

# SOUND SUCCESS



## Room For Manoeuvre

The company headquarters are in Sutton Park, outside Reading. Audiogenic moved here in April 1984 from a house in the centre of Reading that could no longer provide enough storage space

**Audiogenic may not be as well known as other software companies, but it has built up a good reputation as a major supplier of software for Commodore machines. Originally merely a tape duplication company, Audiogenic now writes and distributes software and manufactures hardware peripherals.**

Audiogenic is described by its founder and managing director Martin Maynard as 'a marketing and manufacturing business'. Maynard originally worked in the music industry, and established Audiogenic in Reading in the early 1970s as a recording studio and audio tape duplication service. In 1978, Audiogenic was commissioned by the Southern Electricity Board to duplicate a computer data cassette. The company's equipment was modified to cope with the demands of producing computer tapes in bulk, and Audiogenic signed a contract with Commodore to handle software duplication for the PET microcomputer.

The company then took over the marketing and distribution of Commodore's cassette catalogue, and began selling books, magazines and other Commodore-related equipment. After the launch of the Vic-20 in 1981, Maynard obtained licences to market Vic products developed by American software houses. Software manufactured under licence still accounts for 80 per cent of the Audiogenic catalogue, and represents 85-90 per cent of the company's £1.7 million turnover.

This emphasis on software marketing, rather than in-house production, appears to have been very successful, and Maynard estimates that Audiogenic has now produced over one million

cassettes. 'Our strongest point is that we have a large catalogue. This diversity means that we can understand what's going on in the market,' Maynard claims. 'Having been in the software industry for six years, we've seen it all before. Of all the software sent out over the last year, 20-30 per cent is still on someone's shelf. Writers are losing touch with what people want.'

This cautious approach, promoting tried and tested software, contrasts strongly with the go-for-broke tactics employed by many other software houses. David Smithson, the Audiogenic product manager, points out: 'You don't see us buying Porsches. Some companies are just setting themselves up for a fall.'

Audiogenic now employs 25 people. The company's leading programmer, Dave Middleton (writer of the highly rated Magpie database package), is employed on a freelance basis. Audiogenic tends to concentrate on utility software for its in-house programs, rather than going for the fast profits associated with the games market. As Maynard explains, 'Computers will always have a games element but that phase is now dying and computer software will develop into something more useful. When a package is selling two to three hundred a month you think "that's not selling very well", but it will still be selling that number in a year's time.'

This does not mean that the company neglects the games market entirely. One of Audiogenic's biggest sellers was Motor Mania, and the company has recently launched Alice in Videoland for the Commodore 64. Developed under licence, this game consists of a massive 90 Kbytes of code spread over five screens that are loaded from disk as the game progresses.

Shortly after moving into larger premises in March 1984, Audiogenic installed updated tape duplication equipment. The new machinery reproduces a program repeatedly on a continuous length of tape, which is cut up and packaged in cassette form after duplication. This is both faster and more convenient than the old system, which duplicated programs onto separate cassettes and meant that the company needed to store large stocks of blank C10 and C20 cassettes.

Audiogenic intends to continue its policy of distributing products manufactured by other companies in the UK and USA. Diversification into hardware peripherals has led to the company marketing a touch tablet graphics pad that was developed by Koala Technologies. Planned software projects include a range of cassettes for MSX machines and software for the new Commodore 16 home computer.

## Leading Light

Audiogenic's Managing Director Martin Maynard who founded the company as a recording studio in the early 1970s

