

RADIO DRAGON

INTRODUCTION

Radio Dragon has to be considered as an imaginative experiment which just had to be tried.

The idea was simple. A weekly electronic magazine, featuring anything and everything of interest to Dragon users, which could be down-loaded directly into a computer for the cost of a 2-3 minute cheap rate phone call.

Martin Cleghorn provided the technical know-how, and Peaksoft supplied the manpower, the host computer, and a telephone line.

After a shaky few weeks, during which the editing software was simplified, and the bugs were shaken out of the reception software, the "New Series" took to the air.

It worked. There was up-to-date news (on one occasion, supplied just four minutes before RD went on the air!), inside chat on the Dragon scene, and some first class, "breakthrough" software.

Unfortunately, too few people logged on, and after only six weeks, the organisers decided the effort simply couldn't be justified.

The pages which follow are a complete collection of the Radio Dragon pages, which were originally published on the air in June and July, 1986.

They have been re-edited from their original 32-column format (to suit the Dragon screen) to 80 columns, and repeated items, such as the monthly competition and small ads, have been removed.

PEAKSOFT -
THE DRAGON OWNER'S
ONE - STOP
ACCESSORY SHOP
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#####RADIO DRAGON#####

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

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OSSETT'S A HIT
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No-one could have dreamed up a more unlikely-sounding location than Ossett for a Dragon show, but when the crowds had been and gone, almost everyone seemed to agree the event had been a smash hit.

About 500 Dragon fans paid at the door for the May 31st show, but the true attendance was substantially higher, as most youngsters were granted free admission. Talking of youngsters, it's interesting, for those of us who also attend shows serving other machines, to note the high proportion of adults among the purchasers at Dragon events - it seems the Dragon has become a grown-ups' machine.

It was the nature and atmosphere of the event which made it such a success. Some people were waiting for the doors to open at 10am, and it was only with reluctance that they left six hours later. All around the hall, small groups gathered to renew old friendships, and to exchange ideas and information.

From the stand-holders' point of view, Ossett was unique in that no-one was constantly checking his watch from 2pm onwards, wondering how soon he could sneak away to begin the long journey home - they enjoyed themselves as much as the visitors. Virtually everyone left in the Dragon support industry nowadays is an enthusiast, so I suppose that it's understandable that when everything clicks as it did at Ossett, everyone has fun.

Compusense produced some Dragon 32s, without power supplies or leads, in battered boxes, which were on offer at £25, Peaksoft's uncased disc drive units were being snapped up for 34.95, and Wayne Smithson was kept busy taking subscriptions for the new Dragon Monthly. Peaksoft's Prestel demonstration didn't go as planned, unfortunately. The idea was that the modem should be left running unattended in demo mode from 10am to 1pm, and that the Dragon should be logged on for real at 1pm. However, the vast array of electronic equipment in the hall, plus the live amateur radio broadcasts which were taking place, caused a great deal of corruption, and the system eventually crashed. As there was no-one available to keep constant attendance over the set-up, that was that.

I made one big mistake...I took the Dragon T-shirts and sweat shirts

3

along for the first time, personally and proudly modelling one of the sweat shirts, which I think are a terrific bargain.

Unfortunately, my manly physique (actually, one wit once described me as "built like a racing snake!") seems to have put off prospective purchasers, who snapped up the T-shirts, but left me with quite a lot of sweat shirts to take home.

Business in general was very brisk - one standholder reported that trade was twice as high as during the entire two days of the Manchester show.

As you may recall, Dragon User agreed to take a stand after the organisers offered one free of charge. Surprise, surprise...they didn't turn up.

AND FOR OUR NEXT SHOW....

The Dragon road show's next venue is Bracknell, Berkshire, on June 28th. As it's not yet been advertised, and the next edition of Dragon User might reach only 2,500 subscribers, it will be interesting to see what sort of attendance will be attracted.

The show is from 10am to 4pm at Cooper's Hill Community Centre, 5 minutes' drive from Junction 10 on the M4 and 10 minutes' drive from Junction 3 on the M3.

There's free parking, and admission is 1.00 for adults and 50p for children and pensioners.

The 6809 Christmas Show will be held on November 22nd at the Royal Horticultural Hall, London. It seems that for the first time, the London show will be a one-day event.

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*****DRAGON USER TEETERS*****
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The cynics might suggest that Dragon abUser's decision to go subscription-only, instead of folding completely, is (CENSORED ON LAWYER'S ADVICE)

The future format of DU wasn't being revealed when this edition of RD was being prepared, but at one point, there were whispers of a newsletter-style publication.

As DU will no longer be appearing in the shops, there'll be no commercial need to print a full colour cover to attract buyers, so it will be interesting to see how many features which are geared towards sales impact, rather than the needs of editorial presentation, will be retained.

*****MONTHLY'S MAGIC!*****

1
The first edition of Wayne Smithson's Dragon Monthly was on sale at Ossett - 16 A4 pages of hard work on Wayne's part.

It contains more useful and interesting Dragon gen than any two recent issues of DU, and at 7.50 for a year's subscription, it's a real bargain.

The first edition includes a handy routine to prevent I/O errors when you try to CLOAD in the middle of a cassette file, and a complete disassembler.

Reproduction's a little fuzzy, but I'm sure that improvements in this direction depend on nothing more than Wayne scraping together some more operating capital from our 7.50s.

Get those subs in to Wayne at 24 Coal Hill Green, Bramley, Leeds 13. Telephone 0532 551631.

That's also the address for letters, hints and suggestions and for programs submitted for publication - Wayne's offering a fiver for his "program of the month".

We all know that important disc files should always be backed up, don't we?

Course we do.

And we always make back-ups, even though we've never, ever, actually lost a file, don't we?

Course we do.

So when I discovered that I couldn't read or write to the discs with my Radio Dragon work, and the Communications Directory on them, I just shrugged my shoulders, said: "Ah well, it had to happen some time," and reached for my back-ups, didn't I?

No.

Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaargh!

+++++++PLAIN AND SIMPLE+++++++

Yes, Radio Dragon has become less colourful...and I'm afraid it's all my fault.

After Martin's hard work to produce the previous editing and reception software, I just had to stand up and say: "Sorry, I can't cope!"

The problem was that editing RD required me to set aside time to load the special software, then after completing the work, I had to spend up to an hour and a half transferring the complete board to disc, tying up two computers and a phone line.

The new procedure is so simple and straightforward that RD can be

5
up-dated much more easily. When I have a couple of minutes to spare, I can just tap out a few more words without any special preparations, as everything's done on the word processor which is permanently loaded for other work.

Maybe with a little cunning, we'll eventually get the colour and graphics back...Martin's musing on it.

Meanwhile, we really do need editorial contributions from you.

I'm a Dragon fan, and an ex-journalist who can sit at a keyboard wittering on all day about matters which I find interesting and important, but I'm a long way from being an expert on anything to do with the Dragon. So if you want to let off steam, give an opinion on a piece of software, supply a program which we can reproduce ...in fact anything which bears any relevance to Dragon computing, please deposit it in my Prestel MBX (636705230), or send it by old-fashioned post to me at 48 Queen Street, Balderton, Newark, Notts. NG24 3NS.

Technical queries should be sent to Martin Cleghorn, Prestel MBX 919992757.

The RD reception software, incidentally, forms part of a very sophisticated Prestel/ Bulletin Board terminal program which is available from Martin. (Clever bloke is Martin!)

*****WOT'S THE TOPS?*****

Mega-prize for the latest competition is an "I love my Dragon" car sticker!

We want you to guess the identity of the two biggest-selling software titles of all time on the Dragon.

Needless to say, they're both games, and equally needless to say, they both date from Doris's hey-day...although one's still going strong.

The number one has quite a margin to spare over the runner-up, which itself, is well ahead of the rest of the pack.

Guesses, please, to MBX 636705230, by 30th June.

As for the last competition..having entered the result on the unco-operative disc, I disposed of the original entries. I do, however, recall that Julian Cogdell was an honourable second, but that I simply couldn't deny the prize to Albert Smith for "Dragons love bytes". (Think about it.)

Should be ashamed of yourself, Albert!

A Dragon T-shirt will be winging its way to you if you'll confess to being S, M, L or XL.

*****OPEN ALL HOURS*****

(..well, almost!) We've now received the Mk 93 amended version of the Voyager 7 modem, and we honestly believe that it's both auto-answering and re-setting after each call.

So...Radio Dragon's schedules will change after 17th June, to take into account the facts that (a) I don't have to sit by the phone hitting keys each time someone calls and (b) I'm sneaking a few weekends off.

Instead of Sundays and Tuesdays, 9-10.30pm, we'll now be on the air on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 10pm until 8am the following day. Can't be bad, can it?

Radio Dragon will be closed from 29th July to 14th August inclusive, while I have my annual rapturous fortnight soaking up Normandy cider and Bordeaux wine.

*****NO JOY WITH QUICKSHOTS*****

The Quickshot 2 has long been the favourite switch-type joystick for conversion for use on the Dragon - not because it's particularly good, but because customers have insisted on asking for it by name!

Spectravideo have now changed the Quickshot's electronics to overcome a problem which arose with Commodore 64s.

This amendment has made the Quickshot unsuitable for conversion, as the manufacturers have fitted a transistor which "chops" the current, making it impossible to obtain a full scale reading at the extremes of the stick's travel.

It's worth mentioning, as one Peaksoft customer phoned recently to order their Dragoniser joystick interface, having already purchased a bargain Quickshot from Argos.

One other point: Spectravideo are being "cautious" about the three month guarantee printed on the joystick box. One owner with a faulty joystick, which was sent to Spectravideo two months after purchase, received a request for 3.00. The firm have confirmed that they will not honour the guarantee unless the stick was purchased directly from them. If you buy from anyone else, you must return the stick to the vendor, who will return it to his distributor, who will...

Another joystick which has aroused interest is the Konix, which has been well advertised in Dragon User recently.

Harry Massey of Computape obtained a small supply, and sent them to customers for evaluation. The response was not favourable - Harry's panel felt the sticks were particularly unresponsive. Other retailers have experienced difficulty in obtaining the sticks - Konix have been requesting written communication only...then failing to reply.

#####HAPPY RETURN?#####

The terrific Touchmaster graphics tablet may return to the market... then again, it may not!

7
Supplies dried up when the manufacturers, Panorama Office Systems, decided to pull out of home computer supplies. They began negotiations with another firm which wanted to take over production and existing stocks.

A source within Panorama told me this week that the would-be buyer had been "messaging about" and had been given a deadline of June 6th to put up or shut up.

I understand that there are about 1,000 touchpads in store, although Panorama have been unable to say how many of these have interfaces and software for the Dragon - or for any other machine, for that matter. (The Touchmaster was also supplied for the Spectrum, CBM64 and BBCB.)

Peaksoft have told Panorama that if they can be supplied with full details of the stock, they will consider making a clearance offer, and Panorama have agreed to make some sort of response by June 14th.

If the rights are acquired by another firm, there is likely to be some delay while supply terms for complete units are agreed.

*****PRICIER PAN*****

Pan Electronics have raised their price for Dragon repairs by 2.00 to 11.50 + parts + post and packing.

On the other hand, Omnicron Ltd are now offering a fixed-price repair at 29.95, inclusive of parts, labour and post. Bearing in mind the cost of some parts, that could be a pretty good deal in the right circumstances.

Addresses are:

Pan - 8 Brynamlwg, Pontyclun, Mid-Glam, CF7 9AU, tel 0443 226423.

Omnicron - 16 Haywra Street, Harrogate, HG1 5BJ, tel 0423 501679.

+++++++NOT HOOKED YET+++++++

Peaksoft were very surprised to read in the June Dragon User that they'd agreed to support Christopher Bayne's plan to produce a games compilation tape, with the aim of raising funds for a drugs charity.

The fact is that Dragon User either invented the story, or took someone's word without checking the facts.

Peaksoft were asked in April if they would support the venture, and told Mr Bayne that while they'd be pleased to do so in principle, they wanted to see authorisation, from the charity concerned, for Mr Bayne to collect money on their behalf before any practical support was given. Peaksoft reminded Mr Bayne of this in mid-May - and they're still waiting.

8
+++++++TUGGED OFF+++++++

The Tandy User Group's pages on Prestel have been discontinued, without any explanation.

#####IT AIN'T HALF HOT!#####

I heard this week from a gentleman who was having an unusual problem with his Dragon - overheating.

The Tandy Co-Cos, with their internal power supplies, have always been notorious for this. The American magazines even advertise electrically-driven fans which you can fit into the cases!

I've never heard of the problem arising with a Dragon, however.

In this case, the gentleman was using a Dragon 32 power supply with a D64...but although the power supply wasn't over-heating, the computer was.

It seems that after half an hour or so, the picture begins to distort. Unscrewing the computer's case, to allow it to cool down, solves the problem.

The caller told me that the heat sink became appallingly hot.

Any comments from knowledgeable readers?

Alan Bain, 919998390, would like to hear of a Viewdata program, operating under OS9 or DDOS, which will dump a Prestel screen to a printer.

Finally, the directory now contains the details of 82 Dragon owners - who'll be number 100?

Well, that's it for now, folks...all my own work, and still plenty of room for the advice column, report on a lecture by Ted Hoppy Cockerel, and reviews that various people have promised me, but haven't quite got around to delivering. Only one winge in the whole edition...how about that?

No copyright is claimed in Radio Dragon...if there's anything in this edition which you'd like to publish in a club newsletter, a bulletin board, News at Ten, or anywhere at all, please feel free. We're trying to improve communication between Dragon owners, and we wouldn't want to do anything to hinder that aim. Of course, it would be polite to acknowledge Radio Dragon as the source...but that's between you and your conscience!
