



GX4000

AMSTRAD

Historical Amstrad GX4000 magazine advertisements and reviews collection.

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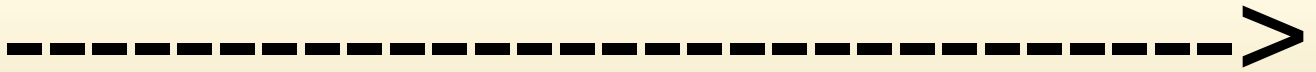
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Amstrad adverts





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The console comes complete with a mains adaptor and two paddle control units designed to put you in the driving seat. Which is where you'll need to be with the ROM cartridge that comes free: the high-

speed car game "Burnin' Rubber". But perhaps the most exciting thing about the Amstrad GX4000 is the price, a very down to earth £99.00.

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La GX 4000, c'est une nouvelle génération de consoles. En plus de son look d'enfer, ses performances sont éclatantes : 64 Ko de mémoire, un son dément, 32 couleurs parmi 4096... une technique qui assure un max. Des tas de jeux sont déjà disponibles sur cartouche



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La nouvelle console de jeux Amstrad GX 4000 est livrée complète, avec ses 2 manettes de jeux, le cordon de raccordement à la prise PériTel, et un jeu de simulation de course automobile - Burnin Rubber - sur cartouche.

AMSTRAD - FRANCE - HALUSOWSKI





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GX 4000

Boom! Les mordus de la console s'éclatent sur la GX 4000: imaginez 64 Ko de mémoire, un son stéréo dément, 32 couleurs parmi 4096, 2 manettes de jeux, cordon Péritel pour brancher sur la TV, et une cartouche de jeu Burning Rubber. La GX 4000 est détonnante de performances.

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 la console de jeux GX 4000, les cartouches AMSTRAD.

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CPC 37

Publisher adverts



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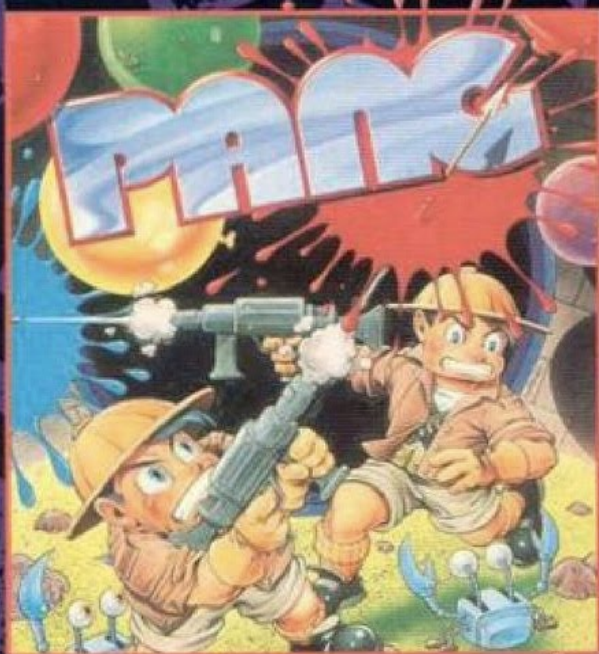
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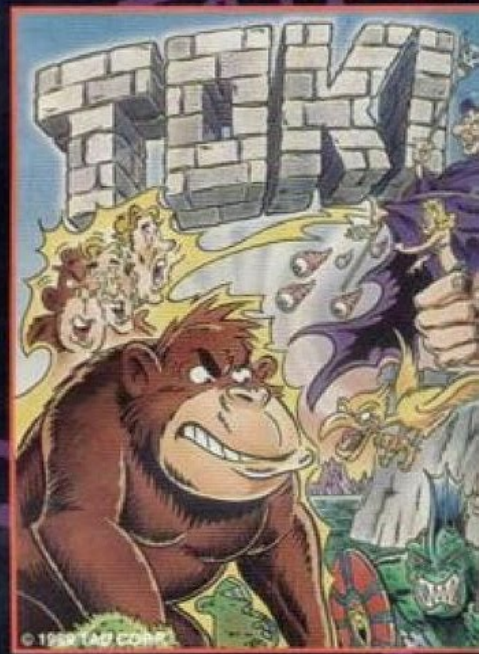
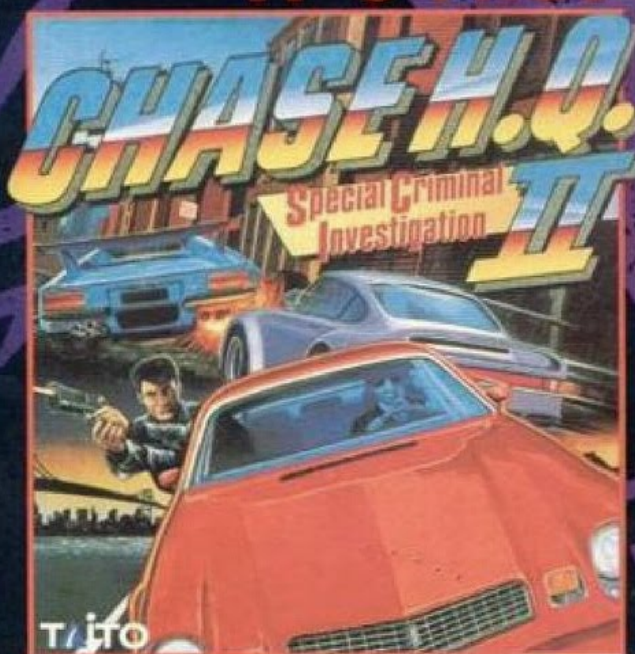
464 PLUS . 612

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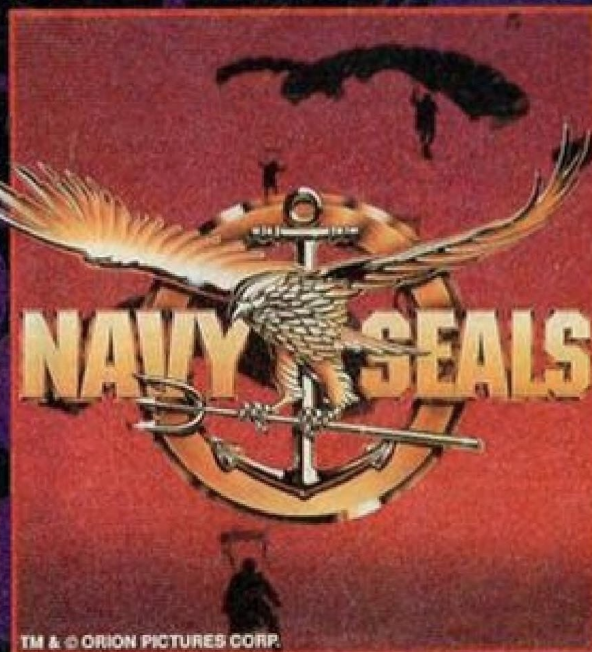


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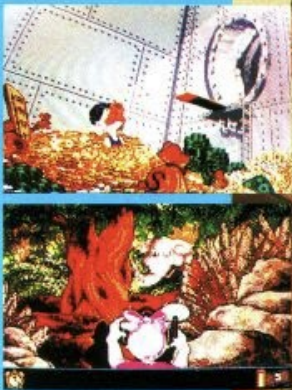
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DICK TRACY

THIS TIME THEY'RE OUT TO GET HIM!

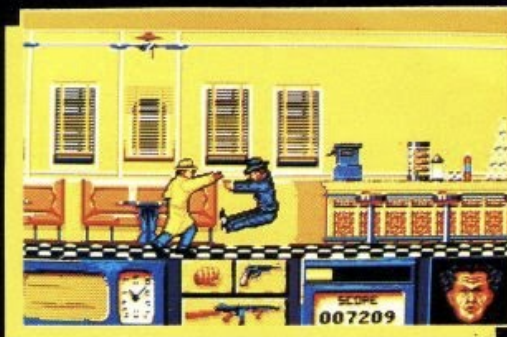
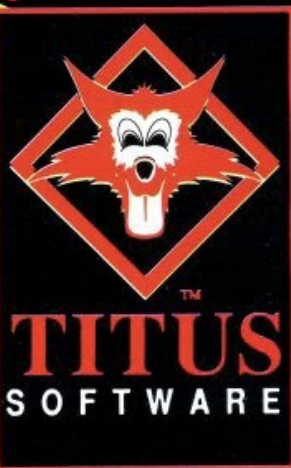
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magazine reviews



TINTIN ON THE MOON

INFOGRAMES ■ £24.99 cartridge

Remember Tintin? That loveable little rascal with the stupid dog and the ridiculous quiff? A few minutes of cartoon preceded by a ten minute explanation of what happened in the previous episodes? The diabolical game we reviewed on the CPC quite some time ago?

Infogrames' rather odd licence finally makes it onto cartridge, but will instant loading and enhanced hardware features make any difference?

Tintin is a pretty unlucky little chap. While most boys his age are playing footie or snogging girlfriends, Tintin is getting into scrapes with vicious criminals. This time things are even worse than usual. Tintin is about to be launched into space on a perilous mission to the moon.

The evil Colonel Boris has planted bombs on Tintin's rocket, and taken several people prisoner. Your job, as Tintin, is to rescue all of these prisoners, and to defuse the bombs.

The game starts with you flying a rocket into the screen and into deep space. The object of this section is to avoid the asteroids and pick up the energy restoring crystals. You must collect eight red spheres to continue to the next stage.

Once all eight red spheres have been picked up, Tintin suddenly finds himself out of the drivers seat and in the midst of the action. Guide Tintin through a platform-filled screen, defusing bombs and rescuing prisoners. Instead of jumping, Tintin has the ability to turn off the ship's artificial gravity, allowing him to float to otherwise inaccessible platforms.

On his way around the many screens that make up the rocket, Tintin



● Tintin accidentally (honest) unleashes a volley of fire extinguisher foam on the hapless and helpless professor.

will have to put out a number of fires, but first he has to find the extinguisher. This extinguisher can also be used as a weapon against the baddies roaming the rocket.

To complete this level, Tintin has to put out all of the fires, rescue all of the prisoners, and capture the dastardly Colonel Boris. Boris is a tricky guy to recognise, never mind capture. When you do spot the shifty looking sucker, you have to sneak up behind him and jump him. Tintin obviously has no sense of honour or fair play. Still, Boris is a nasty crim and he deserves whatever he gets.

The final section is the moon landing. In this bit, you have to regulate the speed of the rocket's engine, and ensure a safe and smooth landing. If this section is handled well enough, you should plop down on the moon's surface quite nicely. All of your remaining energy at this point will be converted into score. Now you can do it all over again...

The main problem with Tintin and you might think this a minor niggle, is that it is DUFF!



● Tintin lies injured on the floor, below him, the nasty bad guy floats in zero G.

SECOND OPINION
 "Tintin had little to recommend it in the tape version, and has even less going for it on cartridge. No improvements have been made, and consequently the game is as dire as it ever was"
 Adam Waring



● Tintin is dead! That big nasty man with the gun has wasted our curiously quiffed hero. Even Snowy can't save him now.



● Uh oh, Tintin has forgotten to pay his gravity bill. As a result the Gravity Board have cut him off and zero-G chaos ensues!

The game has very few saving graces, in fact its only good point is a nice intro sequence, which is well drawn and nicely animated (and completely misleading).

The gameplay is mind-numbingly tedious, the first section being a bore of truly historical significance. In fact, the first section is simple to the point of stupidity, and serves only to delay the start of the actual game. Once reached, the limitations of the platform section soon become evident.

The whole rocket section seems pointless and dull, and it is very easy to complete.

The presentation graphics are lovely, and so it is a disappointment to discover the actual game screens. The graphics on all levels are chunky, garish and very confusing.

The price point of 25 quid is outrageous, especially for a game which shows no noticeable improvement over its tape-based predecessor. This program should be avoided at all costs.



Frank

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Complete the game!

TINTIN ON THE MOON VERDICT

GRAPHICS 61%
 When they aren't bland, they're garish. Very poor for the most part.

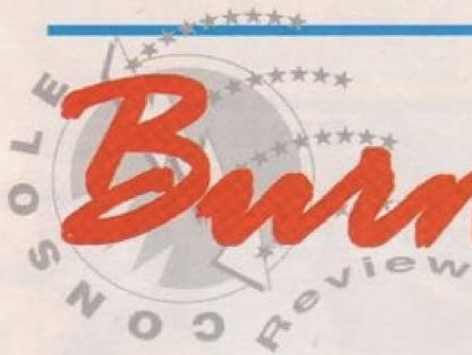
SONICS 75%
 Decent tunes and spot fx do little to improve, er, atmosphere.

GRAB FACTOR 53%
 Limited interest initially, marred by pointless and frustrating first section.

STAYING POWER ... 40%
 Dull and easy, the kiss of death for any game, especially this one.

RATING 47%

If Tintin isn't your number one idol, then don't cross the street to buy this one.



Burnin' Rubber

Ocean ★ Free with GX4000 console and Plus machines

The first Amstrad cartridge game is here!

Ocean's *Burnin' Rubber* comes free with the GX4000 console, the 464 Plus and the 6128 Plus.

And the verdict? It is absolutely stunning! For the full review, read on...

When you've finished admiring your new Console and pretending it's something out of *Stingray*, you are ready to play *Burnin' Rubber* the first ever Amstrad console game. Could this be the start of a new era of gaming?

First, big, wonderful difference: there's no sitting and looking at loading screens; plug in the cartridge and instantly you're there. All set? Then it's race time!

What you drive is a bright red Le Mans-style racing car, a machine capable of over 200mph in the right hands and the world's most expensive shunt in the wrong ones. Your job is to tackle a twisting race circuit and about twelve other cars. Be warned when you try to pass these, though; as in the real thing, not all sportsmen are sports...

First of all, though, you must qualify for the big race. This is done on a small circuit with right-hand bends only. The speeds are very high, and there are other cars on the track trying to qualify too. Still, if you keep your clog down and don't crash, you gain a place on the grid. Don't expect pole position first time round, though. Spectacular slides and excursions onto the grass will lose you valuable



split-seconds, while collisions with the scenery or other cars will either send you careering into a spin or cartwheeling down the track, depending on how fast you hit them.

Unless your name is Nigel Mansell, you will probably be buried in the middle of the pack on the starting grid after qualifying. No problem - there's a long, long race ahead. For all the cars you overtake on the way, though, there are always more ahead of you. Funny, that. Anyway, you must cast all such thoughts from your mind and concentrate as the lights change and you all screech off towards the mountains.

The other cars' initial acceleration is better

than yours, so they remain in front, but once you hit a ton you start to overhaul them. The swines tend to hug the inside of the curves so you often have to overtake them whilst clinging desperately to the last few inches of tarmac on the outside of some ferocious bends.

A fair amount of bumping and shoving goes on between the cars, but it's best to avoid this since it loses you speed - you can even be knocked into a spin. And if you do decide to visit the surrounding scenery, your speed is reduced dramatically, as the car thrashes its way over the grass. There is a lot of roadside furniture, such as billboards, streetlamps, flagpoles and trees. Hitting any of these at great speed results in an incredible tumble end over

end. You can drive away from these crashes, though - in fact the car can't be harmed at all, and never needs maintenance or fuel. (It's probably Japanese.)

Crashing may be safe, but the time it costs is crucial. You see to stay in the race you have to reach special checkpoints situated every few miles within a tight time limit. Seconds remaining are displayed at the top of the screen, but don't spend too long staring or you'll end up cartwheeling through the scenery.

That's basically the aim of the game - to stay in the race as long as possible. It is possible to drive so well on earlier stages that you build up a reserve of time, but one bad smash, and it's gone. And those time limits get tougher and tougher the longer you race.

Burnin' Rubber looks amazing. The increased number of colours on screen compared to the old CPC give apparently increased resolution and much more subtle shading. The cars are very detailed, especially your red machine. It looks mean from behind, but it's worth crashing or spinning out a few times just

to see the side and front views!

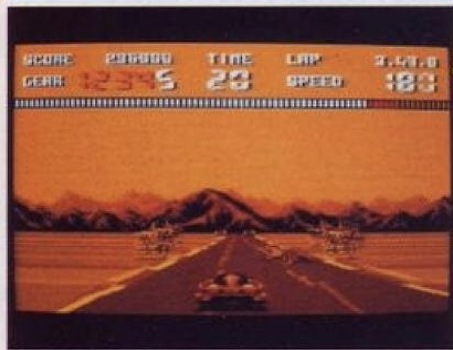
The objects that flash past at the sides of the track are also superbly drawn. The almost obligatory Amstrad and Ocean ad hoardings are seen, along with many other interesting and graphically brilliant items. The 3D scrolling is smooth, too.

Perhaps the most spectacular thing about the graphics, though, are the changing colours. Your

increased number of colours on screen compared to the old CPC give apparently increased resolution and much more subtle shading. The cars are very detailed, especially your red machine. It looks mean from behind, but it's worth crashing or spinning out a few times just



● Scorch past those slow-coach stragglers.



● Sunset on the open road.



● Mistakes certainly get you airborne!

progress isn't measured solely by tightening time limits and escalating points.

As the race goes on, it begins to get dark!

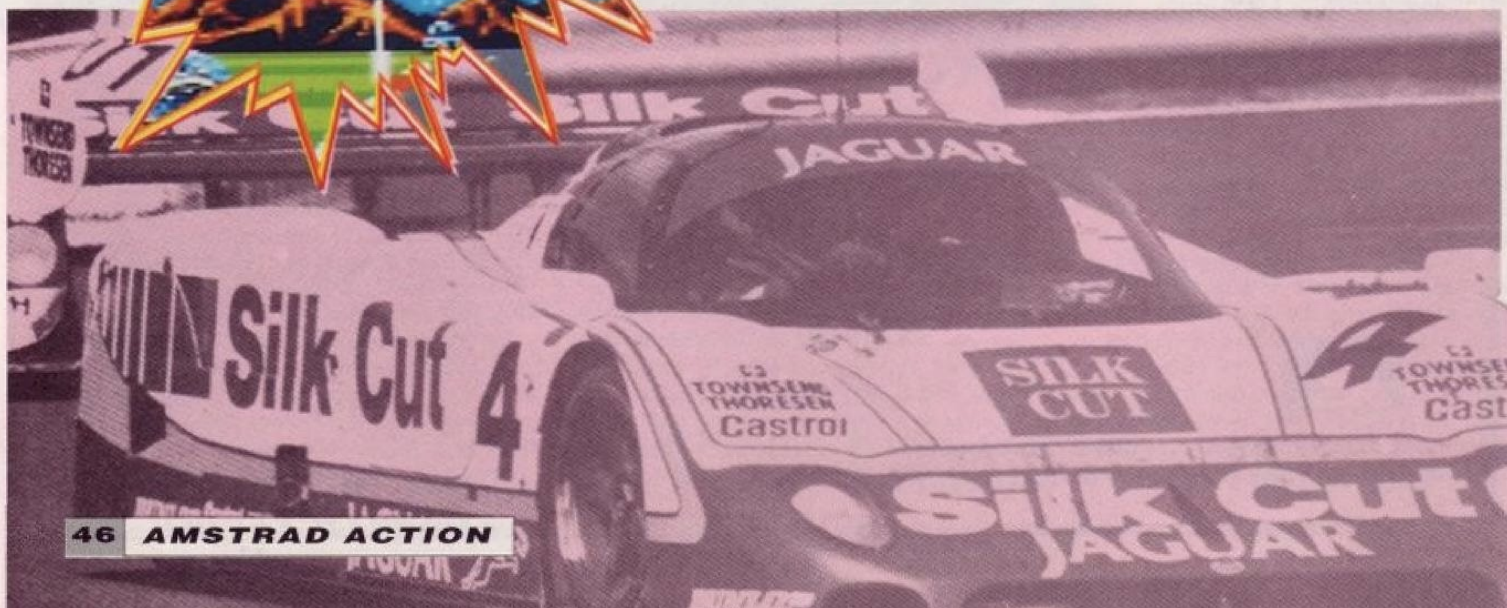
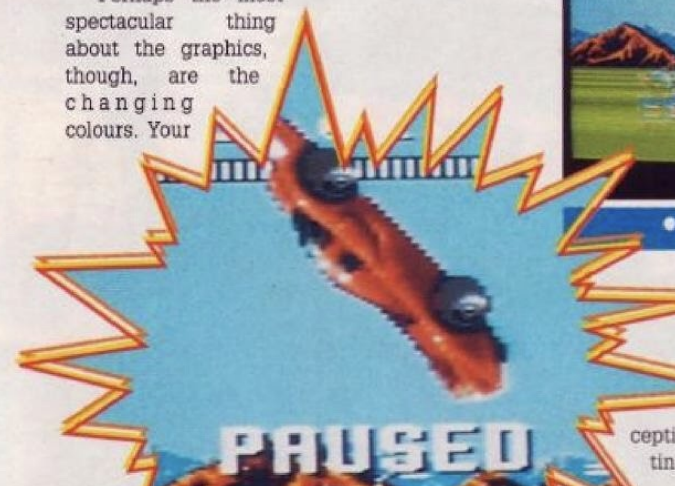
Slowly, almost imperceptibly, the sky takes on a reddish tinge, the landscape darkens and

twilight advances - just like the 24-hour Le Mans race, *Burnin' Rubber* goes on through the night! The colours are shown off beautifully when, during the race, dusk falls. A sunset of which Turner would be proud settles across the land as the cars move swiftly through the gloaming. The light fades gradually into a wonderfully atmospheric blue-black night.

As you race, you encounter hills, dips and tunnels. There are lights inside these tunnels to show you the way, but the walls are a lot harder than the grass verges outside, and you can lose precious seconds as your bodywork scrapes a shower of sparks from the concrete as you overcook a bend. Other hazards include crashed opponents sitting helpless in the road, or veering in front of you after striking each other glancing blows.

Once the basic controls have been mastered, the game becomes very playable indeed - if you don't like the standard controls, you can change them on an option screen right at the start of the game. Collision detection is good, perhaps slightly generous; your car can squeeze through gaps that will have you sucking in your breath. This adds to the fun, especially as the bumping and barging causes sparks to fly off the cars.

Roadholding is good, with the car sliding noisily towards the verge and giving you plenty of warning if you are going too fast. Skidding sounds are heard, and plumes of smoke spin off the tyres.



Unfortunately, the sound is not quite up to the same high standard. The option screen has a jolly tune playing. The car has a thin staccato sound which rises and falls with the revs. The skid noises are recognisable, but the crashes sound like a toy car being thrown down some stairs. The sounds do not really detract from the game, but they don't exactly add anything to it either.

And having to qualify before each race gets a little tedious, but you soon learn the best route to take and it's good to see your lap times improving.

Apart from the sound, the only quibble is the Sega-like hand controller. Confirmed joystick users will not be too impressed by its size and the initial vagueness of its direction control, but it gets better with practice. It's also possible to use a standard joystick with *Burnin' Rubber*, but since these only have one Fire button the car needs to be set up with automatic gears. So if you want to drive a real racing car, persevere with the paddle!

Overall, it's a hell of a start for the console. An incredible game to see and to play. And as the machine's capabilities are bound to be stretched even further in the future, we can look forward to some wicked, wicked games!

James Leach



● "Burnin' Rubber" past a checkpoint.



● At 188mph, the tunnels require steel nerves...



VERDICT

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE
300,000 points

GRAPHICS 100 %
(Well, had to be, didn't it!)

SONICS 60 %

GRAB FACTOR 71 %

STAYING POWER 96 %

AA RATING 92 %

The shape of things to come.

THE SPECTACULAR WORLD OF SPORTS CAR RACING...

Dangerous and glamorous. The Le Mans 24-hour race has come to be seen as the ultimate example of, well, driving very fast at night with people watching.

The race was originally to test the reliability and quality of motor cars, but as more dosh was spent on the cars, they became less and less like the road models. The lack of manufacturing restrictions meant that in 1955 cars capable of 180mph rocketed past 745cc buggies doing about 50. Inevitably a major crash occurred, and very nasty it was too. Eighty-two people lost their lives.

Since then, safety standards have increased along with the speeds. Porsche dominated the sport in the '70s with their mega 917 cars. These were capable of 260mph, and reached 60mph in 2.2 seconds. The driver would need to be peeled off the seat after a race.

German supremacy continued with the

unbeatable Mercedes in the eighties, but in 1990 Jaguar won! The plucky British lads with the best car ever thrashed everyone with ease and came in both first and second! And Mercedes? Er, actually they didn't take part.



In a word: brilliant! If you've never had the pleasure of an encounter with Drax before, don't waste any more time. Go out and get this brilliant arcade adventure and start running him to ground right now.

At the end of the first Barbarian outing, the warriors of Drax were ousted by our hero and the Princess Mariana was freed from Drax's evil spell. However, the bad guy himself managed to do a disappearing act into his dungeons.

As a result, you must choose to play as either Barbarian or Mariana and go get him. Set over four breathtaking levels, the first three maze-like scenarios must be played in order, before you can confront Drax in person.



Barbarian II

It was good on the disc and cassette, so how does it rate on the cartridge?



Starting off with five lives, the beasts form a formidable army for the novice, so make sure you collect any life giving skulls you find along the way. These are the remains of the warriors who went before you. Be warned!

If you happen to find the exit to a level before you have collected all of the available magical objects, a warning light will flash. At this point, the best thing to do is to get a pencil and make a note of where the exit is, before heading back into hot water to get your wares.

Having survived the first three deadly levels, your next adversary is the dreaded Living Idol, a Giant Demon. Survive that and it's on to Drax himself. It's all up to you. Good luck.

Barbarian II is a stunning example of an arcade adventure, featuring some superb backdrops and atmospheric sound effects.

Some of the monsters are truly hair-raising and, although many of them can be dealt with by one swift chop, try experimenting with the

more complicated combat moves, as these will earn you valuable bonus points.

If you do happen to win through as either Barbarian or Mariana, try it with the other character and see how well you do in this excellent offering. Jam-packed with variety, Barbarian II will have you on the edge of your seats at all times. Go to it, Barbie!

Jim Johnson

The three levels consist of the Wasteland, the Caverns and the Dungeons, each containing around 28 confusing screens. Keep your eye firmly on the compass at the bottom of the screen, or you could find yourself wandering around in circles for some time.

On each level, there are six underworld beasts to see

off, and two magical items that need to be collected if you want to stand any chance of doing away with Drax at the end.

So, make sure you've mastered the complex fighting manoeuvres and be prepared to meet up with the likes of the Saurian Beasts, the Giant Grubs and the Slithering things on your quest.

ROUND-UP			
NAME	Barbarian II		
FROM	Ocean	PRICE	Cartridge £24.99
88%	89%	92%	
GRAFFIX	SONIX	PLAYABILITY	VERDICT

Fire & Forget II



Titus ★ £29.95

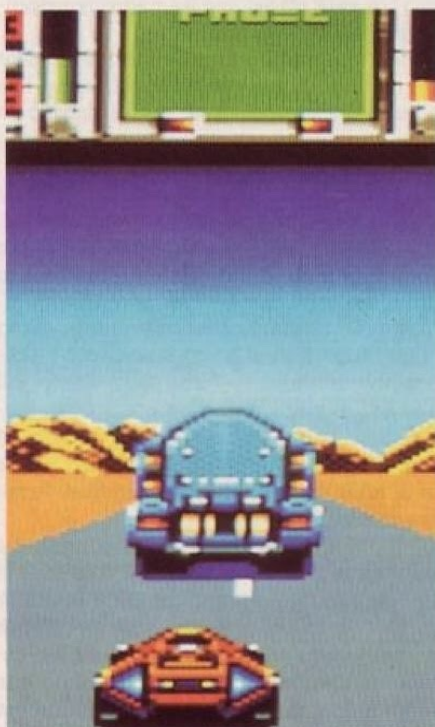


This is it! The first console game (apart from *Burnin' Rubber*) to fall into our grubby little mitts! Eagerly we plugged it into the console. An incredible screen instantly appeared, then, unable to contain our collective excitement we went straight into the game (no tiresome loading or waiting anymore!)

It's another 3D driving game, but a very different one to *Burnin' Rubber*, the game bundled with the GX4000 console. You're on a winding road, heading at 240mph towards the city of Megapolis. The reason is clear; a dangerous group of terrorists has decided to gate-crash the Third International Conference for Peace, being held in the city. It's almost a pity to try and stop them; these Peace conferences are so boring. But anyway, stop them you must, and you have a pretty potent weapon to help you.

You're commanding the Thunder Master II. It's a car. No, it's a plane. No, it's both. Whatever it is, it certainly has 850 horsepower, and is able to convert itself into a genuine airborne attacker, equipped with both ionic phasers and a missile launcher. You'll need both to stop the terrorist convoy from livening up the Conference.

Flying and driving this beast is easy. Unlike *Burnin' Rubber*, you can't come off the road, so



● What a target! But the tanker is well armoured.



you can cruise at speeds approaching those of Royals on the M4. There are a great many technologically advanced opponents who must be avoided or destroyed. The ionic blaster, button one on the joystick, is fine for blasting most of the nasties, but for heavy duty firepower, you can press buttons one and two simultaneously. This launches a missile, which homes in on the biggest target in front of you.

The variety of enemies which confront you is amazing. There are dozens of different machines, any one of which could theoretically destroy you. Destroying some of the enemy is a formality, because they are pretty hopeless at evasion techniques. Others are evil to the core, and might be armoured heavily enough to take almost all you can throw. Perseverance and



brute force will see them reduced to blackened lumps of steel, though.

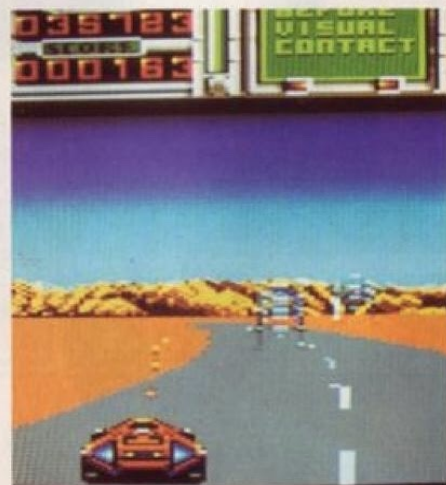
Many of the terrorist craft are airborne, and in order to kill them you must leave the ground too. Press button two and the car lifts off, if you're going fast enough. You only have a limited flying time, so it's best not to linger in the sky for too long. All the weapons systems operate in the same way, but the battle is now in a third dimension.

If you avoid the road mines and destroy the droid craft buzzing in your direction, you get to have a crack at an end-of-level guardian. This is a large, well-armoured truck, which will absorb your worst efforts for quite a while. Keep at it, though and *boom* - destruction, and on to stage two.

You're getting nearer to the city now. You can see it on the horizon. The terrorists are upping their efforts to stop you intercepting their nuclear warhead. This is the firework they are planning to let off at the party. And they are very determined to do it. The hard-



● Take out those annoying droids with quick bursts of your ionic gun thingy.



● Oh, the open road. But there's trouble up ahead.

ware ranged against you is getting larger and more sophisticated, and your flying and driving skills had better be up to it. It is safer to fly for much of the way, but you must be quick to dive and cash in on extra fuel pods and missiles situated on the road. Running out of fuel is the most ignominious way of ending your mission.

Fire and Forget II is a thoroughbred arcade game. Everything about it smacks of coin-op. If you aren't careful, you'll be trying to put 20p pieces into the ports of your console to get another game.

The introductory screen is excellent. During the break between stages, the leader of the terrorists appears, and taunts you for not killing him (yet). It's another great piece of artwork, and fires you up even more to go and get him.

The game's graphics are as fast and as smooth as *Burnin' Rubber*. You see the back and occasionally the sides of your Thunder Master II as you manoeuvre, avoiding the enemy craft - which whizz towards you with a great sense of speed and realism. The cartridge system appears to be excellent at displaying large, beautifully detailed sprites with amazing speed. And there are so many of them! As you progress through the levels, it seems as if you are meeting a different set of enemy vehicles with each encounter.

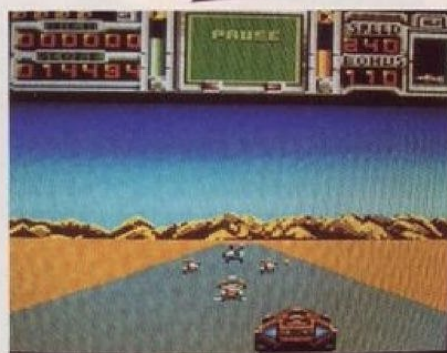
As with many coin-ops there is a tune which burbles to itself quite happily. It's fine. It's not intrusive and detracts nothing. The game sounds are excellent. Decent noises for the car, and the terrorist craft and the violence. There's also some nice stereo effects to be heard on the new monitors. Check it out.

The difficulty is pitched just right. It's possible to progress at a satisfactory rate, without finding things too easy. You can tailor your playing style to suit your temperament. Survival by avoidance is not as much fun as wanton, indiscriminate violence, though! The joypad is perfectly acceptable as a control method, and the ability to use fire button one, two, or both together adds quite a few possibilities for the firing of different weapons.

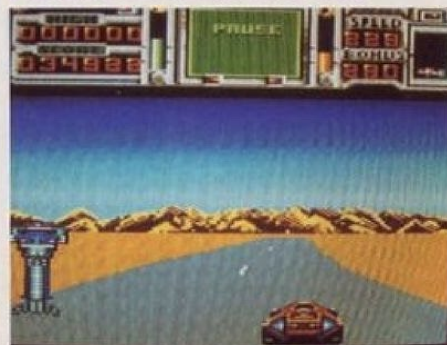
So, overall, the first cartridge game we've seen is a good 'un. It isn't a revolutionary idea for a game, nor does it have the imagination of many current and recent software releases, but it plays beautifully and it looks good.

The only thing left to worry about is the price. Nearly £30 is one hell of a lot compared to the £15 or so of traditional disk-based CPC software. But if that's the price you gotta pay for console games, that's the price you gotta pay!

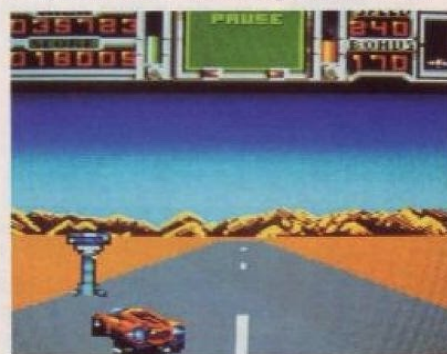
James 'Fired and Forgotten' Leach



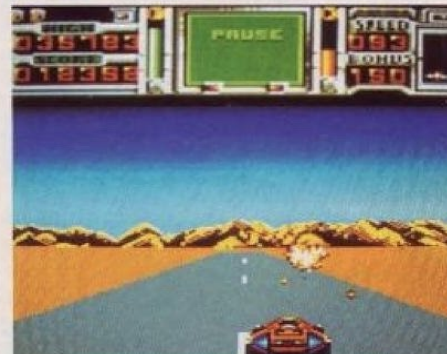
● All sorts of small nasties litter the roads.



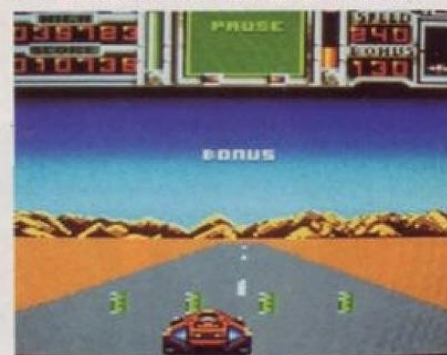
● And robot laser towers stand guard at the sides.



● So head for them and fire at will.



● In fact, destroy anything you see whizzing past.



● But collect the fuel or missile units in the road.

★ **VERDICT**

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE
Get to Level Two

GRAPHICS 88 %

SONICS 84 %

GRAB FACTOR 84 %

STAYING POWER 82 %

AA RATING 94 %

A race-em-up with violence!



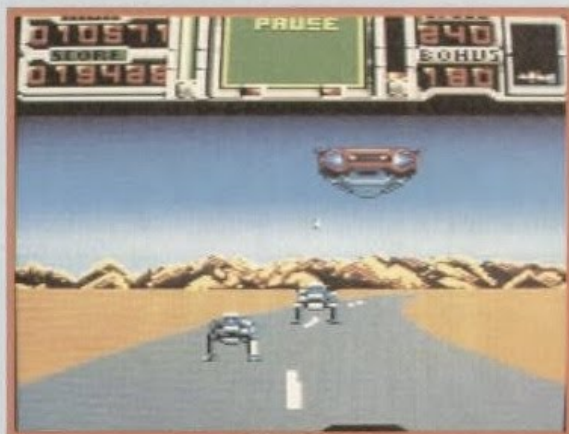
REVIEW



▲ Hooray! But will you have the interest to try the next level?

WATCH YOUR FUEL

The Thundermaster II might be the most wicked mega-powered four-wheeled vehicle of doom, but it doesn't half guzzle petrol. A fuel gauge ticks down whenever the car is moving, and if it reaches zero you lose a life. How do you keep going? Easy - you just run over the fuel canisters that appear after you've destroyed certain baddies!



▲ Blobby jobbies go wobbly in Dobby!

AMSTRAD COMMENT



JULIAN

I played Sega Fire and Forget II first, and had high hopes for this - after all the GX4000 console features a load of hardware chips, and therefore this version should be even better! However, all I can say is the programmers couldn't have used them - this version is dire in the extreme. The scrolling is jerky, the car moves and responds like a badly crippled slug, the road update is juddery and unconvincing, and most of the sprites look like marauding blue cabbages. All these factors piled together make for a game that's about as much fun as having your teeth pulled out. In fact the only good thing I've got to say is that GX4000 software surely can't get any worse than this.

VIVA LA DIFFERENCE

Fire and Forget II is one of the first games to be simultaneously launched on two consoles, in this case the Sega Master System and Amstrad GX4000. The basic plot and the way the game works is the same on both machines, but the actual execution is very different on both versions. The Sega comments and ratings are on this page, and overleaf are the GX4000 comments and ratings - check 'em both and see what we mean.



BY: TITUS

PRICE: £24.99

RELEASE DATE: NOV

GAME DIFFICULTY: MED/HARD

LIVES: 6

CONTINUES: 2

SKILL LEVELS: 1

RESPONSIVENESS: VERY FAST



PRESENTATION 75%

Crummy title screen, a few in-game screens, but no options.

GRAPHICS 43%

Rubbish sprites, jerky scrolling and dreadful 3D update.

SOUND 71%

Pretty good tunes and fairly good effects.

PLAYABILITY 37%

The unbelievably sluggish controls and dreadful visuals make playing this a chore.

LASTABILITY 21%

Completing the game is hard, but it's so bad you won't even want to bother.

OVERALL 33%

An utterly dreadful game in every respect. Even if you're desperate, wait for better GX4000 games to come along.

AMSTRAD COMMENT



MATT

Deary me, what an awful effort to be one of the very first Amstrad games! This is so much worse than the Sega game, it could (and probably should) be a different game. The scrolling's atrocious, the road doesn't meet the horizon, and the steering is very slow to respond. Amstrad GX4000 Fire and Forget II delivers an insipid, two-dimensional challenge that'll have you nodding off in a matter of minutes. One to be avoided like the plague, methinks.



Switchblade



Hiro is the last of the Bladeknights, a trained warrior with a hi-tech re-programmable cyber-arm which can accept any number of different and ever more destructive weapons. He can also kick and punch hard enough to demolish

walls and leap huge distance with one thrust of his mighty limbs. He's also about three feet tall, shaped like a seven-year-old Schwarzenegger and wears his cap back to front. We won't worry about that, though.

Needless to say, Hiro has a rather important task to perform. Namely, to rid the world of Thraxx of the evil Havok, who has dominated the world since the shattering of the Fireblade (you are paying attention, aren't you?). As Hiro, you must explore the Undercity beneath the surface of Thraxx, battling Havok's evil and ghastly minions and assembling the bits of the Fireblade so that you can use it against the evil geek himself.

OK, never mind the scenario, let's get cracking...

oh, is that it? Hmm, click past the opening text screens and your first glimpse of the game itself is worrying. Um, the graphics only take up half the screen, and, er, there's only one colour, if you don't count black and white...

Yes, well, let's not worry about the graphics for a moment - what does it play like? Well, Hiro's a game little chap. Admittedly, there's no great urgency about his walk - more like

somebody pushing a trolley around Waitrose than battling his way to a confrontation with an evil megalomaniac. However, he is nimble enough in a tight corner, delivering devastating low kicks, high kicks and punches on demand and leaping huge gaps (with an appropriate run-up).

You start out on the surface of Thraxx and can travel either left or right. Left will take you - via a nasty creature and some nasty flames - to a hole in the ground you don't see until you step onto it (depending on whether you can step on something that only exists because it isn't there, er,

plement of vitality. If he gets hit by a monster, though, his vitality bar starts shrinking. When it gets to zero, he loses a life. To combat the various monsters he'll encounter, Hiro can deliver low kicks, high kicks and punches. It all depends on how long you keep the Fire button pressed. Let it go almost immediately and Hiro delivers a jab to the forehead. Keep it pressed a moment longer and he launches a boot at the



● Get that heart! It's extra energy and you need it.

um...). Suddenly you're in a different - underground - world. So this is where all the colours are! Yup, once you're underground, *Switchblade* suddenly looks a whole lot better.

Hiro starts out with five lives and a full com-

HAZARDS AND ENEMIES

	Flames 0 points		Flamehoop Savage armoured boar men, carrying arm mounted flame throwers. 300 Points.
	Proximity sensing floor spikes 0 points		Kobras Merciless robot snakes with venomous hypodermic fangs. 300 Points.
	Bladeballs 0 points		Striders Hideous robotic war machines armed with high voltage electric stings. 300 Points.
	Spikelice Mutant insectoids covered with poison tipped spikes. 60 points.		Mansnakes Fierce cybernetically enhanced serpent men armed with powerful mechanical claws. 100 Points.
	Cybats Lethal bat creatures that strike with blade claws. 100 Points.		Razorbe Robot orbs bristling with spinning blades. 350 Points.
	Spiderbe Wall climbing robot sentries. 100 Points.		Reptiles Powerful lizard men that rely upon pure strength as their only weapon. 250 Points.
	Cresthede Armoured mutant warriors that fight with razor sharp wrist knives. 200 Points.		Scorpoid Robot scorpion creatures with spinning blade stings. 250 Points.



● Hmm - bit of a sticky wicket here. You can knock off that Mansnake next to you, but you'll take a lot of damage going down the ladder to the next...



● ...But if you kick that wall in, lo and behold! - a whole new room and an easy way round. Always look out for small wall blocks showing extra detail to the others...



● ...Now you can just go back and kick that other Mansnake's head in - at no personal risk to yourself, too. There are a number of little puzzles like this to be solved with a little extra thought.



VERDICT

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Find three Fireblade bits

GRAPHICS 96 %

SONICS 86 %

GRAB FACTOR 81 %

STAYING POWER 93 %

AA RATING 94 %

Huge, and so playable!



enemy's visage, keep it pressed until your 'kickometer' (bottom of the screen) reaches maximum and you can kick the other guy's legs off. Brilliant!

Switchblade is basically a *Rick Dangerous*-style game, where you must explore the underground corridors, avoiding traps and dealing with various nasties on the way. Unlike *Rick Dangerous*, however, you can't actually 'see' a room until you go into it. So, as you're exploring, you really are in the dark – and that adds a great deal to the game. *Switchblade* doesn't have *Rick's* humour, either, or its range of puzzles, but it makes up for it with a wide variety of evil beasts and a whole host of collectable



1. Now you've got a problem – how do you get that bit of the Fireblade, top right?



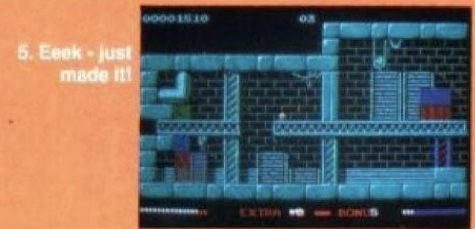
2. Well, how about if you start off by jumping on that thar packing case?



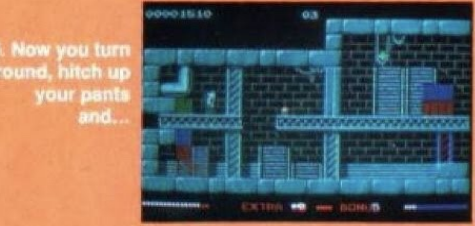
3. OK, now you can jump onto the next one – we're getting there...



4. Grasping your courage in both hands you leap into space...



5. Eeek - just made it!



6. Now you turn round, hitch up your pants and...



7. ...Whoosh...



8. Made it! All you've got to do now is repeat that trick with the packing cases...



9. ...and Bob's yer uncle!

weapons and bonuses. Given this range of weapons and opponents, *Switchblade* is as much a kick-em-up as an exploration game, but some of those puzzles are really very subtle, particularly as you can come at many of them from different directions.

If *Switchblade's* graphics take a while to

impress, the same can be said of the gameplay. It starts off seeming a bit easy and shallow, but gradually escalates into a very impressive and challenging game indeed. In terms of size, it's a monster. With a total of over 150 screens to explore, you're talking about one huge game area.

The graphics themselves really are very good indeed. Although it's all in four-colour mode, the programmers have used split-screen techniques to bump up the colour count right from the start. And there are enough hardware sprites in there masquerading as background detail to push up the number of on-screen colours to nearer twenty than four. Combine that with the high resolution of Mode 1 and you've got a console game that looks like it's playing on a 16-bit. (In fact, although the ST version's sprites are better, the Amstrad's backgrounds are miles ahead of the 16-bit machine's!)

The soundtrack plays continuously, and is original and listenable. There are no sound effects, but that doesn't take much away from the game.

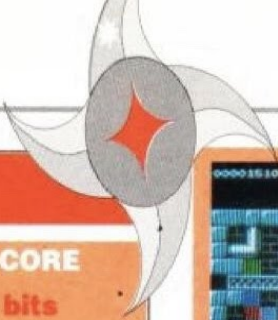


Your vitality meter. (You're looking a bit green about the gills at the moment...)

Collect the letters that spell out these words and you get a goodie.

Your currently selected weapon and, to the right, how much ammo you have left.

Your combat meter – tells you how much power you've got stacked up for your next hit.





For Gremlin to use the four-colour mode on the console – especially when people are expecting spectacular new standards of graphics – is a brave choice, but once any initial disappointment has worked off, the overwhelming impression is of very subtle, and very, very good visuals which really do make the best of the new hardware.

The other striking thing about the game is its sheer size – it just goes on and on! And the further you go, the better the puzzles, the enemies and the fun factor.

If *Burnin' Rubber* on the console set new standards for driving games, then *Switchblade* does the same for platform adventures. It may not grab you by the short 'n' curlies straight away, but it slowly, inevitably, sucks you in until you simply can't leave it alone. What an excellent game!

Rod Lawton

TECHNICALLY SPEAKING...

After playing Switchblade for a few days, we were so impressed we took Gremlin's technical guru James North-Hearn to one side and gave him a grilling...

We've got *Switchblade* now, we've been playing it for a few days, and we think it's really good.

Yes, we're really pleased with it.

It's a very big game, as well, isn't it?

It's a massive game – there's an awful lot in there.

Now we understand that you've used the hardware sprites to actually add more colours for the backgrounds?

We went to 4-colour mode because we felt that because of the size of detail, in the 16-colour mode it would not have looked anywhere near as impressive as it does. We used the stippling effect to add shading etc, which I think you'll agree works. Because we went to 4-colour mode we wanted to add more colour, so there's already – without any hardware sprites or anything – there's already two splits in it, which are noticeable at the top and bottom. And I think at most times we have at least six colours on and sometimes eight colours on screen. By splitting the screen and changing the palette, at the top, the play area and the bottom – if you count the colours you'll see there's always more than four. Because down at the bottom you've got a blue and a red, then you've got all the colours within the game. And there's also sometimes a different colour at the top. So that's easy to implement on the console. In addition to that, we added colour to the backgrounds by actually making the backgrounds out of the 16-colour sprites. So we built up the backgrounds with normal background techniques, but also added hardware sprites to add colour throughout the game.

So the sprites are in 16-colours, but you get higher resolution for the sprites, don't you, than in normal 16-colour mode in the backgrounds...?

What we didn't do is make very elaborate sprites, really big ones, and just plonk them on the screen for the sake of it, because that would have ruined the look of the game. The sprites are actually in key with the rest of the game. They fit. You can't tell they're in any way different from the backgrounds except that they're colourful. We've put sprites on every screen, so every screen contains well in excess of the normal four colours.

The thing is, we also took a look at the ST version – and we've been having a bit of a debate with the ST Format lads – but we actually reckon that the console version is better...

...Slightly better, yeah!

What do you think?

For a start off, the product makes a very good console type of game. That's one of the reasons you think it is better, because on the ST you're aiming – in a sense – to do a different kind of thing.

Does this game format lend itself to the console hardware, is that what you're saying?

Let's put it this way. The console hardware is such that we can implement that type of game as well – if not better – on the console than we can on the ST.

Is that because of things like the hardware sprites?

Yes. That's because the hardware sprites enable us to put more colours on. Also, although in this game we don't scroll the backgrounds. If we had gone to a scrolling design, obviously the console would have been able to handle that as well. We think it came out as well on the Amstrad as a product as it did on the ST. I think the thing you have to remember is we had hindsight as well. We were able to tweak any parts that we wanted to tweak because we'd already produced the ST version. But I wouldn't disagree with you. I think, up against the two, if I could play either one of them, I would probably be more likely to play the Amstrad console version.

Well there you go – straight from the horse's mouth!

Er, no offence, James...)

SWITCHBLADE TIPS

- When you can, jump onto a crate before taking on the enemy. Most can't hurt you while you stand one level above them, but you can merrily kick their lights out.
- When entering a screen, wait for the monsters to appear. Note the point at which they generate for future reference. Try to take them on one at a time and try to get them all. Once all the monsters on a screen are dead they don't regenerate, even when you come back later.
- Take careful note of which weapon you're carrying. You can only repeat-fire after your last missile has exploded and some traverse the entire length of the screen, making them useless in close-combat.
- Avoid stepping off into space without knowing what's below. There are some stages in the game which involve large falls, and this can sap your vitality badly.
- Look out for where the vitality power-ups can be found. Plan your movements so that you pick up the energy when you most need it.
- You only jump a short distance if you leap from a standing position. Take a run-up to jump further.
- If a monster appears at an awkward place/time when you enter a screen, leave it immediately and try coming back.
- Monsters always home in on you, so use the platforms and different floor levels carefully to get them into the position you want, when you want.
- The boss monsters have particular movement and firing patterns. You'll lose energy sussing them out, but once you have even these monsters will (should!) prove easy meat.
- To make sure you're not missing out any bits of *Fireblade*, map the game as you go along. It'll pay off far better than simply trying to do it from memory, and you will find some safer short-cuts round some puzzles.
- Remember, there is no time limit, so you can analyse a problem for as long as you like.
- If you come up against a brick wall (literally), look carefully for square bricks showing more detail than the rest – you can kick these away.



● *Switchblade*, technically, is done in the four-colour mode, but try counting the number in this screen shot! The programmers have used standard split-screen jiggery-pokery and the additional console hardware to 'cheat' on a grand scale.

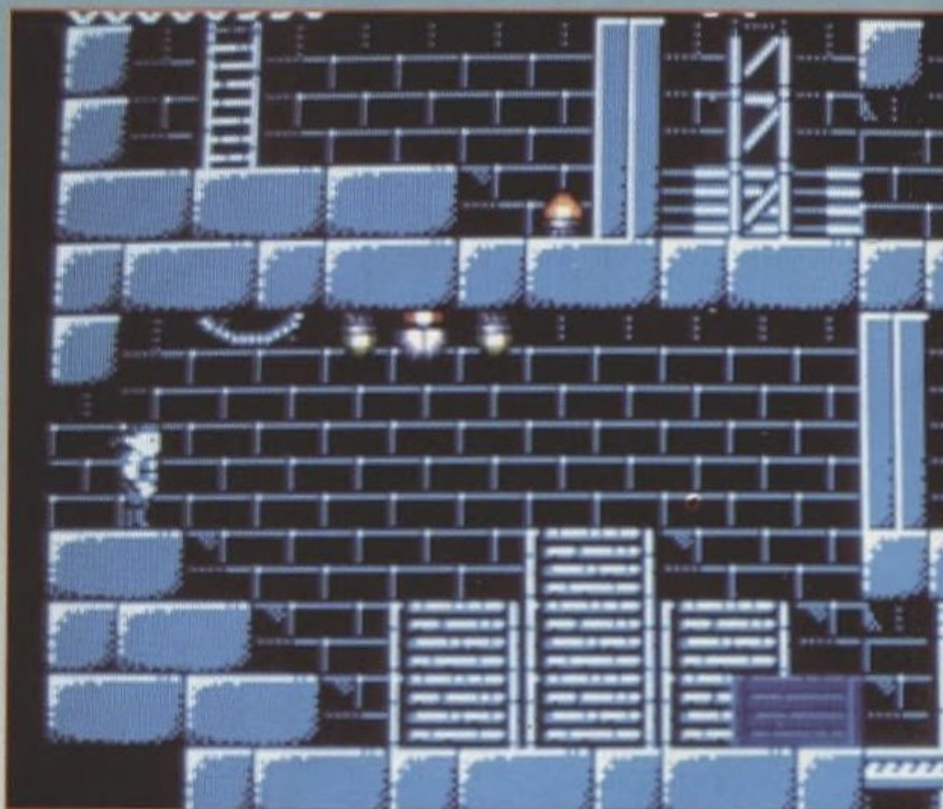


SWITCHBLADE

Havok, the evil warlord, has stolen the Fireblade and broken it into four pieces. This has caused the world of Thraxx, once a peaceful nirvana, to become a devastated wasteland. Now Hiro must enter Havok's Undercity and, as the last Bladeknight, assemble the pieces of the Fireblade and defeat Havvy (as he's known to his friends).

Hiro starts the game above ground, and must find an entrance to the Undercity. Once there, the numerous fiendish traps and puzzles must be solved in order to progress to the next screen. Hiro jumps, kicks and punches his way through the caverns, defeating the baddies either with violence or cunning - most creatures can be jumped over, or lured into falling down pits.

Goodies are scattered around the screens, and take different forms. Potion bottles can be kicked to reveal extra health, and shattering certain wall-blocks uncovers new (temporary) weapons, such as shuriken, bullets, or fireballs, which are especially useful for defeating the major monsters that guard the parts of the Fireblade. Destroying these blocks also reveals secret chambers - so be sure to kick anything vaguely suspicious!



▲ As Hiro explores the Underworld, more and more of the surrounding area is revealed.



▲ Destroy the top block and then use low kicks to kill the nasty below.



PACKING A PUNCH

Power-up icons can be difficult to locate, but are a must-have when it comes to offing the bosses. Here's a look at the options:



BULLETS: Rapid fire, but cause relatively low damage.

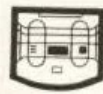


SHURIKEN: Move slowly through the air, but seriously injure foes.



SUPER PUNCH: A close-range weapon that knocks the socks off the enemy.

REVIEW



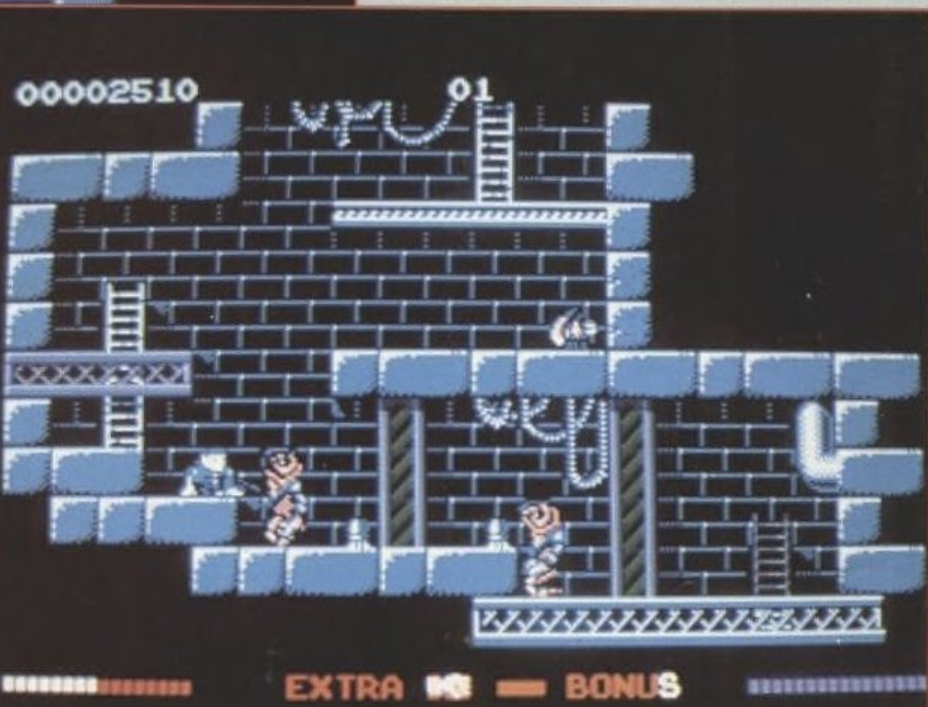
▲ There's a false block just below - if Hiro can get to it.



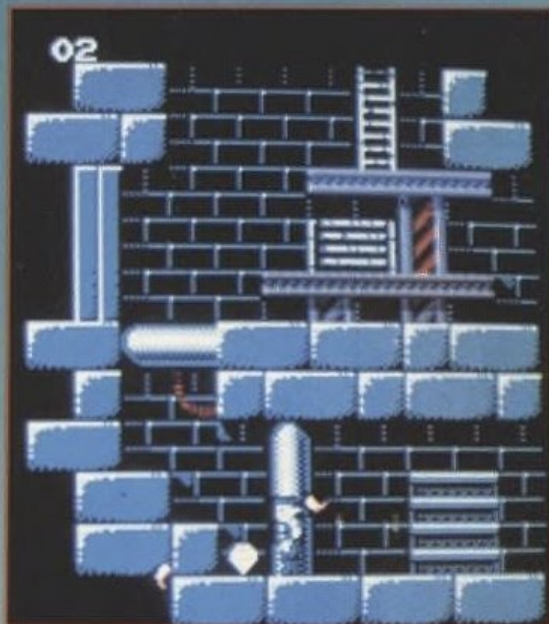
▲ Another token to be collected!



▲ A Blade icon awaits collection next to Hiro.



▼ Gems provide extra points when collected.



▼ The man himself in all his glory!

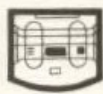


COMMENT

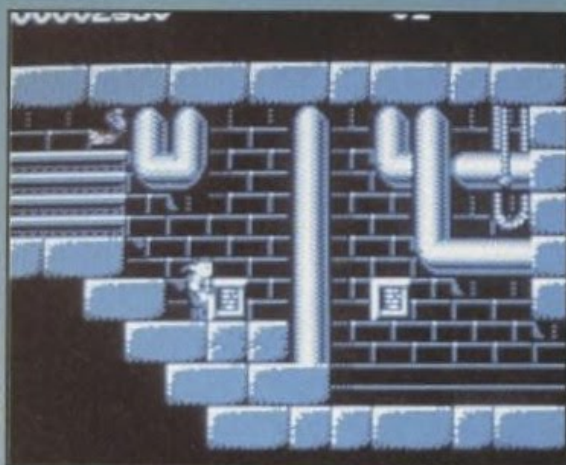


MATT

It's about time a Rick Dangerous-type game was successfully converted to the GX4000, and this fits the bill perfectly. This style of game rewards intelligence as much as reflexes, with teasingly difficult puzzles that give the player a real sense of achievement when he or she finally works out how to get past them. The animation is confident and expressive, and the music is absolutely wonderful. My only gripe is with the lack of colour; this obviously affects the visual side of the game, but the strength of the playability more than compensates for this. So don't be put off by the screenshots - this is an excellent game for GX4000 owners. Let's see Switchblade on other formats, Gremlin!



REVIEW



DIRTY ROTTEN SCOUNDRELS

The enemies come in many shapes and sizes in Switchblade. Dragonmen are fairly easy to dispose of - especially with a mega-kick - but have a nasty habit of pushing Hiro off the screen. As some creatures reappear every time the hero re-enters a screen, this can seriously damage Hiro's health! Scorpions are fearsome opponents, and are virtually impossible to kill; the best bet is to leap over them. Of course, the cavern must be high enough for this!



▲ Hiro pauses to plan his next move.

COMMENT

At last! A decent platform game on the GX4000! Switchblade might not look like the greatest game in the world due to the rather drab backgrounds, but it's the playability that counts, and this has it in abundance. The landscape is huge, and there are loads of hidden screens and bonuses waiting to be discovered - just like a platform game should have! It's a pretty tough game, and you

JULIAN

certainly have to battle every inch of the way! It helps if you make a map (if you do, send it in to the tips section!), as there are a variety of different routes around the landscape, and some are more hazard-packed than others. If you're a GX4000 owner who's looking for something decent to play, splash your cash on this smash!



▲ Kick the pole to gain a bonus



switchblade



BY: GREMLIN

PRICE: £24.99

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

GAME DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM

LIVES: 5

CONTINUES: 0

SKILL LEVELS: 1

RESPONSIVENESS: GREAT



PRESENTATION 82%

A cartoon-style introduction sets the scene in an atmospheric fashion.

GRAPHICS 84%

Brilliantly detailed with outstanding animation; it's only the lack of colour that lets the game down.

SOUND 89%

Despite the lack of spot effects, the groovy tune is catchy and not the weedy sound usually heard.

PLAYABILITY 94%

Immensely playable, with varied challenges and subtle changes in background. Addictive in the best possible way.

LASTABILITY 92%

With 150 screens and tearsome toes, Switchblade will keep even the most jaded player intrigued for a long time!

OVERALL 91%

Wall-smashing, baddie-biffing, tunnel-tramping fun all the way! Highly recommended.

WORLD - OF - GAMES

BY EPYX

Apart from *Gazza II*, the only other sports simulation available on the GX4000 is *Epyx World of Games*, a four-event affair.

Up to four people can play at once, in a sort of strange quartathlon. Each player attempts an event, and the highest scorer wins the gold, the second highest the silver and so on. At the end of the competition the person with the most medals is the winner!

The events are pretty

diverse. First there's the cliff diving, in which you have to dive off the top of a high cliff. The player is judged on his diving style, and his timing and entry into the water.

After that it's time for some downhill skiing. Guide your skier through the gates as he whizzes down the vertically scrolling piste. Miss a gate and points are docked from your overall time.

BMXing requires you to ride a BMX bike over a horizontally scrolling course.



▲ Your BMX bites the dust - literally!

Points are scored by performing stunts - but watch you don't fall on your head or you'll be out.

Finally, there's surfing. Ride the wave and launch yourself into the air and perform spins to gain as many points as possible within the time limit.

If you score well enough, your efforts will appear on the record table, and you can show them off to your pals (for as long as the machine stays on).

▼ Try for the elusive 360 in the surfing event!



► Suicidal cliff diving excitement. ►



GX4000
£24.99

Epyx World of Games certainly looks good, with plenty of colour and some nice detail - the BMX and skiing events being the best examples. However, when you come to play the game, it very quickly becomes apparent that there's simply not enough on offer. All the events are incredibly easy to complete - even a novice could notch up near-perfect record scores in a sitting - and after that the lack of reward makes playing this a routine chore rather than an exciting challenge. The four-player option adds a bit of lasting appeal, but when it comes down to it the easy-to-master gameplay and lack of variety ultimately results in boredom. If you're a fan of sports games, you're bound to be disappointed by the absence of depth and excitement.

JULIAN RIGNALL

GRAPHICS	84%
SOUND	69%
VALUE	51%
PLAYABILITY	63%

OVERALL 59%

Epyx World of Sports

US Gold ★ £24.99

The urge to compete is irresistible. Don't you feel you need to pit your fitness and skills against others? Don't you need to win at everything you do? If not, then you're probably a normal, well-adjusted person. However, if you are manically competitive you might be willing to travel all over the world in order to beat people at exciting and obscure sports. This selection of four games lets you do just that.

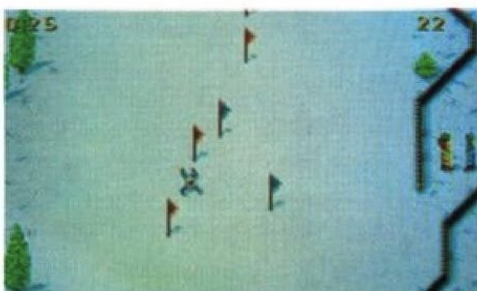
There are four sports which you'll have to master if you want to reach the top of Epyx's high score table. The first is good old BMX riding (remember that?). It's not a case of tackling the traditional half-tube this time, but pedalling along an incredibly perilous track, littered with railway sleepers, bales of hay and vertical drops.



● Slicing majestically through the snow...



● ...making it look so impressively easy until...



● Oww! I think I've cracked three of my ribs!

The track scrolls in a sort of 3D towards the top left hand corner of the screen. You, controlling your speed and direction, must successfully get to the end of the course in the shortest possible time. You have three lives, losing one every time you tumble off the bike. The best way to complete the course is to go as fast as you can, doing wheelies whenever you reach an obstacle to bounce over it. If you do come off, you'll either start at the beginning or half way through, depending on how far you got before the tragic accident.

Having proved how incredibly talented at BMXing you are, it's time to get on a plane and fly to Switzerland (or, conceivably, Austria) to strap on your skis and go, er, skiing.

You start in a shed at the top of a fiendish slalom course. Dig your sticks in, push, and you're off. Again, you control speed as well as left and right movement. Speed is still of the essence. You view yourself from in front and above, so the angles are easier to judge. The only problem occurs if you let your speed build up too much. You won't be able to get through many of a gates, and will end up smacking into a pole. You lose a life and lie there for a few seconds, dazed.

The controls are suitably skiddy; you'll be hammering the joystick or joypad to get round some of the trickier switchbacks. And it is so frustrating when you see a flagpole looming up right in your path. It's possible to miss out some gates. You don't get any points for doing this, but you'll stay on your skis until you reach the bottom.

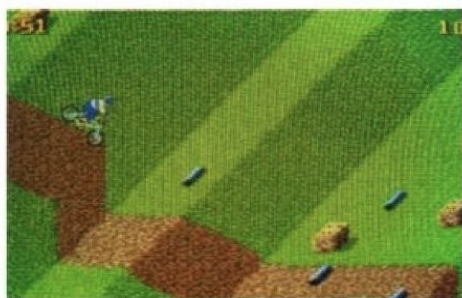
Having survived that with only minor breaks, dislocations and frostbite, you'll want to travel to a warmer part of the world. What about Hawaii? Yeah! Everybody jump in the water because the surf's back in town! (eh? - ed).

You must ride a huge wave, doing tricks, flips and other brave manoeuvres to gain as many points as possible. Again, you'll have to be quick because the wave is beginning to break. If you get caught in the curl, you'll tumble off, smacking your head nastily on the sea-bed and losing one of your lives.

There are a number of moves you can attempt on the crest; the harder and more impressive they are, the more points you'll get. Simple backward flips look a bit pathetic, but if you keep doing a lot, your score gets to be quite



● Strap on the BMX 'protective but trendy' kit.



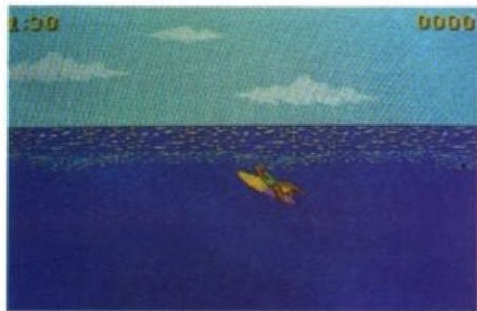
● Some of the slopes are rather steep.



● Pulling wheelies is a good way of getting points.



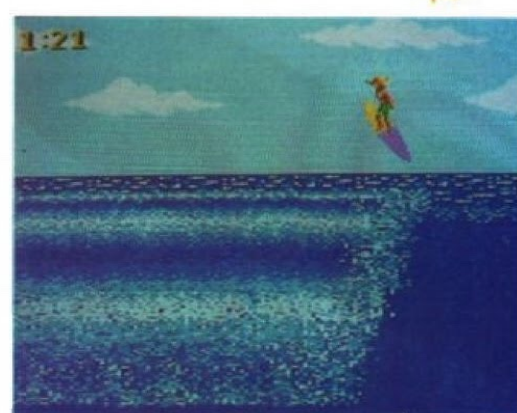
● Those sleepers and hay-bales can be jumped, but are best avoided.



● Awesome! Leap onto the board and ride the surf!



● Flip the board into the air to gain mega-points.

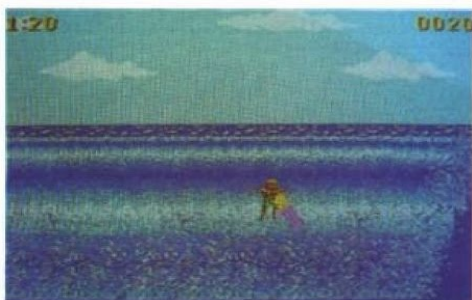


● But make sure that your feet stay on the board. It's very

respectable. Or you can try flying off the top, twisting in mid-air, then slipping back down the wave. It's very tricky and requires practice, skill and the ability to swim.

Having developed a taste (albeit salty) for aquatic competition, you then travel back across half the Pacific to Mexico. There you decide to jump off some very high cliffs into approximately fifteen feet of water. People who do this find it hard to get comprehensive life insurance, because it is a tad risky – those rocks are sharp and can certainly have your eye out if you're not careful.

You control the angle of the diver; you can either drop straight down, in which case you might collide with the rock-face whizzing past



● The uncool bit, when you tumble into the ocean.

mere inches away, or a select a flatter trajectory ending in a belly-flop which hurts a great deal.

Points are awarded on whether you manage to enter the water cleanly, and whether you strike the bottom of the rock-pool before surfacing.

A large pelican sits on a rock next to the pool and watches all your efforts. If you are too pathetic, he covers his eyes with his wings. It's certainly a nice touch, and is well drawn to say the least.

The graphics are without exception very pretty indeed in all the events. They are fast and smooth as well, as we are coming to expect from the far superior cartridge-based software. It has to be said that in the skiing and surfing events, the sprites are not particularly large. However, they are very detailed and will impress the socks off you.

The sound might have taken straight from an arcade machine. It complements the gorgeous visuals perfectly, and really demonstrates what is possible with the new stereo effects. A tune plays throughout the events and spot effects punctuate the action at the salient points.

What lets down *World Of Games* is –surprisingly – its 'forgivingness'. The events are all fairly easy to complete but if you don't suc-

ceed, you automatically go on to the next one anyway. This means that all you're doing is trying to get points rather than progress in the game. There are several differing manoeuvres which you can perform in each discipline, but they are subtle and difficult, so you'll probably end up just going as fast as you can, to get points that way.

The most startling thing of all about *World of Sports* is not the gameplay, which has been seen before, but the sheer quality of the graphics – it's hard to believe it's playing on an 8-bit Amstrad!

So, all in all, *World of Sports* is a distinct step up from the current crop of CPC games in terms of graphics and sound, but unfortunately lacks the real gameplay to accompany this feast for eye and ear. More events would have been nice, as would a bit more variety and length in each one.

James 'Surf-Bum' Leach



● Hurl yourself as far from the cliff as you can.



● Let good old gravity do all the hard work.



● And enter the water as cleanly as possible.



●Ow! You've jst dived 100 feet into four feet of water.

VERDICT

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE
Score in all four events

GRAPHICS 94%

SONICS 73%

GRAB FACTOR 70%

STAYING POWER 66%

AA RATING 72%

Great, but not one to keep you absorbed for hours



The first sports simulation to appear on the GX4000 is a four-event affair featuring BMX riding, surfing, cliff diving and downhill slalom.

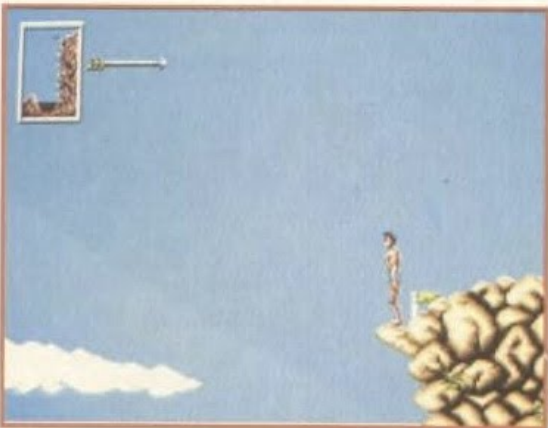
Up to four people can play at once, in a sort of micro-Olympic quartathlon. Each player attempts an event, and the highest scorer wins the gold, the second highest the silver and so on. At the end of the competition the person with the most medals is the winner!

If you're on your own, there's a practice option so that you can play an event over and over again until you're completely unbeatable, and there are also record tables where all your greatest attempts are displayed for you gloat over.



▲ Going for the elusive 360 on the surfboard.

▼ Peering over the chasm before the dive.



▼ Make sure you straighten out before you land!



EPYX WORLD GAMES



▲ The beginning of the ski slalom.

WHERE DID THEY COME FROM?

The events in Epyx World of Games have all been culled from the Epyx Games series, which have appeared on various computer systems over the last six years. Cliff diving appeared in World Games, BMX and surfing graced the superb California Games and slalom skiing featured in Winter Games. So now you know.

THE GAMES



BMX

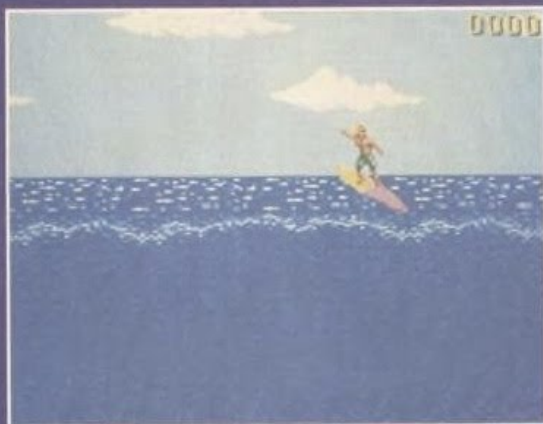
Hop onto a BMX and ride down the very hilly course attempting to do as many stunts as possible for bonus points. It's played against the clock, and the quickest time from start to finish wins the race.



SLALOM SKIING

Ski down a slope as fast as you can, making sure that you go through the pairs of flags. Points are deducted for missing them - just make sure you get to the bottom in the fastest time with as few faults as possible.

LD OF IES



SURFING

Take to the beaches of California, ride the waves and do as many stunts as you can for mega-points within the time limit. You're only allowed three wipe-outs (falling off your board to you and me) - so be careful out there.



CLIFF DIVING

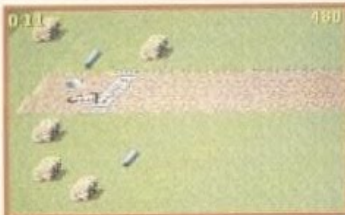
This is the slightly mad sport of slinging yourself off a rocky perch to dive into the rather shallow water below. Points are scored for the perfection of the dive. A perfect 10 is a guaranteed winner - and nearly impossible!

COMMENT



MATT

This is a disappointment from the start. The loading screen is dull and lifeless, and I'm afraid the rest of the game follows suit. The BMX is monotonous, the skiing is too easy, the surfing is poorly animated and the cliff diving - well, the diving is quite fun and is certainly different (I love smashing my head all over the rocks!). The main problem is the lack of events: only four in a console game is taking the Mick a little, I feel. Perhaps the game would be improved by a proper medal-giving ceremony, but I doubt if this would really help. An average game that I can't honestly recommend.



Leap your through the BMX event.

COMMENT



JULIAN

On the positive side, this features some great sprites and excellent, ultra-smooth scrolling backdrops which really show what the GX4000 can really do. However, on the negative side, there are only four events and they're not particularly challenging. It only takes a session or two before you get near perfect scores, and therefore any sense of real achievement is minimised. If Epyx World of Games had a few more events, I would heartily recommend it. But as it stands there's simply not enough to keep you entertained for very long.

GX4000

REVIEW



牛詩集

EPYX WORLD OF GAMES

BY: Epyx

PRICE: £24.99

RELEASE DATE: NOV

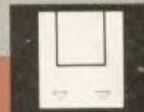
GAME DIFFICULTY: VERY EASY

LIVES: N/A

CONTINUES: N/A

SKILL LEVELS: 1

RESPONSIVENESS: GOOD



PRESENTATION 85%

A whole load of excellent options allowing up to four players to practice and compete.

GRAPHICS 84%

Detailed and nicely animated sprites and great backdrops, particularly the skiing.

SOUND 69%

Rather weak effects, and even weaker tunes.

PLAYABILITY 63%

Very easy, in fact too easy to get into.

LASTABILITY 45%

Only four easy events to keep you occupied - you won't be playing this for very long.

OVERALL 59%

Had loads of potential, but unfortunately this package leaves you wanting a lot more.



Gazza II



Empire ★ £24.95



Gazza: a legend in his own lunchtime. The Spurs midfielder who leapt into the limelight with his tearful performance in the World Cup.

This is the second game that's had Gazza's name on the box (so that explains the title). It's less than a year ago (AA54) that we looked at *Gazza's Super Soccer* - and gave it a right old panning...

Empire is making the most out of Gazza's new found fame and fortune, and *Gazza II* will no doubt attract many of the footballer's new fans.



Gazza II isn't a really a sequel to *Super Soccer* (thank goodness). The team management section has been dropped, and the game has more in common with the *Kick Off* style of computer footie than anything else.

There are few options. You can set the game length, whether you play human or computer opponents, and the skill level of the computer team. That aside, it's straight into the action.

Apart from the (very good) digitised picture of the nation's favourite footballer on the

title page, *Gazza* the game has very little to do with the Tyneside hero. Eleven identical footballers play on each side - none of them with a Geordie accent.

It has to be said that *Gazza* isn't much of a footie sim. There are no fouls, penalties, or free kicks. Your team play like a mauling rabble and any pre-match tactics the team may have gone through are out the window the instant the kick off whistle is blown.

Perhaps that's why it's such a darned good game! It's not bogged down with all the tedious offside rules, and is more like playground football than anything. Everybody appears to chase the ball at once, and if one team breaks through, and your defence



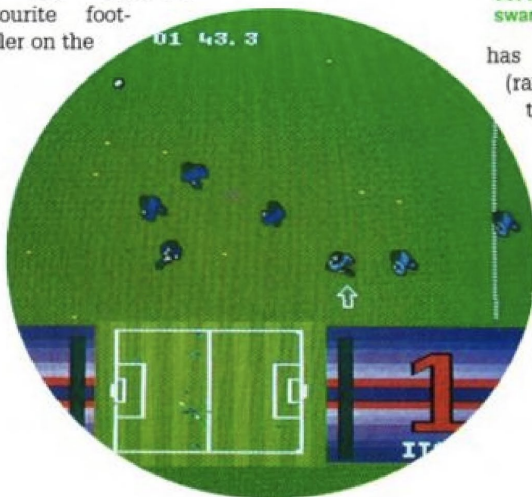
● Oh, and Player One has a goal-scoring chance...



● ...and it's in the net!



● Control automatically switches to the man nearest the ball - confusing when your players start swarming round.



has deserted you, then there's only your (rather useless) goalie between the ball and the net.

It's an uncomplicated game. When you have possession you can simply run along with the ball. The computer-controlled players run after it in roughly the right direction. All this dribbling slows you down, though, so it's quite possible to be caught by the computer players. Tackling is achieved by running into the player with the ball and pressing Fire.



Rather than let the other team take control, the obvious thing to do is to boot the ball to another player on your team.

Gazza II has one of the finest passing mechanisms of any football game. The longer you hold down the Fire button, the more powerful the kick. This allows pin-point passing between the other players on your team – an area that other games have had difficulty with. There are usually one or two team mates hang-

Coming soon, on a CPC near you...

Gazza will also be made available on tape and disk formats, priced at £10.99 and £14.99 respectively.

These versions will have to make do without the specialist hardware in the Plus and GX4000. So, don't take for granted that all the features and the same level of playability will be present on the CPC versions. This review is for the cartridge version only.

Of course, we will give you our opinion of the 'standard' game just as soon as it's made available to us...

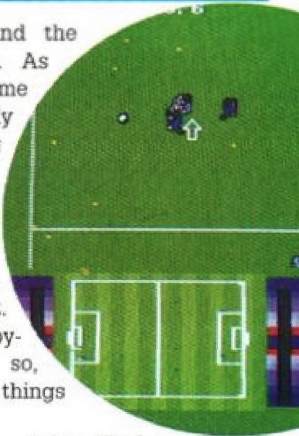


● The goalies are useless...



● ...You can often kick straight through them!

ing is excellent, and the playability spot on. As ever, a two-player game is the one to really test you. Playing against a person, and thrashing the pants off them, is so much more satisfying than playing a computer opponent. There are a few annoying quirks. Even so, *Gazza* has got most things just about right.



Adam Waring

around your man. You always control the player nearest the ball, so you become the player you've passed to as soon as you've kicked the ball. This system works well for the most part. Sometimes, though, when you're chasing the ball, another player on your team gets nearer. In this instance, control flips to him, and you can get a little disorientated while you work out what's going on.

Gazza is very 'diagonal': movement of the players and the ball is strictly by compass direction. No doubt this has a lot to do with the speed of the game, but it does cause flaws in the gameplay. Kick-offs are a sham. You basically have three directions to boot the ball in – each leads straight to the feet of an opposing player. There's definitely no advantage to be had with the kick-off – the fact the other team immediately gain possession stops that.



● Your options are limited...



● ...but you can choose your opponents.

The goalkeepers are crap. They track the ball up and down, so shooting diagonally means you score every time. Even if the ball hits the keeper head on, you can score if you give the ball a hard enough thwack. When they occasionally do make a save, they never catch the ball, it just rebounds back into the penalty area.

Niggles aside, though, the speed and superb playability make up for it all. The pitch scrolls (rapidly) to follow the progress of the ball. The game is played left to right, rather than up and down as is more common in footie games. The action's viewed from above, the (none too accurate) white pitch markings and occasional fleck of yellow make up the entire background. At the bottom of the screen a scanner shows a small-scale representation of the the whole pitch. Coloured dots tell you where the players and ball are. It becomes necessary to learn to keep an eye on both screens at once! Then long passes from one side of the pitch to the other are possible. In two-player games, player one is always light blue, and the opposition plays in black. This choice of colour guarantees that there'll be no confusion about who's who.

The skill of the computer's team is picked by team name. Albania are the weakest team, and Brazil are the best. Skill relates directly to the speed that the team's players move at. The speed advantage you have over the slowest teams makes winning a walkover. Play the computer at anything approaching your own ability, though, and you've got one tough match on your hands!

Gazza II is the most playable footie game on any computer! It's very (very) fast, the pass-



● Your 'kickometer' (bottom left) lets you gauge the strength of your shot.

VERDICT

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE
Beat England!

GRAPHICS 66%

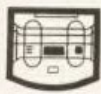
SONICS 60%

GRAB FACTOR 86%

STAYING POWER 91%

AA RATING 88%

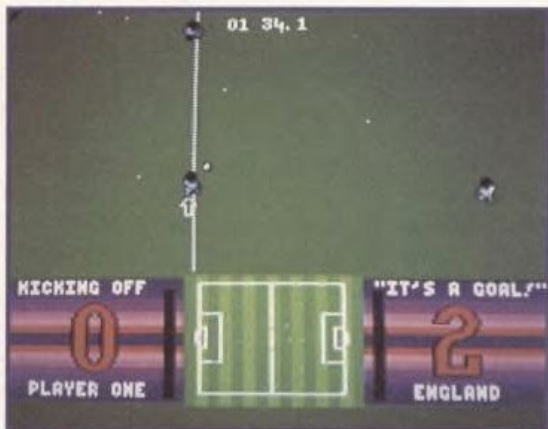
The most fun footie sim you'll find!



Back in the summer, during the World Cup, one player hit the headlines for crying. Noted for the outstanding quality of his football, the short, chubby man has made millions from his cult following as well as his footballing skills. But enough about Maradona, this game stars Gazza, or Paul Gascoigne as he's known to his fans, in Empire's second title featuring the jocular grinning Geordie.

The pitch is viewed from the side (as if the viewers were in the expensive seats), with the pitch horizontally scrolling as the ball is kicked around. At the bottom of the screen lies the radar, which is useful in determining the position of players when the ball is kicked beyond the part of the pitch being shown.

An arrow shows which player is currently under control, and the direction the ball travels when passed. A useful "boot-o-meter" measures the strength of each shot by the length of time the button is depressed (poor thing). If in one-player mode, the choice of opposition includes teams as wide-ranging in talent as Rumania and Brazil. Kick offs, corners, and goal kicks are all included, so don't get lost in the fog on the Tyne - just yer toongue oot!



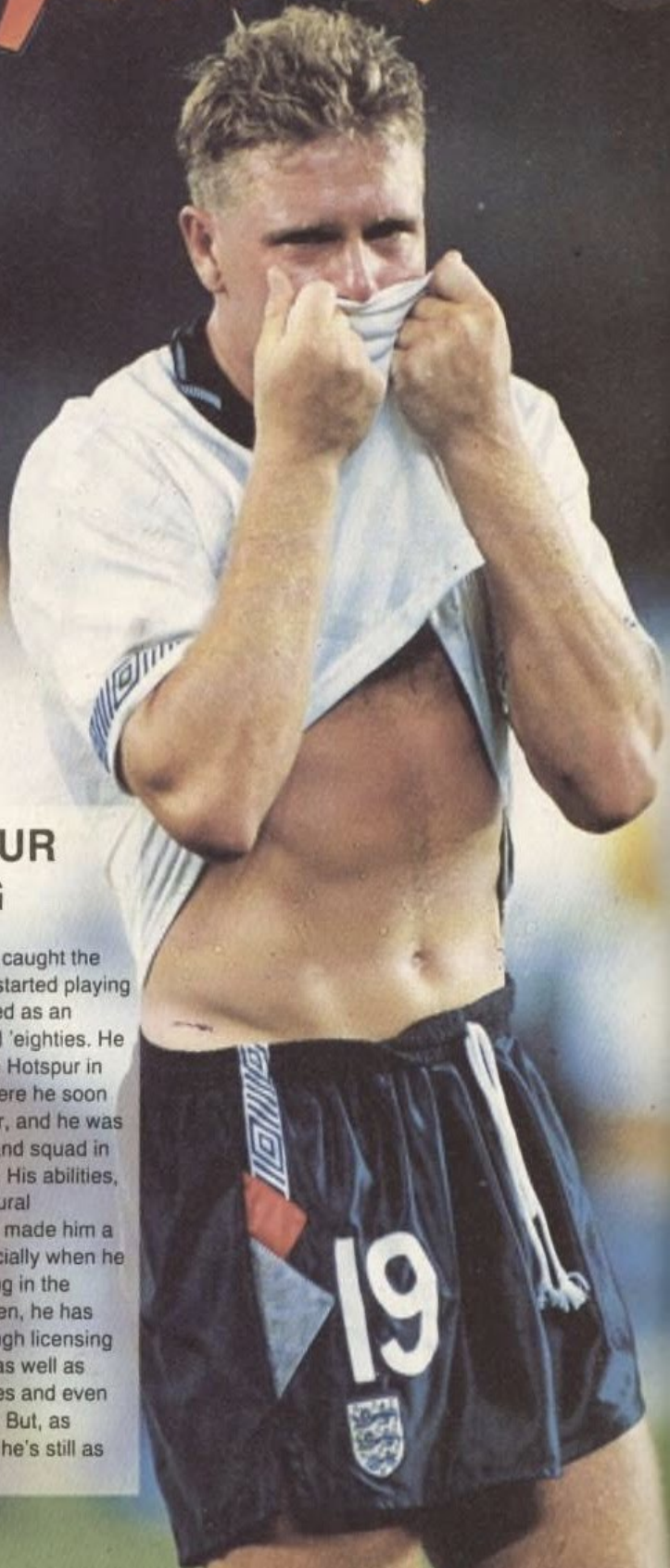
▲ England winning? It must be a computer fantasy game!

COMMENT

When you first see this, it looks like a super horizontally scrolling Kick Off II - the action is fast and the graphics are very smooth! However, start playing and some major shortfalls become apparent. The goalies are hopeless - shoot diagonally and a goal is guaranteed, and the way the players patrol the pitch is completely unintelligent. There

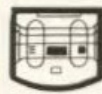
JULIAN aren't any penalties or free kicks either, which is another negative point. I also don't like the way the ball sticks to the players' feet - but I suppose that's just personal preference. It's a shame these niggles are present, because they detract from the great graphics and excellent control method. Football-starved GX4000 owners might like to give this a go - but don't expect the world.

Gazza



STOP YOUR SOBBING

Paul Gascoigne first caught the public eye when he started playing with Newcastle United as an apprentice in the mid 'eighties. He moved to Tottenham Hotspur in the 1988 season where he soon became a star player, and he was chosen for the England squad in the 1990 World Cup. His abilities, together with his natural self-promotion, soon made him a national hero - especially when he cried after his booking in the semi-finals. Since then, he has made a fortune through licensing and endorsements, as well as personal appearances and even "singing" on records. But, as Bobby Robson said, he's still as daft as a brush.



RADAR LOVE

The radar is located at the bottom of the screen, between the two scorecards. Each team is shown in a particular colour, although sometimes the colours are fairly similar, causing confusion. The radar allows the player to see where his or her team is located, so that passes can be made without the opposition intercepting the ball - well, that's the theory at least!

▼ Cameroon begin their attack in the midfield.



COMMENT



MATT

Haway, mon, de ye leek me geem? Well, sorry Gazza, it's a little disappointing in some respects. The lack of intelligent zoning and goalkeeping means that none of the players are where you'd like them to be (especially the goalie). Despite this, the game has some excellent features too; the boot-o-meter allows reasonable control over the power of shots, and the radar, when the colours don't merge too much, helps to plan passes and attacks. The tackling is fairly well implemented, preventing a player from just strolling down the middle of the pitch and taking a shot (a fault in many other footie games). So the game has its strengths, but it's a shame that the weaknesses prevent this from being a classic.



BY: EMPIRE

PRICE: £24.99

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

GAME DIFFICULTY: EASY

LIVES: N/A

CONTINUES: N/A

SKILL LEVELS: 1

RESPONSIVENESS: FAST

1-2

PLAYERS



PRESENTATION 78%

A digitised piccie of Gazza lets you know the star of the game. Weird option screen though.

GRAPHICS 83%

The straightforward sprites and pitch add clarity, although they tend to be somewhat basic.

SOUND 75%

Simple effects, such as booting the ball, are unintrusive - but the tune is as melodic as Gazza's single (ie not at all).

PLAYABILITY 80%

The control method takes some getting used to, but works well.

LASTABILITY 72%

With a World Cup-style option and variable match length, this is a game with balls.

OVERALL 76%

A potentially brilliant football game let down by several annoying faults.

GAZZA 2



BY EMPIRE

Gazza - what a man! Spurs soccer ace and England hero as well as a chart-topping song bird (more like song elephant), Paul Gascoigne is certainly a man to be seen with (preferably without him actually noticing). It seems that Empire have been particularly impressed with his mindless antics and have decided to sell another

soccer simulation with his official endorsement.

It's the usual soccer simulation fare, as you control your players on the eight-way scrolling pitch, and your objective is plant the ball in one of the goals (preferably your opponent's) found at the far-left or far-right of the pitch. Easy huh? You simply run around the pitch taking con-

trol of the player nearest to the ball.

Gazza 2 contains a number of major international teams from the suicidal Albania (they actually pass the ball to you when they kick off!) to the terrifying Brazilian team, whose footy prowess is beyond compare. There's also a chance to sample simultaneous two player thrills if that's what you fancy.

GX4000
£29.99

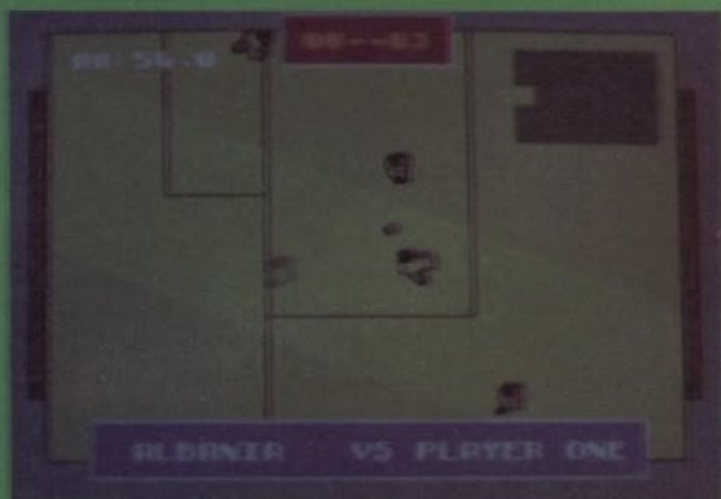
I must admit, I was expecting this Gazza simulation to be about as good as his singing (have you heard the full horror of "Geordie Boys"?), but I was pleasantly surprised by the quality of this footy sim. The on-pitch action is fast and furious, and in simultaneous two-player mode it's great laugh. The graphics are very Kick Off-esque and portray the action well, and on the whole the feel of the game is good. Unfortunately, there are a few niggly little things which prevent this from being a first division soccer game. For example, there are no fouls and hence no free kicks or penalties, and passing is made difficult by the fact that none of the players play in position, (except the goalkeeper who stays firmly on his line no matter what). I could mention other things like the fact that the ball never leaves the ground, or the throw-ins which look like kick-ins, but when all's said and done none of the problems are so unbearable that they totally cripple the action. If they weren't there, though, this would be a great game, rather than just a good one.

RICHARD LEADBETTER

UPDATE

That canny Newcastle lad is going to be making an appearance on the Amiga, ST, C64, and Amstrad CPC. All versions should be out by the time you read this.

◀ "In-the-box" action in Gazza 2



SPECTRUM
£10.99

Just as playable as the GX4000 game and the ball actually seems to leave the ground when you kick it (doesn't seem to change the gameplay much though). However, the other faults from the Amstrad version are in this one too, and they conspire to keep Gazza II firmly in the second division.

OVERALL 74%



▲ Player one scores against the Amstrad goalie!



▲ Can Albania strike back?

GRAPHICS 73%
SOUND 66%
VALUE 79%
PLAYABILITY 75%

OVERALL 74%



Robocop 2

Robo's back in another thrill-packed battle with the notorious OCP.

If you enjoyed the first thrilling instalment of Robo's adventures, then this one's going to blow your mind. Combining action sequences of epic proportions and puzzles to set your

mind reeling, Robocop 2 is an excellent example of the extra facilities available on the Plus range.

Starting off at the beginning, where else, Robo's task is to locate the Nuke Lab at



the River Rouge Sludge Plant. From the very first, you've got a struggle on your hands. Avoid the hammer pins, the pitfalls, the electricity bolts and a whole host of other hazards on your way to making a few well-timed arrests during your hunt.

Timing on this level is essential and you'll need to take a fair few turns before you master each move and jump.

While Robo is out on the chase for villains, OCP has managed to slip a few confusing directive changes into his circuitry. As a result, levels two and five will have you fuming as you desperately try to find the memory chips which will bring back Robo's full power.

There are 32 to find in all, in order to complete four separate circuit boards. As you guide your cursor around each board, you'll have to plan well in advance, in order to avoid being cut off by burnt tracks. Watch out for the directive chips as well, or you'll end up where you started.

To help Robo maintain his perfect scores, levels three and six will see you down at

the shooting gallery. Move the gunsight around the screen and blast away the criminals without harming any civilians.

As you move on to the hazards of the Tokugawa Brewery and ultimately, OCP Civic Centrum, the action really hots up, culminating with the final battle with the beast itself—Robocop 2.

Throughout the game, the graphics are stunning. Scrolling is smooth and you can pick up a fair bit of speed along the platforms.

There are seven levels in all, each of which is cunningly thought out to provide a real challenge with gripping gameplay. You'll be able to complete it, but not without some real effort and cunning of your own.

The music also provides just the right atmosphere to keep you glued to Robo's progress and, even if it does take you a while to master the first level, you'll want to keep on going until you succeed. Get to that final battle to the death at OCP Central and you'll know it's all been worth it.

ROUND-UP			
NAME	Robocop 2		
FROM	Ocean	PRICE	Cartridge £24.99
90%	88%	97%	
GRAFFIX	SONIX	PLAYABILITY	VERDICT

ROBOCOP 2

OCEAN ■ £24.99 cartridge



The future of law enforcement is back... and boy, is he upset! Not surprising, really - problems galore confront our shiny hero, and only his wits and cunning can save him... well, those and a whacking great machine gun.

Following on from the first movie, Murphy, the baldy cyborg from Detroit, has found himself in a bit of a fix. Gangs of nasty unshaven louts have taken to the streets, peddling a bizarre narcotic called Nuke, a drug which reduces the user to a drooling, snarling psychopath, incapable of reason or logical behaviour. (*Have you tried it then Frank? - ed.*)

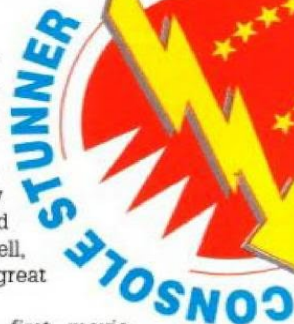
Robo's task is to locate the base laboratory where the Nuke is manufactured, and destroy it utterly. This normally wouldn't be much of a problem for Robocop, because he is basically rock hard (nobody spills his pint and lives to tell the tale), but unfortunately he has more than a few extra problems to deal with. Not least of which is the fact that his own parent company, OCP, has come up with a model to replace him. Understandably miffed, Robo pulls on his titanium Y-Fronts, and heads off into the grimy Detroit underworld.

What we have here is a four-way scrolling platform-cum-shoot-em-up which, at first glance, bears an uncanny resemblance to the original *Robocop*. The action begins in the River Rouge Sludge Plant, a huge warehouse chock-a-block with devious traps, drug-crazed psychopaths, and secret (well, sort of secret) rooms.

Considering he must weigh about half a ton, Robo is a surprisingly nippy little Cyborg. Almost too fast, in fact, and this soon becomes apparent as you accidentally hurtle, at a truly suicidal rate, into some bottomless pit or under a plunging spike.

However, Robo's reactions are swift, and he can leap with (admittedly, less than majestic) grace across all but the widest chasm.

In three of the levels (out of seven), the action is loosely reminiscent of platform games like *Bounty Bob*, or even *Jet Set Willy*. Seemingly insurmountable obstacles hinder your progress, conveyor belts drag you inexorably to your doom, and pixel-perfect timing is required to board floating plat-



forms. The other four levels are smaller 'bonus' stages.

Robo is armed with a pretty snazzy machine pistol, but has to be careful not to blow away any co-operative arrest subjects. Your energy decreases at a sometimes horrible speed, but a large supply of lives and well-placed energy bonuses should ease the strain a little. Platforms, however, are your main concern, at least until the other levels are reached.

Actually, these bonus levels, while lacking depth, could be considered games in their own right. There are two types. One is a puzzle where our chromium crusader has to regain his human identity by connecting a network of chips on a circuit board. The other is an *Operation Wolf* style shoot-em-up and has you calibrating your targeting system on a shooting range. Stop the crims, but don't bump off anything that looks even remotely cute.



● Watch where you're pointing that thing, young man, you'll have someone's eye out if you're not careful.



● Robocop spots a canister of Nuke, but getting to it is another matter, what with electric shields and plunging spikes. I wonder if they deliver?



● The bonus rooms give you a chance to have a breather, and an opportunity to fill your pocket with lots of excellent swag.

THE STORY SO FAR...

In the first *Robocop* movie our hero, Frank Murphy gets blown to pieces by a particularly nasty drug dealer. After being declared legally dead, Murphy's brain and remaining organs are placed in a titanium and plastic exoskeleton, part of a plot by the huge OCP corporation to replace the police force of Detroit with a centrally controlled and privatised force of robotic rozzers. Murphy, however, begins to regain his memory, and causes problems for his owners when he sets out to avenge his own death.

The first movie was blessed with a very black sense of humour, and director Paul Verhoeven handled the film with great style and wit.

The sequel, however, is nowhere near as good as the original and Orion, criticised for making the film too violent, has promised that *Robocop 3* will be classified a PG. This could well mean a better film, but it will almost certainly ensure a larger audience bearing in mind that most Robofans are under 18.

Robocop 2, though, is a vast improvement on the original title, and possibly one of the best film tie-ins to date.

When the Amstrad console was first released, doubts were expressed both about its future, and its technical potential. A quick look at *Robocop 2* should allay any fears that present owners, or potential buyers may have had. When compared to the first releases for the Nintendo, or Sega, Robo should give some idea of the future potential of the new machine...



● "Roses are red, violets are blue, if you spill Robo's pint, this'll happen to you." Some poor unfortunate discovers that messing with the titanium terror is not a smart thing to do.

When the *Robocop* cart was first plugged in, you could hear the sound of jaws dropping all around the office. An excellent intro screen pops up, accompanied by some of the finest sonics ever to funk their way out of an Amstrad. The presentation screens, packed with colour, and beautifully drawn, immediately give the game a movie-style appearance, but only when you hit the Start button does the true quality of the game hit you.

The console's enhanced graphics have been used to produce beautifully coloured and detailed backgrounds, with some fairly spiffy sprites inhabiting said backgrounds. Animation of the main Robo sprite is a bit suspect, but then he is supposed to be a robot, isn't he?

A choice of sound effects or music is presented to the player, and the atmospheric soundtrack (a kind of remix of the film theme) really drives the game along.

The platform theme has been done to death in the past, but this particular outing has enough style and more than enough surprises to carry it off. With plenty of active background features, like moving platforms, jet-powered elevators and hydraulic crushers to name but a few, *Robocop 2* emerges from a somewhat staid format as a refreshing and enjoyable challenge.

And challenge is the word - *Robocop 2* is HARD! Thankfully, just as your frustration reaches a critical point, progress of some sort is made, and your Amstrad is saved from the quite unnecessarily savage beating you were just about to administer.

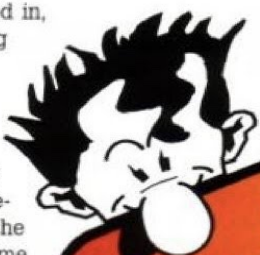


● Nipping into a bonus room is definitely a good idea, as it stops you going all the way back to the beginning when you snuff it.

Novices may at first be put off by the enormously difficult nature of the challenge before them, but perseverance reaps its own rewards. You find that the urge to see what lies at the top of a ledge, or at the end of a maze of tricky conveyor belts, is irresistible.

Reaching the end of Level One alone is an immense task, but in order to reach the final confrontation with *Robocop 2*, our hero will require some kind of superhuman effort (it's probably just as well he is superhuman then, really).

The sub-games are excellent in presentation, and the Identity Chip section is a real



SECOND OPINION
 "Robocop II offers large sprites and tough puzzles. The puzzles are a little too tough, though, and the game rapidly becomes frustrating as you get killed time and time again by the Adam Waring." - Adam Waring

brain-teaser. Both sub-games allow you a chance to have a breather, and you really do need one, if only to mop the sweat from your brow, and, for that matter, from your joypad...

Robocop 2 is a very impressive game, it just doesn't have the Amstrad look that we've all got used to over the years. On first appearances alone, you could be forgiven for mistaking this for a good ST title, and the music, sound effects and depth of play would do little to change your mind.

Infinitely better even than the original game, this has to rank as one of the finest Amstrad titles yet, and hopefully will set the standard for the new hardware. Expensive, but the quality of the package really sets this one apart. An essential purchase...

Frank O'Connor



● What's on the conveyor belt tonight? TV, luggage, toaster, microwave oven, his 'n' hers watches, food mixer, cuddly toy, big metal rozzar??!

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Complete Level One

ROBOCOP 2 VERDICT

GRAPHICS 92%
 Sharp, colourful, and easily the best seen on the Amstrad to date.

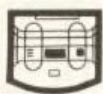
SONICS 94%
 Move your hooves to the funky grooves. Outstanding.

GRAB FACTOR 89%
 Picks you up, turns you round - forget any plans you had for the day.

STAYING POWER 92%
 A huge and demanding task, and one you won't tire of quickly.

RATING 94%

Wonderful graphics and sound. Tough as hell but very playable.



ROBO



▲ RoboCop gets an electro-death here.

Life is never easy for a cyborg cop having to carry out the fight against crime all by his lonesome. Four months have passed since RoboCop's epic confrontation with Clarence Boddicker and his corrupt OCP official pal, Dick Jones. Old Detroit is being systematically destroyed by a combination of a colossal crime wave and the fact that the rest of the police force are on strike! Add to that the emergence of a new drug baron, Cain, and his new super-designer, hyper-addictive drug, Nuke, and Old Detroit seems totally doomed.

Being the righteous robotic rozzer that he is, RoboCop decides to take on Cain and his empire of sin and dish out some Robo-style, autopistol justice to the punks of the city at the same time. But there's a problem. Robo's mind has been re-conditioned and not only has he got saving Old Detroit from impending doom on his agenda, but he also has to contend with the feelings, memories and emotions of Alex Murphy fighting to re-surface...



AUTO-9 ANARCHY!

What with all this heavy combat, RoboCop sometimes has to brush up on his shooting skills. In order to do so, Robo takes a trip to the police firing range and lets rip with his autopistol. As the timer counts down, RoboCop must shoot as many targets as possible making sure he doesn't accidentally blast away any innocent bystanders that happen to get in the way.



▲ Robo-summation at the end of each level.

COMMENT

RoboCop 2 shows GX4000 owners just what their machine can do. The graphics are superb, with excellent presentation screens, great sprites and colourful backdrops. However, the game's a real swine to actually play. On the platform levels, there's hidden traps aplenty that'll have you rapping your head against a brick wall with annoyance. Progression through the game doesn't seem to rely on skills of any description. Although Robo is a graphical treat, the game itself is only really recommended to avid Robo-fans.



MATT



ROBOCOP 2

MICROCHIP MALARKEY

On the way to making Cain meet with a horrible doom, Robocop has to sort out his mind - re-programmed by OCP. Levels two and five are much the same as each other and consist of a circuit board populated by memory-inhibiting microchips. It's down to you to save Murphy's memories by guiding a pulser around this circuit board blowing the chips away. The problem is you can't double back on your trail, so in each level a good deal of thought is needed to come up with a trail that'll destroy all of the chips. In level two, Robocop reconstructs the memories of his old self, Alex Murphy. Level five sees Robocop struggling with memories of his wife.

▲ Loads more chips to destroy on this level!



▲ Microchip fun in level two.



ROBOCOP PLATFORM PATROL

Levels one, four and six all take place across four-way scrolling platform screens. Although Robo's orders vary from level to level, the actual gameplay is much the same. There's always one route through the level, and Robocop must follow it, making sure he doesn't fall foul to some of the traps that Cain has left around for him. Spikes, deadly arcs of electricity and magnetic clamps are just some of the hazards that Robocop meets on the way to the end of the level. Here, there's a huge target to destroy, be it Cain's Nuke producers, Cain's Nuke storage, or at the end of the game, Cain's brain - encased in the awesome Robocop 2 robot.



COMMENT

Robocop 2 features some brilliant graphics - the backgrounds are excellent, and the intermission screens are superb. However, there are some very annoying gameplay features in the platform sections which had me literally screaming with frustration. The collision detection is very dodgy - Robo often dies when it seems that he's well clear of a deadly obstacle, and he also has a habit of falling through holes in the floor when he turns around too close to them. Another annoying feature is that some harmful objects are so well blended into the backdrops, you don't actually realise they're deadly until you've walked into them - aaah! It's a shame that these features are present, because they let down the excellent puzzle and shoot-out screens. Robocop 2 offers a considerable challenge which only hardened gamers will get the most from.



BY: OCEAN

PRICE: £24.99

RELEASE DATE: DEC

GAME DIFFICULTY: MED/HARD

LIVES: 7

CONTINUES: 0

SKILL LEVELS: 1

RESPONSIVENESS: OK



PRESENTATION 85%

Excellent presentation screens help link the gameplay to the actual movie and create a decent atmosphere.

GRAPHICS 84%

Graphically great, Robocop 2 is a treat to watch with decent backgrounds, sprites and faultless scrolling.

SOUND 69%

The GX4000 has an attempt at a Robocop-ish theme tune, and there are a few effects here and there.

PLAYABILITY 75%

Keep all your sharp instruments away from the GX4000 when playing - Robocop 2 is incredibly frustrating!

LASTABILITY 71%

Six levels that'll take a lot of mastering, but the frustration factor may put you off before you see them all.

OVERALL 74%

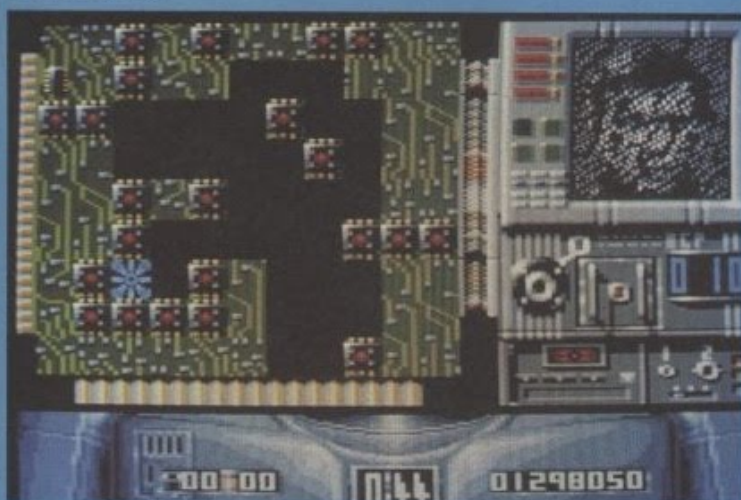
A graphical tour-de-force let down by an incredibly high frustration level.

ROBOCOP

BY OCEAN



The game starts with RoboCop infiltrating Cain's Nuke production line at the River Rouge Sludge Plant. Though he's armed with his Auto-9 pistol, his main problem on this level is dodging between and jumping over the multitude of traps which Cain's lackies have installed to protect their investment. Some of Cain's men who would rather give themselves up than suffer Robo-wrath, are to be found quivering on the platforms, just waiting to be busted for bonus points.



In the first puzzle sequence, Robo has to hunt through his circuits and destroy the microchips inhibiting his memories of his former self, Alex Murphy. As the cursor travels around the circuit board, it destroys anything it touches, including the circuit board, so you have to work out how to touch each of the small chips without having to double back on your trail. As each chip disappears, the image of Murphy reforms in the microscreen at top-right.

Four months after RoboCop's brush with psychotic crim, Clarence Boddicker, Old Detroit's police force are still out on strike and the city is on the brink of anarchy, not to mention bank-

ruptcy. With Boddicker and the majority of the police force out of the way, the city's drugs market has been taken over by another psycho named Cain who is frying jun-



▲ RoboCop gets his orders here.

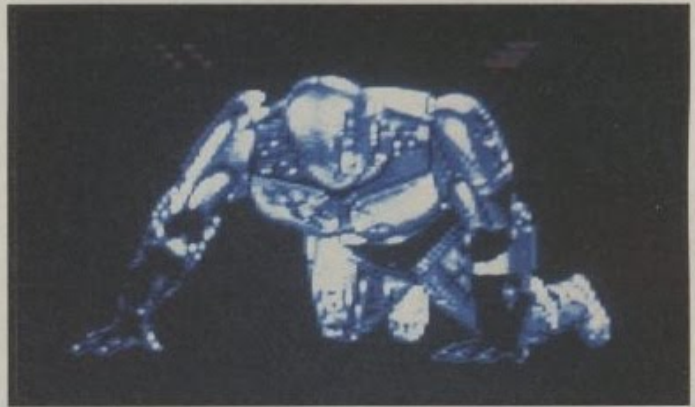


With all this heavy combat, Robo often finds his targeting system needs recalibrating, so he is sent to the police shooting range. Targets pop up all over the screen, and Robo has to blast as many as he can before they disappear. Watch out for the law-abiding citizens, though, as each one shot reduces Robo's score when the timer runs down!



...ies' brains with a super-addictive designer drug called Nuke.

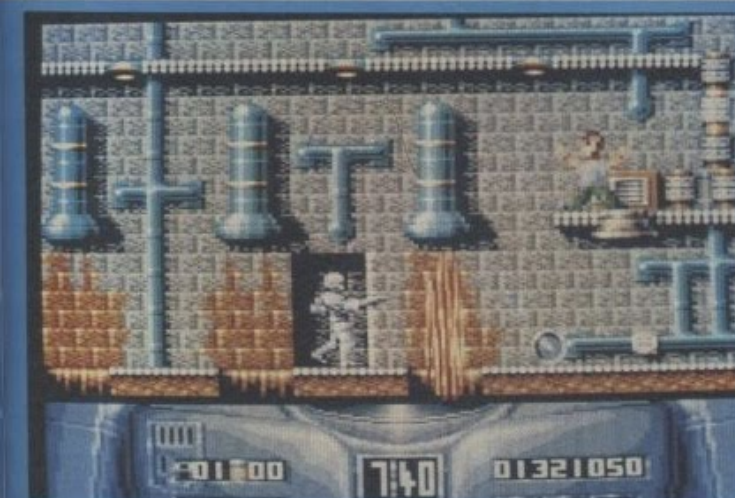
Robo, being the hardest cop on the Force (with the strike on, he's the only cop on the Force) takes it upon himself to shut down the



▲ Recalibrate your target computer in an Op Wolf shoot out.



After a nasty accident with a motorcycle, Cain is dead, but his brain has been installed in OCP's new Robocop 2 unit. To make things even worse, its brain is smashed out of its, er, brain with Nuke, so the machine goes into a real psycho strop. In this final level, Robo has to search the Civic Centrum Building for RoboCop 2 then deactivate it, while leaping over spikes, electric security beams and nasty little robots.



The second platform section is set in the Tokugawa Brewery, which is doubling up as Cain's Nuke storage plant. Again, there are plenty of dangerous traps to dodge, and crims to arrest for bonus points, but the ultimate goal is to find the actual storage facility and destroy it!



Another puzzle sequence which plays exactly the same as the first one, but this time around, Robo has to reconstitute his memories of Alex Murphy's wife. Looks like this board is almost complete!

REVIEW

Nuke production lines and clap Cain in irons as well. But the investigation is complicated by the re-emergence of Robo's human feelings, and the production of a new Robocop - an emotionless supercyborg which is rather more ruthless in its law enforcement methods...

Not surprisingly, you take control of the chromium copper himself, and bringing justice to the troubled streets of Old Detroit is all down to your own joystick skills. Crime is everywhere, so keep your autopistol cocked and you should be able to stay out of trouble (or something).

Robo gets angry with dealers. ▶



**GX4000 CART
£24.99**

The first thing that struck me about Robocop 2 was the very nice graphics - it makes really good use of the GX4000's colour capabilities. The other plus point is that because the whole game is on cartridge, the lack of a long-winded tape multiloop makes it much easier to enjoy it. The actual structure of the game isn't too far removed from that of the original Robocop game, insofar as it mixes action sections with puzzle games and a target shoot-out, and the formula works almost as well as it did before. The only problem I actually had was with the Amstrad joy-pad, which made getting those essential diagonals a little tricky. On the whole, though, this is a pretty good movie licence which is sure to be a big hit with the new breed of software-starved Amstrad owners.

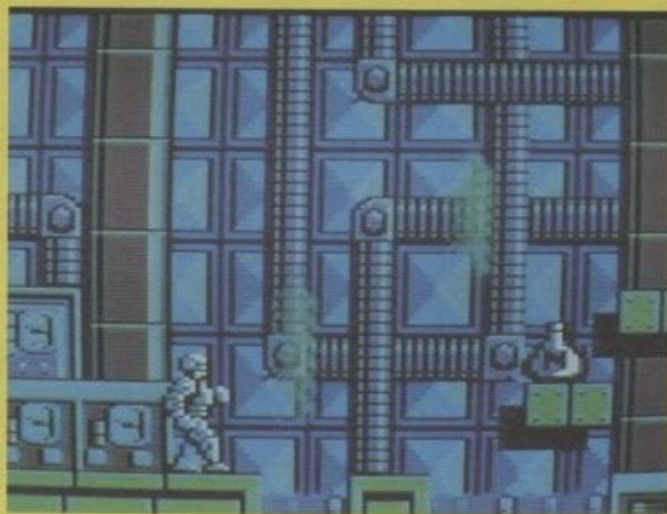
PAUL GLANCEY

GRAPHICS	85%
SOUND	79%
VALUE	80%
PLAYABILITY	80%
OVERALL	80%



UPDATE

Robocop 2 will be appearing on ST and Amiga (pictured) priced at £24.99, as well as Spectrum (£10.99 for cassette and £15.99 for disk) and C64 cartridge (also pictured) at £19.99. The platform sections on the 16 bit versions comprise more blasting than dodging, but apart from that the games are pretty much alike. Expect all versions to be on the streets by the start of December.



NAVY SEALS

Tension has risen in the Middle East (pretty topical, eh?), to a stage where Arab extremists have shot down an American helicopter on a surveillance mission in Beirut, and are holding a group of American soldiers to ransom. Not only that, but they've also managed to get their hands on a large number of missiles, which can be fitted with nuclear warheads! Enter the Navy SEALS - the US Navy equivalent to our SAS - who are sent to rescue their comrades-in-arms, and do over more than a few Arabs on the way.

The action is viewed side-on, with the team members having to run, jump, crawl, somersault and blast their way through six levels of platforms and obstacles, in order to both rescue the military hostages, and knock out the captured missiles. The terrorists aren't going to make your life easy, though, and will shoot on sight! Time is running out - have you got what it takes?

BY OCEAN

UPDATE

The Navy SEALS will be flipping their way onto the Amiga (£24.99), ST (£19.99), and C64GS cart (£19.99) real soon now. We've had an early look at the C64GS game, and it looks a cracker, but if the programmers don't change the level of difficulty, it could end up the same way as the versions reviewed here.

SPECTRUM
£10.99

Huurgh! The Spectrum game is a monochromatic version of the GX-4000 one, except this is even less playable, because the main sprite has an annoying tendency to get stuck in silly places, leaving you wide open for a bullet in the bonce! Again, a very disappointing licence, and one that could have been made so much better by simply making it a bit easier.

OVERALL 73%

GX4000
£24.99

Based on the forthcoming Charlie Sheen movie (which has been postponed for political reasons), Navy SEALS could have been Ocean's surprise biggie - but unfortunately it's not, and for two reasons. Firstly, and foremost, the gameplay is so bleeding hard, it'll have you pulling your hair out within minutes! The terrorists are so fast and accurate with their guns that the only way to beat most of them is to remember where each one is from the game before, then find a safe position before they actually appear on screen. Your SEAL is also annoyingly prone during all the animated jumping-on-crates bits, and even when he's climbing a ladder he's a sitting duck and is easily shot down. The colourful and detailed graphics are SEALS' greatest assets, but as I've already mentioned the animation on the player's sprite, though very realistic, gets in the way of the gameplay. Recommended only to very patient players (or for those with superhuman game-playing abilities).

ROBERT SWAN

▼ I thought seal-culling was illegal?



GRAPHICS	85%
SOUND	74%
VALUE	78%
PLAYABILITY	70%

OVERALL 75%



Those terrorists are up to no good again, with fanatical thoughts of world domination on their minds. As usual their evil schemes involve innocent victims being held hostage for things that are nothing to do with them.

This time they've gone a step too far though. One American citizen too many has had their lives wrecked by the threat posed by terrorists. The time for talking is over. There will be no diplomatic meetings, no bowing to demands, and no secret arms deals.

A helicopter has been downed over enemy territory, and the crew are being used as bargaining chips by a bunch of crazy terrorists who've been out in the sun too long. They've also managed to amass a stockpile of Stinger missiles, which you'd best destroy if they're not to be used against the very country that supplied them.

It's time for the Navy SEALs to go in, kick butt, and get out again, leaving as many terrorist corpses as possible in the time allowed. (Oh yes, mustn't forget to free the hostages...)

Time is most definitely of the essence. Each section has to be completed within a strict time limit. For the most part, this involves setting explosives atop a crates full of robbed US hardware, and getting the hell out to reach the next

stage, killing the bad guys on the way.

There are five members in your team, representing your lives. Each time a Seal is culled, another takes his place. You come to harm by falling too far, being shot and running out of time. When you lose one of your team the timer is not reset, and you must carry on from where the last chappie popped his size twelves. The missile cases that need to be destroyed act as restart points - when you die you reappear at the last one you attached a bomb to.

Somewhat surprisingly for the hardest fighting force in the World, all these guys are armed with is a weedy pistol apiece. Luckily some of the crates scattered around the place have hidden secrets - Uzis, flamethrowers and grenade launchers. Handy, that.

Navy SEALs is a good looker - the sprites are large and well drawn. The terrorists look particularly cool, wearing shades and toting guns. The backgrounds too are well drawn, with the redefined palette being used to good effect.

The animation is excellent on the whole, platforms can be transcended by pulling up on them and somersaulting over the top - a brilliantly fluid action.

The music is spot on too, though this plays only on the title screen. In the game itself there's the usual batch of rudimentary spot effects.

Navy SEALs is not an easy game. Careful paddle control is required to out-gun the baddies. Usually you'll need to duck down behind a crate, wait till the enemy has fired a shot, and then jump up quick and shoot him before he has a chance to respond. Fluff it and the you're probably dead.

The time limit is extremely strict. Dilly-dally for a couple of moments too long and you'll fall foul of this short span. In this instance you need to start the whole level again from scratch. There's nowt



● This is where it all starts. You have to plant bombs on nine missile crates in the three minutes allotted to make it off the first level.



● On the streets of Beirut. Watch out for those soldiers on top of that building - they'll pounce on yer back given half a chance.



● Into the communications tower through an underground tunnel. More crates to be blown before you finish this level.



A variety of different weapons can be used to kill the enemy with. They're packed away in crates found scattered around the complex. This flamethrower is good for cooking their goose. Fry terrorist scum!

wrong with time limits in principle, it's just this one is particularly unforgiving.

The control system is slightly fiddly. There are a lot of actions to be accommodated on the joystick (incidentally, Plus owners may not redefine the controls for keyboard use). Some actions require a combination of moves, and it's easy to slip up, usually with the result of one life lost.

IN THE NAVY

No, the Navy Seals aren't blue-hued sea mammals, they're an elite fighting force of trained killers. SEALS stands for Sea, Air and Land - there isn't anywhere that these guys are afraid to go. And if you think the name's a bit soft, it could be worse - they could have ended up being called the Navy SALS instead.

These crack commandos are used by the military to handle those difficult diplomatic situations. They operate in small groups, each man an expert in his own field.

Formed in the early '60s, the Seals were first

used in Vietnam. They were instrumental in the rescue of American citizens in Grenada. In Panama they ousted Manuel Noriega by playing REO Speedwagon at deafening volume, proving beyond doubt that they're truly ruthless.

Navy Seals is licensed from the Orion Pictures movie. The film stars Charlie Sheen and Michael Biehn as members of the funky fighting force. Unfortunately the film flopped in the States, and so was never put on general release in this country. It's due out on video, though, so if you're desperate to see it (you'd have to be - by all accounts it's pretty dire) you should be able to hire it from your local video rental library in the next month or so.

Tough doesn't mean impossible, however, and after many, many attempts you'll make it off the first level. Of course you then have to face exactly the same problems that you've just overcome. There's not an awful lot of variety between the levels (Ocean gave us a cheat to enable us to see them all, but we're not telling you what it is

there's still something compelling about it that keeps you coming back for more. The difficulty of completing the levels mean you'll still be playing the game in a month's time, not chucking it into the cupboard after a week. Though you may die (many times) trying, the urge to complete the mission is irresistible. It's hard, but the Navy Seals are harder.



Adam

SECOND OPINION
 "Wonderful graphics and sound make Navy Seals look like a winner. Indeed, it is excellent, but it's also far too difficult... that time limit is a real killer."
 Frank O'Connor

- ha!). Basically it's the same old story: missiles, kill the terrorists, and get off the level as quickly as possible.

Despite this, though, there's a lot of challenge in the game. Sure, it's very frustrating, but



● Bounding from platform to platform is darn difficult. Despite being a leathal killing machine, only half-hearted leaps can be made.



● A shadowy figure swings across the city skyline. One of the range of movements that your little chap can make.

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE
 Place bombs on all but one crate!

NAVY SEALS VERDICT

GRAPHICS..... 92%
 Nice sprites with some truly superb quality animation.

SONICS..... 81%
 No music in the game, but some excellent title music.

GRAB FACTOR..... 87%
 Very frustrating at first, but something keeps you at it.

STAYING POWER... 86%
 Six extremely tough levels, but all pretty much the same.

RATING 88%

You certainly won't be finishing Navy Seals too quickly, but it may be a little too tough.



● OK chaps, here we are at the enemy harbour. Our mission is to rescue the prisoner. Let's move!



● We must've taken a wrong turning somewhere. Oh well, knock out the communications tower.



● The map was upside down and we've landed up in the enemy barracks. Oh well, kill them all.



● Here we are at last. About time too. Right, where's the prisoner? Kill all the baddies to find out.



● C'mon, we haven't got all day! There's precious seconds to get to the US helicopter. Kill, kill, kill!



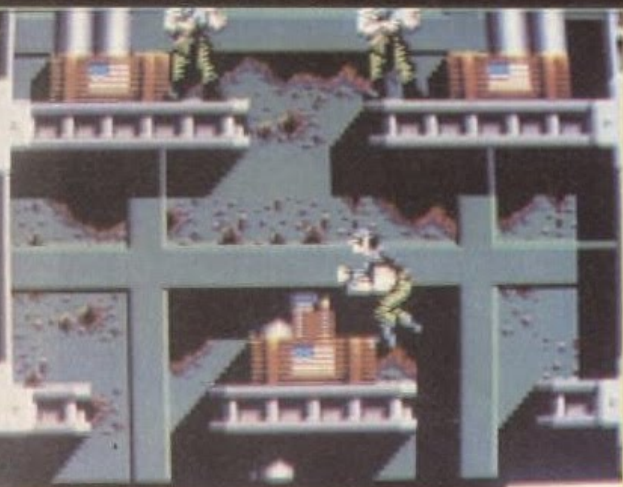
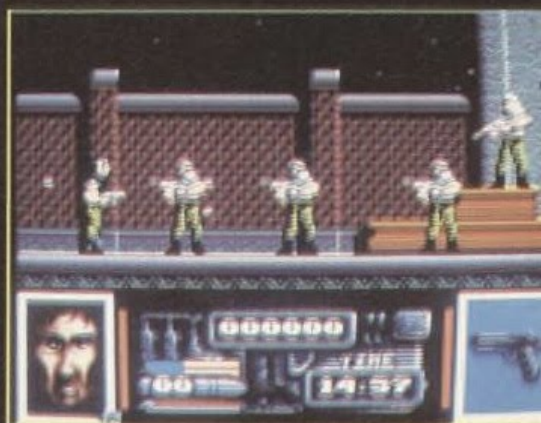
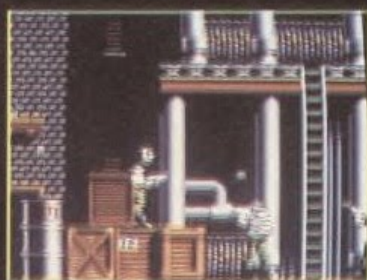
● All in a day's work for the Navy Seals. It isn't over yet though, it's off to Beruit for more killing!



Nope, not a game about paramilitary sea mammals clapping and catching fish, the Navy SEALs are the US Navy's equivalent to our SAS - and they don't even smoke Embassies. Based on the Charlie Sheen film (yet to be released in the UK), the game involves a team of SEALs infiltrating a Middle Eastern country to rescue hostages, killing, maiming, and blowing things up on the way.

The action takes place over six levels, each based in an exotic location, such as a harbour, barracks, and a radio tower. Each team member can jump, somersault on to platforms, crouch and crawl - as well as shoot, of course. The idea is to travel through the level, planting bombs and splattering Johnny Arab Terrorist all over the landscape within the tough time limit. Eight lives are all you get, and the time isn't reset when a SEAL dies, so there's no hanging around!

Luckily power-ups are liberally dispersed through the levels, usually in the form of weapon upgrades including machine guns and flame throwers. Not an easy game, lots of effort is required to free the hostages for truth, justice, and the American way!



▲ The places to plant bombs are cunningly disguised with American flags.

COMMENT



MATT

Whoops! Guess who's made their game too difficult? There's no problem with a hard-to-beat game, but this Ocean offering's just plain awkward to play. That's a shame, as there's a good game in there struggling to get out; and after the poor showing of Robocop II, I was hoping this would be the platform game to buy for the Amstrad. Still, it has its redeeming features; the animation of the hero swinging onto an overhead platform is superb, and it has that "just one more try" quality - although sometimes frustration makes you want to get the cartridge and bung it out of the window. If you're not the most patient of players, think twice before buying.

SEALED WITH A KILL

The Navy SEALs movie stars Charlie Sheen, best known for his performances in Platoon and Wall Street, and Michael Beihn, remembered as Reece in Terminator. The plot concerns a Navy helicopter that is shot down while on a jaunt through Beirut. The SEALs are sent to rescue their compatriots, and when they discover that the baddies have got their mitts on some nasty weapons (I wonder who sold the missiles to them?), they decide to annihilate the terrorists and escape. Unfortunately, the film hasn't been released yet in Britain - but it's expected to appear sometime in early next year.



GX4000

REVIEW



▼ The ladder's your only choice.



▲ A good tactic is to quickly leap up from behind crates, gun blazing.

SEALS



COMMENT

Navy SEALS features some brilliant graphics - the backdrops are nicely drawn and the animation is truly superb. The presentation is also very good, with a stunning title screen and good intermission screens. Even the basic game concept is exciting, requiring the player to sneak around Arab-infested buildings laying bombs and avoiding getting shot.

JULIAN

However, the big problem is that the game is hard. Frustratingly hard. Even though the game is always the same each time you play it (so it's just a case of learning exactly what to do in each situation) it's still amazingly tough since you've got an incredibly tight time limit and your men die or lose virtually all their energy if they fall even short distances. It's a great shame that the playability hasn't been properly balanced, because with a few tweaks to the basic gameplay this could have been an absolute stunner. As it is, it's a very tough and frustrating game which only very, very experienced players will enjoy.



▲ The second level - a Radio Tower.



▲ Back on the chain gang!

▲ A SEAL's flamethrower cuts swathes through the enemy.



BY: OCEAN

PRICE: £24.99

RELEASE DATE: DEC
 GAME DIFFICULTY: HARD
 LIVES: 8
 CONTINUES: 0
 SKILL LEVELS: 1
 RESPONSIVENESS: SLOW



PRESENTATION 80%

An opening screen displays all the levels, and the layout of the game is strong throughout.

GRAPHICS 82%

The main sprites are all are cleverly animated, and the backgrounds are atmospheric.

SOUND 76%

Rather unimpressive effects. The intro music is jolly, however, and adds atmosphere.

PLAYABILITY 71%

The main sprite moves in a lethargic way, and the difficulty level makes it very hard to progress.

LASTABILITY 77%

The game's big and tough, but the massive frustration level might mean you'll give up long before you reach the end.

OVERALL 76%

A brilliant-looking game which has plenty going for it, but is marred by frustratingly hard gameplay.

Oh no, it's the attack of the killer balloons! Get this. The Earth is being attacked by large, bouncy balls. The only thing standing between civilisation and domination by hordes of quivering gasbags (no, not the SDP) is... YOU.

Pang is a conversion of a smash arcade game. Fans of the arcade are just going to love the Amstrad console version to death. The screen layouts, puzzles and playability are identical - this conversion is beautifully faithful to the original.

There isn't really a plot to *Pang*, as such. All you really need to know is that at any second you're going to be attacked by one, two, three or more giant balloons. If you get hit by one you lose a life - but you do have a defence. You can fire a harpoon at these gaseous invaders, which splits them into two. OK, so you've now got twice as many balloons to dodge, but that's life. Hit these new (smaller) balloons with your harpoon, and they each break into two more... only the tiniest sub-balloons can finally be blasted into oblivion.

Inside each giant balloon there can be as many as eight tiny balloons trying to get out. If you want to stay alive, you should tackle the gasbags carefully, keeping the number on the screen to a minimum. Don't take too long over it, though, because you've a time limit for each level...

...And there are plenty of levels to get through. You start off with a map of the world and the option of starting your quest at any one of several famous locations. Wherever you choose to start, there are three screens to get through before you fly (not in a balloon, though) to the next location.

The screens start off easy enough, but that soon changes. Blocks start appearing on-screen, making it difficult to judge how the balloons will bounce. Some of the blocks can be shot away too (usually unintentionally!), further adding to the chaos.

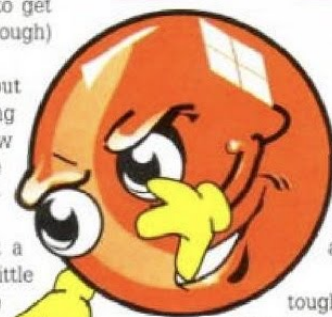
You soon realise that *Pang* isn't just a test of reflexes and strategy, but a tough little puzzle game too. For example there is one screen where as well as simply staying alive you have to stop more than a couple of the smallest balls dropping into a small enclosed section accessed by a



Everyone in the AA office hates this one. Two giant balloons and one large one - you need fast reflexes, perfect judgement, a cool head and a lot of luck. And 600 lives instead of 6 would be good.

PANG

OCEAN ■ £24.99
Cartridge

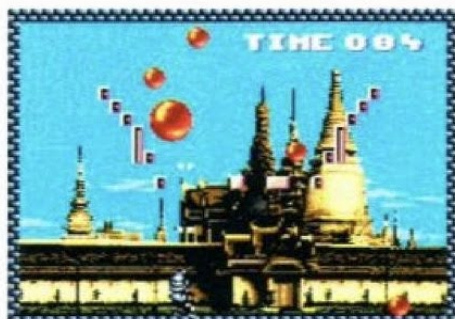


ladder. With more than two in there, you simply can't find a gap to get in there and wipe them out...

Life is certainly tough as a professional balloon-bagger, but you do have some help. If a crab appears from nowhere and goes scuttling across the screen, snapping its claws, don't worry. His claws are good at bursting balloons. If you walk into him you'll kill him, so leave him to it. You'll also encounter a large

whelk now and again. He's not so good. Walk into him and you lose the ability to fire your harpoon for precious seconds. (If you walk into the crab, he turns into a whelk, by the way.)

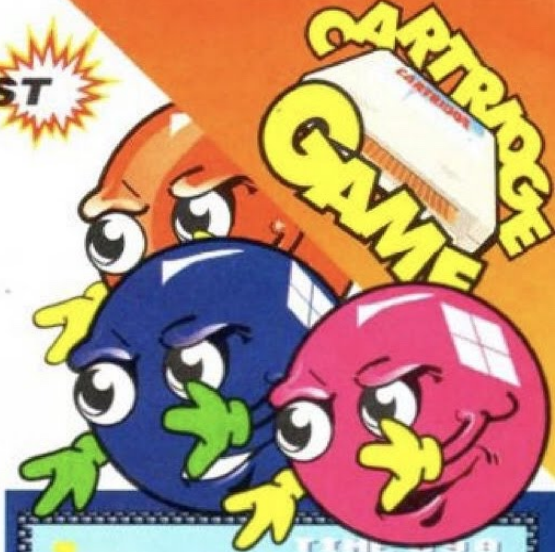
You can also collect weapons falling from punctured balloons. Your standard firearm is a harpoon (which looks like a giant corkscrew in use) but you can upgrade to a double harpoon, power-harpoon (stays on-screen for several seconds), vulcan missile (doesn't destroy blocks), dynamite (blows all the balloons into their smallest size), clock (stops the balloons for a few moments) and hourglass (slows the balloons).



Eek - you're in Moscow, and having to tackle a load of troublesome blocks as well as those pneumatic nasties.



This screen's a bit of a horror. The secret is to blast away those pink blocks, giving yourself more firing space.



SECOND OPINION

"Bursting balloons is a strange idea to base a game on... but it works! Ocean has produced a superbly playable bash, making good use of the console's features"
Adam Waring

The thing is, these power-ups don't always give you what you want. For example, if you're right at the start of a tricky screen with loads of giant balloons, you don't really want to go blowing them all up into thousands (well, it seems like it) of little ones by picking up the dynamite.

To avoid picking up weapons you don't want you have to not walk into them. That's right, there's no jumping in this game (though there are ladders and platforms). So avoiding weapons you don't want can restrict your movements severely. Fortunately, if you don't pick them up the weapons symbols first of all flash and then disappear from the screen.

Possibly the best (or worst!) thing about the whole game is the two-player mode. This is a genuine simultaneous two-player option, and you and your pal (but for how long?) play co-operatively to try to clear the screens of balloons.

"...simple, addictive, maddening, and more fun than could possibly be good for you"

However, although you've got twice the firepower, two brains don't always think as one. Basically, you can forget the strategy! And if just one player dies, the two of you have to start the screen all over again. Oh, frustration! Master the art of working as a team, though, and the two-player mode may help you get further through the game than ever you could on your own. With a total of 17 locations around the world, and three screens at each, there's a lot of balloon-popping to be done before your quest is over.

Pang's graphics are quite superb. The intro sequence looks as if it's straight off a 16-bit machine, and although the backgrounds to each location are done in mode 0 and are a bit blocky, the balloons, screen detail and sprites have obviously been put together using the enhanced cartridge hardware. 16-bit quality? On the

whole, not quite. But it is nearer 16-bit than 8-bit.

The sound, too, is quite superb. The soundtrack is excellent and suits the cute nature of the graphics perfectly. Sound effects are minimal, but equally well done.

Ocean has now produced some really excellent cartridge product. *Pang* is simple, addictive, maddening, and more fun than could possibly be good for you. It's also startlingly well done.



Rod

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Get to Moscow

PANG VERDICT

GRAPHICS..... 90%
 The graphics are a bit blocky, but the sprites are superb.

SONICS..... 95%
 Excellent soundtrack and very good in-game fx give the game an arcade feel.

GRAB FACTOR..... 92%
 You'll soon grasp the gameplay, and it'll surely grasp you!

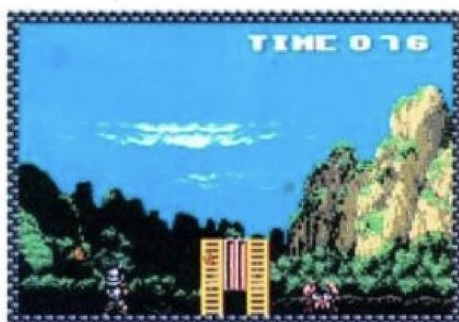
STAYING POWER... 90%
 Loads of locations, loads of puzzles and loads of difficulty.

RATING 93%

Pang is excellent! A superb conversion of a superb arcade game.



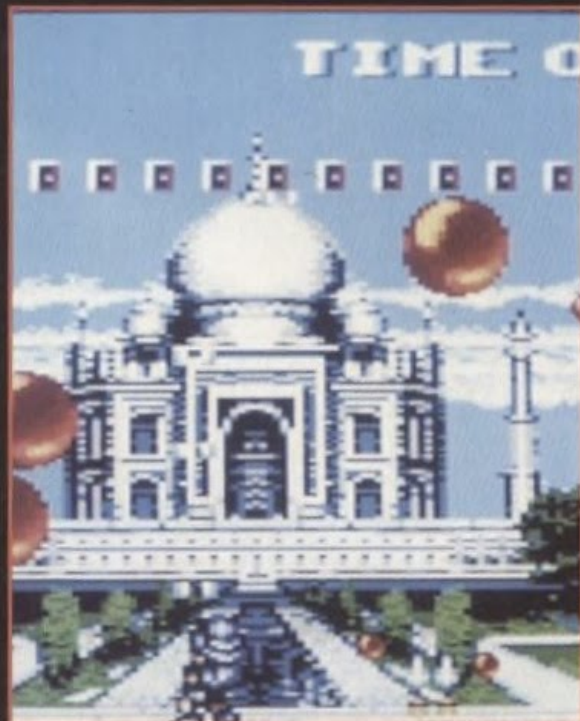
● The sun's going down over Mt Fuji. But you don't have time to admire the scenery - there's balloons to be wasted!



● That crab's your pal. Leave him to his own devices and he'll pop balloons until the cows come home (except there aren't any cows).



● How to blow away those ghastly gasbags...
 1: The giant balloons make easy targets. 2: But hit them with your harpoon, and you get two smaller ones. 3: Hit the smaller ones and you get two smaller ones again. 4: Yup, you guessed it, there's tiddler ones still. And they're all just as fatal if they hit you! Indiscriminate blasting is not recommended...



Blasting bubbles may not sound like the most exciting of pastimes, but when you're a professional globe-trotting bubble blitzer, it's all you can think of. And that's what you've got to do in Pang, a conversion of the wacky Mitchell coin-op.

You (plus a friend, if playing in simultaneous two-player mode) have to travel the world, see the sights, and blast the heck out of loads of bubbles with your trusty harpoon gun before they bounce you into the middle of next week! It's not as easy as you might think - once a bubble is shot, it splits into two smaller bubbles, each of which splits in two even smaller ones!

The odds aren't all against you, as some bubbles release power-ups which give you a better chance to clear the screen. Once all the bubbles are disposed of, it's on to the next part of the world, with even more bubbles!





COMMENT



MATT

Pang has to rate as one of the MEAN MACHINES crew's favourite coin-ops, and the GX4000 version is probably one of the best conversions you'll see on this machine for a long while. Bright colourful sprites, along with some absolutely gorgeous backdrops make the game a joy to watch, let alone play. And the boppy, bouncy music and effects only enhance the game further. My only niggle is that the collision detection is a little unforgiving at times, but with a game that's as addictive and fun to play as this, these things can be overlooked. Pang is a brilliant game that'll have you hooked from the word go - it's definitely one to get hold of at the first opportunity, mateys!

▼ The world is traversed by aeroplane as you clear the levels.



PICK A STAGE TO START ON
PRESS FIRE WHEN READY

▼ Caught between two mini bubbles!



▲ Leningrad's bubbles are red - well, what colour would they be?



▲ The blocks in Emerald Temple cause some tricky bounces, so watch out!



▲ Notre Dame looms in the background on the Parisian level.

IN THE ARCADES

Pang wasn't an astonishing arcade success, but it still picked up a strong following of avid fans. And these people will be pleased to hear that Mitchell are about to release a new coin-op, Super Pang. Following the same basic gameplay, but with different backdrops and even more challenging gameplay, it requires the heroes to once again travel the world and free it from all rogue bubbles! Weird, man...

I'M FOREVER BLASTING BUBBLES

Some of the power-ups are useful, some not so. Here's a list of which to grab and which to avoid...

MAGNETIC CLAMP: Enables the harpoon cable to stick to the ceiling or a platform. The cable then either disappears when a bubble comes into contact with it, or when it's been on screen for a set length of time.



SHOTGUN: Okay for screens with few or no obstacles, but when there are a lot of platforms, leave it well alone.



DYNAMITE: Eeek! This explodes every bubble on screen, turning them all into the smallest variety - which move like the clappers and are dead difficult to avoid!



TWIN CABLE: Well handy, because it increases your rate of firepower, giving you more of a chance to hit sneaky smaller bubbles.





REVIEW



▼ If you clear the screen quickly you get a massive points bonus.



BADDIE POPPIN'

As well as bubbles to burst, Pang also features a variety of baddies who like to make life difficult. Birds fly around the screen and are shot for bonus points. Crabs sneak around the edge of the playfield and stun you for a second or two, while snails bite your trigger finger so you can't shoot for a limited period of time. Avoid 'em or shoot 'em before they knobble you.



▲ Deadly danger from bouncing balls outside Parliament.



JULIAN

Pang is one of those incredibly simple, but amazingly addictive games which once you start playing you just can't stop. Combining detailed and smooth-moving graphics with irresistible gameplay, it's both challenging and enormously enjoyable. I know that bubble bursting doesn't sound particularly thrilling, but the action is fast and gets incredibly hectic, especially if you accidentally pick up the dynamite and end up with a screen full of maniacally bouncing mini-bubbles! On later levels icy floors make life difficult, and the bubbles move faster and faster, requiring much joystick-jiggling and reflex-testing! Pang is easily the best GX4000 title yet seen, and is an absolute must-have if you've got such a machine.

COMMENT



BY: OCEAN
 PRICE: £24.99
 RELEASE DATE: DEC
 GAME DIFFICULTY: EASY/MED
 LIVES: 5
 CONTINUES: 0
 SKILL LEVELS: 1
 RESPONSIVENESS: GREAT

1-2 PLAYERS

PRESENTATION 80%

A pretty nice still pic between levels, but that's about it.

GRAPHICS 93%

Brilliantly drawn, colourful sprites and backdrops, along with a natty map screen.

SOUND 83%

A jolly, boppy, bubbly sort of title track, along with some popping spot effects.

PLAYABILITY 95%

Instantly playable from the start...

LASTABILITY 91%

...and will have you hooked to your joypad until you've completed it!

OVERALL 93%

A brilliant conversion of a fun coin-op that simply demands purchase.

Wizard Pang! Chocks away and get gunning as the balloons start invading the countryside. They are certainly pretty things to look at, but they mean you no good at all and, if you want to survive in this excellent shootie with a difference, you'll need to grease up your trigger finger double quick.

As Pang, the fearless adventurer, your great task is to rid no fewer than 17



neatly into play arena and status bars at the bottom of the screen, enabling you to see clearly how well, or badly, you are doing, as well as telling you just where on Earth you are.

Pang

If you thought balloons were harmless playthings, think again!

countries of the dratted aerial invaders. No mean task at all. Especially when the balloons come in four different sizes, ranging from very big to very small.

Hit the big balloons and they start dividing up into smaller sizes, until they reach the smallest size. Hit the smallest balloons and you finally get rid of them for good, until the next level that is.

Destroy all the balloons and you actually get to move onto the next level, as long as

you've still got some breath left for the next onslaught.

If, on the first level and surrounded by the horrible blobs, you think all this sounds impossible, don't worry too much, as help is at hand in the form of power-up blasters.

Getting hold of harpoons and double harpoons will increase your firepower, as will the power harpoon, destroying balloons and blocks in your way.

The handy vulcan missile will help to take out a few balloons, while the dynamite will blast all of the balloons

all of them, as they may even want to help you. However, it's up to you to find out which are on your side.

Pang is a brilliantly thought out shootie, using excellent graphics on the cartridge ROM and featuring some superb sound effects.

The screen is divided

With Special bonus points to be had for shooting all the balls of the same size, and time bonuses for quick clear-ups, Pang is a totally addictive blast from start to finish. You certainly won't put it down in a hurry and, if at first you don't succeed, you know what to do. Get back into the fray as soon as possible.

Happy hunting and be careful out there!

John Taylor



into their smallest size, leaving you to pick them off one by one.

Making good use of the clock and hourglass, you can slow the baddies down, allowing for double pot-shot power.

At the same time, watch out for the different beasts crawling around on your travels. Shoot some, but not

ROUND-UP			
NAME	Pang		
FROM	Ocean	PRICE	Cartridge £24.99
94%	90%	95%	
GRAFFIX	SONIX	PLAYABILITY	VERDICT

PLOTTING



OCEAN ■ £24.50 cartridge

Puzzle games, eh? Can't get enough of the things, can you? Well you can, actually. *Plotting* is yet another in a long line of generic releases of games that combine brain power along with joystick power. It all started with *Tetris* in the late '80s. But that was then, this is now...

For a game called *Plotting*, it doesn't have much of one. You play a little round blob who fires blocks at another pile of blocks. The idea is to reduce this pile - which happens when two like blocks collide. Get rid of enough and you're through to the next round.

Your character stands at the left hand side of the screen, with the pile of blocks on the right (reversed if you're player two). If you had hands, you'd be carrying a block in them. As it is, one hovers at your side. Line yourself up with a matching block, press Fire, and it shoots away, absorbing the matching block. You can fire at the blocks horizontally, or hit them from above by bouncing them off walls. (When bouncing a block off a wall, an arrow indicates which one it will end up hitting.)

Actually, what happens when the blocks collide is a bit weird. The matching block that you hit disappears. The next block along is replaced by the block you fired. The block that's replaced flies over to you, so you have something to fire on your next go. Should there be a row of the same kind of blocks, then the whole lot will disappear. Clear as mud, eh? Better take a butchers at the box that explains it more clearly, then!

But it is complicated. Even when you've read and understood the rules, there are still situations where your not sure exactly what's going to happen.



Later levels have more complicated screen shapes to increase the difficulty.

True, you can sit down with the instructions and work out every move, but can you be bothered with that?

There are four different types of blocks, all colour coded and with different symbols - so you can't claim to have lost because you got them mixed up. These are seemingly randomly stacked at the start of each game, but in fact are set to the same pattern each time you load. This means, presumably, that the best method to complete each screen can be worked out and adhered to. (The starting patterns are different for the two players, though, so you can choose to be 'player

two' for variety.)

A pre-determined number of blocks need to be eliminated before you can go on to the next screen. To be honest, there's not a lot of difference between levels, apart from the pattern of



Every life is started with a 'zapper' block which will take out anything. Occasionally these appear in the pile, and can be picked up for an extra life.

walls and pipes that serve to deflect the blocks as you fire them.

The walls always keep to the top corner of the screen, and the varying pattern prescribes which columns of blocks can be hit from above. Pipes have a virtually identical role to walls, apart from that blocks can pass through them on their downwards path. When hit from the side the blocks bounce off at an angle.

"For a game called Plotting, it doesn't have much of one."

You're given three lives at the start of a game. These are lost when there are no matching blocks to hit - a situation that is automatically calculated by the computer. Should this occur, then you're given a 'zapper' block, which is capable of taking out any other type. Extra 'zappers' can be found amidst the pile of blocks. Hit one of these and you're given another life. (Hurrah!)

More drastic than losing a life is running out of time. In this situation, all remaining lives are forfeited. It shouldn't happen unless you get really tired of the game (or you're really crap), though; to say the time limits are rather generous is a bit of an understatement.

The basics of the game are very simple, but have been prettied up with cutsie graphics. The little character is a sort of furry blob with eyes. The blocks look rather like the ones used in *Puzznic*. In fact, they're identical, and indeed the arcade

machine the game is derived from comes from the same manufacturer, Taito. The backdrops change every couple of levels. These are rather basic, and merely serve as something to play against; they have no function in the gameplay.

By any standards, the graphics are excellent. They don't really need to be for this sort of game, but they are.

A tune plays continuously throughout the game. It's very nicely done, and not that annoying - even after some time. There's very little in the way of spot effects, but then again, there's little variety in the things that happen in the game.

The trick is to anticipate what will happen when you fire off your blocks. Only by working out the consequences of your actions will you avoid losing all your lives in the first two minutes.

And that's where the problems lie: you have to spend far too much time thinking what's going to happen, rather than actually playing the game.

This is not a problem in such games as *Puzznic*, where there are definite puzzles to solve. But this game lacks the excitement of beating the brain-teasers against the clock. The time limit isn't at all tight, and there's just not enough action.

Adam Waring

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Work out what's going on!

PLOTTING VERDICT

GRAPHICS..... 92%
Beautiful graphics that could be mistaken for the arcade machine's.

SONICS..... 85%
Frontic tune that's not too infuriating!

GRAB FACTOR..... 81%
You get sucked in by the polish and instant playability.

STAYING POWER... 70%
Will it keep you interested? Maybe, maybe not.

RATING 75%

Plenty of playability, but not as compelling as other puzzle games.

SECOND OPINION
"It looks terrific, but once you get to grips with the gameplay (if you ever do!) it starts getting decidedly dull. The time limits are too long and the rules too hard to grasp."
Rod Lawton

Two's company?

It's a golden gaming rule: double the number of players and you'll double the fun. *Plotting* has a simultaneous two-player option, but it's very different to most 'normal' two player games.

A two-player mode traditionally allows you and a chum to either team up against the invading space-fiends, or go against one another. (Usually you can do both; you're supposed to help each other, but being nasty is more fun!)

But in *Plotting*, the two players don't interact at all. Each player has their own playing area, it's almost, no exactly, like having two entirely separate games. You can compete in scoring the most points, or completing each level before one another, but that's about as competitive as it gets.



● *Plotting* is a two-player game, but is played in independent screen areas. There's no interaction between the two players at all, save trying to beat each other's score!

A load of old blocks



1: Ready for your lesson in block-busting? Line up with the type of block you're carrying.



2: Press Fire and *whoosh!* Off it goes, eliminating the block it bumps into.



3: The block behind is then flung back at you. Anything unsupported falls down.



4: It works going downwards too! The block will bounce off the wall when it hits it.



5: The red spot disappears, and the black cross is thrown back to you.



6: Right, what can we do with this, then? The arrow tells you what you're lined up with.



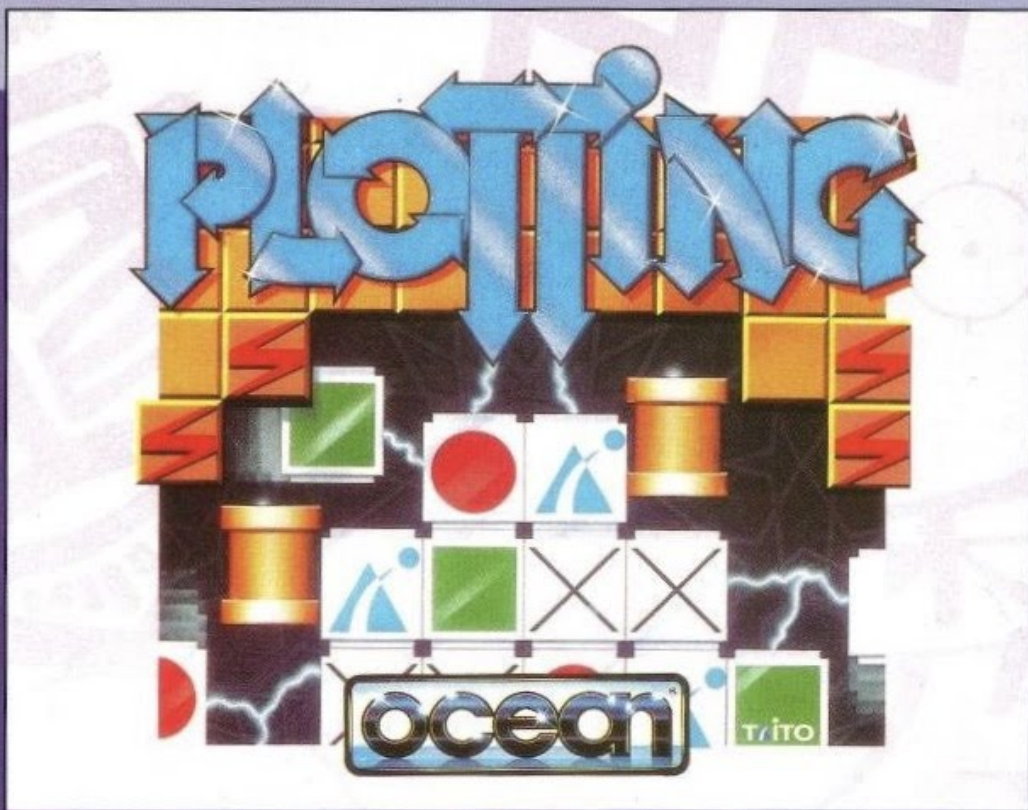
7: You thought that was good? Well take a look at this! We have three blues lined up.



8: Bam! Got the lot of 'em! All three disappear, the block we fired replaces the red.



9: Getting loads of blocks like this not only looks cool but scores lots of points!



Switching on this superb cartridge offering, it all starts off so very easily. The aim of the game is very, very simple; all you have to do is throw blocks to eliminate blocks of the same colour against the wall and reduce the number of total blocks on-screen to less than a pre-set target number within the time limit.

What could be simpler than that? Ok, you obviously haven't played Plotting yet. Deviously simple, yet brain-

numbingly frustrating, this little beauty will have you pulling your hair out by the roots before you've got past the third stage.

To eliminate a block, you can either hit it directly from the side, or use the roof to bounce your own block down onto the desired target.

Once the block has been knocked out, the one directly behind it will be thrown out for your next move. The idea being, that you must plot your next moves very, very carefully indeed. Otherwise you'll be left with a block that you can't do anything with.

PLOTTING

Are simple games really that addictive? You bet. Try this one for size.



Do this, or miss a block and you'll lose a precious life, something you can ill-afford to do on the early levels.

Keep your eyes peeled for the Zapper blocks, which enable you to destroy any type of block, allowing you to pick the best route to the target figure and gaining a valuable extra life in the process.

To start off with, the set

target is nine blocks remaining but, as you progress, this target will drop, making life even harder against the clock.

That, basically, is that. Sounds amazingly simple,

but Plotting really is one of those games that you have to play for yourselves to find out just how devious it really is.

Positioning blocks of the same colour in a row and eliminating them together will earn you extra points and, if you manage to get well under the pre-set target, there are plenty of bonus points to pick up there as well.

Making a mental note of block formations is very advisable, enabling you to pick up every spare point available to get to the high scores.

As a one player game, Plotting is a masterpiece but, as a two player game it really is a winner. The action is fast and furious and you'll end up hating your opponent very, very soon.

Using some excellent graphics and a nicely melodic soundtrack, Plotting is a masterfully put together package that is guaranteed to entertain for a long, long time.

John Taylor

ROUND-UP			
NAME	Plotting		
FROM	Ocean	PRICE	Cartridge £24.99
92%	89%	92%	
GRAFFIX	SONIX	PLAYABILITY	VERDICT



ACTION TEST

DOMARK ■ £24.99 cartridge



● On the easy level things are quite slow and sedate. However, don't get too cocky too early, things have a frightening tendency to speed up rapidly.

At last, Atari's sexy puzzling coin-op finally makes it onto the console (and the Plus range for that matter). The original arcade machine was one of a plethora of Tetris rip-offs. Actually, "rip-off" may be a little harsh, as Klax is a very good game in its own right. The question is, how good is the GX4000 version?

The game involves stacking tiles at the bottom of a screen as they fall towards you. Sound familiar? The parallels between Klax and Tetris are easy to spot, but the differences are just as important. Instead of assembling shapes, as you do in Tetris, you must stack rows of corresponding colours.

The colours must be piled either vertically, horizontally, or diagonally, and a row of at least three tiles of the same colour is a "Klax". Making a complete Klax makes those tiles vanish, giving you more room in the limited stacking box. Although it is often easy to make such a stack, the computer has ways of making things difficult.



● A klax is a line, diagonally, horizontally, or vertically, of three or more tiles of the same colour. Diagonals are hardest, but score most.

At the start of each screen, a set target will be given, it could be as simple as three Klaxs (Klax's? Klaxi? Klaxies?), but it could be something a lot more difficult, like five diagonals, or ten Klaxs. Often the computer will give you a large target score to beat before it will allow you to see the next level.

The tiles are grabbed as they fall, by the small paddle you control. You then move the paddle to the column you wish

SECOND OPINION
"Though a fine game in itself, nothing has been done to take advantage of the console's special features. A real pity. It could have made a good game great."
Adam Waring

to place your captured tile in. Press the Fire button, and the tile drops into place. Your paddle can hold up to five tiles at once, although dropping

them in the right places in the right sequence is another matter. If things start getting on top of you, you can flip the topmost tile back onto the track, giving you either breathing space, or strategic placement.

Great fun can be had by trying to get huge bonuses, by getting large Klaxs, or by making difficult shapes, like the near impossible "X".



● As you progress through the game, the background graphics change, as does the speed and number of tiles... aargh!

Secret warps to higher levels are available, but things get very difficult, very quickly.

The graphical quality in Klax is of a very decent standard. The tiles tumble convincingly enough, and there are some pretty backgrounds to keep you amused. The colours, very important in this game, work exceptionally well, but can be a little confusing when a lot is happening at once.

The sound is limited to the bangs and clanks of the tiles, but special mention should be given to the Klax anthem. It stinks. It's not big, and it's not clever, and nobody thinks that the person who came up with this mind numbingly irritating tune is hard or cool. Let's go round to his house and smash all his windows (it really is that bad).

The gameplay is fun, sometimes great fun, but is marred by the exaggerated inertia imposed on your paddle, a feature which was not so heavily emphasised in the arcade original. Klax has the kind of long lasting appeal that'll make you want to come back for more, time and time again. A worthy contender to the Tetris throne, but it does have its problems...

...One of which is the price. We reviewed Klax on the ordinary CPCs a while back, and looked forward with glee to the console version. All excited we were, squirming in our seats, Uncle Rod had to tell us to sit still and behave. Finally it arrived, and believe it or don't, they are both absolutely identical.

Not one noticeable difference. No change in speed, colour or sound. So can you justify spending ten, maybe fifteen quid more for the privilege of instant loading?



Frank

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Get to level ten, or make an "X"

KLAX VERDICT

GRAPHICS..... 78%
Attractive and functional, with just a hint of style.

SONICS..... 68%
Excellent spot fx spoiled completely by that tune!

GRAB FACTOR..... 89%
Instant addiction, helped by simple gameplay.

STAYING POWER... 84%
So much to see and do, especially with the bonus options.

RATING 78%

Just the same as the tape version. It's a great game, but poor value

The light fantastic

Remember the old Amstrad lightgun? Well forget it again straight away, because Trojan's Phazer is miles better. What's more, the company is also com-

mitted to the Amstrad cartridge format. It should be - it makes them! Simon Forrester sets his sights on two new - and affordable! - cart games

Shoot to thrill

Remember your old Atari consoles? Amongst those cheap joysticks and paddles, you probably had a lightgun hidden away in the corner. Remember skeet-shooting? Well, this technology has been hauled forward into 1993 by Trojan Software, who have produced their own lightgun - the Phazer - plus two games. And they're on cartridge...!

The whole light revolution started with the early light pens, which were a barrel with a light sensitive wotsit at one end, and a hole at the other. The location of the pointer is worked out by detecting to a split second when the photon beam passes under the tip of the pen.

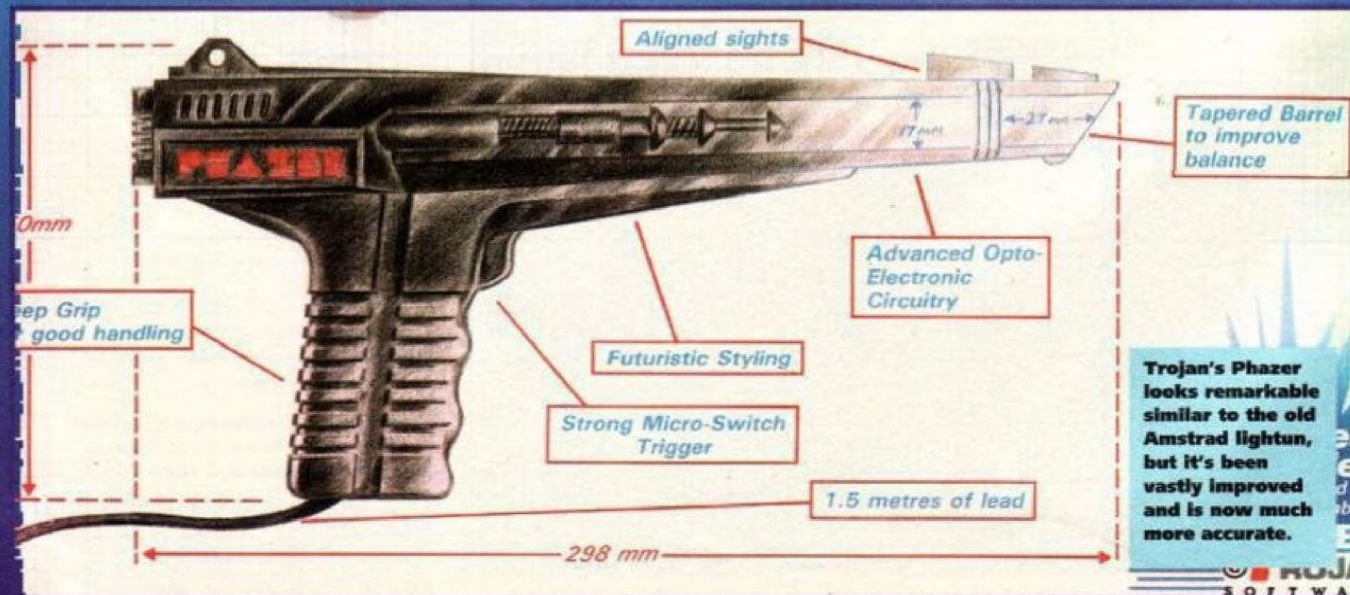
One such pen was distributed by Trojan, and it must be said that it was completely crap. Lack of

Amstradian foresight (or even care) when the CPC was produced meant the Trojan pen had to resort to a hideously slow form of detection, making movement of the pen jerky, and hideously slow.

For some reason, they have managed to overcome these problems with the Plus Machines (and GX4000). This may have something to do with the analogue port (the phone socket-style, er, socket next to the joystick ports), as it would allow greater accuracy, etc. Add this to a nifty lens in the tip of the pen, and you should have a light pen that is infinitely better already. However, strengthen the lens, add a trigger and a handle, and change the shape a little, and you should have a light gun extraordinaire! Enter the Phazer.

It fits neatly in the hand (even in your clumsy slabs - ed) and has a reasonable sight on the top (if you've never seen a real gun sight before, you'll do just fine). The cable is about two metres long, allowing you to sit a fair way away from your machine, and it seems that distance does not affect the gun's operational accuracy.

You can obtain the gun, bundled with *Skeet Shoot*, exclusively from Trade-In-Post (find the ad in AA), for a price below £34.99 (TIP are planning to sell below the RRP). You can also obtain *The Enforcer*, a second cart game designed for a gun (but not bundled with it) for a hideously low price, plus any other cart games you care to mention at varying prices.



Skeet Shoot

Trojan (comes with Phazer) ● 0554 777993

We call it clay pigeon shooting. It's the Americans that call it 'skeet-shooting'. Oh, and Trojan software. It's disgraceful what's happening to the English language...

"Pull!" What the hell is that?

"Pull!" The tug-of-war solo practices?

"Pull!" Someone having a tapeworm removed?

"Pull!" Oh. It's Rod in a deerstalker. Well, you know what they say, he with the biggest gun has the quietest bullets.

Seriously though, *Skeet Shoot* is good. It has no plot, no goal other than to visit all of the locations (which, incidentally, are represented by some beautifully drawn backdrops), and no special effects. It is plain and simple skill, practice, and fun. The aim of the game is to shoot the skeets. You have a time limit in which to shoot the required amount, and a limited supply of bullets per skeet. Thats it.



Watch the birdie! More to the point, shoot those eggs (but not the silver ones).

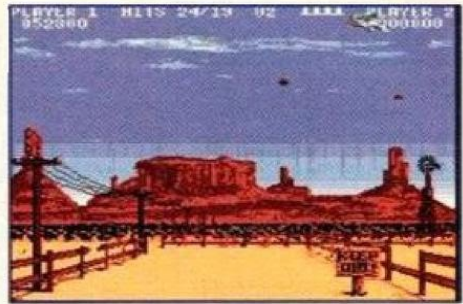
Having said that, there's plenty of nice little features within this rather limiting format, the first being bonuses. On all levels, every now and again, a little goose flies along the top of the screen, releasing eggs when shot. These eggs, when they in turn are shot, give special bonuses, the most useful of which is extra time. Extra point bonus coins fly up from the ground occasionally, so we'd shoot those too if we were you.

Skeet Shoot consists of six levels, each broken up into two normal rounds, and one bonus round. The bonus round sees the geese (the ones you tried to horribly maim - remember?) flying overhead, dropping more eggs which must be shot - though you'd better learn to discriminate between gold and silver ones, as the latter detract from your score.

On top of these extras, some thought has obviously gone into entertaining (distracting) you from the main objective. On some levels, this chuffing great spaceship flies through Monument Valley, or people are busy duffing each other up at Mount Fuji.

One final thing that may or may not impress you with is the way you enter your name on the high score table (Oh, you saw it then, did you Simon? - ed). It involves shooting one of four icons to scroll the letters left or right, select them, and finish. You that you might have trouble entering your name if you're crap, but if that's the case, you won't ever get the chance to enter it!

This game is the perfect companion for your light gun. The graphics are nice, the sonix aren't intrusive, the difficulty is pitched just right, and all in all it's a good 'un!



Skeet-shooting in Monument Valley. Cool!

VERDICT

GRAPHICS

Nice backdrops and the skeets, birds, bonus coins etc all move really smoothly

87%

SONICS

Very good gunshot-style sound effects, but not too much else. But then what do you need?

82%

GRAB FACTOR

You'll pick it up in an instant yet play it for hours. It's simple, but it's also dead addictive

93%

STAYING POWER

OK, so it's not long on gameplay. Simple arcade fun can still keep you happy for a long time, though

76%

A simple game that's brilliantly executed - excellent

RATING 85%

The Enforcer

Trading Post ● 0952 462135 ● £TBA cart

Dying for a drink? (Uh oh, joke coming up). You will in this game!. (Thought so) It's Chicago, it's 1932, and you're right in the middle of a Prohibition gang fight...

Your job is to gun down dozens of bad guys as they pop up from beind trash cans (that's American dustbins), peer out of windows and generally hide like cowards.



Shoot! Shoot them all! Great fun, but hard.

Unfortunately, these gangsters also carry guns. If you happen to shoot any civilians (you dirty dog you!) all you will loose is points (I like to see morals in games - ed), and this is extremely inadvisable as in this game points aren't all that easy to come by...

The game is played *Operation Wolf* style, though the screen won't move - you have to kill a pre-determined number of goons before you can progress any further down the street. There are also nice little bonus levels in between locations, involving loads of bottles of booze and some blokeys trying frantically to pack it. Your job here is to shoot the whiskey before it gats packed. Missing one bottle means the end of the bonus level (a tad harsh), as does shooting a (legitimate) bottle of water.

The Enforcer is hideously difficult. Getting on to a bonus level is damned near impossible, and these levels do not last for long anyway. This is a nicely presented game, with nice sonics (what little there are) and nice graphics, but marred horribly by the fact that it is way too difficult.

VERDICT

GRAPHICS

Good, but nothing special given that the extra hardware of the cartridge machines is being used

71%

SONICS

Again, nothing especially riveting here. Lots of shooty noises, but then you'd kind of expect them...

50%

GRAB FACTOR

Fast and (initially) addictive gameplay gets you hooked at the start, even if you don't get very far...

80%

STAYING POWER

...and you never will, either, because this game is seriously difficult. Those bad guys are too fast

67%

Quite a nice-looking game, but there's not a lot of depth to it and it really is rather difficult

RATING 88%

GX 4000

BARBARIAN II

GX4000

Take control of either a sword-slinging Amazon, or an axe-wielding barbarian and hack and slash your way through four levels of flick-screen action and defeat the evil wizard who resides on the last level.

The graphics are simple, but brilliantly animated (some of the baddies are utterly superb), and there are some great touches like the hero's head being bitten off by a giant dragon.

It's all great fun, and is highly recommended to arcade adventure fans who like a bit of violence.

OVERALL 88%

EPYX WORLD OF GAMES

GX4000

Four events make up this sports simulation - BMXing, downhill skiing, surfing and cliff diving. There are multiple player and practice options which are selectable at the start of the game, and the events can be played singly, or in any order.

While the graphics are first class, unfortunately they don't cover the fact that there's simply not enough game in this package. All the events are easy to complete, and gaining record scores is easy in just a few sittings.

Had there been more events, this would have come highly recommended. As it stands it's a below average game which won't keep you occupied for more than a day or two.

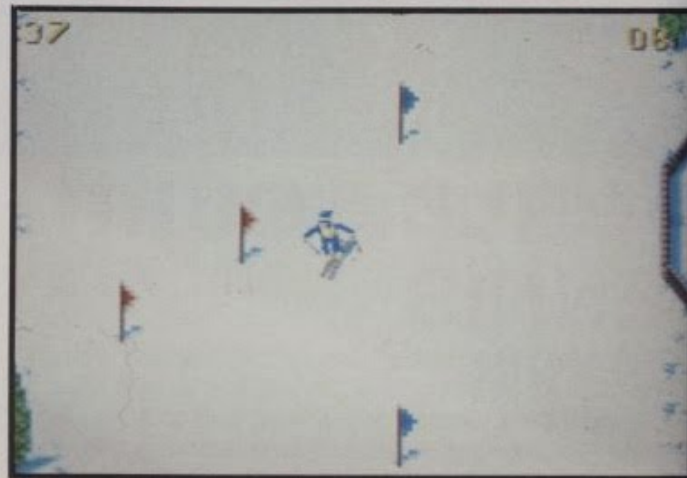
OVERALL 49%

FIRE AND FORGET II

GX4000

When you read the scenario, Fire and Forget II sounds full of promise, with the player required to take to the road in a super-powered combat car and blow up everything in sight.

When you get to play it, though, you discover that the 3D update is rubbish, the car handling is atrocious, the graphics are terrible, the sound is feeble and the game itself is about as enjoyable as having six-inch nails banged into your kneecaps. It's just awful and shouldn't



have ever seen the light of day.

By the way, Crazy Cars II, which we've seen a preview copy of uses the same graphics system and plays in a very similar way, so you're advised to give that a miss, too.

OVERALL 28%

KLAX

GX4000

Klax is a strange sort of arcade puzzle game in which tiles of different colours roll down the screen on a conveyor belt and you've got to pick them up and drop them into a bin at the bottom of the screen in an attempt to make "klaxes" - lines of three similarly-coloured tiles, either horizontally, vertically or diagonally.

If a complete line is made, all the tiles disappear and the rest of the tiles fall downwards. If you fail to reach a set number of klaxes before the bin fills up with tiles it's game over. The game also ends if you let three tiles drop off the edge of the conveyor belt.

It's quite good fun, but the implementation of this version is disappointing. The tiles are badly drawn and animated, and the handling of the paddle is poor. Ardent arcade fans might enjoy the action, but really we can't recommend it to anyone else.

OVERALL 66%

NAVY SEALS

GX4000

Navy Seals is a combat game with action taking place over six levels, each based in an exotic location, such as a harbour, barracks, and a radio tower. Each team member can jump, somersault on to platforms, crouch and crawl - as well as shoot, of course. The idea

is to travel through the level, planting bombs and splattering Johnny Arab Terrorist all over the landscape within the tough time limit. Eight lives are all you get, and the time isn't reset when a SEAL dies, so there's no hanging around!

Luckily power-ups are liberally dispersed through the levels, usually in the form of weapon upgrades including machine guns and flame throwers.

Navy SEALs features some brilliant graphics - the backdrops are nicely drawn and the animation is truly superb. However, the big problem is that the game is hard. Frustratingly hard. Even though the game is always the same each time you play it (so it's just a case of learning exactly what to do in each situation) it's still amazingly tough since you've got an incredibly tight time limit and your men die or lose virtually all their energy if they fall even short distances. It's a great shame that the playability hasn't been properly balanced, because with a few tweaks to the basic gameplay this could have been an absolute stunner. As it is, it's a very tough and frustrating game which only very, very experienced players will enjoy.

OVERALL 76%

OPERATION THUNDERBOLT GX4000

It's sharp-shootin' time. An enemy force has hijacked an aeroplane and have forced it to land deep inside their country. There's only one thing to do - call the super commandos to infiltrate the country, leap onto the plane and fly it and the passengers to safety.

The action is displayed using horizontally scrolling and 3D graphics, and the idea is to simply blast everything that gets in your way using a crosshair to aim your gun.

It's very fast and furious, and sometimes the amount of enemy soldiers seems to be overwhelming! Still, if you stick with it, there's plenty to keep a player happy, and getting through all six levels takes some doing.

The graphics and sound are a little disappointing, but the pulse-pounding action more than makes up for it. Check it out if you're after a fast and challenging game.

OVERALL 80%

PANG GX4000

Blasting bubbles may not sound like the most exciting of pastimes, but when you're a professional globe-trotting bubble blitzer, it's all you can think of. And that's what you've got to do in Pang, a conversion of the wacky Mitchell coin-op.

You (plus a friend, if playing in simultaneous two-player mode) have to travel the world, see the sights, and blast the heck out of loads of bubbles with your

trusty harpoon gun before they bounce you into the middle of next week! It's not as easy as you might think - once a bubble is shot, it splits into two smaller bubbles, each of which splits in two even smaller ones!

The odds aren't all against you, as some bubbles release power-ups which give you a better chance to clear the screen. Once all the bubbles are disposed of, it's on to the next part of the world, with even more bubbles!

Pang is one of those incredibly simple, but amazingly addictive games which once you start playing you just can't stop. Combining detailed and smooth-moving graphics with irresistible gameplay, it's both challenging and enormously enjoyable. Bubble bursting doesn't sound particularly thrilling, but the action is fast and gets incredibly hectic, especially if you accidentally pick up the dynamite and end up with a screen full of maniacally bouncing mini-bubbles! On later levels icy floors make life difficult, and the bubbles move faster and faster, requiring much joystick-jiggling and reflex-testing! Pang is easily the best GX4000 title yet seen, and is an absolute must-have if you've got such a machine.

OVERALL 93%

ROBOCOP II GX4000

Take control of the metallic lawman and guide him through scrolling platform levels, two puzzle screens and an Operation Wolf-style shoot-out section in the

Although Robocop 2 features some brilliant graphics, there are some very annoying gameplay features which will have you literally screaming with frustration. The collision detection is very dodgy - Robo often dies when it seems that he's well clear of a deadly obstacle, and he also has a habit of falling through holes in the floor when he turns around too close to them. Another annoying feature is that some harmful objects are so well blended into the backdrops, you don't actually realise they're deadly until you've walked into them - aaagh! It's a shame that these features are present, because they let down the excellent puzzle and shoot-out screens. Robocop 2 offers a considerable challenge which only hardened gamers will get the most from.

OVERALL 78%

SWITCHBLADE GX4000

Although Switchblade doesn't look too exciting, it's one of the best platform games around.

The aim of the game is to guide your kicking and punching hero through the flick-screen landscape, doing battle with anything that gets in your way and picking up any power-up you manage to uncover.

There are loads of hidden screens, and a huge landscape which is just dying to be mapped. It's tough, but very, very rewarding indeed, and is highly recommended to all GX4000 owners.

OVERALL 92%

FUJI-RD

SAFETY



● Rat-a-tat-tat! Dick lets 'em have it. This is inside the Ritz club towards the end of the first level.



● Looks like Dick's number's up. It's a pity he's run out of bullets and has got halfway through level three.

19A 19B

20

E

21A 22B

DICK TRACY

TITUS ■ £29.99 cartridge

There's trouble brewing downtown as well as the bourbon. Lips Manlis, owner of the Ritz nightclub, has gone missing in very peculiar circumstances. Now Dick Tracy ain't gonna shed no tears for Lips, after all he's as big a hood as they come. But if he doesn't make an appearance soon, all the other gangster will be fighting over his territory - and that spells trouble. What's more, Dick's name has been inscribed in bullet holes on the wall. Looks like it could be something personal...

So Dick sets out, hot on the trail of the missing mobster. First place to visit would logically be the Ritz, the last place that Lips was seen alive. However, someone wants to keep exactly what happened a secret, and Dick's journey isn't going to be an easy one.



● Eat lead scum! Dick can use his fists, his pistol or his machine gun to mow down the hoodlums. Careful though - some fire back!

The gangsters are out in force, and they ain't scared. The good news is that Dick is armed with a machine gun and revolver. The bad news is that he neglected to bring any bullets with him... shmuck!

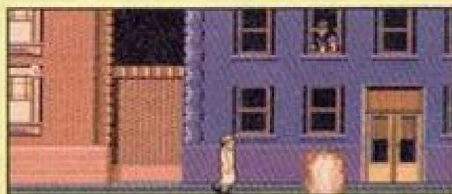
The baddies are either unarmed, carry pistols or machine guns. Knock out an armed baddie and you can nick his ammunition. This is how Dick replenishes his supply. As well as the guys he'll meet on street level, others take pot

shots at him high up from windows and on top of buildings.

Dick is dressed in the brightly coloured garb that's made him famous. The whole game, in fact, is bright and colourful. The animation's a little bit dodgy, though, with Dick waddling, rather than walking his way through the game.

Dick Tracy is a tough game. Not because of cunning traps or well designed stages. It has far more to do with gameplay flaws than anything else. For a start, the system to switch Dick's weapon is clumsy. Down and Fire Two need to be pressed simultaneously to change. The problem is that in the heat of battle it's difficult to do without coming to a sticky end.

Shooting other gun-wielding guys you come across on the sidewalk doesn't usually present a problem; just duck down as soon as you see them and shoot them. The people that lean out



● That chap in the window isn't going to let you pass easily. Come within a few feet and you'll be under a barrage of dynamite.

of windows and from the top of buildings presents a rather more formidable problem. They fire at you constantly. To shoot them you have to be at an angle of around 45 degrees. It's inevitable that you get shot at least once in your efforts to pump 'em full of lead.

Revisit the same area after the screen's scrolled and all the baddies that you've already killed reappear in the same place. Now there's no reason to retrace your steps, but should a

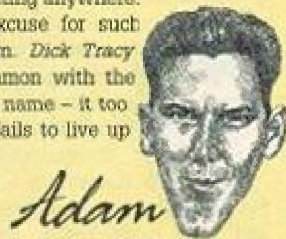
SECOND OPINION
 "It looks great until you play it! The enhanced hardware has been used to produce some excellent sprites and scrolling, but the gameplay is dull and control is fiddly." *Red Lawton*

goon get the better of you, then you're sent sprawling backwards.

You do have to watch your bullet supply too. Waste them and it could be terminal. There places where you simply need firepower, and if you're out of ammo, you may as well switch the machine off and start again. Especially annoying if you'd got a long way into the game.

All these points are forgivable in isolation, but added together they make the game incredibly frustrating and very tedious. It's unfairness, rather than any lack of skill on the player's part, that stops you getting anywhere.

There's no excuse for such poor game design. Dick Tracy has more in common with the film than just the name - it too is mediocre and fails to live up to the hype.



FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Get to the Ritz

DICK TRACY VERDICT

GRAPHICS..... 76%
 Nice and colourful graphics let down by poor animation.

SONICS..... 70%
 Little to choose between the sound FX or rather grim music.

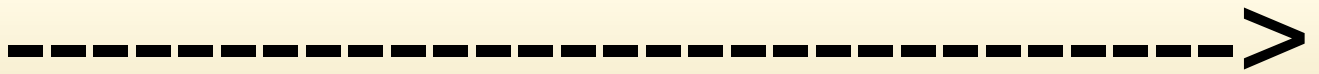
GRAB FACTOR..... 69%
 Initial impressions are good - DT is recognisable and easy to control

STAYING POWER... 47%
 Poorly thought out game design makes for a frustrating time.

RATING 52%

Dick Tracy doesn't play well and isn't going to keep you coming back for more.

Feature Articles



AMSTRAD GX4000

SUPPLIER: Available from high street shops.

PRICE: £99.99

COMMENTS: None.

GRAPHICS: 32 colours on-screen from a palette of 4096.

SOUND: Limited four-channel stereo.

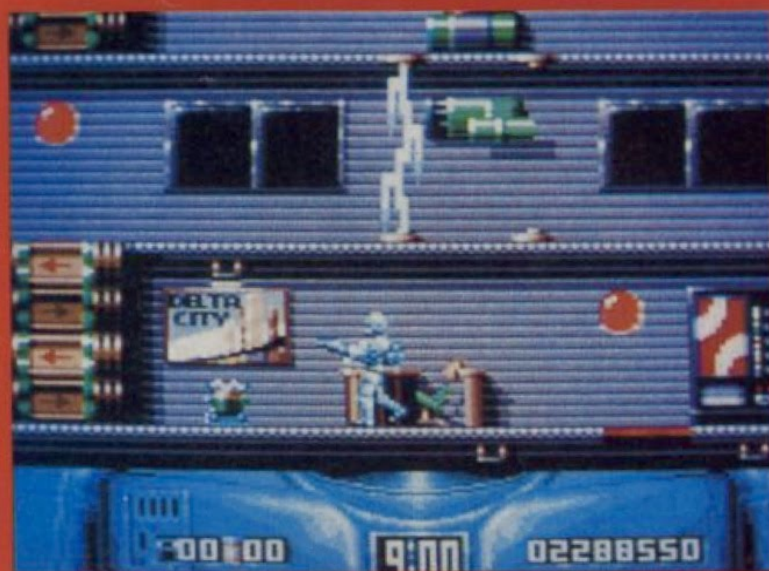
PROCESSOR: Z80-based with custom chips.

PERIPHERALS: None.

THE GAMES: A variety of games are available, ranging from very poor to very good. Some of the games are identical to normal Amstrad games, and a few use the hardware capabilities. In all cases, try before you buy.

THE FUTURE: Software support has been pledged, but at present the user base is growing slowly.

SUMMARY: A neat little machine which is capable of a lot more than much of its software demonstrates.



NOT
an official
Amstrad
publication!



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GX4000 CONSOLE



The consoles

Computer games represent one of the fastest growing areas in the world of leisure. And Amstrad, pioneer of the affordable home computer, is staking its claim with a fantastic new games console – the GX4000.

Imagine playing super-quick arcade-style games, with amazing graphics drawn from thousands of colours. Games with stereo sounds and superb synthesized effects – and written by all the top programming-houses, so there will always be loads of high-quality games to choose from. Massive games, with lots of graphics and levels, so you can play for ages. And games that load in an instant – without having to wait tedious minutes for the tape to finish.

How much would you expect a machine that gave you all this to cost? You'd be pleasantly surprised. Astoundingly, all this can be yours for less than £100.

The GX4000 is the name of Amstrad's long-awaited games console. Rumours of such a machine on its way have been floating about for over a year now,

but have always met with a firm "no comment" from Amstrad. There has been much speculation about what the console would offer, but the product that Amstrad will unveil to the public this autumn has exceeded everybody's expectations. Based on Amstrad's CPC home computer, the console has been given extra internal circuitry to give it "turbocharged" performance.

The bare essentials

A console is a computer without a keyboard. All the expensive mechanical parts – such as disk drives and keyboards – aren't necessary. The games come on cartridges that plug directly into the machine. All that the console needs is the processor – to run the programs, and a few special chips to speed things up.

The result of all the non-essential components being stripped out is that Amstrad can offer the games player a technically excellent device at an unbeatable price. But people who want to compute as well as play games haven't been ignored. Two upgrades to the CPC computers, called the Plus range, will be available. These have keyboards and either tape or disk drives so that more conventional software can be loaded and saved. They will also have the cartridge port to enable them to take advan-

tage of the stunning games that will be available on these plug-in plastic programs.

And what stunners they'll be, with over 4,000 colours to choose from – 32 which can be displayed at a time – giving millions of combinations. And built-in 'sprite' hardware which allow images to be drawn extremely quickly. These special hardware tricks, including mega fast screen scrolling, mean that the games will be of – as near as makes no difference – arcade quality.

Burnin' ambition

If *Burnin' Rubber*, the game supplied with the console (see page 45 for a full review), is anything to go by, the programmers are doing their utmost to make sure that the features offered are used to the full. For instance, *Rubber* uses the massive colour palette to fade the scene from broad daylight to night as you race along. In addition, get your racing line wrong and the result could be a spectacular cartwheel down the track.

All this is just a taste of what's to come, though. As programmers get more familiar with the inner workings of the machine, the games can only get better and better.

The games promise to be big, too.

The cartridges have enormous memory capacity.

There's lots of room for detailed graphics, and plenty of space for masses of screens. So as well as having



are coming!

hundreds of brilliant games to play, they'll last a long time too.

With the top software houses providing the programs you can be sure that they're going to be good, and in plentiful supply. A healthy competitive market, with all the big names vying for sales of their games, can only heighten the quality of the products available. In comparison, other console manufacturers have a strict monopoly on the software produced for their machines.

Styling for the '90s

It's not just insides of the console that are impressive. The styling has been brought right up to the '90s, with a new, sleek moulding that gives it the appearance of a starfighter from Planet X.

And two 'joypads' are supplied, while a variety of game controllers will be made available. Analogue joysticks for greater precision in certain games, and a light gun socket will really allow

you to let rip!

You'll be able to connect the console directly to an ordinary domestic television set, but for better quality pictures, matching monitors – complete with stereo speakers – are available. Of course this does increase the price, but the display is truly excellent.

One thing's for certain. The GX4000 will revolutionise the way that games are played. Amstrad is set to storm the console market in the '90s in the same way it stormed the home computer market with the CPC in the '80s.

The console market has a very powerful new contender indeed...

The GX4000 console is heavily based on Amstrad's CPC range of computers. Significant advances have been made, though. A clever custom-designed chip at the heart of the system delivers unprecedented power for the price. Other features:

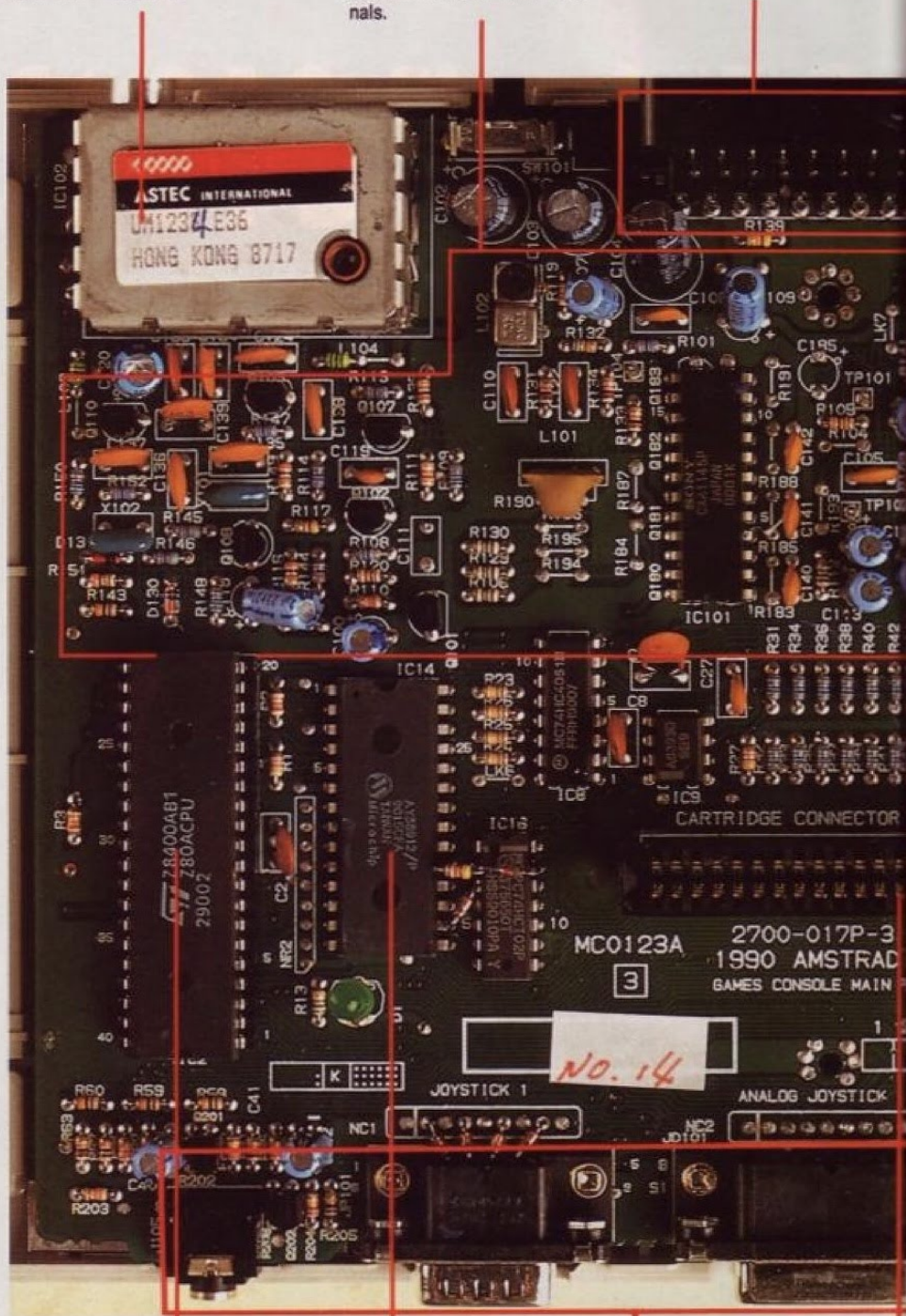
- A Z80A running at 4MHz drives the software. This is the same processor as used in the CPC computers. Proper vectored interrupts allow essential tasks like DMA update to take place automatically.
- The complex custom chip has 18,000 gates and 2K of in-built memory, allowing powerful graphics handling and sound generation. A lot of the processor's workload is taken over by this chip.
- 64K of RAM is included for temporary data storage.
- 16K of RAM is devoted to screen memory. Up to 16 colours can be displayed from a palette of 4,096.
- The console uses the same sound processor as its predecessor, the CPC range. However, a sophisticated DMA - Direct Memory Access - controller plays the music without burdening the processor. The DMA uses a simple command language for note generation, timing, and repeat loops. Three special in-built programs feed the chip without CPU intervention.
- There are 16 hardware sprites, each 16 by 16 pixels. Each is made up of 16 colours, and can be magnified to double or quadruple normal size. Sprite size and palette are independent of the screen mode, effectively increasing the number of on-screen colours to 32.
- Smooth hardware scrolling has been implemented. The screen can be scrolled a pixel at a time, both horizontally and vertically.
- Programmable scan line interrupts allow the colours, sprite data, even the mode to be altered half way through each frame. This creates the illusion of more colours, more sprites and split mode screens - without major programming effort.
- The cartridges can hold a massive one Megabit - that's 128K of instantly-accessible code. Plenty for even the most sophisticated games.
- A light gun - similar to the Amstrad light phaser - will be available around the time of launch.

Technically

TV Modulator. Changes the video signal into an RF output that a television can understand.

Video Circuitry. Converts the screen memory and sprites into RGB and composite video signals.

Monitor Output. For connecting Amstrad or Scart monitors.



Central Processor. An 8-bit Z80A CPU interprets and runs the programs in the cartridges.

Sound Chip. The AY38912, as used in the original CPC range, provides three channels of sound.

Controller ports. Joysticks and light guns connect through these.

Cartridge Slot. games plug



1. There are two chips inside the cartridge. The giant 128K ROM chip contains the software itself.
2. Edge connector - plugs into the cartridge port.
3. The smaller chip is a mystery. It is custom made by Amstrad. It is thought that it could be part of a special security locking system to prevent illegal piracy of the software.

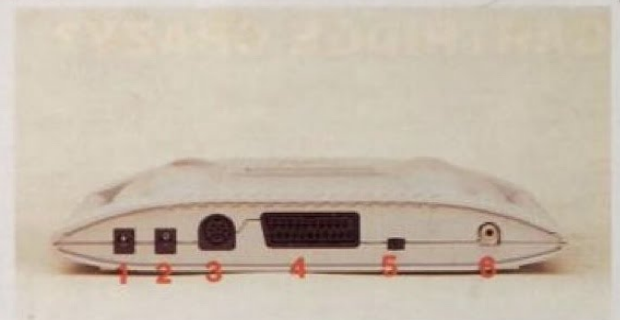
speaking...



1. LED. Indicates the machine is switched on.
2. On/Off Switch. As well as sending power to the unit, it physically locks the cartridge in place. This prevents the plugging in or unplugging of a cartridge while powered up.
3. Pause button. This button tells the program to pause the game. It is a software rather than hardware control.
4. Cartridge slot. This is basically a ROM socket – the cartridges are essentially plug-in ROMs. (ROM software loads instantaneously.)



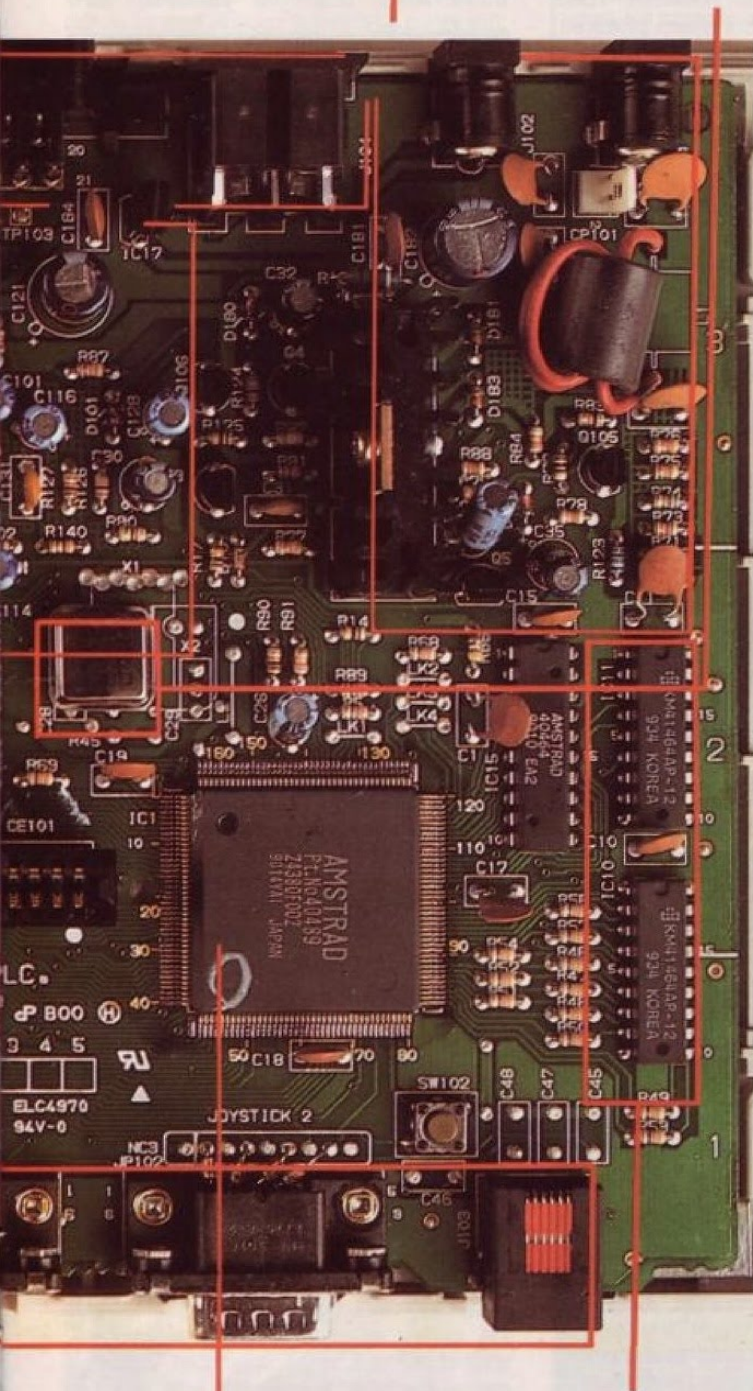
1. Stereo sound jack allows connection to an amplifier – to a HI-FI, for instance.
2. Joystick ports allow you to use any standard joystick or the Amstrad game controllers. Each accepts input from two Fire buttons.
3. Analogue joystick port allows connection for a pair of these special joysticks.
4. Auxiliary control device lets you use a light pen or possibly a light gun!



1. Power socket for use with Amstrad Monitor
2. Power socket for use with the power adaptor.
3. Amstrad monitor Socket.
4. A SCART socket is included so that the console can be plugged into certain types of monitor and televisions. It gives both RGB and composite video signals. SCART is rapidly becoming the standard for connecting video sources/devices.
5. Sound button. Used to offer better sound with TVs.
6. UHF socket. Allows the console to link up to any TV aerial socket.

Power Circuitry. Smooths the power supply for safe consumption by the console.

Crystal. Provides timing for all the circuitry. It's specially modified to generate a clock frequency that provides the best possible picture on a PAL television.



Custom Chip. This is the big brute that does all the clever bits. The gate array, sprites, and other goodies are carved in the silicon within.

RAM. There's 64K of memory in these two chips. It's used for temporary storage of data and screen memory.

AMSTRAD

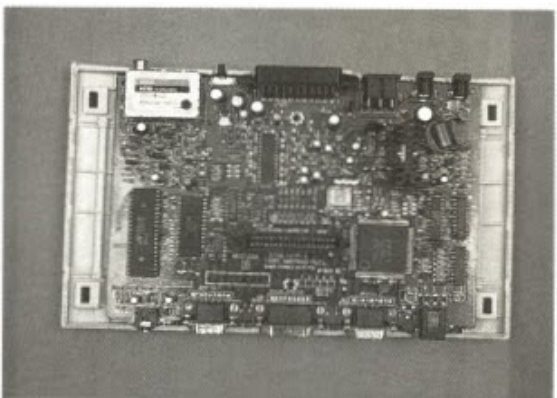
After all the rumours, speculation, denials and press embargoes, Amstrad have finally come clean and demonstrated their price-busting, power-packed GX4000 game console.



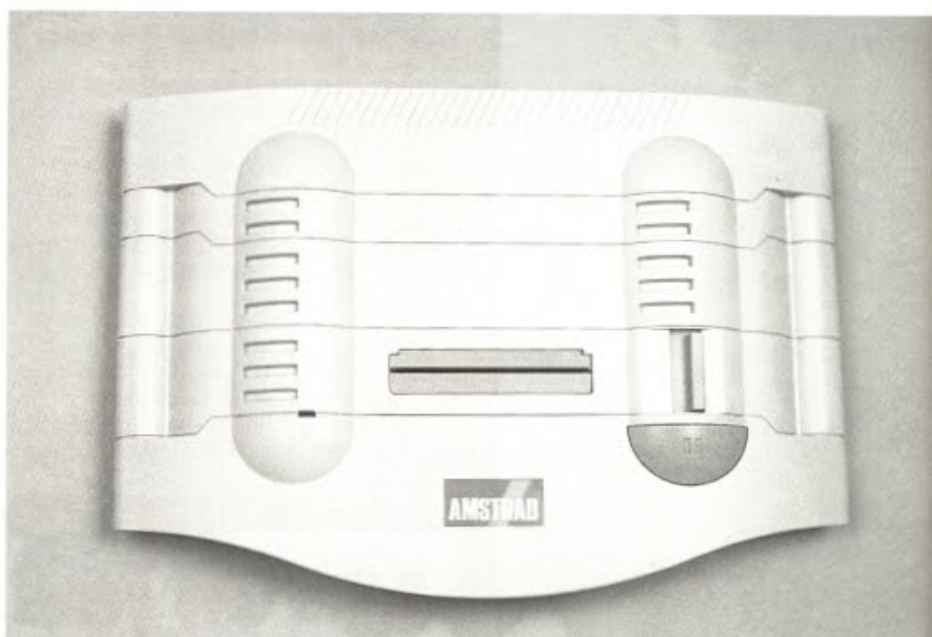
From left to right: 5 Volt power connector (dangles from appropriate Amstrad monitor), 9 Volt power connector (for use with supplied power pack), A/V monitor connector (the one that won't work with old-style CPC monitors), SCART socket, sound on/off switch, TV connector.



From left to right: stereo phono socket, player 1 joypad/joystick connector, analogue joystick port (accepts two sticks with suitable adaptor), player 2 joypad/joystick connector, auxiliary port for light gun.



There's not a lot inside Amstrad's GX4000. The Z80 processor sits to the far left of the circuit board. By it you can see the three-channel sound generator. The square chip to the right of the cartridge is Amstrad's custom piece of silicon which handles graphic modes, sprites, DMA sound generation and colours.



Coined the GX4000, Amstrad's new baby could well be confused with a brand of Duckhams' finest. On inspection, though, you'll conclude Duckhams will have to work damn hard to produce something slick enough to slither its way past the ever-watchful gaze of the Battlestar Galactica Colonists. For Amstrad's GX4000 looks to have done just that; it's the spitting image of a Cylon attack vessel.

Essentially the GX4000 is a souped up 8-bit Amstrad CPC in a pretty box. Rather than accepting tape or disk software, it uses cartridge-based software like most other consoles.

On the back there are two power inputs, A/V monitor socket, SCART monitor socket, sound toggle, and TV (composite) connector. Front: stereo headphone socket, two joypad connectors, analogue joystick input, and an auxiliary port.

In keeping with Amstrad's all-in-one policy, the CPC machines of old came bundled with a monitor. There's a female A/V monitor socket on the GX4000 which looks as though it could accept the old CPC monitor socket no problem. Ahem, well, big problem actually. Although similar, the sockets simply don't jam. There will doubtless be thousands of Amstradians wanting to purchase the higher spec machine and run it on their existing monitor. Well tough — it's not possible. Instead, Amstrad have simultaneously released a 12-inch mono monitor and a 14-inch colour monitor. How convenient... No firm prices for the monitors, but reckon on unleashing upwards of £100.

Two control pads are supplied. They're a little on the tacky side, but you can always swap them for a couple of two-button joysticks or plug an analogue joystick into the appropriate port.

So much for the outside. Inside the GX4000 is powered by the same 8-bit Z80 processor present in all CPCs. 64K of memory is used for looking after screen and other game information. Up to 16 colours can appear on screen from a palette of 4096. In addition 16 sprites, each 16 by 16 in size, can be planted on screen. Sprites can use colours independent of those already on screen. And, as sprites can comprise 16 colours this means a pseudo maximum of 32 colours can be on screen at once. Simple times two and times four hardware sprite zoom is also there for the taking. Pixel scrolling in horizontal and vertical directions is possible.


Sound generation occurs in parallel with the processor. A dedicated DMA controller feeds the sound chip — which is a rather poxy three-channel stereo slab of silicon known as the AY8192 — with note values, timing and repeat loops. While sound hasn't been improved from the CPC machines, the way it's been implemented means the processor is left to get on with other things. And that can't be bad.

The GX4000 is unquestionably more powerful than the 8-bit Nintendo and Sega, but that's about it. At £100 all in, Amstrad's console is going to sell and sell. Software houses are familiar with the CPC format, so there'll be no shortage of good titles. It's got a good future me thinks.

DOPOLIS

BURNIN' RUBBER

Ocean/Free with system/GX4000

 If you've experienced *Pole Position*, *Burnin' Rubber* will come as no surprise. You take the wheel of a formula one racing machine and must simply make it through stage after stage of seemingly ceaseless track. But before participating in the World circuit, you've got to qualify. That's it really.

You get to change gears — all five of them — as you race round the track. Picking the correct gear can be crucial for cruising round corners. Go too fast and you'll skid into the dirt, a passing car or (even worse) a billboard. Go too slow and the other racers will overtake.

Crashes range from the sublime to the ridiculous. A scrape will result in a few sparks while a fast head-on collision with a billboard will send your car flying to dizzy heights in the sky. It's well OTT!

The graphics are

definitely more interesting and colourful than *Pole Position*, but that's no great feat, really. To be fair though, *Burnin' Rubber* does look a lot better than other car games released on the numerous alternative 8-bit consoles.

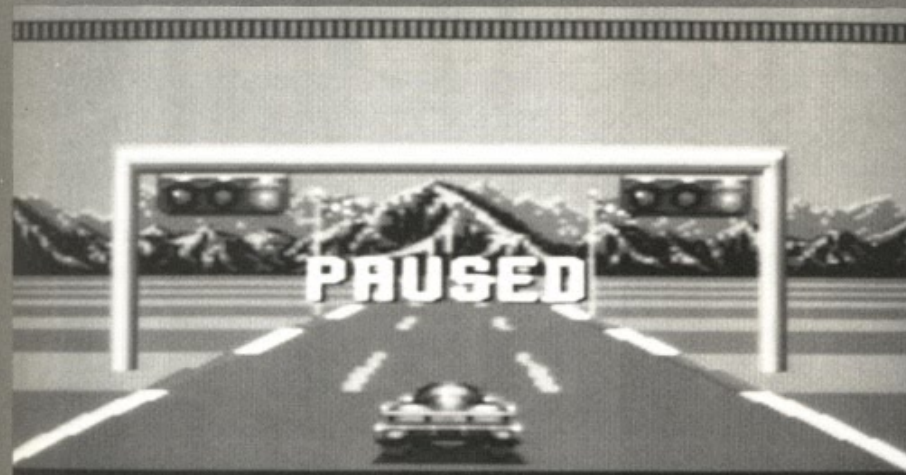
Without doubt *Burnin' Rubber* is *Pole Position '90*. So what? No Amstrad CPC game has ever looked or played this good. For free there's no beating it!

STOP

THE VERDICT 79



Stop playing at Chitty Chitty Bang Bang. Besides, you could be disqualified if the race arbiters get wind of your antics.



You get to see the World from the wheel of your formula one racer if you manage to qualify in the first round. Fail and you get to see the qualifying round — lots!

CHEATS!

Collusion rules. Don't accept anything less!

SUPER SHINOBI

Mega Drive

To build up a super huge number of lives you have to have patience. During the second part of level two between the two moving bamboo bits is a hidden two life token. Pick it up, then kill yourself and repeat the procedure. You'll be able to build up a huge stock of lives... it takes time though. Also, on the options screen select amount of shurikens as 00. Wait for about 15 seconds or press start quickly to get infinite shurikens. Gavin White, Herts

BLACK BELT

Sega Master System

To enable you to finish *Black Belt* in one go, push button 1 to start a game and hold it down while the red screen is being displayed. When the black screen appears, let go button 1 and quickly press and hold the reset button. Rik will appear on screen. Walk across and fall over — you will now have infinite Riks.

METROID

Nintendo

Enter Justin Bailey at the code entry screen for a surprise.

LIFE FORCE

Nintendo

During a two player game, the player who loses all his lives and dies can press button A to return to the game with another life. This only works once for each player on every level.

SAFARI HUNT

Sega Master System

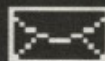
Simply shoot the following animals to qualify: the rabbit at the bottom of the picture on screen one; the armadillo towards the bottom of the picture on screen two; the panther on screen three. Make sure you shoot each as many times as possible and you should clear the qualifying mark easily.

SUPER HANG-ON

Mega Drive

Go to the password option and enter the code 6FF3F546F 355 64 FF0SLP1MFJEDGH for a credit of \$9,999,999,990. With this you can build up a phenomenally powerful bike.

EVERYONE'S A WINNER



You could be a winner like Gavin White of Herts (who, incidentally, wins a totally fab copy of *Thunder Force III*) and gain ever-lasting fame. Simply get your game busting ploys in to Cheat! Console Action, ZERO, Dennis Publishing, 14 Rathbone Place, London, W1P 1DE.

A Drop In The Ocean

Andrew Banner heads up North to see what Ocean has got up its sleeves on the console Front, with spectacular results.

Since Amstrad announced the cartridge based GX4000 and new CPC Plus ranges, software houses have been eager to write new games to utilise the extended facilities of the new machines. One of the highest contributing factors towards the success of the new range is its cartridge port – after all it's instant, it's small and compact, it's difficult to damage it and you can't copy it.

Ocean were one of the first software houses to jump on the bandwagon, and why not. This Christmas will see more console sales than the early eighties, and a large portion of these will be one of the

three new Amstrad machines.

Ocean have a torrent of cartridges for the coming months including the conversion of arcade games, Pang, Special Criminal Investigation (Chase HQ 2) and Toki.

Further games include the infamous Robocop II. Anyone who has seen the film will know the plot and will also know just how appalling it is. Anyway, a ruthless drug baron has designed a narcotic that's in greater demand than the electricity shares; nuke. Simply inject this stuff into your bloodstream for instant paradise. The guy behind the warhead sounding pleasure drug is Cane, a

person who wants to see "made in America mean something again". Anyway, without giving too much away, Cane's brain ends up in Omni Consumer Products' (OCP) new baby, Robocop 2. This thing's got more firepower than Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sylvester Stallone put together and is as ugly and unhumanlike as Margaret Thatcher. Come to think of it, it's policing policies are similar as well. So

film, absolutely nothing except Action man armoured cars. Talk about the game and it's a different matter.

Robocop was the best selling computer game of all time with a success story of 32 weeks at the top of the all formats charts. Not bad. Robocop 2 is much of the same thing though and I doubt whether it will do as well, but it is a hard act to follow. Platform games rarely hold my interest for long, but



what has Robocop 2 got going for it? Well, if we're talking

I have to admit that Robocop 2 is addictive in a "I wonder what comes next" way.

In a graphical sense, Robocop 2 is great. Good, vibrant colours, realistic movement and scrolling. Well, the scrolling isn't that good. Technically it's alright, it's just that the screen doesn't scroll with your sprite. Instead, it scrolls when it needs to and stops the action at that point until it's finished. This is fine once you've got used to it, but it does throw you off a bit at the beginning. Bonus levels have you trying to reconnect your memory banks in order to remember your former wife, this ain't too easy considering you're physically dead! And once again, Robocop is in the firing range, readjusting his sights. This is damned difficult if you're using a controller pad.

Robocop 2 has all the makings of a hit though, especially if the first is anything to go by.



Plotting is an appropriate name for a game such as this. Your next move is vital to the completion of the level and so plotting it is highly important. The objective is simple; lots of bricks (of which there are four types) are jumbled up in a pile, all you have to do is eliminate them – a piece of cake!

Oh, you want to know how? Well, Ok but you'll need your furry friend to help – we'll call him fluffy. Fluffy throws bricks at the pile of bricks. Simply aim a brick at another in the pile and provided it's of the same type, both disappear and the brick directly behind the one that was previously in the pile is thrown back at you for your next move. The trick is to plan ahead and so you don't get caught out.

What's really special though is the two player option. Simultaneous play us-



the game long before that.

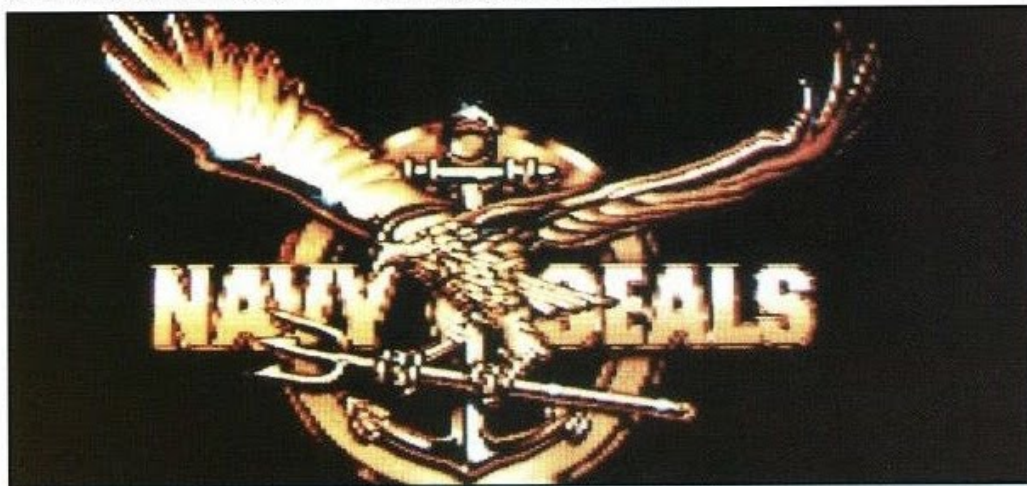
The S.E.A.L.S. are a crack squad totalling five who have been assigned to rescue the

venture unfolds. Boasting colourful and detailed graphics, Navy S.E.A.L.S. has a number of clever acrobatic move-

ments including climbing on crates and hanging from beams and moving along them. It's enough to make your arms ache just watching it. Not only that but you can flip up onto the beam from a hanging position to get to those platforms that have no ladder.

Seven levels of action make Navy S.E.A.L.S. a game to look forward to. The film apparently flopped in America, but with prospects of a few dead Arabs and petrol rationing, I'm sure it's gonna be a box office smash over here. As for Ocean's game, all I'm saying is that it's brilliant.

Andrew Banner



ing a slit screen display puts an end to those long boring periods between player's turns. Another feature of the game is the screen designer which you can use to create impossible levels or ones that are so easy that you don't even need to think about it. Whether you've got a brain or not though, Plotting is damned addictive.

The movie stars Charlie Sheen from Platoon and Michael Biehn from Terminator, the game stars you. Navy S.E.A.L.S. on the big screen is due to be released in February 1991, but Amstrad users will be getting

pilot of a U.S. chopper that's been shot down in the Gulf. There are lots of Arabs in this game and the only thing to do with Arabs is to shoot 'em, especially in the light of recent world events. Did you know it costs me £30 to fill my tank up!!

Anyway, the pilot is rescued safely but in doing this the team discover a number of air to surface "stinger" missiles. It's decided that these missiles pose a serious threat to American lives and a plan is made to destroy all the stocks that have been accumulated...

A scrolling platform ad-



The shape of things to come

Last but not least – the GX4000

This futuristic-looking machine is as neat as one could wish for in a unit intended primarily to take over the family television. Clad in cream beige, it fairly bristles with ports and sockets, and certainly looks the high-tech part. A quick guide round the various ports will give you some idea what's in store for the prospective purchaser.

The front panel houses two digital joystick sockets – standard nine pin D-sub connectors – which look as if they ought to accept standard Atari type joysticks. Be warned!! The GX4000 supports TWO fire buttons, and, in fact, with its supplied cartridge (Burnin' Rubber) needs both of them. The two game paddles supplied provide all the necessary signals, but, in common with most such units, lack tactile feedback. They're suitable for steering a car round a circuit, but sport a direction pad that is perhaps a touch small for many people (or maybe this reviewer should trade his banana fingers in for smaller models!)



Between the two games paddle ports lies an analogue joystick socket, much the same as you'd find on any self-respecting IBM PC compatible games card. Unfortunately, as we go to press, no cartridges which can take advantage of this port are available, so its efficacy remains to be seen. However, access to analogue input is a definite advantage – control via such a stick is almost always more precise, and we look forward to sampling games which take advantage of it.

To the left of these three ports sits a

stereo output jack socket, for connection to the family Hi-Fi (well, if you're taking over the TV, why not the stereo too?) If the GX4000 is not being used with one of the new dedicated Amstrad monitors which provides stereo sound output, this might well be an option, since, even with a game as simple as Burnin' Rubber, the sound chip is capable of churning out nicely separated stereo sounds. Deafen the neighbours!

The last port on the front panel is the 'Auxiliary Control Device' port – light gun port to you and me. Again, we've seen nothing that supports this device (nor even the device – it may be the same unit that is already on the market) so we shall have to wait and see how well it works.



Up top, there are but three items of concern. Towards the front, in the centre, is the all important Cartridge slot with its hinged doors. Surprisingly enough, this is where the games cartridges fit – and we were pleased to see that you can't fit them the wrong way round. Neither can you either insert or extract them while the machine is switched on. That function is taken care of by a combined power/cartridge interlock switch to the right of the top surface (hereinafter referred to as 'the big red switch'). The big red switch moves to the left to allow the juice to flow, and at the same time slots a little tongue into a recess on the cartridge case, thus not only making sure the unit is firmly in position (it won't switch on otherwise), but also making sure that little Johnny (or Jenny) doesn't rip the cartridge out before powering down – very sensible!

To the left is a tiny green LED to let you know what the TV ought already to be telling you – that the GX4000 has power applied and is ready to play. It's all but invisible if there's anything like a decent amount of ambient light – it could do with a dark surround to it to provide some contrast.

And so to the back of the machine. Here we find a further array of sockets

and switches. At the leftmost (viewed from the rear) is a 5 volt socket, for use with one of the new monitors (which provides a 5 volt output). Next up is a 9 volt socket, for use with the provided 'plug-head' power supply pack. Thankfully, it is impossible to plug the nine volt supply into the five volt socket, but I can't help wondering why Amstrad didn't merely supply a five volt adapter and do away with the nine volt circuitry altogether. No doubt there are very good and technical reasons.

Beside the two power sockets lies a dedicated monitor port, again for connection to the new Amstrad monitors (or via a suitable adapter lead, to many others too.) Next in line is a SCART (Peritel) socket, which allows those of us with SCART equipped TVs and monitors (like the Philips CM8833) to get a slightly better picture – more of this anon.

Still further along the line comes the parents' godsend, the Sound switch, which either switches the sound output to the TV or monitor on or (more likely from parental points of view) off. Finally, there is the UHF output socket, in which the supplied TV aerial lead fits to connect the GX4000 to the family TV. Output is on the obligatory Channel 36 (or thereabouts), the same as most video recorders and other games consoles, as well as home computers that plug into a TV.

That's the technical aspects out of the way – how does it play? Well, I've already outlined the way the games paddles feel. That said, my two little friends that help with such things tell me that they find the paddles to be a doddle to use, and since the primary user of the GX4000 will be under the age of eighteen, I suppose they know something I don't! Either way, the machine is pretty impressive. Burnin' Rubber, as a game, is OK – a bit old hat – standard race car stuff – and not, I suspect, meant to be an earth shatteringly brilliant piece.

That said, it certainly shows off the colour and graphics capabilities of the machine, as well as giving a good idea of what it will do sonically. Catch the last page for the full analysis!



TRIPLETS!



GX4000

Amstrad's new console, which is the first ever UK-developed console to be released, will set you back £99. And that includes VAT — there's no hidden extras. The pack comes with a mains adaptor, TV lead, two paddle control units and the *Burnin' Rubber* cart. It looks like a space ship and that's the way you'll see it on the packaging — flying into view. But is it *Space Age*? Well, no, not really. It's a turbo-charged CPC — but, hey!, that's pretty good news. The carts slot in at the top and the control pads plug in at the front. The control pads are a bit of a pain to use — the rocker switch and the action buttons don't have rounded down edges and can make your fingers pretty sore after a log play. Let's hope for an official joystick soon. There's also an analogue joystick port and an 'auxiliary control device' port — probably for a light gun.

The GX4000 has a built-in

modulator so you can link it straight to the TV, and a connector to link it to one of Amstrad's new monitors (see below). Also lurking at the back is a Scart socket.

Burnin' Rubber plays well on the GX4000 and makes good use of the console's capabilities. Programmers should feel quite at home for the processor they'll be using is a Z80A. With 64K of memory, 4096 colours (32 onscreen at once) and stereo sound, the products on their way should be great. There's likely to be a great deal of European software support — though it's unlikely that you'll be playing any Sega coin-op conversions on it! At the moment it is difficult to say if the GX4000 is going to be a definite winner — the quality of software will decide that. If all the titles in development turn out as good as *Burnin' Rubber* the GX4000 looks like being well on the road to success. If you're going to be console shopping soon, the GX4000 should be on your list to see.

cassette- and disk-based software. It's cartridge only and only the forthcoming cartridge games will take advantage of the new facilities on the console/computers.

GAMES?

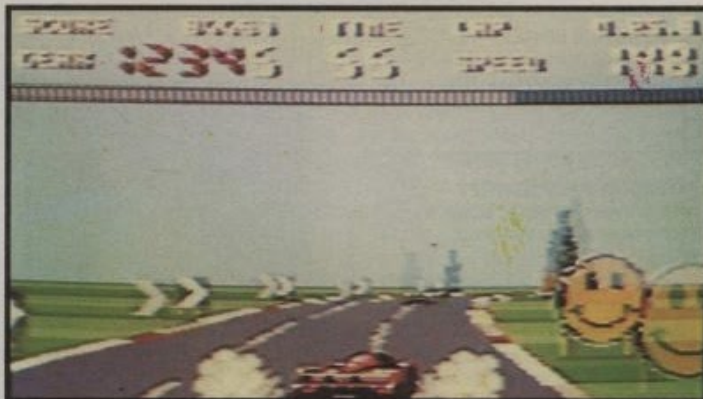
A hardware company can't launch a new computer onto the scene without software support. Games have to be there right from the start. But then, Amstrad has known that for years. When the 464 was launched in 1984 it came with £100-worth of new titles. So, what's ready now for

the GX4000 and the two CPC Plus computers? Well, there's only one cart; it's from Ocean and it's called *Burnin' Rubber*, a *WEC Le Mans* styled game, and comes free with all the machines. Also on the *Burnin' Rubber* cart, when packaged with the CPCs, is the original Amstrad BASIC and firmware.

Burnin' Rubber shows off the new capabilities admirably — the game still has that Amstrad look about it, but with great graphics (the shading and colouring is particularly effective), and animation. Ocean boss David Ward was there to

talk about the new software, saying, 'A catalogue of game products on cartridge is in production. Featuring arcade-style graphics, refined screen movement and digitised music, there will be 12 titles available by December.' What are they?

Well, currently in development from Ocean are *Batman the Movie*, *Operation Thunderbolt*, *Plotting*, *Shadow Warriors*, *Chase HQ* and *RoboCop 2*. Other titles include Epyx's *World of Games* (Epyx/US Gold), *Crazy Cars 2* (Titus), *Fire and Forget 2* (Titus), *Kick Off 2* (Anco), *Klax* (Tengen/Domark), *Escape from the Planet of the Robot Monsters* (Tengen/Domark) and *Spider-Man* (Empire) with lots more in the works. All are expected to retail around the £25 mark.



CPC 464 PLUS/ CPC 6128 PLUS

Amstrad's two new machines are essentially the same. The only differences are that the 464 has a tape deck and 64K RAM, while the 6128 is 3-inch disk-based and packs 128K RAM — both feature a cartridge port. Both are in similar casing, which is smarter and more compact than the old oblong CPCs — in fact, one is

with a *Burnin' Rubber* cart and CP/M disk, it'll set you back £329 with the mono monitor and £429 for a colour monitor set up. The monitors feature stereo sound output, but the sound quality is the same as the original CPC range — a bit tinny.

The new CPCs are impressive and offer very good



reminded of the Amiga. The 464 Plus is supplied with the *Burnin' Rubber* cart which includes the original Amstrad BASIC and firmware. Amstrad have designed two new monitors to complement the machines. There's a 12-inch white mono monitor and a 14-inch colour monitor. A 464 Plus with mono screen costs £229 and £329 for a 464 Plus with colour screen. If it's the 6128 Plus you're after, which comes

value for money. They're the ideal machines for anyone who wants to start computing. But should current CPC owners upgrade? Hmm... If you can sell your original CPC for a good price then, yeah, go ahead. It's also a good move for anyone who likes programming the CPCs. But if you're considering upgrading just to play games you could be better off splashing out £99 for the GX4000.



Availability: most major high street retailers
Dimensions (mm): 255 x 184 x 54
Weight: 600g
Memory: 64K
Processor: 4MHz Z80A
Sound: stereo, three-channel programmable AY-3-8912 sound generator
Maximum onscreen colours: 32
Palette: 4096
Resolution: 160 x 200
Cartridge capacity: 128K
Software: one title, ten-plus in production

AMSTRAD GX4000 ■ £99

While the GX4000 is a very new machine – only being introduced at the beginning of September – its predecessor (the Amstrad CPC home computer) has been around for over five years. The GX4000's architecture is very similar to the CPC's. Indeed, if the GX4000 accepted software on cassette or disk, you'd discover it would run all CPC software. That doesn't mean the GX4000 is simply a CPC without a keyboard – far from it.

The new machine's palette has been increased from the CPC's measly 27 to an ST-beating 4096. Similarly, the number of colours possible onscreen has been doubled from 16 to 32. And such things as hardware sprites, scroll, and split-screen have been implemented.

Amstrad's new console has been put together with the *games* programmer very much in mind.

The GX4000 looks extremely stylish; an astonishing departure from Amstrad's previous efforts. The machine comes with two joypad controllers, a lead for displaying the image on a TV and an Ocean game called *Burnin' Rubber*.

Ports on the front and back of the machine let you plug it into an Amstrad monitor or almost any RGB monitor, and attach a lightpen or lightgun to the console.

Industry pundits reckon the GX4000 is going to be the biggest seller this Christmas – its price, good

■ If *Burnin' Rubber* above is anything to go by, the standard of future GX4000 releases will be stunning.



NONPLUSSED

The Amstrad CPC 464 has been superseded by the 464 Plus and the CPC 6128 by the 6128 Plus. These new home computers contain the same hardware as the GX4000 together with a keyboard and cassette deck (464 Plus) or disk drive (6128 Plus). Additionally, the CPC Plus machines contain the same cartridge port as the GX4000.



looks and Amstrad's aggressive marketing will make sure of that.

Software support

Because the GX4000 is so new, there's no software for it. There's an Ocean game called *Burnin' Rubber* supplied with the system, but that is all. Numerous software houses have pledged to support the console, and it's very likely a selection of the CPC's huge back catalogue of games will be converted to cartridge format.

26 Released Games

1990 - 13

Barbarian 2 - £24.99 - 1990 - Ocean
 Batman The Movie - £24.99 - 1990 - Ocean
 Burnin Rubber - 1990 - Pack-in game - Ocean
 Navy Seals - £24.99 - 1990 - Ocean
 Operation Thunderbolt - £24.99 - 1990 - Ocean
 Pang - £24.99 - 1990 - Ocean
 Robocop 2 - £24.99 - 1990 - Ocean
 Crazy Cars 2 - £29.99 - 1990 - Titus
 Fire And Forget 2 - £29.99 - 1990 - Titus
 Switchblade - £24.99 - 1990 - Gremlin
 Pro Tennis Tour - £24.99 - 1990 - Ubi Soft
 World Of Sports -£24.99 - 1990 - US Gold
 Tennis Cup 2 - 1990 - Loricel

1991 - 9

Dick Tracy - £29.99 - 1991 - Titus
 Klax - £24.99 - 1991 - Domark
 Mystical - 1991 - Infogrammes
 No Exit - 1991 - Tomahawk
 Tintin On The Moon - £24.99 - 1991 - Infogrammes
 Wild Streets - £29.99 - 1991 - Titus
 Super Pinball Magic -1991 - Loricel
 Panza Kick Boxing - 1991 - Loricel
 Plotting - £24.99 - 1991 - Ocean

1992 - 2

Copter 271 - Loricel
 Chase HQ 2 - £24.99 - 1992 - Ocean

1993 - 2

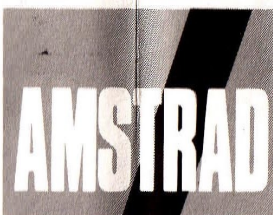
Skeet Shoot £34.99 (with light gun)
 The Enforcer " "

17 Canned Games

Kick Off - 1990 - Anco
 Badlands - 1990 - Domark
 Spy Who Loved Me - 1990 - Domark
 Escape From The Planet Of The Robot Monsters - 1991 - Domark
 Stun Runner - 1991 - Domark
 Gazza II - £24.95 - 1990 - Empire
 Spiderman - 1990 - Empire
 Shadow Of The Beast II - 1990 - Gremlin
 Midnight Resistance - 1990 - Ocean
 Night Breed - 1990 - Ocean
 Toki - £24.99 - 1990 - Ocean
 Double Dragon - £24.99 - 1991 - Ocean
 Shadow Warrior - £24.99 - 1991 - Ocean
 Space Gun - £24.99 - 1991 - Ocean
 Duck Tales - 1991 - Titus
 Cougar Force - 1991 - Tomahawk
 Strider II - 1991 - US Gold

JEUX SUR CARTOUCHES AMSTRAD

TITRE	Style	Description	Editeur	Disponible au	Prix Pub TTC
KLAX	Réflexion	Le stress du tapis roulant : rapidité et vitesse seront vos principaux atouts	Domark	Lancement	299 F
NO EXIT	Action	Un maître du Full Contact confronté à 6 Killers (1 ou 2 joueurs)	Tomahawk	Lancement	299 F
TENNIS CUP	Sport	Une superbe simulation de tennis. Seul ou à 2.	Loriciel	Lancement	299 F
OPERATION THUNDERBOLT	Arcade	Vos ennemis vous tirent dessus. Défendez-vous !	Ocean	Lancement	299 F
BATMAN	Action	Recherchez et détruisez le Joker fou ...	Ocean	Lancement	299 F
BARBARIAN II	Action	Dans la préhistoire, combattez Drax et méfiez-vous ...	Ocean	Lancement	299 F
FIRE AND FORGET II	Arcade	Avec votre bolide, détruisez vos ennemis. Kamikaze !	Titus	Lancement	299 F
SPIDERMAN	Arcade	Tissez des toiles pour libérer votre fiancée des voyous	Entertainment Int.	30-Sep-90	299 F
SWITCH BLADE	Action	Hiro, le guerrier High Tec doit récupérer les 16 morceaux de la lame de feu	Gremlin	30-Sep-90	299 F
CHASE HQ	Arcade	Avec votre Porsche, arrêtez les bandits. Temps limité !	Ocean	30-Sep-90	299 F
NIGHT BREED	Action/Film	Survivez aux pièges de Midian, le monde souterrain des créatures de la nuit	Ocean	30-Sep-90	299 F
NAVY SEALS	Action/Film	Un commando d'élite des marines est envoyé d'urgence au moyen-orient	Ocean	30-Sep-90	299 F
PLOTTING	Réflexion	Astuce et réflexe sont vos atouts. Vu à la télé.	Ocean	30-Sep-90	299 F
CRAZY CARS II	Arcade	La fameuse course de voiture où tous les coups sont permis	Titus	30-Sep-90	299 F
WILD STREETS	Action	Dans les quartiers les plus dangereux, vous devez vous défendre.	Titus	30-Sep-90	299 F
PRO TENNIS TOUR	Sport	Une superbe simulation de tennis issue du hit Great Courts	Ubisoft	30-Sep-90	299 F
MIDNIGHT RESISTANCE	Arcade	Seul ou à deux, détruisez les guerriers de King Crimson	Ocean	10-Oct-90	299 F
EPICS WORLD OF GAMES	Sport	Surf, Plongeon, BMX, Vélo Cross, et Ski ...	US Gold	14-Oct-90	299 F
KICK OFF	Sport	L'adaptation sur cartouche du célèbre jeu de combat	Anco	20-Oct-90	299 F
SPY WHO LOVED ME	Action/Film	L'adaptation du célèbre James Bond, l'espion qui m'aimait : course, tir, bateau, combat.	Domark	30-Oct-90	299 F
TOKI	Arcade	6 mondes fabuleux : Toki doit se battre pour retrouver sa princesse	Ocean	30-Oct-90	299 F
ROBOCOP II	Action/Film	Detroit, une ville qui agonise. Seul Robocop peut la sauver.	Ocean	30-Oct-90	299 F
PANG	Arcade	Seul ou à deux, parcourez le monde avec votre harpon laser	Ocean	30-Oct-90	299 F
COPTER 271	Action	Superbe ! Vous pilotez un hélicoptère chargé de repousser les extra-terrestres ...	Loriciel	5-Nov-90	299 F
SHADOW OF THE BEAST II	Action	Affrontez les créatures du seigneur de la bête !	Gremlin	30-Nov-90	299 F
MYSTICAL	Action/Arcade	Vous êtes un magicien. Votre arme : la magie. Votre but : retrouver les objets sacrés.	Infogrammes	30-Nov-90	299 F
COUGAR FORCE	Arcade	Auto, moto, off-shore, avion, poing, revolver : détruisez l'Organisation à tout prix !	Tomahawk	30-Nov-90	299 F
PANZA KICK BOXING	Sport	Une superbe simulation de kick-boxing. 50 coups possibles. Images digitalisées !	Loriciel	30-Nov-90	299 F
BAD LANDS	Arcade	A 1 ou 2 joueurs, équipez votre bolide (pneus, missiles etc...) et essayez de gagner la course	Domark	Déc-90	299 F
STUN RUNNER	Arcade	Course de vitesse à 900 miles/heure au 21 ème siècle. Essayez d'éviter les ennemis ...	Domark	Jan-91	299 F



AMSTRAD



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