EIGHT BIT

THE GAME OF THE MOVIE

MOVIE BASED GAMES REVIEWED

EXPLORING THE COMMODORE 65

THE SEGA SG-3000

EIGHT BIT ADVENTURER

PLUS BLAST FROM THE PAST, AND MORE!

IN THIS ISSUE!

C=OMMODORE 65
BY CARLO PASTORE

The history of the Commodore 65 began in 1987 when the problem of giving a successor to the Commodore 64 sales champion begins.

The Commodore 64 was the best selling personal computer of all time and had a very large user base. In the period in which Amiga began to monopolize, however, Commodore's attention to the successor of the Commodore 64 was scarce. A small group of people including technicians and engineers were designed to a project that was to lead to the Commodore 64 DX, then called Commodore 65 in the more advanced stages of development. Who were the protagonist?

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The resolutions and colors on the screen he could achieve were remarkable for the time. The card video was equipped with stereo sound. The two SIDs (common audio chips with the Commodore 64) and a chip for data transfer between memory, CPU and GPU called DMAgic. This latest integrated controller, like the 3 and half onboard floppy that can be expanded, the Commodore 65 would be developed in two versions: one with the floppy drive integrated in the body and another with the external

player that would be called Commodore 1565 disk drive. The external reader would have had little economics and some mechanics because the logic part of the management would have been on the Commodore 65 motherboard. The RAM memory was 128 Kb on the card, expandable up to 8 Mb. The ROM had a size of 128 Kb. The Commodore 65 contained a software emulation of the Commodore 64, preserving a compatibility of about 70% with the existing software part. Price machine was turned on and faded down, the Commodore key was started in Commodore 64 mode. The final result could have been achieved with the basic

10 GO64 control from Commodore 65 mode.

The development of the computer starting the revision files lasted too long. Production markets should have been dated Christmas 1990 but that was not the case. In early 1991 the project was concluded because it was no longer considered to be relevant there are of 16-bit computers made of resources further impoverished the finances of a company that began to shake.

04   05

## SEGA
SC-3000H

Paul Monopoli looks at a Yeno branded SEGA SC-3000H but not everything went according to plan.

YENO SC-3000H

NOW SHOWING

THE GAME OF THE MOVIE
MOVIE LICENSED GAMES REVIEWED

Video games based around movies are almost as old as videogames themselves and often as enjoyable, if not more so than the movie itself. Early examples are the arcade games Tron (1982), Allen (1982) and Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back (1982).

However, as one would expect, not every movie based game is great. Back in 1982, Atari released the downright awful E.T. for the Atari 2600 game console. It was a rushed game and it showed. Thinking that they just ride on the success of the film, Atari actually producing more cartridges than there were consoles, resulting in a massive loss for the company. Some say it was one of the contributing factors to the North American video game crash of 1983.

When it comes to 8-bit computers, the story is not good. A few games did capture the magic and excitement of the movie,

but the vast majority were just downright bad.

The highlight of movie tie-ins were those published by British software. At one point in the late 80's and early 90's they produced some great movie tie-ins. Games such as Robocop, Batman: The Movie and the Addams Family still delight retro gaming fans today.

So what's covered in this featured article? Well basically, almost every game released for the 8-bit systems. We're not covering games based on TV shows such as Miami Vice. Although there was a movie in 2006, the game that was released is based on the TV show and not the movie. We have also divided the article into multiple parts to allow room for other reviews but we were going to do them before the anything soon felt we weren't doing the game review any justice. So sit back, grab the popcorn and enjoy.

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RAMBO: FIRST BLOOD PART 2 ■ RAMBO 3 ■ SHORT CIRCUIT
TERMINATOR 2 ■ THE RUNNING MAN ■ THE GOONIES ■ THE HUNT
FOR RED OCTOBER ■ THE NEVERENDING STORY ■ THE UNTOUCHABLES

EDITORIAL

Welcome to Issue 5. Another action-packed issue to get stuck into. This issue is all about movie licensed games and what a nostalgic trip that turned out to be. It's safe to say that my childhood was made up of great games and great movies, like so many of our readers, I'd imagine.

We also have a look at the Commodore 65 and the Sega SC-3000H. We had to push the Sinclair Spectrum article back to next issue as we have so much content for it. It's turning out to be a fantastic article.

Not to worry, there's lots to keep you going this issue, especially Stuart William's Eight Bit Adventurer where he explorers Speccy adventure games. Not to forget Paul Monopoli's excellent Blast from the Past review of Into The Eagle's Nest.

Enjoy the magazine,

The Eight Bit Team

THE MAGAZINE FOR COLLECTORS AND USERS OF EIGHT BIT COMPUTERS

ISSUE 6

EIGHT BIT

ZX Spectrum

PLUS GAME REVIEWS AND MORE!

Issue 6 Coming Soon…
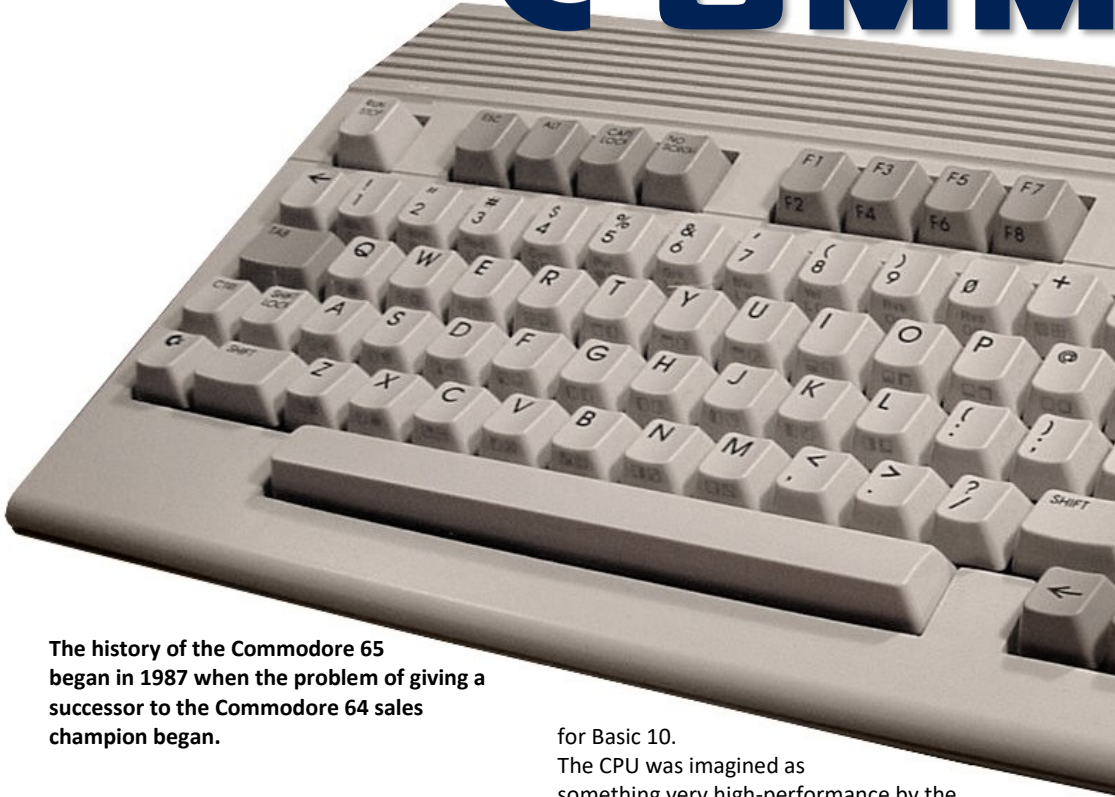
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First of all Fred Bowen, considered in Commodore the software wizard, who was supposed to take care of the birth of a new operating system. The Basic 2.0 of Commodore 64 appeared to be slim and old-fashioned and the Commodore 128 (7.0) was further improved. Bowen then began writing the code for Basic 10.

The CPU was imagined as something very high-performance by the engineer Victor Andrade. The development base was the 4502 processor (evolution of the glorious 6502) which became the CSG 4510 with a clock rate of 3.54 MHz. For the GPU, William Gardei, an expert in video signals, was hired to work on the CSG 4567 chip, also called VIC III.

The resolutions and colors on the screen it could achieve were impressive for the time. The computer was equipped with stereo sound via two SIDs (common audio chips with the Commodore 64) and a chip for data transfer between memory, CPU and GPU called DMAgic. This latest integrated controller, like the 3 and half inch onboard floppy disk controller, was designed by young engineer Paul Lassa. The Commodore 65 would be developed in two versions: One with the floppy drive integrated in the body and another with an external player

ODORE 65

BY CARLO PASTORE
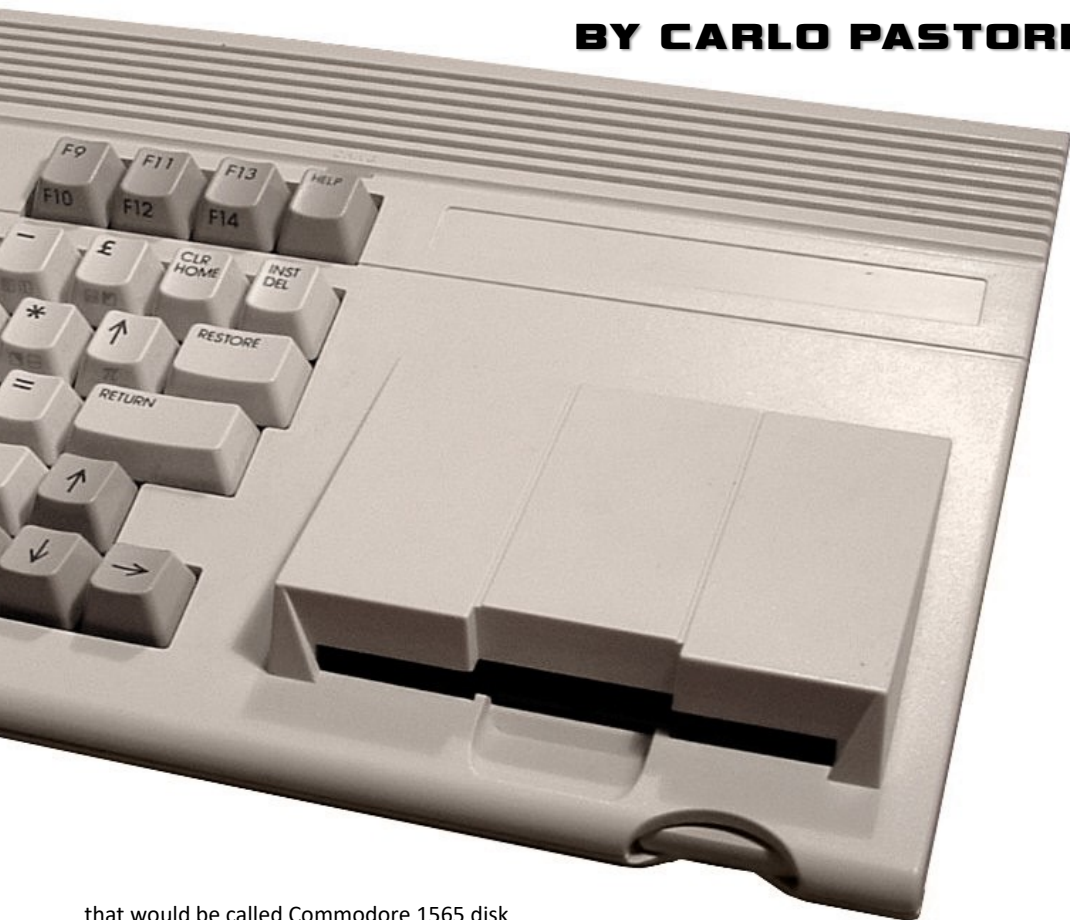
that would be called Commodore 1565 disk drive. The external reader would have had little electronics and some mechanics because the logic part of the management would have been on the Commodore 65 motherboard. The RAM memory was 128 Kb on the card, expandable up to 8 Mb. The ROM had a size of 128 Kb. The Commodore 65 contained a software emulation of the Commodore 64, preserving a compatibility of about 70% with the existing software base. If the machine was turned on and the Commodore Key held down, it would start in Commodore 64 mode. The same result could have been achieved with the Basic 10, GO64 command in Commodore 65 mode.

The development of the computer (starting from revision one to almost complete revision five) lasted too long. Placing on the market should have been dated Christmas 1990 but that was not the case. In early 1991 the project was cancelled because it was no longer considered to be relevant given the rise of 16-bit computers. The waste of resources further impoverished the finances of a company that began to look shaky.

INSIDE THE COMMODORE 65

CPU (Victor chip)
CSG 4510 – CPU – developed by Victor Andrade

The **CPU** Unit named **CSG 4510** R3 is a custom version of the **4502** chip combined with two complex MOS 6526 interface cards (CIA), a UART serial interface and a memory mapper to allow 1MB addressable space. Clock frequency is 3.54 MHz.

Audio – SID CSG 8580

Two **CSG 8580R5 SID** audio chips to produce stereo sound.

Integrated DMA Controller (**DMAgic** custom chip)

ROM chip

128K, containing BASIC 10.0, ML Monitor, C65 Kernel as well as C64 Kernel and BASIC 2.2 for backwards compatibiltiy with the Commodore 64.
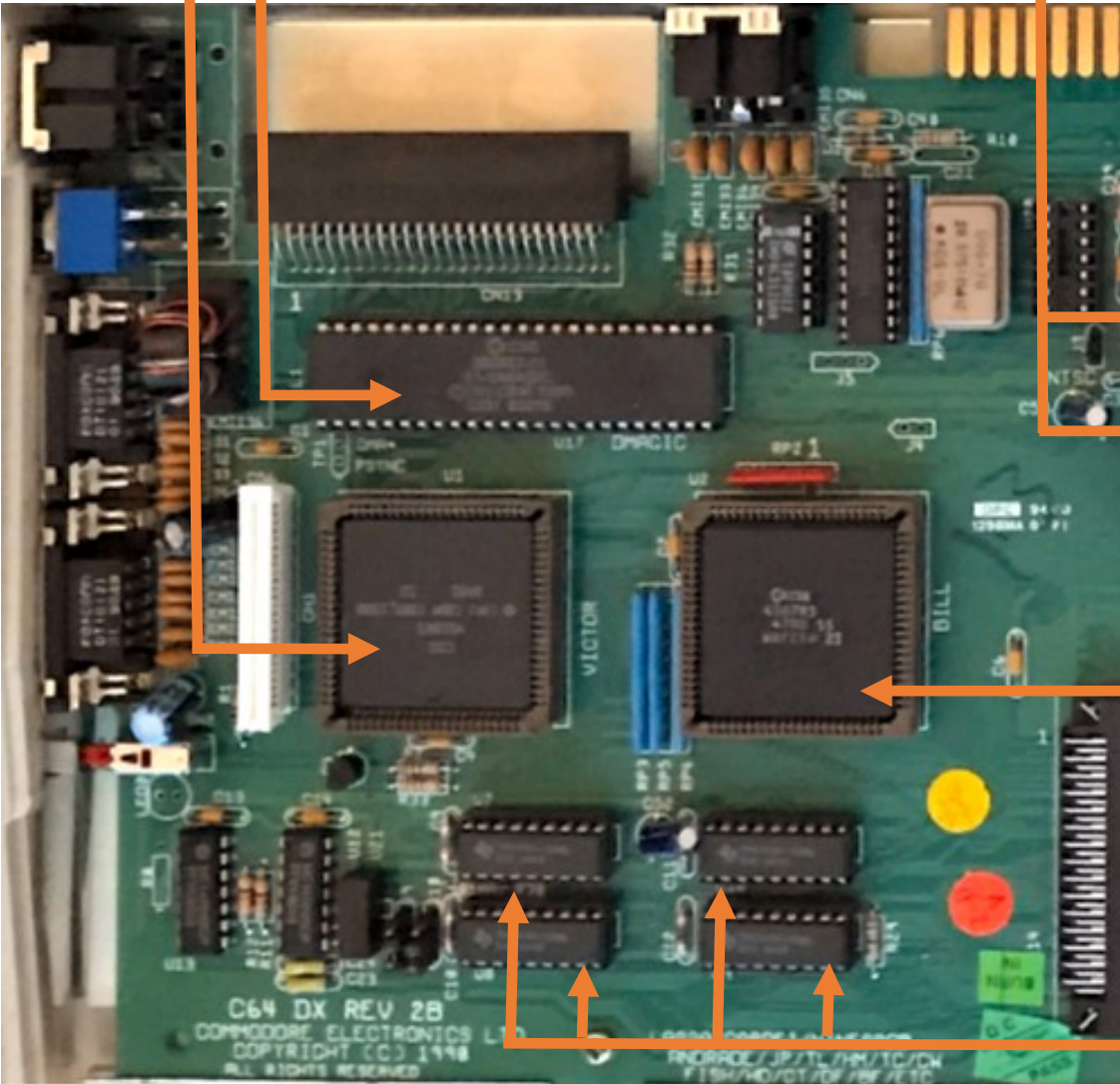
Floppy disk controller chip
CSG4165 F011 – developed by Paul Lassa

Floppy Disk Controller. The chip is an MFM disk interface (see next page). It requires the use of an external 512-byte external RAM as a data cache buffer. This interface can perform reads and writes on MFM formatted floppy disks, as well as readings and full track writes in free format. It can also format floppy disks. It also incorporates logic for read-writing head movement and motor movement. The integrated unit contains the control logic of the external floppy disk drive (Commodore 1565). It also provides an index simulator for readers who do not own it natively.

VIC III (Bill chip)
CSG 4567 – GPU – developed by William Gardei

A new **VIC-III** graphic chip called **CSG 4567** capable of producing 256 colors from a palette of 4096 colors; available modes are: 320×200×256,640×200×256,640×400×400×400×16, 1280×200×200×16, and 1280×400×400×4.

Supports all VIC-II video modes.

Text mode with 40/80 × 25 characters

The Commodore 65 had 128 Kb of standard memory, expandable up to 8 Mb. The memory expansion (below) should have been placed in a connector that could be accessed by opening a door located in the underside of the computer (such as the trap door in Amiga).
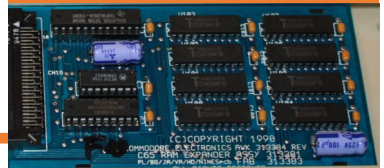
CPU Unit Technical Features

The 4510 CPU is an 8-bit microcontroller made of 2 microns dual-metal CMOS technology with high speed and low power consumption. The integrated circuit is a fully static device that contains an advanced 6502 (65CE02) microprocessor, four independent 16-bit interval timers, two 24-hour daily clocks (AM/PM) with programmable alarm for each, full-duplex serial I/O (UART) channel with programmable baud rate generator, integrated memory map function for addressing up to 1 megabyte of memory, two 8-bit shift registers for synchronous serial I/O. The clock frequency is 3.54 MHz and 1.02 MHz in C64 mode.

COMMODORE BASIC 10.0

The implementation of BASIC 10 was not completed. However, it was intended to be more robust than the BASIC supplied with the Commodore 64. It would have had graphics commands to draw to the screen, sprite control and even collision detection.
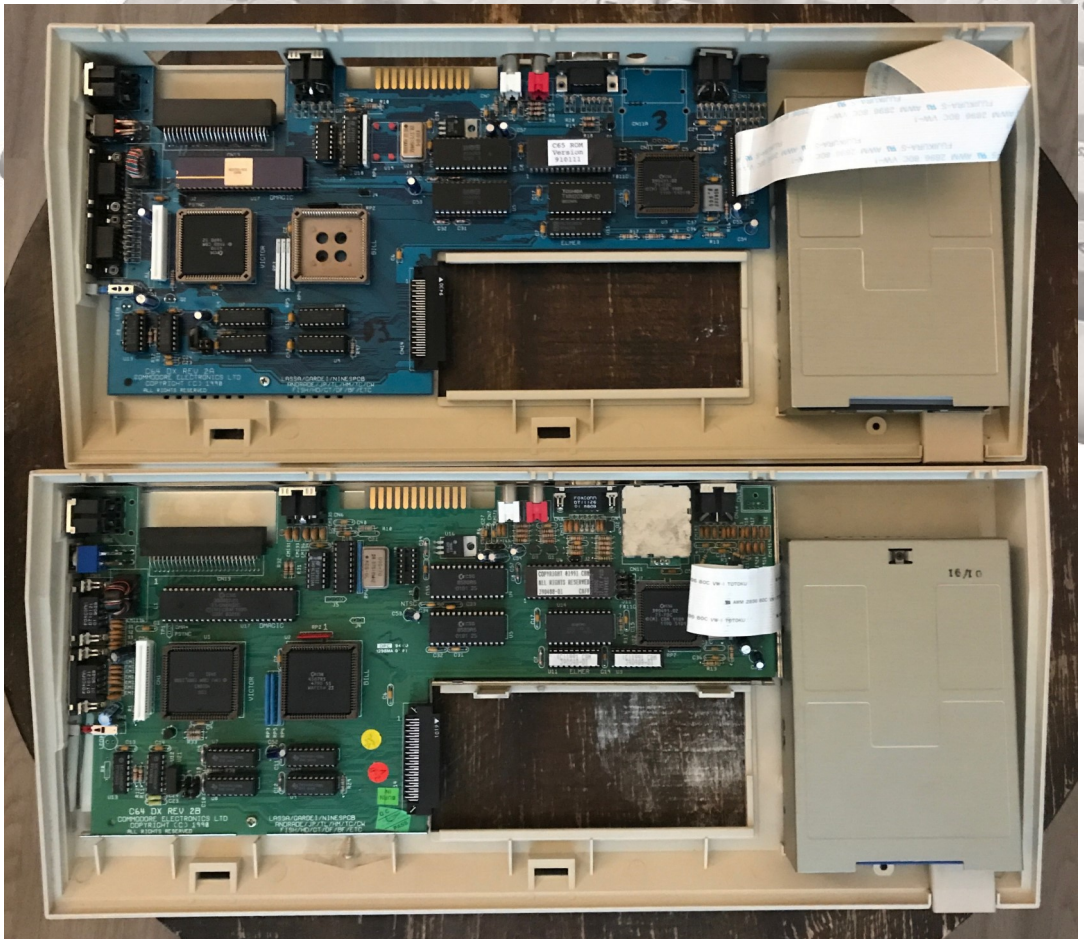
THE TOP BOARD IS THE COMMODORE 65 2A BOARD WHILE THE BOTTOM IS THE 2B BOARD.
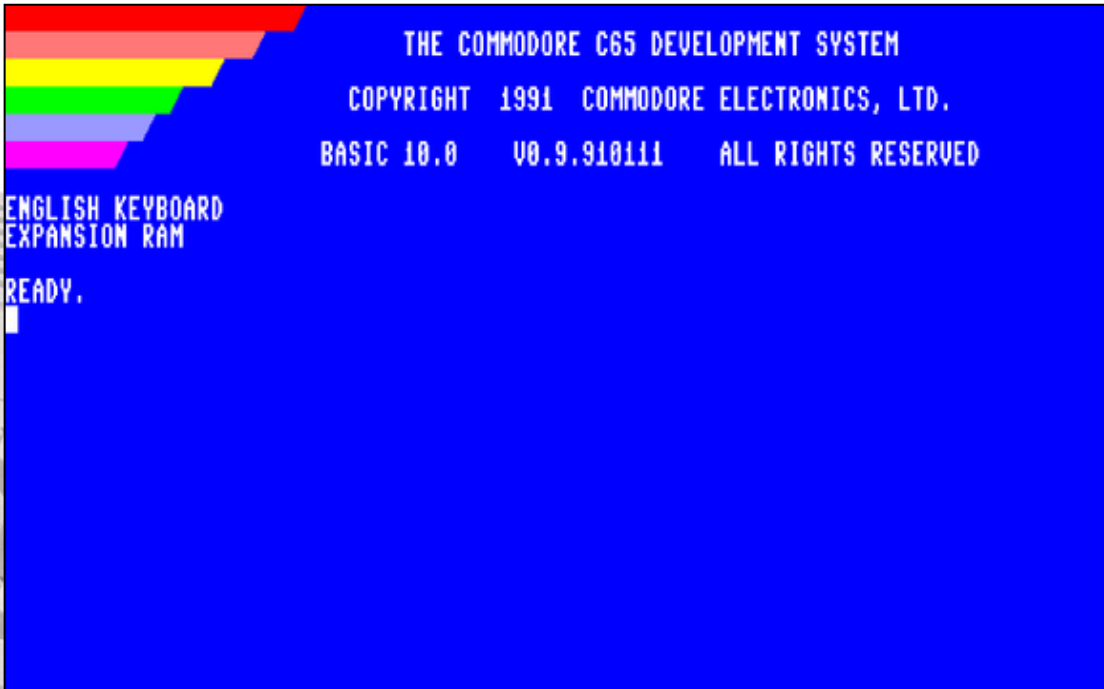
THE COMMODORE 65 BOOT SCREEN

Understanding the MFM Disk Interface

Modified frequency modulation (MFM) is a coding scheme used to encode the data in most floppy disks. It was introduced in 1970 with the IBM 3330 hard disk drive. Hardware compatible with this format can be found in the Commodore Amiga as well as in IBM compatible machines. MFM starts with a modification of the original FM source used to encode data on low-density floppy disks and the first hard disk drives. Because of the minimal space between transition streams, MFM can store data with higher density than FM. It can handle 250-500 Kbit/s of data flow on standard 5 ¼ and 3 ½ disks. MFM was also used in the first hard disk drives before the arrival of more efficient coding such as RLL and is currently considered obsolete in magnetic technology.

Audio – SID CSG 8580

Audio chip technical features

● Three independent and programmable audio channels from each SID chip, with 8 octave sound and a 16 to 4000 Hz limit.

● Four different waves for the audio oscillators (saw teeth, triangular, square, pseudocasual noise).

● Three sound filters.

● Synchronization of oscillator.

● Two 8-bit converters from analogue to digital (used for gamecontrollers).

● External audio input.

THE COMMODORE C65 DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

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BASIC 10.0   V0.9.910111   ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

ENGLISH KEYBOARD
NO EXPANSION RAM

READY.

Commodore 1084S
VIDEO MONITOR

C64 DX REV 2B
COMMODORE ELECTRONICS LTD
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ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

LASSA/GARDEI/NINESPCB
ANDRADE/JP/TL/ZHM/TC/CW
FISH/HD/GT/DF/BF/ETC

U17 DMAGIC
VICTOR

11
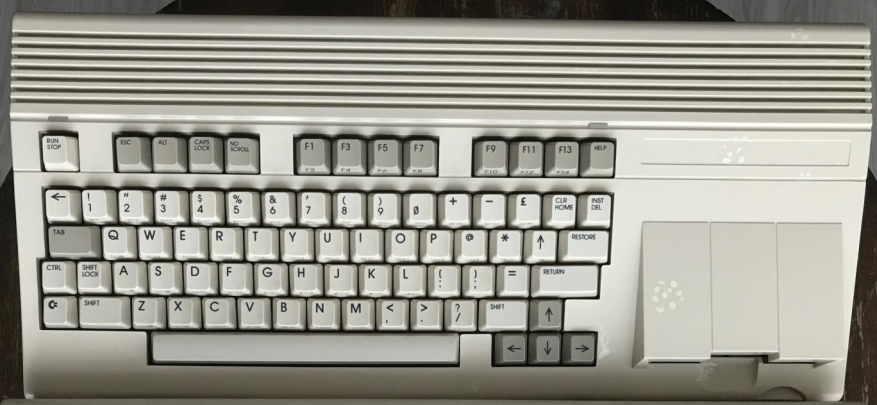
Commodore 65 on eBay and MEGA65

Recently, in November 2017 a Commodore 65 prototype with a RAM expansion board was sold on eBay for dazzling 81,450 Euro. Just two months earlier, a non-functional C65 without a Vic III chip fetched 18,350 US dollars. It seems that desirability and therefore prices are increasing. Just a few years ago you could have expected to fetch one between 15,000 and 20,000 Euro. While still ultra expensive, today prices are much higher. For example, back in 2009, a C65 sold for 'only' 6,060 Euro.

COMMODORE 65 WITH OPENED CASE
Photo by Olaf1541 (Wikipedia)

All hope of owning a Commodore 65 is not lost thanks to the MEGA65 project. A project to recreate the Commodore 65 in FPGA along with modern technology integration such as HDMI. The project started in 2015 and is making good progress. **mega65.org**

The Commodore 64 Ports

● Expansion port for 50-pin cartridges.

● 24-pin user and parallel port.

● Audio/Video composite port (DIN 8 pin).

● RGB Video Analog Port (DB9) (Genlock Interface).

● RF Video Jacks.

● Serial bus port (for connection of floppy drives for Commodore 64 and printers).

● Mini DIN port for the exclusive C65 drive named 1565.

● Two joystick ports (DB9).

● Stereo audio jacks (white and red).

● Port for RAM memory expansion.

Technical features of the GPU

The new Commodore 65 graphics unit represents a clear improvement on the VIC-II graphics chip of the Commodore 64. It has the ability to reproduce 256 colors simultaneously from a palette of 4096 colors on screen. The available graphics resolutions are 320x200 (with a maximum of 256 simultaneous colors per screen), 640x200 (medium number of possible colors per screen), 640x400 (limiting the number of colors to 16), 1280x200 (always 16 colors per screen), 1280x400 (with 4 colors per screen). In text mode, 40 or 80 columns per 25 lines are possible. Synchronized with an external video source, it has an integrated DMA controller. The internal clock can reach 3.58 Mhz.

DMAgic – CSG 4151 DMA controller – developed by Paul Lassa

Chip technical features

● Recovery based on a list of DMA command sequences.
● Ability to chain multiple DMA command sequences.
● Direct access to the entire system memory.
● memory blocks up to 64Kb long.
● The possibility of using window blocks with modulus function.
● DMAgic operations generate access to the video chip (VIC) and external DMA.
● DMAgic operations can optionally access system interrupts.
● DMAgic operations that are interrupted can be resumed or deleted.
● Data flow management for input/output devices.
● Independent memory management by source/destination.
● Independent management of the memory transfer direction between source and destination.
● Independent modulus release for source and destination.
● Fixed pointer independent for source and destination.

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And thanks to Fred Bowen and William Gardei

An original preliminary manual regarding the technical characteristics of the Commodore 65. In particular, a detailed examination of the brand new and powerful Basic 10

Wiring diagram of the Commodore 65
(2b revision board)

THE GAME OF THE MOVIE

Video games based on movies are almost as old as video games themselves and are often as enjoyable, if not more so than the movies themselves. Early examples are the arcade games Tron (1982), Alien (1982) and Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back (1982).

However, as one would expect, not every movie tie-in was a great game. Back in 1982, Atari released the downright awful game, E.T. for the Atari 2600 game console (Not to be confused with ET Phone Home which was average). It was a rushed game and it showed. Thinking that they could ride on the success of the film, Atari actually producing more cartridges than there were consoles, resulting in a massive loss for the company. Some say it was one of the contributing factors to the North American video game crash of 1983.

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So what's covered in this featured article? Well basically, almost every movie based game released for the 8-bit systems. We're not covering games based on TV shows such as Miami Vice. Although there was a movie in 2006, the game that was released is based on the hit TV show and not the movie. We have also divided the article into multiple parts for future issues of Eight Bit. This is to allow room for other stuff. We originally were going to do shorter reviews but soon felt we weren't doing the game and movie any justice. So sit back, grab the popcorn and enjoy...

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AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE
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MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE NIGHTBREED PLATOON PREDATOR
RAMBO: FIRST BLOOD PART 2 RAMBO 3 SHORT CIRCUIT
TERMINATOR 2 THE RUNNING MAN THE GOONIES THE HUNT
FOR RED OCTOBER THE NEVERENDING STORY THE UNTOUCHABLES

RoboCop

Reviewed by John Kavanagh

THE MOVIE

Set in the near future in a crime-ridden Detroit, police officer Alex Murphy is murdered brutally in the line of duty. Resurrected as a cyborg cop to fight crime in old Detroit, he soon regains his memory and sets out to seek justice for those who murdered him.

Directed by Paul Verhoevan, Robocop was made on a fairly modest budget of $13 million but still manages the pull off some great effects for a movie of the late 1980's. Ultra-violent at times, with a sprinkle of black comedy, the movie holds up well today and is in fact, much more memorable than the somewhat boring 2014 remake.

THE GAME

Robocop the game is primarily a side-scrolling shoot 'em up, along with elements of first-person perspective shooting, as well as simple puzzles. Enemies attack Robocop on the street, as well as from overhead windows. Robocop can shoot left and right, as well as up, upper left and upper right. Picking up certain power-ups can give Robocop the ability to shoot three bullets at the same time, increasing the chance of hitting your target.

The second level is the famous shoot the guy in the nuts scene, although in the game you got to shoot him without hitting the woman. Shooting between her legs don't work. The third level

THE COLOURFUL AMSTRAD CPC VERSION PLAYS WELL

THE COMMODORE 64 VERSION IS THE MOST DIFFICULT
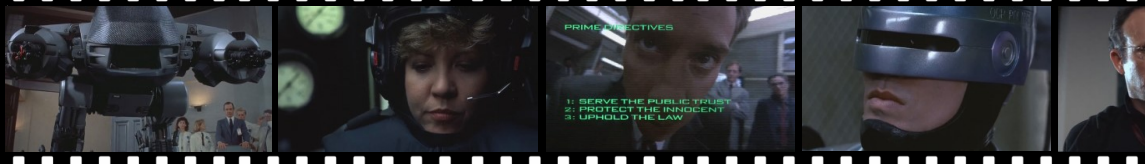
ALTHOUGH LACKING IN COLOUR, THE ZX SPECTRUM VERSION IS THE MOST DETAILED

goes back to being a side-scroller, while level four is a simple puzzle game, where you have to match up the face of a suspect. On later levels, you get to battle the ED-209 robot, as well as the OCM boss.

All versions of the game make good use of the platforms graphical abilities. The Commodore 64 version looks the best but it's the Amstrad CPC and Spectrum versions that play the best. The Spectrum version is mainly monochrome but makes up for lack of colour with little graphical touches that other versions don't have. The Amstrad CPC version is programmed well and makes good use of colour. It has bright graphics, and a fast pace that's faster than the Spectrum version. Sadly there are no sound effects on the CPC version, just music.

Most versions have excellent "speech audio" at the beginning which adds to the astrosphere. The music is enjoyable on all system except the TRS-80 CoCo version which is just annoying. As expected, the C64 version is especially pleasing to the ear. The CoCo version was released on a 128K cartridge making it the largest game cartridge produced for that system, the usual size was 32K. However, the game is weak when compared to all other versions except the Apple II, which is even worse.

THE COCO VERSION IS FAST BUT NOT MUCH FUN

EIGHT BIT

8.0

GOOD

BATMAN

Reviewed by George Bachaelor

THE MOVIE

In 1989 after a very long hiatus on the small and big screen, comic book superheroes were reborn with Tim Burton's, Batman The Movie. In my opinion, Batman The Movie was the catalyst for the superhero genre that is so prevalent on movie screens worldwide today. As a young child, Bruce Wayne is walking home with his parents after watching a show at the theatre in central Gotham. While walking down a dark laneway, young Bruce Wayne witnesses both his parents being murdered by a mugger in front of his very eyes. As Bruce becomes a man, the heartache of not knowing who killed his parents tears him up inside. From his inheritance, Bruce Wayne is now known as a wealthy philanthropist but by day his alter ego Batman is kept a secret. As Batman, Bruce Wayne vows to clean up Gotham City of crime, but his nemesis the Joker always has a new plan of terrifying the good people of Gotham City. Michael Keaton played the role of Batman superbly as did Jack Nicholson who played the Joker. The movie is simply fantastic, capturing the dark elements of the Batman persona with perfection. Worldwide the movie made $411,348,924, and it remains a fan favourite to this day.

THE EXCELLENT ZX SPECTRUM VERSION

THE GAME

Regarded as one of the finest 8-bit movie game licences ever and it's not because Batman's cape flaps in the wind as it would in real life. What makes it such a good game is the brilliant action-packed gameplay mirroring the movie beautifully. There are 5 levels in all with varying playing styles. The first level is absolute gold. A platformer replicating the movie scene of Batman chasing Jack Napier in the chemical factory where he falls into a vat full of chemicals turning him into the Joker. You get to use the bat-rope to pull Batman straight up to a higher ledge or you can swing on the rope giving it the full Batman affect, it's awesome.

THE AMSTRAD CPC VERSION LIKE THE OTHER VERSIONS HAS EXCELLENT ANIMATION

You are surrounded by enemy shooting at you everywhere, your trusty bat wings when shot at them take the bad guys down with ease. The sounds are absolutely brilliant, the graphics atmospheric, including droplets of toxic chemicals falling throughout the warehouse making it treacherous wherever you walk, this is just level 1 and it's amazing too. The second level isn't as cool as the first but it's still pretty good. You drive off in the Batmobile, heading for the Batcave. To turn the corners at 90 degrees you can use the bat-rope to make those tight turns, a real unique game trick for the time. Level 3, perhaps the worst level of them all. Inside the Batcave, it's time to solve the formula of objects required to defuse the Joker's deadly chemical spray that is being found in personal hygiene products all over Gotham City, called Smilex. Once that's done, you go back onto the streets this time in the Batwing with the objective of taking down the

THE COMMODORE 64 VERSION USE DARKER COLOURS

Joker's poisonous balloons exploding above innocent 'Gothamites'. The fifth level is where you have one last battle with the Joker in the Gotham Cathedral. Another multi platformer stage as in the first level brings it all together for a grand ending.

TOTAL RECALL

Reviewed by George Bachaelor

THE MOVIE

Total Recall, one of my all time favourite sci-fi action movies, I never get tired of watching it. Released in 1990, starring Arnold Schwarzenegger, Rachel Ticotin, Sharon Stone, Ronny Cox, and Michael Ironside. The film is based on Philip K. Dick's short story "We Can Remember It for You Wholesale". A brilliant cast and a brilliantly executed movie with some of the best special effects of the era. Arnie plays Douglas Quaid, a construction worker who is married to Lori (Sharon Stone) who he doesn't know is a secret agent working for the Governor of Mars - Vilos Cohaagen (Ronny Cox). Quaid has recurring nightmares about being on Mars with a brunette woman. While travelling to work one day on the train, Quaid sees a T.V. add for a company called Rekall, where they offer memory implants as real as any memory in your head. Undecided, Quaid seeks advice from his work colleague, Harry (Robert Costanzo), who says "don't f*** with your brain pal, it ain't worth it". But Quaid's curiosity gets the better of him and he visits Rekall anyway, requesting the 'Mars package', complete with the girl from his recurring nightmares - a brunette, who is athletic, sleazy and demure. Something goes wrong at Rekall. Before the Rekall staff have the 'Mars package memory' implanted into Quaid, he starts revealing previously suppressed memories of actually being a Secret Agent himself. The Rekall scientists discover that Quaid has already had his memory erased, by whom they do not know. This is where the movie gathers pace. There is a ton of action, simply incredible special effects and demonstrations of new technology possibilities in the future (that may have seemed almost too far-fetched for a 1990 movie, yet we are using some of them such as driverless cars in real life today) as Quaid tries to solve the puzzle of who

AMSTRAD CPC VERSION

ZX SPECTRUM VERSION

he really is by going to Mars and unravelling the mystery that is hiding inside of his mind.

THE GAME

While the movie is fantastic, unfortunately, the game is not so great. Most magazine reviews of the game on 8bit systems from the era gave quite high scores ranging from 70% and upwards to 90%. I think they might have been torn when they gave their reviews. While the game graphically looks gorgeous, it's hard as nails, especially level one on the Amstrad CPC, Filmnstuff's, YouTube channel gave it a 'Level From Hell' status that's how bad the first level is. I would have to agree, the gameplay on this level is a nightmare and that's being nice. What's so bad about it? Just watch Filmnstuff's YouTube video he describes quite brilliantly how poor level 1 on the CPC really is. Furthermore, to me, the whole game looks nothing like the movie which is another letdown. So what's the game about? Five levels, supposedly based on the film. Level one is a scrolling platformer where you need to collect 5 objects by working out puzzles involving coloured switches. Level two, you are escaping in the Johnny Cab shooting down other vehicles out to stop you getting to the third level which is the Derelict Warehouse. Once again you find yourself playing a platformer just like in level 1, solving the puzzles with the coloured switches, its a real pain and quite boring as well. Level 4 is a carbon copy of level 2 but this time you're in a cab on Mars shooting away enemies so you can safely make it to the rebel hideout. A boss duel is at the end of the stage, which is really quite poor in my opinion. Level 5 is another run n' jump platformer where you must collect items and locate Quatto. Again there are some puzzles with coloured switches but not as many as in the previous similar levels. Looks like the coders had enough of putting them in? Not a great movie license game i am afraid to say for one of my favourite movies of all time.

EIGHT BIT
4.0
POOR

NAVY SEALS
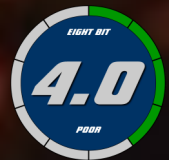
Reviewed by John Kavanagh

THE MOVIE

There were many movies released in the 1980's and early 90's that were instant classics. Movies that stick in your head the first time you watch them and remain there and are still enjoyable to watch again and again. Sadly this movie isn't one of them. I saw Navy Seals when it was new but I can't remember the movie and I don't remember being impressed. Actually, give me a second to watch it and I'll get back to you.

Done!. Well, it's not terrible but far from a classic. If you like a lot of shooting and cheesiness in equal amounts then this is the movie for you. I kinda liked!

THE GAME

The game is a platform shooter of five levels. The first level is the harbour where you have to disarm all the missiles within a strict time limit while avoiding the enemy. The character you control can shoot, climb, jump, duck and crawl. Well, strangely you can't crawl on the C64 version. Opening crates reveal extra weapons with the flamethrower being the most fun. Other levels play similarly . In level 2 you take

THE ZX SPECTRUM VERSION

LOOKING FANTASTIC ON THE AMSTRAD PLUS / GX4000 THANKS TO THE HARDWARE SPRITES AND DMA AUDIO TAKINGA MUCH NEEEDED LOAD OFF OF THE CPU. ONE OF THE BEST CARTRIDGE GAME FOR THE PLUS.

out the radio tower, level 3, the barracks, level 4, rescue the hostages and level 5 is a home-run. Levels 1 to 4 play the same, as in you got to place timed explosives on each missile and then find your way to the end of the level before

time runs out. In level 5 there's no such worry, just shoot n' run to the end.

Reaching the end is difficult, as one hit and your character is dead, luckily you got 5 characters (i.e. lives) to play with. It's best to sneak up on the enemy to kill them.

The sound effects are nothing to write home about, not terrible but functional.

The Amstrad PLUS version is the best, making good use of hardware sprites. The other versions are ok too, although sprite visibility can be difficult at times on the ZX Spectrum.

THE COMMODORE 64 VERSION

7.5
EIGHT BIT
GOOD

STEVEN SPIELBERG PRESENTS
BACK TO THE FUTURE™
A ROBERT ZEMECKIS FILM

Reviewed by George Bachaelor

THE MOVIE

Science - fiction adventure comedy films like Back to the Future is why the 1980's rocked. The year is 1985, Christopher Lloyd portrays the eccentric scientist Dr. Emmett "Doc" Brown, who has built a time machine in a very cool futuristic looking DeLorean vehicle with the pull-up doors. Michael J. Fox plays the teenager Marty McFly, who is sent back in time to 1955 where he meets his future parents in high school via the time machine inside the DeLorean. Things go haywire when Marty accidentally becomes his mother's romantic interest, so the "Doc" helps him repair the damage to history by getting his parents to fall in love. All looks great but there is only one problem, Marty and Doc must find a way to return Marty back to 1985. It's a most enjoyable movie. Back to the Future was a box office smash hit grossing over $381 million worldwide, becoming the highest-grossing film of 1985. It was the movie that made Michael J. Fox an international superstar. A fact many may not know that at the time of the movie being put together, the first choice for the role

COMMODORE 64 VERSION

ZX SPECTRUM VERSION

MOVIE DETAILS
Name: Back to the Future
Year: 1985
Budget: $ 19 million
Gross: $ 210.6 million, USA
Director: Robert Zemeckis
Starring: Michael J Fox, Christopher Lloyd, Lea Thompson

GAME DETAILS
Year: 1985 for ZX Spectrum and MSX, 1986 for others.
8-bit Computer Versions: Amstrad CPC, Commodore 64, MSX, ZX Spectrum.

of Marty McFly was Michael J. Fox. However, he was busy filming his television series Family Ties and the show's producers would not allow him to star in the film. Eric Stoltz was cast in the role but during the filming of the movie, Stoltz and the filmmakers decided that the role was miscast and so Michael J. Fox and his tv producers worked out a way he could do both the Family Ties tv show and the Back to the Future Movie.

THE GAME

Once again, a great movie but a very poor game. Many of the reviews on all 8-bit systems at the time were highly critical, one example, ZZAP!64, issue 32, gave the game an overall rating of only 32%. Translating film to game, software house Electric Dreams went for an arcade adventure type of game, which made the game resemble the plot of the movie but it was so poorly executed. You play Marty McFly, your aim is to collect the right objects and place them in the right place at the right time. There are five different locations to search for objects based on the film. The main street has four buildings a cafe, the professor's house, the dance hall and the high school. You have to go inside the buildings and work out what each object does. Marty can only carry one object at a time, you are informed which item he is carrying by it being highlighted. Throughout the game, you will see the other characters from the movie - Marty's Mum and Dad, the Professor and Biff. They don't have a lot of relevance, you can use an object on them and it may have an effect or it may not. A timer counts down represented by two photos, one of Marty and the other of Marty and his brother and sister. The photos decay slowly as time goes by, but they will decay faster if Marty's mum is close to Marty. The photos can be regenerated by dropping the right object in the right location. When the photos are whole, Marty then needs to go to the Professor's house and make his way back to the future of 1985.

EIGHT BIT
2.0
VERY POOR

Addams Family

Reviewed by George Bachaelor

THE MOVIE

I remember the Adams Family as a black and white tv show while I was growing up. The spooky looking characters were meant to be scary but really it was quite humorous. A film of the tv series was released in 1991, starring Anjelica Huston as Morticia, Raúl Juliá as Gomez, Christina Ricci as Wednesday, Christopher Lloyd as Uncle Fester and not to forget the creepy hand known as 'Thing'. The plot revolves around Gomez's Adams lawyer Tully Alford owing money to a loan shark and con artist Abigail Craven. He notices that her

ZX SPECTRUM VERSION

son, Gordon closely resembles uncle Fester who has been missing from the Adams family for 25 years after he and Gomez had a falling out. Tully proposes to Abigail that Gordon pose as uncle Fester to infiltrate the Adams family house and locate the hidden vault where vast riches are known to be kept so that he can pay off his debts. When uncle Fester (Gordon) returns the Adams family welcome him back with open arms but they suspect something foul is at play. Tully and Abigail attempt repeatedly and unsuccessfully to get past the booby trap blocking access to the vault, so a more devious plan of getting a restraining order against the Adams family allows them to take possession of the house, forcing the Adams family to move into a hotel where they are forced to find employment. A turn of events unfolds where Morticia is held hostage in the house by Tully and Abigail, with Gomez rushing to save her and their family home. I wasn't a fan of the movie, but more so of the tv series. The Adams Family movie proved to be commercially successful, making back several times its operating budget and was followed by a sequel, Adams Family Values, two years later.

COMMODORE 64 VERSION

THE GAME

Ocean Software released The Adams Family as a very colourful run n' jump exploring platformer with about 240 different screens, approximately half-way into 1992. The game received mixed reviews, Amstrad Action #82 gave it 'Master Game' status with an overall rating of 90%, ZZAP!64 issue 86 only gave it an overall rating of 57% and Crash issue 98 gave it a Crash Smash status with an overall score of 91%. The plot resembles the movie to a certain degree. All of the family members except Gomez have been imprisoned in their own house, so its up to Gomez to explore the vast property filled with creepy crawlies and all sorts of supernatural spooky things. In order to free his family members, Gomez must locate keys that open doors, some keys will only open certain doors, so there's a bit of puzzle work thrown in as well. Once a family member is located Gomez must jump on their heads to be transported to a special screen where he must stay alive for 60 seconds. While the game looks good and has much to explore, the difficulty level is set extremely high making it a frustrating game to play. Members of social media website Lemon64 have stated controls and playability are poor to say the least.

AMSTRAD CPC VERSION

EIGHT BIT
7.0
GOOD

The Blues Brothers

Reviewed by George Bachaelor

THE MOVIE

If you are ever feeling down, depressed, stressed out then trust me watching the original Blues Brothers movie released in 1980 will take all those blues away. I am not one for musical movies but the Blues Brothers seem to just make everything feel alright no matter how bad real life is going. Unknown to me the movie actually came about from "The Blues Brothers" musical sketch on the NBC tv variety series, Saturday Night Live. Starring John Belushi and Dan Aykroyd as "Joliet" Jake and Elwood Blues, who are both brilliant, the movie features a host of extraordinary R&B, soul, and blues singers such as legendary James Brown, Cab Calloway, Aretha Franklin, Ray Charles, and John Lee Hooker. The cast also includes non-musical supporting performances by John Candy, Carrie Fisher, Charles Napier, and Henry Gibson. Set in Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A, the story tells a tale of redemption for paroled convict Jake and his brother Elwood. They set out on "a mission from God" to save the Catholic orphanage in which they were raised from being shut down. They see 'the light' in how they can save the orphanage by getting the band back together, organizing a concert to earn $5,000 needed to pay the orphanage's property tax bill. From there, an amazingly hilarious movie unfolds as they are targeted by a destructive "mystery woman" (Carrie Fisher), a group of white supremacist Neo-Nazis, a country and western band all coming to an amazing climax with the most incredible police chase towards the end.

THE GAME

Released in 1991 by Titus Software, The Blues Brothers game is not a film license, so it doesn't actually follow the original movie

WHILE BOTH VERSIONS ARE FUN TO PLAY, THE COMMODORE 64 VERSION LOOKS THE BEST

THE COMMODORE 64 VERSION (ABOVE) MAKES USE OF GOOD SCROLLING WHILE THE AMSTRAD CPC VERSION (BELOW) USES STATIC SCREENS FOR THE BACKGROUND WHICH CHANGES WHEN THE CHARACTER YOU CONTROL MOVES TO THE END OF THE SCREEN.

plot. Instead, it's a one player platformer character based license where you can either play as Jake or Elwood Blues. Your goal is to explore the 5 levels, on each level, there are some items you need to have collected so that you can perform your concert and save the orphanage at the end. Along the way, you encounter bad guys such as the police and even nuns who want to do you harm (cor blimey nuns?). Vinyl records are found all throughout if you collect a certain number they can provide you with an extra life. Other bonuses and gifts can be found in balloons and umbrellas. Some will give you a boost of energy others may stun you. The Blues Brothers is regarded as a very entertaining 8-bit platformer with cool tunes and some lovely graphics and sprites. The Amstrad CPC version is all blue, which to me is just sloppy and lazy work by the coders, but Amstrad Action #79 gave it 'Master Game' status with a whopping overall rating of 95%. ZZAP! 64 issue 81 gave the C64 version an overall score of 91% and it's not all blue so go figure?

THE GRAPHICS DOES NOT MAKE FULL USE OF THE CPC CAPABILITIES

EIGHT BIT
8.0
GOOD

STAR WARS

Reviewed by George Bachaelor

THE MOVIE

In 1977, director George Lucas would have been considered a nobody within the movie Industry. All that changed on May 25th, 1977, when Star Wars was given a limited cinema release. The rest, they say is history and today George Lucas is considered an immortal of movie making. For more than 40 years, the original Star Wars movie has been nothing short of a phenomenon, it is highly acclaimed with many critics and movie fans alike giving it the recognition of being the "greatest sci-fi movie ever made". You don't have to be an action sci-fi geek to know that in a "galaxy far far away", the evil imperial forces lead by the badest of bad guys, Darth Vader, have captured the gorgeous Princess Leia (Carrie Fisher) and are keeping her hostage so as to put an end to the rebellion against the Galactic Empire. A smallish farm boy, Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) meets up with an old Jedi master, Obi Wan Kenobi (Alec Guiness) where he becomes aware of 'the Force' as well as the 'the dark side' of the universe for the very first time. They both

AMSTRAD CPC VERSION

team up with a swashbuckling human male smuggler, Han Solo (Harrison Ford) who is the Captain of the Millennium Falcon, his co-pilot (the walking carpet) Chewbacca, the most lovable companionable droids R2-D2 (Kenny Baker) and C-3PO (Anthony Daniels), to rescue the beautiful princess, help the Rebel Alliance, and restore freedom and justice to the Galaxy. "The greatest sci-fi movie ever made" is praise of the highest order but I believe it is warranted. An epic sci-fi action flick that remains a masterpiece even to this day.

THE COMMODORE 64 VERSION SUFFERS FROM POOR FRAMERATE

THE GAME

Star Wars, the computer game was originally released by Atari as an arcade cabinet game and converted to the 8 bit home computer market by Domark software. The arcade game is quite enjoyable and fast moving with plenty of awesome star wars sounds from the movie. It's a fast paced shoot-em up action mirroring the flying battle scenes of the movie in 3D vector style graphics. I remember sitting in an arcade cabinet covered with Star Wars logos, inside you sat in front of a large aircraft controller at the front of the video game screen, it made it feel as if you were in an X – wing cockpit, i was just a kid but it was real enough for me. The 8 bit home computer versions had mixed

THE BBC MICRO VERSION IS BLOCKY BUT FAST

reviews. ZZAP!64 issue 33 gave it a 70% rating. Amstrad Action magazine #29 gave a scathing assessment of the game, giving it an overall rating of 44%, stating that another game, 3D Star Strike was basically the same game and better fun to play". In comparison, another Amstrad magazine, the March 1988 issue of CWTA (Computing With The Amstrad), gave it an overall score of 91%. Personally i would agree with Amstrad Action magazine. The game plays poorly, it doesn't have the amazing speed or awesome sounds of the arcade version, graphically it's pretty much the same but overall it's a pretty boring game to play. The Commodore 64 version suffers from even worse frame rate compared to the others.

EIGHT BIT
4.0
POOR
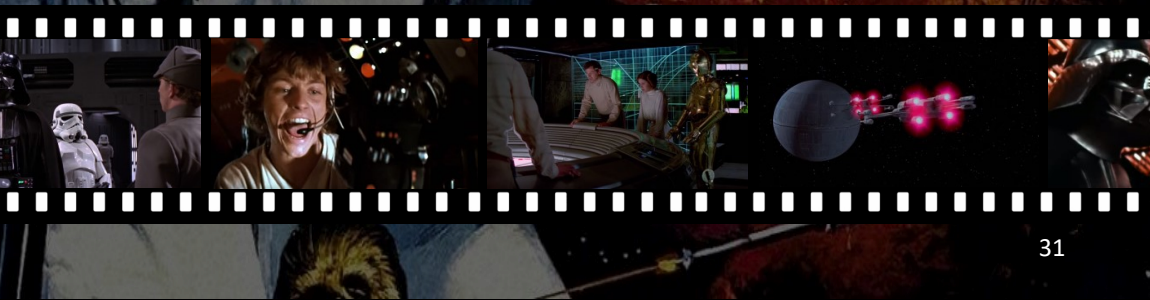
THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

Reviewed by George Bachaelor

THE MOVIE

On the 20th May 1980, three years after Star Wars had been released, the sequel, The Empire Strikes Back hit movie theatres across the world. After the heroics of blowing up the Death Star in the first movie, Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill), Han Solo (Harrison Ford), Princess Leia (Carrie Fisher) are stationed at a rebellion base on the ice world, Hoth. Imperial forces locate the hidden base, launching a devastating assault in the impenetrable AT-AT walkers. Luke flees to the Dagobah system to begin Jedi training with Master Yoda, while Han Solo, Chewbacca, Princess Leia and C-3PO run the blockade of Imperial Star Destroyers in the Millennium Falcon. The Imperials pursue them across the galaxy, eventually capturing them by double-crossing Han's old human smuggling buddy, now the Administrator of "Cloud City", Lando Calrissian (Billy Dee Williams) on the planet, Bespin. Darth Vader uses them as bait to lure Luke Skywalker to him and turns Han Solo over to Boba Fett as a prize to be delivered to crime lord Jabba the Hutt. Luke is unable to complete his Jedi training with Yoda as The Force compels him to help his friends, where he faces Darth Vader in a battle for the ages. Movie critics at the time were divided. The initial reception to the movie from the so-called movie experts had been lukewarm at best. However, Geraldine Pascall wrote in The Weekend Australian newspaper on August 9, 1980 - "that's when I knew. I hadn't understood at all, I hadn't believed. Now I have to admit it, I can hold out no longer. If I sound a bit like Han Solo arguing with C3PO, you'll understand: The Force has hit and it is irresistible. The Force may even be with me." The fans knew too, that George Lucas and his team had absolutely blown them away with the Empire Strikes Back and it is regarded now as the best movie in the entire Star Wars franchise.

WALKERS 04
WAVE 02
SHIELDS 5
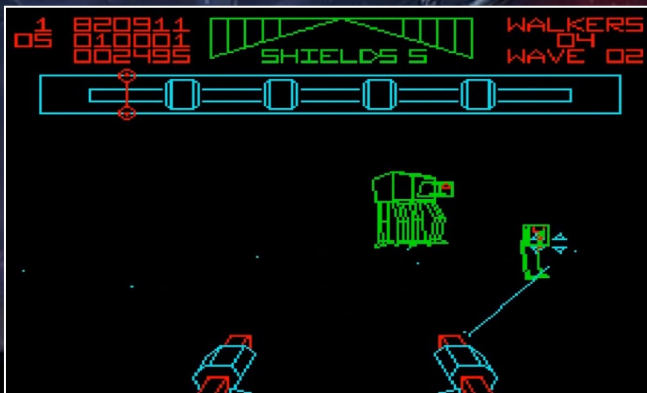
THE AT-AT WALKERS ARE EASILY RECOGNISABLE

THE GAME

DARTH VADERS EXECUTER
IS
SEARCHING FOR THE REBEL HIDEOUT

Issue 38 of Amstrad Action wrote a full page article on the Empire Strikes Back game but it was just as scathing as it first review of Star Wars, giving The Empire Strikes Back barely a pass mark with a 51% overall rating, stating "you'll get more fun hiring the video". I'd have to agree. Once again you find yourself in a vector graphics galaxy. The gameplay is repetitively
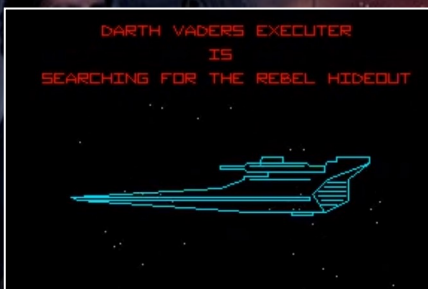
boring. Your first task is to shoot down those pesky Imperial Probes so they can't send back transmissions revealing the Rebellion's base on the ice planet Hoth but it makes no sense as you pass that level and you have to shoot down the vector graphic AT-ATs. Then supposedly flying the Millennium Falcon you shoot down the Empire's TIE fighters. Finally (bored yet? I know I am!), you have to successfully navigate through a deadly asteroid field maintaining your shields. Even the inclusion of some half decent sounds and the tune of the Star Wars anthem can't save it from being a terrible game as it's just so slow and jerky. Some other magazine reviews ratings C&VG Jan 91 = 42%. Commodore Force Jul 93 = 63%. Commodore User Sep 88 = 6/10. Zzap! Sep 88 = 74%

JEDI
3 WAVE PROBOTS
SHOOT PROBOTS AND THEIR TRANSMISSIONS

COMMODORE 64 VERSION

EIGHT BIT
4.0
POOR

STAR WARS
RETURN OF THE JEDI

Reviewed by George Bachaelor

THE MOVIE

On May 25, 1983, The Return of the Jedi was released in movie theatres, this time around the initial reception from critics was generally very positive. It's an entertaining movie bring closure to Star Wars and The Empire Strikes Back, with a much happier ending than the previous two movies. While it's debatable whether Star Wars or The Empire Strikes Back is the best movie in the Star Wars franchise, I would clearly rank this as the third best out of all the Star Wars movies made so far. Luke Skywalker with the help of Princess Leia, Lando Calrissian, Chewbacca, C-3PO, and R2-D2 initiate a plan to rescue Han Solo from Jabba the Hutt in Jabba's palace on Tatooine. Unfortunately, the plan falls apart and they become Jabba's captives. Just before Luke is about to be fed to an enormous sand dwelling monster, with the help of R2D2, Luke is able to free himself and his friends in a brief battle, where Jabba the Hutt is killed. Han, Princess Leia, Lando Calrissian, Chewbacca and C-3PO rendezvous with the Rebel Alliance, learning that the Empire has been constructing a new Death Star under the supervision of the Emperor himself, which happens to be protected by an energy shield on the forest moon of Endor. Meanwhile Luke returns to the Dagobah system where he finds Master Yoda is dying and he is informed that Darth Vader is his father. The ending encompasses three final battle's with Han, Princess Leia, Chewbacca and the Ewoks overcoming Imperial forces at the shield generator on Endor. In space with the Rebel Alliance battling the Empire's fleet to destroy the new Death Star and the internal battle of Luke resisting the pull of the dark side to join forces with his father Darth Vader and the Emperor.

AMSTRAD CPC VERSION

WHILE THE PREVIOUS TWO STAR WARS GAMES WERE SLOWER ON THE COMMODORE 64, IN THIS GAME THE SPRITE CAPABILITIES OF THE VIC II CAN BE USED TO SPECTACULAR EFFECT. IT'S THE ONLY VERSION WHERE THERE'S A TRUE SENSE OF SPEED.

THE GAME

The Return of the Jedi game was released around 1989, again by Domark Software. Once again based on the arcade license of the film. This time around, gone were the 3d vector style graphics from the previous two games. Instead, a more conventional isometric scrolling game with large sprites was used, Amstrad Action #41 reacted more positively to the change giving it an overall of 82%. Other magazine reviews

ZX SPECTRUM VERSION

ratings ACE, March 1989 = 854. Commodore Force, August 1993 = 66%. Commodore User, January 1989 = 58%. Games Machine, February 1989 = 73% and Zzap! February 1989 = 61%. The first level involves guiding Princess Leia through the forests of Endor on a speeder bike avoiding Stormtroopers and the trees to get to the Ewoks hideout. Stage 2 sees you interchanging between controlling an AT-ST, where you avoid large timber logs and flying the Millennium Falcon shooting at Tie Fighters. The main goal here is to blow up the central reactor hidden in the forest. Stage three is the final stage which sees you flying the Millennium Falcon into the Death Star's core with the aim of blowing up the main reactor. With a more movie-like feel, It may look nice in parts but it's a very short game with limited references to the movie itself.

EIGHT BIT
5.0
AVERAGE
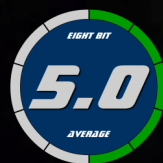
COBRA

Reviewed by George Bachaelor

THE MOVIE

The 1986 film Cobra for me, was an unflattering movie, it never seemed to go anywhere. I'd been brought up on Sylvester Stallone classics Rocky (1976), Rocky II (1979), Rocky III (1982) and Rambo (1982), in contrast Cobra was such a huge disappointment. What i remember most about the movie is the cool hot rod being driven by 'Cobra', the lead character, a bad-arse 1950's Mercury leadsled, fitted with a nitrous-sucking Chev small-block. The other memorable thing from the movie was the coolest set of sunglasses you ever saw used in the marketing posters with the slogan "Crime is a disease, he is the cure" or words to that effect. As for the movie, it's about a no questions asked Lieutenant by the name of Marion Cobretti or "Cobra" (Sylvester Stallone), who is a member of the Los Angeles Police Department's elite division known as the "Zombie Squad". He's the guy the LAPD call upon to take on the jobs that no ones wants to do. The movie starts off interesting with a hostage scene in a local supermarket where Cobra is called upon to take out members of the supremacist group called "The New World". After the incident, Cobra is admonished by Detective Monte (Andrew

AMSTRAD CPC VERSION

COMMODORE 64 VERSION

ZX SPECTRUM VERSION

Robinson) for his seeming disregard for police procedures and protocols. Later model and businesswoman Ingrid Knudsen (Birgitte Nielsen) becomes the "The New World" gang's main target after she witnessed their members on a killing spree and Cobra forms a relationship with her vowing to protect her, so he takes on the "The New World" gang in a pool of blood and bullets. Wikipedia says the film received negative reviews, with much criticism focused on the overuse of genre tropes, yet it debuted at the number one spot on the U.S. box office and became a financial success and is now considered a cult classic. I am not so sure I would be calling it a cult classic for any positive reasons.

THE GAME

Released by Ocean Software around April 1987, the game is a one person shoot em' up platformer. Universally negatively slated at the time of release on all 8bit system for being such a joke of a game. Amstrad Action #20 gave it

30% overall and ZZAP!64 gave it an even worse score of only 13% overall. Comments from the Amstrad Action review such as "a very poxy game" and "one of the worst game-of-the-films I've seen", describe how pathetic the game is to play. Comments you wouldn't normally associate with games released by Ocean software. Gameplay between the film and game are similar in that over 8 levels you must shoot the bad guys and rescue beautiful Ingrid from the evil Night Slasher. The programmers did not make it possible for you to kill the Night Slasher, so there was no way to completely finish the game. Other than that there's not much reference to the movie. During the game, burgers appear that you need to eat to get better weapons like knives and guns, for some unknown reason dive-bombing ducks attack you and you're like where was this in the movie? Graphics and sounds are awful, the only good thing about the game is the artwork on the loading screen.

EIGHT BIT
2.0
VERY POOR

HUDSON HAWK

Reviewed by George Bachaelor

THE MOVIE

Actor Bruce Willis at the time of 1991 was more known for his action blockbuster movies Die Hard (1988) and Die Hard 2 (1990), so it was kind of strange seeing him appearing in a singing /comedy /action flick like Hudson Hawk. It's a strange film, one that has an even stranger plot. The start of the movie shows Leonardo Da Vinci making a machine in 1481, that could turn lead into gold. Master burglar and safe-cracker Eddie "Hudson Hawk" Hawkins (Bruce Willis), attempts to celebrate his first day of parole from prison by sitting down with a nice cappuccino. Unfortunately for him, the enjoyment of drinking a cappuccino continues to remain out of his reach (just like when he was in prison), as Eddie is blackmailed by a range of unscrupulous people including his own parole officer, a Mafia family headed by the Mario Brothers and the CIA (of course they have their fingers in a lot of pies) to undertake several high profile and dangerous art heists. If he refuses to comply Eddie's friend, Tommy "Five-Tone" Messina (Danny Aiello) will be killed. The real reason they want Eddie to steal the artworks is so they can get their hands on Leonardo Davinci's gold making machine. Begrudgingly Eddie undertakes the heists his blackmailers are demanding of him, while throughout the adventure, Eddie is foiled in his attempts to drink a cappuccino. Many incidents occur between

THE COMMODORE 64 VERSION LOOKS THE BEST

ZX SPECTRUM VERSION

Eddie and his blackmailers, with the movie ending in a final showdown and Eddie finally getting to taste a cappuccino. The movie was highly criticized, being widely known as a flop. It is said the movie cost $65 million and only made $17.2 million in return at the box office.

THE GAME

Released by Ocean software early on in 1992 as a one player platformer consisting of mini sub-levels with puzzles to solve within three separate levels. Notable at the time was the cost of the game. Ocean and other software houses had jacked up software prices, this one costing 10.99 for a tape and 15.99 for a disk version. While the movie was a failure, the game enjoyed success at the magazine review tables. Amstrad Action #78 gave it an overall rating of 94% and ZZAP!64 issue 79 gave it an overall rating of 82%. Gameplay is loosely based on the film. You play as Eddie or "Hudson Hawk". You need to solve the puzzle elements such as working out how to reach a high

AMSTRAD CPC VERSION

window or climbing over large boxes as Eddie is a small chap in the game. Graphically it's ok, the Amstrad CPC version has no music and once again models an all blue screen (seriously Ocean did you become that lazy with the 8 bits and the CPC towards the end ?).

Movement of Eddie is quite sluggish which is rather disappointing, the game itself is quite easy, so you will probably enjoy it somewhat.

EIGHT BIT
7.0
GOOD

TOP GUN

Reviewed by John Kavanagh

THE MOVIE

Spectacular visuals, fantastic soundtrack and a story that contained action, drama and romance in equal measures secured the movie's runaway success, making over 356 million dollars worldwide.

The movie is about a daredevil fighter pilot (Tom Cruise) being sent to Top Gun for advanced training. There he competes with other fighter pilots. A love interest and an international crisis keeps the story interesting.

THE GAME

Sadly, there's nothing about the game to keep you interested. Most games that involve flying a fighter jet in first perspective tend to have at the very least, a horizon, not just a dotted line.

This makes the game very boring to watch. Even the wireframe animation of the enemy aircraft makes no sense. At times it seems to be flying backwards and sideways. This is (probably) due to not having a reference of speed, apart from being told your speed at the top right of the screen.

The gameplay is simple, shoot down the enemy before they shoot you. Your cockpit view is on the left while theirs is on the right. A redeeming feature of the game is the two player option so that two people can share in the misery instead of just one. This was the first game I bought for the Amstrad CPC after playing all the supplied Amsoft games. After a few minutes of play, I swiftly went back to playing Harrier Attack!

EIGHT BIT
3.5
POOR
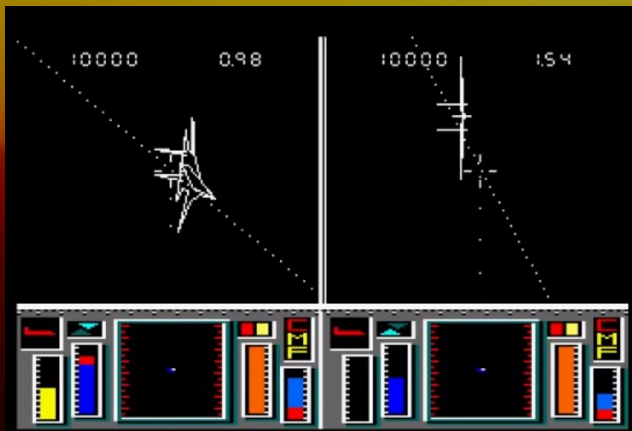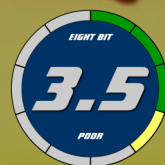
SADLY THE GRAPHICS DOESN'T GET BETTER THAN THIS ON ANY FORMAT. BAD GRAPHICS, BAD AUDIO AND BAD GAMEPLAY.

MOVIE DETAILS
Name: Top Gun
Year: 1986
Budget: $ 15 million
Gross: $ 179.8 million (USA)
Director: Tony Scott
Starring: Tom Cruise, Kelly McGillis, Val Kilmer

GAME DETAILS
Year: 1986
8-bit Computer Versions:
Amstrad CPC, Commodore 64, ZX Spectrum.

VIDEOPACOLYPZ G2012

Multi disciplinary Dutch artist Mike Redman has many projects to his name. As an award winning documentary filmmaker, visual artist and music producer he is internationally renowned. One of his well known projects is 'Deformer', a music project that fuses various music genres into powerful compositions that can therefore not easily be categorised. Soundtrack meets Oldschool Jungle and electronica reinforces live instrumentation. The music can drive people crazy in the clubs, but it certainly has more depth than that as its only purpose. It's experimental and overall pretty dark when it comes to atmosphere.

In 2007 Mike Redman used his Deformer alias to develop a project based on an almost forgotten game console. Instead of getting inspiration from the more famous game consoles that have been used many times for projects other than gaming, Redman embraced Philips' Videopac G7000. The console, first released in 1978 in Europe , is also known as the Magnavox Odyssey 2 in the USA. The Videopac had great potential when it was released and did well on the market, though eventually it was overshadowed by other brands and discontinued in 1984. The Videopac was Mike Redman's first game console, but not only because out of nostalgic motivations did he re-animate the Videopac, Redman was challenged by the limitations of the console. With the limited choice of sounds coming from this computer, a complete album was produced. The 8-bit visuals became another source of inspiration to create a complete audio/visual project entitled: Videopacolypz G2012. Referring to the apocalyptic prophecies of the 2012 Mayan calendar at that time, Redman integrated the human dependence on computers and computer technology, highlighting the catastrophic outcome if technology were infected with a virus, a grim scenario in which man no longer plays a game, but where the tables are turned. Videopacolypz G2012 premiered in 2011 and received critical acclaim. Luckily the Mayan prophecy wasn't fulfilled, but it did leave us an apocalyptic soundtrack for future generations to enjoy: Videopacolypz G2012.

REDRUM RECORDZ

ET
PHONE HOME!

Reviewed by Bill Lange

E.T. Phone Home!, based on the famous Steven Spielberg movie, is an adventure game for all Atari 8-bit home computers. It was originally released in 16K cartridge format by Atari in 1983.

In the Atari 8-bit version of E.T., you control young Elliott, searching in and around his neighborhood for hidden pieces, from which E.T. can build a transmitter to call his spaceship. As Elliott is looking for the hidden pieces, he must outwit the government agents and scientists who are searching for him and trying to steal and re-hide the transmitter pieces. E.T. is losing energy fast, so you are also racing the clock. If you are able to find all the transmitter pieces, E.T. will be able to "phone home" and his spaceship will come take him away … if you return him to the rendezvous point in time.

The game has a smoothly scrolling playfield, fast animation, digital music and sound as well as voice synthesis all programmed into a 16K ROM cartridge. The redefined character graphics map scrolls much like Eastern Front 1941 or GETAWAY! to show Elliott's suburban neighborhood and the surrounding forest areas.

To play E.T. Phone Home!, you will need an Atari compatible joystick plugged into the first controller jack. Press the OPTION key to choose the level of difficulty. Level 1 is the easiest and Level 9 is the hardest. At the lower levels of difficulty, you need to only find a few missing transmitter pieces to complete the game, at higher difficulty levels, more transmitter pieces are required. Press the START key (or the joystick button) to begin the game. Press the SPACEBAR on the computer keyboard to PAUSE/RESUME the game action.

The joystick button handles many functions within the game: it can be used to START/RESTART the game, it allows Elliot to pickup transmitter pieces if he is currently touching one, it allows Elliot to speedily run away from the agents chasing him and finally, it allows Elliot to communicate with E.T. telepathically to see what pieces are required. Using telepathy uses up E.T.'s remaining energy at a faster pace, so use it sparingly. To be able to see transmitter

capabilities. It has fast, smooth scrolling and animation. It is more pixelated and less colorful than some other similar scrolling-map style games such as GETAWAY! From the Atari Program Exchange (APX), but the map graphics nicely capture the suburbia setting of the game.

The game has really nice software-based voice synthesis as well as great E.T.-themed digital music. The in-game sound effects are less interesting.
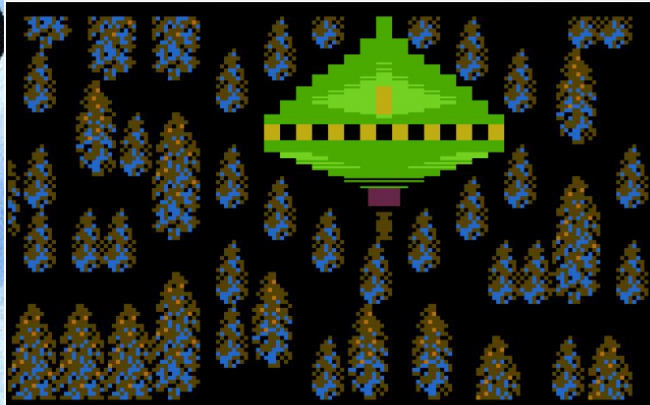
pieces in the wild, Elliot must be "walking", not "running". Elliot must pick up pieces, which have to match in both shape and color to what E.T. needs, and return them to Elliot's house, one at a time. Once all of the required pieces are returned to Elliot's house, E.T. will let you know by speaking to you. Finally, you must navigate E.T. to the rendezvous point.

E.T. Phone Home! makes good use of the Atari 8-bit computer's character set redefinition, fine scrolling and Player/Missile Graphics

E.T. Phone Home! is a fairly simple game that follows the plot of the famous movie. It is a completely different game than its older brother, E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial, for the Atari VCS/2600. It is an underrated game, especially for younger kids. Give it a try for yourself.

EIGHT BIT
7.5
GOOD

INTO THE EAGLE'S NEST

Reviewed by Paul Monopoli ● Atari 8-bit ● Released 1988 (1986/7 other formats)

A visit to a hostile fortress, plenty of enemy solders to kill, ammo and health packs to collect, and it was released 6 years before a certain first person shooter by id Software!

Released by Pandora in 1986, Into the Eagle's Nest was the first game that I purchased for my Amstrad CPC in 1988. Last year I stumbled upon a copy of game for the Atari XE at my local Cash Converters store, so I thought it might be interesting to try a different version of it.

An overhead shooter, the depth of *Into the Eagles Nest* captivated me as a child. Your missions are to rescue your comrades, destroy the fortress and have fun doing it! The dark shading used throughout the game helps to provide an eerie atmosphere, something seen in later overhead titles such as Alien Breed.

On the Atari XE, the first thing I noticed is that the map of the fortress is different to the version I grew up with. This presented an interesting learning curve, as I was pretty familiar with the maps on the Amstrad. With the slight graphical differences between the two versions, it felt like I was playing a sequel to the original game rather than a port.

The graphics are simple, with your soldier donning green and the enemy wearing grey. The HUD is displayed nicely along the right of the play area, and updates will scroll across the bottom of the screen. This is an improvement over the Amstrad version, which requires you to press the Escape key to show the HUD (though in some versions of the game it's a different key), and the game will pause briefly, displaying a message when you've picked something up. I don't need to be told every time I find a key, so having it scroll along the bottom of the screen where I can simply ignore it is a welcome change.

A tune plays on the title screen, though there is no in-game music and sound effects are sparse. I got so sick of hearing my feet shuffling along the floor and the popping of the gun that I turned the sound off.

Early on in the game you will find a lift key, allowing you to explore other levels in the

THE ATARI 8-BIT VERSION CAME ON CARTRIDGE

fortress. It's important to learn how everything is laid out, as running out of keys is one of the dangers that await you. You don't want to accidentally open 2 doors that lead to the same place from different sides. The other big problem you will face is running out of ammunition. There are ammo reserves scattered throughout the game, so only take what you need and remember where they are so you can return when you need to.

Enemy soldiers take 2 hits to kill, but beware, as they can appear in areas you had previously cleared. You can take up to 50 hits, but food can be found that will restore your health. Jewellery that you pick up will increase your score, but is otherwise useless.

This is a game that I returned to many times when I was younger, and playing a different version is rather refreshing after years of bashing away on the Amstrad CPC. With smooth gameplay, clearly defined graphics and a tight control system, Into the Eagle's Nest is an underrated classic that has never received the attention it deserves.

THE GRAPHICS ARE SIMPLE BUT THEY WORK WITH THE TONE OF THE GAME

YOU HAVE FOUND A KEY, BUT IS IT SAFE TO ENTER?

EIGHT BIT SCORE

GRAPHICS
The simplicity of its graphics works with the tone of the game.

7.0 EIGHT BIT — GOOD

AUDIO
Play some music in the background and leave the volume low or off.

2.0 EIGHT BIT — VERY POOR
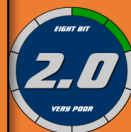
PLAYABILITY
Good controls and an easy learning curve.

8.0 EIGHT BIT — GOOD

LASTABILITY
Getting through the game's 4 missions will last you a while.

7.0 EIGHT BIT — GOOD
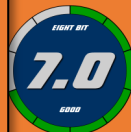
OVERALL
A solid overhead shooter that will keep you coming back for more.

8.0 EIGHT BIT — GOOD

SEGA

SC-3000H

Paul Monopoli looks at a Yeno branded SEGA SC-3000H but not everything went according to plan.

In 1983 Sega unleashed the SC-3000 home computer and the SG-1000 home console. Originally designed to be just a computer, the pending excitement of the Nintendo Famicom inspired Sega to 'consolise' their new micro. Though moderately successful in Japan, the SC-3000 home computer would be released in Australia, Europe and New Zealand to little acclaim. The SG-1000 console was never released outside Japan, though clone systems have been found in the wild.

THE YENO SC-300H BOX ART

While the SG-1000 console would receive upgraded releases, eventually becoming the Sega Master System the SC-3000 computer only received a cosmetic upgrade with the SC-3000H. I'm getting a little ahead of myself though.

As an Australian retro video games collector I often find myself visiting garage sales and markets. It was during one of these trips in 2003 that I stumbled upon a Sega SC-3000 computer, released in Australia by John Sands. While John Sands were primarily known as a distributor of board games in Australia, they also dipped their toes into the home electronics market. I was unaware of the computer's existence but I purchased it anyway, then bought it home to do some research on it.

The 80s home computer market in Australia makes for some interesting reading, as many of the big names either didn't release their systems here, or they licensed distribution to local importers. Amstrad used AWA to sell their computers until 1988 when they setup shop down under, while Dick Smith Electronics distributed several systems, including the Atari 8-bit line.

The keyboard on the SC-3000 featured rubbery, push in buttons similar to the original ZX

Spectrum. Cartridges were the primary media used and these would be inserted into the right hand side of the computer. Connections for a tape drive and a printer were provided on the rear, as well as power and graphical output. The computer has the ability to connect to the Sega Super Control System, which added on an RS-232C interface, and an Amstrad style 3" disc drive.

Though the computer comes with a BASIC cartridge and manual, I didn't fancy trying to code anything with those keys. The kit I purchased came with two games, one of which I can't remember, with the other being Safari Hunting.

A simple game, Safari Hunting puts a rifle in your hands and dumps you in the jungle, with the goal of capturing animals. The graphics are colourful, particularly for an early 80s 8-bit game, and the sound effects are simple beeps for walking, with compressed air sounds being used for shooting. While I enjoyed the game, keeping a computer for a single game wasn't an economical use of space so I sold the kit for a profit.

I put the SC-3000 out of my mind until ten years later, when a small retro gaming shop opened

near my house. As I opened the rickety door the owner greeted me, though something above his head caught my gaze. On the top shelf behind the counter were five white boxes, with what looked like a Sega SC-3000 pictured on them. There were differences, with the keyboard being standard, instead of having rubbery keys, and the Sega logo was nowhere to be found. Instead the brand name used was Yeno. I promptly purchased one of these computers for $100AU, took it home and never used it.

Earlier in this piece I mentioned that the SC-3000 was re-released with a cosmetic upgrade. That upgrade, known as the SC-3000H, was designed to give the computer a standard keyboard, allowing bedroom coders to tap away on their creations, completing them in a more timely and less stressful manner.

I mentioned that I have never used this computer, and upon inspection it appears that it has remained in its box since the day it left the factory. The front and back of the box are identical, with an image of the computer against a red and white background with the sides of the box showing how the computer can be used for games, music and business. There is also a handle on the top of the box for portability.

The box opens from the top using a double flap. Once it is open, the first thing you see is a smaller cardboard box with foam inserts on either side of it, and a small piece of foam underneath it.

The small cardboard box contains a chunky power brick, common with many Sega systems. The power brick states that it is a "Sega" adapter, and can be used with the SG-1000, SC-3000 and SP-400 models. While box shows that the Yeno branding is on the computer itself, it is nowhere to be seen on this power supply.

The brick has a European power connector. What is interesting about this is that a number of these units were sold in Australia around the time I purchased mine, and none of them contains a cable designed for Australian power

SCART CABLE FOR USE WITH EUROPEAN TELEVISIONS

points. I have done a reasonable amount of research on how these computers came to be sold on the other side of the world, but I have yet to find an answer.

Behind the power supply box were a couple of small, white, unmarked boxes. These contained unlabeled cartridges. I was unable to find the labels for these carts in the boxes they came in. Maybe they're in another part of the packaging.

The video cable could be found behind the white boxes. This contains a SCART connection, the standard for European TVs, but not so for those sold in Australia.

Strangely, I was unable to find anything else in the box. I assumed that there had to be some form of documentation somewhere. Maybe it was with the computer itself, or has been buried down the bottom. I pulled the computer out,

SEGA BRANDED POWER ADAPTER

which bought the side foam inserts with it and found nothing else in the box.

The top of the computer contains a similar keyboard layout to the original SC-3000 I owned, complete with green power light.

The bottom of the computer shows a large, misleading, 64k sticker. Technically it's 32k of RAM with 32k of ROM. Underneath that is a Sega sticker, with a small sticker containing the word "France" stuck on top of that.

Though the power and video connections are not the Australian standard, I've been collecting retro hardware long enough to be prepared for this. I have several adapters ready to go, and the voltage should work fine. After connecting the computer to the power, and the SCART cable to the back of my monitor, I turned the computer on in anticipation and saw the green power light turn on.

They say the truth should never get in the way of a good story, but unfortunately the story has to end here. The computer would only display a black, wavy screen with a buzzing noise that got steadily louder. I tried both cartridges, and the video cable for my Sega Master System 1 and ended up with the exact same problem.

So the power supply appears to be working, and 2 video cables gave the same result. Testing the mystery cartridges yields no joy, which leads me to think there may be a fault with the computer itself. I'm not sure what the problem would be, but I guess it's off to get it repaired.

In the meantime, I wonder what was on those cartridges…

INSIDE A TYPICAL SC-3000 CARTRIDGE

TAPE IN AND OUT, 7-PIN PRINTER PORT AND 8-PIN COMPOSITE VIDEO. TO THE RIGHT (NOT VISIBLE) IS RF OUTPUT AND TO THE LEFT, THE POWER SWITCH AND POWER INPUT (NOT VISIBLE).

THE CARTRIDGE PORT IS THE MOST COMMON PROBLEM WITH THE COMPUTER NOT WORKING. LUCKILY, A GOOD CLEANING WITH A ALCOHOL SOAKED BALL TEND TO FIX IT.

TWO STANDARD DB9 JOYSTICK PORTS.

MISLEADING STICKER, IT ACTUALLY HAS 32K OF ROM AND 32K OF RAM.

By Stuart Williams

Begin Adventuring with a Sinclair Spectrum

Are you thinking of taking up adventure gaming for the first time, or are you looking to relive fond memories of past quests for fortune and glory? Either way, unless you are already committed to a particular home micro, there is a great deal to be said for beginning your journey through the world of text and graphic adventures (sometimes known as 'interactive fiction') in the company of the famous Sinclair ZX Spectrum, a phenomenally popular eight bit British home computer of the 1980s which was created by Sinclair Research, headed by the legendary, if a little eccentric, Sir Clive Sinclair (aka 'Uncle Clive'). Getting started in Spectrum adventuring is the theme of this article.

The 'Speccy', as it became fondly known to its millions of original users, had the advantage of being one of the cheapest colour home computers of its day, with a Z80 processor, a cheap storage system (audio cassette), and a useful amount of RAM memory (from 16k-128k, but generally 48k). All that was required for a video display was an ordinary television set. Such was the Spectrum's popularity that it came to be sold everywhere in the UK, both by specialist computer shops and mainstream High Street retailers, and it created an industry which came to produce many thousands of software progRAMs, particularly games, and whose influence is still felt today. Amongst those progRAMs were many hundreds of adventure games; classic text adventures, text and

graphics adventures. And most of those games are still easily available today, either as collectable originals or free online downloads. There is even still a small, but growing, cottage industry of homebrew developers still making new games for the Spectrum, though you won't find their products in W.H. Smiths anymore.

But whether you are a newcomer to adventure gaming, or an old hand, where should you start today? Do you dive in feet-first and buy an old computer, assuming you don't already have a Spectrum up in your loft? Or try out software-based machine emulation on your Mac, PC or Linux machine? And if you do decide to go for the full on retro adventuring experience, which Sinclair Spectrum should you buy, what accessories might you need, where can you find games - and how do you begin? Let me try and give you a few pointers.

Emulation speculation

If you already have a perfectly good modern desktop computer or laptop (pretty much guaranteed if you're reading this), or even one of the cheap and ever-popular Linux-based Raspberry Pi's which are, ironically, the descendants of Sinclair's greatest competitors, Acorn, it certainly makes economic sense to investigate Spectrum emulation before you even consider splashing the cash for the real thing. After all, many such emulators are available to download off the web, many free of charge, and emulated systems have hundreds or even thousands of games easily available online. With a few downloads and a couple of clicks, then, in very little time you could be taking your first ever steps on a digital quest to fortune and glory or returning to that absorbing hobby you used to enjoy decades ago. Emulators like FUSE, Spectaculator, ZESarUX and many similar progRAMs, some even available for use on handheld devices using iOS and Android, are all rightly popular, especially as a place to start before you step into the minefield of finding and buying a real vintage computer for that nostalgic retro experience,

and before building a physical collection of games. Once you get into all that, there are so many choices to make! And so much money to spend…

Cheap and cheerful

Cost of collectable hardware and software is most certainly is a factor, with retro computing and retro gaming becoming increasingly popular, and prices ever on the rise, which makes price as significant a reason for starting out with a Speccy now as it was back in the day – but which one? By the mid-1980s there was a whole range of them on offer. In those days, I was often asked by friends and acquaintances about which home computer to buy. Almost inevitably, for game playing at modest expense, I would end up recommending 'Uncle Clive' Sinclair's original 1982 baby, the little rubber-keyed 48k Sinclair Spectrum, or one of its later, hard-keyed variations. They were quite capable of hosting a good adventure game with text or added graphics, and were very popular with British adventure gamers.

In the UK, at least, there were masses of affordably-priced games available for the Speccy on tape, and the shops and magazines were full of all manner of them, including many on sale by mail order, as was the Spectrum itself at first, following in the steps of its smaller, less sophisticated black-and-white predecessors the Sinclair ZX80 and ZX81. Of course, arcade games always greatly outnumbered adventures in popularity, but this still meant that, over time, there would be many, many adventure games available for the Sinclair micros.

A cottage industry

Importantly from the point of view of the adventure game aficionado, too, the enormous popularity of the Sinclair Spectrum meant that the market could support a diverse range of game types at many levels, whether they be the sometimes (but not always) less sophisticated home-grown products developed during the DIY adventure writing revolution which was ushered in by Welsh company Gilsoft a year after the arrival of the 48k Spectrum. Their remarkable adventure writing package The Quill, written by Graham Yeandle, and its more sophisticated 1986 successor the Professional Adventure Writing System (PAWS), allowed a fascinating (and very collectable) cottage industry in adventure games to develop in parallel to the high-end, major licensed games published by the top games software houses of the day, such as The Hobbit from Melbourne House. More than 450 commercial games for the Spectrum were created using The Quill, and over 400 using PAWS. Even some of the earliest and classic ranges of adventure games which had previously been published for much more expensive first-generation micros such as the Apple II, Tandy TRS-80 or Commodore Pet, such as those seminal games created by Scott Adams for his Adventure International company in the USA, were eventually ported to 'Uncle Clive's' humble Speccy by British progRAMmers.

GET SPECCY. But which one?

So, emulation aside, the benefits of starting out in adventuring with a Sinclair Spectrum are clear. Being made in vast numbers (estimated at five million between 1982-1992, not counting clones), there are still plenty of them around, and they are some of the cheapest retro computers you can buy. But which Speccy should you buy today? The Spectrum was released as eight different models, ranging from the entry level (and probably most collectable, but least usable) issue 1 with 16 KB RAM released in 1982, via the ubiquitous 48k models, to a variety of 128k RAM machines and even the Amstrad-manufactured ZX Spectrum +3 with 128 KB RAM and built in floppy disk drive in 1987. In fact, there were so many versions, some deceptively similar, that it's well worth a quick look at your options – and a recommendation – before you go online looking to buy a computer. Here's my take on which Speccy to buy.
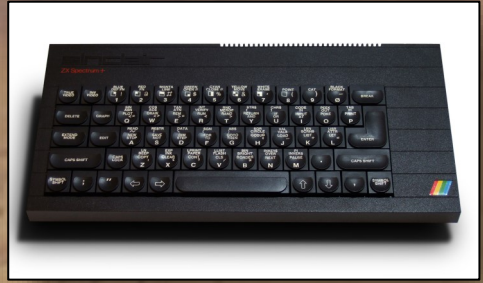
ZX Spectrum 16K/48K

AN ISSUE 2, 1982 ZX SPECTRUM 48K
(BILL BERTAM—WIKIPEDIA)

ZX SPECTRUM+ (WIKIPEDIA)

The original ZX Spectrum is sometimes, but not always, fondly remembered for its rubber mat keyboard, diminutive black case and distinctive rainbow motif. It was originally released on 23 April 1982 with 16K of RAM for £125 or with 48 KB for £175; these prices were later reduced to £99 and £129 respectively. Owners of the 16K model could purchase an internal 32K RAM upgrade, which for early Issue 1 machines consisted of a daughterboard. Later issue machines required the fitting of 8 dynamic RAM chips and a few TTL chips. Users could post their 16K Spectrums to Sinclair to be upgraded to 48 K versions. Later revisions contained 64 KB of memory but were configured such that only 48 KB were usable. External 32K RAM packs that mounted in the rear expansion slot were available from third parties. Both machines had 16 KB of onboard ROM. These days, the issue 1 and 16k Spectrums are really collector's items, not so much users, so if you go for an original Speccy, the best bet is a 48k issue 2 onwards, with the late issue 4A/B being especially recommended by experts, and if you have one of these stuck up the loft from your childhood days, you're in clover!

ZX Spectrum+

Not everyone was keen on the squishy rubber mat-and-membrane feel of the original Spectrum keyboard, so a couple of years after the original, in June 1984, plans were made to 'upgrade' the original with a new case and a more modern-looking, but still membrane-based, hard plastic keyboard. It wasn't a great keyboard, being a little stiff to use, but many think it better than the original. The Speccy 'plus' also had a bigger, smarter-looking, squared-off injection moulded case with a reset button fitted, which saved some wear and tear on the power socket. The new case was also sold on its own so that owners of original machines could do the upgrade themselves. The ZX Spectrum+ was a good marketing ploy, making the now aging 48k Spectrum (with which it was electronically identical) look like a newer, smarter computer, and tying it, at least stylistically, into its new (but incompatible) 'big brother', the Sinclair QL (Quantum Leap, originally code-named the ZX83). The 8/16 bit (16 bit internally, 8 bit data bus) QL, which was not a big success, was intended as a business machine, but like most retro computers today, much of the current popular QL interest is in games, and even now adventure games are being produced for it on a small scale.

ZX SPECTRUM 128 (WIKIPEDIA)

ZX Spectrum 128

Probably the most sought-after (and generally most expensive) model of Spectrum these days is the original 128K RAM version, affectionately known as the ''toastrack', after the large external heatsink on the right-hand end, which cools the internal 7805 voltage regulator. Otherwise, it looks much like the Spectrum+. The 'toastrack' was developed in 1985 by Sinclair, working with their Spanish distributor Investrónica, who helped adapt the ZX Spectrum+ to the Spanish market. New features included 128K RAM, three-channel audio via the AY-3-8912 chip, MIDI compatibility, an RS-232 serial port, an RGB monitor port, 32 KB of ROM including an improved BASIC editor, and an optional external keypad. The ZX Spectrum 128 had no internal speaker, unlike its predecessors. Sound was produced from the television speaker instead. The Spanish version had the "128K" logo in white; the British one had the same logo in red. While these extras were all good things to have, and if you can afford a 'toastrack' there is much to be said for it, apart from the RGB output the advantages were limited in practice, as the biggest market for Spectrum games was always for the 48k RAM models, and much smaller numbers of 128K were published until quite late in the computer's life, by which time the writing was on the wall for Sinclair as a company.

The 'toastrack' was the last of the 'real' Sinclair ZX Spectrums, and so it came to pass that, after the demise of Sinclair Research and the sale of its brand, computer assets and intellectual property to one of Sinclair's greatest enemies, Alan Sugar, in 1986, came the Amstrad Spectrums.

ZX Spectrum +2 (grey)

ZX SPECTRUM +2 (STUART BRADY—WIKIPEDIA)

The ZX Spectrum +2 was Amstrad's first Spectrum, and ironically, despite annoying hardcore veterans of the 'playground wars' of the early 1980s, as well as programmers (who missed the Sinclair BASIC keywords on the keys of original Sinclair machines, which were left off the new spring-loaded standard keyboard), the grey-cased +2 is actually the best Spectrum to buy now, at least for gamers and newcomers to the Sinclair range. This ZX Spectrum +2 was based in part on the 'toastrack', and having both 48K and 128K compatibility, also benefited from the combined wisdom and manufacturing experience of both Amstrad and Sinclair, being broadly the most compatible with all earlier models of Spectrum, and being the most reliable in loading cassettes, having as it does a built-in datacorder, like the Amstrad CPC464. No more trying to find a compatible recorder and fiddle around with cables and sound levels.

The last Speccies

What about the later Amstrad Spectrums? There's the 3" floppy disk-based Amstrad-styled +3, which can also run CP/M, and the black, cassette-based +2A, a hacked version of the +3. Also, two odd variants of these, the +2B and +3B. These all add certain incompatibilities due to internal changes including (from the black +2A onwards) on the edge connector, and issues like distortion of sound (correctable) on the +3. However, for someone looking to get started with a Spectrum, especially bearing in mind the vast majority of games are on cassette, they are probably best avoided unless you already have one, or unless you contract the Sinclair collecting bug!

Send in the Clones

A number of official (Timex USA) and unofficial (often Russian) ZX Spectrum clones were manufactured in other parts of the world, both during and after the passing of the 'real' Sinclair range (some hard-core Speccy fans might even call the Amstrad machines clones). These can be popular with collectors, but are not the best

DIDAKTIK M, CLONE OF COMPUTER ZX SPECTRUM, PRODUCED IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA SINCE 1990 (MICHAL POHORELSKY—WIKIPEDIA)

TIMEX SINCLAIR 2068 (GREGORY F MAXWELL— WIKIPEDIA)

place to start for the gamer or Sinclair newcomer. There are even modern clones and more advanced developments of the Sinclair Spectrum, most recently based on FPGA circuitry, including the most recent officially licensed 'clone', the more powerful, but still compatible, Sinclair ZX Spectrum Next, which we aim to look at in future.

RENDERING OF THE ZX SPECTRUM NEXT (SPECNEXT.COM)

So, which Speccy then?

From the point of view of retro gaming fans, including adventure game enthusiasts, the first +2 is particularly suitable for the internet generation, as apart from its traditional qualities it will also work well with the new generation of 'divMMC' SD memory card-based add-on storage systems. With such a device, which acts as a mini solid state hard drive, literally thousands of games can be downloaded from websites such as World of Spectrum (WoS) and stored on a card, being accessible on real hardware instead of emulators with a few taps

of the keyboard. You can add a divMMC to earlier Speccies too, but it seems that a grey Spectrum +2 with a divMMC device offers the best of most possible worlds for an easy intro to Sinclair gaming.

So the grey Sinclair (Amstrad) ZX Spectrum +2 is the computer I will recommend to the potential Spectrum adventurer starting from scratch with real retro hardware. Spectrum experts Mark Payne and Ant Harper concur on this (thanks for your advice, guys), and further suggest getting an RGB SCART cable (the ones supplied by Retro Computer Shack on eBay are recommended), which should work with any SCART-equipped CRT TV and most LCD TV's, bypassing the old-fashioned RF TV video output which is so hard to tune into today, and giving a much sharper and more colourful display. There are also a variety of divMMC devices made for the Spectrum out there; the most popular are made by ByteDelight, Zaxon and The Future Was 8 Bit, all of which have websites and Facebook presences.

Where to buy? Well, there are plenty of Spectrums for sale on eBay and Gumtree, but there are also the Sinclair for sale type Facebook groups, individuals on the Sinclair Facebook groups and of course specialist dealers like Retrogear, Vintage Gamer, Retro World, The Attic Bug and many more. Retro events like REVIVAL are a good place to meet such dealers, not all of which have retail premises. As always, seek advice, look for restored equipment with a warranty if you can get it, and above all, caveat emptor.

Which games to play today?

Which games to start with, and where from? The choice is, quite simply, amazing. Going on the principle of trying out emulation first – or indeed, downloading games to either play on emulators or to amass a collection on SD card – inevitably the best thing to do is to look online, and probably the first place to look is on the World of Spectrum (WoS) website, which not only has thousands of games for free download but also often includes scans of box art, inlays and documentation, as well as magazine and user reviews. It would be impractical to try and compile an exhaustive list of such games here, but conveniently, World of Spectrum has them all indexed and also offers a list of the most popular 100 adventure games on the site, which again is as good a place as any to begin your search.

Just glancing across the current WoS 'top 100' Spectrum adventures reveals games from such classic software houses such as Adventure International, Level 9 Computing Limited, Melbourne House, CRL Group PLC, Rainbird Software Ltd, Delta 4 Software, Zenobi Software, Hewson Consultants Ltd, Ocean Software Ltd, Phipps Associates, FSF Adventures, Adventuresoft UK Ltd, Richard Shepherd Software Ltd, 8th Day Software Ltd, Games Workshop and many more.

Notable classic games like The Hobbit (now available to download in a community-upgraded 128k version), Snowball, Mordon's Quest, The Price of Magik, Twin Kingdom Valley, Knight Orc, Heroes of Karn, The Balrog and the Cat, Bugsy, Sherlock, The Raven, The Boggit and Bored of the Rings, Robin of Sherwood – the Touchstones of Rhiannon and even Spider Man feature prominently. These, and the rest of the top 100, offer an excellent beginning to any career as a Spectrum adventurer, whether you start and stick with emulation or go for the real thing! Beyond that, the sky's the limit.

Building a physical collection

Today, the once-big names in Sinclair Spectrum

software have mostly either died out or merged with bigger companies making games for modern consoles and PC's. Not only have computer games cassettes disappeared from the High Street, but so have many of the shops, like Woolworths, where the youngsters of more

THE HOBBIT (MELBOURNE HOUSE)

SNOWBALL LOADING SCREEN (LEVEL 9 SOFTWARE)
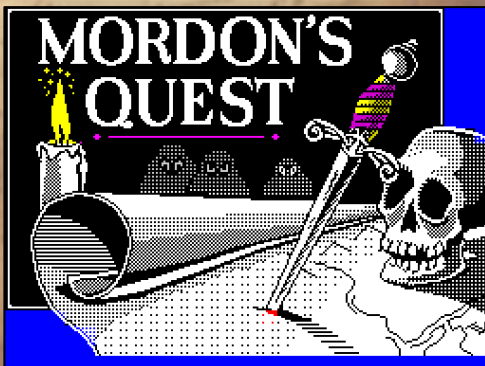
MORDON'S QUEST LOADING SCREEN
(MELBOURNE HOUSE)

```
Grandalf

"Catch" remarked Bimbo as he
tossed a small, gold, ring-like
object across the room.
With an astonishing lack of
deftness, Fordo caught it.

"Ah, you will take it!", smiled
Grandalf.
"Good. You must go to the black
 land of Dormor and destroy it!
 But go thou first unto Smelrond
 at Rivendull. And now, I must
 go. I may see you. Bye!"
"Good luck, favourite nephew!"
called Bimbo as he and the old
wizard hurried away.
Fordo's boggit friends arrived.

What was Fordo to do ?
*
```

BORED OF THE RINGS (DELTA 4 SOFTWARE)

HEROES OF KARN LOADING SCREEN
(INTERCEPTOR SOFTWARE)

KNIGHT ORC, SPECTRUM +3 (RAINBIRD)

than three decades ago would go, pocket money in their (your?) hot little hands, looking with anticipation for the latest arcade game or adventure to add to their collection. But despite the demise of the new market for 'home micro computers', a lot of these old games are still about, available to buy second-hand online on auction sites or from specialist retro dealers, or indeed from fellow collectors on Facebook and forums, similarly to the computers themselves. So, for those willing to seek them out, there are still many, many adventures to be had for the taking, playing, and collecting!

Fortunately, building a collection of Sinclair Spectrum games cassettes, even adventures, does not generally require the skills of a seasoned dungeon quester; most of the time you will not have to go delving down mineshafts, climbing dusty, spider-haunted towers, dodging dragons' bad breath or running away from orcs with a bag of cassettes over your shoulder to win your gaming gold! Though, it has to be said that with some eBay sellers or over-optimistic car booters you may still need to acquire magic spells, gold and weapons before dealing with them…

As usual with things where you are buying at a distance and may not be able to try before you buy, scrutinise the photos and descriptions of games provided on auction sites, especially job lots – as well as the feedback rating of the seller. Sensibly-priced games cassettes which are clearly stated to be tested and working, and which are covered by a returns policy, are the best place to begin collecting if you are starting from scratch. And be patient, you may not always find what you want at the right price, but like angling, another one could come along soon enough, and there are plenty more fish in the sea.

Consider also the many Facebook groups where individuals sell off their surplus games, and the smaller and larger online retro computing dealers, of which there are increasing numbers as the retro computing and gaming hobby grows. The big annual retro events up and down the country, as with buying the computers themselves, can also be a happy hunting ground, with many smaller and larger retro dealers in attendance - though you will have to be prepared to dig through the hundreds of arcade games tapes on dealer stands before you find that long sought-after adventure gem to complete your collection

FULL QUIET

A New NES Game
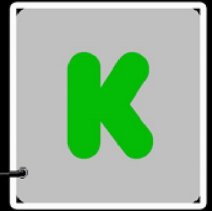
HAUNTED: Halloween '86
(The Curse Of Possum Hollow)

Available on cartridge for the original NES Console!!!

&

STEAM™

order online at:
www.cashinculture.com
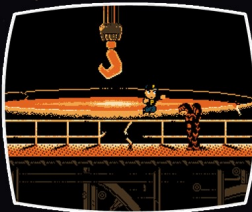
You may also wish to consider giving your collecting a focus or theme, such as collecting all the adventure games produced by a particular software house, like Level 9 Computing Ltd, and even the different versions of packaging in which those games were published over time. Different types of boxes, documentation, maps and posters, and even magazine advertising can all add considerable interest to a themed collection.

The social adventurer

If you don't already know someone who is a Spectrum fan, or an adventure gamer, you can also add a lot of pleasure to your new/old hobby by congregating online in groups. There are many Facebook groups for Sinclair computer enthusiasts. To name but a few: Spectrum for Everyone, Spectrum forever, World of Spectrum, ZX Spectrum and ZX Spectrum Next, not to mention the general vintage computing groups, some of which also cover Sinclair in their discussions. For adventure gaming, there are no Sinclair-specific adventure groups on Facebook, but you will certainly find a welcome in 8-Bit Text Adventures, Interactive Fiction UK, Interactive Fiction and more. You might even seek out such fascinating Facebook pages as Adventure International/Scott Adams Inc., Get Lamp, Adventure Gamers and my own modest Eight Bit Adventurer page, which ties in directly to my column here in Eight Bit magazine, and where you will occasionally find more information complementing these pages.

Conclusion

I hope that's given you a little food for thought, dear reader. Though there's a lot more to text and graphic adventure gaming than this necessarily brief introduction can convey, so please do look for the groups, pages etc that I have mentioned here for more information, as well as checking out the handful of links and books given below, which also includes my Eight Bit Adventurer blog and Facebook page, where

THE BALROG AND THE CAT (ZENOBI SOFTWARE)
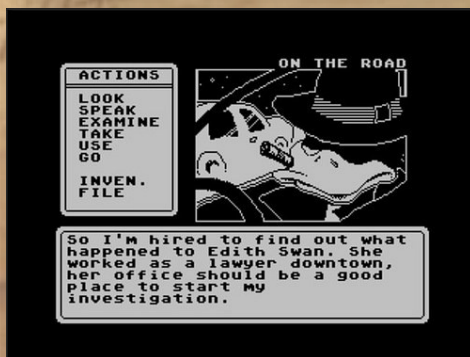
SAM MALLARD—THE CASE OF THE MISSING SWAN
(MONUMENT MICROGAMES)

your comments and suggestions are welcome. In a forthcoming article, I hope to write about the possibilities for the future of Spectrum adventure gaming, as well as the ZX81 and the 8/16 bit Sinclair QL, plus the ZX Spectrum Next, which will hopefully be in my hands before the next issue. I also want to cover adventure game authoring systems such as Gillsoft's The Quill and the Professional Adventure Writing System, which were available for many home micros and may yet be again for the Spectrum Next.

Meanwhile, bold adventurer, your dark and mysterious path forward into Speccy Adventureland begins here. Will you fly into space, travel through time, fight dragons and monsters or go exploring in the tunnels of a colossal cave? Have you got your Sinclair Spectrum, your lamp, a notebook and your map? Then let the quest begin!

 Stuart Williams (aka Grandalf the Grey)

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD—THE TOUCHSTONES OF
RHIANNON (ADVENTURE INTERNATIONAL (UK))

TWIN KINGDOM VALLEY, LOADING SCREEN
(BUG BYTE)

A few web links

Spectrum emulators

Spectaculator emulator
http://www.spectaculator.com/

Fuse emulator
http://fuse-emulator.sourceforge.net/

JSSpeccy Javascript emulator
http://jsspeccy.zxdemo.org/

WoS Spectrum emulators page
www.worldofspectrum.org/emulators.html

Downloadable games

World of Spectrum Archive – Text Adventures
http://www.worldofspectrum.org/textadv/

WoS Visitor Voted Top 100 Best Text
Adventures http://www.worldofspectrum.org/
bestadventures.html

Adventure game websites

Scott Adams Grand Adventures
http://www.msadams.com/

The Level 9 Memorial http://l9memorial.if-
legends.org/html/home.html

Eight Bit Adventurer
https://eightbitadventurer.com/

Micro Adventurer Magazine (downloads)
https://archive.org/details/micro-adventurer

GET LAMP: the Text Adventure Documentary
http://www.getlamp.com/

Facebook groups and pages

Eight Bit Text Adventures Facebook group
https://www.facebook.com/groups/
EightBitAdventures/

Interactive Fiction UK Facebook group https://
www.facebook.com/groups/UKIntFiction/

Eight Bit Adventurer Facebook page https://
www.facebook.com/EightBitAdventurer/

Interactive Fiction Facebook group   https://
www.facebook.com/groups/int.fiction/

TEXT ADVENTURES & INTERACTIVE FICTION //
PLAY / DESIGN / DEVELOPMENT

Facebook group. https://www.facebook.com/
groups/305246623169583/

Books

The Spectrum of Adventure by Thomas A.
Christie, Extremis Publishing
https://www.extremispublishing.com/the-
spectrum-of-adventure.html

Twilight Inventory – A Collection of Forgotten 8-
Bit Adventure Games by Gareth Pitchford
http://www.8bitag.com/

The Guide to Classic Graphic Adventures by Kurt
Kalata
https://www.amazon.co.uk/
Hardcoregaming101-net-Presents-Classic-
Graphic-Adventures/dp/146095579X

The Last Bit

The latest retro news and rumours from around the world.

SPECTRUM NEXT DELAYED

While the Spectrum NEXT boards arrived to backers around December 2017 with only a few problems that needed to be ironed out, the complete Spectrum Next is still not with us at the time of writing. Originally targeted for a January delivery, it will be another few months before we can get our hands on one.

One of the reasons for the delay is to fix a problem that causes incompatibilities with some TVs HDMI sockets. Some sockets supply unwanted power to the device, causing all sort of issues. Other problems are firmware related and are therefore easily fixable. Problems such as screen shimmering, no video signal, no keyboard input and no audio. In fairness, there are bound to be a few hiccups along the way and the NEXT team seems to be on top of things.

A major improvement on the product is that the keyboard is now to be assembled using screws rather than being fixed, which is great news for those of you who worry about future maintenance.

www.specnext.com

NOGALIOUS

I have no idea what 'Nogalious' means either but it's the title of a game recently funded on Kickstarter for the Amstrad CPC, Commodore 64, MSX and ZX Spectrum. Planned to be the first of a trilogy, the first game is a 2D platform game with 5 universes to fight through. You can check out a hard as nails PC demo from the QR link on the left.

BACKERS

Messages from our supporters:

Gryzor: Eight Bits still going strong! What's more, cpcwiki.eu is bigger, better and stronger than ever before - visit for all your Amstrad CPC needs! News, discussions, classifieds, articles - the Amstrad CPC was never more alive (well, after 1990 that is)!

@tobobobo: I'd just like to say I'm a tad miffed I don't have my Vega+ yet.

Chand Svare Ghei chasvag.com: What makes me shiver at night is the fear that I might get too comfortable by laziness, hence imprinted in the present. We always need to shape the water and improve our trails.

Brian Pittman LoGiudice - President Gamers Association of Louisiana: All are welcome. Wanting to meet a fellow gamer, anime fan, manga reader, or overall nerd. Add me on facebook or join Gamers Association of Louisiana (GALs) or Louisiana Anime Manga Club (aka SOAP Southern Otaku Anime Party) or New Orleans Nerds (N.O.N.s)

PALEOTRONIC MAGAZINE

"Paleotronic Magazine celebrates the best of yesterday's technology, showcasing the most memorable video games, computers, audio /video technologies, and more while also providing fun and interactive learning opportunities with software programming and foundational electronics engineering activities. "That what's the website says and while I haven't received my printed copy of Issue 1 yet (can't wait), I did receive the PDF version and it's looking good.

I can say for sure that the magazine is visually appealing. Upon flicking through I see that while the majority of the magazine is retro computer and console related, there are also other type of articles. Articles covering retro electronics are highly interesting, such as the Sony U-Matic (the precursor to Betamax and VHS) and even Marty's video recorder from Back to the Future!

Other articles are about handheld game consoles, the Nintendo Entertainment System, Commodore 64 vs Atari 800, the Jackintosh and an interview with Apple's co-founder Steve Wozniak. There's even a type-in program for the Apple II which also serves as a tutorial explaining BASIC programming. There's also an article of teaching basic electronics concepts.

The magazine works in conjunction with MicroM8, a 3D Apple II/IIe emulator which allows you to play Apple II games with a 3D

perspective. It has user-movable camera views and even a cloud-based disk library. You can download MicroM8 from the link below. The magazine is 120 pages in length and the only reason I held myself back from reading every page from start to finish is that I want to sit back and enjoy the printed version when it arrives. It's that good.

www.paleotronic.com
www.microm8.com

COLOUR PERSONAL COMPUTING

After a long delay, Issue 2 of Colour Personal Computing arrived at my door. An A5 sized publication, 40 page A5 size fanzine for the Amstrad CPC. The magazine is visually improved over the first Issue and there are a number of interesting technical articles and entertaining game reviews. Well worth a read. Check it out at **www.cpcfanzine.com**
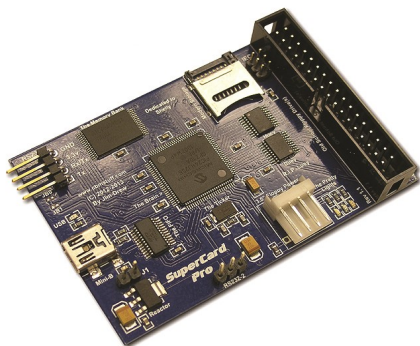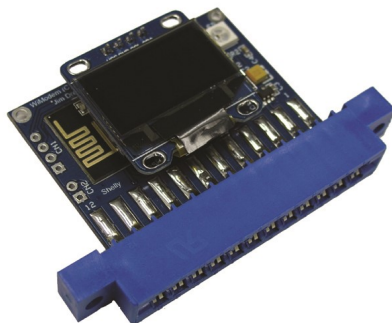
8 BIT ANNUAL 2018

By the time you read this, the Kickstarter for 8 Bit Annual will be finished, having already reached it's target goal of €6,000.

An eye-dazzling 250+ page, full colour annual, available in digital PDF, physical softback and hardback versions. It covers practically every game released in the past year. All 8-bit systems are covered including game consoles and computers. There will also be interviews with game developers and others who are involved in producing games for those systems.

Check out the dedicated Facebook page, 8-BIT RETRO—ANNUAL for the latest information and the Kickstarter page at: **https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/8bitmagazine/8-bit-annual-2018-for-8-bit-computers-and-consoles**

CHASH 2019 AND ZZAP! 64 2019 ANNUALS

After a successful Crash 2018 Annual, Chris Wilkins has recently announced the Crash 2019 Issue 100 annual. Using the same format as the 2018 annual, basically reliving the style of the old Crash magazines. The annual is expected to be released in time for the Christmas period, spreading joy to ZX Spectrum fans around the world.
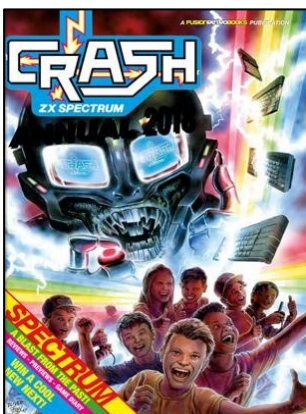
Chris will also be working on a Zapp! 64 annual for Commodore 64 fans. Again it is based on the concept of using the same style of layout and writing as the old magazines. The editor of the magazine will be Roger Kean, who edited the original magazine. The annual will also have contributions from Jaz Rignall and Robin Hogg.

Commodore fans will have less time to wait as the Kickstarter will start in April for a late Autumn release.

LEARN Z80 ASSEMBLY CODING

Keith Sear, the programmer behind the excellent Chibi Akumas games has started a tutorial on YouTube on making your own computer game using Z80 Assembly code. The tutorials assumes no previous experience and are easy to follow. While the tutorials uses an Amstrad CPC emulator to teach, the methods taught can be used on other Z80 platforms. At the time of writing, Keith is 4 lessons in. Check out his tutorials at: **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LpQCEwk2U9w**