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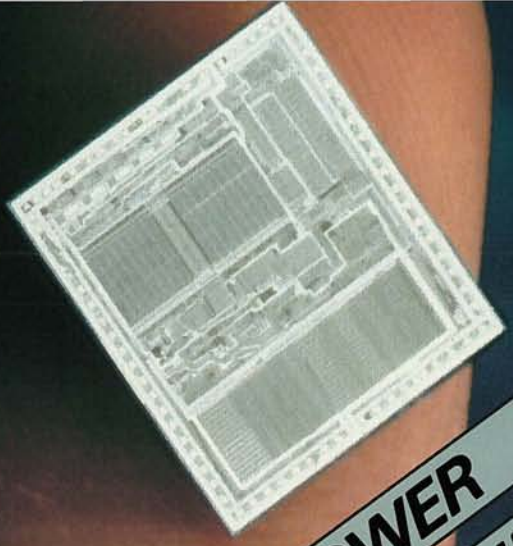

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THE COMMODORE QUARTER-CENTURY

Over the last quarter-century, Commodore International's founder and president Jack Tramiel has led the company on a heady ride from retail typewriter repair shop to global giant in the microelectronics industry.

Commodore has progressed to its present status as one of the top personal computer manufacturers in the world from typewriter repairs and sales in 1958 through adding machines, office furniture, electronic calculators and digital watches during the '60s and early '70s, then to personal computers beginning in 1977. The company's sales are now running over $680 million (U.S.), which is a long way from the $3.5 million attained in 1962, the first year Commodore was listed as a public company.

Much of Commodore's success can be attributed directly to Jack Tramiel, who has both the knack for anticipating consumer needs and the hustle of a determined entrepreneur to turn his ideas into profits.

Commodore Business Machines Limited first set up shop early in 1958 at 2 Toronto Street in the city's downtown core. Later that year, having grown to a strength of five employees, the company moved to more spacious quarters on Davenport Road. Two more moves for expansion purposes brought the company to 501 Yonge Street, then 680 King Street West at Bathurst in 1959, where Commodore continued in sales and repair.

While operating from the King Street shop, Commodore advanced into the manufacture of typewriters with the acquisition of a factory in West Berlin, Germany.

Early in the 1960s, Tramiel began selling and servicing a wide range of office equipment, and distributing nationally for an office furniture company.

By 1962 the Commodore label on typewriters and adding machines had become a basic inventory essential in most major department stores and catalogue houses throughout Canada, and Commodore staff were retailing products in the United States at locations leased in leading department store chains. This year also marked Commodore's entry into the rapidly expanding field of office copying machines with the introduction of its Drycopy machine.

Ever innovative and entrepreneurial, Commodore in 1962 broadened its horizons even more by introducing a stair-climbing wheelchair. Entering the marketplace before many buildings were adapted to accommodate the handicapped, this product disappeared as wheelchair ramps became more common.

In its next year of operation Commodore took over a larger premises at 946 Warden Avenue in Scarborough. At this location the company continued distributing office machinery and furniture, and began distributing for Pearlsound, makers of radio and stereo equipment. Today, 20 years later, this Warden Avenue building is still a Commodore distribution centre, and also its manufacturing site for the C-64 and VIC-20 in Canada.

In 1965 Commodore acquired the furniture manufacturer for whom it was distributing, and moved its operation to what is now Commodore's present Canadian headquarters on Pharmacy Avenue. Commodore still manufactures office furniture (mainly filing cabinets and desks, plus metal housings for the CBM 8032 and SuperPET) at this plant in Scarborough.

Also in 1965, Commodore sold its adding machine plant and instead found a company in Japan to make adding machines for Commodore

Top of Commodore's 1968 line of typewriters, Model 2200 offered the "best portable typewriter value, dollar for dollar" of machines in its class, according to its advertising. (Top)

Commodore Model 202 adding machine, 1968 vintage, was very modern and efficient, including some automatic functions.

The popular Commodore 64, shown here with a Commodore colour monitor, has many applications for home, educational and small business users.

Commodore's new "B" Series business microcomputer, available also with an integral display monitor, has a minimum RAM configuration of 128K, expandable to 896K and has numerous business applications. (Bottom).

to distribute. While in Japan, Tramiel got his first look at an electronic calculator, and he quickly deduced that this product would mean the death of the mechanical adding machine. With the Commodore philosophy that "if we are not our own competition, then someone else will be", Tramiel moved quickly and found manufacturers to produce electronic calculators under the Commodore name. Thus, the company was right there in the market when it began to take off.

Commodore began manufacturing its own electronic calculators in 1969 using Texas Instruments chips. In fact, Commodore was the first company to bring out a "hand-held" calculator – the C108 – an example of what has become a long history of Commodore "industry firsts" in marketing value, innovation and performance in new products.

The market for this type of product is easy to see by looking at a breakdown of Commodore sales in 1969. Figuring machines accounted for 81% of sales, while furniture made up 11% and typewriters dropped to only 8% of company sales.

Up to 1974 Commodore expanded its line of calculators from simple four-function machines to memory machines, scientific machines and keyboard programmable models. Commodore was largely dependent on third parties for the chips and displays that went into the products it was making.

In 1975, Texas Instruments decided to begin manufacturing calculators. At the same time, chip prices dropped to $1 from $12, and Commodore was caught with a big inventory of chips and calculators while market prices plunged. It was this incident which led to Tramiel's decision that Commodore would be a company that controlled its own destiny, and not be at the mercy of other manufacturers.

Commodore purchased MOS Technology, one of its semiconductor chip suppliers, in 1976, and worked its way to become vertically integrated. This vertical integration allows Commodore to supply its own needs, and it gives the company significant lead time in new product development which means manufacturing cost advantages – and that translates into price / performance benefits for consumers.

The acquisition of MOS Technology was followed in the next 18 months by two further key acquisitions: a chip manufacturer and a manufacturer of liquid crystal displays. As a result of these investments, Commodore had in-house expertise and production in more key technologies than most electronics companies several times its size.

Also in 1976, Commodore reorganized its corporate structure as Commodore International Ltd. and moved its financial headquarters to The Bahamas. The operations headquarters are now located in West Chester, Pa.

The next year was the watershed for Commodore when in 1977 – still anticipating the future in true Commodore style – the company introduced its first personal computer: the PET. It was this original machine, launched at the Hanover Fair in Germany and the Consumer Electronics Show in the U.S., that helped give birth to the personal computer market of today.

The PET sparked another period of rapid growth which is still underway today. It was marketed world-wide and really took hold in the European market because of the widespread, loyal dealer network Commodore had developed in its distribution of calculators. Commodore dominates the personal computer market in Europe today with

more then 50 percent of the market in many countries. In fiscal 1983 (year ended June 30) European sales reached more than US$155 million, almost 23 percent of Commodore's total sales.

After the PET line was completed with the 4000 and later the CBM 8000 series micros, the next major product from Commodore was the very popular VIC-20. The prototype of the VIC-20 was previewed at the National Computer Convention in Chicago in 1980, and it was first launched in the Seibu Department Store in Tokyo, Japan because, as Jack Tramiel said about the threat of competition from Japan, "the Japanese are coming, therefore we must become the Japanese."

Commodore sold 800,000 VIC-20s world-wide in 1982, reached the 1 million mark early in 1983, and they are now being shipped at the rate of 100,000 units per month.

The company didn't stop with that success either, but continued research and development and in August, 1982 shipped the first Commodore 64. By March, 1983 The 64 was being shipped at the rate of 25,000 machines a month.

Commodore has become the largest unit seller of microcomputers in the world. And, according to a Dataquest study published in Electronic News recently, Commodore is No. 1 in computers priced under $1,000 with an estimated 43% dollar volume share in the U.S.

As well as the obvious success the company has achieved in the home market, the Commodore name is familiar in both the business and education markets for personal computers with its SuperPET and CBM lines, and The 64 is also being used for a number of functions in small business.

In Canada, Commodore holds about 65 percent of the national market for computer in education (in Ontario it has captured 80%). Penetration is also significant in U.S., British and European schools and universities.

Commodore has become an international company, with manufacturing facilities in Japan, Hong Kong, West Germany, the U.K., Pennsylvania and California in the United States and Scarborough, Ont. In fiscal 1983 world-wide sales increased 44.7 percent over 1982's US$304.5 million to reach over US$680 million. By the end of fiscal 1984, Commodore will be a billion-dollar-plus company.

Wall Street financial analysts who follow Commodore (shares have been traded on the New York Stock Exchange for three years, and on the American Exchange several years prior to that) state that much of the company's success is due to its flexibility and willingness to adapt quickly to – and even lead – changes in technology and in the marketplace. Jack Tramiel puts it more simply: "The minute you're through changing, you're through." The company's track record of tradition and steady growth have resulted in an organization whose sophistication in research and development and in product engineering are second to none.

The commitment and dedication to research and development – over $37 million was invested in R & D last year – will lead to advances in technology and product application from Commodore in the years ahead. The company is driven by technology, and prides itself not only on giving its customers the products they want, but on introducing products the public didn't even know were available.

Commodore has programmers, systems designers and engineers working full-time to develop improved microprocessors, more efficient manufacturing techniques, enhanced quality control procedures, improved product design and engineering and, perhaps most importantly, an accelerated software development program.

Commodore is further expanding its software development in the United States and Canada with both in-house and external programming teams. The results of this program will certainly be evident to users of Commodore computers late in 1983 and throughout 1984.

Commodore remains a firm believer in the adage that if you just stand and watch the world go by, it will. So, the company continues to advance with a planned series of new proprietary systems, including a family of advanced microprocessors and peripheral integrated circuits for high-speed, low-power battery-operated computer systems, and improved video graphics.

In addition, investigation into advanced microprocessor architecture is well underway that could lead to even lower-cost 16-bit Commodore computers.

The most recent results of Commodore's high-level quality and value approach are the advanced "B" series business microcomputer and the portable Executive 64. The "B" series has a minimum RAM configuration of 128K, expandable to 896K. It is ideal for variable work situations, especially where high output levels are demanded. The Exec 64, weighing only 27.6 pounds, can go anywhere with no difficulty. It has 64K RAM, a built-in five-inch monitor and floppy disk drive with 170K capacity.

Another recent step has been the development of a sophisticated new voice synthesizer for the Commodore 64. The Commodore speech module plugs directly into the Commodore 64, and at present has a vocabulary of 235 words. This is the first voice I/O product to be developed at the company's speech Technology Division in Dallas, Texas.

Commodore is celebrating its 25th year with an international extravaganza being held in Toronto, Canada early in December. The "World of Commodore" Show is the first truly international computer show to be orchestrated by a single microcomputer company.

It's not the first "first" from Commodore, and it certainly won't be the last. Tramiel sees success as stemming from sales to the masses, not the classes, and to do that products have to be high on quality and innovation while being low on cost. Commodore has achieved this goal in the past, and intends to make sure it happens again and again in the future.

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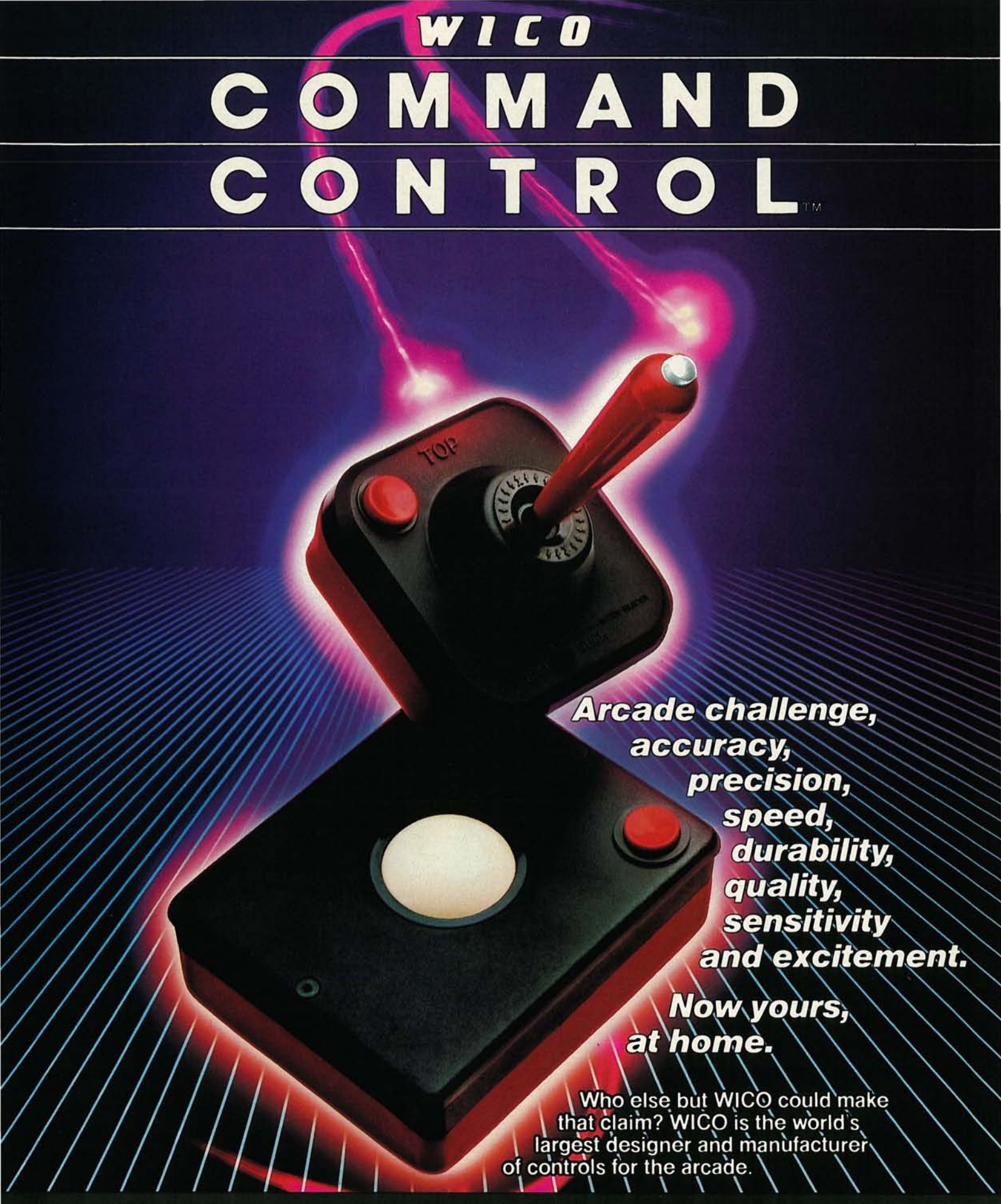

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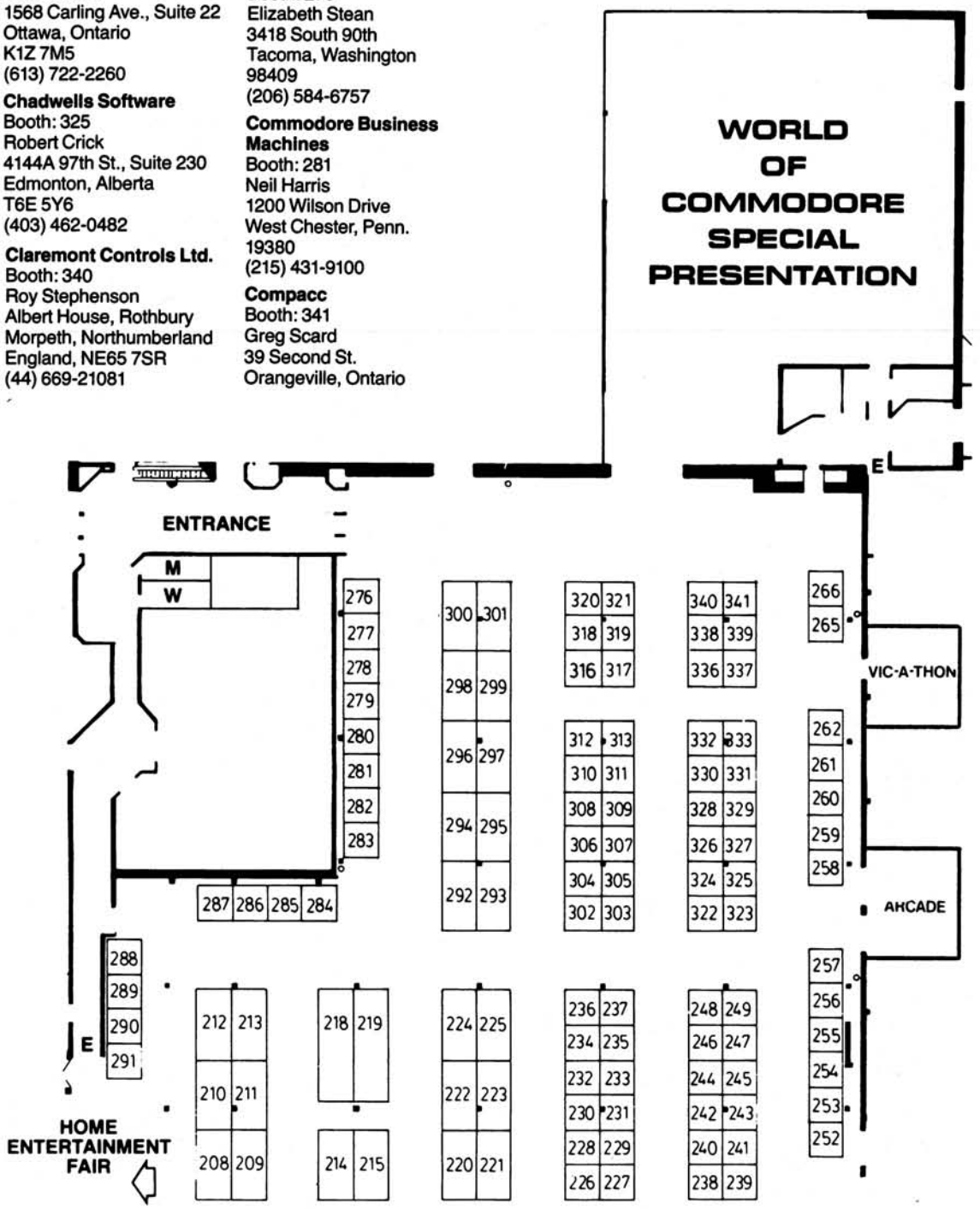

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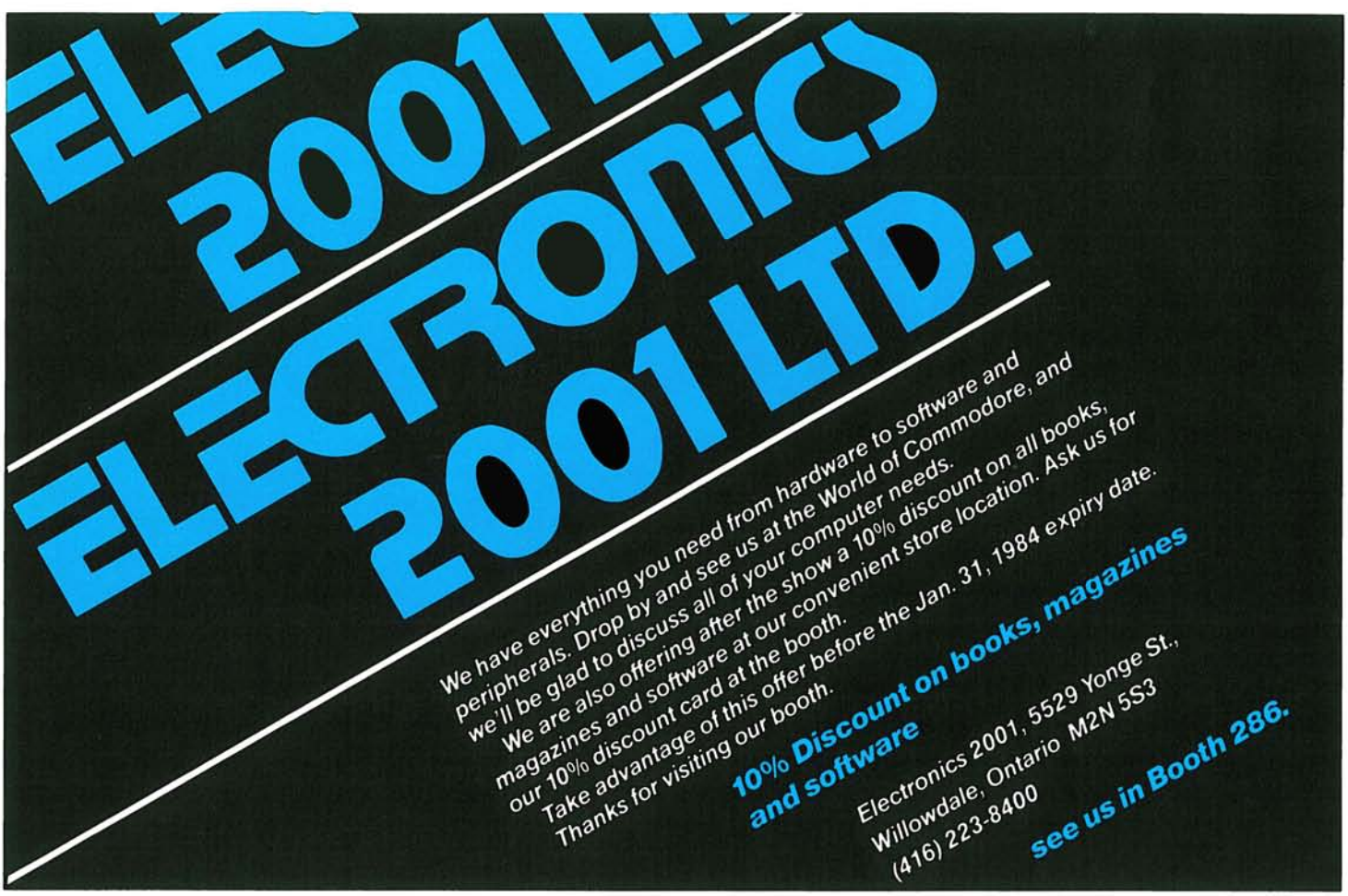

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Thursday, December 8, 1983
3:30 – 5:30 p.m.
"WORD PROCESSING & DATA BASE MANAGEMENT" Applications for business and personal use. DONNA GREEN, Toronto – Word processing expert who has trained numerous business and school users and computer dealers. JAMES WHITEWOOD, Toronto – Co-author of 'The Manager', a well known data base management programme.

7:00 – 8:00 p.m.
"LOGO – A WINDOW FOR THE MIND" LAURIE FOUNTAIN, Toronto – Former teacher computer consultant, currently manages computer sales and training programs and one of the first students of LOGO.

Friday, December 9, 1983
11:00 – 12:00 noon
"SPREADSHEETS" A programme to help make complex jobs easier and faster. PER SKEDUNG, Sweden – A computer retailer and consultant to many European corporations on spreadsheet and financial programmes.

1:30 – 2:30 p.m.
"DATA BASE MANAGEMENT" NANCY ISCARRO, New York – Educator and trainer from the New York high school system specializing in record keeping for beginners – and how to use it for home and small business applications.

3:00 – 4:00 p.m.
"INTRODUCTION TO THE COMPUTER" A demystification session. How to get started and how to get help. JIM BUTTERFIELD, Toronto – Computer pundit and TVOntario personality.

7:00 – 9:00 p.m.
"SOUND AND LIGHT SHOW" A Commodore extravaganze for the entire family. FRANK COVITZ, GARY KIZIAK, PAUL HIGGINBOTTOM, STEPHEN MURRI.
These gentlemen from Canada and the United States have collectively spent years developing graphics and music applications for micro computers. There will also be a 'special' guest appearance on this show.

Saturday, December 10, 1983
11:00 – 12:00 noon
"UNIVERSE" A Magical Mystery Tour Through The Stars. FRANK COVITZ, New Jersey. A leading developer of graphics and music applications for microcomputers.

1:00 – 3:00 p.m.
"COMPUTERS IN EDUCATION AND COMAL" FRANK WINTER, Toronto – Manager, Education Systems for Commodore, originator of North America's largest educational microcomputer lab and author of numerous educational programmes. LEN LINDSAY, New Jersey – Author of the definitive book on COMAL – the COMAL user's handbook. A free COMAL diskette will be given to all attendees at this seminar.

Sunday, December 11, 1983
1:00 – 2:00 p.m.
"VOICE SYNTHESIS" PAM SPILLIOS – The U.S. authority on the emerging field of voice recreation through micro computers.

4:00 – 5:00 p.m.
"THE VERY FIRST PET" A fascinating history and study in technology.

3:00 – 4:00 p.m.
"COMPUTERS AND GAMES" Come and play with an expert.

Both seminars will be given by JIM BUTTERFIELD, Toronto — Computer pundit and TVOntario personality.

In addition to the above seminar programme, there will be satellite demonstrations ongoing throughout the day in the exhibit area. Satellite demos will be given by Alex MacGregor.

MASTER OF CEREMONIES: JACK LIVESLEY – Host of TVOntario's popular series "The Computer Academy". TVOntario is Ontario's public television network.

A special feature of The World of Commodore will be the "SILENT AUCTION" of donated products and services. All proceeds will go to benefit the HOSPITAL FOR SICK CHILDREN in Toronto, and a COMMODORE GAMES ARCADE will be open to all show visitors in Hall 3 of the International Centre. The minimal entrance fee will also go to the HOSPITAL FOR SICK CHILDREN.

SPECIAL SHOW FEATURE: The Videomania Home Theatre: Videomania Magazine will be sponsoring this theatre in aid of the MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS SOCIETY. The latest releases for home video from 20th Century, MCA and Disney will be shown daily. The minimal entrance fee will go directly to M.S.

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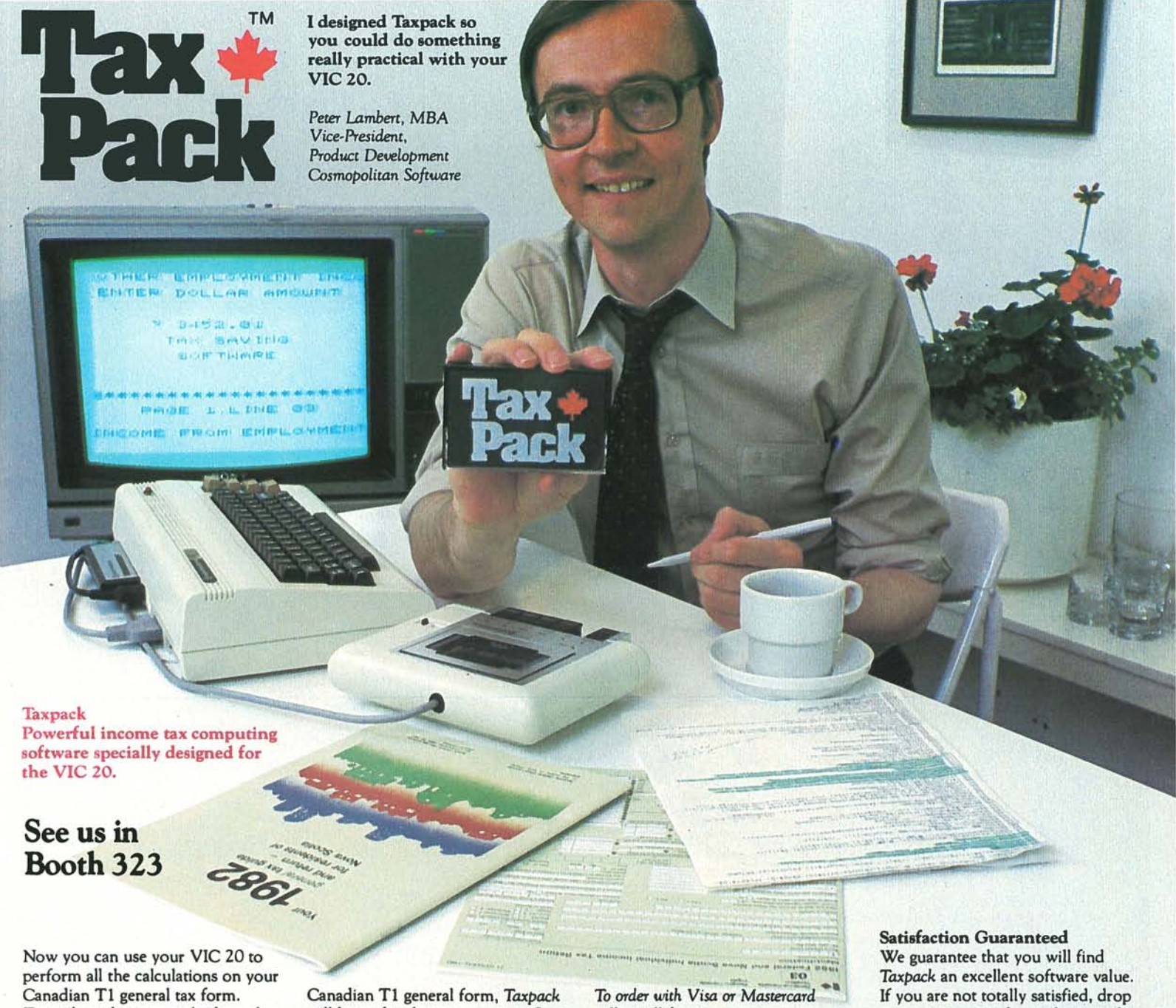

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During the 70's, Commodore expanded its operations worldwide and acquired its own chip-making facility. Thus, from concept through design, research and development, production, technical support and software offerings Commodore is the most vertically integrated personal computer company in the business. Born in Canada 25 years ago and committed to producing state-of-the-art technology at affordable prices.

This is the world of Commodore.

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OUR GUARANTEE

When you buy your Commodore system from either of our 2 locations we not only give you the highest level of support, service, and selection, but also the best price. We will match or better any advertised price, by a Canadian authorized Commodore dealer on in-stock Commodore product.

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