

Vol.11 Nº12.

August 1998.

FORMAT

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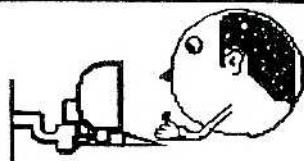


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STOP PRESS: The full range of SD's software and hardware will return in the next few months, if there is anything not listed above that you really need then phone Bob on 01452 412572 and he will do his best to help.

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COMING NEXT MONTH

A review of the new Spectrum Emulator for the Psion Series 5.

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The Editor Speaks

This is a smaller issue than normal as we have had a tight deadline to meet in order to get this out before the Gloucester show. If all goes to plan there will be another issue out fairly quickly as we strive to get back to our original publication deadlines which were so badly disrupted early this year. The catch-up process is well underway, at the moment I'm busy stockpiling material each month so we can have some issues in rapid succession. We will catch up as soon as we can – I promise.

The last issue saw the launch of our 1998 membership drive, something that I'm sure you will understand is really important to our future, I'm therefore rather surprised, and more than a little disappointed, to find that so far (two weeks after **FORMAT** went out) we have not received any subscription forms - not one. Now I didn't expect a flood, not this early in the day anyway, but I had expected at least a trickle by now. As I said last month, when we last had a membership drive we were to target only Spectrum and SAM owners, which led to the common response from readers that "I don't know any Spectrum/SAM users so I can't introduce anyone".

Well that can't be said about PC users, our real target market this time round. Each and EVERY one of you will know several people who own PCs – so there really is no excuse for you not to introduce at least one new member as part of this promotion. You have the form we printed last month which you can

photocopy, if you don't have access to a photocopier then ring Jenny and she will send you some blank subscription forms. Either way, start handing out the forms right away and apply a little pressure to get your friend/relative/colleague to send off his or her subscription.

Remember it is YOU that will benefit in the long run, so it is up to YOU to do your bit to help INDUG grow.

Right, now to the Gloucester show, remember it is Saturday the 17th October and as we have been telling you about it since well before the April show you will have had plenty of time to clear your calendar for that day, so we look forward to seeing you there. This is a landmark show as it is our tenth, because of this we have put in extra effort to ensure that as many Spectrum and SAM companies as possible are there – so don't miss it.

Finally this month, Christmas is just around the corner so I would like to appeal (nay, plead more like it) for a few seasonal items for the December issue. Scratch around your discs and old glossy magazines and see what you can find - then send the goodies off to me (or John Wase if it is SHORT SPOT material) as soon as you can. Many thanks.

Until next month.

Bob Brenchley, Editor. P.S. I've just realised, this is the 150th editorial I've written (including editorials for FORMAT PC). Quite a landmark when you come to think of it. Now the big question is, how many were read? ☺

SHORT • SPOT

YOUR HINTS, TIPS AND PROGRAMMING IDEAS

Edited By:- John Wase.

D'you know, I can't understand the weather. Here we are in the wettest part of Wales, armed with a chain saw to remove some trees (last year their roots penetrated a retaining wall - the replacement cost twelve hundred quid as insurance wouldn't cover it, and I don't want that again), and it's beautiful! So no-one wants to stay in while I type, and it's all frustrating. Never mind: I'm having my own back - some of the birch logs are big enough to go through the kiln, and be turned into things. I'm bringing them back bit by bit on my little trailer. You see, I always take a pragmatic and practical view of matters.

This brings me to a little piece from Geoff Eglinton of Tidbury Green, Solihull. He writes that using his original Citizen disc drives and MasterDOS, he's found it's possible to poke DVAR 1 and get 4 extra tracks on each side: that is 40K extra.

If a RAMDISC is opened with `FORMAT "d3", 1, 8` and something put on it, it can be altered with the sequence:-

```
LET x=16896+16384*PEEK DVAR 44
WRITE AT 1,80,1,X,40
WRITE AT 1,208,1,X+20480,40
```

To reload, `FORMAT "d3"` as usual, and repeat the sequence above with `READ` in place of `WRITE`.

Many thanks Geoff. Couple of points here, at the risk of upsetting him. (Geoff - I don't know how you want to use the information you sent, but this is something I feel strongly about: I write to inform and warn, not to offend). I recall a

few months ago printing some stuff from Miles Kinloch, in which he did clever things by concealing information somewhere, and retrieving it later (even after formatting), but I haven't got it in front of me: it could well have been in an extra track like this. In my book, that's just OK; merely formatting it and using it willy-nilly isn't. Why? Well, here's my pragmatic and practical view of matters, for what it's worth. Firstly, the fineness of the iron oxide particles must be sufficient that the system can distinguish between bits of data. In other words, we must have particles sufficiently fine that we can have a separate magnet for each little bit of data. The tracks are arranged concentrically, so the packing density of data becomes greater and greater as we traverse the floppy towards the centre. (Apple-Macs, I understand, use a system where data are saved at a uniform density). The smallest track on *our* system is the one in the middle; track 80 on side 1. The fineness of iron oxide grind must therefore be such that there is just sufficient resolution *at track 80* to distinguish between the bits of data. The more concentric tracks you try and add within track 80 in an attempt to save more data than the disc is designed for, the smaller is the track, and the finer must be the grind of iron oxide; the better must be the resolution, to accommodate such skulduggery. You're outside the manufacturer's spec, at your own risk. You risk losing data. No allowance has been made by the manufacturer for someone adding further concentric tracks

within track 80, and that's the bottom line.

In the second place, once you've saved data in a non-standard place, you need at least a special program to get at it, in some instances special equipment. Fine, you can use it; can your friends?

And in the third place, if all this is aimed at squeezing more onto a floppy than the manufacturer intended, just because you're too mean to buy discs (and they're still pretty cheap), then my pragmatic and practical view is that reckon you're a dumb skinflint! The idea of a standard system is so that everyone else can keep and use data, and pass it round easily (post permitting). Trying to keep precious data over the manufacturer's specified density is at best risky. Let's keep it simple - that's why SAM's discs can be read on a PLUS D and *vice versa*. All right - I've had my little say: what do others think?

Next, we have a little offering from Michael Harrop of Sheffield. This has solved a problem I have had for many years, so I'm delighted to be able to share the solution with you. Michael writes that not being a programmer, or being any good at programming when he *has* tried, apart from:

```
10 PRINT "Mick is ace"  
20 GOTO 10
```

...he thought that he'd have nothing to add to my pages, and maybe this won't prove suitable for Short Spot, though he *did* try... (*which just goes to show - JW*).. Anyway; last year he got himself a Z88 that he's typing this on at the moment, and spent a few months playing with it and finding programs for it on the Internet, when suddenly, Mick had a thought. Could he transfer his data to one of his Spectrums? He'd got plenty of those, after all: one with a DISCiPLE,

and Drive 1; one with an interface 1 and three microdrives, and the dreaded +3 with its pseudo CP/M 3" discs. So he phoned Bill Richardson (who sold him the Z88 in the first place) and asked him if he'd got a lead to attach it to the Spectrum. Unfortunately, as Bill pointed out to him, they never made one, so it was never-mind-and-forget-about-it time. That is, until he came across an old program in an old EPROM magazine (a bit like **FORMAT**, but for the Z88), which gave details of how to make a lead for the Interface 1, and also a simple program to transfer material from the Z88 to the Spectrum, and from the Spectrum back to the Z88. So off he went to get a friend to make up the lead, as he hasn't the know-how, and then - to try it out. After a few set-backs, Mick got it to work.

Now, with a new interest suddenly back in the Z88 (*is this your interest, Mich, or is it general; please tell us more - JW*), Mick thought **FORMAT** readers might like the program; it might be the very thing to back up their data if they don't have a PC. So here is the listing. You will need an Interface 1 and a microdrive, and you will need to make a cable to the specification in the instructions.

```
9 CLS : INK 7: BORDER 0: PAPER 0: CLS  
10 INPUT "Would you like to read the instructions Y/N";a$  
20 IF a$= "Y" THEN GO TO 1000  
30 IF a$="y" THEN GO TO 1000  
40 GO TO 1161  
1000 REM Z88-IMPEXP VERSION 5, 1989 08 01 BY DENNIS GRONING  
1030 CLS  
1040 PRINT "Z88-IMPEXP is used to save Z88-files on Sinclair Spectrum microdrive cat
```

```

ridges."
1049 PRINT
1050 PRINT "Hardware: Sinclair Z
X Spectrum with ZX Interf ace
1 and ZX Microdrive. S
erial cable with a": PRINT
"9-pin D-socket, male in
both ends."
1060 PRINT : PRINT "Connected as
follows: 2-2, 3-3, 4-4, 5
-5, 7-7, 8-9, 9-8."
1070 PRINT : PRINT "Panel settin
gs:Transmit/Receive baud r
ate-9600. Parity-None. Xon
/Xoff-No"
1080 PRINT "A 70k file is transf
erred in 5 minutes."
1090 PRINT : PRINT "The files ar
e sent via the Z88 Import
/Export program and stored
on microdrive with any na
me."
1100 PRINT : PRINT "It is advisa
ble to use the Z88 name b
ecause the files are": PRI
NT "stored in Spectrum dat
afiles complete with th
eir Z88 name with which
they will be sent back
to the Z88."
1110 PRINT : PRINT "To save keyp
ressing you can store sever
al Z88 files in one Spect r
um file. You can also use
wild-cards when sending f
iles from the Z88"
1120 PRINT : PRINT "If you get'm
icrodrive full'during tra
sfer, three things will
happen.": PRINT : PRINT "1
You can continue this pro
gram as below.": PRINT : P
RINT "2 After sending this
Spectrum file back to t
he Z88 the program will wa
it for the nonexistent'end
of file' so you have to c
on- tinue as below.": PRIN
T : PRINT "3 The last rece
ived file will be sent bac
k to the z88 incomplete bu
t overwriting a file with
the same name."
1130 PRINT : PRINT "If something
goes wrong during transf
er you should press CAPS
SHIFT and BREAK then RUN a
nd ENTER."
1140 PRINT : PRINT "Before sendi
ng a file,make the receiv
ing computer ready first."
1150 PRINT : PRINT "scroll?"
1151 PAUSE 0
1161 CLOSE #3
1162 CLOSE #4
1170 CLS : CAT 12000 FORMAT "b";
9600
2010 OPEN #3;"b"
2020 PRINT #0;AT 0,0;"R)eceive f
ile or S)end file"
2030 LET k$=INKEY$
2040 IF k$<>"r" AND k$<>"s" THEN
GO TO 2030
2050 INPUT "Filename ";n$
2060 IF k$="r" THEN GO TO 4000
3000 PRINT "s";n$
3010 MOVE "m";l;n$ TO #3
3020 CLOSE #3
3030 GO TO 2000
4000 PRINT "r ";n$
4010 PRINT #0 ;AT 0,0; "When fin
ished receiving, press CAP
S/BREAK then CONT and ENTE
R"
4020 OPEN #4;"m";l;n$
4030 MOVE #3 TO #4
4040 CLOSE #3
4050 CLOSE #4
4060 GO TO 2000
9998 SAVE *"m";1;"Z88IM-EX" LINE
1
9999 VERIFY *"m";1;"Z88IM-EX"
Mike hopes that I'll find this of use, and
encloses a PC disc with a text copy 'cos he
doesn't know what I need (it's Ami-Pro
and I keep it for FORMAT, because
that's what Bob uses, Mike), and there's
a PLUS D disc with the program on, too
Mike also mentions that he has a
program for Spectrum users who use
Tasword, which automatically turn
Pipedream text files (Pipedream is the

```

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The original slot-in slim-line drives produced for the SAM Coupé are no longer made. If your existing drive is now showing signs of terminal decline perhaps it is time you gave your SAM a new lease of life by fitting a modern style (PC type) floppy drive.

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

If you want to fit a second drive (or first drive, if you don't have one or the 1772 on your old drive is faulty) then order a Type 2.

Both types are available in either kit form or ready assembled. For the kit you will need screwdriver, soldering iron, solder and a reasonable level of soldering skills. All you need for the assembled version is a screwdriver. Full fitting instructions are given and the only other thing you need is a standard PC type disc drive from your local supplier (cost about £20 to £25).

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

	Kit Form	Assembled
Internal Disc Interface Type 1 (without 1772)	£19.95	£29.95
Internal Disc Interface Type 2 (including 1772)	£34.95	£44.95

Ordering: Write your order clearly, state your name; full address and phone number and if possible please quote your INDUG number as this will help to speed orders. Payment: Cheques and UK Postal Orders should be made payable to FORMAT PUBLICATIONS. Overseas customers may also pay using FORMAT's foreign exchange scheme. Postage & Packing: Prices include UK p&p. Overseas customers please write for a quote. Prices valid for 90 days from date of publication. E.&O.E.

INTERFACES

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

SAM MOUSE SYSTEM: Interface, High Quality Mouse and the Software to drive it. The interface plugs into the mouse port on the back of SAM so you don't need a spare expansion socket. More and more software now works better if you use a mouse. **Only £39.95**

SAM PRINTER INTERFACE: The SPI (Coupé only) allows connection to any standard parallel printer. Allows standard LPRINT, LLIST & DUMP commands to work on compatible printers. Plugs straight into the expansion port. Requires BBC type 26 way ribbon printer cable (see below). **Only £24.95**

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IT'S SHOWTIME

The evenings are drawing in, the weather getting colder, so it must be time for the *Gloucester Autumn Show*. That's right, Saturday the 17th October will once again see people coming from all parts of the country (and overseas) to visit the Spectrum & Sam Show at the usual venue — Quedgeley Village Hall, Bristol Road (B4008) Gloucester - close to Junction 12 on the M5.

The show opens to the public at 10:30am as usual, and runs until 4:30pm. Entry is just £2 per person, with up to two under 14s given free entry if accompanied by an adult – we like to look on this as being a family show so we do what we can to encourage the younger visitors.

Make sure you bring lots of money with you or at least your cheque book (we can always provide the pen).

BRING AND BUY

The Bring and Buy stand is famous with Gloucester Show regulars. It is usually one of the most crowded stands during the day, giving you the opportunity both to rid yourself of those surplus items you have gathered over the years and of course to find that one item you have always been looking for.

If you are selling items then please remember to make sure everything is fully working, complete, and has its instructions or manual. If possible put a small label on each item giving your name and the price you are asking.

The Bring and Buy table is not constantly manned, although when

possible we do try to keep an eye on things. However, we leave it up to buyer and seller to get together and do the business. Each show sees many hundreds of items change hands and I'm sure there will be even more this time, but you will understand that we, as organizers, cannot be responsible for items left for sale, nor can we be responsible for items you purchase.

Our recommendation to buyers is to make sure you get the seller's address, just in case.

STAND BOOKINGS

If anyone wants a stand at this show (or for a future show), and has not already had a booking form from us, then ring Jenny on 01452-412572.

HOTELS

If you want to make a weekend of your visit to Gloucester then ring the Tourist Information Centre on 01452 421188. They will send you a list of local hotels in your price range.

FOOD & DRINK

The most important service at any show. There will be plenty of refreshments and snacks available inside the show, at very cheap prices I will add - not the rip-off prices you find at many shows.

There is also a good pub right next door that sells midday meals and there are plenty of other pubs in the area. Gloucester's main Tesco is also just over the road.

See You At The Show

GETTING THERE

Gloucester is very easy to reach from most parts of the country either by road, rail or coach.

By Car: If you are travelling north on the M5 then come off at junction 12 and follow signs for Gloucester. A few hundred yards from the motorway slip-road you will come to a roundabout with a service station on your left, take the second exit and follow the A38 towards Gloucester for a short distance. Now take the turning on the left, marked B4008 with signs for Quedgeley and the Severn Vale Shopping Centre. Go straight over at the first roundabout and then just before the next roundabout the hall is on the left, set back a bit from the road and often slightly hidden by the mobile fruit & veg stall that uses the forecourt.

For those coming south there are two choices. Junction 12 is not available southbound, so it is easier to continue to exit 13 and then turn north onto the A38 - this only adds about 5 miles to the journey and avoids the traffic around Gloucester. The alternative is to exit at junction 11 (the A40/Cheltenham exit) and follow signs for Gloucester, follow the ring-road around - you eventually get signs for M5 South - until you reach a very large traffic light controlled junction with signs pointing left for M5 South. Go straight across, following signs for Severn Vale Shopping Centre (see above for more details).

Anyone not using the motorway should be able to work things out from their own road atlas, Quedgeley is to the south of

the city.

Warning, anyone with new maps may be tempted to use junction 11a, don't, it is a nightmare and even locals don't know where it goes to.

Parking: Please use the free parking available just round the corner, in front of the Tesco Super-store. Remember to lock any valuables safely away out of sight - being a busy car-park your car should be quite safe, but it is better not to take chances by putting temptation in front of thieves.

By Rail or Coach: Gloucester is well served by Rail and Coach services. Buses to Quedgeley run about every 15 minutes from the Bus/Coach station (which is almost opposite the entrance to the Train station) ask at the travel office. On the bus ask the driver for Tesco Superstore - he will know where you need to get off, the journey takes around 12 minutes.

Other Attractions: There are plenty of shops in the city centre. There is also the National Waterways Museum at Gloucester Docks, our famous Cathedral and lots of other historic and interesting places to visit.

Cheltenham, with all its fine Georgian buildings is only a few miles away, with even more shops and places of interest. There are many picturesque Cotswold villages and beautiful scenery within just a few miles of the hall. Just down the A38 there is the Slimbridge Wild Fowl Sanctuary, a place everyone should visit.

So, why not bring the whole family and make it a real day out.



YOUR LETTERS

Dear Editor,

Please can you advise me. The six pin din socket lead from the SAM which ends up in the aerial socket of my television via the power unit, (the guide calls it 'power input') is malfunctioning. If the lead isn't placed in the correct position I get no picture at all or, a wild jagged effect on the screen. I'm assuming that there is a break in the cable or the head. Can you supply a replacement cable with phono type end one end and have wires the other? (for soldering into the power unit).

I have been reading your glowing reports of the use of the start cable. How much better the display is when using one. The only thing I'm worried about is the length of the cable. In my set-up, I really need a cable of 3 metres to avoid having it pulled taught. Is this possible, or not advisable, a) because it affects performance, b) West Coast can't produce one, or c) it would be very expensive. If such a lead can't be produced, I shall have to have the power input lead instead. At the moment I can't use SAM at all and I've had no luck looking for a lead in the shops, 6 pin seems somewhat non standard.

Yours sincerely, Andrew Rycraft.

I'm sure it would be possible to have a 3m Scart cable Andrew, but you would have to get one specially made up for you. In the meantime I'm surprised you have not been able to get a 6 pin Din plug, Maplin certainly have them in stock if you have a branch near you. However, I've removed a lead from a broken PSU we had in the office and I'm sending this with your **FORMAT**, we can't have you without a SAM can we. **Ed.**

Dear Editor,

This letter is with reference to your query regarding the future of Spectrum and SAM. Personally I believe that new hardware development will not happen for these machines due to cost considerations. What is more feasible will be adaptations of the existing PC equipment to suit these machines. A lot of PC peripherals such as mouse, scanner, RAM etc., are very cheap now. With slight modifications the SAM should be able to use these peripherals.

Also, SAM needs an emulator for PLUS D/DISCiPLE/UniDOS so that disc programs and snapshots from them can be used directly with a SAM under Spectrum mode, which will then pretend to be a Spectrum with PLUS D. Special adapters which would allow Spectrum hardware such as Multiface and Videoface to be used with a SAM would find a ready market even now.

Yours sincerely, P.A.Basheer, U.A.E.

Well, new hardware development is happening, as we speak. I don't feel that cost is a major consideration at this stage, although it would be if it can ever be advanced to the production stage. At the moment the idea is to carry SAM (and the Spectrum where ever possible) forward, mainly using the enthusiasm that exists amongst **FORMAT** readers. If, and I know it's a big IF, we can get to a stage where there is enough advances to enable a new machine to be built then (and only then) we would have to look for finance. In the meantime we can, I hope, provide a future for existing owners. **Ed.**

Dear Editor,

Just a short note to thank you and

Jenny for all your efforts in getting *FORMAT* out to us in spite of all your recent problems.

Now a short story about my encounter with a PC! It all began about three months ago when my daughter went and purchased a second hand PC, just a basic set up with Windows 3.1 - no special graphics or sound - no CD ROM - small HD. Now having got a basic PC it was soon decided to have it upgraded to Pentium 200 MMX - Super graphics card with millions of colours - super sound card - 24xCD ROM and finally a 4.3 gig HD, Bubble Jet colour printer, colour A4 Scanner, Internet modem etc. etc.,

I was amazed at what one could do with a good PC, so it was not long before we soon took up about 2gigs of HD space with some good prog's and games like *Mech Commander* and *Total Annihilation* - *World Atlas* and a good encyclopaedia etc., oh yes, and *Corel Draw*.

I looked at this lot, and I looked at poor old SAM, but my fears for SAM were not to be realized for we soon began having problems with the PC! Strange things began to happen - games would lock up or sometimes the PC would, half way through a game, decide that enough was enough and go back to the START UP SCREEN!? On loading whatever, messages would appear saying that this or that file could not be found though the file was in there somewhere. At times the PC would decide that there was no BOOT file and refuse to start up! My son decided to wipe everything and start afresh and on trying to reformat the HD a message comes up asking him *WHY #!?!#* The 'experts' are baffled and say that the PC has a rare undetectable fault and that the only way to eradicate it is to gradually replace all the components - a joke perhaps - but the PC is now sitting very dormant in its place behind me, and nobody knows what to do with it, short of binning it.

SAM was here first, he may have spiked the PC seeing the excessive attention it was getting. The PC is dead and I'm writing this on SAM with help

from *The Secretary*, so who knows what happened? After all, they are sitting side by side.

Well Bob, we have tried two hard drives, and also changed the link up strap thinking that may have been faulty, but to no avail, so if you have any ideas we would be very grateful for same.

My SAM is an MGT one with still the original twin slim disc drives - everything still (touch wood) working fine. I'm a bit old in the tooth now, so it wouldn't take a lot to please me - I would love to have a 16 bit SAM with just a couple of megs of onboard RAM with a good graphics card, as I like playing with computer art.

I started with a ZX81 then followed by the Spectrum and Spectrum+ and now SAM. Uncle Clive, or should I say Sir Clive, certainly started something when he developed the first affordable home computer. Life in those days seemed to be so much richer for the experience. A whole new industry seemed to spring up from nowhere - mag's galore, so much software one didn't know what to get first! When I first plugged in the ZX81, I remember being amazed at what it could do, or better still, at what one could *make* it do. You were in control, that is until the cat decided to walk across the leads - ha ha.

Then came the Spectrum, what seemed to be a giant leap for the home computer. But above all, what amazed me was just how much the programmers could get out of the 48K. *Lords of Midnight* being a good example. I still play it now and again on SAM. Then there was *Ant Attack* which employed a new development in graphics. I just dream of what might have been had these programmers had their hands on a 512K SAM? Simple things please simple minds - I loaded up *Krakatoa* - bombed the ship and behold, lots of little people began jumping overboard - I sat there crying laughing at the unexpected! Now what have we? *Mortal Kombat*, *Battle Arena* etc., lots of blood and gore, how things have changed.

Sorry Bob for rambling on so, after all

you were there. Just couldn't help thinking back a bit to the 'good old days'. Now I have my SAM - my home brew utility prog's - and I'm in control.

Many thanks for all that you are doing to keep us going.

Yours sincerely, Ron Deeks.

Sorry to hear of your PC woes Ron, if you give me a ring one evening I'll do what I can to help you.

Meanwhile, it was good to hear your SAM is still serving you so well. *Ed.*

Dear Editor,

Having read the April 1998 **FORMAT** Letters page I was reminded that I wanted to write to you regarding the Gloucester Shows.

I would like to add my vote to that of Philip Thomas requesting the shows to remain on Saturdays. Sure, Saturdays I tend to need to visit the Building Society or the Bank as I usually can't manage to do this during the week. Nowadays though, they tend to be open all day so there is not such a rush.

Sundays tend to be 'Visiting the Family' days, so I seem to be in a similar position as Philip.

With regards to the future of SAM, the idea of an IDE Hard drive for the Spectrum or even the SAM appeals to me. I bought my Spectrum in Boots the Chemist (!) on the 11th March 1986, and I acquired my SAM, second hand from Hugh MacLenaghan (remember him?) on 5th August 1992. I have acquired over the years quite a collection of software for both machines (on about 80 odd discs just for the Spectrum). It may even be more, I think I need a computer to count them (now there's an idea...).

The main problem with so many floppies is just knowing what program is on which disc. I think there is also a profound need to avoid duplication of files over so many discs and to use each disc's space more efficiently. I have lots of discs with plenty of room on them which for whatever reason never gets used up. The Disc Labeller programme which I sent to

John Wase a while ago has been very helpful in this respect. Of course the Hard Drive system with a decent GUI system is a must. I can't help noticing that my version of DRiVER (the ideal candidate in my opinion) is closer to my Mac's OS than it is Windows. I have extensive experience of both systems.

I used, for a while, Dave Hood's Disc Cataloguer programme way back when I was using GDOS (prior to February 1990). Although this took up room on every disc and required a certain amount of self discipline to upkeep the data base, I still found it useful and easy to use; an absolute boon, in fact. I regret that it was not upgraded to Uni-Dos standard. No telling what might have been.

Incidentally, what happened in the end to Dave Hood and Betterbytes? If he defected to the PC like he said he would, he seems to have sunk without a trace.

I did buy Betterbyte's Disc Cataloguer program which worked for a while, until I went over to Uni-Dos. If my memory serves me correctly, I think that by that time Dave Hood had already abandoned the Spectrum so I never did see any of his promised upgrades. If a hard drive is produced, a similar program to the cataloguer would be essential. Perhaps something similar to the File Finder program on my Macintosh.

Or, how about a multi-processor SAM Coupe with dedicated graphics acceleration to go with the Surround Sound Processor that is available now, only built in? It would be interesting to know whether this system is true surround sound or simulated surround sound?

Yours sincerely, Dean Shepherd.

Right Dean, you will notice I've only run sections of your mammoth email, I've saved some material for next month.

We have reached the decision that Gloucester shows will stay on Saturdays, as this seems to be the overwhelming vote of the readers. Hopefully we will see you on the 17th.

There are several IDE interfaces

floating around for the Spectrum and SAM, but the Spectrum ones lack an operating system so they are really only useable by the technocrats among us. Cost is also a consideration. While hard drives are now very cheap (I paid £30 for a 340Mb drive a few weeks ago) the cost of the components, the building, and above all the writing of the software, would mean that an IDE interface and rudimentary operating system is not going to be cheap (I would say at least £50) so the big question is, will Spectrum users buy them in sufficient quantity to make such a project worthwhile?

One idea I'm currently looking for a hardware bod to investigate, is doing a combined IDE/High Density floppy interface, along the lines of an enhanced PLUS D. Using 1.44Mb floppies would be a step forward and I think the two interfaces in one idea would appeal to users. What do people think?

Yes, it was a great pity that Dave Hood vanished from the scene. I know he was ill following the break-up of his marriage and I think he felt he needed to make a fresh start.

As I said, I'll run more of your epistle next month, thanks for taking the time to write. **Ed.**

Dear Editor,

In recent issues of **FORMAT** and **FORMAT PC**, you have mentioned the SAM emulator which is available on the Internet. You also say that Mr Skillman would appreciate feedback on his program and what does and does not work.

I therefore accessed the site to be told that there were two versions available; binary or source. The latter required that I had to have DJGPP v2 (whatever that may be!) installed on my system. I downloaded the binary version and having unzipped it, I ran the program and got the MGT start up screen. All I could get after that were four buttons at the top of the screen which, when clicked gave me another button, but nothing else. The help button gave me an

'ABOUT' option but when accessed merely returned me to the start up screen. I therefore deleted the binary system program.

I then downloaded the source version. I unzipped it but presumably because I did not have DJGPP v2, nothing happened - although the various files had been downloaded.

My purpose in writing is therefore twofold. Firstly, can I suggest that many of your readers (like me!), while they may be reasonably able to use their computer, are not necessarily full computer literate and need some help and explanations when it comes to trying to download and make use of programs, such as Mr Skillmans. You may wish to consider this in future issues of **FORMAT**.

Secondly, I would like to try the SAM emulator program. However, as I do not have the time to spend trying to work out how to make the downloaded versions work, can I take you up on your offer to send me a working version? I enclose a formatted disc and a SAE. Assuming I can get it to work (!) I will be happy to send any comments to Mr Skillman; via you I presume?

With thanks for your assistance.

Yours sincerely, Bill Lawrie.

Disc version on its way, although it is exactly the same as the binary version you first downloaded. True, the on-line help is not there yet, but most things should be covered in the README file - if not, then Allan needs to be told what people need to see in the readme/help in order to get going. Feedback is the key, we will pass on any letters we get, although emailing him would be faster.

Ed.

Letters may be shortened or edited to fit on these pages, although we try to edit as little as possible.

This is YOUR letters page so it is up to you to fill it with interesting things - any subject even remotely related to computers. Just keep things as short as you can so we can fit in as many as possible each month. Please write clearly or type your letters. Send them to the address on page 3 or email them to us at Formatpub@aol.com

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