QUICK SELLERS

Just about every week a new software house specialising in games programs appears in the market place. Yet very few of these ever seem to establish a permanent place for their products on the high street shelves. One of the exceptions is Quicksilva, which since its inception in 1981 has rarely been out of the top ten best sellers lists.

The production of the Sinclair ZX80 microcomputer was the initial impetus for Quicksilva. The success of the machine encouraged a self-employed test engineer called Nick Lambert to design a three Kbyte add-on board to supplement the ZX80's meagre one Kbyte memory. This he sold successfully by mail order. When Sinclair released the ZX81 the following year, Lambert formed Quicksilva with John Hollis and Mark Eyles to produce a series of add-ons for the new machine. 1981 also saw the appearance of Defender, a game written by Lambert, which was Quicksilva's first venture into the software market.

The success of its Defender game encouraged Quicksilva to produce other arcade-style software, and the hardware side of the business was eventually dropped. In April 1982, Quicksilva was launched as a limited company.

The company's second big software success was an adventure game called Timegate. By Christmas 1982, there were 10 Quicksilva games on the market, and in January of the following year, W H Smith ordered 10,000 copies of Timegate. With its products — and its name — penetrating the rapidly expanding high street software market, the demand for Quicksilva's products soon rocketed. Having been launched on an overdraft of £200,

the company's turnover for its first year of operation amounted to £70,000. Quicksilva products are now stocked by the large chain stores and by 150 independent retailers. The company also believes that its games reach over 70 per cent of the world market.

Such a considerable upsurge in demand has meant that the company has had to expand quickly beyond a three-man operation. Quicksilva now advertises for software authors in the computer press, and a games writer can expect to earn up to 15 per cent royalty on every one of his cassettes sold. The company today continues to diversify and has moved away from concentrating entirely on the Sinclair machines: the current Quicksilva catalogue includes games designed for the BBC Micro, the Dragon, the Commodore 64 and the Vic-20.

Quicksilva is now regarded as one of the major software publishing houses in the UK. Its name was further enhanced by the vast success of Ant Attack (see page 6), a game that featured extremely sophisticated graphics. Rod Cousens, who took over as managing director when Lambert decided to concentrate on more creative projects, was elected vice-chairman of the Guild of Software Houses and 'Person of the Year' by the Computer Trade Association in 1983.

Quicksilva continues to look for unexpected directions in which to diversify. In particular, the company has recently released a 'non-violent' game called The Snowman, which is based on the popular children's story by Raymond Briggs. It is regarded as a welcome antidote to the vast plethora of 'zap-'em' space invaders type of game. In other ways, the company's plans are a little more predictable: soon it hopes to make a big splash in the North American software market.

On Offer
These are some of the latest games on offer from Quicksilva. The company now produces games for a wide range of computers
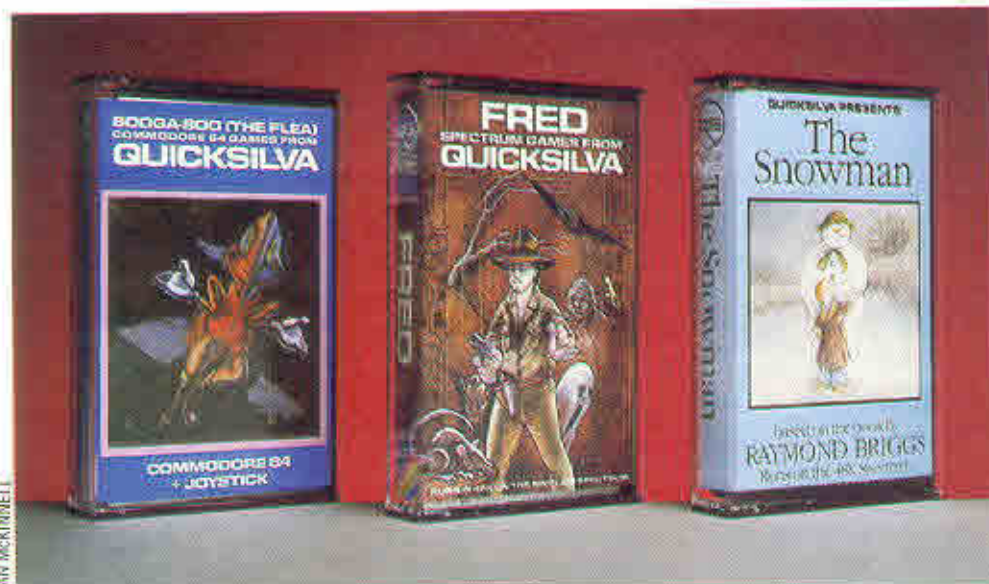
Rod Cousens
The present managing director of Quicksilva

Mark Eyles
Advertising director and one of the founders of the company