

AMSTRAAD

RETROACTION



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The Second Coming of the Amstrad CPC?

The Amstrad CPC has had quite a resurgence of late: dozens of new games have been released or are being worked on, fanzines are being written. Developers are creating some amazing looking games; some of which eclipse the best commercial effort from the CPC's hey day of the 1980s. Boosted by the success of the annual CPCRetroDev game creation contest, there are dozens of varied games being released for the old Anroid. There are even games getting a physical release with disk, inlay, case, and more. It truly is a great time for the CPC, so what better time to have a yearbook update on what has been going on this past year?

As well as catching up on some of the great new games releases, we also take a look at some classic CPC gaming with several retrospective articles. Some of our CPC friends may be familiar with our topical series such as 'Same Name, Different Game', 'Cancelled Games', 'Arcade Action', 'Retro Rivals', but rather than a mere mention with a screenshot, here they are covered within a full two-page article.

Happy reading...



MAGICA

AUTHOR: Juan J. Martinez

LOADING SCREEN: Vanja Utne

<https://www.usebox.net/jjm/magica/>

No sooner had the sorceress left her laboratory unattended for one minute when a rogue goblin went in and snaffled all her potions. Upon discovering the theft, the sorceress makes it her mission to hunt down whoever is responsible and get her precious potions back.

A classic arcade single-screen platform game with the player taking control of the sorceress. To find the potions, the player has 50 different stages to complete. Each stage has a number of different monsters, each with different moves and abilities. The Jester will jokingly jump around, the knight will use a shield for protection, a wizard will use magic, a witch will

fly on her broomstick, a goblin will cast spells, a demon will be aggressive, and a ghost can fly through walls.

The player can attack the enemy by using magic, which will stun them, and they can then be dispatched with a swift kick or throwing another stunning enemy at them. If other monsters or enemies are in the way when a monster has been kicked along the ground, it will set off a chain reaction and all enemies that become involved in the melee become stunned as well. If you don't kick away an enemy after they have been stunned, they will recover, meaning you will have to stun them again. As the enemy is dealt with, they will leave a potion





behind, which the player can collect.

Each of the 50 stages must be completed within a 50 seconds time limit of a life is lost. To complete a level, the sorceress must kill all the enemy, recover all the potions, and leave via an exit door that appears. The player can also gain points by dealing with the enemy and collecting potions. The player starts the game with three lives, although an extra life is awarded every 10,000 points.

Juan J. Martinez has produced another fine Amstrad CPC game following the impressive *Golden Tail*. As with that previous game, Juan uses the full colour palette of the CPC to produce a nice looking game. The characters

may be small, but they are clear and easily identifiable. The loading screen by Vanja Uthe is also impressive, showing of the vibrant colours of the Amstrad CPC.

Not only does the game look good, but everything plays well, too. The sorceress moves around smoothly and is very responsive. Needing to stun enemies and bump them off the screen reminds me very much of *Bubble Bobble* – not a bad thing.

8/10



DOOMSDAY LOST

Authors:

Alberto Riera ([[C]-|E]])

Dani Castaño (El Ñoño)

Themistocles Papassilekas (Gryzor)

It's unusual for a graphic text adventure game to generate such hype in the CPC scene, but *Doomsday Lost Echoes* has done just that. The game is already being touted in the CPC scene as one of the best games in the genre.

The game's plot follows the plight of Mike, an every day guy who doesn't seem to catch a break. He's stuck on the miserable hole that is New Hope, the capital city of Kepler452b. Years of military service has given him the skill-set of a killer



pilot, and he is soon assigned his own patrol ship, the Doomsday. Mike decides to use the ship to escape from Kepler452b and start afresh as a mercenary. One day, Mike follows up on a mysterious e-mail about a lost worker and sets course for the space station where they were last heard from.

The game is a graphical text adventure with the player taking on the role of Mike as he explores the abandoned space station of Regus in an effort to find lost astronaut Arnold Croft. The game features text input as the player has to explore the station, solving the many puzzles in the process.

To play the game, input commands such as 'North' or 'Use key' have to be typed using the game's parser. The parser must also be singled out for its breadth in accepting many shorthand words and phrases, trimming down unnecessary typing.

Basic movement is achieved by using the familiar 'North', 'South', 'Up', 'Down' and similar move type commands. Progress through the game is made by examining rooms, doorways,

ECHOES

hallways – anything that may conceal a clue – achieved by using the 'Look' or 'Examine' command. If there is anything of note, the game will display what is revealed, which can then be taken by using the 'Get' command. Mike also has an inventory that the player can store and retrieve items from throughout the game. This can be brought up with a press of 'I' (for Inventory).

As soon as the game begins, it gives off an amazing foreboding atmosphere of impending danger and that something is just around the corner. The visuals – albeit stills that accompany the parser – are outstanding and add to the game's atmosphere. The game will have the player on the edge of their seat right up till the end.

Even if the player manages to complete the game, there are other extras to extend the gaming experience. The developers added three additional missions within the game, which – depending on which missions have been completed – produces different endings to the game. This gives the game great replay value.

The developers did a fantastic job with the game and it shows with the hard work they put into it. So is the hype surrounding *Doomsday Lost Echoes* justified? Absolutely. This is a fantastic game, and one that even non-text adventure fans will love. It is easy to understand, great to play, has a brilliant intuitive text parser, a fantastic plot, and a superb atmosphere. An excellent game all round.

9/10



OUTLAWS

Code: Toni Ramirez
Graphics: Alxinho
Sound: Jose A. Martin

Outlaws was entered into the CPC RetroDev game creation competition in 2016 and won first place overall, as well as several other individual awards, so it's a good chance that this is a fine game.

The game's story centres around Daniel, who was kidnapped from his family at a young age by a mob of outlaws and brought up in the ways of the wild west. Having enough on being on the wrong side of the law, Daniel decided to fight back. He stole the big outlaw boss' Colt gun, used it to kill the ruthless boss, and decided to take on the rest of the mob.

Daniel returned to Cowntury County, the city of his birth and began a new peaceful quiet life.

However, outlaw activity increased in the city, with stealing, kidnapping, and killings on the rise. The city's residents were in uproar with the increased violence and they needed someone to clean up the city, so Daniel stepped forth to take them out.

Outlaws is a third person arcade shooter in a similar vein to the classic arcade game *Cabal*. To ease the player into proceedings, the game starts off with a practice level where the player can get to grips with the controls and gameplay mechanics. After the practice level the player is thrown out into the lawlessness of Cowntury County where all sorts of villains and outlaws are needing to be taken down.



Daniel will have to avoid the outlaw gunfire as any contact with a bullet will result in Daniel losing one of his initial four lives. The player can receive gifts by shooting at barrels, which are found in general play across the normal and bonus rounds.

Despite the limitations of the game creations rules, the developers have managed to produce a fantastic game that excels in all areas. The CPC's colourful palette is shown off in all its glory with the excellent visuals, both in the loading screen and in game graphics. Mention must also be made of the music which is just as impressive as anything from the CPC's commercial years.

Gameplay is very smooth as Daniel runs back

and forth across the screen with the gun cross hair following suit. Response is spot on, too, as the outlaws will drop dead when they are hit with a perfect shot. Just remember to keep an eye on those incoming bullets as there can soon be lots of action onscreen at one time.

While the concept of *Outlaws* is nothing new or startling, it has been put together expertly and is an absolute joy to play. It will be interesting to see what other project the team come up with in future releases.

8/10



A PRELUDE TO CHAOS

Who is the real hero in A Prelude to Chaos? Is it your game character Amy or is it the 'C' language coding tool CPCtelera? I can only wonder how the Amstrad CPC would have been received during its heyday in the 1980s if coders and commercial software houses had access to the amazing CPCtelera. Egotrip, and others, who put A prelude to Chaos together on the Amstrad CPC have, no doubt, produced an outstanding game.

Based on same title of his ZX Spectrum game,

Egotrip has made the Amstrad CPC version much larger in size and scope. Experienced gamers will realise this top down adventure maze game is inspired by the NES console's Adventures of Zelda series.

Here, a Cyborg Queen has sent her minions out to capture a village and have it prepared for her arrival so that she may become the supreme ruler and take over the world. The distraught villagers overcome their initial shock and enlist Amy to save them from the evil Cyborg Queen.



CHAOS



Amy must explore the village, solve puzzles, collect jewels, find keys, push walls, move objects, all the while avoiding the enemy minions holding the captured villagers.

To help defend herself, Amy has four different weapons to choose from: water gun, fire gun, EMP gun, and an acid gun. Each weapon has different uses, some can only be used on certain enemies, and each weapon has different abilities to help solve the puzzles on each screen. To get through to a next area of the village, there is a dungeon room that be solved in order to switch off a part of the master machine that the Cyborg Queen will use to takeover the world. These dungeons rooms are not as straight forward, some thought must go into solving a puzzle to com



plete these rooms.

Sounds easy enough doesn't it, but there are about 70 different screens you need to uncover. That means that there are quite a number of different enemies to avoid and work out how to defeat them. It's not as easy as it sounds. There are many challenges and puzzles that will test you.

The graphics, presentation, controls, movement, and tunes are all terrific, but the grab factor of A Prelude to Chaos draws you in. It makes you want to explore, discover, solve, and unlock all the little secrets and keep playing and playing. This CPCtelera ' C ' language game is good. Really good.



8/10

DEFENCE

Written by Shining

Music composed by MmcM

In the year 2718 AD, Lance Gryzor and Bill Rizer were waging a war against Red Falcon's army. Having won against the odds, they are dismayed to witness the destruction of Earth. It was all an illusion that was implanted in to their consciousness by Red Falcon following their involvement in a small explosion. A faithful group of Probotectors infiltrated Red Falcon's base and managed to rescue Bill, but unfortunately, Lance was re-captured.

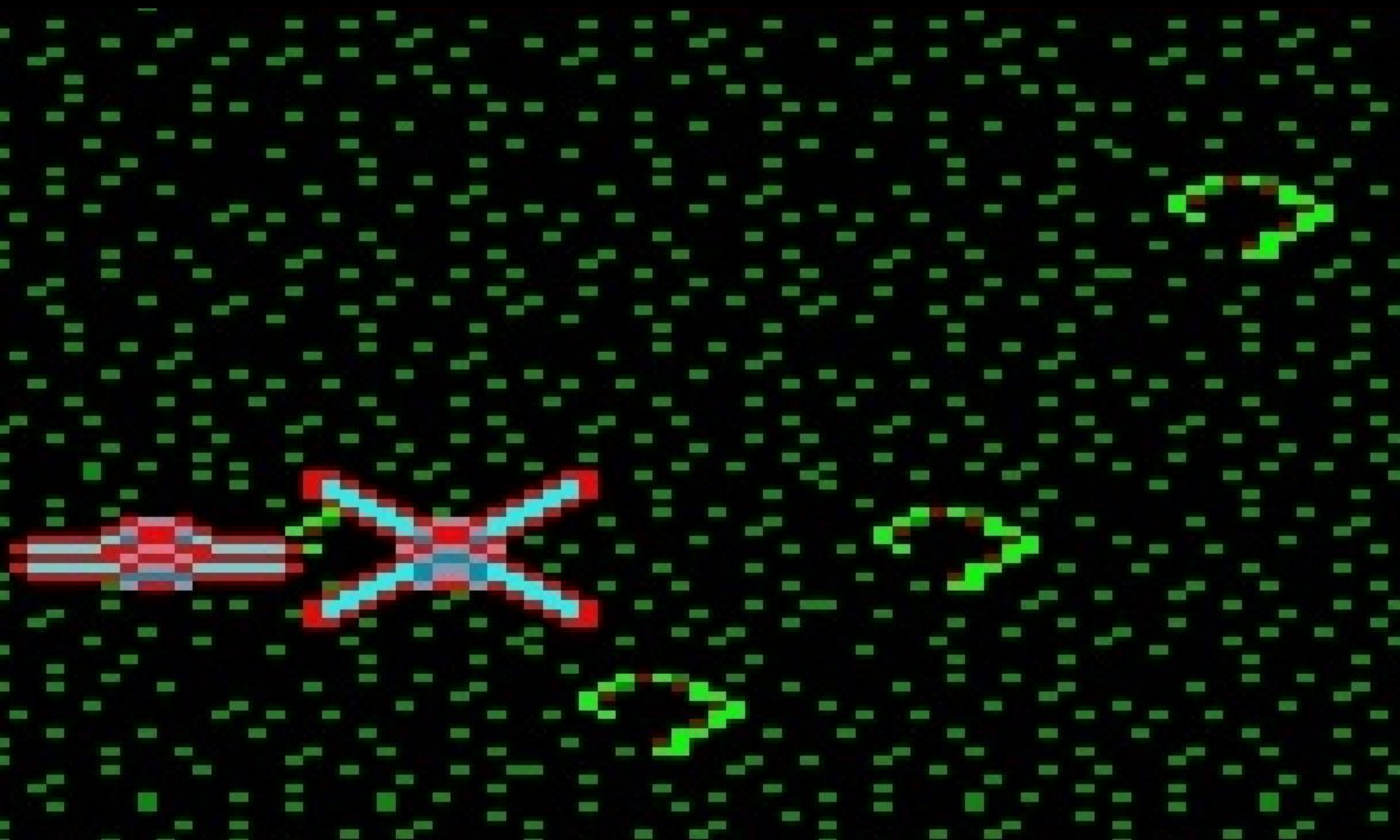
Despite being rescued, Bill is still recovering from his bad injuries within the healing cryostasis chamber onboard the last remaining command centre on Earth. However, the centre soon comes under attack by the forces of Red Falcon, which is now under the command of Lance Gryzor. The Probotectors revive Bill in an effort to save mankind before it's too late.

What we have here is a tower defence game

– of which the developer claims to be the first of its kind on the Amstrad CPC – where the player is tasked with placing weapons strategically around the map to prevent attacking forces penetrating the defences.

The player has the choice of placing different types of weapons (Machine Gun, Rocket Launcher, etc.), of which come at different prices depending on their capabilities. Money is gained by destroying enemy units and by completing missions. If an enemy does penetrate the player's defences, their health will decrease.

The game can be controlled by either keyboard or joystick, although a two-button pad is recommended. The main menu contains five options: Start Game, Buy Upgrades, Achievements, Savegame Slot 1, and Load Savegame. Choosing 1 (Start Game) will enable the player to choose from any of the 16 maps





and the difficulty level (0-50). Buy Upgrades will enable the player to purchase permanent weapons. The other options are relatively self explanatory.

The main game interface consists of the map itself and the info section at the bottom detailing health, score, money, and more. There are six different enemy units to encounter, some ground based, others air based. Each will require the relevant weapon to take them out and it's up to the player to identify this and take the appropriate action.



Defence is a fantastic idea and we're surprised there hasn't been a tower defence game brought to the Amstrad CPC before now. The visuals are adequate, colourful, and do their job well. The controls are easy to get the hang of and the game will keep the player busy for some time.

7/10



VECTOR VAULTS

Code: Alberto Rodriquez Martinez

Samuel has been abducted by the Dingir and taken into Annu's mother-ship orbiting the earth. With no idea why they want him, Samuel manages to break into the Solomon onboard computer, using a virtual space ship avatar called an Enoch.

Vector Vaults is a futuristic scrolling shoot 'em up where the player flies the Enoch ship across multiple vector levels. The task won't be easy, it will be a strict test of the player's pilot skills. As the player navigates their way through the Solomon computer, an energy bar in the bottom left of screen will deplete and must be refilled by collecting batteries along the way. The reward for success will be Galactic Imperium citizenship and an

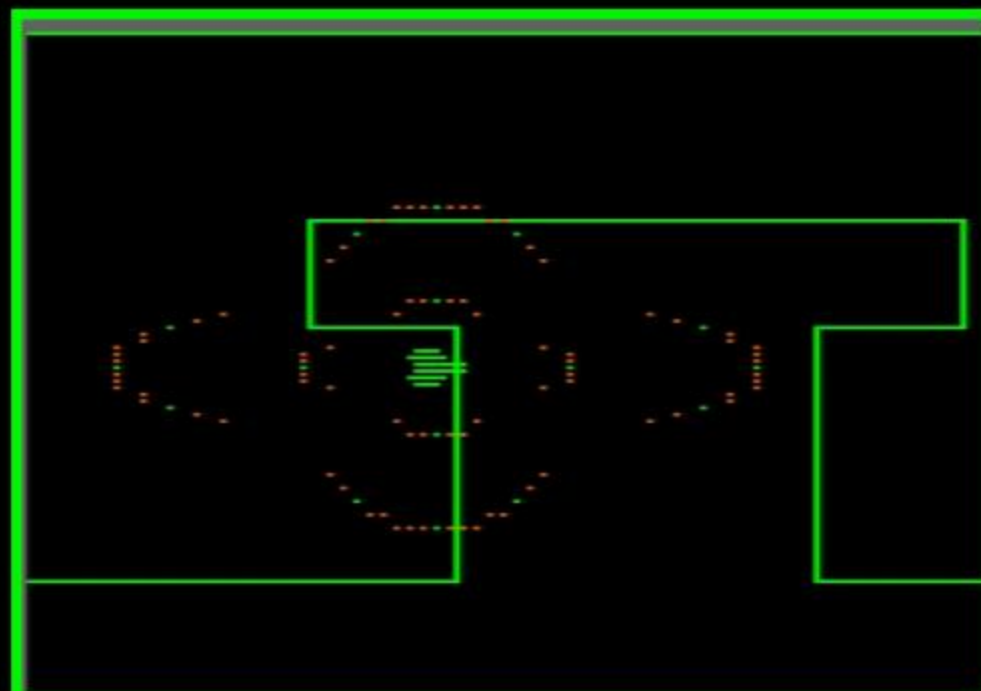
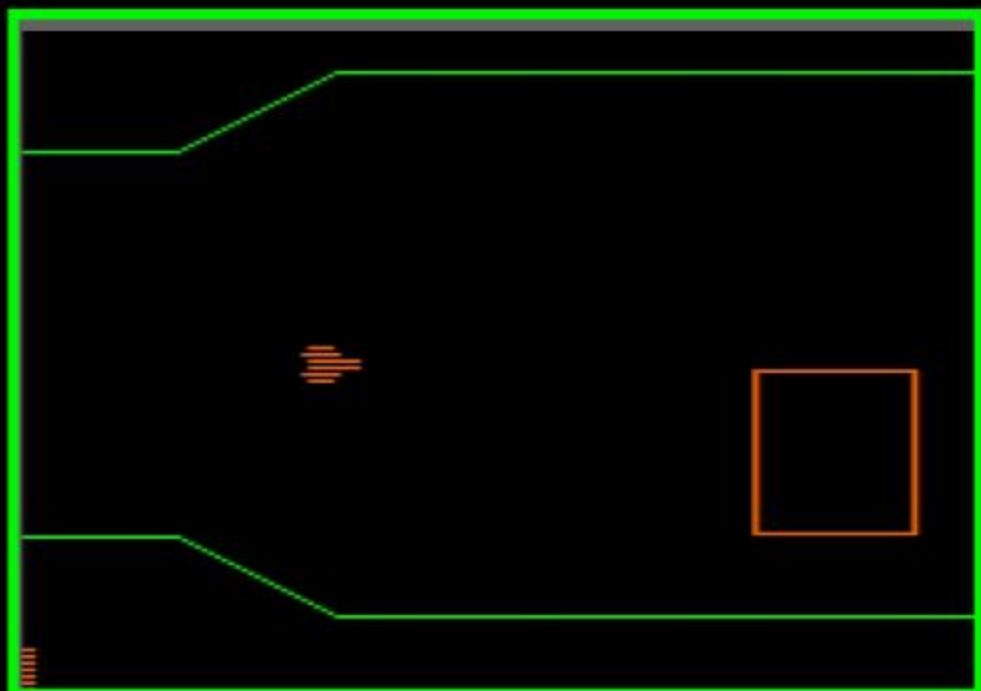
indefinite lifespan.

Alberto Rodriquez Martinez, drew the inspiration for the *Vector Vaults* game from another Amstrad CPC title, a scrambler clone called *Killer Cobra*, which uses a hardware scroll. According to coder Martinez, *Vector Vaults* does not use a hardware scroll, but rather a new graphic technique called Mode C. Mode C provides three colours and 160×200 pixel resolution, but its primary advantage is being able to clear the screen seven times faster.

Developed in 'C' with assembly, *Vector Vaults* requires 128kb and a 3" disk and disk drive. As the first game of the Hidden History Saga, upon completion of *Vector Vaults*, the player will be given a secret code to use in *Light Lands*, the next entry in the series.

The first thing that gamers will notice is how smooth and fast this game scrolls around. Up, down, left, right; the scrolling is smoothly handled throughout. Of course, the



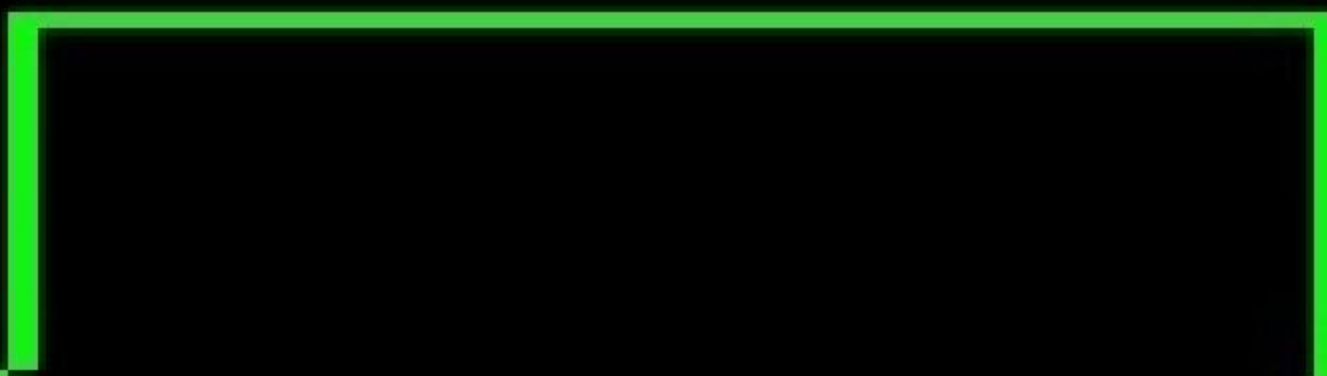


simplified vector style graphics help in this regard, but full credit must be given to Martinez for coding the game this way.

Audio is also limited to a couple of brief classical music samples for the main menu and a few spot effects for the game itself. While the visuals and audio are fairly basic, everything is crisp and clear. Playability is a joy as the Enoch ship avatar can be

controlled with ease and any collision or mistake is purely down to the player's poor piloting skills; there are no collision problems or glitches here.

7/10



SAME NAME, DIFFERENT GAME:

RENEGADE

Same Name, Different Game is the article where we check out the Amstrad CPC games that share the same name but are completely different. This time around we look at the two very different *Renegade* titles...



When it comes to computer games with the same name, you couldn't get two games that are so unrelated as *Renegade*. They may share the same name, but they have completely different genres, design and gameplay. The first *Renegade* was released in 1985 by Kuma Computers while the other *Renegade* arrived in 1987 from Imagine Software. While many gamers will have heard of the latter, they will probably not have heard of the former.

Renegade from Kuma Computers is a skewed isometric maze exploration shooter. The player must negotiate a series of robot infested mazes, steal a number of priceless jewels and escape in one piece.

Renegade from Imagine Software is a flip-screen beat-'em-up where the player controls a nameless character on his way to meet his

girlfriend but is attacked by a gang of vicious thugs. He will have to stand up to these assailants and take them out so he can see his girlfriend.

Converted from the arcade game, *Renegade* takes place over over five varied levels, from the subway, Pier, Sleazy Street, End Street and Interior. Before the player advances through the end of each level, a guardian boss must be defeated.

Kuma's *Renegade* is quite minimalistic, even for its age. Limited packaging with little or no instructions. No real loading screen to speak of. This is a very early original release on the CPC and it shows. From the authors of M. and S. Ferneyhough, the game does look like a 1985 game with its fairly limited visuals. While the graphics do take advantage of the CPC's colourful palette, the main character sprite is



blocky and moves around quite jerkily. Sound is usually the last component thought about when it comes to programming a game on the Amstrad CPC and both *Renegade* games are no exception. Sound is also extremely limited to bleeps and blops.

Imagine's *Renegade* is the package that you would expect from an Ocean/Imagine game: Decent instructions and fantastic loading screen from Mark K. Jones. The game has some great animated, colourful graphics and well detailed backdrops. Skull crunching effects can be heard when a gang member cracks his nut on the ground, with blood oozing out. Although the main screen may be on the smallish side, the scrolling is smooth and makes up for this. Skull crunching sound effects can also be heard when a gang member cracks his head on the ground.

Movement of the main character in Kuma's *Renegade* is limited to walking left, right, up and down the maze screens. The game is very slow and frustrating with the likelihood of a map needed to effectively explore the maze screens. There is one single weapon to use, which fires one lazer at a time, which can cause problems if the player misses a close range shot. The robot guards follow the same pre-determined patrol path, so usually waiting and shooting from distance will get rid off them. The main character will lose one of his three lives if a robot comes in contact with him.

The nameless Imagine "renegade" starts off with an energy bar, but each hit from the enemy takes a block of energy away and if the energy runs empty then one of the three initial lives is gone. There may only be five levels but it's going to take all your fighting skills to get through them all; it's tough out there in the streets. Thankfully, "renegade" can fight back with various moves, including the punch, kick, flying kick, and a very nasty knee to the groin. There is also the chance to leap onto fallen gang members and punch their heads in. A quick kill can also be achieved on the subway level by knocking the enemy off the platform. Watch out for the razor wielding gang on the later level as one slash from them and it's goodbye.

While there may only be a couple of years difference in development of the two *Renegade* games, the quality difference is immense. *Renegade* (Kuma) is a rather basic arcade style game with limited and frustrating gameplay, making for a rather disappointing game. *Renegade* (Imagine) is an excellent example of what can be achieved on the Amstrad CPC if both programmer and graphic artist are on top of their game. Brilliant visuals and gameplay amount to one of the best games on the CPC.



RETRO MEMORIES: THE SURVIVOR

According to sources online, nostalgia is associated with a sentimental yearning of happiness from a past time, but we prefer to look back to our Amstrad CPC games for the same experience...



We've all got a game that we have fond memories of, despite the fact that it may not be one of the best games ever. For me, *The Survivor* (not to be confused with the later released *Survivor* by U.S. Gold in 1987) is one of those games. Being one of the earlier games we had for the Amstrad CPC, this was a rarity that both my mother and I would play.

The game takes place in a vast abandoned mansion where a King's ransom has lain scattered throughout the many rooms. The player controls Angus, who decides to hunt down the treasure within the mansion. However, the mansion is not entirely abandoned as there are many adversaries to overcome. It is just as well Angus came packed with his laser gun and bombs.

The mansion must be massive with over seven levels with over 1000 rooms to be explored in all. The rooms are soon filled with





various nasties, some of which will aimlessly patrol the rooms while other will immediately home in on Angus, draining his life energy. They come in the form of either Ol' Random, Mean Wheeler, Mouth Monster and Glider Cyborg, all of which can be frightened off with a shot from Angus' gun. However, the gun has only been equipped with forty shots, adding a cautious strategy to the game. There are pickups scattered around the rooms, though, ammunition for equipping with the gun and bottles of elixir for restoring health.

Treasures that can be collected include coins and money bags, with points awarded for their collection. Points are also awarded for getting rid of the spirits, with the higher points awarded for the tougher the adversary. Angus needs to clear the bombs on each level before advancing to the next one. Randomly placed signposts will give directions to the nearest bomb.

Presentation of *The Survivor* is average, especially considering its age. The game's packaging comes with a brief description of the game along with credits. The game itself



features a little more explanation of the game within its main menu screens. The visuals of the game are limited but functional. Sound is also limited, but does have a catchy/irritating soundtrack, depending on your taste, that plays throughout.

There are a few annoyances in the game. As is the case with early 8-bit games, the need for a map is useful if you want to navigate around the many screens. One little sneaky feature of the game is when the exit doors to the screens randomly open and close, leaving poor Angus prone to attacks. The enemy also respawn constantly, usually right in front of your face, making it difficult to catch a breather. Angus is also limited to shooting left or right, although this appears to be intentional as the special bomb function fires off a bullet in all four directions. The use of the special bomb does, however, reduce Angus' energy by a couple of blocks.

Despite the little niggles, the game holds a special place in my heart for the contribution that it played in my early life.



GAMES THAT NEVER MADE IT: LETHAL MOVES

Many games have been previewed, advertised and even reviewed, but fail to appear in any form of a final release. These are the long lost cancelled games of the CPC and we take a look through the list,

The origins of *Lethal Moves* actually go back to 1994 when *Street Fighter II* was perpetually announced as coming soon to the Amstrad CPC. Of course, as CPC users know, the much anticipated arcade fighter conversion never materialised.

According to developer, Rob Buckley, *Lethal Moves* came about after a suggestion from Dave Golder, who was the editor of *Amstrad Action* at the time. He had mentioned about the possibility of a two-on-two fighter to fill the empty void left by the non-arrival of

Street Fighter II. Not only would the game pick up a lot of the hype as a suitable replacement, but also receive plenty of coverage in *Amstrad Action*. Rob agreed that this was a reasonable development to pursue with and duly started work on the project.

Early preview images of *Lethal Moves* appeared alongside an interview with Rob Buckley in *Amstrad Action* issue 101, cover dated February 1994. Here, Rob stated that the game would feature "the basic guard, jump, punch and kick moves", with each character having a special move as well. Each character would also perform their moves in a different style to the other characters in the game. The character roster itself was planned at having eight different fighters.

With a large selection of characters and moves, it was quickly identified that the game would be disk based and need 128k of memory for it to become a reality. One positive note was



that this was an original development rather than a conversion, leaving Rob to get on with what could be achieved on the CPC rather than trying to squeeze an arcade game onto the CPC.

This was still early in development with only one fighter moving around the screen. Work was also under way on improving the computer fighter AI. At this point in time, *Lethal Moves* was planned for release at the end of February, coming in at a cost of £7.95 on disk.

Several months later, in the Amscene section of the June 1994 issue of *Amstrad Action*, the readers are informed that the game is still being worked on and will be ready for a late summer release at the earliest.

However, in the intertwining months, *Amstrad Action* had changed editors as Dave Golder left. The magazine itself was not in a healthy position with commercial games non-existent, readership in decline, a slimmed down page count that was decreasing rapidly. This may have been a dampener for any developer hoping to publicise any new games releases through the magazine. Rob Buckley mentions that *Lethal Moves* was far along in development and was finally cancelled when news of *Amstrad Action's* closure surfaced. It seemed a lost cause to release a commercial game without any publication to ensure some kind of media coverage for the game.

While it has been said that a working demo of the game was sent to *Amstrad Action* during its development, any sign of the game has since

disappeared. Rob himself has stated that there is unlikely to be any code surviving from those years, leaving CPC users with a couple of graphic screens and a deep feeling of what might have been.

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Radical plans

PREVIEW FEATURE

Fluff and Lethal Moves might not be familiar names now, but give it a month or so and that could all change. If they turn out half as good as Radical Software reckon they will, they're going to be huge. Dave Golder talks to Radical's main man, Rob Buckley.



Has the ultimate CPC game been written? Some people don't think so, and they continue to write games that stretch the CPC to new limits. Rob Buckley of London-based Radical Software is one of them. Currently he's got two games set for imminent release: there's *Lethal Moves*, a *Street Fighter 2*-type beat-'em-up, and *Fluff*, a *Sonic*-style beat-'em-up. SF2? *Sonic*? This man must have big ideas. You'd better believe it.

So, Rob, who's involved on the writing side of *Lethal Move* and *Fluff*?
I will be writing most of the game code for both games, and doing some of the graphics as well. The infamous Richard Willey of Sentinel Software fame will also be working on the graphics and Richard Fairhurst, AR's own technical guru, will be writing the soundtrack.

How did the games evolve?
Radical has been looking into doing a fight game for some time now, and since everyone else was writing them on other machines it only seemed logical we should do the same with the CPC, especially since it appeared at that time that *Street Fighter 2* was not going to arrive.
With *Fluff* the idea came from my general interest in the Plus machines because after finishing *Smart Plus* people kept asking if we

were doing any more Plus specific stuff and I said no. Then one day I was doodling on *Smart Plus* when I came up with the *Fluff* character, and after doing a bit of animation with it I thought it looked pretty good, and knocked up some backgrounds. Ever since *Fluff* has been a Radical project.

What is the basic premise of *Fluff*? What does the player have to do?
Fluff is a standard platform game in the mould of *Zool* and *Sonic* which has been designed specifically for the Plus machine (sorry CPC'ers). The idea is that *Fluff* has to travel around collecting her children who have roamed all over various nasty and deadly zones. There are all the standard threats, goodies, buddies, moving platforms and what I think is a great amount of gameplay.

In *Lethal Move* what moves will you get?
All of the basic Guard, Jump, Punch and Kick moves will be there, but there won't be any Throws owing to the lack of a third fire button on joysticks. Each character will have at least one special move as well, though with the programming system being used adding new moves is quite easy, meaning that each character will perform the standard kicks or punches differently depending on their style of fighting.

Do you know yet how many different characters there will be in the final version of *Lethal Move*?
This is still up for discussion, but probably eight to ten however many we have when the budget runs out. More than this and we'd have problems squeezing it all on a single disk, as the graphics for each character take up at least 16K. Character info, special move graphics, movement and collision tables take this up to around 25K for each character.

Do you think the game will fill the gap left by *Street Fighter 2*?
I think many people will be surprised when they see it, but don't expect *Blanks* to suddenly jump across the screen. Hopefully lots of people will decide they'd buy this instead of *Street Fighter 2*, but SF2 is a classic and virtually impossible to replace. I am sorry that US Gold decided not to bring out the game, but from the reports I've read it's probably for the best. Trying to live up to the hype of *SF2* on a 64K and SNES giant is only 64K like a failure from the start. With *Lethal Moves* we quickly realised that 128K and don't go from the start, and since it's possible parent nobody's "this is or 'that move'" which is on what it can do well be impossible.

When are both the games finished, apart from the graphics which should be done quite early?
This interview appears in *Amstrad Action* and *Lethal Move* is still in early development.



January 1994 AMSTRAD ACTION



RANDOM RETRO: MANHATTAN 95

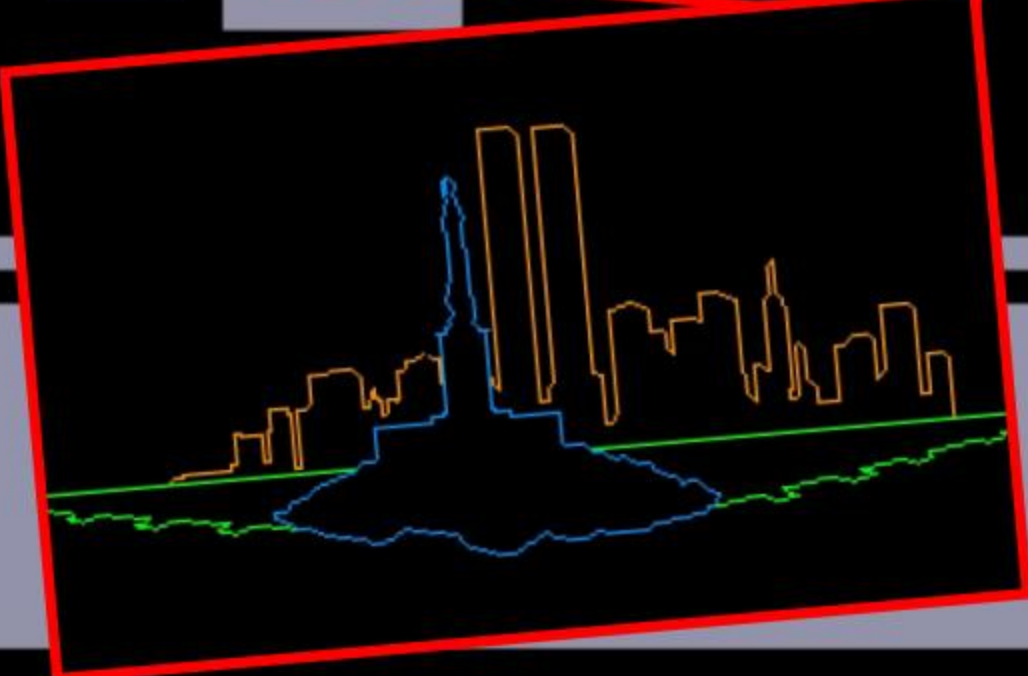
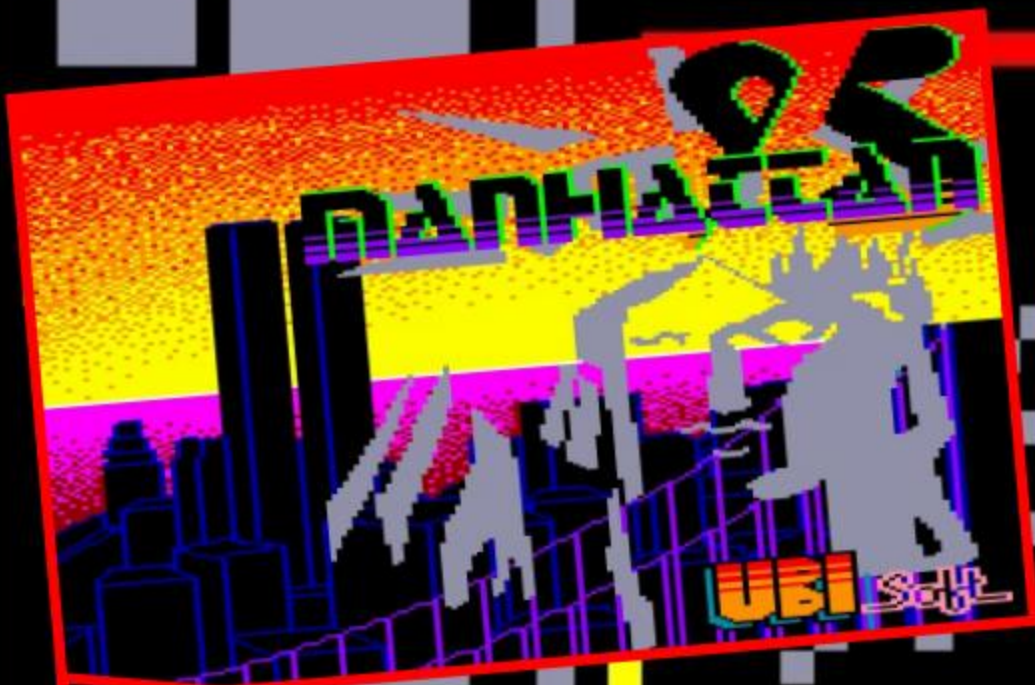
Using the CPC Loader (that can be found on the CPC Games CD package), we select a game at random, good, bad or indifferent. This issue's random pick is one of the forgotten games from Ubi Soft...

If you have seen John Carpenter's cult classic film *Escape From New York*, then the opening titles and accompanying theme tune will be instantly recognisable. *Manhattan 95* just doesn't borrow elements from the 1981 film, it is essentially an unofficial tie-in, from its plot, music, characters and set pieces.

If you have not seen *Escape From New York* – you really should – then you may not be familiar with any of the film's plot. In the future, crime has risen so sharply that the US government turned the island of Manhattan into one large prison facility. During a flight over Manhattan, the President's plane crash lands inside the perimeter of the prison. One man is hand picked and coerced into taking on the suicide mission: enter the prison complex, deal with any hostile encounters, locate the President and escape safely.

Gameplay loosely follows the plot of the film by having the player start off on top of the World Trade Center and making their way around the streets of Manhattan in search of the President. Due to the fact that the government implanted tiny capsules in the character's arteries, set to blow in 24 hours time, quick completion of the mission is paramount.

The visuals of *Manhattan 95* are nothing startling, but adequate enough for a game released in 1986. Mode 1 is used for the in game action which features just enough colour as to not appear too limited. Movement of the characters is smooth enough as to see what is going on.





The aforementioned theme tune on the title screen is a fantastic rendition of the film's main score and sets the tone for the game terrifically. The in game sounds, however, are limited to basic spot effects here and there.

As the player enters the streets of Manhattan, a sensor will display how close the player is to the President. The player will have to travel around the streets by foot, which means that he will run into the island prisoners in their droves. Upon encountering hostile inmates, fists, feet, a machine gun or limited grenades can be used for defence.

The character's health is located in the status area of the screen to the right and is quite generous in the amount of energy bars. It will take some time and a good amount of damage before it is game over. This is just as well as the game is relentless with enemies seemingly re-spawning and relentlessly running at our hero.

Random cars have been left abandoned on the streets, which gives the player the

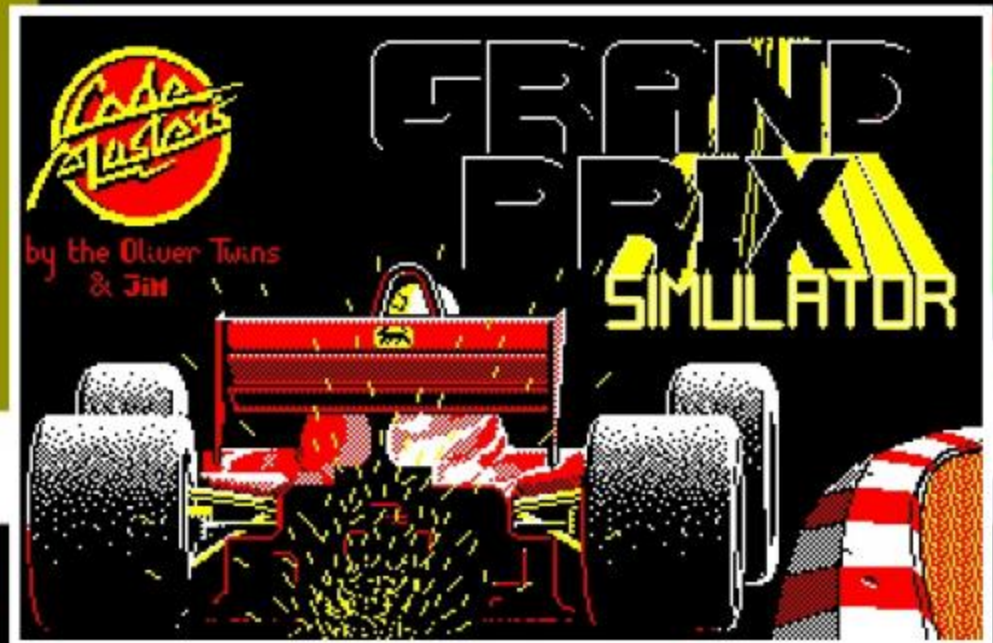
chance to jump in, switching the screen into an overhead driving section. These car sections are a nice change of pace amongst the endless running, kicking and shooting. Here, the player will need to fend off enemy cars who will try and ram the hero's car off the road. If the car is rammed off the road, it is back onto the streets on foot.

Curiously, a second release of the game came out a few months after the initial release. The second release comes with a completely new cover art, presumably to avoid any copyright issues as the original artwork could have passed for a poster for the Escape From New York film. The game itself appears to be unchanged from the original.



RETRO RIVALS: SUPER SPRINT VS GRAND PRIX SIMULATOR

There have been many games developed with a similar theme or look, so much so the authors have been accused of copying other each other's work. We take a look at the rivalry between Electric Dreams' and Code Masters' top down racers and settle things once and for all.....



Background: Super Sprint and Grand Prix Simulator were released in the same year, are of similar style and presentation. In fact, Electric Dreams thought Grand Prix Simulator looked so

similar to their own Super Sprint that they, unsuccessfully, took Code Masters to court over the matter. Here, we put the two rivals head to head to see who comes on top...

Original retail price: A full price Electric Dreams release at nearly £10. However, the game was released in both cassette tape and floppy disk formats. As a Code Masters release, Grand Prix Simulator was released at budget price (£1.99), five times cheaper than Super Sprint. However, it

was only produced on cassette tape, so if a CPC664 or CPC6128 owner wanted the game, they would have to find a way to hook a tape player to their machine or convert the tape image to disk. **WINNER: Grand Prix Simulator**

Presentation: Both games sport a great car racing themed loading screen with good use of colour. Also, both games feature one or two player options. While both games have multiple courses to race around, only Super Sprint will allow you to choose them from the onset, with

GPS players advancing through the courses as they beat the previous course. There is a high score table in both games, but only SS features a winner's circle. SS features four cars racing at the same time, but GPS only has two cars on the same course. **WINNER: Super Sprint**

Graphics: Both games are fairly equal when it comes to the graphics department, although SS edges ahead with its well defined cars over GPS' rather basic cars. While SS does have a rather square display playing area, GPS also has its own

disadvantage of a narrow playing area with a status screen on top. Yes, GPS does have some nice background graphics, but SS wins out where it matters. **WINNER: Super Sprint**



Sound: This is where Super Sprint clearly fails as the game's sound is almost non-existent. There are no tunes to speak of and the sound effects are limited to car engine droning and crash sounds. Grand Prix Simulator on the other

hand features a fantastic title tune. There is even great use of speech thrown in there as well. Sound effects, though, are the standard car skid noises. **WINNER: Grand Prix Simulator**

Playability: Super Sprint plays pretty well, although the computer cars tend to race side by side during the entire race. The difficulty is fairly lenient and even a few crashes will not hamper the player's chances of winning. Obstacles that the player faces include whirlwind tornadoes that can impede the cars' progress. Grand Prix Simulator is also a decent racer, providing the player can get the hang of the car's

manoeuvrability as there can be a lot of skidding and sliding around corners. This can also lead to skidding off course and getting stuck behind the course scenery. The bridges can also cause headaches when the player drives underneath, losing track of the car and the possibility of crashing unsighted. Obstacles in GPS include mud puddles that can cause cars to skid.

WINNER: Draw

Ratings: Super Sprint got a rather lukewarm response from the gaming press. In the UK, the game received ratings of 831 (ACE), 73% (Amstrad Action) and 60% (Computing With the Amstrad). The game was also reviewed in magazines from around the world, with ratings of -10% (Amstrad Cent Pour Cent) and 75% (Sizin Amstrad). In comparison, Grand Prix Simulator received some pretty decent ratings. Mainly

covered in the UK, the game got ratings of 4/5 stars (Popular Computing Weekly), 78% (Amstrad Action) and an average rating of 19/20 (Amstrad Computer User where the reviewers gave out individual ratings of 18/20, 20/20 and 18/20). Over in France, Amstrad Cent Pour Cent awarded the game with an 80%. **WINNER: Grand Prix Simulator**

Charts: Surprisingly, Super Sprint only managed to break into one chart, the Top 20 in Turkey. The game spent three months in the chart, peaking at number 12. Grand Prix Simulator spent 15 months in the Top 20 Amstrad CPC

charts from 1987 to 1988. In that time it held the top spot on two separate occasions. Outside the UK, the game charted in the German Top 10 at number 7. **WINNER: Grand Prix Simulator**

OVERALL WINNER: Grand Prix Simulator

FILM NIGHT

ARACHNOPHOBIA

Licensed games amounted for a large proportion of Amstrad CPC games with the film tie-in game market proving a huge success. Here, we take a look at one of the lesser known releases...

There have been many film licensed games released on the Amstrad CPC. Some good, some okay and some bad. But there was one CPC tie-in license that seemed to have passed everyone by back in 1991 and that was Disney's Arachnophobia, developed by Titus Software.

Arachnophobia starts with some B-Movie style screen introductions, which bring the gamer up to speed on events leading up to the game's first level. The backstory to the game is pretty much based on the film. A newly discovered species of spider being has been unwittingly transported to a small town in the United States where a new breed of deadly spiders are spawned, terrorising the local townspeople.

While the film was B-Movie territory with a mix of horror, comedy and thriller elements, the game is very much action based. In the game, the player takes on the role of an exterminator in Delbert McClintosh's Spider Infestation Control Team. As expected, the task is to rid the areas of these new killer spiders.

Starting off with a bird's eye view of a housing scheme, it is the player's job to travel around the streets, entering infested houses and exterminating the unwelcome visitors. Upon entering a building, the view switches to a more traditional side-view.

Each building has spiders roaming freely around, but they can be eliminated with the use of bug spray. The exterminator does come equipped with plenty of bug spray, but it will not last forever, especially with any nervous



A remarkably aggressive and extremely poisonous spider is discovered in a remote South American rain forest.



Good work! Delbert McClintosh welcomes you as a proud member of the Spider Infestation Control Team. Let's get you and sizzle them varmints!



trigger happy gamer. He also comes equipped with a limited supply of bug bombs which can be placed in a room and let off to deal with any nearby spiders.

In each town there is a queen spider hiding in its lair and to successfully clean up the town of arachnids, the player will have to kill her. In every house, there is an egg sack where spiders spawn from. Destroy these and the game's compass in the status area will point in the general direction of the queen spider's lair. It is not just a matter of marching over there and doing battle, though, as the only way of defeating the queen is by collecting a gas can and matches, where by the exterminator's bug spray will be upgraded to a flame thrower.

This must rank as one of the rarest Amstrad CPC games ever, with very little advertisement or coverage at all upon its 1991 release in France only. In fact, the game was not even reviewed anywhere, even in France where it was released. Very little information on the Amstrad version exists to this day, which is a shame because this is a very decent game.

The quality of the presentation in Arachnophobia is noticeable straight away as it loads up with some very impressive and atmospheric intro screenshots explaining the backstory of the game. The in-game visuals are just as good with colourful graphics, a large main character and clearly defined enemy spider sprites. While the sound is fairly limited, with a little bit of music in the intro scenes and in-game spot effects of bug sprays and spiders jumping around, it does the job very well.

Gameplay is solid enough with plenty of action to keep the best gamers busy for a long time. However, there are some minor niggles which creep in to proceedings. The loading between sections (from overhead map to side-on inside houses) can be very slow, almost to the point that it appears to have crashed. Difficulty of the game is also relatively high with any errors quickly punished by attacking spiders. This is mainly down to the slightly awkward movement of the main character. Jumping is pretty awkward to pull off successfully, often getting the player in to more trouble. Using the Bug spray can also be troublesome as the player will need to fire diagonal up, straight ahead, diagonal down, which requires careful movement of the controls so not to move into trouble.

There is an excellent game hidden beneath the difficult gameplay and clunky controls. If you are determined and prepared to put up with that then this is a great piece of work that should have been covered to a better extent when it was originally released.



ARCADE ACTION: SHINOBI

When it comes to arcade game conversions, the Amstrad CPC has its fair share of hits and misses. We take a look back at one of the better efforts...

The Amstrad CPC conversion of the arcade smash hit Shinobi differs in many ways, but the one way it stays the same is that it is a quality production.

The backstory to the game tells of an annual graduation ceremony at a Ninja school where their most famous graduate has been invited to give a talk and hand out the prizes. However, before any announcements are made the Dark Ninja, Bwah Foo, and his henchmen, manage to gatecrash the event using a cloud of Dark Ninja Magic which freezes everyone. Frozen helplessly, the Ninja school staff watch in horror as the students are taken away.

Taking on the role of the unnamed ninja, the player is tasked with infiltrating the enemy territory, rescuing the kidnapped students and

bringing down Bwah Foo.

The game takes place over five side-scrolling platform missions, each mission containing two or three stages and a final section with the end-of-level guardian. The unnamed main character has an array of moves at his disposal as he negotiates the many scenarios and hazards. As well as the standard walk, he can crouch, sneak crouch, jump and leap up and down between the different floors or levels.

The main standard weapon is an unlimited supply of shuriken and even fists and feet can be used at close range. A power-up can be picked up during the stages, which gives the player a gun that fires explosive bullets. Special Ninja Magic can also be used once per level, which involves ninja figures flying all around the screen taking out all the enemy onscreen.

The enemy characters vary depending on the mission and stage, ranging from knife wielding





thugs, gun-equipped henchmen, samurai wielding warriors and a varied range of ninjas.

Upon defeating the end-of-level guardian, the player is taken to the first person perspective bonus stage, where the aim is to shoot shuriken at ninjas that gradually advance towards you from three platforms in front of you. If the player succeeds in killing all the ninjas, they will be awarded with an extra life, but fail and it is straight onto the next mission with no award.

While the CPC was never going to be able to match the original arcade game's visuals, the programmers produced a respectful attempt. Using the CPC's Mode 1, the graphics are colourful, if a little messy in places. The first level, for instance, has an odd choice of colouring - orange, green, blue.

With the game taking full advantage of 128k of memory, there are some impressive digitised



samples in between levels. The theme tune on the title screen is also a good interpretation of the original arcade tune. The actual in-game effects are limited, but adequate, to the swish sounds of Shinobi firing off his shurikens.

Detractors of the Amstrad CPC often accuse the computer of not being able to scroll, but that exact technique is accomplished here to great success. In fact, not only does the game scroll extremely smooth left and right, but up and down as well. A great job.

The game's difficulty curve is pretty easygoing, certainly to begin with. The early levels can be overly easy, with only the later levels providing a challenge, particularly the missions where one wrong step or jump could lead you to a fall into the pits.

It was always a tall order to successfully convert an arcade game back in the 8-bit days, but the programming team did an amazing job with the hardware at their disposal here. Making full use of the CPC's 128k capabilities, Binary Design developed one of the best arcade conversions on the CPC.



GAME OVER

SCORE	080517		TIME	8:38
TOP	100000			