

Atari ST
Amiga
CBM 64/128
Spectrum
Amstrad
IBM + more

ISSUE ELEVEN - AUGUST 1988 - £1.50

ACE

ADVANCED · COMPUTER · ENTERTAINMENT

● WHO'S BAD?!

Top programmers
rated by...top
programmers.



POWER

Have these three men produced
the ultimate games machine?

FRUSTRATION

Games that make you go F*CK IT!

CORRUPTION

Telecomsoft's Yuppie
fantasy



WARNING! Games Overload!



Can you really cope with
Virus, Whirligig, and
Darkside all in one issue?

● REACH FOR THE
SKY! Win £700 of flying lessons - p14

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If your computer
could choose...

elite

The Computer's Choice!



Atari ST £19.99
Ikari Warriors
Atari ST £14.99
Amiga £24.99

SPECIALS

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A small Cambridge company has come up with a machine that could change the face of computer entertainment. How does it work? What does it do? And will we ever be able to buy it?



35 Who's Bod?

These guys don't just know a good game when they see one—they write them! Chris's hottest readers give us their heated opinion of the work done by their competitors.

78 Carry on Screaming...

Just one more slice to eat and... August 1st! Please, not anything but TIME! We check out games that make grown men cry, sway their eyeballs, smash monitors, and leap screaming from top-floor windows. Don't say we didn't warn you...

72 File-fantasy

Roberto's latest adventure (Swordbuster) has stunning graphics and some concepts with drop-down FileBox menus. Next to a Platinum American Express card and a Porsche 911 Turbo, it could be just what the floppy is looking for...

INTERFACE

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Can Tandy give us CS-ROMS? What's Jeff Miller doing in church? Why are Macgypic telling tales—and why are they? Who's ahead of the big, bad kids? They told us, and we're just surfing to tell you...

More of a killer-gal? Flippage on page 11.



ACE

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Some of the latest, updated in full color over this month's pages.

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With letters like these, who needs a magazine? We put our best up and so you fill the pages...

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For the good news, you could be an ACE prizewinner. How the best news you've reached the end of the magazine.

SIGHT...

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We friends, influence people, and put together the hottest screen displays on the street. Then catch up on state-of-the-art plotting made it all so easy...

34 Hang 'em High

...an ACE's Reader's Gallery page. Digital masterpieces from readers put Pazzo in the shade.

.....AND SOUND

96 Budget Ivory

At last Oberon has emerged with their long-awaited budget range of master keyboards. Chris Jenkins gets it typed up... plus a look at Roberto's latest line of tricks, a reassembled version of the astonishing M70, and news of a powerful new music card for the IBM PC.



THE ACE CARD

Win an Amiga!

Turn to page 11 for details of your chance to win one of two Amigas worth giving away—and check The Bitter End to see if you've won an Ace 27 or any of the staggering 31 software prizes we offered last month.

GAMEPLAY

41 Screen Test

Mike Singleton shows us his five colours in deep space, plus the definitive review of *Wast on the 31*. From the Finestraped Darkside and a load of other not-to-missers—all exhaustively reviewed and rated by the country's top game testers. Don't say Aaargh, say light!



Page 41: *Wast on the 31*—highlighted in green and orange from the 31-bit light.



Page 44: *Bat Out of Hell*—another from our exclusive color 31.

26 Arcade Ace

Could there be a revolution on the horizon in the arcade—you don't just blast everything in sight in *Proboters*, you think while you're doing it—in so Andy Smith claims. Plus news of SAS, *Midway Returns* and... and you're not—*Bat Out of Hell Versus Super Wings*.

91 Play-By-Mail

Play a letter in the post detailing your plans for conquering the universe and someone, somewhere, might just take you seriously.

88 Tricks 'n' Tactics

Let's face it if you can't log the high score table in *Platoon*, *Warway*, *Clif*, *Impossible Mission*, *Center Command* and many others, then there's only one thing to do: cheat.

72 Adventures

What a month! Not only do you get *Compton* and *Legend of the Beasts*, but also exclusive news of new games by the Black Tale team, Infocom, and others.

GET YOUR KICKS ON SIXTEEN BITS

Have you got what it takes?

ROLLING THUNDER

undercover cop?



Got an Amiga??? Then you'd be crazy to miss out on the latest great releases from U.S. Gold - all designed to make the most of the superior graphics and enhanced gameplay which your Amiga offers. Get your Kicks today!

Screenshots taken from various U.S. Gold games



All titles
£24.99
each

U.S. GOLD REFRESHES THE AMIGA BITS OTHERS CANNOT REACH!



Interceptor: reasonable to buy an Amiga?

16-BIT WAR!

The glasses are off in the battle for 16-bit supremacy: Commodore have slashed the price of the Amiga 4000 by £100, and that's only the beginning of a massive assault on the computer entertainment market.

The cut leaves the A4000 with a price tag of £399.99, putting it on a par with the Atari ST for the first time ever, and Commodore have other cards up their sleeves.

Announcing the cut, Commodore's marketing manager Dean Barrett described it as "just the beginning and promised further initiatives in September — all aimed at making 1988 the 'Year of the Amiga'."

This sudden interest in the leisure market follows a long period of relative indifference, during which Commodore concentrated on selling the Amiga as a business machine, and comes at a bad time for Alan Carter this year: the ST seemed to have the entertainment side of home computing sewn up, with a 5200ST costing only £299 to the A4000's straggling £399. In April this changed, when Atari increased the 5200ST price by £100. This astonishing and unprecedented move was forced on them, Atari claimed, by a world shortage of dynamic RAM chips. It unquestionably left the ST vulnerable, despite the impressive line-up of games included in the price and the less well-publicised upgrading of the 5200ST drive to 1040K standard.

The question now is whether Commodore have in fact left it too late to make their move. The ST's old £299 price-tag sold a lot of machines, and that in turn generated

plenty of software support. Titles like Star Trek, Out Run and Captain Blood have sold in very large numbers on the ST, making it big business indeed for the games houses. It's not just the numbers of each title that get sold — a really successful Spectrum or C64 game will normally sell many more than its

ST counterpart — but also the higher ST price. In Galtig's "sales by value" chart, which takes into account the price of a game as well as the number of units sold, ST titles as a whole are now handsomely ahead of their C64 equivalents, putting the ST second only to the Spectrum.

If most ST games are typically a little over twice the price of 8-bit ones in the shops, they can look even more attractive to the game's publishers. According to one major software house, an ST game earns a programmer three times as much per unit sold as an 8-bit title does. If the royalties here are factored four times the software house itself makes on the game, it's easy to see why the ST's getting so much software support these days.

The Amiga may be able to offer software houses the same price advantage as the ST, but it can't sell anywhere near as many titles. For most programmers the Amiga version of a game is only worth doing as a spin-off of the ST original, and

wouldn't be worth the programming time in its own right. Does that matter in the end won't be long as the conversion turns up eventually, who cares if it's an afterthought?

With the price difference gone, the crux of the matter for gamers is whether the few impressive games released for the Amiga but not the Atari machine — like Interceptor, Ferrari Formula One and Stonecrusher — can outweigh their ST counterparts (the still-unconverted Orb is for example) and those 25 new titles. With so many houses also looking to double in computer art, the Amiga could just come out of this one on top — and that's not something anyone would have predicted six months ago!



Dean Barrett - Commodore ST's PR - thinking on a game plan. Is he serious?

A C C E N S E S

HEWSON GO 16-BIT

Advanced 8-bit software house Hewson are about to attack the 16-bit market with two original products for the ST/Amiga — *Atlantis* — *The Angel of Death*, and *Blaster: 007*. Not only that, but they're also converting some of their biggest 8-bit hits — *Blaster* by *Blaster*, *Zynax*, *Exxon* and *Cybernet* for the 16-bit screen.

Previously they had only released *Ranamon* on the ST and Amiga. Andrew Hewson explained, "I grew up a fan for the market, it was an experiment and it worked". So what have they been doing since then? "We've been deciding what 8-bit material to take over onto the new machines, and what original games should be developed."

He also said that their intention was to produce games that use the machines to the full, rather than just taking 8-bit code into an 8-bit game. *Zynax*, *Atlantis* and *Blaster* will appear on both ST and Amiga, with *Cybernet*, *Methodist* and *Scorched* on the ST.



ST - *Blaster* promises to go 16-bit.

BIG SPLASH FROM BIG APPLE

Hold your breath — there's a fair software house in the market who are planning to 'take on' the likes of US Gold and Ocean, offer you 'American as a me too' and 'copy the apple cat'. They're launching with multi-million pound backing and backings. Who are they?



Big Apple's first release — Apple II — showed its class.

They're called The Big Apple Entertainment Co-LLC, and are part of a group called President Holdings. President had fun from the record distribution business and with their associated companies in the video and character licensing

business they turned over a whopping \$42 million last year. They claim to be determined to become a leading software house within a 'young but exciting industry'.

Sounds good, but what's behind the hype?

First, there's cash — and plenty of it. Up to \$5 million has been earmarked for expenditure over the next year. It's a long time since we saw anybody enter the market with such a commitment and the finance to back it up.

Second, there's a good deal of experience. Character licensing and video are just part of the President operation — they also own Funk Radio, the 1-4 people.

Third, there's a commitment to 'originality'. Sounds like more hype — the market is, if anything, improving in this respect already anyway — but Big Apple claim that 'the game scenarios are totally original — you wouldn't expect to see a computer game based on ideas like these'. The originality, it seems, extends even to the designer games pack-

aging which has 'left-round originality' though it will, in fact, be rectangular. Its special 'flip-top box' has apparently been tested for up to 200 openings and closings. We're impressed.

The first games will be hitting the market in June (Apple II) — check out the President's 'Apple II' (Apple II) — being selling.



Big Apple's mascot — Steve Ball — who's designed to enhance the company's image and show 'how tough' they're also feature in a President 'home' computer that will also be the gift to politicians.

can in a couple of years' time, or five years' time with something else. It's got to happen — look at music videos — they're a start, but they're



not close to the music. It's what everyone was trying to do in the 80's with CD wheels, it Jean Michel Jarre with his laser shows, but it's doing the real thing right now — not just some pre-sequenced light-show.

ACE is eagerly awaiting to enter into a partnership with Tandy CD-ROM. Watch its performance.

TANDY CD-ROM DOES IT ALL?

Tandy claim to have come up with a revolutionary development in optical disc media which they're calling THOR-CD. The THOR stands for Tandy High Optical Recording and the big thing about it is, first, that it is compatible with existing CD players and, second, that it promises to be cheap.

We're unlikely to see THOR-CD in the county until 1990, but if we do, we'll get a compact unit that will be able to both read RPD write data. That means it won't be a CD-ROM at all, but more like a CD-RPD — or an ultra-high capacity hard-disk system. The company reason they'll be able to offer hundreds of megabytes per five inch disk.

Even more importantly, the access time looks as if it should be on a par with hard disk systems and the system will be able to cope with musical, video, and computer data. Price is uncertain at present, but the audio unit should cost around \$300 — the computer bit will cost more.

There's just one small problem. The attempt of the Japanese to introduce digital audio tape (DAT) into this country already reported in ACE, have met with very stiff opposition because of the piracy problem. Surely the same problems will apply with Tandy's CD system?

I can see that they might be applicable, but we wouldn't like to comment on that at this stage, and computer systemmaker Amade



The Golden Light Laser Show at just your service — this year it ends in September 1st at W. 100th, South Square, London SW17 7E. Tel: 01 877 1001 for box office or Book orders on 01 877 1001.

Jeff Minter rides again, this time in a converted church in London's Smith Square, where he will be taking part in this year's Festival of New Age and Synthesizer Music to launch the 'Super-Ton' — an advanced software-based light synthesiser.

Before the optics die laughing, they should know that the whole

idea of linking sound and light — as Minter did with his original Colourscape series — has taken on a whole new meaning with the advent of MIDI. Using MIDI notes you could now control one of Minter's MIDI synthesiser with a conventional MIDI keyboard.

It's possible, whereas Jeff, to sense MIDI data including pitch-

and velocity so that you can moderate your light performance according to the music. He thinks that in the near future the light synthesiser will become a powerful instrument in it's own right, used as part of the band line-up for live performance.

It's inevitable. If it doesn't happen with 'Top-A-Ton' now, it'll hap-

THE PHONE GAME

Would you like to play games down the phone without using a modem? Well, you can! (and see the phone system's contribution to the world of adventure and roleplay has been confined to MUOs like WRD or Shades. How the voice games are coming - and you may never think of your phone the same way again!

like *Godror Took*.

Unfortunately, most people have a strong aversion to taking out subscriptions and paying for things in advance. BTU's pay-as-you-go facilities using 0900 numbers may offer gamers experience a way round the natural resistance, thanks to its small plan to some very clever computer technology.

TONE DEAF?

If you're wondering what all this stuff about tones is, you probably can't do the Starline service at all: only users of American-style DTMF phones can enter their data this way.

The hardware limiter here is not insurmountable: separate tone diallers let you enter the informa-

tion on normal push-button phones. That's small consolation for services that rely on casual users - would you run-out and buy a tone dialler just to hear your homepage? - but it could be good news indeed for all you adventure and role players out there.

Some subscription services have never really flourished: the only pundits expected, pay-as-you-go systems are a major growth area. Microsoft itself has such a system, *Hotel California*, offering many of the subscription developer's interactive areas (in their equivalents) to non-members at a per-minute charge. Both *Hotel California* and star-online service *Deans* are highly unusual 0900 services simply because you need a computer and modem to access them.

The phone is a natural for creating the atmosphere of a good adventure. After all, what graphic adventure really could compete with a *Phone's Price Monstrosity*? The problem is it's actually making money out of providing such a service. For years, the only way to charge people money for accessing your system was by selling membership subscriptions, with passwords to keep out the freeloaders. *Pretext* and *Compend* both work on this basis, as do independent games

Interactive

The vast majority of pay-as-you-go phone services are voice lines, and most of these offer nothing more than taped monologues recorded by stock-actors. Page 2 gets a similar. However, there's a new breed of service coming in which, though based on voice rather than modem communication, is nevertheless interactive.

In other problems involved - so Starline's suppliers were forced to use an alternative, higher tech approach.

The service uses the caller's telephone dial as a numeric keypad, decoding the tones made by his phone as his keys in his personal numeric details.

Really an 0900 online game exists. Called *FIST Fantasy*

INTRODUCING THE VOOG...

Though *FIST* doesn't rely absolutely on the use of a tone dialler or DTMF phone, it is clever without one of the other - and that's pretty important given that the service costs upwards of 20p per minute. A far more exciting possibility for the future is the *VOOG*.

VOOGs are Voice-Operated Online Games and, as the name implies, they use voice recognition technology to allow spoken commands by the caller. Voice recognition is only just becoming practical for commercial use, but already BT experiments have shown just how successful games along these lines could be, with a very short 'training' period to let the system learn your speech patterns, a game can correctly follow directional and other commands with a 90% or better success rate.

VOOGs were first tested by BT a couple of years back, when a small band of select subscribers were able to explore a Cornish village over the phone using directional commands. The system was pretty primitive, recognizing only a very few words, and running on an ordinary IBM PC with a voice recognition card tacked on. More up-to-date systems can recognize more words and do not require training for different users - saving time and subscription's money.

A case in point is the new well-established *Russell Grant Starline* service available in the London area, which gives each caller a ten-minute game based on his or her date of birth. Using a separate line for each possible message was clearly out of the question here - fitting 365 different phone numbers legibly on an advert is hardly a serious proposition, quite aside from

interactive features by telephone, would you believe? It takes the form of a spoken Steve Jackson text adventure-com-roleplaying game complete with sound effects. The latter's a crucial element in the whole idea, as anyone who's played Intertec's *Linking Horrors* will tell you: in the realm of fantasy and sound effect it's worth a thousand pictures!

MUSICAL BONUS

Destiny Software, the company formed by erstwhile Beyond-man Francis Lee, has started to include music with its titles - buy a copy of their next release *Diamond* and you'll get a free cassette featuring *What A Girl Wants* from up-and-coming pop *The Company She Keeps*.

In fact Lee is going one step further and actually starting his own music label, *Destiny Records*. Although *What A Girl Wants* was actually licensed from Coral Harbour Records, future releases will be signed directly to the label, which will not only release singles, an vinyl but will also package them along with games from *Destiny Software*. Francis Lee thus joins the ranks of K-Tel, *Realplay*, *Telstar*, and *Virgin* - all of whom have sought to combine the music and software businesses with varying success.



REPEAT POWERPLAY

Acorn are releasing a new version of *Powerplay* for the Amiga. The musical occurrence has been prompted because, as Acorn put it, "It became more and more difficult to use the Amiga owners were no longer satisfied with games ported over from the Atari, and that it was time to produce a game solely for the Amiga, using all of its graphic capabilities."

The game is initially available via mail-order only from July 7th (see coupon on ad). It should be in the shops by the end of July. The company are also investigating the possibility of producing more quarterly sets.





WHO'S AFRAID OF THE BIG, BAD BIRDS?

The **fun** has been flying recently over allegations that Microsoft, a company partly-owned by British Telecom, have been using their BT connections to fold down prices in unfair competition against other online games publishers.

The idea is that if you can make use of BT's buying power, sooner or later you can out-evolve any one else out of business. One newspaper even suggested that Microsoft's recent price increase was a direct result of pressure by the industry body OFTEL, following allegations of accounting irregularities in the way Microsoft faced its prices.

All this, as OFTEL themselves pointed out, is nonsense. It's nothing new, however. Similar accusations have often been leveled at

Telecomsoft, Rainbow, Silverfox, and Frostbit are beginning to prove a very potent combination and some people in the industry actually seem to be afraid of our feathered friends. They reckon that in Telecomsoft's case, big is fast, fast, fast. Here's a company, they say, which represents a deadly form of cheque-book publishing – a company who can march into the market and spend millions... and so what if they lose a lot of cash? They can afford it. Others can't.

For example, Telecomsoft paid a subvented £1 million for Beyond. Whatever the real sum involved, they certainly can't have made much money out of that. And what about Gold? Another label bought and then lost in the mists of time. Transactions such as these would surely have sunk any normal software house, but Telecomsoft can just keep marching on, leaving less well-endowed companies to take the bait.

From a commercial viewpoint, complaints are well-placed industry sourds. I doubt if they're making a profit. They're strong in the 16-bit market, where the games are more expensive, but the number sold is low.

Telecomsoft, however, are quite adamant that all this is rubbish, understandably when their accounts take cover behind anonymity.

"This is a load of nonsense," retorts company supremo Paula Flynn. "Frankly we've found all these criticisms three years ago. We've gone past all that now and are very happy with our performance."

The reason Telecomsoft puts out such high quality product is that top programmers want to work with Telecomsoft as they trust the name of British Telecom.

That aside, Telecomsoft has a large development team of 14 people who offer our programmers support and help through the development of each product. Royalty statements are honest, with payments

made on time to other programmers. "Incidentally, Telecomsoft pays its own phone bills, rent, accommodation etc, and furthermore it is not in British Telecom's interest to support unprofitable businesses."

Perhaps the last word should go to Andrew Hewson, who cut two of the best programmers – the notorious Turner and Braybrook – to BT last year. Surprisingly, he's still in favour of the big boys: "It doesn't matter how big your cheque-book is – if you make silly decisions, you're still going to lose money. The only difference is that those with money can afford to go on making mistakes longer – and if someone in the industry can afford to lose people in that way, then it can be of benefit to all of us."

Looks like the training period is over for Telecomsoft – the month sees no less than four strong titles from the Birds – *Mus*, *Whitings*, *Legend of the Dwarf* and, incidentally, *Starliner 2*. Watch out everyone – these birds are BAD!



Legend of the Dwarf – more intended. Check it out on page 74.

● IS BIG BEAUTIFUL?

So we really want large companies dominating the games scene, or do we have a secret hankering for the class of elite programmers who sell their own games at fairly and are accessible and (sometimes) responsive in a way that large companies can never be? The good news is that perhaps our vertebrae still have ball.

Electra's fit-name of a brand new software house that just goes to show that even nowadays you don't need anything. What's more, they could point the way to a whole new style of games programming and production that may have important repercussions for us gamers.

Since the big companies have too much money to spend, a whole host of small companies have sprung up offering programming, marketing, and sales services for the game. This means that it's now possible to launch your own software house by getting Small Company A to do the coding, Small Company B to do the production, and Small Company C to do the marketing and sales.

That's just what Electra have done. Oxford Digital Enterprises have written the game, a shoot-'em-up for the ST and Amiga; SPK are doing the production; and Entertainment International are managing the sales. They presto – the little birds gang together and up springs a whole creature.

This sort of flexibility is something quite new in the

games business, where previously launching a label cost many thousands of pounds, required a large office, and lots of in-house talent. It could bring greater publishing power to the small guys – like Amiga or Powerplay firms, for example – who can produce great software but they just have the muscle of their own to publish it. In some ways, it's a return to the days of the elite programmer, Jeff Minter style – small, imaginative concerns who can move quickly with the market and deliver hot products. Let's hope Electra can set an example that will inspire others to go the same way.



Electra Better Deal Than Alien, shining over a shell new presence.



SNIPPETS...

Up and coming titles for your leisure

SALESDOWN DOMAIN

Paradox
April 87 £19.99

From the people that brought you *Into the Digital Maze* comes a romp in the lands of fantasy. It's a quest for the five gems of Eden, which when brought together, naturally bring you ultimate power. The game is played over six levels where you battle the minions of the wizard Azael. Features promised are a 32-colour screen, player-monster interaction, hundreds of locations, loads of characters, and a huge gameplay map. Wonder how they're going to map gameplay?



April 87 - Salesdown Domain

DEBUT

Paradox
April 87 £19.99

Also coming soon from Paradox is the mixture of arcade action, simulation and strategy, where you're trying to stabilize the ecosystem of a planet. To do this you have to control the weather system, process food chains, redistribute the population and try to stop wars and pollution. Looks like we can all play at being God again.



April 87 - Debut

JOE BLADE 2

Playtex
Spectrum £1.99

The original game did well amongst the ranks of budget software and

now the main character's back as a London vigilante. His task is to clear the streets of muggers and punks (since when was being a punk a crime?) and save the ordinary citizens held prisoner in their own homes.

BLACK TIGER

GGI
Spectrum £9.99 £11.99
064-135 £9.99 £11.99
Amstrad £9.99 £11.99
April 87 £9.99

This is the latest of GGI's Capcom conversions and plunges the player into the usual plethora of monsters, demons and dragons. The idea is to rescue nice men who may then sell you weapons. End-of-level questions and time limits also get in on the action. Expect this one in September.

THE FURY

Match
Spectrum £9.99 £11.99
Amstrad £9.99 £11.99
064-135 £9.99 £11.99

This looks like being the latest in wacky racing games. This one is set on a track floating in space called the Fury where the vehicles resemble its champion drivers. Of course you've got to uphold Earth's honour against aliens. Beats other drivers off the track, avoid them, play tag or even make a dash for the line on foot if your engine cuts out. No wonder Nigel Mansell isn't endorsing this one - a formula one grand prix sounds easy by comparison.

More Info



More - The Key

18

Concise
064-135 £9.99 £11.99
Spectrum £9.99

Probably the first time a game has been based around a record - Paul Henderson's electronic special that went to number one. The game was delayed from last year but is now progressing steadily instead. The action starts in boot camp with training before you get on to the hard stuff.

More - 18



DESIGN WARRIOR

US Gold
Spectrum £9.99
Amstrad £9.99 £11.99
064-135 £9.99 £11.99
IBM PC £10.99

A shoot-em-up that takes place entirely in your dreams, or is it the offices of Megabuck Inc? Well, either way you're going to run into a lot of demons, aliens, minions, play-glasses and all the other nasty things that pop up when dreams turn into nightmares. The final task is to close one and for all the six eyes of Conair, destroying the power source of the Paras. It's enough to put you off sleeping.

RALLY RUN

Mandarin
April 87 £19.99
Amiga £19.99

A simulation based on the Lombard RAC Rally, and in which you get to be a back seat driver. That's your viewpoint, but you're still got to change gear, steer, take the navigation's directions and generally not crash. Features will include damage reports and the chance to enhance the car.

MAINS COPIES

Arana
April 87 £19.99
Amiga £19.99

Arana's somewhat delayed game is nearing completion. It's a one-player space pursuit game in which you have to defend the colony on Mars from the UFOs that have entered the solar system. Arana say the game is faster and leaner, combining strategy and shoot-em-up. Out at the end of August.

More Info



STARGLIDER 2

In the beginning there was a void, a blank
universe without life or purpose.

And ARGONAUT Software looked upon the void
and said...

"LET THERE BE FLIGHT!"
... and there was STARGLIDER.

And as time progressed, the art of three-dimensional
solid graphics became known unto the
ARGONAUTS, and they rejoiced.

And they said...

"LET US CREATE THE ULTIMATE
PROGRAM, TO HAVE IN MIND IN ONE
ALL OTHER PROGRAMS IN THE
UNIVERSE."

... and there was a blinding light and the Earth spun
the and reassembled.

And as the fire diminished and the vapors cleared,
the brain of their labours emerged from out of the
shroud.

THE ULTIMATE CREATION:

STARGLIDER 2 . . .

... A VOYAGE INTO THE THIRD
DIMENSION.

BY ARGONAUT SOFTWARE

Atari ST/Amiga £24.95



Argonaut Software, 44-76 King's Highway, London, EC4M 3PS.
Retailer and Distributor: Argonaut Software, 44-76 King's Highway, London, EC4M 3PS.



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TALLY HO!

Yes, it's true. You can get yourself on the road to winning your very own Private Pilot's Licence with ACE - in conjunction with Gremlin we're offering the winner of our competition £700 worth of flying time completely free. Alternatively, you could plump for a mouthwatering state-of-the-art radio-controlled plane that really puts the **solid** into solid 3D!

NIGHT RIDER - THE GAME

Gremlin are offering the prize to celebrate the launch of their latest game, Night Rider, available for the Commodore 64/128, Amiga 500, Spectrum, and Amstrad CPC, means and burning into a sleep near you as you read this.

The game claims to be the ultimate flight simulator - shoot 'em up' and blast you into the stars at the controls of a sophisticated bomber - your mission: sink the Bomark.

You'll need to practice navigation and gunnery skills before taking the Bomark and cross your own flight plan, bearing in mind that the H&M Ark Fovis, the aircraft carrier from which you look off,



Night Rider

TAKE TO THE SKIES WITH GREMLIN IN OUR HIGH-FLYING COMPETITION...

may also be under attack and need protection if you're ever to get back home!

HERE'S WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO

To enter the competition, all you have to do is use your knowledge of pilots past and present to answer the three questions on the coupon below. Then enter your name and address and post the coupon to:

ACE Night Rider Competition,
4 Guben Street,
B&F,
B&F TEL

The closing date for entries is 4th August 1988. The prize will go to the first correct entry chosen at random from those received before the closing date and the prizewinner will be announced in the October issue of ACE. Employees of Future Publishing Ltd enter Gremlin are ineligible for entry - hard luck, lads!

THE PRIZE

OTHERS

£700 worth of flying lessons (or simply flying time if preferred) or absolutely no cash to you. We can arrange for the prize to be taken on an airport close to your home. You'll probably be flying in an aircraft like the one pictured below and with your instructor will be able to master the basics of flying technique and theory - great practice for playing Night Rider.

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Tick the box next to the correct answer to the three questions below:

1. Who took the lead role in the film *Reach For The Sky* about the pilot Douglas Gader?¹

- a) Mattilyn Monroe
 b) Kenneth Williams
 c) Kenneth More

2. Who was the first pilot to break the sound barrier?

- a) Chuck Yeager
 b) Dan Daly
 c) Officer Brown

3. Which pilot carried out a forced landing in a famous international incident?

- a) Ronald Pearson
 b) Pete Connor
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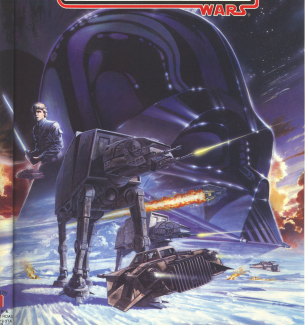
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STAR

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

WARS



by

1

1980

1980

1980

**BARBARIAN 2**

Palace

No lava, no bomb – and let's get a leg moved. Not only that but the process is tweaked up and ready to go back your brother as well. In this version our heroes are free of the confines of stone-walled arenas and can roam a map while playing with taking on all manner of head-dearing monsters. Prepare to be shocked – or at the very least hit – through with a bloodbath.

BT – one of the individual issues.

HIT FOR SIX

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

Demark

Hardly has the wreckage of the Death Star settled, than up pops the Empire back for a new fight. Once again, the game is based on the hugely successful clone-off, this time based on the Star Wars graphics are made in evidence as you struggle with the aggressive walkers and anything else Death Star can think of to throw at you.

Star – a rather tedious format, but how far you bring it down?

The software houses have won the toss and elected to bat. We'll soon be hearing the thud of packaging on shelves – 'and what a fine delivery that is'. Will they be making impressive scores of 900 not out, or trudging back to the pavilion with a duck? Better get your helmets on and prepare for some fast scrolling. There will be some pretty fine efforts, hits for six and the odd game that gets caught out, bowled over, stumped and run out by silly points. Now over to Radio 4 where during the tea interval Brian's about to enjoy a nice slice of cake and a game of *Virus*.





Oh, is anyone else's head?

OOPS!

Big Apple

New software house Big Apple will give plenty of players the pop with its devious arcade puzzle. You're got to travel on the islands to pick up objects, while avoiding the holes and other dangers. If you go in a quarter, even if it could be good, but it could be disaster. Looks like an interesting beginning for the new boys.



Defender makes it hard to make subtle things in their graphics.

STAR RAY

Logoton

Defender makes a comeback in the smoking shoot-em-up. Remember all those little people to protect? Those boxes of items to zap? Those noisy matching things that never leave when to stop coming after you? Well, here it is all over again, but with classy 16-bit backgrounds.

TETRA QUEST

Microdial

The latest from the producers of Leatherstock and Goldrunner is a weird mixture of shoot-em-up and exploration. The strange thing here is that your craft is confined to a grid and has to collect objects without encountering the other robotic inhabitants of the pathways. Furtive use of teleports and lasers helps things move along.



It's a grid of islands in real-time software.

HI-SCORE
18466
RR

2PLAYERS
345

1943
GO

Applied to the Capcom coin-up conversions. These 17 screens show how that you can expect plenty of weapons and juicy apple-cores. Hilarious, very fun to note that the action is supposed to take place at the Battle of Midway, while paratroopers busy life to ensure that you can still do loops and collect weapons by doing many loops into enemy planes.

BT - It doesn't look like this big number is going to arrive much longer. 1943 BT - lots of little planes, but still tough shooting they're easy meat.

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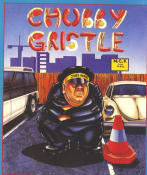
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BACK TO BASICS

After a few months' break – you *HAVE* been diligently practising all the tricks revealed in the first three instalments *HAVEN'T* you? – it's time to go back to basics...literally.

Behind every good picture sits a good talent, with a well-thought-out background. Duty-driven objects can jump out at you and still exhibit positively glacial detail-rendering.

However, if you examine the majority of published computer-generated pictures – whether they are

Spectrum-driven doodles or state-of-the-art raytraced – you almost feel notions of anxiety, or rather of awe. The classic examples are characterised surfaces selected in mirrored tests and 'the last render' – speed. The reason for using such simple backgrounds are themselves simple – lack of skill, and the need to emphasise depth in the most non-orthodox way.

Historically, most well-known computer artists were not in fact artists, they were scientists and programmers, until recently the only people with access to machines capable of computer graphics. However, for seeing and imagining they were technically ordinarily their vision was limited. Science fiction images predominate, especially of space where many of the artistic rules can be abandoned – there is no 'up' or 'down', for example. The most noticeable of these early artists were further exaggerated by technical constraints. Early computers were very short of memory so pictures had to be made round objects very economically – the Lines of Sight box gives some elementary examples.

LINES OF SIGHT

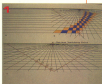
Since images are created on-screen as a series of horizontal lines scanning from top to bottom, the easiest, and most memory-efficient way to program a simple background emphasizing depth is to draw a series of horizontal lines with progressively increasing intervals between them. Although modern drawing programs are much less constrained by memory, for this purpose a still of use – see picture 11.

The illusion of depth created by horizontal lines can be enhanced with a series of lines radiating from a point on the horizon to provide perspective. If colour and area fill are available then the spaces between the lines can be filled with just 27 colours and this simple pattern of lines is very effective sense of depth is created by the checkerboard picture 12.

Checkerboards and mirrored spheres are now perhaps the most cliché of computer graphics. Nevertheless this basic perspective grid can be very useful as an underlying structure in any landscape drawing. It can be constructed quite simply and stored on disk to be brought back as a starting point for many landscape pictures.

The horizontal lines can be drawn with any progressively increasing interval between them. Picture 1 uses the simplest progression: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc. for the same numbers squared (1, 4, 9, 16, etc.) would also work. To alter the perspective lines to the vanishing point with the correct spacing can be difficult. A diagonal line passing through the grid squares that you are 'standing' or would pass through the opposite corners of each square or each parallel row to a point on the horizon close to the edge of the screen.

If you draw these construction lines (shown in red on picture 13) it is relatively easy to draw the radiating perspective lines from the horizon vanishing point through each pair that the construction lines cross, e.g. from 4 through 1, 2, 3, 4, etc. (shown in red). The angle between the red diagonal construction lines should always be greater than 90 degrees or distortion will occur.



1. Horizontal construction lines – each pair to one pixel wider than the one above (1, 2, 3, 4, etc.)
2. Perspective construction lines showing checkerboard effect.
3. Perspective grid. Red diagonal construction lines greater than 90 degree angle to avoid distortion.

For many drawings it is not really necessary to use such an elaborate grid as that described in the Lines of Sight box, however. If the lower terrain is known, simple construction lines can be drawn, and the details of the landscape built up over them depending on the type of terrain. Picture 2a shows a much simpler construction for a flat bottomed valley with gentle hills on either side.

At this stage it is easy to try out several different points of view. Positioning the hori-

zon line near the top of the screen can give the impression that you are looking down into a valley from a hilltop or overpass. A low horizon and high hills gives the opposite effect. Making lines a photo-realistic can be very useful when making these decisions. Try to determine the structure of the photo and view if it is ready to copy.

If the background is to have no detail at all then the hills can be filled with colour to represent hills with decreasing colour sat-

urates from white toward the horizon. The sort of aerial, washed-out or faded background can prove very effective in some circumstances. But increased detail makes for a more interesting composition. Using the underlying structure of the construction lines, gradually build up a series of lines representing smaller hills, hedgerows, field boundaries, water streams, wind dunes, etc... Try not to include too much detail at this stage, but structure.

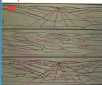


Figure 2a: Drawing outline landscape features around construction grid lines. Red lines can be removed after using technique shown.

1. Define features filled with a range of colours with gradients, taking care to make those in the distance from a given horizon line from its visible ground.
2. Addition of detail features, trees, water streams etc.
3. Dark outlines removed from distant features to emphasize atmospheric contribution colouring.



DIS PLATE

Do you have been avidly reading our series on how to draw and paint graphs, spending every spare minute, and filling dozens of disks with your art work? And now you want to display it, show it off to the neighbours, exhibit it in your local gallery, DO something with it - but what and how?

Over the last few months a flood of packages have appeared designed to help us to make our slide artwork look more interesting. The range of software is so wide that it is impossible to keep up with reviewing it all. Instead we are going to try to mention as much as possible in a series of interrelated items in the graphics column.

The Amiga in particular is blessed with loads of graphics utilities, packages designed not to draw left but to manipulate existing drawings. These fall broadly into two categories: image enhancement and 'open-side shows'. Some of the most recent items in the second group are mentioned below, and those in the first will be mentioned, together with other software and hardware items in the coming months. But first, what of the first SET?

In spite of its wider software base, the ET seems quite definitely to be taking hold in the area of graphics utility. Why? Several excellent new drawing systems have appeared recently, most notably the anti-colour Janus and QuantumPaint, but when it comes to utilities nothing is in sight (Please put me right if you know different). I am going to review any interesting and innovative graphical software for machines other than the Amiga if only I could find some.

Once you have built up a range of images - whether grabbed using a digitiser, collected from files and P.D. or drawn by your own fair hand - you can begin to present them in an interesting way. Standard 'slideshow' methods are okay but what is really needed is a bit of 'production' like they use in pop videos and television.

The simplest sort of display production is the use of fancy wipes and fades, free and gratis again. ANIMATION EFFECTS (Shan Enterprises/Amiga Centre Scotland DS) provides a basic access to all these special effects, but Martin Heath's usual simple-to-use interface but without fluff in the way of control over speed and timing. A bargain price thought!

More versatility is provided by TVSHOW (Zona Group/Microvare DS DS). Over 80 special effects are available, most of which are smooth and faster-in operation. Controlled via menus and excellent icons, the program is fairly easy to use, though some problems can arise if your palette changes greatly from picture to picture. A nice touch is the ability to add a spoken running commentary.

Even more control is at hand with THE DIRECTOR (The Right Answer Group/Amiga Centre Scotland DS). Though at the expense of any sort of user friendliness, The Director is, in spite of its professional display and animation language... The seems a little fiddling for us space-fod Amigoids, but even a very rudimentary knowledge of BASIC (to obtain the language used) bears a strong resemblance to those some excellent presentations with little effort.

The most unusual utility is another in Martin Heath's Animation series - ANIMATION STAND. One of the commonest TV and conventional animation effects is pan and zoom across the screen. Previously no software has allowed a smooth and effective pan or zoom across a picture. Usually, drawing programs zoom in an area by enlarging pixels. STAND uses a special 'interpolator' technique to maintain the integrity of the detail without causing jaggies. In practice the method works very well, creating a unique way to view your artwork.

If the construction lines are shown, it is convenient to color them (like red), if it is easier to delete. One item in view frame colour that suits the drawing well is yellow, olive green is used for leaves. Black is used in pic 2 for clarity. When the outline is complete (pic 3) the red lines can be removed by locking or erasing all the other colours and painting red-red with the background shade.

The next stage is to fill the areas - you have detected in with body colour, solid if



Figure 4: These brushes were used in painting with red background shade. First trees and bushes below. First is olive position. Spray shadows as roughly in position. Second pass with fine spray resulting the first. Third pass shows through gaps. All brushes can be used interchangeably.

HOW TO DRAW TREES

The tree in **WINDSOE** was formed from a coarse shaped brush - smooth on top, broken underneath - like that in 4.1. This is repeatedly passed down in an overlapping fashion (almost like felt across) modeling the desired shape of tree. Branches can be drawn into the black gaps left and a trunk added. When the tree is passed down, all of the background detail show through the black/transparent areas, eliminating all shadows. This can be overcome by lightly spraying out with a dark shade the same area of the tree just passed then repeating the tree exactly on top once again, this time the shade shows through. If you have enough about this process can be carried out when composing the tree separately but this tends to include all of the area behind the tree otherwise you really need some of the background to show through.

This process can be used as a background to any desired scene. It can be changed in any number of ways to create a future picture. 

you have a reasonable palette (16 or 32 shades) of pattern like 4 shades in your list. Instead of the trees to be filled from obviously have a window area border. Temporarily changing the outline to a dotted shade makes gaps easier to find. Even if you do not want a misty effect, making the distant colors lighter than the close ones enhances the feeling of depth. Nevertheless, the real landscape usually has a wide range of tones on a clear day so do not be afraid to use lots of shades if you have them. Perhaps to suggest the diversity without losing its depth.

The final job is to add the details of background, trees, woods, rock outcrops, rocks, buildings, and most importantly shadows. If it is a bright day everything will produce a shadow. If you have a sophisticated remember postage like **Photos Paint** or the **Amigo** or **Spectrum 512** to do it, you will be able to paint the shadows as very effectively. Before **Amigo** and **Delta** like allow a degree of shadow but the palette needs to be set up properly first. An alternative method was discussed in the last installment of this series, using patterned fill with alternative dark colors and transparent pixels. This process is a little bit over the top but allows some of the original colors to show through. A building brush shown in picture 3c is the essential of such outlines, especially on distant hills.



The complete picture to **WOLFE**. The background we have produced sits behind a rectangular array of buttons. Tools can edit the windows/brushes used to produce these details are shown in picture 4. It isn't the way to try for the easiest part of the image to produce as it is made from very free- or four simple elements, a stamp of grass, a bush, a tree branch and a series of meadow.

These are all plotted down repeatedly, sometimes slightly offsetting their scale or tilting them for variety. With a bit of practice, the sort of drawing is very easy.

The great advantage of producing a background on a computer is that it can be recycled in other pictures. All the stages in the production of an image should be saved so you go along as a matter of course. When

the final display is achieved the most important earlier stages should be kept for later use. Sometimes just tilting them horizontally and changing a few colours is enough, but more complex alterations can easily be made so that a particular background can be reused every time. Next month we shall look at some of the possibilities and subsequent need England for some exotic locations.

HANG 'EM HIGH!

So you think you're a pixel prodigy, eh? Get a load of this month's selection of digital masterpieces and think again...

SUGGLIPS

We don't often get representations of real people sent in. The obvious reason is that they are perhaps the hardest subject to tackle effectively. Peter Gibson's version of Maggus, Favourite Man amazes us though, even if he does seem to have a devil's mischievous



SUPERSTING

Considering this was Norwich-based Michael Powers' first ever picture with Jigsaw 2000, we were very impressed indeed. Michael notes that "...colour production, for example from yellow to orange, was achieved using MAGGNY and not SGRAB. The SGRAB mode I find rather clumsy and inefficient, especially in detailed work."



CARTOON CAPERS

Cartoonists often design their characters using certain basic shapes (e.g. circles, ovals, and so on) that make the image easy to replicate and scale accurately time and time again. This approach obviously lends itself well to computerisation, so it's no surprise that we often get our readers' impressions of well-known cartoon characters.



2000's favourite Judge (and perfect) is piloted by 11 year old Sean White of Bournemouth in the South.

Send us this - another Sean White reproduction in the US.



In 'Timing of Whitehead oriented this one to an American 600 using the 1000 mode on program.

Open Computer Production of Glendale (aka. the Southern California) based old-time Porsche 911 featured, using Version 60 for the Commodore.



VERROOOOM!

Cars seem to be one of the most popular subjects, and these examples only go to show that you don't need a state-of-the-art 16-bit machine to come up with a decent image...

SEND 'EM IN...

You too can achieve amazing things by having your personal screen display a full, floating colour on these pages. If you want to make a splash in the world of computer art, this is the place to start. We'll select someone's mightiest pixel masterpiece and offer you work. At the very least, you get the print - and that costs just a few pennies.

Send us your work on tape or disk to: Andrew ADE, A Owen Street, B43-4 BA1 1EA. Screens should ideally be stored along with a display program to save time at the end, though we do have copies of most of the pleasure on disk. Again, don't forget to include some tape or how you view the pictures so that others can benefit from your page.

QUADRANT



LOGOTRON - GEREKES DOBBING - HUBBARD & BURNETT - WOLFE



Being far the easy level might mean you stay alive longer, but you get no stars.

BOMB THE BASE!



The players go against some tanks that'll leave without collecting those four pads. (MIDI) The blue tank is found the easy - nice to see to find the exit.

VINDICATORS

Age 10+

Playing this one or two-players 3D tank game is no picnic until you get to grips with the controls, which consist of five joysticks per player. The player pulls and pushes the joystick to close to move his/her on-screen tank around the multi-level stations searching for the movement events on each level - looks a little over-the-top, but you might just stop the invasion by the evil Targem empire God is watching.

The levels are sub-divided into sections and to exit from each, you'll need to find at least one key to open the exit door. Pensive with the controls is essential before you attempt any of this because the sectors are guarded by various tanks and gun emplacements designed to make your life difficult. Shooting the enemy tanks is tough to start with because your turret is fixed, but if you

drive over the stars that can be found lying on the ground, you can buy yourself some nice add-ons to the end of the sector. These include a gun rotating option, which allows the player to rotate the turret independently of the body of the base simply by pressing the appropriate of the key buttons that are on each joystick.

You can save your stars from each level, until you can afford to buy something you think is really important, like armour or extra speed. It's just as important to collect fuel though - run out during a game and you lose your one and only life.

Vindicators is not your usual run-of-the-mill arcade game. Sure, it looks and sounds great, but the action is not as much as you



And here it is. Really gone through already.

BASTaito
30p

Who said there were only seven different types of mazel? Perhaps there are only the same number of coin-op scenarios. This one surfaced a long, long time ago and was called Pac-man. Nowadays we've got 3D Pac-man games, but herein one that reverts to the old 2D maze idea with power pills to be collected and various mazes to be avoided. The '88 re-creation puts the player in a Similar DS-like motorcycle with a hand firing gun, and end of level guardians to defeat. It's great fun to play and a great nostalgia trip.

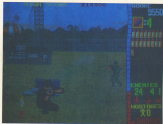
VULCAN VENTUREKonami
30p

No, it's got nothing to do with Star Trek. This continuously sideways scrolling shoot-'em-up has got a lot to do with Zaxxon and Atlantis, though, and it's just like these earlier Konami games with a few extra kifs. Your routes through the game are far more complicated and the extra weapons aren't quite devastating, but you're still going to have your work cut out and you'll have to be very sharp to defeat the end-of-level guardians.

might expect and you'll need to think a little as you wander around the scenery. In this respect it's like a breath of fresh air. For mind-bending action, you're better off playing something like Operation Wolf.

OPERATION WOLF

We brought you news of this machine back in issue 8, but unfortunately we were unable to show you any photographs of the game in action — until now.



Showing off a personal carrier with the usual gun.



Backslapping a fuel tank with the big.



With 24 soldiers, 4 helicopters and a tank left in having performed your work out.



A power-up — collect all the stars and fuel gauges to allow a short time limit rate out and choose the stars on you.

BAD DUDES VERSUS DRAGON NINJAData East
30p

Titles for arcade games get worse don't they? This simultaneous two-player beat-'em-up plays rather better than the title suggests. Pick your way through hordes of baddies in the left-right corridor, punching and kicking them into oblivion. If you're lucky you may be able to pick up an extra weapon like a sword or dagger to make your job easier. We hope to bring you a further report on the machine in the future.

ATARI ST

EXPLORE THE

Your plane has ditched on a mysterious planet somewhere in deep space. Tibet. You and your companions are alive but recover from the impact is short-lived - a large shape is moving towards you, as it gets closer you rub your eyes in disbelief - a Dinosaur! - where are you... and when? Now you learn to survive in a world untouched by modern life - a world frozen in time. Stunning graphics and scintillating action in this thrilling innovative game.



OF

OC



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of the game



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Time has passed... yet despite opponent elimination in the original ARK AND DOH game. Dimension-controlling force "DOH" has come back to life, and capturing the huge space craft JARH. Has entered our Universe ARK AND DOH type space fighter ARK DOH runs through long forgotten computer data and it finds the answer to the threat... "VALOR" is launched and speeds towards the threatening alien presence, before it can extract messages... "The Revenge of DOH"



FLARE

You read it first in last month's ACE: there's a brand new micro out there that could knock the whole computer entertainment world for six, and it's so unconventional it seems to defy logic. Designed from the outset as a mass-produced machine, it's already attracted interest from manufacturers as large as Amstrad and Atari - but will they take it up? And what will we see in the shops if they do? Andy Wilton investigates...

ARCHITECTURE



The Flare board, complete with its four super-enhanced custom chips.

The Flare One is not really one micro but two. The 8-bit side of the machine is shared by the Z80, the Z88, the video chip and the pack of all-in-one 'game' chips. The Z80 does the low-decision making here, while the Z88 handles video operations and other large, repetitive memory-chunching tasks. They take turns: the Z80 gets the better running as desired, and the Z88 then impresses the Z80 until it's back the other way.

Like many Z80 machines, the 50% half of the Flare One runs at very nearly full speed despite the video chip's need to access screen memory. Where the Z80s in the Spectrum and CPC are both locked out for quite significant portions of time, the Flare's Z88 - a chip that runs 50% faster in any case - and its video hardware things almost entirely to themselves. There are also four-on-one-comparisons here with the Amiga, which can suffer significant losses of processing time because of video stress, and its architecture which suffers very heavily indeed on this front.

That might be the whole machine as far as most people are concerned, but there's another side to the Flare One which could prove to be crucial. The machine has a separate 16-bit set-up consisting of its fourth custom chip - the digital signal processor, or DSP for short - and the big jobbers of very fast, very expensive static RAM.

The DSP's technically both sophisticated and complex - hardened technicists can check out the box for details - but the big picture goes like this. The DSP can crunch numbers at a terrific, Archimedes-beating speed, making it very handy for a number of tasks. It could handle all the 3D calculations for a vector- or poly-graphics game, put together some very complex sound equations,



The Flare One's architecture.

or clean the video buffer out of a frame-grabbed image. It could probably also turn its talents to big number-chunching problems like ray-tracing or fractal generation, both of these being natural applications for a machine with such a good graphics display.

The DSP is a green-odd number in program for any other processor in the modern micro world, but it's got enormous potential. Not only is it tremendously fast, but because it's a separate unit it can leave the Z80 and Z88 free to do other things while it takes care of the number-chunching. That's not just power - that's useful power!

The Flare One is an 8-bit machine. Yes, it can move bytes and block graphics faster than an XT and is 20% better of that. Yes, it can show line frame times faster than an Amiga. Sure enough, it can handle the motifs of 3D structures faster even than the ultra-speedy Archimedes can. But it is an 8-bit micro. Inevitably, its limited processor is a 280 - probably that, as every Spectrum or CPC owner will tell you - and though it's got a states, that's that too. Now everyone knows that 8-bit means one old, slow and generally things of the past, so how come this one breaks spots of the 16-bit competition?

The answer lies in the Cambridge suburbs of Cherry Hinton where Martin Bennett, Les Chasen and John Mollison - also Flare Technology - have been pulling their hardware threads into position. The technical side of their success involves an unconventional design and some very powerful custom silicon (see boxes and circuitry for details) but the real stars here are marketing: very simple, a better fit compared to pieces of lesser equipment. Acorn and Commodore want to sell their glossy machines to businessmen. Acorn sell the Archimedes, fitting in best in the classroom, but Flare just want to entertain people. By focusing on games, graphics and music performance to the exclusion of almost everything else, they've managed to stand accepted wackos on its head.

Something like the main-point of what here goes into the Flare One board, and it shows, the thing is complete. That's not to say that the boards overlaid with body into bits, but either that the Z80 and four wheeling great makes chips all have to reach together - and two of those four are processors in their own right (during the boards development time, Flare have funded the work and kept themselves alive by taking on hardware projects from other businesses, notably Amstrad themselves. What with the work and considerable experience of Sector



The Flare team - will their machine change the face of computer advertisement?

seconds before selling up on their own, the file size and limits of designing for most products.

The problem now is to actually get the machine manufactured, and that's what forced Flare's resources. While several sales prices have already started, the final success in the national market is awaited. While the boys from Bristolwood could venturing at the Flare One into their product line - probably by dropping the strictly Spectrum to make room - such pursuits aren't always worth it, great deal, a computer file being the roundabout file size Amstrad are using. Flare over the machine, a clean look side strongly doing.

But will Amstrad want to market such an unconventional machine? As a modern view, the Flare One's specifications look all wrap - and that's leaving the 8-bit architecture out of things for the moment. The Flare One can't consistently average on 80-col-

ours text screen, so word processing and other serious uses are just about out of the question. Its screen takes up a colored 64K of memory: only the Archimedes and top-end PCs offer more for under £1000. It has no screen palette as such: to change one of the screen colours, you need to change all the pixels down to that colour.

The stated points aren't problems at all, but they certainly show what an unusual approach Flare have taken. The idea behind the Flare One project was to produce not an all-round macro but an unconventional machine. The design demands



many assumptions made by manufacturers in recent years, and in its philosophy almost totally unconventional to console. When it's it makes the design, the entry-level Flare One will quite possibly level programs from tape, and every not even have a keyboard. This is not as crazy as it sounds: tapes are a very cheap storage medium, especially for

games, and with modern point-style operating systems a keyboard may simply be unnecessary. Besides, there's never a price to pay for. They want to see the basic machine selling for under £200.

GOOD FOR GAMES?

If the Flare One does make it onto the market, one game feature you can expect to see supporting it is Fontana. "A byte-per-pixel screen is just what you want for 3D work," said Fontana's Ian Oliver. "It makes things so easy. We took a look at the new VGA graphics boards for the IBM PC because that's got a byte-per-pixel mode, but it wasn't any use: you could only have one screen, and you need two for game programming. Otherwise there'd be a VGA version of Commander." Oliver also noted that the 16-bit version of Commander would be a VGA version of Commander.

David's author David Brown is a fan of byte-per-pixel screen layouts - "they're much easier to program for than bitplanes" - but the 3D's calculation speed also caught his attention. "Three thousand vertices every refresh (1 refresh = 1/60th of a second) is quite impressive. You'd be very hard put to get that kind of performance out of an Archimedes - but then that's not really the bottomline. The big tests in said 3D are scattering databases of shapes and putting polygons on-screen."

SPECIFICATIONS

MACHINE	TYPICAL RES	COLOURS (ON-SCREEN)	COLOURS TOTAL	PRICE
ATARI ST	320 x 200	16	643	£399
AMIGA	320 x 200	32	4096	£399
ARCHIMEDES	320 x 256	256	4096	£300
FLARE	256 x 256	256	256	£200?

SCREEN STORY

The extraordinary graphics power of the Flare One stems from a whole series of related design features, but central to the whole thing is the layout of the screen in memory.

The 128K of video RAM is split into two 64K screen planes. The normal arrangement has the video chip displaying one of these (the front screen) while the other updates the other (the back screen). Once the back screen has been updated the two are switched over and the updating process starts again, continually looping so long as animation is required.

The machine has two screen modes, either 256 x 256 pixels in up to 256 colours (low res) or 640 x 256 pixels in up to 16 colours (high res). In low res, each byte of screen memory gives the colour of one pixel. In high res things are a bit more complicated, with each half (or higher) of a screen byte representing one pixel. The normal games mode would be 16-bit, because it maps byte-per-pixel colour layout makes graphic manipulation very easy indeed.

In low res, the byte values represent the physical colour of pixels, not the palette values. That is, you decide what colour a shape is going to be when you actually draw it. This isn't a statement of the obvious: most modern video use palette colours, which you can change at any time. (For example, on an Amiga you can draw a bit to green, and draw a line in colour *A*. The colour gives you a green line, if you use set colour *A* to fill the line you draw nearby turns red - at least anything else you've drawn in colour *A*.)

The Flare One doesn't have a palette as such. If you draw a line in green, the only way to turn it red is to completely redraw it. In practice it's very easy to simulate palette changes using the other bit, so if you're used to the AmigaOS way of doing things it'll strike you as odd that you should have to. Mind you,

if you're used to the AmigaOS way of doing things you'll find the Flare One pretty odd right the way through.

EXPLAINED, OR FURTHER THE LACK OF THEM

The 256-pixel-per-line layout of the Flare's low-res screen is in total contrast to the biplane system used by the ST and Amiga, and gives the machine a distinctive edge over them.

A typical ST or Amiga game screen is made up of four separate 'biplanes'. Each byte of a biplane corresponds to a row-of-eight pixels on screen, giving a small amount of information about each of them. The video chip has to combine this information with similar data from bytes in the other three biplanes to find out what colour each of those pixels actually is.

In other words, if you want to set the colour of one pixel you'll have to alter four different bytes of screen memory, one in each of the biplanes, which means you'll have to make the alterations carefully, so as not to disturb the extra information in each byte and so accidentally change the colour of neighbouring pixels in the same row of eight.

This careful alteration is a fiddly process (rather like the old-fashioned 'handing matrix' technique used in movie special effects). In practice you're going to do these separate operations on each byte: you take the information already in the byte, combine it with a 'mask' byte to clear out the data you want to alter, combine the result of that with a 'blend' byte to fill the gap made by the mask, and then write the finished pixel back into memory.

Can't do that? That's three read operations and one write operation for each byte, and you've got to alter four bytes in all. A decent games programmer can do it or he needs to for the 'mask' and 'blend' bytes



The Flare screen is made up of four-grained images read from memory. Each bit is too fast to photograph.



Even without a palette in the conventional sense, colour changes like this are easy and quick thanks to the Flare.

easily enough, but it still takes eight memory accesses and another eight internal processor operations to change one pixel. The Flare One can do the whole thing with one single write operation, no reads and no internal messing-around. No wonder it's so quick!

The biplane layout handles it a lot better when you're altering several adjacent pixels in large, during software sprite operations for example, but the

BENCHMARKS

MACHINE	CLEAR	VECTOR LINE	FILL LINE	SPRITE
ATARI ST	180	1.3	58	22
AMIGA	120	4	48	57
ARCHIMEDES	550	30	250	66
FLARE	60	60	50	30

The four sets of performance figures, CLEAR, VECTOR LINE, FILL LINE and SPRITE are rough estimates of the four machines' real screen-drawing power, measured in thousands of pixels per frame, (1 frame of 60 is a second) - so the higher the number, the better the machine. CLEAR is the fastest filling of a large area, an important ability for 3D games which need to clear a screen area before drawing shapes onto it. VECTOR LINE is line-drawing between arbitrary points as used in wire-frame graphics games. FILL LINE involves drawing horizontal lines of the kind used to fill a large polygon in a solid 3D game, involving an line length of about 80 pixels. SPRITE involves putting an arbitrary shape on screen, but without clearing the background first. Some of the figures are based on manufacturer's estimates we haven't been able to verify. Also the Amiga and most particularly Archimedes figures could suffer badly from screen chip access. Many Amiga games only use 16 colours at once, giving them a performance very similar to their ST equivalents.

Any chip that can handle a 3000-vertex 3D world, coordinate-invariant 30 times a second, can reasonably claim to be powerful. Well, that's what Flare reckons the DSP (digital signal processor) chip in their micro can handle. So how come it's so fast?

It's not just a question of how fast the DSP runs at 68K4 - but it, it can perform 4 million (that's 4,000,000) individual operations per second - whereas the ST's 68000 runs at 6MHz. Despite this the DSP is far and away the faster of the two chips, thanks to advances made in chip design since the 68000's day.

The DSP is a reduced instruction set chip (RISC) for short. This means that, like the Acorn Risc processor used in the Archimedes, it can only perform a small number of different instructions. Also that a complex chip like the 68000 can do with one instruction might take the DSP two or three - but those two or three still take less time than the 68000's one, usually half

Flare's no slouch at these either as the benchmarks show. Bear in mind that a Flare One pixel can be any one of 256 colours as opposed to 16 for the ST or 32 for the things (depending on pixel modes), and its performance looks like a remarkable testimonial to Fringe's perusal way of doing things.

THAT BATTERY

The battery's speed at conventional operations may be impressive, but that isn't all it can do if the screen isn't up properly, the handy little chip can also perform custom animation and depth-testing tasks automatically.

This makes sports-based 2D games very easy to write, and could also come in handy to displays with overlapping windows. These facilities work by storing depth or alpha-background indicators in each pixel's screen memory bits, and this necessarily cuts down the range of colours available. You'll still always have 64 colours available if you're, however, so this is unlikely to cause games authors a problem.

Another technique that uses screen colour information is mask mixing. Many machines allow you to split the screen into 256x256 different modes, but Flare has really pushed things to the limit. You can set each byte of the Flare One's screen memory to be either one bit or two high-res pixels, so this provides access to a full-colour background (or vice versa) can be set just about any shape you want. This is very useful for text messages, movement paths and also detailed objects. What's more, you can use the high-low res indicator as a depth indicator too, nearly protecting text boxes from graphics operations or whatever.

CUSTOM SILICON

The Flare One's custom chips are remarkable not only because they're so ambitious - made to measure ASIC processors are rare things indeed - but because of the astonishing budget they were produced on. Until recently, prototype custom chips have been produced by photographic methods at an initial cost of around £50,000 per design. New techniques meant that Cambridge

firm Gates could knock them out at a tenth of the price by using an E-beam - an electron gun, that is - to cut the pattern directly into the silicon.

Flare's creative use of custom silicon caught the attention of the Department of Trade and Industry, who've made a 15 minute film about the company. The DTI are trying to encourage more manufacturers to use custom silicon as a way of increasing efficiency and are keen on the Flare One mostly because it's such a clear example, both financially and technically, of the technique's advantages.



It's official: the Flare people themselves are legends!

● NEXT BIG THING

If the Flare One isn't the success it's shaping up to be, it wouldn't be the first time a potentially earth-shattering micro fell by the wayside. The history of microcomputing is littered with machines that were well put together, great value for money or years ahead of their time but still never quite made it in - or even to - the marketplace.

Computer fans with longest memories may remember the Memotech MTX series, a set of sturdy IBM-based colour computers well liked by programmers but sadly unsupported on the games side of things. Related attempts to give the machines Spectrum compatibility failed to save them from commercial failure and abandonment to their owner's attic.

Another would-be blockbuster micro went through such unglorious names as Samart, DPC (pursued to stand for Damp/Proof/Corse) and Elm before eventually being launched under the name of its creators, Enterprise. Generally known as the Flare, the machine had a

built-in joystick and almost no games software; terrific graphics and only a poor little 28K to drive them; and a fantastically comprehensive Basic that ran at a snail's pace. The console design's pleasingly rounded edges made the Flare look like an artist's palette without a hole in it, or possibly a chocolate micro that had been left in the sun too long. There must be a warehouse full of the things somewhere.

Possibly the greatest of the failed contenders, the GL, came from Sinclair Research's very own Uncle Olive. Its central processor was the 68008, the runt of the 68000 litter, which put the GL at least a year ahead of its time (1984). While the press haggled over whether the 68008 was a 32-bit chip as Sinclair claimed, or in fact just an 8-bit chip with ideas above its station - history favours the latter point of view - pundits tended to ignore the machine's real problem, namely that the GL's microdrive system was wholly inadequate for serious use and too expensive for mass game-distribution.

Needless to say, the GL got previous title games support despite being the most powerful home machine of its day. ●

POWER CHIP



Even at its lowest spin rate, this cube's rotating too fast for the camera to catch. The speed is shown in the follow, but the perspective calculations are all the DSP's work.

low. The typical 68000 instruction takes 4, 8 or 12 cycles while almost all DSP instructions execute in a single cycle.

Even where the DSP has to break to one cycle one-instruction stints, there's very little loss of power. Multiplication is always a slow business (as all chips are concerned), and the DSP's mul-



tip takes up a whopping 7 cycles (compared to a typical 50 or 60 cycles on a 68000) but that's nothing near as bad as it sounds. The multiplication side of the DSP is completely separate from the rest of its circuits, so your DSP program can carry on with other tasks until the result is ready. Clever stuff!

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WHO'S BAD!?

GAMES FOR PROGRAMMERS

We depend on the independent programmers of this country to come up with technically impressive, manically playable games – titles like *Virus*, *Lords of Midnight* – but who do they depend on? What sort of games will these software mavericks be loading up tonight after a hard day's work on their latest blockbusters? What do they look for in other people's games, and who do they rely on to deliver it?

Where
amused
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making
errors
of wild
cats.



EFFING ANALYTICAL

G There are two reasons why a programmer might be interested in someone else's code file. The first and most obvious is the same one everybody has been looking at a game — the sheer enjoyment of playing — but the second is peculiar to people who work with machine code to a living: the *technique*, the practice of judging a game by the technical skill that went into writing it.

Analysts are interested in the speed of scrolling, sprite movement or 3D scene manipulation. They're bawling questions like "Could I have written that?" Analysts love to reverse-engineer things, when they see a really original game technique, they'll draw with pencil and paper all they've figured out how it works. They are forced people to impress. Games usually manage this tricky feat by doing something your mind isn't suited to — sideways scrolling on the ST or Spectrum, or split 50-on or 604 perhaps — but the occasional floppy like *Flight Log* or *Comet Command* will knock everyone's socks off by the sheer scale of its animation.

It's a surprisingly large number of programmers who analyze. There are some good reasons for this. There's probably no element of competition in their worksheds — programmers writing code can only judge their own skill or the job by looking at other people's latest games — and also a natural professional curiosity, but there's another side to it as well. Most programmers are either reluctant to spend their spare time playing computer games, or simply don't have any spare time in the first place. If you only look at a game for five or ten minutes you won't see much of its gameplay — unless it's very simple fare indeed, but that's — but you'll get a good idea of the technical skill involved in writing it. In other words, analysis may well be all that a lot of programmers have time for.

JON RITMAN

Since his games debut with the impressively named *Manix* States, Jon has written some pretty hot stuff: he programmed *Midnighter*, *Anteus*, *Dead on*, *Black and Midnight II* for *Downs*. Jon's currently working on a beautiful run-up game for *SARE*, the arcade card Nintendo cartridge company run by Nintendo founder Tim and Chris Stamp. The game will run on *SARE*'s own dedicated coin-op hardware — "The actual board uses a zoned up 580, it's a Hitachi model which has built-in multiply instructions and stuff" — but Jon plans to convert it down to the home market as an all-ports title.

I don't really play a lot of games. I don't like wheel shoot-'em-ups, and they were so common for 90% of the stuff released these days. I read most of the magazine's party thoroughly to the reviews, but I won't buy things unless they look original, big game collections tend to 2D titles or so, but most of them are pretty old.

The limited *Comet Command* was a lovely idea, but I didn't like the way it was so very



Flight Log by Williams, a game obtained by almost every one we spoke to. "When I saw that I just thought 'Wow the hell are they doing that?'" (Chris Manning)

to get demonstrated. I prefer something really straightforward like *Starblaster* any."

The played all at Williams' neat apartment. *Comet Command* — it sounds great but I haven't got on ST, as I've not seen it yet. I think *Anteus* are very, very complex people.

The graphics techniques for generating the landscape in *Comet* (*Mike Singleton*), those were very clever indeed. I never really got to grips with the game itself though. Its strategy rolls and that kind of thing takes a lot of time to get into. I prefer games which keep things relatively simple. I want it to be obvious what you've got to do. I just saw *Flight Log* (Williams the day I handed the limited *Midnighter* over, and I just went 'Wow I really want to write games like that.' I went away with my head full of ideas for *Flight Log* style games.



DAVID BRADEN

Author with his feet off the occasionally successful *Elite*, David's more recent claims to fame was the stunning *Archon* game. David and his ST conversion Mike Lee Screen Test for review's.

He's currently working on *Angels* *Wings*, but once that's out of the way it'll be back to the somewhat task of writing an *Elite* sequel. Don't expect to see that one that year!

I try not to play computer games too much. It's in fact of a computer screen programming all day, so in my spare time I like to get away from it, do things out of doors or whatever. It's not that I don't enjoy games, and it's certainly not that being a programmer spoils them for me: it can be very interesting seeing whether people know those things properly or not. Like *Comet Command* for instance: that does look very good. Substantively it also looks like you'd need to play it a lot to do a justice — and as I say, that's something I try not to do.

STEVE BAK

Steve has firmly established himself in the ST and Amiga world with games like *Goldrunner*, *Knave*, *Star II* and *Return to Genesis*. He's now reviewing his latest hit, *Labyrinth*: to



Comet Command, by Williams — everyone says it's great! Jon (Williams) had some of the things I play if people've only had time for a quick 15 second... (Mike Singleton)

run-on IBM's ST-based coin-op system, before he starts on the ST conversion of Logosoft's forthcoming Amiga title *Star Jet*. Future projects include an Amiga arcade adventure for Microcad based on the cult home/comedy video *Flight Night*.

I play mainly arcade games. I've never really seen a home computer game to measure up to the arcade. I really got into the concept of *Space* a while back, and actually had a machine of home. Once I managed to completely finish it without losing a life the Orion version was very disappointing as a comparison, but then what can you expect? The hardware just isn't the same league.

Of those home games that I have enjoyed, I'd say that *Starblaster* was my favourite. The limited was very good too. I was playing the Amiga version recently, but I missed up playing it for more than I needed to, and got to somewhere around score 7000. When I play a home game, it's just the gameplay that I'm interested in. I couldn't now live about the technical skill that went into it so long as the gameplay's right. I still play *Jeopardy* on the C64 and both intensely and often. Did the game feel a great?

When I wrote *Archon*, *Knave* (*Star II* and *Return to Genesis*), I did them all as challenges really. People said that it couldn't be done — the best scrolling in *Goldrunner*, the large spaces in *Star II* or the horizontal scrolling in *Return to Genesis* — so I set out to prove them wrong. I think gameplay is more important though, and I'm concentrating on that from now on. *Archon* was a simple vertical shooter and I finished the technical side of it about six weeks after the PCW show last year, but it's only just been released. I needed the time in between to get the game maps and ultimately finish the way I wanted them.



STEVE TURNER

Steve's notched up a tall old number of software hits over the years — *Magnetics* and *Revenant* are two of the more recent games — so one to hit the scene of gameplay — and he's not resting on his laurels either. Right now he's busy converting Andrew Brody's classic



The Settlers by Geoff Crammond shows that old-timey bridge construction can get looked after in new playthings. Is Jim Brown found in *Demolition Derby*, and Mike Singleton? In *Street II*. It was a beautiful piece of inspiration. I actually went out and bought a copy!

Can life intensify in the Spectrum, both means being clear out some time in the Autumn.

I don't often find the time to play games - but plenty of any rate - but I do enjoy them. I usually go for good old-fashioned shoot-em-ups. I like the feeling of power you get from them, especially progressive shoot-em-ups like *Satan* or that sort of thing. In the middle, my favourite probably still *Star Wars*. I love the impression of speed you get about it.

I don't really think about the technical side of games I'm playing. If there are sluggish periods I respond to something like that, then I notice it. Otherwise, I want speed programming doesn't necessarily stand out.

I like games I can get into quickly. The one thing, maybe usually only I have time for. I don't usually go by whether - one game can be so different from another - but I do look forward to seeing *Roll Coaster* out.



RAFF GECCO

Just last week a couple of friends with the Mirage, like *Apocalypse*, but that better known to Newcomer games like *Anders* and *Cyberhood*. A dedicated 280-bit, but currently working on a Spectrum, while called *Storm Lord*, its early days yet, but Brown hopes to have the 64-bit version in time for Xmas.

I don't really enjoy home games that much. It's easier to go into the arcade and play something like *Operation Wolf* or *STType*. What impresses me on a more game is technical advancement. Like the sideways scrolling in the Spectrum version of *Zynapse* (Cassini Brown), that was technically excellent. Getting scrolling like that without hardware support is very difficult indeed.

CHRIS HINSLEY

Chris has been writing games since the dawn of the industry - his last life was in *Centipede* done for the C64 - and has a lot of programming credits to his name. You best know us as the first machine to create abstracts like *Thyriem* or *Nolly* and *Psy-*

mania, but now he's turned his attention to the ST and Amiga. His work here includes *3D Xentia*, *Advanced Art Studio* and the award-winning *Realistic Chess* is currently working on *China*, a shooting game for the ST and Amiga which will probably be published by Newcom later this year.

I don't normally buy home games, because I can't really find any lasting interest in them. After ten minutes of play I start picking holes in a game, finding fault with it technically. I was quite impressed by the scrolling in *Godzinger* (Steve Katz) when it came out - it didn't have scrolls to it as a game though, just flying around and feeling - but nothing really amazed me since *Flight 36*. When I saw that I just thought 'how the hell are they doing that?' and that's the only game that ever did that. By and large, I'd rather go and play a few arcade. The hardware isn't so much better these days. Take something like *STType* it was just a straightforward scrolling game really, but boy did it have some additive qualities.



JOHN PHILLIPS

John's Newcom debut, *Impossible*, brought a brand new perspective to bouncing ball games and proved to be tremendously competitive. He followed the up with the ACE entry *Mahal* which contained well-judged gameplay with remarkable precision and technical skill. His new release finished the ST version of *Steel* like, a driving and shooting game for Newcom - which is due out in the Autumn.

I like Paul Wicker stuff a lot - *Miscreancy*, *Section 8* and so on - also a few of the old *Ultimate* games as well. When I have a go on arcade-style games I don't look at it technically, just play it.

I do like games to be complete within themselves, but a lot of the stuff you see these days seems to have something missing. *Roll Coaster* stuff isn't like that, even where the games are fairly abstract, they still fit together well.

REALTIME

Realtime produced *3D Realistic*, *3D Realistic II* and the final incarnation of *StreetRacer*, before heading into full partnership with the old-time progressive *Comet* Command. They're now looking at 3-bit, PC and Amiga versions of *CC*. The next project for *Realtime* will again use 3D - it's a 3D ball that *Realtime* powered and it's the really successful

thing - but the game will only be completed in 3-6 months, and the emphasis will be on later development as opposed to *Comet*-compatible gameplay.

In the weeks I used to play *Reflections* a lot, and I quite liked *Storm* too. As for some games I like *Am Striker* stuff, and I really get into *Reflections* Guide to the Galaxy (Steve Hensley and Douglas Adams) too - though I never could get past the swimming door I think people get the impression that because we produce all the best 3D stuff, write a lot of abstracts about other people's games - but that's not us. We like lots of other programmed stuff, it doesn't matter what sort of game it is, so long as they're good. The thing everyone's been playing could have recently in *Danger*, *Master* (Andy Boyd), *Design* (Bill & Mike Newbert) - we really have put in some time on that too.



MIKE SINGLETON

Mike coded the games world with his land-scrapped *Backroads*, *Lord of Midnight* and its sequel *Exoticists*, *Sevens*, since which he's also brought us *Whisk*.

Steve and Bruce at the time and he has shown them are currently wrapping up the old 3D shoot-em-up *Whisking* to be followed by various projects as yet still under wraps.

To be quite frank, I don't play many computer games. I think this is endemic among programmers. They're spending all day working in front of a screen and not wanting to do that after hours too - I don't even watch much telly, never mind playing games - but really it's just a bad habit.

There are some games that have impressed me. The *Demolition Derby*, I actually went out and bought a copy of the game, and that's a lot. It was the graphics that really struck me - though they were excellent - but that's the way the programming was engineered to fit in with them. It was a beautiful piece of inspiration, and turned the limitations of its graphics system into virtue - which is the mark of a really good game. Recently, *Comet Command* has impressed me too, though I've only had the time to play a couple of hours.

THE WINNER

So who comes out on top? Among the odds *Ultimate*, *Flight 36* all right, experts, with *Geoff Crammond's Settlers* and *Chris Gray's Realistic* also having strong favour. The current favourite on the other hand must be *Realtime's Comet Command* - though hardly anyone was able to get actually found the time to play it properly!

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rumbling towards its destiny.



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Powerplay is available for Amiga version only. Other computers may be able to run Amiga software on some occasions.

SCREEN TEST

Everyone is catching the fever this month, because *Virus* is spreading like wildfire. You saw it first in the pages of *ACE* and now the whole software industry is buzzing with excitement about David Braben's blockbuster game. So prepare yourself for the definitive review, from the people who you can trust.

8-bit owners will have just as much fun with *Dark Side*, the sequel to *Driller*, that uses the Framescape programming system. It too is 800 rated - a superb double for programmers Incentive.

Also bursting out of the pages are an exclusive review of Mike Singleton's latest game *Whirligig*, the computer game based on Mickey Mouse and a hot update on the Amiga version of *Sentinel*.



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THE RATINGS

HOW they're calculated...

If you buy a game, how much enjoyment will you get out of it, and for how long? Just check out our revolutionary PC (Predicted Interest Curve) for the full story. Brilliant arcade games start high on the curve, and then steadily fall off as you lose interest, potential juvenile games may rise the rest of the curve for months - but the interest you receive from them's gone tumbling down; complex strategy games may start you off low - but climb up the scale as you begin to appreciate the scope of the gameplay. And as for the subject - they start low, stay low, and have nowhere to go but down, then, down.

Once you've seen how long the game can hold your attention, all you need to glance at is the renowned ACE RATED. This is calculated according to the area under the PC. The bigger it is, the better the game. Add to that our deflation ratings for IQ Factor (tell it give your brain cells a work-out!) and Fun Factor - a measure of instant appeal and exhilaration as you dive into the game. And, of course, we rate the Graphics and Audio effects too...for EVERY machine the game's available on.

WHY you can rely on them...

The ACE rating team covers a broad spectrum of computer entertainment talent. Andy Wilson - ACE's resident technical wizard - is at hand with a smart bomb as he is with his occasional. Andy Smith wouldn't know hexadecimal from a hole in the ground, but can wipe the floor with any number of games. Bob White (ex-*Personal Computer Games*, *Crash* and *Amstrad Action*) has played more computer games than any other person ought to. Add Steve Cook (ex-*PCG* and former columnist for magazines ranging from *Crash* to *Your Sinclair*) and Peter Connor (ex-*Amstrad Action*, *PCG*, and *Your Computer* reviewer) and you've got age and experience as well as youthful enthusiasm.

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

UPDATES

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SPECTRUM

- 67 CHARLIE CHARLIE US Gold



The map screen (center view) set the scene and it's got a fuel and ammo display. It could also be counting with time.



It is, Firebird alone fights like this, and with no staff tanks left it looks like your pass is coast.



The first Perfect space starts before you hit home and with fuel. You're also warned you're low on energy at the StarGate sequence.

WHIRLIGIG

FIREBIRD set things spinning

SOME people don't know the meaning of the word "rotation." Mission StarGate and the rest of the Mission programming team certainly don't. Their latest strategy has some 4 BILLION locations (sectors), that's 4,000,000,000. Each of these sectors is different and collectively they're known as Super space. Five of the sectors are known as Perfect space, and it's these five sectors that the game revolves around.

The game opens with a map display of sector zero. Icons on the map represent various objects, including fuel, chaff and waste dumps. Also displayed is an icon representing StarGate 1. The StarGates are the doorways to the other sectors and the numbers tell you exactly which sector they lead to. Small blue dots on the map repre-

sent possible positions of hostile objects. Next to the map is a list of the StarGates in that sector and icons representing fuel etc that can be found in these particular sectors.

So, sector zero opens. Press the left mouse button at the prompt and you're transported to the sector. The game view changes completely now. You're taking off your ship in the sector of the screen. It's not a solid 3D, or flat 2D, would be an illusion. Lightwave 3D is the term you need to describe how all the objects are drawn and shaded, the lightsource being fixed as your ship level all the other objects come in, and out of shadow as it beats and baws, while you attempt to guide it around the wrap-around sector with the mouse.

You will have already decided how you

going to tackle the sector before you actually get there, but whether you're going to re-arrange it or not is decided before you head through a StarGate. It's worth remembering that the link between the StarGate and sector are mathematically coded (e.g. prime number sectors always have a StarGate that will lead back to sector 1).

Once you're in a sector it's time to get about finding your target. A pop-up control panel contains a sector which you can use to guide your ship around the sector. Being the control panel is low when things are quiet, but once you start moving under the gunnery it's a fast pointer-energy indicator or a warning every lighter, that it restricts your view and makes your immediate task of surviving slightly more difficult. The control panel's your only way of checking fuel and ammo levels so you have to take it seriously. One thing it doesn't show on your



It's a sector containing fuel and waste dumps. It's a shame we can't show you the superb animation.



Here's a view from approximately the same position but this time you've got your control panel on show. Notice how it obscures your view.

RELEASE BOX

ATARI ST	€19.999	COMPTON
AMIGA	€19.999	AMANET
SPIC	€17.999, €19.999	AMANET
MSX	€9.999, €14.999	AMANET
DAYN	€9.999, €12.999	AMANET

ATARI ST VERSION

The graphics really are top notch, being both smooth and vibrant. The main's goal for you is to run 4 of 4 you wish. The mouse-controlled to move your ship around is highly fun to play with but gets easier as you progress. All in all, although a simple game, it's got plenty of action but it'll get you thinking as to why it's just the usual run & through various waters. After all, the ship you can't change on the ship, but it's very hard to find (and it's a pretty big).

GRAPHICS **B** IQ FACTOR **B**
 AUDIO **B** FUN FACTOR **B**

ACE RATING 8/8

control panel looks in the position of the controls - remaining as fixed. The fixed control buttons aren't too much trouble to deal with once you've found them, but once all one of your best-looking missions and watch the explosion. If the enemy get a shot in the through, you'd better be ready to hit the right mouse button to counter the attack by releasing a short bomb. A word of warning is needed here, your missiles are best-looking. Look at a missile with an enemy in stage and your mouse button to home in on your own exhaust.

Dealing with the remaining enemies including Bomber class fighters, Nightshade class fighters and Archer class fighters is not as easy. These fighters vary in viciousness and can be tough to destroy - especially in the high number sectors when you can be fighting more than one ship at once.

If the idea of finding three separate sectors during 4 billion seems like too big a task, don't worry. There's still which sectors are the Perfect space ones, all you have to do is get them in one game. And watching your way through the water doesn't take you half as long as you might imagine.

Although an impressive game and even the novelty of the stunning graphics has worn off, it's not long before you realize just how playable it is too.

● Andy Smith

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



Get ready for the ACE Best category but it's still worth a look.



Exploiting your way through the water. There's a multitude of class fighters in your path.

They're tough to shake off... and that missile might not be enough to take them.



It isn't as hard as you think it is to get rid. But if you can make it through the Bomber you'll be safe.



Final Words & Everything in the movie you could through the Bomber before the screen ends, so in the end it's a win.





1 The enter the arena screen



2 Looking on the opponent you get a close-up of the arena too



3 Looking forward gets you a better view of the arena you're in the arena. What can that image be for?

DARK SIDE

INCENTIVE scheming in 3D

ULTIMATE With the best software houses to come up with a programming technique that looks the games world by stars. Now incentive you creating a more subtle with their Perspective system. It has made its appearance in Dukes, and is



This is the arena you get shown into. It's not behind, but it's a bit of a surprise - but how can you get to get out again?

now used for the sequel - which looks set to be an even more popular success.

The game is set 300 years after Duke and continues the battle between the Duke and the Death. Your task is to destroy an energy grid which is powering up Dukes' One - a secondary device stored at your planet.

If you're used Duke then you'll immediately recognise the style and distinctive Perspective system. It creates a 3-dimensional world which you can walk and fly into, over and under. This feature is considerably enhanced by being able to fly right from the start with the aid of a jetpack. However, there isn't much fuel - so no loitering.

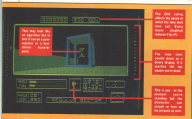
The view you're given is very versatile. You can look through a 90 degree arc up

and down, and also tilt the view. The zoomed-in capability is greatly enhanced by the jetpack - which can go straight up and down - and the ability to avoid and avoid under things.

Interaction with the stippled landscape is rendered in one of two ways: either you can shoot things with your laser or walk into them. The latter can be a little dangerous because every time you walk into something you should it deplete your initial suit's shield supply. Both shield and fuel levels can be increased by walking into the right object.

Once you're familiar with the environment and you equipped, you can get down to the task at hand. It's more of a 3D puzzle game than Duke, although the puzzle elements is still strong. Destroying the

915
ACE RATED



RELEASE BOX		
AMG	£199, £149.95	£119.95
SPAC	£199, £149.95	£119.95
CAV150	£199, £149.95	£119.95
ST and Amiga versions under development		



This is the interior of the arena and there's one crystal in place. What if the jet will move in a new location.



4 As you turn to the right a building comes into view. Let's investigate.



5 Approaching the building reveals a trick - wonder what happens when you shoot it?



6 Back on the ground you shoot the blocks and a few appear. The rest are hidden...

energy get a steady a matter of exploration and mapping, with more and more puzzles introduced as you get deeper into the game.

The energy grid is a chain of towers linked by cables that run along the ground. The lower top holes to be shot to disable them. However, if two other working towers are linked to it the damaged tower will regenerate automatically. This is the crux of the game - finding the rest of a chain of towers and wiping them all out. The real mode seen by the fact that some towers are linked by connected to up to five others.

It's easy to find a low tower early on that isn't complicated, cross-crossing chains. This is important because the time limit depends on the number of towers spending the more towers, the later time runs out.

Naturally things aren't as easy as that because there are plenty of obstacles and puzzles to test your skills. The scripted camera called Phoenix which shoots when you get too close. They don't all behave the same though - watch out for supporting ones and various ways of getting rid of them.

The puzzles mostly consist of working out ways to get inside buildings, and how to switch devices on and off. Rapid travel can be achieved using powerports, which teleport you from an spot to another. The telepod also teleports you, but to use it you have to find two crystals. Each crystal will take the telepod to a different place, and all four are needed to bring about a final victory. The first is a way to find - you'll encounter it by

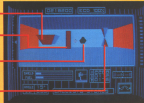
7

A powerport that transports you to another location.

Walking into this causes explosives to go off.

Walking into this symbol on the wall reactivates the clock.

If you shoot the top or bottom of this chamber it can cause blocks to fall in one area.



accident - but the other three are altogether much harder to get.

As in Diner, you have to watch out for the unexpected around every corner. There's a tunnel network which can get you into otherwise hard to get at locations. It's also used when getting out of the prison, and that the automatic defenses can't see you into. You've

also got to watch out for traps drops when the jet-pack isn't on, and the killer machine that appears above you and start blasting away at you slowly.

There's a lot more urgency about the action than in the more subtle Diner. The time limit is a tough one and you've got to move fast early on if you're going to beat it. Having said that, it is easy to get into because although the first few games will end quickly, you'll still be finding out lots of interesting things in that time.

It's more absorbing than Diner, but probably easier to solve as well. You'll be completely entranced by it until it's solved but after that there's nothing to come back to. At the indicated price that's even better value than the original. It looks like Phantasy is going to be around for a lot more games.

■ 58 Plus



8 STEVE - really superb graphics on this version.

SPECTRUM VERSION

To make the maximum use of the Spectrum, play on a monitor which must not have too

GRAPHICS 5 IQ FACTOR 3
AGEED 2 PGM FACTOR 5

AGE RATING 904



904 - not quite finished yet, but we'll update it when it is.

AMSTRAD VERSION

The graphics are a feature top standard is better, excellent on being made if copying, strategy and more. However, not getting lost, but will be made into one if it more of a no wonder you. It's a good job that many hard it copies are enough picture and playing software.

GRAPHICS 5 IQ FACTOR 7
AGEED 3 PGM FACTOR 5

AGE RATING 915



So the fairly standard will you finish it, but also that it has nothing new in it.

SKATE CRAZY

GREMLIN get their skates on

STREET road takes its uptight-based best-ounce course. Forget BMX and skateboarder—skateboards are back.

The game is split into two sections: a one-part challenge and a championship course. In the one part you must level several courses of gullies, large and obstacles, performing stunts on the way. The championship is a right-to-left scrolling course where you have to jump over and duck under obstacles, trying to reach the end.

In the one part two judges track you as speed, complexity and variety of stunts—tricks, knocking to coin over, collecting bonuses and slaying badguys. You have

to complete the course as fast as possible, still doing lots of tricks on the way. Obstacles, dodging and repeating stunts too often can actually lose you points.

On the scrolling championship course you have to skate along by wrapping on

RELEASE BOX

GRAPHICS	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5
SOUND	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5
GAME	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5

CGA VERSION

Incredibly difficult and frustrating course, particularly in the one part, where getting a winning score is a tight proposition, except in terms of a bonus round where you collect five. The course is the most fun-challenging one we've selected for this graphic and sound survey, but the gameplay itself is a real struggle.

GRAPHICS	7	10	FACTOR	3
SOUND	7	10	FACTOR	3
ACE RATING				613

SPECTRUM VERSION

More trouble but still easy. There's a strong weight to the championship course, and its requirements make it the one part. The games end point on some of the last stages, however there's some nice extras for its doing and doing.

GRAPHICS	5	10	FACTOR	3
SOUND	3	10	FACTOR	3
ACE RATING				505



Get in gear to the one side with obstacles, peaked top and tight obstacles on the bottom.

the 140 jumping or dodging under obstacles. Along the way you can collect obstacles that are worth bonus points. Four different courses provide many hazards to knock you down, and some will cause you to instantly lose a life if you don't negotiate them correctly.

Still really hard to perform to get anywhere in the one part version. The championship courses are easier, but still very difficult to complete. Its objective is its own way, but ensuring too because it's so tough.

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



Graphs are needed to determine the forecasting effect of versions, but their rates do not represent a challenge to target.

ALIEN SYNDROME

ACE's mutant hordes

SWARMS of mutant appear to be green and purple maggots are the first thing to greet you in this arcade conversion from ACE (the latter being, not the magazine). And you're going to be seeing a lot of those in this one of two-player game as you try to remove your trapped buddies and escape from the complex, puzzle.

If it those hordes of tedious mutants weren't enough, you're up against a minute time limit too. The exit door the level won't open until you've got enough rescued buddies under your belt, and if you don't get there in time...bad! — its game over.

At last, though, the time limit is going to be the least of your problems as those mutant creatures are horribly numerous, horribly fast and just...horrible. Fortunately for you, there are various retro weapons to just get from bugs dotted around the complex — and you'll need 'em.

Successfully escape from the complex and you'll face some of the best with a very top-notch and-of-level enemies, before setting off all over again in a new, tougher complex.

Is the gameplay sounds ever so slightly

ATARI ST VERSION

Really good, especially for its technical sound in why still good. The game is tough without being too difficult, since the soundtrack is truly an excellent and well-sounding in the game.

GRAPHICS	7	10	FACTOR	3
SOUND	3	10	FACTOR	3
ACE RATING				511

CGA VERSION

Looks slightly more without that possible that the ST version, but the sound's not very amazing. The one actually makes the strategy in the CGA. The game, early sound tracks a whole lot more than in the ST.

GRAPHICS	7	10	FACTOR	3
SOUND	5	10	FACTOR	3
ACE RATING				499

RELEASE BOX

GRAPHICS	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5
ATARI ST	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5
SPEC	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5
GAME	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5
AMIGA	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5



It's a new game to the edge of the screen you have to get to make it work, and there are some in the game that really make the game interesting to playing.

Follow by now, then don't set your heart on state-of-the-art graphics, either. The scrolling is still not great, and you have to get the too close to the edge of the screen to make a move. Basically, Alien Syndrome is different right from the start, and doesn't offer enough interest to make you nervous.

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



It's a new game to the edge of the screen you have to get to make it work, and there are some in the game that really make the game interesting to playing.

HEY Pluto, Hercules don't come much bigger than Mickey Mouse (it's about to celebrate his fifth birthday, and he looks thinking about his pension, but getting even more active in his old age).

True to his spunky-yet-wise image Mickey is playing the good guy, trying to save Disney castle from the evil wizard who has taken up residence. To meet the evil wizard he has to complete a lot of subgames and beat all the hordes of enemies sent to stop him. All this while armed only with a water pistol and bananas—what a mouse.

The tower in which the game takes place one scenario. You have a cutaway view through one side, revealing corridors from perspective by levels. On the far wall are doors leading to the various subgames, and from which the master comes swirling out.

The bad guys come in two sizes—little and large—and lots of different shapes. The little enemies are more plentiful and are no match for a medium sized mouse. Some types can be dispatched with the water pistol, others with the bananas. The big enemies split into two little ones when hit with the banana, so you'll have to go after them all too.

When the enemies are topped they leave behind an object; these can generally be used, but are sometimes lost for you. Mostly you'll be left with water bottles to refill your supply which is drained by the enemies. The other spells that appear will, for a short time anyway, slow the enemies down, speed Mickey up, give you a shield, allow



Open a Mickey mousehouse a early sign that he's with the banana and he will turn into two little mice.

MICKEY MOUSE

GREMLIN come to Disney's rescue

you to walk on this oil, freeze the enemies, and speed them. There's also a block ball which will slow you in the same way as falling through holes in the floor tiles.

Before being able to enter a room you'll need to pick up keys left behind by toppled enemies. Inside each room a one of the sub-games. The sub-game has to be successfully completed in order to unlock the doorway. Once all the doorways are unlocked you can end to the next tower.

Initially you'll encounter the mouse maze. Here you have to make your way round a

maze, avoiding the balcony beneath you feet. You have to throw bananas down to bust the bubbles and also banish the gremlins who float along the balcony with you.

The other two rooms are a bit weird because to see you've got to step a pipe dropping and in the other you've got to turn off taps. To stop the pipe leaking you have to bounce onto it, while opening the moose, and off the pipe at the top of the screen when the barrier goes down. The tap room has moving platforms which you have to keep around trying to turn the taps off. Once again the gremlins are doing their best to foil your efforts.

The tower gets higher and harder as you progress, but initially it's easy to complete a few rooms. It's got a simple addictiveness which will appeal to most players. For those of you who love games out of watching big-screen, staggered, redoubled size there's still plenty of action to cope with. The sub-games lack enough variety to make it interesting for long, but it's enjoyable while it lasts.

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RELEASE BOX		
SPRC	11990, 11990	OUT NOW
CM128	21990, 11990	REARDED
ATARI ST	11990	REARDED
AME	11990, 11990	REARDED

CGA PREVIEW

Just by itself, with some you find it weird, although to more and is needed from the game on. It's simple it's very simple, but already better the game is generally to build.

ATARI ST PREVIEW

The game has some interesting scenes. There's a lot of a model and human in. Disney again seems to be a big picture between games to a certain way.

SPECTRUM VERSION

The game on the big and slightly unusual. Many found has been very surprising. The game look great, but the sub-games don't look so good. The resolution may be a little bit more than that being the game is not to be afraid.

GRAPHICS: 8 IQ FACTOR: 3
 AUDIO: 5 FUN FACTOR: 8

AGE RATING: 7-8



It's a great way to make sure you pick up a key and a banana to make it.

series of both enemies trying to collect a banana, nuts and wood. A block ball has to stop you—you have three lives in each sub-game. There are also hearts for bonus lives, springs to give you reflective shots, a capsule which gives you immunity and skills which lose you a life. As you complete more of these rooms the number of both that appear on each screen increases.

The inverted game involves using your Mickey on a revolving battery. Below him bubbles emerge from nozzles and float



PANDORA

The fisticuffs fly with FIREBIRD

PANDORA lives its best life as a modernist of originality as you maneuver about a single-level, open-air, sprawling mansion, exploring nooks, interlocking terminals and evading hostile parties.

An effective combat system gives a non-linear view out of the strategy of both parties combined with color-dependent BOB and CHA and a clever blow-by-blow system. There are lots of different characters to interact with in a limited screen by employing objects, and the gameplay never ceases, because bosses, and puzzle solving, quite effectively.

To signal the controls, you have only one life and one fire if very really while getting used to the gameplay. Once accustomed, only invulnerability or superpowers will kill you off, giving you more time to concentrate on the puzzle. Unfortunately the bulk of



BT - While searching the body of the engineer, the location of the blueprint is the bottom right-hand box - can the BT give you access to the engine room?

these look merely good but rely entirely upon the old and new - does the Engineers ID get me through that door? Is it self? Does... so, it doesn't. Start again...

With a game like this, playability and presentation, one-give to make the difference between a package worth purchasing and one destined for the bin. Check the version boxes for the best result.

● Cheat Code

RELEASE BOX		
CD-ROM	12.95\$ (12.95\$)	REVIEWED
ATARI ST	12.95\$	REVIEWED
AMIGA	12.95\$	REVIEWED

ATARI ST VERSION

Graphically an excellent quality presentation with a resolution of 640x480. The graphics are the best in the atmosphere genre. If you're looking for a challenge, this game is a must.

GRAPHICS 5 IQ FACTOR 5
AUDIO 4 FUN FACTOR 5

ACE RATING 578

CGM VERSION

Real-time action with a simple, yet fun, presentation. The game is a must for the ST version. It's a great game to play in the evening. The graphics are the best in the atmosphere genre. If you're looking for a challenge, this game is a must.

GRAPHICS 4 IQ FACTOR 5
AUDIO 4 FUN FACTOR 4

ACE RATING 440

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



Prediction: High but not going to be the best overall. BT is the best.

THIS Grandt derivative presents a series of overhead-viewed rooms in a monochromatic, repetitive pseudo-3D style. The kind of mode if you want to micro-manage your character through the maze, blasting down prison doors, exploring blind alleys, unlocking gates, gathering bonus objects, and dodging battle with the urgency.

On each level you'll find that certain dungeons contain your buddies, who will

RELEASE BOX		
CD-ROM	12.95\$ (12.95\$)	REVIEWED
ATARI ST	12.95\$	REVIEWED
AMG	12.95\$ (12.95\$)	REVIEWED
SPIC	12.95\$ (12.95\$)	REVIEWED

ATARI ST VERSION		
Description: Not good, nothing		
GRAPHICS	4	IQ FACTOR 1
AUDIO	3	FUN FACTOR 3
ACE RATING 336		

CGM VERSION		
Not too subtle for all and being. The graph is somewhat generic but not worse than that.		
GRAPHICS	3	IQ FACTOR 1
AUDIO	3	FUN FACTOR 3
ACE RATING 368		

SHACKLED

US GOLD's kid glove

then follow you dutifully about the screen. Each buddy possesses a distinct bang style, which is adapted by the party until the discovery of the next stage.

The urgency and crude and unimpressive in their behaviour to taking them isn't very satisfying. Despite the appealing presentation, the game also has a lot of controls, but whether that would be to evidence once you actually find for the game is extremely doubtful.

● Cheat Code



BT and especially, this is the best of the version ever. The game is a must for the ST version. It's a great game to play in the evening. The graphics are the best in the atmosphere genre. If you're looking for a challenge, this game is a must.

SPECTRUM VERSION		
Not too subtle for all and being. The graph is somewhat generic but not worse than that.		
GRAPHICS	3	IQ FACTOR 1
AUDIO	1	FUN FACTOR 3
ACE RATING 387		

AMSTRAD VERSION		
Not too subtle for all and being. The graph is somewhat generic but not worse than that.		
GRAPHICS	4	IQ FACTOR 1
AUDIO	3	FUN FACTOR 3
ACE RATING 380		



The best thing is that with the game is a must.

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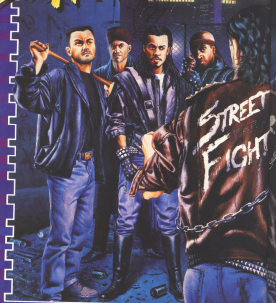
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STREET FIGHTER

... NO



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KILLDOZERS

LANKHOR go to war

MEGALOMANIAC Computers have the habit of popping up and threatening the world. Let's look at the bright side though - you can go after the one with a fast-changing, brain-blasting, mind-marching tank. The action takes place in a six-floor battle-

ground to dole out strategy firepower and add it to your tank's strategy reserves. Once on opposite a without weapons you can either take him straight out with destructors or, if he's got heavy armor, weaken him further with atomic painting missiles.

The vital defenses are armed with the same weapons and are frequently much more powerful. However they aren't very mobile or intelligent. As you go through the levels they get tougher but the biggest problem you'll have is one of mapping. This is

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or computer. Good idea is make up of 20, top-down rooms. On each floor you have to locate a captured engineer and make it to the exit before the time limit runs out. The time limit is triggered by picking up the engineer and reflects the speed of the tank.

All the start you get a choice of tanks with different settings for armor, firepower, hitpoints and speed. These vary from game to game but generally, the faster the tank the less powerful it is. Tanks are armed with three types of missile destructors, atomic and atomic painting. The destructors can be



That's where you get it to be for you and don't go on the better again because they'll be back for you.

KIDDIES are in need of help, and you're on your way. They're trapped inside houses. It is a waste hunting with things you can't do anything.

As you score up the screen it scrolls downward - obviously this is a very long run game. Initially you only weapons are you take, but later on you can pick up more dangerous weapons like bombs (Spectator) and laserbeams (Asteroid).

Mostly you'll encounter headshots, who look real before much like you. There are also bigger, more-looking characters who throw knives or bullets, and lots from any of these despite your energy. You have a more change and if you run into a mine or water - you'll crash in your ship's pond.

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AMSTRAD VERSION		
The picture on each level. The graphics is made for the Spectrum version because it's the best in speed and resolution.		
GRAPHICS	4	IQ FACTOR
AUDIO	2	FUN FACTOR
AGE RATING 500		

DESOLATOR

US GOLD crack mirrors

At the end of each level there is a busy screen where disembodied heads bounce around the screen. You've got to let all of them to a bunch of lines in the shape to move to the next level.



SPICING - Watch out for the head-dimensioned you shooting the center in all directions.

SPECTRUM VERSION		
It's so strong it's been in the top 100 best games of all time. A somewhat weak main story but the graphics are great.		
GRAPHICS	4	IQ FACTOR
AUDIO	3	FUN FACTOR
AGE RATING 500		

ATARI ST VERSION		
The picture on each level. The graphics is made for the Spectrum version because it's the best in speed and resolution.		
GRAPHICS	4	IQ FACTOR
AUDIO	3	FUN FACTOR
AGE RATING 500		

because there are no easy goals, which can be a bit of a problem.

The graphics is a really basic - always a few more things and nothing really - but the exploration is the only thing that adds variety. Of course for the money there's the construction set. This enables you to work out your own game arena. It will take a lot of work but certainly for the long term value.

Red Bull



The predicted interest curve. Interest level is a bit of a problem.

On the way along you can pick up items like money bags and energy. When you have a certain amount of money and you can use that to buy more items. Most important of all are the dollars. One item is good for buying and the other is good for selling. Other items on the way also come into play - things like the food guys for a time - and some will be a bit of a problem.

The game is very to get into, but work up being interesting because it's really impossible to stop clear of all the levels. Random elements like interesting levels, rolling terrain and such, just make life too busy.

Red Bull



The predicted interest curve. Interest level is a bit of a problem.

CORRUPTION



Atari ST screen shot.

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Before you've just caught up with a bomber - a tough test considering how fast it's moving - but the ship's not dropping this bomb across the landscape.



After it spins hard of course for three your perspective helps make the world's closer again - and shows you the path into the target.



Before as you fly to the right, a stress position as you face slowly the purple and yellow color scheme indicates that it's actually making further target than normal.



After you've pulled away from the plane surface is a white-colored the bomb, but you're kept the upper hand. This is focus of a landing vehicle before your death rate out.



Before you've found an other center (background), but the explosion of rocket right and the relative cost to your team a bomber's heading been in you, being as it goes.



After the bomber's an enemy view, but neither of its death rate eroded that color goes in the foreground. The focus a black area as your vision (top left) as you can see.

FROM LANDER TO VIRUS

At the risk of blowing our own trumpet, we'd like to remind you where you can find this one first. Remember our Gold Staff feature goes back to ACE issue 57. That article carried the first views of the finished Zark's printed algorithms. Remember the feature we did it the month after? Or the praise of the ST conversion - not even twice as late as that stage - back in ACE issue 57. Both of those were firsts too.

Even before any of this, we were onto the story. Check out the news pages of ACE's very first issue, if your collection goes back that far, and you'll find the original demo Lander page up in a story there - almost a year ago. It's an emotional experience to see a game this good right the only time from a press preview back before through from the Archimedes was when launched in a fully-fledged ST book/boxset with Amiga and Spectrum versions to follow, but there's just what we've done here in the ACE team.

If you want to know what's already happened, there are plenty of other magazines you can read if you want a vision of the future, there's only ACE.

VIRUS

Can FIREBIRD stop the rot?

PANIC and you're dead, they roll and you probably aren't hearing the clock have come to stop and time will over the planet, and you're the only thing to find help! But can you stop it, control or the thing simpler? Can you get there before they get you?

We talk, or long but the game everyone wanted and (almost) never made actually get a shot of last year has made it down to the local shelves. Does that is here. Amiga 5000 Archimedes where, under the name of Zark, it was the reaction of the Personal Computer World about. On the Amiga's demo of the game - that's only called Lander - went out with every machine sold, that stunning world was delivered in advance to Zark's publisher Superior Software. You'll find

to such level deal with the game as the other machines but then - on the ST at any rate - they really aren't going to need one.

Let's face it, this game is absolutely the only winner. It's got that rare combination of stunning in-the-visuals attraction, and a hell of a good playing challenge. Even before you play you'll be hooked by the sheer display of rolling land-scapes, swooping action and wondrous explosions. Just what'll you get in the pits and through, you'll be staggered!

It's hard to overstate just how exciting the game is, and how satisfying the minute one to see once you've mastered them. Being only mouse movements to do your forward-and-jump-on-the-left-button to burn fuel, you can bring together flying moves that are fast, dizzily fast a

981
ACE RATED



Being off the fence here, you tend to be made of money, too.

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irrevocably delicate. Press on the throat and throw the ship over to one side as you tear up of the landing pool, and at once you're hurtling into the heart of the action.

Once you've figured the controls out well enough to reach one of the tips on your screen, then things really start getting interesting. At first you'll be able to see - flying across that rocky dirt over the landscape spraying the foliage, landing occasionally to provide a stationary target - but you'll need good control skills to hug even those steep, oblique lines. As for the pods (they grow being shielded and down takes heretofore unexplored) which attack you even in the first wave, these can be so tough that you may well want to bring missiles. It's a shame if you do, though, because missiles are in very short supply, and on the next few waves you'll have to get a good deal of them.

Just what's so difficult about those later waves? Everything! The game starts throwing down, against blue screens only (money), bonuses (and bonuses dropping virus levels) - and waits out for the bomb-burst, pods in their down and much more, as well as the obligatory screen-glancing away. Increasing money is also a problem,



A pod's certainly been hit this way, but look at those oblique lines!

and since the landscape's only decentered every 200, you'll have the risk of being completely overrun if you don't work fast.

Compared with *Olds*, *Thrust* or plain old *Defender* might give you a taste of the go-down arcade feel to this coin game, but really *Virus* is in a class of its own. It's really just about perfect too - watch out for



It goes some days before your spaceship. It's trying to see you, but the alien race knows by that point there's at least three just ahead.

the flying fish and the sea monster. The sound effects are both entertaining and useful. The game logic hangs together nicely and the technical achievement will really amaze all you code-breakers out there. It's just too good to be true!

• Andy Miller

ATARI ST VERSION	
Atari's new 16-bit platform is perfect for this one, but they're the world's best. A game that only has potential for enough to be the best, but it's not there yet. It's a great idea, but it's not there yet.	
GRAPHICS TO	15 FACTOR 0
ASIDE	5.5 FACTOR 0
ACE RATING 5.5	



KRELLANS may be mean alien types, but at least you can see their thoughts, which is more than Sidburns will allow you to do. And as commander of an invincible Class Heavy Cruiser, whose job it is to keep Alliance space clear of these troublemakers, you can pose your problems.

If you've already started thinking of strategy, Amiga-style 3D raytrights, think again.

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KRELLANS is in the middle of a battle with some evil Gullans. The results of shooting one or more of them are that you can now transfer from it to one that is the nearest machine that bumps your kill rate up slightly.

STAR FLEET 1

ELECTRONIC ARTS beams up

Star Fleet is graphics die for some material-the-art and therein lies a cosmetic view to be seen. The screen breaks down into sections including a grid map of the region of space you're currently patrolling (and an adjacent grid that shows air) on the particular sector you're in. Towards the top of the screen is the

text window where messages are displayed.

The aim is to work your way up through the ranks from a lowly recruit to an Admiral by successfully completing a number of missions, each requiring you to destroy a set number of enemy ships within a time limit. You're drilled with pleasure (and perhaps also every successful mission bumps your kill rating up a few per cent).

Star Fleet uses a very old game style, but it can still be fun to play. Special bonuses appearing later in the game keep you interested for a while, but the repetitive nature of the game soon test your interest waning.

Andy Bell

AMIGA VERSION

The graphics are sparse and sound is not impressive. The game continues to change a more game on other lines, which will not be true to the spirit of the game. *Star Fleet* is fun to play, but it's a bit long in the teeth and the nature of the gameplay repeats.

GRAPHICS 3 HD FACTOR 3
 AUDIO 3 FUN FACTOR 4

AGE RATING 300

ATARI ST VERSION

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GRAPHICS 3 HD FACTOR 3
 AUDIO 3 FUN FACTOR 4

AGE RATING 300



THE GREAT GIANA SISTERS

Headbang with RAINBOW ARTS

LITTLE Giana from *Milena* is a freckled sleeper, it seems. She and her sister Maria regularly dream of a

strange, mysterious world of puzzles, hazards and dangerous creatures. Your job is to guide Giana back to her sister, as the alternating two-player mode adds an air of quest to that a huge, huge dimensional feel from her only familiar escape.

Giana Sisters plays more than a little like *Super Mario Bros* in its basically another exciting platform game with bonuses to collect, enemies to avoid and using/avoiding problems to overcome. There are some creative little twists, though. For example, how do you deal with those nasty tentacles? Simple - jump on 'em. And to collect bonuses you jump up and back the nearest ledge.



GIANA - You can jump up and get those bonuses - but don't fall to the water!

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C64 VERSION

Graphs for an old game style and other things can't make it really a fun experience.

GRAPHICS 7 HD FACTOR 5
 AUDIO 5 FUN FACTOR 5

AGE RATING 701

ATARI ST VERSION

The graphics are sparse and sound is not impressive. The game continues to change a more game on other lines, which will not be true to the spirit of the game. *Star Fleet* is fun to play, but it's a bit long in the teeth and the nature of the gameplay repeats.

GRAPHICS 3 HD FACTOR 3
 AUDIO 3 FUN FACTOR 4

AGE RATING 710

with you head these bonuses give you very little but extra lives, to the ability to shoot (Giana's solution) which take out those creatures in your way.

The graphics are nice, and the accompanying music lovely, but it's questionable whether you'll stick with the game through all 10 levels to reach that magic crystal.

Paul Lester

AMIGA VERSION

The graphics are sparse and sound is not impressive. The game continues to change a more game on other lines, which will not be true to the spirit of the game. *Star Fleet* is fun to play, but it's a bit long in the teeth and the nature of the gameplay repeats.

GRAPHICS 3 HD FACTOR 3
 AUDIO 3 FUN FACTOR 4

AGE RATING 710

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CAPTAIN Gates drives the nearest, level-headed battleship this side of the Capetrons. The flowery scenario prose writes a wondrous tale of lost jewels and woodpecker desert landscapes. Forget that. Let's go do some blasting.

Vertically-scrolling shoot-'em-ups are nothing new, but everybody loves a good one with loads of action. *Marauder* has been responsible for some of the best, so how do they fare again?

The first thing to notice is that the scrolling is under your control, you don't travel huge bits of the computer pace. It's useful because you really do need quick reactions in between the action.

The robot defenses come in four main types: the rozzers, empacements, located and patterned. The two rozzers generally tend to loiter in on you as soon as they appear. Like all the other defenses they immediately fire bullets that are very accurate if you don't shift yourself fast. Similar to the rozzers are the patterned robots that, when triggered to appear, change around the screen in a set pattern regardless of what you're up to. It's not just the bullets you have to worry about either - running into defenses also proves fatal.

The robots on stationary tracks can't move at all. They shuffle up and down being off the end are usually more awkward to hit than landing on static robots. The stationary robot empacements tend to have higher rates of fire than the others, but at least you know they'll stop where they are.

A particularly nasty form of static defender are the missile firing turrets. These produce relatively slow-moving missiles that come in on you whenever you are on the screen. The missiles can be shot, the only problem is to get on the right line to do it in time - particularly if you're firing more than one turret.

If you get far enough through the defense the battleship goes spinning off the



The Marauder is about to narrowly escape being locked from the air. The grey box passed over and the yellow burst has just missed. However you're still a danger from the other two robots. Note also the green turrets which would gun you down if shot.

MARAUDER

HEWSON go plundering

are all colours, red gives a steel bomb, yellow a shield, green a life, blue reverses the controls, purple loses a life and green, once your lives. The shield, control reversal and

control effects don't last for long, but it can be enough to get you through a tricky spot using the shield, or to kill you when returning from the other bit.

This is a classic game for those who like learning attack patterns. They come you can get a bit further because you know what's coming and can act accordingly. Working out the firing sequences of the batteries also comes with practice and can, considerably prolong your life. There isn't anything original here, but it's an extremely slick shoot-'em-up that gives instant pleasure and addiction, and has plenty of replayability to keep you going.

• **Not Worth**

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top of the screen being wildly and takes you to a new level. The background graphics change and, of course, the robots get nastier. They fire faster and appear in even more complex combinations. They also start taking several hits to destroy.

The programmers obviously thought they were making life too easy, and have added a caveat because that will make you sane. If you spend too long without visiting the screen up, a plane dips in from the side of the screen and drops a bomb of doom. You can avoid it if you're fast but it means you can never relax completely.

The most crucial element is ensuring survival is the use of defenses because these are systems that blast through a stage of robots, and depending on what colour they are which that can either help or hurt. There



isn't too many trouble-free. Shields are breaking in on you and there's a couple of lives remaining showing in the small border left, so it looks like the party's over.

CD4 VERSION

The different backgrounds are well designed, as are all the other defenses. However, I'd avoid shooting the boss as a reward but then not make it to the end of the game.

GRAPHICS 8 10 FACTOR 3
AUDIO 8 FUN FACTOR 8

ACE RATING 79%

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE



PHANTASM

EXOCT's academic exercise

DEJA VU Is what the French call it. But being that someone, somewhere, you've seen it all before. ExoOct Phantasm certainly reminds us of that feeling. Where you've seen this game before is in the form of CDS-i-learned Academy.

In Phantasm you're in command of the ultimate space bomber - Juggernaut - as you zoom around on alien moons looking to eight re-constitutions situated at various on its surface. These re-constitutions are refer to reform energy cells you destroy in their own - to watch it. Your mission is to destroy these nasty pieces of work once and... well, that's it.

Right at the start you get to choose which sector of the moon you start in, and from there on in a case of exploring the said 3D landscape and doing battle with the nasty alien beasts - flying saucers, tanks, ground-based fortresses and watchtowers, to name



Phantasm sports, and also lighting effects. (Here it's two-time attack)

but a few. The extent of the four levels is a kind of training mode where the viewmaster tells you what type of cell you're looking at. Other, higher, levels just test you your bill total to 32. A series of icons in the bottom right of the screen tells you your speed, fuel reserves, shield strength and so forth, while in the top right of the screen is a compass with automatic direction, track (tells you to your steering vehicle). The duration of the

ATARI ST VERSION

Graphics and sound are already 3D and not the Academy ever needed in these departments anyway. The way the later's graphics though, and your control scheme.

GRAPHICS: 8 IQ FACTOR: 8
AUDIO: 8 FUN FACTOR: 6

AGE RATING 4-10

just like that in Academy, even came to be able making moves when you follow with another tool.

Basically, the similarities between Phantasm and Academy are too numerous to list. It would be quicker to list the differences - Phantasm offers only one mission, one character and none of the gameplay. And at \$19.95 its not even budget.

■ Neil Jahn

RELEASE BOX		
ATARI ST	2/19/88	OUT NOW
AMIGA	2/19/88	IMPENDING

AAARGH!

Smashing down the MELBOURNE HOUSE

NEVER mind Aargh! Vainly would be more apt. The games are too easy to beat and so rather few need the sound and graphics aid, you're just not going to want to spend much time playing a game you know you can beat easily.

The game jolly enough - lets control of either an invincible eye or a director and

their sentences and what could be better than a huge bombage or a whizzing wire of steel? Especially when you wander only too a limited amount of enemies - the constant barrage from the villagers trying to do their weapons at you, and the forests that will avoid or smothering into you, take their toll. Aargh is the best form of defence here and it's easy enough to line your monster up with the villagers' control and both a nice addition. Forests can be disposed of in similar fashion. Any spare moments are best spent clearing and eating as many villagers as you can catch.



Beat these buildings, not these people...

smash your way through village after village searching for the final egg. You need to collect these before you get a state of reaching the golden egg. Makes (excepts a volcano). The egg you need are usually concealed inside one of seven or so buildings in each scene. You don't know which contains the egg (that's if any of them do) until you've broken them to the ground. You shouldn't be disappointed if a building fails to reveal an egg though because it will probably reveal something that's almost as important - food. Director and again need

AMIGA VERSION

Great graphics, atmospheric sound and good gameplay but not enough challenge to generate the excitement that will keep you playing.

GRAPHICS: 8 IQ FACTOR: 7
AUDIO: 7 FUN FACTOR: 6

AGE RATING 10-1

Having found yourself an egg you then have to fight the other monster to keep it. (Slightly difficult until you discover the levels that makes it a walk).

Collect the five Rock eggs and you then have to make your way along a short path (overcoming any obstacles on the way) to the golden egg. Collect this and you are when the whole process over again. Acceptable time-keeping, but you'll only play it for a short time before you become bored.

■ Andy Smith

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SARGON III

LOGOTRON's brain-mangler

FAST reflexes and a quick trigger finger will do you no good here. This chess program from Logotron would run the old gray cells of Kaprowitz himself. What, maybe not, but even on its easiest level, Sargon III is a toughie. In a play-off against the established Chessmaster 2000, no clear winner emerged, indicating that the newswriter is certainly no pushover. The game comes with a comprehensive manual, which even teaches you the moves of the pieces. The only problem is that if you need to know that it's going to take you a long, long time to beat the computer.

In Sargon III, you play well enough, but what does it look like? The colors here are not

at great in need. The 2D-only display is basic, to say the least, and up against the several more polished chess programs around it looks (even if it isn't) extremely cruder. The art isn't so far impressing the neighbors, in other words.

Sargon III runs the PC World Magazine Microcomputer Chess Tournament, apparently, and has beaten a Chess Master rated 2200+ — but for the average amateur, such



They're playing with us and holding your own — at least for the moment.

RELEASE BOX		
AMIGA	02/1988	OUT NOW
ATARI ST	02/1988	IMMINENT
IBM PC	02/1988	IMMINENT
OS/2	11/1988	IMMINENT

AMIGA VERSION	
GRAPHICS	1 (30 FACTOR) 10
AI/LOGIC	6 (300 FACTOR) 5
AGE RATING 550	

things are academic. The fact is that most modern chess programs are quite strong enough for the average user, what separates them is really entertainment, ease of use and usability. Sargon is easy enough to use, as readable as any — but in terms of visual appeal, it comes back in the Dark Ages.

—Neil Lane



Sargon is a chess program. It's obviously going to have staying power. The graphics, though, are a damn sorry sight for the time.

PETER BEARDSLEY'S INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL

GRANDSLAM slip up

8-BIT retro consoles have got it covered, but football simulation is the staple of Ocean's Matchday II, and it's not only 4-bitners who enjoy a good game of foot on their computers. Microsoft bought 16-bit owner International Soccer — not as good as it might have been — and now GrandSlam are hoping to tempt us with a football sim, inspired by one of England's most talented players.

The game has a European flavor in that your team can be chosen from a list of some of the best club soccer teams in Europe. You then find yourself in one of two groups of four, whose odds have been plied every other in their own group and the top two go through to the semi-finals.

The format for the game follows the

ATARI ST VERSION	
GRAPHICS	4 (30 FACTOR) 2
AI/LOGIC	4 (300 FACTOR) 4
AGE RATING 390	

usual pattern, i.e., you control the footballer in the best position to reach the ball. You control the strength of a kick during play by holding the fire button on the joystick, while a slider controls up the side of the soccer.

The game looks good enough, but the poor rendition of grass and ball is disappointing. It can also be tough to see just who you're controlling once you've got several players milling about the field. Probably the biggest thing to let the game down, though, is the overall control. This — and the fact that it won't take long to win the tournament — once you're familiarized yourself with the game — makes for a fun shock, well, not so much at the ballers of the second division.

—Andy Smith



Perhaps if GrandSlam had spent less time on the advertising budget and more time on game refinement, the game would have been better.



For the time it took to get this game.

THE SENTINEL

AMIGA • Floppy CD-ROM

Mike Singleton partly made says it all on page 36-37, but for the record we thoughtfully open here at ACE. The Sentinel is one of the densest, prettier, most games ever. The genius of the original concept plus some excellent conversion work by the Amiga make this an essential purchase.

The game's all about energy, height and reliability. Over the mountains, valleys and checkerboard plains of 30,000 different landscapes, you're caught up in an epic struggle to get above your opponents. It's dangerous, wet, slanting trees, and facilities to raise your energy level while avoiding the gaze of the rotating Sentinel and his assistants, the Serives. With fast training and a good sense

of direction you can hop between fields of trees, gain height and work up on the rollers from behind. Reactions get disoriented on the other hand, and you'll be absorbed by the Sentinel's initial stare.

The thing that really makes the game-play riveting is its unique combination, at freedom and time. The game just gives you the basic tools to the job, leaving you to tackle each landscape's problems every way you see fit. The results at various can easily overwhelm you, especially with the Sentinel and a whole bunch of Serives hunting your way - and tobacco kill!

UPDATE SPECIAL

Once you're hooked (and you will be), you'll find the game's password system of life-saver. Stop playing whenever you like, and a 18-digit code will let you start on the same landscape next time. And as well, really 30,000 of the things would take you a while to get through.

Andy Wilson

AMIGA VERSION

It looks fast and smooth, the solid 2D graphics here are as pretty as roses. The soundtrack's just to die for, using background low frequency and great tones of those made in real things in real.

GRAPHICS 8 **IQ FACTOR 8**
VIDEO 8 **FM FACTOR 8**

ACE RATING 903



There's only got seconds to make your next decision, and there are dozens of options open to you - but what's yours?

PLATOON

AMIGA ST • Ocean CD-ROM • ACE RATING 890
SN4 version reviewed issue 7 - ACE Rating 891
SN4 version reviewed issue 7 - ACE Rating 890
Amstrad version reviewed issue 8 - ACE Rating 894

If the first casualty of war is innocence, then the first casualty of convention has to be gameplay. The difficulty tuning was pretty touch-and-go on the SN4 version of this one, but on the ST things are absolutely steel-cut. A simple tale of jungle warfare becomes simply enjoyable invisible excellent shoot you in the back. VO's keep

on you from the forest canopy and booby-traps face you with impossible situations. Tough problems are always welcome, but inevitable deaths like these are just silly. Controls are good though, even if the graphics aren't anything to write home about.

• Andy Wilson



LEATHERNECK

AMIGA • Microcd CD-ROM • ACE RATING 897
Amstrad ST version reviewed issue 10 - ACE Rating 897



You want violence, you get it. Heavy duty violence complete with guns, grenades and rats - that's what programmer Steve Blair has converted to the Amiga, and boy is it just the game's a virtual studies in the Carnasserie or just. Movies would, but the graphics, sound effects and finely-tuned gameplay lift it into the realm of the really classy. Leap out of the

landing craft with anything up to three buddies, machine-gun your way up the beach and then hand-grenade a gory path through the jungle and into the village. Beautiful hand-grenades, horrible screams and heavy low overhead oil add up to a raucous, mad-as-hell, wonderful piece of software. Go on!

• Andy Wilson



ACADEMY RIVALRY



J W



PLATOON

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AMIGA - ATARI ST

Is *Buggy Boy* as good on the Amiga as the 64? Will *Charlie Chaplin* rediscover his sense of humour on the Spectrum? Are the *Lords of Conquest* just as cut-throat and power mad on the ST? Find out all this and more in the latest instalment of Updates.

AMIGA

BUGGY BOY

Rev 02.1986

Atari version released last 7 - Ace rating 8/10

The graphics show off the Amiga's capabilities nicely with lots of smooth, fast action. The buggy is a very responsive, accelerates quickly and is guaranteed well. Its latest appeal is high and its great fun to play, but there are two problems that drag it down a little. It's a bit too easy to level, and with the usual spate of Col Man types games it has aged quite rapidly on a game front. Still a bit of fun but it won't last that long.

● ACE RATING 8/10



RETURN TO GENESIS

Revised 11/1986

Atari version released last 7 - Ace rating 8/10

This horizontal scrolling shoot-'em-up tries hard to live up to its inspiration. On the PC it was a complete fiasco that looked very unplayable. Now the story is the same to read. It's got excellent graphics, some digitised speech and lots of speedy action. The strange rebounding action is still present to make control awkward. Another strange shoot-'em-up to join the hoards of others.

● ACE RATING 6/10

BLACK LAMP

Revised 11/1986

PC version released last 7 - Ace rating 8/10

Spectrum version released last 8 - Ace rating 6/10

The pretty, suitably placed title reveals adventure games quite a bit on its way over from the PC, but not in the best respect it was so desperately looking to, namely graphics. Running round hip-screen castles and scrolling outdoor scenes makes a nice start, but when it's just about all there is, you're entitled to feel disappointed. Jovney packed a good deal more game into it than similar shops, and that one came out years ago.

● ACE RATING 6/10

ATARI ST



LORDS OF CONQUEST

Revised 11/1986

PC version released last 7 - Ace rating 8/10

The graphics may not be state-of-the-art but they're adequate and certainly 'word spin' your enjoyment of the great piece of strategy software. You end up in three cities - men play against each other and try to conquer whichever game shop you happen to be playing of the time. If you can't trust your friends (and once you start playing you won't be able to) you can always try your hand at playing the computer - which can be made to play of any one of

two levels. Good stuff that you'll come back to whenever you feel the urge.

● ACE RATING 8/10

C64

DARK CASTLE

Rev 01.1986

Amiga version released last 7 - Ace rating 8/10

Things haven't improved with the arrival of the C64 version. Basically then, it's a very old-style platform game in which the hero has to make his way through several screens before confronting the diabolical Black Knight. Avoid the pits, bats and ghosts and you're in with a chance but that's a bit easier said than done. Cool graphics and animation do little to fire your enthusiasm and you'll probably get bored if playing the game other than relatively short runs.

● ACE RATING 5/10

SPECTRUM

CHARLIE CHAPLIN

Revised 11/1986

Amstrad version released last 11 - Ace rating 10/10

The game in which that great comedian puts his penguin-walk into action to make several films. You've got to organize the studio, control Charlie and edit the film. The final aim is to make a box office hit. The more graphics are more suited to the Spectrum, but unfortunately the gameplay hasn't changed. It's still just a matter of wandering around trying to hit the other characters as often as possible. Really a true picture of the great man's talents. Ah well, back to the storyboard.

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STREET FIGHTER

Flying fists from GO!



ARCADÉ Fans may know this as the game that had you in your car actually hit heavily, they don't make them that way now, and they definitely won't do that for the same reasons. Which

means that just another standard boot-up, that brings nothing new to the genre.

● **Not So**

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HERCULES

GREMLIN'S mythical game



CONTROL Sayin' it the Demond. You play the movie-board hero of Greek mythology and you've got 12 labours to complete. Well, you've actually got to hit with your club 12 tasks that appear sequentially onscreen, while trying to survive being attacked by a skeleton. The progress and whatever are pass, the game's just on foot and to keep it all in being Hercules is not one of Gremlin's better games.

● **Not So**

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VIXEN

The gorgeous, pouting MARTECH?

CONTROL Well again, teller lady Joan. It seems it not close at sprouting light-bomb steps at another when it comes to dealing with enemies - dinosaurs in the case. Demond's who have for some forgotten the planet Gremlin. But cool women Vixen, raised from slavery by a pack of tigers. She now has the ability to change into a cat if it will.

The interview smiling help-merch get nothing against to offer and it doubtful you'd be playing it in a year's time.

● **Not So**

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EVERY SECOND COUNTS

Not a lot from TV GAMES



THE YEARS OF THE END

CONTROL Games don't have a great reputation on computer games, and the reason is the First Demond just show doesn't change sides. My in three couple has take part in the quiz which clearly means the TV show. Basically it's not more gen-

eral knowledge and trivia ques-tions, the list of which we've seen complete times before.

● **Not So**

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CORRUPTION

Magnetic Scrolls' latest game shows a whole new approach to adventuring. Is it the beginning of a brave new world? The definitive review awaits you...

PAGE 74 >

LEGEND OF THE SWORD

Rainbird AGAIN! Not content with Magnetic Scrolls, they've also turned out this radical auto-play adventure with a control panel that really puts you in command. Is this the business, or is it a bin-liner?

PAGE 74 >



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DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS

Can this long-awaited role-playing license live up to its £1,000,000 price tag? And where to now for role-playing software?

PAGE 74 >

MINDFIGHTER

Abstract Concepts long awaited game set in post-Holocaust Southampton hits the shelves. Will the copies stay there, or should you rush out and grab them?

PAGE 75 >



BARDS TALE RIDES AGAIN

No sooner is Bards Tale 2 out of the closet, than BTS leaps upon us. Not only that, but the BT programming team are turning their talents to other uses.

PAGE 75 >

Balrog-beating...
 Spell casting...
 Staff waving...
 Rod toting...
 Text typing...
 Wizard wasting...
 Treasure grabbing...
 No-one does it better than The Pilgrim – and believe us, in this month's column he really surpasses himself. Check out the menu for this month's feast...

CRACKING THE PAWN... AND MORE

Throughout the section you'll find more of the Pilgrim's Players' Guide to *The Pawn*, plus a host of playing tips in No Problem!, Pat's Patch for budding adventure writers, news, gossip, and other adventuring tidbits...

CORRUPTION

RAINBIRD/MAGNETIC SCROLLS® inside deal

AFTER trying around with the classic *The Pawn*, the traditional *Game of Thrones*, and the whimsical *Unseen Magnetic Scrolls* have finally managed to come out with a game that combines parallel programming, wry humor, and a compelling plot all at once. We doubt about it. *Corruption* is their best yet.

Some won't like it, however. The tale of insider dealing, infidelity and crooked business deals is unlikely to suit people who prefer to wander around picking up treasure. It does have other compensations, however...

First, you get a lot of bang for your money, including a cassette tape that has been prominently in the plot, a lot of documentation (including a personal register section that gives info on your movements), and some amusing guides to London - listing important, classic-etcetera, old so-on.

Second, the game is powerful and flexible. It can understand promises, so will always PUT THE COMPANY OF THE EMPLOYEE IN THE POCKET, or OPEN THE DOORS FOR DRANK. Combine this with a comprehensive use of pronouns, abbreviations and flexible programming, and you have a parser that's both friendly and fast in operation.

Thirdly, you get the usual excellent graphics which, in this case, are certainly more atmospheric than before and every bit as technically accomplished. Much of the graphics revolves around interaction with other people and it helps if you can see them.

Finally, of course, there's the plot. Recently made-a-partner in the stockbbling first-of-figes-it-foges, you soon realize that all is not as it seems. If you don't, you'll find yourself arrested, by mail-day and found guilty of insider dealing (i.e. buying shares in a company about whose financial performance you have privileged information).

The game starts at 9:00am, and the clock advances by 1 minute with every step of the RETURN key, so you're well advised to make maximum use of multiple commands to save time. Gameplay consists of finding and reuniting objects together with booting other characters whom you can question

using ABC pronouns ABOUT subject or others using TELL ABOUT... Your primary objective is to put yourself in the class, your secondary object is to get your revenge.

Character names about the map is certain problem-solved ways, so time not only finds conspiracy but also changes it. In a normal game you map space, in this game you map time-as-well, taking note of when certain

920
AGE RATED

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RELEASE BOX

SHARE IT	2/92cd	02/1000
AMIGA	2/92cd	02/1000
IBM PC	2/92cd	02/1000
SPIC	1/92cd	00/0000
MAC	2/92cd	00/0000
GAARD	1/72cd	00/0000
MS	2/92cd (also on)	00/0000

people perhaps define winners for future reference. In this manner the game is very like *Indiana Jones*—even down to the level of portable reference. In both games, there is someone who hides documents in a cave in the jungle.

Completion is great fun, will take quite a

while to solve, and should please everyone fed up with more traditional adventure subjects. It's only weakness is that the characters are all stereotypes, from the dumb blond to the stoic businessman, and leave us wondering whether it's rewarding when they lose their games (logically, I doubt it).

game a little too far in the opposite direction.

LANDSCAPE	90	SYSTEM	90
CHALLENGE	81	ENCOUNTERS	85
AGE RATING 900			

LEGEND OF THE SWORD

RAINBIRD'S pretty little number

HMMMM... This is a tough-puzzle, make-or-missake.

Legend of the Sword contains a very well-designed user interface with a variety of puzzling and wandering that varies from the unhelpfully unguided to the delightfully cluttered, with not a little instruction scattered along the way.

The screen (in full colour on page 72) is divided into four main sections. Top right is a map display with an attractive overhead representation of the paths you take and features such as trees, buildings, and terrain elements.

Top left are two small windows which keep changing during play, leading to single pictures of your companions, surroundings and other objects when relevant. In the respect the display is slightly similar to *Crown of the Nine* during *Henry*.

In the centre of the screen are movement icons you click on. An icon will illuminate a command in that direction is possible. On the bottom left window where you can enter commands and read responses, inventories, sleepers, and so on.

In addition, there are a series of drop down menu labels across the top of the screen which allow you to toggle between the map and a vocabulary display or well as select certain system commands and other actions.

Despite the number of different elements on the screen, it's very sensibly presented and never seems cluttered. You play the game like very normal adventure, except that many commands can be entered via preformatted and vocabulary tables or icons. Clicking on the map icons will take up the entire screen—useful for getting your bearings before proceeding.

As you move about the map window reveals very pretty, changing landscape into view. The visual appearance is one of smooth, simple, uncluttered programming and makes the preplay look smooth, simple, and satisfying.

When it comes to the actual tasks involved, however, the story changes slightly. With your five companions you must locate an evil wizard's lair and stand with what is likely the evil wizard *Luca*. The bulk of the action consists of exploration,

RELEASE BOX

ATARI ST	Disck	OUT NOW
AMIGA	Disck	AMAZON
IBM PC	Disck	TA

looking items, and solving puzzles. Most of these are the traditional 'word-use-of-kind-object' type—it doesn't mean anything for an object to find if you've been solving such problems for the last five years.

Locations feature the usual dark interiors, tunnels, wilderness fields and battle chambers, together with vast areas of open country and forest. The game is divided into several distinct sections which require passwords and/or special objects to enter and in the respect is open, highly featured.

Legend of the Sword is a beautiful looking game, but the pretty face conceals a rather mediocre traditional adventure. It's not that easy to win, however, and I suspect that *Legend of the Sword* will sell.

LANDSCAPE	75	SYSTEM	90
CHALLENGE	75	ENCOUNTERS	85
AGE RATING 815			



MINDFIGHTER

An ABSTRACT CONCEPT from ACTIVISION

FERGUS McNeil, the man who brought you *Delta 4*, *The Jagged and Veiled Smoking Mirror* is a contributor to this latest venture from Abstract Concepts, a new adventure design house run by Anna Pappas. *Mindfighter* is the first game from the team, previously provided by the Pappas cast now in general release.

The game runs under a new abstract-looking system called *SNAN* (supremely not to be confused with *System Without A Name*). Most large adventure houses use their own system, but until recently even the *Fergus* and *Anna* have relied on clever program-

ming of more widely available utilities such as *The Shell*, allowing their own in-house programming system a big step forward.

However, the small print reveals that *SNAN* is actually produced by abstract artists, The Gilberts of *Abstract* fame. This explains why the new system is something of a few steps forward, one step back often—but more of that is a mistake.

The game involves a psychic child, *Debra*, who has unwittingly manifested in a post-apocalyptic *San Francisco* where life is chaotic even more miserable by *Chalupa* rule. You have to find out what's going on,

RELEASE BOX

ATARI ST	CD ROM	CD ROM	OUT NOW
IBM PC	CD ROM		OUT NOW
AMIGA	CD ROM	CD ROM	OUT NOW
AMIGA ST	CD ROM		OUT NOW
IBM PC	CD ROM		OUT NOW

refer to the present day, and prevent the chaotic from taking place. At least I think that's what you're supposed to do! The game packaging doesn't help much, preferring to glaze over the bones of your situation.

The interface, plus other game features a good deal of interest. The code scope is extremely difficult to map, will normally require geographical issues, steps between locations.

The Travellers' Times

Edited by The Pilgrim • Honorary Editor: The White Wizard • Published by Far Future Publishing
Price: Free with this copy of ACE

WE'RE FAMOUS!

Adventures are rapidly becoming the centre of attention from software houses as role-playing and fantasy games continue to take off in the home like never before.

Lined below is an early glimpse at the announcement by MegaGames (formerly Activision) that they're selling software to be made use of their prime areas of investment over the next few years.

The company have also listed at the moment plans for Infocom, which they bought out some time ago. Larry Speake, newly appointed marketing manager in the UK, is especially envious of the previous lack of promotion of Infocom titles in the country and intends to put the record right.

MegaGames aren't the only ones to be jumping frantically into the adventure/role-playing bonanza. As you can see elsewhere on this page, Electronic Arts are now fast developing their Basic Tale series and looking for new RPG titles to release in the near future. Even US Gold is getting in on the act with Suspense and Disposition (see page 52).

There's not a day when us adventurers were universally lauded by most software houses. These days are changing...

INFOCOM TRILOGY

MegaGames are to release a special compilation pack of Infocom titles, featuring *Mistard's Guide to the Dungeon*, *Leather Goggles of Phobos*, and *Dick's Devil* game has yet to be fixed, but you can see that it will represent a substantial saving on the original trilogy for the three separate games.

Infocom are also heard to work on a new game with



Adventures - the longer the better, hence is Activision's strategy.

Douglas Adams. Watch out for *The Restaurant at the End of the Universe* in the not too distant future, as well as further collaborations with other famous authors - check the space for details.

SKARA BRAE BLASTED

Basic Tale 3 is almost upon us, in which you introduce outside the walls of Skara Brae and must travel the seven outer planes to set the world in rights and restore the city you valued in BT and BT2.

The latest game in the series, released hot on the heels of BT2, adds two new classes of magic user - Geomancers and Chronomancers. This is of particular interest to experienced players of the system since a geomancer can be a development of an advanced fighter. In previous versions, fighting was simply did what fighting men have to do - fight. Now they can learn to cast spells as well. Chronomancers have been introduced for the purpose of mastering 'space travel' - essential in this game if you are to return home.

Other improvements include the listing of known spells (so you don't always have to refer to the manual), bits of outdoor locations, more puzzles, and three spells identified in the game as 'secret knowledge' which can be picked up by any

one. This last feature is significant because it can provide the means for any class of character to wield some degree of magical power.

LOOK - NO BARDS!

The programmers of the ever-popular *Basic Tale* series have started work on a new game that could improve substantially on the quality of computerized role-playing.

MegaGames take you through a devastated world, battling against lake wars, new enemies, and wild mutants. In addition to the usual character attributes of strength, intelligence, and so on, the program offers 30 skills ranging from gambling to demolition and Douglas Adams set your teeth out beautifully.

Skills can be read up in the library and, in combination with your intelligence, lead to the greater character definition. Even better, you can now split parties of adventures in order to surround enemies, increasing the tactical interest of the game.

Combine all the with the

new *Orkishand* titles amongst others), humour - as in *You Don't Like the Game* (so far, ten points) - and attributes for nationality and sex, and you have a substantial advance on the *Basic Tale* series and a very promising game. Watch out for the review, coming soon.



MegaGames - All the latest!

AAGHGH!

What can I do? Last month, I promised you the *Wizard V* review. This month, *Craps Systems* tell me it's been delayed yet again. I hereby block my staff in two, eat it, and lead my people until the desired program actually materialises on my desk. My apologies, but when the games not there, neither the review. All I can say is that I'm sure that when it finally does arrive, it will have been worth the wait.



Basic Tale III - coming soon.

CARRY ON SCREAMING...

Games players come in all shapes and sizes and usually it's tough to tell, at first glance, what particular class of games they prefer. Could you spot a flight sim freak in a crowd? How do you instantly recognise a shoot-'em-up addict? It's not easy is it? But there's one class of games player or that always stands out in a crowd - the 'frustration games' addict. This particular type of games player has several distinguishing features which makes him readily identifiable. The large tufts of hair missing from the scalp, the blood-shot staring eyes, the tortured grimace and the clenched fists (with scratches from the glass of the shattered monitor). If you're now wondering why these people continue to play games that drive them up the wall, chances are you've never experienced the FUN that can be got from playing them. Because, strange as it may seem, these games that regularly drive you up the wall also happen to be some of the all-time greats. We take a look at these tormentors, and what makes them so, so frustrating...



Junkies - you're just spent a few slices of your pocket money on a brand new shoot-'em-up. You've read the adverts and they offer relevant information while the game was loading (special events have probably made themselves a cup of coffee as well) and now you're ready to inflict some serious damage on some alien extraterrestrial clump, or robot pest, etc. etc. You launch into the game and you're going great guns - talking, it seems, can survive you alright. Well, almost nothing, because one stray missile hits your ship and you're out of life. This is bad is screaming but in your terror, the game starts out of the beginning! You have to go through the whole thing again, even though you've still got two lives left!

WYUANGG Oh all you can do to stop yourself screaming is kick through the monitor. Here's one of AIGI we call the 'best' Frustration. Beware offenders in the category are: Army Move, Superwarrior, Death and Goddax and many others. There are plenty more frustration categories besides this though, and we take a look at the worst. We also list these games that make you yell with anguish - and not always for the right reasons...

ANTI-BODIES

These are the things that we get on the best of. We're just about to pick up what you think's going to be a nice bonus that will enhance your ship (or whatever) and so you do so the bonus turns out to be more of a hindrance than a help - a possibly worse the console is involved for a few vital seconds or more you stop also sleep. Alternatively you at least enough to make it almost were impossible to avoid the next step (and of you, by the way). Other way, it is more hard to play on an otherwise good game. Also in this category is the bonus that all is were extremely successful players in the game and just while you is come and about it - 'Come on!' it whistles. It's make your job so much easier! So you go for it, and after a bit of struggle you manage to collect it. Now - and only now - you discover that it does virtually nothing. Against the worst case is this category is the bad bonus that you know is bad, but which is heavily difficult to avoid (and you're WYUANGG again). Beware offenders here are: Starfall and others that!

DEATH TRAPS

These traps have of which death occur frequently in games, the best is the Death Loop you get caught and die a

life, the game starts at the same position, and before you have chance to react someone killed you in the last place (as you again - and so on until you've lost all your lives and have to restart. Almost as bad is the 'Inevitable Death', where you know that during a certain game, at a certain point you are going to lose one of your lives. Try as you might, there's just no way you're going to get past that stage without being that life. The final frustration in this category is the 'Inevitable Death' - you're so wary of knowing that at a certain point in the game a large slab of concrete is going to fall down the ceiling and involve one of your lives. You'd know next time right enough, but there's no condition, when you've spent hours getting to a certain point in a game only to be killed out by something that you had no way of predicting. Beware offenders with Death Trap problems are: Robinson Crusoe, Hunter, Jet Set Willy and Predator.

COLLISION DETECTION

There are two main classes of poor collision detection - both causing their own of 'be never touched me self' the first, and possibly less harmful, is the 'regular' one. The collision detection may be bad, but you can work hard to live with it

and compensate for it. The second class are the games with 'weird' collision detection. Here, the collision detection can be off to such a degree you can't compensate for it. Beware offenders in the first and second class respectively are: Empire on the Amstrad and Screaming Wagon on the ST.

NO-OUT

You know what we mean - you've made a complete level of a game and you realize you're better off realizing that it there on, you can let you do that? Probably not, so you have to actually go and find some method of winning the game. This can be fairly frustrating and we've given away one of the worst offenders in this category - Inevitable Death. Can you ever forgive us?

TITLE SCREENS

The first thing you need to do when you load up a game is play the thing, yet it seems as if programmers sometimes occasionally seem to forget as well, obviously long life screens and lots of credits that you're forced to watch before you get to the game. It's not too bad if you've got a very old copy of the event, but if you have to sit through them every time - well, by the time you're allowed to play you could have lost all enthusiasm.

Serious attendees have one. Our list of 100 includes *PlayStation*, *Amiga/Dos* and *Chibivista*.

NO PALMS

There you are, just about to score your highest EVER score and you hear the shrillst go. *Amiga Ethel* had no way of knowing you were in the middle of a game, but you can bet it'll be the target for your frustration once you get used to seeing her in. Interrupting isn't usually cast a problem for us here at ACE (although it can be when we're playing a game with no pause mode) and the wordwatch girl never mind, but what can really shove a magazine off more than crying it a fantastic game that either has no pause mode, or else one that makes getting screen shots a nightmare by some altering the screen. Standing it out a particularly appalling) or by plotting those *PlayStation* right across the entire. The worst no-pause-mode offender is *Levi* and the worst change-the-screen-when-paused offender is *Interceptor*.

HIGH-SCORE TABLES

Some games force you to state your skills after every game - this is not so bad if you're there just to see some games have high-score tables so large you can get your name on them just by noting the game and letting yourself get killed. This is particularly bad when it doesn't save the score to disk so you have to go through the whole process every time, and believe us, putting your name up at the 100th position does nothing for your ego. The worst example of a too large high-score table is *Clark*.

MAJESTIC/MAJES

A nightmare, most of these. You're almost out of lives so you manage to reach the end of the second level. You sit back and wait to level three to load in and almost as soon as you start to play, you lose your last life. That innocent legend then appears on-screen. Please return to the start of the tape! Forgive get to go through the whole process again, and what's to guarantee you do better next time? Nothing. MAJESTIC serious offenders have one feature and that's quite.

FLIES IN THE OMENT

Let, let by no means least, are the games that really do back

and have a good laugh at you. You've played a game for hours, you've done extremely well, you've nearly finished some reasonably fast and you suddenly realize the game won't let you finish it because you forgot to turn out some magnificent tank right at the beginning. Or you've fought your way through hordes of puny gop, were talking like clustered around some ancient planet, and then what seems like hours of concentrated effort, you're almost within range of a space station. Suddenly you hear that creaky and realize you're being shot at - you make a run for the station and as you do so, a quiet message appears on the screen: *Defeating Impasson destroyed. Even if you reach the station after that, save your precious cash as you try to check manually because the computers will probably be pleased to learn that your precious cash is cheaper here than it was when you bought it. SKAGG!*

Serious attendees have one legion, in ACE, for example, you're low on thrust and cut about to land but getting the disadvantage claim state the plane. Two *Evans' Get Dudes* - you do all that work and then find yourself in the world level zone where funnels drop on your head, set to monitor the guy calling him. And then there's *Mesquero* - get shot down at every foot the city and it's a long long wait to crystallize. Or you might be playing *Academy* where you destroy hordes of various flying robot enemies in a magnificent running battle - only to find out the last shot took out your computer and there's no way you're ever going to find your way back to base. And what about *Deflector*? There's just one objection, but can you find the right tile to fit it before the enemy runs out? Nope. Finally *Demos* change. Now to be a *Complete* feature: if you log on to the computer in this game, the read option points gives does just that - reads the machine, not just the game.

If you've ever had any of these things happen to you, then spare a thought for the poor soul who spent hours and a whole lot of money playing *SHOCK!* Just before they became prevented in a weird, some unending games without them in the back and send them right back to console level.

IT HURTS, BUT I LIKE IT

BATMAN

Console

Amiga	£8.99	£14.99
Spectrum	£7.99	

Believe me we drove it by the masterpiece of counting, exploiting and punting through the delightful, acoustic 3D screens. How cleverly we can be told into a little sense of actuality by their pleasant surroundings. This suddenly you burst through a door, wondering you know what you're doing, and you stop long into a hot power that takes away what jumps, speed or whatever other powers you did have.

Then, of course there are the last powers located in head-to-get-it places, which after great effort to get them do absolutely nothing at all.

And never forgetting of all in the list of the horrible that hidden from view - it could take you weeks to find it. By which time you'd be for the solution.



Batman

Batman

BOUNDER

Console

The Great Games Compilation		
Amiga	£6.99	£14.99
Spectrum	£6.99	£14.99
CDi	£6.99	£14.99

What an addictive nightmare this is. It's not just that it's frustrating, it's the fact that you can't stop playing it. The last problem is controlling the lowering ball, which is like trying to manoeuvre a superball in a football.

Then, as you nearly balance off up the swirling maze, you go in the wrong direction and slip into a ball-bouncing dead end. Not content with that the game stops there just you look at a certain point where you've got no chance of winning.

All to say it'll use the unbroken slugs and ambitions that one so easy to hit, and you'll never know when you're there. Move the screen...

MEGALUS

Home

Amiga	£8.99	£14.99
Spectrum	£7.99	
CDi	£8.99	£14.99

Pattern games have always had a tradition element, and the tower-topping variant is one of the best of it. The whole aim is to get to the top of the tower, and everything is trying to stop you.

Imagine the tower that



strikes your boat as you near the top of the tower, with time running out. Knowing that one false move will send you falling a horrible distance back down again.

The puzzles and clues can also leave you cheating through your lip in mental agony. They have a track of appearing just when it's most critical to you, or putting a disappearing block where you least expect it.

You can easily spot Pac-Man players because they eventually become resigned to these spatial-messing devices and adopt wet expressions and drooped heads and slumped shoulders. Then again, you should see them when they complete a tower - they would go down a foot in 'The Flow is Right'.

TETRIS

Moscow

Amstrad	£8.95cs	£12.95cb
Spectrum	£8.95cs	£12.95cb
CDi	£8.95cs	£12.95cb
Amstrad	£11.95cb	
Amiga	£19.95cb	
MSX PC	£19.95cb	

Not a game that can be said to soothe the nerves. On most versions it would become a lifetime staple type of device for calming the mind or about as quickly it and it, but it keeps on speeding up. Your brain starts to go into overload, the fingers fly at light speed, but still is no good - you just can't win.

However, think you possess that strong computer it always going to win. Oh, the opposite of this player is back.



Snake



Snake

Sea



Sea

other block falls in fit into that carefully designed pattern and builds ever higher the top of the screen.

It's also a matter of not having a game mode, except on the CDi version. You can never get any sort of a break from the action and you'll work away in mere shadow of your former self.

THRUST

Merbury

Spectrum	£ 8.95cs	
Amstrad	£1.95cs	
CDi	£1.95cs	
Amstrad		£3.95cb

Sensitive controls and big-brain tactics are enough to make this one sleep-down frustrating. You fall into a corner, your bullets into those gun-tubes and - forcing miserably slowed the clock out with a general use of Disposables - pile into the opposite wall because you're going too fast to stop. It isn't not quite insuffering enough for you, there are always the central points to drive you bonkers. A special mention here goes to 'The vault' structure

only found in the XT version, which takes you to haul the pad diagonally down, out of its corner. Complete the monumental feat, crash your ship and the game puts you right back in the supple a little further before you crash and it'll put you in a new one level below the map, but with the pad balanced above you. Great, you look in water.

FOR

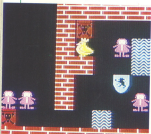
Lagson

Amstrad	£9.95cs	£14.95cb
Spectrum	£9.95cs	
CDi	£9.95cs	£14.95cb

This game of three puzzles with choices, but not explosions, is a classic in getting 'walled out' and it can happen at any time. The puzzles are constructed as that in nearly every case one wrong move can scupper the whole game. Of course your second should might be able to get you out of trouble but you'll probably be too flustered to manage it.

The worst part about it is the speed with which events can happen. You decide on a move and put it into action, only to find the untimely sequence of events results in it fast penalizing your ship.

It's also it classic in the revealing feeling of 'Oh no, what have I done?' as it slowly dawns on you that you've neglected an on-essential passage. It's absolutely devastating and makes you that much more determined to have another go and succeed.



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SARGON III



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IT JUST HURTS...

ARMY MOVES

Impress

Live Action Compilation

Amstrad	£3.950	£14.990
Spectrum	£3.950	£14.990
CGA	£3.950	£14.990

The most rugged ever to appeal realist points. Most people probably haven't ever managed to get off the first stage without the aid of a pal or other cheat.

It's not just the sector points either. What makes it so incredibly enjoyable is the fact that it's very demanding on the player as well. You've got to be concentrated in your step as you jump onto elevators in bridges, take other looping steps and take many of helicopters being offscreen death. After battling through screens, the screen of fire and eventually succumbing, guess where you end up? Back at the beginning stage start.

BARBARIAN

Progress

Amstrad	£4.950	
Imps	£4.950	

Not to be confused with Pac-Man (obviously named this - but only only because it's so easy to complete - the latter involves several unnecessary deaths). The only way to learn which bits of the screen make you, collapse under you or burst open and unleash heavily-armed snakes if you're to let them do their worst. Next time you'll know better of course, but that hardly goes easy on the old blood pressure. Couple these with a few nice stunts, your comments sluggish if at all, a game system that seems to load every screen separately from disk and a nice low and narrow designed blood you enemy, and you're in for major on a truly exciting ride.

ECO

Control

Amstrad	£14.990	
Imps	£14.990	

A unique case, this, in trapping

the player to ever lengths of disgust. A game that looks harmless in its conception, where you try to modify a simple insect into ever higher life forms. A game with stylish, attractive graphics. A game with exciting sex and death. With that scope, surely a game to inspire police-eyes-of-dogger!

Hope. The whole problem is that you start with high hopes of a great experience and spend minutes, hours and days trying to beat the game. The real truth is it isn't there - and is it ever frustrating going through all that just to be let down.



Army Moves

Pac-Man



Barbarian



Predator

rather than real life be based with enemy weapons he could try help getting wounded by? Being chased down without actually making mistakes to deserve it a bit he frustrating for which but, if your blood still a bit below boiling point, why not check out the extra weapons? You can pick up anything from a machine pistol to a 5,000 rounds per minute machine gun but your fire rate stays surprisingly constant. Surely this is all of a new kind, haven't?

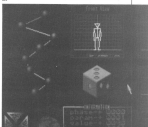
PREDATOR

Action

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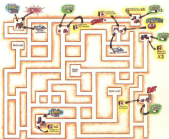


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PLATOON MAPPED (PART 3)

Ian Thompson supplies the third section of the combat zone.



Those juicy tips and pokes just keep rolling in – if a particular game's driving you up the wall, here's the place to look for a tip that could make your life a whole lot easier. Do you want to crack impossible mission? Would you like to complete *Dan Dare II*?

Or make it to the end of stage 5 in *Out Run*? If you can hack your way through other people's code – or produce a map that could prove invaluable to others who are lost, then don't hesitate to send your contributions in – for the best tips, maps and pokes each month we give software away like it was going out of fashion.



SAMURAI WARRIOR

Dushido Buxley loving C64'ers can make life a lot easier for themselves by typing in the following.

For load the game and read the O&A, use by these codes:

POKE 15822,0-127 for higher starting energy

POKE 15827,0-127 for more money

POKE 15832,0-255 to start on a higher level

For unlimited energy, type this list in:

POKE 20385,0;POKE 20386,245;POKE

20387,255;POKE 20388,127;POKE

20389,255;POKE 20390,255;POKE

20391,255;POKE 20392,255;POKE

20393,255;POKE 20394,255;POKE

20395,255;POKE 20396,255

Type F10 to reset the game

ANDRÉ VAN DER BEEK, Rotterdam

ONDS

Microsoft's ACE rated *Thrust-Ash Blast* is straightforward enough, but here's a couple of points you may have missed.

1. After refuelling at a fuel base, fire into the air before lifting off. If the refuelling pipe comes out again then the dump still has some fuel in it. If the pipe doesn't re-engage then the dump's empty and can be used for an extra 100 points.



2. When going through asteroids, fly slowly and activate your shield (as you touch the teleporter – this reduces the risk of impacting your ship on the sides of a small screen.

3. When creating new planetoids, if you require a more powerful installation such as a stronger attractor or repulsor or a rapid fire gun, turn them simply place two or more of the same object in the same position, each hit during the game destroys one of them.)

STEVEN BARRIS, Cullingham



DAN DARE II

Here's a complete solution to Virgin's boot-up on the Spectrum.

- 1** LEFT, DOWN, D, L, L, L, UP, RIGHT, U, U, L, L, D, L, D, SHOOT COMPUTER, R, R, D, D, SHOOT SUPERGREEN, U, R, R, R, R, D, SHOOT SUPERGREEN, D, SHOOT SUPERGREEN, D, R, PICK UP EXTRA ENERGY, L, D, WAIT FOR CRUISER TO ENOUGHTRICE, DOWN INTO CRUISER, U, SHOOT SUPERGREEN, D, L, D, SHOOT SUPERGREEN, D, L, L, U, R, U, U, L, L, D, R, SHOOT BLAST DOORS, ENTER, WAIT FOR DOORS TO CLOSE - FINISHED.
- 2** R, R, D, L, D, D, L, SHOOT COMPUTER AND SUPERGREEN, D, LOSE A LIFE, GET EXTRA FIREPOWER, D, D, D, D, SHOOT SUPERGREEN, L, L, L, SHOOT SUPERGREEN, R, R, R, U, U, R, D, D, SHOOT SUPERGREEN, D, L, SHOOT SUPERGREEN, R, U, U, R, D, D, R, GET RADIO FROM BEHIND DOOR, U, SHOOT SUPERGREEN, D, L, U, U, U, U, R, D, R, D, R, GET BEHIND BLAST DOOR - FINISHED.
- 3** R, U, U, U, R, R, D, SHOOT COMPUTER, U, L, L, U, L, REPLENISH ENERGY, R, U, R, THROUGH FAME BLAST DOORS, L, D, L, REPLENISH ENERGY, R, D, D, L, SHOOT SUPERGREEN, D, L, U, L, D, L, SHOOT SUPERGREEN, U, L, L, SHOOT SUPERGREEN, R, U, COLLECT SCORCH FROM BEHIND DOOR, D, R, R, D, D, U, R, U, R, R, GET BEHIND BLAST DOOR, FINISHED.
- 4** R, R, R, R, U, R, GET EXTRA ENERGY, U, U, R, R, U, R, D, R, D, U, L, SHOOT COMPUTER AND SUPERGREEN, R, D, D, L, SHOOT SUPERGREEN, U, U, SHOOT SUPERGREEN, D, L, L, SHOOT SUPERGREEN, R, D, D, L, D, L, SHOOT SUPERGREEN, R, D, D, D, SHOOT SUPERGREEN, D, D, L, SHOOT SUPERGREEN, R, U, U, U, U, L, L, D, L, GET TRENCH DISGUISE, R, R, D, SHOOT SUPERGREEN, D, R, R, R, U, R, R, U, R, R, U, R, R, R, U, R, GET IN ESCAPE POOL, WAIT FOR TRAIN TO REACH BRIDGE - GAME COMPLETE.

-JONATHAN BARLOW, Southampton

MERCENARY - THE SECOND CITY

Here's a neat tip to allow Amiga-owning Mercenary fans access to the author's cheat room where you'll get keys to every door, passes out of prison and the ability to carry scodes of goodies in your pockets!

Fly the dominion dart as usual, fly to above 350 meters, level off (your speed should be 1,394 kph) and fire a missile. Pick the missile up once you get close to it and then land. On to 88 88, take the cracked megablast unit and go to 8104, go underground, exit your ship and walk through the temple door - feng!

SIMON LAW, Crediton

CARRIER COMMAND

A handy tip to find the enemy carrier.

Start an action game and set course for Golan (just east of Thermopylae). Stay just out of range for approximately 10 minutes. As soon as the message focus is now an enemy island appears, launch a Manta and fly towards the north side of the island. The enemy carrier will be directly ahead of you.



When you're aiming a Manta, try locking it up with both missiles and a laser (plus whatever you wish to carry in the rear compartment).

STUART BAX,
Walton on Thames

IMPOSSIBLE MISSION (C64)

How could we resist publishing a poke for such a good game? (especially as we give it away free on the cover of our American issue).

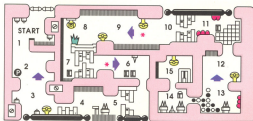
Enter and RUN this short listing before loading the game and you'll find the sprite collision detection has been disabled (the robots can't kill you).

- 1 FOR 31-320 TO 321:RNDM(C64) *PPOKE
- 2 PPOKE
- 3 PPOKE THEN PPOKE 127,128:RND 200
- 4 PRINT "GAMA ENERGY"
- 5 DATA 50,104,225,160,80,140,240,3,188,1
- 6 DATA 141,244,3,75,13,8,72,77,88,188
- 9 DATA 90,144,161,99,92,192,95,98

THE MASTER HACKER, Holywell



CYBERNOID MAPPED

BRUCE ROBERTSON, *Starwage*

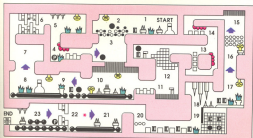
STAGE

1

-  GUN
-  MAIN CARGO PICK UP POINT
-  DRONE
-  CANNISTER
-  MISSILE LAUNCHER
-  BLOCKS
-  CATERPILLAR
-  ALIEN WAVES
-  REAR GUN ADD ON
-  MOVING ALIENS
-  PLANT

STAGE

2





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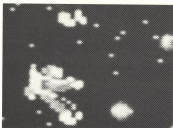
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ZYBEX

An infinite lives game for the C64. Simply type in the listing and RUN it.

100 DATA 81,80,0,0,100,70
110 DATA 141,200,0,100,1
120 DATA 14,1,201,200,100
130 DATA 81,141,121,0,100
140 DATA 1,141,120,0,70
150 DATA 8,4,100,100,141
160 DATA 100,110,70,0,90
170 FOR I=100 TO 304
180 READ A(PORN):L=I*NEXT
190 PORN=157:GOTO PORN

NEIL WHITFIELD, Washington,
Tyne and Wear



OUTRUN

ST owners not only get the best version of the game to date, but some handy tips too.

Type in **STARON** while playing the game for a selection of the following codes:

- B - Gives extended play
- G - Gives you some information about the program
- T - Adds ten seconds to your time
- S - Takes you through the locations
- D - saves the screen in DEGRAF format
- I - crashes the computer!

MARTYN CARR, Woking

STARQUAKE

It may be old on 8-bit machines but STers have only recently been able to join in the fun. These codes will help you if your having problems with the Teleporters.

TROET HIND KIRANG FOKIA SOLUN CYNCE
NALED DAVHO BORNED TONN PUSHD NICKA
LUANG CHING SOOCH

SIMON JACOBS, Birmingham



TARGET:RENEGADE

This tip should prove valuable to Spectrum owners who are finding the game a little tough for them.

Play the game until you have enough points to register your name on the hi-score table. When entering your name, hold down CAPS LOCK and press BREAK, enter a line and a half of characters and then press enter. Let the game count down and then continue to play with infinite lives (the game screen will be corrupted for a short while but it will clear itself).

DARREN BARTLETT, Hayes



NORTHSTAR

Spectrum owners need worry no longer as this infinite lives game will solve your problems.

30 LOAD CODE
40 FOR N=65448 TO 65450
50 PORN 0
60 PORN 1,0
70 NEXT N
80 RANDOMIZE USP:65450
90 DATA 40,30,30,340,100,100,10,100
100 GCM INFINITE LIVES

JAMES TOUCH, Aberdeen

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Tony Ross gets his teeth into two newcomers this month - both from Jade Games. *New Order's* an American import, run over here under license while *Chronicles* are British through and through...

NEW ORDER

Jade Games

No, there's no connection with that pop group from Manchester. This is a game featuring star-stup teams swarming through space attacking, destroying or eliminating the systems. Set in a 30 x 20 x 30 chunk of space up to 50 players engage in space building by occupying and controlling every of the 700 planets scattered throughout 300 star systems.

There is a great deal of detail in *New Order*, with seven detailed attributes to space ships and ten ship-types. I think the six pages of glossary and two pages explaining abbreviations give a good guide to the complexity of the game.

Victory is achieved by building, controlling, destroying or destroying colonies. Points are awarded according to the type of player you are, and the first to score approximately 1000-2000 (2000 +/- 10%) is the winner.

Unusually for an American designed

CHRONICLES

Jade Games

In the last year or two, several computer moderated fantasy games have appeared, and these now present a credible alternative to the dice, board-top, games. Jade has brought out not one, but two such games in rather two sessions, the 180-player *Chronicles of the Kingdom of Arden* and the 500-player *Chronicles of Elph*.

I found the rulesheet brief and a bit vague about the player's role in the game. So far as I can tell, each player starts off the role of a province with five cities at his command. Each province is 50 miles square and there are five empty provinces for every player in the game.

Through conquest, settlement, trade and diplomacy, players expand their provinces and use it to build towns or levels. Spots are charged at five a week(?) up to Empires. Using the way, players can form bands and even take over regions with the help of other players. The rank increases do not depend on province conquest but on reputation points gained from successful actions like the - it encourages less violent strategies.

So what else is there to see to see and how to cast a cheap flag for the last seven orders. Sounds good, but unless orders cost 10p each as a 100 order item would be £1.10. After two days there is an extensive rulebook which sets £1.00 and this gives extra information and orders. I believe this book is the same for both games.

The two games are set in different areas of Arden and the major difference, other than the number of the players, is the lack of an interest mod system in the larger game. The only way to dispose in the game is to write directly to those players whose address you receive when you need them.

Each rulesheet has a copy of the map in the inside and A1 size (rough) copies are available from Jade. You can fill out a bedroom wall with these. They are only black and white, but well-down, and they make mapping easier. Perhaps Jade would consider producing A1 size gridbed tracing paper to go with the maps.

COMPLEXITY 7 ENJOYMENT 7
PRESENTATION 7 SKILL 6
ACE RATING 8

COMPANY ADDRESSES

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PLAY IT... BY MAIL

From reading the detailed 88-page rulebook the impression is of a complex but well thought out game. There are some features which were derived from other games, most notably the player type dispensation. Xenophobia, Power and Crusades which may seem familiar to players of Star Wars, the first space PBM game.

There is little here in the part of *New Order* that hasn't been done before. Space games tend to have similar features. As usual, some form of hypercube jump system is employed, otherwise the game would be very difficult to stage while remaining viable.

Overall, there is only one price for here. It is £100.00, which is considerable expensive for a computer moderated game. Given the complexity of the game, though, I can easily prepared to accept that the price is justified. It also costs £2.00 to start a game and the rulesheet costs £1.00. The ACE rating is lower because of the cost, which might exclude many prospective players.

COMPLEXITY 5 ENJOYMENT 5
PRESENTATION 7 SKILL 6
ACE RATING 6

SPECIAL DELIVERY

Crestwell's World has been taken over by Crestwell and is now run entirely by GM Andy Smith (not of ACE) from the new address below. Former GM Mark Dawson likes the post office so much, that he now writes for them, delivering your orders or enquiries!

The new address for Crestwell is 4 Crestwell Avenue, Clonsilla, Blackpool, FY15 5BE. I haven't seen anything of this game yet, though I know it's one of the oldest UK fantasy campaigns and was originally set up by KJC. I believe it is undergoing revisions following the 8th year.

Bill will KJC (game on some of you others, tell

me what's happening). To'sh's column, mentioned in the June ACE, has managed over 2,100 players, with 36 games started. Our ACE reviewer isn't doing too well and should be reporting next issue.

We received several letters, including some from editors of Fantasies. These are amateur magazines dedicated to providing extra information about play games, along with poetry, letters, fiction and general things. I hope to come some in a future issue, so if you write one, drop me a copy.

Until next time, may all your orders arrive safely.



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No one wants to spend more money than necessary in setting up a decent home music studio. Inevitably, though, you'll want more than one MIDI synthesizer or sampler—maybe even three-or-four. The problem is that it could cost \$1,000 for a decent full-sized keyboard, many of us can't even afford one.

A computer-based system which can handle your sequencing, pitch editing, and even functions such as scorewriting is part of the solution. Obviously, you could also save money by avoiding unnecessary duplication of equipment, and the magic of MIDI can make use of the most expensive, bulky parts of a synth—the keyboard itself—redundant. Increasingly, the best way to save money and space is to forget the idea of buying multiple keyboards, and invest instead in a single controlling master or host keyboard, and several keyboardless MIDI sound modules.

That's the theory. In practice, though, the UK market for master keyboards has been slow to take off. The first Japanese products from Sony, Yamaha and Roland were too pricey to make any impression, and it's only with the advent of Cheatsin's first series keyboards that the idea has become practical to musicians on a reasonable budget.

Most of you will know that Cheatsin started off in the home computer market, and later life music through the popular Spectrason digital drum machines sold on for the Macintosh computers. Now the Cheatsin music range includes MIDI keyboards, drum machines, sequencers, drum kits and synthesizers.

The keyboards are particularly impressive, because they are such amazingly good value for money compared to Japanese and American competitors. In fact, the most expensive Cheatsin keyboard now costs less than the cheapest from other manufacturers!

WORKSHOP

What exactly is a master keyboard, and for? Put simply, it produces no sounds, but generates MIDI signals which control sound-producing keyboardless modules. These signals include pitches, performance features like pitch bend and vibrato, and pitch change instructions which tell the slave synth which sound to play.

Practically every new synthesizer produced now appears in a cheaper keyboardless module form: for instance the Yamaha DX11 and the TX11 and the TXM1 module, the Roland D10 and D10R module, and the Emusic Mirage sampler and Mirage M module. Some units, such as the popular Akai S900 sampler, are only available in modular form. By setting each module to respond to a different MIDI channel, a single master keyboard can control dozens of slave synths.

Of course, you also need a good keyboard if you're programming a sequencer. Many synths, even fairly expensive ones, have relatively poor keyboards which soon become tiring to play, so it makes sense to invest in one good master keyboard instead.

BUDGET IVORY

A master keyboard can enable you to control a host of MIDI-compatible systems, from synthesiser modules to drum machines. Up till now, however, they've been priced out of the range of all but the enthusiastic professional. CHRIS JENKINS looks at Cheetah's latest range - expensive it isn't...

THE GOODS

Cheetah's basic keyboard is the M20, discontinued, but still available. The 129 unit is the absolute minimum you'll need to control a synth module. It features five octaves of full-size keys, a pitch bend wheel, and buttons to change the sound program, or patch, of the synth module you're controlling. It doesn't have velocity response, so it won't play louder if you hit it harder; it doesn't have aftertouch, so it won't keep it in performance effect if you press the keys down; and it doesn't have a modulation wheel, so you can't modulate, say, a vibrato as you play. But it is cheap, and - remember - it works with any MIDI synth module, from the cheapest to the most expensive.

The M20's slightly enhanced replacement, the M25E, costs £199. More interesting is the next model up - the more professional £275 M25H. As you'd guess from the name, it does have a Velocity sensitivity. It uses synth modules in velocity-responsive, but the

M20V tender and it will play louder, or brighter, or however you have programmed the synth to respond. The feature is so easy if you want to develop any real playing technique.

The three-octave M20V also features pitch bend and modulation wheels, and a more professional bank/patch control pad. This allows you to select the sound you want from the same module by pressing one control key for the 'vector' A, or B, one to use bank 1, 2 to 8, and another for the 'page' 1, 2 to 8. This gives a total of 128 selectable patches, and that's how you will respond happily to this arrangement.

These dedicated keys control the MIDI channel to which you're playing, more the playing pitch up or down an octave (giving an effective range of seven octaves), and put the keyboard in patch select mode. A five-digit red LED display keeps you to touch with what's going on. The M25H is a truly polyphonic, so your synth module will play keep

poly whether it be six, eight, ten or more notes. The one thing you can't do is change the velocity response to suit your playing style. If you want this feature, you have to go to the top-of-the-range M270s.

GET THE HIGH NOTES

The M270s is a six-octave keyboard of £499. If you think that's expensive, bear in mind that the cheapest rival seven-octave full-size keyboard, the Nelson Star M20S, costs £1000.

The Cheetah M270s doesn't have some of the complex features of the M20, but its pretty strong nonetheless. The seven-octave full-size keyboard has a weighted action, and responds to velocity, aftertouch, and release velocity. It can be split into two separate playing zones, each of which can be assigned to one MIDI channel, with patch number, MIDI effect controller type, pitch bend and modulation response, upper and lower tone limit, MIDI port number (three one two, one for each MIDI controller).

There are also overall parameters for velocity response (1 to 999, default 500), type of footswitch controller, and so on. All the information can be stored in one of eight on-board memories, and recalled at very little. While many of the controls feature some special functions, there are dedicated buttons to switch the axes on and off and to switch on the sustain function of each zone. The M270s also features MIDI IN and THRU sockets, and a MIDI MESSAGE function, so you can play the keyboard while the sequence is passing your module through it. This means that you don't have to spend money on a MIDI merge box.

CREAM OF THE CROP

If money's no object, you could spend as much as £798* on a master keyboard such as the Roland Millennium, a wooden, weighted 88-note instrument designed for players brought up on Steinway grand pianos.

The most advanced master keyboard, though, is the Elic M20H at £1000. Features include seven octaves of weighted keys, six playing zones, 84 on-board memories or settings, seven programmable MIDI controller sliders and switches, four MIDI out sockets, and a DDAI facility for driving an external drum machine or sequencer.

The Elic M20H and M20V - luxury for a grand price...



Obviously M270s offers a stunning specification for its price. It may not look so sexy as the Elic with polished woodwork on this page, but that doesn't make an impression when you realize it only costs £499.



The MT32 - velocity sensitive keys give articulation and pitch bend effects - a host of features for \$175.

One particularly welcome feature is the MT32's ability to display the velocity at which you are hitting the keys. No more surprises when you play back a sequence and find it twice as loud as you thought you'd played it!

In what level of effects can you achieve with a synthesizer as powerful as the MT32's? You could program two effects to respond to the whole keyboard range, but with different velocity responses so that as you play harder the sound fades or strikes the lid. You could then switch to a program in which the keyboard is split in half, so that the lower half plays along chords while the top half plays a lead synth sound. Or a finale, by writing up a program which puts a bit of sampled drums on one octave of the keyboard, synths low on another, leads static on two tones and a sample-and-hold sound on the top three.

LA LORE

The latest synth module ideal for use with a MIDI master keyboard is the Roland D10. It is a professional version of the MT32, reviewed in ACE issue 1.

Like MT32, the D10 uses "linear arithmetical synthesis". This is a combination of sampled "brass" sounds and synthesized "bassoon" sounds which give incredibly powerful and realistic results. It has a built-in digital reverb, a selector of sampled drum sounds, and it's multi-timbral, so it can play up to eight sounds at a time under keyboard or computer control.

Unlike the MT32, the D10 fits in a standard 15-inch studio rack, has six sound outputs for separate mixing and effects, rather than just two; has a slot for plugging in sound memory cards; and you can edit the sounds from the front panel or an optional hardware programming box, rather than having to buy a software editing package as you can with the MT32.

There are 100 preset sounds and 60 programmable, and the D10 has some interesting built-in drum tones, too. Check out the music version of Flight of the Bumble Bee, the incredible 100-beat solo in the jazz demo, and the realistic Jamaican reggae demo.

MPV is a very reasonable £360, so the D10 is an ideal complement to any computer-based sequencing system.

● Roland Ltd., Amalgamated Drive, Post Office Centre, Bournemouth, Hants., TD6 8DA



Casio's MT32R synth module can be used either as the controller for the available MSX and the multi-timbral MT32.

Casio's future plans for the music market include the MSX synth module, ideal for use with the MP3A. The MSX is a sound module with two oscillators per voice, multi-stage wave forms, velocity and aftertouch response, 300 preset sounds and 100 programmable memories. It also auto-tunes, so you can play up to six single-note sounds at once. At £275.95, you'll still pay less for an

MIDI keyboard and MSX synth module together than you would for some less well-specified Japanese synths.

● Casio Marketing, Embassy House, Embassy Road, Farnham, Surrey GU10 2PH
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PC WONDER BOARD

Fancy plugging a full-size FM synthesizer into your PC? Audio Digital Technology are bringing out a new expansion card for PC compatibles offering a built-in MIDI port and Yamaha synth circuitry that can produce 230 different stereo FM generated voices with 6-note polyphony.

Called the IBM Music Feature Card, the unit comes with editing software and is the result of collaboration in the US between IBM and Yamaha, but will be distributed exclusively in this country by ADT.

Additional software available separately to accompany the unit includes Yamaha's Player program which gives simple 4-track sequencing options together with up to 64 automatic accompaniments, of which 30 can be user defined.

Alternatively you could try Yamaha's Composer software, which gives up to 16-part composing ability together with printing, control of the Music Feature Card, and the option to import data from real-time performances. The Music Feature card is also compatible with some professional MIDI packages - the Feature 2.5 Sequencer, for example, and iRealizer.

All this will set you back £395 (inc. VAT), which is by no means cheap - but then MIDI equipment for the PC never was. When you consider that you can play almost £190 for a MIDI interface box, the package begins to sound more attractive. Contact ADT on 071 877 4548.

NEXT MONTH

Next month sees the beginning of a new-look music section for ACE. We'll be introducing our new Consultant Editor, who'll be on hand to answer your queries each month, and will bring you all the latest music news and reviews in each issue. And don't forget - if you want to shape the new section, make sure you fill in the questionnaire on page 100 - and you could win a prize into the bargain!

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YOU CAN DO IT!

...help decide what goes in the magazine, that's what. We don't just sit on our backsides here in Bath and write whatever takes our fancy, you know. We do our level best to make sure that what's on these pages is what YOU want to read — and you can help us by filling in our latest reader survey below. We'll reward you by offering five lucky readers an ACE 900 rated game for their machine absolutely free.

1. BE HONEST!

Are you: Under 12 13 to 15 16 to 18 19 to 25 26 to 35 Over 35

2. SPECIAL INTEREST

Are you: Male Female

3. CHOOSE YOUR WEAPON

Which of the following computers do you own or plan to buy.

Own	Want to buy	Own	Want to buy
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Atari ST	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Commodore Amiga	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Acorn Archimedes	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Commodore 64	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Spectrum	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Spectrum +3	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Amstrad 484/484	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Amstrad 486	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Amstrad PC16	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> IBM PC or compatible	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Apple Macintosh	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Atari 1000	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> MSX	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> BBC Master	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify):			

Peripherals:

<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Modem	<input type="checkbox"/> Graphics tablet/light pen	<input type="checkbox"/> MIDI interface
<input type="checkbox"/> Video camera	<input type="checkbox"/> MIDI interface	
<input type="checkbox"/> MIDI keyboard or other MIDI musical equipment		

Is your system cassette-loading only? Yes No

4. A BIRD IN THE HAND...

Please tick/box your level of interest (High, Medium, or Low) in the following sections of this issue...

H	M	L	H	M	L
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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5. TIME FOR NOSTALGIA

Rate your interest as High, Medium, Low or Don't Know (i.e. you didn't see the feature concerned) in the following features that have appeared in recent issues of ACE:

H M L Don't Know					
Apr 10	July	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Back Street! Hackers — what they do and why					
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> License to Thrill — The games learning game					
Apr 9	June	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Essential Issue					
Apr 8	May	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Life Games — Evolution and intelligent aliens					
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Billion Spines — ACE goes to Cambridge					
Apr 7	April	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Break the Bank — Computers and Gambling					
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Progress or Prities? Games, Psychology,					
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Into the Machine... Mike English talks...					

6. YOUR PERSONAL, MOST INTIMATE HABITS...

Apart from games, do you use your mice for:

Word Processing Business Graphics applications Musical applications

7. YOUR INNERMOST DESIRES...

What sort of games do you enjoy playing? Rate your interest in the following categories (High, Medium, or Low)

H M L

<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Core-conversations (e.g. Starstrider, Remort)	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Original wheel-em-ups (e.g. Phileas, Rockblast)	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Innate adventures (e.g. Black Lamp, Tormad)	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Strategy games (e.g. Desford, Lords of Conquest)	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Puzzle games (e.g. Bonecrusher, KOA)	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Adventures	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Simulators (e.g. Flight Simulator-II, Tomeslab)	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Role-playing games (e.g. Ultima IV, Wizard Quest)	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Mind games (e.g. Deep)	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

8. NAME DROPPING

Name your favourite entertainment program: _____

9. HACKING HABITS

Do you: Program in BASIC or another high-level language

Program in assembler Use programs at all

10. THE CREATIVE BIT

It will cost less than one word, give us your comments on ACE together with any suggestions you might like us to consider (on a separate sheet of paper if necessary).

Post to: ACE Survey, 4 Queen Street, Bath BA1 1EQ

YOUR NAME

.....

ADDRESS.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

To qualify for the prize draw, entries must reach us by 12th August 1988

You thought the Spectrum was dead? Then think again! Not only are ACE's readers firmly behind Uncle Clive's little beaut, but they're sick up to here with machine vs machine bigotry too.

Other burning issues of the month include software prices (are we getting ripped off?), disk drives (are they supposed to do that?) and most importantly of all, cricket (Owzat?!). There's more: should you bin your micro? should you use it as a doorstop?

But why not read 'em for yourself, and then tell us what you think: write to ACE letters, 4 Queen Street, Bath BA1 1EJ. There's fame, glory and software to be won, and all for the price of a stamp. Why not fill in the Questionnaire on page 100 while you're about it - and help us make ACE an even better mag!

RE - FTL - ST PMS-187

I cannot believe it, I have just finished reading your sixteen test of "Interceptor" in issue ten of ACE. By the time I had finished I was shaking then. Oh no! What do I see, in the release box "no other samples planned". I cannot understand why E.A. and FTL don't get together and swap some ideas about programming STs and Amigas. I think there must be an almost equal number of Amiga owners and those disliking and/or Disgusted Madsen and that's a pretty big market by anyone's standards to come on ACE, try using some strings.

Disgusted ST owner

M.D. Collins Beeston

We're to see Amiga/Dos or ST intercepts, but putting strings in Silicon Valley can be a bit difficult from this side of the Atlantic, even for the globe-trotting ACE team. The sad fact is, in the States both for ST and Amiga are minority machines living in the shadow of IBM compatibility. Many of the really great games they do get are produced by specialty houses with a particular fondness for one machine or the other, and aren't necessarily entitled with transfer to rival Interceptor as a case in point having been closely followed in the Amiga's sound and graphics capabilities, or conversion to the ST might not be a point or give such impressive results. Still, I'm sure programmers on both sides of the Ocean will learn the valuable lesson it offers on learning water and gameplay.

WOT, NO TAPE?

Not for export, the cover on your June mag reads. I'm disappointed. All of a sudden ACE becomes selective towards its readers.

The overseas readers who are not ACE fans, they must be, for they are paying far too much for your mag) are left out when you start giving games away, but they at least get the ACE card.

Make up your minds clean boys. Let us in on everything or leave us out. You should do best if you take a look at other mags and let them teach you a lesson in overseas readers handling.

And if that doesn't work, well nothing is lost, really. You could rename yourself OREN (only for English readers) for instance. Because if there is one thing I - and

certainly a lot more overseas readers - can do without, it is an over-priced mag that was once good value, but once established became a pain in the ass.

Edward Beck Bath, Netherlands

We'd have loved to bring you overseas readers. Impossible situation, Edward, but unfortunately we didn't have much say in the matter. For copyright reasons we could only distribute the freebie cassette in the UK, so it was either that or abandon the give-away entirely. We let overseas ACE fans in on all the extras we can, but it'd be a shame if everyone missed out when we can give most of our readers such a good game.

ACE LETTERS



**ST = SWEAT**

I have just read the letter entitled "Colossus" in your July 1988 issue, and am writing to disagree most strongly with Greg Gorman and with the review in ACE. I bought "Colossus" for my Amiga recently, and think it is simply the best game I have ever bought.

Everything about the game is superb, especially the sound, although as Greg Gorman only owns a humble ST he probably was deprived in this area. As for the game being too easy to complete, I spent several evenings playing it, opening it, and most importantly enjoying it. I admit that I completed it quite easily, but surely that is the point. I always find that most games are far too difficult and I get bored before I complete them. The complaint that it was 225 and only took 4 hours to complete is ridiculous, many times an video card at least that much and last only 2 hours, attributes like this are typical of ST games, who can be so interested in nothing except low prices.

While I am on the subject of the Atari ST, I would like to comment on the latest tribe being offered by Atari to get people to buy ST's. Twenty-two free games with every ST sale. There's no catch says the advert. B****!! What does it cost to make it profit? If that's not a catch I don't know what is. I can't really blame Atari though, the price increase brings the ST right into the Amiga price bracket, and lets take it, who would buy an ST at the same price as an Amiga? It's like trying to sell a new Gordo at the same price as a new 286!! By offering free patch! It's doubt all the people who will look to take Atari up on the amazingly generous "free offer" will see it this way, but will feel disappointed when they get bored with their free games? I doubt it.

Anyway, if you are still reading, thanks for putting up with my rather biased views. I can't be surprised if you can't risk offering all of these ST games who read your magazine, I didn't include my name or address to similar reason!

Squash

We at ACE visited that wonderful entitled to their own opinion when it comes to games. The said, your liking for the particular Progress offering is little short of mystifying. The sound may have been excellent but the animation was well below par for 386 machines and the controls were pretty poor too.

As the gameplay of this really got me wondering though: if winning more than 4 hours' play out of a 225 game is typical of ST users then why does it makes them a pretty smart bunch. A typical live on video newsgroup costs under £10 and should be worth watching at least for a dozen times at say 30-120 minutes a time. That works out at about £1 an hour, which is far-well worth these days. Compare that to £1.25 an hour for Colossus - assuming you won't want to play once you've completed the game - and the video really looks like a bargain. (Of course you could buy a tape of a film you only wanted to see once, but most people would see instead of something like £1.25 to £2 for the evening, making it again around £1 an hour.)

We start also offering ST users in anyone else for that matter - what else are letters pages for? - but I don't really think you can get away with the Gordo/ST comparison. Amiga games may have the edge on sound and the ability of the editors used, but otherwise they're typically very close to their ST counterparts.

IT WAS, NO GAMEPLAY!

My subject is the game *Carrier Command* and the apparent failure of reviewers to give a true picture of the game. Up to now I have been impressed with the coverage ACE has given of computer gaming, but I give it my cast.

Let me explain exactly what I mean with reference to *Carrier Command*. It is on the face of it an excellent game, a worthy contender for the title "Game of the Year". But it is flawed in a very serious way,

HOT REALLY CRICKET

Many many years ago, I owned a C16 (ugh!) and I started to buy "Commodore User" but then, when seeing the 84 graphics I decided to upgrade it. Now though, I have a problem: should I stay faithful with CG which is getting more and more hampered by the needs of what I buy over a new deal and buy ACE with two games such as "Impossible Mission" and "Sprocky"?

There is only one way to resolve it I thought to myself and tested up "Graham Good's Test Cricket". Over now to Peter Bennett with the results: 1st Inn. CU 81 Belay by scoring with 10 with T Gilman taking 3 wickets, A Neal and S Madings taking 2 each and A King with 5 superb catches. CU lost 86 all out. 1st Inn ACE: A Smith top scoring with 21 with help from A Nelson scoring 20 and F Connor scoring 25.

ACE total 136 for 3 wickets. 2nd Inn. CU: M Penderick top scoring with 19 with S Madings taking 3 wickets, A Neal taking 2 and S Wade 4 in 1 over!

CU total 25 of 1st ACE wins by an innings and 11 runs!

Now I can rest with the

PRIZE LETTER

knowledge that next month I will go out and buy the most wonderful magazine around with news, reviews, and hopefully more free games. ACE!

Send Next Christmas

PS. Couldn't you give up your best covers a bit?

Spide them up? Grrrr!! T Gilman is on his way over in Christmas' right this minute, cricket bat in hand. As for losing CU in each covering Gorman, we put it down to getting a great night's rest before the match (He don't want any Peter Gorman's Sherry Jesters' Symantec Reveals AP stories in The Sun now, do we?)

TOTALS

ACE	136	DEC	
CU	36	LMAN	10
		PLAY ON	
CU	25	ALL OUT	
		ACE WIN BY INS. & 76	

unless, of course I have missed something. My problem is the amount of time it takes for the game to get between stands, or rather the lack of anything to do while it waits. It can take five minutes to get between some stands, that's five minutes of blank empty seats. Now I play games to be entertained not bored, that I realise that real cricketers do spend long boring hours crusing around but then I thought SPALDN was fantasy. Surely just being bored would have revealed the problem with the game. In my view it that review should have looked the surface gloss of games and examine the gameplay. Graphics and presentation are important but they are nothing without good gameplay.

Could the game not contain a time accelerator for those boring ones?

So I ask for your comments, perhaps you do not agree with me and live the minutes of empty seat and escape. For myself a game that lets me play it and write the letter at the same time can't be for the old so you suggest it is.

Is Back Wastage

Two things immediately spring to mind here: first, are you leaving your shores in before writing up? Facing to do so can save you a great deal. Second, are you sure you've got an up-to-date version of

the game? The tips you sent with your letter mention continually running out of fuel, one symptom of pre-production bugs already ironed out in the version we reviewed. You'd be well advised to contact Rainbird about this with a screenshot unless you're still identifying yourself with the game. On the general point, rest assured that we play games very thoroughly indeed here. Though CD contains discs have plenty of surface gloss, there's a solid foundation of competence underneath that has us all enthralled. We're certain most gamers will agree with us if they've got the finished version in hand of them.

◆ DON'T BLAME IT!

I haven't really got any major subject to write to you about, so I will cover several subjects in this letter (Make you own your wages).

First, a bit of advice. I would advise anyone thinking of upgrading to a 386-66 to keep their old computer, say Spectrum or C64. The reason for this is pretty obvious, it being the extortionate price of Amiga and ST software. At prices of £15 to £20 a time your software collection is not going to get too large, unless you resort to pirating, which will only end up in the prices increasing more often. Personally, I can hope to be getting an Amiga, but will not be taking any old, lapsed Spectrum-64K.

Taking of 18 bits what happened in the great price drops we were supposed to be having in early '88? The ST has gone up £180, a nice localized price now, or maybe not? Using in Slough I have always enjoyed very decent to large amounts of software, the used to have three shops: Smiths, WH Smiths and an independent software shop. Since about January of the year however, the indie shop has become business only, Smiths seems to only have retail budget software and even Smiths does not stock all the new titles. I have now taken to mail order buying, which is very cheap but usually involves waits for up to four weeks or more. What I would like to know, through your letters page, is whether this is a local problem or a larger scale one.

In the July issue the Editor, when replying to a letter from A White said that no version of GAC was available for the ST. In the June issue you carried a full review of GAC, which is precisely what the letter writer wanted. Doesn't the editor read his own magazine?

Lastly, please never compare

me to titles who want subject like film reviews, garish cartoon covers etc. etc. In their stead the already plentiful amount of second rate magazines which do this.

◆ Frank Walsh Slough

(Don't our wages? What choice?) We're certainly agree with you on keeping your old machine - many's the time I pine for the old 16 bit and a quick look on Spiders of Mars - but a lot of people just don't have the choice, it's the only way you can upgrade it to suit your age! Spectrum or long-in-the-tooth C64 then it's just not an option either is it.

Read the magazine? I'm too busy writing it mate!

As for our last point, we don't know the meaning of the word 'sympathetic' (It's hard to **** dictionary)

◆ DESK DRIVE DILEMMA

Please! Please put this letter in! Yours will be very useful about my Amiga 500. When I got my Amiga 500, though the software was amazing, the sound incredible, but the disk drive extremely noisy. At first I took no notice of this because I thought all Amigas were like this and my friend bought an Amiga 500, 3-DOCK, HONOR to disk drive was quiet! Why is his disk drive quiet and mine not, and why does Commodore lead on to com-

puter and back on mine but the quiete Sider? Also do you know of anything in anywhere I could make my disk drive quiet? Please answer my letter because I am very concerned.

◆ Michael Griffiths Stockport

The disk drive noise probably isn't anything to worry about. Drives often vary in the amount of noise they make - we get the same thing here with STs - and in any case, a noisy Amiga drive seems to be the rule rather than the exception! (Please don't try to deal with sudden influx of hate mail from Amiga owners.) Good enough, experiments here at ACE show that you're not the only one with flicker problems on Commodore. While it runs fine on one of the two 4800s in the building, it flickers abominably on the other. We asked Melbourne Austral/Melbourne why this should be, but they couldn't come up with an explanation. Hm...

◆ DARK DRIVE DELIGHT

On May 25th of this year I bought an Atari 520STFM from "Datawest" in Leicester for £275. Nothing strange you might say but, a couple of nights ago I decided to format a disk to double size to see what would happen. And guess what? I crashed!

I then got over £500 worth of stuff on and all of it booted back, no

problem. This has led me to the conclusion that I have a double sized disk drive which for a £50 must be pretty rare.

Can I possess a unique machine or does that often just describe added dishes in a machine that is supposed to have a single size-disk?

It there is any way you'd be able to check that theory I have to see if I have to see if I have a 1040 in a £25 case?

I need your answers with interest.

◆ Mark Weston Milton Keynes

The simple answer is that you do have a £25. If I does have a double-sized drive, and this isn't at all unusual any more. Shortly before the unexcitable £100 price rise, Alan took the very sensible and thoroughly professional step of upgrading the £25's drive to 1040 standard, without actually telling anyone. Why the modesty about improving a machine they're suddenly charging more for anyway? Probably because the buying public has such a history of reacting badly to such things. Remember the fine Amstrad got when they altered the 484 and started selling the far better £158 - even though the 484 had been excellent value itself? Well, my guess is that Alan didn't feel like getting criticised unfairly for having down priced a bit-styke £25'.

THAT'S ENOUGH BIGOTRY

Are you all sitting comfortably? Then it begins. First off congratulations on an attractive, well-written, interesting magazine. It breaks my previous monthly reading habit into a coolish chaos.

Believe it or not (as the case may be) I'm not going to mean and write about the (just) lack of reviews for my peticular computer. Nor will I spend a word for problem - I'm sure that you're becoming pretty 'big web' of that business of yourself.

Anyway, enough of this merry banter and onto the real point of my letter (Thumpers and thumpers!) It's clearly but surely getting more than a little marked by all of this Commodore (or versus Spectrum) rattle. It's not about to change which of these machines I happen to use, suffice to say it's one of the two.

To be totally frank, both machines are extremely long in



the room" and right on technically antiquated. However, neither of the old disks can quite be certified dead just yet. Their respective vital sign boxes will, I think, guarantee software production on a large enough scale for at least another few years. I'm glad that you praised Seymour Lightman's letter as I am now quite relieved that not all your readers are double-size reading letters.

Let's keep this thing in perspective, we are, after all, only

writing about a handful or two of semi-conductors tucked inside a moulded/plastic case aren't we?

Okay, sermon over, how I we have any more of the ridiculous immature anti-theo, anti-theo nonsense then it'll give the lot of you a slap across my knee. I mean it, I really do. I conclude, I must admit that I would have to be infinitely naive that my three-pence-worth of opinion will make any impression or much of your self-righteous reading.

◆ Adam White Luton

It'd be nice to think that was the end of all this non-illusion we've been plagued with recently but this kind of thing has been going on so long it'll probably take more than a few letters from the likes of Seymour and Adam to stop it.



IF THE PRICE IS WRONG

Ask any retailer if he'd rather sell you a new TV upgrade to a 16-bit machine and he will inevitably tell you that the price of games on these machines are far too high. As an Atari ST owner I can't argue with that line of logic, after all it's absolutely true.

When I bought my machine some 14 months ago I did so on the assumption that software prices would plummet since ET's became mass market machines. Now that there are 125,000 ST owners in this country alone, it's well past the time when software prices should have fallen. But they haven't, instead we are now faced with a concerted effort by the software houses to extract massive profits by keeping prices in the C20 - C30 range. Indeed some software houses have even increased their prices over the past year (Blitz, Ocean and Tynesoft are the three names which spring immediately to mind). Which is hardly an encouraging sign for us owners.

True, there are some games retailing for C15, but these so-called budget games consist mainly of old converted 8 bit titles which sell on the 4-bit machines for C1.50. Thus C15 can hardly be termed either budget priced or a bargain.

Software houses may try to defend their outrageously high prices by claiming that the 16 bit games are much better than their 8 bit counterparts and take more development time to complete, but this just isn't true. Animation on 16 bit machines is generally substandard the size of the playing area is usually minimal, and more often than not the games are just straightforward conversions of 8 bit games.

Anyway, back to the point, unless the software houses whip up quickly their gross profit margin is going to kill the 16 bit software industry in this country. Or, well, at least I can see my ST as a doorstopper.

If you think what I am saying is utter rubbish, then send your mirth back to when games consoles first arrived in this country. They sold

reasonably well, and were soon abandoned by their owners because they couldn't afford to keep paying the high prices for software. A similar fate now looms on the

horizon for the Amiga and the ST unless the software houses are fit to dramatically reduce their prices in the immediate future. How about all you software houses out there releasing some reasonably priced games for my C400 doorstopper then?

T White Workshop

I don't know about 16-bit software prices being extortionate, those high prices are a major factor in the ST and Amiga getting the growing support from software houses that weren't being seeing recently if you can't build a large software collec-

tion, for selective games like Ohio, Intrepid, Virus or Combat Command really can be worth the extra.

As for crossing the software houses of gross profiteering, that's not necessarily fair either. There's pressure on them from distributors and shopkeepers to keep prices up, and they're also got programs that they fear to mind ST and Amiga programmers are still fairly keen on the ground, so they can get a rather higher price on their skills. Lower prices would certainly give sales a real boost, but only if they're good games that actually reach the shops!

REPORTS OF MY DEATH ARE GREATLY EXAGGERATED

I see you are now running a competition wherein people send you letters stating when which day of lesser form of logic, it takes '10 G Abate' sent you a letter telling your readers, many of whom own Spectrum computers, to throw them away and buy another computer.

As you may have guessed by now, I own a Spectrum 480 and have owned it for nearly four years without any major problems with it. Then along comes this letter and tells me to get rid of it for the simple reason that he does not like the thing.

If I may, I would like to point out a few facts.

1. I own over C400 worth of software and can quite easily walk into a major store and buy more software for it, as he is instructing, my computer is 'dead' then I should not be able to do this, BUT I CAN.

2. You can not quite easily purchase a brand new Spectrum, if they were 'dead' I would not be able to do this. They are easily available - unlike the C64 which could not be found in any of the major stores in Glasgow. It seems to me that Commodore have lost all interest in the C64 concentrating mainly on the Amiga.

3. The Spectrum's graphics aren't, as he puts it, 'inferior' take 'Digger' for example, 'the graphics on that are equal, if not better than the C64. The only thing wrong with it is its lack of software which make it generally unattractive to look at.

I never really went into magazines but on this occasion I felt I had to, I like many other readers, am getting sick and tired of the attitude adopted by a small minority of your readers of my computer is 'dead' (it's computing and stuff

the rest, I realize of course that the Spectrum isn't a prime contender for the new United States defence computer but it is a damn sight better than some other ones I could mention, if that is what happens to you when you buy a Commodore computer I think it sits in the Spectrum.

Finally, two quick questions: 1. What about a 16-bit selling computer games chart in your mag? I have to rely on other mags for that. 2. Why does every second letter in this mag come from an Atari ST owner?

Right I'll leave you to make room for the next letter. Keep up the excellent work.

Good Matchings Glasgow

Why does everyone who writes to your magazine seem to take a strange psychopathic delight in putting down the Spectrum?

Glancing through your letter pages I found a whole host of letters saying how bad and out of date the Spectrum is. One 'poor' person had written a letter about how deeply offended he was because someone had compared his beloved C64 with a Spectrum. One of the choice passages from this letter was, 'The always hated Spectrum and always bad, mainly because of its atrocious graphics they dare to display' Another self-named Spectrum owner to throw their machines away. The big question is, 'Has this person ever actually used a Spectrum?'

I myself am quite happy with my Spectrum. C64 is just a rubber keyboard and fractionally worse graphics) but most games are a pound cheaper on the Spectrum than on the C64 or the Amiga

and about C10 or C14 cheaper than the Atari ST which is an advantage when I am faced with the prospect of having to save up 7 weeks' pocket money for 'The Destroyer'.

Peter Keating Glasgow

My sir, if Abate has stated or a 'honest' view, 'he sees the mag's you cause when you start ignoring all other people's machines?' The fact that you can still buy Spectrums doesn't necessarily mean they're alive and kicking - many burned-out or superseded models have been dumped on the market in previous years - but the continued and vigorous software support is a sure sign of life.

As for Peter's gear about the Spectrum being such an Atari ally for machine types, I think it does have a lot to do with not having used the machine. The similarly vintage C64 has all its strengths - sprites, scrolling, colour and sound - upfared where the casual observer can easily see them, its limitations on the other hand only become apparent over time, so you have to stop the machine quite well to ring it off accurately.

The ACE view on all this is that it's horses for courses. Different machines have different good and bad points, but the main machines we own all have a lot going for them. If you've got a machine that's good at what you like doing or playing, why worry about what anyone else has got? (They would letter you from an Atari ST owner 'I think you'll find the 8-bit owners have had a rather better showing this month)

ACE PINK PAGES

Welcome to the Pink Pages, bursting with indispensable information. A games guide updated with all the hot new software, a hardware guide to tempt you into upgrading, the latest Random Access brain-teasers and the Reader Pages, where lots of great bargains and help can be found.

ACE recommended games have all met extremely high standards of quality. We're confident that these are the very best games available for all machines and all tastes. It's constantly updated and this month there are two very distinguished new entries - *Virus* and *Dark Side*.

Sadly, the sands of time have run out for *Highway Encounter* and *Cosmic Causeway*, as they make way for the new entries. *Highway Encounter* has been there from the beginning, but even this classic game had to hang up its joystick one day. Farewell to those stalwarts and hail and well meet! to the new blood.

ACE RECOMMENDED SOFTWARE

ARCADE ADVENTURES

These games usually give the player a joystick controlled character with which to explore the huge game area.

AIRBALL

Microsoft • April 87 £14.95

Multi-coloured three-dimensional arcade adventure that sees controlling the Ultimate Ape (and in years ahead in terms of graphics detail and presentation, 'ape' as the animal in question, most vegetable gardens and rooms full of various obstacles - all spelling instant death. An outstanding member of a superb genre.

DUNGEON MASTER

Microsoft • April 87 £14.95

A pioneering arcade adventure from the

same game that gives you four characters to guide through a series of dungeons on a quest to find the Precious Wizard's sceptre. Help is created by analysing games that will leave you playing for hours on end.

EAGLE'S NEST

Panorama • August 87 £14.95 • June 87 £14.95

The name of the better. Battered bones, especially on the 16-bit machines. The rising favour of the arcade adventure genre atmosphere and if you like the particular style of game, you won't be disappointed with *Eagle's Nest*.

HEAD OVER HEELS

Orion • Spectrum £7.95 • C64 \$1.95 • T12 \$14.95 • Amstrad £10.95 • £14.95 • £14.95 • £14.95 • £14.95 • £14.95

50 exploration tactics (deals with the huge minute maze-like). Twenty-two characters - *Head and Heels* - all you search for the treasure that will free the game. The puzzle can get very difficult indeed, and you'll often have to split *Head* and *Heels* up to use their different capabilities. The game's 300 locations are well drawn, and the animation is excellent throughout. If you're keen.

MAGIC KNIGHT TRILOGY

Remington • Knight game • Spectrum £14.95 • Amstrad £14.95 • C64 \$1.95 • Spectrum £14.95 • Spectrum £14.95 • Amstrad £14.95 • C64 \$1.95 • Spectrum £14.95 • Spectrum £14.95 • Amstrad £14.95

The trilogy is a series of multi-layered arcade adventures which, as well as all the expected running and jumping, have

a complex system of interaction between characters. In *Swordlord* you must master *Clint* the Wizard from the *Wizard's Castle of Magic*. In *Wizard* time you have to find a way back in time after being catapulted into the 20th century, while in *Swordlord* the time past, we find that the magic knight has been split in two, one part good, the other evil. You can't kill yourself, so the only solution is to merge the two halves. But how? Lots of action, plenty of thought and good graphics make of these winners.



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STRATEGY GAMES

The games for magicians. The games listed in this section will really test your mettle on the battlefield.

BALANCE OF POWER

Microprose/Softdisk • Amiga £24.95 • Atari ST £24.95 • IBM PC £24.95 • Mac £24.95

Defensive strategy game for 10 letters. The player takes the role of one of the superpowers, while either the computer or a friend takes the other. There is a mass of things to see, friends and influence people on a global scale. This can be achieved in a number of ways, including supplying arms or financial aid to national leaders in the hope of toppling a government which is not receptive to the great American or Russian dream (depending on which side you're playing). It's complex, involving and it's difficult to play at the minute minutes. Accounting itself may give an insight into the complex world of geopolitics.



DIPLOMACY

London Games • Amiga £13.95 • Atari ST £13.95 • IBM PC £13.95 • Mac £13.95

The grand old man of state negotiation Diplomacy finally made a one-time computer and four. The game can handle up to ten player and it's an intriguing and really addictive game. There's a real feel to this negotiation.

BALANCE OF POWER



CARRIER COMMAND

Microprose • Amiga £24.95 • Atari ST £24.95 • IBM PC £24.95 • Mac £24.95

A magnificent strategy game played with some great visible action. As commander of the carrier carrier Carrier, it's your job to stop the invasion of an island controlled by the huge aircraft carrier Omega. One of the art graphics is tremendous with great graphics to make an amazing and stunning game.

UMS

Microprose • Amiga £24.95 • Atari ST £24.95 • IBM PC £24.95 • Mac £24.95

Microprose's unusual Military Simulator is designed to simulate a conflict between two forces on a coordinateless terrain. It can be viewed in three dimensions from any one of eight directions. The program provides a real-time 3D of combat or warring. The ST version is available now with the other versions following shortly.

VULCAN

CCC • Spectrum £8.95 • Amiga £13.95

An elegant, simple and impressive strategy game, Vulcan covers the Turbans Campaign of 1947-52. A huge playing area and an attack phase takes the game an impression over the same author's earlier works. Vulcan and Carrier: The Turbans Campaign are available to play and it's self-respecting strategy simulation.

SIMULATIONS

Games that put you at the controls. Whether you're flying helicopters or aeroplanes, or steering bobbeights, simulation games can become very involving.

BOBBLEIGH

Digital Integration • Spectrum £10.95 • Amiga £13.95 • Atari ST £13.95

Bobbleigh is a exciting game with enough things to do to keep you busy. It's a great game to play and it's a great game to play. It's a great game to play and it's a great game to play.

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Crosses 32	1.00	5.00	1.00	5.00	Crosses 29	1.00	7.00	15.00
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Crosses 35	1.00	5.00	1.00	5.00	Crosses 32	1.00	7.00	15.00
Crosses 36	1.00	5.00	1.00	5.00	Crosses 33	1.00	7.00	15.00
Crosses 37	1.00	5.00	1.00	5.00	Crosses 34	1.00	7.00	15.00
Crosses 38	1.00	5.00	1.00	5.00	Crosses 35	1.00	7.00	15.00
Crosses 39	1.00	5.00	1.00	5.00	Crosses 36	1.00	7.00	15.00
Crosses 40	1.00	5.00	1.00	5.00	Crosses 37	1.00	7.00	15.00
Crosses 41	1.00	5.00	1.00	5.00	Crosses 38	1.00	7.00	15.00
Crosses 42	1.00	5.00	1.00	5.00	Crosses 39	1.00	7.00	15.00
Crosses 43	1.00	5.00	1.00	5.00	Crosses 40	1.00	7.00	15.00
Crosses 44	1.00	5.00	1.00	5.00	Crosses 41	1.00	7.00	15.00
Crosses 45	1.00	5.00	1.00	5.00	Crosses 42	1.00	7.00	15.00
Crosses 46	1.00	5.00	1.00	5.00	Crosses 43	1.00	7.00	15.00
Crosses 47	1.00	5.00	1.00	5.00	Crosses 44	1.00	7.00	15.00
Crosses 48	1.00	5.00	1.00	5.00	Crosses 45	1.00	7.00	15.00
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DEFLIKTOR
 Spectrum • ZX81 • ZX80 • ZX81 • ZX80 • ZX81 • ZX80
 Defliktor is the order of the day here and the game is played on the player into to control a laser beam to a detector and all the same time during a number of sets that are produced as well. You'll need to make full use of the screen, fire-light, contacts and advancing and retracting blocks if you're to achieve your aim. Check the fire screen and pull off only two 50 runs to go. Featuring stuff that's worthy of status.

Fortunately you have to divert attention while trying to stop the deflector from obscuring yours. A laser beam and fast trigger finger are both necessary in the very original and large - titled puzzle labyrinth - game.

SPORE
 Spectrum • ZX81 • ZX80 • ZX81 • ZX80 • ZX81 • ZX80
 The winning combination of strategy, tactical thinking and great graphics make Spore a really full price release - what a bargain that is to be able to pick it up for £7.99!



PRISM OF POWER
 Amstrad CPC

NEBULUS
 Spectrum • ZX81 • ZX80 • ZX81 • ZX80 • ZX81 • ZX80
 Guide your ship to the top of eight screens using the spiral of platforms, pits and ledges that form the route. It's a highly original game that strikes a fine balance between frustration and satisfaction, added to which is the heavy sound. How making it a good looking, beautiful winner of a game.

SENTINEL
 Spectrum • ZX81 • ZX80 • ZX81 • ZX80 • ZX81 • ZX80
 Screen and compelling strategy game played over the shaped-out surface of a planet. Controlled by the Sentinel.



SKULDIGGERY
 ZX81 • ZX80 • ZX81 • ZX80

Skulduggery came first completely out into the original on the personal machine. Again just Amiboxian, about you're offing for diamonds in screens over 100 different screens... with it the littlest each screen. Skulduggery comes on playfully (some screens to begin with and a choice of starting point) and is entertaining but play-along.



TETRIS
 Spectrum • ZX81 • ZX80 • ZX81 • ZX80 • ZX81 • ZX80
 A fascinating game on the ZX81. Russian game from the classic main. Amiboxian of playing the best.



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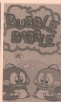
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and various bonuses await as you reach the more difficult later screens. Extraordinary good fun, it's a title on the safety side. Can also be played as one player against the computer.

BUGGY BOY

16k ■ C64 128K ■ 128.000k ■ Amstrad
128.000k ■ 128.000k

A frantic action driving game that will keep you at the wheel until you're blue in the face for a long while. Control the little buggie in the attempt to complete the five grueling courses, including obstacle and tightly written traps. Buggy Boy should have its headlights shining fast.

CONQUEROR

Amstrad ■ Amstrad CPC 16k (single) and 128k versions under development

Once around in your very own land! Lead the army in close combat and you'll get strategy for the cartage. This is a strategy game to get to grips with, but if you believe you'll find you soon become master of the thing. If you still get a 100:1000000000 - target it!



EXOLON

Amstrad ■ Spectrum 12.8m ■ C64
128.000k ■ 128.000k ■ Amstrad 128k
128.000k

Graphically superb forwardly-looking shoot 'em up in which you run, duck and jump your way along a starry, rocky, floating seascape of alien galaxies. A gem.

and a music soundtrack are used to lead the team, but if things are all too tough then you can push off backwater for extra protection and for power.

ODDS

Amstrad ■ Amstrad CPC 16k

A magnificent 'Thomas-like' title. The odds are against you in this one, but the



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Epic Completion ■ C64 128Kba
174 000 ■ IBM PC 128 000 ■ 16 color
interacts with Winter Games and Summer
Games II

Thrilling, action games where the screen is split into two and you can race the computer or a friend. Lots of different Grand Prix circuits, five drive-ups and it scores the all-important average guarantee to give you final timing and your best a real racing treat.

SPIDERTRONIC

174 000 ■ IBM PC 128 000

Save your spider-like character around the game area, collecting scattered jewels in the screen order. The ball in combination of all means you'll be breaking surprise (or twice) to the lives (like other titles).

SUMMER GAMES

174 000 ■ IBM PC 128 000



Eyes opening simulations are of high quality but here have quite captured the personality and style of the original Summer Games and its immediate successor, Summer Games II. One to be played can also make high jumps, gymnastics, springboard diving, clay juggling, shooting, swimming, polo, chess - and others - with lovely large graphics and

smooth animation throughout. Control of your vehicle can be complex so practice is recommended.

SUPER SPRINT

174 000 ■ IBM PC 128 000 ■ 16 color
Amstrad 128 000 Spectrum 128 000 ■
April 87 124 000

One of the better racing conversions currently available. PBR up to three players all competing at once, the screen is fast and furious and it will take a body count to complete some of the more intense circuits that appear later in the game.

THRUST

174 000 ■ Spectrum 128 000 ■ C64
124 000 ■ Amstrad 124 000

Realistic simulation controls and a large helping of real life physics make this look



get the air in absolute trust. Flying deep through the sectors of an enemy-kept planet, you have to get up fast and escape hazardous traps without crashing into the lower walls. Tough enough as it is, but then you've got to have the extra journey with a heavy load during order your own 'hey man, hey' battle.

THUNDERCATS

174 000 ■ C64 128 000 ■ Spectrum
124 000 ■ Amstrad 124 000

The game based on the hit TV series is controlled by its a television screen that just does gameplay. Each of the game's 16 levels is a straight line that you get to finish with a multitude of obstacles to evade along the way. Originally impressive and completely playable too.



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The great old resistance of soaring ships emerges from the draughts and attacking ships while dodging around any large structures. Great realistic-looking draughts and the smoothest steering job I ever played. The best and cheapest above the opposition. 4 stars



All to be noted, especially now that C64 versions come packaged with the excellent Pinhead.

NEW ENTRY

ZARCH / VIRAGE

Spectrum Software ■ Commodore
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It's ACE's highest rated game to date. A solid three dimensional shoot-'em-up with such graphic perfection and lightning accurate graphics that I hesitate to make a claim. Now the 12 bit version has arrived and they're just as good as the 32 bit version (which set the record at 2.5). All but certain to be a nominee in another year for ACE using the 8 bit version.

SPECIALS

Original works that are simply unclassifiable feature in this section.

ATF

Digital Integration ■ C64 £8.99
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Excellent control light simulator. Part 1 & 2 of a range for Digital Integration. An excellent simulation specialist. The equivalent of the 1000 1000, the best being a sure fire hit.

NEW ENTRY

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1 version ■ C64 £1.99 ■ £1.99 ■ Spectrum £1.99 ■ £1.99 ■ Amiga
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The following is Elite (continued from p.16)



just as playable, just as exciting and just as absorbing. Check out the main review on p.14

DRILLER

1 version ■ C64 £1.99 ■ £1.99 ■ Spectrum £1.99 ■ £1.99 ■ Amiga
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This three dimensional masterpiece of exploration and adventure took a year to develop, but the wait was worth it. A whole world was spawned into 8 bit world. Enjoy the days with a feeling of being there! It's creamy, it's fast, it's simply original and very playable. A masterpiece in computer entertainment.

ELITE

1 version ■ Spectrum £12.99 ■ C64
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Puzzle ● Spectrum 17 000 ● C64 0000 (11 000)
Puzzles and action Steve Turner style. Save the world by eliminating alien bases. Small units from the enemy stands to oppose your own fleet, and hopefully make your job a little easier. The ideal game for all Quaker fans looking for a similar new challenge.



MATCH DAY 2
Goal ● Spectrum 17 000 (14 000) ● C64 0000 (11 000) ● Amstrad 00 000 (14 000)
Defining the football game on micro, magnificent graphics, great gameplay, vivid and useful computer equipment. Wonderful moments over the digital make this a must for all computer football fans.

QUEDEX
Taurus ● Spectrum 17 000 (14 000)
In the increasingly challenging game you must steer a metal ball through 50 different systems of mazes, ladders and obstacles, all within a set time limit. The single game concept has a host of added features to make it particularly pleasing you can carry over unsolved bits to the next session, for example, and tackle the different puzzles or places in any order you wish (except puzzles and other absorbing play).

SPINDIZZY
Classic Dreams ● Spectrum 17 000 ● C64 0000 (11 000) ● Amstrad 00 000 (14 000)

Terminator stuff steer your spinning big over tough obstacles and collect gems, against a hectic time limit. The game will allow you a wide variety of cut-throat, simple, smooth, and responsive command by legal steps - and feel safety net. Four levels activate life and escape gaps, but having them in the right order can be harder than it looks. A few bad guys and a lot of cool features, but the experience that bring.



TAU CITY ACADEMY
C64 ● Spectrum 18 000 ● C64 0000 (14 000) ● Amstrad 00 000 (14 000) ● Laser 11 000 000 ● Amiga 1 10 000
Fight simulation goes on up and to space which are both interesting aspects and can be enjoyed. The attention is detail is remarkable as you get off of fun-making missions at a space station. In Academy you get to design your own space station and so well.

WIZBALL
Golem ● Spectrum 17 000 ● Amstrad 00 000 (14 000) ● C64 00 000
A compelling and original ball game in which you become the wizard and must set out to conquer the Golem creature which are used on eliminating the spectrum and rendering the language play vivid. Conquering the wizard's goal for fun and makes this one of the most addictive games to have appeared for a long time.



ADVENTURES

Adventure games require text input from the player and give a text response in return. There are many sub-categories, involving icon-control, graphic depiction of locations, and even speech output.



THE BARD'S TALE

Electronic Arts ■ CH £14.95 ■ Amiga £24.95 ■ Atari ST £24.95 ■ IBM PC £24.95

Build a party of up to six adventurers and sail forth through the city in search of treasure, combat, and fame. Your character develops as you progress during play and the fast-paced, gritty interface - built upon British's iconic isometric base.

BEYOND ZORK

MicroActivision ■ CH £19.95 ■ Amiga £24.95 ■ IBM PC £24.95 ■ Atari ST £24.95

Micro's attempt is made in on the 16-bit platform it is a great success. Leave the fabulous Cosmos of Zork and in a game that combines the wit and ingenuity of one of the world's most popular software companies with state-of-the-art plotting and graphics. Not only, but within an excellent mapping facility.



GUILD OF THIEVES

Blackthorn/Target/Soft ■ CH £24.95 ■ Amiga £24.95 ■ Spectrum £24.95 ■ Amstrad £24.95 ■ Atari ST £24.95 ■ IBM PC £24.95 ■ Amiga £24.95 ■ Atari ST £24.95 ■ Microsoft £24.95

Blackthorn's latest adventure software



Now produce a classic, traditional treasure hunt with state-of-the-art graphics and game play. This builds. Powerful action logic create a surprising game world with humour and imagination.

JEWELS OF DARKNESS

Blackthorn/Target ■ CH £14.95 ■ Spectrum £24.95 ■ Amstrad £14.95 ■ Atari ST £19.95 ■ Amiga £14.95 ■ IBM PC £19.95 ■ Microsoft £19.95

Level 5, Britain's oldest adventure programming firm, has put together one of their master releases. Jewel of Darkness, Dragon Adventure, and Adventure Quest on one disc. The games have been created with graphics and logic capabilities and are on-disc to the original spirit of adventuring as you're free to find.

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RANDOM ACCESS

Welcome to the regular section of the magazine that promises to puzzle, tease and perplex you. We've got a fiendish puzzle and a cryptic crossword to give you some mental exercise, and something to make you chuckle. If you reckon you could draw a cartoon that will give us a giggle, don't hesitate to send it in (for the best chances of reproduction, draw your cartoons black on stiff white paper). If you're one of those types that needs extra motivation to get your thinking cap on then consider the fact that the first correct entry pulled from the hat after the closing date for both the puzzle and the crossword wins £25 worth of software – so, heads down and get to it!

THE ACE PUZZLE No.5

Set by Archie Meade

Take 18 pieces of card and write on them the 18 digits 0-9 as shown.



Place ten of the cards on the table to make a ten-digit number that is exactly divisible by 2. Now place a three-card to the right of those two cards to produce a three-digit number exactly divisible by three. Continue in this way, each time placing a card on the right hand end of the row to produce a four-digit number divisible by four, a five-digit number divisible by five and so on – ending finally with a 18-digit number which must, of course, be exactly divisible by 18.

Thus, each number that is formed must be exactly divisible by the number of digits that the number contains. Needless to say, the cards must not be rearranged once they have been placed on the table!

What 18-digit number will you end with?

Instead of writing this out with pencil and paper why not devise a simple listing that will get your mind to work it for you?

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE No.3

A=2 C=6 E=3

The complete values are:

2 8 2 (prime)
2 2 8 2 1 (52 x 627)
5 8 2 8 8 8 4 (2312 squared)
1 2 7 2 8 2 8 2 7 (283-cubed)

Of the 18 18-digit primes, we need to find the one which can also form the correct digit in each of the expressions in turn, and which for each expression can only result in one answer. For example the prime 181 could not do this there is no other possible, while the prime 181 could be squared as well as 181 (possibly using intermediate and 1818181), and therefore would not result in a unique answer.

The 181 cannot only do it in the first case but also, hence, neither 283 or 283.

The last method selected actually the prime is ten, with listing those for which a single solution is not found. As there are only 18 18-digit primes to be tested against each of the primes, as successive 1818 multiples of 2 to 242 18-digit primes, this method proved to be very time consuming. Using a program each of the 18-digit primes is sorted alphabetically by the substrate, and then each each of these against the values of numbers 2 to 181 in order. A sum 281 is kept track of the number of possible values for each of the prime in turn, and only prime numbers with unique values – so leaving a total of 17. This result is 48 primes containing that the prime 181. This number could further reduced to 28 by eliminating all those values which have a duplicated digit, even as 18181 181 and 2 are 2818181 181. These 28 primes are then placed into 2818 lines of using 2 to create the second of the table to be completed.

Using 18181 in a similar way to the table you can produce another table which is now only those values remaining in the table now. This means that that 18181 prime, which is not as popular in the table but of using 2 which produces the list. The final approach to the puzzle is to use the list only those prime numbers 2818, from which to be able to use the table to be completed.

The application of the substrate's number digits is not done as there is a 18181 number which will produce a correct set of answers. The previous listing method was, however,

HAVE YOU GOT THE GIRLS YET?

NO, I ONLY USE PROTECTED SOFTWARE!



This month's cartoon comes to us courtesy of B. Jefferson of Hull.

PUZZLE ENTRY FORM

NAME

ADDRESS

COMPUTER OWNED

I think the solution is:

.....

Send your answers to: **PUZZLE 5, ACE, 4 Clarendon Street, Bath BA1 1HA** Closing date August 10th.

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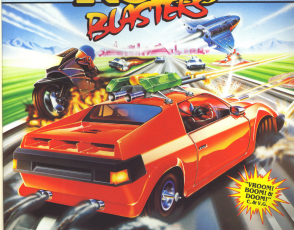
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