KONAMI
SOFTWARE CLUB

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

LATEST RELEASE

Title: F1 Spirit
Machine: MSX
Format: 128K Cartridge
Price: T.B.A.

Ever felt like racing around Monaco in a Formula 1, or competing in a do-or-die rally competition? How about a spin around a stock car track, or speeding through a city in a road race? All this, and more, is possible in this new mega-bit game from Konami.

Right from the start, F1 Spirit is superb, and presented in such a clever way that you'll find it difficult to believe that it's on an eight-bit machine. The opening title screens and music are wonderful, but only a taste of things to come.

To begin with, you have to choose the race that you want to compete in. At first, you only have a choice of three, these being Stock car, Rally, or Formula 3 racing, but if you manage to accumulate enough points, then you can go on to the Formula 3000 race, the Endurance track, and finally work your way up through the sixteen Formula 1 tracks. You get points for coming in the top nine, or top five, depending on what race you're competing in.

Once you've chosen your race, you'll have to decide what car you're going to drive in. You may either choose one of the three ready made cars, or design your own. This is where the fun really begins!

You have five selections to make, which are engine, body, brake type, suspension and tyres. There's a choice of three parts for each, which allows you to build a car unique to yourself!

Next it's on to the race. The idea is to make it around the track so many number of times without running out of fuel, and also to come within the top nine positions to gain points. You'll have to judge the corners skilfully, and work out the best times to take pit stops if you're going to succeed though. It takes a lot of practice to get a grip on proper control of your vehicle solely on the first three race types, so it'll be a matter of weeks before anyone can say that they've truly mastered it.

If you crash into a barrier or another car, a piece of equipment will be weakened, and possibly damaged, depending upon the amount of knocks that your car has already taken. If you're a victim of a particularly nasty crash, like when your car takes to hurtling fifty feet through a stadium packed with (dead) people, then it most certainly will be damaged and it'll probably lose a little fuel. The strength of your bodywork, determined at the start of the race, will be a major factor when calculating if the car is damaged.

These damaged parts affect your vehicle seriously, as it means that your car will not perform at it's best. For example, worn tyres will result in more frequent skidding, whilst a dodgy engine will slow you down.

As well as losing fuel when crashing, the gauge will also go down as you move. The speed of loss depends upon the horsepower in your engine — a high horsepower may prove a little faster, but it will have a low mileage. Consequently, a low HP will result in a better fuel consumption.

Once you've decided that the car needs repairs and refuelling, you must locate the pits, and stop using the brakes (the M key). Two men who look like they've come straight out of 'Metal Gear' (an MSX2 game!) run out and start tinkering with your car. Once the repairs have been completed, and your machine has been refuelled, off you go again.

If you complete the pre-specified amount of laps, you will be greeted by the man with the chequered flag (note the stunning graphics). Your position and score, if any, are then displayed. If you play the game, you'll notice that you may not find it too difficult to finish — it's coming in the top slot that's the hard bit! After you've brooded over your score, you may try again, or attempt another race.

One other uniquely implemented option is the two player game. The screen splits in two, with player one on the left, and player two on the right, but otherwise it's still a normal race, with the same amount of opponents, and the same scoring system. This is certainly the most exciting two player racing game around especially with two equally matched drivers. The only disadvantages in this mode are that you don't see the pit sequence (a 'Pit In' announcement will appear, and then disappear when your car has been dealt with), and you don't see your current position. However, these aren't major faults, and don't detract from the gameplay.

The actual playability, and control of the car are difficult to grasp at first, but it's still very realistic. F1 Spirit is definitely the best racing simulation yet released on any machine. The options available are many — there is even a password which allows you to save your current points and position. Its early 'predecessor', the classic Road Fighter, looks antiquated in comparison — and that's an achievement in itself.

The graphics display is similar to Road Fighter, but much faster, and more colourful. Control of the car is slick and realistic, as previously mentioned, and the backgrounds are clear, crisp and colourful. My only criticism is the character scrolling (jerking!) when your car swerves left or right. This palls into insignificance, though, when you consider that the stadiums, 'Dunlop', 'Konami' and 'Marlborough' bridges, which you visibly travel under, advertisement boards, rally mud tracks,

Monaco's palm trees, Japanese bridges that you travel over and under, city houses appearing in the Endurance competition, fantastic graphical close ups of the pits and race ending that put the Atari ST to shame, and probably the best end of game sequence in any Konami game so far are just a small example of the state-of-the-art graphics that you can expect.

As this is only the second game with the new eight voice sound chip which puts the Amiga in the shade, you would expect that Konami were still learning how to use it — however, yet again, they prove us wrong. There are over ten minutes of different tunes to listen to, and when you hear them you'll probably flip — and start body popping and moon walking. This isn't too easy, though, when you're racing round Silverstone at 200 mph!

Y'know what? I really like this game!

Konami's Large Scale Integration Sound Creative Chip!

Not content with the adequate AY-3-8910 sound chip, Konami have produced a custom designed chip which is to be included in most of their forthcoming MSX game releases. It was designed in order to match the audio effects found in arcade machine (indeed, a similar chip has been used in many games), and so a chip able to utilise up to eight simultaneous voices was produced.

The sounds are generated by inputting single waves into the data, and then playing them back. In this way, it is possible to input very complicated waveforms to authentically create virtually any type of effect or instrumental voice.

The SCC (sound creative chip) itself holds five voices, and the MSX brings the total to eight. As Konami normally use their own ADSR routines with the MSX chip, none of the sounds produced sound out of place.

First to incorporate the new sound chip was Nemesis 2. Over ten minutes of tunes are included, containing a staggering thirty-two sounds for effects and music, plus a further nine effects for the 'digitised' drums! Jean Michel-Jarre, eat your heart out!

If this sound chip interests you, then look for the 'SCC' sign on Konami MSX games, which will tell you that the chip is included in the cartridge. And, by all means, invite your non-MSX owning friends into the house — I guarantee that yours will be the only dry eyes in the house (unless you happen to be crying with laughter!).

Machine Review: MSX2

To us, reviewing the MSX2 in the November issue was quite appropriate for, on the 14th of this month two years ago, the MSX2 technical data was finished.

What we won't be doing, though, is technically looking at it. The majority of readers joined the KSC because they play Konami games, so a gamesplayer's view would be more welcome.

The first feature of the MSX2 that will draw the crowds is the graphics capabilities. There are nine modes in all — two for text, plus two MSX1 graphics screens means that there are five 'new' modes to play with. These include a multicolour mode with a resolution of 256x212, which can hold 256 colours per screen, and also a 16 colour, 512x212 hi res screen (not the mythical 512x512 quoted in some magazines!).

The hardware still only allows 32 sprites on screen, and eight on each horizontal line. Each line on the 16x16 sprite can be a different colour, but it isn't really all that spectacular. As there is no colour rule on the MSX 2 graphics screens (i.e., you can have a different colour on each pixel), most programmers would be well advised to take the time to create their own sprite routines.

The sound chip is exactly the same as on earlier MSX machines, and, indeed, the Atari ST. The cleverer musicians still reckon that it's quite adequate, but I would have preferred to see something along the lines of the Konami sound creative chip!

The speed of the MSX2 is also a little of a let down. The Z80 chip, running at 3.58 MHz looks a little slow when compared to the Atari ST and friends. This, more than anything, has aroused the attention of critics to the MSX2.

I really like the BASIC on the MSX2 though, even if only for the useless novelty commands. For example, you can set up a title for when switching on, the MSX logo colours, a prompt which takes the place of the standard 'OK', and even the shape and volume of the BEEP! Time, date and an initial password can also be set.

Programming graphics is child's play, and much the same as that on the MSX1. Of course, with the superior capabilities, some fantastic effects can be created from very small routines.

Optional add-ons include a sound chip with 256K audio ram, and a video super imposition/digitizer unit.

The Sony videotizer is one such unit, and can be used with the Genlock feature found on the higher ranged MSX2s.

Sony, friendly as they are, also showed us a graphics program on the MXS2, which can be used in conjunction with a trackball. One of the pictures on the disk included a picture of a guy called Roy. Funnily enough, in hi res mode, Roy looks a little like the elephant man (well, I thought it was funny!). However, by all the miracles of technology, Roy is transformed into a normal looking fellow when in multicolour mode. More great pictures can also be created, with the seemingly unlimited options at your disposal!

What good can a machine be, though, without real software? Konami are starting to contribute to the lack-of-software fund with some excellent titles, such as *Vampire Killer*. Already a big hit in Europe, *Vampire Killer* does the MSX2 no harm at all.

The idea is to guide young Simon Belmont through Dracula's satanic castle, defeating his many cronies, which take the guise of demons, bats, zombies, skeletons, and even the Grim Reaper makes a guest appearance, and finally going on to kill ol' blood eyes himself. All you have in your possession is a whip, although you can collect various objects that are dotted around the castle. These include an hourglass which temporarily halts enemy movement, a blue crystal which renders you invisible, and a silver cross which prevents enemies from appearing on the screen. Weapons also can be found, ranging from a broadsword to a rather powerful battle axe.

The graphics in *Vampire Killer* are a good start when introducing somebody to the MSX2. The backgrounds are varied, as are the sprites, and a lot of colour is used. My only complaint is the way in which the colour is used — occasionally the sprites look blocky and the backgrounds overcrowded.

Konami have managed to fit some excellent tunes in *Vampire Killer*. They're possibly a little short, but there are quite a few scores and effects, and they're not too tedious.

Vampire Killer isn't a bad game, maybe a little easy, but still very addictive. Definitely worth considering as a first buy

Having read our thoughts on the MSX2, you may be wondering where you can get one. The problem arises when you realise that the machine hasn't officially been released yet (if it ever will be). Some mail order retailers do stock some machines, and they certainly are worth considering if only for the Konami games. Don't forget either that you can use all past MSX1 games, including the brilliant new megabit SCC cartridges!

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Letters to the Editor

Dear Sirs,
I have just received my Konami newsletter and I am quite impressed. It is nice to see a newsletter not cheaply photocopied, although some screen shots would be nice *(see last issue — ED)*. If possible, could you give more tips than just *Nemesis*, which I completed ages ago (nice end routine). Also, more detailed reviews in the newsletter would be nice.
Mathew Moody
Chesham.

As you can see in this issue, we already have started started putting more tips into the newsletter. However, feel free to send in your own hints for games — we'll certainly make sure that they appear.

Dear Editor,
I had to wait four weeks for my membership, what took you so long?!

I think that I speak for the majority of readers when I say that the Konami staff and programmers' profiles should be terminated. It's all very well for boosting their morale and ego, but they don't have to pay for the newsletter — it's not made for them, it's made for us, the readers. Quite frankly, the profiles are totally uninteresting. The extra space gained by axing that feature could be used to show how arcade games are developed, the hardware specification, etc. Also extra reviews could be included. At the moment, the reviews seem to be a bit biased. What you could do is get the reviewer to do a much shorter review, and get club members to write in with their own views on the game, which then can be added to the aforementioned review. Another idea would be to pick some members to be reviewers, send them the games to be reviewed, and after playing the game for a while, they can then send back a review. If you consider this idea, then I'll volunteer myself as a reviewer.

I would have thought that Konami merchandise would have included the actual games as well. Are you going to do Spectrum 128K versions of games in the future, with superior graphics and sound?
Stephen Fernanders,
Anerley,
London.

Answering your questions in order:

The newsletter is currently a little behind schedule because of the PCW show — this affected the October newsletter, which will subsequently delay this newsletter reaching you. We apologise for any inconvenience, and we will rectify the matter in time for Christmas.

The staff files were written in order to give you an insight into the everyday activities at Konami. Unfortunately, it's one of those articles where you either love them or hate them — what do you think of our new approach to the front page?

Your reviewing idea is interesting, but certainly not feasible. How could we fairly pick reviewers (I see you're quick to volunteer for free games!!!!), and what about those who won't review, but complain at others getting free titles for writing a few lines? Also, a lot of 'reviewers' might just give us a very short or inappropriate review, and then we would be stuck!

Currently, we have no certain plans for releasing 128K dedicated games. However, if any titles are produced, we will let you know!

Stephen has some very strong points in his letter. Anyone else like to comment?

The address to send your brick-bats and bouquets to is:

The Editor,
Konami Software Club,
Bank Buildings,
Bank Street,
Newton Abbot,
Devon,
TQ12 2JL.

Latest Release

Title: Iron Horse
Machine: C64
Format: Cassette/Disk
Price: £8.95/£14.95

Already a hit in the arcades, *Iron Horse* now makes an appearance on the three major home micros. But how does the Commodore 64 version compare with it's excellent arcade counterpart?

The idea is basically the same, with your cowboy having to rescue a train which has been captured by a load of bad guys. He does this by progressing along the train, dodging or killing the Mexicans and bandits that want your blood (not wanting to donate their own!), and collecting loose bags of gold which count as points. Various baddies have different weapons ranging from lassos and guns to fire and rolling bombs. Not the friendliest bunch of lads to be around!

However, some of the small, smarmy Mexicans rush around with weapons which might prove helpful. The special weapons change from level to level — so, although you might be shooting fire on the first level, you'll be throwing bombs on level two, or tossing lassos on level three. But, as we say, variety is the spice of life!

After you've chosen your 'normal' weapon at the start, though, you are going to have to stick to it. It's best to experiment with the different weapons until you find the one that is most suited to yourself. The gun might appear to be the most lethal but the 'rope' can really whip the opposition!

The carriages are split into levels, with each ending requiring you to survive wave upon wave of attack from some of the cruellest looking blokes outside of Hollywood. Clear this part and it's on to the next level with yet more tricks, traps and trouble.

The Commodore version of *Iron Horse* involves some clever graphics and fantastic sound. The sprites are crisp and clear, even if they appear to be made from Lego which gives them an out of place look against the excellent backgrounds. The colourful and realistic carriages are great, as are the ever-changing mountainside and trees. The scrolling is smooth and the perspective is perfect. My only other disappointment, apart from the sprites, is the title screen —after seeing the quite superb Spectrum and Amstrad pictures, I expected a little more from the C64!

David Whittaker is becoming quite a personality in the software industry, and he has done his reputation no harm by doing the sound on *Iron Horse*. He has done a great job in converting the original music to SID — the beautiful Western themes make the game even more authentic.

Despite any character problems the gameplay is still there in it's full glory. Movement is a little tricky at first, as in the arcades, and you can't expect everything to be easy!

A must for all fans of the arcade game!

Latest release

Title: Jackal
Machine: C64/Amstrad
Format: Cassette/Disk
Price: £8.95/£14.95

Having already covered *Jackal* in depth both in the arcades and the Spectrum, I'll try and be brief with the explanation of the game itself. Basically, it's a little like *Commando* in jeeps, with you having to rescue POWs, deliver them to the waiting helicopters, and then launch a solo attack on the enemy's complex. You can collect better weapons as you progress which you will need if you are going to survive against the many tanks, jeeps, submarines and soldiers that roam the area. The stationary gun turrets aren't too friendly either!

The Commodore version of *Jackal* has some really neat graphics. Scrolling is excellent, and the sprites are really well defined and coloured. The backgrounds are also great, and very reminiscent of the arcade version.

Gameplay on the C64 *Jackal* differs from the Spectrum if only in screens. The layout of the enemy base is refreshingly different, with more bridges, water and enemies to contend with.

All in all, a very worthwhile purchase for anyone interested in a good shoot 'em up.

On the Amstrad the brilliant and very colourful graphics are marred only by the appalling scrolling. This also damages the gameplay, sometimes to the point of frustration. The graphics, though, really are good, with an excellent colour scheme, and excellent sprites.

Tunes and FX are fine, much the same as the C64. However, the title music does seem a little more interesting, with more voices and changes to listen out for.

As previously mentioned, the somewhat jerky scrolling on *Jackal* makes the Amstrad version less playable than the others. However, the game is still worth a look, even if only for the wonderful graphics!

In the Xmas issue:

Review Extra! Read all about it!

Metal Gear on the MSX 2   !!
Salamander on the Spectrum !!
Gryzor on the Amstrad   !!
Combat School in the Arcades!
and ...

WIN WIN WIN WIN WIN WIN WIN WIN!
Games, Tee Shirts, Stationery !
Prizes Galore !!!
All in your Christmas newsletter !

Jackal Competition

One of the fastest games on the Spectrum, possibly some of the best graphics seen on the Amstrad, and one of the most playable games on the C64 is a group of claims not often designated to one sole computer game. However, we believe that *Jackal* is that good, if not better, and we're giving sixty KSC members the opportunity to win a copy!

There are twenty copies of each version to give away, and all you have to do is study the *Jackal* advert and answer the following question.

Q. There are four character portraits on the foot of the advert. However, in the main picture, there are only three guys visible. Which one can't you see?

Send your entries to the below address, stating your machine preference (Com/Spec/Ams), and not forgetting to add your membership number.

Jackal Competition,
Konami Software Club,
Bank Buildings,
Bank Street,
Newton Abbot,
Devon, TQ12 2JL.

News in Brief

There is a rumour from Konami in Japan that MSX users are to receive a great many sequels next year. The first one, follow up to *Nemesis 2*, and due for release in March, is the ever-popular *Salamander*. With the mega bit memory and arcade quality sound chip, it's anybody's guess at how good it will turn out!

'*Treasure of Usas*' is due for release on the MSX2 shortly. It's an exploration/platform game, centred around two archaeologists, Wit and Cles. As they progress in their quest to find the four pieces of the jewel of Usas, you can build up their powers with the coins found in the ruins. Great graphics, fantastic animation, cute cartoon sketches and catchy tunes are all included in this enormous and adorable game!

Intended for release in the early new year is a compilation of games by Konami on the Spectrum, Commodore and Amstrad micros. No final details as yet, but we'll keep you posted.

Arcade Review
Salamander

Beyond infinity lies the evil galaxy dominated by the forces of the despotic SALAMANDER. A hero must persuade his compatriots to join him on a journey into hell and beyond. To defeat this devil they must overcome forces mankind cannot perceive even in his wildest nightmares —Organic Monsters of Destruction, Nuclear Spiders, Infernos burning like raging seas, Caverns of Despair, Demons beyond the dimensions of our imagination ...

Now is the time ...

Before anybody gets any funny ideas, that wasn't an SDP Party Political Broadcast concerning the Tories, but the introduction to the classic arcade game, Salamander. The idea, as you'd probably realised, is to defeat the Bacterian constellation of Salamander. Dispatched from the satellite Gradius, you and your heroic buddies fly off to do battle with the evil aliens ...

There are many different levels to progress through, each posing its own tricks and traps. From start to finish, you are greeted by waves of alien ships, each intent on sending you to your maker. If you eliminate a wave then you will be rewarded with a form of weaponry. However, unlike its unofficial predecessor, Nemesis, you don't need to save up your energy pods in order to select your weapon. In Salamander each pod already contains a specific weapon, so no more will you be reaching for the select button and turning back to the screen in dismay as you perish in a designer metal coffin!!

The weapons are similar to their 'Nemesis' counterparts, but some have a different effect. For example, missiles fire both up and down, and there are two types of lasers —'normal' and 'ripple'. Both spell trouble for your evil enemies!

There are nineteen types of aliens hindering your progress, each one having a different attack method. For example, the Beruberum bounces about the screen, whilst the Nop shoots at you from all directions.

Also a problem are the grabbing hands and stabbing tusks that emerge from the landscape. Some will only perish after considerable shooting, but others must be dodged, as your weapons prove useless against their tough shells.

Once you reach the end of each level you are confronted by a vicious guardian, the first one taking the form of a brain, with two groping hands and an eye. Continuous shots to this eye will bring you victory and progress to the next level. This is where the wimps will be separated from the tough, for the scrolling completely switches direction. Instead of going from left to right your ship starts thrusting upwards! The scrolling switches direction (vertical/horizontal) every other level, which is a really novel twist to an already classic game.

With five mega bytes of memory used in the game, you can just imagine how fast and furious Salamander is! And the state of the art graphics complement the game fabulously. The smooth scrolling, superb sprites, baffling backgrounds and amazing animation help somewhat. And with a palette of 65536 colours, and a high resolution screen, Konami make most other arcade games look silly in comparison!

Not to be outdone by the graphics guys, though, the sound boys got to work with Yamaha and produced an eleven-channel sound chip plus a custom designed voice synthesis chip!! The sound chip, similar to the one found in Nemesis, is also used in Yamaha's synthesizer range, which takes some beating! All of this makes Salamander's music absolutely staggering —even with the wonderful hardware, Konami really excelled themselves! There is over twenty minutes of weird and wonderful sounds and tunes, all worth listening to separately from the arcade!

Salamander is simply the ultimate shoot 'em up, with nothing coming close. You can even select another ship, controlled by a separate player, to accompany you on your mission. This leads to some violence, on screen and off, if one player chooses to push the other into the landscape, and then pinch his weapons! However, it does make the game a little easier if the ships don't get in each other's way (very unlikely!).

Play this once, you'll play it a thousand times, and more. But if you never even catch a glimpse of Salamander, then you will never know what a classic game you missed ...

Nemesis Playing Tips
Level Four

Having got this far, you might be mistaken into thinking that you've returned to level one, with the landscape just being inverted. Don't start celebrating finishing the game, though, as this is nothing like the first level, and you're only half way there!

To begin with, get the laser, option and missiles. Most of the time you should stay at the top of the screen, only going down when a mountain or alien approaches. Any pods that you get can be saved for a shield, but first you should get a couple of speed ups.

Once you reach the single volcano, wait until it erupts once, and then sprint through. Go to the top, and follow the volcano backwards. Missiles are essential, unless you're feeling a little suicidal!

Attempt to get a shield before you reach the screen where you are set upon by a horde of metal-crunching, flesh-spluttering, parachuting (couldn't resist that!) bacterions. The best tactic when you get there is to stay close to the ground, in the centre of the screen, and moving backwards when one of those nasty bouncing aliens springs up.

MSX users, spoilt as ever, have yet another bonus stage on level four. However, you'll have to go through the split mountain on level one first and then through the second split mountain on level four to enter it!

Maze of Galious
Cross Examined!

As most MOGers know, you need the cross to finish the game. What most don't know, though, is where it is! Well, I do, and because you're a kind lot (and help pay my wages!), I have decided to come clean and tell you!

Go to the entrance of World 3, and, staying in the castle, go down one room. Take the bottom-left exit out, and then continue going down until you reach a room with two small platforms in it, one above the other. Fall to the lower platform, and then jump up to the left, strike the wall with your sword, and control yourself back to the platform. Repeat this three times and a small passage should appear, containing a coin. Go to the left-hand side of the passage and jump towards the wall so that you appear in it. Walk left through the wall, and, halfway along, jump. If you fail to do so, you'll fall down an invisible hole and have to start the procedure all over again! (Enter and exit World 3 to reset the Castle)

Once you've avoided the hole, continue left and you'll end up in a room with a lava pit and a rock on the other side, which hides the cross. The lava isn't too hard to overcome, but if you do fall in and die, and then lose all your codes, do what I did.

CRY!!!

Konami
Merchandise

For the ultimate present at Christmas time, why not get Mum or Dad to buy you one of our fabulous T-Shirts. There are six dynamic designs to choose from, including Salamander, Combat School, Jackal, Gryzor, Iron Horse and The Maze of Galious. The price is a mere £4.95 for club members (including P&P), and £5.95 for non subscribers.

Orders should be sent to:

W&V Supplies,
Bank Buildings,
Bank Street,
Newton Abbot, TQ12 2JL.

Chest measurements in inches please. Access/Barclaycard are accepted. Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to 'W&V Supplies'. Please allow 28 days for delivery.

Overseas customers please note: Payment can only be accepted in sterling drawn on a British bank, International Money order, or Access/Barclaycard.

Also, please add £1.05 to the price for Europe; Middle and Far East £3.05. All orders despatched by airmail ONLY.