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Audiogenic Software Ltd., Winchester House, Canning Road, Wealdstone, Harrow, Middlesex HA3 7SJ.

Tel: 01-861 1166
THIS ISSUE...

FEATURES
VIOLENCE IN SOFTWARE
Mel Croucher accuses the industry

PAGE 21

GRAPHIC MATTERS
Robin Candy paints with Degas Elite (ST)

PAGE 90

NOT A PENNY MORE
An adventure story to get you in the mood, specially written for THE GAMES MACHINE by Robin Waterfield

PAGE 97

HEAVENS ABOVE
Getting into Satellite TV with Mel Croucher

PAGE 107

LICENSED TO KILL
John Gilbert looks at licences, how they get them, do them and how they turn out

PAGE 112

THE ADVERTISING GAME
There's more to games than playing, as Ocean's Steve Blower explains

PAGE 120

REGULARS
NEWS
What's been happening lately

PAGE 8

READERPAGE
The first of THE GAME MACHINE's readers' letters

PAGE 13

PREVIEWS
Ocean's Christmas bundle, plus all the important games for tomorrow

PAGE 15

REVIEWS
An incredible 38 pages of latest games across the formats rated - sorry, we couldn't fit all of them in!

PAGE 29

GETTING ADVENTUROUS
With Rob Steel and two from Infocom among others

PAGE 79

FANTASY GAMES
John Woods rounds up some of the best role-playing games, and explains how the system works

PAGE 104

MUSIC MATTERS
Jon Bates starts a series on the 'tapeless music studio' by going to the top - the Fairlight CMI

PAGE 143

ENDPIECE
Mel's infinitely trivial quiz, and details of next issue's contents

PAGE 146

WIN!
WIN A SPORTS OUTFIT
Gremlin Graphics have a massive collection of clothes and equipment suitable for Alternative World Games (which you can win as well)

PAGE 110

WIN YOGI BEAR SHIRT 'N' SHORTS
No need to be bear - look smarter than the average in Piranha's natty boxer shorts and T-shirts; and there are copies of the game too

PAGE 116

RE-SHADES
Re-run of the Micronet Shades competition from last issue due to the error made in the copy. Two moderns and free subs plus free time on Shades

PAGE 119

WIN A JOYSTICK
Courtesy of Britannia, we have 20 super new hand-held joysticks to give away

PAGE 128

Issue Three of THE GAMES MACHINE is on sale from 21 January - and thereafter each month.
Take a smash hit all action game (Trailblazer), add a vicious firespitting dragon, a sprinkling of gruesome aliens, a weird selection of trees and silver frisbies, arm yourself with a photon lazer, shake it all up and find yourself on...

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EDITORIAL

It is rather strange to be writing an editorial for a BIMONTHLY magazine devoted to computer entertainment; computers and the games they play are so fast that the publishing trade by comparison seems tortoise-like in speed. Newsfield's other magazines are monthlies, and while they too are slow compared to dailies in reacting to news and reviews, the fact of producing a magazine that appears only every two months brings home the fact of just how fast the software world gallops on.

We have had a fair amount of trouble fitting in all the games reviews we wanted to. Given that our aim is to cover ALL (wishful thinking) software released on all formats, there is no avoiding the fact that by the time this bi-monthly issue appears on the streets most monthlies will have beaten us to it with a lot of the reviews. Our notion in the circumstances has been to shrug our shoulders and not worry about being first, but instead to concentrate on being best and most detailed about what we live and write.

THE REVIEWS

We cover all the popular 8- and 16-bit formats: Spectrum 48/128 and +3, Amstrad CPC, Commodore 64/128, Atari XL, XE and ST, Amiga, Amstrad PCW, IBM PC compatibles and games consoles. Of course games reviews are the primary concern, but unlike other multi-user magazines, THE GAMES MACHINE gives separate ratings for the different formats, because we don't believe a game is always the same on every computer. And you can be sure that NO game version is rated UNTIL IT IS THE FINISHED ARTICLE. First we review the game—the idea, its playability, the way the basic design is conceived—then we review the machine-specific implementation. This means that whatever computer you own, THE GAMES MACHINE reviews are applicable to you in over 90% of cases. It also means that when a specific version isn't yet released, that the other formats' review is your preview, and this frees our extensive preview section for games that really are some way off completion.

AND THE REST

If you add to that all the other areas of computer and electronic entertainment THE GAMES MACHINE wants to report about, like music applications and graphics utilities, desktop publishing and modem-linked shareware, insights into the commercial background of the industry and opinions about its present and future, plus entertainment related subjects like role-playing games and techno-goodies, interactive video and satellite TV, you will understand the limitations of a magazine that only appears every other month: Keeping up with it all is less of a problem than finding space for it all!

RESPONSE

As luck would have it, response to Issue One of THE GAMES MACHINE has been so good that as from our next appearance on 21 January in the New Year we will be going monthly. No doubt we shall still find it difficult to cram everything in, but it will give us more of a chance.

Your letters have encouraged us (with just as much criticism as praise) to prove it is possible to create a magazine that is truly reflective of what computer entertainment is about: Interaction.

The software world exists because of you, because of the software houses and the magazines that act as mirrors and voices of what is going on. THE GAMES MACHINE aims to reflect the coming of age of computer entertainment through a practical, fair and committed contribution.

Enough of speculation and prophecy—THE GAMES MACHINE is about enjoying computers, and if I carry on much longer, my editorial team and the art department will have my chips for wasting important space...
CHILDREN IN NEED ON-LINE

MICRONET, together with PRESTEL and ITECs (Information Technology Centres), exceeded all expectations last year by raising £46,000 for the BBC Children In Need appeal.

On 27 November they will be there again, providing on-line aid for this year's appeal. Micronet will be taking eight computer terminals to BBC Television – two of them actually in the studio – and they hope to stage live interviews with celebrities and conduct on-line auctions of computer products. Computer users will be able to donate money directly on-line, but by exploiting the nationwide communications network available through Prestel, ITECs all over the UK will be logged into Micronet enabling members of the general public to access on-line Children In Need. Dig deep everybody!

WATCH THIS SPACE

SEIKO have launched a personal data system (The RC4000) cunningly disguised as a watch!

Information can be input into this wrist terminal either manually or via a computer and saved for future use. The Seiko RC4000 is compatible with most IBM PC clones, Apple series 11, BBC-B, Spectrum and Commodore 64/128 computers, and you can receive or transmit information between watch and computer. Up to 2K of data may be stored in the watch split into five files (12 if using a computer) taking the form of notes, price lists, phone numbers, train times and so on. This may be called up on the LCD screen which scrolls information in the form of 24-character pages, with the watch holding up to 80 pages. Alarms for up to one year ahead can be set to remind the wearer of forthcoming events such as birthdays or anniversaries. Three versions are available, gold-coloured, metal case (£59.95), black chrome case (£49.95) and a pocket version with a black leather case (£59.95). And in case we forgot to mention the fact, the RC4000 also tells the time!

BELAY THOSE ALIGNMENT BLUES

Failure to load is a common cassette problem, but poor loaders may be a thing of the past for Commodore 64 owners.

LOAD-IT has produced a datacorder which helps to decrease the number of failed loadings due to the cassette errors which we have all come to know and love. The Load-It player/recorder is fitted with a built-in head alignment knob and LED; if you are having trouble loading a piece of software into your Commodore, fiddle with knob until the LED indicator is at its peak – then try again.

The program should now load properly due to the playback head being perfectly aligned for the particular software you are loading. THE GAMES MACHINE tried out this machine in the office (and are still doing so) and it appears to work very well. All our Commodore 64 tape games have loaded to date. For more information, contact Load-It, 35 Stretton Road, Solihull, Birmingham, W Midlands B90 2RX.

BLAST ALONG A EUROMAX

EUROMAX, those joystick giants with a branch in Bridlington, have recently produced the Micro-Handler.

Compatible with all Atari computers and Commodore 64/128, this box of tricks includes a microswitch stick, two integrated paddles, adjustable auto-fire, large robust metal casing, rubber suction feet and an extra long connecting cable.

Well suited to shoot-em-ups: the new Euromax Micro-Handler

Mirrorsoft’s Mean Streak on the Commodore 64 and Konami’s Nemesis II on the MSX2: The stable metal casing with its suction feet helps frantic antics no end, but the fire buttons are stodgy. The auto-fire proves useful, however the paddle facility may be a little outdated for modern software. But it is well suited shoot-em-up games as it sits very solidly on the desk through wave after wave of attacking aliens. The Micro-Handler retail for £24.95 and is available through THE GAMES MACHINE mail order facility.
ADVENTUOUS AWARD

The Guild Of Thieves received the award for GAME OF THE YEAR at the British Micro Computing Awards 1987, held during the POW Show.

MAGNETIC SCROLLS managing director Anita Sinclair stated that she was pleased that Guild got the award rather than their first game The Pawn. She believes it won the award on its quality and depth of gameplay rather than for the technical achievement of its complex parser and impressive graphics.

We realise this may hardly be news by the time you read it but THE GAMES MACHINE will grab any excuse to print a picture of Anita. Oh and look out for Magnetic Scrolls’s third adventure, Jixter, which should be available before Christmas.

ROBTEK RELEASES

Robtek Ltd seem to be in for a busy time before Christmas with all their promises. This month releases hitting the shelves (including Diablo for the Amiga, reviewed in this issue).

The Di Buddy (Amiga £49.95) graphic utility set allows you to create, obtain, manipulate, organise, display and print out artwork. But it also includes a touch-up facility, freeze frame, poster maker, slide show and scissors. Monitor Master (Atari ST £49.95) allows the user to change monitors at the press of a button. Its function will be lost on most owners, but for those lucky enough to have a colour RGB and a monochrome monitor, Monitor Master makes it possible to switch between them without any cable fiddling – a must for decreasing wear and tear.

Laser-Set (PC £149.95) is claimed to be a professional desk top publishing package providing for typesetting that can be used for books, manuals, brochures, newsletters and many other products. Working with most existing word processors it supports virtually all laser printers on the market at present. Laser-Set features automatic kerning, true justification and hyphenation, working in picas and points. THE GAMES MACHINE will be covering it in future DTP articles.

Another PC package is Artpak (£99.95), a presentation graphics program that provides new ways to present ideas and designs, especially enlivening various kinds of charts, which may be drawn, painted or constructed, all with animation and background music.

DEVIL YOU SAY

Modern specialist DATAPHONE LTD has recently launched a new low-cost model called the Demon 2.

Its features include full computer control, auto-dial from the keyboard or directory and an auto-answer facility. Demon 2 will handle 1200/75 and 300/300 baud rates as well as 1200/1200 half duplex for bulk uploading. The modem can be used with any computer having a suitable interface and software, and is priced with a 25 pin connector to an RS232/423 port. Demon 2 will retail for less than £80, and more information may be obtained from Dataphone Ltd, 22 Alfric Square, Woodston, Peterborough, PE2 0JP.

ATARI SHORTFALL

At a time when Atari has announced second quarter profits of more than $13 million, they have also disclosed that there will be a substantial global shortfall of STs this year, perhaps as many as 200,000 units.

The official line from the States is that Atari had underestimated the demand, especially from the UK and German markets, and although they have increased their production capacity they have not been able to respond in time to meet the surge in demand. This is bad news for Atari UK, where a £1 million TV advertising campaign has already begun, aimed at increasing Atari’s share of the popular home computer market during the Christmas period.

To add to the problems of Atari’s national sales manager Paul Welch, are grumblings from distributors that the company only allows retailers seven days to return faulty stock, and with the time taken in distribution, unloading and checking, most cannot return computers that are dead on arrival. Atari may now consider raising the return period to 30 days, which is what Commodore offers.

CHEAP THRILLS

Micronet has recently signed up leading budget software houses CODE MASTERS and FIREBIRD to sell their products through the on-line computing service run by TELEMAP.

Both firms will be making their entire range of titles available for telesoftware and as when they are released, prices could be reduced by as much as 25% below the normal recommended retail price of £1.99. Code Masters managing director David Darling said: ‘As the best selling software house in Britain we’re always striving to look after our customers. Micronet enables us to reach many of those customers in a more effective manner.’

Meanwhile, Code Masters and the Darlings have come in for some trade press stick from Headlines PR managing director Simon Harvey for their recent spate of ‘corporate PR’ which has tended to attack Mastertronic. In Computer Trade Weekly (2 November) Harvey stated that the attack had made Code Masters ‘look completely stupid’, and that reasonable people should not behave this way.

STILL INVOLVED IN 16 BIT.

DARRYL STILL has resigned from his job as production manager with Audiogenic Software to help set up and run a new exclusively 16-bit software house.

The company, called GODAX SOFTWARE, is a subsidiary of Godax Developments which itself has recently become part of the growing Maynard International Ltd empire. MIL, who own various enterprizes including Top Ten Software, is run by Martin Maynard, the man who formed Audiogenic in its original form late in the Seventies.

Still was originally with Incentive Software before spending two years with Audiogenic, setting up the new venture: ‘I hope to establish a reputation for a premium 16-bit label with high quality, original games rather than for the Archimedes.’ But he foresees that it will probably be the New Year before Godax Software makes an impact on the market.
RAINBIRD GETS ZARCH

In our Zarch review (this issue) we state that Superior Software have no immediate plans for conversion of the first ever Acorn Archimedes game to other machines. Now last minute news reaches THE GAMES MACHINE which changes the picture.

RAINBIRD, a part of Telecomsoft, has gained the rights to David Braben's shoot-'em-up, and work has already begun on Amiga and Atari ST versions which should appear in the New Year. The move is not exactly a surprise: Braben's connection with Telecomsoft started when he co-wrote Elite for the BBC which was later sold to Telecomsoft for Spectrum, Amstrad and Commodore conversion, and released through Firebird.

OH JOY, A NEW STICK

KONIX have launched a new joystick for the Apple/Amstrad PC, the Sega and the Nintendo.

A new auto-fire version of their original Speed King is also set for release. All the new sticks will have the same basic ergonomic hand-designed which resulted in the original Speed King's popularity.


The Konix auto-fire

ATARI SHOW

Last year the first ever Atari Christmas show packed nearly 10,000 visitors into London's Horticultural Hall.

This year the show returns, bigger and better, at the Novotel, Hammersmith from 20 to 22 November. Atari UK will be present with all its latest machines and systems, as well as a team of experts to give advice.

SING A LONG A MAX VOLUME

Launched in July, VOICEOVER, a new sound system accessory, has proved to be somewhat of a hit within the teenage pop music market.

The new product may be plugged into a personal stereo, hi-fi or music centre and allows users to sing along with the tape playing while their voice is played back via headphones. Echo chamber simulation can be switched in to confuse the singer completely and two sets of 'phones may be used to allow friends to sing in harmony. Voiceover retails at £39.99 and comes in a package the size of a dual tape cassette box. Hopefully the next issue we will have one of these bop machines to review in depth, stay tuned.

WAR APOLOGY

Last issue, within the pages of our War Without Tears feature, we printed the price of the XSL Phaser Command light gun as being £25. It is in fact £49. We apologise for any inconvenience or confusion caused and promise not to do it again unless we absolutely can't help it.

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VIRGIN BUY INTO MASTERTRONIC

After several months of circulating rumours that budget software giant Mastertronic might go public comes surprise news that Virgin Vision Ltd has taken a 45% interest in Mastertronic Group Ltd.

The buy in will be managed through Virgin Publishing Ltd. To date Virgin Games has not been strongly represented in the 8-bit budget sector (other than through the Now Games compilations). Virgin publishing manager Nick Alexander said: 'This is a very exciting and substantial move for us. We have been looking for a budget market for some time and have been very impressed with Mastertronic's performance.'

The Virgin group is in an ideal position to capitalise on its varied market areas to develop a growing interest in cross-technology media including CD ROM and Interactive Audio Disc. Put simply, they will be looking to publish product where books, music, film and games software all combine into one super home entertainment package. The merging of interests with Mastertronic places Virgin strongly in the mainstream of games production to further this development.
Who's the most mischievous Playboy in the entire galaxy?....

FREDDY HARDEST

...That's Who!, and don't forget it!

You may not believe it but he's a super-sharp counter espionage agent with a big appetite for entertainment and there's nothing he enjoys more than a full blown bruise-up! Now trouble is heading his way as you help Freddy recover, after yet another crash-landing, to steal a space-craft to freedom. Take on man-eating ants, reptiles, robots, mutants and genetic throw-backs with Dinamic's latest wonderman - Freddy Hardest.

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- SPECTRUM, AMSTRAD, C16/+4 £7.95
- DISK - BBC £14.95
- MASTER COMPACT £14.95
- ATARI 8 BIT £14.95
- ST. £19.95 • AMIGA £19.95
- IBM £19.95
Welcome to THE GAMES MACHINE's first readers' letters page. May I say 'thank you' to the hundreds of people who wrote in; because of the tight page allocation I could only fit in.a handful. THE GAMES MACHINE, like other Newsfield magazines, will be devoting more space to readers' opinions as the new issue - the first monthly one. Write to: READERPAGE, THE GAMES MACHINE, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY9 1DB.

THE EDITOR

ATARI MISINFORMATION

Dear Games Machine,

Congratulations on producing a well balanced magazine. I am seriously considering replacing Computer & Video Games with your publication because of your more mature (on the whole!) attitude. I particularly liked the articles by Mel Croucher. I'd wondered what had happened to the former Automata boss - a definite plus for your magazine.

The reviews of films using computers as a theme was knowledgeable and fascinating - it jogged my memory of films I'd seen and completely forgotten about. A couple of points though: HAL in 2001: I was under the impression the letter transposition was completely intentional, and Tron was not 'unsatisfying', it was brilliant!

Simon Goodwin was misinformed (The Duel - Atari v Commodore, Issue 1) if he thought Space War was invented by Nolan Bushnell and the key to Atari's meteoric rise - Pong was the game he created and was the first true arcade machine. Also: Jack Tramiel resigned as a theme was knowledgeable and interesting reading, just like Newsfield's other mags. The reviews are excellent, but you could make the review boxes a bit more detailed. And I didn't see any adventures in the first issue. Give them more time, they may improve.

I am seriously considering buying THE GAMES MACHINE after I bought THE GAMES MACHINE after reading your first issue. Give them a chance!

Your publication because of your more balanced computer entertainment. He advocates that one review boxes a bit more detailed. And I didn't see any adventures in the first issue. Give them more time, they may improve.

I bought TGM to see if the good points of CRASH could be carried forward to a magazine covering more than one aspect of computer games. Congratulations, you have only not succeeded, but you have surpassed CRASH in many ways. You have put your main competitor, C&VG totally to shame. The two magazines cover much of the same ground, but your style is very much better, not treating your readers as morons, whilst not being too high-brow.

I especially like the comparison between different versions of a game, which show that some games may work better on some computers than others - the Spectrum version of Nexus springs to mind! The coverage of games consoles was well done, as was the Fighting Fantasy feature. It's also nice to see Mel Croucher writing for a magazine. I hope he is going to be a regular, as some of his stuff can be hilarious.

The only missing item is a section on coin-ops, but I am sure that you will include this once the mag has "found its feet".

Good luck for the future.

Jon Rose, (Editor of Enigma - Tapazine of the National Spectrum 128 User's Group), Bogner Regis, W Sussex

Thank you for your kind compliments Jon; but I wouldn't underestimate CRASH's ability to give THE GAMES MACHINE a fair crack of the whip. Clearly a machine-specific magazine can do far more justice to the needs of a user group in competition with THE GAMES MACHINE than either CRASH or Zzap! Out to graze, to provide a real alternative magazine that looks more at the game first, then its implementation on various machines. Thus we look to put things more in context for all user groups. That and hopefully giving you a good read (including coin-ops in future issues!)

MORE 16-BIT

Dear Games Machine

In your first issue there was too much on Spectrum, Amstrad and G&G and too little about Amiga, which is what I want. I was the only one to raise this issue to your offices, a lot of Amiga games are released every month. Also, all the 8-bits have their own magazine.

I admit that the coin-op reviews are a good idea, but it is very seldom you will get a chance to review a game on both 8- and 16-bit machines. You were lucky with Chessmaster and Tait-Par but in most cases the 16-bit versions are either way before or after the 8-bit. (Defender of The Crown, Wizbit).

Nathan Brazil, Denmark

You are quite right Nathan: we were told by the Launch Issue editors that no up to date 16-bit games were available for review - a little mysterious in the circumstance. I think you will find this issue redresses the balance to quite a degree. Thank you for your interesting dissertation on piracy and cracking in Denmark. Sadly, through tight space, I had to leave it out, but we may be looking at the subject on an international basis soon, and a more detailed view from you would be most welcome.

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UNITED KINGDOM

UNITED KINGDOM
**SEVERAL DROPS OF IMAGINATION IN THE OCEAN**

This time last year there were doubts over Ocean's credibility as a quality software house. This Christmas, after a year of successes, the situation is totally reversed. They have some major licences lined up, and with a heavy helping of original concepts everything looks hunky dory. What are they? Well . . .

---

**PLATOON**
Commodore 64/128, Spectrum 48/128
Amstrad CPC, Atari ST

AFTER many months of design and development, Platoon, Ocean's only Christmas film licence, looks set to be ready for the 8-bits in January and later in the spring on the Atari ST. Based upon the critically praised Orion film released earlier this year, Ocean were originally stumped at turning a manic shoot-'em-up movie into a fully fledged computer hit. But now, a few weeks before completion, Platoon looks like being one of the best games Ocean have ever devised.

Set in Vietnam, Platoon takes the player through six scenarios each with great variety of gameplay. Starting deep in the jungle with a platoon of five men, you have to negotiate a tangled maze and down into a series of waterlogged tunnels full of enemies who spring from the dark waters and attack. Escape, if you can, and you arrive back in the jungle at night — straight into the jaws of an ambush. Sending up flares provides some light for a limited time so you can spot the enemy. Finally, make your way through dark passages in rough terrain searching for Sergeant Barnes before the napalm strikes. Platoon comes in a large box packaged with the film's main theme tune on an audio cassette.

---

**COMBAT SCHOOL**
Commodore 64/128, Spectrum 48/128
Amstrad CPC

LICENSED from the Konami coin-op, it has taken a team of ten programmers three months to convert, but the effort and manpower put into this looks like it is going to pay off — but see for yourself when Combat School is released this month. Like the arcade original, Combat School takes the player through seven tests of stamina and strength with a deadly mission at the end of the training events. And they comprise an assault course, three shooting ranges, iron man race, arm wrestling and a fight against the instructor, all relying on joystick waggling power and speed — like Daley Thompson's Decathlon before it, Combat School is sure to be the cause of many broken joysticks through the Christmas holidays and a great comfort to joystick manufacturers.

---

**GRYZOR**
Commodore 64/128, Spectrum 48/128
Amstrad CPC

ANOTHER Konami conversion set for November is the out-and-out shoot-'em-up Gryzor — and a difficult one too, because of the original's amazing graphics. Infiltrate the Alien Rebels' HQ, blasting your way through level after level of death and destruction. It starts in an alien forest from which you make your way to the stronghold. There you negotiate corridors full of electric forcefields to destroy the alien heart. How has it fared? Graphically Gryzor is superb on the Amstrad CPC and there's no reason why the Commodore should be any different. The Spectrum version is obviously less colourful but plays just as well as the original.
RASTAN SAGA
Commodore 64/128, Spectrum 48/128
Amstrad CPC
BARBARIANS seem generally popular in the arcade stakes this year, so welcome please, if you will, another graphical masterpiece making his first 8-bit debut, Hunk Of The Month - Rastan the Barbarian.
In an attempt to conqueror the evil wizards, (you know the ones) Rastan crosses six lands, at the end of each lives a wizard (evil of course).
But before reaching a wizard Rastan has to deal with a series of mythological beasts, all displayed in graphical detail. Rastan would make the Master Butcher of those telly ads look generally tame, since his method of 'dealing' with them usually entails slicing their monstrous bodies to pieces in a resounding slash of gore. And as if that was not sufficient, the terrain he battles across is littered with hazards such as lava pits and crevasses (which can be crossed by swinging on vines, however). Like Gryzor, Rastan Saga is unlikely to merit the Mel Croucher Computer Game Peace Award, but at least we're dealing here with the land of myth and not that of the Nine O'Clock News.
Rastan's monumental saga commences with the game's release in December. Sadly, no news of any 16-bit plans at the moment.

WHERE TIME STOOD STILL
Spectrum 128 only
Commodore 64/128
Amstrad CPC, PC, Atari ST
Amiga
WRITTEN by Denton Designs, Where Time Stood Still is in the same atmospheric and graphical vein as their previous offering The Great Escape - the PC version of which is reviewed this issue - only the scrolling (in four diagonal directions) is faster. Incidentally, CRASH magazine readers will have already heard about this game - it had a working title of Where Time Stood Still.

Eco
Atari ST, Amiga
HAVE you ever fancied playing God? Frankenstein did, and look where it got him. But Denton Design's newest invention, Eco, provides you with the chance to do so with slightly less dramatic effect. Creature creation is the name of the game: you start out as an insect on a strange planet which is displayed in perspective with excellent wireframe graphics, striving to survive and learning to reproduce. Mating allows you to alter genes, creating a new offspring which is then under your control. The ultimate aim is to become a humanoid - but what if you change the genes after that? Find out when it is released in December.

MATCH DAY II
Spectrum 48/128, Amstrand CPC
Commodore 64, Amstrad PCW
MATCH DAY when originally released in mid-1985 was the most exciting soccer simulation/game devised for a home micro. Now, it is action-replaying on our screens with advanced game-play, more moves, more animation and generally a whole lot better thanks to the inimitable Jon Ritman and Bernie Drummond, creators of the original, who say they are 'head over heels' with the result. Match Day II should, and that's a very indefinite 'should', be out early in 1988. 48K and 128, Spectrum, Amstrad CPC and Atari ST.

Tynesoft
IT IS called placing your bets on all runners. What is Winter Olympiad 88, that's what. The line-up includes Spectrum, Amstrad CPC, C16/plus 4, Commodore 64/128, Amiga, DR, Electron, Master, ST and Amiga. Prew! With six events - slalom, downhill racing, bob sled, biathlon and speed skating, Winter Olympiad should be reaching the shops in festive spirit by mid-November.
ARCANA

YOU may remember they brought you the 8-bit monster trivia quiz Power Play last year and now it’s nearly ready for the ST and Amiga as well as a new title called Mars Cops. Power Play involves four teams of lowly mythological beasts trying desparately to become high and mighty by answering trivia questions and moving across a board killing each other. Arcana say there are some additional sections being included although we have no details on those yet.

From the pursuit of the trivial to that of criminals: Mars Cops split into three phases; UFOs are invading the solar system and they have reached outpost Mars. As a copper on the beat, yours is the task of chasing and destroying them. Soaring in a Martian canal, you must guide a space fighter through treacherous terrain in pursuit of a UFO and with only one missile you have to make sure that the first hit is dead on as the standard lasers only stun.

A time limit is imposed for the first section, and when it runs out the UFO lifts off and flies into deep space. Once again you can chase it before returning to the surface in phase three to land and refuel just in time to catch the next invading UFO.

Mars Cops, for both the ST and Amiga, should be finished by the time you read this.

CARRIER COMMAND

Rainbird

8-BIT owners can drool over the solid 3-D graphics of Driller this Christmas, but there is no need for 16-bit users to feel left out thanks to Rainbird and their latest the solid 3-D Carrier Command.

Set around an archipelago of 64 islands in the none too-distant future, you take control of a futuristic Weapons Carrier, similar to the aircraft carriers of today but with a complement of amphibious tanks as well as jets and missiles on board. The objective is to clear the islands of their defence systems, which are very similar to your own, and any invading force. The carrier is equipped with four jets and four tanks all of which can be armed from the weapons store. From the take off point on the carrier the jets can fly around and explore the archipelago - all displayed in animated solid 3-D. If, however, you don’t want to fly the jets it is possible to preset their flight paths and send them out unmanned. The same applies to the tanks.

In a similar way the carrier can be navigated by preset coordinates while you embark upon a secondary mission in a jet or tank. To give an overall view of the archipelago a map is provided, and on standard display the islands are shown as small blobs or just dots. However, by zooming into the map the islands can be looked at in close detail, with information provided on the name and location of islands. After using the map and having set the course a telescope can be used to magnify the view of the surrounding area by up to x8.

The island’s defences will send out forces which may attack either the jets, tanks or go straight for the heart and attack the carrier. Your forces are equipped with onboard cannon. Calling up the damage report screen shows how much has been suffered after an enemy strike; repairs can then begin.

Carrier Command is currently being programmed by Realtime Software on the ST and Amiga, and with their track record for producing semi-solid 3-D graphics, Carrier Command should be no problem. 8-bit versions are planned for 1988, but to retain the game’s playing speed, these will probably feature wireframe 3-D.
journeying. However, after soldiers, and it is their power to control the community of workers like constructions. 'Starcells' inhabited aliens who exist in hive-units in an unknown sector of the galaxy, straying too near a black hole, the Hunter gets warped to an unknown place. Hunters, a large spacecraft, is weirdly effective for an shoot-'em-up for Atari ST. But why 'World', when it all takes place in Italy?

**THALAMUS**

**AT LAST,** a product which isn't written by Finnish Stavros Fasoulas. The next release is Martin Walker's *Hunter's Moon,* a weirdly effective shoot-’em-up for the Commodore 64/128 only.

*Hunter’s Moon* is a place, rather like Brookside or Coronation Street, and it is there that the Hunter, a large space craft, journeys. However, after straying too near a black hole, the Hunter gets warped to an unknown sector of the galaxy inhabited by different Starcell colonies. Featuring full screen multi-directional scrolling, 128 levels across 1000 screens and a Loopspace trainer, *Hunter’s Moon* should be ready some time in November at £9.99. Meanwhile, everyone wish Stavros a happy, and very white, Christmas on the borders where he’s helping defend Finland against the Russians.

**GREMLIN GRAPHICS**

Christmas stocking filler games have been a respectable idea since Gargoyle Games did so well with *Sweevo’s World.* Now it’s time for Gremlin graphics to go wacky for Christmas with their *Alternative World Games,* a bizarre collection of stupendously odd events.

Your host, a parrot, takes the players sack-racing in Naples, boot-throwing at the Colosseum, pole-climbing in Verona and running-up-walls in Venice. *Alternative World Games* is out now for the Commodore, but a bit later for Spectrum, Amstrad and Atari ST. But why 'World', when it all takes place in Italy?

**ELECTRONIC ARTS**

Three forthcoming titles for Commodore 64/128 are *Demon Stalker,* *Test Drive* and *Skate Or Die,* the last two also appearing on the Amiga.

*Demon Stalker* is a Gauntlet variant with a menu-driven construction set included, offering 99 levels of mazes with Calvrek the Demon waiting on level 100. On the Amiga first, and later the Commodore, *Test Drive* is a yuppie simulation which lets you fantasise that you are at the wheel of the world’s top sports cars from a Ferrari to a Lamborghini. The object is to get from jet-setting A to nouveau riche B in a restricted time limit whilst avoiding other drivers and those two major road hazards, falling rocks and the police.

*Skate Or Die* is of a similar theme to *720*]. There are five different skateboarding competitions over three tracks — ramp freestyle, downhill race and ramp hill jump. Real fun for all the family, as they say, as up to eight players can partake at any one time.

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**Technical Specifications**

- **Layflat:**
  - *Engine type:* In-line 6-cylinder
  - *Displacement:* 3299 cc
  - *Compression ratio:* 8.8:1
  - *BHP:* 212
  - *Torque:* 270 lb-ft
  - *Transmission:* 4 speed manual
  - *Power steering:* Yes
  - *Transmission type:* 4-speed manual
  - *Top speed:* 130 mph
  - *Brakes:* discs, 16" front, 14" rear
  - *Tyres:* Dunlop SP Extra (rear), 245/55VR-16
  - *Acceleration:* 6.9 s
  - *Top speed:* 130 mph
  - *Lateral Acceleration:* 0.75 g

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**Craft Ratio:** 7.8:1

**Braking from:**

- *80 mph:* 245 ft
- *60 mph:* 88 ft
- *40 mph:* 83 ft

**Performance Figures:**

- *Top speed:* 130 mph
- *0-40 mph:* 8.4s
- *0-60 mph:* 11.3s
- *0-80 mph:* 15.5s

**Engine Details:**

- *BHP:* 212
- *Torque:* 270 lb-ft

**Transmission:**

- *Type:* 4-speed manual
- *Speeds:* 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th
- *Gear ratios:* 4.1:1, 2.72:1, 1.89:1, 1.47:1

**Tyres:**

- *Front:* 245/55VR-16
- *Rear:* 245/45VR-16

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**PREVIEWS**

- *Finnish Graphic Collection*
- *Alternative World Games*
- *Gremlin Graphics*
- *Electronic Arts*
DOMARK

AFTER being quite secretive about it when they secured the licence, Domark are ready to release their coin-op conversion of the Atari Star Wars, which originally stood proudly in the arcades of four years ago. We've been playing the almost complete Atari ST game, and it is a creditably accurate translation, right down to Luke and Obi Wan's digitised voices (or is that really Jeffrey Archer in there?)?

In three stages, the venerable wireframe Star Wars takes you hurtling through space towards the Death Star madly pursued by — and madly pursuing — Empire fighters, across the surface of the Death Star, blasting turrets and laser emplacments, and finally plunging down into the equatorial trench towards the exhaust duct.

Star Wars is set for release at the end of November on Spectrum, Commodore, Amstrad, BBC and Atari ST at £9.99 on cassette, £12.95 for Commodore and BBC diskette and £14.95 for ST and Amstrad diskette.

ELITE

THE CLASSIC coin-op Space Harrier, minus hydraulic chair, comes to the Atari ST in November, nearly a year after its 8-bit release. Taking control of a Space Harrier — a hi-tech pilot of the future, equipped with a jet-pack and an ultra-gun — the objective is to rid a planet of invading fantasy aliens.

Split into 18 levels, the planet surface scrolls towards you at quite an alarming rate while the aliens fly at you at an even more alarming rate. To complete a level a dragon swoops in and twists around the screen; several shots are needed to dispense with the foul creature.

The almost complete ST Space Harrier we have seen gets closest to the arcade machine graphically, they are solid and equally as detailed and colourful. If the animation remains as fast as it is in the preview version, then ST Space Harrier looks set to be a 16-bit Christmas winner.

CRL

AFTER Electronic Arts took over their distribution, CRL's products were slightly delayed, but here comes another another batch of healthy releases kicking off with the graphically impressive Jet Boys. They are on a suicide mission to a bizarre planet, battling alien forces through a horizontally scrolling landscape. On each level there's a mammoth adversary with a distinct armory to deal with. Playing solo, or as a suicide pact with a comrade, Jet Boys looks like a smart shoot-'em-up for November on the Commodore 64/128.

Also for the Commodore is I, Alien starring an alien who wouldn't hurt an intergalactic fly. Humans have arrived on his planet after a nuclear war, and want to take the alien back as a specimen to breed a new food source. Not wanting to be turned into Alien Hotpot, his only chance is to head through the maze of tunnels, find the escape pod, not forgetting to deactivate the time bomb before he leaves.

Other CBM64 titles include Mandroid, sequel to Cyborg, and Life Force which involves the destruction of an orbiting power station that has taken on a life of its own.

Finally, and perhaps most notoriously, there's the first British computer game to get an X-rating — Jack The Ripper, an adventure written by the ladies of St Brides.

The graphics, as you can see from the screenshot, are pretty gruesome. How did the poor ladies cope? Find out on page 23 where Groucher of the delicate sensibility chats with them.

QUICKSILVA

PAC'S BACK! shout the hoardings, computer nasties are out, no more barbarians slashing Page Three girls to bits with Black-and-Decker 7" circular-saws — no, it's back to roots with a new Pac Man game called Pac Land licensed from the Namco-Atari arcade machine.

Set on Pac's island home, the story revolves around the kind-hearted orange segment's desire to help a lost fairy return to Fairyland. Constantly pursued by his erstwhile paranormal ghost opponents, Blinky, Pinky, Inky and Clyde, Pac's objective is to make his way through different landscapes, return the fairy and then potter back home to Mrs Pac.

The storyline is, of course, as sickeningly sweet as a fairyground candyfloss, but Quicksilva promise that the game is a tough nut to crack.

Pac Land on Commodore 64/128, Spectrum, Amstrad CPC, MSX, Atari ST and Amiga, should be out in time for Christmas.
Knightmare the computer game uniquely combines the best elements of traditional adventuring with some hot arcade action and provides puzzles and riddles of a varying nature not found before in computer games.

Mail Order: Activision (UK) Ltd, Units 3 & 4 Lloyds Close, Finedon Road Industrial Estate, Wellingborough, Northampton NN8 4SR. Tel: (0933) 76768


ACTIVISION
WHERE THERE'S YUK THERE'S BRASS

In the second of his industry analyses, Mel Croucher leaves the seamy side of software sex and gets to grips with computerised violence.

The use of fantasy to accept and master aggression is essential in human development.

SUSAN VAS DIAS

In the beginning was pingpong, which begat the shoot-'em-up, which begat the beat-'em-up, which begat the computer-nastiness, and there was a wailing and a gnashing of teeth, and the multitude was sore afraid that profits were about to go right down the lavatory pan. And verily, as I write this, the state of the best selling games software titles breaks down something like this:

**SO-CALLED BUDGET TITLES**
- Competitive Sport Simulations: 40%
- Violent Conflict Simulations: 28%
- Games of Incidental Violence: 20%
- Certifiable ‘Computer Nasties’: 08%
- Others: 04%

**SO-CALLED FULL-PRICE TITLES**
- Violent Conflict Simulations: 42%
- Competitive Sport Simulations: 26%
- Games of Incidental Violence: 14%
- Certifiable ‘Computer Nasties’: 14%
- Others: 04%

Like it or not, those of us who create, flog, or play computer games are participants in an industry based on the packaging and selling of products the overwhelming majority of which encourage young people to indulge in electronic acts of violence on little screens.

In putting together this collection of other people's opinions, I have tried hard to keep my own feelings off the page. Instead I have gathered the recorded voices of some of the most influential and respected people in British games software and thrown in the odd psychotherapist, very odd literary giant, and supremely odd mate of mine. The following transcriptions were all taken long after the Government, press, and sundry loudmouths made knee-jerk reactions to the Hungerford massacre. Everyone has had time to think long and hard about violence in computer games, and the purpose of this survey is to make THE GAMES cringe.

The overwhelming majority of which begat the computer-nasties, which begat the beat-'em-up, which begat the shoot-'em-up, and there was a wailing and a gnashing of teeth, and the multitude was sore afraid that profits were about to go right down the lavatory pan. But first a message from a few guys who couldn't quite make the interviews:

- 'HE WHO LIVES BY THE SWORD SHALL DIE BY THE SWORD' (Jesus) ('C'MON FUNK, MAKE MY DAY') (Dirty Harry)
- 'THERE ARE TWO CERTAINTIES IN LIFE, SEX AND DEATH' (Woody Allen)
- 'NOTHING IS GOING TO MAKE THE LION LIE DOWN WITH THE LAMB - UNLESS THE LAMB IS INSIDE' (D H Lawrence)

...is Principal Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist at St Barts Hospital, London, in other words she's a shrink. So let her kick off the debate with her superior knowledge about what makes us kids tick.

Take it away Susan:

Aggression is innate in all human beings. All too often children are raised to feel that their angry, violent feelings are naughty and wrong. The use of fantasy to accept and master aggression is essential in human development. When (fantasy) characters are 'bonked', 'bombed' and 'smacked' but survive unharmed, children learn that their angry, violent wishes and feelings don't damage and are a normal part of themselves. Destructive events, such as cats killing birds and people killing fish to fantasies about violent human encounters, can be observed in all children's play, very early.

Personally, I think that's hogwash when applied to computer nasties, but I'm not going to include my opinions, am I? Except to say that the difference between cats and kids is something to do with the power of reason, speech and so-called civilisation. Ho hum. Who's next? Why, if it isn't the man who inspired me to start writing computer games all those years ago.

**SIR CLIVE SINCLAIR**

**Mel** - Talk to me about the best-selling computer games played on the computers you originally conceived.

**Clive** - I'm very sad to see the current crop of games that glorify violence, very sad. It's a very unwise development, it's alarming.

**Mel** - Look into your crystal ball.

**Clive** - Games are getting more realistic, and this trend will continue as new machines come out with more powerful graphics. The last thing computers should be used for is to simulate violence between human beings. Aliens, monsters, that's a joke, and can be seen as such, but I am sure that certain games are a corrupting influence. A Tragedy.

**Mel** - Those are very strong words, 'corrupting', 'tragedy'. Do you think your technology is abused?

**Clive** - It is a bad use of it, absolutely, yes. Let's not mince words - that means abuse.

**Mel** - Would you, no, could you try to stop youngsters from using your machines to play violent games?

**Clive** - I would try to dissuade them, yes. I want you to write that in your article.

**Mel** - But isn't the profit motive so strong that software houses will develop more and more violent games?

**Clive** - The day will come, and maybe not very far away, when the law steps in. It has in Germany already.

**Mel** - You mean their banning of Barbarian?

**Clive** - Yes indeed. And I think such things will be banned here before long. Sad, because I don't like censorship at all.

**Mel** - You'd like to see self-restraint as opposed to the law getting involved?

**Clive** - Manufacturers should respect their customers. Very soon, with developments in laser disks, things are going to get much more realistic, more gory.

**Mel** - But do you believe people won't be able to separate reality from imaginary experiences?

**Clive** - It is a worry I don't honestly know. Yes, it's my fear. Whether you agree with Sinclair or not.
not, his picture of the next stage in computer simulators is very bleak, indeed, the sort of stuff that sf writers have been predicting for decades, where people lose themselves inside weird and often horrific fantasies. So what makes people like me continue to develop 'entertainments' with the potential to backfire like this? I want my work to be as 'realistic' a fantasy as possible, so do most others.

IAN STEWART...

...is the boss of the highly successful Gremlin Graphics outfit. I paid him a visit.

MEL - I've just won Second Prize in your Charles Bronson Deathwish 3 lookalike compo. Do I really look like a killer?

IAN - Congratulations! You didn't win because you smiled. Bronson never smiles.

MEL - I'm not surprised, carrying all those firearms around with him, his back must be killing him. Anyway, thanks very much, what do I win?

IAN - One Philips CD mid-system will be arriving at your front door very soon, probably in bits.

MEL - Bronson, Deathwish 3, Hungerford, sick.

IAN - Oh. I see. Sex is okay, but violence is out.

MEL - Sure, I believe that, that's fine with me. People can have a bonk after watching bonking films, but what about Bernard Geltz who gunned down people in the subway after watching Bronson do it on screen, or Michael Ryan who dressed up as Rembo and killed 16 people at random?

IAN - (long pause) I had every opportunity to maximise the coverage I could have got from the Hungerford massacre. We didn't speak to anybody. Nobody at all. Not even you, Mel. And that's the way it stands at the moment.

MEL - Presumably you've been approached personally to comment.

IAN - It would have been ideal as a promotion, but there is no way I'm going to use or abuse anything as tragic as that.

MEL - Will you be withdrawing Deathwish 3?

IAN - It's still in the shops, and as with any software product, it really hasn't got that much of a long life. Neither had Michael Ryan. I suppose the best known pacifist in Britain is the next person I talked to:

MONSIGNOR BRUCE KENT...

...is a personal chum of Billy Bragg, Pope John Paul II, myself and other holy men. He came down for a visit.

"Mel Croucher expects that many readers think he's a hypocritical cynic for accepting the Deathwish 3 competition prize from Gremlin Graphics. Before you write in, Mel has told us that yes, he is a hypocritical cynic, but he has turned the Philips CD mid-system into three years of education for the eight-year-old child of an acquaintance, thanks to Action Aid. The child's name is Ashwathappa, and he doesn't care one iota about violence in computer games. He's too busy trying not to starve.

Sir Clive Sinclair, has his ZX Spectrum computer become a festering wound of corruption?

recently, and over a glass of wine, (but no communion wafers), we took a look at Deathwish 3.

MEL - What sort of games did you play as a child?

BRUCE - Produce games on a non-sexual basis, where your skill is about getting people out of danger, not murdering them.

MEL - Mild-mannered Lucy Kent from the planet Krypton?

BRUCE - Rescuing a crashed aircraft, stop the assassination of Martin Luther King, there are so many alternatives. Why is the sense of challenge perverted like this? These games don't create violence, they ARE violent; full stop.

MEL - Don't you like computers very much?

BRUCE - We call 'security' being willing to murder millions of people - we sell weapons to anyone - but computers are neutral like any technology. It's how you use them. Like the telephone, you can plot a murder on it, you can plan a wedding on it, a computer itself is just neutral.

MEL - Always?

BRUCE - Except when I played computer tennis. It thrashed me. Non-violently of course!

Monsignor Bruce Kent, personal chum of Pope John-Paul

outrageous. As a game I think it is a very, very dangerous perversion. It puts the idea into kid's minds that they can ignore the law, and sort people out by murdering them. We try to build a world of law, justice and judicial procedures, and this bypasses all of that. It turns a killer into a hero. Why aren't heroes champions of non-violence?

MEL - Mild-mannered Bruce Kent from the planet Krypton?

BRUCE - Seriously, I feel quite ill looking at this, I think it's dreadful. I think that the difference between this illusion and the reality of people going out on a killing spree is getting thinner and thinner all the time.

MEL - Give me evidence of that.

BRUCE - Nobody pays for the personal advertising poster I've got here unless it has results. I don't have any personal evidence. I certainly know of kids who have hung themselves after seeing it on TV, I read back in the '70s of casual violence on our streets, I just can't believe these games DO NOT affect people's behaviour!

MEL - This sort of game is about 'winning' about being aggressive, a world of male dominance. How can this stereotype be broken?

JEFF MINTER

If Monsignor Kent's opinions were predictable, meeting with the old llama-head is never predictable:

MEL - If we can stop dancing a minute, give me words of wisdom about violence in your computer games.

JEFF - What do you reckon to the new Floyd, man?

MEL - Better than the new Roger Waters.

JEFF - I don't know, man, it depends which mood I'm in. Floyd are Megagods, let's have a party, man.

MAN, er... MEL - Talk about violence or I'll hit you.

JEFF - Yeah, love it. I've got some really heavy shoot-'em-ups. But I want to be abstract. Blobs, camels, I don't like games where you kill men, I hate it when they go 'seaaaaurgh!'. Can't relate to that. I like a good violent shoot-'em-up, but it's got to be abstract violence. Guns are bad news.

MEL - Guns in computer games are bad news? You mean for children?

JEFF - It's distasteful personally. I don't know how it affects children. For me it's bad news. I don't want no gut exploding.
WAS SO UPHET BY SOME OF THE SCENES, I STOPPED PROGRAMMING FOR A WHILE...  
PRISCILLA OF ST BRIDES

PRISCILLA & MARIANNE
  of St Bride's.

MEL - Tell me why you've done Jack the Ripper?

PRISCILLA - He was a most unpleasant character, except that there was more than one of him.

MARIANNE - Two sugars please.

MEL - That's very bad for you. So is ripping the bowels out of women. I find that offensive.

PRISCILLA - Most people do don't they? We don't look at the pictures when we play the game. Rather unpleasant.

MEL - But it's equally unpleasant without the pictures.

PRISCILLA - As a matter of fact we don't read the gory bits either. Seriously, I was so upset by some of the scenes, I stopped programming for a while.

MARIANNE - We programmed it with our eyes open, but we play it with our eyes shut.

MEL - You've gone a long way from The Snow Queen haven't you?

PRISCILLA - No, it's exactly the same theme, the battle between Good and Evil.

MEL - Sorry, but I see a conflict here. You've done a piece of work, presumably for money, yet you can't bear to watch or read the violent bits yourselves. What about your little girl admirers?

PRISCILLA - Alfred Hitchcock favoured the kind of horror which makes you break out in a cold sweat, rather than the kind that makes you lose your breakfast. And I agree with him.

MEL - You haven't answered my question. Hitchcock-watching is a passive 'entertainment'; playing your Jack The Ripper is active participation.

MARIANNE - One doesn't take part in the violence; no attacking, murder, disembowelling. We don't approve of games where you play the killer.

PRISCILLA - Firstly, you are mistaken for the Ripper, then you pit your wits against him, or rather them. In actual fact, the Ripper is a satanic cult, not mad, quite sane ritual murderers.

MEL - Sane murders? Come on now!

PRISCILLA - Politics and black magic are closely connected, aren't they?

MEL - Why are you wearing two black veils?

PRISCILLA - I'm in mourning for Civilization, Al Gore. (At this point CRL boss CLEM CHAMBERS pops up from under the table)

CLEM - Jack The Ripper is not a video nasty. Those things are as horrible as they possibly can be. Our graphics are not the point of the game, they add to the atmosphere. A world without order, without reason, without justice, that's a video nasty. Don't forget our product will have a Censor's Certificate.

MEL - That is a very important point. Vital in fact. Whatever the software industry says, games now come under the law of the land.

PRISCILLA - I think Jack The Ripper is going to have an over-21 Certificate, the first product to get one. I think. And I'm glad about that. Yes, we do have a lot of little girls who follow our games, ages seven to twelve. I'd HATE to think of them misguidedly buying The Ripper.

I left the ladies of St Brides to the tender loving care of the Sunday tabloid reporters and congratulated the biggest man in software...

KEVIN TOMS
(Well, you try sharing a seat with a giant like Kevin).

MEL - I see the monitors have finally got to you. How long have you been wearing contact lenses?

KEVIN - Half couple of years now, but not as a result of the screens. I wore glasses before.

MEL - I can't think of any product you've been involved with that features overt violence.

KEVIN - A tactical section in President, but you're right, not even in the violence; no attacking, murder, disembowelling. We don't approve of games where you play the killer.

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KEVIN - A tactical section in President, but you're right, not even in the violence; no attacking, murder, disembowelling. We don't approve of games where you play the killer.

MEL - Firstly, you are mistaken for the Ripper, then you pit your wits against him, or rather them. In actual fact, the Ripper is a satanic cult, not mad, quite sane ritual murderers.

MEL - Sane murders? Come on now!

PRISCILLA - Politics and black magic are closely connected, aren't they?

MEL - Why are you wearing two black veils?

PRISCILLA - I'm in mourning for Civilization, Al Gore. (At this point CRL boss CLEM CHAMBERS pops up from under the table)

CLEM - Jack The Ripper is not a video nasty. Those things are as horrible as they possibly can be. Our graphics are not the point of the game, they add to the atmosphere. A world without order, without reason, without justice, that's a video nasty. Don't forget our product will have a Censor's Certificate.

MEL - That is a very important point. Vital in fact. Whatever the software industry says, games now come under the law of the land.

PRISCILLA - I think Jack The Ripper is going to have an over-21 Certificate, the first product to get one. I think. And I'm glad about that. Yes, we do have a lot of little girls who follow our games, ages seven to twelve. I'd HATE to think of them misguidedly buying The Ripper.

I left the ladies of St Brides to the tender loving care of the Sunday tabloid reporters and congratulated the biggest man in software...

KEVIN TOMS
(Well, you try sharing a seat with a giant like Kevin).

MEL - I see the monitors have finally got to you. How long have you been wearing contact lenses?

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I don't need to run a business, and I'm free to program what I want. It's my profession, and I don't need to use overt violence at all. Look at Codemasters, they sell squillons without resorting to computer nasties.

Which is exactly where I will look next.

**DAVID & RICHARD DARLING . . .**

... are the fraternal leaders of the Codemasters empire.

**MEL** - Have you, are you or will you ever be involved with violent computer games?

**RICHARD** - We have shoot-'em-ups, but we don't involve people. Shapeless blobs and spaceships have no connection with real life. It doesn't make players more violent.

**MEL** - If you were approached to publish or write a Rambo or a Barbarian where you murder people that get in your way, what would you do?

**RICHARD** - We haven't ever done that.

**MEL** - What if they paid you lots of money? Lots and lots.

**DAVID** - (long pause) I think we would say no. We're coming up with loads of games that get in your way. What would you do?

**RICHARD** - I think it does affect people subtly. It might just push someone over the edge. Computer games are more interactive than videos, you get involved, especially, as David said, when you have two players against one another. They shout and swear all the time. It's a lot closer to real life than a space shoot-'em-up. If we were to change our graphics so you're killing babies, it would make a lot of difference. It's the images that are important.

**MEL** - What about advertising graphics? What about Rygar or a saw blade ripping through human guts?

**DAVID** - We don't like to criticise our competitors, but I don't want to do things like that. We have a certain responsibility to our customers. We are aware of their age and how they can be influenced.

**MEL** - You take this very seriously, don't you?

**RICHARD** - We think of all the aspects when we buy a product, yes, is it good enough and is it the type of product we want to be associated with in our range?

**MEL** - Do you play violent computer games?

**DAVID** - In all honesty, no. Not since the original Melbourne House Karate game.

**RICHARD** - And that wasn't too violent. They've got a whole lot worse since then, haven't they?

Well, folks I'm taking away valuable space from revoting adverts, and reviews of gruesome games, so just one more interview. And who better than the Supremo of Sickos, the furnace inside the Power House, the soft and cuddly . . .

**ASHLEY HILDEBRANDT**


**ASHLEY** - Be gentle with me, Mel. It was extremely unfortunate. We didn't plan it, but the press release got to them the day after Hungerford. People went apeshit, simple as that. The Star ran a piece saying that these kinds of computer games are turning people's minds, corrupting youth. Bloody Hall.

**MEL** - And, as usual, they hadn't seen the game, I know, it's happened to me. But isn't all publicity good publicity?

**ASHLEY** - In a sense, yes, but God forbid you think we'd want to trade on anything like Hungerford.

**MEL** - What if the game had been like Rambo?

**ASHLEY** - I'd have pulled it then and there.

**MEL** - You told me once that the most violent thing in Soft And Cuddly is bursting bubbles.

**ASHLEY** - Right. This game is non-violent. John Jones who wrote it is, um, 'eccentric'. He did Go To Hell for Activation yonks ago, and in this one you've got to find the various bits of your dead mother, who's been chopped up, bits, stuffed in the fridge, and on so on.

**MEL** - And that's non-violent. God help us if you ever go violent!

**ASHLEY** - It's warped, but I was very upset by the Hungerford flak we picked up. Very.

**MEL** - Your poster might suggest that Soft And Cuddly is somewhat violent. A pile of severed heads dripping blood?

**ASHLEY** - I suppose so; hahaha, you've got to sell the product, haven't you?

**MEL** - Trades Descriptive Act? This is a violent poster selling a non-violent game?

**ASHLEY** - The poster implies gory violence. The creature's found a pile of heads and he's saying: 'Is this my mother?'

**MEL** - How's your Mum, Ashley?

**ASHLEY** - She's alright, bit of trouble with her ear at the moment.

**MEL** - In the fridge, is it?

**ASHLEY** - Seriously, I have published violent games, we all have, except yourself. But I would not run something like Rambo. I do think the publisher has got to be responsible. Soft And Cuddly is fantasy, something like Deathwish 3 is a no-no. Personally, I would never do it. You can quote me.
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The next 38 pages are the core of THE GAMES MACHINE, where you will find the most informative and detailed selection of games reviews in any multi-user computer magazine, with games not just reviewed on one machine - but every version. And if a version is not completed, we will do our best to tell you about its progress. No longer do you have to read a Spectrum game review in anticipation, only to discover that when it is published for your IBM PC it turns out to be entirely different and less satisfying - we will tell you about each version as and when we see it.

VERSION UPDATES

And when a version which has already been reviewed on other machines is finished we will give you the full low down and rating in a Version Update. In the first issue of THE GAMES MACHINE, Version Updates were in a section of their own, but from now on, you will find them treated as reviews in the main section which follows.

THE EXPANDING PC

And talking of PC compatibles, you will find three reviews of PC games - and there are more lined up for the next issue. The market for PC games is growing but Mirrorsoft say that it is 'a market that hasn't really sorted itself out.'

For the recently converted Defender Of The Crown, Mirrorsoft hope to sell 2,500 copies. Meanwhile, Ocean appear quite happy: 'We're pleased with the initial reaction,' comments sales manager Paul Patterson, 'and we're continuing to support it with Arkanoid, which is just released.'

So, which games are worth writing on your Christmas shopping list? To help you find out THE GAMES MACHINE reviewing team this month consists of Nik Wild, Robin Hogg, Richard Eddy, Mark Rothwell and Robin Candy.
NEW BALLS PLEASE!
THE BREAKOUT GAME

Balls are a bit ‘in’ at the moment. Especially, it would appear, when they are smashing multicoloured bricks to pieces. Breakout clones are suddenly appearing in vast quantities and spreading faster than Wordstar or Knight Lore clones did. Richard Eddy gives a personal run-down...

Taito, the company which produced the corks coin-op Arkanoid, are probably to blame for unleashing the craze, and then Ocean for producing a series of very competent conversions for the home micros. The ST version is undoubtedly the superior, retaining all of the arcade’s original features – if it wasn’t for the small screen you could almost think it was the arcade original. Imagine having just released it for the IBM PC.

Following in Ocean’s footsteps came Gremlin’s Knockout, which was somewhat jollier but slower. Gremlin’s home micros. The ST version was the arcade original. Imagine having just released it for the IBM PC.

Not to be outdone Elite shoved in their fourpenneth in the shape of Batty, which now features on Hit Pak 2. Written by an ex-Ultimate programmer, Batty is polished and showed greater graphical sophistication than Arkanoid. And then everyone breathed a sigh of relief thinking that it was over...

Not on your nelly!’ shouted Audiogenic, Alligata, Pirate and CRL in unison, all proffering their latest versions which are: Impact, Addictaball, Smash Out! and Ball Breaker.

Apart from the games, comparing inlay storylines proves most interesting. Pirate’s budget Smash Out! goes for a desperately-try-to-be-convincing story where the bat is supposed to be a spaceship lost in space and bricks are blobs of plasma, while Ball Breaker claims the ball is some chappie called Ovoid on a mission of annihilation. Personally I prefer Impact’s ‘Trapped in a 1970s arcade machine...’ or Alligata’s straight for the throat approach with ‘...I have difficulty imagining a bat is a spaceship... so let’s call things a bat, ball and bricks – it’s much easier!’ And so it is.

I think you can quite happily disregard Smash Out!; it is little more than a poor man’s Arkanoid with measly graphics, nauseous sound and the addictiveness of drying paint. Okay, so it may have screen designer thrown in, but even this is fiddly to use and does nothing to push up Smash Out!’s credibility.

NOVELTY

There’s a lesson to learn here – if you are going to produce a clone you have to do it very well, or devise a novel twist on the formula. Which is what CRL did with Ball Breaker, originally released for the Amstrad CPC range, it took Breakout into 3-D and worked well with some great sound effects and a colourful layout. Ball Breaker is just released for the Spectrum and retains its playability – although to avoid colour clash the monochromatic graphics can make it difficult to see exactly where to position your bat. Complete with all the typical features, it also includes a laser gun which stays with you throughout the game. Ball Breaker adds up to a worthwhile buy if you fancy a different twist on the rest - and soon to be available on the Atari ST and Amiga.

Audiogenic, quiet for some time, return to our 16-bit screens with the elaborate Impact for the Atari ST and Amiga (and hopefully soon for the Spectrum and Commodore 64/128). Impact is quite the connoisseur’s Arkanoid cleverly knocked off by some great sounds from 16-bit, utilising colour very well and sharp definition to add that extra bit of class to the aliens.

THE LARGEST

What gives it that little extra push is the novel way in which features, such as lasers, bat expand and catch are collected – à la Nemesis. Yellow tokens spin down from selected bricks when destroyed and, if collected, are stored in the power select pad at the bottom left-hand corner of the screen. Pressing the mouse button when one is collected makes the ball slow down, collecting two and then pressing the button gives you the catch effect and so on through divide (3 balls), expand, torch (to see hidden bricks), laser, smart bomb (to destroy aliens), missile and forcefield, which doesn’t have the rebound effect off bricks, but simply continues to smash its way round the screen until hitting a wall where it bounces off.

With 80 screens and 48 more you can design yourself using the easy-to-use screen designer. Impact definitely wins my approval as being the best just for sheer addictiveness.

But coming a close second is Addictaball from Audiogenic, which doesn’t quite make it to the very top for the simple reason that it falls down on presentation and graphics. The use of colour is very dull on the first levels – mainly greys, greens, and blues used for the bricks and surroundings – which doesn’t do much to create an exciting atmosphere.

However, Addictaball proves to be quite novel in the way the bricks slowly scroll down the screen in one long trail – it’s great saving grace. The trail can prove to be frustrating when, having died, you are returned to the beginning, or one of the internal stages within a level. Two weapons, laser gun and...
### AVAILABILITY AND RATINGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Game</th>
<th>Platform/Price</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IMPACT (Audiogenic)</td>
<td>Atari ST (£14.95) 91%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMASH OUT! (Pirate)</td>
<td>Spectrum (£1.99) 15%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARKANOID (Ocean)</td>
<td>Spectrum (£7.95) 71%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BATTY (On Hit Pak 2 by Elite)</td>
<td>Spectrum (£7.95) 87%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADDICTABALL (Alligata)</td>
<td>Spectrum (£1.99) 15%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STOP PRESS! No relief breathing yet! We have just received Reflex from Players priced at £1.99 for the MSX...!</td>
<td></td>
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"Impact definitely wins my approval as being the best just for sheer addictiveness."

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**ERIK: PHANTOM OF THE OPERA**

**CHEZ RONNIE**

**ZCV OR NOT ZCV WHY DOES ZEE QUESTION ZEE'S MIND A SICK MIND TO WASTE.**

**BUT ZAT EES IMPOSSIBLE! LE JEEV OR CAR HAS NOT BEEN INVENTED YET MASSEUR!**

**BUT I HAVE INVENTED A MIRACULOUS TRANSPORT CALLED ZEE SCRAPETE BOARD. I AM SHOWER ZAT IT WILL EXIST IN MFOAR DAY. UNFORTUNATELY I AVANT INVENTED ZEE DRAMIS YET...**

---

**THE WOAMAH AT THE TABU. WASS'MORE IN FORM ACTIVE...**

---

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---

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thruster (which allows you to move up and down the screen) can be collected at the very beginning, though they have to be replenished frequently by hitting the correct bricks.

Along the bottom of the screen is a barrier preventing the ball from disappearing but this gradually gets destroyed by the shower of fireballs which come down the screen, unless the fireballs are destroyed with the bat before they reach the bottom. There are cars, bikes and the like to be battered along the way which, if nothing else, adds a bit of humour to the game.

So, now what? Do we dare breathe a sigh of relief or is the next parcel we open going to be Revenge Of The Mutant Bouncing Balls From Jupiter...?
**PHANTOM CLUB**

**Imagine**

**usko Dimitrijevic** is a name to be reckoned with, if only because it is difficult to pronounce. This young programmer comes from Yugoslavia, and the first major game he wrote, *M.O.V.I.E.*, was a huge hit. That was in March 1986 and we have had to wait awhile for the second, which is a follow up in style but not in theme.

Many years ago, a group of superheroes possessed with strange and deadly powers banded together and formed the Phantom Club. The overlord, Zarg, developed an evil streak, and over the years managed to persuade the other members to practise his nasty ways... all except for Plutus. The club split up, and now disapproving Plutus finds himself facing an evil band of warriors, all as powerful as himself. Playing Plutus, it is up to you to defeat the band and destroy Zarg.

You start the game as Zelator, lowest rank of the brotherhood, and aim to rise through the ranks (ten in all) to attain that of Ipsissimus; only then will you be able to defeat Zarg and restore the club's good name. To do this, you must explore the club's many rooms, overcome devious traps and puzzles, and complete the various missions that have been set, while coping with your former colleagues whom Zarg sends after you.

The Phantom Club is instantly recognisable as being from the hands of *M.O.V.I.E.*'s creator, the design of the isometric perspective rooms inevitably recalling the earlier game. But despite the similarities, Phantom Club is an enjoyable experience because the problems facing the player are wholly new. Pay no attention to your special power of 'Brainstorm' — a bolt of psychic force you shoot from your head — it is just a laser gun in different guise, and has much the same effect on baddies when it hits them, although some need more than one shot, but the use of movie screens (a back reference?) in when blasted, earn bonus scores. The game provides one mission per ranking, accessed by shooting at a movie screen, if you have not reached the ranking and number of points necessary to undertake a mission you are informed — it requires at least 40,000 points to start the first mission for instance, and the aim of the mission...? That is for you to find out.

Some rooms, which provide essential information on your mission, is a genuinely fine element, and the frantic search to find the one necessary to enable completion of the mission for your next ranking gives the game that 'just one more go' feeling.

That, and the combination of more usual arcade-adventure elements: extra lives can be obtained by touching floating spheres, others provide extra speed, and spinning spheres.

**AMSTRAD CPC**

Cassette: £8.95
Diskette: £14.95

Plays exactly the same as on the Spectrum, but the appearance is brightened with colour — sometimes too much, and when rooms have an eye-wrenching colour scheme it makes the baddies hard to see.

**OVERALL 75%**

**REVIEWS**

**MOVIE MISSION**

**SPECTRUM 48/128**

Cassette: £7.95

This is the ideal sort of presentation for the Spectrum, and so the graphics look good and work well. The sound is acceptable, with a nice tune on the intro and end screens. Gameplay is compelling, even addictive. Don't expect this to be another *M.O.V.I.E.* because it is not, and perhaps not quite as exciting either, but nevertheless it is a worthy successor.

**OVERALL 78%**
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ONE THING MAKES THEM BETTER THAN THE REST....
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BUGGY BOY
Elite Systems

Many moons ago, Elite opted for the battle to secure coin-op licences, and when measured against their opponents in the race they have had a fair measure of success with the finished results, undoubtedly topping out with Ghosts 'n' Goblins. Space Harrier fared less well than they would have liked on the 8-bit machines, but (see previews) it looks like a winner on the Atari ST. Now comes the Taito car racing game Buggy Boy across most popular formats, Commodore first, ST next, and the rest to follow very soon.

Buggy Boy is a race against the clock around five courses, with obstacles to be jumped and negotiated, whilst collecting bonuses along the way in a bid to reach a distant finishing line. Awkward places are all sorts of obstacles, ranging from fences, trees and rocks to barrels, bushes and walls. Valuable time is wasted if the car collides with any of them. Running over logs lying in the road causes the car to jump (useful for avoiding course hazards), running over molehills tips your buggy onto two wheels, allowing passage through tight places. Bonus point gates can be driven through, each giving between 100 and 500 points, with time-gates adding extra time to the clock. Completing a stage of the course gives a set time bonus and an extra two seconds for each time-gate driven through. Flags awarding points can be collected by driving over them, with an extra bonus to be gained if they are collected in the correct order. Ramming a football on the racecourse also earns extra points.

All the features of the original are present, the buggy can cross bridges, roar through dark tunnels and drive along on the slopes of roadside hills.

COMMODORE 64 / 128
Cassette: £9.95
Diskette: £14.95

Elite have done an absolutely excellent job with Buggy Boy. The graphics are superb and the game is extremely playable right from the start. Sound effects are put to good use and the game moves along at a furious pace. The torturous and varied courses will keep even the most hardened 64 arcadester playing for ages. Buggy Boy has only two faults: one is the lack of a decent title screen tune and the other is the size of the electricity bill you are likely to rack up playing it.

OVERALL 92%

ATARI ST
Diskette: £19.95

Given that the unfinished version we saw still allowed the buggy to go through brick walls, tunnels and other objects without harm (!), it is only fair to say that it looks as perfect to the original as it is possible to be. Elite are still doing quite a lot to the sound, which was quite basic, adding more effects and music to enhance the game. This looks as though it is going to be the version to beat them all.

AMSTRAD
Cassette: £8.95
Diskette: £14.95 Disk

SPECTRUM 48/128
Cassette: £7.95
+3 Diskette: £14.95

The Amstrad version might have to watch its scrolling, but the colour-clashless Spectrum version should be perfectly acceptable, and on the 128 with extra sound may well better other road racer greats like Enduro Racer. Version updates soon.

"Elite have done an excellent job ... Buggy Boy will keep even the most hardened arcadester playing for ages."
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The fourth Dinamic release through Imagine is a one-on-one basketball simulation based around the exploits of Fernando Martin, one of the world’s top players. First out is the Amstrad CPC version, with other 8-bit formats following as fast as possible. Coding and graphics by Dinamic themselves, except for the Commodore, which is by Martin McDonald (also working on Platoon) and Gary Besillo.

The game can be played by one against the computer or two people head-to-head on three levels of play: beginner, amateur and NBA (National Basketball Association level).

Below the main playing area the status panel comprises an energy bar, a personal foul counter, player’s present score, and a timer that keeps track of each five-minute time period — a match consists of two such periods. There are several ways of scoring points, ‘baskets’ (a straight throw within the goal zone), ‘slam dunks’ (jumping up close and slamming the ball in) and ‘rebounds’ (speak for themselves) all score two points, while a throw from outside the goal area — a ‘three point shot’ — scores, suitably, three points.

Slam dunks are the only type of ‘basket’ that is rewarded with a close up, slow motion action replay. When your opponent has control of the ball, however, you are not entirely helpless, watch the personal foul counter carefully, and you will see a small basketball icon appear when you are in range to steal the ball from him. Though watch you don’t foul your him as you are disqualified if you do this too often. A much safer way to repossess the ball is to intercept your opponent as he throws for goal... although given half a chance he will do the same to you.

The inevitable problem with sports simulations is that they tend only to appeal to those who really enjoy the particular sport, possibly excepting the furious joystick-waggles like Daley Thompson et al. So unless the implementation is exceptional, the game is unlikely to have mass appeal, and in the case of Basket Master it really is too hard to play and too slow to watch to completely succeed. Added to that, Fernando Martin is a great slam dunker, and you are often left helpless as action replay follows action replay — an unremitting sight that tends to lull rather quickly. Better played with two humans then.

AMSTRAD CPC
Cassette: £8.95
Diskette: £14.95

Reasonable graphics are spoiled by the naff slow motion replay, the players judder and flicker across the screen atrociously. Even on beginner level it is pretty hard to hang onto the ball for very long, and this causes a deal of mounting frustration. Probably a simulation best left to real fans of the sport.

OVERALL 45%

SPECTRUM 48/128
Cassette: £7.95

COMMODORE 64/128
Cassette: £8.95
Diskette: 12.95

Both should be ready by December. As the Spectrum Basket Master is coded by Dinamic, expect it to be as hard as the Amstrad version. The Commodore one might be a touch more playable, but will have to work all the harder to appeal as there have already been several such simulations, one or two really quite enjoyable.

“... Basket Master really is too hard to play and too slow to watch to completely succeed.”

TX DATE: 12-87 37/148
Incentive's Driller project has taken over 14 months to come to life, most of that time being spent on the highly effective solid 3-D graphics routine Freescape, created by Incentive's in-house team Major Developments. The amount of time and effort put into Driller has paid off and the end result is something no 8-bit owner should be without this Christmas. The package, a large box including a 3-D map construct, comes with a hefty instruction manual, and within its covers lies a novella telling the story of events leading up to the action within the game...

The planet Evath has two moons, Mitral and Tricusip. The Ketars who lived on Mitral had set up 18 enormous platforms to mine for Rubicon crystals - a natural source of energy used both on the moon and on Evath. However their mining techniques were primitive and before long great pockets of gas built up. Aware of the danger the Ketars fled.

Now an even greater danger than the potential gas explosions threatens, a comet is heading towards Mitral. Though its collision with the uninhabited moon would normally have been of little consequence, Evathian scientists fear that with the gas build up it could act as a trigger and set off the explosion of Mitral, throwing Evath disastrously off its solar orbit.

You are assigned the mission to make safe all of the 18 sectors on Mitral by positioning drilling rigs over each of the gas pockets to burn off the gas and ensure that when the comet hits it will have no serious effect upon Evath... and it is due in four hours.

**DRILLING**

The game begins as you land on the first of Mitral's 18 sectors, Amethyst, on board your transportation vehicle. This is similar to a tank equipped with a laser and teleporting device for the drilling rigs.

Discovering where to place the drilling rigs on each sector ranges from being downright easy - there is a big X on the first sector - to being pot lock. When a drilling rig is placed the status screen informs whether gas has been found and what percentage can be burnt off. For a drilling to be successful the burn-off must be over 50%.

The vehicle's energy is limited, but it can be replenished by collecting Rubicon crystals which resemble pyramids. Upturned crystals restore energy and base-down crystals restore the shield surrounding the craft.

Planting rigs may appear a tedious application, but what makes Driller so intriguing, apart from the graphics, are the marvellous cryptic puzzles. It is quite possible to forget about drilling and instead explore the planet searching for switches. Switches, usually found in the shape of cubes, are activated by firing at them, which often has some effect, such as opening secret doors or operating lifts.

**FLYING AROUND**

Unlike many games, the puzzles are not obvious in their appearance - the installation of a teleport system is a good example; early in the game you may find a room with four cubes. Eliminating them in a specific order sets up the teleport system which you may well later discover in a few of the sectors.

Mitral's automatic defences still operate so travel is quite hazardous. Ketar lasers can be destroyed, changed in position or at least switched off, though some continue firing and dodging quickly past is the only possible avoidance.

Mapping Mitral is essential, though difficult from within the tank, but somewhere the Ketars left a jet behind which you can use. It operates similarly to your ground vehicle but of course it can fly and skim over many sectors - it is, however, impossible to position oil rigs using the jet.

Freescape, the technique where all the 3-D graphics remain solid in every perspective, works extremely well, creating a real sense of exploring the unknown. Admittedly it is slightly jerky but that subtracts nothing from the gameplay, and it can be made smoother by altering the step size. The highest step is 250. but it can...
The addition of Driller's huge scenario, innovative ideas and involving gameplay, the whole package offers a bundle of entertainment to take you through this Christmas - and probably the next one!

**AMSTRAD CPC**
- Cassette: £14.95
- Diskette: £17.95

The Amstrad's benefit is the colour; using mode 1 (four colours) and a variety of shading techniques the colour comes alive, and makes close together blocks much easier to see than the on Spectrum. There's no music, which is unfortunate and the FX are little more than warning or explosive noises, but Driller has first-time excitement and long term playability. Definitely not to be missed.

**OVERALL 95%**

**SPECTRUM 48/128**
- Cassette: £14.95
- +3 Diskette: £17.95

Very much the same as on the Amstrad apart from the colour - although the shading works to an almost sinister effect - which because there is less to shift around means the Spectrum version runs slightly faster (even more so on the +3). And no multiloads; it is all squeezed into one 48K load - a considerable achievement for such a mammoth game. At a time when innovation seems halted, Driller not only makes a welcome change but also an excellent one.

**OVERALL 94%**

**COMMODORE 64/128**
- Cassette: £14.95
- Diskette: £17.95

Already well underway, Commodore Driller should be out a month after the Spectrum and Amstrad release. It uses solid colours rather than shading and includes an eight-minute theme tune. Look out for a version update next issue for the full assessment.

**16-BIT**

Incentive have planned Amiga and ST versions of Driller for 1988 and they promise to be faster than on 8-bit. Work has only just begun but we will try for a preview in the next issue.

---

**COMMENT**

To play this game is to get hooked. Simple to understand, it is therefore easy to play; no ploughing through bedsheet-sized instruction leaflets with this one. Nintendo's small-sized controller takes some getting used to, but perseverance reaps its own reward, because the graphics and sound are splendid, combining to make a game that is colourful, jolly and in places pleasantly frustrating as you try to work out the best route round a problem. Let us hope that Super Mario Bros. makes it onto home micros in better shape than did its predecessor.

**OVERALL 89%**
GOING FOR THE THROAT

VAMPIRE KILLER
Konami

MSX CARTRIDGE ONLY

As the full moon slides majestically behind an angry black cloud and the sound of lurking night creatures plays teasingly on his mind, Simon approaches the castle. As he creeps ever nearer, the huge iron gateway swings open as if guided by a phantom hand, and Simon stealthily enters the grounds. Armed with only a whip, he proceeds to the main entrance, knowing that to free his home town of Dransylvania from the evil which invades it, the cause itself must be destroyed – Count Dracula.

The Dracula theme has always been a popular, if over-exposed nightmare, and generally works fine as long as there is atmosphere. Here, the music and sound effects, which adorn the action throughout, do help. Despite the vampire link being tenuous, the game itself proves to be quite good.

The opening sequence of Vampire Killer shows the first of three available Simons entering the castle grounds, from this point on the player takes control. Using either joystick or keyboard Simon can be made to walk left, right, upstairs, downstairs, jump and.

...the best racing played – even better

ELECTRIC DREAMS
SOFTWARE

Mail Order: Activision (UK) Ltd, Units 3 & 4 Lloyds Close, Finedon Road Industrial Estate, Wellingborough, Northampton NN8 4SR. Tel: (0953) 76768
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Commodore 64/128 Cassette (£9.99) and Disk (£32.99)
ZX Spectrum 48k/128k/+ (£9.99)
Amstrad CPC Cassette (£9.99) and Disk (£34.99)
Amiga Disk (£34.99)
of the castle and destroy Dracula then the invisible force behind the all the evil foes he has previously faced will reveal itself and challenge him to the death.

**MSX**
- **Cartridge:** £18.95

The graphics surrounding the main characters are well presented and help to instill a little of the feeling of being in a satanic castle. Control is easy and when Simon whips out his weapon, it's look out ghouls. Vampire Killer provides plenty to do although it can get a little repetitive, the nice graphics and sound coupled with easy gameplay help to make it an above average product... something to get your teeth into.

**OVERALL 69%**

"Despite the vampire link being tenuous, the game itself proves to be quite good."

---

**VERSION UPDATE**

**Camping out**

**THE GREAT ESCAPE**
- **Ocean**
- **IBM PC** £19.95

The highly successful Spectrum game from Denton Designs arrives on the PC after almost a year. Incidentally, Denton Designs have been at work for some time on another 3-D game with a massive playing area which uses similar, although more open, graphics to those of The Great Escape. Designed with the Spectrum 128 in mind, THE GAMES MACHINE can now reveal Tibet, as it was codenamed, will be released soon as Where Time Stood Still - and it will be available in a PC format.

But back to the IBM PC and Germany in 1942: set in a WWII German POW castle prison, the player's task in this arcade-adventure is to escape. The castle, which is described in isometric forced perspective 3-D using individual screens for rooms and a scrolling section for the camp perimeter, has to be explored, a daily routine established and items, which will assist in the final break for freedom, collected and stored in a hidey-hole.

Secret tunnels can be used to move around the castle, whilst avoiding the camp commandant, his guards and their dogs. It's quite an undertaking, with the bribing of fellow prisoners to create diversions, drugging guards dogs and cutting barbed wire, being only some of the tasks necessary to effect the getaway.

**COMMENT**

This is a fine conversion from the Spectrum original, which was a CRASH Smash (December 1986). It retains all the original's atmosphere through the detail of camp life and the aerial viewpoint which works well. With lots to do, and a large castle to search, it's highly playable and provides quite a challenge. Interest pales, though, once completed as it is very much a get-through-it-once game. A pity, too, that the IBM version hasn't taken the greater advantages offered by the machine over the Spectrum, because it's not much of an improvement (if any) over the original.

**IBM PC**

**OVERALL 60%**
BEWARE THE IDES OF ZARCH

ZARCH
Superior Software

ARCHIMEDES ONLY

The first British computer game to get to Number One in the States was Elite, the space trading program which made Lords Of Midnight look easy. Its co-author, the now affluent David Braben, wrote it originally for the BBC (it was later taken up by Firebird and converted for all the popular 8-bit machines), so it seems logical that Superior Software should tempt him to put aside his intention of getting a PhD and design for them a game to beat all games. A PhD has its attractions, no doubt, but to clinch the deal, Superior had the new Acorn 32-bit RISC computer Archimedes, adopted as the new generation BBC machine, in mind for David, and theirs was to be the first ever game for it. Enter Zarch.

Zarch is actually a hoverplane which can flit over land and sea, or power into space at the touch of a thruster. Its main task in life is to defend the lovely countryside against nefarious alien spacecraft — though its powerful weapons, in the hands of inept, or plainly malicious, pilots, is as easily capable of scoring own-goals and defoliating the landscape.

A lot can be said about this landscape too, but obviously much of the breath-taking speed with which the highly detailed, shaded graphics move, is owed to the amazing Archimedes computer (even more so when you consider that Zarch is written in BASIC). If you don’t own one (and who does yet?), then drooling is the only proper response. So this review is for the converted elite, or for the masochists among us who like to see what we might be playing if only we had the large quantities of loot necessary.

RED PERIL

But back to the game: the race of outer space ogres against which Zarch is pitted is intent upon polluting the landscape by spraying over everything a red virus intended to contaminate all forms of life.

The first step is to locate the enemy as soon as you have lifted off the ground at home base. There’s a scanner at the top left of the screen which shows an orbital view of the planet’s islands and seas; the positions of Zarch (white) and the home base (grey) are shown, and all other colours of dots are the enemy. These are made up of six types: Seeders, Bombers, Drones, Mutants, Pests and Fighters, of which the first two actually spread the virus. Attacks come in waves, and once one threat has been disposed of another quickly follows, faster and stronger.

You have three weapons at your command activated by the three mouse buttons, a rapid-fire laser cannon, homing missiles and a limited number of smart bombs which destroy everything in the vicinity (landscape features included if you are low enough). Each successful attack on an enemy craft increases your score, and with every five thousand points a smart bomb and an extra life is awarded.

MOUSABATICS

Control is via the mouse, and, until you achieve a reasonable level of finesse, a very slippery little beast it is too — the first confrontation with an alien tends to be somewhat uncontrolled (flying upside down in ever-increasing circles letting off laser beams and missiles willy-nilly). Thoughtfully, orientation of the mouse relative to the table top is done for you at the start of each mission, ie with the hand control in a central position relative to the Hoverplane. The distance of the mouse from this position determines the declination of the craft and the angle at which it is moved defines the compass direction. Thus, once in the air you are set free to perform some of the most amazingly elegant aerobatics a humble home computer game player could wish for in the truly three-dimensional screen world.

Aliens pounce on Zarch, scattering the deadly red virus on the countryside while attacking with their lasers.
screen, including the player’s score, number of homing missiles on board, lives remaining, number of smart bombs, the current wave attack and the high score. Directly below this are two bars, orange showing fuel level and green indicating height. When you leave the planet’s atmosphere, the thrust cuts out, remaining dormant until Zarch drops sufficiently to be thrust cuts out. remaining dormant the planet’s atmosphere, the waves of extrinsic creatures until showing fuel level and green attack and the high score. Directly of smart bombs, the current wave on board, lives remaining, number score, number of homing missiles screen, including the player’s wish for in the truly three-dimensional screen world.”

ARCHIMEDES

Diskette: £19.95
Zarch is incredibly fast. The Elite-style action zooms over highly detailed landscapes, which feature real terrain effects such as hills and valleys, and whose ground objects expand and reduce in real 3-D at a fair wack. The sound is disappointing though, as even minimal sound effects throughout, but even with the enormous memory available, it’s likely that the complexities of the program running in BASIC made it difficult to squeeze anything else in. Expect to see and hear improved things once programmers get to grips with compression and machine code! Zarch is a fascinating game to play because of its great attention to detail (blast a tree and watch it smoulder). The big BUT is the price of the Archimedes and its present lack of software support – who can afford it?

OTHER FORMATS

It would be foolish to predict that Zarch will never appear on any other existing machine – not so long ago the pundits proclaimed that BBC Elite couldn’t fit on a Spectrum or a Commodore 64, yet it did, very well. When pushed, Superior Software were prepared to suggest that they might make a conversion for the Amiga – sometimes...

FOREVER DIGGING RUBBLE

SKULL-DIGGERY

Nexus

The programmer/founders of Nexus, Paul Voysey and Tayo Olowu, first hit the headlines with a Spectrum game called Psytron as well as several others for Beyond on both the Spectrum and Commodore 64. Later they drew several senior management figures from Beyond after the innovative software house was sold to British Telecom. Since its inception, Nexus has had an uneven history of 8-bit releases. Skull-Diggery is their first Atari ST game, written by the Unsung Heroes and released under licence.

A cave-mite’s only true goal in life is to devour as many diamonds as it can. This sparkingly vocation takes place in numerous varied screens, the overall objective being to collect the required number of gems within an allotted time and gain passage to the next stage.

The little mite munches and digs its way through the caverns, gobbling up diamonds when they are encountered, and generally avoiding other inhabitants such as the crystal bats and crazy ghosts. However, careful utilisation of its fellow troglodytes is often a necessity if certain obstacles are to be overcome, they have a tendency to explode on contact with other objects and can prove very useful for blasting through particularly tough barriers. But releasing them from their earthly prisons is a dangerous matter, since they rapidly home in on the nearest object – and that could well be you if you aren’t fast enough to get out of reach.

A FLAT-EARTHER

Another cave dweller is the creeping vine which is invisible to all but the mite (useful for causing those necessary explosions). It rapidly engulfs the whole cavern if left to its own organic devices – flat mite. However they can be used to advantage in many seemingly hopeless situations, while munching one of the rarely found cup cakes provides an extra life (extra lives are also awarded after every five thousand points).

Game options include music or sound effects, one- or two-player game, joystick or keyboard control and also the choice of which screen number to start on. When actually playing Skull-Diggery in two-player mode you can either compete on the screen simultaneously (each mite in its own field) against the clock, or combine forces, in which case, at suitable moments, one of the players may be sacrificed for the team’s general good.

MIGHTY MATEY MITEY

Skull-diggery is easy enough to get into, since it follows a well-worn pattern of gameplay, although the first shock comes with the bland pastel shades used rather than from any exciting action. The cave-mite looks around with those mitey big eyes of his as he smoothly digs and munches the surrounding rock in search of gems through 100 screens, which should be enough for most people. The music is annoying but can thankfully be turned off, and the option to start on different levels prevents a lack of playing skill from making the game instantly tedious.

ATARI ST

Diskette: £19.95
Taking into consideration the very basic idea of the game, which owes an awful lot to the seminal Boulderdash, everything seems to work well enough, for this is a game where graphics, and these are quite chunky, take second place to the inevitable how-to-go-about-it strategy required to succeed. Skull-diggery is a little archaic and certainly does not use the Atari ST to its full potential. Throughout the game the programmers have used remarkably bland colours. A quick fiddle with the monitor controls assured us that this is how the game is supposed to look—perhaps it should be put down to being a palette-subtle approach from Nexus. However it’s playable and quite cute in the butchest sense of the word.

OTHER FORMATS

Nexus have no plans to release any other machine versions. In truth, the concept has been more than adequately covered through the Boulderdash games and their clones on all the 8-bit formats, and we wonder whether Amiga owners would entirely welcome this aged idea. Certainly if there were to be any plans for 8-bit versions, there would have to be some very novel approach used to give it life.

...in the air you are free to perform the most elegant aerobatics a gamesplayer could wish for in the truly three-dimensional screen world.”
VERSION UPDATE

Droiding

RED L.E.D.
Ariolasoft/Starlight


We have already reviewed the Commodore 64 Red L.E.D. in THE GAMES MACHINE to some critical acclaim (see Issue One, page 61 for full game review). Now this surreal Marble Madness look-alike has been let loose on the Spectrum and Amstrad. The game’s objective is to control three droids around 37 three-dimensional levels in a bid to link up a cosmic grid, and there are no significant playing differences between the versions.

COMMENT

On the Spectrum, Starlight have opted for a much smaller playing area, with loads of decorative detail round the edges – it ‘feels’ even smaller than the on Amstrad. This restriction has had little effect on the scrolling though, and it is much jerkier than one would expect (and considering the monochrome playing graphics). All in all, despite the game’s inherent playing and addictive qualities, the slowness is a severe detraction.

SPECTRUM 48/128
OVERALL 64%

AMSTRAD
OVERALL 79%

HANG TEN

720°
US Gold

Skate or die! The cry now rings out on the home micros courtesy of US Gold with their latest licensed offering from Atari – 720°, a sensational skateboarding experience. 720°, just in case you are wondering, is the skateboarding term for spinning round twice on the board whilst in mid jump. Converted for the Spectrum by Tierx Software, 720° is a far better conversion than Indiana Jones And The Temple Of Doom (reviewed in this issue), which they also did. On the Commodore 64 it’s up to erstwhile Chris Butler, and judging by the preview copy we had, it’s looking good.

720° takes you into the heart of Skate City, performing stunts to build up your street cred by collecting medals and cash in one (even if you do go to the arcades) of the most original games to emerge this year. A better cash level allows you to buy better equipment such as boards, shoes and pads from the city shops and improve your performance. There’s two levels of skating to choose from – trained and advanced; the difference being that advanced level includes further hazards which generally make life more difficult.

Within the Skate City boundary four parks are to be found, each presenting different and challenging skateboarding tasks; take a look at the Park Patrol panel for the details. Each park can only be visited once per level. Finding them can be a problem, but to ensure novice skaters don’t get lost there are map icons placed at intervals along the streets and

ERIK: PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

LITTLE DOES RAUL KNOW, BUT I KNOW HE KNOWS WHERE I AM, AND I SHALL BE WAITING, THEN AND ONLY THEN WILL I TEACH CHRISTINE TO SING BETTER THAN THE GREATEST OPERA SANGER OF OLD TIME.

AND SO

HOW WILL YOU FIND ‘EM IN 25 PLACE – IT KILL SO GOOD – SHE CAN’T BE ANYWHERE!

BOWLING OVER

LITTLE DOES ERIK KNOW, BUT LITTLE DO YOU KNOW – THAT I KNOW...

LITTLE POIS RAOUL...

IF WE KERRY ON LIKE THIS PER MERA LONGER ZIG AIGN’t WILL BEAUM MERA TOO PRICE...

HELP CHRISTINE (AND US) TO ESCAPE FROM THIS DASTARDLY PLOT.

POST!! EET IS 1 LE JERK LISTEN VARY CAROLY AZ I SHALL SAY THIS ONLY TWICE.

‘TIS THIS.

EE AS TAKEN MY POOL TO 2ER ROGERS UNDER ZE OPERA ROUSE.

SACRED BLUES!

NOW I KNOW WHERE EET EEZ I’N I KNOW WHERE ZE OPERATION.

COMPEITITION

Let us have your entry to this story in a cartoon strip. The best 25 entries received by Craysys, Software Publishing Associates will receive a free copy of Erik: Phantom of the Opera.

Please state Spectrum 48/128 or – 3.

Judges decision is final. No cash alternative. Closing date for entries 31st December. Winners notified by post.

ERIK: PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

SPECTRUM 48/128 £7.95
SPECTRUM – 3 £5.95
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Lower Ground Floor
197-199 City Road
London EC1V 1JH

AVAILABLE FROM ALL LEADING SOFTWARE STORES
A most original game – clamber on your skateboard and have a good time – Spectrum screen

skating over them reveals a map of the city. And to further make sure you don’t get lost, there are pointers on the roads. Tickets are required to enter the parks.

PARK PATROL

DOWNHILL
On the slippery slope already – and you can bet your bottom dollar it’s slippery, because there’s water either side of you. Falling off the edge of the track ends in a resounding splash and time being knocked off your clock. Keep kicking all the time, add a few jumps and 720°s and you could easily wind up with a silver medal first time around.

RAMP
Rampaging ramps of the 720° circuit brings you the half-pipe as seen in California Games. Quite simple really, just slide from one end to the other, and if you don’t even have to turn – the computer does that for you which gives you plenty of time to do some fancy stuff to build up those points.

JUMP
Another slippery slope with water on either side. The jump track is basically the same as the downhill course but with the addition of vertical drops which must be jumped. It is more difficult to obtain the higher medals, although getting a bronze after a few goes is good going.

SLALOM
This one’s for the real clever clogs – a combination of the downhill course with slalom flags to weave in and out of. When you’ve cracked this one you’re in with a chance of being the best skater in town!

NARCISSISTIC

Skate City itself is pretty big and there is plenty to do before you enter a park – but don’t hang around for too long as killer bees have an unnerving tendency to attack lazy skaters, which costs you a credit. The art of skating needs some practice, but after a while...manoeuvring around the city and parks should become second nature. The skateboard is turned clockwise or anticlockwise and to get moving you propell yourself along with a kick key; in addition there is also a jump and stop function.

Naturally, you aren’t the only one in Skate City, there are plenty of cars, bikers and bodybuilders (narcissists of a feather flock together?) who line the streets – colliding with any moving thing, though it won’t actually kill you, knocks you off the skateboard... Perhaps 720°’s only failing is that the parks could have become progressively harder. However, fans of the arcade original and novices alike should love this playable and addictive game.

SPECTRUM

Cassette: £8.99

720° is probably one of the best conversions US Gold have proffered for a long while. The scrolling works extremely well, neatly and suitably moving in time with the skater’s kicks. The monochrome graphics with the addition of some subtle shading give a good feeling of perspective and solidity. Sadly, there’s little sound which is unnerving when you can see the loudspeakers at the start point booming away.

OVERALL 83%

COMMODORE 64/128

Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £11.99
November

As you can see from the Commodore preview copy screen shot of 720°, the graphics are large and as colourful as the arcade original, and we may well expect it to be an even better rendition than the already excellent Spectrum version.

AMSTRAD CPC

Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £11.99 disk
late November

We haven’t seen anything of it yet, but if the programming team make the best use of the Amstrad’s capabilities, then there’s no reason why it should not be a marvellous conversion.

"... fans of the arcade original and novices alike should love this playable and addictive game – one of the most original to emerge this year.”
THE RIGHT STUFF

CHUCK YEAGER'S ADVANCED FLIGHT SIMULATOR

Electronic Arts

The recent influx of American software companies to Britain has had a decided effect in the area of 'serious' entertainment. Americans have always believed the British to be starved of intelligent games, and in putting matters right, have asked us to delve into labyrinthine adventures and complicated flight simulations. Chuck Yeager is one of America's all time aviation heroes. Flying the experimental plane X-1, he was the world's first person to exceed Mach One (breaking the 'sound barrier') and is renowned as a superior test pilot of many of today's modern combat aircraft. Electronic Arts have now produced a flight simulator endorsed by the man himself.

In the Advanced Flight Simulator, you can become a test pilot and fly any of 14 famous historic planes from a 1917 Sopwith Camel to a present day F-18 Hornet. A runway is thoughtfully provided and various landmarks can be visited. Once the sight-seeing pall has been cleared, a series of racing courses are also available to fly around using any of the aeroplanes.

On screen you see the cockpit and standard instrumentation (this does not change significantly from craft to craft, which is a bit of a cheat, especially as Sopwith Camels were not noted for their sophisticated 'head-up' displays, but each aeroplane flies very much according to its specification and performance). Various flight influencing factors can be set up including wind speed and direction.

The view of the outside world can also be altered through an 'Eye' menu to observe the plane from all angles, including rear views or even from a separate chase plane. The various options selectable from the main menu are Test Flight, Formation Flying, Airplane Racing, a Demonstration flight and Flight Instruction.

IN THE AIR

Test Flight simply means taking to the skies in a chosen aircraft and flying the plane to its limits. Formation Flying involves closely following a lead plane through a series of stunts and aerobatic manoeuvres, including flying under gates and around buildings, as well as performing rolls, stalls and loops. In Airplane Racing, you take part in a race against up to five computer-controlled planes through a series of gates and slalom hazards.

The Demonstration Flight takes the test pilot through all the standard aerobatic moves possible via the XPG-12 experimental jet. And finally, Flight Instruction is a series of flying lessons in which you can either be the pilot of a Cessna 172 or an observer, in which case Yeager flies the plane for you. Nice of him.

COMBAT SIMULATOR

To complement the Advanced Flight Simulator program, an Air Combat Simulator will be released later, enabling the player to go head-to-head against Yeager himself in simulated dogfights. Top Gun watch out!

THE AIRCRAFT

- Cessna 172 Skyhawk
- F-16 Fighting Falcon
- F-18 Hornet
- P-51 Mustang
- Piper Cherokee
- Sopwith Camel
- Spad XIII
- SR-71
- Spitfire
- X-1
- X-3 Stiletto
- XPL-16 Instigator
- XPG-12 Samurai
- XR-4 MadDog

The cockpit view - Chuck Yeager on the PC

REVIEWS

Electronic Arts

The warm, rounded, mildly reproving tones of the great man himself. An inspiring digitised picture from the Commodore 64

PC

Diskette: £24.95

Comparisons with Flight Simulator 2 are inevitable: Chuck Yeager shares the same sort of in-depth and comprehensive flying techniques which made the Sublogic program such a classic. Where AFS succeeds though is in the sheer number of options available for test flying the numerous planes - and 14 different planes are more than enough for anyone. Racing around the courses against computer opponents is both exhilarating and challenging, and simply exploring the world is enjoyable in itself. Even with solid graphics, the program moves along at quite a rate.

OVERALL 89%

COMMODORE 64

Cassette: £9.95

Diskette: £14.95

The Commodore AFS has most, if not all, the features of the PC version, the major difference being the speed. Flying around can take a while, as the solid graphics (rather more colourful than on the PC) move in a series of large and slightly jerky jumps in animation, with the screen update proving slower than the speed of the aircraft at times. The actual game works well though, and the formation flying and airplane racing are particularly good, and if you can accept the speed with which everything runs, then Chuck Yeager AFS is worth a place in any flight simulation collection.

OVERALL 78%

"Racing around the courses against computer opponents is both exhilarating and challenging..."
Barbarian is already available for the Commodore 64 and Amstrad CPC (disk £12.99, cass £9.99) and Spectrum 48K +2 compatible (cass £9.99).

Ah, the cut and thrust of the warrior world. The succulent sound of skin giving way beneath metal-edged blows, mingling tantalisingly with the ice-crisp clash of sword on sword. The thud of your victim's head as it bounces on the hard ground, and the pleasing laugh of the... er, green creature when it drags off yet another body to devour at its leisure. What more could a gamesplayer ask for? Seriously though, Barbarian on the ST is great. The sound enhances the game no end and the backdrops and side-snakes are very polished. The characters themselves could, perhaps, have been improved upon as they appear very similar to the Commodore 64 version, however this by no means detracts from the game play, and Palace will do well with this very competent conversion.

ATARI ST
OVERALL 87%

Unlike the 8-bit versions, the Atari ST enjoys some stunningly varied backgrounds to the violent action.
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SORRY I SPOOK

BUBBLE GHOST
infogrames

A
re Informatique, those Parisiens who are now famous for Get Dexter, do seem to be busy Frenchmen lately. Licensed by Infogrames in the UK, they have a whole host (no pun intended) of games forthcoming including Phoenix and Bubble Ghost (release dates early November). The packaging on the version which hopped through our letterbox will hopefully be enhanced slightly when it hits the streets. Apparently the translation from French to English is a little too exact and enhanced slightly when it hits the streets. Apparently the translation from French to English is a little too exact and enhanced slightly when it hits the streets. Apparently the translation from French to English is a little too exact and enhanced slightly when it hits the streets.

Picture a derelict old castle filled with surrealistic hi-tech equipment, quiet and still except for the pulsing and throbbing of the machines and the presence of a restless spirit. The ghostly wanderer is destined to travel the thousands of rooms within this melancholy mansion and at the most inconvenient of places. The ghost itself is intangible and may float through anything in its path, the soul however, is incredibly fragile and must be blown very gently from place to place and not be allowed to touch anything lest it burst.

GHOSTLY NAVIGATION

The screen layout displays the many castle rooms as bordering grey stone blocks filled increasingly with techno-traps which are, of course, situated in the most inconvenient of places. Some of the more dangerous traps may be disarmed by the means of finding the correct object to blow into its maw, thus opening a safer route for the soul-bubble. Once the delicate bubble has been safely navigated through a room, the ghost turns to the player with a look of smug, innocent glee and realistic animation - the spooky wafting of a ghost, blowing bubbles left right and centre seems the recipe for a good time.

The ghost's waftings require the use of both mouse and keyboard, controlling left, right and turning movements and blow. The bottom of the screen displays the hi-score, the present score, bubbles remaining which hall is currently being negotiated and a bonus bar which decreases as time ticks by. The six highest scores are automatically saved to disk and displayed. Atmospheric spot effects accompany the spooky negotiating feats, all part of the attention to detail - which is what stands out in Bubble Ghost. Every trap, object and backdrop is very nicely implemented. Some of the halls within the castle are really tough to negotiate with dexterity not being the only resource required, a little logical thought is also necessary to get through some of them successfully.

Anyone who fancies a quick blow and can get into the spirit of this game will have great fun exploring the castle and defending their immortal soul.

VERSION UPDATE

Unmasked

MASK
Gremlin Graphics
Commodore 64


Reviewed in Issue One of THE GAMES MACHINE (pages 63 and 64), the Commodore 64 version of MASK – licensed from the Kenner Parker Toys characters - now joins its Spectrum and Amstrad counterparts.

MASK, the Commodore 64 version's graphics seem more confusing than on either Spectrum or Amstrad.

COMMENT

The graphics aren't as detailed as the Amstrad version, as can be seen from the screen shot, but they look good and work well in movement. The scrolling in particular is very smooth. The other 8-bit versions of MASK were very playable and the 64 adaptation is no exception. Not, perhaps, an earth-shattering release, but for arcade-adventurers it is well worth considering, and MASK fans should buy immediately.

OVERALL 70%

ATARI ST

Disk: £19.95

Cute. Spooking around a non-too-ancient castle in the guise of a ghost, blowing bubbles left right and centre seems the recipe for a good time. With its smooth and realistic animation, the bubble is especially impressive – Bubble Ghost is enjoyable, often amusing and always entertaining. The urge to see all 1,000 halls does seem to fade after a while as each conquered screen is replaced by yet another test, and trying not to complete too much in one sitting is more likely to keep interest fired. If you are tired of blasting aliens to bits or slicing parts off muscles and organs then Bubble Ghost could be just the rest and relaxation in eternity you're looking for.

OVERALL 72%

OTHER FORMATS

While there's no technical reason that Bubble Ghost shouldn't appear on 8-bit, Infogrames are well placed to know that plenty of games of a similar ilk have already been done so, and the delicate quality of the ST version graphics is hardly going to look as impressive on, say, the Spectrum. In consequence, only expect a PC version some time in the New Year.

"With its smooth and realistic animation Bubble Ghost is enjoyable, often amusing and always entertaining."
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NEBULUS

Nebulous

Hewson

Despite Hewson losing the major Grafgold service of Andrew Braybrook and Steve Turner, who have signed up with Telecomsoft-Firebird, Hewson are still well stocked with some excellent programmers such as Raffaele Cecco (Exolon), Mark Kelly who is currently working on Marauder and John Phillips, responsible for Impossaball and now this, his latest top-notch offering Nebulus.

The planet Nebulus is having problems - with the Nebulus Planning Permission Committee (NPPC) having taken off several millennia for a holiday, buildings have sprung up like nobody's business. Worst of all are the aliens who, having tired of intergalactic marauding, have settled down as illegal immigrants and built eight towers in the middle of the ocean.

The people of Nebulus want them pulled down and call upon Pogo - a one-green-thing destruction force - to clamber to the top of each cylindrical tower by means of precarious ledges and then set off the destruction mechanisms at the top.

NOVEL SOLUTION

Phillips has opted for a novel solution to describe the towers in 3-D, and it works exceedingly well; Pogo stays centrally placed while the tower scrolls smoothly around him, and it is the revolving ledges at different heights that create a sense of depth. The illegal aliens, who come in many guises, have different set movement patterns, mostly revolving around the towers. Some, however, drift across the screen and, although not particularly vicious, knock Pogo from a ledge if he collides with one. The others don't kill either but, like drifters, knock Pogo from ledges, and if he does not land on a tower ledge, then he ends up in the drink and drowns. It is possible to hide from alien depredations in the tunnels, which periodically cut through the tower diameter leading from one side to the other - though their real use is for traversing the width of the tower to reach higher ledges.

As few aliens can actually be killed, Nebulus is more a game of timing and pattern learning - when to walk under, or jump over obstacles is important. Learning the law of the ledges is also vital; some disappear, some elevate to a higher position and some act as conveyor belts. Any lack of concentration, or memory leads to Pogo's downfall, literally.

Surprisingly for a Hewson game, the front-end presentation isn't very good leading to a rather weak first impression; although the title screen music is competent, there's no define keys option, or joystick selection on the Spectrum. The opening screen just provides the title and credits, with high-scores that pop up occasionally.

Playing Nebulus late at night, which is quite possible because of its addictiveness, with bleary eyes is not recommended as too many mistakes can lead to hideous frustration - especially when you've got eight towers jammed full of compelling gameplay and beautiful graphics.

SPECTRUM 48/128

Cassette: £7.95

The Spectrum graphics are monochromatic, although a bit more colour could have been splashed about on the ledges if they were exactly one character high; happily the mono-graphics don't have any serious effect on the gameplay apart that it can be difficult sometimes to notice aliens as quickly. The title-screen music is surprisingly good (there's no difference between 48K and 128K) although there's little but spot FX throughout the game.

Nebulus will have you coming back for more and more until you've eventually finished all eight towers. And once you've done that you'll play it again just to remind yourself how good it is.

COMMODORE 64/128

Cassette: £8.95

Diskette: £12.95

Nebulus is fiendish if not downright devilish. Essentially it's a simple idea turned into a highly playable, if occasionally, frustrating game. The graphics are well coloured and somewhat cutey - especially Pogo, who's distinctly reminiscent of Gribbly. Climbing to the very top ledge only to be knocked right down to the bottom again may leave you feeling like you never want to play Nebulus ever again, but you can guarantee that in five minutes you will be back at the joystick because it's so addictive.

OVERALL 90%

OTHER FORMATS

Hewson have no plans for any other machines at present.

"...the towers in 3-D work exceedingly well...jammed full of compelling gameplay and beautiful graphics."
As we stated in our preview in THE GAMES MACHINE Issue One, 3-D Galax is Gremlin’s first game written specifically for the ST. It was programmed by Paul Blythe and represents a new angle on a well-tried theme, that of the early coin-op classic Galaxians. Instead of the usual vertical screen presentation, 3-D Galax uses filled vector graphics for the alien ships, and you fly through them to victory.

From the Vecton system they came. A massive starfleet of Vectoid spaceships heading for our system with one thing on their alien minds – destruction! As the fleet sweeps aside all in its path, a final, desperate plan is formed; if a test pilot can fly the brand new Astrablitz fighter craft to confront the enemy then maybe victory could just be snatched from the alien hordes.

The enemy fleet is split into 99 attack waves, four different types of attack craft making up each wave, flying through space in one of 25 possible formations. The Vecton ships’ formations are strictly structured and move towards the Astrablitz as solid three dimensional graphics. Only three pilot lives are given, and any collision loses one of them. As if this frenetic activity wasn’t sufficient for your average pilot’s viewscreen and shows a more traditional Galaxians view of the action, with the oncoming Vecton formations moving down the radar screen towards the Astrablitz stationed at the bottom.

Shooting the aliens earns up to 400 points. A choice of gunsights is available to help in destroying the system invaders, anti-craft missiles can be launched at the enemy attack waves, while anti-asteroid missiles help you avoid making an alien’s breakfast of yourself all over the hurting space rocks.

The central problem with 3-D Galax lies in its lasting power, after all it is based on a rather old game, and while turning the action through 90° to provide a 3-D scenario brings new life to an old formula, the repetitive gameplay and the lack of graphical variation in the enemy ships mean it might not hold interest for long.

A Vectoid ship looms large – so does death... Atari ST screen

Astrablitz pilot, the craft has the misfortune to run slap-bang into an asteroid storm after every fourth attack wave, and unless you want to be the filling in a rock sandwich, it’s best to navigate through them.

The Astrablitz can be moved in all directions using a radar display to locate and intercept the Vecton fleet. This is located just below the

A Vectoid ship looms large – so does death... Atari ST screen

Paul Blythe’s game represents a new angle on a the well tested theme of Galaxians – Atari ST screen

OTHER FORMATS

In our report in Issue One on Gremlin’s future plans, it had been left as a possibility that conversions of 3-D Galax for the Amiga and Z80 machines might be undertaken. But on checking with the company, THE GAMES MACHINE was told that there are absolutely no plans to do so now.

"... turning the action through 90° brings new life to an old formula, but it might not hold interest for long."
A SHOT IN THE DARK

BATTLESHIPS
Elite Systems

Several months back Elite created Battleships – the computer game – on the 8-bit machines. It was declared a hit by, and featured on the covers of, both Computer & Video Games and Your Sinclair. But in this fast moving business they were overtaken by events. CRASH and ZZAP! 64 indicated their reviewers thought highly of the implementation, but rather less of the game itself. Elite decided to hold back on a full-price release and Battleships will now be appearing on a future Elite compilation. Undeterred, however, Elite is now about to release an improved 16-bit Battleships for both the Atari ST and Amiga.

Based upon the traditional rainy day two-pads-and-pencils grid game, Battleships features the same map plotting with some animation thrown in for the firing sequence. The Amiga and ST versions are identical in gameplay, although on the Amiga it is a great deal noisier with speech and extra effects.

There are essentially two sections; first you place your ships on the grid and then plot where you think the enemy’s are positioned. Second: the battle screen – there is no interaction but you can watch your opponent’s ships being gratuitously destroyed when a direct hit is scored. The grid area is 20 x 20 squares and there are five ships per player (see panel). Ships can then be placed upon the grid in any fashion – upside down, diagonally – but if you are playing against a human rather than the computer, you are each obliged to look away while the other plots positions. Once both sides are positioned, you can sit back, relax, and watch the fireworks, and with four shots per ship, that is usually satisfyingly visual.

Playing Battleships on your own against the computer can prove rather dull but with two players a little more excitement is added.

OVERALL 65%

ATARI ST
Diskette: £14.99

Battleships is polished with some very nice graphics, which give the game solidity, and coupled with sound, the game does come alive. However, it is still only Battleships – the same game you would play with pencil and paper – and that is where it tends to fall apart. There’s plenty of immediate appeal – and a kind of addictiveness is generated by the firing sequence, rather like in a good card game where you just can’t wait to see what you’ve been dealt – but that is shortlived.

OVERALL 83%

AMIGA
Diskette: £19.99

November

We have seen the finished game, and as it stands it is the same as on the ST. However, additional sound FX and speech are being added which may in turn add some rating points.

“...rainy day two-pads-and-pencils game with immediate appeal . . . but that is shortlived.”

VERSION UPDATE

Wild Side Walk

RENEGADE
Imagine

Commodore 64/128
Cassette: £8.95
Diskette: £12.95

The graphics aren’t as impressive or detailed as those of the Amstrad version, but they are smooth and feature some good animation. The keyboard is required for punching and kicking, which adds to the frustration of dying in the heat of the moment. A minor drawback for this otherwise excellent coin-op conversion.

OVERALL 83%

WE REVIEWED Imagine’s violent street-fighting Renegade in the last issue of THE GAMES MACHINE (page 54) in its Amstrad CPC and Spectrum formats.
**FROM OUT OF THE ICE STORM**

**DARK SCEPTRE**

Dark Sceptre marks the long awaited and welcome return of Mike Singleton (Lords Of Midnight, Doomdark's Revenge) - on a less happy note, it also marks the death of Beyond, for the game was originally to be released under that label. So uncertainty about Beyond's future - it never really made its mark after being sold to Telecomsoft by EMAP - has now been resolved. Lately there has been a glut of arcade games but Dark Sceptre serves to redress the balance between them and the complex arcade-adventures that have been notably absent of late.

As with so many Mike Singleton games, there is a deal of background story, which is worth outlining, if only to give some indication of the atmosphere which the game engenders.

Peace reigned supreme in the Isles of the Western Sea. The Lord of the Isles ruled with a kindly hand and all was tranquill until the eve of a winter storm when in disarray ships of the Northlanders were thrown up onto the shores of the Western Isles. The Lord of the Isles smiled kindly upon the new arrivals and gave them succour.

When spring came and the ice storms plagued, the Lord of the Isles offered oaken ships to his guests so that they might return to their homelands. The Northlanders coveted the richness of the Western Isles and refused the offer. Drawing their swords, they demanded lands of their own.

Fearing yet more treachery, the Lord ordered the finest smiths in the land to forge a Sceptre Of Power. It took five years to complete, during which time the Northlanders grew more demanding until nothing would satisfy them except the Lord of the Isle's very throne. Raising the Dark Sceptre above his head the Lord summoned the Dark Powers to defeat the Northlanders. Lightning leapt from the Sceptre and began consuming the Northlanders. But with the strength of the possessed their leader sprang upon the Lord and smote him with the Sceptre, then raised it high and called upon the Darkness to save them.

The winds died down and pain was quenched, yet at the same time their physical being seemed the lose substance and became shadowy. In return for its protecting them, the Northlanders owed allegiance to the evil power within the Dark Sceptre.

**COMPLEX INTERACTION**

The player is in command of a company of warriors seeking to destroy the Dark Sceptre and restore tranquillity to the once-golden Western Isles. To hinder the player's movements, the computer controls other companies of warriors. Most of these are indifferent to your cause at the start of the game although they can be persuaded to aid you in your task, but the Shadow Lords, sworn enemies, whose sole purpose is to protect the Dark Sceptre and annihilate your company. How the Dark Sceptre is recovered and destroyed is left up to the player to find out.

Dark Sceptre is a complex interactive arcade adventure which can be played by the use of joystick. Moving the joystick left or right flicks through the characters that you currently control, showing their current state and whereabouts in graphics and text forms. Moving the joystick up or down highlights one of the five major options. These are Watch, Scan, Check, Plan and Quit. Pressing fire when one of these options is highlighted may take you to another sub-menu or switch control to another character.

Watch: when one of your men is involved in combat, you hear the clash of steel, but you cannot interfere in a fight to determine its outcome - the result is entirely dependent on the characters' personalities - selecting watch shows the character currently fighting.

Scan: a map of the Western Isles with the whereabouts of your characters indicated and the position of your current character highlighted. Check: a rundown on the current character's personality, a list of his present orders and any objects he may be carrying.

Plan: most complex command option and really the crux of the game; a sub-menu of possible commands you may give your characters. Moving the joystick up or down highlights each command. Selecting one takes you to another sub-menu to choose the object or character that is subject to the command. Commands - and there are many - range from killing the enemy to carrying out other tasks.

The characters have their own attributes which affect how well they are able to carry out your orders, and some are better suited to some tasks than others. All told there are eight different types of personality: Thane, the commander who leads your group; Mystic, beings with magical powers; Herald, good for giving massages; Assassin, a hunter and killer; Reaper, strikes fear into others; Fool, a talker; Savage, tough and resilient; Thrall, who are simple characters but numerous.

The final option, Quit, caters for loading and saving current positions in the game as well as abandoning a lost cause. It can, of course, also act as a useful pause mode for the essential tea and meal breaks without which the Western Isles would run dry.

**SPECTRUM 48/128**

Cassette: £7.95

To say that Dark Sceptre is a complex game is a bit of an understatement. Mike Singleton has developed character interaction to a high level. Playing the game is fairly easy but getting anywhere takes some doing. Graphically it is impressive, the very large characters move convincingly and the fight scenes can be fun to watch, but what makes it outstanding is that it oozes atmosphere; background story and plot are almost Tolkienian. Dark Sceptre provides value for money - it won't be completed within a few games. The characters are daunting but persevering rewards with a game to capture the imagination.

**OVERALL 90%**

**OTHER FORMATS**

At the moment we have no news of any plans to produce Dark Sceptre for any other machine.

"Dark Sceptre is a complex game... but what makes it so outstanding is that it oozes atmosphere..."
Enton Design have been busy of late, what with Flash Point (reviewed this issue), Where Time Stood Still and Eco (both previewed) and now Mad Balls, which is based on the TV cartoon and the toys.

Set on their home world of Orb, the Mad Balls are forever bouncing around colliding with the terrain and one another. Their names are charming; Dust Brain, Slobulus, Swine Sucker and Fist Face are just a few, and give an indication of their odious characters and their equally dubious eating habits.

Beginning the game as Dust Brain, your objective is to become top Mad Ball, a rank requiring the capture of all other Mad Balls on Orb. Typically, they are opposed to this and do their utmost to kill you by colliding and pushing you off platform edges.

The nature of the licensed characters might lead one to think that this is a garishly coloured game full of larger than life ugly faces. Not so; the graphical presentation is actually reminiscent of the Gremlin Graphics Re-Bounder. Viewed from above, your Mad Ball bounds around the multi-directional scrolling high platforms of Orb, bouncing against other balls and landing on various objects to collect points, special abilities and food.

Dustbins and Goals are strewn about. Forcing other balls into Goals makes them join Dust Brain's side; falling into a Dustbin drops your current Mad Ball into a tube, any friendly balls inside roll along and push another ball out, captured balls becoming extra lives.

Balls have their own individual ratings (up to a maximum of eight points each) for speed of movement, strength (for withstanding collisions) and hunger level. The lower the hunger rating, the slower a Mad Ball's energy decreases. Each ball needs a different form of food, eaten by bouncing on it, to keep up energy. Food includes tasty morsels of fish heads, bones and even blood!

Terrain features can be usefully employed; springboards and catapults give a longer bounce, while oil slicks cause the Mad Ball to slide around. Bubbles and fried eggs give extra points if bounced upon, and points are also gained for collecting items and bumping Mad Balls down Goals or off the platform edges.

Although Mad Balls's graphics are not thrilling, they are effective in a utilitarian way, and some of the balls on the Commodore do manage to look really ugly. Plenty of levels to explore and interaction with useful items helps keep the game going. However, apart from capturing other balls, there is not a lot else to Mad Balls and an extra task to perform could have given the game far more scope.

**COMMODORE 64/128**

**Cassette:** £8.95

**Diskette:** £12.95

Colour is nicely, if simply, used, providing a less cluttered impression than, say, Re-Bounder. The idea of swapping between captured balls is clever and works well graphically. There may not be enough content to justify a long-term interest, but one thing Mad Balls isn't short on is playability, and that makes it a fun game. Generally, it is a 'jolly' good game, that falls just short of making it into the top grade.

**OVERALL 72%**
SPECTRUM 48/128
Cassette: £7.95
December
The monochrome playing area complemented by coloured balls in the tube, offers a crisp image. Gameplay looks identical, but watch out for a version update in the next issue.

AMSTRAD CPC
Cassette: £8.95
Diskette: £14.95
December
Keep an eye out for the version update. Expect the colours to be similar to the Commodore, but the multi-directional scrolling could be a problem.

"Plenty of levels to explore and interaction with useful items helps keep the game going."

VERSION UPDATE
Refrogger

RANARAMA
Hewson
Atari ST £19.99

WHEN it first appeared on the popular 8-bit machines (Steve Turner first wrote it for the Spectrum) Ranarama met with critical acclaim; in reappraising Gauntlet play-alikes for the Spectrum CRASH even reckoned it outdid the genre founder.

The player takes control of Mervyn, a sorcerer’s apprentice, who through miscasting of spells, has turned into a frog. After a warlock invasion of his dungeon, Mervyn’s task is to destroy them all and hopefully find salvation in a return to human form. To aid him in this task, offensive and defensive spells can be collected, but only after defeating the warlocks in ritual combat can the spells be freed for collection.

Ritual combat involves rearranging the scrambled letters of ‘Ranarama’ within a time limit. Once freed, the spells can be used to provide stronger shields, greater firepower, defeat tougher opponents and locate hidden doors. The more powerful the spell in use, the quicker Mervyn’s limited energy is drained, although he can regain it by collecting energy crystals and casting Power spells.

Scattered around the dungeon are monster generators, which should be destroyed, and Glyphs which perform selected tasks; lower levels can be entered by using Travel Glyphs. Power Glyphs are used to destroy the enemy in a room, whilst Glyphs of Seeing provide a map of the currently explored level. A Glyph of Sorcery provides information on the current range of spells available.

COMMENT
Ranarama on the ST has everything. Fast action, a large dose of strategy, good, finely detailed graphics with rooms viewed from above in Gauntlet style and some excellent sampled sounds and speech. The game has been improved considerably whilst still retaining the playability which made the 8-bit versions so good. Careful, strategic use of spells is required in order to survive the hazards of each level. Ranarama is not just a straightforward 8 to 16-bit conversion, but a polished, excellent upgrade from Hewson.

ATARI ST
OVERALL 86%

Steve Turner’s Spectrum masterpiece is not just a conversion, but a fully-fledged ST game - Atari ST screen

“You’ll know soon enough!
Rampage, coming to your home computer screen, December.

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REVIEWS

THE HARDEST HUNK

FREDDY HARDEST

Imagine

Breasting bravely on the wave of Game Over, this is Imagine’s third release from Dinamic, the Spanish software house who also brought us Army Moves. Dinamic are Z80 programmers, so Imagine’s in-house team prepared Freddy Hardest for the Commodore.

All-round macho man, high-lifer and self-fancied spy Freddy Hardest, blasts into space following a ‘small party’, plays Space Invaders with a meteor storm, and inevitably crash-lands on the moon of the planet Ternat. By an incredible coincidence (and a spot of luck, otherwise there wouldn’t be a game to follow) the moon also contains the alien base of Kaldar.

His only hope of getting off the moon is to discover the Kaldarian base, hi-jack a ship and hi-tail it off. The moon’s surface is pitted with craters and bubbling craters, guarded by robots and populated by nasty alien fauna; a kick deals with the orbiting robots, moon creatures are seen off with a swift laser bolt.

Getting into the base, once it is found, is no problem since reaching the end of part one gives you an access code which you enter as soon as part two has been uploaded (Spectrum 128 is a single load). The Kaldarians aren’t so easily disposed of, immune to laser fire, Freddy has no alternative but to resort to fisticuffs, and whilst he enjoys this kind of ‘full blown bruise up’, it does hinder the task of getting the Captain’s Code – essential to take off – from 16 computer terminals scattered throughout three of the base’s four levels. The fourth level houses four colour-coded ships, and having selected one, only the correct colour-coded computer information is of any use.

The ship will need fuel too and that involves collecting the appropriately coloured nuclear cells, placing them in, and operating, a loading lift from a nearby loading computer terminal. Lifts can also be used to access the base’s different levels and tunnels used to move to other parts of the current level.

In general Freddy Hardest suffers most – the graphics on all machines being jolly enough to delight the eye – from not being hard enough, unless it’s in a fake kind of way, as on the 64 version, where collision detection is almost too fine-tuned to be fair. So while this makes an ideal game for the younger player, it does mean that the street-cred brigade are less likely to find much more than an immediate appeal.

OVERALL 62%

AMSTRAD CPC

Cassette: £8.95
Diskette: £14.95

As is the case with most Dinamic games on the Amstrad, this is highly detailed graphically, and makes good use of colour all round. But the Amstrad first level is too easy, the main cause being lenient collision detection. The second level has even more colour and detail and with the large number of screens, makes for much more of a challenge, although it shouldn’t take too long to complete.

OVERALL 69%

SPECTRUM 48/128

Cassette: £7.95

It suffers a bit in comparison due to the limited use of colour but in one sense copes better – the graphics are well detailed, almost like cartoons. The film style opening is a nice touch and adds to the game’s all-round humour. A too easy first level is virtually made redundant once the access code is gained, but this applies to all formats. A playable, nicely put together release from Dinamic, but too soon completed to have high lastability.

OVERALL 67%

... ideal for the younger player, Freddy Hardest suffers most from not being hard enough for the street-cred brigade ...
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THE COST OF INFLATION

AIRBALL
Microdeal

n-one’s ever satisfactorily explained quite what it is wizards are supposed to do, and perhaps this lack of social and structural fulfillment in their lives is what has traditionally made them such irritating and, indeed, impulsive fellows when it comes to the transmogrification — they’re always turning someone into something they would rather not be, such as a frog, or a newt or a pickled onion. The wizard in Airball has a rather more delicate sense of inverted humour however...

It would be hard to imagine just what it was you did to annoy the wicked wizard this time round, but enough of metaphysics and down to the practical; the fact is, you are made you an extremely fragile newt or a pickled onion. The wizard in Airball has a rather more delicate sense of inverted humour however...

As you set off from the depths of the wizard’s mansion containing over 150 rooms packed with spiked balls, sharp pointed icicles, cacti, vast chasms, pits, killer pads and other delights just waiting to burst your fragile skin and lose you one of your four lives. There’s a task of course; wicked wizards fall into two categories, the ones who have to be destroyed, and those whose irritability can be appeased by solving a problem for them. In this case, the mealy-mouthed mage would like you to search the mansion and recover his spellbook. In return he might just give you back your human form.

When you get fed up of playing Airball in the castle provided by the game, you might, if you’re still hooked on it, want to get a copy of this useful utility program by Scio and Lyon which lets you redecorate and return to your heart’s content. Every single graphic in Airball can be manipulated to provide anything from a ten-room child’s-play dungeon to a horrific 200-room mega-mansion. Running in a GEM environment, creation ought to be a dodder, but oddly the construction part itself isn’t that easy to use, and it’s very easy to overwrite already saved rooms unless great care is exercised. But the endless game possibilites certainly make it a worthwhile purchase for any Airball fan.

OVERALL 75%

The airball can be guided around and to the definitive forced-perspective format of 3-D, with rooms containing doorways, staircases and multi-layered platforms. The rich, ever-changing combinations of pattern all go to make Airball the definitive game.

AIRBALL CONSTRUCTION KIT
Microdeal
Diskette: £14.95

The airball can be guided around and to the definitive forced-perspective format of 3-D, with rooms containing doorways, staircases and multi-layered platforms. The rich, ever-changing combinations of pattern all go to make Airball the definitive forced-perspective game.

OVERALL 85%

The ST graphics are highly detailed, pleasingly coloured and obviously a lot of thought has gone into them. The two main tunes are equally excellent, genuinely adding to the game’s playability. But controlling the action with either mouse or joystick is awful, so using the keyboard is definitely recommended. Apart from this minor problem, the game plays like a dream. Airball on the ST is highly polished, graphically and sonically of top quality, and a delight to play.

AMIGA

Don’t expect a version until after the New Year, but it should be even better than the ST version. No prices or release dates have been announced as yet.

"The rich, ever-changing combinations of pattern all go to make Airball the definitive forced-perspective game."

ATARI ST
Diskette: £24.95

The ST graphics are highly detailed, pleasingly coloured and obviously a lot of thought has gone into them. The two main tunes are equally excellent, genuinely adding to the game’s playability. But controlling the action with either mouse or joystick is awful, so using the keyboard is definitely recommended. Apart from this minor problem, the game plays like a dream. Airball on the ST is highly polished, graphically and sonically of top quality, and a delight to play.

OVERALL 85%

"The rich, ever-changing combinations of pattern all go to make Airball the definitive forced-perspective game."
game is played from within a hovercraft, well equipped for the task—though things could be better. Out to stop you are city defence forts and Hunter attack

**COMMENT**

Tau Ceti has some wonderful graphical effects, with the buildings and other objects viewed in very effective, solid 3-D. The PC adaption retains the very clever shadowing effect of the 8-bit versions; it also retains the depth of game and should provide PC owners with a challenge to last for months.

**PC**

OVERALL 87%

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**I WANNA BE YOUR THRILL INSTRUCTOR**

**METAL GEAR**

Konami

**MSX CARTRIDGE ONLY**

K onami has supported the UK MSX market (consisting of some two hundred thousand users) since its inception a couple of years ago. The base market (that’s in Japan for the uninitiated) consists of over two million consumers who are treated to a 220-page monthly magazine dedicated solely to MSX. At present there is no information concerning which of the 60 possible Japanese authors who create for the MSX are responsible for Metal Gear, but whoever they may be they certainly seem to know their business.

News of the development somewhere in the small country of Outer Heaven deep in the South African jungles, of an ‘ultimate weapon’, codename Metal Gear, reaches Special Operations unit Fox Hound. Fox Hound send in special agent Grey Fox to get more information. Unfortunately all contact with Grey Fox is lost. Undeterred, Fox Hound dispatch another recruit, Solid Snake, to learn the whereabouts of their man and attempt to destroy Metal Gear. Armed only with a transceiver our hero sets out on his very first mission.

The opening sequence shows Solid Snake (the strange code names are probably due to the Japanese/English translation) wading through the river adjacent to the enemy base preparing to infiltrate. Once he has landed, the player takes control of him using keyboard or keyboard and joystick. The aerial viewpoint shows Snake in ‘sneak’ mode, running left, right, up and down in search of weapons and equipment to aid his quest, whilst all the time attempting to avoid the numerous guards.

Should he be spotted or trigger one of the many elaborate alarms, the game changes from ‘sneak’ to ‘alarm’ mode, all hell breaks loose and the chances of survival decrease rapidly as guards home in for the kill. The only way to attain ‘sneak’ mode again is by killing a specified number of the enemy or, in some cases, by moving quickly to another location.

The equipment required to complete the mission may be found in storehouses, trucks or on the guards themselves. A number of prisoners are incarcerated within the complex and should Snake successfully rescue them he is rewarded with information, an increase in his strength, a higher rank and greater potential for carrying weapons. Further information may be offered at intervals via the transceiver through which the Big Boss is in constant contact.

An information panel shows Snake’s life force, stars to mark his rank, a graphical representation of which particular weapon/object he is brandishing and how much ammunition he has left. The complete inventory may be accessed at any time and any of the items therein may be swapped with the current one being used. For example, if the gun in the gun is empty it probably won’t open if shown a gas mask but take the key-card from the inventory (if it’s there) and access is achieved. There are plenty of realistic spot FX in Metal Gear, what with alarms, gunfire and explosions although the music, which unfortunately cannot be turned off, does tend to grate after an hour or so.

Konami do seem to be looking after the MSX user and although the market may be a little small, the quality of the games does at least match that of the software available for the larger user groups. Metal Gear would certainly be a good addition to any MSX gamer's collection.

**MSX**

Cartridge: £20.95

The initial impression of disdain at this non-too-impressively animated macho man may rapidly change on delving deeper. The area of play is enormous, the backdrops impressive, ensuring that the action and suspense never wanes. A good sense of being there is accomplished and the urge to get further into the game is quite strong. If this standard of Konami software is maintained then maybe more people will think hard about joining the other 200,000 MSX owners.

OVERALL 79%

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**MSX CLUB NEWS**

A club for MSX users has been started by David J Krawczyk for people who require information about hardware and software for their machines. The club may be reached at this address:

MSX Central Computer Club
14 The Waredens Avenue
Allesley Village
Coventry
CV5 9GJ

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**COMMENTS**

...the action and suspense never wanes—Metal Gear would certainly be a good addition to any MSX gamer’s collection.”

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**TAU CETI**

CRL

PC

£19.95

PETE COOKE’s classic thinking man’s shoot-'em-up, having made its way successfully onto the Commodore 64, Amstrad and through a sequel, Academy, is now available for the PC. The automatic defence systems of Tau Ceti III have gone berserk, and can only be stopped by shutting down the main reactor in the capital city of Centralis.

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**MSX CLUB NEWS**

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**A BABE IN ARMS**

**JACK THE NIPPER II**

Gremlin Graphics have frequently capitalised successfully on cute characters in their 8-bit repertoire, although not all of them have worked as well as the ubiquitous Monty Mole (their 1985 'Beaver' game never even made it to the shops, culled as it was in the late programming stages). The argument goes: if you have done it once, why not repeat the success but hopefully better still — and Jack The Nipper was definitely a big hit. Now the naughty be-nappied nipper is back...

...And he's gone too far this time — in fact right round the world — for his last prank gained him a deportation order to Australia, and having seen how the outback denizens treated Mick Dundee, Jack isn't too happy about this. So during the flight down-under, he jumps out and nappychutes into what turns out to be... deepest Jungleland.

As in the first Nipper One, Jack's objective is to achieve a naughtiness rating of 100%. To help in this task, he can use such useful objects as grease, logs, onions and dynamite (!). Performing naughty deeds boosts Jack's naughtyometer to that all-important top level.

To traverse the jungle, Jack uses slippery slides, tree vines — Tarzan-like to avoid swamps and quicksand — rickety bridges and even an old mine car on the Spectrum — the Commodore game contains dark passages to get through. The jungle is populated with all manner of beasts, including monkeys, elephants, parrots, hippos, Mick Dundee's nappy-snatching crocodile, as well as some very unfriendly hunters and natives. Bumping into any means losing a life. But it is survival of the fittest, and Jack isn't defenceless: by collecting coconuts and blowpipes, he can see off even the most hostile tigers and rhinos. Extra lives in the shape of dummies (Spectrum) and whistles (Commodore) can be found, with shields providing limited immunity from attack by jungle creatures.

Jack isn't the only member of his family to be roaming the jungle. Jack's dad has also parachuted into the tropical forest, and if he catches up with his son then Jack's jungle japes are over. Lasting appeal once completed will probably be slight, but with such a large playing area, that shouldn't be too much of a problem.
SPECTRUM 48/128
Cassette: £7.99
The Spectrum is marvellously adept at producing arcade-adventures with multitudes of screens, and this is one of them. The graphics look and work really well, the detail in them excellently captures the jungly atmosphere despite restricted use of colour. The sound effects (nothing extra on 128) play along merrily and really add to the game. This is a fine arcade-adventure.
OVERALL 81%

COMMODORE 64/128
Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £14.99
Jack The Nipper II on the 64 is set in a scrolling jungle rather than being flip screen. There is a lot of graphical variation and the sprites are pleasant to look at. The amusing use of sound and some neat graphic effects (try walking down a dark passage) combine to make this a FUN game. Just as playable as the others, the combination of better tunes and neater use of colour make it the best version.
OVERALL 84%

AMSTRAD
Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £14.99
This resembles the Spectrum version, though with a few more colours mixed into the graphics. In fact the colours are often garish, look out of place in some locations, and lose a lot of the game's atmosphere because of it. Playability is retained, however, pity it fails on the visuals.
OVERALL 74%

VERSION UPDATE
Motorway Mayhem

MEAN STREAK
Mirrorsoft

Commodore 64/128 Cassette: £9.95
Diskette: £12.95
DALALI SOFTWARE (creators of Yogi Bear) enjoyed a mixed reception for this when it was first released on the Spectrum. Set in the 23rd century on a Zaxxon style scrolling battletrack (supposedly the ruined M25 of yesteryear), the player rides a powerful motorbike armed with machine guns and missiles in a race against enemy bikers to the motorway end, collecting extra fuel, arms and oil along the way. As a incentive to play the game, a real life £400 motorbike is waiting for the first player to reach the battletrack's finish.
"Lasting appeal once completed will probably be slight, but with such a large playing area, that shouldn't be too much of a problem."

OVERALL 71%

EXPICLICABLE IS GOING TO HAPPEN......

ACTIVISION
© 1987 Twentieth Century Fox Film Corp. All rights reserved. Trademarks owned by Twentieth Century Fox Film Corp and used by Activision Inc. under authorisation.
Thalamus's third release is a departure from their previous shoot-'em-ups Sanxion and Delta, since it's a game of control dexterity. It is, however, by the same author as the previous two, the Finn with the oddly Greek name of Stavros Fasoulas — and Quedex makes it a hattrick of hits for him. Thalamus is about to break the mould with its fourth release, Hunter's Moon by Martin Walker — more news of that when we have it.

Yes, it's another ball game, but Fasoulas has discovered a fresh approach to the subject and devised a fiendish test of skill set to his typically sharp, eye-grabbing graphics. There can't be many dextrous joystick movements left which Quedex doesn't test to the limit.

In Quedex — the Quest For Ultimate Dexterity — the player controls a metallic ball viewed from above as it rolls along through ten playing areas, or planes, and each plane demands a different style of gameplay and joystick skill.

The controlling actions vary from plane to plane, in some keys and amulets have to be collected, whilst others involve simply moving the ball from one side of the plane to the other. A useful facility — almost essential in this type of game — is that planes may be attempted at any time and in any order, although an imposed time limit is continually ticking away whichever plane you are on. Running out of time brings on a bad case of game over. This situation is remediable by watching out for time units and chasms and time-sapping electric seas. Depending on the selected plane, either unlimited jumps may be made, or specified number.

There are no foes to be defeated, no heads to be lopped off, hardly any damsels in distress and no alien hordes to be zapped, it's just you, your joystick and your hand-and-eye coordination, but if you can complete all of the planes, then at least there is the satisfaction of doing it — and the prize of Ultimate Dexterity to be won.

The ball isn't just a holy-roller, it can jump over interfering obstacles and serious hazards such as deadly skulls, deep

---

**COMMODORE 64**

Cassette: £9.99

Diskette: £14.99

Quedex is full of energy, the ball rolls along at a furious pace and, as a result, some planes may seem virtually impossible at first but perseverance and patience are the key words here. The 64 version is graphically outstanding, the ball is convincing in its movement and the plane graphics are detailed, varied and pleasing to look at. Since Rob Hubbard, who did the music for the previous two Thalamus games, has abandoned these shores for the States, his mantle falls to Hagar The Hornblow who Rob nominated — a happiness in the midst of sadness, for the drivingly upbeat title tune suits the game perfectly; oddly, it isn't used in the game itself. If you thought you'd seen the last of the 'ball' game, then think again. Think Quedex.

**OVERALL 86%**

So far conversions for Sanxion and Delta have eluded Thalamus, although a Spectrum Delta was commenced, abandoned, and apparently restarted again — if it comes out, it will be after Christmas now. At present no conversion of Quedex is under way (and Stavros Fasoulas, who would like to do it for the Amiga himself, is stuck doing his obligatory National Service in Finland for a while), but 16-bit versions are planned.

"... a fresh approach and a fiendish test of skill set to sharp, eye-grabbing graphics."
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(Lee Rodwell – The Times, September 1987)

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Actual Atari ST screen shots
Graphics vary according to format

Spectrum £9.95
Commodore 64/128 £9.95 (£14.95 Disk)
Amstrad £9.95 (£14.95 Disk)
HEGOR DRAGONSLAYER

BARBARIAN
Psygnosis

Psygnosis was formed some two years ago from one of the many splinter groups that emerged from the old Imagine software house (before it became an Ocean label). The strong influence of David Lawson, driving force behind Imagine's famed but fated Bandersnatch 'mega-game' team, was clearly seen in the first Psygnosis game, Brattacus, which drew on Lawson's experience in designing Bandersnatch. Barbarian is also designed and coded by Lawson, with animation and graphics by Garvan Corbett.

Hegor, the Barbarian, grew up with the rough warrior teachings of Thoron, his father. Thus he was taught how to fight, drink and womanise, and his reputation as a man to be avoided soon spread far and wide among the more civilised of society. Though they gave him a wide berth, his skill as a dragon-slayer was well known, even revered, and the fact that he killed these fire-breathing beasts with such ferocious consistency helped mitigate the most negative reactions to his more animal habits. Like father, like son, most of Hegor's savage traits could be laid at his father's feet, and indeed Thoron had made many enemies of his own, including one particularly nasty piece of work by the name of Necron, an evil being of awesome power who commanded a devilish band of subordinates. The feud between Thoron and Necron had built in intensity for many years until one day Necron decided to end the quarrel by sending forth his subordinates. The feud between Thoron and Necron could only be ended, Hegor decided, through one means: by seeking out the underground kingdom of Necron in hope of slaying both Vulcuran and the mighty Necron.

Should he succeed in finding a way to avoid Necron's deadly fire bolts and emerge triumphant then his destiny would be fulfilled and he would be king.

CARTOON MUSCLES
The quest opens with Hegor in the marshes just west of Necron's underground lair. Attempting to go in the opposite direction results in the Barbarian's swift demise — and offers an insight into the type of booby-trap that may lie ahead.

Hegor is depicted as a cartoon style character with glistening muscles and flowing blonde hair, animated through a selection of available movements ranging from walking and fighting to dropping everything and running away in blind terror. The detailed, scrolling backgrounds vary from marshy expanses to cavernous areas, all of which are patrolled by deadly dogmen, giant soldiers and numerous other assorted assassins. When these single-minded subordinates are slain, their evil souls drift upwards to eternity as ghastly ghostly images. Hidden traps, modelled very much on those seen in Raiders Of The Lost Ark, abound, demanding great care with every step taken.

Hegor may be controlled by mouse, keyboard or joystick (although the latter is not recommended because of the slow cursor movement) via a panel of icons at the base of the screen. These represent different actions: running, jumping, attacking, defending, walking and even fleeing along with the picking up, dropping and using of any items or objects found during the quest. The deeper into the underground empire Hegor journeys the tougher his opponents become, until finally he comes face to face with Necron himself.

There is no continuous game soundtrack or music, but detailed and accurate sounding spot effects can often make it acoustically frenetic. The omission of a save game facility is odd, but it's only a minor annoyance. Barbarian is a lot more playable than some of Psygnosis's previous releases. However the ST version suffers a little from jerky animation — a few more frames utilised in the movement department would have been better — and the collision detection could have been improved, but, as it stands, it's a very entertaining release. Cavern graphics are atmospheric and varied throughout, becoming more interesting the further you progress. The dragon is a particularly impressive creature if you're unlucky enough to meet it! The sampled sound effects are superb, as realistic as you can expect from the ST, and they really do add to the game. With some extremely devious traps to avoid, countless screens and many evil creatures to defeat, Barbarian will certainly get ST owners burning the midnight oil.

OVERALL 80%

OTHER VERSIONS
Psygnosis have no plans to convert Barbarian to any other machine at present.

"... a truly gothic atmosphere, makes it a novel and exciting experience."
**YOGI BEAR**

**Pirhana**

Humorous cartoon characters have not fared too well in game adaptations, the likes of *Asterix* (Melbourne House), *Fred Flintstone* (*Yabba Dabba Doo*, Quicksilva) and *Road Runner* (US Gold) all suffered some nefarious contraction of their original charm. Only *Scooby Doo* (Elite) maintained his equilibrium ... with difficulty. Now it is Pirhana’s turn, with the lesser fame of Berk successfully under their belts, to uncork the charm with one of the oldest of TV-created cartoon figures.

There is always something unpleasant going on in Jellystone Park and on this particular day it is an unfeeling hunter who has incarcerated small Boo-Boo within an iron cage. Luckily for the hapless bear, his friend – a larger brown bear who wears a hat and tie and answers to the name of Yogi – is feeling particularly fearless and embarks upon a quest to free him.

The dangers of Jellystone Park are all in the game, ferocious frogs, savage snakes, mean mooses, hot-tempered hunters and not to forget Ranger Smith. On his way, Yogi finds sustenance in abandoned picnic hampers or discarded fish. And then there are the toffee apples cunningly placed by his bondaged buddy. Not for eating, these sticky clues teach him the secret of the stepping stones which lie in Yogi’s path to justice. But he must hurry, time is Yogi Bear’s main enemy; he begins his rescue mission in January and must complete it before hibernation begins or Boo-Boo will be lost forever.

**AMSTRAD CPC**

Cassette: £9.95
Diskette: £14.95

We have seen nothing yet of the Amstrad version. It remains to be seen, therefore, what the playability factor will be like. It should be available before the next issue appears.

**COMMODORE 64/128**

Cassette: £9.95
Diskette: £14.94

The Yogi sprite certainly looks like the Hanna and Barbera cartoon character and everything else of pictorial interest is implemented very well. THE GAMES MACHINE team’s opinion is very mixed, ratings ranging from 45% to almost 70%, and reflecting more the personal preferences for the type of game and therefore the resistance to frustration caused by the playability problem.

**SPECTRUM**

Cassette: £9.95

Graphic implementation on the Spectrum is in black line drawing on a coloured ground (largely green) with a parallax background strip at the top of the screen. It allows for a good cartoonesque representation of the characters and fluid animation. As we go to press, we have not seen a finished version – due any day – and therefore cannot comment on playability.

"Yogi retains his charm in a game of reasonable ingenuity ... it is the gameplay that falters."

---

**AMSTRAD CPC**

Cassette: £9.95
Diskette: £14.95

High scores are not solely achieved by covering distance but also by surviving for any length of time, so failed rescuers who have been trying for a long while may not lose heart and perhaps be inspired to try again.

**COMMODORE 64/128**

Cassette: £9.95
Diskette: £14.94

Yogi scurries around avoiding rivers, trees, geysers and frogs, and it is through the pixel perfection demanded in jumping obstacles that the gameplay falters.

His basic directions are left to right (and up and down) along a path with snow capped mountains scrolling smoothly in parallax in the distance. Below is an information panel, showing Yogi’s energy, lives, how far he is from Boo-Boo and what the date is (hibernation nears!). There is also a surprise panel for ... well, surprises. Yogi can be controlled with either joystick or keyboard except on the Commodore 64, which is stick only. Apart from walking, Yogi can also duck and completely fox his assailants by turning into a bush.

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**SPECTRUM**

Cassette: £9.95

**AMSTRAD CPC**

Cassette: £9.95
Diskette: £14.95

High scores are not solely achieved by covering distance but also by surviving for any length of time, so failed rescuers who have been trying for a long while may not lose heart and perhaps be inspired to try again.

**COMMODORE 64/128**

Cassette: £9.95
Diskette: £14.94

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**SPECTRUM**

Cassette: £9.95

Graphic implementation on the Spectrum is in black line drawing on a coloured ground (largely green) with a parallax background strip at the top of the screen. It allows for a good cartoonesque representation of the characters and fluid animation. As we go to press, we have not seen a finished version – due any day – and therefore cannot comment on playability.

"Yogi retains his charm in a game of reasonable ingenuity ... it is the gameplay that falters."
If you've ever had the urge to be a king of the dirtbike track, but are a bit of an armchair sportsman, then look no further than this latest addition to the racing genre. *Excite Bike* is a fast, horizontally scrolling game. There are three selectable modes; race solo against the clock, race a horde of computer controlled bikers against the clock and track designer. The latter lets you make up a track and determine how many laps up to a maximum of nine are to be raced.

Preset, there are five increasingly difficult tracks to race over — any may be selected — but before each main race you first have to qualify in a challenge race by crossing the finish line in one of the top three positions. Bike control requires care, too much, and too little, power often leaves the rider in a tangled heap at the side of the track, especially when racing against computer riders as they bump and jostle you around the screen quite mercilessly.

**COMMENT**

*Excite Bike*’s graphics help make it a good looking game, but even with the addition of a DIY track-building kit, it gives a terrible feeling of déjà vu. Racing games have been around in many shapes and guises for several years, and although this is very playable, it tires steadily as you play. Being so easy to play and master, it may appeal more to younger people, but we doubt whether there is much lasting appeal for hardened arcade or racing fans.

**OVERALL 52%**

One of the later screens of two-wheeled addictive Nintendo fun
Francois Bourgeon is a master of the comic strip in France, Passengers On The Wind received the most prestigious reward possible for this type of work; the Grand Prix Du Salon D'Angouleme. The scenario and compelling style of writing was hailed by the critics and a new dimension to the comic strip was born. Bourgeon only agreed to have his works converted to the computer if the wording and story were scrupulously adhered to; the software writers agreed and attempted to capture the true spirit of his world of make believe.

In the days just before the French revolution, five people (Isa, Dr St Quentin, Mary, Hoel and John) arrived in Africa following an uncomfortable sea journey on a slave ship. Their ultimate aim is to clear Hoel of a wrongful charge of murder and regain the title of Countess for Isa. Unfortunately things do not go well, John goes mad, Hoel falls ill and the two women become exposed to the evil designs of Viaroux and Montague. Love for Hoel spurs Isa on and she quickly decides to travel to Dahomey's kingdom to seek out King Koengla, there to ask him to help save Hoel... and you thought Eastenders was complicated.

Most of the screen is taken up with a very attractive graphical representation of what is taking place in the game. Directly below is an information bar, from the left this depicts which character is talking with two vertical bars (zone 1 and zone 2) next to it, used to either choose another character or select available text options; the largest window is for displaying text messages and giving a choice of answers to certain questions asked throughout the game.

Passengers On The Wind II is played with the cursor, which may be moved anywhere on the screen and a decision on who says what and where taken by clicking the button (joystick or mouse) or pressing the space bar. Should an episode go drastically wrong then the player can restart the game or even load a previously saved one. Action replays of what has transpired in a particular episode (of which there are five) is another thoughtful addition.

The graphics in all versions are very nice indeed, it's a shame the cursor glides around the screen clicking here there and everywhere trying to establish some sort of story and generally get the adventure going. The graphics in all versions are very nice indeed, it's a shame the same cannot be said of the gameplay. Clicking around the main picture area trying to discover someone to enter into the character box is tedious, and it would perhaps have been more helpful to begin the game with these people ready to speak, as it were. This would have been much more user-friendly and would help the player get into the game. Once the basic idea has been mastered, the initial interest in 'what will happen next' soon fizzes out as the player gets into the game. Once the basic idea has been mastered, the initial interest in 'what will happen next' soon fizzes out as the player gets into the game. Once the basic idea has been mastered, the initial interest in 'what will happen next' soon fizzes out as...

The actual gameplay on all versions is very similar to that of Passengers On The Wind I, with the player having to move a cursor around the screen, clicking on whoever and whatever he can get to some sort of response. Its gameplay is about as non-existent as the sequel.

Instead, I'm sure they would have been much more interesting.

**ATARI ST**
Diskette: £19.95

**AMSTRAD**
Diskette: £14.95
Cassette: £9.95

**COMMODORE 64**
Diskette: £14.95
Cassette: £9.95

**PC**
Diskette: £19.95

The actual gameplay on all versions is very similar and the only real difference being the quality of the graphics and disk access time. Indeed they are enough alike as not to warrant individual ratings.

**OVERALL 43%**

"The graphics in all versions are very nice indeed, it's a shame the same cannot be said of the gameplay."
Diamond Games, a German software company marketed in the UK under the Robtek banner, point out that Diablo is based on a 50-year-old game idea. Now the half-a-century-old concept, by Manuel Constantinidis, has been updated to live within the half-a-megabyte machines, with a Commodore version to follow.

In Diablo the object is survival. Keep a ball rolling around the playing area until all panels on the screen are removed. The screen is made up of a series of tracks and bridges spread over 119 panels, each of which can be moved and repositioned anywhere in an attempt to form a single, connecting path for the sphere to follow. A life is lost if the ball falls off the end of an incomplete track or hits the edge of the playing area. To complicate things, once a panel has been rolled over, it is removed from play, making it a one-way journey for the ball.

As soon as a number of panels on each screen have been removed, the border turns green and the ball can be made to wrap round to the opposite side of the playing area. Very useful for getting out of tricky corners.

Completing a track gives the player a screen completion bonus (the more panels rearranged, the lower the bonus) and the next level is started. Further levels include a faster rolling sphere and a higher number of planes to be removed before wrap round can occur. Icons on the title screen perform various functions, including loading a saved game from disk, saving the current game to disk, starting and pausing a game as

Is this screen possible or is it all a pipe dream? Amiga well as exiting the program. A loudspeaker icon toggles between music and sound effects and a ball icon gives the sphere extra speed. Diablo is certainly original, although it bears some similarity to Microsphere's highly entertaining Spectrum oldie. The Train Game, and more to Incentive's much more interesting Confuzion. Diablo, however, won't appeal to everyone, unless you like visual puzzles which require thinking several moves ahead. The challenge of playing further screens is lost when you realise they are simply variations of one another. Both ST and Amiga games are virtually identical.

AMIGA
Diskette: £19.95

ATARI ST
Diskette: £14.95

With such a simple idea for a game, at least the graphics and sound effects could have been improved. As they stand, they are very much below average, doing no justice to either the Atari ST or the Amiga at all. An interesting idea poorly executed.

OVERALL 37%

COMMODORE 64/128
Cassette: £7.95
Diskette: £9.95

Not yet released, and we have not seen a preview copy — version update soon.

"Diablo is original, but the challenge is lost when you realise the screens are simply variations of one another."
SOLID GOLD SOFTWARE'S GREATEST Hits

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WINTER GAMES
LEADERBOARD
ACE OF Aces
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A classic compilation of
software's greatest hits,
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- INfiltrator: A magnificent
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  flight simulation and
decade, that makes all other
- WINTER GAMES: A truly
  classic No. 1
- LEADERBOARD: An
  outstanding location
  for a competition, a superb
  combination of testing events.
- Ace Of Aces: A
  Simon Says
  and spy thriller
  - GAUNTLET: An
    unrivalled classic No. 1.
THUNDERCATS
Elite Systems

For several years Gargoyle Games have enjoyed a string of successes such as Tir Na Nog and Dun Darach, most notably on the Spectrum and Amstrad, although with their TFL label, Shockway Rider made its mark with Commodore 64 owners as well. More recently, Gargoyle Games has concentrated on game development — they did Scooby Doo for Elite — and it was this expertise, as well as the physical proximity of both companies, that Elite called upon when they asked Gargoyle to program Thundercats, licensed from the well-known TV series. Those familiar with Tir Na Nog and Dun Darach may well notice a certain familiarity about the hero of the game, Lion-O...

The third Earth is in turmoil. Agents of evil Mumm-ra have entered the Cats Lair and stolen the Eye Of Thundera — a magic jewel that is the power of the sword of Omens — and captured a few journey to castle Plum-dar and retrieve it, or die in the attempt.

Eventually the final battle. Each level is a horizontally scrolling hive of action with Lion-O as the central character running; jumping from ledge to ledge and either swinging his sword or firing energy bolts to dispose of the enemy. Hordes of Molemen and other mutated life-forms attack from all directions; one touch is all it takes to end a life, although extra lives, weapons or transport may be gained by hitting containers which are situated throughout.

ATTENTION TO DETAIL

Levels three, eight and 13 are non-rescue levels, and should the player go over it Mumm-ra himself enters the fray and Lion-O meets a swift demise. The elemental levels from four to seven (Fire, Water, Air and Earth) are slightly different from the others in that the player is allowed to choose in which order he wishes to enter them.

Thundercats features fast, smooth parallax scrolling which is very effective. The top of screen is decorated with a nicely digitised picture just below which is a slower scrolling atmospheric backdrop (trees or rocks depending on the current location) with the main action taking place below that. Gargoyle Games have worked hard on each version so that Lion-O runs and jumps in a quite realistic way, hair flowing, arms pumping and with a general air of meaning it. Thundercats may not be totally original in its implementation, but the attention to detail, gameplay and addictiveness associated with previous Gargoyle games that are all present, make it a great game to play. If your joystick dexterity is up to it, then Third Earth should soon be free and Mumm-ra sent packing.

Crouched in the centre dispatching a monster, doesn't Lion-O remind you of Cuchulainn? Amstrad CPC screen

Thundercats while they were about it, Mumm-ra’s agents succeeded in incarcerating Wilykit, Panthro and Tygra but the others managed to escape. The Eye Of Thundera was given to Lion-O for his safe-keeping, and he now vows to return it to its rightful place. To do this he must

Thunder Cats is an excellent job across all the popular 8-bit machines — this from the CBM 64 version

AMSTRAD

Cassette: £8.95
Diskette: £14.95

The digitised graphics in the Amstrad adaption are probably the best of all the versions, although it’s a pity the 464 Thundercats is limited to only one digitised picture. The game graphics are nicely done, varied and smooth, keeping faith with the cartoon. Rob Hubbard’s ‘feline’ soundtrack is excellent and works well. This is a polished, playable and exciting release from Elite.

OVERALL 87%

SPECTRUM 48/128/+3

Cassette: £7.95
Diskette: £14.95

The 48K sound is admittedly a bit thin, you need a 128 to appreciate the effects and music. Gargoyle’s experience with parallax scrolling on earlier Spectrum games pays dividends, and using colour planes neatly avoids what otherwise would have been a very monochromatic appearance. This is probably the fastest version of what is a highly addictive game.

OVERALL 90%

ATARI ST

Diskette: £14.95

This is a polished, playable and exciting release from Elite...

The ST version of Thundercats is imminent, and given that the game itself remains as well constructed as we have seen on the 8-bit machines, there’s no doubting that it should be an excellent buy.

COMMODORE 64

Cassette: £9.95
Diskette: £14.95

Thundercats is compelling. Each level completed is a victory and each new one a challenge that just has to be bested. The 64 version has beautiful animation and very smooth scrolling. Control of Lion-O is perhaps a little frustrating sometimes, but once the basics have been mastered you can usually get out of most tricky situations. Then there’s the music; the sound throughout is very good but Rob Hubbard’s music is outstanding, adding a great deal to the overall effect of the game.

OVERALL 86%

NINTENDO

Elite are promising a Nintendo cartridge shortly. It’s still early days in this market, not many games have been converted from home computer format to games console yet. So this should be an interesting experiment to watch. Clearly, though, the game’s design is ideal for cartridge, and we may expect something quite spectacular.

“... attention to detail, gameplay and addictiveness make it a great game... an exciting release from Elite...”
EARLY MANKIND
(EARLY WOMAN EVEN KINDER)

SAPIENS
Loriciels

Founded in 1983, Loriciels quickly rose to the forefront of French software companies with over 200,000 sales by 1984. They started their own in-house advertising agency, and then founded Microoids to concentrate on micro and domestic robots and design software for home computers. Today Loriciels is the number one publisher in France and has become one of the three largest distributors. They have recently approached Elite Systems to help with their latest project, Loriciels UK.

Sapiens (one of the first Loriciels/Elite releases) is a real-time graphic adventure style game with over three million locations; this vast number is achieved via the utilisation of ‘algorithms of fractal vision in perspective’ (...) that’s what we thought too). Designed and written by Didier and Olivier Guillion, it is set in Southwestern Europe some ten thousand years ago when man lived or died by his hunting prowess, and is presented on screen as an upper area for displaying graphics and option/action menus below. The main neanderthal (he can either be played as Torgan or as an original character created by the player) faces setting off into the wilderness in search of food for his starving tribe and becoming a great hunter in the process.

Interaction with other inhabitants is integral, as they may be bearers of useful information or items which Torgan needs — a major achievement in the game is to actually get another character to join Torgan on his quest for food and glory.

INTERACTION

To perform the many actions available, select the option required from the appropriate main menu; a corresponding sub-menu then appears. For example, choosing SAY creates a sub-menu of usable phrases, such as ‘Who are you?’, ‘I can control the lightning’ (a particularly frightening statement) and ‘Good hunting’.

LOOK’s sub-menu offers landscape choices: lateral view, panorama and map. Landscape and panorama depict the same kind of picture but the latter slowly rotates to show the whole surrounding. The lateral view displays Torgan’s view with warned, great care is needed not to chip too much away or the stone will break apart and leave Torgan weaponless.

ORIGINAL

Travel across the terrain is regularly interrupted by the appearance of other neanderthals with whom he may converse and trade, or even wildlife such as rabbits which he may befriend or kill depending on how hungry he is. Each area Torgan finds himself in should be thoroughly searched as it may contain flints for weapons or berries for healing potions and, very importantly, water to drink. Items may be added to the inventory with the TAKE command and traded via the GIVE option.

Sapiens is interesting and certainly quite original in both plot and implementation. The graphics on both versions examined (Atari ST and PC) are very effective and polished and the game itself quite

Our hero looking a little bushed

Torgan greets a member of another tribe, an attractive screen from Sapiens on the Atari ST
easy to get into. Frustration can set in when conversation with other game inhabitants is quickly reduced to a hall of abuse and eventual bloodshed when you do not know precisely what it is they want. It is easy enough, when a tribesmen decides to teach Torgan a lesson for his aggressive manner, to spend game-days recovering from the attack - but isn't that life?

There is certainly a lot to do in Sapiens and it looks very pretty whilst doing it but it is quite repetitive and its interest factor may dwindle quite quickly.

**ATARI ST**

Diskette: £19.99

The music in Sapiens is very Depeche Mode (an appropriately neanderthal band) and surprisingly adds quite a bit to the games atmosphere. All the graphical scenes are impressive, although the character animation is somewhat halting. Perhaps a little more control over Torgan's actions would have been nice, walk left or right, stoop down and hit (with his axe) or throw a spear do not seem quite enough considering the task ahead of him.

**OVERALL 64%**

**PC**

Diskette: £24.99

It plays the same as the Atari version except that the keyboard is used rather more than the mouse. The colours are pastelly and unreal (PC 1540 SD although if you have the colour graphics board, this may not be the case) and the sound is awful, more a fault of the machine than the game. Having said all that Sapiens is still very playable on the PC compatibles.

**OVERALL 62%**

**AMSTRAD CPC**

£14.99

Available mid-January

"Sapiens is interesting and certainly quite original in both plot and implementation."

**COMMODORE 64**

Cassette: £9.99

Diskette: £12.99

**SPECTRUM**

48/128

Cassette: £8.99

The other 8-bit versions are in the pipeline, and should be available before Christmas. The Commodore version should be no problem, but the Spectrum will depend a lot on how the graphics are implemented.

**AMSTRAD**

Cassette: £9.99

Diskette: £14.99

Oddly, there's something very pleasing about running around, eating passers-by and dodging the bobbies. The game uses the basic elements of an arcade adventure, coupled with over 100 screens, and combines them to good effect. The action can slow down quite a bit when there's a lot of people on screen, but eating them soon solves that problem! The graphics are relatively simple considering what the Amstrad is capable of, but they work well; the way the lycanthrope along is especially convincing.

**OVERALL 75%**

**WEREWOLVES OF LONDON**

Viz Designs

For reasons unknown to you (and why not?) a wicked family of Sloane Rangers have placed a curse on you (the whimsy becomes more sublime) - a curse that causes you to transform into a werewolf every full moon! Seeking revenge for this dastardly deed, you intend to search London for the family members and 'dispose' of them, one by one. It may sound like a rather gruesome scenario, but in fact Werewolves Of London is a nicely constructed, humorous and pleasant release from Viz Designs.

To realise your inhuman passion, you can run across rooftops, prowl through parks, stroll along streets, scamper down sewers and even use the Underground (a description of abilities that could describe almost any Londoner in fact). Should you chance upon a Sloane, a cross flashes in the status display, the moment at which you should quickly run up and kill him or her before they scamper off.

The city constabulary disapproves of your actions however, and unlike those silly policemen in the movies with their prejudices about common superstition, this lot is just waiting to fire silver bullets at anything remotely hairy. Being shot by a silver bullet, falling off rooftops or electrocuting yourself on the Underground rails causes a loss of blood, and losing all of it ends your hunt. Pouncing on Londoners restores blood, although you have to catch your meal first.

As soon as daylight breaks, you naturally turn back into a respectable, innocent human. This provides an ideal opportunity to explore the city and collect such useful objects as crowbars (to open the manholes leading to the sewers) and flashlights (useful for dark passages and the tunnels of the Underground). Bandages also come in handy for stemming the flow of blood.

The police won't tolerate all this mayhem, and getting nicked means a night in jug with any illegal possessions being put back where they came from.

Only when all eight of the Sloane Ranger family are killed, can the werewolf curse be lifted, and London made safe again - until the next game.

"Werewolves Of London is a nicely constructed, humorous and pleasant release from Viz Designs."
THE CHIEF WHIP

INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM

US Gold

The hero is back! Licensed from the Spielberg/Lucas film of the same name via the Atari coin-op machine version of the same name, Indiana Jones is on a rescue mission to recover the lost Sankara stones from the malevolent Thuggee cult. US Gold have employed an army of programmers for the popular machines—Tiertex (who did Ace Of Aces and 720°, also reviewed this issue) were responsible for the Spectrum and CBM64, while Paragon did the Amstrad and Atari ST versions. For what we are about to receive, may the coooks be truly responsible ...

Indy's off to recover the stolen Sankara stone and rescue the Indian villagers' children who have been enslaved beneath Pankot Palace, secret worshipping ground of the Thuggee Death Cult. They are forced to dig in the mines for precious gems and the other missing Sankara stones. The game is split into three distinct levels. Indy's first task is to rescue the children, which involves travelling through a series of caverns, tunnels, ladders, chutes and conveyor belts to discover the whereabouts of each. The labyrinth of pathways are patrolled by Thugs and infested by venomous snakes which can give a fatal nip if they get too close.

WHIPPING UP A STORM

The odds aren't entirely stacked against Indiana because, as always, he's armed with his trusty whip. Zapping Thugs with it renders them helpless for a short time, while whipping the snakes dispenses with their disservices permanently. The children are hidden inside tiny cells, and to free them Indy can whip open the cell doors. When all the children have been freed, it's on to the second level. This features a death-defying race in mine cars along the rail network inside the confined space of the tunnels. The player controls the car containing Indiana Jones, and must safeguard against derailments as well as watching out for jumps and missing sections of rail. The route to freedom is guarded by Thugs and a Thug giant all intent on stopping Indy's progress.

The final level takes place within the Temple Of Doom itself. Here the Sankara stone must be recovered from beneath the statue of Kali, the four-armed goddess of death. To achieve this Indy must avoid pursuing guards and other nasties. Clever manoeuvring and a maelstrom of skilful whipping are essential to get through this screen. The action continues until all three Sankara stones have been recovered, when Indiana is then faced with a perilous rope bridge to get across. Indiana Jones And The Temple Of Doom suffers from several problems, some associated with individual machine restrictions, but in general it seems to be an indifferent implementation of a great action film. The coin-op itself, though pretty to look at, wasn't much above average in gameplay, and it must be a point that in converting a less than perfect source, which must be accurately copied, the designers and programmers are seriously restricted. The game's stages are obviously based on the film, but poor game design lets them down tremendously; the Thug guards, for instance, regularly appear out of thin air to attack, giving you no chance at all to retaliate (they are fairest in Spectrum version). And then, rescuing the captured kids seems too easy and doesn't take very long.

AMSTRAD CPC

Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £14.99

Temple Of Doom has some atmospheric, but bland graphics, which unfortunately don't work — due to the colour scheme, it is difficult to see where the edges of ledges are until it's too late. Also unfair are the guards who are faster than Indy on the ladders, and the scrolling screen is just too small to avoid them with any success. What soundtrack there is is horrendous, adding nothing to the game.

OVERALL 42%

COMMODORE 64

Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £14.99

 Indy marches around level one though the Ark had some terrible lasting effect on his gait — and his weapon-wielding seems decidedly dodgy. Racing through tunnels, steering the car whilst fighting off Thugs is a sensation which is sadly lacking, the little mobile cruises through the screen at about the pace of a 1541 disk drive. Not a high quality game graphically, the thing creates sufficient frustration to warrant turning the computer off and loading something else ... quickly.

OVERALL 32%

SPECRUM 48/128

Cassette: £8.99

Tiertex sensibly opted for monochrome graphics, which actually means it comes off best in many ways, avoiding the cluttered impression prevalent in other versions. However, they move jerkily and bear little resemblance to the characters they are based on. It's also annoying, when you've let the tape steam to the end, that the instructions neglect to tell you that this is a multi-load game. A lack of definable control keys is a definite drawback, and another frustration is the whip, which doesn't work as fast as the player would want it to. Nevertheless, Indiana Jones can be enjoyable, but you are unlikely to keep returning.

OVERALL 64%

ATARI ST

Diskette: £19.99

After three less than inspiring Dooms, hopes were high for the ST. What a let down; the play area of section one is larger than in the 8-bit versions and the backdrop and characters are thankfully much more detailed, but Indy still walks like a clockwork doll. Whip accuracy is a touch better and the Thugs give more of a chance to fight back. However the scrolling is very poor (the main character has to reach the end of the screen before it scrolls which means that some adversaries are not seen until the last minute) and the speed of the game is painfully slow. Overall, with the option of playing a hard, medium or slow game, the ST Indiana Jones is better than the 8-bit versions but not to the extent that perhaps it could have been.

OVERALL 56%

"... an indifferent implementation of a great action film and a less than perfect coin-op ... "

76/148 TGM TX DATE: 12-87
A PLUNGE IN THE GUNGE

THROUGH THE TRAPDOOR

Pirhana

Don Priestley's been writing computer games for longer than he might care to think about, way back to early Spectrum days and games like Maziacs. Most were released through Dk'tronics, and the last he did for them before the company turned away from software, marked a new style characterised by giant, colourful figures with plenty of animation, Popeye. After a first release, the then new formed Manhattan software house Pirhana picked up the game, and so started a fruitful partnership which has seen Don follow up with Trapdoor, Funky, and now the sequel Through The Trapdoor.

The highly successful Trapdoor was based upon the cult TV show featuring plasticine monsters. The sequel also features the flubbery antics of gigacte blue Berk, and provides much more action than Don's last offering, Funky, but still retains an irresistible charm that makes it a winner.

Deep down below the trapdoor is a place where you don't go alone... Unless, of course, you're as stupid as Boni the Skull. But he's been helped. There he is, quite content sitting above the trapdoor, when it bursts open and out flies a hideous bird-like creature who grabs Boni by the hand, is rather more independently minded and when not actually being moved in a direction tends to wander off and begin chasing, and later eating, the worms which wriggle around in the corridors. In fact Berk's carrying ability comes in useful at times for imprisoning Drutt within his capacious arms.

Control between the characters remains captive at the farthest end of the fourth region and to get there Berk and Drutt must collect three keys which unlock the doors between the regions.

Through The Trapdoor relies much more on action and timing than puzzles for its main appeal – where puzzles are encountered they aren't as involved as those in either Trapdoor or Funky. While it appears most people still love Don Priestley's graphic style the task-orientated games are wearing a bit thin. At first the game proves difficult, and it may seem as though you're getting nowhere until you discover one little secret that helps to complete a section a gives a clue to the nature of the difficulties ahead.

DIGESTING HELP

Unlike the original, where Berk was the only controllable character, in Through The Trapdoor you can operate both Berk and Drutt, utilising each creature's unique abilities. Drutt, for example, can jump very high and bears a charmed life when it comes to meeting any of the creatures in the tunnels; Berk's far too fat to jump, but he can carry objects, and his hyperactive digestive system has some odd, though useful, effects on the things he eats. Working the characters in unison, it's relatively easy to complete most puzzles.

Controlling Berk is simple – just left and right – although eating sweets and magic mushrooms provides him with jumping and flying powers. Drutt, on the other hand, is more independently minded and when not actually being moved in a direction tends to wander off and begin chasing, and later eating, the worms which wriggle around in the corridors. In fact Berk's carrying ability comes in useful at times for imprisoning Drutt within his capacious arms.

Control between the characters is switched by depressing the fire button, and to indicate which character is currently in control, a row of little bulging-eyed blue Berkys or yellow Druttys appears along the bottom of the screen. As the game progresses the eyes gradually close – when they are all closed your time is up, and Berk and Drutt are zapped.

COMMODORE 64

Cassette: £8.95
Diskette: £13.95
Late November

Games devised for the Spectrum haven't always gone down well with Commodore owners. Happily, Don Priestley's big figure games have. Using character graphics, the 64 version virtually mirrors its Spectrum counterpart. Gameplay will remain the same and the speed should be fine. Add to that a theme tune and you've got a version that could possibly better the Spectrum.

OTHER FORMATS

Pirhana have no plans for Through The Trapdoor on any other machines.

AMSTRAD CPC

Cassette: £8.95
Diskette: £13.95
Mid November

Previous Priestley offerings have been converted very well by Five Ways Software and been well received critically; Through The Trapdoor should be no exception. Obviously the graphics will be blockier for the CPC version to make full use of Mode 0's 16 colours, but this shouldn't affect gameplay. As with the Commodore 64 version, a title tune and more sound effects should be included.

SPECTRUM 48/128

Cassette: £8.95
Mid November

Don Priestley has always been a committed Spectrum programmer, so clearly Through The Trapdoor is crafted with the machine very much in mind. The large cartoonesque characters are engaging and by capitalising on sheer size, he has provided some very startling shocks here and there. The sound is little more than 'bells and whistles', which is slightly disappointing but it hardly detracts from the overall pleasure. It's a fascinating game both to play and watch, and with the inclusion of two characters to control, provides enough entertainment to make it an excellent sequel.

OVERALL 82%

Don Priestley's large graphics shown to good effect, as Berk cuddles Drutt, who otherwise might wander off on his own – 'watch the birdie...'

"Through The Trapdoor has the mixture just right... an irresistible charm makes it a winner."
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Welcome the first of a series of regular adventure sections in THE GAMES MACHINE. I, Rob Steel, find myself in the enviable position of having eight different computers at my disposal on which to play and review adventures. This should mean that even if the adventure market for a particular machine becomes a little thin at times, thefore of columns will not suffer from a lack of material to peruse.

This bi-month I look at Level 9's 'Gnome Ranger', two very different Infocom titles and the game of Jeffrey Archer's first book Not A Penny More Not A Penny Less from the unlikely adventure source of Domark.

NOT A PENNY MORE NOT A PENNY LESS

Domark

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SPECTRUM 48/128 Cassette: £14.95
AMSTRAD Cassette: £14.95, Disk: £19.95
COMMODORE 64 Cassette: £14.95
BBC Cassette: £14.95, Diskette: £19.95

Jeffrey Archer is the author of six bestselling novels to date, including A Quiver Full of Arrows, Shall We Tell The President and Kane And Abel. Born in 1940 Archer was educated at Brasenose College, Oxford and became the youngest member of the House of Commons when he won the by-election at Louth in 1969. Not A Penny More Not A Penny Less was his first novel, published in 1974, it was an instant success - just as well as it was written to make him a lot of money to recover from a huge loss he had taken after being conned in a manner very similar to that in the story itself.

If all this makes Jeffrey sound like a computer work as well, then just read Mel Croucher's piece on page 21 - in fact the game scenario was written by Robin Waterfield (who has also written a role-playing game based on the story for this issue of THE GAMES MACHINE - see page 97), and the programming was taken care of by Imagetec Design.

Not A Penny More Not A Penny Less, the computer game, puts the player right in the middle of the action. Taking the role of Stephen Bradley, the game opens in his office with the knowledge that he has just been swindled out of $250,000. Left virtually penniless by the collapse of the company Stephen worked for (caused by the unscrupulous owner Metcalfe), Bradley, aided by other victims of this evil man, aims to get his money back - to the penny.

Unfortunately the forces of law and order have no proof that Metcalfe carried out this dastardly deed and can therefore be of no assistance, the four victims are on their own. They decide to use Metcalfe's own modus operandi, and Stephen must now attempt to control his vengeful comrades as they each carry out the sting using their own methods.

I played the ST version, visually it looked quite professional, set out as a piece of paper with the graphics resembling a black-and-white photograph which slides to the top of the page and is clipped into position. Below this are the very brief descriptions of where Stephen currently is and what he can see. A single line is reserved for text input at the bottom of the page. The basic aim of the game is to fill Stephen's folder with information about Metcalfe and his other three victims and then use it to gain revenge.

The voice of Jeffrey himself vibrates out of the monitor at the very beginning of the game and orally describes certain situations throughout the 'adventure', although both the graphics and sound may be switched off to speed gameplay up. Text input may be edited via the cursor and delete keys. The size of the text may be selected as 40 or 80 column depending on how good your eyesight is.

Although most of the usual adventuring words can be used in Not A Penny More Not A Penny Less, the way they are implemented is somewhat frustrating. For example, all puzzles in every location must be solved before the player can move on to another place. Movement itself is sometimes achieved in an unconventional way, the game does include the usual compass directions (though not in abbreviated form and only when the game specifies the availability of these exits), but to visit certain people one must input EXAMINE (persons name) - very odd. I did find that in the first location I could say the computer game is no match for the book (which incidentally is supplied as part of the packaging) and is certainly very frustrating to play. But it is by no means a terrible program and definitely worthy of some perseverance.

All versions of the game except BBC and Spectrum have both speech and graphics.

ATMOSPHERE 62% INTERACTION 51% OVERALL 59%

Metcalfe on his way to ruin - Atari ST screen
GNOME RANGER

Level 9
AMIGA Diskette: £14.95
ATARI ST Diskette: £14.95
COMMODORE 64 Diskette: £9.95, Cassette: £9.95
AMSTRAD CPC Diskette: £9.95, Cassette: £9.95
ATARI XE, 800XL Diskette: £9.95, Cassette: £9.95
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SPECTRUM Cassette: £9.95

Level 9 is one of the original UK games houses, remaining an independent partnership for many years, it has produced some 15 adventures in all. Through the years their products have become more and more sophisticated progressing from the verb/noun input to the modern versatile parsers. The size of the games has greatly increased as has their complexity, now they include multi-player puzzles, RAM save/restore, Undo and digitised graphics. But are the story lines any better? The Level 9 greats such as Snowball, Adventure Quest and Lords Of Time are hard acts to follow, regardless of the advanced writing utilities used nowadays (Kaos is the preferred Austin tool at present) and sometime one feels getting that these prestigious games will never be bested.

Gnome Ranger, their latest offering, is actually released on their own label again, rather than through Rainbird. Using all the adventure writing skills and technology the Austins have mastered over the years, is this the quest to end all quests?

The story concerns a gnome by the name of Ingrid Bottomlow who has got to find her way back home after being accidentally teleported to a strange and wonderful land. Set in three parts, it includes all the hi-tech features mentioned earlier, go to, follow, run to, find, to a strange and wonderful land. Set in three parts, it includes all the hi-tech features mentioned earlier, go to, follow, run to, find.

LIKE A LEMMING TO LEBLING

... Or as a lamb to the slaughter, star-struck cub-reporter Nik Wild took a rare opportunity provided by the Personal Computer World Show to chat with one of the greats of American adventure games, INFOCOM’s David Lebling. Co-author of Zork and author of Sorcerer, Spellbreaker and many more great adventures, Lebling spoke with grave frankness. But first, there was the adventure of reaching him in his eyrie...

When I heard that David Lebling was to be available for interview at the PCW Show, I jumped at the chance of meeting him. Brandishing my weapon in one hand and shield in the other (pen and paper to you), I left the relative safety of Newsfield’s fortress on Olympus to join my quest in search of this member of the high priesthood of adventure authors.

Charged with the task of bringing home a few words of wisdom from the esteemed shaman, the very thought of such a meeting gave me the strength I needed to face the terrors which lay before me. Would I survive the human tidal wave which pushed against my soggy and an adventure utility named Cornerstone and an adventure utility named Zil (don’t ask!) began.

"A bunch of us guys from MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) thought ourselves so intelligent that the world would be our oyster. Setting up a computer program orientated company seemed inevitable, and development of a business package called Cornerstone and an adventure utility named Zil (don’t ask!) began.

"Unfortunately our first real taste of the big bad outside world came when Cornerstone flopped and we had to concentrate on the games market if we were to survive."

"Pause for thought and to let Clare Hirsch (an Activision sire) squeeze past. I was now really getting into this question and answer game and thought the next inquiry should be a real humdinger, soul-searching and revealing. "How many writers do you have, Infocom?" asked I."

"Six."
Looking heavenward I prayed. Please, not another one-word answer. But the gods were with me it seemed, for he continued: 'We have a large open-plan affair with smaller offices leading off. The central area is a very useful place to be if you want to learn the innermost secrets of forthcoming games. Aiming to be professional, I adopted a puzzled look designed to coax him on. It worked. "Here any puzzles and their solutions are inadvertently given away," he went on, "as the writers, excited and pleased by their work, come screaming out of their offices and..."

"Does this not give you an unfair advantage when playtesting their games?"

"I try not to listen!"

A small element of panic now crept into my brain. To try and maintain some sort of conversational flow I needed to ask about playtesting, or continue with the author theme. Having a quick brain, I decided to incorporate both ways.

"When you playtest a game can you tell from the way it's written which of your colleagues wrote it?"

He smiled (wow). "Oh yes, definitely. Jeff O'Neill (Nord And Bert Couldn't Make Head Or Tail Of It), for example, has a sardonic wit which is very..." He paused and easily recognised..."

I interrupted, too quickly I think, "And your own style?"

"I have a reputation for purple prose. My descriptions are what my partners call 'flowery'."

I desperately tried to remember a particularly flowery location in The Lurking Horror, failed miserably and blurted out something about the zombie waxing the floor.

"Did you realise that the whole of the GUE campus was actually fashioned on MIT, which me and my buddies attended?"

"Was it really?" I asked realising that this articulation may not be one of my stronger points.

"Yes, it's actually a mirror image of the place, and the dome and everything is really there. The guy who waxes the floor looked like a zombie and he did try to stop the students exploring in his little nooks and crannies and..." he looked at me as though some revelation was due..."

"there was a room along this featureless corridor which had a door marked Alchemy Lab."

My eyes widened as I recalled what lay behind this door in the game.

"What was in this room?"

"I asked, hardly daring to listen to the answer. "I don't know, I never went into it.""

Damn!! One shock horror scandal out the window. I would at this point have dearly loved to continue my in-depth questioning on The Lurking Horror (and perhaps even glean some tips), but professionalism took over, and taking a guess at the answer, I decided to change the direction of my questioning. Unfortunately Mr. Leibling couldn't hear me with my back to him so I turned round again.

"We use a Dec System 20 which is a large, early Sixties main-frame."

Getting away from the graphics, they're doing what Infocom has been doing for years. It's very complimentary to have such skilled people emulate your efforts. Failing miserably to hide my shocked expression I grilled David on the graphics issue. "Why do you discount their rather splendid graphics so easily, don't you like them?"

Yes they're very nice, but do they actually add to the game and how one may play or win?"

I knew about these situations, I've watched Wogan. There is always a stage during the interview when the interviewer tries to turn the tables and take control. This was not going to happen. Brilliantly turning his question into another I said: "So you feel graphics are an extra to adventure games and having no real place amongst the prose?"

"That's right. Houses, trees and so on which appear in the pictures and not in the text cannot usually be examined or manipulated, and once they can be begin to approach that..."
I have a reputation for purple prose. My descriptions are what my partners call 'flowery'.

Our playtesters have had more fun playing Beyond Zork than any other adventure we have done.
Oh oh, someone’s nicked the Star Generator - Amiga going against all odds to see what (pun intended). I shall keep had barely scratched the surface the planet, only to find out that I escaped the ship and landed on with myself when I eventually adventure is. I was quite pleased ultimately exactly how big this lies in the next screen and trying to enable access to the last story, which is

Nord And Bert couldn’t make head or tail of it

Infocom
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PC Diskette: £29.99
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ATMOSPHERE 79%
INTERACTION 58%
OVERALL 74%

It is confession time I think, I have never played Ballyhoo! I mention this because Nord And Bert... was written by the same guy, Jeff O’Neill. Jeff (born 1958) left California State University armed only with an undergraduate degree in journalism and began his career with Infocom as a game tester – he specialised in playing Hitchhiker’s Guide To The Galaxy. His influences are Nietzsche (a prominent German Philosopher who, among other things, developed the theory of Superman (no, not the one who wears his knickers outside his trousers!),) and Mort Sahl (who didn’t!). The very first Infocom story he wrote was Ballyhoo.

Nord And Bert is a decidedly different sort of offering from the Zork zone than we have come to expect. The first thing to note is that it is a collection of eight short stories each of which involves punning, wordplay and general verbal trickery. The scenarios are played independently of each other although a password has to be gleaned from the first seven (the order in which they are tackled is entirely up to the player) to enable access to the last story, which is

entitled Meet The Mayor. The necessity for mapping is made redundant as accessible locations are displayed at the top of the screen and movement is gained by inputting the appropriate name. Examining items may be achieved by simply typing the name of the object the player wishes to study – no more examine errors! – although a closer look may require inputs such as LOOK INSIDE or LOOK THROUGH ‘object name’.

The basic idea of the game is to study the locations and objects or characters in the vicinity and try to spot the spoonerisms (words with sounds transposed such as the ‘well-boiled icicle’ and the ‘well-oiled bicycle’) or homonyms (differing words which sound alike, ‘stair’ and ‘stare’ for instance) to solve the puzzles. Whilst in the British aisle within the Shopping Bizarre scenario the player is confronted with a Box Boy who is busy putting boxes onto shelves beneath a sign which reads ‘Putting Area’. The way to dispose of this boy is obscurity at its worst; the idea is to input the words ‘Pudding Section’ to clear up the putting area and reveal a line of ants which of course will transform into bustling ladies when the player types in the password ‘Ballyhoo’. A tantrum throwing little girl appears at one point, the ribbon in her hair carries the words ‘worst bra’, if the player is getting into the swing of the game then it will

SLOW ON THE 64

Here it was then. The final question, the one which I had been building up to all through the interview, hoping I’d have the courage when it came to it. I did. ‘Why is the disk access time on the Commodore 64 versions of your game so slow?’

He stared at me with those eyes of his (what else?). The ground trembled and beams of light shot into the sanctum (as Clare opened the door). Would David Lebling, this king of adventuredom actually bother to answer, or would he just end the interview here and now with a flick of a hand? To my relief he smiled and spoke...

“At this present time our days are taken up developing new systems and writing new games. When things quieten down sufficiently we will certainly make time to work on this problem. Obviously the larger the game is then more the smaller machines such as the 64 have to access the disk. But until we develop the system, players will regrettably have to sacrifice speed for size.'
I didn't enjoy this game, no atmosphere, no excitement, just lots of experimenting with words, very dull. Its links with the adventuring world are very tenuous indeed and I hope Infocom don't make Nord And Bert a precedent... I shan't vote for either of them.

**ATMOSPHERE 31%**

**INTERACTION 51%**

**OVERALL 41%**

---

**THE LURKING HORROR**

Infocom

AMIGA Diskette: £29.99
ATARI ST Diskette: £29.99
PC Diskette: £29.99
COMMODORE 64/128 Diskette only: £24.99
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I had the pleasure of meeting the author of Lurking Horror whilst at the PCW show (remember that?) and to me he seemed polite, mild-mannered and generally a nice guy (see interview elsewhere in this section). I would never have thought that this symbol of niceness could be capable of creating something as horrific and bloodthirsty as Lurking Horror. David Lebling either needs his brain checking out for hidden psychotic tendencies or, as is probably the case, he is a very imaginative writer. In the interview I held with him he states that his trademark is purple prose, I think he's changed his colour preference to red.

The nightmare begins with the player, as a student at the GuJe Tech., braving a violent snowstorm in order to get to the computer centre on campus and finish work on an assignment. Unfortunately the power of the storm increases drastically and he finds himself trapped within the complex for the night – he is not alone...

**ATMOSPHERE 88%**

**INTERACTION 82%**

**OVERALL 85%**

---

Accessing his personal computer (something which very wisely can only be done via the contents of the game package), the intention was to complete the assignment, unfortunately something seems to be amiss and he is dragged into a different world, a primitive world of sacrifices, tribal rituals, magic and unearthly creatures. Thankfully escape isn't too difficult and soon the player should find himself back in front of his computer wondering what the hell is going on. The hacker, who is in the room with our hero, appears ignorant of these strange goings on, although he does have his uses in the game, you could even say he plays a key role...

Exploration of the campus reveals plenty to see and do. What lurks behind the door to the Aihemcy Lab proves very interesting and places the player in a very exciting predicament, one which is very satisfying to overcome.

Throughout the adventure Mr Lebling maintains the spooky atmosphere although the tension is broken periodically by little snippets of humorous prose. I have played both the Commodore 64 and Amiga versions and although they are basically the same, the Amiga game does have sound effects (IN AN INFOOCOM GAME?! well yes, and they nicely complement the text descriptions. The size of the game and the amount of puzzles there are to solve, together with the very professional implementation of Lurking Horror make it yet another masterpiece from Infocom. Playing it alone in a darkened room at the dead of night is not recommended for the weak of heart.

---

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Back to reality I suppose, until January, when I shall be coming at you monthly (can you wait?)! If you feel stirred to put pen to paper and communicate with me about any adventure related topic please feel free: ROB STEEL, THE GAMES MACHINE, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB.
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Electronic Arts have just released the follow up to the Atari ST art utility Degas. Priced at only £24.95, Degas Elite is a sophisticated package, as Robin Candy found out.

Until recently, art packages for home computers were very limiting. At the low-cost end, the Spectrum only allows a maximum of two colours in any one attribute from a possible eight-colour palette. Colourfully realistic graphics are hard to achieve, the entire picture has to be carefully planned out before setting a single pixel on screen. That so many high quality pictures have been created on the Spectrum just goes to show the ingenuity of some graphic artists. But the rise in popularity of 16-bit computers, along with price reductions in hardware, has opened a whole new area to the budding graphic artist, and provided software which apes that being used in very much more sophisticated and expensive dedicated graphics front ends, and sometimes even matches them.

A doodle from THE GAMES MACHINE: Nik Wild conceived the picture — outside the Goblin’s Cave from The Hobbit — and drew it, Oliver Frey added some colour and smoothed it out

A picture which clearly shows the richness that can be created by keeping the working colours in a tight chromatic key.

Neither the Light Bikes or Robin Candy’s Music For The Masses, was digitised, they were all done freehand.

A doodle from THE GAMES MACHINE: Nik Wild conceived the picture — outside the Goblin’s Cave from The Hobbit — and drew it, Oliver Frey added some colour and smoothed it out

All the Degas functions can be manipulated from the main menu screen. The top line, Desk, File, Set, Make and Block provide pull down sub-menus, and more of those later. The other options relate mainly to Degas’s drawing features. These include all the functions you would expect from a powerful art utility, such as airbrush, stipple, smear, brush, erase as well as a host of shapes, line drawing options and fill. Let's take a quick look at those first.

Airbrush provides the artist with the ability to paint large areas very quickly with a random pixel effect. Stipple behaves in a similar manner but reproduces the effect using the currently selected brush. However, for finer work it proves to be less controllable than airbrush mode. Smear, a function now almost essential to artists on really powerful professional front ends, ‘smears’ colours into each other where they meet, avoiding those ugly mechanical hard edges. Professionally this is done by blending adjacent pixels, Degas randomises the pixels in the area around the current brush or airbrush, consequently the result is less than satisfactory. In fact the same effect can be achieved and improved
upon by airbrushing over the area you wish to smear.

Fifteen preset brush sizes and shapes are available (though you can design your own), and the precise effect these have on screen is dependent on what other drawing functions are selected.

Point allows you to click a single impression of the current brush on to the screen. Eraser rubs out in the shape of the brush. Draw paints the brush shape on screen freehand by following the movement of the mouse until the mouse button is released. Line produces a guideline which can be dragged anywhere on screen, releasing the button sets the current brush shape as a straight line between the clicked on and off points. K-Line draws continuous lines, which can be used to build up complex shapes - a bit like ‘join the dots’ pictures.

**SHAPING UP**

Shapes are well catered for, especially in conjunction with the rotate and distort facilities. Polygon operates similarly to K-Line, making many-sided shapes which, when closed, automatically fill with the current colour. Rays draws several lines all starting from the same specified cursor point and going to any other desired points. Circles of any size can be dragged within a box guide - if the box is elongated then an ellipse is formed when the mouse button is released. Disc is essentially the same as circle except the end result is filled with the current colour/pattern. Frame and Box have a similar relationship respectively - you define the opposite corners of the proposed shape, with Box automatically filling the resultant quadrilateral.

Outline is a useful function; clicking within a shape of colour, draws an outline in a specified colour around the shape. This can be used for highlighting objects, or neatly erasing any ‘pencil roughs’ that were used to define shapes at an earlier stage of drawing.

Fill fills shapes with the selected colour/pattern. Fill functions always require care in use; it needs a delineated area and even one pixel break in a line will cause the adjacent shape to be filled as well. However, pressing the UNDO key, erases the last action. Otherwise, of course, you can select solid white and refill the shapes before repairing the damage!

While most of Degas’s functions have legitimate uses, I think that Disc and Box are a bit pointless when the same effect can be achieved with little extra effort by using the Circle or Frame command coupled with Fill.

**DISTORTING THE TRUTH**

So much for drawing, what about graphic effects? It’s here that Degas begins to show its true colours. Mirror duplicates in reverse symetry what you are drawing elsewhere on the screen, split in two horizontally, vertically, diagonally or a combination of all three. Shadow adds a ‘shadow’ of a selectable colour to the current brush shape and colour being drawn. The shadow position and its size may be defined. Two useful and increasing standard art utility functions are also provided in Degas Elite; Slowdraw defines the speed at which the cursor moves, while Snap overlays a temporary grid - selectable between two and 16 pixels - on the drawing, and ‘snaps’ the cursor to the nearest grid point for accurate placing of lines and shapes.

Text enables the addition of writing to a picture. There are several text sizes and the Font selected can be redefined within a separate program supplied in Degas.

**BLOCKING OUT**

The most powerful facility is Block mode, which is dedicated to manipulating windows. A window around a selected part of a drawing is defined by dragging full-screen cross hairs to create a regular block - or polygonal blocks may also be formed. Once this is done, several options are open. The block can be grabbed, dragged and printed anywhere else on screen, and the process can be repeated to form multiple blocks. Rotate in the Block mode works very well in Degas, with a full 360° rotation available. Stretch allows redefinition of the block’s size through both horizontal and vertical parameters, while H-Skew and V-Skew tilt it either horizontally or vertically. Distort is used to create a freehand manipulation of the block’s contents to quite dramatic effect, even to folding the drawing over on itself...

**“Degas Elite is a marvellous utility at a price hardly above that of a game...”**

Music For The Masses: after only one hour’s hands-on-experience with Degas, Robin Candy started on this freehand digitisation of the newest Depeche Mode album cover. It took him two hours to complete it.

“Distort is a manipulation of quite dramatic effect, even to folding the drawing over on itself...”

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**Degas Elite main menu**

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fast and easy. The main menu offers up to eight simultaneous windows, numbered and available on a mouse click (up to two for a 520ST and all eight for a 1040). Copying material from one to another is instantaneous.

ANIMATED ART
A form of ‘ripple’ animation of a sophistication only restricted by the ingenuity of the individual artist, is possible through two functions, Animation and Cycle. When used in conjunction with each other, they give the impression of movement. What they are really doing is switching between a preselected sequence of colours at a predefined speed. Cycle also works through the preselected colours, changing the colour with each new brush stroke, or it can be used to create multicoloured lines.

DEFINING OPTIONS
Most definable settings are achieved by double clicking on the desired function box, which produces a dialogue menu. But greater function enhancement is possible from the top line of the main menu.

The Light Bikes from Tron by ZZAP! 64's Steve Jarratt - theme in a restricted palette of blues

“Shapes are well catered for, especially in conjunction with the rotate and distort facilities.”

The Rainbow-Hued Colour Chart: one way of selecting a working palette - just click on the colour and the right-hand bar shows what you’ve got

complete workscreen: As is usual with WIMPs, it’s well error-trapped and trying to load a picture brings about the prompt that doing so will erase the picture currently in Workspace 1 - OK or Cancel?. At every load or save, a quick disk directory is provided - a friendly touch. Degas also includes a compression function which reduces the amount of disk space your picture takes up and an option to define picture resolution.

Set allows alteration of the default parameters of various main menu options. Airbrush - define size and spraying speed. Animation - set colour-change speed, set animation left, right or off, select palettes of colours to be affected. Mirror - define which way the image is to be mirrored and distance separation. Shadow - set parameters and shadow colour, size and distance. Colour - set colour palette: a colour can be changed by altering the amount of red, blue or green in it. Colours may be copied from one area of the palette to another simply by dragging them with the mouse. And it is possible to define a range of hues between any two colours - just pick colours you want to use, leaving a few empty palette boxes between them, and the computer will work out the intermediate shades for you.

Make provides three options. Make Fill allows WIMPs, the creation of patterns in an enlarged window, pixel by pixel. Make Line and Make Brush let you define lines (so that patterned lines can be created for instance) and extra brushes, should the ones already present in the program not be enough.

The Block function we have already dealt with.

Of course no art utility would be complete without a zoom facility and Degas Elite boasts a highly effective one. There are ten different zoom sizes accessed through the function keys, and the resulting box can be moved over the area to be enlarged. The enlarged pixel editor picture is displayed on the right of screen with the unenlarged area shown on the left, repeating the changes made in the zoomed pixel editor.

CONCLUSIONS
Degas Elite is a very powerful and flexible art utility. Though it comes complete with an easily-read but detailed manual, the program itself is so easy to use that the manual soon becomes only a reference guide for the odd moment when you get stuck.

The Block functions are extremely powerful, allowing the artist to pick up parts of the screen and manipulate them with the greatest of ease, and the zoom facility is one of the best I’ve seen. The only real niggle is the cursor. This always takes the colour currently selected, which is fine when working in areas of a contrasting colour but not so useful when airbrushing in an area predominantly made up of the current colour - it’s all too easy to lose the cursor. A better alternative would have been a black cursor (switching to white when necessary).

But apart from this minor niggle, Degas Elite is a marvellous utility allowing the artist to exploit the Atari ST's graphics capability to the full at a price hardly above that of a game, and certainly far below the cost of an artist’s oil paint palette.

WIMP BASHING & DTP

Some years ago Apple attempted to create a computer operating system that would be instantly accessible to business people who needed computers but couldn’t cope with the arcane complexities of Disk Operating System (DOS). They came up with the Lisa. Instead of typing syntactical commands at a prompt, the user controls a cursor by moving the mouse, and accesses parts of the program by pointing at relevant options and clicking the mouse key, thus negating the need for complicated keyboard sequences. Choosing a particular option may cause a sub-menu to be pulled down containing further options, which may lead to yet further menus. Some selections act as toggles to switch functions on or off. Options currently selected are highlighted by inverting the box around the selected option.

The philosophy behind Lisa was that the computer did all the work for you. It was much friendlier than DOS. Lisa never took off, but the idea did, and so did Apple's Macintosh computer which really used the system to its full. And so we got the WIMP environment - Windows, Icons, Mouse and Pull-down menus. Degas Elite follows this vogue, which is now currently used on almost all popular machines, from the Spectrum upwards.

The desktop metaphor has had a vital part to play in the growth of Desk Top Publishing (DTP), and in future issues of THE GAMES MACHINE we shall be looking at how they have, the current state of the DTP art, and what this fascinating new field holds in store for the hobbyist and the professional, from both the point of view of text and graphics.
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HOW TO LOSE A MILLION DOLLARS

Find out exactly how Jeffrey Archer's famous literary 'scam' came about in the novel NOT A PENNY MORE, NOT A PENNY LESS by playing this word game contrived exclusively for THE GAMES MACHINE by Robin Waterfield, who wrote the computer game version for Domark.

Domark have published a computer game version of Jeffrey Archer's Not A Penny More, Not A Penny Less, in which you try to recover $1m which has been stolen from the character you play and your friends. But how did you come to lose this money? What happens before the game begins?

In this short choose-your-own-adventure game, you play the part of a minor devil. Your job is to oversee business rip-offs on planet Earth - an insignificant planet in a remote part of an obscure galaxy. If you successfully manage the present scam, you hope to get promoted to a more important job.

The protagonists in the scam are a number of innocents worthy only of your scorn, and a villain devious enough to warm the cockles of your heart (if you had one!). May Old Nick himself look favourably upon your manipulations!

The game depends largely upon your own choices, but at certain points luck may play a part. At such points, when you will be asked to 'generate a number', roll a six-sided die (if you have one) or close your eyes and prod this table with a pencil or something similar:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You hover invisibly over the antique, leather-topped desk at which Harvey Metcalfe is sitting. He is putting the finishing touches on a plan he has devised (actually, you devised it and put it into his mind) - a plan which, if successful, will make him a lot of easy money.

The stage reached so far is this: Harvey has set up a legitimate company called Prospecta Oil, with a holding in the North Sea. He himself holds the majority of the shares. North Sea oil exploration is an exciting field, so the shares are standing at a moderate price. Nothing illegal so far...

Harvey is in consultation with Bernie Silverman, his equally crooked sidekick. 'We need a dupe,' says Harvey. 'Have you drawn up a shortlist of candidates for the job we advertised for a manager of the London office of Prospecta Oil?'

'Yes,' says Bernie. 'There are two possibilities: one is not too smart, but thanks to hard work he's just graduated from Harvard Business School; the other is pretty bright and has equally good qualifications, but also has a fascinating shady past - a definite blackmail possibility, but he'll probably just fall in with our plans.'

Under your guidance, Will Harvey suggest that the first or the second candidate gets the job? If you choose the first, go to 21; if you choose the second, go to 34.

If David has already had dinner with his Auntie May, go to 29; otherwise, go to 40.

David's instincts are too strong: he rebuffs the stranger. What will you have David do next? Return to 10 and choose again.

Over dinner, the conversation naturally turns to David's present job, and his relatives are suitably impressed by his swift acquisition of a managerial post. You are tempted to do something silly like causing Uncle Dick's toupee to slip; but you decide to behave like a serious devil, not a mischievous sprite. Dinner reminds David of his long-standing opinions of his relatives: Auntie May is a superficial socialite, in his view, and Uncle Dick a self-important puffball.

It is household tradition that after dinner the men have brandy at the table, while May goes off and prepares coffee. Will you have David use the opportunity to approach Uncle Dick alone about investing in Prospecta Oil (go to 11), or Auntie May alone (go to 39), or both together (go to 32)?

Dr Robin Oakley epitomises the young, successful and slightly bored GP. He makes small talk while prancing around the stage in mouse costumes, looking for cheese, are supposed to represent man's eternal quest for self-fulfilment.

people prancing around the stage in mouse costumes, looking for cheese, are supposed to represent man's eternal quest for self-fulfilment
Back in Stephen's rooms, you work on the conversation and especially on Stephen's mind until he tells David that he has recently come into a lot of money and would like to invest in this exciting-sounding company of his. Keep a note somewhere that you have arranged for $250,000 to be spent on Prospecta shares.

When David returns to London, he tells Silverman about Stephen; Silverman tells Harvey, and Harvey releases a large block of his own shares on to the market for Stephen to buy. The interest in Prospecta Oil pushes the share prices up even more. What will David do next in his spare time? Auntie May is away on holiday now and cannot be contacted. Return to 10 and choose again.

What little he can find out does not give him any reason to think that there is anything wrong with the set-up. He doesn't even come across Harvey Metcalfe's name: as far as he is concerned, Bernie Silverman is the boss. David wasn't looking for anything fishy anyway; he thought it would create a good impression if it got back to Silverman that he had made a few inquiries. Go to 41.

David gets chummy with the woman sitting next to him in the stadium and she offers him a drink. This stops him drinking so much, and next day he feels ready to face lunch at a London Club. Again, it takes little of your skill to get Dr Robin Oakley to steer the conversation round to Prospecta Oil. David has come equipped with a copy of the geologist's report, and Robin is suitably impressed. He will buy $250,000 worth of shares - make a note of this.

David tells Silverman that Robin will invest; Silverman tells Harvey Metcalfe; Harvey releases enough of his own shares for Robin to snap up. Harvey is very happy. What should David do next? Return to 10 and choose again.

Harvey is not too displeased with his profits, but what will Old Nick think of your work? Not a lot, is the answer. You remain bound to the planet Earth with the hopeless task of trying to deflect the good intentions of someone called Bob Geldof.

You must now influence David as regards what he is to do with his spare time. You must choose four from the following list, and pursue only those courses of action. Don't cheat. Tick the boxes now, so that when you return to this location, you know what to do next.

- Visit friends and relatives Go to 42
- See the sights Go to 22
- Go to a gee-new-in Harley Street doctor Go to 27
- Go to a Soho night club Go to 17
- Go to Bond Street Go to 12
- Go to the theatre Go to 2

If you have now pursued four courses of action, go to 35.

When Auntie May leaves the room, David tackles Uncle Dick directly, but Dick's refusal is blunt. "I know you don't have such stringent laws against insider information as back home," he says, "but as a diplomat I can't afford to get involved in anything which might some day backfire."

David can still try to persuade Dick while May is present, in case she has any influence over him, as most wives do over their husbands (go to 32), or he can give up and try another tack. Stephen Bradley is now on a lecture tour of Italy, so if David tries another tack, return to 10 and choose again.

David usually required to work even on Saturdays - the American work-ethic extends to its offices abroad - but Bernie allows him a day off, and David leaps around the famous shopping streets of London's West End. He conceives the idea of buying a moderately priced painting for the flat in which Prospecta house him rent-free. The painting mustn't be too large, because the flat isn't either - Harvey does not spend unnecessary money.

There are a number of galleries in Bond Street and its side streets, but you and David choose the Lamanns Gallery. If David has previously insulted a "dapper little Frenchman", go to 25; otherwise, go to 38.

David steps to Oxford and Stephen Bradley is a bespectacled, pleasant, mild-mannered man - a weakening, you judge. High Table provides the usual sumptuous fare, and David is beginning to get a bit drunk. Will you have him talk about investing in Prospecta Oil over dinner, so that other possible investors among the dons can overhear (go to 20), or should he wait for the privacy of Stephen's rooms (go to 6)?

If you reject a course of action, go to 10 and choose again.

Dr Victor Pritchard is a crusty old codger who looks as though he would fail any check-up himself. More to the point, he just gets on with the business, and doesn't allow David any time to boast about Prospecta Oil. You are disappointed. David isn't of course, since he doesn't know what's going on, and is content to be pronounced physically fit. Return to 10 and choose again.

'You asked for me, Mr Silverman,' says David. 'Call me Bernie,' replies Silverman genially. 'I've good news for you, my boy - for us all. Here, look at this geologist's report.'

David reads the report, while you look over his shoulder. It doesn't make any sense to you, so you read David's mind. It doesn't make much sense to him either, but the bottom line is that the oil field which Prospecta has leased looks set to yield a major strike in the very near future.

'Share prices will rocket,' says Bernie casually. 'Is there any harm in getting in on the act?' asks David. ('Where did that idea come from?' you wonder. "You chuckle to yourself."

'No,' says Bernie, 'but just let me know who wants to invest, and don't spread it around too much.' David reckons that mentioning Prospecta's prospects to a few select people would be a good way of boosting not only his esteem in their eyes, but also the value of the shares he owns in the company, since nothing makes share prices go up so much as increased interest in them. You and David go thoughtfully to 10.

To your amusement, a glimmer of recognition begins to pass over the Frenchman's face, but is replaced by blankness. Then just as quickly, he becomes the neutral and slightly obsequious gallery manager. Go to 38.

David prowls around Soho late one evening, peering into shops which offer 'books and magazines' and have strangely worded advertisements taped onto the windows. There are many basement clubs offering various forms of exotic entertainment. The overall effect is extremely seedy; you find it quite delightful. Nevertheless, you guide David away from this part of Soho, which seems to offer no openings for Harvey's scheme, and
towards a more up-market club, frequented by businessmen, off-duty politicians, and altogether a nicer class of criminal.

Having paid an exorbitant entrance-cum-membership fee, David sits through an unspectacular floor show. He tries to engage people in conversation at the bar and at nearby tables, but in such surroundings people are reluctant to talk: who knows what one's neighbour might want to offer? Eventually, you get fed up and cause David to insult a dapper little Frenchman in a velvet suit. The look on the Frenchman’s face alleviates your boredom; but you get no nearer your goal, which is Harvey’s fraudulent prosperity. Return to 10 and choose again.

- 18 -

The company folded obviously only because Harvey was scared of being discovered. You have failed as a devil and will be demoted to being a bug in computer game software.

- 19 -

Auntie May is delighted to hear from David, and invites him round for dinner at their luxurious house. However, the invitation is for the evening of 27 February, after May gets back from holiday. If David has booked a seat in the theatre for that evening, he will have to decide between the show and the dinner. If he chooses the show, go to 37— but you may not return to this course of action (visiting friends and relatives); if he chooses the dinner, or if he hasn’t booked at the theatre, go to 4.

- 20 -

Stephen is upset at the change a few years have wrought in his friend: he reckons that David is drinking too much, and getting big-headed about his ‘success’ in business. You try to insinuate yourself into Stephen’s mind, to get him to ignore David’s shortcomings and concentrate on the attractiveness of the proposition of investing in Prospecta Oil. Are you successful? Generate a number. On 1-3, go to 6; on 4-6, go to 28.

- 21 -

he thinks, ‘Hard work beats natural talent any day of the week. After all, I’ve offered a plum job in an exciting company while some of my cleverer fellow graduates are still unemployed.’ Trust you to use the opportunity for instilling a bit of the sin of pride! It occurs to David to investigate the company before accepting the job. Will you let him do so (go to 7) or not (go to 30)?

- 22 -

David visits museums, galleries, HMS Belfast, the Tower of London, Madame Tussaud’s, Buckingham Palace and 10 Downing Street. No opportunities present themselves for furthering Harvey’s ingenious little plan. Moreover, you and David both detect that Bernie Silverman is getting impatient with David, as if he were somehow not fulfilling his expectations. Will you risk one last trip, to the Houses of Parliament, where you reckon offers a reasonable opportunity for insider information to be dropped into receptive ears (go to 33), or will you give up on this plan (return to 10 and choose again)?

- 23 -

Auntie May is away on holiday and cannot be contacted. David can either visit Stephen Bradley (go to 13) or pursue another course of action (return to 10 and choose again).

- 24 -

David accepts both the apology and the drink. They get chatting, and the man introduces himself as Viscount James Brigley. They meet again after the show, and David tells James about Prospecta Oil and its prospects. The very next day, James buys $300,000 worth of shares, which Harvey, when he heard from Bernie Silverman (who had been told in all innocence by David) what was going on, released onto the market. David is playing his part very well, thanks to you. Note somewhere that $300,000 of shares have been bought. Harvey is getting even richer. What next? Return to 10 and choose again.

- 25 -

To your alarm, the proprietor of the gallery is none other than the irascible Frenchman! You and David recognize him, but the night club was gloomily lit, and he may not recognize David. You will have to act quickly and blank out that bit of his memory. You don’t want his recognition of David to upset a potentially fruitful situation, and anyway it amuses you to do this sort of thing. Are you quick enough? Generate a number. On 1-3, go to 36; on 4-6, go to 16.

- 26 -

The next day, David is so hung over that, while he makes it to Robin’s club for lunch, he is in no state to impress the doctor with himself or Prospecta Oil. He’d rather not talk at all, in fact, since talking sets off bass drums inside his head. Once lunch is over, return to 10 and choose again.

- 27 -

As far as you or David know, there’s nothing to tell between one Harley Street doctor and another. After eliminating the specialists, David plumps for either Dr Oakley or Dr V Pritchard. Both are general practitioners and could give David the physical check-up he likes to have once in a while. Will he choose Dr Oakley (go to 5) or Dr Pritchard (go to 14)?

- 28 -

Stephen will have nothing further to do with David. He feels a niggie in his mind that David is trying to manipulate him (actually, it was you!). They part on cool terms. What will David do next in his spare time? Auntie May is away on holiday now, and cannot be contacted. Return to 10 and choose again.

- 29 -

David is lucky: he manages to get hold of a returned ticket for the hit musical Mice, in which people prancing around the stage in mouse costumes, looking for cheese, are supposed to represent man’s eternal quest for self-f fulfilment. The actor who plays cheese is especially praised by the critics. Go to 37.

- 30 -

Paranoia is not a useful neurosis for a devil, but is certainly an occupational hazard. There’s nothing fishy or illegal about Prospecta Oil... yet. And by now Harvey Metcalfe has disappeared from view: Bernie Silverman is the boss as far as David is concerned. Go to 41.

- 31 -

David is a fan of American football, and especially of the Boston Bulldogs, who are over in London for a demonstration match against the Chicago Crunchers. He has a couple of strong martinis before the match, to get himself into the mood, and takes a six-pack of New Amsterdam beer into the match with him. David starts to get rather drunk. You know that the devil who oversees heavy drinking is a bigger devil than you, and couldn’t care less for your concerns, only his. You’d prefer David to stop drinking, but is he already out of your control and in the hands of your rival devil? Generate a number. If it is odd, go to 26; if it is even, go to 8.

- 32 -

Over coffee, David steers the conver-
You decide to make this more than a tourist trip, and you have David arrange to meet the Minister of Energy in the MPs' restaurant. Over a splendid lunch, David-whispers conspiratorially to the minister that Prospecta Oil could be worth investing in. The minister looks around, nods thoughtfully to himself, and then changes the subject. You and David eagerly await developments—but these are not quite what you expect. Prospecta's licence to explore the North Sea is revoked and the company folds. David hopes that Bernie never discover why this happened. You'll have to face Old Nick; David's lucky not to be tied up.
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A long, long time ago, almost before the words 'home' and 'computer' had even been used in the same sentence, something sinister was stirring in a deep, dark dungeon . . .

**THE FANTASY WORLD**

Role-Playing Games first came into being around 1974, and since then hundreds of thousands of enthusiasts have put millions of orcs to the sword and liberated dozens of planets from the clutches of evil Federations. Whilst other gaming crazes have been forgotten, the numbers of role-playing gamers and the range of commercial material available has grown continually over the years. If you've never role-played and some of the abbreviations used in this article are confusing, you may find the section 'What Is A Role-Playing Game?' helpful at this point. If, however, you know your 3D6 from your D10 and an ore from a hobgoblin, read on . . .

The first true role-playing game, and the inspiration for all RPGs now in existence, was TSR Hobbies's *Dungeons And Dragons*. This in turn had been developed from single-character wargame rules coded by TSR founder Gary Gygax, who must therefore go down in history as the inventor of the RPG. Remarkably, D&D and its various expanded versions (Advanced and Expert D&D) remain the single most popular RPG system.

D&D is set in a vaguely-defined fantasy world in which humans coexist with other intelligent species and monstrous beasts drawn from sources ranging from Norse myth to Tolkien. PCs belong to a particular 'character class' — fighter, thief or the unevocatively-named magic user for instance — and this determines their basic abilities. Thus thieves are good at sneaking about, magic users good at casting spells, and fighters good at... well, fighting.

As their adventuring career progresses, PCs gain experience points by finding treasure and defeating enemies. Sufficient of these increases their experience level, resulting in an improvement in their skills. The combat system is straightforward — characters and monsters have hit points which are lost when injured. When none are left, the character dies.

The overall feel of D&D is very simple, the only complicating factor being the need for frequent reference to tables to determine the results of combat and other actions. This can spoil the game atmosphere: 'Let's see... Gandalf as an... um... twelfth-level magic user needs... uh... five or more to hit the troll'.

This simplicity was well-suited to a typical early RPG scenario, which was very much of the dungeon-bashing type. Players would usually find themselves exploring an underground complex of rooms and caves populated by a bizarre collection of monsters which often had no compelling reason for their existence. But though simplistic, gaming of that sort could still be great fun and D&D was a rapid success. The range of material continues to expand today, with a very large selection of often excellent prewritten adventures and a long (in my opinion too long) list of rulebooks. D&D is also making its way onto computer. SSI have licensed the game and plan to bring out both computerised gameplay aids (to
replace some of those tables) and a role-playing type game.

**OUT OF THE CLOSET**

After a year or two underground, Role-playing games started to appear set in an enormous variety of worlds. Just as D&D had drawn inspiration from fantasy fiction, some new RPGs were heavily based in science fiction. The first of these to take off was *Game Designer's Workshop's* Traveller (or Traveller in the States), which allowed players to trade in their broadswords for blasters and explore a futuristic galaxy.

In contrast to D&D, which let the GM choose the setting of his or her game at will, Traveller included highly-detailed background material as well as rules. There are a lot of advantages to this application, since it allows an adventure to be set in a universe of great complexity without requiring the GM to spend weeks preparing background material, yet doesn't prevent an inventive GM from using self-created material if preferred. This wealth of detail, combined with a simple rules system and a very large selection of comprehensive adventures and adventures, has kept Traveller in position as the most popular game of its type.

**CHARACTER ABILITIES**

There are several other excellent games inspired by the Star Wars/EE Doc Smith school of SF, but none has become vastly successful. Of note are Space Opera, whose highly-detailed rules system permitted virtually any SF idea to be incorporated, but which was just too complex for most gamers. *Chaosium's* Ringworld, an excellent RPG translation of Larry Niven's

...humans coexist with other intelligent species and monstrous beasts drawn from sources ranging from Norse myth to Tolkien.

**WHAT IS A ROLE-PLAYING GAME?**

Role-playing games will be familiar to most readers of THE GAMES MACHINE. But if you have somehow escaped their influence, here's an outline of what all the fuss is about, and some explanations.

RPGs can be played by any number from two upwards, with the best size for a group being around four to eight people. Unlike other games there is no deck of cards and no board. Instead of competing against each other to determine winners and losers, the players participate in a dramatic adventure set in almost any time and place they care to imagine - a quest for treasure in a Tolkien-like world of goblins, dragons and magic; a quest against the perps of Megacities One alongside Judges Dredd and Anderson, an investigation of ghostly apparitions in Victorian London; or the exploration of a newly-discovered planet in the far reaches of the galaxy.

One of the players has the crucial job of being referee (usually known as the Games Master or GM) who creates the setting of the story that is to take place. He determines the subsequent progress of the adventure according to both a preplanned plotline and what the other players attempt to do. The rest of the group take the roles of particular beings within the game - warriors, warlocks, samurai, space marines, superheroes or whatever. These beings, or PCs (meaning characters controlled by the players rather than the GM), usually form a group that cooperates to achieve some common goal rather than competing against one another.

Each player has a written record (character sheet) describing the abilities and skills of their PC as specified in the rules of the particular RPG in use. These abilities determine such characteristics as the strength and intelligence of a PC. his/her/its skill at fighting or jumping or piloting a spaceship and so on. The initial skills of a PC are usually determined randomly as laid down in the character generation section of the rulebook, if a PC has survived previous adventures the skills will have been improved by experience.

The GM starts the adventure by describing to the players where the PCs find themselves and usually by giving some sort of introduction to lead them into the action: 'You hear a rumour that a great treasure hoard is hidden somewhere in the mountains', perhaps, or the even more subtle: 'Suddenly you are surrounded by 20 fully-armed space marines ... they look kinda angry ...' From then on, each player tells the GM what his or her PC is trying to do. The GM decides whether they succeed or fail in any given action by a combination of common sense, artistic licence and capitalist reference to the rulebook.

The GM also takes the role of any other beings they run into along the way. these beings known as NPCs (non-player characters), her/his/her skill at fighting or jumping or piloting a spaceship and so on. The initial skills of an NPC are usually determined randomly as laid down in the character generation section of the rulebook.

To give some idea of the feel of an RPG, here's a brief extract from a typical game session. The setting is that of Call Of Cthulhu. Daphne, Reggie and Buffy (played by Sarah, Peter and Tony) are three intrepid explorers who have been contacted by the enigmatic Professor Magister (an NPC controlled by the GM). He has been taken by the enigmatic Professor Magister, who has a long-lost temple devoted to an unknown god and has given Reggie an ancient amulet supposedly associated with the temple. Spurred on by the hope of adventure, fame and fortune our three heroes have accompanied the Professor to the South American jungle. As they have seen no sign of their ancient goal, Reggie has been increasingly troubled by vivid nightmares about a many-tentacled monster.

**SAMPLE OF PLAY**

To give some idea of the feel of an RPG, here's a brief extract from a typical game session. The setting is that of *Call Of Cthulhu*. Daphne, Reggie and Buffy (played by Sarah, Peter and Tony) are three intrepid explorers who have been contacted by the enigmatic Professor Magister (an NPC controlled by the GM). He has been taken by the enigmatic Professor Magister, who has a long-lost temple devoted to an unknown god and has given Reggie an ancient amulet supposedly associated with the temple. Spurred on by the hope of adventure, fame and fortune our three heroes have accompanied the Professor to the South American jungle. As they have seen no sign of their ancient goal, Reggie has been increasingly troubled by vivid nightmares about a many-tentacled monster.

GM: After another two hours of hacking your way through the jungle, the Professor calls a halt. The heat and humidity are more overpowering than ever.

Tony (as Buffy): 'My God, Reggie, is there no end to this jungle?'

GM (as Professor): 'According to my calculations, the temple should be within a few hundred yards of here...'

Sarah (as Daphne): 'I say, chaps, look over there!'

Peter (as Reggie): 'Professor makes his way towards it."

GM: As you approach, you see the figure is exactly like the strange amulet. (Rolls dice)

Tony (as Buffy): 'Careful, Reggie! I smell a rat!'

GM (maliciously): 'Reggie, distracted by Batty's shout you fail to notice a concealed pitfall ahead of you. You fall about ten feet into darkness."

Sarah (as Daphne): 'Reggie! Eek!'

GM (to Peter): 'As you start to pick yourself up, you hear a distant stinging sound.'

Peter (as Reggie): 'My God! The tentacles ... (Many scenes of unspeakable horror ensue)."
An honourable mention in the list of less successful fantasy games must go to the feudal Chivalry And Sorcery from Fantasy Games Unlimited, which still has a small but fanatical band of devotees attracted by the comprehensive rules system. More popular, though still a minority game, is ICE's Middle Earth Role-Playing - an RPG recreation of Tolkien's Lord Of The Rings world with a large selection of supplements providing great detail of places such as Moria and Isengard. It polarises Tolkien fans into those who love it and those who view it as blasphemous!

Finally, a relative newcomer to the fantasy market is Games Workshop's Warhammer Fantasy Role-Play which I've given a more detailed review of elsewhere.

For a long time the RPG market divided simply into fantasy and 'hard' SF games. But nowadays there are many that fall into neither category. I've only space to mention a few, so apologies if your favourite isn't listed!

First to appear were games set in realistic historical settings - Marvel Superheroes and Champions, for instance. In a slightly different category comes Games Workshop's wonderful Judge Dredd - a real must for fans of the 2000 AD comic-strip, and anyone else who enjoys the idea of dispensing justice in a futuristic city with a unique blend of violence and sardonic wit. Incidentally, Games Workshop was set to convert Judge Dredd into a computer game but the hasty exit from software production stopped it, and eventually the licence went to Melbourne House.

Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay
Games Workshop
£14.95 for hardback rulebook (366pp)
Supplements from around £6.95

Games Workshop have in the past been best known for their UK editions of other companies' RPGs, such as RuneQuest and Paranoia. But they write their own rules too, of which Judge Dredd RPG is a supreme example. Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay (WHFRP) is not a brand-new release, but as it has yet to become fully-established, and will appeal to many beginners, I feel it is worth reviewing here.

The appearance of the rules is excellent, with everything you need both to play and GM the game contained in a heavy, well-illustrated hardback. The use of imaginative typefaces adds to the overall quality, which is only marred by a number of garish typos - get a proof-reader Games Workshop!

The rules themselves have evolved directly from GW's Warhammer fantasy wargaming system, and are compatible with it. So your favourite character can adventure independently or, if you have both games, lead armies into pitched battles. However, this has meant that the rules system of WHFRP is rather more simplistic than one might expect for a modern game, owing more to D&D than to say RuneQuest or MERP.

Characters improve their skills by gaining experience points which allows them to advance in ways other times and places. To maintain Lovecraft's sinister atmosphere requires a high degree of GM skill, but the thrill of playing a really good Cthulu scenario, as your character's sanity is gradually undermined, has to be experienced to be believed. The prewritten adventures for this game are amongst the best around.

Last but not least in this whistle-stop tour of today's RPGs comes Paranoia from West End Games. Described as 'a role-playing game of a darkly humorous future', it's not for those who become fond of their PCs! Troubleshooters for the computer that runs the Alpha Complex - a colony of survivors of a future holocaust - trouble is what they invariably find, and shot is what they usually get. Fortunately, computer game-style, each character has a lot available in case of rapid demise, and these are frequently needed. Fear and Ignorance are the keywords for Paranoia referees. At last you can have the players mistrusting each other even more than their hostile surroundings and the insane computer. Paranoia is great fun, unique, and a real antidote to over-serious gaming.

Simple Or Complex

So why have RPGs been such a success story? I suppose a prime reason must be the general feeling of fun a gaming session generates. With no winners or losers, players can forget competition amongst themselves and just immerse themselves in the game's atmosphere. For the players, especially for the GM, an RPG gives a chance to be creative in an informal way, to put on funny voices and to escape into a fantasy world that they have themselves shaped. And unlike most games, they can be as simple or complex as you like and can be played for any length of time from a few minutes upwards.

So to all of you who have never tried role-playing, why not find some friends who are interested and give it a go? You have nothing to lose but your kit points!
HEAVENS ABOVE

(There's a Benny Hill in my dish)

Mel Croucher ponders on the satellite TV revolution

Forget Ronnie Raygun's Star Wars project, the battle in space has been going on for several years, and the latest High Frontier is being fought for in the skies over Britain right now. Satellite television is about to revolutionise our TV screens in exactly the same way as the rest of Northern Europe. If you hop across to Amsterdam or Paris or Dusseldorf or Copenhagen, you will be amazed at the nonchalance of European teleheads, as they flick from the UK football results to the world news live from Atlanta, to the latest pop videos, to a dose of soft porn, to the Big Race at Longchamps, to Doctor Who, to the Moscow Philharmonic, to Beverly Hills Cop 2, to an Optrex eye-bath and a couple of Anadins. Meanwhile, back in the Third World of Andover or Pontefract or Dundee or Coventry, we gloomily discover that there's nothing worth watching on the telly yet again, and slouch off in the rain for a pint of gnat's pee.

Our European neighbours have a choice of up to 65 channels beaming down from the skies, and countries like Holland and Belgium already offer up to 17 choices, including ITV, BBCs One and Two and Channel 4. Meanwhile, over in the States, up to 32 channels are on offer. A wise man, probably myself, once said that we used to have the choice between garbage on BBC and dross on ITV, but with the advent of satellite television we've got the choice of garbage from Europe and dross from the USA. (On second thoughts, maybe Harold Wilson said that.) But this attitude is very simplistic. The choice is incredibly varied, and these days it is almost impossible not to find something of interest being beamed down at us 24 hours a day.

WHAT ON EARTH IS SATELLITE TV?

Good question. The answer is, it's not on Earth at all. Unlike ground station transmissions and cable networks, STV broadcasts audio and video signals from geostationary satellites (bits of hardware in fixed-position orbits.) There are two of these satellites which concern us, INTELSAT VF-11, and the equally catchy named EUTELSAT ECS F-1.

WHO CAN RECEIVE THE SIGNALS?

You can, mate, unless you live in the west of Ireland, in which case you'll need a receiving dish the size of a cartwheel and a reinforced roof. Take a look at Figure One to see where you fit in. And many congratulations to the inhabitants of Cambridgeshire who appear to be laughing all the way to early blindness.

ARE YOU RECEIVING ME?

WHAT HARDWARE DO I NEED?

Not a lot. Your existing TV will show the pictures and play the sounds. Your existing video will record the programmes. Because your existing aerial is designed to pick up signals from ground-based transmitters, and is pointed at the nearest tower block, mountain or rose bed, you will need a receiving dish pointed at the sky and plugged in to your aerial socket on the TV or video. You will also need a little black box to unscramble certain channels, because a load of spoirosports and breadheads have decided to encode their transmissions and charge you for the privilege of decoding them.
WHAT WILL IT COST ME?

I wish I could tell you, but the answer to this little poser is a bit complex. I know a young gent who has built his own satellite dish and decoder for £295 (including VAT), from a boxful of components that he bought from an electronic store. On the other hand, I also know a rich moron who went out and spent one and a half grand on a pony system which performs very well indeed.

Readers of THE GAMES MACHINE, being a discerning bunch of people, would probably opt for an off-the-shelf system retailing at about £425 (plus VAT). Chances are that within two years there will be 50 channels on tap. Amstrad will be flogging dishes and decoders for £199, and some smartarse will be advertising in the small ads of computer mags the circuit diagrams of a do-it-yourself decoder and a dustbin-lid-to-circular roof satellite-dish conversion for a fiver.

You will also need a special licence to receive STV, although disguising your receiving dish as a circular roof cat would overcome this. But don't panic, your Post Office should have Licence Form TVRO, and it only costs ten quid FOR LIFE! (Buy now before government loonies wise up.)

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

Quite a lot really. Firstly, just like the early days of television, and then video, there are a load of cowboys and rip-off merchants out there, who will try and exploit the would-be STV viewer. You don't need their advice. Honest. If you can't work out where to site your receiving dish, and how to plug the cable into your aerial socket, then you are reading the wrong magazine. Try The Beano, or if that's too hard, The Daily Telegraph.

Depending on where you live, optimum reception will be with your dish angled between 25° and 30°, and pointing 27°/16° degrees west of due south (Intelsat), or 13° east of due south (Eutelsat).

Those clever Japanese chaps have just come out with a flat dish receiver, complete with all the electronic hardware built in, which picks up anything from cruise missile bus routes to The Benny Hill Show, thanks to armchair steering for its angle of dangle. A price of £225 is being seriously discussed for the near future, but I've got this strange little noise in my head that sounds something like "MSX-MSX-MSX", which I can't quite explain.

Some greedy folks will try and get you to pay extra for watching their discharges from heaven, and no doubt several thousand hackers and boffins will attempt to change the rules of the game. Other greedy folk will let you watch for free, and instead make you suffer gorgias wedges of advertising every ten minutes. Certain folk will not be greedy, and invite you to view their channels absolutely free. These are the ones to watch out for as they are without exception religious fanatics, perverts, government agencies, insufferable bores or all four.

... a load of spoilsports encode transmissions and charge you for the privilege of decoding them.

EUTELSAT CHANNELS
Super Channel/Musicbox
Sky Channel
Europa
TV5
Filmmet
Teleclub
Sat-1
RAI-Uno
RTL (East Spot)
World Net
WPN
3-Sat
Visnews

INTELSAT CHANNELS
Lifestyle
Premiere
Screen Sport
The Children's Channel
The Arts Channel
MTV Europe
CNN (Cable New Network)
Intefax
Reuters

Okay: you've got a few facts, a few more figures and you've already done my pithy little Trivia Quiz inside the Back Cover. What you need now is an unbiased review of the STV channels available in your very own home, at this very moment in the space-time continuum. How can I refuse you? So here it is, the ultimate guide to satellite entertainment, free from flavourings, preservatives and artificial colouring. Almost.

SUPERCHANNEL – MUSICBOX

Owned by Robert the Fat Man Maxwell, and sundry other opportunists, Superchannel is a bit like a British timewarp. Archive stuff like Fawlty Towers, Doctor Who, Allo Allo, Blakes 7, Emerald Farm, Jim'll Fix It and The Muppets is balanced by prerelease pop videos which don't arrive in the UK for years. The illusion of timewarp is completed by hour-long bulletins of the ITN News. Movies tend to be the sort of blockbuster and box-office hits that are in the video rental Top Twenty. The Benny Hill Show pollutes the airwaves regularly.

SKY CHANNEL

Funded by Rupert Dirty Murdoch, and right now the most popular satellite channel in Europe. Unbelievable amounts of crummy Australian soaps dominate the scheduling, closely followed by unbelievable amounts of crummy American soaps. Serials, movies and sport make up the rest of the output, and Sky is the downmarket equivalent of Murdoch's crummy newspapers.

EUROPA

Difficult to comment on this one, as it doesn't seem to be broadcasting at the moment. Lovely little logo though.

TV-5

French language upmarket service, generously ladled with international news. Half decent music programmes and half indecent entertainment shows. I can't think of a better way to learn the language and habits of our garish可知的 neighbours.

FILMNET

Continual movies laced with a bit of sport, almost all with English soundtracks and Dutch subtitles. Adventurous scheduling often provides superb entertainment. Most titles are reasonably up to date. Recommended, and it's 24 hours a day.

TELECLUB

Swiss-German movie channel, which is really interesting for all the Swiss-German movie fans among us. Also favours soft porn, which is really interesting to some others.

SAT-1

Twin channel German output. One provides the usual ITV-type mix of entertainment, sports coverage and news, the other attempts to entertain, sports coverage and news, the other attempts to entertain the American Occupying Forces, and fails.

RAI-UNO

The Italian equivalent to BBC-1, soaps, news, sport, movies and some of the most amazing game shows you...
will ever suffer. As it’s state run, you will be denied the dubious pleasure of watching the emiotus pomu much loved by Italian pirate broadcasters.

RTL (EAST SPOT)

From the makers who brought you good ol’ Radio Luxembourg, this French language station broadcasts for about five hours a day, and is extremely missable.

WORLD NET

The very worst form of American Religious holy-roller garbage, of the ‘send us $100 or you’ll burn in the bottomless pit’ variety. Bloody hell!

WPN

Equally horrific American garbage, this time pumped out by the State Department. Eight hours a day of Yank propaganda of the most sickening kind. The saddest thing of all is that it is presented as ‘news’. Probably the shape of things to come, once all governments turn on to the satellite phenomenon.

3-SAT

German-based ‘serious’ channel, with in-depth news and analysis, and the occasional entertainment programme that slips in by mistake. Recommended if you want to learn German, not recommended if you want to stay awake.

VISNEWS

Very interesting indeed, a rough and ready hash of unedited global news reports, hitting the screen as it comes in, and before any editors, censors and producers can get their grubby little hands on it. Highly recommended.

LIFESTYLE

WH Smith’s enforcement of everything sexist for the captive ‘housewife’. Morning to late afternoons filled with rubbish about clothes, cookery, organsms etc.

PREMIERE

THE movie channel par excellence! Unbelievably good choice of titles, including current releases, back catalogue classics and, as the channel’s own name implies, simultaneous box office new releases. Premiere is justification for installing your satellite system on its own, let alone all the other channels available! It is worth listing this week’s schedule, just to get you drooling: Nightmare On Elm Street 2 (Freddy’s Revenge), Commando, Agnes Of God, Cue, A Chorus Line, Transylvania 69000, Dream Lover, Wise Blood, Jake Speed, Knights Of The City, Beverly Hills Cop 2, and more, and, more... yowzah!

SCREEN SPORT

When WH Smith have finished turning women’s minds into pudding, they call themselves Screen Sport from 6pm to one in the morning, and try to turn men’s minds into pudding. Worldwide international sports, big matches, tiddlywinks, you name it.

THE CHILDREN’S CHANNEL

Non-stop hardcore porn, er, sorry, wrong spot on my tuner, um, nine hours a day of appallingly bad cartoons, patronising drivel and pathetic pre-teen pop videos. Due to some weird aberration, the most wonderful natural history features manage to save the day. On second thoughts, no they don’t.

THE ARTS CHANNEL

Excellent stuff. Top quality concerts ranging from electronic music to symphony orchestras. Ballet, opera, jazz, hip-hop, cinema, tour news, interviews. Due to the fact that the world is run by morons, this channel only broadcasts from 6am to 9am. Makes you want to weep tears of battery acid.

MTV EUROPE

Lavatory-scrapping stuff. Poor quality concerts ranging from bubblegum to heavy metal, interspersed with vapid vid-jokes. Pomp rock, wimp rock, schlock rock, cock rock, tour news, interviews. Due to the fact that the world is run by morons, and MTV Europe is run by Robert Maxwell & Co., this channel broadcasts 24 hours a day. Should carry a Health Warning.

CNN

Live round-the-clock news service from Atlanta USA. Many of you will already have got a taste for the brush, simplistic but largely accurate and unbiased reporting, on the new late night link up on ITV.

INTELFAX AND REUTERS

Both London-based electronic equivalents to their City and News Agency businesses. Yuppy delight.

The Editor would like to point out that the views expressed in the above analysis of SATV stations are those of Mr M Groucher and all law suits should be directed to him. He will then tear them up because his analysis is remarkably true.

THE FUTURE

Technical Predictions

Everyone will go satellite eventually. Next year 600mm dishes will arrive which work as well as the existing monsters. By 1990 you’ll be able to pick up a little satelite dish and a simple plug-in box from most TV suppliers, and STV rental will become common. Within five years, dirt cheap, flat-dish receivers will flood the market, capable of receiving anything being broadcast, and the Japanese will clean up yet again.

Many more satellites will be launched, and squillions of channels will fight for broadcast space in the heavens. This fight will not be particularly difficult, because heaven has got plenty of space. Pirate channels will broadcast all sorts of deviations and home grown wonders, and governments will try to jam the signals. Clever pirates will retaliate by encoding automatic channel switching, and hijacking official channels. A splendid time will be had by all.

Social Predictions

Maybe we’ll all go blind, or mad, or fall asleep. Maybe we’ll all head off in the rain towards the nearest pint of gnat’s pee. Many myths will be exploded, as Ivan sits down to Dallas and Chuck sits down to Telljournal. Propaganda, pornography and censorship will battle it out, as ever, but much more important changes will happen. Live Aid proved that, television can link the whole world if power changes to Action. This year the Intelsat is being used to train 5,000 doctors all over South America. As I write this, Intelsat is being used to wheel and deal in armaments, some of which will undoubtedly end up blowing the legs of the very South Americans that those doctors will have to treat.

Technology is neutral. Information is Power. The way Satellite Television is going, power will be in the hands of whoever owns the Channels, the Robert Maxwells, the Rupert Murdoch, the Richard Bransons, the Church of the Come Again Stormtroopers of Saint Samantha, the KGB, the BBC, Tesco, but power will also be in the mouths of Jonathon Woss, President Wogan, Sir Alix tartanpanties, Bananarama and Sooty the Bear. What do you say Sooty? Really? Honest? No kidding... hmmm, thought so. Sooty says he can’t wait for all this to happen, and after deep thought and a Dunhill International Luxury Length, neither can I. Now what’s on the box tonight? I’m off out in the rain for a pint of gnat’s...
WIN . . . AN AWFUL LOT . . .

‘Over to you Harry . . .’

‘Thank you David. Good evening everybody and welcome to a packed venue. As you join us, the main event is just about to start and it promises to be a cracker of a competition with the spoils for the winner set very high indeed. The crowd, obviously thrilled at being here, settles down now as best it can to enjoy what surely must be classed as one of the greatest highlights in the history of sport as we know it. With the event sponsored by Gremlin Graphics and THE GAMES MACHINE about to start, we say, “sit back and enjoy the Alternative World Games Competition” . . . How was that, David?’

‘Very good, Harry. Why don’t you carry on?’

‘Thank you David, I will. Well here we are again, and the items included in the first prize are lining up now . . . under starters orders . . . AND THEY’RE OFF! The Football and set of Goalie’s Gloves (a good all rounder with no indication of being all fingers and thumbs) surge forward at an incredible pace, although the Booted Roller Skates (bearing up nicely) are coming up fast on the far side . . . The Tennis Racquet with its set of six Balls (trying not to get court out there) is making a very strong effort in third position, but the Badminton Net with Rackets and Shuttlecocks (make up your own amusing ditty!) is a very close fourth.

‘Jostling for fifth position we have a set of Flat Green Bowls (toward whom I’m slightly biased), a Table Tennis set (what is that strange pong?) and a Swing Ball Set (just to keep you dangling on the edge of your seat). Behind these, on the inside, a Pair of Trainers (look at those muscles pump) and a Hoola Hoop (trained by Sir Kull) are battling valiantly to gain lost ground. But bringing up the rear (trying not to hang ten back), it’s the Skateboard . . . and as they hurtle off into the distance it’s back to the studio . . .’

Who’s gonna win?? You are, we hope! All these goodies taking part in this Alternative Race are items which TGM and Gremlin Graphics are giving away as the first prize in this competition. For the 25 runners up there are copies of Alternative World Games (on various formats) to win. This new game from Gremlin places up to eight players in different world locations competing in what one might call sports with a difference; Sack racing in Naples (Italy), boot throwing at the Colosseum (Rome, Italy) and pole climbing in Verona (Italy . . . here, what ever happened to the ‘world’ bit?) to name but three.

All you have to do to enter this very sporting competition is answer these five simple questions. First correct one out of the bag wins the goodies, next 25 get the game.

1) What is the distance between the penalty spot and the goal mouth (on the same side of the half way line!), in yards, on a full size football pitch?
2) With what sport do you associate John Parrot?
3) Which company wrote the original World Games
4) Who hosts “A question of sport”?
5) In which sport would players Bully Off?

Send your entries on a postcard or back of a sealed envelope to ALTERNATIVE GAMES COMPETITION, THE GAMES MACHINE, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire, SY8 1DB. All entries must be with us by 19 December. Don’t forget your name and address, and tell us the computer you own. Our usual competition rules apply, check out the masthead if you are in any doubt.
Giltzy image rather than technical innovation is the prime concern of many of the big, and some of the smaller, software houses these days. For THE GAMES MACHINE John Gilbert joins the race for the latest licences to see how they get 'em, what they have to do to get 'em, and what they do with them once they have got 'em.

Each company has a different approach to image. Ocean cuts a tomboy image with Top Gun, Gryzor and Combat School, and Piranha, at the other end of the marketing scale goes for the cutesy look of Trap Door but they both use product name as much as programming prowess to rake in the money.

Image building is not an easy business, even for corporations such as Ocean. There are hundreds of films, television programmes and comic book titles appearing every month which you can license. You might be able to spend a few thousand on an old licence such as Nosferatu, or a relatively unknown one, such as Centre of Mass alternatively you may take part in an auction to buy titles like Star Trek or Masters Of The Universe – The Movie for vast sums, but even then you could bankrupt your company because of the marketing complexities.

LICENSE AND CHASE

Licensing became an important part of the software industry three years ago when Activision launched Ghostbusters on the crest of a giant hype wave. The game was moderately good, it was a success, but the computer press lapped up its connection with the hit film and confirmed games players' feelings that a game of the film must be a sure fire success. More than 250,000 copies were sold in four months and it still retains the number one slot in licensing history, although Top Gun, from Ocean, is only a tail away.

Activision also took the risk of buying the rights to any Ghostbusters sequels that might be made and it looks as though it may have paid off. Ghostbusters II, starring Dan Ackroyd, starts production in the States soon and it looks as though it could be another success. Whether the game – which hasn't been officially announced by Activision UK – will be an equal success depends upon how it is marketed.

The industry has got a lot more sophisticated since the Ghostbusters days when you could simply tie-in a game to a film and be guaranteed a best seller. Licence prices have rocketed and competition between software giants has become fierce.

The masters of the marketing game, Ocean, arrived on the scene shortly before Ghostbusters hit the shelves. The company has made the licensing business profitable by opening it up to other fields of entertainment such as animation, motion-caps, television series and cartoons.

Ocean's early marketing expertise came from managing director and co-founder Vic Ackroyd. He admits that it was difficult to get film producers and distributors, such as Twentieth Century Fox and Cannon, to take the software industry seriously. Film companies were willing to almost give licences away but were not willing to support computer games with promotions or special guest appearances by stars at software press launches.

Wyrd had to develop contacts with potential licence outlets, promote a positive image of the size of the software market and keep tags on what was about to appear at cinemas and on television. As more companies joined the chase for licences the race for new material got hotter.

OUTLETS

It's not enough to pick up a licence while a film's in production or an American TV series is being bought by BBC or ITV for transmission in a few months time. You could find, as Ocean did with its first adventure game Neverending Story, that the film has passed you by and a passable game becomes a has-been.

Neverending Story was a German-backed film but distributed in the US and UK by Warner, from whom Ocean purchased the rights. By the time Ocean had the rights, decided what the game would look like and put together a programming team the film was almost through its post production-editing stages. In the following months the film was released in the States and then went on London and Limited provincial release in Britain.

Several months after a full provincial release in the UK, and during an autumn slump in software sales, the game was released. Ocean had no idea that the film had finished its UK tour and the game's less than deserved sales were due mainly to non-cooperation with the film distributor, the adventure game format, and the lousy release date.

Ocean has since learnt by its mistakes. When you're looking for a new product you don't go to a film company's internal hierarchy, such as managing directors or executive producers. Agents, such as public relations companies, are also guaranteed to show ignorance of projects in production and will make sure that you get no information until a film is officially launched.

Instead, you can take all the trade and fan papers such as Screen International, Fangoria in the States and Starburst in the UK. Get to know the journalists on those papers, find out who their contacts are and finally get to know the people who really count during the making of a film – writers, directors and maybe even actors. Just one rumour from any of

"Once you've made a nuisance and shown that you won't be put off by PR flannel, the film companies will start offering you new products."
LICENSES

ENDED TO KNOCK DEAD

these sources could get you in on a multi-million pound licence deal.

Once you've made a nuisance and shown that you won't be put off by PR flannel or the so-called closed set where any of the production team found leaking information or pictures from the film set will have their contracts torn up - the film companies will start offering you new products. The companies who are in that position at the moment include Ocean. Activision. US Gold, and Gremlin Graphics, a tight clique if ever there was one.

The best time to have a product offered to you is when the script for a film, or manuscript for a book is being written. Your programmers can use the script to strip out sequences which can be computerised, and the film has not gone into production yet so you'll have at least six months before it premiers.

Domark was given the script for The Living Daylights at the end of 1986 when the 007 deal was finalised. Designer Richard Naylor took nine stunts from the film and hung them around a core in which gives the player only a few seconds to select weapons for each scenario.

The result looks impressive but, as several reviewers pointed out, if you take the status panel and colourful cassette inlay away what you are left with is a simple shoot-'em-up which could have applied equally well to a vigilante film or any of a dozen spy thrillers. The same can be said for Death Wish III and Cobra, and while we're at it Top Gun is no more than a barely adequate dual-screen flight simulator. I've seen better, but all the games have got those names behind them and very often that guarantees success.

GETTING IT RIGHT

When you negotiate for a movie licence you have the option of buying several different product rights. The most important is the plot, unless you plan to write your own, and this includes the characters within the movie, the way they dress and the way they look.

Once the plot's settled you will want a soundtrack for your game which bears some relationship to the movie. That means paying the composer for the original score and, if you want to include the original theme soundtrack on the tape with the game, the recording artists.

Domark had trouble with the original soundtrack of A View To A Kill when the company decided to include the Duran Duran theme on side B of the tape. In 85 the Duranites had a recording contract with Tritec Music in association with EMI. Tritec agreed to allow Simon Le Bon's vocals on the tape but at the last moment asked for 10% of the game's profits. The music company wouldn't back down but the track went on the game and contributed to the financial flop that it quickly became.

You won't find a trace of The Living Daylights either in or out of the latest Domark 007, which is a hit by anyone's estimates. Directors Wheatley and Strachan wanted the Monty Norman 007 theme in the game but, according to the official line, the budget didn't stretch to it.

Specialised logos, like those of Miami Vice. Masters Of The Universe and James Bond must also be bought. Very often they are owned by authors, artists, or agencies other than the film corporation. The Batman logo, for instance, is owned by DC Comics who can dispose of it with...
their character, but the Bond gun logo is a registered trademark of Danjaq SA.

To finalise the main contact you need the film’s poster artwork for your cassette inlay and magazine advertising. Consumers are more likely to associate the game with the film if the original artwork is used as in Ocean’s Cobra campaign and Gremlin’s forthcoming Masters Of The Universe advertising. For that you have to go back to the original artist, who is likely to be a freelancer.

The route to a finished contract sounds a long one but the film company, like any good book publisher, should be able to act as a front for all the companies concerned in the rights negotiations. One area, however, in which they’re unlikely to be able to trade is in the actors and actresses who portray the characters you want in your game. Their careers are handled by agents who can easily destroy negotiations for film rights by declaring that their client’s likeness cannot appear in any artwork or on the computer screen. Very often, however, they will be satisfied if they get enough money and an undertaking that their client will have the final okay on his game likeness.

Getting the green light from an actor about his game likeness can be a tricky business. The ill-fated Dr Who And The Mines Of Terror, which was due to appear in 1985 but has recently been dropped by software house Micro Power, was partly jinxed by persona problems.

Micro Power intended to have the tenth Dr Who, Colin Baker, on the cassette inlay but Baker was a popular Doctor and wanted more money than the software house’s budget could stand. As a result the other Doctors were approached, Tom Baker being the favourite. Negotiations broke down and, if the game had ever been published, though it was widely reviewed, the face of Dr Who on the cassette inlay would have been anonymous or nonexistent.

On relatively few occasions the characters are more important than the actors playing them and it is the licensing company which has the final say. Such was the case in the long running Star Trek saga.

The rights for the original Star Trek television series are held by US book publisher Simon and Schuster, a large conglomerate which is in the process of taking over the UK book publishing industry. Beyond Software, (which has recently been disbanded) owned by British Telecom, outmanoeuvred British software houses, such as Studio 1, with a bid of more than £50,000. The contract stated that Simon and Schuster should see and approve aspects of the game, its graphics, sound and packaging. No doubt the buzz of landing such a highly sought after licence displaced any problems. Beyond the company might be problems - but there were.

Kirk, Spock, uniform insignia, star ships and even the interior of the Enterprise’s bridge all had to come up to Simon and Schuster’s perfect standards; and once, after two years and two programming teams had overhauled and finished the game, the packaging – boxing, instructions and artwork – came under scrutiny. The game was due out at the end of November but, considering it was finished more than three months ago, it has taken two months to get the inlay past the licence.

Similar problems were experienced by Beyond with Superman, by US Gold with Road Runner and by Melbourne House with Judge Dredd.

**COMICS AND COIN-OPS**

Movie licences may hold the prestige end of the entertainment software industry but coin-ops and comic book characters, far from being the last of 2000 AD, are cutting the action not far behind.

The major part of Ocean’s Christmas line-up is composed of coin-op titles from Konami – Gryzor and Combat School – and Taito. Coin-op deals are easier to do than film rights because the licence comes as a package including artwork and, in the majority of cases, artwork. Coin-op manufacturers are also less strict than film companies about the conversion from reel to computer screen and coin-op adaption usually takes two, instead of six months – for a movie – to complete. There is often no need for the original storyboarding or elaborate program design.

There is still, however, some element of risk in choosing a particular coin-op licence for the computer market. Most are developed in the US and Japan where consumer tastes are different to those in Britain.

Ocean has taken the usual risk with its Christmas releases Gryzor and Combat School; both are at the top of the US coin-op charts but have yet to establish themselves in the UK. David Ward and marketing director Colin Stokes are sure that the games will fill chart spots in that reason – and because of all the lurid hype put out about them - they’ll also reach the top of the home computer top ten.

Marketing Japanese coin-op conversions is more difficult. The Japanese and their heroes and heroines as petite figures, often with pony tails. Such was the problem with Ocean’s Athena and the soon to be released sequel Psycho Soldier. The lead character is admittedly female but is cute, rather than sexy - something which Ocean just couldn’t have. The game’s lead character was, therefore, modelled as a scantily clad Valkyrie on the poster and advertising artwork.

Ocean’s approach hasn’t always worked with press and public. Several magazines covered up the peeky nipples of Game Over’s villainess before she appeared on their advertising pages.

Mastertronic, which doesn’t rely on advertising to sell its software, has solved the coin-op problem in a different way. It’s looking towards the 16-bit market and has shares in the Arcadia coin-op label.

The Arcadia machines contain Amiga circuit boards so the company can dump the machine’s code to disk and sell it for home-based Amigas – the perfect home arcade games, and they’re the real thing not conversions. Amiga and ST owners can therefore look forward to their own copies of new games, such as R-Type, almost as soon as they appear in the arcades. It is just a question of time and could happen as soon as Spring 88.

Comic and cartoon licensing took off along a similar track to coin-ops. The heroes were chunky giants in superlump costumes or bulging with muscle. Transformers, Centurions, MASK, and the occasional oddity like Roland Rat, hit the racks and for the most part have just as quickly disappeared without causing too much financial distress to the software companies that bought them from the TV. The same cannot, however, be said of comic book characters.

Rogue Trooper, Judge Dredd and Nemesis. All these 2000 AD characters, bar the last one, have come a cropper. The reason is simple.
come to play the games you are let down by creaky animation. Your sense of the real disappears.

Nemesis The Warlock was a success, and in all likelihood Judge Death will be, because the manufacturers have concentrated on the technical merit and arcade quality of the games rather than the tie-in with the comic. Rather than 2000 AD's Nemesis you have a computer character in its own right with which you can relate.

CENSORSHIP

The growth of film and TV licenced products has made retailers such as W H Smith and Boots look to their sales policies. Already Smith is taking survival and vigilante-type magazines down from its shelves and the chainstore has started to fight shy of gory covers - the CRASH featuring Palace's Barbarian ran into trouble with some W H Smith branches - and magazine names.

The same is true, though to a lesser extent, of computer games. Already W H Smith has looked at the ethics behind putting games such as CRL's Jack The Ripper (see Previews, pages 15 to 19) on shelves which are sought out by children, and the advertising for products such as Deathwish III, Domark's ill-fated Friday The 13th, and Ocean's Renegade have been called into judgement by the computer press, retailers and parents.

Software houses are also being forced to tone down the violence in their games in order to save their export markets. Ocean has had to alter its version of Renegade in keeping with anti-violence laws in Germany. The game included a thug's head bashed open on the pavement and his blood leaking out. Such violence is not allowed in Germany and it is a less than subtle irony that another country is affecting the standards of our software industry.

LATEST CRAZES

The entertainment software industry only survives because it keeps up with the tastes of players. At the beginning of 1987 the craze was for film tie-ins and we saw Top Gun, Cobra and Aliens high in the charts. Since then coin-ops have flooded onto the market and, according to players and software houses alike, there's nothing better.

Next year, however, products such as Masters Of The Universe and perhaps, Ghostbusters II will see a resurgence of the film licence. Domark's Not A Penny More, Not A Penny Less is also likely to interest the middle range software houses, and some of the big 'uns, into book licensing which is a relatively unexplored area.

The big name writers whom everybody seems to be interested in are Len Deighton, Frederick Forsythe, Stephen King and Clive Barker. The first two have been exploited by Century Hutchinson and, now, Ariolasoft, but King and Barker are only just beginning to become aware of the computer potential of their books and films.

The computer marketing and licensing industry is becoming bigger by the minute. More money is being spent on transfer fees and brand name authors are slowly being made aware that the computer game is just as much an instrument of fantasy as a movie or book.

There is still a long way to go and it is a tricky, complex, business which requires funding and marketing expertise. Very soon, however, you will see the game of the film advertised on poster hoardings along with the book and soundtrack.
SMARTER THAN THE AVERAGE STREETWISE GUY OR GAL!

From the wilds of Jellystone Park deep in the heart of the American Rockies come the lovable escapades of Yogi Bear – Hanna Barbera's parkwise bear. Piranha are now set to release the game of the cartoon series on the Commodore 64/128, the Spectrum and the Amstrad CPC.

To celebrate the launch of the game (Commodore 6/128 reviewed this issue) Piranha are offering Yogi Bear memorabilia and games as prizes in this competition. Ten top winners will each receive a pair of Yogi Bear boxer-shorts, a Yogi T-shirt and a copy of the game, and for the next 30 runners up there are copies of the game – on either Commodore, Spectrum or Amstrad.*

To win you are first going to have to use a bit of grey matter – and probably an encyclopedia – unless, of course, you've got a PhD in Bears. The questions all revolve around Yogi, and other members of the bear family. Each question's answer corresponds to the answer box in the grid - when you think you've discovered the correct answer fill it in the appropriate box, one letter per square (no characters for spaces or dashes).

If you do that correctly the name of another member of the bear family should become apparent reading vertically down the column with the arrow above it. Now tell us where the natural habitat of that bear is. Send your completed form to SMARTER THAN THE AVERAGE COMPETITION, THE GAMES MACHINE, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB to arrive no later than 19 December.

YOGI – THE QUIZ
1) When hungry what type of basket does Yogi go in search for?
2) What is the name of of Yogi’s little pal?
3) What Park does Yogi reside at?
4) What's the Latin name for the Brown Bear?
5) The alternative, not latin, name for the Black Bear

YOGI – THE CLOTHES
For ten lucky winners there are height-of-fashion boxer-shorts emblazoned with Yogi and Boo-Boo running around being madly pursued, as always, by Ranger Smith. There is also a duck wearing a baseball cap (but no-one can remember where the duck, or even the baseball cap, came into the story). And then there are the Yogi T-shirts with his familiar catch-phrase across it – and a copy of the game.

YOGI – THE ENTRY FORM
Fill in the answers and other details and cut out the form (or photocopy it, or redraw it on the back of a sealed envelope) and send it in as fast as possible.

* Please note that at the time of going to press little has been heard of the Amstrad CPC version of Yogi. Amstrad winners should be prepared to wait for their game, or alternatively may choose another game from Piranha's back catalogue: State which please.

In case Amstrad Yogi is not ready in time, and I am not prepared to wait, instead I would like to have:
HOW TO GET YOUR SPECTRUM REPAIRED FOR ONLY £19.95

CALL IN AT OUR MANCHESTER CITY CENTRE BRANCH FOR WHILE YOU WAIT REPAIRS AND SPARES

SPECIAL OFFER!
Update Your Rubber Keyboard to a New Spectrum+
Fitted for only £29.95 * £1.50 post & packing
Also D.I.Y Kit available for only £24.95 + £1.50 p & p
Same day service

SPECTRUM (only)
BOARD REPAIRS £10.00 THE CHEAPEST AROUND

WHILE YOU WAIT SERVICE
CALL FOR APPOINTMENT

TEN ★ REPAIR SERVICE

- while you wait Spectrum repairs £22.50
  Also spare parts over the counter
- All computers fully overhauled and fully tested before return.
- Fully insured for the return journey.
  Developer low price of £19.95 including fast, packing and VAT. (Not a between price like some other repair companies)
- 3 month written guarantee on all repairs
- Discounts for schools and colleges

OVERHAUL WITH EVERY REPAIR WE DO:-
- £6.00 ribbon cable to extend your ports for your periperal to £24.95 + £1.50 p & p
- £19.95 Colour, sound, keyboard check
- £24.95 + £1.50 p & p
- £35.00 + £1.50 p & p
- £22.50 and packing
- VAT not included between price

ARE YOU ANOTHER CUSTOMER - fed up waiting weeks for your estimate?
Need your computer repaired fast, Then send it now to the Number One Repair Centre in the U.K.
We will repair your computer while you wait and help you with any of your technical problems with the latest test equipment available. You are more than welcome. We test your computer and you wait and help you with any of your technical problems. Commodore computers repaired for only £15.00. Please note we give you a 100% satisfaction guarantee if we can not repair your computer. We don't have hidden extras whatsoever. We don't have to boast too much about our service as we have thousands of customers from all over the world highly delighted with our service. A first class reputation for speed and accuracy. Don't forget, we also now have a service branch in Manchester City Centre for while you wait service.

URGENT NOTICE
Don't be misled by adverts showing between prices. A recent complaint against a Manchester repair firm. Mancomp. was upheld by the Advertising Standards Authority on two counts. It had stated BBC repairs between £14 and £25. Their guarantee policy was misleading as it did not make clear that all repairs were not covered.

NEW THE VIDEOVAULT COMPUTER COMPANION EDITION NOW HOT OFF THE PRESS

New bigger catalogue now available containing over 2,500 items including software for all computers, joysticks, spare parts, business software, books, plus many more. Just send 2 x £1.85 stamps for your free copy. Over 20 pages full of top quality products delivered to your door by return post.

The Cheapest 10% Rapid Pay cash on the delivery of your order. 30 days return for full refund. Normal recommended retail price £24.95. Quick offer together is £19.95. (Also a £1.50 p & p)

ARE YOU ANOTHER CUSTOMER - fed up with really up to £50.00 which some of our competitors are quoting? (Man order £300)

140 High Street West, Glossop, Derbyshire SK13 8HJ
Tel: 04574 66555/67761 Head Office & Access orders, queries, Manchester 061-236 0376 while you wait repair centre only.
...the Warrior King

The latest hit coin-op from Taito.

Lands that produce men of legend, dragon slayers, lie in his shadow—guardian evil fear his heart-pounding sword, the axe he wields as swift as lightning. State of the art programming makes a true simulation of the Arcade for your home micro, enjoy superb graphics and realistic action as RASTAN takes on a world of dangers—magical wizards, fire breathing lions, bats, snakes, skeletons and finally the living dead. Is it more than you can handle?

Spectrum 7.95 Cass.  
Commodore 8.95 Cass. 12.95 Disk  
Amstrad 8.95 Cass. 14.95 Disk

Licensed from Taito Corp., programmed for Amstrad, Spectrum, Commodore by Imagine Software.
A new interactive, multiplayer game has recently started up on Micronet – the area of Prestel run independently for home computer users, alongside the original MUG, or Multi-User Dungeon that kept keen modern owners on-line late at night to a mainframe buried in the heart of an English university. Shades was written by Neil Newell specially for Micronet.

To access the game you need a modem capable of 1200/75 baud V.22bis connection, so that you can get online to Micronet, which occupies a considerable chunk of British Telecom’s Prestel information service. You also need a computer, a telephone and of course an account number valid for either Prestel or Micronet – apart from telephone charges (usually at the local rate), playing Shades costs either 6p a minute or 1.62p a minute depending on whether you’re a mere Prestel subscriber or have taken the sensible route for any home-micro-owner, and are entitled to the cheaper rate because you are a Micronet subscriber.

Up to eight people can play in one Shades game, and up to eight games can be run by the system at any one time. Entering a game with your specific persona, the aim is to wander around the land collecting treasure (for deposit with a neutral zone – the pub known as The Talking Shoppes where Micronet subscribers can converse with one another by typing messages on their computer keyboard and broadcasting them to the Micronet world at large. News, reviews, and downloadable software are all available to the casual browser, while special areas of The Net, as Micronet is known to its users, are given over to machine-specific databases where you can find all the latest information relevant to your micro.

The range of commands available is remarkably large – for instance there are over 50 ways of interacting with another Shades on-line. And players ‘socialise’ during a game in a neutral zone – the pub known as The Talking Shoppes where fighting isn’t allowed.

If the idea of playing Shades appeals to you, but you lack the modem, Micronet might be able to come to the rescue. They’re offering a couple of modems, together with a Micronet subscription and 25 hours free play on Shades to two winners of this competition. All you have to do is answer the four questions we’ve set, complete the tiebreaker (in an interestingly original way) in 15 words or less and post your entry to SHADES COMPETITION, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB to arrive before 19 December.

WIN THE MAGIC KEY TO SHADES

We’re giving away two of these fabulous packages worth over £250!

A Pace LINNET auto-dial, answer intelligent modem. Plug this into your computer, connect it up to the phone line and the world of online communications becomes your oyster.

TOGETHER WITH ONE YEAR’S FREE SUBSCRIPTION TO MICRONET

Connecting your computer to the vast information store provided by Micronet gives access to on-line, interactive games – including SHADES and the multi-user space strategy game STAR-NET. There are interactive CHATLINEs where Micronet subscribers can converse with one another by typing messages on their computer keyboard and

PLUS 25 Hours of free adventuring in the land of SHADES

1. What does MUG stand for?
2. What do SHADES players call themselves?
3. What is the pub in SHADES called?
4. SHADES players start as novices – what is the next level?

Our standard competition rules apply. Check out the masthead if you’re in any doubt.

Send your entry to SHADES COMPETITION, THE GAMES MACHINE, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB

SHADISTIC QUESTIONS

Due to a touch of over-eager hacking on the part of our Art Department, last issue’s SHADES competition had a little something missing – information relevant to the answers was mistakenly dropped out. As a result not all questions could be answered. Apologies all round. To make up, we are nothing if not fair (we also have two modems cluttering up the office), we proudly present the full, un-abridged version of the SHADES Competition...

I want to play SHADES because

NAME
ADDRESS

4

Send your entry to SHADES COMPETITION, THE GAMES MACHINE, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB
THE ADVERTISING GAME

Between a third to a half of any computer magazine is taken up by advertising. But who produces these masterpieces of hype, and how? To find out more, Nik Wild and Oliver Frey spoke to Stephen Blower, the man behind the Ocean and Imagine adverts.

It is with brash and colourful designs and illustrations that Britain's software houses do their best to convince the public that their games must be bought. The ads are the public face of a software house and can make or break its image. They can be great, they can be bad, and we usually take them for granted.

But for Stephen Blower they are his entire working life. 'My job is to create Ocean's image in an exciting and up-market way, and to keep it well in sight above the bubble bubble of the rest of the industry's advertising.'

Sitting at his work table in one of two smallish offices that make up Ocean's art department, Stephen seems rather quiet and mild compared to the youthful exuberance of his ad creations. But there is a boyish sense of humour there to accompany the professional efficiency. And he and his team of three need both to get through the workload a large company like Ocean generates.

'It's early October, and we're already into the run-up to Christmas. We've got eleven new ads to prepare this month alone, and on top of that there's posters and other point-of-sale material for the shops, which Christmas demands. So much extra, there just doesn't seem to be the time to get round to doing it all.'

Due to the nature of magazine schedules, Steve and his team have to work in advance of the time readers get to see the results of their efforts. Ads for a December issue of a computer magazine have to be completed and with the printer mid-to late-October; the printer takes about a week to finish his job, and then it takes distribution another week to get the magazine into the shops: early- to mid-November for a December issue, depending on publication date.

STORY TO PICTURE

Add to this the fact that Steve is the very first in line on announcing a new game, then you get to see the problems: the game idea is there, a possible release date is mooted; but of course only the roughest graphic elements of the software exist, from which packaging and advertising art must be developed. So in a sense he has to be the blind leading the slightly sighted towards a complete ad concept.

Taking the game's storyline he has to decide what sort of illustration is required to best sell it, and what sort of design will suit it. Paintings are obviously far removed in look from actual computer graphics, but they have to be exciting in their own right or they will not convey the thrills to be had from the forthcoming gameplay. Bob Wakelin produces most of Ocean's advertising art: 'With Bob, you show him the game or what material we have on it,' says Steve. 'He knows what we want for the market, and I know I can trust him to go off and do a picture that fits. Sometimes, if he cannot spark off the idea, I help out by going through books and developing a rough sketch. He'll then take it from there.'

I like Bob's stuff very much. Also his initial pencil drawing is so detailed you almost know exactly what he is going to end up with before he starts painting it - it's almost like architecture in a way, like a blue print.'

GETTING THE COPY

So much for the actual painting. But obviously there are more elements to an ad page. For one, decisions have to be taken as to whether a game merits a double page spread, a single page, or a share of a page with another game. It is down to financial considerations: how much does the company expect a game to sell? Not every product can be a winner, and experience helps in making a decision. There is also the fact that a game may be initially promoted with a full page on its own and then later kept in the public's eye a little longer by twinning it more cost effectively with another game that has passed its peak selling slot in the fast-moving world of the software market. Whatever the decision, the fact that Ocean publishes many games a month means that that Steve is constantly running the gauntlet of magazine schedules to keep up with their output of new and revamped game ads.

Given the fact that he is responsible for the look of the publicity, it may seem unusual that Steve Blower also writes all the text in the ad, a task advertising agencies have copy writers for. But Ocean has grown in the tight-knit way that many of Britain's dynamic companies have, where the feeling is that it is better to be completely in control of all aspects of one's creative output. Steve designs the ad and feels '... the copy has to be written so that it works with the visual concept rather than just be a scenario for the game, and I position it within the illustration to hopefully look its best.

NO APPROVAL TIME

Given the speed he has to work at, Steve ends up with all the responsibility for his output. There is hardly ever the time to show a rough concept to the fellow management for approval, and even less to print proofs (one-off copies) of the finished design: 'There just isn't time to change anything when we've done it, so I have to try and make sure it's right first time. Obviously you get times when it doesn't work out that way, and then you're in trouble, but hopefully you get things reasonably correct when you put them down on paper.'

With Bob (Wakelin), you show him the game, and I know I can trust him to go off and do a picture that fits.
An example of the problem Steve Blower faces every day: how will the lettering he adds on an overlay look when it is combined with the illustration? ‘Dynamite’ was an ad for four games timed to appear around 5 November two years ago. As you can see, the text is all in black, the artist must use imagination to ‘see’ how the final colours will integrate with the background, and then - if there is no time for colour proofs to be made - hope he chose well.

THE NEVERENDING STORY

Ocean's advert for 'The Neverending Story' went through many transformations, and appeared in several different versions.

For this particular game Ocean wanted to tie-in with the film’s poster image (see John Gilbert’s article on licensing in this issue, page 112), and so Steve had to work from coloured photographs of the original poster artwork. On its own, though, that would have been boring, so he made up a montage of images, including several screen shots taken from the game itself.

The montage is built up on a board. The poster forms the background, right down through the centre, including the white dragon, to the mountain and the rocks around it. But the figure at the top right has been cut up from elsewhere in the poster and repositioned to make the composition look more interesting. The five screen shots are also cut and pasted into position, and then at the base, Steve has used a monochrome film publicity still. Naturally, all these ragged cut edges will show up, and the whole thing has a rough-and-ready look about it...

A recent job he did typifies the sort of problems Steve can be faced with. Ocean decided to put out a compilation of sports games, some of their own and some to be from other software houses. A title was decided on, ‘Game, Set And Match’, and Steve designed a logo and airbrushed it one afternoon. Before all the games were signed up an ad was urgently required for abroad. Only having Ocean and Imagine's own titles to work on, a compilation ad was designed using the old packaging artwork and sent off.

Obviously this version could only be a stop-gap and unfair to the other software houses' contributions, showing only Ocean product as it did. So, the moment the list of games to be...
"There just isn't time to change anything when we've done it, so I have to try and make sure it's right first time."

IMAGINE

Part of any designer's job when he or she works on anything to be printed is to imagine a lot of things: given a finished painting to start off with: what will the lettering that you add separately look like? How will the colour you have instructed the repro house to make the lettering work with the illustration when the two are combined (your typesetting text was only black in its original form)? Will that game logo design stand out like a sore thumb? And so on. So many elements of a printed page are put together mechanically by specialist outside sub-contractors, that to see the finished thing in the magazines is often a surprise - hopefully pleasant!

In the case of Game, Set and Match, Steve was not wholly satisfied, and the ad has since undergone more changes, but there is never much time to worry about upsets like this, if next day he finds himself immersed in producing a 16-page brochure for the PCW Show which is required yesterday, and which he won't see complete until its delivery on the stand! The worry of what that will look like has taken over.

Does he ever lose his cool? 'Well, the pressure sometimes gets a bit much. You know, where at the end of the week you go out for a pint with your mates - and find you just can't talk to them because you're still mentally in the office, spaced-out somewhere. I'm like that, but it doesn't happen too often.'
OVER 10 HIT GAMES

OVER 20 EXCITING EVENTS

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Buy a copy of the Trivial Pursuit start-up 'Genus' cassette (Spectrum, CBM 64, Amstrad, BBC) at £14.95 and get both add-on packs of questions FREE - Save £15.90!

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Built like a hand grenade and just as lethal in action, this totally new Danish design packs top quality micro switches for top-notch control and kool high-scores.

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Ultimate cursor control wiz zee
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PLEASE NOTE: JOYSTICKS AND DISKS ONLY AVAILABLE IN UK AND EIRE!

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Enjoy the amazing 52 colour graphics and arcade quality sound of this great new system from the top makers of coin-op arcade machines!

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SOFTWARE

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BUGGY BOY (ELITE)
QUDEX (THALAMUS)
BARBARIAN (PSYGNOSIS)
DARK SCEPTRE (FIREBIRD)
JACK THE NIPPER II (GREMLIN GRAPHICS)
FREDDY HARDEST (IMAGINE)
RENEGADE (IMAGINE)
CHUCK YEAGER’S AFS (ELECTRONIC ARTS)
THE LURKING HORROR (INFOCOM)
THUNDERCATS (ELITE)
THROUGH THE TRAPDOOR (PIRANHA)
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Apart from our highly recommended games list, you can order any game released by the major software houses to date on any of the following formats:
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OUR OFFER PRICES ARE VALID FOR ANY GAMES AND INCLUDE POSTAGE AND PACKING - NO OTHER EXTRA CHARGES
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<th>OFFER</th>
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Not all the listed products will have been released at press time. Goods will be despatched as soon as possible. Customers will be informed of any long delays.

INSTRUCTIONS:
Write required game(s) on order list
Check in review or ad for correct recommended retail price (RRP)
Look up special offer price and write on order form
Don’t forget to fill in boxes indicating computer format and media type
Add up total and enclose cheque or postal order or alternatively use ACCESS/VISA facility (Don’t forget to indicate the Expiry Date!)
REMEMBER: Incomplete order forms will be returned, so don’t forget format, media, shirt size, Expiry Date etc...
Please ring (0584) 5620 if in doubt!

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MASSIVE DISCOUNTS AT YOUR FINGERTIPS!
The Special Software Discount Offer Prices do not apply to software bargains highlighted in the previous pages, nor do they include Console Cartridges, blank disks or any hardware listed.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>SIZE</th>
<th>QTY</th>
<th>PRICE</th>
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<tbody>
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Please note that Hardware, Consoles and Cartridges are available in the UK only.

PHASORS ON STUN

WIN A BRITANNIA HAND-HELD JOYSTICK

Hand held joysticks seem to be all the rage of late, the ability to jump about while blasting marauding aliens and not having to rely on rubber suction feet for a stable sprite controller are definite advantages to shoot-'em-up addicts. The introduction of micro-switches also aids the quest for ultimate dexterity as they allow pixel perfect accuracy and positive directional movements for the more exacting style of game.

Britannia Software Ltd have produced a hand-held joystick, complete with micro-switches, to meet the demands of modern computer games. Going by the name of Phasor One, this stick is ergonomically designed, robust, comfortable to hold and very accurate to use, and now courtesy of Britannia Software and THE GAMES MACHINE, here is your chance to become the proud owner of one of these joysticks.

We have 20 Phasors Ones to give away, and all you have to do to enter the competition is answer the five questions set out here.

1) What is the hero’s name in the Psygnosis graphic adventure Barbarian?
2) Who wrote the music for the Elite Systems game, Thundercats?
3) Who wrote the original comic strip stories for Passengers on the Wind?
4) In which town is the Konami release Vampire Killer set?
5) In what country does Indiana Jones And The Temple Of Doom take place?

Send your entries on a postcard or the back of sealed envelope to PHASOR COMPETITION, THE GAMES MACHINE, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB, and don’t forget your name and address. All entries must reach us by 19 December. The first 20 correct entries pulled out of the bag will win their senders a Britannia Phasor One joystick.

Our standard competition rules apply, check out the masthead if you are in any doubt.

NAME

ADDRESS

POSTCODE

PLEASE DEBIT MY VISA/ACCESS ACCOUNT

I wish to pay by Visa/Access (delete as applicable)

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Processor</th>
<th>ROM</th>
<th>RAMS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>750</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68020</td>
<td>7000</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
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<td>650</td>
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Keyboard Membrane

<table>
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<td>901226 Basic ROM</td>
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<td>6525 Clia</td>
<td>901227 Serial ROM</td>
<td>901234 Mouse Keeper</td>
<td>6569 VIC</td>
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All the above prices include VAT but please enclose a further £150 post

HOW TO CONTACT US

* For quotes on computers not listed or on any component, telephone 0276 66266. (Quoting GAM /127.)

* To send us your micro for repair, mail it securely packed, accompanied by cheque, postal order (made out to Verran Micro Maintenance Limited) or quote your Access or Barclaycard number

* And to obtain your special discount quote GAM /127.

Merry Christmas from all of us at Verran

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Direct the crazy antics of Charlie as he performs stunts and plays the fool with the rest of the cast. Replay each scene in the editing suite; but be warned—a reshoot will be costly and you could go over budget!

Attend the premiere of your film! The critical acclaim of the audience will determine whether your box office earnings allow you the budget for another film, or leave you with a flop and a trip along skid row!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System</th>
<th>Cassette</th>
<th>Disk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CBM 64/128</td>
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THE COLOUR RED

The Hunt For Red October, a new submarine warfare simulation from ARGUS is nearing completion. Here's a taster of what to expect from the Atari ST version AND a chance not only to win a copy of the game, but also an all-expenses day out to visit HMS BELFAST in London.

Red October – Russia’s most advanced missile submarine, with the on-board capability to destroy 200 cities, is about to defect to the USA. The scenario is taken from the huge best-seller novel written by Tom Clancy.

Taking control of Red October and its 113-man crew, the task ahead is perilous, especially when the Russian Navy has other plans for the submarine – they built it and know its strengths and weaknesses.

Hot on your trail is the Russian navy in its hunter ships. If the warning alarm sounds then you have been detected – either go full steam ahead and make a belt for it, or turn and fire a salvo of up to four torpedos at the enemy above, either guiding them manually or under sonar control. Alternatively, if you feel like being violent right from the outset you can give chase to your pursuers using the hunt and attack systems and eliminating them before they find you.

Orders to the crew are controlled simply through the mouse or joystick. Reports are given back to you on the effectiveness of your decisions through a scrolling message. The same panel doubles for incoming messages on the bridge.

The four ships of the Russian fleet

You play the submarine’s commander. Navigating with the aid of a seabed contour map, you also gain an overall picture of the Atlantic showing Red October’s position in relation to both the US Navy fleet and the Russian fleet. Movement of the fleet can only be watched when surfaced and radio transmissions intercepted. Also, when surfaced repairs are undertaken automatically, but then you are risking detection, so it is worthwhile to use the periscope before actually surfacing.

The Hunt For Red October is soon to be available for the Atari ST, Amiga, IBM PC (£24.95), Commodore 64/128, Spectrum 48/128 and Amstrad CPC (£14.95 cassette).

Argus's new submarine warfare simulation brings you the challenge of the high seas. The screen shows the main display window from the Atari ST version.

Competition ahoy! Thar she blows! Off the starboard bow! Secure the deck! And loads of other interestingly nautical terms like: get your anchor up for some seafaring questions!

Get them all ship-shape and Bristol fashion and you could win yourself an all-expenses (water and salted biscuits thrown in too) paid trip to the old port of London to visit the famous World War II carrier ship HMS Belfast courtesy of Argus Press Software (plus a copy of The Hunt For Red October). Argus let us down a bit on this one, but try as they might, they couldn’t persuade the Russian Navy to let us roam over Red October herself. How-
HMS BELFAST
RED OCTOBER!

HMS Belfast and a copy of the new game THE HUNT...

ever, if you happen to be nautically minded and interested in warships, The Imperial War Museum's HMS Belfast, with seven accessible decks is a fascinating experience.

That's an admiral first prize, and the next ten under-seadogs will each receive a copy of The Hunt For Red October on a machine of their choice. To be in with a chance of winning, answer the five questions below and send the answers together with your name and address, on a postcard or the back of a sealed envelope to: RED OCTOBER COMPETITION, THE GAMES MACHINE, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB, to arrive no later than 19 December.

1) What was the name of Captain Nemo's submarine in 20,000 Leagues Under The Sea by Jules Verne?
2) Which side of a ship is larbord?
3) What traditional illness did sailors suffer from due to lack of Vitamin C?
4) Where is the stern of a ship?
5) Where would you find a plimsol line?

Our standard competition rules apply, if you're in any doubt check the masthead.
She's Mad. She's Bad.

She's Brought Her Dad.

Mercy Dash

Written by Mel Crucher

Drawn by Robin Evans

When no Repitition Falls Ta Bits

Call in the Nerve

Lord Have Mercy!

What a Day! I'm Tadly Blitzed!

Lionel had to darken my roots again

Lost One of Me Floppies Down the RAM & Interface

and I got clamped

up at the next end.

BOOOF! Mercy, this is end Rebusion of Grotesque games. For God's sake what the Hell are you playing at, Wimmun? You promised me a Big Name Celebrity to endorse our latest Short Film in Last Tuesday. Call me as Soon as you get in. For Goodness' and Start earning your Big Fat Fee.

Better see what's on The Nightmare.

Good Guy, Run along and get us ready...

Totaally Lethal Colonel Mungo Mungo Mungo

Mama! Mama!

This looks Yummy Dad. There's The Phone. Oh, I'll deal with it after.


Switched on Mercy Dash for MB Rebus. Please!

Dr. Mr. CLASSIC. PERSUASIVE. Again. For Goodness' Sake. She's Only Here for the Violence!

Switched off. Mercy Dash! Sorry, I'm Not at home, and I wouldn't trust the Dad to take a message any more than I'd trust him to tone my things up, so would you like to Speak after the Tone? Yara! BOOOF!
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Just in case reading Issue Two of THE GAMES MACHINE hasn't given you a clear idea of what the magazine is about, here is a brief rundown on what to expect from Britain's newest multi-user computer entertainment magazine.

Leading articles on people in both the foreground and background of games software; articles on topics of central concern to the growth of computer entertainment, such as computer nasties and censorship; features on the practical and enjoyable use of your computer such as art, music and writing.

THE GAMES MACHINE is multi-format, covering all popular 8- and 16-bit micros, with a strong emphasis on up to date reviews, giving ratings for each format, rather than the more common 'lumped-in' rating system of other magazines.

And then there's the future. THE GAMES MACHINE looks forward to the development of new technologies, and the convergence of existing ones which create a new home entertainment area, such as CD ROM and Interactive Video.

And that's every month from Issue Three onwards!

Ladies and Gentlemen, with the next issue (Three — on sale 21 January 1988) THE GAMES MACHINE goes monthly. It goes without saying, therefore, that the Subscription Department is now officially open. And to kick off with, here's a neat FREE gift for everyone who subscribes . . .

Issue One of THE GAMES MACHINE, which went on sale just before the PCW Show, has been a huge success. The policy had always been to produce two or three bi-monthly issues to see how popular the magazine would be with readers. Well there's no need to wait, we have been so encouraged that this is the last bi-monthly issue — THE GAMES MACHINE goes monthly straight away!

... reviews give ratings for each format, rather than the more common 'lumped-in' rating system of other magazines.
SUBSCRIBE FOR 12 ISSUES NOW, AND GET EUROMAX CONTROLLER ABSOLUTELY FREE!

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THE GAMES MACHINE SUBSCRIPTIONS, PO BOX 20, LUDLOW SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB
Robots and robotics systems which represent genuine current technology are very rare in today's movies. Of the few examples available is, strangely, the Chuck Norris action pictures Code of Silence (Rank Video) in which cop Norris finally turns on the gang of heavily-armed villains with an armoured, weapon-carrying semi-tank, remotely controlled.

Although the movie takes more liberties with fire-power and sophistication, police robots do exist, as seen in a couple of episodes of Hill Street Blues under the command of gung-ho Lt Howard Hunter (James B Sikking). These should eventually reach video libraries on Channel 5, which is handling the series.

Similarly the bomb-defusing robots used by the British Army in Northern Ireland found themselves updated to a modified form in the SF story Booby Trap (Medusa), a post-holocaust tale where a young couple, terrorised by mutant street gangs, devise a very functional looking robot for revenge. Its offensive capabilities include a few gun barrels and a very useful testicle-crushing claw. Eek!

More feasible current robotics came in the highly praised Australian production Malcolm (Virgin Video), in which Colin Friels played the title character, a slightly retarded and withdrawn young man who happens to have a genius for Heath Robinson-style robots and cybernetic systems for serving him tea in bed and opening the mail.

Events take a twist when he takes a young couple as lodgers after the death of his mother, and the boyfriend turns out to be a convicted criminal who can see the potential for Malcolm's robots to perform the perfect bank robbery.

Funny and slightly poignant by turns, at its funding stage the movie almost outdid the fiction of the plot when the producer actually sent one of the remote-controlled robots into a potential investor's office brandishing a gun and demanding a million Australian dollars. The man, suitably impressed, invested...

On a more sinister level, one of the cinema's first plausible murders by current robot technology came in Paul Schrader's Blue Collar (CIC Video). A tale of union corruption in Detroit and starring Harvey Keitel, Vaphet Kotto and Richard Pryor, the film features one character who crosses the bribed officials and is locked in the robot-staffed paint-spraying shop, asphyxiating as the automatic limbs spray the steel chassis.

Generally Hollywood has wanted its robots to be in 'human' form, ie two arms/legs/recognisable head, rather than the more plausible forms which will be a reality long before the anthropomorphised versions the film makers would like. Indeed the robots looked so human in Sleeper (Warner Home Video) that Woody Allen doubled for one by donning a silver carapace and sticking a funnel in his mouth.

For 'realism', designer Syd Mead, also responsible for the visuals in Blade Runner (Warner Home Video), went to Japan to study their current and future developments in the cybernetics line before designing...
No. 5 for John Badham's *Short Circuit* (CBS/Fox Video), an entertaining tale in which a military attack robot is struck by lightning, scrambling its programming and turning it into a charming, witty character. No. 5 escapes from the Army and ends up as scientist Steve Guttenberg and Fisher Stevens try to track it down before the military can seize it back.

No. 5 is a fully practical design on a tank-track base, and has an extendable head with two on-board video cameras for eyes. The special effects crew constructed some 16 different models, each capable of a different function, from ballroom dancing (honestly) to doing impressions of the Three Stooges! Following the box-office success, shooting is currently underway on *Short Circuit II*, with only Fisher Stevens from the original cast.

Interestingly the design of No. 5 is similar to that of Hector, the first of the 'Demi-God' series in the ITC production *Saturn 3* (Channel 5), an SF movie that deserved a far better reception than it received.

Harvey Keitel plays a deranged space pilot who travels to one of the moons of Saturn on which Kirk Douglas and Farrah Fawcett have set up a hydroponics base. Keitel brings with him a Hectic, a lumbering but highly skilled robot, controlled via a brain implant with Keitel.

But when jealousy for Ms Fawcett sends Keitel psychotic, it similarly upsets Hector, who turns on his creator — dismembering him and crating the remains in the same vacuum cleaner, believing it is a close relative of the robot range; The *Gimbots* (both WarnerHome Video) — first and most well-established of the robot range; The *mighty Orbots* (MGM/UA) and the *Gobots* (both Entertainment Video and Vestron Video). Obviously Dante is trying a send-up of low-budget film making — *Joe Dante's Gremlins* — and *Gremlins* (both warner Home Video). Obviously Dante is trying single-handed to revive Robby's career.

Recently the cause has been given a giant boost by the characters of R2D2 and R2D2 in the *Star Wars* trilogy — *Star Wars, The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return Of The Jedi* (all CBS/Fox). The personalities of these two — Anthony Daniels being wonderfully prissy as the fussy C3PO and Kenny Baker, splitting screen time with a pose as can be seen in the *Star Wars* merchandise, ranging from toys to bed spreads, lunch boxes, cosmetics and slippers.

Producer and director George Lucas included a number of other robot characters such as medicos and background fillers, but realised the importance of the main robot pair, possibly more than any other characters, to the series.

A nice Star Wars joke comes in the SF send-up, *Gremoids* (Showchannel), the movie which spawned the Lord Buckethead character who stood against Margaret Thatcher at the last General Election. In the movie an alien character advances on an upright cylinder vacuum cleaner, believing it is a close relative of R2D2 and that it carries a recorded message from Princess Serenia.

The importance of marketing nowadays can be easily seen in the number of Japanese-sourced animation series aimed at the children's market, and which are regarded as little more than promotional plugs for the large range of toys and character-supported merchandising behind them. Currently making parents part with their hard-earned cash to satisfy the material cravings of their sprogs, are tapes from Transformers (Video Gems) — first and most well-established of the robot range; The *mighty Orbots* (MGM/UA) and the *Gobots* (both Entertainment Video and Vestron Video).

Often a robot will be the wise-cracking but resourceful sidekick of a dependable hero. The most famous is surely Robby The Robot, the all-purpose hero of the SF classic *Forbidden Planet* (MGM/UA) — the movie being based on Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*, amazingly — with Walter Pidgeon as the despot. An enduring figure, Robby has also made cameo appearances in both Joe Dante's *Hollywood Boulevard* (a send-up of low-budget film making) and *Gremlins* (both WarnerHome Video). Obviously Dante is trying single-handed to revive Robby's career.

Jesse Vint also had a robot companion in the staggeringly tasteless but entertaining Roger Corman production *Forbidden World* (Emassy), a low-budget gem with some excellent special effects made with few bucks and less taste, while a tin drum called Jinke was responsible for launching a space shuttle full of teenagers into space instead of it just being a simulation in *Space Camp* (CBS/Fox).

One of the most effective teamings of man and robot came with the dreadfully underrated Douglas Trumbull 1971 movie *Silent Running* (CIC), a committed ecological SF film in which the Earth's last growing plants and gardens are orbiting in large space freighters. When the decision from Earth to destroy them — for budgetary reasons — comes through, crewmen Freeman Lowell (Bruce Dem) rebels, killing the other crew members and absconding with his gardens into deep space. Very moving in parts.
The robots, hero, Huay, Dewie and Louie, were squat, box-shaped items and almost certainly the inspiration for R2-D2 several years later. Highly convincing, they were played by young amputees who could fit into the confined shell and operate them from within. Highly recommended for anyone with an interest in intelligent SF.

Disappointing was the highly touted Loca And The Outlaws (Polygram Video), which also went through the titles 2084, The Outlaws And The Starship Redwing and Blood Storm. The only real point of interest in this depressingly flat story was midget actor Deep Roy in an almost kabuki-like costume as the hero’s robot assistant, like a more stylish version of Buck Rogers ‘Twiki in Buck Rogers In The 25th Century (CIC). This was a passable updating of the old Alex Raymond character with Gil Gerard in athletic form as the hero, although our sympathies go to midget actor Felix Silla for acting in what looks a very uncomfortable costume.

Buck Rogers ended up as a TV series after the pilot episode, and television has provided a few interesting entries in the robot line. From the Sixties came the robot in Lost In Space, while the prolific Gerry Anderson had the transparent Robert the Robot on their side.

The robots here floated by some form of technology being taken for granted, although he elaborates with a couple of touches such as smartbullets (small missiles programmed to a certain person’s heat patterns and which will melt flesh and tendons. But the robots are prone to ‘runaways’—individual units which become uncontrollable, turning on humans. That’s where cop Jack Ramsey (Tom Selleck) comes in, to deactivate them.

Villainy comes in the form of Luther Keyes, who as an author has given us innumerable predictions of the same high-tech future we have seen with such books as The Andromeda Strain and Sphere, shows us robots as domestic slaves, routinely doing housework and tending kids. But the robots are prone to ‘runaways’—individual units which become uncontrollable, turning on humans.

Certainly, one of the most interesting concepts involving robots in the cinema came with Star Trek – The Motion Picture (CIC), the first in the TV spin-off series which has improved as it has continued.

One interesting point was that the robots here floated by some form of anti-gravity system, or rather by the barely disguised wires on the set. Not exactly technically correct, but what can you expect from a script which has the heroes venturing outside the spacecraft without protective clothing after a meteorite has crashed through it?

Japan has had a range of robot villains in its SF movies, beginning with the aliens The Mysterious in 1957. In their monster series, which has given us such creatures as Mothra, a giant moth; Rodan, a giant flying turkey with sparks coming out of its bum and Godzilia, a giant fish—thing, came Godzilla vs The Cosmic Monster (Hokushin) which had the monster battling Mecha-Godzilla, a Meccano-style robot suit. Similarly King Kong was revived to fight a Mecha-Kong a few years later in King Kong Escapes.

The Cylons in Battlestar Galactica, The Cylon Attack and Conquest Of The Earth (all CIC) were metallic warriors, determined to give the crew of the Battlestar Galactica a hard time, while the robot presence in pornographic spoof Flesh Gordon (Hokushin) was comprised of large dustbins on legs with whizzing, phallic drill-bits amidships...

One of the best realised visions of the believable robot-utilising future comes in Michael Crichton’s Runaway (RCA/Columbia). Crichton, who as an author has given us innumerable predictions of the same high-tech future we have seen with such books as The Andromeda Strain and Sphere, shows us robots as domestic slaves, routinely doing housework and tending kids. But the robots are prone to ‘runaways’—individual units which become uncontrollable, turning on humans.

Certainly, one of the most interesting concepts involving robots in the cinema came with Star Trek – The Motion Picture (CIC), the first in the TV spin-off series which has improved as it has continued.

The Earth is menaced by an entity called Viger, and the crew of the Starship Enterprise investigate. After a ponderous middle section, V’ger turns out to be a Voyager space probe, missing for many years and discovered by a robotic race who realised it was lost, so assembled a craft for it and sent it home.

But of all the robots in the history of the cinema, pride of place must go to the villain of Robot Monster (Barry Wiles Video).

The monster seen on The Worst Of Hollywood was rather low on funds, so Ro-Man, the robot monster, is a man in a gorilla suit with a diving helmet on his head...we kid you not.
... the producer actually sent a remotely controlled robot to a potential investor brandishing a gun and demanding a million Australian dollars.

Robot villains have been favourites in the cinema for a long time.

ROBO SPECIAL EFFECTS

As with so much in the film SFX (special effects) field, robotics and cybernetics are being increasingly used in fantasy, SF and horror movies to create bizarre Earth creatures and aliens, as in some of the more extreme scenes of horror and mutation.

Many SFX technicians are now coming to the field with qualifications in mechanics, engineering and cybernetics rather than make-up kit and enthusiasm.

One of the first robotics SFX in a major movie was 'Bruce', the name given to the robotic shark in Steven Spielberg's Jaws (CIC). Constructed by veteran Robert Mattey, the shark looked relatively convincing mostly because of the brief glimpses of it through Spielberg's teasing editing. It was certainly less convincing when seen for longer periods in the sequels Jaws 2, Jaws 3 and Jaws – The Revenge (all CIC).

Spielberg in his role as producer also reverted to robotic fabrication for the most part for the creation of the Gremlins (Warner Home Video) in Joe Dante’s film of the same name. Amusing and horrific by turns, the vicious creatures of the title were superbly produced by Chris Walas, also responsible for the final stages of the transformation in David Cronenberg’s The Fly (CBS/Fox).

Success leads to imitation, inevitably, and soon independent producer Charles Band had Ghoulies (Entertainment In Video) on the stocks, a similar tale of malevolent beings being raised by a sorcerer. The creatures here were dreadfully unconvincing, both in appearance (high-gloss plastic sheet) and movement, problems which effects man John Buchler certainly improved upon in the recent sequel Ghoulies 2 (Entertainment In Video).

The fantasy and horror movie is the field where SFX are generally needed, excusing the odd family film such as Disney's Baby – Secret Of The Lost Legend (Touchstone Video), in which the star was an animatronic baby dinosaur found by two scientists in the jungle. The creature was as unbelievable as the story. Similarly Hugh Hudson’s Tarzan movie (Entertainment In Video), had animatronic apes and facial masks for actors in ape suits.

Various ends to which robotics have been used in horror films include the transformation of people into snarling creatures and aliens, as well as some of the more memorable effects robot in the movies. Quite recommended because of its imaginative treatment.

On a less gruesome level, Nick Maley turned actor Bernard Bresslaw into a very convincing Cyclops through a remote-controlled device with a realistic blinking central eye in the fantasy Krull (RCA/Columbia), while the problems in getting a twelve foot high, many-tentacled alien plant with a thirst for blood to lip-synch for a song by Levi Stubbs of The Four Tops caused many millions of dollars and many weeks to be added to the budget and schedule of The Little Shop Of Horrors (Warner Home Video).

Actually the persistence paid off, and the SFX team, headed by Puppet crew member Lyle Conway, produced some superbly entertaining scenes in this very amusing horror/comedy/musical.

As in any field there are experts, probably the master of whom is Italian Carlo Rambaldi. Initially experimenting with robotics to create bats for Nightwing (RCA/Columbia), he was then hired for a full-sized 45-foot robot for the Dino De Laurentis remake of King Kong (Thorn EM) in 1976. Eventually his creation, which was articulated in the arms, head and face, was used for only a few seconds, substituting make-up man Rick Baker in a gorilla suit for most of the movie. Unfortunately Rambaldi’s contributions to the 1977 sequel, King Kong Lives! (CBS/Fox), have fared little better, the film dying swiftly at the US box-office.

Luckily Rambaldi has had more success with creating the mechanical heads of Ridley Scott’s Alien (CBS/Fox), E.T. and Silver Bullet (Cannon Video), taken from a Stephen King werewolf story. Although looking slightly bear-like, his werewolf transformations are well-shot and lit.

Other luminaries in the field include Rob Bottin – who turned actors into werewolves for The Howling (Channel 5) and let his imagination run riot creating the alien multi-shape-shifter in John Carpenter’s The Thing (CIC) – and Tom Savini, an SFX man whose work veers towards the very gory. Excellent examples of Savini’s work with mechanics and robotics come with the rotting crypt-keeper in the opening segments of George Romero’s Creepshow (Mastervision) and the remarkable opening sequence of Romero’s Day Of The Dead (Entertainment In Video).

Of the movie, Savini himself said: ‘We open on the the zombie shuffling down the road and it’s obviously an actor. Then we pan around to see it from the front and cut in the model, and then audiences know it’s not an actor. Quite, since the creature has no jaw below its top teeth and has its tongue and vocal cords hanging down the front of its shirt!

The crew nicknamed it ‘Dr. Tongue’... But technology can be abused more so than in Rawhead Rex (Vestron), a luridous horror movie set in Ireland where the Rawhead of the title is a revived deity worshipped by Druids.

Constructed by Coast to Coast Effects, also responsible for Max Headroom, the seven-foot-plus beast is technically fine but aesthetically terrible, unnaturally shiny and with rotating segmented LEDs for eyes. Add the fact that the cable-controlled head goes through all the combination of expression in close-up in almost every scene, and you realise that this is one for collectors of really terrible movies...
ITS THE 4TH JULY AND THE NATION IS SET FOR AN ALMIGHTY CELEBRATION.

INTO THE COMPARENT CALM OF THE WHITE HOUSE BURSTS THE MANIC DR. MEGALOMANN. "STEP DOWN MR PRESIDENT, SUBMIT TO MY RULE OR TODAY AMERICA WILL KNOW A PLAGUE FROM WHICH DEATH WILL SEEM A HAPPY RELEASE."

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CAPTAIN AMERICA

IN:

THE DOOM TUBE OF DR MEGALOMANN
In the last issue, micro-chip musician Jon Bates gave a brief overview of home micro music. Now, to go a step further along the road towards the tapeless music studio, Jon puts what is possible with home computers into perspective by leaping first to the top of the chip pile and dissecting the Fairlight Computer Music Instrument – the machine against which all other musical micros must measure themselves.

About ten years ago a trio of Australian computer designers were watching the Sydney harbour hydrofoil skim across the water – they liked its name and called their product after it. And the rest, as they say, is history – but it is also the present and the future.

When reviewing music software it is a great temptation to use the Fairlight CMI as a yardstick to hold against other synthesizers and software. It is such a universal music concept that all other software adopts only parts of its resources.

Not that you are likely to rush out and buy one at over £100,000 for the top of the range. Point being that an overview of the Everest of computer music software and in some cases how the software developed from areas above and below the Fairlight.

The Fairlight was conceived in about 1975 when an Australian, Kim Ryrie, started an Electronics projects magazine. One of them was for a synthesizer and he saw a future in the idea. Things didn't go too well until about 1975 when they met up with a computer consultant called Tony Furse who had been working in the States on manipulating sound waveforms by digital means. The prototype system was ready in about 1977 but it was slow and very expensive. A rethink using the faster RAM chips meant they had more speed and memory at their disposal; which in turn opened the doors to sound sampling. Still two years away from the final launch date, they needed to eat and so diverted their time into producing an Electronic Video Paintbox for TV stations to finance their operations. They also produced hardware and software for Remington Office Machines.

**INFORMATION EXCHANGE**

The Series 1 CMI featured sound sampling and sample manipulation, the original sound synthesis formula taking a bit of a back seat. It made its first appearance at an American trade show in 1979 where, oddly enough, it was considered a clever but not very useful machine.

As interest slowly picked up so the software was updated. The theory being that a Fairlight shouldn't go out of date and neither should it be recognisable by any one sound – in practice that doesn't quite work, but it has been possible to buy additional upgrades to both hardware and software.

As interest slowly picked up so the software was updated. The theory being that a Fairlight shouldn't go out of date and neither should it be recognisable by any one sound – in practice that doesn't quite work, but it has been possible to buy additional upgrades to both hardware and software.

The Fairlight is unusual in that it has always used at least two microprocessors in a dual processing mode; one works on information exchange with the user and the other controls the hardware. It usually uses dual floppy disks with, nowadays, a hard disk option. The software on the Series 2 took up over 300K of memory space which was improved on by using the higher level C language and greater hardware memory.

**WHAT YOU GET**

Although now available in three separate packages and price brackets, your essential Fairlight as it drops onto your kitchen table will consist of one (or two) six-octave velocity-sensing keyboard, a green-and-black super high-resolution VDU, the main CPUs and voice modules and one or two disk drives depending on your budget. The VDU is fitted out with a lightpen to speed things up and which gives you the option of redrawing the various waveforms displayed.

Contributing to the expense of the Fairlight are the specifications for the hardware and power supply which have been deliberately overrated so that it can function in live situations where the power could be less than perfect.

On arrival the Fairlight's memory is empty. It comes with prerecorded library disks of sounds but the intention is that there is not a typical Fairlight sound. Commands to the software are issued through an alphanumeric keyboard or via the lightpen (much quicker). In practice most users build up their own sound library, usually by sampling. It has sockets on the back to accept sound from a microphone, mixer or virtually any other device with sophisticated A to D converters to change the electrical impulses into digital information.

Surprisingly, MIDI was a late addition to its armoury.

Having connected it all together, load up the system disk, which pulls the program in chunks, and you get the main menu from which all the other options may be accessed. Each option is called a Page. Without getting too technical I will now take you on a conducted tour of the pages! There are copious help pages. In fact...
directly into memory by drawing them with the lightpen on the screen. You can even do this by putting dots at various points and the CMI will join them up for you. The advantage is that the harmonics are automatically computed and added – the Fairlight guessing what is required and merging the results.

PAGE 7
Control Page: it allows the user to specify the peripherals of each voice; sustain, level, filtering, attack, vibrato, depth, glissando etc, rather like an analog synth. In fact there are 17 different parameters that can be controlled. Each voice is given its own unique control setting, stored on a separate file but pulled back whenever that voice is loaded. From the controls on the keyboard or by foot pedals these can be adjusted in real time during a performance. Thanks to the multi-processor design it is able to do this whilst playing back sequences. From this page, and in association with pages four and five, looping points can be decided on and any of the 128 segments can be made as a start and end point. Voices are thus stretched or made continuous.

PAGE 8
Sampling – the infamous part of the Fairlight: it is awkward for me to quote the bandwidth, the D to A converters were (and still are) a non-linear system that are now available for most computers. The user specifies the sampling rate to be used with the aid of the help page and sets the peripherals for the hi- and low-pass filters plus the level of the trigger impulse and, maybe if you are using tape or CD, a microsecond delay before the sampling starts. After sampling the sound a graphic display of the waveform tells the user if the sampling details of the sample are correct and allows you to edit with lightpen. After editing the user may recall page two – File Control – and save the voice to disk. Any instrument changes harmonically at different pitches. A sampler is not so clever and although it raises or lowers the pitch according to the note played it does not alter the harmonic content. It does to reproduce, say, an acoustic piano across the keyboard requires several samples which are cross-faded into one another.

PAGE 9
Sequence: it is programmed by playing the music in real-time and records all sorts of information that you would expect: the length is limited by the amount of space left on the disk and with the addition of hard disks the sky could well be the limit. On the Series 2 it could only record eight separate parts. Page 9 requires control decisions to be input such as file/sequence name and playback speed. Parts using the same voice can be merged. This is very similar in performance to the MIDI recorders that are now available for most computers.

PAGE L
Library: this allows the updating of

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PAGE C
Page C loads the Music Composition Language. This is the step-time writing page and has been developed for exact writing, and like all good step-writing programs it is meticulous and at first a bit tedious. It is menu-driven throughout and peripherals such as note values and barlengths can be defined. It works on the familiar principle of creating sequences that can be made into 'parts' and these finally go towards forming the 'piece'. Notes, rests, velocity, voice, octaves etc. can be defined for each note and it is written rather in the manner of program with up to eight lines being written and running simultaneously.

PAGE R
Perhaps the most often used page for music compositions. This was originally written with rhythm patterns in mind and was modeled on the Linn Drum machine pattern writing. The user plays notes in real time which appear as notation on-screen. Adding another few bars to this builds up a sequence. Instruments can be added to this, polyphonically. Up to 250 different patterns can be written and then assembled (chained), any eight patterns can also be linked up to form 26 separate sections (A to Z) and patterns and sections can be mixed together to create a complete piece. The Fairlight corrects any timing inaccuracies by quantization commands although it is often more human to leave in slight inaccuracies to give the music 'feel'. The corrections can be done with the lightpen, moving notes about and changing dynamic levels as required – it is very impressive and very fast to work with. All patterns and sections can be stored away for future use and can be converted to the composition page if you want to do some editing in this mode.

PAGE D
As mentioned before, this is the display page used in conjunction with any of the other pages needing waveform display.

ON THE HOME FRONT
Writing about the Fairlight is not an easy task because there are many upgrades and additions you can make, it is possible to miss out features or find that only some of them use a particular page. For example there are about 50 of the new Series 3 in the country but some of these are actually upgraded Series 2 CMIs – Fairlight were not keen to give too much away about the series 3; in fact I couldn't get any screen shots of it at all.

All the photographs you see are from the Series 2. But what the CMI does today the 16-bit computer does at home tomorrow, as we shall see. Although most of us will never afford such an instrument we can use programs that emulate some of its features.

If you would like to have a go on a Fairlight, there are one or two Universities that open their doors at weekends to the likes of you and me, and companies such as Gateway offer one- or three-day instructional courses (Gateway can be reached on (01) 350 0340).

In the next issue of THE GAMES MACHINE, Jon will be reviewing some 'available' hardware and software, offering some advice on setting up at home, and taking a look at the tapeless music studio.
UNCLE MEL'S TRIVIA QUIZ

1) Which of these titles is a genuine computer game?
   a) Attack Of The Mushroom People
   b) Attack Of The Mutant Camels
   c) Attack Of The Killer Tomatoes

2) Spell PIRAHNA. THALAMAS.

3) True or false:
   a) Virgin's NICK ALEXANDER is the nephew of former Tory Minister NORMAN ST. JOHN-STEVAS
   b) Domark's DOMINIC WHEATLEY is the grandson of black-magic author DENIS WHEATLEY
   c) Activision's ROD COUSENS is a Chinaman


5) How many surrealists does it take to program a computer?

6) Who are STEVE GOLD and BOB SCHIFREEN?

7) Who are DAVID DARLING and RICHARD DARLING, how old are they, how many games have they sold worldwide, and don't they make the rest of us look pathetic?

8) What sort of packaging has THE POWER HOUSE been using for direct sales of Soft And

9) What is a blindfold?
   a) a bony panthynose
   b) a sick bag

10) Who is the boss of KONAMI?
    a) Dolores Del Rio
    b) Leonardo Da Vinci
    c) Luther De Gale

11) How long was Jeff Minter's hair at 12 noon on October 1st 1987?
    a) 13½ inches
    b) 23½ inches
    c) Come out of there with my Walkman

12) What do the first three letters of AMSTRAD stand for?

13) Who does THE GAMES MACHINE's Advertising Manager ROGER BENNETT resemble most?
    a) Norman (get that crucifix outa my face) Tebbit
    b) Valerie (sez a boy's nam een France, rilly) Giscard D'Estaing
    c) Ming the Merciless

14) Who is this well-known choappie?
    a) former Lord Chancellor Hailsham
    b) The Gremlin gremlin
    c) Mr Spock washing his ears

15) Unscramble these beat-'em-ups:
    a) FUNKIER GUY
    b) CUT A HAM

16) How much was a copy of CRASH in February 1984?

17) What is Conan The Barbarian's middle name?

18) What does L.E.D., L.Q.D. and E.L.O. mean?

19) What role have Yul Brynner, Brigitte Helm, Ian Holm, Patricia Roc and Rutger Hauer, played?

20) Okay smartypants, name the films in which they played it

ANSWERS

Cuddly?
   a) a blindfold
   b) nylon parntyhouse
   c) a sick bag

JOOLS HOLLAND?

13) Who does THE GAMES MACHINE's Advertising Manager ROGER BENNETT resemble most?
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NEXT (AND LAST) BI-MONTH

Now that you've been satiated by Issue Two of THE GAMES MACHINE, and hopefully have that same warm snuggly feeling that you get after a good meal, it should be said that it is time to gird your loins and ready yourself for the next point of ecstasy in your life . . .


Firstly, next month will be filled to overflowing with informative and revealing reviews of games for both 8-bit and 16-bit machines (and 32-bit if anyone comes out with another game for the Archimedes). Marines Lester and Martin Coxhead follow on from this issue's Robots In Video with a synthetic look at Cyborgs And Androids (if we can shuffle them in between all the reviews).

Martyn Lester and Martin Coxhead follow on from this issue's Robots In Video with a synthetic look at Cyborgs And Androids (if we can shuffle them in between all the reviews).

Getting out the Inseed and turps, Robin Candy will be doing another spot of pixel pointilism with Deluxe Paint II from Electronic Arts.

Reviews for both 16-bit and 8-bit games will feature heavily with our usuals will be in Issue Three. Role Playing with John Woods, Adventure with Rob Steel, Competitions, Music from John Bates and Mel Croucher from . . . Mel Croucher.

Plus some games review for both 8-bit and 16-bit machines . . .

ISSUE THREE IS ON SALE FROM 21 JANUARY, AND THEREAFTER EVERY MONTH

ADVERTISERS INDEX

Activision 20,40,41,56,57,62
   63,102,103

Advance Systems 13

Audiogenic 4

Britannia Software 78

Cambrian 130

Codemasters 135

D&H Games 47

Domark 25,26,27

E.A. 9

Electronic Arts 48,49,51

Euromax 111

Gremlin Graphics 2,3,6

Harwoods 88

Incentive B/C

Imagine 11,85

Jade 81

KJC 96

Konix 36

Lem 87

Thalamus 14

Tynesoft 12,101

US Gold 33,72,131,142,147

Verran 130

Video Vault 87,117

Imagine 11,85

Jade 81

KJC 96

Konix 36

Lem 87

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Acid puddles, forcefields and moving exits make your progress all the more difficult. But there are mystical amulets to be gained which will enhance your powers to repel the monsters, walk through walls or increase your fire power. You may even move some of the maze walls to your advantage. Gauntlet II is not just a further episode in this enthralling crusade, it is a whole new experience in action packed adventure.

The mind blowing sequel to the No.1 smash hit!

Over 100 levels of pulsating action at you take on the powers of your favourite playfield, even if they're already top play. Discover the hidden pits of the Secret Room, come face to face with the fearsome Dragon and watch out for the Death Curse of the evil "IT". Stem utilise, acid puddles, forcefields and moving exits make your progress all the more difficult. But there are mystical amulets to be gained which will enhance your powers to repel the monsters, walk through walls or increase your fire power. You may even move some of the maze walls to your advantage. Gauntlet II is not just a further episode in this enthralling crusade, it is a whole new experience in action packed adventure.

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