

05-1992 [A-1930] Fidelity - **Miami** (never released)

Op mijn verzoek plaatste verzamelaar Paul Wiselius een posting op het HIARCS-forum over de **Fidelity Miami** met de vraag of deze ooit was verkocht? Daar kwamen verschillende goede reacties op, want het is nu duidelijk dat een **Fidelity Miami** nooit is verschenen! Ik had het kunnen weten, want in de oude Computer Chess Reports-tijdschriften is dit onderwerp redelijk uitvoerig besproken. Maar ja, soms lees je niet goed of kijk je er eenvoudig overheen!

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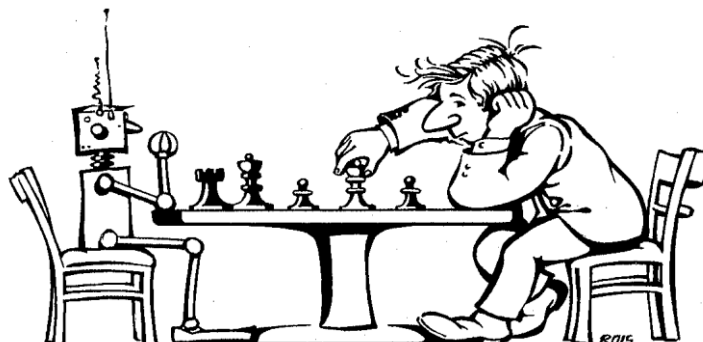
MIAMI (MODEL 6134)

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Fidelity Miami (never released)

Het concept van de **Miami** (behuizing en hardware) was waarschijnlijk al in een vergevorderd stadium, maar van een "nieuwe **Travel Master**" (**Table Master**), met een programma van Frans Morsch kon geen sprake meer zijn! Mephisto had een conflict (rechtszaak) met Saitek over de rechten van dit nieuwe Morsch H8-programma. Saitek won dit gevecht en bracht in 1992 de **Travel Champion (2080)** op de markt. CXG heeft door al die achterhoede gevechten (samen met Excalibur) het concept, van de **Fid. Miami** overgenomen, en omgedoopt tot **CXG Legend** met een programma van Gyula Horvath. **CXG Legend** verscheen in 1992 en heeft het identieke design van de **Fidelity Miami**. Voor **Excalibur** produceerde CXG de **Excalibur Legend** en **Legend II** die in 1993 op de markt kwamen. De verkoopaantallen van deze goedkope kunststof modellen was prima in orde, en zo verschenen er in rap tempo kloonsversies zoals de **CXG Concerto**, **CXG Accolade**, **Krypton Challenge** en **Krypton Regency**.



Computer Chess Reports 1992
Vol. 3 No. 1 by IM Larry Kaufman
Excalibur Electronics



This company was formed recently by two top salespeople from Fidelity Electronics -- Shane Samole (son of the founder of Fidelity, Sid Samole) and Terry Everett. It is located only a few blocks from Fidelity in Miami, and is dedicated to the proposition that by keeping overhead to a minimum, the price to the consumer can also be kept down. When Mephisto bought Fidelity from Sid Samole, he had to sign an agreement not to compete, but this did not apply to his son. Excalibur currently imports the "Sphinx" line of computers, which are known for their modest prices and decent (if not top) playing strength. Excalibur plans to sell top end models next year.



The new Legend...

The two models of interest for this year are the old **Advanced Star Chess** and the new **Legend**. **Advanced Star Chess** is of interest because the price is expected to be very low, under \$70. The playing strength is low class A (the Swedish list puts it in high B at 40/2, but it is relatively stronger at faster time limits and performs far above its Swedish rating on almost all problem sets), and the unit is a peg-style travel set. With **Travel Master** discontinued, **Novag Super VIP** and **Marco Polo** are the two strongest remaining hand-held models, but they are more expensive than **Advanced Star Chess** and only modestly stronger. All three of these models use the 6301 chip. The **Legend** is a table model utilizing the new h-8 chip. The Hungarian programmer Gyula Horvath is new to the dedicated model field, but has been successful in pc program competition. This model was to be the **Fidelity Miami**, but when it was cancelled by Fidelity, Excalibur picked it up. My early testing shows it to be in the low Expert range, though it's too early to be specific. Since it has a display and a price just under \$100 is expected, it should be a very good value, as the cheapest Expert level game right now is the **Fidelity Designer 2100 Display** at about \$130. The program seems to be rather similar to the Richard Lang Mephisto programs, that is to say very selective, but the tiny RAM size keeps it from reaching the high Expert level achieved by **Mephisto Mondial 68000** a few years ago, even though the h-8 at 10 MHz is faster than the 68000 at 12 MHz. The similarities between the early Lang programs and the **Legend** are quite striking, leading me to suspect that the programmer patterned his program after Lang. My test results at sudden death levels were a bit disappointing, apparently because the program moves much too fast on these levels, but on the normal levels it seems to be comfortably over 2000, making it the world's strongest table top chess computer under \$100.

Computer Chess Reports 1992

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Fidelity Review

I'm sorry to say that most of the planned new models have been cancelled or indefinitely postponed. Here is the story in brief: Early this year, a detailed accounting revealed that Fidelity had somehow managed to lose over \$3 million in 1991. I can't really understand how this was possible, although part of the problem was underpricing (i.e. the **Mach III** retailing for under \$200, the **Travel Master** at \$75, etc.). Another problem was that many machines were sold which could not be delivered in acceptable quantity (**Little Chesster**) or quality (**Travel Master**). So the owners (Hegener & Glaser, which also owns Mephisto) decided to cancel all manufacturing by Fidelity and all new models except those which were to be built overseas. The majority of the employees were laid off, with only sales and service personnel and a few others left. So except for some very low end models built in Hong Kong or China, Fidelity may become a Mephisto sales outlet once its present stock of machines is gone, unless plans change. As things look now, this may be the final review in CCR of new Fidelity products, though Fidelity itself should survive as the U.S. arm of Mephisto. In fact I am told that Fidelity has already returned to profitability.

The **Fidelity Elite Premiere** remains the strongest wood autosensory model under \$1000 with its (admittedly lucky) 2424 C.R.A. Action rating and its 2320 estimated rating at 40/2. The **Designer 2325** model, despite offering 2300 vicinity strength for under \$500, has been largely upstaged by the **Mephisto Berlin**, which I consider the better value of the two. Still, if the price gap between the two widens to \$100 it may appeal to some. The **Designer Mach III** is still the only master rated game under \$200 (or even close), and so remains a great buy until sold out. The **Designer 2100 Display** remains the strongest table model under \$150 so far. **Little Chesster** is still the strongest model under \$100, until **Sphinx Legend** becomes available. I expect that by the time that these models sell out, Saitek, Novag, Mephisto, and newcomer Excalibur will all have models out of similar price and strength, due largely to the growing popularity of the fast and cheap h-8 chip.



As for **Travel Master**, planned new versions without the many problems have been cancelled and the original is no longer in production, so we will have to look to other companies for Expert level travel games. The same goes for the inexpensive Fidelity RISC model that was expected about now, though its place will be taken by **Mephisto Madrid** eventually. Since there are no corrected **Travel Masters** to offer owners of defective ones under warranty, owners are being offered in exchange for their **Travel Master** the choice of a **Mephisto Marco Polo** as an even exchange or a **Mach III** for an extra \$75. This is quite a bargain since most people paid between \$75 and \$90 for **Travel Master**, making the total cost of the **Mach III** only about \$160. Most **Travel Masters** work reasonably well for a while, but after some weeks or months some of the squares cease to sense pressure, rendering the unit useless.

Computer-Schach & Spiele (1992)

Frederic Friedel

Ein Bericht von der Spielwarenmesse

Neubeginn mit National

Nach dem Skandal um die Zahlungsunfähigkeit von Newcrest/CXG (siehe CSS 6/91 S. 56) hätte man kaum erwartet, diese Firma oder ihrer Vertreter in Nürnberg anzutreffen. Aber als wir am Stand von CXG-Importeur Lorenz Siwek ankamen, stand dort Eric White, Gründer und ehemaliger Inhaber von Newcrest, mit einer großen Palette von Schachcomputer-Modellen, Zuversicht ausstrahlend, als wäre das alles nur ein böser Traum gewesen. Tatsächlich hat sich für ihn alles zum Guten gewendet: Nach dem Zusammenbruch von Newcrest hat die National Electronics Holdings Ltd., ein in Hongkong ansässiger Telefon- und Uhren-Multi, die Aktiva der Firma übernommen und führt das Geschäft mit den Schachcomputern weiter.



National-Direktor Tommy Tam mit Berater Eric White

Eric White ist bei National als 'Marketing Consultant' im Solde und kann dort weitermachen, wo seine alte Firma aufgehört hat. Wer glaubt, daß hier nur Restposten abgesetzt werden sollen, der irrt. National zeigt ein starkes Engagement für die neue Branche im eigenen Haus, was man in Gesprächen mit Firmendirektor Tommy H. L. Tam deutlich spüren konnte, der auf der Messe für National die Abschlüsse zeichnete. Es werde in den Bereichen Design und Fertigung kräftig investiert, das Interesse der Käufer sei sehr ermutigend. "In drei Jahren werden wir Nummer eins in der Welt sein, das ist unser Ziel". Man würde solche Worte nur milde belächeln, stammten sie nicht vom Chef eines Unternehmens, dessen Umsätze in neunstelligen Zahlen ausgedrückt werden.

Die in Nürnberg ausgestellten Geräte, besonders die Neuentwicklungen, machten einen sehr guten äußerlichen Eindruck. Offen ist nur, wer die elektronische Intelligenz künftig liefern wird. Der Hauptprogrammierer von CXG, Frans Morsch, hat seine Mitarbeit gekündigt, und über Ersatz wollte (oder konnte) man noch keine Auskünfte geben. Immerhin werden weiter Geräte für Fidelity produziert, z.B. **El Dorado**, **Travel Master**, **Chess Pal** und **Little Chesster**. Auch der oben erwähnte **Fidelity Miami** wird von National in Hongkong gebaut. Die eigenen Geräte heißen **Granada**, **Galaxy**, **Legend (= Fidelity Miami)**, **Concerto**, **Spirit**, **Accolade**, **Seville**, **Crown**, **Voyager** und **Star**. Keiner kostet mehr als DM 200,00. In Deutschland laufen die Geschäfte über Lorenz Siwek, der schon reichlich Erfahrung mit den Schachcomputern von CXG sammeln konnte.

Quelle: Computer-Schach & Spiele, April 1992 (CSS 2/92), Frederic Friedel: RISC an allen Fronten. Ein Bericht von der 43. Internationalen Spielwarenmesse in Nürnberg.

Computer Chess Reports 1992-93

Vol. 3 No. 2 by IM Larry Kaufman

Excalibur Review

This new company, run by ex-Fidelity people, has to date been solely an importer of the Sphinx line of chess computers, which are known for modest prices. The **Legend** is the cheapest table-top Expert level game on the market, with an estimated rating slightly over 2000 and a price tag around a hundred dollars. The same program has now been put in the **Accolade**, a hand held model which will be the cheapest such Expert level model at under \$90. A C.R.A. Action test for the two models is under consideration. Excalibur hopes to surpass the 2062 Action rating of the now defunct **Travel Master** (Saitek incorrectly claims that C.R.A. rating for the **Travel Champion**, but **Travel Champion** runs at only 7 MHz vs. **Travel Master's** 10 MHz). The **Legend** and **Accolade** use the h-8 chip too and feature a highly selective program. Excalibur hopes to enter the market with a Master level unit sometime this year. If so, it will surely be priced below competing models, since Excalibur's motto is low overhead.

Computer Chess Reports 1993

Vol. 4 No. 1 by IM Larry Kaufman

Excalibur Review

In the last CCR (v3n2) we reported that Excalibur was considering getting a C.R.A. Action rating for its top models, the table top **Legend** and its hand-held twin **Accolade** (same hardware and software). Based on our estimate of "slightly over 2000" and the fact that Action ratings typically run about sixty points above 40/2 ratings, we thought that Excalibur had a good chance to surpass the 2062 Action rating earned by the **Fidelity Travel Master** (which was discontinued due to unreliability) and improperly awarded to **Saitek's Travel Champion**.

Sure enough, Excalibur went for a C.R.A. Action test (I headed the operator team) and did in fact surpass the **Fidelity Travel Master** and **Saitek Travel Champion** rating by three points! So, at 2065, **Legend** and **Accolade** are the highest rated models with displays for the money (under \$100 and \$70 respectively). Each is about 70% of the price of any rival of greater strength. Some of the glory of Excalibur's success was taken away when Novag got a significantly higher C.R.A. Action rating just a few weeks later for its hand-held game **Ruby** and its table top **Emerald**, but they are in a higher price range. One drawback to the **Accolade** is that it lacks a cover at this time, but at \$70, you might choose to overlook that.

Excalibur also got the **Legend/Accolade** W.B.C.A. rated, and amazed us all by earning a Blitz rating after 26 games of 2344! It did this by winning two separate matches against strong masters and scoring well in a major blitz event. I was the operator so I know the result was legitimate. Usually W.B.C.A. ratings for computers run about 240 points above 40/2 ratings or 180 above Action ratings, but here it performed a hundred points above the figure this rule would predict. If a \$100 toy can perform this well at blitz, how long can it be until one of the powerful pc programs on a \$4,000 computer can earn top spot on the W.B.C.A. list, even above Kasparov and Karpov? I predict that this will happen in 1994.

Computer Chess Reports 1994

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Excalibur Review

Excalibur is the spiritual descendant of Fidelity, as its president, Shane Samole, is the son of Fidelity's founder and many of the employees at Excalibur have been former Fidelity employees. Moreover, Excalibur is based in Miami, as was Fidelity. However, Excalibur, unlike Fidelity, has so far only marketed inexpensive chess computers. The only models of interest to most CCR readers are the Expert level machines utilizing the h-8 processor and programmed by David Levy and associates. These include the hand-held sensory **Accolade** and peg-sensory **Comet** (above), the table-top sensory **Legend II** (left) and **Krypton Challenge**. The **Comet** and **Krypton Challenge** have newer and presumably stronger programs than the other two, though none of these models has been rated by any rating list or agency except for the **Accolade**, the oldest model of the four. It was rated 2065 in Action Chess (game/30) by the C.R.A., and received an astonishingly high blitz (game/5) rating of 2344 from the W.B.C.A. Allowing for the overrating of computers at fast levels, the C.R.A. result suggests a tournament rating of around 2000 for the **Accolade** while the W.B.C.A. rating suggests a tournament rating of over 2100, so perhaps a rating in the low 2000s is nearest the truth at 40/2. I don't have much data to say how much improved the other models are, but probably the new ones are in the mid-Expert range. The **Krypton Challenge** seems to be more reliable than **Legend II**. As between the **Accolade** and the **Comet**, the **Comet** has a cover while the **Accolade** does not; on the other hand, the **Accolade** works on battery or AC while the **Comet** requires batteries.



Internet

<http://hiarcs.net/forums/viewtopic.php?p=77847#77847>

<http://www.hiarcs.net/forums/viewtopic.php?p=68377&sid=73ac099954a27584862368b16ab67974>

<https://tluif.home.xs4all.nl/weblog/22OCT06.html>

http://www.schaakcomputers.nl/hein_veldhuis/database/files/77-0000%20Fidelity%20Product%20Guide%201992.pdf

http://www.schaakcomputers.nl/hein_veldhuis/database/files/10-0000%20Krypton%20brochure%201994.pdf

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