

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

The first days of the New Year 1997 had us watching on our TV screens at a real, life or death race against time by the R.A.A.F. and the R.A.N. to pluck two men, one French the other English, from the mountainous seas of the notorious Southern Ocean. Due entirely to bravery, tenacity and a dogged determination not to give up, both were saved from an almost certain watery grave with only hours to spare. These service personnel, up held the tradition set by sons and daughters of Australia in two world wars and other conflicts. Take a bow Oz-ies you have every reason to be proud.

This issues of your favourite computer monthly contains a rather lengthy but very interesting article by Peter Bootham on the rise and fall of Commodore Business Machines, excellent stuff. A fellow Australian (they get every where) Dave Andrews has a good Geos Tip on Page 5. To even the balance we have Mike Jones from Lytham St. Annes tells us 'his story' of C64's and Geos on Page 6. And no geoNews these days would be complete without some excellent clipart from Peter McGuinn of New Zealand.

Next month we will have an extensive article on an incredible piece of software, Big Blue Reader. Enabling files to be converted from C64 to MS-Dos and back again. This allows all sorts of possibilities for those with C64 at home and PC's at work

See you all in March -- Happy Geosing

Frank



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In Our 6th Year of Supporting GEOS and it's users



The February Disk Review

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Hi and welcome to the February review. Terry has asked me to do this months review, so here goes. We start this review off, with some Thank You's to the following members: Danny Tod, Paul Boulter, George Potter, Dave Garrett, Robert Lords and Ivan Blitz. Well that's a lot of members helping out this month. If I have missed anyone, sorry about that, I just write down the names I've got. So now that I have thanked all these members, let's see just what they have sent in. I start this review off with two new Compliation disk's.

Compliation Disk 8 (geoWrite Help Files)

Thanks goes mostly to George Potter, for these files. You may of read some of his help articles in geoNews. He was the one who wrote the 40 - 80 col article last month. I have also enclosed a few other help files I have come across. All are great whether you are an old or a new user of Geos. It a great and quick way of using a program without having to use the manual.

Compliation Disk 9 (REU files)

I have been asked by a number of members if I would do this disk. So here it is. Every file I could find, that has anything to do with a REU. Hope you find it helpful.

geoCLUB DISK 495

This disk was sent in a few months ago by Danny Tod. I have only now been able to review it, so heres goes: GEOVIEW - to view the following files: Blank Sleeve - Print your own disk jackets. Allows 32 file names to be placed on jacket; CASSETTES V1.0 - Printout your own inlays; CASSETTES V2.0 - Paint Image; -10 to +4 - Paint Image, Schematic of -10 to +4 db audio interface from db; BLANK TEMPLATE - Paint Image; GeosHand 2 - This is a

new cursor for Geos; 128 OVERLAY R - Paint Image, Right side of C128 overlay for 60 DPI printers such as most of the Okidata printers; Blank128OvrlayL - Paint Image, Left side of blank C128 overlay for 80 CPI printers; Blank128OvrlayR - Paint Image, Right side of blank C128 overlay for 80 CPI printers. By Scot Cullen; A ROUND TUIT - Paint Image, This file needs the Durant Font on the work disk!, AUDIO CIRCUITS 1 - Paint Image, Shaded area on right to show 60dpi printing area, will not show up on printout; AUDIO CIRCUITS 2 - Paint Image

geoCLUB DISK 496

Not sure where this disk comes from, but thanks for sending it in. Theres a right mix here, the RamProcess is very good. Just be carefull, if you start getting bugs showing up you will have to stop using it. CP-Uhr64_1.3 - Auto Exec CP-Uhr 64; CP-Clock128_1.3 - Auto Exec CP-Clock128, VirusV1.0, BlinkerV1.0, BlinkerV3.0 - Default Header for Processe under RamProcess; RamProcess USA- Auto Exec Installs & enables process-handling with a REU; PROCESS.TXT (E) - Write Image V2.1; Auto Exec; ResProcess V1.0 - Enables the blending in of the clock in the top right hand corner of applications etc. This is very good; Standard - Desk Acc; GEOS-Original - Pattern; Muster 1, Muster 2, Muster 3, Muster 4, Muster 5 - Desk Acc G.P.E. V1.2 all Designed by T. Sommer; CTRL->TAB - Desk Acc, Make CTRL key a tab key. GeoWrite with Geos 64 2.0 only; PatchBoot1581 - Application, Patches 1581 Boot-disks for Geos 128 only in the 40 character mode; PHOTO MOVER 1.0 - Use this program to move scraps between separate photo albums; TransText - Convert PRG, SEQ, and USR text files into geoWrite format; FontView - will view font files to the screen.

Use +,- icons to change point size; Dingbats - A clipArt font by James Hastings-Trew; Dingbatsamp - Write Image V1.1; Font Editor 2.2 - Use the Font Editor to edit existing fonts, or to create your own. M/P; zapf 10/14, ZS232.GEOS - ZS247.GEOS, California 39, CROWN 1F - GeoFonts; geoLogger 128 - GEOS 128 80 col. Disk file cataloging system; QWIKSTASH- Auto Exec, Copies selected files to RAMDrive; QWIKPIK - Select files to copy to RAMDrive with QwikStash; Pik/StashDocs - Write Image V2.0; NewID - Sets Kernal ID to. Format MUST be = \$xxxx; GetID - Returns ID word of Kernal; ID.doc - Write Image V2.1, Requires font LW_ROMA.

geoCLUB DISK 497

Not sure who sent this in. But thanks for doing it. GEOVIEW - to view the following: BILL THE CAT, CASTLE, CLIP ART BOOK, CYBIL 1, CYBIL 2, DRIVE IN, FARRAH, HALLOWEEN, JUDITH LITE, LINDA EVANS, BIPLANE, BUGS, MASTER - a mix of different Paint Images; Preferences.

geoCLUB DISK 498

I think this disk was sent in by Robert Lord. If am wrong, sorry. GEOVIEW - to view the following Paint Images: FARRAH, LINDA 1, CYBIL 1, JUDITH 1, CAT 1, I PAINT LOGO, RAYS, I PAINT, SIMPSONS - a mix fo different Paint Image; photo manager - Photo Mgr V2.1; TV STARS - photo album V2.1; Preferences.

geoCLUB DISK 499 - 502

Yes we've reached the 500 mark. Thank's goes to Danny Tod and Paul Boulter for these 4 disk's. They have converted 720 printshop clip-art for you here. Thank for all your hard work boys. You get 180 picture on each side, all in photo albums for easy use. Hope you find them as usefull as I have.

Well I will finish it here. I can't believe we have reached the 500 mark. Thank's to all the members who have sent in disk's, over the years. But please don't stop sending in disk's. The more you send in, the better the choice will be. As always the disk cost 1.30 for any 2 disk numbers. Don't forget to make your cheque payable to "GEOCLUB". Well that's it from me for now. So until next time all the best to everyone. Sharon & Terry.

No New Ribbons for me

By Sharon Chambers

For anyone who is thinking of getting New Printer Ribbons, as the ones you are using have faded. Before you do, have you thought of getting Re-Ink (you know the stuff you use to re-ink ribbons). It's very good stuff, you may of seen an article a few month's ago on Re-Inking Ribbons, by George Potter. Well he has contacted me about an offer he has got with the company OfficeLand who sell Re-Ink.

You can get Re-Ink, at a very special discount price of 9.95 instead of the 12.95 (this includes p&p). All you have to do is mention geoNEWS/geoClub UK or Commodore Scene and George Potter, when you are ordering Re-Ink.

Write or phone:

OFFICELAND, 10 Sterte Close, POOLE, Dorset, BH15 2AT. Tel: 01202-666155 you can also get a catalogue from them. I think you can also Fax them on this number.

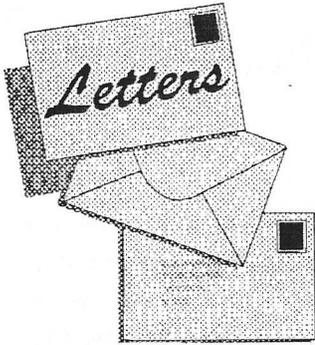
Thanks must go to George, for this offer. If anyone would like a copy of the help article done by George on Re-inking Ribbons and more as well, I have placed his Help File's on a club disk (Compliation disk's 8), for the library, so that everyone can have access to his great help pages. So until next time, all the best for now...

(c) Sharon Chambers 97

C128 Video RAM Up-grade

If anyone is interested in up-grading thier C128 Video Ram to 64K . Maplins now stock 4464 Ram Chips as mentioned in the Wave article in the October 1996 geoNews. They can be located on Page 775 of the 1996/97 Maplins catalogue. The order code is UH93B and they cost £5.79 each. Don't forget you need two of them. They have now discontinued selling the hood for the 2x12 way conector as used when making a gpoCable (the end that plugs into the C64 user port).

Good info from Danny Tod



To The EDITOR

Dear Frank,

I now have an Amiga as well as a C64 and I would like to transfer graphics and other files from one to the other. Do you have any information about a program that will do this? I do have a C64 Emulator for the Amiga but I cannot get it to work. You can hook it up so you can use a C64 Disk Drive but I have had no luck. I would be most grateful of any help you can offer.

I would also be interested in any way of transferring files for the C64 to a PC, are there any programs that will do this?

You are doing a great job. Keep up the good work. Ken Sidwell, 9 Arundel Road, Cheylesmore, Coventry, West Midlands, CV3 5JT

Many thanks for your letter Ken and the words of praise. There is a way of transferring C64 files over to the Amiga but the name of the program escapes me. Never having had an Amiga it's not something I know very much about, actually I don't know anything about them.

However, transferring Geos files over to the PC is my forte, it's a job I do every month and a task I could not do without the help of Big Blue Reader, a commercial program from Sogwap Software. Next month there will be a rather lengthy article describing this excellent work in great detail and well worth reading by anyone even diehard Geosers who wouldn't have a PC in the house. So sit tight until the March geoNews, you'll find it very interesting and I try and include an article of just how I go about transferring from C64 & C128 Geos to Microsoft Publisher which I use to produce this great little newsletter of ours.

Frank

(Ah! that's got another reader hooked for a further month. I'm not as daft as I look !?!")

Dear Frank,

I wonder if you or any other Geosers can help with a couple of queries I have.

I cannot get any sensible print from Geos with my Epson LQ300 and C64 Parallel Interface Cable made by W&T Interfaces, purchased from Trading Post. I know Geos will work with it because I got the V1.3 you loaned me to print, but all the drivers I have tried so far give similar results ie, gibberish printed down the left hand side of the page varying from 1 to 5 characters wide.

Is it possible to buy 1581 disk drives, REU's and Ramlinks new anywhere. I have seen a number of adverts in back copies of geoNews but would prefer to buy new. Hope you can help

All the best
Geoff Sutton, Tigh-Na-Sith, Main Street,
Guildtown, Pershire, PH2 6BS

Hi Geoff,

I hope I can help a little. If the printer worked OK with V1.3 then it should work with V2.0 because the printer drivers are the same. I assume that it is what is known as a geoCable ie a cable with a Centronics plug on one end which plugs directly into the C64 with no fancy gadgets in between. One thing to check is, make sure you are using a driver that says for example 'Epson LQ (GC)' the (GC) is most important.

As for buying new 1581's I'm afraid they are, and always have been as rare as hens teeth and the only time anyone sells one is if they are giving up C64-ing altogether or have hit on desperately hard times. The same really goes for REU's these too have always been difficult to find in the UK which is a shame really because Geos was developed with the use of REU's in mind. RamLinks are only available from CMD in the USA and quite a few members have bought these and CMD's Hard Drives which seem very popular. There are pit falls buying from outside the EU so I suggest you contact Dave Elliott (geoNut) who has more experience than most in this field. His address, 32, Wood Lane, Cippenham Slough. I am sure he'll be happy to help, he is, a very nice man.

A GEOS Tip

By Dave Andrews

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I have a small tip for Geos users that have had a problem with faulty disks, that won't allow them to reach a certain page. You may have already published a similar hint, in which case just chuck this one out.

I have had a few disks, that for no apparent reason, just won't allow me to get to a page, we'll use page three for an example. When DeskTop opens, and I wish to go through the pages, to see what's on them, I try to go from page 2 to 3, all of a sudden, I get a message that tells me that Operation Cancelled due to Disk Error at such and such an address (which doesn't help me one bit, because I have only just learnt my own) and then sits there expecting me to do something about it. So, I re-open it (the disk) and Verify, then try again, same thing. No doubt someone out there in GeosLand has had the same problem, unless I am really unique.

It took me a while, but I finally figured out that perhaps I could sneak in through the back door, having had it done to me, perhaps I can do it. Sure enough, I just click on the go to back page thingo on the DeskTop and I can go back all the way to page 4 and then Whammo, the same thing happens; can't get page three. From here, I used to rescue what I could from the disk and then re-format and re-save all the files. Unfortunately, that meant that I lost eight files, and being as selfish as I am, I wanted my files back, so I had to do something different.

Obviously it was a problem with page 3. How do I get the files from page three to another page? It's right there in front of me and I can't reach it. After trying several different techniques using file copiers, other than Geos, and re-validating, going in and out of Geos was becoming a pain on the drives, and nerves. Using Geos, one must become conversant with every part of it to get the full benefit of its power. Geos has the power to not only stuff up

disks, it also has the power to fix them.

One evening as I pondered this problem alone in my dark dank cellar where light is fearful to tread, I stumbled onto a solution, so I cleaned that up and got back to the job in hand of fixing this disk error problem. I looked at the words along the top of the screen and actually SAW it. The PAGE. "What's behind there?" you ask. APPEND and DELETE. I KNOW what delete means, but what is APPEND? Append is adding something to something else as far as I can understand. Maybe that means that I can add a page to the DeskTop where no page has been before. OK, let's try it. Click on append and the drive rattles and I rattle and think "My God, what have I done?"

There it is, a page with nothing on it. Great, just what I need, another dead page. Wondering where the files had gone, I checked page two and there are all the files that used to be on page one. Click again, and Whammo disk error for page three. OK, wise guy, in through the back door. Page six, page five, page four and there they are, the lost files of page three, but now I can't get the files that used to be on page two, because their on page three. Sounds confusing; try writing it.

Now the real test: We still have no page three, so let's add (append) a page to page two, which actually leaves page two alone and shifts page three to page four. That works. Now transfer all the files, by file copying, not disk copying, to another disk, then re-format and replace all the files back again, or just leave them on another disk and use the re-formatted one for something else.

This will only work if there really isn't anything wrong with the programs, just the disk. Usually, if there is a problem with a program, or file, it will show in the icon, not always though. That is why I have very simple icon pictures that are constant. If I see an icon that is different from the way it should appear, then I suspect the program.

Dave Andrew
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"AND I THOUGHT A COMMODORE WAS A NAVAL OFFICER" ... Mike Jones

Many years ago, hang on, it's actually less than twelve, some (t)wit said to me "you could do with a computer" to make life easier, well as I had a small boatyard come marine electrical business, running the local aux Coastguard station, my better half had decided to attempt a BA degree as a mature student, plus the ancient typewriter had seen better days, I thought get into modern technology, what a good idea.

Gone were the days of the faithful card index, and Challenge carbon copy books, being replaced by an expensive Commodore (it had to have a nautical name) so called 'Business Package' consisting of a C64, 1541, 801 printer, plus Easy Script and Future Finance (any 'Future' earnings would be needed to 'Finance' all the junk required in this new absorbing venture) software.

The 801 printout left much to be desired, as a decender could have been a box of cornflakes, such was my knowledge of computing, but a friend, recently upgraded, presented me with a CBM 8023P printer with a funny looking lead, "you only need to get an IEEE interface to make it work with your setup" I didn't know then that the translation of 'interface' meant 'arm and a leg' however the thing did give slightly better quality with Easy Script, where typed text appearing one side and disappearing the other side of the screen, and printout format not quite as you would expect caused problems, in fact a number of very funny surprises to the finished work made a software change priority in the shape of Tasword 64 WP, which produced an eighty column display on the green screen, giving a true format. Mini Office-2 followed with it's small but effective spreadsheet, database and graphics package, but you guessed it, they wouldn't work with the 8023P. Enter stage left yet another printer, the Citizen 120D, a workhorse among printers, which I still have in use to this day, and actually cost little more than the dreaded interface. Now with the delights of NLQ, and other unhead of (to me that is) features, I now had everything required to process my data, unfortunately I did not realise then the dreaded symptoms of micromania.

One fine day whilst perusing my overdraft,

someone said to me "you need Geos" "Who" said I, well we all know the outcome don't we... v1.3 was duly obtained, and the rot set in, for never before experienced delights of multiple fonts, graphics, my own logo designs, where would it all end, it didn't, there was the follow up, bigger and better, and had to be in my grasp. Upgrade to v2. together with all the extra temptations of applications on the market such as geoChart, geoPublish, geoLabel, but to name a few, allso necessary to produce those special notices, reports, letterheads, and graphic labels etc. Disk access speed now restricted, second drive a must, together with all those little gadgets, tantalisingly advertised, such as an iconcontroller, (a mouse was taboo, might upset the cat) how could I have managed without.

At the end of the day, this system, upgraded a little now by a 64c plus colour, is still running in everyday use, and justifies the expense over the years. Geos became, and still is the life blood of the good old '64, (and 128) a machine much maligned but rich in software, often comparable with PC applications, and I personally have no requirement for the mega speeds of today's technology, where equipment purchased before high noon will often be out of date by evensong.

Nowadays, being semi-retired, but still messing about a bit with boats, old radios, and local CG. paperwork the Commodore brings relaxation with superb games like Computer Scrabble, Trivial Pursuit, and Dominoes. I have become an avid collector of compatible hard/software culled from many sources such as car-boots, often at knock down prices, there is always some new-to-you adventure to try out, for instance 'Stop Press' a DTP by AMX, (the cat had to go) Certificate Maker, or trying to do something 'really useful' with a 1520 and Chartplot. Cartridge based applications are collectable, like Expert, or my favourite 'Partner 64' where at the press of a button gives you rapid access to appointment callendar, memo pads, address/phone lists, and other handy utilities. So much still to explore.

The better half passed with honours, I remain a Geos'64 adict, and that's My geoStory ...
Happy Geosing

DATE = Set or change date.
TIME = Set or change time.
UTILITIES = 1. CHANGE DRIVE I/O.
2. FORMAT MS-DOS DISK
3. 1571 SPEED UP

The Main Menu options may be selected with either the <CRSR> and <RETURN> keys.

MAIN MENU FUNCTION KEY DESIGNATIONS:

F1=LOAD DIR F3=COPY F3=PRINT
F7=DISK CMDS
F2=VIEW DIR F4=TIME F6=DATE
F8=UTILITIES

VIEW DIR, TIME, DATE and UTILITIES options are available only to BBR 128 users.

HOW TO USE MAIN MENU OPTIONS:

NOTE: The <ESC> key is programmed to return you to the Main Menu with many of the prompts that appear when executing these options. BBR 64 uses the back arrow "<-->" as the <ESC> key.

LOAD DIR

Purpose: To load the directory of a disk into memory.

LOAD DIR always functions with the source drive (See "CHANGE DRIVE I/O"). This should be the first option selected in the process of copying or printing files.

After selecting the LOAD DIR option use the <CRSR> and <RETURN> keys to choose the disk type to be loaded; Commodore, MS-DOS or C128 CP/M. Then insert the disk and press the <SPACE BAR>. The disk drive will spin, read the directory and display file information on the screen. Commodore disks show: filename, file type and number of blocks for each file. MS-DOS disks show; filename, file extension, file size, time, and date for each file. C128 CP/M disks show; filename, file extension and file size for each file.

BBR 64 ignores the time and date on MS-DOS files.

BBR 128 ALTERNATE DISPLAY shows the following information:

The disk format: Commodore, MS-DOS or C128 CP/M.

If the disk is single or double sided.

MS-DOS and C128 CP/M disks show: Total Number of files, number of bytes free, number of bytes used and total number of bytes on the disk. MS-DOS disks show if the disk is 8 or 9 sectors.

Commodore disks show: Number of program files, number of sequential files, number of other files, total number of files, number of blocks free, number of blocks used, total number of blocks on the disk, number of bytes free.

The bottom of the ALTERNATE DISPLAY shows: The Date (if set), the Buffer size, copyright notice, Big Blue Reader 128 version number.

The CURSOR Keys and Viewing Long Directories:

The <CRSR LEFT> and <CRSR RIGHT> keys are used to select a main menu option, while the <CRSR UP>, <CRSR DOWN> and <RETURN> keys are used to select file names with COPY and PRINT options.

If a disk directory is particularly long you may view the extra file entries by using the <CRSR UP> and <CRSR DOWN> keys on BBR 128, or if you are using BBR 64 then use the <+> and <-> keys to page through the file names. The maximum number of directory entries read with BBR 128 is 200 and 144 with BBR 64.

COPY

Purpose: To transfer files from disk-to-disk.

There are two designations for diskettes when using Big Blue Reader. One is the source, which is the diskette on which the file you wish to copy resides. The other is the destination, which is the diskette to which you wish to copy a file to. The source and destination drives can be changed by using the CHANGE DRIVE I/O

option of Big Blue Reader.

After selecting the COPY option, you may choose any number of files to be transferred by using the <CRSR> and <RETURN> keys. Files selected for transfer are marked with an asterix "*" to the left of the filename. Pressing the <F1> key will mark all of the files in a directory, while pressing the <F3> key will un-mark all of the files. Press the up-arrow key <^>, (next to the restore key), to begin copying. Although the source diskette should already be inserted in the drive, you will be prompted to insert the source diskette and press the <SPACE BAR> to start the transfer process. Press the <ESC> key to return to the main menu.

After pressing the <SPACE BAR>, the drive will spin and read the selected files into the buffer of the computer. After all of the files are loaded or the buffer becomes full, you will then need to choose the destination disk type; Commodore, MS-DOS, or C128 CP/M diskette. All files are saved to the destination drive. (See "CHANGE DRIVE I/O").

If you are copying files from a Commodore disk to an MS-DOS disk or vice versa, you will first be asked if you would like to do an ASCII translation (See "ASCII FILES"), then you will be asked if you would like to retain the same filenames. Filenames of MS-DOS and C128 CP/M files are stripped of illegal filename characters. Optional line feeds may also be added when transferring Commodore files to either MS-DOS or C128 CP/M disks.

PRINT

Purpose: To view files on screen or print them on a printer.

After selecting the PRINT option use the <CRSR> and <RETURN> keys to select files. Files selected for printing are marked with an asterix "*" to the left of the filename. Pressing the <F1> key will mark all of the files, while pressing the <F3> key will un-mark all of the files. Press the up-arrow <^>, to begin loading files. Select output to the screen or to the printer, with the optional ASCII translation as needed.

If you select the "Standard ASCII to Commodore ASCII" translation, Big Blue Reader will translate the proper characters. You would choose this option for most MS-DOS, CP/M or other standard ASCII text files.

If you select the "Special Translation" table your file will be printed with all control and non-printable characters stripped from the file but with no other ASCII translation.

The PRINT option is an excellent way to preview text files; it can also show if an ASCII translation is needed.

DISK CMDS

Purpose: To execute various disk options.

PLEASE NOTE: Most of these commands will only work on Commodore-formatted disks. The FORMAT DISK command however, will format or erase ANY diskette.

** Big Blue Reader 128 Disk Commands: **

GOTO MAIN MENU = To return to main menu.

DISK DIRECTORY = Display Commodore disk directory.

VALIDATE DISK = To clean up disk (recalculates BAM).

SCRATCH FILE = Erase files from diskette.

RENAME FILE = Alter the name of a file.

FORMAT DISK = Format a disk.

OTHER CMDS = To enter your own disk.

CHANGE DRIVE # = Use this if you have more than one drive.

NOTE: See your 1571/1581 User's Guide for more information on these and other disk commands.

TO BE CONTINUED

This article being so large has been cut into a number of instalments the second part will appear in the next geoNEWS. It will be apparent to anyone who has a C64 at home and a PC at work that this software is probably one of the single most important programs available enabling files to be easily swapped between the different formats.

computer under \$300.

In 1980 the Vic-20 was born. It was first introduced at a computer show in Tokyo and left the opposition gasping when they saw the price! The Vic 20 used a 6502 processor running at 1 MHz and 5k of memory, a palette of 16 colours & interfaces for joystick, light pen, cartridges, memory expansion, modem, printer and disk drive.

When released in the US in 1981 production hit 9000 units per day, an enviable figure even now, but absolutely phenomenal at that time !

Jack decided to expand from just producing hardware for the Vic-20 and CBM got heavily involved in producing manuals, books & software to complement the unit. The advertising budget was set to high and Commodore got William Shatner (from the Star Trek series) to promote the Vic in the states.

The development budget was also high and in January 1982 Commodore showed prototypes of two new computers at the CES show in Las Vegas.

The first was the Ultimax, a machine that incorporated a new sound chip, SID (sound interface device). The Ultimax had a measly 2k of memory though and although a lot were produced they really only ended up being sold in Japan. 2

The second prototype was a totally different story. It featured a new vic ii video chip, the sid sound chip, 16 colours and 8 hardware sprites, hardware scrolling, 64k of memory, two joystick ports and compatibility with all vic peripherals.

This new model stole the show. CBM got very busy, showed a later improved prototype at the same CES show in June 1982 where it again got rave reviews, and by September 1982 it was on the shop shelves at a price of us\$595.

The Commodore 64 had arrived!!

To say that the 64 sold very well would be an understatement. Ex-Commodorian Andy Finkel estimated that sales for the first decade were at least 17 million units worldwide, and probably

closer to 22 million in all.

Byte magazine (August 1994) stated that this was more than all the Apple Macs put together, and it dwarfs IBM's figures for the top selling systems at that time.

But CBM's sales figures are not the only C64 success story.

Within only a year a huge culture started building up around the 64. Magazines, software publishers, peripheral manufacturers et al started coming out of the woodwork.

Strangely enough this vibrant culture was largely ignored by the popular media, who these days will virtually make a mini-series on the release of a prg such as Windows 95.

Right from the start programming was an area of major interest for many cC4 users. An atmosphere of great enthusiasm existed between both professional and amateur programmers, the edges of the 64s potential were continually being pushed and the knowledge was eagerly shared and passed on through endless books and magazine articles.

CBM products sold well worldwide. In England sales were huge. CBM (UK) marketed the C64 as a games machine more than anything else. Disk drive users were in the minority here and most software was tape based.

In Germany an enthusiastic computer computer journalist commented that the fall of the Berlin wall was expedited by the use of C64s and modems for communications between citizens of east and west Berlin'.

Nigel Shepherd, a Scot who came to Australia in 1977, set up an Australian distributorship for CBM products in the early Pet days.

In 1979 CBM established a full on Australian agency with Nigel as general manager for the Asia Pacific region and when the 64 arrived sales down under went through the roof. (in 1986 Nigel moved to the USA and became general manager of US operations.)

Jack Tramiel had coined a slogan for CBM -

"Computers for the masses, not the classes"

The C64 certainly fulfilled this vision, it stood head & shoulders above other makes of that time, presenting a diverse, reliable and cost effective option compared to the mostly dry offerings of other models.

In January 1984 Jack Tramiel had a major fallout with the company's largest shareholder, Irving Gould. This led to Jack resigning from the company. It is not certain why this happened but rumours said that Gould wanted to bring in a professional management team, but Jack wanted his sons to run the company. A new manager was appointed, and within months several top engineers and managers had resigned.

In July 1984 Jack Tramiel bought Atari & put his sons in charge. Over the ensuing years Atari did quite well, especially in the areas of sound & music where it became the first choice for professional musicians.

After Jack's departure CBM produced 2 new machines, the SX64 which was the world's first colour portable computer and the C128, an expanded and improved version of the 64.

At this time they also decided to release several IBM compatible systems. The 128 in particular sold quite well but by 1985 CBM virtually started ignoring this system in favour of the Amiga.

Amiga technology was not developed by Commodore, they bought the rights from an independent manufacturer. The Amiga was in fact way ahead of its time. Seen by many as just a games machine it was actually a much more complex machine than any others around at that time. The Amiga's operating system, designed by Carl Sassenrath, had preemptive multitasking and a graphical user interface.

At a time when PC users thought that 16 colour EGA was state of the art the Amiga could display 4096 colours & had custom chips for accelerated video. Even though the Amiga never reached the same sales figures as the C64 nevertheless a huge productive and creative culture also built up around this machine.

By 1989 CBM was showing little interest in the C64, although it's interesting to note that even in 1991 the 64 was still a huge seller, CBM shipped 800,000 units in that year alone !

It was in the early 90s that things starting going wrong for Commodore. Since the late 80s IBM had started realising that home computers should cater for more than just spreadsheet enthusiasts. Commodore lost its advantage when other machines began to smarten up a bit, but it was poor dealer support & a series of strange managerial decisions that really put the nails in the coffin. Against the advice of its engineers and developers CBM decided to drop support for the 64 altogether, although units were still produced at their plant in Irving, Scotland. At the same time 3 new entry level Amigas were released within the space of 2 years - the Amiga 500 Plus, Amiga 600 & then Amiga 1200. Each model was only partly compatible with the previous and this caused much confusion in the Amiga community.

In 1993 CBM reported a loss of 177.6 million dollars for the fiscal quarter ending in March 93. CBM wasn't the only one feeling the pinch. Atari had lost 17.6 million dollars in 93, after a 1.9 million profit in 1992. Not to be outdone IBM posted a loss of 7 billion dollars in the previous year (much of this was redundancy payments resulting from a decision to downsize).

The computer industry was in a state of flux, this was a time that all decisions needed to be correct ones and in the case of CBM the opposite was the case. In mid 1994 a group of rebel stockholders sent a delegation to a CBM board meeting in the Bahamas, They wanted to vote out 2 senior board members, CEO Irving Gould and board member Alexander Haig (former USA Secretary of State during the Nixon years.)

Jim Sachs, spokesman for the stockholders and renowned C64 & Amiga developer (he wrote the game 'Defender of the Crown') said "In our view a computer company should be run by people who are interested in & fascinated by the product that they make."

The stockholders did not succeed in their quest & by July 94 CBM went into liquidation. At a Commodore Deathbed Vigil party in the USA thousands of Commodore supporters turned up,

some wearing t-shirts sporting the message - Commodore is dead, long live the Amiga and C64

One controversial aspect of the liquidation in the Bahamas was whether US or Bahama law should apply. Under Bahama law directors can only be held responsible for any actions over the past 3 months. Under US law the period of responsibility is 12 months.

Journalist Dan Stets of the Philadelphia Enquirer wrote "Ali and Gould are worried about others finding out how they caused Commodore's bankruptcy, the company was set up to avoid us law."

(Medhi Ali was a senior board member who represented CBM at the hearing).

The proceedings went on and on and finally in April 1995 a German company, Escom, bought the rights to Commodore technology for a mere \$12.1 million. After a year or so Escom was having financial difficulties running their various operations & they sold the rights to Viscorp in the USA.

Where Commodore technology goes from here is anyone's guess. Just previous to Escom's takeover the 64 was still being manufactured in China (without licence), Escom endeavoured to shut this down but as far as I know they did not succeed - 64s are used extensively throughout Chinese schools. Silicon Holdings (India) also make a C64 clone, under rights that they acquired from CBM in 1993.

International Amiga magazines seem confident that the new owners will support the Amiga community, but so far it appears that no new Amigas are being produced.

However the fact remains that a large culture & support system still exists worldwide for these machines.

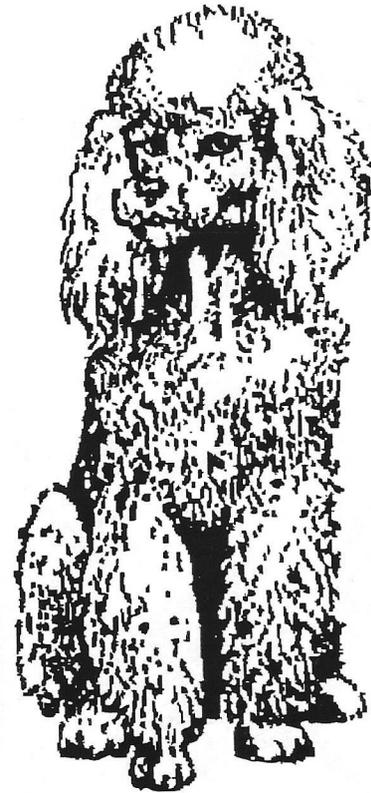
Computer historians seem to be willing to forget CBM's major role in the heady early days of personal computing. But the bottom line is the fact that Jack Tramiel's vision was fulfilled, and the diversity and affordability of present day computers is a direct result of the direction that was set by the CBM pioneers.

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