

AMSTRAD ■ ATARI ■ BBC MICRO ■ COMMODORE ■ MSX ■ NINTENDO ■ SEGA ■ SINCLAIR

8 bit ANNUAL

2018

**8-BIT GAMES
REVIEWED ON
MULTIPLE
SYSTEMS!**

**INTERVIEWS
WITH THE PEOPLE
BEHIND THOSE GAMES**

PLUS: THE SPECTRUM NEXT AND MUCH MORE!

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8 bit ANNUAL



ACORN AMSTRAD ATARI COMMODORE MSX NINTENDO SEGA SINCLAIR

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First published: 2018

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85 - 89%



90 - 94%



95 - 100%

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DISCLAIMER

We allow our reviewers to write in their own words, write their own style and for them to make their own judgments with respect to a game's overall ratings. None of our reviewers are professional journalists and we like it that way as we don't discriminate and we feel it gives a much more fan based look with the game reviews. Our writers / contributors of game reviews write how they feel about a game and decide for themselves if they liked playing a game or not, letting them discover for themselves if a game is of high merit or not. We do not seek to give preferential favour to any games, any developers or any groups.

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II 
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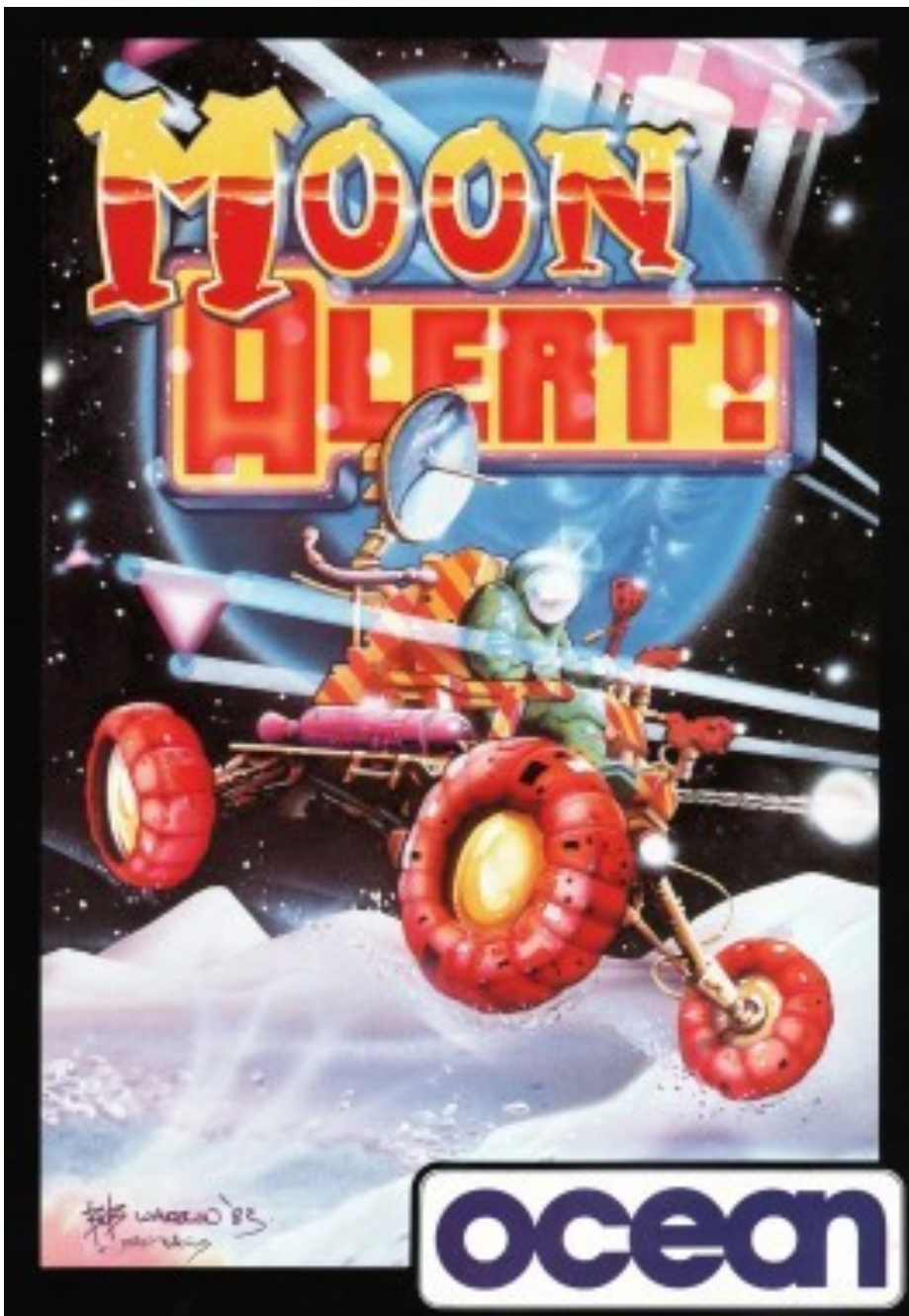
VISIT IN PERSON OR ONLINE

Personal Computer Museum
13 Alma Street
Brantford, ON N3R 2G1
Canada
<http://pcmuseum.ca>



A Tribute to Bob Wakelin and his computer and video games artwork

By: Neil Reive



Back in the 1980's, gamers didn't have the internet or social media to look up the new games releases, and if they didn't buy any gaming publications, the first impression they got when they entered a store was the cover art. Gamers would see dozens of games lined up on the shelves featuring handcrafted artwork adorning the front covers, and none more so than the games from Ocean Software (one of the biggest European computer game developers and publishers of the 1980's and 1990's).

The artwork was designed to give an impression of the game and, due to the game's limited visual appeal in those days, spark the gamer's imagination – and it did just that. Although Bob Wakelin worked freelance for many companies and comic books, he is best known to retrogamers for producing the majority of Ocean's cover artwork. If you don't know that name, you will no doubt have seen his artwork, not only on front covers of games, but on advertising posters and promotional work.



Bob's love of art began as a child. Back then he spent a lot of time at home ill and, along with reading books and comics, he occupied himself by drawing a lot. That love of drawing stayed with him through the years as he looked to make it a viable career option. After spending three years attending an art course at Flintshire College of Technology, Bob's desire to produce comic book artwork grew, despite his teachers trying to dissuade him from working in the entertainment industry.

Following the completion of his art course, Bob got a job at a small company in Liverpool designing posters for rock concerts and album sleeve covers. He worked his way up the ranks and decided to leave his position and go freelance in 1978, one of his first freelance assignments was working for Marvel Comics.

On a whim Bob joined a band in 1980 where he played synths, and things went well for a while. However, the band eventually split up and went their own ways. This led to Bob going back to freelance artwork, and he started sharing a studio space with a fellow artist who happened to do box cover artwork for Ocean Software. It was this freelancing friend that introduced Bob to the Ocean Software's management team of David Ward and Jon Woods, and after being suitably impressed with Bob's artwork samples, they offered him some work. Initially, the plan was that Bob would work with the other artist, with each one working on the areas they excelled at. However, the other artist's timekeeping was a lot to be desired, and with deadlines needing to be met, Bob took over all the artwork for Ocean Software. Some of Bob's early cover art for Ocean included High Noon, Road Frog, Moon Alert, and Caterpilla.

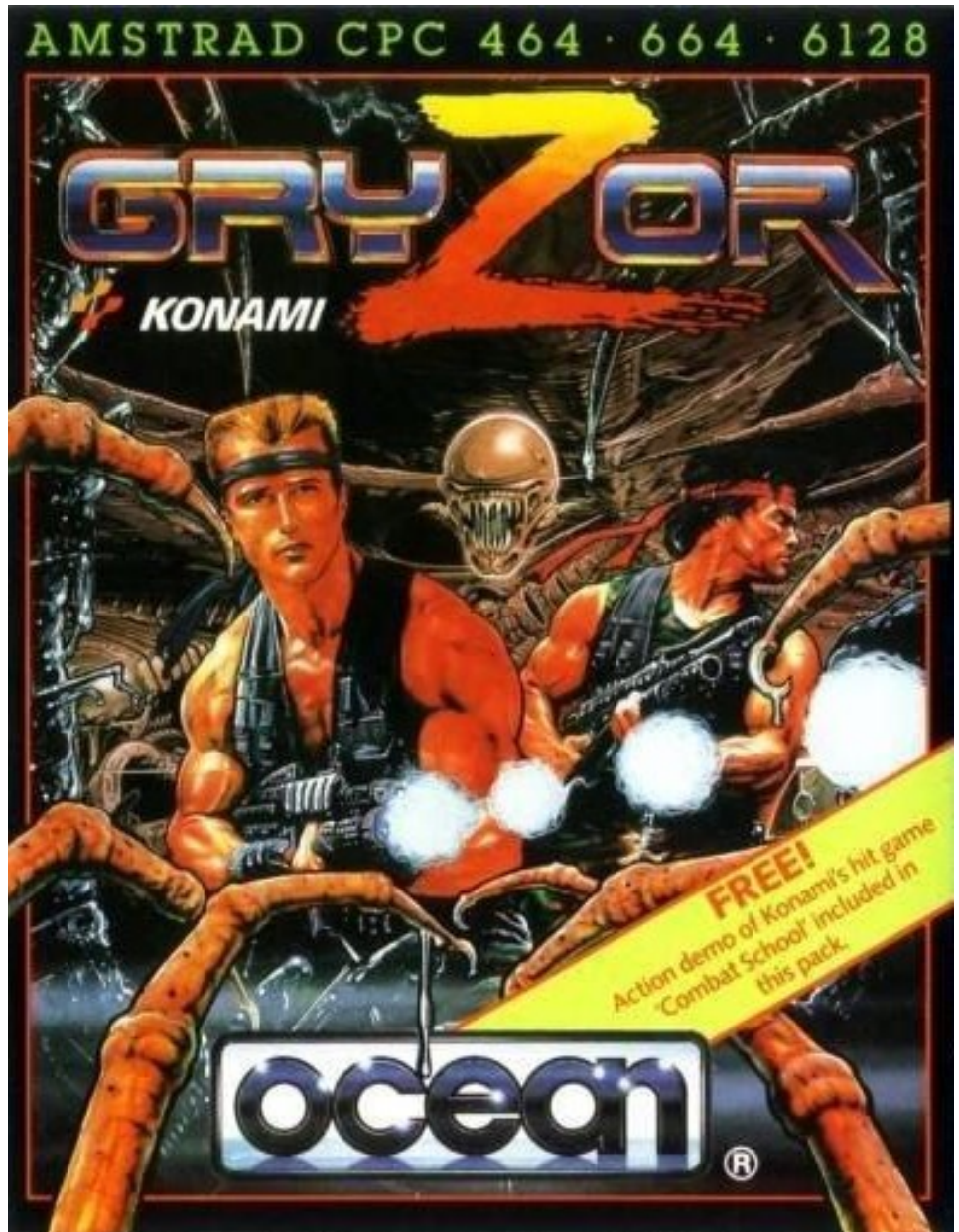
Back in the early '80s, computer games were not much to look at, so Bob's artwork would often make more of an impression than the game itself. To produce the artwork, all Bob got from Ocean Software would be a brief description of what the game was about. Later on, Bob would head over to the

Ocean offices in

Manchester to see screenshots, get a brief on the game, and sometimes see a demo of the game in action. Bob would then reference the subject matter and work on the artwork for four to ten days. Most of the work would be sketched out in a detailed pencil draft, which would then be airbrushed over, and touched up

with felt pen.

Ocean Software's famous logo wasn't designed by Bob, but he was asked to update it. The original Ocean logo was a flat two-toned style blue font on a white background. Bob added an overall shine to the logo with subtly shadowing and twinkling effects on the Ocean letters, along with a blue and white background.

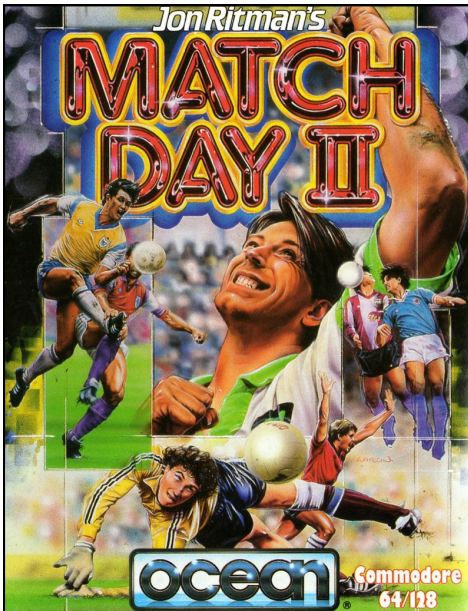


A TRIBUTE TO BOB WAKELIN

Bob Wakelin's Artwork

You can purchase Bob Wakelin's artwork here:
<https://www.etsy.com/uk/shop/BobWakelinArtwork>

Also, check out Bob Wakelin's Artwork on Facebook at:
www.facebook.com/BobWakelinArtwork/



It was this new designed logo that gamers would identify with Ocean for the next decade.

By the mid '80s, Ocean had started acquiring many movie and arcade licences, and it was during this time that Bob's art took on a blockbuster epic feel to them. During busy periods, Bob could be completing up to three designs a week and would often work on them well into the night. To help him through the working day, many of Bob's friends would pop in to entertain him, make a coffee, and keep him up to date with the latest stories.

While Bob still did freelance work elsewhere – such as occasional front cover art for the likes of Computer + Video Games magazine – the continued growth of Ocean meant that almost half of his work was game artwork.

Despite being involved with the gaming industry, Bob had no great love for games; he preferred the social interaction with friends down the local. He had also been asked about designing loading screens and other game art at the time, but felt he would get frustrated by not getting the detail he wanted into the computer screen.

While a lot of Bob's artwork during this time involved arcade conversions (Gryzor, Operation Wolf, Cabal, Chase H.Q., et al), there were also a lot of original game artwork that he worked on, such as Wizball (mentioned by Bob

himself as a fan favourite), Where Time Stood Still, Head Over Heels, and others. During the mid '90s, Ocean Software were downsizing their operations, so one of the casualties was to be one of their warehouses

where Bob's artwork happened to be stored. To avoid it all going to the skip, Bob and a friend got hold of a small van and managed to rescue around 90% of the work.

The last job for Ocean would have been in 1995, following a disagreement over artwork fees. By that time the once big software house had changed drastically, and it wouldn't be too long before it would be sold off to Infogrames. With Bob having been freelance all these years, it wasn't too much of a problem to continue working on comic book art and magazine covers, and he had the opportunity to work for Marvel once more.

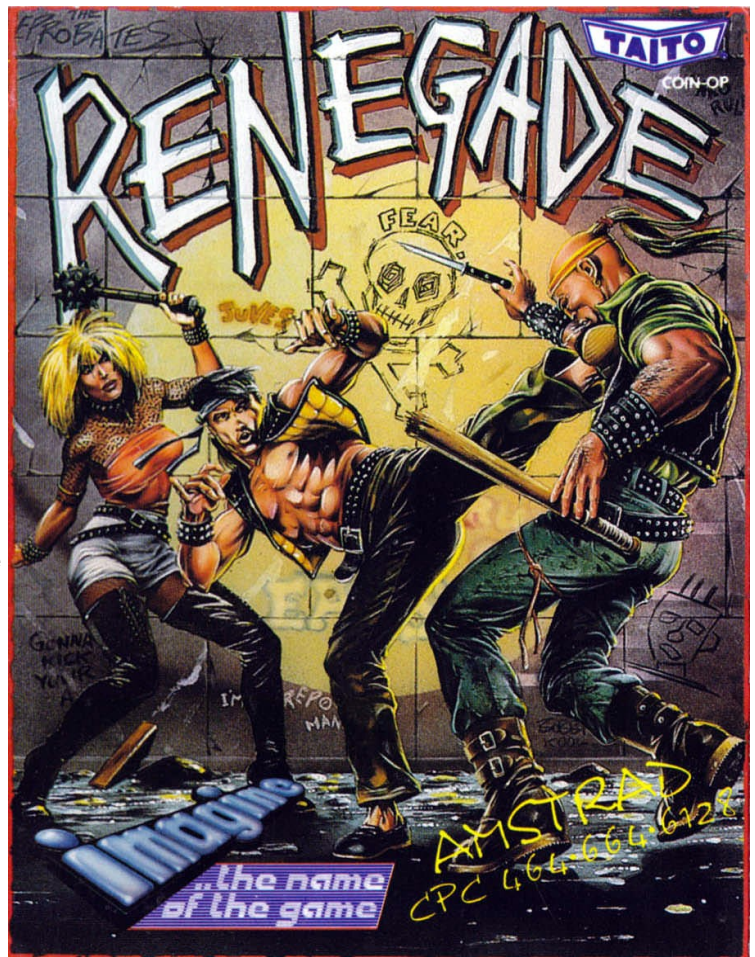
Bob's gaming artwork has stood the test of time very well, and found a new lease of life when retro gamers would begin purchasing prints of his artwork. He would often attend many retro gaming events, taking a variety of his artwork prints for eager gamers to purchase. Bob was initially surprised by the interest shown for his old artwork, but understood how people can get attached to these images in the same way he has feelings for old comic book covers. He mentioned how these things can evoke people's memories of when they first picked up their favourite game, the times that they played it, and the general time period of growing up with the game.

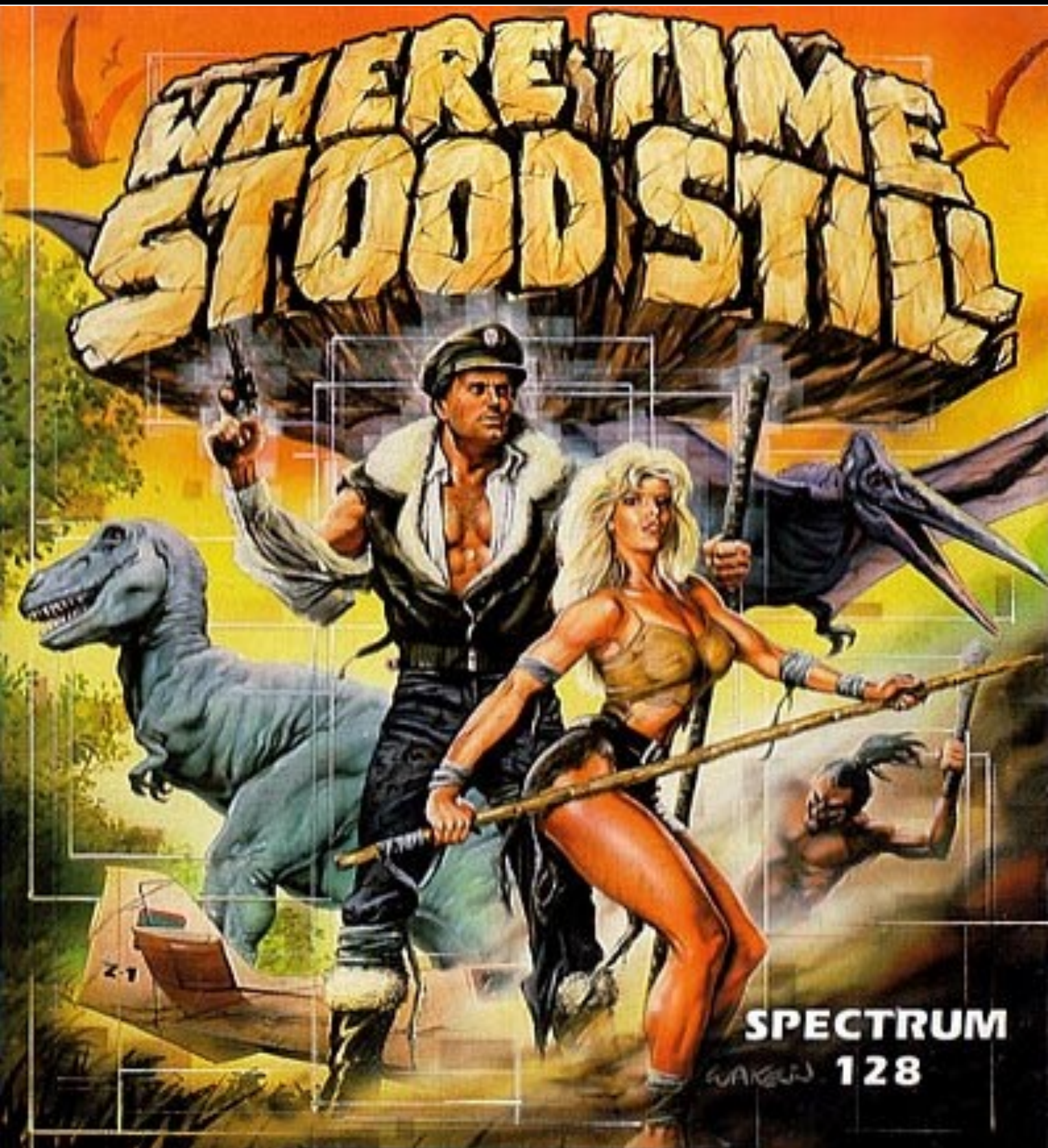
Bob himself had differing views of his own work, stating that he was proud of them – with some of his favourites including Highlander and Operation Wolf – although there were always things he wasn't happy with, and felt that there was some throwaway rubbish, but admitted that sometimes these



would be the most popular pieces. Unfortunately, Bob's output slowed down during the last few years due to him suffering from aplastic anemia. Despite this, he had planned to produce artwork again for games on the ZX Spectrum Next. Sadly, Bob passed away in January 2018, but as with all the great artists, he has left behind a lasting legacy of work that will keep us mesmerised and reminiscing through the ages.

Bob Wakelin's artwork continues on the following pages:



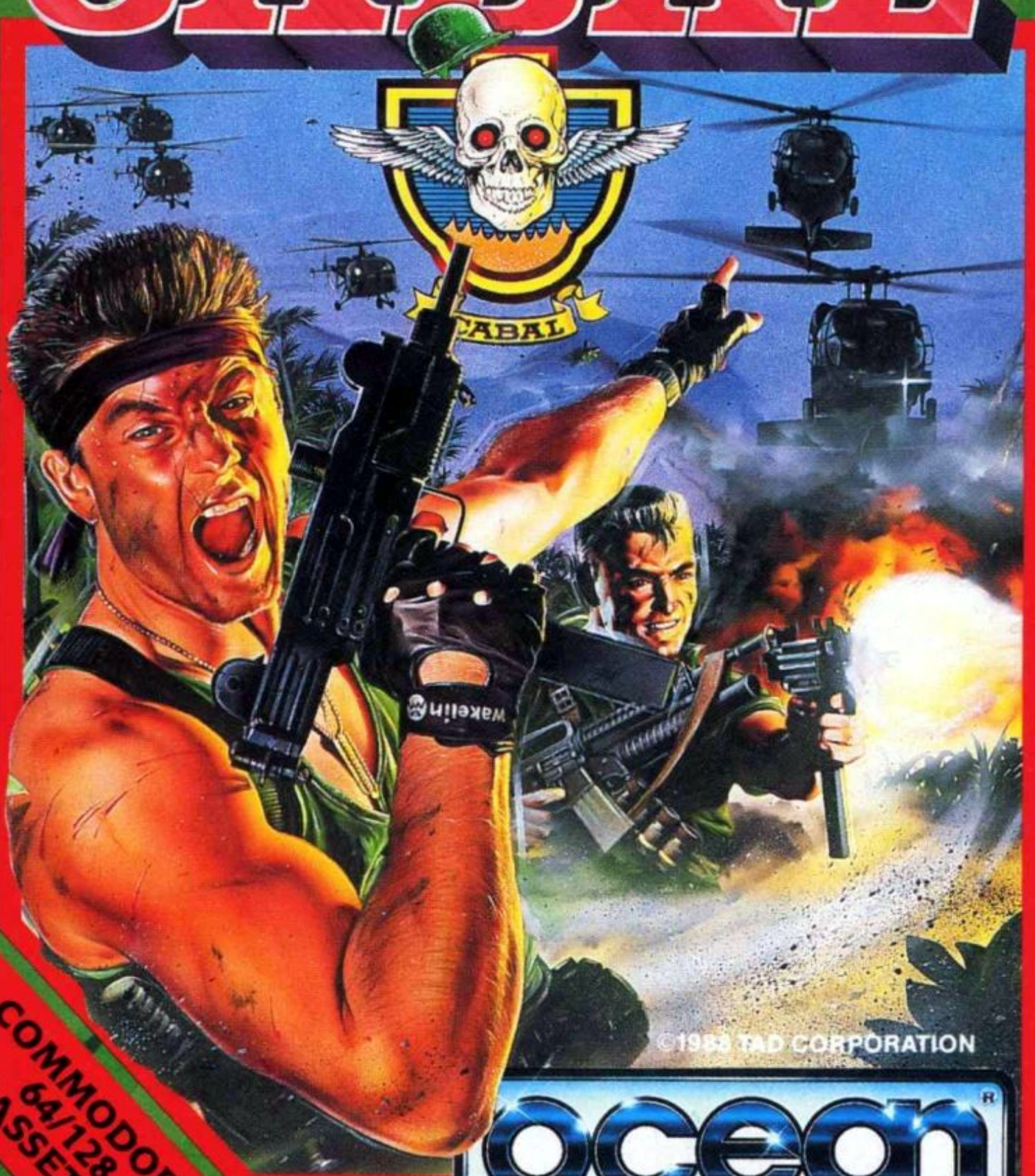


SPECTRUM
128

ocean

A TRIBUTE TO BOB WAKELIN

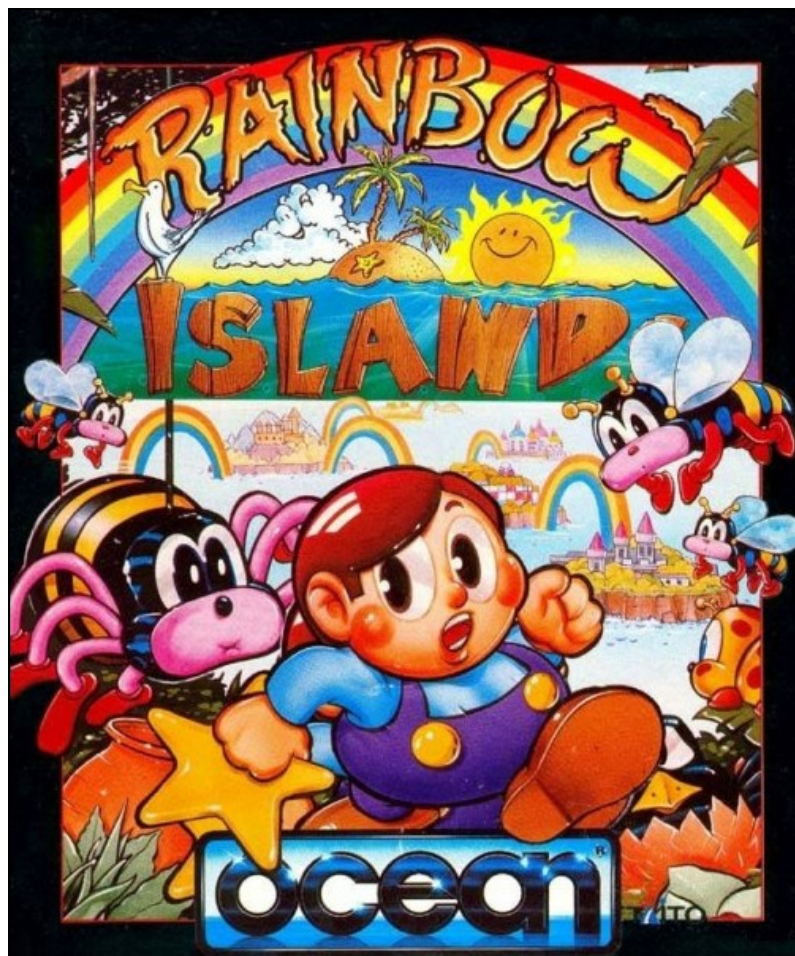
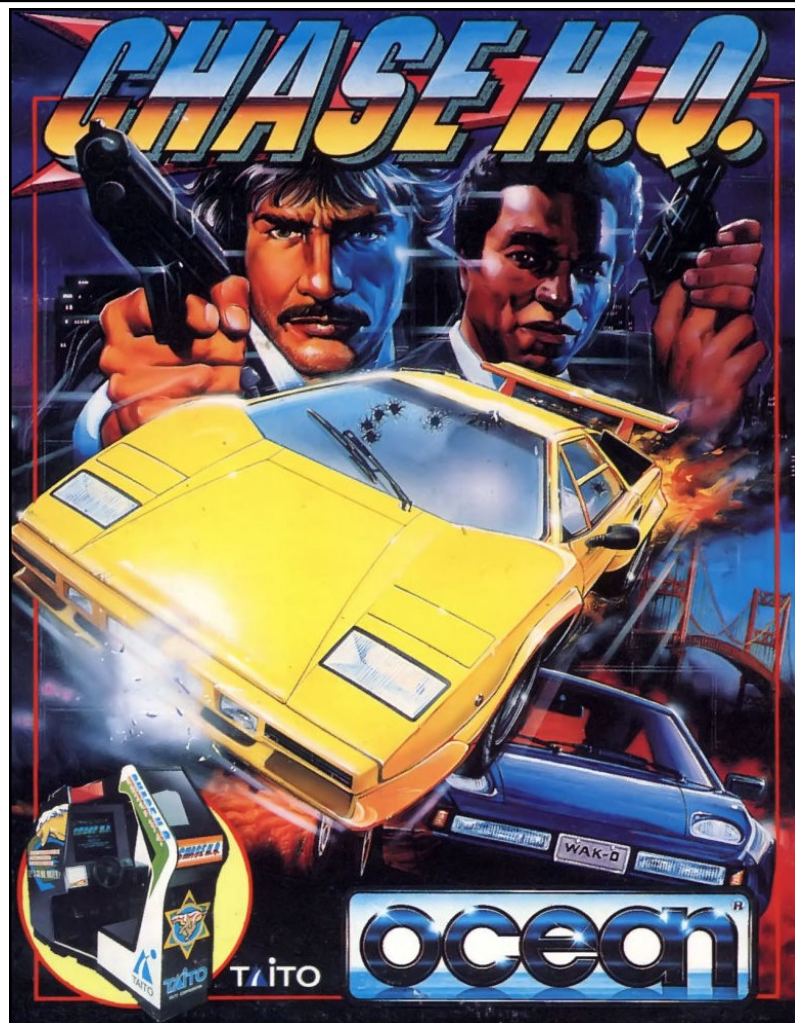
CABAL



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ocean[®]

COMMODORE
64/128
CASSETTE





THE SPECTRUM NEXT

The wait is almost over, the Spectrum Next is almost with us and the Spectrum community is buzzing with excitement. Of course, the board only version was released months ago and currently 130 backers are enjoying tinkering with their new toy. For the rest of us, close to 3,000 full computers will be shipped soon, complete with a manual and beautifully boxed. While it will be great fun enjoying the back catalogue of Spectrum games, the Next has 8-BIT developers scrambling to produce new games for it, showcasing its new awesome colour palette and amazing graphical capabilities. Without further rambling on from me, here are some of the new games coming for the Spectrum Next.



Bidders In Space

Jim Bagley in space, what more can be said? This is going to be a release title for the Spectrum Next and is already looking very promising. Your space ship is hit by an asteroid and you crash land on a



planet. There you must perform various tasks to repair the ship. Find the box of TNT to make your way to new areas in an attempt to find the parts needed for your ship, such as fuel and electronics. Get to blow things up, and fight baddies using your trusty laser and rocket pack.



There are 16 planets (levels) with 20 rooms approx. for each planet.

Dungeonette

Sadly, the SD boxed version of the game is already sold out but the download version is available for US\$ 5.99. Dungeonette is a dungeon crawler with nod to the last of now legendary Spectrum games, but with a new twist for the Spectrum Next, so says the sales spiel. You play a brave hero on a quest to enter the Dungeons of Dooms and slap the Evil Reaper. Like most dungeon crawlers, you have your trusty weapon, armour and shield and must navigate the maze like dungeons, killing any foe that comes your way.

The game is going to have fast, action adventure gameplay, whatever that is. As well as mini boss levels. As expected, the game will take full advantage of the Spectrum Next's enhanced graphic capacities.

Deltastar

No computer or console would be complete without a vertical shooter. Thanks to the makers of Dungeonette, comes Deltastar. Jump aboard the top



secret hyper star fight of the same name and pilot your way to victory. We've seen a good number of games like this on the original Spectrum but taking advantage of the Next's enhanced abilities will bring it to a whole new level. Expect intense arcade action, weapon power-ups, many stages, multiple boss battles and of course, addictive gameplay. Available now from <https://softamuse.itch.io/deltastar> for just under 6 US dollars.

Wonderful Dizzy



No doubt, those of you who opted for the Swag pack in the 8-Bit Annual Kickstarter will have proudly put their "Wonderful Dizzy" posters on the wall by now? Not only is the poster a work of art, it is signed by the Oliver Twins!!!

While there are many games here I'm itching to play, none has me more excited than this. Made exclusively for the Next, the game will be directed by the Oliver Twins and produced by Dmitri and the rest of the team who made the Crystal Kingdom Dizzy remake. The same game that received an Epic Award in this very annual. Since the story is written by both Andrew and Philip Oliver, you can expect a genuine Dizzy experience. Not much else is known about the game except it takes inspiration from The Wonderful Wizard of Oz.

Warhawk Next

Another vertical space shoot 'em up, this time from Rusty Pixels. Based on the 1986 game, Warhawk, you pilot your ship shooting baddies in typical top down action. Looking at the videos, the game looks fast paced and does look like an evolution of the original game. I personally can't wait to check this one out.



Monkey McGee, Where's My Bananas?



Still a work in progress, but it's already looking like a fun little game. It seems like the typical "collect objects while avoiding the enemies" type game that's all too similar on the Spectrum but with improved graphics. Areas seem varied enough and the enemies, while seeming to walk a predefined path, do look interesting.

ZX Next Lemmings

Lemmings for the ZX Spectrum looks fantastic. It is currently being worked on by Mike Daily who has released some videos last year and is still working on it. Visually it is going to look like a cross between the Amiga and PC version, with mouse controls as well as the ability to have 100 lemmings on screens at once! You can follow progress on Mike Daily's blog, <http://daily.blogspot.com>

Dreamworld Pogie

Originally a Kickstarter of a new 'old' game for the NES, created by the Oliver Twins, Dreamworld Pogie will also be coming to the Spectrum Next. Announced back in early 2017 and the first level is now included in the TBBlue latest SD Distro.

In this game, you control Pogie, who must race through 15 platform levels. For those who don't know, Pogie is a pet from the Dizzy series. As you collect icons, Pogie turns into a more powerful creature with invisibility and increased speed for a short period of time.



in 1984, it was a much loved graphic adventure at the time and still is to many. It'll be interesting to find out what the Spectrum Next version will look and play like.

Shadow of the Beast

Not much is known about this game, apart from the impressive smooth



parallax scrolling. Obviously based on the original Shadow of the Beast, released in 1989. From what I've seen, it's looking even better than the Sega Megadrive / Genesis version.

Lords of Midnight

A remake of the original Lords of Midnight for the ZX Spectrum and is being developed by Matt Davies and Simon Butler. The original version was released

Nodes of Yesod

Another remake, updated for the Spectrum Next by it's original creator, Steve Wetherill. This version will feature graphics based on the iOS version.



THE SPECTRUM NEXT



You wake up on a sunny August morning with birds singing, and the air fresh and clear. However, your joints are stiff and you have not woken up in your bedroom as you would have expected. Trying to recall what happened the night before, you manage to piece together a few brief glimpses to give the following account: You were walking home, having just done your week's shopping at the supermarket, when you noticed a stranger in a white overcoat coming towards you. When he got very close you noticed that he was wearing glasses and had a thick, bushy beard. As he passed you he let out a hollow, cackling laugh and you felt a sharp

<MORE>

The Pawn Demo

Another remake, this time a text adventurer called The Pawn, which was released for the Sinclair QL back in 1985 by Magnetic Scrolls. This version will have beautiful graphics taken from the Amiga version of the game. Sadly the game will remain a demo only as the original programmer has no intentions of making it into a full game.



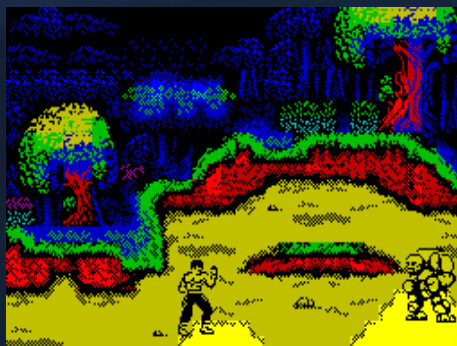
Nextipede

Another game from Johnathan Cauldwell, this time a remake of the oldie but fun, Centipede. This is the first made Spectrum Next game and uses the Timex 8x1 video mode to create interesting colour effects. Created with the Arcade Game Designer (AGD) which was also created by Mr. Cauldwell.



No Fate

Original it was to be called "No Mercy" this game is being developed for the standard ZX Spectrum as well as the Spectrum Next. The screenshot below is for the standard Spectrum. It is being made by the same developer of the fantastic Castlevania: Spectral Interlude, Mikhail Suzakov. Expect some awesome gameplay from this beat'em up. The Next



LINKS

www.spectnext.com

The home of the Spectrum Next where you can find news on the Next as well as the latest TBBlue SD Distribution for download, currently at the time of writing is at version 0.9. There's also a forum to follow as well as an online shop to purchase a Spectrum Next.

www.worldofnext.org

The online resource for finding and sharing software for the Spectrum Next. The site is in its early stages and only lists a few games at the moment.

<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1835143999/zx-spectrum-next>

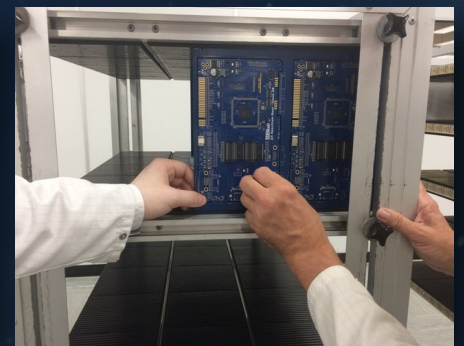
The above is the link to the original Kickstarter campaign. There you can read all the latest updates regarding the newest Spectrum.

version will feature fully new artwork and will make use of the Next's hardware sprite capabilities.

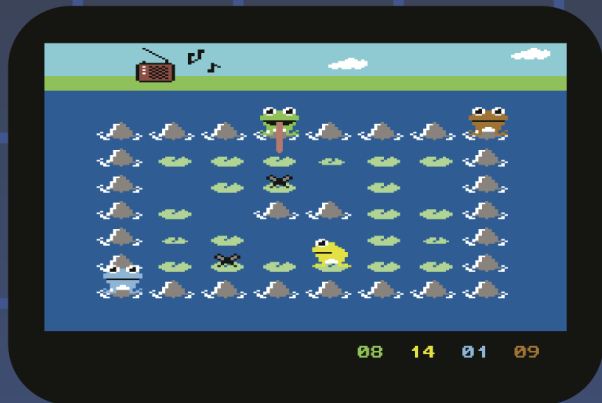
What's Next?

While the board was released in late 2017, everyone has their eye on the fully build Spectrum Next. While the Kickstarter mentioned a estimated delivery of January 2018, nobody was surprised when the date slipped by with no computer released.

There were a few hiccups along the way but nothing major. The latest update we have at the time of writing is that the boards are in the oven! So basically everything is falling into place, including keyboard, case and even the manual and box art. Expect completion before the end of the year.



Commodore 64 4-Player Games



frogs.drwuro.com



shotgun.drwuro.com

available as:

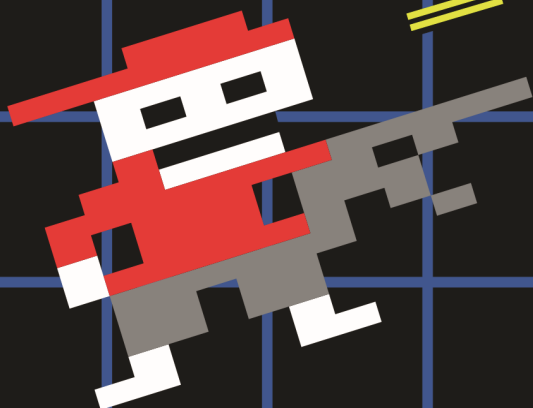
- **Boxed Edition w/ 5.25" Diskette**
FROGS or SHOTGUN, incl. printed manual and extras
- **Boxed Edition w/ 2-in-1 Cartridge**
both games on a single cartridge incl. two additional joystick ports
- **Free Download**
as .PRG or .D64 files

Note:

These games support the
Protovision 4-Player Interface and the
Poly.Play SuperPad64 Interface

FROGS

SHOTGUN



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SPECCY 35 EVENT

centre for
computing
history _

Celebrating 35 Years of The Spectrum



Philip & Andrew Oliver

 **the Oliver Twins**

28th October 2017



The Centre for Computing History (CCH) is a pioneering educational charity that opened at its current site in Cambridge, U.K., in August 2013. CCH was established as an educational charity to tell the story of the Information Age through exploring the historical, social and cultural impact of developments in personal computing. It maintains a long term collection of real computers, hardware and software to tell this story and exploits them through education and events programmes.

On a beautiful Autumn Friday evening on October 28, 2017, approximately 130 avid and very enthusiastic Spectrum computing nostalgics got together to celebrate the 35th anniversary of Sir Clive Sinclair's immortal 8bit computing

invention. Special thanks to Jeremy Thackray, Assistant Curator, at The Centre For Computing History for providing all the information and images of the Spectrum 35 event. Online details can be found at computinghistory.org.uk

The Spectrum 35 event featured displays of some of the Centre For Computing History's rare Spectrum related material, retro vendors such as ZXRenew, and plenty of talks on the past and future of the Spectrum. The talks included:

- Hey Hey 16k: Gig from MJ Hibbett.
- Software preservation: Steven Goodwin.

- The Oliver Twins Story: Philip Oliver and Andrew Oliver.
- The Sinclair Story: Urs König.
- 35 years re-connected with football manager: Video from Kevin Toms.
- Spectrum Next Presentation: Rick Dickinson and Jim Bagley.
- New and Classic Software Q/A Jonathan Cauldwell, Jarrod Bentley, Jim Bagley.

Across are images of the rare Spectrum material and some of the talks that were held.



Spectrum display from CCH collection.



Visitors in The Centre of Computing History main gallery.



The Oliver Twins.



Audience for the Oliver Twins talk.



Audience for the Rick Dickinson talk.

ROBOT GUITAR

The C64 and its SID sound chip is widely recognized as the best sound you will hear in an 8-Bit machine, but did you know that the C64 is powerful enough to control playing a real guitar? Nice guy and all round cool bloke, Steve Smit from Sydney, Australia, tells us all about his C64 'Robot Guitar' project. *In his own words: By Steve Smit.*

Hello everyone, my name is Steve Smit. While my first computer was a VIC20, as soon as the Commodore 64 was released in Australia in 1982, I bought one straight away (back then they were sold for \$699 and that was only for the computer itself!). At the time I was in the electronics industry but the C64 got me interested in computers and through a combination of self-learning, joining a user group and subjects at TAFE, I was able to start a career in I.T., where I continue to be today.

While I did some low-level projects back in the 80's on my Commodore 64, I really didn't get the chance to do anything that I could say was a completed cool project. After selling my C64 I went on to own an Amiga 1000 and many other PC's after that, but something inside me wanted to see if I could go back to that 8 bit time and really finish something cool, so I decided to buy a C64 on eBay and start a project. The project I decided to give a go was to build a 'Robot Guitar', a regular guitar that as much as possible would be under the control of the Commodore 64.

I started this project 2 years ago and had some decisions to make, starting with what language I should try to write the code that would run on the C64? This was my first big decision to make. I really like Forth but a friend of mine suggested

Pascal as this still exists today in commercial use in Borland's Delphi for instance. Meaning that if I wanted to develop later for other platforms I will hopefully have learned some of the principles of this language. Pascal was after all designed to help new programmers develop good habits. When looking around for which Pascal to use I found G-Pascal which had been developed in 1983 right here in Australia by Gambit Games (Nick Gammon & Sue Gobbett).

The project wasn't going to be rushed as I also wanted to have a platform for where I can work on other projects in the future. I spent some time developing a way of being able to work on source code on a regular PC and transfer the ASCII text files to and from virtual floppy disk files (.D64) so that I had a better editing environment.

To keep the design simple I wanted the 'robot' to be able to be mounted to the neck of any acoustic guitar, so I just used two g-clamps (\$4 each) and one length of pine timber (\$1) from Bunnings (a hardware store which I believe are in the U.K. now, or if you are living in the U.S.A. you could try Home Depot), that would be easy to screw all the various bits I needed to mount. The fret fingers are just wooden dowel cut to length and paper clips glued into small holes I drilled into one end of each one. I then glued small rubber pads to the bottom of each to mimic the end of human fingers.

For the fret 'fingers', I initially tried to use solenoids, but I found that these proved to



For the 'fret fingers' I cut wooden dowel, drilled a small hole in one end of each and glued a straightened out paper clip into the hole. At the other end I glued rubber feet (that had to be trimmed down a bit with scissors).

require way too much current and still didn't deliver the required pressure to hold down the strings on the fret board of an acoustic guitar. The solution I tried next was servo motors. Initially my goal was to see if a C64 could drive a servo motor directly, but getting a stable pulse width signal out of the C64 proved very difficult. On top of this, the C64 'Robot Guitar' would need to be able to control a lot of servos. So I used an Arduino Mega with a Sensor Shield (both cost about \$40 each) as a controller that the Commodore

G-PASCAL
for Commodore 64



Steve Smit showing off his C64 with his Robot Guitar invention. Those damn Aussies, always smiling and happy chaps!

ROBOT GUITAR



Here is a test I did with 3 solenoids that proved to be unsuccessful. While they moved quickly down to the strings when powered on, the pressure was simply too light and the note when played sounded very muffled. I abandoned this idea and switched to using servo motors instead.

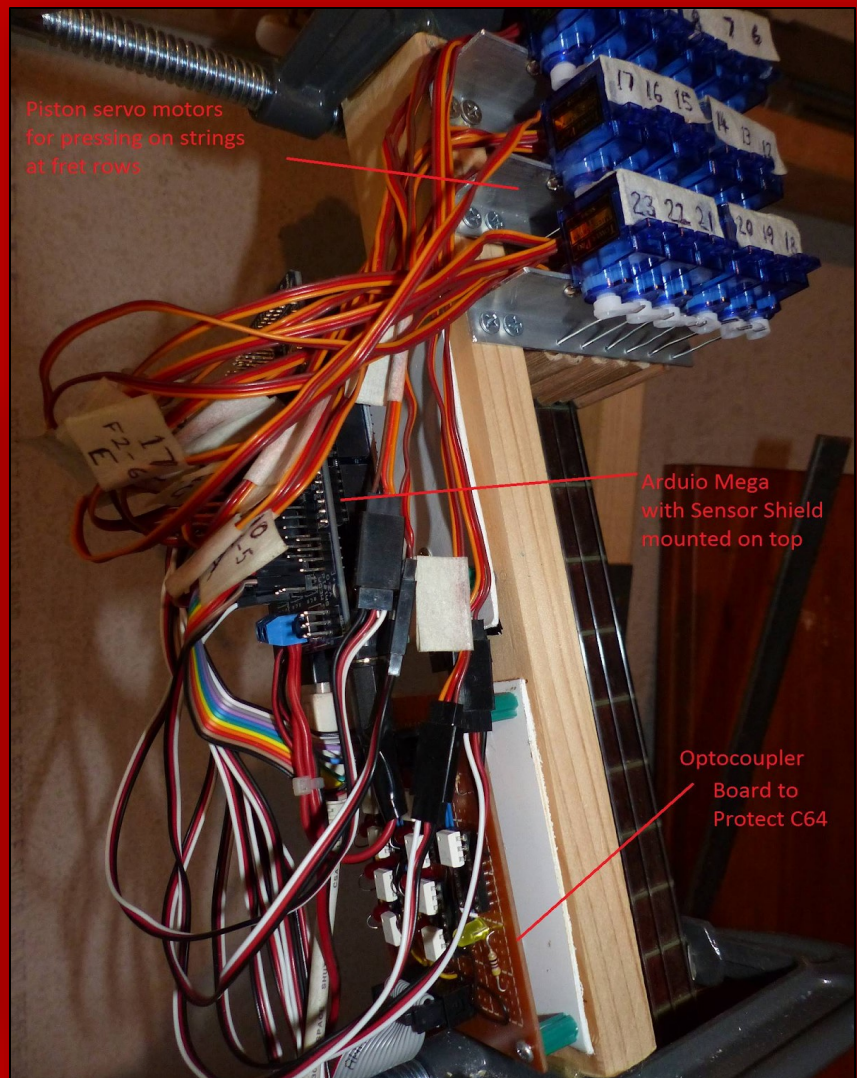
Given the amount of current all the servos can consume, I also decided that I better protect the Commodore 64 which would be controlling the robot via the User Port. From Jaycar (an Australian electronics store) I was able to get 9 optocouplers (4N25) which do not require any power, just the TTL logic of the pins I will be using for the data control. I devised data controls that the C64 could be programmed to achieve that would control the fret servos and plucking servos using bits within bytes to represent the commands and the data. Since there are only 6 strings on a guitar and 8 bits in a byte, I used the top 2 bits to define the commands and leave the remaining bits to either represent a 'push down' or 'pull up' bit for each string of each row of frets, or a 'pluck' or 'no pluck' bit for the 'strumming' servos.

As I wanted the Commodore 64 to own as much of the control, I wrote software routines that store all the fine adjusted positions for all the servos. Another routine that can be used to fine adjust any servo should any adjustments be needed. For extra novelty I supported a joystick to allow the user to adjust the positions

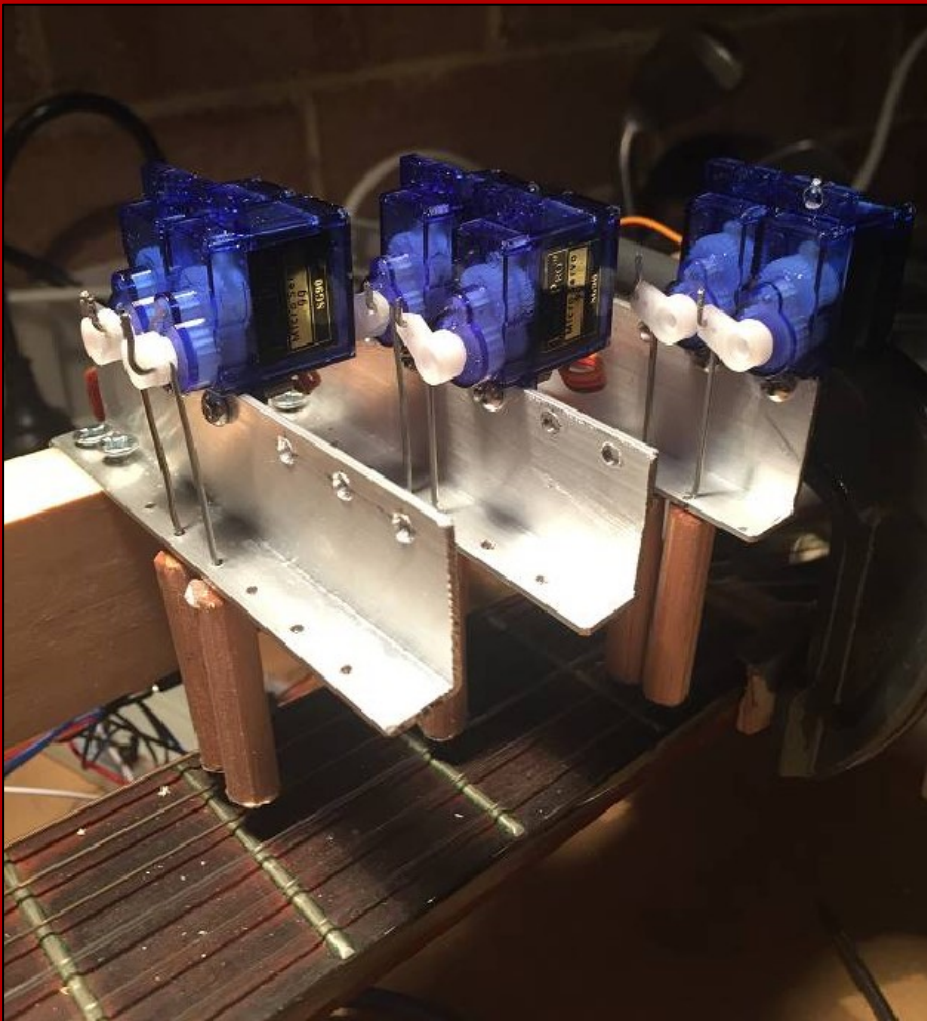
64 would command actions in real time. I found that servo motors were quite good at being both string pluckers as well as 'pistons' that could hold the strings down at each fret position with similar pressure to a human finger. I also needed to be careful of the size of the servo motors as I would need to mount 6 servos per fret row. I shopped around and found SG90 servos on eBay were just \$2.20 each. So far I have purchased around 30 of these as during development I often had some servos under too much load and some of them burnt out.



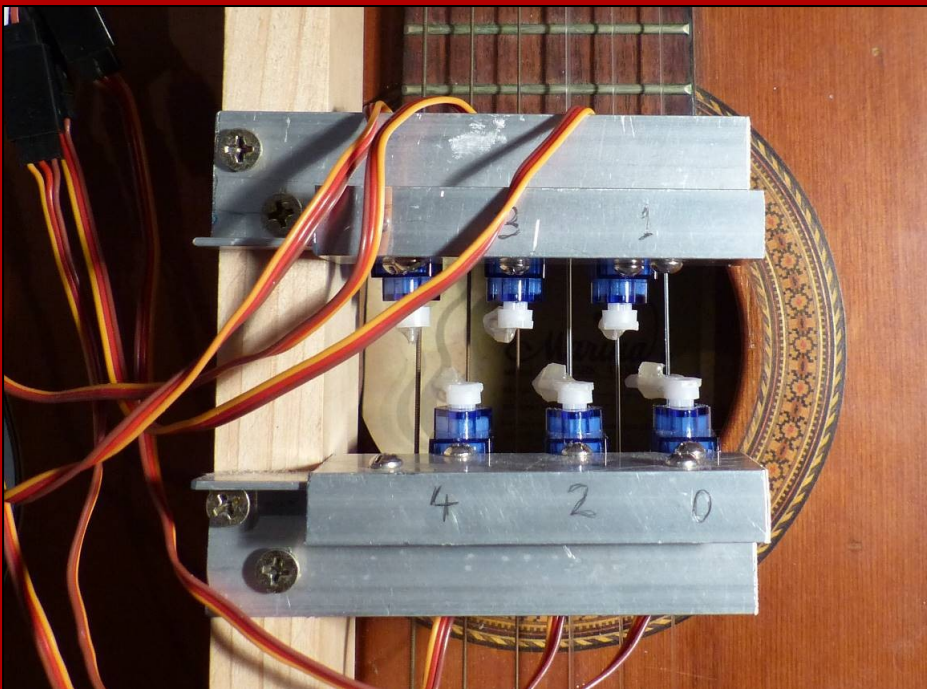
Here is a test of one of my 'fret fingers'. The paper clip has a small bend to feed through the cam on the servo. When the servo turns through about 60 degrees, it either pushes down on the string or lifts away and the sound of the note when played is very good.



On the length of timber I not only mounted the servo motors, I also mounted the controller (an Arduino Mega, with a Sensor Shield) and an Optocoupler board that I made to help protect the Commodore 64.



Here I am testing more servos (having switched to the SG90 servos which are smaller) to be able to play more chords/notes that require 'fingers' on other fret rows.



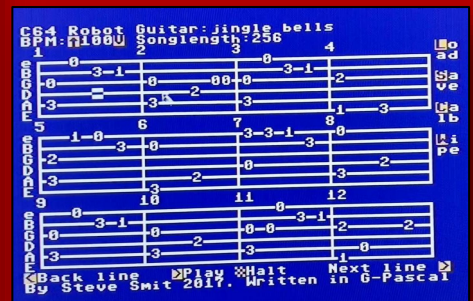
The 'pluckers' are just 6 more servos with cut down plectrums mounted to them.

(using the up or down position of the joystick) or toggle between to two positions each servo will move between (using the fire button of the joystick).

I then wanted the Commodore 64 to be able to load, display, edit, wipe (clear), save and play songs using guitar tablature. The editing can be done by moving the cursor around using the cursor keys on the C64, and I also added support of the Commodore 1531 mouse (the one that still uses a ball in it!) to both position the cursor or select the various options around the screen. Songs when played will also play at the beats per minute as shown on the screen (BPM), and again this is adjustable to speed up or slow down the playing of a song.

I have completed what I guess could be called version 1, but already I've had some ideas for improvements. The first idea I'm working on is to allow the software to be used without a 'robot guitar' attached. Instead the tune would be played using up to 3 voices of the internal Commodore 64 SID chip. Another improvement is to use the software as a guitar training aide, by replacing the last line of tablature with a visual representation of the neck of the guitar showing which positions your fingers need to be on the frets and which strings are being plucked.

For the robot guitar itself I also want to add a guitar pickup and run this back into the C64's SID chip to enable the sound to be distorted by the various filters and waveforms. While I set out to have all the code in Pascal, the algorithms to convert the tablature data into robot commands in real time proved too slow in Pascal, so I had to write these in machine code. I also wanted the screen to scroll up each time a line of tablature had completed playing, but again found that the compiled Pascal wasn't fast enough to write the new screen, so I also wrote a machine program routine that moves the screen up a line.



Here is a screen shot of the monitor showing the main tablature screen, where Jingle Bells has been loaded. The software allows the use of cursor controls or a mouse to select any position for editing a song or activating one of the functions around the screen.

NEW HARDWARE FOR THE CPC

By Carlos PineApple Linares

Greetings all 8-Bit fans (but mostly CPC fans!). When George Bachaelor asked me to write a few words about new 8-Bit hardware devices, I wanted to inform retro fans about the Amstrad CPC's, DDi3 USB Floppy Drive Emulator and the 512kb Memory Expansion.

Both of these devices these days, make our Amstrad CPC computers rise to unexpected levels from all those years ago as basic machines, so here I go with the information.

Piotr Bugaj, (aka) Zaxon, is a Polish guy and Amstrad CPC maniac. He is responsible for a lot of wonderful hardware devices, but more so for any model of Amstrad CPC, the 464, 664, 6128, even Amstrad Plus models. His most famous and sold devices are the USB floppy emulators (basically like a Gotek using HxC firmware) for the Amstrad CPC6128 and the DDi3 USB Floppy Drive Emulators for CPC464 (emulate the external ddi3 floppy 3" unit that existed as an add-on, extremely hard and expensive to find these days).

I guess most retro / 8-Bit enthusiasts will know more or less how these devices work. The easiest way to explain it is, you put your .dsk file (previously passed



Carlos Pineapple Linares, playing P-47 Thunderbolt on his Amstrad CPC 6128 via a DDi3 USB Floppy Drive Emulator.

to .hfe by a program really easy to use) in your USB, you switch it to the device and the computer recognises it as a disc unit / format allowing you to run the game, of course.

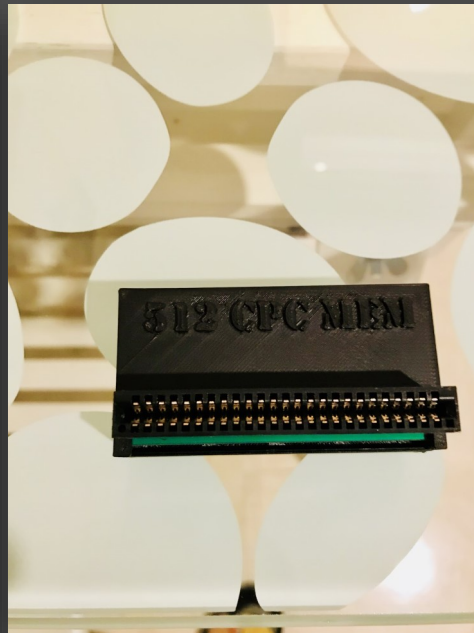
Well, this means that, in your USB pen

drive, you can have hundreds of games to enjoy them in the original machine, in a fast load (no more twisted cassettes), on any of your CPC's. Sounds good, isn't it? (yes it does - Ed).

There is a lot of devices that work like



DDi3 Floppy Emulator.



512K Memory Expansion.



Both devices switched in the CPC 464.

floppy emulators, you can take a look in Youtube or several forums. I told you about these two because I've got them, and I can handle them without deep knowledge of computer science (I'm a pharmacist), you don't need to be an expert with computers or new technology.

But you can find some Amstrad CPC or Amstrad plus games / programs that requires 128 KB and they will not load on a CPC464, or they can give problems on the CPC6128. This could happen in multiload games or new homebrew games, with new techniques that maximises the CPC capacity. Well, our friend Zaxon has overcome these problems by creating a batch of memory expansions of 512kb for the 464. Yes the memory of the computer goes from 64k to 512k, sounds crazy (yes it does, tell us more please - Ed).

The best of all is that the memory expansion comes with a switch to the ddi3 emulator, so you can connect the mega-device (like the Power Rangers

XD) and you will be able to run or load in your Amstrad CPC 464 games like Shinobi, Final Fight, Alien Storm, Edge Grinder, Addams Family, or the marvellous R-Type remake (seriously you have to try this one - I know it's so freaking awesome - Ed) in our beloved CPC464. So I think that with this combo you don't need anything more to play and enjoy in a easy way all the games that you can imagine in the original machine.

Before my goodbye, I recommend you to look for more information on YouTube and forums if you want a deeper and more technical explanation of all of this, and in case you decide to buy a DDi3 USB Floppy Drive Emulator or 512kb Memory Expansion, the cost is about 30 pounds for the memory expansion and 53 pounds the DDi3 Floppy Emulator and you can find it in sellmyretro.com (it's where I bought it). Cheers!!!



CPC 464 running with both devices.



CPC 464 running R-Type Remake from ddi3.



Ddi3 screen showing the .dsk loaded.

WOMEN IN 8-BIT CODING

Ángela Pastor Garres

Hi! I'm Ángela Pastor Garres and I'm studying a Multimedia Engineering degree. At the beginning, I was interested in this career because of the visual effects, but now, although it is still my main objective, thanks to many teachers in the programming area, I would like to continue learning more about programming and its utilities.

One of my fondest memories I have had undertaking my degree was with my programming team called "Bit Beam", when we participated in #CPCRetrodev. At first, when our professor and coding mentor, Fran Gallego, told us that we were going to do a videogame on the Amstrad CPC 64k, I didn't think I could do that because that would be my very first video game. Little by little I grew in confidence as Professor Fran uploaded some videos to his YouTube channel about how to start assembler programming and how we had to focus our project so as not to de-motivate ourselves out of it. From there, class by class, all of us were learning about it and we could write our game in order to participate in the contest. Finally, thanks to Professor Fran and his efforts for us to learn, our development team made a game called "UFO" and with projects like this, I have been discovering the good things of programming. I always have been a little bit reluctant to dedicate hours and hours to programming, but looking at the screen and watching what a few code lines can do I understood why so many people love it.



About being a girl in a male dominated industry feels a bit strange, so many guys and so few girls I feel a little out of place at times. With time though I have learned to see everyone equally, as in others aspects of your life where being male or female is not really important. I see everyone in my class as someone with experience and knowledge whom I can learn from. In fact, many of them are really good professionals and most important, good people, and they have helped me when I am stuck and unsure how to solve what I thought was a big problem, but turned out to be insignificant for them.

From this experience in coding, I think It was a great decision to choose the course I have and get involved in developing an 8-Bit game through the #CPCRetrodev - Amstrad CPC game contest. Although I am not really good at programming, I now know much about how something can seem very easy but it takes so much time and effort when coding. The Multimedia Engineering course has taught me about the creation of computers, television, digital design and visual effects. All of these have given me a completely different way to seeing the things I have always had an interested in.



Amanda Oliver

Hi there, my name's Amanda Oliver. I remember that I had my first experience with coding when I was 15, at secondary school. We had to make some simple mini games in a BASIC dialect. At first sight I thought "Wow, this seems to be pretty difficult, how in the world am I supposed to do that?". I was intimidated but excited as well, I loved videogames from an early age and I always dreamed about making one by myself.

After the teacher explanations and some personal research, I was able to code five simple mini games I thought to myself "That was pretty cool! I want to be better at this!". I was amazed of what I had done and my will to be better wouldn't let me step back in my journey.

Now I am a 4th year Multimedia Engineering student. However, despite the name, most of the subjects are focused on data structures and programming instead of visual design.

Since I got in, I learned a lot of things about coding that I never could have imagined such as - object-oriented syntax, structures, memory management, algorithm costs and I've also learnt multiple languages like Java, C++, OpenGL, plus web design and management like PHP, SQL, HTML, CSS and Javascript.

But last year is different from the others, I learned about what it is like to be a professional engineer and realize what mistakes I need to fix to become one.

This year I had my first assembly coding project and it changed my concept of programming. There's a lot of things to discover as well as comprehend. My first 8-Bit coding was a game called RollaBlaze, a project that myself and two

of my classmates developed for the #CPC Retrodev 2017 contest. RollaBlaze was developed in Z80 Assembler code, with the help of the CPCTelera game engine.

It's an infinite runner type of game style where you have to avoid obstacles in order to get a high score. For making this game I first started coding the character and obstacles mechanics (movement, spawns, updates, etc), then the collisions and the obstacle actions, such as push the character or decrease his life points. I also did the HUD and the points system. This piece of code in the image below shows how we load obstacle data from a list in another file using pointers.

With all this experience, I've learnt to work with the memory stack and registers

of a Z80 processor. When it comes to coding, I enjoy to attempt new ways to optimize my code and I really enjoy when I see some piece of my code working well!

I really like to code mechanics. I'm actually working in another project and I'm testing what it is like to program some AI functions from scratch. Although it is quite interesting, I don't like it as much as making mechanics. We're working on C++, I'm comfy with it but I would like to make another game in Z80 assembly for the next #CPC Retrodev, this time though I have more experience and I would like to make an even better game. In the future I would like to see me there in my laptop, making some awesome mechanics and learning more and more about coding!

```

;=====--WAVE FUNCTIONS--=====
;=====
;=====
spawn_first_wave:

    call reset_cooldown_pos
    call get_nextwave
    call read_wave

    ret

get_nextwave:
    ld hl, #waves           ;;Read the Waves tag from WaveList
    ld a, (actual_wave)    ;; A = Actual wave
    cp #+7
    jp nz, no_reset_actual_wave

        ld a, #00
        ld (actual_wave), a

no_reset_actual_wave:
    ld c, a                ;; C = Actual wave
    ld b, #00              ;; BC = Actual Wave Address
    inc a                  ;; A++ == Increment Actual Wave
    ld (actual_wave), a    ;;Update Actual wave

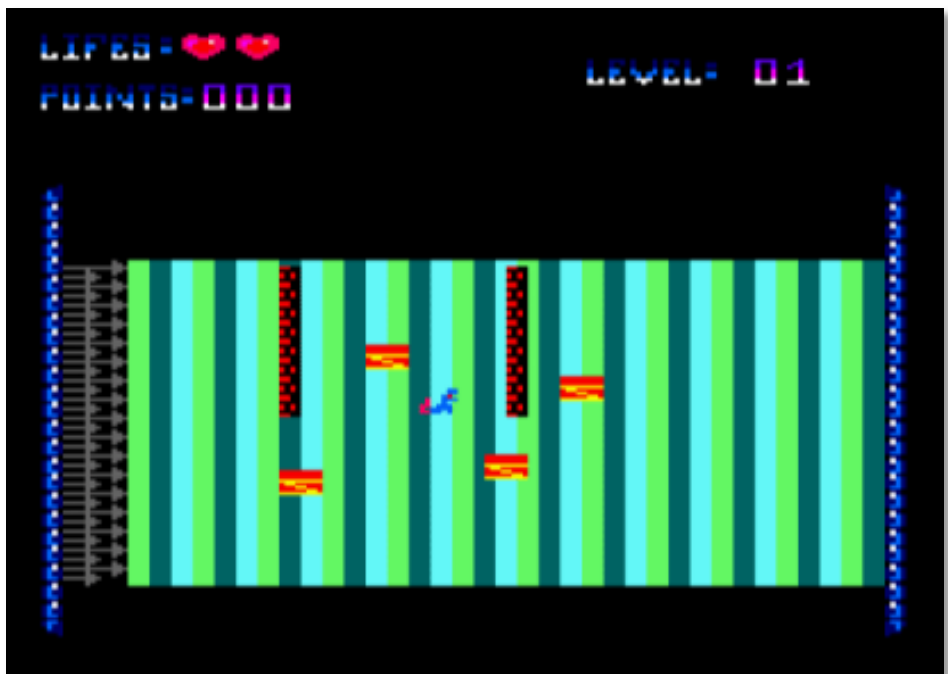
    add hl, bc              ;;Increment HL twice with BC
    add hl, bc

    ld ix, #wavePtr        ;;Load in IX a new variable called WavePtr
    ld a, (hl)             ;;Load in A what HL is pointing to
    ld 0(ix), a            ;;Load a in the first byte of WavePtr
    inc hl                 ;;Increment HL
    ld a, (hl)             ;;A = HL
    ld 1(ix), a            ;;Load a in the second byte of WavePtr

wavePtr = .+1              ;;WavePtr = actual position +1
call #0x0000              ;;Load in the stack what WavePtr is pointing to

    ret
    
```

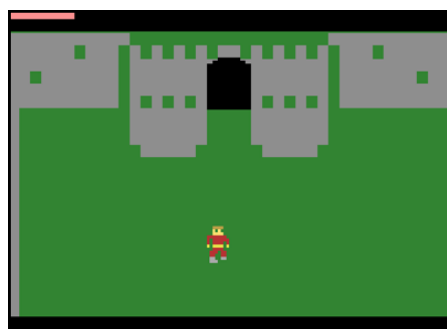
Using CPC TELERA to load obstacle data from a list in another file using pointers



Amanda's entry into #CPCretrodev2017 - Rollablaze

ANGUNA

Release by: Bite the Chili.
Coding: Nathan Tolbert.



It's crazy to expect anything like the Legend of Zelda on the Atari 2600. There's no way a console that required extensive coding jiggery-pokery just to play Space Invaders could handle a game with the scope of the Legend of Zelda. Technically that's true. Anguna is nowhere near as large as the Legend of Zelda and doesn't have the dramatic background music and even by Atari 2600 standards the graphics are only so-so. But Anguna does have five different dungeons to explore, weapons and power-ups to find, bosses to fight, an inventory screen and a password system so you don't have to start at the beginning every time you play.

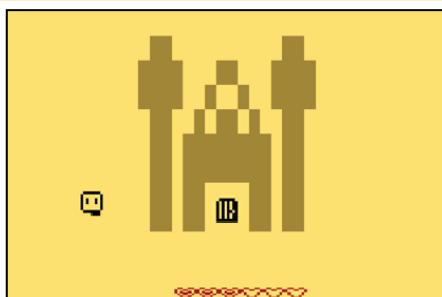
SCORE: 83%

BIT QUEST

Release by: Metal Babble.
Coding: Brian Shea.



Bit Quest is an adorable adventure. You control a little blobby character on a mission to locate a sword and key and use them to rescue the Princess. The game world is large and varied, but that

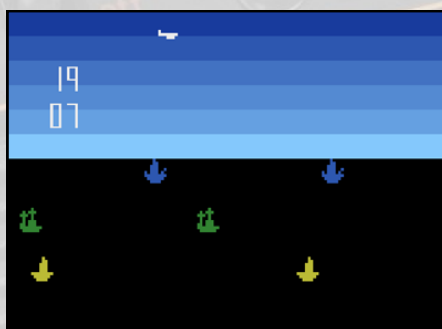


actually ends up working against it. In the easy setting, the sword and key are near the starting point, so the player never sees most of the world or wastes time exploring areas where there's no chance of finding anything. In the hard setting, the location of the objects is randomized, forcing the player to search 100 "rooms" to find two objects. The enemy graphics are varied and look quite nice, but all of the enemies behave in the same unaggressive manner. Combine a bunch of disinterested baddies with a large, mostly empty world and you end up with a game that gets old fast.

SCORE: 38%

BOMBS AWAY!

Release by: OneSwitch.org.uk
Coding: William Pilgrim, Barrie Ellis.

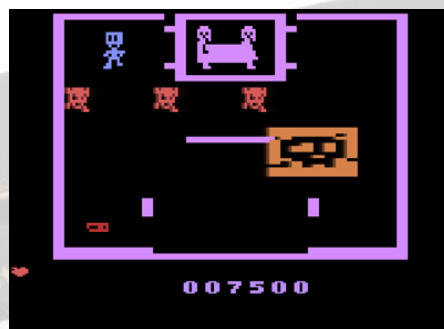
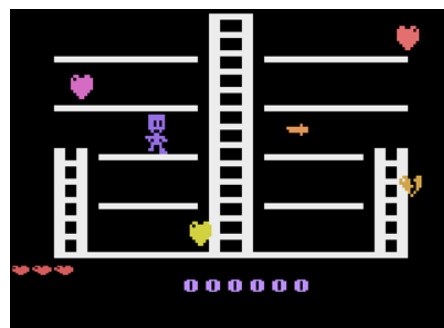


Bombs Away and Drop Zone 4 are a pair of obscure arcade games released by Meadows in the mid 1970's with the same gameplay and the same one button control panel but different graphics. They're pretty simple games. (They kind of have to be. One-button control panel and all.) A plane moves across the top of the screen while targets move across the bottom. The player uses the button to drop bombs and destroy as many targets as possible. One unique feature is the "peace mode" which rewards players for dropping all fifteen bombs without destroying any targets. In the arcade mode the reward is a free game. Here it belts out a jolly happy tune. The left difficulty switch allows players to choose Bombs Away or Drop Zone 4 graphics. A very well-done conversion of a couple of mediocre (even by 1975 standards) games.

SCORE: 65%

CONJOINED!

Release by: Starship Films.
Coding: Jason Santuci, Joe Grisaffi (design).



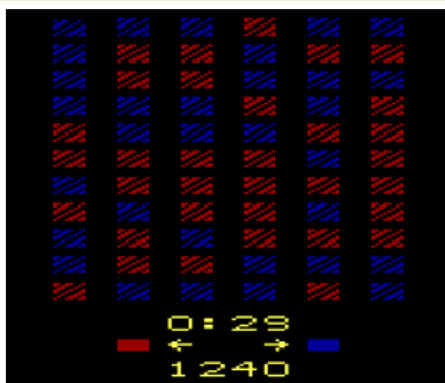
Conjoined is an indie slasher movie about a guy named Stanley who falls in love with one of a pair of conjoined twins. Turns out the other twin is a serial killer. After lots of cheesy violence and fake blood, Stanley and Alina get to live happily ever after (or do they...?). Co-designed by the movie's director, Joe Grisaffi, the Conjoined video game puts players in control of Stanley as he gathers the items needed to perform the back alley separation surgery on Alina and Alisa. The action takes place on two screens. The first screen plays something like a mix of Turmoil and Fast Eddie, with Stanley climbing platforms while avoiding daggers thrown by Alisa. The operating room screen feels slow and uninspired by comparison, but the platform screen has enough action to make up for it.

SCORE: 74%

DOMINANT AMBER

Release by: Rick Skrbina
Coding: Rick Skrbina

Rick Skrbina's entry in the 2017 Hackaday 1kB challenge is an adaptation of a game found on the Genesis Flashback console. It's a simple game with a simple premise (it is only 1K after all). The player is presented with a succession of grids of 66 red and blue squares and must determine which color there are more of (i.e., which color is "dominant") as many times as possible in two minutes. Things start off easy, but as the game progresses it becomes trickier to determine which color is dominant as they become more evenly



dispersed. A fun pick up and play time killer.

SCORE: 82%

DRACONIAN!

Release by: SpiceWare
Coding: Darrel Spice Jr.

The latest entry into the "Holy \$#!&, I can't believe this is an Atari 2600 game!" catalog of homebrews is an adaptation of the Namco arcade classic Bosconian. Just like the original game, Draconian puts the player in control of a fighter ship tasked with finding and destroying enemy space stations, aided by a radar map at the bottom of the screen. If the spot on arcade gameplay and impressive graphics aren't enough, Draconian also includes digitized speech. "Blast Off!" and "Battle Stations!" sound just as impressive from the humble Atari 2600 as they did from the original arcade hardware.

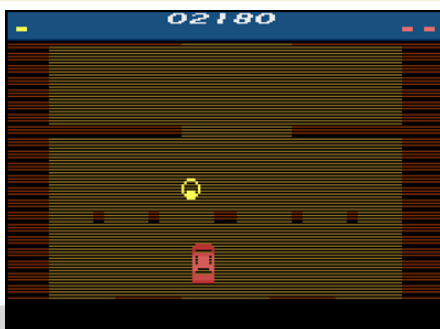


SCORE: 96%

DRIVE!

Release by: Nick Wilson
Coding: Nick Wilson

Drive is not a deep game nor is Drive a novel game. Drive is like a good punk rock song, simple and well-executed. Using your paddle, you control a car trying to escape from a collapsing temple. (If nothing else, Drive serves as a reminder never to drive a car in an ancient temple.) The path to safety is, of course not clear of any obstacles. Fortunately, your car comes equipped



with a limited number of jumps to help escape especially sticky situations. Along the way you will find treasures which award additional jumps and in some cases extra lives or special abilities. The paddle control is smooth and precise, important for a game like this, and randomly generated roads keep the game fresh.

SCORE: 80%

THE GIZZLE WAP AND THE STRANGE RED TREE

Release by: Jeff Smith
Coding: Jeff Smith, Sarah Smith (design)



A collaboration between Jeff Smith and his young Daughter, The Gizzle Wap and the Strange Red Tree takes place in the J'Thainian Forest, a magical world populated by Zazzle Flies, Thesbes and Humming Ducks. You control the Gizzle Wap and his Zazzle Fly ally, which can be used as either a projectile or a shield. The goal is to avoid the evil Myrmica while collecting Cloud Fruit which attracts the Pegsi, small winged creatures strong enough to uproot the

Strange Red Tree and return peace to the forest. The game is clever and charming and looks wonderful, but controlling the Zazzle fly is a bit cumbersome.

SCORE: 86%

HANDY PICK HANK

Release by: Tactical Neuronics
Coding: John Reder

Handy Pick Hank is inspired by Pick Axe Pete an Odyssey 2 game created to fill the gaping void in the lives of O2 owners who wanted to play Donkey Kong. Pick Axe Pete uses the same basic ingredients as Donkey Kong - platforms, ladders, rolling obstacles and a big hammer (or pickaxe). Handy Pick Hank pretty faithfully translates the game to the Atari 2600 to a degree, as players crush boulders, climb disappearing ladders and gather keys that take them through magic doors to the next identical level of crushing, climbing and gathering. It's a decent enough port, but even the very best translations are only as good as the source material. Overall the result feels just a rather soulless copy of the famed Donkey Kong.



SCORE: 50%

GENE MEDIC

Release by: Jason Moore
Coding: Jason Moore

There isn't much demand for new educational games for the 2600. When we were kids, our parents bought them for us but we never played them. As adults, we re-buy them to complete our collections but never play them. That didn't stop Dr. Jason Moore from creating Gene Medic, his take on the oldschool edutainment game. The game tasks the player with curing a patient of an unspecified ailment by finding and editing harmful genetic mutations while staying within the patient's insurance budget. Unfortunately, the promising premise is let down by gameplay that is

far too easy. Additional money is awarded frequently and there's no time limit or opposing force of any kind pushing the player to take action. Without any sense of life-or-death, Gene Medic is - wait for it - DOA (Dead On Arrival).



SCORE: 35%

MINE DIG

Release by: mojoftr
Coding: William Pilgrim



Minesweeper and Dig Dug had a baby and its name is Mine Dig. Players tunnel through the ground to collect diamonds and rescue trapped miners while avoiding hidden mines. A color-coded mine detector lets you know when there's a mine nearby, but not its exact location. Later levels add collapsing tunnels, making it difficult to retrace your steps, add monsters and a depleting air supply results in giving you less time to deduce the safest path. Mine Dig is a unique and challenging game with some great in game graphical colors and sprites, the game is sometimes frustrating but always leaves you wanting to play just one more time.

SCORE: 88%

SAND CASTLES

Release by: Metal Babble
Coding: Brian Shea

Monsters have invaded Sandcastle Island, home of Jack the Apple. So begins the manual for Sand Castles. But as you play the game you notice the



"monsters" are crabs, fish and bats. The sort of creatures you expect to find on beaches or in caves. The one who seems out of place here is Jack the Apple. Whatever the social and political implications of Jack's quest to rid Sandcastle Island of its indigenous life, Sand Castle is an attractive platform game with plenty of flair. A flashy title screen, beautiful sprites and even background music (one bar of background music that repeats infinitely, but still background music). Unfortunately the collision detection is a bit dodgy and the controls aren't as precise as they need to be for a game that requires this much precision jumping.

SCORE: 72%

SCRAMBLE

Release by: Champ Games.
Coding: John Champeau.



Released in 1981, Scramble was one of the earliest side-scrolling shooter games. Despite being one of the most successful games of its time, it was never ported to the Atari 2600. Maybe it



was because of the 2600's notorious difficulty with horizontal scrolling. Maybe it was simply because by the time licensing arcade games for home use became common practice, the gaming world had moved on (after all, Scramble's sequel Super Cobra received a port). Whatever the reason for the oversight, it has now been remedied quite spectacularly. Putting this many objects on the screen at once leads to a lot of flicker, but Scramble still captures the look, sound and feel of the arcade game so impressively, graphically it's spectacular - you'll think you're playing an NES game.

OVERALL: 98%

SUPER CACTUS CANYON

Release by: BJ Best
Coding: BJ Best



The post-apocalyptic earth of 2543 is no place for a cactus. That's why most of them have moved to Mars. Gameplay of Space Cactus Canyon involves you controlling the last cactus on earth in a quest to reach the spaceship that will take him off this God-forsaken rock and reunite him with his family. Along the way you'll collect water, earth's most precious remaining resource, while avoiding the humans who want to keep it for themselves. Thanks to procedurally generated levels, every game is different. Some screens will require quick reflexes while others favour a more methodical approach. The sound effects are pretty bare-bones, but the graphics are colourful and well animated and the



TOLEDO ATOMCHESS

Release by: Oscar Toledo Gutierrez
Coding: Oscar Toledo Gutierrez

display all 32 pieces with minimal flicker and, unlike Atari's game, the board fills the entire screen. Getting the Atari 2600 to play chess under any circumstances is pretty remarkable. Getting it to do so in only 1K is downright phenomenal.

SCORE: 66%

UFO

Release by: Tactical Neuronics
Coding: John Reder



Because so few arcade ports were released for the Odyssey 2, O2 owners typically had to make due with stand-ins for the big name games of the time. UFO was clearly modelled on Asteroids, but added enough wrinkles to stand on its own as a classic (and keep those pesky copyright lawyers away). The player controls a flying saucer capable of moving and firing in any direction and fights off a constant onslaught of UFOs. Some liberties were taken with this conversion - the star ship and the many cheap deaths it caused have been removed - but overall this port does justice to the original game.

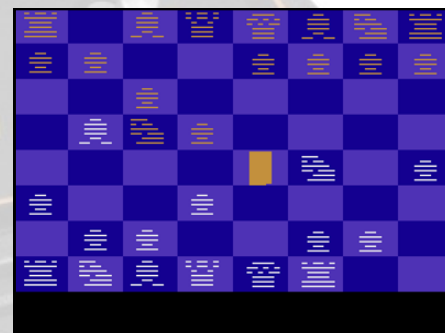
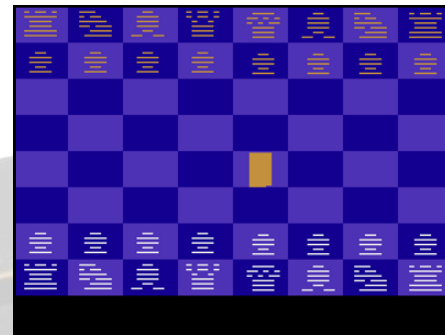
SCORE: 72%

controls are tight and responsive. A top-notch game with plenty of replay value.

SCORE: 92%

SUPER COBRA ARCADE

Release by: Champ Games
Coding: John Champeau



Created by Oscar Toledo Gutierrez for the 2017 Hackaday 1kB Challenge, Toledo Atomchess, is a one kilobyte chess game for the Atari 2600. Some concessions had to be made to fit a chess game into 1K. There's only one difficulty setting. There's no castling. There isn't even a move validator, meaning you can place any piece on any space without penalty. However, if you stick to the honor system, Toledo Atomchess plays a solid game of chess. Graphically, the game uses a venetian blind technique similar to the one used for the original Atari Video Chess to



With its tiny sprites, choppy scrolling and awkward conversion of a two-button control scheme to a one-button joystick, the original Atari 2600 Super Cobra port by Parker Bros. put off a lot more players than it won over. Super Cobra Arcade lives up to the "Arcade" part of its title, improving on the original port in every aspect. OK, the scrolling is still a little choppy, but there's only so much even rockstar Atari 2600 programmers can do.

SCORE: 98%



- **TEAM:** Mariusz (Coding), Miker (Music), Jose (Colour)
- **INFO:** Download from <https://atariage.com/forums/topic/252145-new-game-released-pentagram/>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Paul Monopoli

PENTAGRAM

The sequel to Knight Lore finds Sabreman as a recent inductee into the realm of magic. Now with the ability to shoot magic bolts without Harry Potter style incantations, our formerly hat-wearing hero has no need for his shiny sabre. With his khakis hanging in the cupboard, Sabreman now dons an imposing gown as he embarks on his next adventure to find the Pentagram. Once this has been done he can continue into his final adventure in Mire Mare.

Except he can't as Mire Mare was never released, leading many gamers to ponder the fate of their hero. At the time Pentagram was only released on the

Spectrum and was ported to the MSX. Amstrad and Commodore owners, who had journeyed with Sabreman throughout his travels were unable to continue into this fourth game in the series.

Atari 8-Bit owners were another breed altogether, as Ultimate Play The Game ignored their platform completely. Thanks to the fine work of Mariusz, XL and XE owners can now enjoy the fourth adventure in the Sabreman saga. It's an odd choice considering that Sabre Wulf and Underwulde, the first two games in the series, were never released on this platform. The third game, Knight Lore, did receive a fan port in 2008, but there

appear to be no fan ports of the previous two games.

Upon booting this remake you're greeted with a slightly haunting tune. The tone of the music is reminiscent of other tunes used in similar magical, medieval, fantasy style games. Dare I say it is ever so slightly Harry Potteresque!

The opening menu is basic, asking you to press 'Fire' or 'Start' to play. I started to feel ever so slightly anxious at seeing this, as there was something missing. The standard style of play for Filmation games is to press left or right to turn, then forward to move. I have never liked this control method, and most other titles that use this engine do allow you to use standard directional controls. The problem here is that Pentagram uses down to jump, making standard directional control impossible.

Upon starting the game, Sabreman appears to be sporting a long white beard. Learning to be a wizard must have taken its toll on the former jungle junkie, as he seems to have aged significantly between games. The graphics are identical to the Spectrum and MSX versions of the game, and the controls are accurate for what they are.

Pentagram is reminiscent of other titles using this game engine, with spikes and enemies providing instant death, the ability to move some scenery, and often frustrating jumps that only a semi-3D environment can offer. The main game is silent, as the music from the title screen has not been carried over. Sound effects are basic, with standard beeping being used for walking, jumping, shooting and dying.



The adventure begins!



You shooting the wrong way! Directional controls are so frustrating!

It appears that I was right to be concerned about the controls, as moving left and right simply turns the character. I've never liked this control method as quick movements are simply not possible. If an enemy is approaching you, you have to turn in a direction twice, then press forward to move. It all takes too long and your lives can be quickly depleted. Yes, you can shoot the enemy, but the effectiveness of your magic varies from monster to monster. Some cannot be killed at all, but you will not know this until you start shooting at them.

The problem with all of these issues is that they are in the original version of the game, meaning that the Atari port of Pentagram is pretty much flawless. The coder has done an amazing job and should be applauded for his efforts. The main issues lie within the original game itself.

With Filmation titles I have always questioned why the space bar couldn't have been used as an extra button. It's normally right in front of the joystick and is easily accessible. Today I question why the remake did not include this, and has no support for a two button controller. I suppose if the developer

was aiming for a straight port then this wouldn't have been considered by them. As it is, the source code is freely available should someone want to improve the game by adding one or both of these options.

To combat these control issues the developer has included a cheat mode to help players through the game, and this might be how I have to play it if I'm aiming to complete it. I am keen to continue the adventures of Sabreman, so I will be playing through this game when I get the chance. Now, if only someone in the fan community could release Mire Mare and finish off the

series... The problem there is that the history behind the game is that garbled I don't think anyone knows where to begin.

VERDICT

PROS

- Great recreation of the Filmation engine for the Atari 8-Bit line.
- Title music sets the tone of the game.
- Cheat mode included to help you through the game.

CONS

- Control system is absolutely horrible.
- Lack of colour and music.
- Perfect recreation of a far from perfect game.



Expect to see this screen often!

64%

- **TEAM:** Fandal and Miker (original version by Beam Software)
- **INFO:** Download from http://a8.fandal.cz/detail.php?files_id=7464
- **REVIEWED BY:** Paul Monopoli

WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST

As an Amstrad CPC collector I have managed to accumulate 3 or 4 copies of *The Way of the Exploding Fist*. It seems to be one of those titles that every CPC owner had an original copy of, and for good reason. The game featured bright, colourful characters with a decent amount of animation frames making their movements look as good as possible on Amstrad's 8-Bit wonder box.

This Atari XL / XE port is converted from the Commodore 16, so it lacks the colour of the CPC version. Upon booting the game you are greeted with a demo, showing two fighters duking it out. When comparing this to the Amstrad version, I immediately noticed that the fighters were much smaller. In fact, they only take up a small portion of the screen, towards the bottom. There is a lack of colour on the fighters, with one fighter

being darker than the other to help distinguish you from your opponent. The game features big, bright backgrounds, and while these are impressive the big problem is that they never change.

The characters appear to have less frames of animation than the CPC port, though there is enough going on to simulate a feel of motion as you attempt to strike your opponent. One of the



Getting punched in the face! Ouch!

The Way of the Exploding Fist

C16 version by Richard Costello 1986
Atari port by Fandal and Miker 2017



As expected, the colours are different when playing in NTSC, if playing by emulator, use PAL mode.

The game uses the Japanese 'nippon' scoring system, which is used in many martial arts tournaments today. You can score half a point or a full point, depending on the attack used on your opponent. If you score two full nippon points then you are declared the winner, allowing you to move on to your next opponent.

The Amstrad CPC port has very little music, and the sound effects aren't fantastic. This port of The Way of the Exploding Fist features an oriental inspired tune on the title screen, a section of which plays between rounds. Shuffle sounds are used to simulate the fast moving fists and feet, like so many martial arts movies. One criticism is that when a move connects, instead of a satisfying 'thud' or 'boom' sound you hear a small 'beep'.

The controls involve using all directions of the joystick with or without the fire button, allowing you to have 16 standard moves in your arsenal. This can make for a tricky learning curve, as you will inevitably move the joystick the wrong way at the wrong time while you're learning what to do, but this was an era before the Street Fighter series introduced the 6 button system.

As a game, The Way of the Exploding Fist suffers limited game play in each port of the game. How many times can you fight, what looks like, the same opponent using the same moves before you get bored? In its day the game was an evolution in one on one fighting, today we are spoiled for choice by the likes of SNK and Capcom's stable of fighters.

I have fond memories of The Way of the Exploding Fist from my Amstrad days, but the game was always severely limited in game play. It's one of those games that was always good to have a bash at every now and again, but you wouldn't be sitting in front of the computer for hours, trying new moves and mastering different enemies. There just isn't that much depth to it. That said, this is a great port of the game, and if you're an Atari 8-Bit owner then you should definitely give this one a try.

VERDICT

PROS

- Nice animation for the main characters.
- Bright, colourful backgrounds.
- A variety of moves which can be performed with a single joystick.
- A nice opening tune.

CONS

- Once you've mastered it you're pretty much done.
- Strange beeping sound when a hit connects.
- Just not that much depth to it.

79%



Just a small selection of the animation used within the game.

problems I found was if a move is blocked then it simply doesn't affect the player at all. There is no mark or indicator to show that the strike still made impact. This can make for some 'huh?' moments, as you assume victory only to find yourself KO'd! Like other ports of the game, you can wind your opponent or knock them flat on their back.

- **TEAM:** "mgr inż. Rafał" (Rafał Chabowski), Graphics and level design: "Vidol" (Kamil Walaszek), Music: Makary Brauner
- **INFO:** Download from http://www.atarimania.com/game-atari-400-800-xl-xe-tensor-trzaskowskiego_32011.html
- **REVIEWED BY:** Paul Monopoli

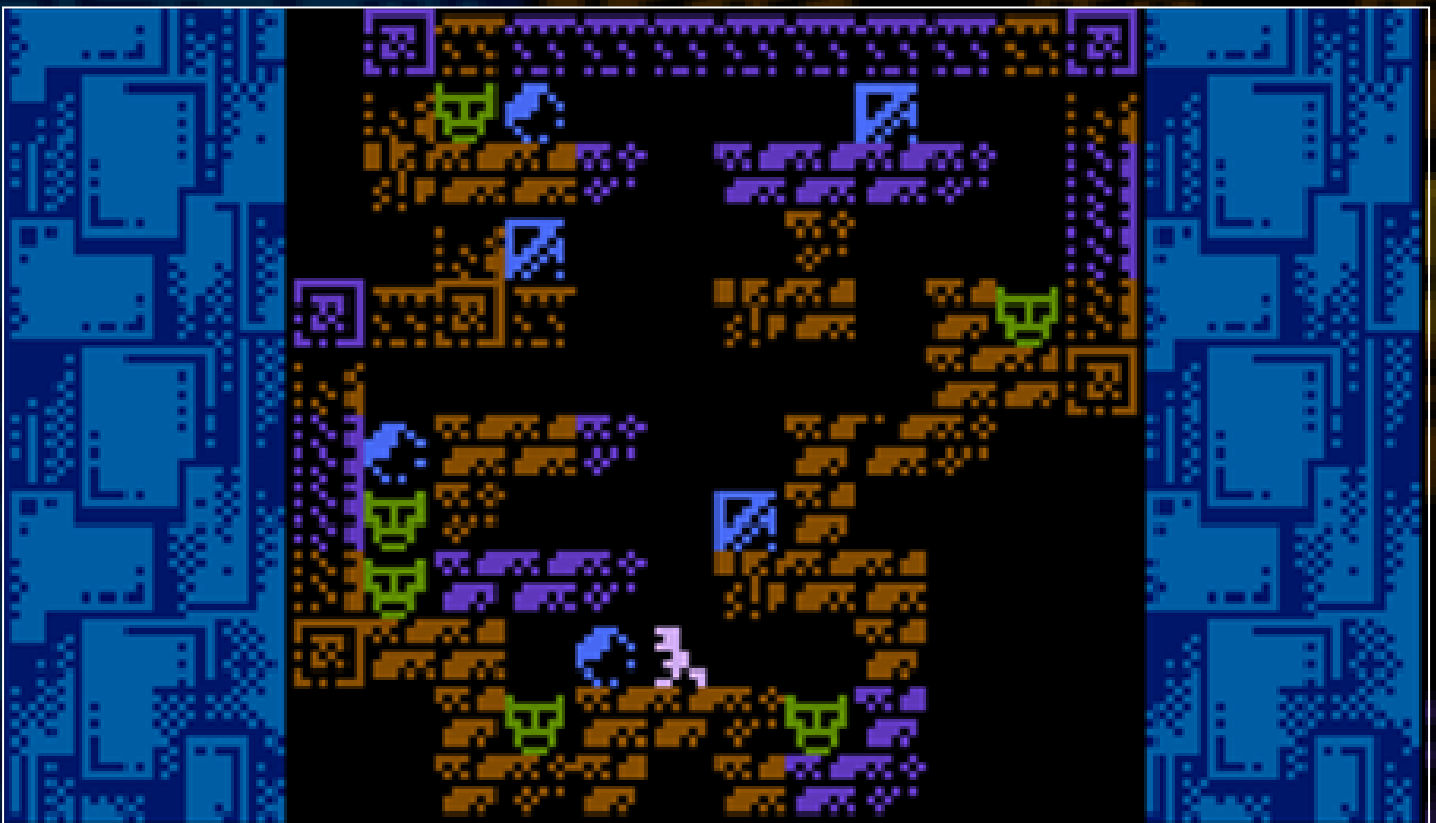
TRZASKOWSKI'S TENSOR

Innovation is one of the key components to making a successful independent video game. A developer needs to have imagination and the ability to create a game that is going to be remembered for decades to come. Original ideas are key, but these ideas need to gel with the gamers who are supposed to enjoy them. The survival of a game depends on this, and while almost every game will have its core audience, the larger that audience is the more successful it becomes.

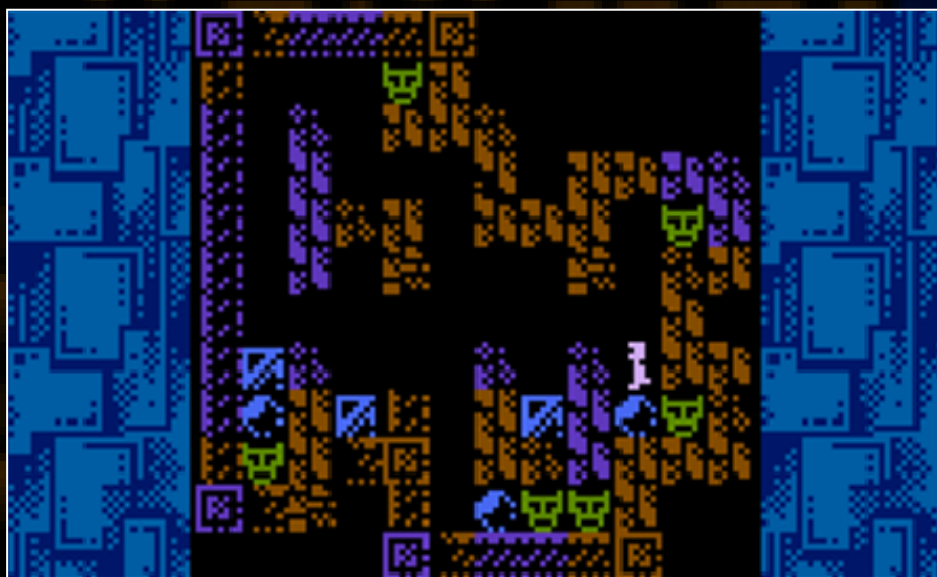
That deeply analytical statement on game development has a purpose, which I will get to a bit later. First, let's have a look at Trzaskowski's Tensor, a Polish puzzle game with a literal twist. The game involves Professor Trzaskowski collecting objects on Jupiter using his 'Tensor', or gravity manipulation device.

Upon booting the game you are greeted with a screen full of Polish text, something that my poor mono-lingual brain is unable to comprehend. I did

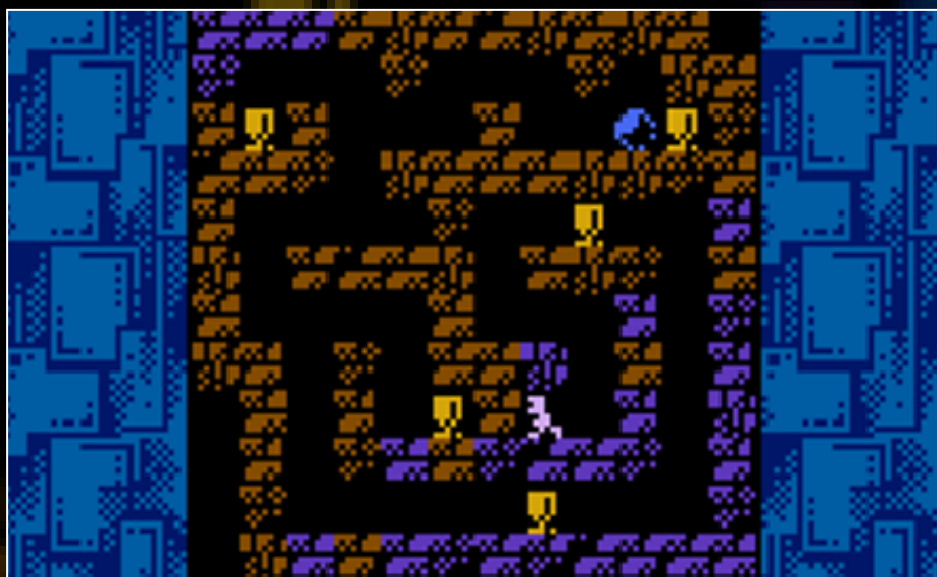
understand the command "FIRE" to start, and I did so. Other than knowing its storyline I had no prior knowledge of this game before starting it, so I really felt like I was flying blind. I was greeted with what appeared to be a platform game, with a small character. The left and right controls move this character, so that's clearly Professor Trzaskowski. Fire appears to do nothing on its own, but when I hold fire and press left or right the screen changes.



OK, so I can't seem to reach anything here. It's Tensor time!!



Still can't reach anything? Time to flip the screen around again.



So many Holy Grails... Where's Indiana Jones when you need him?



All the happy faces...

Why does the screen change? Hold on, it looks like the same screen I was just looking at, but sideways. I hold fire and push left again and it appears to be the same screen but upside down. This must be the gravity manipulation that I mentioned earlier. All of the items on the screen shift when you rotate the game

area, but it looks like the key to finishing a level is to collect specific items. There appears to be no means of jumping, so your character can only move left and right. Finding your way to specific areas of the screen involves you rotating the playing field, then moving a little and repeating the process. You don't have to worry about having items fall on you, as there is no way to die in the game. One of the frustrating things you will find is that you can't pick up the collectable items by standing on them or having them fall on your head. You MUST pick them up from

the side to collect them and have them disappear from the playing field.

The graphics are extremely basic, which suits the genre. Puzzle games don't need a lot of flash and pizzazz to hold a player's attention. The musical score is one of the highlights, and the in game music is particularly enjoyable. The controls are accurate and the gameplay is solid. Interestingly, for a puzzle game there is no time limit, so you can carefully plan your moves out and not have to worry about having Game Over pop up on the screen when you least expect it.

Going back to my earlier points, this game is innovative and original and the developer has appeared to successfully engineer a puzzler with a difference. The problem I'm finding is that the game doesn't gel with me, and I can't get into it. I find the control system restrictive and the whole experience quite frustrating. After writing that last sentence I thought I would do some research into the game and see what others thought about it. From what I've heard the game won first place at a computer competition that was held in Poland, and other reviewers also seem to like it.

Upon playing it again, I can see that the faults I am finding with the game are part of the core game mechanics, so to criticise them is to simply give my opinion. I'm not a fan, but plenty of people are. If you like puzzle games, and I do like puzzle games by the way, then give this a try. It's a new take on the genre, and if you're sick of the plethora of Tetris clones out there then it might be just what you're looking for.

VERDICT

PROS

- Minimalist design that works well for the puzzle genre.
- Designed to get you thinking outside the box.
- Brilliant soundtrack.

CONS

- Controls feel a bit too restrictive.
- Can make you want to pull the rest of your hair out.
- If you don't speak Polish then the game might take a bit of working out.

70%

SEGA®

MASTER SYSTEM

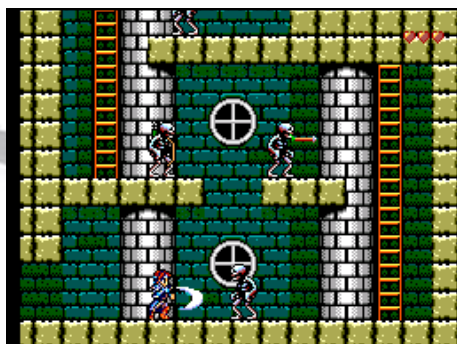
Silver Valley

By: Enrique Ruiz

An RPG with cute graphics and the chance to slay a dragon. What more could you ask for? The graphics are good and varies a lot between levels, as you can see from the screenshots below. Gameplay is varied as well. There's a level where you're on a boat and even a flying level, all from the side on perspective. There's even an arcade cabinet your character can walk up to and play a mini game called Crap Man.

The game is big and will take a while to complete, even if you're good at it. There are 80 stages and seven bosses to master.

SCORE: 90%



Astro Force

By: Enrique Ruiz

Astro Force came in first place in the SMS Power Coding Competition for 2017 and it was well deserved too.

This vertical scroll shoot'em up has smooth scrolling and animation but I would expect no less from Mike Ruiz of Mikgames. There are six stages, eleven bosses and over thirty enemy types. Interestingly, you have two fire buttons to use, one to fire straight and the other to fire at a 45 degree angle, but you can't fire both at the same time. If I had to pick a fault, it's that the story at the beginning doesn't really match the gameplay.

SCORE: 85%



Fairy Forest

By: Annorah and STIR_FC



The concept of a clever eight year old girl, you are in a forest, lost, and miles from home. You must travel through three zones to get home. The lush forest, the night forest and the arid forest. There are two gargoyles to stop you. Use your direction buttons to fly, button 1 to fire a fairy dust attack. You can shoot in any direction and the enemies you can kill range from spiders to bats to err, walking trees.

You lose one of your three hearts if you touch an object but you can get it back by picking up hearts dotted around the play area. There can be a delay in shooting sometimes, especially after turning. Moving after shooting your fairy dust, moves the shot too, but I think this is more of a bug than a feature. The game is maze like, the graphics uninspiring, but the game does have a certain charm to it, even if the hardest part is navigating the maze like map.

The game is too easy for adults, but young retro players may enjoy having a few tries on it.

SCORE: 52%

Bad Apple 3D Demo

By: Gligli

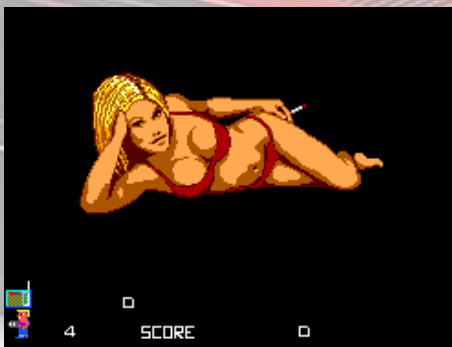
Jaws drop, eyes glued to the screen. I've just loading up the Bad Apple 3D demo. Normally demos don't interest me but this has blown me away. Then I realised that it's just a video player playing a premade video, but still, on the humble 8-Bit Master System, that is just spectacular. Works on PAL only. Hard one to score but for technical achievement I'll give it a score of...

SCORE: 75%

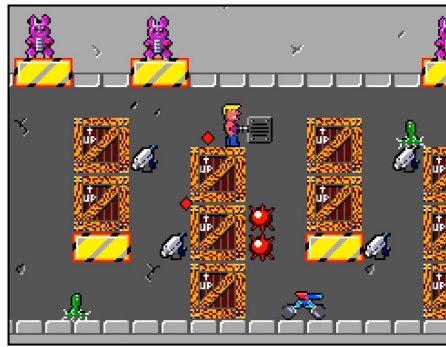


Duke Nukem

By: Revo, Tibone and Calindro



One of the first things I did when I got my first PC back in the mid 90's was to play Duke Nukem 3D, this game is nothing like this but it's still unmistakably the Duke character, especially in the games previous to the 1996, FPS. The blond hair of the character as well as the



sexist undertones, certainly do stand out in this age of political correctness but not in a bad way.

You play as Duke, you have one button to shoot in the direction you facing, either left or right and the other button is to jump. You make your way from the left of the screen to the right, killing baddies on the way. Duke walks like he's walking on ice which makes the game difficult. It gets easier with a bit of practice but I can safely say the game could do with a bit more polish. He feels heavy when he jumps which conflicts badly with the walking on ice feeling. Still, it's Duke, and I would like to say it's fun but it's more frustrating than fun.

SCORE: 67%

Baluba Balok

By: Enrique Ruiz



This has the feel of an early SMS game, but there's nothing wrong with that. If there was a reward for annoying music, this game would have won it. Right, audio turned down, let's check this out.

The game involves collecting all the err, things on screen while being chased by bad guys. It plays a bit like Pac-Man but the game is much more frustrating because each time you're caught, the stage resets and you'll have to start all over again! There are 64 stages in total. You can chose which stage to start from right at the beginning of the game, which is a great inclusion and a good way to undertake practice.

SCORE: 60%

Super Uwol

By: Mojon Twins

Collect all the coins then move down to the next screen in the pyramid. If a baddie touches you, you lose your clothes. You can regain them by collecting a t-shirt which appears at a random point on the screen. The game is one player or two, with co-operative and vs modes. Another enjoyable game by the Mojon Twins.

SCORE: 85%



Mecha-8

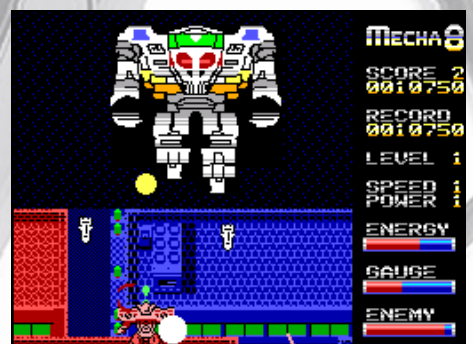
By: Nanochess

Aliens are overrunning a small planet and its up to you to put a stop to it in this intense vertical shoot 'em up.

The player sprite is big and the bosses even more so. While typical enemy sprites are small, there are a lot of them. Sometimes a enemy can be lurking undetected by the eye. Power ups are common, which is a good thing too. Not to say the game is hard, but it's fast, even if the main spite moves slightly slow, which he should for a big giant Mech!

The free game has only three levels while the paid game has six and can be purchased from nanochess.org for \$9 US dollars.

SCORE 90%





ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

The NES DEV competition started in 2011 and 2014 and then yearly from 2016, giving coders a chance to show off their 6502 and specifically their NES programming skills. The contest comprises two categories. Category 2 is for developers to enter utility based software, therefore they are not shown below. Category 1 of the competition is all about game development. While there were less entries than last year, it was still the second biggest number of entries received, with 13 games seeking to take out top honors. Gruniożerca 2 took out first place, but John Kavanagh gave *Wolfing* a higher rating. All the games can be downloaded from the NES DEV website at: nesdevcompo.nintendoage.com/contest17/

Gruniożerca 2

By: Łukasz Kur & M-Tee

Ah, a game where you control a rat. Well that was my first impression but on reading the instructions, it's actually Grunio, the guinea pig.

This is a puzzle game where you have to get to the door to move to the next stages and there are 24 stages in total. You have various methods at your



disposal to do this. You can pick up objects and select where to put them down. For example, in the first stage, you pick up what looks like a tiny square but when you position it, it displays as a bigger square to help you climb over an object to reach the carrot and door. Later stages have hammers and levels. If you pick up the hammer you can use it to break blocks that are blocking your progress. If you pull a lever it might blow up an area allowing you to reach the door to the next stage. As expected, the first stages are easy but it gets hard fast.

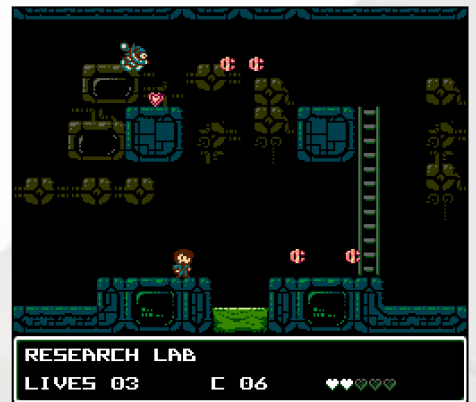
There's are 24 carrots to collect and collection is optional but if you don't collect them then you don't get a satisfied guinea pig at the end of the game. However if you start a level from a password, the carrots collected previously aren't recognised.

If you like cute puzzles games then this game is up your street. Graphics, sound, and most importantly gameplay are spot on.

SCORE: 87%

Project Blue

Toggle Switch & Frankengraphics



In the dystopian wasteland of neo Hong Kong, help Blue escape from the evil clutches of the Omnicorp conglomerate. Escaping isn't easy however, as you have to avoid robots, lasers and even pools of toxic waste. The first few screens are easy but it soon gets hard. All but the most skilled platform players will find this a hard challenge. Blue moves fast, too fast and if you're not careful, can run into trouble far too easy. This and having to restart at the beginning of a stage when you lose a life keeps frustrations high but the desire to progress is equally so. Getting just a little bit further than last time is satisfying. You'll certainly find yourself improving as you play.

SCORE: 84%



Wolfling

Lazycow



Ling is thrown into Baron Baranov's dungeon because the moon light turns her into a werewolf. Can she escape? Can she break the curse?

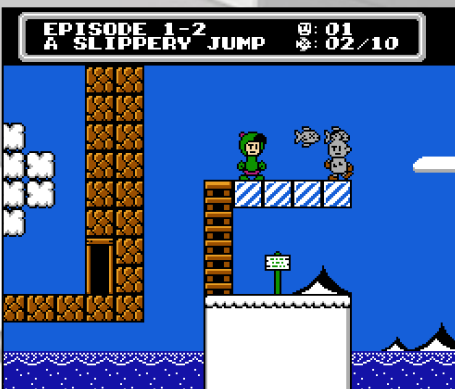
On starting the game, you play as a girl and you must break down the door to get out. By walking towards the moon rays you turn into a werewolf, allowing you to run towards the door, then pressing down for a rolling attack, Sonic style, breaking the door. You soon come across the dungeon guards which are easily taken out. As a wolf you can't jump as good so you must morph back to a girl to get to those higher areas. That can be easily done by holding the down the fire button for longer than usual, but to morph back into a wolf requires moonlight. That's where strategy plays beautifully. You can find moon rays throughout the dungeon. The animation is fantastic and the game character control is much better than say, Project Blue. The game overall feels much more polished. The only downside is that sometimes when entering a new screen the enemy is right on top of you, that said, it isn't a big problem and doesn't spoil the fun.

Score: 90%

The Alfonzo Game

Alfonzo Melee! - Tomas Guinan
Spooky Bard Productions

Alfonzo must collect all of the raw fish in each level, with only his trusty stick to



defend himself against enemies. Alfonzo will meet various friends in igloos along the way and you can select which to play, each having certain skills. Magnus can jump high and punch down to attach from above. Fenwood is a poor jumper, but can destroy opponents with a mere touch. The girl, does she have a name? Apparently not. Well, the girl is a strong jumper and attacks by throwing swords.

Each level has a hidden golden fish, it isn't required to pass the level but it will give you an extra life. This version of the game has 15 levels and a final boss.

Killing enemies can be hard if you don't have a weapon as you will have to get very close. Too close, and you lose a life. The graphics are cute, so is the music just and the gameplay is spot on.

SCORE: 78%

Miedow (Cheril's Nightmares)

Mojon Twins



After walking into the shrine, Cheril falls asleep. In her dreams, a voice commands her to find her daughters...

I got stuck on the first dream. I was supposed to push a statue over the pedestal and I stupidly pushed it into a wall. Oh well, at least I killed the skeleton, lets try again. Ah much better



NES DEV 2017

Category 1 Final Result

1st	Gruniozerca 2	44.612
2nd	Project Blue	43.716
3rd	Wolfling	41.180
4th	The Alfonzo Game	38.582
5th	Miedow (Cheril's Nightmares)	38.104
6th	F-FF	37.220
7th	Jammin Honey	35.804
8th	Robo-Ninja Climb	34.956
9th	Star Evil	34.860
10th	Inherent Smile	32.566
11th	Alfonzo Melee	32.548
12th	Nothing Good Can Come Of This	30.200
13th	LightShields	29.996

this time, although during play I must remember not to shove any statues into corners as there doesn't seem to be a way to get them out of there. Along your travels you will be moving a lot of statues over pedestals to open doors. While doing this, you will be attacked by skeletons, coming out of a creepy skull thing. Destroy the skull before more skeletons come out. There are other enemies too of course, such as ghosts. All the enemies seem to follow you like glue, if one is behind a wall they will creepily mimic your movements.

This game is about solving puzzles to get to the next level as much as it is about fighting baddies. It's not just all about moving statues either, in some areas, doors can be opened by shooting at them while other doors require keys to open them. The only fault I found with this game is when statues get stuck up against walls, if only there was a pull option as well. Also, pushing the statues takes time, they must be heavy!

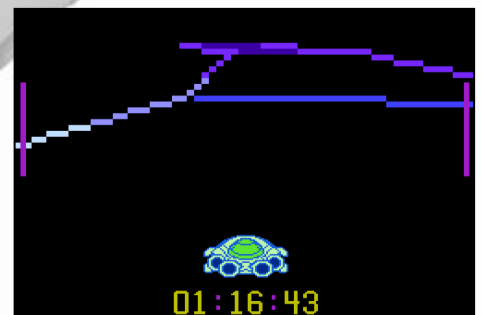
SCORE: 87%

F-FF

Pubby

This is terrible! Especially compared to the graphics, on the other games reviewed here. It's certainly fast, I give it that. There are 3 tracks where you have to do 3 laps. First track is easy to complete. Is the game fun? For a short while, maybe.

SCORE: 45%



- **TEAM:** Megastyle, Reset Magazine Staff and Protovision
- **INFO:** Free to download from <https://megastyle.itch.io/tombstones>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Cameron Door

TOMBSTONES

Wild west, notorious in history as always being an unforgiving existence. El Gringo, the fastest, most dangerous gunslinger ever known, no longer wants to be constantly looking over his shoulder, shooting down enemy wherever he walks, it's time for him to hang up his gun belt and draw an end to the fatal gun slinging lifestyle he has been living all these years, he just wants to retire and settle down with his true love.

Easier said than done, remember this is the wild, wild, west, where everything is wild, gun slinging outlaws are everywhere, you can't just pack up and retire, your enemies are hardened with grudges as long and as wide as the Grand Canyon, they just won't forgive

and forget. One by one they come to hunt El Gringo down, seeking to lay claim to being the fastest gunslinger the wild west has ever seen.

During the load up of Tombstones I am full of great anticipation, the load screen is fantastic, it gets me in the mood for a good old fashioned shoot out, reminding me of my love for western movies, I was brought up on Clint Eastwood's spaghetti westerns such as The Good, The Bad and The Ugly, Pale Rider and For A Few Dollars More.

A decent amount of shooting is going to be had as I read the onscreen instructions, there's three levels, The Desert, The City and The Graveyard, all with 6 outlaws to shoot down on each level.

I am all psyched up for a great shooting game, it's just El Gringo and another scoundrel outlaw in a one on one draw your gun duel to see who is the fastest gunslinger ever, but then comes the big disappointment - the gameplay is far from exciting.

Pressing a key on the keyboard to take down your opponent is not fun. Not being able to press down on a joystick / gamepad fire button loses all of the gun slinging appeal to me. As I'm looking for which key to press I don't even get to see or feel the thrill of the shootout. You only get a short chance to find the correct key to press, if you press the wrong key you're dead, if you're too slow, you're flat on the gravel before you know what hit you.





Where is x on my keyboard?

I just can't be a fan of the keyboard play. I understand the theory behind it, a test of your reaction abilities yet real gunslinger's are holding their joystick / gamepad in their hands, wanting to press down on that fire button to actually see who they are blasting away giving them the full satisfaction of

watching bad dude outlaws fall to their death. The one style gaming experience I found to be detrimental to your enjoyment. A bonus stage of shooting at targets, or another style of gameplay like the run 'n gun shown in Outlaws on the Amstrad CPC, by Toni Ramirez, Alxinho and Jose A Martin

(2016), would have given Tombstones much greater gunslinging firepower. Initially, everything was looking awesome - graphics, sprites, music, storyline, fantastic I thought. Cowboys might appear a bit on the bright side, more Brokeback Mountain than The Good The Bad and The Ugly, but that's ok, I am all for modern updates, I still had a real sense of excitement all the way up to the start of the first screen. However, playing Tombstones for me was a real let down, there is no lastability, no fun, no feeling of being the baddest gunslinger of the wild west, which El Gringo is meant to be.



Dueling in the big city.



I found the x key but I didn't get to see El Gringo shoot.

VERDICT

PROS

- Fantastic tunes.
- Get you in the gunslinger mood loading screen.
- 3 levels with 6 fighters in each.

CONS

- Keyboard action only.
- Not enjoyable as you look for keys to press.
- Only one game style could have had a bonus level or some other kind of levels to give it more excitement.
- No lastability.

64%

- **TEAM:** Dr. Wuro Industries
- **INFO:** Donation recommended, download from <http://frogs.drwuro.com/> Physical disk and cartridge versions also available.
- **REVIEWED BY:** Cameron Door

FROGS

INTERVIEW ON PAGE
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My curiosity got the better of me, no I had not seen any of the work in progress forum posts nor had I watched any videos about the game beforehand. What could this game of frogs be about, my first thought is not another Frogger clone? To my surprise it wasn't, I rejoiced, it was something a little different, original and unique. Frogs, a multi-player game of up to four players released by Dr Wuro Industries. Sounds rather dark and evil doesn't it, like an evil villian in a James Bond movie - hahaha. It is a pretty cool name for a software firm, created by a really cool bloke from Germany (I know I interviewed him - Ed).

The software company may sound dark and evil, the game however is the complete opposite all cute and colourful. I am playing the free download version via Vice emulator, however those who love the feel of playing on a real machine, Dr Wuro Industries has released a physical edition of Frogs on 5.25" disk, with heaps of goodies like a printed manual, stickers, pins, a beer coaster and more. There is also a cartridge version that has two extra joystick ports for maximum multiplayer action, for more info email@drwuro.com to make further enquiries.

So back to the game. Here I am, a one player frog gamer, jumping about, not really getting the most out of the game. I am sure this would be a fantastic game to play with your friends or family, but I am the stereotyped 'loner' retro game player.

Enter my 7 year old niece, just popping over for dinner, perfect timing. She hears the nice little tune from 3 rooms

away and I didn't even have the volume turned up very high. She dances her way into the room where I am playing, "can I play, can I play, can I play", she bugs me. Taking the controller from me she is still dancing about.

I am thinking now I have someone to compete against, to experience the multiplayer aspect, but it's a massively unfair contest in my favour, so instead, I teach my niece how to play Frogs and she loves it, although she keeps jumping into the water and can't quite seem to work out how to just tap the stick on my Xbox 360 gamepad to change the frogs direction without jumping.

We try out the 6 different ponds from the three different game modes consisting of Battle, Bug Hunt and Countdown, deciding we like catching the butterflies on Bug Hunt the best. The disappearing lily pads provide an extra bit of difficulty to the game, it's a nice touch but really



Those radio tunes are so cool - trust me they are. Even in the 4 player battle mode.

the game is rather easy. I can't fault the in game music, it is really lovely, just the right sounds to match the gameplay, the sprites and graphics also accurately portray the game of frogs jumping about in a pond just as you would imagine it yourself. The big eyes on each frog adds great attention to detail of the game's presentation. I had no issues with the controls or the movement of my frog, just a few issues while trying to change direction, otherwise my frog jumped around the pond as if it were in real life.



Your frog is rewarded with a pair of sunnies for winning the battle!



As you can see this is a multiplayer game and is best played as a multiplayer game.

While my niece is thoroughly entertained, I am left frustrated, asking myself in despair "is this all there is to the game?" Just jumping about from grey rock to grey rock, from green lily pad to green lily pad, or green lily pad to grey rock, pushing other frogs off and catching butterflies with your frog's tongue is about as fun as it gets for me.

I am biased in that regard. As a loner, one player I am easily bored with the game, I am aching for an exciting one player version but it's just not here, the game says



4 player cart version

multi-player for a reason and I can't play Frogs as it is intended to be played - with more than one player! I start dreaming if the game was something along the lines of a frog's 'beat 'em up, where the frog that you control goes absolutely ballistic, eating and killing all sorts of swamp life, I'd probably be in one player heaven. The game might not cater to my crazy 8-Bit one player gaming fantasies, but as a multiplayer game, playing against my niece, I can see that with a bunch of people playing Frogs would be much more entertaining.

As 8-Bit games go, the multiplayer aspect is quite different from the usual standard games being released. Dr. Wuro Industries have ventured into an aspect of 8-Bit gaming often forgotten about and developed a gem of a game bringing back the childhood memories of enjoying Commodore 64 gaming with your friends and family.

VERDICT

PROS

- Catchy Tunes.
- Multi-player.
- 3 different game modes.
- 6 different ponds to select.
- Top marks for the 2 extra joystick ports on the cartridge.

CONS

- No real one player challenge.
- Lacks lasting appeal for one player.
- Not much variety in gameplay, same jumping about on all modes.



Go catch those butterflies!

81%

- **TEAM:** Oziphantom
- **INFO:** Free download from <http://csdb.dk/release/?id=159702>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Cameron Door

QWAK

I know what you're thinking... (no you don't, how could you? - Ed) Qwak, isn't this an old game about a duck collecting keys or something? Yes, it is. Originally released in 1989 by coder Jamie Woodhouse on the BBC Micro and Acorn Electron, as part of Superior / Acornsoft's, "Play It Again Sam" 10 game pack compilation.

In 1993, Team17 released an updated budget version with a two player mode, it received a 'Gamer Gold' accolade with a whopping 92% overall score by Amiga Computing Magazine. Then in 2006, Jamie Woodhouse brought Qwak back from the dead with a Game Boy Advance version. In 2010 Jamie Woodhouse released an iPhone version. Yes, I know what you're thinking again.... It's been a very long time for a version of Qwak to appear on the C64. So what's the story behind the C64 version of the game?

Coder, Oziphantom (he must be from Australia with a name like that) informs me that his C64 game of Qwak, originally came about as part of the 2015, RGCD compo, which actually concluded on April 1st, 2016. However, the latest version 1.3 was released on 15th October, 2017.

"It's more of an update on previous system versions, it's half way between the BBC micro version and the Amiga Version. The idea of converting Qwak to the C64, was actually Saul Cross's idea, as I had never played the original until I did the port", says Oziphantom.

I must admit I have never played the BBC micro version or any other system's version either, this was my first play at QWAK.

What do I think about this simplistic 2D platformer game? Honestly - I am totally addicted. A duck has got to eat loads of

apples and flowers, collect a whole lot of keys, a potion or two, avoid the bad enemy by removing them with what looks like a bubble for a weapon (Wikipedia says it's meant to be an egg like projectile - I know a bubble when I see one) and then open the exit door to reach the next, much more challenging higher level.

The C64 version gives you 5 Lives to begin with, if you collect 8 flowers on a level you get an extra life - trust me you will need them. On level three you will come across floating bubbles you can use as lifts, this was too cool. Later a 'Spring' will let you hover, kind of like Yoshi from Yoshi's Island. A 'Red Egg' makes your bullets stronger, so much so that it can hurt level bosses. A 'Shield' makes you invulnerable for a period of time and the 'Potion' transforms the spikes into fruit. To kill bosses you can either hit them with red egg bullets or bounce on their heads



Level 2 looks tough, time your falls and it will be a cinch to get all those keys.



Made it to 3rd level and I am floating on bubbles, but so can your enemy how cool is this!

while the shield is active.

Control of movement I found a little tricky at times, perhaps that's because of the Xbox 360 gamepad I am using? At times it seemed to me all of the sprite characters moved about a tad too fast, I was wondering where my duck character was on the screen, perhaps I am getting

too old, maybe I need glasses?

This version of Qwak consists of 31 purely addictive, challenging levels, I believe other systems versions may have more. The music is terrific, your duck won't die of a lack of atmosphere, that's a certainty. Gameplay is a real challenge even though you can kill your enemy with

a bubble, the enemy respawn moving even faster than they did before, you thought this game was going to be easy didn't you?

There is no end of game sequence, it just loops, Oziphantom says "what do you want for 16kb?" (we want an end of game sequence in the next version - only joking!)



While at times frustrating, there is a reason for only being allowed to blow a single bubble at a time to kill the enemies. "It would make it too easy if you could just shoot your way through, it's more of an avoidance game. The original BBC version gives you a score bonus if you don't shoot anything when completing a level, but that didn't make it into this 16K version", says Oziphantom.

Overall, a fantastic, simplistic game, addictive from the beginning you start playing.



Totally addictive from level 1, get those keys, collect some flowers and get to the exit door at the bottom.....easy bahahah!

VERDICT

PROS

- Excellent tunes.
- Addictive.
- 31 levels.
- Hard to put down.

CONS

- Controls a little tricky at times.
- Movement of sprites too fast?

89%

- **TEAM:** Michael Cassera of Defiance Studios
- **INFO:** Free to download from <http://csdb.dk/release/?id=158992>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Cameron Door

LUNAR LANDER

Lunar lander, Michael Cassera's tribute to Atari's, 1979, arcade game of the same name.

You are in space, controlling the LEM (Lunar Excursion Module). Your mission, if you choose to accept it, well you don't have a choice, is to guide the LEM to a landing spot on the moon surface, without crashing the LEM or using up all of the LEM's fuel.



When you get the velocity arrow levels green at the top right of screen, you should be safely landing the LEM.



Each landing spot is clearly identified, you can land at any of them you choose, some landing spots are harder than others, so they have a difficulty level which will determine the points you receive if you happen to land on them, successfully that is.

Control is by moving the LEM left or

right, pressing the fire button will provide thrust to the LEM, burning fuel in the process. While the whole 1970's retro gaming feel is there, it just doesn't seem to land safely on the moon.

It's not a bad tribute to Atari's, 1979 arcade game, however where it falls down is that it does not include a number of the original Atari arcade game features. There is no close up of the screen when you near a landing spot, while not essential it was a pretty cool feature back then. The atmospheric in game sounds of the arcade version are not there either, sure there's a big leap between arcade boards and a C64 PCB, I think the SID chip could have handled it though.

Also missing from this version of Lunar Lander in comparison to the Atari arcade version is the ease of controlling the LEM. It seems so difficult just to get the LEM to change direction at the best of times. Probably the most annoying issue of the game is the opening title screen music, I found it excruciating, my ears didn't enjoy what they were listening to at all.

What developer Michael Cassera has done in this tribute game shows great promise. I can only see him getting better as a developer and coder, while this version of Lunar Lander for me is not a great game to play by any means, I can see, just how much Michael has put into recreating a game he loves. I have read Michael's story on how the game was coded, its a very interesting read, I encourage everyone to read it - check out the following link to learn more. I really look forward to seeing



It's a long way down to the landing strip for the LEM.

what games Michael Cassera codes in the future.

www.defiancestudios.com/2017/09/20/lunar-lander-completed/

VERDICT

PROS

- Captures the 70's retro feel.
- Pretty good effort re-creating the original arcade game.

CONS

- Quite the challenge getting the LEM to land safely.
- Awful title screen music (sorry Michael, I know you worked hard on this game).
- Limited gameplay i.e. the same left and right movements might just bore you quite quickly - not the coders fault, this was the style of the 1970's.

57%

- **TEAM:** Andy Noble (Programming, Graphics and Sound FX)
- **INFO:** Free to download from <http://csdb.dk/release/?id=160135>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Merman

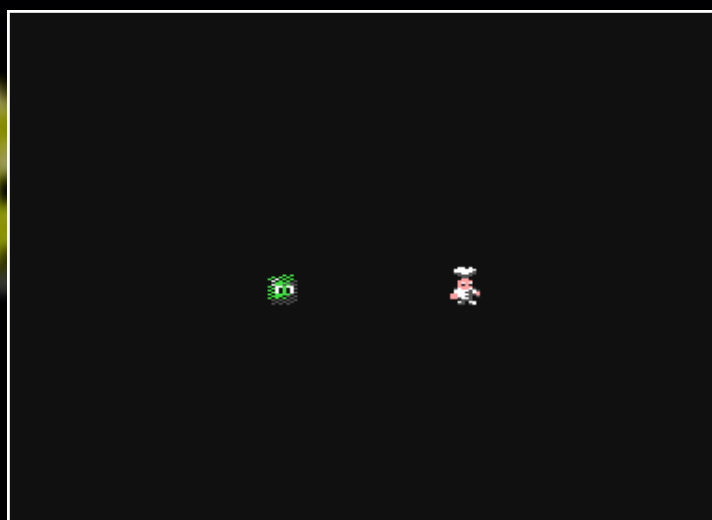
COOKIE



Out of nowhere appeared this fun C64 conversion of the classic Ultimate Play The Game title for the ZX Spectrum, originally released in 1983. Martin Galway himself had been working on a conversion back in the 1980s (see <https://www.gamesthatwerent.com/gtw64/cookie/>) but it was never finished.

Charlie the Chef has to cook up something good, but his ingredients are getting restless locked up in the pantry. The ingredients come flying out and

Charlie must throw flour bombs to knock them into the mixing bowl. However, sometimes the wrong ingredient appears and this must be knocked into the rubbish bins either side of the bowl. Lurking in the bins is the 'Bin Monster', flinging rubbish at Charlie every now and then. Contact with any ingredient or piece of rubbish robs Charlie of a life and knocking the wrong ingredient or piece of rubbish into the bowl will increase the number of ingredients needed to complete the level. It was a straightforward single-screen game back



Chasing an ingredient before the level begins.

then and it is still good fun today. The graphics are well drawn, especially the title screen and the tiny chef. It was a joy to hear a new tune from Paul Tankard after all these years too. What lets the game down is the high difficulty level, since even a slight touch kills Charlie – unfortunately that is part of the original design. The later levels see very unpredictable movement from the ingredients and lots more rubbish to avoid.



The first level, with the Bin Monster about to throw rubbish at Charlie.

VERDICT

PROS

- Well-made conversion.
- Never seen on the C64 before.

CONS

- Difficult at higher levels.
- Limited gameplay.

72%

- **TEAM:** Jon Wells (Programmer), Errazking (GFX), Richard of Blazon (Music)
- **INFO:** Free to download from <http://csdb.dk/release/?id=153297>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Cameron Door

ANTARTA



It's a hard life for anyone living in Antarctica, the coldest, windiest and driest continent on Earth. Spare a thought for the animals that live there, those cute penguins how do they survive?

They say safety in numbers for any animal is the key to survival. Poor unlucky penguin, Anarta, has become lost on the frozen continent during the annual penguin marathon.

To find his fellow penguins, Anarta must catch flying fish - a penguin has got to eat, right? A nice bit of belly filling can be had but Anarta must burn it off while watching out for albatross flying above pelting down bird droppings. Then there's avoiding falling in the scattered fishing holes as well as avoiding some very strange looking enemy with one goal of killing your penguin. It certainly isn't fair or forgiving for a penguin in



Narrow ice, don't fall in.



Your fellow penguins taking off, can you catch them on the Penguin Marathon?



Watch out for the falling bird droppings.

Antarctica.

With only three lives, the task of reaching your goal is quite challenging. At the end of a level, there are 3 in total, the difficulty becomes harder with icicles dropping down upon you whilst inside an empty building. The terrain also changes, some parts become harder to pass as the ice becomes very narrow.

In other parts of the game the ice becomes even more treacherous indicated by the ice turning to blue. Playability and control of your penguin seemed straightforward and easy to get the hang of. Whilst the gameplay was enjoyable, there felt something missing. Perhaps the game offers little variety and it's all over too soon for my liking. The most annoying part of playing the game for me, is the penguin isn't allowed to walk the whole screen. You can go all the way backwards but only



Those falling icicles will kill your penguin.



End of level one and you're still trying to catch up with your fellow penguins.

move halfway forward of the whole screen. It gives an impression that you can't go as fast as you would like to, but Penguins are renowned for being slow waddling creatures anyway, aren't they.

VERDICT

PROS

- Easy to play.
- Cute looking world.
- Cute tunes.

CONS

- Only 3 levels.
- Only half way forward of the whole screen.
- Sometimes you feel your penguin should have an icicle or some other weapon to fight back with.

62%

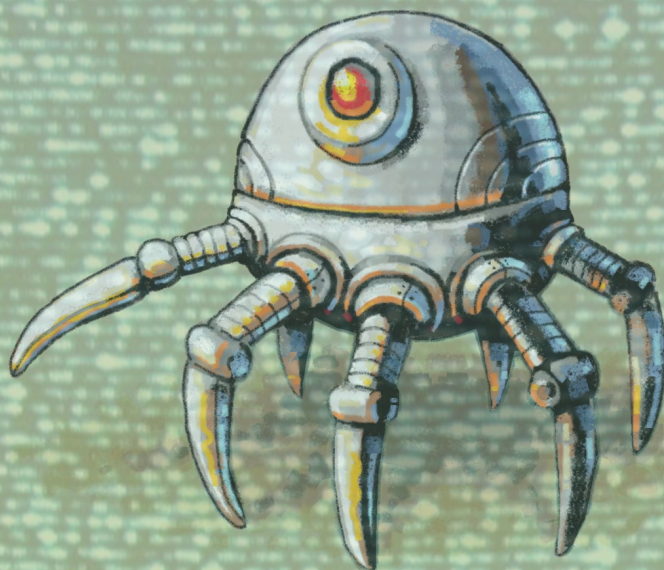
HIBERNATED 1

THIS PLACE IS DEATH

A SCIENCE FICTION STORY
BY STEFAN VOGT

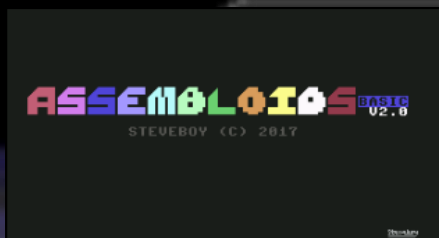
AMSTRAD CPC
COMMODORE 64
COMMODORE 128
IBM PC COMPATIBLES
ZX SPECTRUM 48K

PONDISOFT.UK



- **TEAM:** Steveboy
- **INFO:** Available from <http://www.psytronik.net/newsite/index.php/c64/46-assembloids>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Cameron Door

ASSEMBLOIDS



Nice, always like reading the instructions in game.



If it's there, then you have to go for infinite lives don't you?

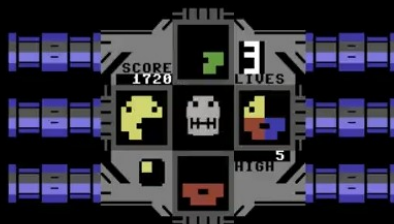
Is it just me or are basic games much more fun to play these days? I don't remember them being quite so good back in the 1980's. How could assembling face parts to make a face be so enjoyable as a basic game? I don't understand it, but boy have I enjoyed playing Assembloids.

The game couldn't be simpler. In four empty boxes, you have to assemble 4 different parts that will make a face.

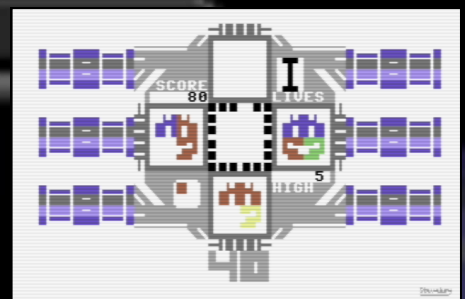
You can see the colour of the next face part arriving just as you would see the next block in such games like Klax and Tetris.

A timer counts down in the middle of the screen, if you don't get your face part into one of the four boxes by using the up, down, right, left controls on your joystick / game pad before time runs out you will lose a life. A life is also lost if you place the same face part in a box where it already exists. When the four different face parts are assembled to make a face in any of the four boxes, you are awarded points based on the colour and time it took (I think, I need clarification on that) to make that face. I got a couple of big scores, 500 points was the highest I achieved for a fully assembled face and that was for an all blue coloured face.

Outstanding super duper graphics or tunes don't make Assembloids a great game. It is brilliant because Steveboy has coded it that the game is so easy to pick up and play. The instructions are readable in game, which is so handy. Game settings allows you to choose your lives or increase or decrease the game speed. The options screen allows you to change the in game colours of the faces, table, backgrounds and pipes. All of this gives the game much



You can change the look of the playing screens..... Aarghhhhh the dreaded skull, time has run out, you lose a life.



Making faces everywhere, but not in the top box? How could I forget there was a top box I could use and after reading the instructions too!

staying power and lastability.

Playability of the game couldn't be more addictive. Why is it so often the simplistic games often turn out to be the most fun? I would never have thought this simple Basic coded puzzler of assembling face parts would be such a fun game to play.

VERDICT

PROS

- Loads of options.
- Simplistic but fun.
- Addictive.

CONS

- Not the greatest GFX or tunes but who cares?

85%

- **TEAM:** Singular
- **INFO:** Free to download from <http://csdb.dk/release/?id=159150>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Cameron Door

KOBO64



Based on the Namco's arcade game from 1981 called Bosconian, Kobo64 was first released by Kajtár Zsolt, for the 2013, RGCD 16k Cartridge Development Competition.

Kobo64 gets another update this time by Singular. What's different, well not a whole lot, some minor modifications.

As overhead shoot 'em ups go Kobo64 is a cracker of a game, so understandably it gets much attention.

Sure it's all been done before, the space thing, fly your space craft around space blowing up space stations without getting blown up yourself. What makes Kobo64 a much loved game is that the gameplay has that arcade feel, smooth controls, fast, action packed, a sense of urgency to complete your missions even though there is no official timer (ok fuel running out is a technical timer). It's all pretty cool shoot 'em up



Follow the map on the right, shoot away at the space stations.

gaming, this version by Singular adds a brilliant bit of music, while completely repetitive and bordering on annoying it adds much to that sense of urgency and fast paced arcade action.

With bullets flying everywhere from your spacecraft as well as from your enemy, it's not quite bullet hell on screen, but it's not far from it either. You really don't have much time to think of any negatives, as your eyes are glued to the screen blasting away, dodging the enemy fire and smiling every time you blow up a space station without losing any of your 5 spacecraft. Ok, ok there's one negative, as you progress from level 6 onwards when the missiles are fired at you that's when the difficulty is ramped up and 5 spacecraft just aren't enough.



Thought I'd fly by without shooting, but they keep firing at you anyway.

VERDICT

PROS

- Fast action packed.
- Smooth 360 degree controls.
- Brilliant Tune.

CONS

- Difficulty is ramped up from level 6 onwards.

90%

UPDATED / CHANGES SINCE THE LAST RELEASE

- ★ Changed some pixels on the logo
- ★ The ugly multicolour charset was redrawn
- ★ Added GRG's nice tune for music
- ★ Some enemies can wrap on screen edges now
- ★ Performance improvements (e.g. map generation)
- ★ Improved re-spawn location handling
- ★ Other minor things no-one will notice (starfield, explosions, sfx, etc.)



- **TEAM:** Retream
- **INFO:** US\$ 1.99 from <https://retream.itch.io/quod-init-exit-iim>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Cameron Door

QUOD INIT EXIT

Gnarly dude, a game where you can eat anything on the screen and never puke, that's so radical man, I bet those vegan hipsters will be in an uproar when they play this game of QUOD INIT EXIT, translated as what goes in comes out.

You play as Zampo, a fat little pink pig that's ever so hungry, so hungry he will eat anything flashed before his eyes. On the one playing screen with about 5 platforms arranged randomly, Zampo is able to chase after and collect food and other items by running along the platforms, jumping onto upper platforms, descending to lower platforms through gaps and dashing along the platforms momentarily thanks to the turbo fart feature.

While small in stature, Zampo has a stomach the size of a 440 pound monster. In real life, Zampo really needs to go on a diet, and drink a few fat loss shakes to lose some weight. The reality of this game though is that Zampo needs to eat and drink constantly to avoid starvation, if he starves its game over. Eating and drinking constantly will see Zampo's satisfaction levels rise, which is indicated by the belly satisfaction meter.

When the belly satisfaction meter is maxed out, a toilet zips across on a platform other than the one Zampo is on, Zampo has to catch it before it disappears in order to complete the level. If the toilet is missed, the game is over and Zampo turns into a brown turd – this is so annoying!



Turbo Fart in action.

As all the different food, drinks, and other items zip across horizontally on the platforms, each one produces a different effect on Zampo, some good, some not so good:

* Food / Drink item: increases the belly satisfaction meter by 1 snout.

* Poison Vial: Decreases the belly satisfaction meter by 1 snout, but also awards the turbo fart.

* Pill: Provides protection against the bad effects of the next poison vial that will be caught.

* Clock: Halts the items, the belly satisfaction meter, and score countdown for 5 seconds.

* Toilet Roll: Allows Zampo catch the last food/drink item needed to max out the belly satisfaction meter.

I found the game colourful and entertaining. The graphics and animations are pretty cool for such a simplistic fixed screen platformer, the music is very enjoyable too, adding to the game's appeal. There are 24 levels to complete, divided by 6 day phases - dawn, morning, noon, afternoon, sunset and night. However I found the game's lastability lacking, getting to see more than the first two levels was where the game fell down in a big way for me.

The HUD also proved to be a big disappointment, it is so small and placed at the bottom, it really needs to be made larger with positioning at top of screen so you can view it better and keep a keen eye on Zampo's eating satisfaction meter.

Overall I was quite enjoying the game but the other major flaw it has is that it's all over quite suddenly and you're left wondering there should be more than one life. I was constantly repeating the first level not making much progress, getting bored quite quickly, you want to

enjoy the game through progression and that seemed limited.

In addition I thought it was a good, fast action packed game with smooth gameplay. Food and other items are easy enough to collect, however Zampo's ability to get to the toilet at the end of each level, is incredibly hard, even a turbo fart won't help you as the toilet is half way across the screen before you know it's there.



Catch the toilet and it's successfully onto the next level.

VERDICT

PROS

- Fast action packed.
- Smooth animation and gameplay.

CONS

- Difficulty set rather high.
- Only one life.
- The toilet almost impossible to catch at end of each level.
- HUD needs improving.

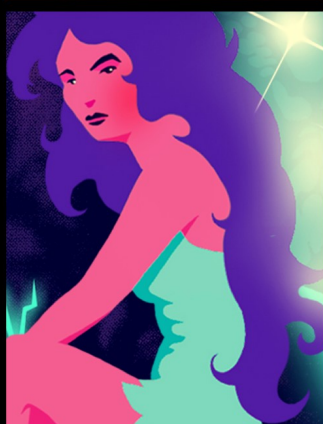
57%



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- **TEAM:** The New Dimension (TND)
- **INFO:** Free download from <http://csdb.dk/release/?id=153014>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Cameron Door

SUPER ACE 1942



I was really looking forward to playing Super Ace 1942. I am a massive fan of 1942 and the aerial shoot 'em up gaming style genre in general.

Come on guys, seriously? You've butchered a classic. SEUCK (Shoot 'em Up Construction Kit) has its limitations, but I feel the result of Super Ace 1942 is awful, especially in comparison to other great SEUCK games from The New Dimension (TND).

You can hardly see the bullets for one. The music is ok but does nothing to add

atmosphere or anything else worthwhile to the game because you can't hear your shots being fired.

Movement around the screen is not great, especially when flying sideways and there are no power ups to collect which is a real disappointment. I had my Cadbury's on the table, thinking I am going to be enjoying chocolates playing an awesome shoot 'em up but the taste of my Cadburys was soured by the poor gaming experience.

Graphics, colours, background screens and sprites look so much worse than the original 1942, C64 game by Elite Software and that was released in 1986! The only saving graces were the intro loaders weren't too bad, but what's the point of that? Finally, where's the plane landing on the aircraft carrier updating you shooting skills?

I realise it's some harsh comments, sure this game was never meant to be 1942 but even as a type of tribute game it's



Super Ace screenshot not super by any stretch of the imagination.

quite poor. I was very much looking forward to playing super Ace 1942 hoping that it was going to be a cool game. It's not a good feeling playing it though, Super Ace its not, more like Amateur Ace which is very disappointing as Errazking and the guys involved in making this game have and are producing much better games than this one.

VERDICT

PROS

- None!
- OK the intro loaders weren't bad

CONS

- Where do I start?

27%



The original C64 version of 1942 by Elite (1986).

This October, the pumpkins are coming for you...

Petunia Pickle's Pumpkin Peril

A Commodore 64 game by Ant Stiller



disk & tape

pond

pondsoft.uk



- TEAM: The New Dimension (TND)
- INFO: Free to download from <http://csdb.dk/release/?id=155863>
- REVIEWED BY: Cameron Door

ZAP ZONE



In the 1996 movie, Twister, there is a scene with the character by the name of Dusty (played by Philip Seymour Hoffman), where he says "It's the suck zone. The point at which the twister sucks you up".

It only took about 20 minutes of gameplay before I knew Zap Zone had me in stuck in the "suck zone". Games like Zap Zone have been done a gazillion times before. the truth is some

work, some don't, regardless if they are essentially the same game. Addictive gameplay is the key, Zap Zone has it in spades, although I think three lives is not enough as the game could be over in a blink of an eye. An essential ingredient to success and enjoyable gameplay of this sci fi shoot 'em up for me is the inclusion of power ups, or some form of it. Like in Galaga (Namco, 1981) the power up is having one of your fighters captured then successfully





releasing it so you play with two fighters providing more fire power. I wondered did Zap Zone need such inclusion? No without one the gameplay is incredibly enjoyable, mainly because the aliens don't actually fire back at you. Another essential element for a game like this is having a decent amount of speed in the gameplay, Zap Zone has got it just about right. Throughout the eight different waves of alien enemy to shoot down the speed was consistent, no major problems or slowness experienced here. When you guide your spaceship through all the alien hordes they start to repeat themselves. You should be able to get that far as it's not really a difficult game.

As you progress through each wave of aliens, they attack you with much more speed and vigor, steadily getting faster

and faster where it becomes rather chaotic on screen, yet it's still hugely challenging and fun. After completing about three full waves of enemies, the aliens slow back down to the original speed. Controls and movement of your character, or in this case your spaceship, can make or break any game.

Shooting and moving your spaceship about the screen I found slightly sluggish which is in direct contrast to the games overall consistent speed, perhaps that could be the emulator I am using? It just felt unresponsive at times. On the positive, your spacecraft can be moved around the whole screen to either avoid the aliens or take up a more aggressive strategy as they begin their attack run towards you.

Musically it's a standout. That crazy tune is brilliant, talk about enhancing a game and making it more addictive than it probably should be. A single screen background of space is almost genius, it looks so cool. The simplistic looking graphics and sprites for everything, your spaceship, the different aliens you are shooting at, the missiles being fired out of your spacecraft - it all just works and plays wonderfully.

Hats off to Richard Bayliss for writing the game in 2016 as a tutorial on programming games for the Scene World Disk Mag. If beginner developers out there are learning to code from games like this I can't wait to see what the future holds, what a cracker!

VERDICT

PROS

- Addictive.
- Oh the music, wow.
- Fast action packed.
- Can leave finger on fire button and fire without getting tired.
- Move spaceship anywhere on the screen.

CONS

- Controls and movement a little sluggish.
- I couldn't take a picture while shooting bahahahahah.

92%



- **TEAM:** Psytronik Software. Martin Piper, Richard of Blazon, People of Liberty, Psytronik Software, Scene World Magazine, TND and Alf Yngve.
- **INFO:** Free, download from <http://csdb.dk/release/?id=152965>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Cameron Door

ZAP FIGHT 2

ZAPPED INTO OBLIVION



The alien empire of the planet XTro has decided to launch an attack on planet Earth, why, I am not sure. Can't alien planets and Earth ever get along in more civilized ways? In gaming scenarios that seems impossible. As always, Earth decides it must have a champion, a fighter pilot that shows no fear in order to end the reign of destruction and chaos brought about by such evil aliens.

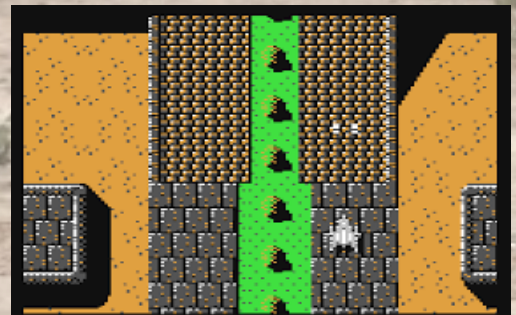
Created with SEUCK with enhancements from SEUCK Redux,

Zap Fight 2 is the sequel to Zap Fight which appeared on Psytronik Software's, C64 game compilation, 'Shoot 'Em Up Destruction Set 3', from 2014. Both games are based on Taito's, 1986 arcade games, Slap Fight, which was converted and commercially released on the C64 in 1987 by Ocean / Imagine software.

With basically the same overhead futuristic shooter gameplay, Zap Fight 2 includes new features such as a new front end, new background screens, new ship, trance music and power ups.

Challenging, that's the best way to describe Zap Fight 2. Five lives seems like it's just not enough. At the beginning of the game your space ship only fires a single missile, being precise is paramount, perhaps precision required is too exact and a little slow as it often leads to an early 'Game Over'.

Your little spacecraft might have the



Original Slap Fight C64 screenshot comparison.

ability to bring down the evil aliens, but it just doesn't seem to have the support as your space craft is surrounded by evil alien hordes with their firepower bombarding you from all directions, its like you never get a chance to catch your breath and devise a strategy to combat them.

Power ups shown in the form of a gold star are very handy when you get them, as the shooting aspect of the game becomes much more exciting. Firing off multiple missiles instead of the single one, gives you that opportunity to take down more aliens much quicker, however with so much enemy coming at you from all angles on the screen, grabbing the power ups is often fraught with great danger.

Sometimes I wonder if the aliens have joined forces with some bad humans, because the greyish tanks shooting at you just don't seem like they were manufactured on an alien military production line. If you are one to get frustrated quickly you will probably end up hating the game.

The gameplay has some minor irritations as mentioned above. Playability, I just felt the difficulty was set just a little too high. Much practice with your shooting is required as well as



Taking flight at the start of Zap Fight 2



Surrounded by four enemies I am as good as dead!

memorizing where the enemy spawn from but that comes undone very quickly if you are not precise with your shooting. This well known C64 development team

has put together another good game, with a terrific soundtrack, some great looking GFX and sprites. It's better than the first Zap Fight but I don't know

something felt like it was missing with the gameplay and staying power, elements that would have made the game go from good to excellent.



Zap Fight 1 screenshot comparison.

VERDICT

PROS

- Better than the first Zap Fight.
- Good gfx and sounds.
- Power ups very handy.

CONS

- Frustrating difficulty level.
- Lacks staying power.
- 5 lives not enough.
- Unfair fight so much enemy surrounding you.

78%

- **TEAM:** The New Dimension (TND)
- **INFO:** Free, download from <http://www.lemon64.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=65471>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Cameron Door

VORTEX CRYSTALS



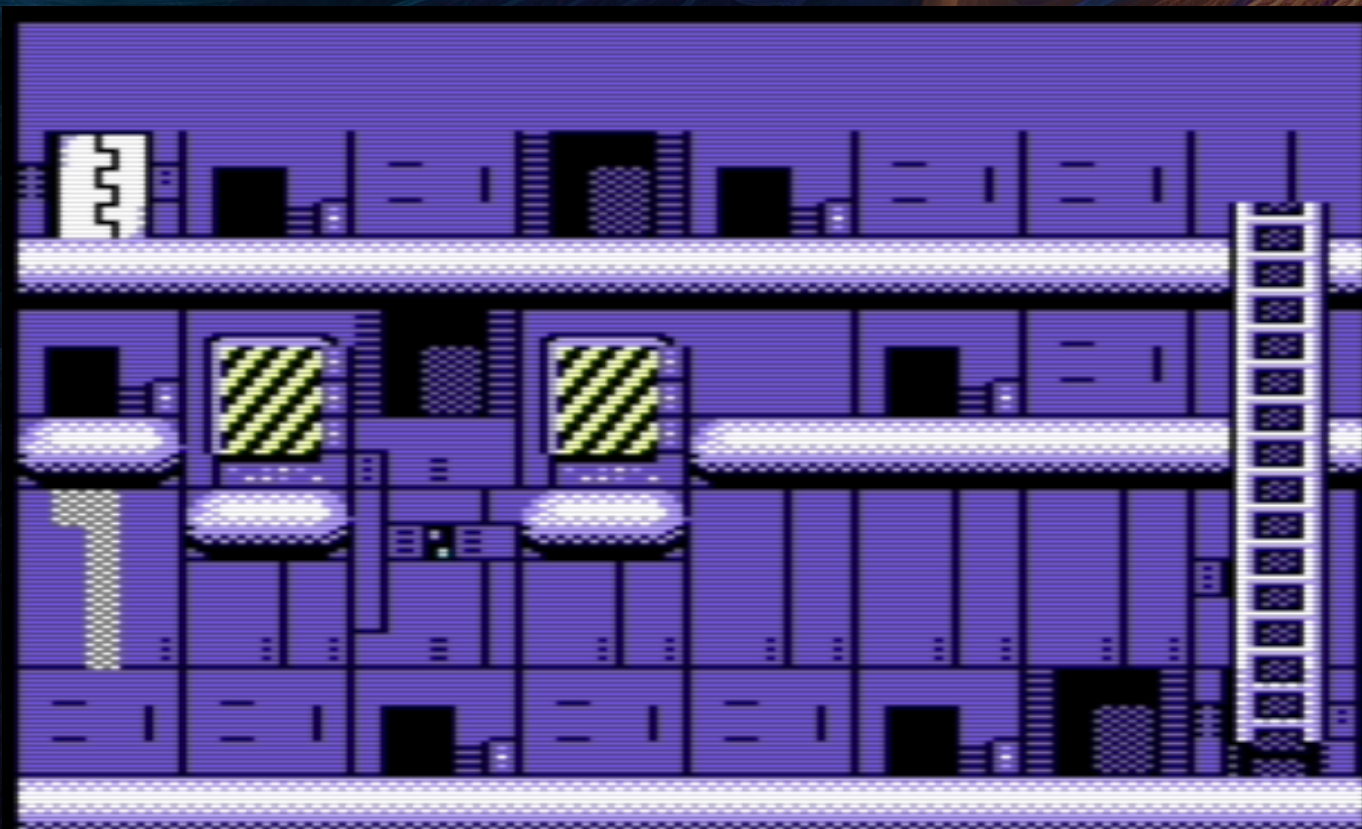
Ahhhhhh finally some time off my back breaking manual labour job,

this is going great, I can sleep in for the next 3 weeks. Ring Ring, Ring Ring. What's this phone call interrupting my happy mood? A phone call from the Prime Minister? Bleh. I'm going back to bed. Ring Ring, Ring Ring. The Prime Minister again? I better answer it. "Help us! Get down to the Vortex Complex, NOW! Aaargh! Aliens! Green Slime! Arrrrgh!" Sounds serious, I better check it out.

Hmmmm. High security building, looks fine from the outside to me, I wonder

what's going on inside? Whoosh! BOOM! Wow what an explosion – there's my answer, we are being invaded by aliens. Goodbye to my lazy holidays then.

A scientist at the Vortex complex has been bitten by a small slimy green alien, in turn becoming a much larger version of it. What's even worse, this alien has taken up 'HQ' in the main control room of the building, just when I was relaxing too, so typical that all hell has broken loose at the same time, of all the billions of people in the world to



SCORE: 000870 LIVES: 05 LEVEL: 01
WELL DONE! YOU HAVE COMPLETED THIS LEVEL
Ammo: 00 0: 19:29

call, the Prime Minister phones me to save the day, why didn't she just call the military or MacGyver?

Inside the 16 level alien infested building you must collect energy crystals on each level. All sorts of dangers are found in your path to collecting the crystals. Level one is easy, but it gets more challenging from there. Alien's are whizzing around doing their best to stop your efforts. If you keep your 5 lives in tact while collecting all the crystals scattered around each level, you can progress to the next via an exit door opening up, but be careful an alien somehow likes to pop up just as you make your way to the exit door causing you to lose a life. Maybe this is a bug? It sure felt like one, or is it intentional?

You think that's it? You think you can do this blindfolded? You think you can take out this huge green alien and eat him for breakfast? Well you are completely wrong. You've got a 20 minute window to complete all the levels or security systems will trigger a toxic gas, killing

you instantly.

Intense. That's one word to describe this terrific platform shoot 'em up. Fast paced, action packed, full of aliens, lots of shooting, puzzles to work out, it is great shooting fun.

Everything is cool graphically, great use of colours, the aliens look cool, your fire power looks awesome either zooming across the room or with the close up explosions. Music I thought was fab, bringing it all together very nicely. Ammo top ups, make your day too, more shooting what could be better.

The controls are annoying at times but that's probably more me being too overzealous wanting to clear the levels so quickly, just take your time, not too much though and it should be fine. That conveyor on level 2 was tricky as, I just couldn't seem to make the distance with the jump no matter how much run up I



gave myself. I got there in the end but I lost a heap of lives doing so.

There's a few faults with the gameplay and playability. It's got lasting appeal, instant grab factor and a whole lot of shooting which is awesome but sometimes you are frustrated as collision detection may be misfiring - you could be standing right next to an alien and you can't kill it.

Originally, Vortex Crystals was released at the 16KB Game Cartridge Dev Compo_2015, run by RGCD. This final version comes with extras such as full documentation and is available on tape or disk. The game has new features consisting of a new front end, new music, high score table with save function on the disk version, new sound effects as well as a hidden in game cheat mode.

Barring the flaws, overall, I found the game to be very enjoyable, one that I could be glued to until the end, 'TND' team have put together a decent shoot 'em up platformer, some minor adjustments would have made the game so much better.



VERDICT

PROS

- Instant grab factor.
- 16 levels of platform shooting aliens and working out puzzles.
- Cool music and graphics.

CONS

- Collision detection a bit iffy at times.
- Why does an alien appear just as you are about to exit so you lose a life?

76%

- **TEAM:** Mr NOP, The New Dimension (TND)
- **INFO:** Free to download at <http://csdb.dk/release/?id=156730>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Cameron Door

SPYDERS



Not looking like a space invaders clone.

Reading the info screens during loading, Spyders is a clone on the classic Space Invaders game (Taito 1978), with influences from Gorf (Midway, 1981) and Galaga (Namco, 1981).

Alien enemy ships have been replaced with multicoloured spiders but the same gameplay principal of Space Invaders applies - shoot down the rows of spiders before they land on Earth and destroy you.

When you shoot at the enemy Spyders above, you can't move your spaceship, frustrating, for sure but it adds to the difficulty level of the game.

The most notable difference between the two games is the use of the music. Instead of hearing that iconic 'pew' noise from Space Invaders as you shoot at your enemy, it appears the space invaders sounds have been made part of the soundtrack. Even though the music is cool without a doubt, how it has been used I found



Yup now it does look like a Space Invaders clone



Level 3. No shields or defence bunkers can only mean one thing - a cool looking explosion of your space ship.

overpowers the game too much for my liking. It's different but perhaps the shooting sounds should be heard?

The gameplay of Spyders is a carbon copy of Space Invaders. The addition of including a shield feature above your ship is innovative giving the game a unique aspect but it doesn't work on every level. The first two levels have the bunkers and spaceship shield, after that the bunkers disappear and you can't deploy the spaceship shield which means your ship is going to explode in a rather cool but horrifying fashion.

I didn't see a UFO like object flying at the top of the screen offering you the chance to shoot it down for bonus points, I always liked that about Space Invaders. Regardless of the colour, each Spyder is worth 10 points. I think this could have been modified. A nice touch is the inclusion at the end of each level of a shooting accuracy and hits made screen.

The coder, Mr. NOP, has stated on the opening loading screens that the Space Invaders theme is just part one and there are plans for more parts to the

Spyders project, so that will be interesting to see where it is taken in the future. Some may find the Space Invaders game style as tired, boring and done to death but I feel Spyders is a good homebrew Space Invaders clone.

VERDICT

PROS

- Innovative features.
- Thumping soundtrack.
- Nice GFX, cool death explosion.

CONS

- Overpowering music.
- No bonus UFO.
- Can't move after firing.
- May bore quickly.

70%

- **CODING:** Dr. TerrorZ (Tero Heikkinen)
- **INFO:** Free to download from <http://csdb.dk/release/?id=149628&show=review#review>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Merman

FORT DJANGO

With the recent wave of 'PETSCII*' graphics and competitions, there was one thing missing – a game based around the graphic format. Along came Dr. Tero (a real-life doctor, having earned his degree in 2013) with this Western themed game.

For those unfamiliar with the term PETSCII, it refers to the built-in characters and graphic symbols the Commodore 64 is capable of displaying. There has been a real renaissance in this art, with new editors to create it and artists trying to create the best screens they can using a combination of colour and symbol. For an early attempt at game programming, this is a good start by developer Dr. TerrorZ (Tero Heikkinen).

In the improved version of Fort Django 1.1, the title screen options can be selected by moving the joystick. Left and right selects between the in game music and sound FX (with sound FX recommended for NTSC users). Up and down selects between map 1 and map 2. Map 1 was in the original release, map 2 is new for this version and includes new graphic designs.

Pressing your fire button starts the game. The player's character, a huge expanded cowboy sprite, finds himself

near Fort Django (depending on the map – map 1 starts inside the fort, map 2 starts outside). Each screen contains platforms and ladders, with exits at the screen edges or up and down ladders. In many screens you will find enemies in the form of bad guys wearing red cloaks and hoods. These enemies can crouch to avoid your bullets and will shoot back. One shot will kill them, while your character can take three hits before dying.

The aim of the game is to escape from the fort with as much money as possible. The player earns a bounty for each enemy killed, with big money bags to pick up holding even more cash. At the end of the game the player's score is the money they have earned or found.

For an early attempt at game programming, this is a good start. The control of the main character is very fluid and the enemies display a little intelligence. The distinctive graphic style, with bricks and ladders, works well in the context of the game and also means there is room in memory for a large map to explore. The second map is better than the first with its distinctive stone designs. Although it is a simple effect, the way the screen turns red upon the player's death works. The music is quite repetitive but is ok. Sound effects are

equally basic. On a side note many in the C64 community have suggested that a more Western style / Ennio Morricone score would have suited the game. FORT DJANGO V1.1 was never going to compete with a full-price game for depth and polish, but it's an enjoyable blast.



Meeting the first enemy on map 1.

VERDICT

PROS

- Simple to understand.
- Bold and big sprites.
- Large maps to explore.

CONS

- PETSCII backgrounds look nice but are very simple.
- Becomes very repetitive without drawing a map.
- Needed more polish on the sound front.

71%



Hit by a bullet, our hero turns red briefly.



Picking up a money bag in map 2.



- **TEAM:** Bauknecht
- **INFO:** "Name Your Price" download option, plus collector's, premium plus and budget disk editions available <https://psytronik.it.ch.io/slipstream>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Cameron Door

SLIPSTREAM

INTERVIEW ON PAGE
258



Stardate 14634 is the present day. Inhabitants of the Omikron system have a shielding system to protect their home planets from regular asteroid showers. However an energy burst detected near the shielding station has malfunctioned robots who have been tasked with overseeing the defence system. As a result robots now think that whole planets in nearby star systems are asteroids and have gone on the attack.

The futuristic 'SLIPSTREAM' starship is the only way of destroying the robots. Released at BCC #11 party, Slipstream won 1st place for categories 'Mixed Other Systems' for a C16 version and 'Mixed category' on a C64.

I gotta talk to the guys, Mad of Bauknecht, Dalezy of Triad and Nero of Bauknecht, who are behind Slipstream. They must be some pretty damn cool dudes, I can't contain myself, what an incredible homebrew game Slipstream is... (you did! The interview is on page 258 - Ed).

Two things I must state before I go any further. 1. That music is like wow, I mean WOW! Feels like I'm in a nightclub, where everything's a blur because I am having such a good time. Talk about being in the "suck zone", that music had me sucked in before I even knew what hit me.

How awesome is the game presentation and graphics. Those 3D polygon graphics are probably some of the most basic computer art you will see, however the guys in the Bauknecht team have made it look so fantastically brilliant. I have been playing the game for some time and I realize its basic in appearance, though that flying in outer space visualization is just gob smacking awesomeness for my eyes, that's some freaky cool coding.

Already you know the game is visually gorgeous and sounds are incredible, but what about the playability?

At first, I found it confusing, it took me a while to work out the method of control. I was like, I got this, it's a ship with a targeting device, the same as what you are given in games like Afterburner (Sega arcade machine, 1987). I thought Slipstream was going to be a gun blazing, pressing the joystick button madly - shooting everything and blasting enemy fighters to pieces, type of game. To my surprise you are not actually doing any shooting. That's right, no shooting, just guiding your targeting

square using it to 'Lock On' enemy fighters to destroy them.

In Afterburner, its simplicity of guiding the aircraft upwards would see your target box move upwards 'locking on' to approaching enemy flying at a higher altitude, move your aircraft downwards and the targeting box would move downwards 'locking onto' enemies at a lower altitude. It was one of the games many features that made it a huge success.

Slipstream's control method is a little different, in that with a press of the fire button you can separate your ship from the targeting box, so this sort of complicates things, but you should be able to get the hang of it, eventually. Without pressing the fire button, I could have been the esteemed Captain Picard of Star Trek, Next Generation, flying all over space, locking on to approaching bogey's (enemy craft) taking them down with ease, but you can't really do that, well you can if you want, but you probably won't last very long. When I changed the mode that's when things started to get a little bent out of shape for me, with the ship in one part of the screen and the targeting box in another, ok, ok, I am an old timer and a little slower at getting to grips with playing games these days. Once I had got to grips with it, the gaming experience was much more entertaining.

If you are a one player like me and want to make things really complicated, you can play the game controlling two joysticks, but that's daft as I don't have two joysticks. As mentioned above, using one joystick was confusing enough for me, initially. The point of this control method is a multiplayer mode. With two joysticks one player can control the ship and your friend or family



Trying to get a lock on!



That's better, multiple lock on's for mass destruction.



Simplistic looking space world but ever so impressive.

member being player two, can control the targeting crosshair device. I give it 10 out of 10 for innovation, but I am not exactly sold on the idea that it actually makes the gameplay any better, maybe I should get a friend and a second joystick to find out.

The enemy spacecraft attack you either from in front or behind your spaceship, they also have different shapes and colours. Their flying patterns follow three types of wave formations - non shooting formation, forward shooting formation and ship targeting formation. I found the variety of enemy wave patterns worked well, keeping you on your toes, but the only way you can avoid being shot is by getting out of the way, without the aspect of shooting weapons at your enemies, some may find this makes for unexciting gameplay, but I am glad to say this is not so. Obtaining shields provides much needed protection, prolonging your journey enabling you to complete each mission.

Playing Slipstream is just fantastic, as a stand alone game it's great but the Bauknecht team have gone above and beyond packing it with so many features that would put many a 1980's / 1990's commercially released game to shame. There are boss battles, inclusion of digitized speech, it works with the Chamelon64 turbo and there is also an in game 'Time Bending' technique.

The music will suck you in, the playability will keep you hooked, it's the best shooting style game without actually pressing the fire button for shooting weapons in a space shoot 'em up game I've ever played on the C64!

VERDICT

PROS

- Music is unbelievable, simply awesome tunes.
- Oozes smooth playability and gameplay.
- Amazingly 3D polygon GFX.
- Very high quality packaged and presented game.
- Packed with features.

CONS

- Controls could be a bit tricky to work out.

95%

- **TEAM:** Released by Equinoxe, CKultur, Richard of Blazon, People of Liberty, Psytronik Software, Scene World Magazine, The New Dimension
- **INFO:** Free from <https://abusimbelprofanationc64.wordpress.com/descargas/>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Victor Simpson

ABU SIMBEL PROFANATION

DISCOVER THE SECRET OF ABU SIMBEL AND
FREE JOHNNY JONES FROM THE SPELL.
AND REMEMBER THE TWO LEGENDS WHICH
OLDEN BOOKS DID TELL...
"...WAIT CALCULATE AND THINK
BEFORE YOU ACT..."
"...THE DIAMOND WILL SHOW THE WAY..."

Profanation

Your mission should you choose to accept it!

A classic Spanish platformer originally released back in 1985 by Victor Ruiz on the ZX Spectrum, also released on other 8-Bit systems, MSX and Amstrad CPC through Dinamic Software, which has now been ported for your nostalgic pleasure onto the C64 by Equinoxe.

You are Johnny Jones, you look nothing like a human form, that's because an evil spell has been cast upon you. Your mission is to discover the secret of Abu Simbel, an Egyptian Temple erected some 3000 years ago. Johnny is trapped inside it, 45 chambers must be explored if Johnny is ever to be free again. Once he escapes he will be rid of the magic spell that's has been cast

upon him by evil Egyptian Pharaoh, Ramses the second.

Even though it is a new game on the C64, it feels as though it plays just like the Spectrum version from 1985, just a bit faster. It retains the same incredibly high level of difficulty, in my opinion this is arguably one of the hardest 8-Bit games I have played in recent times, it asks for nothing but precision. You will need perfect timing and planning to traverse through each screen, otherwise you will find one missed pixel will lead to your demise.

10 lives seems like fair play, but they dwindle away very quickly. Crash, August 1985, review of the Spectrum

game stated that "if another zero was added to your 10 lives, then it would feel about right". That's exactly how I feel about the C64 version.

The graphics are what you would expect for a game of this time period, but one would have liked to have seen some sort of update with the game being released in 2017. Having said that the graphics are probably the game's only saving grace, as gameplay, playability and the annoying "whoop", "whoop", sound effects when you jump let it down.

Controlling Johnny Jones is simple enough, being able to move on the diagonal brings much joy, I will mention it took me a few lives to figure out you can "hug the ceiling" when your jump exceeds the jump space available - a mechanic needed in the later screens. That's some sort of positive, for the era this type of coding would have been unique.

All the usual platformer functions are there - jump, evade enemies, collect keys to open doors and collect crystals / jewels. However you are left wondering, is it really an Egyptian temple you find yourself in? The chambers are predominantly plain looking, barring a few sprites of some ancient Egyptian artefacts or of the Pharaoh. The enemy you come up against include spiders, falling drops of water (which are deadly go figure), flying fish and tiny mummies. These do nothing to portray you playing in a historic Egyptian setting in my opinion.

The colour selection, like the spectrum version should be more like the theme, when you think of Pharaohs of Egypt and of temples you are thinking colours



Watch out for the drip . . .

of gold mixed with shades of blue. Instead you get very drab green and whites, giving the impression you are in

the snow! You are either going to love it or hate it. As a lover of the platformer game style in general, I have tried to be

as fair as I can with this review, however Abu Simbel Profanation doesn't give you good feelings, rather feelings of loud profanations and curse words being said out aloud as frustrations set in from the beginning of play.



It's a trap but which one is it?

VERDICT

PROS

- Controls are ok, at least it not slow.
- Some fair graphics.

CONS

- Incredibly difficult.
- 10 lives not enough.
- Poor colour scheme.
- Tunes not great.

63%

- **TEAM:** Juan J Martinez (CODING), Graphics by Juan J. Martinez & Vanja Utne of Pond, Privy Software.
- **INFO:** Available for €33 as a physical cartridge release from poly.play (<https://www.polyplay.xyz/Rescuing-Orc-Collectors-Edition-Cartridge>)
- **REVIEWED BY:** Victor Simpson and Cameron Door.

RESCUING ORC



Take one look at Juan J. Martinez's website <https://www.usebox.net/jjm/> and you'll find a person with a great deal of computing experience and skills. For the purposes of this publication though, you'll also find that Juan J. Martinez, over recent years, has been a very active, 8-Bit, homebrew gaming developer.

Since 2014, Juan has released six games on the Spectrum (Black Star, Castaway, Escape from Colony 8, Micro INC, The Legend of Traxtor (ZX) and The Return of Traxtor) and four games on the Amstrad CPC (The Return of Traxtor, Space Pest Control, Golden Tail and Magica).

In 2017, Juan decided to develop his first C64 game, a 'run n jump', 'hack n



slash', platformer, calling it, Rescuing Orc. As the title suggests, this is definitely not your typical 'save the damsel in distress' type of platform game. Playing as a tiny green Elf, the premise of the game is to locate Elf's best friend, Orc, who has for some unknown reason to you has gone missing. It is up to Elf (you) to find out why.

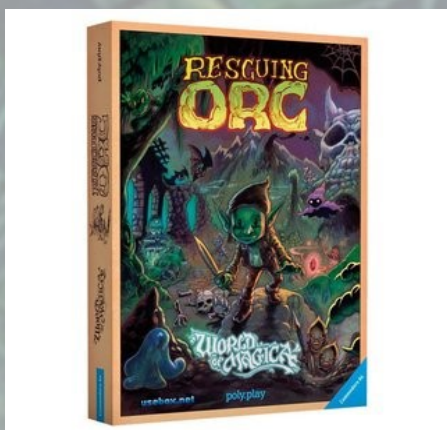
At the start of the game, Elf is inside a very lush bit of woods, where you must help him explore all the screens and uncover clues as to where his friend Orc is. These clues come in in the form of onscreen messages when you press the fire button while standing over what looks like a small white message stick or is it some form of computer terminal, I wouldn't think so being out in the woods, but with the wonders of mobile technology these days, you just never know?

Once you have collected the necessary items such as keys to unlock certain doors, allowing you access to other

screens and eventually to the last screen of that area, you are given another onscreen message, informing you of what to do next, "Orc has gone to the Orcale, the Oracle's lair is a dangerous place, beyond the rocky mountains on the East".

To the east Elf travels, for pretty much more of the same, but with a different looking environment, well it hasn't really changed much to be honest, but it's different. More platform jumping about, collecting keys, finding the odd red heart to give you extra lives and so on, till you reach the last screen of that area and you are given more clues and directions of where to go next.

There are 5 different areas to uncover - (The Woods, The Black Forest, The Rocky Mountain, The Human Fortress and The Bluestone Keep. Each one must be completed before you can travel to the next area. You have 4 lives to start the game with, but when you collect a red heart your lives may be increased by more than one, which



Boxed version.



Jumping among the trees.



Avoiding the double bat attack.

comes in very handy, as I feel there are some weaknesses in the game. causing you to lose your lives very quickly.

Those weaknesses can be explained in two parts - 1: The jumping and 2: Your swordplay. Jumping forth with no fear to find Orc, you learn very quickly that if you are ever going to get anywhere in the game, to be successful you'll need to place Elf at the very edge, almost off the cliff of a platform, before he makes his jumps. Jumping, makes up about 50% of the gameplay, so it's critical to your success of finding Orc. Some may

disagree with us - but at times we found jumping very unforgiving. This in itself makes this seemingly simple game far more difficult that it otherwise would be. The frustrations grow when forced to blind jump from one screen to another, if you miss, you are sent backtracking several screens with respawning enemies. Having said that, you want a platformer to offer you a decent challenge, maybe not so much of a frustrating one though.

In combat, you are armed with your trusty sword (we thought it was rather small and could have looked much better to be honest) to help you avoid all the deadly foes found in what is known as the "dangerous World of Magica" (which is the name of one of Juan's Amstrad CPC games we mentioned above).

The issue we have with the combat, is that you have to be really close to your enemies, maybe it's just us and that we like to have some space between our Elf and the slimes or any other of the enemies for that matter. We just felt the art of combat was way too close for comfort. Having said that, Rescuing Orc is not the type of game where you just run and jump about at top speed, not taking care of what you are doing. If you do go all in brash like, not thinking about what happens, then there will be consequences. You must tread warily in most of the screens, thinking about how you engage with your 12 unique

enemies, as each has its own distinctive behaviour and personality. To us that's what makes a good platformer, one that provides you with a challenge, making you think of strategy and keeping your eyes open for the unexpected like those black bats you can hardly see, then you have to work out where to be positioned to attack them three times before they are killed.

The element of exploration is where platformer Rescuing Orc excels for both of us. Along with collecting keys, there are levers to press to unlock passageways and secret rooms totally hidden from your view where treasures of gold are found. Collecting the keys can seem impossible when you first notice where they are located, however once you explore more you will work out how to get through some screens by using the unlockables as well as employing the strategy of sometimes going backwards to go forwards making the keys easily obtainable.

All said, yeah there are flaws, frustrating ones at that, yet there are many good points. Playability and gaming experience though while not at 'OMG!' standards, we still feel Rescuing Orc is an amazing release by Juan J. Matrinez. It may not be better than some of his other 8-Bit creations, but as a casual platformer with vibrant graphics and amazing tunes it's a damn fine game. The game also benefits without the pressures of time limits you may normally face with other games in the same genre. We both thoroughly enjoyed playing the game and would imagine you would too, when you step into Elf's shoes. At the end of the game, Juan informs the player that there will be a sequel called The Goblin King, it will be interesting to see what direction he takes with the next game in the Rescuing Orc series?

VERDICT

PROS

- Great Tunes.
- Simple gameplay.
- No game timer.
- Gorgeous, colourful graphics.
- Variety of unique enemies.

CONS

- Enemies respawn when you leave a screen.
- Jumping timing is frustrating as hell.

88%



- **TEAM:** Published by Pondsoft. Grapham Axten (CODE, GFX and SFX), Vanja Atne (Cover Artwork)
- **INFO:** 2016 version is free to download from <http://pondsoft.uk/bear.html>. Tape version £10, disk version £15
- **REVIEWED BY:** Barry Flowers

THE BEAR ESSENTIALS



Poor bear and his family. Winter is coming and they have no food in the larder to see them through until spring. Mama Bear won't allow poor Papa Bear home until he provides enough food for his family, 326 apples to be precise if you download the 2016 free version, otherwise it is 350 apples due to five extra rooms added if you purchase the 2017 retail version. You get what you pay for (or not). But would it be too much trouble if Mama Bear and the cubs helped to forage for some of the apples? Of course it would, so of course it is left up to you alone to find enough food for the winter...Sucker!

This is a simple multi-screen platform game in the classic sense. All you need to remember is to collect all the apples on every screen and then return home. Sounds simple, huh. Well, no it's not. You see on every screen there are a hoard of beasties patrolling their given area which prohibit your way, and many of them are pretty tough to avoid. You start off with a generous 5 lives which you may find you'll lose quickly. Fortunately an extra life is gained in every area, but more crucially continues can be gained in special check point rooms.

There are in total five areas to explore. Forest, Cloudy, Rocky, Jungle and Mining. You will only be able to access the mining level once all other areas are completed. Luckily you will receive infinite continues once you finally reach it. Failure to complete the game with all continues lost will result in a mildly amusing snowy scene with 4 sad looking bears, along with the message:

"Tummies rumbling and energy low, Bear and his family are without food in the snow". Oh how I laughed at such a pitiful sight.

Umm yes well anyway once the game has loaded and you've finished admiring the very nice animated screen and gotten through the intro you can then plunge straight into the game itself which is incredibly easy to get into, although you will quickly discover it is very tough to beat. Many platforms do require a bit of logical thinking and precision timing but it isn't unfair.

The graphics are top notch. There's excellent use of colour throughout and the screens are highly detailed. The sprites too are very well designed and animated, and the movement plus collision detection are very slick indeed. There's also plenty of music throughout which you can toggle on or off and there are different tunes for each area and all of pretty high quality.

Thank you for your support, we hope you enjoy this first physical tape release from Pond!

GRAMAM AXTEN
Graham

...and the rest of the Pond software team:
Andreas - Ant - Craig - Roy - Vanja

#81  Vanja Utne



Did I say the game was big? Well it's so huge that I am surprised that Graham Axten has managed to cram this all into a single load, especially given the excellent highly varied visuals and sonics. He has literally used up all last scraps of memory. What's more the retail version also boasts a very handy built-in map which you can access via the SPACE bar. There is also a neat password system which boasts some special things waiting to be discovered, but so far I haven't found anything yet but it still keep me interested.

Overall if you enjoy simple yet challenging platformers then I must

recommend this game. It really does have that one more go factor. The learning curve feels just right that you will progress just that little bit further with each play. It really is a time killer and given the cute theme it is also highly suitable for young children and adults alike. But even with the learning curve, youngsters might find the challenge a little too much to persevere with for too long. It certainly presents a tough enough challenge for seasoned gamers.

This is Graham Axten's first commercial release for the C64 having previously coded "Rockmaze" and "Worm!" way back in his youth after acquiring a C64

quite late on in 1990. Both these games had previously never seen the light of day, that was until one day in 2015 after he decided to join the Lemon 64 community which encouraged him to ransack his loft for his old game tapes. He then converted them over to disk which he then uploaded to the C64 scene database for preservation. This immediately re-sparked his programming interest in the C64 paving the way to what he had always wanted to do, create a C64 platform game of which this is the result. He has created all the code, graphics and sound himself using CBM.prg Studio. Pondssoft was then born and the rest as they say is history.

I myself bought the cassette copy. I was fortunate enough to receive a limited autographed copy from none other than Graham Axten and Vanja Atne themselves. I must say that the packaging and overall presentation is lovely throughout with lots of little extra freebies inside such as stickers and a 12 page manual. If that isn't enough, "Bonkey Kong" is included on Side B of the tape as well as on the disk version representing very good value, so you certainly won't be grizzly with this release. There, I've said it.



Very colourful and well animated sprites.



Watch out for the birds

VERDICT

PROS

- Lovely presentation throughout, particularly with the retail physical tape and disk releases.
- Five extra screens and a handy map in the retail version.
- The immensely colourful and varied backdrops compliment the cute smoothly well animated sprites nicely.
- Lots of good tunes accompany nice sound effects.
- It's tough but fair, and it certainly has that one more go factor.
- A neat password system which apparently reveals some interesting things.
- A big game all in a single load.

CONS

- For a cute game scenario perfect for youngsters, it could prove a little over challenging for some.
- And adults alike.
- Those who want more from a multi-screen platform game than just the simplicity of collecting apples might be disappointed.

92%

- **TEAM:** Released by Sputnik World. Graphics by Almighty God of Level 65, Rulas International (Programming), Baron Ashler (SFX)
- **INFO:** Free to download from <http://csdb.dk/release/?id=159827>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Victor Simpson

BALL



Ball, by Sputnik World, is a simple, surprising and addictive game of billiards with a very spicy touch. As its creators say, it is a game for people over 18 years old. Watch out! A 'spicy touch'? Yes I am over 18 and I wouldn't mind a spicy touch, every now and then!

LOAD "*/",8,1 and I find out what all the 'spice' is about. "Hello darling, my name is Carla, welcome to ball club. Get ready to play with me". You find

yourself in a billiard parlour or is it a men's strip club? It could be both, usually the two go together. Judging by the introduction screen, this looks like an intriguing place to be.

This game of billiards is different, it doesn't have a cue stick to hit balls with and there is no pockets to hit balls into. Perhaps they should have given this game a more 'racey' name, like 'Billiard Ball strippers'?

My fantasies are leading me astray, back to the game. Not a normal game of billiards, instead 6 objects are placed on



Explains the game in one sentence.



Game screen, clear the objects to progress.

the billiard table, your task is to shoot the white ball in any direction on the table and knock out the 6 objects within the very tight time limit before it races to 600, not seconds by the way, its a damn fast clock this one.

If you hit down all the objects within the time limit you are rewarded with an incentive by the lovely Carla, who takes off an item of her clothing and then you progress onto the next table with 6 more objects in different places on the billiard table. Remember those days in the early 1980's when you first played those strip poker video games? Adapt the concept of strip poker, but replace the cards and poker with a ball from billiards. The creators say the true purpose of the game is to cover three genres - billiards, puzzle and strip poker.

The game took only three months of development, the idea of the game came about as main coder, R. International, was trying to work out a routine of bounces with a ball. It was the spark the group needed to create something simple and original. Developer R. International states "because the theme was very clear from the beginning with the creation of the first routines, so it was thought to try something a little more daring than the status quo you normally see in 8-Bit games".

The end result is some pretty cool retro style graphics, pleasing retro tunes and some mildly entertaining but simplistic puzzle gameplay. The puzzles themselves use basic geometry, determining where the white ball is to land first will determine if you can clear the table within the time limit. It's a

classic brick breaker game without all of them bricks to break down, the twist is the strict time limit as the degree of difficulty.

You are given eight balls (lives) to begin with. If you clear a table of all the objects you keep that life and move on to the next more difficult level. In between levels is where the girl stripping her clothes off takes place. If you don't clear the table, you lose a life and get to attempt that stage again. Lose all your lives, it's game over and time for you to go over where you went wrong.

Overall, I would say its a welcome change from all the shoot 'em ups and platformers, not a fantastic game by any yardstick, but one you will pleasantly enjoy for a short while.

VERDICT

PROS

- Simple gameplay.
- Retro tunes.
- Visual gameplay rewards.

CONS

- Maybe not for the kids this one.

71%



Expects visual rewards.



- CODER: Paul Koller
- INFO: PAL only, priced at US\$ 4.99 for the download version at <https://rgcddev.itch.io/luftrauserz> or £40 for the deluxe cartridge version at <http://rgcd.bigcartel.com/product/luftrauserz-commodore-64>
- REVIEWED BY: Squiffy

LUFTRAUSERZ



Plugging a cartridge game into the Commodore 64 is and was always a joy. No load time and a very small chance of load error - although not completely out of the question!

LuftrauserZ is available to buy on cartridge for your real-not-emulated Commodore 64 computer. You can also download the game for a fraction of the price and play on emulator of your choice. But all those joys of a cartridge game surely make it worth paying the premium price .. or do they?

LuftrauserZ boasts a highly packed 4,000 sprite frames, or single cell animation states buried and compressed in the code. Harking back to my own programming days – that is one heck of a lot of sprites. Typically a main character in an average game may consist of 4 animation states, assuming a left and right controlled chappy makes 8 frames. Add a few for death sequence, maybe 2-3 for climbing (let's think Donkey Kong here to illustrate), and you've got about 12-15 sprite frames total to represent Mr Mario, baddies, barrels, balls, blah blah blah and most games of the DK type may have about 30-40 sprites total. So 4,000 really is a lot. My 64k mind does actually boggle, but I'm sure there is some very clever and advanced programming going on here. Anyway. The Game. The setting is WWII

and aeroplanes. Airplanes, Ok? A shoot 'em up, proper arcade style. First glance at a static screen capture may say 'ordinary'. The colour scheme is complimentary but flat, and the in-play graphics are single colour shadows. But – wait until you play and everything starts to move...

You're given a mission at the start of each level. Kill 'xx' in one game, Kill 'xx' enemy types, Score over 'xx' .. this already cries out depth of game. With a satisfied grin I begin Level 1.

Wow – fast. Like Poe Dameron says after stealing a Tie Fighter and flying one for the first time – “Whoooa! This thing really moves!”. And so this game does.

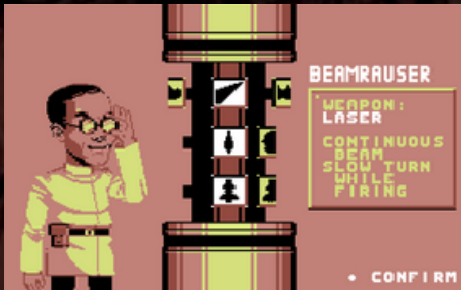
After just a few seconds you should now realize the 4,000 sprite-frames-thing claim may be true. Your controlled craft actually rotates, in a way traditionally lacking in most 8-Bit home computer games. (Unless those games might use

vector graphics, but those are and always were rarities on our C64). This is a good old Vic-II generated 'Movable Object Block', we're talking about here – in single colour mode to add clarity and detail that the multi-colour mode sprite jeopardizes.

Now the shadow / silhouette theme makes more sense. Single colour sprites give you the highest resolution a C64 can offer and the double pixel format of multi colour sprites could simply never rotate like this.

Your enemies flap and rotate with similar fluidity and suddenly this is not looking at all like your typical Commodore 64 game. For a moment you could be in an amusement arcade, back in the day, back in 1984, back when long and spikey hair was cool, and as a spotty youth being good at an arcade game was your chance to really shine and send out messages of awesome to any and all girls in the vicinity. Go! Yeah! Top





of the High Score table again, ladies, don't let these spots, large glasses and the fact I'm wearing my brothers clothes fool you girls. In this arcade I rule the cool.

Boom bam – this little fighter plane you're controlling really does kick out the bullets. So much so that you'll probably do the first level in no time - easy-peasy gimme some of that lemon squeazy laydeeezz.

So you progress. Not next level – levels are made of multiple missions that need to be completed. Kill higher 'xx' of enemies, more Enemies of 'xx type', score even more points this time.

And so it goes. This appears to be the pattern of the game – but I'm not trying to make it sound simple. Requisite skills

increase in good arcade fashion. Enemies flock and twist around with increasing deviance. Weapons and aircraft change. This seems to have the ingredients of a well weighted arcade game and you'll find yourself impatiently tapping fire for a restart after each game over.

The control is excellent but your skills at twisting and turning the craft take a few good goes to master. Unlike a certain similar-ish awesome arcade game, called, Time Pilot, you can't just jet around any old how as this game does have a lower boundary of play – in this case the sea.

I'm not sure how many levels or missions there are, but I'm sure to find out. This is shoot 'em up blasting at the C64's finest and most advanced level

I've seen. I've only really touched on it, and I'm sure there is a real depth of levels and character to the game.

Just on a slight down note – the music is very ordinary and sounds like a million other C64 games. That's a shame – if they had taken the same approach to the audio as they did graphics and the overall design, I'm sure it would have been a really good sound track to go with it. Great fun, with real depth to the game, I loved it!



ARRIVAL



VERDICT

PROS

- Feels like a good arcade game.
- Excellent controls.
- Fast paced and great depth.

CONS

- Average music.

90%



- **TEAM:** Jason Aldred
- **INFO:** Priced from US\$ 4.99 for download to €40 for cartridge, available from <https://galencia.itch.io> and <https://www.protovision.games/>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Merman

GALENCIA



At the end of the 21st Century, with the bees under threat from human activities, along come the Guardians – giant bees trying to protect their own kind. Ace Harper must pilot the Galencia fighter, developed by top scientist Amy, to fend off the invasion.

What follows is an excellent update of the single screen, arcade classic shoot 'em up, called Galaga, released by Namco of Japan in 1981. All you needed to do in Galaga was control a starfighter that can move left and right along the bottom of the playfield and shoot down everything that moves above your cool-looking retro starship, without losing a life - and score as many points as you can. Sounds simple, right? It is. This simple but addictive gameplay has seen no less than 21 different versions of Galaga released on a huge variety of home computers and video game systems over the past 30 years.

So what is different about Jason Aldred's Galencia? After the Protovision logo and loading screen, an introductory sequence tells the story before the main game loads in. You get an instantaneous real arcade game feel about the game, as you delve in further, the next sequence shows you the high scores table as well as the different enemy types, just as in the original arcade version of Galaga. The comparisons to the original Galaga game are easily made but this is Jay Aldred's coding team's own interpretation of the classic.

Pressing F1 opens up the options screen, the choices you have to modify the gameplay are fantastic. Difficulty can

be changed and a 'Tournament Mode' can be selected, which will only give you just one life without gaining any extra lives - ideal for a competition. Music and sound FX can be turned on or off and your scores can be saved to disk for all important record keeping.

After the excellent take-off sequence (which can be skipped if you want to get blasting right away), the enemies fly into formation from left and right of the screen but you don't have to wait until they come together, you can start shooting at them as soon as they appear, just the same in Galaga. After a while the enemies will detach from formation and swoop down towards your spaceship, dropping bombs. Some enemies will mutate into stronger forms, while some levels feature "blockers" that block the player's shots but disappear after a while (or when the player has damaged them enough).



Care must be taken to avoid the tractor beam of the Sirens that will carry away a fighter. If the player has more than one remaining, the Siren can be shot to release the trapped fighter giving you an upgrade to the awesome Double Fighter (giving double shots but a larger target to be hit), just as in the original Galaga game. Tactically the player must choose whether this is a good idea for certain stages (such as the Asteroid levels).



Keep on shooting and don't stop!



The original arcade version of Galaga.

There are 50 waves / levels to clear in total, which includes two Guardians to defeat, the classic Challenging Stages where every enemy must be shot to gain a bonus (an extra life, Double Fighter or bonus points), as well as the tricky Asteroids levels where bonus stars (awarding points or an extra life) await. An extra life is earned every 100,000 points scored, except in Tournament Mode. At the end of the game the statistics are displayed and a rank awarded (I always love this type of feature in games - Ed.)

Galencia is beautifully presented all round, from the physical box and manual to the menus and score displays on the screen (cleverly displayed in the top and bottom borders, giving more space for the action). What makes this game feel every bit like the arcade game, Galaga, is the look and feel of the background



Enjoyable opening screens.

starfield; the colours used on the enemy insects is easily identifiable with the original Galaga arcade video game, which some other versions of the game have struggled to adapt and implement.

The radio chatter from Amy (displayed at the top) is funny, giving something different and unique to this Galaga inspired game compared to the many others that have come before it. Graphics are really polished, particularly the way the enemies mutate and change into different types - a personal favourite is the green Venus fly-trap - it's just 'too cool for school'. Explosions when an enemy is blown to bits are great and so is the cool music that goes with the

action. Galencia is definitely worth more than a quick blast, but may prove a little repetitive in the long term.



VERDICT

PROS

- Excellent Physical Edition, with glossy manual.
- Beautiful updated graphics and sound.
- The background starfield is just like the original.

CONS

- Big jump in difficulty between Normal and Pro.
- Not quite enough variety.

93%



Another wave to contend with.



- **CODING:** Chester Kollschen (Knights of Bytes)
- **INFO:** Priced from €19.99 for the digital version and €45 for the disk version. Available from <https://www.knightsofbytes.games/samsjourney>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Darren Daz Borg

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SAM'S JOURNEY

Without question run and jump platformer, *Sam's Journey* was the most anticipated C64 game of 2017. The waiting and it was a long wait, was a journey in itself. 8-Bit retro gaming enthusiasts have been tantalized by teaser images on websites and treated to amazing videos posted on YouTube from creator Chester Kollschen since 2015.

In the short time since it's release on Christmas Eve 2017, *Sam's Journey* by Knights of Bytes has taken the C64 community by storm. Is there a good reason why this game has received so much praise or is it just all hype? Well I'm here to tell you this is one special game, so it is with great pleasure that I can finally put fingers to keyboard and write the review for arguably the best C64 platform game ever released.

Who is Sam and what exactly is his journey all about? Sam is just an ordinary boy. One night while Sam is sleeping he was woken up by a loud bang. He looked for its cause, opened his wardrobe and suddenly got pulled inside by a giant claw into a magical world.

Developer Chester Kollschen recently discussed the type of world that *Sam's Journey* finds himself in with co-creator of 8-Bit annual George Bachaelor. Chester stated that it is much like an "Alice in Wonderland trip. *Sam's Journey* has 27 regular levels, plus one introductory level and three boss stages. It has everything a magical world might contain: a forest, a desert, mountains, oceans, castles, even a pirate ship. The game is structured into three overworld maps, actually three thirds of a large

map making up the 27 levels, in all there are 60 segments".

The main objective is to accomplish 100% of each level, how you do that isn't a walk in the park. What do you need to do to score 100% per level you ask? *Sam's Journey* gameplay requires you to guide Sam around each level locating and collecting objects like diamonds, coins and trophies. There's an unexpected twist along your travels allowing Sam the ability to switch his identity from his normal self but more on this a little further ahead.

When you're playing as just Sam - killing enemies isn't difficult at all, just jump on top of them. Yes, it's a little like playing Nintendo's *Super Mario Bros* but not too much. *Sam's Journey* is not the bog standard left to right platform game you would normally be used to. With free multi directional scrolling gameplay, you appear to roam and glide in each of the levels so your journey is much more involved in comparison to a standard platform offering.

Enemies like Bee's can only be killed when an item is thrown at them or when they are slashed with the pirate sword. It's a shame the C64 only uses one button as pushing up does get a little straining on the hands. Many hidden rooms and invisible walls are scattered all over the place which can lead to short cuts or attaining hidden items to progress like keys to open locked bonus rooms.

100% isn't necessary to complete a level but it gives it much replay value. Thankfully it has a save system in place and it's needed as you won't complete





this game in one sitting. Sorry tape owners, I'm guessing this is the reason why it was only released on disk and cartridge.

The world map is akin to Super Mario World on the Super Nintendo. This is an 8-Bit C64 machine with 64k, yet the amount of detail gone into Sam's Journey's graphics is quite unbelievable. Levels can only be entered once you have already visited them, so to start with you must begin with level one and so forth. Then you can always back track which is where the replay value steps in.

Each level includes a wide variety of obstacles, hazards and hidden rooms, even in the walls. Sam's Journey is a journey not just in name, it's a journey of your senses too. The variety in level design had me addicted, I just wanted to play through all of the different levels and uncover what exciting adventure I was going to have next. From the cold snowy platforms, to the nice sunny days, swimming sections and cave locations each level had its own unique set of enemies to thwart your progress and stop you completing 100% of a level. Wasps are out for your blood, the slow and steady Caterpillars will take

more than one hit to conquer and last but not least the Roamers, they may seem innocent but they just seem to be at the right place at the wrong time. What makes the game interesting more than the usual platformer is that on your journey with Sam there are puzzles to solve. Helpful objects are scattered around the levels to enable Sam to explore even more than you thought he could.

Platforms move up and down, switches can be hit that open up new areas that seemed unattainable and trampolines are positioned so Sam can get to those high, hard to reach places. This is where the game challenges you, as you must solve which items belong in the right area and understand how to use the items in the right way for you to progress further. With so much going on, trust me you aren't going to get bored playing Sam's Journey that's for sure.



Graphics and sound needs to be experienced to be believed. Knights of Bytes have pushed the C64 to unbeknown limits. I haven't seen anything this good since Thalamus Ltd released Creatures 2 (1992). The amount of colours displayed in game by Chester Kollschen and Stefan Gutsch is 8-Bit coding of the highest level. Alex Ney has also done wonders with the soundtrack. I must confess I was bobbing my head along while playing, it sounded that good. With 19 different

YOU HAVE THE POWER!!!!!!!

Once you start the game you look and play as your boring old self with only jump and throw as your only abilities and a one hit kill. Thankfully the following will make yours and Sam's journey a little easier. Earlier I mentioned there was a twist, well during gameplay, shirts (costumes) have funnily enough dropped onto the level you are playing in this new magical world, it makes sense seeing you entered through your closet. The twist is each shirt gives you a new identity and a special power, much like Kid Chameleon on the Sega Genesis (Megadrive). The shirts give you the following abilities:



Ninja Sam: Allows Sam to stick to walls, jump off walls and also slide down. I found this costume to be the least useful out of all the abilities.



Pirate Sam: Sam now wields a sword to cut down anyone in his way. Great ability and one I use most of the time.



Pitcher Sam: Sam can now aim when throwing objects like rocks and treasure chests to knock down those pesky enemies. His baseball cleats also prevent him from sliding on ice which helps out a great deal.



Disco Sam: One of the coolest costumes! With this ability Sam can glide in the air like a tornado and deal double the damage when attacking enemies. Sam also can discover hidden passages with his cool shades.



Space Sam: Probably my favourite costume out of all of them. Wearing the space costume allows you to get to high places that your jump can't get to with a great rocket boost.



Vampire Sam: Muuaahahahahahah, I've come to suck your blood!!! Well actually no, but this costume gives you the ability to transform into a bat and get to hard to reach places. Nice little touch to the game.

tunes the music keeps things fresh.

Playing Sam's Journey made me feel like a youngster again and that is one of the many things I love about it. The high quality of the graphics, the excellent presentation and fantastic music is 8-Bit gaming epicness. The speed is so fluid and fast, the gameplay is absolutely incredible. Only thing that lets the game down a little (I'm saying this very loosely), it would of been nice to have a life bar. Another thing that would of made this perfect would of been the possibility to have a second button to jump but unfortunately the C64 is unable to do that due to its hardware specifications.

Chester Kollschen and the Knights of Bytes team have turned 8-Bit platform gaming on its head. Sam's Journey has been such a long time in coming, the wait has certainly been justified as Sam's Journey is a gaming achievement of the highest quality for the C64, this is a must have game. So you have finished reading this review now go online and purchase this game, you won't regret it. Sam's Journey deserves it's place with other C64 platform classics alongside The Great Giana Sisters, Creatures, Mayhem in Monsterland and Nobby The Aardvark. Knights Of Bytes have raised the benchmark to the highest possible pinnacle in C64 gaming, the game is just so awe inspiring.

VERDICT

PROS

- Graphics and sound thought impossible on the C64.
- Great hit detection, no cheap kills.
- Great save function.
- Lots of replay value. Got to get 100% on every level ;-)

CONS

- Controls can get a little frustrating.
- Would have been nice to have an energy bar.
- Sam's Journey Part 2 isn't released yet.



97%



- **TEAM:** Eric Hilaire (Programming), Roy Widding (SFX and Music)
- **INFO:** Free to download, 4K version: <http://csdb.dk/release/?id=150669>, deluxe preview: <http://csdb.dk/release/?id=163640>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Łukasz 'Bob8bit' Bobrecki

LUMBERJACK



“He is a Lumberjack and he’s OK. He sleeps all night and he works all day!” This quote from a funny little song from Monty Pythons Flying Circus is a good description of the Lumberjack game series. Actually, there is no sleeping involved in the gameplay, but there is a lot of work. Strong man with wide shoulders does nothing more but chopping down trees. His job is swinging the axe all day long.

We are living in interesting times, when almost any game can be ported between different platforms. Back in the eighties brilliant developers were able to convert some of the games from Amiga and Atari ST to their less smart friends like the C64. Today, many years later it is common to see indie games inspired by 8 and 16 bit productions. But this is not a one way street. Today, the programmers have more knowledge and better tools,

so they can create old school games based on the fresh and new ones. Usually, something is lost in translation, due to hardware limitations, but not in this game.

A C64 group Megastyle has chosen a mobile game to be remade on their favorite platform. A simple production where the player needs to tap the screen on right or left side and cut down an endless tree. To stay alive the player needs to be quick and precise by moving left or right, at getting get out of the way of the branches as they rapidly descend lower, threatening to squash the Lumberjack.

The mechanic of the game is really simple. Each swing of the axe gives the player one point, what makes the game a nice arcade. I found it a nice party game where players can compete to reach higher scores.

Lumberjack is an example of a 4k game. The authors had to work not only with old hardware limitations, but also with a strict file size constraint of 4096 bytes. The puny size is not an obstacle for a skilled developer. All of the core elements of the game have been successfully transferred from touch screen devices into “bread bin”. Lumberjack provides the same level of enjoyment with tapping a phone and with



a joystick connected to Commodore.

The game was supposed to be remade exceeding the 4k limit, but the team decided to abandon this project. Lumberjack Deluxe is still available but not as a complete game. Not all of the planned features have been implemented. Both versions are quite fun and even if I am not playing I like to have the game running somewhere in the background. The tune in the game is the same as in the song I quoted at the beginning.

VERDICT

PROS

- Faithful to the original.
- Good party game.
- Nice Music.

CONS

- Lack of diversity.
- For a single player gets boring.
- Extended Deluxe edition was abandoned.

65%



The deluxe version has improved graphics and gameplay.

COMMODORE 64/128 - ATARI 2600 - VIDEO PAC - PICO-8

SPACEMAN SPLORE

PLANET OF DOOM



Pondsoft.uk

- **TEAM:** Antonio Savona (CODING), Ilkka Sjöstedt & Massimiliano 'WiZkiD' De Ruvo (GFX), Aldo Chiummo & Gaetano Chiummo (SFX)
- **INFO:** Priced from US\$ 3.99 for the digital download version. Available from <http://psytronik.net/newsite/index.php/c64/87-planetgolf>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Merman

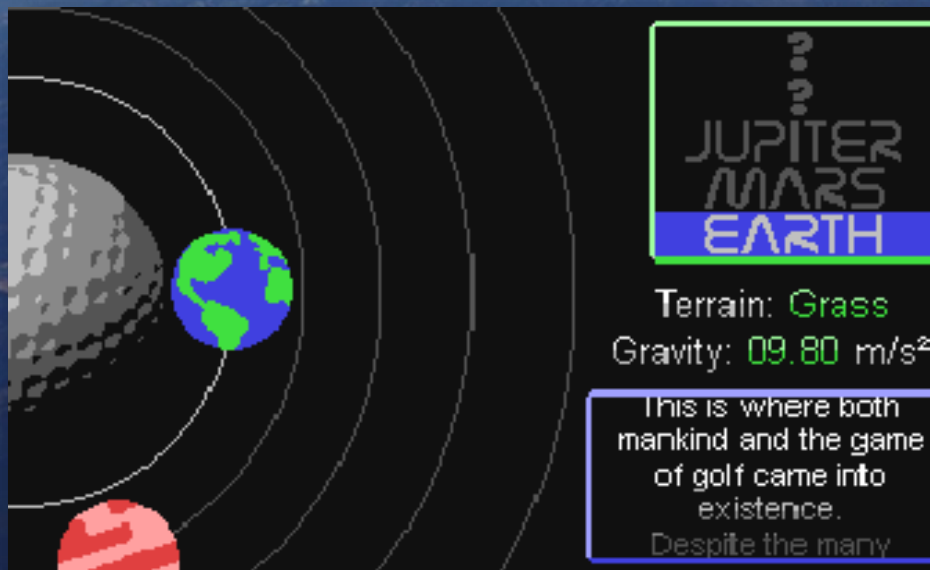


PLANET GOLF



There are two key influences on Antonio Savona's Planet Golf. The first is the phone app Desert Golf, a physics-based golf game with tricky landscapes that will test even the best golfer. The other is the 1971, Apollo 14 mission, where Commander Alan Shepard played golf on the Moon (as well as conducting scientific experiments).

The amazing intro to this game is on side B of the disk, featuring an awesome digitised movie sequence and sampled sound relating the story of that moment in golf history – going on to explain how the exploration of the Solar System over the next thousands of years led to a golf tournament held on five different planets. (The year the game is set, 38911 AD, will have a familiar ring to C64 fans). Initially only three planets Earth, Mars and Jupiter are available to play, but by completing achievements another two planets can be unlocked. Each planet has a different colour scheme to distinguish them, different set of hazards and a different strength of gravity to conquer. The red sky for Mars is particularly effective, contrasting with the lush blue sky and green grass of Earth.



Choosing a planet to play on.

This is a very stylish game, starting with the menus and the choice of planet. Once the game has started, tips are displayed but these can be quickly dismissed by pressing down. Pressing down again will bring up the options allowing the player to quit back to the main menu or continue on the course. The aiming line appears above the ball and is moved left or right, with an almost 180-degree range. Once the player has decided on the angle of shot, holding the fire button starts the power meter growing and letting go of the fire button plays the shot. The resultant shot can then be sped up by holding forward; a really

clever feature and very complex to program thanks to the calculations



Landing in the water costs a stroke, as does going out of bounds.



The game offers some useful tips before many of the holes.

involved. The player must be careful not to hit the ball out of bounds (as shown by the screen edges left and right); if this happens, it costs the player a stroke and the ball is placed back in the same spot. As with standard golf, each hole has a par target - the number of strokes it should take to put the ball in the hole. As the player progresses through the holes, more hazards are added. These include conveyor belts and water hazards, icy platforms that send the ball skidding and on Earth birds that fly over. (The bird is well animated, and hitting all the birds unlocks one of the achievements). Other planets have surfaces with higher friction (changing how fast the ball rolls), while others may have aliens that will kick the ball away and platforms that make the ball bounce higher. Getting a low score will be a real challenge across the 99 different holes.

The graphics are excellent, making good use of hi-res mode and with each planet having a distinctive look as already mentioned. What really adds to the atmosphere is the sampled speech,



The second hole on the Earth course.

including the “miles & miles” sample of Alan Shepard taken from the Apollo14 Moon mission recordings. The music from the Chiummos is very good too, with side B’s extras containing a jukebox option so that it can be listened to at leisure. As if that wasn’t enough, there is a hidden 2K game to uncover and a couple of fascinating Easter Eggs. Packaging is up to the usual Psytronik standards, with the Ultimate Edition stuffed with extras. The box with its outstanding Oliver Frey artwork contains the full Premium+ disk version of the game, a badge, soundtrack CD, keyring, glossy art card, A3 glossy artwork poster

and a set of stickers. (Cheaper options are available, but collectors should go for the Ultimate). RGCD is preparing to publish the cartridge version at the time of writing (January 2018).

How much the player enjoys the game will ultimately be down to perseverance and the desire to see more of the game. It can be very frustrating, as it takes time to figure out the strength of shot needed. But once the player is hooked, they will keep playing. It is incredibly polished and a real technical achievement from Antonio, whose first game P0-Snake also earned high praise. Part puzzle, part action, it will appeal to a wide range of players. Definitely one of the best games of the year.



Watch out for the Martian and icy ground.

VERDICT

PROS

- Superb presentation and graphics.
- The incredible intro sequence.
- Sampled speech is amazing.
- The “speed up” option, helping keep play fast.

CONS

- Frustrating to learn.
- Courses quickly become difficult.

93%

- **TEAM:** Stuart Collier (CODING), Trevor Storey (GFX), Richard Bayliss (SFX), Published by Psytronik Software.
- **INFO:** Priced from US\$ 2.99 for the digital version. Available from <https://psytronik.itch.io/the-sky-is-falling>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Merman

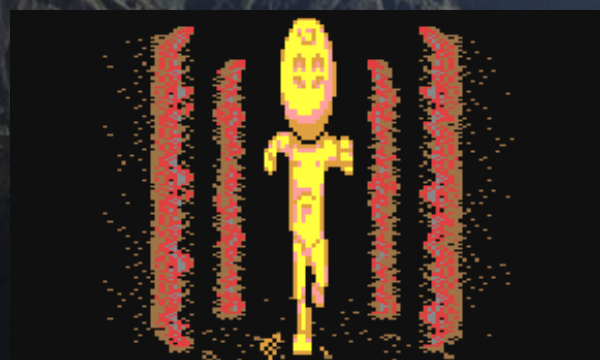
THE SKY IS FALLING



The original iOS app was a fun game, so it was cool to see Stuart Collier (part of the Ovine team) take on the challenge of converting it to the C64 as his first 8-Bit coding project under the name ICON64. With the graphics of Trevor Storey and the music of Richard Bayliss, this promised to be a good combination.

Loading the game from disk offers a menu coded by Richard Bayliss with two choices – the main game itself, or the intro. This animated sequence shows the character running through the cave towards the player in 3D and has a large scrolling message below. It's a very slick piece of coding, including the colour bars behind the scroll.

The main game loads and there is a busy title screen with the logo at the top, the boulder chasing the player's character and another scrolling message – plus lots of moving colour. Pressing your fire



THE SKY IS FALLING

The clever animated intro.

button reveals the difficulty menu, with a choice of Easy, Medium or Hard.

Once the game starts, the player finds themselves looking at the side view of a cave, with stalactites (icicle-shaped mineral formations) of various lengths hanging down from the ceiling. There is no time to look around as our character starts running across the screen – pursued by a very large, bouncing boulder. Worse still, the cave roof is gradually getting lower as the player wraps around to the left side of the screen again. Should the player run into a stalactite then it is game over and the boulder splats them.

Fortunately the player is equipped with a magic wrench. Throwing this upwards by pressing the fire button sees the wrench knock bits of any stalactite it hits, shortening the rocky formation. The aim is to clear all the stalactites before the roof gets too low. Also hindering the player is a low-flying bird, which will



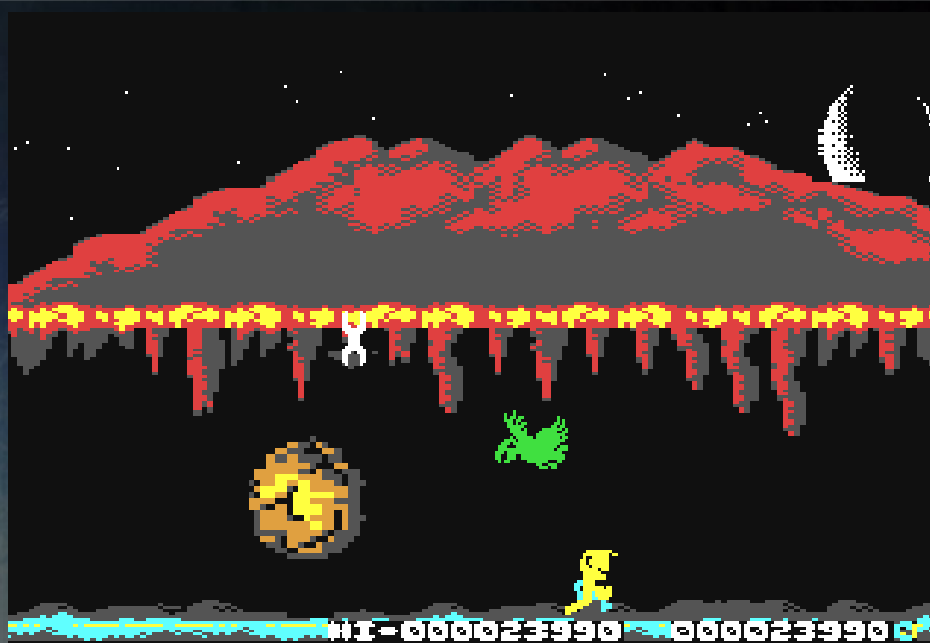
Level 1 on the Easy setting, with only a few short stalactites.

block any wrench that hits it. Every now and then a balloon will fly past and it can be hit with the wrench, causing it to drop a gift-wrapped package. Picking this up will award one of two power-ups, which are 1) a Pickaxe and 2) Dynamite. The pickaxe does a lot more damage than the wrench, allowing long stalactites to be cleared – but it only lasts a short time. The dynamite is more explosive; when it hits the rock it blows up a large area of surrounding rocks, but it too only has a limited time for it to be used.

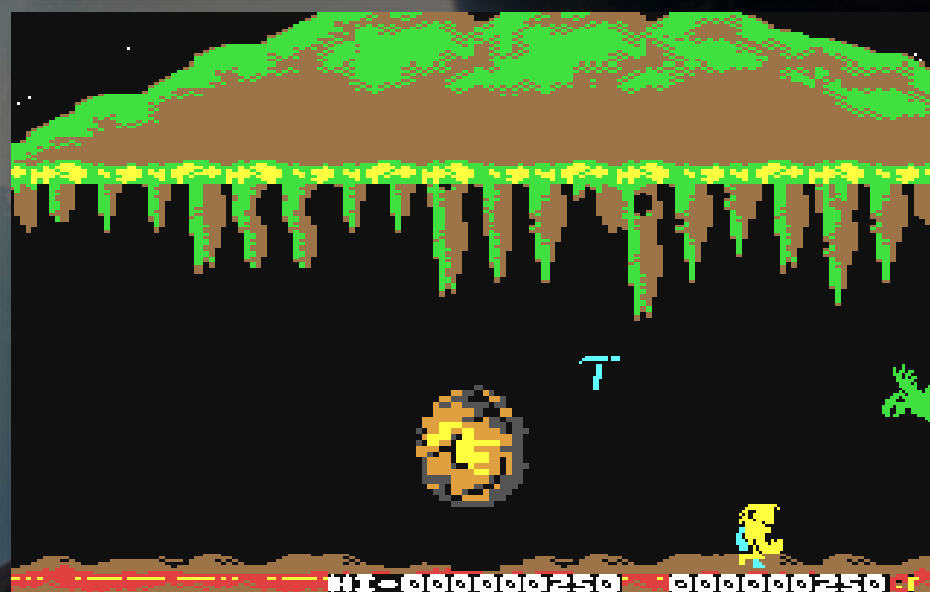
Successfully clearing all the stalactites in a cave sees the player carried to safety by a helicopter or UFO. Then it is time to pick up the bonuses. Score bonuses are based on the level and a speed bonus given for completing the level quickly. This is added to the score and then the next cave begins. On 'game over' an angel flies upwards and the new high score is shown (if applicable).

This is a fun and well presented game. Essentially it takes the classic game of Blitz (Vic 20, 1982), where the player bombed skyscrapers to clear a landing space and turns it upside down.

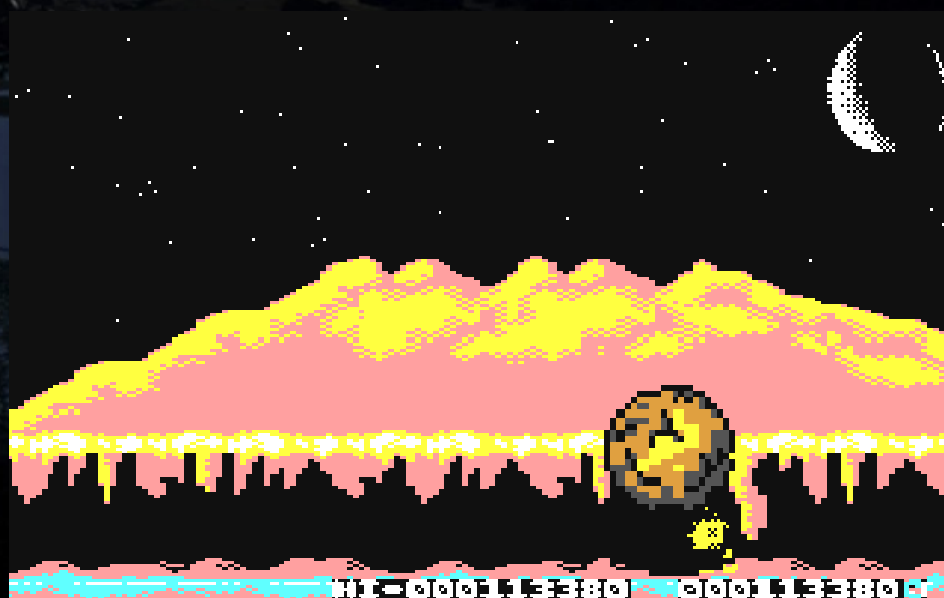
Control is very simple, with just the fire button needed (which is why it worked well as a touch-screen app, needing just the one control). As mentioned before, the intro is very nicely done. The main game has some good graphics, with a well-animated main character. What is especially clever is the way the screen bounces (using the built-in scroll registers) as the boulder does, adding to the effect. The changing colours of the rocks is also a nice touch, giving a sense of progress. There are some simple but fitting sound effects as well as some good music from Richard Bayliss. It all creates a very polished package, with only a few doubts about the longevity.



The bird will get in the way of your wrenches.



The pickaxe does more damage than the standard wrench.



The player gets squashed by the boulder after running into a stalactite.

VERDICT

PROS

- Clever intro.
- Good graphics.
- Easy to get into.
- Ideal for a quick blast.

CONS

- Simple gameplay.
- Gets repetitive.
- Not much changes between levels.

84%

- **TEAM:** Achim Volkers (Programmer), Trevor 'Smila' Storey (Game design and GFX), Saul Cross (Music and SFX)
- **INFO:** Priced from US\$ 4.99 for the digital download version. Available from <https://psytronik.itch.io/argus>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Łukasz 'Bob8bit' Bobrecki

ARGUS

It's really nice to see a Commodore 64 game that is not another shoot 'em up, platformer or some kind of arcade game. The magnificent team of Volkers, Smila and Cross prepared a pseudo 3D dungeon crawler set in the distant fantasy land of Argus. It is time for a long adventure.

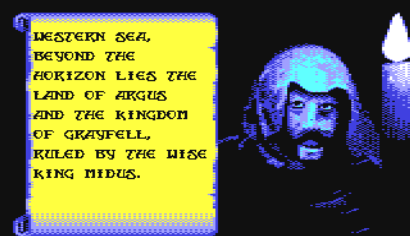
A dungeon crawler game is instantly associated with an RPG genre. Well, this case is different. In this game, there is no role-playing. There are no character stats, no experience points and no leveling up. There is also no story to discover within the temples, forests and caves you will visit. Actually, there is an atmospheric introduction and a conclusion, but that is all. On your journey you will not meet any NPC's. The chests do not have any scrolls of knowledge hidden inside of them. There is not even a short message confirming your progress. The only tale that the game tells is the one you write by your actions.

Argus fits nicely into an action adventure genre. There are multiple keys and tokens scattered around the world. For some of these items it can take a few moments to figure out how these can be used and more importantly where they

fit. You will have to explore more than a thousand rooms in multiple maze-like locations. Usually, a dungeon crawler genre allows player movement in four directions. Argus raises the bar here by adding diagonal movement. Each tile, each location on the map has a possible eight ways to go. Before I started playing I did not understand this idea, but within the game it adds a lot of complexity. In my opinion this kind of level design makes the game almost unplayable without a map. If you like a challenge, you do not need use the one provided by the authors. Take a pen and a piece of paper to draw the labyrinths on your own, but believe me – these mazes can be tricky.

Did I mention, that if you buy a physical edition of the game (even the cheap cassette) you will receive a, beautifully printed double-sided map in the package? Well, now you know. This addition adds a lot to the overall experience. As I did not have the patience to draw each room on my own, I imagined that I have an old scroll helping me on my dangerous journey.

Argus may not be difficult, but it definitely is a demanding game. The before mentioned labyrinths are just the



The storyteller in Argus's intro.

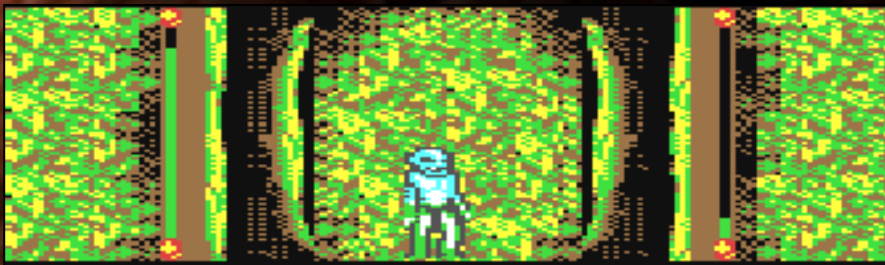
tip of the iceberg. The game is planned in a way that makes you go back and forth through the rooms to find one more key to unlock that particular door on the far side of the world you have visited half an hour ago. The world you travel through is an unfriendly place. There are a lot of different monsters and it's possible that, right after you leave the north forest you shall start encountering enemies that are immune to your basic weapon. Stay strong and remember that these creatures are randomly populated. If you fail and load the area again, you may remember where the monsters were, but almost certainly you will stumble upon a different breed. There are enough enemy types to keep you interested until the end.

Whenever I am in a room with an enemy my heart beats just a little faster. Is it just a snake that is easily killed with one hit? Has a beholder immune to my current wand attacked me? And if the latter, will I have enough time to change my weapon and kill him before he drains my life from me?

The randomness of the game could be counted as a flaw. During fights you can get half of your health instantly depleted by a series of well-placed attacks. On another encounter, the same creature will barely touch you. The fighting mechanics are pretty simple, but without them the wandering would be boring. If your opponent does not flash when you hit him you can experiment with your weaponry if you have already collected something more than the regular stick. After pulling out the right tool to fight just



The door leads to the Temple, once opened with a key.



Trolls lurk in the Forest.



A skeleton attacks in the Temple of Fire.



Argus map for a new generation.

All in all, the game provides a lot of fun. I recommend checking this game out just to see the beautifully drawn world. The addition of a printed map to each copy makes it worthy of investing in the tape or disk version. I found the gameplay a bit repetitive at some points, but when I reached the final location I found fresh mechanics. Investing my time to rescue the Starchild turned out to be an entertaining adventure. Take the challenge, I recommend it.

VERDICT

PROS

- Beautiful graphics.
- Diverse locations and enemies.
- Unique 8-directional labyrinth design.
- Enough content for many hours.
- Printed map added to each physical copy.

CONS

- Too much randomness in fights.
- Only one tune.
- Mid game is repetitive.

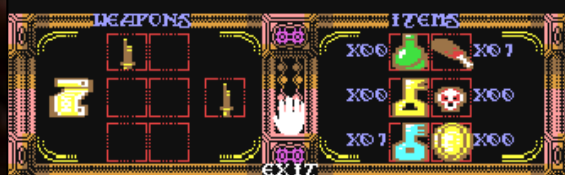
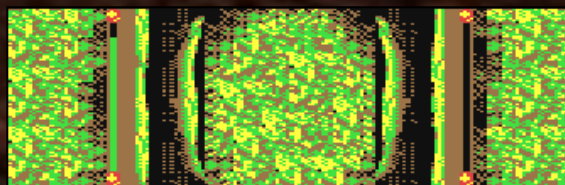
85%

keep the fire button pressed and hope for the best dice rolls hidden beneath the hits. A word of advice: all the fights can be ignored by just walking by the enemies. Good thing is that if you kill them, they will not respawn. I like to keep my dungeon clean, if you know what I mean.

The disk version of *Argus* allows the progress of the adventure to be saved. Be careful though, as the save file does not contain the exact state of the game. Progress on the map will be restored after your death, but within the particular location, all the monsters will respawn. It is a good idea to save whenever you enter a new land, but it is not that beneficial at a later time. Keep your health bar high, as death lurks around every corner.

I love the visuals in this game. Each part of the land is recognizably different from the other and the animation is smooth. Even the brief story, presented as a text during the

introduction and outro sequence is not just a wall of boring text. Instead, you can see an atmospherically designed scroll with an animated person who looks like he is reading the story to you. The vast world probably took up too much memory as there are no sound effects within the game. For the whole game there is just one tune. It was nice at the beginning of the adventure but after a few hours of playing I had to provide a tune of my own.



Accessing the inventory.

- **TEAM:** Baron Ashler / Kabuto Factory
- **INFO:** Free from <http://kabutofactory.altevista.org/>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Łukasz 'Bob8bit' Bobrecki

RAW BATTLE



Baron Ashler is not afraid of experiments. Each one of his games fits into a different genre. A few years ago I found a game *Zombi Terror* and I loved it. It was a quite simple adventure game written in BASIC. Since then I was following creations of Manuel Gomez, as this is Baron's real name. In 2017 he released his last game entitled *Raw Battle*. It was looking like a beat 'em up and I hoped for the best. Unfortunately, this time I was disappointed.

Manuel and Kabuto Factory is not only creating games in multiple genres but also on multiple platforms. Usually the programming starts with ZX Spectrum, and later, when the project is complete he then convert the code to other retro computers. Sometimes it is MSX, sometimes it's my beloved Commodore 64. The *Raw Battle* first and only conversion was done for the C64.

A beat 'em up game should be dynamic and offer fluid graphics. Most players





assume that multiple ways to hit the enemies as well as multiple types of enemies will be implemented in this kind of a game. These basic elements adds up to create a decent "fighter". Well, the latest production from Kabuto Factory does not have much of these attributes, so it should not be considered as a part of this genre.

The game has simple mechanics. You can jump, duck and punch in two directions. Each move is connected with just one kind of an enemy or an obstacle. Actually, it is enough. You do not need to remember pattern movements, just react to the nearest gangster or knife. To add a little more to the gameplay on each stage a bomb must be found and diffused. There are a lot of doors in the background and by pressing up on the joystick you can check if this is the place where the gang has staged the attack. This idea looks nice, but unfortunately only on paper. In my opinion it only adds a bit of delay to the gameplay. Moreover, I had a problem with jumping over an obstacle because I was constantly entering the building.

It looks like *Raw Battle* was made genuinely with graphics based on text mode. This solution may work well in some type of but it does not work well in the action genre. The screen does not

scroll smoothly, as well as the enemies and obstacles. After some time I got used to that and I have to admit that the graphics have a nice touch. The design is not a ten out of a ten, but I cannot say that the graphics are ugly or bad.

The element I found most irritating is the movement of objects on screen. I am aware that 8-Bit machines were not designed for advanced physics, but what I saw in the game is not applying to basic logic. Whenever my character moves everything around him slows down a little. It does not matter if he is moving right or left. I can go towards a flying knife or try to run away from it, still, we are getting closer together at the same pace. This should not be a problem on the first stage, where number of dangerous objects is limited, but in the latter levels, when I am being attacked from each direction it gets annoying.

Maybe after experiencing very good *Zombi Terror* or quite interesting *Knights and Demons* I want too much? Maybe I am too harsh in this review? I want to point out, that Baron Ashler is a really good programmer but he is doing a lot better with games with a little less action. Let's assume that *Raw Battle* was just a minor mistake. I hope, that you will take some time and check some of his older, better games.

At the beginning of this text I mentioned that this is the last game released by Kabuto Factory. It was not a mistake and I did not meant to say that it was the latest. Manuel has announced that he is going sabbatical from retro coding. There is no deadline to this break, but I hope, that he will return at some point. I really would like to see another game with a nice atmosphere and entertaining gameplay created by him.

VERDICT

PROS

- Nice loading screen and tune.
- Easy to start.

CONS

- No music during gameplay.
- Disregard for the laws of physics.
- It gets boring.

60%

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SHOOT 'EM UP CONSTRUCTION KIT

Commodore 64 SEUCK games round-up!

By Merman

The Shoot 'Em Up Construction Kit (SEUCK) for the Commodore 64 recently celebrated its 30th birthday, but there are still many enthusiasts creating new games with the kit. Merman looks at some of the recent SEUCK games, competitions for making SEUCK games and offers some advice on using the kit.



SEUCK'S Main Menu

enhancements to the game. Set in 2050, a tyrant has seized control of the forcefield that protects the United States and now brave air force pilots must stop the enemy. Attacking a series of bases, the enemy is not afraid to drop a tactical nuclear weapon – so the pilot(s) must find a safe place onscreen to avoid the blast. Smart bombs can also be earned; when the border turns red the player can hold down the fire button to wipe out enemy forces in the area. The graphic style is familiar from earlier Border Blast games, drawing on the classic Slap Fight arcade game for inspiration. Presentation includes many neat touches, especially the atomic blast sequence.

OVERALL: 78%

(one of the demo games that came with the SEUCK kit, which was itself inspired by Slap Fight).

OVERALL: 57%

DELTA RUN



BORDER BLAST 3 (ENHANCED)



Alf Yngve has a long history of creating games with the SEUCK kit and this was his winning entry into the 2016 competition run by Richard Bayliss. It is part of a series and as a prize for winning Richard added several

DARK DESTROYER 2117

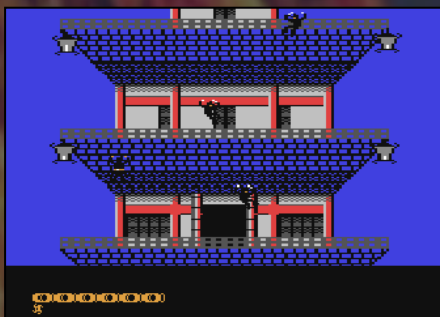


This is a game from Richard Bayliss himself, enhanced with SEUCK Redux and released for Christmas 2017. In 2117 a hostile alien planet is moving towards Earth. Can you make it through four zones and destroy the alien forces in time? Crystals can be picked up for extra points. Although the graphic style is quite distinctive, the game design itself feels highly derivative of Slap 'n Tickle

Richard Bayliss has produced many games with the SEUCK kit and this one features enhancements thanks to Martin Piper's SEUCK Redux. Alien space pirates have been raiding your home land so it is up to you to destroy their four bases. Power-ups are available – B is for bonus points, L is for an extra life, S is for a speed up and F is used to increase the ship's firepower. The player must also take care not to crash into surface features such as glass domes. The enhancements add a lot to this game, which has decent graphics and nice music. The short levels and high difficulty level are off-putting, but there is a fun ending sequence to see. (Thanks to SEUCK Trainers United for their cheat version that let me play through the whole game with infinite lives).

OVERALL: 65%

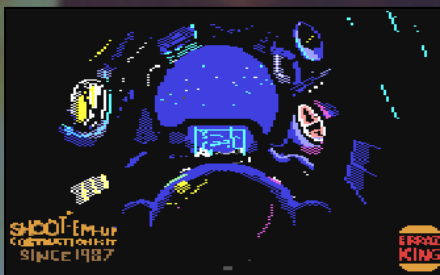
MAIN NINJA



The first of three games from Errazking. Our hero is a ninja climbing a series of buildings. He must avoid attacks raining down from above and reach the top to find his target. This is a very tricky game but does include some clever touches, such as breakable objects and eyes staring out of dark windows.

OVERALL: 62%

NERO



Errazking has been honing his skills with SEUCK in recent years. This particular game sees a space assassin hunting down the alien emperor called Nero, across three planets. There are some interesting changes of perspective as the assassin runs towards an alien city, explores buildings and climbs a tower. There are also clever animated

sequences, including one showing a ship landing on the planet. Graphics are OK with a nice variety of enemies but it feels very basic in terms of game design.

OVERALL: 68%

THE HUNTER

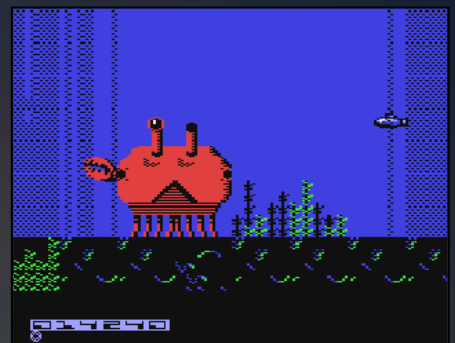


Errazking's sideways scrolling game won the Mod Squad prize (for modified entries) in Richard Bayliss's 2016 SEUCK competition. This review is of the enhanced competition version, which features a new title screen with scrolling high scores and a choice of music of sound FX in-game. The Hunter submarine sets off on a dangerous mission around the world, under attack from enemy craft and dangerous sea creatures. There are some memorable



bosses and a clever touch is the way the defeated boss waves a white flag of surrender. A top quality blaster that deserved its competition win.

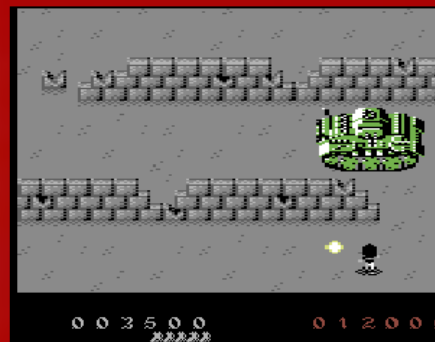
OVERALL: 81%



SEUCK COMPETITIONS

In 2017 there were two competitions aimed at users of the SEUCK kit. The Spanish SEUCK Competition attracted many great entries, including the hugely impressive winner VALKYRIE II from Eleanor Burns, and runners-up CHAKRAM (with its great graphics) and RALLY (an Amiga Kit game).

<https://seuckcompoyole.wordpress.com/>

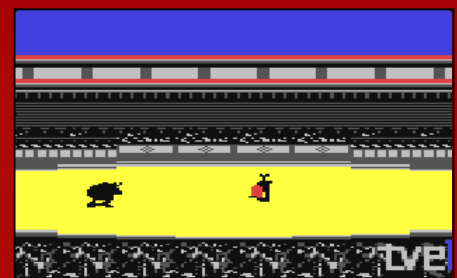


VALKYRIE II by Eleanor Burns

Richard Bayliss has run several competitions through his New Dimension website, and offers to enhance the winner's game as part of the prize. The 2016 competition deadline was extended into 2017, with games split into categories. 'Back to Basics' was for games that just used the original SEUCK kit, while 'Mod Squad' was for those games with minor enhancements. There

were nine entries spread across the two categories, with Alf Yngve's BORDER BLAST 3 winning the Back to Basics category and THE HUNTER by Errazking winning the Mod Squad title. (NIGHT OF THE VALKYRIE from Eleanor Burns won the Organizer's Choice award and was also enhanced by Richard.)

http://tnd64.unikat.sk/Seuck_Compo_2016.html



The highly original MATADOR '16 from Errazking took part.

Richard has announced the 2018 competition, running until the 31st of May 2018. This time entries are split into two themes – science-fiction / futuristic and fantasy / adventure. More details can be found at:

http://tnd64.unikat.sk/Seuck_Compo_2018.html

USING THE KIT

It can be daunting to sit down and create a game with SEUCK, but with a little patience some good results can be achieved. Here are some links to help you.

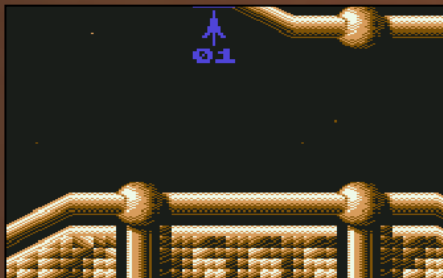
Richard Bayliss has the SEUCK SCHOOL section of his website, offering tips on enhancing your games.

http://tnd64.unikat.sk/SEUCK_School.html



In 2008 Jon Wells hacked the original Kit to produce the Sideways SEUCK, with games scrolling from left to right instead of vertically.

<http://seuck.gamesplaygames.co.uk/>



The SEUCK Vault website offers a large archive of downloadable games (for C64 and Amiga), as well as offering advice and tips on using the Kit.

<http://www.seuckvault.co.uk/>

Finally, Martin Piper's SEUCK Redux is an improved engine for running SEUCK games, reducing sprite flicker. It also gives great scope for enhancing games, including adding power-ups, a new front-end and music. (This link from Richard's site offers examples of how to use SEUCK Redux).

http://tnd64.unikat.sk/SEUCK_Redux.html



SHOOT 'EM UP DESTRUCTION SET 4

Game design, storyline, graphics & sound FX: **Alf Yngve**
 Front-end designs, additional graphics, disk menus, music & enhancements: **Richard Bayliss**
 Disk menu graphics, font, Expendable Army bitmap & packaging design: **Jason 'Kenz' Mackenzie**
 Inlay art: **Oliver Frey**. Additional code, IRQ disk loader & Redux framework: **Martin Piper**
 Edge of Time & Gigablast bitmaps: **Igor Errazkin**

Alf Yngve is one of the best-known names creating Commodore 64 games using the Shoot 'Em Up Construction Kit (SEUCK) written by Sensible Software back in 1987.

Working with Psytronik Software, a series of compilations of these games have appeared under the collective title Shoot 'Em Up Destruction Set (SEUDS). Many of these games have been enhanced with some clever programming, allowing SEUCK to perform tricks it was not thought capable of. Jon Wells enhanced the earlier compilations and also created the Sideways SEUCK editor, allowing games to scroll horizontally from left to right. This review is of the fourth instalment in the SEUDS series, released in 2017.

The first thing to note is the impressive Oliver Frey artwork that Psytronik commissioned. Each side of the disk version starts with the option of activating the fast-loader (which will not

work on all hardware) and a menu system. There are five main games spread across the two sides and four bonus games with one on each side listed in the disk directory to try. The tape version has all the main games and one bonus game (Super Silverfish). The enhanced title screens for most of the games show high scores and allow the player to choose either music or sound FX in-game. First we will look individually at each of the main games and rate them.



The Tau series are sci-fi style vertical shooting games. The Reloaded tag for this one refers to the SEUCK Redux code by Martin Piper, allowing it to feature a redefined score display and power-ups. The giant Firebird from the

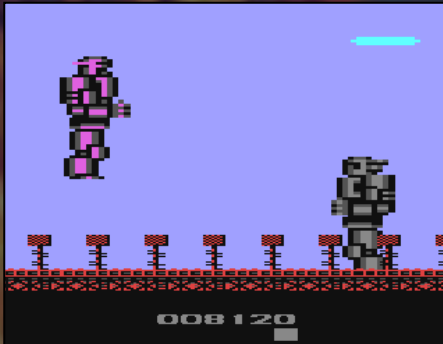


original Tau Zero is back, more powerful than ever and it's heading for Earth! The distinctive graphic style uses high-resolution background tiles (a trick Alf found himself) and sprite overlays thanks to SEUCK Redux, to give lots of detail, with an impressive explosion effect when ground-based enemies or the player are destroyed. Ultimately it is a solid shoot 'em up.

OVERALL: 78%



One new trick Alf Yngve has been using in recent times is expanded sprites, making games with huge enemies and characters to control. The Mech Cruiser



NTT-1 is a giant robot, storming its way through waves of attackers from the invading Russian Empire. A second new trick is revealed by Alf in this game, in that the robot is actually in two halves with a single joystick / input controlling the two players at once and it must split for part of the game. Chunky metallic sprites combine with visually appealing terrain, however the difficulty is high, but worth persevering.

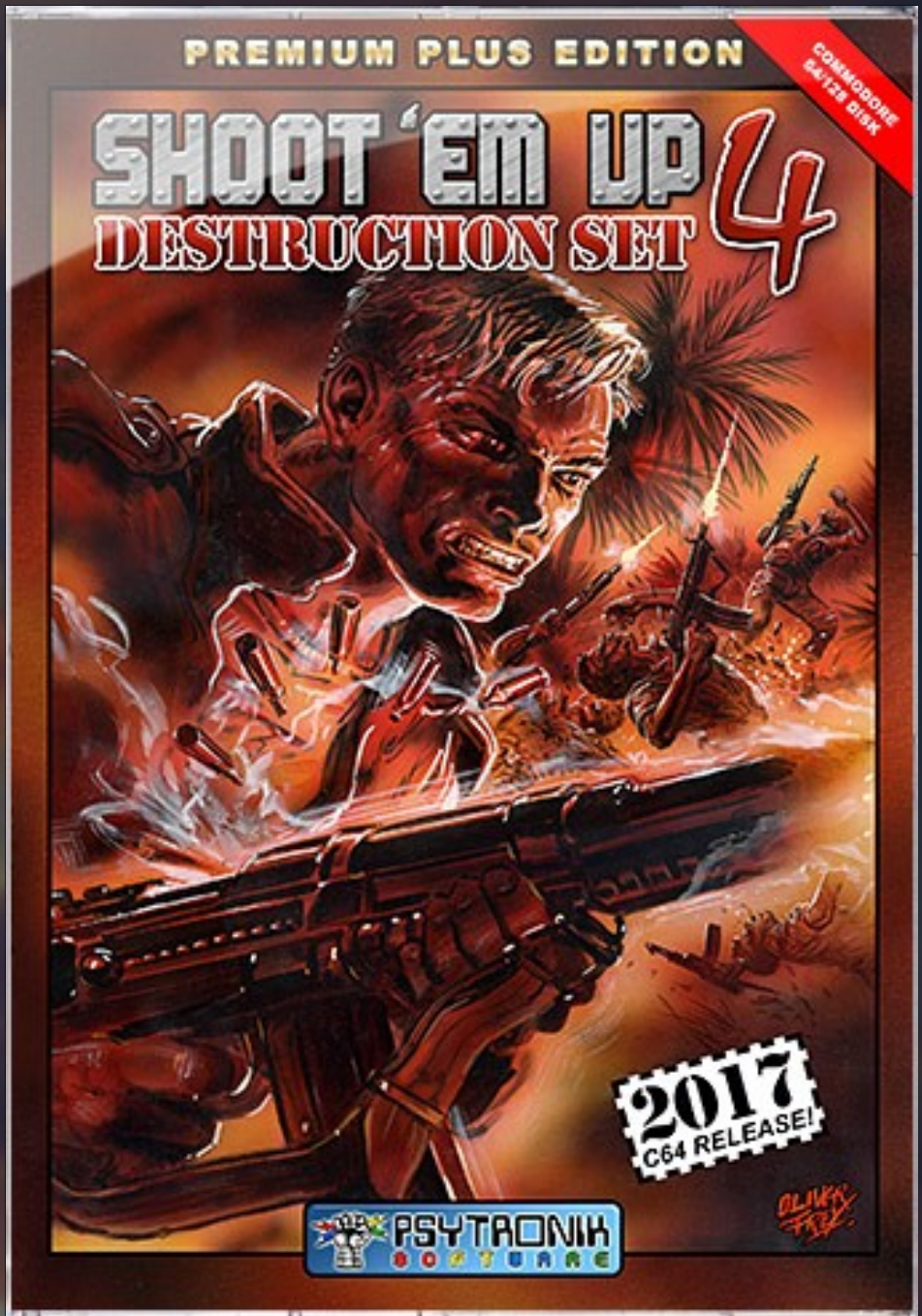
OVERALL: 81%

EDGE OF TIME

DOUBLE OR NOTHING 2



This game also relies on the two players at once trick and is the follow-up to an earlier game called Double or Nothing.



Order your physical copy from the Binary Zone Retro Store website:
<http://www.binaryzone.org/retrostore/>

Buy digital downloads from itch.io: <https://psytronik.itch.io/>

Set in the future when weapons can warp time, the player controls Joe Rubicon in two different time zones – one before a massive war has broken out, the other many years into the conflict. Care must be taken to avoid hazards in both zones, with huge mechs attacking and beacons to destroy. Some of the sprites will be familiar from Big Gun and once again the difficulty is quite high. It is an ingenious use of the two players, and well presented.

OVERALL: 84%

EXPENDABLE ARMY

The player takes control of a mercenary, paid to help overthrow the dictator currently in charge of a small South American country. With the use of a passcode, the game is split into two halves to give a much longer playing time. Weapons crates can be raided to upgrade the player's arsenal, and first aid kits award an extra life. Care must be

taken not to shoot innocent civilians, too. On the surface a straightforward



Commando-style game, but there is more depth to it and some stylish graphics. The prospect of reaching the second part is also an incentive to keep playing.

OVERALL: 83%

GIGABLAST!

Gigablast draws on the classic Terra Cresta for its visual style and also uses the expanded sprites to give a very different look and feel. Controlling a futuristic aircraft and its drone, the player uses its huge firepower to survive the robot testing fields. Well-drawn backgrounds and sprites work together, but it does feel very claustrophobic with so many large sprites in the playing area.

OVERALL: 75%

BONUS GAMES

SPY RIDER 2

Rogue agents are planting gas bombs in American cities, and our hero must stop them. The game has two parts. First is a pseudo-3D drive to a city in a heavily armed car, fighting off other cars and helicopters (using the crosshairs). Reaching the city sees the game become a horizontally-scrolling Operation Wolf style shooter, with the crosshairs used to shoot enemy agents. Impressive but held back by its fairly short levels.





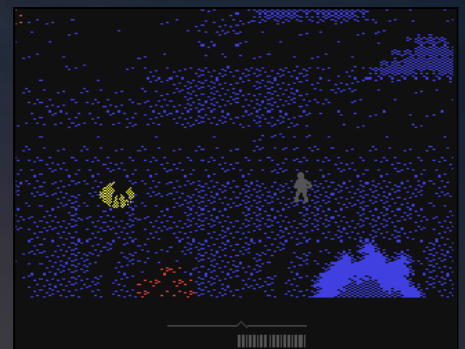
BIG MECH ALPHA

Big Mech Alpha is another experiment in expanded sprites, this horizontally scrolling title cleverly uses hi-res background tiles and puts the player sprites behind them (by changing the sprite priority) to give the illusion of flying through clouds or behind buildings. Another tricky title, closely connected to Big Gun No.1 in its visual style.

SUPER SILVERFISH

The original Silverfish game appeared on the first SEUDS compilation, simulating horizontal scrolling by "firing" sprites across the screen. This new version uses the Sideways SEUCK code to achieve proper horizontal scrolling, as a single player controls a helicopter. Power-ups improve the firepower and enemy bullets are aimed towards the

player (a feature from SEUCK Redux). Large waves of enemies and big bosses will be a test for the best.



DARKLAND

One of the most unusual SEUCK games around. This is a horror game with much of the play in darkness. Fortunately the player is equipped with a flashlight that can illuminate nearby enemies so they can be shot. Clever and challenging.

CONCLUSION

All the games show how well Alf has mastered SEUCK, and how enhancements can make them even better. Richard Bayliss provides some very good music too as well as coding support, and Martin Piper's SEUCK Redux is put to good use. With the bonus games, it is also good value for money offering a variety of styles.



VERDICT

85%



- **TEAM:** Released by ESP Soft. Gg (design, programming, graphics), McKlain (Music / SFX), David MACHO (Title screen), Lopez ESPI (cover).
- **INFO:** Free to download from <http://espsoft.blogspot.ie/2017/05/el-linaje-real.html>
- **REVIEWED BY:** CPC4EVA

EL LINAJE REAL (THE ROYAL LINEAGE)

Run n' gun platformers, do you love them or hate them? I prefer to love them, there's just something I really enjoy about adventuring into new worlds, slashing your way through countless enemies, uncovering interesting objects that may or may not help your gameplay and striving to reach some sort of goal or accomplishment when you reach the end of a level.

El Linaje Real—in English translated - The Royal Linage, is an Amstrad CPC, one player platform game that fits all of the above very nicely. Consisting of five differing levels, set in medieval 1458, a two year long war has lasted between the kingdoms of Arngur and Megrib. A royal messenger rushes into Ernor's tent (who just happens to be the Prince and Army Commander In Chief of the kingdom of Arngur), delivering the most important message that his father, King Abner has passed away after suffering a cruel disease.

To claim your rightful passage to the Royal throne of the kingdom of Arngur and become the king, you must help Ernor take possession of the throne on the third day after the death of, King Abner. If you cannot get Ernor to the ceremony on time, he will unfortunately lose his chance to become the king, as that great honour will be given to the next successor in the family line, Ernor's stepbrother, Devilus, who we all hate and really don't want to be King.

Prince Ernor looks more like a silver Ninja wielding a mighty sword than a Knight in armour, but that's ok because the graphics, gameplay and music more than make up for it. The screens are incredibly gorgeous full of the awesome, Mode 0, CPC 27 colour palette graphics. It's looks beautiful, it's a real standout of the game initially, thats the first few levels though, later in

the game it doesn't feel or look as good, which is unfortunate.

How does it play? It took a little while to get used to the mechanics, especially the jumping, it was quite frustrating and still is frustrating while I continue to play and write this review, but after having greater success at it, jumping is not as bad as when I first started playing the game, I have almost perfected it - almost. The scrolling is really good, no issues there at all, it's a really good feature of the game, slashing away, running and jumping, attacking everything that moves couldn't be easier, what can be tricky is the timing.

So what about all the adventuring and uncovering interesting stuff? The first level is more of a slash and run. Some interesting enemies in the form of birds, spiders, a skull and a swordsman will need to be defeated and they are fended off quite easily, jumping the platforms and rocks above water and

lava is where I had the most frustrations, timing is everything when you jump.

You can hold down fire and release it to shoot long distance which comes in handy, I liked this cool feature as it added a little something different to the gameplay. There was not much to collect in the first level, an apple to be precise, which may not sound too exciting, but make sure you are ready for the ambush towards the end of the level, I was surprised when I discovered this feature for the first time, to get through it you must jump and duck at the dart spitting rocks coming towards you while getting in a bit of good old sword slashing. It got the heart racing that's for sure.

Level two can be quite challenging. You don't have a sword to slash any foes, the mission is played inside the head of Ernor. It is an inner journey, to recover his lost memories as they began to fade



One of the end of level bosses', the red fire breathing Dragon on level 4



Looking more like a silver Ninja wielding a sword under the night sky you head off in your quest.



Defend yourself or you're red energy bar will drain fast and you will lose a life very quickly.



Gorgeous graphics continue as you run and jump your way among the stars in level 2.

while he was reading the message from the Royal Messenger. Your objective is to locate and collect three essential objects: the crown, the sword and the shield, get these items and you can go to level three. To do so you will need to work out how to navigate the upper, middle and lower sections of the level whilst avoiding ghosts, birds, skulls and other enemies.

It seemed odd not slashing your sword about, however it proved to be a greater challenge in exploring and trying to solve the puzzle to get to the next level. The three playing areas inside Ernor's head changed graphically, which proved another bit of interesting adventuring, as were the methods to go up and down a lift and to transport through entrances / exits in the wall.

While in the lower part of the level if you jumped up from certain areas it allowed you to discover more, it allowed you to be able to get to areas you couldn't. Some new enemies appeared in this level, helping maintain playing interest.

Level three, you are riding a white horse collecting food along the trail as well as avoiding enemies. Once you reach a certain point you are then inside a boat heading down a river with flying enemies attacking you, if you survive you have an end of level boss battle, all in all, it's quite a simple and short level.

Level four, more slashing about as you slash your way through a graveyard, then go underground and encounter more enemies and two end of level

bosses - separately. The first of the end of level bosses is a red fire breathing dragon, he'll burn you to toast so slash your way past him as soon as you can, when you do the difficulty raises again as floating lifts will need to be jumped onto to successfully reach the end of the level with the second boss waiting for you which looks like your character only in gold armour.

Level five is more of the same but you're inside the castle making your way to the crowning ceremony, another two end of level bosses to defeat and the throne will be yours.

It's quite a fun platformer game, but towards the end you may feel it's pretty much the same repetitive game. The difficulty level is enhanced by only giving you a limited energy bar, which will gradually decrease with the passage of time and also with each contact with any of the enemies. All this lost energy will be replenished by completing each level. You will lose all energy if you fall in rivers, lakes, marshy waters or lava and you will also lose a life. The loss of life will not affect the objects collected, except on level two. During the game there are restart points if you have reached a certain part of the level so you avoid having to go through the whole level again and again which was very good thinking and took away some of the frustrations.

VERDICT

PROS

- Gorgeous, colourful graphics.
- Smooth scrolling.
- Very well presented, commercial quality.
- Great tunes and in game FX.
- Insane grab factor.
- Excellent playability.
- Don't have to restart from the start of the level every time.

CONS

- Only five levels.
- Pretty much the same repetitive gameplay.
- Jumping is frustrating.
- Graphics and screens towards the end not as good as the first levels.
- In game words and text in Spanish only.

83%

- CODING: Keith Sear
- INFO: Free from <http://www.chibiakumas.com/ep2/>
- REVIEWED BY: CPC4EVA

CHIBI AKUMAS 2

CONFRONTATION

INTERVIEW ON PAGE
228

At the end of 2016, when the gothic comedy, bullet hell shooter, **Chibi Akuma: Episode 1 - Invasion**, was released by developer Keith Sear onto the Amstrad CPC, I thought it was the craziest 8-Bit game I had ever played. Eight months later, Halloween 2017, to be exact, if it was possible, Keith has shown he is even crazier than I first thought, releasing a follow up game to the project, **Chibi Akuma: Episode 2 - Confrontation**.

One look at Keith's picture, would give you the impression, Keith is just a normal person like most of us, he must have such a vivid, wild imagination though, to produce two games with such craziness, you would think he is some kind of mad hatter, thankfully he is quite sane (mostly, hahaha).

To be brutally honest, Chibi Akumas games are not the type of game for everyone. Firstly there is a lot of swearing, to me that's cool, but to others and to the younger gamers out there, perhaps not. Keith is very open and honest about the adult game style, so people should not be too concerned as the warning is right there from the start. Episode two of Chibi Akumas

(Confrontation), follows on from the first Chibi Akumas game (Invasion), the same sideways, bullet hell shooter, gothic spoof comedic gameplay, with a twist. The story is different this time around, many additions have been included in the second game, with more ridiculous out of control insults, more shooting, more levels and even playing vertically!

Chibi Akumas: Episode 2 - Confrontation. The Story so far.....

The town of Nicoyama is in trouble! Evil Chibiko is plaguing their land, killing their inhabitants and massacring their neighbours. If Chibiko's evilness wasn't enough, now her ghoulish brother, Bochan Akuma, has been resurrected from the dead too, it is just a matter of time before the inhabitants of Nicoyama are wiped out forever.

As any good towns folk would do in the face of ultimate evil, they seek out the help of heroes, but none have bothered to show up, so typical of today's society, everyone's too busy on their smart phones (I'll get back to editing this later I am on my smart phone - Ed). Instead, the infamous 'Hero Twins', Yumi and Yume Yuusha, with ego's

bigger than American President, Donald Trump, have decided to help the good people of Nicoyama. Their motives and history is very questionable, they are infamous for a reason, recently they were banished from nearby Hilltown, after a 'small' ecological disaster. Maybe it has something to do with their crazy military tactics that make 'shock and awe' look like passive resistance? The town of Nicoyama is asking themselves "Did things just get better or worse?". Beggars can't be choosers, they really had no choice in the matter. The ultimate battle between insanity and stupidity unfolds, a battle which will decide the fate of Nicoyama once and for all! Whoever wins, the inhabitants of Nicoyama know one thing for sure... their town is completely f**ked!

GAMEPLAY

The first thing that hits me about the gameplay, is that your main character, Chibiko's, movement is a little slow, even before any other sprites come on screen, she seems to take some time moving up and down. It's not detrimental at all, I just feel movement around the screen could be a little faster. The next thing I notice, the game looks much better than the first. No time to enjoy the view of the new background screens though - right from the beginning of level one (Medi - Evil), the craziness and bullet hell madness begins. What are you meant to do? Well press that fire button and shoot like crazy at anything that comes on the screen, don't stop shooting ever (you can hold down the fire button, no need to keep pressing like a fool). I am probably wrong, but the game feels harder than the first, even on the default mode. What do I care though, I can change the options and have 250 continues if I wanted to, you probably will need it too, I used up 60 credits and





Level 3—Dark Tech Noir is so cool.

still didn't finish the game! (you're so crap haha— Ed).

So many bullets flying around, there is nowhere to hide. That's the true nature of a bullet hell shooter. The game has been purposely designed to be impossibly hard to avoid getting hit. You might think that the small red dot in the middle of Chibiko (your player's heart) is a very small target for your enemy to hit, but with so many bullets on screen at once (up to 256 bullets at one time), your three lives deplete so quickly (probably because you suck at games? - Ed). Yeah Ed, you could be right, but I dare you to have a go and see what I mean. The other side of that coin is that you have 3 smart bombs to use within your three lives and do they come in handy. Wiping the screen of your enemies, collecting the coins they leave is cool, but the smart bombs have no effect on the end of level bosses. To defeat the bosses you have to shoot, shoot, shoot and keep on shooting. When Keith said the game is hard he wasn't joking (maybe he isn't so sane? -

Ed). That's enough out of you Mr Editor, those end of level bosses seem to be almost impregnable, they are mean, huge, bullet hell shooting machines, I can't remember when I saw end of level bosses in an 8-Bit game be so "bad ass". If you think the normal bullet hell part of each level is crazy you are right, the end of level bosses though, are completely insane! This may have something to do with the 256K memory feature. Chibi Akumas: Episode 2, claims to be the first Amstrad CPC game to take advantage of having 256K memory installed, giving you enhanced boss battles!

As in the first game, you can use two fire buttons, one to shoot right and the other to shoot left, for the enemies that come from behind you. It still takes a little getting used to even after playing the first game. It was an excellent bit of coding then and still is an excellent bit of coding in Episode 2. I am surprised I have not seen this technique used in other games, after all the source code in both the Chibi Akumas games are

open source. As in the first game, you can collect 'curse cubes', or power ups, to give you more firepower, allowing your shots to do more damage, has Keith thought of just about everything? It appears so.

Graphically the game is quite amazing, the dark, Asian gothic style, I am a big fan of, for this to be illustrated in an 8-Bit game is unique, great to see people thinking outside of the norm and being so original with their creativity. What gets you about the graphics is that there is just so much of it, cutscenes, main menus, background story, it's all fantastic artwork and storylines. In game tunes and sounds are very good too, they work well with the game not against it. Keith has done all the coding, all the graphics and all the music on his own. To have it released in 8 months since the last game, he must have not had much sleep between his real life and coding?

Back in the day of 8-Bit commercial game releases (1980's / 1990's), I felt that follow up games or sequels, tended to be not as good as the first game in the series as commercial software companies took an easy way out to make fast bucks. Yie Ar Kung Fu 1 and 2 are one example of a follow up game that was much poorer than the first, however developer Keith Sear, really has gone above all my expectations with Chibi Akuma: Episode 2 - Confrontation.

Remember, this game is free to download. In terms of value for money or value for gaming it's incredible. Episode 1 (Invasion), was a one player game, Episode 2 (Confrontation), goes one better with a multi-player option. As far as I am aware, there has not been



Level 1 boss defeated.

Meet the Akumas! The Good, The Bad, and the F-ing Stupid!

Chibiko Akuma



Psycho Power	9
Magic Power	666
Chibi-ness	9.5
Subtlety	1

It's fair to say that having a resident deranged Vampire living in the town of Nicoyama has not done the tourist trade any favours... And the townspeople are starting to get tired of being killed and eaten by a psychotic Chibi Vampire! Now they've had enough, and they've decided to try to get rid of her once and for all!

Bochan Akuma



Brain Power	0
Foreplanning	2
Hunger	9
Agreeableness	7

Chibiko's Choul younger brother - When he was alive he was dead stupid - now he's just Dead AND Stupid
Bochan can often be found lurking around the graveyard digging up some dinner - or feasting on the left over remains of Chibiko's Victims!
Chibiko often takes advantage of his. He's too stupid to think anything through, so he's always willing to help in whatever crazy scheme she has planned!

Yumi Yuusha



Strategy	8
Technology	3000
Compassion	0
Pride	8

"Supreme warrior an military strategist" - or at least that's what his bookface profile says!
Though it's true to say he's had great success vanquishing evil in the past, his reputation dropped somewhat once it was realized no one at all had survived at all due to his extreme tactics.
In fact it's now widely suspected that his military style breaches both the Geneva convention and kosher butchering laws.

Yume Yuusha



Magic Power	9
Ego	10
Creed	8
Pakurimon toys	999+

Self proclaimed Spiritualist, Monster hunter and Alchemist!
If there's a paycheck in it - She'll believe anything you say!
With her expertise in matters of the Occult
She claims she can solve all the mysteries of the universe - all major credit cards accepted!
Has a dangerous obsession with Pakurimon cartoons.

'Magical Girl' Card Hoarder Sakuya Chan



Magical Ability	0
Naivety	9
MiniSkirt	12
Karaoke	C

A long standing Nikoyama's resident, Sakuya has spent too long watching cartoons, and aims to become a "Magical Girl" and save the town!
OK so it's fair to say she has no powers, skills or talents...
And it's not quite clear how cosplaying, trading 'trafic the hoarding' cards and singing karaoke can save the town. But hey! she's young, enthusiastic, and wears a miniskirt, and she knows that's all you need to be an anime heroine!... Right???

many two player games in recent times for the normal Amstrad CPC, mainly because of the fact the original CPC's only have one joystick port, as well as the mechanics of making a two player game can be awkward to code. Quite noticeably, two player games on an original CPC, may mean actual gameplay is really sluggish with so many sprites on screen, this is not the case here.

All five levels of the game are brilliantly put together. The animation of the game in general is of a high quality. You are continually surprised and amazed by the level of coding Keith has put into the game. Each level theme is brilliantly captured, level 1, "Medi -Evil", level 2 "Fantasy-World Doozy", level 3 "Dark Tech Noir", level 4 "Spiritual Stupidity" and level 5 "Delusion X". My personal favourite is



Love those UFO's and laser beams.

level 3, Dark Tech Noir, the U.F.O's and laser beams are just gob smacking. After level three, the sideways shooting game changes to a vertical shooting one. The amount of effort Keith has put into the second game, is as crazy as the game itself.

The number of different enemies included in the second game can only be described as pure madness. In total there are 60 plus different enemies, over five 5 levels, last time in Episode 1, there were four levels with 30 plus different enemies. The depth of the game is quite bewildering, not just from a playing perspective, but from a development perspective.

It's a matter of personal choice when it comes to deciding whether a game is good or not, if there was ever to be a 8 -Bit retro game that would make a good discussion for this topic, then Chibi Akumas, Episodes 1 and 2 would definitely fall right into this category. Take one look at the games released by developers in all of the 8- Bit retro system communities (Amstrad CPC, MSX, Spectrum, C64, etc), you notice that classic platformers and classic space shoot 'em ups are what gets most of the attention. Sideways shoot 'em ups and bullet hell shooters, seem out of favour.

It's been a gutsy decision by homebrew developer, Keith Sear to go down this path. Even more admirable that he chose to code the game on the Amstrad CPC, in 8- Bit retro community stakes, the CPC community is small, probably vying for 3rd of 4th place in close competition with the MSX community, both systems way behind the Spectrum and C64 communities in terms of community numbers and games being developed.

Keith Sear can be mighty proud of his coding efforts. Chibi Akumas: Episode 2 - Confrontation, is packed full of features, more than any commercial or homebrew game I have seen. If you love your games crazy, like I do, then strap yourself into a straight jacket as you can't get more insane bullet hell shoot 'em up chaos than this on your Amstrad CPC.

SOME OF THE GAMEPLAY OPTIONS

- **Continues** - Specify the number of continues you have.
- **Game Difficulty** - There are 4 difficulty settings, 'Chibi Akuma' is the default... 'Hyper Akuma' is more similar to the gameplay in the first game.
- **Use TotO Multiplay** - TotO's multiplayer Joystick adapter - allows for 2x 3 fire joysticks with no key clash.
- **2P Continue Mode** - In 2 player mode, you can either share the same count of continues - encouraging 'co-operative' play, or each have your own 'continue store' - so stealing all the powerups and leaving your sibling to die will be to your advantage!
- **Gameplay Mode** - The gameplay in Level 5 is different to the rest of the game - once you win you can play the whole game in this 'alternative mode'.
- **ScreenShake** - Allows hardware screen shaking by repositioning the drawing area - if your display does not work well with this, turn it off.
- **PlusSprite Flicker Flicker** - player sprites while firing to allow you to see the bullets around you for better weaving.
- **RasterColor Flicker** - Allows the use of 2 color palettes, which are alternated each 50hz refresh - this is used to simulate nicer colors not contained in the CPC palette.
- **ScreenShake** - Allows hardware screen shaking by repositioning the drawing area - if your display does not work well with this, turn it off.
- **SmartBombs** - Select the number of Smartbombs you get with each continue.



Bullet hell craziness and the crazy comments begin from level 1.



Level 3 boss - the giant mechanical Chibikko. So hard to destroy!



Get behind the developer and support him so he can continue to develop 8-Bit games on all 8-Bit platforms as he is developing Chibi Akuma's: Invasion, for MSX and ZX Spectrum right now, to be released sometime in the later part of 2018.

Back Keith Sear on Patreon:
<https://www.patreon.com/akuyou>

VERDICT

PROS

- So much has been included in comparison to the first game.
- Cool tunes.
- 5 Levels.
- 256K memory feature
- Insane Boss Battles
- So many continues
- Two player option
- Incredible depth of enemies.
- And it's FREE!!!

CONS

- Movement of characters could be faster.
- Maybe too many bullets on screen?
- Are those end of level bosses too hard?

94%



Chibikko telling it just how she feels....

- **TEAM:** 4MHz, JGNAVARRO (Coding), SAD1942 (GFX), McKlain (Audio/SFX).
- **INFO:** Download from <https://www.4mhz.es/2016/12/16/el-tesoro-perdido-de-cuauhtemoc/>
Physical version also available.
- **REVIEWED BY:** CPC4EVA

EL TESORO PERDIDO DE CUAUHTEMOC

(THE LOST TREASURE OF CUAUHEMOC)

Lost treasures, the search for gold, diamonds, rubies, the excitement of becoming rich beyond your dreams, it's the stories of legend. Many movies telling of such incredible adventures are part of today's popular culture, the most famous of modern times is the Indiana Jones franchise by Steven Spielberg and George Lucas.

Game developers have been inspired to create games based on explorers setting off on legendary adventures searching for lost treasures, in the 8-Bit scene, the most memorable of this kind of gaming for me is Rick Dangerous (Firebird 1989 - AA#48 overall rating 83%) and Rick Dangerous 2 (Microprose 1990 - AA#62 overall rating 97%). Those two Amstrad CPC games had a massive influence on my love for run 'n jump adventure platformers that still remains to this day.

27 years on, The Lost Treasure of Cuauhtemoc by the 4Mhz group, stirs up all those awesome, wonderful gaming memories. The thrill of exploring, the excitement of reaching a new section, setting off bombs to break bricks allowing you to discover new pathways, the agony and ecstasy of timing your jumps to perfection, the bewilderment of solving a puzzle..... It's all there, platform gaming addiction at its finest.



Jump to the far right platform avoiding the flying fish, then quickly jump back to the higher platform on the left to get the gem.



If you fall in the water, you won't die straight away, you'll lose part of one of your hearts for each of your five lives, ingenious lastability factor.



Hmmmmmm another new enemy - I hate snakes! There's a lever to press on screen 5, can you get to it? Hint you need to jump up.



New enemies on screen 2, an exit to the right of screen and a ladder leading down but how do I remove that rock blocking the ladder?



Climb down the ladder and it gets all dark and creepy, there's a decomposed skeleton of an explorer past, new enemies and more gems to collect. Looks like another lever to press.

It has been written in history, that before his defeat at the hands of the Hernán Cortés army, Cuauhtémoc, the last ruling King of Mexico, built a crypt to hide his most valuable treasures. Centuries have passed, but to this very day, nobody has ever found King Cuauhtémoc's glorious hidden loot. Some say, the crypt of hidden riches has never existed, it's just another myth, however a newly found codex sheds some light on a possible location of the crypt inside an ancient Aztec temple. Countless explorers before you have tried to find King Cuauhtémoc's vast treasures never to have returned because the temple is filled with traps, secret passages, mummies, and serpents. Can you find the secret crypt of the temple and be the first one to

discover all of its riches? Sound familiar to you? It's like the very beginning of Indiana Jones and Raiders of the Lost Ark, where Indiana Jones enters the lost temple to find the golden idol.

If Amstrad Action magazine thought Rick Dangerous one and two were fantastic games, The Lost Treasure of Cuauhtemoc, would have set their pulses racing just as high, oh boy what a game, an absolute 8-Bit gaming standout in 2017. There are so many references and similarities to the Rick Dangerous games, perhaps one could be forgiven for thinking it is Rick Dangerous 3 in disguise.

Even though the main character with his distinctive hat, looks like a carbon



Loud bang, cool explosion but a waste of a bomb as the wall remains.....

copy of Harrison Ford in the Indiana Jones movies, coupled with the same exact movements of the Rick Dangerous games of running 'n jumping, climbing ladders, crawling on the floor, pressing levers, avoiding enemies and setting off bombs - I would like to think that The Lost Treasure of Cuauthemoc is its own game, in its own right.

I found it very hard to find any faults, it plays like a platformers dream come true. Running and jumping onto platforms in all environs above the temple and below posed no problems, it's all so smooth. Sure you will come a cropper often falling off or being stung by a bee or get bitten by a creepy spider but that's just you not getting the timing right. What's more if you happen to fall off a platform into the water or get bitten by a flying fish then you don't actually lose one of your five lives, instead you lose part of one of three hearts for each life. It's an ingenious way to provide stability and enjoyment which both Rick Dangerous games did not have, thus avoiding much frustration at constantly having to repeat the same thing over and over again. It's sheer enjoyment not having to do that in this game.

I was informed by 4Mhz there are 87 individual screens in all to explore. You will be amazed by each one of them I can assure you. The 27 colours of the CPC's mode 0 graphics palette are put to full use, in anyone's terminology graphics, artwork, sprites and animations of The Lost Treasure of Cuauthemoc are unbelievable, you would be forgiven for thinking that this is an Amstrad plus game utilizing all those lovely extra colours and features but its not. Add in some fantastic tunes and sound effects from legendary musician McKlain, you really do feel like you are lost in an Aztec world, those sounds add so much enjoyment to the game, I couldn't decide which was the better the music or the gameplay?

There's more to the game than just running 'n jumping about or avoiding enemies, solving the puzzles adds a much greater challenge and increases the difficulty. When you see a lever to press, unlike the Rick Dangerous games it doesn't actually do anything on that screen. You either have to backtrack your movements or go forward to solve the puzzle of what pressing the lever actually does. As you solve each new puzzle the game becomes more interesting, you discover new rooms filled with gems to collect, weapons to use such as a gun or dynamite and new enemies to avoid.

The lower you go in the temple, the greater your discoveries and rewards. Falling through the water sees your character turn all blue, with a snorkel displayed in the HUD (head up display) at the bottom of the screen, you're exploring, collecting gems and shooting at fish with ease, it's all so crazy good. At the bottom of the HUD screen there are four blue shapes which are filled when you collect one of the special gold coloured stones needed to enter the final treasure chamber - you find these when you uncover more screens, as you get closer to finding the lost crypt.

I can't help but be super impressed, the gaming is just pure joy. I love platform adventure exploring type games when they are done right, The Lost Treasure of Cuauthemoc is more than done right, it's almost as close to faultless as I have seen.

Once again the Spanish brigade of CPC coders and developers prove just how amazing the humble Amstrad CPC machine is. They did it back in the 1980s - 1990s with Dinamic Software et al, and they continue to do so today. Yes it may frustrate you and seem high on difficulty at first, these as I found quickly disappear as you appreciate the total awesomeness of it.

The 4Mhz team has put together an absolute cracking game in every



Turning all blue as you explore under water with your snorkel.



The first sign of collecting bombs.... The exploring is so much fun.

respect. Colourful is an understatement. Attention to detail depiction of a hidden Aztec temple is incredible, the thought that you are an "Indiana Jones" type of character searching for the Lost Treasure of Cuauthemoc is how I felt all throughout the game. Fantastic and amazing fall short to describe the gaming experience. The only thing that is missing that could elevate it even higher is the inclusion of cut scenes with a series of different levels as found in the Rick Dangerous games, but this is not the story of Rick Dangerous, this is the legend and story of The Lost Treasure of Cuauthemoc! An absolute stunner of a game to play and enjoy.

VERDICT

PROS

- Unbelievable GFX.
- Instant grab factor.
- So much staying power, so many screens to explore.
- 5 lives but you don't die instantly, you get many chances per life.

CONS

- I really can't think of any to list.
- I encountered a section where you fall into spikes and can't get out that probably is a bug / needs to be corrected.

99%

- **CODER:** Jose Javier Garcia Aranda
- **INFO:** Free download at https://cpcrulez.fr/GamesTest/fresh_fruits_and_vegetables.htm
- **REVIEWED BY:** CPC4EVA

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FRESH FRUIT AND VEGETABLES



Released at Retro Madrid (29th April, 2017), platformer, Fresh Fruit and Vegetables is Jose Javier Garcia Aranda's, 6th CPC BASIC game using his very own BASIC coding platform called 8BP.

The difference between Fresh Fruit and Vegetables and his other 8BP coded games, is that the others are

predominantly shoot 'em ups, while Fresh Fruit and Vegetables demonstrates the power of the 8BP BASIC coding tools with a left to right scrolling, traditional run and jump platformer.

The concept is simple - guide the cutesy pink ball of fluff with tiny legs character to collect about 40 fresh fruits and vegetables appearing at random over two levels - called the Fruity Castle and the Jungle Adventure.

As you go about your collecting of the fresh fruits and vegetables in the first level of the Fruity Castle, the 'Frutometer' on your left of the screen will increase until it reaches the maximum level you can collect, about 20 items in all and from there you are

transported to the second level, out in The Jungle.

Both levels comprise basically the same game play, however the backgrounds look different to represent the themes, the Jungle Adventure level is just a bit harder than the Fruity Castle, as enemies that give me the creeps such as snakes and bees are included. Something you won't see very often in a game is snow falling in the jungle, it was quite humorous adding a nice touch showing another coding technique that can be used with the 8BP platform.

Enemies don't pose too much of a threat, sure if you aren't paying attention, walking or jumping into them you will be gobbled up instantly losing one of your five lives. There are some





New enemies on level 2 - Snakes and Bees with snow falling, climate change really is upon us.

interesting techniques with the enemy such as the spiders crawling up and down, stopping when you don't expect it, then crawling back up. Timing your run to get past them is essential.

The controls are keys only, there's no joystick play here unfortunately. You are limited by three methods of movement - up for jump and left or right to walk around the levels. Jumping is kind of 'knarley', as you can jump very long distances and change direction while you are soaring through the air.

The level design is pretty straightforward, just basic platforms to jump onto, jump off or simply walk down from.

The main title menu is pretty cool as there is a nice bit of music and a demo of the animated fruits whooshing backwards and forwards, however in game there is just some sound FX, which sort of kills the atmosphere. Even though it is a very basic game, I quite enjoyed playing Fresh Fruits and Vegetables. It is a very colourful, one

player, mode 0 game. I just wish there had been a few more levels with a soundtrack, some more interesting enemies and a little tougher level design as the game is rather short.

VERDICT

PROS

- Snow in the jungle.
- Very large 'KNARLEY' jumps, you can change direction mid air.
- Nice scrolling.
- Cool looking sprites.
- Spiders crawling up and down and stopping.
- 5 lives should get the job done.

CONS

- No soundtrack in game.
- Only 2 levels.
- Not that difficult.
- No joystick play.



72%

- CODER: Anthony Henriques
- INFO: Free download at https://cpcrulez.fr/GamesTest/xalk-version_deluxe.htm
- REVIEWED BY: CPC4EVA

XALK DELUXE VERSION



Remember Tetris? Remember its main rival Klax? Both, were commercial arcade and home video gaming smash hits from the late 1980's. Their success in particular Tetris, spawned so many different knock off versions of the stacking blocks game onto just about every

home console and home computer ever created.

The Amstrad CPC had its fair share, either official versions or not, most of them not that great unfortunately, as it happens I wrote an article on such in the AA118 tribute mag back in 2008.

Differences made from the original Xalk version from 1991 include:

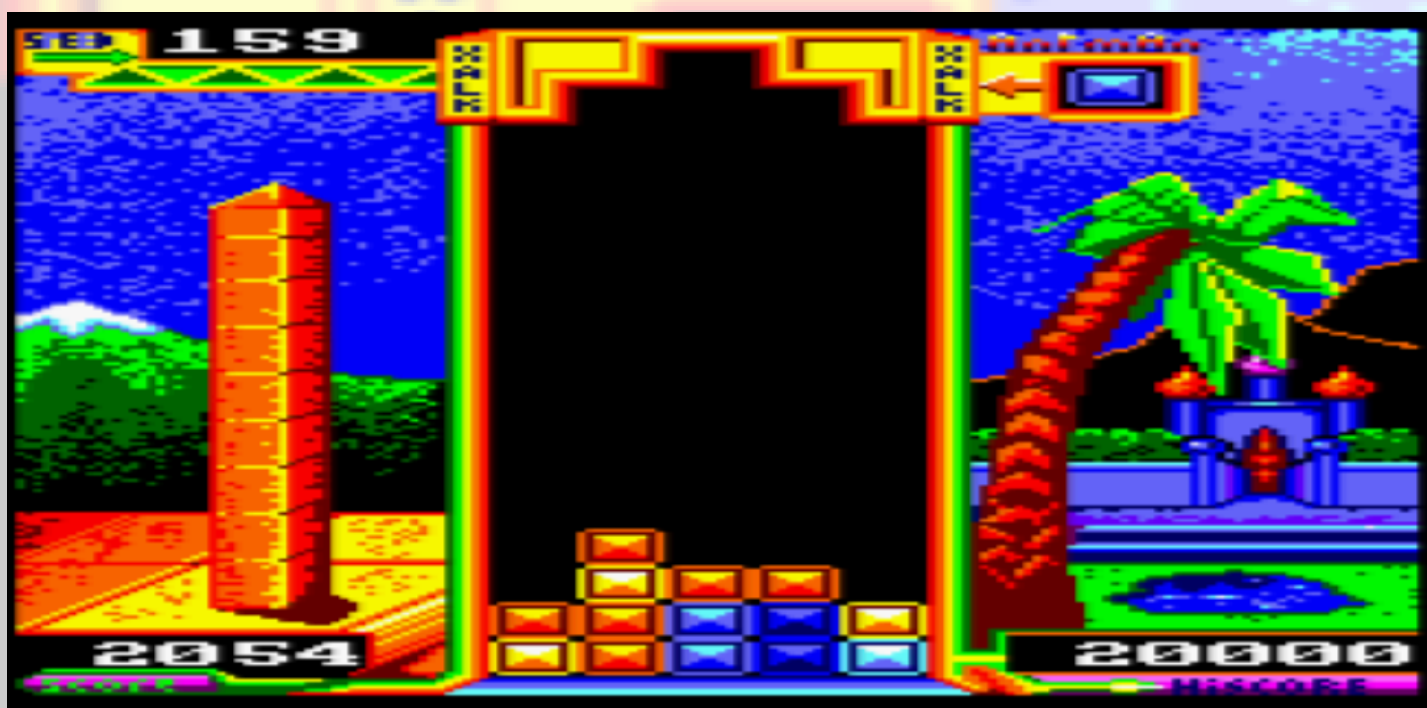
1. New background decoration which did not fit in the Amstrad Cent Pour magazine listing.
2. Improved management of diagonals and combos.
3. Removed the bug in the listing that left holes
4. You no longer choose the speed of departure as it has become random.
5. You can pause the game with Space bar.
6. The difficulty of the levels always corresponds to the number of colors of the blocks.
7. You can reset the score table by typing the letter R in the level selection.
8. The letter C offers you to make a copy of the game on another disk, which is of lesser interest today.



Xalk original (1991)

Even though I am not the greatest tile stacking player that ever lived, I know a little about the gameplay and what makes a good or bad Tetris / Klax style game - A good one is where you are instantly addicted, a bad one is where the game is agonizing slow and you lose interest quickly.

Xalk, did you notice it is Klax spelt backwards ? Is a one player only game, by Anthony HENRIQUES. It was originally a type in game (who remembers the pain of typing all those lines and your eyes getting tired for staring at the screen for hours - that was me back in the day) published in popular French Amstrad CPC magazine, Amstrad Cent For Cent, issue 33, January 1991.



As my score creeps over 2000 points the speed at which the Xalk blocks fall has increased to 159 and its becoming harder to keep the XALK stacked up in separate colour columns.



Xalk Deluxe Choosing a difficulty level and seeing your high scores.

Xalk Deluxe is the updated version of the 1991 original, Xalk. Gameplay of Xalk Deluxe is basically the same as Xalk, which mirror's the Tetris falling block style, but it uses the square coloured blocks that you find in Klax, so stack 'em up and match 'em up, is the name of the game with Xalk Deluxe.

Get the same coloured blocks in lines of 3 either vertically, horizontally, diagonally or in special combos to make that stack disappear freeing up space in the playing area to continue the process.

The tribute to Tetris and Klax styled games is a fine effort. Xalk doesn't try to reinvent the wheel, it keeps the game simplicity level just right, the speed of the falling blocks and the beautifully coloured designed mode 0 playing screen will have you hooked from the start. The background graphics are much improved on the original Xalk and are quite stunningly gorgeous, real CPC eye candy.

Having played Xalk Deluxe for some time, it brought back some great gaming memories of my youth. While, there ain't no firing and blowing up stuff, it was addictive enough even for this action freak gamer. It includes five difficulty levels, the first one you have 5 different coloured blocks to stack, in a 5 slot area, as your score increases, the rate at which the blocks falls gets slightly faster and faster.

The other 4 difficulty options increases the number of coloured blocks that falls

for you to stack up and remove, making it harder to match them in a 5 slot area.

Xalk Deluxe had a good feel from the start, nothing that really stood out as being bad while playing the game. While there was some nice in game FX, a music score could have added much greater atmosphere.

I enjoyed the Xalk Deluxe gaming experience, an enjoyable homebrew styled Tetris / Klax game that will keep you aiming for a higher score for many hours I am sure.

VERDICT

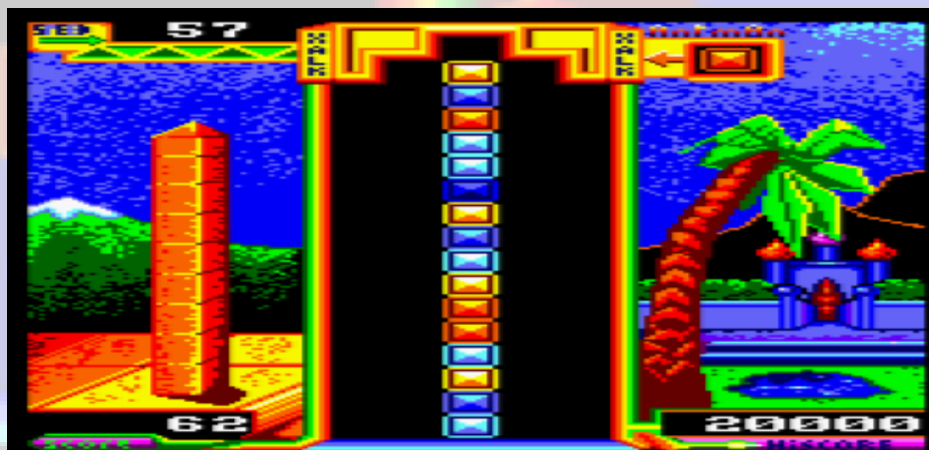
PROS

- Gorgeous colourful designed graphics.
- Simple addictive gameplay.
- 5 levels of difficulty.

CONS

- Really needs some in game music.
- You may tire of playing the same thing over and over.
- Difficulty level may be just a little too high.

83%



Gorgeously colourful in game and background graphics.

- **CODER:** Edouard Berge aka Roudoudou
- **INFO:** Download from https://cpcrulez.fr/GamesTest/combat_pilot.htm
- **REVIEWED BY:** CPC4EVA

COMBAT PILOT



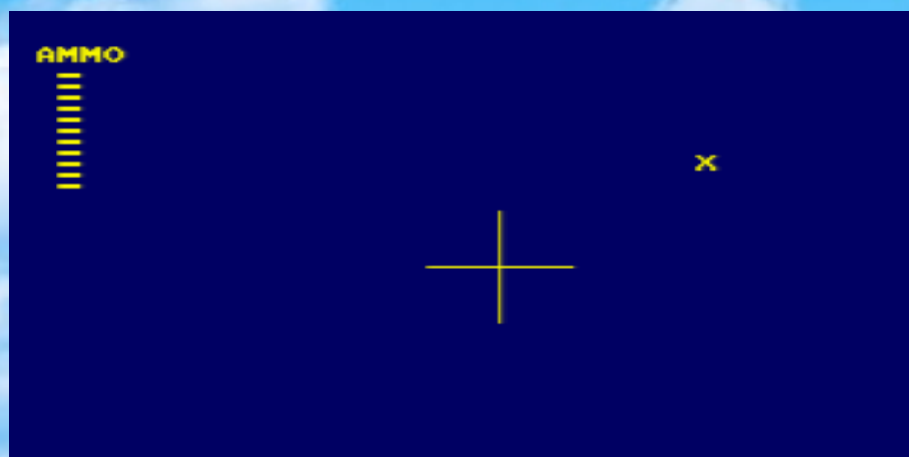
keys to try and get an enemy craft in your crosshair sights. When it's close to the middle of the vertical and horizontal axis, you press spacebar to shoot the enemy down.

There's 10 ammo at your arsenal, but you won't need it as the game is easy as, you will only need one and once you blow the enemy out of the sky it's game over and start over again.

An entry into the BASIC 10 liners 2017 competition, that ranked 7 out of 12 with a total of 6.20 from 10 points in the 'EXTREM-256' category.

For 10 lines of basic it's not a bad game of combat fighting at all.

What you have to do is use the cursor



VERDICT

PROS

- Enjoyable for 10 lines of BASIC.
- Sound on firing.

CONS

- But only for a very short period.
- Would have been good to have explosion sound on impact.

60%

- **CODER:** Ross Simpson alias Out Bush
- **INFO:** https://cpcrulez.fr/GamesTest/find_red.htm
- **REVIEWED BY:** CPC4EVA

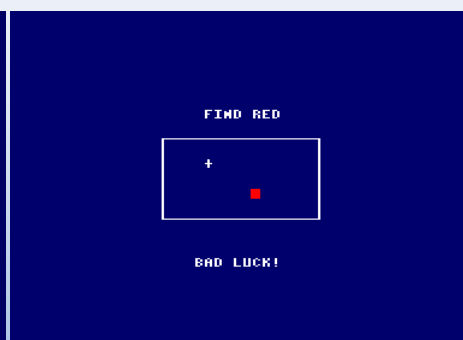
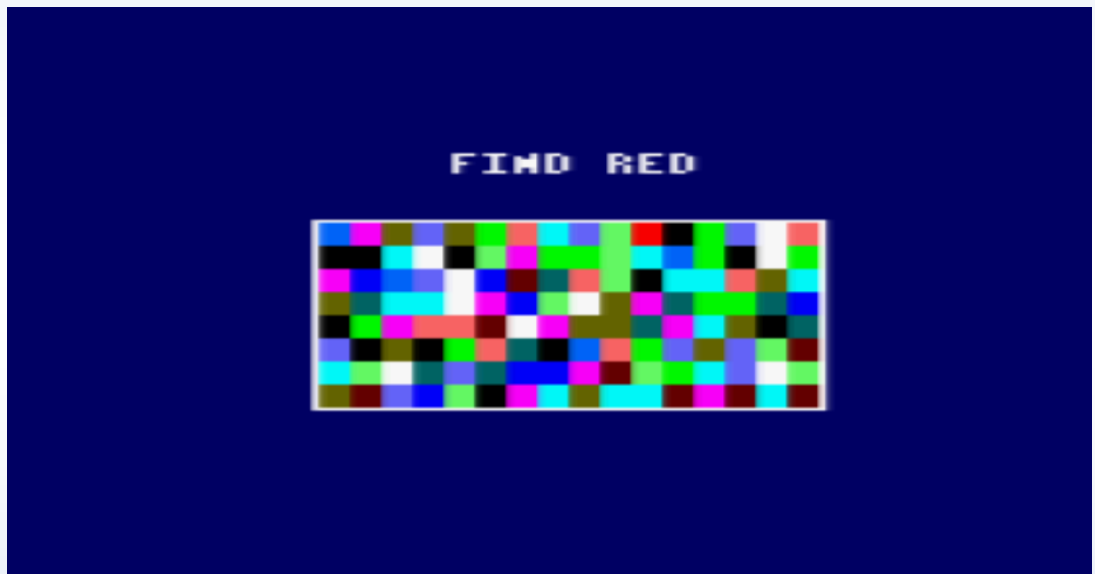
FIND RED



An entry into the BASIC 10 liners, 2017 competition, that ranked 4th out of 12 with a total of 6.80 from a possible 10 points in the 'EXTREM-256' category.

An annoying countdown sound loops about 3 times before showing a selection of tiny coloured squares inside a 16 x 8 rectangular mosaic.

You get about one second, that's right one second to memorize or find the red square hidden amongst all others in the mosaic, then it disappears



What happens when you don't find red!

and you are left with a blank screen. You only get one chance to uncover where you think the red square is.

If you get it right then another annoying sound loops and declares you have found the red square, if you don't uncover it, then you receive the message "Bad Luck!". The sound selection could have been a

bit more pleasing to the ear, the cursor movement seems to jump in multiple blocks and not one block at a time, so that's another annoying part of the game.

VERDICT

PROS

- Interesting BASIC game.

CONS

- Annoying sounds.
- Frustrating cursor movements.
- Only 1 second to memorize the mosaic.
- Only one chance to find the red square.

56%

- **TEAM:** Markus MACHEREY alias Shining, HAL6128 (GFX), MmcM (SFX)
- **INFO:** Free from <http://cpc.scifinet.org/>
- **REVIEWED BY:** CPC4EVA

PENTOMINO

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Pentomino? What's a Pentomino you may be asking? If you read up on wikipedia, I can tell you that you will be bored out of your brain with the full meaning, long story short - A pentomino or 5-omino is a polyomino shape consisting of 5 equal-sized squares connected edge-to-edge.

Conceptualized by an American Professor, Solomon W. Golomb in 1953, he derived the term "pentomino" from the Ancient Greek word 'pente', translated as "five", the -omino of domino, fancifully interpreting the "d-" of "domino" as if it were a form of the Greek prefix "di-" (two). Golomb named 12 free Pentominoes after letters of the Latin alphabet that they resemble. Later, another mathematician, John Horton Conway, proposed an alternate labelling scheme for Pentominoes with 12 consecutive letters of the alphabet.

That's the simple version, like you, I am bored already, to excite things up the best way to describe a Pentomino to a gamer, or anyone for that matter is by simply saying, Tetris style blocks.

The meaning might be boring, but I can

gladly say that after three years of working alone coding his Amstrad CPC Defence game released in 2016, Shining has teamed up with HAL6128 (GFX) and MmcM (music) and put together a most entertaining and challenging game of Pentomino on the Amstrad CPC.

Puzzle games, some people love them, some people hate them, I prefer to love them, I like to give them a chance and more often than not they tend to surprise me, they offer quite a different challenge to the blasting away shooting everything game genre. It's the simplicity of puzzler's that draws me in, gets me becoming addicted to them, as I found out, Pentomino is just this type of game.

The gameplay consists of using a hand tool to place two different shaped Pentominoes into an area of grey squares. To fit them into this grey area you can turn the Pentominoes around in any direction by holding down the fire button, really simple, yet addictive, challenging and thoroughly enjoyable.

I had no difficulties using the controls, it was all very easy and satisfying, I did

find a lot of frustration at times, mainly due to my own crappy gameplay, not because of the game itself. There are four difficulty levels to choose from, this adds another element to an already fun game.

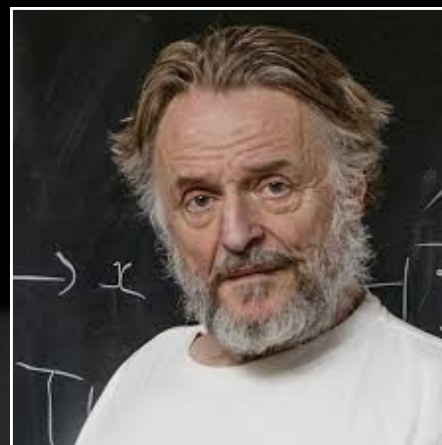
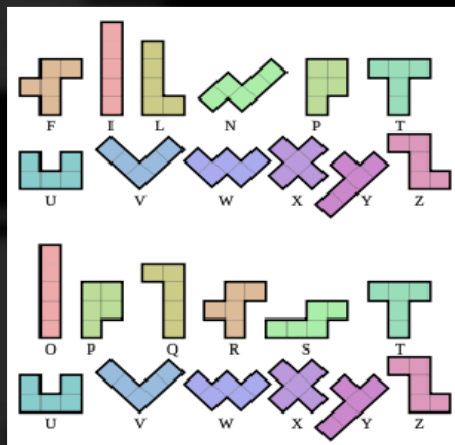
Level one is called 'Easy'. Here you must solve 32 puzzles of two tokens / shapes, the clock shows the duration of completion for the current puzzle.

Level two is called 'Medium'. Here you must solve 216 puzzles of three tokens / shapes. The time clock shows the duration of completion for the current puzzle.

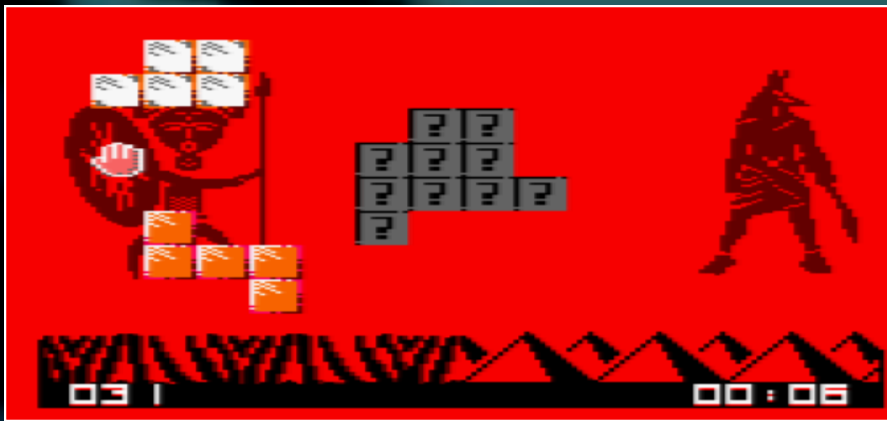
Level three is called 'Hard'. Here you must solve 216 puzzles consisting of four tokens each. The time clock shows the duration of completion for the current puzzle.

Level four is called 'Survival'. Here you must solve all 464 puzzles, beginning with the easy-ones. The clock timer will run out, but you will get a time bonus when a puzzle is solved.

What makes Pentomino on the CPC so



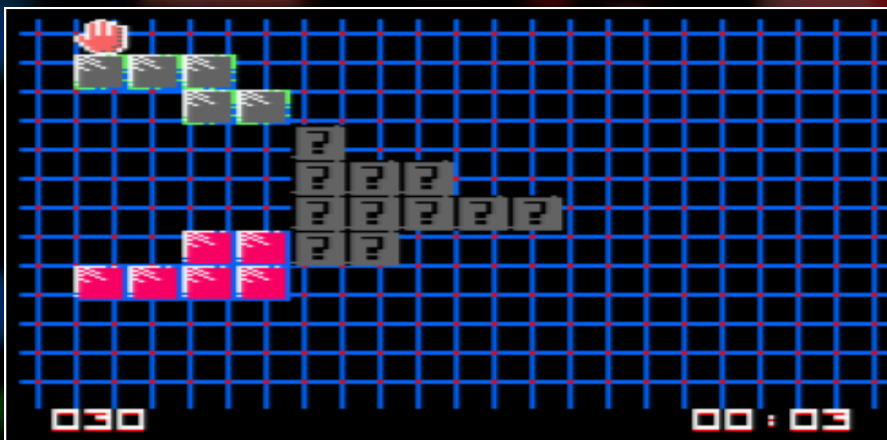
Founding fathers of Pentomino's - Professor Solomon W. Golomb & John Horton Conway. Professor Solomon W. Golomb's, Pentomino, is the top version and John Horton Conway's is the bottom version.



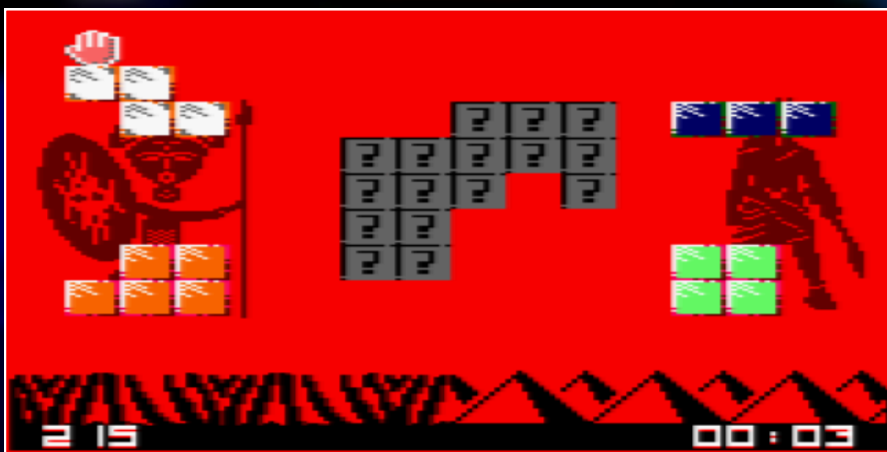
Level 1 - How do I fit the two tokens of white and orange shapes into the grey question marks ???



That's how, but it took me 2minutes 25 seconds !



Still on Level 1, with 30 more puzzles to solve!



Level 3, 'Hard'. Now with four tokens / shapes to fit together.



Level 4, 'Survival'. Arrrrghhhh!!!!
Ran out of time.

cool is the in game graphics and music - it breaks the norm, its originality is a standout in the puzzle gaming sphere. While the gameplay coding is impressive on its own, it was a very good decision for Shining to work in a team this time around as the results speak for themselves. Very high quality tunes and music from MmcM, that really get you immersed in the game, the use of the historic graphic style, also makes this a very impressive puzzler gaming experience.

For large amounts of time, I found myself unable to walk away and stop playing. It may appear to be repetitive to some, however each level presents a new challenge as the shapes of pentomino blocks change and getting them to fit inside the shape required for that level poses a great deal of thinking, trial and error and thoughts of how can this be even possible to complete? Each level is possible to complete making this game an incredibly addictive, gorgeously presented and cracking fun puzzler!

VERDICT

PROS

- Stunning loading screen, in game artwork just as good.
- Cracking in game music.
- Simple and fun.
- Challenging puzzler.
- 4 different game modes of difficulty.
- Runs on all CPC's, including PLUS and GX4000.

CONS

- May get frustrated a lot, Bahahaha.

94%

- **TEAM:** Deanysoft (1992)
- **INFO:** Download from <http://www.cpc-power.com/index.php?page=detail&num=14337>
- **REVIEWED BY:** CPC4EVA

FROGGER

10 REM My version of Frogger written forfun, using PDS on a PC in 1992. Recovered (finally) for all to play in 2017.
20 REM Best wishes, Dean



Green frogs are so cute...

Earlier in 2017, Dean Hickingbottom uncovered four lost Amstrad CPC games - Frogger, Acolyte, Ninja Grannies and Unpredictaball, that he had worked on and were expected to be commercially released by software houses around 1992, but unfortunately they never did.

Not quite every developer and his cat has coded a knock off of Konami's arcade masterpiece, Frogger, from 1981, but you get the drift. A game so simple, yet so addictive. Jump across a busy road, avoid being flattened by cars and trucks, jump onto some logs floating on a river, avoid falling into the drink or being eaten by crocs to get into your home base at the top of the screen, easy - peasy?

Dean Hickingbottom's rip off of the classic Frogger, was written for his wife



All they want to do is get home safely...

on a CPC and converted to Spectrum for a laugh - that's sort of funny! As for his attempt at converting an arcade classic well, its not that funny, cor blimey its damn bloody a nightmare I tell you. The gameplay is just too difficult. It is marred by the very fast rate vehicles and logs move across the screen. You barely move your frog onto the road from your starting position and you get splattered all over the road, the vehicles are that quick. When you get to the logs (if you are a super star gamer like Billy Mitchell) it's no different and jumping from log to log is tricky to master as you don't jump straight you jump at an angle because you are going so fast, well obviously.

If you don't have an infinite lives poke for this game you are going nowhere fast. I quite enjoyed the presentation of the graphics and sprites, its rather cute with a half decent resemblance to its original (I

have seen worse) and credit goes to putting in some effort for sound FX, but the game has nothing on the original arcade or Richard Wilson's CPC plus arcade Frogger conversion of 2007, which received high acclaim of 83% in the AA118 tribute mag the following year. This version may look cute as a green frog, but it's damn hard as a day in the dungeons of hell, maybe that is why Dean wrote this game for his wife?



Incredible how did I get all 4 frogs safely home? I was cheating, I had to!

VERDICT

PROS

- A half decent attempt at a Frogger clone.
- Thank god there is no timer like the original.

CONS

- Just too difficult.
- Vehicles and logs just too fast.
- You're a dead frog wherever you leap!
- Too few lives.

39%



Dreaded snakes on level 2, if the cute green frog's life wasn't hard enough!

One hungry family. One lazy bear. 350 apples.

Graham Axten's
**the Bear
essentials**



retro
GAMER
SWIMMER



Available now from Pond Software
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including worldwide shipping
pondsoft.uk

- **TEAM:** Clockwise Software (1989)
- **INFO:** Download from <http://www.cpc-power.com/index.php?page=detail&num=10015>
- **REVIEWED BY:** CPC4EVA

ACOLYTE



Another one of the lost CPC games from the 1990's that has been recently found. This game is believed to have started out at software company Video Images around the 1990's on the CPC. It later was taken on by Dean Hickingbottom and his fellow coders at Clockwise Software, where it was finished off in their spare time on both Amstrad CPC and ZX Spectrum, however it was never commercially released. After some initial work and demos, the sequel 'The Quest For Madelaine' was shelved as well.

Long, long ago, when men were real men, they sought out adventure, a good clean fair fight or two and a wad of treasures to be found!

Ahhhh, but alas times have changed, an evil wizard called Borderon has robbed you of your human form, turning you into a yellow ball of fluff, giving you the ridiculous name of 'Glut' and locked you away in a medieval castle, with little chance of ever finding your way out.

As you embark on this adventure, you will need to collect green gems scattered throughout the varied rooms of a rather large castle. Collecting the gems will fill a beaker, when it is full it will be exchanged for a golden key. The key fits a chest which is hidden somewhere within the castle and when unlocked, pieces of a magical locking mechanism are revealed.

The locking mechanism must be taken to the main entrance and fitted to the huge oak door that can be found there. Once



this is achieved, you are presented with a blown up display of the locking mechanism. It is promptly scrambled before your eyes and you must then shuffle it to restore the lock in order to open the door and finally be free.

Playing the game is initially enjoyable.





The green orb in the middle is what you need to collect, jump up for it.

There is smooth, fast movement while guiding 'Glut' around the castle and the walking between rooms is excellent. The entrances and exits are clear to see, it all plays quite well, all set in a most beautiful looking medieval type world. The graphical presentations and sounds are quite enjoyable making the experience of being locked in a castle realistic.

However, it's not much of a fair fight as you have no weapons except jumping or moving off screen to avoid the numerous types of enemies that drain your energy with their touch or from receiving a barrage of firepower launched at you. It only takes a few

touches and you lose one of your 3 lives pretty quickly.

The other negative of the game is that you find yourself constantly walking in circles, there's no direction to take, it's a whole lot of trial and error and that can get pretty annoying and frustrating. I really can't believe you don't have a weapon to shoot back at the enemies, I guess wizard Borderon is truly evil and wants 'Glut' never to come out of that locked up castle.

I love the concept of going on adventures, going through rooms, collecting objects, it's a style of game I can really have fun with. However,

Acolyte just doesn't have enough of those good things going for it. If you press "T" you will be transported to the end sequence, where you find out it's almost impossible to complete unlocking the magical mechanism. This could have been a pretty decent CPC game if it wasn't for all the faults.

VERDICT

PROS

- Smooth, fast movement.
- Walking between rooms is excellent.
- Beautiful looking world and theme.
- Interesting at first, but....

CONS

- May get bored constantly walking around in circles.
- Not enough objects to collect.
- No weapons to use against enemies.
- You can be dead rather quick with only 3 lives.
- Can you unlock the mechanism? Seems impossible!

63%



A snake in a boot - there are all kinds of enemies trying to stop you!

- **TEAM:** Clockwise Software (1989), Dean Hickingbottom, David Bradley.
- **INFO:** Download from <http://www.cpc-power.com/index.php?page=detail&num=10013>
- **REVIEWED BY:** CPC4EVA

NINJA GRANNIES

Ninja's, known for their zen-like calm, stealth, ruthlessness in combat, multi weapon abilities, agility..... all the things your granny just isn't. Life was a little boring for Mabel in her retirement years, so she decided to spice her life up with a bit of martial arts training, just in case she may need to defend herself, after all grannies are easy targets for bag snatches among thieves these days.

Schooled in the ways of martial arts, Mabel sets about her daily routine, first up just trying to have a relaxing day in her lounge, but three different foes

break into her house and challenge her to the death.

In the vein of Street Fighter 2, you have an energy bar that depletes each time you receive a hit, different attacks cause different amounts of damage. Mabel is a fairly mild mannered granny, throwing her handbag around at would be attackers is quite humorous but does little to stop them.

Change of strategy, grannies have to get nasty to stop these feisty attackers. Getting Mabel to throw a few karate chops won't do much damage to your

opponents, it's when Mabel really goes for it with devastating round - house kicks, (a move that would give any real granny a slipped disc or hernia), those nasty intruders will think twice about breaking and entering into Mabel's home.

After the first three attackers the game multi - loads up another three different foes, this time attacking Mabel inside the Giro bank, she just can't do her daily errands in peace, luckily, she is able to put into practice all those martial arts skills she has learnt, as she will face off against 12 different foes in all.



Mable brutally beats Burt.



She continues her rampage against an unsuspecting Joe.

The other locations include Mabel being attacked while having a stroll in the park and trying to win a few dollars at the local bingo hall. The opponents all have different fighting styles to the previous enemy, as well as one of the attackers who goes to great lengths to defeat Mabel, by 'flashing' at her in a yellow coat, cor blimey, poor Mabel, but she sorts him out with a few swift damaging round - house kicks to the top of his noggin', he won't be doing much flashing for a while, that's for sure.

Changing up her strategy of attacks somewhat helps, but it's those round - house kicks that inflict the most pain on her opponents. If you just let Mabel stand in the left corner to perform those round - house kicks, you can complete the game on your first attempt without losing a life, like I did.

I quite enjoyed playing the game, it's novel and entertaining - the cast of 'bad guys' is really cleverly done, I don't think I have ever played a game before where I was attacked by a senior citizen in a wheelchair called Rene or Edith who wears a balaclava and wields a heavy crowbar at you. From my research, I found out Ninja Grannies was inspired by the famous Monty Python sketch called "Hell's Grannies". It's not graphically spectacular nor does it have the greatest tunes, which I didn't mind at all, though the long tape load is annoying. Ninja Grannies, depicts the game theme accurately, it's presentation and mode 0 colours have been implemented quite nicely, there's no sluggishness or problems with sprite movements. The added bonus is that there's quite a bit of humour throughout the game, as can be seen when you lose all your lives, a nurse

will arrive to carry you away on a hospital bed, hahahaha.



Amos appears to expose himself to Mabel.



Ralph hits the floor! Mabel celebrates.

VERDICT

PROS

- Easy to play.
- Humorous.
- 12 Different enemies.
- 4 Different locations.

CONS

- Too Easy.
- No staying power.
- Sound definitely could have been better.
- Tape only. Long load time, with more multi-loading of each new opponent.

77%

- **TEAM:** David Bradley, © Video Images (1992)
- **INFO:** Download from <http://www.cpc-power.com/index.php?page=detail&num=14338>
- **REVIEWED BY:** CPC4EVA

UNPREDICTABALL

Unpredictaball, the meanest breakout clone game you will ever encounter on planet earth, is author, Dave Bradley's bold claim. I would have to agree. I have played my fair share of block breaking type games over the years, arcade classics like Arkanoid come to mind, while it was challenging, even that was not as difficult as Unpredictaball.

The reason lies on two factors of the gameplay coding. The first reason is that the space background quickly whizzes around from left to right and right to left. At first I thought the screen was scrolling but it isn't. It does cause some disorientation and makes you unsure of where the ball will land, in other similar games such as Arkanoid you had a better feel of where the ball would be expected to land and thus you could place your bat in the spot the ball would land.

```
10 REM Unpredictaball
20 REM
30 REM By David Bradley, 1992
40 REM
50 REM recovered in 2017 for all to
60 REM play, by Dean Hickingbottom.
70 REM (hi Dave!)
```

The other reason why Unpredictaball is so unpredictable, is the ball movement. I couldn't figure it out and there is no info to suggest why, the ball just picks up speed at random leaving you gasping - how am I meant to hit the ball back? I thought it could be the changing colours of the ball that is determining this jump to and back from hyper-speed, I may be right but I can't be sure, or it could be the colour of the brick the ball hits that changes up its speed so randomly, but I couldn't find any conclusive evidence.

There's the standard power ups to collect providing a longer bat, an extra life and you will need that one constantly as you die pretty quickly, bullets to shoot down blocks and a wall that can help or hinder you depending where the ball is on the screen. A weird looking enemy drops which should be avoided, if it hits your bat your controls will be reversed.

An interesting feature of the game is the inclusion of a level editor. Here you change up and design your own levels.

Sonics are pretty average, graphics are

UNPREDICTABALL THE ULTIMATE TEST

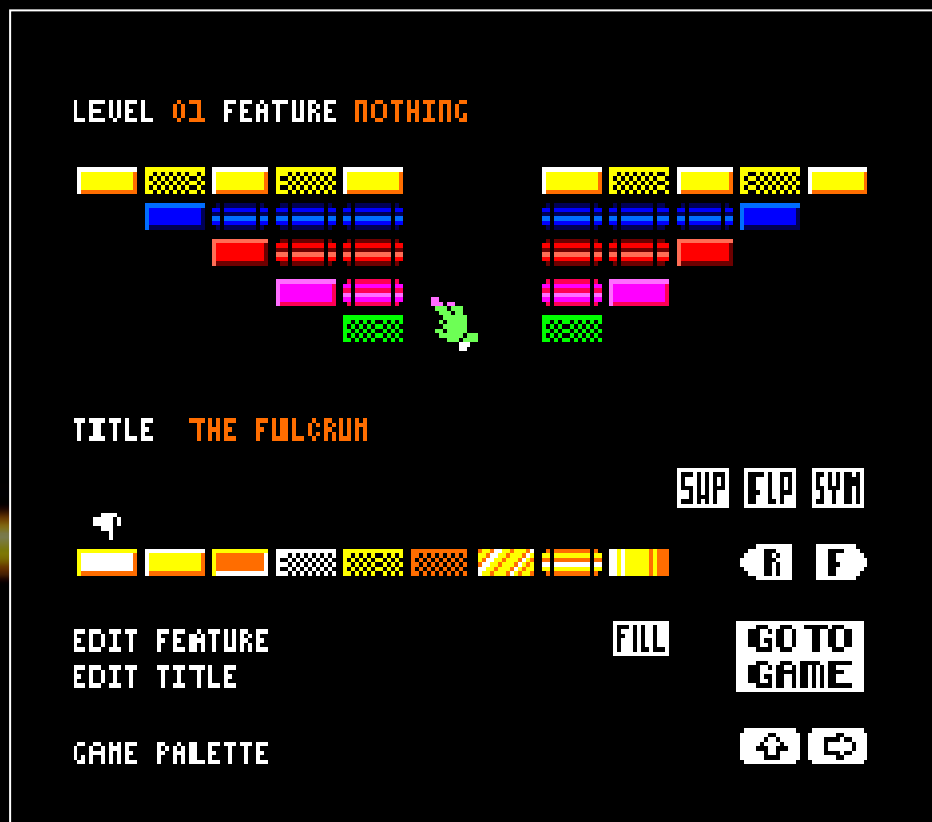


FIRE TO START
E LEVELS EDITOR
H FOR HIGH SCORES
GAME DESIGN GRAPHICS AND CODING BY DAVID BRADLEY



nowhere near as good as Arkanoid or some other block type CPC games I have played, it does however use a raster technique in MODE 1, allowing for more colours on the screen than the standard four colours.

Even though you are given a wad of lives, it's just not enough as you are continually losing them. I like breakout type games but, Unpredicaball is just too unpredictable for my liking.



VERDICT

PROS

- Interesting mode 1 colour technique.
- Power ups come in handy.

CONS

- Frustrating gameplay.
- Poor sounds.
- Too Difficult.
- Space background is disorientating.

38%

- **TEAM:** Morri (Coding and GFX), Mr Lou (SFX)
- **INFO:** Download from [http://www.cpcwiki.eu/forum/games/turn-quest-\(new-game-from-morri\)/](http://www.cpcwiki.eu/forum/games/turn-quest-(new-game-from-morri)/)
- **REVIEWED BY:** CPC4EVA

TURN QUEST

When I think of turn based games, well I don't often think of them to be honest, I am not much of a fan. 8-Bit nostalgics might immediately say out loud *Laser Squad* (Bladesoft / Target Games, 1989) was the best turn based game they have ever played, that may be so, but for me I'm just not that into them.

So here we are a turn based game called wait for it - Turn Quest. Coded by Morri, one of my favourite CPC Basic homebrew developers of recent times and living just across 'the ditch' in New Zealand.

Morri was inspired to create Turn Quest by playing the game *Fire & Brimstone*, coded by Frenchman, Benjamin Soule. Who says he is an itinerant game designer, by itinerant he means he is still looking for the holy grail of game design (good luck with that), he can be contacted on twitter if anyone is interested to find out more....
[@benjamin_soule_](https://twitter.com/benjamin_soule)

Anyway, its not about him, its all about Morri's, Turn Quest.

The premise is simple. You are the blonde hero of the game, to complete it

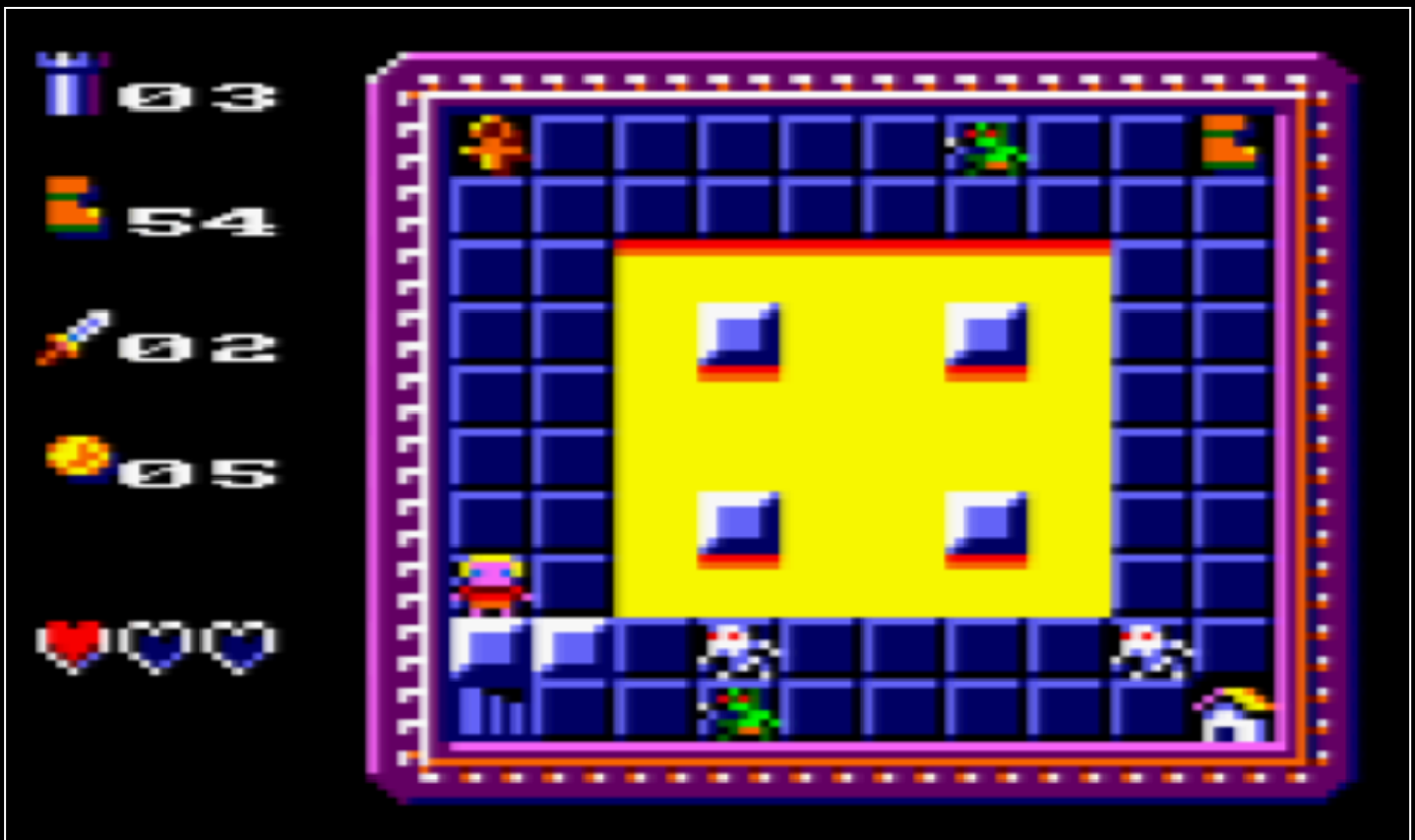
you must save the Princess. Seems easy and simple enough. How to save the Princess is done so by using the cursor keys in the direction you want to move your blonde haired hero (why are blondes always saving the Princess?).

You can only move the hero one block at a time and only if the path is not blocked. It is a very simple 'rogue-like' turn based game consisting of 10 different dungeons, numerous enemies such as spiders, skeletons and goblins, all on a 10 x 10 map.

All the maps and enemies skills are pre-



One spider won't be much of a challenge.



Enemies are everywhere, with only 59 turns left can you make it to the next level? Straight ahead is the 'Power Up' key. To the right of screen is the brown boot to replenish your turns.

set for each game but the placement on each map and the skill ability of enemies is randomized meaning no two games are the same.

A help guide at the beginning of the game gives you a general idea of what to do, it's not complex by any means but having it there as a reference may just help you play a better strategy.

As with most turn based games, strategy is what it's all about. You always get the first turn in Turn Quest and this is not always helpful as you will see when you play it for yourself. Pressing spacebar shows a particular enemy's characteristics on the right of screen. Some can be killed with one attack others with two or three attacks.

Will you decide to attack and possibly lose a life or three or will you run for the exit? These are some of the choices you must make.

Maybe it's not as simple as that, as you have only 99 turns to start with, if you run out of turns, you guessed correctly, it's game over. Turns can be replenished by collecting what looks like a brown boot on the map, so your strategy will encompass collecting the boot so you have a chance of being successful on the next level too. Other bonuses can be attained if you get to the key icon also known as the 'Power Ups'. Here you can select from the random gifts on offer including another life, replenishing your health, increasing your sword attack power, using a shield for protection or adding more coins.

Overall, it's a very nice, colourful, turn based clone, with some well drawn graphics and sprites for all characters on the map. Gameplay while not that challenging was easy enough to enjoy, yet, I felt that some alterations could see this being an excellent turn based game instead of an average one. Once again

developer Morri has done great things with a Basic coded game. It is rather enjoyably quite addictive at times but at other times, equally really annoying and 'pull out hair' frustrating as the difficulty factor is too high, as games can end quite abruptly and still you haven't saved the Princess - maybe that's why blonde heroes are always sent to save Princesses, hmmm who knows?

VERDICT

PROS

- Might be a clone of Fire & Brimstone but looks like an original.
- Plays well even if it is coded in Basic.
- Colourful GFX and helpful instructions screen.

CONS

- Always start with the first turn.
- Difficulty possibly set too high as games end quickly.



Bonus upgrades!

71%

- **CODING:** Tomas Penalver. Created with Arcade Game Designer (AGD).
- **INFO:** € 8.75 on cassette from <http://www.matranet.net/boutique/buy.php> or download from <https://lwsoftblog.wordpress.com/descargas/>
- **REVIEWED BY:** CPC4EVA

TRY AND RUN AWAY

Try to run away by Thomas Penalver has caught my attention due to it being created with Arcade Game Designer (AGD). AGD is quite popular amongst Spectrum game developers and coders but I am not so sure when it comes to CPC games being created with it, perhaps they just aren't aware of it as much as the Spectrum community is?

What is Try To Run Away about then? Your blonde haired assassin (not this again - ed? Well there is more than one colour of hair on the planet - CPC4EVA), no unfortunately it's not an action shoot 'em up, even though I wished it was.

So your blonde head of hair character

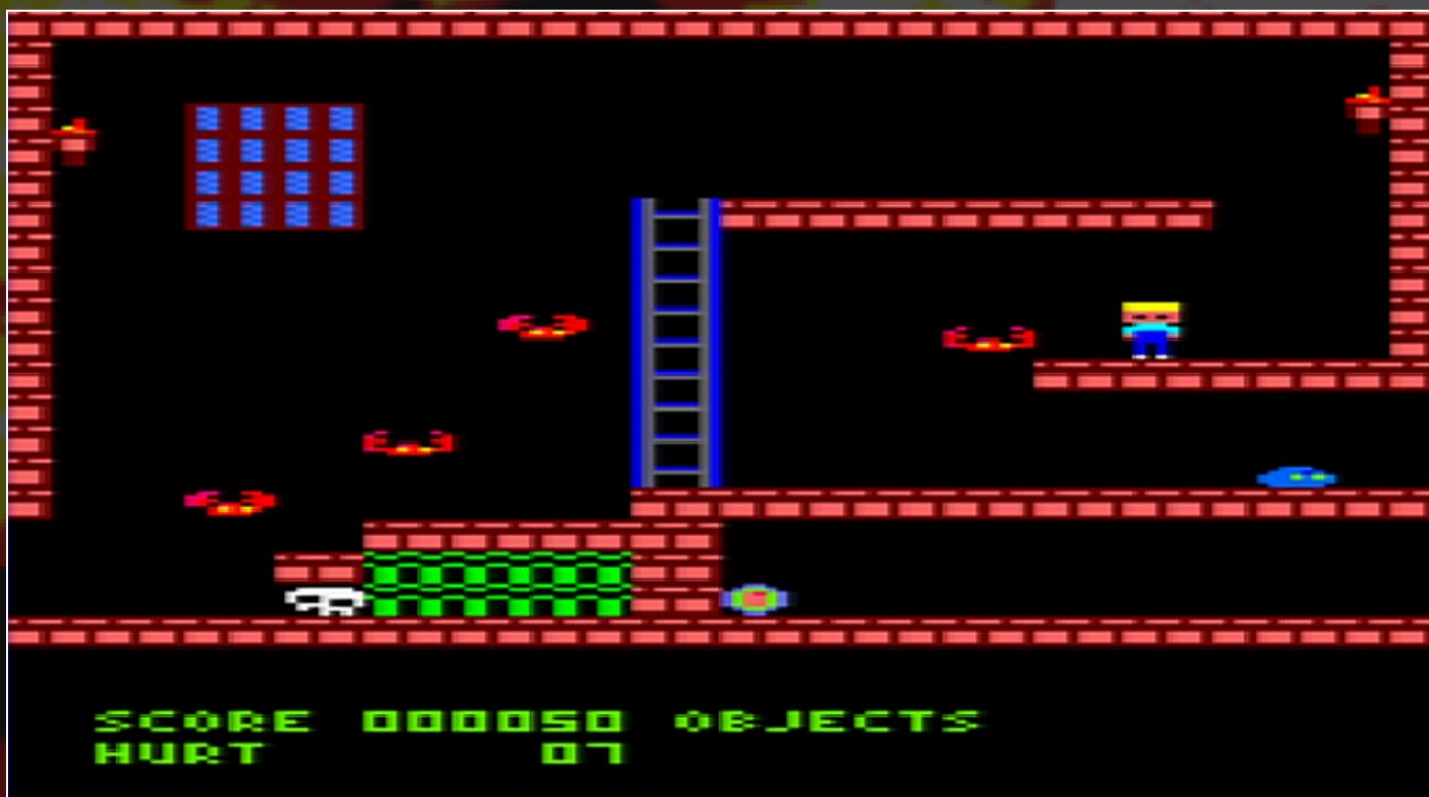
finds himself locked inside a house unable to get out. He is surrounded by bats (or are they spiders?), a floating head, some kind of crawling blob and a gate that comes up from the ground unexpectedly. If he is touched by any of these enemies a hurt meter will increase. To decrease the hurt meter you must eat food that is located almost everywhere. If the hurt meter hits 99, it's game over.

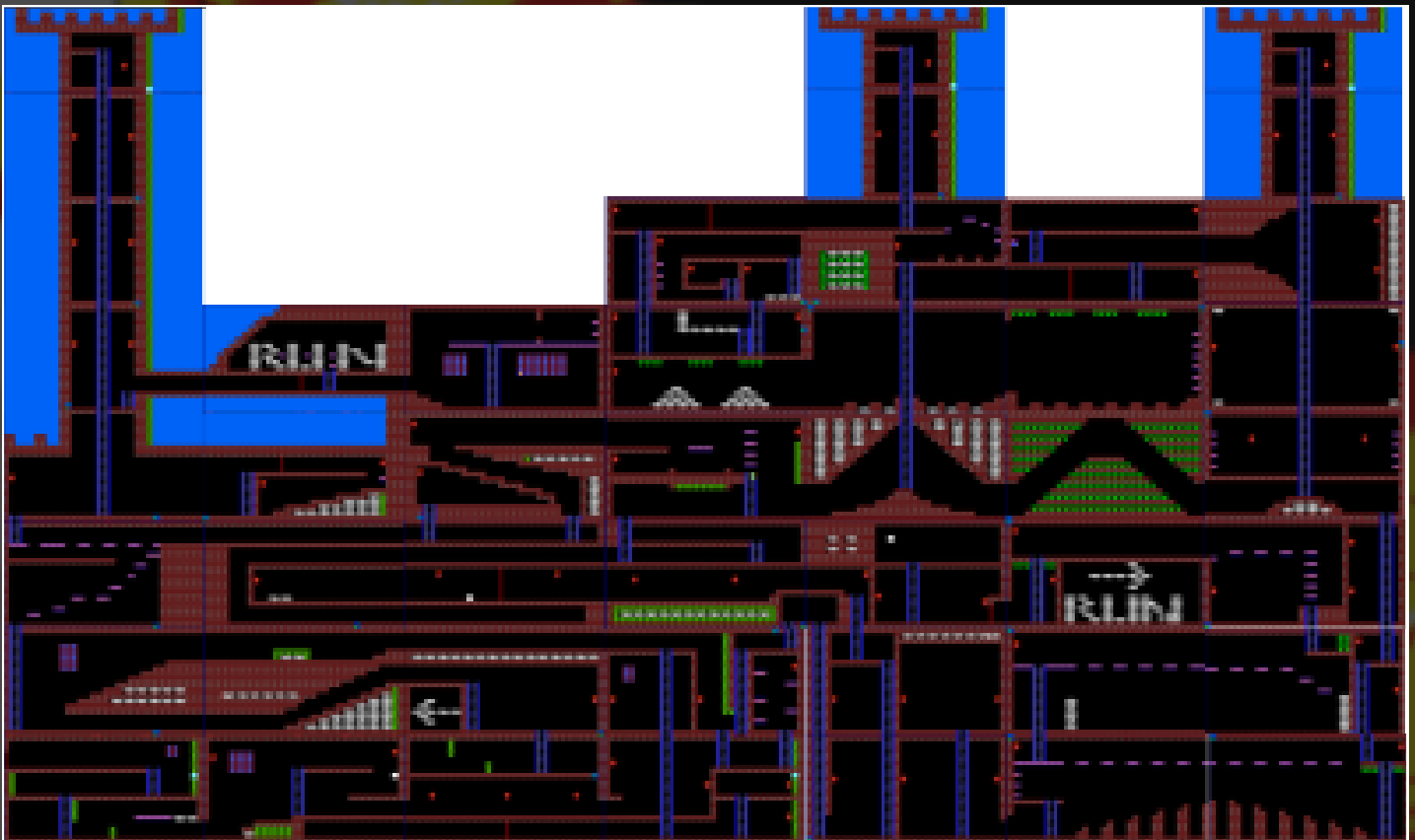
To be able to escape you need to explore the 40 rooms and collect all the 8 Ball objects and one key. Once you have those, make your way back to the first screen and open the last door to be free.

Gameplay involves a pretty stock standard platformer with a few puzzles of



solving how to get to the objects. Graphically it's not too bad, it's colourful with some nice looking artwork and level design, but essentially it's quite plain looking. Control of your character is either by keys or joystick so that's good





The full map!

for people like me who don't like using the keys. It can be a little finicky in spots such as when you position yourself on the ladders, climbing up and down.

I really tried to want to like the game as I am a supporter of home brew gaming and like what I have seen with developers putting games together with AGD, especially the Spectrum's community efforts with it. There just seems like there is no excitement in

playing Try To Run Away, perhaps adding some music may have helped ease this problem but I'm not so sure it would have helped much. Maybe some more collecting of objects as it seems to be a very big playing area with only a small amount of objects to collect. There could have been two types - easy objects to collect and the harder objects to collect, it may have helped cure some of the boredom I experienced with the gameplay.

With many homebrew games being created these days it really isn't about developing the most awesome game ever, it's more about the learning and coding experience. I spoke with the coder of 'Try To Run Away' recently, he informed me that he created the game as a tribute to his youth, "a debt repaid to my childhood" were his exact words. That's what it's all about, regardless of any limitations or technical quality.



VERDICT

PROS

- 40 screens.
- Joystick play.
- Some decent enough artwork.

CONS

- No music.
- Boring gameplay.
- Not enough objects.
- Control / movement on ladders finicky.

58%

#CPCRETRO

Amstrad 64K Microcomp
©1984 Amstrad Consumer
and Locomo
BASIC 1.0
Ready

Once again, annual Amstrad CPC game creation contest #CPCRETRODEV, was hosted by the University of Alicante, in Spain. Entries closed at the end of October 2017, however the awards ceremony was held in early November, 2017. Now in its fifth year, a total of 29 new Amstrad CPC games were entered for the latest competition. The number of games presented at the contest was down a little in comparison to previous years - 2015 (36 games) and 2016 (34games).

The overall honours for the 2017 contest went to block moving, strategy / puzzle platformer, Baba's Palace, by Rafa Castillo and John McLain. Turn the page for a full review of the game. If you love games that test and challenge your brain to solve puzzles, then you will love Baba's Palace, a very high quality 64Kb game, a very deserving and popular winner of the 2017, #CPCRETRODEV competition.

Receiving second place was platformer, Profanation 2, by 4Mhz. My own view of this ranking, I question the judges decision on awarding Profanation 2, as the second best game of the competition. Why? In short the game is



unplayable, I am not alone with this point of view either.

In third place was Basket Cases, by CNGSoft. A basketball game, with the funny name that plays at a fast pace. Finally a half decent sports game for CPC enthusiasts to play, myself included. Sports games on the CPC have been few and far between for many years, as CPC developers seem to be hypnotized into coding platformers and shoot 'em ups.

Fourth place was taken out by Cris, Odd Prelude. As the name might suggest,

this is an odd platformer fantasy adventure with some oddities in the gameplay. A very unique game for the CPC that many may think plays and looks similar to Prince of Persia (Microids-Broderbund, 1990) or even be the CPC 64Kb equivalent to the highly rated, 2D side-scroller, puzzle-platform adventure, "Limbo", by independent studio Playdead (2010 on Xbox Live and ported to several other systems). Rounding out the top five was Bitume. A car shoot 'em up, inspired by Ubi Soft's, 1987, car game, 'Asphalt'. It has some lovely graphics and decent gameplay.



RODEV 2017

RESULTS

POSITION	GAME	SCORE	POSITION	GAME	SCORE
1	Baba's Palace	260	16	Fitzroy and the Missing Chair	82
2	Profanation 2	243	17	RollaBlaze	77
3	Basket Cases	233	18	Pixel Brawl	72
4	Cris: Odd Prelude	232	19	Tunnel Effect	72
5	Bitume	187	20	Moon Man	69
6	Laser Boy	180	21	X-Cape	63
7	Raimbo	178	22	Piti	59
8	Phantis Legacy	178	23	UFO	52
9	Nightmare Fortress	159	24	Dethroned	43
10	Proton Smoke	133	25	My Galaxy	39
11	Agent 006	113	26	Temple Scape	31
12	Balls	104	27	Color Flood	31
13	4676: Invasion	101	28	Plman Survival	26
14	Earth Defender	97	29	Eiro's Bridge	6
15	Brutal Fighters	90			

- TEAM: Rafa Castillo, John McKlain (Music and SFX)
- INFO: Download from <http://cpcretrodev.byterrealms.com/en/>
- REVIEWED BY: CPC4EVA



BABA'S PALACE

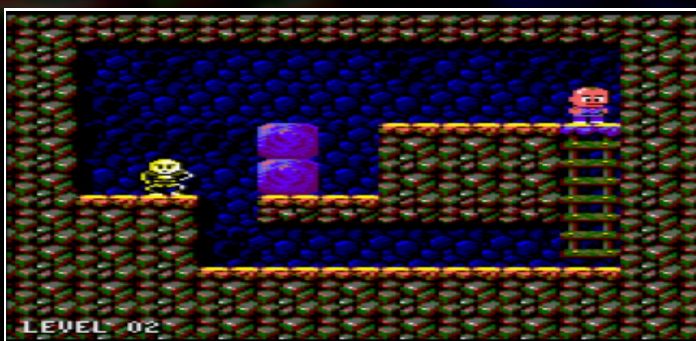


Past winners of the Amstrad #CPCRETRODEV, game creation contest, have shown just how awesome games can be using only 64kb of memory. Baba's Palace, continues that tradition taking out the overall top placing, in emphatic style.

It may only be a simple puzzle / strategy game of moving blocks about a single screen, which I am sure most gamers would have experienced playing so many of in the past. The presentation and enjoyment that you get out of playing Baba's Palace is what sets it apart from the rest of the games in this genre.

From the gorgeous cutscene introductory mini movie with musical score during the loader, to the simplicity of the opening levels and then the game becoming a greater challenge to unlock the puzzles in later levels, Baba's Palace gameplay is faultless.

What is Baba's Palace you ask? The story unfolds with Shaolin Kid, an experienced apprentice of martial arts, on a quest to improve his fighting techniques so he can help those oppressed by the injustices and abuse of the powerful in a far away land. One day, he witnesses the death of Little Indian's father at the hands of a soulless assassin. Unable to help revive Little Indian's father, a quest to find the magical elixir of life begins. Shaolin Kid and Little Indian travel the lands, crossing high mountains, vast plains and lush forests in search of the magical elixir. Their travels bring them to a remote village where one of the natives informs



Walk to the left and push those huge stones into the hole...



Now take out the skeleton!!!



Getting harder... Climb the ladder on the left...



Land on the skeleton's head...

them of the fantastic powers of the witch known as Baba Yaga, who actually holds a magical potion, called the elixir of life that will revive Little Indian's father.

In desperation, Shaolin Kid and Little Indian knock at the front door of Baba Yaga's Palace. An old grey haired, evil looking witch opens the door slowly, "what do you want?", she yells at both of them. "We come in peace and request the elixir of life from you, great witch Baba Yaga, to revive the death of Little Indian's father", they both plead. Baba Yaga says "I am no fairy godmother, I am a real witch, I just don't give out my elixir of life potions for free. You have to enter my Palace and defeat my many henchmen over 100 different levels". With nothing to lose, everything to gain and no other choice, Shaolin Kid and Little Indian accept Baba Yaga's incredible challenge.

To pass each level you, must eliminate all the henchmen of Baba Yaga's Palace that appear on that level. In the early stages, henchmen remain grounded (ground enemies), later on, as the game gets harder there are also flying enemies. All you need to do to eliminate any henchmen, is control Shaolin Kid in any of the four directions, up, down, left and right, walking through each of the henchmen will destroy it / make it disappear. In the earlier levels you only control Shaolin Kid, but later, the game's difficulty increases as you will be required to control both Shaolin Kid and Little Indian to solve the puzzles, you can only control one of the characters at a time though.

An essential element of what makes a game a great game is the enjoyment you get out of playing it. I am so used to playing 8-Bit games with lots of blasting away or timing jump after jump, Baba's Palace has none of those, yet, I couldn't be happier. The puzzles from levels 1 - 6 you can complete easily, then as you progress, the difficulty starts to increase ever so gradually, make a wrong decision, you're going to be stuck. That's ok though, as coder, Rafa Castillo, has installed an option to restart the level, its brilliant innovation, as most games in this style, if you get stuck, you can't restart and all the enjoyment is sucked out of the game, better still there are passwords for each level allowing you flexibility, if you can't pass a level or are too busy at the time you can come back to it when you want to.

Frustrations I have experienced in similar types of games in the past, are still there but they certainly don't feel like frustration at all, more a feeling of "I can do this, I just need to think about it more", I got this feeling because there is no pressure to complete a level, you can complete it at your own pace to solve each of the puzzles, there's no time limits nor any other elements that may get on your



Level 1, so easy, just kill that orange thing by walking into it, push the block in the hole and kill the other orange thing!

nerves. The name of Baba's Palace game is trial and error, using your brain thinking about your strategy is what will get you through all 100 levels. Moving a stone to fill a hole or to get to a ladder, then working out how to reach the henchman, sounds rather easy, but there is much more appeal to the game than that, as each level is composed of different elements with which you can interact to achieve the goal of completing the level.



Now take out the skeleton!!!

Sand blocks can be removed that can either help or hinder you, decisions need to be made, do I climb the ladder or is it possible to move through one of the solid blocks to get to a stone and push it down a platform first? There is also the element of thinking outside the square, normally you would think pushing a heavy stone from height would crush anyone underneath it, but you can use such a tactic to your advantage, as the stones will remain on top of whatever is underneath them, be it Shaolin Kid, any of the henchmen or other stones.

Graphically speaking Baba's Palace is presented so gorgeously from the opening sequences and all the way through the game after that. Rafa Castillo should be very proud of his creation, there is great variety of henchmen, the main character sprites both look so cute and move quite fluidly. Each level looks basically the same, just a different floor plan with many more henchmen, yet the artwork beautifully captures the storyline. I always feel great games must be accompanied by great music. The great one, prolific Amstrad CPC musician, John Mcklain, does it again, Baba's Palace

appeal is enhanced with fantastic music & sound effects.

How often is it that simplistic games to play, end up being great games? It's so cliché perhaps, but it certainly does work. If you look at the past as an example, many of Hewson Software's 8-Bit releases (Nebulus, Anarchy, Netherworld, Impossaball) received such high acclaim, because these games oozed playability with simplicity at the heart of the gameplay. Baba's Palace, is ever so simple, yet it is completely addictive, with more staying power than you could ask for, I mean who challenges your brain to solve 100 levels in a 64k games these days? I don't think that even happened back in the golden age of 8-Bit gaming during 1980's and 1990's? If you love games of thought, that provide an excellent challenge, then you can't go wrong here, Baba's Palace is irresistible 8-Bit gaming of the very highest quality.

VERDICT

PROS

- Simplistic, addictive gameplay.
- Huge staying power, 100 levels will keep you challenged.
- Excellent GFX and SFX.
- Very cute sprites.
- Varied henchmen.
- Excellent intro mini movie.
- Able to restart levels or use passwords to come back to play later.

CONS

- Extremely hard to fault.

98%

- CODING: 4MHz, JGNAVARRO, LordFred (GFX), Sad1942 (Levels), John McKlain (SFX)
- INFO: Download from <http://cpcretrodev.byterrealms.com/en/>
- REVIEWED BY: CPC4EVA

PROFANATION 2: ESCAPE FROM ABU SIMBEL

While C64 owners get a port of Dinamic Software's original Abu Simbel Profanation in 2017, Amstrad CPC enthusiasts got its sequel with Profanation 2: Escape from Abu Simbel. Personally I think both sets of 8-Bit communities would wish they hadn't. Once again you play the odd looking cursed blob formation known as Johnny Jones. Having broken the curse from the first game you would think Johnny Jones would return to his human form, but that is not the case - already it's weird and awkward. This time Johnny has found himself falling down a long shaft into the temple of Abu Simbel, from which he must escape and get to the north pole. The opening animation sequence depicting Johnny Jones falling down the shaft in a mini movie, is the highlight of the game for me, no I am not being sarcastic either.

As platformers go the graphics and sound are very nice, excellent atmospheric tunes again from McKlain, this is where anything nice about the game ends. If you thought the original game of the series was difficult, you don't know what difficult is until you play it's sequel. From your very first moment of trying to jump from one platform to the other, you may as well not even bother with your 9 lives, just give up, walk away, go play the awesome Baba's Palace, or do something better with your time. Don't even get caught up with the pixel perfect timing required with the jumps or be concerned with solving the puzzles, do yourself a favour and walk away from it. I don't enjoy being negative about any games, however if there is flaws in a game, I will 'run the knife' through them without any favour or fear of backlash.

If there was ever a game that didn't deserve its second placing at any

computer game creation contest, then it has to be Profanation 2 - Escape from Abu Simbel. I am very sceptical at why this game was awarded so highly by the judges, I question whether they actually played the game at any length, I get the strong feeling the judges only looked at the colourful graphics or listened to the nice tunes, because if they played the game, they would realize, it's totally unplayable! Not being able to get past the first screen, makes it unplayable!

Constantly I have tried to find something to like about this game, I couldn't. I wondered was it me, am I being too harsh, or does the game really suck so badly? I have chatted about the game to some serious, experienced game players who have actually gotten somewhere in the game, their reaction is that it's the most impossible 8-Bit game they have played in a long time.

I searched online to look for other people's opinions. I saw that on the CPC GAMES REVIEWS website, cpcgamereviews.com, Nich Campbell who reviewed the game felt the same way, I think his overall score of 4 out of 10 was very generous as he stated "Even with nine lives, I have only managed to see the first four screens without resorting to cheating!" I then looked up videos and watched other people playing the game on YouTube, the same result, they struggled to get past the first screen, let alone make it to the fourth.

The game is extremely difficult, yet I read on the "CPC POWER" website, that the team behind the game had started working on it from 2016, well in advance of the 2017 #CPCRETRODEV closing date. Surely they would have had ample time for play testing and making the game better than what it is, surely they



Very colourful and attractive graphics, but the gameplay is so awful!

would have? At first glance, it does not appear so. I am sure they did spend much time on play testing, the end result though is a game that is unplayable. Profanation 2, is such a disappointment, I can't believe 4Mhz released The lost Caves of Cuauhtemoc in 2017, which is such a fantastic game and then they follow it up later in the year with the unplayable Profanation 2: Escape from Abu Simbel - I just can't work that one out? So bitterly disappointed after playing this game.

VERDICT

PROS

- Nice GFX and SFX.

CONS

- Unplayable.
- Extremely Difficult.
- Don't bother with it.

17%



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- TEAM: CNG SOFT
- INFO: Download from <http://cpcretrodev.byterrealms.com/en/>
- REVIEWED BY: CPC4EVA

BASKET CASES

What a breath of fresh air, a welcome change to be able to play an 8-Bit sports game, it always seems it's shoot 'em ups and platformers on the CPC, many thanks CNG SOFT! Finally, my gaming prayers have been answered. The last time I can remember playing a CPC sports game was a year ago when the Pingu Soccer game was released at #CPCRETRODEV 2016 - and that was not so good.

Frankly, I had some reservations about playing Basket Cases, I had seen a video of the game before having playing, it looked rather comical, like you had no control over the players. After loading it

up, giving it a fair crack, pleasantly surprised, I now am. You can play either a one or two player game, consisting of a two on two a side basketball match. Play is conducted over two halves - two screens, being attack and defence. Each game lasting a quick fired four minutes only. That's all you get, if you lose, bad luck, game over, if you win you get to go to the next level and play another game against a more tougher duo, there are 9 opponents to defeat, I guess at the end of it you get to be crowned the Basket Cases champions of the world, or something like that, but I didn't get that far.

Basket cases is aptly named, because at

first and even when you start to get the hang of it, the gameplay feels much too fast, trying to keep up with the play, made myself look rather average and more like a basket case than a basket baller. I thought the first level was difficult, when I finally managed to win a game, probably by sheer luck than anything else, scrapping home by one point, the second level seemed like I was playing the Harlem Globetrotters, almost every one of my CPU opponents shots was going in, many from way back, like "Down Town", "Hail Mary" far away distances, I am talking full court 3 pointers, swish!

When I did get the hang of it I started to enjoy it more, though the gameplay still



Is there a way to steal the ball from your CPC opponents?



The opposition slamming a dunk in my face!

seemed a little odd, it felt flawed or perhaps that's how the game has been coded and is meant to be played? It certainly didn't seem if the gameplay was bugged at all, so I will go with the odd style of gameplay is how it's meant to be played. Maybe I am just so used to playing Dinamic Software's 1987 classic, Basket Master, a much slower moving and entirely different game style, than Basket Cases, I think I just might be?

Having said that, my Basket Cases experience was a lot of fun, felt weird for sure, keeping an open mind about it, I persevered. The only thing I couldn't seem to master was the "STEAL", it just didn't seem possible for me but my CPU opponent didn't have any trouble at all. When I attempted to steal I often came a cropper, as my player would jump in the air and my CPU opponents would already be down the court, slamming a dunk in or having a shot for three points, it felt like a massive unfair advantage.

Passing the ball to your teammate was better than I thought it would be, but I

wonder if a teammate is worth it as I became better at the game I decided not to pass the ball to them, it seemed pointless. The shooting aspect to the game is very easy, press the fire button and the ball gets released as your player reaches the peak of a jump, just as in real life. There is an element of strategy involved as you must decide which is the best course of action to take - do you risk shooting for three pointers that have less probability of going in the basket or do you go for the 2 pointers / slam dunks with a better chance of scoring?

Did I like the game? Yeah I did, it was different to most other Amstrad CPC basketball games I have played. It didn't get stuck on the many factual rules of basketball, like fouls and the like. A simplified bounce the ball on the floor, stay inside the bounds of the court, pass and shoot, fast paced, no nonsense basketball action game. Graphics and sounds are very admirable, Cesar Nicolas Gonzales (CNG SOFT), has done a bang up job in these departments. Its very colourful, very well presented with a large

court area, a cheering crowd, large sprites depicting the human players and even a cheerleader for both teams adding a sense of realism of being at a basketball match. The music is very jolly indeed, I mean that in a good way, just so merry and cheery sounding for your ears. After my initial qualms about the game, it all comes together very nicely, the playability / movement of your players is quite good, it gets a little tricky when you try to "STEAL" the ball, but having said that, Basket Cases provides a challenge and is not so bad as I thought it would be.

VERDICT

PROS

- Very jolly music.
- Colourful large basketball court with a crowd and cheerleaders.
- Fast paced, no nonsense action.
- Provides a challenge.
- Very easy to pick up and play.
- 9 different opponents.

CONS

- "STEALING" the ball seemed impossible.
- CPU opponents play like Harlem Globetrotters.
- Is the 4 minute time limit too short?
- Is it possible the game is a little too fast?



That was close, I won by one point!

82%

- **TEAM:** Dreamin' Bits, Tulo, Tainus and Gabi, Alberto Hache (GFX), Jose A Martin (SFX).
- **INFO:** Download from <http://cpcretrodev.byterrealms.com/en/>
- **REVIEWED BY:** CPC4EVA



CRIS: ODD PRELUDE

Cris, Odd Prelude, odd name, odd gameplay, even an odd way of starting the concept. The story from Dreamin' Bits, which is found in the game manual, states a group of five guys dreamt up the idea for the Cris Odd Prelude game when they met up over a beer somewhere in Madrid, Spain (maybe it's not such an odd thing these days, I am always dreaming things up when I am out for a beer too - Ed).

The beer must have been a top class brew, because Cris, Odd Prelude, may just be the best, 'odd', platform adventure game ever played on an Amstrad CPC. Everything is odd and unusual, it's meant to be, forget the rules of standard games and platformers, because this is a world of dreams, where anything can happen.

Cris knew she shouldn't have approached that odd looking door, there was never ever such a thing as a door on that wall, at least not as far as she could remember. Where did it come from? How on earth could that door open to such an

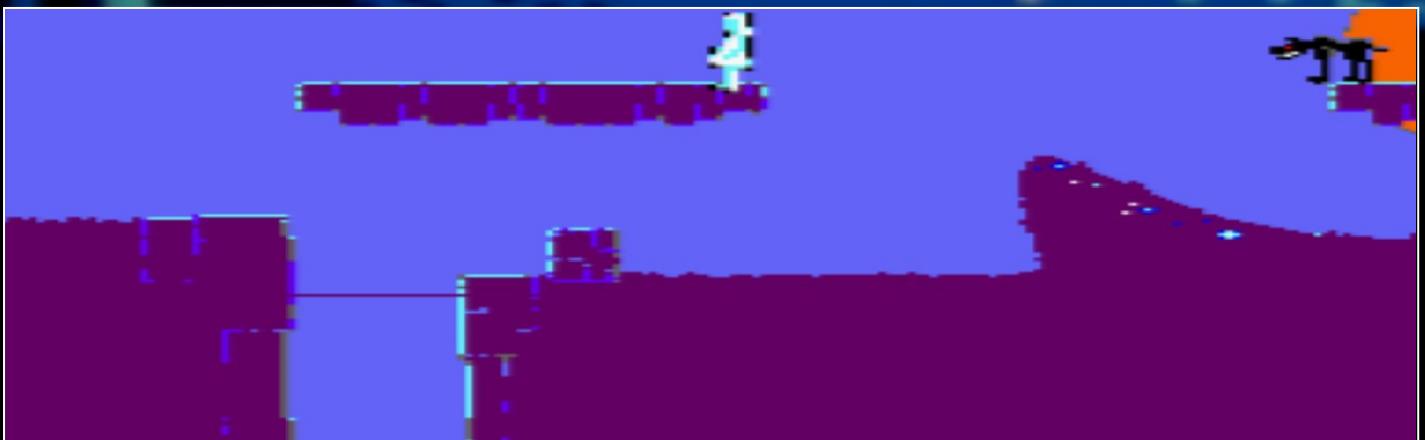
odd world, gleaming with un-earthly colors in the place where the living room should be? In the quiet darkness of the Madrid night sky, an idea suddenly came to little Cris; could this have to do with the recent disappearance of her little sister? She got closer, calling out "Hello? Anybody there?" Getting closer still... "Can you hear me?". It was too late. A strange force had pulled her tiny body through the door, before she could say "Help ME!", she found herself falling down, only to be stuck inside a bizarre world, would Cris ever be able to unravel the secrets of this fantasy world and escape ?

I am not sure she can, having played six delightful levels of oddness you are greeted by what looks like a huge Walrus dressed up in a Navy Admiral suit, asking "Did you bring the book?". I made it all this way, tore my hair out during each level practicing jump after jump, avoiding vicious dogs, working out how to walk on the clouds, using rain to defy gravity, then being told you have to go all the way back to get the book, it wouldn't be so

bad if it wasn't for the fact that when you die on your way back to retrieve the book from the very first screen, you have to restart all the way at the beginning of level 6, unbelievable !!!!

I can sort of look past the glitchy collision detection, even look past the bug where you will die while landing on a cube, or in a place that is absolutely not deadly, but I can't forgive having to restart every time from the end of level six just to get the book, it's totally bonkers! I know the game is odd, but come on, the enjoyment of playing this outstanding game disappears right at this very moment for me.

Flaws out of the way, the team of five guys (Tulo, Tainus, Gabi, Alberto Hache and Jose A Martin) have put together a most amazing, unique, original CPC game. Impressive all over. A lovely atmospheric tune plays throughout, its a great addition, capturing the essence of such an odd fantasy world, quite wonderfully. Absolutely gorgeous 16 color overscan graphics, that appear to



Level 1 - Watch out for those black dogs, they are most unfriendly.



Level 6 - No I don't have the book !!!! Does it look like I have the book ?!?!?!



Heading back to get the book, I can't make the jump this is where I get stuck. Tried pushing the block but my efforts found it was immovable.

be as if you are watching a movie in widescreen mode. Each level is quite short, yet, you are mesmerized exploring the oneiric landscapes. The controls are keys only, me being a gamepad / joystick player, I did not find this hindering the playability at all. Judging the jumps is a little tricky, but nothing to be worried about - nowhere near as bad as Profantion 2! Gameplay and animation is

all very smooth and fluid. The best part of the game is that if you happen to die in the world of dreams, you'll always be given another chance to get further, it's like having unlimited lives.

An odd fantasy platform adventure, where odd equals a game of beauty with a few flaws. Maybe the five guys at Dreamin' Bits need to have a few more beers

together, one can only imagine the ideas they will come up with for their next CPC projects, if they turn out to be as good as Cris, Odd Prelude, CPC'ers will be very grateful indeed.

VERDICT

PROS

- Atmospheric tunes.
- Gorgeous GFX.
- Fluid animation.
- Innovative idea.

CONS

- Possibly a little short.
- Bugs in the game.
- Glitchy collision detection.
- Have to go back and get the book and restart from end of level 6 if you die on the way back - aaaargghh!!!

86%



Defying physics, defying gravity. If you watch where the rain falls, it gives you the hint where you can walk on air or suddenly drop down to your death by a vicious mongrel.



Level 4 - Don't get distracted by all the big toys!

- **CODING:** Arnaud Bouche
- **INFO:** Download from <http://cpcretrodev.byterrealms.com/en/>
- **REVIEWED BY:** CPC4EVA

BITUME

Year 2091, the greatest economic crash in history has befallen Earth. The United States government has removed all security forces from its territories, the rule of law doesn't exist, barbaric motorized gangs terrorize the highways. Convoys carrying essential goods rarely arrive safely at their destination points. With a battle hardened, heavily weaponized vehicle, you are hired to rescue and escort any convoy in danger.

Played out over five levels of high speed destruction, Bitume looks and plays just like the arcade sideways scrolling game, Asphalt (UBI Soft 1987). Select one of three 'hotted up' vehicles, enter your name then hit the road and destroy those highway gangs before they shoot you down, where you will watch your vehicle explode in a huge fireball.

Your enemy on the road comes in many forms - motorbikes, heavily armoured cars, road barriers and more. The motorbikes may attack you from behind or in front of your car, it's up to you to avoid their firepower from close combat

or deadly spikes they leave on the road. Armoured cars may also attack you from behind, but it's the ones that are coming at you from in front of you that are the biggest worry. They constantly shoot large long range missiles at you, there is no escaping a rather quick death from these.

You have limited weapons to counter your enemy with, its a blight on the game I feel, while there are power ups to collect they don't appear often enough. Three lives just ain't enough, nor is 10 lives you receive for typing in the key press cheat when you enter your name at the start of the game.

Graphics and sounds are very good, the animation of driving along the road is smooth too. The on screen layout illustrates your weapon information, current weapon being used, the ammunition remaining, power up bonuses, your armour level shown by a different colour indicating the protection left on the car, as well as the number of lives you have and your overall score. The main guns have unlimited ammo but

they will need to cool down when they reach overheating levels.

Difficulty of progress is what lets this game down. I followed the manual tips - don't try to destroy all enemies, before taking new power-up bonuses (red border) check if the current is more useful, carefully avoid the destroyed cars and try to keep your missiles for the most dangerous enemies. It helped me get further in the level I was on, but I just couldn't get past an armoured vehicle it seemed no matter what I did it was never going to destroy it. I encountered a few other bugs where the game would freeze on me and I could not control my car at all and the machine gun would stay at overheat not allowing me to fire my vehicle's machine gun.

Bitume, really could have been a fantastic shoot 'em up car game with some improvements, as it is, there are bugs, a high difficulty level and just not enough fire power or power ups for my liking.

VERDICT

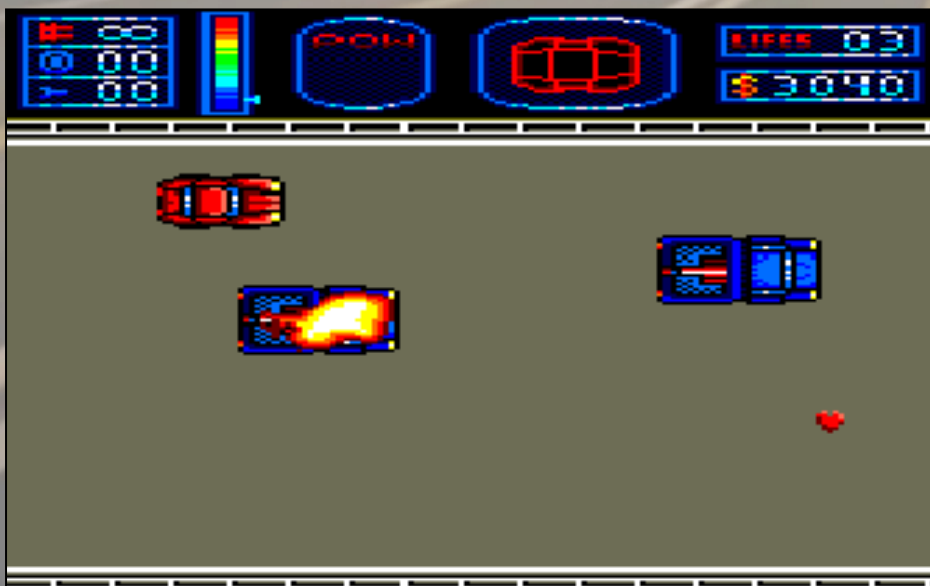
PROS

- Smooth sideways scroller.
- Beautiful GFX and tunes.
- Some nice features, bonuses, weapons etc.

CONS

- Not enough weapons and bonuses.
- Bugs, bugs, bugs.
- Difficulty mars your progress.

67%



Dying a fiery death!

- **CODING:** Carlos Sevilla
- **INFO:** Download from <http://cpcretrodev.byterrealms.com/en/>
- **REVIEWED BY:** CPC4EVA

LASER BOY



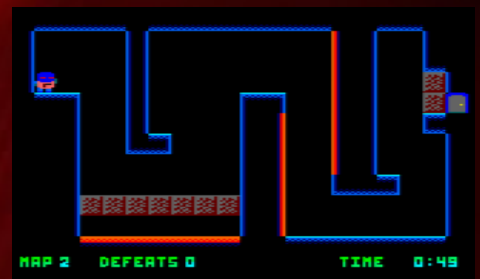
Laser Boy is the spiritual sequel of Hair Boy, Carlos Sevilla's entry into the 2016, #CPCRETRODEV. A straight up platformer, your goal is to control Laser Boy from one end of the room to get to another part of the room where there is an exit door. Moving Laser Boy around each screen is done so either by joystick or keys. You need to jump onto platforms, avoid various enemies and shoot at obstacles across 50 different maps.

Some of those obstacles may include:

- **Lava:** If touched, Laser Boy must restart that map again.
- **Deformed block:** If touched, Laser Boy will disappear.
- **Breakable block:** Laser Boy can shoot a block, and it will disappear after a short time.
- **Lasers:** If touched, Laser Boy must start the map again.
- **Bouncers:** Blades that rebound inside the map. If touched Laser Boy must start map again.
- **Chasers:** These will follow Laser Boy, if touched, you must start the map again.

A fun, enjoyable game, even if it is simplistic and more aimed at a younger audience. I found it to play better than Hair Boy, the overall appearance and features are much better this time around. Some really nice graphics and sprites, the only gripe I have, is that Laser Boy seems to have little control of his movement, he slides about whether you are using keyboard or joystick, making it very

frustrating when you need to be accurate in certain places on each map. Another solid coding performance from Carlos Sevilla.



Map 2, those brown blocks will disappear so you need to jump up quickly.



Map 7, starting to get tougher with blades you can't destroy.

VERDICT

PROS

- Enjoyable, simplistic.
- Better than previous game, Hair Boy (2016).
- Nice colours, map layouts and sprites.

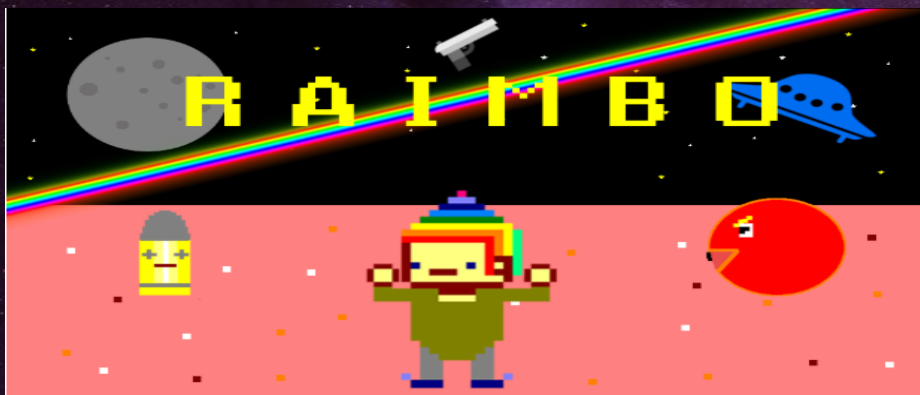
CONS

- Lack of control of Laser Boy, slides everywhere.
- Codes should be for each level.
- No Sound.

70%

- CODING: ToBee
- INFO: Download from <http://cpcretrodev.byterrealms.com/en/>
- REVIEWED BY: CPC4EVA

RAIMBO



Markus, an innocent young child used to live very happily on planet Earth, but one day his life changed forever when Aliens from Jupiter invaded Earth.

These Aliens were not friendly, totally hostile to be exact. They flew around in their U.F.O's killing many thousands of people around the world, leaving Markus homeless. Markus, sought revenge, the Aliens had killed his mother, so he decided to build his own spaceship, flying to Jupiter all alone, a one man army, when he lands on Jupiter he is only armed with one weapon, will it be enough in waging all out war on these hostile Aliens? In total there are 9 maps of battle that Marcus must conquer. He needs to kill the Alien or Aliens on that screen so he can unlock a doorway to the next map. If he defeats all of the Aliens in the 9 maps, when Markus kills the last one of his enemies, he will become known as Raimbo, the greatest warrior in the galaxy! It's an ok game of one player versus a CPU opponent shoot 'em up, but the controls are not great. It would have been better to have use of the joystick. Graphics and sound are fairly average too. Gameplay sees you dead in a matter of moments as you can't find shelter to defend yourself against enemy attacks. Sometimes there is a sprite erase bug as well.



VERDICT

56%

- **CODING:** Kukulcan, CED (GFX), Rayxamber (Music)
- **INFO:** Download from <http://cpretrodev.byterrealms.com/en/>
- **REVIEWED BY:** CPC4EVA

PHANTIS LEGACY



Your mission, should you wish to accept it, (well you always do, don't you - Ed), is save the planet Phantis. How do you do that exactly? By capturing flags, your opponents more specifically! There are 20 maps, each different from the previous one. Flags on each map are positioned in different locations from the last.

The first map is easy, then you really need to use your brain to solve the puzzle of how to create a path for your spaceship. You have a limited amount of fuel to use for solving each map / puzzle, if you go over the fuel you can use your spaceship explodes and you lose a life.



Map 1, position the direction arrows on the map, instructing your spaceship where to go.



Make sure you have enough fuel and you will have captured, your opponents flag!

You get seven lives or chances at capturing your opponents flag, a great deal of trial and error will be involved in playing the game. Your objective of capturing a flag may sound like a walk in the park, however not only do you have to work out the quickest route, you will also need to use your tactical skills to avoid being killed or vaporized by your opponents weapons, which are positioned in places surrounding the flag you want to capture. Each map is one screen only. At the bottom of that screen you are given various direction arrows to



Things are getting tougher already.....

place on the map, which instruct your spaceship of the path to follow and any other things you may require from it such as picking up a missile and firing it or using a shield to counter your opponents attacks. Phantis Legacy is a much better game than Raimbo, yet it finished below it in the 2017, #CPCRETRODEV overall placings, work that one out? A very well presented game, with some excellent colourful graphics artwork, especially the main loader. It is '8-Bit candy' like I have not seen for some time. The flaw of the game is the music, but the many features of the game allow you to turn it off. While I read through both instructions in the game on in the manual I didn't see it mention hold down fire button two and press up to make your spaceship start its journey to capture the flag. Other than its quite a surprisingly good game.

VERDICT

83%

- CODING: Petaflopis, Natalia Bernal Perez, Alvaro Esteve Bernabeu, Antonio Lopez Avila Placido (Code and GFX), Alvaro Jover Alvarez (Music).
- INFO: Download from <http://cpcretrodev.byterrealms.com/en/>
- REVIEWED BY: CPC4EVA

NIGHTMARE FORTRESS

In this one player maze game, your land is being invaded by an evil dark lord who wants to take control of a kingdom and plunge it into chaos. The King has commanded you to expel that evil being from his fortress to restore peace.

You play a powerful wizard who enters the King's fortress, your mission is to face all the dangers and expel the dark lord who devastates his kingdom. You start the game at the exterior of the fortress, where frogs are your main enemy, they need to be shot three times each. There

are various objects to be found such as coins to collect and a key in the third room that will open a door in the first room. If you make it inside the fortress, you will be challenged by greater enemies known as dark knights and if you are good enough, face of against the final bosses of the game. You have unlimited fire power at your disposal and you start the game not with lives but with 80 life points. If you get touched by an enemy your life points drain by a margin of 10, its good idea to stay as far away as you can from the enemy as your life points drain quickly. Lose all your life points its game over. You can replenish you life points by 10 each time you pick up food (chicken). A heart with a plus (+) symbol will increase your maximum life (of 80) by 10 points. The game is played with keyboard using W,A,S,D and SPACE BAR, which for me is a real pain as I am not left handed and it is very difficult using the wrong hand for me to do all the movement of the character. Some ok graphics, an annoying tune, unexciting gameplay and your life points being drained ever so quickly made for a disappointing game.



Outside the fortress - collect coins, shoot the frogs and look for the key to the exit door.



Inside the fortress, collect the chicken but watch out for the dark knights.

VERDICT

49%

- **TEAM:** Daniel Finestrat Martínez (@DanielFinestrat) and Ángel Navarro Martínez (@EingelNavarro)
- **INFO:** Download from <http://cpcretrodev.byterrealms.com/en/>
- **REVIEWED BY:** CPC4EVA

PROTON SMOKE



Commander Serena, is on a rescue mission to free her teammate inside Phantis prison, located on the fourth moon of the Sotpok system. As Commander Serena is heading back to her hyper velocity spaceship, she finds it has been dismantled and butchered by Red Daemon's, Cyborg army.

Now you must shoot to kill everything, avoid the Cyborg attacks and at the same time collect your missing spaceship parts, so that you can leave the Sotpok system

and return safely home. You have three lives to begin with, extra lives are attainable the more Cyborgs you shoot down and the further you progress. Proton Smoke is a good old fashioned, vertical scrolling, shoot 'em up. Your basic weapon, is an 'Ion Laser' with infinite bullets, you need to shoot each Cyborg twice to destroy them. You can upgrade your 'Ion Laser' by collecting 'Proton Charges', the extra firepower allowing you to kill Cyborgs with one accurate blast, you only get 10 of these at any one time, so make sure your shooting is accurate. There are 9 parts of your high velocity spaceship to collect. A piece of your dismantled spaceship will appear on screen when you have killed the required amount of enemy Cyborgs on each level. As there are 9 parts to collect in turn there are 9 levels of the game to complete. Each time you collect a new part you advance to the next level with no stopping of the gameplay. When you collect a spaceship part, it is assembled in the bottom left of the 'HUD' on your



Fire away but avoid the enemy fire back at you a classic shoot 'em up.

screen. The shooting is a blast (poor pun intended). Two directions of shooting only - forward and diagonal forward, you can't shoot sideways or behind you, neither can your Cyborg enemies. Rocks or other objects can be used as shields or barriers to hide behind. Difficulty gradually increases, the first couple of levels you can quite easily manage to avoid Cyborg attacks. Around level five the speed of the Cyborg waves increases, their weapon blasts becoming harder to avoid. Quite an enjoyable game, including some small but colourful graphics, a good fast paced tune, with a decent amount of playability and control over your Commander Serena, character sprite.



Each time you collect a part of your spaceship you level up, spaceship parts get assembled in the bottom left of the screen.

VERDICT

73%

#11 - AGENT 006

Coding: APLSoft
Reviewer: CPC4EVA

You're a secret agent working for the protection of the Basic Intelligence Treaty (B.I.T) and you've been sent to a remote island in order to destroy the Secret Powerful Random Intelligent Terminator Engine (SPRITE). Failure to defeat 'SPRITE', will spread chaos around the WORLD!!! Agent 006, is a one player, sideways scrolling, platform shoot 'em up. It has more than 60 different screens divided into three different levels. Each level has its own theme. As you progress higher, the levels become more difficult than the last, each level containing its own set of enemies and challenges. At the end of each level, about every 20 screens, Agent 006 will encounter a boss that he will have to defeat. To get to the boss, Agent 006 must defeat the enemies he will encounter on that level, such as enemy turrets and enemy soldiers. The platform part comes into play, as you avoid moving obstacles and enemy fire power by either crouching down, moving quickly past them or firing and jumping to get to platforms.

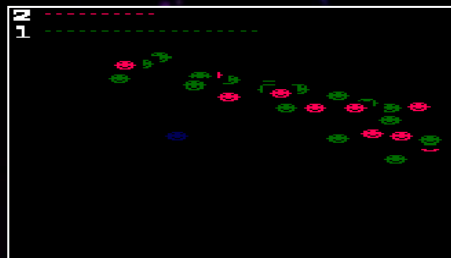
Help comes in the form of power ups and collectables such as a higher jump to get to those hard to reach platforms. You basically have one life, but the game doesn't say game over, you continue where you began, it sort of feels like infinite continues. If you reach a checkpoint which is approximately every 10 screens, you will restart from that screen not from the very first screen of the level. Agent 006 has some collision detection problems as well as bugs such as erasing sprites as well as unexpectedly crashing. Graphics and tunes are ok, your main character is a well drawn and quite large. Other in game artwork isn't too bad either. The controls seem a little unresponsive at times, and the randomness of the game meant you could pass a turrets fire on one turn but the next turn you had to adjust your timing. I didn't find Agent 006 to be a very exciting to play to be honest.



SCORE: 53%

#12 - Balls

Coding: Manuel Alberola Torres
Reviewer: Jesus Delmas



To start with the game is a little confusing. To hopefully take away some confusion you are a coloured ball. The plot to this game is that the colour ball you are represents you as a person within a community where there are 2 classes or colours of individuals, known as 'Haters' and 'Lovers'. The aim of the game is to adjust the number of people in each class to the number indicated by each level, to do this you must change the colour of the balls by touching them, sounds easy at first but after a few attempts it was pretty tricky going. Once you achieve the amount required to have all the same coloured balls, the level is completed and the game is finished (there is only one level so this is more a demo than a game). Graphic of the balls are very simple and primitive, but what this software is looking for is to create a different playable experience than to impress you with its graphics (or lack of them) or any technical feats. The character has a bluish colour and you can handle it in the 4 basic directions. Pressing keys "K" or "L" will change the colour of the ball from a hater class or lover class, other characters in the game move randomly.

The gameplay is very simple. If you touch another character with your natural colour, this character will disappear, if instead you change your colour (pressing "K" or "L") and you hit another character that has the same colour than you, you will create a character of class 'Lover', if instead you hit a ball that have a different colour than you, you will create a character of class "Hater". Everything is about calculating and creating the balls required for each class set that the game indicates you must have, although you must be careful because if a ball collides with each other they may also disappear.

Sadly, there are no sound effects, but the music of the game is very good, during the game sounds are very animated with a melody that helps to create a playable atmosphere.

Finally when all is said and done, the worst part of Balls is that it is a very short gaming experience, as it only has one screen that might just last 10 seconds of gaming. Overall it's an interesting gaming

concept, but I would say it's more of a technical demo than a proper game, although I recommend everyone at least try it.

SCORE: 50%

#13 - 4676 Invasion

Coding: Invasion
Reviewer: CPC4EVA

The year is 4676. Every planet in the universe is crowded by one species or another, some peaceful and some violent. The later ones are responsible for unearthing a habit long forgotten: conquering. Just as it has always been, the strong conquer the weak. One of these civilizations has declared the Earth a weak planet, marking us humans their prey. It's time for you to stand up and fight, to save the Earth! Your mission consists of destroying as many enemy spaceships as you can, while avoiding their attacks and most importantly, not allowing them to get through you. You, the last line of defence, your spaceship is a highly advanced bit of aerospace technology, it comes fully equipped with an energy blaster and thrusters to fly at high speeds. It's shield can withstand 5 enemy attacks (5 lives) before being reduced to a critical state, meaning its game over and you have to do it all over again. 4676 Invasion is a very impressive looking sideways scrolling, shoot 'em up, very much so, in the vein of Dinamic Software titles from years gone by. It also follows the same frustrations experienced with many of Dinamic Software's games, that being they are high on difficulty. The first level of shooting the red asteroids is easy enough as asteroids don't shoot back. After having 'leveled up', blue screamers appear giving you a real aerial dogfight. The problem with that is your at a disadvantage, as you can't move your cool looking spacecraft away from the left side of the screen, only up and down can be used to avoid enemy fire. The game itself is a really good idea, with good looking in game sprites and graphics (the ship and fire power from your ship and enemy ships looks really good), with a very nice tune, let down by some average gameplay.



SCORE: 66%

#14 - Earth Defender

Coding: TOJO
Reviewer: CPC4EVA



As a captain of the extra-terrestrial defence forces, you embark on an all-out fight against a multitude of enemies. Earth Defender is a one screen game of futuristic space shooting. Your objective is to shoot down all enemy fighters appearing from the right of the screen heading towards you on the left of the screen and stop them from getting through to Earth. Your spaceship has a very powerful weapon capable of destroying your enemy's ships in one hit, but the drawback is that you only have one shot, which is recharged when the previous shot is destroyed. The player can move his ship up and down to calculate the precise moment in which he must fire the weapon. This for me is the major flaw of the game, there is no precision, all you do is slide from one part of the screen to the other. The playability in my opinion is very poor, it looks like it could have been a fun shooter too. Every time you use the keys to move your space ship either up or down it jumps what must be 10 million space miles, it's so difficult to get precisely in line with you enemy spacecraft to shoot them down. As a result, they get past you with ease, a life is lost and the game is all over super quick. There is also a bug where an enemy who appears too low on the screen temporarily erases the score and life information. Graphically pretty basic but it has a cool tune. It is also another keyboard only game using left handed keys.

SCORE: 40%

#15 - Brutal Fighters

Coding: Moose Ninja
Reviewer: CPC4EVA

Brutal fighters is a one player, one screen, side view, beat 'em up game. You play as The hero (obviously), who fights against the evil aliens that are invading the Earth. The objective of the game is to beat all the enemies you can before you are defeated. The enemies will teleport to the screen and attack you. Their eyes turn red when they want to attack. They will also shoot you from far away, its without any warning, when you see red glowing fireballs hurtle across the screen, do not get hit by them. You pretty much are fighting against a game you can't win.

Your only attack move you can perform is a punch, but you'll only deal damage to the enemies if you're close enough and you hit them above the waist. Punching one on one isn't so bad, but there is problems if you get too close to each other, the collision detection doesn't do what it should and that's detect it. You eventually get surrounded by multiple evil aliens and more fireballs being hurled at you from both sides of the screen, meaning you have little chance, your three lives are over pretty quickly. To save your health, you must not let enemies attack you, when you notice an Aliens eyes turning red, use that chance to run away or beat him before he attacks. Every time you hit an enemy you'll score one point. Aim for the best score and beat it. If you do so, it'll be recorded and displayed until someone else beats it. The background screen is rather messy, the main character and enemy Alien sprites are pretty good though. Overall there is not any brutality nor much fighting of any merit, the game does not excite a great deal in the fun stakes.



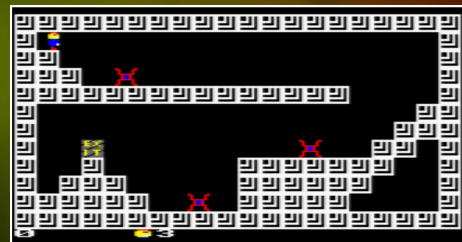
SCORE: 32%

#16 - Fitzroy and Missing Chair

Coding: Awergh
Reviewer: CPC4EVA

The chair is missing. This is not just any chair, this is a special flying chair and it is gone! There are drag marks to a nearby cave system (clearly not a skilled operator or competent villain, as they did not actually fly the chair). Fitzroy's on the job, he's located the caves, vowing to bring back the missing chair. In this maze jumping, avoiding enemies platform adventure, you can play the game in two modes - 1) Normal Mode or 2) Chair Mode. In normal mode, you can move Fitzroy left, right, jump up and interact with interactables. In chair mode, he has four directional movements but no jumping (he can also use interactables in this mode). The goal of the game is to reach to the level exit square positioned in a certain spot in each level. At the bottom of the level there is a heads up display (HUD) that provides information about the current state of the game. The HUD provides three pieces of information: You score, your lives count and your carried items that Fitzroy is currently carrying. Fitzroy can carry many different items. You will have to figure out what

particular item may be required to progress to the next stage of the game, however Fitzroy can only carry one item of a particular type at a time. Interactables are objects that Fitzroy can use (or interact with) to make something happen. Enemies come in many forms, some are static and some will patrol horizontally or vertically. Certain enemies will shoot at you so be wary at all times, colliding into an enemy will result in you losing a life (If you collide with a laser beam it will result in an instant death). Control is either by joystick or keyboard. Fitzroy slides maybe too much for my liking in the character movement department. You can play at three difficulty levels available - Level 1: This is the default level for the game. Level 2: This is an experimental difficulty where less of the map is revealed to the player. Level 3: This is an experimental difficulty where even less of the map is revealed than in level 2. The map design is quite well thought out, graphics are pretty standard but really aren't so bad. I couldn't hear any sounds so that's a bit of a bummer. It's not such a bad maze game, perhaps more lives would give it more staying power.



SCORE: 61%

#17 - Rollablaze

Coding: Pedro Dueso
Reviewer: CPC4EVA

In the underground tunnels, of a fourth moon on planet Phantis, a peculiar rat race with real live rats exists. These rats have an attraction to a special cheese, that only can be found in the tunnels of this moon. It is extremely sought after cheese, so to avoid all the skirmishes and rather brutal attacks on each other, the tunnel rats have devised a rather civilized approach to their dilemma by arranging a tournament where they have to compete in an obstacle race. You must navigate one of these rats through the course, avoiding all of the obstacles in your way without becoming a squashed rat! Easier said than done. There are four main types of obstacles. 1) TNT: Explodes and kills you. 2) Wall: Immovable can't get past, pushes you towards the spikes. 3) Fan: Pushes you up or down the course depending on its location. 4) Spring: Pushes you to the spikes behind you as well as walls. When you die, you have a time being invincible till you press any

key, this allows you to avoid respawning on a obstacle losing your life in the process. The large commercial sized fans appear on the sides of the course from time to time, being only a light rat you get flung away quite easily, coming to a rather quick death if you can't run through the high winds. If you are good enough, you can collect extra lives by picking up heart shaped icons on the course, but be careful as they are positioned next to objects that may harm your chances of success. If you don't keep your rat on the move, you realise the course disappears, your rat will find itself impaled on very sharp spikes at the left of screen. You can earn points by avoiding obstacles, the more time you're alive, the harder the game will become. A new level is achieved when you pass a checkpoint. A nice range of options have been thought of, including selection of joystick, keys, choosing a preferred language and turning music on or off. A very good concept and idea by the coders, I quite enjoyed the gameplay, however the fans made life very difficult for your rat, keeping an eye on where he had been blown away was not easy. At normal speed the game flickered quite a lot, it was very off putting, so I slowed the game speed down in the emulator where it was much better to play. The choice of colours for each level is not great, while colourful, it clashes and can be hard to see objects. The game also has some bugs, which is unfortunate. It's quite a good game marred, by some frustrations, without these it could have possibly made it a very enjoyable game to play.



SCORE: 60%

#18 - Pixel Brawl

Coding: @SpTrGames
Reviewer: CPC4EVA

PIXEL BRAWL is a 'platformer, punch 'em up composed of different levels by which the player must move forward eliminating the different enemies that are on each screen. If all enemies are not eliminated you can't move onto the next level. The game takes place in a jungle environment, the enemies that appear on each screen have different traits you must work out in order to defeat them. This is achieved through learning their movement patterns and planning the best strategy to destroy them. Attacks from the enemy cause great damage to your health bar, so if you are not aware of how



to defeat each enemy you are going to have a very quick game, as almost all enemy attacks are lethal. Your game will end with you unable to defeat the enemies (unsuccessful ending) or when you reach the last level and defeat the final boss - also known as the "terrorist leader". Control of your pixel character is via the left handed key system "W,A,D" and on the right side of the keyboard you can use keys "O & P", to kick and shoot enemies. Shooting becomes available only from level three when our pixel brawl hero gets a gun. Quite a disappointing game. Again being a right handed person, the keyboard controls are no good to me, I just don't understand why developers can't use the CPC's left, right, up and down cursor keys for right handed players as well? I found the game almost unplayable for this reason alone. I would have gotten more enjoyment if a right handed or joystick option was available to play. Graphics and sounds are nothing special, a very basic looking mode 0 game. The brawling is quite frustrating, if you misjudge the space between you and stationary enemies your energy bar is drained quickly. If you are attacked by a moving enemy they are onto you faster than a cat chasing a mouse. Sure you can jump over them but you have very little time between the moment you hit the ground and launching an attack on them to stop them in their tracks, that's without a gun available.

SCORE: 38%

#19 - Tunnel Effect

Coding: Team 0xDEF
Reviewer: Jesus Delmas

In the middle of a homecoming interstellar trip, Officer Selena accidentally crashes her spaceship on an unknown planet, suffering a blackout. After waking up, she discovers that her body is not the same. It seems that her mind has been translated to the body of a robot! What awaits you is series of eleven trials that you will have to pass if you want to recover your original body and get back home. The game is a one player, one screen, puzzle game, with 11 different screens (levels). As you progress further into the game, reaching the higher levels becomes more difficult than the last with its own unique solution. Once you have completed all the levels, the game is over. Tunnel Effect is a kind of 8-Bit version of the famous "Portal" game, by

Valve Corp (Xbox, 2007). Gameplay consists of shooting portals into the walls to be able to access different areas of the level and sometimes, you have to carry a cube with you (or drive it to switches) as a key to open doors and progress through the level. The game gets really hard very soon and the controls (only Keyboard) are very unresponsive and complicated. It has very good ideas and has a little grab factor if you like games that make you use the brain, but its very bad controls and really high difficulty will be very frustrating for game players. Tunnel Effect, has very simple graphics with minor graphical glitches but another drawback is the lack of sound, the game has no music and no effects at all, making it hard to keep playing. Anyway it is a shame because, Tunnel Effect, is a nice effort with good ideas, but its several flaws put this software in the middle between a game and a demo, with more time to develop and better controls it would have been a very nice game.

SCORE: 50%

#20 - Moon Man

Coding: BytesTheDust
Reviewer: CPC4EVA

Moon Man, is a one player, keyboard controlled, maze adventure type of game. You play as an astronaut, your ship has been invaded by horrible alien enemies that are to be eliminated in order to free your ship, so you safely escape back to Earth. To do so you will need to kill all the enemies in all the floors. Once you have cleared a floor an exit will open up allowing you to continue your quite dull battle for your freedom. If you don't move, time will stand still and your enemies won't move, you can only attack or be attacked if you move. There are various alien enemy types including: 'Alien Jellyfish' - they seek and destroy. 'AlienW' - Very unfriendly creatures, they spit out fireballs at you. 'SpinE-T' - No eyes, nor face, but they're spin is deadly. 'Alpha Alien' - Game boss, will take advantage of the other enemies movement to make your life impossible. Best thing about this game is the very catchy tune. The rest is very average indeed. The gameplay was far from impressive as was the graphics. The game is heavily bugged, it crashed on me several times as well removing sprites as I was playing. Love that tune though!

SCORE: 29%



#21 - X-Cape

Coding: Álvaro Moreno Alberola
Reviewer: Jesus Delmas



X-Cape, tells the story of how our hero, a magician called Erif fought against the vampires, lead by the evil Velkan V, known as "The Conqueror", as he conquered Erif's home of Lightnia. Erif's mission is to escape from his prison and fight Velkan V to free his people and Lightnia.

This software that would qualify more as a demo than a game, it consists of eight levels where the only premise is to take a key and exit through the exit door. Throughout the levels you will have to dodge enemies with fixed movement patterns, if they touch Erif, he will die. There is an element of thought required as it appears you can only shoot a certain amount of magic potions on each level. Some need to be timed accurately to destroy more than one guard and it appears your shots can only travel to the right of screen. Meaning you can't shoot upwards, downwards or left, maybe you can but I tried to fire shots in the other directions, it didn't seem possible. There was no mention of this in the manual, either.

The game has very simple background music, it's not all bad, quite a nice rhythm, if you are successful in completing the eight levels, you will return to the title screen with an error in the music leaving the last note sounding endless.

Gameplay is quite easy to be honest, both the graphics and the initial screen are very simple, the effort of the students of the University of Alicante is appreciated, it's a good effort, not such a poor effort at all, but I feel it's more of a simple demo than a game.

SCORE: 36%

#22 - Piti

Coding: SocketWar
Reviewer: CPC4EVA

Piti is a one player, shoot 'em up, platformer game, about a drunk hero who has to fight against the ghosts of his past. It's not a bad little shoot 'em up. It looks

like there are three very happy ghosts (judging by their huge smiles), who set out to do you harm, ironic, but yeah. Your job is simple, shoot them, before they kill you, either by touching you or shooting at you. Their movement around the screen is fairly predictable, the further you can stay away from them the better. You can move fairly quickly around the screens and jump onto platforms. Good to see you can use a joystick in this game. What is most annoying about the game is that when the level spawns, you and the ghosts are all in the one place, meaning the chances of losing one of your three lives at the very beginning of each level is very high. The game seems very short, I counted only three levels, when you complete the third level, it continues with the same levels, except the background colour may change. The shooting aspect is quite good, you get unlimited fire power but it may stop for a moment when there are a large number of bullets racing across the screen. Graphics and sonics are nothing much to mention here really. Not a bad shoot 'em up, not great by any means either, still worth a try.



SCORE: 47%

#23 - UFO

Coding: Bit Beam
Reviewer: CPC4EVA



UFO is a one player, sideways scrolling, shoot 'em up. As enemy spacecraft appear from the right of screen, you move your spaceship on the left of screen up and down, shooting as fast as you can, shoot to kill and don't get touched by the alien spacecrafts or you lose one of your 9 lives. The problem with that is you have to decide to sacrifice a life to stop an enemy craft getting through, aaarrgghhh! Every forty or so enemies a final Boss appears from nowhere, a huge green Alien blob. He is easily defeated after some avoiding and shooting, but if he

touches you or hits you with his weapons, that's it, game over. If you defeat him you go back to shooting the same aliens as before, but you will receive an extra life and smart bomb. The smart bomb comes in handy during normal play, not enough of them I reckon, however the smart bomb appears to have little or no affect on the end of level boss. During normal play, if more than ten enemies escape before you reach the end of level boss, its game over without notice, even if you have remaining spacecraft, that's it, all over. It's bizarre! So frustrating and so are the in game bugs - either sprites are erased or the biggest bug and frustration is that there is no start again feature. Once dead, you need to reload the game. Just so disappointed, as the game's graphics, tunes and playability presents very well, even though its keys only for left handers, it still played quite well, just had the mix right, a bit of grab factor for sure, but gameplay mechanics seemed screwed up.

SCORE: 45%

#24 - Dethroned

Coding: Royal Researchers
Reviewer: CPC4EVA

I am not certain of the Spanish translation of the game, I am guessing the storyline is about a king obsessed with power. Wearing the kings crown allows his bearer to enter into a throne room, but no one knows where this room is situated or how the special crown opens its gates, not even the king, himself. I believe the crown has immense power and the king sets out on a journey within his own castle to retrieve it (I hope that's right, but I am not convinced that I have understood the Spanish translation correctly). Another bugged game, where sprites are erased and the game ends without a restart, forcing you to reload the whole game again. Dethroned looks promising, but the left handed keyboard controls have got me again, its crazy, just crazy! You have three lives to jump around this maze - platformer, avoiding enemies, picking up some collectables and making your way to an exit door. It wasn't enjoyable gameplay, the graphics and tunes are very average to say the least.



SCORE: 24%

#25 - My Galaxy

Coding: AwMy Studios
Reviewer: CPC4EVA



My Galaxy, is a one player, one vertical screen, shoot 'em up. You play James, an experienced space pilot who wants to rule the galaxy (sounds a bit like Darth Vader, doesn't it). To fulfil your dream and be the ruler of every known thing, you pilot your spacecraft to destroy every obstacle that crosses your flight path. The more enemies you shoot down, the faster you will level up. Each level will grow in difficulty as new enemies appear, the higher the level attained, will mean more enemies will have to be shot down (more points will be required), so you can get to the next level (which would also give you an extra life). Once again, controls use the left handed keyboard system (you really are fed up with this, aren't you? - Ed). The game goes on until the player loses all his lives. After that, it's game over. There are three kind of enemies in the game. 'Meteoregg' - Asteroids that are egg shaped. They're big, grey and easily shot down as they don't shoot back. 'Missile' - They are quite fast, and come from one side of the screen to the other. They can really give you quite a surprise. 'Enemy Forces' - They are green spacecraft that fly in two directions. One will fly downwards rapidly, the other will fly very slowly upwards. Another game that presents very well. The spacecraft sprites are very good, it looks quite good graphically, a decent playing field, good 'HUD' presentation, but the gameplay and the bugs do my head in. For some unknown reason you will be out of harm's way and you get sent to the middle of the screen, I'm still wondering what this is caused by? You lose lives for no reason and the game crashes as the sprites or parts of them get stuck in the playing area. This could of been a pretty decent shoot 'em up, but once again, another game heavily flawed.

SCORE: 28%

#26 - Temple Scape

Coding: Ferre García
Reviewer: Jesus Delmas

You wake up in a dark room, a dark force prevents you to escape. You need to kill

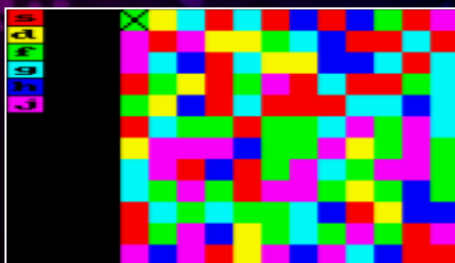


the guardian snakes to see your family once more. To me this game plays more like a demo (a primitive one) that consists of 10 levels with five different backgrounds. You need to avoid the obstacles, dodge the bullets and kill the snakes to pass every level. Once you have finished every level, you start over again. The graphics are quite rough and not very colourful, throughout the game there are many graphical glitches, the control of your character is quite annoying and the absence of music or any sound makes it a very boring experience. To be fair, this is just a student exercise, the creators had never programmed anything similar so the effort of experimenting and programming something on an Amstrad CPC is much appreciated. It would be good if they continue working and improving their programming skills to make a good game someday.

SCORE: 15%

#27 Colour Flood

Coding: Stephane Gourichon
Reviewer: CPC4EVA



Colour Flood is a puzzle game for 2 to 4 players, you can't select a one player versus CPU player, instead you can play the game by yourself and take each turn of the two, three or four player turns. Each player owns a coloured domain or area on the colour board, this is one of the corners of a square board. At each move you change your domain colour by pressing one of the keys on the keyboard, the colours and keys can be seen while you are playing a game. The keys used are "S, D, F, G, H and J". Basically, you want to get the most amount of board space in comparison to your opposing players by choosing or flipping colours. If you have played Othello, it is quite similar to that board game where you are flipping black or white disc's. The game is over when no

more moves are possible and the winner is the player with the biggest area of the board covered. What makes the game somewhat interesting is that there is an element of strategy, deciding which colours will give you more of the board. You can change the grid size to small (12x12), medium (16x16) or big (24x24). Once you select a colour you can't change it. You can see who is winning the race by the colour bars at the bottom of the screen. Another game that has a bug, when you complete a game you are given stats on how each player faired / how much board covered by each player but these are not correct, especially for players 3 and four. It's not such a bad game, interesting concept, plays quite well, perhaps lacking some staying power. Once a board is completed you may lose interest.

SCORE: 52%

#28 - Plman Survival

Coding: Uninstall Studio
Reviewer: CPC4EVA

Plman Survival, is a one player, single screen, shoot 'em up, platformer. Your green character is the shape of the at symbol '@'. You come under attack from a red letter 'E' turned backwards and a purple letter 'F'. The backwards letter 'E', attacks you from the ground, while the letter 'F', will attack you from above. You have to work out a strategy to survive these attacks by moving or jumping your '@' character. You can only shoot one bullet in the same direction the character is moving. You cannot shoot more than one bullet at the same time. Each time the bullets collides with a wall or an enemy, the bullet disappears. Once you have killed one of the letter's they will respawn and you play the same game of survival again and again until your death. Apparently, there are 3 levels, each time you start a new game you go to one of the three levels at random (all three rooms looked the same to me). Quite the basic looking, mode 0 game. No real staying power and not a whole lot of fun to play.



SCORE: 22%

#29 - Eiro's Bridge

Coding: Wasted Horchata
Reviewer: CPC4EVA



A journey into space for the Amstrad CPC! Classmates, Alexei Jilinskiy and Laura Rielo, are such big space nerds, hence, they created a vertically scrolling, one player, shoot 'em up, space game. A little backstory: Alexi and Laura said "When we were first approached for this project, we wanted to go big. Very very big. We wanted a to do a game with explosions, time travel, big guns and a dinosaur - well, maybe not that big! But we really wanted to make a game with cool mechanics like Nebulus. We totally fell in love with that game and planned to

do something like the player exploring and defeating enemies while going up a tower of stairs. But it was too big, so we decided to make something space related because space is awesome. Our game evolved a lot while planning it, in the end, it was pretty far from 'Nebulus'. We ended up with a spaceship game with elements from Tetris and Space Invaders, the original one".

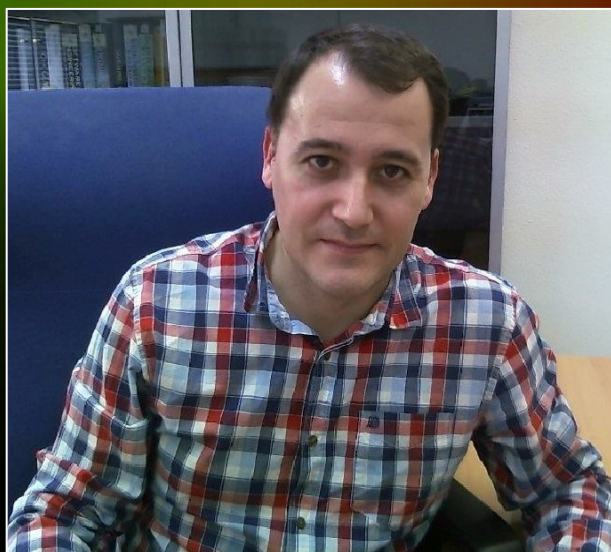
You are the only hope for the human fleet, the only survivor of a expedition into Eiro's Bridge, the biggest wormhole of the entire galaxy. But the bridge is dark and full of dangers like space pirates, who won't hesitate frying you with their plasma cannons or big chunks of space trash that could tear your tiny spaceship apart. You have to survive this last walk into Eiro's Bridge. If you wanna see home again. The game mechanics are pretty simple: you control the human spaceship and you're travelling at lightspeed through the wormhole, but there are lots of obstacles that can kill you. In the first place you

have blocks of asteroids that you have to avoid if you don't want to get pushed back. They can be different sizes and all of them drag you to the bottom of the screen. Then, you have other kinds of asteroids, that move side to side and can kill you with a simple collision, but you can kill them back. Finally, we have the enemies, the space pirates, spaceships that will fire at you and kill you with their bullets. You can kill those too with your own bullets. If you reach the walls, the quantic tunnel teleports you to the other side. A beautiful looking game, however it plays so poorly. The action is quite boring, your one shot when fired from long range takes forever to reach the top of the screen where your shot won't take so long but the whole affair is uninspiring or exciting, it's a shame, because I love the graphical presentation of the game itself. Furthermore the game is very buggy and believed to be unfinished.

SCORE: 18%



All games were tested on real hardware.



Professor Francisco José Gallego Durán

#CPCRetroDev2017

Game Creation Contest

10/11/2017



- **TEAM:** Bob's Stuff (<http://www.bobs-stuff.co.uk/>)
- **INFO:** <http://www.bobs-stuff.co.uk/zxspectrum.html>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Dave E (www.everygamegoing.com)

JILLY'S FARM



Soko-"Baa"-Rn. Geddit?

Sheep are generally thought of as being woolly, cute, smelly and, well, a bit stupid. So when they crop up in games, they don't tend to be given puzzles to solve. Jilly's Farm is different. Firstly, because it's isometric - also known as "Ultimate: Play The Game" filmation style. And secondly, because the sheep is the hero. And he's the hero because he's got a big brain. Yours, in fact, because you get to control him in

this 3D landscape of grass, hay and targets.

Jilly's Farm is the latest from prolific Spectrum programmer Bob Smith, who has been programming for the Spectrum for over thirty years (perhaps most famously known for his Farmer Jack trilogy, Stranded suite and Gem Chasers). Bob takes a real pride in the games he creates, and Jilly's Farm is no exception. It has a colourful loading screen, a flamboyant introduction with a



Baa! Indeed!

0 START GAME

1 KEYBOARD

2 ROTATIONAL

3 REDEFINE

Z

K



M

X

L

UNDO

Q

QUIT

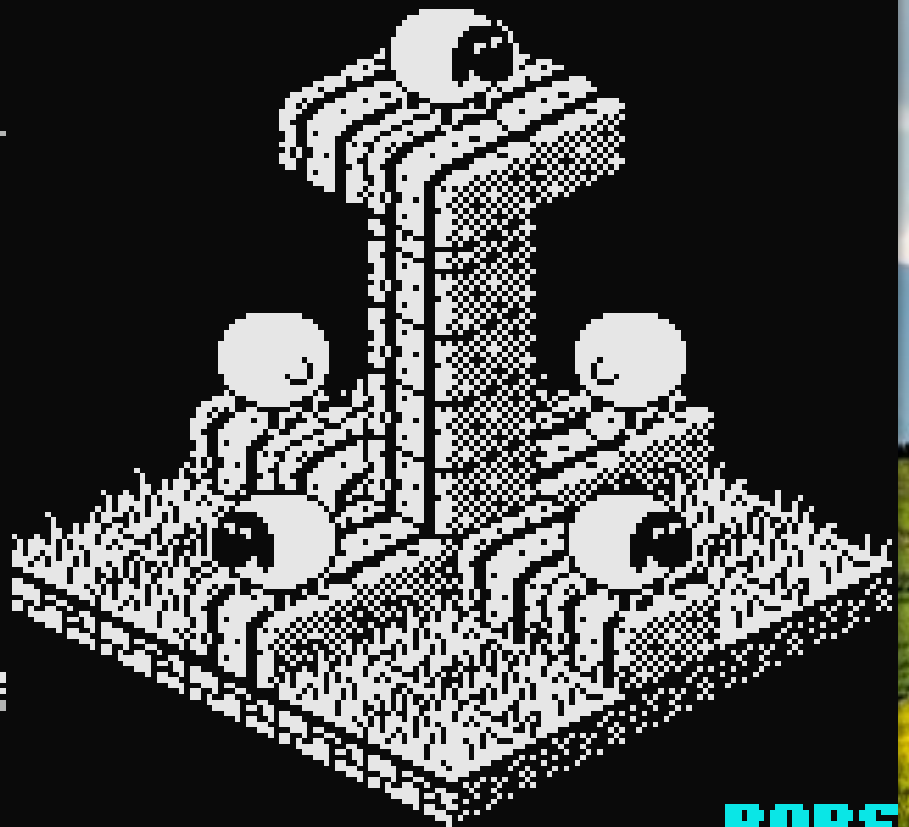
4 ENTER CODE

0000

5 EDIT LEVEL

#SokobAARn

BOBS
STUFF
2017



Aww, those sheep are so cute!

blare of bouncy music and a special guest appearance by Sabreman (of Sabre Wulf fame) and between levels, you even get a fade effect reminiscent of the "That's All Folks!" at the end of a Looney Tunes cartoon.

Which is all well and good, but what of the game itself, then? Well, it's Sokoban - also known as Japanese Warehouse Manager - also known as Push The Bales. This game is usually played from overhead and involves you simply pushing bales of hay (or just blocks in some versions) into target positions within mazes. You must get all bales into position without pushing them up against walls of the maze and blocking yourself from accessing them. Jilly's Farm just takes the idea and puts it in a 3D style with a woolly protagonist. You control him by rotating him left and right and moving him forwards and backwards in the exact same manner as Alien-8 (and its brethren). When all bales are correctly positioned, he leaps upon the last one and emits a "Baa!" speech bubble.

The game includes 30 levels and a screen designer and it's Bob's wish that

any officiandoes of the game design their own levels with it. Rather than have a save level, any screen a user creates is actually compressed to a 25-character code. Simply design your screen, test it and copy the code to a forum post and any other user can play your level by typing it in. Not a bad idea, that.

From easy beginnings, the levels get progressively more demanding, and on the occasions on which you mess it up, tapping Q will return you to the opening screen so you can decide if you want to try again.

If you compare Jilly's Farm with some of Bob's earlier work, it's quite obviously been less of a challenge than what many will consider his magnum opus, 'Splattr'. The 128Kb game of 'Splattr', is still available from cronosoft.co.uk. I must mention that game took the Spectrum machine to places it had never gone before and would certainly have been able to retail as a £10 professional release had it been released in the Speccy's heyday. Jilly's Farm however, would have been more suited to a £2.99 budget label. That shouldn't take away anything from this great game though

and puzzle fanatics and lovers of the Ultimate Filmmation series will be in their element here.

VERDICT

PROS

- Neat-looking graphics.
- Cute protagonist.
- Easy-to-control.
- A doddle to understand.
- Great tune on start-up.
- A tribute to Filmmation games that work really well.
- Easy to use screen designer utility.

CONS

- Monochrome only.
- Only 30 levels.

88%

- **TEAM:** Radastan
- **INFO:** Free from http://www.bytemaniacos.com/?page_id=3437 but you can also donate.
- **REVIEWED BY:** John Kavanagh

DEAD SPACE

I used to really enjoying playing Dead Space on the Playstation 3. The tense, creepy astrosphere of the survival horror game kept me coming back for more, time and time again. Now there's an game on the ZX Spectrum which was inspired by it, let's check it out.

Dead Space for the ZX Spectrum shares the name of the PlayStation 3 (and Xbox 360) spooky survival horror trilogy and the main character looks similar, although a little shorter in height, and that's where the similarities ends in terms of gameplay.

While the original Dead Space was

designed to be the most terrifying game that could be made, things are different on the ZX Spectrum. As expected, the game looks nothing like the original, how could it on an 8-Bit. Instead you play from a top down perspective.

The story is simple. Hostile aliens have taken over the space station and it's up to you to rescue the eleven people trapped on it. Unfortunately you don't have any weapons.

As previously said, the game character looks instantly recognisable and that adds to the enjoyment of the game in a reverse-retro sort of way. The game is maze like, just like the original too but

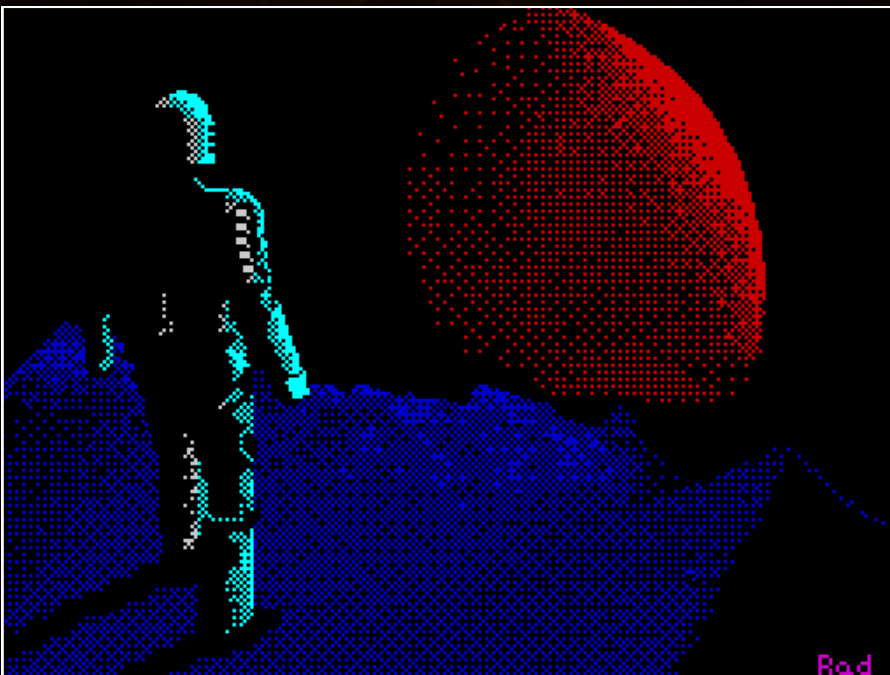
everything is way too bright. Running around a dark corner in the PS3 game and having a monster jump out really did cause the game player to jump out of their seat, but not in this game. Not having a weapon, you would think add to the game suspense but it doesn't, because the enemy are unintelligent. They just follow a predefined path, no enemy AI here and nothing to scare you. Getting zapped by the energy conduits is much more of a danger. You have to navigate them at the brief moment they switch off, otherwise you'll fry and lose one of your three health packs. Touching the aliens in any way is also lethal but they are much easier to avoid.

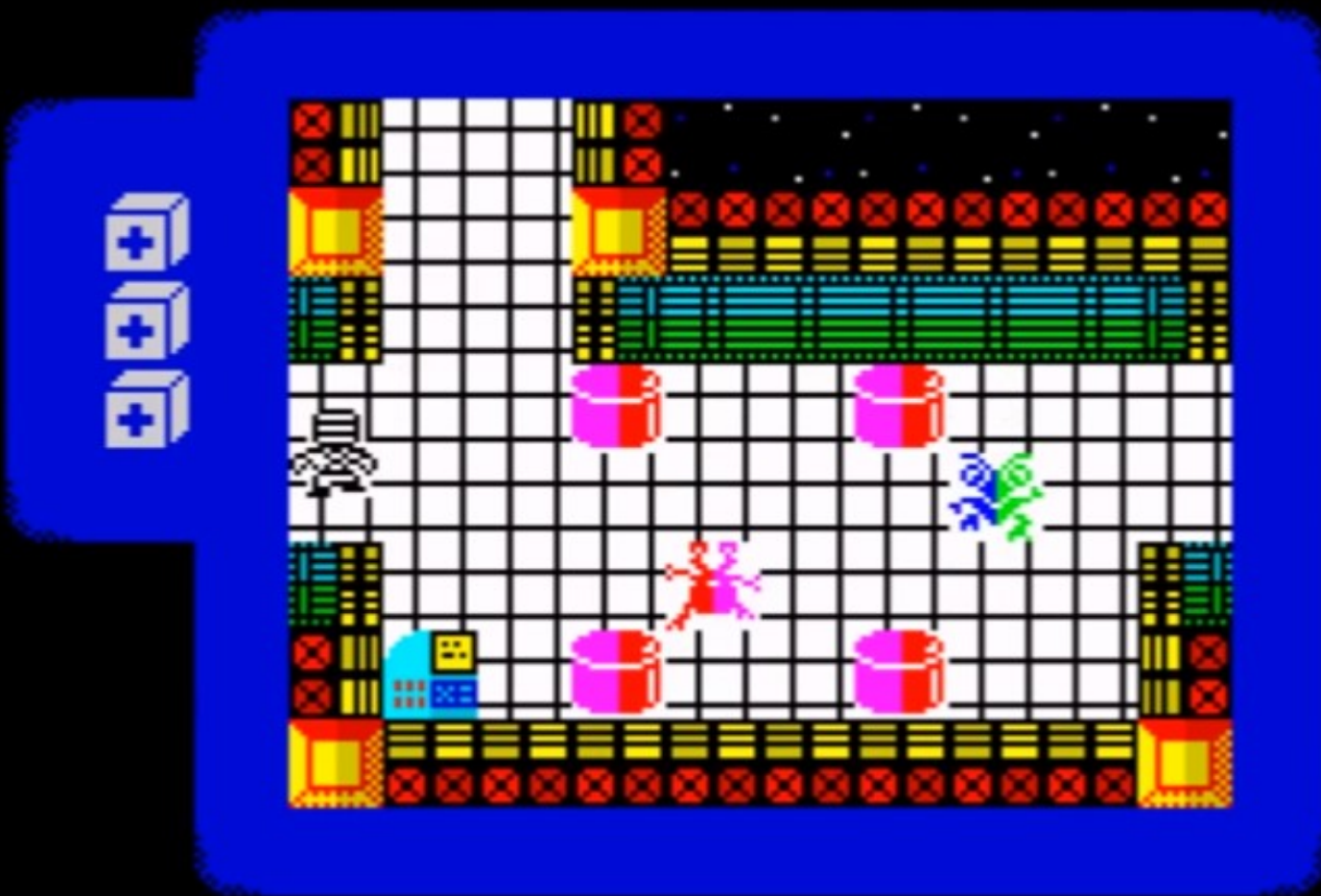
The people you must rescue, just sit there and wave their arms hilariously, waiting to be rescued. What is annoying is that you are not told how many people you've rescued, so you must keep count in the back of your mind.

Playing the game you may notice that there's no time bar, just three health packs and once they are gone, one more touch of a electrical field or by an alien will end your game. I do like the idea of being able to take your time to explore.

There's also no scrolling within the game but that's neither here nor there and wouldn't have made much of a difference if there was scrolling.

Graphics are functional and there's no colour clash. They can be best described as functional. Sound is terrible, the footsteps are clicks and everything else is just clicks. Controls as the basic Q,A,O, P and SPACE





Watch out for those extremely stupid aliens.

setup that works so well.

While not expected to be as graphically amazing as the original, a little bit of suspense was expected. On its own merits, it's a fun game but the gameplay is a bit simplistic. It would be more fun if there were guns and intelligent enemies with a dash of moody graphics. Then it

would be a more of a true homage. As it is, it feels like an early Spectrum game with simplistic but fun gameplay.

You might think there's a lot of criticism here and there is but at the same time, the game is still fun to play, just on a more simplistic level. It's certainly a game that you want to complete and

enjoy it while doing it. But you'll be doing it in a relaxed state, taking your time, enjoying the challenge. Overall, it's a good game, even with the crappy sound effects. Just don't expect any sort of survival horror shooter and you won't be disappointed.

VERDICT

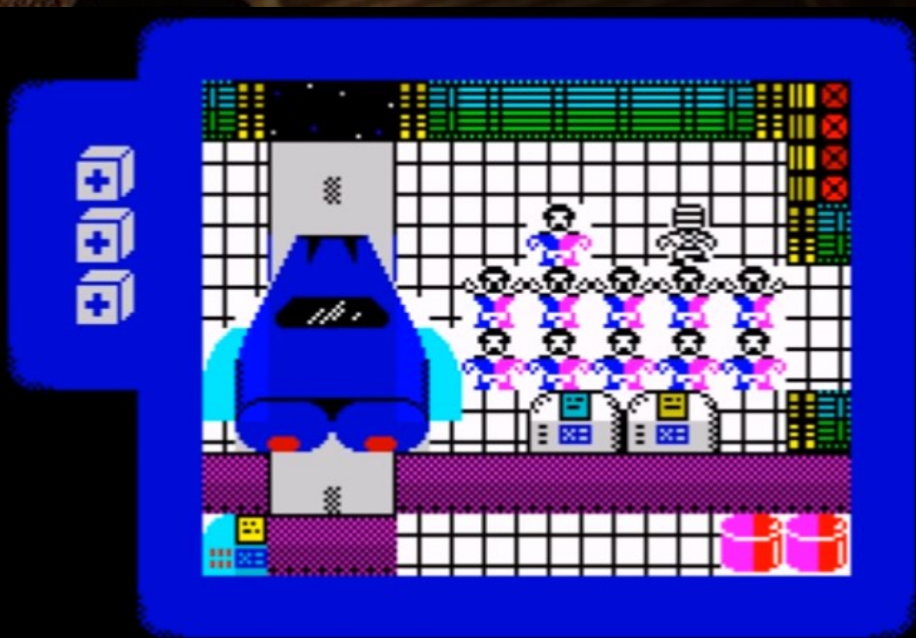
PROS

- The game sprite is instantly recognisable for Dead Space fanatics.
- Simple gameplay but enjoyable.
- Strong desire to complete the game, and that's what saves it.

CONS

- No guns.
- No enemy AI.
- Poor SFX.
- Lacks the 'jump out of your seat' moments.

78%



You've rescued them... well done!

- **TEAM:** The Mojon Twins
- **INFO:** Play it at www.historyworthplaying.com
- **REVIEWED BY:** John Kavanagh

THE COMPUTER SPIELE MUSEUM'S MUSEUM GUIDE

What a mouthful of a name, try saying that fast after a few drinks. Made by the Mojon Twins for the Computer Spiele Museum, a real computer museum based in Berlin, Germany. The Computer Spiele Museum's Museum Guide put you in control of either a male or female where you must recover the missing games and put them back in the correct devices.

To make things difficult are a bunch of different enemy sprites, one touch and you loses one of your lives. While they follow a pre-determined path, they move fast and often near the edge of screens where you bump into them before you see them. They also tend to be in spots where you have to either use an item or

pick up an object. When you do pick up an object or stand next to a device, you can read a little bit of info on it. Nothing you won't already know, but a nice touch nonetheless.

Finding the games which are a cassette, cartridge, CD and so on and inserting them into the right machine is fun for a short while, and since the game is so short you'll complete it fast before it gets boring. You can also find keys, find all three and you get a code which you can go on to win a guided visit to the real museum.

The game is hard to rate, on one hand, it only takes about 5 minutes to complete after a turn or three and is more of an advertisement than a game.

On the other hand, I'm wishing it was a full game and one that I feel I would enjoy playing, but as it is, it's just a clever advertising promo.

The game can be played directly on the site or you can use your mobile phone to record the game to be played back into a real Spectrum, very clever. However, playing on a web browser can vary in speed, for example, it plays faster in Firefox than Google Chrome. Usually we would say it's best played on real hardware but with a game so short, why bother? Instead, play it directly from the site for few minutes of fun. That way, you won't be disappointed and you may learn a thing or two about the museum.

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How can you say no to such a request?

VERDICT

PROS

- An enjoyable game that lasts for a short few minutes.
- Can win a visit to the real museum.

CONS

- Very short game.
- More of a clever advertisement than a game.

25%

- **TEAM:** Retroworks
- **INFO:** Download from theswordofianna.retroworks.es, free but donation recommended.
- **REVIEWED BY:** John Kavanagh



THE SWORD OF IANNA

A long time ago, the world was ruled by the Lord of Chaos. The goddess Ianna appointed Tukaram to wield the sacred sword that could defeat Chaos, and he did. After centuries of peace, Chaos is back and as heir of Tukaram, it's up to you to stop him.

This is a platform game where you control, a long haired character with a lot of muscle who looks a lot like Conan the Barbarian. The first thing that strikes you is the smooth animation of Jarkum, your character. He walks, runs, climbs, hangs off ledges and fights in fantastically smooth animation. The animation of the enemies are good too, but not as quite as good as the player character. Speaking of enemies, there are a good number of them and imaginably drawn too. Fighting is typically simple, although the controls could get you killed, more on that later. What brings extra dimension to the fighting is the enemies skill level. When fighting, you not only have your own health bar to watch, but the enemy's too, as well as his skill level. If his level is higher than yours, watch out, he's a tough cookie to deal with. You can increase your skill level through combat, as you kill enemies your level bar will



The main character is beautifully animated and the enemies are beautifully drawn.

increase, once it reaches the top, your skill level will increase by one.

The controls take a little while to get use to but I think they add to the game, even, as mentioned earlier, they could get you killed if you haven't mastered them. The fire button can be pressed to make your character run, this is useful for making long jumps when a normal jump won't do. Pressing CAPS SHIFT will turn your fire button into an attack button. Pressing it will swing your sword or axe. However, you better make sure you're facing your enemy once you press CAPS SHIFT, otherwise you could be facing away from the enemy. In this situation, expect to be slayed from behind. Facing the right way is more difficult than expected in certain situations, for example, when jumping off a ledge and your character is facing the wrong way. You got to turn him around quickly before pressing CAPS SHIFT. Don't think of this as criticism, but as something you need to master. Which you will after playing a few times.

Typically in this type of game, there are levers to be pulled. It's not always obvious what the lever does as it often causes an action on another close by screen such as opening a passage, but from what I see, it's a good idea to pull them. There are also things to pick up such as different weapons and potions to increase your health bar.

Graphics wise, the surrounds don't look too impressive but the sprites are and the music is a work of art. The sound effects are sparse but with music this good, who cares. It certainly creates atmosphere for the game.

It's a big game and will certainly be one you enjoy playing. There's a password system so you don't have to start from the start, which is a massive bonus for a



There are many different enemy types.

game this size. Paul Monopoli wrote the MSX review somewhere else in the annual. I haven't read it yet or played the MSX version but I heard it's just as good. This was a game that was four years in the making, and it shows. It's free to download and you'd be nuts not to play it. There's a donate button on the Retroworks website, and donations are well worth giving to such talent.

VERDICT

PROS

- Fantastic animation.
- Great gameplay.
- Beautiful music.

CONS

- You're kidding, right?

92%

- **TEAM:** Mat Recardo (Game Design/Concept, GFX, Load Screen), Sergey Kosov (Music)
- **INFO:** Free from <https://prefim.itch.io/hyperkill/purchase> but donation recommended. Also available in tape format from bumfungaming.com
- **REVIEWED BY:** Dave E (www.everygamegoing.com)

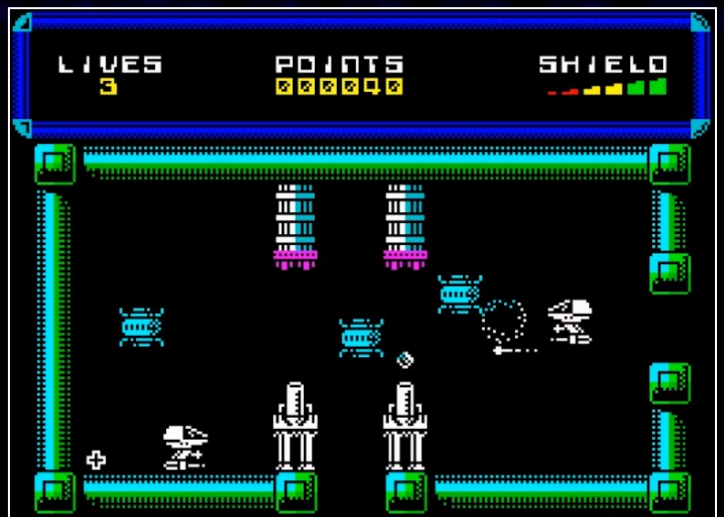
HYPERKILL



Hyperkill is a flick-screen, shoot 'em up of the type that simply asks "How far can you get?" As Spectrum releases go, it's one of 2017's finest. Your drone-ship is very responsive, graphics are excellent and each new room presents you with not just a new variety of baddies, but also demands a new strategy to cross it.

Some power-ups are scattered around, and yet more are left by splattered enemies. These range from temporary invulnerability to friendly satellites that protect your drone by blowing up anything that gets too close!

You have three lives, and each has an energy bar, so you can get quite far into Hyperkill, even on your first go. Ahem, well, as long as you are aware that you actually have two



weapons - a regular pistol, and a bomb to clear stationary obstacles. Hold down fire to activate it.



Chuck in some great music and this would've easily set you back a tenner back in the Speccy's heyday. One of the best Spectrum shooters I've played.

VERDICT

PROS

- Great music.
- Fantastic gameplay.

CONS

- Similar to many games that came before it.

80%

Retro Computing Roundtable



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- **TEAM:** Evgeniy Barskiy (Code), Dmitri Ponomarjov (GFX), Oleg Origin (GFX), Aleksey Golubtsov,diver4d (GFX), Marco Antonio del Campo,MAC (Load Screen), MmcM (Music).
- **INFO:** ZX Spectrum 128K only. Free download from <https://www.worldofspectrum.org/forums/discussion/54442/dizzy-vii-crystal-kingdom-dizzy-2017>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Dave E (www.everygamegoing.com)

CRYSTAL KINGDOM DIZZY 2017



Some people in the Spectrum scene do brilliant things with the machine. Others are simply brilliant artists, musicians or coders. Some of them work alone and present something that just about works, and then others step in to smarten it up. Every now and then though, you get a magical collaboration where a bunch of leading lights set out to make the game of the year.

If I say the names Oleg Origin, Evgeniy Barskiy, Dmitri Ponomarjov and Marco del Campo, what do you think? No, not "Russian"! Instead it's the nearest thing the Spectrum has got to a dream team. Add to the mix six new pieces of music by maestro Sergey Kosov and you'll attract the interest of every Spectrum gamer going. And if that's not enough, let's just add the Spectrum's most famous Eggy hero - Dizzy. So began, in 2014, the story of the development of Crystal Kingdom Dizzy 2017 and, three long years later, it's here to thrill the Spectrum world.

You may well have already glanced at the screenshots illustrating this review. If so (and if this is the first you've heard of Dizzy's new outing) you may well have assumed this was an Amiga or an Atari ST game review. The specifications of the engine powering it are certainly impressive - fifty frames per second, big cartoony sprites, a loading screen and an attract mode straight out of the arcades... and the list goes on and on. In fact, this is basically the Amiga version of Crystal Kingdom

Dizzy in every sense apart from the lower resolution of the graphics - even the cutscenes of that superior version are preserved within it.

Personally, when I first heard about the Crystal Kingdom Dizzy remake all those years ago, I hoped it wouldn't all end in tears. Any game featuring Dizzy is actually a risky choice for a project - Never mind one on such an ambitious scale! - because The Oliver Twins still forbid the distribution of Dizzy's previous adventures in any online form. You won't find him available to download on World Of Spectrum, for example; you'll only find him in the darker corners of the Internet. Which is

a shame in itself, but an absolute bugbear for the Ruskiies because, for some bizarre reason, they have embraced the Eggy hero in a way that the Europeans never did. At one point, World Of Spectrum hosted over thirty Russian Dizzy adventures alone. These days all of these games remain resolutely unavailable because Codemasters ordered them all to be taken down. Yes, even the Dizzy adventures that were the product of someone else's imagination had to go. One understands why, because clearly Dizzy is a franchise that still has plenty of life left in him, and the twins were probably alive to the possibility that, if they allowed unfettered distribution of



Dizzy at the start of his adventure.



Inside Freddy's Shack.

his adventures on the 8-Bits, they might one day face someone ripping him off on a modern format. But, yes, if I was being asked to pour three years of my life into a project, I'd be somewhat reluctant to go ahead with it given that history.

There's also the fact that the original Crystal Kingdom Dizzy wasn't particularly bad. Like all the others in the series, it's a colourful graphic adventure. You play the cute little bouncing egg of the title and find yourself in the town of the Yolkfolk, setting out to bring object A to egg character C to acquire object B to get past obstruction D, and so on. The Spectrum version has about 130 locations; the Amiga one 136, and the overall objective is to find the sword, chalice and crown. These are, apparently, the "treasures" of the Crystal Kingdom which has recently been looted, casting a strange spell upon the village and causing them to lose their electricity supply. The original has amazing AY music and appeared towards the end of the Spectrum's shelf life (Christmas 1992), when the standards expected of any game were very high. Dizzy games were already very well respected and it garnered high praise from Your Sinclair (by then the only Speccy magazine still standing). Indeed, the only thing they found to criticise was the "high" price tag (£9.99). Unlike, say, the remake of R-Type on the Amstrad (where much more of the arcade could have been ported had shortcuts with the conversion not been taken), the original wasn't really an ideal candidate for a remake.

Still, enough of this pondering. You're probably anxious to know if the game is actually any good. Well, yes, it's brilliant. But then you expected that, right? I mean, with the names behind it and the long development time being a case of them all wanting absolute perfection in the release, it was bound to be a real rave from the grave. The very fact it's a Spectrum 128K only game also gives you a clue that this isn't going to be your average AGD/La Churrera-designed platformer. Had this version been released back in 1992 it would have quite likely blown the minds of all who experienced it.

All that said, when you've played the original (and most Spectrum owners will have done!), there's always a strange feeling when you get your hands on a different version for the same machine. And there are huge differences between the two. Things that you expect to find simply aren't there, whilst other things are there, but are positioned on different screens or in slightly different places. This makes reviewing a remake more of a battlefield; the reviewer must constantly ignore the voices in his head that say "Well, that's different!" and "Why can't I reach that on this version?" because, as this is a new version, they are quite obviously going to be placed differently. The differences are, frankly, an irrelevance.

So, with all that in mind, where does Crystal Kingdom Dizzy 2017 excel the most? In the graphics, which are more cartoony? In the dialogue, which is both longer and more witty? In the control

system, which is more intuitive? In the music, which is more memorable and more varied? Or in the animation, which is smoother and with less colour clash? The answer is, of course, in all areas and yet in none. This is essentially a completely different game - a brilliant one, at that - and it delivers exactly what the genius coders behind it intended to. If you're a Dizzy fan, and you've never played the Amiga version, then by all means feel free to get wildly ecstatic about this alone. However, to me it sort of begs the question "Why not just *play* the Amiga version?" That's because the two are practically identical... except the Amiga version has, naturally, better graphics. (I felt much the same about the superior BBC Micro version of Palace Of Magic when fans spent a whopping ten years converting it to the

Electron. Brilliant conversion, but if Palace Of Magic is your thing, you've probably already played the BBC version anyway.)

Ultimately then, who is the target audience here? It can only be those who have never played a Dizzy game before, and want the very best one available for the Spectrum. If that's you, get it, play it, be amazed...! Because this absolutely could not be any better.

Note: Bearing in mind the history of Dizzy releases disappearing, if you do think this sounds interesting, you might want to download it sooner rather than later!

VERDICT

PROS

- The best that could be done on the ZX Spectrum.

CONS

- There are no cons.
- Except for that you may have played a similar version on the Amiga.

98%

- CODER: John Blythe
- INFO: Free download from <https://www.rucksackgames.co.uk/foggy>, Tape version available for £10 from bumfungaming.com
- REVIEWED BY: Dave E (www.everygamegoing.com)

FOGGY'S QUEST

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In this game, you play a sprite that bears more than a passing resemblance to Casper The Friendly Ghost. However, you're no ghost; you're an intergalactic tourist exploring the mysterious Dimension 52b. Tourists are renowned for their search for adventure but, on this trip, you've got more adventure than you bargained for. Immediately upon landing, you are set upon by a bunch of homicidal "NARGs" who stole your ship, its dimension splicer and the vital power crystals it needs to run! You've retreated to some caves in order to formulate a plan to get all the component bits back and make good your escape.

So begins Foggy's Quest. Bum Fun Gaming seem to be snapping up a great many of the recent Public Domain releases for the Spectrum, giving them a snazzy inlay, recording them on physical tapes and then banging them out at £12 a pop. Which is actually a bit of a troublesome scenario for an unbiased reviewer. Often I haven't had chance to review the Public Domain release of the

game before the Professional one comes along. That's not particularly problematic per se, but, if a game isn't particularly good, it does feel a bit sad to give it a mauling when a software house has clearly seen such potential in it.

Anyway, I digress. Whether you've downloaded the original free Rucksack Games release or bought a cassette version from Bum Fun, you'll get exactly the same game, which is a platform jaunt written by John Blythe with the Arcade Game Designer (AGD is a software utility by Jonathan Cauldwell that greatly simplifies the process of writing a graphic adventure. All you need is an idea and, importantly, the imagination and dedication to design the map and the puzzles to bring it to life!). If you play an AGD game, you don't really expect anything revolutionary as, by its nature, it's going to be confined to the limits of the utility used in its design. At the other end of the scale, AGD takes away any excuses the programmer might have regarding coding. AGD's range of configuration options for your homebrew project is near-perfect, so whether a game designed using it succeeds or fails depends 100% per cent on the idea, and the choices the author takes in the implementation of it.

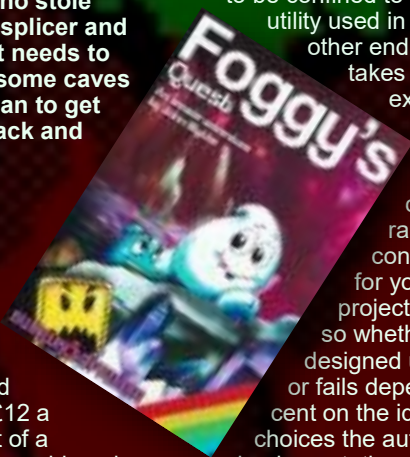
So, after that rather lengthy introduction, let's consider the decisions

John Bythe took in putting Foggy's Quest together. Firstly, it's a nice-looking game - bigish sprites with a cutesy feel to them scroll swiftly and smoothly around. Secondly, it's a flick-screen affair which is designed with some skill, particularly in its opening stages. You are cleverly restricted to a small area in order to get to grips with the easy-to-use controls, and learn the basics of ascending and descending ladders, jumping and manipulating the inventory.

However, you get three lives rather than an energy bar. This is the game's first serious mistake, because serious mistake two follows hard with some of the dodgiest collision detection ever. Attempt to jump a patrolling nasty and, until you've got used to the game's quirks, you'll not only die but be left positively befuddled by the number of pixels away from said nasty that you can actually be. What makes Foggy's Quest unique in the befuddlement respect is that, whenever you are "deaded", it includes a short pause which presents the evidence of your unfair demise for all to see. There's no death "animation", the whole screen just stops in its tracks. I counted some ten pixels between me and the nasty that apparently "got me" on more than one occasion. They need seriously wide berths!

Beware of jumping when you don't need to. Foggy is propelled in the direction of travel if falling. Sometimes it's necessary to fall from one platform to another rather than jump.

The next thing to annoy me was that some problem-solving within the game needs to be solved by "comparing the





relative speed of jumping with the speed of ladder climbing". Imagine a nasty that patrols left to right over the midriff of a ladder. In many platforms, you simply wait for the nasty to reach a certain position before hitting it up the ladder to safety. But in *Foggy's Quest* (thanks in large part to the collision detection alluded to), you won't make it. Instead you need to jump part of the way and then clamber the rest. This wouldn't be so bad in itself if the ladders weren't so finicky about the position Foggy must be in to operate them at all. Basically, if he isn't pixel-perfect square on the jump itself, the clamber up fails and leads to a spectacular loss of life.

Now we come to the Object Pads that litter the playing area. These nicely-animated blue bubbly areas indicate that an object can be used when you are positioned upon them. As you progress through the flick-screens, as you might expect, there are keys to find (to open up other areas) as well as the constituent parts of your ship. However, a few of these pads are positioned right underneath the same patrolling nasties that pervade the ladders and platforms. "So what?" you might say, "Just don't

jump into them and you'll be ok!" That's true, but the trouble is that the key that "actions" your inventory is the same "jump" key control that sends Foggy in a nice spacebound leap. So linger just a fraction too long on the "use key to open door" action and control will return to Foggy and, well, you can guess the rest...

All of the above control quirks mean that I haven't got very far in *Foggy's Quest*. It's so frustrating as to border on the impossible, and the stupid "Foggy's Quest Is Over" ending screen, unceremoniously presented on the loss of your last life, seems designed in large measure to be the final push towards having you smash up your Spectrum in a fit of unrestrained petulance.

It looks very attractive, and if you persevere, it's a neat enough, bug-free little game. If you love all kinds of graphic adventure, then the imagination and platform design is well up there with the best.

And, to get my criticisms in perspective, if the game had an energy bar, or even an increased number of lives, I'd forgive it for its horrendous gameplay quirks.

But, as it stands, I doubt I'll return to it any time soon. As for the physical version, I can't really recommend you invest your cash in it for the game alone. By all means do it to support the homebrew scene and bung John Bythe a few quid in royalties to work on its sequel. But bear in mind that it probably would've struggled to find any fans as a Mastertronic budget title back in the day.

VERDICT

PROS

- Nice graphics.

CONS

- Bad collision detection.
- Control quirks.

37%

- **CODER:** Steve Snakes (Reptilia Design)
- **INFO:** Download from https://drive.google.com/file/d/12m-2GM-wLv85-C_anmsDf8SvQkKIFEYM/view
- **REVIEWED BY:** Merman



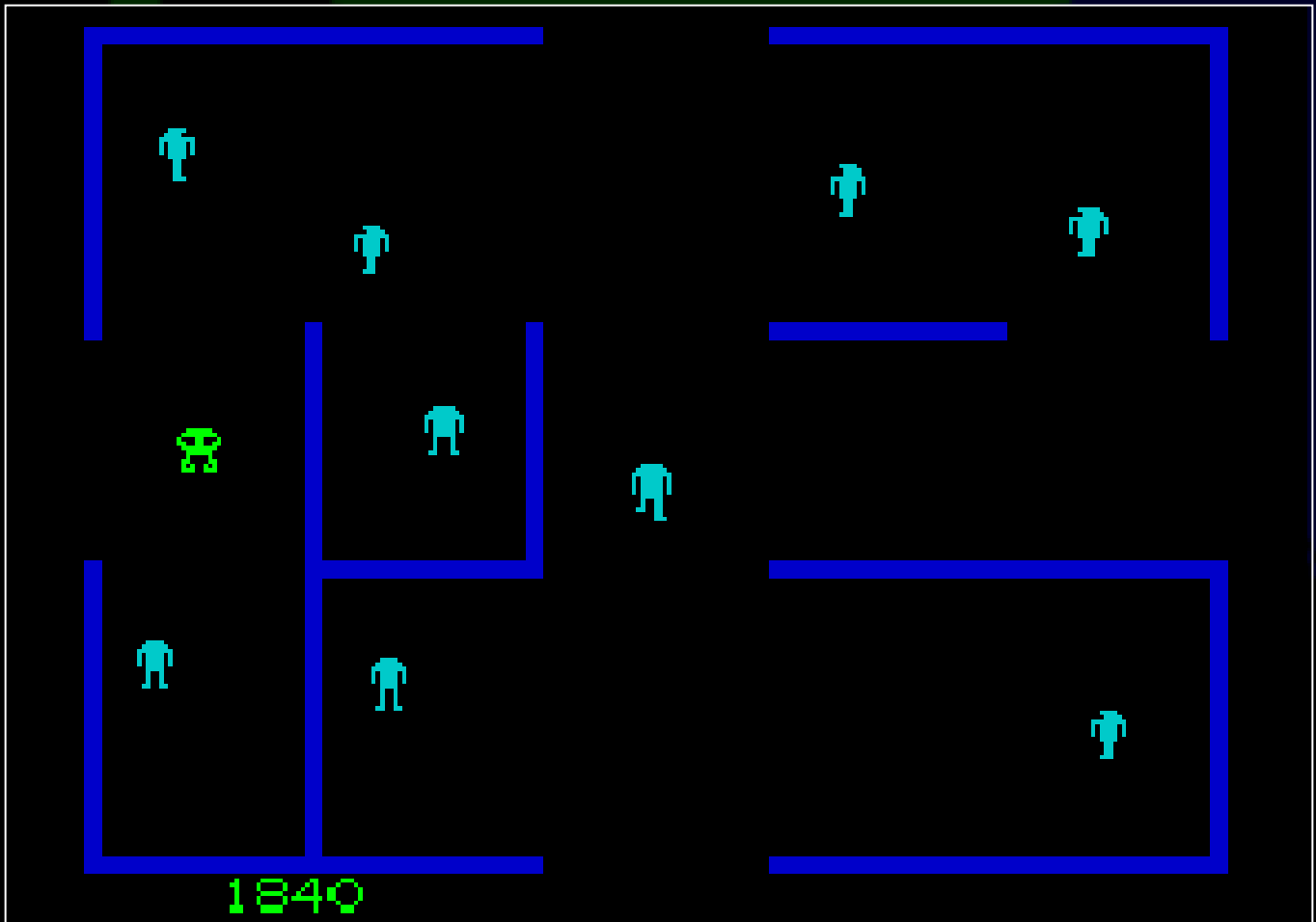
HORACE AND THE ROBOTS

Here is the recipe for an exciting new Spectrum game. Take the gameplay from a classic arcade title, namely Berzerk. Season with the Currah Speech module for in-game speech. Stir in the colourful Sinclair mascot Horace, who has a history of running around mazes. Bake with the programming genius of Steve Snake

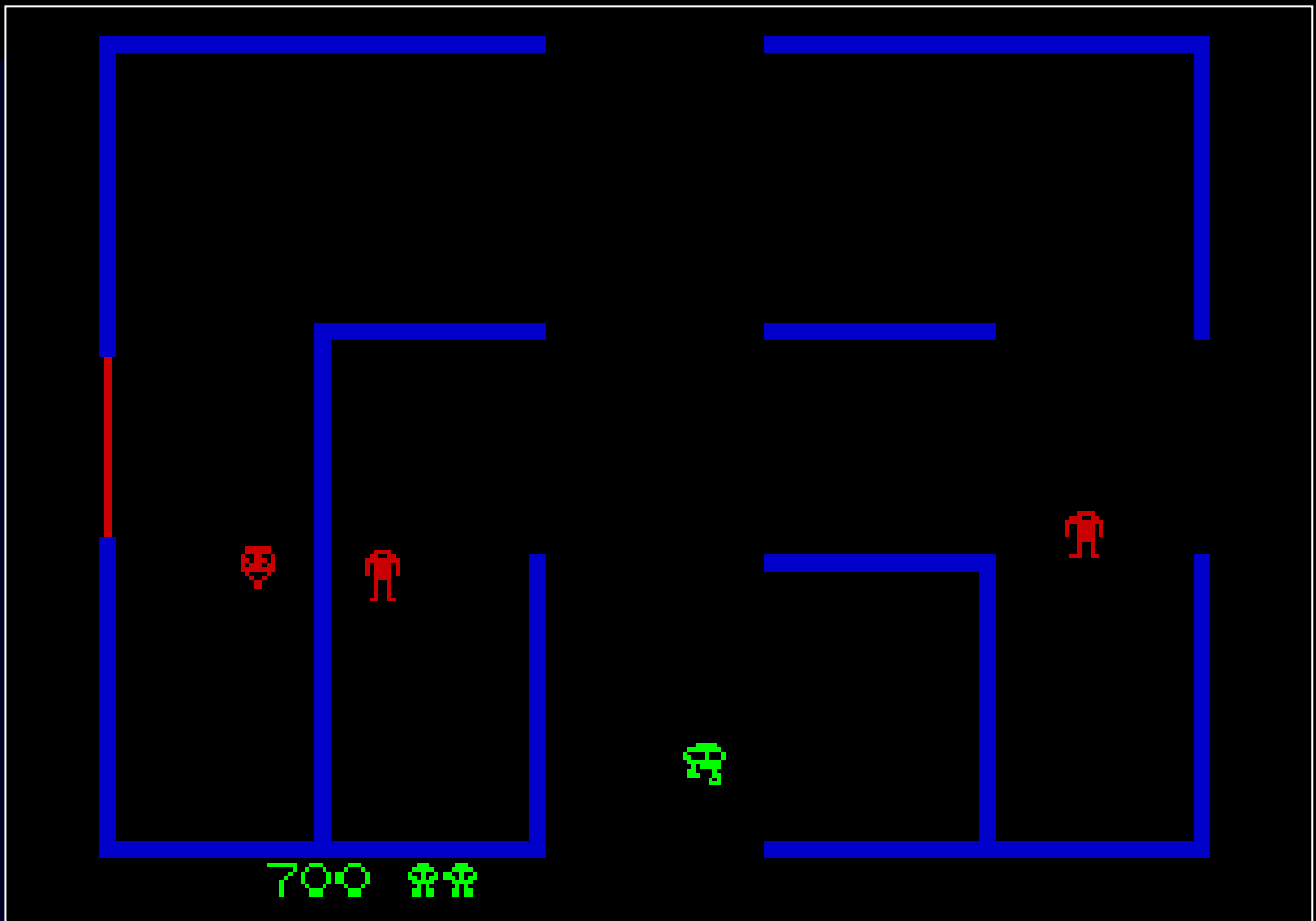
and turn out of the oven in time for Christmas 2017. The end result will be a tasty treat called Horace and the Robots.

If you have never played Berzerk, then a quick summary. The game takes place in a maze, split into single screens. Each screen has electrified walls that will kill the player or enemies. As the player

completes more screens, the enemies change colour and become more aggressive – homing in quicker and shooting more frequently. The robots can accidentally shoot each other and will explode if two or more collide (so the player can lure them into killing themselves, a useful strategy as the screen becomes more crowded). A short



The first level of Horace and the Robots looks easy...



Evil Otto is homing in as Horace tries to flee south.

time after a screen begins, the nasty Evil Otto appears. This malevolent bad guy can pass through walls and homes in on the player, killing them with a single touch; the only escape is to flee through an exit (at the top, bottom or sides of the screen). There is a bonus score for killing all the robots on a screen before leaving, handy for racking up a higher total. Each game is different as the screen layout is determined by random factors, and barriers prevent the player back-tracking.

What added so much to the coin-op



Neil Parsons created this inlay for the game, for those who wanted to convert the game back to tape.

original was the speech, and this is replicated with the help of the Currah Speech hardware unit. Although it can be tricky to set up in emulation, it is possible to have both speech AND 128K sound. The robots taunt the player, calling them CHICKEN if they flee a screen before all the enemies are killed, an INTRUDER ALERT sounds when Evil Otto appears and the robots cry out STOP THE HUMANOID among other randomised phrases. (Included in the random phrases is HORACE, so you get apt combinations like GET HORACE). There are also many control options – keys is the default (QAOP and Space), with Kempston, Sinclair and Cursor joysticks supported.

Graphically the game captures the style of Berzerk, with a great Horace sprite to control. What is also impressive is the title screen with its large logo moving and flipping as the scrolling message gives the credits and control options. The sounds are OK but basic, with the speech being a lot of fun. In game the control is fluid and easy to grasp. Pressing in a direction moves Horace, pressing a direction and fire at the same time shoots in that direction. It's possible to rotate fire by holding the button/key down and moving. One difference from the original is how hard it is to shoot a robot's incoming bullets, which combines with the rapid increase in difficulty level

to make this a tougher version to conquer. Another niggle is the lack of a high score, either shown on the title screen or as a high score table. This would make it even more fun to play, trying to beat your last score. It does not detract from the achievement of one of the best Berzerk-style games on the Spectrum, cramming all of the arcade action into 48K.

VERDICT

PROS

- Almost arcade-perfect.
- Currah Speech adds to the atmosphere.
- Great range of control options.

CONS

- Lack of a high-score table.
- Difficulty soon increases.
- Too hard to shoot enemy bullets.

90%

- **TEAM:** John Blythe (Rucksack Games)
- **INFO:** Download from <https://www.rucksackgames.co.uk/downloads>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Dave E (www.everygamegoing.com)

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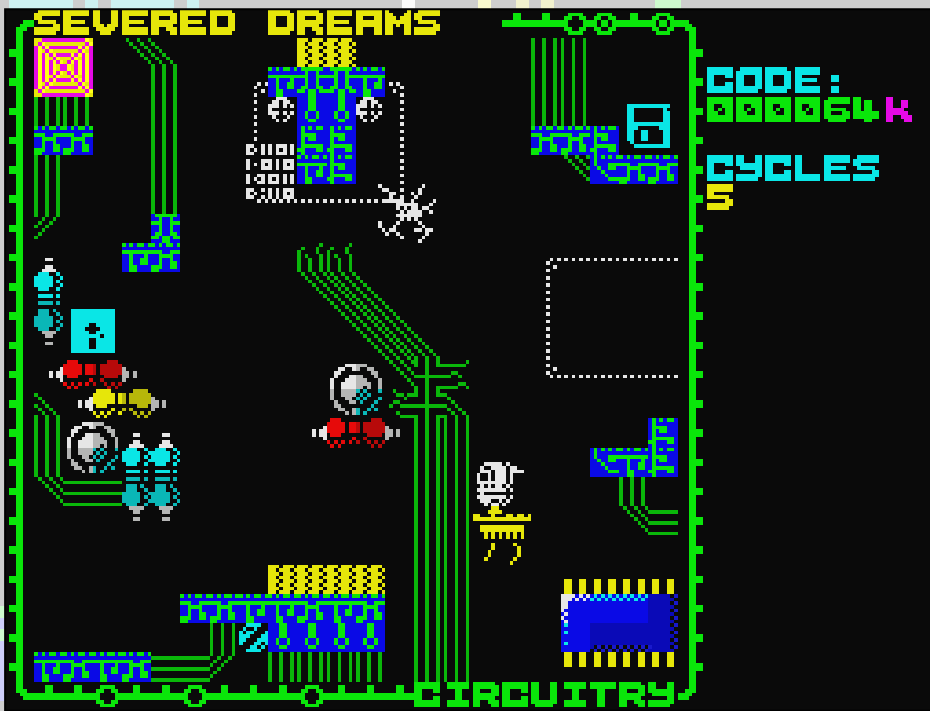
CIRCUITRY



Since the advent of the Spectrum Arcade Game Designer, it seems every Tom, Dick and Harry has found a few days to put together his own "collect the objects and avoid the patrolling nasties" platform game. In Circuitry, you are Nan'O'Bot, and you need to collect all the flashing items from each screen before jumping into the Exit panel to proceed to the next one. It's a formula that you're probably overly familiar with.

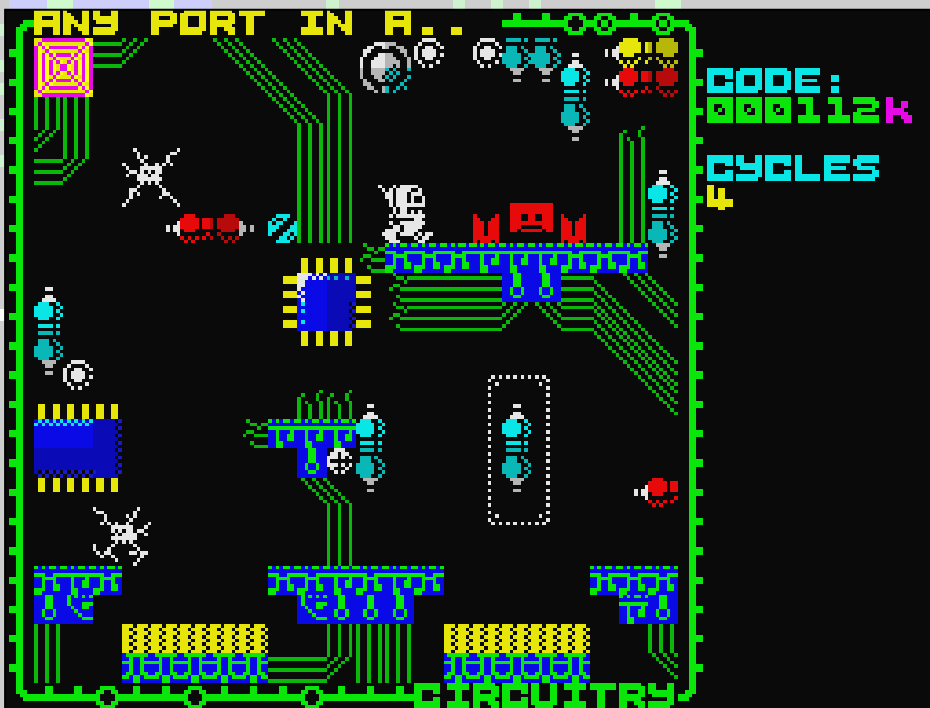
The blurb on the cassette inlay calls Circuitry "claustrophobic platforming mayhem"; a description that might use "mayhem" a little too readily but is otherwise pretty bang on the money. Every screen of the game feels very claustrophobic indeed. This may perhaps be due to John Blythe's decision to pack it into a square area rather than make full use of the Spectrum's screen. Indeed, if you take a gander at the screenshots, you'll see a big part of screen real estate bottom right sitting completely unused. The thick "circuit-style" border reduces the actual playing area even further too, giving the game a real feel of restriction. There's rarely a choice of route through the screen, and navigation and jumping of the bad guys needs some real thought. Puzzles are arranged in such a way that the solution dawns on you after a few abortive attempts (or deadly failures).





though seems to have been expressly designed to make you wonder rather than to be an unwanted oversight.

Overall then, Circuitry is a cramped, but pretty cracking, little game. Of course, it doesn't exactly offer the seasoned Spectrum gamer anything new and it's not a game you're likely to remember for the rest of your life. But it's quirky, and that's admirable enough that it gets my vote. Shame about the lack of music though.



Circuitry was initially released on-line by Rucksack Games and recently given the physical treatment by the respected Monument Microgames. A physical version will cost you £9.50 from www.monumentmicrogames.com, and comes with the usual cassette, glossy booklet, badge, game card and CD with emulator version. Download the free version from rucksackgames.co.uk/circuitry.



VERDICT

PROS

- Very responsive.
- Very colourful.

CONS

- No music, only spot effects.
- Can be a bit vexing if you confuse a platform with a background.

53%

Despite its description, this land isn't one of mayhem. There's no time limit and there's a generous helping of lives so, ultimately, there's no pressure to complete a screen quickly. Indeed, there's often areas of each screen where Nan'O'Bot is safe from all harm and where you can take a breath and work out how to tackle the next bit. That this is maintained throughout the screens shows great creativity on the part of its designer; so too does the theming of the game, with all adversaries being IT-related. Platformers may well not be in short supply on the Spectrum, but marauding blobs of solder and blocks of zeroes and ones certainly are.

The skill with which the levels are put

together in Circuitry also means it has a habit of lulling you into a false sense of security. Getting most of the flashing data items (floppy disks, etc) isn't very hard, and Nan'O'Bot is a very responsive droid. He skirts quickly around, can stretch out pretty far from each platform before attempting to jump to the next one and can fall from any height without dying. Yet despite this apparent ease, it's all a bit more difficult than it looks. It's all also insanely colourful, managing, quite ingeniously, to avoid any and all colour clash.

If there's one thing to criticise, it's only that it's sometimes difficult to comprehend what is a platform and what is just a background graphic. Even this

- **CODER:** Gabriele Amore
- **INFO:** Download from <https://www.dropbox.com/s/x7zx4cjm4dqjzia/Castle%20Capers.tap?dl=0>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Dave E (www.everygamegoing.com)

CASTLE CAPERS

Uh oh, the latest Spectrum release from Gabriele Amore has just landed on my desk. His "conversion" of the arcade Popeye was an abomination and his Pengi-clone Pengo Quest was decidedly odd in both execution and premise, so my hopes weren't high for Castle Capers. But, at least I consoled myself as I loaded it in, there are some instructions with this one. Fairly limited instructions, but we'll come to that, but instructions nevertheless. His previous games have left the player to work out what to do himself.

The game is set in a fairy-tale platform

world ruled by the Evil Mouse King. There are a number of screens to complete which are all patrolled by the King's patrolling minions, and you have only your skill with the placements of blocks to rescue the fairies from each of them. You move a wizard looking character around each platform and can only go left, right or create a block directly in front of you; if you do this, it will appear in the direction in which you're currently facing.

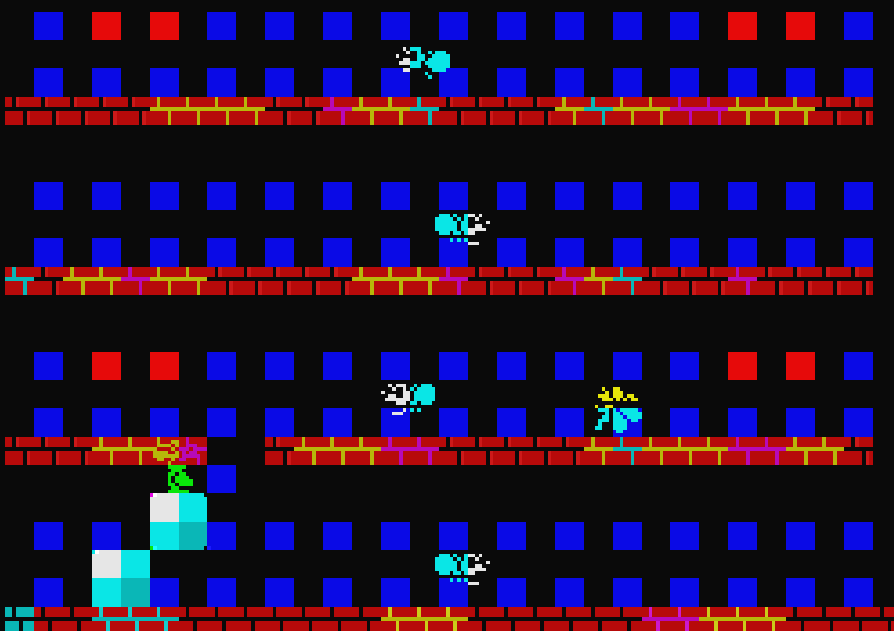
Oddly, the instructions inform you that you have infinite lives - apart from when you reach the final confrontation with the Mouse King. Having played games

like **Solomon's Key** (on the Spectrum) and **Breakthrough** (on the BBC), my initial thoughts were, at this point, how hard can this be?

Well, I soon not only found out but also gained myself another Gabriele Amore game to hate. What the instructions hadn't pointed out was exactly how to use that "create a block / create hole" control. Tap it, and a block (the same size as your wizard) does indeed appear - and tap it again and it does indeed disappear too. So, sharpish considering the patrolling minions jerkily steaming toward me, I created a block, stepped onto it, created another one, stepped onto that, created a third and stepped out of harm's way onto the platform above. The fairy gliding back and forth on this platform ran into me - all good - and another one then appeared on the platform below.

Which left me unable to complete the screen.

How could I remove the blocks below me? It wasn't possible. Tapping that "create a block / create hole" would only create further blocks, leading me further and further up the screen until I became trapped at the very top. How was I supposed to use it to create holes? There were no clues in the instructions but fortunately a quick visit to YouTube revealed that holes were created by placing the block in front of overhead platforms, and then removing it. You see, removing the block doesn't just remove the block itself, but the platform too, which creates the holes that you need to drop through if, later, a fairy is milling about on one of the platforms





I'm racking my brain for something - anything! - positive to say about **Castle Capers**. A typical game involves scooting out of the way of an approaching nasty - off one side of the screen and onto the other because it has wraparound - and constructing a 'staircase' of blocks until you reach an overhead platform. At that point you need to remember to 'remove' the block you place in front of it to create a hole. Then you must retreat down your staircase and create a branch of it that avoids filling in the hole

below you.

Aha! Back to the game I went, hoping that the frustrating feeling that "Well, this can't be right; I must not be playing it properly," would now go away. It didn't. It was replaced by the frustrations of the game itself.

Firstly, Gabriele Amore clearly builds all of his games with the same tools - and so they are always jerky, and the sprites are always the same sizes. The same criticisms I've levelled at his previous efforts therefore apply in equal measure to **Castle Capers**.

Here, instead of your wizard being able to run and jump enemies, he's got blocks to construct, and holes to create. Any player therefore needs a bit of time to study the screen layout beforehand, or needs the game to run at a reasonable speed that they can place blocks to strategically avoid the enemies and consider the bigger picture of getting from A to B simultaneously. **Castle Capers** doesn't give you nearly enough time to think about what you're doing before you have to do it simply to prevent a collision.

I'd also take issue with the blocks in **Castle Capers** not being giant ice cubes, as they possess the same level of adhesiveness. Create one, step onto it, and forget to jerk forward into its very centre, and you'll slip backwards off it as you create another one! Create two

vertically-aligned blocks and you'll teleport up them when you stand on the one at the very bottom.

Baddies, of which there are many, have varying degrees of movement and intelligence. Some just move jerkily left and right in set patterns; others bounce too, meaning they can reach you even if you're between platforms on a block or, if they bounce high enough to come through the floor, even on the platform above. Yet others ascend or descend passages of blocks you've created, and fall through the holes you've made. Without exception, they all move slightly faster than you do, meaning once one's on your tail, you can't hope to outrun it or even scramble to safety. It's at this point that you begin to understand why you're given infinite lives. If this booted you back to a title screen, you'll never be bothered to start a subsequent game!

Screen layout is aesthetically unpleasing. The Spectrum always suffers from colour clash, so programmers compensate for it by having cute-but-monochrome sprites, or dispensing with backgrounds. Doing this means the player can see what's going on, and indeed Amore's **Pengo Quest** seemed to have grasped this. **Castle Capers** therefore seems like a step *backwards*, because there's a whole lot of colour clash going on - when enemies glide through or over the blocks you've created, they almost seem to temporarily disappear.

you've created. Then you rinse and repeat that formula on each platform to reach the next one. When you've collected your quota of fairies you proceed to the middle of the top-most platform and continue to the next screen. All of that *does* take some skill and, if you've got a Spectrum 128K, it's accompanied by some very snazzy in-game music.

Amore was probably hoping to create a cutesy platformer to tax the brain. But the game itself is so dated, basic and samey that you won't pick it up more than once. **Solomon's Key** is head and shoulders above this mess, and it's over 35 years old now. Check it out if you must - it's probably just about worth it for the music.

VERDICT

PROS

- Good SFX.

CONS

- Everything else.

28%

- **CODER:** Jaime Grilo
- **INFO:** Download from https://mega.nz/#!uhcxTbqZ!JI9sa1bJZT8_V0bZREtAu4LfVWwJk39LVekCoehDAI or €10 for Tape version from bumfungaming.com
- **REVIEWED BY:** Dave E (www.everygamegoing.com)



THE ADVENTURE OF JANE JELLY: THE TREASURE OF ZEDIN

If you call your game *The Adventures Of Jane Jelly*, you're clearly, possibly even subconsciously, telling us all not to expect too much.

The game is a platformer with pretty big, er, sprites in which you must collect flashing artefacts and avoid the roaming nasties. It looks like a budget game from the wrong type of software house - a tired concept with the only real attraction being Jane Jelly's Madonna-esque spiky jugs.

So worth playing then right? Ho ho.

Well, in fact, it's kinda okay. Jane can jump amazing distances so screens can be traversed quite easily. Indeed, a few

screens had me convinced she'd never make it, but she did, every time. She's also fairly responsive when not perched on a ladder and, although I suspect the game holds very few surprises, there are enough treasures littered around the tomb for exploration to feel somewhat rewarding.

Heh, heh. But the trouble is that there

```
THE ADVENTURES OF JANE JELLY ©  
The Treasure of Zedin ©  
By Jaime Grilo (2017)
```

```
You are JANE JELLY, a treasure  
hunter.
```

```
Your mission is to explore the  
Caves of Spectrum and find the  
TREASURE OF ZEDIN!
```

```
Besides the treasure, you will  
find 25 valuable relics.
```

```
Also you have to find 3 keys.  
Open the doors with the number  
of keys requested.
```

```
But the task is not easy...  
In your way you will find many  
cave hazards that kills you...
```

```
PRESS ANY KEY TO CONTINUE!
```



are already many better tomb-raiding platformers than this. But, if you've got a breast fixation, then you'll find it fun. (Just don't kid yourself that you're downloading it for any other reason!)

VERDICT

PROS

- Good playability.

CONS

- Terrible sound, and everything else.

43%

- **CODER:** Paul Jenkinson
- **INFO:** Download from <http://www.thespectrumshow.co.uk/DL/games/CodeZero.zip>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Dave E (www.everygamegoing.com)

CODE ZERO

You know, a funny thing happens to me when I play a game that has no music and only spot effects for sound. I start to hum. And, what's more, I've realised that the tune I start to hum is often linked in some way to the game itself. Whilst I was suffering Code Zero, I was humming Empty Room by Sanna Nielsen...

The rather promising backstory to Code Zero is that you play the "fixer" of an all-powerful conglomerate. You're the one they call when something goes wrong, and something has gone very wrong at the company's main nuclear power plant. In fact, things have gone so wrong that all those who were working in it have been killed or hospitalised, and the power plant is in danger of imploding. Your mission is "Code Zero", meaning jet in, shut the plant down and escape.

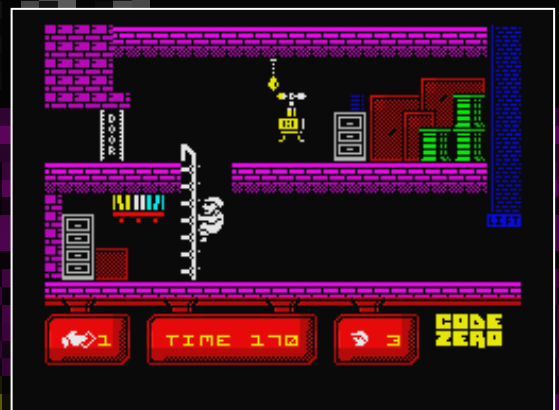
Alas, traversing empty room after empty room does not a great game make. The barren backdrops, coupled with the fact that your hired mercenary plods around with seemingly little enthusiasm for the task at hand, hardly inspires much confidence. The game itself also seems devoid of the mission spoken of in the inlay - instead you seem to have to hunt

out key-cards and then use these to open doors. An elevator connects four floors of pain. Your mission actually seems to consist of relentlessly trudging up and down empty corridors, firstly collecting a key-card, and then tediously trying every door you've seen on your travels in the vague hope that it will open it.

There are some roaming nasties in some locations (A grand total of one per room!) but their lumbering attack patterns are easily avoided by climbing out of their reach on the far-too-conveniently placed ladders. Not only can you not tell which key opens which door, you can't jump either, meaning even skirting around those nasties takes much longer than feels comfortable. The acid rain and electrical showers that must be ducked under are also very easy to avoid because you just need to wait for the opportune time to walk past them.

Though few and far between, there are one or two nice touches - the skyscrapers peeping through the windows you walk past, for example, and the climbing animation as you hoist yourself around on the ladders. But they can't even begin to raise this one out of the category of almost interminably dull.

Does it get better as you get further in? Well, I have to be honest and say possibly. Personally, I was too bored to even try and found myself just walking into the nasties in the vain hope of injecting a little excitement into this interminable snoozefest. It didn't, but at least my suicide put me quickly out of my misery.



Code Zero is a game that doesn't work on any level, devoid of imagination with the only incentive to progress being to collect more key-cards and open more doors. Whoopee (yes, I'm using sarcasm). With that being the case, why Cronosoft felt Code Zero to be worthy of a physical release is just beyond me. Like Sanna, I must move on...

VERDICT

PROS

- Some nice touches.

CONS

- A game that doesn't work on any level.

12%



- **TEAM:** John Blythe (Rucksack Games)
- **INFO:** Download from <https://www.rucksackgames.co.uk/downloads>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Dave E (www.everygamegoing.com)

THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING PROFESSOR



Peter Poldark is the latest in a line of unfortunate professors to be doused in a chemical concoction that reduces him to the size of a thimble in this graphic adventure from

Rucksack Games. But I'm not sure what's so "incredible" about it. In fact, I don't know who in their right mind would enjoy this. It's just too damned hard to be any fun at all!

Let's get all the superficially good stuff out of the way first, shall we? It's colourful, yes. It's from the rather talented Mr. Blythe, author of Circuitry, yes. It's responsive, sure. And it's got some thumping AY music on the 128K Spectrum too. In addition, I always think what makes a good graphical adventure (be it platform-based or otherwise) is where the objective is, from the outset, extremely clear. Here you're charged with recovering three blue pills, two green ones and one white diamond-shaped one, in order to return Poldark to his normal height. Easy.

However, whilst collecting up the pills is certainly clear, what's less clear is what the other objects are that are scattered throughout Poldark's lab. The instructions are less than helpful, saying only that you should be on the lookout for flashing question marks that indicate an object should be "used" (ENTER key) when standing in front of them. These puzzles seem to be of the type where you bring a certain object to a certain place and then use it to remove an obstruction. This isn't wildly exciting and objects are small and indistinct, making using them correctly more guesswork than skill. Poldark is limited to carrying only a single object at any one time too meaning that, when you pick one up, you immediately whisper a silent prayer that you won't have to carry it through seventeen screens of "fun" before you can actually use it.

And what "fun" you can have here!! Sauntering around the first two screens I was killed off about twelve times in the first two minutes!! Which wouldn't be so bad if you had a significant number of lives to attempt the challenge. But no, you've got a grand total of three and losing the third one sends you straight back to the title screen. There's no chance to save your progress, no high score, just a perfunctory "Game Over" and that's it, all progress is lost.

As for the game itself, well, as you might have gathered it's a platformer. Indeed, it shares quite a few elements with Circuitry (screen size and cramped feel, for example), but whilst that game is ingenious and quirky, this is simply frustrating with a capital F. Amongst the multitude of sins it commits are: presenting backgrounds that look like platforms, failing to respond to the jump



key at critical moments, requiring pixel-perfect positioning (often in as many as three places per screen) and zipping along at far too high a velocity. The confusion about objects just adds to the general melee, making this, in a nutshell, one seriously hard and seriously bad game.

Ok, I suppose in today's world of emulator save states, you could persevere and, of course, make progress by saving and loading each time you collided with an enemy... but that's not really how most people want to play their games, is it?

Personally, I look at this game as three lives, a humungous quest and overwhelming odds against you even progressing further than the fifth or sixth screen. That is, frankly, just a terrible combination. If Rucksack had substituted an energy meter for the three lives, or even given Poldark ten of them, I'd be more forgiving. But if I'd bought this for my Spectrum back in 1985, it would have been quickly relegated to the back of the drawer marked

"unplayable".

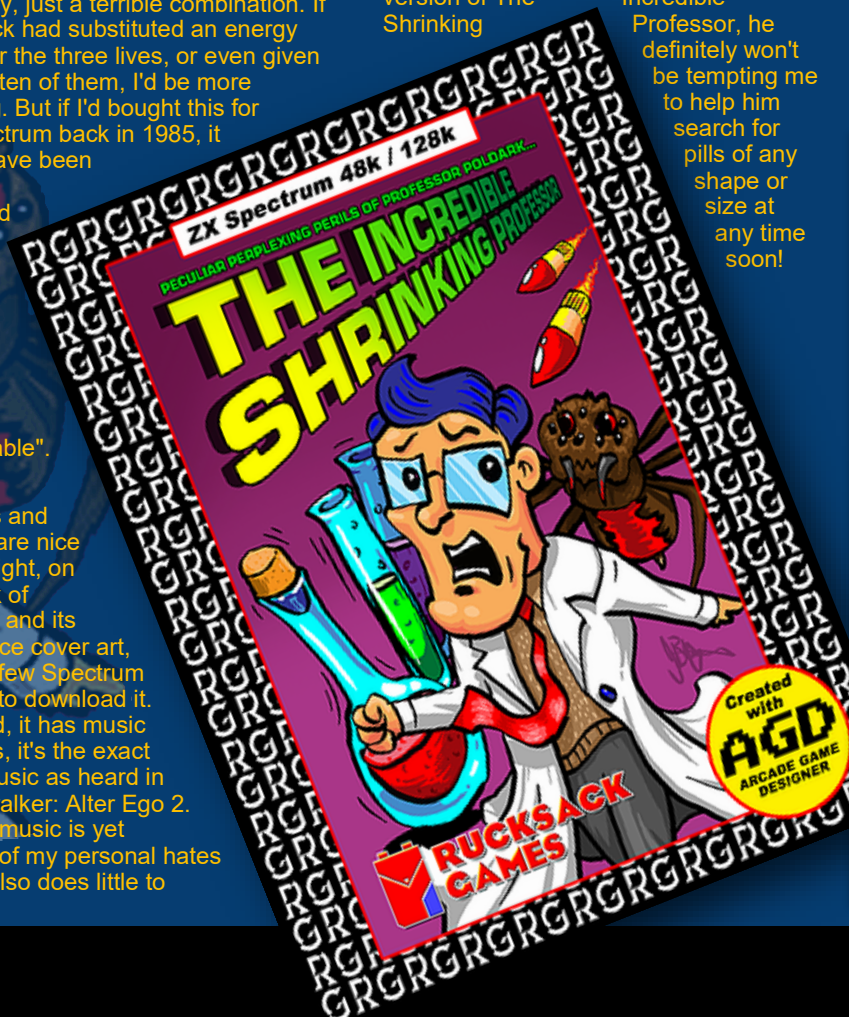
Yes, the graphics and colours are nice and it might, on the back of Circuitry and its rather nice cover art, tempt a few Spectrum gamers to download it. As noted, it has music too. Alas, it's the exact same music as heard in Dreamwalker: Alter Ego 2. Ripping music is yet another of my personal hates so this also does little to



assuage my ire. As far as I'm concerned, Poldark had better start learning to survive on breadcrumbs. Because, until there's an infinite lives cheat or a easier version of The Incredible

Professor, he definitely won't be tempting me to help him search for pills of any shape or size at any time soon!

The Incredible Shrinking Professor is available free from Rucksack Games (<https://www.rucksackgames.co.uk/professor>). The download contains versions for the Spectrum 48K, Spectrum 128K with AY chip, Spectrum +2 and the ZX Vega.



VERDICT

PROS

- It looks nice!
- If you're an absolute masochist, you might get a kick out of it.
- If you haven't played Dreamwalker, then you may not have heard the music, Rainbow Days, and it's worth hearing!

CONS

- It's far, far too hard.
- It induces tantrums and expletives by ignoring the jump key at critical moments.
- It needs too much pixel-perfect positioning.

30%

- CODING: Rafal Miazgds
- INFO: Available on tape for £8 from <https://bumfungaming.com/shop/zx-games/targetrenegade/>
- REVIEWED BY: Dave E (www.everygamegoing.com)

TARGET: RENEGADE 2017



Target Renegade came out almost exactly thirty years ago, just in time for Christmas 1987. Although I didn't realise it at the time, it was quite an unusual release. First there had been **Renegade**, a coin-op arcade machine. That game had then been converted to the popular 8-Bit home computers of the day (Spectrum, Amstrad, Commodore 64, etc). If you're not familiar with the original **Renegade**, it cast you as a tough thug. You started off the game having been ambushed in the subway by practically the whole town. However, as in all the best beat 'em up games / movies, being faced with sixteen or so adversaries on the same screen didn't mean you'd be found in A&E a few moments later. All the bad guys instead would line up and attack you either singly or in pairs. Very sporting of them.

The original game was screen based - you cleared one screen of lunkheads to proceed to the next and the conversions that appeared retained this functionality and, perhaps surprisingly, were all pretty good. **Renegade** was released by Imagine and people liked it so much that

Imagine developed its sequel, **Target Renegade**, in-house. There was, and is, no coin-op of **Target Renegade**. It was a home computer exclusive.

And **Target Renegade**, on the Spectrum 128K (which is where I first played it) was good. It was very good. It retained the sprites of the original, added a few fighting moves, included slightly more intelligent bad guys, and replaced the stationary backdrops of the original with scrolling car parks, streets, gardens and back alleys. You either played the **Renegade** alone or, if you selected the two player option, you co-operated with your identical twin **Renegade** brother, who was controlled by your best friend. In an era where there weren't too many co-operative two player games, it really shone. Each of the five stages got progressively tougher, on the Spectrum 128K at least it was a one-time loader and it all moved at a pretty speedy pace. I particularly liked the fact that many of the bad guys carried weapons (baseball bats, snooker cues and coshes) but, when you managed to land a punch on them, they would drop their weapons. This added some guile to fighting; sometimes you could lure a weapon-carrying thug into one corner, take his weapon and beat up his mates with it.

In fact, the original **Target Renegade** didn't really have a lot of drawbacks at all. The only real quirk it had was that you had to remember to keep your **Renegade** hard-pressed in the direction the current level scrolled to get through it as quickly as possible so that it generated the minimum number of bad guys on each level. It was also criticised for its particularly vicious timer

- in two player mode, the timer was fair; in one player mode, you needed a lot of practice to make it through each level before it ran out.

The original **Target Renegade** was a tough game, but I managed to beat it both with a friend and on my own. So what's Bum Fun Gaming's **Target Renegade 2017** all about then? Can you ever really improve on perfection?

Well, the first thing to make clear is that this isn't just a "colourised" version of the original. The original was already in colour - alright, it might have been that pseudo colour that's actually monochrome cheat that Spectrum games were infamous for, but it was colourful nonetheless. I make this point because its programmer, Rafal Miazga, calls it "Target Renegade Colorized" on his site. A more accurate description however might be "Target Renegade Made Tougher And With Different Stages".

This being the case therefore, this new version of **Target Renegade** is written for people exactly like me. People who loved the original, and remember all of the moves and strategies you employ to get through its five stages. What you get here is the same game with five different stages and with the difficulty ramped up a notch. You will recall that I called the original tough. Well, this version is tougher. So tough, in fact, that I haven't yet made it off stage two. (In the original it's rare that I don't get to at least stage four.)

The sprites - both of your character and the enemies - remain completely identical to the original. However, if you



recall the initial car park scene of the original game, where you are attacked by a motorcycle-riding Hell's Angel, then you'll probably also recall that, once you had practised a jump-kick to dispatch him from it, it actually wasn't so hard to achieve. Let's just say that dealing with two motorcycle-riding Hell's Angels in **Target Renegade 2017** is slightly harder.

And so this theme continues as you fight your way through the stage - a garage replacing the car park. Where you'd be attacked by two enemies in the original, you now get three. Where you'd be attacked by three, you're faced with four. Oh, and that pimp, whose gun kills you with a single shot in the original? His brother's in the hood too in **Target Renegade 2017**. Dealing with the additional enemies takes up more time, making it doubly essential to take out two or more of them with a single flying kick. You just don't have the time to deal with them sequentially here, either using punches or the weapons they may discard. And, of course, just like in the original, don't forget to hug that screen to force it to scroll at all times.

The bad guys still attack in the same

manner, the background music is identical and that fantastic two-player co-operative play facility is retained. It's also worth pointing out that, although the game is listed as 128K only, it does work on the 48K Spectrum in precisely the same manner as the original - multi-loading each level in turn (Horrible, yes, but better than nothing!).

Recently I reviewed **Jet Set Willy: The Nightmare Edition**, which was a similar sort of release to this. It also ramped up the difficulty, introduced much tougher adversaries and different rooms to battle through. I loathed it. However, I loved **Target Renegade 2017**. The difference between the two "upgrades" is that **Target Renegade 2017** retains all of the elements that made the original so playable, but it doesn't assume any familiarity with the original. Indeed, I suspect something very like **Target Renegade 2017** would have been very warmly received back in 1988 (instead of the god-awful **Renegade III: The Final Chapter** which we got instead). If there's one thing to criticise (apart from the level of difficulty), it's only that I, personally, would have liked to have seen some different sprites to battle, rather than the familiar prostitutes, pimps, skinheads

and Hell's Angels of old. (I mean, if you've redesigned the backgrounds, why not go the whole hog?)

But, in summary, if you completed the original Spectrum version of **Target Renegade** back in the day, then you'll find this new version just as fresh, exciting and challenging. And so you should - it has, naturally, got the pulse of the original coursing through its veins.

VERDICT

PROS

- As exciting to play as the original.

CONS

- Not much.

84%

- **CODER:** Mat Recardo
- **INFO:** Name your price, download from <https://prefim.itch.io/robot-1-in-the-ship-of-doom>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Dave E (www.everygamegoing.com)

ROBOT 1 IN THE SHIP OF DOOM



You'd have to have been adrift in space, devoid of all human contact not to have heard of Robot 1 In The Ship Of Doom, right? Mat Recardo's fast and furious, Jet Set Willy style game garnered so much praise on its initial release that not one but two

publishers snapped up the rights to make physical versions of it. So if you've missed it so far, you have the choice of downloading it for free, buying it for £3.99 from Psytronik (<http://www.psytronik.net>) or buying it for £12.00 from Bum Fun (<http://www.bumfungaming.com/>). All three versions are identical and the only difference between the 48K and 128K versions is that the 128K one benefits from a thumping bass beat from Sergey Kosov.

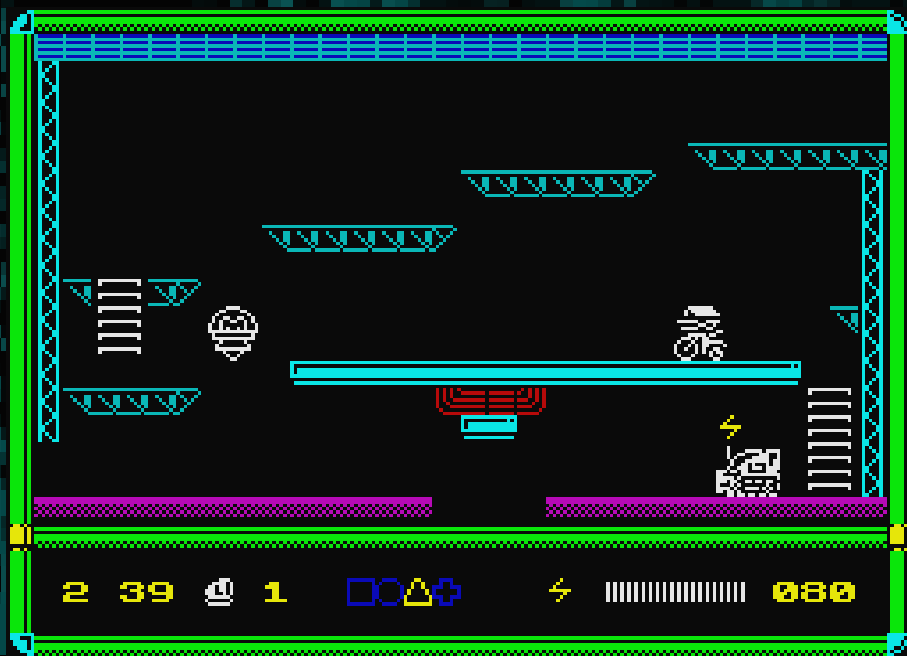
As you might established from the name, you take control of Robot 1. The impending "doom" your spaceship faces is in the form of the sun. It's on a collision course you see, and the only route of escape is the teleport chamber, which is handily located just to the right of your start position. However, you

can't just haul your little robot butt into it and escape your fate. It will only work once you've collected up the four teleport keys, and they're scattered about the derelict spaceship. So before you're going anywhere, you're going to have to explore the whole ship, find them and then get back to the teleport chamber.

I've mentioned Jet Set Willy in this review already because I'm really convinced that the reason this game has proven so popular is because it modernises all the elements from that Spectrum classic. If you can picture Jet Set Willy where Willy didn't amble around his mansion so much as power-walk, and where Willy's bed was replaced by a teleportation chamber, you've basically imagined Ship Of Doom. Even some of the rooms and platforms have a very "Willyesque" feel to them and I can't help but feel it's not entirely accidental.

However, this isn't to say that, if you're one of those people who hate Jet Set Willy, you should steer well clear. There are a number of differences, in addition to the speed and responsiveness of Robot 1, that really elevate this particular platformer over the myriad of others that spring up almost weekly for the Spectrum.

Firstly, Robot 1 has lives, and a battery pack. One might think that collision with a moving nasty might drain the battery pack and, once depleted, cost Robot 1 one of his five lives. Wrong! Actually, like in JSW, collisions equal instant death (although Robot 1 thankfully doesn't reincarnate you on the spot where you died over and over again). Have you ever seen those eBay adverts for old laptops where the seller disclaims the battery pack with some





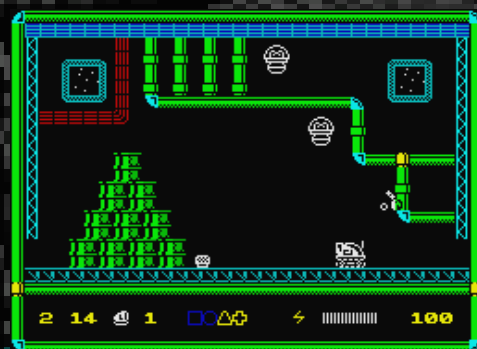
words like "not guaranteed to hold a charge"? Well, Robot 1 suffers from the same affliction; every 30 seconds or so he needs plugging into the wall until his

battery is all topped up. Ignore that blinking power indicator at your peril because, if it reaches zero, that's also instant death.

positioning him precariously between two obstacles is therefore a breeze.

Mind you, these same elements do, of course, only make for a very small game. Once you have completed it, it's unlikely to ever get loaded up again. Despite the lack of long term challenge, in the short term it's not easy.

Overall, a superior platformer that's brilliant fun whilst it lasts. Even though, admittedly, that's not very long.



Now, depending on your point of view, I've saved the biggest revelation about Robot 1 until last. Have you been reading through this review thinking "Look, when I was in my youth, I had the time to wander Willy's great big mansion for five whole hours in real time because I didn't have any responsibilities. But really I don't want to wander a similarly-sized spaceship now. I'll just be bored? Well, if you have, then fret no more, a game of Robot 1 won't last five hours. In fact, it's guaranteed to not last any longer than five minutes. Because, after that, the sun will burn your spaceship to cinders unless you teleport out of harm's way.

Mix all these elements together - thumping bass track, turbo speed platform action and time limit of five minutes maximum and you'll probably conclude that Robot 1 is a game which you'll have quite a lot of fun completing. Indeed you will; I managed to complete it on my third go by not hesitating, and hurtling rather recklessly under the patrolling nasties that litter each screen. The control of your robot is excellent and

VERDICT

PROS

- Good music.

CONS

- No Lastability.

62%

- CODER: Mat Recardo
- INFO: Name your price, <https://prefim.itch.io/pod/purchase>
- REVIEWED BY: Dave E (www.everygamegoing.com)

ROBOT 1 IN THE PLANET OF DEATH

Mat Recardo has a host of impressive Spectrum games in his portfolio so far and, since he went so far as to specifically name "Robot 1" when he was stranded on the Ship Of Doom, I sort of had this funny feeling we might be seeing some further adventures featuring him. And I was right - having escaped from the Ship

Of Doom (What do you mean, you haven't managed that yet? C'mon, it's certainly not hard!), he's teleported himself to the nearest planet. The planet of death, in fact. Sounds like an enchanting place. Still, what's in a name? It might not be so bad, after all.

Sequels are often difficult to get right. They have to tread the fine line between being as familiar as the original yet better. They also need to introduce something so that they don't just feel like the retread of some old ground. The good thing is that Planet Of Death does both - for if Ship Of Doom was a homage to Jet Set Willy, Planet Of





Death is a homage to that other Spectrum classic Dizzy. The trundling Robot 1 remains the same, but the game is a much less stressful affair. There's no countdown to doom in the corner of the screen, and the whole environment is a much more pleasant place to hang out. To begin with, it's coated in lush greenery, presided over by giant oak trees and there's a host of animals and humanoid creatures inhabiting it.

As with the initial jaunt, Mat Recardo's impressive machine code routines are complemented by another bouncy AY background tune provided by Sergey Kosov. Also, like the original, the game is available on two labels (£3.99 from Psytronik or



£12.00 from Bum Fun), or free to download if you don't care about a physical version. As before your robot is able to fall from any height without incurring damage. Unlike in the original though, he no longer needs constant recharging (He now has a lives system and an energy bar), and there are more game controls to master. It's necessary

to talk to some of the characters in the game to see what they want (key K) and the puzzles are of the "bring an object to a certain spot then put it down to activate something that allows you to get further in the game" type. (I allowed myself an immature giggle after bringing the banana to the peasant to see if he was hungry - try putting it down in the long grass in front of him; looks plain wrong!)

Despite superficially appearing to be very similar to the original, Planet Of Death is a very different kind of game. For one thing, you spend a lot of time jumping from branch to branch up the large trees that are scattered around. Frankly, this a bit of a pain - the colour clash as Robot 1 merges into a red tree

makes it difficult to judge the jump accurately. On the other hand, the trees themselves appear to be home to some shy additional beasties too - because a nice touch is their eyes, blinking at you from the hollows within them!

Like the original, the graphic adventure is flick screen. Unlike the original, when you snuff it, you get a familiar tune that

any Spectrum owner worth his salt should recognise instantly. To my shame, I didn't. Well, not until I thought about it. I won't say more in order not to ruin the surprise.

Overall then, a fairly respectable graphic adventure. It's not really an improvement over the original. It's just bigger and less frantic. Those two elements probably mean you'll play it for a bit longer. A good little budget game.

VERDICT

PROS

- Good Tune.
- Respectable graphics.

CONS

- Not really an improvement over the original.

58%

- CODER: Phil Ruston
- INFO: £10 from bumfungaming.com or free download at <http://www.worldofspectrum.org/infoseekid.cgi?id=0027761>
- REVIEWED BY: Dave E (www.everygamegoing.com)

BOUNCING BOMB

REDUX

Those Spectrum platformers just keep on coming. You thought you'd seen every possible permutation, didn't you? Every last twist on the old formula; every single ounce of fun milked from the format? Quite probably. In fact, I almost don't want to write that Bouncing Bomb Redux is an old-school platform game, as I figure I'll immediately lose 90% of you to the next review. But, no matter how much I try to find something unique about the game with which to draw you in, I just can't do it.

In this game, you control a bouncing bomb (Duh!) which is already primed. A length of fuse wire at the base of the screen indicates how close it is to exploding.

Your mission is, on each screen, to collect a number of red keys. Collecting the last one will open a hidden door which you'll then have to bounce over to proceed. Each screen is a mini-puzzle in itself, and the keys must be collected in a set order; the one that's flashing is the current "target".

The skill of the game is learning how to control the constantly bouncing bomb. You can move it left and right with 'O'

and 'P' respectively, causing it to leap between gaps in the platforms and over the patrolling nasties. (Yes, of course there are patrolling nasties - I didn't think to mention them until now as they are so much a staple of these types of games!) You can also suppress the bomb's upward motion by half by holding down the 'A' key, which can be helpful to avoid inconveniently placed spikes on the ceilings occasionally.

Collision with a nasty or a spike ends with your bomb exploding, one life being removed and the current screen being completely reset so you can attempt it again.



The BUMFUN tape version features an exclusive AY soundtrack!





So, overall, a very simple game concept with screens very nicely laid-out (that is, they don't feel cramped or cluttered). The bomb responds well to the keyboard controls and it's all rendered in colourful fashion (without clash). Learning how to manoeuvre the bomb around is tricky

and it will take the player a fair amount of time to master each of the screens. The unfortunate thing though is that, as you might expect, it's just not very exciting to release yet another platform game for the Speccy. Graphics may be

nice enough, but sound is limited to the dull thudding of the bomb (There's no additional music or effects on the 128K Spectrum either). Whilst I know that not every new Spectrum release is going to have the production values of **Request In Peace** or **Invasion Of The Zombie Monsters**, you do get the distinct impression with **Bouncing Bomb Redux** that the author (and publisher) have simply banged out a very dated and very mediocre game concept. And, that being the case, it can hardly expect much in the way of reception.



VERDICT

PROS

- Graphics nice enough.

CONS

- Not very exciting.
- Limited sound effects.

30%

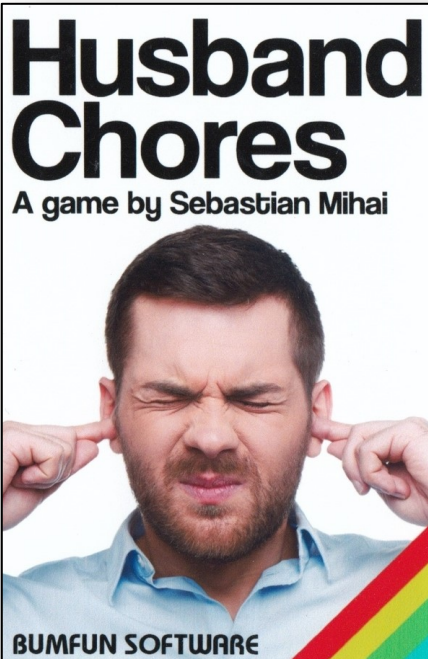
- **CODER:** Sebastian Mihai
- **INFO:** Download from <http://sebastianmihai.com/downloads/husband/>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Dave E (www.everygamegoing.com)

HUSBAND CHORES

You are having a bad day, but it's nothing compared to the living nightmare if the housework is not done by the time your wife gets home.

Accomplish the Sisyphean task of staying on top of the household chores in order to placate your wife and live another day or face the dramatic, earth-shattering consequences in this hilariously stressful simulation of one man driven to his wits' end by the seemingly insurmountable pressures of life as a house husband.

You must successfully stay on top of all the chores in order to placate your wild harridan of a wife, but it's not an easy task. The toilets are overflowing thanks to a fault in the neighbourhood sewer



system, the rubbish bins are crammed to the brim with stinking trash and to cap it all off the local snowplough driver has mistaken your house for a dumping ground, regularly depositing huge piles of dirty snow outside your front door. You must clear these every time you need to get to the dumpster!

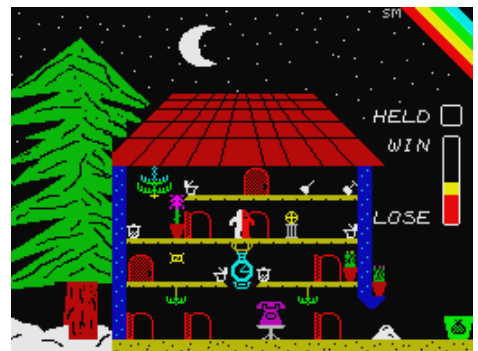
Do your best to complete all your chores but there's one more thing. To make matters worse the automated door system you installed to make your life easier is malfunctioning and the doors are opening and closing at random. It's very important to decide carefully which areas to tidy first and when to make your way to them.

There are tools that you must use to complete your chores. These are kept on the top floor of the house. You can only carry one tool at once due to your fundamental laziness.

The Plunger can only be used to clean the toilets and the Shovel must be used to clean up the snow that is regularly dumped outside.

Any task that requires your immediate attention will have an exclamation mark above it. You must sort these situations out quickly or your Win / Lose meter will start to descend rapidly. The point of the game is to help the meter reach the top by performing your chores in a timely manner.

To pick up items, simply walk over them and press the action button, then go to the area where you wish to use them and press action again. To empty a bin, walk up to it and press the action button. You will then be carrying the rubbish from it, which you must take



outside to the dumpster. Press the action button to deposit the rubbish.

You cannot empty rubbish bins if there is snow dumped outside your house stopping you from reaching the dumpster. Make sure to clear dumped snow as quickly as possible! Picking up rubbish will remove whatever tool was in your hand and you will have to go back to get it from the top floor before you can use it again. Good luck. You're going to need it!

VERDICT

PROS

- There aren't any!

CONS

- Too many to list!

24%

- **CODER:** Gabriele Amore
- **INFO:** Download from <https://www.dropbox.com/s/qp5ngmwsmhpjuy/Crazy%20Kong%20City%20Episode%201.tap?dl=0>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Dave E (www.everygamegoing.com)

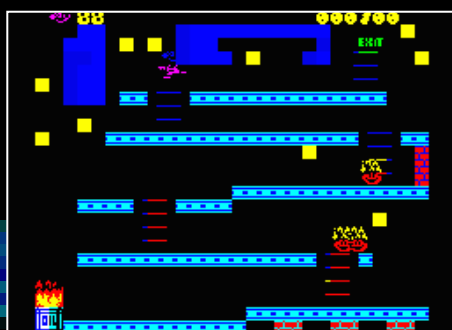
CRAZY KONG CITY

EPISODE 1:

SAVING HELEN BLONDE



Gabriele Amore has become quite a prolific author of games for the Spectrum, even if almost all of his wares are jerkily-moving platformers. Crazy Kong City Episode 1 is a platformer quite evidently inspired by the original Donkey Kong. It pits you against a giant monkey, avoiding the usual barrels and dancing flames, and your aim is to reach the top of the screen where you'll do battle with the mighty ape and rescue your beloved. Except that, well, in this version you won't... because Kong and his hostage are a little camera shy. So find your way to an exit door instead.



Crazy Kong City 1 is basically a very old-style platform game. It's got AY music and it's fairly responsive to key

controls but, frankly, it's pretty awful to play. Its main problem is that it's just too frustrating. Whilst it's easy enough to jump the barrels as they move along the platforms toward you, it's very hard to avoid them once you've actually got anywhere near the exit door at the top of the screen. This is because they just drop out of nowhere without warning, usually costing you one of your 99 lives.

Wait, wassat? Ninety-nine lives? Really? I've heard of giving the player a sporting chance but that's far too many! I can't help but think Amore thought something along the lines of that he'd have his player once and once only, and so gave him a huge number of lives in the hope that the player might at least then play that one time for longer. If so, Amore may well have been right. I really did want to clear that third screen for example, but having wasted some 44 lives attempting it and always being killed off by an unexpected bonk on the head from a barrel, I not only gave up but vowed never to return.

Some good points about the game are the plink-plank-plonk AY music (Sounds like a Sixties' song!) and the imagination shown in the sprite design. The Mario equivalent is particularly interesting, as he's neither bordered nor outlined; most of the time when he is standing in front of a black background it's hard to ascertain what shape he actually is. I mean, what's silhouette and what's background?

Compared to earlier Amore games, Kong is much more polished. However, that's not saying a lot because Castle Capers (somewhat incredibly given a physical release by Monument Microgames) and his version of Popeye are crap design personified. Regrettably, you see elements of that

crap design here too. Not just in the obvious stupidity of having your path to success take you right under where the barrels appear from, but even the descent of the barrels themselves. They sometimes fly out at 45 degree angles mid-drop for example.

I hate games where progress is determined by luck not skill, and here you'll only really proceed to the later screens if you have *incredibly* good luck. So sorry Helen Blond, I won't be recommending anyone rescues you from Crazy Kong City any time soon.



VERDICT

PROS

- Responsive controls.

CONS

- Progress is by more luck than skill.

46%

- CODER: Jonathan Cauldwell
- INFO: Download from <https://spectrumcomputing.co.uk/index.php?cat=96&id=32158>
- REVIEWED BY: Dave E (www.everygamegoing.com)

EGGHEAD GOES TO TOWN



Egghead is a Jonathan Cauldwell creation - yes, it comes from the man who was writing new Spectrum games long before it was fashionable. As with other famous eggs, if you've played one of Egghead's adventures, you pretty much know what to expect from any of the others. In short, you get to play a cartoony-looking egg with feet, and indulge in some flick screen collect 'em up antics. I'll say one thing for Egghead too... he's certainly the most controllable egg in town!

The back story, such as it is, is that Egghead is collecting up the pages of a manuscript. Indeed, the pages of a new issue of Crash, that favorite of many an

Eighties' Spectrum owning schoolboy. Why Crash? Well, last year, a Crash annual appeared, having been successfully crowdfunded by all those afore mentioned schoolboys. Indeed, Egghead Goes To Town was initially only released on a physical cassette and given away free to all those who pledged a certain amount towards the Crash Annual. (As you might have guessed, I was one of them!) Hence the back story is a tenuous connection to the crowdfunding campaign. There's another connection to another crowdfunding campaign hiding within the game too, but I think the less said about that one, the better!

Initially I was a bit loathe to give Egghead Goes To Town a chance. I

think that's because I have played all of its prequels. All steadily improved upon one another. The fifth outing, Egghead Round The Med, which is quite definitely one of the biggest and best Spectrum platformers ever produced. The Med was always going to be a hard act to follow, but, unfortunately, Cronosoft did so... with a rather pitiful follow-up in the form of Egghead's Cracking Day Out. And, yes, before you all say Egghead's Cracking Day Out was actually written a long time before Egghead Round The Med, I do know that. But it was nevertheless a massive step backwards after the awesome Mediterranean jaunt. Cracking Day Out was also produced at the behest of a third party (a museum) rather than springing forth from Cauldwell's fertile imagination. Indeed, there's a temptation, when you know of the creativity that runs through Cauldwell's veins, that if his latest release is "just another Egghead game", that fact alone immediately feels a little disappointing. This is, after all, the man behind Telly Addicts, Gamex, Mr. Fruity and Quantum Gardening! (And see www.spanglefish.com/egghead/ for even more).





When I did load it up, however, I was quite pleasantly surprised. As is usual with these "room by room" games, you don't really need a great deal of skill to play it and, quite often, you won't really try to "win" it as much as "try to see a bit more of it". Wandering through the screens (which are all named "Jet Set Willy" style), you'll encounter those which you merely cross (such as the grain store) and those which you need to carefully plot a route over in order to avoid the roaming nasties and collect up those flashing manuscript pages. I quite liked some of the "unexpectedly fast" patterns of the roaming nasties in the game too. These range from spikes coming out of the ground, or stalatites stabbing down from the ceiling, to the rising and falling pods you must duck under. Many of them rise at one speed,

but fall at a much faster one. This is an interesting quirk. It's almost like a jump scare when it happens, and when it's combined with Egghead's rather unique way of dying, the effect is magnified.

That's not to say this game is unfair to play though - unlike many other platforms, all of the Egghead games only rarely call for pixel perfect accuracy! - and the graphics are the usual "colourful monochrome" style that cleverly avoid colour clash. There's even a handy summary of how far you got when it's game over. There are a few cultural inclusions too (I recognised the Rentaghost theme in the haunted house), as well as an "arc" over certain screens like the battlements area. There are some nice touches like ropes that you can swing from (a first for Egghead) and waterfalls that you can pass behind (They seem pointless, but they're aesthetically pleasing). Yertzmyey fans take note too - this game has a fantastic thumping bass sound by the man himself on the intro page.

scattered about the screens are actually teleporters. And it's a bit of a shame that you can't have that Yertzmyey masterpiece play throughout the game itself (You could in previous Egghead games), the in game riffs when you collect items are a lot less pleasing to the ears.

But all things considered, Egghead Goes To Town is a fine return to form for Egghead and his adventures. It may not be as good as Round The Med but it is a very imaginative offering and, if you've never played an Egghead game before it's at least as good as the other five.

VERDICT

PROS

- Overall, an enjoyable game.

CONS

- It's not better (or worse) than previous Egghead games.

74%



There's nothing really to criticize about the game itself other than to say Egghead does seem to have passed his best by this stage. I also thought the instructions let the game down a little too - they don't detail the fact that it's a lot bigger than it may at first appear, and that the telephone box looking sprites

- CODER: Ast A. Moore
- INFO: Download from http://sky.relative-path.com/zx/25_years_in_the_making.html
- REVIEWED BY: Dave E (www.everygamegoing.com)

A YANKEE IN IRAQ

With over 26,000 games (and counting) on the Spectrum, there's an astounding choice of what to spend your time firing up. For the fan of the scrolling blast 'em up, there are the classic gems like *Dragon Breed* and *R-Type*, and the more recent *More Tea Vicar* and *Genesis: Dawn Of A New Day*. And, now to give new meaning to the phrase "fire and forget", there's one more, *A Yankee In Iraq* by Ast A. Moore.

There's no scenario to this game - it's just you in a helicopter flying through a featureless desert shooting and bombing things. Compared with *Vicar* and *Genesis*, it's nothing short of tragic. Firstly, on many levels the game itself is ridiculously unfair. The screen area is cramped and the Iraqis' surface-to-air missiles zero in on you in one second flat unless you skirt out of their way to

hug the left or right side of the playing area. Unfortunately for you, planes enter from either side of the playing area. This means that there's a very good likelihood of flying into a "safe" space only to explode as a plane you never saw coming mindlessly flies into you.

You have three lives and the random nature of the game means you can reincarnate right next to an enemy and be picked off a second time too. Fly too low over the missile launchers and it's also instant curtains as your helicopter doesn't pick up speed at anything near the velocity it needs to.

All I can really deduce after an hour's play of this garbage is that you should try and keep your helicopter in the top middle of the screen. That way you'll get farther. Having said that, I haven't yet escaped stage one because the total lack of variety, planes and missiles ad infinitum makes this game feel more like

an endurance test than any sort of fun. And, when you're concentrating so hard on flying on the spot, it's very hard to monitor the ground and the skies at the same time.

There's a loading screen and a title page, the latter of which tries to be "clever" by not having you select the

game options by keypress (with which we're all familiar) but instead by flying a helicopter and shooting at your desired option. On this page you have to use 6, 7 and 0 to control it for no real reason and with no explanation of these controls anywhere on the page. Even if you've redefined the controls for the game itself, this page still insists on these defaults!

Those of you old enough to remember *Your Computer* magazine would probably agree that *A Yankee In Iraq* is like the type-in games that that magazine used to feature. Such games were generally a little bit more superior than Basic fodder but wouldn't usually have been able to stand alone as budget titles, let alone full price ones. *A Yankee In Iraq* sits firmly in that category - a very simple scroller hopelessly outclassed by much of the competition.

I'm afraid its stirring music (on the 128K version), and the fact that it's free, can't save it.



VERDICT

PROS

- I don't think there are any?

CONS

- Everything!

16%

- **CODER:** Kas29
- **INFO:** Download from <http://zx-pk.ru/attachment.php?attachmentid=57717&d=1470050691>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Dave E (www.everygamegoing.com)

ANGRY BIRDS: OPPOSITION



The Angry Birds games were a phenomenal success on modern machines and now they're coming to a Spectrum near you. Well, sort of. Because, although Angry Birds: Opposition features the same lovable sprites as the original, it is actually completely different.

You are in control of a big gun which is situated at the base of the screen. Just below it is a tugrope between the "birds" on the left, and the "pigs" on the right. And dead centre of the tugrope is a cart.

As each level begins, a solitary bird begins to fly across the screen. A quick blast from your weapon and he disappears into a rather nicely animated "poof" of feathers... and that cart quite satisfyingly moves one place toward the "pigs". Miss, however, and the cart will return to the centre. And miss several times and it won't be long until it's

pressed up close to the "birds" and they will claim victory, ending your turn.

The aim is, naturally enough, to blast enough birds that the cart presses up against the "pigs" on the right. Doing so lets you proceed to the next screen.

Created by World Of Spectrum member kas29, Angry Birds: Opposition starts off with a deceptive lack of action. The birds move at a fair pace and your stationary gun base deals with them without much problem. However, on screen three, the backdrops start changing and your gun starts gliding uncontrollably back and forth. This ratchets up the difficulty, leaving you less time to react to the birds which appear. Just when you're getting the hang of this, the birds begin to change their flight paths.

There is an impressive amount of variety to this game. Screen backdrops, gun handling and bird behaviour slightly alters every time you manage to shoot enough birds to clear a level. On level

six, for example, the screen features a house, and the birds fly behind rather than in front of it, meaning you need even more skill to pick them off when they emerge from its shadow.

In fact, despite its very simple premise and the fact it's all operated with a single fire button, the game is fairly impressive. The only real fault with it is that it doesn't have the smooth scrolling you might expect. The birds move at a fairly regular speed, and I didn't have any difficulty knowing when to hit the fire control to stand a good chance of striking them. But their movement is jerky rather than fluid, which is somewhat distracting. There's also a peculiar vertical scroll upwards when you do win a level.

With a great loading screen and some nice introductory music, it's all put together with quite a lot of finesse and it's so addictive that I did wind up playing it for a good hour or two.



VERDICT

PROS

- Nice loading screen.
- Addictive!

CONS

- Scrolling is a bit jerky.

76%

- **CODER:** Errazking
- **INFO:** 48K version: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B-AzfT4W9i2abE5sZIF5VVFHejA/view>
128K version: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B-AzfT4W9i2aZDh2MWctcmozWmc/view>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Dave E (www.everygamegoing.com)

ABU SINVER PROPAGATION

There are pyramids in the Sahara that are full of traps for the would be ignorant plunderer. There are also games that are steeped in culture that are full of traps for the would be ignorant reviewer. I have the feeling that Abu Sinver Propagation may well be one of those games that I simply have not "got" (i.e. understood) because I'm English, not Spanish. And in case you're already puzzled by why I'm opening this review this way, allow me to explain...

There is a game, not this one, called Abu Simbel Profanation. This game was released by Dinamic Software, only in Spain, and it was owned by tens of thousands of Spanish Spectrum owners. In Spain, this game is as famous as the Spectrum itself. Most games doing the rounds in Spain in the early Eighties were pirated British jobs but Simbel was a genuine Spanish one, with Spanish cover art and Spanish on screen language.

It was a colourful platform game and, in it, you played Mr. Johnny Jones (probably a distant relation of Indiana Jones, who was extremely popular at the time too!) and had to plunder an Egyptian tomb. It was, and is, one of the most infuriating games known to man, demanding pixel-perfect accuracy and finely honed reactions. To make any sort of progress you have to almost memorise the route from every single screen and follow it zealously, with no margin for error. If you meet a retro-gaming Spaniard at a retro game convention, load it up and see how well he does. He'll likely get a lot further than you can and he'll play the game with an unmistakable sense of nostalgia.

Having acquainted ourselves with that background, therefore, let's look at Abu Sinver Propagation, the latest physical

release for the Spectrum from Matra Computer Animations (<https://www.matranet.net/>). "It's impossible to leave Abu Simbel's lost temple alive," state its (Spanish only) instructions. Note that that's Simbel (the old game), not Sinver (the new one). "But who cares? Because Johnny Jones is somewhere else, a lost pyramid in the Sahara and now he must find the exit."

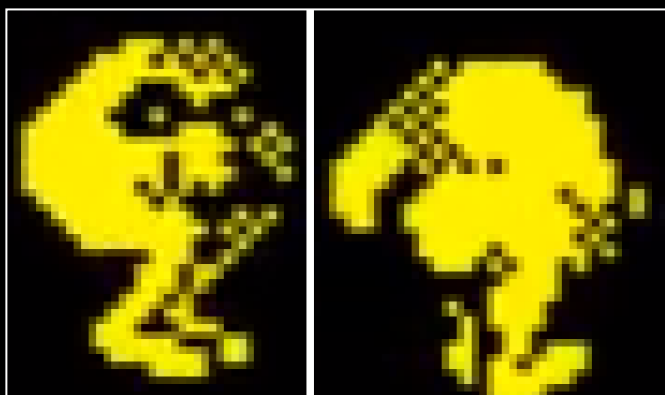
Starting to cotton on yet? Abu Sinver Propagation is one of those "homage spin off themed" games that hangs on to the shirt-tails of an already successful one. The difference is that we Brits don't really know the original. So, as a Brit who doesn't know the original, its nuances and similarities may well be lost on me. Of course, that doesn't mean I can't review it, it's just a proviso. I make

it just in case the following review has somehow missed something superb that's staring the average Spaniard in the face.

So, here we go. Firstly, Sinver is, very surprisingly, not a platform game at all. It's an isometric affair, created with Incentive's 3D Game Maker. You spin around and walk in one of four diagonal directions in "Ultimate" style, through interconnected monochrome rooms, jumping over spikes and onto platforms. Most of the rooms are empty and the sole task seems to be to cross them without losing a life. You can wander back the way you came if you wish but there's only one route, so you must press ever onward.

Secondly, Johnny Jones, I kid you not,





The stuff of nightmares!

looks like an arse with legs.

Thirdly, the challenges border on the ludicrous. Perhaps this is a nod to the original but, for example, in the second room you reach you must jump onto a box, make your way to its edge and then leap over a row of spikes. Unfortunately, if you touch the box with any part of your body other than your feet, it disappears, leaving you to face an impossible jump. It took me roughly 30 attempts at easing myself to the very edge of the box to complete the jump without suffering an impromptu impaling. And my reward? In

the next room, more of the same: more spikes, more boxes... And, for me at least, more than enough boredom.

And, well, there's not really a lot more to say. The game is merely a 3D Game Maker job, and if you've ever used that utility, you'll know that it's not difficult to make an isometric platformer using it.

The music, which plays on interrupt throughout, is good but not exceptional. Take away the Abu Simbel connection and this game brings absolutely nothing new to the table. It's exactly like AGD's Land Of Mire Mare, pimping off a famous "name" in the Spectrum world to ensure more people will look at it than would otherwise. Like that game, it's also been given a unjustified physical release and I equally wouldn't recommend you raid your Paypal account to secure a copy of it, no matter how tempting the cover art.

That's not just because releasing games

that are "tenuously connected (by the author himself) to beloved classics" is tremendously unsporting... It's also because this game is hard and samey to boot. And if I just don't understand the attraction for cultural reasons, well, that's fine. But I would hazard a guess that you, the person reading this, share my ignorance. So, unless you're someone who just loves any 3D style isometric format game, my advice is to steer well clear of this.

VERDICT

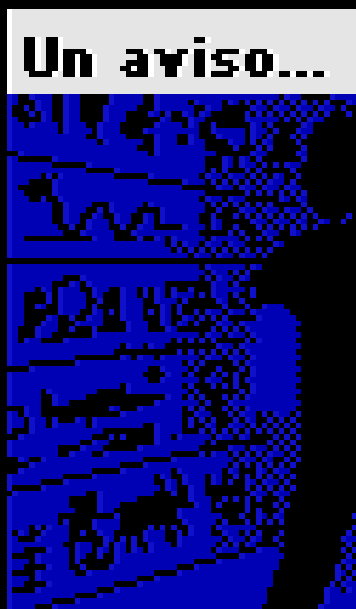
PROS

- Might be for you if you love 3D style isometric games.

CONS

- Otherwise, steer well clear.

35%



CHEAT ?



- **CODER:** Timmy group
- **INFO:** Download from <http://www.msxdev.org/2017/09/22/msxdev17-9th-entry-magical-tower-adventure/>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Morio Saaii Ximen

MAGICAL TOWER ADVENTURER

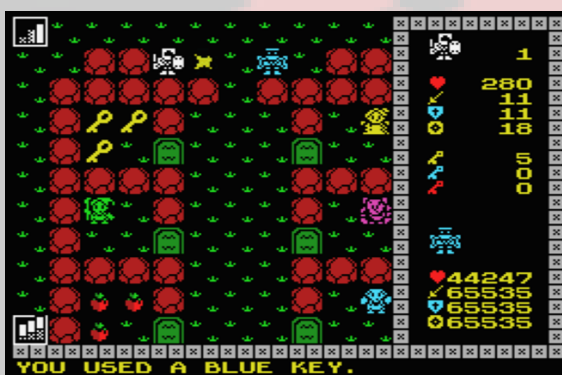
There is a story of a tower somewhere in the evil lands, filled with monsters and other magical creatures. Many fighters have entered, but no one has ever come back. There are many rumours about treasures and princesses, but no one really knows. This time a new hero arrived at the Magical Tower and he will need all the help he can get to kill the boss at the top level of the tower.

Magical Tower Adventure is a dungeon crawler and a port of the same name from the ZX Spectrum game released in 2016 (although a lot of code has been rewritten for the MSX version). Guide your hero through 10 levels (starting at zero and ending in nine) filled with all types of villains and monsters. You must collect coloured keys to open the same coloured doors, decide to fight enemies, or avoid them. It's up to you to survive and reach the top of the tower.

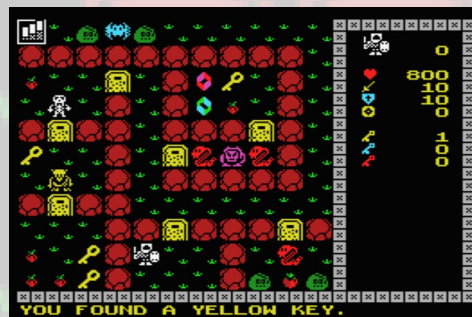
With a mix of exploration and turn based action, gameplay is all about decisions you need to take to complete the game successfully. Essentially, keys are what you need to get anywhere in the game. Hold keys and you can explore more of each level or, if you like, explore more of other levels. Each screen / level has one or more set of stairs allowing you to travel to each of the 10 levels. Some are easy to get to, while others may be blocked by a foe or tombstone. You only get one life, so when your health runs out, it's game over. How does your health run out? By attacking the varied enemies blocking your path. If you rush in like I did then you will find that your energy is drained very quickly. What you need to do is

locate the icons that will give you more attack and defence points, as this will help improve your hero's abilities or reduce your loss of health points when you have engaged in an attack. You can see your attributes at the right of the screen, along with any enemy you may encounter. Sometimes it's best to just move on, avoid the enemy, and work on finding a different path. Health potions can be found to replenish your hero, so keep a constant eye on your attributes as you may be wondering where did you go wrong when you find out it's game over.

Overall, an intriguing game to play. It's not just finish this screen first, then move onto the next as you have to locate items that will allow you to get to the later screens. This will enable you to destroy all the henchmen and take on the evil red monster at the end. The sounds are limited to basic sound effects, and you have to really turn up the sound to hear them too. An overhead / side on view playing area works well, and there are no issues with the controls or movements. What annoyed me most was the fact you can not pull away or get out of an attack,



Game flaw? When you engage in an attack you can't leave it - this guard type started with 65,000 plus health points!



Collect as many keys as you can, yellow keys for yellow doors.

meaning you have to see it through to the end of each battle no matter if you are about to run out of health or not. Graphics look very 'Spectrum-ish', although being ported from a Spectrum game, that's a given. The level design, layout and presentation is of a good quality, although each room is more or less the same. There's just enough exploration, fighting and objects to collect to keep you entertained and challenged.

VERDICT

PROS

- Intriguing to play.
- Just enough exploration to keep you challenged.

CONS

- Limited audio.
- Each room looks the same.

57%



Delta Soft is the name of a dutch group dedicated to the MSX 2 system. Since 1988 they made over 50 programs for this system.

Visit: <https://remymsx2.home.xs4all.nl/>



- **TEAM:** Kai Magazine
- **INFO:** €42 for the physical cartridge or €12 for the digital download, <https://kai-magazine-software.favscart.com/>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Dave E (www.everygamegoing.com)

HIGHWAY FIGHTER

Highway Fighter boasts the tagline "An underground racing game". What that means is anyone's guess... because you view all of the action of this game from way overhead, i.e. as if you're in a helicopter keeping pace with the car below you as it rockets through deserts, cities and beaches! Underground? I don't think so.

What we have here is a souped up "avoid the other cars on the endless road" game. If you were around in the Eighties, you may well have typed in a similar sort of game from one of the books of Basic programs for the early 8-Bit machines. They were all typically the same; a vertically scrolling road peppered with other vehicles, some stationary, some not. The aim was to chug along, avoiding the sides of the road itself and the hazards on it, whilst picking up cans of fuel, that's precisely what you do here too.

Of course, we've come quite a long way since the 1980's and *Highway Fighter*, mercifully, doesn't silently scroll in "8x8 CHR\$ chunks" or return you to a blank screen with a flashing cursor when you run out of fuel. No, no, no. Highway Fighter is nothing if not a smooth scroller, and there's a myriad of options available to suit whatever MSX2 computer configuration you're playing it on. 60Hz/50Hz Monitor, 11000 or 16 colours and even the choice of three different sound cards are all chosen from the introductory screen before the game starts.

Once it does start, though, there's no going back. Literally. You can accelerate, you can put on the brakes, but you can't reverse - the scroll moves from top to bottom, keeping your car squarely in the bottom sixth of the screen and it's your task to react to whatever hazards smoothly scroll into view.

As for the hazards, well, fairly predictably, there are other cars (I counted about five different models), some (stationary) trucks and, every now and then, a police car positioned horizontally "road-block" style across a section of road. The other cars either do not react to your presence at all, or glide back and forth to impede your progress. In addition, there are also some "big boss" cars which attack at the end of each stage.

It's inadvisable to prang anything with your shiny automobile if you can help it, because it has a tendency to bounce off the target, turn at a 45 degree angle and skid in the opposite direction of your aim. You can recover from this skid by quickly rocking on the left / right control keys (or waggling of the joystick). In fact, in the "big boss" stages, you need to ram the computer's



The opening screen shows the more powerful car. You'll have to work your way up to driving this.

car off the road whilst not letting your own come to a fiery end, so mastering how to recover is essential. Later stages, if you can reach them, introduce broken down cars at the sides of the road, and bridges peppered with holes.

To navigate around all of these various hazards, you use accelerate (Space), brake (N) and cursor left or right to steer. When you have moving cars, bridge holes and broken down automobiles to contend with, this does take some skill. However, I found the brake key to be quite awkwardly placed - it would, in my opinion, have been much better to have cursor up for accelerate and cursor down for brake.



The police cars are positioned horizontally, but they're easy to drive around.



The roads bend left and right and scroll very smoothly from top to bottom.



A bit of respite as you drive through suburbia.

Having said that though, and particularly in the case of the yellow car, braking itself feels rather unnecessary because there is such a dramatic slowdown as soon as you release the accelerate key anyway.

You have a choice, each time you play of selecting a yellow car (Easy) or a red car (Hard). The instructions inform you that the yellow car is for beginners and the red car for veterans. Now, as far as lastability goes, that's quite a welcome

inclusion because not only do the two cars handle radically differently, but the red car consumes fuel much more quickly. Don't forget that, if your fuel runs out, it doesn't matter how many cars you've avoided or how well you've navigated all the hazards, no fuel equals immediate game over. If you're driving yellow, you can comfortably miss two fuel cans in every three and still hope to clear the level. If you're driving red, you need to know exactly where your car needs to be positioned in order to collect every last fuel can!

Highway Fighter looks very nice. The cars, the roads, the scenery flying past, it all feels very early Grand Theft Auto-esque. It also sounds pretty snazzy too. The rolling party tunes remind you of the Sega arcade games of old. I found myself thinking "This is kind of like an overhead view of *Out-Run!*" whilst playing, and that's probably what Kai Magazine intended. The "big boss" cars are a good idea too and needing to keep them in the middle of the road whilst rocking left and right to prang them injects a bit of something extra to what might otherwise have become a repetitive "avoidathon" game.

However, for all of this praise, *Highway Fighter* does have some glaring shortcomings. Firstly, remember those holes in the bridges I mentioned? Well, the computer controlled cars just glide right over them. This gravity defying feat looks decidedly odd.

Secondly, each time you collide with something, you crash, lose a bit of fuel and restart the game a little further down the road from where you crashed, except, that is, for when you actually do run out of fuel. Whereupon, your car slows to a crawl, then to a standstill, before it is unceremoniously flung into an unrecoverable skid and crash. The game then acts exactly as it does when you crash with some fuel remaining, and so restarts you a little further down the road before ultimately deciding that, with no fuel, it is in fact game over. This is also decidedly odd behaviour, and just wastes your time.

Thirdly, in this game, collecting those fuel cans is ultimately what will

determine your success or failure. Now, when you're playing a stage for the first time, you have no idea when these cans will appear, or where they will be. Nevertheless, if you've got honed reactions, one might think the game would allow for you to career across the road to grab them from either the left or the right. But it doesn't. You more or less have to hit a fuel can head on to collect it. It can feel very frustrating to practically drive over 80% of the can from a 45 degree angle and yet still not acquire it!

Highway Fighter is a game where practice makes perfect. Each time you play it, you'll intuitively remember what's about to scroll into view and take the evasive action required. In this way, you'll avoid more cars and you'll get further, until you ultimately clear each stage. Technically, it's very impressive - it may well be the best game of its type on the MSX - and it's ridiculously easy to get into because, with the exception of that skidding feature, it could be played without any instructions whatsoever.

Whilst *Highway Fighter* is let down by a few visual and gameplay quirks, these aren't anything major enough for me not to recommend it.

VERDICT

PROS

- Flicker-free graphics and scrolling.
- Music is top quality and very bouncy.
- A game you can pick up and play instantly (as long as you know how to recover from a skid!).
- "Big Boss" cars introduce variety and take skill to conquer.

CONS

- Some odd sprite and gameplay quirks.
- The break key is awkward to reach when playing with keyboard.
- To progress you need to learn the layout of each road.
- When you can download thousands of free MSX games, is this one really worth 12 Euros of your hard-earned cash?

71%

- **TEAM:** Imanok
- **INFO:** Download at <http://imanok.msxblue.com/files/taipromo.zip>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Paul Monopoli

TINA'S ADVENTURE ISLAND

Ahhh, the sweet, sweet sound of calypso music. Irritating to some, but I like a jaunty little tune to introduce a video game. It's a beckoning sound, that lets you know that the game is going to be a light, friendly adventure. That's the feel I got upon booting up Tina's Adventure Island.

Tina's Adventure Island is a modern update to the NES Wonderboy clone with a female protagonist and quite a few extras. This platforming adventure sees our adventuress journeying from the left side of the level over to the right, dodging or attacking enemies and collecting fruit.

Like the original Wonderboy and Adventure Island games, your health bar is in a constant decline, requiring you to make a special effort to collect as much fruit as possible to maintain your energy. Fruit will only increase the bar slightly, so you have to make collecting it your priority as you journey around the islands.



It's dangerous to go alone. Take... um... these!



Tina's adventure begins!

After first introductory level you meet the sorcerer, Shihakata, who presents you with a knife and boots. The knife can be used to kill enemies, who will drop money which allow you to buy more items or weapons at the end of the level. The boots allow you to jump higher, depending on the length of time the button is held down for. After each level Shihakata will make an appearance, selling you an assortment of wares, including stone axes, boomerangs, wings and extra lives.

Many of the items will help you along your way, but after forking out for a pair of skates I found that Tina was only moving forward at a single pace. She could stop or jump but I ended up missing out on a lot of money along the way, and intentionally hit an enemy just to be rid of them.

Cheery music plays throughout, with sound effects being standard beeps for

jumping and attacking. The coders seem to have thought of an audio track for every section of the game, and it adds to the professional polish of this already gorgeous game.

The graphics are bright and colourful, with no colour clashes. Almost everything is animated, from Tina's walking, to the enemies shifting around or flying, to the pieces of fruit bopping to the tunes. The original MSX palette is far from being the best and brightest used in an 8-Bit computer, but Tina's Adventure Island appears to be coded with great care and detail.

There is really only one major criticism that I can give to this one, but for many it might be a deal breaker. The scrolling is quite jarring to the eyes, and some people who I've shown the game to are unable to play it for extended periods of time due to the screen jerking as Tina moves. I have been told that it's difficult to have the MSX scrolling smoothly, and that certain tricks need to be implemented to give the effect of a scroll. Konami's Parodius is a good example of this, where it looks like the screen is moving, but items jerkily move from right to left.

The jarring effect is caused by the background shifting along with the sprites. Perhaps a less ambitious approach would have been to have the background remain static and only shift the sprites and the ground. Just a

thought, as for many this sadly ruins what is otherwise a great little platforming game. It's hard to recommend in its current state, but if the scrolling can be fixed or a workaround implemented then you can feel free to add another 20% on to my score.

If you don't mind the jerky scrolling then I definitely recommend giving this game a try.

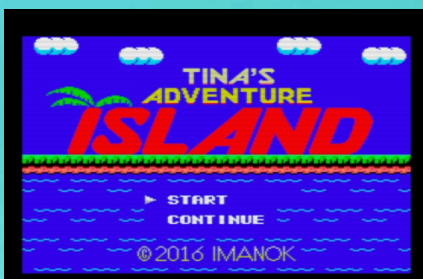
VERDICT

PROS

- Bright, colourful MSX1 graphics with nice animations.
- Bright, bubbly music.
- Significant enhancements to the original Adventure Island gameplay.

CONS

- The scrolling is going to be a deal breaker for many gamers out there.
- Some of the items are a bit useless.



A gorgeous, colourful title screen on the humble MSX

67%

- **TEAM:** Deltasoft
- **INFO:** €5 from https://remymx2.home.xs4all.nl/index_e.html
- **REVIEWED BY:** John Kavanagh



LUCKY DARTS

Playing darts is not my game. When it appears on TV, the players with their flamboyant behaviour and their audiences watching with over excitement, I just switch over. When asked to play in a pub, I politely reject the offer, mostly because I don't know how to play. Lucky Darts, as the name would suggest is a dart game I must review, lucky for me then, the games comes with the rules!

On loading up to the Rocky theme song, you know you going to be playing a well

presented game. The opening menu gives a number of options. There's options to read about the history of darts, the rules (handy for me) and even tips on how to play. Interesting the tips are for playing the real game as I somehow doubt I should play the MSX game standing 2.73 metres away from the screen. The history of darts spans 16 screens are is a very entertaining read, even if it has a large a number of typos, the rules section span 6 screens.

Starting the game presents a number of options, such as the number of players,



one or 2. If you choose two players then you are presented with a choice of best of 3, 5, 7, 9 or 11. Then you've got to pick your game, 301, 501 or 701. The most popular I believe is 501, so I picked that. After the game is selected you get to pick your player while enjoyable, recognisable music plays for each game character. For example, "Hungry like the Wolf" from Duran Duran for the character of Martin Adams (Wolfie). There are 15 characters to choose from, however there doesn't seem to be any difference to gameplay whichever character chosen, apart from that is, the weight of the dart. Heavier darts needs more 'force' to be applied, more on this later.

The playing screen shows the dartboard plus the required information such as score, sets, number of darts and so on. During the game the only sound effect usually heard is the dart firing, although the odd sound effect does occur from time to time which is a nice touch.

There's no dart animation, why



The main playing game screen. Functional and works well.

- **TEAM:** Retroworks, UtopiaD (Programming), Pagadtipacio (Artwork)
- **INFO:** Download from <http://theswordoflanna.retroworks.es/en/375-2/>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Paul Monopoli



THE SWORD OF IANNA

I have been a fan of the humble platform genre for the past three decades. The adventures of Mario, Sonic, the PC Kid et al have kept me glued to my systems for many hours at a time, so when a new platformer is released I take notice.

The name Sword of Ianna immediately made me think of The Legend of Zelda, or the Ys series, though as soon as I booted up the game my mind went directly to Rastan Saga. If I had to be honest, I don't actually know the story behind Rastan Saga. I own the arcade

board and occasionally have a bash at it in my arcade cab, but that's all I know about it. It's a fun game. Could Sword of Ianna 'out Rastan', the Rastan Saga?

A word of warning, before you play the game I suggest visiting the website.



The only good goblin is a dead goblin!

Here you will find the instructions you need and a map of the control system. I didn't do this on my first play and got stuck, not realising that your character could run, a key element in getting you through certain screens.

The other reason to visit the website is that the game is only in Spanish, though you can find all the information you need in English online. If you feel you've learned all the Spanish you need by watching Terminator 2 (Hasta La Vista Baby) then you will definitely need to stop here first.

The Sword of Ianna is a flick screen platforming adventure starring a burly warrior who is placed in your more than capable hands. The first thing I noticed is that the graphics are bright and colourful and really appear to push the humble MSX2 to its limits. Honestly, you could be forgiven for thinking this was a 16-Bit game. Prior to playing this the best I thought the MSX2 had to offer was the Metal Gear series and Castlevania.

The story is simple, you are a warrior who has been chosen by the goddess Ianna to defeat the evil of the land. To do this you will need to master the art of swordsmanship. Pushing the second button on your MSX controller will draw your sword, and holding button one and a direction will swing the sword overhead, from a kneeling position, in front of you or with a big swing. Most of the time I found myself simply swinging in front, as the other moves seem to take a second or two too long, giving the enemy a chance to hit first. There may be enemies later in the game for whom these other moves will be effective, but I



Ummm, can I borrow some of those bandages?

haven't gotten that far in yet.

The game contains puzzle elements, and you will have to locate switches and defeat specific enemies to unlock doors to continue along your way. Food can be found in boxes that can be destroyed with a swing of your sword, allowing you to heal wounds inflicted on you by the enemy. Occasionally jumps will need to be precisely timed to proceed, as jumping too early or late can lead you to a spiky death.

The musical track is quite haunting, setting the tone of the game. Evil has taken over the land, and the background tunes make sure you know all about it. Sound effects are rather basic and seem

out of place when the rest of the game sparkles so brightly.

Animation on the barbarian is silky smooth, with walking and running motions full of animation frames. When your sword is drawn, you remain in your fighting stance and shuffle forward slowly. This allows you to react to enemy attacks a lot easier, and without accidentally running into your adversary's sword.

Overall I would have to say that Sword of Ianna is one of the finest 8-Bit games to come out of 2017, and I highly recommend playing it. The only problem that I can find is that the physical cartridge is no longer available on the website. I guess I'll have to invest in an MSX flash cartridge for my Panasonic FS-A1F.



You do know you can't hit me from behind a wall, right?

VERDICT

PROS

- Bright, colourful graphics.
- Controls coded to gamepad, arrow keys and Q,A,O,P,Space, Shift.
- You will definitely want to play this until the end.

CONS

- Sound effects are lacking.
- No English language option.

94%

- **TEAM:** EAV (Eduardo Adrian Varoni)
- **INFO:** Download from <https://www.msxgamesworld.com/gamecard.php?id=5157>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Paul Monopoli

MAZOGS

Treasure hunters have it rough, don't they? All that twisting and turning through different pathways, encountering traps and ugly fiends who would rather eat you than sit down for a cuppa and talk things over. I guess that would make for a dull adventure if you think about it.

In Mazogs you play the treasure hunter who must simply enter a maze, find the treasure and then exit. That's it! Really! Of course, the aforementioned monsters are hanging around various parts of the maze and any attempts to persuade them to ponder their life choices over a warm brew will surely end badly. Thankfully there are swords that can be

found for you to slay those tea hating fiends.

The swords and treasure are hidden in boxes scattered around the maze. Other item boxes are empty, allowing you to place items in them for safe keeping. You can only carry a single item at a time, so if you're holding on to the treasure and encounter a monster you



It's a monster! At least I have my trusty sword!



Looks like those creepy eyes were right. I found the treasure!

can stash the chest away, find a sword, kill the monster, pick up the treasure and continue on your way.

All experienced adventurers know that it is wise to map out the mazes you're exploring them, right? Well, under normal circumstances yes, but in Mazogs that can be somewhat difficult as the mazes are randomly generated each time you play the game. This adds a nearly endless amount of replayability for gamers who love maze games.

The big question is, how do you find the treasure and the exit when the game is different every time you play it? Well, have you ever had that feeling like you're being watched? Where you develop an uneasy feeling and the hairs on your back start to stand up? Well, that's because you are as some of the boxes in the maze have eyes in them. These eyes will help you find the treasure, or if you're carrying the

treasure help you find the exit.

The game appears to only use the cursor keys to control your adventurer, with no real need to use the fire button. Well, none that I could find anyway. If you pick up a sword and run into an enemy they die. If you pick up a sword or the treasure, to put it in a box you simply have to walk into it.

Navigation is simple as the adventurers movements are locked to a grid, meaning that you won't be running from a monster and find that you can't turn the corner because you're not quite at the right angle. Movement is slightly jerky but the MSX isn't the best mover and shaker in the eight bit world and scrolling is known to be jerky on the hardware.

The characters are large and colourful, though rather basic. This doesn't hurt the game at all, in fact it fits quite nicely with the overall presentation. Items that are held in boxes are a single colour, but it doesn't feel like they need to be anything more than that. They clearly represent what they are holding and that's all that matters.

A tune plays throughout the game, though it does start to become monotonous after about 5 minutes and I found myself turning the volume down. It's not a bad tune, but it's short and

continuously repeats. Sound effects are very basic, but are drowned out by the music so you won't hear much of them anyway.

Overall, Mazogs is an enjoyable romp. If you're an 8-Bit gamer from way back who wants to play something new, yet familiar then Mazogs is a game you should definitely check out. Just don't forget to stash your swords.

VERDICT

PROS

- Bright and colourful.
- Simple controls means easy to pick up gameplay.
- A bright tune....

CONS

- that plays over and over again.
- Not much of the play area is immediately visible.
- No instructions. Am I playing the game right?

78%



Which way do I go again?

- TEAM: N.I.
- INFO: www.msxdev.org/2017/03/04/msxdev17-2nd-entry-slime-center/
- REVIEWED BY: Paul Monopoli

SLIME CENTER

As a trained English teacher I find the differences between British and American English to be trivial and unnecessary. When I teach a class I am forever trying to have my students use British English, while so much of the materials on the internet use American English or a combination of both British and American, as the person writing the text clearly has no idea what they're doing.

When I was asked to review Slime Center the memo came to me as 'Slime Centre', which is how I would have spelled it without knowing otherwise. As

it is, my computer is autocorrecting the name of the game to Slime Centre, so this is how I will have to refer to it throughout the review. This will save me from going back and correcting every mention of the title.

Slime Centre finds you working in a facility, presumably experimenting with chemicals of some description. A disaster happens and the place becomes infested with blobs of slime. You are wearing your bio-hazard suit, but touching the green goop will still hurt you. You have to find your way out, and fast!

The game throws you in the deep end by starting you in the middle of the facility surrounded by blobs. There are blue boxes that can be picked up, as well as chips that operate as keys and health packs to restore valuable life. The blue boxes are bombs, that when set off will send a shockwave in four directions, killing any wayward blobs that ventured along its path. The chips come in different colours, opening their respective coloured doors.

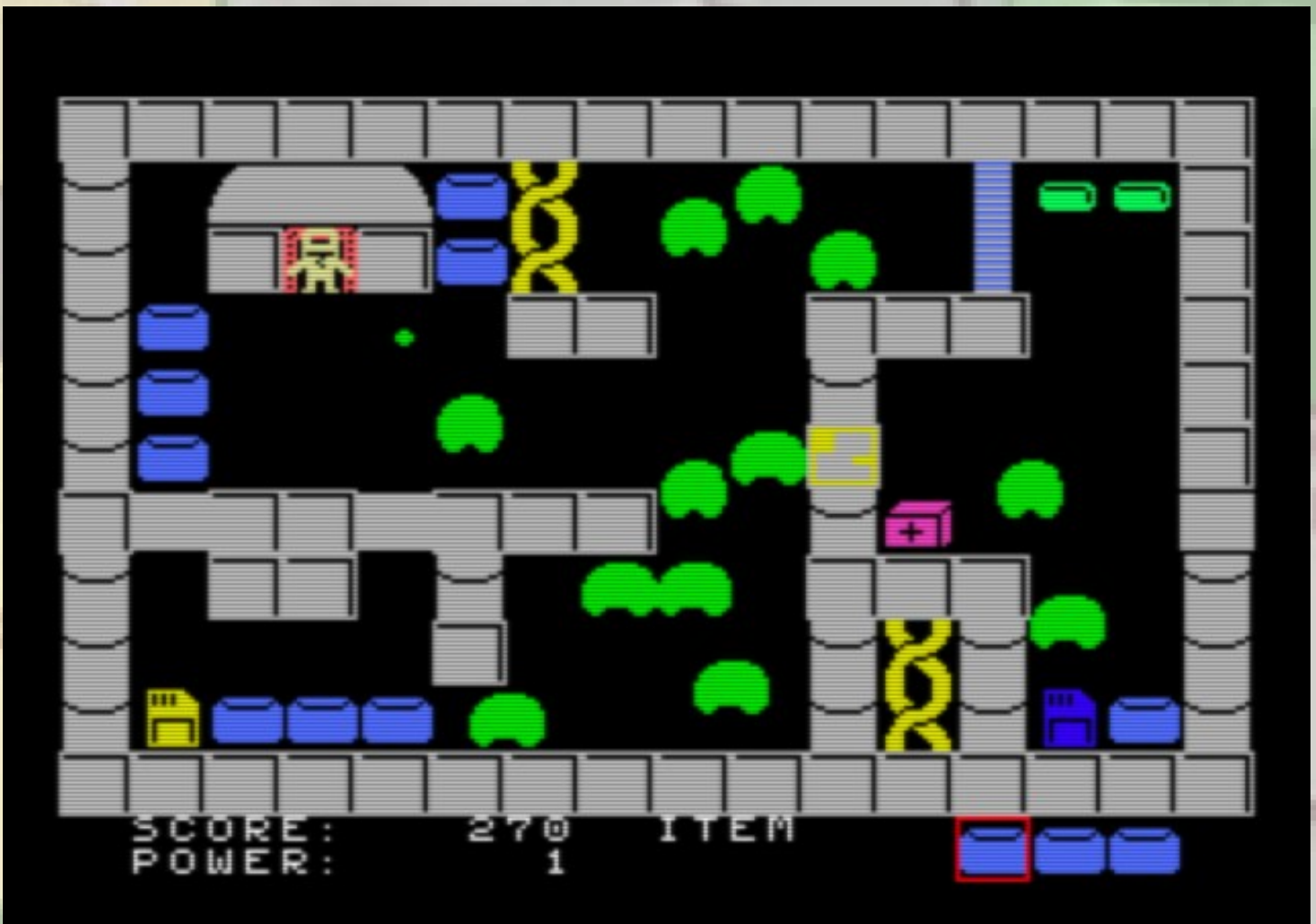
The game will require you to run back and forth, collecting a chip from one section of the game and opening a door several screens away. The developer has wisely used a flick screen approach rather than attempt any scrolling. The MSX hardware struggles to scroll at the best of times, and this approach doesn't detract from the game itself. Each screen feels like a different room in the facility and with blobs randomly moving all around the room you have to carefully plan your path and decide when to detonate a bomb. Hitting blobs while in corridors is your best bet as they can only move in two directions.

As this is an MSX 1 game the graphics are very basic. Colours are bright but, as per the hardware restrictions, not too many of them have been used. Your character and the blobs have minimal but serviceable animation. I didn't find anything else that moved, but there might be some other nasties later on in the game that I haven't gotten to yet.

The controls are displayed on the title screen, something that many home-brew titles seem to forget about. Cursor



You start surrounded by a swarm of slimes.



There's a key which lead me to a health pack.

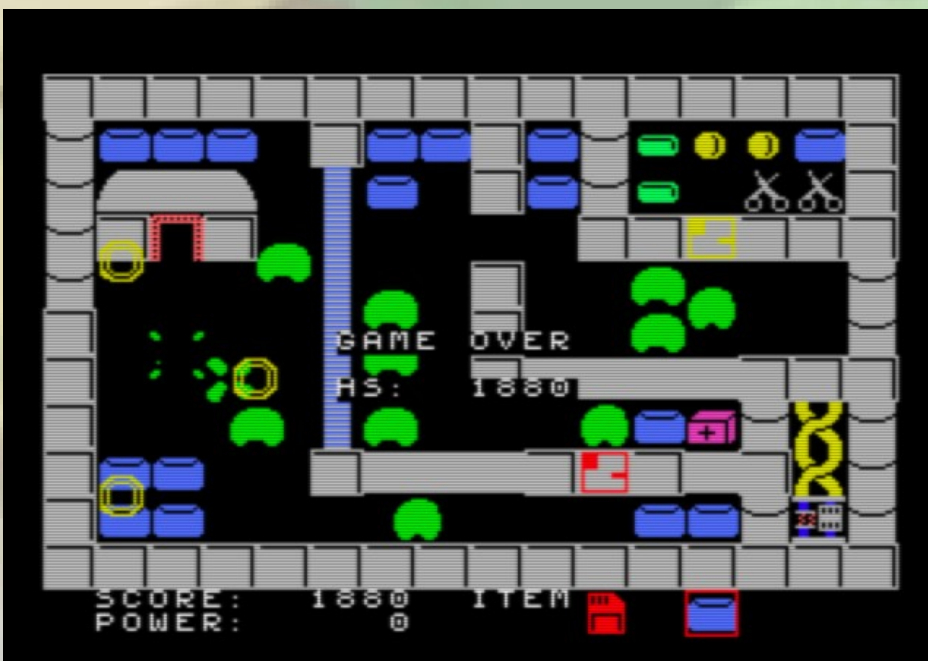
keys will move your character around the screen, while X selects items to use and Z or SPACE use those items. I kept getting confused when using the Z and X keys to select and use items, so I found it easier using X to select and SPACE to use items. The keys are far

enough away that I don't have to think about what I'm doing, but not too far that it's a stretch to reach them.

There is no music in the game, only standard sound effects for picking up and using items, and killing blobs of

slime etc. As the game is playable on all MSX systems, it needs to be noted that certain restrictions had to be made for it to work on MSX 1 hardware. The game is still fun without a tune in the background.

Slime Centre is an intense overhead puzzler that can be forgiven for having basic graphics and no sound track. The game is purely and simply a lot of fun!



He slimed me!

VERDICT

PROS

- Fun, fast paced gameplay.
- Easy to pick up controls.
- A good strategic puzzler.

CONS

- No music.
- Sound effects are very basic.

84%

- **TEAM:** GW's-Workshop
- **INFO:** Download from <https://www.msxdev.org/2017/03/22/>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Morio Saai Ximen

XIΛEX

Shoot 'em ups (also known as shmups) are pretty much all the same. *XIΛEX (Zevimodoki)* falls into this category, and while a decent shooter, nothing really stands out. As the winner of the MSXdev'17, MSX Freestyle category, others and myself included agree that it plays nicely indeed, but I feel there is more that could have been done with it. The developers entered *XIΛEX (Zevimodoki)* into the MSXdev'17 contest to pay homage to the 1982 Namco arcade classic shmup *Xevious*.

I give it a thumbs up for the *Xevious* homage. It does look and play like *Xevious*, yet it's lacking the smoothness of the vertical scroll, and it just seems too jittery and annoying (the scrolling that is). Surprising because the enemy appearing on the screen from above, their attacks and flying towards you seems almost *Xevious* perfect. Understandably, this is not *Xevious*, but I still would have liked to have seen your ship have the ability to shoot bombs and have ground targets to take out. You just don't have either in this *Xevious* tribute game. Another noticeable difference is the bonus lives you can

pick up. In the original *Xevious*, you get your first extra life at 20,000 points, however, in this game the first bonus life (according to the game's manual) is at 30,000 points, then every 40,000 points thereafter. So your level of progress and game difficulty is set quite steep from the beginning. Good games like *Xevious* allow you a degree of lastability where you can obtain the extra life at a relatively early part of the game, allowing you to progress and ease slowly into the higher difficulties. In *XIΛEX (Zevimodoki)*, you just don't seem to get the same lastability.

Graphically, it's a very good rendition of *Xevious*. Your spaceship in this game looks more high tech and better looking than the original *Xevious* spacecraft. The background screens, the enemy fighters, the weapons being fired at you and enemy bosses all look great, and they move so smooth like too. Colour selection allows all of them to be easily seen and fired at, and playability is not really an issue.

The main issue is the gameplay, as it's a pretty boring affair without the above mentioned bombs and any form of extra firepower. I feel the inclusion of extra weapons would add greatly to the lastability of the gaming, and also give it a bit of extra excitement. Players can fire at will by either pressing the fire button like a crazy person a million miles an hour, or just leave the finger pressed down firmly and move the ship around the screen (by far the better option to play the game). A variety of enemy does inject some excitement into the game as they have different traits and ways of surprising the player with their attacks, but I feel it's just not enough excitement and playing this game just feels too much of the same thing.

Some people may enjoy the montomous gameplay, while others may enjoy it for a short period and be looking around for something else to play. I feel this is where the game has left me. I like what the developers, GW's-Workshop, have done with this *Xevious* tribute. There is a lot to like about *XIΛEX (Zevimodoki)* as it's not entirely a bad shmup, but it just doesn't fly as high or have as much fun as playing *Xevious*.

An interesting snippet was found online. Apparently, the developers mentioned that "the game harbours some easter eggs, thinking they should keep them a surprise for players, but that the MSXdev'17 jury team should know about it". It would be even nicer to share these things with players and reviewers too, I think.

VERDICT

PROS

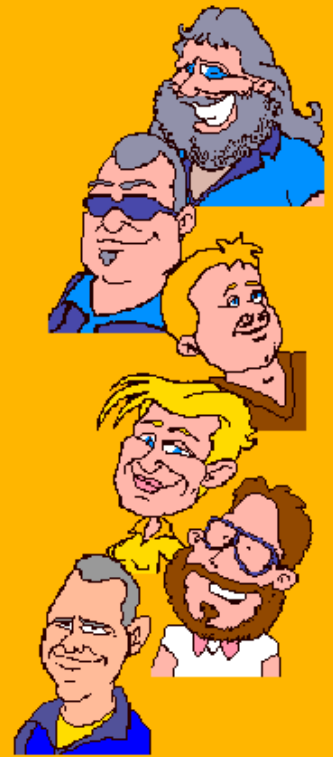
- Good homage to *Xevious*.
- Plays like an arcade game.

CONS

- Monotonous gameplay.
- No bombs and no power ups.
- Lacks lastability.
- Jittery vertical scroll.

76%





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DELTA SOFT



- **TEAM:** Santiago Ontanon
- **INFO:** Download from <http://www.msxdev.org/2017/08/27/msxdev17-7th-entry-xspelunker/>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Morio Saaii Ximen



XSPELUNKER

Amazing! Incredible! Unbelievable! What on Earth am I talking about? Isn't it obvious? I am talking about X-Spelunker! Wow, what a platform game. This one knocked my socks off.

The name *X-Spelunker* reminds me of those ghoully looking *X-Out* retro gaming magazine ads from 1990. That was some some outrageous artwork used in advertising to sell a game. *X-Spelunker*, though, needs no ads or gimmicks to sell it, as one game of it and you're hooked on it.

X-Spelunker was the winner of the MSX game creation contest, MSXdev'17. The game's coder, Santiago Ontanon, was inspired by games such as *Spelunky*

and *Livingstone Supongo*. Exploration is at the heart of this 12-level platform adventure. You can't help but love this game to bits. The opening mini movie where Elaine Sinclair receives a letter from the postman, informing her Michael S. Xavier (her husband), who's name just happens to be an acronym of MSX, is in the Yucatan Jungle on a most important expedition - it sets the scene of play, perfectly.

After changing a few of the settings -- trust me, you want to change the settings -- it's easier to have the 'machete' automatically on. This is your main weapon (it's the only item you can use while jumping) and it's much easier to rope jump if you use the second fire



button. Levels are procedurally generated, so unlike platformer games like *Rick Dangerous* where you return to the same part of the level, players will start at different locations, but still need to make it to the board with an arrow on it (which could be positioned anywhere), allowing you to move on to the next level.

YouTube user 'Raijard' wrote: "The fact that it is different every time, is a double-edged sword; On the one hand the game never ceases to surprise, but on the other, it prevents concrete methods or maps from appearing to finish it". Brutal? Yes it is! Difficult for sure, but is it playable? You better believe it; you remain hooked. There are eight different objects you can carry at the one time with some more important than others. You have to work out what you will need to carry. Do you take an icon (which can help you lower a stone, which in turn gives access to a bow and arrow, allowing you to shoot at enemies from afar), do you take the boots, grab bombs, or even a snorkel? You have to work these things out and complete each level within a time limit. If time runs out, sadly, it is game over.

Adventuring around the jungle is so smooth, so damn impressive and



Watch out for those blue scorpion and blue tree elves. Collect that stone on your left and throw it at them should do the trick.

technically brilliant! Gameplay consists of the slow reveal technique: when you move up or down, more of the screen is revealed. Sure, the main method is running and jumping about the screens, but the magic is in the adventuring and exploring. The way the game has been coded, you forget about the run and jumping part, and you need to think about what you are doing. The wrong step and you might be getting hurt by ivy on the ground. Not paying attention can lead to you falling from height, sending you to an instant death.

A pathway looks blocked, so do you chance throwing a bomb up in the air to explode the wall?

The game plays so smoothly and there is no issue with controls. The only frustration you may have is not realizing you should have seen an object sooner or realized you had to jump on a vine to get to a ledge, or you could have waited for an enemy to move before you attacked it with your machete.

Graphically, the game is fantastic; I am on an expedition in the Yukatan Jungle. I am jumping from tree branch to tree branch, picking up stones, throwing them at blue scorpions and blue tree

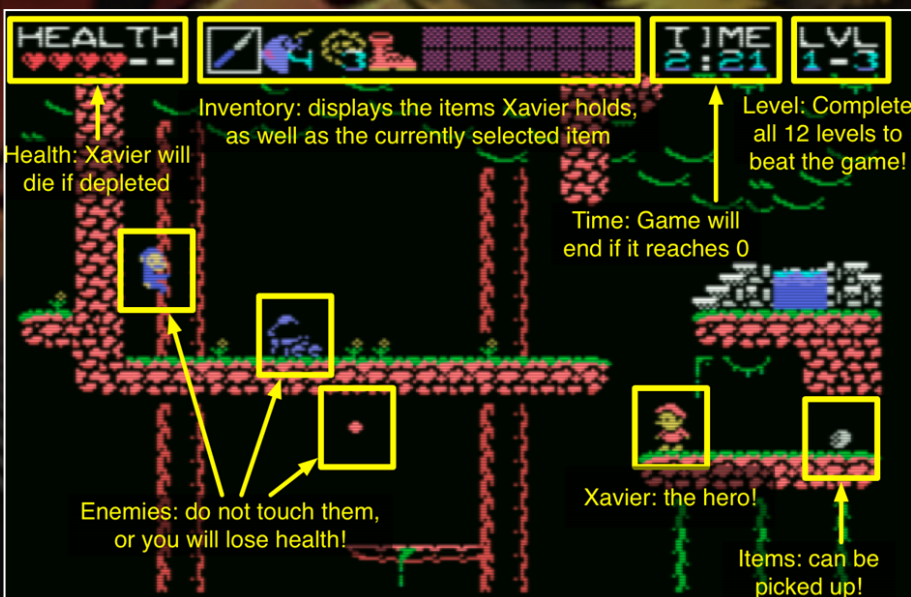


Level 2 is just as impressive, but watch out for that green snake or is it a lizard?

elves. I am pushing heavy grey stones along the path to jump onto so I can jump onto an out of reach ledge. I am using yellow ropes where I just get reach. The backgrounds and level design is just so awesome. The soundtrack is amazingly atmospheric with the little sound effects of picking up objects or getting stung by a bee adding that little bit extra detail. You are not at home in front of a computer; you imagine you really are an explorer in the jungle on a most important mission.

Some people may not like the game, personally, I have to base the game on

its merits. It's very hard to fault. A cracking platformer, and one that grabs you from the start. If there is a fault of the game, it's the lives or 'Health' system. I am not such a fan of it, as a small touch here or there by an enemy and the game seems to end much too quickly. Overall, you get a game worthy of winning any 8-Bit game creation contest. Yeah, you may be frustrated, but persevere, because *X-Spelunker* is hot. Developers in the future should be inspired to create games based on it. A wonderful hack n' slash adventure platformer of the highest quality.



Everything you need to know.

VERDICT

PROS

- Amazing gameplay.
- Fantastic GFX and SFX.
- Heaps to explore.
- Loads of objects to collect.

CONS

- Poor health / lives system.
- Lastability issues.
- Time limits maybe a little short.

95%

- TEAM: N.I.
- INFO: Download at <http://ni.x0.com/msx/dptrip.html>
- REVIEWED BY: Morio Saaii Ximen

DOOPM TRIP



Press your fire button or space bar and your little green bird will reveal some form of bonus: either points, a power recovery or a re-chance. I love this idea and it breaks up the normal running around collecting boring fruits. Having said that, the game is a real challenge with enemies out to stop you. Burgers, weird looking spaceship things, shoot french fries at you, so avoid them by running around the screen, and if they touch you then you lose one of your power or lives.

The coder has made Doopm Trip a lot of fun to play. It's so fast and action packed, you really don't get much time to stop and think. Green objects in the shape of a lettuce will show up on your screen. Collect them and they will zoom around the room, and if they hit an enemy then the enemy is destroyed. Clearing a level is done when all enemy have been killed. Easier said than done as blue circles are placed randomly on each screen. This is where the enemy

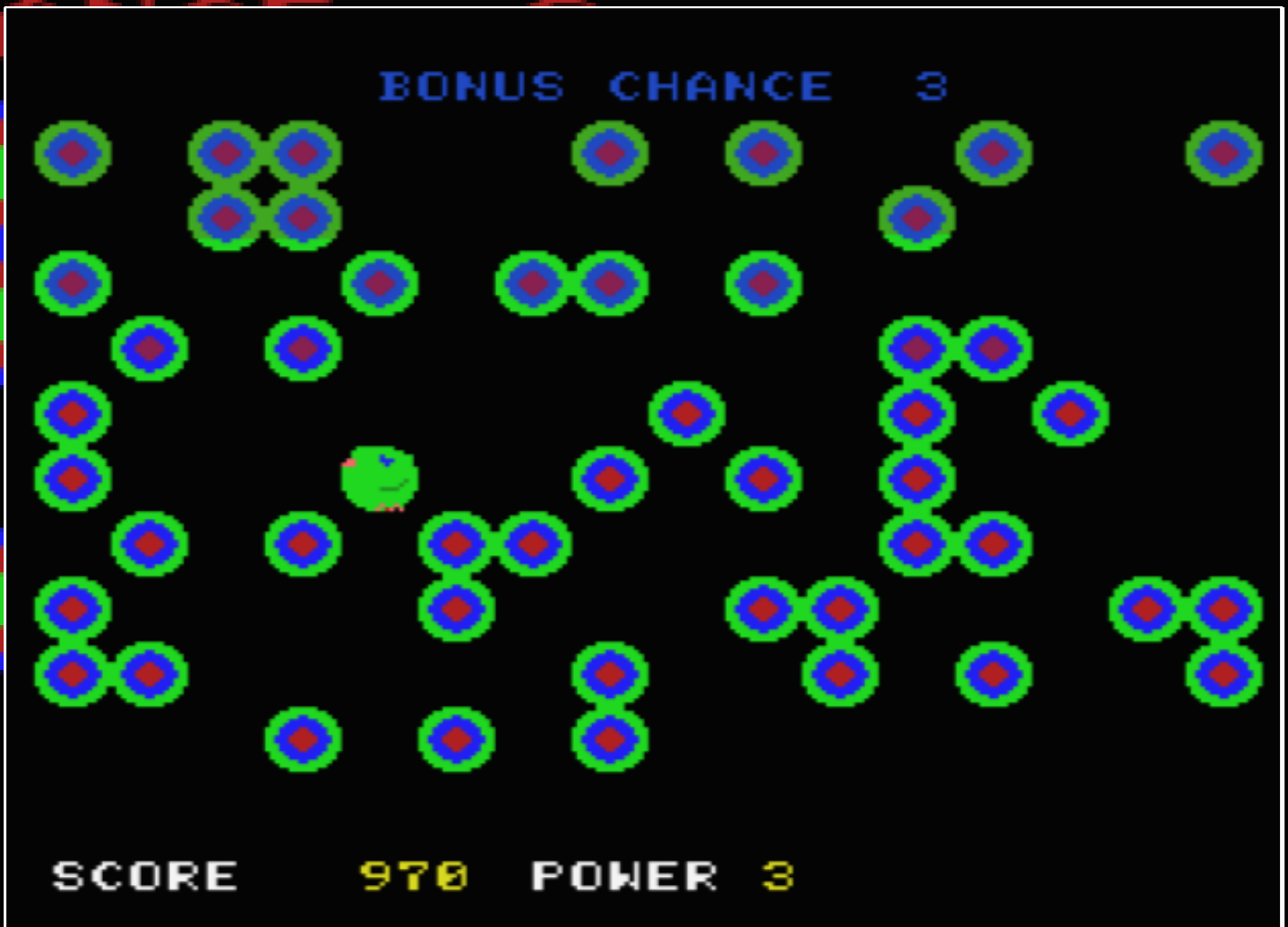
Doopm Trip? The MSX has some very strange names for games. Is Doopm Trip a strange game? No, it's not. A little different and possibly cooky. What game do you know of where you control a green bird collecting various kinds of fruits, and are then teleported to a retro flashing bonus screen that just may give you a seizure if you stare at it for too long? I can't think of too many games like that.

First impressions: how colourful is this game? More colourful than a 16-bit Amiga -- joking. You get the general idea though. The colour of each sprite on screen is so striking, it's colour overload in the best possible way.

Gameplay involves you controlling a green bird around a fixed screen where you can move in any direction. In each screen are fruits to collect, such as bananas, apples, grapes -- all sorts of awesome, healthy fruits. Collect five pineapples and you get instantly transported to a bonus screen -- you don't even have to finish the level. Here, the colours become even more trippy, and at first you get lost for a moment with all the colours flashing so quickly.



Grab all the fruits. Collect five pineapples to get to a bonus screen. The pink heart is an extra life / power. Avoid the enemies (the yellow / blue coloured burgers) and watch out for enemy spawning at the blue circles. Oh yeah, collect those green lettuce to fire off a green circle to kill the evil burgers and other enemies.



These colours flash in the game, its very trippy. Press the fire button to reveal your random bonus.



I should have hid in those white trees or are they mushrooms?



More bonus stuff, nice points and an added life / power.

spawn from. Extra power ups will appear randomly in the form of a heart, collect these for extra life / power. I imagine you get this if you reach certain points or have collected items or destroyed a number of enemies. It can become very chaotic at times, especially with so much happening on the screen. Your bird can take refuge in the white looking trees, and if he stays there he won't be harmed as the enemies will be destroyed if they touch them.

While there may be so many of these collectable item type of games out there, Doopm Trip brings a great deal of originality to the genre. Even if it looks and plays a basic type of children's game, there is so much to love about this game: great tunes, simplicity, fun, gorgeously colourful and highly addictive.

Flaws? I can't really say, as it's such a fun game. Other than the flashing colours in the bonus stage, possibly the inclusion of an instructions screen before you start play would have been an excellent addition, especially informing you what each fruit or enemy does. This health / power system I feel should be a lost lives system. I guess that's down to personal preference. The power / health system seems to have the effect of games ending too quickly as you, the

player, are not really concentrating or fully aware that you just lost a life / power attribute, due to focusing on the screen, collecting fruits and avoiding the enemies. It's really not detrimental to the game though, and it's a matter of personal preference really.

VERDICT

PROS

- Fun and addictive.
- Colourful.
- Cool tunes.
- Bonus stage whenever you collect 5 pineapples.

CONS

- Bonus stage colours and flashing may just give you a headache.
- Instruction screen before game starts would have been good.

86%

- **TEAM:** Digiconcrete
- **INFO:** Download from <http://www.msxdev.org/2017/01/08/msxdev17-1st-entry-skullrs/>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Morio Saaii Ximen

SKULLrs

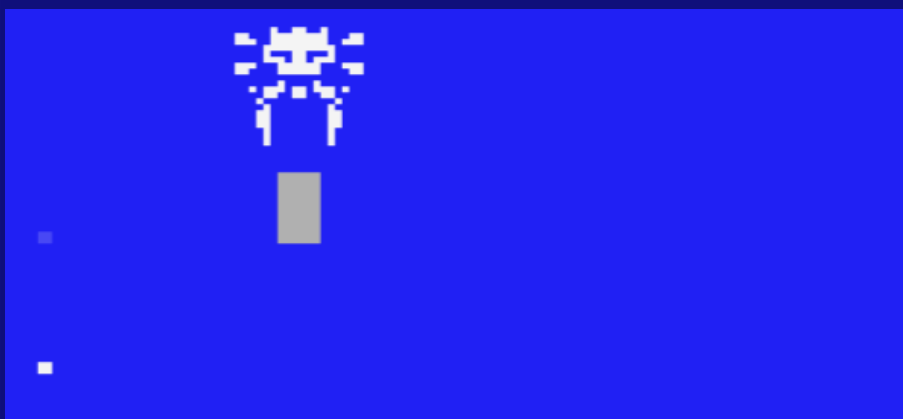
The solar system's defenses have already fallen and SKULLrs' invasion is imminent. Can you stop them? The game is completely written in MSX BASIC, but don't let that sway your opinion of Skullrs, nor let your opinion be swayed by the 8th place it received at the MSXdev'17 game creation competition. Yes, it is as simplistic as it comes. Scarily, though, you will find yourself addicted to a minimalist game of testing your reaction skills.

Think of Pong -- you know, the 1970s Atari game that helped create the video games industry. A square ball that you hit with a rectangular block (representing a table tennis bat) to get the white ball to the other side of the screen. If the ball gets past your bat you lose a point. It is all about hand eye coordination and testing your reflexes.

SKULLrs uses the same sort of principal, only there is a large skull positioned at the top of the screen firing

off large grey blocks. It never stays in the same spot, instead randomly moving from left to right and right to left along the top of the playing area. You are the white square ball, and to defeat the SKULLrs forces, you have to press the fire button and make the white square ball hit the large grey block. The white ball bounces up to you and that's when you have to decide when to press the fire button and release it in an effort to hit the grey block. If the Skull is far away, you have to fire quickly as it takes the white ball time to travel there. If the Skull is close, you can allow the ball to bounce a little before releasing it.

It's all about accuracy, and getting your speed and sense of timing in sync with each other. If you miss hitting the grey block, it's game over straight away, but the game reloads so quickly, there is no time to sulk in defeat -- you'll just want to play again and again. The game is extremely addictive, and you could be playing this game for hours just trying to get as high a score as you can.



Object of the game: the white square needs to hit that falling grey block. Can I time it accurately?



No, I can't!

VERDICT

PROS

- Extremely addictive.
- Requires skill.
- Game reloads quickly.

CONS

- Terrible graphics.

69%

- **TEAM:** N.I.
- **INFO:** Download from <http://ni.x0.com/msx/bird-ch.html>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Morio Saai Ximen

BIRD AND CHAIRS

One bird, many chairs and 18 levels filled with random generating enemies equals more fun than I had expected. Bird and Chairs is a single player, vertical action / avoidance game where you play a cute bright yellow bird who couldn't harm a fly. Not in this game though; your bird is an attacking monster, though he never changes form, always remaining the cute little yellow bird. It reminds me of Tweety from Warner Bros cartoons. Your objective is simple: throw any of the chairs in the room at all of the enemies in the room. If you are good enough to get to the 18th floor, you will see a little demo (end of game surprise, I imagine). Very simplistic, but very playable and very addictive I must say.



Grab the chairs to kill spiders and butterflies, but don't forget to grab the food!

The playing area consists of a 20 x 20 sized grid. You use the keyboard to move the yellow bird in any direction (up, down, left, right, etc). Each level is completed by removing all the enemies from each screen. Along the way you may collect goodies (food), which are for the purpose of scoring points. Picking up chairs is done by walking over them, they are everywhere so

there won't be problem finding one. Carrying a chair will allow you to throw it, while pressing fire on your joystick or 'spacebar' on the keyboard will release the chair across the room. If an enemy is on the same path as the chair, they will be destroyed, and if the chair doesn't hit an enemy, the chair disappears into the wall and is quickly respawned into the playing area.

Gameplay is like playing Pac-Man, but without the dots. It's a very tight gaming area to play in, so you have to be quick on your joystick or keyboard to make sure your yellow bird avoids all the enemies randomly moving about. If you are touched by an enemy, your power (lives) will decrease. With only three 'power' (lives), you have got to ensure you avoid the enemy as best as you can, otherwise the game will be over as quickly as you started it. So far I have encountered crabs, butterflies and a strange spiky blue object as the main foes. At the beginning of the level you will see eggs that hatch, so stay away from them as they are not birds eggs, but they release new enemies into the level.

What I like about the game is that if you throw a chair across the room and it hits two enemies, it unveils a jewel, of which there are five to collect. I got close with three. If you hit three enemies with the one chair it reveals a love heart to collect. Other items I collected were a time clock, which temporarily freezes the enemies for you to throw chairs and destroy them. There is also a green square with a chair on it, which can be run over and chairs will fly out in four directions. If you time it right you can get rid of enemies much faster. Included is a bonus stage appearing after level three. We love bonus levels in games, and here you will have to be very quick to collect the bonus chairs, as there is a

very tight time limit to collect them all.

The graphics are quite basic, but for 32kb you can't expect something awesome. Having said that, it has a very retro look, which is lovely. The game has a very nice tune, but what it could have done with is a louder sound or screen shake to identify when you lose one of your power (life), as you can be so engrossed in the game that you don't actually realize you may have lost a life.

The game has loads of grab factor, the playability seems just about right, and there are no major issues to write about. I just wish the game had joystick control, because you need to be quick and the keys for me just don't make the gameplay as enjoyable as it could possibly be. Otherwise, it is a most enjoyable game for all ages. Well worth playing, for sure.

VERDICT

PROS

- Addictive fun for all ages.
- Bonus levels.
- Lots of helpful items to collect.
- Hitting multiple enemies with one chair reveals more goodies.

CONS

- Needs a louder sound, or screen shake to illustrate a loss of life.
- Tight playing area.

71%

- CODER: Francisco Tellez de Meneses
- INFO: 25 Euro on cartridge from <http://www.matranet.net/boutique/msx/card/ghost/ghost.php>
- REVIEWED BY: Wyrdwad



GHOST

Back in 2011, a Spanish homebrew game developer named Francisco Tellez de Meneses released a wonderful indie Metroidvania for modern PCs (and later consoles) called *UnEpic*. This game was heavily inspired by the Konami MSX classic *The Maze of Galious*, but expanded upon that influence with a shockingly deep RPG-inspired character development system that gives players a remarkable amount of freedom in how they choose to play the game. The result remains, to this day, one of my favorite indie games of all time, and was one of a handful of titles (along with other *Galious*-inspired games like *La-Mulana* and

Hydra Castle Labyrinth) that helped push me over the edge to buy an MSX2+ of my own, leading to many years of avid MSX gaming and collecting.

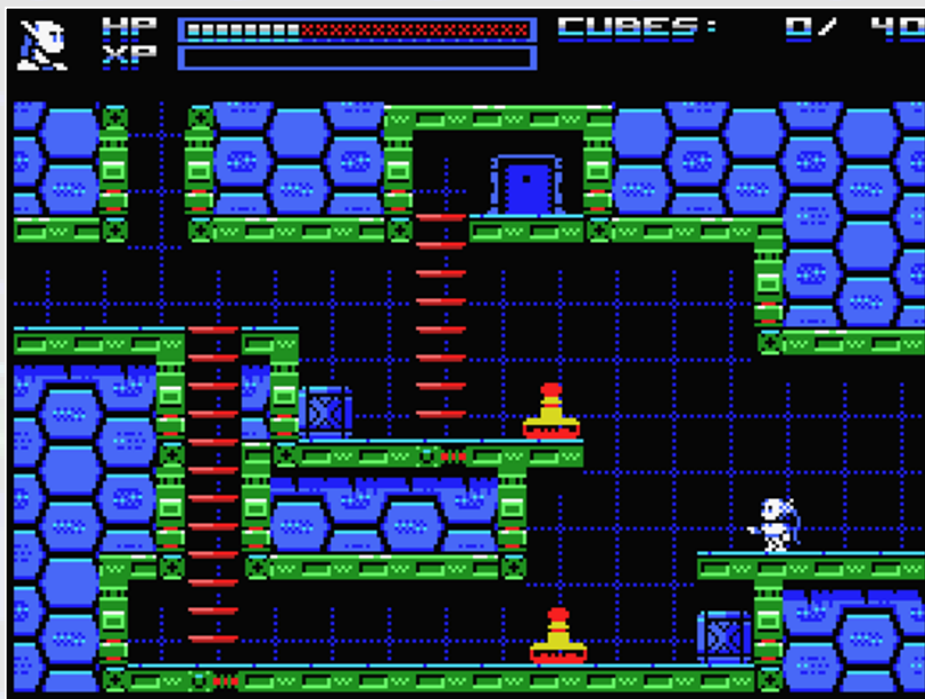
Because I loved his first major release so much, I'd been keeping an eye on the further output of UnEpic_Fran ever since, waiting with bated breath to see what his follow up might be. Many years passed, but finally, my answer came in 2016, when a spiritual sequel to *UnEpic* titled *Ghost 1.0* was announced for Windows on the Steam platform. It looked to be a very similar type of game as its predecessor, but with a futuristic spin and a brand new mechanic that

allowed players to possess enemy machinery and use its weaponry to take out other foes and solve puzzles.

The end result is a game that far surpasses *UnEpic* in terms of story, characters, and basic gameplay mechanics. It eschews the admittedly rather unlikable (but somewhat amusing) cast of its forebear in favour of a more nuanced, well-written, and sympathetic cast, as well as a significantly more fleshed-out world with much farther-reaching consequences for the player's actions. Add to that a control scheme that allows players to pull off some truly badass moves with total ease, and the result is an excellent follow up to an already excellent game. I still think I like *UnEpic* a little better, if only because it offers more freedom in terms of character customization and has a much more varied and interesting game world to explore. *Ghost 1.0* nonetheless proves that UnEpic_Fran is more than just a one-hit wonder developer.

Given how much I like these two titles, I once again found myself keeping an eye on Fran to see what he had in store next and this time I didn't have long to wait at all! It was only one year later that he announced that he was working on an actual MSX game called *Ghost*, which was slated to be released on an actual MSX cartridge and would serve as a canonical prequel to the events of *Ghost 1.0*. This game was developed specifically for MSX1 systems, but a notably enhanced version with a built-in graphics and level editor (among other features) was also released on Steam under the name *Mini Ghost*, retailing for a mere \$1.99 U.S.

Needless to say, I was there from day one to play *Mini Ghost* on Steam and I



also ordered the game on MSX cartridge as soon as Matranet got copies of it in stock. And to say it didn't disappoint would be an understatement.

It's interesting to compare the two versions of the game, as the differences between them are quite fundamental. The Steam version is almost undeniably the better game overall, but the specific things from it that the MSX version lacks help give the cartridge title a bit more of an authentic '80s feel that I find welcome enough to warrant replaying the game in its entirety. You can almost think of the MSX version as the game's "hard mode".

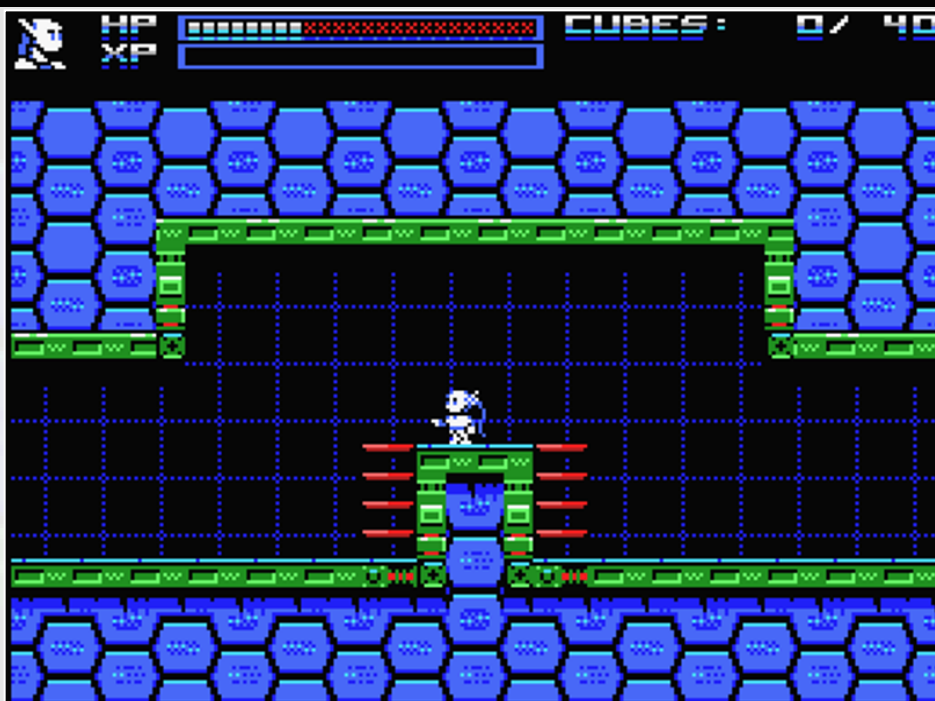
But before we get into that, let's first talk about what *Ghost* actually is.

The setup is simple but effective and appropriately tongue-in-cheek for those familiar with the events of *Ghost 1.0*: Slimy businessman Viktor pays a hacker acquaintance of his to break into the computer system of a space station he was hired to safeguard and cause it to go haywire. Viktor is then contacted by the owners of this space station to quell the disturbance for which he charges an exorbitant amount of money (that's just the kind of slimeball this guy is!). The person he sends to quell this disturbance is you, an android in a 3D-printed body known only as Ghost. You're sent to the space station Dallas armed with nothing more than a blaster, and it's up to you to find and destroy its malfunctioning computer core.

Gameplay-wise, think *Maze of Galious*, but in space. There's the main station which serves as a hub and then four wings that are closed off behind airlocks which require keycards to unlock. The first keycard can be found in the main station, while key cards two through to four can only be found by defeating the bosses in wings one through to three. The computer core you've been sent to destroy is located at the farthest point in wing four, meaning you need to explore pretty much every last corner of Dallas before you're able to complete your mission.

Along the way, you will, of course, be collecting various upgrades that allow you to do things like run faster, shoot while walking, destroy heavy barrels, detect hidden mines in the floor, see in dark areas and so forth -- all fairly standard (yet welcome) *Metroidvania* fare. These upgrades are generally hidden inside destructible crates, though many of the most crucial (including all maximum health upgrades) are instead sold in the various shops scattered throughout the station. Among the items you can only buy in shops are batteries, which are of particular note, as they're a means through which the game is able to pace your growth, preventing you from getting too powerful too quickly.

Basically, the battery size you have equipped determines the maximum number of "cubes" you're able to carry,



with cubes serving as the currency used in shops. When you start the game, you can only carry a maximum of 40, but after buying the first battery you're likely to find (which costs exactly 40 cubes, of course), you'll be able to carry up to 80 instead. This will allow you to buy slightly more expensive items, as well as the one battery you'll find in one specific shop that costs exactly 80 cubes -- which upgrades your maximum cube capacity to 120, allowing you to buy even better items including an even bigger battery, which allows you to buy even better items.

This metered growth mechanic may seem a bit restrictive at first, but it does add a considerable bit of extra challenge and strategy to the game, partially due to the way death works. You have unlimited continues, but each time you use one, you restart at the first room of the game with zero cubes. As such, when you get near the end of the game, where up to 200 cubes are required to purchase the best possible upgrades, you'll be forced to hang on for dear life as you move from room to room carefully killing enemy robots and breaking crates to scrounge up the last few you need, then painstakingly inching your way over to the shop that sells the item you want. It's pretty intense, necessitating learning enemy patterns and mastering the game's controls so you don't make a wrong move and get yourself killed.

It is possible to abuse the password system to get around this, however, since you can bring up the inventory screen at any time by pressing the F1 key, which also shows you the game map and your current password. If you're about to die, you can always attempt to do this at the last possible moment, then jot down your password, reset the game, and enter it in to continue from the first

screen with all your items and cubes intact, along with a full health bar. This will bring you back to wherever you happened to be before your near-death experience, but it'll leave you in a much better position to survive long enough to make your purchase. Arguably, this could be considered cheating, but the game mechanics very blatantly allow for it, and the game is difficult enough that they almost seem like they were intended to be abused in this manner -- especially since the MSX version has absolutely no means of fully healing yourself, with the only HP recovery option being the experience bar that increments your life by one measly unit each time it's filled up (again, just like in *Maze of Galious*).

The Steam version of the game, however, actually does include a means of fully healing yourself. Only two screens away from the game's start point, there's a medical bay with robots who restore HP on contact rather than taking it away. If you need to recover, you can always warp back to the start point (yes, *Ghost* even has an equivalent to the classic *Galious* halo item) and heal up, then continue from there. In the MSX version, this medical bay does not exist, instead replaced with a room containing a few crates and a single flying enemy (although interestingly, it also contains a shortcut to another part of the station, which the Steam version medical bay does not have).

There's one other extremely key difference between the Steam and MSX versions of this game, and that's sub-weapons. Basically, whenever you destroy an enemy robot in the Steam version of the game, there's a chance it may drop whatever unique weapon that enemy happened to be using. You can then pick up and use the dropped

weapon yourself, as long as you don't already have three of that particular sub-weapon stocked, or aren't presently wielding a different sub-weapon. If any of these is the case, you'll need to fire off whatever you've got queued up before you can pick up any additional drops.

Even with those restrictions, the sub-weapon system drastically reduces the game's difficulty, since basically every single available sub-weapon is considerably more powerful than your base blaster, with greater range and in most cases the ability to strike multiple foes at once and/or strike foes in multiple directions at once. Enemy robots drop sub-weapons constantly, so even though you're only able to stock three of any given type at a time, you'll rarely be without something in reserve. Combined with the presence of a medical bay, this makes the Steam version of the game exponentially more forgiving than its MSX counterpart, and also makes it a more fun and accessible alternative, giving players a greater variety of gameplay options. Add to this the graphics and level editor, a save-state system, the ability to rebind game controls, and the fact that the Steam version actually tells you what each item you find does (rather than relying on you to look it up via the included mini-poster in the MSX version), and it becomes almost no contest which iteration of the game is better.

Still, the lack of these features does not in any way make the MSX version a bad game, as previously stated it almost gives it a "hard mode" feel that warrants a second playthrough for anyone who really enjoyed the game on Windows. The MSX version also manages to impress technically, once you realize it's an MSX1 game. There's never any

slowdown or flickering and all game sprites manage to be multicolored moving smoothly even without black boxes surrounding them. The only downside is that if you use a gamepad to play, you're stuck with "up" to jump, button 1 to fire, and the F1 key on the keyboard to access the map. Button 2 is completely unused, and there are no means of rebinding any of this. This is a bit unfortunate for players who want to just kick back on their couches and play *Ghost* without ever having to touch the keyboard, but it does mimic the way *Maze of Galious* was controlled back in the day (albeit with far better game physics), so fans of that title should have little difficulty getting used to it.

The MSX and Steam versions alike, too, share the exact same soundtrack, which consists of a small handful of simple yet catchy PSG tunes that will sound very familiar to fans of *Ghost 1.0*, since most of them are 8-Bit demakes of tracks from its big brother's OST. Again, like *Maze of Galious*, the two tracks you'll be hearing most are the main station theme and the theme played in all four of the wings, which are smartly based on the two most standout tracks from *Ghost 1.0*, "Flying Robotic Artificial Nanobots" and "Jet Out the Amazing". (Fun fact: these track names create the acronyms FRAN and JOTA, referencing *Ghost 1.0*'s creator and main composer.)

The MSX version's primary benefit over the Steam version is that you can buy it physically, and the physical edition is very much worth owning. It comes with a mini-poster depicting some game art on one side and a full list of items with their effects on the other (though the printing is so small that most players old enough to really appreciate this style of game will almost certainly need a magnifying

glass to read any of it!). Also included is a mini-CD containing a handful of art images, a prologue comic (in both English and Spanish), that selfsame list of items and effects (with much larger printing) and a full game map. Add to that a neat white box and a cool-looking blue cartridge, I'd personally say the MSX version's asking price of 25 euros is entirely justified. As of the time of this writing, you can still purchase yourself a copy over on <http://www.matranet.net>, so be sure to grab one if you're interested.

If you can only buy one version of *Ghost*, though, or if you've only got a couple bucks to spare, I would highly suggest spending your money on *Mini Ghost* via Steam before even considering the MSX version. Not only is it a far cheaper alternative to the MSX ROM, but it's almost undeniably the better version of the game as well, due to its vast amount of exclusive features.

If you end up liking it as much as I did, though, you're going to want to buy the game twice anyway. Regardless of which version you choose, I would highly recommend procuring yourself a copy if you're at all a fan of Metrovianias or classic 8-Bit platformers. It's quite short (easily beatable in a single afternoon), but rest assured, this is the kind of game you'll pick up and play through again and again for many years to come, as it's just far too addictive and fun not to. I very much look forward to whatever UnEpic_Fran's next masterpiece may be.

VERDICT

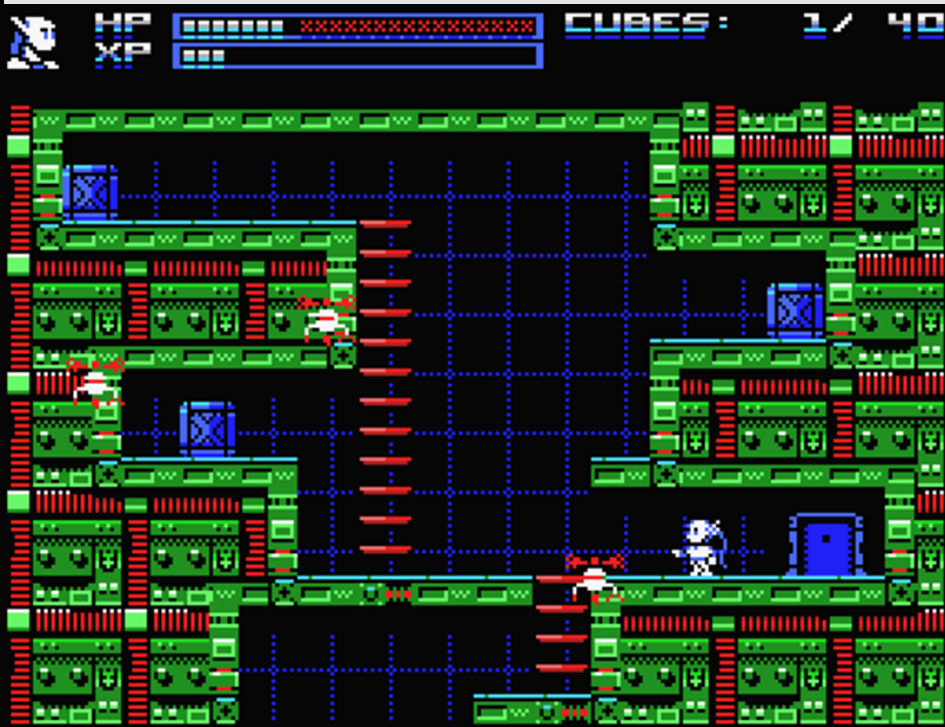
PROS

- Fun, responsive gameplay.
- High level of challenge.
- Excellent Metroidvania-style map design.
- Appealing and atmospheric visuals and music.
- Quite technically impressive for an MSX1 outing.
- Physical edition comes with a cool blue cartridge, a mini-CD, and a mini-poster.

CONS

- Extremely short (approximately 3 hours on a first playthrough).
- Not optimized for controller gameplay.
- Lacks key features from the less expensive Steam version known as *Mini Ghost*.

91%



- **TEAM:** Sarah Walker (Coding), John Blyth (Graphics)
- **INFO:** Download from www.rucksackgames.co.uk/whitelight
- **REVIEWED BY:** John Kavanagh

WHITE LIGHT

The galaxy is threatened by the Industrial pirates! They have stolen the White Light—The greatest known source of energy. You, as a skillful space fighter pilot, have been dispatched to retrieve the light and destroy the Industrial pirates once and for all. What does this mean, perhaps a white knuckle intense space shooter for the BBC Micro? Let's find out.

Well you're won't be disappointed, what you get is a vertical shooter with smooth parallax scrolling, running in mode 2 (160x 256 pixels with 8 colours). The game runs at 50 frames per second with 25 frames per second scrolling and this is just a sight to behold on a BBC Micro. It would be hard, if impossible to get better than this on an standard 'Beeb'.

Playing the game itself is nothing new, it's just like the countless vertical shooters that have come before it. You start with three lives, well four actually as you can play with zero lives but another hit and it's game over. You also start with two bombs that can blow up everything that is on screen, use wisely,

especially at the boss at the end of levels. Speaking of which, there are 14 large levels, totaling 90 Kilobytes of data.

The action feels fast but never too fast. Up can move your ship left and right as well as from the bottom of the screen to a little over one third of it. During play, I felt it was easier to let your ship at the bottom of the screen and just hold the fire button constantly. That's not to say that you can complete the game with little effort. The 12 different enemy formations requires different tactics to be successful. End level battles often includes many turrets which can be devastating if they are not dealt with swiftly.

There are power ups of course, leading up to 4 way directional fire, something you will certainly need on later levels.

The music is excellent and each of the four tracks are pulsating and a joy to listen to during play and the sound effects are spot on.

White Light is a vertical shoot 'em up by numbers. There's nothing new that I'm sure you haven't seen countless times. Where it stands out is at making good use of the BBC Micro capabilities. I'm sure this will be the go to shooter for fans of this computer for a long time to come.



VERDICT

PROS

- Smooth parallax scrolling.
- Enjoyable shooter.
- Pulsating music.

CONS

- Nothing new for a vertical shooter.

80%



■ **CODER:** Darren Coles
■ **INFO:** Download from www.bbcmicro.co.uk/game.php?id=2652
■ **REVIEWED BY:** John Kavanagh



TRAILBLAZER

Trailblazer was released in 1986 for many 8-Bit formats including the Atari 8-Bit, Amstrad CPC, Commodore 64, ZX Spectrum and many more. Sadly there wasn't a version for the BBC Micro. Thanks to Darren Coles, this has now changed as he has ported a version to the 'Beeb'!

Trailblazer is a game that requires the player to direct a ball along a series of suspended passages over 14 levels. There are special fields on the track that makes the ball jump, slow down and speed up to warp speed the ball. There ever tiles that invert the controls!

What an impressive port too, everything is done right. The scrolling and animations runs at 50 FPS and the game feels fast. Like the original, there are two game modes, Arcade and Practice. The practice mode is handy to get to grips with the game thus enhancing your enjoyment when you play the game for real.

It doesn't have the conveyor belt look of the

Amstrad version or the two player option of the C64 version. It's graphical similar the ZX Spectrum version but with a little more colour.

There are two input options, keyboard or joystick. A nice touch is that the high scores and fastest times can be saved to disc. The scores can also be reset by pressing 'R' on the score screen.

The game is a fantastic conversion of a good game. As mentioned, the graphics are the best the BBC Micro could do. The sound effects are



spot on too. I believe this is the first game by Darren Coles, lets hope it is not the last. The BBC Micro could do with a few more conversions of this quality.



VERDICT

PROS

- Trailblazer on the 'Beeb'!
- 50 FPS

CONS

- No 2 player option but then again many versions didn't have that anyway.

90%

- **TEAM:** Robin Jubber
- **INFO:** Download from www.bbcmicro.co.uk/game.php?id=2688
- **REVIEWED BY:** John Kavanagh

FRED THE NEEDLE

Fred The Needle



You need a steady hand to play Fred The Needle and maybe be a bit of a masochist. The game is about guiding a spinning needle from one part of the screen to the next without touching any walls.

This is a marmite type game, in that you either love it or hate it. Personally, I hate it. It's just so frustrating, especially with the incredibly tight time limit. Of course, with us being professionals (ha - ED), we'll give it a fair review.

As you navigate around a course you can spin the needle in the opposite direction

with a press of the space bar. This is supposed to help if you are too close to a wall. It probably does, not that it helped me often. To get through a level, even the first requires holding down the Return key for boost. In fact you must play the game like this to beat the clock, only laying off for really tight turns. I found the keys a bit awkward really, they were 'Z' and 'X' for left and right and '.' and '/' for up and down. I found it cramped my fingers when trying to hold the Return key. An option to redefine keys to one's comfort should be mandatory for those type of games.

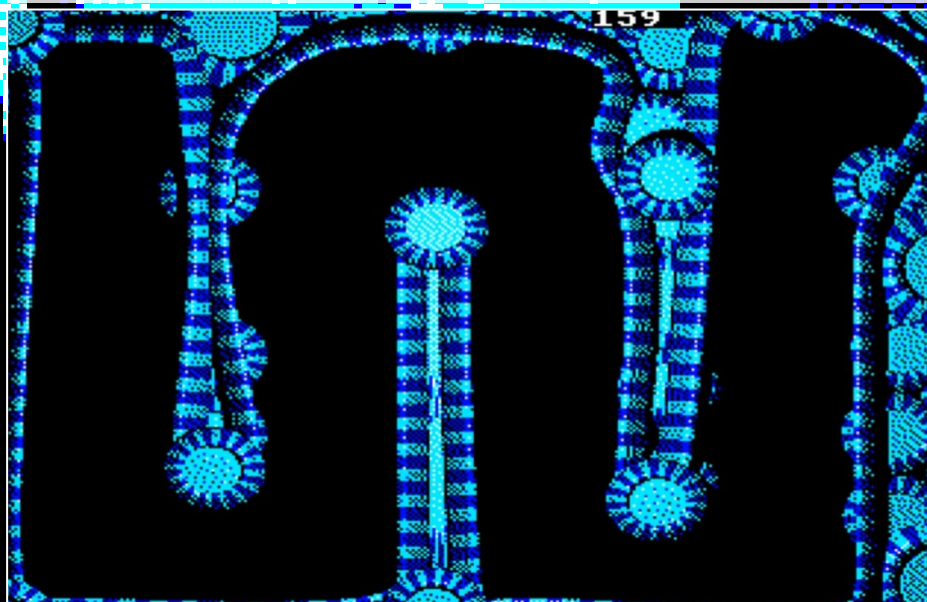
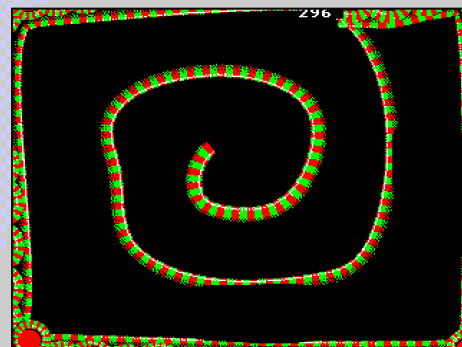
Each level can be accessed by a password, hint, the password for Level 00 is "THUD" ;-)

The graphics are nice and makes a good use of colour for different levels. The course layouts are vastly different from each other, the first few used to master certain abilities, like taking tight turns on level two, see screenshot to the right.

One thing that really bothers me is that there's no exit graphics. You just complete the course and it's on to the next level. That and the counter being just a bunch of

numbers counting down fast. It would have been nice to have a proper clock displayed. Little touches like that would be appreciated by those who would play the game.

There's nice music at the beginning of the game but none in game, but that's probably to help with focusing on getting through the level. The sound effects are just a sound for boost, one for reversing the spin of the needle and another crash sound for when you hit the wall. Limited, but then again, what do you expect from a spinning needle?



VERDICT

PROS

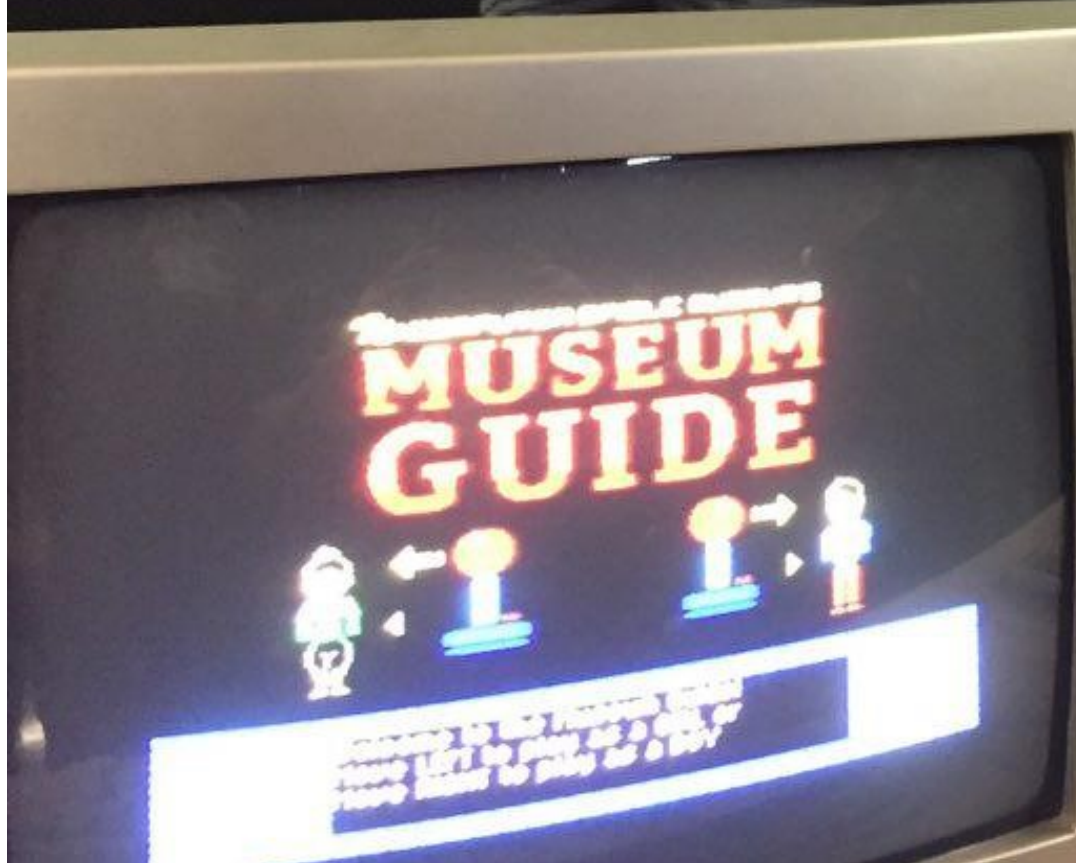
- Make good use of colour.
- Some people will love this.
- Levels accessed with passwords.
- It does what it set out to do.

CONS

- Time limit too difficult.
- Some will avoid like the plague.

72%

MOJON TWINS



From left to right, na_th_an, Anjuel and Kendroock.



MOJON TWINS GAMES

2009 Biniax 2	Spectrum 48k & 128K
2009 Kurashiku Nihongo Monsuta Shiro 3	Spectrum 48K
2009 Nanako Descends To Hell	Spectrum 48K, Amstrad CPC
2009 Subacuatic	Spectrum 48K
2009 Uwol: Quest For Money	Spectrum 48K & 128K
2009 Nanako In Classic Japanese Monster Castle	Amstrad CPC
2009 Phantomas Tales 1 Marsport	Amstrad CPC
2009 Platformer Medley First Block	Amstrad CPC
2010 Uwol: Quest For Money	C64
2010 Sir Ababol	Amstrad CPC
2010 Lala Prologue	Spectrum, Amstrad CPC
2010 Cheril Of The Bosque	Amstrad CPC
2010 Nanako In Classic Japanese Monster Castle	C64
2011 Uwol 2 – Quest for Money	Amstrad
2012 Sir Ababol	C64
2013 Zombie Calavera Prologue	Spectrum 48K/128K
2013 Sgt. Helmet Training Day	NES
2013 Sir Ababol to the assault of the NES	NES
2013 Goku Mal	Spectrum 128K & ZX Vega
2014 Ninjajar	Spectrum
2015 Jet Paco	NES
2016 Sir Ababol 2 – Ice Palace	Amstrad CPC
2016 Lala The Magical	NES
2017 Sir Ababol Remastered	NES

INTERVIEW: MOJON TWINS

The Mojon Twins have been major developers of 8-Bit gaming for a decade. They have been kind enough to share their experiences with us and the greater 8-Bit gaming community, so let's delve a little deeper into their gaming coding caves and find out a little more about who they are and the 8-Bit games they have been making.

8-BIT ANNUAL: So just who are the Mojon Twins, where are you from, how did it all start and are you really twins or are there many people involved in the group?

Mojon Twins (MT): We are a group of friends from Spain who also happen to make games. Not all of us are active always, of course, so that's why it's hard to give a number. We are a bunch of maybe five, six people who talk daily and basically share a deep friendship. We all talk about the games we make, design them, try them, but most of the time no more than 2-3 people are involved in creating the actual games.

8-BIT ANNUAL: What is the main purpose of the Mojon Twins coding team?

MT: Have fun. We all seem to have been pretty imaginative as kids and now years on, as adults, we still love to think about weird stories and develop characters. Most of us have drawn comics or written fiction in the past. Retro video games are a good vehicle



Phantomasa 2 was the first game to bear the Mojon Twins label.

for creativity. Most of us fell in love with videogames in the 80's and dreamt of being able to create them some day. And that day has come!

8-BIT ANNUAL: What was the Mojon Twins first ever game and which system was it for?

MT: Most of us met and made friends while being part of retro developers CEZGS circa 2005-2006. That's when our team was born. The first game with the "Mojon Twins" label was released in 2007 (CEZGS' "Phantomasa 2", for the ZX Spectrum) but I'm sure earlier efforts may be considered as Mojon Twins games.

8-BIT ANNUAL: What is your favourite machine to work with?

MT: The ZX Spectrum was our first machine, but lately we have a great deal of love in the beautifully simple hardware design of the Nintendo Entertainment System. But it comes and goes in waves. Whenever we have developed for a certain 8-Bit machine we did so because we felt like doing so, and greatly enjoyed the process. That's one of the best things about old systems: the same game can look so different in different hardware that it is actually interesting to change platforms from time to time and experiment, especially with graphics and music.

8-BIT ANNUAL: What do you think has been your best ever game and why?

MT: We all have our personal, unpopular favourites (for example, one of our personal favourites is "Fundamentally Loathsome", generally loathed and laughed at), but objectively our best game has to be "Ninjar!". We put so much effort, so many hours on that game. We loved the script, loved the pop culture references, and had a hell of a time making it. Six months of pure joy with lots of laughs. The game engine is pretty simple but it's so full of varied content that it makes it worth it. People seemed to have loved it when it was released more than three years ago.

8-BIT ANNUAL: How many games has the Mojon Twins released?

MT: Hard to tell. As for single releases, close to one hundred. If we count unique games, maybe fifty. It's been more than 10 years.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Which system have you made more games for and why?

MT: Definitely the ZX Spectrum. It was the first computer for most of us, it was greatly supported and with fantastic documentation for referencing when we were learning coding development 10 years ago, and it is a fairly simple system. It has its glitches and caveats but the documentation is so good that you never get stuck. The good news (for new developers) is that, as time progresses, other retro systems are getting the same amount of documentation.

8-BIT: I notice you seem to release a lot of platform style games, is there any plans to make something different like sports, car racing or puzzler's?

MT: Definitely not sports or car racing, at least in the common way you are

used to. We have experimented with all genres in the past, though, and have a couple of well developed ideas for sports simulators (but not actual sports). As for puzzlers, we have released quite a few ("Cadaverion", "Sila Tsiki" or "Nanako in Classic Japanese Monster Castle" (this one for the CPC) come to mind), and many of our longer platformers or top-down action games have puzzle elements.

8-BIT ANNUAL: What are your upcoming releases and when are they expected to be available?

MT: This one is pretty hard to answer, given the way we usually work. We develop ideas into games in a very anarchic way. We may work on something then drop it for something new, then get back to it. We are currently working on a CPC game for a famous compo, have designed a couple of NES games we'd like to finish in time for the nesdev compo, we have a couple of plans to release a Famicom game ("Espinete") pretty soon, and that's all I can say, really. We never run out of ideas and we have several games being worked on at the moment, but we have no schedule.



NINJAR! On the ZX Spectrum.

8-BIT ANNUAL: What can you tell us about Ninjar! The Lost Levels that you are working on for the Amstrad CPC?

MT: We made a deal with Monument Microgames that we'd offer something exclusive for them to publish. They were interested in "Ninjar!" but it is being currently published by 1985 Alternativo (which may launch a second edition in the near future), so we proposed building a new "Ninjar!" game using the engine we are currently developing reusing revamped discarded levels from the original. As the engine was backported directly from the NES and it was being built with portability in mind, we added a CPC core to it and decided to take "Ninjar!" to the Amstrad CPC 464. Anjuel, an all time CPC enthusiast, pushed us even further to make it as he created the whole graphics set in a blast. They were so good that we had to



The Commodore 64 Version of "Nanako in classic Japanese Monster Castle"

make the game. Later on, Davidian made a bunch of great tunes in Arkos, so we had to make them fit. There was a lot of head scratching and banging our heads on walls because it was a tough process to cram everything in.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Are all your games free to download?

MT: All our games are free to download except those created exclusively for physical releases, which are made free to download some time after the release, to give buyers certain privilege. But at the end, everything we develop will eventually be free to download.

8-BIT ANNUAL: What tools do you use to code games with?

MT: Most games are coded in C using cross compilers such as z88dk, sdcc or cc65 (depending on the system and architecture). Code is written in plain text editors (na_th_an's choice being Sublime Text 3). Graphics are usually made in Aseprite or a very old version of Photoshop. Maps are assembled in the good old mapwin (mappy) utility. Object placement, conversion duties, script compiling, etc. are performed by custom written applications. Music and sound effects are created in readily available utilities tailored to each different 8-Bit system.

8-BIT ANNUAL: What are 'must haves' in your game releases? For example does every game need to have music?

MT: Music, definitely (if possible). But the absolutely minimum is playability. With no playability, everything else is just accessory.

8-BIT ANNUAL: What advice would you give to people coding games?

MT: Enjoy what you do. Sometimes the only reward you get for your work is during the creation process. Do what you do because you enjoy the time you spend doing it. Don't think in the outcome. Don't do this for the money,

because you'll be pretty disappointed :-D. Live in the community. Share your stuff. Be competitive, but in a positive way. Do what you want to do, not what you are expected to do. If you feel like creating something tiny and stupid after a blockbuster, by all means do it. Work with passion.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Do you ever think about remaking classic games or will you continue to release all your own games?

MT: We have all toyed around the remakes scene in the past, but currently we are not interested at all. After all, it's spending time on concepts somebody else created. Most of the time we can't cope with our own ideas!



Yun on the Nintendo Entertainment System.



Moggy Master On The Sega Master System.



PRODATRON

Without question, 30 plus years after their initial release dates, 8-Bit computers are experiencing a second life. On one hand of the 1980's revival, it is being illustrated in Netflix and Disney products, in series like *Stranger Things* and *Guardians of the Galaxy*, or the neo retro, present in a bunch of Steam games and Raspberry Pi console remakes, like *Retron 5* or the *NES Mini Classic*.

On the other hand, there is a vast retro community out there, developing hardware and software for "early age" 8-Bit machines, that, like myself, those in their middle age years spent much of



their youth growing up with. We have found one such person who just can't get enough of the 1908's, 8-Bit subculture. This interview is about 8bit developer and retro enthusiast, Jörn Proda aka "Prodatron", creator of the Symbolos operating system on Z80 based computers - the Amstrad CPC and MSX.

Behind Prodatron, there is a digital creator from Germany, forged in graphic demos and HTML programming in the late 1980's and early 1990's - a CPC owner who was part of the staff of Symbiosis



INTERVIEW: PRODATRON



SymbOS running on an MSX and Amstrad CPC 6128.



and Beng!. Barely active in the Net, he gets a notorious echo in 2006, when he made an entire OS for several 8 bit computers (CPC, PCW, MSX2 and Enterprise computers), available for free digital download. In 2017 he released the version 3.0, and nowadays SymbOS gets bigger and bigger with new applications, videogames and other resources.

Distrito Entebbras (D.E): My first impression when I saw this product was like: "It's an 8 bit Windows". MSX and Amstrad machines with floppy Disk Drive had MSX-DOS and CP/M command line interfaces, respectively (which were very close to MSDOS first version), but not an environmental User Interface with icons and mouse pointer; at least in MSX case, not available for the westerners. You made a great program.

PRODATRON: Thank you! (smiling) Already since the 80's I had this dream to have multitasking and a graphical user interface with overlapping windows for my Amstrad CPC. In the old days I did some attempts to reach this goal, but it wasn't really useful. Years later I discovered the CPC again, now as a "retro computer". At this time I had some

more experiences on how to develop a project and how things worked. I had to think about some important issues, like the pre-emptive priority-based task scheduler, splitting the GUI into a high level independent platform, using low level screen routines as well as a concept of how to use the limited bank switching possibilities of the Amstrad CPC in the best way for multiple programs running at the same time inside the extended memory. At the end it seemed, that all this was solvable, and so I went on with this project and finally was able to fulfill my old dream.

D.E: In your personal site you say were part of Symbiosis, a group of Demosceners. The golden years of this activity were a truly inspiration for a lot of users (and I'm including myself), it was essential to define the "cyberculture" term. Looking back, do you miss any aspect of the Computer Demos subculture?

PRODATRON: Being part of the Demoscene was a great time and a fantastic experience. You learned a lot how to squeeze everything out of your computer – no matter, if it was an 8 bit or a 16 bit one at this time. You did things,

which were probably impossible in the imagination of the original developers of the machine. I don't want to miss this experiences at all, as it helped me a lot to optimize code and getting a feeling, what is the optimum and how a computer can do something in the best way. On the other hand I don't miss my activities as a demo programmer today so much. It seems, that I am more a tool developer. But I am still a passive member of this subculture by joining the two biggest demo parties in Germany every year (Revision in Saarbrücken and Evoke in Cologne). Today it's a completely different generation of hardware, but it's still really cool to watch actual 64K demos!

D.E: Since the first release (April 2006), the last version of SymbOS is huge in elements and addons. Is it a mere willing that was born in your mind as a final concept, or was it a large and planned product that changed a lot from the earlier sketches?

PRODATRON: It is a mixture of both. The basic concepts for SymbOS from 2001 didn't change. Fortunately it was never necessary to modify them, even today with the new hardware and possibilities it still works fine. But now we already have new features, which weren't in my mind at the beginning. The first goals of SymbOS have been defined like this: It should be much better than GEOS for the C64, it should have a pre-emptive multitasking scheduler like the Amiga workbench (never liked cooperative multitasking), and it should look like Windows 95. After designing the concepts for all the SymbOS components, the first real working version

appeared at the end of 2004. At this time it was still small, the GUI could even run on a 64K system. With the FAT12/16/32 file system implementation and much more features, SymbOS was growing and growing. But until today we never violated the rule, that it is still bootable on a naked original 128K Z80 system from the 80's. The flexibility regarding memory consumption probably is quite a special property of on 8-Bit product. Most of the new features are now placed inside external modules and service applications. The minimal configuration still requires about 80K of RAM. But a full installation with a high resolution backdrop, multiple desktop widgets and all services running including network support already takes about 200 KB.

D.E: In present days there is a lot of homebrew video gaming software for obsolete computers, but only a few non-entertaining applications and OS. What was your main reason to make an Operative System like SymbOS? Do you feel more comfortable when you are making applications than when you are making video games (like Lord of the Rings for CPC)?

PRODATRON: Beside the fact, that I am more a tool programmer, that's a good question anyway! In people's view a retro computer is usually a pure gaming machine. In one aspect this is somehow true: You still can play nice games on these machines, and many people still have the same fun like they have with modern games. But 99% of them would never use an 8bit computer for their daily work. And this is the point which is so fascinating to me. With SymbOS, I am



trying to convert such an old machine into something, which appears to be very similar to actual modern systems. Developing new tools, which look and behave like these which I have running in Windows on the PC is really fun for me. Another motivation for SymbOS, is the support of new hardware. As an example we now have network interfaces, MP3 decoders and even a new graphic card (at least new for the CPC). Using them with the old single tasking OS is quite boring. You may watch a demo for the new graphic card, or you may download one file from the internet, or you may try your MP3 player. But not at the same time, and then your computer is completely blocked for this one task. In SymbOS, you can use the new hardware in a much better way. You are listening to your favourite MP3 playlist while having your chat program open and check, if your buddies are online. All this in a new bigger resolution at high speed with lots of colours. And if nobody wants to chat with you, you play Pac-Man or Columns, while you are downloading and unzipping new applications and media files in the background, while SymAmp is still playing music.

D.E: We can see in SymbOS many common elements with the 80s Microsoft products (specially between Windows 2 and 3.0): Task Manager, Control Panel, a DOS terminal, a Bar Menu, some keyboard shortcuts, etc. Even the installation menu have some resemblances with the WinXP installation. What would you say it was your main inspiration excluding MS Windows: GEOS for C64, the MSX japanese file managers, or even the OS GUI's for 16 bit computers like Amiga and Atari ST?

PRODATRON: The Amiga workbench was the number one inspiration for me, when I only had my CPC in the past. I also liked the Macintosh-like design of the C64 GEOS a lot. To be honest compared to the workbench I never liked GEM. At the beginning of the 90's I saw the Arthur GUI (later Risc OS) of the Archimedes, and IMHO (in my humble opinion) Microsoft made a good decision to rip some ideas from this GUI for Win95. Unfortunately I didn't know details about



INTERVIEW: PRODATRON

the MSX before I started the port.

D.E: SymbOS, runs perfectly on a lot of machines, including MSX computers with add-ons like Powergraph V9990 and CPC marginal equipments like PCW computers. I suppose you made it on Assembler, the “old school” programming language (you’ve written in your site that the total code is about 119000 lines). Was it very difficult to port SymbOS, to other platforms, or you made only a few changes between Amstrad and MSX versions? As your personal point of view, is assembler coding some kind of romantic act?

PRODATRON: SymbOS, is written 100% in Z80 Assembler. The first port for the MSX required several initial re-works like re-sorting some source codes, deciding what has to be done for a port in general, having a new concept for handling 16 and 4 colours at the same time, improving some interfaces between the SymbOS modules, etc. Today it’s much easier as all the concepts, preparations and experiences are already there thanks to the first port. It shouldn’t take much more than about two weeks to have a new port running rudimentary on another platform – the initial Enterprise 128 port took about 10 days. Oh yes, coding in assembler is incredibly romantic! (big laughs). Well at least it’s probably good for keeping your brain trained; you feel good, as you try to reach the optimum for your code size and speed; and you always remember about the beginnings.

D.E: What would you say to the actual average programmers, using huge IDE’s every single moment, a lot of DLL’s and protected by big amount of online documentation with given examples? Don’t worry to hurt their feelings a little.

PRODATRON: Hahaha, it’s the only way how you can survive today in commercial business. If I have to develop an actual application I am using huge IDEs, DLLs and a lot of documentations and examples as well. Now C++ is becoming the new assembler language – many people don’t use it anymore, now it’s even hard to find C++ coders at all. But it starts to become really strange, that many programmers don’t even know anymore, what a Hex number is or how to use Bits. And there is sometimes a problem with code optimization. Today’s computers are so fast, that you usually don’t recognize, if your code is completely unoptimized. If it’s running on your local machine only, that maybe ok, so there is no pressure to learn it anyway. But if it has to run in a time critical environment like on a server farm, which is accessed by thousands of clients per second, it could become a problem or quite expensive.

D.E: That’s a typical question: What actual OS do you prefer (beside SymbOS): Windows, Linux, MAC OS, Android?

PRODATRON: I prefer Windows and Android. Linux is great for running servers, but I still like using Windows on my PC at home. I am not a big Apple fan but I love my Apple Lisa.

D.E: Among with the original OS, in your site there are a lot of applications, including video and music players (an MP3 reader!!), a calculator, many games (Snake, Columns, Pacman, Game of Life); and even some other resources (fonts, wallpapers). If any user wants to develop one of these resources for your OS, is there any editor available? In the official site you talk about SymStudio, but the link is broken.

PRODATRON: Good news here, SymStudio is now called Quigs and will be available soon for the public! Trebmint, (the alias of another CPC developer, called Rob Buckley) is currently working hard on the first release. Currently there is a full working version available, which was used by EdoZ (another support programmer in the SymbOS project) to create most of the new games and apps of the last three years. But there are differences in the Basic-like language, so it’s better to wait for the release of a newer version.

D.E: Have you ever considered to make SymbOS in other languages (German, Spanish, Japanese)? Would you adapt them if the community gave you the entire translations?

PRODATRON: To be honest, I don’t have such plans. Today you would use an additional text file or database with ID’s for each label or something like this. On a Z80 machine you still try to keep your code as small and fast as possible, so usually you link texts in your code directly. That means for each language I would have to assemble a separate binary of the whole operating system and for each application as well. It is already hard to handle all the different ports of SymbOS and this would even add a lot more variants. The nice thing about the English language is, it is understandable by most people and from an 8-Bit computer point of view, it is a very compact language! (intense laughs).

D.E: Have you considered porting SymbOS to other machines like Spectrum +2, Dragon or BBC computers?



PRODATRON: SymbOS requires a Z80 and has some requirements for the memory bank switching capabilities of the platform. Unfortunately many older machines are not able to provide this. Porting it to the ZX Spectrum would be a dream, but without hardware modifications it’s impossible for the normal ones. Spectrum +3 would allow 128K only with very huge changes to the kernel and memory structures. But I am planning to port SymbOS to the ZX Uno and Spectrum Next. And of course there is still the possibility to port SymbOS to other Z80 machines like the Amstrad NC100/200 range and even the PCW16 with its fast 16MHz Z80.

D.E: Time to finish the interview. Now we’ll close the Text Editor, write exit in the command terminal and close all programs before leaving the System. We wish you the best in the next years, our old machines need big creators and programmers like you.

PRODATRON: Thanks a lot for these very interesting questions and your kind words!

Published on 23rd December, 2017. By: Frank Romero on the “Dsitrilo Entebbras” (Spanish) website, translated to English as “Entebbras District”. The original interview link is here: <https://distritoentebbras.wordpress.com/2017/12/23/interviewing-jorn-mika-aka-prodatron-symbos-creator-and-retro-enthusiast/>



AMSDOS

IN HIS OWN WORDS: The limitations of 10 Line BASIC
Coding By Amsdos.

8-Bit Annual: It looks like Mode 1 is being used in your CPC game 'Find Red', is this correct?

AMSDOS: No I am using the CPC's Mode 0. I'm using Character 133 which is a half sized square block, which looks like a Mode 1 cursor in Mode 0. These blocks have to be drawn in graphically, the trick here is to calculate where the top left corner of a Mode 1 cursor is positioned on a Mode 0 screen graphically, though it obviously needs an xpos & ypos format to work.

8-Bit Annual: With respect to playing 'Find Red', I am finding the cursor movement moves in multiple blocks or spaces and not single spaces is this how its meant to be ?

AMSDOS: No, unfortunately it's me coding with a limited

amount of space issue. I've used INKEY()<->-1 to handle the controls which is faster than INKEY\$. JOY(0) is probably around the same speed as INKEY()<->-1, though unlike INKEY(), JOY(0) doesn't allow you the extra directional movements, so it doesn't allow 8-way joystick movement.

The cursor is no ordinary cursor - that too is drawn graphically, though like the square boxes uses formulas to work out something that looks like a Mode 1 program. The cursor from memory was redefined to be a 3x8 character set, these are nothing new, Gilligan's Gold is an example of it, which Ocean made in 1984, 'Find Red', uses that as well which makes it possible to have 40x25 text in Mode 0.

8-Bit Annual: What did you use to code 'Find Red'?

AMSDOS: I coded the program in Winape, though to make it compatible on all CPC computers, I wrote it using the CPC 464 & BASIC 1.0 settings. I think what's happened here with the movement, is the 464 BASIC 1.0 is a touch slower than BASIC 1.1. I am assuming you maybe using BASIC 1.1 to play the game though. However, the game is also a bit touchy in BASIC 1.0, though when I tested in BASIC 1.1 I had to tap the keys even more so. The only thing I can suggest to slow it down is a FOR loop at the start of Line 7, say:

```
7 FOR d=1 TO 100:NEXT d:<rest of line here>
```

Unfortunately the loop will start playing around with the music, though that seems to be the only way of slowing the program down and keeping it within the confines as a 10-Liner.



KEITH SEAR

Who are you?

My name's Keith, I was born in the UK, but I moved to Japan a few years ago, I had been learning Japanese as a hobby for many years, so when the opportunity came up at work to move to the Japan office, I took it!

How did you get into 8-Bit gaming and specifically, the Amstrad CPC?

Our family got the CPC when I was about five, and ours came with the 'Amsoft' games pack – so it was immediately interesting, however, I quickly became interested in programming thanks to the Usbourne programming books, I used to type in the programs, then change the text and the way they worked. Later I would move onto the 'Amstrad Action' magazine type ins and making my own games and programs.

Why did you get back into 8-Bit retro games now?

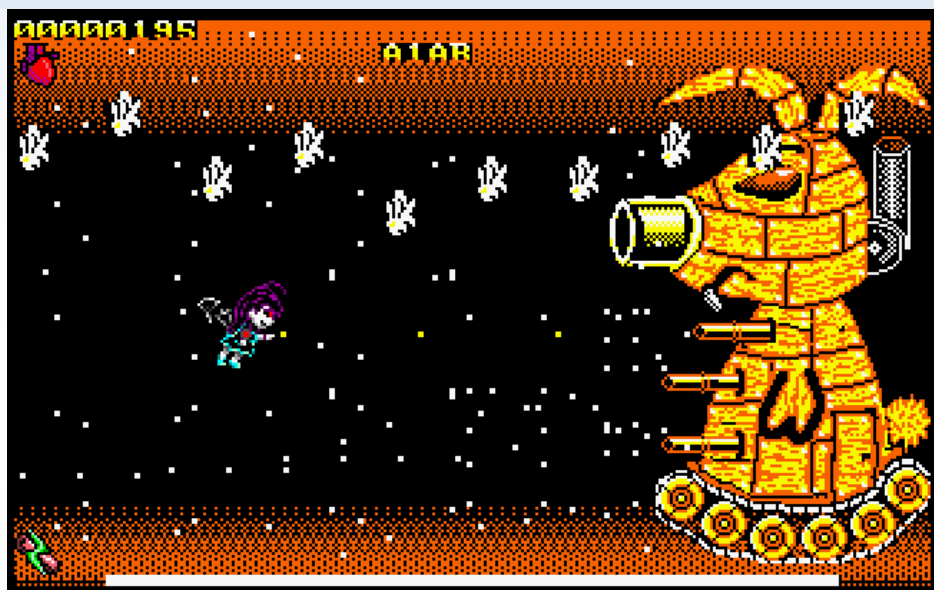
After I bought my house in the UK, I was finally in a position to have spare money, and the space to store things, so I started buying the classic computers I owned and wanted to own when I was younger – I brought my CPC over to Japan with me, but I've bought a lot of Japanese systems since I came over here, as retro gaming is pretty popular, and there are second hand systems for sale in a local second hand hardware store.

Getting back into CPC development

I do computer programming as part of my work, and I've worked in many popular languages such as C++, C# and Java over the years, but I find the speed of these languages move too slow and programs become obsolete quickly which is discouraging for hobbyist

What game to make? Chibi Akumas is born

Well, I'd decided to try to make a game, but I had no idea what! The idea came from the hardware itself, I liked the idea of 'raster switching' the colours to try to get more colours on screen – it was a trick I thought is under used in retro



The giant end of level 1, "bunny Tank" boss on Chibi Akumas: Episode 2 - Confrontation.

programming. I wrote an iPhone game a few years ago, and I can't even play it myself now because of the constantly changing iOS platform, and binary signing, so programming an older system seemed a breath of fresh air, as there would be no changing platform, no complex operating system, and no programming language with thousands of unknown and cryptic commands to learn. In ASM I could write everything myself from the ground up and if it ran on the CPC today it would still do-so in another 30 years time.

gaming – if I was going to try to make the most of it, the CPC's, 4 colour, mode 1 graphics seemed the best choice, as raster colours have to be constant for a horizontal strip, I thought making a game scrolling horizontally would be best – so it just had to be a horizontal shooter!

One of the most interesting horizontal shooters I've seen recently was 'Death Smiles' - the bullet hell shooter on the XBOX 360 – while I liked the gameplay, I found the style a bit cliché and thought the comedy style of the game called Cotton was a better choice, these two games were my inspiration for making a game on the Amstrad CPC, sounds crazy as, I know, I just wanted to have something different from the 8bit gaming norms. I was pretty sure that even if the CPC could somehow do it, I had nowhere near the skill to pull it off, so I was still unsure whether I could make it happen!

I had started reading the old Amstrad



INTERVIEW: KEITH SEAR

Action issues on the Archive.org website, and started thinking it might be fun to make my own game – and unlike in my youth, this time I'd try to do it in Assembly language! My plan was all backwards though, I wanted to make a game, but didn't know what!

As I mentioned above I really wanted to play with raster colour switching, as raster colours only work in 6 vertical strips, I decided my game would be a horizontal shooter. I was aware "Bullet hell" shooters were a relatively new concept, so I thought bringing one to the 1980's CPC would be something original – and the focus on small dots rather than sprites would play to the CPC sprite-less favour.

There were two obvious problems to my plan – I had never programmed a game in assembly and had no idea if the CPC had the CPU power required to do such a game!

Designing the game

Now I knew what I wanted to do, I had to start forming enough ideas to make a game! I read once that 'Super Mario's' dungarees and mustache design was based on what made the character look clear on the sprites of the NES – and I figured if Nintendo could make billions off it – the same idea would be good enough for me!

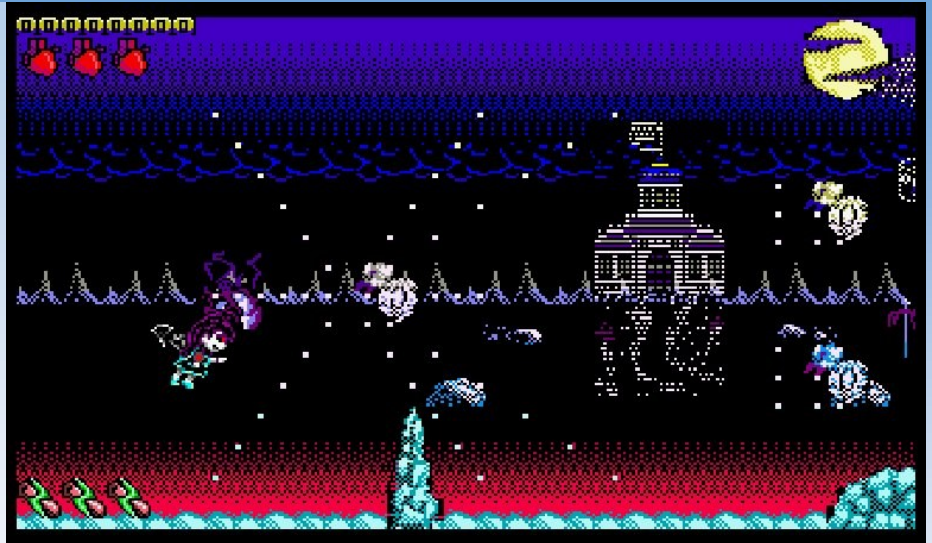
I decided to work around a palette of 4 shades, with black being lowest, and white being the top – on the CPC there's only one mid grey, so I decided on a 4 colour gradient of black, purple, cyan and white colours.

While the game Cotton was an inspiration, I wanted to make something unique of my own, so I thought having the main character of a Vampire rather than a witch would work – as vampires can fly and a white skinned purple haired vampire seemed quite plausible. Also I thought having the main character as the villain would give the game a twist!

I had decided to use the Amstrad CPC plus sprites to avoid the raster colours making the player change colour as much as possible – this defined that my main character should be 32x32 pixels.

Giving the character a big head made drawing the face and eyes a lot easier, the black 'whites' of the eyes were needed because her face was white – the bracelets were there to define her hands, the simple dress and basic shoes were again what were visible to draw at low resolution with only 4 colours.

The big 'Ahoge', the giant strand of hair was a bit of a comic addition to the



The CPC PLUS version of Chibi Akumas: Episode 1 - Invasion, has the V9990 graphics card beat through!



Here's the regular MSX 2 version.

character – but it gave the advantage that when I had to draw her at 8 pixels high during the introduction – the 'Ahoge' let you know it was her!

All the other enemies were just things I thought of as I went along, some were things like 'Zombichu', I thought would be funny, most were just a case of 'I need more enemies - think god dammit!' So I drew the first thing I could think of that seemed usable! I had decided each level would have a theme, 'Skeleton Mountains', 'Zombie Forest', 'Fish River', 'Ghost Cave'. Usually I just tried to think of things to fit the level theme.

Writing the game.

Chibi Akumas: Episode 1 - Invasion

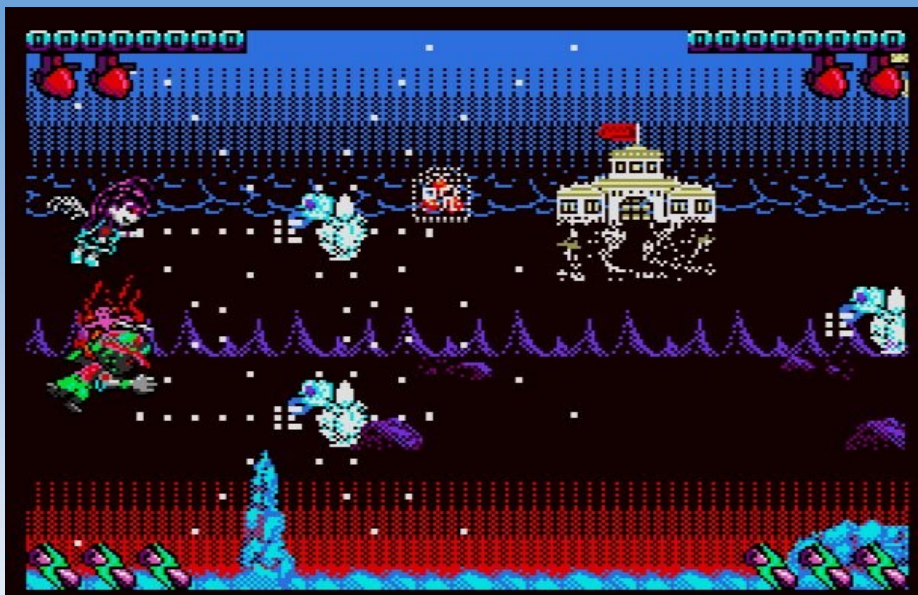
People always say Assembly language is hard, but it depends how you look at it, it has so few commands, you can print them all on a sheet of A4 – Assembly is

easy, working out how to do what you need with the limited commands can be tricky!

After a month or so I had a basic skeleton game, it was half basic, but the sprite and bullet routines were ASM – it looked horrid, and was slow as hell, but the code worked, The level map, the player sprite, and all the bullets were working.

I started designing real level sprites, and working like crazy on the code to get it into an actual playable level. The more I worked on the code, the better I got and the faster the game became. Soon I understood self modifying code, then I no longer needed the firmware, and could use the shadow registers, and I became better at optimizing the code for speed and size.

I find there are many advantages to developing ASM for the Amstrad. The documentation available now for the CPC



And here's the MSX V990 Version!

is unrivaled too – The Quick Basic manual was the size of a doorstop, but the entire Z80 instruction list fits on a sheet of A4. Also you'll never get a source-code dump of windows 10 or a full schematic of the latest Pentium – but Amsdos is completely disassembled, the Z80 CPU is x-rayed and all the undocumented opcodes and bugs of the chip are fully understood.

The CPC I used to own is long gone, but these days I have a 6128 plus, a 6128 and recently got a 464. Hardware wise I use HxC disk emulators, X-mem, M4, C4CPC, and I have both a re-made and original Multiface 2 to test and debug my game. All my development and initial testing was done with Winape – it's a great all round package. It really wouldn't have been possible for me to make my game without it.

By Christmas 2016, my first ever Amstrad CPC game had been completed and released into the 8-Bit retro community.



Chibi Akumas: Episode 2 – Confrontation.

I was full of ideas after Chibi Akumas: Episode 1 - Invasion. For the sequel I had wanted the game to be more like I wanted the original to be. For the original game I really wanted it to be 10 levels and have 2 player support, but this was just too ambitious, so I had decided to do two 'parts', hence the sequel being made.

I reworked the game engine, finishing the 2 player support, and restructuring the code, moving the second screen buffer so I could potentially use all the banks for sprites. I also reprogrammed the code removing the limitations I had found frustrating, such as the 24x24 pixel hit zones and sprite clipping, improving the backgrounds, better enemy animation and easier level coding.

The second game introduced the other 'Chibi Akuma' character, and I brought in some rival characters to give the main character something to interact with – I tried to make new and more adventurous boss battles, with huge sprites like the 'Bunny Tank'. I worked on implementing complex movement patterns like the second boss and a pre-rendered 3D background during the last boss battle (an idea I saw used in 'Blazing Star' on the neo-geo).

Extending Chibi Akumas over to other 8bit, Z80 systems - MSX & Spectrum.

As Episode 2 was reaching completion, I felt it would make sense to try to bring the games to other systems,

as this would be quicker than writing a new CPC game, and bring the game to a wider audience. I had previously looked briefly at the MSX2, as I had hoped that its graphics would be similar to the CPC and could make an easy port... it was not remotely similar!

Now I was looking seriously at a port to the Spectrum 128k and MSX2. I knew I would need to redo all the graphics, and write new sprite and input routines, but at least I could keep the same level logic, and music (all three systems use the same sound chip). What's more, if I figured out how to do this now, any future games could be designed for all 3 platforms from the ground up.

Both the new systems posed challenges, The Spectrum's limited 2 colours per 8x8 pixel block and it's memory layout is not as convenient as the Amstrad CPC's. The MSX display is nothing like the CPC or ZX spectrum as it has a totally separate GPU – with it's own memory.

I started writing my own Sprite Editor in C# on windows – I hoped that by creating my own editor I could easily convert the sprite files from the CPC version to the other platforms, and save me time in the future.

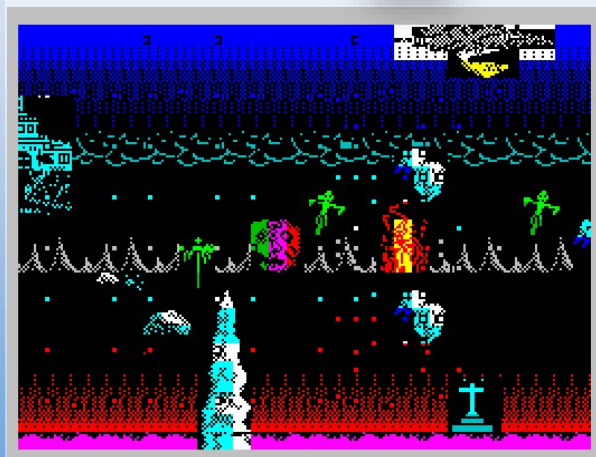
The MSX also has an unusual 'Problem' in the shape of the V9990 and Turbo-R. While the game has the basic MSX2 features, I learned it is around the same speed as the CPC. The later released Turbo-R and V9990 external GPU are much more powerful, the Turbo-R CPU has up to 8x the power of a regular Z80 and the V9990 has speed and sprite rendering capabilities vastly in excess of even the PC-Engine. Trying to find ways of tweaking the game to take advantage of this hugely powerful 8-Bit platform is really tough!

Going Forward!

I aim to have the new 'V1.666' release of Chibi Akumas Episode 1 complete in early 2018 on CPC, ZX Spectrum and MSX2. From there I will continue to port and upgrade Episode 2 to all 3 systems. I guess such a game would come out early 2019.

It's too early to say what I will do after that, making these games is very time consuming, and while I have enough ideas for many more games, it's difficult to say if I will be able to continue dedicating the time and effort it requires to produce games of this standard.

I'm making all my games, and the tools I write open source, I'd like to think maybe someone else will pick up my code, and start making their own new and unique spin-off games with them!



Early screen from Chibi Akumas for the Speccy.

JOSE JAVIER GARCIA ARANDA

8 BITS OF POWER (8BP) FOR THE CPC

IN HIS OWN WORDS - Jose Javier Garcia Aranda - 8BP for the CPC

8-BIT ANNUAL: Jose, what is the game Fresh Fruit and Vegetables?

Jose: It is a platform scrolling game, made to demonstrate that this type of game is possible with the 8 Bits of Power (8BP) coding tool I created for the Amstrad CPC. Platform games involve physics to implement sprite movements, when you jump and fall down.

8-BIT ANNUAL: What is the story behind Fresh Fruit and Vegetables?

Jose: I wanted to do something different, that "motivates" people to eat fruits and vegetables which are considered healthy foods.

8-BIT ANNUAL: What info can you tell us about the game?

Jose: I chose to have only 2 levels, I just wanted to make it a simple game and show another use for CPC games with the 8BP BASIC commands programming structure. All the sprites are designed using SPEDIT, which is a tool included in 8BP. This tool is quite easy to use, although programmers can use other tools compatible with 8BP such as RGAS.

8-BIT ANNUAL: I thought it nice and also humorous there is snow in the game, fruit and vegetables don't grow so well in snow enviroins?

Jose: The snow is a nice effect, I included it to demonstrate how 8BP can move sprites, compute physics, perform scrolling and at the same time, create a snowing effect. it is a way to demonstrate to coders and game players the 8BP power entirely in BASIC.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Can you tell us more about the enemy sprites you have chosen?

Jose: There are several type of enemies:

- **Angry Balls.** These are guardians that move in horizontal direction on platforms.



- **Snakes.** They move quickly, you must jump to avoid them.

- **Bees.** They are flying enemies so you have to be careful when you jump.

- **Spiders.** They move vertically but take care because their movements are not always the same they can catch you out if you don't time your movement.

8-BIT ANNUAL: How did you create the timing effects such as the spiders crawling up and down but also have them stopping and climbing again, was this all down within 8BP command structure?

Jose: I used a feature of 8BP called the "sprite routing". In 8BP you can define a route and assign it to any sprite. Then, each time you invoke a command "AUTO", the sprite moves one step across its predefined route. So, if the route contains a stop, a movement in another direction, an acceleration, whatever, is achieved easily.

8-BIT ANNUAL: I found collecting fruits and vegetables quite random was that deliberate?

Jose: Yes this was done in order to force you to change your path or move back to increase the difficulty level of the game.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Was designing the difficulty of the game part of the plan ?

Jose: I played each level a lot of times to design the location of each platform. I did not draw a "map" as such or plan it out. I put in the elements and played a lot, changing locations of elements until I liked the end result.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Why no joystick controls?

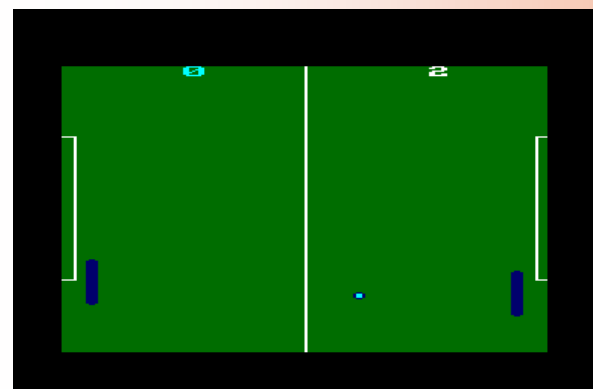
Jose: I should enable joystick as there is no limitation in 8BP regarding joystick controls. I did the program very fast and I forgot some details though (you are more than forgiven -Ed).

8-BIT ANNUAL: Any other information about the game and 8BP you can share with us?

Jose: The game was prepared very fast in just 3 weeks, I wanted it ready to present in the "RetroMadrid 2017" event. I wanted to show this game to demonstrate other types of game different from the other 8BP games I have created - Nibiru, Anunnaki and Montoya. Next for me is that I am preparing to code pseudo 3D capabilities for 8BP for which I will demonstrate by creating a racing game, a typical "pole position" style game with the road in 3D for our beloved CPC.

8 BITS DE PODER

Programming the Amstrad CPC using the 8BP library ("8 bits of power" from BASIC
"Limitations are not a problem, but a source of inspiration", Jose Javier Garcia Aranda.



INTERVIEW: JOSE JAVIER GARCIA ARANDA

The 8BP Commands

Here is a summary of all the commands provided by 8BP, with which you can do almost everything: printing up to 32 sprites, animations, collision detections, layout maps, multidirectional scrolling, sprites routing through tracing, overwriting printing, music, star movements, ink animation, etc.

ANIMA, #	cambia el fotograma de un sprite según su secuencia
ANIMALL	cambia el fotograma de los sprites con flag animación activado. (no hace falta invocarla, basta con un flag en la instrucción PRINTSPALL para que sea invocada)
AUTO, #	movimiento automático de un sprite de acuerdo a su velocidad
AUTOALL, <flag enrutado>	movimiento de todos los sprites con flag de mov automático activo
COLAY,umbral_ascii, #,@colision	detecta la colisión con el layout y retorna 1 si hay colisión
COLSP, #,@id	retorna primer sprite con el que colisiona #
COLSPALL.@quien%.@conquien%	Retorna quien ha colisionado y con quién ha colisionado
LAYOUT, y,x,@string	imprime un layout de imagenes de 8x8 y rellena map layout
LOCATESP, #,y,x	cambia las coordenadas de un sprite (sin imprimirlo)
MAP2SP,y,x	crea sprites para pintar el mundo en juegos con scroll
MOVER, #,dy,dx	movimiento relativo de un solo sprite
MOVERALL, dy,dx	movimiento relativo de todos los sprites con flag de movimiento relativo activo
MUSIC, cancion,speed	comienza a sonar una melodía a la velocidad deseada
MUSICOFF	deja de sonar la melodía
PEEK,dir,@variable%	lee un dato 16bit (puede ser negativo) de una dirección
POKE,dir,valor	introduce un dato 16bit (que puede ser negativo) en una dirección de memoria
PRINTSP, #,y,x	imprime un solo sprite (# es su numero) sin tener en cuenta byte de status
PRINTSPALL,orden, anima, sync	imprime todos los sprites con flag de impresion activo
RINK, salto	Rota un conjunto de tintas (4 u 8) de acuerdo a un patrón definible
ROUTEALL	Modifica la velocidad de los sprites con flag de ruta . (no hace falta invocarla, basta con un flag en la instrucción AUTOALL para que sea invocada)
SETLIMITS, xmin,xmax,ymin,ymax	define la ventana de juego, donde se hace clipping
SETUPSP, #, param_number, valor	modifica un parámetro de un sprite
SETUPSQ, #, adr0,adr1,...,adr7	crea una secuencia de animación
STARS, initstar,num,color,dy,dx	scroll de un conjunto de estrellas

Tabla 9 Comandos disponibles en la librería 8BP

In the following diagram you have the memory structure of 8BP. As you see, you will have 26KB for your BASIC program, and you have 8.5KB for graphics, 1.25KB for music and 0.5KB for the tile map and / or world map for scrolling games.

```

AMSTRAD CPC464 MAPA DE MEMORIA de 8BP
;
; &FFFF +-----
; | pantalla + 8 segmentos ocultos de 48bytes cada uno
; &C000 +-----
; | system (simbolos redefinibles, etc)
; 42619 +-----
; | banco de 40 estrellas (desde 42540 hasta 42619 = 80bytes)
; 42540 +-----
; | map layout de caracteres (25x20 =500 bytes)
; | y mapa del mundo (hasta 82 elementos caben en 500 bytes)
; | ambas cosas se almacenan en la misma zona de memoria
; | porque o usas una o usas otra
; 42040 +-----
; | sprites (hasta 8.5KB para dibujos.
; | dispones de 8540 bytes si no hay secuencias ni rutas)
; +-----
; | definiciones de rutas (de longitud variable cada una)
; +-----
; | secuencias de animacion de 8 frames (16 bytes cada una)
; | y grupos de secuencias de animacion (macrosecuencias)
; 33500 +-----
; | canciones
; | (1.25 KB para musica editada con WYZtracker 2.0.1.0)
; 32250 +-----
; | rutinas 8BP (6250 bytes)
; | aqui estan todas las rutinas y la tabla de sprites
; | incluye el player de musica "wyz" 2.0.1.0
; 26000 +-----
; | variables el BASIC
; | V
; | ^ BASIC (texto del programa)
; |
; 0 +-----

```


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BAD ARNOLD DEMO (BAD APPLE DEMO)

8-BIT ANNUAL: How on earth did you pull this extraordinary CPC demo off?

Shining: There was an old thread on CPCwiki forums about this because it was released for many platforms and not on CPC. Then later on Devilmarkus came with nearly 6000 black and white pictures, featuring the bad apple sequence. Last year NQ! and some of his followers released Bad Apple on Spectrum and as I decided to try to get it into CPC, I asked him if I could use the same music and he agreed. After many months of experimenting, wondering how the hell can I squeeze all the stuff into a CPC and not use too much ram, I finally did it by choosing to use 1MB. I did not have 1MB for my CPC so I developed it in an emulator first and finally Toto built a Y-MEM for me so I could test it on a real machine. The CPC player routine is very simple and short to get enough speed out of the Z80. All the brain-logic is in a Windows PC program which transforms the pictures for my player algorithm. For the intro, I experimented a little bit with hardware scrolling and horizontal and vertical splitting because I wanted to understand more of the nasty tricks of CPC development.

8-BIT ANNUAL: When was it released and where?

Shining: It was released at Evoke 2016, August 19th, 2017.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Did you code it all live at the demo party or did you have it already pretty much coded before hand?

Shining: No, it was mostly done before the demo party, while showing it at the Evoke demo party I only changed the scroller a little bit.

8-BIT ANNUAL: How accurate is it in comparison to the Bad Apple demo?

Shining: I think every version of the Bad Apple demo is different, so you can't really compare them against each other.

8-BIT ANNUAL: It is a massive 1MB demo the likes we don't see of on a CPC just how did you push the humble 64k / 128k CPC to



do it ? What special coding tricks or techniques did you use to get it to work on a CPC, such as any specific coding tools?

Shining: Firstly to get it to use 1MB it involved massive bank - switching. As for the techniques used, Bad Apple and the intro are pure Z80-assembler. Bad Apple itself has no special tricks, only thing is to get the bytes very fast into GFX-RAM area using the massive bank switching after each 16KB block. The intro uses many stuff I wanted to test out: Horizontal screen splitting, vertical colour splitting, hardware-scroll and permanently changing the animation blocks (but this is like hardware-scrolling).

8-BIT ANNUAL: How does it operate on a normal CPC, what are the special requirements to run the demo? Is it able to run on all CPC's and plus machines?

Shining: It is compatible with all CPC's with 1MB extra ram and playcity. It runs from a 80 tracks floppy disk but I recommend using something like the M4 because it loads faster.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Did you do all of it on your own or were there others involved and if so what was their involvement?

Shining: Other people were involved. For the font: BSC. Music: NQ!. Original-Pictures: Devilmarkus. The code and rest by me.

PENTOMINO

8-BIT ANNUAL: Pentomino takes me back to those cool puzzle games I enjoyed playing in the 1980's and 1990's. What was the game coded with ?

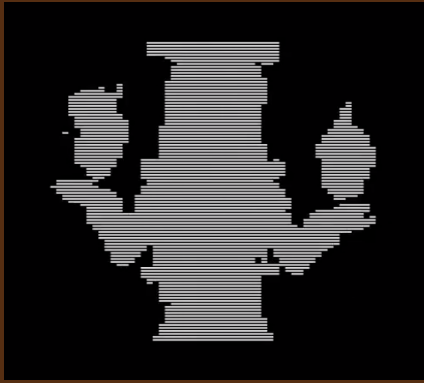
Shining: Pentomino was coded in C (SDCC - compiler) and assembler. Mostly all hardware related stuff like sprite-routines or special effects were written in assembler. The game logic was written in C. Also I coded a Windows application to help define all the 464 puzzles.

8-BIT ANNUAL: How long did it take to code Pentomino?

Shining: Pentomino development began shortly after releasing my game, Defence (about November 2016) and was finished when released around March 2017.



INTERVIEW: SHINING



8-BIT ANNUAL: What was the idea / inspiration behind the game? Why use the Tetris inspired shapes?

Shining: The idea was a board game, my son Silas likes, I wanted to code something my 6 year old could play on our CPC and hopefully would enjoy playing.

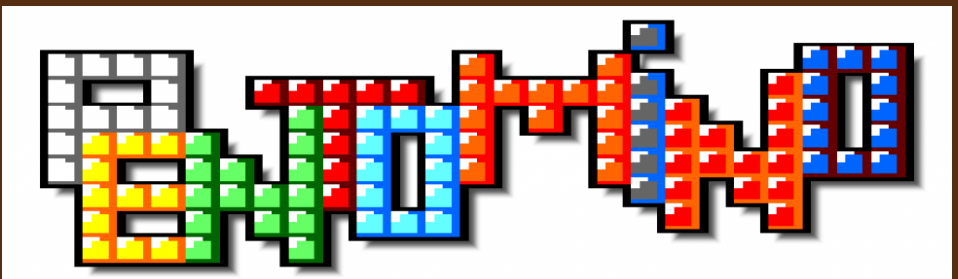
8-BIT ANNUAL: Why did you choose the backgrounds do they have a special meaning or reference to the game itself?

Shining: Graphics were done by HAL6128. We wanted to keep them relatively simple, not too colourful to not disturb the gameplay. Its meaning depicts a time travel through the Ages. From the primitives, to the Egyptian Empire, Greek

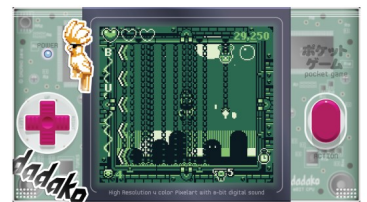
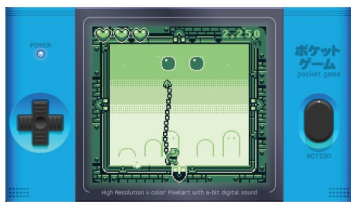


Empire, Roman Age, the Middle Ages, current time and the future. In between we experimented with pattern GFX. Hal

also did some more very cool GFX that did not make it into the game due to the 64KB limit. There was nearly no bytes left.



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INTERVIEW: DOUGLAS BAGNALL

ARCADE GAME DESIGNER BY JONATHAN CAULDWELL



official facebook group

Arcade Game Designer (or AGD), created by Jonathan Cauldwell, is a programming tool for coding games on 8-Bit computers, specifically the Sinclair Spectrum and Amstrad CPC computers. It allows anyone with or without coding experience to learn how to code and create a game on these 8-Bit computing systems. I have been fortunate enough to interview some of the people coding with AGD by creating a post on the AGD Facebook page. First to be interviewed is coder Douglas Bagnall. He first started coding with version 4.6 of AGD but has now since moved on to using version 4.7. He is coding with AGD to create Sinclair Spectrum games.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Greetings Douglas Bagnall, would you be able to discuss your background in 8-Bit computing?

DB: My first real introduction to computing was at secondary school where we had about four Commodore PETs (which I still have fond memories of) and a couple of research machines running Logo. At home we had some Pong style game that plugged into the telly, and later we had an Atari 2600. My favourite game on the 2600 was Nexar - my hands hurt like hell after playing that for hours on end. It was about 1983, I think, when I was given a 48k rubber key ZX Spectrum for Christmas - obviously the best Christmas ever.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Were you a coder back in the day or a game player?

DB: Sadly, no. I was just a gamer, not for want of trying though. I spent hours typing in program listings from magazines - not to play the games but to understand how the games worked on the inside. I learnt how to program from these although it would be years (decades even) before I'd write my first game. Of course I played loads - Jet Set Willy (not Manic Miner - I've never played that, not even on an emulator), Lunar Jetman, Atic Atac, etc. I was terrible at most of the games but still enjoyed playing them.

8-BIT ANNUAL: When did you first start using AGD and why?



Douglas Bagnall

DB: I started in January 2015 with AGD 4.6 (I know this because the first file I saved from AGD is dated 07/01/2015) - yes I have every single version of every game and test I have ever written in AGD. The first piece of advice given to new AGD'ers is to "save regularly" - and I do. All of my games have hundreds of revisions. Ever since owning a Spectrum I have wanted to write a game for it and even now, over 30 years later, that desire is as strong as ever. I spent a good few weeks looking at different options, from Sinclair BASIC, Boriel's ZXBasic, to assembler, but none of them seemed right for me. I stumbled across AGD somehow and added it to my list of things to try. AGD was like a breath of fresh air after trying all of the other options. Don't get me wrong, the others are great for developing on the Spectrum, but AGD was clearly designed for making games, which means creating games in AGD is much easier than anything else.

8-Bit Annual: How have you found the AGD coding experience? Has it been easy to pick up?

DB: I've been writing utilities and business type software since the age of 14 so programming is nothing new, but most of my programming centered around "events" triggering some action. Games programming, especially in AGD, is all about the "game loop" where the same code repeats multiple times every second. Once I managed to get my head round this, everything else was a doddle. The manual to AGD is very good and so I was able to learn all of the commands very quickly. It's still sometimes easy to forget that AGD is geared towards games on a 48k computer, and that resources, especially memory, are very precious. I don't mind this as I like the challenge of writing and rewriting my code to make it as efficient as I possibly can. Sometimes whole sections or levels have to be removed for a game to work.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Doug, you mentioned that you have made a few games with AGD, what are they called?

DB: I've released four games so far... The Adventures of Bouncing Bob -

Summer Breeze: This is a standard platform adventure game where you have to avoid baddies whilst completing a quest – in this case you are helping Bob to turn off the heating and to find batteries in order to power the air conditioning system.

The Adventures of Bouncing Bob – Bustin' Ghosts: I read in a forum somewhere that it would be very difficult to create Pac Man in AGD, so I created Bustin' Ghosts just to show that it was possible.

The Adventures of Bouncing Bob – The Lurching Dead: Again, I remember reading in a forum that AGD would never be able to produce a Berzerk clone, so of course I had to show that AGD was capable. I limited the game to 127x127 rooms (16,129). It would have been easy to have 256x256 rooms but I decided this would be overkill. In hindsight I should have limited the game to 256 rooms (16x16) which I think would have been more than enough.

The Adventures of Bouncing Bob – Jet Pack Bob: Jet Pac is still one of my



favorite games of all time and I just had to make something similar in AGD. I am still amazed at how much Ultimate managed to squeeze into just 16k. I added a few features to make it different whilst hopefully giving the game a similar feel.

Which game was your first with AGD?

DB: The first game that I actually developed in AGD is called Easter Madness, but I didn't manage to finish it before Easter 2015 and so moved onto another project with the intention of coming back and completing it before Easter 2016. Well clearly that didn't happen. Maybe next



year? I liked the Hungry Horace series of games and wanted to make a series of games using the same main character (simply because coming up with original characters is hard work). I also needed a character that would be easy to animate, and thus Bouncing Bob was born. I worked on Summer Breeze on and off throughout the rest of 2015 and much of 2016, finally finishing it in August of 2016.

8-BIT ANNUAL: What is your favorite game you have created with AGD and why?



DB: I've enjoyed creating each game that I've released because each one was harder to develop than any of my previous efforts. I love the challenge of trying to work out how I can make AGD do the things that I want it to do. I can do things now in AGD that I wouldn't have dreamt of when I first started. Having said that though, I'm still learning and experimenting with new ideas.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Which of your AGD created games has proven the most challenging to code and why?

DB: Summer Breeze was quite a challenge as it was the first proper game I had ever written so not only was I learning about game design, I also had to learn how to code in AGD. Bustin' Ghosts was a fairly straight-forward game with only one screen. The Lurching Dead was a challenge in that I moved from pre-drawn screens to screens generated as they are needed.

I spent many, many hours working out a formula which would use the location coordinates to pseudo randomly generated rooms with enough differences from their neighbours that players wouldn't get bored. And of course, the room had to be the same layout if the player went back

into it, no matter which entrance was used. Jet Pack Bob had other challenges. At first I was going to have thousands of randomly generated planets for Bob to visit, but I was never happy with them and so reverted back to pre-drawn screens — a decision I am very happy about as, again, I now think thousands of planets would have been overkill.

There were other challenges in Jet Pack Bob. I wanted the game to have a similar look and feel to the original Jet Pac, but I also wanted to improve upon the original in some way. Having a shield was one, and allowing the rockets to land in different places was another. I'm not sure that I achieved the "improved" status, but I am happy with the end result.

8-BIT ANNUAL: What projects are you currently working on using AGD and what can you tell us specifically about this project?

DB: I'm working on a few different games at the moment. Another game I enjoyed; not just because it's a great game, which it is, but mainly because it was hand coded in machine code — this, for me, is just amazing. I've fought with assembler and have the scars to prove it. I am in awe at anyone who can write in assembler, but what Albert Ball created in machine code is truly astounding. The game is called **Jumping Jack**. A fairly simple game of jumping through moving holes to reach the top of the screen (sounds easy but it does get very hard). I've been working on this, on and off, for quite a while now. AGD has a limit of 12 sprites on screen at once. This is nowhere near enough for a game like Jumping Jack, so I've had to employ other techniques like using manually animated objects as well. A nice technical challenge which is still keeping me busy.

I'm also working on a two player co-op cross between Breakout and Arkanoid which I call **Breakanoid** (can you see what I did there?). This required me to delve into a bit of assembler so that I could read the screen attributes to detect when the player's ball had hit a brick. The main issue I have at the moment is memory. I've got to the stage where I need to edit a sprite event but AGD doesn't have enough memory to allow any editing. This is really the only thing holding up its release (and the fact that I need to create a loading screen and select some suitable music). Another game almost finished, apart from level design, is **The Adventures of Bouncing Bob – Under World**, which is similar in concept to the amazing Alter Ego.

There are a few other games which I have been developing but there's no point in mentioning too much about them as they probably won't be developed into full games in the near future, they are merely technical challenges for me to overcome.

8-BIT ANNUAL: What is that have you learned about coding since using AGD

INTERVIEW: JOHN BLYTHE

that you may not know before?

DB: "Save!", "Save!", "Save!". It's so important to save regularly. Save every change. Save before testing, then reload the saved game after testing.

8-BIT ANNUAL: How easy are you finding using the AGD tools to code games?

DB: AGD is so easy to use, especially in combination with an emulator. If it wasn't for AGD I wouldn't be able to create the amount or types of games I've made.

8-BIT ANNUAL: What are you trying to get out of using AGD?

DB: Fun. I love coding (whether games or utilities or business apps). I also love sharing my work so that other would-be game creators can learn and make more games for us to enjoy.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Is there anything else you would like to share or add about your games or in using AGD to code games?

DB: Don't be afraid to experiment. AGD allows you to try different ideas without having to worry too much — just save regularly.



John Blythe

JOHN BLYTHE INTERVIEW

8-BIT ANNUAL: John Blythe, what is your background in 8-Bit computing?

JB: Well I got my first computer in 1983. It was an Acorn Electron 32k. I was heavily involved in the school computer club and they were all BBC Micro's so I wanted something I could use at home too, but couldn't afford the BBC. Even so my parents bless 'em, put themselves in hock for a while to get me that £199 computer. I was 13 then and did a fair amount of BASIC coding out of the magazines and off my own bat. I got to a point where I could code up some nifty BASIC stuff like adventure games and I remember a PONG like tennis game called Wimbledon '84 I think. Even partially finished a vector graphic adventure, with compressed text routines they were happy days.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Were you a coder back in the day or a game player?

JB: More of a gamer to be honest. Although like I say I did love to do some coding. Only in BASIC though. Assembler language was something even to this day, is a mystery to me. I just can't get my head around how it all works.

8-BIT ANNUAL: John, when did you first start using AGD and why?

JB: Back in October 2016. Relatively recently. I was showing my work

colleague and friend Andy John's my graphic adventure game I'd recently done and he showed me his project using AGD. That was to become his Monty's Honey Run game. I was shocked how easy it was to get professional quality games up and running. It convinced me to give it a try. Not looked back since.

8-BIT ANNUAL: How have you found the AGD coding experience has it been easy to pick up?

JB: Very easy. Once you get into and learn the shortcomings, limitations of the engine and its little bugs it's a really very powerful, easy to use engine. Thanks to the work of others in the AGD community there has been some great additions to the main engine. Ability to play AY music for instance was a great leap forward for the quality of these games. It's still evolving to this day. The AGD Lab group made up of some clever individuals, but mainly Alan Turvey have really helped show what is possible with the limited but flexible coding language used by AGD.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Have you made any games with AGD, if so, what are they called?

JB: Yes I have. Some say I'm a machine. LOL. No more so than anyone else though. I've released 3 games since December 2016. All well received I hope. **Foggy's Quest, Circuitry and The**

Incredible Shrinking Professor.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Which game was your first with AGD?

JB: Foggy's Quest: To Narg and Back Again. It was a particularly ambitious project for a first game. I sort of threw myself in at the deep end. An arcade adventure with menus and objects to use in multiple locations. It was amazing it fitted into memory, indeed I think I only had a few kilobytes left at the end.

8-BIT ANNUAL: What is your favourite game you have created with AGD and why?

JB: The Incredible Shrinking Professor. I like it because it feels more rounded. The graphics look great, the design is really solid. I used all the things I'd learnt so far. Object manipulation was nice unlike Foggy's Quest which was a bit rough and simplistic. Little things like giving the player character death animations or animating small scenes when you used an object in the right place. The intro screens and outro screens nicely bookend it. Having multiple music tracks really helped to finish it off. I also did multiple versions to cover 48k/128k Spectrums as well as a special VEGA version for those users and a ULA Plus version for extra colours, which looks nice. Very pleased with it.



The Last Run

8-BIT ANNUAL: Which of your AGD created games has proven the most challenging to code and why?

JB: Hmm. Probably Foggy's Quest. It's the largest game I've done. Has the most graphics, but it had quite a few unique objects you had to use in different locations, which did different things, like open a door or create a new object or grow a plant etc. That all had to be coded in as bespoke code in the events (special routines within AGD). It became difficult to manage, especially when the memory got very low. Trying to go back into the event code meant I had to delete some sprites so I could open the code in the built-in editor. Then once I'd finished I had to re-draw the missing sprites so the game would work properly. Fun times - not! Well, actually it was, who am I kidding.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Do you have any new AGD works in progress?

JB: I have two projects on the go right now. A game called **The Last Run** and another which is a secret project for another guy....shhhh!

8-BIT ANNUAL: John, what can you tell

us specifically about this project?

JB: Nothing. It's a secret. As for **The Last Run**, it's a run 'n gun game. Run left to right across the screen shooting baddies and avoiding hazards. I've tried to vary my style and genre of games as much as AGD allows. **Foggy's Quest** was an arcade adventure. **Circuitry** was more a **Manic Miner** style game. **The Incredible Shrinking Professor** is an arcade platformer. **The Last Run** is a shooter. It's set in a distant future and the world is decimated, taken over by Aliens. They destroyed your platoon. You're the only one left and you decide to make a suicidal run at the enemy base. You're gonna make 'em pay!

8-BIT ANNUAL: What have you learned about coding since using AGD that you may have not known before?

JB: Limitations! Know the limitations and work with them rather than around them. Design the game with them in mind. It's good to be ambitious of course and to push the limits, but do too much and AGD will kick you in the ass. With each game I try to do and learn a different aspect of AGD. For instance **The Last Run** is using the particle system in AGD, something I've never used before. My design and implementation is hopefully fitting in with it rather than trying to push it to do something it really can't, which ultimately would probably break it.

8-BIT ANNUAL: How easy are you finding using the AGD tools to code games?

It's very easy. Obviously you use them on a ZX Spectrum or emulator, so they can be rudimentary. But they are simple to use and once you get the hang of it, it's really quick to start knocking something together. The IDE (the basic language you use to



Foggy's Quest

code) is very limited, but flexible. It could be a bit more memory efficient, but it is perfectly usable and can be made to do some great stuff. The sprite, objects and block editors could do with more features, but this is on a Spectrum with limited memory, so I think they do an admirable job as is.

8-BIT ANNUAL: What are you trying to get out of using AGD?

JB: I just love being creative. Always have. I have many ideas floating around my head. If I can couple that with working in the retro scene then all the better. The other aspect is I love limitations. I love showing that even if something only has a limited memory or limited palette of colours or sound, it can still do something cool. AGD allows me to do that easily. It's very satisfying to see a finished project, that plopped out of your head and onto the screen and find that people actually like them.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Is there anything you would like to add about your games or using AGD to code games?

JB: It's fun. Even if you don't finish something, it's still fun to try. It's got a great community too, we all love to help out and there's always something being shown off to inspire you.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Which version of AGD are you using and why?

JB: Current version 4.7 - it's the latest version, it has some bug fixes and additions. It also has some new bugs, but generally it's a bit better than 4.6. I'm waiting to see how the PC version develops and if that turns into the ZX Spectrum Next version, then I might get some real good stuff going.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Are you strictly using AGD for Speccys games?

JB: Just Spectrum games at the moment. I am sort of intrigued by the Amstrad version, but it's not been updated for some time. So not sure what bugs and limitation it has. Mostly I'm waiting to see how the ZX Spectrum NEXT version develops.

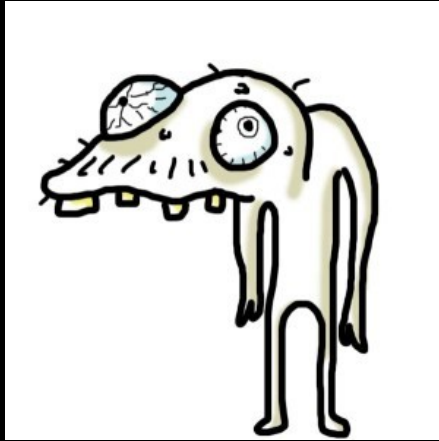


THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING PROF.

The Incredible Shrinking Professor

INTERVIEW: PAUL WELLER

PAUL WELLER INTERVIEW



Paul Weller's avatar he asked to be his picture for this interview.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Paul, what is your background in 8bit computing?

PW: My first computer was a 16K ZX Spectrum. Well, technically it was my brother's but I feel like I was the one who completely embraced it. It was a real life changer and really opened up my imagination. I went on to upgrade to 48K then a +3 much later.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Were you a coder back in the day or a game player?

PW: Both, although my coding was always BASIC only. I spent a lot of time typing in games from magazines and managed to pick up enough knowledge to mess around making silly animations and a few simple games myself. I never ventured into machine code as that was well beyond my understanding and I was always primarily interested in the art side of things.

8-BIT ANNUAL: When did you first start using AGD and why?

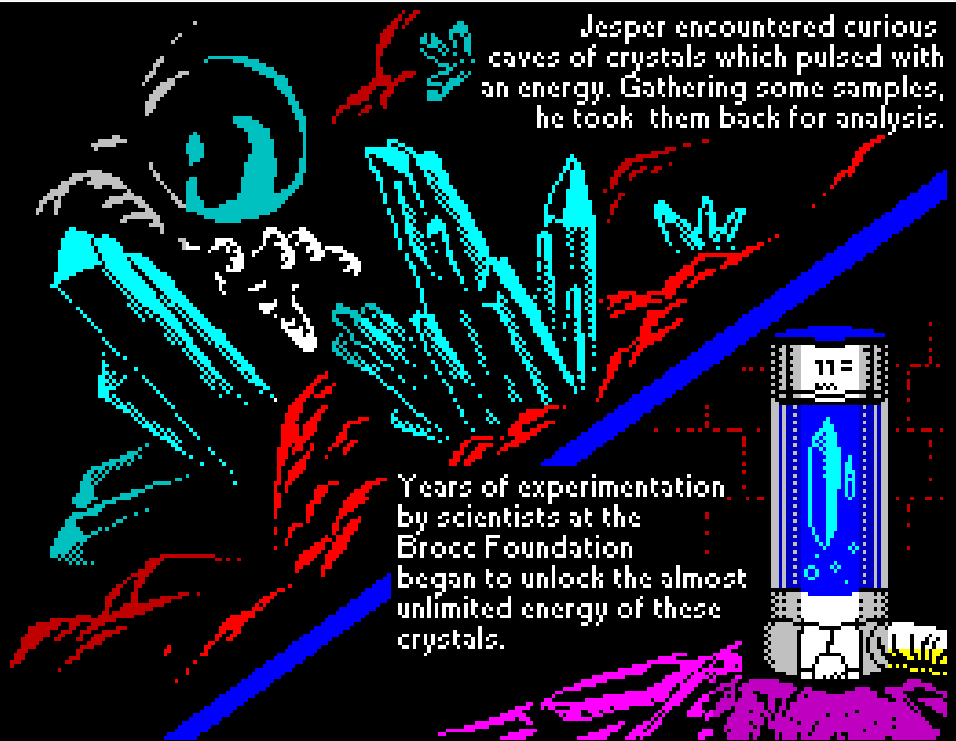
PW: I started with AGD just this year (2017). I had previously made a couple of Spectrum style games in Gamedesigner and that gave me more confidence in coding. I wanted to try my hand at making a game for a real Spectrum, not just something that emulates the look of the era.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Paul, how have you found the AGD coding experience?

PW: To be honest, it's much simpler than I had initially feared. It's like an easy version of BASIC, so getting results fast is a doddle. I'm still fairly new at it and there are a lot of tricks and techniques to learn though.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Have you made any games with AGD?

PW: My first and only complete game so far is called 'That Sinking Feeling'. It's kind of an underwater Cybernoid without



Jesper encountered curious caves of crystals which pulsed with an energy. Gathering some samples, he took them back for analysis.

Years of experimentation by scientists at the Brocc Foundation began to unlock the almost unlimited energy of these crystals.

Aeon: The story is set with a series of scenes between each level.

the shooting. It was a good, easy project to start with and I am pleased with the final result.

8-BIT ANNUAL: What projects are you currently working on using AGD?

PW: I am currently working on a rather ambitious game called 'Aeon'.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Paul, what can you tell us specifically about this project?

PW: The concept of Aeon is to produce a multi-game package, with a continuous storyline. It will consist of four independent games with different styles, each tied together with a story told in a series of images. Essentially it covers several generations of a family against the backdrop of the rise and fall of a civilisation on a distant planet.

8-BIT ANNUAL: What have you learned about coding since using AGD that you may have not known before?

PW: That I seriously need to double check my ENDIF statements more thoroughly!

8-BIT ANNUAL: How easy are you finding using the AGD tools to code games?

PW: If you work within its inherent limitations, AGD is pretty damn easy to use. It does have a few personality quirks that make me shy away from creating larger or complex games, but I encourage anyone to watch the video tutorials and give it a go.



Aeon: A planetary survey mission must take care to avoid the dangerous whirlwinds that plague the surface.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Paul, what are you trying to get out of using AGD?

PW: I can never sit around doing nothing. I have to have some sort of creative project (or two, or three) on the go at once. AGD is another outlet for this creativity, providing the satisfaction of making something along with the nostalgia of the old days.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Paul, is there anything you would like to add about using AGD?

PW: I'm very much looking forward to a Spectrum Next version of AGD. With all the extra memory available and higher processor speeds, I'm sure people will make some really exciting stuff on it.

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INTERVIEW: ARIEL ENDARAUES

ARIEL ENDARAUES INTERVIEW

8-BIT ANNUAL: Welcome Ariel Endaraues. Can you please describe your background in 8-Bit computing, when did it all start for you and what was your first 8-Bit machine you owned? Did you code commercial games?

Ariel Endaraues (AE): Well, I'm from Argentina and in the 80's my first computer was a Timex Sinclair 2068. I began to program some simple games in basic, along with my best friend who programmed on a Commodore 64, between the two we were improving but without reaching a commercial level.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Ariel, how did you learn to program? Was it something you were keen to learn all by yourself or did you sort of just get into by accident?

AE: Like many people of my generation, we started programming to make our own games. At that time we only had Spanish magazines that brought listings to learn how to program. In addition, the price of cassettes pushed us to create our own games.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Can you remember your first ever program you wrote, if so what was it and what did you use to code it with?

AE: The first game I programmed was simply a goblin that had to get to the other side of the screen by dodging a small monster that moved randomly. It was made in the basic of the Sinclair 2068.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Ariel, when did you start using Arcade Game Designer - AGD?

AE: Start using AGD in early 2017.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Ariel, have you used the AGD tutorials, if so what do you think of them?

AE: Yes, I used an excellent tutorial by Paul Jenkinson that is on YouTube. Then in the Facebook group and in the AGD forum there is very good information.

8-BIT ANNUAL: What games have you written using AGD?

AE: I have programmed a single game, Pumpkin Poe, a Jet Set Willy style platformer, that fortunately had a very good reception.

8-BIT ANNUAL: What sort of issues did you encounter while coding these games?

AE: The main problem I found was an error in the putblock function that if you



Ariel Endaraues

do not take precautions consumes all the memory. AGD is a great program but it is not perfect, and you have to learn to avoid bugs.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Ariel, what are your thoughts on developing GFX and music within games using AGD?

AE: The sprite editor of AGD was very comfortable, but to add music it was necessary that David Saphier developed an excellent tool called Musicizer that simplified this process, especially for those who do not know ASM.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Ariel, what are your thoughts on gameplay and playability with using the AGD tools?

AE: To create platform games or games in the style of Cybernoid, AGD has the necessary tools to do so. To create other game styles, you need some knowledge and dedication. I think AGD is a very versatile tool for

developing computer games of all game styles and genres.

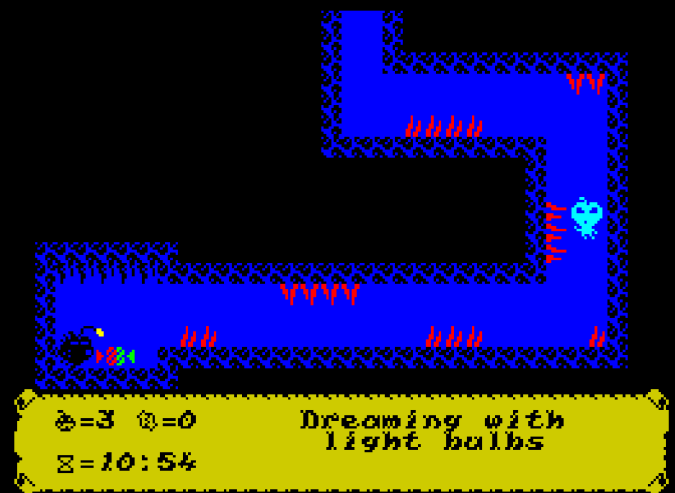
8-BIT ANNUAL: Ariel, which version of AGD are you coding in? Do you think this is ample for what you want to do in games or do you feel there needs more features?

AE: I use version 4.7. Maybe a version for Windows would be great, to take full advantage of the memory.

8-BIT ANNUAL: What are your thoughts on the AGD homebrew scene?

AE: The community of AGD is growing a lot, and the results are in sight, the amount of games that were made in 2017 is impressive, many of them of great quality.

8-BIT ANNUAL: What do you think is the best and worst games you have seen coded with AGD?



AE: Without doubt one of the best is Qbox created by Sergio Llata, if I'm not mistaken the first isometric game made with AGD, and the worst is hard to say, because each game is the product of the effort and love of an author according to their possibilities. You have to remember that these games are almost always free and that's why we should be grateful.

8-BIT ANNUAL: So what does the future hold for Ariel and AGD? Are there more games projects on the horizon?

AE: Of course, for me to make a game was to fulfil a dream and good reviews gave me a lot of strength to do something new and better in 2018, a couple of ideas are already on paper.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Ariel is there anything else you would like to add or mention about AGD or the homebrew scene you have not mentioned above?

AE: Recently in the top 5 homebrew games of 2017 made by a prestigious Spanish channel, 3 of them were made in AGD, I think that is a clear example of the potential of this engine and that the future will be even better.



PUMPKIN POE

INTERVIEW: DAVE CLARKE

DAVE CLARKE INTERVIEW

8-BIT ANNUAL: Would you be able to discuss your background in 8-bit computing?

Dave Clarke (DC): My first introduction to computers was at school with the BBC Micro. I remember playing Granny's Garden and the main thing that sticks out is the screen with the witch who has a blue face and green hair. I don't really remember too much about the game itself. At home I had one of those Binatone machines which had 6 games built in and 2 paddle type controllers. I remember there being many pong variations and a game with a square that bounced around the screen. I never knew what this was at the time, but I now realise that it must have been a shooting game (we never had a light gun).

8-BIT ANNUAL: Were you a coder back in the day or a game player?

DC: I was a gamer, but always wanted to get into coding. I used to love playing games on the ZX Spectrum and Atari 2600 when I was a kid (still do), but I loved the ZX Spectrum games the most I think. I used to love trying to work out how the games were made although I never got very far at the time. I knew about the colour clash and was intrigued with how the developers used to get around it. I used to write my own programs in BASIC and even tried to replicate Windows 3.1 by creating a login screen, a desktop and a basic paintbrush program. I think it also had a notepad type program in it too. At one point I took the graphics from Wario Land on the Gameboy and mapped them all out on graph paper. I then redefined some UDJ's and made him jump, but as it was all in BASIC I didn't get too far.

8-BIT ANNUAL: When did you first start using AGD and why?

DC: I started using AGD in March 2017. I decided around that time that I really wanted to do something that I had always wanted to do since being a kid and that was make my own ZX Spectrum game. I always wanted to have something I made myself and was inspired by the games I had played such as Manic Miner and the Dizzy games. I didn't really have any idea what type of game I wanted to do so played with lots of basic ideas which I still have. I went with AGD as I didn't know enough BASIC to make a game I would be happy with and I had no idea whatsoever about assembly.

8-BIT ANNUAL: How have you found the AGD coding experience, has it been easy to pick up?

DC: AGD was fairly easy to pick up as I had a basic understanding of BASIC so things like variables and IF statements



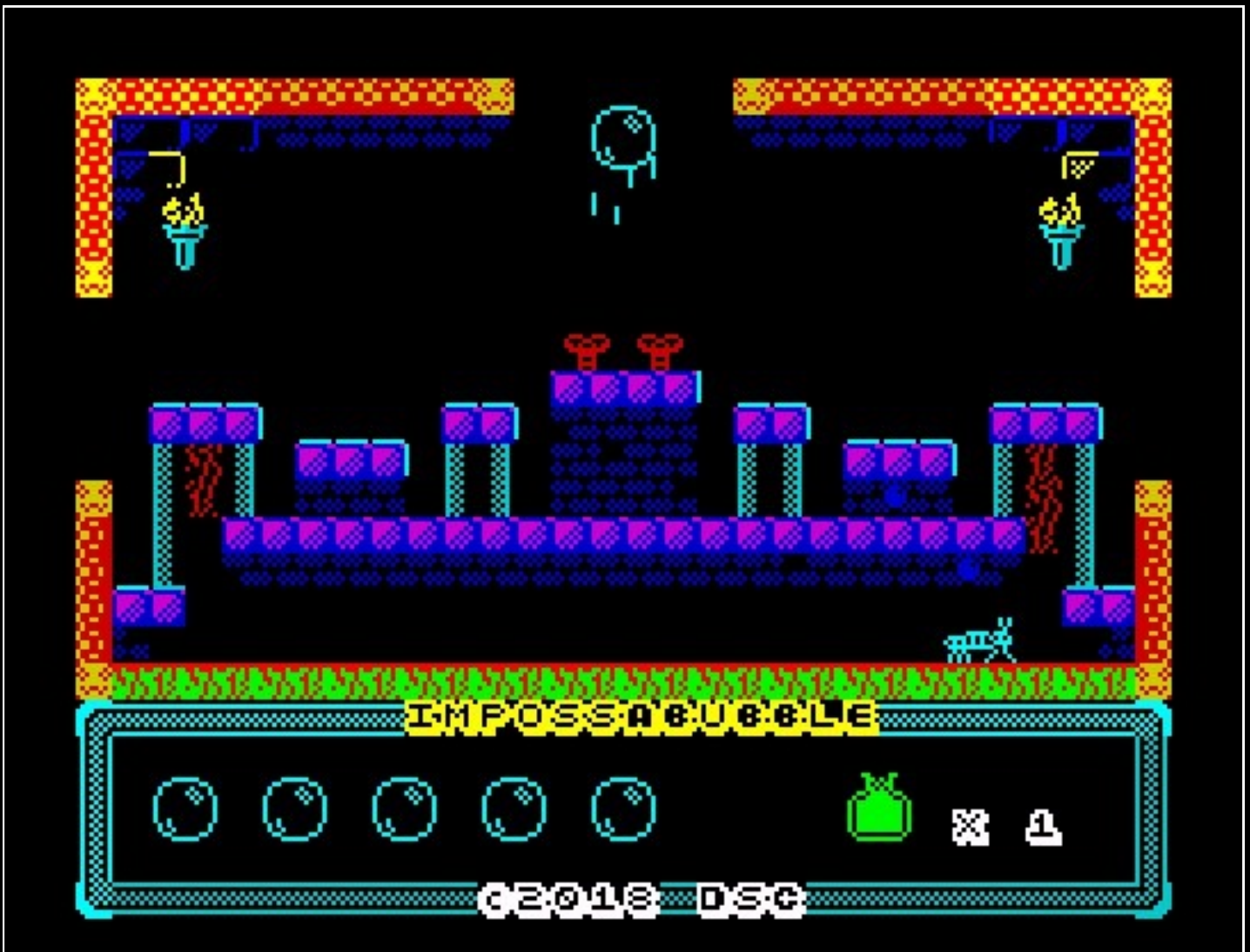
were familiar. I started off by making a few demos for myself to learn and I started off with the classic Manic Miner. I made a very basic game on one screen trying to understand how best to use all the tools available. I then went on to try a Mario style game which replicated the first level of the NES version. I was getting to grips with more complex coding and starting to think about how the graphics might look in my games. There is so much you can do with AGD and although I've created several demos for

myself to test ideas and game mechanics there is lots more that can be done with it especially when you start including assembly routines.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Which game was your first with AGD?

DC: My first game was Impossabubble. I took the idea of one of my favourite games, Impossaball, on the ZX Spectrum and wanted to turn it into a 2D style platformer. I found this quite challenging





as I had to learn new techniques and used assembly code for the very first time. I had to learn the basics of how assembly worked as I'd never used it before so this was very challenging, but I enjoyed learning it. I've released a digital download for it and it will soon be releasing it on tape through Monument Microgames.

You have been turned into a bouncing bubble who is trying to find their friends who have been trapped and turned into bubble mix as a result of experiments to make levitating assassins. The bouncing routine was fairly easy to get to grips with and was a result of experimenting with different ideas.

8-BIT ANNUAL: What has been the most challenging aspect of coding Impossabubble?

DC: I decided that it should be a map as opposed to a single screen type game where you fulfill an objective and move on to the next screen. This was a huge challenge for me as I'd never designed a game before so had no idea where to start. I started out by making a basic map in Excel bit by bit and slowly adding

rooms and taking rooms away as I went along. I then created the map in AGD itself to work from.

All the rooms you see in the game were created while using AGD itself. I didn't map out any ideas for the rooms on paper or otherwise. I probably should have as it may have made it easier, but I found working directly in AGD meant that I could immediately see how it would look and then test it to see if it played well or needed tweaking.

While working on Impossabubble I came up with Brick Racer. I wanted to see if I could make a quick easy game based on the old LCD style games I used to play as a kid. It involves you having to steer your car left and right to avoid the other cars. Each car you successfully pass adds 1 to your score. As you pass more cars the game gets progressively faster. This was not as challenging as Impossabubble, but still gave me opportunities to learn new things.

8-BIT ANNUAL: How easy are you finding using the AGD tools to code games?

DC: Now that I'm used to it I can knock up a quick demo to test something fairly quickly. If it wasn't for the video tutorials by Paul Jenkinson I wouldn't have found it as easy and I think it would have taken longer for me to pick it up.

8-BIT ANNUAL: What are you trying to get out of using AGD?

DC: I've always wanted to make my own spectrum game since being a kid and AGD has been the tool to finally help me realise my dream. It's also really fun to make a quick game if you think of something and it's easy to implement an idea.



INTERVIEW: JASON ALDRED



Many a retro gaming enthusiast would have grown up playing arcade games during the 1980's. One of the best shoot 'em ups ever made and highly regarded as the best ever retro video game shoot 'em up of the early 1980's would be space shooter Galaga, released by Namco in 1981.

Galaga's legacy is one that is quite unique in gaming circles in that the original arcade game seems impossible to clone or replicate. Sure, many have tried to bring Galaga or some mocked up versions of it to home computer systems, but they have failed and failed quite miserably.

So what's a chap by the name of Jay Aldred, based in Leyland, doing then making a Galaga inspired game called Galencia for the C64? Doesn't he know it's like cooking risotto, the 'death dish' on

Masterchef? Fortunately for retro gamers, Jay Aldred is no aspiring chef, but he has shown he is more than capable of cooking up, I mean coding up a Galaga based shoot 'em up with stunning results. Here's the fun stuff about Galencia from the man himself.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Jay, I learned that you haven't been in the retro / 8bit scene for quite a while, what pulled you back after all these years to develop Galencia for the C64?

JA: Hi there, it was a combination of two events, firstly I had to move back to my home town, some 350 miles away from where I was living at the time, to look after a family member. Immediately after the move I was only working part time while I was searching for full time employment. Secondly I saw an advert for a brand new C64 game from Psytronik

- I was amazed that the C64 had commercially boxed games being released in 2017. These two events, having some time available and the knowledge of a market for C64 games got the cogs turning!

8-BIT ANNUAL: Was Galencia the only game you wanted to do or did you have other ideas? What was the reason you chose to go with the Galaga inspired game?

JA: I have always had a love for Galaga and always been a little disappointed with the available options for the old C64. I thought that with careful planning I could expand the Galaga idea and design the game around the C64's strengths instead of shoehorning something that wouldn't work onto the C64. A lot of games try to be too ambitious and suffer for it. Sometimes this was out of the



development team's control, if it was an official conversion for example. I was kicking around quite a few ideas before committing to Galencia. Originally I was going to remake my very first 'SHMUP' on the C64 - the mid 1980's game 'Alpha Runner' (now seemingly lost forever!) but a recent Steam release with the same name forced me to change my plans!

8-BIT ANNUAL: Did you know that many before you have tried and failed to produce a good 8bit Galaga style game? Why did you think you could succeed where many others had failed?

JA: The early efforts were commendable for their age and I know that many people still enjoy playing those (Galaga, Zalaga and Galpus spring to mind). I was looking for a different approach and intended to make a massively multiplexed game with a maximum of 48 sprites on screen,

including the border sprites. Those earlier efforts did not take this route and relied on character based enemies, Galpus was very clever with the way they implemented this, but I wanted to try a different route. I wanted lots of motion on the screen with the formation animating and moving smoothly as the enemies sit in formation, a multi layered, multi colour starfield, things that you don't usually see on a C64. I was trying to aim for an Arcade like experience. For example modelling the attract mode and interface on what I thought a C64 powered arcade machine might have been like.

8-BIT ANNUAL: You coded Galencia on the PC with CBM PRG STUDIO tools as you don't own any C64 hardware, how does it differ from your earlier days in programming?

JA: My first steps into machine code programming were with an 'Expert' cartridge - a bit like an Action Replay. I had no concept what an assembler was until I started working at Mr.Micro. It was an absolute revelation to me! Cross assembly, macros, symbolic debuggers. To be honest we had very good tools back in the 80's. CBM prg Studio was a great all-in-one tool to get started with and I would recommend it to beginners. For my next project, Galencia Khaos Sphere, I have switched development to the sublime text editor and Kick Assembler (known as Kick Ass!).

8-BIT ANNUAL: Galencia is not a straight copy of Galaga, you meant it to be this way, yet the gameplay and playability is just like an arcade Galaga game but it has a few twists, what can you tell us about the game design and playability?

INTERVIEW: JASON ALDRED

JA: I really wanted to capture that early 80's arcade experience on the C64, a scenario like - what if a C64 was inside an arcade cabinet? With a game like Galencia - you have to get things right, the difficulty curve must be carefully balanced and deaths must feel like they could have been avoided. If you get any of these things wrong - people will stop playing pretty quickly. The idea of the twists to the gameplay are twofold, firstly to accommodate the C64 hardware limitations and secondly to try and keep things fresh, introducing enough new elements to keep the player interested and make it feel like completing the game is within their grasp.

8-BIT ANNUAL: I noticed the enemy ship that captures up your ship has a much shorter transporter beam than that in Galaga, it's a little too close for comfort in my opinion, is this part of the C64 limitations or more of the difficulty level you were after?

JA: The main reason behind this decision are to do with the sprite multiplexer. The way it works in the game is the best way to keep the action fast paced and have the tractor beam active.

8-BIT ANNUAL: I saw on the Galencia website you have a team of 6 including yourself that put the game together, how did you all meet and how did you get the team together to communicate and submit work?

JA: Let me go through the team members in the order they joined the project:

Pulesbot (USA)

All music and half of the sound effects. Joined through our previous collaboration on YouTube videos (described below).

Flemming Dupont (DENMARK)

Concept art and exploration of ideas. Flemming approached me and impressed me with his amazing cover artwork for previous projects (He did the cover art for Rocket Smash ex, Jars Revenge and Mollusk Redux amongst others) and originally we planned on Flemming working on the Galencia box art, unfortunately due to circumstances beyond our control, this was not possible on this occasion. We remain good friends and one day will work together again!

Saul Cross (UK)

Other half of sound effects, touching up my sprites and creating new ones along with creating the loading screen bitmap.

I approached Saul via PM on Lemon64 forum and was lucky enough to be able to get Saul to contribute to the project, fitting in work on Galencia around his



Examples of Flemming's artwork.

very busy schedule.

Saul is very professional and fantastic to work with, he has a solid understanding of the C64's hardware and quickly understands the needs of a project.

Jakob Chen-Voos (GERMANY)

Production and distribution of physical media for Protovision.

I was looking for a distributor for Galencia and had communication with other publishers. At this stage I had a few copies sold on digital distribution through Itch.IO and had a good feel for where the market was strongest. Germany has by far the most active C64 users with the surrounding mainland countries also being very strong. The market is also decent in Australia and UK too - but nothing like the Germans, they love the C64!

This was a huge factor for me, I wanted

Galencia to be distributed right in the heart of the C64's strongest territory. The other factor was a little game called Sam's Journey! There is some prestige about being on the same label as what is, for many, the most anticipated C64 release in decades. This situation has improved lately with Galencia also being on the same distributor label as Thalamus, not many C64 publishers can compete with this!

Protovision also offers me full control over the packaging, we managed to negotiate for Galencia to be the first ever game to be distributed on cassette for Protovision as well as the big box packaging - this is the first game to market using this improved packaging, we also have 6 different versions to choose from:

- 1) Digital Download
- 2) Basic Cassette
- 3) Boxed Cassette



Saul's loading bitmap.



Boxed versions of Galencia featuring Lobo's Artwork.

- 4) Boxed Disk
- 5) Boxed Cartridge
- 6) Deluxe boxed Cartridge and Disk

I feel it was a great decision and offers me flexibility I would struggle to find elsewhere.

LOBO (USA)

Lobo answered my public advertisement for an artist to help out with the box and manual, he is an incredible artist who stays focussed and works quickly, really quickly.

We collaborated closely for the artwork and quickly got the look you see in the final packaging. I was so lucky finding Lobo at short notice and the artwork really stands out from other products.

8-BIT ANNUAL: The musician of Galencia, 'Pulsebot' is only 16 years of age, that sort of defies the norm, aren't young people more interested in coding on the latest mobile platforms? For you does it bring back memories of when you first started out in the 8-Bit gaming industry?

JA: Before working on Galencia, I made a few youtube videos to teach myself video editing. For one of the videos I was looking around for some appropriate background music and stumbled across a channel owned by 'The Highway Guy'. I sent a message over and asked for permission to use this music in my video, with a link back to his channel of course and that was the start of our collaboration. Months later

when working on Galencia, when I reached the stage where I wanted to introduce some music I thought of THG and we started to work together once more. It wasn't until months into the project that THG (now renaming himself to Pulsebot) told me he would complete a certain music track after school and this is how I found out he was so young!

He is an extremely diverse musician with a technical background and plays in orchestras as well as his passion for chip music. Computer wise, he works on pretty

much all platforms, both retro and current and his age and enthusiasm does remind me of my younger years, boundless energy and the ability to learn new skills very quickly. So nice to see this kind of drive in the younger generations with many young people choosing not to create but only to consume.

8-BIT ANNUAL: You spent so much of your spare time on developing Galencia, was it a labour of love and fun or more one of frustration? What kept you motivated to get Galencia to be such a great C64 homebrew game?

JA: I had the time and desire to make something I wanted to play myself. I am very happy with the end product and winning multiple Game-of-the-Year awards put me a strong position for my next project. I hope that Galencia and its sequels will be remembered in the C64 story for years to come.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Galencia has been highly acclaimed by online media, how satisfied are you with the final release? Is there things you may have thought I have to leave this bit out but may put it back with another version?

JA: I am very happy with the final release with amazing reviews and excellent features like the 4 page spread in the issue #31 of 'Return' magazine, Reset64 Game of the Year award and many other accolades. I think Galencia can stand proud in the C64 library offering a challenging and rewarding game to everyone who is interested in 'SHMUP's.

There is of course a lot of ideas that occur to you post release, but I will keep those to myself for the moment, hopefully if we sell enough units I will revisit the C64 and make these ideas into a reality ;) You can find everything related to Galencia at our HeadQuarters: www.galencia.games



Galencia

A brand new game
for the Commodore 64
on tape, disc and cartridge!

www.return-magazin.de

KNIGHTS OF BYTES

8-BIT ANNUAL: Welcome Knights of Bytes. So, who are you guys? It's a fantastic group name but what is your background in 8-Bit computing and when did it all start for you guys?

Chester Kollschen (CB): My name is Chester Kollschen and I love 8-Bit and 16-Bit computer and video game systems. Officially, I am a computer scientist, but I've always seen myself as a game developer with heart and soul. I founded the Knights of Bytes as a game development label back in the 90's and we released some titles for the Commodore 64 home computer such as Ice Guys, Bomb Mania, and Metal Dust. The team has changed over time. Currently, Stefan Gutsch creates the graphics for our games and Alex Ney provides the music. I do the programming and manage the projects.

8-BIT ANNUAL: What was your first 8-Bit machine you owned?

CB: That was an Atari 2600, closely followed by, yes, a CPC464.

8-BIT ANNUAL: How long have you been coding games and did you code any 8bit commercial games back in the day?

CB: Ice Guys for the C64 was my first commercial game. It was published in 1995 by the retro publisher Protovision as the C64's heydays had already been over at that time. But this cooperation turned out to be quite fruitful, and thus, also Bomb Mania and Metal Dust were published by Protovision in 1998 and 2005, respectively.

8-BIT ANNUAL: How did you learn to program? Was it something you were keen to learn all by yourself or did you sort of just get into by accident?

CB: Actually, I knew I wanted to create video games from the moment I first saw one. That was at the age of six in a local toy store where this brand-new play-on-your-TV thing was presented. It was Donkey Kong on either a CollecoVision or Mattel IntelliVision. However, it had been a long way from this epiphany to the point when the first game really took shape. It involved reading many books and saving a lot of money.

8-BIT ANNUAL: So tell us the story of Sam's Journey, how did

the concept begin and has it been a successful venture?

CB: My team and I are great fans of the 2D platform genre. But really cool platformers on the C64 are so incredibly rare that we had to play them on other systems like the NES or the SNES. In 2014, Stefan and I had the idea to take the challenge and develop a console-style platformer for the C64. We had some brainstorming meetings and decided on a feature set very quickly. The next years of hard work paid off and the game had a successful release on Christmas Eve 2017.

8-BIT ANNUAL: What was your inspiration for Sam's Journey, was it classics like Super Mario Bros., Sonic the Hedgehog, Rainbow Islands, or was it something else?

CB: I am big fan of Super Mario Bros. 3 (NES), Stefan likes Kirby's Dreamland (NES) very much, and we all enjoy the Donkey Kong Country series (SNES). However, Sam's Journey is our declaration of love to the genre, and thus, the genre itself was our inspiration rather than other games. We tried to incorporate our favourite platform game features and yet make the game unique on its own. Interestingly, Sam's Journey reminds different people of different games, depending on their gaming background, and that's a really nice thing.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Who did the colour scheme and awesome looking graphics on Sam's Journey? Was there any special tools used to create them?

CB: The graphics were created by our pixel artist Stefan Gutsch. He didn't apply any voodoo or anything, but he really put some thoughts into the colour scheme and picked the colours for the levels in a very clever way.

8-BIT ANNUAL: What type of problems did you confront when coding Sam's Journey?

CB: You always run out of CPU cycles and memory bytes when creating games for a limited system. However, a big challenge was the free-directional scrolling because the C64 doesn't have any hardware support for that.

8-BIT ANNUAL: How long has Sam's Journey taken you from concept to completion?

CB: We had the initial idea on February 2014 and released the game in December 2017. In the time between, there were multiple breaks caused by job-related higher priority projects.

8-BIT ANNUAL: How does Sam's journey differ from other similar platform games on the C64? Is it the same run and jump platformer gameplay or is there more to the gameplay?

CB: The large number of gameplay features and their combinations make Sam's Journey quite unique on the C64. Sam can run, jump, climb, swim, peek, pick up and throw items. Additionally, he can find six different costumes in the game that change his appearance completely and give him special skills. The levels are huge and there's much to discover. You can try to just run through, or explore each and every corner of a level to find all items and get the perfect 100% score. Your progress can be saved to disk or cartridge at any time.

8-BIT ANNUAL: How happy are you with the end result, is it exactly what you had hope for or was there some modifications made and if so how does it differ from the original plans?

CB: Actually, Sam's Journey has become exactly like we wanted it to be, and as the feedback on the game has been very positive, we are more than happy with the result.

8-BIT ANNUAL: How many versions of Sam's Journey are there? Is it on tape, disk, cartridge, is there a 128K version etc?

CB: There is a disk edition of Sam's Journey that comes on two double-sided 5.25" floppy disks. And there is a cartridge edition of Sam's Journey that comes on a cartridge with 512 KB ROM and 3 on-board save slots. Both editions come in a beautifully decorated cardboard box with a printed manual and some additional goodies. People without a real C64 can go for the digital download edition and use the provided files to play in an emulator.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Where can you get your copy of Sam's Journey?

CB: The boxed editions are being distributed by retro publisher Protovision. The digital download can be purchased either at



Jakob Voos of Protovision (left) and Chester Kollschen (Knights of Bytes)

Protovision or at itch.io.

Boxed Edition, Disk or Cartridge:
www.protovision-online.de/shop/product_info.php?products_id=199&language=en

Digital Download:
www.protovision-online.de/shop/product_info.php?products_id=200&language=en
<https://protovision.itch.io/sams-journey>

8-BIT ANNUAL: Will there be a Sam's Journey sequel?

CB: There's no sequel planned at the current time! :)



8-BIT ANNUAL: Who is Christian Gleinser / Dr Wuro Industries?

Christian Gleinser (CG): Dr. Wuro Industries, is a company located in a secret underground bunker, run by the mighty Dr. Wuro, who compels his slaves to produce video games according to his visions. It is never fully disclosed how many slaves are really located in this bunker, but one of the most prominent ones seems to be Christian Gleinser, who is also allowed to leave the bunker from time to time, in order to present the company's output to the world.

8-BIT ANNUAL: How did Christian Gleinser get involved in coding C64 games?

(CG): Besides my early projects as a kid / teenager, the initial thoughts about creating a new game on the C64 was because of Georg Rottensteiner's, "Joe Gunn", which, at least for my personal perception, launched the era of "new games on old machines". At that time, I had to choose a project for my studies, so I proposed to create a game for the C64 in assembly language, which fortunately was accepted. However, I discovered that it was a lot more difficult to get into it than I imagined, so the final result was not really the game that I planned it to be, but well, that's how it started. Years later, I regained interest in developing C64 games, as I was also much more into the C64 scene again by that time.

8-BIT ANNUAL: What games have you coded, when were they released and has it all been on the C64 or has there been games for other 8-Bit systems as well?

(CG): Apart from the C64, I have coded mainly for the PC and I also got interested in mobile platforms at some point. Two games got released, 'Gloomy Nights' and 'Living Dead', an old school arcade-style game for the PC. "Paco", is a maze / labyrinth game for Android. Another game for PC called "Heimat Games", was created recently, originally as a contribution to a festival, but this will probably see a public release someday, as it received much enjoyment so far. As for other 8-Bit platforms, I haven't really dived into that world, as I feel mainly connected to the C64. I enjoy playing games on other platforms though, but as far as developing games for them goes, it's only the C64 where I really feel at home. My current C64 games so far have been Frogs (2017) and Shotgun (2016), which both could be described as 4-player "party action" games, which focus on quick matches between the players and easy-to-learn gameplay, enabling the players to basically just grab a joystick and join the fun.



Christian Gleinser

8-BIT ANNUAL: What was the inspiration behind Frogs?

(CG): After the success of my last 4-player game, Shotgun, which was released in 2016, I thought about creating another 4-player game for the C64, and resurrected an older idea that I already had a few years ago as a possible OUYA game. It was not fully fleshed out, but I liked the idea to have a game with Frogs, hopping from lily pad to lily pad. Maybe an indirect inspiration might have been the C64 game "Arc Doors", which is pretty much unknown, but it's one of my long time favourites actually. The gameplay is quite different though. But as a little fun fact, when I created the first mock-up screenshots for Frogs, I simply used a screenshot from the game "Arc Doors" and shifted the elements around a bit, to get a first impression of how the layout of my game, Frogs, might look.

8-BIT ANNUAL: What was the inspiration behind Shotgun?

(CG): I was attending a gaming event in Germany called "VSTsw", where we played 8-player games using the Atari XL Multijoy interface. I had my C64 with me too, along with the 4-

player-interface, but I was a bit sad that I didn't have a huge library of fun 4-player games with me (we only played "Bomb Mania" as far as I remember). I was quite impressed by the simplicity and how much fun those Atari Multijoy titles are to play with friends, so I decided to create something new for the C64 and that was how Shotgun was born.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Why did you go the multiplayer route and not include a one person Vs computer game style in Frogs and Shotgun?

(CG): It's probably a question of focus, I don't know. Both games have always been intended as multiplayer games to be played at parties, and frankly I'd assume that it's the best way of playing them, no matter how good the 'AI' would be. That said, there have been quite a few requests for a single player mode, mostly because people told me they have nobody to play with. I don't know how difficult it might be to insert a proper opponent 'AI', maybe I should try it someday. There's always the possibility that there will be follow-ups to the games, although at this point I have a few other ideas for future games which I am prioritizing higher than sequels.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Is it all your own work or did you have a GFX artist and musician?

(CG): As for Frogs and Shotgun, I did everything by myself, actually that's the way of developing that I enjoy pretty much, mostly because I like to have full control over the final product and I'm not dependent on others to finish their stuff (that's not meant to sound mean of course, but as pretty much everyone does this kind of work in their free time, it often happens that things get off the tracks a bit, so if I'm the only one who works on all the stuff, I am responsible entirely on my own). Also, I like to have everything in my own style, even though other people might be better musicians or graphics artists than myself, I like to identify with my creations, so I enjoy seeing the final product as "my work". That said, I have also worked with other people in the past and it's a nice thing too, so I wouldn't totally exclude the possibility to do co-operations in the future of course. The music, though not inspired by other games, is a clear reference to 80's breakdance music (which is something that I really love). For some reason, I thought Frogs hopping around the screen and breakdance music might make a good match.

8-BIT ANNUAL: The games seemed to be aimed at a younger audience was that your intention? Is there any indication of how older audiences have received your games?

(CG): This was actually never my intention and will probably never be, because in most cases I actually dislike stuff that was made "especially for kids" - because in my opinion a lot of kids don't like that stuff either. That doesn't mean that I don't like the fact that kids also appreciate the games, and there have been also a lot of parents who told me that they especially like Frogs because they look so cute and they think it's perfect to be played with their kids (actually not only kids, also wives!). That's great of course! It's just that I like to create stuff that happens to appeal to both kids and grown-ups alike. Actually I'd say, I mostly try to create stuff that I'd like to own myself, so probably my main target audience is people who I'd identify with. That also includes kids, because sometimes (or very often maybe) I still feel like a kid. But I would never really like to create a typical "kids product", as these things are often a bit awkward in my eyes.

8-BIT ANNUAL: The disappearing and reappearing lily pads give realism to Frogs jumping about in a pond, is this just a simple timing bit of coding? Have you used any special coding techniques that is unique to your games?

(CG): I'd say my code is pretty standard, really. I haven't got much experience with coding in assembly language, so I don't know all the tricks. But so far, my games are not very resource-heavy, so it's all within my means. The lily pads work like this: After drawing the level, a list of all the pads is created somewhere in memory. Each pad has a number (its ID basically) and a counter. The counter is set to a random number and then

decreased over time until it reaches zero. As soon as this happens, the pad will go into a "transition state", changing from "fully there" to "fully gone" or vice versa, depending on its current state. After that, the counter is set to a random number again and the whole process starts over. No magic here.

8-BIT ANNUAL: What limitations did you come across when coding both Frogs and Shotgun and how did it affect your coding and the games you ended up releasing?

(CG): Actually the games have been able to be implemented pretty much how I imagined them to be, so luckily there were no limitations to the hardware which affected my decisions in gameplay or graphics. I feared somehow that the Frogs playfield would be hard to be re-drawn for each frame, and I was right, but luckily it was no problem to simply just re-draw all the parts that really changed during gameplay, so this was just a matter of re-planning the drawing process a bit, but nothing serious. Of course there were a lot of things that I learned during the development, though.

8-BIT ANNUAL: How long did it take you to code each game?

(CG): I coded each game in Python (using Pygame) as a prototype first, in order to test whether the gameplay idea would be fun and to see if things should be tweaked before creating the final version on the C64. That way, coding the final version was a lot easier, because everything was already clear. The prototype for Shotgun took me one week, the one for Frogs took around 3 weeks. Coding the final version of Shotgun took around 3.5 weeks, overall, Frogs took around 3 months I'd say.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Where did the idea of making a cartridge version come from? How was it received and how difficult or easy was it to make?

(CG): The idea came from Siem Appelman, a guy from the Netherlands who likes to create cartridges. At first he simply proposed to make a cartridge of Frogs, which I wasn't that much interested in at that point, to be honest - somehow I felt like the cartridge should offer more than just that single game. At least there should be both games on it, to make it a "party game cartridge". Then he had the idea of putting the 3rd and 4th joystick port directly into the cartridge, and when he sent me a photo of his prototype, I

was sold. The development of the cartridge was all done by him, so all I had to do was to create a game selection menu and only do a few minor changes to my games. I am very happy with the final result and I think it really turned out to be the cool "party game cartridge" that I mentioned before. Thanks and greetings to him!

8-BIT ANNUAL: Is there anything you would like to add that people may not know about Frogs and Shotgun?

(CG): Both games contain hidden Easter-eggs, and so far it seems like hardly anyone knows them. I will give you a hint: Enter the name of a popular bassline synthesizer, which by the way created a whole new musical genre, in the title screen of Shotgun, and enter the name of a popular drum machine, which by the way shaped a lot of genres as well, in the title screen of Frogs. Both machines are from the 80's and it's enough to just enter their "numbers" instead of the full name. Enjoy.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Are there any future plans for sequels or any other works in progress?

(CG): I am generally open to the possibility of creating something like Frogs 2 or Shotgun 2, which would then be variations of the original games with more levels, more modes, more items and maybe even a single player mode. But I have a lot of other ideas at the moment, which I feel are more interesting for now, that's why I will probably try to implement those first. At least I can say for sure that I really like the C64 as a development platform and I will continue to create games for it. At the time of writing this, I am already developing another game which will hopefully be finished soon. Even though I still have a few 4-player ideas, I decided to go for a single player game this time. I'm really curious to see how this might work out.

*** To purchase a physical boxed edition of Frogs, goto the Dr. Wuro Industries, website, <http://Frogs.drwuro.com/>



Christian's game, Shotgun being played live on TV.

BAUKNECHT



When you think of space style shoot 'em up games, your likely to be thinking of and playing a game that involves pressing the buttons frantically on your joystick or game controller. However the guys of Bauknecht group (Mad, Decca, Nero, Notstrom and Sire) have thought outside of the space shooting 'norm', developing a most innovative space shooter involving no shooting. Yes, you read correctly, a space shooter with absolutely no shooting (well the enemy fighters shoot at you but you can't shoot them). Just how did they do it?

8-BIT ANNUAL: Greetings Stefan. Thank you for the interview. Could you please introduce yourself and your group Bauknecht. Who are you and what have you guys been doing on the C64?

STEFAN MADER (SM): Greetings! It's some sort of honor to do this interview here. My name is Stefan Mader, I am a coder since the age of 9. I started coding on Robotron KC85, a computer used in the eastern German Republic. After the big change in Germany I didn't hesitate to get a C64 for early coding attempts. Bauknecht was founded in 2002 as a PC demo group. We developed some demos and gained some fame by it. Back then I asked a friend how we should call our group and he replied with Bauknecht at a phone call.

Till today it's not clear why we choose the name the most possible answer is, that we loved games and animes from japan with German names and this one sounded quite strong as a candidate for such a game development group. However we did change the name to Boyknecht lately, because I feared copyright issues, Bauknecht is also a company developing household technologies in Germany. So we switched to another name now. The first real members of the group were Mad, Senf and Sire on PC. Later joined Decca, Pixtur (The mastermind behind the demogroup still), Nero, Degauss (A plus/4 maniac) and Dalezy.

There were many other people helping in getting the productions done (e.g. Luca, Notstrom, Bo, Kichy). I think these are the people most involved with our productions. Originally coding on PC, sometime I got in contact with the Farbrausch guys, from this experience I was remembering all the tricks I learned in coding PC and low level

demos. The guys of Farbrausch (Chaos/ Mr.Pet etc.) were former Amiga coders and told me a lot of tricks for coding low level graphical effects. So I started doing some low level C64 stuff. Since I knew this kind of machine from my youth, I was very excited to see, that you can develop a full demo (or game) just by using a PC and an emulator.

So we did some demos and game prototypes on C64. Somehow, I don't remember how exactly, I found out that the Plus/4 is capable of more colours than the C64 and the whole focus of our group switched to develop for this platform. I think it's safe to say, that we are more of a C16 / Plus/4 group currently. C64 is a awesome platform and you can do a lot with it, especially the sound chip and the sprites are a big advantage of it. The thing is, that the Plus/4 didn't have all of these mega impressive demos and games the C64 already has got. So we try to cover the C16 with some proper games and demos to give it the value it really deserves.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Slipstream was released at BCC Party #11 and received 1st place overall. What is this competition, what rules do you have to abide by to enter the game for this competition and how much time are you given to put the game together for it?

SM: The game was around one year in development. We just used this party to release the game. As with all demo parties you can enter your productions there and just look how it competes. We were lucky to receive a first place and will for sure attend to this great party again.

8-BIT ANNUAL: What was the inspiration behind Slipstream? Who came up with the idea of having a 3D polygon game with no shooting and splitting up the targeting device and your spaceship? Was it based on any other game(s)?

SM: The main inspirations were Silpheed on the Apple IIGS. REZ on the Playstation II and Starfox on the Super Nintendo. First I wanted to create a Wipeout clone on the Plus/4 and already developed a 3D engine for it. Sadly it was much too slow. So I came up with the idea in doing a 3D game just with small polygon objects. Silpheed

was an awesome example for it. The idea to select the enemies for destruction was taken from the game REZ which is more like a computer demo than a dead serious computer game. Rez is very fun to play and to look at. One point is that the sound effects are in beat with the music. So it's very immersive. If you look at our game you probably could notice, that the sound effects also fit somehow to the music. I don't know if we fully succeeded there but that's what we were aiming for.

8-BIT ANNUAL: What more can you tell us about the use of the 3D polygon GFX? I mean they look nothing special on screen but boy do they have impact. While simplistic in presentation, its a credit to you all that the GFX in slipstream work so well, I mean people are used to seeing huge space ships or billion dollar military fighters represented as the main game sprite, but you guys have gone for a completely different concept.

SM: The polygon graphics heavily depends on the tile based graphics mode of these machines. That's why we gained this speed and fluidness of the game. Perhaps it's possible to do the same in a bitmap mode on a faster machine but we at least succeeded on these target platforms.

8-BIT ANNUAL: I have loved playing the Slipstream game, being an old timer though I found the controls a little tricky, how is the game meant to be controlled for maximum fun in one player mode? What can you tell us about the multi mode and two joystick option? Was that something you wanted to do or just happened by accident?

SM: The selection of the enemies with the joystick was implemented from the first conceptual phase on. The problem was





Stefan (MAD) Mader - There's coding magic in those hands!

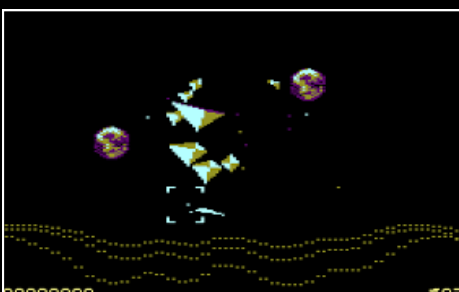


Dalezzy (the musician of the C64 tracks).

that the ship could be hit without proper ship movements. So we needed some movement there. Having to move the ship by pressing the fire button, was somehow an accident or not planned implementation and we didn't know if it would turn out well. So the two joystick mode was added later, too.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Just how did you guys do it? I mean it's such a unique style of gameplay, I don't think I have seen this type of game before in any 8-Bit games. Just how did you guys pull off a space shooting game with no shooting to be so good?

SM: I think the main point of the game is all the stuff around it. The music by Dalezy, Degauss and starbuck, the marvelous graphics by Nero. Till the end of the game I feared not to find a pacifistic explanation for all the destruction in the game. Since I am somehow trying to improve the world rather than destroying it, for me this "pacifistic" point was very important. The idea for the story did show up just some days before completing the raw game. How I came up with level names is funny, I looked on a star map to find proper names for each of the different levels. The game with all levels fitted well in 64k, since 3D level data is really not expensive memory wise. So later on I



added some simple samples of wave player to the game too, to use the remaining space.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Everything in slipstream, playability wise, seems to be just so fluid and smooth, were any special coding techniques used in getting the game to play like this?

SM: We filled most of the memory with tables. Especially a division table for 64 by 64 divisions with 2 byte elements took already 8k of memory. We needed this divisions to paint the outlines of the space ships. The 3D perspective projection is also done with a simple table lookup, of course this charmode idea worked out well here. The clearing of the screen is just done by storing 1000 times a zero, instead of the 8000 times needed in bitmap mode (without thinking about clever improvements here).

8-BIT ANNUAL: The game is great, but what brings it into the stratosphere is the music, its just mind blowing fantastic, you could have put the music as an entrant into the game competition and won on that alone. Who was the person / people behind the music and how did you guys put together such crazy cool music?

SM: On C64 it was Dalezys job. He is one of the best demo scene musicians on the C64 for such a long time now. A Berlin demoscene friend helped me to get in contact with him to do these musics. I was so glad he didn't hesitate to start with the tunes and produced them in just about no time at all. I think he had fun doing these tunes and that's also what you hear in the game. So yeah, they are one of the most unique C64 tunes I heard for a long time, too. On Plus/4 Degauss and Starbuck did

the songs, which from my point are somewhat equally awesome if you know the limits of this machine.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Slipstream has so many features, what can you tell us about them especially the time bending technique?

SM: The time bending is just invented for the restarting at a checkpoint. It's just a way of saying you can restart at a former point explained as a materialistic version of this game element. So it's perhaps more of a funny story element. The game itself is more like "meditating" and keeping the ship moving while avoiding being shot.

8-BIT ANNUAL: What limitations did you come across when coding Slipstream and how did it affect the end result?

SM: The hardest part was the conversion to C64 from the original Plus/4 version. I tried to use the same code on both machines and just exchange the graphics and sound code. I had to look up many effects on the internet. Of most help was a site called codebase64.org. What also was awesome is that the loading system already worked on both systems without code changes. Great job by Krill of Plush.

8-BIT ANNUAL: Thanks again Stefan, for all your insights into Slipstream. What future C64 plans does the Boyknecht / Bauknecht group have?

SM: We are currently developing a new Plus/4 game. Could be that it will be shown on the next BCC. And then we most probably switch to the Amiga OCS/ECS and do some demos there, we already did the first steps for it. I can't wait to do some demos there, too.

IT WOULDN'T BE POSSIBLE WITHOUT YOU!

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Luca Fauna
Luca/FIRE
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XFLEBLOND

Yves Grethen

Zach Seigel
Zoran Malnar
Zorro

- **TEAM:** Dave Clarke, (Coding and GFX), David Saphier (Music)
- **INFO:** Price, \$ 1.49 US or more, we suggest more! :-) Available at <https://retrobeachman.itch.io/impossabubble>
- **REVIEWED BY:** Zac Xavier

IMPOSSABUBBLE

INTERVIEW ON PAGE
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8-BIT Annual book all about games released in 2017, that was the original concept, more often than not though, there is an exception to the rule, in this case it is *Impossabubble*, coded by Dave Clarke for the Spectrum. The decent chaps down there at 8-Bit Annual have given me a reprieve, give me the opportunity to review the only game in the annual released in 2018 and they said have a go at putting it together in a possible new review style for the 2019 annual. Well here goes, let's find out if *Impossabubble*, a 2018 released 8-Bit game is better or worse than games from 2017?

PLOT AND GAMEPLAY

Obviously you are playing the game as a bubble, as for the why, for a change it's not some evil witch or warlord that's put a curse on you. It's because you have averted a worldwide crisis of bubble-mix formula being used to create levitating assassins, trust me you don't want to run into one of those gravity defying villains. In your attempts to save the day, you've been transmogrified into a giant bouncing bubble - ah life just never is easy for saving the world is it. Not only have you become a bubble, 21 of your best buddies are no longer human in form, instead they have been reduced to bottles of frothing, foamy bubble mixture! Your job is to search the 28 rooms looking for the blue and green objects with what look like antenna coming out the top of them, which in reality are your friends who have been transformed into a bubbling existence.

Impossabubble keeps it simple where it matters - gameplay. Bouncing the bubble around the screen is done so by

moving left and right on selected keys or by using the joystick, pressing the fire button will make the bubble bounce higher so you can reach higher platforms, bounce onto lifts or to avoid any of the creepy crawly insects moving about the screens. While you can move higher you can also drop down from platform to platform on each screen to get to the other side of a room or drop down an opening to the next room

That's pretty much the game in a nutshell - bounce around screens, navigate the rooms and collect the frothy bubbling mixture—your friends. No two rooms are the same though and

the path to collect your friends is not all one way, that would be too easy. In some parts of the game to move forwards / be able to reach another room and locate your friends, you must backtrack. Littered throughout are giant fans that will make your bubble float much, much higher, while in other rooms travelling up a waterfall will allow you to complete your task of saving your friends.

While the above sounds like the game is plain and barish, it sort of is, as it's really pretty much the same gameplay throughout. The hazards in the form of green spiders, blue ants and blue



Top left blue thingy with antenna is one of your foaming friends you need to collect them.



Your bubble bouncing along on a floating platform next to a running waterfall. Another of your foaming friends trapped beneath a blue platform bottom right. Look up there's a transporter tube in the ceiling.

spears travelling across sections of each room do their thing in always the same manner, either up or down or left and right, they have limited AI. Rooms become harder when they are filled with multiple layers of spikes making crossing a room more difficult. It's all about how well you time your bubble's movement, with care the game is not overly difficult. Five lives for the better players will be enough to see you out to complete the game. Although the game is simple there is enough there for you to be challenged, on the flip side your gaming experience is limited to moving your bubble around each room in the same directions to collect your friends, therefore some may find it very repetitive going.

WHAT I LIKE

128K version displays some lovely looking but simplistic presented graphics and sprites. Colour selection used gives this game coolness. The same dark blue for the platforms works wonderfully well while bubbling along on your 'save your friends' adventure. Each room has a consistent design theme, the orange room border and the colours of hazards and insects are perfectly matched. Your bubble colour and animation as it bounces along the room couldn't be depicted better, animation of the bubble pressing against the blocks of each room gives your bubble realism. Fiery torches in some rooms give the game added atmosphere. Tunes by David Saphier are just fantastic, a real standout of the game, it really does make this simple game even more fun and enjoyable, sadly this can only be heard on the 128k version, on the 48k

version you can only hear spot effects. Movement around the screen was fluid with no problems with the controls. The warp tunnel at the end of the game was fun, a very cool way to end the game.

WHAT I DIDN'T LIKE

Transitioning between screens was not always accurate. There appeared a bug in one screen as when you entered it you would always die and it was rather frustrating to say the least. Other screens seem to be out of whack when you fell through them, the timing just seemed a little off. Perhaps the game was just a bit too easy, requiring more of a difficulty factor? Maybe the creatures needed better AI to give you that challenge? Remember how frustrating the laser jump sequences in such 1980's classics like Bruce Lee and Mission Impossible gave the game much staying power, Impossabubble perhaps could of done with something along those lines in one or two of the rooms, to give it a bit of unpredictability,



This time one of your foaming friends is green in colour. Watch out for the traveling spears or you'll lose a life.

enhancing the gaming experience. The sprite of your foaming friends was probably too dark when it was shown in blue, the green worked fine and probably should have been used throughout the whole game.

VERDICT

You could be forgiven to think the game would be plain and dull, I mean you are just bouncing a bubble around similarly designed rooms, surprisingly though its an enjoyable game. Dave Clarke, never heard of him you say? Fair call, as Impossabubble is Dave's very first 8-Bit game that he has developed and released, using 8-Bit coding tool - Arcade Game Designer (AGD). What I find about Impossabubble is that it ticks all those nostalgic 8-Bit gaming boxes, you know the ones you grew up with when you brought home a new budget game to play with. Who could not forget the 1.99 budget price tag from games of the 1980s by Mastertronic, Codemasters and others? They were the mainstay of school kids forking out their pocket money for a bit of cool gaming - Dave offers the game at a 1.49 price tag. When you play Impossabubble you think that's real value for money, I recall many games of the 1.99 budget range being awful, Impossabubble is not, its not even close.

8-Bit gaming in 2017 saw big name releases in particular on the c64, that's great and all that, one of the best things about the 1980's was discovering hidden gems that were simplistic with regards to gameplay and graphics. Impossabubble is just that, one game that has little fanfare or hype, for me I really enjoyed those type of games. It sort of reminds me a little of the early days of Hewson Software, when they would release an original title and people would glance over it and wouldn't realise what a cool game they were missing out on. Impossabubble is not impossible by any means it's quite possible you will enjoy it greatly, for what it's worth, it's also much more fun than many Spectrum based games released in 2017, that's a certainty.

VERDICT

GFX	81%
SFX	92%
FUN	82%
STAYING POWER	82%
OVERALL	84%

8 BIT ANNUAL 2019



Coming Soon...

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8 bit ANNUAL



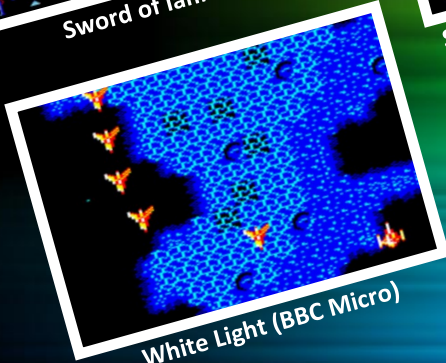
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