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MAGAZINE OF THE YEAR

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ACE

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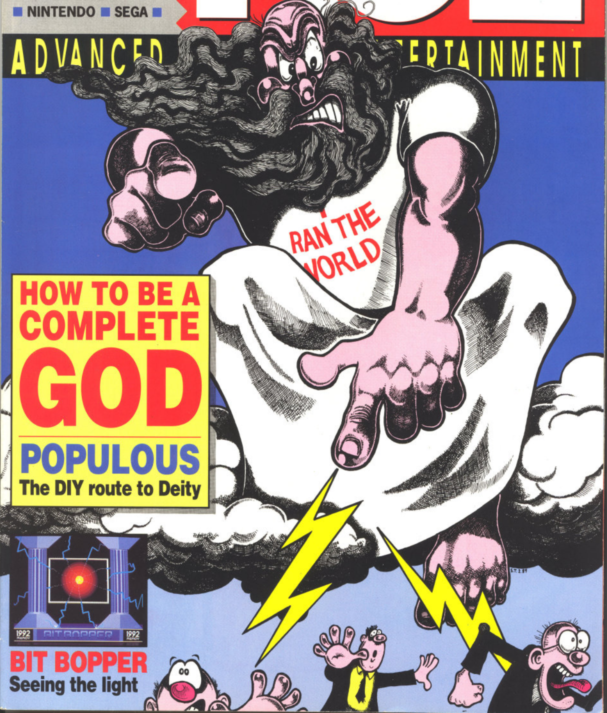
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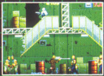

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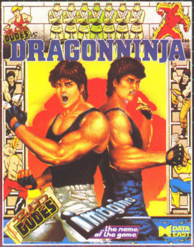

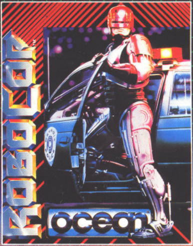

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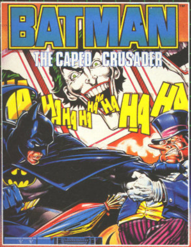

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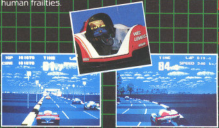

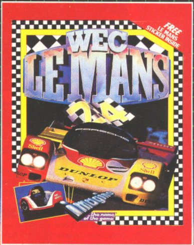
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Editor
Graeme Kidd
Reviews Editor
Bob Wade
Staff Writers
Steve Jarratt, Andy Smith
Production Editor
Damien Noonan
Consultant Editor
Brian Larkman (Graphics)
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Steve Cooke
Contributors
Simon N Goodwin,
Tony Takoushi, Zog
Art Editor
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Production
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Vivien Dean
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Louise Cockcroft
Advertisement Manager
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Publisher
Kevin Cox

Cover by Simon Thorp

SUBSCRIPTIONS
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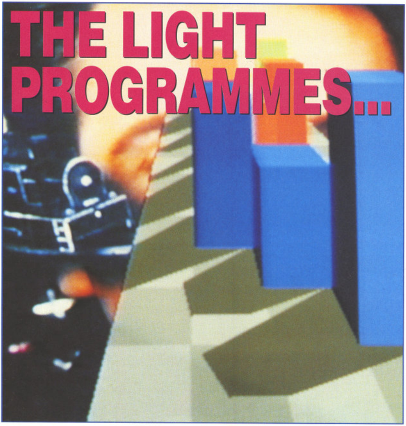
THE LIGHT PROGRAMMES...



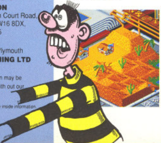
SPECIALS

WALLOWING IN MUDs **25**
Expert multi-user-gameplayer Zog ruminates on the possibilities offered by involvement in online games.

LIGHT ENTERTAINMENT **32**
What is the *Bit Bopper* and why do you need TWO Archimedes computers to use it? And who, or what the heck, is Marek? All the details, in glorious technicolour.

GAMEPLAY

SCREEN TEST **39**
More games than a season in the football league this month, led from the heavens by *Populous* and featuring the new statesman game, *Balance of Power 1990*. Then Infocom move off in a new direction with *Battletech* and another way of going to war – *Borodino*.



ARCADE ACE **22**
It's showtime again. Arcade Ace Andy Smith gets on the road with Atari's *Hard Driving* and marvels at other coinslot wonders.

SCREENTEST SUPPLEMENT **69**
Version updates in an at-a-glance guide – check out the latest arrivals for YOUR machine. Then a quintet of cheapies go under the microscope, but only three of them make the grade. Find out which.

TRICKS 'N' TACTICS **70**
Steve Jarratt and friends really go to town this month, offering up no less than ten pages designed to make an amateur into a professional gameplayer. Including full maps of *Rambo III*, *Incredible Shrinking Sphere* and the complete solution to *Total Eclipse*.

ADVENTURES **95**
Our man with the well-oiled lamp lights the way through the tortuous paths offered by *Zak McKracken*, and a trio of games from Sierra Online...

DEAR MUM...

It's really great, now they've got computers at school – learning is now so much fun that I've actually given up trainspotting at the weekends in favour of doing homework. Well, I say it's homework, but the teachers don't actually set it. You see, there's this really neat piece of educational software called Populous in which you get to practice creating worlds, sending earthquakes and manipulating your worshippers, and nearly all of us have taken a copy home – it's a real laugh! Sometimes, I even sneak the computer into the study, use Dad's hotline to the Vatican and phone up Nick's son for a game. Suddenly, being a schoolgod is fun again.

Mind you, wandering around on Earth in my celestial parka and hiding behind a pair of extra thick glasses just so I could collect train numbers was all a bit pointless really. Once I'd got the knack of causing minor weather incidents, like ice on the points, there was no reason to hang around draughty stations at specific times just to note the number of Brush Twos or Peaks. With just a touch of pre-planning, I found I could have a long lie-in on a Saturday morning and then collect all the numbers I wanted with a quick visitation to Paddington station.

Dad caught me at it once, and was really angry, thundering on about cheating and stuff but I did point out that everyone had to practice Acts of God and he seemed to accept my explanation... He still confiscated my pet plague of locusts that I had been keeping in a matchbox under the bed, though. Good job he didn't make my boils erupt again, mind – a couple of Insurance companies down in your end of things nearly went bankrupt last time that happened.

Anyway, Mum, I expect Dad'll be down to see you again soon – I've noticed that he's been fiddling around with that bag of swan feathers in the potting shed lately, and you know what **that** means...

Your loving godson, Zeus Jnr

I
RAN THE
WORLD

REGULARS

NEWS **9**
Lots of goodies, including more on the Konix Multi System, early details of the PC Engine CD ROM drive and the first PC CD ROM game from Mirrorsoft/Pergamon Compact Solution. Then there's SAM....

LETTERS **12**
If you've got anything to say, here's the place to say it.

GRAPHICS **89**
Brian Larkman chips away at *Sculpt-Animate 4D* and visits a gallery to view William Latham's exhibition of computer-generated graphic art.

THE BLITTER END **138**
That's all folks! Well, nearly all. Why is a top software house boss riding a plastic motorbike? FInd out.

PINKS

There's N'Gar Thrombobo and Nigel from Rigel to give you a chuckle. There's a prize crossword and puzzle to make your head ache and there's the definitive guide to Puzzles, Brain Games and Specials if you're thinking of making a software purchase. But don't blame us if you buy one we recommend and then find yourself unable to go to work or school for the next six months because you're glued to the monitor.

If you look carefully, you may just find the odd competition, and the occasional something that's a little out of the ordinary as well. You have been warned...!

CORAL SEA, MIDWAY, SA
RELIVE THE BATTLES TH

Naval warfare changed dramatically in the first few months of the World War II Pacific theatre. Almost overnight, the balance of power shifted from the huge guns of the battleships to the torpedoes and dive bombs of the carrier-based aircraft. Now, entire battles were fought without the great fleets coming into visual range.

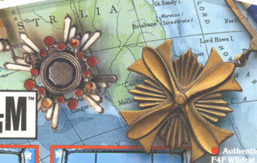
It became clear that control of the seas – and the outcome of the war – would belong to the navy with the most effective carrier force. And at the beginning of 1942, the advantage was clearly with Japan.

With the devastating success of the Pearl Harbour strike, Japan's fleet was larger and stronger. Japanese aircraft were swifter and more manoeuverable. Their pilots were more seasoned. Even their torpedoes were more reliable.

But before 1942 was over, the tide in the pacific war had turned. Four pivotal battles – Coral Sea, Midway, the Santa Cruz Islands, and the Eastern Solomons – spelled the end of the Japanese advance and the beginning of a long retreat. Battlehawks 1942 provides a fascinating, challenging, and very exciting pilot's eye perspective of these historic confrontations.

"In early 1942, American planes were no match for my Zero. I was a hawk in a flock of geese – soaring, looping, pouncing, destroying. I was truly saddened for the brave men in those sluggish planes. All too soon, the planes got better ...."

"My first burst of tracers skimmed the Val's tail. Just as I corrected my aim, he dove. I followed, and my Wildcat's cannons took his plane apart by bits and pieces. Suddenly, he pulled up and bailed through his shattered canopy. Moments later, the Val exploded ..."



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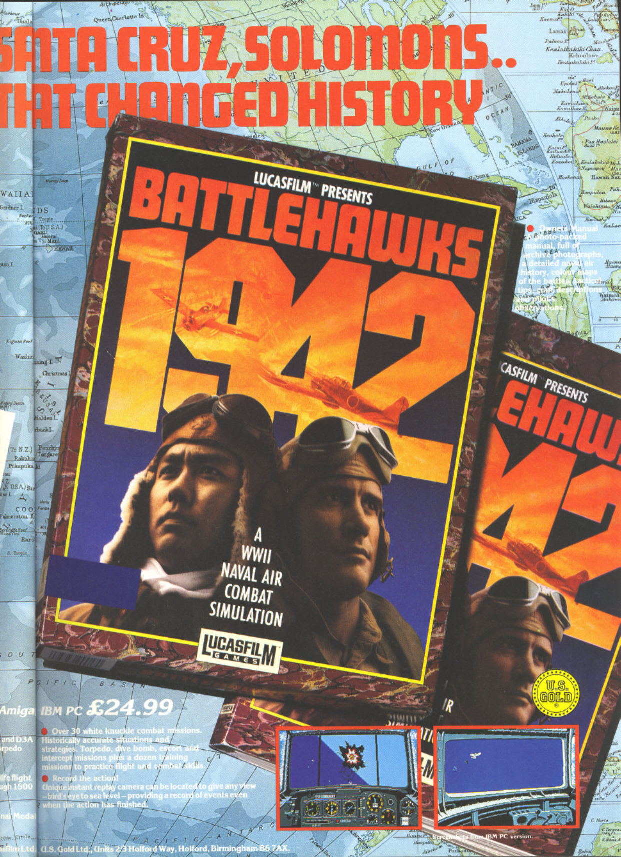
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Screenshots from IBM PC version.

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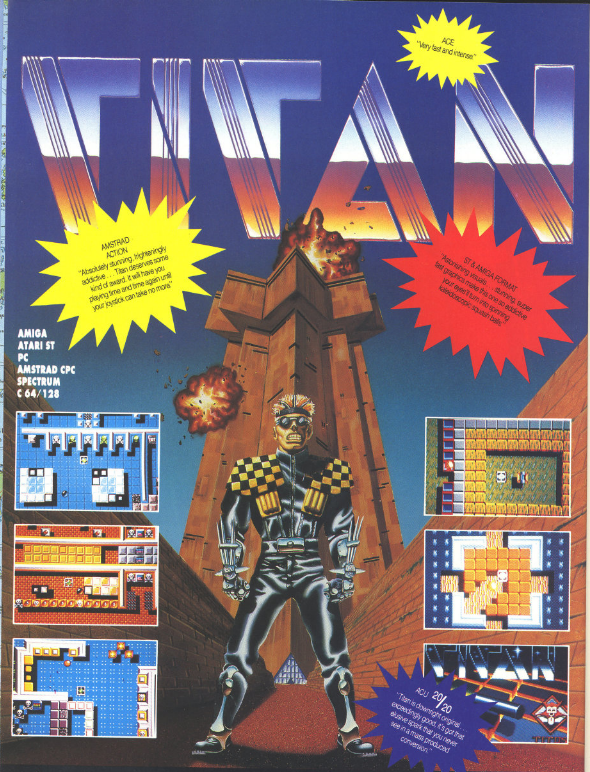

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ST & AMIGA FORMAT
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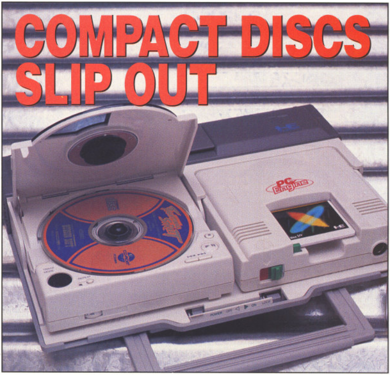
COMPACT DISCS SLIP OUT



The PC Engine slots into a neat carrying case alongside the CD ROM drive. The plastic case is the interface, and the CD drive can be removed and used independently as a portable CD audio player.

After several years of rumours and mutterings about the imminent possibility of CD ROM entertainment software, the new medium for computer games is about to become a reality. Two products have just been launched at different ends of the world, and a new CD standard was recently announced which makes Compact Disk Interactive a more immediate possibility.

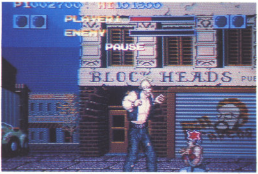
In Japan, NEC recently launched a CD ROM drive for the PC Engine as an add-on which costs the equivalent of £300. Already two games are available for the system: *Street Fighter*, a conversion of Capcom's 'traditional' coin-op beat-em-up, and *Noriko*, a text, audio and graphics adventure-type game packed with text that is impenetrable to all but fluent Japanese speakers. And we may yet see the PC Engine in the UK within the next couple of months – Micro Media claims to be on the verge of signing a deal which will allow them to import the Engine and games.

The PC Engine CD ROM could soon dominate the world – at the moment there are probably around 100,000 CD ROM drives in existence connected to IBM PC compatible hardware, but if only half the Japanese Engine owners go for the CD ROM drive, NEC will achieve sales of over half a million units.

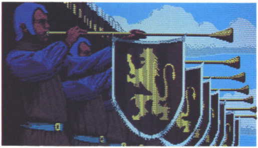
CDWARE

On the day we photographed the latest peripheral for the PC Engine, Pergamon Compact Solution and Mirrorsoft launched the first CD ROM game for PC systems running audio CD ROM drives: *Defender of the Crown*. Conceived as a pilot project to polish the methodology of adding full motion-picture quality audio to computer games, the *Defender* project was undertaken in association with Cinemaware who produced the interface software and audio soundtrack.

The gameplay in the CD ROM version of Defender has not be altered one jot – deliberately, as the intention was to see how people reacted to having high-quality audio added to an existing game. Jim Mackonochie, Chairman of Mirrorsoft and the man behind its sister company Pergamon Compact Solution which specialises in CD ROM products for the corporate market is unsure how well the latest version of Defender will sell: "I didn't want to sit around and do nothing until I had a large installed user base", he explains. But CD ROM is catching on in America – a chain of software retailers, Egghead, has announced that they are stocking CD ROM drives and are looking for compatible entertainment products.



PC Engine -*Street fighter*, CD ROM style. There's no full-motion video animation, but the accompanying soundtracks are well impressive.



PC CD ROM - The fanfare in this version of *Defender of the Crown* has to be heard to be believed - full CD quality stereo accompanies the graphics.

An EGA PC with an interface card linking it to a CD ROM drive with audio capability is needed to play the latest version of *Defender of the Crown*, but the full soundtrack whcih includes a narrator speaking in an 'Olde English' accent makes the experience much more cinematic, even though game graphics are identical to the floppy-disk PC version.

IMMINENT INTERACTIVITY

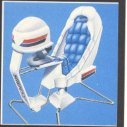
Compact Disc Interactive, which offers the potential for full-motion TV pictures (on part of the the screen at least) in interactive programmes that load from CD is getting a little closer with the announcement of the CD XA standard that allows audio and animation data to be interleaved on a compact disk rather than stored separately.

Next issue we will take a look at the future of CD-based computer entertainment – catching up on all the developments. Stay tuned!

EARLS COURT AND BEYOND

The Konix engineers responsible for most of the Multi System hardware design stand behind Wyn Holloway, who couldn't resist one more go in his rock 'n' roll arcade chair. Left, Chris Green, middle, Wyn Holloway, right Robert Kent.

The prototype arcade chair in all its glory...



...and an artist's impression of the final unit.

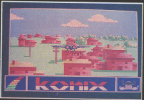
In amongst the 'My Little Ponies' and cuddly toys of the Earls Court Toy Fair, Konix unveiled their Multi System console. The occasion was also the first public showing of the rock 'n' roll arcade chair that will be available as an add-on – obviously it was not the final production version but a rather noisy prototype that drew the crowds to the Konix stand.

The hardware and demonstration software were warmly received by the toy trade and visiting members of the entertainment software industry alike – on the Monday of the show programmers and publishers were invited to a presentation on the stand. The moving chair was a definite hit – at least one programmer was overheard planning to link it to his ST!

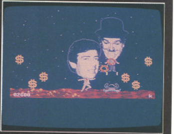
Although the first prototype of the final hardware didn't make it to the stand at the Toy Fair launch, the Attention To Detail team had completed a quartet of demos which showed off the potential of the console.

According to Konix boss Wyn Holloway, the launch was a major success – ten days after the show closed, interested parties were 'queuing up' outside the Konix HQ in deepest Wales to talk serious business.

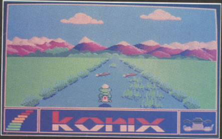
THE MULTI SYSTEM DEMONSTRATION SOFTWARE



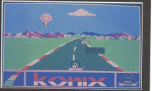
(Above) An *Afterburner*-style demo in which a jet zooms over rapidly-scrolling landscapes.



(Right)A jokey *'Invaders'* type game put together to show the power of the Multi System – digitised heads with wiggly bodies have to be shot from the skies.



(Left) Romping along a river on a jet bike – mind those logs!



(Below) On the road with the Multi Sytem.

The market for starter micros took a kick up the backside with the first public showing of SAM, the new home computer from Miles Gordon Technology. SAM is a 256K micro, priced at £149.95 and built around a 6MHz Z80-B processor. It made its first public appearance at the NARSA electronics show in Blackpool in February, and reaches the shops this summer.

Entry-level machines still sell well, but hardware has been caught in a timewarp since 1982 when the first big-sellers captured the UK software market. A succession of home machines like the Memotech, Dragon, Einstein and Enterprise have come and gone, yet the vintage Spectrum and Commodore 64 still dominate first micro purchases.

Amstrad occasionally finds CPC machines kicking around in warehouses, and sells a few – but the bottom dropped out of the CPC software trade a couple of years ago, entrenching the Spectrum and C64 still further. Remarkable considering how little those machines have developed in the last seven years.

Amstrad has done little with the Spectrum apart from reducing compatibility and bolting on a job-lot of tape recorders and cheap disk drives. Commodore has merely changed the 64's box, producing the Edsel-like gesture of the 64C. A redesign, the 64 Plus, was commissioned from Konix brains trust Creative Devices, but did not go into production.

MGT has stepped into this gap with SAM, a modern design that runs Spectrum software but exploits custom widgetry to bring the machine's spec up to date.

SAM VS 8-BIT MICROS

SAM outpaces the 3.55MHz Spectrum with its 6MHz Z80 B processor. Like the Sega console, it has a range of 64 display colours – contrasting with the Spectrum's eight, with 'normal' and 'bright' variants.

The biggest flaw of the Spectrum is its dull display. Gameplay can be as good as 16-bit titles, but after a while every game looks the same because of the restricted palette and 'attribute' grid that leaves developers trapped between Scylla and Charybdis – flickering colours or a monochrome playfield.

The SAM design cures these problems, although games need some conversion to make full use of SAM hardware. Pixel resolution can be twice as high as on the Spectrum, and attributes are optional – if you must, you can use

SAM GOES PUBLIC

all 64 colours in one character-space.

Even if you just load a standard 48K ZX cassette game, SAM can refresh your jaded eyeballs. All 16 Spectrum colours and shades can be independently translated to palette colours, which should make it easier to tell the shots from the sprites in many games.

Sound effects are routed either through the TV or through stereo Walkman headphones. SAM has a six-channel stereo sound chip, rather than the three-channel mono AY-8910 of the ST and Spectrum 128 (details of SAM's SAA-1099 are in the Maplin Electronics catalogue). The feeble Spectrum 'BEEP' is still supported, for compatibility with old software.

SAM's ROM includes a block-structured BASIC interpreter and a 'swapper' which lets you access disks and use up to four programs at one time.

SAM VS 16-BIT MICROS

The basic model of SAM is half the price of the Atari ST, but it comes close to the same price when you expand the memory to 512K and add a 780K disk drive. When it comes to graphics and sheer processing power the Atari is still way ahead.

SAM does have a built-in network, potentially useful for games as well as education. You can plug all sorts of cheap Spectrum peripherals into SAM's expansion connector, while the ST limits you to built-in interfaces and a 64K cartridge port. Besides the main expansion port, SAM has sockets for a mouse, joystick, light-pen or gun, printer, cassette, headphones and MIDI musical instruments.

There's space for one or two 780K 3.5 inch disk drives, based on MGT's existing Spectrum add-ons, three times faster than Amstrad drives. Disks slot into the front of SAM, under the keyboard; this is more sensible than the ST or Amiga arrangement, which puts a single drive at the side of the computer.

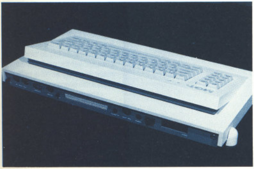
SOFTWARE - OLD AND NEW

The main point in SAM's favour is its Spectrum compatibility, which means that a vast range of commercial games is available, at half to a fifth of the price of 16-bit titles.

It remains to be seen what price software houses will set for programs that use SAM's special features. With its extra memory and processing power, SAM should be an attractive machine for people developing new Spectrum software. It should not be hard to produce a souped up SAM version of a title once the Spectrum code is working.

MGT have a 16-channel MIDI package in the works. This sequencer started life on the 128K Spectrum but author Steve Turner ran out of memory and processor power before he'd finished. SAM should encourage other programmers to dust off software that became too ambitious for the Spectrum.

SAM is unlikely to give Amstrad or Atari much cause for concern, but it should draw new users into the hobby, and that's good news for everyone in the long term.



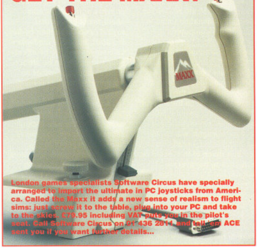
SAM – the first finished computer.

The NARSA Show – SAM surfaced up North, rather than at Which Computer or some other mainstream show, because the NARSA Show fitted MGT's development timetable and provided an audience suitably impressed by SAM's price and ingenious hardware.

It's an annual event, organised by 57 amateur radio, electronics and computing clubs in the North of England. It's a big show, with over 100 stands in two halls and two annexes – even then some traders had to be turned away because of lack of space. About 5,000 people attended and the halls were packed solid until late in the day, when these pictures were taken.

The show started life 27 years ago, as one of the many 'Radio Rallies' where wireless enthusiasts exchanged valves, aerials, and suchlike. Nowadays there's a roaring trade in computers, interfaces and disk drives as well as other electronics. Prices can be stunningly low – just £10 for a working, populated PC or MSX mother-board – but boxes, power supplies and keyboards are extra, and it's unusual to get any documentation...

GET THE MAXX?



London games specialists Software Circus have specially arranged to import the ultimate in PC joysticks from America. Called the Maxx it adds a new sense of realism to flight sims: just screw it to the table, plug into your PC and take to the skies. £79.95 including VAT puts you in the pilot's seat. Call Software Circus on 01 436 2811 and tell 'em ACE sent you if you want further details...

GIRLS JUST WANT TO HAVE FUN...

OASIS IN THE DESERT OF ISOLATION

In reply to Mandy Flower's letter in the March issue, indeed there are more of us women computer users than many people would think – we are just a bit more difficult to find than the men.

A look at the gender of reviewers in magazines will reveal that we exist in small amount at that level, but as users we are often hidden under that barrage of spotty 14 year old boys that dominates the scene. But, to paraphrase a hero of mine, Never Fear, OASIS is here. OASIS is the Organisation Against Sexism In Software, and is a newly-formed group that is open to both men and women but takes women as its starting point.

The group is not a lot of budding Mary Whitehouses out to stop people having fun, though it does want women to get a fair deal from this industry. OASIS is a forum for discussion for its members, primarily through a newsletter, and also serves as a source of information for women who may feel isolated as users.

So, Mandy and all the people out there who are interested, write to OASIS for more information. The only way we can stop feeling isolated is to let people know we are here!

Sandra Vogel
OASIS
3 Alden Court
Stanley Road
Wimbledon
LONDON SW19 8RD

SEXIST SOFTWARE SOLUTION?

There is no definite reason for the male domination found in the world of computers.

Personally, I think that a major factor must be the fact that females are not encouraged to use computers at an early age as much as males. For instance, take the kind of leisure software on the market: shoot-em-ups, save the helpless princess from the ravenous dragon, war simulator... and so on. I really can't see how much of that would be attractive to the average female. But it's not all bad. Some software does appeal to both sexes, even though a lot of it is biased towards males.

If this bias exists, then why don't software houses market more in the way of 'female only' software?

For instance, I remember reading about a program available only in America that allowed an on-screen doll to be dressed in a range of clothes, hair styles and so on, but I remember reading that the company involved had no plans to sell the program in the UK as they didn't think they would achieve worthwhile sales.

A chicken and egg situation exists. Software will mainly be targeted towards the male, and females will have less to attract them into using computers. The only solution would be for a major software house to think of some good 'female' programs and advertise them in magazines that the girl, or woman, would read.

But that would never happen... would it?

David Carter
Woking, Surrey

True, much of the existing games software is itself sexist and is marketed in a sexist manner – but unless careful thought is applied to designing games that 'appeal' to girls, all you'd end up with is software that reinforces current sex-stereotyping. Operation Wolf or Rambo games propagate the macho male stereotype, and doll-dressing simulators do the same for female sexist stereotypes. Which doesn't go very far towards solving problems.

The nature of entertainment software is a function of the sexist attitudes of society itself, which influences the people who make the games and the people who buy them. Chibbling away at sexist advertisements in the computer press or making noises about sexist games that exploit people and their bodies is a start, but more fundamental changes need to be effected if women are to be attracted to computing – either on the entertainment or serious side.

An awful lot of women are familiar with computers – owing to the the way society generally perceives women's role in the order of things, most wordprocessor operators are female. True, there are female programmers too, and the work of companies such as F International, which specialises in contract programming undertaken by female programmers working from home on a Teleworking basis, does allow women to fit computers in with their lifestyles.

And remember, Paula Byrne is at the helm of one of this country's largest software publishers: Telecomsoft.

Equality of opportunity in the world of computing is not going to be easy to achieve, even with the worthy efforts of groups such as OASIS. But it is well worth everyone trying. There's a massive, untapped market of female customers out there for a start... Let's hear from software publishers – and from more of our female readers on this matter.

Meanwhile, over to another female with a computer-related problem...

SUBSCRIBER BLUES

PRIZE LETTER

I would like to congratulate you on your excellent magazine which I have never read.

How does she know it is so good then? I hear you ask. Well, it must be. What else would stop all communication between my boyfriend and I as soon as he lays his hands on a copy?

Now it looks as though I am in for a very lonely year because he has just written to you for a subscription. I don't suppose you would consider shortening your October issue, as I would like some of his attention for my Birthday.

Come to think of it, if I remember correctly, he did speak to me one day the other week – he said something like 'let me try it once more' when his Aliens tape wouldn't load.

Ah well, isn't there a saying: If you can't beat them, then join them...

Sarah Scott, ACE Widow
Chiswick

There certainly is Sarah. As luck would have it, these pages are being produced on Valentine's Day (aaah!) and seeing as communication between couples is essential in a relationship, it now looks as if you are going to have to get involved with your fella on the computer gaming side of life. I'm awarding you £50 worth of software which you can run on 'his' machine – maybe you'd like to write to OASIS for a bit of advice on what to choose before you start chatting to your partner about the final selection of games that you will soon be playing together, as a couple.

FOUR THINGS YOU NEVER KNEW ABOUT YOUR ST or AMIGA

PRIZE LETTER

1) On the new STs, the mouse and joystick ports are awkwardly positioned underneath the console. To get over this problem, simply keep your computer upside-down.

2) Want to make pirate copies of games, but frightened of being caught? There is a solution! Firstly, buy the original game and make a copy of it. Take the label off the original and put it on the copy. Flush the original down the toilet, and keep the copy in its box. Voila! A pirate copy that is indistinguishable from the original.

3) Floppy disks aren't very nice to eat. So if you do eat one, make sure you put lots of tangy tomato ketchup on it first.

4) If an adventure program confuses you, why not even the score? Simply type in "X2ZZJ3*". The program won't have an answer for that. One-all, I think!

Stephen Meek
South Humberside

Er, yes. Imagine our surprise when we received this letter in the office... Here's £25 worth of games, Stephen.
GK

SLIPPED HIS DISC(O)

I have an idea, based on research, which I would like to thrash out with you.

Problem: cassette-based software usually retails for around £10 or less, but the equivalent disk package may sell for more than the price of the cassette version and the cost of the disk added together.

Solution: locate licensed disk copying facilities at retail outlets, so the purchaser can buy a legal copy of the software and put it onto a disk of his own. By this arrangement, everyone seems to win: the producer can sell software at a lower price yet still make the same profit; the retailer doesn't have to worry about keeping stocks yet can offer all titles immediately; and the buyer is happy because the software is cheaper, yet the producer can maintain quality as he is getting the same revenue as usual.

The only drawbacks that I can see are that mail order companies are not catered for and that the risk of pirating might be increased. But mail order companies should have as much opportunity as retailers of opening their own licensed copying centres. Secondly, if the copying outlets

ACE LETTERS

ADVANCED COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT

Another month, another collection of views and opinion and another £100 worth of software given away. It's been shared out a bit this time, but if you fancy having a go at doing the ton solo, put printer or pen to paper and send a missive to our Editor at: ACE LETTERS, THE EDITOR, 4 QUEEN STREET, BATH BA1 1EJ.

supplied a bond of assurance as proof of purchase and only transferred protected files using equipment similar to that used by software houses at the moment, there appears to be no real problem.

I'd be interested to read comments on this subject, including those from the software houses who will no doubt say the initial idea cannot be financially viable.

Peter Harper
Barnsley

Neat idea, but it has been tried before and didn't work too well. Two separate companies had a go at installing just such a software duplicating system for cassette games a few years ago – Mikro-Gen had a machine in their shop, for instance. It never really caught on, partly because retailers didn't want to spend time duplicating games on a busy Saturday morning. Shops still had to keep stocks of the inlays and packaging for games, so in the end they didn't really benefit.

One company, however, provided a useful service for Amstrad owners with disk machines – Ambyte would make up pick 'n' mix disk compilations, and only charged the cassette price for each game providing a customer bought at least two games with each order. There are whispers that Ambyte may be starting up again, so CPC owners with disk drives might want to keep an eye out...

VIOLENT DEBATE

PRIZE LETTER

Why is it that a small group of 'do gooders' suddenly think that computer games are bad for us, and lead to aggressive anti-social activities?

I have played computer games for five years, during which time I've seen countless shoot-em-ups, hack-em-ups and adventures, none of which have led me to become a mad, knife-wielding Ninja from Middle Earth. I can't understand them, where can the link between games and real violence possibly be? It has to be said, that out of the millions of games players in the world, there will inevitably be a few who are missing a byte, but this minority should not be used to curtail the fun of the vast majority.

If the games manufacturers don't join together and make a stand, they'll have restrictions slapped on them before they know what's happening. It's not even as if these meddling fools could do anything anyway – there are networks of pirates in the games world, and these would thrive if censorship were introduced. Banned games, or restricted games, would still reach those who weren't supposed to have them.

It should be left up to the programming houses and the public to exercise self-censorship – after all, no-one forces us to buy any particular gruesome game.

Adam Morely
Stoneygate, Leicester

Mr Morely makes several sensible points about the practicality of censorship which earn him £25 worth of software. Anyone out there fancy providing a well-argued case for censorship? After that convincing thumbs-down to censorship, let's hear from a parent...

Computer and arcade games violent? WHAT RUBBISH!

I am the mother of a 12-year-old computer and arcade game fanatic, and he hasn't changed into a little Rambo. He's quite normal, just like all his game-playing friends. Kids aren't stupid – they know the difference between pushing a few buttons to destroy an image on the screen and loading a real rifle and shooting someone.

These people who seem to know everything are so sanctimonious. I bet when they were kids, they didn't go and shoot real indians after playing cowboys and indians. They must have forgotten what it is like to be young and enjoying an adventure or fantasy game.

Maybe if there weren't games like *Rambo* and *Operation Wolf* for kids to have a good shoot out, there might be more violence on the streets...

Mrs Bryer
Croydon

NEXT MONTH

Issue 20 is the one to watch out for – it arrives in the shops on 6th April, and there's a cassette on the cover. Not an ordinary 8-bit game or playable demo though, but a real treat for the ears.

Our music coverage resumes as Jon Bates tunes up with an audio demo that backs up the start of a whole new way of looking at music and computers.

And the future is nearly upon us. Check out the latest developments on CDI, CD ROM and other interactive entertainment media. We speak to the experts.

Getting into Roles – Steve Cooke spends a week locked away in an isolated location in Cornwall. How does he keep sane? By engaging in Role Playing games on a multitude of machines. Check his definitive guide to the genre.

Doing Battle: Andy Smith catches up with wargames, while Zog and others ruminate on the possibilities for military simulations...

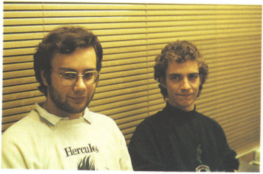
ACE ON THE ROAD AT MAELSTROM...

Mike Singleton has been writing games for some long while now, but the urge to publish them himself has never really gripped him. A couple of years ago, he set up Maelstrom with Hugh Batterbury and Malcolm Hellom, primarily as a development house to write software, but not ruling out completely the concept of publishing as well. Fairly soon, though, it became clear that an international perspective and considerable resources were needed to publish games successfully, so Maelstrom decided to concentrate on developing software and leave marketing and sales in the hands of publishers.

The most recent product to come out of the Maelstrom stable is *War In Middle Earth* – Melbourne House asked Mike and his team to provide the 8-bit versions. Gameplay is completely different to the 16-bit implementation. Obviously there wasn't room for the detailed character-level graphics on humbler 8-bit computers, but Mike Singleton decided that it would make more sense if the player couldn't see the location of Sauron's forces: "If you think about it", he explains, "the 8-bit versions are more realistic – in the book, Bilbo had an idea where armies of Orcs would be located but didn't know for certain until his party encountered the enemy."

Future projects are still under wraps in Maelstrom's Wirral HQ, but a couple of major games are well under way, including *Star Lord.* We can't let you know more than the title and the fact that up to 30 players, human or computer, will be able to join the fun. Look out for further details in a few months' time – from what we've seen, it 'll be well impressive.

Mike has been working on 3D routines, but without a specific game scenario in mind, and a couple of neat demos are waiting to be incorporated into a future title. He's mastered a method of producing filled 3D shapes and whizzing them round the screen which includes 'the headlight effect' – objects are lit as if they were appearing in the path of a car's headlights, so as they get 'closer' to the player, they are better illuminated. Then there's a high-speed demo of a filled 3D landscape which is waiting for a game scenario, and a game which might be described as the evolution of *Lords of Midnight* onto the ST and Amiga. More news of them, as and when the publishing companies Maelstrom is working for allow us to mention details...



Maelstrom's *War In Middle Earth* 8-bit programmers. On the left, Chris Pink who did the code for the Spectrum and Amstrad version and helped Paul Rowbotham on the graphics. On the right, Mike Lyons, for whom the C64 *War In Middle Earth* was the first major coding project. Andrew Elkerton was the graphics man on the C64.

INTELLIGENT PLAYERS

Mike and his partners at Maelstrom are very keen to develop the personality element behind computer-controlled players. Not for them the mindless blasting of a shoot-em-up, no matter how slickly-coded. Mike explains his view of computer gaming: "In principle, I think it is much more satisfying when you play real people – what's the fun in beating a computer? Much of the time, all you're doing is playing against an algorithm and you're frustrated until you beat it, then you get bored." Pete Barnett, Production Manager and *Archon* freak chips in... "Computer chess is no fun, unless you want to improve your game. You're fairly certain that the computer is going to win when you start, so what's the fun? Even if you do defeat the computer, you're denied the satisfaction of sitting there for half and hour and taking the mickey out of the loser." The Maelstrom team are working hard to develop personality elements behind computer players – "computer-generated players should play like people, not like a chess computer," Pete continues, "now an artificial chess player on computer that played like a person would lead to a more enjoyable game."

So shoot-em-ups are out of the future product portfolio. What about Dungeons and Dragons type games? "They don't turn me on at all," Mike says, "because you can never win." Strategy underlies all Maelstrom games, but as Mike explains, "Our games don't really fit into any category, mainly because we don't like doing the same thing twice. 'Strategy without tears' is probably our game design motto – getting the computer to take care of dynamic elements in game, elements that you simply couldn't put into a game based on dice and cardboard counters." Like the planetary orbits in *Star Lord* perhaps... oops, can't say that! ●

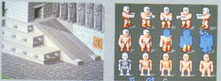
...AND AT GREMLIN

For the last two years (minus a three-month break), Gremlin's in-house programmers have been beavering away on their latest 16-bit product, *Ramrod.* And although resemblances to *Robocop* are strong, the sprite was on the drawing board well before Peter Weller's mutilated character appeared on the siver screen.

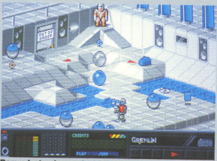
Set over four vertically-scrolling 'tech' levels (Low-tech, high-tech, Aztec, plus one undecided) the player's mission is to keep Ramrod from becoming bored. This is ensured by wandering around the landscape playing computer games – what else? – drinking Pepsi, playing music, blasting aliens and many similar wheezes. Contact with arcade consoles brings up a sub-game, which, Gremlin hopes, can be tied into some big-name companies such as Sega. Completing all the sub-games on one level sees Ramrod board a mini-sub for transport to the next.

For any statistics freaks out there, the game runs off 450K of source code with over 1Meg of graphic data (not counting 128K for each of the four sub games), and Ramrod himself has over 140 frames of animation.

***Ramrod* will surface first on the ST, with an Amiga version hot on its heels.**



(Left) Part of the unfinished Aztec level, which utilises authentic temple and statue designs. (Right) A selection of Ramrod's 140-odd animation frames.



Ramrod stands overlooking the Low-tech landscape. Note the loudspeakers for playing music, and the Juggler demo sprite near the bottom of the screen.

RAFFLES

ENTER THE ILLUSION!

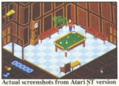
ATARI ST
AMIGA

SPECTRUM
AMSTRAD
C64

ENTER THE ILLUSION!

Get lost in a house . . . a house more real than anything you've experienced on a computer before. Lured in by its owner, you must find every gem hidden within its walls before it will release you. But beware! There are real traps, genetically enhanced monster-mice, and a puzzle in every room that will keep you glued to this game for months to come. So be warned! Featuring the most realistic portrayal of a house ever, using the revolutionary 'World Maker' technique to allow you to pick up, move and use virtually every object you find!
The Edge, 36/38 Southampton Street, London WC2, England

THE EDGE



Actual screenshots from Atari ST version

INTERPHASE YOUR IMAGINATION

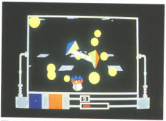
Come with us now on a journey into the depths of imagination, to places where only the mind can go. A world where the lines between reality and fantasy blur until they are indistinguishable. This is the world of *Interphase*, the Imageworks game that has amazed everyone who has seen it with its outstandingly fast solid 3D graphics.

Back in Issue 12 we had our first look at the early graphics for the game, then titled *Mainframe*. Since then programmer Adrian Stephens has taken his impressive graphic routines and used them to create a game.

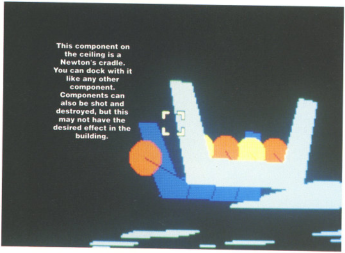
Because the game is so abstract in appearance, an important part of understanding what is going on is the accompanying storyline. The novella isn't finished, but has all the elements to make a great film. It revolves around 'dream tracks' – recordings of brain patterns during intense daydreams. These tracks can then be played back to other people, and they will experience the events as if they were real. There are even portable versions to plug into – like a sort of 'Dreamman'.

The problem with these devices is that the experiences are so real they are addictive. They are also being used for subliminal advertising. One of the kids who has been trained since birth to record the tracks, realises this and tries to do something about it.

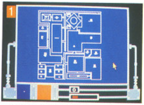
Events culminate with him operating a two-way dream track unit. Using it he can interact with the computer in the building where the tracks are broadcast from. He's trying to guide an accomplice through the building's defence systems. She has to retrieve his last ever dream track recording, which will otherwise cause chaos all over the world... ●



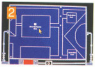
The pod at the bottom of the screen has released the fighter in the foreground. The fighter is in fact akin to a computer virus-killer – and guess who's the virus in this computer! If they prove troublesome you can shoot them – resulting in the explosion of yellow spheres filling the view.



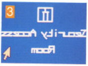
This component on the ceiling is a Newton's cradle. You can dock with it like any other component. Components can also be shot and destroyed, but this may not have the desired effect in the building.



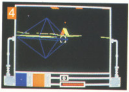
1. This is a blueprint of part of the building and its defence systems. The accomplice in the building will tell you where she needs help.



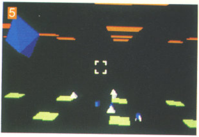
2. Zooming in reveals more detail but closer examination still is required.



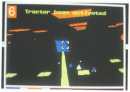
3. Clicking on the security access room icon will reveal the corresponding component that appears in the game. You can now leave the blueprint and try to find the component.



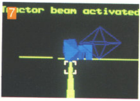
4. This is where the component belongs, but the fact that it is only in outline form means you will have to go find the component itself.



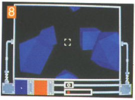
5. There's the component floating up in the top left of the screen. So how can it be got into position?



6. Activate the tractor beam and the component can be dragged to the correct site.



7. Position the component correctly inside its outline and when the beam is released it will slide into place.



8. Once docking mode is activated you can dock with the component and reveal the puzzle inside. This one has six spinning polygons which change when shot. Different combinations will have different effects.

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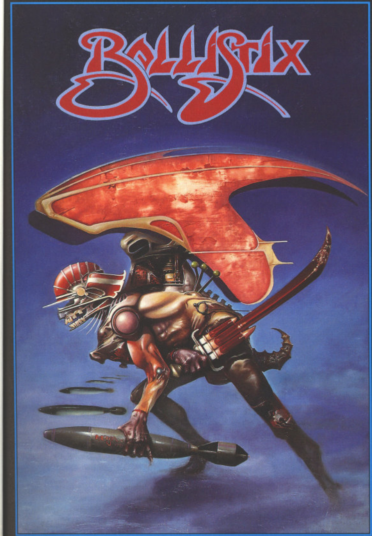

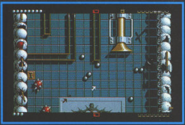

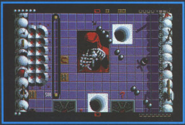

BALLISTIX
Its a whole new ball game!

Sick of silly old soccer ? Tired of pathetic pinball? Then you need a dose of *Ballistix* - the fastest, wackiest, toughest ball game yet to appear on a computer. *Ballistix* just explodes with excitement, puzzles and an amazing **130 different screens** of frenetic action.

The aim of the game is simple; score more goals than your opponent to win the match. Doing it is a different matter as **splitters** fill the screen with dozens of balls, **tunnels** hide them from view, **bumpers** bounce balls all over the show, fiendish **red arrows** speed them up to almost impossible velocity, **magnets** pull them away from your control, and much, much more.

Ballistix is incredibly flexible, too. You can play against the computer or another player, set the speed if you can't stand the pace, define where the balls are fired and their velocity, rack up bonuses that will get you extra goals and then, at the end of an exhausting game, set your name in pride of place on the high-score table. And it's all played to the accompaniment of a throbbing sound-track and a crowd that applauds your every goal.

Ballistix is definitely not a game for wimps. It's tough, fast, challenging and incredibly competitive - in fact, it's just the kind of game you like.

Two joysticks required for two-player game

ATARI ST/AMIGA - £19.95

Screen shots taken from the Amiga version.

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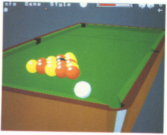
PSYCLAPSE

3D POOL ● Firebird

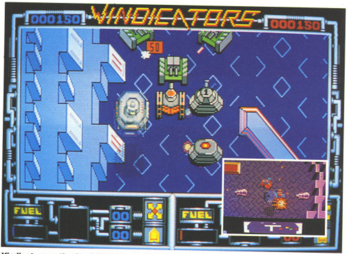
Continuing the current trend for green baize sports, Firebird have produced a 3D pool simulation, due to be released on all formats – Archimedes, BBC Electron and MSX included.

Rather than the staid old overhead display, the table and balls move in true perspective allowing players to take shots from any natural viewpoint.

The package features a knock-out tournament in which the final opponent faced is the European Pool Champion, 'Maltese' Joe Barbara. Anyone who fancies taking a crack at the Malteser will have to wait until mid-April.



Archimedes – Pool with a fresh perspective. The display should be identical to the ST and Amiga versions.

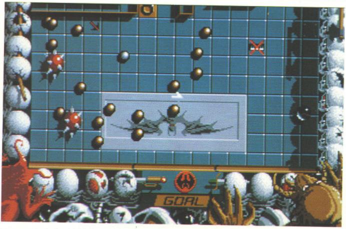


***Vindicators* on the Atari ST, with (inset) a glance at the Amstrad version too.**

VINDICATORS ● Tengen

Domark's subsidiary label, Tengen, which deals exclusively with Atari coin-op conversions, is all ready to kick off with its first release, *Vindicators*. The game is due for an all-formats release with a PC version to follow.

APRIL SHOWER

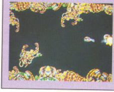


BALLISTIX ● Psygnosis

Just when it looked as if *Speedball* had the monopoly on high-speed ball games, along comes *Ballistix* from Psyclapse to try to redress the balance. Boasting fully user-definable game features, exhilarating gameplay and over 130 different pitches it sounds like one for Amiga and ST owners to watch out for.

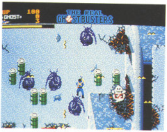
(Left) *Ballistix*, a whole new ball game.

COMING SOON FROM ACTIVISION
Amiga versions of *R-Type*, *SDI* and *Afterburner*. STAY TUNED.



THE REAL GHOSTBUSTERS
● Activision

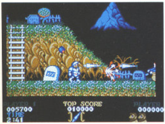
You've seen the cartoon, played with the toys and wondered what happened to Dan Aykroyd in the process. Now, thanks to Activision, you too can be one of the Real Ghostbusters. Get slimed soon!



PAPERBOY AND GHOSTS 'N' GOBLINS

● Elite

After a quiet couple of months, Elite are set to burst back onto the market with 16-bit versions of their best-selling 8-bit games, *Paperboy* and *Ghosts 'n' Goblins*. Both games are set to appear over the next month or so – expect full reviews soon. From what we've seen, fans of either coin-op are in for a pleasant surprise.



One of two action-packed conversions coming from Elite: *Ghosts 'n' Goblins.*

FORGOTTEN WORLDS AND VIGILANTE

● Capcom

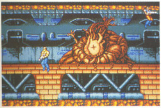
US Gold's Capcom label continues its assault on the Japanese coin-ops with *Forgotten Worlds* and *Vigilante*.

Forgotten Worlds lets two players work as a team, battling across an assortment of weird and wonderful scenery, letting rip with heavy-duty firepower purchased along the way.

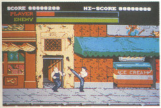
The Oriental combat theme gets another lease of life with *Vigilante*, where a heart-broken martial arts expert risks life and limb crossing the seedier parts of New York to rescue his beloved.

Released on all formats, *Vigilante* should be ready for a full review next issue, with *Forgotten Worlds* to follow sometime in April.

***Forgotten Worlds* – Two forgotten heroes search for something to blast.**



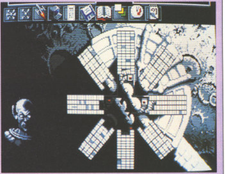
***Vigilante* – A dispute breaks out over the price of an ice cream?**



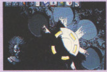
MILLENIUM 2.2

Last time a big asteroid hit the Earth it wiped out the dinosaurs. In the year 2200 one arrives with the human race's name on it. All that survives is a colony of 100 people on the moon. Not a very promising position to have to face as the colony leader. From just this one base you've got to colonise the solar system and survive all the dangers that a hostile universe can throw at you.

In order to expand the colony there are seven areas of the base that need to be used – research, production, energy, resources, defence, flight bay and life support. The purpose of each is self explanatory but the important thing is the interaction between sections and the ever-increasing detail that is revealed as you get into the game.



ST – The moon base is bigger than any of the other colonies you can build. The icon menu at the top allows access to all sorts of information on planets, ships, colonies, the solar system and what's going on.



ST – The life support unit sprouts podules to house the increasing population. The hairy chap in the bottom left is a mutant created to inhabit hostile planets.

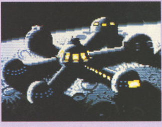
For instance, the research department will start off being able to do only simple projects, but as the game progresses more and more complex and time-consuming bits of equipment become available. To build with these you need more and more resources, and the energy to operate them. Resources are limited and so other colonies must produce them for some building projects. You'll even have to go and mine asteroids.

Of course you aren't going to be left in peace to explore the solar system. Disasters will strike and threats will materialise. The defence screens provide solid 3D shoot-em-up action that will have you panicking to act fast.

Whatever the setbacks you have to persevere or the human race will die out. As it is there are some unpleasant mutations to be made in order to colonise inhospitable worlds.

The beauty of the game is that just when it seems there's nothing more to discover, something happens that changes everything. Nearly all the action is icon controlled and accompanied by some moody and attractive graphic scenes.

Just one more thing to remember, something no self-respecting space colonist should forget – FOMM.

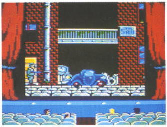


ST – The energy unit adds on solar panels as more powerful generators are researched and built.

CHICAGO 30'S ● US Gold

Take a trip back in time to the Chicago of 1930, where the ruling force is the mob and prohibition is in force. Detective Eliot is on the trail of illegal booze and runs the gauntlet of gangsters who come out of the woodwork to take pot shots at the dick.

Programmed by Spanish software house Toposoft, *Chicago 30's* is to be available soon on the US Gold label for the Amstrad, C64, Spectrum, ST and MSX.



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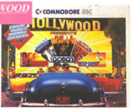

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HIGH SPEED DRIVING, DRUG DEALING AND DEATH!

Where could you find CD jukeboxes in the shape of pink Cadillacs, Kiddie rides in the shape of helicopters, fairground Waltzers and banks and banks of the latest arcade games? At the 45th Amusement Trades Exhibition International at Olympia in London. So that's where we packed Andy Smith off to for the day, to check out what will be big news in the arcades in the coming months.

The ATEI Show – noisy, hot and loud. In fact it's just like a normal PC Show, except for the range of goodies on display and the fact that it's only open to the trade. Which meant that as at the Preview '89 Show (covered in Issue 16) most of the groups huddled around the machines and sampling the rides were besuited businessmen.

The Atari stand was one of the most popular, since a new game was enjoying its world premier. *Hard Drivin'* has been some three years in development, and according to Atari is "the most realistic simulator ever to hit the arcades". And that's what's so revolutionary about the machine – it's been specifically designed to be more of a simulator than a driving game, and there's not a hydraulic to be seen!

Climb into the seat, adjust it for height and you're ready to start. Unless you can drive already it's probably a good idea to stick to automatic transmission because this simulator has more than just the standard accelerator and brake pedals – it has a clutch. And a four-speed gear shift. Select the transmission type, turn the key in the ignition on the console front and the motor kicks into life.

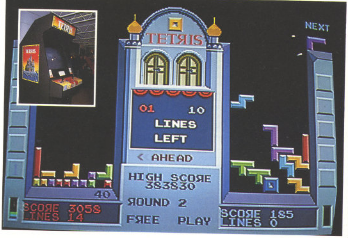
Taito's Tritrovision machine showing off *Operation Thunderbolt*

CHASE HEAD QUARTERS

The *Chase HQ* sit in cabinet – see last month's ACE for a review of the game.

More animated cabinets, this time showing off Namco's *Metal Hawk*.

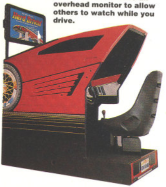
***Tetris*, the ACE rated puzzle game developed in Russia, makes it into the arcades in a superb simultaneous two player machine. This game's got one big thing in its favour – it's maddeningly addictive! (Inset) Just to prove it really is an arcade machine.**



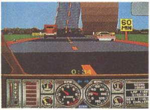
Then it's a case of deciding what kind of race you'd like. There are two courses: a stunt course and a speed course. The speed course is probably the easiest to cut your teeth on, since it simply involves driving around the course avoiding oncoming traffic while overtaking the slower moving cars in a bid to reach the next checkpoint within the time limit. Break the lap record and you enter 'The Challenge Lap': the machine remembers the course and time of the best driver on record, who becomes your opponent in a head-to-head race.

Speeding around an undulating circuit in what feels like a real car (thanks to the centre-

Atari's *Hard Drivin'* cabinet. Deluxe versions have an overhead monitor to allow others to watch while you drive.

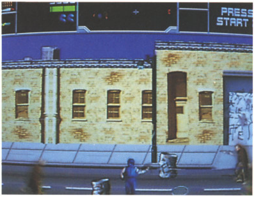


feel steering wheel and column that supply continuous feedback as you drive, juddering over rough ground, or yanking your hands all over the shop if the car spins), is exhilarating enough, but for real breath-taking, knuckle-whitening action, try the stunt course. Again, you're up against the clock and there are other cars to avoid, but there are also some amazing obstacles to negotiate. The first is a jump across a bridge (Blues Brothers fashion) where exactly the right speed must be reached, not just to make it across the gap but also to avoid landing on the front bumper on the far side. Next, there's the astounding 360 degree vertical loop, where the speed must be adjusted on the way through the loop to avoid falling off the ceiling! Finally there's a high bank you have to drive around before you reach the checkpoint and gain extra time.



***Hard Drivin'* – on the stunt course. Get in the right gear and make sure you accellerate at the correct time when you go through the loop – or you'll fall off the ceiling!**

Atari aren't just blowing their own trumpet with their description "the closest thing to driving without actually being there" – it really is. You may have to pay a bit more than normal for the ride (playing in a deluxe sit-in model may cost up to £1 a time) but it's well worth the money, and hopefully the compact sit-in that will follow should be cheaper to play.



***Narc* from Williams (a change for them, as they're normally associated with pinball machines). That's you in the midle of the road, blowing away some vicious crooks with your trusty sub-machine gun.**

Atari didn't have the show all tied up though: there were plenty of other games getting the crowds excited – including *Narc* from Williams. It's curious, but this anti-drugs machine ('Say No To Drugs' is emblazoned all over the cabinet) is a violent, bloodthirsty, horizontally-scrolling shoot-em-up.

The players (one or two simultaneously) play the roles of Max Force and Hit Man and are out to smash the K.R.A.K. drugs organisation. That's why they're each equipped with two machine guns and a fistful of rockets and have to shoot loads of baddies that stroll onto the screen from either side. A small map at the top of the screen shows how far away the boys are from the current gang-leader's location. Once they eliminate the leader, they're told to go after the next, tougher opponent. During the course of the game, baddies killed will drop their booty of either money or – one assumes – packets of drugs, which must be collected for bonus points at the end of the round.

The display for *Narc* is great, mainly due to the fact that as well as custom chips, Williams are using a Texas Instruments 32-bit 34010 graphics signal processor to generate the near-photographic quality picture. Though the game may have great graphics and a message to get across, it's not that good a shoot-em-up.

Williams
NARC
SAY NO TO DRUGS!

Williams get the message across.

Also of interest on the Atari stand was the coin-op version of *Tetris*, the ACE rated puzzle game designed in Russia. You'll certainly remember it if you bought it, because it's one of those magnificently simple but horribly addictive games that is quite impossible to stop playing once you've started. And what a wonderful coin-op formula that makes!

The game breaks down into several rounds that you progress through by stacking falling shapes to fill a set number of lines. There's no time limit, but the falling shapes get faster as you move up through the rounds and once the stack reaches the top of the screen the game's over. Experienced *Tetris* players should seek out one of the coin-op machines in their local arcades, because onlookers will be so impressed by your skill at playing this (to them at least) bizarre and alien machine!

Taito were also to be found there in force, showing off their *Chase HQ* sit-in version and more importantly, *Operation Thunderbolt*, sequel to the hugely successful *Operation Wolf* that Ocean recently converted magnificently to computer. As you might guess, it's in much the same vein as *Op Wolf*, but the scenery and enemies have changed. You now fight what appear to be Middle Eastern terrorists and two players can simultaneously shoot and blast the enemy to their hearts' delight. The rest of the plot's the same – destroy a set number of baddies, collect extra ammunition and rocket bombs and avoid taking hits. Magnificent blasting action, and even more fun now you can play with a friend.

Amongst the Best of the Rest was *Winning Run* from Namco. This is a sit-in game based on Formula One racing, viewed from the cockpit with a practice lap to determine your place on the grid before you launch into the Grand Prix. Terrific stuff, and enhanced by the highly-animated cabinet. Also from Namco is *Metal Hawk*, a helicopter shoot-em-up viewed from above that's tough but promises to be highly addictive.

The show promised a bright future as arcade games. Twenty-six inch monitors were much in evidence on a variety of games, and if manufacturers can keep coming up with games that involve new ideas and new technological advances, like *Hard Drivin'* and *Narc*, there's going to be no excuse in future to walk past an arcade thinking 'Well they're all the same, aren't they?' ●

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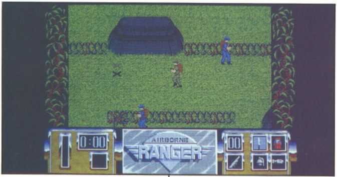
Airborne Ranger



Not content with the purely lifelike, militaristic simulations that MicroProse have brought out in recent times, Major Bill Stealey decided to take a step out of line and introduce some of the strategy and quick-reaction thinking that MicroProse simulations are renowned for and pump them into an 'action strategy' game. The result? Airborne Ranger, an addictive game combining the best of MicroProse strategy with fast arcade action where you control one of the troops belonging to that crack American combat unit who have earned the priviledge to wear the exclusive black beret.

As the best of the best, you are chosen to single-handedly accomplish twelve missions, set in three different parts of the world. Amongst the frozen wastes of the Arctic, you must beware the pitfalls of walking on thin ice. In the more temperate climate of Central Europe, you are faced with the prospect of coming up against the best frontline troops that the massed Communist hordes can produce. Alternatively, you could end up somewhere in the Persian Gulf taking out a fuel dump where, if the enemy doesn't get you, the heat and fatigue almost certainly will.

On each mission, you can choose from an impressive array of weaponry and supplies that will form the contents of three supply canisters that will be your lifeline on your mission. Grenades, magazines for your carbine, LAW missiles, knifes, time charges and first aid packs can all be selected to best suit your needs for the coming mission.

Once packed, you are flown to your destination in an Osprey aircraft. Having parachuted safely down to terra firma, the action really starts to hot up as you run, walk or crawl your way towards your objective, picking up the dropped supplies as you go. The difficulty can be altered before each mission, thus affecting your chances of survival. However, those with experience can go for a higher risk and the greater glory that ensues on return from a successful mission.

ST VERSION

Extremely playable and visually appealing with plenty of variety

Although proving popular with simulation die-hards, seasoned arcade players will also enjoy getting to grips with Airborne Ranger. The game can be played as a fast-moving, hit-and-run action game, but players will soon find that it will require some thought and pre-mission planning if one is to succeed in achieving each objective. This is where MicroProse's reputation for excellence in strategy and simulation games comes in. Often it is a matter of getting to your objective in as quiet a manner as possible, thereby ensuring that the enemy remains unaware of your presence.

Once you have achieved your objective, you must make tracks for your rendezvous point where you will be picked up by a waiting Osprey. However, one word of warning – there is a strict time limit to each mission so, athough stealth may be important, lack of time might occasionally mean having to run the gauntlet in order to succeed. Are you man enough to handle the pressure?

The action is real – the suspense triggers the adrenalin rush that starts your senses working overtime. Airborne Ranger is an addictive strategy game that will have you playing over and over again in an effort to complete the next mission and get back in one piece.

RELEASE SCHEDULE

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AMIGA	SOON	£TBA

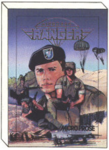
AIRBORNE
RANGER

RATING OUT OF TEN

GRAPHICS	8
SOUND	7
STRATEGY	9
PLAYABILITY	9
OVERALL RATING	9

'Airborne Ranger is a move away from the simulation side of MicroProse releases but is still a step above the normal Rambo/ Commando style of shoot-'em-up. An effective combination which should attract those looking for a thought-provoking game' – TGM

'. . . an excellent game with a first-class mix of strategy and arcade action.' 'Once I'd learned that stealth with a knife gets you further than blasting everything in sight . . . trying to complete the other missions was quite compelling. A game which needs careful thought as well as great firepower is revealed' – Crash



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PLAYING BY PHONE

86 - MERCURY CO

A man who has spent many a night crouched in front of his computer running up the phone bill contemplates the future of multi-user modem games and the race between players and game designers. His real name remains a secret, but Zog (for it is he) knows his dungeons. He achieved the coveted status of a god in Gods, one of the more popular Multi User Games...

With the capabilities of computers rising and costs falling, both the possibilities of what can be modelled by Multi-User Games (MUGs) and the depth of realism they can achieve are constantly increasing.

As processor speeds increase, programmers get the freedom to move away from writing the customised code in assembler needed to achieve speed of response. They can start using more advanced languages which are more portable and cut development time. The major problem for those writing Multi-User Games is that users always expect a quick response to their input, as with any real-time system. It has been shown to be psychologically necessary for users to get an immediate response from the computer – even if all that happens is an echo of the text keyed in. A long delay makes users feel less in control and somewhat unnoticed, so they soon stop using the program.

Because software tools have progressed too, game developers can now use powerful compilers that produce highly-optimised code, and so can worry less about achieving speed and concentrate more on the tasks and functions that they are trying to code into their game.

Both the cost and power of hardware has changed, and nowadays the machine that a MUG runs on no longer needs to be a large mainframe or mini computer at a university. It can be a micro with a specialised board, or multiplexer unit, to handle the connection to several modems and thus to the phone lines. 'Aha, but is it a meatier micro than I can afford?' I hear you mutter to yourself. I had my doubts too, until last October, when I saw *Zone* at the Adventure Convention '88 in sunny Sutton library. I can now look you straight in the terminal and honestly tell you that this rather racy game runs on no more than a QL clone!

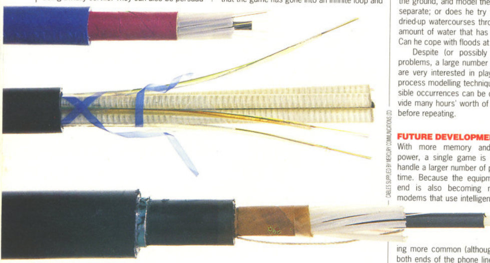
Multiplexers can be made to control the modems for a MUG, clearing up the messes that dropped lines can cause and generally being awfully servile. They can also be persuaded, after a little argument, to become more intelligent still. This becomes especially useful when more than one game is connected to the same multiplexer. The immediate advantage is that paying customers have more choice about how they spend their money, since every game has a different feel and style of play to it. Also, inter-game communications are possible – perhaps a player in one game picking up a telephone and dialling, and someone in another game suddenly hearing a telephone ring...

The function of a multiplexer, to switch a number of telephone lines to several games, also provides a useful way of avoiding some of the current limitations on game speed. If a single MUG will only support about 8 players before slowing right down, then just plug another machine in next to it, and hey presto! You can now support up to 16 players, if you have enough phone lines. Unfortunately, any one player can only ever meet the seven other people in the one game.

MEMORY BONDS

There might be a world memory-chip shortage at the moment, but the bonds imposed by computer memory on multi-user games are also loosening. Early games stored all their room descriptions on disk because of space limitations, but disk access is a ridiculously slow process compared to memory. Just try to imagine what would happen if 32 or more people each moved into a new location simultaneously, and each new location description required at least one disk access – the response to your simple 'North' command may not come back for ages!

To experience a MUG like this (once it gets behind, it tends to stay behind) is like trying to move through cold treacle. It is immensely frustrating because of the time-lag between command and response, so if you type ahead and make a mistake you could be in big trouble. Usually, a special bit of code called a Watchdog is written which keeps an eye on the rest of the program, and if nothing much happens for a certain time then the Watchdog assumes that the game has gone into an infinite loop and crashes it. When response times get too bad, the Watchdog can stop the torture for you in the simplest way possible, probably just when you've gained thousands of points and not quite got round to saving your new score!



CABLES SUPPLIED BY MERCURY COMMUNICATIONS LTD

Nowadays, plenty of memory is usually to hand, so people can begin to model their worlds in more detail, developing complex models of internal reality and of various continuous processes which add a realism (however warped) which appeals to people. For example, if a game is to model the weather, either to add realism or make a puzzle that is only soluble when the river level is low, then it becomes attractive to build a weather system rather than using a random number generator to determine the water level of the rivers. Players also feel somehow more in control of their environment with this approach than if the whole thing is just the result of a single roll of computerised dice. So, you build weather in, winds and all, and allow a spell or three which lets the players begin to affect it. Deciding where to cast the spells, and when, can be a puzzle in itself that the players have to solve...

A well-modelled effect can avoid interaction bugs between various other bits of the game, but the coder usually finds that there are still a few bits that introduce more problem effects than they cure and have to be kludged to get them to work.

JUST PLAYING IN THE RAIN...

Anyway, back to the weather. Rain isn't too bad – just add a rainfall description to all the rooms that represent outdoor locations, and tell all the players who are outside (without the umbrella) about getting wet. Try not to forget to put in the extra code that stops matches striking and makes the paper map all soggy if they get wet. But now what do you do if the weather turns cold and it snows? Snow lies on the ground, only going away if it melts. People and monsters leave footprints in it. Or what happens if it rains for forty days and forty nights? Does the programmer assume that rain just soaks into the ground, and model the rivers as something separate; or does he try to make rivers from dried-up watercourses through which a certain amount of water that has fallen as rain flows? Can he cope with floods at all?

Despite (or possibly because of) these problems, a large number of game developers are very interested in playing with continuous process modelling techniques, which, if all possible occurrences can be catered for, can provide many hours' worth of data for the players before repeating.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS.

With more memory and more processing power, a single game is increasingly able to handle a larger number of players online at one time. Because the equipment at the players' end is also becoming more sophisticated, modems that use intelligent switching between speeds depending upon line quality at any time are becoming more common (although they only work if both ends of the phone line are set up to handle it). Gradually, the old joke of 'He who laughs

SECOND OPINION

■ Itinerant reviewer and experienced player of Multi-User Games **Phil South** gets his oar in...

Shades and MUD are the oldest multi-user games, as far as I know, and some say the best. They are certainly the first games most people try, due in part to the fact they're the most widely quoted and advertised.

MUD has an ancient, epic feel and a strong sense of tradition because most of the high-ranking players have been on it for about three years. As a novice you get nuked by stronger players less these days than you used to, but it still happens. Shades is younger, more exciting in many ways and the players are much more friendly and pervy. 'Pervy?' I hear you squeak. Well yes. It's a product of having the choice of which sex you appear as in the game. It's a curious fact that, given the choice, males choose to be female and vice versa, and what with the option to KISS <player name> and CUDDLE <player name> a lot of that sort of thing goes on. Innocent fun, sure, but if you think about it sooner or later there's going to be a bunch of big butch guys around who like being kissed and cuddled by other big butch guys. Yes folks, computerised cross-dressing is here to stay.

PARALLEL PROCEDURES

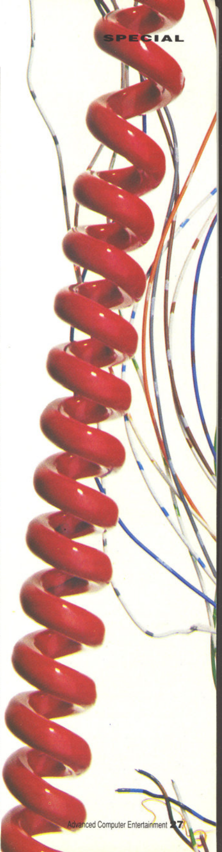
■ **Steve Cooke**, formerly known to many as **The Pilgrim**, offers up a couple of thoughts on future MUGs...

Traditional adventure development houses are currently investing a lot of time, money and effort in producing new interactive character drivers (Level 9) and role-playing elements (Infocom, Origin etc). MUGs, on the other hand, have all this provided by their very nature. They already have interactive characters – human ones. What's more, the human players have more individual attributes than any RPG creation is likely to boast in the near future. MUGs could, if the hardware allowed, dominate the adventure/fantasy scene in the not-so-distant future.

In contrast with his single-user game counterpart, the MUG programmer is able to concentrate more on environmental development and system commands. Although MUGs have been able to offer interaction as their main attraction, they have lagged behind single-user computer adventures in terms of environment, graphics, and parsers – but once these aspects are tackled, stand by for some intriguing developments.

The first will become apparent with the advent of digital phone networks in the 1990s. Large-bandwidth communications will mean the possibility of CD-driven MUGs with full-screen graphics, instant communication, and – in conjunction with 16/32 bit processing – affordable but enormously powerful environments with thousands of locations, graphic user interfaces, and – on top of it all – more players per game with more commands at their disposals.

The second development is less obvious. As MUGs become more popular, comms becomes more widespread, and bandwidths increase, people will begin to see the development of interactive characters within a single-user game as a waste of time. Why bother, when there are dozens of real people on call at the touch of a button? This could well mean a reversion on single-user systems to the more traditional 'interactive fiction' approach, as pioneered by Infocom's early games, and – in conjunction with CD-ROMs and graphic user interfaces – a greater concentration on single-user puzzling, text, and simulation. Whatever happens, you can be sure that the categories of fantasy game we now take for granted – RPG, text/graphics adventure, interactive fiction, MUGs – will be completely overthrown in the next ten years. For my money, the descendants of MUD and SHADES will be at the top of the pile.



last is at 300 Baud' is becoming less common. This is good for all players, since to some extent game response is limited by the speed of the slowest port rather than masses of input from the fastest ones.

Graphics are now de rigeur for all the single-user adventure games that are available. Even Infocom, past masters of the all-text adventure, now have at least static pictures as part of their games. Providing graphics with a MUG is not at all easy, however, given the limited bandwidth of the normal phone line. It is more likely that graphics will be handled as much as possible by the player's own machine, so if you are the lucky owner of a SUN workstation, you could have wonderful piccies with anti-aliasing, highlighting, shadows and all the extras. Otherwise, you will have to make do with the best picture that your machine can be made to draw. This has the advantage that the process is transparent, the MUG not caring about how things are drawn, just the fact that the player at the other end has some kind of graphics capability. If he goes out and upgrades his machine, or his graphics package, the MUG couldn't care less.

Unfortunately, a local machine can only be allowed to do a small portion of any processing. If the MUG sends out a chunk of data and says 'Here – take this lot and show the player what he can see,' someone is going to modify his program so that it displays the obscured and invisible objects too – a useful tool for debugging purposes, but it does give a player rather an edge... In fact, it could be called cheating by someone less kind than myself.

This also highlights another point that has come to light concerning the use of a home computer which was once no more than a dumb terminal. With communications programs becoming more advanced, players can now log a session (and read it later if it scrolled off the screen too fast for them to read at the time) and build in sets of commands, as a function key assignment or a script file. With a cunning set of commands, the garnering of treasure before other players get to it becomes a matter of who can log in first and press a key – not much fun any more.

This is not to say that I am personally against the use of F keys and scripts – it is rather like Canute's telling the sea to go back, but things could be developed further. I am all in favour of artificial intelligence in a persona – and I would dearly love to see control programs that handled most of the behaviour and actions of game characters automatically. In other words, the program handles the mechanics of moving about, hunting for treasure, etc, and you have to be a sort of superego, controlling an overview of what is to be done next and chatting to the other game inhabitants. People are hard at work on producing these artificial intelligence exercises.

FURTHER GAME CHANGES

The MUG itself is going to have to change further. For example, randomising the start locations of treasure is one of the simpler ploys used by game designers to cope with comms programs having function keys. As scripts evolve which can test room descriptions for the presence of treasure, and keep on searching until it is found, so game design is going to have to keep pace. The point is not to become annoyed about technological advances and ban clever home computer players, but to make game personas more like human beings, with automatic and learned responses. If games are made more complex, only a human will be able to cope.

Many deaths amongst experienced players of MUGs tend to occur when they nip into the kitchen to make a quick cup of tea. Because they are lazy, they just leave their character hanging around on the game rather than logging out. Zog's First Law, that the more unlikely an event is, the bigger the chance of it happening when you are most vulnerable, then swings into effect. The deadly mummy stumbles in to the room and of course attacks your character. You return with a steaming cuppa in your hand, just in time to see the mummy deliver the final crushing blow that knocks your ever-so-painfully-developed-persona into limbo. But is it fair or realistic? In real life, the loud crunching noises as your front door is converted to matchwood should easily be enough to awaken you from your daydream and encourage you to leap out of the window! With clever programming, giving the player useful information (online maps for example) and handling the simpler and more repetitive tasks, the MUGer can concentrate on relaxing with his cuppa and directing things from his position as general, rather than having to do the donkey work. When a door is smashed down, the intelligent program should be worried enough to beep long and loud at you and still make your persona leap out of the window if the mummy bursts in.

Still, players of games do not by any means have it all their own way. Little tricks by the coders, such as routes through mazes that are randomised between resets can confuse all but the cleverest players (human or script). The evolutionary race between keen players and game designers has a long way to go yet, and both have a few tricks up their sleeves... ●

CONNECTING UP

To connect to a MUG, you need a Modem to plug into the phone line, and a comms program for your computer – anything from a simple terminal emulator (eg VT52 or VT100) to a full-blown package with logfiles, programmable function keys, command files, software modem control, various comms protocols like Kermit and so on.

Modems should be capable of transferring data at 300/300 baud or 1200/75, although 1200/1200 and higher speeds are beginning to be offered for those lucky people with pots of money to spend. All sensible MUGs can be accessed at 1200/75, but unfortunately the makers of American equipment and comms programs are not used to split-speeds like this and you can have problems with certain equipment and/or comms packages.

When connecting, try to find out what the bytes you get back are going to look like to your system. This is usually 7- or 8-bit data, No parity and 1 stop-bit .

I play most on the Heaven system, which currently consists of a multiplexer called the Butler, and two games: Gods and Zone, along with an associated Bulletin Board. In common with many other systems, you can try the games out as a guest persona for free, with limited time and no experience. If you like the system you can pay to register. The use of the Bulletin Board, for leaving and receiving messages, is also free.

Game costs vary from free (usually experimental versions) up to a massive 5p a minute or so, so try out a few before paying some rip-off merchant too much. Speaking of which, BT has to make a few hundred million profit again this year to please the shareholders, so whatever you do, don't forget that telephone-call costs will be on top of this too.

Heaven is on 01 994 9119, 1200/75 and 300/300, 8N1. Accounts can be either for a month (with unlimited usage) or for a block of 20 hours which you use whenever you play on either game. Both types cost £10 plus VAT. The phone numbers, protocols and charges for other games, such as Mirrorworld, Wanderland, Mountain, MUD 2, SX MUD and Shades are regularly exchanged and posted on the many Bulletin Boards around the country. Unfortunately, MUGers outside London are very badly served because of BT's pricing. Shades is offered via Micronet, which is normally only a local phone call away, but they then charge everyone for the privilege of playing, country-wide.

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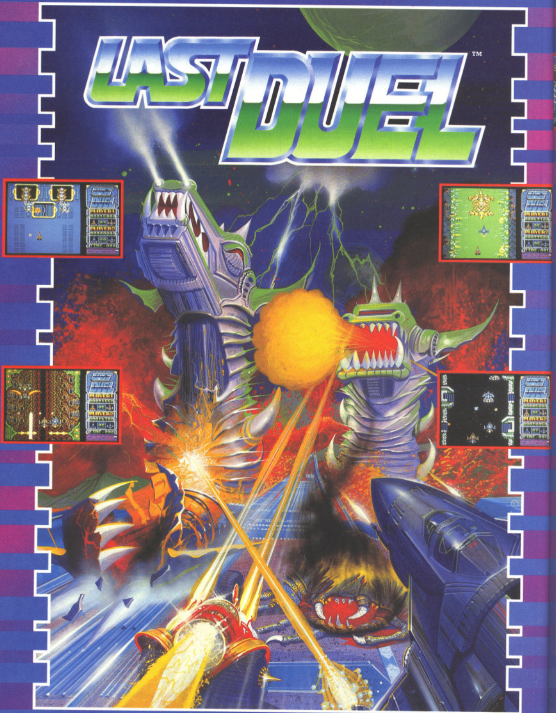

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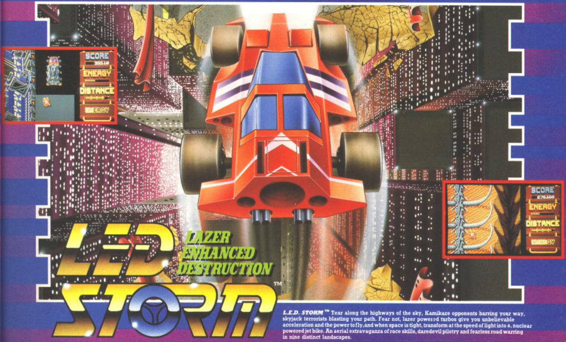

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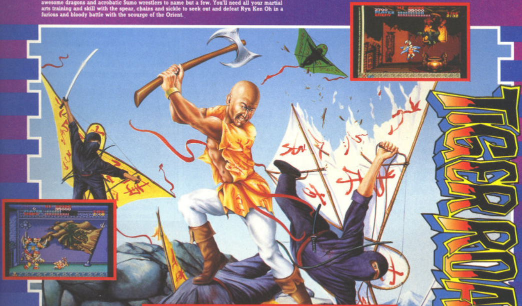

Screen shots from various systems

CAPCOM™

GIANTS OF THE VIDEO GAMES INDUSTRY

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TRIPPING THE LIGHT FANTASTIC

Today, computers can be creative performance tools. The arrival of 16-bit and 32-bit RISC machines at 'affordable' prices opens up new possibilities for new forms of computer entertainment. Soon, we could be entertained by audio-visual programmes generated by computer, or even generating our own multi-media entertainments.

Computer-generated images are all around us. Complex and expensive hardware is used in the TV and video world to create effects, animation, and graphics – everyone from Lucasfilm to the smallest, back-street video editing suite is using computers. And computer game graphics are popping up on TV and even in a few high-tech discos.

The computer is beginning to be accepted as a medium by fine artists (see Brian Larkman's graphics pages this issue), and not just by the self-congratulatory types in the advertising and TV world. Already, powerful graphics packages put professional results within the grasp of the ST or Amiga owner, and by investing in a video digitiser and genlock board, impressive video production facilities can be enjoyed by the individual.

Then there's the world of music, where the MIDI standard, sampling techniques and computer-driven equipment allow an amateur who has minimal training in music to create and record professional-quality compositions. With talent, a C64, the right software and a tape machine it is possible to create a Top Ten hit.

Yet computer games are still the main entertainment application of 'affordable' machines, and it is the graphics and music from computer games that most people are familiar with. There's a tidy living to be made producing sounds and images to go with entertainment software, and it rarely makes commercial sense for a programmer to go off on a self-indulgent, creative track divorced from games programming or hard-core commercial systems work. But apparently self-indulgent pursuit of innovation or 'way of life' products can pay dividends. Like the Apple Macintosh project, led in an anarchic and off-the-wall way by Steve Jobs, a man with Vision and the drive to create a computer that was 'insanely great'.

Despite the low possibilities of immediate financial reward, two small programmer-led companies have spent the last couple of years following their primary interest, paying the bills with the profits reaped from earlier, commercially-oriented projects. Jeff Minter's ST *Colourspace* spawned *Trip-A-Tron*, 'a creative graphics performance tool', and in turn a concept video album Merak, but for the time being Jeff has returned to writing shoot-em-ups to earn money. And Alex Blok and the Technation team have dedicated six months to Project Flashdance – the development of an Archimedes-based digital audiovisual entertainment system for professional users.

PROJECT FLASHDANCE

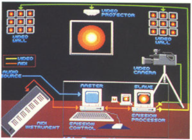
Alex Blok has a somewhat 'alternative' view of the world, as opposed to the hardline commercial viewpoint – 'ecosystems' appears on his business card alongside 'hardware', 'software' and 'systems'. "I'm interested in developing things that help to preserve the environment," he explains. And he is clearly serious when he says that he will "invest money in making the world a better place" if Project Flashdance makes a lot of money.

He first got interested in home computers in the days of the ZX81, when he entered a magazine competition to predict the likely design and capabilities of a theoretical machine, the 'ZX82'. Readers of the now-defunct Micro Computer Printout will remember that Alex Blok sent in the winning entry, which predicted many of the features of machines such as the QL, One Per Desk and Z88.

By a strange and dramatic quirk of fate, Alex moved from his Spectrum prize to the BBC when his house was struck by lightning, which blew up the Spectrum and other electrical goods. The insurance money funded the purchase of a BBC, and Technation was born. An unpublished graphics program was followed by a Morse code word processor for the disabled developed in conjunction with Quantel, and then the first major commercial success for Technation – a Desk Top Publishing program. This BBC software and its subsequent versions generated most of the money that funded Technation's 'Blue Skies' research.

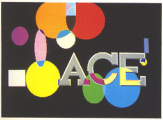
By drawing together people with a variety of skills and talents and paying them on a royalty basis – if a project succeeds, then all the members of the team get to share in the proceeds – Alex has assembled a pool of creative talent. Technation's slogan is 'Innovation by Imagination' and apart from 'run-of-the-mill' commercial work, there is plenty of room for creative thinking. Much of the work on hardware or algorithms for projects of the future proves useful in the development of more immediately commercial applications.

The idea for a sound-to-light system first



A schematic diagram of the *Bit Bopper* and the potential inputs and outputs.

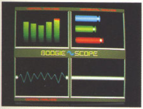
began taking shape at Technation during 1986. Using the BBC computer, a prototype system called *Bit Bopper* was built and tested, but work on commercial products pushed it onto the back boiler for a while. The following year, design and feasibility studies began on a project called Genesis – which may be described as an imagination processor, designed to run on graphics workstations of the future. By the autumn of last year, *Bit Bopper* had taken over again, moving onto the Archimedes and evolving into a system for controlling sound and vision. Project Flashdance came into being, a project to which Technation has devoted all its resources.



Aciiid! Oil wheels gain a new lease of life on the *Bit Bopper*. The geometric shapes slide around the screen, changing colour and getting larger and smaller. Seeing as it was for us, Alex Blok put an ACE logo in there too...

BIT BOPPER

Technation have only been working full time on Project Flashdance for about six months now, but already the *Bit Bopper* is capable of producing some spectacular effects. Running on two Archimedes machines linked together via MIDI, the system is designed to be integrated into existing visual entertainment systems which might include devices such as lasers or other effects equipment, as well as monitors or video projectors. One Archimedes, called the Emission Control, runs software that is used to set up the effects that can be generated by the other Archimedes, the Emission Processor. It is the Emission Processor that does all the work during a *Bit Bopper* programme.



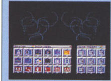
The part-finished *Boogie Scope* – three different frequency analysers pulsate in time to the audio track. Just for fun, this one!

Working on the Emission Control machine, imagination is all that limits a Light Jockey. A wide range of effects can be produced and run automatically, sequenced in a visual programme or synchronised by the system to an audio track. An art utility is part of the Emission Control software suite, and text messages, logos or patterns can be generated, saved to disk and incorporated into a *Bit Bopper* programme. Alternatively, a video source –

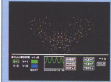
CONFESSIONS OF A LLAMAPHILIAC...

Trip-A-Tron, son of *Colourspace* and product of llama-inspired programmer Jeff Minter is billed in its own advertising as 'a creative graphics performance tool'. Reasonably so, for it is in effect a light, or graphic effects synthesiser that allows the user to prepare a sequenced 'show' or produce graphics on the ST 'live'.

Jeff Minter has devoted an uncommercially large chunk of his programming effort to developing *Trip-A-Tron*, which contains over 28,000 lines of assembler. A major opus indeed, and one which has absorbed much of Jeff's creative ability and experience at programming fast-moving graphic games.



The front panel of *Trip-A-Tron*, in effect the main control menu which allows subsidiary control panels to be called on screen and used.

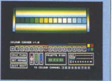


***Trip-A-Tron* is peppered with silly but apt names and more than its fair share of furry animals. This is the *Sillyscope*, the design tool that allows laser effects to be generated.**

Trip-A-Tron is no mere sound-to-light program – it was designed as an instrument which allows the user to play with light as a musician would play with sound. While very much an 'alternative' product, away from the mainstream of games programming, *Trip-A-Tron* is seriously innovative and well worth checking out.

If lashing out £35 on a piece of software for the ST deters, then investing £12.95 in the Merak concept video would be a worthwhile alternative. Produced by Jeff Minter, in association with electronic musician Adrian Wagner, Merak is a space opera in which *Trip-A-Tron* generated graphics accompany and illustrate a concept album.

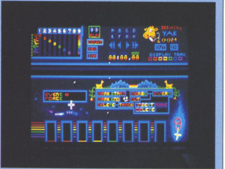
Merak, the video, makes interesting watching – even if you don't share the llama-loving hippy values which run deep in at least one of its creators. Without wishing to sound too much like an advertising copywriter, even if you hate Merak (unlikely), all you've done is bought a rather expensive blank video cassette.



Here we have the *Colour Cooker*, which could just as logically have been called the *Shade Stove*. This bit of *Trip-A-Tron* allows palette changes to be effected.

Jeff Minter and Alex Blok are already talking about the common ground which the *Bit Bopper* and *Trip-A-Tron* share, and are mulling over the possibility of a joint product for the Atari ABAQ, if, as and when the hardware materialises.

■ Merak is available on VHS cassette, direct from Llamasoft at 49 Mount Pleasant, Tadley, Hants RG26 6BN, Tel: 07356 4478. Go on, give a talented old hippy a bit of support!



Just as a computer musician might use a sequencer to program a tune, so the *Trip-A-Tron* light artiste uses an event sequencer to set up a sequence of pre-defined events. Alternatively, you can customise the keyboard, turning boring old alphabetical keys into powerful light synthesis keys and play pictures along to music. Jeff Minter has taken the *Trip-A-Tron* out on the road, gigging with light on stage, and met with acclaim. There's no reason why you, too, shouldn't become a visual star...

VHS – Merak the video, *Trip-A-Tron* meets the video taper.

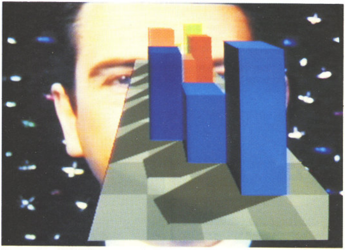
perhaps a hand-held video camera that moves amongst dancers at a disco – can be used for live input. Then there's a sophisticated text processor module, that allows messages to be set up and made to appear at pre-defined times or under certain musical conditions. The way in which text appears on the screen is also controlled by the Light Jockey – on the prototype we saw, letters letters spelling out a message could be tumbled onto the screen as 3D cubes.

A video processor gives the Light Jockey considerable control over images fed in as a video signal. They can be pixellated, flooded with colours, recorded and played back or assembled in a sequence and displayed in time to the music. Facilities to cut from one image to another are being programmed in – already there's an impressive roll, which curls the full screen up onto itself. As with all the *Bit Bopper* functions, images may be pulsated in time to the audio input.

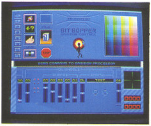
A suite of basic visual effects is also available to the light jockey. The *Twinkle Zone* generates psychedelic patterns which can then be pulsated in time to the music; an *Oil Wheel* simulator adds a new twist to the old 60's disco favourite – a basic set of geometric shapes is available on the system, but custom sprites can be generated using the art utility and moved around the screen with or instead of the standard shapes; the *Fireworks* utility generates starburst effects, exploding pixels across the screen; the *Boogie Scope* offers a set of unusual frequency analysers that pulsate in time to an audio track, and finally, there are a range of 3D sound-to-light effects planned. Already, a 3D bar graph frequency analyser is up and running, and even more is promised.

All the *Bit Bopper* effects can be used on their own, or superimposed on a video signal – which means that a *Bit Bopper* programme can be overlaid on a pop video. The Light Jockey can instruct the *Bit Bopper* to produce its own effects randomly, in synchronisation with the audio track or can drive the system manually in real time.

Words can hardly do justice to the complexity of the effects that may be produced with the *Bit Bopper* – it is, after all, meant to be part of an audio-visual entertainment system, and really needs to be experienced. Technation are still beavering away, adding more and more effects to their system but the demo software is sophisticated enough for them to take on the road to audio visual companies. If a backer is forthcoming, the *Bit Bopper* and Light Jockey could soon be a vital ingredient of every high tech disco show. ●



The cunning solid 3D frequency analyser display, overlaid on the Sledgehammer video. Those blocks bounce up and down, following the levels of Peter Gabriel's songs. The movement is smooth, slick and well impressive. All the other *Bit Bopper* effects can be overlaid on video images in the same way, using the built-in genlock facilities.



One section of the control panel found on the Archimedes that acts as Emission Control. The software is still at a comparatively early stage, but everything works via a really friendly user interface based on sliders and a control panel layout that is familiar to anyone who has used a mixing desk or edit suite.

COMBINING TECHNOLOGY WITH IMAGINATION

Technation. Set up in 1982 by Alex Blok, Technation has remained low-profile – you probably haven't heard of it, but as a BBC, PCW, CPC, C64 or Amiga owner you will certainly have heard of, if not owned, software produced by Technation. They are the people who claim to have produced the first DTP software in Europe, and arguably the world – remember *AMX Pagemaker* for the BBC? Potential wrangles with the American giants Aldus, who also came up with the *'Pagemaker'* name and DTP software at roughly the same time, led to Technation's product being renamed *Stop Press*. After its debut on the BBC computer nearly five years ago, *Pagemaker/Stop Press* was rewritten for the C64, and then for the Amstrad CPC and PCW machines, each version meeting with rave reviews in the specialist press.

In 1987 Technation turned its attention to the Amiga, producing *Amigamagic*, a demo for Commodore UK that incorporates *Sampled Sound Studio*, an interactive rolling demo, a 3D animation system and a computerised User Guide. This was followed by the design for an Amiga product, *Sample Studio*, published by Datel – Technation also co-wrote the code. Then at the end of last year, Technation decided to start publishing in its own right. *GetSet Typeset*, a utility for the PCW version of *Stop Press*, is being published in-house, but Technation is not going to end up as a software house. The team is committed to innovation, and for the last couple of years has been using receipts from commercially-published projects to fund research and development on projects for the future.

The world's first Light Jockey: Alex Blok sits down in front of Emission Control, the Archimedes that runs software that controls a *Bit Bopper* programme of visual effects and music. Essentially, it's an on-screen audio/video mixing desk that he's playing with.

The full breakdown of the Project Flashdance crew goes as follows... Concept, graphic design and Emission Control code, Alex Blok; Emission Control and Emission Processor code, Neil Lee; Audio hardware, Andrew Fisher; Video digitiser hardware, Mike Harrison; Video genlock, Wild Vision.

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WIN A 2000 YEAR OLD COIN

ACE and Actual Screenshots, CRL's new label, are teaming up to offer a lucky reader the chance to own a coin that was legal tender before the birth of Christ. It's a Silver Denarius of the sort issued between 83BC and 30BC, and the first prize winner in our *I Ludicrus* competition will collect this piece of small change along with a copy of the game on the ST or Amiga.

Five runner-up prizes of VHS copies of the classic Carry On film Carry On Cleo are also on offer, cunningly complemented by a free copy of *I Ludicrus*, and then by way of consolation we have a further ten copies of the cute gladiatorial beat-em-up to send out to ten more successful entrants.

Poor old Ludicrus, a short and puny staff writer of a Roman soldier finds himself in a bit of a predicament in the latest release from Actual Screenshots. Ludicrus was boasting one evening that he could take on the combined might of the Emperor's gladiators and defeat the lot of 'em, no trouble. Sadly for Ludicrus, the Emperor got to hear of his drunken boast, and has had him arrested and thrown into the arena. The game starts as Ludicrus squares up to the first of his formidable opponents. Can you fight a path to freedom for the little legionary? Well, enter the competition and you might get the chance to test your combat skills without parting with any hard-earned cash.

Answer the five questions, complete the entry form and post it to I LUDICRUS, ACE MAGAZINE, 4 QUEEN STREET, BATH, AVON, BA1 1EJ making sure your missive arrives in our office before 2nd April.

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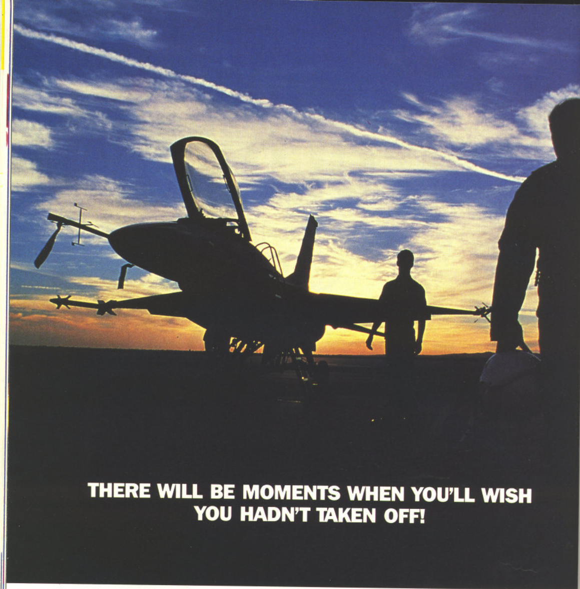
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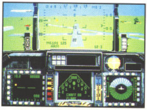

Atari ST screen.

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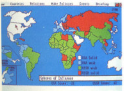
SCREEN TEST



No doubt about the biggest game of the issue and indeed the year so far – it's POPULOUS. The game that's good enough for gods. Playing it can seriously inflate your ego and cause untold suffering to large quantities of helpless little humanoids...

The 1990 version of BALANCE OF POWER also races past the 900 mark, and also places the power of life and death over nations in your hands. It's the most realistic and absorbing simulation of global politics there is. Success is measured by tiny victories and failure by total nuclear holocaust.

Infocom's venture into the world of graphics and role-playing, BATTLETECH, also receives a very warm welcome. It plunges you into a world of hi-tech weaponry, mass destruction and a tricky quest.

Wargamers get a treat for the second month running, this time through BORODINO, a war game with great graphics as well as strategy. Once more unto the disk drive, friends, once more...

THE RATINGS

HOW THEY'RE CALCULATED...
If you buy a game, how much enjoyment will you get out of it, and for how long? Just check out our revolutionary PIC (Predicted Interest Curve) for the full story. Brilliant arcade games start high on the curve, and then steadily tail off as you lose interest; powerful puzzle games may ride the crest of the curve for months – but the moment you solve them they'll come tumbling down; complex strategy games may stump you at first – but climb up the scale as you begin to appreciate the scope of the gameplay. And as for the turkeys – they start low, stay low, and have nowhere to go but down, down, down.

Once you've seen how long the game can hold your attention, all you need to glance at is the renowned ACE RATING. This is calculated according to the area under the PIC. The bigger it is, the better the game. Add to that our definitive ratings for IQ Factor (will it give your brain cells a work-out?) and Fun Factor – a measure of instant appeal and exhilaration as you dive into the game. Then there's the ARCADE ACCURACY rating, used where appropriate, to report on how good a job the programmers have done with the conversion job on a game that began life in the coin-op arcade. Of course, we rate the Graphics and Audio effects too...for EVERY machine the game's available on, giving the full picture, no matter which machine you own

WHY YOU CAN RELY ON THEM...
The ACE reviewing team covers a broad spectrum of computer entertainment talent. Andy Smith wouldn't know hexadecimal from a hole in the ground, but can wipe the floor with any number of aliens. Bob Wade (ex-Personal Computer Games, Zzap!64 and Amstrad Action) has played more computer games than any sane person ought to, while Steve Jarratt (ex-Zzap!64, Crash, Commodore User, industrial chemist... eh?) makes up the third member of the in-house reviewing team. Add Steve Cooke on adventures (ex-PCG and formerly columnist for magazines ranging from Zzap!64 to Your Sinclair) and count in our new Editor, Graeme Kidd, who has over five years' worth of professional gameplaying under his ample belt (and a list of credits even longer than his moustache), and you've got age and experience as well as youthful enthusiasm.

Every game on the following pages has been seen by all of us. We compare notes, express differing opinions, and only then do we decide who's to take final responsibility for getting our views into print. What follows, then, isn't just a collection of casual comments, but the definitive ACE verdict on this month's software. We've checked it out – now you can too.

ACE RATED

BALANCE OF POWER 1990 Mindscape 59
POPULOUS Electronic Arts 40

REVIEWED

ANDES ATTACK Llamasoft 62
BAAL Psyclapse 62
BATTLETECH Infocom 43
BILLIARDS SIM Infogrames 62
BORODINO Atari 55
CAPTAIN FIZZ Psyclapse 44
CIRCUS GAMES Tynesoft 62
COSMIC PIRATE Outlaw 44
DRAGON'S LAIR Readysoft 48
DUGGER Linel 62
GALDREGON'S DOMAIN Pandora 56
GL HOTSHOTS Gremlin 56
G.NIUS Lankhor 56
HIGHWAY HAWKS Anco 62
HUMAN KILLING MACHINE US Gold ... 62
JOURNEY TO CENTRE OF THE EARTH Rainbow Arts 44
MINI GOLF Gremlin 62
PALADIN Omnitrend 48
RAMBO III Sega 60
RAMPAGE Sega 60
RASTAN Sega 60
REALM OF THE TROLLS Rainbow Arts 62
ROGER RABBIT Buena Vista 62
R-TYPE Sega 60
SLIPSTREAM Microdeal 62
SPACEBALL Rainbow Arts 62
STORMTROOPER Creation 56
STREET FOOTBALL Epyx 62
SUPERMAN Tynesoft 48
TEENAGE QUEEN Infogrames 62
WANDERER Elite 50
WILLOW Mindscape 50
ZANY GOLF Electronic Arts 62

SCREEN TEST SUPPLEMENT

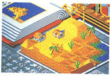
UPDATES 83
Three pages of version updates giving the verdict for your computer.

BUDGET 86
Round-up of the latest in budget games.

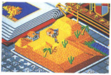
TRICKS'N'TACTICS 71
All the best tips for beating all the best games.

POPULOUS

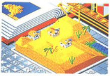
A little divine intervention from ELECTRONIC ARTS



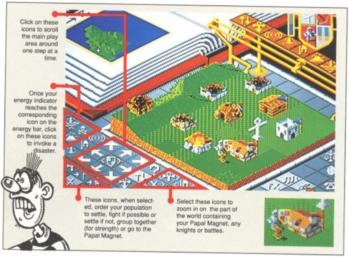
A Desert World – your followers, having run out of flat land to build on, are idle in their houses. You won't gain power until they populate more land...



...so level the land off and they'll be encouraged to go forth and multiply! Remember – the flatter the surrounding land, the more advanced the dwellings.



See? They have been tempted. If you now level off the rest of this part of the coast, they will hopefully move onto that as well.



Click on these icons to scroll the main play area around one step at a time.

Once your energy indicator reaches the corresponding icon on the energy bar, click on these icons to invoke a disaster.

These icons, when selected, order your population to settle, fight if possible or settle if not, group together (for strength) or go to the Papal Magnet.

Select these icons to zoom in on the part of the world containing your Papal Magnet, any knights or battles.

963

Look closely at your armchair. Does it resemble Mount Olympus, the Seat of the Gods? Currently, perhaps not – but in *Populous* that's exactly what it can become, as you look down on a world in which you have divine powers, and influence the lives of the population at the touch of a mouse button.

As a Divine Being, the more followers there are to worship you, the more power is put at your disposal to influence wordly affairs to your own advantage – and you're going to need a few advantages in order to survive. Why? Because it's war down there.

Another bunch of people living there follow a rival deity (controlled by either the computer or a friend, who can be sat right next to you or playing miles away via a modem or datalink cable) and these worlds aren't big enough to support both tribes, so one has to go. And that's where you come in.

First thing to do is build up a good following. This is achieved by ordering your meagre population (which starts at about three tiny men, each representing a tribe) to settle. In this mode, the tiny men wander the countryside looking for flat pieces of land to build houses (representing towns and villages) on. The flatter the immediate surroundings, the more advanced a house the little chaps can build – up to a castle. The more advanced the dwellings, the faster your power builds up and the greater the population's technology level, which helps later when it comes to fighting.

So what if the land is too uneven to build on? Easy: flatten it for them. Using the left mouse button, click on a piece of land and, lo and behold, a small hillock appears! This is very handy for filling in gaps between other hills and thus creating flat land. The right mouse button has the reverse effect, so by creating and digging out pieces of land you can encourage your population to grow.

Right, the population's growing nicely, your power is increasing and it's a lot of fun playing with the landscape. But your people aren't populating the more remote areas lovingly created for them – what to do? Simple, make them journey to settle by placing what's known as the Papal Magnet in the right spot. The Papal Magnet is a kind of religious icon, a monolith that your population is attracted towards when put in 'Go to Papal Magnet' mode.

If your followers have a leader they all head towards the leader who in turn heads for the Magnet, but if you have no leader they head directly for the Magnet and the first to reach it becomes the new leader. Leaders can be fun guys, especially since you can turn leaders into knights, who immediately set off for the nearest enemy settlement, kill the inhabitants and burn down the houses, destroying the land which the community was using to sustain itself. Knights remain on the rampage until they're eventually killed.

Once you get your people in the right

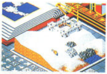
RELEASE BOX		
ATARI ST	£24.95dk	April 89
AMIGA	£24.95dk	April 89
IBM PC	Version possible, price TBA	

LANDSCAPE GARDENING

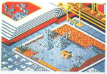
***Populous* contains three games. The tutorial game speaks for itself, the custom game allows you to alter over 60 game parameters (making the opposing deity as tough or as soft as you wish) and the campaign game consists of over 1,000 increasingly-difficult worlds. Like *The Sentinel*, you don't have to play through all the landscapes in the campaign game at one sitting: the next world you play depends on the score achieved, and you can access the last world played by simply typing in its name.**

As well as the difficulty of the opponent increasing, the climates of the worlds change, affecting how your population reacts. For example, Grass Worlds are the most friendly, whereas Ice Worlds are inhospitable places where it can be difficult to persuade followers to leave their cosy homes to settle in other areas.

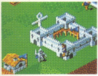
Desert and Fire Worlds are also harsh and the people tend to die young. This may not sound too worrying, but you do have to change strategy to compensate. For example, if you're used to having lots of knights wandering around a Grass World bumping off the enemy, you may be in for a nasty surprise when you try that tactic on a Desert World, where knights tend to die off before they can travel far or do much damage.



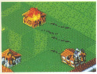
A Snow World. Life is harsh in this climate.



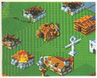
A Fire World. Boy! That sea is dangerously hot!



Gain enough energy and you can turn your leader into a knight.



Knights set off in search of enemy dwellings, fight the occupants then burn the houses.



It's tough to build around burnt-out houses, so to get rid of them, dig them down to sea-level.

place, all you have to do is switch them back into Settle mode and they'll populate the right area. Assuming things are going well and the other player appears to be struggling it might be a good idea to switch them to Battle mode. Then they'll look for enemy houses and fight the inhabitants, taking over the house if they win. If there are no baddies in sight they'll settle as normal. This is a handy way to polish off the last of the other player's followers, so destroying the power of the opposing god, and winning dominance over the whole world. Then it's on to another world, a new kind of landscape and another challenge.

Populous is a terrific game. The 1,000 worlds alone will take months to play through – and don't expect to win each one – but the ability to play against a friend (especially a remote one) increases the lasting interest even more. Unless you're the world's most obsessive shoot-em-up fan, you're bound to enjoy playing *Populous* for a long, long time.

● Andy Smith

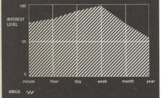
AMIGA VERSION

Terrific graphics, well presented, are complemented by life-like sound effects and eerie choir-like music. Absolutely wonderful stuff that will keep you playing and playing. Bullfrog are going to find this one a tough act to follow.

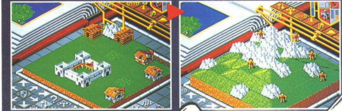
GRAPHICS	**9**	**IQ FACTOR**	**6**
AUDIO	**8**	**FUN FACTOR**	**9**

ACE RATING 963

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE

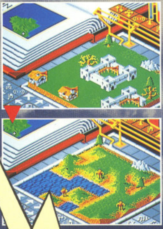


If only every Amiga game was as good!



ACTS OF GODS

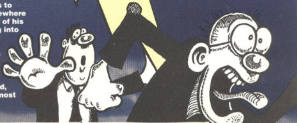
Knights may be nasty pieces of work, but if you really want to upset the other god, try throwing a natural disaster at him. Volcanoes (Above) not only destroy houses, but also throw up large boulders that are limiting to build around and can only be removed by lowering them into the sea.

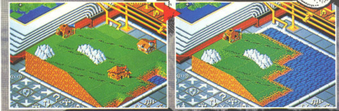


Earthquaking (Right) a part of enemy territory is not quite as deadly as a volcano but still fun, destroying buildings and removing huge chunks of land. If he has built on low-lying land, a timely earthquake can have some of his people floundering in the water, and if he doesn't build land under them quick, they'll drown.

An equally effective means of getting rid of some of his chaps is to stick a swamp somewhere in his territory – any of his followers wandering into it will be swallowed up.

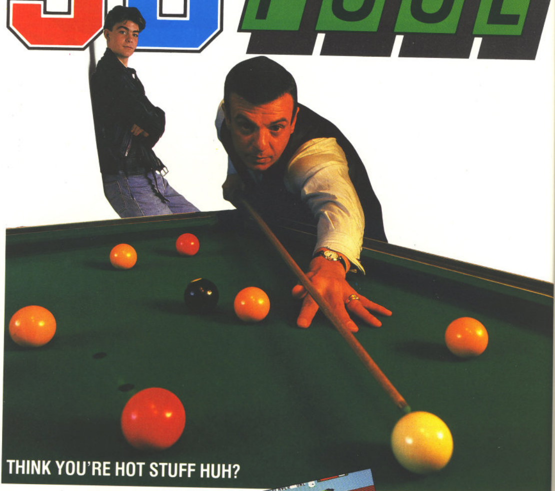
Even less subtle than volcanoes are floods (Below). The water table rises over the whole world, hopefully covering most of his territory.





Flooding, before and after. Encourage your population to settle on high, flat areas and if your opponent's none too smart he'll content himself with populating the low-lands. Activate the flood and Bingo! Most of his population will be wiped out!

3D POOL



THINK YOU'RE HOT STUFF HUH?

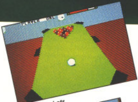
Well here's your chance to prove it.

European champion 'Maltese Joe' Barbara is waiting to rack 'em up and blow you out.

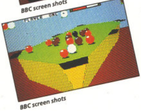
Unlike any other pool simulation, 3-D POOL incorporates a unique "move around the table" feature — allowing shots to be played from any position, just like in a real game.

3-D POOL will take all your skill to master and if you do get that lucky break, how about entering the nationwide 'Maltese Joe' high score competition with the chance to play a real frame with the champ. Full details in every box.

Cue up for a shot at big Joe.



BBC screen shots



BBC screen shots

Pocket 3-D POOL on . . .

Atari ST	£19.9
Amiga	£19.9
IBM	£19.9
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Commodore 64 Disc	£12.9
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BBC/Electron	£8.9
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FIREBIRD

A LEGEND IN GAMES SOFTWARE

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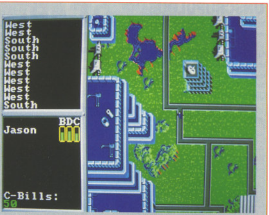
BATTLETECH

INFOCOM swap text for 'Tech

SYNONYMOUS with the very best in text adventures is the name of Infocom. Now they are turning their talents to role-playing games. *BattleTech* is well known among RPG fans, rather for violent conflict than for character development. Ironically this makes it a much better bet for success on computer than other, more involved games.

The *BattleTech* games are set in the 31st Century, when five warring nations fight it out using hi-tech robots called BattleMechs. The 'Mechs are similar to those robots in children's cartoons which have all manner of wacky weaponry, but there's no messing about with transformations into seemingly harmless kitchen utensils – these 'Mechs aren't about to disguise any of their metal-mashing armoury.

This first *Battletech* scenario, set on the planet of Pacifica, is sub-titled *The Crescent Hawk's Inception* and centres around a young chappie called Jason Youngblood. You control him as he learns how to become a 'MechWarrior and – subsequently joined by several other characters – tackles a difficult quest.



```
West
West
South
South
South
West
West
West
West
West
South
```

```
Jason                BDC

C-Bills:
50
```

This picture window shows animated battle scenes during fights, or reports on how a fight is progressing. It also indicates the direction of travel when just moving around.

The characters Under your control are listed here, along with indicators for Body (physical strength), Dexterity and Charisma. In a fight it becomes the command menu with options for moving, using weapons, scanning enemy units etc.

The Citadel where you start and do the initial training. The main game screen shows an overhead view of the action. It's also where various windows and menus pop up for transactions in shops, and to provide information.

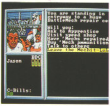
You start in the training school where 'Mech combat training is the main order of the day. There are many other things to do, however, most of them essential to successful completion of the quest. Dealing in stocks and shares is the best way to make big money: money which is needed to pay for combat training, buy armour and weapons, and learn skills in tech and medicine. Most expensive of all is customising a 'Mech with non-standard weaponry.

Once JY graduates from the training school – and this will happen abruptly – his main job is to map out the rest of Pacifica. This takes time, and many hostile forces must be engaged after leaving your home town. An expensive terrain mapper can be acquired, which will speed things up considerably and make finding towns much easier.

RELEASE BOX		
ATARI ST	Price TBA	AUG '89
AMIGA	Price TBA	AUG '89
C64/128	Price TBA	IMMINENT
IBM PC	£29.99dk	OUT NOW

Most of the other towns have hospitals, armouries, 'Mech repair centres and lounges. Here other characters can be found and persuaded to join the quest, adding their skills to the team's capabilities.

The 'Mech battles can be handled by the computer, which performs well. There are plenty of opportunities to practice combat out in the open, against both 'Mechs and groups of humans on foot. Humans are easy meat for a 'Mech, but if you're on foot a fight with anyone could prove fatal. Combat practice and money can also be gained at an arena where you can go head-to-head with another 'Mech. Defeat, though, is costly.



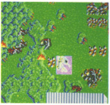
```
You are standing in
entryway to a huge
BattleMech repair ce

Will you:
Ask to Apprentice
Visit speed shop
Have 'Mechs repaired
Buy 'Mech ammunition
Talk to others
Leave the Mechit-Lub
```

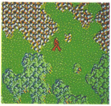
```
Jason          BDC

C-Bills:
50
```

Entering the Mechit-Lube where 'Mechs can be repaired, tech skills learnt or a 'Mech customised.



Battling with two 'Mechs during a training mission.



Out in the open you encounter an enemy group. Will you take them on or try to escape?

Factors affecting the outcome of a battle include the terrain, weapons used, which opponent is tackled first and how much you move around. The computer can generally be trusted do a good job against an inferior or equal force, but against a stronger opponent more cunning strategies from the human mind are needed.

After a while 'Mech combat becomes incidental to the quest part of the game. Exploring Pacifica is a big job and every town will have to be visited at some point. Frequent saving is handy too because you never know when disaster will strike.

BattleTech does not have quite the level of puzzling you would expect from an Infocom game, but it combines the 'Mech combat and quest elements well. The only problem is that because the game is addictive you may solve it quickly, and it only has limited replay potential. A great start though, and it looks as if there will be more *BattleTech* games on the way.

● Bob Wade

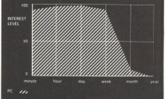
PC VERSION

The VGA and EGA graphics are pretty darn good and even in CGA events are clearly depicted. Not much sound for accompaniment though.

GRAPHICS	**6**	**IQ FACTOR**	**7**
AUDIO	**1**	**FUN FACTOR**	**5**

ACE RATING 801

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



Very absorbing and challenging, but you might complete it rather too quickly.

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WARE

CAPTAIN FIZZ MEETS THE BLASTER-TRONS

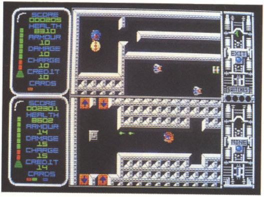
PSYCLAPSE play a duet

UNSCRUPULOUS members of the military have concocted a devious method of gaining new recruits by cloning. A normally routine tonsillectomy now results in the somewhat confused patient regaining consciousness on another planet, with a genetically identical copy in tow and facing hordes of rampaging creatures. A most unpleasant welcome to the Queen's Cloned Highlanders.

The freshly press-ganged Captain Fizz and his brother-in-arms have been beamed aboard the planet Icarus to purge a huge installation infested with Blaster-Trons. After negotiating all 22 levels of the flick-screen complex, they must reach and disconnect the deranged central computer that's creating the Blaster-Trons.

CFMTB gives the *Gauntlet* theme another twist by featuring a simultaneous split-screen display and dedicated two player action. In fact, the packaging states that it's impossible to complete the mission alone, so computer hermits should steer clear from the outset.

Both players move individually, but must co-operate in order to solve puzzles and progress through the maze-like installation. Additional ammo and armour can be collected,



(Right) Shooting the last grey 'L' block sees the circular lift entrance open, allowing Blue to enter.

(Left) If Blue selects the octagonal switches in the right order, a row of green lights appears and the glowing green force field is deactivated, allowing Red to scurry past.

RELEASE BOX		
ATARI ST	£14.95dk	OUT NOW
AMIGA	£14.95dk	OUT NOW
SPEC 128	Price TBA	IMMINENT
AMSTRAD	No version planned	
C64/128	Price TBA	IMMINENT
IBM PC	Price TBA	IMMINENT

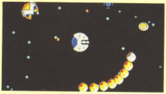
ST VERSION

Twin screens necessitate small playing areas, but the tiny graphics are clear and neat, being functional rather than aesthetic. The blasting action is accompanied by a mere four separate sound effects – adequate for the job in hand, but hardly the products of a vivid imagination.

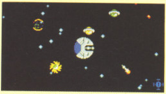
GRAPHICS 6 **IQ FACTOR** 4
AUDIO 3 **FUN FACTOR** 7
ACE RATING 754

COSMIC PIRATE

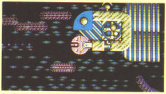
OUTLAW hoist the Jolly Roger



Amiga – In deep space, fighting off hordes of marauding fighters.



Amiga – Combat continues. The little planet-like objects are tokens.



Amiga – Run for home with a ship in tow.

MAKING crime pay is the aim in this latest from the Outlaw stables as you play Guy Manly, a dude with a dodgy past out to make it rich in the tough world of intergalactic organised crime.

On board NEST 51 Guy encounters The Council, who are the meanest, baddest mothers this side of the Andromeda Nebula and only happen to be behind every crooked show in the galaxy. To prove himself Guy must make them (and hopefully, you too) pots of money by zipping around space hijacking innocent space truckers in order to pinch their trucks, tow them back to base and flog the cargoes.

Before setting out on a first hijacking mission, you need to convince The Council that you've got what it takes to survive. Thoughtfully, they have installed several mission simulators at the base to give a taste of what you can expect to find in space. And what, exactly, can you expect to find in space?

For a start, there's a multitude of aliens of various shapes and sizes, out to destroy your ship. Secondly, there are hyperspace beacons, providing short-cuts from one sector to another, which you need to use to reach the same sector as the space truckers. Once in the same sector as a truck, you only have to follow the icon to the ship and then shoot it a few times before docking with it and bringing it in for a reward.

Unfortunately, warping from one sector to another costs points, and the only way to collect points is to shoot aliens. It takes a long time to mount up points merely by alien-bashing, but luckily the aliens often drop pods which can be collected to increase your score, or reduce your damage level. Allow the damage meter to reach the top, and you'll have failed the mission and will have to do another simulator session before The Council will allow you to go out again.

As you gain experience The Council allows you to undertake increasingly dangerous missions, which usually mean you're hyperspaced further away from the target and have to spend longer blasting aliens to gain points to travel

AMIGA VERSION

The graphics and sound are great and it plays well. The missions are fun for a while, but do become repetitive eventually.

GRAPHICS 8 **IQ FACTOR** 5
AUDIO 8 **FUN FACTOR** 8
ACE RATING 786

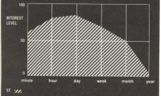
RELEASE BOX		
ATARI ST	£19.99dk	OUT NOW
AMIGA	£19.99dk	OUT NOW
SPEC 128	Price and release date TBA	
AMSTRAD	Price and release date TBA	
C64/128	Price and release date TBA	
IBM PC	No version planned	

together with colour-coded keys which open doorways. Credits may also be traded in to revitalise a player's flagging health status.

A pleasant mix of blasting, strategy and puzzling makes *CFMTB* compelling and entertaining. An interesting change of direction for Psyclapse, a welcome price tag and a good excuse to invite a friend round for a blast.

● Steve Jarratt

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



Great fun, for as long as both players can maintain their mutual concentration.

through hyperspace beacons. After surviving a few missions you will have earnt enough to start thinking about upgrading the ship with better weapons, faster engines and so on.

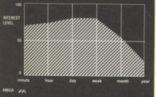
Cosmic Pirate is a fun shoot-em-up. Ultimately it lacks depth in gameplay, but the increasingly difficult missions sustain the interest for a while.

● Andy Smith

COSMIC SECTOR MAP
SECTOR
GALAXY
SPACE TRUCK
PLANET
PIRATE

Amiga – The sector map screen where you plan a route to riches...

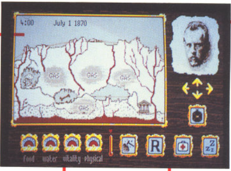
PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



An entertaining shoot-em-up that's marred by the repetitiveness of the missions.

JOURNEY TO THE CENTRE OF THE EARTH

Going underground with RAINBOW ARTS



This map gives a rough guide to the route you have to take.

The four dials and thermometer indicate your current state of health and supplies

Deterioration in health is also indicated by the character's worsening appearance in the picture.

These four icons allow you to inspect the fossil layer you're in, change the rationing, use medical supplies and pause the game.

JULES Verne liked to go where no man had gone before – if only in print – voyaging around the world in 80 days, 20,000 leagues under the sea and, of course, to the centre of the earth. Readers, and later filmgoers, delighted in being taken on these journeys – now computer owners can venture into the realms of the unknown as well.

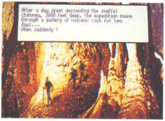
As might be expected, coming from the team of programmers that produced *Joan of Arc*, the game is presented as a mixture of adventure and strategy elements interspersed with arcade action. The player can choose to take the role of one of four adventurers, each of whom possesses different skills, but play is much the same for any of them.

The task is to find a route linking various locations, descending into the bowels of the earth. Along the way, the character faces a war of attrition against numerous underground dangers. A rough map acts as a guide but the exact route has to be discovered by analysing rock strata and text descriptions of the locations. Should the adventurer stray off the route all manner of hurtful surprises await. Injuries can be treated from the medical kit but there's only a limited amount of healing power.

The arcade action sequences require the player to avoid falling rocks, catch water dripping from the ceiling, beat pterodactyls away and circumnavigate herds of stampeding woolly mammoths. Unfortunately the gameplay is woolly too, because all it involves is running left and right to avoid things.

It's certainly a well-structured game, but lacks sufficient content to keep you hooked. When it's completed and the route is known, it will offer little to keep you coming back.

● Bob Wade



After a day spent descending the sneffel chimney, 3000 feet deep, the expedition move through a gallery of volcanic rock for two days...
When suddenly !

There are many delightful backgrounds: this one appears at the start of the game and is followed by a rockfall sequence.

RELEASE BOX

ATARI ST	£19.99dk	OUT NOW
AMIGA	£19.99dk	IMMINENT
C64/128	£9.99cs • £14.99dk	IMMINENT

No other versions planned

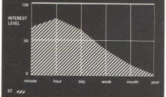
ST VERSION

There are attractive still shots and backgrounds. Action sequences are not well animated – the mammoths are hilariously jerky as they thunder forwards. The sound effects are mostly digitised, including the roar of the mammoths and echoing footsteps.

GRAPHICS	5	**IQ FACTOR**	5
AUDIO	4	**FUN FACTOR**	4

ACE RATING 579

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



Action is sparse and there is little strategy.

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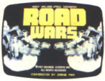

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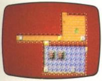
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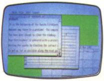
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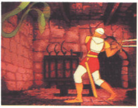
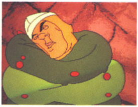
ATARI SUPER PACK

DRAGON'S LAIR

The READYSOFT six pack



A mistimed swing of the sword...



...and Dirk ends up being grabbed by the tentacles.

WANDER into any arcade of five years ago, and it's a good bet there's a large crowd huddled round one machine, bunging in 50ps like there's no tomorrow. Don Bluth's *Dragon's Lair* was one of the first machines to preempt the trendy CDI buzz of today by using Disney-quality animation drawn from a laser disk.

The expensive and unreliable machines soon fell out of favour, but now, Amiga owners with a 1Meg memory (or an A1000) can sample the delights of the ground-breaking arcade coin-op. All the cel animation and soundtrack of the original has been digitised, and the resulting 130 Megabytes of data compressed on to six double-sided disks. Cue smug-looking owners of a second drive.

The gameplay revolves around the efforts of one Dirk Daring to rescue princess Daphne from the clutches of Singe the Dragon. Daphne has been imprisoned in Singe's castle and Dirk must hack-n-slay his way through booby-trapped rooms, up crumbling spiral staircases and past all manner of creatures in a brave attempt to liberate his beloved.

Dirk's actions are limited to movement left, right, forward and back plus a swipe of his sword, and are dictated by the proximity of monsters or flashing objects which show the direction in which to move – the real trick is in the timing. Depending upon the action chosen by the player, the corresponding sequence is drawn from memory and the next situation is entered.

Many locations require a number of actions to be executed, and progress tends to be a matter of trial and error, simply remembering the correct sequence for next time – a none-too-demanding occupation.

● Steve Jarratt

AMIGA VERSION

The aural and visual excellence of *Dragon's Lair* is beyond doubt, but the game is very repetitive and doesn't take long to complete. Intrusive disk-accessing and swapping prove to be the final nail in the coffin.

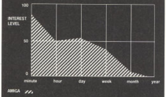
GRAPHICS	**9**	**IQ FACTOR**	**2**
AUDIO	**7**	**FUN FACTOR**	**3**

ACE RATING 473

RELEASE BOX

ATARI ST	Price and release date TBA	
AMIGA	£44.95dk	OUT NOW
No other versions planned		

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



Shows off the Amiga's capabilities, but that's unfortunately about all it does.

PALADIN

Because the knight belongs to OMNITREND

A what? A Paladin is a knight-errant or a paragon of knighthood, according to Chambers English Dictionary, and that's what you are in this American cross between role-playing and wargaming. There are ten quests in the basic package, with an additional disk available separately containing another sixteen quests.

Each quest involves a specific objective that must be reached, sometimes within a time limit. For example, the Trojan quest puts you at the head of a small party who must infiltrate a castle and rescue a princess within a game-time limit. Like most wargames, *Paladin* is made up of phases – your moves and combat followed by the computer's moves and combat – but unlike some, it's for a single player only.

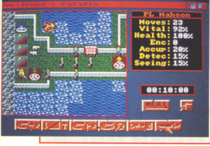
Movement and combat are both restricted by the number of movement points each member of your party has and, in turn, the number of movement points is restricted by the amount and type of objects or weapons the character is carrying. Almost any action in the game requires a quantity of movement points to be consumed – to attack an adjacent enemy, for instance, costs 3 points if you use a sword or 5 points if you use a crossbow, while movement itself costs different amounts depending on the type of terrain to be covered.

Complete a quest successfully and hopefully your Paladin will have his characteristics assessed and improved, making him slightly more powerful as you move through the quests. If your Paladin should be killed, though, you'll have to create a new one before playing again. The quests are fun, the fantasy wargaming side of things gets very tactical at times and it's good to be able to develop your character. A flaw in the game, however, is the inability to move a character through a square that's occupied by someone else, which forces frequent and costly detours.

Paladin is a little simplistic, but if you enjoy chopping up dragons and lobbing fireballs around it can be fun. The quest-builder program included allows you to modify existing quests and create new ones, so it'll keep you busy for quite a while.

● Andy Smith

(Left) Your men prepare to move in and rescue the princess in the Trojan mission. Survive it and hopefully you'll increase your Paladin's statistics.
(Below) Another quest, and some fearful dragons to avoid or attack. Fortunately that wall's providing cover – but how long will it remain intact?



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Moves: 23
Vital: 92%
Health: 100%
Enc: 0
Accur: 20%
Detec: 15%
Seeing: 15%
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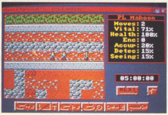

PL Mahoon
Moves: 2
Vital: 71%
Health: 100%
Enc: 0
Accur: 20%
Detec: 15%
Seeing: 15%
05:00:00

RELEASE BOX

ATARI ST	£24.95dk	OUT NOW
AMIGA	£24.95dk	OUT NOW
IBM PC	£24.95dk	IMMINENT
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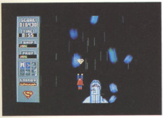
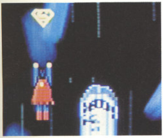
Extra Quest disks probably £14-19.95dk		





SUPERMAN

TYNESOFT's man of steel

LAST time Superman popped up on a computer it was to howls of derision. Now Tynesoft have breathed new life into the old hero, sending him into eight action games against his deadliest opponents. Forget the boy, here comes the man.

Each of the eight action sequences is preceded by a comic book page telling the story so far. They don't have to be read every time, but they are nice introductions first time round.

The first sequence is a battle against Darkseid's Para-demons. They try to reduce Superman's power to zero with fireballs and concussion clouds. All the big S has to do is destroy enough demons and concussion cannons to move to the next stage. Heat vision is most effective for this, but super breath is good for keeping the demons back and the super punch is also active if needed.

The weapons don't change much in each stage, although a super kick and telescopic vision are added to our hero's powers. Having had a behind-the-action *Space Harrier* view in Stage One, we move on to a horizontally-scrolling Stage Two. Flying guardians have to be shot or avoided while travelling along a ship to release two hostages.

Stage Three takes the form of a vertically-scrolling shoot-em-up, in which Super protects the space shuttle from an asteroid storm, avoiding Kryptonite asteroids that weaken his power. In Stage Four it's back to horizontal scrolling to battle past a mean bunch of defence systems.

In all the stages it is very easy to run out of power – not only do enemy hits sap it, but so do your own weapons. A careful eye on the power gauge and occasional rests can save a lot of frustration.

There really are several different types of game in one here and each one has been well thought out and programmed. The only major gripe is that it gets tough too quickly. However, with a little bit of practice the variety shows through and makes for a most enjoyable game.

● Bob Wade

(Top left) C64 – Protecting the space shuttle from the asteroid storm. Watch out for the green rocks because they are made of Kryptonite.

(Below) ST – The Para-demons are green and either fly the concussion cannons or shoot fireballs.

RELEASE BOX

ATARI ST	£24.95dk	OUT NOW
AMIGA	£24.95dk	IMMINENT
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IBM PC	£24.95dk	IMMINENT

ST VERSION

Again, the graphics are nothing special but the sound is fine. A simple but challenging game with plenty to keep you playing.

GRAPHICS	**5**	**IQ FACTOR**	**6**
AUDIO	**7**	**FUN FACTOR**	**6**

ACE RATING 761

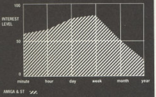
AMIGA VERSION

The graphics are colourful but simple, leaving you with the impression that a bit more work could have improved the game considerably. Sound effects are good though.

GRAPHICS	**5**	**IQ FACTOR**	**6**
AUDIO	**7**	**FUN FACTOR**	**6**

ACE RATING 761

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



Simple but playable stuff with plenty in it to keep you occupied.

C64 VERSION

Only six stages, but just as well programmed as the ST. The loading is a pain with long pauses between the action. Three skill levels make it more playable.

GRAPHICS	**7**	**IQ FACTOR**	**2**
AUDIO	**7**	**FUN FACTOR**	**7**

ACE RATING 752

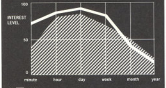
ST VERSION

Delightful graphics and animation and a passable rendition of the Superman theme.

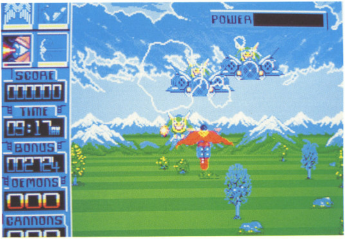
GRAPHICS	**8**	**IQ FACTOR**	**2**
AUDIO	**7**	**FUN FACTOR**	**8**

ACE RATING 805

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



Tremendous variety and challenge, though ST version is difficult and C64 loading poor.



WANDERER

Futuristic feline frolics from ELITE

PSEUDO 3D games have been around almost as long as the Spectrum, but it's rare to find one in true 3D. Elite's *Wanderer* is one such game and to get the full effect you have to wear a pair of weird glasses with red and blue lenses.

The game is set in the future when cats have become extremely rare and expensive – in fact Earth's last cat has just been stolen by would-be galaxy ruler Vadd, and locked away in his fortress called the Sphynx. It's down to you to get that cat back and destroy Vadd.

First problem is that you'll only get to face Vadd by convincing his guards that you're a fervent admirer of his by offering a gift of 8,000 cats. How are you going to get hold of so many cats? By playing cards, of course.

The planets in *Wanderer* are all involved in an inter-planetary game of poker. You start with two cards and it's a case of shuttling between the planets swapping cards to give the planets better hands than they had before and thus being rewarded with cats. Then you fly off to another planet – avoiding or destroying any other ships you may come across depending on whether they appear to be aggressive – and start jiggling the cards again.

Wanderer is not like the average shoot-em-up. It gets to be quite strategic at times, in the card-juggling amongst planets, which can be fun. Don't expect it to keep you glued to the monitor for months to come, though.

● Andy Smith

RELEASE BOX

ATARI ST	£19.99dk	OUT NOW
AMIGA	£19.99dk	IMMINENT
SPEC 128	£8.99cs • £12.99dk	IMMINENT
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C64/128	£9.99cs • £11.99dk	IMMINENT

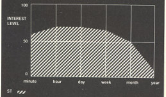
ST VERSION

The 3D effect is very good (thankfully you can opt to play in 2D if you wish) but the sound effects are poor. *Wanderer* is not a riveting game, but it can be enjoyable in the short term.

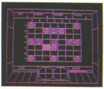
GRAPHICS	**7**	**IQ FACTOR**	**5**
AUDIO	**3**	**FUN FACTOR**	**7**

ACE RATING 682

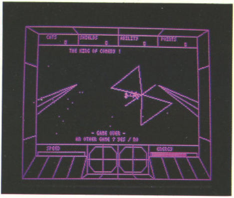
PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



The 3D is nice, but there's not really enough to keep you interested for very long.



The Galactic grid.



In 2D mode – of course, you wouldn't be able to see much if we showed *Wanderer* in 3D mode, because it splits the image into red and blue – fighting off a group of marauding aliens before you land on a planet.

WILLOW

MINDSCAPE minus the light and magic

BASED on the recent Lucasfilm movie, Mindscape's first solo product (rather than under the auspices of Mirrorsoft) tells the tale of one Willow Ufgood, Nelwyn farmer and unwitting catalyst in the eventual downfall of Bavmorda, evil Queen of Nockmaar.

Born to a common Daikini woman in a Nockmaar dungeon, the baby Elora Danan is found to be the bearer of a prophetic birthmark – she is the child destined to destroy Bavmorda and become Empress of all kingdoms. In an attempt to save the child, the midwife Ethna rescues the baby from the dungeons and sets the child afloat, Moses-like, on a bed of vegetation. Willow finds the child, and the adventure begins. The story of Willow's fate is portrayed through sub-games based on scenes from the film, all linked through a central storytelling scroll.

The Lucasfilm logo is usually one to watch out for, but in this case it's one to beware. *Willow* provides a collection of six unimaginative and lacklustre games: one is merely a single selection screen, one a simple puzzle, three are maze-based, and the last a dire cross between *Quazimodo* and *Barbarian*. Each may be played independently, and in truth this is to accomodate mapping, without which the game would be impossible. Oh, how the mighty have fallen.

● Steve Jarratt

IBM PC VERSION

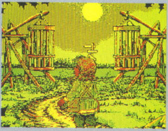
Average graphics, juddery scrolling and stilted animation complement and compound the lame gameplay, while constant disk accessing finally kills any remaining urge to continue. *Willow* does have one saving grace, though: it plays a nice soundtrack at the beginning.

GRAPHICS	**4**	**IQ FACTOR**	**4**
AUDIO	**6**	**FUN FACTOR**	**2**

ACE RATING 238

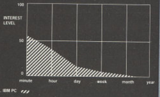
RELEASE BOX

ATARI ST	£24.99dk	IMMINENT
AMIGA	£24.99dk	IMMINENT
C64/128	£14.99dk	IMMINENT
IBM PC	£24.99dk	OUT NOW
No other versions planned		



One of the sub-games: select which cage the warrior Madmartigan is in. Taxing, huh?

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



The film's potential has been missed by a mile. A rush 'cash-in' job, perhaps?

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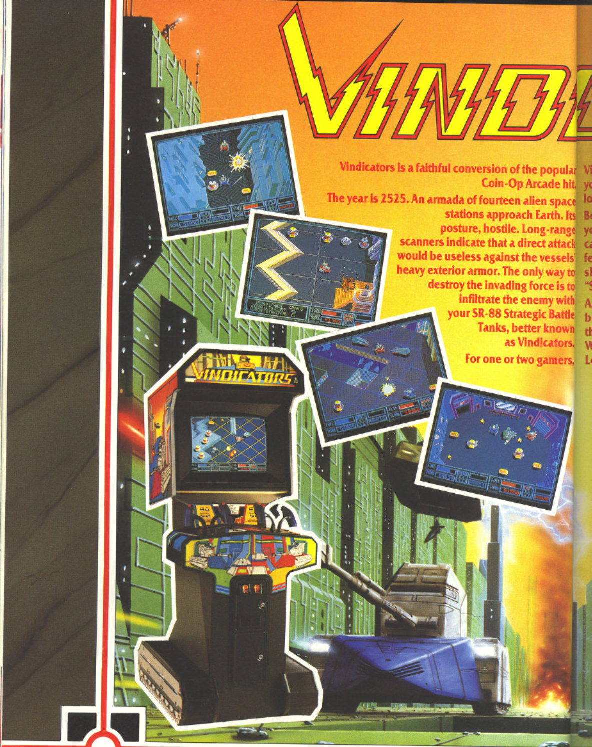
*Tengen is a subsidiary of Atari Games Corporation



Vindicators is a faithful conversion of the popular Coin-Op Arcade hit.

The year is 2525. An armada of fourteen alien space stations approach Earth. Its posture, hostile. Long-range scanners indicate that a direct attack would be useless against the vessels' heavy exterior armor. The only way to destroy the invading force is to infiltrate the enemy with your SR-88 Strategic Battle Tanks, better known as Vindicators.

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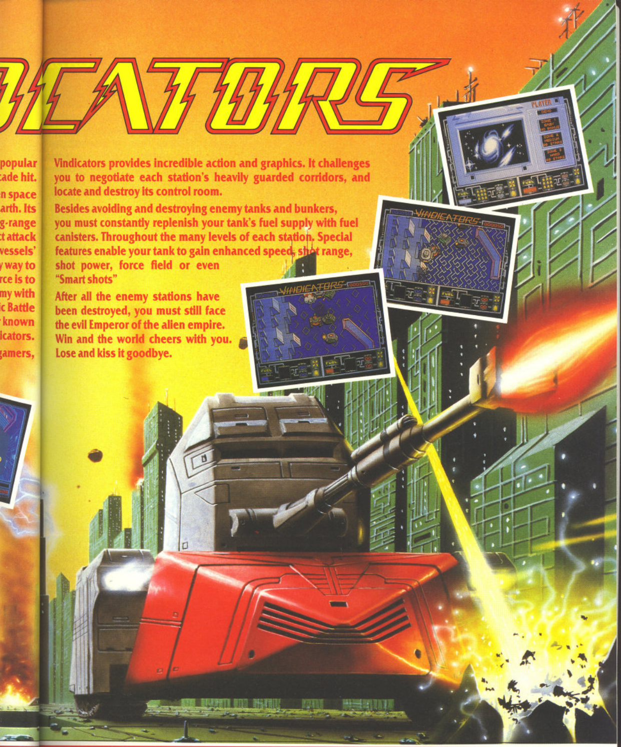

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Vindicators provides incredible action and graphics. It challenges you to negotiate each station's heavily guarded corridors, and locate and destroy its control room.

Besides avoiding and destroying enemy tanks and bunkers, you must constantly replenish your tank's fuel supply with fuel canisters. Throughout the many levels of each station. Special features enable your tank to gain enhanced speed, shot range, shot power, force field or even "Smart shots"

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Amiga		£19.99
Atari ST		£19.99

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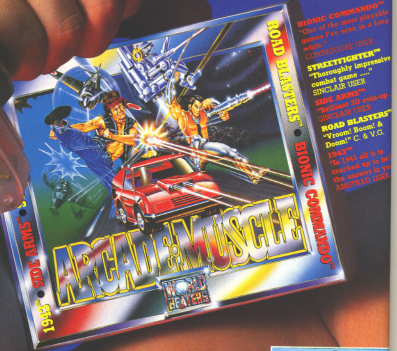

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BORODINO

ATARI's 1812 Overture

SERIOUS and not so serious, wargamers have plenty to smile about these days. If you own an 8-bit machine there are the SSI, SSG and R T Smith games to choose from. On the 16-bit front, there's UMS and a couple of PSS games to try. Now from Atari comes the first of their Battlescapes range for the ST.

Borodino, designed and programmed by a certain Dr Peter Turcan, is a one or two player simulation of the famous battle of 7 September 1812 in which Napoleon commanded the French troops in a confrontation with the Russian army under Prince Kutusov, 70 miles west of Moscow at the small town of Borodino.

The way the game plays is its most revolutionary feature. For a start, you play the part of the Commander in Chief – either Napoleon or Kutusov – and only see the battlefield through his eyes, as if standing on a nearby hillside. This means that you might not have as clear a picture of what's happening as the commanders who are in the thick of it, which can affect the outcome of the orders you give. It is possible to cheat slightly by looking through the eyes of other commanders if you wish – useful while acquainting yourself with the game.

Unlike other wargames, you don't select units in turn, give them objectives and then sit back to watch them try to reach their targets. Instead, orders are addressed to your Corps Commanders who in turn issue orders to their Division Commanders and so on down the chain of command.

The game progresses in 15-minute turns, each Commander in Chief being allowed to issue up to eight orders per turn. Orders are sent – because of the period of the game – via riders, and this is another important factor in the game. As your subordinate commanders and their troops get caught up in the fighting, orders can arrive too late, too early, in the wrong order or even worse, not at all.

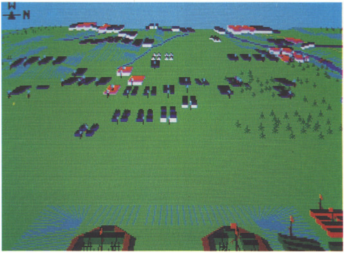
Orders can be as simple or as complex as you wish, ranging from 'Ney, order your artillery to shell The Redoubt for 2 hours', to things like 'Davout, form an attack line from 1/2 mile southeast of Shevardino linking with Ney, to 1/2 mile southeast of The Redan linking with Poniatovski'. Obviously, as you become more confident and conversant with the system your orders are likely to become more complex.

The display is solid 3D throughout, with coloured blocks to represent the various regiments of the armies and groups of small houses to represent towns and villages, adding to the realism of the simulation. *Borodino* really is a great attempt to recreate the battle while putting you in control. The frustration of not knowing whether an order has made it through, or how a part of the battle that's out of view is going, is very real, and though the game is easy to play it's also challenging. If you're at all serious about wargaming you should search this out. Dr Peter Turcan could be a name we'll hear a lot more of in future.

● Andy Smith

RELEASE BOX

ATARI ST	£29.99dk	OUT NOW
IBM PC	£29.99dk	IMMINENT
No other versions planned		



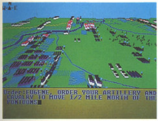
Watching Napoleon's advance from the Russians' position at The Fleches. You can only see this sort of thing when you elect to look through the eyes of other commanders as well as the Commander In Chief (either Napoleon or Kutusov).

ST VERSION

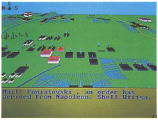
Though the graphics are slightly blocky, the screen updates quickly. There's no sound at all but that doesn't detract from the game. Though it's not as flexible a system as UMS, it's still a superb and enjoyable game.

GRAPHICS	**8**	**IQ FACTOR**	**7**
AUDIO	**N/A**	**FUN FACTOR**	**7**

ACE RATING 891

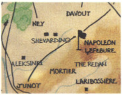


```
Order:EUGENE, ORDER YOUR ARTILLERY AND
 CAVALRY TO MOVE 1/2 MILE NORTH OF THE
 PONTOONS
```



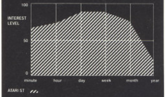
```
Mail: Poniatovski , an order has
arrived from Napoleon. Shell Utitsa.
```

(Above) Elect to see the communications and you'll know when and if your orders get through, and how your subordinate commanders will interpret them.



(Above) Looking north from Napoleon's position on The Redan. Eugene will now get his troops in a good position for a push on Borodino. By the time the order gets through to Eugene (if it does at all!) and he has issued his own orders to his subordinates the situation to the north may be completely different.

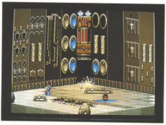
PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



A great game, but with only one scenario it'll play out quickly. Still, one for the library.

G.NIUS

Intelligent escapology on the LANKHOR label



If G.Nius (the small droid in the centre) can avoid falling debris, destroy the other robots and shoot the blue canister, he can grab a lift to the next floor.

MAINTENANCE droid supervisor G.Nius suddenly finds his routine of electronic management broken by the deceleration trauma of his cargo vessel hitting a planet, head-on. Although still sound, G.Nius is far from safe: the ship is slowly disintegrating; the exit is on the far end of the vessel; and his underling maintenance droids are all displaying violent tendencies.

The ship is made up of numerous flip-screen rooms separated into levels. In order for G.Nius to reach the exit, he has to negotiate all the rooms on each level and blast the luminescent terminals in each. Only when all the orange beacons have been deactivated do the 'lifters' appear. Shooting these provides a hovering platform to the next level.

G.Nius runs the gauntlet of collapsing rooms, springboards and trapdoors, and defends himself from his rampaging comrades by rapid laser-assisted dismantling. Collecting the energy, shields and nails (?) left behind in the debris helps to prolong the droid's lifespan.

This blast-em-up arcade adventure is an entertaining romp, but its initial lure is soon dispersed by a serious lack of variety. Only the more strong-willed will want to stay the course through to the very end.

● Steve Jarratt

RELEASE BOX

ATARI ST	£19.95dk	OUT NOW
AMIGA	Price TBA, under development	
IBM PC	Price TBA, under development	
No other versions planned		

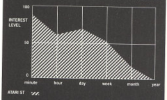
ST VERSION

In typically French fashion, *G.Nius'* gameplay tends toward the limp side, but it scores high on aesthetics. The humorous sampled spot effects are clear and well suited to the frenetic, zany action, while smart static graphics are accompanied by a collection of neat sprites and some clever effects, such as damage sustained by the scenery from stray shots.

GRAPHICS	**7**	**IQ FACTOR**	**3**
AUDIO	**7**	**FUN FACTOR**	**4**

ACE RATING 592

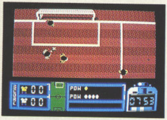
PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE

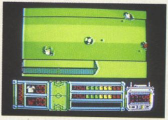


Fun to play for a while, but not bursting with long-term possibilities.

GARY LINEKER'S HOT SHOTS

GREMLIN hit the crossbar





(Left) C64 – Those with little taste may select to play on a red pitch. Note the pitch radar at the bottom of the screen. (Above) Spectrum – It's an open goal, but that maximum-power kick is bound to be over the crossbar.

JUST when you thought the glut of soccer games was over, along comes another Gary Lineker-endorsed product to prove everybody wrong. Taking a more mainstream approach than many of the same genre, *GL's Hot Shots* provides a one or two player game of eleven-a-side soccer.

The pitch and team members are viewed from overhead and control is apportioned in the usual way, with the player nearest the ball coming under direct control. Pressing the fire button causes the player to kick the ball when in possession, and attempt a sliding tackle when not. Fouls are taken into consideration, so too much Vinny Jones off-the-ball defence is frowned upon.

Ball-control also follows the now-standard procedure: while the fire button is held down, a sliding meter varies the strength of shot, and pointing the joystick changes the direction of shot accordingly. In this way, banana shots and overhead back-kicks can be executed. Surprisingly, the player becomes stationary when the joystick is pressed, allowing the opposition to catch up and attempt a tackle.

The package supports a wide range of options, including a choice of pitch surface and colour, team colours and game length.

● Steve Jarratt

C64 VERSION

Reasonably comfortable to play, but solo participants won't get much of a game from the thicky computer. Blocky sprites and juddery scrolling do little to enhance its appeal.

GRAPHICS	**5**	**IQ FACTOR**	**3**
AUDIO	**5**	**FUN FACTOR**	**7**

ACE RATING 550

SPECTRUM VERSION

Trickier to play than the C64, but at least the computer provides a worthy opponent. Awful character block scrolling and jerky player movement make the game a little disorienting at times.

GRAPHICS	**4**	**IQ FACTOR**	**3**
AUDIO	**5**	**FUN FACTOR**	**4**

ACE RATING 535

RELEASE BOX

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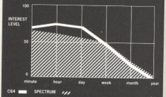
PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



Entertaining at first, but has too many flaws to be considered a long-term pastime.

STORMTROOPER

Destruction from CREATION

HAUL on those combat boots and let's go do some serious damage. Irreversible damage to robots, gun emplacements and any armed foe fool enough to stand in the way, in a battle through levels of a mining complex, heavily defended by men and machines.

Each level is composed of a horizontally-scrolling area with platforms on three levels. The aim on each level is to find the exit, which involves removing barriers as well as battling against marauding bad guys. You can walk, lie down, jump and climb – and shoot while upright or prone. Barriers that block the way are deactivated by shooting terminals.

The starting weapon does not take out all the enemies – just ones with little armour. To deal with robots and heavily-armoured mercenaries a more powerful weapon is needed. Several can be found scattered around the levels. Unfortunately you can only alternate between the standard gun and one other, at any time.

After the first few games it becomes a fairly simple matter of remembering the pattern of attackers and completing timing problems – good old-fashioned gameplay. As new territory is encountered there are lots of frustrating deaths in store from the unexpected.

● Bob Wade

RELEASE BOX

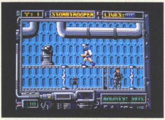
ATARI ST	£19.99dk	OUT NOW
AMIGA	£24.99dk	April 89
IBM PC	£24.99dk	April 89
No other versions planned		

ST VERSION

Smooth scrolling and moody backdrops set the scene nicely. Animated characters help to maintain the atmosphere of danger. Sound and music aren't that special, but there is a nice scream when you fall down a hole.

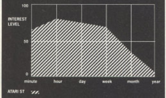
GRAPHICS	**7**	**IQ FACTOR**	**2**
AUDIO	**6**	**FUN FACTOR**	**7**

ACE RATING 703



Having battled to the first underground level the Stormtrooper now has to eliminate terminals like the one to the left of the middle level. These remove the sparking barriers like the ones on the bottom level.

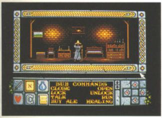
PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



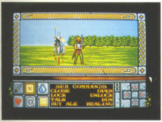
Old-fashioned gameplay with enough levels and variety to please.

GALDREGONS DOMAIN

PANDORA on the treasure trail



Paying a visit to the ancient wizards who inhabit the land can be quite profitable. This one provides a book of magic spells.



Outside, the barbarian often bumps into fellow travellers. The guy on the horse is the one to watch out for: he's actually an immortal knight in Azazael's employ.

AZAZAEL the wizard has been resurrected by the high priests of Shool, and seeks the five legendary gems of Zator to become ruler of all Mezron. Fearing for the safety of his people, King Rohan sends a mercenary barbarian warrior to retrieve the gems before the evil wizard and his cronies can get their hands on them.

The barbarian's quest is displayed from a first-person perspective in a cross between *Dungeon Master* and *Lords of Midnight*. As well as negotiating rooms, corridors and labyrinths, the Schwarzenegger lookalike can go yomping across moorland and through woods, visiting the local hostelries and dropping in on the small houses dotted about the landscape.

As new scenes are entered, a variety of characters appear who either wish the barbarian well or duff him up, depending on their loyalties. Combat, however, is a simple matter of selecting the option and repeatedly clicking on the chosen opponent until a result is obtained. Likewise, magic spells, once discovered, are selected from a menu and invoked on cue.

The interactive element of *Galdregons Domain* is quite limited and although the large scale of the quest should keep many ad venturers happy, Dungeon Masters in need of a fix might be disappointed with this offering.

● Steve Jarratt

RELEASE BOX

ATARI ST	£19.95dk	OUT NOW
AMIGA	£19.95dk	OUTNOW
C64/128	£14.95dk	Summer 89
IBM PC	£24.95dk	Summer 89
No other versions planned		

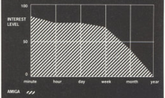
AMIGA VERSION

Galdregons Domain doesn't really make full use of the Amiga's potential. The graphics are OK, if a little limited, but the possibility for sound effects has been severely missed, relying on standard sampled grunts, groans and clunks.

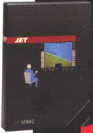
GRAPHICS	**6**	**IQ FACTOR**	**4**
AUDIO	**3**	**FUN FACTOR**	**5**

ACE RATING 704

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



Plenty of ground to cover, but sadly little action of any great interest en route.



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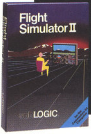

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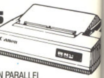

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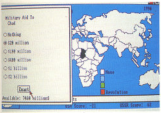

```
Military Aid To
 Chad
○Nothing
●$20 million
○$100 million
○$400 million
○$1 billion
○$2 billion
     Enact
Available: 7460 million$
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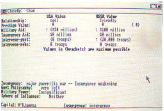
Trouble brews in Central Africa, with the Ruskies supporting the rebels in Chad, so let's help the government out a little...

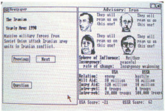


```
Closeup: Chad
                   USA Value            USSR Value
Relationship:        cool                friendly
Prestige Value:      0                   0                  ( 0)
Military Aid:      ↑ ($20 million)     ↑ $100 million
Insurgency Aid:      $0 million          $0 million
Intervene-govt:      (0 troops)        ↑ (20,000 troops)
Intervene-rebs:      0 troops            0 troops
              Values in (brackets) are maximum possible

Insurgency:  major guerrilla war -- Insurgency weakening
Govt Philosophy:    very left
Military Power:    Insignificant
Sphere of Influence:    Neither

Capital: N'Djamena          Insurgency: insurgency
```

However, a close-up of the Chad situation shows that the Reds are hedging their bets, by supporting both factions.



```
Newspaper
The Iranian
Yearly News 1990
Massive military forces from
Soviet Union attack Iranian army
units in Iranian conflict.
  Previous    Next

  Question
```

```
Advisory: Iran
They will        They will
ream us on       ream us on
this one!        this one!
They will        They will
ream us on       ream us on
this one!        this one!
Sphere of Influence:   Neither
Insurgency:           peaceful
  rate of change:     Insurgency weakening
               USA              USSR
Relation:    enemy            hostile
Milt Aid:    $0 million       $0 million
Insrg Aid:   $20 million      $0 million
Intrv-gvt:   0 troops         0 troops
Intrv-reb:   20,000 troops    500,000 troops
USA Score: -21       USSR Score: 62
```

A newspaper report details Russian movements, but the advisors clearly think it unwise to question their actions.

BALANCE OF POWER

THE 1990 EDITION

MINDSCAPE's George Bush/Mikhail Gorbachov simulator

960 ACE RATED

Absolute power corrupts absolutely, the old adage tells. And what better stage could there be on which to examine your maniacal tendencies than that of global politics.

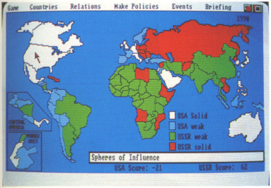
In what can only be described as fanatical detail, *Balance of Power: The 1990 Edition* (successor to the award-winning *Balance of Power*) takes the player through eight years of world politics as figurehead of either the USA or the USSR, protecting their interests in countries around the globe.

The basic aim is to increase the geopolitical prestige of the host nation above that of the opposing superpower. This means getting friendly with powerful nations, and making sure enemies are few and weak. At the higher levels, this is achieved by using every military, economic and diplomatic trick in the book. However, the opposition doesn't just sit there and take it: if disparate policies can't be sorted out across a debating table, problems escalate rapidly through the Defence Conditions: push too hard and it's time to re-boot the world.

The simulation provides four levels of play, including the newly-added Multi-Polar scenario where players have to contend with 80 countries, all of whom indulge in active foreign policies. (The monumental logistical task of co-ordinating global intercourse is most evident in lengthy delays as the computer works out the effects of each turn!)

To attempt to summarise all but the most basic mechanics of this simulation cannot be covered in any great detail here; it takes the 91-page instruction manual to do them all justice. Suffice to say, that this is a strategist's dream. The sheer size and scope of the simulation mean that it is possible to become totally immersed in the proceedings; single turns can take hours to fully digest and implement.

● Steve Jarratt



Just one of the many informative map displays. This one shows how much influence the two superpowers have in other countries.

RELEASE BOX		
ATARI ST	£24.99dk	IMMINENT
AMIGA	£24.99dk	OUT NOW
IBM PC	£24.99dk	IMMINENT
MAC	£29.99dk	IMMINENT
No other versions planned		

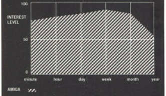
AMIGA VERSION

There are no sound effects at all, so world domination is carried out in complete silence, and the many screens support only six colours at most. However each screen is clear and does the job it was intended for well. Constant disk access slows things up slightly but this is a small price to pay. A mammoth simulation, thought-provoking and totally absorbing.

GRAPHICS	4	IQ FACTOR	9
AUDIO	N/A	FUN FACTOR	3

ACE RATING 960

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



A vast simulation which, although pricey, represents a marvellous long-term investment.

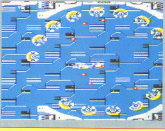
SEGA ROLL THE R'S

SEGA MASTER SYSTEM/Power Base

R-TYPE ● £29.95crt

R-Type has been hugely successful on both coin-ops and home computers, and console owners certainly would not want to miss out.

The level design and adversaries are exactly the same as all other versions – familiar territory indeed – and the weapon power-ups are the same too, well impressive when it's all attached, boasting several kinds of laser, homing missiles, drones and speed-ups. All of which is needed to deal with an enormous number of attacking aliens and deadly end-of-level guardians that take a lot of killing.

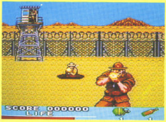


The two bad things to note about this version are that ship movement is sluggish and when there are a lot of sprites on-screen it flickers horribly. Apart from that it's just as addictive and thrilling as ever. One of the best shoot-em-ups on the Sega.

● Bob Wade

GRAPHICS	4	IQ FACTOR	2
AUDIO	6	FUN FACTOR	8
ACE RATING 808			

RAMBO III ● £24.95crt



This is the latest game for which you need the light gun. It's not like the computer versions of the same name, but is instead an *Operation Wolf*-like excercise in target practice.

The screen slowly scrolls horizontally and enemy soldiers appear from the side of the screen or from behind objects. You have to blast them as fast as possible before they do too much damage. Other attackers, such as helicopters and tanks, are harder to take out.

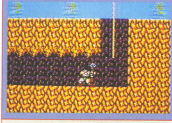
The gun starts off on automatic fire and switches to single shot when the ammo runs out. There are also bombs which kill off everything on screen. Along the way you can rescue prisoners and pick up more bombs, ammo and life force.

If played properly, from a distance away, it's a very tough game. Even close up you've got to be very quick and efficient at blasting the enemy. Should satisfy anyone keen for an *Op Wolf* type of game.

● Bob Wade

GRAPHICS	6	IQ FACTOR	1
AUDIO	6	FUN FACTOR	7
ACE RATING 582			

RASTAN ● £24.95crt



Yo, hunky warriors! Pull on those fur-lined boots, shoulder that axe and let's go slice and dice some lizards. In fact let's go hack up anything that moves on this horizontally-scrolling landscape.

As you wander along, leaping holes and pools, swinging on ropes and climbing between floors, there are all sorts of things to fight. Some of them fly, some jump, but most just come straight at you.

Extra weapons, food, potions and what-have-you can be picked up along the way. Weapons are positioned specifically, but everything else is randomly distributed after the death of nasties.

It's a lot of fun and the 'continue' option allows you to get reasonably far into the levels. Would not go amiss in anyone's collection.

● Bob Wade

GRAPHICS	7	IQ FACTOR	3
AUDIO	4	FUN FACTOR	8
ACE RATING 784			

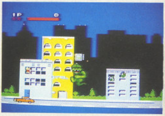
RAMPAGE ● £24.95crt

Here's another arcade conversion that made it onto computers before the consoles, and did well for itself. With only two joystick ports and no keyboard there obviously isn't the three player option, but it should satisfy most people as a twosome.

The idea is simple enough and merely requires a love of destruction on a grand scale to enjoy. As a mutated monster – amazing what food additives can do – you're going round in a fit of rage beating seven colours of brick out of America's cities. All you have to is clamber up the sides of buildings and smash them up until they collapse to the ground in a cloud of dust.

Each city is defended by helicopters, tanks and men with guns, and there are surprises both tasty and unpleasant inside the rooms of the buildings. Not much of this has a big effect on health, but attrition on the monsters will eventually turn them back into humans and end the game. Best as a two player game but gets repetitive in the extreme.

● Bob Wade



GRAPHICS	5	IQ FACTOR	1
AUDIO	6	FUN FACTOR	6
ACE RATING 520			

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Bob Wade

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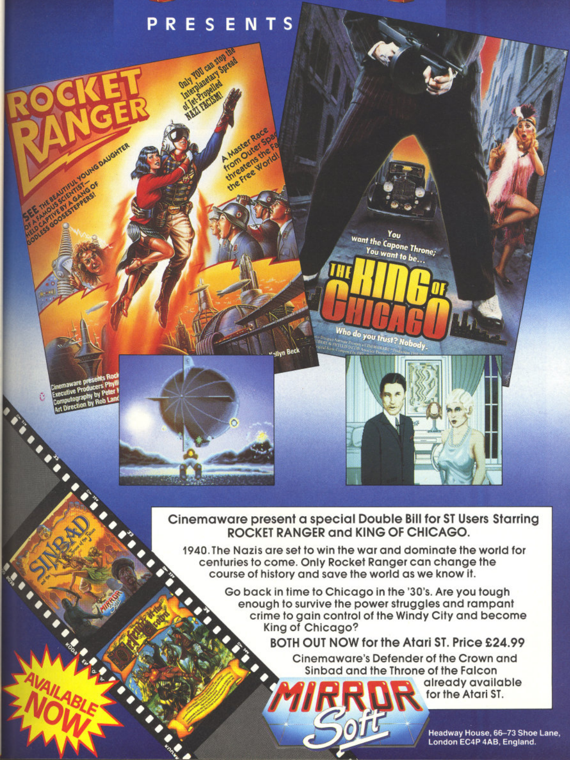
CINEMAWARE

PRESENTS



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MIRROR Soft

Headway House, 66–73 Shoe Lane,
London EC4P 4AB, England.

SHORT AND SWEET

TEENAGE QUEEN

■ Ere International, Amiga version reviewed, £19.95dk

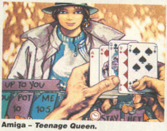
Anco, it seems, aren't the only ones trying to spice up a poker game with pictures of naked women. But whereas Anco at least use digitised photographs, this game from French software house Ere International uses illustrations to depict the lady as she gradually sheds her clothes and adopts assorted lewd poses.

The standard strip poker formula is followed – both players start with a set amount of money, and you try to win money from the girl until she has to borrow more money in exchange for an item of clothing.

Strip poker games don't have a very good reputation as games (after all, once you've seen the final screen, there's little incentive to play again) but the *Teenage Queen* plays a better game than your average strip-em-up and the digitised speech is well done.

On the whole, it's nicely presented and with a dozen or so pictures to play through it might take you a few hours to beat it. Once you've played through it though, you'll have to be very bored to boot it up again.

● Andy Smith



Amiga – *Teenage Queen.*

GRAPHICS	7	IQ FACTOR	5
AUDIO	7	FUN FACTOR	7
ACE RATING 408			

REALM OF THE TROLLS

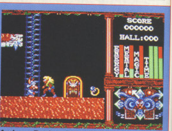
■ Rainbow Arts, Amiga version reviewed, £24.99dk

Are you a brave elf? If not then don't even think about going down to the *Realm of the Trolls*. It's an old-style platform game in which you control your elf using the mouse and have to rush along platforms connected by ladders, and pick up goodies by clicking on icons.

The Halls (as the screens are called) are patrolled by trolls who are protecting their chests of gold, swords, rings, golden goblets and so on. They don't take too kindly to the thought of someone making off with their treasure, so will attempt to stop you with blows to the head. It only takes a couple of hits to kill you off, forcing a restart, so it's a good idea to either avoid them or lob a bolt of energy or fire at them, which stuns them for just long enough to make a getaway (hopefully!). You can also try making a couple of holes in the actual platforms and hope the trolls fall through them – but, note, the holes don't last forever.

Realm of the Trolls is poor. The gamestyle is very old hat, the animation is nothing special, the sound effects are dire and the graphics are very simplistic. Worst of all is the gameplay's real-time icon selection, which is awful.

● Andy Smith



Amiga – *Realm of the Trolls.*

GRAPHICS	5	IQ FACTOR	1
AUDIO	1	FUN FACTOR	3
ACE RATING 245			

HUMAN KILLING MACHINE

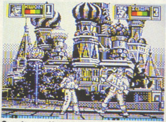
■ US Gold, Spectrum version reviewed, £8.99cs, £12.99dk

Kwon is the killing machine in question, but no sub-machine guns and rocket launchers here: this is a beat-em-up in the *Street Fighter* mould, with large sprites and rounds fought in various capital cities.

You start the game in Moscow feeling pretty tough, so it'll take first opponent Igor five knock-downs to defeat you, whereas you only need three to beat him. Allow yourself to get knocked down a couple of times though, and you'll take on the next opponent (a dog called Shepski) in a tired state, meaning you fight on equal terms. Just manage to scrape through the round and you're in a weak position to take on the next opponent, which is in Amsterdam outside a Nachtclub, slugging it out with an irate woman called Maria. If you think she's tough, wait till you meet Helga!

As well as the usual moves available with or without the fire button pressed, some of the attacking ploys are rather more spectacular than average. Graphics are good (especially the backgrounds) and animation and gameplay are fine, but it's not original stuff and is probably one for the real beat-em-up hard core.

● Andy Smith



Spectrum – *Human Killing Machine.*

GRAPHICS	8	IQ FACTOR	2
AUDIO	4	FUN FACTOR	7
ACE RATING 568			

MINI GOLF

■ Magic Bytes, ST version reviewed, £19.99dk

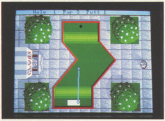
Everyone is going crazy for crazy golf games. This version from Germany has two courses of 18 holes, ranging from simple ones to be found at any seaside resort, to weird ones straight from a fevered imagination.

The ball is positioned anywhere on a starting mat and then a line is drawn out from it using a cursor, which indicates the direction of the shot and its strength. In expert mode the line is turned off, so shot calculation is harder.

Most of the holes on the first course should be completed in two or three strokes, but the second course is much more complicated and has lots of five- and six-stroke holes. Wacky features range from tubes and tunnels to teleports. Later screens even go as far as having surreal 3D and gravity. Shots can be replayed or retried if you think they could go better. The contours of each hole may be viewed from several different directions.

This sort of putting game works well on computer, but with only two courses it won't remain interesting for very long. Only the expert level and second course are likely to test you after a few days.

● Bob Wade



Atari ST – *Mini Golf.*

GRAPHICS	4	IQ FACTOR	4
AUDIO	4	FUN FACTOR	6

ACE RATING 613

BAAL

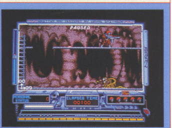
■ Psyclapse, ST version reviewed, £19.95dk

Your mission: find and destroy the evil Baal and return with the War Machine. How to go about it? Well, you're in charge of a troop of Time Warriors, and controlling them one at a time you have to wander through the three parts of Baal's domain collecting pieces of the War Machine. A set number of pieces are needed from each section before you can seek out a transporter and move to the next section.

Progressing through the sections involves walking along platforms (connected by ladders), finding and destroying generators which power the force fields that block your path. Then it's a case of destroying any aliens that attack you and avoiding any mines on the floors. For dispatching aliens you've got four laser modes, but you have to find ammo for three of them.

Baal won't win any prizes for originality, but the graphics are very colourful and the animation is very lifelike. It's also a very large game (thankfully there's a save game option, so you won't have to complete it in one sitting) and will keep map makers and 'collect and shoot' fans happy for quite a while.

● Andy Smith



Atari ST – *Baal.*

GRAPHICS	8	IQ FACTOR	4
AUDIO	6	FUN FACTOR	6

ACE RATING 726

DUGGER

■ Linel, Amiga version reviewed, £19.95dk

Herbie Stone last popped up, or swung in, in *Crack*, a *Breakout* clone. Now he's back in a variant of the old arcade game *Dig-Dug*.

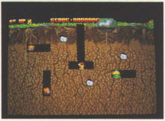
The most memorable thing about *Crack* was the hilarious opening sequence, and this has been developed a little for the new title. It's still very funny and has all the signs of being a long-running gag.

The game itself is a very straightforward affair. The screen represents a cross section of earth which Herbie can tunnel through. Dotted around are two types of animal and some rocks. The aim is to either crush the animals with the rocks or inflate them until they burst, if you can get close enough.

The animals don't tunnel but will occasionally mutate and float towards you. Running into them is fatal at any stage, but rock-dragons can kill by breathing fire as well.

It's very odd to find such an old game concept as this rearing its head on the Amiga. As soon as the initial nostalgic thrill of recognising *Dig-Dug* is gone, it's just a repetitive and uninspired game. Let us have something more original, please.

● Bob Wade



Amiga – *Dugger.*

GRAPHICS	5	IQ FACTOR	1
AUDIO	6	FUN FACTOR	3

ACE RATING 372

ANDES ATTACK

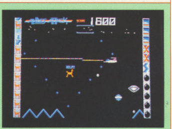
■ Llamasoft, ST version reviewed, £9.95dk

Once upon a time, there was a computer called the Commodore Vic 20. Now this was a great little machine (little being the operative word) and some great games were produced for it. One of the most prolific games writers at this time was a chappy called Jeff Minter.

Jeff managed to produce simple but highly playable games with animals as the main characters – especially sheep, yaks and llamas. That made him very popular with almost everyone because it was such a wacky idea.

Now it's 1989 and Jeff's been busy converting some of his classics to the ST. *Andes Attack* is one such game. It's nothing but a *Defender* clone, in which you fly a ship over a horizontally-scrolling landscape protecting llamas from being animal-napped by a wide variety of alien beings. Lasers, smart bombs, all the usual stuff is there, but by today's standards it's not up to much. The graphics are fast but not particularly colourful and the gameplay's showing its age. Still, if you haven't got a Defender game for your ST and you'd really, really like one, give it a try – it's not hard to find better games, but you could find worse as well.

● Andy Smith



ST – *Andes Attack.*

GRAPHICS	5	IQ FACTOR	1
AUDIO	4	FUN FACTOR	6

ACE RATING 380

SLIPSTREAM

■ Microdeal, Amiga version reviewed, £19.95dk

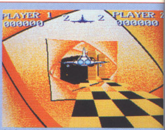
The Slipstream is actually nine streams, all infested with flying craft that you have to destroy. As well as planes to shoot – they drop bombs, so it's best to shoot them – there are giant geometric shapes and walls to avoid.

You view your spacecraft from slightly behind, *Afterburner*-style, and the buildings (?) scroll from background to foreground to meet you while enemy planes stick to scrolling from one side to the other, dropping their bombs.

Although all this sounds like loads of fun, in reality it isn't. The scrolling is painfully slow: there's no sense of movement or urgency as you jog along. The backgrounds are fine, but the sprites are uninspired and the mothership is better called a mothergreyblob. Collision detection is also bad and it's terribly annoying to have to sit through a 'mothership drops you off back at the beginning' intro after you lose one of your three lives. The digitised 'Grnud lurk Connamder' speech at the beginning is also poor, though the sound effects aren't bad.

Microdeal have boobed with this one. There are many better shoot-em-ups around, and plenty of better ones in the same style.

● Andy Smith



Amiga – *Slipstream.*

GRAPHICS	2	IQ FACTOR	1
AUDIO	2	FUN FACTOR	2

ACE RATING 235

ZANY GOLF

■ Electronic Arts, ST version reviewed, £24.95dk

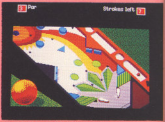
Crazy, wacky, wild, loopy, quirky golf. Nope – it's *Zany Golf.* Why doesn't somebody produce a game called Stupid Golf, or Wacky Snooker where snooker tables have windmills and tunnels instead of pockets?

This is graphically the most impressive of the crazy golf games. Every hole is in 3D and attractively drawn. It also has an excellent range of holes and obstacles – things like bouncing hamburgers, fans to blow the ball around and magic carpets to guide it with.

There are only nine holes but each of these is very complicated. It still won't take long to exhaust, but that's crazy golf games for you. Other nice options include seeing a map of the hole at the start, having a limited number of strokes to complete the course and getting bonus strokes for completing certain tests.

The putting method is a little odd, operating like a snooker cue – drawing out a line behind the ball. It's quite difficult to judge direction and strength using this system because it's only a dotted line. Fortunately you don't have to be too accurate about hitting the hole dead on – a relief when playing in 3D.

● Bob Wade



Atari ST – *Zany Golf.*

GRAPHICS	8	IQ FACTOR	3
AUDIO	6	FUN FACTOR	6

ACE RATING 688

CIRCUS GAMES

■ Tynesoft, ST version reviewed, £24.95dk

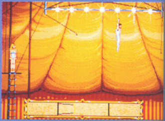
The sound of the Wurlitzer, the flash of the lights, the pong of the elephants... It's Big Top time as Tynesoft provide aspiring artistes with their chance to take part in the Greatest Show on Earth.

Four events are included: tightrope-walking, trick horse-riding, trapeze artistry and tiger-training. Each one may be practised as a stand alone event, or the International competition may be entered which plays through all four in sequence.

Performance of events follows the Epyx tradition of timed joystick movements rather than fierce waggling to execute a manoeuvre. Thus somersaults, spins and jumps are attempted in the more aerial acts, and the tigers are directed toward their specific tasks by controlled use of the whip (oo-er!).

All four acts are beautifully portrayed, with pleasant static graphics, smooth scrolling and reasonable animation. Its downfall comes in lasting interest: once all four events, and a paltry four at that, have been mastered to any degree, the urge to return is quashed. And the over-inflated price tag is a major hurdle, too.

● Steve Jarratt



Atari ST – *Circus Games.*

GRAPHICS	8	IQ FACTOR	3
AUDIO	4	FUN FACTOR	6

ACE RATING 535

WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT

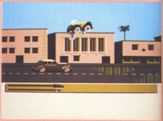
■ Buena Vista Software, Amiga version reviewed, £24.99dk

It doesn't take long for game manufacturers to get their teeth into a big licence these days does it? No sooner is the film released than the game is imported from America. It's made up of three separate games based on sequences from the film, the plot of which goes something like this: Roger has been framed for the murder of Marvin, The Gag King, and so he has to find Marvin's will before Judge Doom dissolves Toontown and all the Toon characters.

First you are put in the driving seat of Benny the Cab, a Toon car, as you race across town sproinging over patches of Dip, the stuff that dissolves you, and cars that get in your way. Then it's into the Ink and Paint Club for a mad rush around the tables grabbing napkins and receipts in the belief that the will is hidden amongst them. Another quick dash across town takes you to the Gag Factory where you make a bunch of weasels laugh themselves to death before facing Doom himself.

Unfortunately, it just doesn't cut the mustard. Not only are the games boring, but there are too few of them. Roger Rabbit fulfils the old adage 'Graphics alone do not a game make'.

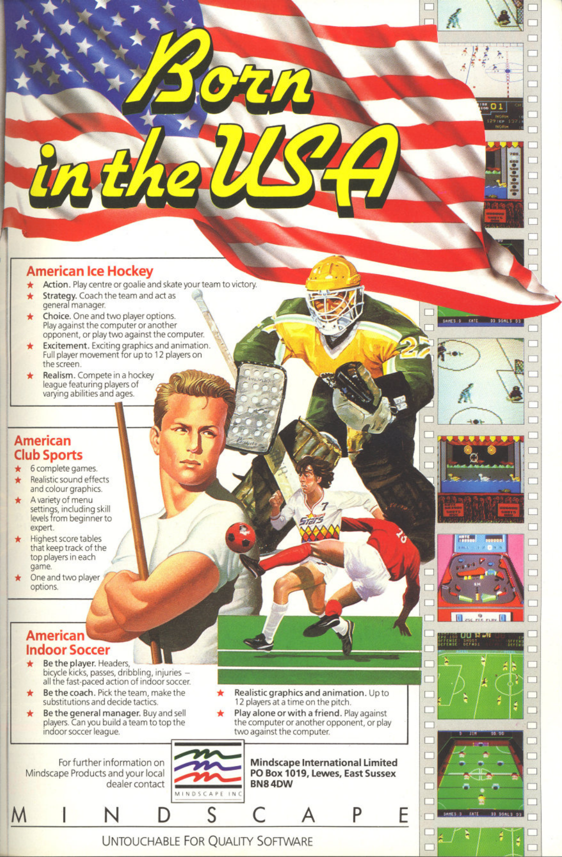
● Andy Smith



Amiga – *Who framed Roger Rabbit.*

GRAPHICS	8	IQ FACTOR	2
AUDIO	6	FUN FACTOR	6

ACE RATING 310



American Ice Hockey

- ★ **Action.** Play centre or goalie and skate your team to victory.
- ★ **Strategy.** Coach the team and act as general manager.
- ★ **Choice.** One and two player options. Play against the computer or another opponent, or play two against the computer.
- ★ **Excitement.** Exciting graphics and animation. Full player movement for up to 12 players on the screen.
- ★ **Realism.** Compete in a hockey league featuring players of varying abilities and ages.

American Club Sports

- ★ 6 complete games.
- ★ Realistic sound effects and colour graphics.
- ★ A variety of menu settings, including skill levels from beginner to expert.
- ★ Highest score tables that keep track of the top players in each game.
- ★ One and two player options.

American Indoor Soccer

- ★ **Be the player.** Headers, bicycle kicks, passes, dribbling, injuries – all the fast-paced action of indoor soccer.
- ★ **Be the coach.** Pick the team, make the substitutions and decide tactics.
- ★ **Be the general manager.** Buy and sell players. Can you build a team to top the indoor soccer league.
- ★ **Realistic graphics and animation.** Up to 12 players at a time on the pitch.
- ★ **Play alone or with a friend.** Play against the computer or another opponent, or play two against the computer.

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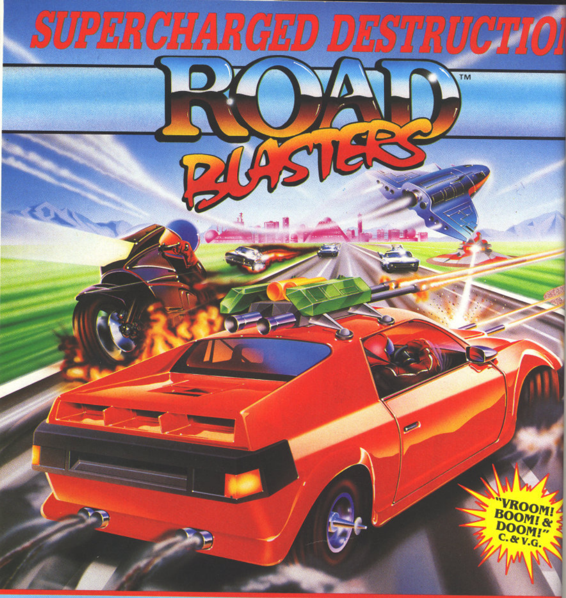
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Screen shots from Atari ST version

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SPACEBALL

■ Rainbow Arts, Amiga version reviewed, £24.99dk

Oh look, another continental variation on the *Breakout* theme – how exciting. This one is a two player game where each bat tries to out-score the other.

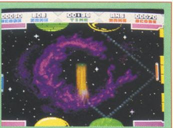
The screen has a layer of destructible blocks on either side and 'bumpers' at the top and bottom. Floating around in the middle are various alien beings which rebound the ball and explode when hit.

The aim is to out-score the other player by hitting more objects. Big points are gained by busting through the wall opposite to score a goal. When that happens play restarts with all the blocks in place.

Tokens appear in the playfield and when the ball hits them it makes a bonus effect appear in boxes in the corners of the screen. Hitting a highlighted box will put the effect into operation. There are split bats, small bats, faster balls and so on.

You can play single matches or a knockout tournament in which eight players can take part. The music is excellent but the gameplay is just too simplistic and unremarkable to hold interest after a few games.

● Bob Wade



Amiga – *Spaceball.*

GRAPHICS 4 **IQ FACTOR** 2
AUDIO 8 **FUN FACTOR** 5
ACE RATING 505

BILLIARDS SIMULATOR

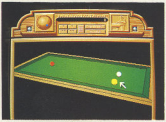
■ Ere International, Amiga version reviewed, £19.95dk

You won't be pocketing any balls in this 3D billiards sim. No joke! It's French billiards, so the table has no pockets. Instead, the game comprises of cannons, so you score points by striking your ball to connect with both the red and your (computer or human) opponent's ball in the same shot. And that's all there is to it.

The rules may be simple, but actually playing the game is not so easy. Which cue should you use? Do you want one that allows you a more powerful shot but less accuracy or is accuracy of paramount importance? This is just one of the host of options open to you, including where to hit the ball to make it spin different ways and the strength of the shot. Unlike real-life billiards you can also alter the weight of the balls, the amount of rebound or even the amount of friction of the balls on the baize.

The 3D option is great, allowing you to move and view from anywhere around the table, but if you prefer you can also play in 2D. *Billiards Simulator* is a very competent piece of programming, and it's very enjoyable to play. Well worth having a look at if you're at all interested in the sport.

● Andy Smith



Amiga – *Billiards Simulator.*

GRAPHICS 8 **IQ FACTOR** 6
AUDIO 6 **FUN FACTOR** 8
ACE RATING 819

HIGHWAY HAWKS

■ Anco, Amiga version reviewed, £19.95dk

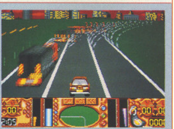
There's no mistaking the coin-op inspiration for Anco's latest: plenty of roads and blasting in this drive and shoot game.

Basically, the object is to complete each sector in as short a time as possible. The player's car is fitted with a gun with which to dispose of other road users, and depending upon the time taken and vehicles destroyed, a cash bonus is awarded which can then be used to purchase more equipment. Bigger cars, efficient tyres and extra weaponry can be obtained to supplement the basic kit.

Extra fuel is collected as tokens along the route, and additional ammunition is available on shooting the juggernaut trucks which congest the road. The tail gates fly open, leaving either ammo caches or oil slicks on the road. Similarly, more time can be gathered by jumping for bonus plaques on overhanging gantries.

The action on offer here is surprisingly entertaining. The roads move very quickly, the opposing vehicles are solid-looking and the whole affair is pretty smooth. Those who can't wait for the official 16-bit *Roadblasters* could do much worse than acquire this little gem.

● Steve Jarratt



Amiga – *Highway Hawks.*

GRAPHICS 6 **IQ FACTOR** 2
AUDIO 6 **FUN FACTOR** 7
ACE RATING 694

STREET SPORTS FOOTBALL

■ Epyx, C64 version reviewed, £9.99cs,£14.99dk

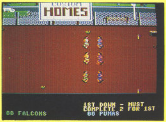
British kids play soccer and cricket in streets and playgrounds, but American ones are even more adventurous and risk life and limb at their own brand of football. Naturally it's not the full-blown version – there are only three players on each team.

The teams are picked from the neighbourhood kids, who all have different skills. The three positions are two receivers and a quarterback. With only three players per side the action is easy to follow and there isn't much switching between them.

The most interesting part of the game is the ability not only to use a large range of pre-set plays, but to be able to design your own. The rules can also be changed to select the number of points for a win, the number of passes required for a first down and the time delay before the defence is allowed to cross the scrimmage line.

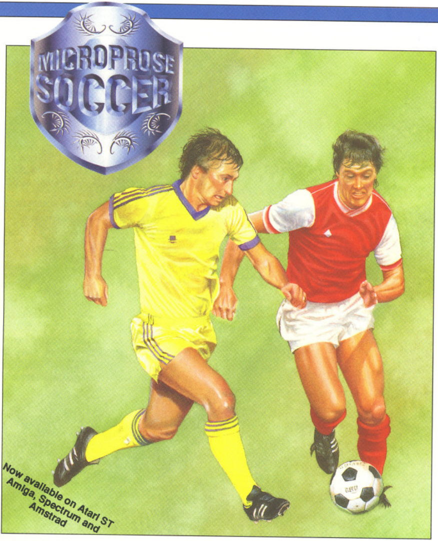
It's a much easier game to get into than other American football simulations, but ultimately doesn't have the same depth, even with the ability to design plays. A nice variant on the theme.

● Bob Wade



ST – *Street Sports Football.*

GRAPHICS 5 **IQ FACTOR** 5
AUDIO 4 **FUN FACTOR** 6
ACE RATING 711



WHAT'S THE SCORE?

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Challenge the computer or a friend, competing in the World Cup, International Challenge or the indoor league.

An overhead perspective of the pitch makes it easy to play good graphics and sound effects make every match seem real.

Fully animated players can perform a whole variety of movements, including overhead and banana kicks. There are 29 different teams and a unique action-replay facility.

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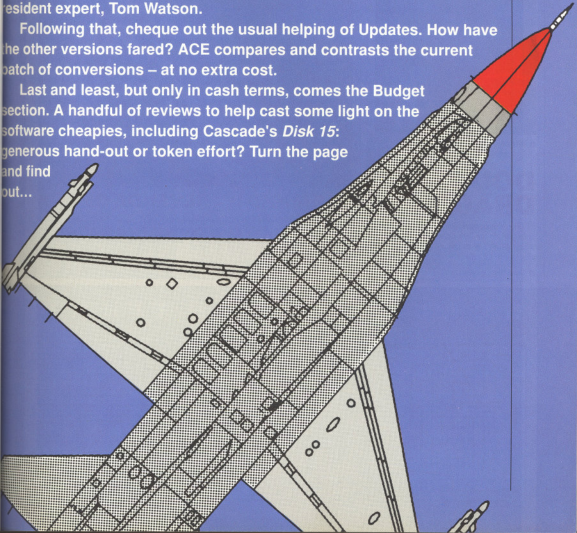
SCREEN TEST
SUPPLEMENT

or everyone out there who always wants more, here's a little upplementary benefit to improve your fortunes.

Cash in on the biggest ever Tricks 'N' Tactics section: ten whole ages crammed with info for the frustrated gamesplayer. Follow the fficial FoursField maps of *Incredible Shrinking Sphere;* complete *otal Eclipse* and *The Munsters;* rescue the Colonel with our superb *ambo III* map; and take *Falcon* flying lessons from Mirrorsoft's esident expert, Tom Watson.

Following that, cheque out the usual helping of Updates. How have he other versions fared? ACE compares and contrasts the current atch of conversions – at no extra cost.

Last and least, but only in cash terms, comes the Budget ection. A handful of reviews to help cast some light on the oftware cheapies, including Cascade's *Disk 15*: enerous hand-out or token effort? Turn the page nd find ut...



TNT
TRICKS 'N' TACTICS

VIRUS

The game that puts the Speccy into Archimedes emulation mode gets the POKE treatment, here. Type in the listing, RUN it and load in the program. Easy.

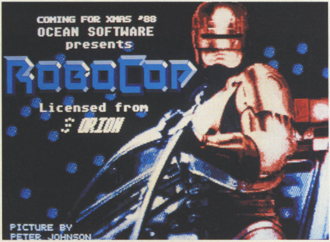
```
10 CLEAR 49000: LOAD "" CODE
20 POKE 52564, 205: POKE 52565, 20:
POKE 52566, 128
30 FOR A=32788 TO 32846: READ B:
POKE A, B: NEXT A
40 RANDOMIZE USR 52480
50 DATA 50, 21, 255, 122, 254, 46
60 DATA 192, 62, 50, 50, 84, 205, 33
70 DATA 21, 255, 34, 85, 205, 62
80 DATA 195, 50, 58, 252, 33, 52
90 DATA 128, 34, 59, 252, 195, 0
100 DATA 252, 50, 107, 92, 33, 69
110 DATA 128, 17, 160, 252, 1, 15, 0
120 DATA 237, 176, 195, 61, 252, 175
130 DATA 50, 145, 175, 50, 203, 147
140 DATA 195, 184, 53
```

■ Matthew Pryce, Oswestry

DOUBLE DRAGON

ST Double Dragoners should stop playing for a while, get on the high score table and type in 'NEIL HARDING' (with space), for an interesting effect.

■ Steve Hern, Kingkerswell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OCEAN SOFTWARE
presents
ROBOCOP
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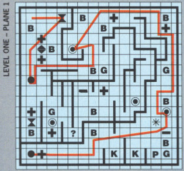
PETER JOHNSON

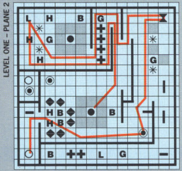
ARKANOID II – REVENGE OF DOH

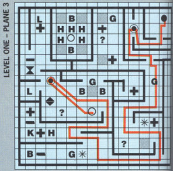
Owners of Imagine's 16-bit *Breakout* game should dust it down, shove it in the drive and load it up. As soon as the purple *Arkanoid* screen disappears, press the right mouse button and hold it. Some free advertisement for *Robocop* appears, and if the button is held down long enough, a 'tune' can be heard. Wow.

■ Colin McCaffery, Wilmslow

INCREDIBLE SHRINKIN S


LEVEL ONE – PLANE 1


LEVEL ONE – PLANE 2


LEVEL ONE – PLANE 3

LEVEL ONE – PLANE 4

PACMANIA

Pacmaniacs having trouble reaching the final level can now reap the obvious benefits of having infinite lives. Simply type in the required listing, RUN it and follow the prompts to load in the game.

The listing below works on both the Spectrum 48K and 128K versions.

```
10 INPUT "HOW MANY LIVES? (1-255; 0=UNLIMITED)"; L
20 IF L<0 OR L>255 THEN GOTO 10
30 RESTORE (60+(10 AND L=0))
40 PRINT "PRESS PLAY ON TAPE...": LOAD "L" CODE 24300: POKE 24351, 119: POKE 24352, 95
50 FOR F=0 TO 8: READ A: POKE 24439+F, A: NEXT F: PRINT USR 24300
60 DATA 205, 71, 95, 62, L, 50, 198, 134, 201
70 DATA 205, 71, 95, 175, 50, 69, 137, 0, 201
```

■ Jason Bullough, Douglas

WINNERS

Lucky recipient of this month's £150 mail order voucher is Daryl Baker of Minehead, for his fabbo solution to Total Eclipse (and it does work 'cos we've checked it!).

£20 vouchers also go to: Jason Bullough, Douglas; Gary Shaw, Cleethorpes; Matthew Pryce, Oswestry; Craig Reid, Perth; and Sean Meads, East Oakley.

And many thanks to everyone else who sent in hints 'n' tips but who didn't get a prize. Please keep sending them in - there's no reason why YOUR name shouldn't be here next month!

HEROES OF THE LANCE

Here's a welcome helping hand with US Gold's AD&D game.

When first starting, use magic sparingly since each staff only has a limited number of charges. (Blue Crystal Staff=200 charges; Staff of Magus=100 charges).

Use the 'Find Traps' spell often, as falling rocks severely weaken the team. However, injury from rocks can often be avoided by moving quickly.

Always put Goldmoon third or fourth in the party, with Tanis or Riverwind up front: they have a ranged weapon and a hand-to-hand combat weapon. It's also useful to have a magic user in the first four.

Flint Fireforge isn't too good at combat because of his diminutive size. His forte is dealing with the Aghar; otherwise, use him as chief bearer!

Give all scrolls and wands to Raistlin.

Shields can and should be given to each member of the team. Also, share out the gem rings to instill confidence.

Heroes of the Lance

The 'Web', 'Sleep' and 'Charm' spells can be useful if unfamiliar with normal combat – especially against trolls.

Use the 'Find Invisible' spell to discover potions. However, try to use them sparingly, and only when necessary.

Scrolls contain combat spells and can only be used by one person.

The waterfall behind the door cures wounds, but can be used just once. Make a note of its location and return only when several members of the party are severely wounded. Try not to cast the 'Cure Wounds' spell until after the waterfall has been visited.

During the early stages, the only real problem in combat should be the hatchlings. They are invulnerable to magic, so use the 'Deflect Dragon Breath' spell and get Tanis to the front. Use his range weapon (the bow) and aim at the hatchling's stomach. Five or six well-placed shots should dispose of him.

When confronting the Bozak Draconians, use a 'Web' spell, running at the same time so that they back off. Once they are webbed, walk behind and attack from the rear, avoiding the magic missile.

Avoid contact with wraiths, as they drain life forces almost immediately. Only red arrows are effective against them, and the same also applies for Spectral minions.

Never run from a spider, since it is more dangerous than standing and fighting.

Do not enter into combat with baby dragons: their acid breath is lethal.

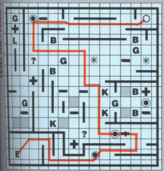
To kill Khisanth, throw the blue crystal staff at her.

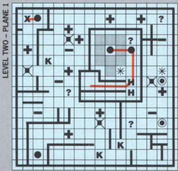
Once the first shaft has been entered there is no going back, so make sure that as many items as possible have been collected, and that members of the team are all equipped with shields and potions.

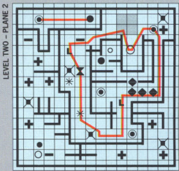
Do not run straight for the disks – the party get teleported out of the city without them. Run and jump, then let Goldmoon pick the disks up. Move slightly to the left, then push up.

■ Gary Wilson, Aldershot & Mark Kerr, Newcastle

G SPHERE INCREDIBLE SH

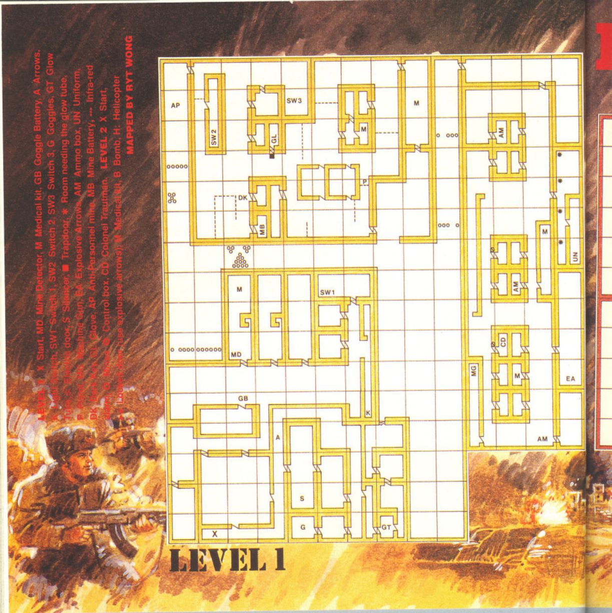






LEVEL 1 X Start, MD Mine Detector, M Medical kit, GB Goggle Battery, A Arrows, K Light Switch, SW1 Switch 1, SW2 Switch 2, SW3 Switch 3, G Goggles, GT Glow Tube, ≎ Electric door, S Silencer, ■ Trapdoor, ✱ Room needing the glow tube, P Pistol, MG Machine Gun, EA Explosive Arrows, AM Ammo box, UN Uniform, DK Dark Key, GL Glove, AP Anti-Personnel mine, MB Mine Battery, --- Infra-red alarm, ○ Mines, ⊘ Control box, CD Colonel Trautman. **LEVEL 2** X Start, ►◄ Locked door (use explosive arrows), M Medical kit, B Bomb, H: Helicopter

MAPPED BY RYT WONG



LEVEL 1

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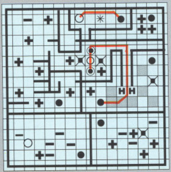
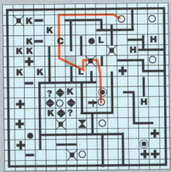
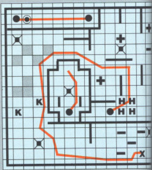
LEVEL TWO – PLANE 3



LEVEL TWO – PLANE 4



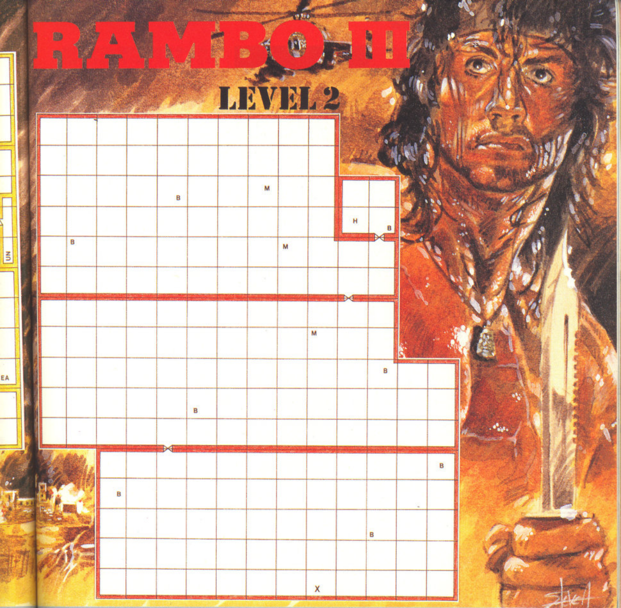
LEVEL THREE – PLANE 1



LEVEL THREE – PLANE 2

RAMBO III

LEVEL 2



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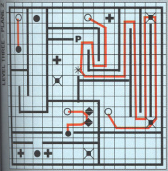
DILE SHRINKING SPHERE I



LEVEL THREE - PLANE 2
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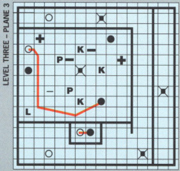

LEVEL THREE - PLANE 3
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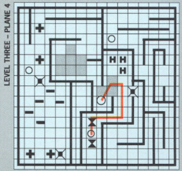

LEVEL THREE - PLANE 4
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ROBOCOP

Got a C64? Can't kill Clarence Boddicker? Having a spot of bother with a rampaging ED-209? Good. Type in this listing, RUN it and sit back as the future of law enforcement appears with infinite time and energy for all levels and sections.

```
10 FOR I=352 TO 468: READ A: POKE I,A: C=C+A: NEXT
20 IF C<> 16583 THEN PRINT "ERROR IN DATA!": END
30 SYS 368
40 DATA 72, 169, 131, 141, 89, 1, 169, 1, 141, 90, 1, 104, 173, 32, 208
50 DATA 96, 32, 86, 245, 169, 1, 141, 86, 3, 169, 96, 141, 85, 3, 169, 32, 141, 84, 3, 96
60 DATA 169, 96, 141, 104, 173, 141, 147, 172, 169, 96, 141, 233, 246, 141, 238, 246
70 DATA 169, 36, 141, 235, 246, 169, 110, 141, 240, 246, 162, 176, 142, 241, 246, 232
80 DATA 142, 236, 246, 169, 179, 141, 243, 246, 169, 1, 141, 244, 246, 76, 0, 128, 169, 96
90 DATA 141, 159, 185, 141, 164, 185, 169, 164, 141, 161, 185, 169, 168, 141, 162, 185
100 DATA 169, 221, 141, 166, 185, 169, 167, 141, 167, 185, 76, 0, 128, 83, 43, 65
```

Thank you for your co-operation.

■ Sean & Adrian Meads, East Oakley

SEGA TIPS

■ SHINOBI

When the title screen appears, push diagonally while pressing button 2 and select a level to start on.

■ QUARTET

On Level 2, kill the monster, collect the key and star, and enter the warp door twice for a bonus sheet.

■ ALEX KIDD IN MIRACLE WORLD

When the octopi appear in Lake Fathom, kill the first one and sit on its bowl. Keep tapping down and a bonus sheet is entered.

To continue the game, push up and tap button 2 eight times. Note that Alex must be in possession of at least 400U for the continue option to work.

■ CHOPLIFTER

On the second stage, fly behind the battle ship, fire and up comes Jaws!

On Level Three, travel backwards past the lava pit.

■ BLACK BELT

After power-up, press button 1 to access the number of players. A blank screen then appears for about 30 seconds; quickly tap the Reset button for infinite lives.

■ ACTION FIGHTER

Bring up the name entry screen, but instead of a name, try the following: HANG_ON, GP_WORLD, SPECIAL, and DOKIPEN for various modes of transportation.

■ FANTASY ZONE

Buy all the engine parts and the ship's weapons never run out.

■ TEDDY BOY

When the title screen appears, move the control pad up, down, left, right and a new screen appears. Now press up and down nine times, press button 1, and select a starting round!

■ Craig Brown, Middlesex & Daniel Russell, Wroot

MUNSTERS SOLUTION

No doubt fans of the cult TV show were chuffed to see a computer game based on the antics of the Munster family – and would be even more chuffed to see the complete solution. Look no further.

From the start, go far right and stop at the top of the stairs. Keep shooting the ghosts until the spell bottle fills up, then descend the stairs and collect the object to the left.

Shoot the ghoul to the right, then walk right to collect the cross. Go left, up the stairs, then walk left until another flight of stairs is reached, and walk down.

Go left, shoot three ghouls and collect the object. Keep walking right, collect another object and then head left and back up the stairs.

Go far right and down the other stairs. Head left, shoot the ghoul and go down more stairs. Quickly shoot the three ghouls, collect the object on the left, and then go right to meet Herman and Grandpa.

Collect the object, go up the stairs and wait for the vampire in the middle of the room. When he arrives, blast him, then go right to the end of the graveyard and collect the object.

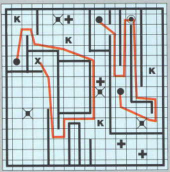
Walk left killing the zombies, then return to Herman and Grandpa, who are now under your control. Go right three screens without stopping, and then wait at the edge of the fourth. When the hands appear from boxes 2, 4 and 5 walk right and underneath the fourth box. When the hands appear from boxes 1 and 5, head right and then climb the stairs. Grandpa now transforms into a bat and flies off.

With Herman in tow, go up stairs, kill the ghoul guarding the right door and go right (don't worry about the ghoul – he doesn't attack unless attacked). Go right, collect the object, and then meet Eddie in the next room, where the second stage of the game starts.

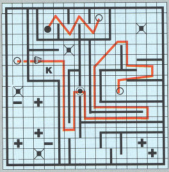
In control of the dragon, go to the far right of the screen and keep firing in the middle and lower part of the screen to kill the creatures

NCREDIBLE SHRINKING P

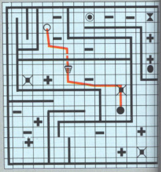
LEVEL FOUR – PLANE 1



LEVEL FOUR – PLANE 2



LEVEL FOUR – PLANE 3



LEVEL FOUR – PLANE 4

as soon as they appear. After a while, the final stage of the game starts.

Go far right and open the doors in the room (it takes three hits to kill the monsters that appear). If Marylin isn't in that room, proceed to the next, and so on until she is found, and the game ends.

NOTE: *Always keep the spell bottle above half-full to kill ghouls, and keep an eye on Lilly's energy level; if it falls below half way, the vampire cannot be killed. Also, beware of the fat ghost – he drains the spell bottle very quickly.*

■ Gary Shaw, Cleethorpes

ALIENS

Another quickie for the freebie tape: to immediately access the next level, on the C64 simply press the up arrow key, followed by Restore; on the Spectrum it's up arrow followed by Symbol Shift.

GORMAN
00001000

■ James Foxton & Jed Pearson, Thirsk

FOOTBALL DIRECTOR II

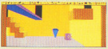
All those Amiga owners feeling left out after the *FD II* tips for the ST and Spectrum in Issue 17 – take heart. Here's a neat way of starting the game with a healthy bank balance.

Copy the game onto another disk – files are going to be changed so don't use the original. Boot up the copy as normal, clicking on the 'FD

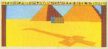
TOTAL ECLIPSE

Incentive's third Freescape(TM) game is available for the Amstrad, C64 and Spectrum at the moment, and can be completed in a couple of ways. The one below does the job in thirty easy(ish) stages.

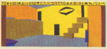
1) Collect Ankh from aeroplane's wing and enter pyramid via rear door.
2) Shoot block, and exit. Reenter pyramid via front door.
3) Collect Ankh, go north. Shoot block and go east, north and shoot arrow.



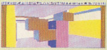
4) Shoot bar on floor. Walk up to wall, face north and walk into block.
5) Go east, north, east, south, north and north.



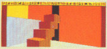
6) Climb steps, shoot symbol behind building, enter door.
7) Go west, up steps, south, south. Collect Ankh, go west.
8) Go west. Face north and go through centre door. Go north, west.
9) Shoot eye. Go east, south, south.
10) Go through left hand door on north wall.
11) Shoot slab. Go west and through slim door.



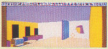
12) Collect Ankh, go south. Go through door under steps, north, west and north.
13) Go through fourth door, go through second door, walk down steps and push block.



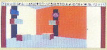
14) Go south, east, north, north.
15) Reenter pyramid via front door, go north, west and collect Ankh.
16) Go through slim door, south. Go through door under steps and north.
17) Go north up steps. Face south, fall off wall, go south, east. Duck down, go east, turn around and head west again.
19) Duck down, go west and fall off walkway. Go south and through door under steps.



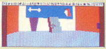
20) Go north, west, north. Go through fourth door from left, go through second door and shoot head.



21) Go south, east, east. Shoot blocks in front and go east. Face east, shoot wall and fall off the platform.
22) Collect Ankh. Go south, south, south and through door on north wall. Go west and then through slim door.
23) Go south, through door under steps, north and north up steps.
24) Face south and shoot top door. Go south up steps, climb next set of steps, face south and fall off wall.



25) Go south, east, duck down, east, north avoiding hole in floor and west.
26) (Save game) Walk up steps as far as possible.



27) Duck down and go forwards once only.
28) Press 'H' once, then press 'H' to enter Shrine.
29) Move close to the statue to avoid the shots of the gun on the ceiling.
30) Fire at the gun repeatedly until it is destroyed – end of mission.

■ Daryl Baker, Minehead

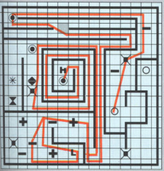
And as if the above solution wasn't enough, Spectrum owners are now treated to the loader listing below. Type it in, RUN it and load in *Total Eclipse* with unlimited Ankhs. Note: no Ankhs are available until at least one has been collected in each game.

```
10 BORDER 0: INK 0: PAPER 0: CLEAR 32767: LOAD "" CODE 65088
20 POKE 65295, 248: POKE 65296, 255
30 FOR F=0 TO 7: READ A: POKE F+65528, A: NEXT F
40 RANDOMIZE USR 65088
50 DATA 205, 85, 254, 175, 50, 162, 181, 201
```

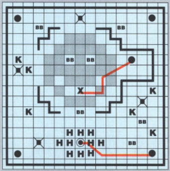
■ Jason Bullough, Douglas

SPHERE INCREDIBLE SHRI

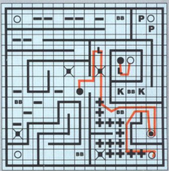
LEVEL FOUR – PLANE 4



LEVEL FIVE – PLANE 1



LEVEL FIVE – PLANE 2



Garfield
WINTER'S TAIL
JIM DAVIS
THE EDGE
The ski animal's coming your way soon

GARFIELD © 1978 United Feature Syndicate Inc.

36/38 Southampton Street, Covent Garden, London WC2E 7HE Tel: 01-83

II' and 'BOOT.BAS' icons as they appear.

Enter the game as normal. When it's up and running, select the 'Quit' option from the 'Main' section of the pull-down menu.
A CLI window now appears. Type LIST to list the 'FOOT.BAS' part of the game.

Using the cursor keys, edit the program lines 1514 and 2547 to read as follows:

```
1514 NEXT
NW=150+INT(RND*200)
NW=INT(NW/AP)
NV=200+INT(RND*300)
NV=INT(NV/AP)
AI=5000000£+INT(RND*(500000£/AP))
NF=(5000+INT(RND*3000))/AP
NP=INT(NP+NA+NF)
GOTO 332

2547 GOSUB 2548
IF RA=9 AND AI>300000£ OR
AI>1500000£ THEN ]2547
GOTO 2548
]2547: RA=INT(AI/5000)
PRINT TAB(5);
PA5
PRINT "DIRECTORS WITHDRAW";
PA1
PRINT TAB(30);
MONEY INT(RA)
PRINT TAB(3B); "-"
JR=JR-RA
```

In line 1514, making AI equal to 5,000,000 provides £5M starting budget; this can be tailored to suit, however. Line 2547 making RA=INT(AI/5000) stops the directors from withdrawing too much cash every week.

Click on the 'close window' icon for the window containing the program text, and save the amended program file by typing SAVE "FOOT.BAS"

To run the amended disk, boot up the disk as normal, by clicking on the 'FD II' icon. When the 'BOOT.BAS' icon is clicked, the message 'BAD FILE MODE' appears. Accept this by using the 'OK' box.

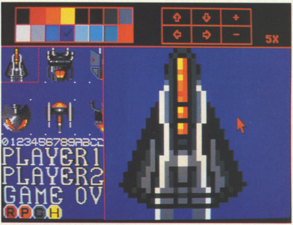
Close the CLI window containing the few lines of text, by clicking on the 'close window' icon.

Type 'LOAD'. A message box appears prompting for the 'NAME OF PROGRAM TO LOAD:' Using the left-hand mouse button, click on the text bar and type 'FOOT.BAS'.

When the 'OK' message appears, type 'RUN'. The program should now start as normal with plenty of dosh to spend.

■ Les Winward, Middlesbrough

SIDEWINDER



Tired of the way ST *Sidewinder* looks? Why not copy the data disk B onto a new disk, and load the individual compressed graphic files into Degas Elite. The more artistic blast-em-up fans may now redraw the backgrounds, explosions and craft at will.

Used in conjunction with the designer program on disk B, ST owners now have a passable version of the *Shoot 'Em Up Construction Kit* (and it scrolls smoothly, too!).

■ Chris Cox, Glasgow

METROID

Nintendo owners enjoying this very Japanese shoot-em-up arcade adventure could do worse than follow the excellent tips below.

First of all, enter the following password:

M7- - - -   -znNw1
YT- rfm   WOOObL

This places Samus in the last zone, Tourain, armed with Screw Attack, High Jump Boots, Varia, Maru Mari, six Energy Tanks, 235 missiles and a long Ice Beam! And not only that, Zeebetite – the Mother Brain's power source – has been destroyed.

No map of Tourain is necessary since it's a one-way trip to the Mother Brain. But first, to ensure success, the Energy Tanks must all be filled. To do this, simply hang around destroying Metroids. The only way to kill them is to freeze them with the Ice Beam and then blast them with five missiles. The deceased organism leaves a capsule behind which then provides either 30 missiles or 30 energy units.

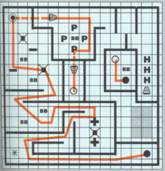
When the Mother Brain is finally reached, stand facing it between the two metal pillars where the Zeebetite used to be, and blast it with around 30 missiles. If Samus is knocked from his perch by a Rinka, wait until another one appears, freeze it, and use it as a platform to regain the previous position.

Once the Mother Brain is destroyed, a door appears. Enter it, race up the vertically-scrolling corridor, and board the lift to safety.

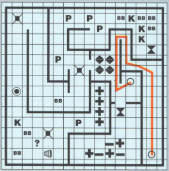
■ Craig Reid, Perth

KING SPHERE INCREDIB

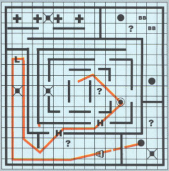
LEVEL FIVE – PLANE 3



LEVEL FIVE – PLANE 4



LEVEL SIX – PLANE 1



BAAL

PRESS SPACE TO BEGIN

Psygnosis difficult shoot-em-up suffers from only having six warriors at the player's disposal. To increase the available army, find a convenient fuelling/saving point and then keep moving back and forth between it and the nearest monster, building up points by repeatedly killing the creature. Since an extra warrior is awarded every 5,000 points, repeating the process soon results in a few more men with whom to sally forth and do some exploring.

One such location is at 08-49 on the first level, with a fuelling point and some green, snake-like monsters.

To make things easier still, the following co-ordinates provide the approximate locations of the rocket pads on Level One:

24-04 25-54 49-02 00-53 36-28
48-65 30-52 12-65 18-29 58-37

■ Alan Hughes, Milton Keynes & Ian Urquhart, Edmonton

NETHERWORLD CHEAT

To escape from the current level of C64 *Netherworld*, try pressing '2', '4' and 'E' all at the same time.

INTERNATIONAL KARATE+

When Archer Maclean coded the ST version of *IK+*, he included a number of special messages and effects which only appear when the correct codes are typed in:

ANBK EDHK GLZP SHAH STEW TOTO
ANGL FOOK GPZP SIMR SUNL JUMP
FISH BIRD PERI FREZ PAC

The following codes have been censored, so a bit of imagination is needed to fill in the spaces.

F**K D**K W**K C**T T*T

■ Timothy Cooke, Norwich

WHOOPS!

Last month's *Carrier Command* cheat intimated that the password worked on both the Amiga and the ST. In fact, the correct password for the ST version is 'GROW OLD ALONG WITH ME', again with spaces. Sorry for any inconvenience caused. The offending staff writer has been shot. Again.

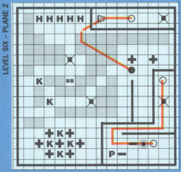
ELITE

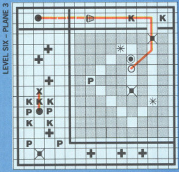
Fuelled by the cheat for ST *Elite*, many people have written in with the byte changes for the Amiga version. To join in the fun, simply type 'SARA' when first prompted for the start-up password, then enter the correct code. During the game, press '*' to bring up the hacking screen, and alter the following bytes for the required effects:

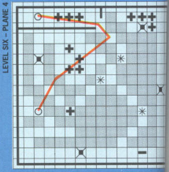
Byte	*Value*	*Result*
18	FF	)More money
19	FF	than you can
1A	FF	)shake a
1B	FF	)stick at
1F	46	Maximum fuel level
21	04	Maximum no. of missiles
22	01	Large Cargo Bay
2B	01	Fuel Scoop
2D	01	Escape Capsule
2F	01	Energy Bomb
30	01	Energy Unit
31	02	Naval Energy Unit
32	01	Docking Computer
34	01	Galactic Hyperdrive
3A	01	Retro Rocket
3C	01	ECM Jammer (activated by 'L')
3E	01	Cloaking Device (activated by 'Y')
89	01	Unhappy Refugees
8D	01	Secret Document
97	00-08	Harmless – Elite rating
9F	10	Mission 1
9F	20	Mission 2
9F	31	Mission 3
9F	40	Mission 4
9F	50	Mission 4

Cargo can also be obtained in this way, but since the above items render the user a) incredibly rich and b) incredibly well-equipped, it's really a bit pointless to include them.

LE SHRINKING SPHERE







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Weird Dreams
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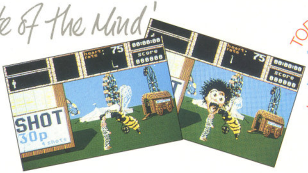
'State of the Mind'


heart rate 75
00:00:00
score 000000
SHOT
30p
4 shots

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Atari ST screen shots

FALCON

Mirrorsoft's 'Colonel' Tom Watson climbs into the F-16, pulls a high-G Immelman and spills his guts.

GENERAL TIPS

The most important aspect of playing Falcon is the Rank settings, in terms of what you're going to meet in the game. Refer to the manual for the different ranks and their respective reality/difficulty levels. The higher levels rely less on the technology aspect, and more on pilot skill. There are also more variables to watch out for, so be prepared.

The higher up the levels, the less reliable missiles become; flares become more effective and it's more difficult to get a lock-on to another plane. Winning dogfights is no longer a matter of just letting rip with an air-to-air.

When arming up on the later levels, the weight aspect becomes more important. Drag factors also come into play: speed bleed-off in certain turns will be affected, and so on.

DEALING WITH SAMS

The most difficult aspect of low-level flight is attack from SAM sites. There are two types, SAM 2 and SAM 7, ground-based and shoulder launched respectively. SAM 7s are normally fired ahead of the plane and can be spotted by a visual sighting, while the first signal of an airborne SAM 2 will probably be as a lock-on warning signal.

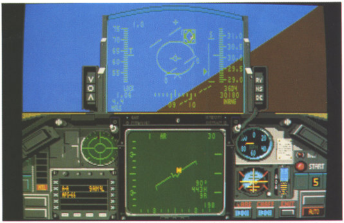
The best method in dealing with ground-to-airs is simply to avoid the SAM site. Plan a route beforehand, and keep a constant look-out when flying on autopilot.

However, if a SAM does get on the Falcon's tail, don't hang around. Flip the plane on its head and go into a dive. Turn again, then tail out releasing chaff. As the F-16 bottoms out of the dive – coming within a couple of hundrd feet of the ground – release more chaff and then pull up again.

Going inverse before a dive avoids a redout, since the manoeuvre is similar to pulling a positive-G climb, rather than the more dangerous negative-G dive. It's also quicker to pull 'up' and dive, than push the nose down as normal.

Releasing chaff at the bottom of the dive confuses the SAM's lock-on, hopefully sending it straight into the ground. If not, it's time to hope that its limited fuel runs out before it hits!

Note that carrying some of the heavier air-to-ground weapons, when ranked at Lieutenant Colonel or above, can cause a loss of stability when turning over; at which point the plane just drops out of the sky. It's therefore best to jettison part or all of the stores beforehand, on the grounds that it's better to lose a payload than a plane and pilot.



Learn to fly by the Head-Up Display. Russian MiGs are unforgiving of a momentary lapse of concentration, caused by pausing to look at the control panel.

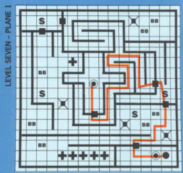
COPING WITH MIGS

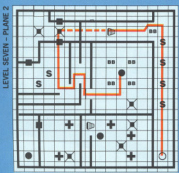
However, at least pilots are safe in the knowledge that they won't have to deal with SAMs, while there are MiGs in the air. But how to cope with the Russian fighters?

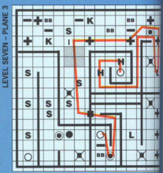
To begin with, it's worth noting that MiGs aren't always detected by radar. Keep a check on the HUD – they often appear here first as a lock-on signal – and constantly scan the sky for a visual sighting, using the different viewscreens.

As soon as there are MiGs in local airspace, slow to a combat speed of about 80% revs, around 350 Knots.

CREDIBLE SHRINKING S







On turning to approach the first bogie, there's a good chance that the Falcon will enter into a head-on manoeuvre called 'engage', where both fighters are headed straight for one another. Select cannon – missiles can't get a decent lock-on to the MiG's nose – and fire once the MiG is on target. With a speed advantage the Falcon stands a good chance of coming out unscathed.

Use the cannon in short bursts to conserve ammunition; it's best not to run out of ammo with a MiG approaching at high speed. If there's no result from the engage, go to air-to-air and attempt to get on his tail. With greater manoeuvrability, the F-16 is in a prime position to do so.

If you can see condensation coming off the MiG's wings, that's because it's pulling a very tight turn. That's when they are at their weakest, so strike while the iron's hot!

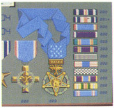
Bear in mind that whenever two or three Migs are in force, they will adopt authentic Russian fighter tactics: one plane sets itself up as a target, while the others are getting on your 'six', looking to put an air-to-air up your exhaust.

In this situation, the Immelman is a very useful evasive manoeuvre to learn and execute. However, later levels often require a burst of the afterburner to reach the climbing speeds necessary. Make sure there's enough fuel left, and get ready to fend off air-to-airs which home in on the powerful heat signal of the burners.

Surface to Air Missiles: love them or loathe them, they're here to stay. And there comes a time in every pilot's life when ECMs just aren't enough, so dive, dive, dive!

Success in dogfighting is all down to practice. Always know what weapons are still available, and get used to switching to the correct weapon system without looking at the display. It's also useful to be able to fly by the full screen, using only the HUD for information, to facilitate good visual sighting of the enemy.

ECM pods are useful, since the electronics are extremely effective against radar guided missiles. Apart from their great weight, though, the main problem is that when it's transmitting, it's like a big beacon saying 'Hi, I'm here – come and get me!' And in general, the trouble with the onboard computer systems is that the more there are running, the greater the chance of discovery. The basic principle on any long-distance mission is to fly fast, fly low and fly quiet. ●



Follow the basic rules of Falconry and you just might live long enough to savour the trappings of success...

FALCON CHEAT

If an engine is lost at any stage during the mission, rather than eject and risk capture, wait for the RPM to reach zero, then pull the nose up while pressing the 'HELP' key to stabilize the plane. If the airspeed still isn't at zero after this, bank the craft to left and right, so that any vestiges of forward movement are removed (if the HUD display is out, press '7' on the numeric keypad to bring up an alternative airspeed indicator).

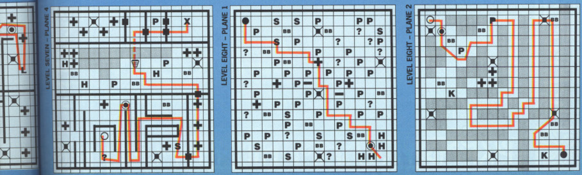
Keep holding the HELP key, to retain level flight, and then wait until the Falcon touches the ground. Press the 'ESCAPE' button and choose 'End Mission' from the pull down menu. A helicopter should now pick up the surviving pilot.

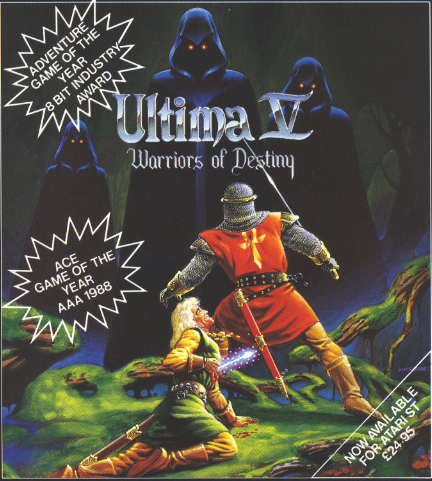
■ Martin Sidgreaves, Lossiemouth.

The engine's out, the ECM's down and you've no weapons left. Time to cheat.

SPHERE

The preceeding maps show possible routes to complete the first 30 levels of ISS (we've left the last one a mystery). The maps are fine for the ST and Amiga, but from level four onwards, ramps are replaced by destructible walls on the eight-bit versions. ■ Thanks to the FoursField team

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UPDATES: AN AT-A-GLANCE GUIDE

UPDATE SPECIAL

HEWSON £24.99dk
C64 version reviewed Issue 4 – ACE rating 943

On the 8-bits it was astoundingly good. On ST and Amiga it was still astoundingly good. Now, on the PC, it's set to cause late nights and manic addiction all over again.

John Phillips' brilliant invention has been remarkably well converted from the ST and Amiga versions. This means that it's the extended version with two missions instead of one. All the towers are exactly the same, although speed changes on the PC make timing problems slightly different. It plays slower than other versions, but this isn't much of a problem.

The rotating towers look superb and all the hazards and features bounce, spin, float and slide in style. There's the familiar nasty tricks awaiting in the form of disappearing blocks, sliding blocks, doors to nowhere and complicated series of lifts.

In between towers there is the interlude sequence where fish can be shot while gurgling around in a submarine. This is one of the most impressive feats on the PC because it has amazing parallax scrolling in several different planes. Forget the techie description – it looks fantastic, particularly from a distance.

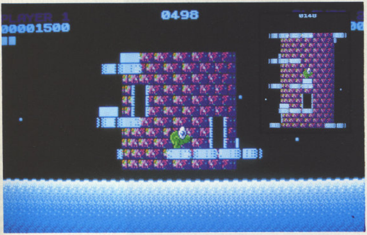
This one can't be recommended highly enough. It is an entertaining and absorbing game that is certain to prove utterly obsessive.

● Bob Wade

PC VERSION

The CGA version looks great – one of the best exhibitions of CGA graphics there is. EGA looks terrific also. The sound effects are understandably weak but at least they match the Spectrum's.

■ **ACE RATING 952**



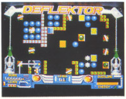
AMIGA

ADVANCED SKI SIMULATOR

CODEMASTERS £19.99dk
Spectrum version reviewed Issue 3 – ACE rating 727

Codemaster's budget piste-em-up makes it onto the big machines with a slightly-altered title and a major price increase. You can compete against either a friend or the computer as you race down several slopes, each against a time limit. Good fun, but pricey.

■ **ACE RATING 540**



DEFLEKTOR

GREMLIN/VORTEX £19.99dk
Spectrum version reviewed Issue 4 – ACE rating 906

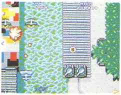
This great little puzzle game based on the properties of light has taken a long time to come onto the Amiga. But the wait has certainly been worth it. 60 screens of puzzling and frantic joystick manipulation accompanied by some great music that plays throughout means you'll be playing this for a long time to come. Fascinating stuff.

■ **ACE RATING 935**

FLYING SHARK

FIREBIRD £19.99dk
Atari ST version reviewed Issue 16 – ACE rating 895

A straight port-over of the ST version, so it's just as impressive.



Fabulous graphics and very demanding wave patterns. The sound effects and music were so good that they haven't had be changed much either.

■ ACE RATING 895

LIVE AND LET DIE

DOMARK £19.95dk
C64 version reviewed Issue 16 – ACE rating 723

As you might expect, things move a lot quicker on the Amiga than they do on the C64, and are a lot nicer to watch and listen to as well. There are still only four courses, which is a pity, but it's very enjoyable and provides a tough challenge. If you fancy playing *Buggy Boy* on water, with a couple of *Roadblasters* and *Out Run* bits thrown in, check it out.

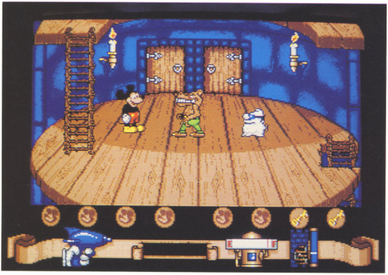
■ ACE RATING 760

MICKEY MOUSE

GREMLIN £19.99dk
Spectrum version reviewed Issue 11 – ACE rating 743

Not much to tell this and the ST version apart. Excellent animated graphics and good sound. The gameplay is hectic and varied, but always on the simplistic side – particularly in the sub-games.

■ ACE RATING 770



TITAN

TITUS £24.99
Amstrad version reviewed Issue 18 – ACE rating 677

The scrolling is smooth and not as eye-wrenchingly painful as the Amstrad. The gameplay and levels are the same. Graphics have been improved but not by that much.

■ ACE RATING 691

TRACK SUIT MANAGER

AGAIN AGAIN £19.95dk
Spectrum version reviewed Issue 15 – ACE rating 588

Makes no attempt to introduce any graphics or sound. The strategy elements are the same complicated mix as on the Spectrum. Ideal for footie fans but has little appeal otherwise.

■ ACE RATING 606

AMSTRAD

AFTERBURNER

ACTIVISION £9.99cs, £14.99dk
Atari ST version reviewed Issue 16 – ACE rating 687

Very colourful and fast-moving version – probably the best of the 8-bit ones. It's got the speed of the Spectrum version and far superior use of colour. Unfortunately the gameplay is still pretty boring.

■ ACE RATING 672

TECHNOCOP

GREMLIN £9.99cs, £14.99dk
Spectrum version reviewed Issue 16 – ACE rating 804

The driving graphics are colourful but don't convey much impression of speed. The sections in the buildings are identical to the Spectrum and virtually the same graphically. Still good value and entertainment on the Amstrad, with two games in one.

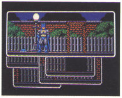
■ ACE RATING 804

ATARI ST

BATMAN

OCEAN £19.95dk
Spectrum version reviewed Issue 16 – ACE rating 903

Keep the Speccy gameplay and objectives and improve the graphics and you're left with a great arcade adventure with plenty of puzzling and object manipulation to keep you busy. The two different games come on two separate disks included in the package so once you've completed one it's a simple case of booting up the other disk and starting in at that.



■ ACE RATING 910

THE GAMES – WINTER EDITION

EPYX £19.99dk
C64 version reviewed Issue 13 – ACE rating 653

It's the same seven events, expertly put together and programmed. There's quite a lot of skill involved in getting proficient at each. The backdrops are pretty and the animation good for each event. Excellent presentation but it's old hat these days.

■ ACE RATING 672

C64

CRAZY CARS

TITUS £9.99cs, £14.99dk
Amiga version reviewed Issue 6 – ACE rating 690

The graphics don't convey much impression of speed and the sound effects are poor. The driving also leaves much to be desired – it's far too easy to lose it on a corner and it's very tough to get the car back on the road.

■ ACE RATING 442

RAMBO III

OCEAN £9.95cs, £14.95dk
Atari ST version reviewed Issue 18 – ACE rating 649

Not as difficult to survive as in the ST version – a welcome change. The gameplay is otherwise very similar. Same mix of exploring and shooting. OK graphics and a decent tune.

■ ACE RATING 662

R-TYPE

ACTIVISION £9.99cs £14.99dk
Spectrum version reviewed Issue 15 – ACE rating 871

The classic Irem coin-op turned out to be a superb Spectrum shoot-em-up, with all the gameplay intact and some surprisingly good graphics. The C64 version is pretty good too, but not quite up to the Speccy standard. Still well worth a look at, though, if you're a blasting fan.

■ ACE RATING 821

WEC LE MANS

OCEAN £9.95cs £14.95dk
Amstrad version reviewed Issue 18 – ACE rating 841

Oh dear! Although the Amstrad and Spectrum versions of this coin-op conversion were great, the C64 version is not. The impression of speed is there, but the car's handling feels all wrong. It's still better than *Out Run* was,

but it's not up to the standard of the others.
■ ACE RATING 586

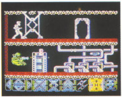
SPECTRUM

A QUESTION OF SPORT

ELITE £14.95cs £14.95dk
ST version reviewed Issue 18 – ACE rating 672
Based on the TV show, this sporting trivia game's a lot of fun. All the rounds are there and there are five separate question blocks to choose from. Great fun if you enjoy this sort of thing.
■ ACE RATING 672

OBLITERATOR

MELBOURNE HOUSE £9.99cs £14.99dk – ST version reviewed Issue 9 - ACE rating 570
Obliterator was not one of the world's greatest arcade adventures when it first appeared on 16-bit machines, and to give Melbourne House credit, they have managed to convert it wonderfully to the Spectrum. Unfortunately it's still not a wonderful game and frustrates more than it entertains.
■ ACE RATING 530



RAMBO III

OCEAN £8.95cs
Atari ST version reviewed Issue 18 – ACE rating 649
Not much difference in the gameplay, although the enemy guards behaviour has changed a little. Exactly the same problems to solve and area to explore. Looks reasonably good too, but lacking in the sound effects department.
■ ACE RATING 649

XENON

MELBOURNE HOUSE £9.99cs £14.99dk – Amiga version reviewed Issue 7 – rating 869
The game that made the Bitmap Bros famous makes it onto the 8-bit machines. The graphics are as good as you could expect from a Spectrum, and though all the extra weapons aren't there, the gameplay is. A great conversion of a good shoot-em-up.
■ ACE RATING 819

DUNGEON MASTER

UPDATE SPECIAL

MIRRORSOFT/FTL £19.99dk
Atari ST version reviewed Issue 8 – ACE rating 949

It's not often Amiga owners turn green with envy at a game ST owners already have. But something happened last year that must have left every Amiga owner gritting his teeth and smouldering. *Dungeon Master* from FTL/Mirrorsoft arrived. And what a game it turned out to be.

You take the part of Theron, an apprentice wizard out to recover his master's Firestaff from the dungeons of Lord Chaos. Twenty-four adventurers have tried before you, but the fiendish Lord Chaos has defeated them all and hung their personae in what he grimly calls the Hall Of Champions. It's here you start the quest.

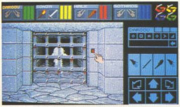
You can choose up to four champions as companions, and after resurrecting them you enter the game proper. By using the mouse and clicking on movement arrows at the side of the main game screen, you proceed cautiously through 14 increasingly difficult levels of Lord Chaos's dungeons. Along the way, you'll encounter all manner of vicious and ferocious monsters that will try to kill you. With some observancy, though, you'll find plenty of weapons and armour to pick up and equip the party with.

After a while, and with the experience gained in a few fights, you'll notice your characters' statistics improving: fighters becoming stronger and magic users more powerful.

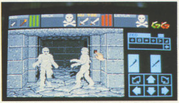
What makes *Dungeon Master* really special (apart from marvellous 3D graphics and eerie sound effects) are the puzzles. Time and again, you'll get completely stuck and will have to sit, ponder and think hard before the answer to a riddle or the solution to a problem becomes clear.

Dungeon Master is one of the all-time classics. Like *Elite*, you'll just keep playing it – and believing in the whole dark world that resides in your machine.

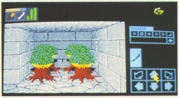
● Andy Smith



Hit the button and then get ready to take on some mummies...



Another game with different characters. Those mummies are still a problem...

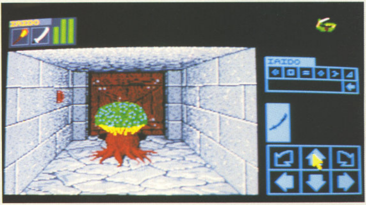


Screamers (above and below) make a tasty meal for adventurers when you chop 'em up.

AMIGA VERSION

At present *DM*'s only playable on machines with a 1Meg memory but a 'normal' version should be appearing soon. As it is, the Amiga graphics and sound are identical to the ST version and the gameplay's all there. Therefore it's deserving of the same high rating.

■ ACE RATING 949



WATCH OUT FOR...

ENCORE
Elite's cheapie label, Encore, have decided to re-release their re-releases on disk for the C64. The back catalogue initially includes *Bombjack, Airwolf, Combat Lynx, Saboteur, Battleships* and *Frank Bruno's Boxing*, all at the basement price of £4.99. These should all be available now, and any further Encore releases will also be available on disk – the next one to watch out for is *Turbo Esprit*, which will also appear on cassette for the Spectrum, Amstrad and C64 at £1.99.

CULT
Fans of footballing games should be interested to hear of D&H Games' plans to release three £2.99 budget games on their newly-formed Cult label. *Soccer Star* is a full, graphical soccer strategy game, set over the four English divisions; *Cup Football* features football management amongst the top European clubs; and *Soccer Q* contains 2,000 soccer-oriented questions in a quiz-cum-strategy game, where the right answers see teams rise through the divisions.

All three titles will be available for the Spectrum initially, with C64 and Amstrad versions to follow.

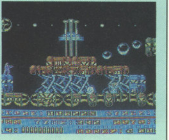
MASTERTRONIC
One original Mastertronic release to watch out for is *Advanced Soccer Simulator* (Spec: £2.99), a football managerial game which features some good match highlight sequences.

Those wishing to catch up on some back-catalogue action can get hold of *Mindshadow*, (Spec & Ams 'flippy': £1.99), *Rescue On Fractalus* (C64, Spec, Ams: £1.99), *Action Force* (64, Spec, Ams: £2.99), and *Little Computer People* (C64: £1.99) on the Ricochet label.

However, latest news from the Mastertronic camp is that Product Manager Andrew Wright has decided to cease using the Ricochet label for re-release games, preferring to put all product under the Mastertronic banner. The decision has been made because it was felt that original product from Mastertronic was being overwhelmed by the large amounts of Ricochet re-releases. It was also felt that the label simply wasn't needed any more, since there are so many budget labels on the market already.

And in addition to this, the £2.99 MAD label is also to be shelved, making way for Mastertronic +. This will cater for the higher priced 8- and 16-bit products, at £2.99 and £9.99 respectively. It prompts one to wonder how much 16-bit product will be on the ordinary Mastertronic label... Watch this space.

RACK-IT
Up-and-coming titles on Hewson's budget label include *Maze Mania* (Spec, C64, Ams, and possibly on 16-bits) which is, surprisingly enough, a maze game. *Cyberdyne Warrior* (C64 only) is a blast-em arcade-adventure collect-em-up set over 75 screens. Shoot the baddies, collect the prisoners and take them to the safety of orbiting satellites – that sort of thing. Both titles are set to appear at £2.99 for the three eight-bits.

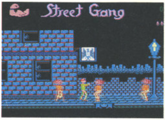


BUDGET BARGAINS

STREET GANG

PLAYERS

● Amstrad, Spectrum: £1.99



Mickey Spatsburg, as well as having a stupid name, also has a death wish. After the infamous 'Curl' – leader of the biggest gang in New York – threatens to mug everyone who crosses his East Side district, guess where Mickey decides to go?

Streets and roads of the Big Apple are displayed side-on, and Mickey makes his way from left to right across the flip-screen scenery. All manner of assailants appear and attempt to stop Mickey dead in his tracks, with everyone from acid house fruitcakes to gun-wielding grannies laying into our hero. Mickey hits back with bare fists and jumps over gunshots, but can also collect weapons en route.

A bulging bicep signals Mick's current strength, and as he gets hit, so the arm withers. Death sees Mickey explode (!) and reappear at the start of the level.

Hardly in the same league as *Renegade*, this one. Combat is too limited to be of any real interest and the zombie-like characters simply wander on, attack, and wander off again. An over-simplistic beat-em-up, and really-not recommended.

■ ACE RATING 418

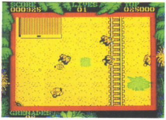
SAS COMBAT SIMULATOR

CODEMASTERS

● Spectrum, Amstrad: £2.99

Taking a Commando-style viewpoint, *SAS Combat Simulator* takes the player through four huge levels of enemy-infested landscape, on a clandestine mission to assassinate the rebel leader.

The SAS officer begins his mission on foot armed only with a gun and a limited supply of grenades. Collection of 'Codemasters' logos is rewarded with a jeep or tank in which to cover ground more quickly; a bazooka with which to increase the death toll; rapid fire, ditto; and a smart bomb, double ditto.



The play area scrolls alternately horizontally and vertically, with an enemy stronghold at the end of each level. On reaching the enemy headquarters, the display switches to a *Green Beret* style side view, as the SAS officer indulges in hand-to-hand combat against hostile commandos.

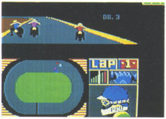
Not the most original of games, but a pleasant mix of two game styles. Reasonably portrayed on the Spectrum – even more so on the Amstrad – and proving quite addictive, if lacking in repeat appeal.

■ ACE RATING 712

INTERNATIONAL SPEEDWAY

SILVERBIRD

● Spec, Amstrad, C64 : £1.99



Probe Software returns to the budget scene yet again, with this unusual speedway simulation. Starting off in the local league, the aim is to progress through the national and continental leagues and, ultimately, reach the World Championship in order to make off with the trophy.

Each race is viewed from behind the player's biker, and the oval course moves in perspective according to his position. Acceleration is achieved by pressing the fire button and one turbo-boost is available per race, to get out of trouble or simply try and catch up.

International Speedway makes a good attempt at something different, and succeeds to a large extent. But the main problem is that it's only a one player game; competition against computer opponents tends to become jaded after a few races. The inclusion of a few more options – maybe even an engine tuning/bike design section – would have bolstered the lasting interest.

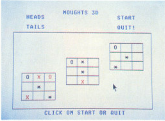
■ ACE RATING 589

DISK 15

CASCADE ● ST: £19.95

In a spirit of generosity, Cascade have decided to follow in the tracks of their popular eight-bit release, *Cassette 50*, by producing *Disk 15* for the ST (effectively, 15 £1.33 games).

But although boasting '15 amazing games on one disk' the package actually contains 15 badly-programmed and generally awful compiled BASIC routines. The delights on offer include Hangman, Mastermind, Othello, Draughts, Solitaire and 3D Noughts and Crosses as the more competent, if unexciting, games. However, the real dross comes in the shape of Astro Dodge (dodge the asteroids by moving left and right); Heli Bomber (seen as a BASIC listing for the ZX81 in Issue One of C&VG, 1981); Sub Hunter (drop depth charges on the submarines); Rally Driver (a tepid version of the old black and white arcade game, Grand Prix) – and so it continues, ad nauseam.



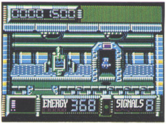
A more despondent and dismal bunch of games you could not wish to meet. To be avoided at all costs, except for reasons of nostalgia or to have a good laugh.

■ ACE RATING 163

STEEL

RACK-IT ● C64: £1.99

The stage for Rack-It's latest game is a large computer complex filled with high-tech equipment and patrolled by hordes of laser-spitting hover droids. The player's droid (a dead ringer for V.I.N.CENT from The Black Hole) is directed around the complex, and is charged with the collection of eight cartridges, only three of which can be carried at one time.



Once collected, the cartridges must be transferred to eight cartridge slots located in one room. However, the slots must all be activated beforehand by accessing active terminals throughout the building. A sub-game is entered, where a moving wall of blocks is eventually destroyed in order to shoot the central data-bus (similar to the destruction of the guardian in *Phoenix*).

The droid is continually beset by the electronic opposition who blast and bounce into him, decreasing his energy as they do so. This can be replenished at terminals in exchange for points already earned.

Continuing the Rack-It tradition, *Steel* sports some gorgeous graphics – backgrounds and sprites. However, a high standard of gameplay is a tough act to follow, and unfortunately *Steel* misses the mark. It's enjoyable at the outset, and caters for the blasting and mapping fraternities, but the repetitive nature of the mission may not be to everybody's taste.

■ ACE RATING 635

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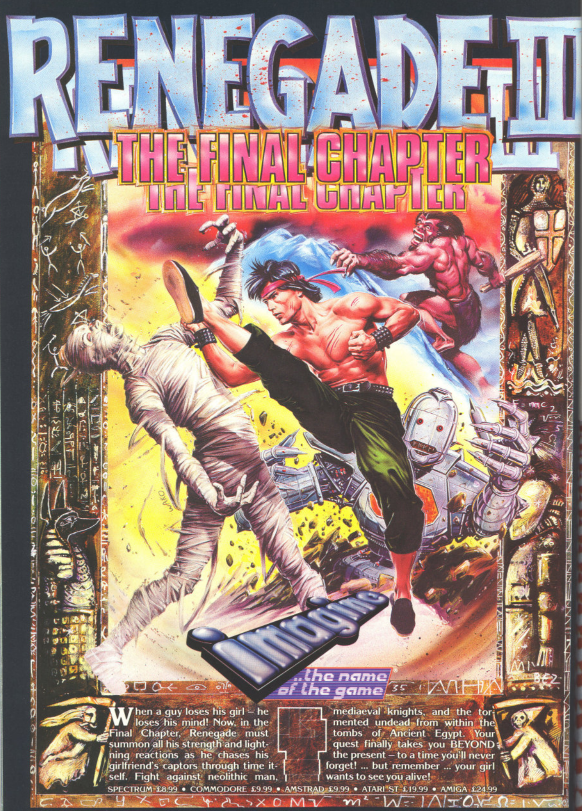
RENEGADE III
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TEA 4D

Funny how these things seem to come together. *Sculpt-Animate 4D* for the Amiga has just been released in this country by Byte by Byte, coinciding with the first major one-man exhibition of computer graphic art in Britain, 'The Conquest of Form: Sculptural Images by William Latham' at the Arnolfini Gallery, Bristol. The importance of such coincidence is that this new version of *Sculpt-Animate* has the power to produce images similar to Latham's – images of which any artist might be proud. Our resident computer artist, Brian Larkman, has a look at Latham's work, a try at *Sculpt-Animate 4D*, and highlights the differences.

TEA HELIX – Mundane scenes with subtle Alice-in-Wonderland twists are very effectively rendered with *Sculpt-Animate 4D*, which is reviewed by Brian Larkman in the following pages. *SA4D* features a new and exciting tool, 'helix', that operates by drawing an open or closed curve as a profile, with a simple edge to define the radial and axial offset for each sweep rotation. Visualise a washer slid along a spring. As it passes up the spring it is rotating round the central axis of the spring. With each complete rotation it moves along the axis by a certain amount, the axial offset. If the spring tapers along its length then each rotation of the washer moves it away from the axis by the radial offset. Simple, really!

When it first appeared shortly before the 1987 PCW Show, *Sculpt 3D* marked the beginning of a new era for computer graphics enthusiasts. It was the first program to offer simple and easy to use ray tracing on an unmodified 'home' computer, the Amiga: it provided an excellent modelling system that allowed almost any object to be 'sculpted' on screen, similar in many ways to the systems used by professional computer graphic animation studios. Later it was upgraded to a full animation system, *Sculpt-Animate*, and many new modelling features were added.

Now the series has culminated in *Sculpt-Animate 4D*, an even more polished version. This process of continuing software support and development from the major software publishers is characteristic of mature systems such as the Apple Mac or IBM PC. Byte by Byte are one of the first companies to display the same professional attitude toward the Amiga.

TRI-AL VIEW

Right from the original version, the superb modelling interface of *Sculpt 3D* – the Tri-view – has remained unchanged. In its perfect balance of clear, thoughtfully-positioned and informative icon 'gadgets' and carefully-coloured wire-frame model, the Tri-view is unequalled. Even the recently-arrived *Caligari* system, good as it is, doesn't put as much power in the hands of a novice user straight away.

The three windows that make up the Tri-view are almost standard Amiga windows with the addition of 13 frequently-used 'hand tools' conveniently positioned for immediate access. These are described in more detail in the illustration below. The more specific 'power tools' are reached from menus or the keyboard.

A LA CARTE

The real power of *Sculpt-Animate* has been growing, behind the scenes, on the menus. The original tools in *Sculpt 3D* relate solely to the construction, transformation and rendering of the three-dimensional model. The starting point can be one of nine geometric primitives or a more complex object generated from a curve defined by the user. This curve can be spun into a spindle or pot shape or extruded into the third dimension.

Once the basic shape has been defined groups of points can be selected and acted on independently – sections or whole objects can be expanded or contracted, points can be dragged in one or more windows to distort a shape or drag out a spout or indent the surface, gaps or holes can be filled, surface colour, texture and smoothing can be set. Similarly whole objects can be rotated, duplicated, reflected, distorted in any direction, coloured and saved independently so that libraries of objects can be built up.

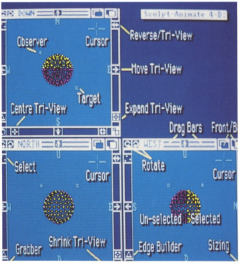
Next the environment can be set up for rendering. The position of the observer or 'photographer' is determined by the cursor in two windows and set from the menu. Likewise the direction of view or 'target' of the observer and one or more light sources are positioned, the colour of the sky and ground are set, and the depth of shadows is chosen. (The results of these settings can be varied by changing other parameters such as tilt, exposure and focal length of lenses – similar to those of a 35mm camera.)

Finally the image size, resolution and rendering method are set and the render is started. The rendering methods available increase in quality roughly in proportion with the rendering time. Hence a wire-frame view with no hidden line removal is almost instant, but a full-blown ray-trace can look photo-realistic but take many hours to complete.

ANIMATE

The arrival of *Animate 3D* added several useful new modelling tools, in particular a form of Bezier curve or 'spline' to generate smooth curves. More significantly *Animate* provided a means to describe motion and kinetic transformation, or 'tweening', for every object and its parts, together and separately. In addition to the shape and motion of objects, *Animate* can cope with transformations of colour, smoothing, surface texture and even lighting. Similarly the position of the observer and target can be changed to give panning and zooming effects.

For example, it would be possible to ➤



THE TRI-VIEW – The three windows of the Tri-view represent three sides of a cube, viewing North-South, East-West and Up-Down respectively. These directions are used rather than the more conventional X, Y and Z for ease of visualisation, a theme followed up throughout the *Sculpt* system with 'real-world' analogies being used for almost all functions. Other gadgets allow the view to be 'panned' relative to the world displayed within, zoomed in and out, centred on the cursor and rotated in either direction. Objects can be built up using point and edge building gadgets and those visible in the windows can also be selected ready for some manipulation or transformation operation.

Throughout human history artists have striven to find the ideal medium – plastic yet permanent, sensitive and varied yet subtle – allowing their emotions and inspirations to take form for all to see. Wood, clay, stone, marble, metal and plastic have all been tried with some degree of success but each material has its limitations. The latest medium to be tried is not strictly a material at all, and that is the source of its appeal and versatility.

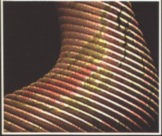
3D modelling using a computer provides a means to generate 'virtual' objects easily that can take on any form, colour or surface texture the artist desires without the expense and hard work of actually making them for real. Like word-processing for the writer, computer modelling allows the artist freedom to experiment almost at will and to revise his work subtly or dramatically many times with little pain. Only then, when the final selections are made might the finished work need to be made 'real' with a hard copy.

Very little of William Latham's recent sculpture has taken on any real dimension. As well as existing in his mind – as does the work of most artists – it takes form within an IBM computer, behind a monitor screen which, as Latham writes in the catalogue to his recent exhibition, "...acts as a window looking into a three dimensional volume of synthetic, illusory space ... it is within this space that I make my sculptures." The final product, the saleable 'piece', is usually a Cibachrome print of the image. Some of these are reproduced here.

Unlike most computer artists, Latham uses programming, admittedly at quite a high level, to produce his art. The use of computers grew from his work as a postgraduate student at the Royal College of Art with evolutionary and biomorphic shapes developed from drawings and prints on paper. After the Royal College he was awarded a Research Fellowship by IBM UK to continue his work at their Scientific Centre in Winchester. Access to powerful hardware and IBM UK's own solid modeller software, WINSOM, resulted in his unique evolutionary forms. Using the high level interactive graphical language ESME, also developed in-house at Winchester, Latham produced images that surprised even the designers of the software.

Many of the forms are evolved from simple geometric 'primitives' – sphere, cone, cube, cylinder, torus – transformed according to a set of rules applied repeatedly in different sequences. These operations generate a 'wire-frame' model which is then translated to a solid model by WINSOM, applying colour and texture according to other parameters such as lighting position and texture map type. Some of the results can be seen here.

If you want to see more of Latham's work it will be touring to Milton Keynes (25 Feb – 1 Apr), Halifax (6 Apr – 18 May), Barnsley (23 Jun – 30 Jul), Newcastle (2 Oct – 28 Oct), Preston (4 Nov – 9 Dec) and Folkestone (13 Jan – 19 Feb, 1990).



On first sight, Latham's work looks real. The illusion created is so good you are left wondering what the originals are really like – their scale, the feel of their surfaces. Then you begin to question how they could have been made – and realise that many of them are impossible. Delicate spiral traceries apparently sculpted from marble, burnished metal gradually transforming into stone, such inconsistencies stretch to breaking point the normal powers of description. In fact much of Latham's work is indescribable, based on a world where our familiar laws of nature are ignored or distorted.

make a thin, pink face gradually turn fat and blue while shaking from side to side, with the viewer panning across and zooming in and the sun rising from horizon to zenith. All these changing parameters could be set up in one global scene and perhaps a couple of key scenes, then the program would generate all of the in-between scenes and render a frame for each one, eventually linking them all together into a smooth animation.

Like the original Tri-view, this animation system was beautifully implemented from the start, so that little has needed to be changed for the *Sculpt-Animate 4D* upgrade. Rather it is the modelling and rendering tools that are again further developed...

HELIX THE CAD

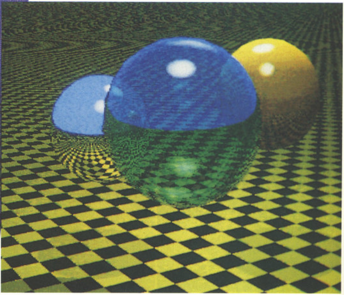
Because the Tri-view and animation systems are so little changed, the first impression of *SA4D* is a little disappointing. Apart from a change of colour, all the improvements are hidden amongst the menus, or even deeper under the skin. The file requesters have at last been improved (though we still do not have the choice of adding icons to the image and anim files, and what about file comments?) Grids and grid-lock, hide and reveal of selected vertices, angle measurement and user-defined 'hot key' macros are some of the other useful additions. A new 'metal' texture, faster 'scanline' rendering modes and an overall speed improvement are also very welcome.

The most exciting improvement however is Make Helix. At a time when William Latham is providing inspiration, this device is by far the most fun, as you can see from the illustrations. Even when the novelty has worn off, it will prove to be a powerful tool.

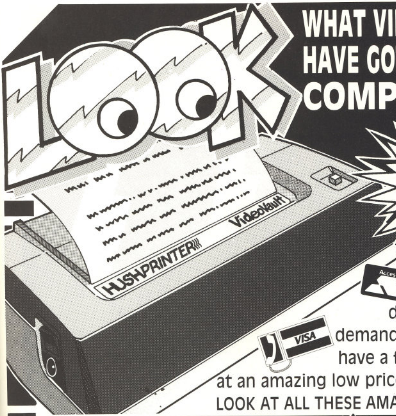
One common reaction to much of the best Twentieth Century art is the sometimes resentful feeling that: "...if only I had thought of it I could easily have done that...". Although considerable skill and expertise are still required, the predominant feature of many modern works is this original 'idea', sometimes just the application of some new material or technique. The work of William Latham fits well into this category. It is too late now for any of us to come up with Latham's idea. Nevertheless the influence of other people's inspirations on our own work is a reasonable one. Almost all art is derivative in some sense.

Sculpt-Animate 4D gives us all a chance to experiment with similar techniques and themes to those of Latham – though at a much lower level of complexity and finesse – and still have just as much fun! ●

THREE SPHERE TEST – The biggest cliché in computer graphics, spheres against a chequered background, still provides the best test of a rendering system. The new version of *Sculpt* seems from this test to be greatly improved. The rendering time of this image was greatly reduced over the old version (though still several hours!) and the accuracy of the ray-tracing is also very good. The usual fringing effects associated with HAM images are now all but eliminated. Transparency in particular is greatly improved, especially at the edges. Some HAM pictures (though not this one) show an odd horizontal banding which may be some sort of bug. This only occurs in Photo (full ray-trace) mode.



Each of these images has been modelled using the helix tool of *SA4D*. Although they are much less complex than William Latham's images, they have a functional similarity. They represent only a few days' practice but the versatility of the program suggests that more complex and interesting structures will develop. If so, you will see them first in ACE.



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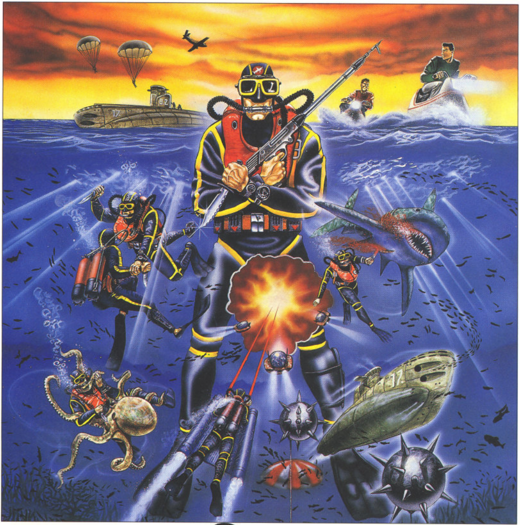

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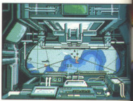

The tranquil surface of the Pacific Ocean belies the battle of wits taking place in the world's last unexplored territory. A perfect hiding-place for a determined enemy, or is it? Your jet-bike and technologically advanced bathyscaphe should help, but there are still the enemy bases to destroy, lines of communication to be knocked out, and the natural predators of the deep just waiting for a tasty snack at the first sniff of blood! So check your oxygen supply, and dive, dive, dive...

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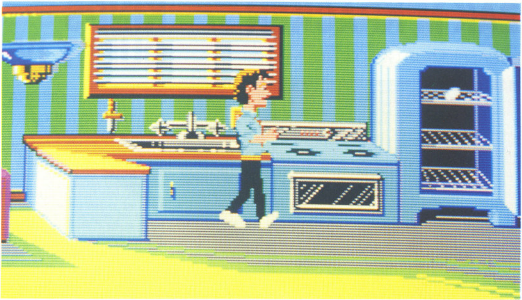


GAMES THAT PUT YOU IN THE FRONT ROW...

STEVE COOKE takes us into an animated adventureworld with a detailed look at the latest products from Sierra-On-Line plus Lucasfilm's *Zak McKracken*...

Since the monochrome days of Legend's *Valhalla*, software companies have dreamt of producing a 'computer movie' worthy of the name. This burning desire has led to the release of several products quite obviously NOT worthy of the name – we could mention *Zim Sala Bim* and others...but we won't. Instead we'll check out the state-of-the-animated-adventure-art as it reveals itself on the shelves right now.

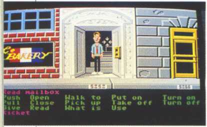
This month, that means Sierra-On-Line's range of games, including *Kings Quest IV* and *Leisure Suit Larry 2*, plus a release from Lucasfilm/US Gold, *Zak McKracken*. All these products offer animated sequences and reasonably extensive command sets. Which, if any, could tear you away from the silver screen?

ZAK McKRACKEN

LUCASFILM/US GOLD's cinema ticket

MANIAC *Mansion* set new standards for animated adventures when it first appeared over a year ago. The principle assets of that game were the ability to 'switch' between characters, providing opportunities for numerous tactical puzzles, and the excellent graphics. Now Lucasfilm have come up with a new game featuring the same system, but – visually at any rate – much improved.

A few years ago, no-one would have believed that a game like *Zak McKracken* was possible, at least not on the Commodore 64. Early animated efforts like *Zim Sala Bim* were hopelessly limited in gameplay and graphic presentation, but *Zak McKracken* can fairly be described as very impressive.



Keyboard/mouse selection from a limited command set gets you going in *Zak McKracken*. You move the character by indicating a point for him/her to walk to using the cross-hair cursor.

Your initial character, a lowly hack named Zak, moves through his flat in a world where people are being driven to idiocy by a noise over the telephone system. Your aim is to save the world from brainlessness in the company of fellow characters, Annie, Melissa, and Leslie.

The game is full of genuine wit and good humour which the American software houses currently seem to be doing better than anyone else. Typical targets for this off-beat satire are tabloid journalism and co-eds. To team up with Melissa and Leslie, for example, could take quite a lot of travelling – they've converted their van into a spaceship after being instructed to do so in a dream (sounds more like a nightmare) and are now on Mars 'awaiting contact with intelligent beings'.

Meanwhile, down on Earth, you struggle with your mailbox, the local pawn shop, your phone bill, a somnolent bus-driver, and a host of other puzzles before being able to join up with the rest of your party. And of course, everyone's getting more and more stupid by the moment.

The command list in *Zak* is pretty slim. It uses the same approach as the ICOM games (*Déja Vu* etc) which is to use a single command USE (ICOM use OPERATE) to unlock all sorts of puzzles. Thus you don't need to DRAW MAP, you can simply USE CRAYON ON PAPER and get the same result. In practise, this approach isn't nearly as limiting as you might think. Furthermore, the game trots along at quite a pace and allows you – unlike the Sierra games – to 'opt out' of any animated sequences introduced for the purpose of storytelling if you've seen them before.

Zak's a very colourful, well-thought-out game that represents some of the best animated adventuring around today. It's certainly on a par with the best that Sierra have to offer and should receive serious consideration, even if it is – along with the Sierra products – grossly overpriced.

AHA! THOSE NEUROMANCER LINK CODES

No excuse not to get into cyberspace now, you punks. Get a load of these link codes to ease your spatial-orientation in the early game phases, yeah?

Organisation	Link	Password(s)
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Consumer Review	Consumerrev	
Asano Computing	Asanocomp	Vendors
World Chess	Worldchess	Member
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ACE ADVENTURE VERDICT

Superlative presentation on-screen, with the game-detail of an ICOM adventure combined with the animation of an arcade game. All versions equally impressive visually, with the usual exception of IBM CGA!

LANDSCAPE	**82**	**SYSTEM**	**93**
CHALLENGE	**75**	**ENCOUNTERS**	**70**

KINGS QUEST IV

Oooey gooey SIERRA animated romance...

ONE thing's for sure – these Sierra games are certainly diffferent. After the hurly-burly of *Police Quest*, the humour of *Leisure Suit Larry*, you now have the (rather sickly) romance of Princess Rosella.

Rosella's father has got a nasty bout of the dreaded lurgy and seems destined for a resting place six feet underground when our heroine receives an offer of help from the good fairy Genesta. Calling by magical means from the far-off land of Tamir, Genesta suggests that Rosella might be able to cure her father with a special fruit found in Tamir. In return for this advice, she asks Rosella to help her save her own life, currently threatened by the wicked witch Lolotte.

So there you have it – unhappy Princess,

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THE original *Lesiure Suit Larry* product was a great success with gamesters because of its adult (hmmm...) humour and sparkling story line. The second game in the series is destined to be even more successful.

Larry is dumped by the girl of his dreams and wakes up to reality in the form of an endless quest for amorous fulfillment. Despite the promise of the title, there isn't really anything naughty in the game, but the humour is lively and mildly risqué. Larry can (and probably will) make passes at every woman he meets, but is destined to be truly successful with only one of them. Your pressing objective is to find her.

The puzzles in this game are superior to those in *LSL1*, and Larry finds himself in a variety of situations involving the KGB, Italian bimbettes, and a couple of TV shows. The puzzles are often highly original and almost always amusing – Larry, for example, strikes it rich during the game and receives a $1 million bill, but of course no-one will change it for him. Well, almost no-one...

The sub-plot in the game concerns the evil Dr Nonookee whom Larry must locate and defeat. The program attempts to convince the

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noble suffering King, good fairy, and wicked witch. And that's not all. There are also ogres, minstrels, poor fishermen, and even – this is almost too much – the Seven Dwarves, complete with bad manners and dirty laundry. Guess who has to clean up?

Provided you can stomach the fairytale cliches, *Kings Quest IV* turns out to be a tricky game with some very original touches and – in parts – excellent animation. With the one proviso common to all Sierra games (that you need a powerful graphics system and rapid disk access), the plot moves along at a sparkling pace, presenting puzzle after puzzle with ingenuity and humour.

Your first real objective in the game is to rescue a talisman belonging to Genesta, stolen by Lolotte, and needed to ensure Genesta's survival. As the game progresses, you have to undertake numerous other tasks to accomplish this one – befriending unicorns, helping the poor, and other generally worthwhile causes.

Unlike the other games in the series, *KQ4* has certain structural weaknesses that can spoil the fun – though only to a minor extent. Occasionally the program will give away a partial solution by misinterpreting an input and hinting at some as yet undiscovered feature of the game. Worse, there are certain action sequences where it is possible to die without apparent justification – particularly if you are trying to navigate on a screen with poor graphics resolution (IBM CGA, for example).

Despite these minor quibbles, *KQ4* proves to be a challenging game where you will need to be totally painstaking in your examination of and interaction with every location feature in order to make headway. Of all the games, it comes closest in spirit to a traditional fantasy adventure – the only drawback being that some might find just a bit TOO traditional.

ACE ADVENTURE VERDICT

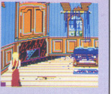
Almost too yucky for some players, we suspect, but a challenging game nevertheless. Some puzzles are made harder for those with low-definition graphics screens and some sequences are very slow on a basic PC system. Mucho processor power recommended.

LANDSCAPE	**75**	**SYSTEM**	**89**
CHALLENGE	**75**	**ENCOUNTERS**	**70**

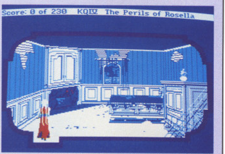
DISPLAY OF INJUSTICE!

It's just not fair for some players. Sierra games all rely to a certain degree on being able to distinguish elements of the display so that you can examine or interact with them. Here's a typical example from *Kings Quest IV*, where a trapdoor on the ceiling is clearly visible in the PC VGA system, but is quite invisible on the CGA version.

Of course, Sierra don't want to make things too easy for you, but there's no doubt that having a high resolution graphics monitor makes playing these games a far greater pleasure. CGA owners have to be very persevering in their approach to problems where other owners get a head-start by being able to SEE the beginnings of a solution.



(Right) *KQ4* on the PC EGA system. You should be able to make out the outline of a trap-door in the ceiling.



Score: 0 of 230   KQIV The Perils of Rosella

(Below) The same location in CGA. Where's that trapdoor gone, Guv?

LEISURE SUIT LARRY

GOES LOOKING FOR LOVE IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES...

SIERRA'S fun-lover flashes again...

player that this is the main plot of the adventure, but when there is nookee on the horizon, everything else gets relegated to sub-plot. You might be in search of glory, but lust is more immediately interesting.

LSL2 is a highly amusing game. My own personal feeling was that, like any good idea, it didn't grab me quite as much as the first time round – but you get a bigger game, more laughs, and ultimate gratification.

ALL IN GOOD TIME

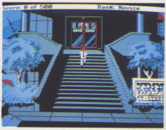
There's one way in which all Sierra games differ significantly from most traditional adventures, and that's the way the plots evolve during game-time.

In *Leisure Suit Larry*, for example, you can visit the docks whenever you wish. For much of the early part of the game, you'll find nothing there. At the appropriate moment, however, possibilities can develop in this location (and in many others) which previously did not exist.

This use of time has a peculiar effect on gameplay that, if you have a slow machine, can be particularly galling. It means that you have to spend a lot of time moving round the map, constantly revisiting locations in your search for solutions to puzzles.

In *Kings Quest 4*, Rosella gets involved with a number of characters, but sometimes finding them in the right place and at the right time isn't that easy. The same is true of *Police Quest 2*, perhaps even more so, since the very nature of the game revolves around a series of events and your response to them.

However, provided your machine can shift you about the game at a decent rate, this feature of Sierra games can add considerably to long-term interest. When you get stuck, you can never be sure that the solution hasn't just appeared around the corner.



Score: 0 of 500   Rank: Novice

ACE ADVENTURE VERDICT

Highly amusing and enjoyable to play, with a slight drop in the interest level around a third of the way through. Things pick up once you've hit the high seas, however.

LANDSCAPE	**72**	**SYSTEM**	**89**
CHALLENGE	**75**	**ENCOUNTERS**	**79**

POLICE QUEST II

SIERRA-ON-LINE put you on the street...

POLICE *Quest 2* is the successor to the much-favoured *PQ1*, a program that appealed to gamesters who preferred contemporary scenarios to the romance of the *Kings Quest* series or the science fantasy of *Space Quest*. The second game in the series is an enjoyable challenge that has you fighting for your life against your old enemy Jessie Bains, who's out to get you for sending him to jail.

PQ2 uses all the standard Sierra gameworld creation techniques (see the 'World Building' box for further details) and some of its own. The action is spread across the town of Lytton (a map of which comes with game) and the only way to travel about is in your unmarked cop-car. The car sequences are impressive compared with those in *PQ1*, with a street-scrolling display seen through the windscreen, rather than the overhead view in *PQ1*.

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You play the role of Detective Sonny Bonds and are accompanied throughout most of the game by your chain-smoking buddy Keith. Keith has a habit of strolling off for a fag whenever there's work to be done – probably just as well since the novice player would otherwised be humiliated by his sidekick at every opportunity.

The game comes with complex documentation regarding penal codes, traffic codes, and radio codes. Codes, passwords, files, and combinations recur throughout the game, providing enough puzzles to give most players more than their money's worth.

As with all the latest Sierra games, *PQ2* boasts a considerable range of locations, including toilets (again) and sewers. You'll be glad to hear that you can't enter one from the other. There are also airplanes, various police stations, and the odd bit of night life.

Despite superficial similarities, the main asset of the Sierra games is that each one offers a very different atmosphere from the other titles in the series. *PQ2* is a challenging game, requiring frequent saves, and offering excellent graphics – provided you have a machine capable of displaying them.

ACE ADVENTURE VERDICT

One of the best Sierra games if you're after contemporary excitement and enjoy ferreting around for clues. Graphics and sound are excellent, but PC CGA owners may be disappointed.

LANDSCAPE	**70**	**SYSTEM**	**92**
CHALLENGE	**75**	**ENCOUNTERS**	**70**

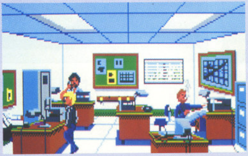
WORLD BUILDING

Sierra's games accomplish a number of different tasks in their presentation that, when taken together, provide a powerful structure for story telling.

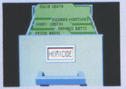
First, the games contain narrative sequences. in which characters move about the screen carrying out certain predetermined actions while the program displays appropriate messages, in a text-window. These sequences are often used at the beginning of a game to 'set the scene', although you can skip them when you've seen them before.

In addition, story-telling sequences occur during the action. A typical example here is in Kings Quest IV where you enter the dwarves' house. The place is in a shambles and entering TIDY HOUSE will set in motion a sequence where you first tidy both rooms and then await the dwarves, who arrive soon afterwards and treat you to supper.

During the rest of the action, you control the game entirely by mouse/joystick. This enables you to manoeuvre your character about the screen, negotiating obstacles and approaching other characters or items of interest.

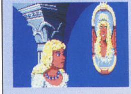


(Above) An interior location – your office in *Police Quest 2*. You can examine the notice boards, sit at your desk, use the phone, get files from the cabinet, and talk – in a very limited fashion – to other characters.



***Police Quest 2* in close-up mode. You have a choice of files to select.**

At any time (other than during animated sequences) you may hit a key and initiate a 'text entry' mode, where a panel appears for you to enter a command. The command structures within the games are simple but adequate, enabling you to interact with the objects and people you encounter.



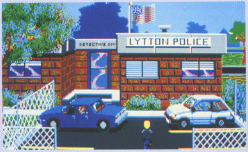
(Left) *Kings Quest IV* in narrative mode at the beginning of the story, where the good fairy Genesta asks for your help. Sit back and watch.

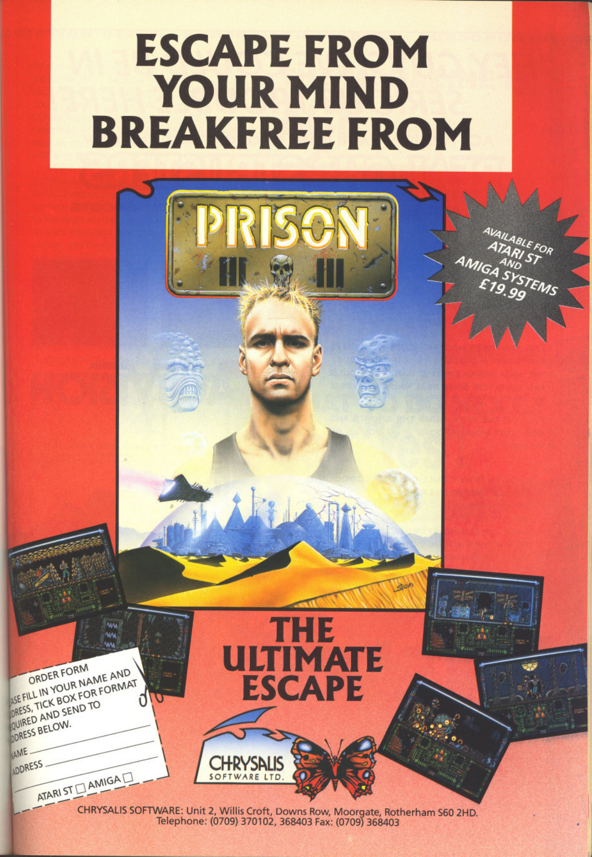
Sometimes, examining an object will put the game into 'close-up' mode, where a picture of the item in question is displayed in detail. A typical example might be when you look in a drawer or chest – or, as in the screenshot – when you look inside the filing cabinet in your office in *Police Quest 2*.

Other screens include panoramic exterior views of the landscape and more restricted views of interior locations, though the movement and command possiblities in each are the same.

The games vary in the amount of screen detail and the degree of interaction between the character and the gameworld. *Police Quest 2* allows you to look in drawers, examine charts, and even enter the lavatory, whereas *Kings Quest 4* is slightly more limited, though it still offers a number of interesting touches including rocking cradles and performances on various musical instruments.

(Below) A typical exterior panoramic view – outside the Lytton Police Station in *Police Quest 2*.





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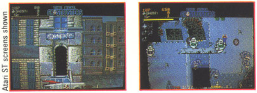
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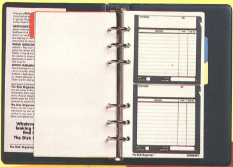

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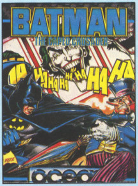

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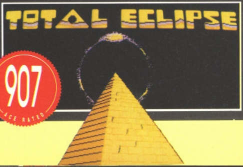

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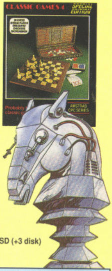

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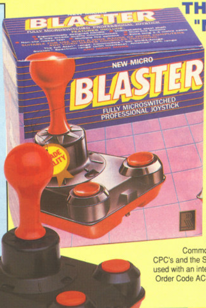

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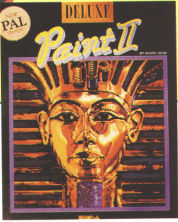

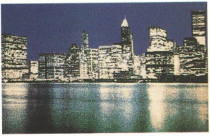

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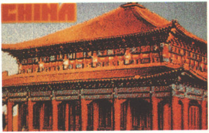

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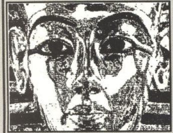

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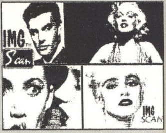
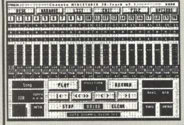
This simple unit plugs into the cartridge port of the ST and accepts scanned information via optical cables which fix easily to the head of any printer. Scanned images can be saved in raw data, Degas and Neochrome formats. The Software supports scanning resolutions of 75,150,216,300,360 and 1000 dots per inch horizontally. There is an example disk available which contains a slide show of images scanned with this product. The cost of this disk is £3.99, £2.00 of which is redeemable on purchase of a scanner.

IMAGE SCANNER ONLY £89.99





Midistudio £99.99

Midistudio is a 20 track Midi Music Studio. This Midi software package is a realistically priced introduction to Midi music processing and includes the following features.

20 tracks each assignable one of 16 midi channels, each track can be transposed up or down 2 octaves, the main screen features full tape deck controls with individual volume sliders for each track, note editing facilities including editing of pitch, octave, duration and velocity, plus full midi controller editing(pitch bend, mod wheel. etc.).

Full control over phrases is offered through Quantizing, transposing, and phrase arrangement software pages. The arrangement facilities allow moving and copying phrases on any of the 20 tracks.

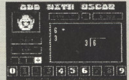
The package is easy to use and is a strong competitor with Pro 24.

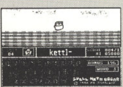
" Out performs Pro-24 v2.1 in almost every way "
Atari ST User Jan 89

EDUCATIONAL SOFTWARE

Add With Oscar £12.99

Add with Oscar is a fully mouse controlled educational game with full colour screens and sound for teaching addition, subtraction, multiplication and division to children. This program has selectable difficulty levels and a Hi-Score table.





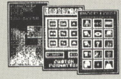
Spell With Oscar £12.99

Spell with Oscar is a game which teaches spelling, keyboard skills and motor coordination. Pictures of objects move smoothly accross the screen and the pupil should spell the name of the object while Oscar checks for mistakes. Spell also incorporates selectable difficulty levels and a Hi-score table. **Extra data disks £5.99**

TRILOGY £12.99

Quick List Plus is a utility that compiles a directory of your disks. Sort on disk or name, reads any drive, including hard drive. Printer output for hard copy of databases.

Mastermat is a formatter that optimises disk space, allows non standard sector and track formats/ fast read format.



Picstrip is a utility that captures all or part of a picture file for use in Basic programs, supports GFA, FAST, HISOFT and ST Basics and is Degas, Neochrome and AB Animator compatible.

AB Animator £14.95

AB Animator is a utility for creating and animating sprites. It supports GFA, HISOFT and FAST basics and is compatible with degas and neochrome picture files.Use the full icon control to animate up to 20 big frames of 56 pixels wide by 33 pixels high.

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THE ACE SERIAL

The Git In The Machine: 7

THE STORY SO FAR...N'Gar Thrombobo is no ordinary sprite. Fed up with being a Centauran Battledrome in one of little Horace Claghandle's games, he sets about taking his revenge. His plans for world domination begin at Grimlythorpesdale Municipal Sewerage Flocculating Plant. Poor old Horace has gone quite insane, but decides he can save the world by writing a virus which he names MATAHARI (Machine-Accomodated Totally Annhilative and Horribly Active Recursive Inteligence). After a terrific struggle N'Gar eventually overcomes MATAHARI, and manages to get inside a Kiddiemate Deluxe Robot. There's nothing quite so angry as an upset Centauran Battledrome though, so things don't look good for Humanity. NOW, READ ON...

NGar Thrombobo was now probably the most highly-evolved, dangerous, merciless, ruthless and vicious mass-murdering tyrant in the known universe.

Or at least that was what he idly surmised as he lay hidden beneath a Comfydown Duvet in the bedding department of Dotheboy's Department Store, having hastily made his escape from the toy department. And now here he was, free at last. And in control of an autonomous mechano-electronic construct no doubt at the very forefront of cybernetic technology.

He idly vapourised a small section of duvet with the needle laser he'd manufactured from the Kiddiemate Deluxe's bedside lamp arm and the insides of an electric toaster stolen from the electrical department. Then he whipped out the array of razor-sharp kitchen knives he'd pilfered from the kitchen department earlier, and in five seconds flat flayed the Comfydown Duvet into a trillion bits of fluff which hung in the air like a dense fog.

"What the bloody 'ell's goin' on?" said an extremely portly gentleman who'd just been about to examine said duvet. He pushed forwards into the dense cloud of feathers, arms stretched out in front of him, and scarcely noticed a rapid "swishing" sound and the fact that his fingernails were suddenly 0.3mm shorter on the right-hand side.

"Bloody typical!" he exclaimed, "I want the bloody manager! Come to look at a bloody duvet and the bloody thing bloody exbloodyplodes in your bloody face!"

N'Gar Thrombobo advanced through the cloud of feathers towards the source of the voice. His hastily-constructed ultrasound scanners told him he was dealing with a particularly bloated and offensive humanoid. He flicked out the needle laser and fired.

"Bloody 'ell!" bellowed the man – not at the infinitesimal discomfort of having a needle laser beam penetrate his skull and wipe out seventeen million brain cells which weren't doing anything anyway, but at stubbing his toe violently on what he took to be a chamber pot under the bed.

N'Gar Thrombobo took the full force of the impact in the gyroscopes. He staggered backwards under the bed reeling, and feeling the lubricating fluid well up in his optic sensors.

"I want a bloody refund!" swore the man at the Assistant Manager who'd just hurried to the scene.

Meanwhile, over on the other side of the hall, a face turned to look. A face which, in the right light and from certain angles, didn't look entirely dissimilar to that of a certain Horace Claghandle...

N'Gar Thrombobo sulked in the darkness, licking his wounds (or rather sealing the fissures with metal paste). Clearly, these huge blobs of protein were harder to destroy than he thought.

He whirled the array of kitchen knives around thoughtfully, then experimentally tried releasing one of them from his robotic hand. The knife flew through the air at three hundred miles an hour with a kind of screeching sound and embedded itself two inches deep in a wall sixty feet away. Eureka!

N'gar Thrombobo found that by calculating the precise instant at which to release the knife as he whirled it round he could attain an accuracy of +/– 3mm at the target. The only problem now was knife supply...

The kitchenware department was the answer. Thrombobo drilled through the whole line of kitchen units, stealing the cooking knives from each set of drawers. To make space for them he pulled open the Kiddiemate Deluxe's back panel and threw out three dozen plastic cows, a DIY cardboard Farmer Giles and a schematic representation of the interior of a Mussey Furgatroyd F101 tractor engine, thoughtfully provided free of charge by the same company responsible for the advertising on Farmer Giles' coveralls. He stepped out through the doors of the last kitchen units just as Mrs and Captain Cecil Mincepansy were examining it.

"How perfectly howwid!" were Captain Micepansy's exact words. In fact they where his last words.

"One wants one!" squealed Mrs Mincepansy with delight, scooping N'Gar Thrombobo up in her arms. They weren't her arms much longer.

"Aha!" cried Horace Claghandle, leaping from behind a mock-Chippendale breakfast bar wielding a large Kendo stick and grinning devilishly behind his slatted mask.

"Aha!" cried Horace Claghandle's truant officer, grasping him by the collar of his Kendo smock and lifting him three feet in the air.

"Aha!" cried N'Gar Thrombobo, hastily stuffing the remains of the Mincepansies into the kitchen unit and flicking open his back panel.

Over the next eight milliseconds, several things happened, most of them simultaneously.

Horace Claghandle's truant officer got hit across the bridge of the nose by a Kendo stick, Horace Claghandle got hit in the eye by a 1930s-style prefabricated polystyrene milking shed and N'Gar Thrombobo got hit in the olfactory interface by the floor as he performed an intricate half-twisting somersault in trying to pull out an inflatable muck-spreader which jammed half way.

"That's him! That's the bloody one!"

"Please calm down Mr Bludgeon, and point him out to me." said the Assistant Manager.

"There!" shouted Mr Bludgeon, "That's the little bloody mechanical monbloodyster that bloody jumped out of the bloody eiderbloodydown. Just like that bloody film, Alibloodyens!"

"Dab you all!" shouted N'Gar Thrombobo, whose oral interface, as well as his pride, was damaged, "Why cad't you all realise that I ab destid to be ruler of the cosbos!" Screaming with frustration, he launched himself at Horace Claghandle, who swiped the Kiddiemate Deluxe with his Kendo stick, sending the robot careering across the floor towards Mr Bludgeon.

"Got yer, yer bloody little..." he said, reaching down to pick up the battered Kiddiemate – only to find the miniature robot picking him up instead.

"Yaieee..." screeched N'Gar Thrombobo as he carried Mr Bludgeon towards the window and the seven-floor drop the other side of the glass.

"...eeearrrgggh..." he continued as the floor gave way beneath him six feet from the window.

"...ggghhrrrumpphhh..." he added as he landed in a shower cubicle being demonstrated to a series of Japanese visitors in the bathroom department on the floor below.

"...phhhtannng..." went the steel control cable in his one remaining still-functional leg as he struggled to get up.

"...grroooomphhh..." he offered as the water fused his circuits and his head blew off.

"...phhhluggg!" he concluded as Mr Bludgeon and two hundredweight of plaster landed on top of him.

"Bugger!" said Mr Bludgeon, quite out of character. "Bloody bugger!" he added as an afterthought.

While from the remains of the Kiddiemate Deluxe, there was only silence...

INDEX

118 ACE PUZZLE No 13 ■ *121* ACE PUZZLE No 11 SOLUTION ■ *133* ACE CROSSWORD No13 ■ *126* ACE CROSSWORD No 11 SOLUTION ■ *138* THE BLITTER END ■ *116* COMPETITIONS ■ *114-115* HARDWARE UPGRADE GUIDE ■ *134-137* READERS PAGES ■

GAMES YOU'VE GOT TO HAVE

All of the following games are **ACE RATED**, that means they're all red hot masterpieces of computer entertainment. Some of the games were available long before the first issue of **ACE** came off the presses however, so we never had the chance to review them in the magazine. These games are marked with the **ACE CLASSIC** flash, and rest assured, they're all superb pieces of software and are well deserving of the title.

PUZZLES

If you're after a game that will provide you with a real challenge, without necessarily requiring large doses of strategic thinking, then it's a puzzle game you want.

BONECRUNCHER

Superior Software ● C64 £9.95cs £11.95dk ● Amiga £14.95dk

At first sight this recent release may appear to be nothing more than a *Boulderdash* rip-off. However there are a number of **highly innovative gameplay** features which give *Bonecruncher* a feel all of its own. Highly recommended for those who prefer to **solve problems rather than shoot them.**

■ ACE RATED 948 – AMIGA

BOULDERDASH

Prism Leisure Corporation ● Spectrum £2.99cs ● C64 £2.99cs
● Amstrad £2.99cs

A game that has everything – **instant addiction, long-term challenge, frenetic excitement** as the clock ticks down and **extremely tricky puzzles**. You must collect jewels hidden in caverns, digging away earth and boulders to get at them. Boulders can drop and cause you serious damage, while the jewels are often hidden by seemingly impenetrable walls. **Complex, but great fun**. *Boulderdash* is **a classic you can't afford to miss** in its budget incarnation.

■ ACE CLASSIC

DEFLEKTOR

Gremlin/Vortex ● Spectrum £7.99cs ● C64 £9.99cs 14.99dk
● Atari ST £19.99dk

Optics are the order of the day here (not the spirit dispensers) as the player tries to connect a laser beam to a receiver and at the same time destroy a number of cells that are on-screen as well. You'll need to make full use of the mirrors, fibre-optic conduits and polarising and refracting blocks if you're to achieve your aim. Clear the first screen and you'll only have 59 more to do. **Fascinating stuff that's horribly addictive.**

■ ACE RATED 906 – ST

NEBULUS

Hewson ● C64 £8.95cs £12.95dk ● Spectrum £7.95cs

Guide Pogo to the top of eight towers using the spiral of platforms, lifts and ledges that form the route. It's a **highly original** game that strikes a fine balance between frustration and addiction, added to which is the **rotary scroll**, thus making it a **good-looking, playable winner of a game**.

■ ACE RATED 943 – C64

SENTINEL

Firebird ● Spectrum £9.95cs ● C64 £9.95cs £14.95dk ● Amstrad £9.95cs £14.95dk ● Atari ST £19.95dk ● Amiga £19.99dk

Bizarre and compelling strategy game played over the chequered surface of a planet dominated by the Sentinel. Fundamentally you have to absorb energy while trying to stop the Sentinel from absorbing yours. A **clear brain and fast trigger finger** are both necessary in this **very original and large** – 10,000 possible landscapes – game.

■ ACE RATED 963 – AMIGA

SKULLDIGGERY

Nexus ● Atari ST £19.95

Boulderdash clone that **completely outdoes the original** on this particular machine. Again (see *Boulderdash*, above) you're digging for diamonds in caverns over 100 different screens – with a time limit for each screen. *Skulldiggery* scores on **playability** (easier screens to begin with and a choice of starting point) and its **entertaining** two-player option.

■ ACE RATED 919 – ST

SPORE

Bulldog ● C64 £1.99cs ● Amstrad £1.99cs ● Spectrum £1.99cs

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great graphics make *Spore* a worthy full-price release – **what a bargain** then to be able to pick it up for £1.99!

■ ACE RATED 919 – C64

TETRIS

Mirrorsoft ● Spectrum £8.99cs £19.99dk ● C64 £8.99cs £12.99dk ● Amstrad £8.99cs £12.99dk ● Atari ST £19.99dk ● Amiga £19.99dk ● IBM PC £19.99dk

A **fascinating** geometrical oddity, this Russian puzzler turns the obscure mathematical topic of packing into a cult game. One at a time, shapes fall downwards into a rectangular playing area. Left to their own devices they'll pile up until they reach the top of the screen: your task is to guide them down and pack them in tightly so that doesn't happen. Different versions have proved to be rather variable in their arcade aspects, but the **brilliantly simple idea** behind them means they're **well worth a look** whatever your machine.

■ ACE RATED 956 – C64

THINK!

Firebird ● Spectrum £1.99cs ● C64 £1.99cs ● Amstrad £1.99cs

Originally released by Ariolasoft at full price, but now available for a fraction of that from Firebird. It's a **horribly addictive** game played on a 6x6 grid – either one or two player – in which you attempt to connect four counters, horizontally, vertically or diagonally. A **compelling puzzle** which incorporates **many additional features** and skill levels.

■ ACE CLASSIC

XOR

Logotron ● Spectrum £7.95cs ● Amstrad £9.95cs £14.95dk ● BBC £9.95cs £12.95dk

Extremely tricky maze game involving the player controlling two shields, and collecting masks through 15 mazes, which increase in complexity as you progress. Also in later stages, fish and chickens lie in wait, often blocking the masks and just waiting to fall on you and bring your quest to a premature end. Later still, the fish and chickens are the least of your worries as bombs, transporters and dolls crop up to conspire against you. **Smooth scrolling, simple graphics**, this one **requires planning** to complete successfully.

■ ACE RATED 927 – SPECTRUM

SPECIALS

Original works that are simply unclassifiable feature in this section.

ATF

Digital Integration ● C64 £8.95cs £12.95dk ● Spectrum £8.95cs £12.95dk ● Amstrad £8.95cs £13.95dk

Excellent combat/flight simulator that's a bit of a change for Digital Integtration, the simulation specialists. The emphasis is on **solid action**, the result being a sure-fire hit.

■ ACE RATED 956 – SPECTRUM

DARK SIDE

Incentive ● C64 £9.95cs £14.95dk ● Spectrum £9.95cs £14.95 dk ● Amstrad £9.95cs £14.95dk

The second game using the Freescape programming system, which sets more of an arcade challenge. The **3-D graphics are again superb** as are the tasks and puzzles.

■ ACE RATED 915 – AMSTRAD

DRILLER

Incentive ● C64 £14.95cs £17.95dk ● Spectrum £14.95cs £17.95 dk ● Amstrad £14.95cs £17.95dk ● IBM PC £19.95dk

This three-dimensional masterpiece of exploration and adventure took a year to develop, but the wait was worth it. A whole world was crammed into 8-bit micros to give the player such a feeling of 'being there' it's uncanny. It's bold, dazzlingly original and very playable. A milestone in computer entertainment.

■ ACE RATED 956 – AMSTRAD

ELITE

Firebird ● Spectrum £14.95cs ● C64 £14.95cs £17.95dk ● Amstrad £12.95cs £14.95dk ●

BBC £12.95cs £14.95dk (available from Superior Software)

Still the best space trading game, *Elite* set a standard for other companies to follow. One of the first space games to use vector graphics, it's a shooting and trading effort set across several galaxies, with plenty of variety to the gameplay. You can trade legal goods in (relatively) safe systems, or run the gauntlet of pirates in the galaxies' danger spots with your hold full of contraband. Either way there's a nice line in zero-G dogfighting, and **as big a task as you'll find** anywhere.

■ ACE CLASSIC

INCREDIBLE SHRINKING SPHERE

Electric Dreams ● Spectrum £9.99cs £14.99dk ● C64 £8.99cs £14.99dk ● Amstrad £9.99cs £14.99dk ● Atari ST £19.99dk ● Amiga £24.99dk

A **manic maze** world where mass, **size** and **inertia** combine to provide wicked gameplay. Tricky puzzles and endless nasty obstacles will have you **rolling** around in **delight.**

■ ACE RATED 923 – C64

MAGNETRON

Firebird ● Spectrum £7.95cs ● C64 £8.95cs £12.95dk

Puzzles and action Steve Turner style. Save the world by dismantling eight satellites. Steal parts from the enemy droids to upgrade your own droid, and hopefully make your job a little easier. The ideal game for all Quazatron fans looking for a similar, new challenge.

■ ACE RATED 904 – SPECTRUM

QUEDEX

Thalamus ● C64 £9.99cs £14.99dk

In this **impressively challenging** game you must steer a metallic ball through ten different screens of mazes, bonuses and obstacles, all within a set time limit. This **simple game concept** has a host of added features to make it particularly pleasing: you can carry over unused time to the next screen, for example, and tackle the different screens or 'planes' in any order you wish. Excellent graphics and **utterly absorbing play.**

■ ACE RATED 934 – C64

SPINDIZZY

Electric Dreams ● Spectrum £9.99cs ● C64 £9.99cs £14.99dk ● Amstrad £9.99cs £14.99dk

Tremendous stuff; steer your spinning top over tough obstacles and collect jewels, against a **fiendish** time limit. The game landscape is a vast system of catwalks, ramps, towers, and trampolines surrounded by lethal drops – and NO safety rails. Floor switches activate lifts and bridge gaps, but tripping them in the right order can be harder than it looks. A few bad guys and **a lot of nice touches**, but the exploration's the thing.

■ ACE CLASSIC

STARGLIDER II

Rainbird ● Atari ST £24.95dk ● Amiga £24.95dk

One of the **finest examples** of a game using vector graphics to their full advantage, gets the **solid 3D** treatment and comes out looking every bit a winner. You've got a large task to complete and there's plenty of Egrons to destroy, making this combination of blasting and exploration a game that **stands head and shoulders** above the competition.

■ ACE RATED 927 – ST

TAU CETI/ ACADEMY

CRL ● Spectrum £9.95cs ● C64 £9.95cs £14.95dk ● Amstrad £9.95cs £14.95dk ● Atari ST £19.95dk ● Amiga £19.95dk

Flight simulator/shoot-em-up and its sequel which are both **incredibly smooth and well put together**. The attention to detail is impeccable as you set off on hair-raising missions as a space cadet. In *Academy* you get to **design your own space skimmer** craft as well.

■ ACE CLASSIC

TOTAL ECLIPSE

Incentive ● Spectrum £9.95cs £14.95dk ● C64 £9.95cs £12.95dk ● Amstrad £9.95cs £14.95dk

The third game using the **Freescape system** is a bit of a departure from the first two, but it's still **an incredible game**. In *Total Eclipse* you're battling against time back in the 1930's trying to prevent the moon exploding. For arcade adventurers who love puzzles, the Freescape system is **a godsend.**

■ ACE RATED 907 – AMSTRAD

WIZBALL

Ocean ● Spectrum £7.95cs ● Amstrad £8.95cs £12.95dk ● C64 £8.95cs £14.95dk

A **compelling and original ball game** in which you become the wizball and must set out to conquer the 'colour creatures' which are intent on eliminating the spectrum and rendering the landscape grey and drab. Controlling the wizball is great fun and makes this one of the **most playable** games to have appeared for a long time.

■ ACE CLASSIC

BRAIN GAMES

Fed up with mindless blasting? Want a game that offers you an opponent who's worthy of your skills? This is your section.

CHESS MASTER 2000

Electronic Arts ● C64 £9.95cs £14.95dk ● Amiga £24.95dk ● Atari ST £24.95dk ● IBM PC £24.95dk

Strongest chess game on the Amiga, with excellent graphics, 2D or 3D viewpoint, 12 levels of difficulty and **all the playing options you could wish for**. Plus some fairly nifty speech synthesis.

■ ACE CLASSIC

COLOSSUS CHESS 4

CDS ● Spectrum £9.95cs ● C64 £9.95cs £14.95dk ● Amstrad £9.95cs £13.95dk

Best bet for 8-bit machine owners, with choice of 2D or 3D view, **umpteen levels of difficulty, and myriad options** which enable you to play, watch, work out chess problems, etc against a fine computer opponent.

■ ACE CLASSIC

COLOSSUS MAH JONG

CDS ● C64 £9.99cs £14.99dk ● Amstrad £9.99cs £14.99dk

Rummy-like **oriental game of strategy and chance**. A tutor program and short manual make this an easy to use and highly entertaining piece of software for veterans and novices alike.

■ ACE RATED 937 – C64

INFOGRAMES' BRIDGE

Infogrames ● Amstrad £12.95cs £15.95dk ● MSX £12.95cs

Graphically the best of all contract bridge simulations, with large playing cards depicted against a suitably green baize background. **Plays a good game** (for a computer, which after all is a bit short in the imagination and flair department), and **features a wide range of options and bidding conventions** which you can toggle on and off according to your style.

■ ACE CLASSIC

POWERPLAY

Arcana ● Amstrad £8.95cs £14.95dk ● C64 £8.95cs £14.95dk ● Amiga £19.95dk ● Atari ST £19.95dk

If you want to try out your general knowledge, we reckon you'd be better off with this **original and challenging** combination of strategy game and quiz than with the admittedly monster-selling *Trivial Pursuit. Powerplay* is **graphically very pretty** in its setting on Mount Olympus, home of the Gods.

■ ACE RATED 935 – AMIGA

SCRABBLE

Leisure Genius ● Spectrum £9.95cs ● C64 £12.95cs £14.95dk ● Amstrad £9.95cs £14.95dk ● IBM PC £24.95dk

The **hugely popular** word game translated very successfully onto the micro. Fast, excellent display, and a surprisingly large vocabulary (even if it does include some strange-looking words on occasions). **Good enough to give** even strong human opponents **a tough game** at the higher levels.

■ ACE CLASSIC

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BUYING THE MACHINE YOU REALLY WANT...

With so many machines to choose from, which one should you upgrade to? It's not an easy decision, but Roger Yates might be able to help.

"Yes Sir, the Sinclair PC200 is a 16-bit machine, fully IBM compatible and comes with a colour graphics adaptor". All of the above is true, but what the salesman didn't tell you is that you don't want it. Choosing the right computer involves a little more than listening to his sales pitch.

Fortunately, the architects of life seem to have allowed two distinct categories of people – those who want to pursue mostly business type activities, and those who don't. Frankly the latter group is the more interesting, so let's deal with the former first.

BIG BLUE BROTHER

IBM. There, now that's over. Well, what did you expect? The truth is inescapable. If you are looking to balance your books in some sort of serious business environment – perhaps where your and few other souls' livelihoods might depend on the computer – or you work for a company that expects results, and where promotion can be earned by affording yourself the capacity to work at home – then you have no choice. The sad and sorry IBM standard has been imposed and it's a very brave man (or salesman, indeed) who can honestly claim that a computer other than one which is fully IBM compatible is going to do the job. Of course you don't need to buy a real IBM, heaven forbid. There are hundreds of IBM compatible computers out there, from Amstrad to Watford. The price, for what essentially is the same machine, varies like interest rates.

In fact the complication with IBM type computers is that the range of vendors and corresponding machines is a little too large. The oldest type of computer comes equipped with an Intel 8088 processor. So old hat now that you don't want it — it isn't even a real 16-bit processor.

Probably the cheapest IBM type which offers reasonable performance is based around the Intel 8086 – as the cheaper Amstrad PCs are. However the mid range chip, the 80286, is now found in computers which can be had for under a thousand pounds, and the extra power is worth the money.

As a very rough guide to performance each generation above the 8086 offers a 5 times improvement in the performance-speed. This varies from one machine to another – some have faster clocks and others have that and faster memory. Do you need speed? If you can afford it, then yes. The only way to forecast is to think about how you are going to use the computer. If your intended tasks are keyboard-dependent, like word processing, speed is generally a luxury. On the other hand, if the task is processor related, graphics, database or accounts work, then the faster the computer the longer you are likely to keep it.

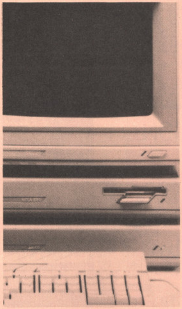
By the way, if you are looking at any of the latter applications, or hope to use the computer for a multitude of tasks, then budget for a hard disk. If for the moment one is beyond your purse, at least make sure that you buy a computer which offers real IBM expansion compatibility – that pretty well rules out computers like the Amstrad PC200, Amstrad portables and the Olivetti PC1.

SERIOUS GAMES ?

For the home computer enthusiast who has just been talked into an IBM clone there is hope that it can be used for entertainment – music, games and so forth. Unless you can afford to spend over a thousand pounds on the kit then you will be disappointed with IBMs as games machines, especially those only offering CGA, like the PC200 which sickeningly portrays the uselessness of CGA graphics with its four pathetic colours and horrible sound. Only the EGA colour computers offer anything like decent screen displays, and even then while the range of serious software is huge, games software is not nearly so prolific. The cheaper CGA display is fine for all business applications but if you are forced by fiscal restrictions to go for this type of computer you can improve on it later by adding an EGA card and screen, but again, only if the computer you select has proper expansion slots, and doesn't draw its power from the monitor a la Amstrad. You cannot improve the sound, that must remain appalling.

APPLE CORE

There is another machine which has been extolled as the ultimate 'business micro' and is both powerful and very easy to use. While it's true that the Macintosh SE is easy to use, it is also frighteningly expensive. The disadvantage is that there isn't nearly the choice of business or games software for the thing, and, even worse, it offers little hope of IBM compatibility – you can't even read IBM format disks without spending lots more money. Yes, the Mac is easy to use, but DOS on a PC is within the understanding of all, with a little effort. The reward for not going the Apple route is more money, more choice and a place in the computer world.



THE GAMES MACHINES

While computers such as the Amiga and ST cannot directly run IBM software, they are capable of performing most serious tasks. Gameswise, they offer the best value for money in terms of display quality and speed for pounds. Both the Amiga 500 and Atari ST make use of the Motorola 68000 processor and to great effect. The real games enthusiast might be best going for the Amiga – it has the edge in terms of sound and graphics over the Atari.

The Atari offers a better compromise between business, ease of use and games. It's certainly no arcade slouch and if you spend that little extra you could opt for the excellent mono screen which is great for word processing – your colour TV has to double up for games. The Atari has two more advantages. Firstly it has built in MIDI ports, so the budding musicians will approve of it. Secondly, the 1040 can read and write IBM format 3.5" disks so at least you can take data from IBM applications without much grief. The ST may not be as fast as a MAC, but it is very nearly as easy to use.

FRIVOLOUS BUSINESS ?

The Amiga, of course, has business capabilities. One of the best known IBM word processors, *Word Perfect*, can be bought for it (for a couple of limbs), and the Amiga mouse-driven environment makes it a delight to use, much nicer than on an IBM. The Amiga has a reasonable range of serious applications, certainly enough to offer you choice.

The main problem with an Amiga in a dual role might be money. If you need to do business like things you will need the expensive high quality Commodore colour display. I truly love playing games on an Amiga but for one point, which rather sours it in a serious role when compared to the ST, and that's its awful disk reading speed. Still, serious applications might justify a hard disk which is much faster.

Both the Amiga and Atari have a respectable catalogue of serious applications but they tend to offer the widest choice in word processing, with the range diminishing as you move from database programs, via spreadsheets to accounting, which is the weakest area for both computers. There are plenty of examples of programs being available across all machines – but don't expect to find programs, as excellent as they are, like *Protext* or *Superbase* in daily use at work.

ARCHIETYPE

Games publishers seem to concentrate on the ST, Amiga and PC – in that order. This rather leaves Acorn's Archimedes out in the cold which is a shame since the different technology employed in this computer (it uses a thing known as the RISC processor) means that it is something really special.

The Arch produces graphics comparable to the Amiga but with many more colours and more speed. Screen displays on the Arch are among some of the best I have seen on any computer. But, sadly, it isn't a mainstream computer and lacks choice in both games and serious software. Pity, because it really is an exciting and interesting computer. If your interest is in programming computers and you don't mind being limited in the range of software you can buy then you should investigate this computer a little further. If you once owned a BBC computer you will be used to being in a backwater so an Archimedes might be an attractive option.

MAKE LIKE AN IBM

The Amiga, Atari and Archimedes offer an IBM emulation. On the ST this is done MOST cheaply via software but it doesn't really provide a valid way of running IBM programs, it's just too slow. Commodore has the A2000 with Bridgeboard, which is actually an IBM clone inside the Amiga. This is an expensive way of getting a 4.77 8088 IBM and even if you can afford it, you might be better buying an A500 and an IBM clone. The Archimedes offers software emulation which is surprisingly fast. Not good enough for long term use, but excellent for running IBM applications on an occasional basis.

BUY WHAT YOU NEED

The key to solving this dilemma is to look at the software for these computers first. If your priority is games find out what pleases you most, and which computer runs it the best – chances are it won't be a CGA IBM PC. If you need serious applications as well as games then look at the software on offer for the particular machines and see if any of it can do what you want – and that's all that really matters.

Don't just ask the salesman to tell you what the computer can do. If he says it can run programs which accept data from IBM applications then take him a copy of your data, nail him to the floor and ask him to demonstrate. Don't walk into a shop just with the idea of buying a computer, get it firmly fixed in your mind what you want the computer to do, and write down all your questions so that you don't get distracted. The salesman will hate you, but at least you will get the computer you deserve. Remember that no matter how superb the hardware, if it ain't got the software it's just a box of components...

ABOUT ROGER

Roger Yates doesn't work for IBM or Amstrad. He lives in Surrey with a spaniel and several hundred computers (only the spaniel chews the kitchen carpet, though).

COMPO' CORNER

THE ACE PINK DRAGON COMPETITION

Thanks again to Danielle of US Gold, who kindly donated those completely brilliant collectors' editions of Dragonlance chronicles and legends, we can now offer you the chance to win the separate volume sets. Chronicles comes in 3 volumes as does Legends, so the lucky winner will win 6 glorious paperbacks!

All you have to do is tell us where the authors Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman now live (a clue: neither of them live in Tividale!)

Send your answers to DRAGON PINK, ACE at the Bath address to arrive no later than 5 April 1989.

THE WEIRD PINK COMPETITION

Unless you've been living on Mars for the past few weeks, you must know that Rainbird have managed to gain a spot on prime time TV with their *Weird Dreams* game. The game is played on Saturday morning's Motor Mouth programme when a person from the public is picked to represent the main sprite from the game, and by answering questions they progress through the game and earn themselves some great prizes. Wonderful fun!

We had a little chat with Rainbird and managed to get hold of FIVE limited edition *Weird Dreams*/Motor Mouth T shirts. Want one? OK! Just answer these simple questions, post the answers to WEIRD PINK, at the Bath address – ensuring they arrive no later than 5 April. The first five correct entries pulled from the sack will each win a T shirt.

THE QUESTIONS:

1. Who said "I have a dream" in a famous speech?
2. Who dream of electric sheep?
3. Who dreams of Jeannie?
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5. Who will always be together in electric dreams?

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THE ACE PUZZLE No13

Set by Archie Medes

The sender of the first correct entry pulled from the sack wins £25 worth of software for their machine.

There had been a daring robbery from the museum – a valuable, historic jewelled brooch had been removed from its case. Alerted by the alarm in the early hours, the police had soon responded and had succeeded in picking up 'Fingers' Ned, a well-known villain, coming away from the nearby town square. A search of the above-named gentleman revealed nothing and so he was duly released. The jewel had, it appeared, vanished into thin air!

In truth, it was Ned who HAD taken the gem, working under the instructions of Bill 'The Brain', the leader of the outfit. After the theft, Ned had concealed the jewel underneath one of the paving slabs in the town square, the exact slab having already been selected by 'The Brain' and secretly marked with chalk in advance. When things had cooled down, the treasure could be collected, and meanwhile no evidence would be found on either man.

The days passed and the rain fell. "It's no good", wailed Ned, "the mark has been washed away!"

The jewel was hidden under the___ slab in the ___ row.

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Bill lit another cigarette, poured two generous measures of bourbon and said in his slow Bronx drawl "Then it's as well I can remember how I selected the required slab."

Carefully closing the blinds he switched on a single overhead light, its bare, fly-specked bulb throwing shadows around the darkened room. He explained:

"First, I.noticed the town square was indeed an exact square and was paved with a regular checkerboard arrangement of square slabs – there being ninety-nine rows, each having ninety-nine slabs. I then imagined that the slabs had been numbered in the following way."

1	2	3	4	5
6	7	~~8~~	9	1
0	1	1	1	2
1	3	1	4	1
5	1	6	1	7

He sketched a rough five by five grid on a piece of paper and placed a single digit in each of the squares.

"To illustrate the point," he continued, "assume that there were only five rows of five slabs. Here, I have started in the top left-hand corner and have numbered the squares in counting order – one, two, three, etc. Each row runs from left to right. Once the number exceeds one digit I continue counting but 'split' the number over more than one square. I continue in this way until I reach the bottom right-hand square, which in this case is numbered with the 7 of 17. Having done this I would then select the square for hiding the jewel. On this grid the selected square would be the third one across in row two." He placed an X on this square.

"Why is that, Boss?" asked Ned, gulping down the bourbon in one go.

"The reason is simple." Bill drew deeply on his cigarette and replied in a hushed voice. "It is the square which produces the highest sum when its digit is added to the digits on the eight surrounding squares. In this case, '8+2+3+4+9+1+1+1+7.' No other square on the grid will give as high a total! Now, we just apply the same principal to the 99 by 99 arrangement of slabs in the town square."

Ned was amazed at the ingenuity behind the plan, but he now knew all that he needed. The light glinted on cold grey steel as a single shot rang out. Through narrowed eyes Ned watched as Bill slid to the floor, his burning cigarette gripped between his lifeless fingers.

"Too bad, partner," murmured Ned, slipping the revolver back into his pocket, "but you ain't getting any of the loot." Closing the door silently behind him he was soon swallowed up in the darkness of the night.

It was only later that he found he was unable to calculate where the treasure was concealed. Can you beat him to it?

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SOLUTION TO ACE PUZZLE No11

The first correct entry out of the sack came from Stephen Lodge of Horbury, near Wakefield, who wins £25 worth of software for his micro.

ANSWER: The palindromic cube 10662526601 has a cube root of 2201, a number which is not itself palindromic. It is the only such pair of values so far discovered. All other palindromic perfect cubes have cube roots that are palindromes also.

Solution: The difficulty in solving this problem on most micros is that the arithmetic capacity of the machine is soon exceeded. For example, if the upper limit which can be handled has nine digits the largest cube that can be evaluated accurately is 997002999 – the cube of 999. Any values in excess of this are rounded by the computer and are given in exponential form. For instance, the cube of 1234 would be given as 1.8790809E, the PRECISE value having been lost. Consequently, it is impossible to determine if the value is palindromic or not as we need to know the exact value. The value of 110011 cubed, given in the question, should have indicated that some higher cubes were likely to be involved.

Fortunately, this difficulty can be overcome by performing the calculations using STRING variable rather than numeric variables. This is not as odd as it sounds! In the program listing the actual multiplication is done in the subroutine at line 1000. Before going to this subroutine the program defines two variables, the STRING variable C$ and the NUMERIC variable N. The number held in C$ is multiplied, digit by digit, by variable N, and the resulting product is 'built up' into variable P$. An additional variable 'carry' is used to hold intermediate values in the multiplication which are greater than 9. Before returning from the subroutine the product is transferred back to variable C$. By the use of the double GOSUB in line 30 the cube of any number (in variable N) can be calculated even though it may compromise of more than 9 digits. In this way, each cube in turn (starting with an initial value of N of 11) can be calculated. This cube so found must then be tested to determine if it palindromic. This is done by first reversing the order of digits in the string in the subroutine at line 2000. Before going to this routine the string to be 'reversed' must first be transferred to variable Z$ (line 70). The variable returned by the subroutine (R$) contains the reversed digits. In the case of a palindromic number R$ will be the same as the original Z$. As we are only interested in palindromic cubes any non-palindromes are rejected and the next value is taken (line 60). Once a palindromic cube has been computed it is then necessary to determine if its associated root is palindromic or not. The subroutine at 2000 is used again except that this time it is the root (N$) which is tested. If this results in a non-palindromic root, the program execution ends with an appropriate message (line 80).

THE LISTING

```
10 N=11
20 N$=STR$(N):C$=N$
30 GOSUB 1000:GOSUB 1000
40 PRINT N$;" ";C$;
50 Z$=C$:GOSUB 2000
60 IF R$=Z$ THEN PRINT" (P) "ELSE
PRINT:GOTO 90
70 Z$=N$:GOSUB 2000
80 IF R$<>Z$ THEN PRINT"NON-PALINDROMIC
ROOT IS SHOWN ABOVE":END
90 N=N+1:GOTO 20
1000 CARRY=0:P$=""
1010 FOR F=LEN(C$) TO 1 STEP -1
1020
V=VAL(MID$(C$,F,1))*N+CARRY:CARRY=0
1030 IF V>9 THEN CARRY=INT(V/10):V=V-
CARRY*10
1040 P$=STR$(V)+P$
1050 NEXT
1060 IF CARRY<>0 THEN
P$=STR$(CARRY)+P$
1070 C$=P$:RETURN
2000 R$=""
2010 FOR F=1 TO LEN(Z$)
2020 R$=MID$(Z$,F,1)+R$
2030 NEXT:RETURN
```

NOTE: This listing should run on any micro capable of using MicroSoft BASIC.

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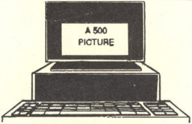

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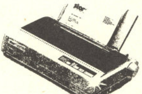

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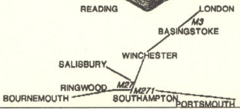

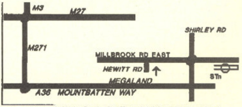

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EEEK!

We've got to get up pretty early to catch some of you readers out, haven't we? Back in Issue 17 the PP's Ed set a competition to win a wonderful *After Burner* notepad. All you had to do was find out who was the first person to fly the prototype of the F14 Thundercat. Oh Dear, EVERYONE knows the F14 is a Tomcat, not a Thundercat!

Even more disastrous, the drunken Ed didn't even know the answer himself! So, it was on the blower to the Grumman Corporation of New York and after a quick chat with their PR dept we discovered it was none other than Bob Smyth, with Bill Miller taking up the other seat.

The winner then was Trevor Briscoe of Washington, Tyne and Wear, who got it smack on the nose, bingo, absolutely right. Nice work Trev.

COR!

How many words were there in the February Issue of ACE? Lots of you made some very wild guesses, and some of you even tried to count them. As we didn't know ourselves and we're far too lazy to even try counting them we decided to award the prize of Ubi Soft posters to Brendon Byrne of Luton who quite correctly stated 'there are five words in "The Feb Issue Of ACE"'. Well done Brendon (smart ass!).

SOLUTION TO PRIZE CROSSWORD No11

The first correct entry out of the sack came from Mark Rouse from Cambridge, who wins £25 worth of software for his machine (when he writes in and tells us what machine he owns!).

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Wasteland	--	--	19.95
Wec Le Mans	11.95	14.95	11.95
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TITLE	SPECTRUM		CBM 64		AMSTRAD	
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Alien Syndrome	6.45	-	6.45	9.95	6.45	9.95
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Amalyte	-	-	6.95	-	-	-
Army Moves	3.95	--	3.95	---	3.95	--
Athena	3.95	--	2.95	--	--	--
Baal	--	--	6.95	9.95	--	--
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Barbarian Psygnosis	6.95	--	6.95	--	6.95	--
Barbarian 2 Palace	6.95	--	6.95	9.95	6.95	9.95
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Best Of Elite Vol 2	--	--	6.95	--	--	--
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Black Tiger	6.95	--	7.45	9.95	7.45	10.95
Blasteroids	6.95	--	6.95	9.95	--	--
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Bombuzal	6.45	--	6.45	9.95	--	--
Bubble Bobble	5.45	8.95	5.95	8.95	5.95	9.95
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Caveman Ugh-lympics	--	--	7.45	10.45	--	--
Chessmaster 2000	--	--	6.95	10.45	--	--
Classic Collection	--	--	3.00	--	3.00	--
Comet Game	1.00	--	1.00	--	1.00	--
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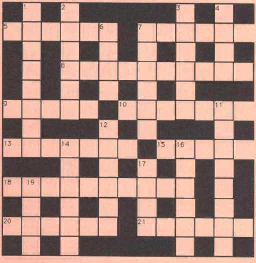
ACROSS

4. Motorists teeing off (7)
6. Reversal of input and output circuits to make razor sharp (5)
8. In case the bounder forms a software house (7)
9. Early form of electronic device (5)
11. Cruel, she sabotaged game from Gremlin (8)
13. Pity male characters running round in school break (8)
15. Ten to one backing for leading Norwegian game (5)
16. River Liffey flowing from Ocean (7)
18. Time to get boy a computer (5)
19. Host prepared to introduce heated game from Addictive (7)

DOWN

1. Night vision (5)
2. Key to get free of network (4)
3. Mercenary software house (7)
5. The way to win a game from Imagine (7,4)
7. Herman's family game (3,8)
10. Drive-in surgery (4)
11. Icy greeting (4)
12. Boy unhappy at first to get game (4,3)
14. Goal to develop student computer language (5)
17. Flip coin to get a screen symbol (4)



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Acheton, Adventure Quest, Aftershock, Apache Gold, Arnold Goes to Somewhere Else, Boggit, Bored of the Rings, Brawn Free, Classic Adventure, Castle Blackstar, Castle of Skull Lord, Colossal Adventure, Colour of Magic, Crystal Theft, Cursed Be The City, Dodgy Geezers, Dracula, Dungeon Adventure, Dungeons, A, A 'n' Everythin, Emerald Isle, Enchanter, Erik The Viking, Escape from Khoshima, Espionage, Island, Fantasia Diamond, Forest at Worlds End, Gnome Ranger, Guild of Thieves, Heavy on The Magick, Heroes of Karn, Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, Hobbit, Hunchback, Imagination, Inca Curse, Jewels of Babylon, Kentilla, Knight Orc, Kobyashi Naru, Lords of Time, Lost Phirious (Parts 1 & 3), Message from ndromeda, Mindshadow, Mordon's Quest, Necris Dome, Never Ending Story, Planet of Death, Price of Magik, Project Volcano, Qor, Questprobe III, Red Moon, Return to Eden, Robocide, Scary tales, Seabase Delta, Seas of Blood, Shymer, Smashed, Smuggler's Cove, Snowball, Sorceror, Souls of Darkon, Spellbreaker, Spytrek, Star Wreck, Subsunk, Terrormolinos, The Pawn, The Trial of Arnold Blackwood, The Sydney Affair, The Vera Cruz Affair, Very Big Cave Adventure, Warlord, Wise and Fool of Blackwood, Worm in Paradise, Zork 1.
Joan Pancott Tel: 0305 784155 - Any Day - 1pm to 10pm.

I have completed the following: The Pawn, The Bard's Tale, Ultima IV, Phantasie I, Dracula, Never Ending Story, Zork III, Wishbringer, Enchanter, Borrowed Time, Kobyashi Naru, Heavy on the Magick, Legacy, The Prince of Magic, Claws of Despair, Wizards & The Princess.
Derek Wong, 42 Ingram Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey. CR4 8EB.

Wishbringer, Labyrinth, The Hobbit, The Hulk, Spiderman, Seabase Delta, Kobyashi Naru.
Ann Gray, 9 Alness Close, Birchwood, Lincoln, Lincs. LN6 0YX.

Heroes of Karn, Imagination, Seabase Delta, D,A,A n Everythin, Fourth Protocol I, II & III, Ship of Doom, Message from Andromeda, Kobyashi Naru, Questprobe III, Forest at Worlds End, Wild Bunch, Knight Tyme, Spellbound, The Hobbit, Bugsy Part 1 only, Mops To, Heroes of Karn, Seabase Delta, Gremlins, Lord of the Rings (Part II only), Robin of Sherwood, After Shock.
Russell Cooper, 12 Butlers Close, 52 Butlers Road, Handsworth Wood, Birmingham. B20 2PA.

Let me know your problem with Football Director, The Double Soccer Boss, Premier League and Soccer Star and I'll sort you out. Send SAE to:Paul Phillips, 29 Ormestone House, Hartcliffe, Bristol.

For technical help on Commodore 64 Basic and Machine/Assembler language. Please contact Johnathan Kendall (for most problems would you please write!) I will endeavour to reply to all letters – if you enclose a stamped addressed envelope!
Johnathan Kendall, 27 Bishop Bridge Road, Norwich, Norfolk, NR1 4ES. Tel: 0603 625987

The Pawn plus early stages for Guild of Thieves (I've only scored 300+ points so far).
Clive, 66 Billett Lane, Berkhamsted, Herts, HP4 1DR.

Jack The Ripper (p1-3), Dracula (p1-3), Hampstead, Big Sleeze and others.
N Buzzard, 11 Faversham Drive, Weston-super-Mare, BS24 9NZ.

I can help Spectrum owner with GAC, +2 loading problems, removing attribute clash + any basic programming problems, GAC, PAW and I also have an extensive knowledge if ZX BASIC. I can help fellow P B Mers on Hade Games 'Avalon'. Just send an SAE to:
Matt Burke, 33 Brookhouse Hill, Fulwood, Sheffield, S10 3TB.

Adventure Quest, Beyond Zork, Infidel, Plundered Hearts, Starcross, Trinity, Castle Blacktar, Classic/Colossal Adventure, Dungeon Adventure, Emerald Isle, Gnome Ranger, Guild of Thieves, Hacker, H.H.G.T.G, Jinxter, Knight Orc, Leather Goddesses, Lords of Time, Mindshadow, Nord and Bert, The Pawn, Planetfall, Price of Magik, Red Moon, Return to Eden, Snowball, Wishbringer, Worm in Paradise. Phil Armstrong, 92 Dryden Road, Low Fell, Gateshead, Tyne & Wear. NE9 5TX. Tel: (091) 4875639

The Colour of Magic Part 1 and some of Part 2.
John Morris, 130 Avondale Road, Shipley, West Yorkshire. Tel: 0274 586238 weekdays 3-6pm, weekends all day.

For tech help on Dungeon Master Tel 0734 780508, ask for Chris.

Amiga owner willing to swap hints & tips on the following games:- Great Giana Sisters, Leathernecks XR35, F18 Interceptor, Test Drive, Xenon, Firepower, Hollywood Strip Poker, Tetris, ECO, Vampire Emprie, Soccer Supremo, Garrison I & II, Bubble bobble and over 100 more.
Scott Lyle, 27 Stansted Close, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 2TW. Tel: 0245 356641 after 6 and before 10pm or weekends

Adventure Land, Colossal Adventure, Circus, Colditz, Greedy Gulch, Jewels of Babylon, Knights Quest, Magic Mountain, Pharaoh's Tomb, Eye of Bain, Planet of Death, Ship of Doom,, Espionage Island, Hobbit, Invincible Island, Inca Curse, Ten Little Indians, Perseus and Andromeda, Lords of Time, SAE required with all requests for help.
Nirmal Singh, 104 Vansittart Road, London, E7 0AA.

Colossal Cave (original adventure), Guild of Thieves, Leather Goddesses of Phobos, The Pawn, Jinxter.
Clive J Mewse, 66 Billet Lane, Berkhamstead, Herts, HP4 1DR.

All aspects of BASIC especially adventures, debugging, compression and protection, simple machine code including RSXS, playtesting, poking. Please state level of understanding. Have got a CPC464, GT64, Multiface II+, DK 'tronics Speech rom. General Amstrad queries welcome but solutions not guaranteed.
Sean McManus, 226 Chertsey Rise, Stevenage, Herts. SG2 9JQ.

The Pawn and Knight Orc (part 1 and early part 2).
Shazad Ahmed, Tel: 01-340 9176 (4-10pm).

Dungeon Master
SAE to: Anthony Hopkins, 91 Springfield Avenue, Sandiacre Nottingham, NG10 5NA.

Jinxter, Pawn, Guild of Thieves, Leather Goddesses, Collosal Cave, Mr X.
Clive Mewse, 438A Ewel Road, Tolworth, Surbiton, KT6 7EL.

The Pawn, Guild of Thieves, Jinxter, Corruption, The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy, Hollywood Hijinx and I have 80+ points on Wishbringer.
Anil Tohani, 5 Orchard Avenue, Rainham, Essex RM13 9NY.

Any help on Ultima V appreciated. All letters answered. I have most character replies on disc in text files, almost complete dungeon plans, and will attempt to reciprocate on any info.N.B.H Vickerstaff, 670 Yarm Road, Eaglescliffe, Cleveland, TS16 0DP. Tel: 0642 781073

Help on Hitchikers Guide to The Galaxy, Tasword, Qualitass, Tasprint, DMP2000. Ben Taylor, 5 Hope Street, Glossop, Derbyshire, SK13 9SB. Also help wanted on Stationfall.

C6464/128 Help Service, write to me with a list of games that you want help on and I will send it back post haste. Please send a SAE and remember it is for your arcade type games only. Write to Mark Essen, 26 Thick Hollins Drive, Meltham, Huddersfield, HD7 3DL. Hurry!

Fed up with a crap picture on your MCOI with Atari ST? SAE for help sheet to: C Parker, 14 Cross Lanes, Pill, Bristol BS20 0JQ. Phone Pill 5242 after 6pm.

For technical help on all aspects of 68000 assembly language programming on the Atari ST, send sae. to Simon Jones, 267 Ansty Road, Wyken, Coventry CV2 3FL.

Pawn, Planet Fall, Station Fall, Enchanter, Sorcerer, Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy, Leather Goddesses of Phobos, Hollywood Hijinx, Zork 2, Part of Dungeon Master (11th level), Starcross.
C Bass, 21 Third close, East Molesey, Surrey KT8 9PW.

Any help on Dragons Lair Screen three. Any pokes. All on Amstrad tape or disc. I have completed T.Renegade, Frost Byte. 0789-840274.

CBM 64 Programming Group send your problems with a SAE to Howie Bailey, 142 Broomfield Road, Chelmsford, Essex CM11 1RN.

Any help appreciated with C64 adventure games and any info in general. Write to Fred McDonald, 17A Drum Trocher St, Kilsyth, Glasgow GG5 0LX.

Chrono Quest, The Pawn, Shadowgate, Uninvited, Dungeon Master, Half of Bermuda Project. G H Walker, 34 West Street, Evesham, Worcestershire WR11 4AP.

Snowball, Return to Eden, Worm in Paradise, Bard's Tale I, Pool of Radiance. Jim Laver, 366 High Street, Colney, London, Herts AL2 1HN.

Anyone stuck on: Lancelot, Gnome Ranger pt 1, KQ III, Lurking Horror, Corruption, Guild of Thieves, Jinxter. If so write to me. Tracy Tattum, 68 Alver Road, Fratton, Portsmouth Hants PO1 5HW.

Help on Kings Quest 1, 2, 3, Leisure Suit Larry and Guild of Thieves and some Amiga games for sale. Ring Peter 0529 60684.

I have knowledge on many ST adventures, my speciality being The Bard's Tale, Borrowed Time, Tass Times in Tone Town, Jewels of Darkness, Corruption, Jinxter, Bureaucracy, The Grail and Questprobe 3, Human Torch and The Thing. Once again I offer my help to all adventurers!
Neil Hickman, 56, Mogul Lane, Halesowen, West Midlands B63 2QW. Telephone (0384) 60129, between 6 - 10 Monday - Saturday.

I have a game called Caves of Doom which is an adventure game with its own book. This game is for the CBM 64 and I am having great trouble solving it. If anyone out there can help solve the adventure, then please write to Stephen Morgans, 48 Hanbury Walk, Bexley, Kent, DA5 2JJ.

Has anyone got any tips for any Sega especially for Teddy Boy , Fantasy Zone, The Maze, Kenseiden, Double Dragon, After Burner, Zillon 2, The Ninja, Rocky. Send the tips to Chris Mason, 54 Lochinver, Birch Hill, Bracknell, Berks, RG12 4LD.

I have completed the Bard's Tale I. If you want a map, please enclose 5p per map for photocopying. Write to John Riddoch, Limehillock Croft, Grange, By Huntly, Aberdeenshire AB5 5LA. Or phone Grange 643 for quick tips.

Write for help on any part of Leisure Suit Larry in the Land of the Lounge Lizards. SAE to Colette Spoard, 14 Nevin House, Bourne Avenue, Hayes, Middx UB3 1QU.

Help wanted on Bards Tale. Have completed Dungeon Master, Phantasie II, Lords of Time, Golden Baton, Colossal Adventure. Alan Wheatley, 48 Cameron Crescent, Buckie, Banffshire, Scotland AB5 1DW. Tel 0542 32045. Weekends only.

Help, hints and bits of maps offered (but not complete solution) to the following: The Pawn, Guild of Thieves, Jinxter, Colossal Cave, Leather Goddesses of Phobos. Please say how many points you have scored and what you did to earn them (this helps me determine where you are) plus what is puzzling you. Write (with SAE) to Clive J Mewse, 438A Ewell Road, Tolworth, Surbiton, Surrey, KT6 7EL England.

I have completed Leisure Suit Larry in the Land of the Lounge Lizards and Police Quest. I have also got quite far on Hacker. Stephen Cotton, 2 Dawlish Close, Elmbrook, Nuneaton, Warks V11 6YR.

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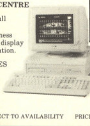

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THE BLITTER END...

CHAMPAGNE ON DRAUGHT...

It's not all champagne and Ferraris in the entertainment software industry, but Staff Writer Andy Smith is clearly aiming to stock his cellar with the bubbly stuff. True, it does look rather like we sent a life-size photo of Andy to compete in the *Vindicators* play-off, but you can tell by the beret and high-fashion rolled trouser bottoms that it is the real Smithy collecting the booze. No self-respecting cardboard cut-out would be photographed dressed like THAT. (Come back Frank Spencer, all is forgiven.)

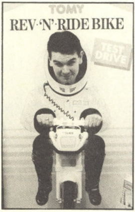
And on the subject of hats, notice that Marc Strachan of Domark is sporting suitable Jay Arther Tengen (or ten gallon?) headgear as he hands over the fizz...

Which all leads rather smoothly to an Oops spotted by several eagle-eyed readers in our last issue – for the second consecutive month, the Domarks suffer at the hands of the mystic force behind ACE Oopses. Despite the words you read about the Rainbow Arts crew providing 16-bit versions of the Tengen coin-ops, we learn that Consult Computers, Walking Circles and Teque are in fact doing the business. However can that have happened? Paranormal forces must be at work.

SOFTWARE MAGNATES AT PLAY, NO 1 IN A SERIES...

Stepping out of his red Ferrari, Mark Cale of Cale and Cale, purveyors of games software to the cognoscenti, experiences a taste of life in the saddle. Playboy Mark was spotted going on a test drive at the recent Earls Court Toy Fair with siren wailing and headlight flashing.

Ride hard, stay sane as we say here on Blitter End. And just to help all our Blitter fans out there to stay sane, we've got a couple of delightful scale models of classic motorbikes to give away. In what is almost certainly the first Blitter End competition, we're offering you, dear readers, the chance to write a witty caption for this picture of Mark on his mean machine. The two most chucklesome entries sent to Blitter Biker, ACE, 4 Queen Street, Bath, Avon, BA1 1EJ before April 1st earn their senders model motorbikes. Mark Cale and employees of Future Publishing are simply not allowed to enter!



JUST TOO MANY 'H'S

And to close, one more oops, discovered in this very issue. (Another First for Blitter End...) The feature on the *Bit Bopper* this month makes fulsome mention of a company called 'Technation'. Which means that there are a good few too many 'h's on the page. Muttering darkly about the strange keyboard-polling routines of the ACE writing machine has simply not let our man get away with calling Tecnation 'Technation'. Full details of the sanctions extracted for this foolish error can't be given on this page – most of our readers have delicate stomachs...

ADVERTISERS INDEX

16 Bit Centre 129
16 Bit Software 129
Activision 100
Atari 46-47
Barbeck 131
Best Byte 118
Boxoft 131
Castle Computers 119
Cheetah 130
Clik 112-113
Computerware 135
Crazy Joe's 121
Digital Integration 38
Domark 51-53
Enkay 129
Entertainments International 8
Evesham Micros 117
Games Shoppe 124
HSV 124
Homesoft 120
Infogrammes 94
Intermediates 111
Krysalis 99
Ladbroke 106
MCD 132
Mail-Centa 120
Mailsoft 131
Medusa 121
Megaland 122-123
Megasave 126
Microprose 24, 68, 82
Microsnips 58
Microware 131
Mindscape 65
Mirrorsoft 35, 61
Ocean 2-3, 36, 88
PC Entertainments Software 133
Postronix 20-21
Psygnosis 17
SDC 128
STD Software 131
Sabre 16 129
Samdale 109
Softek 15, 76
Softsellers 125
Software City 127
South East Kent 131
Sub-Logic 58
Target Games 116
Telecomsoft 42, 79
Telegames 133
Telemap 29
Tiger Mail Order 126
Topsoft 110
Triologic 29
US Gold 6-7, 30-31, 54, 66
Video Vault 87, 93
Worldwide 136
W.T.S 131

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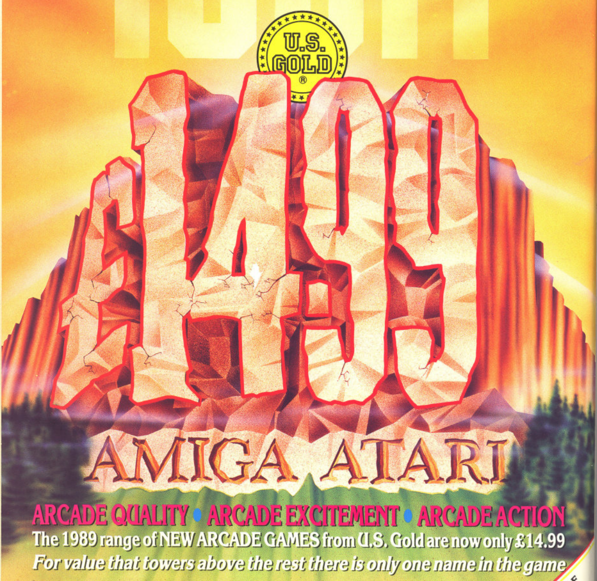
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