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AN EXCLUSIVE FROM AMERICA
Nolan Bushnell’s latest techno-venture unveiled!

MSX II POWERPLAY
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The airwaves could be yours — we tell you how!

BEHIND THE BULLETIN
TGM visits Bulletin 1000 to see how those telly ads are made

IT’S A CRIME!
To miss out on Playing By Mail

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New hi-tech train sets

WIN AN AMIGA & COLOUR MONITOR!
PAGES OF THE LATEST GAMES
AMIGA ATARI ST AMSTRAD CPC/PPC/PC
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COKE IS IT: Over 350 million servings of Coke are drunk every single day worldwide.

COKE FROM COCA-COLA
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Whether you're going into town for a bite to eat or a look round the shops, there's one thing you can't afford to be without. A Midland LIVE!Cash Card.

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If you are aged 14-20, you can open a LIVE!Cash account.

Just call in at your nearest Midland Bank and fill in an application form. Or call free on 0800 400 469 for written details.
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!

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!
MAY 1988

THIS ISSUE...

FEATURES

PROVE YOU'RE THE BEST!
Final chance to enter for the first National Computer Games Championships

DOUBLE-O'S BACK IN TOWN
John Gilbert reports on how computers have puffed fresh life into the steam train-set

MAIL ORDER

ENDPIECE

THE GAMES MACHINE QUESTIONNAIRE
Your opportunity to tell us about TGM — use it, PLEASE!

IT'S A CRIME!
The TGM crew take on KJC's Play By Mail game in a bid to explain how the system works

REGULARS

GETTING ADVENTUROUS
Rob Steel investigates crime, space piracy and comedy

GOING OVERBOARD
Where No Vultures Fly — grisly board fun, plus boardgame news

FANTASY GAMES
John Woods plays a Nordic RPG bid and indulges in gruesome reading from Harn

MUSIC MATTERS
Two astonishing utilities for the Atari ST may herald the music performer's equipment of the future, says Jon Bates

WIN!
Mel's Trivia Quiz

OMNIBOTS ARE GO!
Tomy robots and copies of GO!'s Bionic Commandos are the prizes!

SIERRA ADVENTURES
Win the entire 16-bit Sierra Online adventure range!

COMPARISON RULES
The Editor's decision is final in all matters relating to adjudication and while we offer prizes in good faith, believing them to be available, if something unforeseen happens (like a game that has been offered as a prize being scrapped) we reserve the right to substitute prizes of comparable value. We will do our very best to despatch prizes as soon as possible after the published closing date.

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COVER DESIGN & ILLUSTRATION

OLIVER FREY

TGM TX 006:5-88/5/116
PC ENGINE

In TGM004 we incorrectly implied that the PC Engine - new wonder machine from Japan - was part of the Nintendo range. TMG reader Shintaro Kanayoa, who provided valuable input to our article on the Nintendo Family Computer in TGM001, wrote to us with more details...

The PC Engine is built by NEC. It has absolutely nothing to do with the Nintendo console, and, as far as I know, Nintendo software is not compatible with it.

As to how it compares with the ST and Amiga (as one Readerpage writer has it) is anyone's guess, since there have been no Commodore or Atari ST owners' reviews of this machine in any British or American computer user magazine.

From what I have read, the PC Engine may have an Intel 80286 processor and 80287 math coprocessor, but very little else of interest seems to be available.

In the near future, the PC Engine is not likely to be considered a major player in the microcomputer game market, I'm afraid.

The PC Engine is much cheaper than the Amiga, but not so cheap as the Atari ST. For the price of the ST, you get a Commodore 128, which is not a bad bargain on its own, never mind in comparison with an Amiga.

NO 8-BIT ATARI

Dear Games Machine

I would like to ask you why you have nothing in your magazine about the Atari 8-bit. You seem to be all for the Spectrum, Commodore and Atari ST, but what about the Atari 8-bit? I have bought all your issues just in the last six months.

I would also like to tell you about a new magazine called "Warehouse Guard". So now you know!

Thanks for the information! Shintaro Kanayoa, London SW15

MORE MSX

Dear Games Machine

I have been buying THE GAMES MACHINE from the 1st edition and will continue doing so as I think it's great. I was glad to see that you are going to continue doing so. Unlike some other magazines which I receive, I feel that your magazine is worth my money. I have been reading it since the first edition and will continue to do so.

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As you can see from the contents of this issue, David, the MSX reviews are back. The reason they disappeared for an issue or two, believe it or not, was that our venerable Philips machine packed up! It took a while to get hold of a brand new one - a Sony MSX HB-F7000 in our case, with built-in disk drive, twin cartridge ports and a word processor on board. And very nicely designed it is too.

DON'T ABUSE ME

Dear Games Machine

I was devastated by reading your article on Industrial Child abuse (TGM004, page 21). I am 18, and for years I have worked like a madman on the Spectrum and MSX spectrums, determined to know everything about the Z80 chip. All hours I have studied, even during sleep (my dreams are in binary) my brain continues to sort game-concepts and animated graphics. I have at last reached my goal. All the technical rough edges have been smoothed, enabling me to write a Unix-like clone if I wanted to, using equal speed and graphics.

I was planning to write a game before the end of May and send it to a fairly well established software house within the budget division. Your article soon put a stop to that! In five minutes flat my dreams (and future plans) were transformed into seemingly naive and positively dangerous ideas. Should I continue programming? Are Mastertronic a load of gits? Does Firebird employ me? Is the Master's Darlings really at heart?

Are there any Spectrum programmers out there with a list of honest and genuine software houses? Please write to this magazine and tell everyone who the good guys are.

Yours, T.C.

Mel's piece was more about the Victorian era of games programming, the days when under-age programmers were stuffed into the workhouse. Things aren't quite as bad today, and the three companies whose names you mention are certainly not among the Scrooge-like taskmasters referred to. But they are businesses, and look for a good deal if they can get it. Who wouldn't? And so should you. Before committing to any offer, try several companies to see what deals can be done. Certainly insist on handling nothing over without a contract, and make sure you are getting a reasonable advance on a reasonable share of royalties. On the other hand, don't expect anyone to give you top rates for a first game - after all, the software house is the one that takes the real financial risk.

The Parsc Pixe! -- indeed sound impressive. We'll try and get our hands on one soon for evaluation. And if you want to be impressed by music software development on the ST, try Jon Bates's article on page 111.

INTERESTED IN ART

Dear Games Machine

As a third-year in the process of choosing my options, I would be grateful if you could supply me with information about the careers of ART DIRECTOR and DESIGN/LAYOUT PERSON. For instance, which GCSes might be useful.

Ben Gladman, Ramsgate, Kent

Now that's a different question! First, Art Director. In magazine terms, this is the person responsible for the general appearance of one, or more, magazines. The Art Director liaises with editorial and pre-print production people to ensure the pages are decently designed and conform to the house style, and directs the efforts of the layout people. A Design/Layout (or Paste Up) person is the one who actually, under direction of the Art Director, sticks the actual text and pictures in position on the magazine pages.

That's very briefly, but an awful lot of skill and self-determining work goes into all the art functions. GCSes should certainly include Art, with an emphasis on drawing and technical skills. Most people Newsfield employs come from art schools, however, with at least some basic understanding of graphic techniques and reprographics (the use of repro cameras and picture half-tone making).

The 800XL is one of the best 64K computers costing thousands more - so you are getting a whole 32-bit processor on board. And very nicely designed it is too.

Concern about the question of which 16-bit computer to purchase - Atari ST or Amiga - and, indeed, which is the best, is still foremost in THE GAMES MACHINE readers' minds. But first - a bit about the PC Engine. We want your letters because it's the best form of feedback from you, so write to READERPAGE, THE GAMES MACHINE PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB.
Dear Games Machine

I have just spent the last eight months saving up £700 to buy an Amiga. I am now at a dilemma.

Over the past few months in TGM, there has been twice as much software reviewed for the ST than the Amiga. I am pretty annoyed about this because it confirms the fact that the ST is selling more units than the Amiga. I am not particularly biased towards the Amiga, but I want to buy the best (not the cheapest) of the two micros.

I'm sorry to say it, but everyone who has bought an ST or Amiga obviously knows which one is the best, the Amiga. As far as I know, the sound and graphics of the ST have been pushed a fair bit, but the Amiga has hardly been touched at all in the sound department and very little in the graphics of recent software.

Now I don't care if the ST sells twice as many units this year than the Amiga because I know thousands of people haven't got the cash for the Amiga. But I was wondering if you, THE GAMES MACHINE could possibly tell me what you think the future of software for both micros will be like.

I know this is a tough question but I really do want to give an answer, as I'll probably buy a compact disc player if my uncertainty continues!

Aiden Donnelly

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Dear Games Machine

For the review of After Burner, which was done from a production copy, the game was played fully over several hours to level 12. No runways had appeared at that stage (rather than after every four levels as on the comp. op.). Nor was there a continue mission option. We can only suggest you take a photograph of the runways from the screen of your copy and send it to us.

As to the death of the 8-bit market you so gloomily predict, perhaps you should not be too hasty - it’s more than alive and well, just take a look at some of the reviews in this issue!

Kenneth Jackson, Edinburgh

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Dear Games Machine

I own a Sega console system and algorithmically the game has been very pleased with the amount of coverage you give it. I am disappointed with the reviews you give it. Let’s take After Burner. You give it 60%! This is brilliant! At least 85%. You obviously didn’t play the game. You state it has no continue feature. YES it does. You state there are no runways. YES there are.

I mean to say that your classing such brilliant games as Rocky, Out Run, After Burner etc. with the likes of Spectrum’s Nigel Mansell’s Grand Prix is pathetic. I think we can appreciate that consoles and 16-bits are taking over, leaving C64s. This is obvious for the rich, yuppies or working class individuals as the Software is expensive, but worth it. BE FAIR.

Dear Games Machine

I am very impressed with how many Commodore games in the quantities around, and my following complaints are not intended to be uninteresting), but maybe a cartoon could be added to the magazine (and no, I don’t thing Cutey-Poo is hilarious). This would help to make the magazine less formal, as does a lighter "Over..."

Just who is running THE GAMES MACHINE? Issue 1 saw Graeme Kidd as editor, and Oli was just Art Director. Issues 2 and 3 had Oli as editor, and 4 had Julian Rignall as ‘Acting’ editor (Oli ill, maybe?). TGM005 once again returns the position of editor to Oli, or perhaps Oliver as we should now call him.

As I said before, these are purely my own views and I think that the only way to find out the thoughts of all the readers is to have a questionnaire like the annual CRASHionnaire. This always makes interesting reading.

Last words must be devoted to Mel Croucher. To those who don’t know his history it’s sufficient to say that he wrote possibly the best ever computer game – Deus Ex Machina – the only game that was more an experience than a computer game. Keep Mel writing his controversial reports, his quiz, and of course Mercy Dash – he’s an inviable writer.

David Bick, Tewkesbury, Glos

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Dear Games Machine

To begin with I say that THE GAMES MACHINE is one of the best magazines around, and my following complaints are only my opinions on how to fine tune. The magazine as a whole: TGM is about ‘Computer and Electronic Entertainment’, and as such it is ‘Reporting wherever technology is applied to entertainment’. It seems to me that the magazine is much more concerned with computer games than anything else, and that all sorts of other non-electronic subjects are included, such as board games. Not that there is anything wrong with this. A computer magazine with the occasional article about other things is fine, but I would prefer a magazine in which the regular articles have more space, so that computers don’t take over. At the moment you seem stuck between the two.

This leads me on to the magazine’s organisation. As a computer magazine it is fine, and things are well spread out, but the back pages seem to get lost inside it all. The presentation also is severely lacking when compared to CRASH (and I presume ZZAP!64). The contents page is very uninteresting and the headings for each section are awful. Take CRASH’s Forum pages for instance - there’s no doubt what the page contains due to its header. These sort of headings also make it much easier to find certain places at a glance, much more so than the uniform box that TGM uses.

Variety seems to be the difference with all the Newsfield productions. Some sections are loved by all, some by just a few, but they are all valuable and should be kept. The features are generally good (The Rare interview in TGM004 was excellent), but maybe a cartoon could be included. Mercy Dash is fine as it goes, but an unprejudiced cartoon would also add to the magazine (And no, I don’t thing Cutey-Poo is hilarious). This would help to make the magazine less formal, as does a lighter "Over..."

We’ve told Mel again and again not to get his relatives to write to us! OKay, another questionnaire like the annual CRASHionnaire. But we are always keen to hear what people have to say about it. (Use your influence through this issue’s Questionnaire!). Oliver is TGM Editor – he decides what goes in and what doesn’t – although he writes nothing for the magazine; he took over from Mr Kidd, but was away on a well-earned holiday throughout TGM004, so Julian Rignall did a caretaking job for him. And finally: Mel is almost 100 wonderful, isn’t he?
**INTO THE SOFTWARE ARENA**

THE first ever British entertainment software conference was held on March 11-13 at the Hotel de France, St Helier, Jersey. Organised by THE GAMES MACHINE's parent, Newsfield Publications, it brought together over 80 top representatives from Britain's leading software houses and distributors. (See pages 108 and 110 for Robin Evans's more irrevocable coverage of the event).

The three-day weekend event was designed as an opportunity for software publishers to discuss their common problems and was based around a series of speeches given by invited guests, with question-and-answer sessions after each. The speakers were Simon Treasure from chart pollsters Gallup, Geoff Grimes, Marketing Manager Elite Systems, Mike Blackman, Project Director Montbuild - the people who organise the PC Show, Jack Schofield, editor Computer Gazette, and Dean Barrett, the new Marketing Manager of Commodore (UK) Ltd.

Much of the discussion revolved around the commonly felt need for a truly representative software publishers' association; one such already exists in the United States, a situation neatly outlined by American Mark Lewis of Electronic Arts. But Dean Barrett came in for some criticism for Commodore's past policies of standing off in for some criticism for Commodore's past policies of standing off.

**Awards**

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Gary Bracey accepts the top award for Ocean - Best Software House of 1987

**WORKSHOP BRANCHING OUT**

**SWAMP THING** was seen dripping down Oxford street on Saturday March 12 - entertaining the crowds who queued up to celebrate the opening of a new Games Workshop retail outlet. People began to form an orderly line from 5.30pm on the evening and it grew steadily throughout the night. By the time the shop opened at 7.00am, there were well over a 1,000 enthusiastic role-players waiting to invade the premises. Hundreds of bargains were to be had, with games selling for as little as £1.00 each. Many stars from the boardgames made personal appearances; Orcs, Dark Elves and Space Marines all turned up to meet their fans.

To back their claim that fantasy boardgames are increasing in popularity, by the time you read this Games Workshop will have opened yet another shop, this time in Southampton. Bargain games, celebrities and a £50 prize for the best fancy dress are all included to encourage a good response from the public. The address of the new shop is 23, East street, Southampton.
**THE SKIES THE LIMIT**

MICROPROSE, creators of such programs as Gunship and Project: Stealth Fighter are beginning a new programmer recruitment drive throughout Europe.

"The quality of European programmers has never been better," says MicroProse UK boss Stewart Bell, "our new initiative is recognition of UK and European achievements and the huge amount of ability there is out there.'

Such is the scale of the recruitment drive that both American and UK divisions of the highly successful simulations company are involved in the search for new talent. The recruited programmers will work in the USA on products for both the UK and European markets.

Meanwhile, Gunship, MicroProse's best-selling AH-64 attack helicopter simulator now has Hercules monochrome support for the PC. The release is in response to requests from PC owners who wanted to run MicroProse products on their Hercules monochrome monitors. Changes have also been made so that the game now supports EGA mode on all currently available systems, with VGA cards along with the inclusion of a hard-disk installation and back-up copy creation facility. The amended game will be priced at £34.95.

And still further: in West Germany, MicroProse have overturned the ban placed on their submarine simulation Silent Service. The German censorship authorities, the Federal Office for Examination of Harmful Publications felt that the game fell under the heading of a product which was "morally corrupting and coercing" (the Germans generally ban all wargames under this heading). In early 1987, under German law, the game was subsequently banned and up till now has only been available through licensed adult shops! The recent lifting of the ban could mean that Strike Eagle, the F-15 Strike Eagle and Gunship (currently under consideration by the German censorship authorities) could one day be available to the German youth.

**HOME COMPUTER LASERS ARE HERE!**

MICRODEAL have stolen the march to be first with an interactive laser disk game. It's called Journey Into The Lair and it is for the Atari ST.

To buy Journey Into The Lair will set you back £99.95, and if you do not own the cable link to connect your computer with a video disk set you back £99.95, and if you do not own the cable link to connect your computer with a video disk player, that will cost you another £19.95. And then of course, you need access to a video disk player itself. Microdeal say the game will work on all four popular machines as long as they have interface ports; they are the Hitachi 9550, the Magnavox 8040 and Pioneer LD700 and 900 models.

What you get for your money is the game Atari disk, Dragons' Lair PAL video disk and instruction manual. The recent lifting of the ban could mean that Journey Into The Lair..., 'Conferences' are available. And if problems arise on your stay, the Night Porter is there with an advice and horoscopes.

Telemap aims the service at the 18-plus age group: 'Though not censorship reasons', says Telemap's David Rosenbaum. "Hotel California is available without subscription to Prestel or Micronet, requiring a 1200/75 baud modem, and is accessed by dialing 0899 01 0890, costing £1.00 per minute and 25p per minute off peak."

In May Gremlin Graphics's resident loony programmers are just out of a plan for charity. Well done boys! However, the seven-strong team have been persuaded to use parachutes as it was felt that otherwise the daring leap would muck up Gremlin's autumn release schedule. The charity in question is the Royal National Lifeboat Association, and if you feel like sponsoring the lads, send a cheque or postal order to: RNLI Parachute Event, Gremlin Graphics, Alpha House, 10 Carver Street, Sheffield S1 4FS.

**SCHNEIDER vs AMSTRAD?**

THE LUCRATIVE PC-clone market has resulted in an ironic twist to Amstrad's relationship with former German distributor Schneider. While Amstrad attempts to establish its own cheap PC clones in Germany, Schneider has now launched some new computers which make "innovative technology available at unusually low prices" - or put another way: yet more PC clones.

Currently Schneider is looking for British distributors to handle a range which begins at £450 for a Euro PC with integral 3.5" disk, 512K RAM and monochrome monitor. (A colour monitor raises the price to £620.)

The main sales point, besides pretty styling, is that hi-tech allows the machines to be built in Germany - rather than cheap labour Asian countries. Amstrad, due to its own difficulties in the German market, claimed to be unworried since Schneider was not a known in the UK market. At the same time, however, Dixons have announced that they'll now be stocking cheap Olivetti PCs alongside Amstrad machines - illustrating the increasingly crowded nature of this end of the PC market.

It could be timely for the end user - in the States PC machines have established themselves as the biggest sellers by far. Are we about to see the pattern repeated here in Britain?

**NEWS BITS**

VICTOR, the Japanese video company known here as JVC, has announced plans to produce a new Super VHS video system in Europe. The specifications are not complete but their main objective is to produce a system offering 400 lines of horizontal resolution and providing strikingly high picture quality. Additionally the Super VHS system is being designed to incorporate a common recording format which can be applied throughout Europe regardless of different television signals, whether they be PAL or SECAM.

The system will only run Super VHS tapes, which should be available in SE-180, 120 and 90 formats with a tape speed running 2.43cm per second. JVC was unable to confirm any European release dates to THE GAMES MACHINE but they are convinced that it would be a quantum leap for technology taking the video hardware market by storm, and contributed to world wide video culture.

Optimistic company JVC.

TELEMAP, the company which runs the comms service Micronet, is enticing modern owners to mix socially in a new entertainment service - Hotel California. Hotel California offers the user all the joys (!) of staying in an American hotel complete with casino, newsagents and a shopping mall (being run by mail-order company Kays). Socialising is done in the Cafe Society where guests can have public conversations - but should talk grow more intimate, 'Conference Suites' are available. And if problems arise on your stay, the Night Porter is there with an advice line and horoscopes.

Telemap aims the service at the 18-plus age group: 'Though not for censorship reasons', says Telemap's David Rosenbaum. Hotel California is available without subscription to Prestel or Micronet, requiring a 1200/75 baud modem, and is accessed by dialing 0899 01 0890, costing 38p per minute and 25p per minute off peak.
Major Career Programming Opportunities

In-House Opportunities

Designer Programmer
To £25,000 OTE
This is an exciting new role for high achievers, liaising with Graphic, Music and design support functions to develop original 16 bit products for subsequent conversion to other formats for worldwide sale.

Senior Programmers, Programmers
To £15,000 OTE
We have opportunities at various levels for experienced professionals to work on the development of single format conversions for worldwide sale. Liaising with graphic music and design. You will be able to demonstrate a high degree of technical ability in Z80.6502 assembly. Senior roles exist for high achievers.

Senior Designers, Designers,
Senior Graphic Artists, Graphic Artists,
Senior Musicians, Musicians
To £15,000 OTE
Our commitment to producing software of the highest possible standards is the key to our success. We need people who can work closely with in-house, subcontract program developers in the development of multi-format establishment software products for worldwide sale. You will be either currently involved in this capacity or will have formal qualifications to equip you for these roles.

Trainee Programmers, Designers,
Graphic Artists, Musicians
Opportunities exist for the right people to liaise with in-house development staff to develop your skills and techniques prior to appointment in one of the above disciplines. You will combine academic excellence with a creative and effective outlook, some proven experience in your selected discipline would be beneficial or alternatively an ability to demonstrate your work or potential.

Format Supervisors
This role requires highly developed and proven skills in planning, resourcing and managing in-house and subcontract program developers in the development of specific format software products for worldwide sale. Exacting quality standards and ability to meet commercial deadlines will be more important than specific technical knowledge.

The development of new products combined with our success in the market place will provide excellent opportunities for challenging work and further career development. In consideration with this campaign we have produced a Company Opportunity Brochure. If you would like to be a part of one of the most exciting software developments of the future and how you match up, write or phone for the free brochure. Alternatively write or phone with details of your experience to date and ambitions and we will fix a time for a chat.

Contact George Yapp, Software Development Manager, Software Development Centre, Anchor House, Anchor Road, Aldridge, West Midlands WS9 8PW, Tel: 0922 558522 Telex 306139 ELITE G Fax: 0543 414842.

Sub-Contract Opportunities

Development Teams
OTE £100,000
Liaising with in-house supervision and support functions on original multi-format entertainment software product development for worldwide sale.

Designer Programmers
£25,000 OTE
Liaising with in-house supervision and support functions on original single format 16 bit entertainment software product development, for subsequent conversion to other formats for worldwide sale.

NINTENDO DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE
(FULL SUPPORT GIVEN)
I would like to know more about the Nintendo system...

1. Could you give me some information on how I should go about getting a machine.

Well Kingsley, you would probably expect to pay over £1,000 for the complete set, including cabinet and PCB kit. If the price tag doesn't put you off then why not contact distributors Delhi Leisure Plc at 127 Wandsworth High Street, London, SW18 4JB (01-870-5224) for more information. Konami are releasing a Nintendo version of Nemesis under the title of Gradius, which looks truly excellent, so it may be worth contacting them if your budget doesn't quite stretch to a full blown arcade machine. Contact Konami through the Konami Software Club, Bank Building, Bank Street, Newton Abbot, Devon, TQ12 2JL (0626-68611).

ST owner Philip Shore of Hitchin in Hertfordshire is having problems with his Okidata Microline 83A printer.

1. Do I need any special software to run the printer?

Text files and documents of data can be printed without the need for special software Philip, so you shouldn't have any problems with running the printer through programs such as First Word, Calligrapher and Fleet Street Editor.

2. Will I be able to do graphics and screendumps on the ST?

As far as we know, block graphics and normal text characters are the only graphics which are supported on the 83A. For a test of the printer's screen dump capabilities, try the trusted method of dropping down the Alternate key and pressing Help. Generally though, the results aren't too good if you're trying to produce screen dumps on printers incapable of supporting high-resolution graphics.

3. There is a printer driver on Degas Elite for the Microline 84, can I use this on the 83A?

It is possible to adapt the 84 driver to suit the 83A but the graphics handling code within the driver would need extensive reworking, something best left alone unless you know what you're doing.

That's it for this month's edition of the Information Desk. If you've got anything to ask about the world of computers and electronic entertainment, tips on the latest games or solutions to reader problems, write to INFORMATION DESK, THE GAMES MACHINE, PC Box 106, Ludlow, Shropshire, SY9 1DB. On-line readers can of course MBX us by using our I-D (TGM).
MAY THE FORCE GO WITH YOU!

You’ll need it!! The reflexes and powers of a mere mortal will not be enough if you accept the challenge of these four chart topping arcade conversions, together for the first time in one package.

GAUNTLET™ & THE DEEPER DUNGEONS MAPS.

A C&VG hit. They said “Great graphics, good sound, perfect playability—what more could you ask for?” The best selling game of 1986 – a UK No. 1 and the Gallup charts for 48 weeks.

ROAD RUNNER™

A C&VG game of the month “One of the best conversions I have ever played.” A UK No. 1 and in the Gallup charts for 20 weeks.

INDIANA JONES™

ST User said “A cracking arcade game, good sound and graphics combined with lot of action”. A UK No. 1 and in the Gallup charts 18 weeks.

METRO CROSS™

Crash Magazine said “As Coin-op conversions go this is a real winner”. A UK smash hit.

PAC - the world's most famous computer character is back. There are many imitations but only one original PAC-LAND. This superb conversion of the internationally famous coin-op is not to be missed.

You can obtain your copy of PAC-LAND direct from Grand Slam Entertainments - Post and packaging FREE!!!
Write now or send with a cheque or postal order made payable to Grand Slam Entertainments Ltd.
B & I Distribution, Units 1 & 2, Conlon Development, Water Lane, Darwen, Lancs. BB3 2ET.
Name
Address
Town

or Phone: 01-439 0666 - our Credit Card Hotline
Southampton may conjure up images of Tall Ships, old sea dogs and episodes of *Howard's Way*, but delve a bit further, in the general direction of Terminus Terrace, and you will find SOFTWARE STUDIOS, the Activision group's development headquarters. Richard Eddy, complete with deck-shoes, reports.

SOFTWARE STUDIOS are not the only studios to be found in Terminus Terrace; next door is situated BBC South's studios. And, true to my appalling sense of direction, I managed to make a BBC commissaire very bewildered as he struggled to offer me ordinary studios, but not ones with any software. But to the BBC's left, about 100 yards, sits the real Software Studios office, equipped with nearly every piece of hardware imaginable.

S
o this is Software Studios. "Yes, the central hub on the wheel of development control" proudly states Neil Jackson, one of the Studios' producers.

Software Studios, born in the old Electric Dreams offices, takes care of development, both technical and creative, for Activision and its associated labels. Although most product is written out-of-house, the Southampton office is a place where the programmers can come for back-up facilities and advice.

Software Studios is, additionally, the product testing base for Activision games. All games are subjected to rigorous playtesting, not just to ensure that the required features and effects have been included, but also to check if any refinements can be made.

The coin-op conversion *Karnov* is currently doing the keyboard rounds at the moment – and everyone is pleased with it. Andy Percival, liaison officer between the Studios and Activision’s Hampstead head office, has this to say on the subject on the infamous firebreathing Russian: "Karnov is, we imagine, the pinnacle of Spectrum conversions. The sort of game that makes it tempting to say, ‘Right, we’ve done it – the perfect Spectrum conversion why bother to do any more?’, but we don’t want to work to that attitude. Now we know a product like Karnov can be achieved, who knows what else is possible?"

**MAJOR LICENCES**

Three more coin-op licences are to come from the Studios before 1988 draws to a close. Targetted for later in the year, *Afterburner* is the major licence. An upright arcade machine is already installed and the development team has been throwing ideas around. Andy Percival again: 'We decided to scrap some elements of *Afterburner* straight away. We studied the machine and decided what we liked best about it. It was, obviously, the speed and exhilaration. To capture that on a home micro – it's planned for release on Spectrum, Commodore 64/128, Amstrad, Atari ST and Amiga – the game is going to lose a lot of graphic detail, especially on the ground.

'We also looked at what Sega had done in converting it for the Master System – it was unimpressive. How could they leave out the speed variation and, of all things, the afterburner control itself? We are aiming to do a lot better.' *Afterburner* is planned for a Christmas release.

Activision's other licence is *Type*, the smash hit scrolling shoot-'em-up that swallows 10 pences quicker than the Royal Mint can make them. The graphics are under development at the moment, mainly on the Atari ST. Their redrawing from the arcade original is the task of Mark Jones, author of Rainbird’s *ST Art Studio*; and in some cases he is making them look better than on the coin-op.

Nearest completion is Sega’s *Time Scanner*. If you haven’t played the game in the arcades, *Time Scanner* is a pinball simulation, spread over four levels, each with a different theme including ruins and a volcano scene. Currently, playtesters are determining whether the ball movement is accurate enough – the conversion looks good, but they want it to be perfect.

**ON 16-BIT**

In the 16-bit area, Activision has tied up *Microllusions*, an American software house already well known for its excellent role-playing epic *Faerie Tale*, which Activision is releasing at a more affordable price than the original.

Dave Cummings, Chief Playester at the Studios, is currently wading through that one. 'It's huge,' he says in exasperation, 'I played all through the night once and only covered a small part of the map.'

*Fire Power*, another from Microllusions, may remind you of SNK’s coin-op *Tank*. The game places the player in control of an armoured tank breaking into enemy territory. *Fire Power* offers three choices of play – player-v-
computer, player-v-player or two players connected through a modem. The view is from overhead with multi-directional scrolling. Complete with digitised through, represents an immense task for Software Studios. And what about the future? Neil Jackson has a few bright ideas... 'We'll be concentrating

On the Amiga Fire Power is an efficient blaster

explosions, it all adds up to an efficient blaster. Fire Power is available first for the Amiga, and other versions are planned.

Meanwhile for the Atari ST, and later for the PC, Archipelago an adventure game which may, when completed, be capable of displaying up to 20,000, locations each with its own graphical representation. Such a game, which must be playtested right on creative polish — with the possibilities that 16-bit machines offer, we are going to try and make each game like a film release, pushing up the corporate image of Activision and Electric Dreams with title sequences and effective packaging.

THE GAMES MACHINE will keep you up to date with Software Studios's creative polishing over the forthcoming months.

The oddly named Luge from The Games - Winter Edition

Gold European marketing and distribution rights, we in the UK will have to wait until Summer proper when Spectrum, Amstrad CPC and MSX II versions are ready. Roger Swindells, Epyx's European Product Manager informed us: 'Sentient Software, who converted Winter Games, are working on the other formats which will not only be released in the UK but in 16 additional countries with translated versions for release in France, Germany and Spain. I've already seen some early versions,' he went on, 'and they're looking good — the Spectrum is obviously going to be the hardest to convert, not only because of the machine's graphical limitations, but also because sound plays such an important part in the game.'

The Games - Winter Edition features seven new sporting events. As with past Epyx sporting games there are excellent opening titles, complete with Opening Ceremony and options allowing players to compete in all events, fastest speed possible by angling your body corresponding to the angle of the track's curved sides. Displayed from almost overhead, screens flick from one segment of the course to another.

The other six events are split into two sections: two skating and four skiing events. Figure skating is an unusual event; the screen shows the silhouetted figure of a skater ready and waiting for the player to select music to dance to. As the music plays the contestant choreographs the dance by pointing to icons representing different movements. Having decided upon a dance routine it's time to show it to the judges. Here you have to remember your prechoreographed dance and execute as it was planned.

In speed skating all competitors race on four tracks, battling it out to achieve the fastest time. Quite simply, it is a waggle event, thrusting the joystick left and right to increase momentum.

The four skiing events are downhill, slalom, ski jump and cross country. In the downhill,
as well as achieving a fast speed, tricks can be performed. Much of the race is displayed in first-person perspective, looking down at the track in front, but as soon as you come into view on one of the cameras, the display changes to a side view – this is where the skier can do flips and twists and other fancy moves to boost the score.

mini-quests. Dark Side is planned for release in May on Spectrum, Commodore 64/128 and Amstrad CPC at £9.95 on cassette, £14.95 for Spectrum+3 and Amstrad disk, and £12.95 for Commodore 64/128 disk.

Attractive display in Epyx's split-screen cross country event

The slalom is straightforward – the winner is the player to complete the course in the quickest time. Ski jumping requires concentration and timing rather than speed for a player to do well. At strategic points on the run and in flight the joystick is moved to control the skier's angle and position – one for the practice mode! Finally, in the cross country event, the competitor traverses plenty of humour to spice up the gruelling action. The obvious question is: are we going to see The Games - Summer Edition? 'Well,' mutters a rather noncommittal Swindells, 'the American side are definitely thinking about it, but it's so early yet the events to be included haven't been decided upon, so don't expect to see anything before the end of the year at least.'

DRILLING AGAIN

Two major Spring releases are on their way from Incentive. The first is Dark Side, sequel to Driller, and featuring once again the highly effective solid 3-D graphic routine FREESCAPE written and designed by Major Developments.

The game is set some 200 years after the Driller quest. The Ketars, exiled from their home planet of Evath, are planning revenge. On the dark side of their banishment planet Tricuspid, they have constructed the ultimate weapon, Zephyr One, and have aimed it directly at Evath, programmed to destroy the planet on impact. The objective of Dark Side is to prevent the Ketars detonating Zephyr One, but, like Driller, the game also incorporates several sub-plots and

The second FREESCAPE adventure starts on the Amstrad – Dark Side

The second release is an upgrade of Incentive's acclaimed Graphic Adventure Creator (GAC), soon to be released for Atari ST. The much-improved version is called ST Adventure Creator – or STAC – and Incentive claims it to be far more powerful and flexible than its predecessor.

Two pictures from one of STAC's example adventures which show what can be done with talent, imagination and ST Adventure Creator. These were done by David Wyatt, an artist new to computers. Digitised from his original paintings, they were imported from Neochrome. Having entered the relevant data describing locations, objects, defining messages and instructions for the whole control of the game, you can create an ordinary text-adventure. However, STAC has a graphics editor allowing the user to create as many full-colour pictures as the game can handle. Degas or Neochrome 'slides' can be imported into STAC and stored in a compressed format. STAC itself takes up roughly 100K of a disk leaving the user a minimum of 300K to play with. Additionally, STAC comes with a disk containing several character fonts, a test adventure file, graphic demos and a free 200K adventure.

Priced at £39.95, STAC goes on general release in April.

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IN PRODUCTION

Strange brews are almost the name of the computer game, but if you want to talk odd, how about this one: design a game licensed from Walt Disney's Lazer Tag when the toy's manufacturer insists that the computerised version must be strictly non-violent and involve no injuries, let alone death.

Gol have tackled the problem and set to release Lazer Tag any time now. They got around the problem by simply substituting the word 'tag' for 'death' or 'injury'. The object is to tag all other hiding places, scrolls vertically and then smugly sits with the use of a beam projector. Naturally, the cuteness that smugly sits with Mickey Mouse may not appeal to Real Men who prefer a bit of violence and ten pints of OAD. For hunters, then, Gremlin have the ideal product - Hercules, master of muscles and

Heroes, Jaysan and Katra, in a cosmic battle fought against their long time enemies, the Egrons, who plan to destroy Jaysan and Katra's home planet of Novenna with the use of a beam projector. The course is set for Mira, an Egron-dominated planet, and the luck of the gods is not quite with you - for a start incoming ships can only enter unarmured. Entering unarmured into enemy territory is no easy contemplated manoeuvre, but then, neither is confronting the Hallucitron projector - a device which throws images of hideous creatures on your view screen, making your course yet more hazardous.

You are faced with contending against some 80 characters, including space whales, sifting pac-woods and graceful but deadly mantas; but the main battles are fought against notorious starglider craft. The sequel is, claim Rainbird, one of the first complex programs ever written...

Earth Light is a title which has been bandied about the industry for a while - it's the name of Pete Cooke's (Tat Ceti, Micronaut One) latest game and Firebird have signed up the rights to release it. On the moon a peculiar alien creature, that goes by the name of Slaatn, is stranded - his home planet is by destroying force field generators and combattling an army of security droites that roam the crater-ridden moon surface trying to keep the force fields in operation.

Pete's previous games have all contained innovative features in them - with Earth Light he has designed a graphics routine that creates incredible shadowing effects on the scrolling moon surface, changing as the Earth, streaming with light, revolves around the sun. Earth Light is planned for release in June, initially for the Spectrum. In May Rainbird plan to release a graphical shoot 'em up extravaganza on the Atari ST, to be followed by the Amiga, Verminator is the game; it's set within an decaying oak tree riddled with vermin. Verminator is the star and a mercenary one at that - for every creature he exterminates cash is earned. Extra equipment can then be purchased to take him through the entire 250 locations. Cash can be accumulated in banks or a casino, or even borrowed from loan sharks if he's desperate. Rich with colour and a fair bit of humour, Verminator is programmed by Chris Hinsley with graphics from Nigel Brownjohn, authors of the Advanced ST Art Studio.

WASTE NOT...

New software house Exocet are making their debut very soon with Foundation's Waste - a shoot 'em up on the Atari ST. The Federation, a militaristic governing force, has captured you, a rebel, trying to escape for the seventh time. This time, however, we expect to be laid. The game is the next time - armed with information from Federation records and a stolen ship, the object is to blast through defence systems and destroy as much of the Federation planet as possible. Shields, side-shooters and extras are gained along the way. Full review next month.

Strip Poker II goes all the way right down to the bits which makes the Amiga and Atari ST blush. Anco is set to release this outrage of extensive sexism next month. But now sexist, it is it exploiting the female gender again? Anco's Karen Graham explains: 'We're bound to have some complaints, but we expect that. And it's not only female strippers, we're currently digitising some male strippers for release later in the year.' For tat then, You won't find Strip Poker II in WH Smith shops, however, the chain store has refused to stock it. But interest is riding high says Anco - they've already been flooded with orders. However, we mustn't forget the poker element must we? Find out in the full review next month.

OF MICE'N' MONSTERS

Downstairs, below Gol's offices, is Gremlin Graphics' Birmingham programming base. It is here that the programming of Mickey Mouse, Gremlin's second Disney licence, is currently under way. The action is set in Disney castle where four wicked witches, under orders from the Ogre King, are doing their worst to create havoc throughout the Magic Kingdom. Mickey's quest is to climb the four towers defeating the Ogre-King's minions along the way and rebuild Merlin's wand, which has been broken into four and one piece given to each witch to guard.

The screen displays a cross-section view of the tower, scrolling vertically, with Mickey climbing up and down ladders. A Disneyesque feel for the characters is captured well in the graphics and there's typical Disney music to accompany the gameplay. Occasionally doors are to be found within the towers' walls, and behind each lies one of four bonus games ranging from an upside down version of Space Invaders to a Pipeline variant. It's all scheduled to appear on Spectrum, Commodore 64/128, Amstrad CPC and Atari ST in May.

Naturally, the cuteness that smugly sits with Mickey Mouse may not appeal to Real Men who prefer a bit of violence and ten pints of OAD. For hunters, then, Gremlin have the ideal product - Hercules, master of muscles and...
The first non-violent shoot-'em-up: Lazer Tag from Go! - Commodore 64 screen

The eponymous Disney rodent, Mickey Mouse - above on the Atari ST

The pros and cons of being a Minotaur as described by SSI's Advanced D & D game, Heroes Of The Lance - Amiga screen

Pogo hops back into action on the Amstrad with Nebulus one of the many Hewson releases to come

Launching Exocet is Foundation's Waste, first out for the the Atari ST

Loriciels's Championship Ski

A clever new use of horizon gives Loriciels's Championship Ski on the Amstrad a heightened feeling of reality

Loriciels's Championship Ski on the Amstrad

Side Kick scales one of the 69, thousand million possible screens in Action Force II on the Spectrum

Revealing fun from Anco's girlie version of Strip Poker II (that's for boys, the boysie version for girls comes later) - Amiga screen

Attacking the opponent in Go!'s Street Fighter - Spectrum screen
The life forms of three prestigious government officials have been captured by the dreaded Dream Demon. He now has the vital information to formulate his evil plans. Overcome the Two Headed Monster, the Demi-Demons and the final confrontation with the Dream Demon himself and then only you, the DREAM WARRIOR, can save the world.

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THE PRICE OF MAGIK: “Another superb adventure ... their best yet” — Commodore User. Also a Crash Smash.

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We take it for granted that software personalities spring fully-made into the public glare of limelight, but Mel Croucher knows better . . .

The recent Computer Arena 88 (for more details see item in news, page 9) proved to me yet again that not only is everyone involved with the software industry a complete loony, but that they are also extremely likeable people; if I had tried to invent this month’s little investigation, I doubt if I could have come up with a stranger collection of true confessions. So here they are folks, the little seedlings from which the flowers of British computing grew, the spontaneous answers to my simple question: ‘Hello darling, tell me about your first wee jobbie’.

**PAULINE GARDSDEN**
Leather Goddess of Infogrames

**MEL:** Hello Darling, tell me about your first wee jobbie.

**PAULINE:** The first time, eh? You never forget your first time, do you. Yes, I used to pack groceries in my father's shop.

**MEL:** So did Margaret Thatcher. How old were you?

**PAULINE:** Three! And you're right. I went on to a major position serving my father's shop.

**MEL:** Three! So you got a proper job?

**PAULINE:** Spot on. But my first full-time job was as a secretary in the textile business. I suppose that's a form of software. In fact I spent quite a lot of time in the rag trade. I can still measure you for a suit just by looking at you.

**MEL:** I dare you.

**PAULINE:** Thirty-one and a half inside leg, and you dress on the left.

**MEL:** I am humbled at your skill, and must close this interview in not a little confusion.

**STEPHEN HALL**
Grand Slam Supremo

**MEL:** Hello Darling, tell me about your first wee jobbie. I mean before you were so impressed you bought the company.

**STEPHEN:** I worked at Harrods.

**MEL:** Yes, that's very impressive.

**STEPHEN:** Yeah, my job was to stick down the envelopes. I lasted half a day: ran out of spit! Then I became an office boy.

**MEL:** Not a very glamorous beginning, if I may say so.

**STEPHEN:** Well that's where you're wrong, mate. You see, I was office boy to Lord Lew Grade. That was in 1968, after I graduated from business school. Not glamorous! You're joking. Those were the days of Danger Man, The Saint, when ATV was at its height, the most successful slice of the entertainment industry.

**MEL:** So Lew Greed taught you all you know.

**STEPHEN:** Wrong again. He shattered all by business illusions overnight. He turned round and told me I was a schmuck.

**MEL:** I could have told you that.

**STEPHEN:** I can't decide whether to invite you to lunch or get my lawyer to pay you a visit. Yeah, it was an amazing time and place to start out my working life, we were involved with the Palladium, Drury Lane, the great Bowling Alley Boom, oh yes, and I was involved when the group purchased an outfit called Lenmac. Do you know who they were?

**MEL:** Tell me, Stephen.

**STEPHEN:** Oh, I thought you might have heard of them, John Lennon and Paul McCartney. Software? To me it's simply another extension of the entertainment business that I've grown up with. It's all showbiz.

He was so impressed with the company, he bought it – Stephen Hall

**NIKKI PENNY**
Thrusting Figurehead of Loriciel

**MEL:** Hello Darling, thank you for not taking me to court over this month's Mercy Dash, and tell me about your first wee jobbie.

**NIKKI:** Are you ready for this? Okay, here goes. Deep breath and tell all: I used to be employed by a well known manufacturer of rubber goods, and prior to that I was deeply into promotional inflatables, known as Windy Balloons!

**MEL:** entire paragraph removed on grounds of self indulgence, bad spelling and even worse taste, (The Editor)

**NIKKI:** No, they were bigger than that. 25-foot long blimps, rubber dirigibles.

**MEL:** Buddyell! Did you model for them, or simply blow into them to achieve the necessary inflation?

**NIKKI:** My function was as the designer, and I didn't have to wrap my lips around them. We just shoved a vacuum cleaner up them and threw it into reverse.

**MEL:** Well, I suppose that was yet another kind of software. Tell me something, were you trained for all this?

**NIKKI:** No, they were bigger than that. I had no patience with sticky-fingered offenders, youth custody, but mainly for junior schools. I'm sorry to say that I had no patience with sticky-fingered...
little boys who wanted to sit on my knee.

**MEL:** Sorry, I'll get off. By the way, what's that perfume you're wearing?
**NIKKI:** Piscisist... spelled with a Y.

Never a penny less after a Penny More - debonaire Dominic Wheatley

**DOMINIC WHEATLEY**
The baritone half of Domark

**MEL:** Hello Darling, tell me about your first wee jobbie.

**DOMINIC:** My first honest penny, dear boy? Passing round the champers in a French chateau for Moet & Chandon. Dreadfully hard work, of course, all that Dom Perignon and caviar, entertaining visiting Japanese and Americans. I often wondered how I could ever keep it up, once I'd got used to the good life, don't you know.

**MEL:** How terrible, that must have been extremely difficult work. But have you ever had any really hard times?

**DOMINIC:** When I was in the army.

**MEL:** Which regiment?

**DOMINIC:** The Irish Guards, marching up and down outside Buckingham Palace in a funny hat, you get the picture? Dropping in for a bite of lunch with the Royals.

**MEL:** Yes, I suppose that could be hard work.

**DOMINIC:** No, that wasn't the hard bit. The hard bit was carrying an armful of rifles through the jungles of Belize, riddled with worms that I'd caught off pigs.

**MEL:** The jungles were riddled with worms?

**DOMINIC:** Oh no, I was riddled with worms, the worms were breeding in me.

**MEL:** Um, Dominic, would you mind passing the sick bag...?

**JIM MACKONNOCHIE**
Managing Director and sweettalker, Mirrorsoft

**MEL:** Hello Darling, tell me about your first wee jobbie.

**JIM:** I never give interviews.

**MEL:** But I owe you a favour.

**JIM:** Oh, well in that case, how can I refuse you? I joined the Royal Navy, Second Lieutenant, sweating around Aden, cradling a sten gun around Aden.

**MEL:** Did you see any action?

**JIM:** I am glad to say no.)

**ANDREW HEWSON**
Eponymous silent man of Hewson Ltd

**MEL:** Hello Darling, tell me about your first wee jobbie.

**ANDREW:** South End Seafront.

**MEL:** Don't tell me: you were the deck-chair attendant.

**ANDREW:** Oh much better than that. I was the bingo caller. It cost the little old ladies a tenner a go. and I wasn't getting paid much more.

**MEL:** When was the first time you ever got a fiver in your hand?

**ANDREW:** Yes, I can remember that, it was when I was cutting grass for the Council.

**MEL:** But then you started knocking around with some famous people. Tutenkhamen and Jesus Christ, wasn't it?

**ANDREW:** I worked at the British Museum for seven years doing radio carbon dating, and you're right, I handled the Tutenkhamen stuff, bits of dead bodies. But I never got the Curse of the Mummy's Tomb as far as I know. And yes, we used to get phone calls from the Society for the Turin Shroud wanting us to prove that Jesus left his photographic negative all over the place.

**MEL:** How far back did your radio carbon techniques take you?

**ANDREW:** All the way. Neolithic flint mines, I even wrote a paper that was published in Nature about my work on prehistoric deer antlers.

**MEL:** So how on earth did you get into computers?

**ANDREW:** Under the earth, actually. When I started at the British Museum there wasn't a single computer in the place. By the time I left there must have been 40 or 50 of them, I became totally fascinated.

**MEL:** And the rest, to coin a phrase, is history.

"I handled bits of dead bodies." Andrew Hewson

**TRICIA PETERS**
Highest profile of CCS

**MEL:** Hello Darling, tell me about your first wee jobbie.

**TRICIA:** Treading grapes, or did your lot of heavy cases about.

**MEL:** You were paddling it?

**TRICIA:** I decided to throw my weight behind the software industry, I thought there might be more money behind the software industry. I put a seven-foot-high poster in the window with that single word on it. And in a word, that's it!

The strong-arm strategist - Tricia Peters of CCS

**IAN ANDREW**
Father-to-be of Incentive Software

**MEL:** Hello Darling, tell me about your first wee jobbie.

**IAN:** I was the tea boy for Stanley Gibbons, the stamp dealers.

**MEL:** You should have got together with Stephen Hall, he used to stick down envelopes. What was your first responsibility?

**IAN:** I was an insurance clerk for the Commercial Union, but I soon started my own business, specialist stuff for collectors of Post Office picture post cards.

**MEL:** You had your own premises?

**IAN:** Sure, but I soon discovered that I had got into a dead end, so I converted the shop overnight, and became a software house. It must have confused the shoppers. I only had one program, my entire stock consisted of that single title for sale. Splat!, and I put, a seven-foot-high poster in the window with that single word on it. And in a word, that's it!

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The strong-arm strategist - Tricia Peters of CCS

MEL: Program interrupt. Amend Curriculum Vitae data as follows: the real name: Rodney Waldheim. Education: Greta Garbo: Home for wayward boys and girls. Criminal Record: ...

FRANCIS LEE
A song a day: a Destiny Software

MEL: Hello Darling, tell me about your first wee jobbie.

FRANCIS: Carpet porter in Kensington, but I thought there must be something better in life than this.

MEL: What could be better?

FRANCIS: Assistant fishmonger, guts and fins and scary scales, but after three months I thought there must be something better in life than this.

MEL: But what could be better?

FRANCIS: Clerical Officer in the Civil Service, but I thought there must be something better in life than this.

MEL: And then ...

FRANCIS: And then rock’n’roll, the music business, I never looked back.

ROD COUSENS
Peripatetic god-king of Activision

MEL: Hello Darling, tell me about your first wee jobbie.

SYNTHETIC VOICE: Mr Cousens is not available, this is his security system speaking, and if that’s bloody Mr Croucher, sod off, I am connected directly to Mr Cousens’ legal advisers.

MEL: Hang on a sec, I boot up my patent superhacker, tumble a few passwords, switch on the Voodoo-emulator, and hello, this is Rod Cousens speaking. Hard copy please, my name is Rod Cousens, postman, pimp, politician ...

ASHLEY HILDEBRANDT
The power behind The Power House

MEL: Hello Darling, tell me about your first wee jobbie.

ASHLEY: Let me think now, what was I doing last week? Ah yes, I was with CRL.

MEL: No, I mean what was the first job you ever had?

ASHLEY: I just told you, I worked for CRL.

MEL: No, no. What other jobs did you have after leaving school or university, you know what I mean: paperboy, postman, pimp, politician ...

ASHLEY: The only job I ever had in my life was as assistant editor of a photographic magazine called Better Technique. Then I ...

MEL: Terrifying. What then?

ASHLEY: Then I...

JEFF MINTER
The genial shaman of Llamasoft

MEL: Hello Darling, tell me about your first wee jobbie.

JEFF: Oh, well, yeah, no, yeah, cleaning the bogs in a fork-lift truck factory. Yeah, 1978, I was just saving up for my first video console.

MEL: Then you worked on the farm, didn’t you?

JEFF: Right, that was a drag. Cycling 20 miles a day. Silly. There were no beasites unfortunately, I would have liked some beasites, but I was on this planting machine, I was pretty bored.

MEL: Thanks Jeff, I’ll let you get up now.

JEFF: Yeah, thanks, I suppose I’d better get up. By the way, I read one of your articles the other day.

MEL: Oh, what did you think?

JEFF: Yeah, you nearly got a fact right.
PROVE YOU’RE THE BEST IN BRITAIN!
IN THE FIRST EVER NATIONAL COMPUTER GAMES CHAMPIONSHIPS
(THEY’RE ARE ALMOST UPON US!)
SHOW THE WORLD WHAT YOU’RE MADE OF ...

Arranged by the publishers of THE GAMES MACHINE, the National Computer Games Championships are the first of their kind to be held in Britain. Compete in your region – and if you make it through the semi-finals you can fight it out, expenses paid, at the exciting finals at this year’s Earls Court Personal Computer Show! Fame before the whole world and big prizes for the two champions!

MAKE YOUR JOYSTICK COUNT ...

Fill in the coupon now – loads of CRASH and ZZAP! readers are doing the same! Closing date for entries is May 23.

VENUES

For all the fine print detailing entry rules and controlling regulations of this exciting championship, see last month’s TGM. We now have details of the six first-round venues:

(Midlands)
BIRMINGHAM SPORTS CENTRE
201 Balsall Heath Road
Highgate
Birmingham B29 9DL

(SW/Wales)
NAILS WORTH BOYS CLUB
Bath Road
Nailsworth, Nr Stroud
Gloucestershire

(N. Ireland)
SEALINK FERRY ’ST DAVID’
LARNE - STRANRAER
(full details will be supplied to selected contestants)

(Scotland)
PETTE-LORRE BOYS CLUB
Orchard Brae +
Edinburgh

(North)
HUNSLET BOYS CLUB
Hillside Road
Leeds LS10 1BP

(London/SE)
ST ANDREWS BOYS CLUB
12 Old Pye Street
Westminster
London SW1

All days are Saturdays – start times are 10.00am except the Sealink Ferry “St David”.

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 Signature .................................................................

Parent’s Name .................................................................

Please tick the regional heat venue you would like to attend:
□ Birmingham
□ Gloucester
□ Belfast (Larne-Stranraer Ferry)
□ Edinburgh
□ Leeds
□ London

In case for any reason you are asked to attend a venue other than the one you have already selected, please tick the next best alternative for you:

□ Birmingham
□ Gloucester
□ Belfast
□ Edinburgh
□ Leeds
□ London

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

OUT RUN high score is:

INDIANA JONES high score is:

720 high score is:

GAUNTLET II high score is:

RYGAR high score is:

OR 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!
GOING, GOING, NEARLY GONE!
YOUR LAST CHANCE TO
WIN AN AMIGA A500
AND MONITOR

TGM readers have gathered
that the Amiga is an amazing
machine

Here it is, the final chance in this series of three for one
lucky reader to win a brand new Amiga A500 complete
with 1081 monitor. Yes, three Amigas we've had, and
so far, two given away. Who will win this month? It
could be YOU!

If you're an 8-bit owner, now's your
chance to upgrade, and if you already
own an Amiga, why then win one for
your left hand. The first two
competitions resulted in simply floods
of entries, and it is no exaggeration
to say that our post room was awash
with hopeful envelopes. Obviously,
over the past few months TGM
readers have gathered that the Amiga
is an amazing machine with strong
capabilities for producing quality
graphics, stereo sound and for
running games and stunning utilities.
In fact the phrase 'I've got an Amiga'
now surpasses 'I've got a copy of
Spycatcher' in social circles. Anyway,
what you all want to know is . . .

HOW TO WIN THE AMIGA
A combination of cryptic clues and a
word-search forms this month's brain
 teaser. Hidden within the box of 156
letters are the names of 12 famous
computers, some old, some new,
some almost forgotten and several in
blue. Now, we're not expecting you to
find them without any help, so there
are 12 cryptic clues which correspond
to the names of the hidden
computers.

Having discovered the 12 mystery
identities, ring them round in an
obvious way (you can photocopy the
coupon if you prefer), fill in all the
details and send the whole caboodle
to: AMIGA COMP III, THE GAMES
MACHINE, PO Box 10, Ludlow,
Shropshire SY8 1DB

Entries must
arrive here by first post on May 19 and
the first one picked out of the specially
parked Ludlow Council skip outside
wins. All entrants must abide by the
standard competition rules detailed in
the masthead - anyone found not
doing so will be thoroughly blittered.

CRYPTIC CLUES
Suss 'em out and find 'em:
- A colourful machine from 1982 now with a sugary taste
- Everybody's favourite shoe box, and the name of a zzappy band
- A computer with links to a wild cat
- Jack's 16-bit machine
- Just what do you want to win?
- 'Elo Tosh, gotta a Japanese import?
- Of Alan Michael Sugar Trading
- One of the later international business machines - just the initials
- A fiery machine, Welsh in origin, most popular in its 32K format
- Sir Clive cut his quark-quarks before he took the leap
- Atmospheric Spectrum rival came in two forms
- Scotty beamed aboard a flan

Name .................................................................
Address ............................................................
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COMES TO LIFE...

/VOW 'S YOUR CHANCE TO BRING THE LEGENDARY CHARLIE CHAPLIN BACK TO LIFE IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE.

This new computer game is one way. Its unique concept allows you to direct the crazy antics of this famous screen-clown. Choose the script, cast the characters, select the scenery props and backdrops, then it's scene one! take one! camera! action!

Another way is by assembling our intriguing "flick-book" which demonstrates the secrets of film making. Simply cut out the pictures of Charlie, glue onto the tops of strips of stiffish paper 35mm x 85mm and staple all the pictures together in sequence with number one at the top. Flick as illustrated and before your very eyes the magic of movie making is demonstrated.

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CBM64/128 £9.99, £14.99
SPECTRUM £8.99
AMSTRAD CPC £9.99, £14.99
ATARI ST £9.99
IBM PC £24.99

U.S. Gold Ltd., Units 2/3, Holford Way, Holford, Birmingham B6 7AX. Tel: 021 356 3388

Screenshot from Atari ST

NOW'S YOUR CHANCE TO BRING THE LEGENDARY CHARLIE CHAPLIN BACK TO LIFE IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE.

This new computer game is one way. Its unique concept allows you to direct the crazy antics of this famous screen-clown. Choose the script, cast the characters, select the scenery props and backdrops, then it's scene one! take one! camera! action!

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CBM64/128 £9.99, £14.99
SPECTRUM £8.99
AMSTRAD CPC £9.99, £14.99
ATARI ST £19.99
IBM PC £24.99

U.S. Gold Ltd., Units 2/3, Holford Way, Holford, Birmingham B6 7AX. Tel: 021 356 3388
An amazing, new, interactive techno-toy is taking America by storm. Our New York correspondent, Marshal M Rosenthal, tells the story of Axlon’s TECHFORCE fighting robots in the form of a photoplay...

Welcome to the Planet Krim-Baba! I am Baby Face - the referee for today's game.

Both red and blue Progs - programmable robots - have sent their finest champions to compete. I have chosen one from each team.

Let them come forth!

Right -

Remember - your Inverser cannon can temporarily freeze your opponent dead in his tracks, but you only get one shot.

This is an energy crystal. The first Prog to carry it through the goal post wins.

Blue lost the toss -

So red will start with the ball -

The red Prog is tricky! Be careful.

Win any way you can!
GAME COMMENCES...

RED MUST BE HERE SOMEWHERE!
THAT BLUE PROG'S AS BLIND AS A BAT!

AAOOH!
URK!

RATS - I MISSED!

RED HOMES IN ON THE PRIZE!!!

BUT!
RED! YOU CHEATED!

THERE IS A PENALTY FOR CHEATING -

I HAVE TO STOP HIM - HMM...

RED ALMOST GOT ME - BETTER TRY A SHORT CUT!

THERE IS A PENALTY FOR CHEATING -
THE BLUE PROG IS THE WINNER!

Thus ends another day on the planet Krim-Baba.

Rockslide!!

This ought to slow Blue down.

A pile of rocks!!

Aahh!!

Blue's got the ball!

Red's already recovering! I better hurry.

There's that red son of a progb!

Let's see how he likes an invader blast!!

Invasion fire coming right up!
BATTLE BETWEEN PROG

Axlon's TECHFORCE explained

Blue may have won this encounter, but who knows what will happen when you take over control of the Red team? In order to do that - we had better check you out on the TECHFORCE setup. And keep in mind that this high-tech toy comes from Nolan Bushnell, the man who created Pong and started Atari.

The heart of the system is the Drive Base. This combination motorised tank and electronic nerve centre receives its instructions by remote control from either of the two Command Consoles (more about this later). Each base has a front mounted invader cannon of awesome power. Special perceptors, which are also on each Drive Base, react to the invader's invisible infrared beam when hit. This causes the Base to be deactivated for a short time. Normally, one of the two PROG (Programmable) Robot shells, Red - Demon/Blue - Protector, are placed onto a Drive Base. An internal connector mates them, and also activates lights on the Robot which flash when an invader beam strikes true.

A Drive Base Cap can also be placed onto the Base. It features a special surface which holds Lego type building blocks, so that you can make your own kind of robot or fighting figure. A set of ID tags complete the PROG, and these attach by velcro hooks to the robot's back.

Why is it so important to have the PROGs tagged? Because the real test comes when you take charge. For this, there are two Command Consoles - both which use radio-frequency (RF) to send commands to the Drive Bases. As each Base has a rotating ident dial in the bottom - it is possible to combine commands to control up to 16 PROGs simultaneously, or in any configuration that you choose. Keyboard buttons on the Command Console can be used, or plug in the ever popular joystick. You can switch between PROGs, create elaborate patterns, even commit them to the console's computer memory to carry out. Electronic beeps echo each command input, and there are even built-in battle formations ready to be put into effect with a press of a button. Plus switches designed for future enhancements. Batteries power everything, from the four C batteries of the Main Console to the eight AA batteries of each Drive Base (the second Console derives its power from the Main unit).

The basic kit consists of two Command Bases, two Drive Bases, and four Robot Shells: two each of Red and Blue. Also included are three Battle Barriers and two Energy Crystals, one green and one orange. The instruction manual also includes a variety of game setups, and there is a special kind of dust which can be used to hide the PROGs.

“...it is possible to combine commands to control up to 16 PROGs simultaneously...”

ABOUT 'BATTLE BETWEEN PROG'

IT IS always hard to 'show' a game in progress, especially if there is a lot of action and spontaneity which can be destroyed in a controlled setting. Battle Between Prog went the route of a photoplay, becoming a sort of high-tech Punch and Judy show. Daylight-balanced tungsten lights were used so that each shot could be viewed exactly as it would appear. A 35mm camera with a macro (closeup) lens was mounted on a tripod and combined with Ektachrome ISO 100 slide film. A fast film wasn't necessary since most of the exposures were taken between 1/4 and 1 second (a cable release was a necessity however). Each shot was lined up by consulting a story-board: a series of drawn images that told the entire story.

The special effects were a hoot to do. Since infrared beams are invisible, we cheated by using a low-powered industrial laser. To see the beam required more than just absolute darkness (the entire set had a black curtain running around it). There needed to be dust in the air for the laser beam to show, and you can just imagine how enjoyable it was doing over 30 'takes' while blowing chalk dust into the path of the beam - with no lights on at all, and different exposures being timed by counting 'one-one thousand, two-one thousand ...'. Not to mention the thrill of cleaning it all up afterwards. And remember, it is very dangerous to look directly into the beam of a laser... this includes the lens of a camera as well.

Babyface's destruction of the Red PROG was easier on the lungs, but still a bit tricky. A magician uses a special kind of tissue called Flash Paper, which burn very fast in a burst of yellow light. It looks a lot hotter than it really is, which was good since the PROG had to be returned to Axlon afterwards still (somewhat) in good condition. Pieces of Flash Paper were wadded up, and a small fuse made from it that was ignited with a punk (not a person). Varying the exposure was vital, since it wasn't possible to really tell how the flash would appear.

Once the slides were processed, all that needed to be done were the opening and closing credits. The two chosen slides were Genlocked (video-interfaced) through a video camera into an Amiga computer. Graphics were added, and the whole business was then photographed.

Battle Between Prog was produced, written and photographed by Marshal M Rosenthal. Art design/layout by Louie Volpe. Set provided by Fractures USA. Special effects by Steve Storozum.

Marshal M Rosenthal is a New-York based photographer and writer whose work takes him throughout the world. Rosenthal’s latest project, THE IMAGINATION WORKSHOP, is a cable show featuring the creative output of young people in all aspects of the visual arts. This is his first visit to the planet Kmm-Baba.
CINEMWARE presents

THE THREE STOOGES

Can THREE Stooges Save ONE orphanage From FORE closure?!

OUR HEROES
They can save the day by making ASSETS of themselves!

THE EVIL BANKER
He took their NEST EGG and told them to BEAT IT!

THE WIDOW and HER 3 BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTERS
They’re about to be thrown out on their ARREARS!

NOW PLAYING AT A DEALER NEAR YOU
In his final report from the International Toy & Hobby Fair, John Gilbert assesses the impact of microchip technology on trains and spiders.

Plastic has replaced wood in Toy Town. A company's survival depends as much on its sleek plastic image, colourful logos and the tales behind its toys as it does on moulded Bakelite product. If you miss out on Masters Of The Universe or Lasertag, all the philosophy behind them, you might as well apply for bankruptcy, if one of the big success stories of this year's International Toy and Hobby Fair, at Earls Court, was the success of a company which, less than six years ago, was facing financial ruin. It had relied on two types of traditional toy, the Tri-ang train set and the Scalextric racing car, for almost 70 years. Suddenly, computers, in the form of Sinclair Research, were in and Hornby's train's were stranded in the long, dark, tunnel of archaism.

Hornby, however - unlike Sinclair Research - is still a toy industry success story. Its long haul out of relative obscurity and into the bleeping light-show age of electronic product demonstrates the volatility of the toy industry.

The company's change in fortune started in late 1982 with a management buyout. The new team saw the need to diversify from its train and track product lines and within two years had moved into the girls' toy market with Flower Fairies, a range of poseable dolls created from the drawings of Cicely Mary Barker. Those were followed, in 1985, by a bunch of floppy-eared dogs, called Pound Puppies.

It wasn't until late 1985/86 that Hornby ventured into the toy train market again with Thomas The Tank Engine, a range of steam locomotives which re-awakened interest in trains. At the same time a resurgence of interest in motor racing was responsible for pushing up sales of Scalextric. By then, Hornby was interested in combining technology with its trains and race-track to add realism.

ON TRACK

Computerised control boxes and attention to detail mark the Hornby train releases for 1988. The long-awaited System 90 provides high power for the newer InterCity models - which in reality can reach speeds of 130mph. It also introduces a set of two hand-held controllers and a complex Catenary system which allows two trains to run on the same track, one using electricity from the rails and the other using an overhead wire system.

The overhead power supply system is used by the latest of Hornby's model engines, the InterCity Classes 90 and 91. They are the trains of the 21st century, according to British Rail, and it is likely that train sets up and down the country will never look the same again.

The futuristic image of British Rail - Hornby's newly toolled Class 91

Hornby is, of course, also keeping its train tracks linked to the past, but the classic steam and electric models it produces will contain more electronically - rather than pressure-, controlled details. The Stannier's 8F, for instance, will boast a glowing firebox.

RACING TECHNOLOGY

If Hornby hides the electronic technology of its train sets behind stylistic and historic exteriors, it is also keen to show off the futuristic capabilities of its new Scalextric motor racing range.

The main track attractions are the Electronic Overhead Start Gantry and the Electronic Lap Counter kit. The Gantry starts a race by showing the colour red, then a five-to-one countdown before allowing the cars past the starting grid. The lap counter notches up the number of circuits and includes two pit stop facilities at the trackside.

It is the new cars - and the Scalextric leap into the realms of fantasy - that generated the most excitement at the Toy Fair. Like Gremlin Graphics, Hornby has hied up the MASK cartoon licence, so you will be able to take control of Matt Trakker's famous Mask turbo car against Miles Mayhem's monstrous wheels. There are two MASK racing sets: MASK ThunderHawk Patrol and MASK ThunderHawk Attack. Both contain the usual lengths of track and the scale car, but the Attack pack introduces a flying leap feature which will have even the Mayhem ratpack shuddering in its grooves.

The more realistic racing cars include the Jaguar XJR-9, Porsche 956, Lotus Renault and Lotus Honda, all of which have some impressively advanced features. All new Porsches boast working brake lights, while the Lotus racers sport a turbo afterburn flash and smoke which pours from the back wheels during the rev up period, all controlled with gentle manipulation of the computerised hand-held control units.

A new range of state-of-the-art accessories also makes night racing more realistic. The hazard Long Chicane crash barrier includes flashing lights to make driving safer and the Public Address System gives a blow by blow account of the race. Track safety has also been improved with the introduction of Magnatraction which holds cars on the track using a method similar to that used by the Japanese on their hovering motor trains. Add to that the introduction of four wheel drive on many of the models, plus scale models of the World Championship and Formula One Silverstone track and you can see that Hornby has come a long way since the introduction of its clockwork train sets.
AURORA
If Scalextric looks impressive but complex, then the Aurora racing kits from Tomy, are impressive but compact; they fit onto the dining room floor rather than take over an attic.

The cars, controlled from a function box built into the track. This box contains three plugs, similar in construction to the Atari joystick ports.

Compact stack-track layouts from Tomy's Aurora range, incorporate the latest technology through joystick-style control.

UP THE SCALE
Radio controlled models are the current craze for youngsters and it is you find on most home computers. The car controllers also resemble a joystick with a simple trigger for acceleration and deceleration. Other controls, to set the number of laps in a race and the lanes in which the cars should drive, are built into the control box together with a simple switch which releases the cars at the start of a race.

You can also add the new Aurora AFX lap counter to the orange part of the track. It clocks up the laps for both cars independently using a dial system, rather than the more easily read LED digits from the Scalextric lap counter, but it is better situated, being at the side of the course rather than facing the on-coming cars.

The Aurora range contains four new racing sets. The first is the Formula One Dual, comprising two turbo-charged Formula One racers on the fast bend of a scale Grand Prix Circuit. There are eight feet of race track, two piers, six crash barriers and two plug-in hand controllers and a two-way race plug which allows cars to switch lanes.

Midnight Racers contains two AFX Turbo Firebirds with working headlights for night driving. The dual-level track layout comprises banked curves, four piers laid over the ground circuit and eight crash barriers.

The Ghost Racer set takes on the electronic power of Scalextric at its best with a built-in computer control centre for programming the number of laps and the speed of the cars. Ghost Racer cars, which include a Testarosa and Porsche 959, are ideal for lone racers who have no friends to take on. You can leave the computer to control one of the cars while you handle the other.

Finally, the Daredevil Rally set contains a Peugeot 205 GTI and Volkswagen Golf GTI - what(?)? They may not be your average racing car but the fun comes when you see what they're up against. The tortuous track includes a steep climb-and-drop wall, loop-the-loop, a high speed S-curve, nine piers and 12 crash barriers. If you did it for real you'd be in trouble.

POCKET PINBALL
Just as old console games find their way from the arcades onto home computers, so miniature electronic pinball machines are finding their way into the games market.

Tomy had two of the latest pinballs on show at the Toy Fair. The first, and smallest, is Atomic Pinball. The game board has banks of Proton Bumpers, which set off an electronic bell when hit by the metal ball. An electronic score board notches up the Particle Points as the ball thunkers through the gates and flips against the Factor Bumpers. Whether it stays in play or sinks into oblivion depends on your skill with the two flipper at the bottom of the board.

The big daddy of all pocket pinball machines, however, is the Astro Shooter. It boasts three flip controllers - one in the middle of the board and two at the bottom - and you will need them all to keep the ball in play! At the top are plastic gates, a hyper rail and two mega-bumpers, but it is the lower end of the playing area you have got to watch. Firstly there are the Kickout Craters which take the ball into a hole and spit it out when you're least expecting it. Then right at the bottom of the board Tomy have put a Rollover Forcefield. If you manage to keep the ball in play over it for long enough, all the lights in the field's circle light up and you score a bonus.

Even the score facility on Astro Shooter is as realistic as the game's bigger arcade brethren. The top set of digits shows the high score while the bottom shows your current success. Current scores can be reset by a push button but the high score remains on the table ready for the next game even when you disconnect the pinball from its mains power.

CUDDLERONIC
Finally, no visit to the Toy Fair would be complete without a report on something cute and cuddly. I guarantee these furry things will be all the rage at Christmas and who'll blame mums when they fall for - yes you've guessed it - electronic pets.

There are three of them, all as insipid as each other and all incredibly irritating. Take Petster Spider - please. He likes a quiet doze, especially when his batteries are run down, but if you make a move towards him his eyes light up and he crawls towards you, ready to play games.

If spiders aren't your bag, especially giant furry ones, then try the two cats in the range. Petster is the world's first electronic pussy. He is remote controlled and moves in any direction you tell him. He also purrs, flashes his eyes and plays on his own, which generally means moving about randomly and getting in everyone's way - just like the real thing.

Alternatively, if a small cat isn't enough of a handful, give a home to Petster Deluxe, another moggie. This one likes to be stroked, but his microchip brain ensures that one minute he's docile and the next he's leaping out of your lap. Great fun, if you're that way inclined.

WHERE AND WHEN
All the toys I have mentioned in these two reports from the Earls Court Toy Fair are available now from Hamleys in London and will be available from toy stockists such as Zodiac and WH Smith within the next six months. The Hornby and Bandai products will soon be available from branches of the Beatties toy chain, and the Tomy pocket electronic games should be available from bigger branches of Dixons shortly.
On a hostile world, you can run, but you can’t hide, ...Teladon is waiting

Commodore 64/128 Cassette £8.99
& Disk £12.99

Mail Order: Activision (UK) Ltd.
Units 3 & 4 Lloyds Close, Finedon Road
Industrial Estate, Wellingborough
Northampton NN8 4SR (0933) 76768
Vampire's Empire, market for the first time - Gremlin houses are entering the 16-bit games across Atari ST, Amiga and a record amount - no less than 26 increase and this issue we review launched. In that first issue only THE GAMES MACHINE was straight to the top of the market's going - on the ST. Mastertronic is pleased see that this month's top game. It's all very promising for owners of conversions of Predator. US Gold have Actlvision make an appearance with Graphics makes an appearance with Mastertronic's Sidewinder, is GeeBee Air Rally 68 Cybernoid 51 Cybernoid 51 GeeBee Air Rally 68 Gutz 51 Ikari Warriors 38 Impossible Mission II 74 Pac-Land 70 Power At Sea 40 Power At Sea 40 Samurai Warrior 72 Sherlock 89 Sherlock 89 Strike Fleet 52 Strike Fleet 52 Vampire's Empire 69 Vampire's Empire 69 Blood Valley 43 Blood Valley 43 Federation 43 Federation 43 Ikari Warriors 38 Ikari Warriors 38 GeeBee Air Rally 58 GeeBee Air Rally 58 Loads Of Midnight 90 Loads Of Midnight 90 Mega Apocalypse 58 Mega Apocalypse 58 Rastan 59 Rastan 59 Teladan 45 Teladan 45 Yeli 46 Yeli 46 AMSTRAD CPC 43 AMSTRAD CPC 43 Blood Valley 43 Blood Valley 43 Gothik 55 Gothik 55 Federation 50 Federation 50 Revenge Of Doh 45 Revenge Of Doh 45 LEAD REVIEWS SIDEWINDER Mastertronic kept this one under their hats - but it's simply wonderful - combining perfectly tuned playability with stunning 16-bit graphics. Proving itself as a better game than last month's Xenon, it's an absolute snip at £9.95 and you can find out all about it on . . .

USAS We finally received our MSX II in time to take a look at Usas from Konami, and what a beauty it is. Looking far too much like an arcade game for its own good, Konami's quick thinking platform game reveals itself on . . .

F1-SPRIT May is proving a good month for MSX owners as Konami again come up with the goods. F1-Spirit is a one- or two-player racing game with a host of additional features.

IKARI WARRIORS Elite are back in action with Ikari Warriors. Originally released for the Amstrad CPC 18 months ago, the other versions are finally here and the programmers have made a fine job converting the SNK coin-op. Watch out for the 16-bit versions soon!

PAC-LAND The ever-hungry yellow creature is back with a vengeance in Quicksilva's arcade conversion of Namco's Pac-Land. Retaining all the features, simplistic graphics and identical music of the coin-op original, it's all been squeezed to fit inside a Commodore 64/128

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WHERE ARE MY CAR KEYS?

IKARI WARRIORS
Elite Systems

Two years ago, Ikari Warriors was released on the Amstrad CPC with the promise of other 8-bit versions to follow. It has taken Elite Systems over two years to fulfill that promise, but they have finally achieved it, with the added bonus of 16-bit versions to follow shortly, and all packaged in Elite's new-style large boxes.

Central America, the United States' backyard, is the setting for Elite's out and out shoot-'em-up Ikari Warriors. The scene is one of rebellion, bands of revolutionaries have captured US General Alexander Bonn and are now holding him prisoner in the US headquarters. Fortunately, just before he was taken prisoner, the General sent out a mayday which was picked up by two Ikari Warriors. These guys are pure fighting machines and just the men for the job when it comes to rescue missions involving use of maximum force.

Mishap sets in when the plane transporting the warriors is forced to crash land deep in the jungle, which is crawling with revolutionaries, enemy tanks and helicopters. These are the sort of men who have no qualms about shooting first and asking questions later. Clearly, only one thing remains: to get through, wasting the enemy en route.

It could be a bridge too far for the Spectrum warrior in this fine adaption to the 280 screen.

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

A long time coming but Ikari Warriors is finally here. Elite have had two years in which to get it right and the resulting program is an excellent, tough, constant action shoot-'em-up of the highest order. The game is slightly harder than the coin-op original, mainly because the warriors can shoot each other accidentally (which doesn't happen in the arcade game). Not surprisingly, the continue-play option has been taken out which means the entire game has to be completed in one go - a daunting task. The graphics do their job well, getting better as the warriors progress further. The playing area is faithfully copied from the original (albeit with a few minor adjustments) and overall there is very little difference in the game's appearance compared with the coin-op. Has it been worth the wait? It most certainly has!

OVERALL 87%

The Ikari Warrior (or Warriors if the two-player option is selected) moves through the jungle taking out the guards with grenades and bullets. Retreating guards leave behind supplies of ammunition and extras for Ikari Warriors to pick up. Extras include longer bullet range, an immediate-effect smart bomb and an extra boost to the destructive power of grenades. The latter is the most important of all as it enables warriors to launch grenades from a safe distance; but beware of...
SPECTRUM 48/128
Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £12.99
Ikari Warriors is a game which works best with two players, if only for the fun of working as a team. Despite smooth scrolling, high degree of graphic detail and variation, there's not an awful lot of room on screen in which to run around. Elite opted to place the status displays on either side of a resulting smaller combat zone, in turn scaling down the graphics as small as possible without losing any of the detail. To avoid potentially disastrous attribute clash, warriors and enemy soldiers are the same colour as the background, a simple solution which works well and makes the game pleasing to look at and play. With the comprehensive front end (including a novel Kempston Mouse control method), Ikari Warriors is enjoyable mindless blasting, worthy of any fan of the original.
OVERALL 84%

OTHER FORMATS
PC, Atari ST and Commodore 16/4 owners can expect to see Ikari Warriors on their machines priced at £19.99, £14.99 and £7.99 respectively. The original Amstrad version of two years ago is to be repackaged and re-released at the standard price of £9.99 on cassette and £14.98 on diskette.

stray grenades and bullets, for they are just as likely to hit your partner, losing him a life. Converted from the SNK coin-op, Ikari Warriors faithfully recreates the arcade machine in graphics, playability and general layout. There are some omissions such as the large enemy tank at the end of each region, but on the whole, the tactics used in the arcade original can be applied to the home computer versions with remarkable ease.

IS JUNGLE WAR FAIR?
Jumping into one of the many deserted tanks dotted around the play area provides you with much needed protection from bullets and allows you to cut a path through the enemy ranks. The tank's fuel level must be kept topped up or it explodes on reaching zero. Warning is given, but with only a few seconds in which to get clear, and a horde of guards taking pot shots nearby, it is risky. Careful driving is essential to avoid trundling over mines, while quick reactions and some slick steering are needed to dodge thrown grenades.

As the game progresses, helicopter gunships fly down the screen firing bullets all over the place, shell-firing tanks patrol the jungle paths and machine gun bunkers bar the way, unless destroyed with a well placed grenade.

The game continues through the jungle, across lakes, along wooden bridges and eventually into the enemy occupied US base to rescue the General and return home with the satisfaction of a job well done.

At the very start of the game, a warrior exits the crashed aeroplane - Commodore 64 screen

And this one's a Bridge To Fear; your lone Ikari warrior faces a horde of unpleasantness ahead – Spectrum screen

“... enjoyable mindless blasting – a constant action shoot-'em-up of the highest order . . .”

VERSION UPDATE

Knight takes castle

DARK CASTLE
Mirrorsoft

Atari ST: £24.99

MIRRORSOFT's gothic tale of heroic deeds arrives for the Atari ST. Built around a surprising number of platforms, ladders and swinging ropes, Dark Castle is home to the Black Knight, and as the brave adventurer, you must defeat him. The castle is made up of 14 deadly levels riddled with bats, rats and spooks that provide tough opposition. There is an ample supply of rocks dotted around with which to defend yourself, and as progression is made through the levels, additional weaponry – magic potions and fireballs – may be collected. Dark Castle was fully reviewed for the PC in TGM003 with an Amiga version update in TGM004.

COMMENT

This version of Dark Castle is little different to its Amiga counterpart. The gameplay remains awkward and frustrating due to the complexity of the character control: joystick and mouse or keyboard. Combining the badly designed control method with the continual swapping of three disks results in a slow and frustrating game. The graphics and sound are of a relatively high standard but they are not sufficient to counter the poor gameplay.

ATARI ST
OVERALL 47%
the Philippine islands became a key strategic base for the further conquest of Asia and Australasia by the Japanese in World War II. The war-torn archipelago became the site of land and sea battles whose names ring through history, Corregidor, Bataan and, in 1944, Leyte Gulf. One of World War II’s greatest naval conflicts, it signalled the end Japan’s domination of the Pacific. The US forces of Generals MacArthur and Nimitz, came together to culminate in the first landings on October 24 and 25. Simultaneously, the US fleet shattered the Japanese fleet, sinking most of it. The landings put the seal on MacArthur’s famous promise made at Corregidor in March 1942: ‘I shall return . . .’ Leyte Gulf marked the beginning of Japanese desperation, and during the clash the first of a new, terrifying weapon was used: the ‘Divine Wind’, better known as Kamikaze.

In the simulation the object is to capture four Japanese bases on the Philippine islands within 96 hours. Under player control is the American fleet, including a battleship, aircraft carrier and a cargo ship, each equipped, the fleet sails into the Pacific.

Stage One involves equipping the fleet prior to combat. In port fighters, bombers, fuel and troops are loaded. Space on each vessel is limited, necessitating shrewd allocation of resources if the fleet is to accomplish its task. Once equipped, the fleet sails into the Pacific.

From the bridge of the fleet battleship, the commander can access the main departments of his vessel. Messages are received by the communications officer, navigation provides a map showing vessel and target positions, a status screen shows the damage taken by each of the fleet’s main ships and weapons control screen is where all the offensive/defensive armament is activated.

The Gulf is patrolled by enemy destroyers, the navigation officer alerts the commander if they come into radar contact. Once contact is established a decision has to be made whether to launch an air attack or wait for the enemy vessel to come in range of the battleship’s guns. An air attack involves fighter planes diving in to take out the ship’s anti-aircraft guns and make it safe for bombers to finish the attack.

The air attack is a simple simulation screen where the player flies the planes towards the ship to take out selected targets while trying to avoid being shot down or crashing into the sea. Failure to eliminate anti-aircraft guns results in the bombers being shot out of the sky before they get near. If this happens, the commander can use the battleship’s guns on enemy destroyers. Once in range, a course heading broadside to the enemy is taken and guns elevated to fire deflection shots. A succession of hits will sink it, but all the time it is firing back, inflicting damage on the American fleet.

NO FRIENDLY SHORE

When land-based Japanese aircraft attack, the fleet’s anti-aircraft guns come into play. Kamikaze planes are the worst as they fly directly at the ship and, when shot down, collide causing severe damage (and possibly the end of the game). Elements of Beach Head are very much in evidence here as guns have to be set at the correct elevation and angle of deflection to hit the target.

Once the fleet comes in range of a base, the two-stage assault begins. First, coastal defences are bombarded by the battleship’s massive 16-inch guns. Any targeting mistakes can be corrected by using a binocular view to judge the angle of error and correct it for the next shot. Japanese bunkers lie towards the island’s end, so the entire coast defences must be passed before they come into view. The amount of damage inflicted determines the difficulty troops will face in assaulting and capturing the base.

To assault the base, select the number of troops to send in and the amphibious landing begins. Allocate too few and they will need reinforcing, send too many and there might not be enough men left to capture other bases.

The game is over when all four enemy bases are taken, the 96-hour time limit runs out or the fleet suffers severe damage and cannot complete the mission.

Attack land-based defences prior to landing the marines – Commodore 64

In Combat Control on board, which acts as a menu selection screen for the varied options – Commodore 64 screen

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

In many ways, Power At Sea is similar to Accolade’s previous release, Train, with simple, independent arcade sequences built together to form a game. There’s always a problem when it comes to introducing mini-arcade sections into programs: the amount of memory available restricts the mini-game’s complexity, resulting in limited depth of play – the problem with Power At Sea once mastered, the mini-games lose any of their challenge; the only demanding stage remains the fighter/bomber sequence which relies more on luck (to avoid being shot down) than anything. The subject matter of the Leyte Gulf battle is rich in potential and, to its credit, Power At Sea manages to bring together the main elements of the historic conflict. Unfortunately, like The Train, the game is far too easy and it would only take a couple of hours play before its appeal is exhausted.

OVERALL 65%

"... rich in potential, unfortunately the game is far too easy."
COMING SOON...

...the Hottest, Meanest Machine you’ve ever seen...
Blood Valley

Blood Valley is based on the Duelmaster Fighting Fantasy adventure book of the same name, written by Mark Smith and Jamie Thomson. These authors have previously contributed two titles to the Fighting Fantasy series, Talisman and Sword Of Samurai. They also participated in the software design of games based on these series, and Jamie co-wrote, for Games Workshop, what is now a classic adventure, The Tower Of Despair.

The action takes place in the evil and sinister Valley of Gad, wherein the reptilian ruler Archveult holds his annual hunt. A slave is set free at an ancient circle of standing stones, subsequently hunted down and cruelly put to death by the Archveult and his allies.

Blood Valley is for one or two players. In solo mode you are the quarry and may select one of three characters to play: priest, barbarian, or thief. Each has different characteristics which have to be utilised in order to complete the quests and objectives set that enable an escape. In two-player mode, one person plays the Archveult who, with allies Kritos Bloodheart, Karim the Assassin and the Demiveult, attempts to track down the second player. Using a full-screen map, each ally is positioned in the valley, ideally where you think the quarry may run. When the hunted enters a place inhabited by an ally, Archveult teleports there to do battle.

In the dark and sinister valley, something stirs: quarry on the top layer, hunter below in a two-player game – Amstrad screen

Blood Valley is deceptive. The graphics are better than average, the highly effective music is haunting and the scenario has strong potential. But running along from left to right, taking swipes at constantly attacking enemies makes for a very limited game, even with the various regions and different creatures to encounter. Graphically it’s a mixed bag: some areas are attractively presented while others are more abstract in appearance, making it difficult to determine where your character is in the valley. Animation is basic and on the whole limited.

OVERALL 41%
The Japanese are renowned for taking their leisure pursuits seriously. Earlier this year a game for the Nintendo, Dragon's Quest III, was released in the land of the rising sun and hyped to such an extent that it is rumoured over two million copies were sold on its first day in the shops – the user base for the Nintendo in Japan is ten million. Dragon's Quest I and II were converted to the MSX, unfortunately there are no plans to do the same with the third in the trilogy. But with Nintendo's plans for Europe still firmly shaded in corporate mystery, it is the MSX II machines which offer the best opportunity of seeing fresh Japanese games on our screens.

Centuries ago, the War God Induras banished Usas, the Supreme Mother God, and threw the four pieces of her sacred jewel to the winds.

'A party of Wit and Cles' (to quote the usually quirky English translation) – the two heroes – are attempting to find the broken jewel and achieve one of the greatest discoveries of the academic world. Their adventures lead them to many strange places – which all look remarkably similar – to fight many unusual enemies. The instructions are, for a Japanese game, commendably brief: three pages.

As is typical with Japanese software, the game's front-end is entertaining, polished and informative. It displays page after page of storyline which introduces the characters and gives a thorough background to the story. During all of which, a non-atmospheric tune plays.

The two archaeologists travel by car to the place of Temples, once they alight to continue their journey on foot. On arriving outside one of the five temples, you are asked if you would like to enter, if affirmative, you can choose which of the characters is to face the challenges within, and attempt to return with one of the four keys required to allow access to the fifth temple.

**TEMPLE FUGIT**

The two heroes have differing characteristics, Wit carries weapons and Cles is a kung fu expert; the powers of both may be increased, or changed, by picking up different keys – represented as a Japanese symbol or word – along the way. One of these symbols is the key to the end chamber of each level where battle with a demon awaits. If the creature is destroyed, one of the four keys to the main temple is yours and a magic beam transports you back outside.

The other characteristics, jumping ability and speed, can be enhanced by collecting coins of different values; having sufficient money means you can trade with it for enhancements.

Usas is basically a platform and ladders game although, in the refreshingly original Japanese style, it is full of intricacies which lift it high above others of the genre. All the characters are drawn cartoon-style and move with precise realism. The puzzles and dangers faced within the temples are fascinating, infuriating, dumbfounding and impressive.

The backdrops are nicely drawn and full of detail. An occasional glitch flickers onto the screen but is insufficient to threaten the enjoyment of play. The accompanying sound is effective although the continuous musical track can become irritating.

**MSX II**

Cartridge: £19.95

The Japanese don't take their games software too seriously. Like their films – of the Godzilla ilk – they throw everything in while maintaining a basic scenario. The imagination of the programmers knows no bounds, progress in their games is a must if only to find out what bizarre event takes place on the next screen. Usas is a lovely example of this style, incorporating weird and wonderful monsters with crazy obstacles and obscure weapons, all programmed with polish and finesse. Attention to detail is omnipresent and a fantastic, impelling urge to get to the final battle is instilled by the steady progress one makes with practice – and the enjoyment to be gleaned by making it. It is good to have MSX back in THE GAMES MACHINE office.

**OVERALL 88%**

"... refreshingly original, infuriating, dumbfounding and impressive..."
The name of Nick Eaton, Teladori's author, is firmly linked with that of Destiny boss Francis Lee. Nick wrote Sorderon's Shadow, published by Beyond, and Greyfell, published by Starlite—both companies for which Francis Lee worked before forming Destiny.

Teladon, an evil psychopathic genius on the moon, is threatening to destroy the world and it is up to you to stop him. But be that as it may, the game has two distinct types of play: a 3-D section, reminiscent in appearance of Micronaut One (but only as a craft that fires heat-seeking missiles, and spinners which destroy you on contact. Both may be either avoided or shot with lasers. Other obstacles include locked gates, and laser beam fences. Objects to aid you may also be found along the way: keys, extra lives, laser energy, and oxygen pills are available to be picked up and utilised. Trapdoors and air chutes transport you up or down a level — although this is unwelcome if the current level has not been thoroughly explored. The gameplay continues in this shortening tunnels and decreasing complexes — until Teladon's HQ is reached. Once there, you must fight your way to the self-destruct button to end Teladon's threat. There is some interest at the start, but because of the indifferent gameplay, these two time-worn game formats never rise above being clichés, and boredom soon deflates the urge to carry on.

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**SPECTRUM 48K**
Cassette: £8.95

Graphically the game is bland with a plump sprite wobbling across sparse backdrops, and indistinct enemy craft trying their best to terrify people. The line-drawn and shaded 3-D tunnels with little apparent depth are unconvincing — so are the aliens popping suddenly into full-blown existence. Of course Teladon runs in 128 mode, but there's no advantage, not even the poor sound FX are enhanced and the tune's the same.

OVERALL 46%

**OTHER FORMATS**
There are no plans at present to release this game in any other format.

"... indifferent gameplay and boredom soon deflate the urge to carry on."

**VERSION UPDATE**

**Bouncing back**

**ARKANOID, REVENGE OF DOH**
Imagine

Amstrad Cassette: £8.95

REVIEWED last issue (TGM005) for the Spectrum, Revenge Of Doh appears this month for the Amstrad. Including enhanced sound effects and music courtesy of Gary Biasillo and colourful graphics created by Ivan Horn, Doh kneads revenge.

Forget the scenario of a huge alien spacecraft and the time-
FREEZE A JOLLY GOOD FELLOW

YETI
Destiny

Since Europeans began to explore Tibet, they have reported legends of a huge ape-like creature called the Metoh-Kangmi - roughly translated, the filthy abominable snowman. The stories cover a huge area, from the Caucasus to the Himalayas, from the Pamirs through Mongolia, to the far eastern tip of Russia. In central Asia these creatures are called Mehteh, or Yetis, while tribes in the eastern regions refer to them as Almas. The Yeti has been part of the folklore of the Sherpas of central Asia these creatures are called Mehteh, or Yetis, from the Caucasus to the Himalayas, from the Pamirs through Mongolia, to the far eastern tip of Russia. In central Asia these creatures are called Mehteh, or Yetis, while tribes in the eastern regions refer to them as Almas. The Yeti has been part of the folklore of the Sherpas of Nepal, the Tibetans, the Bhutanese and Sikkimese for centuries, and their children are brought up on legends of the Yeti in much the same way as English children are warned of the Bogeyman. Yetti - available first on the Spectrum, is by veteran Christian Urquhart.

SPECTRUM
Cassette: £8.95
Graphically Yeti is good, incorporating large, colourful and well drawn obstacles. The animated creatures chase the explorer across the snowy foothills of the Himalayas as if they mean real business. Yeti doesn't involve particularly original gameplay, yet the elements combine well. The Yeti is involved in only a small section toward the end, which gives rise to the notion that the game could actually have been called anything! Despite this, Yeti is well implemented and good fun to play, certainly not abominable.

OVERALL 69%

OTHER FORMATS
A Commodore 64 version is set for release although at the time of going to press Destiny could not confirm a release date. There are no plans for Amstrad or 16-bit conversions as yet.

VERSION UPDATE
Soap operandum

BONE CRUNCHER
Superior Software

Amiga
Diskette: £14.95

FIRST released for the Commodore 64 and BBC earlier this year, and gaining 70% in TGM004, Amiga owners may now rest easy with the knowledge that Bone Cruncher is available for their machine, should they desire it. Under the player's control Bono, the entrepreneurial dragon, travels around a many-leveled maze making soap for filthy monsters whilst trying to avoid his enemies, the Glocks and the Spiders. The layout of the first few mazes in this Boulderdash familiar, are relatively simple to deal with - but the deeper Bono goes the harder it becomes.

AMIGA
OVERALL 61%

Many men have attempted to capture the abominable snowman, all have failed. Yeti - capitalising on Chris Bonnington's much-publicised seek-and-communicate expedition - revolves around a modern expedition whose objective is to capture the elusive creature at all costs. Armed with ten grenades, a rifle containing 50 rounds of ammunition and three lives, you, as the brave explorer, trek across the wild, snowy wastes in search of your quarry. The game begins at base camp, first objective being to survive long enough to reach the end of level 1. Obstacles both animate and inanimate block your path; huge buddhas throw bolts of lightning, mad meandering monks vie with each other to try and kill you, and mystical wonders ceaselessly hinder your journey - until you shoot them. Many obstacles are only passable by destroying them with a grenade. Although a careful eye must be kept on the ammunition level. Fortunately supplies are scattered around the playing area, and moving over them restocks your inventory.

STAY FROSTY

There is another hazard to be faced; much of the game is set in mountainous Tibet where frostbite is a real threat. Constant monitoring of your body temperature meter is required, if it drops too low you are turned into a human icicle, although collecting a mystical fluid prevents this from happening.

Crunching through the snow, blasting everything in sight with bullets and grenades proves to be very enjoyable in this blend of shoot-'em-up and pick-'em-up played across a series of horizontal flick screens, which often reminds of Exolon. The eponymous Yeti is occasionally glimpsed during the first three levels, but is impossible to catch until the fourth. Only then is the player is given the chance to ensnare it, and prove the legend of the Yeti to be true.

"... blasting everything in sight proves to be very enjoyable ... "

COMMENT

Little different to that of the Commodore 64, the Amiga characters are slightly better defined. The monster grows, speech and the theme tune which spiced up the Commodore version are gone, and the tune which does play is mediocre. Bone's bowel trouble is the only sound effect unique to the Amiga version, which hardly strains the might of a 512K memory. Bone Cruncher on the Amiga plays just as well as the 8-bit game and represents a cleverly designed and enjoyable puzzle, but it lacks any attempt at improvement over the smaller machine versions.

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Little different to that of the Commodore 64, the Amiga characters are slightly better defined. The monster grows, speech and the theme tune which spiced up the Commodore version are gone, and the tune which does play is mediocre. Bone's bowel trouble is the only sound effect unique to the Amiga version, which hardly strains the might of a 512K memory. Bone Cruncher on the Amiga plays just as well as the 8-bit game and represents a cleverly designed and enjoyable puzzle, but it lacks any attempt at improvement over the smaller machine versions.

STAY FROSTY

There is another hazard to be faced; much of the game is set in mountainous Tibet where frostbite is a real threat. Constant monitoring of your body temperature meter is required, if it drops too low you are turned into a human icicle, although collecting a mystical fluid prevents this from happening.

Crunching through the snow, blasting everything in sight with bullets and grenades proves to be very enjoyable in this blend of shoot-'em-up and pick-'em-up played across a series of horizontal flick screens, which often reminds of Exolon. The eponymous Yeti is occasionally glimpsed during the first three levels, but is impossible to catch until the fourth. Only then is the player is given the chance to ensnare it, and prove the legend of the Yeti to be true.

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COMMENT

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Puck Off!

Blastaball has quite a history; it was originally written for the 8-bit formats under the title Hyperbowl and released at a budget price. Following a conversion to the Atari ST, it became part of Arcadia's Super Select System, and from that coin-op, has now been downloaded onto Amiga. The Amiga version of Blastaball was converted by Pete Waterfield and D Anderson who together form part of Icon Design.

Set in the future, Blastaball is a on-one-on competitive sport derived from ice hockey. Players compete on the Blastaball board, viewed from above, attempting to score points by bashing a massive puck into the opponent's goal area. Each game has a time limit of three minutes or is halted by the referee if either player scores nine points. Young Kreezor escapes, imprisoning them in caverns far beneath Snowman's land. With red sweets he properties he can utilise by moving diamond-shaped sweets whose ends come across three differing levels, filled with platforms and monsters. The game's many levels, filled with platforms and Kreezer-munching monsters provide plenty of pixel-perfect hazardous action. Although frustration can reign at first, with practice Hickey can be made to perform death-defying leaps and bounds across the screen, at which point the game becomes enjoyable. This implementation, as one of Icon Design, does not expect it to be on par with Xenon — also part of the Arcadia range — it is a neat offering, and enjoyable as a two-player game, but could lose its appeal after some time.

Overall 65%

COMMENT

Frost Byte's ST graphics are bright and colourful, with delightfully evil looking monsters. The game's many levels, filled with platforms and Kreezer-munching monsters provide plenty of pixel-perfect hazardous action. Although frustration can reign at first, with practice Hickey can be made to perform death-defying leaps and bounds across the screen, at which point the game becomes enjoyable. This implementation, as one might expect from a straight 8-bit upgrade at a budget price, does not use the Atari's full potential, but the overall impression is one of competence.

Atari ST OVERALL 65%

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REVIEWS

SIDEWINDER
Mastertronic

Following Xenon and Rockford – The Arcade Game, comes yet another of Arcadia’s coin-ops converted to the Amiga home computer – the machine which forms the basis of the actual arcade machine. Unlike the two earlier releases however, Sidewinder hits the streets under Mastertronic’s own name and very much at a 16-bit budget price.

To end a stalemate in the galaxy-wide war, the aliens have launched Star Killer, a gargantuan spaceship as big as a small planet. Earth’s entire fleet was sent out to destroy the monstrous spaceship – to little effect. Only the finest flaw in the leviathan’s armour offers a slender hope – a mistake in the docking bay design which might allow a single seat fighter access to the craft’s interior. That will be you, of course.

Once inside Star Killer, the fighter emerges in the water distribution level. Interceptors and numerous gun emplacements mean that surviving this area will be difficult, although power packs floating down the screen can be picked up to boost the rate and destructiveness of firepower. On later levels power packs can turn the fighter semi-transparent, making it invulnerable to enemy fighters, or alternatively allow hovering to enable time to completely destroy ground targets in that area. All power packs are limited in endurance by time and distance covered.

BROAD APPEAL

At the end of the water distribution level there is a corridor which, in combination with a short disk access, will take the fighter through to the next level. Here hydroponics are used to produce a wide variety of crops for the aliens which their well-armed crawlers gather in. Besides the usual gun emplacements and interceptors – five types in all – there are also mouthes in the arid sands which fire yet more missiles when they show themselves. The next section is the residential level followed by the flight deck and finally the control level – destroy this and the Star Killer will blow up. To ensure Sidewinder’s broad appeal, Mastertronic have thoughtfully included an excellent choice of five different difficulty levels, from Beginner to Master, all of which can be selected and changed while in play by pressing the F1 key. There is also a two-player option, with each player taking it in turn rather than both being on screen at the same time. A great deal of game design has gone into Sidewinder to ensure maximum playability. The opponents always seem to be fair; once their threat is identified they can be reacted to quickly, sometimes almost subconsciously, and attention moved to the next wave of enemy fire. This can lead to a great deal happening on screen, all of which the player can cope with until some unexpected new factor upsets the calculations.

AMIGA
Diskette: £9.99

Sidewinder might appear to be the latest in a long-line of graphically superb Amiga shoot-'em-ups, and visually it is of arcade quality, but it is set above the competition by three important factors. Firstly the sonic; these are an aural delight which a reliable source at TGM identifies as owing a lot to, if not actually being, digitised from the BBC Dr Who sound FX album. Our favourite is the sound of the fighter’s bullets thudding on enemy armour, but they’re all very effective – and in stereo too. Second, is the ability to chose your own difficulty level, making it playable to a wide-range of people. In addition there’s also the option to play the first levels, which might become easy, on a high difficulty setting, then switch to an easier one for unfamiliar levels. The most important factor, however, is Sidewinder’s sheer playability, without which none of the rest would matter. At the same time the game never seems to demand the rigid pattern-following some arcade games impose on players. In short Sidewinder is a fun shoot-'em-up which, at the price, is a must.

OVERALL 93%

“Sidewinder is a fun shoot-'em-up which, at the price, is a must.”
THE INSIDES STORY

GUTZ
Special FX/Ocean

Ocean's Special FX team have been hard at work again after last month's epic blaster, Firefly. Gutz is classy shoot-'em-up, from programmer Robbie Tinman with graphics by Andy Rixon and musical accompaniment from Fred Gray. The storyline and the game's objectives conjure up distinct images of the coin-op Alien Syndrome.

Investigating a ten million ton alien ambling slowly through space is no picnic - except for the alien when you prove incompetent. Fortunately the planet-eating brute decided not to chew but merely swallow you whole, leaving you relatively safe within its major intestine.

The objective is to travel through the alien's body - split into 16 sections (four levels, with four sub-levels each) - destroying its kidneys, lungs, heart and brain; one of these major organs appears at the end of each level.

The graphics are nicely drawn and thankfully not as gory as you might expect!

ORGAN-ISER

The body of the alien is a complex maze of passages and dead-ends infested by a multitude of pests and parasites, all of which are deadly. Extra armament can be collected throughout the journey.

Different weapons kill different pests - there is no single weapon available that can defeat all the varieties encountered. An extra life is awarded at 10,000 points, which is mean, considering the amount of mayhem faced.

A map may be found on level 1 and it can be used at any time to show your exact location in the maze. However, its use is restricted by a time limit.

In preparation to kill the organs, three parts of a laser cannon and a key to the protection chamber have to be located within the sub-levels. Having defeated a parasite-splitting organ the next level is made accessible, and this format continues until the brain is reached and destroyed.

COMMODORE 64/128
Cassette: £8.95

Gutz is the kind of game to get worked up over. Although it is not frustrating, should concentration lapse within the complicated mazes, you could find yourself on a hiding to nowhere. Gutz is immediately playable - the map and first weapon are not far from the starting point - but as progress is made, so the gameplay becomes increasingly difficult. Although the animation is slick, the sound - while good - does little to enhance atmosphere, and generally Gutz is not as polished as Firefly. But it still provides a challenge and instils immense satisfaction as each level is completed.

OVERALL 77%

VERSION UPDATE

Conversion of the month

RAFFAELE GECCO's futuristic shoot-'em-up is a massive Spectrum/Amstrad hit reviewed TGM006. The C64 conversion, by Nick Jones, has been done very much keeping in mind past complaints that Spectrum-to-Commodore conversions are frowned upon if the resulting game retains its graphical origins too much.

A series of interconnected rooms lead to depots where Cybernoid - the fighting machine - aims to deposit valuable supplies retrieved from renegade robot forces that have invaded the planet and left it barren of all supplies. There is only one route to follow through the tunnel as, having entered one room, you cannot retreat. Rooms are equipped with automatic defence systems and swar with enemy robots - though Cybernoid has a series of six weaponry systems to fight with. Strategic use of the weapons is essential - different rooms need different use of weapons to overcome individual hazards.

COMMENT

Cybernoid, an excellent strategic shoot-'em-up, is equally as impressive on the Commodore as its Spectrum and Amstrad counterparts. The colour used is, unlike the extensively bright Spectrum version, mainly metallic - blues, greys and purples with the odd bit of galactic greenery. This has the advantage of giving the game atmosphere - of a sort. Quite a novelty for the Commodore is the Define Keys options, and surprisingly Cybernoid plays a lot better on keys than joystick. Sound has been well executed, with either a theme tune or sound FX running throughout the game. Cybernoid retains its addictive challenge and represents one of the best Commodore this month.

COMMODORE 64/128
OVERALL 85%
Once again the Lucasfilm team of Noah Falstein, Ken Macklin and Larry Holland, who last gave us the PHM Pegasus, have turned in a seafaring simulation.

This team of writers - whose interests range from fantasy artwork to prehistoric archaeology - are already planning their next collaboration, but it's a well-kept secret.

Ten missions are on offer, from a simple patrol through to World War III conflicts against Russian naval and air forces. Alternatively, the seasoned commander can try the campaign made up of the four most difficult scenarios on the disk. Whatever the decision, load and save options are available upon completing a mission.

Once a mission has been selected, the Nato shipyard is displayed. Vessels from each selected, the Nato shipyard is and save options are available whatever the decision, load disk. Whatever the decision, load and save options are available upon completing a mission.

Once the fleet is ready, the mission begins. Following in the same style as PHM Pegasus, Strike Fleet offers two views, one from the bridge of the currently controlled ship and a map view showing the combat area and the vessels detected within it. Orders can be issued from the map screen to individual ships or the fleet as a whole and, if necessary, the fleet can be split up into smaller groups, very useful if a large area of sea has to be searched quickly.

FLEET OF STRENGTH

The Pegasus influence is also apparent in the bridge view. Split into three, the top section is the binocular view of targetted craft and target data, the middle section shows the ocean ahead and the lower third displays the main systems of the currently controlled ship. Extra features available to the Strike Fleet commander include a sonar display for detecting enemy attack submarines, on board helicopters to provide wide range radar and sonar cover, remote and manual tracking systems and an extensive array of defensive and offensive weapons.

During a mission, the commander can expect to encounter patrol boats, cargo ships, mighty battle cruisers, missile frigates, attack submarines and air force bombers as well as the deadly anti-ship missiles frequently launched. In all conflicts the commander is faced with the decision to fire first or wait until fired upon. The decision made determines the fate of the fleet and unwarranted provocation of the enemy invariably leads to total fleet destruction and a court-martial. The key to success is to exercise caution at all times, use limited force and above all try to keep the fleet intact.

On the armament front, anti-ship and anti-air missiles are available, a ship gun provides long range firepower, submarines can be taken out with torpedoes or ASROC missiles. As a last ditch defence against incoming missiles, chaff can be launched or the Phalanx close-in gun activated.

Lucasfilm know what makes a good game. Strike Fleet has action, strategy, depth and playability. Not quite a departure from PHM Pegasus but enjoyable nonetheless.

COMMODORE 64

Diskette: £14.95

The challenge is even stronger in Strike Fleet than its predecessor, PHM Pegasus. The ten missions are no pushover. Even the first few tasks, such as the relatively low-risk Stark Realities mission can pose problems if you're not careful. Graphically, the game closely follows the successful style of PHM Pegasus, and is absorbing, thought-provoking, demanding and a highly realistic computer representation of modern naval warfare.

OVERALL 85%

OTHER FORMATS

There are no plans to convert to any other format.

"Strike Fleet has action, strategy, depth and playability."
you HAVE BEEN SWALLOWED! EATEN ALIVE BY AN EXTREMELY HUNGRY, TEN MILLION TONNE MEGA-BEING THE SIZE OF THE MOON, ON A JOURNEY TO EARTH FOR ITS MAIN COURSE!

NOW TRAPPED WITHIN THIS RAVENOUS MONSTER FIGHT ITS ANTIBODIES TO GAIN ACCESS TO THE MAIN FUNCTIONS IN ORDER TO SHUT THEM DOWN - AND THAT'S NOT EASY! THEN BUILD A SPECIAL WEAPON, BREACH THE DEFENSIVE DOORS ... JUST FOR STARTERS!

S.P.E.C.I.A.L. FX BY ocean

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Initiating his internal computer, Bob Winner, android No. 0, could at last breathe again... New York... the Docks were deserted... or were they? No! The OTHER ONE was there... one of the men sent to destroy him... He had a mission to complete, but first he needed to find the weapons to defeat his opponents. A gun-fight, a boxing bout, a kick fight. But that was not all. He knew he would have to overcome many other obstacles. The quicksand and marshes, the giant wasps he knew would attack him.

Strength alone would not suffice. He needed intelligence and wits if he was ever to reach the secret temple...
CLONED AGAIN

GOTHIK
Firebird

The list of games which have cloned Gauntlet since its arrival on the home computer scene is extensive. It is a genre which has tended to be successful to date, although few have seriously challenged the gameplay or addictiveness of the original. Could the new Firebird release, GOTHIK be the one to topple Gauntlet from its pedestal?

The wizard Hasrinaxx – an accomplished mage – was a great friend to the people of Belorn. Life was good until one dark day an evil lord arrived, heading a great army. The people feared the tyrant evil lord arrived, and they would not bear arms against him. Hasrinaxx tried in vain to defeat the conquerors, but without help from the people he failed and was taken prisoner.

The evil lord enslaved the people and set them to work building a castle. When complete, he cast a spell over Hasrinaxx to ensure the wizard could never be set free. He split the mage's body into six parts, and sealed each in a secret chamber guarded by a ferocious demon.

One day a young warrior was passing the castle, when a mysterious voice spoke to him, beckoning him to enter and rescue the wizard. He could not refuse. You take the part of the warrior, honour bound to recover and reunite the six parts of Hasrinaxx's body.

FLUID DRUID

Gothik offers alternate characters to play: Olga, who possesses strong magical powers, or Olaf, strong of arm and swift in the use of arrows. Three weapons are available at first: lightning bolts, arrows and fireballs – the latter being capable of destroying walls.

The game display is in traditional Gauntlet style, ie: seen in plan form from above. Potions to both aid and hinder are hidden within the castle which can increase your weapon inventory and power, nullify enemy fire and befriend new creatures. Their effect may last for only a few seconds or for up to a minute.

Other useful items to be found are: food to replenish energy, gold, firestorms, quivers, the chalice of wisdom, magic relics, shields, and bonus lives. Some are to be found in corridors. Others in rooms guarded by bracken – which thankfully may be incinerated by using a fireball. However, beware, excessive use of either fireballs or lightning bolts depletes your magic strength rapidly.

Once a level has been successfully explored and the bonus items collected, entering a portal whisks you on to the next level.

VERSION UPDATE
The old grey fox

SKYFOX
Electronic Arts

Atari ST: £14.95

FOUR years after its first software flight – it was a big Commodore 64 hit, and didn't fare too badly on the Spectrum – Skyfox has been rolled out on the Atari ST's electronic runway. The action may be set on a Federation asteroid base, but, in a startling similarity to Earth, it too has a requirement for inexperienced pilots to save it from certain destruction. The craft designed to undertake this task, Skyfox, is equipped with lasers, heat-seeking and radar-guided missiles. This armament is put to good use when taking on enemy motherships capable of producing tanks and jets which aim to destroy Skyfox and its vital bases.

For pilots lacking the skill to instantly tackle one of the seven different invasion scenarios, there are eight training missions to practice on and five skill levels.

AMSTRAD CPC
Cassette: £8.95
Diskette: £14.95

Gothik is a competent example of the Gauntlet genre. Though bright and cheerful, it slightly bloated character sprites stomping around the dungeon. The music and sound effects are jolly enough, though nothing spectacular. Animation is basic: the main character doesn't move his/her legs when walking vertically, and on occasion looks like he/she never left. Olga and Olaf look too similar on the option screen, thankfully their respective names are highlighted to avoid too much confusion.

OVERALL 57%

OTHER FORMATS
The Amstrad version wins the 8-bit release stakes by a hair's breadth – two others should be available by the time you read this: Commodore 64/128, Cassette £9.95, Diskette: £12.95 and Spectrum: Cassette £7.95

"...Gothik is a competent example of the Gauntlet genre..."

COMMENT

COMBINING strategic elements with rapid-fire air-to-air and air-to-ground arcade action, Skyfox should be good. Unfortunately the action, while competent, is nothing special, and the strategic element – destroying the motherships first while guarding home-bases – is simplistic. No attempt has been made to rewrite the game in the interim, it is an exact copy of the 64 version of old. At its low 16-bit price, Skyfox offers reasonable fun, but nothing to seriously compete with the likes of either Gunship or, indeed, more recent Electronic Arts releases.

ATARI ST
OVERALL 60%
The accompanying instructions - and some useful background on how nuclear reactors operate - also give an interesting account of the famous nuclear mishap, plus some useful information about the famous sprite has been dressed up in costume. According to which one of five worlds he visits Rockford appears as either a hunter, chef, cowboy, spaceman or doctor. This Arcadia coin-op conversion remains essentially the same as when Boulder Dash first appeared: to escape from each level Rockford has to pack up a specific number of objects and find the exit door before time runs out. On some screens getting objects simply involves moving boulders by either pushing them or munching the stuff they rest on. Puzzles of this sort can be very intricate and on later screens there are added complications such as needing to kill monsters by dropping boulders on them and using explosions to destroy walls.

A status line at the top of the screen shows the number of treasures you need to collect, time remaining, lives left, level number and which world you are on. Each world contains four levels, (the order differs according to your computer make) and each level is made up of four screens - there are 80 screens overall. Given that visually Rockford is not great - it never relied on that - and sound maintains a low profile, the fact remains that the underlying gameplay is as addictive and challenging as ever - simple to play but very difficult to master.

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The computer runs checks on the systems, shown on screen as messages. These inform you of dangerous pressures or temperatures in the core which could lead to problem situations. Your task is to adjust the status of one or more systems using the command window in the lower part of the screen. If the simulation indicates that a vital part of the reactor system is failing, there is the possibility of a heat buildup or a radiation leak. If you cannot quickly think of a solution to the problem, the best alternative is to initiate a SCRAM (effectively shutting down the plant) and evacuate!

Despite the sensationalism of the packaging, Chernobyl is really a very straightforward, unoffensive simulation with nothing much in the way of exciting action. Its interest lies mainly in the
Our man Albatross

ROLLING THUNDER
US Gold

Commodore 64/128
Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £11.99

Namco’s coin-op game, Rolling Thunder, fully reviewed for the Spectrum and Amstrad CPC in TGM 004, is now available for the Commodore 64/128. Assuming the role of undercover cop Albatross and undertaking his battle against Geldra, you fight your way through ten levels of multi-scrolling action, tackling the obstacles and armed opposition encountered. The further you get the tougher the action. To complete the game, Albatross has to fight his way to, and subsequently defeat Maboo, head of the evil organisation intent on world domination.

OVERALL 74%

OTHER FORMATS

8-bit versions may follow on Mastertronic’s new budget-plus MAD-X range.

"... the gameplay is as addictive and challenging as ever."

Chernobyl gives a strong, if simplified, feeling of control over the reactor. The game can be bewildering at first, but a great deal of satisfaction is gained once you begin to successfully maintain the plant. One of several rather tedious looking screens – Commodore 64

COMMODORE 64/128

Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £11.99

Graphically reminiscent of Open University lectures, with functional, colourful and clear diagrams, Chernobyl does provide a credible simulation with reasonable grabbing potential if you have the patience to persevere, and while you do, it’s supported by some very atmospheric and disturbing sound FX. As a simulation it’s good (though the instructions could have been clearer), as a game it’s reasonable: either way, it’s engrossing and unusual enough to deserve attention, despite the silly box.

OVERALL 64%
THE FLINTSTONES
GrandSlam Entertainments

Taking time off from advertising breakfast cereals, the Flintstones will soon appear on most home computers via GrandSlam Entertainments. It isn't the first time the famous stone-age family has been pixelated, Quicksilva had a less than first-rate attempt with Yabba Dabba Doo when the company was under Argus Press - the umbrella that so impressed Stephen Hall, he bought it, and with it rights to a subsequent Flintstones game. The programming is by Teque Software Development, who also did the well-received Terramex.

The only excitement Fred 'Twinkle Toes' Flintstone wants in life, is to do battle with Barney 'Butter Fingers' Rubble in a game of bowls at the Bedrock Super-Bowl. But life is never so simple: before he is allowed to, there is a promise made to Wilma to fulfill: redecorate the living room.

Fred's mood is as grey as the paint he daubs on the walls, but he has to hurry if he wants to finish before the bowling alley closes. A ladder helps reach the top of the wall, but when he moves lower down Fred has to watch out for young Pebbles who has decided to scribble on the stonework. Returning his daughter to her playpen entails Fred dropping the brush, and since this is actually a squirrel, it happily bounds about until he can recapture the damned thing.

Scoring is somewhat out of the ordinary: passing time is shown by an hourglass, when the sand runs out. Fred loses one of four mini-hourglasses, when all are lost, he loses one of four lives and has to start his task again. When this happens, Fred doesn't start gaining points again until he scores more than on his previous attempt.

DIY complete, it is time to climb into the car and race to the Super-Bowl before it closes. Avoiding the many rocks on the road is quite a task though. Hitting any at high speed results in a wheel dropping off, forcing Fred to stop and replace it before he can continue his journey. These delays can be fatal if Fred is late and the alley closed - he loses a life.

IN LIKE FLINTSTONE

Once at the bowling alley the contest begins. The screen is divided in two: on the left side Fred stands ready to bowl, you can move him across the alley to select where he throws from. You can also set the spin he puts on the ball and control the speed of the throw.

Every prehistoric Fred's dream: an afternoon spent playing bowls with yer mates down at the Bedrock Alley.

VERSION UPDATE
Planet carefully

MEGA-APOCALYPSE
Martech

Spectrum: £8.99
RELEASED on the Commodore 64 late last year, Mega-Apocalypse enjoyed a great deal of acclaim as a superb update of Crazy Comets. The scenario, then as now, is refreshingly direct - travel through space, find strange new worlds and destroy them. Divided into two sections, in the first you add equipment to your ship by crashing into some objects, while avoiding collisions with the comets whizzing about the screen. In the second alien worlds whirl around in dazzling combat manoeuvres attempting to collide with you. When they first appear in the distance, the planets can be despatched easily, but growing nearer, they require numerous hits to destroy them. At a level's end a mega-planet must be disposed of before the next level can be reached. Another equipment screen follows and the whole cycle is repeated. Other nuisances are comets which appear without warning at the edges of the screens and large planets that can materialise anywhere.

COMMENT

Mega-Apocalypse is yet another example of the well-worn truism that Commodore 64 shoot-'em-ups rarely convert well to the Spectrum. The Commodore version included a stunning star field, speech and a two-players on screen option - none of these appear on the Spectrum game. Music and sound effects are reasonable on the 128, but non-existent on the 48K version. Equipment add-ons are purported to be numerous, but on initial levels all that's available is a joint rotate-ship and auto-fire system. The latter allows rotation to be controlled by the fire button, which gets confusing on equipment screens as control then reverts back to normal. Difficult and repetitive Mega-Apocalypse's magic has largely been lost in the conversion.

SPECTRUM
OVERALL 55%
with the fire button. As in a standard ten-pin bowling game, each player gets two throws per turn (or frame) and ten frames per game, unless a player gets a strike — in which case he might have another frame added on at the end. Three games make up a match meaning Fred gets to bowl 60 times before proceeding onto the next section.

At the end of each turn Barney is shown having his two bowls. Unlike all the other game sections, the bowling has no time limit, even if Fred loses he can go onto the final section. Watching Barney bowl may initially give helpful hints, but soon becomes an unnecessary time-waster in very long games. The length of each game is made yet longer by the long-winded restacking of the pins after each bowl — this is taking realism too far.

Incentive to do well is provided by points, with Fred’s bowling score being doubled and added to his game total — once Barney's score is subtracted — at the end of each game.

Fred eventually returns home to find Wilma distressed by the disappearance of Pebbles, he sets off to search for his daughter and finds her clinging to a girder on a building site. The site is haunted by enormous nuts and bolts which have to be avoided. Should he be too cautious however, time runs out and Fred loses a life. Should Mr Flintstone lose all his lives, Barney will rescue Pebbles showing Fred to be a miserable failure.

**SPECTRUM 48K**
- Cassette: £8.95
- Diskette: £12.95

**AMSTRAD CPC**
- Cassette: £8.95
- Diskette: £14.95

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

**MSX II**
- Cassette: £8.95
- Release date: end of April. THE GAMES MACHINE is reliably informed that all formats will have gameplay identical to the review above — even the Spectrum will have a digitised ‘Yabba Dabba Doo!’ at its start.

**SPECTRUM**
- Cassette: £7.95
- Spectrum - 3 Diskette: £14.95

MARANNA was a peaceful land, until the wicked wizard, Karg came along. Thwarted in his attempts to overthrow the throne, Karg takes revenge by opening a mystical portal that allows access from the pits of hell. Evil creatures now roam the land leaving death and chaos in their wake. Fortunately one man has proved himself capable of facing the demonic hordes: the king of Maranna, Rastan.

You take the part of Rastan and undertake his task to travel through the kingdom destroying all in his path until you reach the distant land ruled by Karg. There you must face and defeat the evil one in his deadliest guise — the soul sucking dragon.

The game is split into six levels, with each one filled with blood-thirsty creatures from hell — necessitating the five lives awarded to Rastan.

Armed with a basic sword at the outset, Rastan finds more powerful weapons as he traverses the landscape; a mace, an axe and a lethal fire sword. Killing the demons earns points and reveals any useful objects they may be carrying, including a shield that reduces damage, medicine to replenish energy, and a rod that awards a bonus. Only when Rastan has fought his way through the many realms of his besieged kingdom, can he finally challenge Karg, defeat him and restore peace once more to Maranna.

Nicely detailed graphics help this excellent Spectrum romp

**COMMENT**
Rastan Saga is a great hack and slash game in the best tradition. Graphically sound, the macho, axe-wielding Barbarian sprite cheerfully slaughters his way across the nicely detailed backdrops. The various demonic hordes are also well drawn and fulfill their attempts to slay Rastan with great zeal. The game hooks you from the start, and great enjoyment is to be found hacking the evil minions and sending them back to the hell from which they spawned. Overall an enjoyable romp through the violent world of the Barbarian king.

**SPECTRUM**
- Overall 85%

**AMIGA**
- Diskette: £19.95

The Flintstones has graphics that could challenge the TV cartoon which, together with an excellent rendition of the theme-tune, played throughout, plus a digitised ‘Yabba Dabba Doo’, establishes first class presentation. The game is no less impressive, although from the beginning, progress is difficult — perhaps, with only 20 screens in total, they thought players should work damned hard to see them! However, the aesthetic appeal created by the sound and graphics is sufficient to impel you to reach the next screen or level. If you have the patience, The Flintstones could provide an amusing, if generally tough challenge.

**OVERALL 76%**
on the rebound

pinball construction set

Electronic Arts

In a way, this should really be a Version Update review, because Pinball Construction Set made its first appearance on the Commodore 64 back in 1985 on the Ariosolsoft label. But as that was over two years ago now, it seems only fair to give this new PC version the full treatment. Critical response to the original 8-bit kit was highly favourable. Now Electronic Arts are making it available to PC owners in the UK.

Pinball Construction Set, or PCS, is just what it claims to be - a complete pinball design utility which requires no programming skills whatsoever. Once designed games can be saved to disk for later playing, and just to give you the flavour of things there are five example games included.

The main screen display is divided in two vertically: blank pinball table on the left, design icons on the right. Of these, 17 are pinball parts - flippers, bumpers etc. in the form of polygons, which can be moved over onto the table by using the hand pointer. Included among these parts are such things as magnets to twist the ball's movement and lanes to make pathways for the ball. In addition, there are several command icons for use in designing the polygons used in the pinball game.

shape of things to come

The first of these reshape icons, an arrow, creates control squares on the polygons and game sides when selected. If the pointer - now an arrow - is placed on one of these squares, the shape can be dragged into a dramatic new form. More control squares can be added by the second icon - a hammer - or eliminated by the third icon - scissors. This last function is useful if you have pulled something into an unworkable new form - delete the square and the mistake disappears too. But be warned, the flexibility of this system of design and the ease with which it can be done, means that the pinball novice (as we discovered at THE GAME'S MACHINE when one such had a go) can rapidly design tables of manifest unplayability.

Next command icon is a paint brush with three colour choices below. (A wide choice of these three colours can be cycled through on some machines - and doesn't include standard background black.) At the crudest level the brush and paints can be used simply to change the colour of selected shapes. However when used in conjunction with a magnifying glass icon then pretty much anything on the board, plus the score/title area to the right, can be decorated a pixel at a time. If you have the patience you could do a fancy logo for the game.

Testing the game under construction is performed by another icon, while a world symbol gives the player control over gravity, ball speed, bumper kick and the elasticity of sides and flippers. The next icon means the player can establish scores and even sounds for targets, plus bonuses. The final icon is a disk by which games can be saved, loaded, played and copied. Copies can only be played with the PCS disk.)

Amstrad PC players should note that the joystick option refers to analogue joysticks used with a joystick card.

pc

Diskette: £14.95

Pinball Construction Set is without any doubt the last word in such utilities. Its icon system is essentially straightforward, though with such a wealth of options extremely complex results can be obtained - given sufficient patience. If you're a fan of pinball games PCS is unmissable and could even be used to recreate favourite pinball tables such as Spy Hunter and Space Shuttle. For non-fans the enormous range of options available might prove enticing for the creative but essentially it is just a pinball game, and whether you like such games or not should essentially govern your reaction to this admittedly superb utility.

overall 84%

"Pinball Construction Set is without doubt the last word in such utilities."

version update

a prime evil

predator activism

Atari ST Diskette: £14.99

All the gore and ultra-violence of the latest Arnold Schwarzenegger film comes to the ST from Activision. In Predator - the game of the film - you step into the shoes of Schwarzenegger, leader of a crack team of commandos on a rescue mission in the Central American jungle. Things go wrong when the team is forced to retreat after the mission is aborted. Then real bloodshed begins as the team encounters the Predator, a hunter from another world, immense in strength and agility. For full game details of this multi-load horizontally scrolling shoot'em-up, see the other formats review in TGM005.

comment

The scrolling isn't perfect but is kept to a minimum and doesn't detract from the gameplay. In some places, the colour scheme is not as subtle as the greys and greens found in the Commodore 64 game, and there is the odd graphical mistake - the ability to walk through bodies and tree trunks for example. Sound takes a back seat for much of the game, with grenade explosions, bullet effects and the whirr of helicopter blades at the start. The theme tune in the introductory sequence is jolly and out of context with the game and its non-stop violent action.

On the whole Predator is an enjoyable shoot'em-up with some neat effects but a disappointingly straightforward conversion from its 8-bit predecessors.

atari st

overall 70%
On a daring salvage mission, you beam aboard the generation ship Pandora.

Something is wrong. Crew members have mysteriously died. The ship's seventh-generation computer has turned renegade. Just how evil is it?

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FAR AWAY IN A LAND WHERE TIME STOOD STILL...

...A SUDDEN ROCK-FALL THREATENS TO KILL OUR HERO

ARGHH!!

WHERE TIME STOOD STILL

ARRRRR... GOOD LORD!

DANGER LOOMS EVERYWHERE!!

OH NO!! CANNIBALS
RETURN TO GENESIS

A last year's PCW Show - the advent of THE GAMES MACHINE Issue One, Steve Bak, author of Goldrunner and Karate Kid II, loaded up an early game demo on TGM's Atari ST. It was a revelation, because, among other things, it was intended to demonstrate that, despite a firm belief to the contrary, the Atari ST can cope with high-speed, horizontal, parallax scrolling using all 16 colours. Steve proved his point, the demo is now a complete game - Return To Genesis.

Originally the project was titled Conword 50 since it was intended to use cloned scientists to experiment on artificially created worlds. In the year 4600 12 scientists were selected for cloning, due to advanced medical treatment all were in effect immortal. Together with hundreds of androids, the clones were sent to their respective worlds and allowed to get on with their work.

They said it couldn't be done, but this is 16-colour, ultra-high-speed parallax scrolling on the ST - so there!

The discoveries these people made benefitted Mankind enormously and created the new legend of Genesis.

Then in 6204 the Zaphir invasion of the artificial planets began. Mechanauts, shocktroops, effortlessly overwhelmed planetary defences and were considered so powerful that no-one dared intervene. The Federation decided that any attempt to help the clones could only endanger themselves. So the scientists were left to survive as best they could... until now. The Mechanauts have become embroiled in a war with Heridus, and their hold over the occupied planets has greatly weakened.

CLONE ON THE RANGE

Remembering their debt to the scientists, the Federation despatched Group Captain O'Rourke to initiate a rescue of the clones. A spaceship was quickly readied, its only armament a simple laser gun. However once some of the 12 scientist clones are rescued they might be able to contribute their expertise, and add special project enhancements to the ship.

Return To Genesis is essentially a two-way horizontally-scrolling shoot-'em-up with quite excellent parallax movement of the background features. Besides being drawn, the background also contributes to gameplay by acting as obstacles, tunnels or corridors. Flying into aspects of the scenery at high speed does not harm the ship, but could bounce it back into the gunfire of a pursuing Mechanaut ship.

Each world houses 12 scientists, represented by a waving, spacesuited figure; they can be rescued by flying over them, or killed if a careless shot should hit them. Once rescued, a scientist can be made part of the crew by pressing the help button; this presents you with pictures of the scientists on board, any of whom can be asked to contribute their talents to the ship's defences, though not all will be able to help.

On returning to the action the chosen scientist's add-on capability can be activated. Abilities include: triple-fire, rear-fire, invisibility/invulnerability, smart-bombs and pinballs. If you die however, all the scientists are lost, and will not reappear on the world. Once every scientist is either rescued or killed, the ship goes on to the next of ten possible worlds.

To help you in your task there is a scanner under the play area which covers the entire world showing the location of the spacecraft, the scientists and enemies.

ATARI ST

Diskette: £19.95

The graphics move at a dazzling speed - even when static they are very pretty. The digitised speech is similarly impressive and quite abundant, though more of a frill than an integral part. At first, Return To Genesis is difficult, moving at high speed invariably results in the ship ending up as a pinball amongst the scenery, and turning the ship around to shoot enemies approaching from the rear awkwardly. With practice these objections fade and progress is made. Unfortunately the price of this progress generally seems to be a rigid gameplan for dealing with alien attacks, which are identical from game to game. This need for precision, and the rather limited amount of blasting involved, make Return To Genesis fiddly. Yet at the same time the outstanding graphics make success in reaching new levels very rewarding.

In conclusion, Return To Genesis is a worthy addition to the ranks of a well-worn computer genre.

OVERALL 81%

OTHER FORMATS

An Amiga version is planned.

"... outstanding graphics make success in reaching new levels very rewarding ..."
+3 MASTER DISCS

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As though it has just been let out of school after a particularly tough lesson learning about fractal mathematics, the Amiga is rejoicing in an unprecedented number of vertically scrolling shoot-'em-ups for playground relaxation; Black Shadow — one more in the growing line — is programmed by Zen Room Productions, with Jules Burt responsible for coding and Jon Law handling the graphics.

Earth is doomed to perpetual darkness when an unfriendly asteroid under alien control parks itself in an orbit which permanently eclipses the sun. Ships sent up to attack it have been destroyed by a forcefield, but the eggheads think they might be able to disrupt the shield long enough to allow one ship to get through. Infra-red scans have revealed huge quantities of attack-craft stored beneath the surface of the asteroid — which you can plan on having to face. Fortunately satellite photographs indicate that as well as military bases and industrial units there is a solar hyper-reactor on the asteroid. If you can destroy the reactor then the asteroid should also be destroyed.

Black Shadow features a one- or two-player option which, in the latter case, shows both players on screen at the same time, with both returning to the start if one is killed. If one player loses all his lives, the game is over for both.

Attractive pictures of either male or female characters — the pilots of the craft — are shown on screen above the scores, and a choice of joystick or mouse control is available. Normally you fire bullets, but if joystick or mouse is moved backwards on firing, a bomb is released. From the outset Black Shadow is hard: aliens meander down-screen and numerous ground installations constantly fire missiles, while more aliens emerge from the bottom of the screen forcing you to be looking everywhere at once.

OTHER FORMATS
A conversion is imminent for Commodore 64 — Cassette: £9.95. Diskette: £14.95. An Atari ST version is under consideration.

"... only average game graphics, poor sound FX, lack of originality and too-tough gameplay..."
PRETTY IN PINK
PINK PANTHER
Magic Bytes

Pink Panther - how come he's escaped being computerised for so long? - written by Rolf and Betina Lakamper, is the first Magic Bytes release marketed through Gremlin Graphics. Other products from this programming team include Western Games and Mission Elevator.

As usual, Pink Panther is flat broke. Work as a butler appeals - it means he can live luxuriously by day - and burgle the house at night. But the rich sleepwalk, and if his master should awake during the nocturnal pilfering, Inspector Clouseau is not far away. The reward for successfully burgling several houses is an ill-deserved holiday in the sunny South.

To start there are three choices: to the left a job shop, centre-scren a supermarket, right a holiday island - your ultimate destination. At the job shop Pink Panther chooses which of four available houses to work in - but only if he has the correct accessories will he get a job. Choosing a holiday without sufficient funds for the return flight ends the game.

Pink Panther arrives at night to find his master deep in a dreamy sleepwalk. A display at the screen's top shows how alert Pink Panther is, his thoughts - actually an action option menu - and a money bag to be filled. Acting quickly to stop sleepwalkers from bumping into anything is essential. Standing before the sleepwalker and pushing sends him in the opposite direction, and ringing a bell (selected from the thought bubble menu) should turn him either into or out of the screen. Other items, such as a trampoline and a board, help get somnambulists over obstacles.

"If control were easier Pink Panther might have been a reasonably demanding, but very repetitive game."

BIG DEAL
CARD SHARKS
Accolade

Playing cards is perhaps one of the oldest forms of entertainment. There are games for one, games for many, games of pure luck and games that require great skill and concentration to play well. Some are played simply for entertainment, while others include the chance of winning - and the risk of losing - high stakes.

Card Sharks, compiling three different games, was designed by Mike Lorenzen with graphics by Mimi Dogget and Richard Antaki. Card Sharks comprises three versions of Poker - five card draw, seven card stud and Texas hold 'em - and Hearts and Blackjack. The games require three computer players to act as opponents - which are picked from an available six characters. They include Luigi, Lady Vanderbilt and Milton who are all specialists at particular card game, and three well known political leaders, Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachov. Having chosen your game and opponents, play commences.

Card Sharks is played around a traditional green baize gambling table with your opponents - who all have their own personalities and continually remark on the game's progress - facing you, their facial expressions changing to suit the mood. These finishing touches add spice to the card games, injecting humour and instilling an interest in what would have otherwise been a straightforward simulation.

"... doesn't try to be anything else but an enjoyable, humorous, card simulation."

AMIGA

Diskette: £19.99

Character control needs to be precise and quick, but some aspects are irksome - sending the somnambulist in another direction by ringing a bell is particularly temperamental. With only one chance to get things right, playing Pink Panther proves frustrating. However, the graphics are quite good and well animated, while the theme tune is accurate. If control were easier Pink Panther might have been a reasonably demanding, but very repetitive game.

OVERALL 39%

ATARI ST

Diskette: £19.99

It's close, visually, to the Amiga game and the tune is also well represented. Scrolling is decidedly sluggish, making it slower to play, although sometimes easier. But where the Amiga version loads at one go, the ST requires very lengthy loads, both when the player dies and on choosing a level. After a few deaths these loads become irritating. With character control little improved, the ST game is not a lot of fun to play.

OVERALL 34%

OTHER FORMATS


THINK BUBBLE

The simulation aspect is written with accuracy and all the games play well, although it is the sort of game only likely to appeal to those with an interest in cards - it doesn't try to be anything else but an enjoyable, and at times humorous, card simulation.

OTHER FORMATS

There are no plans at present to convert Card Sharks to any other formats.

COMMODORE 64/128

Cassette: £9.95
Diskette: £14.95

Although potentially boring to non-card freaks, Card Sharks soon dispels any such fears as it gently drugs you into the world of gambling. The emphasis is on fun, and the simplistic (though effective) cartoon graphics coupled with the occasional jolly jingle, counter-balance the more serious side of getting into debt. The ease of play, the appropriate reactions of your opponents and greed all add up to make Card Sharks a thoroughly enjoyable card game.

OVERALL 75%
Our blood is mixed,
We are as one,
Let no man or beast come
between us,
And let nothing deter us from
our aim,
To avenge the deaths of our
parents,
And destroy the Scorpions,
DEATH TO THE
SCORPIANS

HERCULES –
SLAYER OF THE DAMNED
Son of the Gods, curse of his
fellow men, Hercules is set 12
awesome tasks to exonerate the
sin of murdering his children.
Armed by his divine fathers he
sets forth to face the hideous
skeleton hordes and ultimately
overcome the evil minotaur.
To slay the damned is his only
saviour in repenting his sins.

BLOOD BROTHERS
"Our blood is mixed,
We are as one,
Let no man or beast come
between us,
And let nothing deter us from
our aim,
To avenge the deaths of our
parents,
And destroy the Scorpions,
DEATH TO THE
SCORPIANS"
THE FLYING GEEBEBES

GEEBEE AIR RALLY

Activision

Take a trip back to the Thirties when airspeed mania gripped America in the form of high speed air races. These aviation events often lasted over ten days and could incorporate courses of more than 100 miles in length, with participants reaching speeds in excess of 250mph in their single seater aircraft. One of the most successful machines to take part in these races was a 'plane called the GeeBee, a craft with a huge engine and fuel tank to match, a very short wing span and a delicate rudder and flaps. Inspired by the heroic deeds of birdmen such as Johnny Daring (world airspeed record 1932), Steve Cartwright, author of the Hacker games and US Aliens, designed GeeBee Air Rally.

GeeBee Air Rally challenges the player to complete four courses against the clock in eight mid-air collisions barely rock the GeeBee, but a serious bump destroys the plane and the pilot is increasingly difficult game levels, and can be played at one of three pilot ranks: beginner, expert or ace. Every fourth course is a special event - either the player has to pop a set number of balloons or compete in a slalom speed race. The plane may be controlled via joystick or keyboard and can bank left and right, raise or lower altitude and alter its speed.

A MATTER OF COURSE

The flying sequences are interspersed with graphic scenes depicting after-race events such as the winning ceremony, the obligatory kiss from a local beauty queen or where the pilot landed when he bailed out.

Points are gained by staying on course; failure to do so or bumping another plane results in a time penalty being imposed. Minor

For comparison, here's the Amiga version flying screen automatically ejected to float peacefully back down to terra firma - he lives to race again. Below the primary game area is the instrument panel showing the 'plane's compass direction, its altitude, speed and throttle position. Two warning lights either side of the console flash when time is running out, the plane strays off course, or it is involved in a collision.

SPECTRUM

Cassette: £7.99

Sound is poor, the use of colour is occasionally garish, but in general the Spectrum's graphics work well. Furthermore with three races and one special event being loaded with each section, 48K owners should have little to complain about - although if you die in race 1, that section has to be reloaded. It is a pity that playability is weak. The first race is almost impossible to die on and the next two are only slightly harder. The balloon-popping special event is more difficult, but can soon be mastered if you do not attempt to get every bonus point. The next load offers more unchallenging races and then a slalom bonus section - which is very difficult.

OVERALL 55%

COMMODORE 64/128

Diskette: £14.99

Graphically Gee Bee Air Rally is good; the planes may be a little crude but they move smoothly, and slipping your wing under a competitor's to get past is a moment of real tension. The gameplay is a significant improvement over the Spectrum version - it is a lot harder. Competing aircraft loom on the horizon at a frightening pace and, since judging their height is difficult, the best tactic is hugging the ground, then climbing to pass them. Playable and exciting, Gee Bee Air Rally is worth considering - although like other versions it might get repetitive. The game regularly accesses the disk so the planned cassette version (£9.99, coming shortly) might not be so playable.

OVERALL 62%

AMIGA

Diskette: £19.99

GeeBee Air Rally is high on presentation - it begins with a short, pleasing opening sequence accompanied by quality sampled jazz music. The sound FX are equally as good, and graphically the game works to good effect, with solid planes flying into the distance at a fair speed. However, no matter how professional the whole package looks, the game still fails to grab any real attention due to its repetitive objectives.

OVERALL 63%

"... graphically the game works to good effect ..."
Vampires seem suitably immortal in their appeal to a wide-range of media, from books to films to computer games. Magic Bytes’s latest release — a rather camp look at the genre — is soon to be released on a broad range of popular computers. To make the most of implementations on 8- and 16-bit machines there are two versions.

**COMMODORE 64/128**

Cassette: £9.99  
Diskette: £14.99

The heart of the game is essentially made up of running around platforms and ramps with a puzzle element and time limit included to rack the brain. The caskets placed around the caverns on the 16-bit machines are absent, the monsters just appear out of nowhere. Van Helsing runs around too near to the edge of the screen, making it difficult to avoid the monsters, platform edges and trapdoors. However, it is enjoyable exploring the lair, setting up mirrors and then watching the beam of light reflect along its intended path. Although it can become frustrating should a mirror be misplaced and the beam wanders off course — an easy mistake to make due to the relatively small size of the screen. Graphically, Vampire’s Empire could have been better and there should be a lot more to do, but as a puzzle game it is above average.

**OVERALL 59%**

**AMIGA**  
Diskette: £19.99

Vampire’s Empire comes complete with mirrors already scattered throughout the lair and very detailed rooms, albeit fewer than the 8-bit versions — only 160, and the time limit is thankfully non-existent in the Amiga game. According to the German programmers these differences are due to a much harder screen layout and they believe the 16-bit players may require a little help. The thoughtfulness of the Amiga programmers is further demonstrated by excellent, if quite disgusting, sound effects and genuinely comic graphics. With such immaculate presentation the game’s humour is perfectly conveyed.

**OVERALL 79%**

**OTHER FORMATS**


Van Helsing almost bumps into an amorous blond vampire lad in the Commodore 64 version

“... disgusting sound effects and comic graphics . . . essentially running around platforms and ramps ...”
FAIRY ‘NOUGH

PAC-LAND
Quicksla

The eight-year-old arcade hero, the fellow that sent space invaders pac-ing, the guy everyone knows, finally makes a home computer comeback – Atari's rotund, yellow pill-popper, Pac-Man is back on your screens. Having gobbled his way through several adventures, he reappears on the Commodore 64/128 in Pac-Land – converted from the Namco coin-op by Gannon Designs, with music from David Whittaker’s Musicon Design.

In his latest adventure, Pac-Man has the task of rescuing a fairy who is lost in Pac-Land. At the start of the game, Pac has already performed the rescue, it is the return journey that forms the game. Pac can walk, run and jump across the landscape and its many obstacles: cacti, tree stumps, fire-hydrants, hills and conveyors.

That essential ingredient of the earliest game, the power pill has not been thrown out, though, and they exist as hovering, glowing globes, scattered here and there around Pac-Land. When collected, the on-screen ghosts turn into defeatable, quivering blue jellies. The fruit, too, remain and yield bonus points.

TRIBLY TROUBLE

Running through the sections of Pac-Land slowly diminishes Pac's energy level, shown by a row of small Pac-Men along the bottom of the screen. Should all energy be extinguished before a level is completed, Pac is attacked by the ghosts who strip him of one of his five lives. However, when he does reach the end of a level, the Fairy pops out from under his trilby – where he has been hiding her – and rewards him with additional points. The Fairy Queen also appears and gives him a pair of flying shoes to make his journey back through Pac-Land easier. Having finally reached home base, greeted by his wife and children, he discovers that another fairy is lost and Pac sets off once again.

Pac-Land is fiendishly simple, and with level after level of scrolling platform action, it proves incredibly addictive. It may at first appear cute and twee but by the end of the second level the action becomes manic and requires great joystick dexterity.

Pac-Land is played as a horizontally scrolling game, with, in effect, platforms. Pac can walk, run and jump across the landscape and its many obstacles: cacti, tree stumps, fire-hydrants, hills and conveyors.

Despite pre-release reviewers' qualms, Pac-Land has turned out to be a fine success. This is the forest – Commodore 64 screen.
THAT'S THE SPIRIT

F-1 SPIRIT: THE WAY TO FORMULA ONE
Konami

F-1 Spirit is another MSX II game by one of the typically unnamed Konami programming teams. Rather unusually for an overhead race game it comes complete with a huge range of options and won't even allow a player into an F-1 car until points have been earned with other machines. The game also incorporates the new SCC sound chip which offers a considerable improvement on the average MSX sonics.

As in real life, drivers won't be given a place on an F-1 team until they have proved themselves in one of the less expensive racing sports. You, as a novice racer, are given a choice of three races to enter; stock car, rally and F-3. Graphics and gameplay vary considerably according to which of these is selected.

When a race is finished points are awarded if you cross the line in better than ninth place. The maximum number of points possible is 9, but to qualify for the next race 12 points are needed - therefore a number of races need to be run. After these essential 12 points have been earned the player can then go on to Formula 3000 and Endurance races where points may be gathered to finally go on to the first F-1 race.

Each of these races are held in a different country, with a unique track layout. Qualification for each successive race requires a progressively higher point total - 180 for the final one - so it is fortunate points may be saved via a password system. Should all of these races be completed, and the race 16 won, you become the F-1 Spirit.

THE CORRECT CHOICE

Selecting which race to participate in is not your only consideration. Before each event you are presented with a choice of three ready-made cars or an option to design your own car. The performance of your car and should the wrong choice be made, poor qualities, such as constantly spinning out of control, soon become apparent.

If you decide on the latter, five major components become open to change. First the engine: it comes in six different varieties ranging from economical but weedy to fuel-guzzling and powerful. Other components come in three basic forms: body type (tough but heavy, medium, and lightweight but fragile), brakes (weak - but remain effective for a long time, medium, and strong - which may need to be pumped to maintain force), suspension (smooth - but requires loss of speed to make some corners, medium, and precise - mistakes can mean a loss of control) and finally transmission (gear changes automatic, or one of two manual types).

All these selections can have a quite genuine effect on the game play these details certainly add to the appeal of this tough but attractive race game.

MSX II
Mega Cartridge: £18.95

With six different race game types, considerable room to customise cars and 16 F-1 races to complete, F-1 Spirit poses a considerable challenge. Presentation is generally first class; the new sound chip provides a good tune - played throughout - and superb engine revving FX, while graphically the game is both good and varied. It may seem easy at first, particularly with an automatic transmission, but the need for close attention to competing cars and sharp corners makes itself apparent after the first crash, and the increasing difficulty levels are cleverly graded. Essentially F-1 Spirit offers a tough, top rank race game with lots of playability and endurance - in short, a first class MSX II.

""... a tough, top rank race game with lots of playability and endurance . . . ""
Usagi Yojimbo started life as a comic character created by Stan Sakai. Thanks to Firebird the heroic rabbit is now set to continue his adventures on the Commodore 64. Beam Software — of Hobbit, Exploding Fist and Sherlock fame — once an offspring of the Australian arm of Melbourne House before Mastertronic bought the UK operation, are the programming team responsible.

In 17th century Japan, the Shogun's power has yet to establish peace; times are troubled and noblemen war against each other. Myamoto Usagi, better known as Usagi Yojimbo, has to rescue his old friend and panda, Lord Noriyuki. Evil Lord Hikiji has already sent his minions to murder Noriyuki.

Usagi's task is not an easy one, there are many different paths for him to choose, some lead to inns (where food and information may be found), others take him into combat with ninjas, bounty hunters and other enemies.

Meters at the bottom of the screen display Usagi's health and that of his enemy. When his sword is drawn the portrait of Usagi at the top left of the screen scowls and the music becomes more dramatic. In this attack mode, Usagi is capable of only three moves — parry, side-swipe and overhead cut — each determined by the length of time the joystick button is pressed. Mastery of the sword alone will not bring success however. Etiquette is a serious matter, should Usagi fail to bow to people of higher status he gravely offend them and may find himself in a fight to the death. A good samurai also bows to people of equal status, this can often lead to receiving useful messages.

**PANDA TO NORIYUKI**

Money is measured in silver coins called Ryo and, being a lordless, wandering Samurai (or Ronin), Usagi is hard up. Defeated enemies should be relieved of any coins they might have on them as Usagi needs money to buy food from innkeepers to replenish energy. Money can also be used for gambling, but a better use for it is as alms, to be given to monks and beggars. The amount of money Usagi has is shown at the upper left of the screen.

It is elements like these in the game that make *Samurai Warrior* a cut above so many other martial arts games and much more than a hack-and-slay affair. For instance, kindness to the poor is an act of goodness which improves Usagi's karma — shown on the upper right of the screen — a touch of role-playing. Karma can be lost, too, if you should strike a helpless opponent, torment small animals or kill a priest; should it fall to zero, Usagi is compelled to commit hara-ki. Karma continues on to future lives therefore Usagi must always take care in his actions toward the weak if he is ever to rescue Noriyuki the Panda Lord.

Other touches, such as the split paths — Usagi's actions mostly take place along the base of the scrolling screen, but if he takes another path higher up the screen, the scene flicks into a new level — add further interest and lift the game enormously.

**COMMODORE 64**

Cassette: £8.95
Diskette: £14.95

In terms of graphics *Samurai Warrior* is not outstanding, yet all the characters are well animated and have a solid, cartoonish appeal, and they suit the subject perfectly. Animation is fast and realistic — if you want to believe in a martial arts bunny — with the way of the warrior scrolling neatly behind. Sound is also suitable, a combat tune nicely matching the tension of battle but sometimes almost overwhelming the battle sound FX. A very fine game.

**OVERALL 84%**

**OTHER FORMATS**

There are no other versions planned at the moment.

"... a cut above other martial arts games and much more than a hack-and-slay affair."

*Jimbo scowls dangerously as, sword drawn, he prepares to cause a nasty injury
RETURN TO ATLANTIS
Electronic Arts

Return To Atlantis was produced by the Interactive Stories Division of Electronic Arts, with Mike Wallace as the principal electronic artist involved. Development times, we are always being told, are getting longer, but Return To Atlantis ought to take the underwater biscuit - it was first copyrighted in 1985 and has been in continual development since then.

Wanton exploitation of Earth's resources has reached such a point that to survive man has turned to the oceans, and he makes a vow: unlike the land, the oceans will be treated with respect, resources carefully rationed and treasures preserved. But many a vow is made to ingest, and a majority arose which intended to mine the marine resources, forming the Maximum Utilities Management to propagate its view.

MUM's opponents saw the oceans as offering an alternative way of life without the prejudices of nationality and race, an ideal inspired by the story of Atlantis, a great society which they thought might be rebuilt. These two opposing cultures at first resorted to covert acts of sabotage, but worried that an escalation to full-fledged war could not be far away, an organisation called The Foundation decided to act. Dedicated to unifying all Earth's forces, The Foundation recruited the best graduate from the Academy (you) to maintain the balance of land and sea forces, protect sea creatures, and preserve the ecosystem. While doing all this you may also discover the city of Atlantis.

Caught by the dreaded crabs, the underwater adventurer may not return to Atlantis after all - Amiga screen

IN THE DIVING SEAT

Return To Atlantis asks you to create a character with a Diver Profile incorporating seven attributes - mostly determined by chance. These cover athletics (dive strength), weapons (aptitude for armaments) and awareness (control of oxygen supply) amongst others. Most can be improved by successfully completing a mission - or worse, by aborting one.

There are 14 missions to attempt, ranging from a simple treasure hunt through repairing the US/Soviet hotline, to rescuing the crew of a damaged submarine. All begin at The Foundation's base on Isla Perdida, where the hologram of a top agent briefly you audibly as well as visually. Then you can visit the island's Sea Thief Castle where various cosmopolitan informants may be questioned for leads. In response to your inquiries - a choice between pleading, bribing and threatening - quite brilliant pictures of the informants smile or frown, and, like the Foundation agent, their replies are spoken - and lip synched. These pictures have featured heavily in previews and one might think they were made for advertising purposes. When satisfied you have all the information you can get, your ship, Viceroy, flies you to the area of sea where your mission begins. The journey is shown in cinematic fashion by a red line traversing the globe.

THE NOISE OF ART

Once the Viceroy has landed a cut-away section of its control cabin is shown - a form of option screen, complete with a small blue diver representing you. Available here is the onboard computer, ART, which relays messages, aborts missions, scans the ocean floor and reports on changes in your attributes. There is a Medical Room where ill-health can be restored by a beam - at the expense of experience points. Some missions require you to carry special items of equipment; these can be taken from the gear room. When ready to dive you need only to take the elevator down to the bottom of the Viceroy.

Under the surface, you are presented with a solid, 3-D view of both diver and surrounding area. The diver is mouse-controlled and can be improved by successfully completing a mission - or worsened by aborting one. The diver is programmed to search for various objects, manipulate them and - after some (too) heavy cinematic opening credits - after some (too) heavy cinematic opening credits - after some (too) heavy cinematic opening credits - after some (too) heavy cinematic opening credits - after some (too) heavy cinematic opening credits - after some (too) heavy cinematic opening credits - after some (too) heavy cinematic opening credits - after some (too) heavy cinematic opening credits - after some (too) heavy cinematic opening credits - after some (too) heavy cinematic opening credits - after some (too) heavy cinematic opening credits - after some (too) heavy cinematic opening credits - after some (too) heavy cinematic opening credits - after some (too) heavy cinematic opening credits - after some (too) heavy cinematic opening credits - after some (too) heavy cinematic opening credits - after some (too) heavy cinematic opening credits - after some (too) heavy cinematic opening credits - after some (too) heavy cinematic opening credits - after some (too) heavy cinematic opening credits - after some (too) heavy cinematic opening credits - after some (too) heavy cinematic opening credits - after some (too) heavy cinematic opening credits - after some (too) heavy cinematic opening credits - after some (too) heavy cinematic opening credits - after some (too) heavy cinematographic opening credits.

Despite the many exciting frills, the depth of play is limited.
GAMES

BAT & BALL

JINKS

J

inks is the latest program by German software house Rainbow Arts and is marketed in the UK by GO! The actual development of the game is credited to Diamond Software – of Ball Raider and Diablo fame – with Uwe Jonsson as the chief programmer responsible.

As with most Breakout variants, the imaginative scenario is worth disregarding as far as the review is concerned: concentrate instead on the game itself, which is unusual for the genre in several respects; suffice it to say you are assessing the capabilities of a planet from a triangular-shaped spaceglider – the bat – by using a small probe – the ball.

Most noticeable break out from tradition is that according to which direction the spaceglider moves, the screen scrolls left or right. To complete a level the probe is guided to the far right and into three rotating balls, if you are successful the game loads a short interlude section where four circles represent available levels. Bounce the ball into one and the relevant level is loaded.

Each time a level is finished, more hostile aliens are added. These can include Atari and Commodore symbols which shrink the spaceglider on a first contact and might destroy it on a second – and spinning wheels. Other hostlies, such as gnashing teeth, swallow the probe – you have two to start with – while others create regions of high gravity until the ball is bounded through them, switching them back to normal.

Peaceful aliens, collectable for points, include pigs, globes and various bricks. Helpful aliens include rotating red cross symbols which restore a shrunken spaceglider to its previous size.

AMIGA

Diskette: £24.99

Jinks is distinguished from the cascade of Breakout clones by its quite superb graphics, designed to demonstrate the Amiga’s capabilities, and the bizarre way in which it is played. The front-end is highly impressive: the Rainbow Arts loading screens are particularly good, and the accompanying tune is very Dire Straits. In-game graphics are similarly polished, as are the sound FX, and completing the first level is both fun and amusing. But continuous play rubs away some of the magic; on high speed levels the ball moves so quickly it can be difficult to catch, let alone control. Playability becomes repetitive and the urge to continue is markedly reduced when all the levels have been seen. Fairly long disk accessing also becomes irritating. On the Commodore 64 (we didn’t review it) Jinks was dismissed for poor playability and lack of lasting appeal. On the Amiga playability is improved, and presentation is first class, but whether you play for long depends on how satisfied you are with simply improving the saved high score table.

OVERALL 62%

OTHER FORMATS

An Amstrad version should be on sale by the time you read this; Cassette: £9.99, Diskette: £14.99.

"The front-end is impressive, but continuous play rubs away the magic ..."

SHOULD YOU DECIDE

IMPOSSIBLE MISSION II

US Gold

S

everal years after the enormously successful Impossible Mission was released on the Commodore 64 – it was THE game for that machine – a sequel has finally appeared. Programming is once again credited to Epyx with US Gold handling distribution.

It has been two years since agent Elvin Atombender, Enough time for the dread Elvin to establish a new five-tower stronghold which, in a mere eight hours time, will launch a missile to destroy the entire world. IMA Special Terrorist Unit’s single Field Agent – the trusty 4125 – has been called on to ensure this doesn’t happen.

4125’s initial objective is to assemble the eight-digit code for four of the five towers so that he has access to all Elvin’s numerous safes. Locked within these safes are musical sequences which, when arranged together and played, open the express elevator doors so that 4125 can get to the central control tower. Once inside, all 4125 has to do to save the world is find the correct computer terminal which will disarm the apocalyptic missile.

Once inside the first randomly selected control tower, 4125 can use elevators and corridors to move around deciding which of the rooms he tackles first. When beside an interesting object, such as a car or motorbike, the agent can be made to search it by pushing upward on the joystick. Elvin’s evil genius has produced a large number of lethal robots to defend his secrets. There are six different types of robot which patrol the complex, some useful, some deadly.

Bombs and mines are available and once selected, can be planted by pulling down on the joystick and pressing fire. Time bombs explode after a few seconds and are needed to blow up the safes. Back in the connecting corridors, 4125 can assess his progress with his handy pocket computer. This is displayed at the bottom of the screen and is dominated by a map of the control tower in which 4125 is located.

COMMODORE 64/128


The belated sequel to the hugely successful original not surprisingly sticks very closely to the same basic format. The animation of 4125 is a straight copy of the original with sound effects similarly alike. The graphics are very good and a lot more varied than Impossible Mission. Although the addition of a wide variety of new robots, the ability to mine and bomb objects, plus a rigid layout of rooms in separate towers, make the new game markedly different to play. Using mines to blow away part of the platforms is a particularly good innovation. In addition the musical tape recorder section is graphically excellent and a worthwhile change in the puzzle sections. For those who are not expecting too much of a change the sequel is probably ideal, for others Impossible Mission II offers the best platform game around, although the lack of a save function could become irritating.

OVERALL 86%

OTHER FORMATS


“Impossible Mission II offers the best platform game around . . .”
In the year 1984 and Los Angeles prepares for the Olympic Summer Games. The dignitaries and celebrities prepare their speeches, and await the huge crowds expected to attend. Beware there are still the straying city-dweller cats despised by all. The infamous cats are well known for they are planning their own competitive games. Will Bad Cat live up to his name?

The graphics used are of a high standard, the events original and the sound is superb.” ST USER

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Jet on the Amiga is based on a combination of three earlier subLOGIC programs: IBM Jet, Amiga Flight Simulator II and Radar Raiders. With subLOGIC's Flight Simulator widely regarded as the most realistic aircraft simulation ever, Jet immediately deserves attention.

Jet is not just Flight Simulator II with a few guns. During combat scenarios the player is granted two jets with additional ones awarded for every 10,000 points scored. The ability to use the spare jet, however, realistically depends on ejection from the current 'plane before it blows up.

As well as points, medals are also awarded, specific examples include a Silver Star for each enemy MiG shot down and an Air Medal for successfully completing a sortie. The challenge of earning these medals is subject to nine different skill levels, while a practice mode allows just that, with no crashes, enemy fire . . . or medals. Considering the broad range of skill levels, point scoring and the superb graphics, Jet is clearly playable as an arcade game as well as a simulation.

HARD MISSIONS

For players interested in a more technically detailed game, Jet delivers on this as well. To start with there is a choice of two different aircraft to fly: the US Air Force F-16 Fighting Falcon and the US Navy F-18 Hornet. If the F-16 is chosen the player can choose between four different land-based scenarios; the first mission is simply to scramble the F-16 out of its concrete bunker and shoot down incoming MiG-21 fighters; the second is a nighttime ground attack one - avoid surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) and bomb the target; mission three is a peaceful free flight jaunt with no purpose other than to enjoy the scenery; mission four combines the ground attack mission with a MiG threat making it the hardest of the F-16 scenarios. Should all ground targets be destroyed and the F-16 has landed, the skill level is raised and the targets replaced.

In addition, if a MiG game is played at a sufficiently high level the dated MiG-21s are supplanted with MiG-23s which are faster than either the F-16 or F-18, as well as being highly manoeuvrable. MiGs come equipped with Atoll air-to-air missiles but won't, fortunately, enter the safe zone.

LOGICALLY subLOGIC

Once a scenario is chosen the cockpit view and controls are displayed. Jet's instrumentation, identical for both aircraft, dispenses with realistic dials and Head-Up-Display (HUD), and instead places subLOGIC design displays on all four sides of the main viewing window. Although this is less effective than a HUD, it does not obscure any of the spectacular scenes Jet can present, and it is more user-friendly than a mass of F-16 dials. Beside the usual complement of air speed indicator, altimeter, compass and thrust display, Jet has several special displays. At the
superimposed over the main display, HUD fashion.

ALL ROUND VIEWS

What is actually shown on the main display is open to change via a wealth of Flight Simulator-type different view options. The player can view his aircraft from a spotter plane flying in formation to the right; from the control tower; from a tracking ground based view; from directly below; from directly behind the jet; from the MiG which you’ve locked onto; a wire frame missile-eye view and a full screen option which does not show the controls. Possibly the most useful perspective, however, is being able to look from the plane in any of nine different directions, including directly below. During dogfights, having a small window showing where the six o’clock position behind you can be crucial.

For combat the ordnance available is the same for either aircraft. In dogfights the most useful weapons are the M61 20mm cannon, AIM-9 heat-seeking Sidewinder missiles and the AIM 7 radar homing Sparrow missiles. Once lock-on is achieved the missiles can be launched from several miles away, but when these run out or miss, the cannon has to be used. For air-to-ground or air-to-sea combat the best weapons are M61 cannon again, AIM-9 Sidewinder, Maverick missiles and Mk-82 free-fall smart bombs. During combined attack missions a mix of weapons can be chosen within realistic weight limits, and when these are exhausted the aircraft must be returned to its base/aircraft carrier to rearm.

When all these features have been exhausted, scenery disks from the Flight Simulator games can be loaded in for free flight joyrides. Should a friend also own an Amiga, the two machines can be linked for a two-player dogfight. There is also an option whereby other computers, such as the Atari ST, can be linked together via a modem.

OTHER FORMATS

Other versions of Jet can be found on the PC: Diskette £34.95 and Commodore 64/128: Diskette £34.95. Conversions for the Atari ST and Atari XE are also supposed to have been written, but prices and release dates aren’t yet known. It should also be noted that the game might vary from version to version – particularly the original 1985 IBM game.

"... Jet is quite dazzling ... multiple viewing option reveals the speed and detail of the F-16/10 graphics."

VERSION UPDATE

I wish they all could be ...

CALIFORNIA GAMES

Epyx/US Gold

PROGRAMMED in the States by Epyx, the PC version of California Games has come across well. Originally reviewed in TGM001 on the Commodore 64/128, California Games is a series of six events set in the land of sun, sand and sea. The events are: Half pipe Skateboarding, Foot bag, Surfing, Skateboarding, Foot bag. Roller Skating, BMX bike riding and Flying Disc. They can be played – or practised – by one or more players. Scores are not only building up by successfully completing the events but also by the number of stunts pulled during play – showing off is a Californian tradition.

Since the Commodore original, the best conversion yet

AMIGA

Diskette: £34.95

To begin with Jet is quite dazzling; taking-off and playing around with the multiple viewing option reveals both the speed and detail of the F-16/F-18 graphics. Attacking the Soviet missile cruisers is particularly impressive. Yet while Jet is undoubtedly very playable as an arcade game, as a simulation it might lack a little detail – the omission of either chaff or flares to counter missiles is particularly puzzling, though it does add to the skill requirement since you actually have to outmanoeuvre the Atoll missiles. To some extent the lack of a great many different scenarios is made up for by the huge number of skill levels, but even so, the simulation is a little disappointing in its limited number of different targets.

In conclusion Jet is a very attractive, if expensive, arcade/simulation flight game, well worth a look.

OVERALL 89%

CONTESTANT

EPX

0:42

4 0

COMMENT

Epyx have done an excellent job – there is a lack of quality sound but the superb playability of the Commodore 64/128 version has been retained faithfully. Graphics are of an equally high standard and you can select one of nine possible graphic modes before loading, dependent on your particular set-up. Playing with a colour board improves the game further and possibly makes it the best PC entertainment package to date. PC California Games is available on 5.25" and 3" diskette and can be played using a standard Atari joystick.

PC

OVERALL 90%
Unchain your friends! They are prisoners within the mysterious castle. Release the letters that bind them and chain them to yourself; only then can you make your escape. Release as many as you can for their predicament is dire, though the more you have on your chain the slower your progress will be! Defend yourself with a choice of 8 different weapons! Battle your way through 112 stages of gripping continuous action! Defeat your foes, rescue your friends, escape from every stage; only then is freedom yours!
Shackled is available for:
Amstrad CPC · Atari ST ·
CBM 64/128 ·
Spectrum 48K/128K+2 ·
Spectrum+3 · MSX
GO TOTALLY BOTTY WITH GO! AND THEIR BIONIC COMMANDOS

8-BIT & 16-BIT COMPETITION

Win a Tomy OMNIBOT 2000, SPOTBOTS and loads of games!

Bionic Commandos are tough! Bionic Commandos are mean! Bionic Commandos are a force to be reckoned with! Bionic Commandos also have funny, long telescopic arms - bit like car aerials... The Bionic Commandos are from Capcom's arcade original currently undergoing conversion by Go! If you read the previews last month you will already know that the Spectrum and Commodore 64/128 versions are looking good - and why not? The game is being programmed by Software Creations, the development house who had a smash hit last year with Bubble Bobble.

But the Bionic Commandos are so damned adventurous, they're also swinging in on the Amstrad, Atari ST and Amiga too. The Commandos enjoy the 'bionic' prefix because of their mechanical arms. With a quick press of a button their bionic arms extend to grab hold of the nearest object, and then retract, pulling them up. Doing this at the right time ensures that the mechano-lads eventually make their way through all five levels under the player's control.

To celebrate the April launch of Bionic Commandos, Go! have come up with a few more bionic buddies as prizes in this competition. First prize is an Omnibot 2000 robot plus a copy of Bionic Commandos: there are five second-place prizes of a Spotbot and a copy of the game: and finally there are copies of Bionic Commandos for 25 runners up.

Fancy winning a robot to do all your fetching and carrying then? Course you do! Answer the five suitably robotic questions correctly and send them (plus your name, address and model of computer - see caption for details) on a postcard or back of a sealed envelope to: BIONIC COMMANDOS COMP, THE GAMES MACHINE, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB.

Entries should arrive here by May 19 and all entrants must abide by the competition rules which can be found in the masthead.

OMNIBOT 2000
From Tomy, and as seen in TGM005, the sophisticated and personable Omnibot 2000 is the top of the range in entertainment robots. Built-in cassette recorder plays tapes containing either movement instructions in the form of a computer program, or music. A clock tells the time and there are other novel features. Omnibot 2000 is manoeuvred via a radio-control unit included in the package. Retailing at over £250, Omnibot 2000 is our top prize.

1. Which film proclaimed 'Number 5 is alive'?
   a) The Prisoner
   b) Short Circuit
   c) Robocop

2. The film Forbidden Planet starred which robot?
   a) Ro-man
   b) Cynthia Cyborg
   c) Robby

3. Which actor played the bionic man in The Six Million Dollar Man?
   a) Major Wild Bill Stealy
   b) Lee Majors
   c) Lionel Majors

4. Which entertainment system offers ROB as an extra?
   a) Nintendo
   b) Sega
   c) Dolly Parton

5. Walter the Wobot is friend of who?
   a) Jonathon Woss
   b) Wogue Twouper
   c) Judge Dwedd

BIONIC COMMANDOS - THE GAME
Straight from the arcades with five levels of shoot-'em-up action and crafty platform leaping, we've got 25 copies of Bionic Commandos to give away to the runners up for the Spectrum, Commodore 64/128, Amstrad CPC, Atari ST and Amiga.

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   b) Wogue Twouper
   c) Judge Dwedd
PLATON
The first casualty of war is innocence.
SPECIAL PACK
ORIGINAL MOTOWN RECORDING
ON "TRACKS OF MY TEARS" BY SMOKEY ROBINSON
WITH AUDIO CASSETTE
SPECTRUM
COMMODORE AMSTRAD
£9.95
SPECTRUM
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A computer product from Ocean.
Why go elsewhere?
We stock most games on all formats.
Telephone for games not listed. All games are sent 1st class, most by return of post.
Castle Computers, the competent mail-order firm that cares about its customers!

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**COMPETITION**

**PREHISTORIC BOXER SHORTS, AND IT'S . . .**

![The Flintstones](image)

**THE FLINTSTONES**

**8-BIT & 16-BIT COMPETITION**


Red faces all his favourite tasks in this new adventure brought to your screens by Grand Slam Entertainments. Programmed by Torque Software Developments, whose credits include the recent Terramex, Flintstones puts the player in the roly-poly role of Fred Flintstone as he desperately tries to get to Bedrock Bowling Alley in time for his regular game.

Hounding him is his nagging wife, Wilma—a gorgeous doll she may be, but she has a sharp tongue. And hanging onto Fred’s leopard-skin couture is Pebbles—the cutest kid anyone could want, but with more mischief in her than a cunning fox.

Just as Fred is ready to make his way to the bowling alley, Wilma chooses that precise moment to announce: “My mother is arriving and Fred, don’t you remember how you promised to paint the living room before she arrives?” Pebbles joins in the painting lark, assisting Fred by drawing flowers, writing her name and putting handprints on the walls. Keep the little sweetheart under control, Fred...

But even a relaxing bowl becomes fraught: Fred has to get his car to the Bedrock Bowl, his buddy, Barney Rubble, plays a mean game, and to wrap up an ideal day, Pebbles has to be rescued from a building site. As cute as Flintstones may look in the screen shots, it isn’t an easy game...

**Win prehysterical boxer shorts, videos and games!!**

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A positive host of Flintstones goodies are waiting to be won, courtesy of Grand Slam: there are five first prizes of a Flintstones video (VHS), a pair of unique Flintstones boxer shorts and a copy of the game. And for five second-place prizes, we have boxer shorts and games, and ten runners will receive a copy of the Flintstones game.

Flintstones is released for Spectrum, Commodore 64/128, Amstrad CPC, Atari ST and Amiga. The five questions all relate to different aspects of the game’s sections. Answer them correctly and you could be on your way to winning one of the prizes. Send entries on a dinosaur egg or the back of a sealed envelope (together with your name, address and model of computer) to: FLINTSTONES COMPETITION, THE GAMES MACHINE, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB to arrive here by May 19. Our standard competition results apply, if in doubt check out the masthead for details.

1. An Old English Sheepdog is used by which manufacturer of paint as its mascot?
2. In bowling what is the term given when a player knocks down all the pins in one go?
3. If there are 292 pebbles per square foot on a beach, how many pebbles are there on a beach measuring 68 feet by 152 feet?
4. Your mother-in-law is an Aunt to your children. True or False?
5. Who published Yabba Dabba Doo, the first Flintstones game?
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When Martin Chater and Mike Carroll of Visions Software, together with Julie Inskip, who worked for distributors Centresoft, noted the serious lack of promotional information about computer software, the result was BULLETIN 1000 — and the promotional computer game video was born. Robin Hogg went to their London W8 offices to find out more about the bulletin makers.

Enthusiasts know all about up and coming new games, but you can't expect the buyers for large stores to have the same keen interest, or the time to read lots of magazines. Two years ago, their only sources of reliable information were magazines such as CRASH and ZZAP! 64 through the reviews, but in terms of sales and in-store promotion, there was an obvious gap. The benefits of full promotion were not being realised; what was needed was a service for both retailers and consumers alike. From this, Bulletin 1000 was formed to make promotional videos.

Until Bulletin 1000's formation, retailers only received promotional material from software distributors in a decentralised way and on a limited scale, but, as Julie Inskip insists, 'Retailers wanted more than what distributors could offer, which is when they turned to us.'

That was some two years ago; but first the other side of the coin – the software houses – had to be persuaded of the need; after all, they were going to have to pay for the advertisements. Video was not the first solution chosen by software companies. Before they came to see Bulletin 1000 as a direct link to retailers for product promotion, their efforts centred round contacting the multiples and independent computer stores and sending them poster packs. It was an effective method but limited to a static display once in the stores, and inflexible.

'The poster packs were just to get retailers to know about products,' says Julie, 'but from this we saw the opportunity for further promotion of a more comprehensive and effective nature.'

Alternative methods of promotion were suggested and considered, including demonstration disks and cassettes previewing the latest games. This last required shops to set up at least one computer system to constantly display games, taking up space in-store and requiring constant attention, something the multiples and independents would not accept.

'The demonstration disks idea was considered but then dropped for obvious reasons, eventually it was decided that video would be the best promotional medium.'

The first videos were more of an interactive TV programme than a Bulla was a Papal notice, usually nailed to church doors, issuing short, sharp edicts in the form of news. Since those days, the bulletin has remained one of the most effective means of disseminating vital information.

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“Which meant that on a half hour tape, with 90 seconds - and longer. An extreme case was Ocean's advertisement for Pinball, which was also to appear on the Columbia Video of the film, but in a different setting in the software history, it lasted all of seven seconds! This incredibly limited amount of time proved a major headache. For Bulletin 1000, the specifications for the recording were terrible,' recalls Julie. 'It had to be exactly - no more, no less - and it was extremely frustrating having to compress all the information on the game into seven seconds. We had to keep re-editing and cutting bits out while trying to fit everything. Ocean wanted to say about the game, along with the artwork, packaging, and the Ocean logo.

In the case of games-of-the-film and other licensed products, Bulletin 1000 use libraries to obtain relevant material such as music, special film or television sequences, or scenery from the licensed product itself, subsequently paying royalties for their use. Occasionally they have to record from coin-ops for licence-holding software companies, but there are problems: 'We don't like to record from coin-ops,' is to be quite honest, because the kids don't want to see what they can't buy - they can't buy an arcade machine! We do it if we should need a computer version with it in comparison but they're very difficult to record from. We either have to bring them in-house or go to the manufacturer and record them, and even then we have to contend with American standards and incompatible formats. In general, we don't record from coin-ops that much.'

It is in the recording and editing suite that the videos are actually created. Within one room, the three main processes of recording, editing and duplication - are all performed using a synch-locked interfacing link between.

Beginning with the recording phase, the system is set up to simultaneously record the game onto a VHS video tape and a record-only Sony U-Matic system. The actual set up can take a while, rerouting connecting leads linking up the recording units and the relevant computer, until which the software company's game is to be played. As the game is played the twin recording tapes are made. A time code is automatically generated, and appears on every frame of the VHS recording to display each scene of the game in hours, minutes, seconds and frames, each second being made up of 25 frames. At the same time it is embedded on every frame of the U-Matic recording, but it appears on screen, not on the video tape image.

Once complete, the VHS tape is shipped to the client, and the software company. At this stage, the client decides which scenes from the game should be used in the advertisement, providing all the required information by means of the time code visible at the bottom of the screen.

Using this system, explains Julie, 'computer software companies have the freedom to put any scenes they want in the advertisement. The customer decides which scenes are to go in and in the order of their choice - commercial for them. Any ideas that the client has about the composition of the commercial, how it is to finally look and the order of scenes can be turned into reality quite easily through this system. The final video commercial, in effect, is a virtually direct copy of what the software company specifies.'

IT'S ALL IN THE EDITING

The next stage is editing. Audio and video connectors are used to link the primary 'source' U-Matic (with the embedded time code) to a secondary 'output' system, onto which only the selected scenes from the software company wants are recorded, the VHS version having only been used for the original recording.

The editing operation is run through an executive screen using a mouse. All standard video operations of both source and object video systems are controlled through the edit software.

Game sequences can be tagged onto the end of other previously recorded sequences or trimmed, allowing a number of black screens to appear between scenes which effectively creates a pause between sequences. Each sequence has its own start and end time code (in and out-points) with the video system taking the specified time regions and transferring them onto the secondary U-Matic tape.

Corporate logos and special title screens are done here but for the more exotic generated video effects. Bulletin 1000 uses the services of another company, TSI. They do the sort of shots where packaging whirs, flips and zooms around, as well as caption information detailing the game title, producers, formats on which it is to appear and prices.

The final product is copied over to a master tape and the duplication phase is started. The format used by most of Bulletin 1000's customers is VHS; very few Betamax recordings are made, reflected in the ratio of duplicating machines they have - 38 VHS, two Betamax. 'That's about the percentage in terms of demand for our tapes,' says Julie. 'At the moment the VHS system, awful in quality that it is, is the system which everyone is using. We can also record and reproduce in stereo, but it depends on the retailers having stereo machines in large numbers which doesn't seem likely at the present time.'

TALKBACK

When the finished video is sent to the multiples, independent retailers and overseas customers, the process does not stop there; feedback is continuous from all areas of the market, in the form of comments from franchisees in position that we can talk to virtually everyone in the industry. We get to

EXTREME ADS

In some cases, adverts show nothing of the game bar the title. Bedlam from Codemasters of this type of 'teaser' in which the game title appeared with a voice-over shouting 'Bedlam! This style of promotion is certainly effective, and eye-catching and Bulletin 1000 are watching it very closely indeed to determine its success or failure as an alternative form of advertising.

Advertisements tend to be 60 seconds long, although the big

"on a half hour tape an advertiser's product would be seen at least once by everyone who walked into the store."
 Quantel's recently they have installed in-house facilities for everything except complex profile software house. In February 1985 they all met at the LET (trade show). Martin Chater and Mike Carroll were both involved with Visions, a high-

At first all video production was done through TSI Video Studios, but with computer games and video films produced here. We now produce all our own games, as clearly, we have the independent retailers as well, and with our increasing dealings with Europe we're in a good position as leading market field.

Julie agrees: 'The reason is that this market place is not big compared with other industries. The use of video as an advertising tool is very new, particularly when it comes to using it in the computer industry. We do a good job for everybody, striking a fine balance between what the overall industry wants and what the kids want, the kids are in the end the people who matter.'

'The best thing about video promotion of computer games,' adds Martin, 'is that the games are totally audio-visual, nothing else compares with them, not even music. They are the most obvious choice for audio-visual presentation.

Which prompts another question: with the recent advances in CD-ROM and CD Video Disks, is Martin planning to adopt the new technology?

'Keep an eye on technological developments, but the technology that we deal with at this level has to be tempered by what's cost effective for both the video producers and the software companies want and what the kids want, the kids are in the end the people who matter.'

In the background, part of the complex patchwork which allows different source computer and target video recorders to be linked together.

BULLETIN 1000 INFORMATION

Julie Inskip was an employee at Centresoft, a major software distributor. Martin Chater and Mike Carroll were both involved with Visions, a high-profile software house. In February 1985 they all met at the LET (trade show) at Olympia and started another software company called CSM. Encountering a serious problem in identifying all the multiple and independent retailers, they set up Bulletin 1000 in May 1985.

At first all video production was done through TSI Video Studios, but recently they have installed in-house facilities for everything except complex graphics work. At TSI, graphics work is undertaken using Quaitez's Paintbox and Specialmata art utilities. Bulletin 1000 also has an Amiga and operator so that clients can enjoy a wide range of computer graphics facilities for enhancing advertisements on the spot.

"We do a good job for everybody...." says Julie Inskip
REACH FOR THE STARS
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The 11th Official Commodore Computer Show
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SHERLOCK — THE RIDDLE OF THE CROWN JEWELS

Infocom
COMMODORE 64/128 Diskette: £19.99
PC COMPATIBLES Diskette: £24.99

Sherlock — The Riddle Of The Crown Jewels is the first story in Infocom's new Immortal Legends series, developed in conjunction with Challenge Inc. Using Infocom's development tools, Challenge lends its own blend of puzzles and plotting to interactive fiction. The author, Bob Bates, lives in Greenbelt, Maryland and is a graduate of Georgetown University. This is his first adventure release.

Sherlock Holmes has been the subject of many adventures in the past, however, Infocom have put a slightly different slant on the scenario by allowing the player to take the role of Doctor Watson rather than the deerstalkered super sleuth.

Holmes's arch-nemesis, the villainous Moriarty, has stolen the Crown Jewels. The timing of the crime is particularly dastardly, it is Jubilee Week and a Royal procession is to take place through the streets of London in two days. Should the jewels not be recovered in time for the Queen to wear them, the thief will be exposed and the British government will fall into international disgrace. Scotland Yard has tried every trick in the book to trace the thief, to no avail. Hence the PM himself visits Holmes's home to ask for his help. You, as Doctor Watson, arrive at 221B Baker Street while the PM is waiting in the parlour to see Holmes.

You find the housekeeper, Mrs Hudson, in a terrible state. It transpires that Holmes has not been out of his study for three days, he has entered one of his depressed states of mind for which only you know the cure. Eager to help, you march up to his room and show your old friend today's newspaper. As soon as he reads the jewel theft, Holmes snaps out of his depression and into action.

The PM is now allowed into the room and subsequently hands over a piece of paper on which is written a clue, and a less than veiled threat to Holmes. From this, Sherlock surmises that the thief is none other than Moriarty. Aware of how well the villain knows him and his sleuthing ways, Holmes decides to alter his detecting tactics by allowing you to conduct the investigation... under his guidance of course. This way he hopes to thwart Moriarty's plans to kill him, and find the Crown Jewels before the procession ensues.

HOLMES IS WHERE THE ART IS

An examination of the clue and the map of London (supplied in the packaging) should give you some idea of where to begin the investigation, and reading the instruction manual may help you find a reliable way of getting there.

Two types of cab are available to you: the growler and the hansom, one of these is more trustworthy than the other, but both are free! Exploring old London town is interesting, from the most famous landmarks to the gloomiest back streets. Holmes trails Watson offering advice and information when he can, although most of the time the good Doctor has to figure things out for himself. Travel is quicker by cab: walking from place to place can take valuable time — and you only have until 9.00 Monday morning to solve the crime.

The game is standard Infocom style with a status bar at the screen's top and an abundance of white text which simply oozes atmosphere through the monitor from the black background.

Unfortunately there are one or two elements which are not quite up to Infocom's usual standard for perfection: a sign outside the temporarily closed Tower of London, apocryphes for any inconvenience caused and then offers, 'Have a nice day!'. Americanism - which I'm sure didn't exist in 1887 - ruined any atmosphere the game had built up and brought me down to earth with a bump.

IT'S A FAIR CAB, GUV'NOR?

Even though I only completed 36% of the game in the short time I had to play it, I still encountered one or two other oversights. Whilst sitting in a growler parked near a man selling telescopes, I inadvertently managed to get the game very confused: the man offers to sell me a telescope for an inflated price.

The cabbie says: 'Where to, Guv'nor?'

I input HAGGLE, and the program asks 'Haggle with who?'

The cabbie says 'Where to, Guv'nor?'

I input MAN (indicating who I want to haggle with) and the cabbie says: 'Oh good, I've never been THERE before,' and goes careering off through the streets of London with Holmes and I still inside. We eventually stop in a random location miles from the telescope vendor. Most infuriating.

During the rest of my Watsonian escapades I met Beefeaters, security guards, pet shop owners and hundreds of tourists. I was able to row up and down the Thames, visit Westminster Abbey, Scotland Yard, Madame Tussauds and Buckingham Palace. Holmes followed me everywhere and, although he didn't offer that much helpful advice, his presence wasn't as annoying as that of a certain dwarf who once 'helped' me on a previous quest.

Sherlock is enjoyable, its initial ease encourages you to play on, and as puzzles are solved and time ticks by, a certain necessity to crack the case is instilled. The on-screen hints are tempting to use when a seemingly insurmountable problem is encountered, but true adventurers should find them easy enough to resist. I shall return to old London town in the guise of Watson during my own time, this, to me as a reviewer, is the sign of a good adventure.

LOADS OF MIDNIGHT

ADVENTURE

A

ventures written to be humorous usually fail miserably as all they do is send up the more serious side of genre. Taking a product and mocking it to try to be amusing is easy and shows a lack of imagination on the part of the author. Loads Of Midnight is one such game.

The Land of Midnight is the setting, a place where the computer age has recently dawned and sales of software are booming. It transpires that Gloopmork the evil one, banished to the Northern wastes some years before, is bent on conquest. He has learned of the mind control properties of a certain black gem to be found embedded in a golden crown, and he wants it. With the gem in his possession people would do his bidding and he could build a software industry all his own — power and recognition would be his. However, many small companies still thrive, one such...
being owned by Ludo, who just happens presently to be in possession of the golden crown (although being good of mind, he would not use it for personal gain). Fortunately he hears of Gloompork’s avaricious interest and decides he must destroy the crown by casting it away from the top of the Tower of Doom. Only by doing this will the Land of Midnight be safe from Gloompork’s dire threat.

A LOAD OF . . .

Written using the Quill, Illustrator and Patch, Loads Of Midnight lacks atmosphere. The graphics are good and nicely reminiscent of Lords Of Midnight but the text descriptions let them down badly. Most of the writing is taken up with what exits are available, which soon becomes tedious. Admittedly I did not get very far, mostly because I couldn’t be bothered. There is nothing in the game to warrant perseverance, and the attempts at humour are childish, often irritating. It would be nice to see some original humour injected into some of these utility-created adventures.

ATMOSPHERE 28%
INTERACTION 22%
OVERALL 26%

The graphics are a close parody of the original masterpiece

FEDERATION
CRL
SPECTRUM Cassette: £9.95
AMSTRAD Diskette: £14.95

Once upon a time in the golden olden days of adventuring when all that was required by the player was the old verb/noun input, there lived a software company that churned out games thick and fast mostly written using Gilisoft’s utility the Quill. Eighth Day Software produced some above average quests including; Faerie, Ice Station Zero and one of my all time favourites, Quann Tulla. Federation is a revamped version of the latter.

Quann Tulla is the flagship of the federation, unfortunately its designer, Erra Quann, has hijacked it. He pilots it to an outpost of the evil Empire where he hopes to sell the secret of its innovative engines. You take the role of a member of the Federation’s elite secret service; your mission is to stop Quann.

The adventure begins inside a cracked life support bubble in the smoke-filled interior of your ship. The first problem is one of avoiding suffocation, but it is easily solved. Released years ago by Eighth Day as Quann Tulla, Federation is a revamped version with graphics

WONDERFULLY WEIRD

Science fiction is usually a good topic for adventure games as it is only the author’s imagination which limits the scope. All kinds of weird and wonderful objects and creatures may be incorporated in such adventures with no logical reason needed for their presence or role in the game. Quann Tulla is one such game which incorporates many futuristic/alien elements to good effect. The ball that changes size when picked up, the computer terminals, the shock-cape and the numerous hi-tech creatures found in the corridors of the great ship, all help to build up a believable atmosphere. Although most of the objects to be found may be alien to you, the EXAMINE option is sensibly implemented, helping explain, or hint at, the uses of most of them.

The screen layout is nicely done, with a small graphic representation of some locations displayed in the top left-hand corner of a well designed control panel. This also shows your score – 10,000 is possible – and the number of turns you have taken. Below, scroll the text descriptions.

Quann Tulla was a good game when it was first released all those years ago; its overhaul and new look modernise and help maintain its appeal, although the price is a little steep for a single-load game.

ATMOSPHERE 75%
INTERACTION 64%
OVERALL 70%
Stretch out your scrawny necks and drift in for a carrion landing with VULTURES— an unlikely, but involving boardgame— plus: be Jimmy Greaves et al with Serif’s adaptation of Central TV’s SPORTING TRIANGLES.

Buying Paradigm’s latest game, Psychology Slander Intuition (PSI), set for release in early June, could lose you a lot of friends. It gives you the chance to tell your chums and relatives exactly what you think of them, and it is, say Paradigm, incredibly easy — the hardest part is living with yourself, or even your better half. Without showing the card, the objective for the other players is to guess the mystery person’s identity by asking you PSI Questions.

PSI, the game that answers questions like: What kind of inflatable would your sister be?

These can be anything from: ‘If this person was a holiday resort, which one would they be?’ to, ‘If this person was a member of the pig family, what kind of pig would they be?’.

Naturally if that person was your best friend the proceedings might become, well... difficult to say the least.

The game in its spoken form has become popular in pubs and at parties during the time designer Steve Knight has struggled to publish after rejections from many other companies. THE GAMES MACHINE has yet to see how it improves over the spoken version, but we will keep you informed.

The Games Team, whose previous title A Question Of Sport, earned them a reputation within the boardgame market, are set to release their next creation in August; licensed from Guinness Publishing, it is called Genius — The Game Of Phenomenal Facts and revolves around questions- and-answers based on record-breaking achievements as described in that well-known anthology of personal madness, The Guinness Book Of Records. ‘It could not be described as ‘Trivial’’, states Bob Johnson of The Games Team. The package, which also contains The Guinness Book Of Phenomenal Pictures, retails at £29.95 and is being sold through Toy Brokers Ltd.

Front Page Splash — a simulation on a board, inspired (if that’s the word) by the world of journalism, is about to be launched by Octogo Games. Just like the real thing, six people try to create headlines and stories from random words — we do it all the time here at THE GAMES MACHINE. The playing board resembles a daily newspaper’s front page and the game comes with 600 words, each with different scores depending on their length, with which to build up the story. Players take turns to add words and the winner is the one with the highest score when the story is completed — a sort of Scrabble with whole words rather than individual letters.

A copy of Front Page Splash is being wired to us at this very moment and if it doesn’t change the way we write, we’ll demand our money back. Look for a review next month — now who last used Roger’s Thesaurus...

THE VERDICT

Vultures is a great launch product for Henry Games, it appealed immensely to everyone who played it — probably because it combines strategic thinking with a bit of lunacy thrown in. Additionally, it’s your skill that eventually helps you to emerge the victor — there are no dice adding to the fun. It is a fantastic idea, with a couple of games for everyone to fully decipher the instructions and see how to work them to their best advantage, but having done this, Vultures showed itself as an (oddly enough) attractive, absorbing game of greed and supremacy.

Vultures

Henry Games, £19.45
2-4 players

From Henry Games’s London headquarters at 42 Beak Street (it’s true...) comes Vultures, one of the most simplistic yet highly entertaining boardgames we’ve played for ages.

The board represents a desert landscape complete with two oases and four nesting trees. The yummy objective is to be first vulture to collect five carcasses and return to your designated tree.

At the start, playing vultures are each dealt three cards from a collection of flight, fight, carcass and waddle cards; any left over are placed in the discard pile face down.

At the start of a turn the vulture in play declares if it has a carcass card by squawking loudly and throwing the carcass card next to the discard pile face up. Next, it takes a new card from the discard pile and turns the following card face up on the other pile. The grid reference shown on the displayed card is then used to place a carcass at the corresponding grid reference on the board. It may sound complicated but works fine in play.

If a vulture does not have a carcass card it can carry out one of two movements: one allows the vulture to take a new card from the discard pile, two allows the use of a flight card to move the number of squares the card shows. A waddle is a similar card, but movement is restricted to only one square.

The objective in flying around is to get to a carcass and claim it for your own before any other player does.

Fighting — another way of collecting carcasses — takes place when a Main Vulture Fight card is drawn from the pack and displayed. Players drawing this card have to give a battle-cry consisting of jumping up and down, flapping their wings and squawking loudly. Challenging an opponent to fight is simply achieved by landing on an occupied square, although vultures nesting in trees cannot be attacked.

Each player should own a couple of red fight cards by this point in the game — the cards each have a value on them, ranging from one to ten. The vulture with the highest fight card wins the challenge and receives one of his opponent’s carcasses (no point, then, in challenging a carcassless vulture). The big bonus in challenging happens if the vulture being challenged has no fight cards — if, this is the case the challenging vulture receives all the carcasses and the unlucky vulture is out of the game.

The game is concluded when one vulture has claimed five carcasses and has nested in its tree.

THE GAMES NEWS

Gaming News

A bit of Vulture culture from Henry Games

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SPORTING TRIANGLES

Serif, £14.99
2-4 players or teams

As the title suggests, and by its very nature, Sporting Triangles is only likely to appeal to players heavily into sport. If you are the sort who prefers watching the Saturday afternoon film on BBC2, don’t even bother having a go. The 3,000 questions supplied require considerable knowledge of not only present sporting facts but past ones too.

Players choose a playing triangle (yellow, green, white or red) and take turns to throw the die which dictates the number of squares they move clockwise around the triangular game board.

Questions are asked when players land on red, green (both specialist sporting questions) or yellow (sporting trivia) squares. One point per correctly answered question is scored, marked by placing a small, solid plastic triangle of the player’s colour in the triangular peg board.

Should a question have a bonus question attached, a correct answer scores the player two points. White squares represent harder questions and score two points for correct answers. The first player to fill their triangular score segment with pegs is declared the winner.

THE VERDICT

Sporting Triangles is a worthy trivia game if you have players who know about the many aspects of sport the questions cover. It really boils down to sporting Trivial Pursuit, so you can gauge whether you’re going to like this or not before playing it. The boxed packaged is neatly designed, contains clear instructions – but can the boardgames market take another trivia-based game?

THE GAMES MACHINE CLASSIFIED SECTION

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From TGM007 THE GAMES MACHINE Reader Classified Section will be read by literally thousands and thousands of people – probably the best available method of reaching other computer users with your small ads. Whether you want to buy, sell, swap, meet or merely inform, an inexpensive classified ad in THE GAMES MACHINE could soon be the ONLY way to do it!

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92/116 TGM TX 006.5-88
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Due to a worldwide shortage of memory chips, prices of many computers have gone up. From April 1986, the Atari ST range is also likely to be affected. For details of any price increase, please return the coupon below for our latest literature.

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There are two MEGA STs, one with 2MB of RAM and the other a massive 4MB. Both new computers are fully compatible with existing Atari STs and run current available ST software. The MEGA STs are styled as an expandable Central Processing Unit with open architecture and a detachable keypad. They are supplied with GEM, a task mouse controller and all extras.

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ATARI 1040ST-F - NEW PRICE

As we have to announce a new reduced price point on the Atari 1040ST-F, the new price is now available for only £490 inc VAT. The 1040ST-F is a powerful computer with 1MB of RAM and also includes a built-in 14" double sided 3½" disk drive. The 1040ST-F has been designed for use in business and professional applications for which require a high resolution monochrome or colour monitor. It does not therefore have an RS-232C interface for use with a domestic TV, but the RS-232C interface can be easily interfaced for use with a domestic TV. The RS-232C interface can be easily interfaced for use with a domestic TV.

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• COMPETITION

 HIT YOUR FUNNY BONE ON THE CHUCKLE BUTTON WITH THE SIERRA COMPETITION

A sagging mass of flesh that appears to have been human at one time. Tubes and wires extend from his body leading to machines which keep him alive. Suddenly, his visage stirs and he begins to speak.

She may not be a great looker, but think of the muscles in that leg.

16-BIT COMPETITION

A THOROUGHLY good romp through the pinacles of animated adventures awaits the lucky winners of this Sierra On-line competition. Sierra have recently been bombarding the adventure pages with 16-bit animated adventures, pumped full of rib-tickling black comedy. Three which have particularly struck gold in Rob Steel's judgement are Space Quest II, Police Quest and Leisure Suit Larry with marks of 95%, 92% and 83% respectively.

She may not be a great looker, but think of the muscles in that leg.

Here's your chance to win Sierra's entire catalogue of games, eight in all. The Sierra games are traditional adventures in the sense that the player has to type commands in order for the main character to act - however, rather than relying on text to provide adequate descriptions of locations, continual graphic displays - often with animated characters, all of whom are fully interactive and funny with it - are used.

First-prize winner receives King's Quest I, King's Quest II, King's Quest III, Space Quest I, Space Quest II, Leisure Suit Larry, Police Quest and 3D Helicopter where applicable (Leisure Suit Larry is not available for the Amiga and 3D-Helicopter is for the PC only). The following ten correct entries picked from the bag win a copy of Sierra's latest adventure Space Quest II.

To be in the running for one of the prizes on offer just tell us whether the five quotes below (taken from reviews of Sierra games in TGM003 and TGM004) are correct as they were originally printed - answer true or false. Write the answers down on a postcard or back of a sealed envelope together with your name, address and model of computer, and send it hyperdrive to: SIERRA COMP, THE GAMES MACHINE, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB to arrive no later than May 19. All entrants must comply with our competition rules as stated in the masthead.

1) "... attempt to thwart the plans of Slimeface Vohaul."
2) "... Police Quest includes more than 100 city streets..."
3) "... makes John Travolta look like Patrick Moore peeling spuds..."
4) "... overcome his 'jerks' and lose his virginity..."
5) "... weed out Death Angel's gang and bring the racketeer to justice."

Win eight highly acclaimed graphic adventures with the emphasis on comedy!
QUESTIONNAIRE

THE GAMES MACHINE is now six issues old, so it's time to ask you, the readers, what you think about the magazine and its contents. In addition, we would like to ask you some questions about what you do and don't do, what you like and dislike – they may seem nosy, but they all help us shape the magazine the way YOU want.

Please fill out as much of this form as possible (placing a tick in the appropriate boxes, or filling them in with numbers as requested), and send it (or a photocopy if you don't want to cut up your copy) to TGM QUESTIONNAIRE, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB to arrive here before May 19. The first form drawn out of mailbag after this date earns the sender £50 worth of software of his or her choice, plus a TGM T-shirt. The next four forms drawn earn their senders £20 worth of software, plus a T-Shirt.

GENERAL

Age: ____________________________

Are you . . .

- □ Male
- □ Female
- □ At school
- □ At College/University
- □ Working Full Time
- □ Working Part Time
- □ Unemployed

MONEY MATTERS

On average, how much do you spend on computer games every week?

- □ £2-£5
- □ £6-£10
- □ £11-£20
- □ More Than £20

Have you purchased a utility in the last six months?

- □ Yes
- □ No

If 'yes', please state type

Do you intend to purchase a utility in the next six months?

- □ Yes
- □ No

If 'yes', please state type

Have you purchased a peripheral in the last six months?

- □ Yes
- □ No

If 'yes', please state type

Do you intend to purchase a peripheral in the next six months?

- □ Yes
- □ No

If 'yes', please state type

Do you intend to buy a new computer or games console in the next six months?

- □ Yes
- □ No

If 'yes', tick the appropriate box

- □ Spectrum 128 or +3
- □ Amstrad CPC
- □ Commodore 64/128
- □ Electron
- □ Atari ST
- □ Amiga
- □ IBM PC Compatible
- □ Archimedes
- □ MSX II
- □ Nintendo console
- □ Atari console
- □ Sega Console

What is the major influence on your decision to buy a computer game (please indicate in order of priority 1-6)?

- □ Friend's recommendation
- □ Magazine Review
- □ Advertising
- □ Author
- □ Producer
- □ Price

ARE YOU WELL READ?

When did you first buy THE GAMES MACHINE?

Issue: ____________________________

How many issues have you bought
On average, how many other people read your copy of TGM?

How do you get TGM?

Which other magazines do you buy?

Which other magazines do you read regularly but not buy?

What type of game do you enjoy playing (in order of preference 1-6)?

Do you enjoy playing computer games?

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SOFTWARE COVERAGE

Please rate TGM's coverage of software out of ten

Are there enough screen shots?

Are there enough machine comments detailed enough?

Would you like to see the current review system changed or improved?

If 'yes', how? . . .

Do you use TGM as a source of reference when buying software?

What do you think of the standard of TGM's covers?

GENERAL BUYING HABITS

What is your weekly income?

What types of books do you buy?

What do you think of TGM as a source of reference when buying software?

How often do you buy books?

How often do you buy canned drinks?

How often do you go to the cinema?

How often do you watch TV per day?

How many hours do you spend watching TV per day?

Which TV station do you prefer (mark 1-5)?

Which radio station do you prefer (mark 1-5)?

Which of the following takeaway fast-food chains do you prefer (mark 1-6)?

Do you have a bank account?

If 'yes', with who (and state type of account)?

Which other magazines do you read?

Do you have a Building Society account?

If 'yes', with who (and state type of account)?

CONTENTS

Please award marks out of ten for each of the following features in TGM

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Do you think TGM should offer any of the following?

Gadget software charts

Do you enjoy playing computer games?

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Which other magazines do you read regularly but not buy?
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RULER/ CLOCK/ CALCULATOR
12"/30cm ruler with flick up battery-operated digital clock showing time and date in hours and minutes (AM and PM), months and days. Solar-powered, removable calculator with full functions, including memory, and eight figure LCD display.

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Light Wars - The Laser Tag Craze/ Console Overview Computers in the Movies/ The Robosystem - the presentation system of the future/ TV Gaming - Anglia TV's new adventure game! The Compact Disc revolution Mel Croucher's Software Swindles! Ben Daglish and Rob Hubbard speak out! Preview! Reviews!

TX:002 Dec/Jan 87/88
Robots in Video/ Mel Croucher's Violence in Software/ Getting into Satellite TV. Licensed To Kill - The race for the latest licensed film/ A Penny More/ An adventure story/ Robin Candy paints with Digital Elite (ST) Interview with Stephen Blower, the man behind the Ocean/magna adverts! Preview! 32 pages of Reviews!

TX:003 February 88
Coin-Op Confrontation/ TGM On-Line - A look at Commodore Censoring Computer Games! Mel Croucher's Stereotypes in Software/ Robin Candy paints with Deluxe Paint III/ Low-cost multi-track recorders reviewed/ Rob Steel's reviews of new arcade/ A round-up of Board Games/ Robin Evans' 'Mercy Desk/ Preview! 32 pages of Reviews!

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GROW YOUR OWN RADIO STATION

Microchip technology is becoming to our century what Gutenberg's first movable type was to the Middle Ages - the great democratiser - and never better seen than in the next generation of radio transmitters and receivers. Mel Croucher examines why the government is having to free our airwaves.

Last month, the London listings magazine *Time Out* was dragged before the beak accused of 'providing assistance to pirate radio stations'. What they had done was to commit the terrible crime of publishing the radio frequencies of Radios Caroline and Lazer 558. It was the first such prosecution under the 21-year-old Marine Broadcasting Offences Act in over TWELVE YEARS, and it is almost certain to be the last. On Thursday, March 10 1988 the case was thrown out of court. The government gave up trying to enforce a ludicrous piece of legislation, and the Department of Trade and Industry's Under Secretary, John Butcher MP, had failed in his February 1 plea in the House of Commons to 'clear the airwaves of pirates'. As from now, the airwaves are fair game for anyone who wants to pollute them.

Once upon a time, when the world was sepia and I was a little boy, before the days of television, the contraceptive pill and sliced bread, the centre of entertainment, knowledge, music, news, and what we used to call the radio, was the wireless (because it had lots of wires). In those days, we had a choice of three proper stations and one improper station. The proper ones were The Home Service (I voted for Mr Churchill and love the Royal Family), The Light Programme (I didn't vote for Mr Churchill and love the Royal Family). But let me tell you, gentle reader, it was the improper station that was the mmd-blower. It was called Radio Luxembourg, it played rock'n'roll music all night long, it carried adverts, and the jocks were young wildmen with names like Jimmy Saville. Trouble was, the signal was fuzzy, Radio Moscow often nudged it off the dial, and after a few years it became boring.

Then one day in the mid-Sixties a miracle happened. A bunch of loonies set up a radio station on board an old boat and started beaming subversive sounds across the nation all day and all of the night; Radio Caroline changed everything. The presenters didn't give a damn. Kenney Everett, Whispering Bob Harris, John Peel, Simon Dee, Tony Blackburn and friends, boozing on air, transmitting rude words, and waving electronic two fingers up at a government who tried, and failed to ban them. Pirates started sprouting up all over the wavelengths, broadcasting from bedrooms, garages, transit vans, public bogs, and anarchy ruled the waves. It was fabulous, and it was free.

On September 30 1967, the BBC took the only way out. They bought the souls of the pirates, hijacked, and launched Radio One, with Tony Blackburn and most of his legitimated mates. Piracy collapsed overnight as everyone tuned in to the new national networks, and illegal radio went in to cold storage. But things are changing, the airwaves are once again filled with anarchic stations and the government has admitted defeat. The biggest ever freeing up of radio broadcasting is happening right now, and it will never be the same again. The reason for this can be summed up in two words. NEW TECHNOLOGY. Thanks to cheap microchips, the cost of a radio transmitter with a broadcast radius of a few miles is ludicrously cheap; thanks to satellite broadcasting, the profits from international radio networks are ludicrously high. Let's take a look at the future which has already happened, and start off with the next generation of radio receivers.

RDS: THE INTELLIGENT RADIO

After ten years of research and design, a new breed of radios is being introduced in Britain right now. The functions that these new machines can perform are, in the words of William Shakespeare, bloody amazing. The Radio Data System was finalised under the 1986 Comité Consultif International de Radio agreement, and your new generation receiver will perform anywhere in the world except Japan and Australia. In alphabetical order, here is what it can do.

- **AF: ALTERNATIVE FREQUENCY SELECTION**
  - Using an on-board RAM store, the receiver makes sure that it is tuned to the strongest signal available for any selected station. And it ain't restricted...
to VHF bands, but will switch if it considers that this will result in a clearer signal.

CT: CLOCK TIME
Digital display of UTC (that's what they call Greenwich Mean Time these days), local time, various time zones, day, date, leap year, menstrual cycles! you name it.

DI: DECODER IDENTIFICATION.
A 4-bit utility for decoding Dolby, surround-sound, total stereo split and filtering out all those naughty frequencies that make the family dog wet itself.

IH: IN-HOUSE DATA
Probably the most interesting feature for the computer-literate, and anyone wanting to grow their own radio station. This feature is provided for the broadcaster's own individual choice of function, and computer-coded information on what is being broadcast will be flying through the airwaves.

M/S: SWITCHABLE MUSIC/SPEECH
A personalised twin-volume option, preset by the user. The intelligent radio is informed if it is broadcasting music or speech, and adjusts its volume according to your instructions. Invaluable to those who wish to cut out all the garbage that is spoken between records.

ON: NETWORK OPTIONS
Nice one. Suppose that you are the sort of person who wants to listen to particular news broadcasts all day, or heavy metal all night, this option instructs the radio to find the program of your choice automatically, no matter which network it is being broadcast on. Say goodbye to those "it's the bleeding Open University again" blues.

PI: PROGRAMME IDENTIFICATION
A 16-bit block, four bits displaying the broadcast's country of origin, another four to show if the service area is local, regional or national, and then eight bits for individual station identification, with up to 555 individual stations at your fingertips.

PIN: PROGRAMME ITEM NUMBER
Essential for all home pirates. A digital display showing the real-time length of the programme, record track, computer data transmission, etc., how far into that programme you are, and how long it's got to go. Spot on automatic recording is here, regardless of cock ups in late scheduling.

PS: PROGRAMME SERVICE
Eight alpha-numeric characters, including ASCII codes, Greek, Hebrew, Russian, but not Arabic, which will display what you are tuned to, eg: 'LAZER 558'.

PTY: PROGRAMME TYPE
Even better than Network Options, this option instructs the radio to broadcast programmes of any particular type continuously. So if you are into Country and Western, your receiver will scan the world for you, and probably commit electronic suicide.

RT: RADIO TELETEXT
A must for all Yuppies; this 64-character display is amazing. It can show news flashes, titles of records being played, sports results and, of course, adverts. Another neat touch is for in-car use, whereby emergency messages will be relayed via a speech synthesizer.

TA: TRAFFIC ANNOUNCEMENT OPTION
A single-bit flag which tells you when a traffic bulletin is being transmitted, and will automatically override whatever you're tuned to, if so instructed.

TDC: TRANSPARENT DATA CHANNEL
An invisible feature, but probably the most intriguing for THE GAMES
MECHANICS. TDC will allow the transmission of computer data, telephone conversations and television programmes, via the radio, to be downloaded via a standardised port. The connector and signal characteristics are in the process of being internationally standardised as I write this.

TP: TRAFFIC PROGRAMME OPTION

A simple flag, to allow car radios (or household ones, come to that) to be automatically returned for local traffic information, while you are on the move.

WHEN CAN I GET MY HAND ON ONE OF THESE RDS WONDERS?

The Answer to that is right now, but you have to go to Germany for it and exchange an arm for a leg for the new Grundig RDS hi-fi system. RDS machines are scheduled for release in the UK in 1989 and I confidently predict that they will be cheap and plentiful within two years, just in time for the total freeing up of the UK airwaves, and your high-powered radio station.

Philips, Sony and the other big bidders are ready to roll, and the cheapsops will flood on to the market soon after. As ever in the hi-tech world, these RDS services are in operation at this very moment on all FM transmitters in England, and by the end of this year Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland will be covered.

As we go to press, I am sorry to report that there seems to be a deliberate holding back of these machines in the UK, while the manufacturers get shot of all those crummy music centres, hi-fi stacks and inferior receivers. Manufacturers' schedules indicate that Christmas 1989 is going to witness the big RDS promotions. You will have THE GAMES MACHINE. Okay, now let's take a look at which of the big league players are going to tackle the back bedroom pirate broadcasters.

MANY OF THE INNER CITY RENEGADE STATIONS ARE CONTROLLED BY HOODS...

Maxwell, Rupert Murdoch, Eddie Shah, Capital Radio, Piccadilly Radio, and the IBA have all gone to Luxembourg. And if that sounds depressingly familiar, it is. Anyone wanting to be their own Director General simply has to put themselves in an envelope, and the winner will be the highest bidder. 'Loads of munny!' Radio will become infested with the same old advert and garbage programming that is churned out of the television, and the pirates will yet again fill a desperate need for alternative entertainment, news, views and adverts.

Timothy Renton is the Minister responsible for this new broadcasting free-for-all, or should I say free-for-nobody-at-all. What do you say Timbo?" I think it's very important to see diversity of programming and competitive tendering for ownership of these new networks as going together. I mean, they are two horses ploughed into the same furrow. (Psst. From another one, mate.) The bidders must meet the demand for customer taste and choice. Once he (sexist) has done this, he even invites me to join in the competitive tender.

But what does the Minister mean by 'diversity', is Radio One diverse? You can't press me on that." (Extracted from Hamsard.)

This is a load of old cobbled. Of course, no matter what any government mouthpiece says, it will be the same old rich moguls who will own our airwaves.

But one man is not playing the game. In the very near future, that man of many parts, some of which are sheathed in rubber, Richard Branson, is going to try and hijack British legislation by a factor of 18 months ahead of all the competition. He will attempt to dock with Communications Satellite ESC-1, and beam down a brand new all-night national radio station. It will be called Radio Radio (silly silly), and will boast stations as Paula (I'm Not A Pervert) Yates, Jonathan Woss and the mouthmawed queen of outrage, Ruby (a bit of a motormouth) Slut Yates. Jonathan Woss and the mouthmawed queen of outrage, Ruby Wax.

What strikes me as hugely funny is that despite this Star Wars technology, what it will actually do is to take us back to the Sixties, and Radio Caroline. Yes folks, among the proposed presenters are none other than Tony Blackburn and Whispering Bob Harris. (Ask yer grannies). Just like Caroline was a generation ago, this station is going to be hugely successful. And the reasons will be exactly the same. The main reason is that, for just £15 a year, you will be given the most comprehensive collective head, and be able to break free of the turgid, rigid, footling, terminally boring music playlists that innumerable BBC and IBA stations.

Another very important reason for guaranteed popularity is that it will have the exciting flavour of forbidden fruit. Richard Branson is growing his own revolution by using satellite communications, and is completely bypassing the new British Radio Authority. Several recent communications satellites have commercial radio stations indicate that they are thinking about sacking their night staff, and reyling Branson's channel.

GROW YOUR OWN PIRATE RADIO

The publishers of this magazine in no way endorse any activity which may be outside the law, and have no intention of encouraging the practice of illegal radio transmissions. But if you are thinking about becoming a pirate, here's what you do. A short-range radio transmitter costs about £100 upwards. VHF transmitters are preferable because they don't need a large aerial, thus there is less chance of being spotted by street patrols. The authorities have for all intents and purposes given up hassling back bedroom pirates.

The only way you will get busted is if you have the bottle to hijack the airspace of a legal station and interfere with their signal. There have been several instances where pirate stations have been raided and the safeguards of law and order have come out with broken noses and death threats. This is the real problem for the would-be pirate. Many of the inner city renegade stations are controlled by hoods, who will get very heavy if a newcomer starts poaching on their territory. There is big money involved, and many of the stations are managed by dealers of certain, er, commodities.

Target your audience. Pirate stations broadcasting in several major cities. My favourite is the gentleman in Leeds who plays the same Alice Cooper record day after day.

I like to leave MY GAMES MACHINE readers with some little token of my affection every month, and I had planned a listing of my favourite pirate radio stations. But we don't want to become the second case in 12 years to be prosecuted for aiding and abetting the pirates. So I am happy to pass on to you my specially compiled Radio Station Charts, of the most modish-posing and irritatingly beguiling planetary dial. Thank you for your attention, and happy twiddling.
A SCANADANIAN FANTASY

John Woods examines a Nordic takeover bid in fantasy games and indulges in some gruesome reading from the land of Harn

A long, long time ago in a galaxy far, far away, my Star Wars - the role-playing game campaign is reaching a crucial stage. My unfortunate (but unfailingly heroic) young Jedi has been taken captive by representatives of a race of lizard-like masters of genetic engineering, and is being held in a giant sponge-like underwater complex on their homeworld. Meanwhile the rest of the party are speeding through hyperspace to attempt a daring rescue, little knowing the perilis that lie in wait for them... With the anticipation of the next game becoming almost unbearable, the task of writing this month's reviews is a welcome distraction! This issue I feature two sets of fantasy role-playing rules: a brand-new Scandinavian system and a more established but comparatively little-known one from the USA. Now, where did I put that lightsabre...

The MEGA Role-Playing System - Fantasy Edition

144pp Hardback £12.95
Role-Playing Rules
Published by Mega Games Ltd.

MEGA Games are newcomers to the role-playing world, with products based around the Norwegian-written MEGA role-playing system. Apparently they plan to release a series of rulebooks using the same basic system and covering all types of role-playing (fantasy, science fiction and so on), plus a range of scenario packs to supplement the rules themselves.

First to be released is the fantasy version of the rules, and the company certainly seem to be proud of it. 'Excruciating Detail!' promises the back cover. 'The first RPG of a new generation... all of the qualities most desirable to GMs and players. Could this be the beginning of a Scandinavian invasion of our games shops' shelves? Will the unlikely-sounding MEGA system force the old favourites to look to their laurels? Your intrepid correspondent determined to investigate...

The first impressions of the rulebook were quite favourable. The publishers have wisely opted for a hardback format that is rapidly becoming standard for role-playing rules, for reasons that will be obvious to anyone who's ever had a softback rulebook subjected to a few months of frantic table-referencing and rule-checking. The rules are tidily printed on high-quality paper and illustrated mostly by a generous number of scattered pencil sketches, including some of the cutest goblins you've ever seen! Only the lack of an index earns an instant black mark in my book, but this is to some extent compensated for by an extensive table of contents.

The most important item in the introduction is an explanation of dice codes used in MEGA FRPG. As well as the usual codes - 'd6' to represent a six-sided die - there are 'special' rolls with codes such as 's26', designed to give 'a gradual and floating system of randomness'. All dice rolls are also open-ended, meaning that maximum and minimum rolls have further dice added or subtracted to extend the possible range of scores indefinitely. At least, this is the conclusion I came to after several minutes' study of the section concerned. The rules manage, in a few short but taut paragraphs, to make the simple act of rolling a few dice sound like a task of Einsteinian complexity. My initial confidence somewhat shaken by this, I gathered all my courage and cast a bottle of aspirin before plunging into the main mass of the rulebook...

COMBAT

Subsequent chapters present everything the good fantasy role-playing system could offer. Character generation is based on the standard system of rolling dice to determine basic character abilities, but there are some unusual additions to the normal range of Strength, Dexterity and the like in the form of Artistic Creativity and Musicality. Obviously a cultured lot, these Norwegian gamers... One chapter describes the system for determining these attributes for a new character. This is followed by a description of the various skills available to characters, ranging from Telepathy to Torturing. As in RPGs such as RuneQuest, PCs are not limited to particular classes of skills but are free to develop their abilities as they wish. The use of skills is resolved by the GM assigning a difficulty level to the action being attempted. The player then rolls a certain number of dice (the exact number depending on the skill involved, for some peculiar reason) and adds this score to their character's skill level. If this exceeds the difficulty level, the action is successful.

The combat system follows the same general principles, with the defensive value of the target replacing the difficulty level. A successful attack does damage to a specific location (head, chest, tummy or whatever) giving a more realistic feel.

Four different magic systems are provided, ranging from Priest Magic - granted by gods to their devoted worshippers - to Willpower Magic, where the raw determination of the caster produces the magical effect. An extension of the same skill system is used to determine the success of spells at spell casting. Descriptions of a range of monsters (including the cute goblins), encounter tables, equipment and price lists and a section on previous experience for adventuring characters tie up a book that clearly is trying hard to live up to its promises of all necessary information for running a game in one volume.

Sadly, the confused style of the opening section continues in the rest of the rules. The prose seems throughout as if written in someone's second language, with some very curious turns of phrase ('Many variations of the vampire have been told and here we have one, one which we find acceptable as it is based on reasonable explanations...'). This is a particularly serious problem in the sections explaining the more complex parts of the rules such as the combat system. What turn out, on careful reading, to be fairly sound and straightforward rules are explained in such a hurried and confusing fashion as to make them almost unintelligible. Even worse, there are very few concrete examples of play given, and those there are have dubious relevance.

SOME GOOD IDEAS

In fairness, there are a number of good ideas here. I particularly like the Priest Magic system, with its ideas for how worshippers can gain in standing with their deity by good service, thereby getting the chance of divine assistance. And...
the skill and combat system are fundamentally quite workable, though there are pages of mechanics - the more you pore over before they become comprehensible. But there are also a large number of ideas that seem to have been imported piecemeal from other systems, without really offering the gamer anything new.

All in all the system is exceeding- ly disappointing, with what I can only describe as a half-finished feel. The system's claims to completeness are let down by some hopelessly inadequate sections - the encounter tables are laughable, and the character background chapter consists only of a number of examples. And both playability and realism are lost in places that often seem to be absurdly over-complex for what they achieve - the whole system could be drastically streamlined in places.

All in all, I really can't recommend MEGA to anyone, especially the inexperienced gamers that some of the advertising has been pitched at. Nor can I understand the motives for publishing a product that is so clearly in desperate need of a complete rewrite. With a great deal of work these rules could form the basis of a reasonable system, but for now I'm afraid all the hype seems to have concealed a real Scandinavian turkey. Buy RuneQuest instead.

**HARNMASTER**

Columbia Games Inc.
Role-playing Rules
140pp Softback £13.50

Harnmaster is not a new game - it has been available in the UK for around a year now. But I make no apologies for featuring it, on the grounds that it is certainly one of the very best realistic fantasy RPGs, and as such is the perfect antidote for a humble reviewer, jaded after too many years of fighting his way through the trackless miles of prose in those MEGA rules...

Harnmaster is written by N Robin Crossby, and developed specifically for Columbia's fantasy world of Harn. A huge range of background material, maps, and the like has been published for this world, so it's an ideal choice for a GM who wants a detailed campaign setting with plenty of material to do all the work alone. However, there is virtually nothing in Harnmaster that is specific to the world of Harn. The rules are broadly applicable to any fantasy campaign setting. The overall philosophy behind the rules is very much that of the highest possible degree of realism, and as such the overall complexity of the system is high compared with better-known MEGA rules. The rules can easily be adapted to any fantasy campaign setting. The overall philosophy behind the rules is very much that of the highest possible degree of realism, and as such the overall complexity of the system is high compared with better-known MEGA rules. The rules can easily be adapted to any fantasy campaign setting.

**COMBAT PROOF**

The layout of the book has a business-like feel that suits the style of the rules well. The text is clearly set out, with sparing but effective use of pen and ink drawings - many of them serving some specific purpose as well as enlivening the text. The rulebook is softback which suggests it will readily become battered - these are the sort of rules you need to refer to frequently! A plus point here is that the combat tables are provided on two solid card pullouts, printed in full colour, to reduce at least some of the wear and tear on the rulebook as combat-crazed players check the success of their actions. And best of all is the inclusion of a comprehensive index, a must in a system of this nature.

After a brief introduction to roleplaying concepts, including how to roll dice for those of us still confused after earlier reviews, the rules open with - you guessed it - character generation. A total of 32 different attributes are used to describe a character in full detail, ranging from standard physical abilities such as Strength, Endurance and Agility to mental characteristics such as Intelligence, Aura (magical power) and Will to the finer details such as eye colour, complexion, medical and psychological abnormalities - and more. Background details such as a character's previous occupation and family status are also covered. The rules are concise and well-thought-out, so that after working through the dozen pages with pencil, paper and dice in hand, you have brought to life a completely detailed individual. Next you must decide what skills and abilities your new computer will have.

**NO SOLO SEDUCTION**

Unsurprisingly, Harnmaster uses an open-ended system allowing any character to learn any skill. The starting ability in a skill depends on a combination of relevant character attributes specified for each skill. Use of skills is resolved by a percentage dice roll, a player having to roll lower than his or her character's skill code for success. A nice extra touch is that any score divisible by 5 has special significance - either a particularly successful result or an especially devastating failure. Skills increase by experience or training. The range of skills described is enormous, covering everything from the mundane (Ceramics - the ability to make pots) to the exotic (Pyrokinesis - psychic fire control) to the erotic (Lovcraft - seduction: 'Cannot normally be improved by solitary practice').

The combat rules run to a substantial 28 pages, though some of this is given over to detailed descriptions of weapon and armour types. The rules are complex but clearly explained, and allow a player a range of distinct attacking and defensive options to choose between. Dodging, missile use, mounted and unarmed combat are all configured into the system in a logical way, and the effects of different types of weapons and armour allowed for.

**GRUESOME READING**

Most radical of all, Hit Points do not appear at all. Hits result in realistic injuries depending on the body location struck and the weapon used, and those affect the injured character's reducing abilities and by causing shock and bloodloss. Injuries must be treated in an appropriate way to heal - broken limbs need casts and bandages, wounds become infected if left untreated, and frostbite and frostbite warnings are dealt with in a very satisfactory manner. Too many GMs and players rely on monster-bashing for the exclusion of role-playing, and it is good to see a system that encourages the opposite trend.

The spiritual side is governed by the GM, and compared to simpler systems will always require more work and thought from players and GMs. The rules are designed to allow the enterprising GM to convert any desired creature to the Harnmaster system with ease.

**FEW BIZARRE MONSTERS**

The remainder of the book is taken up by a wonderfully comprehensive prehistorical, an excellent set of rules for creatures with cross-referencing to detail not only who is met but also what they or they are up to at the time, a very satisfactory situation. This section will disappoint those who like a huge range of bizarre monsters, detailing as it does only a fairly small selection, but it gives enough examples to allow the enterprising GM to convert any desired creature to the Harnmaster system with ease.

Harnmaster is a system for the purist. Whilst the rules are exceedingly clearly written throughout, there will be many GMs and players giving the rules an initial perusal for that effort, players can come to know their characters down to the last detail, and feel a much greater sense of involvement and realism than would otherwise be possible, and GMs can create a logical, self-consistent and convincing fantasy world of their own by means of research.

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**NEXT MONTH**

I’ll be featuring Land Of Ninja - RuneQuest adventure in Imperial Japan, skilfully adapted by the honourable Games Workshop. Until then, keep rolling those dice (if you can find the instruction manual)!
MR POSTMAN, WHERE'S MY GAME?

It's a crime to miss out on Play By Mail - one of the fastest growing pastimes in the country. But getting going can be bewildering. THE GAMES MACHINE tells you how.

A Play By Mail section in THE GAMES MACHINE is long overdue, but rather than plough straight in with reviews of the games available, we thought it better to start from the beginning. Realising that not everybody fully understands PBMs or how they work, we thought we would give this section a different slant by acting as guinea pigs, entering and playing one or more existing games, then reporting each month on our progress (or lack of it). Through our experiences, we hope to better both yours and our knowledge of this increasingly popular genre.

This does not mean, however, that PBM games will not be reviewed, and we should be grateful if any interested parties would invite us to look at their games.

WHAT IS PBM?

The scenario for a game is created, control of which, in the case of the larger companies such as KJC Games, is undertaken by a main frame computer. Customers wishing to take part in the game apply, and are sent a pack, which usually includes the scenario, instructions, turn card and a results sheet.

The turn card is used to write down what action you would like to take within the boundaries of the game and the results sheet is used to report on those actions.

A charge is made for each turn taken - usually around 75p - and you are allowed to take more than one turn per sitting if you wish. When satisfied with your orders, you post them to the controller who, processes the data and dispatches the results for you to consider your next move (if you are still in the game). This process normally takes around ten days - referred to as a game week and continues until the game is won, you retire or get killed.

WHAT GAME TO PLAY

We studied the Play By Mail games available and decided on It's A Crime from KJC Games. Two main reasons influenced our decision; with over 450 players involved in each game, it is very popular - and it appears easy to play without being simplistic.

THE SCENARIO OF IT'S A CRIME

You are a gang leader who controls a group of misguided youths. Your gang is one of roughly 500 which inhabit New York City in the late 1990s.

Your main goal is to control a powerful gang. To accomplish this you must build your turf into one of the largest, and your gang into one of the richest, toughest and most notorious in the City.

Ultimately your quest is to become Godfather, whereupon you are declared the winner and the game ends.

We should have taken our first two turns - which incidentally are free to all newcomers - by the time you read this, next month we shall report on the results.

ABOUT KJC GAMES

KJC Games was established in 1981 by Kevin Cropper. From small beginnings it steadily grew, until today, when it is the largest PBM company this side of the Atlantic - unless you are reading this from that side of the Atlantic.

The first game moderated (controlled) by KJC was Crasimoff's World - a fantasy role-playing game run entirely by hand. This was closely followed by the popular wargame Earthwood - KJC's first computer-moderated PBM game. Their latest offering, It's A Crime, is the most popular PBM game in the world, with over 10,000 players. It won the 1987 HG Wells Award; as well as the 1987 CRASH Readers' Award for best PBM game. KJC process approximately 15,000 turns per month at present, although this figure is continually rising. There are now 27 games of It's A Crime started, of which four are complete. Each individual game starts with 450 players and involves six mbeyes' worth of programs and data.

The games are currently run on IBM 20mbyte clones - mostly Amstrad although KJC are in the process of upgrading. Eventually all their computers will be linked via a network which will include one very fast machine to process the turns - incorporating a 386 chip and a 280 mbyte hard disk for storage - with the rest of the machines used as terminals for inputting. The system should be up and running by the time you read this.

As you can see, KJC Games take PBM seriously.

We are on the look-out for another PBM game to become involved in as well as It's A Crime - if you know of one that would suit you or you can personally recommend a game, please drop us a line. And keep tuned for next month's first proper game report.
Somewhere off the Isle of Wight...

Here's their plane, Dad! Hope this parachute works better for me than it did for you in '44! Bumped your head, didn't you?

I felt a small jerk... and now, I see behind the shadow of the plane, the shadow of a parachute person on skis... but... no!

What kind of plane is this, young man?

I think it's a little freakier, isn't it?
GET INTO CRIME!

In the late 1990's the streets of New York are a jungle. You are the ice cool leader of a gang of drug crazed terrorists. Your main goal is to become the richest, toughest and most notorious gang in the city.

DARE YOU PLAY.....

FREE OFFER

SEND YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS TODAY FOR YOUR FREE TRIAL OF IT'S A CRIME THE WORLDS MOST POPULAR PLAY-BY-MAIL GAME

Write to:–

K U C GAMES, PO BOX 11, CLEVELEYS, BLACKPOOL, LANCS FY5 2UL
INTAKE OF DEHYDRATED CAMELS

Drink, it seems, is not the great dehumaniser; as Jon Bates discovers, it is Bioquantization that is the problem, and German software house C-Lab is probably most to blame with their best products yet: The Creator and X-alysyer.

Whilst feeling intelligent, I came across a fascinating piece of scholarly research that related directly to one of this month's reviews. I have taken the liberty of reproducing extracts from this lengthy tome in your interest.

There is something in the human brain that actually either gets bored with exact rhythm or responds to it by going into a comatose or trance-like state. Recent research at the University of Latvia has proved conclusively that exact quantization of beats has been the cause of much human suffering and loss of dignity. To quote from the recent dissertation, Bioquantization; a Study American Library of Congress Accession no. 5066 by their eminent musicologist Professor Zygote Stoner:

'I have observed this phenomena at many beer-houses and places of ritual peasant gathering where the attendants to this ritual have had computer-generated music released at them for periods of up to six hours at a decibel rating of between 115 and 128db ... they appear tired, listless and nonsensical. Attempts to assess their mental capabilities after prolonged subjection to severely quantized rhythm patterns have proved very difficult ... the subjects often reverted to base familialities and threats of violence when asked to participate in assessment games like 'Doodlets' and 'Binge' (both popular western rituals) ... I have proved conclusively that this is due to the endless cacitude of the rhythms and is not related in any way to the intake of liquids by the peasants that was observed to be consumed at a rate that related to the intake of dehydrated Camel (see appendix xi) ... in fact, my research shows that it is the relentless mechanical rhythm that has created the raging thirst in the first place.'

Well, who can argue with that?

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THE CREATOR

One of the attributes of any decent software is that it should, in my humble opinion, be dead easy to get to grips with from the word go. In other words you can start working with it straight away and then peel back its layers of complexity as you go along — thus removing the need to burn plenty of bedside lamp oil while puzzling through the manual.

The Creator certainly fulfills the first rule as, once loaded, you can record your efforts straight away.

It is a real-time recording program with extensive sequencing facilities enabling the stitching and chaining together of sections with sequenced parts running simultaneously. It works on a process of data hierarchy rather similar to most real-time sequencers except that the amount of control and editing you can achieve is staggering.

The smallest unit is called an Event: a note, pitch bend movement or program change etc. These are built up into Tracks: the provision for the musical information relating to one instrument usually on one MIDI channel. Every track can be named, processed, edited and copied independently.

16 tracks on one screen page can constitute a Pattern. A Pattern can also be processed in total. When recording, a Pattern or Track can be of unlimited length so your keyboard doodlings can be edited up into something worthwhile. On playback you can solo or mute any Track. There are 99 Pattern pages available and the usual way of working is to allot to each page a section of your piece — verse, chorus, lead etc. However the top level of the hierarchy, the Arrangement section, allows parts to be cut and pasted, chained, overlapped, repeated, moved about, with very easy commands. Because of this it is possible to have one Pattern page just for the drums, which can run all the way through the piece.

This is where we get the concept of 64 tracks; you can have up to four Patterns running simultaneously and as every calculator knows, 4 x 16 = 64, although it is in fact only using 16 actual MIDI channels — there is no provision as yet for assignable multiples of this as on some other sequencers.

IDIOT PROOF

On loading, the screen is split into five main sections. On top are the main global controlling peripherals of tempo, time signature and bar number. If you alter the number of beats per bar, the bar numbers alter...
accordingly. Bars are broken down into numbers of beats and fractions of a beat. A small window tells you how much memory you have left, and just to keep things on a real-time basis there is a time-elapsed indicator running off in hours, minutes and seconds. Fastidious though this may seem, there could be a program that can work with film and video, and your timing here is pretty crucial.

MIDI sync commands are altered in this section as well. Below it are four main screen sections, most important of which is the central Pattern box. You can have up to 99 Pattern pages, each consisting of 16 simultaneous channels/tracks. For easy reference, when you select the MIDI channel for each track you can name the instrument it is to command — very useful when you return to the file at a later date. Down the right-hand edge of this box is a reference column displaying the editing peripheral of the population. I can't retain a head of figures and instantly relate them in ratio formula to the small section of the sound that is digitally visible on the instrument to command. With the programming utility with full display of all the peripherals on one or two screens.

On its heels was the realisation that most synths could do with memory expansion when it came to the voice department. Even with some synths retaining up to 256 voices, there comes the problem of swapping them about so that your favourite sounds are accessible easily and not lost amongst the slurry at the bottom of a ROM buffer somewhere. Hence voice library editors and managers. As the DX7 has outsold every other synth there by a factor of 10, I can understand the proliferation of programming software for it.

LOOK, NO HANDS!

The X-alysor has a very direct approach. The library is presented in two columns: on the left the one you already have, and on the right the one you are about to create. Voices are mouse-dragged and to and fro, or pulled from, either the library or DX7. Voice dumps of 32 at a time are achieved in the same way by clicking on the correct screen icon. By the way, the program comes with about 300 new voices, most of which are useful and serve as excellent food for customising. You could get the sound of each voice first as it automatically sounds it on the synth for you.

However the amazing feature of this particular program is that you don't need a DX7 to work it! I repeat, this is a DX7 programmer that doesn't need a DX7 — and you can still hear the sound!! How? The secret is the second part of its function — that bit about DX-to-sample-transformer. It has some furious maths routines converting the DX sound peripherals to a MIDI Sample Dump Format.

What? Okay, it's technospeak time. Recently there has been a standard format implemented for samplers so a common language exists between samplers of different makes and sampling rates, etc. Thus your 16-bit 'ABC' sampler can dump sound via a common MIDI format to the 'XYZ' sampler with 16-bit — or whatever — format. This, in theory, is no source of eternal light and joy to you yet but it does mean, as C-Lab themselves point out, that MIDI-capable software can convert any synthesized sound created and edited on a computer and dump it onto a sampler. Wonderful. You can buy a suitable sampler, and use this program to get it to emulate a DX7 or maybe another synth when the software is available.

This could herald the age of the newer DXs have. It also edits any DX7 type of tone module. The bad news is that it only works on the 1040 ST.

As MIDI-madness set in it was screamingly obvious that oneprime application was that of visually displaying the editing peripheral of digital synths. Despite claims by a few of the idiot guides that take you by the hand from novice to professional.

"The Creator offers different styles of 'humanised' quantizations."

"... we are dealing with a program that can work with film and video ..."

"All sort of delights await the intense user ..."

"All the usual professional type of alterations are available. Quantize from (4th nearest note) to 768—which is real-time. And as well as transposition you can alter the velocity, if your module/synth is velocity sensitive of course; you can mimic the effect of a compressor — this affects the overall ratio of velocity, delay tracks, select a split point, loop a Track etc.

What I found confusing at first is that the initial ease of getting something down and playing it back, I realised that there are several different ways to approach the main functions, and this wealth of detail can be overwhelming at first; eg: Loop. This refers to the looping of one Track within a Pattern — something you might do for a repeated riff or drum beat. It has nothing to do with the overall cycle control referred to in the right-hand window.

Another minefield at first is the quantization options. Once upon a time that is, about 18 months ago, quantization was simple. You played your notes in, selected to what note value you wanted them to correct themselves to, and hey presto! That was absolutely spot-on. The Creator not only does individual quantization for each Track, Pattern or Arrangement, but it offers different styles of 'humanised' quantizations. In fact what this does is to introduce an element of tolerance to the beats. It also looks at other musical criteria besides timing and smooths these out according to an overall average. If that is not enough you can flip the whole screen to the event editor, available in numeric or graphic/numeric versions, and dive right in and alter the individual notes, velocities etc. All the alterations can be heard as you do them and you can shuffle backwards and forwards as many times as you like, using the cycle mode.

"Wealth of Detail"

Wealth of Detail

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"The Creator offers different styles of 'humanised' quantizations."

"All sort of delights await the intense user ..."
sampler being almost the only tone module you need. However this also explains why the program needs one megabyte of memory as it takes a couple of minutes to transfer to the sampler. A quick spin-off of this is the X-alyzer's ability to access the pury sound chip in the Atari, bypass the sound registers and stuff the sample dump through the digital-to-analogue converter resident in the chip. Got it? Even if this information hits you with all the force of a polystyrene granule, it does mean that you can roughly edit the sounds without having to plug everything in.

**SOUND MOUNTAIN**

The edit facilities are extra simple to use. You can choose between the full peripherals on display or an Easy Edit page. Easy Edit shapes up the sounds much in the manner of an analogue synth, that is to say Attack, Decay, Sustain, and Release for the sounds' shape or its tonal colour. Whichever page you choose, you can mouse-drag bar graphs, tug sound shapes around, or increment values with the left-hand button. If you prefer, the cursor keys do the same trick. Very quick, very easy.

The program also stores additional data such as performance memories and tuning data. After each alteration a note is automatically sounded on the synth so you can quickly hear the effect. As with The Creator, the undo function button comes to the rescue should you foul up totally.

There is also a three dimensional 'sound mountain' display à la Fairlight for every sound. Although you can't edit from this, it is an interesting display of the sound and can be skewed through 180° on either axis. All in all a rather excellent program and one which stands to alter the future of sound synthesis by the use of MIDI.

**ARCANA COMPETITION**

Five days of gliding lessons, including food and accommodation were on offer to the winner of Arcana's Powerplay and Marsco's crossword. After training, the winner also receives a year's membership to their local club. And who is it? Why it's Mr. Lee from Cambridgeshire PE17 1JF. Fasten your safety belt SJJ. Turn further runners up each get a copy of Powerplay:

**ROAD WARS COMPETITION**

Melbourne House had copies of Road Wars for the first 20 entries drawn which correctly answered how much it would cost one person to buy all the Atari ST versions at a 10% discount if there were one in eight of 150,000 multimedia format copies produced. The answer was £337.331.25. And the winners are:

Michael W McLeod, Scotland KW1 5UT; Guy Everett, Devon EX21 5UU; Neil Griffiths, Nottingham NG2 7EP; N Langley, Middlesex HA2 8XF; P McEvoy, Bradford BD4 3QX; Paul Nicholls, Berks SL5 8PG; James McGloin, Herts WD1 9JU; J Skipper, Norfolk NR20 4HD; CB Zecha, Netherlands; Ricky Fonwick, Northumberland NE32 SPL; B D Jagger, Lancs FY7 8TD; J Soffici, Glossop GL52 3DA; Craig Judge, Ayrshire; Jason Brimelow, Manchester M29 0LJ; Aman Khan, Middlesex UB9 0R1; Stephen Worthington, Essex RM17 5XA; Robert Dean, Essex SS15 3XK; Simon Ashe, Hampshire SP11 6SC;

TGM's WIN AN AMIGA (1)

Yes, this was the first of our three opportunities for a lucky GAMES MACHINIST to win an Amiga A500 plus a 1081 Colour Monitor. The response was enormous! The first answers: A = 4. Psygnosis (Barbarian); B = 2, Audiogenic (Impact); C = 3, Arcade (Powerplay); D = 1, Elite (Battleships). And the man who has turned 16-bit overnight is Paul Johnston from Lancashire BB5 1SU.

**LIGHT PHASERS**

Mastertronic asked you to shoot to kill — words in this case, tucked in a wordsquare, with 10 Sega Light Phaser guns, the three-game Combo Cartridge and Shooting Gallery on offer to the drawn winners. And they are:

Jonathan Williams, Worcs DY9 6LD; Tudor Watson, W Sussex GU28 0QX; Derek Liddiard, Stockport SK4 4AA; John Ellis, Leeds 11; James King, Middlesex HA6 6BE; Tim Davies, Kent TQ7 6BU; Gary Morton, 15 Alma Court, Bristol BS8 2HG; Alex Hargest, Leeds PE12 6AG; Paul Gravett, Sussex BN2 6DF; Patrick Walsh, Slough, Berks.

Next month, cheaper utilities for the Atari and Amiga, and hopefully the first music software for the Archimedes, plus some answers to your queries. And I am still trying to make room for my list of essential terms that you are dying to know about! The Creator costs £225 and the X-alyzer £111.64 both from SOUND TECHNOLOGY, 6 Letchworth Business Centre, Avenue One, Letchworth, Herts SG6 2HR. Tel: (0462) 480000

**COMPETITION WINNERS**

Graham Greenough, Midts UB3 8LP; Greg Atkin, Glasgow G66 8BB.

ST Clarke, Tuscobridge Wells, Kent; D Ross, Oxford OX9 8RU; Martin Hancock, Sheffield S5 5EJ; Gareth Howland, Sheffield S6 7ES; Trevor Cobb, Leeds LS6 1RZ; Ross Allen, Bentley BN1 1JQ; Wayne Stylus, Bolton BL2RH; Simon Wills, Harps PO7 4PI; B Singleton, Leeds LS14 2HD; M McSwiggan, Guernsey, Channel Islands;
UNCLE MEL'S TRIVIA QUIZ

Fresh from his personal triumph in Jersey as MC of the Newsfield Readers' Awards 1987 – a three-day stint without sleep – Mel Croucher effortlessly provides another 20 questions designed to enlarge your brain. Only those Persons Renowned in Computer Knowledge could possibly get 17 out of 20 correct. Have a go...

1) True or false: Marvin The Paranoid Android got to Number 53 in the charts in 1981 with a song titled Marvin.

2) Which programs masquerade as DEAF GIRL, OVLLEMM, BUM CALLS and YE POPE?

3) What event will give British software producers access to 320 million potential customers, on January 1st 1992?

4) What have Nigel Mansel's Grand Prix, PSI Distribution and Edgar Allan Poe got in common?

5) How many are Leo McKern + George Baker + Patrick Cargill + Eric Portman + Patrick McGoohan?

6) What does CP/M, CAD, PDS and KINNOCK stand for?

7) Spot the difference between MERCY DASH cartoonist Robin Evans and Dan Dare 2 villain, The Mekon.

8) Who played the voice of The Martian in Journey Into Space?

9) How many Californians does it take to program a computer?

10) In which software house were Giorgio Moroder and Phil Oakey in 1984?

11) How many women does it take to program a computer?

12) Which of the following creatures are not associated with computers: mouse, turtle, lynx, dragon, bug, puma, cheetah, codemasters

13) What printers can you find in MAD RATS, OVILETIF and HERB ROT?

14) Spot the odd one out in the CRU stable: Wolfman, Dracula, Frankenstein, Clement Chambers

15) True or false, the first digital computer was designed in 1822?

16) Who are Richard Barile and Roy Trusbaw?

17) What is the name of the family featured in Lost In Space?

18) How many SDP Members of Parliament does it take to program a computer?

19) Who wrote Hunter's Moon? a) John Stalker, b) Martin Walker, c) RUN DMC

20) What has an overfilled plate, Palace Software and a hole in your tights got in common?

ANSWERS:

1. Robin Evans
2. MERCY DASH
3. Dan Dare
4. Nigel Mansel
5. Leo McKern
6. CP/M, CAD, PDS, KINNOCK
7. Mekon
8. The Martian
9. Californians
10. Software house
11. Women
12. Creatures
13. Printers
14. CRU
15. False
16. Richard Barile and Roy Trusbaw
17. Family
18. SDP Members of Parliament
19. Hunter's Moon
20. Overfilled plate, Palace Software, hole in your tights

END

NEXT MONTH
IN THE GAMES MACHINE!

- 2001 – A MEMORY SPACE ODYSSEY
  When George Orwell wrote 1984 in 1948, it seemed a long way off. When Arthur C Clark wrote the script for 2001 – A Space Odyssey, it seemed a long way off. But we've passed 1984 and 2001 is getting inexorably nearer. What will our software be like then? THE GAMES MACHINE finds out for you.

- IT BITES BACK!
  Jon Bates interviews a band who eschew Fairlights and prefer to produce their music with the aid of Atari STs – they're called IT BITES.

- HYPE'S ALL IN A NAME
  THE GAMES MACHINE investigates the meaning of tough-talking titles and company names – are they a joke or money-spinners?

- MSX II – THE RANGE
  Pleased as punch with our new SONY MSX HB F-700B, we take a look at some of the machines now available for MSX II users.

- AND THE REST
  Plus personality-crunching Mel Croucher, hot on the trail of some industry scandal, a superb new Amiga art utility, all the latest multi-format reviews and preview news, boardgames, fantasy games and play by mail games and electronic features.

- Don't miss the next issue of THE GAMES MACHINE! It goes on sale from May 19 at all good newsagents.

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AUF WIEDERSEHEN MONTY

Lying low in Gibraltar, poor persecuted Monty Mole’s whereabouts have been leaked to ‘Intermole’ who are in hot pursuit.

JACK THE NIPPER IN COCONUT CAPERS

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