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Cover design & Illustration by Oliver Frey

TGM TX 005:4-88/5/108
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This month you have kindly written in on a wide variety of subjects, from multi-board cassette-based software to moderns. We thoroughly enjoy reading your letters and are only sorry that we do not have room to print them all. If you can't resist the urge to drop us a line and air whatever you feel needs airing, please address your communication to: READERPAGE, THE GAMES MACHINE, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB

MAGAZINE RACK
Dear Games Machine
I used to read C&VG, until I read THE GAMES MACHINE, to which I quickly subscribed in Issue Three. I have now found out that there is a competition to win an Amiga, but to my dismay it said that the answers were to be found in the previous issues (one, two and three) of which I only have Three. I have racked my brains and the stores trying to find where copies are to be found. Please tell me if there are to be any back issues, if so how do I obtain them and at what cost.

Carl Horland, Egham, Surrey

From TGM006 there will be a back numbers offer, but so you can enter the Amiga Competition, you can already write and request the issues you want, using the mail order address, enclosing payment of £1.50 per issue to cover postage.

ANYTHING YOUR'S CAN DO....
Dear Games Machine
I would like to take this opportunity as an ST owner to reply to Jonathan Holloway's letter in TGM006 (March).

I am a games player and, like Jonathan, I wanted to upgrade from Spectrum to Atari ST. How wrong I was, because even if I realised that the ST was not so hot on the games side. What I mean is that although the ST can have nice graphics, it is not great at animating them. I am a huge Enduro Racer fan, also the sound quality is very much like the 128K Spectrum. The best sound it manages is digitised, which eats up memory enormously (even with compression routines).

Now if, on the other hand, you saved up for a bit longer and bought an Amiga 500 you would realise, as I have, that the ST is a box of nothing! The Amiga has a graphic system that puts the ST to shame and a sound chip that is only equalled by top quality synthesizers. There is a bitterm chip to speed up repeated graphic functions and wait for this, the Amiga is stereo. Now don't let an ST owner or salesman in a shop away your mind by saying, "there's a bitterm chip coming out soon" or "just wait till AMY comes along. That is what got me to blow all my savings on an ST. I bought mine in May 1987 and I am still waiting for them.

I have since been told that the AMY is only for 'top of the range oh God look at the price' STs only, and the bitterm will mean the majority of all games released will not work. To add to the argument, Atari have recently upgraded their DOS which has brought with it many more incompatibilities. (Just read recent computer press to see how angry new owners are). How often do you see Amiga owners writing in this much? As to TGM being less formal, DON'T YOU DARE! The bulk of readers like it just the way it is.

A big cop out is the idea of a POGes section; if we double precious space to this then you'll soon notice that chunks of the magazine will deteriorate and you'll get fed up with the ST and Amiga games that you paid £20-£30 for and all because a cheat mode made it too easy for you.

Better to include a play by mail section. There are some excellent POGes games out there that many people don't know about. I'd say that many people who have not got a computer will buy this publication for POGes reviews, previews and tips.

Jason Shimano, South Wirral, Cheshire

Without wishing to convey bias on either ST or Amiga, they both have features which make them capable of supporting outstanding software. TGM feels that the two computers are good for each other, competition never hurt anybody and can only instil an urge to create better and better games for both.

No comment on cheat modes, but a POGes section is planned.

CARTOON TIME
Dear Games Machine
Now that TGM has been successfully launched I would like to comment on how it could be improved (albeit only slightly).

I am happy to see the Adventure Column (by Rob Steel), but where is the helpline? I had always thought that the Column (by Rob Steel), but where is the reading this article I wondered if there was any way to get my hands on one of those marvellous Nintendo games, also I would like to know if there are any plans to produce a Nintendo magazine in Britain. Thank you again for that wonderful article.

Paul Bedser, Ropley, Hants

You would be very lucky to get your hands on one of the Japanese magazines! Perhaps Mattel could help put it in touch. As for a British version; there is insufficient Nintendo software backup at present to support such a project. But perhaps not for much longer.

MARVELLOUS SCREENSHOTS
Dear Games Machine
I loved your interview with Rare and marvelled at some of the screenshots. Having a Nintendo myself I thought nothing could possibly surpass Super Mario Bros but from the shot of Wizards And Warriors I was wrong. Please could you print some more screenshots. Will they be producing cartridges for the UK market?

I do have one complaint, (a very minor one), there just aren't enough Amstrad reviews.

Apart from that small complaint you have produced the best ever computer magazines to hit Britain, blowing C&VG right off the shelves.

W Matthews, Chichester, W Sussex

The games highlighted in the Rare feature, along with many more, will eventually become available to the UK market, although we have no precise date as yet.

A MUG'S GAME
Dear Games Machine
First, can I have a quick dig at John Vincent (Readerpage TGM003)? He says: "As one of your older readers (i am 29) . . . . Cor. Mabel, fetch me my invalid chair! I may not be twice his age, but I could count the difference between my and twice his, without taking off my shoes — and I still have my thumbs free for twiddling. Still, I'm not going to claim anything on that basis, because I'm sure there are some out there who could say

CUTIE-POO GOES FOR A WALK

Dear Games Machine
I must congratulate you on your excellent and most interesting article on Rare in TGM004 (March). I am the proud owner of a Nintendo system and think that it is the best thing to come over to Britain for many years. After reading this article I wondered if there was any way to get my hands on one of those marvellous Nintendo magazines, I also would like to know if there are any plans to produce a
moves, while the game draws a picture? The people stuck with 330 baud modems have to wait four times as long – makes a typical cassette loader look good. Of course, you could always lease a Modemlink unit from BT. But not on my salary. I expect we will eventually see picture MUGS since people seem to like them. It'll be customer-organised, though, at least, because it can be done at home prices. And, when it happens, it may well involve some totally different technique. For example, how about special MUGS playing software for the home micro, which receives only a special code string (‘show picture number 17485923’), and then displays the picture taken from a video disk bulk store attached to the home micro? You'd be sent the disk (for a fee, of course) when you signed up for the game – then by all we'll have the CD-ROM drives, won't we?

Cheers
Paul Smeex, Bristol
Er... cheers Paul!

AVAST SUBJECT
Dear Games Machine
On the subject of piracy: it concerns the subject of software lending libraries, that are freely advertised in many national magazines. It strikes me that, as all software is sold under the condition that it 'is not for resale, hire, all rights reserved', etc., then these libraries who lend software to people are blatantly flouting the law.

Three years ago, there were numerous libraries operating and advertising freely in the press, then came the new laws on software copyright, and the formation of FAST. The Software for hire ads disappeared overnight, as you would expect.

So why is it then, that over the past year or two, they've all started reappearing? I find the whole situation very irritating, as I presume that these activities push up the price of software, therefore those of us who choose to buy our games in the normal way, must be subsidising the pirates' activities.

A Regular Reader

Software Libraries themselves are not against the law, possibly what they do is. If a library purchases software on which it states (as it does on most modern packaging) 'Any unauthorised copying, hiring or lending is illegal' and they go ahead and lend the game out, they are liable to be prosecuted under criminal law and sued for damages under the provisions of civil law.

THE INK IS BLACK
Dear Games Machine
As a rubber-keyed 48K Spectrum owner, a CRASH subscriber and an occasional YS reader, I must congratulate the staff of THE GAMES MACHINE.
TG0003 was the first time I bought it, and it wasn't the last. The layout cannot be faulted, and as in CRASH, the reviews are informative. The features were generally good, although I must voice my strongest disapproval of Mel Croucher's Racism in Software article. It is absolutely ludicrous to suggest that white characters are used in preference to black characters. Some of the garbage spoken by Mel Croucher is reminiscent of speeches by Labour's loony left – need I mention any more comparisons?

Concluding my letter, I must express how sincerely wishes for the long-life of THE GAMES MACHINE. It is, in my opinion, the best organ for the 8-bit sets, at least, because I don't like the U.F.M. I and hope that it grows to the popularity of CRASH and ZZAP!
Scott McGlashan, Glasgow

Thank you for your letter Scott. We're delighted with the way sales of the magazine are going. Nothing official yet, but it's rapidly catching up with the other two.

WHO THE HELL IS MEL?
Dear Games Machine
TG004 has to be the best yet. What with the Ultimate interview, excellent previews and reviews, but one feature I was particularly interested in was Mel Croucher's 'Industrial Child Abuse' article. A lot of heartache seems avoidable through common sense, who in their right mind would sign themselves away without a written guarantee of money being paid. But then I suppose the answer to that would be: 'who's going to swindle innocent little me?'

There seems to be plenty of sob stories flying around, but surely some young programmers have made it without being imprisoned.

Before I go could someone tell me who (or what) Mel Croucher is? Where did he arise from and is he just a figment of everybody's imagination?
Alistair Crichton, Irvine, Ayrshire

Yes, we've been wondering who the hell Mel Croucher is. And why?
Remember the software house Automatia? No? Neither do we, but Mel had something to do with a character called RIMap... or something....

BAUD WITH DEFENDER
Dear Games Machine
I am considering purchasing a Companet Modem for my Commodore 64 which seems to offer good value for money, what do the experts at Newsfield think of this package?

My main problem with using modems is the cost. How much do the different MUGS's and billboards etc, cost to use, and are there any cheap rates or special services?

All of Newsfield's magazines are brilliant (I now buy CRASH, ZZAP! 64 and THE GAMES MACHINE), although I hope that the Adventure Trail will still continue in CRASH now that Derek Brewster has left (what's he doing now?)
Richard Taylor, Rugby, Wars

For more information about Companet and the excellent services they provide, why don't they drop them a line at UNIT 26, SHERTON BUSINESS CENTRE, WADSORTH ROAD, PERIVALE, MIDDLESEX, UB6 7JB. Derek Brewster is now running a new software-label called Zeppelin Games, whose products we hope to be reviewing in forthcoming issues. However, even though the great quater has left CRASH Towers, never fear, the adventure trail will continue.

MORE CONTROL
Dear Games Machine
Being an avid game player I'm quite worried where games programming is going. As games are nearing arcade-quality with Amiga and ST games getting better and better all the time, one major aspect of arcade games being missed out – the games control. It's alright if you're playing a shoot-'em-up, but if your playing Out Run for example; a joystick just won't do – when the game might be graphically sound, using anything else but a steering wheel as control doesn't seem right. Non-aracne games like Test Drive and Crazy Cars, where the graphics are brilliant, could also benefit from the steering wheel treatment.

I have only heard of one peripheral for better control and that's Joautent 2 with the add-on fan for players at a time. I'm not implying that software companies should shell out millions developing a new form of game control, but a neutral mains-powered joystick could do it so you wouldn't get a steering wheel made by US Gold not working on a game by Electronic Arts. I hope this has not been a waste of time,

MJ Randall, Hounslow, Middx

You're right of course, and it wouldn't surprise us to see someone working quietly away at that very problem now. Let's hope they, whoever 'they' are, doesn't take too long about it.

USER FRIENDLY
Dear Games Machine
As the Leeds area is lacking an Atari ST user club, several friends and I have decided to set one up.

We have, at present, around 12 people definitely interested, but we shall need a lot more to make it a viable proposition. This venture would be of interest to those who intend purely to rip-off software. It is for those who are dedicated to learning how to use their machine to the fullest. We hope to have guest programmers from development houses along to explain the ins and outs of programming. If it is also possible, we will offer a F/D service. As the ST is an excellent music generator (ie MIDI), musicians who use the machine are also welcome. I use my machine for music as well as games and for writing these reviews.

Anybody who is interested, please ring me on (0532) 871329, after 6.00pm any weekday evening or any time during the weekend and let me know. If you don't have a phone, write to the address below.

We will organise a meeting and take things from there.

We would be grateful for any support you can give us.
Paul Crosby, 4 Station Close, Garforth, Leeds LS25 1PT

If there are any Atari ST users in the Leeds area who would like to join a new, up and coming user club, why not contact Paul.
**ABOMINATION HILL**

DESTINY SOFTWARE is running a competition in connection with the company's first release, *Yeti*, in which the lucky winner could receive £30,000.

The competition has been organised around the much-publicised Himalayan expedition led by mountaineer/adventurer/explorer Chris Bonnington. For once, Bonnington is not out to be first to the top of a mountain, he aims to find the elusive Abominable Snowman aka Big Foot aka Yeti.

William Hill are offering very high odds of 150 to 1 against success and Destiny Software has placed a bet of £200 that the Yeti will be found. If they are proved right, the bet will be cashed and the winnings given away to a lucky entrant. All you have to do to enter is send a postcard to Destiny Software, Lamerton House, 23 High Street, London W5 5DF with a maximum of 50 words on the back describing what you think the Yeti will look like ... the best description wins.

Bonnington has expressed great confidence in finding the legendary beast, and claims that too many trustworthy eyewitnesses have seen it for them not to be believed. His plan is simple enough: climb into the Himalayas and then sit quietly for however long it takes until the Yeti decides to put in an appearance. Believing it to be a creature of some intelligence, Bonnington argues that previous expeditions have failed to meet a Yeti face to face because they have been too noisy and aggressive.

Whatever Bonnington discovers, Destiny is releasing the game *Yeti* to coincide with this expedition, available first for Spectrum and Commodore 64.

**RARE ENQUIRIES**

FOLLOWING our article in TGM 004 on Rare Ltd, the company owned by the Stamper family, who used to be Ultimate, numerous programmers and development teams have been ringing the offices for Rare's number, all keen on either development for the Nintendo market or Rare's new high-speed Z80 arcade board. It has to remain a matter of confidence for the time being as to who, but some pretty hefty software names are included among the enquirers.

**SUPERMAN DAY**

SUPERMAN is 50! Created by Jerry Siegel and Joe Schuster, the man of steel has been delighting audiences around the world with his superhuman feats. Action Comics was the first medium by which the Kryptonian was made known to the public, although films and eventually television soon saw his potential and helped spread his fame. As awareness of Superman grew so did his powers: from the very humble beginnings of being able to run fast and jump eight miles, the modern red, yellow and blue crusader can fly faster than the speed of light, possesses super-breath, has X-ray vision and can magically change from his alter ego Clark Kent into the saviour of the universe. Who knows what powers he will need in order to deal with the problems of the world in another 50 years?

Up, up and away, faster than a speeding bullet – Happy Birthday dear Superman
SEEN ONE AH–64 APACHE HELICOPTER, YOU'VE SEEN 'EM ALL

LAST ISSUE we reviewed version updates of Gunship from MicroProse and Tomahawk from Digital Integration, both for the PC Compatibles. If you have a look at the Gunship review, you will, of course, notice that the screen shot is actually from Tomahawk and vice versa. THE GAMES MACHINE humbly apologises for this error and assures all concerned (especially Fiona from MicroProse) that this will not happen again - at least, not until the next time...

In this issue we include yet another version update for Gunship, this time for the Atari ST - have a look and see if we got it right this time.

THE MANDARIN MILLION

A MAJOR new software force was launched in February with a budget of £1 million at its disposal to provide exclusive games for the 'discriminating user'. Called Mandarin, it combines the Europress Group in a series of joint ventures with some of the UK's top programming teams. First title for release is a space shoot-'em-up from Powerhouse Software called Icarus, only available for the BBC B, B+ and Master. Level 9 Computing has also joined forces with Mandarin, and at the end of March will be releasing the adventure trilogy Time And Magik, available for most 8- and 16-bit machines.

ANGLIAN FOR AN AWARD

KNIGHTMARE, Anglia Television's interactive adventure game, has won the Jean d'Arcy International Award for video production in Paris against some tough competition from 19 entries from around the world including Japan, West Germany and the United States. The international jury praised Knightmare's 'original conception and technical innovations'. The production company, Ideas Factory, is to working on another 13-part Knightmare series for Anglia which is to be screened on children's TV in the autumn.

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DIAL—A—DEMO

MICROLINK is offering a 'try before you buy' facility. Computer users who haven't yet seen the range of services Microlink has to offer can now log on directly for a free interactive demonstration. All you need is a 1200/75 baud modem and a telephone connection to (01) 583 1275. Once online, at the >PAD prompt, type CALL 72 and press return. When asked to sign on, type ID MAG111 and press return again. The password DATABASE, followed by return, displays the menu. You can browse through four sections; communication, information, services and leisure, each describing a different aspect of the system.

THE BUSINESS

COMMODORE BUSINESS MACHINES has launched a personal computer system based on the Amiga specifically for the small business market. Named the Amiga System 500, it incorporates a high-resolution colour or mono monitor, the MPS 1200P dot matrix printer, PC Transformer and The Works (a software package consisting of word processor, spreadsheet and database modules). Retailing at £699 plus VAT with the colour monitor and £599 for mono, the Amiga System 500 will be available from February 22 through authorised dealers.

SEGA CUTS PRICE

THE RETAIL PRICE of the Sega console system has been reduced. £124.95 will now buy: the Sega Master system, the Light Phaser Gun and shooting game plus either Out Run, Space Harrier or Rocky.

ROB HUBBARD, one of the UK's leading computer music artists, who left our shores for the wider spaces of the United States some months ago, has joined Electronic Arts. He is to be based at the company's American headquarters in San Mateo, California and will be working on the development of future titles. Hubbard's musical successes to date, mostly on the Commodore 64, include the award winning titles Sanxion, Monty On The Run and Knucklebusters.
MINDFIGHTER is to be the first adventure release from new software company Abstract Concepts - described as a 'serious' sister to Delta 4. Programmed by Fergus McNeill of Boggit and Bored Of The Rings fame, the game is based on the book of the same name and has been designed by its authors, Anna Popkess. Set for release in April, Mindfighter is set in a post-nuclear holocaust world and the story tells of the quest of a little boy called Robin to help the survivors. Robin, although only eleven years, is a student of parapsychology who possesses a high degree of control over his mind. He quickly discovers that evil forces are at work on his decaying world; what survivors are left are being cruelly suppressed by The System - an extremely fascist regime who have grasped control. The only way to help these people is for Robin to return to the present day and prevent the World War III from taking place. The adventure uses a new programming system called SWAN and features digitised graphics, icons and a parser to match any other on the market today. A copy of the book will be included in the Mindfighter packaging, and the game will be available on most 6- and 16-bit formats.

I cannot see 'train' - Fergus McNeill and Anna Popkess wait for one on Ludlow station - an adventure in itself.
Bowl or Bust! Fred and Barney want to go bowling but Wilma has other ideas ... and guess who's left holding the baby?

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Cinemaware, whose Defender Of The Crown set a 16-bit standard for others to beat, are back in action with material that affectionately dips into those Saturday morning matinées so popular in the cinemas of yesteryear. We take a look at their two new games, marketed in the UK by Mirrorsoft.

If you ask anyone who works for Cinemaware, they’ll tell you that they see themselves as the next generation of computer entertainment producers – as important to computers as the first talkies were to the film industry. For the future the company is heading towards interactive video and CD-ROM technology for further products, but meanwhile they are enthusiastically pursuing the task of putting the ultimate interactive movie onto a home computer, with themes ranging from comedy to tragedy and a fair bit of heroic fantasy in between to keep everyone entertained...

After a flying start with the highly acclaimed games Defender Of The Crown, Sinbad And The Throne Of The Falcon and SDI, Cinemaware’s current release is another homage to film – wrapped around the theme of the Thirties gangster movies. King Of Chicago is reviewed in this issue. And there are two more cinematic products ready for spring launches, first made great claims for it. For a start, he reckons it is the first computer program which really takes full advantage of its licence, and certainly when you see the animated graphics, you can see what he means. No stick figures here! The real life Stooges in authentic monochrome flesh are unmistakable. And there’s over 900K of compressed, digitised Moe’s strangled cry of frustrated rage: “You idiot?”

If that isn't sufficient to get worked up about, then Bob and the Cinemaware team are authentic to their Hollywood inspiration, even to producing interesting statistics and items of production information such as you get in those lavish, colour brochures they sell at big movie premières to help recover the money lost making the film. Did you know, for instance, that the guy who wrote The Three Stooges is the same man who wrote the navigation program for the Space Shuttle? At least the custard pie trajectories should be accurate.

Controlling The Three Stooges, your objective is to guide them through a movie (packed with the sort of situations matinée audiences loved to participate in by giving forth with suitably sappy sighs and appropriate groans of anguish) and attempt to raise money for Ma’s Orphanage. This venerable institution is threatened with closure by the evil banker, leaving Ma and her three delectable daughters homeless (ahhh).

To rake in the finance the boys take on a series of odd jobs including prize fighting (except Curly can’t fight unless he hears Pop Goes The Weasel and Larry’s violin is broken); becoming waiters at a top restaurant (how good are you at throwing custard pies?); and tackling medical matters at the Stoogeville Hospital (smacks of the Marx Brothers’ Day At The Races).

From the Amiga screen shots, it is obvious that the standard of graphics are high, and when combined with computer animation, the whole game works to stunning effect. Amiga and ST versions will be available in March, retailing at £24.99, and the Commodore 64/128 version is expected in April – but on disk only – which should retail at E14.99. Cinemaware take film-style animation further than ever before with the comedy game The Three Stooges – Amiga screens.
If you were brought up on Saturday morning picture shows where real heroes saved real damsels with real dramatic endings — not the kind of cissy stuff you get now on TV, such shows as Kissyfur or Gobots — Cinemaware's early summer release may hold particular interest...

Those matinee shows contained weekly adventure episodes which always left the audience with a cliff-hanger ending — will the hero's finger nails hold out...? Cinemaware's Rocket Ranger, inspired by heroes such as Flash Gordon and Rocket Man, is the title of the new and intriguingly cinematic game, and it follows in the matinee footsteps, being split into different episodes, each with a cliff-hanging situation at the end. Set in the Forties, the war is raging and the Nazis are advancing into the rest of Europe. But meanwhile in the future... a group of 21st century scientists...

Who have backseen that the Nazis will/did win the war, will/have ambitiously sent a rocketsuit, raygun and a secret decoder wheel back through time as a loan to you, in the hope that you can save mankind (forgive the mixed tenses, but life gets difficult in this scenario...). Rocket Ranger is packed full of atmospheric and highly stylistic graphics, reminiscent of Fritz Lang's Metropolis — the film that for the Thirties and Forties embodied the future — and features two megabytes of sampled speech. The animated graphics, needless to say, are superb, and there are some nice touches of typically over the top humour, such as the flying bird that gets knocked dizzily off course by Rocket Ranger's effortless leap into space. Planned for release on the Amiga in May and the Commodore 64/128 in June, Rocket Ranger should also be available for the Atari ST, PC and Apple IIGS in the near future. Roll on CD-ROM!

Two jet aircraft are at the centre of this ultra-realistic simulation, the F-18 Hornet and the F-16 Fighting Falcon — you can select either. The flights all take place in the vicinity of San Francisco Bay, and feature six missions; interception of incoming cruise missiles, saving a pilot from drowning, preventing the escape of two stolen F-16s, a training mission, a top secret mission for advanced pilots and a free-flight mode.

What makes Interceptor so different and exciting are the solid 3-D graphics. Not content with sitting the pilot in his cockpit at the controls, Interceptor has various viewing modes which can be freely flicked between as you please. Of course there is the usual cockpit point of view, but it is possible to look sideways and backwards over the tail as well. Additionally, you can set the viewing position outside the aircraft from what appears to be eight directions, from above it looking down or below it looking up — and there is a zoom facility too. Flicking between all these options can provide both the player and any onlookers with what looks just like a film; rapid cutting together of the 'scenes'...

The nasty Nazi rocket awaits launch, but can Rocket Ranger step in and save the day...?

A large airship is in danger — Rocket Ranger to the rescue — It's a real cliff-hanger! Can he do it? Tune in next week kids... Amiga screens

AFTER

AFTERBURNER

PROGRAMMERS have been trying to write the perfect 16-bit flight simulator since before the machines hit the shops. The real trick is to find some way of satisfying the serious simulation fan and yet attract the mass of gamers who want something a bit more exciting than watching dials and reading vast manuals. Well Electronic Arts may just have done it. The simulation is called Interceptor, and it is for the Amiga. 'It has to be seen to be believed' is a well-worn cliché, but in Interceptor's case it is true. Sorry our two still screen shots convey only a twentieth part of the visual excitement this program generates, but you do need to see it moving. Congratulations also to Electronic Arts for providing just about the most cleverly engaging preview demo we have ever seen.
can create as much excitement as the best aerial sequences from the movie Top Gun, especially when your fighter is heeling over in an eight-gee turn, chasing after a missile flying in low over the ground.

The ground detail is well realised (though necessarily simplified), but the Golden Gate Bridge is completely convincing whether you fly over or under it. A typical flight simulation problem is the pilot's inability to distinguish sea from sky when performing fast twists and turns; in Interceptor apart from the colours used, there are tiny details in the sea, and actually a sun in the sky—useful for orientation.

Your fighters are equipped with two sorts of missiles, Sparrow and Sidewinder, with full attack radar control, and a 6,000 rpm Vulcan cannon. You are protected by defensive radar and attack alarms, because the simulation does have enemy aircraft in the skies. The cockpit controls look clean, but we thought the HUD needs some added detail.

Two takeoff/landing areas are supplied, an airstrip near the sea's edge, which both planes can use, and an aircraft carrier, which only the F-18 can use. Landing on the carrier is alarmingly realistic, even to the grab wires violently catching the hook. There are innumerable other details in the game, too many to go into here, suffice it to say you can eject from the jet and watch the pilot parachute down, and the best gimmick is definitely the presence in your airspace of Airforce One—the President's plane. You can shoot it down too, but understandably, that makes you a terrorist!

Interceptor includes a wide variety of digitised jet and weapons sound FX. In keeping with the simulation's realism, the level of engine volume alters dramatically depending on whether you are inside or outside the aircraft and whether you are on afterburner or not.

Interceptor takes off.

Aaargh! is another coin-op conversion from Mastertronic's Amiga board Arcadia system. You can play either of the disgusting heroes— an ogre or a dinosaur—depending on how you feel, with your main aim in life being to collect golden eggs. When five are safely hoarded away, it is time to go to a volcano where, presumably, a nice hot lava bath is doubt nosh through countless hamburgers—just like in real life.

Naturally, the cities' inhabitants are struck with neither your beauty nor your trampling habits and strike back using all the forces available to them, which include catapults and cannon. Aaargh! goes on general release in April, first for the Amiga, ST and Commodore 64/128.

Target Renegade, and will be out for Easter.

AAARGH!

NO, it is not a cry of horror, but the sound a couple of monsters make in a forthcoming release from Melbourne House—and the game's called Aaargh as well.

Aaargh! is another coin-op conversion from Mastertronic's Amiga board Arcadia system. You can play either of the disgusting heroes— an ogre or a dinosaur—depending on how you feel, with your main aim in life being to collect golden eggs. When five are safely hoarded away, it is time to go to a volcano where, presumably, a nice hot lava bath is doubt nosh through countless hamburgers—just like in real life.

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RENEGADE II

NOT so much an official sequel, more of an inspired original game. Imagine's Renegade is back, meaner, tougher and generally a whole lot more unpleasant than before. Matt, the (unofficial) brother Renegade is out investigating Mr Big's dodgy dealings, and in a similar manner to the official original coin-op conversion. Matt battles through level upon level fighting Mr Big's army of brainless thugs.

Though the game is relatively early stages of development, the graphics are already looking good—and in the majority of cases, very cartoon-like. Enemy thick-heads include a skinhead, a Beastie Boy with his 'pet' and the inevitable 'ladies'. Oh, and the name? It's called Target Renegade, and will be out for Easter.

THE HAT STRIKES BACK

IN a very nice shade of morning dew on fresh grass too, Green Beret returns to the action this summer with a new adventure as yet to be named. Plans for the game suggest it will be split into several sections, each requiring the player to utilise different arcade skills. Our screen shot shows the first element—the flyer, with Green Beret in his trusty aircraft bombing enemy land. This is really just a taster, we will bring the full story behind the game within the next few months.
SPILL YER GUTZ!

AFTER a great launch for Special FX this month with Ocean's Firefly, the programming team are back at work developing their next game with the unappealing title of Gutz. The game takes place in, of all things, a stinky alien body — how you got in there none of us are quite sure yet, but obviously the task is to emerge from it unharmed. Much of the game time is spent in parts of the body running around trying to find an exit. There are five areas to explore, each with five sub-areas, all connected by tubes. The visceras are infested with odious bodily pests, and you have to select different weapons to deal with this vicious assortment of internal fauna.

At the end of each bodily section, battle takes place with a major organ — such as a kidney or heart — displayed in gross graphical detail. From what we've seen so far, Gutz appears impressive, with some marvelous graphics and wonderful sound FX. Out soon for Spectrum and Commodore.

SHACKLED UP WITH US GOLD

SHACKLED is the title of the latest all-formats release from US Gold. A thinly disguised Gauntlet style game, the player's problem is to search and fight through alien-infested mazes in order to discover and free a series of shackled prisoners. At the end of each maze stands a large opponent which, as usual, must be destroyed before you can move onto the next level. And so it goes on until all the prisoners have been freed. Out soon for the Spectrum 48/128, Commodore 64/128, Amstrad, Atari ST and with the possibility of an MSX version to follow.

And another US Gold release on Spectrum 48/128, Commodore 64/128, Amstrad and ST formats is Desolator, a maze exploration shoot-'em-up game. We have only seen something of the Spectrum Desolator, and pretty nifty it is too.

PSYGNOSIS READY

FOLLOWING the success of Terrorpods and Barbarian, 16-bit software house Psygnosis is almost ready to launch Obliterator; sadly not quite ready enough to make a review in this issue of THE GAMES MACHINE. As we go to press, they tell us they need another ten days to get the final touches sorted out.

Playing Drak the last of the Obligators, you are up against some terrifying foes inside a monstrous and sinister alien cruiser that has materialised in the local area. The cruiser is equipped with bionic arms. The objective is to fight your way through five levels of enemy-held territory to stop a nuclear bomb being detonated. Starting in a forest, the commandos' adventure takes them through towers, sewers, rockfaces and other danger-packed scenery. Bionic arms come into their own with the climbing; pressing fire shoots out an arm extension to grab anything secure. The extension can then be used to swing on, or, by retracting it, to pull the commando upwards.

Both Commodore 64/128 and Spectrum formats are well underway, with Software Creations, the people who converted Bubble Bobble for the 64, looking after the Commodore side of things. The graphics have not been finalised, but they look promising and the game plays very well indeed, which must be good news for Go! as they have not really enjoyed a critical hit yet.

THEREBY HANGS A TAIL

GREMLIN GRAPHICS have taken over responsibility for the Magic Bytes label which Aniolasoft marketed before its recent withdrawal from the UK. First release due out in April is a licence that has been waiting for someone to pick it up for a long time — The Pink Panther.

The cerise-coloured animal has been employed as a butler, but in keeping with his devious personality, attempts to relieve the householder of his valuables. Never fear, Clouseau is near, and on his tail, searching all the rooms (reums?) for 'im. And that is not all, because the householder has a tendency to sleepwalk, so things could get a little tricky and the panther may not find himself in the pink for long.

Written by Rolf and Betina Lakamper (Western Games and Mission Elevator), The Pink Panther will be released for the Atari ST, Amiga, Commodore 64/128, Spectrum, and Amstrad.
Here at last! The game for the super heroes amongst you...

A fantastic arcade game in which you must reluctantly leave the beautiful Gwendoline behind and go and fight the monstrous Sfax.

Sfax is a mutant sorcerer from the Red Planet who has cast an evil spell over your ravishing companion, who is now dying a slow and cruel death. You have no choice but to go beyond the portals of space and time in order to find this evil sorcerer, the physical embodiment of Sfax, and to destroy him!

Wait no more. Take charge of your super vessel...

- Incredible arcade flight/fight sequences
- Superb voice simulation and soundtrack
- Stunning graphics with different levels of scenario

The graphics and sound are great! Solid colourful sprites with very pretty backgrounds in a realistic manner. MACH 3 is great fun and very addictive from the start. This is a fast shoot-'em-up in the best tradition. — GAMES MACHINE.

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Once upon a time, there was a man who had a software house. Now this software house had a product which wasn't very good, but then again neither was it very bad. The product didn't do fantastic well, but on the other hand it didn't do too badly. And that's the end of the story. Except for one thing, the product went into the Top Ten of a certain magazine without a single copy having been sold. The magazine was called Popular Computing Weekly, the product was called The Bible and the man who had the software house? It was me. Of course. And that's no fairy tale.

Once upon another time there was another man who claimed to have written the greatest computer game story. He did this so that a certain software house who had the software house? It was me. Of course. And that's no fairy tale.

The best place to start was to talk to the man who was responsible for hyping, er, promoting software houses and their products. Headlines. Public Relations moguls.

Mad Mel, Media Moie, presents the fifth of his industrial cans of worms – the software charts.

Paul Liptrot

MEL - Why did you dream up the idea of a Gallup Chart for home computer software, Paul?

PAUL - We chose Gallup because of their name, very prestigious, even though it was costing us an arm and a leg. In the early days I knew several software houses who were dead against any charts, but they were like King Canute trying to hold back the waves. The charts were going to happen in a big way whatever they thought about it, and Gallup seemed the best idea.

MEL - Were the charts ever hyped?

PAUL - The software industry is so bloody disorganised I wonder if they could ever get their act together to organise a decent hype? Look, I know that Gallup isn't exactly fair, it can't be if they don't cover certain outlets. But just look at the other charts! They contain some incredible anomalies. My view is that out of all of them, Gallup is trying hardest to be accurate.

MEL - You're producing Software Choice these days. Has it got a best-seller chart in it?

PAUL - No. Personally, I’d love to publish a chart, but it’s an exclusive publication to WH Smith, so it’s simply not ethical to do it. It’s also the largest circulation mag in the UK.

MEL - Well, it’s not an exclusive chart, is it? It’s a flaming freebie. Do you think the charts are being hyped, Paul?

PAUL - Hyping probably still does happen, I know you’ve done it, but I’ve got no evidence. Anyway, I’ve got other things to occupy my mind.

MEL - Ah, yes! Congratulations on your new marriage, and give my regards to King Canute.

Well, no really juicy meat to chew on there, so how about a chat with one of the men responsible for hyping, er, sorry responsible for promoting software houses and their products, Headlines. Public Relations moguls.

Simon Harvey

MEL - What’s up with your voice, Simon? Started puberty, have you?

SIMON - Yes, I’ve got one hair on my leg now, but the voice is much more to do with my sore throat. What can I do for you?

PAUL - We represent Microprose, Martech, CCS, Excocet and two mega mystery outfits. So sure. I’ve called a halt now. Otherwise there would be a conflict of interest what with everyone being in the same market.

No markets for handleless frying pans – merchant of hype Simon Harvey

Simone - We represent Microprose, Martech, CCS. But two mega mystery outfits. So sure. I’ve called a halt now, otherwise there would be a conflict of interest what with everyone being in the same market.

TGM TX 005:4-8821/108
MEL - Is 'All Publicity Good Publicity' actually true?

SIMON - Oh Gawd, here we go, I know exactly what you are trying to get me to say.

MEL - Alright then, was Jack The Ripper an amazingly successful hype? I just happen to have the Daily Mirror headline here, 'POrno outrage at Ripper game'.

SIMON - Okay, so a few million people heard about Jack The Ripper through this, but what resemblance does it have to the game? Absolutely nothing! The Mirror totally ignored what we were saying, but that's the tabloids for you: they think with their hormones and not their brains. The MP who wanted it 'confiscated' is probably another rent-a-quote Peter Bruinvels, looking for publicity.

MEL - All publicity is good publicity?

SIMON - Over twelve million people heard about that product, from Radio One listeners to Guardian readers, and I reckon that GRL got damn good value for their fee. The power of the press is huge.

MEL - So you use the press to hype products?

SIMON - There's no market for a frying pan without a handle! You have to tell people what you want. Jack The Ripper was a good adventure.

MEL - Bloody good, if I may say so. Well, bloody anyway. The Advertising Standards Authority have been giving certain outfits a lot of stick recently. Any comment about your role in promoting product that might not actually exist?

SIMON - It's a general problem. Magazines need loony lead-in times, at least six weeks, people like Boots make buying decisions every fortnight, and sure, programmers can let you down. The play-testing and debugging is a real pain in the arse, but yes, you've got a good point. When product is late, and the adverts are running, that's bad news.

MEL - Do you know of any products, and let me put this diplomatically, that have reached positions in the charts which do not accurately reflect the fact that they are selling abominably crap numbers?

SIMON - Yes. I know of one right now. On the other hand a lot of people who

"Gallup isn't exactly fair, it can't be if they don't cover certain outlets..."

don't make the charts do sell a lot of product. Either they're in the wrong shops, or the product has a long shelf life, selling steady quantities. If people really believe that Code Masters are the biggest in the market with a turnover of £2 million, that damages us all. This market is not served very well by PR or hype. We must stop bickering among ourselves and try to promote the industry.

MEL - How?

SIMON - Don't waste journalists' time, don't mail out thousands of press releases every five minutes to idiots like you. The magazines get pissed off with loads of garbage, it just has a negative effect. And that's why I'm not going to say any more. By the way, what am I doing in Mercy Dash this month?

MEL - Nothing compared to what she'll be doing to you in Jersey next month. *

SIMON - Great. See you in Jersey, I'm looking forward to it.

I think that it is worth looking at the state of a single title in various charts at the moment. But to compare, say, a 'Readers Favourites Chart' in a monthly specialist magazine like CRASH with 'Europe's No 1 Weekly Software Chart like the Microdealer Top 30, is a pointless exercise. The former is obviously idiosyncratic to a particular machine, and must be at least a month out of date due to publication deadlines, whereas the latter is based on current sales figures in certain shops.

"The MP who wanted it 'confiscated' is probably another rent-a-quote Peter Bruinvels, looking for publicity."

The sales are there but Gallup is not - 'The Edge's Tim Langdell has been quoted in the publication Computer Trade Weekly as saying the following: 'We've had a 25,000 ship out on Garfield, and in many cases it's outselling Out Run. For some reason, our sales aren't being picked up by Gallup. This would appear to be more to do with their sampling methods than with our sales."

But what I want to know is not numbers of product shipped, but the number that is actually sold in any given week. In computer software there's not so much a grapevine of rumour and gossip as a tropical rain forest of the stuff, and like the rain forest it gets tangled, steamy, it stinks a bit and the creek you're up will probably be blocked by twisted garbage. So it really is good to talk to someone who is prepared to quote facts and figures from first-hand experience. Such a man is the force behind a modestly successful software house called D&H Games,
JOHN DE SALLIS

MEL - Congratulations! I see that you were at Number 23 in last week's Gallup Chart with Football Director, and you're up to Number 16 this week.

JOHN - No, you heard me right; they're going down! Football Director is our first game, it's been out since last summer, and we've sold about the same quantity every week for the past 30 weeks. But the funny thing is, we've never been in the charts until now.

MEL - Er, down? Don't you mean up?

JOHN - No, you heard me right; they're going down! Football Director is our first game, it's been out since last summer, and we've sold about the same quantity every week for the past 30 weeks. But the funny thing is, we've never been in the charts until now.

MEL - I don't suppose there is any remote chance of you telling how many copies you've sold of your program, is there?

JOHN - Why not, I've got nothing to hide. In fact I'd be pleased for you to tell the world. Since its release in August 1987, we've sold an average of 600 copies a week. We sold a few more over Christmas and sales have been dropping a bit since then.

MEL - How many copies have you sold in the week where you've gone up the charts?

JOHN - Not the 'charts', we don't show in the Top 30 or whatever of any other chart, it's just Gallup that I'm talking about. Current sales? Last week we sold 400 copies, so that's two-thirds of what we were doing before Christmas.

MEL - Thank you. Is there anything else you've noticed that is peculiar about the Gallup Best-Seller Chart?

JOHN - The whole thing is peculiar! There's US Gold claiming to have flogged 250,000 copies of Out Run, and they've been in the Gallup Chart for a couple of months. I make that something over 30,000 copies a week, right? And there we are, climbing up towards the Top Ten, and I swear to you we are selling 400 to 600 copies a week. Makes you wonder, doesn't it. There's something else I'd like you to explain to me.

MEL - I'll try.

JOHN - How come Paperboy was in that chart for 68 weeks without any advertising?

MEL - Out Run, Paperboy and Gauntlet, what are the real sales figures, Simon? And how does a title selling less than 600 copies a week and climbing up the Top Ten?

SIMON - Out Run? 150,000 to 175,000 sold so far. Gauntlet a quarter of a million. Paperboy 230,000 sales in the UK, 600 copies a week and in our Top 20? Sure, why not? It isn't a very big market you know. The vast majority of chart titles achieve somewhere between 15,000 and 30,000 units sold. If you hit over 50,000, you can strap on your laughing tackle.

MEL - So it's like the music business. The top five or so titles sell squillions, and the rest can chart with far lower sales.

SIMON - Right! It's more like the LP market, the way the sales curve drops off below the top five or ten. Yes, you can certainly get into the Top 20 with sales of 600 a week, no problem.

MEL - What about the other charts, let's take an example of a particular title, how about Garfield?

SIMON - There are no other charts! If you mean Microdealer's chart, it's purely a distributor chart, don't make me laugh. And Garfield can be at Number One three weeks before Smiths stock it.

MEL - How easy is it to hype a title into your chart?

SIMON - I'm not going to dodge that question. If you want to, it is conceivably possible. They call it 'aggressive marketing' don't they? But I don't think that sales are large enough to justify the massive expense that a hype would take. But it's easy to monitor hype attempts. For example if we start seeing 20 kids buying ten copies each of a particular game, say, in North Yorkshire, we can spot that pretty soon. I have no evidence of coordinated hyping, not that I know of.

MEL - Fair enough. Maybe I need to understand exactly how you compile your Top 50 Chart.

SIMON - I wish everyone understood! We've identified 24 different categories of software outlet. Some are obvious, like Smiths, Boots, Woolies, Menzies and so on. At the moment I am satisfied that we have acceptable levels of information from 18 of them.

MEL - Making unacceptable levels of information form six of them. That's 25% still to go.

SIMON - Gallup are investing in a lot of new hardware and months of programming to cover the independents and manipulate the chart.

MEL - Manipulate! You don't mean that, do you?

SIMON - No, I should have said to 'understand' the chart, to handle all the inputs.

MEL - Of the four or five hundred independent software shops in the country, how many do you cover?

SIMON - 40 to 80 of them every week.

MEL - Why don't you include the massive sales that Boots handle in your chart?

SIMON - A fair question. We don't sample Boots because we can't work out a way of not using their store manager's time. Boots just won't agree. It took them an amazing 15 YEARS to join the music charts! We are working on Centrosoft as Boots exclusive suppliers.

MEL - What would you say if I stated that the charts are useless, and nobody would suffer if they all disappeared?

SIMON - Most of them are useless, but Gallup is different. I've been charting software since May 1983. I was the first person to supply a proper chart. I am telling you that the whole of the games industry is very small, and there are less than ten serious characters, there's a lot of small outfits. If Gallup disappeared, you'd be left with multiple distributor charts, full of misinformation and false information. You'd be in the bloody Dark Ages.

MEL - You are saying that smaller companies need your chart to give them credibility.

SIMON - Right. They need it to prove that they are part of a real market, and that they are a real company.

MEL - Final question. Firebird. Code Masters. Alternative. How can you monitor them in the present circumstances?

SIMON - We haven't got the information from them, so we don't know how they stand, so we make assumptions. This is not satisfactory.

MEL - Thank you.

I still think that the so-called Best Seller Charts are a load of old cobblers, but I can see the undeniable use of a well-regulated, well-respected software chart, and it seems to me that Gallup are getting their act together. The Firebirders of this magazine do not support Gallup and have never put money into it, preferring to publish what ZZAP! 64 or CRASH readers vote for in terms of a games' popularity, broken down into logical categories like Strategy, Hotline and Adventure. These charts may well be a quad of old cobblers too, but are intended to reflect who is playing what game, as opposed to how many are being bought. All I am going to say is that I believe that today's charts cannot be hyped, I get a crinkly mouth. They can be. And I know a man who's done it. To be quite honest with you, I know several.
WIN AN AMIGA A500 AND COLOUR MONITOR COUR OF THE GAMES MACHINE!

As we announced in the last issue, THE GAMES MACHINE has three Amiga A500 Computers and three 1081 Colour Monitors to give away as prizes. One set has already gone to the lucky winner of last month's competition, but here's a second chance for readers, and there will be a third go next month. As it's a well-known fact that all Amiga owners are highly intelligent (and generally quite wealthy too) this competition presents you with a marvellous opportunity to become richer and cleverer all at the same time. You know it makes sense...

You probably know all about the Amiga already, but if you're a bit hazy on exactly why it is the most sophisticated home computer around, there's a full run down in TGM001 on its features. Now is definitely the time to have an Amiga too - the initially sluggish software base is a thing of the past and apart from all the excitement of graphics, text-handling and music utilities, there are some of excellent games available, and many more being released over the next few months - just check out the previews...

Anyway, to prove you are clever enough to deserve an Amiga, answer the following questions correctly - then it's down to a matter of luck! First correct entry pulled from Oliver Frey's airbrush compressor box wins!

Write the answers down on a postcard, or back of a sealed envelope, together with your name and address, and send it to: AMIGA COMP II, THE GAMES MACHINE, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB to arrive no later than April 21 - which just happens to be the date TGM006 goes on sale with your third and final chance to win an Amiga. Our usual competition rules apply, check the masthead for details.

1. Add the Spectrum review percentages of PREDATOR and CYBERNOID to those of the Commodore FRIGHTMARE and TASK III, then divide the result by the percentage for Sega GLOBAL DEFENSE and add the price of the Atari ST DUNGEON MASTER. What's the answer (correct to five decimal places)?

2. How many games featured in TGM004 were licensed from one company to another?

3. The Amiga version of Mercenary from Novagen software is reviewed this issue, name all the other computer formats for which it has been available.
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ON BEING AN ELITIST

British entertainment software is coming of age; last month we featured Rare Ltd on a recruiting drive, this month we turn our beady eye on Elite Systems who have been, and still are, looking for talented games designers. The West Midlands software house has gone into overdrive, and somewhere in its future there could be Nintendo too. Roger Kean took a look, Cameron Pound took the pictures.

Elite has been around for a long time by games software standards, though not quite as long as 'those guys down the road', as Elite's boss Steve Wilcox refers to the brothers Stamper, featured in last month's articles on the old Ultimate and the new Rare; and though coming from a very different background, Steve now considers the two companies may have something in common – an interest in things Japanese.

... organised games software development was beginning, and the family saw a viable market just opening up.

Richard Wilcox Software never reappeared, but his big brother Steve, and father Brian, did. The age of organised games software development was beginning, and the family saw a viable market just opening up. Capitalising on Richard's programming knowledge – he designed some of the first games for the new company before developing a greater interest in playing music – they formed Elite Systems Ltd. Kokotoni Wilf, a Spectrum title, was first, and had the distinction of being one of the first to be consciously and specifically designed for an audience who were being perceived to like playing a particular type of game. The type was personified by Jet Set Willy, and in a disarmingly frank manner, Elite's advertising copy literally claimed that Kokotoni Wilf was out to match, or beat. Matthew Smith's giant Spectrum hit. That it failed to do so critically – it received 84% in CRASH, no mean rating – was not to deter the fledgling software house, because the Wilcoxes were not thinking like so many of their competitors – all or nothing on one success – they were looking much more to the long-term and wanted a formula which would create successes.

Neither Steve nor Brian would ever claim to be computer programmers, and they certainly had not come from the 'back bedroom' school of games developers – Brian's background was firmly set in the Midlands metal foundry business – so they came to entertainment software as publishers, treating it as a business. This led to a totally different approach from what was mostly happening at the time; instead of saying, oh here's a great game idea, they looked at the market, the magazines, the reviews, decided what seemed popular, and then set out to create a game to satisfy the demand, marketing the product aggressively to create the sales. Kokotoni Wilf was a very successful experiment, it just wasn't quite right.

TYING UP

So Elite can take credit for being first to see the advantages in licensing popular film or TV titles; Richard's Blue Thunder had been loosely based around the theme of the big feature film of the same name, but for their next three titles, Elite left nothing to chance, tying up firm deals to license some of the most popular American series on British television at the time. The first two, The Fall Guy and Duke Of Hazzard were hardly rated as great hits, but with the third, Elite hit the critical jackpot and Airwolf was a CRASH Smash.

In the field, only one other software house was really beginning to compete in the race for licensing deals, and that was Ocean – of whom Steve ruefully says: 'They are always typically three months ahead of everyone else' – another company that saw itself in the role of publisher. The licensing game has come in for a lot of criticism from a public who
They have licensed big TV series, big everything— they might have reflected complaints were made, and however factors were in their favour—and still would soon become weary of tie-ins. As a result of licensing, but if the public often fails to take account of the really licence deal. It is a criticism that so second-rate games and having to pay began to feel they were getting capitalise on advertising opportunities; Elite could develop games. The Grand National— big coin-ops; Frank Bruno— big events; The Systems has been almost illustrated by two games which very powerful releases, the likes of Ghosts And Goblins. Buggy Boy, and virtually no programmers!' and Scooby Doo. But that situation has changed with Airwolf has not quite finished. Elite is still on the lookout for talented designers, programmers and computer graphic artists. So how does the new setup operate?

**DOWN MEMORY ARCADE**

The modern Elite is a very much more confident outfit than the one that produced Kokotoni Wilf, or even the one that struggled over, and nearly lost, Scooby Doo. Steve Wilcox thinks they have learnt from their management mistakes, and that despite making those, because all through they maintained a powerful presence when it came to snapping up decent licences, the company is now ready to tackle a new era of expansion. Most importantly, they have learned that there is a massive worldwide market for Elite ideas, whether it be through selling the product direct, or by licensing it to third-party publishers. However, that new development coincident with something Elite has been noted for of late with all the coin-op conversions. But as Steve explains, the potential for a coin-op is limited to the UK market generally.

'The coin-op publishers are becoming interested in pursuing the market themselves,' he claims. 'Some of them have already set up their own consumer divisions in the US. Capcom are already writing Commodore versions of their coin-op games. I don't think it will be too long before they're bringing their own conversions into the European market, and in that case the best we get out of it is the sales and distribution deals.

'So we took the view twelve months ago that there was no long-term future for us in coin-op licences, that we would have to begin developing our own sources. Now having identified that as an outside market for us, we think about next was how do we do it?'

**LOOKING FOR TALENT**

The method decided upon meant creating a pool of reliable in-house software designers - the ideal situation where everyone can feed off the excitement of each other's ideas. But first time round this very situation created problems. The solution was simple: tighter management control of both the programmers and of production. Step one was to increase Elite's management structure and so Geoff Grimes was appointed as marketing manager. Geoff's background in the pop music business, and later marketing within the growing video industry, meant that though he knew little about computer games, he was able to bring an outsider's valuable attitude to a business he saw as being very similar to both music and video. Geoff's primary task was to help Steve and Brian resuscite Elite, streamline its activities, identify gaps in the market, and set up an internal structure ready for the new staff. Step two was to employ George Yap as software development manager. Geoff's experience was with Kalamazoo, a company producing warehoused office systems, where he managed a team of 50, experience that equips him well to deal with Elite's large development team... Together, the expanded management team began to select suitable candidates for the top software jobs, the positions of software supervisors. It meant, about a year ago, that they were in the odd position where, as Steve says: 'We had, I think, about ten people in management or supervisor positions and virtually no programmers.' But that situation has changed with a strong recruitment drive—one that has not quite finished. Elite is still on the lookout for talented designers, programmers and computer graphic artists.

All this product brought Elite into their first real phase of growing up as a company. Licensing brand-names can be a tough business. The product owner does not want to be made a fool of, and the sort of control the publisher then has to exercise over the game development militates against sub-contracting the programming. In 1985 Elite recruited programmers and graphic artists, but it was not a perfect arrangement, as Steve says: 'When we did have in-house programmers we experienced all the problems that everybody else experienced at those times. And we made the decision that we would use contract development sources.' Thus the company entered a second phase characterised by long periods of quiet punctuated by some very powerful releases, the likes of Ghosts And Goblins and Paper Boy. The use of freelance teams is best illustrated by two games which conveniently come at the start of the period and at the end—Scooby Doo and Thundercats. Both developed for Elite by neighbouring Gargoyle Games. Scooby had eluded Elite's in-house team for months, but Gargoyle knocked the idea into a very different, but reasonably successful shape—at least Elite was able to recoup the money spent on the licence.

But as the hugely successful Thundercats hit the 8-bit marketplace, Elite was already well into a third phase, a retransformation into a company with heavy staffing on the development side. Which brings us to today.
A BUSY YEAR AHEAD

Anyone who joins Elite is facing a busy year, as the company's emphasis switches to producing single-format original games, mostly for 16-bit machines and with a eye on the Nintendo too. They reckon to release no less than 18 multi-format titles and a dozen single-format games. For those already in place at the development tables and in the marketing department, the next few weeks will be hectic. Ikari Warriors is ready – the Spectrum version arrived for review as this article was being completed – complete with a brand new large-size box, which Elite will be using from now on, enabling them to add more elements to the packaging.

The next multi-format release, Beyond Enduro Racer, Dragon's Lair, Singe's Castle, Goblins And Goblins, Paper Boy and Living Daylights – all for £9.95 as well. The next multi-format release, Beyond The Ice Palace – an original title – will be available for Commodore, Amstrad, Spectrum and ST. The ST Buggy Boy is all but completed, so is Space Harrier and Thundercats. The latter is being tweaked because it has proved too difficult in the earlier levels. And of course, there is its Nintendo counterpart; the game has been considerably reshaped and rewritten for the Nintendo debut.

If this is not enough, the development teams are working on numerous other projects. One includes the Spectrum Buggy Boy; still in its early stages, the graphics are looking amazingly good with a real feel for movement, hills and corners. Hills seem to be a current obsession on the top floor at Aldridge. Three simultaneous experiments are taking place using unknown horizons to create an entirely new form of road racing game. The primary machine is Commodore 64, and the development is an extension of techniques learned during the design of Buggy Boy. The echoes are on Amstrad and ST. It looks very clever, but Elite will not commit to any dates yet. Several other Commodore 64 original titles are in development too, but again, it is too far off for any hard information.

One really fascinating game, which is almost ready for release, is in real 3-D. Called Wanderer, it uses high-speed wireframe graphics duplicated in red and blue. When viewed through the supplied opposing 3-D glasses, the result is truly spatial. The object of the game is to beat aliens in the centre of the galaxy, and to do that you have to construct a weapon, and to construct a weapon you have to fly around different parts of the galaxy and collect different bits of machinery. It does not rely on the gimmickry of the 3-D, but uses the technique to wrap around a truly complex and involving strategy/shoot-'em-up. Watch out for it.

Another multi-format game being developed on the ST is Aquablast. It is a river racing shoot-'em-up – boat games seem to have been out of fashion recently – and all we saw of it was some very early static screen designs, and of course the gigantic work document detailing how it will look and play. The release of that one is still some way off.

'... there was no long-term future for us in coin-op licences, we had to begin developing our own sources.'
concentrating on developing original games (although Steve is at pains to point out that coin-op conversions are still good business, and Elite is looking to secure titles, but not on a package deal basis as other companies still do), and it is in this area that Elite is banking on its new structure to produce good results. First they looked first at doing multi-format products simultaneously – something Gremlin Graphics have done for three years, very successfully – but rejected the notion because, as Steve says: ‘One of the problems with that is when the designers are sitting down and considering how they should design something, they are constantly considering the limitations of each individual machine. So either the coding is compromised or the design is compromised, because you don’t design up to the top machine but take the lowest common denominator.’

CREATIVE PROCESS

They reached the conclusion that for original games a single format should be produced, ideally 16-bit to give the best implementation of any design; and then go to the next stage – the conversion.

Steve wants to keep this originating single-format development in-house because the single formation is the most difficult to produce, and it is a creative process rather than an industrial one, which doing conversions tends to be. This in turn gives their own programmers more interesting work to look forward to – only one of the incentives Steve sees in working for Elite.

How does the in-house team operate when developing a new game?

‘The single-format developments will be done by a team of three: the developer who also needs to be a capable programmer – a sort of person who has been involved in doing conversions, or maybe original games on his own or with somebody else’s design, who is really responsible for formalising what’s going on at various stages in the game’s development, throwing ideas in, discussing it with the programmer and the graphic artist, and then producing a development document, and the third guy is the graphic artist.

The development document Steve refers to, is one of the vital management tools Elite has instigated. Sometimes such a document can be inches thick. Like a film script, each one details every aspect of the game from the packaging scenario to printer dumps of screen action, identifying potential problem areas for the team to consider. It also offers the opportunity to other format programmers to see what is happening, comment on problems and maybe come up with a solution that the primary team had failed to see.

CAREER PATHS

Under George Yapp, two people coordinate all the teams, Simon Cook and Ian Upton, both experienced games designers and programmers.

Their function is to produce designs from scratch, or work with the single-format developers and formalise what is actually going into the design with the aid of the development documents.

Through structures like these, Elite is ensuring that the programming teams are fully supported all the way through the process. There is another benefit to the hierarchical structure too. ‘By bringing people in, initially as trainees,’ Steve says, ‘subsequently as conversion programmers and ultimately as seniors, product development programmers, we’re looking to provide a career path for those lads, rather than them being in the business of conversion after conversion after conversion, which is what a lot programmers spend their time doing. And when the guys make it up to the stage of being development programmers, they’re then in the situation of having a strong influence over what they’re producing, which I think is an important consideration as far as giving them opportunities is concerned.’

But Steve points out that there is still more to the supervisory capacity than organising and chasing. ‘One thing which most software publishers in the country experience is that most developers are programmers – especially the programmers – but it’s true of other disciplines too – are self-taught. Something we’re actively working on at the moment is training, a dedicated training. The supervisors are used if you like, as a library and a reference point; a Spectrum programmer working on a conversion of a 16-bit game would be expected to sit down with his supervisor at the start of the project and plan all the work, and that would include looking at the design and writing various documents which would suggest how they intend the game should be produced. This also helps us produce a schedule, which the supervisors themselves can use to check progress.’

GOING WORLDWIDE

If Steve Wilcox sees the main advantages of single-format development being cost-effective and helpful to the programmers, he is also aware of the major advantage it also offers when it comes to the ever-expanding worldwide market – and in turn, again, to the programmers, who get a share in royalties. ‘The benefits as far as single-format developers are concerned are the ways in which that product can subsequently be exploited, not only in the number of territories we can sell it, but also the

number of machines it can be converted for, including the Nintendo, which clearly we have to be aware of because it is the biggest single machine on a worldwide basis. And in some cases we will produce PC versions.’

Does he see the PC market expanding in the UK?

‘We wouldn’t speculatively produce PC product – we’re looking at producing PC product when the 64 or 16-bit version has been sold to potential US sources, because the PC market is very much driven by the US.’

But one speculative project Elite has undertaken is to convert Thundercats for the Nintendo machine.

‘Now although that’s not relevant as far as the UK is concerned, the reason we produced that – and we are producing more Nintendo games – is that we’ve taken the long-term view that we have to create product we can sell on a worldwide basis and not just a UK or European basis. This was really a speculative development which started from reverse-engineering the machine just the same as the Stamper guys did it.

‘It would be nonsense to suggest that this is a viable development for UK only, and it’s not intended to be so. Our decision to do this was based on the success and scale of the one in Japan back in 1985, which was the first time I went there, and I brought some of the machines back with me. But it does fit in with what we want to do – and have been doing for the past twelve months – which is moving away from the complete dependence that we have had with the

and what about Elite’s sally into the budget market with the Classic Range? Peter Kury, an ex-Tweng man, was recently appointed to look after Elite’s budget sales. But Steve insists his job is to make the most of existing back catalogue titles while at the same time organise the very successful compilations the company has been doing recently.

There’s still a very strong market out there,’ Steve insists. ‘There’s no question of us changing the emphasis of the business from full-price, we’re still very much involved in producing full-price games. Neither are we taking the Rare route, which is we’re not getting out of this market to go somewhere which is apparently more lucrative and less competitive. What we’re looking to do is actually add on that business. I do expect this year to be a very strong year, and we have to be very optimistic, especially with a view to the new formats and new territories which previously we haven’t been able to access.’
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And rather an exclusive kinda competition it is too. To celebrate the launch of Cinemaware’s latest Computer Movie, *The Three Stooges*, THE GAMES MACHINE has joined forces with Mirrorsk, who are marketing Cinemaware’s product in the UK, to bring you the chance of winning the ultimate in Stoogemania souvenirs.

The prizes on offer here are rare, normally only obtainable from the Stoogestore, Philadelphia, US of A — but seeing as how you lot are the top-notch in computer magazine readers, we’ve arranged for them to be specially imported.

For the first prize winner there is a huge goodie-bag stuffed full with an assortment of Stooges stuff: there’s a He-Man Shirt featuring scenes from past Stooges films, a T-shirt with the Stooges’ faces on them, a Stooges poster, a Stooges keyring, a Three Stooges mug, Sticker packs and a set of The Three Stooges stand-ups. And there’s more... 25 runners up will each receive a Stooges Memo-board and door-knob hanger and a 3-D comic book staring... well guess who.

With such rare, cult prizes, just think what winning this comp would do for your street-cred (we’d rather not...).

So get the noodles in your brainbox churning over, and answer these three questions, all of them Stooges orientated. Having answered them to the best of your ability, jot the answers down on a postcard or the back of a sealed custard pie — not forgetting your name and address, you idiot — and post it off to: STOOG COMP, THE GAMES MACHINE, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB to arrive no later than April 21. Anyone found not following the competition rules listed in the masthead will be forced to eat the freebie popcorn that Cinemaware has been sending out recently...

1. Name FOUR of the Three Stooges — it’s not a trick question, there have been six in all
2. Apart from The Three Stooges, name two other Cinemaware products
3. What is Larry’s favourite activity?
   a) computer programming
   b) bareback horse riding
   c) stamp collecting
   d) playing the fiddle

Please note that as the prizes are all being specially imported, neither Mirrorsk nor THE GAMES MACHINE can fully guarantee the items mentioned will be obtainable as listed.
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ALL’S FAIR IN TOYS AND WAR

In the first of two reports, John Gilbert tells why some of 1988’s toys are in for a rough ride.

Electronic games are out and furry things are in. That’s the attitude I got from many of the manufacturers parading their wares at this year’s recently-held British International Toy and Hobby Fair. The show, crammed to capacity on both floors of Earls Court, harked back to the so-called good old days with electric train sets, cuddly Pound Puppies and some incredibly lifelike dolls - of both sexes - who cried and wet their nappies both on and off cue.

Despite all the reflective bravado it was, again, the electronic toys that caused controversy. They create more realistic forms of entertainment every year and it is this reality factor which causes worried debate in Parliament and among those who think they have to guide the fragile minds of children away from nasty influences.

One such vanity, recently identified by an increasing number of MPs, psychologists, and British television programme buyers, is Mattel’s Captain Power And The Soldiers Of The Future. It was on show at Earls Court and seemed innocuous enough on first inspection.

The package contains one of two types of plastic gun, an instruction booklet couched in American bravura, and a video tape. The tape introduces you to Captain Power through interactive video entertainment and gives you an opportunity to put your gun through its paces.

Captain Jonathan Power, for those of you who won't see the TV ads about him in coming months, is a rebel from the future. He lives on Earth of the 22nd century. The metal wars between humankind and robots have just ended and Earth is ruled by an evil mechanical monstrosity, Lord Dread, from his fortress palace called Volcania.

The dark lord is aided by four Commanders and a legion of Bio-mech robotic soldiers. Winged Sauron leads the attack from the air, Blastarr battles away on the ground, Tritor goes to it sea and Dread Commander controls his evil master’s land troops.

Captain Power has five assistants, all experts in a particular field of combat. There’s Tank Ellis who leads the ground assault, ace hawk Masterson, intelligence officer Scout Baker, technical expert - and the only female member - Pilot Chase, and Colonel Stingray Jones who is guardian of the oceans. Notwithstanding the fact that these humans are the stars, the main feature of the package, and the one which the kids will no doubt beg for at Christmas, is the interactive gun - and here begins the controversy.

There are two types of gun: you play on the Power side with one and on the Dread side with the other - both are supplied with standard features - each weapon interacting with certain sections of the video tape broadcasts. Light signals are encoded into the on-screen targets and you score points by locking onto them and pressing fire. If you are on target, the light signal from the screen travels back to the gun which then beeps and your score is increased.

HUMAN TARGETS

The Captain Power introductory video is live action, so the targets on the screen are not computer animations but real humanoid figures dressed as Dread robots. They will respond to your attacks if your gun catches the light signals from their laser fire, and your score is decreased. When it reaches zero a tiny cockpit is spat out of the gun to signal the game’s over and you have lost.

Critics are worried about the influence of the gun on young children because of the ‘live’ targets. They argue that Mattel’s toy is introducing kids to aggression at an early age, which could have a detrimental effect on their reactions to acts of violence.

Their case is further strengthened by the recent introduction to this country of the Captain Power television series by the Super Channel satellite television network, broadcasting from Europe. Each show lasts 30 minutes and, during a recent survey done by Channel Four television, two episodes contained 130 individual acts of violence in which the viewers could use their guns.

Parents of children who use the gun in the United States admit that the toy is very addictive, and there seems to be no saturation effect as with games cowboys and indians. And the guns’ supporters believe that the TV mock battles are a lot less damaging to children than one-to-one cowboy battles or wars. Mattel’s opponents, however, say that the distancing effect of a child firing a gun and the violent results of that action on a television screen may also insulate a child from the real nature of violence and make aggression more acceptable.

If the opponents lobby power is sufficient to get their concerns taken up in Parliament, Mattel could find its support from Super Channel through the Captain Power TV series taken.
...the kids will no doubt beg for the interactive gun — and here begins the controversy.

The other three 'bots are more for fun than utility. Crackbot stands seven inches tall and moves around in a manic dance of hands and head. There's no remote control console for this one, but a clap of your hands makes him perform. Dingbot is similar to Crackbot, but acts as if he is continually lost. He constantly carries a map — upside down — and reverses if he bumps into objects or walls. Tomy states with mechanical tongue if he bumps into anything.

If you want a robot with more serious purposes in mind there's always the Omni series, which also comes from Tomy. All of these robots have hand-held remote control sets to turn them in all directions and make them arms and head move.

Each Omni has a set of individual features. Omni Junior is the smallest of the range with a cheeky personality all of his own. He shakes hands or goes off and sulks depending on his mood, and can also tell you what he is thinking. Omni is a mid-range robot and carries a cassette recorder into which you can put a tape of programmed movement instructions or music to be played through his mouth. The big daddy of the family, Omni 2000, also has a built-in cassette recorder but is more sophisticated than Omnibot. He can tell you the time, fetch a drink for you, or allow you to listen to your favourite music.

All these Tomy robots, which should be available in high streets by late spring, are powered by calculator batteries and not tied to the mains.

THE POWER RANGE

So sure is Mattel of the British success of Captain Power that the company plans to release a range of interactive Power toys and play figures, the first of which is the Power On Energiser. It is attached to the Captain Power figure and can be activated manually or by the Power On sequence on the video tape. When switched on the Power symbol on the Captain's chest lights up.

The Scandroid/TRAC 5000 is another light-activated toy. It is Captain Power's radar-assisted targeting cyborg which detects any moving object in its path and fires a real, but harmless, infra-red beam. Blastpack is a one-man arm weapon which shoots an infra-red beam and destroys airborne threats. Finally, the Sky Bike is Captain Power's supersonic cycle. It has a battle sensor which detects danger at a distance of up to 10 feet away from the television screen and 20 feet away from other Captain Power toys.

Mattel remains untroubled by the dispute and in any case would not lose out seriously if Captain Power's television exploits were in any way censored. The interactive guns can be used in a gun-to-gun manner similar to those in the Lazer Tag and Photon light-activated toy. It is real, but harmless, infra-red beam. Its weapon which shoots an infra-red beam and destroys airborne threats.

In the Lazer Tag and Photon light-activated toy, it is real, but harmless, infra-red beam. Its weapon which shoots an infra-red beam and destroys airborne threats.

A yapping bundle of fun and no mess on the carpet or hairs on the chairs — Spotbot

My favourite 'bot, however, has got to be Spotbot. He looks like a mechanical dog and is just the sort of obedient pet I need. Spotbot can carry small objects around and do doggy things such as yap and chase his tail if he bumps into anything.

If you want a robot with more serious purposes in mind there's always the Omni series, which also comes from Tomy. All of these robots have hand-held remote control sets to turn them in all directions and make them arms and head move. Each Omni has a set of individual features. Omni Junior is the smallest of the range with a cheeky personality all of his own. He shakes hands or goes off and sulks depending on his mood, and can also tell you what he is thinking. Omnibot is the mid-range robot and carries a cassette recorder into which you can put a tape of programmed movement instructions or music to be played through his mouth. The big daddy of the family, Omni 2000, also has a built-in cassette recorder but is more sophisticated than Omnibot. He can tell you the time, fetch a drink for you, or allow you to listen to your favourite music. All these Tomy robots, which should be available in high streets by late spring, are powered by calculator batteries and not tied to the mains.

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Not only has a lot of software been released these past four weeks, but an inconvenience number of games have appeared for only one or another format, which makes it hard for us to fit them all in! However, we have squeezed as much as we could into the issue; 31 games reviews in all. but that leaves more than 25 we could not review. Sorry if we missed out something you wanted to read about. BUT just look at the selection we have got - specialties of the house this month come on both 8- and 16-bit formats, with Ferrari Formula One on the Amiga, Firefly on the trusty old Spectrum and Commodore and probably the best role-playing game on computer – Dungeon Master on the ST.

It would appear that simulations are established as being back in fashion again; there are five featured this month, giving you a taste of flight, racing, military and mountain climbing. Shoot-'em-up addicts need hardly worry though, there's plenty of mainstream arcade action as we lift the lids on Firefly, Xenon, XR35, Predator, Magnetron and Cybernoid. This month's breakout game, as promised last month, is Revenge Of Doh. It's not as stodgy as the name may sound, but you can always wash it down with a drop of arcade adventure from Dexter and Scooter in Get Dexter II or Golden Path.

**LEAD REVIEWS**

**DUNGEON MASTER**
The Americans have been working wonders with the Atari ST recently. As we saw last month, the highest rating in this issue goes to a US software house; FTL's the name, and the name of the game's Dungeon Master – the ultimate in computer role-playing. It grabs a 94% rating.

**FERRARI FORMULA ONE**
For Amiga owners we have reviewed the most elite of racing simulations, a fascinatingly detailed experience both on and off the world's leading circuits. Ferrari Formula One comes from Electronic Arts and features everything you could want from such a game.

**FIREFLY**
The highest rated 8-bit game this issue is from Special Effects/Ocean. Firefly is a great shoot-'em-up, packed with excitement and adrenalin-pumping action that should do any Spectrum or Commodore 64/128 owner's collection a power of good.

**BEYOND ZORK**
The Zork Trilogy has sold nearly one million copies – and now adventurers can go Beyond Zork with Infocom's latest addition to the range. A bit of a change in style, too, both in presentation and in the inclusion of role-playing elements.

**ADVENTURE PAGES**

**XENON**
Arcade-perfect! came the cry from the drooling mouths of our reviewers. Melbourne House's straight download from the Arcadia coin-op ends up superbly on the Amiga and ST, proving itself as the best 16-bit blaster so far.

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**SUMMARY**

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The second of Melbourne House's conversions of Arcadia coin-ops, Xenon is yet another game in the vertically scrolling shoot-'em-up mould. The Amiga technology in the boards of the Arcadia machines makes for quality conversions to the Amiga and other 68000 machines. Perfect (or near perfect) coin-op conversions are the result, with arcade quality graphics, sound and gameplay.

The time is the future and after five centuries of peace following the horrific Arachnid battles, war again breaks out. The aggressors, an alien race known as the Xenites, are ravaging the colonized systems of the Federation. Captain Xod of the Federation has run into a Xenite ambush and has been captured by the alien horde. The only person in range is ace pilot Darrian, and when it comes down to it, that means you!

As you can see, there is nothing to choose between the graphics—this is an Amiga screen.

At the halfway point and at the end of each sector a sentinel Xenite makes an appearance. As is usual in this type of game, the mother aliens require several hits in a single vulnerable place before exploding. Destroy the end-of-sector alien and it is on to the next sector with faster, deadlier, more heavily armoured, laser-firing Xenites.

Xenon will almost certainly be a hit, with its arcade-perfect graphics, great gameplay and quality presentation. With its release, the demands for arcade-quality conversions will be even greater, so Rockford and other Amiga board conversions should be worth waiting for. Melbourne House are a company to watch for '88 if they continue to release games of this calibre.

Overall 88%
Masters and Slaves

Midi Maze
Hybrid Arts

In the 1970s the in-thing was to wear a Smiley Face badge encouraging all and sundry to ‘have a nice day’ – quite sickening really. Now American software house Hybrid Arts have incorporated Smileys in a game with a musical theme. Written by Xanith F/X, authors of many graphic demos, it is their first game to be published commercially. Although Midi Maze can be played alone, by linking up a maximum of 16 Atari STs through their Midi ports, up to 16 players can compete in the battle.

The game takes place in a 3-D maze, displayed in first-person perspective where the solo player takes control of a Smiley in conflict with up to 16 other Smileys. The musical link is rather tenuous as each Smiley represents a note attempting to reach the top of the music score seen top right-hand of the screen.

The action is displayed in a relatively small window, the objective being to eliminate the other Smileys by lining each up in your sights and scoring three direct hits. When ten Smileys have been busted the round ends. Thus Midi Maze is an incredibly simple game, but the addition of masses of options gives its playability factor seemingly endless possibilities...

Before a round begins a mouse-controlled option screen is displayed, from this players select the power of their Smileys (speed of movement, the length of time the Smiley takes to recover from a hit and the number of lives). In addition, the viciousness of opposing Smileys can be chosen from three settings. Dumb Drones (do nothing apart from wander around the maze waiting to be shot), Plain Dumb Drones (wander around the maze but fire if they come in contact with you), and Not So Dumb Drones who actively seek you out in an attempt to destroy you.

Midi Maze is an amusing game for one player, but with a couple of STs linked together it becomes more challenging.

ATARI ST

Diskette: £19.95

Amiga owners may not be too pleased to hear that the ST version is graphically identical but the ST has coped admirably. The only difference being in the game's background music, it's rather weak in places and stops altogether when firing bullets. Despite the inevitable sound problems, the coin-op's graphic quality and addictive gameplay have all been captured with amazing accuracy. What knocks Xenon down is its inherent difficulty. A slight alteration of the difficulty level could have provided the player with a decent challenge, but as it stands it's a little too tough for novices. Players of the original won't be disappointed with the conversion as all the tactics used in the coin-op can be applied to the computer version exactly, Xenon is the most challenging ST shoot-'em-up so far.

OVERALL 85%

"Coin-op players will be hard pushed to find any differences between this and the original . . ."

Midi MAD!

Using the ST Midi connection, up to 16 machines can be linked together, enabling players to be in direct control of a Smiley each, but you do need a Midi-cable for each ST. By forming a Midi-Ring using the Midi-In and Out ports, one machine becomes the master while the others remain slaves. The master machine player is the only one who can employ the options – the slaves do nothing more than play the game.

Another facility the Midi connection offers is that of Midi-CAM. Midi-CAM allows an ST, which is not actually being used to play the game, to provide a view of the action to an audience. Using this the audience can either watch the action from an overhead point of view, or switch between individual players' displays.

Obviously, Midi Maze is much more enjoyable played this way as long as you have Midi-cables (costing around £4.50 each), but whether these options make the very high £35 price tag worthwhile for individual players is a matter open to question.

ATARI ST

Diskette: £34.95

Considering its musical title it's surprising that there is a lack of music and decent sound FX. All you get is bells and whistles produced from firing and being hit – a jaunty sound track would have created much more enthusiasm for the gameplay. Midi Maze, though simple, is implemented well, with very smooth animation of maze walls Smileys who move in and out of perspective convincingly. However, unless played in conjunction with other people, the game quickly loses its attraction, and its price for the single user is certainly a deduction.

OVERALL 62%

"...an amusing game for one player, with a couple of STs linked together it becomes more challenging."
Licensed from the Atari coin-op, Championship Sprint — for those of you who can still stand the pace after the recent plethora of Sprint clones — has one main advantage over Super Sprint (also published by Electric Dreams) and that is the ability to design your own courses using the track editor. Catalyst Coders are the programming force behind the game, and they have improved it considerably over Super Sprint.

The game of Championship Sprint is just as you would expect; eight different tracks to race around, each with whirlwinds, gravel, oil and water hazards. The objective is simply to race four circuits against three other cars on each of the eight tracks and emerge the winner. Collecting the occasionally appearing spanners may later improve the car’s performance, giving it either super turbo, turbo acceleration, a score increase or higher top speed. It is advisable to use a joystick because the car is less easily controlled via keys.

Losing a race means the end of that particular game, but should first place be achieved you go onto compete in the next race, and so on until all eight tracks are completed. Two players can also race simultaneously against two computer controlled cars.

**SCALE TRICKS**
Championship Sprint’s attraction is the track editor which allows you to create and race on your own courses designed from 30 different pieces of track. It is like building a Scalextric track — the piece of track desired (whether it be a ramp, a straight, a corner or whatever) is selected and the cursor moved to the location where you want it to be placed; press fire to position.

Along the top of the screen are pull down menus (these appear as icons along the right-hand side on the Spectrum, split into four groups, which activate more options — hazards, ability, screens and options. Through hazards you can decide whether you want whirlwinds, gravel, water or oil, and in what quantity on the track.

Ability has two sub-options: Spanners, lets you put up to seven spanners on the track, and Drone Speed determines how fast the opposition travels, ranging from zero (slowest) up to five (fastest).

**AMSTRAD CPC**
Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £14.99

Championship Sprint is probably the best of the genre that has been plaguing our screens in recent months. For once the cars actually look like cars rather than blobs of colour. The playability has been increased, leaving none of the frustration which spoilt Super Sprint. Through its implementation, the track editor is far easier to use on the Amstrad than other versions. So Championship Sprint is a commendable rendition on the Amstrad and should be popular with its arcade followers.

OVERALL 72%
Screens accesses three sub-options: Next shows you the next track, Clear erases the track on the current screen and Set Course lets you input the direction the cars race around the track. The final choice is in the Options menu; from this you can save or load tracks, set the playing keys or see all 30 different track segments.

Without the track editor Championship Sprint would rate as merely a good rendition of the Sprint theme, but with its inclusion, the package proves an interesting addition to the range.

SPECTRUM 48/128
Cassette: £9.99
The Spectrum version, too, improves over its predecessor with better graphics and far more playability. There's a good feeling of being in control of the car, which itself is more manoeuvrable and eradicates problems of getting stuck in corners. The track editor is time consuming to use because there's no track selection menu - each piece has to be selected in the main area by scrolling segments of track already in place until the desired piece is found. However, once this system has been mastered it poses no real difficulties, and it scores as well as the Amstrad because track action is faster and more compulsive.

OVERALL 72%

COMMODORE 64/128
Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £14.99
Like the Spectrum, the Commodore incarnation of Championship Sprint plays well but the editor is fiddly to use. One definite advantage over the others, though, is the ability to play the game straight from the track editor rather than saving out a track and then having to load it back into the main game program, which makes the whole process quicker. Despite the ageing theme Championship Sprint is the best of the current selection.

OVERALL 70%

"Championship Sprint proves an interesting addition to the range."

XR 35 FIGHTER MISSION
Anco
Anco are rapidly asserting themselves as major producers of budget-priced software for the ST and Amiga although not without failures such as the disappointing Karting Grand Prix (receiving 40% in Issue Four of THE GAMES MACHINE). XR 35 Fighter Mission is a standard horizontally scrolling shoot-'em-up, but one that sports some very impressive graphics and fast, difficult, non-stop action.

OVERALL 76%

AMIGA
Diskette: £9.95
What makes XR 35 Fighter Mission special is the highly professional presentation of the game. Everything from the alien graphics, and the multi-layer scrolling right through to the smallest explosions have been designed and implemented with considerable thought and attention to detail. The appeal lies in its simplistic gameplay, although each sector is a highly demanding challenge in itself, requiring a good memory (to remember each attack pattern), a sturdy joystick and an awful lot of skill (or luck) to succeed. The spaceships are so fast there is very little margin for error, which can make it a bit frustrating at first. Nothing new then, but a gem of a game nonetheless, and with its quality presentation, highly recommended.

OVERALL 76%

"... an old idea, but when the results are this good who cares?"
A team of German programmers, Peter Hemmer, Volker Roth and Frank Endler, has recently been snapped up by Databyte and commissioned to write a number of games for release in this country during 1988. Task III is their very first step into the games market and if the standard of software at least remains consistent they should soon become the proverbial household names.

Ten years after the Cappin wars, an evil emperor has selfishly invaded the once peaceful galaxy of Cybernetica. You, Prince Troma, son of Colon (does that make you a semi-colon?), as the last survivor of the Cappin wars rebel star fleet, must seek out and destroy this malefic conqueror.

Task III is a vertically scrolling shoot-'em-up. It consists of 16 levels of mayhem in which you attempt to survive long enough to blast any and all enemy ships, avoid traps and natural hazards and pick up those necessary extra weapons.

The weapons available are depicted as square platforms, close to which fly support balloons. Each time a balloon is shot the weapon available (indicated by a pattern on the platform) changes. The choice usually begins with Speed and flips through Front-lasers, Smart-bombs and Dimension Warps until it reaches the Emergency Package, which gives your ship all the weapons it can carry ... for a limited time period. Staying close to a platform for too long soon becomes hazardous, as the deadly balloons attack with ever greater ferocity. Implementing the weapon selected is achieved simply by flying over the platform.

KAMIKAZE CAPERS

One or two players may indulge in Task III and control of the ships is via joystick. Should your courage run out there is a quit game option and a pause function to allow for breathing now and again. There is also a small score awarded if you decide to commit suicide – this is done by colliding with a backdrop without shooting your weapons. High scores are saved to disk for posterity.

OVERALL 84%

OTHER FORMATS

Looks like this one is for the Commodore 64 only, and there are no plans for conversions.

"... Task III is a highly proficient blasting game ..."
GLOBAL DEFENSE

 Sega

How many coin-ops are left for Sega to convert onto console? Now the arcade machine S.D.I has undertaken the conversion and changed its name in the process. Global Defense is based on Ronald Reagan's concept of space-based defensive weapons destroying incoming enemy nuclear missiles. A subject not without controversy, but nevertheless a fitting subject for an arcade game.

The time is the future, the Earth is protected by orbiting stations, and someone has pushed the button. Nuclear missiles have been launched and it is now do-or-die time. Global Defense is split into two stages, the offensive and defensive half. Starting on the offensive, the screen scrolls from right to left as your battle satellite roams through space. Enemy nuclear missiles enter stage right on the first screen and, unless destroyed, carry on to re-enter the atmosphere and fry your country's cities. A indicator along the bottom of the screen shows the damage caused by warheads getting through; if the indicator fills up completely, it's goodbye America.

When the missiles themselves, the opposition takes the form of kamikaze killer satellites, space fighters zooming around in various formations and enemy battle bases hovering in space firing laser bolts at your lone craft. The missiles pass through the player without causing damage, but contact with anything else is fatal. Help is provided in the form of allied satellites which, when collected, offer up extras such as a faster-moving gunsight, faster rate of fire and a futuristic first-aid kit which neutralises any damage caused by the nukes.

Make it through the offensive half and a shuttle comes into view to retrieve your satellite, whereupon points are allocated based on the percentage of missiles, aliens, bases and fighters destroyed (with bonus points awarded for achieving 100% destruction). After this, it's on to the defensive stage where the Motherland lies thousands of miles below and the enemy missiles are coming over the horizon. The warheads start as dots and grow larger with their heat shields glowing as they re-enter the atmosphere. Destroy them before they hit their targets and, as their flight time is only a matter of seconds, each shot must count. Not the easiest of tasks when they fly over en masse, and on later levels it is even worse as they split up into smaller, just as lethal, re-entry vehicles.

Survive this, and once again points are awarded based on the total percentage of hits (including a defence rating based on the number of warheads which got through) before the next offensive half begins. As the player progresses through the later levels, the missiles change their flight patterns (changing between horizontal and vertical flight), the enemy fighters become more aggressive, more missiles appear in the defensive half and the backdrops get even more impressive graphically.

Like the coin-op, the console game uses two fire buttons to control the satellite. One button to fire deflection shots at targets and move the gunsight (as in Missile Command) and the other to move the satellite around the screen. What makes it tricky is that both actions can't be performed at the same time. Unlike the coin-op, only one player is allowed on the screen at any one time, an omission that plagued Alien Syndrome (see Issue Four of THE GAMES MACHINE). As a result, without the dual player facility the console version is slightly tougher than the coin-op, but the appeal and playability of the original is still there.

"Much of the coin-op's playability has been captured . . ."

Global Defense

Sega

Mega Cartridge: £19.95

On a single One Mega Cartridge, Global Defense manages to put big name coin-op conversions like Afterburner on Two Mega cartridges to shame. A very close version indeed with some wonderful backdrops (getting even better on the later levels) which really show what the Sega is capable of when the programmers put their minds to it. Much of the coin-op's playability has been captured and each level is faithfully recreated both graphically and in general gameplay. Where the game loses out is in the sound (which is nothing special) and the lack of twin-player action. It's mystifying that Sega should have problems with converting dual player games. This aside, Global Defense is a great game, one of the closest coin-op conversions yet, and hopefully the forerunner of even better console games.

OVERALL 81%

The very effective city destruction screen

Coin-op conversion from S.D.I. in the arcades, Global Defense pits the tiny satellite (centre under the big rock) against asteroids, missiles and enemy craft

control the satellite. One button to fire deflection shots at targets and move the gunsight (as in Missile Command) and the other to move the satellite around the screen. What makes it tricky is that both actions can't be performed at the same time. Unlike the coin-op, only one player is allowed on the screen at any one time, an omission that plagued Alien Syndrome (see Issue Four of THE GAMES MACHINE). As a result, without the dual player facility the console version is slightly tougher than the coin-op, but the appeal and playability of the original is still there.

"Much of the coin-op's playability has been captured . . ."
No, it is not Faster Than Light, the offshoot of Gargoyle Games, who have created Oids, but FTL Games from San Diego in sunny California. Two other games from them include the Elite-style game SunDog, and more recently Dungeon Master, which, as it happens, is also reviewed in this issue.

The Oids of the title are an oppressed race of android slaves controlled by the tyrannical Biocretes. Starved of oil, forced to work to the point of collapse and then melted alive to make new androids, the life of an Oid is not a happy one. Their saviour comes in the shape of a V-Wing pilot from a sympathetic alien race determined to end their slavery.

One of five Biocrete galaxies is selected to commence the rescue mission, whereupon a mothership takes the V-Wing to the first planet of the chosen destination. The Biocrete planets are barren worlds, devoid of life bar a few trees and bushes. Chasms and caverns provide a natural defence against attackers (or rescuers), but to be sure, the Biocretes have set up gun and missile emplacements, large ground bases launching jets and flying saucers, explosive orbs and devices which use artificial gravity to pull and push your V-Wing around the sky.

The ship is armed with four Nova bombs and an unlimited supply of nuclear bullets capable of destroying most defences, although for the larger ground bases a Nova bomb or two is recommended. Its force shield provides last ditch protection against enemy bullets, missiles, collisions with the planet surface and kamikaze craft. But of course it gradually wears down unless recharged by using up fuel. Fuel bases around each planet provide top ups if the ship lands nearby, and teleporters can be entered to reach normally inaccessible areas totally sealed in by the rockface.

RESCUE LANDER

Firing a nuclear bullet at the Biocrete factories, inside which the Oids are trapped, releases...
prisoners and they run around, waving frantically to attract attention in an attempt to be rescued. This requires you to land on a nearby plateau and then the minute figures run over and enter the ship. Oids are not indestructible and perish in flames if shot at; likewise, activating the ship’s exhaust or shields burns the little automatons to a crisp if they approach too near. And, naturally enough, if you crash the V-Wing, any Oids on board are also lost.

Rescue sufficient numbers of Oids and the mother ship re-enters the atmosphere. Thrust up to it to unload the Oids and move onto the next planet in the chosen galaxy. If the final planet is cleared, the mother ship heads back to base where the eternally grateful Oids are dropped off and the mission ends. Four other galaxies of planets can be explored and if that isn’t enough, a construction kit is supplied with the game. Using the kit, existing planets can be radically altered or entirely new ones created and populated to suit the designer’s whims and fancies.

Oids is really a Thrust derivative — only far superior with its highly detailed graphics, subtle use of colours and fiendishly addictive gameplay. And the notion of landing a craft whilst avoiding planetary hazards in order to pick up waving rescuees, goes back to the earliest days of Spectrum gaming ... but Oids’s gameplay is far more sophisticated. Ship control is simplicity itself and yet highly demanding, while surviving can get very difficult on later levels, with inertia and gravity devices pushing the ship all around the screen, hordes of missiles to contend with and sheer rockfaces to run into.

For the smallest graphics ever, take a look at Oids.

ATARI ST
Diskette: £19.99

For the smallest graphics ever, take a look at Oids. The little robots running around are wonderfully animated, and they’re all the more impressive when you realise they are all of two pixels in height on the screen. There’s something disturbingly satisfying about shooting helpless Oids, the animation when they burst into flames is incredible. Even with five galaxies of planets to explore, they can only provide so much lasting appeal, which is why FTL Games have included the easy to use and highly flexible construction kit. Oids is a great game, so take a look at it (if only to see the sickeningly amazing animated effect of Oids going up in smoke).

OVERALL 82%

OTHER FORMATS
The next logical step would be an Amiga version, and the game’s simplicity and basic idea means 8-bit conversions would be entirely feasible. However, there are no plans to do so yet.

"... highly detailed graphics, subtle use of colours and fiendishly addictive gameplay."
The King Of Chicago

Cinemaware now have a healthy collection of releases for the Amiga, numbering amongst them Defender Of The Crown and Sinbad. Indeed our cover issue is dedicated to two more forthcoming releases previewed on page 15. The King Of Chicago continues their homage to movie classics, focusing on the legends of the Thirties gangster era. To animate the computer characters and give them a semblance of emotion Doug Sharp's Dramaton system was used; but, as usual, the finished product is a collective effort from the Cinemaware team.

Scarface Al Capone has been removed for an extended vacation in Alcatraz, leaving his Southside gang in the hands of the devious and dangerous Tony Santucci. Pinky Callahan (your character) is a rising mug in the Northside organisation, sick of Chicago's bloody civil wars and second in line for the Northside leadership. Ahead of him are the discredited Old Man and his chief advisor, Ben; both of whom can be persuaded to stand down.

The action begins in 1931 and ends in 1934, the year leaders of organised crime held a meeting in New York to form the national Syndicate. This was set up to centralise violence and remove it from the hands of individual gangs; Chicago was considered too barbaric to join. Pinky thus has three years to establish such a commanding position in Chicago that gang wars are a thing of the past and an invitation to the Syndicate will be duly forwarded.

The program takes the form of still shots containing a hint as to what is to come or what you have to do. More often than not, these contain a tinge of irony or black comedy: 'What are friends for but to step on as you head for the top'. The scenes themselves always involve Pinky and include one or more of the other characters to whom he can talk. For single disk drive users, this structure can prove annoying because of the constant disk access required.

Interaction involves strategy: choices effect outcomes which have far-reaching or immediate consequences. The personality of your character and those with whom he interacts change slightly with every decision. Being cool with Lola raises your toughness and makes threats more effective, but it could force her into the arms of your rival: indeed, a cool deviousness pays far greater rewards than cowardice or rash gun-toting does.

The game's major advantage is its random element: it can start at one of several points, and (so it is claimed) results in any one of a billion solutions. Though scenes may reappear, different actions required in them do not necessarily lead you down a wrong or right path: it is all a case of adapting to your situation. React too slowly however, and the computer will make an arbitrary choice for you. As with all multiple choice type programs, the repetition of scenes and choices can grow a little similar, but there are so many options that it renders it a minor irritant.

At any point the game can be exited or paused by pressing the right mouse button: this brings up a 'projector' line, from which there is a choice of 'intermission' or 'end the movie'. The package comes complete with a reference card and booklet, detailing histories of gangsters and their films and including mug-shots of the main characters involved.

Graphically, The King Of Chicago is excellent, combining gorgeously evocative still shots with detailed and appropriately grim characters. The only detraction is the contrast between the faces, which are all beautifully drawn, and the suits, which are always simple, giving the impression of cardboard cut-outs. The sound complements this general high standard to create a fully convincing Thirties feel and without exception the musical backing is superb. There is black humour throughout, which really appeals to the air of deviousness and suspicion which the game creates. The only serious gripe is the constant disk access: it does impinge significantly on the atmosphere if you only have one drive. If you have two then, despite the high price, the game's depth and playability make it highly recommended.

Overall 80%

Other Formats

As with other Cinemaware games, expect to see The King Of Chicago released on the Commodore 64 and Atari ST with some adjustment in the graphics on the 64 version. As with the Amiga, constant disk accessing may be irksome for single drive owners of these machines.

"... black humour appeals to the air of deviousness which the game creates."
DJL SOFTWARE have been around for quite a few years, but early on decided to stop marketing their own product in favour of developing other people's. Very early programs included Froggy on the Spectrum (1983 under their own label) and the official AtariSoft Spectrum version of Pac-Man to name but two. Now, Nigel Mansell's Grand Prix has made the conversion pit stop to be translated onto the Amstrad. Receiving 73% on the Spectrum in TGM004, the game uses the race elements of Formula One Grand Prix and adds strategy, with the player deciding when to make pit stops, when to apply the fuel consuming Turbo Boost and when to make the final winning burst past the leader, all in the style of Nigel Mansell himself (complete with gear box failures, worn out tyres and seized up engines). David Looker worked on the programming and John Looker produced the graphics.

Not quite first yet - Nigel Mansell on the Amstrad

COMMENT
Apart from the improvement in graphics and colour there's very little extra to Nigel Mansell's Grand Prix on the Amstrad. The sensation of speed doesn't quite work and you only know you're doing 180mph by looking at the speedo in the cockpit. Like the Spectrum version, the cockpit is packed with too much information, and it can all get very tricky when you're trying to find the information you want on the display and keep the car on the track at the same time. In play, the game is highly enjoyable, racing around each of the 16 tracks in the Grand Prix season is good fun, and the inclusion of strategy lifts it above the ranks of the average road race game, though not enough, unfortunately, to capture the realism of a simulation. Consequently, it finds itself in a no-man's land in between the two groups.

AMSTRAD
OVERALL 74%
PREPARE FOR A TOTALLY NEW PINBALL STYLE GAME;
PREPARE TO BE INSTANTLY HOOKED, PREPARE FOR FRANTIC GAMEPLAY

PREPARE FOR JINKS!

“"The graphics are well designed and the scrolling is faultless.""

Happy Computer

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the next level! Look out for Jinks - a completely new angle in computer fun.

CBM 64/128 £9.99, £11.99d
AMIGA £24.99d.

Rainbow Arts
SLAYGON

Slaygon was written using a utility called GFA Basic. The authors of the game, John Conely and James Oxley, defend their decision to use this low-level language by stating that: ‘GFA Basic is easy to understand and simple to use... a language doesn’t have to be confusing to be powerful, and GFA should enable you to do anything that your imagination can dream up....’. GFA Basic was created by GFA Systemtechnik and is distributed by MichTron Inc.

The Cybordynamics laboratory is working on a strain of toxic virus capable of annihilating all human life from the face of the planet. This sinister plan must be thwarted at any cost, and only you have the answer. Your creation, the Slaygon, is the most sophisticated military robot ever built and the ultimate infiltration device. As such, it is ideal for the task of entering the Cybordynamics lab and destroying the place.

Slaygon is controlled from within its frame by a highly trained specialist, and as it possesses the strength of a hundred men, the armoury and weapons of a small tank and the intelligence of its operator (7), it is purportedly unaffected by conventional weapons.

After acquiring a low-level security pass, you gain entry to the lab. It is now up to you to access the five security levels, explore the 500 rooms and ultimately destroy the Cybordynamics complex by finding five override codes to enter into the computer room’s system console.

SYSTEMS CHECK

The screen display for Slaygon is very attractive, incorporating inventory boxes, energy level, systems status icons, directional arrows, an overhead map of the complex (which updates as you move around, pinpointing objects and places of importance) and a window depicting the front view from the machine. The Slaygon’s in-built systems include laser gun, scanner, plotter (for mapping), directional indicator, shields, message display screen, cloaking device, battle sensors and storage areas. Most of these systems drain your energy in use, as do some of the objects picked up, although energy pods are dotted around the complex which restore lost power. Controlled by mouse, you choose the particular function required, move the cursor to it and click. Objects found along the way - such as keycards, power pods and extra weaponry - may be examined by the on-board computer, picked up and used as and when necessary.

WEAR A ROBOCAP

OVERALL 54%

AMIGA

Diskette: £19.95

An Amiga version of Slaygon should be available by the beginning of March. If there are any substantial differences to the Atari ST version (Microdeal don’t think there will be) we shall review it, version update style, in a forthcoming issue.

“... aesthetically pleasing, the urge to continue playing soon palls.”
The trans-Atlantic surge of American programs continues with the import of *Falcon* through Mirrorsoft, who also distribute CinemaWare and Mindscape products. *Falcon* is a simulator based on the USAF multi-role jet fighter, the General Dynamics F-16 Fighting Falcon. The F-16 is a popular subject for simulations at the moment as Digital Integration also intend to release a game based around this remarkably agile, lightweight aircraft, and Electronic Arts are including it in their game *Interceptor* (see previews this issue).

**GOOD ADVICE**

Before any mission begins, the aircraft must be loaded up from the armament screen. At the lowest rank the F-16 has unlimited armament and fuel, but at higher ranks the weapons space on the jet is limited and weight/drag influences come into effect. Stores for the F-16 include free fall and runway denial bombs, air-to-surface Maverick missiles, Sidewinder heat-seeking missiles. ECM pods and extra fuel pods provide a passive but vital role and are essential stores for missions against long range, SAM-protected targets. The combination of arms loaded affects performance and the jet's ability to pull high Gs. The crew chief in charge of weapons loading warns of any unstable and potentially dangerous loads on the jet, so heed his advice! A comparatively clean cockpit layout distinguishes *Falcon* from previous simulations, with every dial and display serving a purpose. Rear and side views allow you to keep track of targets passing by, the rear view being most critical as it warns of enemy Migs and missiles sneaking up from behind. To keep track of damage there is a display on the right of the cockpit, while on the left are back-up displays for all of the aircraft's major instruments. There is even a 'black box' flight recorder, useful for replaying events after being blasted from the skies!

Once booted up, the standard options for selecting the control method and the sound level are displayed. A twin-player option allows for two PCs to be linked, flying one against the other in combat. Once registered on the duty roster, the pilot's rank can be chosen (from the lowest skill level of First Lieutenant through to the advanced level of Colonel), the number of enemy Migs to be encountered (up to three on screen at any one time) and any one of twelve missions. These range from a milk run - a practice bombing mission - to the grand slam mission with four Migs to intercept. The rank selected determines the skill level of the enemy Migs and the accuracy of missiles as well as the level of flight realism and the effects on the pilot and the F-16.

**BIG MANUAL**

Flying the plane is a demanding task and the PC copes admirably in reproducing the flight sensation above a world split into friendly and hostile territories, complete with bridges, SAM batteries, natural and man-made landmarks, runways, rivers and roads. As in reality, takeoffs and landings are as hazardous as actual combat, if you are unsure of the aircraft and its performance, although to help, there is an ILS (Instrument Landing System). The 132 page manual supplied with the game details everything about flying the Falcon from the first take off and basic flight manoeuvres through to combat procedures, the cockpit layout, advanced flight manoeuvres and same of the twelve missions entails.

Combat is exciting, fast and enjoyable but limited, with only two types of enemy. While flight enthusiasts may find *Falcon* doesn't have the depth of Chuck Yeager APS, it is a good game and well worth a look.

**OTHER FORMATS**

*Falcon* is already on the Apple Macintosh at £34.99 and plans are afoot to bring out Amiga, ST, Commodore 64/128 versions and possibly Spectrum and Amstrad conversions too.

"Combat is fast, exciting and enjoyable but limited . . . "
FrighTmare
Cascade Games

Programmer Mike Mannion and designer Ron Ashley - Floppy Electronics Ltd - were contracted to write FrighTmare by Cascade Games. Mike has only written one game previously, Top Duck for Tynesoft Ltd, released Christmas 87. Mike informs us that the game was not dissimilar to the arcade platform-and-ladders romp, Mr Do's Castle. Top Duck failed to make the big time for Mike, appearing and disappearing with hardly the ruffle of a feather, it even managed to avoid THE GAMES MACHINE offices. However we wish them more success with FrighTmare which between them, Mike and Ron hope to convert for other machines, the formats are listed below.

In the depths of the mind lurk the deepest horrors, images and sounds so awful that it is only when the subconscious ruins your thoughts that they creep into existence... when you are asleep.

There are four dream zones to deal with, each more surreal than the last. The idea of FrighTmare is to face them all within the allotted eight and a half hours between midnight and dawn. To succeed in the game one must survive the nightmares and increase your dream rating from the fairly passive Bad Dream to the ultimate Nefarious FrighTmare by destroying as many monsters as possible. This world of unreality is built on legends; the hands of thieving peasants cut off by an evil Prince roam the land, together with men who worshipped the moon in the hope of gaining eternal life and were subsequently condemned to walk the twilight world caught between the personae of wolf and man. There are those who made a pact with the Devil and now suffer the non-life of zombies, and a mad pharaoh stalks the land killing to experience the death denied him by his embalmers. In all there are 15 different monsters which can be tackled with various weapons found scattered throughout the dream world.

These armaments include; holy water, crucifixes, revolver-and-bullets (silver or mundane) and a watch to temporarily slow down monsters. Other aids are wings for increased jumping ability, rings for additional lives, and chalices which increase the dream rating. Control of the main character is via joystick.

The layout of the screen is tidy, showing the dreamer nimbly leaping about ancient buildings, monuments, trees and swamps avoiding or killing monsters like there was no tomorrow, which there won't be if you don't wake up.

COMMODORE 64/128
Cassette: £9.95
Diskette: £14.95

Platforms-and-ladders games are ten-a-penny, and are among the oldest formats for computer games. To be anything special a game of this ilk needs to stand head and shoulders above anything that has gone before. FrighTmare doesn't quite get there but is very close. The opening tune is suitably atmospheric, as are the sound FX during gameplay. Character control is finely tuned, and animation of all the characters is effective. Colourful backdrops add ambience to the strange world of dreams, and with lots of screens to fight through, it should keep you interested for hours to come... eight and a half to be precise.

OVERALL 71%

OTHER FORMATS
Conversions of FrighTmare are forthcoming for Amstrad CPC and Spectrum - £9.95 Cassette, £14.95 Diskette, and the Spectrum +4 for which no price had been decided upon at time of going to print. It will also be available for PC compatibles at £19.95. All releases are imminent. More 16-bit conversions are on the way, but Cascade could not give us precise details on availability.

"... it should keep you interested for hours to come..."
Magnetron

Magnetron is Firebird's first Spectrum release from Graftgold since that company's founder-members, Steve Turner and Andrew Braybrook, moved their licensing from Hewson. It is written by Steve Turner, long-standing Spectrum developer, using his previous Quazatron as a departure point.

Eight orbiting satellites are currently threatening the planet Quazatron. KLP-2, a psychopathic little engineering droid, whose favourite pastime is dismantling fellow robots, has been sent to disable the four reactors on each of the satellites – easier said than done, since they are guarded by 16 different types of droid. The main game presentation is in flick-screen, isometric 3-D, showing various levels connected by ramps.

There are several options when it comes to tackling enemy droids: they may be destroyed by the use of 'frixy' power discs, mortars and boomerangs, or by grappling with them at close quarters, and then using the dismantled parts to build a replica of KLP-2 incorporating the enemy's abilities.

The risk in grappling is that target droids are protected by a self-destruct sequence that counts down when the enemy droid is grabbed. Enter the subgame: a grid of nine squares appears, and three types of icon: bomb, diamond and box-shaped. To prevent detonation the three bomb shapes must be placed along the bottom row of the grid before time runs out. To purloin the salvaged parts, the other two rows also have to be completed in order. When the main game resumes after a successful grapple, the identification number of the droid you are controlling is displayed at the top of the screen. If the replica is destroyed, KLP-2 returns to his previous chassis.

This is a straightforward reworking of the transfer subgame Andrew Braybrook first used in his Commodore 64 hit, Paradroid, followed through in Steve's Spectrum rewrite, Quazatron, and which since has become a programmer's standard library technique for beefing up games. It is, however, rarely used as elegantly in plot terms as in Magnetron.

Reactors are shut down by reducing or overloading their power. Each has four containers holding either a positive fuel rod or a negative inhibitor. Replacing them with rods KLP-2 is carrying shuts them down if the overall charge goes below one, or overloads it if it goes over five. When all four containers have been disabled, KLP-2 is free to teleport to the next satellite. KLP-2's movement is affected by his own weight and the amount he carries – climbing and steering becomes more sluggish if he is too heavy – and by magnets, indicated by arrows, which either aid or hinder progress depending on whether the droid is positively or negatively charged.

With every action, energy is drained and can only be regained by grappling with droids containing good power units – usually lower numbered droids – but beware, these are the most difficult to defeat.

Computer access points on all levels provide status displays: sphere icons display current reactor status, which satellite the player is at (1-8), and grid coordinates of the current sector; droid icons display KLP-2's current status, and if in replica form, its various parts can be seen if the security class is below or equal to that of the current replica; box icons – if a sufficient security pass is held – display available weapons and devices that can be acquired.

OVERALL 80%
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Yes, it's Spring Sale time at THE GAMES MACHINE, a special service from us to you. This is not a Newsfield Mail Order offer, but a feature we've worked out for you so you can save money on some brand new and recent top games – as much as £81 if you feel so inclined! It's easy to do, just cut out the coupon(s) and send off to the respective companies.

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Climb every mountain on the Amstrad CPC and Commodore 64/128 with Chamonix Challenge or get your TGM T-shirt soggy in Championship Water Skiing for the Amstrad CPC. Again for Amstrad CPC owners you can attempt to Get Dexter II too, or blow up most of the known galaxy with Lee Enfield in Space Ace for the Spectrum (cassette only). Commodore 64/128 or Amstrad CPC. All games retail for £3.95 on cassette and £14.95 on disk but cut out the coupon and get each game for only £6.95 on cassette or £11.95 on diskette!

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Brand new and still damp from the duplicators! Here's your first chance to get Crash Garrett or Captain Blood – Infogrames's two big Spring releases. For information about both products, take a look at last month's issue where they were both previewed – or even Rob Steel's assessment of Crash Garrett in the Adventure section this month; They're on offer here at £16.95 for the Atari ST version of Crash Garrett or £21.95 for the PC version. Captain Blood for either the Atari ST or Amiga at £21.95.

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Become a great British hero on the cheap! Virgin's Dan Dare II sequel hit high marks on all the 8-bits. But by using this special TGM coupon the game can be yours even cheaper now – Virgin are offering it through TGM for £1.50 off cassette versions and £2.00 off disks for the Spectrum, Commodore 64/128 or Amstrad CPC. That brings the prices down to £6.45 for Spectrum or Amstrad cassettes; £12.95 for Spectrum or Amstrad disks and £17.45 for Commodore 64/128 cassette, £19.95 for disk. Watcha waiting for – there's the human race to be saved!
In CRL's latest gruesome adventure you take the role of a man horribly cursed to be a werewolf by night. With animal blood flowing through your veins, your appetite for fresh human flesh is unnerving. Can you break the curse by playing through the adventure without killing anyone? But, amid the blood there is love — Nadia, a young girl, is the apple of your eye — but should you fail in your quest, she could end up being the apple in your flesh salad. Check out Wolfman's striking screenshots in the adventure section.

Get your teeth into this one and save £2.00 if you're a Commodore 64/128, Spectrum, or Amstrad CPC owner. Normally £9.95 on cassette and £14.95 on disk for all three formats, use this coupon and the game's yours for only £7.95 on cassette and £12.95 on disk.

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**US GOLD**  
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Namco’s arcade machine comes into your own home! But get it through this special TGM reader’s offer and save yourself a wacking £1.50 off all the versions – that’s Spectrum, Commodore 64/128, Amstrad CPC, Atari ST and Amiga. The prices are as follows: Spectrum £7.49 cassette; Commodore 64/128 £8.49 cassette or £10.49 on disk; Amstrad CPC £8.49 cassette or £13.49 on disk; Atari ST £18.49 and Amiga £23.49. Rolling Thunder was reviewed in TGM004.

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**US GOLD**  
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Hut! Hut! Hut! Probably the best American Football simulation come across the fish pond is the brand new Forth And Inches – and for an explanation of the title, you’ll just have to wait. Sorry it’s only for the Commodore 64/128 at the moment, but it’s on offer here at £14.95 off the normal price, bringing the price down to £8.49 on cassette or £13.49 on disk.

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**RAINBIRD**  
**MORPHEUS**  
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At last Andrew Braybrook’s epic space shoot-em-up sets out from its Rainbird nest – if you missed all the details, like how totally brilliant it is, check them out in TGM001. The whole package comes in a large-sized box with Time Slice manual, a poster, a badge and a reference card. Morpheus retails in the shops at £14.95 on cassette and £17.95 on disk – and of course it’s only for the Commodore 64/128 – but if you use this special TGM coupon, you can snap up a copy at an amazing £4.00 discount making the prices only £10.95 on cassette and £13.95 on disk.

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**RAINBIRD**  
**CARRIER COMMAND**  
**SAVE £5.00!**

Rainbird’s 16-bit simulation thriller Carrier Command flies in very soon, with solid 3-D graphics and effects that will make your eyes pop out and probably do some- raus too! For further information look back into TGM002 where we previewed the game – it’s on offer here for the Atari ST and Amiga. You would have to pay £24.95 in the shops for this beauty but by the miracles of TGM readers’ coupons, Rainbird are letting us give it to you at a saving of £5.00 – so all you pay is £19.95 for either format.

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**FIREBIRD**  
**MAGNETRON**  
**SAVE UP TO £4.00!**

Magnetron is the follow up to Steve Turner’s Quazatron, the story of a cute robot chappie. And considering Steve’s tremendous reputation, this is a spectacu- lar offer, specially for TGM Spectrum or Commodore 64/128 readers. Normally priced at £14.95 on disk and £9.95 on cassette for Commodore 64/128 or £7.95 for the Spectrum cassette, using this coupon you can get Magnetron at £4.00 off C64 disk, making it £10.95; or £6.00 off either Spectrum or Commodore cassette, making it £5.95 Spectrum and £6.95 Commodore 64/128.

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DOH STRIKES BAT

ARKANOID, REVENGE OF DOH

Imagine

Breakout style games, with their quirky insistence on disguising the simple bat and ball theme by providing intricately woven scenarios, turned into a veritable second-flood of titles after the success of Imagine's Arkanoid. Now the company is cashing in again on its own success with an Arkanoid II. Revenge Of Doh is a conversion from Taito's coin-op sequel.

At the end of Arkanoid the evil dimension controller, Doh, was finally beaten into submission and banished from the universe. All was peaceful but as the conquering space craft cruised homeward little did the occupants know that 40,000 years later history would repeat itself. During that time Doh nursed his wounds and learned evil arts, evolving into a much more powerful and vindictive form, ready at last to unleash his revenge on the universe.

A vast alien spaceship, Zarg, has entered the universe. Failing to answer any communications signals it is scanned using radar xenographic equipment, revealing the presence of Doh. Deploying the space craft Vaus II you must destroy Zarg's protective barriers and limited-fire laser guns; however, not all the effects are desirable.

MULTI-COLOURED SWAPPIS SHOP

GET DEXTER II

Infogrames/ERE Informatique

The original, Get Dexter, released through PSS in April 1986, was one of the first games to really exploit the Amstrad's sound and graphics capabilities properly. Now Infogrames have released the sequel, retitled from its French counterpart L'Ange de Cristal, with excellent graphics, quality sound and deeply puzzling gameplay.

The android Dexter and his monoped sidekick Scooter, find themselves on the planet Kef. Kef is inhabited by three races: the animals, the Swappis and the Stiffens. Once a peaceful land, Kef took a turn for the worse when a group of Stiffens broke away, forming a secret religious sect, and slowly began killing off the Swappis.

Dexter has offered to help the swappis by discovering the Stiffen sect's whereabouts and hopefully destroying it, but the Swappis want him to prove that he is capable of doing the job properly.

To do so Dexter is asked to complete three tasks listed on wall plaques in the Swappi houses. Additional clues are found on information boards scattered around Kef. Detailing the tasks would give too much away... but as they are unravelled, the more Dexter explores his world.

Kef is displayed in glorious isometric perspective, all in full colour, many fantastic and humorous creatures roaming its lawns and houses. One idea used is that any animated objects in the game can move from screen to screen - whereas normally (say, Headd Over Heels) creatures are restricted to one room only.

As in the prequel, there are loads of objects scattered around the room, most of which can either be picked up and dropped, thrown, or pushed around. A useful way to use objects is to present them to a Swappi who, by its very name and nature, swaps it for the object it is carrying - the advantage to this becomes apparent when solving some of the puzzles. Scooter is also a bit more useful this time around - Dexter can call him back and tell him to fetch an object, though the objects are restricted to those in the current room.

Get Dexter II is packed full of little features which add more fun to what is essentially a puzzle exploration game - and the end is great, but you will have to work out how to get there yourselves...

ATARI ST

The Atari version is coming soon, watch out for a version update. It's the same game, but the graphics will be of higher definition.

SPECTRUM 48/128

Cassette: £7.97

Revenge Of Doh features colourful, smooth-moving graphics which are excellently drawn, while the music is quite good even on the 48K Spectrum. Breakout have become pretty standard, but it is the implementations which distinguish Revenge Of Doh from the rest of the genre, such as the capsules idea first used in Batty, which has been expanded to give the game a greater scope. If you're a Breakout style games player who hasn't yet got a Breakout style game, this is the one to get.

OVERALL 81%

REPRESENTATIVE QUOTE

"... new implementations distinguish Revenge Of Doh from the rest of the genre..."

AMSTRAD CPC

Cassette: £9.95

Diskette: £14.95

Get Dexter II is a superb sequel and one which will keep your interest for a long time. A graphical masterpiece of programming with a highly coherent series of puzzles to keep any ardent, and experienced, arcade adventurer glued to their monitors for a long while, Get Dexter II is definitely not for the novice; practice in map making and knowing where to look for clues is essential if you're going to really get into the game. The cassette version is slightly smaller than on disk - every room is disk-accessed - because it wasn't possible to squeeze everything into 64K. One plus is that the original Get Dexter is included in the package free.

OVERALL 87%

REPRESENTATIVE QUOTE

"... a superb sequel and one which will hold your interest for a long time."
What Ya China Do?

Golden Path

A long time ago, when the people of Amtix ruled the land of CPC, there came to them from the Arsof dynasty a tale of the mysterious East, drawn from Chinese mythology. The story was looked upon by the revered ones of Amtix with troubled brows and much disdain, for it was a tale not of the standard with which they had become accustomed. It gained no favour and so became lost and all-but forgotten in the mists of time. And it came to pass that the mighty Firebird heard of this, considered the story's plight and concluded that it would be worthy of resurrection if it were to be told by a storyteller of greater memory than the original mythologist. So it was that the Firebird raised *The Golden Path* from the ashes and commissioned Amiga and Atari to portray the legend to the land.

Y'in Hsi's father died at the brutal hands of Ch'un Kuei when that Warlord took his Palace by storm - naturally the lad, now a monk, wants revenge. To end the tyrannical rule of Ch'un Kuei he must travel the Golden Path to the land of mystery and legend, there to do battle with the soldier of war and in so doing become the most powerful Emperor in China's history.

Golden Path is a graphical adventure wherein you take the role of Y'in Hsi as he undertakes his perilous journey to meet Ch'un Kuei. The screen is split into four windows, the primary one depicting the current graphical location and events taking place therein. Bottom left is the Book Of Law which gives text descriptions of locations and events when clicked on. To its right is the inventory, and far right is a small graphical representation of the current location showing the Golden Path: click on it to display your score. A vine encircles the inventory window portraying Y'in Hsi's strength, which slowly withers and dies as time progresses or if Y'in Hsi acts in an unenlightened way (kicking the life out of a starving man for example), although it may be rejuvenated by completing certain tasks.
YOU TAKE THE HIGH ROAD

Y'in Hsi is mouse-controlled: a cursor in the guise of a Chinese symbol adorns the screen, and moving it to the left or right of the picture and pressing the left hand button determines his direction. Clicking above or below his head dictates whether he will take the high path out of a location (if one exists) or the low path. Resting the cursor on Y'in Hsi and pressing the left button enables him to pick up objects in his immediate proximity, or drop anything he may be carrying. Clicking the right button whilst the cursor is over the monk allows him to use the particular item he has in his hands to perform a particular task (give the flowers to the pretty girl for example); a question mark appears over his head if no use is found and an exclamation mark if the object may be used in some way.

Moving the cursor away from Y'in Hsi and clicking the right button while he is carrying an object makes him throw that object at the cursor's position. Should he be empty handed, the cursor placed on him and the right button clicked, he kicks out martial arts style, with his feet. In the same way moving the cursor away from him and clicking the button makes him punch anything within reach. This control system may sound complex but is simplicity itself once grasped.

Graphically the locations and characters in Golden Path are attractive and in most cases the animation is entertaining. Sound effects accompany the action and there is a slightly tedious music track which plays egg fried rice music for far too long and much too often.

PLAY IT AGAIN SHAM

TIME FIGHTER

Software Invasion is the programming team who brought us the dubious delights of Plasmatron and Lifeforce. Here they squeeze the last ounce from that omnipresent computer game topic, time travel.

Not to be confused with an attempt on that fine coin-op Time Soldiers, Time Fighter does share similar subject matter. You play the part of a man who has been given the ability to travel through time. This may sound like a stroke of luck but it has its drawbacks. Each time you arrive in a new timezone the problems of that era are yours to contend with. Armed with weapons suitable to each period, you fight off stone-age men, cowboys, medieval soldiers and space men as you run and jump from one end of the screen to the next.

The primary play area shows the action, depicting both you and the enemy as matchstalk men against a suitably periodic backdrop.

Below this is a status panel showing energy, lives remaining, the current score, high score and the weapons available to you. The main aim of the game is to travel through each timezone in sequence from the stone-age to the future, killing everyone you meet on the way and surviving long enough to reach the end of the level. However, pressing the space bar allows you to visit forthcoming levels and play them up to a point without fear of losing a life, although no score is awarded.

SOFTWARE INVASION

AMIGA

Diskette: £19.95

The backdrops for the trek along the Golden Path are extremely well done as is the way old Y'in Hsi moves from location to location. Gameplay is instantly grabbing and although there are many and varied ways of dying quickly the inclination to have one more go is very strong. The fact that there is a save game feature also adds to its addictiveness. There are 100 steps to take along the Golden Path and 37 locations to visit. Puzzles within the game are fairly straightforward to begin with (using the tweezers to get the thorn out of the Dragon's paw - dragons have paws? - for example) and should therefore not deter non-adventurous players from having a look. Golden Path is lovely to look at, interesting to play and sufficiently enticing to warrant perseverance.

OVERALL 78%

ATARI ST

Diskette: £19.95

Apart from arriving on two disks, the Atari ST version of Golden Path is identical to the Amiga.

OVERALL 78%

"...the inclination to have one more go is very strong."

REVIEWS

AMSTRAD CPC

SPECTRUM 48/128

"Any challenge soon dissolves into nothing,"
With the backing of the Italian motor company Ferrari, Electronic Arts have devised a car racing game with a difference. In *Ferrari Formula One* the entire racing team is under the player's control, from the engineers and pit crew through to the driver himself. Successful team co-ordination is essential, not just good driving.

Starting at Fiorano, Ferrari's home base and test circuit, the Ferrari team can use the facilities present to set up the car ready for the World Championship Grand Prix season. The Fiorano wind tunnel allows the team to experiment with different wing settings on the car to achieve maximum downforce while keeping drag to a minimum.

In the garage the Ferrari engine is tested and its horse power, torque and fuel consumption ratings are altered to suit each track. The wind tunnel and garage are not present at the tracks, the team has to return to Fiorano. However, a garage on site allows for complete overhauls. Each of the car's systems - suspension, the engine, the gearbox, wings and the tyres with their various compounds for wet and dry surfaces - can undergo major refits and alterations. In both garage and pits a bird's eye view of the car is offered and to alter any system just click on the relevant part of the car and use the mouse to change the control panel settings.

If the player needs help in the garage, Mauro the computerised crew chief can be consulted to make suggestions on what adjustments are best for the car. Any suggestions made are marked in red, although the player has the final decision on what settings are put into effect. Once the car is set up, its performance can be measured on the Fiorano test circuit. Cameras are set up along the track to measure the car's progress and, using the collated data, problem areas in its performance can be identified and rectified. It is far better to find faults during the test circuit runs then during the Grand Prix season!

Once the Ferrari has been made ready, all that remains is to enter the Grand Prix. Using the race control icon, any track can be selected, any session of each circuit can be attempted (either a practice session, qualification laps, a warm up or the race itself) and the length of the race altered to suit the player. The date can also be changed as well as the driver's name, and at any time the season's standings can be displayed showing the player's total points accumulated and the other drivers' points so far.

A slight departure from reality is possible in that the player can define the Formula level of any race. Formula Three is recommended for novices as all gear changes are automatic and the car is less prone to mechanical and electrical failures than with the higher the Formula levels, where rival drivers become more skillful and more demands are made on the driver in fuel management and track handling. A passenger level allows the player to take a back seat while the car is driven around the course by the computer and player interaction is limited to requesting pit stops.

The racing season takes place over five continents at 16 different circuits, starting with the Brazilian Grand Prix and working through to the final race at Adelaide in South Australia. Practice runs are used to learn the layout of each track and identify trouble spots before attempting the qualification runs. Depending on the qualification time attained during the preliminary runs, the Ferrari will start the race in anything from first to last (eighth) place. Strategy comes into play when the player has to choose the right tyre compounds, wing settings and suspension before the race begins. The weather, the course, its route and the overall length all play a decisive part in setting up the car ready for the race and a wrong decision during set up can cost the driver the race.

### THE PITS

On the track, the view is from inside the car as it negotiates the circuit. Race information is displayed in the top right corner. The layout of the Ferrari itself is fairly standard showing steering wheel, turbo boost level, oil pressure, fuel percentage, engine temperature and the current RPM rating. Side mirrors offer a view of...
Other Formats

Electronic Arts say they are converting for every format known to man except the Dragon and Oric! This certainly includes the ST, Commodore 64/128, Amstrad CPC, Spectrum (should be interesting) and PC machines. Prices and timings unknown at the moment, but some way off yet. THE GAMES MACHINE will keep you informed.

"Ferrari Formula One – a departure from the standard – a game of incredible complexity and truly remarkable realism."
WEAPONS GALORE

CYBERNOID

Hewson

Raffaele Cecco, author, among other games, of Hewson’s 8-bit big shoot-'em-up hit Exolon, teams up with Nick Jones to provide yet another orgy of death and destruction – initially on the Spectrum 48/128 and +3 and Amstrad. This is Nick Jones’s first original game. His pedigree is more ‘backroom’ – he used to be with Mikro-Gen, designing music packages and background game graphics. He was also responsible for the Commodore 64 conversion of Exolon and is doing the same for Cybernoid.

Once again the Galactic Federation is in dire straits. This time the pirates have hit them right where it hurts, in the storage depots. The solar system’s surreptitious scavengers have raided the depots and milked them for all they are worth. Valuable minerals, jewels, ammunition and the very latest in state-of-the-art weaponry have been stolen. Now with their resources at an all time low, the Federation has commissioned your mercenary skills to recover the stolen supplies and restore order to the galaxy.

And you are going to need all the available destructive power at your command, because your ship's presence has been detected, and the pirates’ planetary defence systems are activated. The planet in question is a maze-like structure of interlocking rooms leading to a depot where any recovered items can be deposited. Each room contains some sort of defence device which has to be immobilised or avoided for that screen to be negotiated successfully, and once a room has been entered the only way out is through the exit leading to the next screen.

In addition to the planet’s defences, there are the pirates themselves. Some pirate ships contain an item of the stolen supplies, or additional weaponry, which can be picked up once the ship has been destroyed, but a constant stream of deadly plasma bolts must be avoided while trying to accomplish this.

SPECTRUM 48/128
Cassette: £7.99
Diskette: £14.99

Just like Raffaele’s Exolon, the graphics are high quality with plenty of attention paid to detail; colourful and smooth-moving, they put many other Spectrum games to shame. The 128 version features a great music score which runs right though the game, but if it gets annoying it can be switched off. Though little thought is needed to play Cybernoid, as the problems are more a question of good timing than lateral thinking, it maintains interest because there is always the desire to see just one more screen or get past a particular section without losing a life. Classic shoot-'em-ups are always fun to play and this is no exception.

OVERALL 84%

AMSTRAD CPC
Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £14.99

Noticeably more colourful than on the Spectrum, the Amstrad animation tends to slow down when there are a lot of elements moving on screen at once. Nevertheless this hardly spoils the enjoyment. Sound is a continuous music score which can become a bit grating after a while but can be switched off to leave just the spot FX running. Certainly one of the better shoot-'em-ups to appear for the Amstrad, and well worth looking at.

OVERALL 80%

COMMODORE 64/128
Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £14.99

The conversion of Exolon, which, since it is in Nick Jones’s hands, should be an accurate representation, will be available by the time you read this review.

"From the word go it is compelling and keeps the player coming back for more ..."
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After two years of playtesting, Dungeon Master has arrived on the ST, boasting 'at least 800K' of data. It is courtesy of FTL Games, whose Oids is also reviewed in this issue. Future projects include Sun Dog – The Frozen Legacy (programmed before Dungeon Master) and additional dungeons for this game. At a lower price, these will require the original and involve character interaction.

The laboratory of your master, the Grey Lord, is deep beneath sacred Mount Anias, where the legendary Power Gem is rumoured to be locked fast. Attempting to capture it he was torn asunder and his good half lurks in the dungeons, waiting to wreak chaos on the world: neither can enter the domain of the other. Now knowing the true spell to gain access, Theron’s direct link with these implements. Each character has two hands: one for holding objects, and an ‘action’ hand – usually best for using weapons. By pressing the mouse button against the appropriate character’s weapon, a series of sub-menus can be accessed which detail what to do with these implements.

Once the four champions are selected, a leader is nominated, and proves Theron’s direct link with the dungeon world. He/she can pick up or throw objects, press buttons and pull levers. The leader may easily be swapped for another at any time.

If you don’t cast a spell to light a torch, it can get pretty dark!

MOUTH, EYES AND HANDS

Each champion is distinguished by the physical attributes of stealth, stamina and Mana (magical energy). Additionally, they may have developed skills, such as fighter, wizard, ninja or priest, and have additional attributes such as strength, dexterity, wisdom, vitality, anti-magic and anti-fire. Whatever their qualities, they all learn from experience and recover by resting.

An inventory for each shows possessions as pictures inside light grey boxes. they can only carry as much as their maximum weight potential allows. Characters can acquire objects and stronger clothes/armour for defence; if they are wounded, the injured body part registers red on their status screen until a healing potion is found. Mouth and eye icons allow eating/drinking and close examination of objects.

Each character has two hands: one for holding objects, and an ‘action’ hand – usually best for using weapons. By pressing the mouse button against the appropriate character’s weapon, a series of sub-menus can be accessed which detail what to do with these implements.

Once the four champions are selected, a leader is nominated, and proves Theron’s direct link with the dungeon world. He/she can pick up or throw objects, press buttons and pull levers. The leader may easily be swapped for another at any time.

If you don’t cast a spell to light a torch, it can get pretty dark!

POWER MASTERY

Dungeon Master is played in real-time, so it is wise to keep your warriors prepared for any surprises: spells should be prepared in advance. Food and water are essential, even if it means eating the monster you have just killed. Mapping could prove invaluable, but is sometimes
deceptive. Above all, the game requires practice, since characters strengthen through trial.

After the action commands, the most important aspect is spell casting. Spells need Mana and experience to create and direct, so the more powerful spells are usually beyond your band until continual usage proves fruitful. However, simple (but necessary) spells - such as creating the light for a held torch - can be created by anyone.

Spells require the correct combination of at least two from a series of 24 icons. Power is always the starting point, followed by any from elemental influence, form and class/alignment. Fortunately, the package fully details the nature and result of these incantations.

Bearing all these elements in mind, long, tense and very challenging games can provide great enjoyment. It will take a long time to complete, but (more importantly) it will prove constantly compelling.

**ATARI ST**
Diskette: £24.99

The atmosphere generated is superb. The wholly engrossing scenario creates a complete world which can be manipulated at will: its depth fully reflects the two years it took to program it. The presentation - an interesting and evocative novella neither too involved to prove turbid nor too short to be unhelpful - is superb. Similarly, the innovative character selection system and icon display are both neatly implemented and quick to use (helpful when you’re fumbling for the right weapon). The gameplay echoes this front end; a world believable because of its details: the torch light gradually dimming and needing further magic to refuel it; the real-time feature which adds considerably to the tension; the fact that characters gradually acquire skill or need to be reclothed after resurrection. These details are enhanced by the graphics: large, colourful and clearly drawn creatures, with beautiful use of shading on the dungeon walls. The already eerie and tense atmosphere is increased by the game’s sparse but wholly appropriate sound effects. Dungeon Master is a role player’s dream, but capable of providing a good deal of enjoyment for any ST owner.

**OVERALL 94%**

**OTHER FORMATS**

An Amiga version is due for release in a couple of months. No other format plans at this time.

"... a role player’s dream, but capable of providing a good deal of enjoyment for any ST owner."

---

*SPEEDY SEQUEL*

**ZILLION 2 - THE TRI FORMATION**

Reviewed only last issue, and already there is a sequel, which must make Zillion 2 the fastest follow up in history. Continuing where the original left off, Zillion 2 is biased more towards arcade action compared with the arcade adventure/Impossible Mission overtones of Zillion. Often, sequels are dire to say the least, but with this one Sega seem to have got it right.

JJ returns for part two and yet again, his friends have wandered off and got themselves captured by the Norsa. JJ is the only one around who can rescue them and in the process destroy the Norsa once and for all (very unlikely considering there are strong rumours of Zillion 3 coming to the Sega later this year.

Zillion 2 is split into three separate action stages; in the first, JJ rides his jet bike along a horizontally scrolling corridor, firing a laser at the space station defenders. Enemy guards on the passageway return his fire, while jet-pack guards fly around unleashing laser bolts. JJ has to be careful that his bike does not fall down a hole in the corridor floor or run over floor lasers. It can jump to avoid these hazards and fire at any aerial station defenders. If JJ gets hit by a laser bolt or runs over floor lasers, energy is lost, but dropping down a hole loses him a life.

When collected from the corridor, power capsules provide JJ with extra energy, greater laser power and even the ability to change Transformer-style into a flying robot - handy for avoiding floor hazards. Good coordination in jumping, firing and moving is essential if you are to get through this stage without dying.

In the second stage (more like Zillion), JJ leaves the bike and runs along, blasting enemy guards and other futuristic guardians, using lifts and jumping from platform to platform in the search for his lost comrades. One is held prisoner on each level. By rescuing them, the third level is accessed, where the now-familiar extra-powerful opponent has to be destroyed in order to progress to the next. Later levels bring in more guards, large, powerful killer robots, ever more complex space station layouts and even more vicious end of level foes to defeat.

**SEGAE**

Mega Cartridge: £19.95


Often, sequels are dire to say the least, but with this one Sega seem to have got it right.

"... Zillion 2 is great... Sega have a winner with the series..."

OVERALL 83%
SOME YEARS AGO, THERE WAS A SPATE OF PUZZLE GAMES, MOSTLY FOR THE SPECTRUM; A FEW VERY GOOD ONES, BUT MOST LITTLE MORE THAN HURRIED REHASHES OF IDEAS IN THE COMMON DOMAIN LOOKING FOR A QUICK BUCK. BUT WITH TETRIS, MIRRORSOFT SEEMS TO HAVE TAPPED INTO A NEW VEIN OF INTEREST IN PUZZLES EXCLUSIVELY DESIGNED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF A COMPUTER'S CAPABILITIES; SOKO-BAN IS ANOTHER SUCH.

PROGRAMMED BY SPECTRUM HOLOBYTE, AN AMERICAN COMPANY, ITS OVERALL MARKETING IS HANDLED BY CINEMAWARE, AND THEREFORE IN THE UK BY MIRRORSOFT.

A FOREMAN'S LOT IS NOT A HAPPY ONE. DESIGNATED THE CLEANER OF A WAREHOUSE COMPRISING 50 UNTIDY LEVELS FULL OF BOXES, YOUR TASK IS TO MOVE THEM INTO PREASSIGNED STORAGE AREAS ON EACH FLOOR. FORTUNATELY, YOU DON'T HAVE TO MOVE, SINCE THE TIDYING UP IS DONE BY PROXY: YOU CONTROL A MECHANICAL WAREHOUSEMAN AND DIRECT HIM TO PUSH THE BOXES AROUND, ONE BLOCK AT A TIME.

THE TITLE SCREEN DISPLAYS THE WAREHOUSE LOBBY, FROM WHICH THE PLAYER'S OWN TORTUOUS LEVELS CAN BE DESIGNED AND SAVED TO DISK. ALTERNATIVELY, PRESSING THE FIRE BUTTON ACCESSES THE PLAYER SELECTION SCREEN.

THE PROGRAM ALLOWS UP TO FOUR PLAYERS TO PARTICIPATE AND THEIR NAMES TO BE ENTERED. IF ONLY ONE PLAYER TAKES PART, THERE IS NO TIME LIMIT ON THE ACTION; IF MORE THAN ONE, A TIME LIMIT FROM ONE TO 20 MINUTES CAN BE DEFINED. AT THE LEVEL SELECTION SCREEN ANY ONE OF THE FIRST 50 LEVELS, EACH SEPARATELY LOADED, CAN BE CHOSEN—THEREAFTER THE MAZES WHICH YOU CREATE YOURSELF ARE ACCESSED.

THE PSEUDO-3-D WAREHOUSE LEVELS ARE VIEWED FROM ABOVE.,

SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF A LEVEL, A TUNE ANNOUNCES THE FACT AND THE NEXT, MORE DEVIOUS, MAZE IS LOADED IN.


OVERALL 83%
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Nintendo Development Opportunities Available (Full Support Given)
Benson rules twice

MERCENARY
Novagen

Amiga £24.95
LAUNCHED to universal enthusiasm on the Commodore 64 way back in 1985, Mercenary and its devious sequel The Second City have now been converted for the Amiga.

As a 21st century soldier of fortune you have crash-landed in the central city of the planet Targ, a world beset by war between the Palyars and Mechanoids. Your inter-galactic craft, Prestinium, is beyond repair, but your trusty in-helmet PC, Benson, still remains for assistance. Planning one of several routes to escape is only one concern, however: optimising the spoils of war can bring high rewards. By exploring the city network and its series of underground complexes both can be achieved.

The Second City lurks in the eerie red dust of the southern hemisphere. With no clues or records you crash-land again, every underhand trick conspiring to hinder your escape. Fortunately, in both games the current position can be saved/loaded as required.

The complete package comprises the games plus the Targ Survival Kit - a collection of city and underground maps, technical specifications of craft available, a hint sheet and a short story, Interlude On Targ.

A fit of peak

CHAMONIX CHALLENGE
Infogrames

PC £19.95
FIRST reviewed in TGM003 (February), Chamonix Challenge was awarded a worthy 75% on the ST. The PC version is also multi-load, and involves identical gameplay elements: a choice of five routes to climb (graded accordingly), a selection of items with which to fill your backpack and assist progress, and a rhythmic control method used to move your character. All climbs comprise three stages: a level glacier pitted with crevasses, a snowy slope where rhythm and a sure grip are essential, and (the most difficult stage), the rockface.

Throughout the game hindrances other than the climb are encountered: the elements conspire to freeze you, and tiredness and hunger can soon set in if the correct equipment hasn't been packed.

VERIFIED

REFERENCE

PREVIEWS

VERSION UPDATE

COMMENT

The graphical speed of the Amiga Mercenary is immediately impressive, from the gorgeous opening starfield sequence to the incredibly fast-moving in-game vectors. The presentation is excellent: subtly effective, grey on-screen display, maps, technical data and an interesting novella. Coupled with the sombre colour-scheme adopted, it generates a menacing and precarious atmosphere. However, it's the gameplay that really sets it apart from most other programs: the total freedom of movement within the city, a wealth of puzzles to solve and objects to trade, the precise acts required to balance Mechanoid and Palyar interests; in short, it's a game with incredible depth. Though something of a literal translation from the Atari ST - the sound takes understatement too far and the gameplay doesn't differ from the 8-bit versions - it's thoroughly deserving of any Amiga owner's attention.

AMIGA
OVERALL 89%

version update

COMMENT

This game has translated reasonably well to the PC. The graphics are passable enough, with some neatly cute touches, typical of the Infogrames style, spread over reasonable backdrops. However, the gameplay is just as frustrating as the other formats: pixel-perfect precision is required to leap over relatively small gaps, and the rhythm method needed is tuned to the point of pure annoyance. The presentation is impressive: the options are virtually identical to the ST, and there's a similar neatly animated climber's face registering dismay when a crisis crops up. Setting aside the quibbles, perseverance does dampen the initial tedium, and when you've grown acclimatised to the troublesome control-method, there is a great deal of satisfaction to be gained from conquering a peak.

PC
OVERALL 68%

68/108 TGM TX 005:4-88
GRYZOR

The coin-op smash hit from Konami now for your home-micro. This fantastic conversion with all the original play features takes you into a thrilling alien world... negotiate force fields and take on fanatical guerillas as you infiltrate their headquarters. Split second timing and nerves of steel are a must for this fun packed program where addiction will always bring you back for more!

WORLDS APART,

Survive to become a captain through the toughest training academy. Konami's arcade blockbuster has already reached No 1 in the Gallup charts with this superb conversion for your home-micro. Featuring all the gameplay of the arcade original, Combat School offers a real challenge to the toughest thoroughbred gamester.

Seven gruelling events, plus a penalty stage and if you don't—you're out!

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**Torqueing choppers**

**GUNSHIP**

*MicroProse*

**Atari ST**

Diskette: £24.95

The Apache helicopter itself, a product long overdue. Since its Commodore 64 debut there have been rumours as to just how good the ST version could be. Totally rewritten to take advantage of the 16-bit machine's capabilities and power, *Gunship* has finally arrived.

**Comment**

Many of the ideas incorporated into the PC version come to light in the ST *Gunship*. The mouse and joystick controls are very smooth and the sensation of flight is superlative. Apart from the enhanced graphics and improved speed, the game is essentially the same as the PC version. The missions haven't undergone change and the game is still immensely playable. Considering the weak nature of the ST sound chip, the effects of whirring rotors and flak explosions come across really well. The PC version was good and on the ST it's even better. With the recent release of the excellent *Project Stealth Fighter* and now a quality conversion of *Gunship*, 1988 looks set to be MicroProse's finest hour.

**IBM PC**

**OVERALL 85%**

---

**Up in arms**

**UNIVERSAL MILITARY SIMULATOR**

*Rainbird*

**IBM PC**

£24.95

The IBM PC has had a long-standing as a more upmarket machine when it comes to its leisure use. Strategy games, simulations and games requiring extensive use of the player's brain were the order of the day, but over the last couple of years there has been a marked increase in the number of PC arcade games. Now, the PC goes back to its grass roots with the release of the

**Comment**

*UMS* looks set to revolutionise the computer wargame and on the PC it is a giant leap from the standard two-dimensional maps of previous wargames. The on-screen command selection system works much better than the drop down menus for issuing commands as used in the Atari ST version. At a single glance, all of the required commands are displayed on screen giving the program a very user-friendly air about it (more so than on the ST). Where it is let down is in the PC's graphics handling. Movement markers, combat units and ground features tend to merge into one large black mass if grouped closely together, this problem is even more apparent if they're in the distance. The solution is to use the zoom-in facility or adopt a different viewpoint but it can still be a problem if the wargamer wants to look at the battlefield as a whole. Apart from this problem, and other slight graphical differences, the program is still as flexible and powerful in its use as the ST version was. If you're looking for the ultimate wargame on the PC then look no further.

**IBM PC**

**OVERALL 92%**
Hear The Force, Luke

STAR WARS
Domark

Amiga £19.95

The Amiga version of this ageing arcade game has arrived at last: the other formats have been with us for a couple of months.

The basic objective is to destroy a sequence of Death Stars; the difficulty of the task differs according to the level tackled. Initially there are three: easy (wave one), medium (three) or hard (five): starting on wave one results in a struggle against Tie-fighters followed by a hazardous trench sequence on the Death Star, where enemy lasers must be avoided. Hitting the exhaust port at the end of the trench causes the Death Star to explode.

The higher levels incorporate a laser towers sequence: bonus points are awarded for destroying their peaks. Similarly, the difficulty and number of enemy shots against you increases, and the trench section is littered with obstacles.

Shields are lost on contact with any object, be it enemy fighters, missiles, gun emplacements or ground features; if a level is successfully completed, an extra shield is awarded. When all shields are lost, the game is over.

It's the nature of the game, but the Amiga graphics look just like the others.

COMMENT

Apart from the sound, the Amiga version of the great arcade vector graphic classic is virtually identical to the ST. The sound is put to greater use, incorporating some powerfully explosive effects and gorgeous staccato laser fire. Speech is very clear and atmospheric (if moribund in parts) and includes some extra phrases; nonetheless, if anything the complete aural effect is less aesthetically pleasing, partly because the digitised interpretation of the Star Wars theme is comically flat. Graphically, it's marginally more sluggish; but despite its visual simplicity the gameplay is extremely compelling because the action is non-stop. Long-term interest could wane because of this simple format, but until then it is as it should be, considering the machine's capabilities: a brilliant arcade conversion packed with furious blasting action.

AMIGA
OVERALL 78%

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TWINS

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AMIGA
OVERALL 78%
When you wish upon a Star

**Firefly**

Special FX/Ocean

Special FX was founded last year by former Ocean director Paul Finnegan together with Jonathon Smith, a long-time Ocean programmer. After a short spell with Liverpool-based Software Projects, for whom they wrote Hysteria, they've returned along the Manchester Ship Canal to old haunts at Ocean under their own label. Firefly is the first of a proposed six releases for this year.

For the crew of the Firefly there is no home - just Firefly itself. Their mission, under the player's control, is to destroy an army of mechanoids which has colonised a solar system. The system is displayed as a 9 x 5 grid of 45 segments. The objective is to get from the far left-hand side, where Firefly starts, to a switch situated on the far right-hand side.

Before the game starts some segments are already filled, while those which are just empty black spaces are parts of the solar system still under mechanoid control. There are always eight planet segments which cannot be occupied by the player and eight gamble segments. The latter consist of a vertical line of two thumbs-up signs and three thumbs-down along which the Firefly moves; pressing fire on a thumbs-up clears the segment allowing Firefly to progress, but a thumbs-down returns the player to the beginning to start the game again.

Segments with a circle (white on the Spectrum) are safe, allowing Firefly to cross them without gambling or entering into battle, which happens when an empty square is activated. Battles take place in a multi-directional scrolling sector of space which forms a maze inhabited by mechanoids. A sector is cleared by destroying the mechanoid generators, which show up on the scanner (middle bottom) as flashing dots.

**Cracking Yokas**

Having located a generator Firefly must collect four amoebla-like forms called Yokas; the generator can then be entered and deactivated. Deactivation is achieved in a similar way to gambling; a thumbs-up and thumbs-down appear on screen flashing alternately - hitting fire when the thumbs-up is lit destroys the generator. Landing a thumbs-down means another four Yokas have to be collected before re-entering the generator for another try.

Continual bombardment from the mechanoid hordes drains the damage indicator, which, oddly, starts at full and empties out with...
This seems to be it for the time being, but Ocean may well want to consider some other format releases before long.

"Firefly is an impressive new label launch, and a highly addictive one..."
**SPRINTED COURAGE**

**PREDATOR**

Activision

It is a shame that everyone under 18 won't have seen the film of Predator, the blockbuster, all-action, box-office hit movie starring Arnold (The Terminator, Commando) Schwarzenegger - and of course, caring parents won't let you see it when it comes out on video either, unless you have turned 18 in the meantime. So for the underprivileged underagers, the next best thing is to play the computer version, which Activision has kindly prepared for you. The storyboard was designed by System 3 (Bangkok Knights, The Last Ninja and IK series) with coding, music and graphics by Source Software. For the 64 version, Hugh Riley provided the graphics. You take the role of Major Alan 'Dutch' Schaefer, the leader of a crack combat team sent in on a top secret mission to rescue white-collar survivors of a helicopter crash deep behind enemy lines. The team finds the survivors murdered by guerrillas, and following a fire fight with the guerrillas at their base, the team is forced to retreat back into the jungle. Then, one by one, each member is killed by a new threat, an alien predator from another world. Extremely agile, the alien is seemingly invulnerable to the most powerful of firepower. Predator is a powerful movie and it is difficult to see how any computer game could capture the suspense and excessive violence that has made the film such a success. Almost predictably, the basic idea behind the game is nothing new, which may disappoint some readers who have seen the film, but System 3 have managed remarkably well to capture the film's flavour, and for once, stick quite well to the plot. The game begins with the team leaving their helicopter, running into the jungle with the Dutch providing the rearguard in what quickly becomes a battle for survival. The game takes the player through the film's main scenes, from the jungle itself to the guerrilla base, on over trees spanning chasms and mud pools and on to the final encounter with the predator itself, all by way of scrolling landscapes. This is done, in all versions, by the use of multi-loads, so if you are not on disk, be prepared for a wait between sections. At the outset, Dutch is armed with a machine-gun and three grenades, and as the jungle is overflowing with guerrillas, enemy soldiers, low flying vultures and the predator itself, there is no shortage of targets.

**BODY SNATCHER**

At each stage mutilated bodies of Dutch's team lie strewn around the jungle clearings. Searching their corpses reveals extra weapons and ammunition for use against the enemy. Dutch can be wounded by enemy bullets, machine-gun fire, or claw wounds from passing vultures. As he is, however, made of sterner stuff, he can take several wounds before losing a life. Frequently the predator's gunsight tracks in on Dutch as he runs through the jungle, and a life is lost if it catches up with him. In the final two levels the predator itself joins in the action, using all of its skills to try and kill Dutch. The whole mission is played against the clock - a timer attached to a nuclear device primed to explode. As is often the case with film tie-ins, the computer version is better appreciated after seeing the film - the instructions do not go into much detail about the game's objectives, so if you have not seen the film first, you may find some of it bewildering. Though we have seen game scenarios like this one done in countless forms before, from the opening sequence onwards - as Earth looms into view - the game is very professional looking, and, depending on which format you are playing, can be effectively atmospheric. It is only the limited gameplay of each level that makes Predator something of a let down, although despite this, it manages to be a very enjoyable shoot-'em-up.

**SPECTRUM 48/128**

Cassette: £9.99

It's such a pity that much of the film's atmosphere isn't given proper justice in the green and black scrolling levels of the Spectrum. The background scenes of jungle foliage look very impressive, but they tend to obscure soldiers, vultures and bullets moving around the screen, spoiling playability. Arnie himself is neatly animated, strides along purposefully and really looks as though he's firing a powerful gun, but the preditory alien looks decidedly average for such an awesome beast. Don't worry too much about the multi-loads as they are only about 30 seconds long.

**OVERALL 70%**

**COMMODORE 64/128**

Cassette: £9.99

Diskette: £14.99

Colour and animation really come into their own on the Commodore version. Jungle details are superb and the Arnie character works particularly well, right down to changing facial expression. Colour is used well, not only to convey atmosphere, but practically too when you are targetted by the alien. Sound FX add to the whole with twittering birds in the background and a suitable gurgling noise as the alien in hiding watches you. Best of the three versions, Predator is a creditable film licence, and an interesting reworking of the scrolling shoot-'em-up.

**OVERALL 84%**

**AMSTRAD CPC**

Cassette: £9.99

Diskette: £14.99

Colour has been put to good use in Predator. The dark browns and greens work well to recreate the film's atmosphere effectively. The scrolling is a little rough around the edges and the background graphics, (like the Spectrum version), tend to obscure enemy bullets and the alien gunsight, but the game itself is polished in the way it is put together. Surprisingly, sound FX do not play a prominent part, they are restricted to gun fire, the approach of the alien's gunsight and the infrequent cry of vultures.

**OVERALL 76%**

... from the opening sequence, the game is professional and atmospheric.
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HOW THE CHAMPIONSHIP WILL RUN

Six towns throughout the UK have been chosen for the regional heats, so there should be a venue not too far from you (see the separate list). The National Association of Boys' Clubs is already running a qualifying competition among its own membership, and they will be supplying three Spectrum and three Commodore entrants to each of the regional heats. We will be selecting a further 27 Spectrum and 27 Commodore entrants, from the forms you send in, to attend each of the regional heats. This means that in the first round a total of 360 contestants will fight to go through to the semi-finals. The five best high scorers in each format per regional heat will qualify for the semi-finals, making a total of 60 contestants. And from there, the three top scorers in each format will go through to the prestigious finals to be held at the Earls Court Personal Computer Show.

THE PRIZES

Apart from the thrill of displaying your joystick prowess to the world at large, there are some exciting prizes and mementoes to be won. Every qualified entrant will receive a specially designed certificate scroll to prove that they are at least considered among the 360 best arcade games players in the country. Special medals have been struck bearing the National Computer Games Championship logo on one side and the Boys' Club logo and year on the reverse; the 60 semi-finalists will each receive a bronze version of the medallion, while those who qualify for the finals will receive a silver medal. For the two outright winners, one on the Spectrum and one on the Commodore, there will be gold medals mounted in wooden display plaques.

US Gold are providing a mixture of hardware and software prizes for both winners to the value of £1,000, with valuable runner-up prizes for other finalists. On top of that, there will be free software and other gifts for finalists and semi-finalists and the chance to meet several famous personalities who will be attending the events. But perhaps the most thrilling aspect will be the chance to prove yourself the very best British computer games player in front of the vast audience attending the Personal Computer Show. And of course you will be featured in Newsfield's magazines as such.

COMPETITION RULES, ENTRY DETAILS AND VENUE DATES

The six regional heats, each comprising 30 Spectrum and 30 Commodore contestants drawn from the National Association of Boys' Clubs (three per machine) and from Newsfield magazines' entry forms will take place in the following towns:

May 14 - Birmingham
May 21 - Gloucester
May 28 - Belfast
June 4 - Edinburgh
June 11 - Leeds
June 18 - London

All days are Saturdays. Heats will be held in the mornings. The towns listed are correct at time of going to press, but the organisers reserve the right to make last-minute alterations. Qualifying entrants will be informed of necessary attendance details in good time.
The semi-finals will be held in Leeds on August 16, and in London on August 18; finals at the Personal Computer Show over the three public days, September 16-18.

Friends and relatives wishing to attend the first round and semi-finals will be welcome, but the NABC will be making a very modest entry charge to non-contestants. Readers wishing to attend will also be welcome — details will be published in future issues, or you can ring the organisers' office for details no sooner than one week before these dates.

If you wish to put your name forward to qualify for Britain's first National Computer Games Championship, fill out the form as soon as possible and send it to the listed address. The high scores you give will be checked by experts both at Newsfield and at US Gold. Entrants under 18 must ensure their form is countersigned by a parent or legal guardian. All qualifying entrants must be prepared to attend the venues they select on the due dates. You may select to enter at any one of the above listed venues. The organisers will accept no claims for travel or subsistence expenses for contestants in the regional heats. All contestants qualifying for the semi-finals can claim up to a maximum of £10 for travelling expenses and will receive free software from US Gold. Finalists will be given a free weekend at the Personal Computer Show in London. During contests, the decision of the appointed judges and stewards will be final and no correspondence concerning administration can be entered into.

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NATIONAL COMPUTER GAMES CHAMPIONSHIP ENTRY FORM

Please write clearly, using block capitals.

I wish to put my name forward to qualify as a competitor. If selected to compete, I agree to abide by the championship regulations.

Name
Address
Postcode
Telephone

Please tick the appropriate box:

[ ] I wish to compete on the Spectrum: □
[ ] I wish to compete on the Commodore: □
[ ] I am aged 18 or over: □
[ ] I am aged under 18: □ If you are under 18, your parent or legal guardian must sign here and print their name below:

Parent's Name

[ ] Please tick the regional heat venue you would like to attend
[ ] Birmingham
[ ] Gloucester
[ ] Belfast
[ ] Edinburgh
[ ] Leeds
[ ] London

In order to help us determine whether you should qualify to enter, please give your high scores on two of the following five US Gold Games:

OUTRUN high score is: ........................................
INDIANA JONES high score is: ........................................
720° high score is: ........................................
GAUNTLET II high score is: ........................................
RYGAR high score is: ........................................

And your best score on two of your favourite arcade coin-op machines:

1 Coin-op name is: ........................................ high score is ........................................
2 Coin-op name is: ........................................ high score is ........................................

Complete the form and send it to THE ORGANISER, NATIONAL COMPUTER GAMES CHAMPIONSHIP, NEWSFIELD LIMITED, PO BOX 20, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB. Successful applicants will be contacted in plenty of time. Please do not ring or write to ask, it only blocks up the phone lines! And good luck!
INFORMATION DESK

Information Desk is a new monthly column devoted to answering your queries concerning the world of computers and electronic entertainment. We will do our best to answer your questions, but if we can't (even with the aid of oracles) we will put the question to you, the readers.

First off, M Westwood of Barnsley, South Yorkshire, is enquiring about Nintendo's new machine, the PC Engine (as featured in the extensive Ultimate/Rare Interview in TGM004).

1. Is the PC Engine an entirely new machine or a hardware add-on/extra for the existing Nintendo range?

The machine is a complete system in itself and is fully compatible with all existing Nintendo cartridge software.

2. How does it compare with the ST or Amiga? Is it worth waiting for the PC Engine?

From what we already know, the machine represents a considerable advance over the existing UK Nintendo system and, like most consoles, would probably be best suited as a complementary system to a home computer (whether Amiga or ST). As to whether it's worth waiting for, it's too early to say for definite as the machine might not be released at all in the UK (or Europe for that matter).

Moving on, Commodore 64 owner and potential Amiga purchaser, Mark Healy of Enfield, Middlesex, has written asking about Amiga monitors, the Xerox 4020 printer and a Panasonic video camera.

1. As I need very clear output, which monitor would be my best choice out of the Commodore 1801, the new 1684 or one from the Philips range?

Phillips are particularly good at producing high quality monitors at reasonable prices and the 8833/8852 series monitors are worth a look. If however, you've got a little extra cash then consider the 1804 or the Amiga 1901C; dedicated monitors are safe bets and save a lot on time and installation. Incidentally, THE GAMES MACHINE's monitor is the standard Amiga 1801, so take a look at the Amiga screen shots in this issue if you want to judge for yourself.

2. Can the Xerox 4020 Colour Printer (or another of equal quality) be printed to directly within software?

Afraid we can't help you there Mark, but most art packages and word processors have printer drivers which can be redefined and customised to suit the user, so you shouldn't have a problem with the Xerox. Perhaps an Amiga/Xerox owning reader out there can help.

3. Where can I obtain a Panasonic WV-1410 b/w video camera?

Panasonic WV-1410 black and white video camera from, and what price would it be?

Your local dealers may be able to help you Mark. In the Middlesex area, try Andromeda at 34 Rockingham Rd, Uxbridge. Alternatively get in touch with Shorrock's Security at Unit 2F, Godington Way Industrial Estate, Ashford (0233-22466), otherwise contact Panasonic themselves at Panasonic (UK), 280-290 Bath Road, Slough, Berkshire, SL1 (UK), (0753-73181). The camera itself is priced at a modest £179.00.

The final letter in this month's Information Desk comes from Stephen Brook of Yeovil, Somerset, whose father has just bought an Amstrad PCW 9512.

1. I'm particularly interested in simulations of aircraft and helicopters; could you please tell me if any are available for the 9512?

As far as we know, Tomahawk by Digital Integration priced at £19.95 is the only simulator on the PCW to date, with nothing else in the pipeline. Unfortunately, MicroProse, one of the leading software companies producing simulations, have no plans to produce software for the PCW series. Contact Digital Integration on 0276-684959 or write to them at: Watchmoor Trade Centre, Watchmoor Road, Camberley, Surrey, GU15 3AJ.

2. Could I use disk software from the Amstrad CPC or other PCW's?

Sorry Stephen, but CPC software won't run on the PCW, period. You shouldn't have any problems with software from other PCW machines though. Unless any PCW owning readers know different!

And that's it for this first appearance of The Information Desk. The Desk is open for business every month so if you've got any sensible answers to questions, hints, tips and cheats for the latest computer games or any questions, suggestions, grievances, general queries about computers and electronic entertainment, drop us a line at INFORMATION DESK, THE GAMES MACHINE, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire, SY8 1DD. On-line readers can MBX us by using our I-D (TGM).
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• “For my money this is not just as playable as the coin-op it is in fact much more playable” COMMODORE USER
• “Fans of the arcade original and novices alike should love this playable and addictive game – one of the most original to emerge this year” GAMES MACHINE
• “U.S. Gold has set a superb standard” CRASH
• “720” is the epitome of a classic. It’s got every element of a great game” SINCLAIR USER
• “Did we flip over it? You bet!” SINCLAIR USER (Nominated a Sinclair User Classic)
• “Virtually flawless arcade game. Addictive smooth and slick, easily U.S. Gold’s finest hour. Don’t miss this one” SINCLAIR USER (Nominated a Sinclair User Classic)

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THE GAMES MACHINE T-SHIRT SUBSCRIPTION OFFER, THE GAMES MACHINE, PO BOX 20, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB
Authors of the very playable King's Quest series, Al Lowe and Mark Crowe, have once again joined forces to produce another 3-D animated adventure for your delight and delectation. Leisure Suit Larry In The Land Of The Lounge Lizards is the latest offering from Sierra On-Line Inc. Larry is a jerk! The wrong side of 40, he has realised life is passing him by. A final walk on the wild side is what he needs before it is too late. His existence to date has hardly been a flurry of excitement, living with his mother until the age of 38, when she threw him out.

You begin your quest outside Lefty's bar. Armed with a watch, money, breath spray and dressed in his highest quality, 100% man-made, permanent-press suit. There is a Taxi rank in this location, although a trip into the bar is required before Larry can hit the outside the toilet may not look like it, but he needs you to get him a drink. Fulfilling this dubiously friendly act will reward you with a TV remote control unit. This may seem obscure at first (even remote?), but who knows what one may find in the pockets of a drunk, and the unit's function is obvious and soon required.

You can sit down at the bar and get blown out of your brain if that's what takes your fancy, although this will only hamper game progress and, as in real life, is pointless (but sometimes a necessity). You can play the jukebox, talk to the other people in the bar and even chat up the one and only girl there. However, the main purpose inside Lefty's is to find the password to the locked door, get past the pimp and, refraining from indulging in what might (to some) come naturally with the whores - VD is rife in these circles - steal her chocolates and escape.

Suitably armed with all the cliché gifts that girls are supposed to like; chocolates, flowers and a ring, you may now head for the Casino to try and make your fortune (girls like money too!). The gambling - be it Blackjack or the slot machines - is very realistic... I kept losing. Three of THE GAMES MACHINE reviewers were seated around the Atari ST for the duration of an afternoon, biting our nails in trepidation as the dealer dealt hands designed to keep us on the edge of our seats. Thankfully the gambling elements in Leisure Suit Larry by no means detract from the adventure, they simply add to an already very enjoyable game.

Control of Larry's movement as he jerks his way around the many screens is via keyboard, joystick or mouse, with actions such as EXAMINE and TALK TO carried out using text input. The parser is more than adequate to deal with almost anything logical you may wish to input. The graphics themselves are fairly blocky although colourful and often amusing. The sound is basic to such an extent that I wonder why they bothered at all. and gamespeed can be a little slow, accessing the disk for each location visited. However, some of the situations Larry finds himself in (his Disco dancing makes John Travolta look like Patrick Moore doing the Mashed Potato) and the interaction with other characters is often hilarious. The quest to lose Larry's virginity, without catching anything unspeakable, is an entertaining one, wholesome and sexist, but nonetheless a jolly good romp (can I say that?).

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CRASH GARRETT
Infogrames
ATARI ST Diskette: £19.95
PC Diskette: £19.95
AMIGA Diskette: £19.95

The year is 1938 and Crash Garrett, once a full time adventurer and ace pilot, has decided to settle down to a quieter life-style. No more derring-do escapades for Crash, he has found the girl of his dreams and is putting the days of bootlegging, gun running and gang wars behind him; Crash Garrett has gone legit. The events in Crash Garrett the adventure take place over a two-day period in the year 1938, Garrett is taking Cynthia Sleeze, the famous gossip columnist, to the town of Lone Pine, where she hopes to interview top film star Shucks Shottaway. The game opens onboard Crash’s plane in mid-flight; Cynthia looks more than a little worried . . .

Upon loading the first disk you are presented with a very scratchy, none-too-musical rendition of what I presume to be a typical 1930s tune. Thankfully this theme can be avoided with the stab of a key and the game proper begun.

The screen layout of five windows and all graphics therein are effectively implemented. The primary window is taken up with Crash’s immediate area or the current event taking place, and any characters present are depicted graphically, complete with fitting expressions and speech bubbles. Top left of the screen is a window to show a reservoir of super power available to Crash, which asset gives our hero extra strength – however, the doses are limited to only eight per game and must be used wisely. To the right of this is the location/ offers no reason why. The cracked stone vase on the well lid is particularly annoying. It rests on the metal lid covering the well just waiting to be manoeuvred, but can you get it, examine it, move it, look inside it or anything else remotely logical? No you can’t! The vase just sits there being infuriating, with no reason given as to why interaction with it seems impossible. This predicament arises with many situations and objects throughout the game and eventually becomes tiresome. Crash Garrett is an adventure which has a tendency to play with itself. The story unfolds without much interaction from you until the going gets tough. As soon as Crash gets into a pickle the game works and therefore leaves you floundering as you struggle to understand the adventure’s idiosyncrasies. Many a time I found myself flying off to some airstrip or another due to innocently inputting CLIMB INTO PLANE or GO UP. Many frustrations await the player as the game is unwilling to allow the usual adventure options to be used, and event description in text. The primary window is below this, with the inventory window at the far right. And at the bottom there is a single line for your text input.

LACK OF INTERACTION
Crash Garrett is tough. It comes with a very slim instruction booklet which gives little idea of how the game works and therefore leaves you floundering as you struggle to understand the adventure’s idiosyncrasies. Many a time I found myself flying off to some airstrip or another due to innocently inputting CLIMB INTO PLANE or GO UP. Many frustrations await the player as the game is unwilling to allow the usual adventure options to be used, and event description in text. The primary window is below this, with the inventory window at the far right. And at the bottom there is a single line for your text input.

ATMOSPHERE 58%
INTERACTION 47%
OVERALL 52%

BEYOND ZORK
Infocom
ATARI ST Diskette: £29.99
AMIGA Diskette: £29.99
PC Diskette: £29.99
COMMODORE 128 Diskette: £24.99

The success of the Zork Trilogy is renowned throughout the adventuring world; selling nearly three million copies, it is one of the most popular entertainment software products ever. Infocom has decided to cash in on this success and recreate the Zorkian universe, and in so doing make it 'bigger and better' than before. Beyond Zork combines the puzzles and prose that have become Infocom’s trademark with the combat and character building elements of role-playing games.

It is a dark time for the Kingdom of Quendor, the Wizards have all disappeared. The Enchanters' Guild is in ruins and the villages lie abandoned. The streets and wastelands of Quendor are haunted by vicious monsters and, because you have loaded up the
game, it is up to you to unravel the meaning behind these ominous events.

The first surprise in Beyond Zork is the existence of a very attractive title screen; unusual for Infocom, it depicts the sun rising behind a brick monument of the name Zork. Once loaded there are many more changes to familiarise yourself with. The screen display is default to show a window, top left, which either offers location descriptions, character's possessions or attributes. Right of this is an updating-map feature showing the immediate surrounding area plus exits from the current location. The bottom of the screen allows for text input and event descriptions. Should this new format not appeal to hardened Infocom fans, the 'old ways' can be called up by inputting the Mode command to change the screen to Infocom's more standard game.

In fact Beyond Zork includes a number of useful commands; Colour changes on-screen colours; Name allows you to rename objects and characters; Undo takes you one step back should a wrong move be made (not on the Commodore 128 though). The power of the Infocom parser does not suffer from these extras, and the text descriptions are as screen-filling as ever.

ROLE'S CHOICE

Once you are used to the strange new layout, the enhancements therein actually add to the gameplay. You may either play a preset character or create one of your own and decide the characteristics - strength, luck etc - yourself. The scenario is a little strange - subtitled The Coconut Of Quendor - and is full of unusual creatures all of whom seem bent on your destruction.

Movement around the land is fairly easy at first, although there are many deaths awaiting the unwary adventurer. One small drawback: the fact that you have a table of characteristics requiring constant vigilance keeps pulling you back from this land of magic and mystery to something more akin to the real world. It is hard to stay mentally in Quendor when a bar chart has to be carefully monitored to ensure survival. Having said that, I like this new style of game, the changes made to the Infocom format are neat and work very well. The inclusion of the role-playing elements add just a little more spice to the standard text adventure, and with that extra sprinkling of realism, Infocom are really cooking.

ATMOSPHERE 85%
INTERACTION 89%
OVERALL 87%

**WOLFMAN**

**CRL**

**COMMODORE 64 Cassette: £9.95**

**Diskette: £14.95**

Rob Pike has been one of my favourite adventure authors since the days of Pilgrim, and as I find lycanthropy a most interesting subject, you may well imagine the slavering interest with which I loaded his latest offering. This adventure comes in three parts, during which you get the chance to play both the haunted anti-hero of the title and the light of his life, the beautiful Nadia.

Part one concerns the dawning realisation by the main character that he is a werewolf. He wakes one morning with blood on his hands, ripped clothes and memories of a horrific night of mayhem and death. As the full horror of his situation becomes apparent, the man decides to fight his affliction. He sets off on a trail of learning, during which he must resist the awful temptations of the flesh he encounters, or be forever cursed and lose the love of Nadia.

Part two, set in the mountains, is interesting in that you get to play the part of Nadia as she falls for the Wolfman and takes him home to... er... make friends. She knows his dread secret and must be very careful not to allow the beast within the man to emerge... if you see what I mean. Unfortunately Nadia is kidnapped by wolf hunters and, obsessed with revenge, the Wolfman vows to find and rescue the girl.

Part three is entitled The Monastery Of Fi Shan and concerns the tracking of the hunters and the ultimate discovery of a monastery which may hold the answer to the Werewolf's curse.

It's okay if they're still, but if they move, you have got to be over 18 to see them - a yukky screen shot of someone who met the Wolfman - Commodore 64 screen
DAMBUSTERS — CBM 64 • AMSTRAD CPC • SPECTRUM
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AND WIN BOB WAKELIN’S ORIGINAL FIREFLY ARTWORK

FIREFLY is a shining example of the power of 8-bit to run top-notch games. Special FX/Ocean are the combined forces behind Firefly, the masterpiece of arcade mayhem that scored a cool 90% for both the Spectrum and Commodore 64 versions in this issue of THE GAMES MACHINE. And not only does it have ‘mazing gameplay, but the packaging artwork is another piece of fantasy illustration by Ocean’s most famous artist, Bob Wakelin.

Bob has been painting illustrations for Ocean’s packaging and advertising ever since the company’s birth, and although he does lots of other work as well, he has managed to illustrate nearly every game Ocean has published. Now here’s your chance to own an ORIGINAL Wakelin, and start that collection which one day you will leave to the nation in your bequest. If you are the winner of this competition, the painting he did for Firefly, signed by Bob and the Special FX team, is yours, plus a copy of the game. But if you are a touch less lucky, there’s still a chance to win a copy of Firefly for either the Spectrum or Commodore, because we’ve got 25 to give away.

To be in with a chance you’re going to have to cast your eyes back over the review. Below are seven lines taken from the review with words missing (? means one letter). Find the missing words and fit them into the puzzle around the letters of FIREFLY. First correct entry out of the bag wins the painting. Solve the puzzle, fill out the coupon and send it to: FIREFLY COMPETITION, THE GAMES MACHINE, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB to arrive no later than April 21. Our usual competition rules apply – see the masthead for details.

- It’s not unreasonably ????????? once the...
- pressing fire on a thumbs up...
- ?????? the segment...
- is restored and ????? supply is increased...
- fish cause raindrops to ?????
- ??????? together...
- destroying the ????????? generators...
- means another four ????? have to be collected...

Name
Address
Computer
Postcode
Adding to the fun and excitement of Arkanoid... All new features include unit choices to vastly increase the screen options, many extra VALIS effects, multiple shots and a secret additional alien to contend with. This adds up to the most thrilling reaction game since ARKANOID but with so many improvements you just won't be able to stop playing.
GOING OVERBOARD

Boardgames go electronic with Tankattack from IQ Games - a strategic board game played with a Commodore 64/128 keeping the running totals. And for espionage lovers, there's Spycatcher.

GAMES NEWS

Rolling a six to start, new boardgames company Henry Games, launches with four original products all designed, they say, to be efficient, long-lasting and with a high level of presentation.

The first, Vultures, dumps participants in a desert landscape playing vultures who roam the barren wastes in the hope of scavenging a few morsels of food. Catching prey and returning with it to the nest without being attacked is the objective. There's a balance to be maintained between keeping up the bird's strength but not overfeeding your pet or it becomes too fat to fly. Vultures comes in a chic box which wouldn't look out of place on anyone's side board. We'll be taking a close look at Vultures next month.

Megalomania is a (true to life?) simulation of politics. Honesty is never the best policy for a candidate raising campaign money to help win an election; from striking deals to bribing newspaper editors, dishonest tactics are the order of the game, and if the state is parlous, you can even hire assassins. As Henry Games says, Megalomania will tell you who your friends were.

The third and fourth titles are Ascent - a sort of Chamonix Challenge (TGM003) on a board - and Laterlal Thinking, a cerebral spree to test your powers of strategy in the same way chess does, but with fewer pieces and simpler rules.

Paradigm (pronounced 'paradime') have run into a bit of trouble with their celebrity gossip game Who's Had Who. The Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) has refused TV advertising because of the game's suggestion of sexual promiscuity. Paradigm reckon they lost £500,000 worth of sales through not being allowed to advertise. The game is due to be repackaged and renamed Celebrity Gossip - The Who's Had Who Of Games. It's good too, well worth checking out next time you see it in the shops.

Waddingtons obviously think they have a winner on their hands with their new release Cops'n'Robbers. With the aid of cards, dice and roadblocks, all but one of the players begin to track down the robber Slippery Sid. The other gets to play Sid... More news on that one soon.

And while on the subject of solving mysteries and tracking down crimes, MB Games have Mysteries Of Old Peking on the go. The player becomes a celebrated detective from Beijing (to give the city its modern name). You can play several in fact, all with authentically Chinese names: Mr Wotsup, Mr Cloo, Mr Kwik or Mr Smartee - roll over Charlie Chan...

Crimes to be solved are selected from a casebook, the idea, of course, is to discover the culprit's identity. For those possessing an inquisitive mind, good powers of detection and a decent Chinese accent, Mysteries Of Old Peking might be light up your hon'orable street.

From Eire-based IQ Games, another bid for elusive success in placing a computer strategy game on a board, this time with the Commodore 64/128. Players actually move their pieces - an assortment of tanks and armoured cars - on the board, rather than watching them being moved on the screen. The computer keeps track of scores and military equipment.

The board is divided up into four fictitious countries, each with a capital city, military headquarters and repair depots. The players divide control of the countries equally amongst themselves. The objective is for one country to overthrow all others by gaining possession of the other's headquarters.

Bulletins are provided through the computer, informing players of their success or failure in moves, giving strategic reports (which player controls which country), political news and weather reports - the important because conditions influences the day's fighting. Despite these functions, the computer acts as little more than dice; determining how far players can move across the board towards the opposition's HQ.

The vehicles vary in power: armoured cars are either light or medium in power and the tanks are either light, medium or a massive battle tank. The computer program takes these facts into consideration when deciding the outcome of a battle between two opposing forces. Battles are fought when...
two players face each other no less than four squares apart. Losers remove their vehicle from play while the winner can continue his journey.

And so the game progresses... until one player has wiped out the opposition and taken control of all HQ's.

THE VERDICT

Unfortunately Tankattack doesn't succeed in grabbing the players' attention as most moves are slow and the computer program wastes a lot of time in relaying unimportant information. The battles, when two vehicles launch an attack, are a bit of a farce - it is not unusual for a light car to win over a main battle tank. The game may have some appeal for ardent strategists but for the everyday board games player, Tankattack hails little long term enjoyment - which is a pity as the game's concept is good. It seems we must still wait for the first ideal computer-moderated boardgame.

THE BOARDGAME!

SPYCATCHER

Paul Lamond Games
2-6 players, £11.95

Spycatcher - the plot has nothing to do with the famous Peter Wright novel - originally to be published by Playtwice Games, has now been handed over to Paul Lamond for release.

The objective - which, however, takes as its theme, the kind of problems an author following in Peter Wright's steps might encounter - is to move around the board visiting four sections to attempt to get your risque book published. The sections comprise: Press, Government, The Courts and your Publisher; from all of whom you attempt to win a Permission Card. To gain the cards, players collect a series of Influence Cards, all of which have a number on them ranging from 1 to 12. The idea is to collect a run of three cards (eg 6, 7 or 8 10, 11), and then when you land on a solid colour segment you can apply for permission.

If the Permission Card allows you to publish, you keep it; get a card from each section and you have won the game. When applying for permission you may be challenged by another player who also has a run of cards of the same suit but with higher numbers, if the challenge is successful, they keep the permission card and you lose out.

It's quite a palava to go through to get your card but there are a few lucky squares which give free Permission Cards. The board tells you to 'Give a permission card to the player of your choice', we usually gave it to ourselves. Well, there's nothing in the rules to say you can't...

To publish or not to publish...

WIN SPYCATCHER - THE BOARDGAME!

Spycatcher - the boardgame has been doing the rounds of the office, and preventing anyone from the serious business of playing computer games! No wonder, because we have no less than 20 boxed games to give away in this special competition.

Spycatcher is only just now appearing in the shops as you read this, so if you want to get your hands on it hot from the press, all you have to do to be in with a chance is answer the four questions below. They are related to the four sections from which Permission Cards have to be gained - the courts, the government, press and your publisher. Write your answers on a postcard or the back of a sealed envelope, together with your name and address, and send it to: SPYCATCHER COMP, THE GAMES MACHINE, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY9 1DB and make sure your entries arrive by April 21. First 20 correct answers win. Make sure you abide by the competition rules listed in the masthead or we'll have you slammed up against MI5 for interrogation - or even worse, make you publish your book in Australia!

1. Which is the highest court in Britain?
2. Within the government who is the Education Minister?
3. Historically, Caxton is well-known as a printer of books, but who is credited with inventing the printing press?
4. Which publishing group does Rupert Murdoch own?

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- Ferrari Formula One (Electronic Arts)
- Xenon (Melbourne House)
- Beyond Zork (Infocom)
- Cybernoid (Hewson)
- Dungeon Master (Mirrorsoft)
- Task III (Databyte)
- Predator (Activision)
- Oids (Mirrorsoft)
- The King of Chicago (Mirrorsoft)
- Revenge of Doh (Imagine)
- Magnetron (Firebird)
- Get Dexter II (Infogrames)
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- XR35 Fighter Mission (Anco)
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**THE MEGA CHOICE:**
Apart from our highly recommended games list, you can order any game released by the major software houses to date on any of the following formats:
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RULE FOUR: the adverts must include the words, 'ultimate', 'unique' and 'batteries not included'.

Once you have flogged boxfuls of expensive electronic codswallop to your Yuppies, you can then flog them even more boxfuls of even more...
expensive electronic codswallop, just by reminding them that there are wicked people about who want to steal their codswallop, and making your Yuppies purchase technosecurity devices. Easy isn’t it. First you sell something useless for the sole purpose of showing it off, then you sell the same idiot something equally useless to protect it.

It now gives me the greatest pleasure to field test some of the latest, ultimate, unique, batteries not included products for all you discerning readers of THE GAMES MACHINE. Hold on to your credit cards, here we go.

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Yes folks, for only 50 quid you can strap this ‘intricate micro-electronic sound wave detector’ to your arm or leg, and if you should happen to snore during your slumbers, Snore Stop will deliver you an electric shock as a ‘warning to your body to mend its noisy ways.’ A must for all South African and ex-War Torturers, who will be able to strap them to your vital parts and fall asleep on the job.

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**MICROVAC £7.95**

Now here’s a supreme example of codswallop, the Microvac ‘is the only way to clean computers, it will vacuum or blow ... batteries not included.’ Now why didn’t I think of that before. All these years and I’ve been cleaning the dirt between my input keys by placing my head just above the keyboard, inhaling and, er, blowing.

**ONE TOUCH ELECTROLYSIS KIT £29.95**

A perfect example of the Yuppe Toy. It works like this; you shell out just under 30 quid, and receive a ‘breakthrough made possible by microchip technology’. What does it do? Well, I’m not quite sure to be honest. Apparently you pop it on some ‘unwanted hair’, whatever that may be, and One Touch removes it. And to think, underprivileged folk used to spend 50 pee on a pair of tweezers.

**THE SONIC TAPE £229.95**

Now there may be some of you who think that £229.95 is a bit steep for a tape measure without any tape. But Sonic Tape is a lovely little jobbie for any Yuppe with more money than sense. It sends out an ultrasonic beam, bounces it off the wall, and tells you how far away the wall is. And it is accurate to within a staggering plus or minus 20 millimetres. Imagine the scene, you’ve measured up your kitchen, the MFI units have been unpacked, and the fridge-freezer is two centimetres too big to fit in the corner. ‘Oh dearie me. Our Sonic Tape seems to have plussed or minussed a bit. Still, never mind, the fridge can go in the toilet.’

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What an amazing advance in time management this is. Apart from the wrist watch you also get a blue strap that ‘looks like genuine lizard skin’ which must be news to all the green and brown lizards in the world. During the daytime, the face of a smiling sun appears, whereas at night... yes, you guessed it, the face of a smiling moon appears. Now the Yuppies do not have to remember if they’ve just eaten breakfast or supper, they can look at their watch to remind them. And to think, I always used to look out of the window before I knew if it was day or night.

**THE FRANKLIN SPELLING ACE COMPUTER £59.95**

Yet another ‘invaluable electronic product, batteries not included’, the Spelling Ace measures six inches by four, and claims to be able to help you spell ‘anything from the most obscure words to the most common’. The only problem is that it contains none of my favourite Anglo-Saxon expletives, copped up most plurals with irregular endings, none can handle a single proper noun or place name that I needed. In fact it was about as useful as a knitted condom. I did find an alternative gadget that performed excellently, however. It contained twice as many words, gave me their pronunciation and origin, had all the rude words, abbreviations, proper names and foreign phraseology that I wanted, and came in a package measuring five inches by seven inches. What’s more it only cost £4.75. It’s called the Concise Oxford Dictionary.

**TS06E SATELLITE RECEIVER £17.95**

A must for all self-respecting Yuppies. A bright yellow plastic satellite receiving dish, batteries not included, which can’t receive satellite television signals. But what the hell, the neighbours will never know. ‘Oh yah, Jocasta and Toby were watching the Serbo-Croatian News only this morning, fascinating, and so good for their education doncha kneau.’ Coming soon, fake yellow plastic cordless telephones, fake yellow plastic bags of cocaine and fake yellow plastic Filipinos maids.

**THE WOOLIE SHAVINGer £7.95**

No, no, it’s not an item of sexual equipment with a Belfast accent, the Woolie Shaver ‘makes sweaters look new’ by gently shaving off those wee bits of fluffy wool which grow overnight when you put your jumper to bed. And to think, mankind used to use primitive fingers and thumbs to do the job. (Batteries not included, by the way).

**BLUEBIRD ENVIRONMENTAL VX £59.95**

My all-time personal favourite Yuppe toy, taking codswallop to new heights of gullibility. Now get this, a sort of scratch ‘n’ sniff gismo in a revolting plastic box with fake woodgrain all over it, and a selector knob on the front. The idea is that you plonk it on top of your television or video, and dial various smells to accompany the picture. Would I lie to you? Smellyvision has arrived, offering the following choice:

- PINEWOOD (a bit like the stuff you pour down the bog when it gets blocked.)
- SPRING (a bit like ‘pine’)
- HOME (I think it’s meant to be baking bread, but it’s more like dead fish-batter)
- SEA (kind of exactly like the contents of the batter)
- ACTION (smells like burning rubber to me, I wonder what action they mean)
to throw up until halfway through.

during these invaluable aids to modern living, Pinewood. I thought I could smell a £19.95 THE FALSE HOUSE ALARM

friends, read on. 

how are they going to protect them from getting nicked? Read on, my whom's got a false car.

Now that the Yuppies have got all £19.95 THE FALSE CAR ALARM, for anyone on it (batteries not included). There's also a FALSE CAR ALARM, for anyone who's got a false car.

I tried out the Bluebird Envirovision MUSK (sweet) HEAVEN (sweet sweat) LATE-NITE (very sweet sweat) and they give you a little tin box painted red, with a tiny light bulb stuck on it (batteries not included). There's also a FALSE CAR ALARM, for anyone who's got a false car.

The chances of sizzling the nuts off a couple of attackers wading into a lone victim are by no means 'guaranteed the ultimate in personal protection'. Just you try counting five seconds off, and picture the situation. And if you were wondering, batteries are not included.

Yah, well, I hope you've enjoyed my little survey, dahlings. Mind how you geau. okay yah. Must be off and buy some batteries before Harrods claususes. Byeee!

SAMCO SONIC REPPELLER £24.95

This one actually runs off the mains, so batteries are not included, and emits ultrasonic waves that are believed to affect the nervous system of pests'. Well, I don't know what I did wrong, but I stuck it in the same room as a load of T'Pau records, and they're still there.

STOP-THEFT INTRUDER STICKERS £4.95

A set of little red stickers with a picture of a man in a hat on them acting suspiciously, and the words 'Alarm Fitted' printed on the four very little stickers, and 'Neighbourhood Watch' printed on the two quite little stickers. In this way you can let all potential burglars know that not only have you got something worth nicking, but you can't afford a real burglar alarm.

THE PERSONAL DEFENDER £39.95

THE EQUALISER £49.99

THE PROTECTOR £49.95

THE PERSONAL PROTECTOR £39.99

‘When the chips are down, beat the attacker with Microchips!' They're legal, they're probably lethal and they’re the very latest thing for Yuppies frightened of the dark. Next time you are mugged, raped, kidnapped, or simply beaten to a pulp for the hell of it, don’t worry, here's what you do.

Ask the attacker if he would kindly wait a moment, and allow you to whip out your Personal Defender-Equaliser-Protector. Next invite him to stand still for five seconds so that you can switch your hand-held gadget on, and apply it to the person. OK? Good, now deliver 50,000 volts up the bastard and watch his central nervous system fry. There are only a few minor things that worry me about these Stun Guns. First, they're the very latest thing for Yuppies. Secondly, if kids get their hands on them they will certainly use them, just 'to see if they work', on each other, dogs, babies, or little old ladies coming out of Post Offices. Thirdly, they offer a totally unrealistic sense of security to frightened people. The chances of sizzling the nuts off a couple of attackers wading into a lone victim are by no means 'guaranteed the ultimate in personal protection'. Just you try counting five seconds off, and picture the situation. And if you were wondering, batteries are not included.

IMPORTANT! As we go to press we have heard that Mel's place on Stun Guns requires an update. On February 25 The House Of Lords ruled that Stun Guns such as those featured above should come under the category of firearms. As a result their possession and use is now covered by the provisions of the Firearms Act, and it is illegal to use such a weapon, or carry one without the appropriate licence being first obtained.

Sammo's £39.99 SAMCO SONIC REPPELLER is currently £19.95 and the Equauser £49.99 can be had for £29.95.

When the chips are down, beat the attacker with Microchips! They're legal, they're probably lethal and they’re the very latest thing for Yuppies frightened of the dark. Next time you are mugged, raped, kidnapped, or simply beaten to a pulp for the hell of it, don’t worry, here’s what you do.

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Yah, well, I hope you’ve enjoyed my little survey, dahlings. Mind how you geau, okay yah. Must be off and buy some batteries before Harrods claususes. Byeee!

TGM TX 005: 4-8807/108
FLEXIBLE FIGHTING

The release this month of the scenario pack Griffin Island provides John Woods a welcome excuse to take a look at his favourite FRP system, RuneQuest. And from West End there's an addition to its Star Wars range in the form of a pacy boardgame of spacefighter combat.

RUNEQUEST

RuneQuest - Fantasy Roleplaying Adventure; 96pp Hardback £7.95
Advanced RuneQuest; 160pp Hardback £12.95
RuneQuest Monsters; 112pp Hardback £9.95
RuneQuest Griffin Island; 114pp Hardback £10.99
Role-Playing Rules, Background Book, Scenario Pack

RuneQuest is a fantasy RPG with a complex history. Published in the US by Chaosium (Call Of Cthulu and many other games), it became popular in Britain six years ago when Games Workshop licensed the rules for a UK printing. When Chaosium sold the rights to Avalon Hill, who completely rewrote and repackaged the system, the UK printing disappeared, and for a while only the Avalon Hill US edition was available. Whilst its content was excellent, the price of the imported materials put the game well beyond the reach of most of us, and RuneQuest more or less vanished from the game scene in this country.

But last ye. 3ames Workshop came to the rescue with another licence agreement, opting for a sturdy hardback format rather than the flimsy paperbacks of Avalon Hill's expensive boxed sets, and RuneQuest is once more on the up and up. Clearly the game must have something going for it, for so many different companies to have been involved - what's all the fuss about?

The first popular RPG to escape the Dungeon, RuneQuest opened a whole new world of adventure to its players. Unlike Dungeons And Dragons and other early games, PCs do not have to be drawn from a fixed selection of character types or 'classes'. Instead, every character has a skill rating in every field. Thus a barbarian can learn to pick locks and brew poisons as well as just ride horses and swing a battleaxe, and the lowest clerk or barmain can become skilled at fighting and casting magic, if an adventuring lifestyle should provide opportunities to do so. In exchange for a little extra bookkeeping there is freedom to develop your character to become capable in exactly the fields you wish.

SELECTED DAMAGE

RuneQuest also features a sophisticated combat system. As in other games, a character or monster has a certain number of hit points reflecting its ability to survive wounds or damage, but in RuneQuest individual body locations are kept track of as well as overall damage. So a character might take an arrow in the arm and lose the use of a shield but still be able to wield a broadsword, or a manticore taking a well-placed axe blow to the tail might be rendered unable to use its sting - good news for anyone so unlucky as to be fighting one! This extra detail makes combat much easier to visualise in play, whilst still being relatively quick-moving.

RuneQuest owes its great appeal to an extremely well thought-out and elegant basic game structure. Skills are expressed as a percentage score which the player or referee must roll under on percentile dice for success. A spectacularly low roll means that something wonderful has happened - a so-called critical success - whilst a really awful failure or fumble results from a particularly high score.

This basic system is used to resolve almost everything that can take place in the game, from fighting (using percentages for Shield Parry, Dagger Attack, Dodge and so on) to activities such as swimming, tracking enemies or wild beasts and disarming traps. Adverse circumstances or abnormally difficult situations result in a modification to the dice roll, chosen at the referee's discretion in line with guidelines in the rules. A character's abilities increase with experience in a realistic manner, since after an adventure in which a given skill was successfully used, the player makes a dice roll to try to increase the percentage in the skill.

EFFECTIVE SORCERY

The beauty of this system is that anything can be included in the game in a straightforward and consistent way. Perhaps the best example of this is the use of magic. The rules detail three different types of which the two commonest, sorcery and spirit magic, use the standard skill system, almost without modification. Characters have a percentage chance of success with any spell they know. In the case of spirit magic, least powerful of the three types, this percentage depends solely on the character's innate ability or 'Power'. For more effective sorcery spells - corresponding roughly to the classic wizardry of fantasy literature - a character must learn each spell from scratch, building up its chance of success from a low starting percentage. Other sorcery skills can be combined with the basic spell, allowing sorcerers to modify the effects by, for instance, increasing the duration or range of a spell. Finally there is divine magic, granted by gods to their priests and initiates, which enables some powerful spells to be cast with relative ease. But to use divine magic a character must effectively dedicate his or her life to the service of the chosen deity, and this may be too restrictive for many adventuring types!

The original Avalon Hill version of the current (third) edition of the RuneQuest rules came as an expensive boxed set of five softback rulebooks in two-tone printing. Games Workshop have very wisely decided to rework this into a series of individual booklets, keeping the basic attractive and clear typestyle but livening up the text with a scattering of full-colour illustrations. The first book, RuneQuest Fantasy Roleplaying Adventure, gives all the information about the system that a novice player needs to get started. Character generation, combat and skill rules are all introduced along with the basics of the three magic systems and a selection of the commoner monsters.

Advanced RuneQuest is a larger supplementary volume with information pitched principally at
referees, including further details on magic and additional spells, combat and skill rules covering less common situations, a short introductory scenario and a handy pull-out reference section. Also in this volume are the excellent character background rules, enabling referees to introduce PCs with additional skills learnt from earlier lives in a highly consistent way. Thus a PC who started life as a hunter will be skilled in riding, tracking, spear-throwing and so on. This book also includes notes on converting character statistics from the previous Second Edition rules, the principal changes being the renaming or combining of certain skills.

Finally, RuneQuest Monsters, details 95 creatures of varying degrees of nastiness. Each beast is illustrated, some in full colour, and the description includes not just rules of generating each type of creature but also a ready-to-use example of a typical one, which can help speed play. Not all the creatures are nasty – domestic beasts such as horses are featured too, and there is a large section of humans from all walks of life. This book is probably the poorest value of the three, with the text being thinned out by over-generous illustrations. It is quite possible to get by without it, though – the selection of creatures in the first book is sufficient to get started and to give referees enough examples to invent their own monsters.

**MOUNTAIN AND ISLAND**

Lastly comes the first scenario pack for the new edition, Griffin Island. In its original incarnation of Griffin Mountain, this was widely held as one of the best adventure packs ever for any system, so it is a real pleasure to see it back in print. The change of setting to an island makes it easier to fit the material into an existing campaign, and this is definitely the way to use this pack – it is not ideal forbeginning players or referees: instead of offering prepared adventures for the referee to take players through one step at a time, the book details the geography, human and monster inhabitants, treasures and perils of Griffin Island and leaves the exact use of these details to the referee.

There are statistics for several creatures unique to the island, a selection of wandering groups for players to encounter ranging from the welcome (trader Joh Mith’s caravan) to the deadly (an orc war patrol), full descriptions of the four towns of the island including their rulers and other inhabitants, and details of ten particularly interesting areas, any of which would form a natural base for an evening’s adventuring and some of which, like the dreaded Crypt of Ockless, provide a fearsome challenge for even the toughest of adventuring groups. There is a handy pull-out reference section and an attractive fold-out colour map of the whole island. Those responsible for this reworking have done an excellent job, and players can once again look forward to the perils of the River of Damned, Finathia’s Prison and of course Griffin Mountain itself – tread carefully!

To sum up, Games Workshop have produced a first-rate repackaging of the RuneQuest Third Edition. Anyone who wants an FRP system with both realism and playability, and which can be readily adapted and expanded to fit in with almost any fantasy world, need look no further. Griffin Island is a bargain, a truly first-rate scenario pack for referees who are prepared to put in a little imaginative effort. Dust off those spell foci, polish up the chainmail and keep your shortsword ready – RuneQuest is back with a vengeance, and in what is otherwise a slack time for UK roleplaying let’s hope it is here to stay!
WIN A PERSONAL CD PLAYER AND COPIES OF CAPTAIN BLOOD
MUSIC TO YOUR EARS FROM INFOGRAMES

CAPTAIN BLOOD is the newest space adventure to swim the Channel from French software house Ere Informatique to become available in the UK thanks to Infogrames.

Previewed last month, Captain Blood tells of computer programmer Bob Blood, who was sucked into his own space travel simulation and became the notorious Captain Blood. Blood's objective is to scour the universe searching for five clones of himself, along the way he meets 16 different types of alien life forms, all of whom he can communicate with and occasionally, offer him help with his quest covering 32,000 planets.

The game has only just been translated into English - and we've got copies of it to give away, together with the special first prize of a personal CD player complete with speakers, so you can listen to endless hours of Jean-Michel Jarre - the theme music for Captain Blood is taken from his Zoologik LP. The winner also gets a copy of the game, as do the ten runners up. Don't forget to state if you want an Atari ST, Amiga or a PC version.

If you really want to help Captain Blood on his search, you're going to have to do a bit of searching yourself. Hidden in the words above are the ten words printed here - locate them all, cut out the coupon and send it to SANGUINACIOUS COMP. THE GAMES MACHINE, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB to arrive no later than April 21. and you'll be in with a chance of scooping the special first prize or a CD player. Above by the rules, printed in the masthead or listen to endless hours of Jean-Michel Jarre - the theme music for Captain

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Please tick: □ Amiga □ Atari ST □ PC
The Apache... Fierce and elusive, like its warrior namesake... Capable of defeating enemy tanks, infantry, and hostile aircraft on the modern electronic battlefield.

Gunship's revolutionary 3-D graphics enable you, the pilot, to fly into the world's hottest trouble spots... You'll use an unbelievable array of high tech information and weapon systems, including lasers, video cameras, night viewers, radar warnings, jammers, computers, missiles, rockets, flares and a 30mm cannon! Successful missions will be rewarded with medals and rank promotions.

GUNSHIP is available for the CBM 64/128K, Spectrum and coming soon for IBM PC and Atari ST

The Apache... Fierce and elusive, like its warrior namesake... Capable of defeating enemy tanks, infantry, and hostile aircraft on the modern electronic battlefield.

Gunship's revolutionary 3-D graphics enable you, the pilot, to fly into the world's hottest trouble spots... You'll use an unbelievable array of high tech information and weapon systems, including lasers, video cameras, night viewers, radar warnings, jammers, computers, missiles, rockets, flares and a 30mm cannon! Successful missions will be rewarded with medals and rank promotions.

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G/C/288

MicroProse Ltd, 2 Market Place, Tetbury, Gloucestershire GL8 8DA, UK. Tel: (0666) 54326. Tlx: 43422 MPS/UKG.
OVERTURE AND BEGINNERS PLEASE

Despite what he promised last month, Jon Bates reveals he lied, but claims he was seduced from the purely straight and tapeless path by some 16-bit utilities which have drummed up his enthusiasm.

The grand design for this month was two superb utilities for the ST and a guide to terminology and music, but having spent the last two months looking at MIDI software for the Atari ST range, we have a complete change of plan. Two drum programs and three music utilities for the Amiga (and a few for the ST) that are self-contained, don't require any additional keyboards, modules or bolt-ons, and are all suitable for absolute musical dimbos (this word is not in our dictionary and we take no responsibility for it - Ed). Some of the software has been available for some months, some has been whizzed to us extra quick for immediate appraisal.

The loading screen is really first rate with a good, sampled, eight-bar, repeating tune. Hey, I thought, if this tune is using the drum program we really do have something special. Now unless I am mistaken, or the loading tune was subject to some extreme processing in the drum department when recorded originally, they are not the same. The loading screen tune has some pretty meaty and well formed drums, which is nearly as far as you can get from the samples that are easy to get on with; I say fairly easy because you can't use the mouse with it.

The drums have an overactive reverb which makes them sound positively cavernous.

The structure of this program is that it is marketed by Robtek, but as it is written by one Holger Gehrmann, I strongly suspect that it is German in origin. (Gehrmann, the German?). Anyway, the instructions are in German and English.

The loading screen is really first rate with a good, sampled, eight-bar, repeating tune. Hey, I thought, if this tune is using the drum program we really do have something special. Now unless I am mistaken, or the loading tune was subject to some extreme processing in the drum department when recorded originally, they are not the same. The loading screen tune has some pretty meaty and well formed drums, which is nearly as far as you can get from the samples that are easy to get on with; I say fairly easy because you can't use the mouse with it.

CRACKLE ON

There is a choice of 20 sounds which can also be played without the sequencer running. Each drum can have its pitch and volume fine tuned, which is remembered for each note you play. The usual features are here - number of beats per bar, quantization, (that's the bit that rounds up your inaccuracies) and speed. HiTec Drum Studio only records in real-time so there is very little chance of editing anything you have done or entering really complex patterns. Patterns can be erased or copied. As you record there is an audible metronome beat (or 'crackle', as the handbook has it!), flashing light on screen and the power light flashes as well. This causes the CPU some problems because there is a fractional pause every now and again as it hiccups its way round three places at once. I'm dubious of the programming. Another fickle finger can be pointed at the programming since there is a rather suspicious screen flicker that did not occur with any other programs run on this Amiga.

Right that's enough on this one. Basically it is very poorly thought through and I think that one should expect a lot more from a drum machine than this - I'd rather have the loading screen and its soundtrack than the ensuing skimpy and somewhat tacky program.
and most impressed I was too. I still am. David Hanlon and Andrew Bailey have honed the samples and sequencing up to make a really professional package. It will take up to 26 samples and sequence them. One big bonus is that it stores its samples in IFF format which is the same as most popular dedicated samplers, so you don't need a sampler to create a sound. You could borrow or even buy a disk of sounds for any sampler using IFF and 3.5 floppy. Not to worry though, Adrum comes with its own drum kit. Like all music for the Amiga it only plays back four channels at any one time.

The program is protected by Access Code system for which you need the manual. When you first load up there is a page number and cross-reference code on screen. You look up the page number and code which then gives you another set of letters and figures to enter. I particularly like the instruction manual, which is very friendly and informal but takes you through the basics in a nice step-by-step fashion.

Once into the program, try the demo songs which, like all the assembled songs, are termed 'projects' (very arty!). It can be controlled by mouse and has the usual icons that you would expect to see: tape recorder type controls, slider functions etc. The samples themselves are very well selected and presented with some smart sounding acoustic and synth drums plus a range of percussion instruments that even includes a gong. Not a suspicion of a hiss or swoosh even on samples with a one-second reverb and echo built-in.

David Hanlon and Andrew Bailey have honed Adrum to make a really professional package.

DEFINING BEAT

It works like most drum machines by combining patterns (here called 'measures') into longer song (project) formats. It uses a left-to-right graphic display with the four lines/channels displayed simultaneously. Across the top of the screen are 26 alphabetical icons. Each one has a sample under it. As you click on the letters the sample name and details appear in the bottom left-hand corner of the screen. Patterns are entered by clicking in the display area, the letter indicating what sample is present at this point; clicking the right-hand button removes it.

Things get a little hazy when it comes to defining what a pattern is, because Adrum uses the term 'beat' to define that smallest portion of time it will resolve to. This is confusing to read, although not to operate and work with. Not only does it allow you to superimpose notes on any layer of the pattern, it also allows you to split beats and force them to a different layer. This feature is very useful for making the different layers more understandable. You can also define the order of the notes and how they are treated.

Whole sections of patterns can be changed and set to different patterns. They are entered by dragging them from a drop-out menu. As you move up and down the staves the pitch of the note will change. All notes and their order of appearance can be changed at any time with backups as well. Any sample can be altered severely and recreated to your own taste: pitch, volume and length of sample are all accessible. It will work to MIDI clock pulse, both sent and received, but you will need an Amiga MIDI interface in the serial port. You can also get Adrum to play and send note-on and -off information. This means effectively that you could use Adrum as a four-note MIDI sequencer and also get it to be a voice sample module as it will accept samples from most samplers. In short it is an excellent program and I hope it sells in truckloads. It should. Maybe a conversion to Atari would ensure vast fortunes for its designers. Buy one now.

HOME STUDIO

The following three programs are all American and are really designed for the novice to create music in a fun sort of way.

First of these is The Music Studio from Activision. It is available for the Atari ST and Amiga with only one or two differences between the versions. The technique is that you can compose, edit and store both music and lyrics. You can also design and create sounds and store those as well. The features are many and quite comprehensive; a sort of jack-of-all-trades, master at none but not bad to get you going.

The program has five screen displays.

1) The main composing screen. This uses traditional music notation; you place notes on the staves by dragging them from a drop-out menu. As you move up and down the staves it sounds the pitch of the note. All well and good. The Amiga has four sound channels, the ST has three, and each channel have a different colour, which makes distinguishing them on the screen quite easy. You can only enter the number of simultaneous notes that the sound chip will play. However if you have the MIDI option open to you it is possible to increase that to 15 notes. Most note values are catered for, but it will only be as presentable and accurate as your hand and eye allows. In short it doesn't appear to do automatic note spacing, add beams to the tops of notes, or insert bar lines for you, although it does automatic transposition from key to key. One good idea is that you can replace the staves and add lyrics for your song. It prints the song out as a set of screen dumps to any computer printer. Certainly okay for fun and reference, but not for serious Desk Top Music Publishing. Still, again, it isn't designed with that in mind.

2) The sound design screen. This shows you a graph of the sound. Here the Amiga sounds markedly over the ST. All the sounds are generated by the internal chip - no sampling here - and as we all know the ST's sound chip is none too clever, in fact it is pretty hopeless by today's standards. Whereas the Amiga lets you design pretty good sounds with some fancy harmonics, and has a standard where necessary just like real synthesisers, the ST only produces sounds like those found on the BBC, Spectrum 128, Amstrad, etc. Both chips allow you to shape the sound - known as the sound envelope - and the graphic display of the envelope is clear, when it is possible, which is very important value of each parameter. The pitch can be changed and vibrato added.

3) The file menu. Simply a display of saving and loading songs and sounds plus all disk and printer operations.

Music paintbox. Not a totally original idea, but if you ain't got a clue about the notes in real notation then try this. It drops notes on a conventional stave as a set of rectangles which are moved or cut and shorter, depending on the duration of the note. Like the conventional notations screen, the sounds are selected and allotted to the channels. Again, the alignment depends on your accuracy with hand and eye. One neat touch is that it converts to standard notation, so if you flip to the ordinary notation screen your rectangles appear as real notes.

5) MIDI page. Each internal sound can be assigned a channel and a note range for a MIDI keyboard. Quite well thought through this, as it means that you can be a little bit more flexible when it comes to the notes and have any MIDI instrument(s) play within certain ranges - a reasonable sequencer feature. Notes can be also entered from a MIDI keyboard but only in step-time, you still have to have an idea of note duration. It works this option on the Amiga as well, but of course you do need an interface. Voices can also be renamed to refer to the voices contained in whatever synth you are using. There is a solo feature here which lets you isolate one or more tracks if you only wish to hear these as you are working on them. It allows you to superimpose notes on top of one another and pluck different tracks without erasing anything, both notes sound on the synthesizers provided of course the notes are assigned to different channels.

Generally not a bad program and it gets a thumbs up as a painless and versatile introduction to music making. One slight niggle is that it only runs on a medium resolution screen.

JUST ADD VOLUME

Very similar in approach is the Music Construction Set for the ST from...
Electronic Arts. Minor differences are that there is no graphics notation option. However, if you do have a miniature piano keyboard under the stool which highlights the notes you are entering or playing. It aligns notes for you but does not move lines automatically. It works on the first three MIDI channels, transmitting note information only and refusing to send any transpositions. The waveform editing is a little more detailed though. In direct comparison it's swings and roundabouts with perhaps the Music Studio having the edge.

Finally, the Amiga has rather interesting concept called Instant Music, again from Electronic Arts. It uses a very well defined graphic score with different colours for each channel. The sound libraries are sampled and the program reads other sound samples if they are in IFF format. What is unique about Instant Music is that you can get started immediately and use a feature called Mousejam — you select an instrument for the mouse to play and as the music plays and scrolls you can play along with it, moving the mouse in the display area thus going up and down in pitch. Some clever programming enables the Amiga to play notes that are compatible with whatever piece is being played.

The excellent visual display gives lots and lots of possibilities to literally paint music; filling in blocks of sound which turn into notes. One octave keyboard can be brought up to give you a rough guide as to the pitch of the program. An interesting feature of this program is that voices can be swapped over and you can even take the outline of pitch and rhythm from one song and superimpose your own crazy variation on the original.

The comprehensive editing is from the cut, paste, and copy school. Although it doesn't support or use traditional notation, if you are an Amiga owner and musical novice, then I recommend this program to you as it is fun to use, easy and sounds great. It can get more complex: eg you can get more complex eg you can add chords, melody, bass line and rhythm patterns, all with useful assistance from some smart programming if you want it. This is what makes Instant Music unique, the intelligent way it interprets the gist of the music and lets you more or less intelligent way it interprets the gist of the music and lets you more or less adjust the computer's interpretation of the music to suit your own personal taste.

Last comment about the American programs in general; they are adept at writing manuals and they are adept at writing manuals and packaging. I can cope with the blurb, laid-back, cool and superlatives - at least you feel you have bought a professionally produced product and not a xeroxed parish magazine. Next month more music utilities and a comment on the terminology - honest - and as ever I look forward to your letters on anything relative to this column.

The Music Studio - a sort of jack-of-all TRADES, master at none but not bad to get you going.

The Amiga has rather interesting concept called Instant Music from Electronic Arts.

Programs covered this month

Drum Studio Basic C125 025

Adrum Bugfrog - once unknown

The Music Studio Activation £64.99

Music Construction Kit Electronic Arts £24.95

Indeed Music Electronic Arts for £14.95 disk

(also for C64 £9.95 cassette and £14.95 disk)

SMASH IT UP WITH HEWSON

In TGM003, we asked you to identify four Hewson games screens, which were 1) Southern Belle, 2) Nebulus, 3) Pyracurse, 4) Quatzatron. The winner receives a PHILIPS PORTABLE CD RADIO CASSETTE PLAYER, plus Hewson's great six-game arcade compilation tape. And that all goes to Sam Heng, HPS016 OEL. A further 50 runners up each receive a copy of the compilation, and they are:

Matthew Alexander, Shropshire SY5 8LJ; W. Haynes, N Devon EX38 5BD;

M Stevenson, Manchester M18 5NH; Kevin Clements, Edinburgh EH3 8P; David Fox, Sheffield S6 8SR; Scott McCloud, Glasgow G44 4RT; John Wilkinson, Honolulu HI 96813; Neil Robinson, Yorkshire HG2 6U; Timothy Jones, Staffordshire ST10 1SS; J Baray, London N10 6U; Howard Thorpe, Southampton SO1 2ZK; Greg Wells, Essex SS6 8P; Darren Harper, Bolton BL4 9BH; Stephen Morris, Yorkshire HG1 3JU; Chris Buxton, Bristol BS18 1LK; Peter Evans, Scotland M30 6DX; Martin Ryder, Leeds, LE15 0BT; Tamas Kucsen, London W10 4PG; Chris Kaye, Wirral L6 7P; Peter Taylor, Essex CO5 8PG; Peter Warren, Bucks SL4 8BT; Gary Lane, Sheffield S5 8PP; Richard McCulloch, Cleveland TS2 8JQ; John Martinson, Dorset BH22 9JX; Mark Schofield, Nottingham NG2 7JL; Kevin Degville, Dorset DT18 2U; Nicholas Hemstock, S Yorks SE1 1UJ; Philip Corrigan, Slough DNN3 2OH; Adam Coupland, Berks RG11 1JR; John Healy, Midlothian EH12 9SB; Richard McC前瞻性

POURS ELECTRONIC ARTS

To celebrate the launch of Electronic Arts's Test Drive in TGM003, we had a model RADIO-CONTROLLED PORSCHE 911 TURBO for the winner, and a model, Radio-Controlled PORSCHE 993 for the second place, with copies of the game for the runners up. You had to answer seven questions - answers: 1) Aston Martin DB6, 2) Genevieve, 3) Mini Cooper, 4) Juha Kankunnen, 5) Super car, 6) Gran Turismo, 7) name of the Italian designer who designed the Mini series and recent Ford ranges. The answers are: 1) P Scott, Surrey GU15 2SP, with Howard Thorpe, Southampton SO1 8AX in second place. The runners up are:

James Brown, Cheshire WA6 8KO; L Shanko, Sussex GU13 1HP; Chris Garbutt, Essex SS13 6RR; Mark Furness, W Sussex PO20 1D; B Wheeler, Kent DA13 6SH; Andrew Laver, Leeds LS13 4BY; Gary Merr, Sheffield S6 8PP; SC Davies, Leicestershire LE15 9RF; Paul McKeen, Glasgow G15 4DQ; David Rose, Gloucester GL3 4PD; Mark Fletcher, Glasgow G42 9IDN; Alastair May, Scotland IV2 1B
UNCLE MEL'S TRIVIA QUIZ

From the man who has everything, to you, poor dear reader, a small gift to brighten your day ... Once again, nice Mel Croucher has racked his brains on the torture machine of obscurity and little known facts to provide you with a quiz of trivial proportion. As everyone is getting so good at reading upside down, from next month we will be printing the answers back to front instead ...

1) Which high-rise band charted with Micro Kids in 1983?
   a) as Lewisham bus drivers, b) as cannibals with bones through their noses, c) as chartered accountants

2) The term 'Baud Rate' is derived from a) the time taken to fall asleep during an adventure game, b) Monsieur JME Baudot, the French telegrapher, c) the fact that programmers are as thick as a plank, and paid accordingly

3) True or false? US Gold supreme Geoff Brown used to be in a rock'n'roll Band

4) Who made the original recording of Tracks Of My Years as featured on Ocean's Platoon, and in what year was it recorded?

5) How are negroes depicted in Grand Slam's current Terramax?
   a) as Lewisham bus drivers, b) as cannibals with bones through their noses, c) as chartered accountants

6) Where do you take Amiga software infected by the 'Virus'?

7) In which hi-tech fantasies did the following characters appear: Rick Deckard, Flynn, Bomb 20, Dave Bowman?

8) Which word connects 'Frenzy', 'Manager' and 'Director'?

9) When should everyone who holds computerised data on individuals have registered under the Data Protection Act, and why?

10) What is the name of the Home Office legal matrix enquiry system

   ANSWERS

   a) as Lewisham bus drivers, b) as cannibals with bones through their noses, c) as chartered accountants

   1) TGM006. 2) Monsieur JME Baudot. 3) true. 4) Ocean. 5) Grand Slam. 6) Data Protection. 7) 'Virus'. 8) 'Director'. 9) When should everyone who holds computerised data on individuals has registered under the Data Protection Act. 10) Home Office legal matrix enquiry system.

NEXT MONTH

BULLETIN 1000 THE VIDEO

At last, THE GAMES MACHINE gets into the offices of the people who create the software promo-videos we all stare at in J Menzies and WH Smith. How are these promotions created? Who decides the order of the ads? Do they sell games? TGM006 has got it taped!

- Mel Croucher proves how determined he is to be included in THE GAMES MACHINE. There's Mercy Dash (lovingly inked by Robin Evans), a look at the opening of the airwaves by the Government to the public – will this mean a Tony Blackburn clone in every street? Mel has cajoled his way into Computer Arena 86 – the computer industry conference held in Jersey March 11-13, and he will be reporting his findings on how some of the best-known softpersonallities began their working lives.

- John Gilbert continues his look at Techno Toys, interactive TV/video and reports further on his findings at the 1988 Toy Fair.

- Vivacious virtuoso Jon Bates casts a lilting look at a 64 track sequencer and a professional sound designer program.

- PLUS all the usuals; RPGs with John Woods, adventure with Rob Steel, Coin-Op Confrontation courtesy of Robin Hogg, competitions (don't forget the Amiga and monitor to be won) and all the latest multi-format games reviews, previews and boardgames.

- Issue Six of THE GAMES MACHINE hits the streets on April 21, be there!
Every move you make, every step you take, they're watching you. Fight your way through the precinct - the back alleys, the car parks, fight your way through the villainous community, the skinheads, the Beastie Boys, the bouncers. On a hot, steamy night in New York this is just the tip of the iceberg on your chilling quest to confront "MR. BIG".

A spectacular arcade style brawl with many hoodlums and hellhounds to encounter - this is Target Renegade - if it moves, it hurts!

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DATA EAST’S

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