

# KILOBYTE

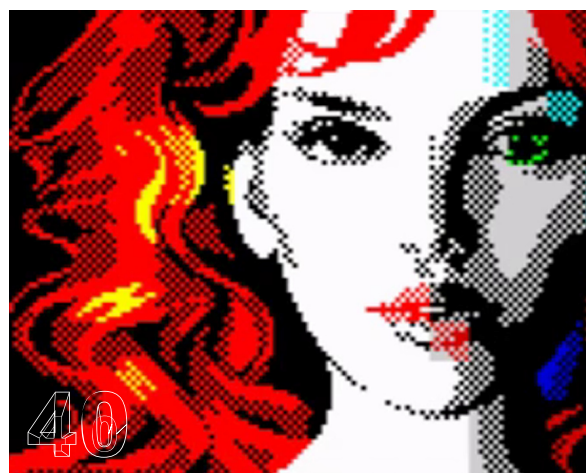
## MAGAZINE

2019 / 3

SQUEEZING ELECTRONS · COLLECTING CRAZE · 8-BIT PREPPER OS · TWEET IT  
VALLEY OF RAINS (SPECTRUM) · DRIFT (SPECTRUM) · UCHUSEN GAMMA (MSX) · AND MORE



8BIT  
ONLY

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#### **KILOBYTE MAGAZINE'S GEM AWARD**

for games with exceptionally clever concepts, great playability and/or impressive technical features.



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# DISCOVER

THE ART OF FLOPPY DISK SLEEVES



Photo: bk

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When it comes to technical impressive demos, certain 8-bit platforms are more frequently blessed by coders than others. The C64 certainly comes top on any list, but there are very active scenes for Atari, Amstrad, Sinclair and even 8-bit gaming consoles like the Master System. And then there are the ones that do not gather the interest of many coders. Maybe because they didn't sell quite as

well back in the day, thus lacking the cult following other machines enjoy. Or maybe they are just not sexy enough to program for – which one might hardly believe, seeing that even Tamagochis and calculators get demos. Among those rather neglected systems is one that sold ok back in its heyday, at least over in Britain. And it sports the popular 6502 processor that powered many more successful homecomputers.



# ELECTRONS



WITH ACORN'S MICRO TODAY

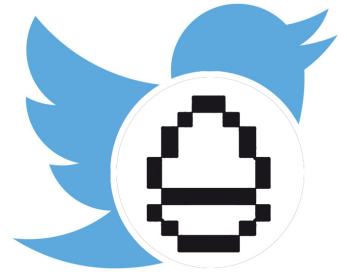
This is all about the Acorn Electron. And it's the tale of a talented coder that got just this machine instead of any of the more popular ones – which has made all the difference to him in a positive way. On Twitter and Youtube, he goes by the handle of oxCoDE. He remembers how it all started: “I grew up in The Netherlands in the glorious era of the 8-bit homecomputers. My friends had a Commodore 64 or a MSX or ZX Spectrum, but I got an Acorn Electron from my parents as my very first computer. I think it must have been 1983 or 1984. I also seem to remember that we had a computer classroom at school with one BBC Micro and a few Electrons. Needless to say, most of the time I would be playing (tape based) games on the Electron, at school and definitely at home. Soon I was wondering how to make these games myself.” And so he tapped into BBC Basic, which the Electron shares with the more powerful educational computer from the same company. This was fun for a while, but for him to really make something with the machine, he had to dig deeper. Learning assembly and trying out stuff with his code, he found something that he strived to do for a living. And so he studied computer science and upgraded to the Acorn Archimedes and then to standard PCs. “I'm a software guy that likes coding at the lowest possible level, usually directly on the hardware.” But he never forgot about the little

Electron that started it all. “About one year ago I was looking for a new programming challenge. Many years before I had programmed an unfinished Gameboy emulator. And now it seemed like a nice challenge to get back to my roots and create an Electron emulator, named Electroniq, which is not released yet. Of course, it was written completely in C. I had a blast coding my emulator and eventually getting 99 percent of all Electron games working on it. Creating an emulator requires a great deal of detailed technical information about the computer you are trying to emulate. So, I started collecting and reading all the available information about the machine itself and about the 6502 CPU. By the way, this is so much easier right now than in my childhood because of the internet. Basically, I dove head first into the 6502 and Acorn world. This very much deepened my understanding and appreciation for both the 6502 CPU and the humble Acorn Electron.”

## **ATTIC ATTACK**

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“All this time I knew in the back of my mind that my actual Electron from my childhood was still buried somewhere in the attic. Untouched for many years. I dug it up, fired it up and of course it still worked without any problem. I started contributing to the 8-bit Acorn dedicated forums of stardot.org.uk. The next logical step (for me at least!) was to see what I could create in 6502 machine code.”



*Follow oxCoDE on Twitter and feel free to contact him for more Electron demo goodness.*

Reunited with his original hardware, he went to work. And having programmed his own Electron emulator, he knew basically everything there was to know about the system. But the real driving force to produce something great was the underdog status the machine has today, often belittled. “Somehow it frustrated me how most people underestimate the Electron. Discarding it as the little brother of the BBC Micro. Most new hardware and software development is done on the BBC Micro. I decided to remain faithful to the Electron and try to show myself and the world that this humble machine can do much more than most people expect. I really love the challenge of creating something with limited resources (CPU cycles, available RAM, hardware features) and making people go: ‘I didn’t even think that was possible on an Acorn Electron!’”

#### **RACING THE BEAM**

One of his more recent demos is called “Racing the beam”. If this sounds somewhat familiar to you, that may not be a coincidence. “It is also a nod to the Atari 2600 scene where racing the beam is a way of life”, oxCoDE explains. And it is very much a necessity with the Electron as well: “My demo effects are getting more complex, trying to squeeze every last CPU cycle out of the Electron. You see, my demo is all about illusion. The demo runs in MODE 2, which has the most colours available (all 8 of them) but it takes 20Kb of

RAM (out of 32Kb available). And because of the way the ULA works in the Electron, the 6502 CPU is stalled for most of the time while the ULA works to output the video image to the screen. Sounds like a challenge to me! To get a 50fps colourful scrolling text in MODE 2 is absolutely impossible if you have to move 20Kb of screen memory every frame. And the Electron has no hardware scrolling capabilities to speak of. What to do? The answer is to race the beam as it goes down the screen and change the colour palette (16 logical colours each of which can be any of 8 physical colours) every few scanlines where needed. This requires cycle perfect timing but the final effect is very convincing, including the depth effect. This is not as easy as it seems because the Electron has a fixed interlaced display. Two fields create one frame and both fields require different timing. Also important is what you draw on the screen before the demo starts because this determines the ‘flow’ of the scrolling text. I had to write simple image (de)compression code to fit everything in the final binary.” So while this sounds like quite the hassle, at least there is a bright side: in this day and age it is no longer necessary to develop your 6502 machine code on the target machine itself. oxCoDE uses VSCode on Windows 10 together with the Beeb VSC extension for 6502 syntax highlighting and BeebAsm for assembling source code into a disk or tape



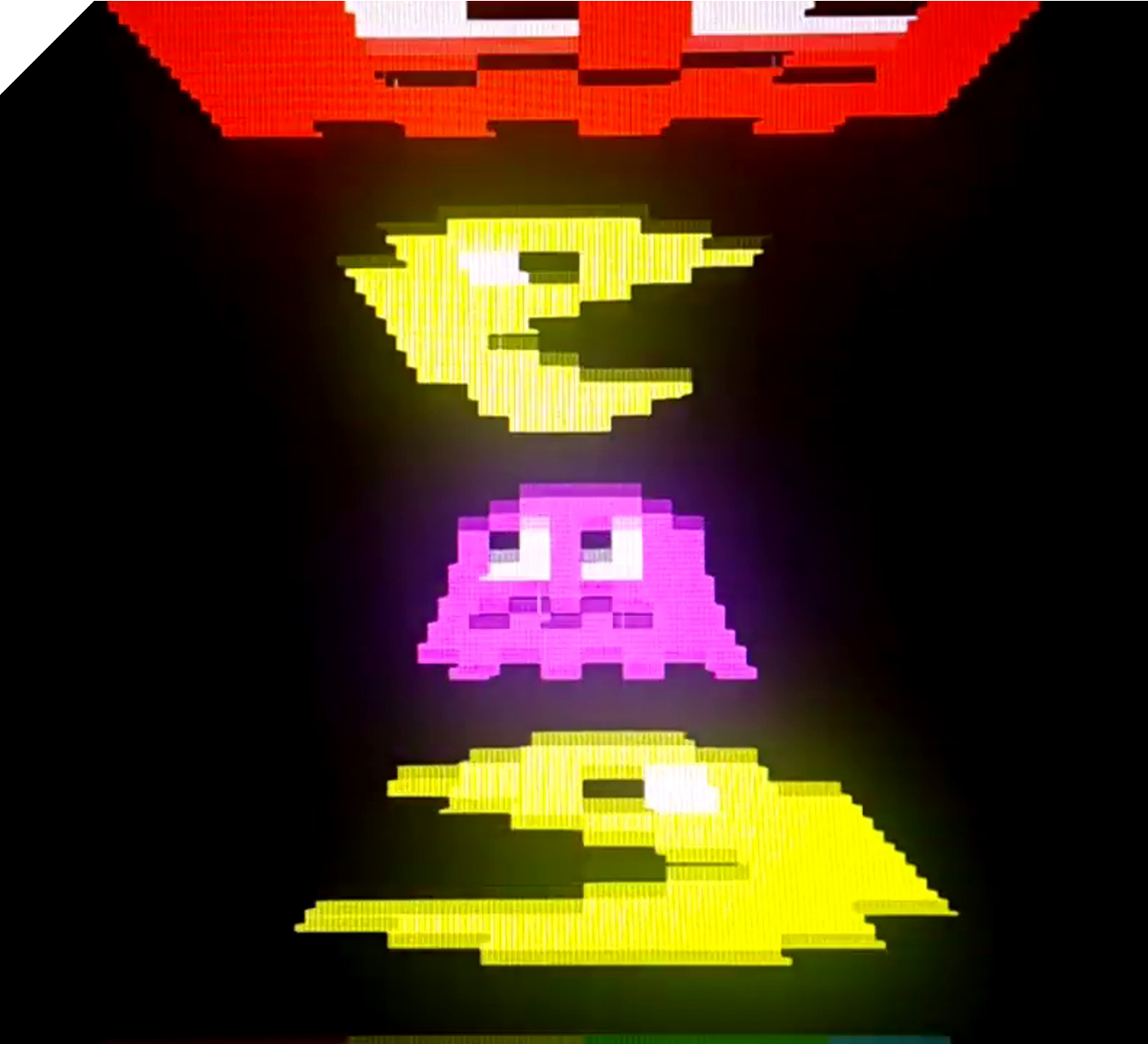


image. “As a true Acorn Electron fanboy, I still have many ideas for other demo effects on the Electron. You can find them on my YouTube channel, on Stardot, or on Twitter. Maybe later I will try programming

the Commodore C64 or, more likely, the BBC Master. But nothing beats that super nostalgic feeling of creating new things for my original childhood Acorn Electron that have never been done before!” (oxCoDE/bk)



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People like to collect things. Different things, depending on whom you ask, but in one way or another, collecting is fun for many. Raul Goycoolea is one of them. He is from Mexico City, 49 years old,

and he just loves vintage computers and consoles. And he amasses a lot of them in his home. Seeing the first machines when he was around six years old, they fascinated him. And so he went on to learn everything

# CRAZE

COLLECTION IN LATIN AMERICA

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Photo: Raul Goycoolea. Montage: bk

he could about them – and today he is the co-founder and CTO of a Cloud Consulting Company in Latin America. Getting in touch with some of these old machines defined what he wanted to do for a living. So

he started collecting the ones he had and the ones he could only dream of back when he was young. And now he probably owns the biggest collection in Latin America. We talked to him about his passion.

***How large is your collection now - and how do you know it's the largest in Latin America?***

Right now I have 271 old computers and game consoles on my collection. I try to keep track of them all in a database, but normally I can add one to five new system per month. I keep posting on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter about my collection, fun facts about these computers, and also any new system that I add to my collection. And I receive a lot of comments and questions. People ask me if I want to purchase their old systems. I found some friends in Brazil, Argentina and Chile that collect old systems, but the largest collection I'm aware of in Latin America is around ten computers. I never met someone so crazy to collect 270 computers and who is still looking for more.

***When did you start collecting old computers - and why? What does it mean to you to collect these electronics?***

I started collecting old computers when I was around 20 years old. Back then, I remember that computer magazines showed not just the main keyboard, but also a complete setup with floppy drives, color monitors, printers and other peripherals. Back then even the simple floppy drive could cost more than the computer itself, so for a child that asked for a home computer for Christmas,

it was not easy many times to get a complete setup at all. So when I started with computers, I saved my programs by writing them down on paper and used the TV as a monitor. And I always dreamed to have a complete setup o eday. And so I made a promise to myself: some day I will have the most complete setup, not just a single computer, but everything I can get for all the systems. That's the way my collection started.

***Where do you find the stuff you search for? Are you looking at flea markets, online, asking colleagues and friends?***

Normally I keep watching auction sites like Ebay around the world, and sites like Mercadolibre in Latin America. But I also get them from friends and customers who know about my passion for old computers and somethings say: I have an old system that could be interesting for you. I look everywhere I can to catch additional computers, sometimes very uncommon ones, and sometimes just another system that extends my never ending collection.

***What kind of old computers do you prefer to collect, or do you just go for all that you like?***

I concentrate on a time frame for my collection. For me, the limit is a point in time were computers began to be very common. So my stopping point is the original IBM PC, with





which the whole computer industry changed and exploded. So any system that came out before the PC finds a place in my collection.

***Do you also repair items in your collection when they are broken or do you let someone else handle this?***

Yes, my 271 computers are all in working condition. I buy my stuff

especially on very old or uncommon platforms. I try to complete a setup by purchasing parts, even empty boxes, cables and manuals, and also non working units. So I enjoy a lot of cleaning, retrobrightening the plastics, changing parts and general systems repairs.

***Do you actually use some of your old computers and if so, what for?***

I normally take out one old system at a time, connect it up and explore it. On this days and time it's easy to download old software from the internet. And connecting the old system to a Mac or PC to transfer the software in some way. So now it's a great hobby to explore all technologies with new programming techniques. I also try to introduce each system to my son, who is now eight years old. He likes to play old games, even does basic programming! I was able to ignite his passion for programming a computer to do anything he can imagine. I also like the new generation to know the history

of the computers, how it was to use them before touchscreens and the internet came along.

***Where do you store all your collection? In your house, or do you have a barn or something where you put all of them?***

I store all of my collection in individual boxes, almost all platforms in their original packaging if possible. And then I store them in a couple of closets at home, and also in a small room I use as warehouse. I'm currently considering to rent a warehouse to move all systems to it.



Photo: Raul Goycoolea

# SCENE WORLD



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# EMILIA'S GREAT

DAVIDE BUCCI ABOUT HIS BRAND NEW VIC20 GAME

Photo: Davide Bucci



***Y***our text adventure game for 8-bit machines stars a female character. So naturally, the first three questions would be: Why a text adventure? Why in 8-bit? And why with a female character?

Let me start from the last question as it allows me to briefly introduce

the game. I am now working on a text adventure called "The Queen's Footsteps." The player's alter-ego is called Emilia Vittorini; she is a 25-year old girl who in August 1904 just came back in Italy from a nine-months archeological expedition in Egypt. Emilia follows the transport of treasures of the Nefertari's tomb

# ADVENTURE

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“ON THE QUEEN’S FOOTSTEPS”



to portrait a strong and independent woman acting in Italy, at the beginning of the last century. Emilia drives a car, travels alone and is smart and brave. By the way, I have already written a game called “Two Days to the Race,” with Emilia in search for a stolen racing car prototype. Emilia incarnates the type of a strong character that I find interesting to describe: definitely not a damsel in distress.

To come back to your first question, let us discuss about my relation with text adventures. I began playing adventure games at the beginning of 1990’s, especially graphic adventures. At the same time, I got from a neighbour a collection of old Italian computer magazines from a decade earlier. They contained articles dedicated to text adventure games and even type-in games for computers such as the Spectrum and the C64. I have to admit I never typed in 1994 those BASIC programs on the machines they were meant to, but I always found them fascinating. Fast forward to 2011, I decided to convert one of those type-in programs into a Java applet. The game was called “La piramide di Iunnuh”, by Aristide Torrelli and was published in MC-microcomputer in 1984. Written in Basic for the TI99/4A with 16KB, it was minimalistic yet enthralling. Among other things, it showed me how the code of such a game can be organized. Much more recently, I stumbled upon Hibernated 1, writ-

to the Egyptian museum of Turin. By the way, this discovery really happened in 1904 in the Valley of the Queens, in Egypt. When her ferry arrives in Genoa, Emilia has to leave the treasures on a train heading towards Turin. The day after, she finds however that things have not gone as planned. I really wanted

ten by Stefan Vogt. I bought it immediately (I choose the Amstrad CPC version coming on the 3" disk) and I really appreciated it. This game showed me that there was still a community interested in such works and I said to myself "why not." I am not an English native speaker and it moreover was a very good occasion to try to improve my language skills.

Coming now to the choice of the machines, another collateral effect of reading old magazines was to develop a taste in retrocomputing. Recently, I decided to dedicate more time to this hobby. I wanted to meet again what inspired me so much when I was a kid: the ZX Spectrum, the C64, the VIC20, etc. I will surely provide versions for some 16 bit systems, too such as the early MS-DOS and the Olivetti M20. I may one day expand this list to other machines I appreciate, for example the early Macintoshes.

***What adventures, novels or movies inspired your game the most?***

My all-time favourite computer game is without doubt "The Secret of Monkey Island." When I was 13, I was mainly attracted by the graphics; now, I realise that what really kept me playing was the perfectly calibrated mix between hilariously funny characters, a nice atmosphere, nice puzzles and a great comical

plot. I also liked the second and third Monkey Island games, "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade", "Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis", The Dig, Myst, Grim Fandango. Much more recently, Hibernated 1 was also a great source of inspiration. For what concerns the esthetics of the game, part of the interest that the game gathered on Twitter is maybe due to the graphical loading screens. They reinterpret some paintings by Alphonse Mucha, one of the most important artists of the Art Nouveau.

Many details of the game are based on historical facts and I had to read a certain number of books: for example, the description of Genoa is based mainly on a Baedeker tourist guide of the Northern Italy I own, edited in 1904. I used the book "La storia del museo egizio" (2016) by the Egyptian Museum of Turin for the details of the discovery of the Nefertari's tomb and Schiaparelli's archeological mission of 1904.

I do not want to spoil the plot, but I can anticipate that for some scenes of the game, it has been very useful Piero Angela's book "Viaggio nel mondo del paranormale" edited by Garzanti in 1978, dedicated to the world of paranormal by the greatest Italian scientific journalist.

Someone suggested that Emilia Vittorini somewhat recalls Laura Bow and it is true that from what I



read there is a certain similarity, but I never had the chance to play to the Sierra games where she appears. I will probably do that in a near future.

*It all started on Twitter with a photo of your VIC20 showing the loading screen. Was this your first computer?*

Yes it was. My mother bought it second hand around 1985. She was a teacher and wanted to show some BASIC to her students. I was hoo-

ked! Almost 35 years later, I think the VIC20 really deserves to be exploited more, as it has some interesting features. I think for example that its nice pastel colours really fit well with the Art Nouveau-style drawings such as the one I used for the loader. A text adventure game is however negatively affected by the limited quantity of text that can be shown in the 22 columns of the ordinary VIC20 screen. With the amazing help of some great fellows in the VIC20 Denial forum (I would in particular thank Mike), I could

simulate 40 columns using a smaller font that still remains readable on modern monitors and TV's.

***What development tool do you use to make the game available on so many different platforms?***

It turned out that the same Aristide Torrelli (who published in 1984 the first adventure game that I studied) is still interested into adventure games nowadays. He is active on the Internet and developed authoring tools and a language dedicated to text adventures, called AWS

(Adventure Writing System), strongly inspired by the GAC (Graphical Adventure Creator) he used in 1980's. I got in touch with him and when I approached AWS, I found it was simple, regular, compact and well documented by Aristide. In a first moment, I decided to create an interpreter, running on my C128. I then realised that the automatic code generation may be more efficient for computers with a very limited hardware. In particular, memory is something very scarce and must be exploited very efficiently. I finally put together a tool,

**Introduction** Today is August 27th, 1984. Nine months ago, you, Emilio Vittorini, joined the Italian Archaeological Expedition in Egypt led by the Egyptianologist Schiaparelli, the director of the Egyptian Museum of Turin. You were on a wooden ferry back in Genova, Italy: your treasure chest now contains three days' worth of provisions. While heading towards Turin, you organised a sumptuous feast for the crew. They left Genova by train yesterday. It would be hard to find the treasure if you were to follow the train to Turin.



called AWS2C that can translate a game described in the AWS format into a C language source. With some preprocessor tricks, I can very easily adapt the C source on any machine that has an efficient cross compiler. The only issue is memory, of course. I split the game in three parts that can work with machines with 32KB of RAM, I hope I can join them together for more equipped machines. Since I don't work directly on the main C sources of the game, every time I improve AWS2C, I can run again it on my games and benefit in a matter of seconds from the improvements of the tool.

***What are some of the difficulties you ran into developing this game?***

I already had AWS2C working successfully at the beginning of the development, so the main challenge was mainly to put together the story and choose some challenging puzzles to solve. I tried to follow the well-known Ron Gilbert's Rules of Thumb while writing the game. Surely, putting together the puzzles was the most difficult thing. I had played in the past to games where the puzzles were illogical and weren't really serving the story. I tried to avoid that as much as I could.

***You also ported the first part of the game onto the Comman-***

***derX16. Now that's interesting - why did you choose to do this?***

I follow the 8-bit guy on Youtube and I was intrigued by the CX16 from the beginning of its development. I saw there was someone working towards a target for the Cc65, the C compiler I use for the 6502 machines and I thought it was worth a try for The Queen's Footsteps. I could compile Two Days to the Race, too, and I think the latter was one of the first complete game to be released for such a platform.

***Your game can be downloaded for free, currently as beta version. Will there be a commercial release?***

Well, I would really like to see the game distributed in a physical format with a diskette, a manual and some goodies inside a nice box. I really liked how Hibernated 1 was distributed. I really appreciated that the whole game could be downloaded for free. Coming to The Queen's Footsteps, it depends on the opportunities that will present in the future and the amount of time I can dedicate to the project in the next months.

***More about the game, disk images for all platforms from C64 to MSX can be found on Davides website over at <http://davbucci.chez-alice.fr>***

BE PREPARED FOR THE POST-APOCALYPSE



Nothing lasts forever. And neither will this civilization we built. But when the inevitable happens, our precious little 8-bit microcomputers will be the cradle of a new tech revolution – once again. Or so thinks software developer Virgil Dupras. You could call him a digital prepper. His hypothesis: When the lights go out after a global economic collapse alongside a war, supply chains will break down,

and producing complex electronic devices from many different parts, or even to service the existing ones, will be really hard, if not impossible. But because electronics will remain to be important for political and social power, people will look to build computers again. But who will have the resources to rebuilt microchip factories and produce semiconductor technology from scratch? Not that's where the 8-bit micro-



Photo: Frank Becker, pixabay

controllers come into place. Or the Z80, to be more specific. He states: “Parts can’t be manufactured any more, but we have billions of parts lying around. Those who can manage to create new designs from those parts with low-tech tools will be very powerful. Among these scavenged parts are microcontrollers, which are especially powerful but need complex tools (often computers) to program them. Computers, after a

couple of decades, will break down beyond repair and we won’t be able to program microcontrollers any more. To avoid this fate, we need to have a system that can be designed from scavenged parts and program microcontrollers. We also need the generation of engineers that will follow us to be able to create new designs instead of inheriting a legacy of machines that they can’t recreate and barely maintain.” So why the focus on the 8-bit Z80? Because it is one of the most popular chips we use even today. It is used in electric toothbrushes, vacuum cleaners, microwaves, USB keyboards and many more devices of our everyday life. So chances are pretty high that scavengers will come across one. And low-tech, according to Dupras, is important, because it fits in perfectly in a future where energy is sparse (because of the collapse) and power-hungry electronics are simply not worth the current. The intention here is to kind of jump-start mankind’s civilization back to the computer age after the collapse. The OS itself won’t feature any fancy graphical user environment but look more like CP/M, which also is a possible basis to build upon. It can read SD cards and floppy disks, has a text editor and some more features listed on the website. It’s currently under development and stirred up quite some press coverage already. Strange as the idea may seem, a new OS for the Z80 sounds at least intriguing for what it is. (bk)

WHERE ALL THE COOL KIDS GET THEIR RETRO UPDATES



Photo: Old Tektronix advert. Montage: bk

The social web, origin of and solution to all our problems – or so it seems. Creative people use all form of communication to talk about their work, get inspired and find likeminded guys. But among the many social platforms out there, there is one which seems to attract many retro enthusiasts who are creating games, programs or hardware for 8-bit machines. And it's the one with the bird in the logo. But why is it that retro creators like or even prefer Twitter over Facebook, for example. What is going on in this community and is anyone not following them missing out on anything? KILOBYTE MAGAZINE asked around for answers on Twitter and

got several responses. Thanks to everyone who took time out of his day to explain his driving force in using the blue bird.

“Personally I like posting development updates on Twitter because all communities are a bit mixed and you can get immediate feedback from anyone. If you compare it with other forums, they tend to be more focused on one system, and the users you find there are basically fans of that system”, Juan J. Martinez explains. He coded several games for the Amstrad CPC line of computers and posts update on his projects quite regularly. The instantaneous feedback he mentions, without having to fear shitstorms is

an important factor for many creators. One of them is Paul Nicholls. He currently works on a Pascal to 6502 compiler, a C64 platform game and a 6502 code snippets cookbook with a lot of helpful code snippets: “I like Twitter with the quick tidbits of info you can give and receive and the retro community is very friendly.” However, there is really no structure to be found on the platform. Which makes it confusing for some, as Jens-Christian Huus, SID wizard and developer of DeepSID, thinks: “I primarily use Twitter to post updates and fixes for my deepsid site. When I need proper C64 news and updates, I must confess I lean towards Facebook groups, the Lemon64 forum and CSDb instead. Twitter tends to be a bit too chaotic for my liking.” As some tweeps mix their retro content with other things like photos of their vacations or regular updates on their dogs and cats, this might add to the feeling of confusion in ones timeline. You follow someone for their hobby, and then they start to spread out their whole life in front of you. Kroc Camen says: “I don’t want to mix my personal life with the ‘producer’ side of myself that creates content for a community; Facebook is simply a no-go. With Twitter, I can keep on-topic and block or ignore the content that’s no relevant.” And if you are confronted with uninteresting stuff or bad comments, keep it cool like chiptune artist and game composer Inverse Phase says: “My

interactions are generally good, only sometimes bad – and hey, you know what: that’s life.” Which seems like a healthy attitude toward the whole social media thing in general.

But on Twitter, for some reason, the retro community seems to be more warm, welcoming and constructive than on other platforms. Stefan Vogt, creator of the text adventure series Hibernated and passionate Infocom collector, says: “If someone asked me where to get a good first impression of the retro community, I’d direct him towards Twitter. There are so many talented, honest and creative people on there that it is just great to be a part of this. And I might add that without Twitter and the fuzz I made there for my adventure, I might not have gotten noticed with Hibernated the way I was.”

There is indeed a lot going on over at the Blue Bird’s virtual Inn where the retro folk gathers around a warming fire of nerdy updates, coding hints and requests for collecibles. It is a bubble that seems not yet harmed by progressing time – time that turned other platforms into rather nasty places to stay, with people more often than not forgetting their good education. Among those are sadly forums as well as Facebook groups. So what are you missing out on? Whom should you follow and why? We’ve created a short overview for you to give the platform a chance. Get in touch with the retro tweeps, you’ll like it. *(bk)*

YOU KNOW YOU WANT TO!



**Tom Greene**  
@txgx42

If you like everything associated with Apple II and floppy disks stuff, Tom Greene is the guy you want to follow. He patches programs, converts disks to disk images, repairs computers and collects them. Be aware that there are occasionally dog pictures here and there, but that dog looks sweet and don't worry: It's at least 90 percent nerdy stuff. So you're good.

Óscar is an very talented coder. Not only did he program some of the most amazing games that came out for the classic Intellivision in recent years, he also races the beam on the Atari 2600 and wrote books about coding some platforms. He posts in English and Spanish, but due to the translation feature, you won't have a hard time understanding him.



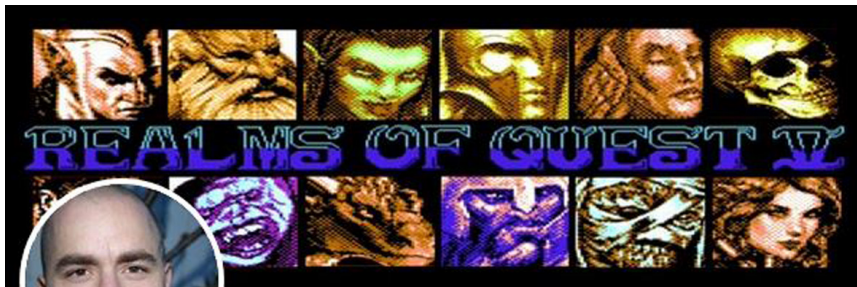
**Óscar Toledo G.**  
@nanochess



**John Wilson**  
@RochBalrog

John Wilson is a dyed-in-the-wool adventure coder. He founded Zenobi Software in 1982 and concentrated on adventures for the Sinclair ZX Spectrum, most notably the *Behind Closed Doors* series. He still adapts and ports his adventures to other platforms and is a nice chap to connect to. If for no other reason, follow him and ask him to write some new adventures!

When it comes to RPG on the Commodore VIC20, Ghislain de Blois is your man. Author of the *Realms of Quest* series, he has written some impressive software for the little brother of the C64. He tweets very regularly and shares development updates in his feed. Sometimes, you may see his midnight horror movie of choice and a slice of pizza that goes with it.



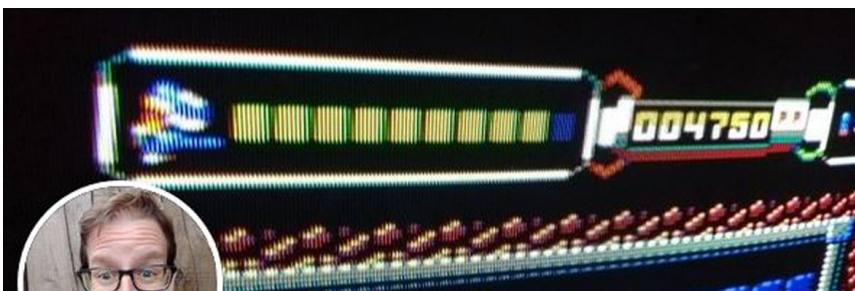
**VIC-20 RPG Developer**  
@hitfan2000



**rob // AtariSpot**  
@AtariSpot

Rob Wanenchak is on a mission to preserve rare and unusual video game stuff. It's mostly about Atari with him, and he dug up quite a lot of interesting things so far. So if you like to read about the 8-bit past of Atari and discover some things you might never have heard of before, he is the go-to address. Check out his Tweets!

Telling you to follow Juan J. Martinez if you are into Amstrad CPC games would not be correct. You should also follow him if you like MSX, Spectrum and C64 stuff. Because he is one hell of a coder, develops nice games and asks users for suggestions and their opinion during development, sharing updates and explaining improvements. So what are you waiting for?



**Juan**  
@reidrac

If you can't get enough of nerdy retro magazines, there are a plethora of accounts you don't want to miss out on Twitter. Vinny Mainolfi's is one of them. Being the head of Freeze magazine, he'll take you back to your C64 past regularly, post highlights of upcoming issues and more. Next to Reset magazine, he is definitely the one to add to your list.



With Stefan, it's all about adventure games, Perry Rhodan and music. Author of the *Hibernated* series that sparked a new widespread interest in text adventure games on 8-bit platforms, science fiction stories are where he feels at home. He also resurfaced some great programs from and with Tim Gilberts (follow him as well!) and is a great guy to have on your friendlist.

*Frogs, Shotgun, Shadow Switcher:* Christian Gleinser proved multiple times that he is not only capable of creating great multi-player games on the C64, but also creates completely new gaming experiences on the trusty old breadbin that may look like they were introduced in 1984 (*Shadow Switcher*), but play like something you'd not even think of in 2019.



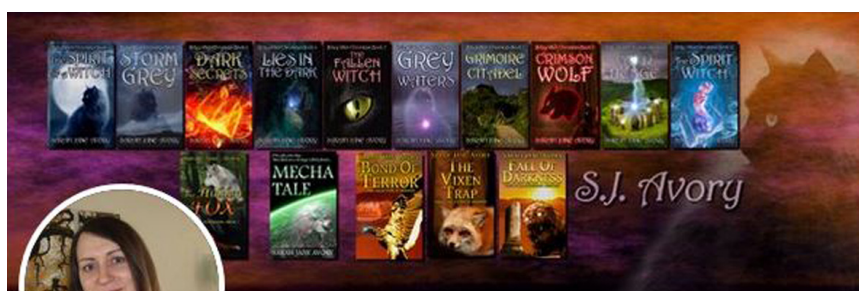




**Chris Stanley**  
@ScubaChris72

Chris Stanley knows his way around exploding fish and cherishes mancaves. As member of Megastyle, he contributes to some of the funniest, yet never dull and quite challenging gaming experiences on the C64 in recent years. Trivia for you: he worked for Psygnosis back in the day!

Author of the Briley Witch books, she is currently coding a RPG on the C64 that takes place in this realm. But more recently, it seems that Shmups have grabbed her attention as he released *Neutron* in 2019 and is working on a title called *Soul Force* with some nice parallax scrolling which hopefully will be out in 2020. Follow her for updates on her projects!



**Sarah Jane Avory**  
@SarahJaneAvory



**Snake Petsken**  
@snakepetsken

PETSCII graphics is what you need, then Snake Petsken is the account you're looking for. Alter ego of Manuel Vio, here you'll find all the blocky pixle beauties you want. Reduced to the max, those graphics sometimes make you wonder if they're really only PETSCII, but yes, they are. You'll also like to follow Cal Skuthorpe for more blocky goodness.

AND HIS MANDOLINE, AND HIS ACCORDION ...



**H**e covers video game music in a very special way: Banjo Guy Ollie. You can find his channel on Youtube, and we guarantee that you will like it. There he sits, a bearded man with a basecap, playing very familiar tunes on his Banjo from decades of games, noticeably enjoying what he's doing, making them sound like they were folk songs. In some videos, you might even get a

glimpse of his games in the background. Stuff for the Sega Master System or Atari, or even an OutRun arcade cabinet. So who is this guy, why does he do what he does? We just had to find out and thankfully, Ollie agreed to an interview. Born in France and living in Ireland since 1998, he was lucky to be one of the first people to get in touch with the first Philips Videopac console when

# AND HIS BANJO

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OLLIE PLAYS THEM ALL – AND LOVES RETRO GAMES



Photo: BG Ollie, Youtube

***When one thinks of Banjos, many things spring to mind, mostly revolving around the US. But you live in Ireland and play the Banjo – so what’s your connection to this instrument, what makes it special and likable to you and since when do you play it?***

The banjo I have is a Tenor Banjo, played with a plectrum unlike the bluegrass banjo. It evolved from a similar root obviously but branched out according to the needs of the music it was used in. The tenor banjo would have been used as a replacement to the guitar in Brass Band type setups and when the 70’s folk music craze erupted and the banjo started appearing in more mainstream music, it made it over to Europe where the Tenor version was picked in Irish Traditional Music because it allowed to play the melody in a live environment. It’s not my first instrument however (Guitar is, and Flute second) and I didn’t quite have a specific affinity to it when I started really. I just thought of it as a challenge, see if I could take it out of its comfort zone and do something different with it.

it came out in his youth, because his dad worked at the company then. “The first version we had was just the motherboard without the plastic shell, including bare pcb carts. A few weeks later we got a proper full version”, he remembers. Then he went with MSX and MSX2 before leaving the 8-bit altogether world behind with an Amiga. But the memories stayed with him...

***And you certainly did. Even more special is the fact that you combined your love for music with your love for (mostly) retro videogames, resulting in the BanjoGuyOllie channel on Youtube. When did you come up with this idea and how much of an instant hit was it?***

I saw folks like Smooth McGroove and others. And I actually reached out to him and asked him if he'd thought about covering *Turrican* tunes. He actually replied and said the music was indeed cool but not quite in his line of sight. So I thought, hell, I'll try to do it myself then. I started with stuff from *Vampire Killer* (the MSX version of *Castlevania*) and some *Wonderboy 3* since I loved the soundtracks and it went from there. I think the first week the Konami Facebook page shared one of my covers and I woke up the next day with around 1k subscribers on the channel. I initially didn't think I'd continue, I just wanted to see if I could do it, but when I saw the positive reaction, I just kept going ... and I'm still at it five years later.

***Which video game composers do you find the most inspiring?***

That's such a hard question. I do have a fondness for Chris Huelsbeck who worked on the *Turrican* series, but there's so many more I like.

***Your recorded videos look very professional and polished. There is certainly a lot of cutting and mixing involved. How much time do you put into each one?***

It depends ... a week ... two ... Those *Turrican* tracks can take me a whole month of work.

***You can be seen playing not only the Banjo – although one can get a glimpse of your Banjo collection on the wall behind you – but a variety of different instruments. How many Banjos do you own and how many instruments do you actually play?***

I only have one banjo really. There's a second one on my wall, but that was a loan from a friend since I didn't have a banjo when I started the channel. The rest is just various other instruments: Mandolins, Bouzouki, Oud, Ukulele, Guitars (acoustic and electric), a bass, a Ubass, a Violin. There's a lot there and then I have the accordion(s), all my flutes and many many more. I don't know how many instruments I own really. I never counted.

***You played a lot of NES and Amiga covers, so one might guess that you have a special place in your heart for these systems. What are the fondest memories you have on them?***

I had the Amiga, but I never had an NES. I got into the NES less than ten years ago really when I started collecting. My brother had the Sega Master System, so we played a lot of that back then.

***Did you ever try it the other way around and compose music on, say, 8-bit systems?***



Photo: BG Ollie, Youtube

Yeah. It's pretty much how I started learning and making music: on the MSX. Programing tunes in BASIC at the time, because there was no tracker type stuff available to me back then. Then when I got an Amiga, I started using trackers. Soundtracker first, then Protracker and then I moved on to Octamed. Great tools! I made a few tunes for poor attempts at demos and small games with my friends. These things never left our room however :) I sometime remaster one of those tunes with more modern tools on my main channel.

***Speaking of your main channel: You also collect and restore old hardware and games, as can be***

***seen on your channel The 8-bit Manshed. How many different systems do you own – and do you have a favorite one?***

Mostly arcade PCBs, yeah. I do have a few other systems ... most of the usual suspects really. Sega, Nintendo, Commodore, Spectrum, Amstrad ... and of course the MSX is by biggest and favourite collection of all.

***About restoration: What was the most difficult one you faced so far, and why?***

All of them, to be honest. Repairing an arcade board is never an easy

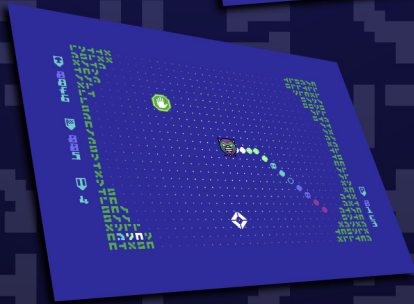
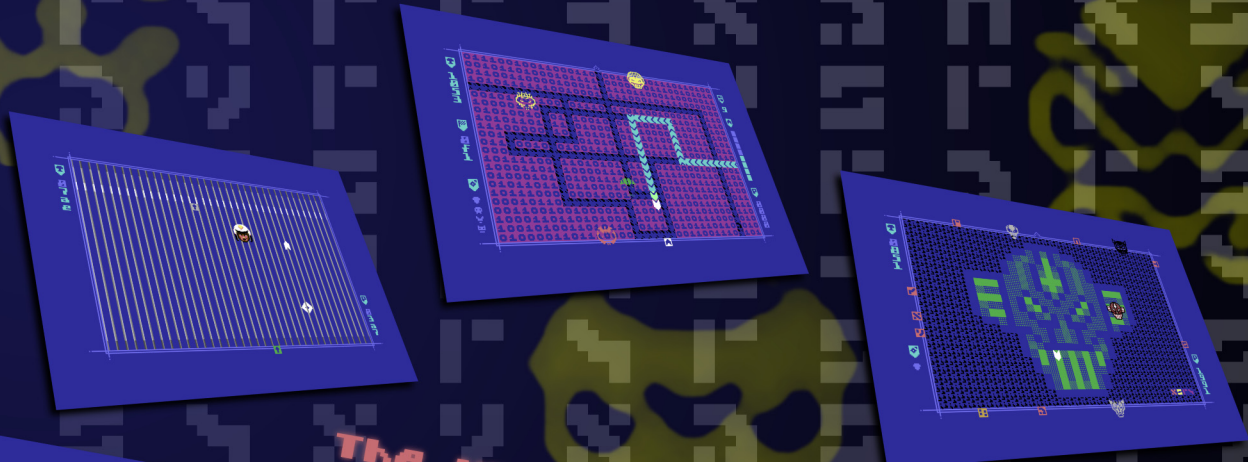
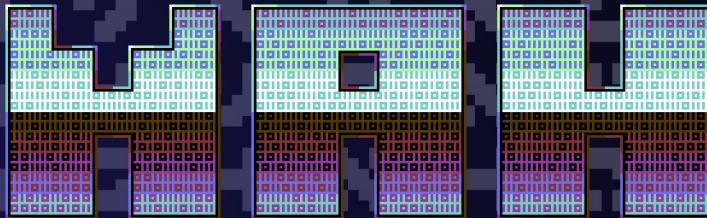
thing. There's so many parts and potential for multiple issues happening at once.

***And finally, do you plan to go on a small tour or play at retro events?***

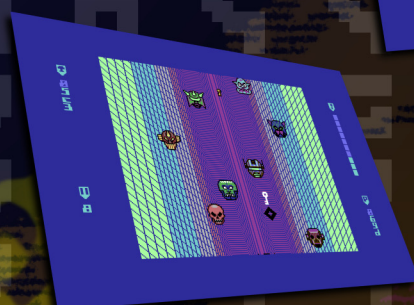
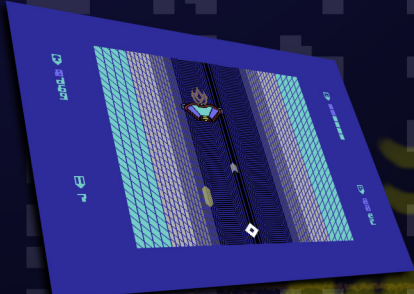
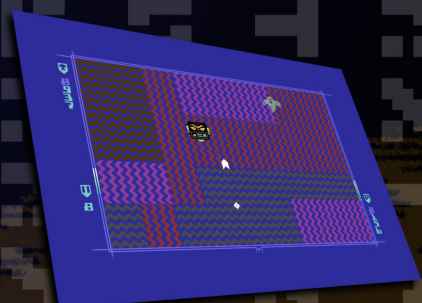
Haha, I get asked that a lot. I've no plans to tour or go to events. I mean if I get invited, I could go and do a panel, but live concerts is not something I do. There's a few reasons for that. The first reason is that it just wouldn't work in a live environment. Too many instruments are required, sound constraints, etc. I change the lead instrument sometimes in one cover, etc. It just would be too complex to do on my own and there wouldn't be the demand for a live band, at least here in Ireland. The second is that I have a full time job that takes a lot of time already. Free time is then spent on the music, but I wouldn't have time to

tour or do concerts. I'd have to drop the work on my channel then. Another, and probably the main reason is that I've been playing live music already for most of my life. Late nights in pubs and concert halls take a toll and I am in my mid 40s now, so it's not something I would enjoy doing anymore. It's a lot of long nights, playing for very little money and because you're then focussed on the concert, not mentioning travel, you don't have enough time to learn and craft new music. So the great thing about doing it on Youtube is that it allows me to do it from the comfort of my room, in my own time and under my own terms. I had stopped making music before I started the channel, so I'm delighted that I get to call the shots myself when I make music, I can spend the time I want, I can experiment, try new things, take the time to learn new instruments ... and I'd hate to change that.



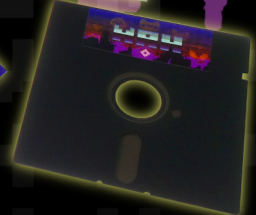
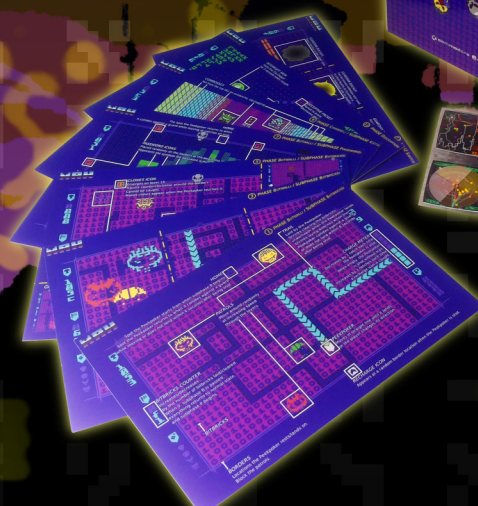


The world is  
DEVASTATED.  
And on the brink of  
TOTAL DESTRUCTION.  
YOU are HUMANITY'S  
LAST HOPE.

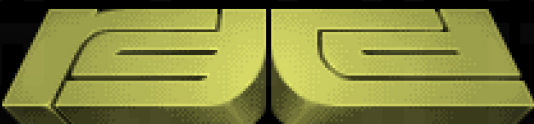


# RETREAM

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# PROVISION

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# CRY ME A VALLEY

VALLEY OF RAINS (SPECTRUM)



GEM AWARD  
2019

Every now and then, a new game comes out on an 8-bit system that makes your jaw drop. “Impossible!”, you think. “What is this sorcery?” But nevertheless, it happens. And one of these examples is Valley of Rains for the Sinclair ZX Spectrum, which was released towards the end of 1989 in time for

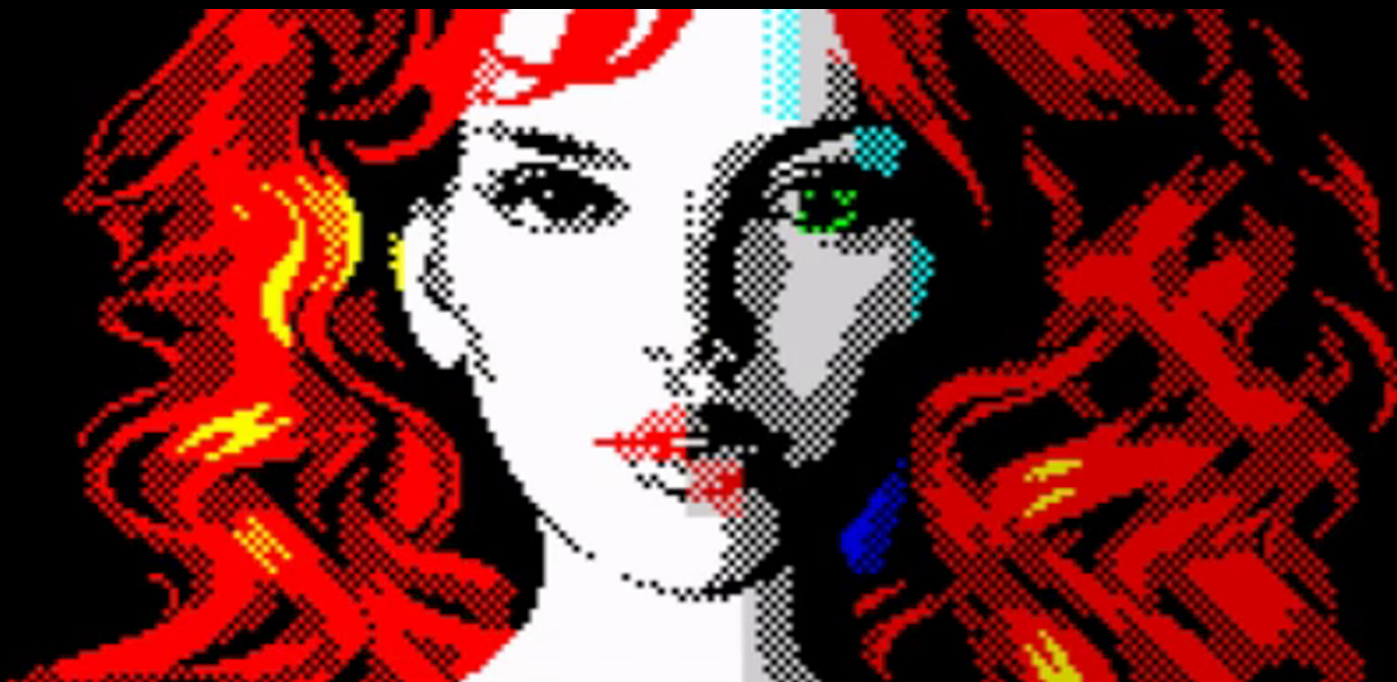
the retro game competition of the Russian Yandex museum. The player takes control over a red-haired female warrior with some magical powers, who is the result of an affair between a water lily and an ant. Yes, you read that right. The intro states the following: “My mother is water lily, the most beautiful flower on the



earth. My father is Ant, the strongest being on the earth. Volcano has given me fire. Wagtail has blessed me for great deeds. I went on the road to return life to Valley of Rains.” And that’s about it for the story. It is quite unusual to say the least, and we won’t even go into detail as to how a liason of the two afore mentioned creatures may result in the creation of a powerful young woman that seems to enjoy running around in her underwear (*Vixen* springs to mind). Or where this valley even is and why there is no rain anymore. But you will forget about all of this as soon as the game starts. Because everything else in this game has obviously gotten a lot of attention: graphics, sound and gameplay are superb. But first things first.

**GLORIOUS SPECCY GRAPHICS** \_\_\_\_\_  
The visuals here are excellent. Start-

ing with the female protagonist, who breathes when she stands still, her hair blows freely in the wind when she runs – the animation sequences of this particular sprite are just insane compared to other jump’n’run games on the Spectrum. The color clashes are also concealed very nicely, thanks to the clever composition of background colors. It helps that the nameless warrior princess is black and white, except for her flaming-red hair and her turquoise boots. She might very well be fully intended to look this way, with her pale skin being a stark contrast to the darkness that surrounds her. After all, nobody can tell for sure what a woman conceived by a water lily would look like. The enemy sprites are single-colored for the most part, with only a few exceptions like large bugs and mid-stage-bosses. And talking about the latter

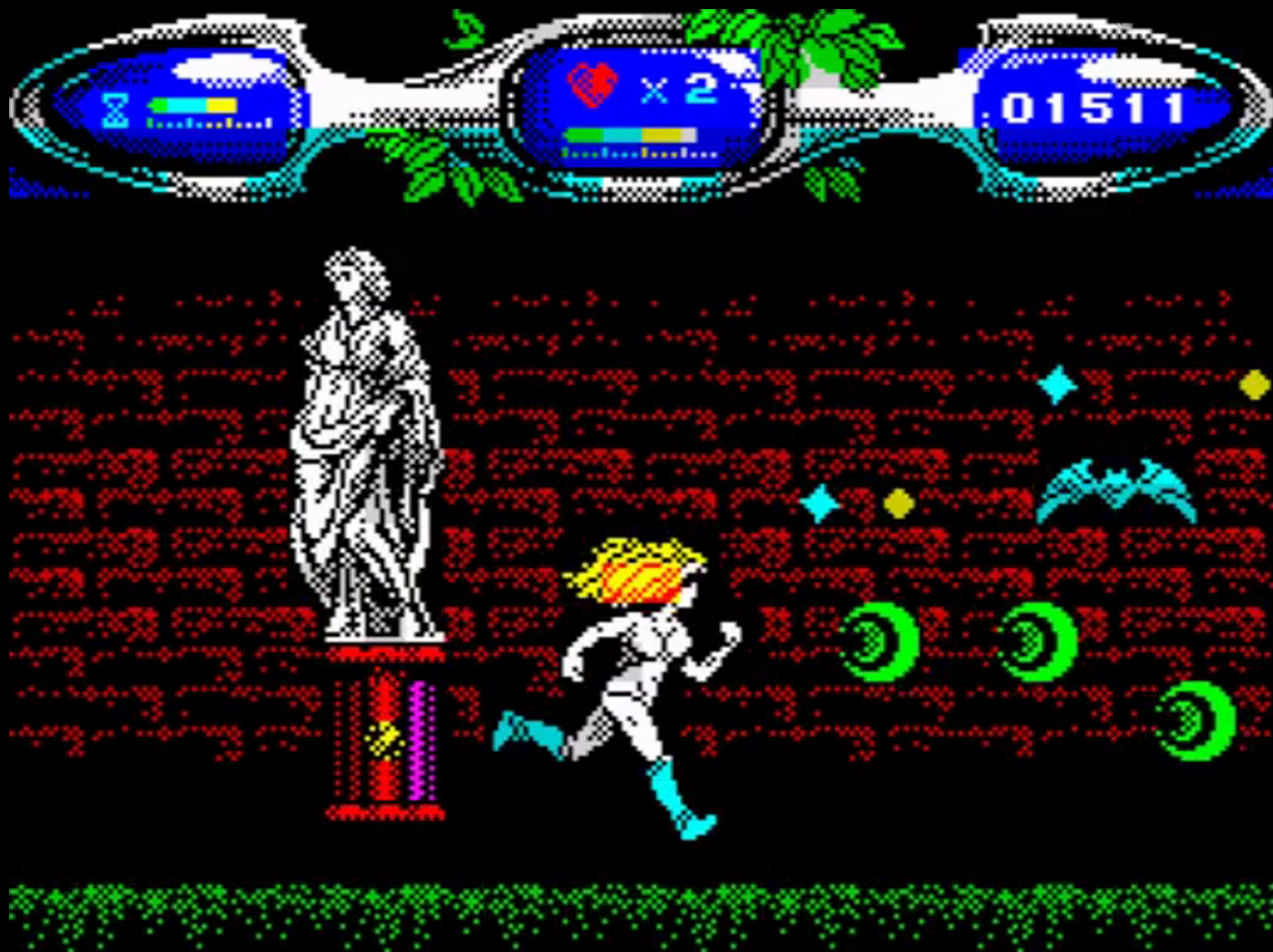


ones: Those bosses certainly look amazing as well. To fully appreciate how well everything is crafted here, take Turrigan II for the Spectrum. The sprites, the scrolling, the shots, the level of detail, the use of colors – every aspect of this game is so much better. And it would be fair to say that his one, if it had come out in 1992 for the Speccy, would even have made many Commodore users turn their head and rub their eyes in disbelief of what they glanced at. What Sam's Journey is for the C64, Valley of Rains is for the Spectrum: A graphically masterpiece that has the potential to spark interest of former users in this 8-bit platform. Russian studio Zosya Entertainment went out of their way to make this game the way it is. And this also ap-

plies to the soundtrack that has an unusual ace up its sleeve.

**CD QUALITY SOUND** \_\_\_\_\_  
Thankfully, the developers spared us the squeaky music of the Spectrum – except for a surprisingly catchy and really great title music – and concentrated on ingame sound effects instead. A good choice, because even if they are not very varied, they certainly add to the overall atmosphere of the game. But to play it like it was meant to be played, make sure to download the free MP3 album from Tiurula over at <http://tiurula.ru/album01.html>. This is meant to be played in the background while playing the game, an accompanying soundtrack on CD. Or, if you happen to have one of the

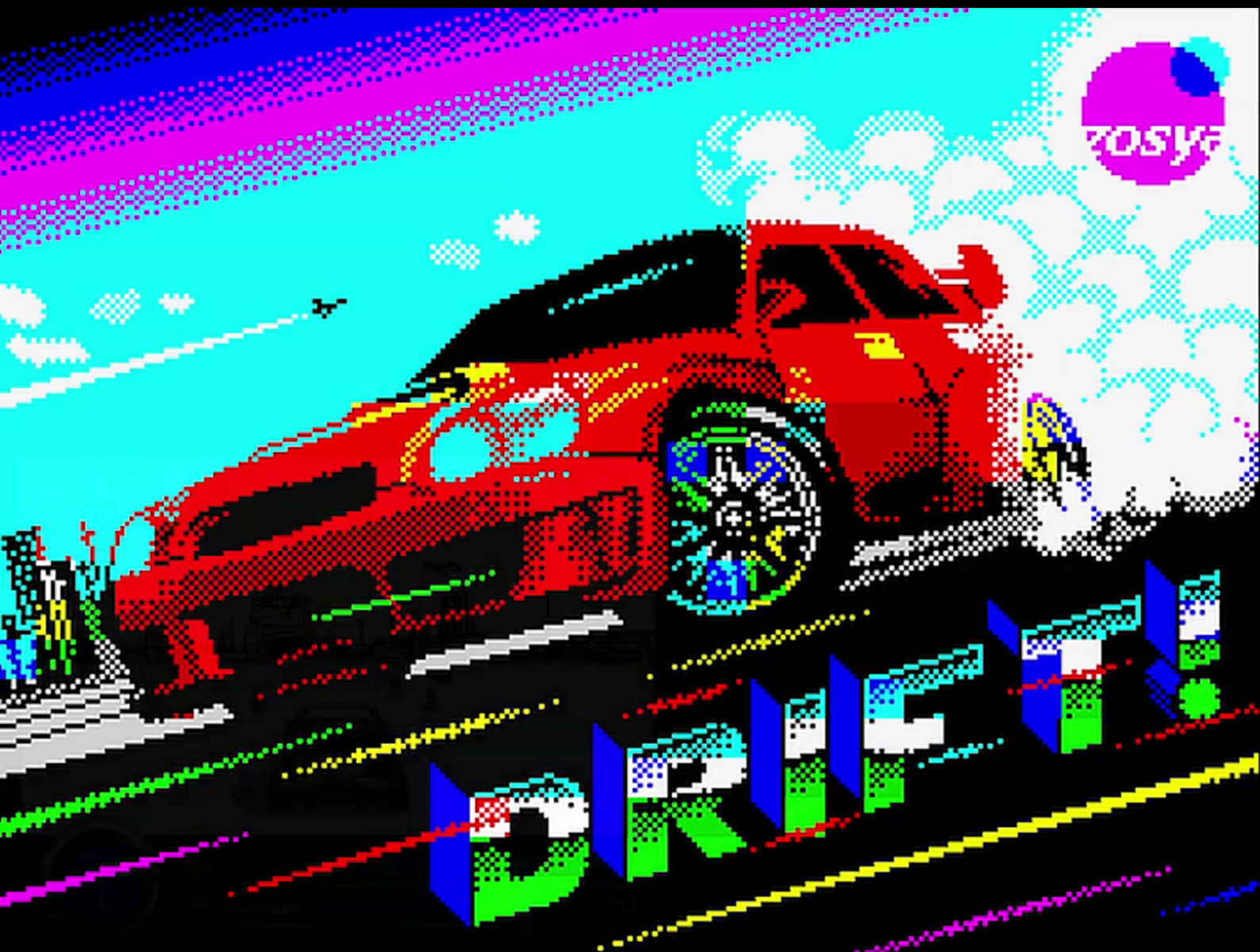




rare and expensive NeoGS sound-cards that fit into any Spectrum-compatible computers with ZXBUS, you can play back the music on the machine while playing. In any case, the game tells you when to insert the CD or MP3 and will ask you to press the firebutton afterwards. So how does the soundtrack sound? Well, it's rather relaxed, sounds like folk with guitar and accordion playing together. In a way, it reminds one on the Tristram village music from Diablo I, if you are familiar with that one. It's highly recommended

to follow the developer's advice and play the game with this soundtrack. Although it feels a bit like cheating, this is not an entirely new concept – Outrun comes to mind that also came with the original arcade soundtrack on audio tape in some versions.

The TAP image of Valley of Rains is 52 kB, the game is free but the tape can also be ordered from Zosya directly. And it might very well be the game every Spectrum owner should have in physical form, as it is that good. Try it! *(bk)*



GEM AWARD  
2019

New racing games for 8-bit computers and consoles are pretty rare these days. Most developers concentrate on platformers, jump'n'runs or puzzle games. Most, but certainly not all. Russian-based coding studio Zosya released its game *Drift!* for the ZX Spectrum in 2019 and shows what the small micro – which was also a great hit over there due to several clones – is still capable of. Most notably, they

chose not to focus on fast gameplay action, but on another aspect of racing games that only very few have yet considered at all on any 8-bit platform: drifting around corners. In fact, this is what it's all about and it makes for a surprisingly fun and unique experience on the little British home computer. The game starts with a already stunning intro sequence, using demo effects for the construction of the

# THE METAL

45



title in vector graphics and a few short animated sequences that show a drifting Lada 2105 from behind as well as a view from the inside of the cockpit and an external frontal view of a Subaru Impreza 2014 drifting around a corner, leaving a smoky trail behind him. Combined with the catchy music and digitized speech samples that one can hear throughout the game, this makes an impressive opening. So impressive that one actually starts to wonder how good the game can actually be on a ZX Spectrum after all. And the

answer is: Very good! The player can choose between the two cars that he already saw during the intro: The Lada is called Julia and the Subaru is called Sabrina, most probably to avoid any possible license claims from those companies. Actually, the real car brands are mentioned nowhere, but judging from their looks, those two models are very likely depicted here. After the car selection, the player starts his racing season, competing in two heats with four participants against computer opponents to beat their time. nd

the top-two from those heats race for the final of each course and the winner gets not only points, but also money – which is important as you’ll have to pay for repairs, starting fees and general preparations for every season. If you lose all your money by losing too many races, the game is over.

Steering needs some time to get used to, as you have to turn in the direction you want to go, let the car follow you and then steer to the opposite direction while accelerating, resulting in a drift. However, you have to keep the car on track and not smash into walls or pylons.

If you go off-track, you’ll get penalty points for this, reducing your score and your earnings. Make it through three laps, stay below the time limit and get extra-points for nice drifts to proceed. Graphically, it is a stunning little game. The screencaps don’t quite live up to the detailed animations on-screen, the nice backgrounds and the overall presentation you’ll experience when playing this little gem. The steering feels complicated though, and takes a lot of practise to master. But doing so feels very rewarding and this game is an absolute must for Speccy fans. Get the free tape-image! (bk)



LAP 1/3  
0:26

# DRIFT

014

15



UCHUSEN GAMMA (MSX)



Juan J. Martínez strikes again. You may know this diligent coder from games like *Rescuing Orc* (C64), *Magica and Dawn of Kernal* (CPC), *Night Knight* (MSX) or *Escape from Colony 8* (ZX Spectrum). With *Uchusen Gamma*, he presents another fun little game that for MSX computers with at least 16k of RAM, allowing for some space shooting action on even the oldest, rather obscure MSX machines.

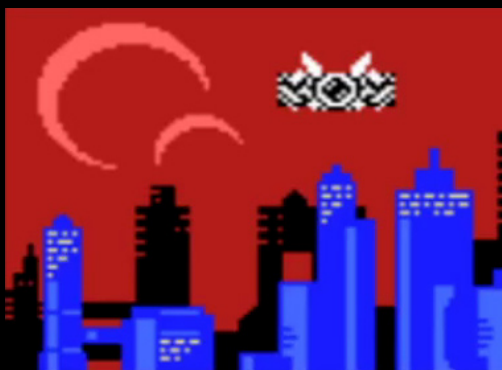
The story goes like this: “The Emperor has died without a direct heir, and a military junta has taken over the Galactic Empire. Without the strong hand of the old order, the cyborgs of the Mions system have been ruthlessly raiding the Outer

Worlds, leaving behind a trail of death and destruction. The Empire has ignored the cry for help for too long. When everything seems lost, only one combat spaceship model Gamma can stop the advance of the cyborgs and put the imminent war to a halt.”

There are five stages to beat and a final boss to fight. Enemies can be shot down with your ship’s primary weapon or with a smart bomb that can either be triggered by pressing the second fire button or M on your MSX’s keyboard. The bomb will destroy not only enemies, but also their projectiles, making it an interesting weapon of last resort. Graphically, the most pleasant



surprise was the simple neon glow effect on the equal sign that was used bridging objects in the first level. It would have been interesting to see this style continued through the level. The background looks nicely done for a game of this size, yet it's nothing to write home about. The scrolling however is very smooth and the Gamma spaceship feels agile to steer around. A nice feature: You can increase your score if you keep a chain by shooting one enemy after the other, multiplying your score and thus coming closer to the 50.000 points you'll need to earn to get an extra life. The music is nice and every stage has its own soundtrack – not bad for a game with 16k. Uchusen (translating to space ship from Japanese,



by the way) is a solid shmup, yet it gets quickly challenging as enemy ships and their bullets get faster and harder to dodge. It is, in a good way, everything you'd expect it to be, coming from Juan's experience. Currently, the game can be downloaded for free from his website over at [usebox.net](http://usebox.net), but a physical version is planned, however no more details are known as of this writing. (bk)





“In the 13th century, the town of Trasmoz was excommunicated for its pagan practices and its inhabitants were cursed forever. The population was decimated until it became a ghost town, diseases and all sorts of evils on children, animals and crops made this an abandoned place left by the hand of God. Until now, no one had dared to approach Trasmoz again, there is talk of dangerous creatures of the night, witches and living dead who protect

the place run by the evil magician Mutamin: Immortal servant of the devil and master of the inaccessible castle and the watchtower. But tonight is the night of the dead and the moon is full again. The time has come, as the prophecy says: »When the full moon crowns the night of all saints, a brave hero will break the curse forever. He will sanctify the place with the fire of wandering souls, when they are liberated.« You are the hero chosen to fulfill

this dangerous mission. Will you be able to free Trasmoz from his curse before the sun rises again?" And with this story set, a lovely single screen arcade platform game begins that does not reflect the described terrors. Done with the infamous Arcade Game Designer by Jonathan Cauldwell, it's just as cute as it gets. Our little hero bobs impatiently when not moved in any direction, ready to slay the evil monsters in the dungeon that wait for him, he is eager to solve the puzzles that he comes across. Basically, those puzzles consist of killing enemies, getting flames from them and then lighting the torches placed across each screen. Not all enemies can be killed, like bats for example, and a time limit puts additional pressure on the player. And with the introduction of floating ghosts that can't be killed in level six, the game continually gets harder and harder. It also does not help that your sprite dies as soon as you touch an enemy, be it a bat or be it a spike. A heart system, even with only two hearts, would have been a great relief. But then again, who said it would be easy to free the town of Trasmoz? Volcanobytes did a solid job here and the game is challenging and entertaining for a whole while, letting you yell "one more time" after each game over. Polyplay published a physical release of the game recently that contains either a 3" disk or a golden cassette with imprint, a poster, stickers and a manual. (bk)



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NEW GAMES FOR  
CLASSIC COMPUTERS AND CONSOLES



## HIBERNATED 1 THIS PLACE IS DEATH

What would you do, waking up too early from hypersleep? Stranded and with an Artificial Intelligence being your only friend? Close to Vega, Olivia Lund is on the trail of mankind's greatest secrets and a thousand-year-old mystery.

**HIBERNATED 1** is the critically acclaimed text adventure debut from Stefan Vogt (Pond Software). The interactive novella inspired by Isaac Asimov and Perry Rhodan is considered a modern reboot of the whole genre for which **INFOCOM** and **LEVEL 9** were famous for.

For this, the first part of the saga won the legendary **CRASH SMASH** award. The Addon **EIGHT FEET UNDER** is included.

**DEVELOPER:** Pond Software

**Systems:** Amstrad CPC, Commodore 64, Sinclair ZX Spectrum, Amiga, Atari ST and IBM PC

**Box content:** Diskette or cassette in a cardboard box that also contains a 128 MB SD card (includes disk images, MP3 soundtrack and extras), manual, poster, stickers, Hibernated 1 addon »Eight Feet Under« download code and the exclusive **mission patch**

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**64**  
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