

# LOG ON

THE MAGAZINE FOR  
MICRONET  
MEMBERS

**Vol 2**

**ISSUE No 2**

**Winter 1990**

## ***Upgrades for The Future***



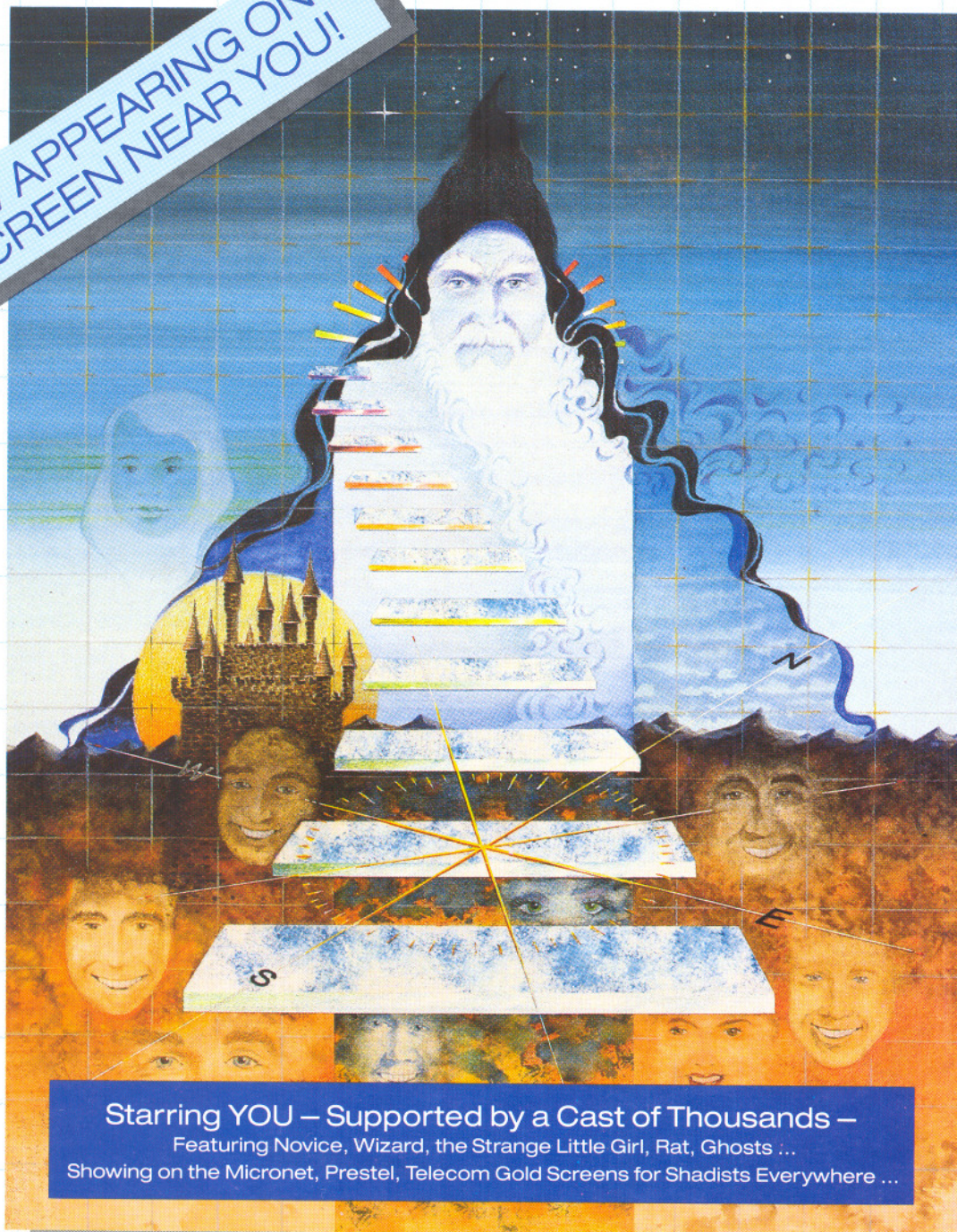
▶ **All about Xtra!**

▶ **The Online Casino**

▶ **New Telesoftware**



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THE MAGAZINE FOR  
MICRONET  
MEMBERS

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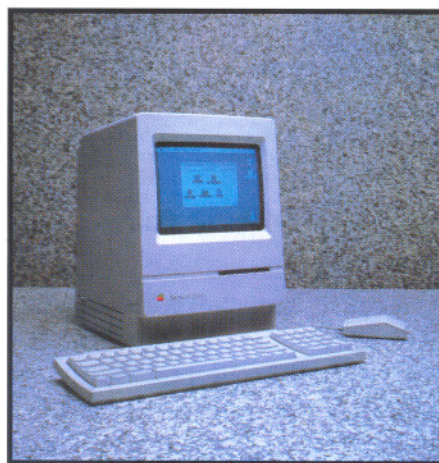
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# Editorial

**T**imes change, and so do computers. A few years ago, you could choose from a dazzling display of home computers. The Spectrum, Dragon, Oric, Aquarius, Lynx, Sord M5, BBC, Amstrad CPC464, Atari 800XL. Even the Jupiter Ace, with its 3K of RAM and built-in Forth language.

They all looked different, and none of them would talk to each other, unless you hooked them up to a system like Prestel.



Nowadays, the system is king. Manufacturers produce ranges of machines constructed like lego sets, a hard disc here, a turbo chip there, extra RAM for this model and MIDI ports for that one. The idea is, that if you buy into the system, you'll stay with it when you want a bigger, better computer.

In this issue of Log On, we turn our attention to the main contenders for the upgrade market, and look at the current trend towards the Graphics User Interface - GUI.

Why? Because we know Micronet members are some of the most quality conscious buyers in the market. And we also know that most of you, whatever machine you own at the moment, have heard that nagging voice in your brain urging you to save up for a better one!

Prestel and Micronet, along with sister services like Telecom Gold, can outfit the simplest of machines with staggering power - if you can order and pay for theatre tickets at the press of a button, it matters little if the button's on an old rubber Sinclair Spectrum keyboard, or the latest jazzy supercharged IBM-compatible 386.

But the best results come from the best machines. Look at the range of telesoftware becoming available for the Amiga, ST, and PC machines with the power to run programs of real value and quality. Micronet has the power to bring you such programs, as you'll see if you follow the changes to our telesoftware service, detailed on page 5 of this issue.

So if you're thinking of upgrading your kit, see what Micronet's editor Paul Needs has to say on the subject in this issue of Log On. And don't forget to browse through the various online micro-magazines as well: because that's where you'll find the hard facts on which to base your choice.



## Diary-1991

Nobody brings you news from the major computer shows faster than Micronet, so if you can't attend a show yourself, make sure you follow the daily news reports when they're on!

This is the diary of events for the next few months. Please note that some of the shows have not yet acquired a firm date.

### DECEMBER

December 15: All Formats Computer Show, New Horticultural Hall.

### JANUARY

January 10-13: Consumer Electronics Show, Las Vegas

January: 16-bit Computer Fair, Novotel, Hammersmith

January: British Education Technical and Training Show.

### JUNE

June 4-6: Networks '91 Exhibition and Conference, National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham

● In November 1990, Micronet, in the form of News Editor Ian Burley, was at the huge Comdex Fall show in Las Vegas. If you missed the daily coverage from the States online, catch up in the next issue of Log On where Ian will be spilling the beans on what's happening Stateside.

Apart from computer shows, there are many other events you'll want to mark in your diary: especially the social gatherings of Micronet members up and down the country.

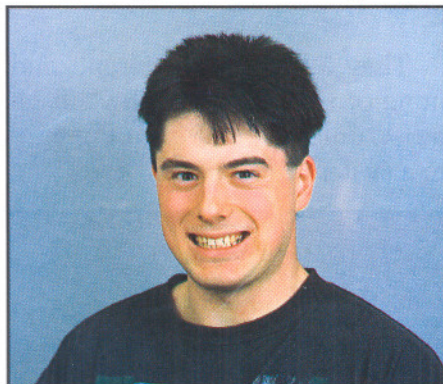
These are usually arranged on an ad hoc basis, and details can be found on the TMMC database, page 800952, or, for multi-user game enthusiasts, on InShades magazine, page 81053.

## New Editor For Atari Micromag

There's a new ST Editor at Micronet, in the shape of Ashley Cotter-Cairns, who took over the job from David Foster in October this year.

Ashley was helping out on the News Desk for a few months before taking over this important position, so his name will probably be familiar to many Micronetters.

He began his career on a computer fanzine, 'What Poke', and entered the professional arena writing for titles like A&B Computing and Your Amiga.



**Ashley Cotter-Cairns**

By the time he came to Micronet, Ashley was assistant editor at Your Amiga, and we're very glad to have him as our ST editor in addition to his continued presence on the news area.

Atari users will already have gotten to know Ashley on the Atari micro-magazine, although he continues to write news stories as well from time to time. But if you haven't, make sure you log on to his database, page 8001021, and send him a letter to say hullo!

### Would you like an Apple, Mac?

Over the years we've expanded our coverage of microcomputing to a wider range of machines.

One area which we haven't covered so far is the Apple

Macintosh range of micros. They've been around for some time, but although they are highly regarded, they've never made sufficient sales impact to justify full coverage outside the normal news area.

We've decided to review this situation, but to do it properly we need your help. So we're launching a survey, through the Micronet News area (page 8001110 or \*NEWS#) to find out just what you think about the Mac.

Do you already own or use a Mac at work? Are you thinking of buying one soon? Apple recently launched a new range of Macs and we'd like to find out whether you're as interested in the machine as Apple thinks you ought to be!

So make sure you fill in our online news survey, and help us get a better picture of what you want on Micronet.

### New Deal for ST and Amiga

As reported in the last issue of Log On, Atari ST users now have a brand new comms terminal with which to access Micronet and download telesoftware.

STarTerm, by 'Netter Tony Price, is a fully-featured viewdata and 'scrolling' terminal and replaces Rubyview from Y2. You won't be able to download telesoftware without it.

If you're an existing member, and you haven't yet done so, make sure you log on to Micronet as soon as possible to download STarTerm. If you do so before the end of 1990, you'll be entitled to free registration of the program with Tony Price, which would otherwise cost you £10.

Amiga users are also getting a replacement terminal to their Rubycomm software.



## New Amiga Download System

Commodore Amiga fans are getting a whole new package for their telesoftware downloads, as part of the continual reform of the telesoftware service on Micronet.

Last September, as announced in the last issue of Log On, we introduced the new FCET protocol for encoding telesoftware for the ST. This meant ditching Rubyview as our recommended ST software, and now we've done the same for the Amiga.

The combination of FCET and the code-packing Lharc program means we can cram far more code onto a single frame, reducing download times and thus the money you spend online transferring the software to disc.

## Better Programs

It also means we can bring you bigger programs, and some of the new Public Domain and Shareware packages we're making available are of a very high quality indeed - in some cases, as good as commercial software, but at a fraction of the price.

Amiga users should checkout Spread, for example, a compact and well-organised spreadsheet with all the facilities you'd need for personal budgeting, or even small business accounts - and it's free.

However, FCET programs can't be downloaded by the old Rubycomm software, so we're switching to a videotex program called Supertex. It was developed in Australia for their Prestel equivalent, and we've modified it slightly so it can download our own telesoftware. With that, and the FCET/Lharc decompactor, you'll be in business.

## PC Next in Line

As we go to print, the mighty PC telesoftware database is also getting the FCET treatment. But in this case, your normal PC comms software will work just as well with FCET as it did before with the standard CET-encoded software we put up before.

There are huge reservoirs of public domain software for the PC, as well as excellent Shareware packages, and we hope to bring you some of the very best from the UK and USA over the next few months.

Even though you don't pay a penny for the software itself we do recommend paying the registration fee for Shareware programs. We know you don't like adding to your phone or Prestel bill for nothing so we're making great efforts to ensure that every single program that we put up is a high-quality piece of software which does what it says it will do.

## Telling it Straight

That means writing more about each piece of software in the telesoftware area. Sometimes that information will be in the form of a full review on the relevant microbase. Otherwise, there'll be at least a frame or two about it on the telesoftware area itself.

If a program needs a high level of technical knowledge to use, we'll say so. If it's a backgammon simulation which assumes you know the rules, we'll warn you that there are no instructions.

We can't do this for every single machine overnight: there's a great deal of work involved. But we've made a start with the ST, Amiga and PC, and hopefully the rest will follow.

## New Programs On the Net

Here are some of the latest additions to Micronet's library of telesoftware. If you have a PD or Shareware program you'd like others to see, send us a copy!

### Acorn BBC and Archimedes\*

EorVia - Encode your files  
Brot\* - Mandelbrot generator  
Speedy\* - How fast is your BASIC?  
Othello\* - Hi-Tech version of the Classic game  
Set-Dir\* - Set the directory on your machine!

### Sinclair Spectrum

NSWP207C - Move files around under CPM  
Touch-Type - Give your fingers a work out  
Ludo - The famous board game

### IBM compatibles

SmallC - Get a version of "C" running on your PC!  
TutorC - You don't know what "C" is? Find out!  
Spacewar - Classic space game  
Dr Brown - Tell all your problems to your PC!

### Commodore Amiga

Dmouse - Mouse utility for your Amiga  
Iconut - Utility to manipulate Icons  
PopUpMenu - Make your Workbench appear anywhere!  
Textra - Text editor with loads of extras  
Spread - Excellent compact spreadsheet

### Atari ST

Ripper3 - Ultimate Shades utility  
Pro-Edit - Very smooth file editor  
Backgammon - Elegant version of classic game  
Cribbage - The grand old pub card game.  
Vkill - Tells you if your disc has a virus  
PCFormat - Allows you to read ST disks on a PC



# Xtra! - Read All About It

**Chris Bourne lifts the lid on Micronet's leisure magazine**

**X**tra! began more or less when I joined Micronet, which was back in 1986, four and a half years ago. Sid Smith, then Micronet's editor, cornered me in a bar and forced me to drink beer until I agreed to leave the mag I was working on (EMAP's Sinclair User) and run his concept of a leisure magazine for Micronet instead.

"Shake things up a bit" he said. "Make Micronet jump!" So that's what we tried to do.

Today's Xtra! is really three magazines in one. There's Waveguide, John Cull's fabulous TV and Radio magazine, which moved to the Xtra! banner a couple of years back when I finally bit the bullet and accepted that JC does it better than I could ever hope to.

There's Voltage, which covers hi-fi and related products, with occasional features on special subjects such as Midi music gear. It's updated every week or two, and we'd love to be able to do more: but at present, the hi-fi world is vast and resources are slim. So if you want more hi-fi coverage, make a louder noise!

Then there's the original Xtra!, which has covered all sorts of things over the years. Currently it comprises of music reviews, current affairs analysis, food and drink, and of course the Xtra! Letters.

The daily letters are a free-wheeling haven for 'Netters suffering from an overdose of

computer-speak. They range from plugs about favourite local rock bands to debates about politics, lightbulb jokes, and requests for information about hi-fi gear, since Voltage doesn't have a letters area of its own.

There's often a competition running on the Xtra! letters area too, and I've become notorious for the endless supply of awful LPs I give away. Joe Longthorne seems to be the most treasured 'naff' prize...but all hates are catered for!



**Chris Bourne**

Music reviews are provided by The Velcro Fly, and Tim Knight. Tim writes about LPs, and specialises in scouring the back catalogues to re-assess those 'complete collections' which are continuously appearing on CD. In keeping with Xtra!'s philosophy of dynamic chaos, classical, jazz and rock music all get the same treatment.

The Fly, on the other hand, is a Micronet legend. Supposedly a Texan Flight Sergeant from a USAF base who went AWOL from running a mobile forces disco to

marry his landlady, The Fly's true identity is a mystery. I know it's not me, and I know who gets the cheques, but who writes the words...that's another story.

Whoever he is, the Velcro Fly is the hottest, meanest, most outrageous singles reviewer in the business. I'll back his snapshot reviews to say more, and to the point, about 7" of vinyl than anybody currently writing in the music press. The best rock music is hot, steamy, loud and rough round the edges, and that's the way Velcro writes.

Current affairs is catered for by the weekly Comment column. There's usually been a feature of some sort each week on Xtra!, though at times we've veered towards the Sunday supplements rather than the daily leader columns.

However, straight news analysis seems to get the best response. I'm quite proud of some of the plaudits we've received for the serious articles: on AIDS, for example, or the Rushdie affair, or the current crisis in the Gulf.

I don't see why people should have to memorise a dictionary in order to read serious journalism. What Xtra! Comment tries to do is explain the complicated issues in simple language.

To access Xtra!, go to page 401 or key \*XTRA#





# First Lord of Trash

Trash is Micronet's Multi-User science fiction game, full of weird puzzles and surreal humour. We reveal the secrets of Scrounger, first Lord of Trash.

**A**s we predicted in the last issue of Log On, the first players to reach the top rank of Lord (or Lady) on Trash have now made it all the way.

Scrounger was first to get there, closely followed by Biff, who overtook Janet in the closing stages of the race. Trash is a game of puzzle-solving and careful avoidance of danger, as players explore the worlds of the Multiverse to collect PPs - Promotional Prospects - gained by solving the puzzles. Along the way they also amass credits which they can use to regenerate their stamina and psionic powers.

The key to success is efficient play - making the most of every item you find - and most players rely on maps and brainpower. But Scrounger went one further.

"At first I used function keys for speed but I eventually wrote my own software that was able to semi-automatically execute a preprogrammed script in addition to providing normal terminal functions" he says.

"This proved progressively more useful as promotion reduces the number of puzzles and means you have to do the rest more often. If the game was quiet, I could often get a flying start at the reset and execute an entire preprogrammed script in less than 10 minutes."

Armed with his automated software, Scrounger forged ahead of the pack. But he didn't stop there.

After solving his quota of puzzles, he'd shift the mobiles - computer generated characters which can help or hinder your progress - using his special psionic powers to do so.

That made life tougher for the other players, and Scrounger moved further into the lead!

The next landmark in his progress came with the discovery of a bug in the game which allowed sneaky characters to convert their money - credits - to PPs - the Promotional Prospects you need to go up in level. Scrounger shot ahead, but when the other leading players found out, they closed the gap fast.

Alas, in his eagerness, one of Scrounger's closest rivals, Pleco, had a nasty 'accident' with a giant spider which Scrounger had moved to an unexpected location. Exit Pleco...

While the players were busy exploiting bugs and little quirks of the rules, Ambushbug, the creator of Trash, was busily closing up these loopholes, and introducing new puzzles and challenges for the high-level players. Undaunted, Scrounger marched on.

"The race between Namnib, Biff, Janet and I heated up" he says, "but we all got on well. I managed to maintain my lead of about 50 PPs and on the last weekend, I figured I had to make the final sprint to avoid tempting the others to try playing during the day to pip me at the winning post."

Of course, you don't have to have your own special software and the cunning of Rasputin to play Trash successfully! Scrounger was determined to be the first player to do so...but others who've made it all the way, if at a slightly more sedate pace, have done so by more conventional methods!

## Top Of The Trashcan

The following players are a very select group: the first ones to reach the coveted rank of Lord or Lady in Trash. It's always tough to reach the top in a new game, as you can't benefit from the previous experience of others. So special congratulations to:

*Lord Scrounger*  
*Lord Biff*  
*Lady Janet*  
*Lord Namnib*

Their names shall resound in the annals of garbage disposal forever!

You can find Trash on page 8680 of Micronet, keyword \*TRASH#. Both scrolling and standard viewdata software can be used to play, and there's an extensive database with lots of hints and tips on how to get ahead in the game, including special puzzles for novices!



# Upgrading - Necessity or just hassle?

Choosing a computer used to be fairly simple. The number of machines available was fairly limited, and most people I knew bought a home computer because of their curiosity and a sense of pioneering.

It wasn't a matter of plug in and go either. Nowadays new machines are often supplied with a bundle of software, and even printers. Back then you got the machine with its built-in BASIC, and that was that. In order to do anything, the machine had to be programmed by the user, and there were relatively few commercial applications around. What was around was of a pretty poor standard..

Of course, this has changed drastically in the last ten years or so. Many software houses, both domestic and international have sprung up, and the more popular micro-computers have themselves changed out of all recognition. The power available to an Atari ST owner today was unthinkable even to most business users just a few years ago. The power difference between a CBM 64 and an Amiga is astounding.

But with the wider range of new models, and the differing features available, the decision on which micro to buy has become more complex, and is not aided at all by jargon-ridden sales literature and advertisements. Of those users faced with the even more difficult choice of upgrading from their old system, Micronet members are probably in a better position to

judge what they want to use than many first-time buyers.

## Why Upgrade?

The decision to change the computer and software which you may have been using for several years is not an easy one to make, nor should it be taken lightly. You may have spent many hundreds of pounds on software and accessories which may no longer be usable on your new system, and will need to be replaced.

Also important is exactly WHY you want to upgrade! It may be that you need to have more speed or power, you may want to use a hard disc drive instead of mounds of floppies, or you may want to run other kinds of programs which are not available for your current machine.

Most important is whether the machine will fulfil your purpose in buying. Check whether there's a good choice of quality word processors, or games, or whatever you need before you buy.

Is the machine growing, is it well supported by the manufacturer, is there plenty of third-party support from software and peripheral producers? It's too late to grumble about lack of support once you've spent your cash.

However, you may want to upgrade simply because you lust for a bigger, better system! I would guess that this is the motive for many of us who upgrade our systems. We then spend a great

Home computing has changed a great deal since the introduction of the Sinclair ZX81. Micronet Editor Paul Needs looks at the choices ahead in home computing.

deal of time justifying to ourselves just why we have an absolute need for, say, an Acorn Archimedes 540. Even if this IS the case, I reckon that you still need to carefully consider the points above.



**The New Apple Mac Cla**

Surveys have shown that by and large, 'Netters use their computers for fairly 'serious' tasks - games playing is not considered the main purpose for owning a machine. Programming seems less popular than in earlier years.

But it's not a 'black or white' situation. Many of those interested in these 'serious applications' are



also interested in games. Although most would not consider the latter important in their choice of machine, many still are influenced by, for example, the capabilities of their machine when it comes to leisure software. Similarly, many of you are still interested in programming and 'tuning' one's machine.

## What is the choice?

Bearing in mind the golden rule of "will it do what I want", the choice really comes down to your own individual preferences.



## the new home machine?

However, it does seem that manufacturers have decided that easy-to-use graphic front-ends are the way forward. All the 'new' machines currently popular in the UK have them - the Archimedes, ST and Amiga. Although the older PC compatible is generally not supplied with a Graphical User Interface (GUI), the recent introduction of Windows 3 looks

set to change this.

In theory, a GUI will make our lives easier, programs should be easy to install and use, and disc management should also be a piece of cake. But, is it true? More importantly, do we like and want them?

Personally, I've objected to them for as long as I can remember.

I liked the BASIC front end of earlier home machines like the Spectrum, BBC B/Master and CBM64. "It's good", quoth I, "cos you can run anything you like from the BASIC prompt, and fiddle with it any way you like".

When I moved to IBM compatibles, I was quite pleased that MSDOS removed some of the fiddle - no need to type RUN before a program could be used - all I had to do was to type the name of the program or batch file and off it went.

This rose-tinted view has changed over the years. Every program I used worked differently, file formats, function keys and so on. A new application wasn't just a financial investment, but also a vast investment of time was involved in learning it.

A few months back, I took the plunge and decided that for my own use at home, I wanted a fairly powerful machine which was easy to use. I wanted to learn one simple operating system, under which all programs I'd choose to use would run in a similar way.

I've used a PC-compatible for several years, and I am fed up with the inconsistency between different programs. Windows 3 may change this, but I wasn't prepared to wait and see. Having looked at the Amiga, I decided against it. Workbench is good, but it isn't as intuitive as I'd like.

I already owned an Atari ST,

but wasn't really impressed with what I'd seen other than the old familiar word processor and MIDI software. The Archimedes is a superbly powerful machine with a good front end in RISCOS, but the software support just isn't there. In the end, I chose an Apple Macintosh.

## The New home machine?

The Apple has always been an easy machine to use, and I'd say the operating system is still the best GUI I've seen or used. With the recent launch of low cost Mac models, starting at £895 for a machine with built in mono display and 40MB hard disc, it could well start to find a place in more UK homes.

Apple have decided that those people who buy their own personal machines are now one of their target markets - especially students (who get an extremely favourable discount) those who have one at work, and need a machine at home. At the 'Net, we'll be keeping a very close eye on the way the Mac develops over the next few months.

In the end, the choice is up to you. Keep an eye on developments on the Micronet Micro-Magazines and Newsdesk. If Micronet covers the machine you have short-listed, write to the appropriate area (see contact list at the back of this Log On) and ask for opinions from the editor and other users.

It's also worth looking at telesoftware availability - is there a large body of public domain or shareware programs available? Top software costs top prices, but for individual needs a free program may do the job as well or better than a package designed for corporate business use.

Get assistance and make the right choice for you!



# The global supermarket?

**L**ike the global office, described in the previous issue of Log On, Teleshopping is one of those applications of online services which seems to capture the imagination of the public. The ability to simply browse through a catalogue or "What's On" type publication, then log on to order your Christmas presents or book some tickets to see Madonna can be very appealing!

Many such things can be done already using your Micronet account, but others have yet to really develop. Certainly, the idea of being able to place an online order to Sainsbury's, then have it delivered later that day or the next appeals to me - especially when I'm short on time to visit the supermarket myself. Even paying for delivery could save me money.

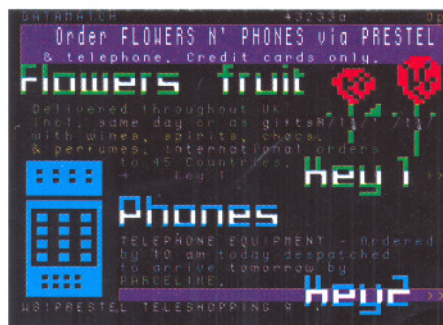
## From the comfort of your home..

Prestel has a variety of services available now to save you the bother of making out an order then walking to a post box, or telephoning a theatre or booking agent in London, or finding a florist who can deliver roses to your girlfriend in Lingfield. It's all done online, and you pay by quoting your credit card number and filling in a simple response frame.

Kays and Littlewoods, both big names in the traditional mail order catalogue scene, have a substantial presence on Prestel. In both cases, you can order a catalogue, which shows you just what you can buy,

and for how much. Prices are often substantially less than in their traditional mail-order counterparts. In addition, news of latest special low-price offers are often featured on the systems.

Both services operate via dedicated gateways to Kays and Littlewoods own computer systems, and orders can be processed right away if the item you want is in stock.



## Wine and tickets

Those armchair tele-commuting wine-enthusiasts (telewinos?) among you can order up some crates of their favourite tippie via services like Wine Seller. Again, special offers abound.

If you prefer the arts to sitting at home every evening, First Call can help you obtain those sought-after tickets for not only the theatre and west end shows, but also rock, pop and classical music concerts, cinema and even some major sports events.

First Call is run by the Space-Time group, which was developed in 1979 to develop ticketing and marketing systems for the performing arts. Following two years of research and development,

One way online services can make all our lives easier is by taking the drudge out of shopping. We examine how services on Prestel can save you shoe leather - and possibly money...

they installed the first Box Office Computer System (Q), and now more than 170 venues world-wide have selected this technology.

The Q system handled more than 16 million ticket sales in the UK last year, and over 25 million worldwide. One of the most popular UK events among Prestel users was the visit of the Moscow State Circus.

## Electronic flowers...

It can be a nuisance - especially if, like me, you live out in the wilds, to find a florist's shop who is able to arrange deliveries of flowers to another part of the country.

Again, a solution lies on Prestel. Both Datamatch and Relay Florist offer delivery of flowers to your chosen destination, you can pay for your gift by credit card.

Then of course, you could even make your friend's lives easier as well as your own by getting a Micronet brochure sent to them - and see the ad on the back page for how to save money this way!

Teleshopping services on Prestel can be accessed from the index on page \*55#, or by keying directly:

Wine Seller - \*4888840#  
 Littlewoods Shop TV - \*3630#  
 Kays Teleshop - \*KAYS# or \*2010#  
 Datamatch - \*43233#  
 Relay Florist - \*567009#  
 First Call - \*FCAL# or \*6787470#



# Cagey 'Netter in his Prime

Having joined Micronet way back in 1985, Vince Merrell has graduated from Dragon 32 to a Prime EXL 1227 Minicomputer. Paul Needs found out what happened in between...

Vince Merrell is a name familiar to readers of Micronet's "Amster's Cage", which is a Special Interest Group (SIG) for users of Amstrad CPC and PCW computers. Vince co-edits the area, adding his comments and replies to letters sent in by Cage readers each weekend.

"The first time I heard of Micronet was at a Dragon show at London's Novotel. Someone asked me if I was interested in joining, but as I was too young I didn't at that time."

When Vince had upgraded from the Dragon ("a great little machine") to an Amstrad CPC464 ("the one with the cassette deck"), and then upgraded further to an Amstrad PCW, he decided that he would join the 'Net, primarily so that he could use the HOBS home banking service.

Once online, he became an avid reader of AMSNET, an Amstrad area run by former IPs Viewfax 258.

Shortly after this, the Amster's Cage was launched by 'Netters Ian Hoare and Paul Needs, as an area to provide reviews and features of the CPC world.

This expanded a little when Amstrad launched the PCW8256 and PCW 8512, and when Amsnet and Viewfax closed down their service on Prestel, Vince migrated fully to "The Cage".

After simply reading articles on the Cage, and contributing to the

letters area, he wrote several features for the Cage about the successful PCW range of machines - "In all, I must have been a contributor to the Cage for around three years, and in April of this year I became a co-editor of the area".

Vince now works for Lloyd's of London Underwriters Hayter Brockbank plc as their Systems Administrator.

The company keep a massive database which serves up to 48 users



Vince Merrell

on a Prime EXL 1227 Unix mini-computer, and Vince has to make sure that the system (also including the terminals and network) is running at its best all of the time.

"It takes a lot of time", he told Log On. "I start quite early, and at the moment I often don't leave the office until 9 p.m. - and also have to put in some work on Saturdays".

Between his commitments to his job and the Cage, Vince has little time to pursue his interest in music. He used to spend many hours in recording studios, and on one occasion his Micronet account

played the part of an impromptu host for a "CelebChat" when he allowed members of one popular band of the time online to chat with 'Netters.

These days, Vince uses an Amstrad 2086 at home, with Axis Professional software so he can edit Cage frames offline, and then bulk update them to Prestel's editing centre, "Duke". He also uses a Cambridge Z88 (in common with several other 'Net editors) for writing on the move.

Like previous editors of the Amsters' Cage, Vince firmly believes that the SIG (Special Interest Group) belongs to its readers.

"Without readers' letters, but also reviews and features, the Cage is far less valuable. It is run in our spare time, and obviously we cannot write everything about the Amstrad 8-bit computers ourselves".

If you're interested in the Amstrad CPC or PCW machines, and can contribute the occasional review or feature, then do get in touch with Vince via the Cage (see box below). Remember, it isn't necessary for you to be a seasoned journalist, and your view on Amstrad software etc is important!

Key \*CAGE# or \*800934# for the Amster's Cage, Micronet's SIG for Amstrad CPC and PCW users.



# £500 worth of Micronet absolutely free!

**W**ouldn't it be nice if all the things you wanted in life were free? Free food. Free houses. Free holidays. No Prestel bills.

We can all dream about what we'd do with a million pounds as well, but short of winning the Pools, precious few of us will ever see that kind of loot.

However because it's Christmas, Micronet's decided to knock fifty quid off your next bill. That's about an hour a day of free Micronet for the next three months...

We should point out that the fifty pounds is a discount on your bill, and we won't be able to exchange it, or any part of it, for cash or other goods.

There is, of course, a catch. You have to win the competition to claim the prize - but there will be TEN winners, not just the usual one! While we're on the subject of saving money, don't forget that anybody can get a ten pound discount on

their bill simply by introducing a friend to the system. Check out the ad on the back page of this magazine for further details!

Reading the micro-magazines, downloading telesoftware, playing



Shades, or waffling on mailbox... we don't care what you do with the fifty quid as long as you do it on Prestel or Micronet. So how to get your hands on the prize?

Simple. All you have to do is solve a simple puzzle. When you

have the answer to the puzzle, you log on to Micronet, go to the competition entry page (\*LOGON COMPETITION#) and fill out the special online response frame. Don't forget to include your tiebreak answer as well, and please read the rules printed below before you enter.

## How To Enter

Three 'Netters were all playing different games on Micronet at different times over Christmas.

From the following clues, we want to know who was using what computer on Christmas Day, and what were they doing online?

- 1 David doesn't use an Amiga and doesn't play Trash.
- 2 Colin made it to Wizard on Shades on Boxing Day.
- 3 The player with the ST spent Xmas Eve on Casino.
- 4 Barry has a PC.

**TIE-BREAK:** What computer would you like to upgrade to next, and why?

## Standard Competition Rules

1 The competition is open to all Micronet subscribers except employees of British Telecommunications plc and Modular Technology Ltd and their immediate families.

2 Entries are limited to one per Micronet account and all entrants must be fully paid-up Micronet subscribers at the time of the draw.

3 All entries must be received by 12am on Monday 4th February 1990. In the event of more than one person correctly solving the competition, the judges will award the prize to the entrant whom they consider to have provided the best tiebreak answer.

4 The judge's decision is final. No correspondence will be entered into.

5 All entries become the property of British Telecommunications plc and none will be returned.

6 It is a condition of entry that competitors agree to be bound by the rules.

7 All winners will be notified by mailbox, and the results will be published in the following issue of Log On, subsequent to notification.



# The Online Casino

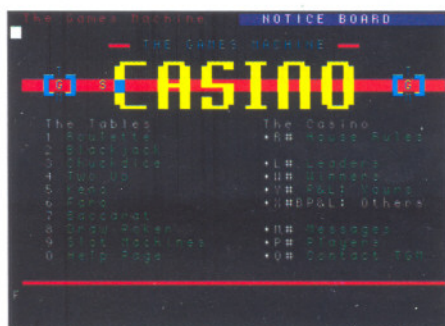
Fortunes can be won or lost at the spin of a wheel or flip of a card. We look at the revolutionary new online Casino from Australia.

Australians will bet on anything. In Canberra, where they banned gambling, there were weekend traffic jams all the way to the border at Queanbeyan just to play the slots on the other side of the state line.

Two-Up, the notorious Aussie coin-tossing game, has long been illegal in Australia. But try telling that to opal miners in Cooper Pedy, who'll hazard a fistful of gems against the throw of a couple of 20 cent bits.

But in recent times Australia has also had Viatel, its equivalent of the Micronet service in the UK, and the boys at Aussie software house The Games Machine had the bright idea of matching the national mania for a flutter with the hi-tech world of comms, to produce the world's first online videotext casino!

It's been a smash hit on the Australian system, with punters



flocking to play, even at prices equivalent to 18p and 12p a minute peak and off-peak. Now Casino has been made available to Micronet subscribers so you can see for yourself what all the fuss is about, but at that much lower price of 8p

per minute peak, 2p per minute off-peak - inclusive of all normal network charges, but excluding VAT.

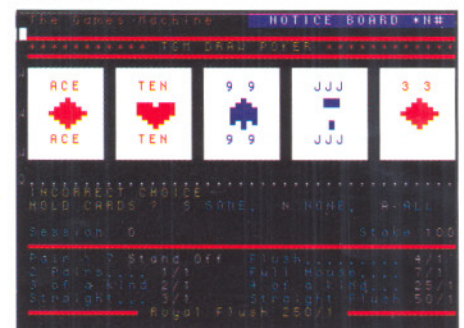
Casino runs on a gateway computer, but the games are all played through dynamic viewdata frames. For instance, if you play Blackjack, the cards will be graphically drawn on your screen as you play. You enter bets according to the prompts, and decide whether to stick or twist.

Unlike a real casino, you don't play with real money! Instead, you play to out-perform other users of the system. Comprehensive leaderboards are provided for each game so you can see how the other players are doing, along with grand total boards and month-by-month top scores.

Blackjack is only one of the games simulated. UK subscribers will probably be familiar already with Roulette - offering all the standard bets, six at a time if you want - and Draw Poker. In addition you can play Baccarat, an ancient European variant of Blackjack, where the idea is to get as close to 9 as possible with two or three cards. It's the game James Bond played against SMERSH agent Le Chiffre in Casino Royale!

Then there's Keno, where you bet on numbered balls drawn from a barrel - rather like bingo, but lacking the same mental strain! Faro is similar, but based on predicting cards dealt from a single pack. These are both popular casino

games in the USA, allowing punters to carry on gambling even while they are taking time out away from the tables to grab a quick meal - they just give their bets to the waiters!



Chuckdice is a type of roulette, but betting on the fall of three dice rather than the spin of a wheel. You can bet on totals, high-low, odd-even, or combinations of doubles and triples.

Finally, no Australian casino could possibly be complete without the simple, but fiendish Two-Up. The Casino version asks you to bet on either the fall of a single throw - both heads, or both tails - or on the series, choosing heads or tails and winning if three doubles are thrown in a row.

Whatever your taste in games, give Casino a try and let us know what you think of it! Nothing quite like it has ever been seen on a videotext service before, with its sophisticated dynamic graphics linked to an interactive scoreboard system. Enjoy!

To play casino go to page 8684 or key \*CASINO#



# MICRONET DIRECTORY

All Micronet areas can be accessed directly by page number, or by entering a keyword. This is a brief selection of important keywords. For a much fuller list, see page 80005, or \*M KEYWORDS#

## ▶ \*M AZ# .....800046666

A - Z QUICK GUIDE: A fast-access index to all the main features of Micronet. With over 13,000 pages of information, you'll need it!

## ▶ \*ADVENTURE SPOT# .....8105

ADVENTURE SPOT: Help and advice for intrepid adventure gamers. The area includes InShades, the popular magazine for Shades players.

## ▶ \*CAGE# .....800934

AMSTER'S CAGE: Daily coverage of Amstrad CPC and PCW micros, with news, reviews, and comment. Also the home of the invaluable Cage Comms ROM!

## ▶ \*BEEBUG# .....800909

BEEBUG: Still the biggest and best BBC micro user group, the beebug area offers news, reviews, and a variety of excellent software.

## ▶ \*BAZAAR# .....828

CLASSIFIED ADS: There's always a bargain to be had in our classifieds area. Computer systems, cameras, video gear, motorbikes... anything!

## ▶ \*CASINO# .....8684

CASINO: All the fun and none of the risk, as you play the regular casino games in this Australian on-line simulation.

## ▶ \*CLUBSPOT# .....810

CLUBSPOT: Run by the British Association of Computer Clubs, ClubSpot hosts a wide range of mini-magazines run by enthusiasts for enthusiasts.

## ▶ \*M COMMS# .....8008083

COMMUNICATIONS INDEX: How to get in touch with other people through Micronet: Mailbox, Telex, Interlink...it's your choice!

## ▶ \*M COMPLAIN# .....800406006

COMPLAIN: We hope you don't have any complaints. But if you do, we want to hear them, so we can put things to rights as quickly as possible.

## ▶ \*M COMPLIMENT# .....800406005

COMPLIMENT: Of course, we like to hear when you think we've got it right, too: and any ideas you have for improving the services we offer!

## ▶ \*M GAMES# .....868

GAMES: All Micronet's games accessible from one page, at the press of a single key.

## ▶ \*M NEWS# .....8001110

COMPUTER NEWS: The fastest computer news service in the UK. Updated every day with the latest stories, this is one area you can't afford to miss.

## ▶ \*M CUG# .....800652

GAY CUG: A closed user group for gay members, The Cug offers daily news, letters, help and advice to gay men and women.

## ▶ \*DIALTALK# .....81195

TELECONFERENCING: DialTalk is a powerful facility which enables you to talk online, publicly or confidentially, to groups and individuals.

## ▶ \*EDUCATION# .....165

CAMPUS 2000: Prestel's comprehensive education area offers specialist services to teachers and students, as well as careers and computing advice.

## ▶ \*ENROL A FRIEND# .....800020001

ENROL A FRIEND: Save money on your subscription by enrolling your friends as Micronet members! After all, the more folk you know online, the more fun you'll have!

## ▶ \*INTERLINK# .....86874

TELECOM GOLD: Access BT's high-powered business network at a special discount through Micronet, and enjoy facilities such as Fax, Infomatics and much more.

## ▶ \*GALLERY# .....81122

DO IT YOURSELF: Run your own electronic magazine, and read other members' pages, in Micronet's unique home publishing area!

## ▶ \*CHESSBOX# .....380

CHESSBOX: For the chess enthusiast, ChessBox offers you the opportunity to play Chess online, BCF approved chess tournaments and even against grandmasters!

## ▶ \*MONEY MATTERS# .....5672

BUSINESS ADVICE: Money Matters is a professional service to the small businessman, offering advice on tax, law, finance and employment.

## ▶ \*ED# .....8001170

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: Editor Paul Needs is always ready to speak his mind, and so are Micronetters! Why not join the debate yourself.

## ▶ \*MAILBOX# .....7

ELECTRONIC MAIL: The heart of the Prestel network is the Mailbox system. Recently overhauled, the new system makes it even easier to send your message.

## ▶ \*MICROMOUSE# .....800951

COMMS NEWS: Steve Gold, the UK's leading comms journalist, writes exclusively for Micronet every day in Smalltalk, about the world of communications.



▶ **\*MIDISPOT#** ..... 800989

MUSIC CITY: As computers become more and more a part of the music business, Micronet brings you all you need to know about the latest products and techniques.

▶ **\*PC SUPPORT#** ..... 800936

Daily letters, reviews and news for users of IBM and Amstrad compatible PC's. The area includes a special public domain and shareware software service.

▶ **\*1#** ..... 1

PRESTEL FRONT PAGE: The start for all your explorations of the vast Prestel database, including NewsDay, Games City, SportsEye, and Look!

▶ **\*SHADES#** <sup>†</sup> ..... 8118

SHADES: Micronet's addictive and absorbing Multi-User Fantasy Adventure. Play with and against real people as you struggle to reach the rank of Wizard!

▶ **\*SOFTTECH#** ..... 8000201

SOFTTECH FEATURES: General computing features for all machines, including comprehensive reviews of printers, modems, monitors and other peripherals.

▶ **\*SPECTACULAR#** ..... 8009121

SPECTRUM: Daily updates about all things Spectrum, from the old rubber key models to the new Plus 3. Spectacular includes special comms advice for Speccy users.

▶ **\*STARNET#** ..... 811211

STARNET: Compete against other Micronetters for control of the galaxy in this long-running strategy game. Full instructions and advice provided online.

▶ **\*TRASH#** <sup>†</sup> ..... 8680

TRASH: It's your role to travel to strange parts collecting rubbish to reach the rank of Lord or Lady.

<sup>†</sup> Trash and Shades are Third Millenium System Games.

▶ **\*M TEleshopping#** ..... 811613

ELECTRONIC SHOPPING: Join the retail revolution and buy goods directly via our online shopping system. General goods as well as computer gear are available.

▶ **\*TSW#** ..... 600

TELESOFTWARE: Hundreds of FREE programs are available for all the major machines as Micronet Telesoftware. Full instructions online.

▶ **\*TELEX#** ..... 8

TELEX FACILITY: Send a Telex anywhere in the world via Micronet, at a fraction of the price it would cost you if you had to buy your own machine.

▶ **\*TMMC#** ..... 800952

TMMC CLUB: The Midnight Micronetters' Club is open to all members; a social forum for meeting people on and offline, making friends, and having fun.

▶ **\*M VIRGINS#** ..... 800953

NEW MEMBERS: The Virgin User area contains simple, clear advice and instructions for getting around the system, and making the best use of it.

▶ **\*WAVEGUIDE#** ..... 401400

TV AND RADIO: All the news and gossip from the world of TV and Radio. Waveguide even brings you advance info on the plots of your favourite soaps!

▶ **\*M NEW#** ..... 800

WHAT'S NEW: With 13,000 pages there's something new to see every day on Micronet. The What's New index tells you about the very latest updates.

▶ **\*XTRA#** ..... 401

ENTERTAINMENT: The original Xtra! magazine combines topical comment, music reviews, cookery and humour in one vibrant area.

▶ **\*VOLTAGE#** ..... 401012

HI-FI NEWS: Voltage brings you up to date news and reviews of hi-fi, video, TV and other consumer electronic goodies.

▶ **\*SIXTEEN#** ..... 800916

16/32 ST: For users of the Atari ST computers, 16/32 offers daily letters, reviews, news and a second-hand bargain basement area.



## Contact

There are many different ways to contact Micronet, depending on why you wish to do so. Here are some of the important response frames and telephone numbers. Using the appropriate one helps us help you much more efficiently.

### Machine specific queries:

Acorn.....\*80010009#  
Amiga.....\*800200759#  
Amstrad.....\*800934049#  
Atari ST.....\*80010200#  
Commodore 64.....\*800200759#  
PC compatibles.....\*800500619#  
Spectrum.....\*8009019#  
Z88.....\*8000888#

### Micronet queries & problems:

Complaints about Micronet.....\*800406006#  
To compliment Micronet.....\*800406005#  
Problems with Telesoftware.....\*60000#  
Problems with Interlink.....\*86874#  
Wrong routes?.....\*800406007#  
Problems with Shades.....\*81180#  
Problems with Trash.....\*868017#  
Suggestions.....\*800020002#  
Letters to the Editor.....\*800117#  
Help for Beginners.....\*8009539#

### General queries

To change account details, or make a general query or complaint about Prestel \*33333#  
If none of these areas seem to help this problem, you can always mailbox us directly on 018221122 for general enquiries or 223681485 for technical enquiries.

**ALSO:** For all problems, queries and assistance phone 0442 237237 inside office hours.



# ENROL A FRIEND INTO THE EXCITING WORLD OF MICRONET...

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Simply return the coupon or send details on-line via page 800020001 or key  
\* Enrol a Friend #.

It couldn't be easier. You simply nominate them – we'll do the rest.

Return to: Micronet, Units 8/10,  
Oxgate Centre, Oxgate Lane, London NW2 7JA.

My name is: \_\_\_\_\_

and my MBX number is: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to enrol my friend/relative:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Machine Type: \_\_\_\_\_

I claim my £10 if they join.

ENROL

MICRONET

