

CGW SURVEY

Survey of Game Manufacturers

There is intense interest in the ongoing debate concerning the merits of the two new 32-bit computers, the Amiga and the Atari ST. We feel, as computer game consumers, that the acid test for any machine has little to do with its technical merits. The real question is, how many games will I be able to play on my computer.

Because of this, and because this is also a turbulent time for the older machines as well, we decided to poll some of the major computer game manufacturers and ask them the following question: "How many games do you plan to release in 1986 on the following machines?". Note that the answers in the chart below represent more than just titles (ie. SSI is not releasing 46 titles in 1986) the numbers represent all products on all machines (ie. A single title which will be released on three machines equals three products in the "totals" column. Here are their answers:

	Strategic Simulations	Electronic Arts	Sierra On-Line	Microprose	Avalon Hill	SubLogic	Broderbund	Avante Garde	Simulations Canada	Strategic Studies Group	Total
Apple II	14	8	7	5	5	2	1	3	2	1	48
Atari	8	5	2	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	19
Atari ST	4	0	7	5	2	2	0	0	0	0	20
C64/128	11	10	3	6	6	0	2	3	1	1	43
Amiga	2	8	4	5	2	2	1	0	0	0	24
IBM PC	4	5	7	5	3	1	3	2	1	0	31
Mac	3	5	3	0	2	1	3	0	0	0	17
Total	46	41	33	27	23	8	10	8	4	2	202

Strategic Simulations continues to be the most prolific purveyor of computer games. Adventure games will represent a larger portion of the SSI line in 1986, confirming the increased popularity of role-playing games.

Electronic Arts is strongly committed to the Amiga. They will support the ST if mass merchants begin to carry it.

Sierra On-Line is "head over heels in love with the ST". Also a strong PC emphasis, largely due to relationship with Radio Shack and the Tandy 1000 machine.

Microprose would like to get into fantasy but hasn't had any designs presented to it. They are actively recruiting game designers and welcomes game submissions.

Avalon Hill Game Co. Although Avalon Hill is cutting back on the number of titles to be released (compared to past years), the titles they do release will run on several machines with the Apple and C-64 claiming the largest piece of the pie.

SubLogic will release only two titles this year, Jet and Flight Simulator.

Broderbund is undecided on ST and Amiga, although is carrying Mindwalker (by Synapse) for the Amiga.

Avant-Garde will release primarily sports related titles in '86.

Simulations Canada will have only two new titles this year - Operation Overload and Stalingrad.

Strategic Studies Group will release one title - Road to Appomattox. SSG is a rarity in today's environment, it is still a one-man programming band; Roger Keating. SSG reports that they keep Roger chained to his computer and can expect one new game every nine months.

There is many a slip twixt press release and actual shipping of a new game but 1986 would appear to be a good year for gamers. The numbers for the ST and Amiga have to be viewed with skepticism as most manufacturers are reluctant to commit resources until the market smoke has cleared. However, it must be reported that more positive comments were made regarding the ST. The relative price of the Amiga (for a game machine) and the financial condition of Commodore were noted by a number of manufacturers as the reasons they were hesitating on the Amiga.

There does not appear to be the same feeling regarding the IBM-PC, despite the cost of a system. The Macintosh library of games is growing but not at any great speed, perhaps the new Mac+ will spur interest. For the obsessive gamer, Apple and the C64 are still the machines of choice. There aren't many titles you're going to miss with either of these.

ATARI and the Pirates

CGW gets a large number of letters from Atari owners complaining about the lack of new game software for their machine. We put this question to the manufacturers and the responses will provoke controversy. More than one company stated that copying (piracy) of Atari software was worse than occurred with other machines and that their sales figures did not justify greater support for the eight bit Atari.

Atari owners and user groups obviously deny these charges. CGW has no evidence that either side is right but it is clear that game companies are normal American businesses. When sales are declining on a particular product an intelligent manager will allocate scarce resources to support products that are increasing in sales.

There is a lesson to be learned from this discussion. Piracy occurs with every machine but a price will eventually be paid. If piracy becomes so severe that sales are minimal then your machine will simply no longer have new software to copy. It doesn't really matter what the justification for copying was, the bottom line is no new games. CGW strongly urges our readers to be aware of the hidden costs of piracy and to consider these facts when you are asked to make a copy of a game.