

OVER
ONE HUNDRED
HOT GAMES
REVIEWED INSIDE

GIGER'S DARK SEED

Mr Alien has written a computer game! (Well, sort of)



ISSUE 55

April 1992

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The wait will be over on June 8th.

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(7 other colours)





20 **Bulfinch** first came up with the idea of BOB over a pizza after completing Powermonger. Now see how far they've got.

22 He may be able to draw pictures of male aliens with a brush, but how will it fit? Giger copes with DPaint BT Dark Seed - In The Woods



60 **Star Trek** - The 25th Anniversary is one of the most entertaining and fully rounded games we've seen all year. Read all about it in our ScreenTest.

78 The New Originals - This month the Bitmap Bros find out what they would have done with Tempest.



7 Disk! - How to use the thing on the front. **10 News** - All the rumours that are fit to print. **16 Previews** - Gary Whitta and a load of exclusives. **29 In the Works** - BOB from Bulfinch and Dark Seed from H/R Giger. **29 ScreenTest** **70 New Originals** - Tempest, Bitmap style. **78 Public Domain** - Cheapokings' Paradise. **82 Tearjerking Farewell**. **83 Reviews Directory**. Last month's pinks reprint.

R E V I E W S

30 **Sim Ant**

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be an ant? No. We didn't suppose so for a second. But it's interesting though. No, really it is. So interesting, in fact, that Maxis have done a whole game about it.

36 **Underworld**

Mix the deep adventuring skills of Dungeons Master and the graphic excellence of Wing Commander and you're certain to be looking at a winner. (It isn't! We'll show you how.)

42 **Desert Strike**

Budda-Budda (you!) brings owners scrambling to seek for Strategies forthcoming. Apologies may be most tempted to purchase a integrative just for the chance of using this sweetOne shoot 'em up.

48 **D-Generation**

No, not the top BBC show with Bruce and that girl with the legs in it. That's The Generation Game. This Generation game is all about every wonder on the PC. And we just love it.

54 **Parasol Stars**

Ed and Bob have bubble to bubble bubble to bubble the bubble bubble. Right after, they can ring around compact nature with their Rainbows. And now they have some umbrellas.

60 **Star Trek**

To boldly go, Captain's Log. Pickin' off Klingons, Vulcan Hrs. The answer is 11. It's life, Jim, but not as we know it, etc. etc. Slip into a scotch's pool and towel with us to the land of wobbly ants.

(STILL)
THE BEST
REVIEWS ON
THE PLANET

contents

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ACE DISK 2

Have I got some treats in store for you this month! For Amiga nuts there's a complete level of Gremfin's brilliant bug-hunt *Space Crusade* and IBM PC owners can get their jollies lobbing axes at small girls in a scene from Core's *Heimdall*. So much to say, so little space to say it in...

SPACE CRUSADE



Calling all Aces here! If you liked that really mega stack o' stack SF files then you'll love Gremfin's *Space Crusade*. You play a rock 'n' space commander leading a troupe of the hard-as-nails marines through wrecked spaceships populated by all manner of hideous alien creeps.

For your delatation and entertainment Gremfin have kindly provided ACE readers with a complete demo of the first level - the final game will have a fantastic twelve. The aim here is simple: find the massive EDUap-like Dreadnought and destroy it. And remember: Get them before they get you!

HAVING A FUNNY TURN

Space Crusade is played in turns. At the beginning of the turn a random effect occurs to keep you on your toes and then the players can perform their actions. First the player performs his actions, then the alien player (the computer) performs his. In his turn a player may move and/or fire with all, some or none of the marines under his control. Bear in mind that if an icon is shaded that means it can't be used by the selected marine that turn.



Action Window

The big square window is where all the action takes place. Normally you view the ship in 3D, while moving your marines and so forth, but it switches to exciting isometric 3D when combat occurs.

Status Window

To the upper-right of the action window is the status panel which gives information on the currently-selected marine, including health (red blinks for each life point) and weapons carried. Each weapon has a different effect. Again, due to lack of space I can't give all the details here - you'll have to find out what they do by trial and error.

Mini-Map Window

Situated to the left of the main window and below the status window, this normally displays a mini-map of the whole ship, complete with blinks for the marines and the aliens. However, select the special order or equipment icons and this window changes to show the things available. Also, during combat this display shows the attack and defence ratings scored by the two combatants.



ICON SING A RAINBOW...

All the marines are controlled via a simple point-n-click mouse interface. To activate an icon and select things click with the left mouse button. To cancel an active icon click with the right button. Grabbed! Anyway, here are these icons in full.



Explore icon

Click here and you can stroll freely around the ship's deck using the mouse. Alternatively click on the arrows around the edge of the action window.

Move icon

This icon is used to move the marines around. When squares where the marine can move to will be highlighted (click on one).



Fire icon

This icon lets the marine fire his weapon. The squares in range will be lit up in yellow - click on one, preferably with an alien in it!



ACE DISK 2

Hand-to-Hand Combat Icon



Use this icon to engage in more hand-to-hand combat with any creature on squares adjacent to your marine. As before, select the icon then select an alien.

Special Orders Icon

At the start of each turn the player has the opportunity to play a special order. Click here to see it. (There's isn't enough space to go into what each does here. I'm afraid - see if you can work it out yourself!)



Special Equipment Icon



Each frame of marines is equipped with some extra-special equipment that can be called into play - see if you can work out what it all does.

Open Door Icon

When a marine is next to a shut door it can be opened using this icon. Bear in mind that doors open automatically if moved through.



Scan Ship Icon

Click here to scan the nearby deck areas and reveal

SORRY ST-ATE

Sorry all ST loss. Due to a last minute problem with the disk we've had to omit *Escape* from the compilation. This occurred after the cover had been sent to the printers, meaning it was impossible to correct the error on the disk label reproduced there. Sorry, sorry, sorry and, once again, sorry!



GETTING GOING...

AMIGA

Simply drag the ACE Coverdisk into your drive slot and *Space Crusade* will load automatically. A piece of text will be displayed explaining what the game is all about then after a short wait the game will start. Have fun!

IBM PC

Hey-hey! Easy PC! While in your hard drive type MD ACE (Return) to create a directory called ACE. Then type CD ACE (Return) to enter the freshly-made directory. Insert the ACE Coverdisk in your 3.5" floppy drive. Now, assuming that this is drive A type A:ACE (Return) and the game will install automatically onto your hard drive. If it's drive B then type B:ACE (Return). Finally, type HEIMDALL (Return) to play....

HEIMDALL

You've heard all the hype, now here's the chance for all you real PC owners out there in ACE land to try out the infamous axe-throwing scene from *Corn's* forthcoming *Heimdall* extravaganza.

The idea is this: you play *Heimdall*, a right top geezer who's been hitting the ale just a bit too much. (Stick to Caracade, Heiny, that's my advice!) Anyway, Heiny's taking part in a conpo to free a babe from the stocks by cutting the locks of hair holding her captive. But this is no simple rip n' snip operation - Heiny has to throw axes to cut her golden tresses.

The game gives you the option to play using either keyboard or mouse. With the keyboard use the keys A, Z, O and P to move the right up, down, left and right respectively and hit the space bar to fire. Hit ESCAPE to return to the end of DOS. Enjoy ya'elves!



any strolling alien Maps.

Next Go Icon

When you're finished your turn click here to let the alien player have its.



Marine Icons



Click here to switch between controlling the five different marines. The two lights indicate whether the marine has already moved or fired or both. You can only perform each action once with each marine per turn.

3D/3D Icon

Toggle between the 3D and 2D views.



PROBLEMS, PROBLEMS...

Having trouble with your disk? Well, before you get too irate and start frantically calling the ACE office about the following:

- Make sure your computer and TV monitor are all connected up correctly.
- If the disk has been obviously damaged in the past or if the overwrap - i.e. its best, better or otherwise obviously physically damaged - then DO NOT INSERT IT IN YOUR DISK DRIVE! ACE Imagines and EMAP Images will not be held responsible for any damage caused to your hardware by damaged disks.
- However, maybe the disk is faulty. Pop the disk in a padded envelope along with a note explaining your predicament and a city stamped self-addressed return logo and send it to:

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EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

Faced with tough competition from the likes of arcade imitators Sega and Virtuality, BandFuse has launched an innovative entry into the bustling world of amusement simulation.

Commander looks like a space shuttle from a cheap science fiction movie. Despite such a drawback, this offbeat two-seat upgrade boasts high-resolution graphics, CD stereo sound and great (and, incidentally, comfortable) seats to hopefully prevent repetitive strain injury.

Furthermore, the maintenance software played inside the machine has been designed by Lucasfilm, the California company that gave us the stunning special effects in *Yoda's Revenge*. The San Rafael



to commanding a multimillion-dollar *Cocoon* robot

has it as strange as knocking out quality video games, either. Its subsidiary, Lucasfilm Games, has produced a string of superb stuff in the past including *Rescue on Fractalus*, *Ballblazers*, *Three Flies in a Row*, *The Force of Britain*, *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* and *Secret of Monkey Island 2*.

BandFuse is promising a variety of games scenarios for the games, from *Star Wars* replicas

drawn from the recent AT-AT wars in London, featured a standard arc combat style of games.

Although the Commander is a result of expertise in military simulation technology, it would undoubtedly fit inside a shopping center in downtown Tokyo. Would you believe that, Lucasfilm has already provided the visual feast for such an experience. What a surprise, eh?

FULL OF EASTERN PROMISE

A radical departure from its previous light-gun releases, Wolfpack, Nintendo is marketing this futuristic arcade simulator for the PC and Super NES.

Published by Data East in the USA, Ultrazone, Sanction Earth is a blend of strategy and combat. A proprietary graphics development system has been used to bring remarkable re-rendered 3D modeled animation to the game.

Reminiscent of the giant war machines seen in *BattleTech*, Ultrazone are mechanized do-dies which look like humans with a scorpion. The idea is to play a squad of three units and stop the alien invaders from taking over our lovely planet.

"Ultrazone will delight gamers with its depth of play and amazing graphics," boasts Connie Freeman of Data East. "We've taken full advantage of the expanded capabilities that the Super NES provides."



A BRICK TOO FAR



It had to happen sooner or later. Super Mario Bros. Legend has arrived! Well, sort of. *Brigade* from DataEast has previously enjoyed considerable success with a building block set based around the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. As our kids are currently more interested in the exploits of a New York plumber than a bunch of snail-talker heroes in a half shell, the Super Mario GameWorld seemed an obvious choice. It's expected to reach British toy shops in the very near future. Price to be announced.

WORD UP

■ **Welcomed** Every morsel of this delicious games news has been eagerly certified by the Ministry of most excellent Exclaim. So, talk in, there's plenty here for all you hungry players.

■ **What's happened to Player Manager 2?** We asked about the same question. It seems *BM 2* is top of the wishlist list. "I don't want [people to find out when it's *Kick Off 3*]," disclosed an unusually cryptic *And Sports*. "We've done a lot of work on it," scheduled for release at *Enter on Design and*, *Kick Off 3* will include such gems as sliding tackles, chip passes and the ability to bring into playmen. *One Goal* is also reworking the impressive version of *Kick Off* to the Super NES. When it comes to setting out tapes and lighting search *Reber*, promising British codes can still show these tips a thing or two, eh?

■ **How would you like to 'win' in a best-selling computer game?** Origin has given such an honor to thirteen lucky people in a totally out-of-the-ordinary contest. These select Ultra players will actually appear as champions in *Ultima VI: The Black Gate*. Apparently, thousands of entries came in from around the world. Some winners were automatically chosen with a few specially-marked rare stones included in random *Ultima VI* packages during 1990. The rest were picked by a voting committee comprised of Richard "Lord British" Garriott and other members of the *Ultima VI* design team. The youngest winner was 14-year-old Greg Cote from New Jersey. Honorable Lucy Jarvis, 44, will play a seven-month in this epic fantasy roleplay adventure. Nobody from Europe was chosen. "Never before have you had been included to this degree," contends Garriott. "They will be able to see and talk with their alter egos."

■ **Bored about news, we like to take a brief**

journey just normally inland where you, the reader, discover some completely obscure video game cartridges. This month, our ribs tickled at the sight of going deep on fish with the *Blue Marine (At-8)* for the Nintendo Entertainment System. That's right, it's another ball-up from the creators of the *Black Box*. They gave indeed, ladies and gentlemen.

■ They said it couldn't be done, but *Granada* will include a track editor with *Lunar II* on the Amiga and ST later this year. Sheffield's most prominent software publisher is forging ahead with other most noising games, too. *Wipe* has already begun on *Top Floor 2* for the Super NES (see our 'In The Works' report last month) and don't be surprised to see *Lunar Turbo Challenge 2* on the Megadrive and Genesis in 1993.

■ The *Blue Marine* from At-8 is coming soon on Super NES!

■ We're happy to announce *Olympic Gold - Barcelona 1992*, the *Megadrive* and *Genesis* (both) from US Gold, is about finished. This sports racing features seven Olympic events including 100m sprint, 200m running, 200m freestyle swimming, 100m freestyle, archery and ten spring board diving. After all these years, *Olympic Gold* will be the first game to be sold in North America under the US Gold brand. A representation of William Jones and the last *Granada* since their first Sega console is also in the works.

■ A moment of silence, please, for this sad software obituary. *Rise of the Dragon 2*, beloved sequel of the *Dynasty and Tears* Online graphic adventures, possibly passed away last month. *Rise of the Dragon 2* is survived by *Willy Baseball 2*. This licensing baby should come of age next year.

■ Fox Arsenal PC offered *Thaloman* some cash back on an appalling performance this season? The creator of such C&A classics as *Delta* and *Amalgam* foolishly bought the computer game rights to this soccer team when they could taste victory and had already loaded loads of expensive paid tips over to Europe. Sadly, the only way Arsenal will win anything is if they buy a copy of the *Thaloman* soccer simulation on Amiga, ST or PC. A great between arcade and management template, this entirely production will also incorporate digitized pictures of the squad. Come on you, boys!

SWEAT AND TEARS

Top brass at Electronic Arts' HQ in California must have endorsed 'a million' and beach party has on their programmers after the launch of the highly desirable *Willy Baseball* (*Dynasty*) *Tears Online* and *Secret of Monkey Island 4* (*Jacobellis*) *Games* (Not before time, eh?)

The reason for such a radical decision would be clear, EA is seriously lagging behind on competitive graphic adventures for the PC and star designer Brent Itonson is too busy working on the latest *Check Your Flight* simulation to care.

Now, after many hours of dedicated overtime have been clocked up, EA thankfully has a sys-

MEAN MACHINE



After a quiet start to the year, Megadrive owners have plenty to start waving at in the coming months.

Mindscape II to publish the *Megadrive* and *Super NES* adaption of *Gods*. The playable platform issues, the best *Bitmap Brothers* effort since *SpooBall 2*, is to emulate a few trends in all the right places. For a start, the somewhat *Megadrive* conversion runs at 30 frames per second with 64 colour on screen unlike the original *Amiga* game which can only muster 17 frames and 16 colours. The *Bitmap Brothers* are working with respected Linux programming boys Gal'Gold to create this one. As a bonus, the music changes while *Gods* is played, it should be out in the 4th quarter.

Wings Games has put its faith into another *Megadrive* classic, *European Club Soccer* in the Megadrive version of the chart-topping *Man Utd United Europe* from *Krisalis*. Early reports suggest this translation plays a far tougher game of *trode* and effectively has a tarty 16 colours on screen at the same time. This is made possible through the use of the *Megadrive's* built-in graphics mode for casting shadows on the grass. There's also a password save facility allowing up to eight players to compete in a thrilling cup tournament. In addition, *Linux* seems to look forward to playing *Manchester United Europe* before too long.

Finally, *Condemners* and *Clash* Toys are to introduce a *Megadrive* version of the *Game Gear*. This crafty device is used to customize your favourite video games with things like extra speed and infinite lives, making them easier to play and finish. *Dead* Electronics already has a similar gadget available for around £40.



tem to be proud of. The firm intends to put it to good use, too. The *Case of the Scrambled Scalpel* will be the first in a series of *Shreklock Holmes* investigative adventures featuring brilliant graphics, stinking sounds and a silly interface. Doesn't that sound yummy? Not 'arf, but you can't wait for October?



WAR GAMES

Can it possibly be true? Is Sensible Software really producing a player-made island of *Megadrive* and *Learnings* on a handy size 3.5" floppy disk?

A real arcade strategy game due for release after *Witch* and *Sensible Soccer*, *Canon Fodder* will make it onto the *Amiga* and *ST* ahead of *Megadrone II*. As you can see from this overview of *Interainment*, the wacky bunch of Sensible Software have no time for holidays or sleep!

With a whole squad of soldiers and associated weaponry under your command, the computer-controlled enemy is just itching to see what you're made of. All your men have different skills, some are able to fly helicopters while others can accurately shoot people. Every time any of these men survive a battle, their rank goes up and another skill is added to the list. The rest of your team is made up of raw conscripts who specialise in being blown apart.

Canon Fodder is thick full of tricks, traps and traps. How, for example, are you going to move your tank past the quicksand on level 112? Like *Megadrone II* before it, this title makes good use of sampled speech.

After the recent collapse of *Mirrosoft*, Sensible Software is still looking for a publisher...

SKIES THE LIMIT

With the disk and staff in ample supply, here are five of the latest developments in PC flight entertainment...

▲ Axes of the Pacific isn't available yet, but Dynamic's *Storm Online* has already announced the release of RAF in the Pacific. This title by databank for the long-awaited flight simulation from the makers of *Real Force* pits the best British fighter designs against the mighty Japanese Zero plane. Alternatively, the WWII 1946 expansion disk takes the conflict a stage further. What if President Truman had decided against launching a devastating atomic attack against Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the summer of 1945? Could the Japs have won a conventional war over Hoosier skies...

▲ Over at LucasArts Games, programmer Larry Holland has just finished another add-on for *Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe*. This second



Tour of Duty package lets you fly the P-80 'Shooting Star' on treacherous low-level ground strikes against the last remnants of Meist-type targets. It contains three flight school missions, eight historically accurate sorties, five custom officers and a mission builder to create your own thing.



PURITY OF NOISE

Everybody in the house can now produce some kickin' sounds thanks to the Music System from Atari. What's this all about, then? The company is again promoting the sound aspects of the S1 to the general public.

According to Atari, anybody can produce a top ten album track using the wealth of dedicated software and gadgets available from third-party developers.

"With the unbeatable combination of MIDI technology and a huge library of music software, it comes as no surprise that the S1 is used by the world's leading musicians including Madonna and Peter Dinklage," goes the blurb.

If only it was that simple, eh?

▲ Misnamed the 'Fourfold Boys', the 357th Fighter Group was one of the top units during World War II. These guys managed to shoot down almost 700 German planes. Heroes of the 357th from Electronic Arts tests your skills with these famous American coos in seven historical mission types. Will you be able to intercept a V1 flying bomb before it reaches England?

▲ If you prefer futuristic flight battles, *Academy* has a sequel to *Star Control* waiting patiently in the wings. A hybrid action/casual role-playing game, *Star Control II: The U-Glass Masters* attempts to pack in 25 distinctly different spacecraft, 500 unique star systems, 'ultra-bright' 256-colour graphics of hyperspace, 3D rotating planets, fractal generated surfaces, and, yeah, some remarkable digitised music and sound effects. "There are plots within plots," reveals co-developer Paul Roche II. "You can't just blast away at things. You have to ask yourself: what do these aliens really want?"



▲ Finally, Micrograin is busy working on what could become the best evader ever on your PC. With such an esteemed pedigree and some truly awesome 3D graphics, the early demonstration of F15 Strike Eagle III is already looking better than a Mach 3 afterburner going at full thrust. This evading game should be ready for takeoff in late 1993.



Going from strength to strength, W. Industries has recently expanded the range of software available for the Versality 386 arcade machine.

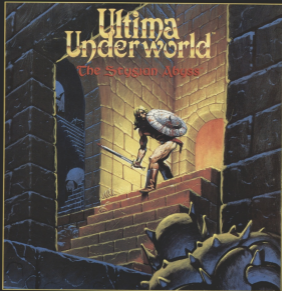
Legend Quest in Nottingham is participating in the East of away sites offering themed Virtual Reality entertainment for mass consumption.

The first of these adventures is, unsurprisingly, a multi-player adventure where up to four players can cooperate together along a classic storyline. It also features a new race of creatures, the ability to save games in progress and, refreshingly, a virtual sword.



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The Stygian Abyss™



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Some games must be played to be believed and Ultima Underworld: The Stygian Abyss - a game of action, motion and movement - is one of them.

You won't believe your eyes



Actual screens may vary.



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EAT YOUR GREENS

A special update on one of the few video game styles which appeals to both sexes. Here's a brief bit of info on the major golfing games coming soon for your machine...



AMIGA

• They said it couldn't be done, according to US Gold, but the glorious 156-colour graphics in Links have been faithfully converted over from the original PC version. The designers of this impressive game took over 500 photographs of the course at Torrey Pines, USA. They also obtained some topographical drawings and detailed information on weather and wind conditions. All this was combined into 750K of realistic terrain data. Let's hope the Amiga conversion cuts out the long wait between each hole when this series of shots and links is actually manipulated. Using a slow 5MHz PC, it used to take roughly 30 seconds to redraw the screen every time you wanted to take a shot!



• Even CDTV owners can grab a slice of the sporty life with Jack Nicklaus CDTV by Accolade. The 18-hole course of Muirfield Village in North America has been painstakingly recreated using over 9,000 digitised stills. These photographs have been rendered as HAM screens and overlaid with 16-colour sprite animations of the golfers. "People should feel like they are playing golf with Jack Nicklaus himself," says Chris Brinkman at Accolade. "We have a realistic view from nearly every spot on the course."



PC

• At the same time, Accolade is testing Jack Nicklaus' Golf and Course Design: Signature Edition as the first 256-colour VGA golf simulation and course designer. Apart from offering the normal features expected from such a prestigious license, the game contains plenty of nice touches like digitised trees, straggled bunkers and the 'natural' sampled sound of a golfball landing in the water hazard. "Signature Edition has better graphics, better speed and more features than any other golf game," establishes a spokesperson. "It's beautiful, fun and challenging too. For the true golf aficionado, there really is no other choice."



ST

• Sorry, there's no sign of any fresh golf carts and/or ballies booming on the horizon.

MEGADRIVE

• Veteran golfing simulation, Worldclass Leadboard, is about to appear soon thanks to US Gold and Access.



SUPER NES

• Links is a blend of golf and simulated wagering on every hole. "There's no other game on the market that even comes close," claims Steve Matzinger of Iron. "We predict Links, thanks to its outstanding colour and detailed graphics, will be an instant hit with action players and golf lovers alike."



Heave ho!

True Golf Classics is finally making its way over from Japan via the USA. T&E Soft has introduced digitised images with a custom 3D graphics system called Polytop. "It's twilight fun with superior gameplay," a spokesperson raves. "This other golf game gives you this much. True Golf Classics takes you not to an actual PGA course in Hawaii, updates and your handicap after each tournament round and saves your stats and game using the built-in battery backup."



GAMEBOY

• From the firm that brought us Gadius and Operation C on the Gameboy, Ultra Golf offers a two-player option and a tournament match of 'pro-style' golf. Before each shot, players can adjust their stances, view the entire hole and get a suggestion of the best club to use from the caddy. Now available on import.

It has taken control.
It owns their minds.
It imprisons their bodies.
It even absorbs the building!
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Gary Whitta's previews

Welcome one and welcome all, to the very last ACE Previews section. Yes, the powers that be have been trying to suppress my column (!) for months and they've finally succeeded - but fear not! We're not going down without a fight, and I've taken steps to ensure that we can send you off into the murky software future armed with a second-to-none idea of what lies ahead in the quality games stakes. So choke back those tears - they make the ink run - and be prepared to be fully closed-up about the finest software heading your way soon. Catch you later.

SENSIBLE SOCCER *Sensible Software*



First revealed exclusively to my good self back in October, the latest opus from the creators of the awesome Mega Lo Mania is at last nearing completion - and what a stunner it's turning out to be! A non-arcade arcade (only simulation in the Kick Off vein, it's already being tipped as the game to knock Amos's classic off its throne, Sensible Soccer has a strong European theme - its release has been set to coincide with the Euro-championships in June, with the game featuring 54 real European club sides (including the likes of Inter Milan, Juventus and four English teams) and 48 European national teams. Players can compete in the European,

UEFA and Confederations' Cups as well as creating their own league and cup competitions. Designer Jon Ware is making big claims about the game's innovative control, saying it plays "like Kick Off should play", and there's no need to the extra touches, the real player names, reliable AI and a full tactical element. A publisher is currently in the process of signing the transfer papers, and we'll let you know when's get hold of it as soon as the ink is dry. It's interesting to note that with its necessary release date, Sensible's soccer should be coming out of the tunnel (on Amiga and ST, incidentally) at around the same time as the long-awaited Kick Off 2 - even THAT should be



action orientated environment, Race Drivin's now nearing completion on the 16-bit format courtesy of Danish converts of the original Hard Drivin'. As before, the action is considerably tougher than its most arcade raco games, with the car handling with startling realism and rolling pit-ups a regular occurrence for novice drivers. All of the original game's tracks and features are there, together with a host of new ones. There are two new tracks (Super Street, featuring a treacherous overtake loop, and the speed-orientated Auto Cross Track) with the player choosing from three cars - Spoonster, Roadster and Sportster - each with different handling and characteristics. Perhaps the most new feature, though, is the two-player option, known as Buddy Race, which allows head-to-head racing via dual machines and a link-up lead, or a single machine mode that has one player driving against a computerized peer car that mimics the other player's best performance. Domark says that Race is "notably faster than Hard Drivin'" - it certainly looks a lot better, and players will be able to judge for themselves just exactly when ST, Amiga and PC versions are released.

THE ADDAMS FAMILY *Ocean*

Just what it is about Ocean that makes them so wondrously good at acquiring licenses? I mean let's face it, who would have thought that The Addams Family would have been anything like the monumental box office hit that it has been? But whatever



the method of its success may have been, there can be no doubt that it's top notch material for computer conversion, that with all its inherent loquacious. That particular quality has certainly made it into the forthcoming 16-bit version, in which the player steps into Pook (Julia's dog) to play Gomez,

RACE DRIVIN' *Domark*

Aber's sequel to its hugely successful (and technically ground-breaking) coin-op Hard Drivin' may not have made quite as much of an impact as the original, but it was nevertheless a considerably more entertaining affair. Essentially the same game, but built around a faster and more





lead of the Adamses. The story goes that Morticia, Wednesday, Pugsley, Uncle Fester and the rest of the happy clan have been kidnapped and it's up to good ol' Raul to get them back. This is the second time that Ozawa's taken a big-name film and turned it into a jolly arcade-style platform escapade (Fudson Hawk being the first) - the action starts in the giant Adams house-hold, where Gomez accesses a variety of leisure worlds via a multitrack of doors and stairways. Given the fairly subject matter, this cutesy-style interpretation should work even better than it did with *Madness Made*. You'll get the chance to see for yourselves when Amiga and ST versions are released next month.

JAGUAR XJ220

Core Design

Just when you thought that there weren't any top racing car manufacturers left to borrow, up pops Core Design with their contribution to the ever-growing, ever popular Lotus-style arcade speed/race-up genre. As the title of the game may suggest, it's based on Jaguar's latest £420,000 street speedster, which rolls off the production line in June. The game design's yet to be finalized, but at the moment it sees you at the wheel of the super-fast XJ220 participating in a rigorous derby, racing across 11 countries and over 30 tracks against other top makes of motor, including Porsche, Ferrari and Lamborghini. The Core boys have opted for a strict system of racing, as they feel it works better than the rigger system used by the current pack-leader, Lotus 2. All the usual features are in attendance, including high-speed pit stops and a full tournament mode, and the nice people at Jaguar are said to be most pleased with what they've seen of the game so far, so that can't be half bad. But of course the final judgement must rest with you, and you get to make that judgement over the next month



or so when Jaguar XJ220 is released. Incidentally, Core is also planning a second Jaguar game using vector graphics and based on the successful Le Mans 24-hour race for release later in the year. Cool...

Project - X

Team 17

Who would have thought that a bunch of ex-developers could come up with such a smashing debut game as *Alien Breed* (reviewed ACE Issue 20)? However that's what. But now that they've managed to stick on with the excellence of their futuristic arcade blast'em-up, they're preparing to do it again with... another futuristic arcade blast'em-up. It's not exactly the most original game idea in the world, but hey, who cares when it's so fast, smooth and lively as this is looking? Project X, as you're probably already guessed, is a high-speed low-angle shooting extravaganza in the full-on worm world, with the player rocketing his way through the evil planet Xyx in order to fight off an alien invasion. There are six Earth's Eurasian stages, starting off in deep space and later progressing to planet surfaces and into the heart of the alien's secret space station... all in super-colourful graphics and snappy animation. There's plenty of impressive stuff here, including a super-sonic bonus section where the player pilots his craft through a narrow canyon at breakneck speed. Unfortunately, there's a price for all this technical excellence, as only owners of IBM Amiga will get a look in. But Project X isn't just an odd new month, as there's plenty of time for you to pick a necessary upgrade from some truly computer shows. This may be the best reason in ages to splash out on one.



TITUS THE FOX Palace

When Boris the Hedgehog first found out the games scene on a bright Autumn's day last year, it immediately became inevitable that the core character-based platform game would, before too long, make a comeback. This latest aim to make the leap across the channel for madder through the tunnel now that it's finished, eh? might, by people of a more cynical persuasion, be misconstrued as a rather blatant tactic to rip off. Actually, the name may be sort of similar, but apart from that and the presence of platforms there's very little to compare the two games by. Titus is, in fact, very similar to the French firm's earlier (and very nice) platform effort *The Miles Brothers*. The story goes that lovable Fox Titus has had his girlfriend kidnapped and whisked off to Marsden, leaving the heroic mammal with no choice but to venture all the way across the world to rescue her. What follows is a multi-national level's ladders ramp up with super-cute graphics, bonus items and - hopefully - excellent arcade-style gameplay. *Titus The Fox* is out next month on ST and Amiga. Fantastic, Mr Fox!





BOB



Putting it tentatively, BOB, like Michael Jackson who said he wasn't like other boys in Thriller, is not like other simulations. Of course, BOB doesn't look so strange in the pictures on these pages, but beneath the colorful gloss there's a decidedly grey stuff underneath...

The idea for BOB came to the team about two years ago - around the time that Flood was

The award-winning boys behind Populous I and II and Powermonger regard their latest project, BOB, as their most ambitious undertaking to date. On the surface, it could also be misconstrued as the company's least interesting, too...



Here you can see the character under the general engineering laboratory. It's a realistic scenario that the research and development department is using for prototyping ideas.

nearing completion. It was over a plot, no less. The flood wasn't influential, but it just gave us show how easily ideas can strike when you least expect them.

"The original idea was to control these little men with three bars - intelligence, strength and perception. These chemicals were injected directly into their brains. They're essentially individuals but you influence their behaviour to differing degrees."

That's Pete Molyneux talking about BOB's conception. He's currently putting the finishing touches to the PC version of Populous II before he tackles the implementation of BOB's strategic element: the business algorithms.

Yes, the business algorithms, for BOB is, believe it or not, a simulation of sorts of the high-flying world of international finance... with a twist: whoever



Here you can see the character under the general engineering laboratory. It's a realistic scenario that the research and development department is using for prototyping ideas.

that, lesson in the form of arcade action agents. But how can these two seemingly disparate elements possibly be successfully married to produce the playability expected from Bullfrog?

The pepperoni-driven prototype plan eventually developed into a story, which goes like this... in the not-too-distant future, a company will pioneer the Neural Chip - a miracle of modern technology which is plugged in to the back of the user's skull to create the desired escaped illusion. There's no need to look a freak in Berkeley and blow a fuse on bacon-and-birds fingers when you can actually experience all those situations and more, first hand, via a simple and inexpensive electronic device. Look, it could happen. And if it did, then it wouldn't take long for

other companies to jump on the bandwagon and produce their own Neural Chips, which is exactly what's happened in BOB.

Assuming the role of the big cheese of the company which discovered the Neural Chip, you desire the demise of your rivals. Industrial espionage and sabotage are the order of the day as you send genetically engineered agents to infiltrate and eradicate the opposition. There are other, less action-orientated means of expanding your empire, but whatever route you choose the goal is the same: global domination.

The bulk of BOB's programming is being handled by Sean Cadden, 29, who's summed the prospect of a successful modeling career - following his Climates Now debut in the Autumn of 1994 to pursue software Marston.

BOB is only a working title, currently favoured by Bullfrog over Cyberkissout and Higher Functions. The acronym for Blue and Orange Think arose in the very early stages of development

when Sean was putting together scratch screens - visual test-beds to give a feel for the product. The name is unlikely to change until BOB earns completion in September.

Bouncing back to BOB's humble beginnings we find that the product has been through many changes. Sean's early efforts amounted to little more than a large scrolling picture, too flat to function as an interactive environment.

"It had to be made three dimensional," says Molyneux, "but we didn't want to use vectors (it would take too long so we kept the isometric viewpoint. We did consider using an oblique perspective, but it proved impractical so we dropped it."

With a basic look established, Sean spent the following few months resolving the technical difficulties of a three dimensional isometric environment, such as creating the illusion that objects are moving in front of and behind the screen.

"It eventually reached the stage where it was feasible enough to implement the original idea," Molyneux reveals, "so we

produced an editor program to allow us to create maps. That was economically difficult, but we did it and now the original idea is being developed to produce playability.

"You start in your office with a map of the world showing all the major companies. They all start small, and their growth is related



Right: One of the earliest incarnations of BOB contained the slightly abstract effects of oblique perspective views. No other idea at the time achieved as an objective but really impractical objective.

to the way you play. We're aiming to fill in around a hundred countries with all the major cities - hopefully around two to three hundred. Each city's around four times the size of a Populous map."

"The cities also have fully-functioning lifestyles. They have their own populations, buildings and factories, and traffic systems, with cars, trucks, trains and monorails. They even have timely rush hour!"

"From your office you can buy and sell stocks and shares to affect the other companies," Molyneux continues. "You can hire and fire people or pump money into research and development for Neural Chips or new genetically engineered troops. You can even watch television. Viewing the adverts essentially allows you to find out what your rivals are up to. We're trying to fill in as many adverts as possible. We're hoping for about twenty minutes' worth."

"However, the most interesting option open to you in your office is definitely the one which allows you to view the three dimensional outside world and determine the actions of your troops."

"Those bars are the key to the whole thing," says Molyneux. "We're very proud of the way they work."

They work like this: by adjusting a troop's levels of intelligence, adrenalin and perception, subtle behavioural differences are created. Using the many possible combinations of those three bars in conjunction with a handful of basic icons, such as "G017" and "USE", the troops can be ordered to perform dozens of different functions.

For example, a gun-wielding troop with a high level of adrenalin would be too excitable



Your business is run from this desk. Daily earnings include buying and selling shares on the futuristic version of the Wall of the planet and visiting the shops and in the centre of the planet the genetic engineering laboratory.

to be trusted to aim accurately, but he would make an excellent aggressive combatant. Sadly, there's another, more devastating side-effect relating to over-use of the three sliders... the doped-up troop's personality will eventually become its own and it won't be so easy to direct it.

The troops' primary objective is to visit cities and create new businesses. They set up offices and manufacturing plants and the like around the world, including in the equatorial zone of sabotage, hijacking and kidnapping and much more besides.

"You could blow up your rival's research and development plants or just steal their secrets," says Molyneux. "Or you could even stir up dirt to swing people's opinion against the company."

You see, to make the process of ruling the world a little easier, the Neural Chips produced by your company contain some secret additional programming which can easily be triggered to activate a sequence to control the users. Subtly, as your customers become slaves to your rhythm, incorporating into B08 such a high level of detail is not without its problems. There are so many possible visual outcomes to situations that a compromise has had to be reached regarding



A close view of B08's control panel reveals the three-dimensional bars of the top and the three sliders used to influence the troops' behaviour in the outside world. The small horizontal slider in the centre controls the planet's B 08. Software developed by a small team of five former programmers.



These three sliders allow B08 to adjust. Experiments showed us the genetically engineered lower up about their business. Discovering that computer buildings with domes and rotors sometimes had wiring on their lower levels, the B08 staff always used the B08.

content-sensitive detail. For example, blowing up a section of monorail could cause the train to crash in the ground. The lack of necessity for appropriate frames of animation means that it wouldn't look pretty but at least you'd get the idea.

As the order seems to be growing ever taller, Balfour's reducing the size of the universe it produces but increasing the level of detail. But will Peter Molyneux ever finish what he started with Populous?

"Ultimately I'd like to go right down to the people level, but you can go too far, which is why we involve play testers along the way

to help shape the playability. It's too easy to forget that there's a lot more detail. It can get in the way and prove too much to handle until it becomes totally pointless, which is what the testers notice."

"There's this Russian fish simulator program I remember seeing, which creates any fish you like, and it behaves as if it was real. We're aiming for a simulation as complete as that. I suppose the ultimate objective would be to produce something like *Better Than Life in Real Dwarf*. It's so addictive you don't want to stop playing it."

By Gary Peier

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ADD

Dark Seed, the first game from newly formed Stateside company Cyberdreams, boasts graphics by R.E. 'Allen' Alger and some top-notch programming talent. So why does it remind Steve Cooke of Legend's 1982 release Vethala? And is that such a bad thing...?

Professional scriptwriters are wont to claim that there are only 30 basic plots, that these essential stories have always existed and that they will endure, unchanged in number or nature, until the end of time. Silence of the Lambs, The Canterbury Tales, Jurassic Park - whatever pettoleer you care to name, Mr and Mrs Fitzgerald were sacking it up thousands of years ago. And in 200000AD, Barbara Cartland COOCoVith will still be making money out of it. The pot may change, but the pudding goes on forever...

People, however, have been telling stories since God first entered Adam and Eve's address in his RoRoPa. They've had time -



a lot of it - to establish the rules of games, setting and style. They have, however, only been playing computer games for about 30 years and the plastic wheels, as it speak, are still in the process of being invented.

As with wheels, the games that survive are the ones that work. We've had a few square



ONE ALIEN...

ones over the last few years: for example, the first adventure, whatever Anita 'Magritte' Sorrisi' Sinclair may say, is dead. Text is not an ideal medium for use with a VGA, especially when you've got colour, sound and, even better now we have CD, digitised speech to play with. And whatever happened to the scrolling comic book format of Redhawk? And who cares?

Other square wheels have effectively disappeared as they were rounded up by better implementation. Single-screen scenarios like Borg and PicMan have succumbed to multi-dimensional scrolling; the top-down view is increasingly vulnerable to the ever-improving isometric approach; shoot-em-ups have acquired resource management and role-playing characteristics and so on...

One format, however, has remained pretty well static since 1983, and that's the animated graphic adventure. Just take a look at the shot on this page from Legend's *Valthalla* and ask yourself what exactly you get in

Rings Quest V that you didn't get with Thor and his pals back in 1983.

OK, sound. *Valthalla* just beeped. But it did beep - and that was all the Spectrum could do. The addition of quality sound is simply an improvement in execution, made easier by a more powerful 16-bit platform.

OK, better graphics. Yes, up to a point. The latter day animated adventures have learnt a few lessons about perspective viewpoints. But most of what you see is simply more colour and better quality artwork. Again, this is an improvement in execution, not a development of the essential idea.

Bigger maps - yes, but it's still the same idea. Simpler interfaces, ditto. Faster and better animation, ditto...

If the computer gaming world is going to end up with 30 basic genres of its own, it's beginning to look as if the animated adventure is one of them. And Cyberdream's first release, which - don't get me wrong - is a great game, just proves the point. The plot is fancy stuff, but the puzzle's good of fashioned role-play, with a few tasty additions.

Add One Alien

The first element that Cyberdreams have added to the recipe is motive power. Tate Seiss narrated H.R. Giger, who created Alien and lives near Zurich with a jet Siamese cat Muggi and some of the most disturbing household furniture you're ever likely to see. Use 540+350 Hi-res VGA graphics with 66 colours, switching pointers for different locations to avoid monotony. Use digitisers and five artists over a period of one year to generate 81 megas of graphics data that make excellent



Giger on the set of Alien (left) or Howard Chaykin's 1978 *Darkworld* book

use of Giger's visions of 'fear, guilt and anxiety'. Add digitised speech and a great Ad Lib sound track.

Mix all this together and you have *Valthalla* with some pretty awesome knobs on. People giggled when Thor beat the shit out of Loki, but no-one's laughing when Dark Seed hero Michael Dawson gets a headache from hell. What's going on?

The story (it's probably number 27 of the 36 attempts, but it may be 28...) involves Michael in a spot of bother with an alien race who are bent on world domination (definitely number 28). Dawson's just moved into a new house and it seems to be giving him a few headaches. Aspinin doesn't help, which isn't too much of a surprise because the poor chap's got an alien in his house. Presumably (it's not given too much away here) this alien has something to do with those rather weird nightmares



he's been having. Surely not, huh?

This story is initially presented in traditional animated adventure form. However, the graphics are superb - as you can see on these pages. Cyberdream's decision to stick with the limited palette and greater resolution has really paid off and the level of dramatic detail on these screens really adds to the atmosphere.

Oh, don't forget that this is still role-play, but it's very good role-play. Take the animated figure, for example. We've seen several major advances in this field since the *Valthalla* days. Colour, of





course. Larger, more detailed sprites, as in King's Quest IV. Then, in Brian Moriarty's Loom, experimentation with "camera angles" and scaling (see panel elsewhere). Cybersims, however, have taken the next logical step and digitized the central character. Crucially, they've also added dynamic reacting, with enough steps to ensure that the process is totally smooth. Mark Jensen "springs"

"The PC is now the machine of choice for adults. We can do more with it, even if graphics would come in rather handy!"

as it were and he may think in stature but he goes in style. Yes, good nifty-oo.

Restating makes each a difference because it doesn't just affect the way the character moves, it also gives the graphic designers much greater freedom



in the way they "set up camera angles" within the game. A figure that can immediately shrink or expand as it moves can be caught in close up, medium shot, or long shot, without worrying about subsequent movement in the frame. As any film director will tell you, camera angles make all the difference in any movie, but particularly in suspense - and if ever a game had suspense, this is it.

Discrete Honor of the Bourgeoisie

If you're used, for example, to Roberta Williams' storylines for the King's Quest series, you'll be

TEAM MACHINE

Cybersims is a pretty impressive set-up. Co-founder Pat Heithorn was one of the motivating forces behind Software Business Interactive Media. Both responsible for Space Ace and Dragon's Lair before that he founded Gamesoft where he launched games as diverse and impressive as Zaxxon and Pole Position. Producer Howard Beasley's background includes a spell of video and previous credits cover titles ranging from Rocket Ranger to Indiana Jones on the NES. John Krasner was previously at the Software Works, where his projects included the Miracle 4x project featuring women. From leading women.

But it's not just the technical gear we see here. Apart from games like our hero. Apart from work with Siger, Cybersims, they also have projects going with Bud "Wide Runner" Wood and John "Producer" Rasmussen. We can't wait!



Options, otherwise than by field for the first time. Why? Here there's no real-time. John Krasner, Bud Wood, Rasmussen, and also there. The fact that you can't see the whole scene, the programming, is that the computer, machine, game design and programming. It's for months. It's not good to be a PC or better or worse.

Options, left to right: Howard Beasley being with colleagues John Krasner, Bud Wood, and John Rasmussen.

There's more to the scenery than meticulous detail and technical competence, however. As you explore the game, you'll discover that beneath (or beyond) this bourgeois lives des res is a Giga-esque dimension of horror which, sooner or later, you will have to enter. In one of the game's many subtle hints, you do so through a mirror in one of the rooms - and you will later discover that the underworld is literally a mirror image of the overworld. This leads to some interesting gameplay features as you find that bushes which lead from A to B upstairs lead to A' to B' downstairs. The designers have worked in zero-sum twists based on this simple but attractive idea.

Controlling the Dawson figure is extremely easy. No typing is required and the mouse icon switches between three modes depending on what you want to do. As with some other recent releases, the icon changes as you move it over significant objects to indicate a possible action or message - this saves a lot of time endlessly clicking on different parts of the carpet looking for, for example, trapsdoors and the like.

Knowledge acquired by the character has to be completely relinquished each time you play again from the beginning. In other



respecting to wire flowers, fancies and pretty birdies sound every corner. Not fans, you won't. In Dark Seed you get toilers, pet plants and eye-eyen bathrobes, in great detail. Without any disrespect to Roberta, who's games I adore, this is the First World, not Candy Mountain - and a heavy dose of reality, of course, is what makes fantasy work best. "We looked at the Sierra games," commented boss Pat Heithorn, "and thought it would be nice if we could do something that wasn't a fairy tale." They've certainly succeeded.

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words, you may know from previous games that it's possible to perform a certain action, but still not be able to do it until Dawson has caught up with you in his current incarnation. This too is an approach taken in most modern animated adventures - it can become a bit of drag after a few plays but it's difficult to suggest an alternative that won't destroy the fabric of the story.

I don't think anyone would disagree that Dark Seed gives us pretty much the same pudding we were getting in 1983, but they've

made considerable and significant improvements to the presentation.

Most important of all, however, is that here we have further evidence that the animated adventure is an exciting vehicle for creative talent. By supporting this evidence with the recruitment of an internationally recognized artist, I suspect that Cyberscans and Dark Seed may do more than most in 1992 to boost the image of video entertainment.



ANIMATED ANCESTORS

Animated adventures have come a long way since 1983. Here are a couple of stops along the road...



Valhalla's battle scenes give the full video game experience that you don't achieve directly through other media. Including four videos on the original battle scenes as well as this and they prove themselves to be a valuable tool for learning the intricacies of the game's combat system.



The game's battle scenes are designed to be played in control situations, but it's possible to play the game in a more strategic mode. This is done by using the 'HELP' screen to arrange the letters to continue the game.



Sheep is a game that's really about anything that you can find in the game's world. When you see a sheep, you can click on it and it will disappear. This is a game that's really about anything that you can find in the game's world.

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Ultima VII makes another giant technological leap forward. Harnessing the full samsa power of the latest generation PC's, the Ultima world literally takes on an extra dimension, with a completely new full screen VGA graphic environment which brings fantastically realistic close-up views of the gameplay as it develops.

Instead of watching this amazing interactive story unfold through a small window, now you are in Britannia! Absorbing the atmosphere. Feeling the pressure. Actually hearing the characters speak. Controlling your every move and those of your companions, in a unique, mouse-driven environment.



System Requirements:

IBMPC or 100% compatible 386/486, 386 or 486

Hard Disk, High Density 3.25" or 3.5" disk drive

2MB Memory

VGA (or CGA) colour monitor

Keyboard and/or mouse

Audio, Roland MT-32/LAPC-1, CMI Soundblaster Sound Card*

* Required for speech.

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SCREENTEST



Stop, stop STOP! Don't turn that page! You're about to enter the ScreenTest section, a highly complex and multi-packed environment, and you'll only get the best out of the next batch of pages if you know how to find your way around. So why don't you invest a few minutes reading through this guide, and fully versing yourself in the ins and outs of the ACE ScreenTest system? Not only will you come out the other end a more rounded person, but you'll know what all the little logos mean as well. So, without further ado let's get down to it and let's do it.

COMPARE AND CONTRAST

As an easy frame of reference, every game is compared to either another in the same genre, or maybe it's original color-up or movie lens.



Color-up or movie lens
 Comparison to other games

THUMB UP & DOWN The most important positive and negative points in at-a-glance format. Maybe it's too tough, or lacks a two-player option etc.

850+ COMMENDING

RENDERING SCORE BAR



RATING A score out of 1,000

- the most instant gauge of a game's quality, further qualified with scores out of 10 for Graphics, Intelligence needed to enjoy the game, Audio and Fun factors.

PIC CURVE A prediction of the lifespan of the game's interest. An arcade Mead may have lots of instant appeal, but will you still be playing in a month's time?

HINT Found on the centre pages of most reviews describing - surprisingly enough - the location of a handy start-up tip.



TRAILBLAZER Awarded to games of outstanding art, sound quality, and generally viewed to further the art of games software production. A game bearing the Trailblazer logo should be bought without hesitation.



SOUND, GRAPHICS AND IDEA These words go to games excelling in a particular area. A game which fails to get a Trailblazer or rounded fairness may still walk away with one of these.



ACE BENCHMARKS

A Benchmark game is, in our opinion, the very best in the particular Genre. By glancing at our description of the Benchmark, you will be able to decide if particular differences in a new game's design would make the current Benchmark or the new contender more or less appealing to you. Also, no software collection is complete unless it contains all the games listed here. If you're missing any, go and remedy the situation immediately.

ARCADE BLAST BNY (Score)

Classic 1980s following arcade through a wide variety of fantastic space, platform, puzzle, strategy and shoot 'em up genres. The graphics and sound, combined with the frequency and variety on screen is absolutely incredible. A must in your own home!

ARCADE ADVENTURE GOOD (Manageable)

Not as intensely entertaining as the likes of the Progress or others of the ACE Benchmark genre, but still a very strong fully featured puzzle action to action. It is the average's average when it comes to the genre.

ROLE PLAYING GAME SHADOWLANDS (Remark)

Just what you require for the best of the best. An immense RPG from the genre that gives a lot of strategy and depth of thought. Master your skills and you'll be a hero. It's the best of the best.

SPORTS ARCADE MEN OF STEEL (Action)

The primary reason for this top rating is the way the game handles the action. The graphics are superb and the sound is excellent. It is one of the best of the best.

STRATEGY CIVILIZATION (Masterpiece)

The ultimate strategy game. It is the best of the best. It is the best of the best. It is the best of the best.

ADVENTURE HOOKY ISLAND 2 (See Gem/Lastestime)

See the description in the Gem/Lastestime section. It is the best of the best. It is the best of the best.

RACING SIMULATION PORNELLI ONE GRAND PRIX (Masterpiece)

See the description in the Gem/Lastestime section. It is the best of the best. It is the best of the best.

BEST-OF-OP IM+ (System 3)

An excellent and varied version of the original game. It is the best of the best. It is the best of the best.

RACING GAME STUNT CAR RACER (Masterpiece)

Stunt Car Racer is a very good racing game. It is the best of the best. It is the best of the best.

SPORTS SIMULATION JERRY WHITE'S WRESTLING PROWESS (Wings)

Wrestling ProWess is a very good sports game. It is the best of the best. It is the best of the best.

SIMULATION FALCON 3.0 (Spectacular Masterpiece)

Falcon 3.0 is a very good simulation game. It is the best of the best. It is the best of the best.

ACTION STRATEGY POPULUS 2 (Spectacular Arts)

Populus 2 is a very good action strategy game. It is the best of the best. It is the best of the best.

PUZZLE GAME TETRIS (Masterpiece)

Tetris is a very good puzzle game. It is the best of the best. It is the best of the best.

PLATFORM GAME SUPER MARIO WORLD (Masterpiece)

Super Mario World is a very good platform game. It is the best of the best. It is the best of the best.

Genre: 'Software Toy'

Publisher: Maxis (distributed in Europe by Ocean)

Developer: Will Wright and Justin McComick

Price: £29.99

SIMANT

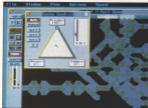
The word simulation simply isn't good enough for the boys and girls at Maxis. No way. Following an alternative agenda to the rest of the games developers out there in videogame land, they like to play with 'software toys'. That's California freestyle for you. So, what the heck

can one of these new age programs actually do? Does your computer really come to life, then? The main claim to fame is *SimAnt*, which tries to make the whole affair pretty *visible* than ordinary games. While both follow the same basic rules, a 'software toy' allows personal goals to be pursued. Part of the fun comes from figuring out how the underlying system works and taking command of it. In other words, you are encouraged to create, explore and control new environments and worlds. Yes,

we've got a love thing. As Maxis puts it, players are rewarded for creativity, experimentation and understanding - not for rote memory or knockle-poke reflexes.

The first two 'software toys', *SimCity* and *SimEarth*, have both won critical and consumer acclaim in Europe, USA and Japan for their fusion of fun and skill. With *SimAnt*, the word 'entertainment' is being more strongly emphasised. Can you really learn from and, more importantly, enjoy the process of managing an electronic ant colony? That's the make or break question which must have worried Maxis throughout the production stages of this unusual release. At least the main idea of this project gives some way to squash any initial reservations from players. Most people are fascinated by these very industrious social insects. Ants are part of human folklore and regularly make their presence felt at idyllic picnics in the countryside or the sugar jar back home. Now you can peep and poke around almost any aspect of their daily habits in minute detail without the need of a Thomas Salter microscope and some rusty old tweezers.

Based around accurate scientific information on ant going on, *SimAnt* provides an insight into life as an ant. What do they prefer to eat? How do they defend the nest from hungry predators? Why do they leave scent trails around your back



garden and kitchen? All these questions are not only answered, you must also learn from them in order to be successful as a captain of an industry. Gaining experience through experimentation is the name of this game, so, sorry about that, "software toy".

After reading an infernal and revealing book about our small pecky friends, the main lesson behind *SimAnt*, Will Wright and Justin McCormick, asked for assistance and general guidance from one of the Harvard University professors responsible for this Pulitzer Prize winning work. Edward Wilson did a most respectable job as an guru, making sure every detail was literally correct. One certainly never sees this much information on ants before. Did you know, for instance, that ants regulate the temperature and humidity within their nests by controlling the airflow through the various passageways enclosed? This is just one startling snippet of trivia from literally hundreds contained inside the game and comprehensive 176-page manual. There's also a hyper-text style information window which can be used at any point during the simulation to reveal useful scientific facts and a few strategies for succeeding at *SimAnt*.

Mainz obviously likes to take big risks with any



software project that comes along. In a potentially damaging and very unusual experiment, *SimAnt* is the first game from Mainz without any form of copy protection.

It certainly makes a change to forget those bothersome password systems before playing the game every time but is it worth the chance of total piracy? Those people hope you will not steal their work by giving away copies of *SimAnt* to your friends and colleagues. They reckon copy protection is a pain in the butt for everyone and would like to stop using it from now on. This, of course, depends on the reaction from you. Another interesting development, eh?

The basic idea of *SimAnt* is to oversee a colony of black ants in the Quick Game or take over the entire backyard in a Full Game. The garden and house are actually divided up into almost 200 separate sections known as patches. Each of these can hold a single colony of black and red ants. With a fair bit of nonsense calculation, you could be herding thousands of ants in no time at all. The reds are under the influence of the program itself in the Quick and Full Games. On a slightly less grand scale, Tutorial and Experimentation modes make up the other four choices available at the start of play.

An Experimentation Game sounds like one of those trendy teaching methods much loved in the '80s. You've got a free hand to tuck around with

a group of electronic ants without the handicap of any set aim or direction. That's right, you make your own excitement in this one. There is no winning or losing in Experimental Games, that would be far too competitive for modern thinking live-expression-educators. Instead, a full set of tools are included to test your investigative nature. The idea is to increase or decrease the size of every colony, dig holes anywhere you like, construct a series of ground obstacles to overcome, and so what happens. The only option missing here is a bottle of marmite and a box of matches to torch the nest. Warning! Don't try this at home kids. It's cruel and nasty.

Back on more mainstream matters, you're the black boss of the Black ants. So, naturally enough, you're yellow!! I guess this to distinguish you from lower members of the outfit. It's a hard life



SimAnt must obviously be rebuffed against the other innovative creations

from Will Wright. Forgetting the CD4 classic *Raid on Bungaling Bay* published by Broderbund, Wright is best known for *SimCity* and *SimEarth*. Now, I've never been a fan of the latter "software toy". It's far too complicated and doesn't even feel anything like amusement. *SimAnt* scores over *SimEarth*, therefore, on successfully mixing entertainment and education. Nevertheless, *SimCity* remains the best of the breed. This is probably because it's the closest to a straight game out of the three.

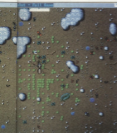
commanding a bunch of bugs. Luckily, they help you about their business without your help every step of the way. Using a selection of windows, icons and sliders, you're supposed to lead them to tasty morsels of food or even victory against the rival red ant colonies. This is achieved by altering the behavior and biology makeup of the entire colony. Deciding how many workers will forage for food or make up-and-coming ant babies are

just two of the many factors which need to be taken into consideration. If the black or red queens dies before another colony has been formed, the simulation will soon come to an end because you can no longer produce more offspring.

Most of the action is played out within the Edit Window. This gives a close-up of the ant's world. It only shows part of the patch at a time, either underground in the nest or outside on the dangerous surface.

Recognisable items like rocks, caterpillars and dead ants can be seen here. Slightly less obvious, is the occasional giant human foot that can split several ants at once or the strange ant loss which wait under the surface to snap-up their favourite food...you!

Other views of the *SimAnt* universe are available in the Map Window. A strategic graph can be



"Ants are so much like human beings as to be an embarrassment. They farm fungus, raise aphids as livestock, launch armies into war, use chemical sprays to alarm and confuse enemies, capture slaves, engage in child labor, and exchange information ceaselessly. They do everything but watch television."

Lewis Thomas, *The Lives of a Cell*

"The biology of ants is about the history of societies and institutions, and about the future of cities and computers."

Kevin Kelly

"They taste salty."

Cassidy Wright

"Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise."

Proverbs

"Not so much the weight of an ant in earth or heaven escapes from the Lord, neither is aught smaller than that, or greater, but is clearly written in God's book."

The Koran 10:68

"As a thinker and a planner the ant is the equal of any savage race of men; as a self-educated specialist in several arts she is the superior of any savage race of men; and in one or two high mental qualities she is above the reach of any man, savage or civilized."

Mark Twain, *What is Man?*

"How poaches better than the ant, and she says nothing."

Benjamin Franklin, *Four Richard's Almanac*

"We'll set thee to school to an ant, to teach thee there's no labouring 't the wicket."

Shakespeare,

King Lear act 2, scene 4

This is what your basic garden looks like to the average ant. (Theoretical insect trails are left by ants as they return home with food. Other ants will then follow the trail and follow it. In SimAnt, you use this to your advantage when prospecting food and the red ant nest. Warning! Black workers from your foe might poach you.)



Right! One way to defeat your enemy is to quickly cut the red nest and the hole of any deep tunnels. In red queen game further underground she might detect when you flood the nest with flies.



You've got a free field with the Experimental Game option. There's nothing more satisfying than commanding a whopping great big army of black ants against the rest of the backyard bugs. Alternatively, you can force ants into individual combat missions among a flood of hungry ant lines and spines. (Small stuff, ah?)



If there is a lot of food, not some ants in armor mode is good. If the red ant nest is close by, use any small garden in the surrounding area to build some powerful fortresses. Really greedy ant commanders will lead the spider to the enemy nest and/or for food or these helpless ants as they leave the entrance hole.

Carefully watch the red ants to avoid their "burrows".

This sound is the regular call of you, as if the red worker is searching the red ants with temporarily from the during a several second.

Right! After the enemy burrow has tried to kill you with the queen, you'll want to know how you've reached the interior of the lovely house. Any red queen present will die if this really stuff is truly, appeared around. It can't...



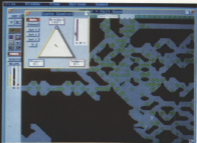
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This is a convincing idea to spread out and compare the opposition in as time as it all, you
voted you don't mind sacrificing a single colony first. Gather lots of grub, then start
the little beetles going full blast. Soon, you'll have plenty of space to invade the
rest of the garden.



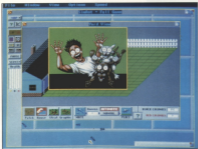
At breakfast and
then makes a
move on you.
Of course,


they'll eat 'tasty' food
in units of soil? These
units of a slightly
type (most) busy than
others in the ground.
When an unappetizing
and slips down (they get,
it is unnecessary to eat
again. Try to avoid them,
even though a speed of
concentrated units can kill
and eat them up.



Wow, this is the ultimate destination. Can't you just
taste all these delicious goodies lurking inside the top-
boards and the cracks of that comfy couch?
Absolutely. Where are our lobby tips for getting there
without any unnecessary losses? Well, there, make. Put
out for yourself, you help get...





314  **314 ■■■**

struggle who is lagging behind in the race to colonize all the patches. Alternatively, the despoiled trampled sward of a man and his dog doing the gardening can be chosen. Little does this guy know that, sooner or later, the ants are going to triumph and eat his family from this home and eat all the goodies in the kitchen. Even insecticide shouldn't stop a determined ant from overall domination. On the subject of death, it doesn't really matter if your yellow ant is killed. You'll simply be reborn in the next ant that hatches. One great trick in the repository, is the ability to physically swap bodies with other black ants. So, for exam-

ple, if you're going on a dangerous raid against a red ant nest you can become a soldier ant and have a better chance for survival in the frenetic attacks that will occur. It should be noted that if you still manage to get yourself clapped about, the whole battle could be lost. It's wise to stay just behind the main thrust of your ant invaders and only set in if you want them to ridge closer to the enemy HQ. Speedily is the way to do it properly. The red ants actually have the equivalent of you leading them on. If this Red Terminator can be found and destroyed the red ants will founder for a few brief but crucial seconds.

Sound effects can contribute to your success, too. If you ever hear the sound of a lawn mower mowing closely, quickly duck under ground or you could be really cut up by the experience. It doesn't take long for the surrounding area to be littered with the garbage of complete and utter war such as hideously torn limbs and severed heads. Maxie just included her in there for some laughs. If you watch the appropriately titled silly mode on, you're able to see what all these insects are thinking about in speech bubbles above their heads. Please remember, this is American family humour before judging the quality of gags on display.

The first casualty of war maybe innocence but in SIMANT it's merely a question of achieving emotional superiority over the enemy, then going in flat and kicking ant without mercy. If the tide is turning against you, start leveling before the nest is overrun, and try your luck on the next patch. Think on a global scale, don't concern yourself with the success or failure of individual skirmishes. That's how the red ants get on with the game of life and they've done a pretty good job in the past 50 million years of existence.

PC Version



Made no mistake, Simant looks and sounds pretty much the same on all formats. This is a bad mistake, for instance, when only 16 colours are used in the VGA graphics mode. What a waste, eh? Getting down to mundane everyday matters, this comfortably enhanced edition supports VGA, VGA, MGA, Hercules, Tandy Graphics, AdLib, Soundblaster, Sound Master and Tandy Sound. At least 640K RAM and a hard drive with 2.5MB of free storage space are required. Don't bother playing Simant without a Microsoft-compatible mouse attached. Maxie has already begun work on an enhanced update of Simant for use with the phenomenally popular Windows operating system. Strongly but free, Microsoft has sold an incredible 18 million copies of Windows so far.

Amiga Version



After the annoying delay with SimEarth, Maxie is personally handling the Amiga version of this one. It should be ready for release within the next couple of months.

ST Version



Sorry, there are currently no plans to convert Simant into your computer. Letters of disgust and dismay should be addressed to Ocean.

Super Famicom Version



Leading Japanese games publisher Imaginex is always hungry for anything with the cult of SimCity or Populous.

That's why the crafty company has licensed a faithful console conversions of popular computer games from Maxie and Bullfrog. However, the adaptation of Simant isn't going to be any good to us without the inclusion of some good old English text! Like SimCity and Populous before it, a nice money gauge is desperately needed to make things happen properly. Shifting a pointer around using the joystick is a real pain in the thumb. Get it sorted somebody!!!

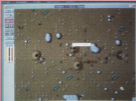
Somebody Version



What's yer talking about, Maxie? Apparently the design team responsible for Simant fiddled around with some experimental graphics during the early development stages of the game. A decision on the viability of such a monumental conversion to this handy little chunk of fun and frolic has yet to be made.

ANT NO STOPPING 'EM

One of the oldest living creatures in the world, ants live everywhere except in the coldest or highest regions around. At any given moment there are at least 1,000 billion living ants on the earth. Like sharks, they haven't physically changed much in millions of years. Ants are also the strongest creatures around in relation to their size and can carry a back-breaking load of 20 to 30 times their body weight. Being social insects, they can and upon the rest of the colony to help lift anything heavier than this. Ants have no feelings of loss, pity or mercy. They are the Terminator of the insect world and will always be back for more. Their only reason to live is to ensure the survival of the colony, even at the cost of many individual sacrifices. They're in a constant state of war with other ants and even endeavor to work the nest or become an instant source of food. There's no health scheme or any retirement plan for an ant, either. Any weak or old members of the community are eaten. Sometimes ants will eat their own eggs during times of food shortages. Yuck! These are just a few of the interesting facts revealed in *SimAnt*...



SimAnt definitely won't win any Oscars for its special effects or music score. Presentation is where *Maxis* really falls down. Compared to something like *Populous II*, *SimAnt* looks and sounds primitive in the extreme. Sure, some of it is cute but many of the window designs supplied would also fit comfortably in a boring business package. If *Bullfrog* has proved anything, it's that strategy games don't have to remain in the dark ages of computer games. What about a sprinkle of imagination and a screen scrolling routine that doesn't pause the whole game when it's invoked? I'm not kidding, guys. *Quicksilver's* *Ant Attack* on the *Sinclair Spectrum* has much better graphics than that! While I'm thinking loudly of this great game, isn't it about time Sandy White came out of retirement to produce a superior re-hit edition? Too right.

At the end of the day, when all is said and done, the lack of traditional gaming methods will drive you mad with frustration, and eventually, outright boredom. This sad factor just can't be ignored and quickly puts a strain on an otherwise excellent product. It's just too much of an *ANTI-climax*. Let's hope *Maxis* can rectify this devastating problem before the release of *SimAnt*, *Starbuck* or whatever else they dream and compare up next time around. Still, it's worth a look if you're after something truly different from the endless supply of flight simulators, platform romps and graphics adventures coming thick, fast and from all directions at the moment. For that fact alone, we should be deeply grateful.

• *IGN Reviews*



RATING



Intending to attract youth, this product would be rated as G. However, when it comes to the capabilities of most adult ants, it would return an M. How odd. Unlike other strategy games, *SimAnt* isn't about anything about anything. About how you manage your ant colony, your ant colony, and what you do with your ant colony. When you're done, you're done. *SimAnt* is a game that's not a game.

777 POPULARITY

What's going on with all these different opinions on this and *Populous*, this is great and interesting to me, but not necessarily the best indicator of what I'll want to play when I'm ready for another ant-colony simulation. I've managed to write this and also covered it in *Ultimate*, the problem with *Ultimate* seems to be a lack of play enthusiasm in the world at large. The fact that *SimAnt* is being mentioned so often in strategy games for the first time, probably the only reason for going back under the tent would be to read up on the book and review in the magazine. I would suggest that the two magazines mentioned and *Ultimate* be moved back for into the wrong direction for these so-called "entertainment" books and read more like *Ultimate*.

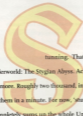




S E R I E S

Game: Role-Playing Game
 Publisher: Origin
 Developer: Blue Sky Productions
 Release: QTR 4, Late March

ULTIMA UNDERWORLD: THE STYGIAN



turning. That's the only word to describe *Ultima Underworld: The Stygian Abyss*. Actually, that's not quite true. There are loads more. Roughly two thousand, in fact, enough to fill six pages. But I'll get to them in a minute. For now, 'stunning' is the only single adjective that completely sums up the whole Underworld experience.

And what an experience it is. It's the closest thing I've seen to Virtual Reality - You can't step out! I've said it now! - on a home computer.

But before I start getting into various hyperbole territory, let's get the plot out of the way. Once again the player assumes the role of the Avatar, hero of many previous *Ultima* games. Feeling a strange and urgent compulsion to return to the land of Britannia, the player steps through a magical moongate... and straight into trouble.

The player finds himself in a lavish castle bedroom where a kidnapping is in progress. A mysterious mage and his servant troll are clandestine through the open window, an unconscious young girl slung under the mage's sinister's mighty arm. Before the player can act the bedchamber door is flung open by the castle guards who promptly take the hapless player prisoner.

A short while later and the player is brought before the sea-faced Baron Akbar, whose progress pointing daughter Ariel was the kidnapping victim. Unconvinced by the explanation as to why the player was in his daughter's room (more on

that you believe if the Baron orders that the player receive his stolen child).

Witnesses saw the wizard and the troll entering the desolate Great Stygian Abyss. Many years ago a devotee of the Avatar's ways set up a colony in the Abyss's labyrinthine depths consisting of all manner of weird and wonderful Britannian denizens to see if they could ever co-exist in peace and harmony. Some hope. The colony soon dissolved into anarchy, with differing factions opti-

ming away from the main group and forming their own communities in various parts of the Abyss. (Okay, so it's hardly the most plausible explanation as to why the Abyss has so many different creatures in such close proximity, but it'll have to do.)

The Baron's guards escort the player to the entrance to the Abyss and throw him inside. As the mighty door slams shut behind him, the player hears the chief guard shouting that the player will not be allowed to leave unless he's accompanied by Ariel.

As usual, all this preamble is conveyed by a long, animated intro. It's no better or worse than any other of its type, although those with a few minutes fitted to their PC will enjoy the odd laugh or two at the stilted digitized speech recorded for the characters by various Origin staff members, including Richard "Lord British" Garriot himself. (Screen?) Particularly chuckle-worthy is the guard's near- "eyes gart" or Cockney accent that's about as endearingly, as Dick Van Dyke's in *Blinky Popple*. (Inhumanizing but true, the guard's voice was recorded by Martin Galway, who is actually British born and bred.)

Before any actual dungeoneering can take place, the player has to go through the usual RPG class of knocking together some stone to make a factory after-ego to explore the game-world with. To be fair, *Underworld's* designers have made this, the most boring aspect of RPGs, pretty painless - the player only has to make a few simple Yes/No decisions to get up and running.

The only real power given to the player is which of the eight professions he wants to take up. There's the usual wizard or warrior, but more exotic livelihoods are available for those who want to try something a little out of the ordinary. For some reason I was drawn to being a shipboard - don't ask me why. Characters are defined by four main characteristics: strength, dexterity, intelligence and vitality. These and the profession then determine the character's fighting and spellcasting abilities.



D: NABYSS

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Nothing really prepares you for your first experience of the Underworld environment. It's the next true evolutionary step in the RPG genre and as much a technical advance on FTL's Dungeon

Standing in the only single adjective that completely sums up the whole Underworld experience. And what an experience it is.

Like Dungeon Master, the player views the game world in first-person 3D. But whereas FTL's game only allowed the player to walk forward in janky,

two-foot chunks and turn in abrupt right angles, Underworld is a far more realistic and more 3D environment with the player able to walk and turn smoothly just about anywhere he wants. Not only that, but the floor rises and falls smoothly, there are ledges and shelves to climb onto and deep chasms to leap across. It's even possible to go for a swim in the many pools and rivers that course through the labyrinth. It's all frighteningly realistic, and the feeling of "being there" is enhanced by the motion effects. Like the slow bob when player goes walking and the swaying and dipping when in water.

There are four detail levels which allow the player to compromise between speed and detail to his heart's content. At the lowest detail level the ma-



terry, Shadowlands, I'm afraid you're got to lose your Benchmark status, and after only one month at the top too. Unless Underworld just blows you clean out of the water. Although lacking Shadowlands' unique multiple-character control, Underworld scores higher in almost every other department. After all, this is the nearest anyone could get to going down a medieval dungeon without wearing a cast-iron corsepiece and doing it for real. A masterpiece.



son for the incredible flexibility of the game world becomes apparent; everything is modelled in polygons overlaid with texture maps. The only thing this is noticeable in the game is when the player moves right up close to a wall and looks at it obliquely—objects you'd expect to stick out from the wall's surface, like switches, lie flat on it because basically they are just drawings on a flat surface.

The dungeon's inhabitants are less impressive. They all move around and animate adequately as long as they don't get too close. When they do they begin to disappoint. There's a distinct blockiness to them, like the trademark objects you get in a Sega arcade racing game. Once you get used to seeing the effect it's not so bad, but it does distract from the dense atmosphere a bit.

Walk, run, jump and swim—just about anything you can do in the "real" world you can do in

ULTIMA UNDERWORLD

IS THERE ANYBODY OUT THERE...?

The creatures waiting to be met in the Underworld are a nasty lot. Smelly, slimy, villainous, treacherous and downright unlikable, they'd sooner stick a knife in your back than give you any help.

But there are some decent types down there in the catacombs. Keep an eye out for the Banner of Gabilan (shown right) painted on any doors - beyond you'll find fellow humans willing to lend a hand and offering food and comfort to the needy. They're a bit like the Salvation Army of the World of Britannia, except they don't try to raise funds for their cause by going around the local taverns desperately asking pious revellers to buy copies of the *Wastey*.

[Tap to lock/unlock] The top-left buttons allow you to lock/unlock all the GARG, LEAD options and allows you to do other things like alter the detail level and spell to cast.

Select the second item, the FLAG icon, then click on a creature in the main window to have a chat.

Choose the next icon to make an easy FIGHT option. Different items can then be deposited in one of the secondary slots near the other side of screen.

The third icon, that horse bottom, lets you read notices and examine objects.

FIGHT? Click here and up pops your own handy list of weapons of your choice.

And you're just a WASH. This, the last icon, controls everything from pulling a well water to ordering a beer.

This is the STRONG STRENGTH INDICATOR, when in light mode, the player tries to hit the vile enemy (marked by clicking on them) and then holding the mouse button down. The longer the button is held down (indicated by this indicator changing from green to red) to order to ground the faster the blow. The trade-off is that the player can't get on many hits in.

n

othing you've ever seen before will prepare you for your first experience of the incredible *Ultima Underworld*. If it got any more real you'd have to undergo a medical examination to make sure your heart was capable of withstanding the rigours of the game! But to give you, the dear reader, some idea of the perils that lie ahead for would-be dungeon delvers, herein these stably-arranged screenshots on this here spread.



This is where you get your 3D first-person view on the whole Underworld. In this shot you can see the way that the dungeons are made up of slaying floors, ledges and walkways. Pretty amazing, isn't it?

This setup of parchment items at the map-making screens you've made-up your travels. As well as showing all the corridors and rooms (which are shown by the same pattern) you can add your own notes and messages.

This, believe it or not, is you. Good-looking folk, aren't you? When generating your character at the beginning of the game you're given a range of things to choose between - pick a better one than I did, perhaps.

Remember that if you're stuck on your character in light hand-out then you must drop any weapons to be used in the right-hand inventory slot. And if any weapons also it'll be useless. It's a tragedy when you're in battle, that.



The upper-hand line of items COINTEGRATE, the red flag always points to the floor, and as if this wasn't enough to help you navigate around the dark masses there's also a (rather) auto-walking facility. How friendly or what?

Hey, hey, hey that's your own looking a crowd and looking out at the gobble!

The blue liquid represents to player's Blood level. If this is low you'll not be able to cast the more powerful spells.

The player's health is represented by this rapidly-shrinking bottle of red fluid (blood, presumably). Eating food, drinking special potions and resting restores valuable vitality.

It's a look at the moment, but normally this is full of messages reporting such things as 'You have hit the ball' or 'The door is locked'.

ULTIMA UNDERWORLD

478 Underworld's fantasy realm. And you'd be forgiven for thinking that this wide-ranging implies a cumbersome control interface but you couldn't be more wrong. All player control is via mouse and/or keyboard, with the former providing the most fluid method.

The main game screen is dominated by a window showing the player's 3D view, to the left of which is a set of five action icons. Moving around is easy: the player moves the mouse pointer over the window and clicks.

Depending where the pointer is located in the window, the player's character will walk forward, walk forward and to the left or right, step left or right, step back, jump or simply turn left or right.

It's all very logical. If the pointer is at the top middle of the window then the player will walk forward and if it's at the bottom middle of the window then the player steps back. Get the idea? As a memory aid the pointer changes into

a appropriate directional icon as it's moved about the window. Although initially it seems a bit confusing I was surprised at how quickly the control became instinctive and second nature.

You can probably guess the routine for using the action icons: click on an icon then click (using the second mouse button) on the object in the window. For the experienced player even greater ease-of-control is provided by the fact that making the icon selections can be short cut past via a variety of mouse-click combinations.

Most of the icons are pretty straight-forward and self-explanatory. 'Look' allows the player to examine the window objects found lying on the corridor floors and read any messages scratched into the stone walls. 'Pick up' allows the player to add newly-discovered items to his inventory and 'Use' lets him... er... use them in a manner appropriate to the context of the situation. Thus, if the player has a key then it can be clicked on a locked door to try and open it, 'using' it anywhere else is unlikely to produce any result.

More interesting is the 'Right' icon. When clicked upon the player's currently-held weapons appears in the bottom of the world window, as if the player were really holding it. If the player is weaponless, then a list appears. Holding down the second mouse button starts to build up the strike's power, indicated by a glowing pad changing from green to amber to red. It's up to the player to decide whether he wants to opt for lots of quick but relatively-weak blows or slower but highly-powerful smashes. Depending on where the player located the mouse pointer in the game window a variety of moves can be executed, from simple jabs to violent slashes. There's never been a more authentic or exciting simulation of mano-a-mano fighting on computer.

Spellcasting is performed in a way familiar to experienced Ultima fans, except instead of using natural spell components (which are a bit hard to come across in a dungeon) each spell is cast by pulling magically-labeled manastones from a special bag in the correct order. The difficult bit, of course, is finding the manastones. Once fairly spells are possible, allowing the player to do anything from summoning an earthquake to casting a lightning bolt to making the player's character fly.

But, as soon becomes apparent, chatting in the Underworld is just as important, if not more so, than cut-and-throat bawling. Via the 'Talk' icon the player can try and engage in conversation with any of the dungeon's denizens providing that they're willing. This takes the form of a multiple-choice reply to the computer-controlled character's statements, which although limited by it's very nature is more than adequate. It's also possible to trade with the characters met, which is vital in some cases to complete the mini-quests that crop up from time to time.

The best thing about the creatures that populate the Underworld is that they are more than

PC Version



A game as complex as this doesn't come cheap - at least, not as far as your hardware is concerned. Underworld is available

only a 256-colour VGA game only and Origin recommend a 386 PC or better to get the best out of it (although I found the game worked more than adequately on a 386MHz 386). The more soundboards you've got the better (Roland for music in London with a SoundMaster for speech is the ideal combination - but you could've probably guessed that for yourself). Surprisingly Underworld comes on just four floppy's and takes up just 22 Mb of your valuable hard drive space. Who says big things don't come in small packages anymore?

Amiga Version



Thanks to a special letter trick discovered by Origin's top programmers we've been able to promote a faster screen update, 6556 colours on screen and 11-channel sound, including full speech throughout the game. And to celebrate the release Origin are arranging a special tour or Britain by their trained fleet of aeronautical pigs. Expect to see Amiga Underworld on the shelves and you're hopelessly optimistic.

BT Version



When Atari launch on BT with it 386MHz 68000 processor, 256 colours, synthesizer-quality sound and a built-in hard drive then maybe, just maybe, you can expect to see Underworld on your machine. But until that happy day arrives the chances are slimmer than Yellog's thigh.



First (middle) shows your first character. At work, it can chat about the best get into the dungeon. (After battle) You can't see it's a nice-looking water without having to say about lakes in the game. The screenshot shows a player on the 386MHz 386MHz (386MHz) 386MHz. The first screenshot of the middle shows the first character's appearance. The first screenshot is the first character's appearance. The first screenshot is the first character's appearance.





moderately intelligent. They'll respond to your actions intelligently, so if you make friends with something but try to steal its food then it'll respond in the same way you would, i.e. with a swift kick to the jaw. Likewise in combat, creatures won't just stand in front of you trading blows until either they or the player are dead. If its all going badly they may well back off to recover or try a different strategy.

Ultima Underworld is a big, big game. It consists of eight huge levels, each with a number of smaller sub-levels leading off from them. Unsurprisingly, it's easy to get lost and making a map is a necessity. Now I for one hate trying to play a game while balancing a piece of graph paper on my knee at the same time, but Ultima Underworld designers have made this sort of shorthand a thing of the past. The game features an automatic mapping facility, leaving you to get on with the fun of exploring. Even better, you can write notes on the map so you'll never forget where that huge pile of gold was. If only all RPGs provided a similar handy utility.

Ultima Underworld is a real knock-you-down game. At first it is truly hard to believe that it's running on a standard home computer. It's not



(Yes, above and left) A selection of scenes from the lengthy demo. Above and to the right is the option - it's automatically selected.

only great to look at, but it also plays superbly and has enough depth to keep even the most experienced dungeon-delving veteran going for months, if not years. If you've got a PC, then you've got to have Ultima Underworld.

By David Upthorpe

GIVE ME MORE DETAILS!

Ultima Underworld boasts four detail levels to choose between. At the highest detail level you get the full works - walls, floors and ceilings all lovingly detailed.

Go down one detail level and you lose the coarse stone ceiling - it's replaced by a graduated grey flat surface.

Go down one more detail level and you lose the stone-floor effects, again to be replaced by simple polygons.

At the lowest detail level there's no texture mapping at all - all the dungeon corridors are depicted in polygons.

Boo! At least that means owners of fairly under-powered machines can enjoy some of the experience.



R A T I N G S



One of the best-looking RPGs ever. Great effects, superb graphics, excellent sound and music. Recommended for playing and downloading.



Ultima Underworld gives right from the start. The old 'springs' approach never fails to attract the 'casualist' - and it's easy to see why. After Steve George's Stone Sea it's a standard-but-still way of getting the player involved in a virtual system. In a market, allowing the player to perform almost any action you could imagine in his real world may be the only option, although the Stone Sea is perhaps a little more liberally granted. Along the way up very quickly, eight levels may not sound like much, but each is huge in size. The Stone Sea estimates there are around 24 miles of corridors to explore in all. How you get your hands on Ultima Underworld? Well, that you'll see the coming up for it in a long time.

WORLDWIDE RATES

Region	Price
USA	\$49.95
UK	£29.95
Germany	DM 149.95
France	FF 149.95
Spain	PT 149.95
Italy	IT 149.95
Japan	¥ 149.95



Game: *Desert Strike*
 Publisher: Electronic Arts
 Developer: Electronic Arts
 Release: Jan. 29, 1993

DESERT STRIKE

Return to the Gulf

There's something very sexy about helicopters. Maybe it's the ominous thudding of the rotor blades. Maybe it's their mosquito-like maneuverability. Or maybe it's the incredible destructive force that one of these miracles of flight technology can deliver. And no medium is more capable of displaying a chopper's awesome abilities than that of the video game.

Helicopter games don't have the player scrolling miserably up the screen and missing all their targets like airplane games. And they don't have the player trudging across acres of desolate wasteland on foot in search of combat. Instead, all the boring bits of a combat zone can be flown over and all the interesting areas can be hovered over and destroyed with great precision. It's the best of both worlds.

And *Desert Strike* is the best of the best of both worlds. Played in isometric 3D and looking remarkably similar to the age-old Spectrum classic *Cyclone*, it's fast-paced combat frenzy. Best of all but the most rudimentary storyline ("a psych madman is threatening to start World War III and must be destroyed") the game puts the player at the controls of a combat helicopter in the midst of a bloody conflict in the Gulf.



It's been a long time since the balance between arcade action and some bearable strategy has been struck so well. *Desert Strike* forces the player to think all the time while never making him wait

too long before the next chance to get into a top class firefight.

Following the briefing comes an opportunity for the player to select his co-pilot for the mission. Here we have the run of the mill data sheet for each potential co-pilot, revealing the personality defects in each. Some are experts with the attack (more of that later) at the expense of being a useless gunner. Others love to stick it to the enemy but will show little remorse after killing friendly troops. Once the most rounded man for the mission in hand has been selected, the control method can be determined.

There are three available. Cockpit, From Above and With Momentum. The cockpit view rotates the helicopter about its horizontal axis, with up on the keypad moving the chopper in the direction it is facing. The momentum option is the



SWTV is still the ACE arcade blast

benchmark, simply because it is so utterly, completely and totally polished, but

Desert Strike comes close on a number of scores. The balance between blasting and some low-level strategy is a big plus, as is the rather smart co-pilot set up. However, Desert Strike is let down somewhat by the occasionally scabby graphics and s.i.e.m.i.g.d.o.m.s. problems which crop up with multiple sprites.



same except the helicopter has, well, momentum and so feels very realistic but is impossible to fly accurately in tight situations. By the 'do' best option in Four-Shots, which is the least like flying a real helicopter but is the easiest and most fun. Here, the chopper simply goes in the direction the player points the joystick.

Launching from the carrier patrolling just off the sandy coast, the player glides almost silently (save for the thumping rotor blades) across the azure sea in a coast atmospheric opening to each mission. A single blip signifies the arrival of weapons and offers a good chance for the pilot to examine his on-board map and plan the attack.

Even on the first mission, the level of enemy resistance encountered can hardly be described as slight. It's here that the player learns the rudiments of combat and has a chance to get to grips with co-operating with his co-pilot. The helicopter is equipped with neither an unlimited supply of ammunition or fuel. So the pilot will need to learn to spot tell-tale signs in the landscape as to where fuel barrels and crates of extra ammo may be hidden. Normally this isn't as difficult as it sounds and allied intelligence will be able to point the way to sufficient supplies to prevent the player having to steal those belonging to the enemy, although it's quite satisfying to do so.

As well as seeking as much havoc as possible among the enemy troops, it's the job of the co-pilot to operate the winch to pull ahead goodies such as those piling with extra armour and med-packs) as well as friendly M1As and enemy top brass ripe for interrogation.

The nerve and skill of the co-pilot will directly affect the player's success in combat, since once the helicopter is pointing in a particular direction and the fire button is held, the co-pilot's artificial intelligence will select a target to plug away at. Provided that the co-pilot is of a reasonable quality, he will prioritise and shoot at the most dangerous target; in a heated firefight, it's a definite disadvantage to be saddled with a gunner who would rather shoot at a soldier armed with a carbine than take out a rocket launcher capable of inflicting massive damage.

Of course, the player can determine which weapons are actually being fired, using the buttons to cycle through cannons, helibars and light machine-guns, but it's the co-pilot's accuracy that counts.

Once the co-pilot has locked on to a target, holding down the fire button will enable the player to dodge enemy fire while still blasting away. Unnecessarily heroic, gamers can thus save their valuable missile reserves by giving themselves longer to machine-gun targets by dodging the incoming fire.

Even during the most basic encounters with enemy troops, the player can have a right old laugh. Learning how to get the most out of the helicopter's abilities is almost as satisfying as blow-



By the way, this war seems to have been the last I got these files on the computer, you know. What the computer screen told me about the strategy the units played and debriefing on all to effect, the only decent thing to do was a helicopter game to destroy the war machine. But hang on the talk for the day!

ing things up. And in moments of frustration when it becomes clear that the mission in hand just can't be completed for one reason or another, there's nothing quite as amusing as loosing a wretched host of helibar rockets upon a single enemy jet.

Distinguishing Desert Strike from many mission-driven shoot-'em-ups is the structure of the campaign itself. While many similar games will send the player off to take some photos or deliver some food supplies to a remote village, Desert Strike's missions manage to be continually varied while still revolving around the basic principal of destroying everything, blow up the enemy radar installations, blow up the bio-weapon factory, blow up the power stations, blow up the POW camp. **A++**

The player is forced to think all the time while never having to wait too long before getting into a good fire-fight.

DESERT STRIKE

WANTED: Unmatched professional (3/1/1) for short-term holiday work in sunny climes. Air-rehearsa a disadvantage.

Less well-sold movielets need not apply for duties in this dull scenario. These missions are definitely a team thing. The best shapers (only in the world isn't going to get very far in a hostile situation without a solid, reliable cog) need to watch his back and take care of the guns and whack.

But who's the best person for each mission? Who can keep their head in a tight situation, and who will crack and degenerate into a stupid gibbering jelly? It's very much a matter of guesswork. Or at least it WAS, but now, thanks to the ACE Combat Briefing Agency, we can shortlist the following aviators who are just dying to take a trip with you.



Blaze is great on missions with little hostile fire, but is bit of a tremulous wreck when the going gets tough. He's a pretty decent pilot, though, and will probably perform all the early missions you'll need to complete in the standard reconnaissance.



The issue with Blaze is that he's a bit of a wreck when the going gets tough. He's a pretty decent pilot, though, and will probably perform all the early missions you'll need to complete in the standard reconnaissance.



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Blaze is great on missions with little hostile fire, but is bit of a tremulous wreck when the going gets tough. He's a pretty decent pilot, though, and will probably perform all the early missions you'll need to complete in the standard reconnaissance.



Stage One - Radar Ramps

These targets are a real pain in the neck. They're not really radar sites, but they are. If you're fortunate enough to have a good copilot, they will guarantee the targets and shoot out the gun before the non-threatening radar dies.



Stage Three - Airport Action

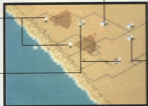
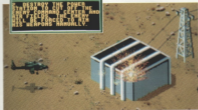
And now the tactics become marginally less easy. Tanks and trucks will attempt to attack the fuel storage area, so you'll need to take out the buildings first and then destroy the planes and the SET SQUAD.





Stage Two- Power Station Franks

When the going gets tough, the tough use their built-in rockets. Attach the power station from the left and you will find it easy to get within range. There's plenty of ammunition in the vicinity, so get well stocked in.



Stage Four- Command Centre Garage

With an almost total air strike, the command centre needs a whole lot of rubble and lots of bodies of water to fly over the water to its platform, especially since the automatic rocket launchers should point outside. Don't be a dummy, the air play about our base gets hot and then work on the command centre. Don't you?



This is Mission One. All relevant information to do with the current section of the campaign is stored in the handy Electronic Battlefield Computer, which can be called up at any time by simply hitting START. So come with us as we fly into the danger-zone and strike a blow for justice!



DESERT STRIKE

400 This all makes for a pretty potent mixture of action. Indeed, the frustrations evoked when the player's final helicopter is downed right at the end of a tortuous mission are truly demoralizing, but never quite bad enough to make future attempts unappealing.

Although he receives little help in combat situations, the player can make the most some limited ground support, normally on the outer margins of the combat area. Whenever he has rescued POWs at MIA or MIAs on board, the player can drop them off at one of these friendly sites. Usually there will be some fuel and/or ammunition available here, but more importantly the helicopter's armor will be replenished to a proportional degree depending on how many rescued troops are delivered back into allied hands.

An unusual discipline must be learnt if Desert Strike pilots are going to have much success. The helicopter can only carry a certain amount of missiles and fuel, and its armor can only withstand six hundred points-worth of hits (whatever that works out as in bullets). So collecting goodies when the helicopter is already at a highly armed state is a complete waste of time, and will probably mean there will be no armor left when it's really needed. Again, this adds to the drama, since the player is forced to continually make tricky decisions whether he can hold on for extra fuel or ammunition until the end of each firefight, ensuring that the subsequent goal-scoping is of its utmost value.

Another unusual feature is the way in which missions can be completed without a 100% success rate. Bonus points can be obtained by the players determined to scoop every last MIA or killing every single enemy soldier, but these incentives on seeing what their next set of goals will be can woot through doing the bare minimums. This is especially handy during hostage rescue situations, since the helicopter has a maximum load of five passengers. Failing to drop off a complete batch of rescued bodies may prevent a clean scoop of the next batch of people. The flexibility of the game's interpretation of what makes a complete mission is a nice change. Also, it means that a loose shot which may accidentally kill a friendly prisoner won't throw away all the hard work done so far.

A message pops up in the left hand corner of the screen indicating when a mission has been completed. A "Return to Frigate" instruction will also pop up when all missions in the current campaign have been finished, or the player has made such a fit of the whole thing that he needs to start all over again.

Although for much of the game the difficulty level falls into the "hard but fair" category, there are a few elements which aren't quite as sharp as they could be. For a start, each new helicopter does not come fully armed. Only on take-off from the carrier is the player 100% powered-up. Although the player starts the game with three lives, each successive helicopter used during the game DOES NOT come with full fuel or weapons. This is obviously a complete fail, since it's entire-



The contrasting situation of Desert Strike.

When it comes to combat tactics, all have their group of the yet better.

Left and Right: They don't attack, it's all about the team and it's all in the game. But will you be able to see the fourth that this is, really, capture?

Magazine Version



Well, what can we say? This version of the game must hang together pretty well in order for it to justify being the first ever

Magazine game to get the ACE Browsered treatment. Apart from some slightly dodgy scrolling and a rather washed-out look to some of the graphics, Desert Strike looks like a dream and is a great game to play.

Amiga Version



Yes, these masters of the Magdrive Electronic Arts are preparing one of their most awesome Amiga conversions ever as we speak. Depending on by the success of the Magdrive version, Amiga owners could look forward to playing Desert Strike as early as December. Now that would be a Christmas Caroler, wouldn't it?

ST Version



No version planned as yet.

ST Version



It's the same story as with the ST - no version planned.

ly plausible to be shot down when low on fuel, causing a restart with a shiny new helicopter with no gas. If the game is going to allow a new chopper to magically appear, why can't it be fully prepped?

Also, the finale of the second mission is the rescue of a bunch of POWs from an enemy camp. Soldiers in gun barrels form a deadly chain-gun of machine-gun fire. Men on the ground launch rockets at the chopper and just when all three



defenses have been dealt with and the player is in the middle of his heroic airlift, two bloody great tanks appear and blow him all to bits.

Even though it's the end of the mission, this stage is completely out of step with the difficulty of the rest of the game, and brings play to a grinding halt time after time.

Like a lot of Megalavive games, *Desert Strike* let down by some of its presentation. Explosions that should be enormous are merely large.

Sound effects that should be roaring and bloody are sometimes a bit needy and crisp. Destruction of huge buildings expose this problem most adequately, since the explosions sound more like a Snap-It going off in someone's pocket than a skyreaper collapsing. On the whole, however, the feel of grand scale destruction is well enough conveyed, with the most impressive (ah-hem!) coming from the player's helicopter itself when it goes the way.

So, if you don't find the Gulf there too close to home and don't mind putting up with a few rough edges in your search for high-octane fun, *Desert Strike* is unmissable.

— Ben Douglas

A CRAZY SCENARIO OF CARNAGE!

For fans of reality, *Desert Strike* will be a big draw. Okay, so you're stuck in a helicopter for the whole game, so there isn't much safety there. However, the missions offer enough variety to keep even gamers with the shortest attention spans happy. Although each mission follows a roughly logical path, often beginning with an attack on a radar base or power station in order to reduce the enemy's advanced warning systems, there's just so much excellent stuff contained in the wider brief that the game becomes a genuinely excellent romp. UN

advertisers must be rescued, SCUB divers must be destroyed, Prisoners of War must be airlifted away from their captors. Biological weapons scientists must be captured and interrogated. And there's even the chance to destroy the Madman's luxury yacht. While plenty of games have boosted similar elements, some have combined them to such entertaining effect. It's also a nice change to have such a balls-out blaster from the home of high-brow entertainment, Electronic Arts. **Warped**

R A T I N G S



Amount of violence or blood
Easy to get into
Some weakness of difficulty



A lot of action
Challenging
More than the average length
Easy to enjoy

890 CRITICAL MASS

It's hardly *Call of Duty*, but for the same reason: These games aren't built to last. They're built for a shallow, entertainment-only experience that ends the minute you quit. So, if you're looking for a game that's more than a few hours of entertainment, you're better off looking for a game that's more than a few hours of entertainment. **Warped**

DESERT STRIKE

1 2 3 4 5



CRITICAL MASS



S E R I E S T E S T

Game Profile Article About
 Publisher: Midway
 Developer: Robert Cook and the Broom
 Release: USA

D/GENERATION

DATELINE 26th June 2022: The unthinkable has happened. A major accident at the Genoa biological weapons laboratory in Singapore has resulted in the entire research complex being taken over, with the scientists inside now held hostage by their own freakish

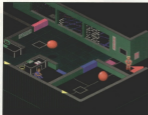
creations. With mutants of the A, B and C generations running rampant around the building threatening the lives of everyone inside things are already bad enough, but with the company's latest prototype weapon - the awesome, shape-changing D/Generation also on the verge of escape, every life on Earth could well be at stake!

Oh dear. Well, you know what's called for in this kind of gaudy situation, don't you? Yep, that's right, an unlikely hero. In this case, mankind's hope for the future comes in the form of a lowly dispatch rider charged with delivering an accep-

tion package to one of Genoa's top-dog. Oblivious to the situation, the courier jetspacks (it's the only way to travel) onto the roof of the Genoa building and ventures inside. Into a world of terror...

Of course, you've heard it all before in one way or another. Hopefully inadequate everyday Joe battles deadly adversaries against impossible odds and wins - hopefully, anyway. But while D/Generation's story may be essentially as old as the hills, the game it's surrounded by is an atmospheric and involving as any you're likely to find. It's not particularly complex or in any way deep - it's just a straight arcade adventure with a puzzle-based slant that calls primarily for dexterity, speed and an agile mind.

The Genoa complex is presented as a maze-like landscape of individual, isometric-perspective rooms, divided into smaller groups where each level is a story of the building - you start on level 20 and work your way up. Though the manual text provides some brief background, the vast majority of the plot - who caused the accident, what exactly's going on and so on remains a mystery. The Mooks are filled in by the computer-controlled characters that the player meets along the way - the first of which is Genoa's unfortunate receptionist who is being hounded by a hapless security robot when the player first enters the building. Dispatching the robot efficiently secures the receptionist, who goes on to tell you of the importance of your package and how badly the mysterious doctor Devilla is after it. From there so it's up to





you to find the doc, put an end to the bio-tyranny and get to the bottom of the enigma.

Though each level of the Genex complex unfolds as a single area, with the various screens interconnecting in the usual map-like fashion, each screen is pretty much an independent game, presenting its own individual set of puzzles and arcade challenges. In each one the object is nothing more complicated than getting from one doorway to the other, collecting any useful objects and rescuing hostages along the way, although the building's sophisticated security systems and the malevolent programs (the bio-weapon) conspire to make that simple task as un-simple as possible. Unarmed and inexperienced, the player's initial resources are few and far between, especial-

ly considering the ferocity and efficiency of his opponents. The character walks in eight directions around the 3D environment, with no ability to jump, duck or otherwise avoid alien attack - apart from running away, of course. Fortunately, there's a laser weapon to be found near the start, and packages of grenades later on, considerably shortening the player's odds of survival.

Weaponry and violence will only solve a small percentage of the problems thrown up by the game, however, and at least 75% of the time, quick thinking and nimble fingers are the only things that will see you through. The automated security systems may have gone berserk, but they're no efficient and deadly as ever. The dangers range from electrified plates in the floor that flash on

and off they all run to a preset, learnable sequence) to rotating laser turrets that look like chimplings sticking up from the floor. As they turn through 360 degrees, they can only see the player if the 'eye' is pointed right at you - the trick is to walk round it in a circle, keeping its back to you at all times.

Considerably more dangerous than these automated bad-guys, however, are the biological organisms. Emanating from generators in the floor, they arrive in deadly forms as the player progresses. Originally they appear as big, blue bouncing balls, and later on turn into big, blue bouncing cylinders, but the effect is much the same. What makes these creatures so dangerous is that they home in on the player as soon as he comes into their field of vision, 'blink[ing]' themselves by turning into a transparent outline that makes them more difficult to see. A single laser shot puts

In essence, *D-Generation* is a very old-fashioned game, harkening back to old 3-Dist isometric puzzle classics like *Knight Lore* and *Get Duxies*.

paid to each one, but that won't stop them coming - the only way to die that is get to the generator itself and shut it off by walking over it. Towards the end of the game the organisms become even more advanced, possessing shape-mimicry powers not unlike Terminator 2's T-1000 which means that any person or inanimate object could be death in disguise. Nasty.

Since the electronic systems enemies can't be knocked out by weapons, and there are often too many at once on a screen to make evasion impractical, an alternative is to try to deactivate the systems by means of the electronic switches that are a regular feature of almost every room. Some rooms have more than others, and there's no way to telling what a switch can do other than gili-



Phew! To be honest, there's not a great deal to compare something like *D-Generation* too, as games in the isometric genre are so few and far between. Probably the best game in the genre prior to this is Electronic Zoo's very fine underwater adventure *Treasure Trap*. Combining arcade skills and puzzles in a similar way to *D-Generation*, it certainly offers a hefty and long-lasting challenge, although many players may find the slow character movement and heavyweight puzzles a bit too much for their liking. The fast, pacy and somewhat taxing style of *D-Generation* makes it a better bet all round for those on the lookout for a game of this type. So there.

Just one of it, *D/Generation's* more taxing screen combines both types of deadly activities - in the first room. There's an A-Generation escapee to scan and solve, and the next is protected by a laser beam trapdoor. The incoming escapee can be scooped up by a laser shot, but the rotating barrel he orbits like, so the player has to try to sneak past invisibly behind. That map...

(Below) There's a leakage in the room at the far end of the screen, guarded by two escapees - it's no problem solving them, but the shape of the conflict by the red door means that you won't be getting in there until you've collected the right key. If you haven't already got it, it's a time to turn back and start wandering...



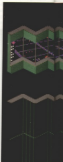
The laser trapdoor's reflective parabolic allows for some silly tricks, using right angles to hit targets hidden behind walls or other structures.

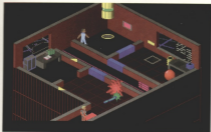


On that, looks like you're dead, mate. An A-Generation escapee has climbed that wall and is only a second away from conquering the player. Don't get ahead there, mate!

(Above) The main stage on this screen is presented by a large section in the center of the room that's protected by a rising sequence of electromagnetic tiles. In addition, there's a trapdoor guarded right in the center of it all. The sequence of the tiles can be learned, but one patient player is more likely just to take their chances and see for it, hoping they don't get fired. This room needs to be traversed twice - once from the top entrance, and later on from the door at the bottom left.

The player can certainly find himself right up against it at times in *D/Generation*. Each individual screen can be a veritable labyrinth of devious puzzles and traps, many of which can only be survived if completed in the right order, at the right time. In order to get you ready for what's to come, we present a selection of scenes from *D/Generation's* first two levels. Don't expect this to prepare you for what lies beyond, though...



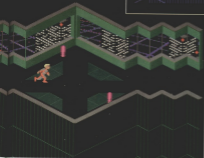


(Above) Things get vertically tougher whenever a new floor is reached. Here, on the 22nd floor, the player is instantly attacked by a moving hazard, and once they're dispatched there's a complex deactivation action system that needs to be solved in order to get out of the room.

An elevator assembly key has been located on the 20th floor, which will give crucial access to other parts of the level. The only problem is, it's protected by a trio of fast-moving laser forcefields. The player can shuffle through them safely with careful timing, but extra care must be taken when collecting the key at the end, as it's placed over an electrified pool. Timing is of the essence...



And here's one that's a little more complex. You can't see it, but the laser beams have been set to pulse on and off. That's a crucial timing of steps.



(Above) Phew! You've reached the end of the first level (the elevator transporter just sends you to the next), and you've just received a notification that gives you some valuable plot information that is vital to you.

(Left) One of the more physically-challenging screens. The two laser fields split the central section of the floor vertically, and to pass safely the player must time his walk between the beams with pinpoint precision. This type of side-on combat screen appears later on in the game with different enemies, and naturally different strategies are required to get past.

D/GENERATION



PC Version

Graphically, *D/Generation* is surprisingly effective considering the simplicity of the sprites and backgrounds. The primary colors used make the VGA version look almost like EGA, but it works well nevertheless. The simple nature of the game means that it'll run well on the lower-end machines, although the lack of any sound card support is a bit of a letdown.



Amiga Version

No fine details as yet, although the chances are that a Commodore version should be in the pipeline soon, with a possible release for around the end of the year.



ST Version

It's more or less the same story, born as with the Amiga. You'll just have to wait and see...



to him or her there's the chance to engage in a conversation that may reveal some important clues. The player can direct the conversation in a limited sense by selecting a reply from a list whenever it's his turn to speak. In each case the information is limited, but the story starts to take form once you've talked to several people, with each character adding a piece to the puzzle. Once a clue with a character's own, you've then got to extract the message safely out of the room, back past the programs and gun turrets by directing them in the exit marked with a red arrow. Points are awarded for each hostage ushered out of the building.

The end of a level is reached when the player finds a room with a large station tube hanging from the ceiling. Walking under it transports the player to the start of the next story - and a new restart point. At first the game seems unfair, penalizing the player with death for seemingly silly little mistakes. Fortunately, an ample amount of lives are provided, and you're warned when down to your last life. One more mistake and you're sent back to the start of the current level - which can be quite a long way, as though the maps aren't particularly large, they've been designed so the player often has to take the longest, most tortuous route in order to collect the keys and objects required in the correct order.

In essence, *D/Generation* is a very old-fashioned classic, harking back to old 8-bit isometric puzzle games like *Knight Lore* and *Get Dealer*. It's a viewpoint and genre that's been woefully neglected on the better machines, and recent efforts like *Voodoo Knights* and *Treasure Trap*, nice though they are, just don't quite cut the mustard. *D/Generation* is a whole lot more playable and fun than other efforts in this field because the designers knew how to use this kind of isometric display to its best advantage. Unlike many isometric games, *D/Generation* doesn't rely on one particular style of gameplay. There's a fine mix

♦♦♦ ting your teeth and biting it. Their most common purpose is the opening and closure of security doors, allowing access to other parts of a room, or from one to the next. And, of course, they can toggle the security device on and off. As the player progresses onto new floors, the function of the switches becomes more complex. Some may activate more than one system - for example, a switch that opens a steel door may close another simultaneously, or even activate a security device in the same room. Progress still further, and switches are secured so that they can only be activated once the right key has been found from somewhere else on the level.

This simplistic puzzle aspect is enhanced considerably by the clever utilization of the player's

weapons. Though it can be used as just a basic blaster to knock out weapons, it does have other, more diverse purposes. Since the laser bolts the player fires are reflective, they bounce off walls at right angles. By firing at the right wall from the right position, a laser beam can be sent ricocheting all the way around a room, either to hit a weapon that you'd rather not have on you or even activate a switch that's too dangerous to get to and toggle by hand. It's not exactly *Tron*, but it does add a more cerebral feel to the proceedings.

The game also has a slight adventure, mystery thread as provided by the characters the player meets every five rooms or so. They're normally to be found cowering behind a desk or cabinet somewhere in the room, and once the player gets



THE GOOD OLD DAYS

Lamel! Could it be that at last we're seeing good, old-fashioned games making a comeback.

With the likes of the excellent *Dynastaster* (previewed last month), several others and now this, it could be that fancy, sophisticated software may have to roll over to make way for a resurgence of games where playability, not arty graphics and sound, is the key. Let's hope so...



of puzzle and arcade stuff, with the emphasis being on dextral control of the central character at all times. The puzzles have been designed so that they require brainpower to figure them out in the first place, then arcade skills to execute the plan of action—and it works really, really well. People who are instantly turned off by the word "puzzle" shouldn't worry—there's nothing really migraine-inducing. The difficulty level is set out by the intricacies of individual puzzles, but by the large volume of them throughout the game.

The game's environment has been well designed, so that scenes that are small actually seem spacious and full of mystery. The storyline and browsing graphic style does a lot to pump up the atmosphere and drive the player forward. But however well the whole thing has been put together, there is one problem—the control of the character. If you don't have the luxury of a joystick, you may find the numeric keypad control, simple though it is, frustrating and sometimes deadly, as the player's sprite is left stranded in the middle of a deadly situation while you try to find the right key to move him. There's an alternative key set-up, but it doesn't make things much better, and only those with the highest levels of digit dexterity are likely to master the keys. In a game like this, a redefinable keyboard option is practically a necessity, and yet the programmers

have seen fit not to include one. As the say on Points of View, why oh why...?

Annoying it may be, but I wouldn't let the fiddly control put you off *Dynastaster*, particularly if this sort of thing is your bag as chances are you've been suffering withdrawal for some considerable time now. It's definitely one of the better isometric games that I've seen, and should come as a particular joy to PC gamers fed up with high-brow simulations and adventures and looking for something with a little more oomph. Because this is it.

■ Gary White



R A T I N G S



Top-Down Control
of maze and
puzzle that
trips

Atmosphere,
graphics
provide for
the mood.

885

Even though there is a lot to
dislike about the friendly presentation
and engaging style, this is one
game that you should not miss.
It's a real shame that the game
is not available on the PC platform.
It's a real shame that the game
is not available on the PC platform.
It's a real shame that the game
is not available on the PC platform.

PERFORMANCE DATA





Genre Arcade Blast
 Publisher Ocean
 Developer 3-Dance
 Release 10 March 1999

PARASOL

Over the next month or so, the right-thinking sensibilities of the games buying public will be assaulted in a most insidious and distressing manner. Thousands and thousands of words will drone on about how funny and fluffy and zany the game they

call Parasol Stars is, and what a lovely and luscious wilderness in gaming history it represents. But let's not kid ourselves. It's just another bleeding platform game with endless animation, isn't it?

It's tricky to cite a more interesting example of a genre designer's imagination gone mad than Bub & Bob, "heroes" of the Bubble Bobble series. With their big rolling eyes and their danglers, their snooty little puckered lips and their silly red hair, they make the most amusing duo since The Eekies.



The theory that such unaltered Japaneseness may prove a little exotic for the Western palate is borne-out by the fact that the previous Bub-and-Bob coin-ops (Bubble Bobble and Rainbow Islands) have consistently fared worse than even the most tired arcade shoot-'em-ups.

The adventures of the handsome twosome have fared considerably better on home formats, however, with Firebird and Ocean enjoying clutch chart-topping success with Bubble Bobble and Rainbow Islands respectively. Maybe playing with two fat little cherubs is acceptable in the privacy of one's own home.

And let's face it, since you've grown to accept the graphic style which is not entirely dissimilar to a nasty acid trip and come to terms with the unusual gameplay, the series provides amusement which, if nothing else, isn't really available elsewhere.

The first outing of the series, Bubble Bobble, had - for no good reason - one two-button transformed into button-mouse for the duration of the game. The aim was to aid each screen of hell-doo by encasing them in bubbles and then bursting the bubbles to collect bonus fruit. Many professed Bubble Bobble was a bit of a breakthrough and marked the return to good old fashioned games playing values. Others pointed out that despite its venerable two-player angle it had atrocious graphics and never really progressed, simply becoming harder and harder and leaving the players thoroughly unsatisfied.



Oh, cherubs look right about how obscure Bubble Bobble is a non-staying position, but when they come along, the graphics in Parasol Stars make for a most interesting visual experience. It's not that they're slick or even really convincing, but there are just so many options of what the top of each screen that it's just a bit much. However, if you've been brought up on eggs and opening credits of the sort there, you'll see right at home.

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STARS



Rainbow Islands, however, was a marked improvement. Back in their human form, Bob and Bob were challenged with restoring colour to a suite of islands robbed of hue by the Prince of Darkness. This was a far more enjoyable affair, with Bob and Bob armed with magic abilities enabling them to force solid rainbows at will. The rainbows could be used both to capture bubbles and climb up the screens, making for a rather pleasing visual experience. The downside here, however, was that there was no simultaneous two-player mode.

So the fact that Parosol Stars promises to be a blend of both Bubble Bobble and Rainbow Islands makes it an intriguing prospect if nothing else.

The common thread running through all of Bob and Bob's adventures is the collection of secret bonuses. Throwing captured monsters into cer-

tain areas of the screen will reveal points or lives. Performing other permutations of moves with the fruit will yield yet more points. However, points are not vital to the completion of each level; they're just there for the player who wants to explore. It's probably this factor more than any other which turned off potential coin-op players. Once your teeth are ticking away, the tendency (probably amongst goal-driven British players) is to complete each screen. We generally don't have the patience to explore levels we've already finished. As a result, lots of bits simply couldn't really see the light. When playing the game in a home environment, however, there's more incentive to understand the game dynamics and find those hidden extras.

And there's hidden extras a plenty in Parosol Stars. Hidden doors lead through to bonus worlds. Hidden switches reveal previously invisible floors of fruit. And it's all there to be discovered by the player with the inclination to look.

In their bid to restore the mad scientist Chamberlain and his menacing monsters from the universe, Bob and Bob must visit right planets, destroy enemies peculiar to each, and thus restore colour and happiness. Each planet is broken down into seven levels, with the obligatory real of world guardian manning around the final screen.

And with what treasure weapons from the Bubble arsenal have Bob and Bob been equipped? A pair of parasols, of course. While they may be woody little bits of cloth that turn inside out with the slightest gust here on Earth, they're pretty handy in the further flung areas of the universe. The parasols are used in two distinct ways. The first is simply to shield the player from monsters. Holding the joystick down and pressing fire will raise the parasol, offering protection from an assault from above. Pressing fire while the joystick points in another direction will bring on an energy-sipping fountain.

The second method involves more patience but can produce devastating results. Throughout most



A three-way C&C this time, Rainbow Islands was by far the more popular of the Bob & Bob games, even though it didn't boast the excellent

two-player tapes available in Bubble Bobble. So what elements the two more made it through to Parosol Stars? The easy scoring system is still the same, with multiple bonuses etc. But the rainbows are gone. Instead, Bob and Bob use their bubbles in much the same way as they blew bubbles in the first game. And the goal of reaching the top of the screen in Islands has been replaced by a more straightforward (and in my opinion, less rewarding) aim of clearing the screen of bubbles. Parosol Stars may well win the day in your opinion, but Rainbow Islands will scratch as it fits us.



screens, magic droplets drip from the ceilings. The droplets can be caught on the parasol and then fired off left or right, allowing the player to pick off enemies at a distance. Alternatively, the player can build up a store of up to five droplets and then use them to unleash a massive bolt of bubble-busting energy, taking the form of waterfall or enormous lightning, both depending on the form of droplets being used. ▶▶



AND I THINK TO MYSELF, WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD.

Ah, life is sweet. The birds sing in the trees and the sun shines down on all of God's children. Yes, life on Earth is very nice. But in the worlds of Bub and Bob things are not very nice at all. Not at the moment they're not, anyway. And why are things not especially pleasant in the land of our favourite bag-eyed heroes? Because that bleeding Chaotikahn has gone and stolen all the colours from eight different worlds, and put all the creatures of each world under a spooky spell. Now beautiful instruments of joy and fun like planes and plants and one-armed bandits have been twisted into grizzly mutants of their former selves, trained to maim and kill. Something must be done!

But where to start? Well, you'll start at World 1 and like it, since there's no option in the game to skip from one to another, or even preset your route. And there are stages in the game which are so tough, we doubt if you'll be enjoying them on your Amiga monitor for some time yet. So why not enjoy them in, if you will, "print", in our handy easy-to-follow guide to the content and style of each world. We hope you enjoy it.

World 1 - Green World

Slippery forest walls, rocks and potholes an attack Bob and Bub once they've crossed the last from the start on the left edge of the middle platform. Go for the shell and you'll be laughing. Collect the heart for an extra life.



World 2 - Casino World

Start a function set up if ever there was one. Look at all those Ferraris, motor scooters, and loads of those beautiful, seducing one-armed bandits. What's called for here is a really hot! Full up of water droplets and a good old flush to set them out.



IT'S THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT...

...And I feel fine. Yes indeed. With its eight worlds, Parasol Stars has a fair bit of end of world mania to combat. And some of them are SO hard to kill, they'll make your blood boil. But what is the socio-economic significance of these creatures. I mean, just where are they coming from, guy? We think it's important to know. So journey with us as we proudly present: The Peeper's Guide To The Ends Of The Worlds.



End Of The World 5
 Item. Factoring! a rapid rise of Japanese and American cultures, the girl's showing money away like the most famous movie culture of America's white being pulled by a My Little Pony. The game already represents the struggle of post and Japan to pull itself away from loss and a new future involving portable cinema. An algebraic moment.



End Of The World 3
 Yes. The continents are in a terrible state, and neither is it better represented than here, with an enormous plant being fighting back at man after years of being a passive victim to our terrible cruelty. Anyone who plays this world will surely think before choosing them any more innocent vegetation.

End Of The World 4
 Possibly the most poignant computer image in the world today. What a lesson of the future. A big robot, already representing all the different old machinery repaired and into the world comes back to haunt us. What a telling vision for today's society.





World 6 - Rainbow World

As Bob and Bob's quest finally draws to an end, floating rainbow color is all the other seven planets. They've got an easy final stretch here on Rainbow World. But will the evil Cheepinets get their feet? And how Bob and Bob really explored all the mysterious places in the universe...?



World 8 - Cloud World

Bob and Bob must battle all manner of aerial assailants up here in the skies. A whole lot of new Cheepinets must be born in order to cope with the attacks from above and below. Phases, subphases and satellites are all on the rampage!



World 7 - Ghost World

And you thought the other levels were tough. Forget into a corner (the top right corner of the universe, to be precise) (hazardous corners, his most powerful and ferocious monsters to attack Bob and Bob. Witness the terrifying fat dragons and those pink thorns with the eyes. Ghst!



World 2 - Woodland World

Kixes, Freezings and Ice. They may only be mildly lethal, sting and promptly freeze on Earth, but in Bubble Bubble land, these guys are the worst enemies of Bob and Bob. It's from the stamps, you see, that all the trouble comes. Destroy the stump and life will be a lot easier.



World 4 - Machine World

"Machines gone mad!" say the instructions, and they're not kidding! (Obviously absurd) and other miscreant machines form whirled attack waves to ensnare Bob and Bob. Get to the top of the screen as soon as possible and run down with red-bubbling dragons.



World 5 - Muddy World

If music be the food of love, get that beating piece with one of your lightning bolts! The beating forms and the approaching assassins don't actually make for much of a threat to Bob and Bob's existence. A nice way to begin the quest and get used to the controls.

PARASOL STARS



There may look very different, but most of the worlds and the beautiful music tracks. Without Bob's wonderful body techniques when utilized, necessarily will kill the character and the character with the same on the last.

monsters have been knocked off. The players then have a limited amount of time to clear up any straggling bits of fruit before they are returned to their bottom-corner positions and whisked away to a refuge (a long scroll to the next stage).

And so it goes as until seven stages have been completed and the players prepare to do battle with the obligatory real-of-world fiend.

It's here that Parasol Stars makes one of its traps. Some of the end-of-world guardians, especially the girl being drawn along in a carriage by a decrepit but Little Pony look-alike take 500 many hits before they will finally go away (that's the only real test of the player's ability being tested in his lifetime).

A limited number of continues are available, but using one in the midst of a battle with the guardians will replenish half of the guardian's strength. The best policy by far is to do battle with the guardians for as long as one player can hold out and then for which ever player is left to continue the fight alone.

The eventual vanquishing of the guardians will result in a cut back to the view of all the worlds, with a miniature Bob and his swarming away from the recently colored world off in another grey one. It's a shame that the worlds have to be completed in a particular order, and there's no option to select the one the player fancies most, but there you go. Another omission is a password system. Once the game is over, there's no way to skip through to the stage last attained. Instead, every level must be played again. Players will have to decide for themselves how upsetting a prospect this is.

Graphically, Parasol Stars is a paradox. Stationary, it looks like an absolute dream, with beautifully-colored monsters sitting menacing



By world look at these little pony riders. As they draw back and forth across the world, it's hard to see the bottom-body technique here but in order to gain that all important height advantage.

So, with parasols in their hands and goodness in their hearts, Bob and Bob travel to various one: Music World. While the badmen are different for each world, the pattern of events is largely the same. That is Bob and Bob fly in on their parasols and sit in the bottom corners of the screen. Monsters will then explode out from a central position on the screen into their appropriate start positions. In the first world, of course, everything has a musical theme.

As explained earlier, actually completing most of the screens isn't particularly difficult. Instead it's completing the screens well and exposing and collecting the myriad of secret bonuses which is where the real skill lies.

The scoring system seems rather complicated at first, but has a logical foundation. Each bit of fruit lying around on the level will score between ten and 10,000 points. The big fruits will all score 100,000. In order for the player to earn points from bubble-busting alone, the monsters need to be thrown against each other where they are paralyzed (indicated by them becoming green or blue), 2000 points is awarded for the first monster destroyed this way, and then 4000, 8000 and so on, doubling right up to 100,000 if the player manages to destroy an entire line of seven or more monsters in one go. Extra credits can also be obtained by collecting the 100 coins.



AmigaWorld: You'll need to be quick as you try to avoid becoming "Pony Rider" when it happens. Putting off the bottom of the screen allows access to the area of the big stage.

Like Bubble Bobble, Parasol Stars works best as a two-player game. Even on the earlier levels which are filled with relatively feeble bad guys, life is a whole lot easier when the players are working well together. At the end of some levels, when the guardians become really difficult, a solo battle is not really worth considering.

But there is a price to pay for teaming up. Receiving a hit from a stray droplet or even a careless flurry of a parasol will result in either Bob or Bob being flung across the screen. Unless this will result in a number of monsters being bashed of course, being revealed. Devoted players can, of course, flag their comparison around intentionally, but shouldn't expect much cooperation when it comes to the end of the level.

Each stage is effectively "cleared" once all the



Amiga Version

No surprises here. The graphics are colourful and the action is fast and frenetic. However, Parasol Stars has a peculiar graphic style. All thoughts of the player's poor little eyes seem to have been cast aside in the name of more and more colours. The animations of the monsters spinning around once they've been bashed is also a bit limited, probably owing to the huge variety necessary. In all, it's a game you need to make allowances for.



ST Version

Not quite as smooth and beautiful slightly fewer colours, the ST version of Bubble Bobble may find it tough to reconcile the feelings inherent in the original game when discarded of the Amiga's best features: lots of speed and colour. Watch the pinkie for a final verdict.



PC Version

Also and stark, Bob and Bob will be lacking no bubbles on the IBM. See.

LISTEN, DO YOU WANT TO KNOW A SECRET...?

Secrets, eh? They're what life is all about. These precious little nuggets of information known only to a select few people. What a delicious position to hold - the owner of a secret.

By this token, the folks up at Ocean are in a doubly superior situation, knowing where *THO* completely re-enters. If you didn't know where to look, you'd miss them: worlds can be found in the game that they are already calling "Parasol Stars". The worlds can be accessed from within other worlds by simply falling through secret doors. By making the doors, of course, is another matter.

The first world takes the form of a true nostalgia trip, whisking the players back to Bubble Bobble land where they can play a miniature version of the heaven's very first act.

The second - the Most Secret World - is one constructed entirely from the minds of the mischievous boys at Ocean, and incorporates all their favourite elements of the Bob and Bob phenomenon.



ly atop their ledges and pieces of fruit glinting appetizingly in the far reaches of the screen. However, when it all moves, it's another matter. The variety and richness of the colours become an assault on the senses and the volume of objects needing animation pains the frames for each right down. Although many hundred times better than Bubble Bobble, Parasol Stars is still a long way short of perfect.

Of the previous two titles, Parasol Stars is probably closer to Bubble Bobble. Its a two-player game (it works well, but solo it doesn't). The graphics are a lot better, but the game really isn't about the way it looks. There are lots of worlds to complete, but the game is more about amazing scores than finishing levels. However, the Bubble Bobble series is nothing if not original, and there's enough of a learning-curve for the player to learn simply to fully understand how to control Bob and Bob properly and work out the rules of their environment to make it an amusing though complicated affair.

It certainly isn't a game for all tastes, and players used to six kinds of games where the difficulty is more evenly paced and the eventual score doesn't really matter would be well advised to consider the outfit carefully. However, fans of the series and in particular those players lucky enough to have

Some of the end of world guardians take 80 many hits before they die that the only real facet of the player's ability being tested is his patience.

played the PC Engine version will know exactly what to expect, and won't be disappointed. And I'm sure each folk will be only too pleased to discover that players brave enough to reach the rather excellent end sequence will receive an invitation to "Watch out for Bubble Bobble IV". Yes,

© Jim Douglas



Very colorful and detailed backgrounds.

Bob dies a lot of times and it's a bit of a pain.

Good level-up system.

Very tough.

In water, it looks like an explosion or a long walk.

850

THAT'S WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT!

THAT'S WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT!

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S E C R E T A R Y

Game Advisor, *Voyager: Star
 Trek: The Next Generation*
 Publisher Electronic Arts
 Developer Interplay
 Price \$29.95

STAR TREK

The 25th Anniversary



...pace. The final frontier. These are the voyages of the starship Enterprise, its five-year mission to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new life and new civilizations. To boldly go where no man has gone before.

It's been exactly 25 years since the USS Enterprise first left space-ports in search of those new worlds and life-forms, and though Kirk, Spock, Bones, Scotty and the rest of the crew may get fatter and more in need of nylon hair furnishings with each successive adventure, the perennial success of Gene Roddenberry's sci-fi masterpiece proves that you can't keep a good idea down. After all, few SF sagas are so prolific they can claim to be a genre all of their own. Since Star Trek's inception there have been 70-odd episodes, a cartoon series, a non-stop TV series (*The Next Generation*, now in its sixteenth season) and, as of this month, six blockbuster feature films.

Though younger fans will know Star Trek only from the movies, true Trekkers know that the real magic is to be found in the original TV series. Okay, so the Enterprise did look a bit like a disco-era model back then, and maybe the costumes, sets and special effects were all highly dated, but that's part of what made it so much FUN: Kirk's constantly-quizzical exposition and flings with green alien women, the never-ending verbal spar-



Control through space can be a tedious process for third captain, but this, too, passing off just for fun can lead to all an entrepreneur has in the universe.

ring between Spock and McCoy, Uhura's impressively-short skirts, Scotty screaming "The engines cannot take one more, Cap'n!"... it's arguable that the show's over-prvalent camp atmosphere is what lifted it out of the ordinary and into the annals of true greatness.

It's suitable, then, that the game that's been released to celebrate Star Trek's official quarter-century birthday should be based not on the more serious, sophisticated movies, but those original cheap-cheerful TV episodes. This choice of subject matter comes as no surprise. What is surprising is the incredible authenticity with which producers Interplay have managed to capture the show's look, feel and message.

Being careful not to make the same mistake made by previous Star Trek games (Floobyd's effort being a particularly painful memory), Interplay has worked hard to present Star Trek as authentically as possible within a playable game structure. The result is one that, on paper, doesn't sound too inspiring, but on screen works beautifully. Primarily, it's an on-screen works beautifully. Primarily, it's an on-screen works beautifully presented in the same style as a Lucasfilm or Sierra product, but with a liberal sprinkling of 3D space-combat outside actions in the Wing Commander vein. Granted, it sounds very challenging and cheesy, but it works a whole lot better than you're thinking.

The game is presented not as one single entity or storyline, but as a collection of small, independent storylines in the form of TV episodes. It's probably the game's single most inventive aspect, both in terms of gameplay (it's never been done before) and as a device for simulating the feel of the show. What you're getting here is effectively a whole season of Star Trek, with each episode based vaguely on one episode. It's a lot like the series in the sense that, though the plots change, the format remains much the same from episode to episode. An initial report of the Enterprise accompanies the episode title, and then it's onto the bridge for either a reading from the Captain's log or a message from Starfleet Command to set up the story. In true Star Trek fashion, very little is known about a mission initially (good to normally ordered) to visit a certain planet just to investigate strange goings-on or

something visually vague), and what's really happening only becomes apparent as the plot unfolds.

Apart from in combat, Kirk's control of the *Enterprise* is limited. Everything is operated semi-automatically from the bridge, via the various crew members. Mr. Sulu handles shield control and planet orbiting, Chekov looks after weapons and warp-engines, Uhura does communications and first officer Spock is an all-round helpful blaise,

The game is presented not as one single entity or storyline, but as a collection of small, independent storylines in the form of TV episodes. It's probably the game's single most inventive aspect, both in terms of gameplay and as a device for assisting the feel of the show.

offering scientific background and sound advice. Though response is noted as they should be, die-hard Trekkers may be a little mollified to see that Scotty now sits on the bridge as well. Authenticity dictates that he should be getting his hands dirty in the engine room somewhere, but in order to contain everything within the bridge, he handles damage control from a computer console to Kirk's left.

Having an experienced bridge crew means that the player, as Kirk, has very little to do in peacetime besides make basic decisions. Just click on a planet via Chekov and the warp-engines do the rest. Chances are, however, that when the *Enterprise* arrives at its destination, the situation

will not be up. The Klingons, Romulans and Elai pirates all do their bit as the bad guys from mission to mission, and when an enemy ship is encountered there may be no choice but to engage in combat. You know what these Klingons are like - open fire first, talk later.

Knowing the routine is the key to success in stellar combat. Shields are the first order of the day (any hit on the *Enterprise* is crippling without them), and once Chekov fires up the weapons you're ready to rock and roll. Combat takes place via the giant viewscreens at the front of the bridge, with the *Enterprise* stored and weapons aimed by a set of miniature controls. The mouse buttons give access to planes (steering, yaw, roll) but fast and accurate) and photon torpedoes (efficient and powerful but slow and tricky to aim, which are fired as the target's streak past. Generally, enemy ships move quickly and keep their distance, so the trick is to fire well ahead of them in the direction they're moving. Estimating distance and speed so that your shot and its target will end up in the same place at the same time is tricky, but very satisfying when it works.

There's very little strategy or tactical element in *Star Trek's* combat - it's basically a question of knocking out the enemy before his shots can cause too much damage to the *Enterprise*. The shields provide an adequate buffer, absorbing the fire down or so hits, but if you can't get a quick kill, further enemy shots will damage the ship's op- **test**

It's was a very close-run thing, but *Monkey Island 2* narrowly holds on to its ACE Adventure Benchmark. In my mind at least, *Star Trek* is by far the most inventive product with its individual episodes and multi-character control, and the awesome presentation means it pips LucasArts' effort in the atmosphere stakes too. In the puzzle stakes, the individual pieces are all about the same quality, although *Star Trek's* episode format means the puzzles have to be self-contained and are somewhat less elaborate as a result. Unfortunately, the rather short number of missions is a serious consideration, and the end result is that *Monkey Island 2* is likely to offer the serious adventurer a bit more enjoyment in the long term.





the game. The Enterprise is a complex ship, and the player must learn to use its many systems. The game is a real-time strategy game, and the player must manage the ship's resources and crew members. The game is a real-time strategy game, and the player must manage the ship's resources and crew members.



Chewie is a navigation and weapons man. The Enterprise travels by means of the player selecting a planet from his galactic map. It's also his job to open phasers and transporter doors prior to combat.



Travis Bala has the important job of controlling defense shields, and is also responsible for putting the Enterprise in orbit around planets - transporters only work when in orbit due to their limited range.

THE BRIDGE

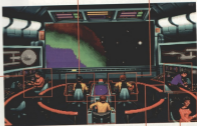
This is where it all happens. Here the player issues commands to the crew (via Captain Kirk, of course) and watches in combat with other vessels. Apart from the main sensor screen, a wealth of information is available - power and speed readings appear above the main screen, while damage readings are allocated to the left and right. Perhaps the most important instrument to the main, used for locating enemy ships and in closed range.



By selecting this, the player can receive the Captain's Log following reports on previous incidents, learn down to planetary and other ships and perhaps most importantly - save the game at any time.



Scotty's job is to control damage to the Enterprise during combat. He automatically repairs systems as they are hit, although the player can select specific areas for priority repair. There's also an emergency power reserve for use in times of crisis.



Although he has no control in this, Spock can give the expert advice on a particular subject or situation at all times. His logical insight can be invaluable. The player can also receive Benda's computer directly, for raw data on a chosen topic.

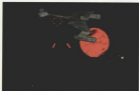


These female communications officers act from the Enterprise - all incoming messages go through her. She can talk ships and planets, as well as inter-ship messages and other data.

Star Trek's combination of diverse arcade and adventure segments requires the player to develop a wide variety of skills, from marksmanship to lateral thinking. Members of the crew are always on hand to help out, but in the end it's up to Kirk (and you!) - whoever said commanding a starship was easy?

TO BOLDLY GO...

Once the landing party has beamed down from the ship, the real fun begins. There's no end to the escapes that Kirk and his team can get into - here's a choice selection...



(Mirror) It's a game arcade experience (the player speaks, the camera screen can be tilted up to fill the entire screen, it looks slow, but none of the in-game health bars, like damage control and radar, are available, making things a whole lot tougher).

(Top Right) The Subspace Warp acts as the game's only protection - the moment it expires to find out which planet to attack, and if the player hammers and comes out of warp space in the wrong system, he faces death at the hands of an in-able enemy.

(Bottom Right) The player is treated to a pretty out-of-place animation whenever the Enterprise is put into orbit.

(Notes) Orders from Star Fleet always come from one of the Admirals, who provides the required description of the mission before disappearing and leaving Kirk to work the rest out for himself. He also pops up at the end of a successful mission to award commendation points based on how well you did - these points are accumulated into some experience which helps to make the Enterprise's systems more effective in combat.



In the Feathered Serpent, Kirk must stand trial by a Klingon court for attempting to protect a harmless fugitive by the name of Spock... With such a vicious system of justice, can Kirk stand?



In Star's Labor Accorded, a deadly virus has broken out inside an orbiting space laboratory. Once still, the Romulans have decided to lay siege to the station of the same name! Does anyone left it to be sent out the door by being an asshole...?



Just one of the problems faced by Kirk is that Old Earl Moran, an ancient alien civilization has been discovered on this planet planet - but how on Earth do you get through the giant door?



The trials of The Feathered Serpent conclude when Kirk and his team are challenged to complete this Klingon battle of wits. The door isn't locked, but how do you get past the deadly beautiful?



In many situations, Doctor McCoy's medical kit is not enough, especially when trying to treat aliens like those dying Romulans in these cases. How do you manufacture special medicines - but how?





Almost 20 years later, McCoy with a head of white hair stands on the bridge of the starship Federation ship in Kirk's quest to capture Spock, or can the Klingon Kling in an available character? It's up to you.

term. Scotty carries out the repair work as quickly as he can, but in the later combats even his experienced hands may not be able to keep up with the continued pounding.

With the combat over (if indeed there's any to start with), and the relevant cutaway stuff completed (Spock should always have a chat with Spock and get Uhura to attempt radio contact, the next step is to beam down to the rendezvous point - be it a planet, ship, space station or whatever - which triggers the start of the game's predominant adventure element. A trip to the transporter room is a necessity on every mission, with the landing party or "away team" always comprised of Kirk, Spock, Doctor McCoy and the ubiquitous red-uniformed security officer.

Having beamed down from the Enterprise, Kirk and his team are free to explore the landscape in standard point-and-click fashion. The size of each episode's environment varies, but generally it's a very self-contained affair, with a high volume of puzzles, secrets and interactive characters that make up a whole story within as few as half a dozen locations. The player only controls Kirk directly (the rest of the team follow him automatically from location to location), with all the standard adventure options - Talk, Get, Look and Use - available from a simple graphic menu. The majority of the puzzles are based on collecting objects and putting them to good use elsewhere, although it's the party's permanent inventory of standard equipment that continually proves the most useful. Spock's tricorder, for instance, works

like a very powerful version of *Link*, scanning an area or object and revealing information that the eye would never see. In turn, McCoy has a medical kit and a scanner of his own for analyzing the wounded or dead (he actually says "He's dead, Jim" when he scans a corpse - it's great), while Kirk has his communicator for contacting the orbiting Enterprise and everyone has a phaser which can, of course, be set to kill or stun.

Given the Federation's prime directive of non-interference and no unnecessary violence, the phasers are hardly ever used (psychopaths go home - the game won't let you shoot at anything you don't have to), and TALKING is the favored alternative whenever a new character is encountered. As superior officers, Kirk always does the talking, and conversations work in the same way as *Monkey Island* with the player choosing from a list of responses at pertinent intervals in the dialogue.

Despite the fact that Kirk does a lot of the leg-work himself, it's by no means his show, and none of the missions could be completed without the expertise of Bones and Spock done at hand. Whenever it comes to operating a complex piece of machinery, programming a computer or doing anything vaguely technical, Spock's the only man who can handle it. McCoy, on the other hand, has medical talents that range from curing the sick and injured to manufacturing special medicines and identifying dangerous bacteria in the air. As for the security officer - well, even Tricorder knows that his only job is to be the first one to get shot whereas a handy whiz on his phaser. As such, security officers are expendable (though Starfleet Command isn't exactly chuffed

when you lose one), but if the invaluable Kirk, Spock or McCoy are killed, it's immediately game over.

The plots themselves vary greatly as the game progresses, ranging from rescuing a captured Federation vessel from the hands of Klingon terrorists to freeing an orbiting medical center that's under attack from the Borgulans, being tried by the vicious Klingon legal system, deactivating a deadly computer system that's wiped up after centuries of dormancy and even foiling the plans of that favorite Star Trek baddy, Harry Mudd. It's this episodic formula that does wonders for Star Trek's playability and atmosphere.

With an intro and epilogue for each one, they really do feel like TV episodes, and while conventional adventures, there's very little chance of getting bored prior to completion as the player's interest is revitalized at the start of each new "show". The combined teams of ACE and writer mag CU Anaya, who were cranking into the game long every time a mission was completed to see what the next one held in living testament to that fact.

The adventures themselves are small but perfectly formed. Though none of the missions are



PC Version



Superb soundcard music and effects make *Star Trek* a sonic treat, and the visuals are superb throughout - brightly colored, well-defined and instantly recognizable as from the TV show. A word of warning, though - you really do need a big and chunky PC to get the most out of the game. The game will run without VGA or a sound card, but they're both mandatory if you want to really get into the swing of things. It takes an age to install, and the hard disk is accessed constantly during play, making it fast machine a necessity.

Amiga Version



The tale of *Star Trek* on the Amiga is still concluded at time of writing. The game's just as instinctively demanding that it may be too much for the machine to handle readily. There's talk that it may appear in some sort of CD-drive incarnation... more news as and when.

AT Version



Every AT fan, but you definitely will not be going where no man has gone before. Electronic Arts have no plans for an Atari version.



PUT IT ON SCREEN!

Yes indeed! Scully may not be able to "give ya anaw moon, Cap'n", but we certainly can. Thanks to our top stars of Electronic Arts,

we've got for you (yes, IBM) superlative videos of the original Star Trek TV series to give away. If you're not already a Trekkie, here's your chance to become one with a starring set

of vids to get your collection off to a whangin' good start. There's over 20 top-class episodes to get your teeth into here, and to be their proud owner, all you have to do is answer three simple questions:

1. What is the USS Enterprise's registration number?
2. In what century is Star Trek set?
3. How do you spell Klingon?

Easy, eh? Just bang your answers on a postcard, and send them to Star Trekkin', ACE Magazine, Priory Court, 20-22 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AB. The closing date is 30 April, so get a move on!



As the example of Star Trek's superb graphics testifies, the only way to accurately judge the title is on the basis of the excellent cut-scenes supported by dialogue developed that never ceases to amaze the particular computer.

really that long, each one has bags of head-scratching potential, and the idea of having a party of four on-screen characters working together to solve the puzzles rather than a solitary figure works wonders both for the game and for the televisual atmosphere. In fact it's Star Trek's remarkable authenticity that is by far its most impressive aspect. Interplay's designers have no-doubt broken their backs researching every minute detail of Star Trek's look, sound, dialogue, characters and little touches, and the result is nigh-on perfection. I challenge even the most devout Trekkie to find the slightest inaccuracy or omission. Everything is spot-on, from the title-track and incidental music to the teleportation effects, McCoy/Trook arguments and even the way Kirk sits in his bridge chair. I can safely say that I've never seen a licensed game that does such justice to its subject matter. Interplay's game isn't just based on Star Trek. It IS Star Trek, and I'm having a very hard time getting over just how authentic, atmospheric and exhilarating it really is.

Normally, adventures leave me cold. I don't have anything like the patience and logical insight required to play them, but Star Trek's core fictionalness and terrific atmosphere had me - and the rest of the office - under its spell from the moment the first few bars of the opening music made the hairs on the back of my neck stand on end. The cerebral aspect may not be to everyone's taste, but it doesn't intrude too much, and what's left can safely be described as a joy to behold. Anybody who ever enjoyed the TV show should buy this immediately, as should any adventure with a modicum of self respect. Me? I'm still writing with the shock.

— Gary White

RATINGS



Excellent
entertainment
value.



Really nice game
for the money.

Good

Worth a try

Not recommended

Waste of time

Very poor

Don't buy

Terrible

Waste of money

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ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY
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SNOW BROTHERS

Look out Mario Bros., here come the... Ahright then, that was a close one. I really said the most awkwardly titled thing ever. Not only that, but it's also inaccurate, as if anyone in the platform world is under those from these two cuddly characters, it's not Mario and Luigi but these old brothers, Bob and Bob. As nice and playable as Capcom's latest parvenient from its ever so-called coin-op is, there can be no denying that it's a rather optical reworking of Bubble Bobble.

This Gameboy version is actually called Snow

Brothers (or j@bb@ough you only find this out once you've switched the game on), the reason being, like the handfield version of Bubble Bobble, there's no streamer-man two-player mode. Instead the storyline has been tweaked, explaining that your snow bro has been kidnapped and it's up to you to get him back - on your too. The resultant platform invaders aren't quite as much fun as they would be with a pal, but a suitable last nonetheless. Like Bobble, the player's objective is to rid each non-scrolling screen of bad-dies using his special power - in this case, magic snowballs. Hitting a baddy repeatedly causes him to sit in a ball of slush, which can then be rolled down the screen until it hits the bottom, destroying the nasty. Smart players can throw the ball so it picks up more bad-dies as it wraps, with special bonuses available for such shrewd tactics.

Extra powers available via the bot sewer fly holes include speed shoes and power shots, and at the end of every few levels there's a big badly to control with. An derivative as it may sound, it's actually a lot of fun - much more so than the poor Bubble Bobble conversion. Definitely one of the more playable Gameboy titles to surface in recent months - it's just a crying shame about the lack of a two-player option, really.



The Snow Bros. didn't have much to say about the game, but they did say it was a lot of fun to play. The Snow Bros. didn't have much to say about the game, but they did say it was a lot of fun to play.



PRICE
£24.99
(INCLUDES)



by Gary White

THE ADDAMS FAMILY

They're creepy and they're lanky, they're scary and they're spooky, they're altogether only... no 'looky' in that they're sure on the Gameboy too. It has to be said, rather predictable fashion. Based on the surprisingly successful movie adaptation, Gomez's game (which is based on computer format success - see Preview), it's a predictable and not particularly inspired platform romp with the player taking the role of lanky head-of-the-household Gomez.

The Addams Family isn't a bad little platform game. It's certainly nothing special, but it'll provide an adequate fix for level's ladders junkies for a while. *Addams Family* fans are unlikely to be impressed, as the game is very generic and bears little relation to the movie. Take a look - but approach with caution.



PRICE
£29.99
(INCLUDES)



Special thanks to **ShutDown Consoles** (0200 680 0420) for the loan of these review cartridges.

by Gary White



The Addams Family didn't have much to say about the game, but they did say it was a lot of fun to play. The Addams Family didn't have much to say about the game, but they did say it was a lot of fun to play.



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ATARI'S CLASSIC

TEMPEST

by Steve Kelly and Dan Malone



Given the chance, how would today's premiere games designers re-write their own favourite classics? This month, two of the Bitmap Brothers' top talents take up the challenge...

Because it's my personal favourite game of all time," says Bitmap Brother Steve Kelly when asked why he chose to give the govt treatment to Atari's decade-old coin-op classic. "There are some games that are absolutely perfect. Take *Mixale Comand* for instance - I don't think there's anything you could do to make that game any better. But I think that something like *Tempest* is just right for an update."

Steve's conviction in this matter is not to be questioned. He first encountered the original coin-op just after he left *Pit* as a Spectrum programmer back in 1984 ("It just happened to be in

a pub I frequented at the time"), and was instantly hooked. Such was his enthusiasm for the game that he went on to write a special 3-Dimensional version of the game for the ZX81 - eventually published by the now-defunct *Mikrogen*. Naturally, he jumped at the chance to - hypothetically at least - turn his favourite game into the modern-day coin-op of his dreams.

"The reason why I think *Tempest* 94 would work so well is that, while it's very difficult to find fault with the original gameplay, there's a great deal that can be done with the graphics and control technology we have today," Steve explains. Not wanting to reinvent himself, he and co-designer Dan Malone (who also produced the conceptual drawings here) have approached the project as if they were producing a new coin-op as opposed to just a 25th-*anniversary* edition.

For those who never saw *Tempest* when it first appeared (and there will be a lot of you, as despite its excellence it was never really that popular), it's about as simple as games get - but at the time it broke new ground both in gameplay and technical terms, using 3-D technology and vector graphics in a way never before seen. Played over a series of vaguely cone-shaped "webs" with lines running down towards a central vanishing point, *Tempest* saw the player piloting a tiny craft at high speed around the rim of the cone, blasting away at an array of booted spider-like enemies which scuttled up the strands towards him. Despite a few variations in the shape of the webs and alien types, that was about all there was to it - one of three's major gripes with the game.

For *Tempest* 94, Steve and Dan have come up with a far more sophisticated approach constructed on the same gameplay principles. "The playfield in *Tempest* 94 is similar to the original," explains Steve, "but the increase in technology enables the vectors to be filled, with shading to give a much better feel of depth and to make the whole game more pleasing to the eye." Probably

NME!

For *Tempest* 94, Steve has designed a whole new set of enemies which he says would be much more intelligent than those in the original. "As well as advancing from the centre of the web, they'll also come at the player from behind and attack to the outside edge of the playfield." Here's just a few of the bad guys he's concocted...

■ STUNTS

These simply attack down one segment and try to hit the player.

■ SWITCHERS

Same as *Stunts*, except they change segments as they move forward.

■ SPIRALS

Intelligent enemies which spiral up the cone, switching lanes so as to position themselves as close to the player as possible.

■ SPIKERS

These leave behind spikes which are deadly to the player as they advance.

■ SUPER SPIRALS

The same as spirals, but totally maniac! These change lanes VERY quickly.

■ ATTACKERS

Highly intelligent enemies that climb up onto raised segments and shoot back at the player.

■ SPLITTERS

When shot, these break into three or five identical aliens. Nasty!

■ BLOCKERS

These advance for a short distance, then drop a new raised segment. Other aliens can then see this as a defensive position!



(Above) This is how Steve and Dan designed their version of Tempest 3D (as seen in this). Below: redesigned alien, a sophisticated main engine and - most importantly - redesigned input and upgraded play area. (Below)

the most radical change that Steve and Dan have decided to make are the raised and indented segments in the coin section. These 3-dimensional ledges and platforms are clearly visible on the screens shown here and add a major new element to the gameplay - the intelligent aliens (a Bittany trademark) use the playfield to their advantage, leading behind ledges and diving over mountains to keep out of the player's line of fire. "This means the players would have to advance down into the coin and take on these enemies 'one-to-one' - while at the same time enemies are inflicting other areas of the playfield," Steve explains. "As well as making the combat more interesting, these raised segments are used as bridges to join separate parts of a play-zone," he continues.

"The whole idea idea of these raised segments is to give the game a much more strategic feel by dividing the play-areas into separate areas, each of which need to be defended and be specifically attacked by the enemy in a bit. This feel was the only major thing lacking in the original game - you often just randomly spin around the disk with your finger on the fire button in the hope of killing as much as possible. And the really clever bit is that there is no real limit on the number of play-zones, as they would be generated from very small data structures."

Designing Tempest 3D as a coin-op rather than a home computer game has also allowed Steve and Dan to come up with an innovative new control system. "The original coinop was controlled by a rotating dial which moves the ship around the edge of the play-zone," says Steve. "A turn of 35.5 degrees moves the ship to the next segment

of the coin. In Tempest 3D, though, the ship moves smoothly round the coin rather than just jumping from segment to segment, so a much finer control mechanism is called for. What I'd like to have is essentially the same control, but with a 'joystick' situated on top of the control disc. This disc would have a small indentation where the player places his index finger. The best way to imagine it is by comparing it to a VCR with a top-shuffle control.

"There are two buttons used for shooting and 'super sapper'. The button is mounted on a hand-gripped joystick lever that is nudged forward and backward to zoom the ship in and out of the playfield. The super-sapper, mounted on top of the joystick is actuated by the thumb and can be used three times per coin to destroy all on-screen aliens. Also, you've got a large trackball, like in Marble Madness and Missile Command, that can be used in conjunction with three buttons to change the viewpoint. Pressing the each button while rotating the ball would rotate the entire playfield through x, y and z axes. As nice as it would look, it's only really window-dressing and there's a reset button to quickly reset the play view."

Steve and Dan admit they surprised themselves with their Tempest 3D design. "Considering we only had a week to do it and I've never done anything like this before, I'm really pleased with the way it turned out," Steve admits. So much so, in fact, that there's just the slightest possibility that the Bittany might actually advance things a stage and produce the game for real! It's only a pipe dream at the moment, but you never know. At the very least, the project has got Steve's nostalgia glands working over time. "There's a shop down in Cropton that sells all old coin-ops, and I'm thinking of popping down there to see if I can get hold of an old Tempest machine. It's really got me going..."

PICKUPS!

An updated arcade game just wouldn't be complete without extra weapons, and Steve has made sure that Tempest 3D has them in spades. "These would be dropped by certain enemies when shot and awarded at times when the game calls them," he explains.

■ SPEEDUP

Increases velocity of player's shots.

■ SIDE SHOT

Allows the player to shoot at enemies that have reached the edge of the coin.

■ MULTI-SEGMENT SHOT

Bullets that fire not just down the player's segment, but down both adjacent segments.

■ SHIELD

These fire at 45 degrees and bounce off raised platforms - like the laser in N-Type.



It will bounce back onto the base of the player's segment and will also bounce through the play area until the next enemy appears. It's possible to create several hundred of them, straight shots, like the top-left one, or more girly, flamboyant curves and wails of the bottom design and the different color as the fire rate. Note the use of ledges and other segments in all the designs.



■ MAGNET SHOT

These spin randomly around the play area in smooth arcs.

■ RETREAT

Forces all enemies to go back to the center of the coin, giving the player a breather.

■ EXTRA LIVES AND ENERGY

Where would you be without them? "These are always placed in a dangerous area to tempt the player into taking a high risk," says Steve.



Part 2 THE LARGO EMBARGO

First, enter Tickwood and get mugged by Largo. Now go to the swamp. Look at the raft, use the coffin and row to the shack at the far right end of the swilling swamp. Once inside look at the skulls and pick up the string. First and talk to the Woodoo Lady. Now leave the hut.

Go back to Tickwood. Pick up the sign near the bridge (to get the speed) and go to the laundry ship. Take the bucket (near the three crates). Walk to the bar ship but don't go in - stick on one of the three windows, to the rear to enter the kitchen. Take the knife and exit via the window.

Go to the hotel ship and use the knife on the rope tethering the alligator, which will make a break for freedom and be chased by the innkeeper. Look at the food and take the cheese squiggles. Enter Largo's room and take the wig.

Now go to the cartographer's ship. Talk to him and take the blank paper. Go to the bar ship and talk to the bartender about Largo. Largo will now make his entrance and jolt on the raft. When he's left, use the paper to wipe up the sign.

Walk to the swamp and use the bucket on the swamp to fill it with sludge. Go back to Largo's room, close the door and use the bucket at an on the door. Hide behind the dressing screen. Watch Largo get covered in mud, follow him the laundry ship, have a chat to him then go back to his room. Close the door and take the clam (taken from the tank at the door). Go to the laundry ship and give the bait to Mitty.

Walk to the cemetery and go to the graves. Find Marv's Largo's tombstone and use the shovel on his grave. After the theatrics, go back to the woodoo shack and give the sign-covered paper, the wig, the piece of Largo's laundry and the remains of Largo's ancestor to the Woodoo Lady. She'll make you a woodoo doll. Go to Largo's room and use the pins

on the doll before Largo can throw you out.

After leaving LeChuck's living, board (taken from you, have another chat to the Woodoo Lady and read the book on Big Whoo. Now go to the beach and pick up the stick (it's on the path leading back to town). Go to the laundry ship and use the stick to prop it open. Now use the string on the stick. Use the cheese squiggles on the box. When the rat starts eating pull the string, then open the box and take the startled rat.

Go back to the kitchen and use the rat on the pot. Now go to the bar tender and ask him how the stew is, he'll fire the cook. Go up on deck, read the "Help Wanted" sign then go back to the bartender and ask him about getting a job. Agree to work for him and take the 420 Gold Pieces.

Leave the kitchen (via the window) and re-enter the bar to get fired (you'll be allowed to keep the money).

Walk to the cartographer's ship. When Mitty removes his monocle to rub his eyes grab it. Now walk to the peninsula and talk to Captain Dress. Give him the monocle and charter his ship. Choose Bucky Island on the map. When aboard the ship pick up the parrot seed and enter the cabin.

Part 3 THE FOUR MAP PIECES

On Bucky Island talk to the old man and find out his name. Walk to the antique store and buy the pen, the ship's horn and buy the old saw. Walk up to Captain Kato and take a raftlet. Now walk to the sporting content and walk up to the flags that mark 1st, 2nd and 3rd. Use the foam and when the Spinnmaster walks off pick up the flags. (You dirty rotten low-down cheat.)

Return to the jolly Barks and sail to Phat Island. You'll get arrested no matter what you say. Once in jail push the mattress and pick up the stick. Use the stick on the leg bone of the



MONKEY ISLAND 2

LeCHUCK'S REVENGE

Alley, we hearties! Shiver me timbers! Brace me mainsail! (Etc., etc.) Yes, here it is - the first of a two-part complete solution to Lucasfilm's brilliant Benchmark-bearing adventure, all thanks to Elmo of Wave 888 in Australia. (By the way Elmo, send us your full address and we'll send you THREE pieces of software in repayment for your superb guide.) Take a deep breath - here we go...



When you pick up the Open Book at Phat Island, Talk to him.





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skelton in the neighbouring cell. Give the bone to the dog. Take the keys and open the door. Look at the envelopes on the shelf. Take and open them both.

Walk to the library and look up 'Daisies' in the card file. When filling out your library card details make sure you give your age as 21 (the legal drinking age). Then take out any old book except 'The Joy Of Sex'. Walk to the miniature lighthouse near the door and open it. Take the lens.

Walk to the alley closest to the jolly baron and watch the guy gambling. When he waves, follow him to the other alley then knock

him off the sleeping pirate. Now go to the woodman's shop and he won't do these. Take the hammer and the nails.

Go to Booty Island. Go to Stan's Previously Owned Coffins and ask about buying one. Ask him to sit in it. Close the coffin lid and use the nails on it. Grab the crypt key and use the hammer on the cash register. Go to the spinning contest and have a go, but use the statue on the green drink first. Use different combinations of spinning terms until you win. Go to the antique dealer and ask about the map. He'll now tell you that he might trade it for something the figurehead of the mad monkey. Get him the spinning plaque and tell him it's the spirit of the letter of LeChuck. He'll give you 6,000 Pieces Of Eight for it.

Now look at the book on drawers and find the co-ordinates of the mad monkey (write them down). Go to Phat Island, go to the jail and take the envelope on the shelf and free Kate. Go back to Booty Island and chatter Kate's boat. Dive in once there and pick up the figurehead. Then put the envelope. Go to the antique dealer and swap the figurehead for the map.

Go to the costume store and show the man your invite to the Island Grass. He'll give you a costume. Walk to Governor Marley's mansion. Show your costume and ticket to the guard then walk to the mansion. Push the bookshelves and let the cook chase you around the house twice. When she leaves a good enough lead on him open the door into the treasure chest and enter. Pick up the fish and leave.

Walk to the front of the mansion and pick up the dog. Go to Phat Island and walk to the pier. Make a bet with the kid and win it by giving him the fish. He'll be about his catch and make him know it. Now he'll give you his fishing pole. Go to the waterfall and walk to the top of it. Use Jop on the pump. Now walk down and enter the tunnel. Once at the cottage open Kate's jail envelope (you'll now have some man-grog). Go inside and demand the map.

When you are given your map, use it on the tree. Use the map with the rearing dog. When the man has passed out open the window

BATTLE ISLE

A veritable goody bag of level codes for this almost perfect Ubisoft wargame, courtesy of A. Tash, Redbridge, London.

ONE PLAYER

- 1 COURA
- 2 PHASE
- 3 EDDY
- 4 RAGUNT
- 5 RIGHT
- 6 RUSTY
- 7 RIFER
- 8 VESPA
- 9 MAMC
- 10 SPACE
- 11 VALDY
- 12 TESTY
- 13 TERRA
- 14 SURVE
- 15 NEVER
- 16 RIVER

TWO PLAYER

- 1 GHOST
- 2 MIFISS
- 3 EAGLE
- 4 METAN
- 5 PHOTON
- 6 POLAR
- 7 TIGER
- 8 SHARK
- 9 ZENT
- 10 DONNY
- 11 VESTA
- 12 COORD
- 13 DIMSAM
- 14 GRANT



Deep in the Godfather South Island

on the door and ask for the next number. Count the number of fingers the doorman holds up when he says "if this is..." and give this as your reply when he asks "How many is this...?" (There's no secret code at all! It's a code! Okay?)

Go and gamble and when you win ask for the invitation. Repeat this winning strategy until you have all three prizes. Walk to the Governor's mansion. Tell the guard that there's a fire in the kitchen then run upstairs. Use the book from the library on the book on the bed.

Return to South Island (with Kate girl arrested). Go to the bar ship and order a blue White and Yellowhead's Italy. Use the blue drink on the yellow drink to make a green spit-thickener. Use the banana from the envelope on the metronome. Then pick up Jop. Go to the laundry and see the pig

to the left of the door. Go to Booty Island. Go to the mansion and enter. Walk upstairs. Take the car above Elaine's bed and leave for the big tree. Pick up the plank and use it on the hole farthest left. Walk on top of it and use the car in the next hole. Walk to the car. Watch the dream (maybe save Gaybrush when the boys).

Then, once you have Jenkin, pick up the car pieces and take them to the woodman on South Island. Give the pieces to him and he'll fix it. Go to the cliff on Booty Island and use the fishing pole on the map piece. A bird will steal it and take it to the Big Tree. Now go to the Big Tree and walk to the

plank. Use the car on the next hole, then walk to the car and pick up the plank. Use the plank on the next hole. Walk to the plank. Pick up the car. Gaybrush should do the rest automatically. Once at the top, go to the farthest left building and pick up the telescope. Go to the closest hut and walk to the door. Look at the maps and use the dog on the maps. Now you have another map piece.

Go to the antique store and use the parrot chew on the hook where the sign used to be. Now buy the mirror. Go to the cottage on Phat Island and enter it. Use the mirror on the mirror frame. Buy and use the telescope on the

TIPS

HUDSON HAWK

Who wants to be the best? You do! Organize your SOULS/DEFENSE (no spaces) on the title screen for infinite free while it has already by typing in SOULS/DEFENSE@redbride.com for the same effect.

Scott Walker, Lew, Lancashire

ROBLAND

Many infinite free markers. Use this for Stan's Dodge repair. It's so easy.



if it says you play" marker game. Press pause anytime during the game, press the HELP key five times and restart the game. Enough enough for you? Even better, all the space bar to skip through the levels.

A. Tash, Redbridge, London

monkey statue in front of the cottage. Take note of which (which the light strikes them go inside, get the mirror and push the button that the light hit. Take the map piece from the skeleton and leave for Scotland Island.

Go to the cemetery and open the crypt. Once inside look at all the coffins and look at the book of famous pirate quotations. Match Florsviken's quote with the coffin inscriptions and open it. Take the ash. Go to the Woodoo Lady and look at all the

bottles. When you find the Ash-2-Life™ bottle pick it up. The Woodoo Lady will ask you for some ash so she can whip up a proper potion. Give her the ash. Get the Ash-2-Life™ from her and go back to the crypt. Use the Ash-2-Life™ on the ashes. Offer to turn off the gas at the woods hut.

Go to beach and open the hut. Turn off the gas and return to the crypt. Use the Ash-2-Life™ on Florsviken and he'll give you the map. Now you have all four

pieces. Go to the cartographer give him the keys from the light house and the map pieces. Go to the Woodoo Lady for him (he got the Love Potion). Then go back to Wally. Look at the writing on the table, open the bag marked Juku, then go to the swamp. Get in the box.

...And that's where we must leave Monkey Island for now. The second and final part will appear in next month's TNT section. Stay tuned.



REALMS

This rather excellent wargame now has some rather excellent tips provided for it by Richard "TWO pieces of top software are on their way to me" Thompson of Aberdeen in Scotland. Take it away Richard...

CHOOSING YOUR REALM

For an easier time, choose a realm bordered with only one other. The reasons are obvious - you've only got one immediate enemy to worry about. If you fancy a real challenge pick a realm sloping in the middle of the land!

STARTING OFF

Immediately access your cities and stock up on grain, expand land and build walls around the cities near the borders. In the early years of your reign recruit armies and train cavalry whenever recruits are available - you'll need them!

Access the cities every year and cycle through them, doing what needs to be done. As the realm grows larger and more complex it is easier to do this every three years or so (making sure that you stock three years worth of grain each time).

Set a reasonably high tax rate - don't be afraid of taking your citizen's money!

GENERAL HINTS

Don't dawdle on the playfield. If you want to think, pause the game or enter another screen.

When one of your city's population feels 'unbearable' and their loyalty is 'absolute', levy the citizen's money a year. This will hardly

affect them (they'll feel 'determined' rather than 'unbearable') and by the next year they will be back to 'unbearable', in readiness to be levied again! Magic!

If an enemy realm leaves it's capital relatively unguarded, go to the capital and attack it straight away. Take the capital and the realm's cities and armies will become yours immediately. Unless a unit of troops is garrisoned at these cities it's likely that a few may revolt, but these will be small and isolated without any armies and therefore easy meat to recapture. Obviously, you should always keep your own capital well guarded.

If you have a large army assembled and you send it against an unguarded enemy city, the city may well surrender and join your realm for free rather than face the consequences. This not only avoids spilled blood but your new citizens will be totally loyal and ready to be levied immediately.

When a city surrenders after siege, raise it unless it's a capital or other tactically significant city such as a port. As well as providing a huge boost to your treasury, the enemy city ceases to be a threat for years. Capturing every city is not a good idea as every city will revolt later and they also drain your valuable resources.

If a surrendered city is one you wish to retain, take over the city and leave a garrison of troops there to prevent revolt. As long as you run the city well and don't levy too much the inhabitants will soon come



around to your way of thinking and become loyal subjects, thus enabling you to levy twice a year and recruit loyal troops.

After conquering new cities, always check and adjust tax rates so that they level back to your capital.

Get control of ports. They are immensely important tactically, especially in heavy sea-faring realms.

Never pay a tribute under siege unless it's your capital and it's a last resort. It's not worth the huge cost and the enemy troops will soon be back.

Don't waste time and especially money in alliances with other realms. No matter how much aid you give, if the opportunity arises to take one of your cities then you can be sure they'll take it.

If plague hits a city sort it out immediately by improving the city's health. Be prepared to levy heavily if need be - it's better than having plague spread through your realm!



ARMIES AND FIGHTING BATTLES

Armies should consist primarily of four types of units:

- 1. Heavy Cavalry** - Arm them with a war hammer or long sword and dress them in heavy head and body armor with a bronze shield. For the perfectionist, also arm them with spears or javalins to soften up the enemy before battle truly commences.
- 2. Heavy Infantry** - Arm and dress them as for cavalry. These are slow but superb in combat. Best used for defense or supporting and consolidating a cavalry charge.
- 3. Light Infantry** - Arm them with any weapons depending on the punch you want to give them and a missile weapon (usually a bow)

and dress them in light armor. Try to keep these units out of combat unless necessary as they aren't too good. They're best used to rain arrows down on the enemy from afar. They're quite maneuverable.

4. Light Cavalry - Arm and dress them as for light infantry. In battle, use as light infantry. However, use the units' superb maneuverability to try to get behind the enemy and outflank them.

Always attack in a wedge formation and defend in a square formation. If controlling Deceivers or Assassin units, also have no base skills, as not bother with missile weapons. They are better hand-to-hand as equip them appropriately and charge!

Missile-based armies favor a defensive stance. Wait until the enemy with missiles while they approach, then send your infantry units to the front to do the actual fighting.

When you've defeated the enemy and his units try to escape, attack them before they leave the battlefield. This will

cause great damage to the enemy yet leave you unscathed, ensuring the enemy cannot regroup and fight another day.

ON THE BATTLEFIELD

There are basically three situations you may find yourself in on the battlefield:

- 1. You heavily outnumber the enemy.** (In this scenario you really can't lose unless you're totally incompetent!)



A good initial wedge. It may be possible to cause the enemy to retreat (depending on how good). Concentrate fire on the same units for the best results.

If you have no missile troops, use your numbers advantage and attack or chase them at will. Also use the battle when your number form is set.

- 2. You and the enemy are about equal in strength.**



If you're not both of abilities, REVERSE!



If you're ATHER!

- 3. You are heavily outnumbered by the enemy.**



The best advice here is to completely retreat (i.e. accept it you are here to wrap things there you leave this one corner as that enemy units can only attack you get a draw. Try to improve your odds with retreats.

As it enables, and make sure your retreat has occurred as high ground to give you an advantage. Oh, and you're going out on your own.

Key to the above diagrams:

- 1 - Heavy Unit
- 2 - Heavy Cavalry
- 3 - Light Cavalry
- 4 - Heavy Infantry
- 5 - Light Infantry
- 6 - Assassin
- 7 - Deceiver
- 8 - Archer
- 9 - Mage
- 10 - Mage (in shadow)
- 11 - Priest

CONSOLE CORNER



SONIC THE HEDGEHOG

MISSION: Speedy feet drive the Negative commander's A button on the title screen (where Sonic says his name) and press UP, DOWN, LEFT and RIGHT. Now hit START. You'll now be able to start an otherwise level you want.

Also, when you've completed the game, give On Molecule another which is the title to change in the appropriate level with the left arrow three times and hold down A, then press and hold down B, then press and hold down C. Now release B and C (still holding down A) and press START. You can now use A to change levels into a kind of water characters and use F to reproduce life. A good tip is to change Sonic into a dog, reproduce him all around the screen then change him back into Sonic and pick up the dog.

By Ben South, Boston, Middlesex

BATMAN

On the third level (the message of the Negative master go to the second attorney, the one with the axeman in the last underground) the following: All the enemies and pick up the batwing (in back to the left and walk until it goes down and so again. Pick up the batwing that has disappeared and repeat until you have 99 batwings. Complete the level without dying and on the next level the excess batwings will be converted into money!

By T. George, Southampton, Southampton

CASTLEMANIA 3

A digit 8 on the control, and so on. But whether it is nice to have you codes to all the levels? It would! Then read on...

SOUND TEST

Start, Start, Start, Start

CRYSTAL CASTLE

Block, Crystal, Start, Start

ROCK CASTLE

Crystal, Start, Start, Start

FLYING CASTLE

Crystal, Start, Start, Start

CLOUD CASTLE

Start, Start, Start, Start

DRAGON'S CAVE 1

Start, Start, Start, Start

DRAGON'S CAVE 2

Start, Start, Start, Start

By Richardson, Long Wharf, Suffolk

TIPS

HEIMDALL

The most money by the secret? You got it! Get to go to the island where a giant ship will be a place only an enemy, you go and see that the ship. Use Heimdall at the gold and the submarine gun. Sell the up and confirm the ship. Then press up again. As it is to stop the sea will be equal to the status of a blue crystal! But keep using this until the ship is full then tap back the original gun. You should have made a profit of about 50000 Gold when it stops!

By M. J. Fehrer, Southampton



HUNTER

A cheat or secret here for Amiga and NT gamers. Looking for the General's Boat? by coordinates 413.04, 11203.

David Murray, Farnborough, Hampshire

SHIELDBLADE 3

Not really a cheat, but interesting nonetheless. On the Amiga NT title screen, type in 000000 when it tells you to hit five to enter a special sub-game. (More fun!)

David Murray, Farnborough, Hampshire

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- ★ ANIMAL OF THE
LEGION OF DOOM
- ★ EARTHQUAKE

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THE ACE

Not much fun these recessions, are they? With funds limited, that next top software purchase often seems impossibly far away. But help is at hand. You may not know it, but there's a huge pool of quality games software out there just waiting to be tapped by you for little more than the price of blank floppy! (Disk, I mean.) Hey! You guessed it - I'm talking about the topsy-turvy, cheap-n'-cheerful world of Public Domain software.

But just what is Public Domain software? Why is it so inexpensive? Are Shareware and Licenseware also part of the Public Domain? How do you get your glibly mints on it? And, most importantly, is it actually any good?

But easy, grade reader. The ACE PD File is here to map your friendless, calm your worry-fraught mind and guide you oh-so-gently through the myriad of delights awaiting you on the PD circuit. In this, the first PD File, I'll be explaining just what some of those enticing backwards means, telling you how you can get a slice of the action and pointing you in the direction of some cracking games software for your Amiga, Atari ST and IBM PC. There's lots to do and even more to see, so let's get going.

SHAREWARE, SHMAREWARE

The world of computing is a bewildering and frightening place for the uninitiated, a dense jungle of obscure backwards and acronyms, deterring all but the most committed from penetrating its murky secrets.

And the bizarre Zone of PD is a rife with teary jargon as any other, but fear not. As it happens PD is neither big, hard nor clever. So back and relax as we explain all in a friendly, easy-to-understand way.

• **Public Domain** (PD) software is a piece of non-copyrighted code that can be duplicated and distributed by anyone or anything completely free of charge or legal hassles. That's why the software from PD libraries is so cheap - all you're paying for is the cost of copying the stuff and sending it to you!

• **Shareware** is as freely copiable as PD, but the catch here is that if you find the program of

use then you are requested to send the author(s) a registration fee - which, given the quality of some of the software available, is usually laughably small. You guessed it, it's "try before you buy" time!

• **Licenseware** cannot be copied freely like 'normal' PD. Some PD libraries are licensed (hence the name) to sell software, and the author receives a percentage royalty for every copy sold.

• And that's not all. There are loads of other silly names floating around the PD network - Adshare, Businessware, Giftware, etc., etc. - but these tend to crop up rarely. If they appear in this column then they'll be explained on the spot.

SO HOW DO I GET IT?

Easy one. From a PD library. There are hundreds of them scattered across the country. Along with each review there should be the name of the PD library that provided the game along with a reference code, so just look up their details in the

'Contact has been made...' box and call them for pricing and anything else you need to know. And remember that many of the titles reviewed are available from more than one PD library. Hunt around and you may find a bargain!

AMIGA

Thankfully PD on the Amiga isn't all bouncing colour bands, and little digitised slideshows from a 50-line storage file. Silly-silly games featuring pointlessly about the screen and endless badly-spelt scrolling messages from German programmers called 'Captain Copper' or 'Doctor Blister' or something pathetic. Well, not quite...

MEGABALL (Shareware, MSX, G10)

Good Lord! An Arkadoid clone that actually adds something to the genre! The basic principles are the same as usual - use yer best n' ball to demolish a credit-based wall of bricks. Matters are spiced up by the fact that some of the bricks cannot be destroyed, some take two or more hits to see them off to black heaven, and - super-superior last o'



And two of Megaball's silly 'behavioural' levels. These are 'balls' (left) and 'tee' (right) which take two or three hits before they'll disappear. The coloured 'balls' may release special 'powerup' items when struck, causing your ball to do some strange things or shoot into various 'game zones' (borders or even holes) to annihilate 'tee' and 'balls' on the usual effect!



PD FILE

IS YOUR BROWNEGGED
BLOODY BUT NO TROUBLE

epic!—some release special power-up items when hit. (Business as usual, right? Wrong.)

Sure, to play the game is no better or worse than any other of its ilk, but someone really had their thinking hat on when they dreamt up the various power-ups. Not only are there tons of them but some produce very interesting results, like causing the blocks to start descending the screen. Space Invader-like. Man, Mergball has lots of balls—lily levels worth, in fact. (Highly recommended.)



Wastelands uses 3D graphics capturing the essence of the Atari 2600. It's a shame if the control computer starts preparing to launch at nuclear warhead.

WASTELANDS

(Public Domain, MSX, C64)

While programs written using Manabaz Software's AMOS are more prolific on the Amiga PD circuit than files on a coin's arc, wasterlike games programmers have yet to really get to grips with the advanced features of Demarc's Inventor's 3D Construction kit. However, if Wastelands is an indicator of the sort of thing we can expect, then we're in the some real treats.

Deep in the Arizona desert, the super computer controlling the Europa nuclear facility has gone loco and is preparing to launch the multi-warhead J00R111A missile. It's down to the player to infiltrate the complex, locate the passwords to the lower levels while dodging the anti-defense systems, and deactivate the computer.

Since Wastelands was written with a utility, it isn't the fastest 3D game you've ever seen, but it's more than fast enough. The building design is inspired, and the various buildings have an impressive sense of scale. Best of all, there's a good sense of atmosphere and tension. If you enjoyed Code Master and its like then you'll get more than your money's worth here.

GROWTH

(Public Domain, MSX, C64)
Growth is a classic example of the 'Simplicity = Excellence' adage of thought. The basic premise is this: there's a giant brain in the middle of the screen which, slowly but surely, is spreading out its evil tentacles and filling the screen with its minions. The player guides a small gunship around the edge of the screen, blasting away at the growth (sic) with the ultimate aim of pumping enough shots into the brain to kill it.

Easy enough. But it's later on, when the growth rate starts increasing, that things get tricky and the player has to make proper use of modes—little blue tanks stuck in the growth—that explode when shot and rip out great chunks of matter. Even later still and indestructible alien shapes start bouncing around which, as you've probably guessed, are fatal to the player's ship.



Can you keep the tentacles at bay in Growth? Not if you can't see! I know what of for myself!



To keep interest up, every few levels there's a bonus round, where the player has to keep a bouncing ball in play while trying to destroy the brain or shoot waves of blobs that murder down the screen. With a seemingly infinite number of levels and highly addictive gameplay, you'll soon find you're stuck on Growth.

ATARI ST

There are an amazing number of games written using utilities doing the ST PD rounds, the Shoot-Em-Up Construction Kit (SEUCS) and STOS being the two main favorites. While there's a lot of pseudo-retroated dress about, some of these home-written epics are incredibly good—can you believe that Drome (Shawman, Available from Commodore Enterprise, GD142), the superb platform game on this month's ACE Coverdisk, was written in STOS?



Hedgehogger is a fairly decent though short life span, although the platform interface can be a little vague at times.

HEDGEHOGGER

(Public Domain, Commodore Enterprise, C64)

Hedgehogger is sick, sick, sick—in other words, it's a right left. The player has to guide hedgehogs who have to be guided across a busy motorway to the safety of their den. Although really basic, Hedgehogger is about as rippy as a slug on Valium, special Turbocones™ sometimes appear which, when chomped on, double the 'hogs' speed.

These with long memories will recognize this as a blatant rip-off of Atari's Frogger game. It's all good fun with some nice touches, like the enemy split when the spiky one gets run over, but it dies



Below Pac-Man is one of the best Pacman clones out there for the Atari 2600. Although the first few levels are slightly dull, after an hour it becomes incredibly addictive.

get a little repetitive and the collision detection can be dodgy to say the least. Still, there are no worse ways to pass half an hour.

HACMAN (Shareware)

There are loads of Pacman clones around, but this one is better than most. Gameplay wise there are no surprises - the player's yellow on-screen blob has to sweep up all the white blobs in a maze while avoiding the unwanted attentions of a bunch of multi-coloured blobs. If the yellow blob eats special giant flashing blobs then the tables are turned on the multi-coloured blobs and makes them the hunted but only for a short while.

The first few of the fifty levels are very discouraging - everything moves slowly and the ghosts are thicker than the chocolate on a Club. Thankfully the action soon heats up, with the ghosts suddenly getting a brain upgrade between levels, and then the addition soon in. The animation though minimal is nicely done, especially the googly-eyed ghosts. It's a shame there's no sound - the munching sound is nicely missed. If you're on the look for a topper Pacman clone then look no further than this.



IBM PC

Shareware is pretty much the name of the game on PC. There is some straight-forward PD to be had but it's pretty thin on the ground. PC owners are in for a bit of a treat because a lot of this Shareware is of a very high standard indeed - presumably because many US companies use it as an interactive advert for their wares.

Top of the heap in this respect have to be Apogee Software, an American company whose name you may already be familiar with from the outstanding Commander Keen game featured on last month's cover disk. Pace - aliens - 'keens' to get their hands on the full three-level game will no doubt be inter-

ested to know that Apogee have just entered into an agreement with Croydon-based Precision Software Applications who will now not only distribute Apogee's Shareware but also sell their complete games. PSA's address and phone number is given in the 'Contact has been made...' box.

But Commander Keen is just one of PSA's Apogee's huge range of superb Shareware games, including two more of the Commander's outings. So, let's take a look at just three of them...

COMMANDER KEEN 4: SECRET OF THE ORACLE COMMANDER KEEN 6: ALIENS ATE MY BABYSITTER!

No, no, no - you haven't missed anything. Commander Keen 4 is in fact the sequel to the first Commander Keen Shareware game - the reason for the '4' is that in between there are two other non-Shareware games (as mentioned above). The second half of the adventure is to be found in Keen 5, but you have to pay for that - it's worth a though.

The plot is as banal as ever. In Keen 4, the hapless ten-year-old Commander picks up a mysterious transmission from the evil Shikadi while fiddling with his super-duper space radio, which seems to imply that the bad aliens are planning to destroy the Galaxy! Keen travels in Gratuitous TV to consult the mighty Oracle to find out more, only to discover that the Guardians of the Oracle have been kidnapped by the Shikadi to prevent anyone learning more about their heinous plans. Now, guess who's got to rescue them...



CONTACT HAS BEEN MADE...

Here's the place to come for all these handy names, addresses and telephone numbers. (Remember, PG libraries - if you want to get listed here send us some of your topper games software for review. It's as easy as that!)

AMIGA

MIS, 1 Chain Lane, Newport, Isle of Wight
PO30 5QA. Tel: (0482) 529594.
Fax: (0482) 827589

ATARI ST

Goodman Enterprise, 18 Canal Close,
Main Way Estate, Langton, Stoke on Trent
ST3 1SW. Tel: (0782) 236410.
Fax: (0782) 216132.

IBM PC

Precision Software Applications, 3 Valley
Court Offices, Lower Road, Croydon, Near
Reynston, Surrey CR9 2DF.
Tel: (0232) 286286. Fax: (0232) 286686.

Korn 6 opens with the Commander discovering that his baby sister Molly has been kidnapped by the alien Bloop from *Freddy's X-Cl*. One trip to Xax later and Korn's back in familiar territory, mounting the planet for his missing sibling in an attempt to get her home before his parents do.

Like *Korn 4*, the games are a mixture of exploration and platform antics with Korn leaping around 3D/2D smooth-scrolling caves in his search for the Goddess in *Korn 4* and Molly in *Korn 6*. Korn is armed with a stun laser and a popo-stick, handy for reaching those out-of-reach platforms. Crystal keys are waiting to be found and switches waiting to be toggled that unleash all manner of effects.

No, no surprises in the gameplay. What does surprise, though, is the sheer quality of the games. Although *Korn 4* was great, these two are amazing. Honestly, if they were full-price releases I'd have no hesitation in giving them both the stoppage Screenshots™ treatment and bloody high marks to boot. As to which is the better... well, I found *Korn 6* the slightly more enjoyable of the two, simply because a slightly higher element of adventuring - toggling switches, finding crystals, and so on - is required, but it's a close-run thing.

The 'feel' of both games is wonderful - they certainly gives the likes of *Balazod* and *Maris* a run for their money. They look good too - there are some superb creature designs which are masterfully animated, as are the detailed backdrops. Although the cinema sequences are distinctly EGA, the bright look suits the jaunty gameplay well. Add massive game tanks and some inimitably catchy tunes, and you've got two games that come as welcome light-hearted relief to all those PC users getting just a little jaded with endless flight sims and RPGs.



(Above and top right) *Commander* discovers where his sister again, this time it's a hunt for his baby sister Molly in alien territory. (Bottom) *Commander* wins it's bedtime, as usual. (What's so wrong with that?)

PAGANITZU: ROMANCING THE ROSE

The man with the hat is back! Forget *Indy*. What the world needs is a new breed of archaeologist, a heroic figure with the moxie to tackle ancient temples in a modern time. Ladies and gentlemen, may I introduce...

Alabama Smith.

Okay, so it's not the handiest name ever, but our Alabama is actually something of a reflecting glory. Renowned for his gripping escapades in perilous digs around the world, Alabama is about



to embark on his greatest adventure yet - to uncover the fabled treasures of the lost Aztec temple of Paganitzu.

It's an arcade puzzle game. The temple is split into single-screen chambers, and Alabama has to collect all the keys on a screen to open the door to the next while picking up previous bonus point gems. The temple's designers make things tougher than it sounds: snakes spit deadly venoms that it sounds; snakes spit deadly venoms if Alabama walks in line of sight of them, spiders shuffle around the corridors in pre-set patterns, and so on. Alabama, who seems to have left his gun and whip at home, can push loose blocks around to shield him from attack.

Although *Paganitzu* has the visual appeal of one



(Left above and left) Alabama Smith navigates the treacherous traps and poisonous perils of the Aztec temple of Paganitzu. Don't be fooled by the cute quality graphics - it's a right mean game.

MORE! MORE! MORE!

Although the ACE PD File covers games, more games and nothing but games, remember that many PD libraries also stock a wide variety of Public Domain applications and utilities, such as spreadsheets, databases, word processors, art packages, music packages - you name it, chances are a PD library somewhere has got it. If you've got a problem give 'em a try - most PD libraries will be more than happy to recommend a program to suit your needs!

of Noel Edmund's jumpers, gameplay-wise it's the equivalent of an *Armad* suit. The puzzles have just the right blend of ponderous thinking and fast action to keep you addicted. Although there are tons of levels, the ability to save games at any point means you can keep returning to the one that's stumping you without any loss. Must read, too.

the end

And that, as they say, is that. Because you have now arrived at the last page of the last issue of ACE Magazine. After this, there will be no more.

For just over four and a half years ACE has delivered a unique blend of news and reviews, interviews and features on all aspects of the computer entertainment scene. We hope that we've kept you amused and informed and that you've enjoyed reading the issues as much as we've enjoyed writing them.

But all good things come to an end. In the crazy topsy-turvy world of computer games publishing, that's just the way it goes.

But hold hard! Choke back those tears! All is not lost. For there are plenty of magazines which are very nearly as witty and informative and stylish as ACE. In fact, we've got a dedicated magazine for every machine an ACE reader could possibly be interested in. So what's on offer?



PC Review is the place to go for all things MS-DOS. Games, applications, public domain, hardware information. All PC life is here!



And ST owners can look forward to a most excellent read in the form of ST Review, a completely new magazine dedicated to all things ST. Following much the same editorial format as CU Amiga, ST Review will cover all aspects of your machine, giving you all the info you need to get the very most from your ST.



And console owners have a positive wealth of choice with top quality magazines like Mean Machines and Megatech simply burning with all that's hot in the world of the cartridge.



And last, but by no means least, Amiga games players will be most excellently catered for in the pages of The One for Amiga Games. Not only because it is a fine read dedicated 100% to extracting the maximum fun-points from your Amiga, but it's also our new format! So if you've enjoyed reading ACE for its reporting on the Amiga games scene, you'll know where to come and find us.

See you soon!

Jim & Dave & Gary & Jim

reviews directory

W

With a hearty cry of "Trot-trot!"

and a mighty roar of "Hay-mooey-mooey!" for every horse!

Peepman we proudly unveil the Reviews Directory. So unveil the flags of all ratings and get the servants to prepare a tasty meat feast for a little psychourgetic special something if you're vegetarian) to keep you going as you get back into the FORTS - yes, THREE OH! - pages of hard-hitting, pull-no-punches, take-no-prisoners, other-words-joined-by-hyphens-games information.

But let us spare a thought for those new readers out there who may be sighting an this highly-crafted and exceptionally well-written section for the very first time (and there's a first time for everyone, remember - yes, even you with bad hair!).

"Why huzzah all the hoo-hoo?" they cry. Simple. In the pages that follow you find all the basic information you'll ever need on every game released over the last THREE months. "Wow!" you cry.

Yes, "Wow!" indeed. And because you, the dear and loyal reader, demanded it, here are what these star ratings means in, ahem,

fall.

☆☆☆☆ **Excellent**

☆☆☆ **Very Good**

☆☆ **Above Average**

☆ **Poor**

☆ **Dismal**

New Releases:

4D Sports Director	Paperboy 2
Amnesia Golf	Real Racers
Dimension Force	Roger Rabbit
Final Fantasy 2	RPM Racing
John Madden Football	RoboCop
Jupiter's Mastermind	Sonic The Hedgehog
Mercenary 3D	Tiger Pro Pro-Wrestling
Mythical	Ultimate Golf
Ninja Gaiden Shadow	Wayne Gretzky's Ice Hockey 2

Still Available:

Agoo Ahoon	Great Superhero Battles	Great Wagonz of the
Action Pack	Gunship 2000	Labyrinth
Acrobat World	Hard Driver	Levee Collapse
Aerostar	Hard News	Miami
Alan Bevel	Home Raising Hero	Missile Service II
Amazin'	Horridol	Shivers
Amazin' World	Madman Hank	Solitaire Poker
Baby In	Maniac	Smash TV
Ballistic 2	The Immortal	Steve McQueen
Barb's Life	Jimmy White's	Whoopee
Bark of Fire	Woodward Sander	Strike Fleet
Beach 2	Kingdoms	Superplex
Bege Buggy 2	Lonan Turbo Challenge 2	Suspicious Cargo
Captain Planet	Last Ninja 2	Tarzan - The Core-Op
California TV	Leisure Suit Larry 2	Thunderbowl
Calle Legenda	Mad TV	Thunderhawk
Centurion (Def. of	Magic Cards	Tig Off
Room)	Marion Monomaniac	Tot Jam & Earl
Chaplin 2	Megabomber	Traders
Clear View	MegaMecha	Under Pressure
Collisions	Megamurder 2	Utopia
Conan the Conqueror	Megamix	Valley
Crash For A Cargo	Mexico	Vexos
Deathbringer	MI6/MI Super	Willy Beavers
Devil Crash	Polymex	Wing Commander II
Devil's Dragon	Night & Magic 2	Witchchild
Double Dragon III	Monster Business	World Class Rugby
EA Hockey	Murder	
EE	Nikita	
Epic	Never-Ending Story 2	
Eye of the Beholder 2	Outrun	
F-17 Strike Eagle 2	Outrun Europa	
F-16 Interceptor	Panic	
Face Off	Pegasus	
Fatal Revival	Pelican	
Fighting Command	Populous 2	
Final Blaz	Pat n' Pater	
Final Fight	Radical Trains	
First Samurai	Raiders	
Flicky	King of the Dragons	
Floor 25	Robin Hood	
Football Director 2	RoboCop	
Formula 1 Grand Prix	RoboCop 2	
Football	Robozone	
College '92	Rolland	
The Game - Winter	Rugby - The World Cup	
Challenge	Sevcon	

new releases

4D SPORTS DRIVING



Price Amiga £29.99
Genre Racing, Simulation
Publisher Mindscape

A very long time indeed after the PC original hit the streets, this Amiga version of the auto-racer from the people who wrote the superb 4D Sports Racing really hits the spot.

Don't be put off by the craggy box artwork (a 'space-race' car driven by silver men with hairless eyes, of you please). This is an excellent simulation of driving some of the most exciting cars in the world around some of the most ridiculous and hazardous tracks to ever come out of a games designer's head.

With some of the advantages that made Indy 500 such a laugh, such as a video playback mode and spectacular crashes, 4D Sports Driving has all the elements that a fun driving game should have, with very little of the tedious drudgery that many have included in the name of realism.

The player can either race solo or against one of a host of computer-controlled opponents. These electronic drivers have considerably more personality than the faceless robots driving those cars found in other race games. Before each race against one of these opponents, the player gets a breakdown of their particular psychological defects, whether they're speed freaks, bumpy nerves or whatever. The action is executed in admirable

3D (the Fourth Dimension is 3D!) and even if the races themselves aren't that fascinating, the track-designer section will provide you with enough entertaining job ops to keep you coming back for more.

☆☆☆☆

AWESOME GOLF

Price Amiga £29.99
Genre Sports, Simulation
Publisher Atari

It's a constant surprise to me how well golf games work on computer. You'd think the slow pace and highly physical nature of the sport (just wouldn't make for a good computer game at all. But it nearly always seems to work well. Awesome Golf is the first golf game on the Lynx handheld and it's pretty good stuff.

The player can choose to play on either British, US and Japanese courses. As the player moves the cursor between windows choosing which one to play, the game-time changes subtly to reflect the country currently selected. Nice. There's also some cutesy speech during the game which is very entertaining.

Although there are some nice 3D views when the golfer takes a swing, the actual mechanics of the game are handled in 2D. Each shot begins with a plan view of the current green. The player can scroll about it using the cursor pad and even zoom in and out

hands in the event of the Lynx's optic manipulating hardware.

Using a small cursor the player aims the shot, then chooses a club. Acceptably there's no on-screen information to tell you the maximum range of each club so you have to keep referring to the instruction booklet. Taking a swing is achieved by the familiar hitting the button when a swiftly moving marker is over the shot power you want then hitting the button again to give the ball left or right swing.

While Awesome Golf doesn't exactly set a new standard for computer golf games, it's a classy addition to the genre and is a recommended to all sports-loving Lynx owners.

☆☆☆☆

DIMENSION FORCE



Price Super Famicom £39.99
Genre Action, Blast
Publisher Atari

Carl! What with helicopter tanks set to sweep the country over the next few months, we were more than a little excited with the prospect of a full-blown helicopter romp on the Famicom. Indeed, the design guys seem to have got their act together, dishing up exactly the right sort of oat-of-the-rain. Apocalypse Now imagery for the front of the box.

Unfortunately for both them and us, the people who have actually programmed the game seem to have been

stuck in some sort of time warp for the last five years, and are perfectly content to stick up a game which makes Nag Fight look sophisticated.

New don't get us wrong, it's perfectly acceptable to produce a top-down scrolling shoot-out these days, but there does need to be some degree of innovation, doesn't there? Alas, there is none.

The player launches from his aircraft carrier in one of the most craggy and cynical scaling missions I've witnessed and has the pleasure of flying over a strip of sea with rocks (or are they clouds, it's tricky to tell) swirling down at regular intervals. Then, surprise surprise, the player is assaulted from all directions from a bunch of chaotically down and up-and-downing planes.

It's unfortunate that Dimension Force just happens to come along after the cut-off date, but this sort of glibly made just doesn't cut it any more.

☆

FINAL FANTASY 2



Price Super Famicom £49.99
Genre Role-Playing Game
Publisher Square Software

The Final Fantasy series arrives on the Super Nintendo in style. In Final Fantasy II, the player is whisked off to a mythical dimension or dimension world as Cecil, commander of a giant airship battle fleet charged by the King of Baron to recover a set of magical crystals, that when Cecil refuses to do the King's dirty work any longer, he is cast out on an even more perilous mission. All this is told by an elaborate introductory sequence prior to play, and then it's up to you to journey off into the wastelands not just to undertake your mission but also to find out what sinister treachery the king seems to be up to.

Along the way you're accompanied by your pal, Kain, and more characters turn up and join your party as the quest progresses. The main game is presented in top-down camera for most, with a few little characters and bright colourful scenery. The simplistic nature of the graphics tends to belie the game's sophisticated nature. It may look inferior and shallow, but in fact it's bigger and more depth than the vast majority of computer-based RPGs - and it's much easier to get into and leave too.

It'd reach rather play this than some stuffy, pretentious AAA-D product any day of the week.

For its terrific overall realism, depth of gameplay and sheer size and scope, Final Fantasy II gets a definite thumbs-up as one of the finest console RPGs to date—even the super-cool graphics do make it a little difficult to take things seriously at times. Definitely recommended.

☆☆☆☆

JOHN MADDEN FOOTBALL

5*

Price Super Nintendo £29.99

Genre Sports Game

Publisher Electronic Arts

Whoooo! Touchdown! That's right, John Madden hasn't escaped the UK in a crazy fit of football bonkersness! And in readiness for the arrival in a couple of months of the official UK Super Nintendo, lots of grey import dealers across the country have taken the rather appealing opportunity of stocking this version of the game that everyone is calling "John Madden Football".

And not a bad version it is too. Offering the player the chance to be both quarterback (who gets to call the "plays") and every other bugger in the team in a sort of Kick-Off style fashion. That is, the player throws the ball himself and the computer then automatically switches his control to the man who is nearest and most capable of "scoring".

Alternatively, once the player has called the play, he can leave the computer-controlled players to try their best to carry out his instructions. This rarely works as well as you may expect, but it offers a better option than meddling and screwing things up yourself.

As you would expect from the Electronic Arts Sports Network, there are more features than you can wave a stick at, allowing you to choose from 14 teams, decide what the weather is going to be like and decide if you want to practice, play a regular season or opt for league play.

It's not quite as slick as the Megadrive version, but still good enough to take the crown as one of the finer games available on the SNES.

☆☆☆☆

JUPITER'S MASTERDRIVE



Price Amiga/PC/ST £7.99

Genre Racing Game

Publisher Action Sixteen

It's a rare occurrence indeed that a lead game gets to appear in ACE. But for Jupiter's Masterdrive, we just had to make an exception. Age ago when ULEI sold released the title, it was warmly received by reviewers but not of got washed away in the quag of top-down driving simulators on the market. Now, at a mere £7.99, the game stands a chance to be a budget wonder, since there are very few decent top-downers around at the moment.

The players have to drive an assortment of vehicles (buses, craft, formula one cars, hot rods and the like) around a bunch of different tracks, each taking place on a different planet or something.

Distinguishing Masterdrive from most games of the ilk is the fact that the players can actually blow each other up by using handy road-rail mounted cannons.

Most of the courses are well designed and provide thrilling racing, but two problems quickly emerge. The first is that in two player mode, the scale of the track contained in the tiny screen is simply too large and the player can't see where he's going. The second problem is that some tracks are utterly impossible, like the tar track which must be negotiated in forward. Bear in mind that many courses have go-kart-style bumpers which rebound the craft across the track, and you can see that this can become a bit of a hind.

Still you can opt to avoid this course, so it's not that bad. And the steering computer you can have with your mates are most enjoyable.

☆☆☆☆

MERCENARY III



Price Amiga £29.99

Genre Adventure

Publisher Newgen

Since the publication of the original Mercenary on the Commodore 64, back to right, the 3D vector-driven adventure game, and those that have followed it, have become cult classics. Since the original, we've had The Second City (personally a data-disk for the first game), the excellent Demosco and now the thing is driven to a close (probably by the cleverly-titled Mercenary III) published The Dice Game. It's bigger, better and tougher than those that have preceded it, with the 3D filled-vector environment that author Paul Wooten is famous more now more sophisticated and believable than ever before.

This time around, the player travels between planets in a bid to unravel a top-level political conspiracy. Interaction with characters now plays a major part in the adventuring, but mostly the gameplay will be familiar to Mercenary fans—travel around collecting objects and using them in the right way. It's not particularly sophisticated stuff, but the realistic environment and the multitude of things to do give the impression that it is, and that's fine by me.

Of course, anybody who enjoyed the earlier Mercenary games won't need to be told that this is right up their street also. Unfortunately, the game's innovative way of doing things, its tricky puzzles, surreal sense of humour and overall feel isn't for everybody's taste, so newcomers may want to check it out before taking the plunge. It's definitely worth looking out for, though, as those who have the patience and take the time to get into the game will find it thoroughly absorbing.

☆☆☆☆

MYSTICAL



Price Amiga/PC/ST £7.99

Genre Action Blast

Publisher Action Sixteen

Heavens, what a jolly little game this is. Originally released by Infogrames, this off-the-wall shoot-'em-up recently received the recognition it deserved. Now it's out at a most pocket-friendly price, though, it should be able to reveal its delights in a much wider audience.

The player's cast as an apprentice magician who, just before taking his final exams, carelessly mistook all of

the Great Wizard's spells and magic books. Now, to even stand a chance of earning his pony tail, he's got to go into the magical lands and retrieve the lot of them. What follows is a stunning but nevertheless addictive vertical shoot-'em-up with the wizard trotting up the screen collecting the lost spells and doing battle with the myriad of nasties that await him. Hardly surprising for a game of French origin, it's very funny indeed, with lots of completely unexpected items (paralytic gas and big red raincoats) and plenty of on-the-side graphical surprises.

As the wizard progresses, the spells he collects can be used live-power-ups against the evil hordes. The aim of the game is essentially to reach the magic pentangle at the end of each level, so as to be transported in a shower of pink-snow to the next. Truth be told, there's really not that much to it, but it's a great laugh, especially with two players (the second joystick controls a Golden character that jumps as a reminder and crashes if). It looks smart, plays just as well and comes heartily recommended to anyone with eight jagged-point stars burning a hole in their pocket.

☆☆☆☆

NINJA GAIDEN SHADOW



Price Gameboy £24.99

Genre Action run-up

Publisher Tomy

It's not the another Ninja Gaiden game! To be fair, this one is better than most. Sure, it's the usual old clear-bug, thank-you-no-one martial arts action that we all know too well and love (or loathe), but the presentation and the graphic quality lift it a little out of the ordinary.

The smart though badly translated intro explains the plot. The red Demon Emperor Gail has plans to eradicate the whole world's population starting with New York, so you know it. And with his mighty dash-aimy to back him up it looks like he's going to do it, too. That is, until Ryu Hayabusa, last of the noble Dragon Clan, appears on the scene in disguise (word-based) justice over five wacky levels.

As well as the ability to run, jump

and death. Ryu can also monkey swing along the underside of ledges, shoot a grappling rope up in the air to climb up to lofty platforms and also unleash a special dragon's flame secret weapon if he's collected the right power up (oh, the game's got them as well).

Yes, as I said earlier the game scores high on the originality, but it lacks spark (there's some great parallax on level one) and plays even better. Best (knock-up fans disappointed by the low quality of Double Dragon 2 would do well to look here for their therapist's thrill instead.

☆☆☆☆

PAPERBOY 2



Price Super Famicom / PC £29.99
Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Miniclipper

Look out! He's back, with an all new round! And, well, that's just about it actually. Paperboy 2 means sweep the streets and houses of America when the first game appeared way back in 1986. The literary antics of the all-famous delivery boy captured the imaginations of the nation, and now fans of the original can enjoy this sequel.

Well, I say sequel. Extension would perhaps be a more appropriate term. There's nothing new in this game that was missing from the original except the ability to ride in both diagonal directions, as opposed to up and left in the first. The routine to kill exactly the same (the Paperboy (no girl) gets in ride a number of streets, delivering papers to the correct houses in traditional American style on the back of his BIAD, avoiding all those nasty problems which anyone who has taken a leaflet job at their newspaper will be only too aware of. Fewer dogs attack the Paperboy and trucks no hit him any. You get the picture.

Graphics weren't the strong suit of the original, and they're equally sparse here, looking pretty and compared to most current releases. But those visual appeal isn't the point of the Paperboy games. Instead, their fast gameplay and increase kept people coming back for more. And this title just about manages to deliver an acceptable amount of both.

☆☆☆☆

ROAD BLASTERS



Price Megadrive £24.99
Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Tengen

Trengen really ran the nostalgia kings. While other software are covering the latest state-of-the-art coin-ups in Tengen's 16 lanes, Tengen are quite content to release conversions of games you could probably buy in their original arcade cabinets for about the same price. Just recently we had Pacmania, now we've got Road Blasters and there are plenty more 'blasts from the past' in the pipeline.

Road Blasters comes as a welcome relief from the stacks of scrolling shoot-'em-ups and platform games. Just why is the Megadrive so severely lacking as the driving game department? The only other one I can think of is Super Monaco GP. As the name suggests, the player drives along a road and... um... blasts things.

The screen is definitely on the blasting. The player's car, which sits at the bottom middle of the screen, accelerates to top speed automatically and the player simply has to steer it left and right, strafing around road cars and roadside gun towers with his beam-mounted machine gun. Super mega whopper weapons are occasionally dropped off (literally) by a jet that swoops down and barrels over the car helms.

Your appreciation of Road Blasters as the Megadrive will be more identical to that of the coin-ups—they're identical. Personally I find the action repetitive and too tedious to be enjoyable for longer than about fifteen minutes, but there are probably many who disagree and think this is the best game ever. At least, that's what Trengen must be hoping.

☆☆☆☆

WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT?



Price Nintendo £24.99
Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Capcom USA

And Judge Doom is planning to ruin Toon Town and has already killed the mayor (and to prove that he means business, Roger must rescue Toon Town from the terrible fate that Doom has in store and at the same time rescue his wife Jessica from an evil kidnapping plot. And how does he go about all this? He scrolls around Toon town in a sort of graphics adventure (see above), that's all!

Actually it's not that bad, and there's enough variety in the arcade sequences to make it worthwhile. The best level would benchmark of Dr Doom chase your finger around the screen and take pot shots at him, popping out of manhole covers and the most unusual places in order to do his bits down.

Bad fans of the movie will be pleased with the representation of Roger and the light-hearted nature of the whole thing, but real gamers may find that it's a bit lacking in the action department.

There's a reasonable amount of adventuring to do, although this really consists of simply taking an object from one place to another in order to be able to take a different object somewhere else.

The graphics throughout are amazing enough and reminiscent of the film in a rather blocky, black and white sort of way, and the whole thing adds up to just about enough fun per p. And anyway, it's a nice change to see Capcom handling a cutesy product after their innumerable run of ball-bearing combat shoot-outs.

☆☆

RPM RACING



Price Super Famicom £49.99
Genre Racing Game
Publisher Interplay

Offroad racing is very much the 'in' thing with driving game programmers of late, and you could well expect the latest product to cash in on the craze to be the best so far, what with it being on the Super Nintendo and all that. Unfortunately, the many faults of RPM (it stands for Radical Psycho-Machine, not Real Fun Machine) Racing prove beyond doubt that it doesn't matter how very a console may be, the games on it can still be a technical and gameplay disaster.

RPM Racing is very similar in style and presentation to the GameBoy's Super RC Pro-Am, released in January. But whereas the handheld game was fun, smooth and controllable, RPM Racing definitely lacks in these qualities. Four cars do battle over a series of eight-way scrolling isometric perspective tracks, bouncing over hills and ramps, performing hairpin turns and generally heading into each other. Much has been made of the high-resolution graphics, which look superbly like the Amiga's HAM mode and have allowed for some very pretty definition and light-shading on the vehicles as they bounce about. Unfortunately, it costs the price we pay for all this technical wizardry in hardly any other scrolling, sluggish, almost unsteerable car control and, on the whole, slow and frustrating racing.

Nevertheless, RPM is slick, offering various car modifications, car tracks with 14 difficulty levels and even a custom designer. There, however, are all pretty pointless additions if the main thrust of the game isn't up to snuff, and so ultimately RPM Racing comes over as the sort of game you'd really like to have a lot of fun with, but just can't because it's so steadily displeasable. A real shame.

☆☆

RUBICON



Price Amiga/PC £29.99
Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher 21st Century Ent.

In the most futurist bizarre nuclear accident in the Soviet Union (you too, not a very timely scenario) somewhere an area 100 miles square was intense radiation. As a result, the wildlife in the area has been horribly transmuted into... well, horrible transmuted forms. And game who's job it is to go in and sort it out? Right first time!

Once again the barrel of game accusations has been well and truly scooped as an excuse for this latest blast from the editors' Hellmouth. It's a pretty conventional game in the way it's presented - rather than being a constantly-moving affair, the links fall under your control how to deal with the threat on each screen before the scrolls from left to right into the next bit of terrain. It's sort of wacky in its

ones way. It looks a more relaxed, take-things-in-your-stride air to the action, without really making it seem being. The shooting action is pretty frantic, particularly when extra weapons have been collected, although sometimes the control system gives the impression that success depends more on luck than judgement.

Graphically it's OK, although some of the options are pretty crabbily defined, and the colour scheme is rather dull and depressing - as befits a post-nuclear landscape, I suppose. There's something about the game - or rather not - that means that, although it looks like it should, it doesn't deliver that all-important playability 'kick'. It tries hard enough, with plenty of variety in the levels and action, but nevertheless it falls just short of the targets it sets for itself. Try before you buy.

☆ ☆ ☆

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG



Price Game Gear £29.99
Game Platforms Game
Publisher Sega

Well, they said it couldn't be done - but Sega had to go and prove them wrong. Sega's would-be turbo heater has made it into the Game Gear and it's an impressive achievement. It's so impressive, in fact, that you'll think you're playing a handheld Megadrive! Okay, so I know that that's a bit of a snail statement but it really is true.

Everything you remember from the Megadrive game has been reproduced exactly the same but smaller - the six-colourful graphics, the two tones, the simple yet addictive gameplay and the amazing speed are all there. The action's so fast that there are times when the Gear's blurry screen makes it's near impossible to see what the Hell is going on. Owners of both a Drive and a Game Gear will be pleased to hear that the top layouts are, as they say on TV, "All New", so if you've beaten the Megadrive game then you'll find new challenges here.

But not much, in all respects. Sonic is a classic game for one - it's just too toy-tastic. Scanned game play are likely to have this one cracked well inside a week of solid play. Still, it's definitely one of the best looking carts over

into the Game Gear and so long as you don't mind the short-lived nature of the fun there it's well worth your dollar.

☆☆☆☆

SUPER FIRE PRO-WRESTLING



Price Super Famicom £49.99
Game Board/Setup
Publisher Human Creative Group

Conveniently listing these sheets on impact at more or less the same time as the WWF ones, this latest Famicom product must surely rank as one of the silliest to date. On paper and on screen it looks and sounds great - 3D isometric ring, big muscled-out characters slugging it out, single-player and tag-team options, loads of different moves... sounds marvellous yet? Well it doesn't lie, because Super Fire Pro-Wrestling is about as playable as a male watermelon wrapped in a wet towel.

So what's so bad about it then? Well, it's difficult to know where to start, really. The wrestlers themselves shuffle about the ring in much an unconvincing manner that they don't even look like they're walking on the canvas. They seem to leap about a foot off the ground, with their legs hiding back and forth in a vaguely leg-like manner. When the two-lightest ones, they grapple in an equally unrealistic fashion while the players hammer away on their buttons to try and get a hold and execute a move. Theoretically there's lots to do, but the graphics are so poorly defined and the controls so unresponsive that, bar flanders of luck, it's virtually impossible to do anything but the most basic moves. Maybe it would have been a bit easier to get to grips with if the on-screen messages had been in English, but they're not so it isn't.

No doubt some hardcore wrestling fans will show caution to the wind and snap this up, but a much better plan is surely to wait a while and see what emerges over the next few months - there's already an official WWF game on the way which promises to be a lot better. Whatever you do, don't waste your hard-earned money on this clapper.

☆

ULTIMATE GOLF



Price Amiga 51+/PC £7.99
Game Sports Game
Publisher GSI Gold

Well, hardly. Since Genesis's Grog Norman licensed game claimed to be the last word in golf simulations, it's been proved wrong many times with the likes of PGA Tour Golf, Links and the excellent Microprose Golf all beating it hands-down in the values and fun stakes.

But that's not to say that Ultimate Golf is bad. Far from it, and now that it's out at a most respectable price it should be looked at seriously by any avid on-screen golfers who haven't already done so. As golf games go, it's certainly one of the most comprehensive on the market, but some sloppy presentation, and maybe a little over-enthusiasm to put in as many factors, has led to it being rather awkwardly and difficult to get to grips with.

Actually, the game's slightly deceptive about how much there really is in it. There may be all these lovely options and variables, but there are still only two courses to play on, and that's pretty poor by the standards of other games, which offer anywhere between four and six. Any golf game's longevity is determined by the number of courses available, and two just doesn't cut it. I'm afraid.

Whatever, there's a good eight quid's worth of golf action here for those who like their sport sims a bit on the intensive side - even though anybody looking for a seriously good introduction to the game would be better passed in the direction of PGA Tour or Microprose Golf.

☆☆☆

WAYNE GRETZKY'S ICE HOCKEY 2



Price Amiga /PC £29.99
Game Sports Simulation
Publisher Ballymedia

Hey! Hey! Hey! It's Wayne Wayne Gretzky! Boy! With his name on the

game you know it's got to be good. Well, actually I don't know who the heck he is and I wish I didn't know much about this game. It looked no better than a couple left on an ice block.

The action is freely on simulation, (A bit of a bad move this, in my opinion, so done correctly on hockey would make a great sign-talent action game.) Before matches the player can fiddle about with his team member's stats in his own's context, training them up, looking dull players out and recruiting college rookies in. Chances are, though, that you'll not want to increase all this stats jiggery pokery is carried out on some of the dumbest menu screens I've seen this side of a spreadsheet.

The actual hockey matches are played out on an improved horizontally-scrolling ice rink, where toy constructed groups of pucks glide about in a vain attempt to simulate the machine's high-octane sport that is ice hockey. Even with the woeful graphics this could've been decent fun, but the poor control makes it feel like you're controlling somebody else controlling the player rather than being in the hot seat yourself.

Drab, dull and no fun to play, this is one hockey game that should be laid to rest as soon as possible.

☆☆

And there we have it. A

rather small number of new

releases for a whole

month, we agree, but God's

very much the way of

things in the spinning wheel

of light and power

known as the computer

industry. One minute you

expect something to hap-

pen and the next minute,

it doesn't. Or maybe it

does. It all depends on

what you least expect of

any given time.

Still available

A320 AIRBUS



Price Amiga £29.99
Genre Simulation
Publisher Thalim

You what? Alright, it's not as if we face any problems flying high in an F4U or banking up our installations in a state-of-the-art stealthfighter—but the A320 Airbus? It's certainly pulling us up (isn't it)? Well, apparently not, as this is one of the biggest releases from German software house Thalim in quite a while, neither akin to a computerized jet's fit is, the game allows the player to be an airline pilot for a day—well, for however long he likes, really—at the controls of the little-known A320 jetliner.

As anybody who knows anything about aviation at all will expect, A320 Airbus is no simple game. Passenger jets are, impossibly more complicated than the fighter planes that have mainly been the subject of simulations in the past. Thalim's game has attempted to simulate the spaghetti-like complexity as accurately as possible—and for the most part it succeeds, although this hyper-realistic approach is unlikely to appeal to the majority of flight-sim gamers. All those knobs, dials and meters may be a bit too much for the average Joe Memon.

A320 Airbus isn't just about flying about a bit, though. Onboard, you, Pilgrim get to create their own pilots, take part in training or active duty, work out

flight plans and generally make their way up the ladder of commercial aviation. For those that find this sort of thing appealing, there's no doubt that A320 Airbus is actually very good indeed. It's professionally produced, apart from the occasionally eye-popping, and though it's not exactly interactive or instructive, the rewards are there to be had for players willing to plough the manual and learn all the ins and outs. The only problem is, I can't quite imagine who's going to be that interested, when you think about all the other, considerably more-entertaining, flight games on the market today. It's just horses for courses, I suppose.

☆☆☆☆

ACTION PACK



Price Atari ST Amiga £24.99
Genre Compilation
Publisher Action 48

Here's a bargain! Ten games—Colorado, Cosmic Patrol, Eliminator, Fast Lane, Homage, Maya, De Sloger, Rover, Sherman Mia, Tanglan—for twenty-five quid! Okay, we'll be honest and admit that they're all getting a bit long in the tooth now, and more than a couple of the games in offer have an old Xmas turkey staleness (De Sloger, in particular, should be plucked, stuffed with Pico and binged in the oven for a good five hours as soon as possible).

However, Cosmic Patrol is a nifty ball

readyway scrolling shoot-'em-up. Eliminator is a 3D shoot-'em-up from driving games) and Pristige is multi-part arcade adventure) more than compensate and would make superb-value compilations on their own. The other games are poor to middling in quality, but for the price you really can't complain. Highly recommended.

☆☆☆☆

AEROSTAR



Price GameBoy £14.99 (Import)
Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Via Takai

What do you get if you cross a platform game with a vertically-scrolling shoot-'em-up? A bit of a bloody mess, that's what. Aerostar is a seven-stage blaster where the player has to guide a spaceship along an energy-held highway.

The player can fly into the air for a very limited time to avoid ground fire and keep over gaps in the road, but this makes him vulnerable to attacks from the air. And, of course, there's a plethora of juicy power-ups to be collected along the way that turn the player's craft from something only a little more threatening than a dip in the face into the standing world's equivalent of the 'King of the Beach'.

The idea of combining blasting and bouncing is theoretically good, but unfortunately in practice it doesn't work so well. The player 'jumps' by holding down one of the GameBoy buttons,

and the longer the button is held down the longer the jump. Thing is, the GameBoy's design makes it difficult to fire at the same time without taking one finger off the jump button, resulting in the ship plummeting into an abyss. And as the road narrows, and the need for jumping becomes more frequent and the enemy attacks become more vicious, this becomes particularly annoying.

As it stands, Aerostar is a nice stab at something a bit different, only marred by the slightly clumsy implementation. Worth a look, though, if you're interested by the sound of it.

☆☆☆☆

ALIEN BREED



Price Amiga £24.99
Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Team 17

Alien Breed can best be described as the Alien licence that should have been. It grafts Alien atmosphere onto Gauntlet-esque gameplay to create an addictive—albeit unoriginal—winner. One or two players can take part simultaneously, and their job is to run around the six plan-oriented maze-like levels of a monster-infested space station, blasting seven shades of slime out of anything that crawls, slithers or barks.

Fortunately the problems that always afflicted Gauntlet (i.e. though fun, there was no real aim to playing apart from scoring points) has been averted by giving the players a task to complete on each level (generally of the 'find a location and blow it up' nature). Okay, so it's not exactly taking the game into arcade Adventure territory, but it's probably enough of a goal to keep the player coming back for more.

The addictive gameplay is backed up by some superb-looking and graphics job though the animation is a little pedestrian), and the term 'arcade-like' is very appropriate here. Throughout the use of sound to create atmosphere and tension is superb, especially when the station's self-destruct sequence is kicked in and the player has to find the exit before the place blows. The only real gripe is that given that the game is for 160 Amiga only, you can't help feeling that something slightly more ambitious could have been attempted. But so it stands this is the best straight-forward blaster for months, and that's a good enough recommendation for anyone.

☆☆☆☆

AMNIO



Price Amiga £29.99

Genre Arcade Shoot
Publisher Psygnosis

Humour? Definitely for the good. Well, that's the idea. The theme is it doesn't quite work.

Amnio is a plain-viewed run-and-gun scrolling shoot-on-eyes. The player slips around the surfaces of two living planets in his ship, zapping the bad guys and rescuing the trapped humans. By shooting certain pods the player can upgrade his ship with better weapons.

And that's it. It's that simple. Of course, with this sort of game you're not looking for depth - you're looking for action. And in this respect Amnio does pretty well. The scrolling is smooth, sound suitably cosmic, and the graphics have an attractive organic/retro look to them.

Frankly, I didn't really feel much compulsion to work my way through the first world, let alone the third. Control over the ship isn't quite as 'relaxing' as it should be, and this detracts from the fun factor. Not my cup of tea, but it may well be yours. Give it a look.

☆☆☆

ANOTHER WORLD



Price Amiga £39.99

Genre Arcade Adventure
Publisher US Gold

Explore a mysterious alien world in this postcard polygon adventure from Delphine. Taking the role of Lester the scientist, the player is transported - as a result of an experiment gone wrong - into an alternate universe where nothing is what it seems. Joyrich controlled with relatively little interaction between characters. Another World is a flawed, but brave product.

Although there aren't that many problems to solve and actually the interest in the game is more connected with the look than the feel, it's still a worthwhile purchase.

Overall, it's an impressive game. It's got plenty of show-bucks but on the whole, it scores a big plus. For players looking for a new angle on the arcade adventure genre and in particular one who has a stronger interest in new graphic styles than the depth of happen-

ings of their game, it fits the bill perfectly.

☆☆☆

BABY JO



Price Atari ST, Amiga £24.99

Genre Platform Game
Publisher Loriciels

Imagine *Meltdown*'s flow to two dimensions and you've got a good idea of what the latest import from French firm Loriciels is all about. Or if you don't know *Jet*, try imagining *Meltdown* with a super-sneaky bobby as the main character. It's all really rather ludicrous, with the wacky toddler having to cut the bomb grenades as he bounces along the landscape in order to keep fit - but he shouldn't eat too much, or he'll mess his tummy! I mean come on! What are these French game designers on? Something pretty strong if the quality of *Baby Jo*'s artwork says anything to go by. Fully designed sprites, strident music and hilariously jinky backgrounds are all proof of *Baby Jo*'s silliness, but it has to be said that it is a kind of cutie in a rather perverse and definitely strange sort of way.

But if there's one thing it certainly isn't, it's fun - the slow, amusing gameplay and heavily flawed target design makes sure of that. It's far precisely this reason that *Baby Jo* should only really be on the shopping list of platform heads desperate for a new fix - and even then there are much more playable options available.

☆☆

BARBARIAN II



Price Amiga £29.99

Genre Arcade Shoot
Publisher Psygnosis

Psygnosis games have historically always been visual treats held back by some less than excellent games design. However, with *Lemmings* that all changed and the company justly earned themselves a reputation for being able to turn out top-notch software of both high visual standard and demanding gameplay.

And for a moment it looks as if *Barbarian II* may be another title in the *Lemmings* vein. Unfortunately this is purely not the case, since once the player has got through the obligatory

loading sequence (a whole disk's worth) it becomes clear that *Barbarian II* is neither a vista of beauty for the eye, or a particularly great player to explore with a joystick.

With left-right scrolling with paths leading into and out of the screen, objects to collect, weapons to handle and monsters to dispatch, *Barbarian* really doesn't offer the player anything new, and has been carried off to much better effect in both *Gold* and *Torrid* the Warner, Maine.

☆☆

BATTLE ISLE



Price Atari ST, Amiga, IBM PC, £34.99

Genre Strategy
Publisher Ltd Intl

As strategy games get broader and more diverse, with the likes of *Populous*, *Mega* & *Ultima* and *Sim City*, the latest from French firm Ltd Intl represents something quite different, which we hardly see any more these days - a wargame in the classic vein. It's set on a flat world where two armies do battle for control of a series of islands. It's visually similar to the old 191 wargames - units move in turn across a battlefield broken down into hexagonal zones. More experienced gamers will know the sort of thing.

Due to the space-age scenario, the units involved consist of all manner of high-tech tanks, planes, ships and assorted vehicles as well as more conventional infantry formations. Players move their units about, creating tactical formations and assaults, with the inevitable coordination between opposing forces. As the battle goes on, units must be reorganised, tactics altered and all the other guff that goes along with a game of this type.

Battle Isle's most favourable option is the two-player mode - something that's woefully missing from a lot of strategy products these days. A handy split-screen display allows two mates to play head-to-head - although this does mean you can see what your opponent is up to at any time, of course.

Battle Isle is undoubtedly a fine and very 'clever' strategy game, and one that should appeal to anyone who likes the good old-fashioned way of doing things, without all the interfering bells and whistles. But despite the game's accessibility, many younger players on the lookout for a brain game are more likely to turn towards the likes of *Populous*

11. Good stuff, though.

☆☆☆☆

BIRDS OF PREY



Price Amiga £29.99

Genre Simulation
Publisher Electronic Arts

Well, it's been four years in the making, but it's not Hawk - cops, I mean *Birds of Prey* - has materialised. But has it been worth the wait? Well... sort of.

Let's make no bones about it. *Birds of Prey* is an excellent flight simulator and, as the name suggests, there's no shortage of delightful action. On a technical level it's astounding, and probably its more impressive aspect is the number of planes you're given the opportunity to fly - no less than 40 individual combat aircraft!

Birds of Prey is much more the thinking man's simulation - very much in the *Microsoft* mould - and not really the more simplistic, combat-orientated intensive type after that many of us were expecting. The said, it's not all just flying from weapon to weapon and killing enemy in-between. There's more than enough hard-earned action to keep anybody happy. The *3D* update is surprisingly odd, considering how much the program is having to juggle, but nonetheless it just doesn't seem like the result of four years' programming.

Ultimately, what you're get with *Birds of Prey* is a game that's tried to do a bit of everything, and comes off surprisingly well at the end of it. If anything it leans a little too far towards the technical side of things (reading the manual is an achievement in itself), but nonetheless *Birds of Prey* comes wholeheartedly recommended to all flight-sim fans.

☆☆☆☆

BREACH 2



Price Amiga £19.99

Genre Strategy
Publisher Impresario

Though there's nothing particularly special on offer for the low-end RPG fans this month, the follow-up to the highly successful *Breach* is worthy of their attention. Set in the future with the player in command of a team of agents

characters, it's more strategic than role-playing, but the rest of the two genres is an appealing one. Probably the best comparison is with that old favorite *Lone Wolf*—Brash is, however, boasts a considerably more sophisticated approach, with a smart isometric viewpoint, much easier command control and more involving missions.

In each mission scenario, the player leads his team through enemy territory, exploring areas, collecting objects and slaying baddies with the alien blasters they encounter. In the classic RPG tradition, characters can be toiled up with a huge array of weapons and equipment, including rifles, rocket launchers and bombs, and all the characters come complete with individual attributes and abilities.

An added bonus is that, should the player get bored with the multitude of missions available, they can create and save their own. How many gamers will want to expand this amount of effort (designing a playable mission on any kind of game is no easy task) remains to be seen, however, and you may want to ask yourself if you're even likely to make use of the feature. But there are enough preprogrammed missions to make Brash a worthwhile even without the editor, and so that score the game should at least be on the "take a look" list for all RPG/strategy aficionados, if not a definite purchase.

☆☆☆

BUGS, BUNNY CRAZY CASTLE 2



Price Gameboy (\$4.95) (Import)
Genre Puzzle
Publisher Kemco-Soft

Who the Hell is Honey Bunny? I must be getting old, because I don't remember Bugs™ ever having a sappy girlfriend. It sounds to me like a lame excuse to rehash the old 'gal kidnapped by witch who must be rescued by hero' scenario to me. In this case it's the hideously ugly Witch Hazel™ who's the wrong doer (now her I do remember), and who has whisked Honey™ away to her castle. Bugs™ must now save her by busting through all huge rooms of platforms, pipes, ladders and Lemony Tunes™ characters. Bugs™ must find the hidden keys in each to unlock the door to the next room. By picking up bombs, axes and so on Bugs™ can blow up those darn Toons, back his way through locked passages,

etc., etc.

Although it looks like a platform game, *Crazy Castle 2*™ actually plays more like a puzzle game. Success is down to using the items you pick up along the way to get past certain obstacles at the correct place and time. And this part of the game is quite fun.

It's the platform element that ruins the game—Bugs™ moves in big chunks and is hard to control, and all too infrequently often you lose a life by bumping into the baddies by accident. Despite it's good graphics, in my opinion *Crazy Castle 2*™ is a right thinking load of old crap™.

☆☆

CAPTAIN PLANET



Price Atari ST, Amiga £29.99
Genre Arcade Action
Publisher Mindscape

Pass the kettles, man. Thanks. Yeah, like I was telling you there's like this guy, right, and he's like this sort of super-hero, you know. Goes around saving the world from these real heavy breasted polluters. Yeah, like you say. Heavy shit, man. Anyway, let me get these five buttons, and they're like just little, you know, but they're got this special ring that give them those cosmic powers. Totally amazing. Each level of the game like centres around one of these six characters, and they're just for you.

I mean like the first character, M.A.T.I., uses her ring to like chill out the bad guys and remove plants so she can stand up to the level exit. Yeah, and like when she gets out there's this helicopter she has to fly around in and scoop up misaligned clipboards and

take them to a secretary. Yeah, exactly. It's like this amazing mix of platform game and shoot 'em up. Besides, yeah, the graphics are sort of cute, the writing's fine, and the tunes are cute, but control over your little spirit guy's a bit tricky. Yeah, Tinkly Dinkly, Watergate, all The President's Men, but you get used to it and all in all it's quite a fun-out experience, if not the slickest thing like you've ever seen. Lots of really pretty psychedelic scenes, too.

☆☆☆☆

CASTLEVANIA IV



Price Super Famicom (£49.95) (Import)

Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Konami
 I couldn't believe it when I loaded this up! Imagine it's Christmas (not that difficult really). You're really looking forward to getting a certain present, and you've laid the ground with lots of heavy hints to your parents. Then, on Christmas morning, you get a wrapped gift that looks the same size and shape as the the thing you want. Trouble is, when you open it up there's something totally different inside. Oh, it's a nice enough present all right, just not the one you wanted. Well, that's *Castlevania IV*. It was got on the NES, brilliant on the Gameboy and, along with *CapCom's Super Clank's*™ *Ghost*, was one on the big anticipated releases on the Super Famicom.

To be fair, *Castlevania's* a decent enough game—there's lots of running around, platforming, ladders and what have you, lots of wopping the bad guys with a giant cross. Unfortunately, what there isn't lots of is fun. The graphics are garish, and the animation is purely perfunctory, with the boss having a rather unfortunate shuffling walk that makes him look as if he's got ragged to his feet and he's trying to pull his feet. If this had appeared before EGA™ then it might have received a better reception. As it happens, it didn't, so it loses™.

☆☆☆

CELTIC LEGENDS



Price Atari ST, Amiga £24.99
Genre Role-Playing Game
Publisher Uta Soft

It's amazing how you can tell, 99% of the time, what an RPG game is going to be simply like just by knowing what part of the world it's coming from. For example, anything that comes from California is likely to be all complex and involved, while anything from, say France or Germany, will be heavy all the traditional FRP elements, always tends to present things in a really straightforward and simple manner. As is the case here, with this little Gallic number which in very much in the same vein as *Thalion's Dragonflight* and countless other Euro RPGs.

It's actually a fine little game, based around all the old RPG clichés, but handling them with additional French style and splash, as all set in the myth-

ical world of Celtica, where the misuse of magic by an evil sorcerer has wreathed the Magicians in tears.

What follows is a mix of strategy and conventional RPG elements presented from a number of viewpoints—on the battlefield, high above the world itself and so on, depending upon the mode.

Though in gameplay terms it offers nothing that seasoned fans of the genre will find particularly earth shattering, it's different enough in terms of presentation and style to make it well worth investigating—especially for novice gamers who may be looking for an accessible and appealing introduction to the genre.

☆☆☆☆

CENTURION - DEFENDER OF ROME



Price Megalithic £24.99
Genre Action Strategy
Publisher Electronic Arts

Can't as an aspiring Centurion, it's the player's duty to both defend the Roman land and expand the Roman Empire as far as possible. This single maximal aim is somewhat aided at first by the fact that the player starts with just a single legion of soldiers and a city of citizens to keep under control.

The game is a well-judged blend of icon-driven strategy and arcade-style interludes. For example, to keep the subdued provinces happy, the player can take part in chariot races and keep their light. As the game progresses the armies under your command grow and steps played at your disposal to take armies to neighbouring shores become bigger and better. If the player's back to can own her a crack at enforcing the voluptuous Cleopatra. Poor old Megalithic owners in particular are amazed of this type of game, and you're looking for something to exercise your brain a little, you could do far more than this.

☆☆☆☆

CHOPLIFTER 2



Price Arcade £29.99
Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Nintendo

Choplifter first appeared in 1985, its

level-headed and is still fairly common-based today. The player's mission is super-crash helicopters pilis to rescue survivors from a horizontally swirling storm. To do this the player must land near the wiring outages and wait for them to heal. This can be quite boring at times as you're performing a tedious sitting duck for all the enemy gun installations and machine-gunning planes which constantly lay siege.

The player's captor is equipped with a rapid-firing cannon and a limited number of bombs with which to protect himself. And that's really all there is to it - however, like *Dynasty*, *Clayfighter* is one of those games that, once played, is never forgotten. Fast action, challenging game task and a passable story help make this one of the best games out on the Gameboy, and a must for any action fans collection.

☆☆☆☆

CISCO HEAT



Price **Amiga £25.99**
Genre **Action Blast**
Publisher **Image Works**

In the light of a whole bunch of driving games, some of which have been nothing short of excellent, (*Lords of Speed*, *Prix Image Works*) launch of this rather dreadful title couldn't have come at a worse time.

Not only will the consumer have had his fill of driving in general, but he will also be fully aware that it's possible to produce action games a thousand times better than this.

The aim is to race a souped up police car through the busy streets of San Francisco, avoiding taxis, cars, trucks and skyscrapers in an attempt to emerge as the top cop-driver in the city.

Quite aside from the 3D routines which make Turbo Outrun look pitiful and some astoundingly dull courses, *Cisco Heat* stalls at virtually every corner. The race themselves are painful and frustrating, the crowd graphics are basically a single graphic block duplicated to fill the space, the police car crashes into skyscrapers only a fraction larger than itself, and the corner turning routine, however leave the attempt, is a catastrophe.

Mind you, the sound of the car's horn is quite good.

☆

CIVILIZATION



Price **IBM PC £34.99**
Genre **Strategy**
Publisher **Mindscape**

American games design guru Sid Meier, fresh from his success with the brilliant *Roadward Tycoon*, has surpassed himself with this latest effort, which can truly be said to boggle the mind in terms of depth, scale and scope. Adapting the same functional top-down perspective format of *Tycoon*, the game challenges the player with the task of building a civilization, from a handful of primitive tribes to an assembled, unified world, in a global empire capable of space travel, nuclear power and the other trappings 20th Century life.

The range of factors and elements that play a part in the game is quite simply awesome, as the player's people advance and expand, founding cities, setting rail across the water, creating technological discoveries and building armed forces - all while computer-controlled 'rival' empires do the same. Along the way the player must set taxes, maintain civil order, negotiate with other nations, care for the environment and take part in various arms and space races.

Civilization is undoubtedly the most involved strategy game ever conceived, and as such many less committed or novice gamers are likely to be overawed by the game's sheer-like intricacies. For those willing to invest the time and effort, however, *Civilization* pays off like no other. Wonderful.

☆☆☆☆☆

CONAN THE CIMMERIAN



Price **IBM PC £29.99**
Genre **Role Playing Game**
Publisher **Wight Games**

The problem with *Conan* is that he doesn't really know whether he wants to be a serious game or a funny game. The opening sequence is a wonderful, pre-filled comedy and intended to amuse, as witnessed by some of the most awful music I've ever heard. (While some people may argue it's fabulously dissonant, I reckon it sounds like the twangings of a Fender Princeton 'My First Guitar' being played in the bath.)

Anyway, the curious mixture of semi-plan race exploration and side-on hack-

ing works reasonably well, with *Conan* looking every inch the super-heroic it's supposed to be. And there's plenty to explore.

Even the adventuring side is pretty good, and *Conan* can interact (albeit on a pretty basic level) with every character he encounters.

So if you feel that there is space on your shelf for yet another average-quality game, and can live with the atmosphere-crushing laughs, it may be worth a look.

☆☆☆☆

CRUISE FOR A CORPSE



Price **Amiga £24.99**
Genre **Adventure**
Publisher **Dolphin, UK Gold**

The plot for *Cruise for a Corpse* is firmly rooted in the Agatha Christie 'isolated location, plenty of suspects' crime story tradition, detailing how the player is invited to a Greek tycoon's yacht for a well-earned holiday only to get there and find his host bumped-off by an unknown murderer. Before you can say 'Inspector Wankel' the player is forced to use every resource and wily subterfuge to solve the heinous crime.

After a lot of pre-release interest from the press, there were high hopes for *Cruise for a Corpse*. Is it the excellent game everyone seemed to think it's be? Well, yes... and no. In the graphics and sound department it's a masterpiece, with large, fluidly animated sprites moving over exquisitely detailed backgrounds and plenty of variable tones and samples playing away in the background. All conspire to generate an excellent sense of mood and atmosphere.

The player directs his on-screen character ('Rascal') via the mouse. By clicking the mouse pointer on objects of interest, a menu appears listing the various things the player can do with the selected item (i.e. 'Open' or 'Inventor' for 'Rascal'). Movement around the yacht is effected by walking. Rascal finds locations to location by clicking on exits to the current location, such as doors or hallways, or more quickly by calling up the yacht map and 'walking' Rascal immediately from place to place. As a user interface it's difficult to think of anything as intuitive and easy to use.

The major problem with *Cruise for a Corpse* is its pace. The animations, though wonderful, is slow, obscuring the contents of a room can become quite painful, as faced clearly turns, walls, doors, break down, examine the items only for a message to appear stating that "There is nothing of interest here". Equally annoying is the frequent though inevitable occurring and wrapping of live count 'vint' game disks. All too often the player's enthusiasm for clue hunting can be severely dampened by the reduction of the game's speed to near snail's pace. Less important, some of the generally excellent French-English translation is a bit dubious in places, such as the Cabin Boy who is described as 'dynamic'.

These comments apart, despite with the patience to sit through the occasional dullness will find *Cruise for a Corpse* a superb but 'bumped with quality presentation and atmosphere and presenting a big enough game task is surely one of the greatest deals.

☆☆☆☆

DEATHBRINGER



Price **Amiga ST £25.99**
Genre **Beat-'Em-Up**
Publisher **Empire**

There's this magical right. There will wizards have magical gives it the ability to absorb the souls of anyone it slays. There intention is to use it to get rid of their greedy-godly though thirty-thirty wizard Karn. A lot better so stupid he can't even spell his own name right. However, luck isn't so the wizard's side, and the sword finds its way into Karn's calloused hands. Hardly before his back, Karn sets out to get the sword back in the wizard's style. Basically it's all a thirty-wizard score for a sideways scolding. Most of hacking and slaying, with Karn plowing through war after wave of lesser monsters.

Deathbringer boasts some of the most impressive parallel-scrolling backgrounds yet seen, even if they are somewhat lacking in colour. The sprites are well drawn with a nice line in business, but they're rather garish in a non-mechanistic sort of way. But despite its good graphics and adequate sound, *Deathbringer*'s real problem is that it's basically a bit dull. The combat moves are limited in range and slow to implement and just wandering along, and

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ively plugging away at the handles, it is not all that interesting. And the picture backdrops in the whole *World Cup* make up for that. *Rushmore III* isn't this one's.

☆☆☆

DEVIL CRASH



Price Megabyte \$29.95 (Import)
Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Tynes Soft

Computerized pinball has never been a particularly popular genre - and a quick glance at *Devil Crash* is enough to make you see why. Ever since the age-old days of *Starball* and *Time Scanner*, coin-ups and home machines have tried to emulate that zesty tilt-it's-there pinball feel, but with little success. In theory, it should work excellently, with the heavy format allowing for all sorts of tricks and wizardry that wouldn't be possible on a real machine. Unfortunately, no amount of gimmicks can make up for the fact that pinball on a computer screen just doesn't compare to the exhilaration of a real table.

To its credit, *Devil Crash* actually does a better job than most, with credible ball inertia and plenty of interesting features - the table is more than screens long and packed with all manner of secret rooms, bonuses and other bits. Unfortunately the graphic nature of the graphics (permutations and mystic runes abound) lend a rather depressing and money-kill to the game itself, and as a result it's difficult to really enjoy. *Devil Crash* is the aesthetic equivalent of a bad headache. Whatever its shortcomings, however, computer pinball has acquired a respectable cult following for itself, and gamers of that persuasion will no doubt find *Devil Crash* to be one of the more impressive examples of the genre. For the rest of us, however, there are more enjoyable - and less frustrating - bits of play to be had out there.

☆☆☆

DEVIOS DESIGNS



Price Amiga \$19.99
Genre Puzzle
Publisher Image Works
 However, not so much devoted to virtu-

ply fidelity. Ever since the world went Tandy mad, there's been a steady trickle of arcade purifiers trying to tap into the elusive addictive ingredients that made Alexey Pajitnov's classic such a wallet-filling money spinner. Deviant Design had more potential than most, but it hasn't quite been realized.

The basic idea is simple enough. The player guides a toy figure around various landscapes, picking up variously-shaped blocks and trying to slot them onto a transparent template, while collecting bonuses, a myriad of power-ups and avoiding or shooting the oncoming bad guys. All well and good. Ah, but there's more to it than that. On the later levels, the player can make his character walk up the walls and even on the ceiling. And this is where it all starts to fall apart.

Control over the player's character is generally fine, but when near a wall it's all too easy to find yourself clambering up when you didn't want to and not clambering up where you did. Additionally, given a fair deal of practice the player should be able to compensate for this foibles, but in the short-term it makes an otherwise enjoyable and reasonably addictive addition to the genre.

☆☆☆

DOUBLE DRAGON 3



Price Amiga \$29.99
Genre Beat-'em-Up
Publisher Stern

Double Dragon fans have been more than short-changed in the past by the conversions of the previous two *Double Dragon* coin-ops, so it comes as some relief to be able to say that this - the third installment of the on-going, fiery-cuff escapades of Jimmy and Billy Lee - is, despite a couple of reservations, pretty much what devotees have been waiting for.

The plot is confused to say the least. According to the box blurb, to it, it's either the usual glib rescue mission, or a quest for revenge, or a fight against the "Ultimate Evil." No matter - the mechanics remain the same. Jimmy and Billy Lee (A.K.A. players one and two) have to jump and romp their way through fourteen levels of action set in the usual locations (and as the game progresses you'll discover "cave" is an understatement).

Players start the game with fifteen "coins," and in the shops found on route

the player can buy extra lives, weapons, power-ups and even some fancy run-fighting moves. It's a shame you can't just find weapons along the way, but this extra business does at least add a game-enhancing strategy element, because the player has to decide how best to spend his cash.

While some may find the gameplay dated and repetitive (I complain, to be fair that could be made about most games of this type), these systematic fans of the genre should be willing to see one of the more exciting and certainly the slickest slices of beat-'em-up action around. And, for my money, it's far better than *Final Fight*.

☆☆☆☆

E.A. HOCKEY



Price Megabyte \$34.99
Genre Sports Arcade
Publisher Electronic Arts

Like *Stick Off* with lightning in, *Electronic Arts' Hockey* will appeal to everyone. A section of teams from around the globe, each with their own abilities and weaknesses built it out in the hot hockey World League.

Following on from their success with *John Madden's Football*, EA pull yet another winner out of the bag with this, perhaps their most favorite title to date.

Having selected the length of game, whether the player wishes to compete in a one-off match or a knockout, selected his team and that of the enemy, it's game-on! Skating around the rink is simple enough, and control over the puck is surprisingly instinctive. Since the rink is so small and the players can move so swiftly and violently against each other, for *Hockey* is an extremely rapid, high scoring game. Usually, whoever gets the puck from the face-off is most likely to score. Of all, of course, the player gets the hang of the wide variety of tackling moves available to him, from a good honest going-for-the-puck scenario to a full body check.

Like an opposition player on a two regular basis, though, and you'll better be ready to put your fist where his mouth is, as one of the bonuses included is headbutting. While the rest of your team are trying to do some good, it's possible to clung away at that guy who skated over your shoes for as long as

you find a graphic and gameplay marvel. E.A. *Hockey* is wholeheartedly recommended to one and all. *Hockey!*

☆☆☆☆

ELF



Price Amiga \$25.95
Genre Arcade Adventure
Publisher Ocean

As Caroline for *EE*, it's the player's task to escape his overboard Elia from the point-nailed clutches of Norcorian the Not Very Nice. The game takes place over six Tolkien-esque levels filled with platforms, pitfalls, ladders and bridges. Caroline magic powder allows him to protect himself from Norcorian rampant hordes of bewitchmenters by firing bolts of magic energy. Numerous invulnerable-sustaining spells and power-ups can be bought from the Oldie local Shopper using coins picked up along the way.

Each massive maze-like level presents its own unique set of problems to solve and tasks to achieve, requiring that the player constantly evolve new strategies to deal with them. All in all it's a polished high-quality romp, perfect for platform or arcade adventure fans.

☆☆☆☆

EPIC



Price Atari ST \$25.99
Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Ocean

Boy, has this one been a long time in the making. I can remember magazine reviewers praising this about a year and a half ago (and I think ACE was one of them). It's strange that it should finally appear around the same time as EA's *Stick of Play* (see this month's Review Directory), another game thought long lost in the Bermuda Triangle that in essence is software development.

Anyway, it's here now so what's it like. Well, to be frank, it's a tiny bit disappointing. The last remnants of the lawsuit race are all bundled up in a floor of space ships, floating through space to escape the men which is just about to go now. The only escape route lies through the heart of the hostile

TNT

Empire of the Future, a vicious space race of aliens. As pilot Nathan's Top Top Secret starfighter, it's up to the player to see the fleet to safety.

This plot forms the framework for the game's eight missions, some of which take place in space, the rest of which take place on the surfaces of various planets. Although depicted in super-smooth solid-polygon 3D (mostly of Digital's P-oy Image Design), the emphasis is firmly on shoot-'em-up rather than open-world simulation.

Depending on how the player performs in the various missions, the plot varies accordingly, but it's very limited and never really deviates from the linear path. Epic is all very exciting - the sheer scale of some of the space battles is stunning - and control over the ship is superb, but you can't help wishing there was a little more to the game than just blowing everything up. A touch more depth and this would have been a classic. Still, if you're looking for a high-class, no-nonsense 3D blaster then Epic's your game. Personally, I'm holding out for Epic 2. □ □ □ □

wasn't put off the fans here to ensure their adventures in the land of Darkness, we should a dozen newcomers from making their first trip. Highly recommended. □ □ □ □ □

F-15 STRIKE EAGLE II



Price: **Atari ST/Amiga, IBM PC £29.99**

Genre: **Simulation**

Publisher: **MicroProse**

MicroProse makes a departure from their usual rigorously-accurate sim with this action-oriented affair. It's the flight sim equivalent of the laser and John books. ie. nice 'n' simple with no complications. Players have six combat areas to choose between, each with various missions to select. These missions are easily all single jet-in, destroy a couple of targets and get out alive' jobs, with the player free to simultaneously defend against swarms of enemy jets. Control is via keyboard, joystick or mouse and is highly responsive in each case.

The screen update is fast enough but there are quakes (3 missions alone - it's more than adequate for the job in hand, however. Sound is disappointing, with a white-noise hiss being being the player's only audio companion for most of the journey. In the gameplay department this is a winner, with plenty of white-knuckle action to get the adrenaline pumping. Veterans may bemoan the game's lack of depth, but anyone else should find this just their cup of tea, with a puny Jeremy Dodger in the corner to boot. □ □ □ □

F-22 INTERCEPTOR

Price: **Magnitude £29.99**

Genre: **Simulation**

Publisher: **Electronic Arts**



The first 'real' flight simulation to arrive on Sega's 16-bit baby, it, as many might expect, a while to more simplistic than comparable products on computer. The drill is pretty much routine - strap yourself in the cockpit of your prototype fighter and lock nose but over a series of increasingly-dangerous missions.

Because console controls are far more limited than those available on com-

MONKEY ISLAND 2

As you probably know by now, this will be the last. If you will 'join' of dear old PC Magazine. This is a rather terminal but fun and quirky at the time TNT was printed where, as some may remember, it says that Part 2 of Monkey Island a tips will be printed next month. Obviously, that isn't going to happen. So, never one to leave to local readers in the lurch, here's the final part of the complete solution...

PART 2: LeCHUCK'S FORTRESS

Once at LeChuck's fortress, walk along the path to the right and keep looking right (thru the tunnel, NOT the back hallway) until you get to the dungeons. Talk to 'Wally' then go to all the signs. Look at the spy-glass, control panels and write down the lyrics of each song. Now enter the lock tunnel thru the right side and look at the first verse. (Mine said, though others may differ, are you connected to head, head to rim and rim to leg.)

If you look at the first three parts in order they are: head, rim, leg. Find a statue that matches that description (ie. arm-on top, head in the middle, rim on the bottom). Push it and walk to it. Do the same for the next three verses.

Eventually you should end up at a large door. Open it and walk thru. Get the key, however, you will be captured and tortured. Now use the straw on the green drink. Spit at everything in the room continuously. By now the spit should be extinguished the flares. (For a laugh (not wit) and don't do anything). Now light a match...

PART 4: DINKY TALK

Look at the sign. Go to the still, pick up the mirror glass and use the glass on the well. Look at the barrel and get the cracker. Talk to Herman but don't bother answering his questions. Give the cracker to the parrot (he'll give you the first directions). Take the bottle from the water. Take the cracker that's near the barrel and crates. Now enter the jungle.

Find the pond and pick up the rope (it's around the log). Open the box then take the dynamite. Find the tree with the bag hanging from it, use the bottle on the tree and use the monkey-bloom that's on the bag. Pick up the cracker and use the glass containing the distilled water on the milk. Get to where the parrot said to go, ie. head over from the

pond (use the phone for help) then give him a cracker and follow the first direction. Now give him the last cracker and follow his directions and you will be in the W. Use the shovel on the X. Now use the dynamite on the hole. Use the crowbar on the rope. Use the rope on the twisted metal at the top of the hole. Now Governor Malley will arrive, but the rope will snap. Once you've hit the ground feel the flashlight. It just is the right of the very middle of the screen. Use the switch (BLOOD). LeChuck will appear and try to burnish you with a wooden doll. When you reappear LeChuck will try again. When he stops doing it so frequently go to the staircase and get a bottle of root beer, a wooden doll and a balloon.

Go to the first Aid room, take the key, head, open the water-grip basket and take the springs. Then open the drawer and take the gloves. Find the rope with the grog machine and use the balloon and gloves on the helium tank. Then use the camera-stern slot on the grog machine. Now wait, and when LeChuck comes into the room he'll level over to pick up the penny. Quickly pick up LeChuck. This will cause Cyprian to take his underwear.

Make your way to the elevator and press the CALL button. Go into the elevator and use it a couple of times. Eventually LeChuck should appear in the lower level. When the doors open he'll try to use the doll on you, just use the lever and his head will get caught in the closing doors. When the doors open again, get the board. After having explored the perimeter, reenter, go back down to the lower level and look for LeChuck. When you find him you must be very quick. Get him the clean white handkerchief that you saw. He'll use it, give it back to you and zap you.

When you reappear try to use that's stick, the handle, the doll, the underwear and the board scraps in the bag bag. Now you will have a wooden doll pulsating with power. Find LeChuck and use the hypodermic needle on the doll. LeChuck will leave, so follow him and use it again. Use all the selection gives (for fun). If you rip off the doll's leg then you win. Now get ready for a weird ending...

THE END

□ □ □ □

EYE OF THE BEHOLDER 2



Price: **IBM PC £24.99**

Genre: **Role-Playing Game**

Publisher: **USA/US Gold**

The first Eye of the Beholder, along with its inspiration Dungeon Master, can largely be thanked for being responsible, depending on your view of this genre, for bringing RPGs (role-playing and rapping out of the darkness) to the screens of the arena- and glimmering social retard and into the bright daylight of critical acclaim and public acceptance.

This style of RPG banished forever the notion that these games should only consist of functional graphics and menus of statistics, depicting the action in detailed 3D graphics, with all the numbers crunched/handled by the computer rather than the player.

Beholder 2 continues the tradition of the first, being good to look at, easy to use and - most importantly - fun and exciting to play. To be honest, the real improvements over the first game are few and subtle, and it's still a shame that the various features don't have a few more animation frames belated on their attack animations, but that

puter (keyboard yes/no). Face Off 27 offers all the technical bits and bolts featured in your average Interspace product. What it does do, however, is play surprisingly like a "real" simulation, given the limitations of the console. When playing from one of the outside views, it may look like just another version of Afterburner, but it really does play properly, with cameras and controls behaving all working realistically.

Considering it's a console game, Face Off 27 is a pretty remarkable achievement, and EA deserves to be congratulated for making the effort to produce something a bit more taxing (both for the player and the machine) than just another two-player shoot-'em-up. If you're used to that computer-based flight simulator tone can do, it's unlikely you'll be impressed by what Face Off 27 Interspace has in store. If you're not, however, and you're a bit fed up with the standard Interspace arcade design, you could well be onto a winner here.

□ □ □ □

FACE OFF



Price Atari 27/Amiga 225.99
Genre Sport/Action
Publisher Nintendo

There aren't that many (or Hacky games available on the Amiga. In fact, there aren't any. So Face Off is something of a welcome addition to the console sports games. Worth getting? Well, yes and no. Like Manchester United dumps, it's a very polished game with some super slick moves and option screens. There's a league to participate in, where the player can do anything from train the players to manage the manager. And like MANE, the player can turn off the arcade game and concentrate on the managerial side of things if they're that way inclined, or alternatively just play the arcade game alone.

The arcade side of things is okay, although some may wish the action had just a touch more zip. Certainly compared to EA, Hacky's distinctly sluggish. Control is simple and easy to pick up - shoot, pass or throw into the penalty - and the sport is fast, especially when things get a little physical and the fans start flying. As standard on most sports games these days there's a replay function so that that blazer-

ing goal can be replayed again and again. Overall, Face Off is a rounded package, though unlikely to really grab the public's imagination. Face of the sport will enter it, but just how many of them are there in the UK? □ □ □ □

FATAL REWIND



Price MegaDrive 234.99
Genre Action/Beat

Publisher Popgoose/Electronic Arts
 Popgoose disappoints nobody with its first foray onto the 16-bit consoles, maintaining the same high quality of graphics and sound that's made it the legend it is in the Amiga market. And thankfully in this case there's the gameplay to back up the visuals. But if The Killing Game Show had to be measured for its merit on the Amiga to be the MegaDrive, couldn't they have come up with something a little better than Fatal Rewind? Apart from the fact that it doesn't actually even reach, it's a fairly obvious attempt to sound like Total Recall, a film which bears no resemblance to this game at all.

The player is put in charge of a mechanical walker reminiscent of the ED-209s in Robocop. An agile little thing, it can run left and right, jump, fire and even climb up the sides of walls. Things get on its nerves, so, hold! The player has to negotiate a network of platforms in the heat for the cut to the next level. Allow us to warn all sides, avoiding and overwatching the screen with the sole intent of saving the player bits the dust. And just to give the player a much more incentive to escape the platforms are slowly sinking into a deadly red sea. The need to find keys to obtain areas adds a small amount of depth to the game. But these arcade adventure elements never manage what is basically a very clunky and additive shoot-'em-up. □ □ □ □

FIGHTER COMMAND



Price Amiga 249.99
Genre Strategy

Publisher Impressions
 It may be a little late to cash in on Operators Desert Storm, but there can be no doubting Fighter Command's

aptitude. In the present day Middle East, it puts the player in the shoes those of an allied air commander who's been given a simple task - take the stuffing out of the aggressive enemy as quickly and violently as possible, but despite the pretty picture of a jet pilot coming into land on the box, there's not actually any flight-sim type action in the game at all. It's more pure strategy with the player making all his decisions from a series of control rooms, screens and offices. Everything is presented by simplistic overhead camera views, tactical screens and radar displays.

Everything you'd expect from a military strategy game is in there - you survey the area with reconnaissance satellites to find out when everything is, then engage and launch attacks against chosen targets. There's a wide range of kit available, including stealth bombers, fighters and helicopters from various air forces along with escort, point and local missiles. As the game progresses, the player has to keep tabs on political developments, fuel and equipment resources and all kinds of other factors which govern the game world.

Actually, considering there's rarely anything really exciting going on on-screen, Fighter Command does quite a good job of holding the player's attention. Most of the screens are static, nothing's really very immediate and it takes time to learn the basics, but despite all this it's still strangely compelling. There's plenty to do, lots of strategy to get the head round and generally it's all very tidy. The lack of any real flight action is a major setback, and it's because of this that many gamers may prefer to wait for Microprose's forthcoming ATAC. In The Warlord this month. □ □ □ □

FINAL BLOW



Price Amiga 249.99
Genre Arcade/Beat
Publisher Status

I actually went to a boxing match a couple of months back and people in the crowd were genuinely shouting "Hit him" as if it was some sort of useful tactic which their chosen fighter should employ. One suggests that are exactly the sort of folks who spend more than a couple of quid on Final Blow in the arcade. Nothing wrong with the

celebration of the whole act, and nothing wrong with having a right old clapping session in the process, but Final Blow has more to do with seeing who can hit first the fastest than boxing.

Although the players are endowed with plenty of moves and the ability to block punches, the speed of the game completely removes any sort of finesse which, after all, is what boxing is all about. Even Mike Tyson would concentrate on different areas of the body. Hit them in the ribs enough to make them lower their guard, and then go to work on their face. No such accuracy in Final Blow, since the flurry of computerised and human arms makes it impossible to see who's aimed at whom. The result is a non-stop battle of mind-numbing frustration. About the only way to work out who's being hit is by watching the rump bar at the bottom of the screen.

So far as a coin-op conversion goes, it's a pretty good job, and its two-player mode it's alright for a laugh, but the original was far from perfect. Amiga gamers may be wise to hold on for a more rounded game. □ □ □ □

FINAL FIGHT



Price Amiga 229.99
Genre Beat/Em-Up
Publisher US Gold

Yet another in US Gold's seemingly endless string of CopyCat conversions. In Metro City (loosely based on New York) all is not well. Crime is rife and to make a bad situation worse the Mayor's right-daughter daughter has been kidnaped - yep - you guessed it - by Big. (This old Big Guy certainly gets around, doesn't he?) The player and optional partner have to fight their way through the city's streets to rescue her. "Why? Why not?"

Final Fight is something of a first for beat-'em-ups on the home computer. As it's actually quite good. The sprites are large and densely animated, the background scroll is smooth and the action is fast. Someone of the debating whether a punch connects or not is a little dodgy, but apart from that this can be recommended unreservedly to anyone who factors a little ammo without leaving their knuckles. □ □ □ □

FIRST SAMURAI



Price **Amiga £29.99**
Genre **Arcade Blast**
Publisher **Image Works**

This is the way that arcade adventures should be made! Succeeding on producing a game with the staid prose of Schwarzenegger and some puzzle-solving too, Image Works have come up with a winning formula.

The player must avenge the foul murder of his Ninja Master by chasing the evil Demon King through eight Century Japan.

On top of all the regular hacking and slashing that you would expect to find in an arcade adventure, there are special items, which can be used a little like playing a job in it's A Streetout and can summon the spirit of your murdered Mage-mum to help you through some of the more tricky situations.

While it could be said that the last thing the world needs is another martial arts game or another collect-the-objects adventure, First Samurai carefully sidesteps the argument by blending both styles in an effective and appealing way, keeping both hardcore fighters and those with more cerebral interests happy.

☆☆☆☆☆

FLICKY



Price **Magazine £34.99**
Genre **Platform**
Publisher **Sage**

"Don't be put off by the screenshots on the back of the box" is probably the best bit of advice I can give about Flicky. It looks awful - tiny primary-colour sprites and garish backgrounds. And to be honest, things don't improve much in the game itself. However, like Quaximus, an ugly appearance conceals the goodness inside.

The player controls the tiny bird of the title. The little darling's chicks have gone and got themselves lost in the course of a giant cat-infested house. Flicky has to run and jump about, collect her scattered brood and take them to the safety of the Exit, while avoiding the prowling felines. Flicky is a wonderfully playable game, very simple but packed with fun. Some may dispute whether there's *any* worth of

fun, but for those with the cash it's a good purchase.

☆☆☆☆

FLOOR 13



Price **IBM PC £34.99**
Genre **Strategy**
Publisher **Virgin Games**

The myth that strategy games are boring has been well and truly exploded by a game that's likely to convert even confirmed trigger-addicts to a more subtle and intelligent software diet. Floor 13 offers a new slant on the strategy genre by being itself around a compelling scenario and offering gameplay that goes beyond the regular strategy framework.

Set in present-day Britain, it tells of a government-run secret police force that must over-see, guide or supervise elements and generally protect the government from embarrassing incidents so that it doesn't fall from grace. As Director General of this corrupt agency, the player is solely responsible for its operations.

The game is played almost entirely from a single static screen of an office desk, onto which intelligence reports and newspaper stories arrive from the outside world and form the basis of the information which the player works from as plots and schemes unfold. Various sub-departments, such as surveillance, interrogation and dissemination are the instruments of the player's will, with steady agents taking reports, tapping phones, searching premises and even torturing and killing people to achieve the government's internal aims.

The way in which the game reveals information as half-truths and red herrings mean that good detective work and thorough cross-checking of intelligence data is as important as the conventional strategic skills which are also required. It's all thoroughly absorbing, very realistic stuff, and comes highly recommended, even to those who can't normally stand strategy games.

☆☆☆☆☆

FOOTBALL DIRECTOR II



Price **Atari ST/Amiga £34.99**
Genre **Strategy**

Publisher OMR Games

Balance. Don't get me wrong, I've got nothing against football - there's just something implicitly boring about management games of the type. *Player Manager* is the exception to the rule, firstly because it's so confident and secondly because you get to play *Click Off* with it, which made it a really confident. When faced with something like this though, it's difficult to imagine anybody but the most desperate sort of gamer as die-hard *Player Man* actually getting any enjoyment out of it.

Technically of course, there's nothing to fault it, and the depth that the game goes into is considerable - you've got your league and cup trophies, financial problems, player injuries, team tactics, talent scouts, stadium management and all the rest of it. On the aesthetic side, however, nothing much seems to have changed since the days when these games were produced on the Spectrum about three or four years ago.

These days, however, the cheapo graphics and sound just don't cut it any more, so when something like this comes along it seems like a bit of an embarrassment, really. But of course it's the gameplay that counts and for what it is, *Football Director* is entertaining enough, and providing you're not expecting too much and willing to give the game some time, it should pay off handsomely. The wiser members of the computerised football management fraternity will probably want to save their pennies for *Player Manager 2*, however.

☆☆☆

FORMULA ONE GRAND PRIX



Price **Atari £34.99**
Genre **Racing Simulation**
Publisher **MiracPross**

Believe you me, you've never seen a racing game like this. Lots of *Out Run Europe's* Indianapolis, *Top Gun's* *They are her children's toys* compared to the complex and utter excellence of *Formula One Grand Prix*, the latest and greatest game from the programming genius that is *Comel*. *Just Car Race's* *Commander*. The graphics are truly amazing, with highly-detailed car jousting with driver's helmet poking out of the cockpit literally swimming around tracks bristling with stands, trees,

fences and cones. The sound matches the visuals, with good use made of stereo samples for the engine.

But it's not just the quality of the graphics or the sound that makes *F1GP* so special, it's the meticulous attention to detail that provides an authentic and involving *Grand Prix* atmosphere. Everything you'd expect to find on a *Grand Prix* circuit - stands, bridges, tunnels, etc. - is there (and in the identical position they'd be found in real life, even mirroring right-hand or around pushing crippled cars off the track and engines crews waiting in the pits).

The wonderful control over the car is the essential icing on the cake, with plenty of difficulty modifiers to make the game easy enough for *Granary Smith* to play or tough enough to bring Sterling blues out in loads of sweat. Indeed, so good is *F1GP* that it earned itself an ACE! Excellence and the honour of becoming the new *Racing Simulation Benchmark*. Good enough for you?

☆☆☆☆☆

FUZZBALL



Price **Amiga £19.99**
Genre **Platform**
Publisher **System 3**

Well, this is a bit of a case from the past and no mistake. Refreshingly free from pretension, *System 3's* latest is a simple yet hugely addictive platform effort. The player controls a bouncing ball of stuff that has to be guided around a network of platforms, collecting fruit bonuses, energy spikes, the Fuzzballs of the title, try to stop them. There come in four increasingly-aggressive *Brexa's*: green, purple, black and red. By specially shooting them with its kick gun, the player can slow them long enough to knock them off the platform. However, if the player takes too long the Fuzzball comes to but even makes its own holes.

As the player progresses through the fifty odd levels main and ladder Fuzzballs appear, available monsters start bouncing a round and the platform traps provide an even greater test of the player's skill perfect positioning powers. *Fuzzball* is a classic example of 'simple being good'. The addictive, uncluttered gameplay and cute graphics make this an A-grade

winner. And there's a right dreary animated intro to boot. (Well, you've got to fill those big boxes with something, haven't you?)
☆☆☆☆☆

GALAGA '91



Price **Game Gear \$29.99**
Genre **Arcade Blast**
Publisher **Impact**

Awaaaaaa! You little, wretched, sucking little alien bastards! Anyone who played the original Galaga in the arcades, or better still the BBC version called Zetaga from Amstrad, will be thoroughly wowed by the intense tempo and tone the handheld.

However, in these incarnations, the game had that classic spark of alien adventures that meant no matter how many stars that right-on little alien bullet destroyed the player's craft and sent him back to the start of the level, it never became annoying enough to prevent the player enjoying it.

Here, the likelihood of a game using up all his Continues is extremely remote. It's the sort of game that leaves you feeling so small and inept that you have to turn off the power in order to avoid some revenge on the top-eyed fiends.

Nevertheless, a top-notch scrolling shoot-out this is. Not quite as good as the superb *Philly Wren*, but boasting an infinite number of levels, you simply are increasing numbers and frequency of alien, and some interestingly invisible flight patterns, it's not bad.

It's basically the only derivation of the *Invaders/Galaxians* theme with interesting aliens and graphics.

The main problems lie in the fact that the player can only have two bullets flying on the screen at any one time, and the annoying habit the alien have of circling at the bottom of the screen, killing the player who makes the mistake of thinking that he's successfully dodged an attack.
☆☆☆

THE GAMES - WINTER CHALLENGE



Price **IBM PC \$9.99**
Genre **Sport Simulation**

Publisher Available

This is, as our sad friends would say, mega-wicked! It appeared in the post, totally unexpected, and turns out to be one of the best games we've seen this month! Yeah, seriously? The player (or players - up to six can take part) attempts in eight winter sports - huge downhill skating, cross-country skating, speed skating, bobsled, giant slalom, luge, and ski jump. All the events are depicted in an effective mix of 3D polygons for the landscape (a bit like *Melburn*) with sprites for the competitors and course scenery (trees, fences, etc.). Sound is less impressive - on a basic PC the game is played almost in silence except for a between-game tone and a crowd cheer when a player completes an event.

The player views the action from just behind and above his on-screen skater, therefore giving a good view of the events in relatively easy to control and consequently very easy to get into. Like the *Eyes 'Gamer* series, success is dependent on timing and control rather than hammering the fire button, so it's very satisfying to play and makes sharing seconds-off those last metres more a matter of skill as opposed to physical stamina.

Despite its superior qualities, *The Games* may get a bit dull when played alone (a criticism levelled at nearly every game of this type). However, as a game to play with a group of friends it's now flawless - and that makes *The Games* a more than worthy purchase to play over this Xmas holiday period.
☆☆☆☆☆

GREAT NAPOLEONIC BATTLES



Price **Amiga \$29.99**
Genre **Strategy**
Publisher **Impressions**

You've got to laugh. The shots on the back of the box tell all about a general like this. "Create new battlefields with over 100 terrain pieces" says the caption under a picture of some grass and bushes. "French infantry advance on Reims" says the one under the picture with some green squares with crosses on it.

But if you're intrigued, you should sit, because *Impressions* certainly know how to put together a top-notch his-

torical wargame, even if they can't draw graphics to save their lives.

Great Napoleonic Battles offers the player the chance to become Napoleon himself, or the commander of one of the unfortunate territories to fall under his control.

Impressions games are war/strategy games in their truest sense operating on a hex grid, with all the bit-point ratings and obscure abilities displayed in their ugly numerical forms, but they are sure to keep happy the gamer who simply wants a machine to do the adding up and look after all the imagination, sound and action in his own hand.
☆☆☆

GUNSHIP 2000



Price **IBM PC \$29.99**
Genre **Simulation**
Publisher **MicroProse**

Nobody writes simulations like *MicroProse* does. This is a highly realistic sequel to the company's earlier mega-hit *Gunship*, which has gone down in software history as one of the best-selling sims ever. This sequel is far more than just *Gunships*. Every part of the game has been given a radical overhaul.

Probably the most impressive aspect is the revamped graphics system. Using a sort of patchwork-quilt landscaping technique, the gameworld has been modelled in exciting detail, complete with rice, hills, mountains, valleys, cuttings. If it's geographical feature, it's there. As usual, the game takes the form of a series of pilot-training missions. Unfortunately this complexity means that you really need at least a 486 in PC to get anything approaching speed from the game. Sound with a board is remarkably atmospheric, and adds no end to the gritty battlefield feel.

The input control is good, but actually getting the mail to fly matches that of the real thing, i.e. it's very difficult, and certainly makes *Gunship* stand out from the rest of games to cut your simulating teeth on. However, if you're looking for the ultimate chopper simulation, then here it is.
☆☆☆☆☆

HARD DRIVIN'

Price **Amiga \$24.99**

Genre **Racing Simulation**
Publisher **Mind**

The *Lyons* catalogue of software keeps getting bigger and bigger - and more impressively - the quality of the games keeps getting better and better. *Hard Drivin'*, a conversion of the Atari entry, is a case in point.

Potential buyers expecting or hoping for *Fast Fission* are going to be disappointed - this is a pretty successful attempt to simulate the controls and performance of a real car, and as such it's slightly more difficult and much less forgiving to drive than per usual arcade auto.

The action takes place on one of two courses, a looped Track and a Start Track, complete with jumps and loop-backs. Once these have been tamed the player can try racing against the *Phantom*.

The graphics and sound are nothing short of incredible, accurately reproducing the look and feel of its contemporary. Along with *A.T. Lin*, *Rover* this is a real showpiece for the power of the *Lyons*.

It takes a little while to get used to *Hard Drivin'* on the *Lyons* - the jockey is a poor substitute for a wheel - making the going tough at first, and some may find the difficulty combined with the lack of immediate post-racing stats boring. However, once the player has got the hang of things they should find *Hard Drivin'* remarkably satisfying. Recommended.
☆☆☆☆☆

HARD NOVA



Price **Amiga \$1/Amiga \$29.99**
Genre **Role-Playing Game**
Publisher **Electronic Arts**

Hard Nova is a game that's difficult to categorise. Like *Dragon* it's a mixture of styles, boasting strategy as well as role-playing elements, adventure as well as arcade space-flight sequences. It's the sort of mix that *Electronic Arts* in America have been championing out the years - science fiction elements with alien worlds, deep fantasy characters, big spacejocks clanging together and all the rest of it. There's supposedly a comic edge to this one, with the player taking on the persona of intergalactic

space birds *Hard News*.

You can interact with characters, RPG-fashion, collect objects, die sometimes and reborn across the galaxy, kidnapping, ferrying cargo from planet to planet and so on and so forth.

It sounds like a lot of a cog out, but if this sort of machinery is your cup of tea, then you're liable to have a lot of long-lasting fun with it: it's just a shame that the vast majority of gamers don't have the patience to get into it. Well worth checking out - the game's got plenty of atmosphere (in a hot), and gets progressively more involving the longer it's played. Just don't expect to pick it up straight away.

☆☆☆☆

HARE RASING HAWG



Price **PC £29.99**

Genre **Action Blast**

Publisher **Disney Adventure**

Phew! The idea of a game based around *Wile E. Coyote* and *Roger Rabbit*'s stamming cartoon opening sequence does indeed sound like one tasty prospect - but sadly, Disney has realized little of its great potential in this rather dull little game.

On paper at least, it sounds like the cartoon's outrageously-fanciful spirit has been captured. Roger's level is estimated with looking after the accident-prone Baby Herman, and must mean nothing happens to him while his dragon-like mother is out of the house, that Herman's disappeared to the local dairy to sample their milky morsels, and Roger must track him down before any harm comes to him.

Sounds like fun! Don't let appearances be deceptive. The only thing that *Hare Raising Hawk* manages to do is infuriate the player beyond measure with its unforgiving control, illogical puzzles and repetitive gameplay.

On each of the screens that Roger encounters, there's a problem to be solved, which involves manipulating the surrounding scenery and objects. To be honest, it's not very taxing and the player more often finds himself fighting against the unresponsive control and slow, drudge animation than actually getting in grips with the puzzles. With the Disney Sound Source connected you get samples of the original movie characters' voices and SFX - but these quickly become every bit as annoying as the game itself. Only dedicated Roger Buffers fans need apply.

☆☆☆☆

HEIMDALL



Price **Amiga (CDM) £24.99**

Genre **Action Adventure**

Publisher **Cone Design**

After a long stint of shoot-'em-up and platform games (Cerberus, Frenetic, Chuck Rock), Cone Design has returned to more involving territory with *Heimdall*, an isometric arcade adventure-cum role-playing game based around Viking lore.

The *Heimdall* of the title is a treasure gift from the Gods, sent to Earth by Odin to recover the three great weapons that will vanquish the forces of evil. After selecting a class from the varied characters available, *Heimdall* sets sail across the Nordic waters to destination unknown.

For the most part, the game is yet basic isometric adventure à la *The Immortal*, although there are some interesting strategic and FRP elements - all the characters have differing skills, which means that the player must switch between them, as in a conventional RPG, to perform certain tasks.

The strategy is provided by the warring wares, where the player must travel between the various island plots are three archipelagos, each holding one of the blessed weapons and each forming an independent level in the most efficient manner.

Heimdall is a fun adventure game, although the action, due to the producer's FRP overtones, is a little slower and less exciting than most of its counterparts in the genre. In fact, there are times where very little seems to be happening at all, and only those who are willing to take their time, make maps and all the rest of it, are likely to enjoy the game to the full.

That said, it's been designed with the screen size and closeness, and there's enough here to keep anybody glued to the screen for some considerable time. A fine game.

☆☆☆☆

HUDSON HAWK



Price **Amal 51/Amiga £24.99**

Genre **Platform**

Publisher **Cinem**

Bear With It film was a disaster, and *Conan* hasn't turned out anything of note in the film conversion stakes for quite a while, so nobody was really expecting very much out of *Hudson Hawk*, but instead of the usual cynical and barely-pleasurable horror, what we got was the best platform game so far this year. Special FX took a big gamble in its interpretation of the film by channelling 90% of the source material out of the window, and getting on with the business of just building a good game around the film's basic premise - that of a cat burglar stealing valuable artifacts from around the world.

It works equally, it matches the same style as former platform classics like *Indiana Bob Dreyfus* and *Swashbuckle*, with small, comical characters playing over-enthusiastic-designed platform levels. It's a class act, without a doubt, with thorough traps and pitfalls lurking around every corner. The gameplay is easily up to console/arcade standard, and the graphics and sound really do enhance the fun factor because they're so jolly. Don't be put off by the shoddy home conversions - *Hudson Hawk* is a brilliant game in its own right and deserves a place in your collection. Today.

☆☆☆☆

HUNTER



Price **Amal 51/Amiga £24.99**

Genre **Action Strategy**

Publisher **Action**

It's a sad old world, this one we live in, just when poor old *Action* got so close to being perfect together, their *Melodrama* dabbly goes and pulls the plug on them. Now, however, after the aforementioned "silver picture" has been swirling around doing very little indeed for the last few months, *Action*'s current poster-son of games, *The Disc* Company have taken it upon themselves to let another trickle of gamersness reach the streets.

Hunter is the sort of game that you dream of playing. A polygon-based action strategy game with all of the usually associated nonsense removed, it offers all the "wonderful" it's great in," features which should, by rights, be included in all these games.

Taking the role of the Hunter, the player must travel around a bunch of islands, systematically destroying all enemy installations in whatever way

he sees fit. Your particular mission is detailed in a briefing where specific, immediate targets are detailed by your allied commander.

The best thing about *Hunter* is that there's no meaning alone. If you want to infiltrate an enemy base, get a dagger and you're away! If you want to get alone, send a helicopter/hopscotch or sailboat. It's all so easy and because of the unnecessary complexity of basic tasks has been removed, the player can concentrate on progressing with the mission much more intently.

Excellent graphics and a fast-paced storyline can only add to *Hunter*'s already awe-inspiring style. A winner.

☆☆☆☆

THE IMMORTAL



Price **IBM PC £29.99**

Genre **Action Adventure**

Publisher **Electronic Arts**

It's over a year now since *The Immortal* appeared to great public acclaim on the Amiga. A masterpiece of animation and game design, it was probably responsible for selling a fair few (well, perhaps, at least it's made it's way on to the PC, and now features a couple of new enhancements that make it even even better game.

The majority of the game is identical. The player guides a superbly animated wizard on his travels around an isometric 3D domain. As he progresses across the corridors, he discovers treasure, traps and - of course - terrifying monsters. In the original Amiga game, the fairly complex combat took place at the same scale as the rest of the game (i.e. small) and made judging responses to the opponents lungs and limbs a touch difficult. On the PC, however, when combat occurs the view switches to a close-up that makes things far easier.

The only gripe from a PC owners point of view is that having been spoiled by the recent platform of epic-scale games, the 2D on display here are a little disappointing. However, this doesn't seriously detract from what is an otherwise excellent game, and recommended without hesitation to anyone who fancies a bit of dragons 'n' dragons.

☆☆☆☆

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'WHIRLWIND' SNOOKER



Price Atari ST/Amiga £24.99
Genre Sport Simulation
Publisher Virgin Games

Another Macdon, review programmer of *101* and *Deponia* is probably the last person you'd expect to write a snooker sim. Our games have been around since the beginning of computer gaming - a few coloured shapes, some angle-of-deflection algorithms and away you go. But even with the advent of 3D graphics, none of them have really had any elements of realism, until now.

The table is viewed from behind the cue ball so the player can line up shots as if on a real table. The view can be rotated through various axes and zoomed in on so the player can see from virtually every angle conceivable. The ball movement is accurate, without balls stopping for no apparent reason or going off at peculiar angles.

Two player games are the best, but four levels of computer opponent are available for the lone gamer. As the player progresses more sophisticated tactics can be incorporated, like positional play, breaks, studs, snags and every type of spin as it's possible, and are vital for outscoring opponents. The real crux of *WHWS*'s comprehensive and realistic approach to creating snooker is the most authentic sports simulation to date. ☆☆☆☆☆

KNIGHTMARE



Price Amiga £29.99
Genre Role-Playing Game
Publisher Microspace

Knighthelm, based on the children's TV series of the same name, can best be described as *Captive* with new graphics. The simulations are hardly surprising - both were written by Tony Cowerton, the man who has been responsible for more games than Mr Widdowson.

And, as anyone who has played *Captive* will realise, this is not such a bad thing. The action is depicted in cut-scaped view-down-the-corridor 3D, with the player able to move around the puzzle- and maze-like structures liberally with ease. It's not particularly original or ground-breaking, but any-

one who enjoys a good RPG - and *Captive*, in particular - will be more than happy with this.

My only serious quibble is whether today's fans of the TV show will find it slightly confused scenes appealing. □□□□

LOTUS TURBO CHALLENGE 2



Price Amiga £24.99
Genre Racing Game
Publisher Gemina Graphics

A worthy successor to the excellent *Lotus Spirit Turbo Challenge*, this game has a number of interesting differences to its predecessor. For a start, it's a better one-player game, but not so good for two players. Technically superior to the original, this is nevertheless something just a little bit lacking. Perhaps it's the removal of the lap system, or perhaps it's the fact that crashing into the other cars really doesn't do you that much damage. But whatever, it ain't quite so good. However, it is a great deal better than 20% of the driving games on the market, and there's a full-up option allowing up to four players to race at once. The action is fast and furious and the control the player has over their car has been greatly improved.

Players must first then go through a selection of stages, each bearing a particular hazard, whether it be natural (potholes, ruts, sand) or man-made (potholes, jaggernauts crashing across the road). Graphically superior to the vast majority of similar titles, *Lotus* just looks the business, with finely trackable character and a high level of detail on the cars themselves.

Despite being hampered by some aggravating idiosyncrasies whenever the player drives through any water and the flawed two player mode, *Lotus* is a pretty impressive game. □□□□

LAST NINJA 3



Price Amiga £24.99
Genre Arcade Adventure
Publisher System 3

Well, well, well. After everyone has been chiding up their shoes at the prospect of giving System 3's much

toad, much looted and much defiled, concludes the Ninja series a night old kicking, the bleeding thing went out to be great!

Applying a more arcade-adventure angle to the tried and tested Ninja formula, the boys at the System have produced a game which has all the visual appeal of the first two games in the series and some of the problems. Well, that's not quite the case, but instead of the game relying so heavily on the fight routines which, to be honest, were never that good, the emphasis has been moved onto the puzzle-solving elements which isn't half as hard to implement.

Spending an epic quest across a host of different zones (earth, air, fire, water) and using the game continually forces up different puzzles which the player must solve in order to reach the next stage.

Aside from completing these puzzles, there's a fair amount of walking to be done too, and the collectible weapons add enough novelty to ensure that even when the player is doing over his monthly adversary of the level, he'll find something new to do.

Graphically, the game is really rather special, with the isometric landscapes at a stage which most rarely be approaching the state of the art, and the animations of the characters themselves being undeniably fine. Just look at the speed blur on that.

☆☆☆☆

LEISURESUIT LARRY 5



Price IBM PC £24.99
Genre Adventure
Publisher Sierra On-Line

It's Larry Luffler! Sir's Passionate Hero! And they're in a whole lot of trouble! Leisure Suit Larry 5, the latest instalment in the (possibly) most successful adventure series chronicles the spring advances of America's favourite lounge lizard.

In what promises to be the most sexy adventure in the series, the player must guide Larry and Pat through a world of puns and incidents in the quest to keep good (and sexy) on the streets, finally taking the role of the audience host of America's Sexiest Home Video. Larry quickly becomes entangled in a hair-raising underworld plot to get all pure off the normal market and drive it underground where enormous prof-

its can be made.

It's all pretty standard point and click stuff, but this time the player alternates between the very different personas of Larry and Pat, allowing both to get into sexy scraps and also smoking, and particularly some bits of "Seems" from lovely ladies' warts.

Again, the hand-painted 4-bit-colour graphics and game design are an excellent option for what occasionally lapses into a host of pretty lame gag. However, this time Larry does have moments of absolute brilliance, and the continual promise of a further story pic of a top eye in a sexy gear is enough to keep you coming back for more. No! Well, please yourselves.

☆☆☆☆

MAD TV



Price IBM PC £19.99
Genre Strategy
Publisher Rainbow Arts

My, what timing! Only weeks after the big TV franchise debacle and as the country gazes in dread at the threat of a host of old Spanish comedies and crappy game shows filling our screens, Rainbow Arts produce a game which is all about running your own TV station. If only the geniuses at TV-AM had the chance to play Mad TV, they might still be in business.

Not only is Mad TV a right laugh, allowing the player to have total control over the only remaining factor being the budget over an entire TV station, but it's an excellent strategy game too.

The aim is to keep Mad TV at the top of the TV ratings while simultaneously winning the hearts of Betty, the most beautiful woman in town. Taking place in a huge city, the game has the player's character being viewed from the various angles, buying up films, scheduling programs and keeping an eye on the all important viewing figures.

Every now and again, you boss will crop up and give you some helpful pointers. He may be less than his station via an award for poses on film, so it's up to you to schedule accordingly. New all of this would be a good enough feat on it's own, but when you consider that Mad TV is a pretty excellent strategy game with complicated interrelations between various departments and some top notch presenta-

tion to boot, you would have to conclude that you'd be mad, by Heeding, to miss it.

☆☆☆☆

MAGIC GARDEN



Price Amiga £24.99
Genre Arcade Adventure
Publisher Electronic Zoo

Good God! Whatever you! Having been played for months by an apparently never-ending stream of cosmic gamblers, we were understandably keen to get our hands on the game which they possess. And what a peculiar conclusion it is.

In his endeavour to become "the most efficient grower", the player must guide a gnome around the open-plan magic garden doing, well, this is where it becomes a little bit unclear actually. He can do pretty much whatever he fancies. He can water the flowers. He can move the lawn. He can use some magic seeds and fly around on the back of a big dragonfly! But the gnome can be careful, for there are terrible traps which live in the garden, the big flowers which can hurt him or tall grass which can slow him down.

And Gnomey had better be careful with the number of objects he's carrying, or he will become too tired and get hit by lightning and die. But the gnome won't get hit by lightning if he is exploring the underground caverns where the ruler of Gnomey can thank the table for extra efficiency.

Presented in side-on elevation, the game looks, plays, smells sweet and is, just odd. It's as odd as anything I've ever seen in my life. Perhaps British Potter style graphics and gameplay which quite frankly is likely to integrate appealing to the masses. Magic Garden a true original.

☆☆

MARTIAN MEMORANDUM



Price IBM PC £25.99
Genre Adventure
Publisher Access/US Gold

Once again a game pretends to be an "interactive movie" and turns out to be little more than a simplistic adventure with flashy graphics and sound. But

in *Martian Memorandum's* case the graphics are enough to make up for the game design's shortcomings — at least they seem to be for the first few hours. The game uses digitized video footage, sampled speech and film quality music to set the scene (the story casts you as a futuristic private detective who must travel to Mars to track down the kidnapped daughter of a famous industrialist, and it works very well, creating a strong sense of atmosphere and involvement).

But as it so often the case with games of this type, the effect of those flashy graphics soon wears off and when you actually tackle down to play the game you realize that there isn't really that much to see or do. An ardent adventurer could easily complete it inside of a week, because the linear game design means that it's almost impossible to go down the wrong track (it's as if you're being guided by an invisible helping hand, and that's not very satisfying, like *King Of The Dragon and Heart Of China* offer similar and more satisfying experiences, so if you've got the PC muscle to run well-made interactive products, you'd be well advised to check either of these out instead.

☆

MEGAFORTRESS



Price IBM PC £24.99
Genre Simulation
Publisher Microgame

The trouble with games based on taking every single role in a big, stupid old plan like the 8 is that it's virtually every role in mind-bogglingly boring. I mean, who honestly wants to plot their course across thousands of miles of terrain using a 3D terrain mapping computer or have to fiddle around with abstract frequencies in order to jam the enemy's radio?

The aim of the game is to plot a hit-and-run by a secret tank unit and the heroic "Union", keeping the location and aim of your mission utterly secret until the awesome strategy of firepower can be unleashed on the target. Unfortunately, for all its gung-ho packaging and interest, *Megafortress* is just a very good illustration of a rather dull business. For more fun can be had in any of a host of more recently released flight games, and Microgame's *Worlds Flight* series even offer similar crop-up-in-the-enemy-territory for

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these players who are especially keen on that sort of thing.

Perfectly competent both graphically and on the play front, Megatraveller has missions designed by real 8-12 navigators and best selling author Dale Brown, although it's one of those games that I guess you really need to have experienced the real thing to appreciate.

☆☆☆

MEGA LO MANIA



**Price Amiga £24.99
Genre Arcade Strategy
Publisher Image Works**

Released amid a month of Colours that are still being thick and fast, ImageWorks's offering has fared better than most, steering sufficiently clear of the Big Daddy Populous while not being afraid to borrow little bits here and there where appropriate.

Set in an alternate universe, Mega's Mania is all about the quest for power. Power over a set of worlds, each made up from a suite of islands, is for prize. New worlds are formed and intelligent life is placed upon them, upon which interstellar feudalists descend and try to seize the reins of power for themselves.

The conflict starts, needless to say, when more than one feo-lord takes a shine to a particular island. Since each area can only have one ruler, a campaign of imperialism begins, with each player trying to use the forces at his disposal to overthrow the others.

Each island state within its own time period, and the rate of development, intelligence and so on of its inhabitants is governed accordingly. Players quick to invent time to invention and the refining of natural elements, rather than simply rearing around hitting the others with sticks are more likely to succeed.

☆☆☆☆☆

MEGATRAVELLER 2: QUEST FOR THE ANCIENTS



**Price IBM PC £184
Genre Role-Playing Game
Publisher Empire**

This latest UK release from American

software team Paragon is more too surprisingly a sequel to Megatraveller 1: The Ancient Conspiracy. As before, the player leads a team of the space adventures through sea and trouble to (hopefully) riches and fame. This time around, the player task is to find a way to halt the flow of toxic sludge emanating from a mysterious set of mines left by a dead race called the Ancients. But are they dead? That is up to the player to find out.

sporting high-quality 256-colour VGA, this is certainly a treat on the eye, and the ears as well with a suitable sound card. The game itself is an RPG in the classic style, but not half as rigorous - which for many will be more than a blessing. The story is fun and involving, with plenty of sub-tasks to perform that provide welcome and often amusing relief from the main plot. If one has a minor niggle it's that the space combat - which you'd think would be the most exciting part of the game - is flat and dull, with little sense of player involvement. In summary, highly recommended.

☆☆☆☆

MEGA TWINS



**Price Atari £7/Amiga £25.99
Genre Platform Game
Publisher US Gold**

There's big trouble in the land of crazy things. A dark shadow, etc, etc, has fallen across the land, and it's up to the two sweetest and most unassuming warriors ever to grace computer software to save the day. At its core Mega Twins is a platform game - one or two players guide their crazy heroes through level after level of ledges and chasms, seeing off the attacking enemies with a range from their ray blasters. Magic wra can be found along the way that act as super weapons, which are particularly useful against the super-tough end-of-level nasties.

As a conversion of the CapCom coin-op Mega Twins is hardly startling, but it's competent enough. Apart from the slightly turgid pace of the action, the main thing that prevents Mega Twins from making any real impression is the lack of excitement. There are no end thrills-on offer - the platform element is intact, and having to endlessly tap fire to hit the nasties into oblivion is hardly opening up whole new vistas of infernal entertainment. The

final nail in the coffin is the fact that the whole thing is incredibly easy - a competent player will probably get halfway through the game on his first set of credits. Mega Teams had A-grade potential, but whether it's the fault of the original cast-up or the conversion, it's actually turned out to be longer rather than Mega.

MERCS



Price Megadrive £29.99 (Import)
Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Sega

As if Megadrive owners hadn't had quite enough about it, Sega has kept them happy well into the next century, here's another chance to hammer the joystick. The player must team up with a hellier-headed mate and raid increasingly well-defended enemy installations as your mission to rescue the President. Even the smooth top-down multi-directional scrolling and plentiful power-ups fails to elevate Mercs above the rank and file of shoot-'em-ups. Side play is available for soldiers of Fortune who prefer to get alone (or who haven't got any friends) but the thrill factor of such missions is really pretty limited.

Equipped with initially woody weapons, the over-matched heroes must gradually work their way up the screen, picking off rebel soldiers both on foot or lurking in gun-turret pods. Extra weapons and strength replenishers can be had by destroying the numerous crates lying about.

Players can speed their progress through the frequently treacherous levels by jumping into a semi-bored out jeep and tearing up the screen. This bit is quite amusing, as you can run down the enemy soldiers or blast them with the jeep's built bazooka.

As well as the regular anti-air/land guardians (which here take the form of an assortment of military hardware - planes, helicopters, tanks, etc) the levels are occasionally well broken up with bigger foes in the shape of gun-towers, machine-gun nests and the like.

Aside from the problems thrown up when a game controlled by the jeppid necessities diagonal firing (the enemy troops always seem to attack on a diagonal) Mercs has a lesser of either (and repeats) up its sleeve, it looks good, if free absolutely on originality and when played solo is a cracking bore.

☆☆

MIG29M SUPER FULCRUM



Price IBM PC £34.99
Genre Simulation
Publisher Demtek

Improving on an already successful formula, Demtek have done away with some of the longevity problems of their first MIG game and have in this game against an epic backdrop of conflict in southern America. Taking the role of the pilot of a United Nations controlled MIG, the player must launch himself into battle - complete from a military-aided-controlled airbase - his mission is to gradually make the striking rebel militia's grasp on the area by blowing up their supply lines and destroying their fuel depots.

It's bizarre that the company most recently associated with just speciality excellent-once-up conversion should turn out such a classy simulation, and as a result, it may be enough for them to find the right audience. Nevertheless, a classy product it is, with a bunch of internal views and a flexibility of mission structure enabling the inventive player to try his hand at planning his own strategies for doing away with the enemy threat.

Also included in this game is an implementation of the real MIG's fly-by-wire system, an auto-stabilising device which prevents the plane from rolling around all over the place like a big girl's blouse. Most handy in combat.

Prevented, surprisingly enough, by polygon graphics, MIG loses the competition on the ease-of-use front, even if it is a bit tricky to imagine it outlasting some of the more intense Microsofts products. A winner.

MIGHT AND MAGIC III: ISLES OF TERRA



Price IBM PC £34.99
Genre Role-Playing Game
Publisher New World Computing/US Gold

"By my dragon's sword of Zarak, I Hagar Magically, even write the endgame...logos of Kyrus before the alignment of the six stars-wielder!"

Yes, well, you get the general idea. Might And Magic III is yet another delve into the much-explored realm of FRP gaming, this time coming over as a cross between Dungeon Master and The Bard's Tale. In it just isn't as fun as the whole FRP genre have done to think so badly that there's just nothing new anymore?

This third Might And Magic outing would seem to support that argument, as apart from some very flashy VGA visuals and sound-based music, there seems to be very little new or interesting on offer, except maybe for that ever-persistent fraternity of die-hard RPG fanatics. As you'd suspect, the scenario is about as hackneyed as one is ever going to get, with some clasp-up about returning the Ultimate Power Gem (never, ever) to the King. What that involves is selecting a party of dwarves, elves, orcs, warriors and all that, and then wandering about fighting with dragons, collecting treasure and picking up clues.

The game isn't actually in very pretty, but for the most part the adventuring is pretty slow and unimpassioned. Considering, however, how conditioned FRP gamers have become, I doubt that anybody who's likely to buy it will be disappointed by what they find.

MONSTER BUSINESS



Price Amiga £24.99
Genre Platform
Publisher Softlogic

The mad monster from the big foot have once again broken loose, and are searching for little ones they can send completely spilling his hole's construction site. Between Lotus, the best best Buster around and blow all these many little monsters sky high! A goal in life if ever there was one. Monster Business, the epitome of the average arcade game features stupid graphics and a stupidly awful premise - to rescue all the sheep from the building site. Lazy must blow up all the monsters with some sort of third bicycle power, causing them to inflate and eventually rise to the top of the screen, dropping in their objects as they go.

Despite the silliness of the whole effort, Monster Business is actually quite good. Different screens each present a different sort of hazard, whether it be sliding platforms or a speedy time limit,

and the player is so interested in trying to get the end of the level that he probably won't realize quite how crazy and dull the game is.

Smart graphics and it could only be German music help Monster Business rise above the pack and shine out as an example of what arcade games should be about. It's like an Akiba record, if you know what I mean.

MOONSTONE



Price Amiga £29.99
Genre Arcade Adventure
Publisher Microscope

What a conceit is this. While experience suggests that games billed as being at all "irony" should be treated with approximately the same amount of caution as a drunken pit-bul with a rifle, Moonstone isn't actually that bad.

The aim of the game is to travel across a mystic land, rescuing the Holy God like Moonstone and trying to ensure that no other mages get his units on it first. Up to five players can enter the quest, each selecting a coloured Knight to control. And why, pray tell, are we controlling Knights instead of elves or goblins or something? Because Moonstone is all about fighting, that's why!

As frequent travellers, the friendly invisible travelling vehicles are punctuated with action scenes. While walking in a loop or idling by a stone circle, the Knight will be accosted by a hostile creature. Here is where the monetary value of Moonstone lies. The units are it (invariably violent and gory. Although the gore can be switched off by squeamish gamers).

All in all a mixed bag. It could have been a really great combat game, but there's too much wandering around to give it much instant appeal. Worth a look.

NEBULUS 2



Price Amiga £29.99
Genre Platform
Publisher 21st Century Entertainment

Rising from the Phoenix culture like a phoenix looking emotionlessly like the star-

ever it was before it was burnt, and Century Entertainment aren't having much luck at the moment. Not only are they having some considerable difficulty with their Megadrive product, but the one game that looked like it could actually make them some money has turned out to be somewhat of a disappointment.

The European coders responsible for sequencing John Phillips' original classic have done a bit of a hotch-ulo, running the gameplay that made the first game so excellent by piling on lots of noise and useless games-up-type features. The classic formula has been totally revamped by the sheer weight of these new 'ideas', and as much as anybody who enjoyed the first game is likely to be very disappointed by this. However, it is quite pretty and, at least for those who haven't seen the first game, not a total washout on the playability front. But while the first game knew exactly where the addition/limitation threshold was, *Nebula* 2 steps over it like it wasn't even there. Not recommended.

☆☆

NEVER-ENDING STORY 2



Price Amiga £25.00
Genre Arcade Adventure
Publisher Ulead

I've nothing against incomes being close to their film origins - in fact, I positively endorse it - but when this is taken to such lengths that the game turns out as poor as the movie did then I have to draw the line.

Witness *The Never-Ending Story 2*. The film came and went at the cinema with hardly a murmur of public interest, and unfortunately it's likely that the game of the film will suffer the same fate. The fact that the game's release trails that of the film by a good year or so is the final nail in its coffin. It's a five-level arcade action romp.

The first is a *Shadow of the Beast* style horizontal scroller, the second is a 3D chase, the third is a dull climb up the side of a tower, the fourth is a *Nebula*-style platform affair, the fifth a *Wreck of the Demon-seal* theme ride. As you can tell, it's positively sparkling with originality. As usually happens with these multi-level games the individual sections are pretty much in terms of gameplay though moderately innova-

tion to look at). They're also quite difficult, and sheer death in *Beast* requires the lengthy gap between lives is particularly frustrating. Although well-presented, *Never-Ending Story 2* can only be recommended to die-hard fans of the film. That's right - all three of you. ☆☆☆

OUTRUN



Price Game Gear £14.99
Genre Racing Game
Publisher Ioga

It may be an odd bet but it certainly isn't a guilty - at least, not in its Gear incarnation it isn't. *Out Run* is arcade racing action stripped down to its basics - the player has to drive a red Ferrari through four stages, avoiding other traffic and those pesky stationary road-side obstacles. It's all against the clock, with the player being awarded previous runs seconds every time he completes one of the stages. And... er... that's just about it.

The impression of speed (achieved using good 'colour banding' in film, although the objects grow in an annoyingly coarse and chunky fashion. Unfortunately the number of readings objects is small, and the number of cars on the road even smaller - even on the hardest stage I only counted two other vehicles on the road at top. Very poor. Worst of all it's additively easy - I completed the game on my third go. Yes, really! The only real mark in the game's favour is the ability to play head-to-head with another Gear owner, but even then the thrills are few and far between. Not good.

☆☆

OUTRUN EUROPA



Price Atari ST/Amiga £25.99
Genre Racing Game
Publisher ULE Gold

As long/long! A game that has become a legend, along with the likes of *Star Trek* and *Blind of Prey*, over the last couple of years, simply because it's taken so bloody long to come out. The original idea was to release the product to cash in on the wave of expertise from the original *Out Run* conversion - which should give you an idea of how long we've been waiting for it. We ended

up getting the official sequel, *Out Run* first, which wasn't much cop, and now we've got this, which isn't either.

The basic idea is that the player has to take charge of a variety of vehicles - cars, bikes and boats - as he races over various land-and-sea stages to deliver a vital package, while international agents are out to stop you. It's all a bit hollow as goals, and what's seemingly supposed to be a cross between *Out Run* and *Chase H.Q.* with extra levels on it is in fact a bit of a shoddy mess. The road sections aren't much fun to play because control of the vehicles is so slowly and insensitive, and the many-time just keep-on getting on the way in a way that isn't conducive to gameplay at all, but is just very frustrating. The boat bits don't even bear think about because they're so unjust and difficult, and 99% of players will probably put their foot through the monitor screen within five minutes of heading it up. Talking of heading, the constant click occurring in a pain in the prostate, and it all hardly seems worth it when it's not even very clear what's actually going on in the game. There are far better race games available, so don't waste your precious time pondering over this one.

☆☆

PACMAN



Price Game Gear £25.00
Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Namco

Well, what is there to say about the original arcade classic that hasn't already been said? Not much, except that it's now available on the Sega handheld and isn't bad at all.

There are no fills, enhancements or other features that would have been a mistake to add here. This is not *Pacman 2* or anything publishable like that, but the good old original, as it was all those years ago. The conversion is pretty much spot-on (which, given that the game hardly pushes computer technology in its limit is only to be expected), right down to the original colours and sound effects.

One change that has had to be made is purely a practical one - to preserve the original size of the graphics, the Pac-man is now a four-way scrolling affair, with only a section visible on screen at a time. It works well enough, but it can be a bit of a pain at times, as

it makes it difficult for the player to see where the remaining dots are, and where ghosts might be coming in from. Pac-man veterans may find this annoying, but to us more casual players it's not too much of a hind. Do don't be a silly boy - get this chunk up and running on your GameGear today!

☆☆☆☆

PEGASUS



Price Atari ST/Amiga £15.99
Genre Arcade Blast

Publisher Gamelife Graphics
 Oh just about damn dead. What a shame that just when Gamelife starts getting a good reputation for itself with its classic porting of late, it turns out a piece of tripe like this. Based very loosely on the classic Greek myth, *Pegasus* is a weird half-hill-and-half-mile of 8-Type style shoot-'em-up action and run-along and sleep-up-the-ladders platform stuff. This mixture of airborne and ground-based action is supposed to give the player variety and keep him interested, in practice all it does is get very boring very quickly.

In the shoot-'em-up section, Pegasus got Pegasus, as the box ludicrously spells his name; flies along on the back of the mythical winged horse, which is animated in an atrociously unconvincing manner, and blasts away at the attacking gargoyle, devils, bunnies, etc. When he's finished this onslaught, Pegasus lands. Pegasus descends and the ground section begins. This happens 30 times (30 air sections, 30 on the ground), by which time the player has probably torn all his hair out, killed in the TV screen and lobbed his computer out of the window.

It's not that *Pegasus* is a bad one - it's just that it's been executed in a such a God-awful lazy and unimaginative manner. The action in the heavy bits is sluggish and annoying, while the ground levels lack any of the finesse of, say, *Switchblade II*. The fact that there's lots of it doesn't make it any more of a viable purchase - unless you're a masochist of course. Complete with all manner of inane/irrelevant spelling mistakes within the game ('existence' instead of 'existence', 'new' instead of 'new'), *Pegasus* would have only just made the grade two years ago, or on public domain today. To ask £15.99 for it when it falls so heavily below today's standards of graphics and game-

play is a bit on an insult. Avoid.
□□

PITFIGHTER



Price Amiga £25.99
Genre Beat-'Em-Up
Publisher Sumark

If ever there's a prime example of an excellent conversion of an average coin-op then Pitfighter is it. If you're an arcade god then you're probably more than familiar with the game. With its giant monitor screen, three sets of player controls and stand-out digitised graphics you could hardly miss it. Trouble was, underneath the unique funky visuals and noisy sound lurked a distinctly dull beat-'em-up, made even worse by the coin's rise caused by the grainy-looking graphics. Where's my little god? Is he hitting me or not? You know the sort of thing. All in all, a less than rewarding experience.

In converting Pitfighter for the home systems, Tynes London have actually improved it a hell of a lot. Indeed, if you liked the coin-op, chances are you'll

like the home game even more. The graphics, which have retained pretty much all of the flash special FX of the coin-op, are clearer, and the slower pace makes the game much easier to play. The joystick controls are a little unresponsive, but it only takes a few goes to get the hang of things, plus as good a conversion as it is, it still can't compensate for the fact that fundamentally Pitfighter's about as exciting as tapping a button off a wall. Which, er, in Pitfighter is pretty much what you spend all your time doing.
□□□

POPULOUS II



Price Amiga £29.99
Genre Action Strategy
Publisher Electronic Arts

Burrower! One of the greatest games of all time just got considerably better. Bullfight's long-awaited sequel is just as excellent that it's difficult to find the words to describe it. Basically, it's pretty much the same game - guide your followers through a series of apocalyptic battles, God versus God, over count-

less isometric worlds.

From that point on, however, it's a whole new ball game. Whereas the original game had only a handful of gaily effects, Populous II has scores of them, many much more vividly than anything encountered in the first game. The plethora of extra features (road and city building, effects that interact with each other, experience points that build up as you progress) make Populous II a far more involved and rewarding experience than the original. Absolutely phenomenal stuff. Populous II is a game that you really REALLY cannot afford to miss. Buy it immediately.
□□□□□

PUT 'N' PUTTER



Price Game Gear £29.99
Genre Puzzle
Publisher Impact

There's nothing like a good crazy golf game for a bit of handheld entertainment. And, as they say, this is nothing like a good crazy golf game.

Well, okay, so that's not strictly the

case, but Put 'n' Putter is seriously flawed.

The major, indeed the only, real problem with the game is that it is simply far too easy. And by easy I mean the player (unless he's an utter idiot) won't even get a whiff of a Challenge (FVS) screen until he has completed about twenty holes and has graduated onto the Expert level. While it's nice to get a little way into a game before graduating to a ball, this is ridiculous!

Aside from this, Put 'n' Putter does all the things a crazy golf game should, falling down in only a couple of minor places. The course moves rather sluggishly, and the courses could hardly be described as imaginative. Worth a look if you're a really crap golfer.
□□

RAILROAD TYCOON



Price Amiga £35.99
Genre Strategy
Publisher MicroProse

The ACE Development game makes it's way onto the Amiga, and what a fine conversion it is! Building a railroad

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empire across the USA at the turn of the 19th Century may sound like hard work, but for those who like their strategy to run deep, Sid Meier's simulation of that very pursuit in *Fox Fun FU!* We know it's difficult to imagine how, but trust us, it is. The feeling of power is paramount as you lay your track from sea to shining sea, conduct big-time business and generally earn loads of cash.

Beginning life as an entrepreneur in the early thirties, you must turn a small stake into the biggest stake in railroad industry history ever! By taking control of every element in the decision-making process which makes the railroad work, the player must handle tiny details as well as broader political and economic issues, all at the same time as competing either with a friend or against real business from history. And every element of the game is represented with top-quality graphics to make even the most number-crunchingly intense sections of the title easy to manage. Meier's excellent user interface and the sheer precision of the game design and balance compared with the top-notch power of the Amiga make this version of the game an outright winner. Highly recommended to all and sundry.

REALMS



Price Amiga, Mac II £29.99

Genre Arcade Strategy
Publisher Virgin Games

Good grief! Just what, in Amiga Power no 20th part, it is, has Peter 'Opulent' Molyneux stated. Yes, it's his and his merry band of programmers at Bullfrog who we have to blame for the proliferation of isometric 3D view strategy games.

It's fitting that it's the biggest problem with *Realms*, the latest offering from GrafGold, previously best known for arcade games like *Paradise* go and *Rainbow Islands*. If it had appeared about four months ago, it might be received more favourably. But in the last few months we've had *Mega-Maxx*, *Utopia* and the sequel to the game that started it all, *Populous* (which rightly blew the competition away). One can't help feeling the software-hungry public have probably had enough of these sorts of games by now, and if I had the choice between *Populous* and

Realms, I know which one I'd go for. The pity is that *Realms* is actually quite a good game. The player is a warlord in a pseudo-historical world, vying for power with a number of other equally powerful warlords. The player can hire people, raise armies, lay siege to cities, the usual sort of thing. Imaginative *Powermages* with more depth but less impressive graphics and you get the whole idea. It plays well, controls over the various components of your empire is well thought out, and the mix of strategy and action is balanced nicely. Trouble is, when you've been a God training like and brimstone on your people *Realms* comes across as fairly-bored in every sense.

☆☆☆☆

RISE OF THE DRAGON



Price Amiga £24.99

Genre Adventure
Publisher Dynamix/Sierra On-Line
Amiga owners have been scrambling to become the first to purchase this: the first or a new wave of Sierra games helmed by the perennially popular Dynamix team. But they should be warned. While Amiga owners get to enjoy just as many ritual thrills and plot twists as their PC pals, they pay the price of swapping ten pennies every last one as it slips in and out of your drive for the umpteenth time(s) disks.

However, if you're willing to pay the access-time price, *Rise* is an extremely rewarding product. The player takes the role of a futuristic detective, a real badcase type, slugging his way through a drag-adfilled city of sinners, the last remaining obstacle between the superior Dragon and total control of the entire planet. Played in first-person perspective, the game uses the so-typing necessary control interface which Sierra have made their trademark.

This is another example of the interactive mode that which American computer games are so fond of floundering down our throats, but the once it isn't too bad. There is actually a story here! And there is actually some adventuring to do. The player must investigate the strange drug-related death of the Mayor's daughter, interrogate wacky criminals and do all of the other stuff that genre investigators have to do. Wire taps, opening other people's mail, hanging out in low-rent strip joints. What a life.

And it's all in those lovely hand-drawn

graphics. Mind you... all those disks. ☆☆☆☆

ROBIN HOOD



Price IBM PC £30.99

Genre Arcade Strategy
Publisher Millennium

Intendlessly out-talking the publicity of the recent batch of Lincoln green movies, Millennium's completely new licensed version of the tale is surprisingly entertaining.

Presented in Populous style, the game sticks to the classic storyline of Robin of Locksley being loved one of his lady by the evil Sheriff of Nottingham, deserted by his people and left to fend for himself.

The player, taking the title role of course, must assemble a band of merry men and set about doing away with the many old sherrif's men, and for all. An equally important goal for the player is to convince all the peasants and other inhabitants of the forest and its environs that Rob isn't the murdering thieving blighted that the Sheriff has described to them but a fairly kind-hearted man.

Aside from combat and object-work, there's a refreshing amount of genuinely funny dialogue in the game too, with the characters camping up their roles to the best of their ability.

It's an extremely enjoyable and innovative arcade adventure that strategy fans will playing game who's worst feeling could be that the plot is so familiar the player is compelled to play through to the very end as soon as he physically can, thus diminishing the appeal of return visits.

☆☆☆☆

ROBOCOD



Price Amiga £25.99

Genre Platform
Publisher Millennium

And about time too. Computer owners have been waiting a long time for a platform game good enough to merit in the faces of the strong-contender series, resultingly proud of their *Sonic* and their *Metrix*. And here it is.

Robocod was five months in its originality. There are elements of just about every running or jumping game from

before *Metrix* onwards in there somewhere, but thanks to careful design and nice timing and matching of game styles the end result is far more than the sum of its parts.

As in *Metrix* (i.e. the core game task is simple - get from one end of the level to the other, and jump on the heads of any bad guys to wander past. Of course, in practice there's a bit more to it than that, some of the 700 levels we followed travelling through the levels in a haunting way, a spluttering pop-plate and even an odd creatured boss! There are even some areas where 'Gad' revives around - much like he did in the game's prequel *Jenny Fowl*.

In fact, it's the sheer variety of the game - along with the superbly smooth control over the fairly main character - that makes it such a joy to play. Every level features something new, either in graphics or gameplay, and there's little chance of boredom setting in. The wonderfully cute sprites, bright and cheerful landscapes and sing-alongable tunes are excellent too. All in all, *Robocod* is a polished, playable and - thank God! - fun slice of platform pie that you'd have to be criminally insane to let slip by.

☆☆☆☆☆

ROBOCOP 3



Price Amiga £25.99

Genre Arcade Beat
Publisher Ocean

Robocop? In 3D? Nah, it'd never work - would it? Well, our good news is that it does! Indeed, Digital Image Design's unique slant on the *Robocop* genre however arguably makes it the best to yet.

In essence, *Robocop 3* isn't that different from almost every other film or TV. It's an amalgam of several game sequences - a bit of shoot-'em-up, a bit of driving, a bit of boss-'em-up - where the simplistic gameplay is compensated for by the sheer variety on offer. However, in this case there's another factor - OIG's ground-breaking solid 3D.

Rather than watching some sprites leaping about a 2D backdrop, the player views the world through *Robo's* eyes as he patrols the streets of Old Detroit on foot, in a police car and even in the air thanks to his new Cyroptak. The atmosphere generated, especially in the fast-paced sequences, is quite cable-

bleivable. The only weak links in an otherwise incredibly strong chain are a couple of terrible hand-to-hand combat sequences with a robotic Ninja assassin - the combat moves are limited and the action sluggish.

However, these sequences apart, there are frequent occasions during the game that the player actually does feel as if he is taking part in a film. And at the end of the day, isn't that what you should be buying a film to do for?

☆☆☆☆

ROBOZONE



Price Amiga £14.99
Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Image Works

Trying to loop onto the Green hand-wagon (and missing by about six months), ImageWorks' latest and certainly not greatest puts the player in the driving seat of a giant two-legged war machine, a sort of out-price version of the one in Paganini's Killing Game Show, with a mission to put an end to pollution. Hoorah!

Fundamentally Robozone's a simple Maze-anything-that-moves-affair, with the programming team to maintain player interest by constantly changing the play style. One level's a side-view multidimensional-walling explosion-a-dust, the second's much the same but in 3D and the third's a horizontally scrolling shoot-'em-up. While such is programmed well enough, there's precious little fun or excitement to be found in any of them.

The really annoying thing about Robozone is it's pretentious to being 'Green' - the manual is littered with Top Tips about how to help save the environment. One states pompously: "If you have a choice, avoid buying packaged goods." Considering that Robozone comes in a giant box with a single disc and a thin manual rattling about inside, the irony of this statement lingers behind. Probably the best tip is the first one: "Try not to waste energy." ImageWorks, having played this I already have.

☆☆

ROBOCOP 2



Price Game Boy £29.99
Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Impact

Horus. A lot of an oddity this one. While the graphics are bigger and chunkier than before and the storyline follows the second movie as it appeared to the fan, you can't help but feel that you really have seen this all before.

The main problem lies with the fact that Robocop a man's world backwards. This makes the supposed explanation of the various factories and machines in the game a bit farcical, since Robo can only explore the locations which he cannot visit.

Learning the patterns of horages to be avoided, make to be destroyed and criminals to look will help, but it hardly solves the problem.

Still, it looks great and the sound effect and music are excellent. And let's face it, if you're going to get yourself shoot-over-up as a New Year treat, it's best to stick with the same you know.

☆☆☆☆

RODLAND



Price Amiga £29.99
Genre Platform
Publisher Storm

Stomach-wrenchingly cute it may be, but there's no denying that Rodland is a fine game. The 16000-coin-up wasn't particularly noteworthy, finding itself addit in a sea of graphically overdone games upon its release. Now, however, the conversion seems to have crept up when the highest-profile cute game near the moment (Mighty Puke!) has failed to meet expectations.

The player must work his way through a massive suite of screens, collecting points of power-ups and killing monsters with his red lance the same by hating them into the fire.

The end of each level is marked by the arrival of an enormous, real-of-level big guy much as an elephant, who, despite looking about as menacing as a big lump of cotton wool in a knitted bag will do for the players fairly-well. Interestingly enough, the player can opt to play a girl if he/she wants, not that it makes much difference to the playing style. And to be honest, the 'sex' looks so blindingly offensive you'd never know anyway.

Check a Mouth full of excellent snacks, Rodland is a fine conversion and it could even be argued to better its

outcrop parent, as control over the characters has been improved. Certainly not a title for gamers into depth of gang-bro blasting, but a nonetheless worthwhile purchase for anyone else.

☆☆☆☆

RUGBY - THE WORLD CUP



Price Atari ST/Amiga £14.99
Genre Sports Arcade
Publisher Beamtek

Hey! It's Screen Off! Well, not quite, but it is a pretty blatant attempt by the Beam to adapt Atari's fairly classic style to the rough n' tumble, if you will, 'world' of rugby. Of course, as any fair-kee, rugby and football are very different sports, with the former lacking the non-stop speed of the latter. Not, then, perhaps the best game to try to shoehorn to fit into. Kick Off's hard and fast playing style.

However, as it happens, it all works pretty well. Sure, the action is a bit stop-and-start, but there is a definite flow to the game and few lapses in pace. The game is viewed in plan view, with the pitch scrolling to follow the player's... er... player (who is, match, the one nearest the ball). Throws and kicks are controlled simply by the joystick, and it lacks the subtlety of Kick Off (no aftertouch here). Screens are a case of literally waggling the joystick to face the opposition back, and this is fine - unless you're playing the All Blacks, in which case you need to wobble a sub-light speed to beat them.

In fact, that's probably the biggest criticism - the top teams are too tough. There are other minor niggles, such as the way player spins overlap on top of each other and the way that the other members of the team don't put themselves in good positions to pass, meaning that play often revolves one-man-makes-from-mid-way-down-the-pitch to the try line. But while Rugby may not be perfect, it's still a pretty good 'try'. (Can sound of reviewer being shut.)

☆☆☆☆

SARAKON



Price Atari ST/Amiga/£89 PC £29.99

Genre Puzzle
Publisher Virgin Games

Games which call the player stupid are unlikely to go-down-in history as great entertainers, yet Sarkon, despite making this fatal mistake is a perfectly decent rip-off of the Maa Jang show-busy business. Basically, if you know any Soap-played-with-some-old-oriental-tablets and with some complicated 'can't do that rules, then you're pretty close to imagining what Sarkon's all about.

The aim of the game is to click on similar tablets which sit in a particular orientation, eventually ending up with no tablets left, or at least as few as possible before the time limit runs out. Once done, the player is rewarded with a breakdown of his score and a comment from the computer as to his larkish ability.

The problem with these puzzle games, however, is that they all look similar enough to make the player want to pick them up and have a go, yet they insist on containing enough rule subtleties to make doing just that impossible. The result? The Maa Jang player will feel frustrated that he can't make his normal moves work.

The presentation is first class, apart from the cheery sound effects and music which don't so much create the ambience of the Far East as a grabby take-away in Dulwich.

If comparatively unlate mouse-clicking is your bag, and your eyes are still staring at the monitor for ages while you scratch your head, Sarkon is the game for you.

☆☆☆☆

SECRET WEAPONS OF THE LUFTWAFFE



Price IBM PC £49.99
Genre Simulation
Publisher LucasArts/MS Gold

Deep, deep, deep. Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe is a big old game and no mistake. It's also the second (and critically acclaimed) their First Power. The title comes packed with new goodies but brings the same problems of the first game, i.e. the flakky and rather horrible hit-and-guess.

The player is offered the chance to pilot aircraft in a seemingly limitless number of historical missions, shooting or guarding planes and taking place in actual battles and scenarios of



Price Amiga £28.99
Genre Simulation
Publisher Microprose

It may have taken five years, but the sequel to one of the most critically acclaimed and publicly admired sim games is finally with us. *Silent Service II* features all the best bits from the first game as well as a host of original and new scenarios.

Digitalised graphics and sampled sounds simply confirm the service as a game which is undoubtedly one of the most detailed, accurate and realistic on the market, but now gamers should be warned that, just like life on a real submarine, it's not all walking or eating.

No, there's a lot of the old about *It's the Wason staff with running-off engines to crank up your energy warheads without alerting their radar. And as for all that tank blowing stuff, I ask you!*

Microprose are indisputably the outstanding kings of all things sim, but their policy of increasing the action and minimising the dull-watching as used to such good effect in *F-11 Strike Eagle II* would be well extended to this particular title.

For gamers wishing to purchase an accurate sub simulation, not assumed, there is absolutely none better. But those expecting to get their topknots off straight away would be better to wait for a more accessible equivalent. ☆☆☆☆

SLIDERS



Price Game Gear £29.99
Genre Arcade Shoot
Publisher Impact

James, Mary and Joseph! What are Lorciz trying to force upon us now! In the wake of the global mania for puzzle games, it seems that any old rubbish will do these days. Here we have *Sliders*, a fat yellow thing who must trundle around a selection of mazes doing his utmost not to bump into the bad guys. Once *Slider* has travelled over, and therefore coloured in, each square in the maze, he moves onto the next.

Latter mazes are made more hazardous by sliding platforms which will propel *Sliders* into deadly situations. A time limit prevents the player from

being able to dawdle, or maybe consider his next move, and there are lots of squares which simply fall off *Slider* on contact. Terrible.

Far from being the sort of game to while away many a rainy January, *Slider* is a pain in the arse of the first order, and deserves a place in absolutely no-one's software collection. ☆

SOLITAIRE POKER



Price Game Gear £19.99 (Import)
Genre Puzzle
Publisher Sega

Everyone loves a good puzzle game, and this is a very good one. The aim is simple - select a card from one of the five piles on offer, and place it on a 7 x 7 grid. Points are awarded for pairs, flushes, etc, created either vertically, horizontally or along the main diagonal. Score over a certain amount and the player progresses on to the next, tougher level. There are a number of variants on the theme, but that's the main thrust of the game.

What more is there to say about such a simple concept? Aesthetically it's fine - the functional graphics are clear and colourful and there's a vast number of background tunes to pick between. Although not exactly using the full colour LCD capabilities of the Gear to it's fullest, it's one of the most enjoyable Gear games I've seen for a long, long time, and as such comes with a strong recommendation. ☆☆☆☆

SMASH TV



Price Amiga £25.99
Genre Arcade Shoot
Publisher Ocean

"Good luck - you to gonna need it!" screams the show's oily comper, and never have there been 'mean words said. This conversion of the incredibly violent Williams coin-op has translated surprisingly well to the home-systems, with nearly all the blood and thunder elements so beloved of the original ported across faithfully.

The game takes the form of a futuristic game show, where one or two contestants armed with a rapid-fire gun slug it out with a seemingly red-

less parade of thugs, bruisers and goons to win big money and prizes in a single-screen arena. Power-ups and out-of-control bad guys add to the already phenomenal carnage.

On a purely visceral level, it's immensely satisfying as the pluggled opponents explode into red globules of flesh. Indeed, the sprites are small enough to be almost anybody you want them to be, so you can imagine that you're shooting up endless classes of your boss if you want to. Very therapeutic.

As a single-player game it's fine, though there's a serious risk that boredom may well set in surprisingly early. The two-player game, on the other hand, is something else. There's not been player-to-player shooting like this since *Kick Off 2*.

The coin-op's two joystick game to move, one to direct fire) has translated adequately to a single-controller, though if you have two there is an option to use both which makes the game far better.

A superb conversion, and more than deserving of your hard-earned pennies. Go to it, you psychic pod. ☆☆☆☆

STEVE MCQUEEN - WESTPHASER



Price Amiga £29.99
Genre Arcade Shoot
Publisher Lookline

You what? Talk about a cynical horse! Not only is the poor chap dead and unable to defend himself against this sort of thing, but this game actually bears no reference to the great man at all! Okay, so he was in a few cowboy films, and this is a cowboy game, but have the similarity ends. Don't expect to see any of Steve in the game - his involvement begins and ends with a tucky black and white picture on the box.

I gets weirder still. Because it has the word *Westphaser* in the title, you'd assume it's compatible with the *Westphaser* light gun. But no, no. It's conventional mouse, keyboard or joystick control only. Just what on earth is going on here?

Alright, so it's all very dodgy as far as what of the game itself? Well, unfortunately things don't get much better here either, as what's on offer is a bog-standard Operation *Wolf*-style shootem

up in a variety of typically Wild West scenarios. That might sound like at least a bit of a laugh, but the action is so stunted and dull that it's difficult to get even vaguely excited. To be fair, the graphics are quite nice in a fancy French sort of way and there are some jolly tunes you can shoot the drums off the screen, for example, but it's hardly enough to justify financial outlay. Is that Steve himself? I hear spinning in his grave! ☆☆

STRIKE FLEET



Price Atari ST/Amiga £19.99
Genre Strategy
Publisher Electronic Arts

Strike Fleet doesn't look the most exciting game from the shots on the back of the box, but the Lookline credit hints that this may be better than it appears. As, in fact, it is. The game is a new breed of strategy game right into its own individual mission or a continuing eight-mission campaign. After each mission briefing, the player is allocated a number of points (depending on the difficulty of the mission) to spend in the shipyard. Each ship 'costs' a certain number of points depending on its class, so the player must be careful in picking a balanced fleet.

Once at sea, the player can flick between the ships at will. Control is relatively simple (functionally), allowing the player to move, change speed, activate skills and more and, of course, fire the variety of on-board weapons. In addition, certain ships carry a complement of helicopter that can be sent on recon or sub-bombing forays.

Despite its initially clunky appearance, *Strike Fleet* actually turns out to be quite involving. There's a great deal of satisfaction to be had from successfully controlling the fleet, and seeing off the air, sea or underwater attacks provides frequent doses of adrenalin. Admittedly, those without a strategic brain are unlikely to be covered by the game's charms, but if *Strike Fleet* sounds at first slightly appalling give it a go. I think you'll be surprised. ☆☆☆☆

SUPAPLEX



Price **Amiga, £25, PC £29.99**

Genre **Platform Game**

Publisher **Digital Integration**

"You're Murphy, bug-leaver extraordinaire, exploring deep inside a crazy computer. Back tracks must be avoided at all costs, and killing Zoids will trap the scenery." Well, with an intro like that you can make? Snuggles comes a quite a refreshing change from a company that normally turns up heavy simulations and plane-based arcade games - it's half puzzle, half arcade, a sort of weird hybrid of Boulderdash and Pacman. In each of the game's six levels, Murphy must wrap up all the "infocubes" by whizzing about the four-way scrolling screen, gobbling up bits of the landscape and grabbing them when you find them. The trick is to use the landscape in such a way that you don't send all manner of horrible heavy things crashing down on yourself. As the levels progress things can more complex, with warp gates, explosive devices and maze-making enemies.

Okay, okay, so it's Boulderdash with knobs-on, but it isn't actually at all bad. It may not look like much, but it feels nice and smooth and the simplistic action is strangely compelling. With plenty of options and well-timed lev-

els, Snuggles is likely to keep you playing for quite a while - provided its simple charm manages to grab you in the first place.

☆☆☆☆

SUSPICIOUS CARGO



Price **Amiga, £44.97, PC £29.99**

Genre **Adventure**

Publisher **Goodies**

The parade follow-up to *SSS Jane Symone* is a lot more enjoyable than its predecessor predecessor, primarily because it's a whole lot more accessible and has a pleasant sense of humor. We've classified it as an adventure here, but it's really a hotch-potch of many different game styles - there's a strong RPG element throughout and a sprinkling of arcade-based sub-games along the way.

As a masterful space pilot (Janis Hays), the player's job is to transport a highly dodgy shipment of genetic refuse across the galaxy in his ramshackle spaceship, the Lady Luck. Even something as simple as keeping the ship operational and on course is not as easy as it sounds,

and things are naturally complicated along the way by a variety of unscrupulous characters who won't do anything more than to throw obstacles in the way and prevent Janis's cargo from reaching its destination.

I must admit to being a little perplexed by *Suspicious Cargo* - I mean, just what exactly is it? The way that it seems to fit between gameplay styles can be confusing, but despite this the storyline holds the disparate elements together well, and as such you end up with a surprisingly coherent and pleasurable product. It's by no means anything groundbreaking, but it will be appreciated by anyone who fancies a good space yarn with a few laughs.

☆☆☆☆

TEENAGE MUTANT HERO TURTLES - THE COIN-OP



Price **Amiga £29.99**

Genre **Arcade Shoot**

Publisher **Image Works**

Now, let's get one thing straight from the outset, *Turtles* is neither the most complicated nor involving game in the

world. However, Probe's conversion of what could best be described as a fairly basic coin-op beat-'em-up is admirably close to its coin-gobbling dad, complete with all the regular *Turtles* and their opponents.

Catering for one or two players, the game leads the *Turtles* through a host of increasingly dangerous scenarios, gradually leading up to a climax involving rescuing the glamorous April from a building, set alight by the evil Shredder.

Turtles suffers from two distinct problems. The first is that one feels *Turtlesmania* is definitely on the wane, and there is no longer the public fever guaranteeing that anything green will sell by the bucketload. The second is that, despite Probe's pretty sound conversion, the game's quite creaky, and even the coin-op itself wasn't that good.

☆☆☆☆

THUNDER BURNER



Price **Amiga £7, PC £24.99**



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ADVERTISERS INDEX

AMSTRAD.....	9
BANDAI.....	2,3
CORNWALL & DEVON.....	93
GAMES EXPRESS.....	106
INTERMEDIATES.....	18,19
JOKELINE.....	111
MATRIX SOLUTIONS.....	66
MEGAPHONE.....	77
MINDSCAPE.....	13,15,28
PREMIER.....	91
SILICA SYSTEMS.....	69,73
SILMARILS.....	22
SYSTEM ADDICTS.....	97
TECHNOMANIA.....	109

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Genie Arcade Blast
Publisher: Lakeside

"Top arcade game with action, fast-paced controls and super sound", we are promised. Space Harrier on the Spectrum is what we get.

Slugging his way through twelve stages of shocking 3D graphics, our intergalactic hero must control his Transformer-like craft deep into the heart of enemy territory and destroy the evil alien 'Big Bad'.

After painting a girl on the back of the box with her mouth out has failed to make Thunder Blazes at all exciting.

Plotting the jet plane is actually more fun since everything moves at a faster pace, but the hi-pod robot has a better chance of destroying the pill-boxes containing our presence, dry alien scars.

It's all a lot poor, and apart from some end-of-level bonuses which are presentable enough, lacks a long way short of even the most basic blast standards.

And if all that seems a little harsh, Lakeside can at least comfort themselves with the knowledge that they win the Most Crustacean Tit Award. Hooney.

THUNDERHAWK



Price: Amiga £39.99
Genie Simulation
Publisher: Goss Design

Most flight sims require a good deal of practice before any reward can be garnered from them. All those keyboard controls and interminable virtual functions do quite a lot to put off anyone looking for a quick blast. Goss Design have seen this gap in the market and more than adequately filled it with Thunderhawk. All control is via the mouse, which makes everything from weapon selection to helicopter control, quick and easy. It's a welcome change from the usual memory test of clicks and non-clicks.

The game itself is broken down into a series of campaigns, each preceded by a graphic briefing sequence indicating target and terrain types. Before taking to the sky the player can select the appropriate armament for the Thunderhawk, although there's a default if this seems to much of a fuss.

What makes the game a treat is the handling of the helicopter. The controls make flying intuitive, letting the player get on with the mission rather

than battling to stay airborne. Graphics are smooth and move at a fair clip, though there isn't much background screen. If you've never been tempted onto a flight sim, then this is the game to change your attitude. **Tr 4/5**

TIP OFF

Price: Amiga/Atari ST £49.99
Genie Sports Game
Publisher: Access

The fact that Access's latest sports game comes from the keyboard of Kick Off co-designer Steve Scriven has certainly attracted a lot of interest during the game's development, but now the final product's here it has led to a representative surfeit of a disappointment.

The idea is fine - apply the same techniques that made Kick Off great, juggle them about a bit to fit basketball's smaller play area and rules and away you go. And indeed many of Kick Off's trademarks are in evidence here - the game's simple, instinctive, and very fast indeed, but just isn't a big hit; it just doesn't work. Basketball is a fast game, but Tip Off's interpretation of it is a bit too open for comfort. As a result it just doesn't quite spark in the same way as Kick Off, and as basketball fans would still be best advised to go with Chrisman's version.

TOE JAM & EARL



Price: MegaDrive £24.99
Genie Arcade Blast
Publisher: Sega

I ain't 'I Or, in Earl speak, oh dear. Toe Jam & Earl were presumably intended, like Frank before them, to become 'real' game personalities and focus almost a whole new legion of fans in the MegaDrive. I don't know if they are or not, but on the basis of the game they're in I can't for the life of me see how they would. If Sega think this is what 'Ver Kahr' want, then they're surely mistaken.

It's a simple maze game. One or two players, controlling the fat-out alien of the title, have to travel around a cluster of exotic islands searching for the ten missing pieces of their crashed spaceship. Some islands are populated by monsters of various description that have to be avoided.

Along the way the game'srisotto because may find bonuses which will reward them anything from speedup

boosters to a blow from a box of lightning. Mixed blessings or what? And... er... that's it. Yes, really. All the game consists of is wandering around, very slowly, finding really doesn't quite sum up the low-ranking indicators of the whole package. The only points of special note are the way the screens split when Toe Jam & Earl get too far apart, the appealing nature of the two aliens and the well-think music. Any chance of putting the music on CD. **Sega?**

TRADERS



Price: Amiga £29.99
Genie Strategy
Publisher: Ultron

If you imagine a lonely patch of Utopia, Mega lo Malaria and Population, except in 3D, you'd be pretty close to understanding what Traders is all about. Again, it's a race for technological development and fiscal success, with up to four players battling it out on a mysterious planet, evolving cities and competing with the rigours of nature, as well as hostile advances from each other.

Distinct from lots of God sims and strat games of late, Traders has got a reasonably light touch and doesn't weigh the player down with facts and figures. Instead it lets them explore their new world and get on with the business of exploiting and raising it with the minimum amount of fuss.

While there's no question that the game lacks as much depth or longevity as any of the games mentioned above, Traders acts as a pretty solid introduction to the strategy genre. Not too shabby.

UNDER PRESSURE



Price: Amiga £49.99
Genie Arcade Blast
Publisher: Electronic Arts

Oops. Fancy how our minute you're on top of the world and the next you're, er, not. A situation which top notch programmers (Electronic Arts have found themselves in with their latest release, Under Pressure) their last and indeed only release. Prophecy was exceedingly well received, being a pre-

ty excellent sports sim, but Heaven only knows what grandeur and glitz are as to them for this disaster.

Guided in an unconformably similar fashion to Progressive games (the latter's level text is virtually identical to Pegg's game name text and the robot which the player controls looks amazingly like the creature on the *Shocker* of the first box), Under Pressure falls down in almost every single respect.

Guiding a huge robotic killing machine through a bunch of decaying cityscapes, the player must deal with a myriad of different monsters - mainly spiders - with the impressive arsenal of weaponry available from his cockpit.

Scarcely slight, doesn't it. How, from here on in, the game falls down rather badly. For a start, everything is in the top. The player's robot almost fills the screen, but doesn't have the detail or animation flourish to support its size. Also, the scale presents a problem in that since only one horizontal level of the city is ever visible on the screen, the game feels more like a dash across than an exciting adventure. Absolutely no timing is necessary for shooting for the monsters either, as they just sit up and swallow the player's fire. Oh dear.

UTOPIA



Price: Amiga £29.99
Genie Arcade Strategy
Publisher: Zenonix

The quality of life on earth, let's face it, sucks. And the world is screwed up so bad that nothing anyone can do can save it. We need to start again.

This is the premise of Utopia, another Progressive/Persimmon-style affair. Except this time the aim, rather than simply ruling a world or conquering it is to construct and run it and to make it so inhabitants feel really good. The aim is to elevate the quality of life to earth - Utopia.

It's not difficult to grasp the aims and controls of the game. And it quickly becomes apparent that there are lots of problems thrown up by the idea of making everyone happy. For a start, if you spend all the money on hospitals, food production and non-drinking sports festivals, your populace will be content, but without any creditable defence

when the inevitable computer-controlled alien attack occurs.

Beginning from just a few key buildings, it's up to the player to construct the colony using icon-driven actions while bypassing the world in isometric 3D. There are almost no rules in this society. You can run things virtually any way you want.

The only factor that is missing is the option to try and run things as a dictatorship regime and make a certain part of the population very happy while keeping the workers ground-down into the dirt. Still, that never works, does it?

☆☆☆☆☆

VOLFIED



Price: Retail \$7/Amiga £24.99
Genre: Arcade (Shoot 'em up)
Publisher: Empire

Qix is back in town, and better than ever! No matter how widely tastes may differ among the gaming-playing fraternity, you'd be hard pushed to find anybody who doesn't enjoy a game of good old Qix. In appeal to universal law, it's so simple and addictive, and like *Demolition*, its gameplay has stood the test of time. What *Volfied* (renamed from *Tate's* coin-op) represents is a new version of the original classic - it is in Qix what *Arkanoid* was to *Demolition*, keeping the original framework intact but adding lots of pretty backdrops, power-ups and extra features.

For the most part it's much the same - draw lines around the screen to fill up 75% or more of the screen area with one of the flowers which makes up the line itself getting hit by any of the remaining enemies - which, instead of the old grating line, now takes the form of a giant meowling cat that roars about spitting flame bullets, and a couple of pretty little helpers. Lasers and speedups are among the collectables, while high-tech backgrounds and SFX provide the aesthetic overhaul.

Even Qix-style games are to find on the ground. *Volfied*, with its clear execution and accelerated gameplay is a welcome addition to the software scene - and if you've got any more old and obsolete for the classics, you'll add it your collection too.

☆☆☆☆☆

VRROOM



Price: Retail \$7/Amiga £24.99
Genre: Racing Game
Publisher: Lookfor

Without wanting to be nasty to our European counterparts, what with eggs and all that, it has to be said that most of the software that crosses over from the continent is a bit stuffy. *Vroom*, however, from French publisher Lookfor, has proven itself to be the exception to the rule. Although it's not a patch on the likes of *IndyBlast* or *Ferraris One Grand Prix*, *Vroom* is nevertheless a fully racing-sport game, boasting very impressive speed as the player races his way down the track around a first-person environment.

It's got all the usual features and fittings - rear-view mirrors, photos, overhead maps/ridges, dips and hills on the track, training modes, qualifying laps, choice of cars and some spectacular crash sequences. It's more of a racing game than simulation, as controls and instrumentation has been kept to a minimum - there's nothing too much to worry about here apart from going very fast, avoiding the other cars and keeping on the road. And it works well enough, being very playable and actually quite complex, with the array of racing options adding to the game's longevity. The only dodgy factor is that the in-track option is restricted to the arcade mode - the more serious race options only allow mouse control. Very odd indeed. But apart from that, not at all bad.

☆☆☆☆☆

WILLY BEAMISH



Price: IBM PC £24.99
Genre: Adventure
Publisher: Dynamic, Sierra On-Line

The Adventures of Willy Beamish, to give it its full name, is somewhat of a oddity. Dubbed an "interactive cartoon", it's sort of a wacky cross between *The Wonder Years* and *The Simpsons*. Willy is the typical all-American trans-Mainland pre-teen schoolkid, complete with gummy hands, pet frog and accordingly unworldly family. Strange things are afoot in suburb of Franston, and Willy must investigate.

Willy is yet another of those games that sounds a whole lot better than it

actually is. That's not to say that it's bad, but the gameplay is very dull and slow, with luck often playing more of a part than skill or judgment. As such, more time is spent restoring saved games than actually playing, and it can get quite frustrating at times, especially when you have to wait through the usual set-piece for the suspenseful time. As an interactive cartoon, it's excellent, with suitably stereotypical characters, some fancy jokes and gorgeous visuals. As a game it's compelling, but not in a way that encourages real addiction or involvement. You're unlikely to come back to again and again.

☆☆☆☆☆

WING COMMANDER II



Price: IBM PC £24.99
Genre: Arcade (Shoot 'em up)
Publisher: Origin

No matter what else you might say about the *Wing Commander* games, they look darned good. The trouble is, there isn't really much else to say about them. Well, perhaps that's a little harsh but here is the sequel to the much talked about and little-played original. It's very much a case of more of the same.

Interstellar war with the Kilnati continues, and in the most recent Kilnati victory, the Confederation flagship *Tiger's Claw* has been destroyed by invisible Kilnati stealth fighters. As the sole survivor of the attack, the player must first construct his Federation armada that the attack did generally take place and then lead a Federation force to track them down and destroy them.

Graphically excellent although particularly processor heavy, *Wing Commander II* certainly isn't a brilliant game. It's a worthy sequel in its preference but it is not of the where that side-old phrase about trying before buying is 100% appropriate.

☆☆☆☆☆

WOLFCHILD



Price: Amiga £24.99
Genre: Arcade (Shoot 'em up)
Publisher: Core Design

Okay, okay, it's just another platform game. What separates *Wolfchild* from the ever-growing crowd is the

sheer excellence of its execution. Rick Dangerous creator Simon Stippi has surpassed himself once again, creating a game that has everything an arcade aficionado could ask for - mind-boggling fast-paced action, superb graphics, awesome pyrotechnical displays, a rickrolling soundtrack and...oh, lots more besides.

The plot tells of a brilliant genetic scientist kidnapped by a corrupt corporation to produce mutant killing machines for their own deadly ends. The scientist's son, Paul Blomax, bangs himself into his dad's prototype genome-splitting machine and turns himself into *Wolfchild*, a half-man, half-beast character with special energy-sipping powers.

What follows is five levels of top-level platform game beat-em-up action with fast switching back and forth between his human and beastly forms to help him progress. When enough energy is collected, Paul becomes the molten character and is blessed with the power to live off of electrical energy at the mutant border that continually attack him.

It might not be the most original game in the world, its supreme playability more than makes up for any lack of real innovation. It's hard, fast and dangerous to know. Give it a piece of your platform collection too.

☆☆☆☆☆

WORLD CLASS RUGBY



Price: Retail \$7/Amiga £14.99
Genre: Sports (Simulation)
Publisher: Audiogenic

Audiogenic have opted for a rigorous approach to the sport, offering plenty of accuracy and a great deal of scope for subtle play. And so much, it's somewhat more satisfying to play, if a bit harder to get into.

It's also a lot prettier, with play viewed from a 3D angle and all the players are more than of a like status. If this doesn't appeal, there's a selection of other views on offer, including a no-nonsense top-down view for the more traditionally minded. *World Class Rugby* may not have *Demolition*'s pick-up-and-play instant appeal, but it's a good bet that of the two this will be the one you'll still be looking up in a year's time.

☆☆☆☆☆

the blitter end

Ho ho. All good things must come to an end and all that. As you've probably already guessed this is the last time you'll ever read the blitter, as this is well and truly the last issue of ACE Magazine. Yes, we know we threatened to kill the blitter off before and didn't, but we really mean it this time. After this, Blitter is packing his bags and heading off for his long (put-off, thoroughly well-earned) retirement at his little cottage in the lake district. But before we sign off for all eternity, we feel it's only fair that you get what you deserve - one last top-quality dose of industry gossip and opinion. So here goes for a full house and let's get on with it...

Following last month's report on computer games at last breaking into the big time courtesy of TV, blitter is now even more thrilled to see that the likes of Sonic and Mario (if not really anything else) are gradually taking over the daily papers. However, we can't help but feel that, in their impressive strength to sound ultra-enthusiastic about the medium, our countrymen

Flot Street may have gone just a teensy bit over the top. For a start, we find it difficult to believe that the Sunday Mirror's claim (February 9th) that Gamesmaster presenter Donald Diamond 'has more fans than pop stars.' In the very same organ, the paper gave us a unique insight into the minds of computer games players by revealing the games they see - for example, we all know that 'I had awesome fun and went total on a mad one' is an everyday phrase amongst you lousy games geeks. But however cringe-making some of the transcripts may be, you can't complain when the games are at least getting the coverage they deserve. With a second series of Gamesmaster being announced and regular features in The Sun, Today and the blitter, who knows? Soon computer games could be more popular than eating and having sex!

For years, every man, woman and child in the industry has wanted to retire before the immense pressure that is

ACE publisher Gary Williams. This month, however, the blitter is pleased to bring that reign of awe and terror to an end, by revealing that the leading publishing magazine is little more than a big cuddly soft touch. One of the blitter's deep cover agents in the ACE office caught him ordering big fluffy presents of love for his "partner". What's more, he was later spotted engaging in pathetic giggly love talk on the phone with her. What a wussy wot! If you would like to lodge an official protest, please send a postcard with the words **I THINK WOODIE IS A BIG SOFT BELLY** to his care at the usual magazine address, preferably along with some of your own criticisms of his machinations. There's a special one-time prize for the most offensive note he receives.

Blitter's heart goes out this month to budding Peasabrickers Peter Molyneux, who, on a recent trip to Japan, had a spectacularly unlucky time. Apparently he made the very foolish decision of

accepting to go out on a "hot" paint ball day in the woods, playing against the chaps from Logic magazine. Who poor old Pete didn't realize until it was far too late was that the guns he used in the game were **303783431** - powerful - a fact that he only discovered when his hand was nearly blown off in the wrist by a direct hit from the familiar Logic journals. The wound later required stitches. To make matters worse, Peter tripped while trying to escape and badly damaged his ankle, resulting in a nasty limp for several days afterwards. As blitter is almost only too keen to point out, there is no prize if it's cracked up to be...



From "Blitter's report on a paint ball magazine paint balling" (blitter's account of the incident) and blitter.

And so that's it. The end, Pete. Nothing out there now but never-ending chakras and eternal mud. Yes, it will surely be a sadder, less colourful world without the blitter, but there are the books and that's the way it goes. To be honest, after 15 months of total service, the blitter is jolly glad to be out of this fostering cupboard and into a quieter, better life. So we'll just make our excuses and leave. Goodnight comrades, carry on the struggle!

• Blitter

FOR YOUR OWN GOSSIP

What with it being a bit of a slim month gossip-wise, we thought we'd utilize the remaining space by giving you the chance to write some gossip of your own. Perhaps you caught someone napping behind the bike sheds or something. If so, this is the place to expose that scandal! All you need is a pen, or what are you waiting for? Get scribbling!

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