

CS update newsletter #003

IMPORTANT NEWS

The end of 'Commodore Scene' is on the horizon.

Commodore Scene can no longer function in its present format.

Recently many events have conspired and forced me to take a fresh look at how CS will function in the future.

One of the main reasons for this decision is the ever dwindling number of subscribers for CS and the continuing lack of support for the Commodore in the UK as a whole, this was particularly evident at the recent 'Commodore Scene & Retro Show' in Crewe where there was a pathetic turn out of ONE person!

It would have been nice if those 20 to 30+ people who said they 'would' come had the guts to be honest with me and not lie to me rather than let me and Shaun do lots of hard work for nothing.

I was disgusted - I still am.

On the reverse of this newsletter is a review of the event by Shaun Bebbington, he is a bit more reserved than I am about the lack of support.

As of now the following changes will apply :

1) Support for 'tape' users has finished - for gods sake, get a disk drive.

2) I plan, after CS39 (maybe CS40), to publish CS once a year as a 'yearbook' at Christmas time. Between issues there will be a newsletter every 2 months or so. Any outstanding subscriptions will be adjusted accordingly or refunded.

3) The CSIS will see prices rise across all items before the end of this year. I can no longer afford to be doing this for nothing, it eats up a vast amount of my time and all I get is complaints about the cost of items and the time it takes to get them.

4) If you need a written reply to any letters please include a SAE (or just a stamp), all requests for help

without those go straight in the bin.

5) It is unlikely that there will be any further shows or events. If you can't be bothered then neither can I.

6) Support for the coverdisk will stay until the current format of CS changes.

7) There will be further changes soon and I will inform you of them as and when they arise in CS38 under the section called 'TERMINUS'.

Other things

Printing : After the fiasco with CS37 at the printers, it has now become clear to me that they don't want to continue printing it as it seems to be more trouble than it is worth. I have had no end of trouble getting them to do it and I am fed up with them. I want to continue to issue 40 but if this doesn't work out then the issue you have in your hands may be the last of its kind. I will let you know of any developments.

Hardware : There are some great new hardware products on review in CS38. Full details will be in that issue (if it gets printed) along with prices, etc. I doubt anybody will buy it though as not many people want to see their Commodore machine develop beyond its current state!

I feel pity for those of you still using a C64 & datasette unit, you have no idea what your C64 can do.

Software : I now have copies of Its Magic 2 and Blocks & Monsters here in stock. You can have both for £10. Usual address.

CS Clearout : In line with my current feelings for the scene at the moment, I will be having a massive clearout of all my spare Commodore hardware and software. I will provide a list with the next issue or newsletter for you to peruse. The more rare items will be offered on eBay. I have hundreds of original tape software that I will be taking to the local refuse site unless anybody wants it? I will offer it for free as

long as it is picked up. There are some very rare items in there! I just don't have the room for it or the inclination to store tape items anymore!

Micro Mart : Shaun Bebbington has been writing a very interesting Retro column in Micro Mart for quite some time now. However, nobody is telling the editor this. Yet again 'apathy rules'. This column is the ONLY mainstream magazine carrying Commodore material. If you don't support it then it will disappear. I know some of you are reading it but you are not telling MM this!

PLEASE drop them a line on-line at go www.micromart.co.uk/forum or buy an issue and write to them.

Use it or lose it!

Last Words : There is so much happening at the minute for the C64 & C128 that it is hard to get my head around it and put it into easily understandable text - but I will try my best to do it in future issues.

What is even more difficult to understand is the lack of support from the so called users in the UK. Yet again people are letting slip away the very thing they want - support for the Commodore.

Sometimes I really do wonder why I bother to put myself through all this when there are only a handful of people who really care.

The future of CS is in your hands, if you aren't bothered about CS let me know - if you are bothered then let me know as well. **I would like you all to send me just one letter to cast your vote.** Don't leave it to somebody else - YOU - write a letter or an e-mail and let me know what YOU think. Any 'nil' returns will be counted as a 'I am not bothered about support for the Commodore'

CS38 : Despite what is happening, CS38 is nearly complete and should be out in September providing the printer gets his act together.

A very disappointed editor, Allan.

THE SHOW

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If you would like to use this article for any other C64 based publication, please email me - my address is at the end of the article.

It was all looking promising. Last years show was relatively well attended, despite a lack of advertising, and raised some £65.00p for the Citizen's Now Group in Crewe, and for this year's show? It has been advertised for a while now, on the net, in Commodore Scene and more recently through Micro Mart. Both Allan and I have had many more emails and requests for information this year than last year, and Allan did a mail shot of his entire database - some 300 people. I was rather hopeful of a good attendance from all parts of the Retro community, as we also had word that Ian Gledhill from Retro Review was planning to attend.

For the week running up to the "big day", I have booked a week of work to really get organised this time. On the Wednesday before, I made the train journey up to see Allan in Leeds, to do some final planning. "What would really impress people?" I thought? Well, what could be more impressive than a C64 multi-tasking? Allan and I then went to work out the bugs in JOS with the IDE interface, and we managed to have the CD playing on whilst running the OS. We then had JOS running the star field screen saver, the under-developed GUI, playing Mine Sweeper, displaying 40/80 column text and displaying 4 bit gray-scale JPEG images, with the music still blasting out! And the icing on the cake is that you could do all this, concentrate on file-managing through the Shell AND display your 8 times table up to 11 x 8. The only thing we could not get running, due to a lack of files, was the mod player. All was not lost though, as I had a full disk of mods at home.

On the Friday I dusted off all my old systems that I was taking to show - I was especially pleased when I had my Vic-1010 ram expansion module running. Allan and I had agreed between us that I would demonstrate the JOS system, and he would concentrate on GEOS, Wheels and MP3. I had also half-written a speech, which was to mention the future of the Retro scene.

On the morning of the show, Allan was demonstrating The Wave Internet browser to Michelle and I. We then downloaded the beta version to see the difference, and got the package displaying picture icons. All this was very exciting - a little more development and the Wave is going to be an extremely polished package!

Finally we where set up and ready. As a grand total of one UK Commodore Scene reader managed some 300 mile round trip to get to the show, this is excluding Robert Bernardo who made it from America to Europe and then from London to Crewe, here is what you all missed.

Derek Stuart from D&D systems had the latest Sinclair QL clone on show - the Q60. The machine itself is very impressive, with high-quality graphics and sound. Allan had his usual set-ups, including an SX-64 with a Turbo Master accelerator card running at 4.09 MHz. This system was particularly good at running Freescape games! I had many systems from my collection, including my C128 with SCPU, RAMlink, FD2,000 and SmartMOUSE. I then showed the Pre-release of Jos/WiNGS running from the RAMlink. It appears that the updates have included an attempt at running two GUI systems at once - the program still needs further development though but the potential is definitely there. From there, I had WiNGS up and running, including all those things that I have already mentioned, except I had up to 3 mine sweeper games running on the GUI. I then demonstrated to the huge crowd the slightly older JOS from the IDE. I have five jpeg images on the GUI and there was more than enough memory to display more. The problem is that the images where taken from a nearly full 1581, and we had no more jpegs there, however JOS was quite happy to handle nearly 800k of data. All four people, including Allan Bairstow and Derek appreciated the future potential of JOS. Derek from D&D systems suggested that we needed some way of getting more colours on the C64, which is why the CommodoreONE is in development.

Robert then played his video camera through the AV input of the 1701 monitor. We where viewing the show he had attended in Europe earlier in his vacation. What a difference between the UK show we where at and the one he had attended. The room was packed with programmers and genuine active users. There where all kinds of upgraded and modified Commodores, and a fantastic looking Commodore 128 in a tower with see through plastic so that you can see the insides. The attendance for that show was approximately 100 people, and the user group running it had about 1,000 members. With the show Allan and I had organised, I was only hoping for an attendance of around 20 or so people. I have come to the conclusion that people in the UK are just simply not interested in anything substantial happening with their C64's, which is extremely disheartening for both Allan and I. All the hard work and expense and it came to nothing much. Obviously, I thanked all the people who did turn up, and I would like to do it again. I would like to give the prestigious "CS BIG HAND AWARD" to the following people;

Derek Stuart, Robert Bernardo, Allan Bairstow, Allen Monks and Mike Morley for making the event and Tom Brereton for helping set everything up. I really appreciate all of the help and support provided by these people.

As for the future, well it looks like the second show is to be the last, unless (as I have said already) things really start improving in the UK scene, which I seriously doubt. Nonetheless, Allan and I will be planning something for the future, not that many of you will be bothered. Where as the C64 looks to have a bright future with current developments, the UK scene will always be the poor relation. This is something I tried to explain to certain members of the Protovision team, but they don't seem to understand, as Robert Bernardo didn't understand why many users still have and use the dreaded tape deck. I have and can fully demonstrate a C64 with multi-tasking capabilities, high quality document printing, super smooth 3d gaming and much, much more, but people don't want to know, or at least if they do, they don't want to see it or do it themselves.

I plan to embark on a "Why Upgrade" series for Micro Mart, but I have to question how many people will really be interested in such a subject matter. It feels like I have done a lot of work for nothing, and I'm sure Allan feels the same way sometimes, but what can you do? If Allan stops supporting the C64 tomorrow, the handful of genuine enthusiasts and users that are somewhere out there will lose out, which would be a great shame, where as it would not affect the majority of the so called "enthusiasts" in the UK. Again, if Allan was to decide to give it all up, the so called "enthusiasts" will do nothing but complain, and yet they do nothing and give nothing to the UK scene. Example; People complain about the lack of games reviews in CS, and yet don't buy the latest entertainment software when it is released. These same people are not willing to learn assembly language and write games for public release, and are not even willing to write games reviews for CS. We true active users and enthusiasts really despair at times!

Finally, I will be interested on your comments about the above article. Please send them to RetroComToday@aol.com - Shaun Bebbington, freelancer for Micro Mart magazine.