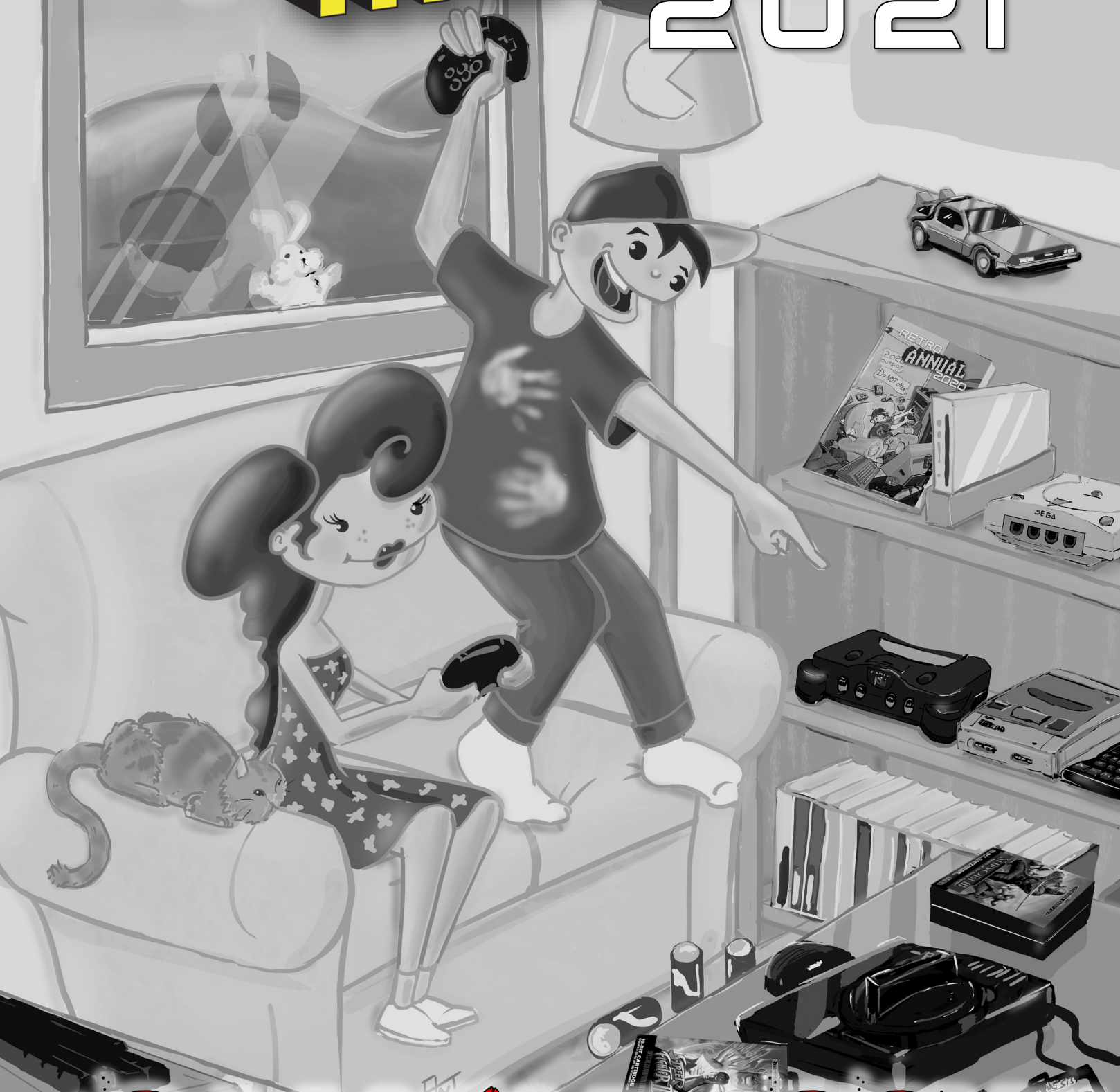


RETRO

ANNUAL

2021



SAMPLE ISSUE

# MASTERING THE GAME



STUART KEMPIN

of **LIFELONG**  
**WEIGHT LOSS**

FREE ONLINE BOOK AVAILABLE AT  
**MASTERINGTHEGA.ME**



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RETRO

# ANNUAL

2021

**SAMPLE ISSUE**

**W**elcome to the latest Retro Annual Sample issue. We have chosen a few articles and reviews from the 2021 annual and presented them to you for your entertainment.

*Ok okay, yes, there's a bit of marketing going on here where we try and show you what you're missing out on if you didn't order a copy and/or support our latest Kickstarter.*

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*Enjoy this sample,*

*John Kavanagh*  
*Editor*

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## The Tech behind...

# WARGAMES

JOHN KAVANAGH

**W**argames changed me in a big way. I didn't realise it at the time, but this movie would have a lasting effect. It's what led me to a life of having a great interest in computers, not just the gaming aspect but what they can do, programming them, my career and even my life. The movie introduced five year old me, and I'm sure, many others too, to the world of computers.

WarGames, starring Matthew Broderick and Ally Sheedy is a cold war thriller where teenager, David Lightman, unwittingly hacks into an advanced artificially intelligent military computer. While looking for games to play, he came across "Global Thermonuclear War", where he choose to play as the Soviet Union. The supercomputer perceives the threat as real and activates the nuclear arsenal of the United States in retaliation. Can Lightman with help from his girlfriend stop the onset of World War III?

That is all I'm giving away regarding the plot. It's an entertaining techno-thriller that still holds up today, and the outdated technology only adds to its enjoyment. The movie led to cybersecurity changes and introduced many people to hacking, dial-up modems and computers in general.

After President Ronald Reagan watched the movie, he discussed the plot with the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to look into how plausible the movie was. Reagan asked, "Could something like this really happen? Could someone break into our most sensitive computers?". The reply, a week later, said the problem was much worse. This led to a significant overhaul of computer security for the US military.

The movie was also the first to use the term "Firewall" in relation to computers as a security measure. It also introduced

WarGames (1983)  
Running Time: 1 hour 54 minutes  
Country of Production: USA  
Budget: \$ 12,000,000  
Gross Worldwide: \$ 125,000,000  
Starring: Matthew Broderick, Ally Sheedy, John Wood, Dabney Coleman  
Directed by: John Badham

"WarDialing" to the masses, which is when a computer dials every number in a local area code to search for computers and servers to connect to.

Over the next few pages, we cover the antiquated and extremely fascinating technology that was seen in the movie.



Here you can see the ISMAI 8080, along with it's dual disc drives and 17 inch Electrohome screen





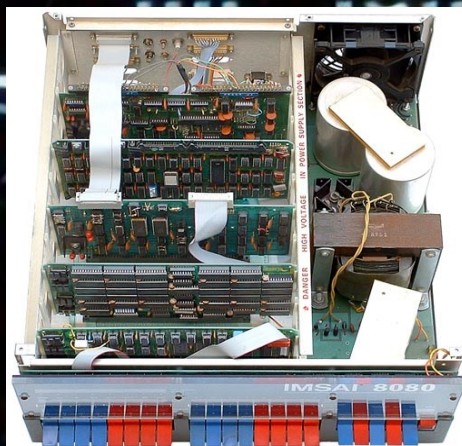
The IMSAI 8080 Micro Computer. IMSAI stood for Information Management Sciences Associates Inc.

### The Technology used in WarGames

The computer David Lightman used in the movie was the IMSAI 8080 which was a clone of the MITS Altair 8800, in fact, the IMSAI 8080 was the "first clone" computer of many S-100 systems. S-100 refer to the 8-bit, 100-pin bus used in those computers where the main system can be expanded greatly with add-in cards for extra RAM, input/output boards, Real-Time clocks, video boards, cassette and disc controllers etc.

When Wargames was released in 1983, David's IMSAI was already old tech. It's often mentioned that the equipment David Lightman had would be unrealistic for a teen as it would be very expensive, especially when you consider all the extras such as the display, disc drives and so on. While that is true, considering that the computer was discontinued five years earlier, was it perhaps a hand-me-down from one of his parents?

The computer was released in late 1975 and as mentioned, was a clone of the MITS Altair 8800, the first commercially successful personal computer. It has a much better front panel design than the Altair and a stronger power supply. It ran on an Intel 8080A, 2 MHz CPU with base models having only 256 bytes of RAM but this can be upgraded to a maximum of 64 Kilobytes. It cost US\$ 931 at release, fully built or US\$ 699 in kit form. It can be upgraded to load software from cassette, 5¼ floppy disc, 8-inch floppy, and even from paper tape! In the movie,



Hood off, displaying a number of S-100 cards

David used an IMSAI FDC-2 dual 8-inch floppy drive. More on that in a while. Later versions of the IMSAI 8080 used an upgraded Intel 8085A 8-bit CPU running at 3MHz.

Using the IMSAI 8080 or indeed any S-100 based computer is very different to modern computers and even early microcomputers that came in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The base system has no video or audio output, only blinking lights on the front panel. When the computer is switched on, there is nothing in memory. Nothing is loaded from ROM, there is no ROM chip. Programs can be entered into the system with toggle switches, entering one byte at a time into each memory address. To load from tape or floppy, a basic boot loader had to be entered into the system, every time the system is started. From there you can load up software, such as the CP/M operating system or maybe even 4K Basic.

Some users kept to the blinking lights of the IMSAI 8080 for their needs, but that's not good enough for our protagonist. David Lightman had an Electrohome 17 inch monitor. This monitor was used because of its readability at distance. Of course, for it to work with the IMSAI 8080, there would have to be video circuitry installed into the computer. There were a number of different video cards available for IMSAI 8080 to display the type of video output seen in the movie, but instead, a CompuPro System 8/16 was used, which is another S-100 based computer. It displayed the text on David's screen as seen in the movie. It is unknown why this was done but the System 8/16, from 1983 is a more powerful system, with 16



The CompuPro System 8/16 was used off-screen



# WARGAMES

KB of RAM, upgradable to 1 MB. It could be fitted with 8 or 16 bit CPUs.

As mentioned earlier, the IMSAI 8080 could use a wide variety of media depending on which add-on cards were fitted. David Lightman's choice of storage was the IMSAI FDC-2, a dual 8-inch floppy drive. For the time, an impressive piece of kit. The controller has its own processor and firmware, providing (for the time), sophisticated control of the floppy disk system. 8-inch disks could hold about 1 megabyte of storage.

The keyboard used by David was the IMSAI IKB-1 Intelligent Keyboard. It's a thick device even by the time the movie was released. It had 63 keys and was programmable. This programmable feature was useful in sending commands to the off-screen CompuPro System 8/16 for certain text to be displayed on screen.

The IMSAI 212A modem on top of David Lightman's screen never existed. It's actually a Cermetek 212A with a repainted front panel with the IMSAI logo added. The modem could operate at 1200 baud, so in other words, it can receive and transmit data at 1,200 characters per second. Interestingly, David used an outdated acoustic coupler in the movie, limiting transmission rates to about 300 baud. This is probably done for the purpose of the audience, to highlight that David was connecting through the phone line to another computer.

Many speculate about the computer voice in the movie. While there were computer voice generators at the time, it was actually the British actor, John Wood, who read the lines backwards, and then played in the correct order to create a flat sounding speech. Along with a few other effects, the computer voice for the movie was created.

Then we come to WOPR pronounced "whopper", the War Operation Plan Response, the military computers tasked with handling the US nuclear arsenal. Sadly (or thankfully) WOPR isn't real. The display of the fictional computer was generated by an Apple II and an early fluorescent flat-panel screen.



The IMSAI FDC-2 dual 8-inch floppy drive



The IMSAI IKB-1 keyboard



The IMSAI 212 A modem on top of the monitor and the acoustic coupler at the bottom right

The filmmakers weren't granted access to NORAD, the North American Aerospace Defence Command, deep in Cheyenne Mountain, Colorado Springs, so didn't have any idea what the command center looked like. So for the movie, they had twelve giant screens on the wall. The graphics were powered by four HP 9845C computers. It had dual 16-bit processors running at 5.7 MHz with

an impressive (for the time) 1 MB of RAM and graphics with a resolution of 560x455 pixels and 4096 colours. Of course, it was later discovered that the real NORAD had nothing as fancy as was shown in the movie. After all, we know that the real NORAD contains a Stargate to travel to off-world planets! Right?



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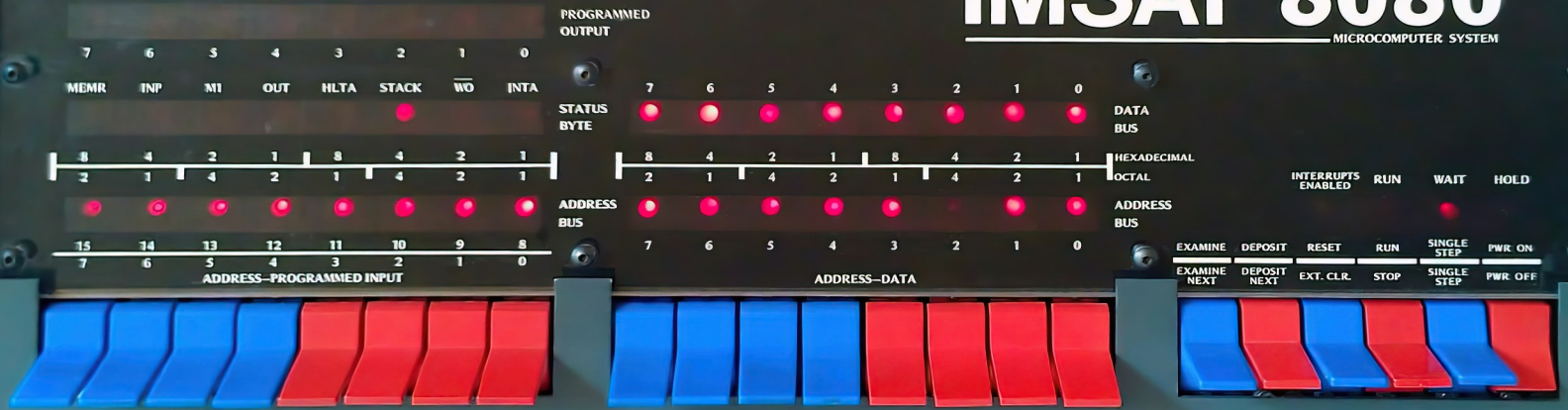
European Distributor  
Harper Industry Products, Ltd.  
6079 Spremlingen 2  
West Germany

Prices: USA Domestic



## IMSAI 8080

MICROCOMPUTER SYSTEM



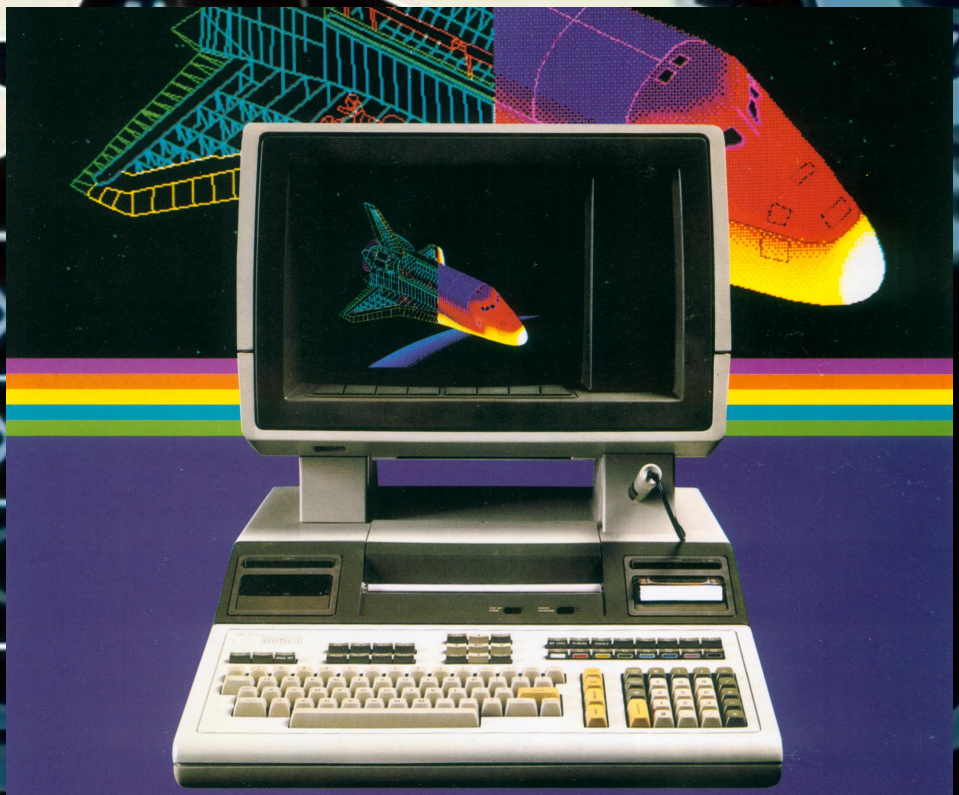
The IMSAI 8080 Control Panel

### Entering a program into the IMSAI 8080

Even David Lightman would have had to enter data via front panel switches to get a bootloader going before he could load anything from his 8-inch floppy disk drive. He would have to do this each time the computer was switched on.

To enter a program, firstly he would turn the PWR ON/PWR OFF switch to the PWR ON setting. David would now probably power his dual 8-inch drives, but first, he would make sure there aren't any disks inserted as by just powering on, random data could be written to his disks, destroying the data on them.

The computer sits at address 0, awaiting input. David would enter the first line of his bootloader, a program written in machine code. The eight data switches in the centre of the panel allow for a number between 0 and 255 to be entered using binary. Let us say for example, the first byte of his bootloader is hexadecimal 3E, which is 62 in decimal, and 00111110 in binary. To enter the binary, he would pull switches 5,4,3,2 and 1 down, then press the DEPOSIT/DEPOSIT NEXT switch into the DEPOSIT position. This inputs your value in address 0. Then the second value is entered and DEPOSIT NEXT is pressed to increment the address by one. The data can be examined by pressing RESET to go back to address zero and then pressing EXAMINE NEXT for each address line. Once the program is fully entered and checked, push the RUN/STOP switch into the RUN position to run the program.



The HP 9845C (1980) Computer

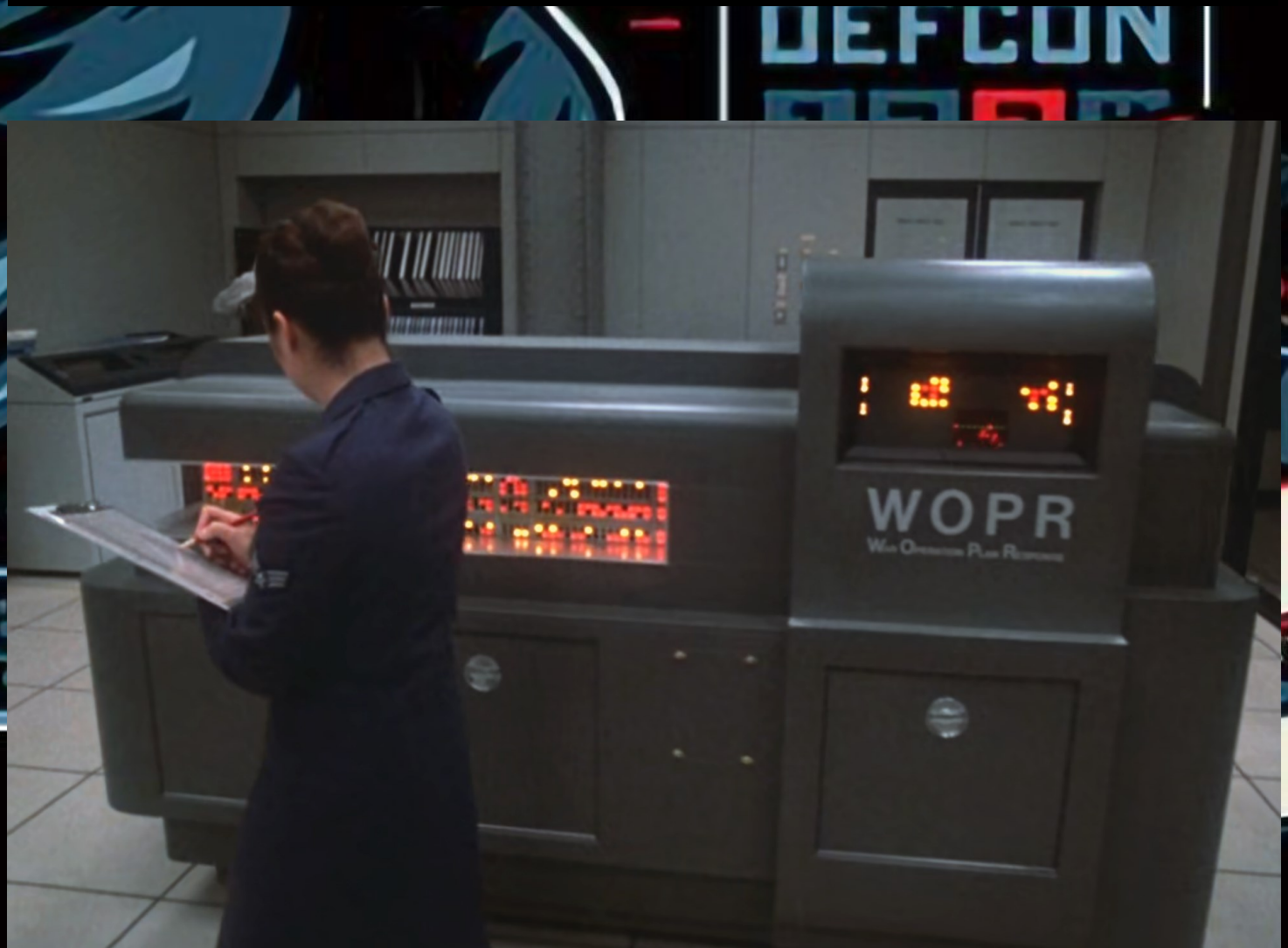


Tense faces considering the possibility of World War III





The screens in the movie version of NORAD was generated by four HP 9845C computers



The WOPR, War Operation Plan Response, or Whopper to you!



## SPECIFICS

MANOS RANTMEISTER

**FORMAT** Amiga

**YEAR** 2021

**CREDITS** Ported from Z80 to 68000 by Hoffman, enhanced amiga soundtrack and SFX by Hoffman

**PRICE** Free download

**WEBSITE** [hoffman.home.blog/metal-gear/](http://hoffman.home.blog/metal-gear/)



# TACTICAL ESPIONAGE ACTION METAL GEAR

**M**etal Gear was the first game in a hugely successful Konami franchise that popularised the stealth genre. It had sequels across a variety of platforms, with the latest title, Metal Gear Survive, being released in 2018. The first game was originally released for the MSX2 in 1987 and NES, C64 and DOS ports followed. Fast forward to the blessed year of 2021 and an unofficial Amiga port gets a release by Hoffman, which promises a faithful conversion of the 8-bit classic with some 16-bit polish on top!

In a brief lesson on retrogaming geography, there is a fortress nation in Africa, called Outer Heaven. Rumours have it that a deadly weapon is being developed there, called Metal Gear, which is something like ED-209 but with the capability of launching nuclear attacks. Metal Gear obviously threatens world peace, so how does one go about handling such a dangerous and delicate situation? You send an inexperienced, unarmed soldier carrying only a walkie-talkie and his cigarettes!

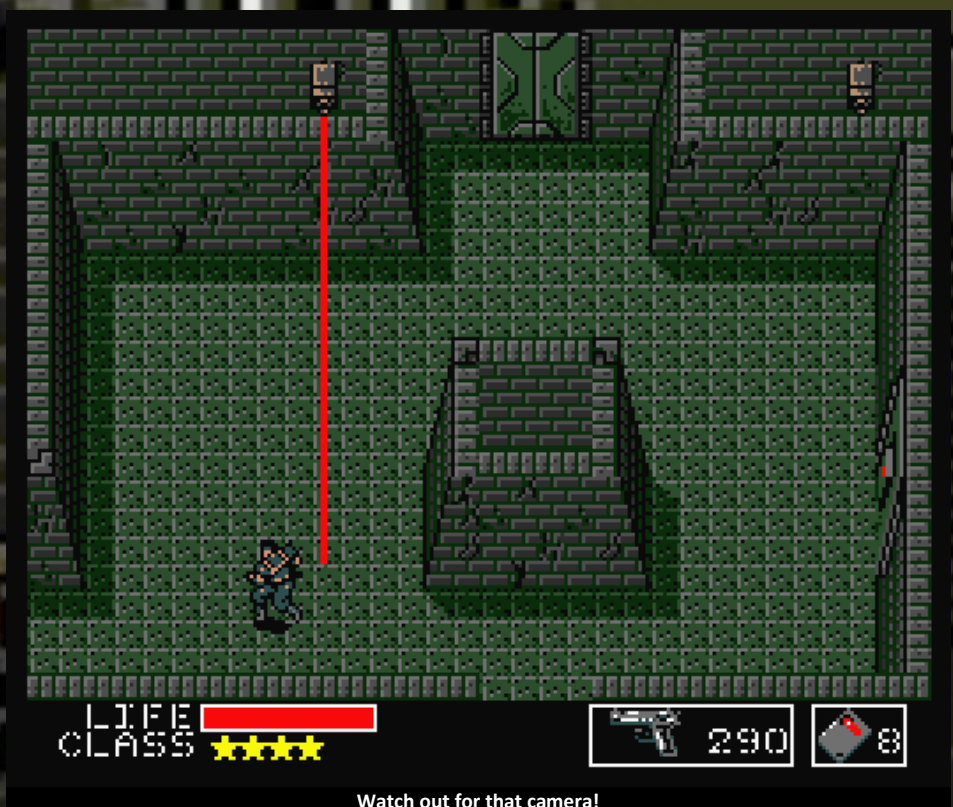
You must explore the base, rescue the prisoners and gather weapons and equipment while avoiding being spotted by the guards or the cameras. When you are spotted, an alarm sounds which, if you are lucky, may cause only the guards on screen to attack you or they can call their buddies as well, which arrive for a friendly chat. You avoid this alarm by remaining outside your enemies' field of

vision so you must carefully observe the various patrol routines to find your opportunity to sneak around. You can attack the guards but it is a good idea to be stealthy about it as well, tiptoeing behind them and using your lethal punch or a silenced gun.

Your commander regularly contacts you with the transceiver, giving you hints on how to progress. Later on you must use your walkie-talkie to get in contact with various other characters as well, but you

must know the right frequency! Rescuing prisoners is also very important since this allows you to level up, increasing your maximum health as well as the items you can carry. The equipment ranges from helpful (ammo, food) to necessary (for example, the gas mask and the keycards).

The game offers various checkpoints. These become very important, since Metal Gear is often a trial and error affair and you will find yourself replaying



Watch out for that camera!



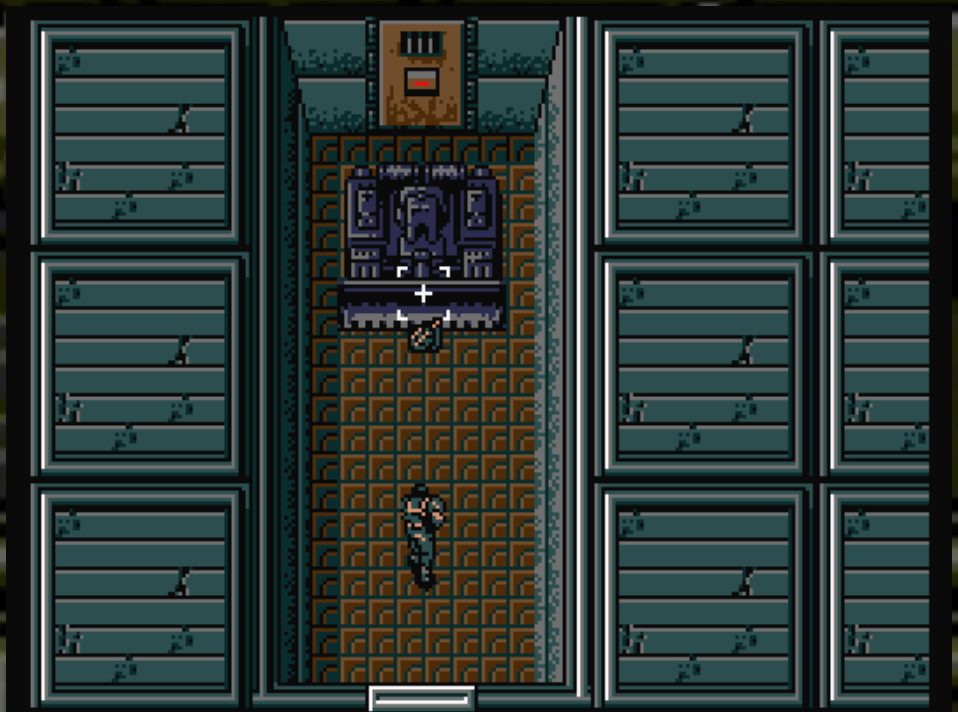


LIFE CLASS

Stealth is the key to success



Metal Gear is a faithful port of the original



LIFE CLASS

28 4

The graphics are fantastic but not overly enhanced for the 16-bit version

the same screens over and over again and a clever use of checkpoints can really save your joystick from being thrown out of the window.

The controls are quite sophisticated for such an early game. You use the M key to punch and the F2-4 keys bring up your weapons, your equipment and the transceiver respectively. F1 allows you to save/load the game. I disliked the lack of diagonal movement, not knowing which doors the keycards unlock and the fact that you can only equip one item at a given time, but these issues plagued the original version as well.

The Amiga visuals look very close to the MSX version. One could get greedy here and ask for some enhancements befitting the miggy, but I am quite happy with graphics respectful to the 8-bit original. The colours used are perfect for the military setting, and everything moves very smoothly, although without a lot of animation frames.

The sound is where the Amiga port really shines, giving you the option to have the original sound or an enhanced version. And I strongly suggest you choose the latter, since it offers beefier sounds and a fuller orchestration, greatly contributing to the excitement of the

game! The sound effects are nothing to write home about, but at least they are simultaneous with the superb music.

It should also be mentioned that the Amiga version offers 4 translations: the original Japanese, the original European, an English fan version and a Spanish translation as well!

Overall, this is a masterfully faithful port from the 8-bits to the Amiga that retains the addictive (and sometimes frustrating) gameplay and offers a fantastic soundtrack. This is a classic game that will appeal to both longtime fans and newcomers to the franchise and let's hope Hoffman decides to port Metal Gear 2 as well!



LIFE CLASS

Hello Big Boss!

## TACTICAL ESPIONAGE ACTION METAL GEAR

### SCORE

#### GRAPHICS

Very faithful to the original.

7.5

#### AUDIO

Offers both the original music and a thrilling Amiga soundtrack!

9.0

#### GAMEPLAY

Sophisticated gameplay that can become frustrating at times.

7.0

#### STAYING POWER

You might revisit this version to attempt different strategies or enjoy a different soundtrack.

6.5

#### OVERALL

A brilliant Amiga conversion of a classic 8-bit game.

7.5



## SPECIFICS

**FORMAT** Commodore 64 with 256K expansion cartridge

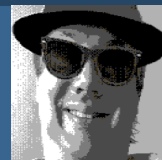
**YEAR** 2021

**CREDITS** Sonic team 64. Coding by Andreas Varga, GFX by Oliver Lindau, Music and SFX by Mikkel Haastrup


**PRICE** Free

**WEBSITE** [csdb.dk/release/?id=212523](https://csdb.dk/release/?id=212523)

MERMAN



# SONIC THE HEDGEHOG



**B**ack in 1991, US Gold announced home computer versions of Sega's Sonic The Hedgehog - but nothing of these games ever emerged. Fast-forward to recent years, and the amazing Super Mario Bros 64 arrives. That spurred Andreas Varga (Mr. SID) into researching whether it was possible to transfer the Master System version of Sonic to the C64. With little fanfare, the game was released in December 2021 as an early Christmas present to the homebrew scene.

Dr. Robotnik and his army of Badniks have invaded the tranquil South Island, capturing the local animals in Capsules. Sonic must free the animals and stop Robotnik from tracking down the legendary Chaos Emeralds. There are six of these hidden throughout the game, and the player must find all of them to achieve the "good" ending.

Sonic can use the Spin Jump and Super Sonic Spin Attack to destroy enemies, but he only starts with three lives - and any damage will cost a life, unless Sonic is holding Golden Rings. Holding at least one Ring prevents the loss of life, but dropped Rings cannot be regained. Gathering 100 Rings earns an extra life, resetting the counter to zero. Falling into

the water or off the bottom of the screen is also fatal. Rings can also be collected from the Video Monitors. Monitors offer Shields (protect from one hit), Power Sneakers (increase speed for a short while) and Invincibility (brief invulnerability). Arrow Monitors act as checkpoints, returning Sonic to the last one activated in a stage should he die. One-Up Monitors grant an extra life, and hitting the One-Up Monitors in the first two acts activates a third in the final stage.

At the end of each Act and Special Stage, the Bonus Panel is spun round. Revealing a "?" or Robotnik does nothing, a Ring gives 10 extra rings, Sonic gives an extra life and the "!" gives access to the Special Stage. Here, Sonic uses springs and bumpers to move around, and must collect a minimum number of Rings and reach the exit point before time runs out (with hidden monitors offering extra lives and continues). At the end of each section,



Hey look, it's Jim Carrey!



bonus points are awarded for rings and time remaining. The last Act of each Zone sees Sonic take on Robotnik in one of his inventions, spinning to hit it and cause damage at the right time. Making his way through Green Hill Zone, Bridge Zone, Jungle Zone, Labyrinth Zone and Scrap Brain Zone, in the final area Sonic must stop Robotnik from escaping in his blimp from the Sky Base Zone.

This game requires a RAM Expansion Unit (REU) of at least 256K. The reason for this is to use the DMA (Direct Memory Access) chip to provide smooth, full-screen scrolling. If the REU is bigger than 256K, the whole game can be installed to give faster loading. The game is supplied on two D64 images or one D81 image. NTSC players will notice the occasional flicker, but otherwise the game is compatible.

This is superbly presented, from the familiar SEGA intro to the tiny but detailed maps between Acts. The on-disk manual is more than just text, and there are a couple of hidden options on the title screen (including a level select). Run out of lives and you can Continue at the last Act reached, and you can also earn extra Continues during play. All the control is from the stick and a single button.

Graphically, it takes the look and feel of the Master System game and passes it through a charming C64 filter. The colour palette is excellent, the changing character sets for each level really

capture the look of each Zone - and the \*whole\* screen scrolls. Cleverly, the HUD elements (score and lives) are drawn in sprites. Sonic and the enemies are all rendered in overlaid sprites, giving plenty of colour and detail. Sonic moves so well, and even has his toe-tapping animation if you leave him standing idle for too long.

The soundtrack is just immense, taking the best of Yuzo Koshiro's Master System compositions and enhancing them with SID goodness. The sampled speech in the intro is spot on, and the sound effects throughout are just perfect. It's hard to fault the sound in any way.

Gameplay wise, it is so easy to pick up and play - with the simple controls and the ease of progress. But there is depth here, as you chase a higher score and track down all six hidden Chaos Emeralds. A couple of design decisions also differentiate the C64 version from the Master System, and I feel they were sensible. The second Act of Bridge Zone was originally forced scrolling, pushing the player on and punishing them if they fell behind. This is much better tackled as a standard level. And in the Jungle Zone you could not fall down in the second Act and carry on; now you can. Andreas



Sonic looking at fish with big teeth!

based these on feedback from watching lots of videos and testing the game. Hardcore players may say it remains a relatively easy game to complete, but for them there is the challenge of speedrunning (with many of the glitches and tricks working on this conversion).

As a conversion, it is very hard to fault anything in Sonic 64. As a C64 game in its own right, the scrolling and graphics place it among the very best platform games out there.

## SCORE

### GRAPHICS

A treat for the eyes, with smooth scrolling and detailed sprites.

10

### AUDIO

An amazing soundtrack and perfect FX.

10

### GAMEPLAY

So easy to pick up, and you want to because it's Sonic.

9.5

### STAYING POWER

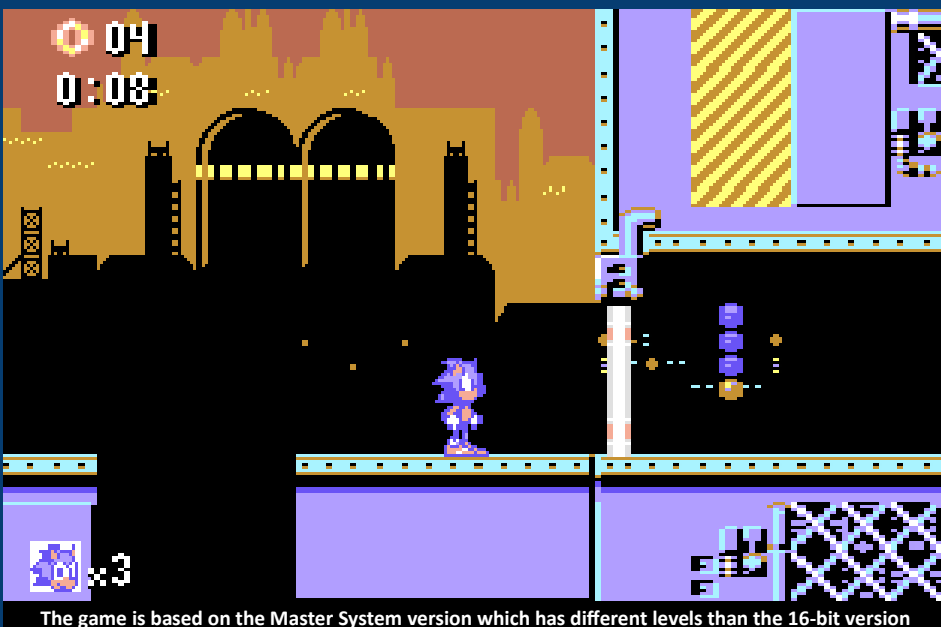
It will grab you and keep you playing for that good ending.

9.5

### OVERALL

An outstanding conversion and a superb platform game.

9.5



The game is based on the Master System version which has different levels than the 16-bit version



## SPECIFICS

TOM WEDLAKE

**FORMAT** Commodore 64

**YEAR** 2021

**CREDITS** Game concept and design by Trevor Storey, coding by Achim Volkers, music by Saul Cross

**PRICE** Tape and disk options from £8.99 to £24.99, digital download

**WEBSITE** [psytronik.bigcartel.com/product/battle-kingdom-c64](http://psytronik.bigcartel.com/product/battle-kingdom-c64) and [psytronik.itch.io/battle](http://psytronik.itch.io/battle)



# Kingdom Battle

**B**attle Kingdom is a new 2-D, top-down action adventure game for the Commodore 64. Released by Psytronik Software in association with Icon 64.

You play as Sir Bob. Now, Sir Bob's job is to save 8 princesses over 8 separate Kingdoms by assembling 8 different Master Swords and slaying 8 different dragons. Long story short, Sir Bob's got a lot on his plate. Each Kingdom has been overrun by evil ghouls 'n' ghosts and a dragon, which Sir Bob will have to slay to save that particular Kingdom's princess. In order to slay the dragon you first have to assemble the Master Sword.

To do this, you have to guide Sir Bob around the Kingdom, Pac-Man style, and enter any yellow doors you can see. Wait around outside for too long and the dragon will hunt you down, killing you instantly if you don't enter a building. Inside each room is where it shifts to the more Zelda-like view we all know and love. Once you've killed every enemy in the room, except for the wraiths who seem like they're just there to boogie, you'll either be rewarded with treasure, which adds to your score, or a piece of the Master Sword. As you progress through the kingdoms, more pieces will need to be collected to complete the Sword.

Use the joystick to control your movement and the fire button to shoot an arrow. Your arrows gradually replenish but you can pick up quivers for an instant ten arrow boost. Sometimes you'll want to wait a while before exiting a room just so you have enough arrows when you enter the next one. When you've collected all the pieces of the Master Sword, it's automatically equipped and has unlimited ammo. Now it's time to enter the castle in the middle of the map and slay the dragon.

The graphics and presentation are excellent with all the enemies being nicely animated and fun to fight. The Kingdom itself, though simple, is well done and has some charm to it. I just wish it wasn't repeated over and over. It would've been nice to see a few different maps thrown in.

The music and sound are fantastic, the opening theme and boss room music are my personal favourites. On top of that, you also get the swishing of Master Swords, the crackling pop of spawning enemies and the echoing bloop of the dragon's fire.

Now you may be thinking that this all looks a little easy but one hit from anything and you lose a life. The hearts don't work like Zelda, where you can take a few hits per heart. Each heart is a life, one touch from anything and you die. And the only way to get extra lives is by saving a princess or by collecting 2000



Save states make it possible to complete this hard as nails game





points. So you have to be completely focused the whole time. Because pretty soon you'll reach dragon seven. The difficulty spike is just outrageous. It's like this boss has come from a completely different game. A game where the main character was three times faster than Sir Bob! His flames always seem to find you and Sir Bob just doesn't move fast enough to give you, what I'd call, a fighting chance.

Battle Kingdom looks great, plays great, sounds great, but that difficulty spike makes it nearly impossible to complete without save states. I would like to have seen a few more items hidden in the Kingdoms, items that boost your abilities giving you a fair chance of taking down the final bosses. Which would've made the Kingdoms a little more fun to explore and less repetitive.



Sir Bob travels around the Kingdom, Pac-Man style



Outstanding graphics but a little repetitious

## SCORE

### GRAPHICS

Outstanding with a lot of charm.

9.0

### AUDIO

Atmospheric music with satisfying sounds.

9.0

### GAMEPLAY

Excellent until the difficulty spike, which makes you feel far too slow.

7.0

### STAYING POWER

Repetitive Kingdoms leading to near impossible bosses.

6.0

### OVERALL

At a quick glance it seems amazing. But the more you play the more repetitive and unfair it becomes.

7.0



## SPECIFICS

KEITH SHAW

**FORMAT** ZX Spectrum  
**YEAR** 2020  
**CREDITS** Andy Precious  
**PRICE** Free  
**WEBSITE** [zx.preshaudio.co.uk/hell-year/](http://zx.preshaudio.co.uk/hell-year/)



# HELL YEAH!

**H**ELL YEAH! was developed by Andy Precious as a project to stay the boredom of lockdown within the UK, the game was started in March and is his first 100% completed assembly game and is a culmination of various programming projects on the ZX spectrum since owning one as a 10-year-old.

You and your twin brother are part of an elite special service unit on a top-secret mission. Suddenly, a hellish void opens up and entices him through...

Now you're under attack from strange creatures and must fight to survive in the hope of finding him!

HELL YEAH! Is a side-scrolling run and gun shooter which spans across four levels each one with two mini-boss fights within, playing as an elite soldier you are tasked with finding your twin brother after he is sucked into the void that has opened, you start in a graveyard and immediately face hoards of gun-wielding enemies, floating skulls and other weird things trying to stop you, beware some enemies cause more damage than others!!, some harm you on contact, while others can only harm you with their projectiles.

You have a health bar that depletes when you get hit, step into a trap, or hazard within the scenery, be careful

some hazards can insta-kill!!, medkits can be found to top up your health along the way, there is a checkpoint system in place, when you die you are placed at the last checkpoint to start again.

There are three difficulty levels, easy, medium, and hard, enemies inflict higher amounts of damage on medium and hard modes, If you complete the game on easy or medium, the game continues back at the first stage on the next highest difficulty setting with all remaining weapons and power-ups, the

end screen can only be seen once the game is completed on hard mode.

The levels are well laid out with plenty of moving platforms, ladders, and hidden and visible traps all hindering you will whilst trying to traverse the landscape to reach the various power-ups and weapon upgrades scattered throughout, on top of this you have to avoid the bullets fired by the hoard of enemies rushing toward you, secrets and hidden paths can be found within the levels with some containing extra power-ups so it's



Well detailed and animated graphics



worth searching them out.

There are several different weapon types available to pick up with limited ammunition for each (thankfully your starting weapon has unlimited ammo), weapons have different properties, some ammo can travel through solid objects for example, and others are suited to certain enemy types and situations.

Power-ups can be found, some require a bit of puzzling and backtracking to reach, these power-ups greatly help you survive a little longer against the hoard and also help with some of the hazards imbedded

into the scenery along the way, the power-ups consist of:

POW - increases the power of shots.

RAPID - increases the rate of fire.

SHIELD - temporary invulnerability from enemies.

HELL YEAH! Is a very accomplished game with great looking detailed sprites and backgrounds with no visible colour clash due to the sprites having a black border, the game display is easy to read with health and selected power-ups all shown on screen, it is all well laid out with no clutter to make things confusing, the animation and movement of the main

character and the games numerous enemies are very smooth, as is the scrolling of the screen, the game runs extremely well with lots of bullets and enemies on the screen at one time with no evident slowdown.

Controlling the main character and navigating the scenery is pretty good, you will need to step onto moving platforms, jump over spike and lava pits and navigate ladders in the search for your brother, although there were times when I found it difficult to jump onto a platform or traverse a trap it was not bad enough to detract from the gameplay experience.

If I had to nitpick there are a few things that let the game down a little, the sound is a disappointment with only spot sound effects and no music, it would have been nice to have a 128k version with more varied sound and background music. The keys are not redefinable and are set to Q, A, O, P, and M for fire, a loading screen would have been nice to have, and having to play the game through three times to see the ending may be a bit much for some.



Party at a grave!



Finding the secrets enhances the longevity of the game

## SCORE

### GRAPHICS

Large well detailed and animated sprites, detailed and varied backgrounds and enemies, a lot is happening on-screen at one time with no slowdown, a loading screen would have been nice.

8.0

### AUDIO

The lack of music and weak sound effects let the rest of the game down a little.

6.0

### GAMEPLAY

Easy to pick up and play with plenty of power-ups and extras to collect, varied enemy types keep it from getting boring.

8.0

### STAYING POWER

Having to play through the game on three levels of difficulty and finding the hidden secrets enhances the longevity of the game.

9.0

### OVERALL

A very accomplished game considering it is Andy's first assembly game and all on a 48K spectrum, I hope there is more to come from this talented programmer.

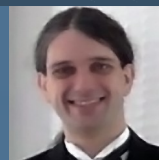
8.0



## SPECIFICS

MANOS RANTMEISTER

**FORMAT** Amstrad CPC (requires a Dandanator), also available for the ZX Spectrum and MSX2  
**YEAR** 2021  
**CREDITS** CPC Coding by Spirax, original ZX Spectrum coding by Benway  
**PRICE** Free  
**WEBSITE** [www.retroworks.es/php/game.php?id=11](http://www.retroworks.es/php/game.php?id=11)



# Los Amores de Brunilda

**W**hat can a religious man do when his faith is being challenged by superstition? Will his beliefs remain unwavering or will his resolution falter when confronted with pagan magic? This is the theme of Los Amores De Brunilda (Brunilda for short), which takes place during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. You control a Franciscan monk, Fray Gonzalo, en route on a pilgrimage along with his younger companion, Fray Cesareo. After a long day's walk, the 2 monks decide to find shelter in a nearby village before nightfall. Unfortunately, they choose a village ruled by superstition and fear, a village that has a dark secret, one of love, jealousy and betrayal.

The game was initially intended as a text adventure, back in 1994. After a long hiatus, it was released for the Spectrum in 2013 and later ported to the MSX2. The Amstrad CPC port was released in 2021 and it was based on the MSX2 version and it requires a hardware add-on called a Dandanator but, fortunately, some emulators support it.

Brunilda is mainly an exploration game with some light puzzle-solving involved. Fray Gonzalo must explore the various places, interact with the NPCs and uncover bits of information that will help

him solve the mystery and redeem the village. This will also involve quite a few fetch quests, a handful of challenging mazes and some arcade sequences, where you have to push the right direction at the right time. The HUD is simple and clear, with your faith (which functions as energy) shown on the bottom left and your inventory on the right. Apart from the items that you need to progress the storyline, you can also collect some rosaries, which will replenish some of your faltering faith, when it reaches zero.

The graphics of Brunilda are simply brilliant, making excellent use of the Amstrad CPC's colourful palette. Everything is usually clear, although not always. The sprites are cute, the scrolling is quite fast and smooth and, combined with the top-down view make Brunilda look like a console game. The presentation of the game is also superb.

The music of Brunilda definitely doesn't play second fiddle to the awesome graphics. The game is chock full of fantastic tunes that fit the game





Good graphics and scrolling

perfectly and they truly make the AY sing, as was the case in Retroworks' other game, the Sword of Ianna. There are also some basic SFX.

In a genre such as this, sometimes lovingly referred to as 'walking simulators', clunky controls can become a deal-breaker. Fortunately, the game controls for Brunilda are fluid, fast and responsive, so the fetch quests never become too tedious. Interacting with the various objects and NPCs is done very simply with the fire button and picking up objects is simply a matter of walking on them. There are enemies as well but, being a pacifist monk, instead of karate-chopping them to

oblivion, you can only avoid them. The game map is moderately large and it is quite pleasing to explore.

And the gameplay is fun and

addictive, aided by the linear, but atmospheric, immersive and interesting storyline and the solid

controls. The game is conveniently separated into chapters, each with its own password and there are also several save points throughout the game area.

There is only one negative thing I could find about Brunilda and that is the various mazes, which are quite tricky to explore, with very limited visibility and relentlessly respawning monsters.

Overall, Brunilda is a great addition to the Amstrad CPC library, a polished title that looks, sounds and plays brilliantly and truly showcases the Amstrad's strengths.

## SCORE

### GRAPHICS

Colourful, cute graphics with fast and smooth scrolling.

9.5

### AUDIO

A plethora of superb AY themes accompanies the gameplay.

9.5

### GAMEPLAY

Simple and effective controls and addictive storyline.

8.5

### STAYING POWER

The game is very linear, but you might revisit it to enjoy the graphics and music.

6.5

### OVERALL

A glorious exploration game for the Amstrad CPC.

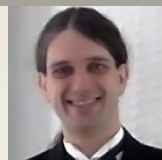
9.0



## SPECIFICS

MANOS RANTMEISTER

**FORMAT** Amstrad CPC  
**YEAR** 2021  
**CREDITS** ESP Soft  
**PRICE** Free  
**WEBSITE** [espsoft.blogspot.com/2021/09/siemb-chronicles-arkos-traitor.html](http://espsoft.blogspot.com/2021/09/siemb-chronicles-arkos-traitor.html)



# SIEMB CHRONICLES

## ARKOS THE TRAITOR

I think that every Amstrad enthusiast has associated Dinamic software with colourful graphics, hard as nails games and title screens with scantily clad women. Well, Siemb Chronicles: Arkos the Traitor by ESP Soft is influenced heavily from Dinamic and the developers do not try to hide it. On the contrary, Siemb Chronicles pays tribute to Dinamic's Game Over.

Siemb Chronicles takes place in the same universe as ESP Soft's previous game, Galactic Tomb. It is a run-and-gun shooter, in which you control a commander of the Elite Army, with the easily-pronounced name Caberhi Tram. Mr. Tram, armed with his gun and a few grenades must travel to the planet Hypsis and defeat Arkos, an officer who has turned against the Empire, maybe because the Emperor increased the tax on bubblegum or something. Of course, this assassination mission does not rely on stealth, since you have most prudently decided to go all guns blazing against an army of alien creatures and robots who seem very eager to reduce you to galactic ash.

Shooting is not the only thing you do in Siemb Chronicles, since there is also a lot of platforming involved, with some very cruel jumps that require pixel-perfect execution, even in the first level. Power-ups are there to help you, like weapon

upgrades, health, shield or extra grenades, but they are very scarce. There is also the occasional power-up that kills you, which is always a gamer's favourite. Being shot doesn't kill you outright, thankfully, since you have an energy bar that seems deceptively generous, until you realize that it gets depleted very quickly.

One is blown away by the graphics of the game, which showcase the colourful

palette of the Amstrad CPC. Unlike most Amstrad run-and-guns, Siemb Chronicles scrolls quite smoothly and, as if that weren't enough, it features some lovely parallax as well. The sprites are big and well defined, but the movement isn't as smooth as it should, especially regarding enemy projectiles, which are sometimes hard to avoid because of this. The overall presentation of the game is also quite polished and competent.



Colourful graphics with smooth parallax scrolling



# AMSTRAD CPC

The soundtrack of the game is nothing short of brilliant which is to be expected, since the composer is none other than the CPC wizard, John McKlain. Although there is only one tune during gameplay, the thumping rhythm manages to maintain the game's excitement and hypes the player to keep on blasting. There are also simultaneous sound effects, although they can be hard to hear over the loud music.

The controls of Siemb Chronicles are very solid and contribute to the enjoyment of the game. 2-button joysticks work as well and are recommended for this game, with the 2<sup>nd</sup> button used for throwing grenades.

And the gameplay ranges from enjoyable to frustrating, depending on your relationship with difficult games. While being difficult is not a negative thing in my book, there are often unfair places,

where, for example, the frequency of the enemy projectiles makes it almost impossible to avoid all of them and, if you don't find a health bonus, there is no way to replenish your energy other than losing a life. There are some features that every gamer loves, for example having to redo the level from the beginning if you die. There are some mid-level checkpoints, but there is also a nice mini-boss before you get to them. At least the game rewards you with a password that lets you jump straight to the second part of the game, but good luck managing to get there.

Overall, this is a game that fulfils all the expectations mentioned in the first paragraph of this review, while improving on all aspects of the Dinamic titles, except the cruel gameplay. Apart from showcasing what the Amstrad can do, I wholeheartedly recommend Siemb Chronicles to fans of the run-and-gun genre as well as to gamers who seek a challenge.

## SCORE

### GRAPHICS

Lovely, colourful graphics, with some amazing parallax.

8.5

### AUDIO

Excellent, exciting tunes and simultaneous SFX.

9.0

### GAMEPLAY

Solid controls but brutal difficulty.

6.0

### STAYING POWER

Depends on your relationship with challenging games.

6.5

### OVERALL

A highly polished but very difficult run-and-gun, a fitting homage to Game Over.

7.0





## SPECIFICS

**FORMAT** Nintendo Entertainment System  
**YEAR** 2019  
**CREDITS** Morphcat  
**PRICE** £24.99 (NES cartridge), €8.99 (Steam), \$9.99 (itch.io)  
**WEBSITE** [www.morphcat.de](http://www.morphcat.de)

TOM HAHN



# Micro Mages

**H**ow retro can it be? A new game for the original Nintendo Entertainment System! And that's quite special, as there aren't many new games available for Nintendo's 8-bit powerhouse. So let's enjoy this piece of retro goodness to the max! So, what's this game all about?

### Once upon a time...

... there were four mages living with their beloved princess in a small cottage in a dark forest. They lived there happily, until... one of the mages forgot to lock the door of the small cottage. Not very smart, indeed. When the mages came back from their studies that day, the princess was gone...

A fairy told the mages that strange things are happening in the old Demon Fortress on top of Pretzel Mountain. Of course, our heroes didn't hesitate to come into action to find their beloved princess! After chanting a so-called 'teleportation spell' (I wish I had one) they took off to the Demon Fortress... And that's where the game begins.

### Multiplayer fun

After a short introduction to the game accompanied by a nice tune, you can choose how many people you want to play. Surprisingly, you can play this game with up to four people simultaneously! In this case, four different coloured micro mages will await you and your

mates at the start of the game. Great multiplayer fun is guaranteed if you have a few NES-loving mates (and a four player adapter when you play with more than two persons of course). The name of the game is well-chosen by the way, the mages ARE micro. But they're incredibly cute, well-animated and move well.

### A creepy tower to start with...

On the first level, you have to climb a tower to reach the exit. The exit will bring you to the next part of the tower.

There are three parts of the tower to climb before you reach the end of the level. The towers are creepy with some skulls and some walking skeletons which you can easily defeat by shooting spells at them by a press on the 'B' button. Shoot two spells, and they're dead (hmmm, weren't they already?) It's also possible to shoot spells in the air, even diagonally. That's handy for the bats, ghosts, goblins and other baddies that will soon show up...



# NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

Playing this game is not completely straightforward, unfortunately. That's because there are no platforms like in Super Mario for example. So you really have to climb the walls by pressing the jump button in combination with the direction button. That might result in some funny 'button bashing' in the beginning until you get the hang of it. But the controls work fine, thankfully.

## Power-ups

On his way to the top, our small hero finds some crates here and there. By shooting at them, a power-up will appear. As the first level is pretty easy, you won't need them directly, but they might be handy at a later stage. For instance, there's a 'magic feather' to find with which you can fly short distances through the air (with means less climbing), and when you collect a fairy, you won't immediately die when you are hit by an enemy, because she protects you once. Besides those handy power-ups, you can also find pearls and sapphires for extra points. When you

have enough points, an extra life icon appears – very useful of course. So it's sensible to pick up the pearls and sapphires as well. Some crates are not easy to reach, so it's up to you whether you want to open them or not. On every stage, there are a few handy checkpoints like in many platform games. Really funny: you can destroy the checkpoint flags for 500 extra points! (only for the angry birds among you). Reached the exit? Then it's time to climb the next part of the tower, angry or not!

## End-of-level bosses

At the end of every third stage in a level, there's the 'not-so-original-and-sometimes-frustrating- end-of-level-boss'. There's a huge ghost at the end of level one and the God of Thunder (named Thorrix in this game) at the end of level 2. And there are more of course in later levels, but you can find out for yourself. All the bosses have their own special power. The ghost tries to suck you in (because it wants your soul – yes, that's creepy!), Thorrix throws lightning at you (because he's... well, just Thor basically). When you hit those bosses with your spells at certain times, they will die. Nothing special here I'm afraid, but the bosses do add a bit of variety to the game, as their abilities are different from the 'normal' baddies you'll discover

in the game. After defeating the end-of-level-boss, you will finally get a password, and you can start the next level if you wish.

A password system or save function is always a bonus for me as it gives you a moment to think if you want to quit or continue the game. But in this case, I would have preferred a password after each stage, because the game isn't easy. Now you have to start all over again when you die at the last stage of a level. A bit frustrating sometimes...

## Loads of fun

To end this review and to sum it all up: I had loads of fun playing Micro Mages! The controls feel a bit strange at first but work well, the characters are funny and the graphics and backgrounds are solid and colourful. Music and sound are OK, you can play the game with up to four people, and the game has a funny ending too! Micro mages is a quality game that's worth playing if you have an NES (or if you can emulate one). It's not groundbreaking or amazing (eh...I meant amazing, sorry) but still loads of fun!

## SCORE

### GRAPHICS

A nice intro screen, beautiful backdrops. Funny characters with good animation.

8.5

### AUDIO

A nice soundtrack, some stages have different music. Sound isn't groundbreaking, but OK.

7.5

### GAMEPLAY

You need some time to master the controls. But they work well. Not easy to get passwords.

7.5

### STAYING POWER

You need some time to master the controls. But they work well. Not easy to get passwords.

9.0

### OVERALL

A very entertaining game set in a spooky world. A nice homage to Nintendo's NES too.

8.0



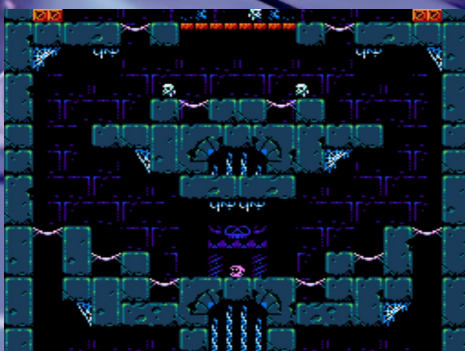
It takes time to master the controls



You can climb the walls in this game



The beautiful cartridge version



Skeletons can easily be defeated with two spells



# BLAST FROM THE PAST

## SPECIFICS

KEVIN WALSH

**FORMAT** Commodore 64, also available on various other formats

**YEAR** 1986

**CREDITS** Designer: Kellyn Beech, Artist: James D. Sachs, Composer: Jim Cuomo, publisher: Cinemaware

**PRICE** PC version on GOG for €5.19

**WEBSITE** [www.gog.com/game/defender\\_of\\_the\\_crown](http://www.gog.com/game/defender_of_the_crown)



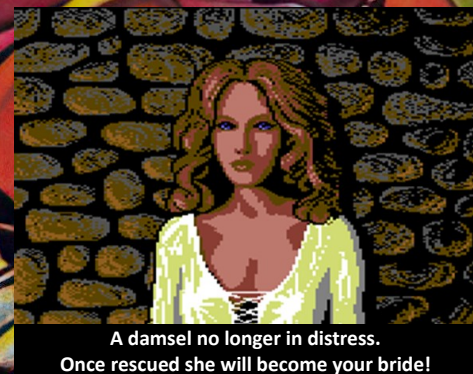
# Defender of the Crown

Cinemaware originally released Defender of the Crown on the Commodore Amiga in 1986. In 1987 it was ported to the Commodore 64 and many other systems. It's a turn-based strategy game designed as "A Cinemaware Interactive Movie". From the opening title sequence, to the cut-scenes, mini-games, random events, and music, it brilliantly delivers.

Our story begins in medieval England in 1149. The king has been killed, his crown stolen, and war has broken out across the land. Saxon and Norman armies

slaughter each other for total control. There are four lords to choose from and each possess various strengths in leadership, jousting, and swordplay.

It takes a few play-throughs (losses) to understand what is best to do. Your first course of action should be "Read Map". Take note of which lands generate the most income and occupy them immediately. The more land you control, the more income you will generate per turn, and the greater purchasing power you'll have to amass your army. Check out the large green area on the map.



A damsel no longer in distress. Once rescued she will become your bride!

When you select "Conquest", or "Go Raiding", click the green area first, then your destination. Robin Hood will assist you. You can only use his services three times per game, so use him wisely.

The black horse signifies your starting territory and your army as you move about the land. The black shields represent all the land you control. At the beginning of the game, your fellow Saxons (all marked by shields) will not attack you. The Norman territories are marked by flags. Use this to your advantage. If you move your army to a Saxon castle, you will have a choice to attack or safely pass through. Accept the offer and pass through, so you can occupy or attack land on the other side of it. Also, know that moving your army to any territory you already occupy will not "use" your turn.



YOU		ENEMY
48	SOLDIERS	27
4	KNIGHTS	8
1	CATAPULTS	1
	♠ = 25	🐎 = 10

OPTIONS	
FEROCIOUS	ATTACK
STAND	AND FIGHT
BOMBARD	
OUTLOOK	
RETREAT	

Battle rages across the land!





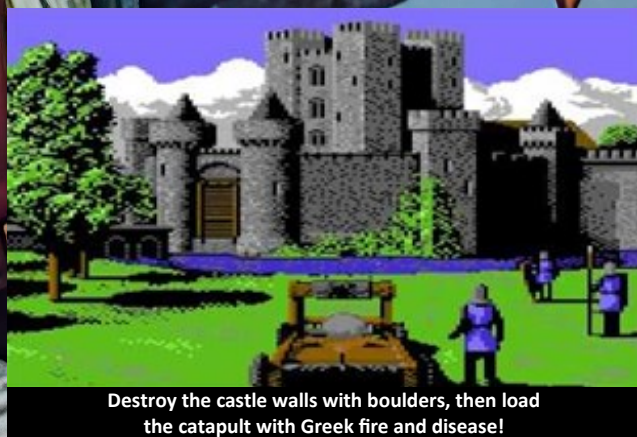
The eighteen territories you must occupy for victory



Best be handy with a joust or suffer a quick defeat!



The attention to detail is impressive. Check out the shadows



Destroy the castle walls with boulders, then load the catapult with Greek fire and disease!

Either you or other lords can call upon a tournament and fame or land must be waged. Jousting in a tournament can be quite cruel until you get the hang of it. Aim for the center of your opponent's shield for victory. However, if you're having difficulty, choose Cedric of Rotherwood. His jousting ability is strong, which allows greater room for error.

When you have a strong enough army and enough gold, you will need to purchase a catapult. Without one, you will not be able to attack castles, which is imperative to your mission. Raiding castles and certain random events will start the swordplay mini-game. This game is tough, and there is much to learn before the land is united under



Trumpeters trumpet your ears!  
The tournament is about to commence!

your rule. Random events, such as a chance to rescue a damsel in distress, a kidnapping, or being raided keep the game fresh. No two games are the same. If you like strategy games, this Cinemaware classic should not be missed.

## SCORE

### GRAPHICS

Possibly the best cinematic game experience on the Commodore 64.

9.5

### AUDIO

The SID chip easily trumpets its way to victory.

9.5

### GAMEPLAY

Moving the arrow around the map and making selections is a bit slow. The mini games control well.

8.0

### STAYING POWER

Random events and the ability to choose different lords certainly add to lastability.

8.5

### OVERALL

Stellar presentation, sound, story, and challenge.

9.5

CHOOSE A CHARACTER



WILFRED OF IVANHOE

LEADERSHIP: GOOD  
JOUSTING: GOOD  
SWORDPLAY: GOOD

CHOOSE A CHARACTER



CEDRIC OF ROTHERWOOD

LEADERSHIP: AVERAGE  
JOUSTING: STRONG  
SWORDPLAY: AVERAGE

CHOOSE A CHARACTER



GEOFFREY LONGSWORD

LEADERSHIP: WEAK  
JOUSTING: AVERAGE  
SWORDPLAY: STRONG

CHOOSE A CHARACTER



WOLFRIC THE WILD

LEADERSHIP: AVERAGE  
JOUSTING: WEAK  
SWORDPLAY: AVERAGE

Wilfred of Ivanhoe is the most well rounded and usually the best choice for a beginner



# BLAST FROM THE PAST

## SPECIFICS

SIMON BOUGHEY

**FORMAT** Atari 2600

**YEAR** 1977

**CREDITS** Steve Mayer, Joe Decuir, Larry Kaplan, Larry Wagner, published by Atari, Inc.

**PRICE** Very cheap, used

**WEBSITE** [www.atarimania.com/game-atari-2600-vcs-combat\\_7258.html](http://www.atarimania.com/game-atari-2600-vcs-combat_7258.html)



# COMBAT

I had combat as a young kid. I was probably about 4 when I received my 6 switch woody, this would have been late 84 or early 85. I remember most of the games I had, Crystal Castles, Jungle Hunt, Pacman, Space Invaders, Defender, Vanguard, Adventure, Asteroids and others. Combat was a game I didn't at all grasp back then and so I never really played it because nothing ever seemed to fight back. I didn't understand AI back then... or 2 player only games it would appear. Stupid child.

Everybody even remotely into retro gaming systems knows Combat. It was a pack in game with virtually every Atari VCS/2600 ever sold, so now there are so many out there, it's almost completely worthless. Nowadays, if you are looking to buy an old Atari with a complement of games, you can guarantee it will come with at least 1 copy of Combat. I have 8 Atari 2600s and 10 copies of the game myself. One even came with an Atari 400 I recently picked up, and the carts don't even fit that machine, so as you can see they are literally everywhere.

So fast forward from 1985 - from that little snotty 4 year old Bozo, to now. I have, at least physically, grown up and have a 15 year old son who disappointingly does not share my passion for old consoles and games. In his opinion they are all crap apparently. The boy though has recently been a pleb at school, so the boy has had his Xbox



This brings back a lot of memories

taken off him for the foreseeable future. All of a sudden, the boy wants to play old games with his old man. Strangely, Combat is the game he repeatedly asks to play... and what fun we've had firing pixels at each others seemingly random bunch of pixels.

Combat is a 2 player only 1v1 battle across 27 game modes. Not quite a 27 games in 1 cart, but close. All of the various modes or variations are quite similar, but also different enough to prolong your interest. Tanks are what

Combat is mainly remembered for, and it's what we play the most - mainly because I'm better at that bit than my son. Let's face it dads have to keep winning for as long as possible... because we all know, it won't last forever...

The gameplay is simple - once you begin a game, you get a limited amount of time to shoot your opponent as many times as you can, while trying not to get hit yourself. See, simple. There is no visible onscreen timer but you know when time is running out because the



scores start flashing. This signals mass panic to both players if the scores are really tight. 19-4 up or down, and it doesn't quite have the same effect. Whoever is the higher scorer when the game ends is the "Winner"... apologies if I've ruined that bit for anyone!

The tank variant is one tank versus one tank with various walls to hide behind. Every hit scores you a point and sends your opponent's tank spinning off. Sometimes it will spin across the screen and out of the way... but sometimes it's great because it will remain where it is after spinning, facing the wrong way! Bam... you hit it again... Bam.... again and again... Spawn killing that is apparently he tells me. Whatever... This is incredibly comical until the shoe is on the other foot... or on my son's foot in this case... and you are getting slammed constantly before you can move, let alone retreat, hide or fire back. Then its fist clenchingly rage-inducing. Its okay though, I just threatened him with extra time off his Xbox and he soon stopped... Great success!!!

Tank Pong is great fun too. This mode allows you to bounce and ricochet shots off walls a bit like Pong. That ladies and gentlemen is probably how that mode got its name. You now don't have to be in direct line of sight of your opponent to hit them or get hit by them, it's the same game but with different rules. The rounds bounce around a good few times before disappearing, so you can get hits seemingly out of the blue. The physics on show here are really quite good, but luck is still a factor when the round sets off on its seemingly power ball-esque way. Invisible-Tanks sounds ludicrous, and it actually is but is still quite fun to play despite feeling a little bit like a party game in some respects. The tanks remain invisible unless they fire or are hit so a game of invisible cat and mouse ensues, where you don't even know where your own tank is.

In some of these variants, you even have some control over your round after it's fired. This makes for some real fun as you can never be too sure of your hiding spot.

The rest of the game modes are all about aerial combat, Biplanes, jets and a

cumbersome 'no one wants to play as it because it's impossible to win with' bomber. There are 13 game varieties that take place in the sky. Most of which are very playable... except that damn useless bomber. Trust me the easiest way to win in Combat is to get your opponent to play as the Bomber, it doesn't stand a chance against the three small planes. It's too big of a target and its projectile doesn't cover a wide enough range. I've never witnessed the Bomber win in a match, ever. It's so big it gets hit over and over again with no chance to react or dodge incoming fire. It will drive you nuts... you literally may as well not play if you are the bomber. If it could fire backwards and/or sideways, it

may stand a chance... but it doesn't, so it doesn't. Oh... and it's slower than the fighters and takes half the screen to turn. So you see the issue.

The last few game variations involve Jets. These move quickly and pull fast aerial turns, sneaking up behind an opponent, or warping from the bottom of the screen to the top (or vice versa) for a surprise attack. I loved being the single jet in the three jets versus one setup. The three jets stick together in a line and are controlled as one. It was easy to run circles around those three jets, being such a small and difficult target to hit. Three jets fire three bullets which gives them a wider field of fire. Don't worry,

# COMBAT

## VIDEO COMPUTER SYSTEM™

### GAME PROGRAM™

**27** VIDEO GAMES

TANK • TANK PONG • BIPLANE •  
INVISIBLE TANK • JET FIGHTER  
TWO PLAYERS



Just one of the cover variations throughout the sale of the game



# BLAST FROM THE PAST



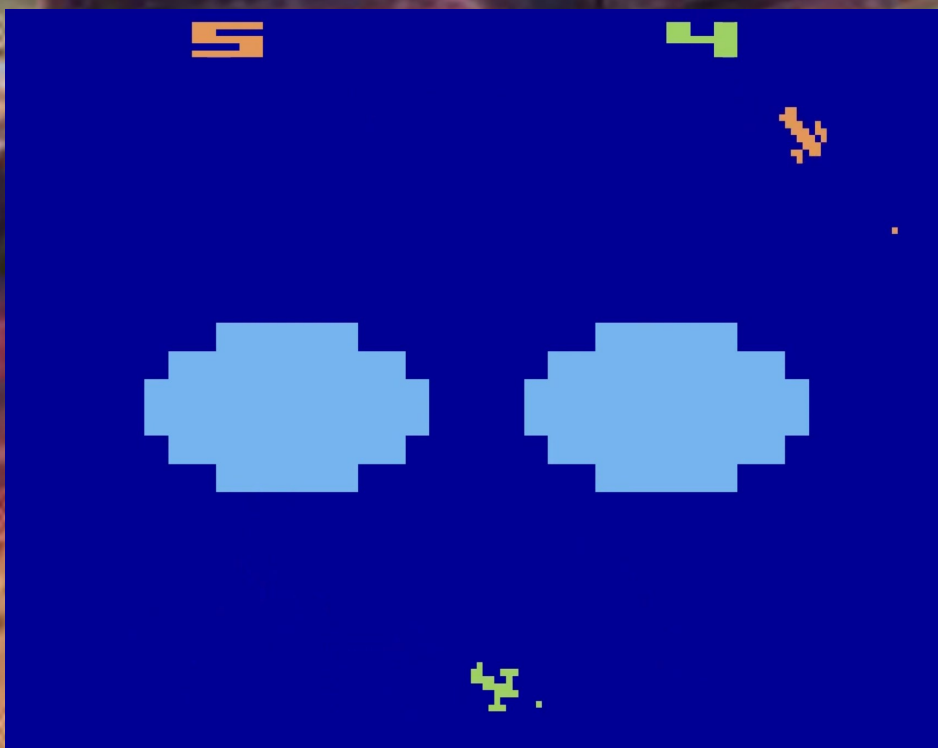
The maze offers more of a challenge, especially in pong mode where shots bounce off walls

it's still very even.

Each variant is fun and different, except for the bullet magnet of a bomber. If you only play each variant once you will still remain occupied for a good hour or so.

Now graphically this is basic... very basic. The tanks are seen from a top-down view and do actually resemble tanks to some degree... even more so when a little player imagination is incorporated.

Travelling Up, down, right and left, each sprite sort of looks like what it's meant to be. Tanks, planes and party hats.... ok jets... kind of (\*\*said while shaking his head\*\*). When these sprites take on a diagonal direction they distort completely and become very jagged. The bomber is the worst for this. I have no love or sympathy for this big flying hulk of complete uselessness in case you hadn't noticed. For some reason, and this might just be me, it looks like it's



Those are biplanes, honestly!

having trouble staying aloft to start with. When it starts to turn and is diagonal it really looks like the sizeable pixels are having trouble just staying together. You know those junk models that toddlers make at playschool before proudly bringing them home telling you the mass of screwed up litter, washing up liquid bottles, fruit netting, and toilet roll tubes they've bunged together with half a mile of sticky tape - is in fact an aeroplane... then you are somewhere on your way to understanding how this looks.

Combat's sounds are even more simplistic than the graphics, but they are enough and do the trick. Basically, all you hear is the drone of your tanks, the engine of your planes or jets, the sound of your rounds being fired and a rudimentary explosion when you score a hit. That is all there is, and all that's really needed. Music... erm... nope, nothing, Zilch.

Combat's control system is simple enough. Atari 2600 joysticks consist of only the directional stick and one fire button. For the tanks, you press up to move forward no matter what direction you are facing. Left and Right rotate the tank, and the fire button makes you shoot. The tanks move awfully slowly and turn just as sluggishly. An important factor to remember is that they can't reverse, making rushing in and then retreating a very dangerous strategy indeed. Your tank is very vulnerable when trying to turn round because they can only fire the way they are facing and have to be stationary to change direction... YIKES!

The planes and jets are a little easier to control once you work out what direction does what on the joystick. They constantly move so you just have to steer, and shoot of course. With the old Biplanes, which are viewed side-on, up and down are reversed, so up makes the plane descend and down makes it ascend. Left slows them down just slightly and right speeds them up just as slightly. The jets, viewed from top-down... or bottom-up... hmmm... are similar to control, but use different directions. This time left and right steer the plane left and right... amazingly. Up speeds them up and down, you've guessed it, slows them. This was a little confusing at very first,



# COMBAT

especially after you just get used to the tanks or the biplane! It keeps it fresh and really makes you think you are controlling different instruments of war... Honestly.

Combat then, an often overlooked but really fun 2 player experience. If you've got kids that are intrigued by what you used to play in the dark ages, get them on this. They'll either love it and be hooked on older simpler games... or bore them stupid and snuff out any spark of interest they may have had. For me, it has ignited my son's interest for now, but how long that will last after he gets his Xbox back remains to be seen.

Combat is everywhere, it's at the back of the shelf, it's at the bottom of your game pile, or in a box of random gaming rubbish... and it's in every retro gaming shop for pennies. It's one of those games that tries its best to remain face down so that you have to pick it up and turn it over to see which game it is in the hope you'll play it this time, before its once again discarded into the box of the stuff you are not going to play. Do it a favour, show it some attention and love. Sit down with a mate and let it show what it's all about. It can still make you smile. I think it may just surprise you. Of course, if you are on your own, you may as well just lob it back in the box...



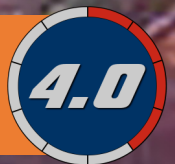
## PROS AND CONS

- + Simple to play
- + Fun with a mate
- + Some interesting modes
- No single player
- Basic graphically
- Bomber is pointless

## SCORE

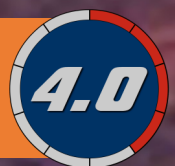
### GRAPHICS

Very basic... and for the most part recognizable especially if you see jets instead of party hats.



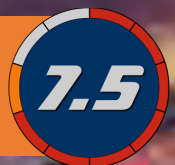
### AUDIO

Sounds are as basic as the graphics.



### GAMEPLAY

Its simplicity is its biggest asset, anyone can pick this up be playing in seconds.



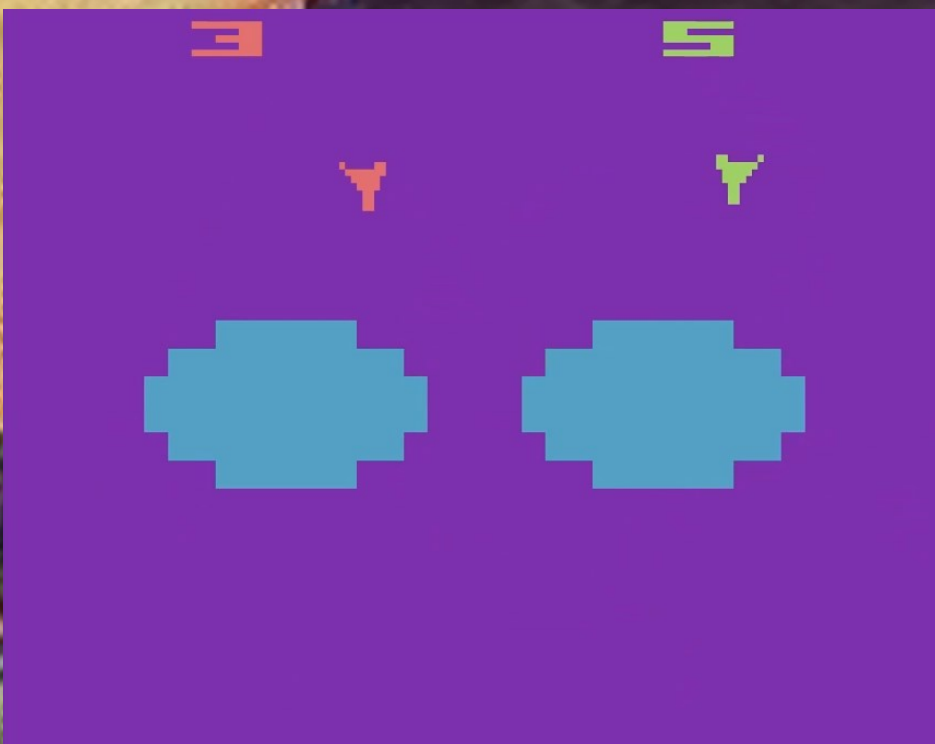
### STAYING POWER

It's a two player game, so providing you have a friend you can have a lot of fun here with the various game modes.



### OVERALL

Combat is a game that everyone has at least one of. it's actually really fun if given the chance.



The jets are the fastest of the game modes



## SPECIFICS

PAUL MONOPOLI

**FORMAT** Sharp X68000

**YEAR** 1993

**CREDITS** Developed by KCET, Published by Konami Co. Ltd

**PRICE** Various prices used, depending on condition

**WEBSITE** [castlevania.fandom.com/wiki/Sharp\\_X68000](http://castlevania.fandom.com/wiki/Sharp_X68000)



# 悪魔城ドラキュラ

## AKUMAJÓ DRACULA

**K**nown as 'Castlevania' in the West, the Akumajó Dracula series has been a staple of video gaming since the 80s. The exploits of the Belmont family, and their quest to keep Dracula: the original night stalker at bay are legendary, with each generation of video game system seeing multiple releases.

While the Nintendo Entertainment System/Famicom version is the best known version, the original game has been remade multiple times, often with many differences. For example, while the NES version is an action platformer the MSX release is a platforming puzzler. This Sharp X68000 iteration is an action platformer, but it is a completely different experience to any other version.

Beginning with an animated introduction, the game shows the resurrection of the Dark Lord before having you dive directly into a deceptively simple first level. While Castlevania aficionados may know what to expect, the casual gamer might be misled by the ease of which Simon Belmont traverses this first stage. Venturing through the familiar mansion level (present in almost all versions), is no major issue for fans of the platforming genre. After this, that

legendary Castlevania difficulty rears its ugly head.

Level 2 will see you making your way through what appears to be an underground sewer-type environment. This level is a great demonstration of the gorgeous parallax scrolling offered by

the X68000 hardware. A lot of effort has been put into enhancing this port, which has led to some additional level design choices. While these are visually pleasing, they are also quite frustrating. Travelling up a vertical water way at high speed on a platform that continues to shrink is frustrating, especially when

SCORE-000400 TIME 390 STAGE 01  
PLAYER ██████████  
ENEMY ██████████



Don't be scared, they are just rave dancers!



# SHARP X68000

Simon gets knocked back each time he is hit (a common complaint in all versions of the game). This section is a test that will challenge even the most hard core Castlevania fans.

While the backgrounds are very well done, it is worth mentioning that the animations within the game match these with a visually pleasing fluidity. Considering the X68000 did not have the biggest market share, the attention to detail is amazing. Platforms give a slight bob when they are landed on, while Simon and his enemies have been given a decent amount of frames for their movements.

Along with graphical enhancements, Simon himself has been given a few tweaks and is now able to strike downwards and on some diagonals. A much needed upward strike is still sadly missing, though one could argue that its inclusion might make the game a little too easy.

For the purposes of this review, the game was played on a late model X68030. While many games feature incompatibility issues with this last

iteration of the Sharp PC line, Akumajō Dracula is actually enhanced when played on it, featuring a thumping soundtrack that gets even better when connected to MIDI hardware. Sound effects are nothing special, and you are likely to hear similar in just about every other Castlevania title from the 90s.

The difficulty has been mentioned before, and it is worth mentioning that it could be a barrier for many. Those expecting to sit down with the game for an extended period might find themselves pulling the discs out of their drive and throwing them out the window, frisbee style, in frustration. Perseverance is key, as is identifying when enemies will appear, though not all gamers are going to have the patience to work through the levels.

Despite the difficulty, Akumajō Dracula is a masterpiece on the Sharp X68000 and is even better on the X68030. If you had been considering importing one of these expensive PCs, this game might help you make that decision an affirmative one. If you love Castlevania then this is a game that must be experienced, ideally on the original hardware.



Gorgeous graphics for the time



The game is best played on original hardware



Those birds are not dropping pool!

## SCORE

### GRAPHICS

Gorgeous visual effects, decent animations and scrolling.

9.0

### AUDIO

Amazing musical score, even better with MIDI equipment.

9.0

### GAMEPLAY

Has that famous "Castlevania difficulty" that people will love or hate.

6.0

### STAYING POWER

Players will be rewarded for persevering, but not everyone will have the patience for it.

7.0

### OVERALL

A great conversion of a classic game. A lot of work has gone into this title, but the frustration levels may put people off.

8.5



# CRAP FROM THE PAST

## SPECIFICS

**FORMAT** Amiga CD32

**YEAR** 1994

**CREDITS** Developed by Micromania, published by Flair Software

**PRICE** At the time of writing, a near mint version is on eBay for €89

**WEBSITE** [crappygames.miraheze.org/wiki/Dangerous\\_Streets](http://crappygames.miraheze.org/wiki/Dangerous_Streets)



SIMON BOUGHEY

# Dangerous STREETS

Ok, I looked at this one and got the wrong of the stick. I was thinking it could be an ok Streets of Rage/Final Fight style game. Side-scrolling beat 'em ups are a favourite of mine, so this was well worth a crack. The name, the box art and the characters on that box art scream Streets of Rage, Final Fight... 64th Street even. I actually got quite excited to try it out on my newly, and expensively I might add, acquired Amiga CD32... Jeez, these things are getting really expensive! All was great until I fired it up to realise the box had fooled me! It's a damned 2D one on one fighter, which, with a few exceptions, is not really my cup of Yorkshire tea. But having decided to review it... the show must go on and all that.

At very first glance, with a now very open mind, I thought this could be ok, and she's got a nice backside...

10 minutes later and that peachiness had worn off. I was left wondering what the hell I was doing with my life- train spotting may even be the way forward. What had I bought here?!? I told myself I was going to crack on with a review and... well just endure it really... for the fans.

Whilst I was forcing myself to play, one question kept popping into my head... This is bad, But what is the worst game of all time?

Many say ET on the Atari 2600, but everyone has heard the myth and believes the stories about it single handily almost ending the world as we

know it blah blah blah. This just seems to have become the fashionable go-to answer. In truth, how many of us have ever actually played it? I have, and it's not THAT bad actually, but that's for another review sometime. How about Shaq Fu? or the infamous Rise of the Robots? Can you see what's happened here though? ET has taken the emphasis



A kick in the chest, yet he's smiling at the view!



off Dangerous Streets and this review... I'd almost forgotten what I was supposed to be talking about... That, unfortunately, speaks volumes.

Right, back to this review and its story... The year is 1993. The Amiga's reign as ruler of the home computers is starting to wain. It had been superseded by those now legendary consoles from Sega and Nintendo, the Megadrive/Mega CD and SNES, which were starting to show up the old commodore tub with their flash graphics, great sound and good arcade conversions. plus, even bigger things were on the horizon!

Commodore, though really weren't ready to let themselves be outgunned just yet. They came out all guns a blazing in the September of 93 with the release of the Amiga CD32. This was, at least in Europe, the first 32-bit games console and it doubled the processing power of its console rivals. Impressive stuff.

Despite some strong initial sales, take up of the new CD32 was slow, the lack of first-party titles was a glaring omission. This new console seemed happy to offer little more than straight ports of existing Amiga games with only superficial improvements at best.

What the machine was crying out for was a hero or an exclusive and iconic game to kick start a franchise that the CD32's owners could point to, a franchise to call its own.

In early 1994 the CD32 got Dangerous Streets. In this one-on-one fighter from Flair Software and Micromania, eight 'Mighty Challengers' would do battle on... Erm, dangerous streets...

Anyway, I've rambled on enough now. Having endured this myself... It's now your turn. Let's dive in and see what unsuspecting gamers are in for when they load this beauty up.

It literally starts with the title screen. I know... What beef could I possibly have with a title screen? On first look it seems ok, but then it quickly becomes apparent that the artwork is a tad ropey. It got a feel of a knock off copy of something where everything is there, in order but just slightly off. But we'll look past that.

Instead, let's enjoy the fact that all it says on screen is to press the yellow button for instructions... So a press of the yellow button on the controller brings up the instructions, which helpfully tell us how to load the game up, after we've already bloody loaded the thing, because guess what... I'm sat here with it pigging loaded! Just spare a brief thought for the more literal minded gamers out there who may never see past this title screen that offers no other option other than to press the yellow button. What these instructions don't mention is what each button does what in game, and more importantly- Why does the blue button have the same effect as pressing 'down' on the d-pad, but only when it feels like it... about half of the time??? These enigmas remain completely unanswered. Being the brave rule breaking hero I am, I decided to ignore the game and press the red button... Hiding behind the settee while I did, just in case! I've watched cartoons, I know what can happen with the press of a red button. I survived and was into the game. I did it my way! and won! or so I thought at the time...

Another title screen... This one told me to 'press fire' for which I will assume they mean the red button, given that the controller has no fire button as such, but in fact has several buttons to choose

from... Sheesh. At this point, we get our first ear full of the music, as an intriguing piece plays in the background. O...K intriguing...? Yes, in the sense that I was worried my disk was faulty. It's a typical 90's German techno affair, albeit slightly off-key and sometimes at a too slow a tempo. Worse music has appeared in games granted, this is just very generic sounding at best, almost sounding like bits are missing. During the game, this swapped out for a dull blend of 70's euro-pop and early 80's synth-rock nonsense that does nothing but make you want to mute it.

On we trudge to choose our game type. I just don't get what the developers were thinking here... ok so we get the usual 1 or 2 player options, but the screen graphic gives the impression that only player one can use the joypad, the other player appears left to fend for themselves with just a joystick. What is going on here? Seeing as I have no friends... one player tournament it is. I did press 2 player too for the hell of it... and FYI, you can use a pad as player 2 after all.

Now that we're beyond all of the confusion and misleading partial information of the title screens, we get to pick our fighter. Usually the exciting bit the first few times around. There are





# CRAP FROM THE PAST



8 to choose from and it appears they are just part-time roughens because we get to find out what their real-life jobs are. There's a blue haired guy who 'works in a disco club,' a 'teacher in a gymnasium,' a tubby 'truck driver,' an 'expert palmist,' or even a 'custodian in a old castle.' (Yes, I'm aware its 'an old castle' but the game says 'a old castle'... they can't even get that right!)... and a 'Top Model.' It's a tough old decision, but I'll admit, the gym teacher looks nice showing roughly 97% of her backside off- so for the sake

of research, I'll give her a go. (How old are you??? - Ed)

This is when I found out my TV was turned up too loud... Oh dear. My speakers must have popped... No wait, my mistake, that's actually an attempt at speech as a truly horrific distorted voice blurts out the name of the fighters. Remember Spike on the Vectrex... well that's better than this. This a C-bloody-D game... and that's all they could come up with?!?! This game was supposed to be

next-gen for its day- a system seller...

Ok it has started, time to fiiiight... Good grief, now what's going on? I'm fighting myself. My first fight is against exactly the same character as the one I had just chosen... and by the same, I really mean EXACTLY the same as both fighters are wearing identical outfits! I don't mean to nitpick here, but not even a variation in colour. Cue lots of foul language when I completely lost track of which fighter I was after some manic jumping around... You see, I thought I was getting on quite swimmingly- until I realised I was actually on the receiving end of the pummeling I thought I was dishing out. This is well beyond moronic now.

Not that any of that matters at all when the controls are so damn right awful, the fighters just jerk around the screen like broken robots suffering from lag. You spend most of the fight stood right next to your opponent constantly missing with your attacks, they just don't seem to connect. It looks as though they can't be hit if they have entered an attack animation... But surely not? or the hit detection is just completely broken. Either way, it just doesn't work.

Fighters as you'd expect have basic attacks and a set of special character specific moves. My gym lady seems to have two, firstly the 'show your opponent your bum' manoeuvre, (God knows!) and secondly what has to be the single best fighting move ever to grace a fighting game- A block! No, she doesn't put her arms up to defend herself, or find a shield from anywhere... she literally turns into a grey square block of metal to repel attacks. You couldn't make this up. Some fool obviously did though.

Ok, it can't all be this bad... I love castles, so I thought I'd try the odd blue 'an castle custodian' perhaps. (I did that on purpose). Let's ignore his random unexplained skin blueness and the fact that he seems to have springs on his feet. What I really don't get is why his special move appears to be to generate an octopus from his head. Things don't get any less mind-boggling from here... The portly truck driver with his deadly move of taking his hat off or opening up his stomach to send out a mini version of



himself to attack! It's not a gory move there's no blood or entrails to see, he's just a hollow tin can like Bender from Futurama seems to be. His inside is just black, no detail, no texture, nothing. This just continues to raise questions of how? what? and why? My brain at this point is ready to give up... These special attacks are no more powerful than normal attacks to make them even worse, so what's the point? Long walk and short pier springs to mind. Nothing makes sense here at all. You have a bunch of characters that don't particularly resemble what they are supposed to be, nor do their specific moves have anything to do with their character... Did they even play this when they'd finished it these developers? I'd say there's no chance in hell they did!!!!

There is some humour to be found here I suppose, although I'm not sure it was ever intended. You can't help but laugh at the sheer stupidity of it all. The way the character faces on the scoreboard gets more bashed up as your fighter takes punishment is briefly amusing and is possibly the best thing about the game besides turning it off. But once this wears off, which it does very quickly, reality kicks you in the teeth all over again. Another oddity is there is no proper health bar, in a beat 'em up! Instead, there is a star system whereby stars disappear when a certain amount of damage is taken. They just tend to disappear randomly giving you no idea how powerful your attacks are, if you can connect with them that is. Madness.

Graphically this isn't an absolute mess, it's close, mind, it's just lazy and in no way 32-bit quality. The sprites are poorly designed, poorly drawn and badly animated. The English girl is a top model apparently, but she's so badly realised that she's more comparable to someone who failed to get on Ru Paul's Drag Race... The truck driver looks like some sort of deviant Super Mario with his trousers suspiciously undone. Things just start bad and get worse in every aspect of this game. The backgrounds are near C64-quality garish messes with little effort put into the textures or shading. Sound is dull, mostly made of swishes and whooshes of missed attacks, and that attempt at speech would embarrass a



Erm...

Spectrum or C64. But by far the biggest issue is how the thing controls. There is no real weight to any of the characters, their limbs flap around like they have a life of their own. I managed to win a lot of my fights by just standing there and mashing a single button as the plank AI fighter just walked straight towards me. Should you lose though, there are no second chances, the game dumps you back to the title screen in the hope you'd want to start again.... ha ha ha, as if!

Let's get something straight here; the Amiga CD32 might not have been the greatest games machine to ever enter the market, its life span was a mere 8 months, but it was capable of so much more than this. The Amiga computers were never really home to particularly good fighting games, (Ok Mortal Kombat and Body Blows were pretty decent), the one button joystick was just too limiting. This was something the multi-button CD32 pad should have had no issue with if utilized properly. Shadow Fighter did demonstrate that the CD32 hardware was not to blame for this Dangerous Streets monstrosity.

So what is the worst game ever made?

Who knows definitively... But this, this comes very close. Incredibly Commodore used it as the headline game in the 'Dangerous Streets' CD32 bundle not long before their bankruptcy... Stop for a second... Let that sink in for just a moment... Had they ever played this before making that decision? This probably meant this game would be the first game that the punters would play having just forked out this next-gen system!

This really is bad from top to bottom, inside and out. I would still have preferred a side-scrolling beat 'em up, but with the awful outcome of this, it's a good job it wasn't. Is it Rise of the Robots bad? yep, it's at least on par. This, along with the likes of Rise of the Robots, Superman on the N64 and Shaq Fu, amongst others, has a special place in hell. A place that Atari's ET does not deserve to be! (That is a gaming political message brought to you by Bozo Bo). Bizarrely, if you can get it really cheap, I'd say buy it, as it has to

## PROS AND CONS

**Pros:**  
 + Nice Bum  
 + You can turn it off  
 + erm....

**Cons:**  
 - Graphically poor  
 - Sound is shocking  
 - Bad controls  
 - No atmosphere  
 - Stupid character design  
 - Useless attacks  
 - Brain dead developing  
 - Confusing menus  
 - You have to give someone money for it- Its not a joke  
 - The disk loads up

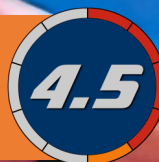


be seen to be believed. But then, I'm daft like that. But seriously, this must be a source of constant ridicule and embarrassment to all involved in its development.

## SCORE

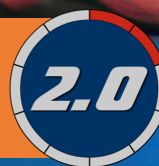
### GRAPHICS

They are bright and even quite well drawn...



### AUDIO

Just awful.



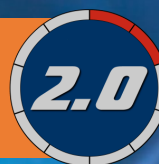
### GAMEPLAY

Controls are poor and its hit detection is just broken, completely.



### STAYING POWER

There is about 30 second of game play here before you realise it's one of the worst games to grace the industry.



### OVERALL

It's just wrong from concept to realisation. Its impossible to experience this without wondering who's idea it was and how it ever got past the testing phase.





# BLAST FROM THE PAST

## SPECIFICS

SIMON BOUGHEY

**FORMAT** Atari ST, also available for Amiga, Commodore 64, ZX Spectrum, Amstrad CPC, MS-DOS, SAM Coupé

**YEAR** 1989

**CREDITS** Developed by Core Design, published by Firebird Software

**PRICE** At the time of writing, around 20 Euro upwards on eBay

**WEBSITE** [www.atarimania.com/game-atari-st-rick-dangerous\\_s9227.html](http://www.atarimania.com/game-atari-st-rick-dangerous_s9227.html)



# RICK DANGEROUS

**B**efore we had the strangely sexy, posh, pointy boobed, jagged-edged gaming sex symbol, Lara Croft, with her (then) teenage boy pleasing angled curves...

And many years before we had the rugged good looks of the rogue-ish, reluctant hero, Nathan Drake...

And in the same summer Han Solo had played ladies man Indiana Jones, who'd strutted his stuff in *The Last Crusade*.

We had a much lesser known, lesser attractive and less agile, let's face it... tomb robber... Off in the distance, far away from these super cool, super sexy adventuring heroes, doing a similar thing with a much smaller budget and a huge grin on his face- was Rick Dangerous! Mr Dangerous, as his name would suggest, is the kind of adventurer who laughs in face of danger and ridicules death-before duly kicking him the unmentionables and continuing on his way to be.... erm, dangerous I suppose.

One look at Rick Dangerous and you will know exactly who he is based on. But if you were in any doubt as to the inspiration behind the character Core Design showed up with in the summer

1989. The 2D adventures of a chisel-jawed, whip-cracking, Nazi-clouting professor of archaeology hero with a fedora, leather jacket and revolver - the opening 20 seconds of gameplay will undoubtedly ram home that this is an all

out unashamed tribute to one Henry Jones Junior.

The story and plot of Rick Dangerous is pretty much based on the Indiana Jones movie *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*. Set in



Watch out for that boulder, opps, too late!





Jones moment from any of his movies.

Armed with an incredibly large calibre revolver and dynamite, Rick must fight hostiles and evade traps across this and three other levels. The second level is set inside a giant pyramid in Egypt. On the third level, Rick must get inside the Nazi stronghold of Schwarzendumpf castle and rescue captured Allied soldiers. The rescued soldiers then inform him that the Nazis are planning a missile attack on London. So the last level sees Rick infiltrate their secret missile base to put a halt to the fireworks.

At its heart, Rick Dangerous is a 2D platformer... a devilishly difficult 2D platformer. No matter how good you think you are, you are NOT getting through these levels in your first few goes. The game is based on linear progression through the four separate large levels. Each level has its own individual themes and contains many instant kill traps that have absolutely no visible warnings as to how they will kill you or how to deactivate them, making the game more about trial and error and pattern memorization than most other platform games. In certain areas there will be a trap that needs switching off before you can progress, not too far away will be an area with more than one button, one button will lead to the trap becoming redundant... while the other button is basically an ass hole and will cause something unwanted and undesired to happen to Rick before you know what's going on, making him have to do the last few screens again. These buttons look exactly the same and if you don't remember which one makes you dead the next time you try, you'll probably end up dead again, quickly followed by the joystick! Then there's your Dynamite. Sometimes you have to blow holes in walls to get through and all too often the section of wall you've just forcefully removed flies back at you, very quickly, killing Rick instantly! There are similar temper testing delights throughout, one being arrows or lasers shooting out of walls or ceilings as soon as you step onto a platform, you need very quick reactions to dodge some of these. The other potential rage-inducing moments come courtesy of how the game moves.

1945, British agent Rick Dangerous is travelling to the Amazon jungle in search of the Goolu tribe. En route his plane annoyingly crash lands in the jungle, and Rick must now escape from the enraged Goolu. At least he found them I suppose,

you know, small victories and all. After the opening story text, the game starts from a rolling boulder, a very famous scene from the Indiana Jones movie and probably the most identifiably Indiana



Duck for the boobie traps



# BLAST FROM THE PAST



All the baddies look the same, only changing on the next level

This is not a side-scrolling platformer. It's similar to the original Donkey Kong in that you must complete the levels one static screen at a time. Unlike DK though, once you get to the edge of the screen either by ladder, door or jump the game scrolls across left, right, up or down depending on which side you exit it from, revealing the next screen and its puzzles or obstacles for you to navigate. This works fine on the whole but will sometimes throw up those moments of pure unadulterated agitation, putting it mildly. An explanation is required and here is one such explanation- Your only way out of one screen, and onto the next, is by way of a blind jump or dropping downwards. Sounds simple, and it should be, but the problem is the screen won't move until you've made

this blind drop off the edge. What you didn't know, because you can't pigging see below, is that there are spikes below where you are dropping. DEAD. Next time you think, ok I'll jump further out, but there are spikes further out too. DEAD. 3rd time you've learned from those first two attempts and jumped perfectly into the gap between the spikes and survive- only then for you to not realise you need to move over as you fall because some smart arse developer thought it would be a great idea to then put spikes in the middle a little further down. DEAD... GAME OVER! The joystick delicately placed down with great care... Yeah right! This is a pattern that will play out repeatedly until you exhaust your patience. I can just imagine this developer sat there chuckling to himself

as he puts these vexing bits together... What he probably didn't realise back then is that some of us... ok me... still hates him over 30 years later!

To navigate these levels, Rick can walk, jump and crawl-and all with one stick and one fire button. For protection, he has his revolver, dynamite and a peculiar stick thing which he uses to toggle certain switches and prod and stun enemies if you dare get close enough. The revolver and dynamite both have very limited ammunition, a maximum of six bullets and 6 TNT, more can be found as you pick your way through the levels but ammo is generally quite scarce throughout the game, meaning enemies should only really be dispatched if there is no other way past. You can jump over



the various baddies, but the slightest touch and Rick is dead... the pansy. The neutralised baddies bounce out of the screen towards the screen in a faux-3D style, comically waving his arms with toddler tantrum intensity while yelling "waaaarrghh!" like everyone else's annoying kids at the play barn. It has connotations of the famous Wilhelm scream. It never gets old. Rick dies in the same fashion, this though does get old.

But back to the controls, in general they work well with a joystick. By today's standards though they definitely lack a little finesse. Walking, jumping, crouching, (I had to put crouching because autocorrect was trying to make a mug out of me, so better safe than sorry!) and using your weapons are done with the one button. Left and right, or forward and backwards as we used to call it back when I was a kid, on the stick will have Rick walk in that direction. Down will see Rick duck, (had to be careful there), diagonally down will make him crawl. Up is jump and then a left or right will get him to jump in that direction. Using weapons are equally as simple. To fire Rick's hand cannon of a revolver all you do is press the fire button and press the joystick up as you do. The gun makes a very satisfying sound when fired, it's like a gun being fired in, and echoing around, a barren canyon in an old spaghetti western movie... Peeyow! or something like that. Oh, and to place some TNT it's down whilst pressing fire... now run. It's all that simple and works quite well until things get a bit hectic. Sometimes you will find that instead of firing his gun, Rick will just jump, which can be a hindrance when trying to stop an advancing enemy.

The game's fun cartoon style is nice to look at. Rick himself is a well-drawn, well designed cartoon character.

The beautifully crafted box artwork may echo Drew Struzan's now cult level Indy posters, but the in-game sprites are of a very different artistic style: The old classic Great British comic strip. All the characters are squat, chunky, and have their headwear pulled down so all you can see is a big nose and a toothy grin. Rick himself reminds me very much of Bully Beef from The Dandy, joyfully

cosplaying as Indiana Jones. Enemy sprites are very repetitive but suit the levels they are patrolling. Some just dumbly wander back and forth, but others will shadow your movements on a higher or lower level until they drop down to you and follow you... Don't forget, one touch and it's back to the checkpoint time! There is also a nice use of foreground scenery - Rick (and his enemies) sometimes walk behind columns and posts, which is a nice effect for the time. Graphically each level has its own style. These, too are quite repetitive, but well designed and drawn; the colour palette lets them down just ever so slightly though. The first level, the cave system, is a mix of brown backgrounds and grey walls and platforms- it all looks a little grim. Yes, it is supposed to be deep underground, I get that, but it needed just a little more use of colour in places. The pyramid level fares only slightly better. This level may mainly be browns and bronze but it is accented with blue in places, and the red fez-wearing enemies add a bit of colour with their stereotypical headwear. Then in the castle it's all grey mixed with grey and grey, with grey highlights and a greyish grey tint... It all goes as colourful as John Major's Spitting Image puppet- until the last level, where everything goes blue. Really, really blue, and looks strangely Lego-like all of a sudden.

Rick Dangerous is a cracking 2D platforming forerunner to the adventure games we have today. Despite my nit-picking of the colour schemes, it really doesn't detract from a really good game. It's fiendishly hard, purely evil in places, but good fun and humorous throughout. The developers must have realised it was hard and decided to give you 6 lives to get through the levels with. It's twice as many as most games gave you, but mark my words, it's not enough - not nearly enough! You will have to play the levels again and again, remembering what



## PROS AND CONS

### Pros:

- + Really good fun
- + The sound of that gun
- + Easy enough to control
- + Waaaargh!
- + 6 lives!!!

### Cons:

- Ruthlessly hard
- Blind jumps
- Died again
- Only 6 lives!?!

comes next to get through them. If you can take the deaths as you try to press further with each go, you may, just may get to the end before you drag the game out into the street and give it a good thrashing!

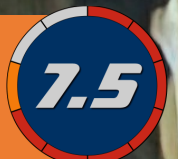
But I doubt it...

Rick Dangerous was also driving gamers scatty on the Amiga, Amstrad CPC, Acorn Archimedes, Sam Coupé, Commodore 64, ZX Spectrum and MS-DOS.

## SCORE

### GRAPHICS

Good art style and nice to look at.



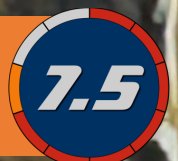
### AUDIO

Satisfying gun shot sounds and Waaaaah!



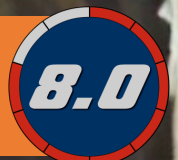
### GAMEPLAY

Controls well, but constant deaths can become frustrating... No, Infuriating!!



### STAYING POWER

Getting through it will be tough, but it has enough charm to keep you hooked- as long as your joystick survives being thrown around.



### OVERALL

It's hard, often unfair in parts, tantrum inducing even, but it's a great game.





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