

Forging Ahead

Piracy is the thorn in the flesh of the software industry. That's why suppliers go to such lengths to protect their programs



TONY SLEEP

Slave Driver

Software cassettes, like music cassettes, are duplicated using a high-speed tape copier. This consists of a master deck, into which the original is placed, and a number of slave units which make recordings simultaneously. Copying both sides of a program cassette takes a matter of seconds. Disks have to be copied individually using normal disk drives



TONY SLEEP

A Hundred To One

Just as it is technically illegal to make copies of other people's music cassettes, copying of programs represents software piracy. Unfortunately for the suppliers, piracy is not only difficult to prevent, but equally difficult to detect and prosecute. Some suppliers claim that for every copy of their programs bought legitimately a hundred illegal copies are made

Software piracy can be defined, simply, as the unauthorised copying of programs. In common with the music business, which the software industry is starting to mirror, piracy happens in different ways and at different levels. At the lowest level, piracy is committed every time a home computer user makes a copy of a program that has been borrowed from a friend. Even the fact that some programs (especially those written in machine code) can't be *SAVED* using the normal *BASIC* commands provides little deterrent, because it is always possible to link two cassette recorders together and copy the program from one to the other — without the need for a computer at all.

Some games suppliers claim that for every copy of a title they sell, up to 100 illegal copies are made. Though it might be argued that some of them can well afford the loss, it must also be remembered that there are a good many people who earn their living from program royalties and who don't drive around in Rolls Royces!

There has been a great deal of controversy concerning dealers who offer software on loan, rent, or the try-before-you-buy schemes — since they make it easier for those who copy programs. Less scrupulous dealers will take this a stage further, and give away pirated copies of popular titles to someone buying a home computer to increase its effective value.