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#####RADIO DRAGON#####

New series - edition 4

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#####RADIO DRAGON#####

Wasn't it a cracking edition last week? Absolutely superb! Thanks to everyone who contributed.

For those of you who've been expecting MBXs from me (hi, Brian!)...I'm afraid my Prestel conection's been wonky for the past couple of days. BT's engineers have been busy on the local Prestel number, and on the odd occasion when I've managed to log on, the conection has dropped whenever I've tried to use a response frame (including the MBX).

HOT FAVOURITE

About 170 Dragon fans attended the Southern Dragon Show in Bracknell, Berkshire, on Saturday.

The hall was, to put it politely, compact, and most of us were soon wilting in the heat.

John Penn and Computape were offering software at give-away prices, Peaksoft were doing their thing with accessories, Pamcomms was demonstrating something with a light pen (sorry, but I NEVER have been very sure quite what Pam's up to!), Compusense had a pretty meagerly-stocked stand, and Harris Micro Services had their range of business software on offer.

Also present were a couple of firms which were wondering why they couldn't sell any of the Commodore 16 software in which they specialised. I never quite got to the bottom of that one!

By cramming the exhibitors against the walls, ample room was made in the centre of the hall for visitors to settle down with a cooling drink and chat about this, that and (no doubt) the other.

Whisper is that the next event will be in Kent.

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I HEAR....that Compusense would not be un-delighted if someone would provide them with the opportunity to gracefully withdraw from the scene. Quote me and I'll deny it!

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*****THINK OF SOMETHING!*****

Stephen Chittenden was among the visitors to the Southern Dragon Show, and I received an unexpected blank look when I mentioned Radio Dragon.

Stephen subscribes to Prestel, but not to Micronet, so he was unable to view The Gallery pages, and therefore knew nothing of RD or the necessary software.

It occurred to me that there are probably others in the same position, and unless they order a new copy of the directory, which also contains the details, they'll remain in blissful ignorance forever.

There are now far too many people in the directory for me to consider doing a mass MBX, so unless someone can come up with a bright idea, I'm stumped!

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 DRAGON USER LATEST
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Letter received by Peaksoft:

"I slowly treked down to my local newsagent in May and found they had my Dragon User ready for me. I excitedly walked home, sat down and opened the front cover, and started to read the Editorial.

"Arghh! Shock horror!

"Dragon User as from July will be subscription-only.' I stood up and started to run around the room and scream in frenzied anger.

"The subscription rate is 12.00 a year - and that's a special offer for this month only. 'Goodness,' I thought, 'I can't afford that!'

"Slowly, I felt my Dragon computer slipping through my fingers, with nowhere to go but back into its dusty box into oblivion.

"I thought I may as well read my last Dragon User. So I flicked through the tightly-packed pages, enjoying the last letters page, News Desk, Dragon-soft reviews, all the full-length articles and amazing offers from companies such as yours.

"Then I see some amazingly exciting words at the bottom of your advert...'Dragon User back issues 1.00'.

"Could this be it? Could I be able to send away for Dragon User each month? I know it would cost me 1.49 because of the stamps and the cost of the postal order...but who cares?

"I could read my favourite mag again and have one of the best Dragon companies to thank. (Great writing style this boy - Ed.)

"Like you say..making me glad I bought a Dragon!

"I would be so grateful if you would do this for me. I know it would

be quite a bit of bother, but how can I survive without my computer and my favourite mag?"

That came from a 15-year-old in Somerset.

So what else could we do?

I rang Dragon User and asked if we could take out ten subscriptions, in case we came across any other youngsters in the same position. I explained that we didn't want to make any money out of it, but we didn't particularly want to make a loss, either... so as we were prepared to pay in advance for ten subs, how about giving us just enough discount to cover the cost of posting it to the kids?

"I'll see what I can arrange and get back to you this afternoon," said the Dragon User personage.

That's the sixth promise I'm still waiting for them to keep.

****NO BACKING FOR HACKING****
By Legal Eagle

It occurred to me some time ago that computer crime is probably one of the fastest-growing areas of crime today.

For those who deliberately go out to break into computers and salt money away, the consequences and punishment of fraud are probably well-known to them.

But what of us innocent (or ignorant!) "fun" hackers? We don't set out to break the law, but what laws could we fall foul of?

Hacking in general, by which I mean electronic access to remote computers, falls into two basic groups - those who hack for information and fun, like climbing a mountain "because it is there", and those who hack for criminal reasons.

But where does the fun stop and the crime begin? If you have read any books written by a hacker, they always say that they have a "code of ethics" in that the whole idea is to break into the system to prove its weakness, and thereby increase security, not to steal or damage.

But in doing so, or for those of us who just browse, what laws could we be breaking? For example, how would you prosecute the hacker who managed to see Prince Philip's mailbox on Prestel?

If your hacking leads to a company losing data, which then interferes with their financial affairs, what then?

Well, despite the new Data Protection Act, merely reading other people's data is not an offence, and a case law decision established the criterion that if data is insecure because the keeper has left passwords easily accessible, no crime may have been committed.

However, our Prestel man might be charged with fraud or some other offence, as you will see later.

Under the existing Theft Act, if you use a security-cracking device

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- an automatic dialling program running an algorithm, for example - then it could be likened to safe-cracking! So be warned!

However, by far the largest problem for companies is computer fraud, accounting for losses in excess of 1 million pounds annually. This is covered also by the theft and fraud legislation, so is easily prosecuted when detected. The offence of obtaining a pecuniary advantage by deception may be breached in the case of obtaining services of a computer by electronic impersonation, but this involves deception, and you cannot deceive a machine!

Perhaps conspiracy (carrying life imprisonment) could be considered where two or more people work together, but if alone, a computer cannot be regarded as an electronic conspirator!

Abstraction of electricity (electricity theft) could well be used to prosecute people involving unauthorised use of computer equipment by staff, so those of you who hack from work.....

And what about criminal damage, if you make a system screw up, and thereby lose all its data? Does that damage the system or destroy the data? Well, perhaps it doesn't damage the system, but it destroys the data. Unfortunately, the Criminal Damage Act excludes intangible property (things you can't touch) from being damaged. So what laws could we be breaking?

Well, as you may have guessed, there is a catch-all piece of legislation called Section 42 of the Telecommunications Act, 1984. It covers dishonestly obtaining services with intent to avoid payment, and carries a 2000.00 fine and up to six months in prison. And if you manage to hack into a Government computer, you could come up against the full weight of the Official Secrets Act (life)!

I have probably raised more questions than I have given answers, and you can see that the legal aspect of hacking is a veritable jungle. If all talk of prosecution has made you think about what you do, then that's all to the good. As there is little clear case law or decisions, it is not possible to give clear-cut advice. I have only set out my interpretation of what ammunition could be lined up against you. For most of us, it will not be a problem unless we stray from the straight and narrow, and that's where the fun stops and the crime begins.

If anyone has any questions about computers and the law, MBX the Legal Eagle (375672137) and I'll reply in this column for the benefit of all.

FOOTNOTE: I must clarify a couple of points regarding the legal column a couple of weeks ago, which dealt with the Data Protection Act. Some of you have been left with the impression that everyone who has a mailing list must register. The truth is that if your list is on a home computer and you use it purely for household, domestic or recreational purposes, e.g. Christmas/birthday lists or local social club members, then you don't have to register, provided that if it is a club list, you must obtain each member's permission in writing to keep their names and addresses on computer. If you do this, and keep the letters, you are exempt from registration. Secondly, when you want to find out which organisations have a computer which you think may be keeping data on you, each main library will have a register of data users which you may inspect free of charge - just like the voters

register. However, these registers will not be available for some time, and your full rights of access do not come into force until November, 1987. The National Council For Civil Liberties has published a book which sets out all your rights, and how to go about exercising them.

 +++++UNPROTECTED+++++

On the theme of the Data Protection Act, someone, who shall remain nameless, asked me if we would be registering under the DPA, in view of the fact that we maintain the directory on computer.

Having just paid 160.00 to the Office Of Fair Trading for the privilege of being allowed to hand out free credit to all and sundry, I am NOT going to pour more money into Her Majesty's coffers.

Instead, the directory details are now entered on the backs of unpaid Dragon User advertising invoices, the discs have been erased, and each copy of the directory will in future be typed out individually on a device which has a type-face remarkably similar to our Tatung printer.

 *****WHAT'S ENTAILED*****

As Radio Dragon exclusively revealed last week, the Vicar's wife and the grave-digger... (oh no, sorry, just remembered that she paid up before we went on the air!)

Anyway, our OTHER exclusive dealt with Julian Cogdell's planned new Dragon's Tail newsletter.

Julian's now MBXd me to say:

"The aim of Dragon's Tail is to fill a gap, becoming wider Dragon User's demise, to spark new interest and to provide a new market-place.

"If there's anything you would like to see, or if you have a listing, article or comment of general interest, just MBX me on 992893036. I could do with help for the first issue.

"I need a full set of maps for Juxtaposition. Can you help?"

Julian's address is 34 Shooters Drive, Nazeing, Essex, EN9 2QD.

On the same theme, has anyone seen Issue 2 of Dragon Monthly? Wayne hasn't been chasing me for advertising.... in fact, I haven't heard any mention of him since Ossett.- Harry.

 #####WHAT'S THE BUZZ?#####

I had a call this week from a Dragon user who has just rediscovered a Buzzbox modem he was given a year or so ago.

Unfortunately, he can't get it to work.

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He has a D64, and a tape-based program called "DC2.BIN". It seems the instructions with the modem say it needs a couple of batteries, but one problem is that he can't find anywhere to fit them.

If anyone can provide definitive instructions to get him on-line, please MBX me, and I'll pass the message on.

Julian Cogdell MBXd me last night with battery connection details, but it seems there's no sign of the battery mounting on the modem in question.

I think this gent would appreciate a blow-by-blow commentary on how to get on line...as well as some informed speculation about the reason whyhe can't find anywhere to stick his PP3s.

Any offers?

Another gent with problems is Dave Martin, of Southampton, who is blessed with Premier DOS, and would like to pick up some utility software.

Our third request for help comes from a gent who's fitted a second disc drive onto his Dragon disc case. The original one was an ALPS, and the second one's an MPI.

Everything works fine..... except that when he's reading or writing to one, the other one also spins round, without actually reading or writing to the second one.

Any offers?

Any suggestions, please, to my MBX - please let me know if I have permission to give your address to the inquirer, so that he can write to you if necessary.

(Please use page 89 to MBX me, as most of my addresses were lost in the infamous disc crashing episode.)

*****I'LL KEEP TRYING*****

Zero response to my attempt to make a little beer money for someone last week, so here's this week's "Could You Do It?"

Could you design a practical RS232 port for the D32? I'm talking about a complete unit, independent of the cartridge port, which could be built, then passed on to someone else with the instructions: "Here you are - just solder this wire onto your computer's wotsit and this one onto its thingy...and Bob's your mother's brother."

To keep things simple, the unit would need to sit inside Doris, with a ribbon cable attached to be squeezed between the two halves of the case, terminating in an external port.

You design it, we'll build and market it, and pay royalties on each one produced.

As I said last week, I don't have a monopoly on ideas - so if you

5 have a brainwave for a useful project, don't just daydream about it...drop me an MBX. Let's keep the Dragon LIVE!

The directory now contains the details of 111 Dragon owners - new copies cost 1.50. Printer dumps of RD editions 1-3 cost 1.00 each.
