

F1

COLLABORATORS

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Contents

1	F1	1
1.1	History Index Page	1
1.2	1985-86	1
1.3	1991-92	2
1.4	Starting Again	3
1.5	The Distributors	5
1.6	The Big Ones	5
1.7	F1 Licenceware GOLD Range	6
1.8	F1 Licenceware Today	7
1.9	F1 Licenceware and the Future	7
1.10	F1 Licenceware's Recommendations	8
1.11	spare	9

Chapter 1

F1

1.1 History Index Page

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THE HISTORY OF F1 LICENCEWARE
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Hi, my name is Steve Bye, Co-founder of F1 Licenceware. I have been asked to tell the story of how F1 came about and what our philosophy and aims are.

Click on the following sections to begin.

[CLICK](#) The Beginning - 1985 to 1986

[CLICK](#) Around the Year 1991

[CLICK](#) Starting Again!

[CLICK](#) Acquiring the Distributors

[CLICK](#) The Big Ones!

[CLICK](#) F1 Gold Begins

[CLICK](#) F1 Licenceware Today

[CLICK](#) F1 Licenceware and the Future

[CLICK](#) F1 Licencware's Recommended Viewing

Thanks for taking the time to read about our history.

All the best,

Steve & Belinda Bye.

1.2 1985-86

1985-86

I had spent a few years learning to program the Spectrum in a mixture of Assembler and Basic. The culmination was six games that were released commercially on the GTI label on the Speccy/C64 and Amstrad. The games in order of release were; Classic Punter, Classic Trainer, The Manager, Cup

Manager, Classic Trainer II and Soccer Director. The last named was the biggest success, though they all did very well, as far as money goes. Soccer Director got in the Spectrum charts at number 11 and Classic Punter got to number 2 in the CTW ship-out charts (what is bought for stock, but not necessarily sold) You may well remember one or two of them? They were mostly awful, but people seemed to like them at the time!

The upshot of all this was that I had a lot of money to spend, so I decided to invest it into a software shop, which I called Sparks Software. At Sparks we bought/sold/hired and exchanged games on all computer formats and it was a BIG success. I think we were one of the first people in the country to hire out cartridges, long before Sega/Nintendo brought in the rental fees. Before long I was employing three people full time and opening more shops in and around Devon. I enjoyed the good life for a few years and luckily I spoilt myself rotten with the proceeds because as you may have guessed the economic boom of the late 80's was coming to a shockingly abrupt end and the recession was looming it's ugly head. As is usual in life, once the balance of things are upset everything else fails to function properly, the shop takings started to nosedive and shops had to be closed down. Before I knew it I was left with just the one shop in Exeter, the original one I started with. Sparks was still making me enough to provide myself with a comfortable living -if I did all the work myself. But, staff had to go. Things levelled out for a while and I kept Sparks afloat, just.

1.3 1991-92

1991-92

September 1991, the landlord of the property I rented warned me that he was selling up and that I would have to leave in six months. On top of that news came through that Virgin was planning to open a software "megastore" in town, before then I had enjoyed a virtual monopoly of selling software in Exeter, apart from Boots and Woolworths but their prices were a lot higher than mine, but now there was some real competition on it's way. That Christmas was the worse ever for sales. I started having trouble paying the rent and rates, it was time to move on. The only shop I could find locally was 10 miles away in Tiverton, the rent and rates were less than half of what I was currently paying, the shop was already fitted out and had a clean modern looking interior, all I had to do was move my custom shelving and stock in. I gave notice to my landlord and moved in a few months later. BIG mistake, the rates were low because business was worse here than anywhere locally. It was

only a matter of months before I lost everything and was signing on the dole, another victim of the recession. Luckily I have always paid the bills on time and didn't owe much to anyone and was able to sell the shops contents and name (Which I changed to Burning Software) At least I didn't need to go bankrupt. As it turned out the landlord never did sell the building and Virgin never did open a megastore in Exeter. Makes you wonder about fate!

1.4 Starting Again

STARTING AGAIN

After getting married to Belinda and spending a few months on the dole I started at the beginning again. I learnt a programming language first on the Atari S.T and soon after on the Amiga. I settled on the Amiga as the better machine of the two and knocked up a few educational titles. Admittedly they were not exceptional but they were comparable to other stuff around at the time. I tried CLR, (The Central Licenceware Register) to see whether they could distribute them for me. I was pretty disappointed with the way I was treated. I waited months for a reply, in the end I phoned in and actually prompted someone to look at the software. A couple of weeks later I got a reply. It was a standard mailshot saying basically, "Not good enough". They didn't return the disks even though they asked for stamps to do that. I was pretty well disgusted with the whole business and realised that they must be either run by people who don't care or simply are so overwhelmed with software that they couldn't handle the work load, either way it was at this point in time that I thought;

THE AMIGA NEEDS A DECENT LICENCEWARE SCHEME WHERE PROGRAMMERS ARE TREATED WITH RESPECT.

There certainly seemed to be a market for it. I imagined all the hundreds, if not, thousands of programmers like myself that would never contemplate sending software to CLR again. There was nowhere else for them to go except the Shareware route, which only seemed to work for the lucky few. But, and it was a big but, we had no money, (We being Belinda and I) Getting married had made sure any money we had saved was now gone. So, I was truly back at the beginning. How do you start a company with no money, no contacts and no experience? I didn't have the answers so I just followed my nose, studying the Amiga PD market in every detail, writing to programmers with good looking PD titles and telling them of my plans etc. The biggest hurdle I thought at the time was getting the trust of the programmers, especially as another Licenceware company, Deja 'Vu had apparently dumped on a lot of

programmers and hadn't done the Licenceware name any favours at all, what with Deja 'Vu and CLR I reckoned programmers would have a phobia against Licenceware, things were not going to be easy, why should they trust a nobody to pay them royalties on their beloved production? Even more importantly how was I going to sell the programs for them not having the money to advertise? The problems seemed endless.

December 93

I believed we had most of the problems solved one way or another. I had now decided what to call ourselves. How this came about was I was looking through some PD clip art and saw a nice Formula 1 car. I remember thinking it would make a nice logo, it did.

Belinda (now heavily pregnant) agreed to risk a weeks dole money on a tiny advert in C.U Amiga. We set February 1994 as the official launch date of F1 Licenceware. We still had no titles to sell and no money. That £50 seemed a hell of a lot of money at the time, and when the advert came out asking for programmers to submit software for free evaluation the response was a massive two enquiries. Both of which came to nothing. We gave it about six weeks when it seemed obvious that we had got it all wrong, maybe it couldn't be done with no money? I went back to the magazines studying how others did their adverts, one's who kept re-advertising etc. And how they laid their adverts out. I soon came to the conclusion that £50 adverts by newcomers to the market simply would not pay. There was little hope in advertising big with what we could afford.

One thing I did notice was that the mags did "News" items and so I wrote to all of them in the hope of getting a freebie plug. Amiga Power and Amiga Format obliged with plugs for us and this resulted in our first two titles Magnum Pro and Cricket Crazy being sent in. I sent them for review, Cricket crazy got a reasonable review in Amiga Power but Magnum never did get reviewed until over a year later. As the months passed titles started to trickle in, we got a few hot titles in like BlackBoard V2 and Fortress which both got good reviews and really started to get us noticed, which in turn meant more titles coming in. I will be for ever thankful to those early F1 programmers for putting their trust in us with no apparent reason. They just let us get on with it without a murmur. Simon of Magnum Pro, David Odd of BlackBoard and Lee Bamber of Fortress and later our biggest early mega success, RELICS OF DELDRONEYE all should take credit for helping to get F1 started.

We had a few rucks with the organiser of CLR, he got the idea that we were "Poaching CLR" programmers, when in fact we just wrote to programmers of

good PD programs, not knowing who had what with CLR. Perhaps now I am in a better situation to understand CLR's position, as we are now in fact having the same thing done to us by other schemes, but it is a free market and competition is good. We like our programmers to have titles in other schemes so they can appreciate the service we give them compared to others.

1.5 The Distributors

The distributors cometh:

When we had seven titles I started contacting PD Libraries to see if they would distribute the F1 Licenceware range, the response, as you would expect was very slow. Most were still peeved off with Deja Vu and CLR programs were selling so well at the time that most couldn't see the need for another scheme. Some thought we were a joke, some even took us to the cleaners. Undoubtedly our biggest break came when I took the risk of phoning 17 Bit Software and talked to Markus about distributing the F1 range. I couldn't believe it when he said yes, particularly when we were requiring money from them as start-up costs! 17 Bit also must go down in the F1 annals of history as the break that actually got sales going. They advertised the F1 range for about a year and done F1 nothing but good. Thanks 17 Bit. We must not also forget the other early distributors that put their trust in us like, Seasoft Computing, Hornesoft PD, and Your Choice PD, who are still good active distributors of the F1 range.

F1 was now at the stage where we were getting good reviews, plenty of software sent in and paying out more and more each quarter to the programmers which in turn had the knock-on effect of getting more word of mouth publicity, respect and trust from programmers, that we believe we have maintained to this day.

As far as our mail order customers went, we developed a standard policy of also treating customers with the respect they deserve. We aimed to provide a fast, efficient and courteous service. I think we achieved that and a lot of our customers agree.

1.6 The Big Ones

THE BIG ONES

Our next big "software" break after the best selling RELICS was INTRODUCING WORKBENCH by Kevin Winspear which sold extremely well and got fantastic reviews in all the magazines, cheers Kev. Then our crowning glory, GRac, the

Graphic Adventure Creator which also got stunning reviews and is still selling well. GRac is the first program of it's type on any computer and is nothing short of stunning. GRac allows non-programmers to create Monkey Island style adventure games easily. The programming and over a years work by Edmund Clay was a feat of which many a professional programmer would find hard to match using any language. The fact that GRac is written with Amos Pro is nothing short of unbelievable, as writing a good graphic adventure in it's own right in Amos is no mean feat. It is an achievement unattained by many so called "Ace Amos programmers"- RELICS, being one of the very few exceptions. Writing an adventure creation system in Amos takes nothing short of genius. I take my hat off to Edmund and reckon he must be one of the top Amos coders in Europe. These are the type of people F1 need and welcome, pioneers.

1.7 F1 Licenceware GOLD Range

1995, F1 GO GOLD

The main problem with Licenceware, as far as I am concerned, is that the whole business is based on trust. The programmer trusts us to pay them their CORRECT royalty each quarter and we trust the distributors to pay us the programmers royalty. Mostly it works, but like in any business there are going to be some dishonest people. We have come across our fair share of these and the business has suffered as a consequence. There are two or three particularly bad companies still operating in the Amiga market that were once F1 distributors. What F1 needed was a new scheme where the element of trust was at a minimum for us and the programmer. Another part of Licenceware that I am not too happy with is that the instructions have to be on-disk text files. I believe that most people prefer printed manuals and the manual can also sometimes work as a limited pirate deterrent, especially if the software is too complicated to use without one.

Witness the birth of F1 Gold. Each title is of EXTREME quality, in normal circumstances any F1 Gold titles should be able to compete commercially. The programmer get's a better royalty, the customer gets a nice printed manual and the distributors have to pay up front to buy them, eliminating the trust aspect. Now the programmer has to trust only us to pay them their royalty. At the time of writing we have only 3 F1 Gold titles just released and the early signs are that they are going to be a great success with or distributors, customers and programmers alike.

1.8 F1 Licenceware Today

TODAY

Today, October 1995, F1 is still going strong and enjoying an excellent reputation of trust with it's programmers/customers and distributors. F1 is still run by just Belinda and I and the contents of this CD reflect nearly two years of slog on our and our programmers behalf. At this point I would like to take the opportunity to thank all the customers, especially the one's that have written to us saying how happy they are with the quality of our products and with the service they have received from us. Most new F1 customers are genuinely shocked when they receive the goods they ordered from us less than 48 hours before hand drop on the their doormat, with free cat disk and the occasional freebie.

All 60 odd programmers that have contributed to this disk will get a share in the proceeds of every sale.

Big thanks and all the credit for the existence of this CD must go to Chris Wiles of Active software, who first suggested it and has followed it through and done most of the work on it over the last three or four months, big thanks Chris, and to Jeremy Ford of Ground Zero Software for his help and both again for being good distributors of F1 titles.

More thanks go to Pete Topping of Your Choice P.D who has helped us with advice and plenty of money saving bargains over the last year or so. Cheers Pete.

Also we would like to thank all the PD reviewers of the Amiga magazines for giving us over 121 FREE reviews between them to date. Thanks a lot, we couldn't of done it without you all.

We sincerely hope that you enjoy using the software on here and look forward to hearing from you as either a customer, programmer or both in the near future.

1.9 F1 Licenceware and the Future

THE FUTURE

For the immediate future we plan to push ahead in the direction we are going, but with plenty more F1 Gold titles too. Depending on the success of this CD we may do another, in a year or so. We still do not advertise much in the magazines, but that may change soon.

In the not too distant future, but dependant on how the Amiga market bares up to strain we would like to start releasing full blown commercial software,

but that is quite a way off. From my previous experience is it best to take things easy and gradually ease your way into new areas rather than bulldozing in and finding out you were not really prepared.

I have recently heard that our good friends CLR are calling it a day, they are to take no new titles on and are just going to let the scheme peter out.

So now F1 are the only established Licenceware scheme on the Amiga.

From later this year, mainly due to the move to F1 Gold, we will be slowly transforming from F1 Licenceware to F1 Software...look out for this name change in the near future.

1.10 F1 Licenceware's Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS

Here is a short list of titles on this CD that I think you would do well to take an extra long look at. Obviously I think ALL our titles are excellent, otherwise I wouldn't have taken them on, but these are the titles that are landmarks in the history of F1, as far as I am concerned. In order of release:

F1-007 FORTRESS Lee Bamber

CLICK to goto this program

F1-018 RELICS OF DELDRONEYE Lee Bamber

CLICK to goto this program

F1-031 POWERBASE Steve Rennocks

CLICK to goto this program

F1-044 BLACKBOARD V3 David Odd

CLICK to goto this program

F1-048 ERIK David Parsons

CLICK to goto this program

F1-051 INTRODUCING WORKBENCH Kevin Winspear

CLICK to goto this program

F1-055 AMOSZINE #4 Various

CLICK to goto this program

F1-062 JUNIOR ARTIST Gina Mears

CLICK to goto this program

F1-066 GRAC Edmund Clay

CLICK to goto this program

F1-084 WORD PLUS PRO Richard Butler

CLICK to goto this program

F1-085 LEGIONS OF DAWN Andrew Campbell

CLICK to goto this program

F1-091 DMC Andy Gibson

CLICK to goto this program

F1-098 GONKS Lee Wilson

CLICK to goto this program

F1-099 GRAC USER DISK Edmund Clay

CLICK to goto this program

1.11 spare