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JAMES BOND 007

in

LIVE AND LET DIE
THE COMPUTER GAME



ACTION PACKED

FEATURE ARTICLES

ACTION NEWS: A full PC Show report of anything and everything that is happening on the ST games front. Brought to you this month by Martin Moth and Jason Spiller.

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BITMAP BROTHERS INTERVIEW: Jason Spiller wags chins with the creators of the classic Xenon, and the new future sports game, Speedball.

22

STA SCORING SYSTEM: Yes, it's here! The much heralded, mysterious STA Scoring System! Nick Clarkson shows you how it's done...

103

GIVING THE GAME AWAY: Our prolific tipster, Steve Merrett, brings you cheats for 'Revenge of Doh' and 'Side Arms' amongst others. Whilst that Basildon hacker, Mark Lawrence, pokes 'Impossible Mission' and some others to bits.

40

DUNGEON LETTERS: In a new and much requested feature. Mitch.... oops sorry 'The Troll' answers some of your queries on popular adventures in his own... er, unique style.

52

PLATFORMS MEGATEST: In the return of the mega-test, Steve Merrett, with a spring in his step, casts a critical eye over platform games, and in doing so, sorts out the men from the boys, and the Giana Sisters from the rest of the bunch.

88

MEGA COMP: How many of you have yearned for your very own arcade machine? That many eh! OK, so what are you waiting for, turn to page 76 and you can win a genuine Gauntlet II arcade machine, courtesy of those awfully nice people at US Gold.

76

REVIEWS



SDI: SDI didn't exactly set the coin-op world alight. Could this be due to the fact that its scenario had you saving planets instead of blasting them into oblivion?

38

SPEEDBALL: Kef grabbed the heavy steel ball, paused and aimed for goal - Conroy saw his chance! At full tilt, he charged the veteran from behind taking him off his feet and leaving him writhing on the ground. Conroy sneered: 'Get off the field, old timer, before you really get hurt!'

28

VETERAN: Saigon - still in Saigon - Another day in this hell on Earth! And what's waiting back home for us? No hero's welcome, just hostility and ostracism! How could anyone possibly take this nightmare and turn it into a subject of entertainment?

66

PACMANIA: He's back! Yes, that rotund, yellow, pill-eating fellow has returned. But does he do it in style?

80

MORE REVIEWS

SKYCHASE: Combining excellent two-player arcade action with air-combat flight simulation would, at first glance, seem a tall order. The emphasis in Skychase is not in the satisfaction of the kill, but in the thrill of the chase. Old-fashioned duelling is back with a vengeance.

32

GARFIELD: Just when you thought that every cartoon character had been pixelised, the Edge bring that fat, lazy, lasagne-eater, Garfield, to your computer screen. Is it possible to base a computer game around a cat whose only hobbies are eating and sleeping?

60

STELLA CRUSADE: Do you have a Field Marshall's baton hidden in your knapsack? Have you got what it takes to plan and build an unstoppable force which can sweep the space fleets of the People's Holy Republic from the Kiffryn's Cluster?

70

CYBERNOID: Pirates, it seems, will never die. But the ones in Hewson's newie, Cybernoid, aren't your usual "Yo, ho, ho and a bottle of rum", one-legged variety - Oh no, these are a new wave of nomad space travellers - and they are twice as deadly.

30



STAR GOOSE: Logotron have so far been associated with maze-like puzzle games. But now they have commissioned the likes of Steve Cain and Graham "Kenny" Everett to write a shoot'em-up for them. Is it worth a gander? And is it all its quacked up to be?

72

EXOLON: Armed with a backpack brimming with grenades and a holstered blaster, our hero sets out on his quest. His aim - gratuitous violence!

36

SINBAD: Cinemaware's endeavours to 'bring the movies to our screens' have received a mixed reception. Most certainly, the graphical presentations are stunning - in particular, Defender of the Crown! But critics have said that this artistic extravagance is at the expense of game-play. Are the 'film crew' at Cinemaware creating pieces of art for computer users to marvel at, or is this a case of self indulgence from a group of movie fanatics?

69

TRIP-A-TRON: Wow! The best light synthesiser in the business! We take a trip to the Dark Side of the Moon, only to find... Trip-a-Tron - it's an experience that's guaranteed to leave you Comfortably Numb.

86

DRILLER: Yet another computer game about us Earthlings irresponsibly exhausting our planet's resources to the point of destruction. Do we really need another morality tale?

78



ELITE: Elitism is a quality far beyond courage, skill, acumen and ability. It encompasses all of these and more, and can only be obtained by, who else, elitists. Never has a computer game expected so much from a player! From your inaugural flight as a harmless traveller to your umpteenth mission as a seasoned, affluent and ruthless trader, Elite is not just a game, it can become a part of your life!

64

SKRULL: All adventures have to start somewhere, but the majority of them seem to begin in dark and dank dungeons. I suppose if a story began at the meat counter in Tesco's, you'd be bored stiff by the time you reached the check-out!

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WHAT MORE?

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CREDITS

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ACTION NEWS

PC SHOW SPECIAL

THE computer show that simply everyone who was anyone had to attend had two major differences from last year. First, the name - out with the PCW Show; in with the Personal Computer Show (PC Show). Second, a change of venue from Olympia to Earl's Court as the show had outgrown its previous host.

The entertainment section was as large as ever, with dozens of stands covering the entire spectrum of computer entertainment. A cacophony of noise constantly waged war on punters' eardrums along with almost every gimmick under the sun in an effort to attract them to so-and-so's or such-and-such's stand. Martin Moth and Jason Spiller fill in the details of the biggest computer show in the UK.



MEDIAGENIC

At the show, Mediagenic had a stand about the size of a broom cupboard. This, however, was the place to get boarding tickets for a limo ride to the Inn on the Park, where Mediagenic had their own show going on. 26 feet long Cadillacs with video, telephone and drinks cabinet are certainly THE way to travel around London!

On show for the first time was Afterburner on the ST. The game looks fast and Argonaut have got the aircraft looking good and the controls feel fine, but the game still has a way



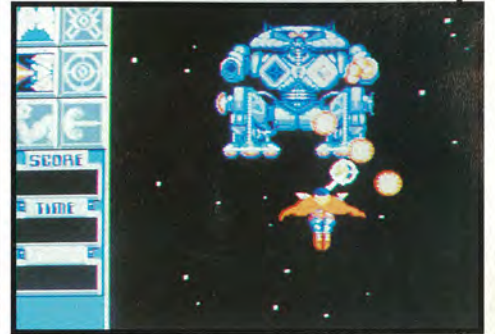
Jason Spiller goes for a ride round London courtesy Mediagenic

to go before it reaches the streets in time for Christmas. Although the game did not look that impressive at

the show, I have a hunch that it will improve by leaps and bounds over the next month or so and prove that Afterburner really can be converted to a home micro. SDI, R-Type, IK+ and Incredible Shrinking Sphere were also playable (a rarity at the show as most games were just demos). One for the New Year will be Time Scanner, a computer pinball simulation with multi-levels.

TYNESOFT

Tynesoft were demoing Superman and Circus Games for the ST. Other games to expect are Mayday Squad (November release) and an 'ST



Up! up and away with Tynesoft's Superman

Mega-pack' featuring Winter Olympiad, Plutos, Seconds Out, Mousetrap, Blood Fever and Frostbyte. A provisional price of £24.95 has been put on this compilation.

DOMARK

A double-decker London bus was the star of Domark's stand, along with a computerised life-sized Spitting Image puppet of Maggie Thatcher ranting and raving about computer games. As for ST games, Live and Let Die, Return of the Jedi, Spitting Image and



Return of the Jedi - the sequel to the sequel from Domark

Computer Maniac's Diary are all under development. A scoop for Domark was revealed at the show - they have signed an agreement whereby Domark, under a new label called Tengen, will produce conversions of all Atari coin-op arcade games. Titles for the near future include APB, Toobin', Dragon Spirit, Vindicators and Xybots.

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OCEAN



Dragon Ninja - fast action, large sprites and smooth animation

Ocean's stand was one of the first to see on entering the show and, with the size of the stand, it was almost impossible to miss. Literally dozens of Operation Wolf arcade machines were in action to promote their major game for Christmas. A WEC Le Mans coin-op also featured as Ocean have signed the rights to convert this coin-op hit for, hopefully, a December release. Dragon Ninja (December release) features some nice animation in another of these popular street-fighting games. Batman (October release) is based on the famous cartoon character and is set out in a cartoon format with the Caped Crusader dealing with the usual gang of 'baddies' including Catwoman and Penguin.

Other games demoed were Daley Thompson's Olympic Challenge, Victory Road and Guerilla War, with videos promoting Robocop and Rambo III. Also on the stand were Typhoon arcade machines; it is hoped that this will be ready for the ST around the New Year.

Batman on the ST - Holy Computing, Robin!



GRANDSLAM

The two major influences on Grandslam's stand were Espionage and the Pac-men. Espionage is a four-player computer board game with hints of chess and draughts with-

in the gameplay. Pacmania was in a playable state, Pacland was only in arcade form but will be available in October. The licence to Running Man, yet another Arnold Shorts-in-leather film, has been snapped up by Grandslam, with the game release

date set in early 1989, and there was a video showing film clips of this and Thunderbirds. According to sources



Pac is back with vengeance in this conversion of the excellent arcade game, PacMania

within the company, Thunderbirds now has a good story board worked out and development of the product is just getting under way. Saint and Greavsie is another board game that is under development but it is too early to say what the final format will take.

BIG APPLE

Big Apple are releasing quite a few games onto the ST market between now and Spring 1989. Lasertrain (release date early '89) sets you in command of a train of the future, navigating your way through eight space stations in the outer stratosphere. Fool's Errand is a fantasy puzzle available later in the Autumn, priced £19.95. Thud Ridge is an F105 Thunderchief flight simulator set in 'Nam. Similar, from what I've seen, to the Afterburner style of game, it also features bombing / cannon-strafting missions, multi-camera views and missions based on real targets in Hanoi. Available in Jan/Feb '89 at £19.95.

Harrier Strike Mission II is another, more comprehensive, combat flight sim where you pilot a carrier-borne Harrier on an assortment of missions. The expected release date is later in the Autumn at a price of £19.95. Oops! is a 32-level, strategy/maze game where the object is to collect eight pods on each of the thirty-two levels avoiding the ever-present enemies. Yet again, the game is due for release in late Autumn at £19.95.

Greased Lightnin' (release date Jan '89) is a game that will instantly be a hit with 50's freaks. Set in the era of hot-rodding, you customise your '63 Corvette and take it for burn-outs in an effort to become 'King of the Road'. Smoke tyres against a T'Bird, a '32 Deuce Coupe and a '63 Dodge Hemi - but watch out for Smokies.

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MICRODEAL

Jug and Fright Night were being demoed, along with their most interesting product, an adventure creator, that will be out sometime in the New Year. The description that I have just given it is not quite true, however, as it can be used for most games, as well as interactive cartoons. The programmer wrote his own version of GEM and it is this that forms the backbone of the program. Having been shown around the program by John Symes, Microdeal's MD, I can say that this is one product that will really be a hit when it comes out.



Fright Night - 'hide behind the sofa' computer gaming



JUG - fast action horizontal-scroller

LORICIELS

Albedo is an arcade adventure that features no less than 15 different games - 11 one-player games and 4



two-player games! The planetoid Albedo has fifteen trials (individual games) that you must pass on your way to discovering the secret held by the Supreme Master. Albedo will be available in late October. Another new game under development is 944 Turbo Cup, a car-racing game based around the Porsche 944 of Rene Metge that is currently sponsored by Loricieis. This should be available in November.

LEFT: Turbo Cup - Porsches galore in this scrolling racing game

INFOGRAMES

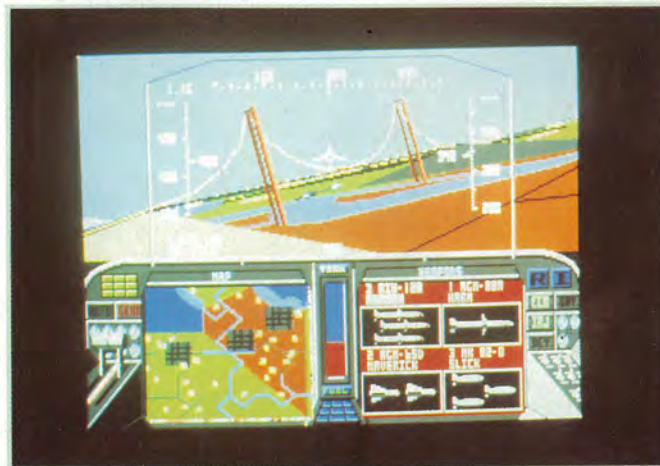
A number of European contingents exhibited at the show, but perhaps the most established and definitely the most prolific was Infogrames. Concurrently, Infogrames had discovered that we were more discerning than they had first believed and were radically altering their tactics. This was evident in the highly acclaimed Captain Blood and the hilarious Stir Crazy and, by all accounts, forthcoming titles promise to continue Infogrames' new-found belief that quality is better than quantity.

MICROPROSE

Star of the MicroProse stand (and the show) undoubtedly went to Super X, the multi-passenger action simulator. Queues of eager passengers formed an integral part of Super X and I can say that some parts of the ride were truly astounding. However, one of the main interests in MicroProse turned out to be the PC version of F19 - Stealth Fighter. The graphics and flight characteristics are stunning and the ST version will be along in the Spring of '89 and promises to be just as good, if not better. Times of Lore is looking extremely interesting and should be available about the time you read this. Major 'Wild Bill' Stealey was in the limelight, as usual, and, when not being interviewed, was to be found in front of his computer playing F19.



Throughout the show, the queue for Prokon never diminished



F19 Stealth Fighter - IBM version shown here; ST version will be an improvement on this.

PUFFY'S SAGA



Screenshot on ST



Screenshot on ST



Screenshot on ST

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One phrase sums up the success and appeal of Arkanoid — "I'll just have another go!" Arkanoid is addictive! Using all the capabilities of the 16 bit micro this conversion is almost an exact replica with all the excitement of the original Taito coin-op smash hit. This is Arkanoid — the blockbuster.



Exceptional graphics, innovative game design and digitised sound all add up to recreate the atmosphere generated in the box office smash hit. Closely following the original storyline you take your platoon, selecting individual men for assignment, who will encounter the enemy and their many booby traps as you seek to find the enemy's underground headquarters. On entering the warren of tunnels you will need flares and a keen eye — your enemy will lunge at you, from beneath the waters which flood the tunnel floor, wielding vicious knives — the atmosphere itself is enough to kill!



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ENTERTAINMENT



DALEY IS BACK Enter the 1988 Olympic Challenge with Daley Thompson as you 'work out' in the gym, where your efforts will directly affect your performance in the competition itself – another first from Ocean.

Ten Olympic events include Long Jump, Shotput, High Jump, 100m Sprint, 400m, 110m Hurdles, Discus, Pole Vault, Javelin and 1500m. You will need all your skills to build on what you hope was, an impressive work-out, and, as is necessary for all top flight athletes, your judgement to select the most effective equipment for each event is now vital – a decision which can win or lose you a place on the podium.

This isn't just another sports simulation, this is a Daley Thompson 'event' where all his talent and humour burst through to make a thrilling and enter taining game play for all the family. Go for the Olympic Challenge!

FROM

ocean

OF THE ART

Hostage is a variation of the highly original game, Prohibition, in which you command a team of crack commandos whose task it is to storm a besieged embassy, eliminate the terrorists and liberate the hostages. The controls prove to be responsive and the figures are large and move realistically as they duck, roll and jump through windows. Mission Neptune is a nautical game with a difference, as a battle on wet bikes is followed by navigating a sub to troubled waters where an under-water battle ensues in deadly earnest. Cutting your assailant's air-pipe sends him shooting to the surface in a swirl of bubbles.

NOVAGEN

The staff at Novagen, and many eager 'Mercenaries' are still anxiously 'Waiting for Godot', (otherwise known as Paul Woakes), to put the



finishing touches to Damocles. Described as: 'A complete solar system of discovery', Damocles encompasses nine planets and nineteen moons and is a fine example of Woakes's forte: smooth and fast scrolling, stunning 3D graphics and immense game content.

In great contrast, Novagen's new programming talent, the flamboyant-sounding Donovan Prince, has completed an arcade game which is described as 'incident-packed'. Finally, reversing the usual process of converting games from the arcade, the explosive ST blaster, Backlash, has been introduced into the arcades with great success.

INTERCEPTOR

Pandora and Players Software are now a part of the Interceptor group and, combined, they are due to release no less than six titles over the next three months. Pandora present a barbarian sword-hacking game called Galdregan's Domain and a traditional vertically-scrolling shoot-'em-up with bolt-on weaponry features and two plane parallax-scrolling backdrops called Outlander. Also, Jules Verne would be amused to discover that Phileas Fogg had been turned into pix-

TELECOMSOFT

Telecomsoft had a very up-tempo stand with plenty of graffiti-covered walls and life-size cut-outs of Cadillacs and muscle-bikes. They backed up the 'street-cred' (their words, not mine) stand with plenty of product, especially for the ST. FISH!, the latest Magnetic Scrolls adventure, is almost finished and will be available from October 26th at £24.95.

Blazing Barrels, by Icom Simulations, has you dodging the bullets of the Wild West as you take the part of Black Jake, the fastest gun in the West, to rid the town of outlaws. 23rd November is the release date and the price is £19.99.

Weird Dreams is the most interesting game from a visual point of view ever to grace the ST's screen. The action takes place in your dreams, and the whole game is freaky. On the screenshot showing one of the levels, you must grab a fish from the shoal that is swimming past and batter (no pun intended) the hideous monsters coming your way.

Three other games coming soon are Verminator, a Black Lamp-type of game where you play the part of a vermin destroyer. Release date: November 16th. Price: £24.95. Savage, written by Probe, will be available in Jan '89 and is an all-action shoot and smash-'em-up with multi levels and differing viewpoints. Finally, Deja Vu II: Lost in Las Vegas is the sequel to Icom Simulations' last interactive graphic adventure. 'Coming soon' at a price of £24.99.



ABOVE: Weird Dreams - a slap round the chops with a wet fish sees off your enemy. Well freaky



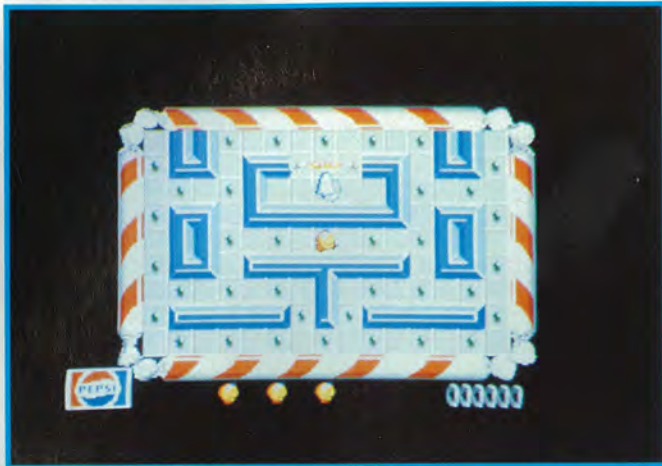
US GOLD/GREMLIN/SSI/GO!

As usual, U.S. Gold brought their glitz and razzmatazz to the show, and all concerned seemed even more bubbly and enthusiastic after another record year of software sales. They sponsored the much publicized National Computer Games Championship in conjunction with the National Association of Boys Clubs, with a prize of £1000 worth of hardware and software for the winner. The nationwide heats were hotly contested and this culminated in a final bout at the show. U.S. Gold have also teamed up with drinks giant, Pepsi, for the Pepsi Challenge Mad Mix Game, a fifteen-level, overhead-perspective game based on Pac Man, but starring the endearing Pepsi Man himself. Once again, U.S. Gold have secured the rights to convert another Sega blockbuster, Thunder Blade. As usual, they promise faithful reproduction of this explosive helicopter assault game which has even superseded Outrun in the arcade popularity

stakes.

Meanwhile, U.S. Gold's affiliated software developers, Gremlin Graphics, SSI and Go!, promise a dozen titles over the next six months. Go!'s proposed releases over the next quarter include road racing in L.E.D Storm, adventures with Joan of Arc, Realm of the Trolls and Forgotten World, while arcade action comes courtesy of Human Killing Machine, Starball and Tiger Road.

Adventurers SSI are continuing their dungeons and dragons quest, with Dungeon Master's Assistant, Heroes of the Lance and Pools of Radiance, which are all expected over the next quarter. Finally, we can look forward to more games from the States thanks to the U.S. Gold and Epyx amalgamation. Over the next few months we can expect The Games - Summer edition and tough Vice Squad strategy, L.A. Crackdown.



(Top right) U.S. Gold bringing glitz and razzmatazz to the show. (Top left) Pepsi Mad Mix - the game seems somewhat familiar to older generation players. (Below left and right) Now here are some screenshots you won't find in any other mag just yet - Thunderblade nearing the end of its extensive development period is looking terrific!



els, as that much loved classic, Around the World in Eighty Days, has finally made the transition to computer. The game is a combination of

arcade action and strategy, and Rainbow Arts have excelled themselves with the artwork. Finally, Debut is a rather high-brow strategy-in-space game, which presents you with the daunting task of stabilizing a planet's eco-system. Meanwhile, Players Software promise the sequel to the respectable combat game, Joe Blade. The war is over and Joe is continuing his horizontal crusade on the streets, massacring punks and muggers along the way.

(Left) Around the world in 80 days - around the computer in an evening



THE EDGE

The Edge were hedging their bets this year as far as developments on the ST and the only noteworthy game on dis-



play at the show was Garfield, which has been described by others as: 'Easily the best cartoon licence ever!' (See Garfield review in this issue of STA). Meanwhile, Ace are continuing to develop first-class arcade conversions, including Alien Syndrome, Soldier of Light and the Taito's arcade hit, Darius.

ELITE

Beyond the Ice Palace, Overlander, Space Harrier and Buggy Boy are just four recent successes from the Elite stables, and over the next quarter they promise a variety of themes ranging from the boat chase from Live and Let Die to Mike Read's Pop Quiz and A Question of Sport - errr yes, Emlyn! Additionally, Ghost and Goblins, Wanderer 3D and the eagerly awaited Paperboy are expected before Christmas.



Live and Let Die - the tie up with Domark seems to be working well

HEWSON

Hewson are slowly but surely becoming a major contender in the software industry with successes like Nebulus, which was awarded Golden Joystick's Best Original game in 1987. Their release schedule over the next three months includes: Stormlord, Guardian and Astoroth.

INFOCOM

When it comes to book-to-computer conversions, James Clavell's novels have got to be the most prolific subject. Infocom have tackled the weighty Shogun, which is due for release in January. Additionally, the latest in the long line of Zork adventures, Zork Zero, is expected in the spring, which will be followed shortly by what is reputed to be the largest computer role-playing game ever, Battletech.

ANCO

Finally, Anco, the software company with integrity, were displaying their very own brand of entertainment, and in pride of place was the occasional dog-eared poster of Samantha and Donna inviting you to a 'Sizzling Evening of Strip Poker!' Still not suitable for children - or adults!

MIRRORSOFT/IMAGE WORKS

Mirrorsoft has made the industry sit up and take notice this year with the launch of their exciting new label, ImageWorks. They commissioned a wealth of programming talent who have produced the most exciting selection of software in the entire show. Sky Chase (reviewed this issue) is a dual-screen, air combat game that will keep you permanently on the edge of your seat, while Speedball, from the Bitmap Brothers, is proving to be irresistible to U.S. publishers, who are vying for the rights to distribute it in the States. Other games include Bomboozal, which is the work of a host of eminent programmers including Crowther and Minter, and Fernandez Must Die, a Crowther/Bishop production.

F16 Falcon from Spectrum Holobyte, and Falcon - a Mig crosses your path performing a Split-S



MANDARIN

'Enter two potential Bestsellers', exclaims Mandarin Software optimistically! Set for a November release is the Lombard/RAC Rally Simulator, which promises a faithful re-enactment from behind the wheel of a class leader - let's hope it's not Skoda! In stark contrast is The Lancelot Adventure Game which is linked to a £5,000 treasure hunt - Camelot here I come! This is a Level 9 production which has been described by its creators as: 'The best game to date!' Well, they would say that, wouldn't they?





P.C.88

HOSTAGES



INFOGRAMMES





MANHATTAN DRUGS

Silmarils are soon to be releasing Manhattan Dealer, a street fighting game where you play the part of an undercover cop determined to stamp out the drug trafficking in Harlem and Chinatown. The usual moves of a streetfighter combine with an element of strategy to make this game a bit different from the run-of-the-mill combat games. Available soon at a price of £19.99.

STARGLIDER II DOES RUN IN MONO!

Our apologies to Argonaut Software and Rainbird about the Starglider II review in last month's ST Action. In the compatibility chart, it was indicated that the game did not run on mono systems but, it runs on both colour AND mono systems. In fact most Rainbird games support the ST's high resolution mono monitor, and Starglider II is probably one of the best games yet which runs in mono.

TOP TEN SCORING GAMES

- | | |
|--------------|-----|
| 1. SDI | 83% |
| 2. Cybernoid | 81% |
| 3. Elite | 78% |
| 4. Driller | 76% |
| 5. Speedball | 75% |
| 6. Stargoose | 71% |
| 7. Pacmania | 70% |
| 8=. Garfield | 66% |
| 8=. Skrull | 66% |
| 10. Exolon | 63% |

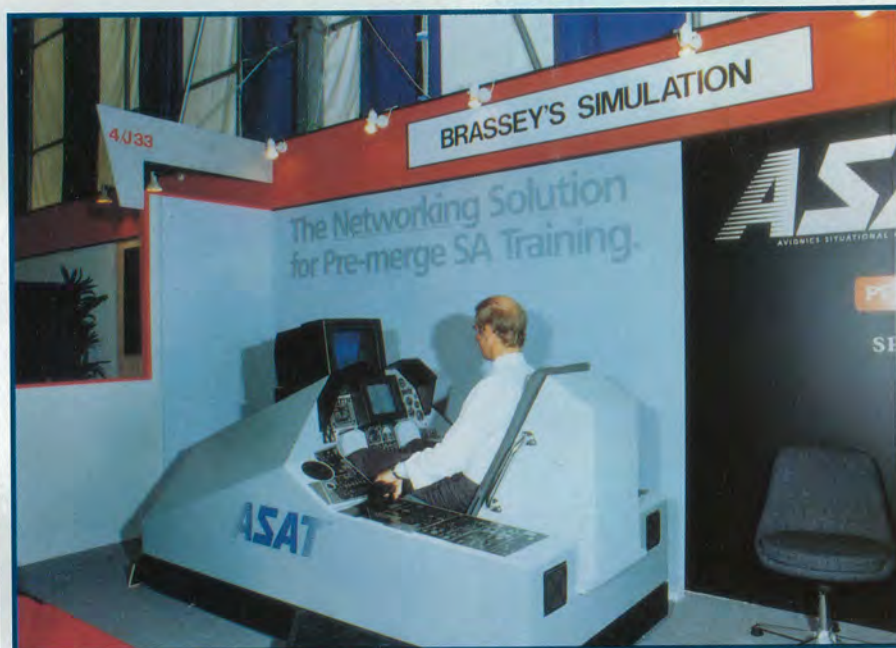
STA

ASAT AT FARNBOROUGH AIR SHOW

Perceptronics, a military simulation systems company, working in conjunction with Sphere Inc., previewed ASAT (Avionics Situational Awareness Trainer) at the recent Farnborough Air Show. The machine, costing \$100,000, is a networkable F16 pre-merge Situational Awareness trainer (pre-merge being the period before visual contact is made in combat). Nothing special in that, you might think, but the real story behind this news item is that the software driving ASAT is the IBM AT version of Falcon, by Spectrum Holobyte (almost identical to the ST version in Beta testing at the moment).

Jim Mackonochie, Chairman of Sphere and Mirrorsoft (seen here flying the ASAT) is understandably thrilled with the merging of military technology and entertainment software industry: 'the software is becoming so realistic that there will soon come a time when kids wishing to fly for real will, with very little training, be able to step into a modern military jet and fly it.' Jim was demonstrating the trainer when a Russian contingent, including their Chief Test Pilot, passed by and stayed to watch. Someone was commenting that Jim was getting surrounded by a lot of Russian aircraft when, all of a sudden, Jim shot down one of the Migs. Apparently the Russians stopped smiling at that moment...

Jim Mackonochie, chairman of Mirrorsoft, tackles with Migs on ASAT



THE MUNSTERS - AGAIN AGAIN

Again Again are releasing an arcade game featuring the Munster family from the cult hit-TV series. The game is being developed by Teque, authors of Terramex. Available mid-November at a price of £19.99.



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Summertime blues

I would like to share my anger with other ST owners at Atari for releasing their new 'Summer Pack' offer with 22 games. As soon as I had bought an Atari 520 STFM earlier this year, Atari released it again but with 22 games and a double-sided disk drive. If only I had just waited I could have had all those games and could have saved myself a fortune by buying double-sided disks. They could have warned us!

James Loh
London N20

Replies unforthcoming

I wish to complain about the responses you get, if any, when writing to a software company. I have written to quite a few with queries about various games I have bought, or about the release date of new games.

Usually, if they do reply, they send something you didn't ask for, such as, a price list or a set of A4 adverts for their games. I really do think software companies could do something more to answer game players' queries, after all, we are the ones who buy their games and put the money into their bank accounts.

I would like to point out, however, that two of the smaller houses, Magnetic Scrolls and Psygnosis, did actually answer my questions and I would like to thank them for this.

Andy M Grossett
Guisborough

Travel in time

Congratulations to ST Action and U.S. Gold for being the first to fulfil H.G. Wells' prophecy of time travel!

To win the U.S. Gold competition, entries should have been posted BEFORE 15th July 1988 yet, according to your answer to a letter, the August issue wouldn't be on the streets UNTIL the 15th July 1988.

Any chance of telling me how I can return in time to an hour before this year's Derby? I'd like to win a few bob, then I could buy the U.S. Gold games and maybe complete them before I start them.

Neil Sutherland
Renfrew

Oops! Ahem.. (Let's hear it cloth-ears! ED.) The date, unfortunately, was a simple error on my part and I apologise for the confusion that it may have caused.

Price differences

On the subject of mail order houses/ software prices, why is it that many mail order houses advertise software that has not yet been released. However, when you place an order unaware of this fact, you are promised delivery within several weeks yet the actual date of delivery may be several months, or never! For example, has anyone managed to successfully order

**The Letters Desk,
ST Action,
10 Theatre Lane,
Chichester,
West Sussex,
PO19 1SR**

a copy of Flying Shark yet?

Software (games) prices are, on the whole, very high. This is patently obvious to the layman by the fact that High Street stores will sell a top title for £24.95, yet that same title will be available from a mail order company for perhaps £16.50. A staggering difference of £8.45 or 34%. Where or to whom does the difference go? Assuming mail order houses make a profit (which they must do to remain in business), how on earth can the RRP of £24.95 be justified?

P A Edwards
Walton-le-Dale

Interrogation time

I would like to ask a few questions:

- 1) Are your tips in Giving the Game Away tested?
- 2) In issue 1 you reviewed Slapfight. Slapfight was also reviewed in issue 2 with differing ratings. You also did the same with Gunship and Jump Jet, how come?
- 3) You said in issue 3 that you did not review old software (letters page, Ashley Griffiths' letter). So what do you do next month but review Moon Patrol, Missile Command and a couple of others - do you call that new?
- 4) Who are DS, SM, SK and HG?

Apart from these moans it is an utterly great magazine - keep up the good work.

John Lee Barker
Mansfield, Woodhouse

Answers:

- 1 - Yes.
- 2 - The second time around the games were reviewed as part of a Megatest. The ratings differ because the games in the Megatest are compared against each other and not, as in the original review, on purely its own merits.
- 3 - Moon Patrol and Missile Command were part of a group of games that were updated and rereleased by Atari. We thought that it would be a good feature to review these games. Most had not been available for the ST beforehand.
- 4 - DS is Dave Stewart, ST Action's Editor; SM is Steve Merrett, chiefly responsible for game reviews and Giving the Game Away; SK is Steve Kennedy, an avid adventure player and HG is our very own Hugh

Gollner, MD of Gollner Publishing and Publisher of ST Action.

More ideas for the mag

In the percentage ratings section of each review, why not give one-line reasons as to why the reviewers gave that mark. For example, 'Sound - 10% - Almost non-existent, just a few beeps'. See what I mean? By the way, are the marks given an average of all three reviewers scores?

On the competition front, keep to only one or two competitions a month, thereby improving the quality and value of the competitions rather than filling the mag with plenty of 'cheap' competitions.

Anyway, enough of my criticisms and ideas. The mag is great (though there is always room for improvement) and the reviewers sound like sensible people, even if one does have an invisible 10 feet tall dragon. Who doesn't?

I would like to see this letter printed, as a friend of mine says that you do not even read, let alone print hand-written letters.

Keep up the good work and shame Amiga owners and make Speccy owners pale into insignificance. Viva la ST!

Colin Brown
Birkenhead

We do read ALL the letters we receive, even if they are hand-written. However, please make sure that they are legible as it does make it slightly easier for us when there are so many letters. One good point when writing to ST Action (no matter what it is about) is to put your 'phone number on your correspondence (well done, Colin) as it is often quicker and easier for us to ring you up about questions and queries that you have. Please remember, though, that we have a very high workload and therefore your patience is valued greatly in these matters.

The scores given are an average of all three reviewers marks. Hopefully, (I know we've said this for month's now, so just bear with us) the way the scores are worked out will be featured in an article this month.

In reverse gear

Please could you let me know if it is possible to obtain back issues of ST Action and, if so, how much? Is it also possible to obtain a binder to keep the magazines together?

N Johnson
Rochdale

Back issues are available in VERY limited quantities from our offices at 10 Theatre Lane, Chichester (and NOT from Avon Direct Mail) for £1.78 in the UK. That's £1.30 for the mag and 48p for postage. If you are outside of the UK, then please phone for prices. As for binders, we're still looking in order to

get the best deal for you, our readers.

Enjoy the scenery

Referring to Vol 1 issue 4 page 6, there is an interesting item on a new Flight Sim II scenery disk for Western Europe released by SubLogic. Now I am a Flight Sim II freak - its the nearest I can get to flying without vast expenditure. But nowhere can I find SubLogic's address! My own dealer has tried to order it but each time has been notified by his dealer in Scotland (I should say supplier) that he also cannot find SubLogic's address.

So please, if you know it, could you advise of SubLogic's address. Why not list useful addresses of companies mentioned in a particular issue in the back of the magazine?

Many thanks for producing a fine magazine - all you need now are some decent 16-bit games to review!

P.S. A feature on how the cover graphics are done would be very interesting.

M Knight
Bolton

SubLOGIC's address is:

713 Edgebrook Drive
Champaign
Illinois 61820
USA
Tel: 0101-217-359-8482

Unfortunately, SubLOGIC do not, at present, have a distributor in the UK.

And now...the Gallery

After hearing your plea for letters I quickly put pen to paper to ask if you have thought about including an art corner (or gallery) in which people send in their works of art done on their STs. You may even think about including, say, a Top Five.

I was wondering if anyone would agree with me as there are bound to be lots of keen artists putting their art packages to good use. I am rather a keen drawer on my ST and I know the ST can produce some quite remarkable results.

Mark Purslow
Marple

Well, do you agree with Mark? Let me know, please.

Zap! Pow!

Could you tell me if there is, or will there be, a 'Zapper' gun available for the ST, similar to the Nintendo gun and, if so, how much does it cost?

David McQuiston
Ballymoney

As far as we know, there are no 'guns' available for the ST at present and we have not heard of any in development. It would also be necessary for games to incorporate the idea within the program and, likewise, we have not heard of any of these. A pity, really, as Operation Wolf (the Christmas release from Ocean) would have been ideal for the 'Zapper'.

Dial M for Modem

I'll start off by saying that ST Action is one of the best mags out for the ST. Who else has given us a detailed set of instructions to make the extra joystick interface.

Anyway, down to business. Is it possible to get a modem and software that will let me log on to Micronet, Prestel and, more specifically, to SHADES (The adventure game) which I have played on my friend's BBC B (yes, a Beeb - it's the only way I can get onto SHADES at the moment)? If it is possible, what would be the best one(s) to get?

B Howe
Stevenage

After consulting with Lee Cooke, ST World's comms expert, he suggested a Miracle Technologies WS2000 as an ideal modem for what you require. As for software to run the modem, try either K-Comm 2, from Kuma, or Flying Start, a PD program. If you have any difficulties, contact Lee at:

*Lee Cooke (STW)
117 Limbrick Lane
Goring-by-Sea
Worthing
West Sussex*

Multi-player blues

Could you please tell me how many multi-player games are available for the ST. You know, the ones that allow more than one ST to be connected up and more than one person can play in the same game. As far as I know, there are only two interactive games for the ST which are Midi Maze and Flight Simulator II. Midi Maze is quite enjoyable when played with more than one player, but is, in itself, quite a primitive game. Why can't we have more games that use interactive play of this kind, games like Carrier Command and Dungeon Master. Carrier Command is a brilliant game but, as most of you realize, it is much too easy. It would be something if you could even have two players in the game, one trying to defeat the other on equal intelligence. I think that

things like that aren't impossible to most experienced programmers or software houses. I presume the reason that they do not explore this potential is that they think there won't be enough people interested in a program like that. But I ask you, how many people out there know of other ST owners in their streets and would like to have programs that use interactive play? Definitely not just a handful of people.

I hope more readers will write in to share my hope for this possibility and to show software publishers and games writers alike that the people they sell their games to would like to see more interactive computer games.

Patrick Van Der Nat
St. Helier

Trackball query

I'm writing to enquire about any information you have on Trackball joysticks. It is a long time since I have seen an advert for Trackball joysticks and I would like to know if they are still available? I remember that a firm called WICO used to manufacture them and sell them for around £40.

That was a while ago obviously. Please could you come up with an address so that I could obtain one?

P.S. Keep up the good work, especially 'Action News'.

Allan Kew
Thame

Yes, the Trackball is still in production with Atari UK (identical to the WICO model) and Silica Shop stock it at a price of £13.50. However, the Atari Trackball does not work with the ST without much internal modification (maybe a future article?). The only trackball that will work unmodified with the ST is the Marconi Trackball that costs around the £70 mark!

Uninvited plea

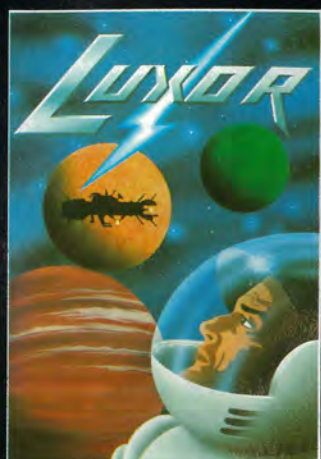
In your review of Mirrorsoft's 'Uninvited' (issue 4) you mention that a hint sheet is available. Please could you let me know where I can obtain one as I am stuck!

Ruth Adams
Southampton

Uninvited hint sheets are available from Mirrorsoft directly. If you phone them on (01) 377 4645, they will send you a hint sheet. They also have hint sheets for other Mirrorsoft titles, but not all.

STA

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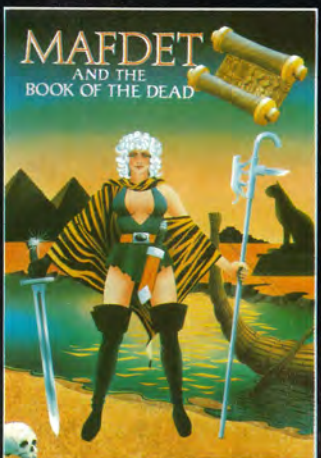
Love and magic will help you win the day — you must not fail in this mission. Collect power points to recharge your guns and life-support systems as you battle through the planets.



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The Bitmap Brothers

During the course of a year, and on the strength of one product, The Bitmap Brothers have become one of the most sought after software developers in the industry: Jason Spiller decided to find out why and how.

Mirrorsoft invited representatives from many computer journals to attend the launch of their new software label at the London Savoy Hotel. But they also ended months of speculation with another announcement. Tom Watson, Marketing Manager of *ImageWorks*: 'In addition to the exciting launch of the *ImageWorks* label, I'm happy to announce that we have signed up the much sought-after *Bitmap Brothers*. We are in the unique position of having products ready for the new label and the Bitmap's first game for *ImageWorks*, *Speedball*, is near completion.' He turned to the Bitmaps and added, 'we are reliably informed!'



During conversation with the Managing Director of *ImageWorks*, Peter Bilotta, I perceived that he considered the Bitmaps to be a bit of a catch: 'We had already signed up a number of eminent, independent soft-

ware writers for *ImageWorks* including Tony Crowther, David Bishop and Adrian Stevens, when the Bitmaps made their presence known. Five major publishers were contesting for them at the time and they were about to sign up with one particular company when we presented them with a more attractive offer.'

During lunch, I sat next to Bitmap Brother, Steve Kelly, a nonconformist if ever there was one, with waist-length hair, round glasses, jeans and tee shirt - an unusual contrast to the sea of grey business suits in the Savoy lounge. The kitchen catered for his vegetarian needs, but he seemed even less at ease with the occasion as the waiters served up the main course for us carnivores - suckling pig! I ladled on the apple sauce as he tucked into his nut cutlet, and during our lunchtime tete-a-tete, I became more intrigued by these 'sought-after' *Bitmap Brothers*. Why, on the strength of one product, *Xenon*, were five major publishers really vying for them? What was this 'more attractive offer' that *ImageWorks* tempted them with? We arranged an interview on a day when all three Bitmaps were to meet Peter Bilotta at *Mirrorsoft*.

In the shadow of Fleet Street, *Mirrorsoft* occupies one floor of a building where they control all of the software labels in the group: PSS, FTL, Mindscape, Spectrum Holobyte, Cinemaware, and now *ImageWorks*. The *ImageWorks* office was a hive of activity with staff preparing press packs, answering constantly ringing telephones and generally dealing with the inquiries generated by *ImageWorks*' successful, nationwide promotional events. The Bitmaps were still in a meeting with the M.D., and as I passed the door a disdainful-looking Steve Kelly emerged from the office to meet me: 'They've started talking money, I always find it embarrassing - Eric deals with that side of the business!' We were soon joined by the other members of the company, Eric Mathews and Mike Montgomery. Obviously they are not brothers and I wondered how they thought up the name - why *Bitmap Brothers*? 'Why not?' Mike retorted quickly as if this was the umpteenth time he had heard the question. Then, in turn, they each gave their own definition of the word, contradicting each other in the process. Steve's description was the most coherent: 'A Bit-map is a way of storing graphic information by mapping each onscreen dot.' Eric interjected: 'I guess it beats calling ourselves the Pixel Gang!'

Three years ago, the Bitmaps were separately pursuing careers in



Mike Montgomery: Why Bitmap Brothers? 'Why not!'

the software industry. Steve and Mike were gainfully employed with Psion and Leisure Genius respectively, but Eric was freelance. 'Even then I could see the advantages of being a free agent, but relying on revenue from small advances and meagre royalties was not easy. My first commission was for a children's educational game called Magic, which few will have heard of and even fewer will have bought. The requirement was for a colourful, amusing game which would keep the kids' attention and so I concentrated on the 'amusing' graphics and Steve was brought in to do the programming, and that's when we first met. Like all educational software, Magic didn't exactly leap up the charts and the effect that the royalties had on my bank balance was negligible. This underwhelming success was not exactly an ego booster, but it was an invaluable lesson in gauging development time and generally learning the business.'

Mike recalled the first time he met Eric. 'He just turned up at Leisure Genius one day with Magic and was enthusiastically demonstrating the game to the bosses. They were not too impressed with the product, but they asked him if he would do the graphics for the Amstrad version of Monopoly.' Steve recollected that while Eric was working on Monopoly, he was doing the Spectrum version of Scrabble. He then introduced Eric to Psion who kept him busy with demos, screenshots and general artwork for

QL software. Eric explained. 'About this time, Steve and I started working on "QL Karate" and again, I did the background graphics and he did the programming. Karate sold well by QL standards and I guess this was our first success, certainly in terms of it being entirely our own project. We were going to sell it ourselves but we decided for better or worse to give it to Eidersoft to publish.'

Leisure Genius was bought out by Virgin and after a year under the new management, Mike left to join Eidersoft. 'After the success of QL karate, Eidersoft commissioned Eric and Steve to do an ST version', Eric continued. 'This was our first sixteen-bit project although we kept to the same working format. This was immediately followed by a conversion onto the Amiga.' I wondered

if working on a new machine presented any problems. Steve answered: 'Eric is more a graphic artist than a programmer and so he benefitted from the excellent art and colour capabilities of the ST. His productivity and the quality of his work improved considerably. But from a programmer's point of view, I had to overcome some problems which were created from working on a completely new machine.' Karate sold well on both formats but the royalties were meagre! Steve continued: 'I then embarked on my own project, an immense arcade-strategy game, but six months later I had to scupper it through lack of funds. I still think it's a

great concept and a perfect application, but in the light of the workload which has been piled on our plates, I don't know whether I'll ever complete it.'

May 1987. Disappointed but not disheartened by the unfinished game,



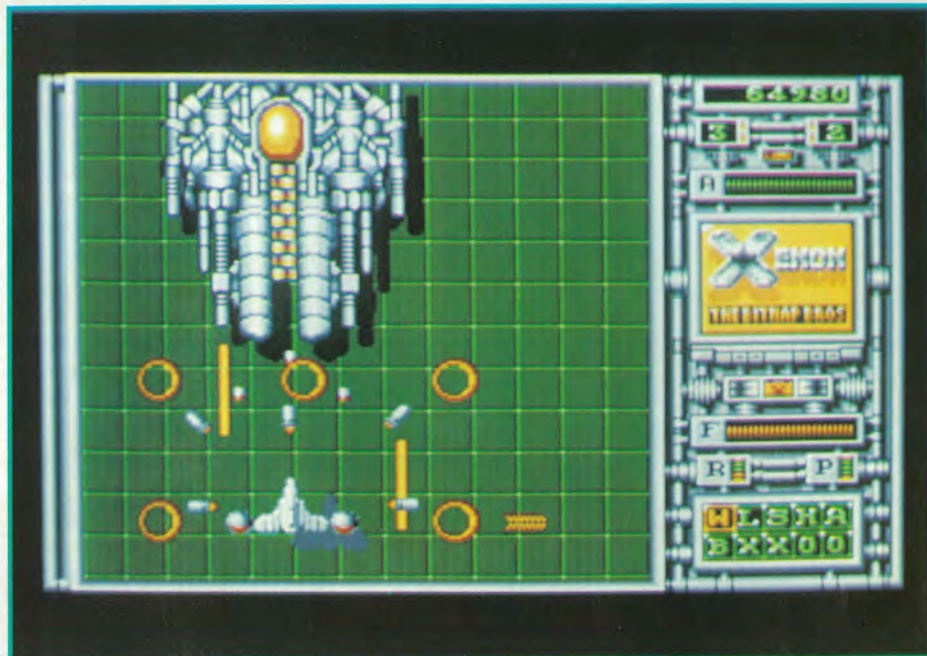
Steve and Eric began work on a project which would eventually earn them reward and acclaim. Eric explained: 'After analyzing the sixteen-bit game market, our discoveries revealed that there were surprisingly few vertically-scrolling shoot'em-ups. However, they were as popular as ever in the arcades and eight-bit format and so we eagerly started work on *Xenon*, content in the knowledge that we would be the only ones to think of such an obvious idea! But we were not far into the project when we received news of a number of scrolling shoot'em-ups in various stages of development. The initial designs for *Xenon* were on paper and



Steve Kelly - a non conformist if ever there was one!

we worked through the entire game and introduced completely original features, adversaries and hazards along the way. From this embryonic stage to the finished product, we predicted that the project would take six or seven months to complete. An Amiga version was required concurrently, but we were heavily immersed in the ST project and so we poached Mike from Eidersoft. When he heard about the terrific salary and company car he wasn't going to get, he didn't need much convincing!

The *Bitmap Brothers* was formed and during the next six months they utilized the development time to its best advantage. But I wondered whether they encountered any problems during the production of *Xenon*? They say two's company - was three a crowd? Mike answered. 'We completed *Xenon* on time and the result was far better than even our high expectations! I think the fact that we are still friends after six months of intensive and pressurized work speaks for itself! Currently we work from our respective homes, but our intentions are to find an office where we can



tell you to stop being a prat.' They all agreed that working in the same office would increase productivity and the ability to air fresh ideas would enhance the creative process considerably.

The programmers, Steve and Mike, had never worked together

and read each other's programming. Machine Code is easily the fastest language and it's lighter to use, although I must admit that de-bugging is a painstaking task.' Mike interjected. 'De-bugging in any language is a pain in the ass! But as Steve says, Machine Code is quick - I can write ten times as fast with it than I can in 'C'! Additionally, we found that on 68000, Assembler is more portable than 'C'. Admittedly the programming process can often seem long-winded, but you can do anything that the machine that you're working on is capable of.' Eric explained that during the course of making *Xenon*, the usual working format altered. 'Rather than each of us performing specific tasks, it became a joint effort and we were engaged in every aspect of the project.'

With *Xenon* completed, what was the next step? Eric continued the account: 'We spent some time preparing a scrolling demo of the game and we took it around to prospective publishers. I orchestrated the promotion and, as expected, all of the companies who saw it wanted it!' I wondered whether U.S. Gold was one of these companies? 'We didn't approach them because creating a certain image for the *Bitmap Brothers* was of paramount importance at the time. U.S. Gold would have packaged and promoted *Xenon* with the usual glitz and razzmatazz and our name would be in some obscure position on the packaging in type that you would have to squint to see. *Xenon* would have been a U.S. Gold game!' Steve continued. 'The criterion was for a smaller company with a lower profile and even if it meant that the initial advance would be less, we knew that the game would sell on its own merit without blanket advertising and a big name. Eventually, we decided on the newly-formed Melbourne House and duly signed a contract with them.'



Eric Mathews: "relying on revenue from small advances and meagre royalties was not easy."

work together. Game design can be quite soul-destroying sometimes and just when you think everything is getting on top of you, it's comforting to know that someone you can trust will

before, but that didn't cause any problems during production. Steve explained: 'Both Mike and I are fluent at Machine Code, which is a real bonus as we can work twice as fast

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Grab your way through Chicago, punch up New York, and jump on San Francisco. Three indescribably nasty characters which bear a remarkable likeness to King Kong, Godzilla and Wolf-Man, on 150 days of destruction, through 50 different cities.
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Based on the popular arcade coin op, ENDURO RACER described as "THE BEST COIN OP CONVERSION AVAILABLE" (Popular Computing Weekly). From tarmac tracks to desert trails, a stunning motorbike race pitting you against time as you compete with deadly opponents and the cruel and challenging terrain...
© 1987 Activision, Inc.



The evil Zark has rendered all landscapes drab and grey. With the help of your faithful servant Catelite restore Wizworld to its former glory. Collect icons for special effects as you manoeuvre to shake off the alien forces. Stunning graphics create the mood for a thrilling and compulsive game with hordes of hidden features and extra controls.

THE VERY BEST IN



ST ENTERTAINMENT

Xenon sold well and became nationally famous when it was chosen to supersede *Starglider* on the Saturday morning television show, 'Get Fresh'. Mike explained: 'Starglider had been used in the game 'Get Mucky' in the last series, but the show organizers wanted to change it. Apparently, the audience and the kids who were playing the game didn't know what was going on and so the need was for a more conventional, points-orientated arcade game. *Xenon* fitted the bill perfectly!' *Xenon* sold well and the longevity of its popularity is remarkable. But the Bitmaps do not attribute this success to its weekly airing on 'Get Fresh'. Eric was adamant. 'The game would have sold well anyway! We were the first to introduce features like weaponry customizing and it was the first vertical scroller with a hundred sprites on screen at one time. If a game comes on the market which is even remotely similar to *Xenon*, it is described as a 'Xenon clone' which is the finest form of flattery. Also, we are thrilled at the announcement that the game is being entered for an award at the P.C.W. show.

I played an incomplete version of the Bitmap's current project, 'Speedball', at the *ImageWorks* launch. I asked Steve if they were on time to meet the completion date? 'After watching the film, 'Rollerball', a dozen or more times, we were inspired to introduce certain features from the film into the game and we decided to make it ruleless and more violent.' I made the observation that a number of companies were developing games which are a combination of Rollerball and football etc. Did this bother them? 'The same thing happened with *Xenon*. I don't think there is any espionage in the industry, but we have learnt that it is prudent to tell as few people as possible about the project we are working on. We have proved ourselves with *Xenon* and we are confident that *Speedball* will be equally well received! Already a great deal of interest has been shown in *Speedball*, and Peter Bilotta is going over to the States next week to deal with inquiries, and hopefully, select a publisher to distribute the game over there.'

During the interview, I perceived that perhaps the *Bitmap Brothers* placed a great deal of importance on creating an image. At great expense, they had contracted a top photographer for their promotional shots and, initially, Eric was adamant that I use them for this interview - I eventually con-



vinced him that original shots would be more interesting to the readers! Is this image mysterious, distant or cool? No their image is their reputation for being brilliant software developers.

Evidently, *ImageWorks* are impressed with the Bitmap's first product, *Speedball*, and the *Brothers* were obviously happy with the working relationship as they signed a contract to produce another three products over the next twelve months.

STA

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Speedball dispenses with sportsmanship, protocol and rules. In the eyes of the corrupt officials and greedy promoters, serious injury and death increase viewer ratings!



Although Xenon was an attractive game and won all sorts of commendation, I didn't rate it that highly because of its difficulty. However, the Bitmaps have returned with the extremely playable Speedball.

On first sight, I was saddened to see what looked like a cast-off screen from Xenon. But I started playing and realised that it was a totally different game - and eminently playable. Though the action is very frantic, Speedball is a piece of cake to play; and within no time I was shoulder-barging with the best of them.

Speedball is a brilliant future sport, and a brilliant computer game. However, I do feel that the 'Brothers should get away from the bas-relief metal graphics, as, although theirs are undoubtedly the best, they are getting a little long in the tooth.

SM

"Kef grabbed the heavy steel ball, paused and aimed for goal - Conroy saw his chance! At full tilt, he charged the veteran from behind taking him off his feet and leaving him writhing on the ground. Conroy sneered: 'Get off the field, old timer, before you really get hurt!'"

SPEEDBALL

IMAGEWORKS (£19.95)

Kef hadn't been on the Speedball circuit since last season, after incurring a spinal injury from Golden Boy's 'over-zealous attack'. The trainers, sponsors and press had written him off and even he had to admit that he was past his best - every knock seemed to hurt ten times as much and injuries never healed! Was it a coincidence that his first game back was against Lacerta and their new appointed captain, Conroy? Or were the sponsors hoping for that much publicized 'revenge clash'? As

the heavy steel ball emerged from the centre and clattered across the pitch, Kef instinctively scooped it up and looked around: 'Now, where's that dirt-bag Conroy?'

After six months development time and numerous 'inspirational' viewings of Rollerball, the Bitmap Brothers have created the most likely contender for the game of the future. Long gone are the days of sportsmanship, team spirit and that well worn proverb reserved for disappointed losers: 'It's not the winning but the taking part that counts!' The Bitmaps portray this as an era of violence, greed and corruption - a bit like the football league today except that the violence has been transferred from the terraces to the field. The first option screen shows one of the player's forearms tensed, with clenched fist pounding his thigh, indicating his impatience to get the ball rolling. Using the joystick, you can select to play against the computer-controlled team or pit your strength against a fellow human. Additionally, you can choose to play for the Speedball League or settle for a quicker knockout tournament. The impatient player pulls on his leather-studded glove and clenches his fist once again.

There are three teams in the league: Verna, who Kef captains; Conroy's team Lacerta; and the mysterious Myra. The game screen displays an overhead projection of the arena as the ten players, five on either side, take position. Suddenly, a central sec-

This game has me in two minds as to whether or not I really like it. On the one hand, it sports really good graphics, slick animation and the overall look and feel of the game is not left wanting in any respect. However, although the gameplay is quite well thought out, Speedball does not inspire me to play and play until the joystick is worn out, and this is one of my main criteria when buying a game. I found myself playing it for a short while and then looking for something else to do. No doubt Speedball will be another Bitmap cult hit, but I think I'll sit this one out.

MM

tion of the field elevates, a door slides open and spits the steel ball into the air. The ball drops down to the pitch and the men in play for both teams are indicated by four arrows, and manipulating the joystick, you must attempt to manoeuvre your player to the ball and gain early possession. The joystick



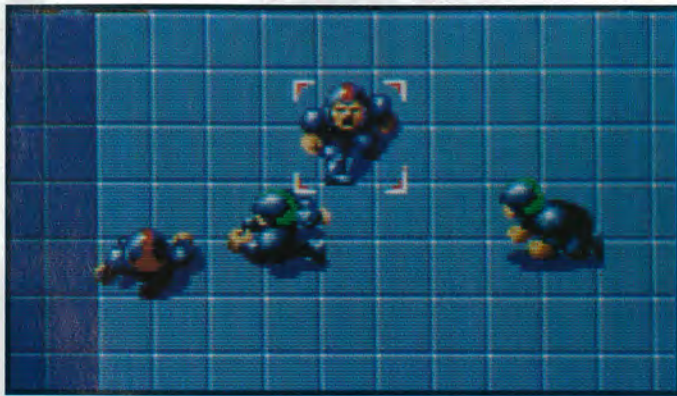
cope with the action magnificently and the controls are direct and responsive. As with rugby, a player can run with the ball to gain ground, but the real skill is to pass the ball up the field accurately and bring one of the forwards into play. Holding down the firebutton for a second and then releasing, causes the player to throw the ball: in the direction that he is facing, but accuracy can only be achieved with practice. There are two methods of regaining possession of the ball, interception when it is thrown, and stealing from your opponent's grip with a dirty, sliding tackle - obviously inspired by Rollerball!

Speedball is a game of violence and blatant violation of rules, but it is

As expected, the Bitmap Brothers have produced a worthy successor to Xenon! Speedball is, without doubt, the best two-player participation game that I have ever played on a home computer. I understand that a number of American publishers have expressed an interest in the game and I would not be surprised if the Bitmaps were commissioned to produce a version for the arcades. The graphical presentation is slick, the controls respond immediately and this is the first game that has achieved the 'nearest man on' technique effectively. Speedball will undoubtedly race to the top of the software charts and deservedly so.

JS

players are frozen to the spot, the opposition advance up the field unopposed. For



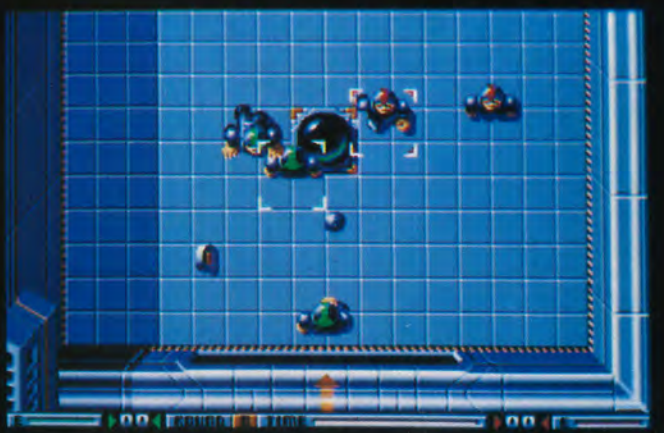
also a game of tactics, utilizing chances and gaining the advantage. There are numerous features indicated by letters which momentarily light up on the pitch, and moving a player over the top absorbs the feature. For example, if a team gains possession of the letter 'J' in a two-player game, the opponent's joystick controls are reversed, resulting in comical consequences. An equally infuriating disability occurs when the letter 'F' is absorbed and while your

your own defence, collecting the letter 'P' protects your team from tackles, while 'W' turns the ball into a fearsome throwing weapon and 'M' sends bolts bouncing around the arena. But perhaps the most amusing feature is the ability to gain possession of the ball no matter where it is in relation to your nearest player - this is hilarious when your opponent thinks he is about to score!

'Time out' and it's time for decisions and tactics! During the course of the game, a number of disks or so-called tokens briefly appear, and collecting them increases your options at half-time. You can choose to bribe the corrupt officials for extra time and even gain an extra goal, or increase your team's stamina, sap your opponent's energy and walk all over them in the second half.

The teams walked out for the second half, and having jumped on every available token, Kef mercilessly chose to reduce the opposition's strength and increase his own stamina. He looked around the field to see Conroy skulking in the corner as helpless as a kitten - Kef began to charge at full tilt!

STA



The ejector door slides open and spits the heavy steel ball into the arena. The ball clatters across the floor and lands with a thud into Kefs gauntlet. The possessor of the ball is a marked man!

STA
Rating

75%

GRAPHICS: 77%
SOUND: 65%

LASTING APPEAL: 72%
ADDICTIVENESS: 75%

DIFFICULTY: AVE/HARD
1ST DAY SCORE: N/A

KEYBOARD
JOYSTICK
MOUSE
COLOUR
MONO
520ST
1040ST

"Pirates, it seems, will never die. But the ones in Hewson's newie, Cybernoid, aren't your usual "Yo, ho, ho and a bottle of rum", one-legged variety - Oh no, these are a new wave of nomad space travellers - and they are twice as deadly".

The Federation is not happy. Its massive underground storage mines are being constantly pillaged, and because of this they are losing billions of pounds-worth of rare minerals, jewels and, more importantly, the latest up-to-date weaponry. Naturally, someone is going to have to do something about it. And, being on the mighty Federations' pay-roll, it is up to you to round'em up, and clear'em out.

The three, flick-screen mines are excellently depicted as a strange hybrid of organic material and sheet metal walls, and once you have left a screen you cannot go back. Above the main playing-screen, your ship's status panel is located. This displays how many lives you have left, your current weapon and the time limit for this level. When you have been in a room for a few seconds the pirates will appear. They arrive, guns ablazing, in groups of five or six and must be shot before they get you. Destroying a pirate causes it to drop its cargo, and you must collect whatever it yields, and anything collected will be added on as a bonus at the end of a level.

Everywhere you go in Cybernoid, something is out to get you! For the main part they are static, launching numerous bombs or missiles, but the two best examples of Cybernoid's deadly, moving inhabitants are the pipe-dwelling aliens who require pixel-perfect positioning to get past; and, possibly the worst of all, a formation of wall-hugging woodlouse-like ships, which simply plough through who-

Cybernoid - bursting with beastly bio-baddies.



CYBERNOID

HEWSON (£19.95)

Graphically, there are quite a few similarities between this and Hewson's other newie, Exolon. Thankfully though, with Cybernoid, they have dropped Exolon's dreary colour scheme and have replaced it with bright primary colours. The game itself, is quite hard with a myriad of aliens appearing on screen at once, and, quite often when this happens, the action slows down considerably, making the controls on your ship fairly sluggish. A very good, all-action shoot'em-up, and another reason to go out and spend money.

NC

ever gets in their way. Thankfully, to combat these odds, your ship is armed with a limited supply of useful additions. These are accessed by pressing any of the keys from F1 through to F5, and once chosen, holding down fire will activate the feature. The extras, for the most part, are heavy artillery, useful for destroying the large plants and any lurking missiles. But even more useful is the defence shield, which turns your ship white, indicating it is immune to all weaponry for a limited period. Extra weapons, such as rear lasers and rotating shield-balls, can also be found lying around the screens, and these will last until you lose a life.

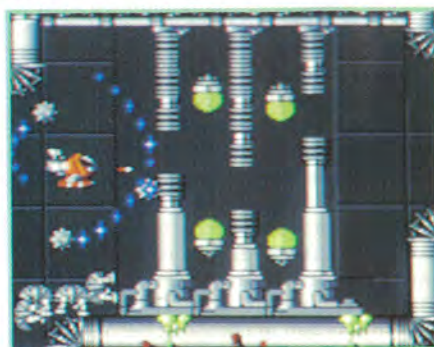
Should you scrape your way through all of a level's screens, you must dock your ship on a teleport similar to the one you began on. You will now sink into a bonus screen which will turn both bounty

collected and time remaining into bonuses. But if you run out of time, or don't collect a certain amount of cargo you will forfeit a life.

STA

Cybernoid has got to be one of the best collect'em-up and shoot'em-ups I have seen in a long while. The organic-style graphics are brilliant, and the screens are absolutely teeming with deadly inhabitants, keeping the player permanently on his guard. Though the title music is nice, the actual game's spot-effects are a little weak and do not complement the incredible explosions. All the little extras you can add to your ship, both look good and serve their purpose, and it's really annoying to get quite a way into the game and then lose them. Though offering nothing new to the genre, Cybernoid has what so many others lack - playability; and once it gets its claws in, you're hooked. An excellent game, not to mention a difficult one, and one that has had me transfixed since it arrived.

SM



--- STA 30 STA ---

STA
Rating
81%

GRAPHICS: 80%
SOUND: 60%

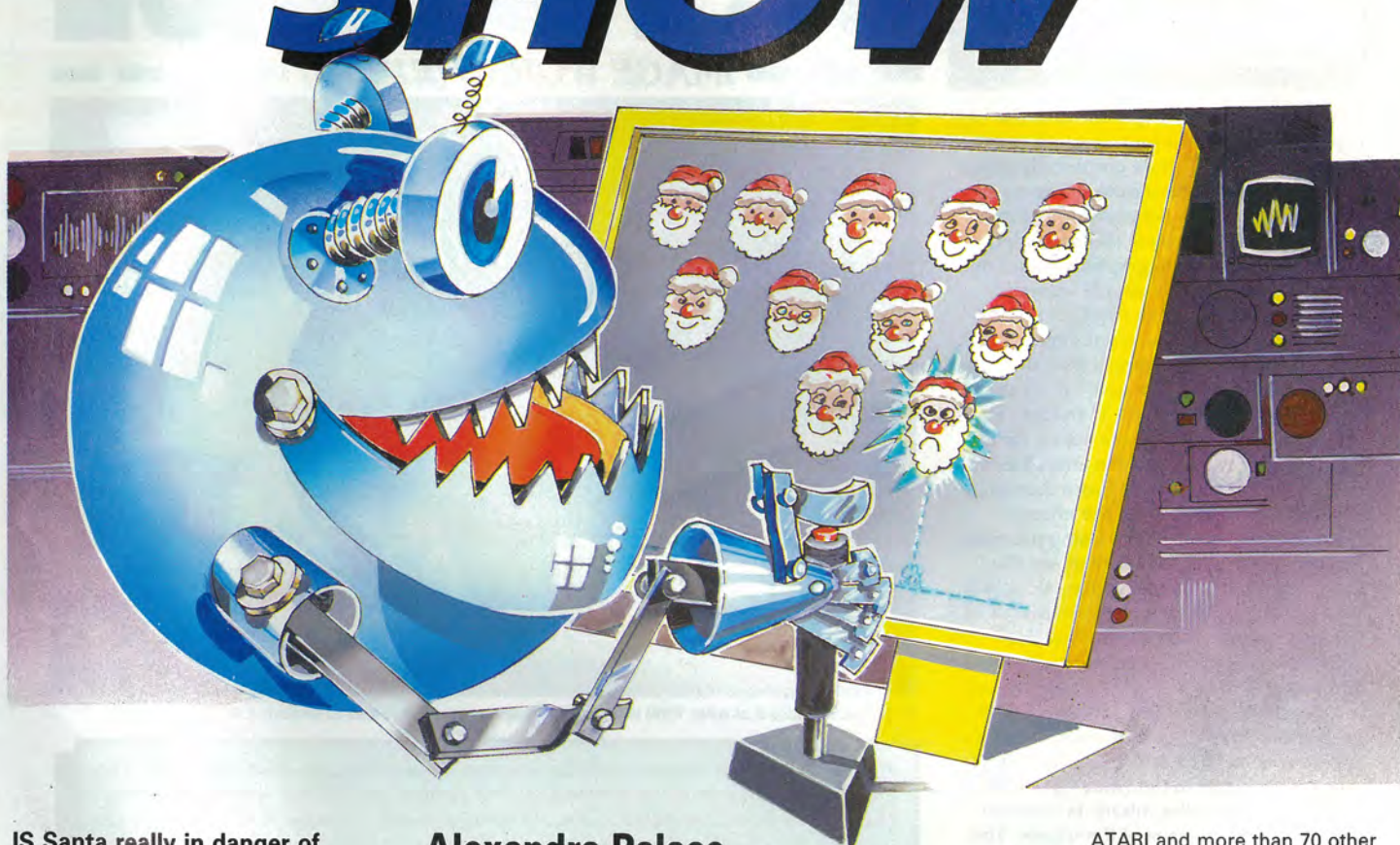
LASTING APPEAL: 75%
ADDICTIVENESS: 82%

DIFFICULTY: AVE/HARD
1ST DAY SCORE: 11643

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SHOW



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DATABASE EXHIBITIONS

To be honest, I fail to see what the attraction is about this standard vector graphic, head-to-head game. True, the vectors are very well done and move well, but the gameplay is uninspiring and repetitive, consisting of simply flying around a grid landscape, shooting your opponent's tail - something that has been done before, two years ago, in Ocean's 8-bit-only 'Top Gun'. The wealth of options add a little to its lasting appeal, but I'm afraid I still came away feeling disappointed. A tedious game and one that doesn't warrant its price tag.

SM

First impressions of Skychase give the feeling that there is a lot missing in comparison with other, more graphically pleasing, flight sims of the moment. However, first impressions do not always hold true, and this is no exception. The reasoning behind the wire-frame graphics and minimalist ground detail is simple - speed. Everything in this game revolves around the maxim: speed, speed and more speed.

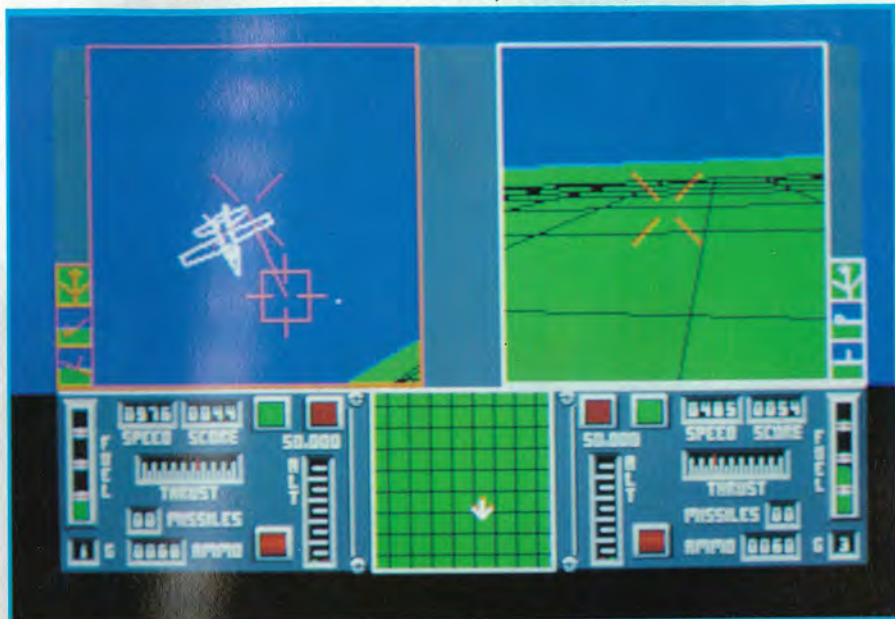
There are no complicated plots to follow in Skychase. The game is all about duelling in the skies, 1 v 1 in military aviation terms. Both aircraft are set up for a head-on intercept. Once the aircraft pass each other the fight is on. From then on, the task is simple - shoot the enemy plane before it shoots you. Using the mapping screen where both aircraft are displayed in relation to each other, along with the out-of-cockpit view, you endeavour to get your opponent in your sights. Your speed can be varied by using the Esc and Tab keys (* and - for your opponent), and the guns are operated by pressing on the fire button. Missiles (small, round, red spheres) need to have the missile lock reticule operative in the Head-Up Display before launching; the missile is released with two quick presses of the trigger. The attitude of each aircraft is given by three boxes by the side of each screen depicting roll, direction of travel and angle of climb.

Each game does not end with a 'kill', but lasts for a finite time, governed by the amount of fuel allocated to the air-

"Combining excellent two-player arcade action with air-combat flight simulation would, at first glance, seem a tall order. The emphasis in Skychase is not in the satisfaction of the kill, but in the thrill of the chase. Old-fashioned duelling is back with a vengeance."

SKYCHASE

IMAGE WORKS (£19.95)



At a closing speed of over 1300 mph, quick responses are needed to ensure a kill.

This is so fast! At times it can be too fast - not often you hear that said. The game can appeal to all skill levels, as the options are a great leveller of ability. The real thrill of this game is the two-player mode - I've spent entire evenings playing Skychase with a partner. It's like a three-dimensional shoot-'em-up with a difference - there are no set moves! However, the ultimate thrill has to be a 'guns-only' confrontation with the computer set to 'Ace' flying ability - people with weak hearts should only play this under doctor's orders. Skychase works because it is a no-nonsense, all-action game that requires a lot more thought than one would realise.

MM

STA
Rating
60%

GRAPHICS: 61%
SOUND: 60%

LASTING APPEAL: 52%
ADDICTIVENESS: 68%

DIFFICULTY: AVERAGE
1ST DAY SCORE: N/A

craft. Points are awarded for each successful attack, the winner being the one who has scored the most points by the time the fuel runs out.

The options menu is vast and allows a great deal of tweaking of each aircraft to level the game out, whether it be against the computer or another opponent. The game options cover two-player, one vs. computer (with the right-hand window active or inactive) or a demo. Numbers of missiles and bullets, along with the missile lock-on time, bullet hit-area and trigger timing (the time taken between pressing the trigger and the missile being released) can be varied. All this and many other controllable factors enable two players of vastly different experience to be equally matched in the skies.

The music is quite unusual for a combat game but works well alongside the

effective game sounds. Imageworks have sacrificed a lot to make this game fast and playable but the end result is not left wanting in any respect. All-in-all, a game that has the emphasis on playability and not 'cutesy' graphics - a welcome change.

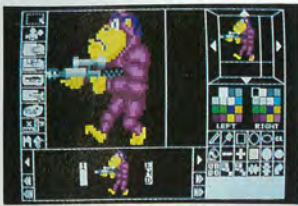
STA



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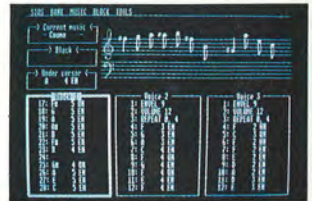
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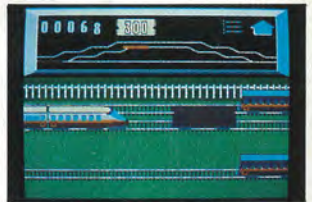
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Atari ST screen shots shown

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Mail order: Mediagenic, Activision House, 23 Pond Street, Hampstead, London NW3 2PN Consumer Enquiries: 01-431 1101. Technical Support 0703 229694

SEGA®

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"Armed with a backpack brimming with grenades and a holstered blaster, our hero sets out on his quest. His aim - gratuitous violence!"

Now this is a novelty: a computer game without a sci-fi epic scenario. In fact, as far as I can see, in Exolon the only reason your character, Vitorc, yomps through the five levels, blowing up all in his way, is because he wants to!

Our hero, Vitorc, must walk and leap through each of the five level's twenty-five screens, shooting any of the floating aliens or blowing up any obstructions. Each screen is packed with death-dealing obstacles ranging from mines to huge hydraulic pile-drivers, and when a screen is entered from the left you cannot go back. There is no real time-limit, but if you dawdle on a screen for too long, a rather large, indestructible missile appears and kills you.

Vitorc is armed with two weapons, a shoulder-slung blaster and a backpack grenade launcher, and the limited supplies of these must be used to destroy the aliens and the obstacles, though more supplies can be picked up on the way. The amount of ammunition you have remaining is displayed beneath the game screen, along with your score and how many of your nine lives are remaining. The blaster is only effective against the flying aliens, and, for larger obstacles, such as the huge metal drums and rock-filled skips, a grenade must be launched. This is done by standing fairly close to the object you wish to annihilate and holding down fire. A rocket grenade will streak from your backpack and swoop in an arc until it hits the obstacle, causing it to explode in a mass of shrapnel. Care must be taken not to stand up when an object explodes as you are knocked off your feet by resulting blast and you lose a life.

As you progress through the weird landscape, you will come across what

Vitorc, clad in his protective exoskeleton, yomps his way through the 125 screens.



EXOLON

HEWSON (£19.95)

Hewson certainly have been busy just lately, Exolon being yet another of their eight-bit conversions. Exolon is basically a flip-screen, shoot'em-up.

Although the graphics are somewhat drab - dark greens, greys and blues being a little overworked - they do produce an adequate atmosphere. The sound, too, is, at best, average; which is a pity as the game could have really done with some neat explosion noises.

Exolon's gameplay is most frustrating, with the untimely deaths becoming more and more annoying, practically killing any desire to continue. Disappointing.

NC

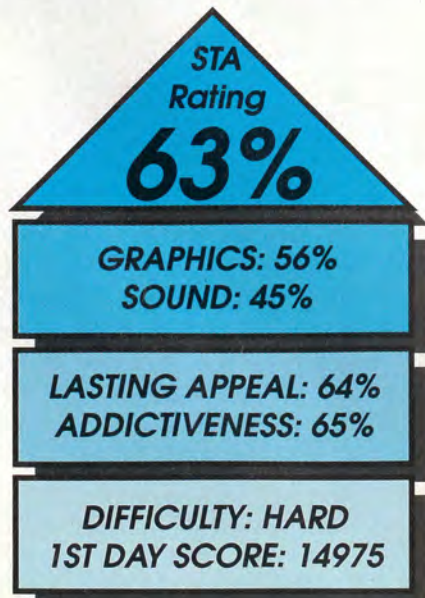
My biggest complaint about this game is the fact that lives are lost so easily. There is barely a screen goes by without something colliding with you. That aside, Exolon is mindlessly playable and the ideal game to wind down with at the end of a hard day. The graphics, although murkily coloured, are very effective; sound, though, is instantly forgettable. Although Exolon is another conversion from an 8-bit game, it is worth considering adding it to your collection.

SM

life. Most of the screens are split into two floors, and if you prefer the other floor to the one you are on, by popping into a blue cubicle and pushing up (in the same way, you don your exoskeleton), your molecules will be dispersed and will re-assemble in the other booth.

On reaching the end of a level, you must enter another cubicle and the level will be complete. You will receive one thousand points for every life you have left, and if you have completed the level without the exoskeleton, another ten thousand points.

STA



looks like a red telephone box. Entering this box and pushing up on the joystick causes Vitorc to be encased in a resilient, dual blaster exoskeleton. This impressive outfit has both its good points and bad points; though you are immune to both mines and pile-drivers, you plod along at a much slower pace, making you slightly easier prey to the flying creatures.

The further into the game you travel, the more varied the alien installations get. Particularly nasty are the enemy missiles; these are guided by what looks like a brain on a stick and unless you can destroy the brain the missile will home in on you and - guess what... yes, you lose a



Trip·▲·TRON

LIGHT SYNTHESISER



TRIP-A-TRON converts the ATARI ST into an instrument on which you (and your mouse) can produce flowing patterns of light and iridescent colour, and match the display to any music.

THE RESULT is fascinating - pleasure enhanced by knowing that your sequences can be saved and enjoyed again or used as performance art at a disco or by a group.

SOON THE LIGHT-SYNTHESIST COULD BE UP THERE WITH THE GUITAR HEROES.

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Missiles abound in Mediagenic newie.

STAI



SDI looks really boring when you see someone else playing it, and my initial reaction was to play it just to get it out of the way. However, SDI is also one of those games which is very hard to put down!

The graphics and backdrops are excellent, with the best full-screen scrolling I have ever seen, and the sound also adheres to this high standard with a different, quality tune accompanying each level.

The game is a beauty to play, and has just the right difficulty level to keep you coming back for more. I hope SDI does better on the ST than it did in the arcades - it certainly deserves to.

SM

"SDI didn't exactly set the coin-op world alight. Could this be due to the fact that its scenario had you saving planets instead of blasting them into oblivion?"

SDI

MEDIAGENIC (£19.95)

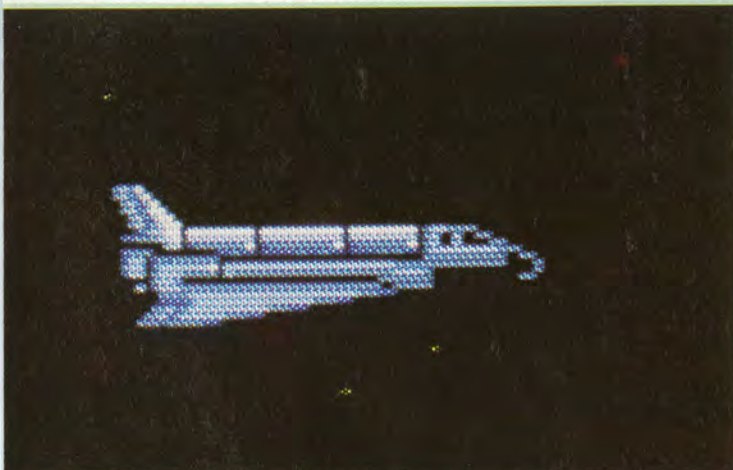
SDI breathes new life into the ancient lungs of the classic "Missile Command". Taking control of a brand new satellite, one or two players must - working together or against each other - travel through the game's

shuttle gliding across the screen; it slows and its hatch opens, releasing your ship into space. No sooner have you gained control of your craft, than a massive onslaught of the most varied missiles and enemies you have ever seen appear from all directions. It is obvious that this game has been set sometime in the future, as they are like nothing on earth (at present anyway!); spider-like satellites which, if you don't shoot them straight away, release deadly shrapnel; "Penny Droppers", which float at the top of the screen, dropping flak; poison dust clouds; and homing

| | | |
|----------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| KEYBOARD | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| JOYSTICK | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| MOUSE | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| COLOUR | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| MONO | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 520ST | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1040ST | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

more destructive radius.

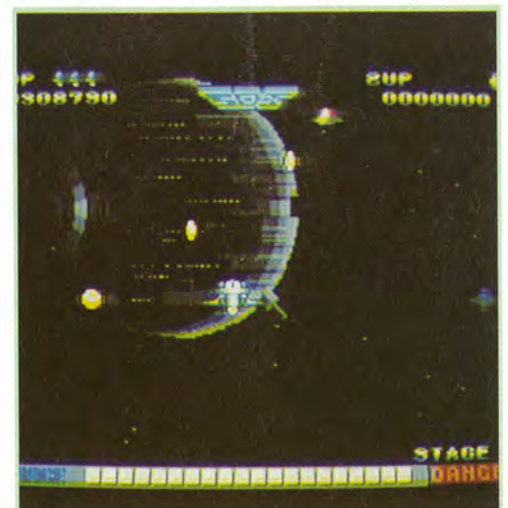
Situated below the action is a line of yellow squares. These squares change to red should you let any mis-

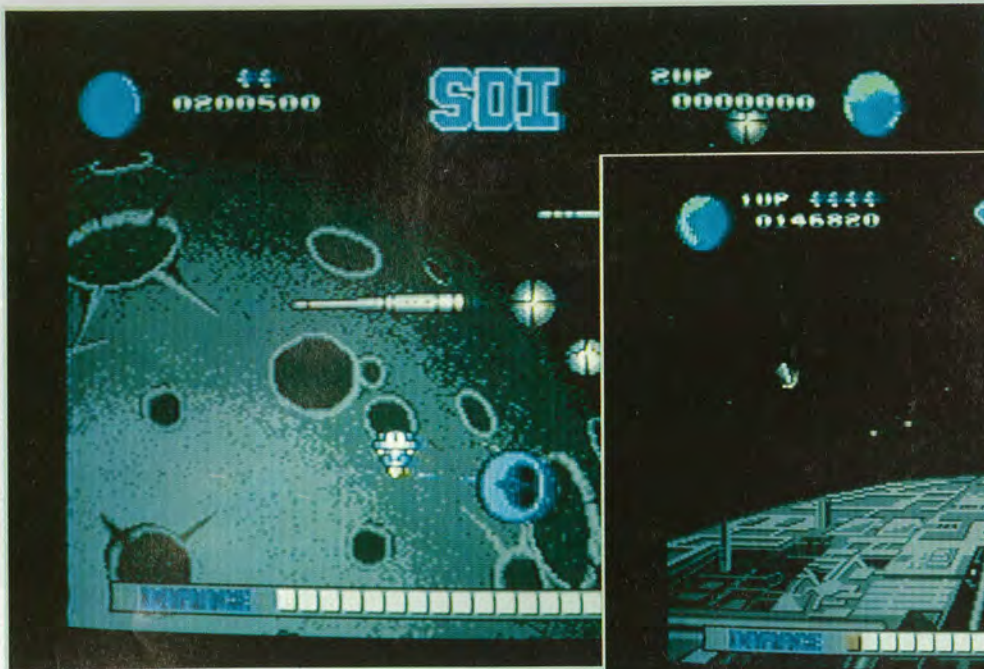


twelve levels, shooting the approaching nuclear war-heads. Your weapon sight is shown by a cursor, and once the cursor is at the desired position, pressing fire will cause a pencil-thin laser beam to be emitted from your ship, which explodes when it reaches the cursor. The following explosion will then expand, and anything within its radius will be destroyed.

The game begins with a space-

missiles. Contact with any of these, or being too close when they explode, will cost you one of your five lives. Occasionally, one of three coloured pods will appear, and shooting it adds an enhanced feature to your ship: red gives the player three cursors - for three times the devastation; blue causes your satellite to move faster; and yellow, which enlarges your missile's explosions, causes a larger,





Should any missile pass by your impenetrable barrier, you will enter a defensive stage. This involves you protecting your base from the incoming missiles.



**STA
Rating**

83%

GRAPHICS: 80%
SOUND: 80%

LASTING APPEAL: 79%
ADDICTIVENESS: 85%

DIFFICULTY: AVE/HARD
1ST DAY SCORE: 122500

due to the fact that your planet is no more. But if only one or two get past, at the end of that level, you will enter a defensive screen. At the bottom of this screen is your base, and to ensure its safety you must shoot any incoming missiles. Complete this easy task, and you will receive your level bonuses. These relate to the number of missiles you have destroyed, and if you have cleared the level totally, two, cutesy little ducks appear and perform a jolly dance!

The game ends when all of your five lives are lost or if you complete all twelve levels. You will then be asked to type your name onto the novel high-score table. Circling behind the scores are several asteroids and these can be used to practise the accuracy and speed of your fire - a nice touch.

STA

Excellent - in more ways than one. The gameplay is absorbing, the graphics are first rate, the controls are just about perfect and the sound is great - what more could one ask for in an arcade conversion? The learning curve is about right as well. There are also neat little touches that really put the game in a class of its own, such as, a playable high score table and a dancing duck that does a turn if you complete a level perfectly. All in all, a first-class game that is worthy of anybody's hard-earned cash.

MM

siles slip through your defences, and if all the squares turn to red - most unlikely - the game ends abruptly,



GIVING THE GAME AWAY

Hello, and welcome to the October tips section of ST Action. I apologise for the lack of tips this month, but what with the PC Show and all of its associated disruption, things have been pretty hectic around here. But rest assured, we will be back to normal next month. Oh well, let's crack on with the cheats, and don't forget, if you have absolutely any cheats, pokes or maps, don't hesitate to send them into me, at the usual STA address. As I said last month, an increased response could make me decide to offer even more prizes!



Spidertronic - Infogrames

I don't really like this 3D collect'em-up game - it's boring. Still, if you bought it and would like to cheat, who am I to stop you? Get a high score and enter CHEAT onto the table. Now press return and then the fire button and the screen will go black. Then a message will appear saying: Last game level: GAME.LSO

New game level:

Type in GAME.LS and the level you wish to start on. Press return and, once again, fire and, lo and behold, you begin the game on your selected level.

Thanks for that go to David Hobson, from Birmingham.

Sidewinder - Mastertronic

If you were to take disk two of this epic shoot'em-up and look at its directory, you would find - wait for it - a game editor programme!

Load it up and then press from F1 to F6 in relation to the level you want to edit, and you can pull any annoying nasties out of the game. Use the joystick to move the two lines to the piece you want, and move it to where you want it. Any levels can be saved by holding down both of the mouse buttons. Warning! Any modification made to the master cannot be undone so it may be wise to make a backup of the disk too.

Ta very muchly to Michael Goodman for that interesting discovery.

Eliminator - Hewson

Finding Hewson's fast-moving shoot'em-up hard going? Then type in these codes on the help screen:

amoeba, bloop, cheeki, doinok, enigma, slipme, geegee, handel, bicicle, jammin, kickong, lapdog, mikado.

Ta very much to yer actual Andy Hewson for those.



Revenge of Doh - Imagine

Paul Webster, of Preston, Lancs has sent in this brilliant cheat for Imagine's sequel. Load up Arkanoid II as usual, and when the pink Arkanoid screen appears, type IMAGINE whilst holding down Caps Lock. When loaded, and the opening bit is showing, type "PETE-JOHNSONWANTSHEAT" (NB: no spaces). Now when playing, press 'S' and both exits will open, allowing you to go to the next screen.



Peter Beardsley's Soccer - Grandslam

Fed up losing in this repetitive kick-around game? When you get the ball, run with it, continuously tapping the fire button and no-one can take it from you. 'Ere we go...

COMING SOON

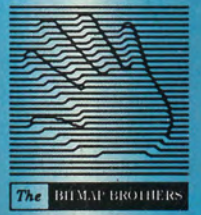
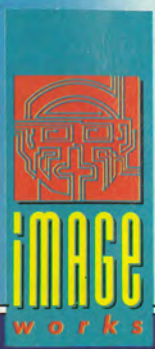
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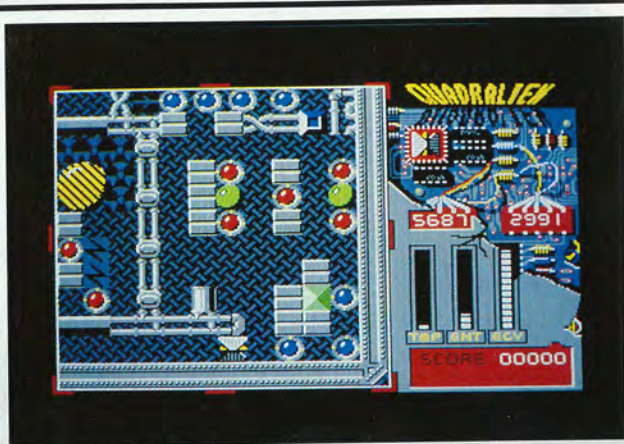
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Virus - Firebird

This is rather a corky game, and the aforementioned Mike Goodman has sent in a list of useful pointers.

- Firstly, for slightly greater accuracy, use the keyboard instead of mouse.
- On starting a new level, destroy the seeders first as they infect more land.
- If you wait for a drone to mutate before shooting it, you will receive more points.
- Whenever you are being attacked, never stay still. It will make you a sitting duck. Fly around leaving a spread of bullets; it will run into these before he collides or shoots you.
- Attack a bomber from the front of its flight path, or you may be hit by its parachute bombs.
- Always use your missiles to kill an attracter. But you must always launch your missiles with the nose of your plane pointing up, or they will plough straight into the ground.
- Always refuel when you only have a third left.
- If you see the legendary sea monster, shoot it, it's worth 1000 points.

Incidentally, if you are using the mouse and lose control, press the "/" key and your craft will be placed the right way up again.



Quadralien - Logotron

Paul Ioannou from Halifax, has sent in the three passwords and a couple of tips for this unusual puzzler.

Level 1 - 170961 Level 2 - 010655
Level 3 - 610169

Once in the core you cannot quit. So choose droids with good lasers and energy supplies - probably Jack and Spud. The Quadralien mother consists of four separate parts grouped together and surrounded by Earthling boxes. The mother can only be destroyed by blowing up each box from a different direction. From the starting point there are three exits: north, east and west. Go east and destroy the first box, return to the start and go north to get the second box. You will now have both droids to blow up the remaining parts. Go west, through the one-way force-field (through which you cannot go back), and get the other. Not forgetting to keep recharging.

Space Harrier - Elite

Did you know ?:

If you look at disk two, you will find folders called "LEVEL6 (for instance).DAT". Change, say, "LEVEL2.DAT" for "THEENED.DAT", and after completing level one, you will see the game's disappointing end sequence.

Side Arms - Go!

Fancy extra options for this disappointing conversion? Mark Lawrence is yer man:

- 1-5 - gain weapon
- 6/7 - add / decrement speed
- 8 - increment lives
- 9 - gives man shield
- T - show game info
- X - followed by number key - sets stage
- K - kills all aliens except mother ship
- D - suicide
- C - kill enemy at end of stage
- R - restart stage
- L - add 1000 to score
- I - finish game
- Q - quit to desktop



Mickey Mouse - Gremlin

Mark Lawrence comes to the aid of all you Mickies who are having trouble kicking the Ogre King out of Disney castle. After Mickey has taken his bow, type 61315688 and a thin white line will flicker in the border. Now press any of the following keys for:

- F2 - Opens door to sub-game
- F3 - Takes you straight to conflict with a witch
- F4 - Refills your water pistol
- Enter (on numeric pad) - Quit sub-game
- . (also on numeric pad) - Complete sub-game successfully (also with witch and ogre)

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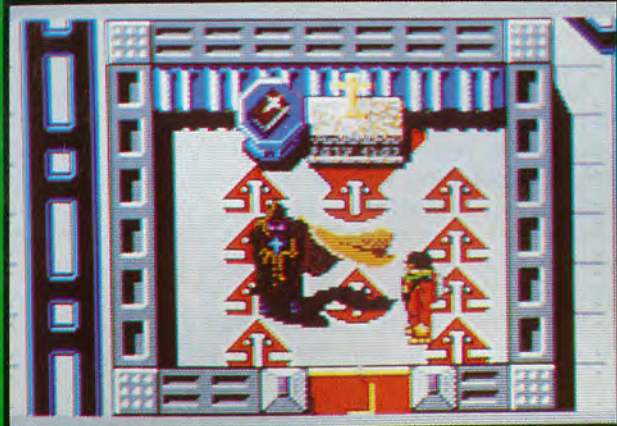
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Pandora - Firebird

More hints for this arcade adventure, this time from Woody, in Coventry. Incidentally, Alastair Macmillan from Edinburgh has sent in a complete solution, but lack of space prevents me from printing it. If you would like a copy send a SAE to:

Pandora solution (C/O Steve Merrett),
ST Action, 10 Theatre Lane, Chichester,
West Sussex. PO19 1SR

Anyway, on with the tips:

Characters and what they are in possession of:

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Annie | - I.D Annie |
| Diabetic | - Bent coin |
| Hooligan | - Iridium mace |
| Thief | - Kryptonite, Sonic Blaster, Gold Key |
| Bank Manager | - Nothing |
| Lt Commander | - Shakespeare, Code Black, his I.D |
| Commander | - His I.D code, Code grey, Code blue, scarlet |
| Priest | - Photosabre, Light box |
| Engineer | - I.D, Sonicdriver |
| Security Officer | - Alien egg, Insulin |
| Captain | - Code white, SDI disk |
| Resource Officer | - Deltan icon, I.D |
| Science Officer | - Pool 8-ball, I.D |
| Chemist | - Hyperdermic, acid |
| Gardener | - Megabio feed, insecticide |
| Driffid | - Nothing |
| Deathfly | - Death sting, sugar cube, araknoic eye |
| Medic | - I.D |
| Doctor | - Squash ball, knuckle duster(!) |
| Wackobrain | - Brokan Orak, Sandworm shell, Wookey wig |
| Pianist | - Nothing |
| Musician | - Glass |
| Squash player | - Kzin 97 ball, electroboost |
| Ice creature | - Ice pendant, thermolance |
| Menial droid | - Kwik kleen, electruncheon |

Items on blue tables:

Ostronn egg, Laser rifle, Vulcann vase, Mobian brain, bible.

I.D's to be collected:

Annie, Lt Commander, Commander, Engineer, Resource Officer, Science Officer, Medic and Captain.



Championship Wrestling - U.S. Gold

Anyone who has bought U.S.G's new Epyx compilation may be having some trouble with the likes of Prince Vicious and Zeke Weasel. If so, Darryl Reeves from Telscombe Cliffs, East Sussex, sends in some help:

When playing the computer, Prince Vicious and Howling Manslayer will use mainly kicks on you.

If your opponent is standing on the tuckleberry (oh, me darling, oh, me darling - oh sorry, that's Huckleberry!), get up close and perform a drop kick.

Once your opponent is down, keep doing leg drops until they are at the edge of the ring. When they get up, do one kick and then your custom move.

The best character to choose is K.C. Colussus as he has the most powerful custom move - the trash compactor.



Starglider - Rainbird

For invincibility: start the game, slow down to zero and press "F" for fixed cross-hairs. Pause the game (with backspace) and type the following twice:

JS (space) ARG (backspace) S (backspace). Return.

Then N - 5000 extra points.

E - reboots disk

M - halts all enemy craft

P - an extra missile whenever pressed



And Finally...

Right, before I go, I would like to say thanks very much to: Telecomsoft, U.S. Gold, The Edge etc. for their help with the prizes. This month's winners are Alastair Macmillan for his complete solution to Pandora (don't forget, if you want one send a SAE), and William Morgan for his Captain Blood solution. Bye, and see you next month, Steve.



In response to public demand we have been forced to print a picture Mr Smart-arse himself Steve Merrett



Captain Blood - Infogrames

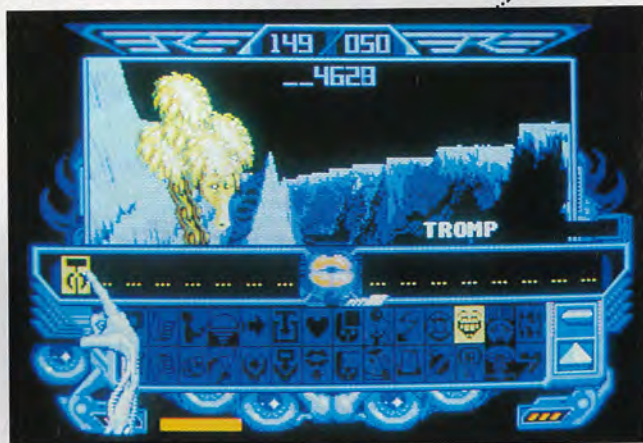
I loathe to print any more on this, due to the major faux-pas a couple of months back. Oh well, here is the complete solution as described by William Morgan, of Cothem, Bristol:

To begin with you must go and see the Buggol (planet mind 137). Land, and say to him: "Me want vote.". He will tell you of another Buggol called Morlok who lives on planet Rosko 1. Carry on talking to your Buggol and you will eventually get the co-ordinates. Now go there, and talk to Morlok. He will rant on about the fact that he isn't President, etc. Say to him: "Me not vote Morlok, me want Yukas President.". He will give a lot more information and the co-ordinates for a planet called Female 021. Go and blow it out the sky, and go back to Morlok, who will now give you the co-ordinates for a planet where an Ondoyante is kept prisoner. As far as William knows, you

don't need to go there, but write down the co-ordinates anyway. Leave Rosko 1 and switch to exterior vision, and then destroy it (that's not very friendly!).

Return to Mind 137, and go and see the Buggol. He will now dislike you and give you the co-ordinates to Rosko 2. On reaching Rosko 2, land, and teleport the willing Buggol. Now find an uninhabited planet and, on landing, teleport him there. He will say the planet is good-looking, and, if you ask: "Me want know co-ordinates planet number = Blood.", he will now give you the co-ordinates to find number 2.

Go to where he is, land, and say that you like him, and will not kill him. You must also get three sets of co-ordinates from him before you disintegrate him (having made sure you have saved the game beforehand). Now go around using this method to get the co-ordinates out of the numbers, always killing them before you move on. Kill the last one and completion is all yours!



The STA Pokes

The Ultimate in sixteen bit cheat routines brought to you exclusively by **Mark Lawrence**

More cracking pokes from **Mark Lawrence** this month. This time it's your chance to get on top of: Virus, Bionic Commando, Impossible Mission 2 and Alien Syndrome.

All of these cheats, except for Bionic Commando are used in a similar way: type-in the program, insert a blank floppy into your disk drive, run the cheat program, then exit to the desktop and run the small .PRG file which should have appeared. This will ask you to insert the game boot disk and press a key. Do this and the game should load and run with the cheat installed. The Bionic Commando cheat requires the game master disk to be in drive A: when you run the program.

The Virus and Bionic Commando cheats must be typed in whole, while the Alien Syndrome and Impossible Mission 2 cheats are added on to the end of the Universal cheat routine (Mk 1), which many of you will already have typed in.

Please do not phone the ST Action offices if you have any problems with these pokes. We do try our best to ensure that they work, but because they are quite complicated, and must be typed in 100% correctly, problems can occur. If you can't stomach typing in the cheats, then wait a few months until the ST Action Mega cheats disk is released. This contains all of **Mark's** cheats, in a tested runnable form.

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UNIVERSAL CHEAT ROUTINE MK1 FOR ST BASIC

```
10 REM ***** Universal Cheat Routine Mk 1 *****
20 OPTION BASE 1: DIM A%(128):CHEAT=VARPTR(A%(1))
30 DEF SEG=0: REM Remove this line if new ST Basic is in use
40 X=CHEAT:READ B
50 WHILE B<>99999
60 POKE X,B:X=X+2
70 READ B
80 WEND
90 REM This code is common to all cheat routines. Type in this listing and save it for future use.
100 REM To use a cheat routine replace the lines of code in this program with those in the new listing.
120 DATA &H601A,&H0000,&H00E4,&H0000,&H0000,&H0000,&H0000,&H0000,&H0000,&H0000,&H0000,&H0000
130 DATA &H0000,&HFFFF,&H4FFA,&H01FE,&H2F3C,&H0000,&H0300,&H487A,&HFEF4,&H4267,&H3F3C,&H004A
150 DATA &H4E41,&H4FEF,&H000C,&H487A,&H0064,&H3F3C,&H0009,&H4E41,&H5C8F,&H3F3C,&H0007,&H4E41
160 DATA &H548F,&H4267,&H487A,&H004A,&H3F3C,&H004E,&H4E41,&H41FA,&H0068,&H3018,&HCOFC,&H0006
180 DATA &HD1C0,&H487A,&H0037,&H487A,&H0033,&H2F08,&H2F3C,&H004B,&H0003,&H4E41,&H4FF9,&H0007
190 DATA &H7FF0,&H2F40,&H0004,&H2240,&H43E9,&H0100,&H41FA,&H003A,&H3018,&H5340,&H2458,&HD5C9
210 DATA &H3498,&H51C8,&HFFF8,&H4ED1,&H2A2E,&H2A00,&H1B45,&H496E,&H7365,&H7274,&H2067,&H616D
220 DATA &H6520,&H6469,&H736B,&H2061,&H6E64,&H2070,&H7265,&H7373,&H2061,&H206B,&H6579,&H0000
240 REM *****
250 REM The following code is game specific. These are the lines of code that must be altered to provide
270 REM cheats for different games.
```

ST BASIC MK1 CHEAT DATA FOR ALIEN SYNDROME

```
285 REM Cheat for Alien Syndrome, uses Universal Cheat Routine Mk1
290 DATA &H0003,&H0000,&H5172,&H4A6E,&H0000,&H5198,&H4A6E,&H0000
300 DATA &H5FE4,&H4A6E,&H4155,&H544F,&H5C41,&H4C49,&H454E,&H2E50
310 DATA &H5247,&H0000,99999
320 BSAVE "ALIENCHT.PRG",CHEAT,256
```

ST BASIC MK1 CHEAT DATA FOR IMPOSSIBLE MISSION II

```
285 REM Cheat for Impossible Mission 2, uses Universal Cheat Mk1
286 REM Gives infinite time
290 DATA &H0002,&H0000,&HB20C,&H4E71,&H0000,&HB224,&H4E71
300 DATA &H4155,&H544F,&H5C49,&H4D2E,&H5052,&H4700,99999
310 BSAVE "IM2_CHT.PRG",CHEAT,256
```

ST BASIC CHEAT ROUTINE FOR BIONIC COMMANDO

```
10 REM ***** Cheat Routine for Bionic Commando
12 REM ***** Does not use any universal Cheat routines
20 OPTION BASE 1: DIM A%(128):CHEAT=VARPTR(A%(1))
30 DEF SEG=0: REM Remove this line if new ST Basic is in use
40 FOR X=CHEAT TO CHEAT+109 STEP 2
50 READ B:POKE X,B
60 NEXT X
70 CALL CHEAT
80 REM Type this routine in and then insert the Bionic Commando disk
90 REM with the write protection off. Now run it and the program should
100 REM install the cheat on your disk. If you now load Bionic Commando
110 REM in the usual way you should have infinite lives and infinite
120 REM time. If you want to remove the cheat, run this program again with
130 REM the Bionic Commando disk in the drive.
140 REM *****
150 DATA &H49FA,&H006C,&H7E02,&H3F07,&H487A,&H0058,&H7C3D,&H3F06
160 DATA &H4E41,&H508F,&H3800,&H3C3C,&H49B8,&H3A3C,&H0480,&H6114
170 DATA &H3C3C,&HA37E,&H7A06,&H610C,&H3F04,&H3F3C,&H003E,&H4E41
180 DATA &H588F,&H4E75,&H611A,&H703F,&H6106,&HBB54,&H6112,&H7040
190 DATA &H2F0C,&H2F07,&H3F04,&H3F00,&H4E41,&H4FEF,&H000C,&H4E75
200 DATA &H4267,&H3F04,&H2F06,&H3F3C,&H0042,&H4E41,&H4FEF,&H000A
210 DATA &H4E75,&H6269,&H6F6E,&H6963,&H2E64,&H6174,&H0000
```

FAST BASIC UNIVERSAL CHEAT ROUTINE MK1

```
REM **** UNIVERSAL CHEAT MK1 ROUTINE FOR FAST BASIC ****
RESERVE CHEAT,256
X=CHEAT:READ B
WHILE B<>99999
```




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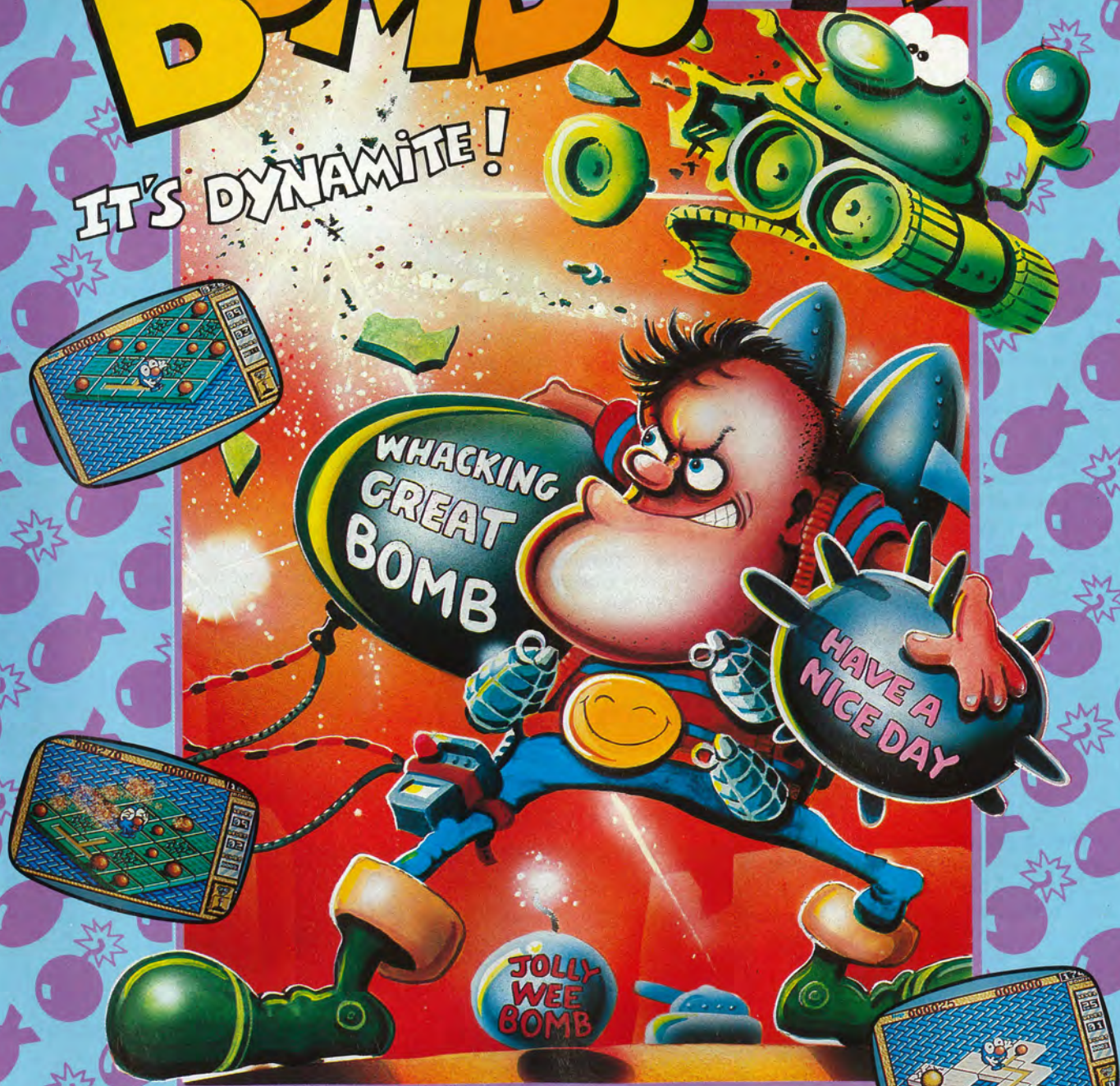
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Leisure Suit Faith

I have two problems with Leisure Suit Larry. Once I have given Faith the tablets, how can I prevent her running off to her boyfriend? Also, I have the apple, but I don't know what to do with it.
J.C. Ellis, YORK

I know the feeling! The bottle of tablets is guaranteed to make any woman think you are Robert Redford, and just when you think you've finally hit the jackpot, she runs off to attack her boyfriend.

However, the good news is that in this game you want Faith to run away, as this means you can now examine the desk she was guarding and operate what you find there. The reason you don't know what to do with the apple, is because you have not yet reached the point in the game

where you need it. As you are obviously a low-down snake, I have no doubt you will know what to do with it when the time arrives. I should explain that, apart from the fact that I enjoy insulting foolish humans, that last comment was also a cryptic clue!

Corruption toilet Mirror

I have been playing CORRUPTION from Magnetic Scrolls and I don't understand the description given for the mirror in the office toilet. The mirror is described as: 'covered in tiny bright scratches'. I have removed the mirror from the wall, but there is nothing behind it. I have a nasty feeling I am missing the point!

B.C. Giles, Norwich, Norfolk

The trouble is, my poor carrot-


cruncher, that you are obviously a nice country boy who has not yet been exposed to the wicked ways of the city yuppies. The scratches have been caused by dope addicts using razor blades to separate cocaine on the mirror. Instead of having 'smack' up their nose, what they really need is a 'smack' in the mouth! I never will understand human beings. You do not need to take the mirror, it's simply there to alert you to the possibility that all is not well in this little loo. Look around. Now that you know someone has been up to mischief, perhaps they have stashed the goods somewhere. Think hard, where would you hide something in a loo?

Red Moon Red Room

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containing a Red Line on the floor. You are warned that: 'Anyone crossing the red line will die' - and sure enough I do! How can I cross this red line without dying?

Stephen Brecht, Blackpool

If you rub out the line before you cross the room. You won't then 'Cross the line', will you? I trust you are now very 'Red in the face'?

Space Quest Robot Pilot

I've been playing Space Quest from Seirra On-Line and I'm stuck. I have bought a space-ship and the robot pilot to fly it. The trouble is that the pilot keeps asking what sector I want to fly to, and I don't know what the answer is. I have been through the documentation and I have read the computer read-out from the cartridge, but there are no space sector coordinates mentioned anywhere.

Maureen Linsel, Beccles, Suffolk

The trouble with you, Maureen, is that you are in too much of a hurry to blast-off after the meanies. My advice is that you walk back to the nearby space bar and have a few beers. The guys at the bar don't seem to be in a hurry to blast off. In fact, if you have a few drinks with them, they will probably tell you some facts which will make all your troubles disappear.

Corruption Jail Break

I am having some difficulty with CORRUPTION concerning the Casino. I can get the matchbook from McNally in the cell but I cannot get out of the cell (even with the cypheric hints) so please could you tell me (if possible) how to get out of the police cell.

Paul Taylor, Livingston, Scotland.

This is an old trick that I learnt from John Wayne. All we have to do is to pretend to fight with each other. When the guard comes in to break up the fight, we'll grab him and tie him up. Just remember not to punch me too hard Paul, as I might get carried away and knock your block off!

Space Quest II red 'Wallbots'

After reading last month's tips on Space Quest II, I decided to write in and ask a question myself. How do I get past the red 'Wallbots' beneath



the spaceship in Volhaul's Asteroid? I've been puzzling on it with a friend for ages.

Steve.

The 'Wallbots' that Steve is having trouble with, are a group of security robots which line the walls of an underground corridor. The reason they are leaning against the wall is because they are being recharged - which means there is a lot of dangerous electricity flowing about. If you examine the ceiling, Steve, you will notice that there are some fire sprinklers fitted. Wouldn't it be awful if someone started a small fire in a container and activated those sensors? Some poor robot could end up getting a thousand volts up his input port! It makes my eyes water just to think about it.

Getting adventures published

I wrote an Adventure game for the BBC Electron which I have now rewritten for the Atari ST. Could you advise me where I should send it to get it published?

B. Clydesdale, Dundee, Scotland.

Oh dear! This is a tricky one. In the good old days it was not unknown for some boy-wonder to produce a mega-game in his upstairs bedroom. Things have changed a lot since then - especially in the 16 bit market. To have any chance now, a game must be worthy of having a fortune spent on its advertising and marketing. For this reason, companies tend to be only interested in software of the very highest quality - and it's even harder in the adventure field. To be

brutally frank, I suspect that unless you have produced something quite extraordinary there isn't a company in the land who would be interested. That's the bad news! The good news is that there is a thriving market for home-grown adventures in various Adventure User groups, who swap and sell games between themselves. While you might not make a million, you could have lots of fun sharing your creation with other enthusiasts. Check out the small ads at the back of mags, I'm sure you'll find one. Incidentally, if anyone out there runs such an exchange group, let me know and I'll give you a mention.

Bureaucracy locked door

I'm stuck in the Bureaucracy game from Infocom. There is a door in the brown stone building which is locked and I can't find a key anywhere. When I try to smash the door down, my blood pressure goes up so much it kills me.

Mark Brincat, Sidcup, Kent.

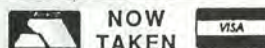
You are obviously one of the old school of adventurers Mark. 'If at first you don't succeed - smash it to bits!' The reason you cannot find the key - is because there isn't one. As this is the door to somebody's apartment, did you never think to try knocking? Remind me never to invite you round to the Dungeon for tea, I'd hate to think what you would do to my drawbridge.

Kings Quest III empty jar

In the Sierra game - Kings Quest III, could you please tell me where I can find the EMPTY JAR which is neces-



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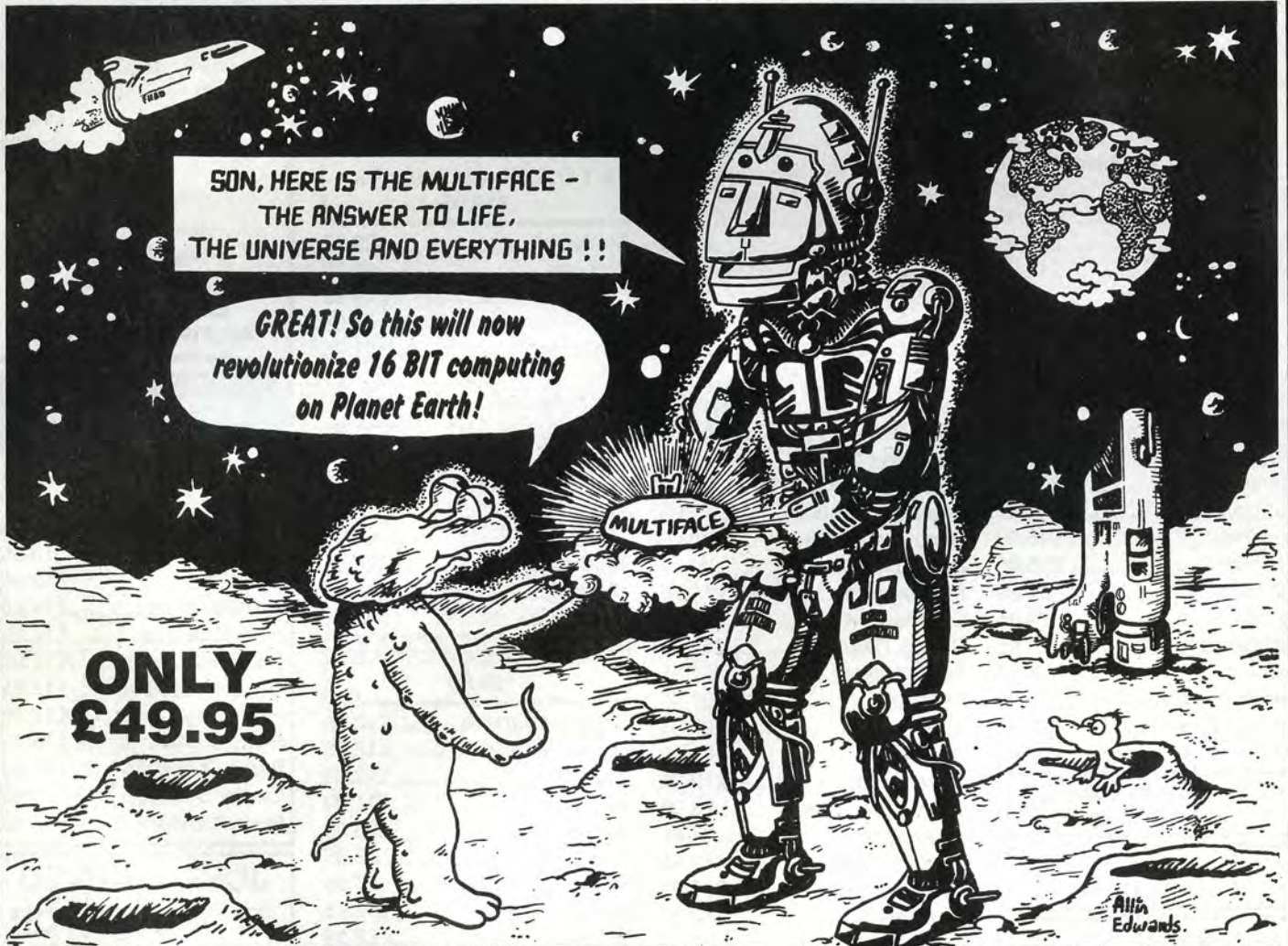
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
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ST ACTION

sary for the spell - 'Brewing a Storm'.

Mr A. McCarten, Preston, Lancs.

'MADAM' indeed! How would you like a thick lip? I'll have you know I run a classy Dungeon down here, and it's all good clean fun. True, I have played 'Leisure Suit Larry' - but I didn't get a high score!

As for Kings Quest III, this tricky customer causes more trouble than I care to think about, but in your case the answer is quite easy. The plain fact is that there is no empty jar to be found! Having ruined your day, let me explain further. While there are no empty jars around, there are lots of other jars with something in them. And guess how you turn one of those 'full' jars into an empty one? I suggest you dash off to the village store and buy something that comes in a jar. If you then use the contents, guess what you will be left with?

Beyond Zork large onion

I have been playing the BEYOND ZORK game from INFOCOM and it's driving me nuts. I cannot find a way to pick up the large onion as it is too heavy. I have found the spell to make things levitate, but it doesn't seem to work on the huge onion.

Mark Smith, Rochester, Kent.

It's enough to make you want to cry isn't it - the onion, that is! What you need here, Mark, is a bit of lateral thinking - as opposed to vertical. If I asked you to move a large iron cannon-ball across my Dungeon, how would you do it? You wouldn't try to lift a large, heavy, 'ROUND' object would you?

Guild missing the points?

Just a word from Northern Ireland's

Magnetic Scrolls adventure bashers. We decided to send in the full solution, for full points, for Jinxster, seeing nobody else has bothered to, or can!

We completed 'Guild' two days later but we are missing five points somewhere. Got any suggestions? Also we are having problems regarding the plant pot in The Pawn, although we have already completed this, but with only 345/350. We have also just completed Corruption, but we're not telling anybody about it. Work it out for yourselves, we had to! OK, just one hint: 'Make Buzby happy.' (Work that one out!)

Robert, Stephen, David Benington, Stranmillis, Belfast.

Cocky little humans aren't you? Well, maybe the old Troll knows a few tricks too. Admittantly I never did manage to open that pesky safe in Jinxster - although I did give it a good gnawing around the handles! However, I do know the answer to your plant problem. Ensuring you first have the trowel, you must, 'PLANT THE PLANT IN THE POT WITH THE TROWEL.' Having done that you must return to the perspex doors in the Alchemist's laboratory and knock on the door. What happens then, I'll let you discover.

Hints and Tips

My first useful goodie this month, concerns the Sierra game 'Leisure Suit Larry', and it comes from Linda McGillivray in Perth, Scotland. To ensure under-18 players don't become corrupted by this naughty game, you must first answer a series of questions to prove that you have been around for a long time. The trouble with this idea is that the questions are all to do with American history, which means that even very old Trolls do not always know the

answers! Many players have obtained copies of cheat sheets which contain the answers to the questions and this has certainly helped. But did you know that there is a single command which bypasses the whole thing?

When you are asked for the answer to the first question, simply reply by pressing the 'Alternate' and 'X' keys at the same time and the program will jump to the game start position. Hooray!

My second tip concerns saving your game position during the playing of adventures. Whilst playing the Sierra game, Space Quest, I became increasingly angry at the time it was taking to complete certain sections. It became obvious that it was best to keep 'saving' my game position every few moments to prevent me having to do the whole section over again. However, this is very time-consuming and it is annoying to have to keep changing disks.

I then found that if I installed a simple RAM disk utility before booting up the game, I was able to use this as my 'save' and 'restore' disk during play. With its help I was able to save and restore in a flash, which saved hours of frustration. Remember to check with all adventures whether you can specify which disk-drive you wish to save to - as using a RAM disk can make things much easier.

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"Just when you thought that every cartoon character had been pixelised, the Edge bring that fat, lazy, lasagne-eater, Garfield, to your computer screen. Is it possible to base a computer game around a cat whose only hobbies are eating and sleeping?"

GARFIELD

THE EDGE (£19.95)

It could only have been a Monday when Garfield awoke to be told that his girlfriend, Arlene, had been locked up in the city pound. Realising it is up to him to rescue her, our decidedly unintrepid hero gets up, stretches, and ambles to her rescue.

Garfield's escapades are shown, comic-strip like, in the top two-thirds of the screen. These screens look as if they have been lifted straight out of one of Jim Davis' comic strips, and capture the atmosphere perfectly. Wandering around these screens are Jon's other pet, Odie, the stupid dog, and your sickeningly cute nephew, Nermal. Odie proves to be the biggest problem as touching him means that he steals anything you are carrying, but should he prove too much of a nuisance, you can boot him into next week with a well-placed kick!

Garfield can move in the usual four directions, and by pulling down on the joystick he can pick up any adjacent object.

Garfield can only hold one thing at a time, and this object is shown in the status panel at the bottom of the screen, as are any items held by his wandering colleagues, Odie and Nermal. To the right of this panel

is Garfield's health bar (represented by a pile of pasta), and this depletes as Garfield gets tired. Should the bar reach zero, Garfield will keel over in a "nap attack", and won't get up until fully rested. These attacks can be thwarted by eating and, true to form, Garfield will eat anything - even useful objects!

You begin the game in Jon's living room, but to

rescue Arlene you must venture out into the wide, blue, flick-screen outdoors. As you explore you will find shops; the park; dark, dank sewers; and even a pasta party! In true arcade-adventure style, Garfield must find useful objects and use them to solve problems. The puzzles are fairly logical, but require a little lateral

Behind the comic-strip facade of "Big, Fat, Hairy deal" lies a very average arcade-adventure. The graphics and animation are, for the most part, perfect (Sic.) (Odie's lumbering gait is just how I imagined it), but our fat hero himself walks just a little too energetically for my liking. Not a bad game, but a lot more thought could have been put into the basic concept. But if you are a fan of both Garfield and "Pyjamarama"-style arcade-adventures, this will be more than adequate.

SM

The Edge has taken this endearing character, translated all of the hilariously expressive characteristics that make the cartoon so popular, combined them with an amusing little adventure and produced the most instantly likable game since Stir Crazy from Infogrames. The joystick controls our feline friend with positive directness and the game content is just enough to keep serious game-players entertained for a limited period. Emphasis has been placed on keeping the player in stitches rather than presenting him or her with taxing conundrums to solve. I am often critical of companies basing games around films, television programs and cartoons, because the popularity of the theme has often been used to conceal an inferior product - take the many 007 games, Miami Vice and Automan for example. But with a constant supply of comedy and terrific animation and characterization, Garfield is a rare exception to this rule!

JS



thinking. For example: if you want to get rid of the giant rat in the cellar, you must lure it away with a doughnut. But to get the doughnut you must scare the man in the health food shop, so you must find something to frighten him with, and so on.

To rescue Arlene and complete the game, Garfield must collect the key to the cell and unlock the door. When he has done so, they can both saunter off into the sunset.... aaaah!!

STA

STA
Rating

66%

GRAPHICS: 74%
SOUND: 60%

LASTING APPEAL: 55%
ADDICTIVENESS: 68%

DIFFICULTY: AVERAGE
1ST DAY SCORE: 380



Whilst frantically searching for Arlene, Garfield leaves the Hardware shop, finding nothing there to help him.

Football management games, both Soccer and American Football, have the potential to produce excellent strategy games of some considerable sophistication. QUALSOFT produced League Division One in 1983, and Mexico 86 in 1985, but otherwise the implementation has been infantile. When Coda sent me HEADCOACH for the BBC Micro, 2 years ago, I saw an American Football computer game for the first time that measured up to the same standards. QUALSOFT is pleased to offer Atari ST users "World of Soccer" and "Head Coach v3", two games I honestly believe will fill a yawning gap for those looking for realistic simulations of the real games.

Malcolm Howard, QUALSOFT

WORLD OF SOCCER

International management is the ultimate challenge in soccer. To build a squad of players to defeat the ball playing skills of Brazil, the fluid play of Holland, the organisation of West Germany, the counter-attacking of Italy, and the many varied styles of many others, demands an insight into the game rare amongst managers let alone fans. Do you exploit a team's weaknesses, or play to your own strengths? Do you attack down the flank with wingers, or pierce the centre with powerful midfield running? Do you play a flat back four, or use a sweeper or libero?

In "World of Soccer", players are not just attackers/defenders/midfield but goal poachers, play makers, ball winners, wingers, left, right and centre backs, sweepers (19 types of player in all). The results of matches are determined by simulated soccer matches controlled by the skills of the opposing players. Strategy is determined by the skills you build into your squad, and tactics by the particular skills you use to defeat particular teams. Substitutions and tactical moves can be made during the match to change or reinforce your plans.

For four years, through the Qualifying and Final stages of the European Championship and the World Cup, you will guide the European team of your choice. You can prepare for the competitions with friendly matches of your choosing, developing your strategy to match the in-form players at your disposal. Success is there for the taking, but it will need earning.

Choose from 33 European squads. The 4 UK home countries have 16 man squads which can be increased to 36 with players of your own. A customisation program will allow squads for any of the 33 countries to be created.

HEAD COACH v3

On the field 220lb blocks of concrete-on-legs collide, while a small man in a suit paces the touchline stroking his chin. He's the Head Coach. He has more tactical skill in his little finger than the MCC can muster in the entire club. Third down and 9, he signals to his quarterback. The quarterback takes the snap back into the pocket dummies to his star running back, wheels to the right skirting two defenders, motions to throw to his rightside wide receiver and then swings his pass back over the pack to his open Tight End. He catches and makes another five yards before being grounded. An eleven yard gain and another first down, thanks to 2 hours of rehearsal the previous Thursday afternoon. The crowd cheer the quarterback but the head coach knows that his Right Guard really deserves the credit. This is American Football, Chess with mobile human pieces.

It's your first season as a Head Coach in the NFL and you face two pre-season games. You must give as many of your 45 players a run out to see how they've come through the close season. Through these matches and the time spent at training camp you must devise your game plan to face your first NFL game. Over the next 16 games you will meet the likes of the Chicago Bears, the Washington Redskins, the Dallas Cowboys, the LA Raiders (hiss). Each game will need a new plan to exploit the weaknesses and nullify the strengths of such teams, and in the game you will probe their defense and try to stifle their offense. Success over these 16 matches will put you into the playoffs and in sight of the Superbowl. Failure will give you the best of the college draft, which will allow you to make up for the deficiencies you must by now have discovered in your side. Providing of course that the club keeps you on . . .

Let us be straight, Head coach v3 is NOT an arcade game. It's a sophisticated game based on American Football. For those who already understand something about the game, it's a chance to find out just how much they really know. For those to whom the game appeals but is something of a mystery, then Head Coach v3 is the ideal way to find out what the game is all about. In the match itself, you have a choice of 27 offensive plays and 21 defensive plays, and so you can bias your plays to suit the skills of your squad and negate those of the opposition. The training camp will give you an insight into the current performance of your players, even checking their speed in 40 yard sprints. There's only one thing that can prevent your team from eventually achieving a Superbowl place; YOU! But we warn you, this game is ADDICTIVE.

"World of Soccer" and "Head Coach v3" are available from QUALSOFT at £17.50 and £19.95 respectively.

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COMPETITION WINNERS

Fire and Forget Competition

The winner of the Tamiya radio-controlled Beetle is David Beckwith, of Thatcham in Berkshire. Congratulations David, the Beetle will soon be on its way to you. The answers were as follows:

- 1 - b) Amnesty International*
- 2 - c) Thunder Master*
- 3 - a) Offshore Warrior*

Better Dead Than Alien Competition

The winner of the Sony CFS 1000 radio cassette player is J P Smith, of Huntingdon, Cambs. The answers that won the comp were:

- 1 - a) Brad Zoom*
- 2 - b) 25*
- 3 - b) A function that allows you to jump to the next or previous song on cassette*

Konix Competition

The 20 fortunate winners of a Konix Speedking Joystick are as follows: Daniel Webster, Buckingham; D J Christie, Longhoughton; Andrew Dowell, Rainham; Nik Cunniffe, Luton; Craig Sheridan, Marton; S A O'Donnell, Barnstaple; P Morrow, Blakelaw; John Burdett, Scunthorpe; Shaun Eynon, Monkmoor; Mark Blackmore, Plymouth; P J Chare, Pontardawe; M Ashford, Uckfield; John White, Doncaster; John P Marshall, Nottingham; Stuart Clarke, Longridge; James Barrett, Kirkby in Ashfield; C J Simpson, Richmond; Joseph Santos, Holloway; S P Lawrence, Woolwich and Chris Cumming, Harrow.

The answers were as follows:

- 1 - b) 9*
- 2 - True*
- 3 - In the base*

SKRULL

... Plus aucune sueur, plus aucune chaleur, plus la moindre étincelle:
Le monde de la lumière va s'éteindre à tout jamais.... Vous seul,
SKRULL, l'incroyable fruit bâtard des amours contre-nature de la
femme-soleil et de l'homme-ombre, pouvez libérer à nouveau la lumière.
Mais le monde glauque
des ténébres n'est pas
sans risques...



1632
DIFFUSION

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When Elite was released for the BBC computer four years ago it became a cult game. Fanatical 'traders' actually contacted each other via modem to report that a tonne of Frozen Bladderash fetched eight credits on Ceinzala, or to complain that they had just ferried gold-flake scales of Geratean Reptiles half way across the Solar System and only just covered their costs. Its creators, Braben and Bell, had no alternative but to utilize Vector-graphics to conserve vital memory for the game and achieve smooth scrolling for the gameplay. But the ST version benefits considerably from solid graphics and maintains the smooth scrolling and massive game content without concessions. The accompanying Space Traders Flight Training Manual and a Novella, entitled 'The Dark Wheel', make crucial reading for their instructive and atmosphere-creating qualities.

You pilot a trading-class vessel called the Cobra III, which is simply equipped with a single fore-mounted Pulse Laser, three homing missiles, seven light years of fuel and access to the Auto Trading link system via the ship's computer. An unknown benefactor lends 100 credits to begin trading and before embarking on a journey you can link up

"Elitism is a quality far beyond courage, skill, acumen and ability. It encompasses all of these and more, and can only be obtained by, who else, elitists. Never has a computer game expected so much from a player!"

ELITE

FIREBIRD (£24.95)

Not having seen Elite on either the BBC or the C64, I was somewhat overawed by the game's success; to be honest, I just didn't know what to expect. Being a complete novice, I dutifully waded through the game's comprehensive instructions before embarking on my quest.

Without a doubt, Elite is a huge, complex game and for the most part I seemed to wander aimlessly from galaxy to galaxy. After learning the rudiments of space travel, I attempted, somewhat abysmally, some inter-galactic wheeling and dealing.

Only after several hours of gameplay did I finally realise just why Elite had built up such a loyal band of devotees. Elite, despite its high price, is an incredible experience, one that should not be missed!

NC

with the so-called CorCom trade system to buy stock. The inventory screen displays commodities from simple organic food and textiles to narcotics, liquor and slaves, and on selecting a product you can specify

| | | |
|----------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| KEYBOARD | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| JOYSTICK | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| MOUSE | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| COLOUR | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| MONO | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 520ST | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1040ST | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

quantities. Trading in slavery, narcotics and firearms is considered illegal by the Galactic Government and the Galactic Police Force, or GalCop for short, will take chase if you are known to be dealing in contraband. Such booty also attracts other unwanted intruders, Pirates!

In addition to purchasing goods for trading, you can beef up the Cobra's weaponry to a sufficient level to begin a journey into areas of the System Space which are considered safe. It is advisable not to venture into danger zones which are described as Anarchic or Feudal, until you reach the combat status of 'Deadly'. Both the directional controls and the instrumentation in Cobra's cockpit can be governed with the mouse, although you can use the joystick for flight control. Selecting 'Launch' shows a short animation sequence of the Cobra jettisoning from a



The filled in 3D graphics make the passing vessels seem almost inhabited. Its advisable to identify the class of ship before blasting it!

How on earth do I sum up a game as big and as impressive as Elite in a hundred or so words? Easily - just use that old reviewer's cop-out cliché: "buy it!" The graphics have been brought right up to date; with some of the fastest filled objects ever, and the sound also is well done. With the five missions the task ahead is long and hard, and it is not a game you can just pick up and get straight into. Time must be spent reading the instructions and getting used to the controls, but it will be worth it.

Although twenty-five quid is an above average price for an ST game, it will be a wise investment, as Elite is a very above-average computer game!

SM



space station and into orbit around the planet Lave. Pressing 'F7' identifies Lave as an agricultural planet and although under dictatorship rule, it is relatively safe. Holding down the right-hand button and pushing the mouse forward causes Cobra to accelerate towards Lave and as the Space Authority have suspended orbiting fees, you can spend time familiarizing yourself with the controls without incurring charges. Other trading craft often come into view and it is advisable to identify a vessel before entering into a confrontation. Accidentally attacking a Police craft will besmirch your reputation and your status will change from 'Harmless' to 'Offender' - not an ideal route to Elitism! The most favourable way to increase your combat status and stay the right side of the law is to identify and destroy Pirate vessels, Thargoid invaders or potentially dangerous asteroids. With a target in your sights, pressing the 'I' key activates the I.D. computer which identifies the target and you can decide what action to take.

All trading must take place on board a Coriolis class of space station, which have the facilities linking up your computer with the CorCom trade network. On locating a Coriolis, pressing the 'C' key activates the docking computer which helps you guide Cobra into the docking bay. Once docked, an inventory shows the products available for sale as well as the current price, and selecting 'Buy' or 'Sell' begins the trading sequence. The computer keeps track of the transactions as business continues and this vital information



can be used much like a stock-market trader uses the Dow Jones index. A particular planet may have a glut of a certain commodity and this will be reflected in the low price. Recognizing these bargains can only come with experience, but you may have already visited an area of space where there is a limited supply of this particular commodity, which will again show in the comparatively high unit price and the meagre amount that is available for sale. On this rare but potentially lucrative occasion, you can buy this cheap commodity, ferry it to the area where the product is in demand and name your price. Demand for goods varies considerably and prices fluctuate and so it pays to keep a list of extreme variations in price.

It is possible to gain status as a trader, but if you have managed to avoid confrontations, your combat rating may still be 'Harmless' and, in the eyes of

Selecting the docking computer aids your course to the Coriolis docking bay, but the trading traffic on a Thursday night still makes it a tricky manoeuvre.



pirates, that makes you a soft, fat-bellied businessman who is incapable of defending himself. When Cobra is under attack, you can elect to fight it out and gain a more respectable combat rating, or hit 'H' for

Hyperspace and make good your escape. But if a confrontation is unavoidable, pressing F's 1 to 4 enables you to view around the craft to see how many adversaries you are up against before deciding on your action. Guiding the weaponry sights over a target and pressing the left-hand button activates the laser, and pressing the 'M' key arms and fires a missile. But if the pirates get the upper hand and you are unable to launch into Hyperspace, there is one last resort. The thought of leaving your valuable cargo for

It is rare that the name of a game refers to its quality as well as its content, but here is one occasion when it most certainly does - Elite is elite! This ageing classic is not just a tarted-up version for ST users, the solid graphics add a realistic dimension to the gameplay and the trading aspect of the game has been designed to be more comprehensive, accessible and usable. Thus, the game is now attractive to 'fringe' game players who might otherwise be put off by the seriousness of mercantilism in space. Even the most recent developments in space, such as Damoclese and Starglider II, do not put this Elite to shame. It is the combination of battle and business strategy that makes this durable game a veritable champion!

JS

the pirates to fight over is a bitter pill to swallow, but he who fights and runs away lives to trade another day! Tapping the 'Q' key launches the escape capsule and, with tears in your eyes, it's: "Bye 'bye, expensive furs; adieu, gold and platinum; and adios, precious jewels! **STA**

STA
Rating
78%

GRAPHICS: 79%
SOUND: 62%

LASTING APPEAL: 89%
ADDICTIVENESS: 70%

DIFFICULTY: AVE/HARD
1ST DAY SCORE: N/A



Some planets have an abundance of tradable produce. Others, like Celaan, are just not worth bothering about.

STA
Rating
58%

GRAPHICS: 53%
SOUND: 55%

LASTING APPEAL: 55%
ADDICTIVENESS: 60%

DIFFICULTY: AVERAGE
1ST DAY SCORE: 6500

A new software company which was launched at the P.C. show, was unique in having software actually ready for review. The company is called Software Horizon, but the launch was not exactly accompanied by waving flags and a fanfare of trumpets and so we know very little about them. The four titles which are due for release cover a variety of themes and the first game under the spotlight is Veteran, from Paradox Software. Although the scenario does not state that the game is based on the Vietnam war, we can presume by the title and certain elements within the content that it is. The scenario describes that the war is nearly over and that for once in history, the good guys are not the victors. Often described as a war which could never be won, this game professes to be a last-ditch attempt to end the conflict in your favour.

The first battle is fought on flat desert terrain, with the odd sprig of foliage and trees in the background. The battle commences with a patrol of foot soldiers entering the screen from both sides and firing, while further away, two sand-bagged bunkers conceal Vietcong who appear momentarily and lob grenades. Behind the bunkers, another foot patrol fires with less effect and, in the distance, a constant flow of armoured personnel carriers trundle across the screen. The mouse moves a floating gun-sight, and pressing the left-hand button sends a volley of fire crackling across the screen.

Suddenly, a Vietcong leaps up in front of you, yells something in a foreign

It is a shame that the debut product of a new software company should receive an unfavourable review in ST Action, but I must report that Veteran is deficient in a number of areas. Perhaps the main fault is its lack of variety, and it is for this reason that I question the game's long-term appeal. Secondly, I have seen finer graphics in eight-bit games and the rather muffled speech synthesis would be inaudible even if it were in English. Veteran was obviously inspired by Infogrames's Prohibition, which was also criticised for its lack of variety, and Paradox have failed to improve on the theme to a satisfactory degree.

JS

"Saigon - still in Saigon - Another day in this hell on Earth! And what's waiting back home for us? No hero's welcome, just hostility and ostracism! How could anyone possibly take this nightmare and turn it into a subject of entertainment?"

VETERAN

SOFTWARE HORIZONS (£14.95)

Well, well, well... if it's not the first clone of Operation Wolf! I do hope 'Wolf' isn't going to suffer from the 'Roadblasters' syndrome, where several look-alikes appear and take away its appeal.

Mind you, judging by the standard of this, I think you would be better off waiting for Ocean's official conversion. Veteran's animation is jerky, and the gameplay is severely flawed by the fact that the enemy soldiers manage to fire off a round before your bullets reach them, causing your energy to be depleted much too quickly. In fact, the only thing I liked about this was the machine-gun noise - roll on Operation Wolf!

SM

tongue and aims his revolver. Quickly, the floating gun-sight must trail across his body, accompanied by a burst of gunfire. This close-up confrontation is digitized for added realism and as the high-velocity bullets rip into his flesh, he lets out a blood-curdling scream to indicate that this game is about as subtle as an episode of the A-Team. The gun bunkers and heavy artillery are immune to gunfire and so pressing the right-hand button activates a very effective rocket launcher. You begin the game with eight rockets and a full magazine, and a status display monitors the ammunition depletion. Both gauges of ammunition can be replenished by aiming the gunsight at piles of rockets or bullets which have been left by dead soldiers, and pressing the left-hand button absorbs them. The aim at this stage of the game is to hit as much heavy artillery as possible for high points, avoid enemy fire and maintain a healthy quota of ammunition.

A lull in the action indicates that a level change is imminent and so it is possible to anticipate this and collect whatever weaponry is lying around. The foot patrol continues to act as cannon fodder and distracts your attention from firing at the heavy artillery and replenishing your ammunition. Meanwhile, in the distance, the heavy artillery is joined by tanks and massive missile launchers and a troop-carrying helicopter hovers on screen, lands and takes off again. Additionally, the digitized Charley pops up more frequently and you have fewer opportunities to replenish your ammunition; therefore, it is advisable to use the weaponry efficiently and economically in order to endure the attack. A third level, which contains similar action, must be endured before you reach the enemy's Headquarters and it is advisable to have a full complement of missiles in order to cause as much devastation as possible.

STA



I've heard of not shooting until you see the whites of their eyes, but this is a bit too close for comfort.

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"Cinemaware's endeavours to 'bring the movies to our screens' have received a mixed reception.

Are the 'film crew' at Cinemaware creating pieces of art for computer users to marvel at, or is this a case of self indulgence from a group of movie fanatics?"

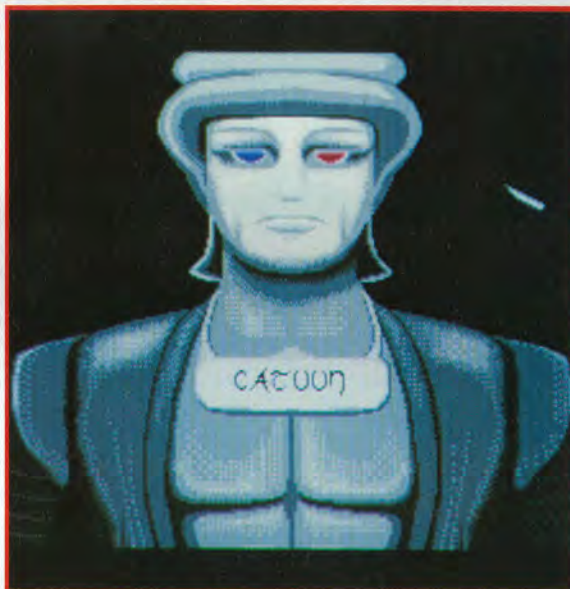
SINBAD

MIRRORSOFT (£24.95)

Bob Jacobs is quickly forging himself a reputation for being the Cecil B De Mille of the software industry. Like De Mille, Jacobs has a passion for extravagant productions, but the two have something else in common! De Mille's massive historical stories were four or five hours long and required a number of reels of film when shown at cinemas. Similarly, Cinemaware have spread Sinbad over three disks or so-called 'reels' and if your ST has less than 1 meg of memory, the disks have to be changed over and accessed constantly throughout the course of the adventure. An example of this constant 'disk juggling' occurs when Sinbad meets and talks to another character and you have to alternately access two disks in order to ask questions and respond to replies.

In this particular salty adventure, Princess Sylphani discovers that her father, the Caliph, has been turned into a falcon. The court physicians believe that he is under a spell but can offer no remedy and so the Princess commissions Sinbad to solve the puzzle. Your task is to protect the kingdom while the Monarch squawks and eats small rodents and find out how he can be saved. A sand timer indicates the time you have remaining to complete the task before the Caliph

becomes a falcon forever. Sinbad has a ship and crew at his disposal in the harbour and you have the choice of undertaking a sea journey or searching the immediate area in Damaron. The first screen-shot shows Sinbad at the crossroads looking at a signpost, and positioning a sabre-shaped



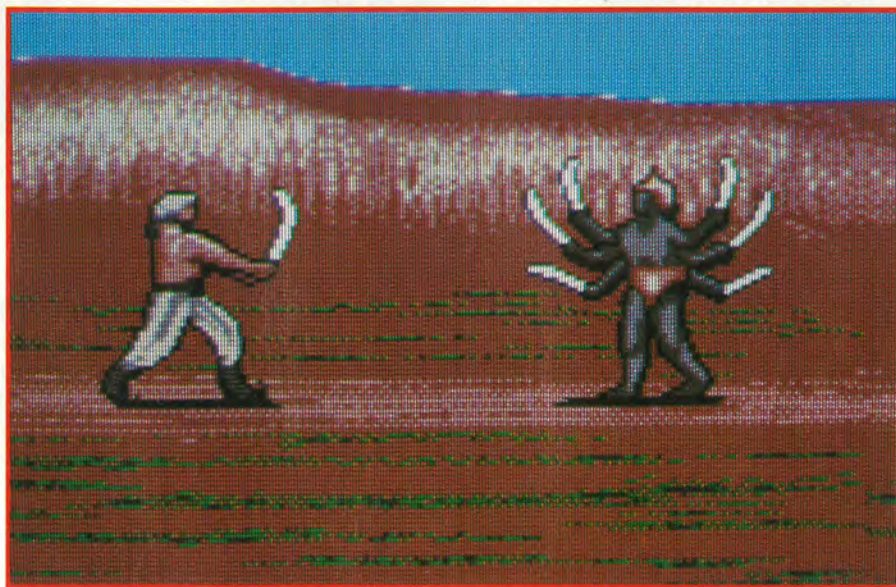
cursor over one of the destinations and clicking the joystick firebutton confirms your choice. Depending on which destina-

Cinemaware's latest 'movie-on-a-disk' is even less tangible than Defender of the Crown. As usual, the artwork is outstanding and there is a remarkable amount of material in one game. But if you own a machine with less than 1 meg of memory, it will bring into question the life expectancy of your disk drive. Cinemaware have become martyrs to the cause of bringing film-like quality to our screens. But I fear that they have lost sight of the meaning of computer-game entertainment under a facade of elaborate and extravagant artwork. Art for art's sake? Action, for our sake!

JS

tion you have chosen you must then implement the first of many disk changes.

The success of the mission relies on gleaning information and clues from certain other characters in the game. The legendary Shaman is one of the first characters to find as he has vital knowledge of the Caliph's curse. But perhaps the most useful character is the Genie who, when found, can be called upon to help in life-or-death situations. You are given a choice when phrasing questions and responding to answers, which conveys a variety of attitudes such as, curtness and impetuosity or kindness and patience. If a character does not like your attitude you will not gain the relevant information. Iris the ageing gypsy has great knowledge and it pays to be kind and sympathetic towards her or she will chastise you for your impetuosity. A picture of Sinbad appears and you choose your greeting and change disks - or should I say reels! Then the same picture of the old gypsy fills the screen in reply to your question and you must again change reels to get Sinbad back on screen. You must then choose your next question carefully, change reels for the old woman's response and so on. This juggling act continues until you choose the wrong reply and upset the gypsy or she gives you the



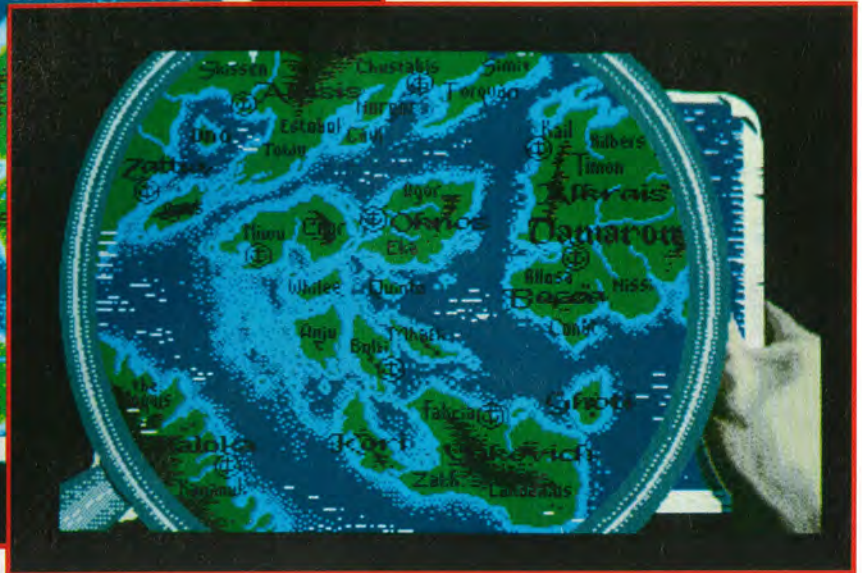
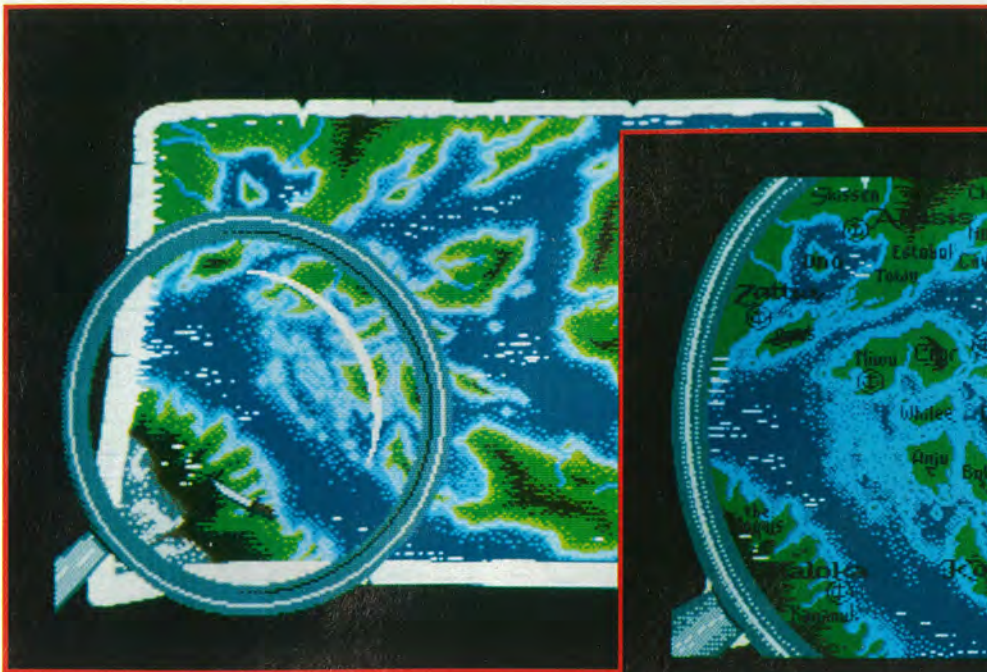
Having removed its magical gem, Sinbad is shocked when the statue comes to life.

Coming from the people who brought us that classic medieval romp, "Defender of the Crown", I was expecting big things from this. But on playing, as much as I tried to like it, I just couldn't. The game is repetitive and, for the most part, involves travelling from city to city whilst looking at Sinbad's back. The "action" sequences, too, are a major let down: gone are the large, sword-wielders of the Amiga original, replaced by tiny fighters an 8-bit owner would be ashamed of.

If you want a really good "Cinemaware" game, I recommend you wait for "Rocket Ranger" - I shall.

SM

For long distance travel, the map is essential when finding the quickest route from A to B, a bit like an Eastern A to Z!



**STA
Rating**

60%

GRAPHICS: 56%
SOUND: 57%

LASTING APPEAL: 61%
ADDICTIVENESS: 56%

DIFFICULTY: AVERAGE
1ST DAY SCORE: N/A

relevant information.

A more interesting confrontation occurs when Sinbad meets the beautiful and comely seductress, Libitina. Again, the irritating disk juggling continues, but she has vital information concerning the whereabouts of three idols. Depending on your approach, she may call upon 'Jamoul the Butcher' to sort Sinbad out or it is just as easy to end up bedding the wench for the night - this has its obvious advantages and some disadvantages! Fumbling with the disk change in anticipation of the steamy spectacle, an unusual and rather speedy love scene is followed by a guilty-looking Sinbad sitting alone on the bed. He feels strange and hears

Libitina's voice in his head saying: 'Now I possess you!'

With a swap of the reels, Sinbad is back at the signpost pondering on his next destination. Suddenly, a warning appears on screen! A 'Pteranoxos', or large man-eating bird is attacking your ship and with yet another disk-change you can re-join the crew. A large spear protrudes from the bottom of the screen and manipulating the joystick to aim and pressing the firebutton, sends the projectile hurtling towards the bird. But if the Pteranoxos manages to evade the arrows it will continue to pester the crew. Combat comes in a variety of forms, such as the fabled Cyclops which must be stoned with a sling and shot in its underground lair. While an uncouth and unskilful sword fight ensues whenever Sinbad is confronted by one of the Black Prince's guards or the evil one himself. This particular piece of action consists of two crude movements, a low chop and a high chop! There is also a large-scale battle of strategy to be fought against the Black Prince's armies, where Sinbad the simple sailor becomes a general and moves armies on a large-scale grid map. You must make decisions for him, keep your men supplied with weaponry and the

"Sinbad and the Throne of the Falcon" is Cinemaware's second title, and after playing their highly acclaimed "Defender of the Crown", I was expecting yet another classic game. Having been impressed by the Amiga version, I would have thought that the extra time spent in developing the ST version would have helped to produce an exceptional game.

Unfortunately, the ST's "Sinbad" is not quite the salty seadog that his Amiga cousin is. The action sequences are jerky and somewhat reminiscent of a poor eight-bit game. The gameplay, too, seems long-winded, and, should you own a 520, the disk swapping becomes the final straw. Ultimately, "Sinbad" just doesn't live up to his Eastern Promise.

NC

ultimate aim is to drive the Prince and his armies away from the city. **STA**

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SINBAD



Navigate your ship through this tortuous passage, saving ship-wrecked men as you go.

"Do you have a Field Marshall's baton hidden in your knapsack? Have you got what it takes to plan and build an unstoppable force which can sweep the space fleets of the People's Holy Republic from the Kiffryn's Cluster?"

STELLA CRUSADE

US GOLD (£19.95)

It is this meticulous pre-planning and careful manoeuvring of resources which appeals to the war-gaming enthusiasts. The thrill of the game is not in the final act of the battle, but in the quieter, but inevitably more considered, prelude to the holocaust. For this reason war-gamers are content to do without the arcade 'Zap' and 'Pows', and, instead, let the computer coldly announce the final result of each skirmish.

The game involves the struggle for supremacy, between two rival empires, over Kiffryn's Star Cluster. This simulation may be played as a two-player game or as solitaire with the computer playing the part of the opposition. In the solitaire mode, the game may be played at many different skill levels to enable you to gradually build up your control of the game. Different campaign scenarios may be selected which will change the playing time from between 2 and 40 hours of struggle. In common with other 'Empire' simulations of this kind, you will be required to send out scout-ships to colonize new worlds and there set up farming and factory

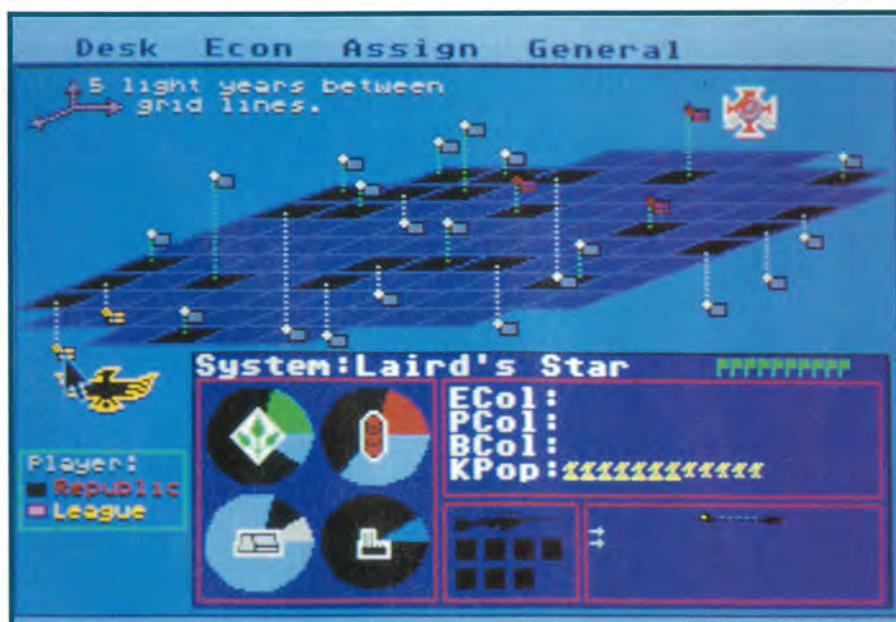
units to build and support your task fleets. Starting at the opposite end of the galaxy, your opposition is also spinning his/her web of influence until the inevitable moment when your scouts blunder into each other's territory, and the war drum begins to beat.

The game is played in a series of 'Moves'. Each commander takes turns to input all actions that he/she wishes to be carried out during the next time-slot: movement of task-forces, building of new ships, setting up of factories, training crews etc. Selecting the 'End of move' option, passes control to the opposition who will then enter its proposed moves. Finally, the computer will action both sets of orders. If it is found that two battle fleets have arrived in the same system, and you

Ensuring that you always have superior fire power assembled at the right place, is the name of this game. It's a pity that you have no control over the fleets once the fighting starts, but I accept that a Commander's task is to set up the right conditions for his forces before the battle, and not get his hands dirty during it. There are virtually no fancy graphics or sounds to be found in this game - 'In Space no one can see or hear you Zap!' A Galaxy map and many tables of statistics form the main displays.

The best way to play this game is with a friend who also thinks he's Napoleon. Failing that, the wealth of options hidden inside the game's strategy will ensure that war-gamers will need to spend many hours of careful study before they can beat the computer-controlled enemy.

AM



The Universe as we know it, over which your Stella Crusade is fought.

decide to fight, the computer will step through the resulting conflict. At suitable intervals you will be given the option to continue or flee and fight another day. During the battles there is not much action to be seen, simply reports of losses and gains. Your only influence on the outcome is reserved for the earlier choice of your fleet commander and his characteristics.

STA

STA Rating
60%

TEXT/GRAPHICS: 50%
GAMEPLAY: 68%

LASTING APPEAL: 60%
ADDICTIVENESS: 60%

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AMIGA

ATARI ST

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CBM 64/128

AMIGA ATARI ST
 IBM PC & COMPATIBLES

POOL OF RADIANCE

FANTASY ROLE PLAYING



"Logotron have so far been associated with maze-like puzzle games. But now they have commissioned the likes of Steve Cain and Graham "Kenny" Everett to write a shoot'em-up for them. Is it worth a gander? And is it all its quacked up to be?"

STARGOOSE

LOGOTRON (£19.95)

Set against a full-screen, smoothly scrolling backdrop, Star Goose sets the player the task of stealing six crystals from each of the eight cities on the planet Nom. Should you collect all forty-eight gems,



your Nomman enemies will have to cancel their invasion plans, leaving your world safe.

A very pretty cinematic intro screen sees your Ship landing on Nom, and pressing fire shows the scene from above and the multi-coloured surface of Nom. Each of the eight cities has its uneven surface littered with defence installations and pre-programmed attack vehicles, and it is these you must avoid whilst you search for the crystals. Just below the planet surface, at the bottom of the screen, is a display showing the health of your ship; your shield's strength, indicated by a blue bar which diminishes with every collision or

How nice it is to see that an old dog can be taught new tricks. Logotron have taken the basic formula for a scrolly shoot'em-up and beefed it up by adding uneven terrain and a novel tunnel section, and the whole package works, and plays, well. Graphics are of the high quality we expect of the two esteemed game developers, and it's nice to see that all of the screen has been used instead of having a massive scoreboard taking up half of it. Anyone who has twenty quid lying in his pocket, and fancies letting off some of his homicidal tendencies, need look no further.

SM

shot you receive; your rapidly decreasing fuel level; and the number of missiles you have on board.

As you progress up the screen, your ship rises and falls over the constantly undulating land. Thankfully, this very attractive landscape is not just for decoration; it is useful for avoiding enemy fire, and acts as a very useful shield for both you and the attack forces in the heat of battle. The various opponents take the form of mines, huge cannons and mobile vehicles. Shooting these will take a number of hits before they explode, but by launching a missile by pressing the alternate key twice, they will be destroyed instantly.

Scattered randomly on the planet's surface you will find metallic faces with huge mouths and strange gates. The mouths open as your ship approaches and entering them sends you into a 3D sub-game in which you must collect glittering eyes which are stuck to the wall. Collecting these refills both your shield and your fuel, and by passing through a gate, your missile's level will be miraculously replenished - extremely useful!

Should you collect all six of the crystals, at the end of a level a portal will open and by entering this you will have completed the level, and will receive a considerable bonus for your troubles. Failing to do so will involve having to travel the tortuous landscape again, until you do collect them all. Only when all eight levels are complete

Congratulations to Logotron for producing a refreshing and original interpretation of the ridiculously prolific and predictable theme of scrolling shoot'em-ups. From its slick presentation to its unbeatable game-play, Star Goose is the first serious challenger to Xenon for the title of best scrolling shoot'em-up. The success of this game can be attributed to a number of factors, not least the intelligence of the enemy who, in their many and varied forms, anticipate your every move. Also, this being a terrain vehicle rather than a sweeping assault craft introduces all sorts of new problems with the undulating and unforgiving terrain. This will undoubtedly be the Star Goose that laid the golden egg.

JS

STA
Rating

71%

GRAPHICS: 78%
SOUND: 55%

LASTING APPEAL: 67%
ADDICTIVENESS: 75%

DIFFICULTY: AVE/HARD
1ST DAY SCORE: 36917

is your race free from attack from the Nomman oppressors. **STA**



Stargoose - a quacker of a shoot'em-up set against a full screen undulating landscape.

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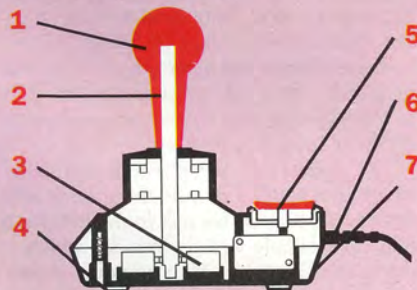
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The original, classic Conan stories were filled with such subtle descriptions as: 'Each blow of his mighty sword sliced to the bone and tore and tugged at the ape's flesh, until the cold grey blade was warmed with crimson gore.' Each story was more outlandish and barbaric than the last and you created and explored the dungeons in your mind, using the limitless powers of your imagination. As a marginal dungeon dweller, I generally find computer adventures toothless, impotent and tame in comparison to those books. In fact, I have never played an adventure that could maintain my interest long enough for me to get anywhere - until now! An obscure French company called 16-32 Diffusion have developed the most outstanding dungeon adventure ever produced on the ST. It is called Skrull, and it quite adequately for the most vivid imagination.

Skrull stands beneath a portcullis, which proceeds to drop to the ground and effectively cuts off his exit to the left. He is fully controllable with the mouse, which works in conjunction with an unusual and somewhat confusing icon system. There is a command to Stop, two spearheaded arrows indicating Walk and Run, a sword

"All adventures have to start somewhere, but the majority of them seem to begin in dark and dank dungeons. I suppose if a story began at the meat counter in Tesco's, you'd be bored stiff by the time you reached the check-out!"

SKRULL

16/32 (£24.95)

At first glance, Skrull could easily be mistaken for a Psygnosis game. Both the packaging and the graphics are very reminiscent of Barbarian. The controls, too, seem to be very similar. The gameplay itself, is that of an arcade adventure - and a rather good one at that! The sampled sound effects are adequate and complement the action nicely. My only worry is that perhaps the control method is a little too cumbersome - energy can be lost quite unnecessarily because of the awkward set up. Nevertheless, if Skrull is only their first release, we should be seeing great things from 16-32.

NC

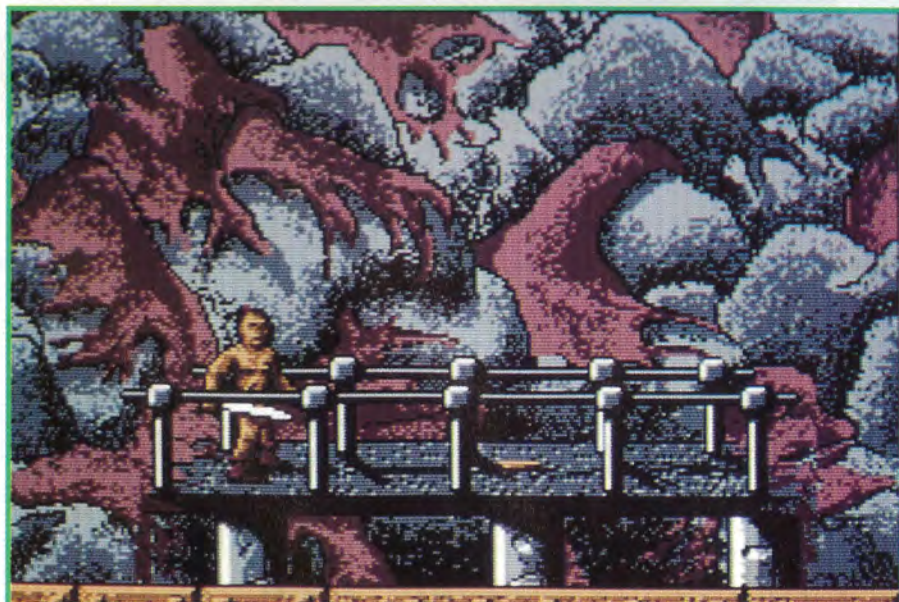
icon which is self-explanatory and two icons that enable you to Pick Up and Use objects. Selecting the icon to walk and holding down the right-hand button sends Skrull meandering off in the corresponding direction. Care must be taken from the word go; the first of a thousand surprises presents itself - a pit! You never quite master the start and stop commands in time for this hazard and Skrull invariably disappears down the hole. An energy gauge beneath the screen indicates that a painful and costly chunk of his strength has been wasted in the fall and a weaker but wiser Skrull appears on the other side of the pit.

Yet another pit appears, but this time there are precarious bars to walk over - surely not for your convenience? Sure enough, as Skrull reaches halfway, one of the bars disintegrates and you must quickly activate the 'Stop' icon to avoid another fall and Select Jump. With a grunt of exertion, Skrull leaves the relative safety of his precarious perch, somersaults Comaneci-style and lands on the other side of the pit.

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Skrull passes

a foreboding door which cannot be opened without a key and so you are forced to continue down the passageway. Suddenly, a blood-curdling screech marks the imminent arrival of a giant bird of prey and, swiftly, the 'Sword' icon must be sought and activated. You have a split second to choose your action, a high and low hack



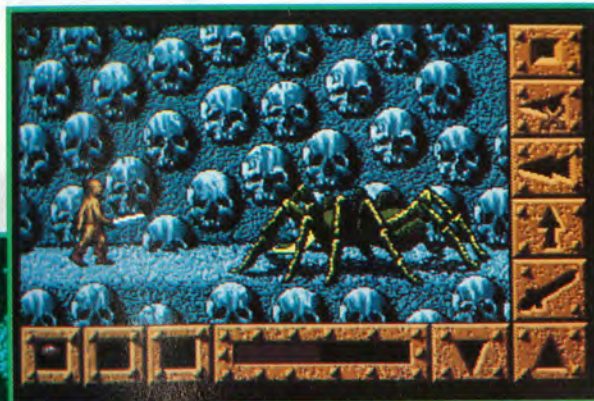
Skrull's barber has got a sick sense of humour. Still, who's going to see it down in this dark dungeon.

Skrull takes the basic structure of Psygnosis's 'Barbarian' and adds slightly better control and depth of gameplay. The graphics and sound are nothing special, and some of the animation leaves a lot to be desired. But, generally, the whole thing hangs together fairly well. The game itself is quite challenging, and should keep the most ardent of players going for a couple of weeks. But the format is an old one, and ST owners are used to more advanced techniques, therefore, I cannot recommend this dated-looking nostalgia trip.

SM



Brave Skrull beheads dragons, slays Minotaurs and ventures into dark, skull-filled rooms. But would you believe it, our hero is an arachnophobic!



achieved by pressing the left or right-hand mouse button. Misjudge the timing of your defence and the bird knocks Skrull to the ground, depleting his energy further. It takes just one successful hack to turn the bird into a hideous grey face which disappears in a puff of smoke. Another bird wings its way down the passageway and this time its demise yields the key to that door. At this first sight of action, the mouse/icon system proves to be cumbersome and creates many difficulties, not least being the task of putting Skrull in a position to pick up objects. With the key displayed in an inventory beneath the screen, you can return to the door, unlock it and enter. Skrull appears in an identical doorway on the other side, which is initially confusing. But further investigation reveals that you are in a different passageway.

The first of many tasks in this adventure is to find a jewel and return it to its rightful place in a gem cluster. Stairs within a gargoyle's mouth lead to the inner recesses of the dungeon, where rooms are lined with skulls - this is where the action really starts to heat up. After negotiating a

safe path through fire-breathing skulls, a remarkable piece of animation shows a giant tarantula attempting to drive Skrull onto spikes. Finally, with rapidly decreasing strength induced by a swarm of vampire bats, Skrull must collect the next object which holds the key to the next part of the adventure. Even deeper recesses turn this adventure into a nightmare, as Skrull enters a blood-filled room only to be confronted by a dragon. A crude and bloody battle ensues and many direct hits are required to slay the beast. But this is where you learn that this is also a soul-destroying adventure! With a drop of life left in Skrull's veins, we beat the dragon, only to be crushed by an avalanche of rocks - this is where our adventure ends!

STA

Hair-raising, sinister, cruel and bloody, Skrull is a totally heartless game! What feverish mind thought up the portcullis trap, where Skrull meets his end, crushed beneath a massive slab of stone? Some of your worst nightmares appear in this adventure, from the giant, hairy, man-eating spiders to being skewered on metal spikes. This fear is heightened by the unique and awkward controls, which take some getting used to. The graphics are quite spectacular and the game content is massive. If Skrull is an indication of the quality that we can expect from this obscure French software house, they will be a force to be reckoned with!

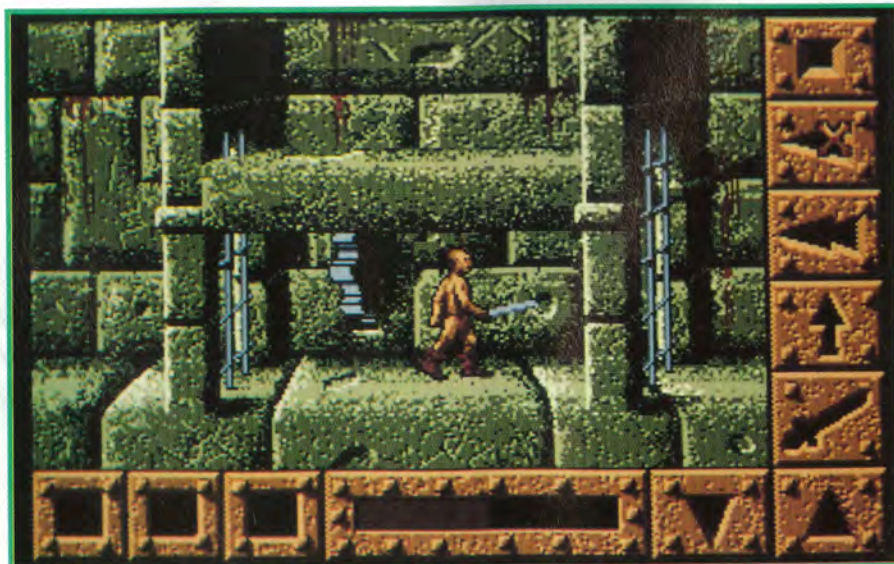
JS

STA
Rating
66%

GRAPHICS: 63%
SOUND: 55%

LASTING APPEAL: 72%
ADDICTIVENESS: 68%

DIFFICULTY: AVE/HARD
1ST DAY SCORE: N/A



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--- STA 76 STA ---



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THE QUESTIONS PART ONE

1 - Name the major arcade game currently being developed by U.S. Gold for a Christmas release that features a helicopter.

2 - Which sport is NOT featured in Epyx's California Games?

a) Skateboarding b) BMX c) Volleyball

3 - What Gauntlet-type game was released by U.S. Gold in the same month as Gauntlet II?

a) Alien Syndrome b) Shackled c) Pandora

"Yet another computer game about us Earthlings irresponsibly exhausting our planet's resources to the point of destruction. Do we really need another morality tale?"

DRILLER

INCENTIVE (£24.95)

Once again a scenario describing how the Earth has been bled dry and, as usual, the solution is to go and interfere with somebody else's planet. As the title suggests, Driller is a game about the oil business, but you will need more than a jeep and a few geological instruments for this task. Earth has been abandoned like an empty husk and a substitute donor has been found in the moon 'Mitral', the Dallas of the future! Mitral is one of two moons orbiting the primitive planet 'Evath' and while the Earthlings are busy fouling up their new planet, you are employed to make the moon safe after some ostracized criminals from Evath crudely and irresponsibly mined it. The old lags designed a complex security system for their own protection, but their lack of mining knowledge eventually made Mitral unsafe and they were forced to return to Evath.

However, scientists have calculated that a meteor is due to strike the volatile moon in a matter of hours and in its current, volatile state, a collision of this magnitude would wipe out half the population of Evath. Your task is to make Mitral safe in preparation for the collision.

There are eighteen sectors on Mitral where the crust is thin and likely to rupture. Incentive have included a self-assemble, polyhedral model of the planet which shows how to identify these areas. Equipped with an 'Excavation.Probe' land vehicle, you begin the mission on one of Mitral's artificial surfaces. The vehicle is steered by mouse-activated directional icons and the craft responds to any change of speed and direction. The terrain is covered with a network of buildings which are guarded by a complex and deadly security system designed and implemented by the criminals. Your vehicle has caterpillar tracks and can traverse most obstacles and moving the cursor away from the



Driller : fast 3D graphics coupled with absorbing gameplay.

directional arrows and on to the screen activates the laser which can eradicate any immovable objects. On a number of occasions you must traverse a chasm by blasting a flat, rectangular block which falls over to form a bridge.

Each of the eighteen vulnerable areas are marked by a large cross on the ground and on locating a trouble spot, your task is to tap the pocket of gas beneath the crust. Manoeuvring the vehicle as near as you dare, capping is achieved by placing the cursor over a drilling rig icon which sends a signal back to the Scientists on Evath. Plotting the grid map coordinates mission control transport a rig to the moon and guide it into the hole. Transporting rigs, we are told, is an expensive manoeuvre and the scientists urge you to make the necessary preparations before-

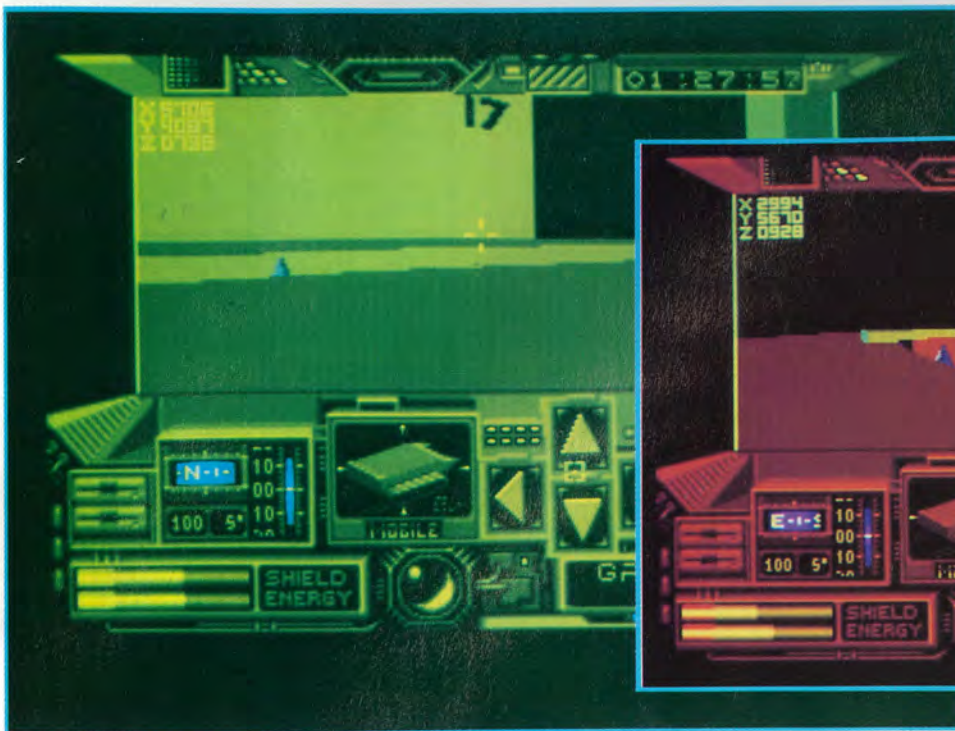
hand. The closer you get to the centre of the underground gas build up, the more gas can be yielded and after successful capping, a flame ignites at the top of the rig to indicate that the site has been made

There are numerous games which deal with a similar theme - take for example Firebird's Sentinel and the Tau Ceti series of games. The subject is certainly nothing new, but from the plausible scenario to the excellent presentation of this game, Driller more than justifies itself. The graphics are nothing short of incredible and never have I seen such an effective impression of distance and perspective! Considering the subject, this could quite easily have been a stuffy strategy game, but Incentive have struck a good balance between arcade action and strategy. Finally, Driller is unique in being a computer game with a constructive rather than destructive theme - what more 'Incentive' do you need to buy this game?

JS

KEYBOARD
 JOYSTICK
 MOUSE
 COLOUR
 MONO
 520ST
 1040ST





One of Driller's lateral thinking problems. In front of your craft (left) is a yawning seemingly impassable chasm. To get to the other side, the slab to the right must be shot. This will fall and make a useful bridge (below).



safe. The areas which were once inhabited are a confusing labyrinth of roads, channels and alleyways, but using the vehicle's comprehensive instrumentation, navigation is just possible.

The task of making Mitral safe is impeded by the criminal's complex and effective security system. Of course, burglars and bank robbers are leading authorities on beating security systems, so this one has been designed to be thorough. A network of laser beacons form the basis of the system and they can detect your presence and attack with their shield-depleting beam. An attack is like standing in front of a strobe machine and before the beam wipes out your shield defence, you must centre the weaponry

sights on the beacon and fire. With the beacon knocked out, you can safely explore the immediate area. But the Ketar Scanners have picked you up and now the entire system is aware of your presence. A more effective way of disabling the system is to locate an area nerve centre, manoeuvre the vehicle beneath the overhead cables and blast them. Without communication, the system cannot relay messages and you can continue searching the area in rela-

tive safety. Energy and shield strength can be replenished by locating store hangars where you can blast pyramid-shaped supply pods. Once all eighteen mining platforms are plugged, you must quickly

locate a reconnaissance jet, board it and vacate Mitral before the meteor collision. Avoiding a disaster of global proportions is in your hands!

STA

Driller is a massive and puzzling game, yet it is easier to get into than, for example, Elite or Mercenary. The freescape system is remarkably fast and smooth, and combined with the effective sampled sound, creates an incredible atmosphere. The game plays very well and the sectors get harder very gradually. Driller is one of those games that, when you give up after getting stuck and go to do something else, you think: "Why don't I try...", and go and load it up again!

SM

It's a pity to see all of the action going on inside a small window in one half of the screen, but despite this, the Freescape system works fantastically well. Being able to view your surroundings from almost any angle with few restrictions, gives this game a level of explorability which more than makes up for the modest pace of the gameplay. Driller offers strategy with a sense of achievement, but at the expense of joystick wiggling excitement. One of the better 3D-ers.

NC

STA
Rating
76%

GRAPHICS: 78%
SOUND: 58%

LASTING APPEAL: 84%
ADDICTIVENESS: 69%

DIFFICULTY: AVE/HARD
1ST DAY SCORE: 83866



Our intrepid pilot finds a supply pod. Shoot any of them, and his energy and shields will be replenished.

If Pac collects that yellow power pill, he'll be able to polish off those two pursuing ghosts easily.



PACMANIA

GRANDSLAM (£19.95)

"He's back! Yes, that rotund, yellow, pill-eating fellow has returned. But does he do it in style?"

There cannot be anyone who hasn't heard of Pacman. At the height of his popularity two years ago, he appeared on everything from lunch boxes to underpants; he even had his own TV show! Then he disappeared. Where? Nobody knows: perhaps tax exile; perhaps all the pressure and publicity got too much for him; but whatever the reason, those smooth-talking guys at Grand Slam have found him and have coaxed him out of retirement. The result? Pacmania.

Anyone familiar with Namco's Pacman, will remember the basic layout of the dot-laden maze. Well, what Namco have done for this sequel of a sequel is tip it up, so that it is viewed at an isometric angle, and reduce the amount of maze you can see; instead, it scrolls very smoothly when Pac moves.

In the centre of the maze there is a cage, and from this cage spring - also out of retirement - Inky, Blinky, Pinky and Clyde, our hero's ghostly enemies. Realising that for years they have been unable to catch Pac, they have also recruited a deadlier, un-named, jumping colleague. Dotted in each corner of the maze are the power pills, and if Pacman collects one of these, the ghosts will turn blue and run in the opposite direction, indicating that for a limited period they can be eaten. If you do catch and eat one, you receive a two-hundred-point bonus, and this bonus doubles for each ghost caught. Having been eaten, the remainder of the ex-ghost - its eyes - will zoom back to the centre cage, where it will completely reform. Should Pac get in trouble with a ghost on either side, by pressing fire, and if your timing is spot-on, he can leap over any oncoming spectre - most useful! Beneath the ghosts' cage, fruit and vegetable bonuses appear, and if Pacman is feeling daring and collects, a considerable points bonus will be his.

At the beginning of the game you

It's been very quiet on the Pac-Man front just lately. That is, of course, until now. The Pac-Man theme seemed to have been exhausted, and I would have thought that we had seen the last of our yellow spherical friend. So just when you thought it was safe to re-enter the maze, Inky, Blinky, Pinky and Clyde are back! Although the gameplay is still the same as it always was, Grandslam have taken the 2D mazes and transformed them into a 3D landscape of passages and tunnels. The net result is an incredibly successful game which has had added sparkle injected into its elderly formula. Pacmania proves to be just the tonic for would-be pill poppers.

NC

Pacman is one of the classic heroes of computer games, and this fine conversion does nothing to damage that image. The graphics and the tunes are excellent, as is the scrolling, but I found the perspective takes a while to get used to. The ghosts seem more intelligent than their ancestors, and you will find Pac's newly-acquired jump facility being used a lot. A polished conversion, and one that takes the basic essence of Pacman, and adds humour to it.

P.S. Did you know: the music on level one sounds like the theme tune of the Henry's Cat cartoons?

SM

can choose from one of three starting mazes, these are: Block Town, which is the easiest; Pacman's Park - hmmm, getting tricky; Sandbox - getting quite hard. A fourth maze, Jungly Steps, is shown on the title screen, but this is unselectable and the game must be played through to reach it. Having selected a screen, a humorous cartoon-style intro will be shown while the computer designs the screen, and normally results in Pacman being chased by a dozen or so ghosts. Each level has its own accompanying tune and these boppy tunes are perfect, creating an excellent, claustrophobic manic feeling.

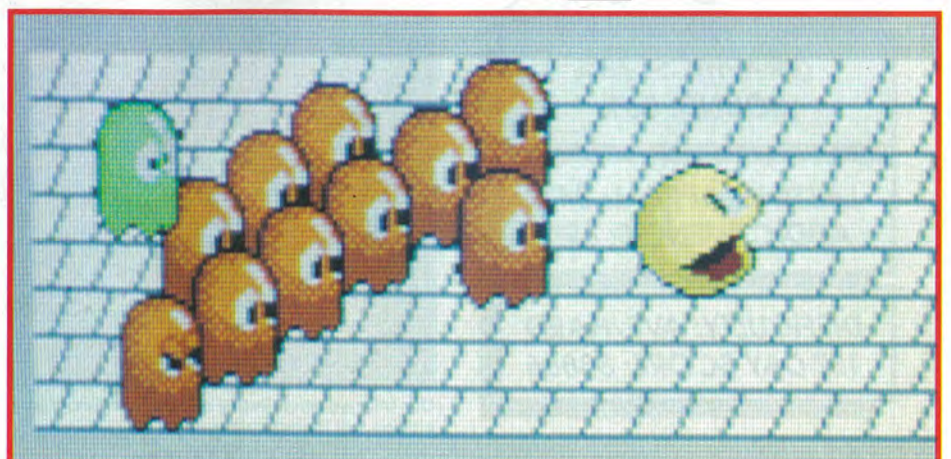
STA

STA
Rating
70%

GRAPHICS: 69%
SOUND: 60%

LASTING APPEAL: 63%
ADDICTIVENESS: 70%

DIFFICULTY: AVE/HARD
1ST DAY SCORE: 14455



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Hookability **93%** Overall
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89%

Sinclair User says ... The best ever managerial game, the one your speccy has been waiting for. **93%**

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COMMODORE 64, SPECTRUM

BATTLE PROBE

CRYISIS (£14.95)

For a start, 'Battle Probe' is a blooming boring title for a shoot'em-up, and I must confess that after the briefest encounter with the game, I was engulfed by an overwhelming wave of apathy. But drawing on my resources of resolve and enthusiasm, I responded to my early morning call and prepared to scroll where I had scrolled only a few hundred times before. For my 1040ST, running this game was about as taxing as the 'Look-in' crossword and after the loading procedure, a still screen-shot and the shortest and most repetitive piece of digitized music I've ever heard, urged me to commence play.

In keeping with the general predictability of the product, the vessel which appeared at the base of the screen was very typical for this type of game. This 'assault craft' is equipped with double cannon, and a press of the firebutton sends a volley of cannon-fire sweeping across the screen. But even with this seemingly impressive weaponry, the vessel is rendered vul-

nerable due to the cumbersome craft and woolly directional controls.

The first sign of opposition appears in the shape of blinking eyeballs which sporadically fire lasers as they move jerkily down the screen. Everything that appears in the game moves faster than your vessel so that weaponry should be used to its best advantage. Wrenching the joystick to the left or right sends the craft meandering across the screen and pressing the firebutton scatters a volley of fire. A collection of strange craft and creatures throw the same brand of weaponry at you and as you travel over recognizable terrain, you reach certain points in the game where the position of the craft triggers off some rather clever surprises. Suddenly, like an explosion in an eyeball factory, a dozen or more eyeballs join the attack and blink their way down the screen.

Well that's about it really! The terrain seems to go round like a continuous-reel tape and more unusual crea-



tures are introduced in a vain attempt to keep your attention. It is quite obvious that the indistinct controls and cumbersome craft were supposed to make the game more challenging, but all they manage to do is irritate. The prolificness of this genre is an indication that it is a winning formula and very popular. But I am sad to say that Battle Probe is not a particularly good example.

STA

STA
Rating
25%

GRAPHICS: 18%
SOUND: 22%

LASTING APPEAL: 23%
ADDICTIVENESS: 24%

DIFFICULTY: AVE
1ST DAY SCORE: 18500

STREET GANG

PLAYERS (£9.95)

It is six months or more since Players Software converted their most successful eight-bit game, Joe Blade, onto the ST. Since the release of this respectable horizontal-scrolling wargame, the chaps from Mercury House, we presume, have been searching for a worthy successor. Sadly, I must report that they have not found one in Street Gang from Time Warp Productions!

'Mickey's life was dull and boring', says the uninspiring scenario; and so instead of taking up a sport or pastime he joins New York's toughest street gang - hence the title. But Mickey must first prove himself worthy of such an honour and this is where you come in. You must guide this misguided youth on his travels from the west to the east side of town - or left to right on your monitor screen! The game-screen emerges showing Mickey on the streets and wrenching the joystick to the right sends him meandering across the screen. The first of

his assailants look like blonde-haired twins in matching grey jogging suits. Confronted by mean Mickey, the twins produce mugger spray and squirt it at our trainee thug. The joystick controls quickly prove to be woolly and indirect as you try to stop Mickey from getting a faceful by wrenching the joystick in the opposite direction. There is a fatal delay in his response as you jerk the stick from the base in irritation. But, fortunately, Mickey has been endowed with powerful legs and pushing the joystick forwards can send him sailing over the joggers.

Pressing the firebutton unleashes Mickey's awesome fists which can cause their unfortunate victim to explode with astonishing unreality. Occasionally, as his smithereens settle on the sidewalk, the victim drops whatever weapon he is carrying and moving Mickey over the top of it replenishes his strength and energy. You would have thought that Mickey's explod-



ing fists would be the fear of Manhattan, but a constant stream of rival gangs continues to pour onto the screen brandishing knives, guns and baseball bats. A so-called bonus level shows that Mickey has resorted to rummaging through dustbins. The screen shows four bins, and pressing the firebutton opens up one of them.

The style of the background graphics in Street Gang is very similar to that of Joe Blade, but the game-play is immeasurably inferior. If you want to avoid a boring and dull life like Mickey's, avoid Street Gang!

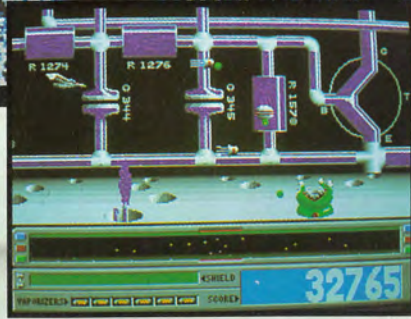
STA
Rating
31%

GRAPHICS: 34%
SOUND: 25%

LASTING APPEAL: 28%
ADDICTIVENESS: 29%

DIFFICULTY: AVE
1ST DAY SCORE: 220

STARRAY

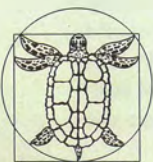


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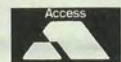
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OPENING MOVES

SARGON III, LOGOTRON (£24.95)

During this evaluation of Sargon III, I make reference to and comparisons with The Chessmaster 2000 by Electronic Arts and Microdeal's Techmate Chess. Both of these games are quite different in their presentation and offer a variety of features. Chessmaster 2000 is graphically appealing and can be played on a 2D or 3D board. Additionally, it has incredible speech synthesis which makes comments and adjudicates the game. On the face of it, Chessmaster is very attractive and there are some interesting analytical features which I will describe later. Microdeal's Techmate Chess is a no-fuss-and-nonsense presentation which has been designed to be 'user friendly' - ideal for those who just want to get on and play the game.

Sargon III is accompanied by a thorough and comprehensive manual which is divided into four sections.

The first section is a comprehensive introduction to the game of chess, which describes the basic rules and gives the minimum information necessary to get the game running. This description of game-play begins with the strength and importance of each piece and how they move. It then goes on to describe very basic moves as well as strategic manoeuvres, such as 'castling' and 'en passant'.

The second section refers to the many features within the program and explains how they work in conjunction with the game. Section three gives you an insight into the minds of the great players and how they won

and lost historic matches, from the historic Anderssen-Kieseritky battle in 1851 to the incredible Kasparov victories. The final and largest section is devoted to chess problems and is most interesting and helpful to intermediates and advanced players alike.

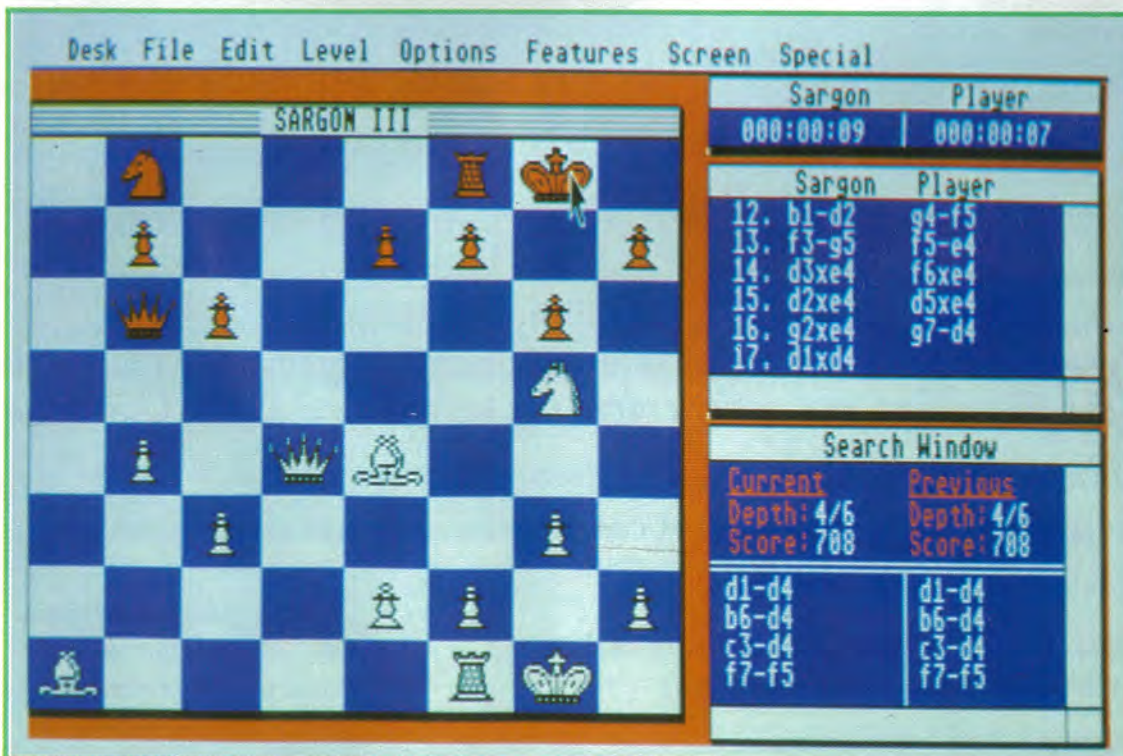
Openings, strategies and tactics are described in diagram form and explained in great detail. Sargon III has by far the

most comprehensive, interesting and detailed manual of the three titles.

Sargon III can be played on both mono and colour monitors, which have to be set on medium resolution. However, considering the

amount of time that you spend staring at the screen in this game, mono is far kinder to the eyes. The chessboard is a basic, flat presentation and, thankfully, it has standard black and white pieces arranged at the start of the game. One complaint about Chessmaster 2000 is that the sets of pieces are only a slightly different shade from each other and can easily be confused. Sargon III is automatically set on its lowest level of difficulty. The program maintains a time limit for itself for each of the nine levels. Each level progressively gives the computer more time to make decisions and

| | | |
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| 1040ST | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |



Sargon III presentation is uncluttered, and its "Opening Moves" hints and detailed analytical facilities makes it the complete chess package.

"Wanna play?" "Gotcha!" If you can stand the broad American accent, Chessmaster 2000's incredible speech synthesis adds a personal touch.



move, which makes the game more difficult for you.

The computer assumes that you want to play with the white pieces and waits for you to make the first move. All of the titles are mouse-controlled and with Sargon III, you place a cross on a particular chess piece and depress the left-hand button which highlights the square. Then dragging the piece to the desired square and releasing the button anchors it in its new position. Depending on the difficulty level you have chosen, Sargon III will select its response from its 'Opening Library'. This library holds a collection of Grandmaster openings and the game continues with analysed variations on these openings depending on your responses. Sargon contains more than 68,000 variations, which is by far the largest selection. A particular opening move may have a name such as 'Sicilian Defence', C7-C5 - Bishop's pawn two squares.

Eventually, depending on your responses, the program will exhaust its opening move library and will begin thinking and playing for itself in response to your game. Alternatively, the opening library can be cancelled at the beginning of the game. Each move is displayed and catalogued and a 'Take Back' feature allows you to retract as many moves as you wish - all three games have their own version of this feature. Even to an intermediate player like myself, Sargon III can sometimes seem quite fallible, and so choosing Infinite level gives the computer unlimited time to make its moves. However, it will continue to think

indefinitely unless a suitable move can be found in its Opening Move library, a move is forced because there is only one legal move which can be made or it is forced to get itself out of a 'check' situation. On these occasions, the search in the library is terminated.

Sargon III also caters for novices of the game with an 'Easy Play' option which can be activated at any time during a game and on any level that you are playing. Usually, Sargon assesses the amount of time you took to make a move and spends the same amount of time thinking about its response. But when 'Easy Play' is selected, it is stopped from using that time. Alternatively, if you grow impatient, selecting 'Halt

Search' forces Sargon to make the best move it has thought of up to that point. Additionally, on selecting 'Verify Moves', Sargon will suggest moves from the Opening Move library. Again, both Chessmaster 2000 and Techmate contain 'Help' features that suggest moves and retraction modes which enable you to go back to a point in the match where you made a fundamental error and replay the game.

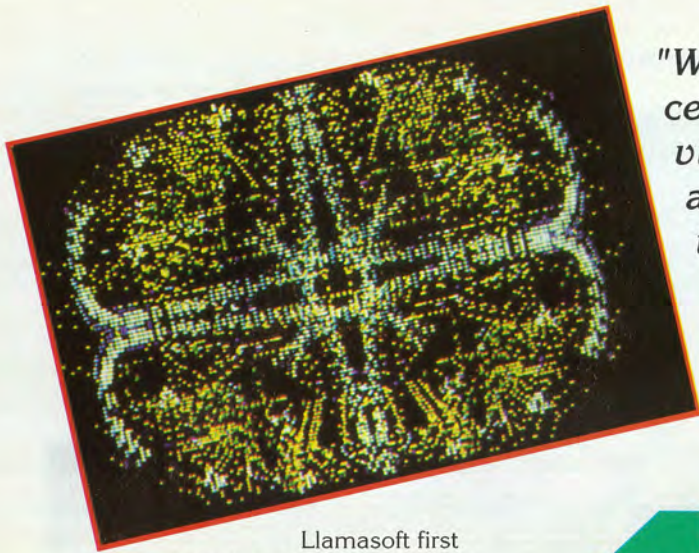
Summary

All three titles are excellent presentations and contain similar features. But with its thorough and comprehensive manual, its 'user friendliness', its analytical features and 68000 opening moves, Sargon III is a clear winner. Chessmaster 2000 (24.95) speech synthesis is quite brilliant, although that broad American voice saying 'gotcha' and 'whoops you got me', is a novelty which wears thin very quickly. Microdeal's Techmate (19.95) is simply adequate and benefits from being uncluttered by fancy graphics, speech synthesis and unnecessary features - ideal for players who just want to get on with the game! But Sargon III's strength is its comprehensiveness, which is crucial for beginners to the game. Additionally, its intelligence and in-built library makes it challenging and thorough enough to cater for the needs of the most experienced player.

STA



Techmate is a no fuss and frills chess package for those who just want to get on with the game.



"What does music look like? Why is it that certain old songs will bring back happy visual memories from your past? Why aren't most pop videos connected with the songs except on a superficial level? Who cares, let's get into Llamasoft's brilliant Trip-a-Tron (man)."

TRIP A TRON

LLAMASOFT (£34.95)

Llamasoft first introduced us to the idea of the 'light synthesizer' with Psychedelia way back in the days of the C64, followed by Colourspace on the ST. Why the need for a light synth in the first place? It's like this: putting your thoughts into vision in as immediate a fashion as simply picking up an electric guitar or synth and giving it a good old thrash, used to be impossible (except in terms of dance) - what was needed was the visual equivalent of the sound synthesizer. Some tried - hark back to the early eighties, when The Human League were a synth-and-slide-show band.

Now we have cheap, fast and colourful computers (and sometimes cheap fast and colourful programmers), the furry Jeff Minter - alone in this world of "can I set it to automatic?" mentality - has given us a very creative tool in the form of a light synth. On the simplest level, Trip-a-Tron is a program which displays streams of illuminated dot patterns in co-ordination with the movements of your mouse (or Pro-draw graphics tablet). On the other end of the complexity scale, Trip-a-Tron will pre-process and display sequences of pic-

ture-file imagery, give you immense power (if not control) over the dot and line based effects it generates. By default you are in a sort of 'space',

someone's parent's big telly screen. On the other hand, individuals could use it purely for a form of 'electronic yoga', it's loads of fun late at night with very loud music and whatever / whoever else you're comfortable with.

Getting it loaded

Trip-a-Tron will run on a 520ST, although there are features which will not be available to you until your memory upgrade gets purchased and fitted. The whole packaging is rather interesting - it consists of a 100% Filofax-compatible binder, with the loose-leaf manual inside, and the two single-sided Trip-a-Tron disks inside one cover. I rate this as the best packaging I have ever seen on any piece of software in the universe

this millenium (even if the pages themselves are only in black and white). The manual itself is very humorously written, despite being totally in the wrong order.

This pro-



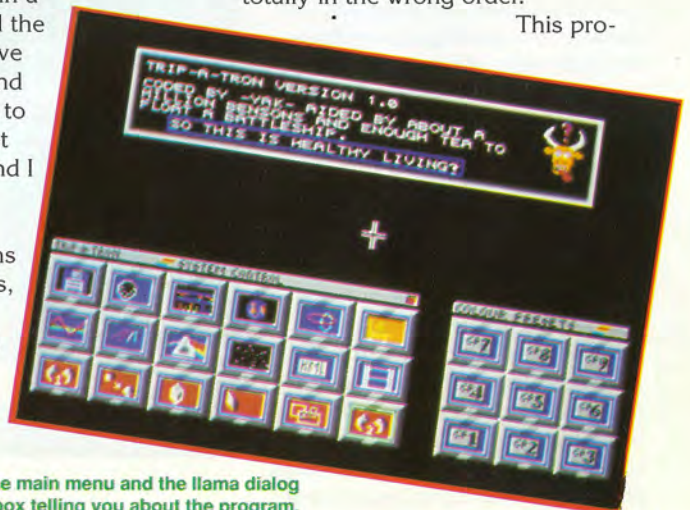
The controller-choosing screen, which you see before the program completely loads. As you can see, mice or Pro-draw tablets can be utilised.

where it's dark, and the objects you manipulate are light.

Trip-a-Tron can be used for a variety of things, from simply relaxing in front of the screen in a recreational mode, all the way up to a serious live performance. More and more bands will want to have a light synthesist among their ranks, and I can imagine many young groups in garages and bedrooms - a number of persons, a number of cheapo synths, samplers and a drum machine, a few ST's and a Trip-a-Tron setup with



Jeff's weird and wonderful file selector. This is where you load, save, directory - anything to do with the disks.



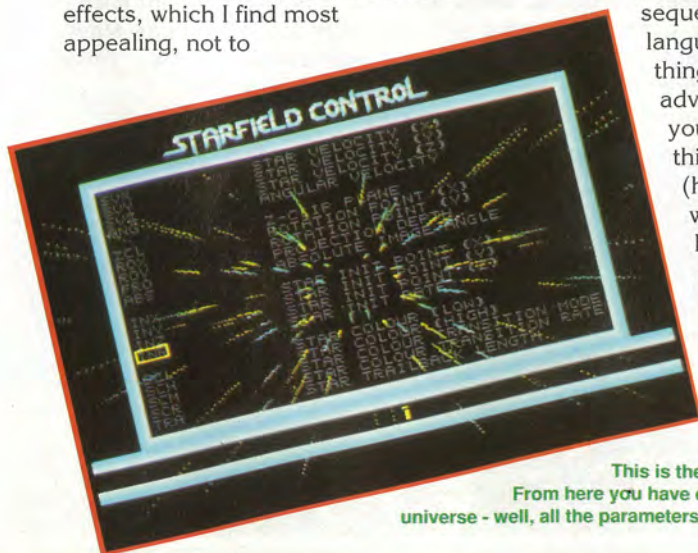
The main menu and the llama dialog box telling you about the program.



The IES page, where internal events get sequenced, and strange things generally happen. The bottom right icon is quit, pressing this causes the frame to fade to black.

gram is intended only for use in low-res mode. Across the two disks, you will find adequate demo material to learn from. Initially, you will find a control panel - the bottom half of the screen is full of buttons. The top half is still active for use as a kind of 'scratchpad area' to try out effects in. The simplest aspect will let you move a 'lightform' about the screen. This can be played about with while you alter the palettes, the decay-mode settings, the line-mode effects, various expander and mixed-up effects - all from certain keypresses.

Symmetries can be altered flexibly - Jeff seems to attach quite a lot of importance to symmetry, I personally don't. Strobe effects are fun, they flash the entire screen background with a certain colour which fades back down to the original. Demo 2 will let you discover things like laser effects (imagine the screen is the sky, and there is simulated a simple scanned laser projector which shoots up shapes in the sky), and starfield effects, which I find most appealing, not to



This is the starfield control. From here you have control over the entire universe - well, all the parameters of the starfield.

This is the sillyscope, where general wave patterns are created for use by other parts of Trip-a-tron.



mention a must for doing Doctor-Who-opening-titles type of effects.

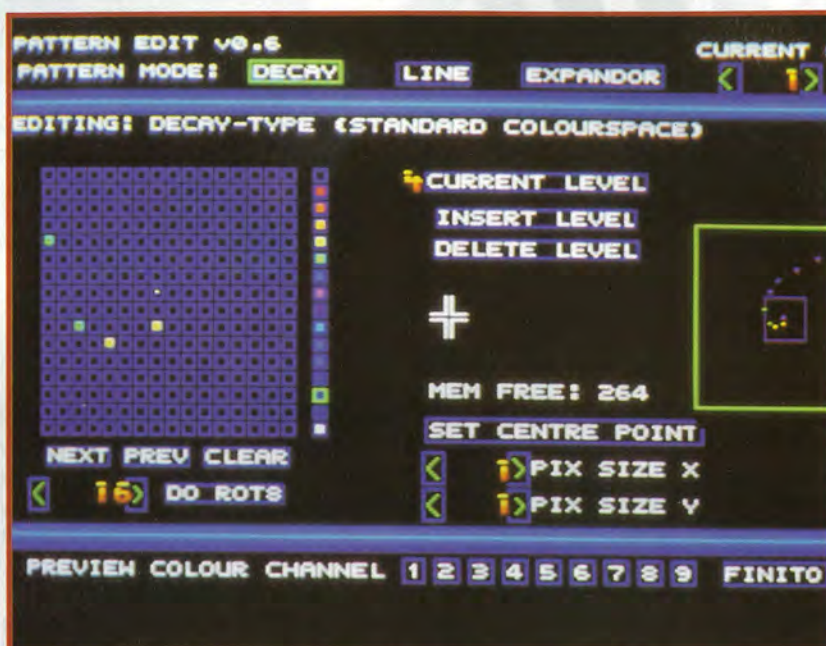
When things get advanced, there are the mentioned picture-file manipulation capabilities courtesy of the video sequencer - .NEO or Degas files can be treated in some amazing ways over a pre-defined series of frames for later use. Such effects as: rotation, scrolling, filtering - even an odd intensity-contouring effect are all available,

KML certainly could look hairy if you were not used to programming, although perseverance is the order of the day - it promises total control over Trip-a-Tron, ease of use, intuitive

interpretation, total ownership of the universe, etc.

If you were about to buy a Filofax anyway, get this. If you have a musical inclination, get this. If you have a visual imagination, get this. If it ever occurred to you that watching some posing drongoes using their instruments on TV is not the most intuitive visual interpretation to a song, get a Mega 4 and buy two of these. If you want something which will act as an automatic music-in / pretty pattern-out generator, forget it - you've missed the point.

STA



Lightform pattern editing. This is the decaying Colourspace-type of lightform. Others to choose from are line modes and very interesting 'expander' shapes.

with amusing time prediction indicators to give a clue as to how long processing will take.

There is a 'colour cooker' to define palettes; an event sequencer; and the KML language. This is where things really get advanced! Using KML you can define everything as Key-Macros (hence the name KML) which means you can bring your predefined sequences into play in real time without ever needing to access the control panel.

Product: ..Trip-a-Tron
Publisher: ..Llamasoft
Author:Jeff Minter
Price:£34.95
Phone:07356 4478



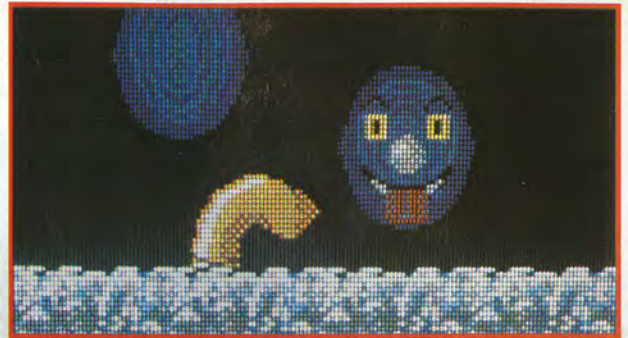
Walking the Plank

It is a decade or more since an indistinguishable little blob took its first, faltering steps on platforms and ladders. Today, the graphics may have improved, but the basic theme has not altered - Steve Merrett.

Platform games are one of the most popular genres - shoot'em-ups just pipping them at the post, and this is not surprising as they normally have twice the enjoyment value of a "Blap the aliens from Xarq" game.

They date right back to the days of Sir Clive's second baby, the ZX81, where moving your character square up and down user-

title for them - Manic Miner. It was duly released, and went on to become one of the most famous games of all time. It was a very simple affair; guide Miner Willy around twenty tortuous screens, avoiding the nasties that followed set routes. But its sheer playability, not to mention, recognisable tune made it sell in thousands - making



defined ladders made a refreshing break from shooting alien character blocks!

It was not until 1982 though, that a platform game explosion happened. It was at the time when so-called 'Attic Programmers' were all the rage, and the 48K Spectrum had just arrived. A little-known Liverpoolian programmer called Matthew Smith, went to Bug-Byte with his second

Miner Willy and his programmer computer legends.

Soon after this, the computer magazines of the time were literally swamped by games featuring a cute character who leapt over zany monsters, but none apart from Interceptor's 'China Miner' were notable.

Never one to rest on his laurels, Smith, now with his own company, Software Projects, began to work on

a revolutionary sequel. This sequel was Jet Set Willy, and once again, came up with a new idea for the genre. The game was set over sixty-three flip screens. They all, like the predecessor, housed platforms, but instead of having to complete one screen to go to the next, you could walk freely between them, allowing you to explore Willy's huge mansion. Apart from a major bug, Smith had done it again - and once again the clones reappeared.

After this point, platforms went through a bit of a lull, with no revolutionary ideas appearing. Until, that is, a small company by the name of Mikrogen released 'Pyjamarama', which they called an 'arcade adven-

ture'. The game sported what were then large, beautifully animated graphics, and best of all a new concept - using objects, as in adventure games, to wake Wally Week from his nightmare. By manipulating Wally via the joystick, you could collect objects and take them to the place they were needed, thus solving that part of the puzzle.

The aforementioned are, sadly, the last innovative ideas we have seen for a long time, and now the platform genre just follows these three routines. I am not saying that the new releases are bad - far from it; it is just that with such a large scope for ideas, surely something new must appear soon.



Chubby Gristle: 21 screens, all of which look much the same



Chubby Gristle - Grand Slam

Programmed by the Teque team, who were responsible for Gremlin's cute hits, such as the Monty Mole series and Thing on a Spring, the game goes back to the very beginning of the genre.

Set over twenty screens, you must guide the gross Car Park attendant in his quest for food - enormous amounts of food! Chubby's aim in life, you see, is to tip the scales at one ton. Not much of an ambition, but who are we to stop him?

To begin with the game looks quite good: lots of colour, reasonable tune etc., and it took me back to the good old days of Miner Willy and the like. But after a while, when I had grown bored of it, I realised that instead of the fiver I would have spent for Manic Miner and got a couple of hours enjoyment, I would have

paid twenty quid for this and not even got half the fun.

Each screen is home to about half a dozen maniacs. These maniacs - housewives, traffic wardens etc., all follow set routes, and by learning the patterns, you should be able to complete the game without too much grief. This, in fact, is the game's biggest failing. Learning their routes will not take hardened gamers very long - especially with only twenty screens.

A brave attempt by Grand Slam to recreate the flair of the old games (Chubby looks suspiciously like a certain mole!), but in the cold light of day I'm afraid that people will expect something a lot better than this before parting with twenty pounds - I know I would.

Terramex - Grand Slam

Also programmed by Teque, this game sets out to provide the gamer with a humorous escapade involving reaching a loony professor. Whereas Chubby Gristle went right back to Manic Miner-esque gameplay, this comes a little more up to date by using the system developed in Pyjamarama.

During the options screen you can choose one of five characters, ranging from the big John Caine to the very English Fortisque-Smithe. All these characters have the same abilities, but they all have to give the mad professor a different object at the end of the game.

Set across various terrains - jungles, underground laboratories and inside wells(!) - you must guide your chosen character, picking up anything that looks reasonably useful, and leaping or avoiding any maniacs - all of

which kill on contact, and here is where the game's biggest stumbling block is found: normally, timing is critical in a game such as this, but due to the random emergence of some of the hidden nasties, a lot of lives are lost on one screen - incredibly frustrating. Anything you collect is stored by a slave in your inventory, and can be summoned up whenever it seems necessary. The puzzles are very obscure and the solutions are normally found by resorting to trial and error - a very long-winded process.

Basically, this is a very average game. The graphics and animation are of a reasonable quality but the former could have been a bit larger, and the sound is reasonable. Actually, that sums up the game quite nicely, "It's a nice game but..."



(Left) For Big John Caive to reach that Brolly, some pixel perfect moving will be required. (Right) Choose your character at the start of the game.



(Above) After a long day spent bomb hunting, how nice it is to relax with a cool beer. Here, our hero is seen trying to escape without paying!

(Below) The rather risqué loading screen.



Mission Elevator - Euro Gold

Way, way back in the mists of time, when arcade machines were experiencing a boom, a little arcade machine appeared, and on its nice, shining cabinet it bore the words: Elevator Action. It was a very simple game, with very simple graphics, but before very long it became a bit of a cult. The gameplay was very simple - travel up and down in a lift, shooting nasty men before they shot you - but like so many of that time, it was extremely playable. Several years later, Quicksilva released a conversion and, somehow, made a real pig's ear of it! However, all was not lost as a group of German programmers went on to program a much improved version - and here it is!

Programmed by Micro-Partner (who went on to become Magic Bytes), they took the basic idea and created a novel arcade adventure from it. Your mission is to reach the top floor of a building and defuse a bomb. During your search of the sixty-two, increasingly difficult levels, you must find keys, the bomb codes and money - all of which aid your task. Out to stop you are several shifty-looking guys wearing raincoats. These men are really mean, and shoot you without so much as a "Hello", but if you are quicker on the draw, they will dissolve into a mixture of sou'wester and slime. But if they get you first, you will spin around until you die from dizziness - well, that's what it looks like!

The game is filled with a lot of nice, humorous touches, such as resting in a comfy chair, electrocution, whispered hints and the dice sub-game, and will appeal to die-hard fans of the original and anyone who enjoys a tough challenge. It's getting a bit hard to find, but if you can get one, do so - I don't think you will be disappointed.

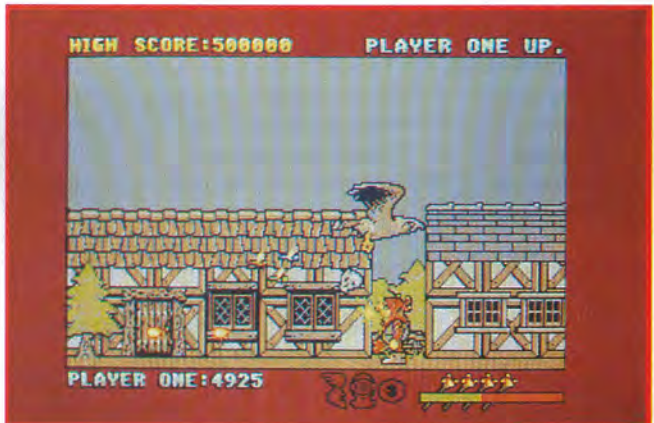
Black Lamp - Firebird

When this was first released, I remember thinking that it was terribly over-rated. The graphics are indeed, superb, as is the sound and the atmosphere generated. But the gameplay, what there is of it, is diabolical. Jack the Jester is a clumsy, unresponsive bloke, and whilst watching his lumbering gait is quite funny at first, the humour soon wears off as your game ends all too quickly.

The idea of the game is to collect the famed Black Lamp and take it back to his King - thus ensuring the Princess, who Jack loves so much, will be his to marry. The King obviously doesn't want a Jester as a son-in-law, so sets him the hardest task he can think of - all I can say is that he must have thought for several days to come up with a task as hard as this!

Jack begins inside a castle and is instantly set upon by hordes of rampaging nasties. And when I say hordes I mean hordes! These irritating so-and-so's just keep bumping into you, or shooting you, and although you shoot them, they just keep a-coming. With a flash of inspiration, you decide to clamber up the nearby ladder. An easy task you think - unfortunately not. Positioning Jack is extremely difficult and would have a Trappist Monk shouting expletives at the screen. If, by any chance, you should manage it, you can go onto another similar screen. Then another, and another, and so on... Yet another point against it is the fact that Jack can only carry one lamp at a time. This will surely make completion impossible due to the aforementioned barrage, and just to rub salt into the wound, if you do complete it (I cheated), the game just restarts. No "Well Done", nothing. Hardly a deserving reward for a quest as hard as that.

As games go, this is a boring, repetitive arcade-adventure that, apart from the attractive graphics, has nothing to redeem it. I also think that many people would have bought it having seen the pretty pictures on the back of the box. A pity really, and a massive let-down from such high-calibre programmers such as Graham "Kenny" Everett and Steve Cain.



(Above) Jack lollops through the village - "watch the birdy!"

(Below) Jack fights a losing battle against the mutant hordes. Who said a Jester's life was an easy one?





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Impossible Mission II - U.S. Gold

Every machine has its classic game; the Spectrum had Knight Lore, the ST has Dungeon Master, and the Commodore 64 had Impossible Mission - arguably the finest platform game ever.

The game had lots of new improvements over any others of the time: somersaulting, speech synthesis and oodles of playability. It was obvious that sooner or later a sequel would appear, but it did take five years to appear. Was it worth the wait? - I can answer that with a resounding yes!

Elvin is back - and further round the twist than ever before. The evil genius has locked himself in an eight-towered building and is set, once again, to destroy the world. Your mission, Agent 4125, should you decide to take it, is to infiltrate Elvin's lair and kill him.

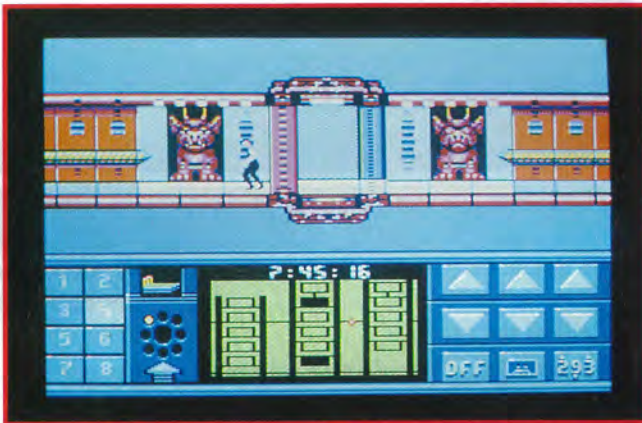
Whereas the original Impossible Mission was viewed from the side, the sequel has opted for a forced perspective look, allowing you to see any laid mines or blast holes. New robots inhabit Elvin's new home too. These go by such delightful

names as Squat Bots, Pest Bots and Suicide Bots.

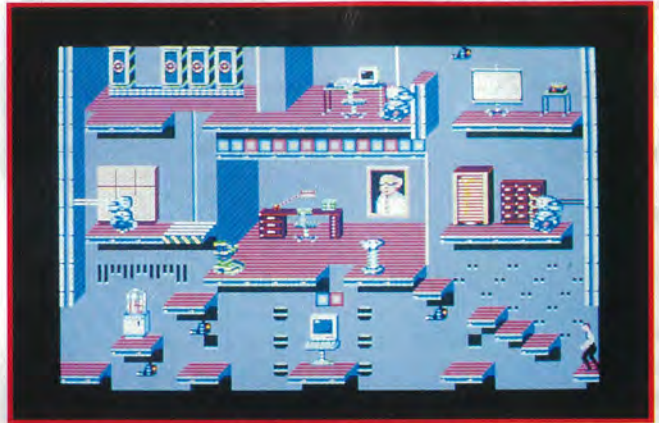
All the rooms have been very well thought out and some will require a considerable amount of thought. The robots are amazingly unpredictable and, more often than not, you will laugh at your demise - vowing not to make the same mistake twice. The game is set against a strict time limit and each death knocks six minutes off this time.

The game is split into several separately-loaded, multi-room towers, and in each tower you must blow up a safe so that you can collect a code. Piece together this code (a tune), and access to Elvin will be given. Should you fail by running out of time, Elvin's mad cackle as he launches his missiles all over the world, will ring in your ears.

The game offers a challenging long-term task and is a tough nut to crack - even to hardened Mission 1 pros like myself.



Agent 4125, finding the elevator locked, prepares to find the code



Deep in the heart of Elvin's lair

That blue gem will enable you to jump higher



Could this be the end for Hickey the Kreezer?



Frost Byte - Micro Value

This is a rather good conversion of a very under-rated, 8-bit game. Originally written by the now defunct Mikrogen, it has been spruced up both graphically and sonically, making it a much improved game.

Controlling a Slinky (remember them?)-like creature called Hickey the Kreezer, you must rescue your fellow Kreezers who have also been trapped by the person who captured you. There are five colleagues to rescue and about nine screens between you and them. Your character slinks left and right, and pushing up on the joy-stick causes him to leap - pushing a direction now, guides his fall. Scattered around the caverns are several useful objects: ammunition, hi-jump sweets and go-fast sweets, all of these can be collected by pulling down on the joy-stick and activated by pulling down again.

Also occupying the caverns are the evil-doers them-

selves. These are a real bunch of weirdos! Some look like ghosts whilst others are scooter-riding jesters - there are also some Hickey-eating parrots to contend with. Fortunately, these can usually be dealt with by a shot of your gun, but some are immune to your shots and have to be carefully avoided. Should you eventually manage to rescue a friend, a door slides open giving access to the next, harder level. Once all five are free, the game ends.

The control method of Hickey is a novel one, and it works very well. The game requires pixel-perfect leaps and remarkable timing in order to pass the various ghouls. As it is essentially a pattern game like Chubby Gristle, once the routes are learned interest will wane - but unlike Chubby, this has enough screens to warrant the purchase.

Great Giana Sisters - Go!

To say that I rather like this is a bit like saying Michael Jackson is a quite popular singer!

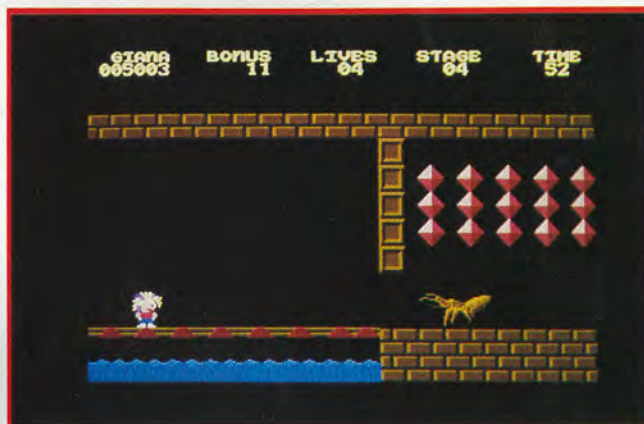
I think the main reason I liked it because of its similarity to that Nintendo classic, Super Mario Bros. Programmed by the Rainbow Arts team, they have taken all the little quirks from SMB and added several of their own. There are lots of hidden levels, warps, diamond caches and weapons, and these are found by causing your little Giana sister to daintily(!) head-butt a wall.

The game is set across thirty-two flick-screen levels, and each one is set against a hundred-second time limit. During this time you, controlling the dreaming Giana or her sister Maria, you must avoid any of the marauding nasties whilst running around collecting diamonds and various bonuses. The nasties are really mean and trundle along, normally, in groups of two or three, these can be stomped upon with a well-timed jump, but if Giana collects a lightning bolt after head-butting a magic brick, she can shoot them with her newly-acquired dream bubble weapon. As mentioned earlier, several 'additions' to little Giana's armaments can be had: the afore-mentioned lightning bolts, rebounding shot, homing shots, smart bombs, freezing clocks and immunity to fire. But should you collide with a nasty, you will lose anything you have collected - making the level even harder to complete.

I really love this game. It has everything a platform buff like myself needs including addictivity and long-lasting appeal- I have been playing this consistantly since it came in for review; and only recently have I completed it! If you only buy one platform game ever, I strongly recommend this one.



Great Giana Sisters just goes to prove that you don't need flashy graphics and sampled sound to make a great game. Just play it for twenty minutes and I guarantee you'll be hooked!



(Above) Our hero attempts to use the lift without conceding a life - fat Chance! (Below) Basic graphics, overt difficulty and insurmountable odds make Beyond the Ice Palace a tedious game.



Ice Palace - Elite

One of my favourite Commodore 64 games was Elite's official conversion of Capcom's Ghost 'n' Goblins. It was a bizarre mix of a classic platform game and a horror film - and it played like a dream.

Beyond the Ice Palace is a sequel of sorts; it is not a licence, but it has the same graphical style. The plot, in a round-about sort of way, explains that a force of evil has ravaged the land which especially picks on wood-cutters, by destroying their homes and the forest. A person has been appointed to destroy the evil being, and to help him he was given a sacred arrow and a friendly spirit to come to his aid when called.

You, of course, are the chosen one, and looking like a wimpier version of Psygnosis' Hegor, you start your long journey. You can run along or under the surface, though you normally end up underground. As you trot along, a group of nasties appear and you must quickly shoot these as contact with them sends you into an over-long death sequence. Having destroyed them you continue, only to have a blaze of concentric circles appear behind you. This is a tougher nasty, and he requires several shots to destroy him. One of the game's major faults can be found here, for as you turn to destroy him, he will shoot you, not even giving you enough time to fire once.

You continue fighting various nasties until you reach the end of the level. Here you meet a snake-like demon (not a million miles from the one that appeared in G'n'G) which, for an end-of-level monster, is pretty pathetic, because if you summon your spirit, he will run through it, erasing it as he goes.

This is a bit of a let-down, especially considering Elite's previous high standards. Gameplay is finicky, and although you begin with nine lives, these rapidly deplete. The most annoying point was the lifts at the end of the first level. If you fail to shoot all the baddies on your first life, on going back up, you will collide with the remainder, losing you another life, and another, and so on. Rumour has it that Elite are converting Ghosts 'n' Goblins - I feel it would be better to wait for that.

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Super Conductor is ideal for performers, allowing them to hold up to 10 different songs in memory at once and quickly change from song to song and to play and edit. SOUND ON SOUND magazine (August 1987) says "Super Conductor really must get the thumbs up as it is a very powerful music program at quite a remarkably low price".

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Van Helsing prepares to take the escalator down to mens wear...



Walk past that coffin and, as if by magic, a vampire will appear



Vampire's Empire - Gremlin

The notorious stars of a thousand 'B' movies make it to the ST - but not in style. The scope for a vampire game is huge and, sadly, this game doesn't even scrape the surface of its potential.

You play any Vampire's arch foe - Van Helsing - and equipped with a large supply of garlic, mirrors and a crystal ball, you must end this menace once and for all.

The game is played over one hundred and sixty scrolling screens which span four levels. Scattered around these levels are the oddest assortment of Vampires you are ever likely to see, ranging from seductive women to arm-waving lunatics. Should you encounter one of these you can kill them with a well-aimed clove of garlic - but it won't be long before they will return again. Walking past a coffin also awakes these demons, but when they appear they can be dealt with in a similar fashion.

Van Helsing's arch enemy is, of course, Dracula himself. Now, being Lord of the Vampires, it is going to take more than a couple of pieces of garlic to despatch him, and this is why Van Helsing carries the mirrors and crystal ball. Floating around the screens is a lightning bolt, and if Van Helsing can trap this bolt within his crystal ball, he can redirect it so that it reflects off the mirrors until it hits evil Dracula himself. If you manage this you can progress to the next level - something, I must confess, to have not managed yet - mind you, I can't exactly say this had me burning the midnight oil trying to do so.

Running around the various levels, getting used to the finicky controls is initially good fun, but boredom creeps in very quickly and I was left with the feeling that there was not a great deal to go back to. An unsatisfying game, but fun for a short while at least.

Bubble Bobble - Firebird

This conversion from the smash-hit Taito coin-op succeeds where very few others do - it's slightly better than the original.

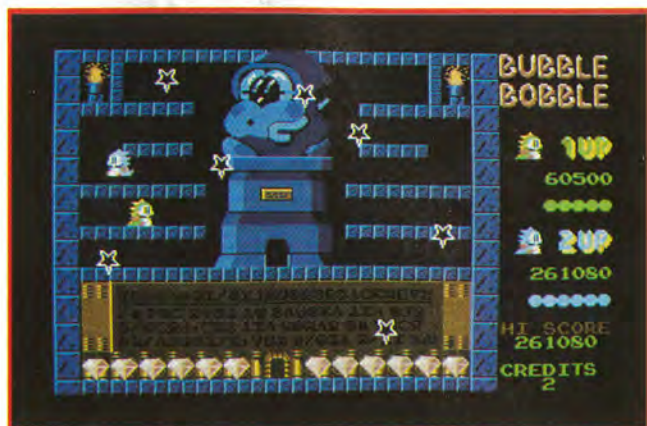
The graphics are more clearly defined and the game plays slightly faster. But apart from that, it is a spot-on conversion. The only thing that is missing is a slot for your ten p's!

You must guide Bub and Bob - two brontosauri - through one hundred different levels until they rescue their girlfriends from the evil Baron. "Easy!", you may cry. But far from it. The levels are inhabited by several species of the Baron's cronies - gnomes, jack-in-the-boxes and fluffy elephants - and contact with these means instant death for you cute dinosaur. Bub and Bob do have a weapon to fight back with though: by opening their mouths they can release a huge bubble. If one of these bubbles touches a nasty, it is encapsulated by and if you pop the bubble the nasty will fall to his death, relinquishing point giving fruit. But if you are too long killing them, an evil fish-like creature will chase you around the screen making it even harder

to kill the nasties, until he eventually gets you or you get them.

There are several bonuses to collect and these help both of the bubbling Brontosauri to destroy the baddies more quickly. They take the form of fire breath, level skip, and smart bombs. Also randomly floating around the screen are letters; collect these to make the word EXTEND, and an extra life and the next level are yours.

As I mentioned earlier, it is a top-notch conversion that's slightly better than the original. The game really comes into its own in two-player mode - allowing you to see some screens that are quite a way into the game, thanks to the credit system. This game is a credit to the converters, Software Creations, and after seeing their excellent conversion of Bionic Commando, I can't wait to see what they tackle next. In fact, Bubble Bobble is so good it almost makes up for Firebird's Black Lamp. Notice I said almost!



The hidden bonus screen - just one of hundred of surprises



Bub looks up in anticipation of what is to come

After collecting a freeze capsule, Jack can kill the enemy with ease



Elite's hero attempts to wriggle his way out of a tight spot



Bomb Jack - Elite

Converted from the very old Tehkan coin-op, Bomb Jack takes us back, as in Mission Elevator, to the days when gameplay had priority over fancy graphics. The game idea is very simple - all you have to do is guide Jack around a screen defusing bombs, whilst at the same time avoiding nasties. No-one knows why Jack spends his days leaping around defusing them, but defuse them he does. Every now and then a sparkling circle will appear with a letter on it, and if Jack collects this it will have one of three effects: it will turn all of the nasties into collectable smiling faces, thus killing them; or it will give you a hundred-point bonus and if you are even luckier, you will get an extra life.

Originally converted to the 8-bit owners in 1985, Bomb Jack went on to launch Elite, who were then quite a small company, into competition with other big licencees, such as, U.S. Gold and Ocean. The conversions were a big

success, especially on the Spectrum, and gave Elite the recognition they deserved for quality software.

Bomb Jack continues that trend on most fronts, but I think it may just have escaped Elite's graphics quality control department. The backdrops are very good, but the sprites are poor and not very well defined. Gameplay, though, is spot on, with all the nasties, bonuses and features of the coin-op, though for some reason the tune isn't as I remember it.

A very close conversion, and one that can be played by anyone of any age and let down only by its graphics. If Elite had spent more time on them the game would have been brilliant. As it stands, it's just very good.

To Sum Up...

| Game | Difficulty | House | Price | Pics | Sound | Overall |
|-----------------------|------------|-------------|--------|------|-------|---------|
| Chubby Gristle | EASY-AVE | Grandslam | £19.95 | 49% | 45% | 49% |
| Bomb Jack | AVERAGE | Elite | £19.95 | 47% | 55% | 59% |
| Impossible Mission II | AVE-HARD | US Gold | £19.95 | 80% | 58% | 73% |
| Mission Elevator | AVE-HARD | Euro Gold | £19.95 | 65% | 60% | 71% |
| Bubble Bobble | EASY-AVE | Firebird | £19.95 | 72% | 55% | 76% |
| Terramex | HARD | Grandslam | £19.95 | 60% | 48% | 56% |
| Black Lamp | HARD | Firebird | £19.95 | 64% | 50% | 51% |
| Frost Byte | HARD | Micro Value | £14.95 | 66% | 45% | 64% |
| Ice Palace | HARD | Elite | £19.95 | 56% | 53% | 63% |
| Great Giana Sisters | AVERAGE | US Gold | £19.95 | 85% | 65% | 82% |
| Vampires Empire | AVE-HARD | Gremlin | £19.95 | 66% | 48% | 64% |

You may find that the scores in the above chart and the opinions in the reviews differ from the scores given to the games when they were originally reviewed in ST Action. This Megatest is based solely on the opinions of Steve Merrett and Nick Clarkson and it reflects both the fact that they have formed opinions of the games over an extended period of time as well as the fact that the games are being compared against each other. These scores should be used as a comparative figure which indicates the merits of each game against the others.

If you have opinions about our Megatests, suggestions for additional information to be included, or ideas for future Megatest's, then please write to the usual address.

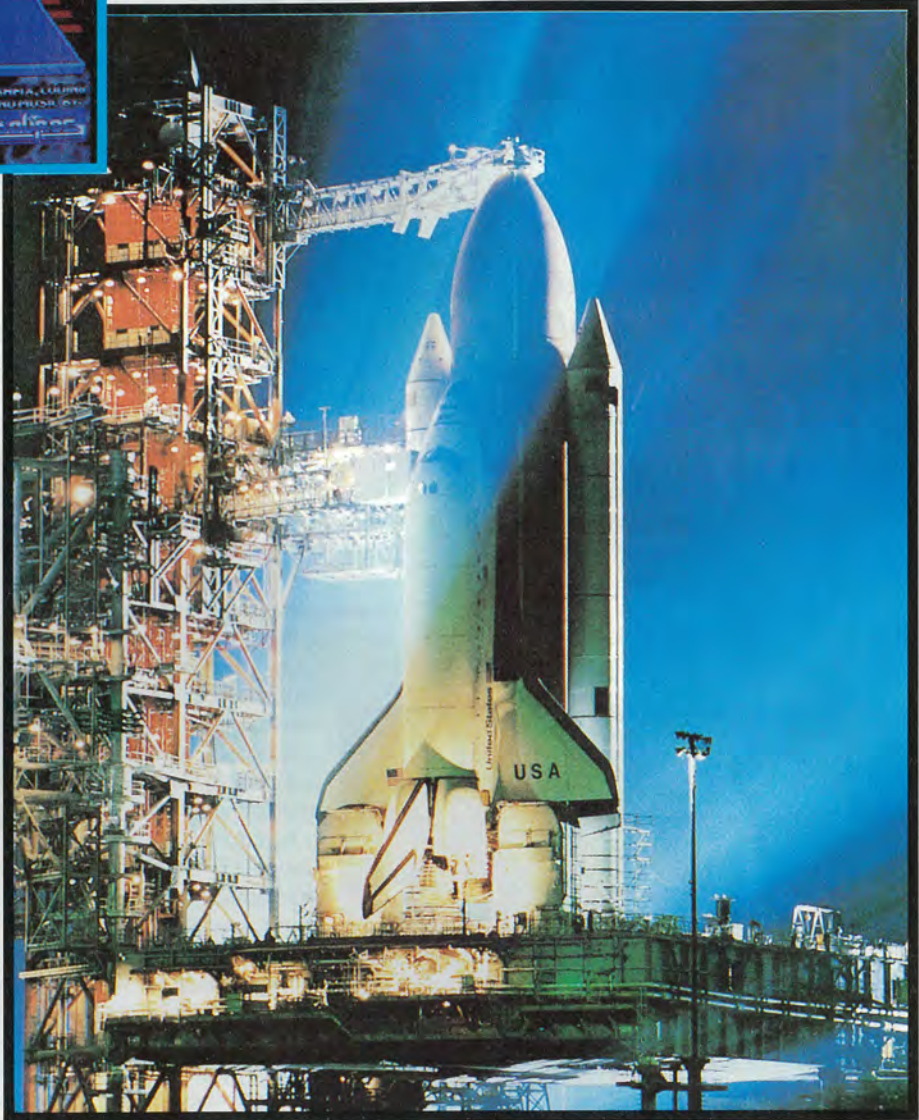
COMPETITION



WIN A MONSTER MODEL OF THE NASA SPACE SHUTTLE PLUS SDI POSTERS AND GAMES

Yet another monster game from Activision to keep you on the edge of your seat, SDI has action with a capital 'A'. A game to really keep both hands busy as you control both mouse and joystick in order to get through the levels. ST Action has brought you an exclusive review on SDI and, to coincide with the review, Activision are offering a monster model of the NASA Space Shuttle (65cm long by 50cm wide!) along with a copy of SDI and an exclusive A2-sized SDI poster to the lucky winner of this competition, along with 20 runner-up prizes of a copy of SDI and an A2-sized poster of the game.

All you have to do is to answer the questions below and send the answers in on the form provided to reach us at ST Action no later than 15 November 1988.



- 1 - What does SDI stand for?
a) Spacial Defiance International b) Strategic Defence Initiative c) Space Defence Interceptor
- 2 - In SDI, what happens on the status screen when you get through a level with a 100% hit rate?
- 3 - How many bonus objects are there to collect?
a) 3 b) 5 c) 9

Right, now you've got the answers, fill in the form below and send it without delay to the ST Action offices to reach us no later than 15 November 1988.

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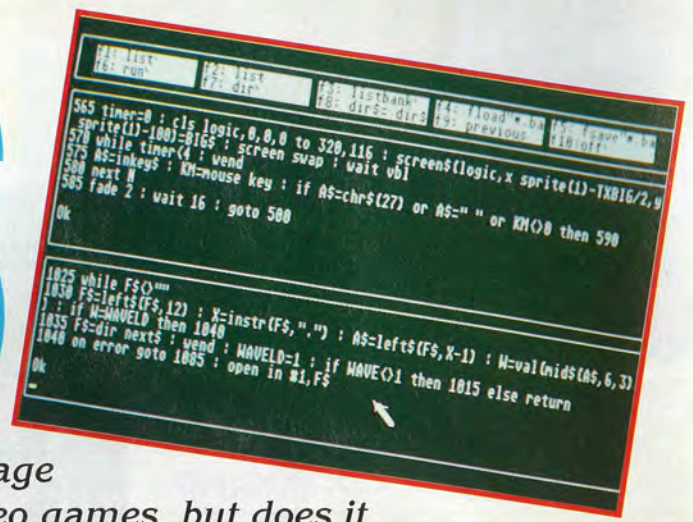
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ST Action Competition Rules:
 The Editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into regarding competitions or the results of competitions. All prizes are offered believing them to be available. If, however, a prize is unavailable we reserve the right to substitute a prize of comparable value. No cash alternatives will be given. Results will be published as soon as possible and prizes despatched as quickly as possible. Please refrain from phoning regarding competition results or prize delivery. Employees of Gollner Publishing Ltd and companies participating in competitions are not eligible to enter.

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STOS



"STOS is a new programming language designed mainly for the creation of video games, but does it have all of the power needed for the job?"

MANDARIN (£29.95)

Forgive me if I am wrong, but I imagine that the majority of people reading this magazine are male, in their teens to early twenties and like to play games without much regard for what's going on 'under the bonnet'.

If you really don't care for talk about bits and bytes, variables and

The trouble with doing such a thing is that there really isn't any way round the potentially tedious task of programming. A further problem is that, as anyone who has taken the time to learn the usual beginner's language, Basic, will have found out, the problems of moving large coloured graphics about the screen are simply beyond the ability of the Basic language to do properly. Especially so if you are attempting a synchronised music track and simultaneous multiple animations.

The solution to most of these problems would seem to have been solved by JAWX International of Paris. The one problem they haven't got round, unfortunately, is the time-consuming and arcane pastime of programming.

To be fair to JAWX and their distributors, Mandarin Software, STOS Basic, and its accompanying utilities, does its best to ease the burden of games development.

These utilities make it about as easy as it could be to generate multi-coloured, animated sprite data, music scores and backgrounds etc., whilst STOS, the main language, will take this data and produce (with a good deal of user input) professional quality games.

STOS's unique ability to do this, in such a straightforward manner, stems from its many special graphics and sound commands that come ready built into the language.

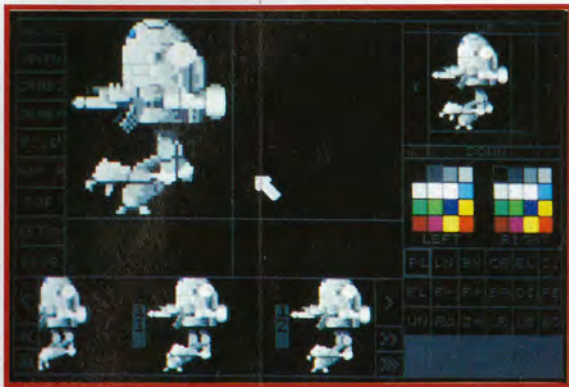
STOS is able to move sixteen variable-sized sprites about the screen at different rates and in



This is one of the parts to the sprite editor that I like the best. Apart from the fun of doing it, it is very educational to be able to examine professional work in such detail.

different directions, at the same time as animating each sprite through sixteen different frames. Don't forget though, that that is an awful lot of sprite data that somebody will have had to sit down and design.

Other graphic abilities include: fine pixel scrolling of all, or part, of the screen in any direction; user-defined scaling of all, or part, of the screen, i.e. creating zoom effects; page flipping of the main screen with other hidden screens in memory; col-

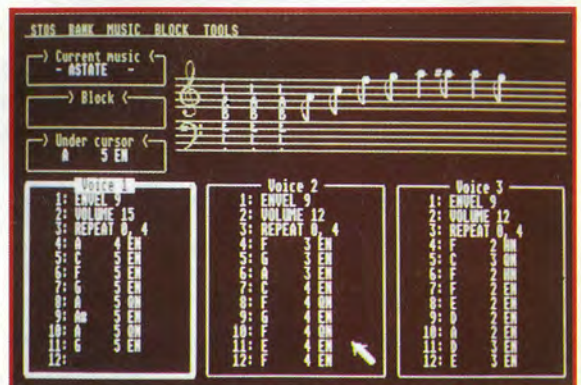


This is the font editor accessory. Itself written in STOS BASIC and, as such, is user alterable. The final version of the editor may look slightly different as this was a pre-production version.

integers or sprites and icons, then I should skip this and go onto one of the games reviews. If, however, you're feeling a little jaded at having saved the universe yet again, you might like to consider the prospect of creating your own games.



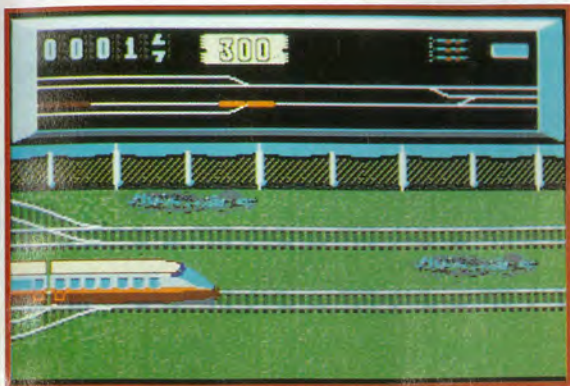
Here is the sprite animation part of the editor. Full control of the number of frames and the rate of change are easily handled. The resulting data can be incorporated into your program.



This is a competent attempt at easing a thorny problem. Music production is no walk-over even with such software helping out.

lision detection between sprites and user-defined areas of the background and other attributes too numerous to mention.

One other, rather fun, aspect of STOS graphics, worth mentioning, is its ability, via the sprite editor, to grab graphics from other people's programmes. It is an easy matter to



This is one of the games provided with STOS and written in it. Study of the listing goes along way to explaining how to use STOS effectively. The game itself may not be the best you've ever seen and the still image certainly doesn't do the scrolling justice, but never-the-less it's enjoyable to play.

extract the sprites out of, for instance, the game XENON, and then include them in your own programs. Though



Ok, so the world may be growing weary of vertically-scrolling shoot'em-ups but that isn't to say this one is not worth playing. It is free and it is user-alterable, so what more could you ask for?

of course you wouldn't do that sort of thing would you?.

STOS also has ability to read DEGAS or NEO files and manipulate them in a number of different ways, such as fades and dissolves, not to mention being able to convert between them and finally compact them for saving to disk.

Given all this graphics power it is perhaps surprising that STOS can't mix screen modes or increase the amount of on-screen colour. Both effects can be achieved by the judicious help of machine-code sub-routines, but it would have been nice to have them as easy Basic commands.

One proposed enhancement that might be included in a later version will be a 3-D vector system for would-be Star Wars/Star Glider programmers.

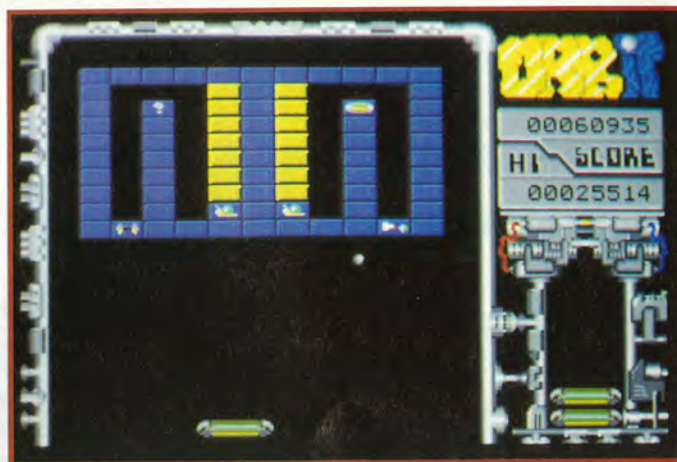
The music and sound side of things are well catered for with simple commands to generate interrupt driv-

en effects that won't slow the game down when they execute. Again it should be noted that whilst the music editor makes it relatively painless to create three-voice music, a good understanding of music theory certainly helps the process along. It could even be said that a complete lack of music theory will stop the process stone dead. Still, there's nothing to say you can't have a game without music is there?.

Talking of games, three ready-written ones are provided for you to play and list and alter if you wish. These three are not bad by any standards. They perhaps aren't state-of-the-art extravaganzas but they certainly show off STOS well. One of them, Orbit, is as good a Breakout/Arkenoid variant as you are likely to find.

The second game, Zoltar, is a competent shoot'em-up with its own attack wave formation editor included. An example of a games editor within a games editor. The third, Bullet, is bordering on an original concept for a game. It involves trying to steer a speeding train along a branching track

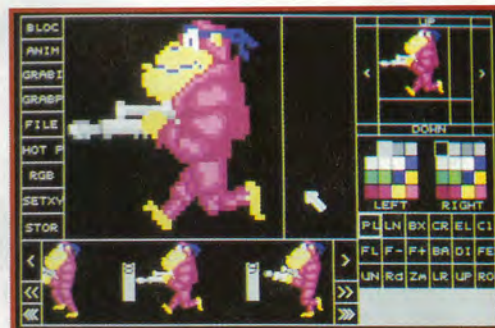
at the same time as avoiding station-



The best game of the bunch is Orbit, an Arkenoid/Breakout clone. Programmed in only two days (so they claim...) it could probably sell for £15 to £20 on its own. There is not much to say about it except it's great fun, well executed and a credit to STOS.

ary wagons and a pursuit train. Quite enjoyable as games go really, what it lacks in visual appeal it makes up in game play.

So, all in all, if you have a mild fancy to try your hand at games programming instead of just playing them, then you probably won't go far wrong with STOS. If nothing else, at just under £30 it's outstanding value for money when you consider the power of the language, the three games and the excellent utilities provided. Highly recommended. **STA**



It, too, comes with its own screen editor, so you can make it as fiendish or as simple as you care to - proving once again that designing and implementing games CAN be as much fun as just playing them.

CASE FOR CONVERSION

This month, Dennis Hemmings and Mark Smith check out three more arcade games, and consider the possibility of converting them to the most popular 16-bit games computer, the ST.

Main Event - Konami

"Hello and welcome, grapple fans. This is K/CF TV reporting to you live from all local arcade halls across the country. Today we bring you the tag team bout of the century with America's own Conan the Great and

ously, but "Main Event" is really something else!

There are two wrestlers on each team, and up to four players can compete at once. However, even if you're playing on your own, you can still tag the other wrestler, and control him. Obviously, you can only control one player at a time. There is a vast

bout are the first team to gain a knockout, fall or submission. When you are pinned to the canvas, you have to get out of the hold before the ref counts to three. To do this you have to tap the "Big Action" button as fast as possible and hope that your team-mate jump into the ring to help you!

At the top of each screen there is a score for each player which decreases as you take hits.

Apart from determining your effectiveness, it will also end the game if it falls to zero. You continue to play regardless of lost bouts, for as long as you have a positive number of points.

The real beauty of "Main Event" lies with the seemingly unlimited amount of crazy things that you can get up to. Amidst shouts of "Get back in the ring!", you are even able to fight outside the ring. All four wrestlers can take part in this all-out scrap, and absolutely anything goes, including smashing chairs over opponent's heads! The only problem is that the original wrestler who was thrown out of the ring has to get back in before the ref counts to twenty, otherwise the match is lost.

The attention to graphics and speech is remarkable. The end-of-

bout sequence is very impressive, whilst the animation of the sprites and the realistic and colourful backgrounds add to the appeal of the game. Remarks by the commentator and the crowd add an atmosphere that is quite uncanny, and which betters anything else achieved by any other game.

A conversion would be tough. All of the perspectives, the movement and the moves would leave little room for sound, which would be a shame. We're unsure if something would be better than nothing, as we'd prefer to visit the arcades rather than play a sub-standard version. However, some parts of "Main Event" will have to be sacrificed, but everything's so good about the game it would be difficult to decide which aspect to remove! Until we see a really decent version, you'll find us down at the arcades!

Armed Formation

Shoot'em-ups, in the last

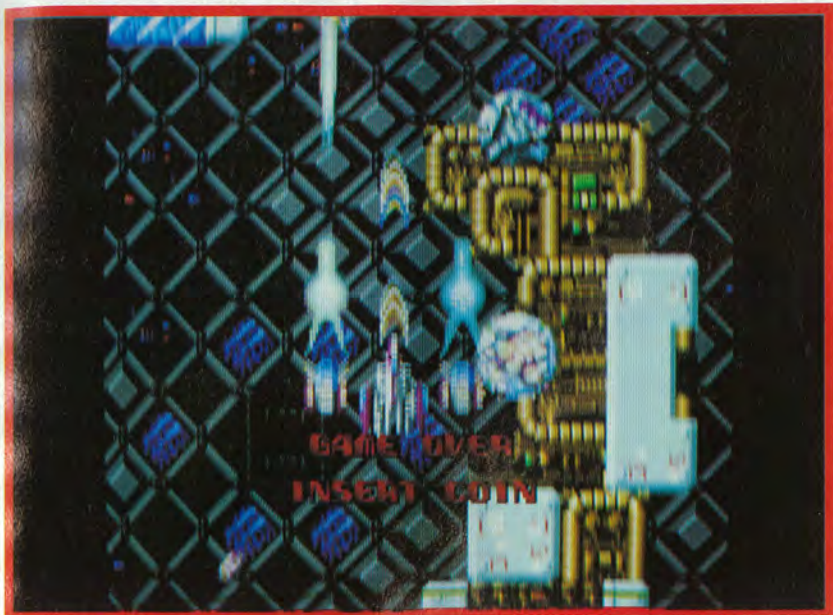


Kamikazee Ken fighting it out with the cray-zee duo of San Antonio Smasher and El Condor. Hang on to your seats and prepare yourself for the rough and tumble of our Main Event!"

"Main Event", the newie from Konami, is different. For a start, it doesn't involve killing, yet it's probably more violent than any other game. It's also funny, with a daft commentator, an ecstatic crowd and big, mean, dumb wrestlers. It's also more enjoyable than any other game. If you start playing you won't want to stop. (Whaddya mean, we've said that before?) The terms been used loosely on addictive games previ-

range of positions available to you, from standard punches and headlocks, to back-breakers and pile-drivers. It's also possible to bounce off the ropes or jump off one of the corner posts. The winners of the





year or so, have invariably been new ideas added to old themes, so it's refreshing to find that "Armed Formation" doesn't follow the crowd and adds a little sparkle to an aged formula.

There isn't much of a storyline to "Armed Formation", it's just a matter of shooting every alien in sight and asking why later. Who needs an excuse, anyway, when it's either you or them?

The screen scrolls vertically as you pound the aliens, with mountainous areas and space stations passing you by. As you manoeuvre your ship between the gaps in the landscape, you must watch out for the aliens approaching at all angles. The most dangerous appear from the side of the screen, and have to be dealt with swiftly and effectively.

As with most other popular shoot'em-ups, extra weapons are available, which include two pods, one on each side of your ship, which can be placed in a number of different formations (hence the name "Armed Formation"). Apart from being able to set the positions of the

pods, they also shoot bullets or lasers - handy for destroying enemies lurking in awkward places.

A lot of effort has been put into creating "Armed Formation", with original aliens and detailed and effective backgrounds. Traps have also been implemented into the game, one example being the air gushing out some of the mountains on later levels. Most games allow you to destroy everything in sight, so hazards which you can only dodge, prove to be another interesting addition to a fun-filled and enjoyable game.

Having said all this though, "Armed Formation" still has its faults. The screen can get cluttered

and maybe the game's just a little too difficult. Let's not forget, too, that after all, it is still based on a very tried theme, and that it has similarities to both Salamander and R-Type. Shoot'em-ups are still popular, though, and I don't think this will effect the game too much.

There is nothing intricate about "Armed Formation" except, maybe, the detail

on the graphics. ST owners are constantly being fed with a number of similar games, yet a decent conversion of "Armed Formation" would still find room in this ever-expanding market.

Bronze Adventure

As new ideas for games are few and far between, most software houses release titles that are obviously just revamped themes on old ones - Konami's "Haunted Castle" being a prime example. However, Taito have taken this a little too far with "Bronze

Adventure", which is nearly a straight copy of "Ghosts and Goblins". Even the platforms on the first level seem to be in the same place!

The scenario is that Emma, the King of the Underworld, has gone stark raving bonkers (which isn't surprising with a name like Emma!). As a high priest of your land, it is your responsibility to stop Emma and his followers before it's too late.

Playing on a cartoon-style background, you have to force your way through screaming hoards of teeth-gnashing and



vomit-wrenching creatures. For your protection you have an unlimited amount of coloured bubbles, with different colours causing different effects. There are also other objects which assist you, such as, temporary invulnerability.

Creatures that you meet in your adventure include: undead zombies, laughing hyenas, floating genies and screeching ghosts. Every time that they hit you, you will lose one of your three lives before continuing from where you died. Some of the bullets, however, will only force you backwards rather than kill you.

Near the end of each level, there is an obstacle or guardian to pass. These are probably the best part of the whole game, and certainly the only original cre-





ations. For example, on level one you have to destroy a stationary tree trunk which is dispersing green spooks, while another level has you hurtling through a forest, dodging a bombardment of ghosts, before reach-

ing a troll who needs to be taught a few lessons in manners!

The backdrops change constantly throughout, making "Bronze Adventure" interesting to watch as well as play. Apart from leaping between platforms, you also get to travel on lifts and on boats, with the water bringing a new variety of sea monsters and lethal objects with it. There are also water spouts which will lift you back to the platforms at the top of the screen.

Graphically, "Bronze Adventure" is impressive with large characters and classy backgrounds.

Despite its awful similarity to "Ghosts and Goblins", we still had a lot of fun, and even managed to reach the very end guardian. That's when we found out just how tough the game was, as there are two to defeat, one after the other. The first was difficult enough, but once you have finished with him, you are too exhausted to fight the other! Quite a

nasty, and unfair twist to an otherwise enjoyable game.

As with most arcade games, very few problems would be posed by a conversion of "Bronze Adventure". There is currently a lack of really decent platform games on the ST, so this would be most welcome. We would certainly give it a chance.

**Thanks to:
Electrocoin and
Leisure World
Amusements,
Victoria Parade,
Devon**



REVEALED

An Insight into the ST Action Scoring System

We at ST Action believe that a good scoring system is essential. Not only does it provide the reader with an insight into the game's strengths and weaknesses, but also acts as a useful guide when making the decision of whether or not to buy.

Many other scoring systems use a number of icons to represent a game's performance, we feel that such scores are of somewhat limited scope. By taking account of a single reviewer's score, they must also tend to be biased towards that person's own particular tastes and preferences.

What exactly is the difference between a game being awarded two, instead of three, joystick icons? No, we're not too sure either. So ST Action's scoring system has been kept clear and accurate - there's nothing quite like the good old percentage rating system. Awarding a score out of ten is pretty hit and miss too; where this kind of system is used, you will often find nearly every game scoring 7 or more, and far too many games are awarded 9 or 10 out of 10 - how can you use this information to help judge the qualities of a game? All games reviewed in ST Action are marked out of one hundred and the overall rating scores awarded are shown in figure 1.

To further improve the value of our assessment of a game, ST Action uses several reviewers when

calculating a game's score. Each reviewer is required to independently analyze the game, taking note of both its good and bad points. All of their findings are taken into account when calculating the software's final scores.

ST Action's scoring system does, however, tend to produce scores which are sometimes lower than other

reviewer's comments, to assess the game's potential.

Try relating to the reviewer's tastes. For instance, if you like flight simulators then you could read Martin Moth's comments; if arcade-conversions or platform games are more your forte, then Steve Merrett's comments could be helpful.

STA1 awards are given to good or outstanding games which our panel of reviewers feel deserve special attention. Games that

offer exceptional playability, lasting appeal and value for money will be given STA1 status. You may notice STA1-awarded games with lower scores. These are games which are obviously lacking in some areas but are still of a high quality; e.g. Virus in issue 5 received an STA1 but only scored 75%, whilst Mickey Mouse (reviewed in the same issue) scored 78%. The decision to award Virus with an STA1 was taken

because of the game's lasting appeal. Mickey Mouse, unfortunately, lacked this important quality and, therefore, narrowly missed being awarded the coveted STA1 rating.

Of course, our rating system is open to criticism. Because of many valid points raised regarding the 'originality' factor, we have decided to change this point. After all, nearly all games available today have been inspired by some previous theme. In its place we have decided to include a 'lasting-appeal' factor. The inclusion of this point will, hopefully, help sort out the games with a longer playing-life.

Because ST Action handles such a large amount of data when assessing a game, we have written a

NEBULUS by HEWSON (£19.95)

| | | | |
|----------------|---------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Reviewer: NC | Played for 3 Hours, | Difficulty: AVE | Best Score: 15250 |
| Graphics: 97 % | Sound: 98 % | | |
| Overall: 98 % | Addictiveness: 98 % | Lasting appeal: 98 % | |

| | | | |
|----------------|---------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Reviewer: SM | Played for 6 Hours, | Difficulty: AVE | Best Score: 18588 |
| Graphics: 94 % | Sound: 95 % | | |
| Overall: 91 % | Addictiveness: 98 % | Lasting appeal: 92 % | |

| | | | |
|----------------|---------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Reviewer: HG | Played for 2 Hours, | Difficulty: AVE | Best Score: 23230 |
| Graphics: 94 % | Sound: 95 % | | |
| Overall: 92 % | Addictiveness: 98 % | Lasting appeal: 98 % | |

Overall scores taken from 3 players

| | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| Graphics: 95 % | Sound: 93 % |
| Addictiveness: 98 % | Lasting appeal: 91 % |
| Gut Feeling: 91 % | Average score: 19022 |

***** STA Rating: 92 % *****

Press RETURN for the menu, or enter 'P' to print:█

magazines' ratings. We feel this is justified as it enables you, the software buyer, to not only spot any particularly

| | |
|-------------------|-------------|
| 0% - 39%: | Poor |
| 40% - 54%: | Average |
| 55% - 74%: | Good |
| 75% - 90%: | Outstanding |
| 91% - 100%: | Buy it now! |

outstanding games, but also those which may be considered below average. However, low-scoring games are not necessarily poor. A game sporting either poor graphics or sound will undoubtedly receive low marks in that particular field, thus dragging its overall score down even if its overall playability is excellent. It is, therefore, very important to read the review and score breakdown, in particular, the

ST ACTION SCORE SHEET

Game Name **NEBULUS**

Software House **HEWSON**

Reviewer **NICK**

Date of Review **8- SEPT '88**

Notes to the Editor **COST £19.95.**

..... **POSSIBLE STAI CONTENDER!**

.....

.....

Left: this is the score sheet that all STA reviewers have to fill in for each game that they are to comment upon. The top of the chart has room for the game name, software house, reviewers name and date as well as space to pass comments onto the rest of the STA team such as especially useful playing tips.

The Graphics and Sound section has tickable boxes which indicate what score the reviewer wished to give to each aspect of the game. On the right of the chart are boxes to indicate which hardware the game runs on and finally in the bottom right there are boxes for percentage scores such as addictiveness, lasting appeal and overall 'Gut feeling' rating. There are also boxes for best score so far, level of difficulty and for the reviewer to indicate how long he has spent playing the game.

--- GRAPHICS MAX 32 ---

VG Good Ave Bad VB

Use of Colour.....

Detail

Graphic Originality ..

Smoothness

Quality of Animation

Variety.....

Wow Factor

Speed of movement.

--- SOUND MAX 20 ---

VG Good Ave Bad VB

Music Overall (x2) ...

Effects Originality ...

Effects Variety

Effects Wow Factor .

--- CONFIGURATION ---

Yes No ???

520ST

1040ST

Mega ST

Keyboard.....

Joystick

Mouse

Colour

Monochrome

--- MISC ---

Time played **3+ Hrs**

Overall % **90**

Addictiveness in % **90**

Lasting appeal % **90**

Best score so far **15250**

Difficulty **AVG.**

special computer program into which the reviewers' scores are entered. This allows any number of our 'score sheets' to be processed in order to reach the final rating for any given game. This is printed out and used in the review's score summary box.

The formula we use is quite complicated. Basically, the ticks on the reviewer's score sheet represent numbers between 0 and 4. These are added up for the graphics and sound categories, and multiplied by a special value in order to set a suitable weigh-

ing, and to reach the final Graphics and Sound percentage ratings. The rest of the calculation takes into account the other percentage ratings of: Overall (gut feeling), Addictiveness and Lasting appeal, which are estimated directly by the reviewer. These are combined with the Graphics and Sound ratings to give the overall STA rating. When more than one score sheet is used in the calculation, each individual score category is averaged before the overall STA rating is calculated.

No scoring system should be treated as anything more than a guide, but even so, ST Action readers can rest assured that they are getting some pretty well-thought out advice in the form of our special computerised rating system.

Phew! So that is how it's done. If you feel that our system could be 'tweaked' in any way, why not send us details of how and why we could improve it further.

YOU

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Screen shots from Atari ST version.

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