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ISSUE 10 of THE GAMES MACHINE goes on sale from August 18, see page 121 for details - don't miss it because it will be packed with essential features, reviews and articles - as usual!
JUST THINK

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£100 Amiga price cut heralds war with ST

by Stuart Wynne

The much-rumoured £100 cut in the price of the Amiga A500 finally happened in June, bringing it down to almost exactly the same price as the Atari 520STFM — £399 including VAT.

But the Amiga price does not include a £25 modulator to link it to the TV, or a games software bundle — so the ST still saves money in practice.

And though there's talk of Commodore commissioning Amiga demos from software houses, the manufacturer has no plans to match the ST's bundle, which includes £400 worth of (mostly) well-regarded software.

Analysis: Commodore's price cut brings the two major 16-bit games machines closer than they've ever been before.

The move should please the Amiga's designers — they planned it as a state-of-the-art games machine. But unfortunately when Commodore liked the Amiga so much they bought the company, financial problems forced them to promote the computer in the far more lucrative business market.

Ever since then, the cheaper ST has dominated the British games market — so much so that Gallup's first games chart measuring value rather volume of sales had the ST second only to the long-established Spectrum.

The launch of the Amiga A500 with keyboard, computer and disk drive in one package 18 months ago seemed designed as a way Commodore was determined not to undercut Amiga prices on the Continent, and kept prices relatively high.

It was afraid that cheap British Amigas would be sold by independent 'grey market' dealers abroad where recommended retail prices were higher — thus cutting into Commodore's own Continental sales.

Now, however, Commodore is taking more control of where its products end up, so it has no misgivings about the UK price cut.

Next month TGM will bring the first reports on ST and Amiga sales as the battle hots up — but the summer is a slow time for computer sales, so the price war won't get into full swing till the autumn. And by then the high price of dynamic RAM chips could have fallen, bringing about a further cut-and-thrush of price slashes...

Commodore has also knocked down the £464 price to £149 (including VAT, 10 sports games, tape recorder, joystick) while C64 software sales in the US leapt by a market-sweeping 42% in the first few months of this year — despite Commodore's attempts to concentrate on the Amiga in America.

Murdoch, Amstrad join for satellite space race

by Robin Hogg

By mid-1989 the UK public could have 26 TV channels — if the partnership between newspaper proprietor Rupert Murdoch and Amstrad boss Alan Sugar takes off, and other satellite plans succeed.

Computer manufacturer Amstrad will sell a 60-centimetre satellite dish for £199 including VAT — installation will be around £40 — whereas existing systems start at almost £500. And it will receive the four Sky satellite channels which Murdoch starts broadcasting early next year (see box).

But the Astra satellite, due for a November launch into space, will be able to transmit up to 16 channels — leaving room for more entrepreneurs to set up their own satellite stations.

At the launch of the partnership, Murdoch (who owns The Sun, the News Of The World, The Times and the Sunday Times) emphasised that the deal was 'bringing for the first time the real choice of viewing'.

Press tycoon Robert Maxwell (The Daily Mirror et al), Murdoch's arch-rival, will also reach for the skies next year. In partnership with British Telecom and WH Smith he will offer up to six channels from the British Satellite Broadcasting (BSB) satellite, due for an August 1989 lift-off.

The Maxwell venture will rely on subscriptions and pay-for-what-you-watch charges whereas Murdoch's Sky channels will depend on advertising revenue and charge viewers nothing beyond the hardware purchase.

Murdoch already has one Sky channel, which has been losing money since its inception.

Analysis: When Rupert Murdoch, Alan Sugar and Robert Maxwell cross paths there are bound to be explosions in the satellite-crowded sky.

Sugar and Murdoch have poured scorn on Maxwell/BSB's adoption of the D-MAC (multiplexed analogue components) system — they prefer the common PAL format for TV transmissions.

D-MAC is regarded as superior to PAL — it can transmit 20.25 megabits of data per second as well as the TV picture, allowing the BSB satellite to broadcast top-quality sound with its programmes or teletext-like information services.

However, D-MAC transmissions cannot be received by PAL dishes or vice versa. A situation akin to the frustrating VHS/Betamax divide in video may develop.

The British government also jumped on the satellite bandwagon last month with a much-mocked scheme to transmit Channel 4 and BBC2 from satellite. But it would be politically difficult to make a public-financed channel such as BBC2 available only to satellite owners.

Trade And Industry Secretary Lord Young said — ironically, on BBC Radio 4 — that 'terrestrial' (ie ordinary) transmissions of the two channels would continue till half of British households had satellite dishes.

The Earth-based frequencies left vacant by the departure of BBC2 and Channel 4 would then be given to other private-enterprise TV stations.

But the bandwagon could roll in either direction before then.

The limits of Sky

Satellite TV will bring choice to the great viewing public — but will it be a freedom of choice between sitcom reruns, insipid films and endless American football?

Rupert Murdoch's Sky satellite TV will fall into four distinct channels.

■ The main Sky Channel will be 24 hours a day general entertainment, with 18 hours of 'improved quality' including six hours of the arts.

■ Sky News will be a 24-hour news channel in a style similar to the American Cable Network News (CNN).

■ Sky Movies is potentially the best channel on offer — Murdoch owns the 20th Century Fox film studio and he can pick the pick of the blockbusters.

■ Sky Sports is meeting with opposition from WH Smith's ScreenSport satellite channel, who are concerned that Murdoch could build up a monopoly on major sporting events.
Code Masters to simulate full-price software house?

by Barnaby Page

Budget house Code Masters are set to move into full-price games. 'We're looking at the possibility of games at £9.99,' said Operations Manager Bruce Everiss, and 'it could very well happen this autumn.'

Increased production costs and the need for advertising its foray into 16-bit will make full-price inevitable, according to the top executive.

Currently most of the software house's games sell for £1.99 on 8-bit machines.

But the firm already gets more income from just two games in its Code Masters Plus £8.99 range, launched last December, than from the 30 cheaper titles. Code Masters' turnover was £2 million and it expects to bring in £5 million this year.

Everiss hinted that a full-price Code Masters range would not simply have more complex games - it would have gimmicks.

If you put a T-shirt or something in the box you can charge more,' he said. 'We would have to justify (the move) with value.'


Analysis: Everiss said three factors could push Code Masters into full-price: programming and manufacturing costs, advertising rates and dealer pressure.

The cost of putting games together is increasing,' he said. 'Authorship costs are going to go up.

And though advertising 'moves costs up markedly,' it's something we're going to have to come round to sooner or later.' At present Code Masters advertises only in the computer trade press.

He added: 'The retailers would rather sell for £5 than for £2. The multiples [high-street chains] are always putting pressure on to raise prices.'

Ironically, the firm was launched in October 1986 to champion the cause of cheap games.

Two of its biggest budget rivals - Mastertronic and Firebird - are associated with full-price labels (Melbourne House and Rainbird). But the fourth great budget power, Alternative Software, has no full-price line.

Meanwhile, Code Masters has run into trouble with the original cover for its charity fund-raising game The Race Against Time. The original packaging used a photograph of athlete Jesse Owens without the copyright-holder's permission.

The new cover shows runner Carl Lewis. Proceeds from the £4.99 Race Against Time (Spectrum, Amstrad CPC and Commodore 64) go to the Sport Aid charity.

New use for old Commodores saves £160

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Now Amstrad play at the 16 bit game

by Dominic Handby and Barnaby Page

Amstrad is planning a £299 16-bit games machine called the Sinclair Professional PC. for an autumn launch. It is expected to be a direct rival to the Atari ST and Commodore Amiga - though £100 less - and to be at least partly IBM PC-compatible, with a 3.5" disk drive.

Despite its name, it will not be a Speccy. The new machine will be bundled with a games compilation from G0!1 including Basilis, Wizard War, Peter Pe, and Transor The Last Stormtrooper.

And other major games producers including Avalon Hill are in secret talks with Amstrad bosses to discuss software for the Sinclair Professional PC.

Amstrad's tight-lips policy is characteristic of their plans, will make no comment. Marketing executive Anthony Sethill said 'I can't discuss anything like that' when the prospect of a new machine was mentioned.

Analysis: Amstrad's tight-lips policy makes the public debating club. But despite the swirl of speculation now surrounding the Sinclair Professional PC, the likely truth has emerged through a combination of insiders' information and past Amstrad-watching.

Amstrad, which was planning a public debating club, will almost certainly be launched at the PC Show (successor of the old PCW Show) in mid-September - historically, all Amstrad's computers have been released at one showtime or another, and with this year's PC User Show past in late June the PC Show is the next possible date.

And the fact that software for the Sinclair Professional PC is already in production suggests release cannot be far off.

Probably the biggest question mark hangs over the role a new machine will play in the already crowded marketplace. will it be a game machine, a very low-cost business machine, or even an in-between product for leisure applications like art software which require considerable processing power?

Much hangs on the monitor. If the new computer is a stripped-down version of the PC1512, Computer Trade Weekly and experts suggest Amstrad won't be able to supply a monitor well as the keyboard and CPU for £299.

And if it's made to any impact on the 16-bit games market, accustomed to ST and Amiga graphics, it will need a built-in Enhanced Graphics Adapter (EGA) rather than the Colour Graphics Adapter (CGA) of most cheap PCs - which in turn means purchasers will have to shell out another £100 for an expensive monitor.

So as former Amstrad consultant Guy Kewney told us, 'It's not at all clear what sort of a package Amstrad would have to produce to silence about their meeting with Pitstop II including Professional PC for an autumn release of the machine.'

Reports that Amstrad are seeking a manufacturer to produce 3.5" disk drives may indicate that the Sinclair Professional PC will be sold as a games machine. As Kewney says, 'for the games market you need that extra flexibility - the standard 12 inch disks, as used on the ST and Amiga, is stronger than the 3.25" floppies for Amstrad's PC1512 and PC1640.'

On the other hand, IBM took the 3.5" route with their PS/2 range - successors to the PC line - while other companies have opted for 3.5" drives on their most recent computers. It seems likely that it will be a 3.5" drive for Amstrad's machine.

So if the new product doesn't take off as a games machine, Amstrad could easily start selling it to business users, in a reversal of Atari's business-to-games move with the ST.

If that happened, though, it would be up against the PC1512 - which is that much different from the ordinary 15.2" - the 1512 line starts at £399 for a model with just one disk drive and monitor.

Amstrad's Alan Sugar: September launch for cheap 16-bit games machine. Or then again, maybe not.

And vague rumours of an extraordinary bundle of 50-100 free games with the Spectrum +2 and +3 also suggest that Amstrad are attempting to get rid of remaining +2 and +3 stocks - at some cost, Amstrad could make the machines irresistibly attractive to punters despite the Spectrum's lackluster image in the brave new 16-bit world.

There is also the theory that the £299 package could appear with a different name, and that Amstrad's disinformation department has simply given its product the temporary working title 'Sinclair Professional PC' - either because it roughly sums up an MS-DOS machine marketed as a Spectrum or even because it could mislead competitors.

Amstrad's plans for the Sinclair Professional PC seem slightly unambitious - the disk drive contract is apparently for 10,000 drives a month. Sources close to the project say 100,000 copies of the GO! compilation will be made, implying that by the summer of 1989 the hardware-and-software package will be revamped or even replaced with a new model.

We'll have to wait and see. As Kewney puts it, 'it can't be both PC-compatible and an Amiga-killer. There has to be some trick about it. It's a very foolish person who bets against something that Alan Sugar does.'

His company does, after all, make almost £500,000 profit a day.

Meanwhile, some reports say Amstrad has abandoned the idea of a games console for less than £30 and that its designers have left the company to take their ideas elsewhere. Other reports suggest shops are ordering 'hundreds of thousands' of the consoles to sell. Come in, Broomwood...
Brought to you by the team who produced the top-selling STAR WARS® game, THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK™ is the next stage of the unfolding drama.

This game follows the non-stop action of the movie and is a direct conversion of the famous coin-op.

The player takes the role of Luke Skywalker, piloting a snow-speeder against the huge Imperial Walkers. Darth Vader controls his forces with deadly cunning, using his Probots to search and attack the Rebel Base.

The action continues as the player becomes Han Solo in the Millennium Falcon, looking for safety in the galaxy whilst being attacked by Tie-Fighters and dodging asteroid storms.

May the Force be with you – Always!

STAR WARS®
GENIC ENGINEERING

Take two game formats, add a pinch of something different to each, stir well and stick both products in a hot development for a couple of months. Richard Eddy talks to Audiogenic and tastes two dishes they had prepared earlier.

It's all the way for ASL (Audiogenic Software Limited), as the company readies itself to pounce on the 16-bit public with Helter Skelter and more balls later in the year for the Commodore 64/128 with Emlyn Hughes's International Soccer.

Audiogenic, which has been around for almost more years than any other software house in the business (although its current form - ASL - is more recent), long pursued a policy of producing software for less popular games machines. However, 'less popular' meant the machines were getting older and declining rather than machines in their infancy. Last year ASL implemented a policy change and crossed over to the growing 16-bit market.

The first few products were not impressive - then Impact made a big dent, the September-launched Breakout-style game for Atari ST and Amiga, with an alarming degree of addictiveness. A year later and Impact's authors, John Dale, Adrian Stephens and Spiny Norman delivered Helter Skelter.

Helter Skelter is a massive 80-screen, addictive combination of Breakout, a pinball game and Pac-Man - taking the bouncing ball theme one step further. Each screen is built up of a combination of platforms patrolled by monsters. Its objective is simply to squash all the monsters and proceed to the next level.

Controlling the red ball is pretty tricky when barriers are placed in odd places in Helter Skelter - Atari ST screen

Squishy-squashy

Squishing is an intricate process whereby you manoeuvre a bouncing red ball around the screen with a left, right and a jump control key, using the platforms to bounce and land on a monster. Monsters are squished in a particular order, indicated by a flashing yellow arrow above the monster's head. Squishing unmarked monsters results in them bifurcating, and then the two smaller monsters have to be squished individually.

Each screen is played against the clock, but the time limit changes every time - running out of time loses you one of five lives. As with Impact there is a plethora of icons to collect as they appear including extended time limit, warp to next level, freeze monsters and one gives you the ability to kill monsters in any order.

It's going to take some time to get through all the screens, by Level 17 things start getting really tricky, so be thankful the programmers have included a password entry system; every time a set of ten screens is completed a password is given, enter it next time you start a game and you can start from where you left off.

Helter Skelter comes complete with its own construction set allowing redesign of up to 48 screens from scratch, which can be saved. Nearly completed on the ST and Amiga, ASL says 8-bit conversions will be considered if 16-bit sales are successful; there's no release date yet. Additionally, ASL is currently holding meetings with a coin-op manufacturer, so you may see Helter Skelter in the arcades as soon as it's in the shops.

This ST screen from Helter Skelter is easy enough, unless you fall off the platforms - the bluebird is the first monster to squish.

Throwing-in

Emlyn Hughes's International Soccer does look like Commodore's International Soccer, released yonks ago (an now on cassette from CRL), however, ASL's Peter Calver says: 'International Soccer was good enough in its day, but this is a definitive and playable football simulation for the Commodore!'

It certainly is playable, and though it doesn't excel in graphics, its control method is easy to understand. All the moves are there, sliding tackles, a variety of kicks and many more, all joystick-controlled using many combinations of directions and button pressing.

Peter is determined to make Emlyn Hughes's International Soccer the most accurate football simulation, right down to the fine points of the game. 'One aspect which is nearly always overlooked in a football game is a proper throw-in, either from the line or from the goal keeper - we've included them here.'

The game has been in development for almost a year now, and still has a way to go before it's finished, but should be out before Christmas.

Footnote

Binary Design has just been commissioned to write ASL's next big game for Christmas - all I know at the moment is that it will be a massive shoot-'em-up with insects. It's the first time ASL has contracted out-of-house for a product. An interesting move.
Our type of game

Irem's wickedest arcade master title, R-Type, hits home computers later this year from Mediagenic on the Activision label with counterparts for Spectrum, Commodore, Amstrad and Atari ST.

But how can it be done? With a bit of determination? The detailed, highly coloured organic alien graphics aren't going to reproduce precisely, but at least Spectrum owners won't be treated to another monochrome shoot-'em-up - as you can see, there's plenty of vibrant colour. Yeah, who minds up-as you can see, there's plenty of determination? The detailed, and Atari ST.

Mediagenic on the blaster Irem's a smidgeon of colour clash? of vibrant colour. Yeah, who minds up-as you can see, there's plenty of determination? The detailed, and Atari ST.

And even more ST speed is burning up the track in the racier shape of Nigel Mansell's Grand Prix from Martech. The Spectrum game was fully reviewed in TGM004 (73%) with the Amstrad version a month later (74%). No sign of the Commodore version yet, it appears there's a programming hitch. ST Nigel Mansell's Grand Prix will cost you £24.99 in August.

Heading along the straight in Nigel Mansell's Grand Prix on the ST from Martech

R-Type, if you missed it in the arcades (pretty difficult task), is in the mould of Namco's and Salamander, you're out to destroy the sluggish Bydo empire with your space ship. Scrolling horizontally from left to right the journey takes you through eight graphically excellent levels traditionally with a gruesome monster at the end of each. We showed several pictures from the Hudson-Soft's PC Engine version in TGM008.

Additional fighting power is collected along the way to build up the strength of the R-9 ship. To increase battle power when in possession of the standard on-board laser, hold down the fire button allowing power to collect and then let it fly in a bolt of cosmic energy - deadly.

Be warned: R-Type is difficult, but unbeatable addictive - let's hope Activision does a good job. Meanwhile, the Mediagenic Electric Dreams label is finising off Super Hang-On for the Atari ST, the motorcycle racing game of speed, speed and more speed!
underground where they could live safely, but other evil, deranged creatures decided to make a life above ground — the surface dwellers. The separate cities can only be accessed by overground routes. Too terrified to travel from city to city using the overland freeway system for fear of being attacked by the surface dwellers, the people underground have recruited tough drivers to carry parcels, messages and people from one city to another.

Right, enough of Elite's SF novel as an Overlander you are to drive safely along four different freeway routes, destroying attacking surface dwellers and collecting as much cash as possible. With more cash better vehicles can be built. The freeways are displayed in a similer fashion to Buggy Bo... (oops), but include double hills, valleys and such like.

Overlander has a September release date across Commodore 64/128, Spectrum 48/128, Amstrad CPC, Atari ST and Amiga 2000.

While Elite tries keeping drivers on the road Epyx pushes them off in a new product 4x4 Off Road Racing. Four by four terrain, varying in difficulty and including hills, valleys, swamps, mud streams and other hazards, have to be tackled in a selection of four cars. These can all be fixed up in the custom bay where you pick tyres, select how much fuel is in the car and change the engine. Outfitting the car forms the game's strategy element as what the car is equipped with influences its abilities. No release date or price yet, but it will be available for Commodore 64/128.

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Uplifted by the success of The Great Giana Sisters (TGM007, Amiga 72%, Commodore 64 82%) German software developer Rainbow Arts, distributed in the UK by GOL, is currently producing the sequel — Arthur And Marthun: Gliana Twins In Future World (who dreams up these snappy titles?) It's quite different from the first, with new ideas and a host of different graphics. More news as we get it.

And more for GOL; Black Tiger on the cartridge label. In this conversion from the cartridge coin-op you are the last surviving warrior from a race of thousands which has been captured and thrown into deep dungeons. The journey takes you through five subterranean levels of eight-directional scrolling action towards your hapless colleagues. Every time one is rescued, you're awarded money, armour or weapons to help defeat the assortment of mystical kidnappers. Black Tiger is a bit similar to Ghosts 'n' Goblins, but involves far more strategy in the attack plans.

From Black to Road: Tiger Road is another cartridge coin-op to Commodore 64/128 conversion. We've got an early peek, so early in fact that everything in the screen shot could

be changed; but then again it might not. GOL's David Baxter just isn't sure yet. But he wants to get it right because he says Tiger Road is the biggest and best martial arts adventure game ever, right?

Powerplay it again Arcana is producing a new Amiga version of their Trivia-based game Powerplay — Game Of The Gods. It comes with enhanced graphics and is said to be generally better all round. "After the reviews of the

little games ported over from the Atari — we wanted to produce a game specifically for the Amiga."

The screen shot proves that Powerplay is certainly looking a lot better, and whether it is fully improved we'll find out next month in the version update. Arcana's long-delayed Mars Cops looks like it's ready to hit the streets soon; the new date is end of August on Amiga and Atari ST.

Strategy and steering: 4x4 Off Road Racing — Commodore 64

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The main playing screen from Arcana's second version of the trivia game Powerplay original Powerplay on the Atari ST/ Amiga (TM004 76%), we decided to enhance it further," says an Arcana spokesperson. "It's obvious to us that Amiga owners were no longer satisfied with games ported over from the Atari — we wanted to produce a game specifically for the Amiga."

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Swiss adventure Linel, the Swiss software house which recently launched into the UK market under their own name with Crack Starring Herbie Stone, is ready for a second release with the action packed adventure Ice And Fire.

The adventure is said to be complex and there are nine ways to complete it. The player assumes a character role ranging from cleric to thief, with the objective of reaching the height of the profession and finding a last resting place; for a cleric that's a bishop and a chapel. Whichever character you pick has only three days to live, so a strict time limit is imposed in which to complete the adventure. On your Atari ST, Amiga or PC in the near future.

Strategic subs Microprose is almost finished with the strategy arcade epic Red Storm Rising, based on the novel by Tom Clancy (author of Hunt For Red October). Red Storm Rising relates the events of the beginning of World War III. With their eyes on the Persian Gulf's oil supplies, the Russians create a diversion by invading West Germany and Iceland with conventional means.
A bomb explodes in the Kremlin - not the work of Western terrorists, but the opening of a Soviet campaign to destroy the NATO alliance and seize Europe and the North Atlantic!

Red Storm Rising – Commodore 64

From ST and Amiga, Psygnosis's Barbarian makes it onto the Spectrum

Rev it up with the ST version of Overlander

Chums of Giana, Marther begins her adventure in Future World – Commodore 64 screen

A very early screen from the Capcom game Tiger Road on the Commodore 64/128
Mike Sutin, director of The Kristal says: 'It's the biggest game ever!' He's talking about a mammoth 16-bit space odyssey set in the Kreemar system whose planets and asteroids the player can visit to question the inhabitants and slowly reveal the story.

The Kristal was originally devised in 1976 by Mike as a musical comedy called The Kristal Of Konos. It never reached the stage despite Elaine Page, the cast and musicians of Jesus Christ Superstar recording some of the songs, which Mike stage managed. Patrick Moore, the astronomer, recorded a long narration for the show which has now been digitised and forms part of the magical opening sequences for the game.

'The show was sitting my shelf for years,' explains Mike, 'and remained there until 16-bit machines arrived, making The Kristal possible. The game has been created on computer as the stage show would have been — complete with Scoff® character entrances and exits.'

The Kristal features 60 exquisite backdrops drawn by the game's artistic director Michael Haigh and SF illustrator David Hardy, who originally created the paintings for a slide-show in the musical. The show's co-writer, Rodney Wyatt, flew back from his home in the States to help develop the game. Along with Chris Petts and Julian Edkins, Rodney created more than 75 animated sprites including 50 characters. The whole animation process uses 1,500 frames. The most accurate animation is seen in the sword fight sequences which contain 150 frames for a single character. The design for the sword fight is by Neil Glancy — himself a black belt in Katnagari, which means 'the swift sword'.

'It's difficult to relate the story without giving the game away,' says Mike, 'because the story unfolds as the game progresses. The objective is to journey around the Kreemar system visiting the many planets in search of the Kristal, the one object which can restore harmony to a chaotic universe. The game package comes with a ancient scroll relating the loss of the Kristal, giving vital clues to its whereabouts.'

Programming for The Kristal may seem an impossible task, but it's being handled by programming director Alex Mills, assisted by Justin (TerroForce, previews TGM008), Giulio Zicchi and John Edwards. Collectively all the people involved come under the banner of Fissionchip Software and The Kristal has been scheduled for a launch in October on Atari ST and Amiga, and comes with a novel relating the history of Keemar system and the Kristal. It's being published by Prism Leisure Corporation at £29.95 — and well worth it too.
The things people do to keep hold of their Young Persons Railcard.

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Young Persons Railcard.
Meil Croucher has never been against a spot of creative plagiarisms, but when someone tries muscling in on his favourite plot he feels there is a case to answer

I ACCUSE

Our Royal Highnesses, androids, Vulcans, your Honour, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, the sleazy business of entertainment, whether entertainment is a computer game, a song, a movie or whatever, there is no such thing as a new idea. All ideas and treatments of those ideas are recycled time and time again. We don’t necessarily think of this as theft, or ripping off the public, it is simply the way things are.

But when an author passes off a stolen idea as original, that author should be shot.

A couple of weeks ago, I was shooting my mouth off and inviting anyone to shoot me down. I just happened to give me the title of a computer game, and I would provide the earlier titles from which it was ripped off, in exchange for a drop or two of Fiji’s unadulterated finest draught ale.

As a result of that challenge, I was given the titles of the computer game spin-offs from three of the most successful science fiction movies of all time, all based on ‘original screenplays’.

“There is no new thing under the sun”

Old Testament: Ecclesiastes 1:9

Sometimes the writer of a computer game, a book, a song, is convinced that their work is original, having forgotten that they arose from inspiration in childhood many years ago, or watching the television half-asleep.

And sometimes highly professional producers of entertainment blatantly rip off plots and claim them as their own.

When Mick Jagger or George Harrison is dragged through the courts accused of stealing songs, that in itself provides great entertainment for certain folk who enjoy the spectacle of the rich and famous getting caught out. Perhaps I may be allowed to entertain you by presenting evidence that three of the biggest titles in recent movie history, all of which have had huge computer game spin-offs, were based on someone else’s uncredited work.

I am bound to say that I myself stole the idea for this investigation from a Leeds programmer named Ken Smith, who kindly gave me some video footage and a movie screenplay with a well-known title, suggesting that they might be one and the same plot.

Thanks Ken.

“Let no one say that I have nothing new; the arrangement of the subject is new”

Pascal, 1670

Back to the forger

Does this plot sound familiar, m’Lud? An old scientist invents a machine which can transfer matter through time. A young chap is whisked back to a town in pre-computerised America, where his actions could affect the future. Unfortunately he gets stuck in the past, and must obtain a special chemical to power the machine. In order to get back to the future he has to be in exactly the right place at the right moment. After running across a few friends and enemies our hero manages to return in the nick of time.

Back To The Future 1986? I’m afraid not.

I have just presented the outline for an episode of Lost In Space written by Peter Packer two decades before Back To The Future hit the big screen. It was entitled Return From Outer Space and made in 1965; Billy Mumy took the Michael J Fox role. But in this version, there was no subplot concerning incest between the hero and his mother, Billy Mumy being only on the verge of puberty, and his mum (as played by Nancy Reagan look-alike June Lockhart) secure in her cast-iron bra and the sanctity of wedlock.

“A brand new mediocrity is thought more of than accustomed excellence”

Baltasar Gracian, 1647

Do androids steal electric sheep?

If there was supposed sex in Back To The Future, there was rampant kinky sex aplenty in Blade Runner, this time between the hero and a lovely android, not to mention the ambiguous repulsion/attraction relationship between the hero and a murderous android renegade. Blade Runner was the big SF blockbuster of 1982, based on a 1968 book by the late Philip K Dick, called Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep?, which was infinitely more complex and subtle than the movie.

Members of the jury, I accuse screenwriters Hampton Fancher and David Peoples, and the storyboards writers headed by Ridley Scott, of filching entire scenes, lumps of dialogue and characterisations in Blade Runner from the 1966 Star Trek episode titled What Are Little Girls Made Of?, written by Robert Bloch and directed by Harlan. Here is my evidence, featuring parallel plots of the Star Trek episode, and the Blade Runner equivalent in italics.

Dr Roger Korby, scientific genius, creates androids almost impossible to discern from human beings, including a beautiful, frigid female and a sinister, murderous male who kills one of Captain Kirk’s colleagues. Kirk investigates.

During his investigation, Kirk is fooled by the doctor into believing that the lovely Andrea is human, and is shocked when he discovers she’s an android.

In a vital Star Trek scene, Kirk gently seduces the android like this:

Kirk: Kiss me.
Andrea: No! I am not programmed for you.
Kirk: Kiss me!

They kiss, awkwardly. Then they kiss again, deep and soft. He rakes his fingers through her hair and presses her to him.

And how about this scene from Blade Runner?

Deckard: Now you kiss me.
Rachael: I can't rely on my memory.
Deckard: Say 'kiss me'.
Rachael: Kiss me.
They kiss... he backs off... she's catching on quick... he kisses her hard, deep, soft. He rakes his fingers through her hair and pulls her into him.

In a later scene, there is a chase sequence where Kirk falls into a pit, to safety. Again, this scene is one hand effortlessly hauls Kirk back to safety. Kirk's face is resigned, half respectful, certain to let Kirk fall to his death. And clings onto the ledge by his fingers. The android looms above, and pulls her into him.

"It's always the latest old song that an audience applauds the most" Homer, 840 BC

I am not a free man

The author of a computer game based on an SF film would never dream of claiming the plot to be original. Why then are the writers of the films themselves prevented from getting away with it? I suppose the answer to that is the same as the answer to most abuses of power: Big Money!

Some authors are patently honest about the origins of their ideas — as in: 'I now come to my third major case.'

I accuse George Lucas of not crediting the plot and characters of Star Wars to Mr Hans Christian Andersen.

The farce be with you

One film, more than any other, was responsible for the space opera boom. It was father and mother to an entire generation of movies, kids' toys, video arcade games and home micro-entertainments. When it hit the screens in 1977, most SF authors, critics and reviewers hailed it as a masterpiece, although some accused it of being nothing more than a superb hi-tech setting for clapped-out ideas ranging from The Seven Samurai to Bambi, Michael Moorcock (in The New Statesman), JG Ballard (in Time Out) and Samuel Delany (in Cosmos) all failed to spot the film's stolen origin. Here is my case for the prosecution against George Lucas, the 'writer and director' of Star Wars.

How many of you remember an old fairy tale about a little boy who gets a splinter of an evil mirror in his eye? Perhaps you will allow me to remind you. Your Honour, ladies and gentlemen of the jury: I accuse George Lucas of not crediting the plot and characters of the entertainment known as Star Wars to their creator, Mr HC Andersen, deceased.

Compare The Snow Queen, by Hans Christian Andersen — born in Odense 1805, died in Copenhagen 1875 — with Star Wars (in italics):

After the splinters of an evil mirror cause misery and darkness to invade the world, the Snow Queen kidnaps and imprisons a young person named Kay in the sinister Ice Palace.

After the Evil Empire subjugates a section of the galaxy, Darth Vader kidnaps and imprisons a young person named Princess Leia in the sinister Death Star.

A plea for help from Kay gets through to an orphan girl named Gerda, by means of a coded message in the care of two inhuman messengers, a prissy taking rose bush and a cute little talking crow.

A plea for help from Leia gets through to an orphan boy named Luke Skywalker, by means of a coded message in the care of two inhuman messengers, a prissy robot called C3PO and a cute little robot called R2D2.


Gerda then falls in with a mercenary 'robber' girl whose companion is an intelligent, hairy reindeer. Luke then falls in with a mercenary named Han Solo whose companion is an intelligent, hairy old Wookiee named Chewbacca.

After many adventures it is left to Gerda to save the Forces of Light from the Forces of Darkness by getting to the heart of the Ice Palace and breaching the Frozen Lake.

After many adventures it is left to Luke to save the Forces of Light from the Forces of Darkness by getting to the heart of the Death Star and breaching the reactor core.

She is successful, of course, but the Snow Queen lives to fight another day.

He is successful, of course, but Darth Vader lives to fight another day.

Your Honour, ladies and gentlemen of the Jury, I lay down my briefs and I rest my case. Besides I've got to go and steal a copy of Smart Art from a 1959 copy of The Topper. It's time to nail together this month's Mercy Dash, and recycle someone else's cartoon clichés...
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TEARS IN RAIN

In our second feature on cyberpunk, Stuart Wynne and MC Wynne look onscreen — where it all began with the dazzlingly transcendent Blade Runner

When filmmakers have turned to genuine literary SF for a strong plot to accompany the effects, weakness of directorial vision has all too often ceded drama to backroom technicians. Two of HG Wells's most famous novels suffered cinematic translations — The Invisible Man (1933) and War Of The Worlds (1953) — that ended up dominated by SF, The list of books butchered by Hollywood goes far beyond SF, of course, but special mention must go to Tobe Hooper's Life Force version of the brilliant Space Vampires by Colin Wilson, a wholly pathetic film apart from Apogee's SFX and one star, Mathilda May. Even David Lynch (Eraserhead, Blue Velvet) couldn't turn Frank Herbert's epic Dune into a good movie.

Where SF movies have succeeded they've tended to be of the comic-strip variety such as Star Wars etc., and antecedents like Flash Gordon and Buck Rogers — both of which were revived in the early Eighties. George Lucas's Star Wars is a very influential film, however, and despite having to be released at a time when filmed SF was generally as popular as a copy of Deus Ex Machina, it shattered box office records, conventional SFX technology and preconceived notions of SF films.

One director inspired by Star Wars was Ridley Scott. His 1979 classic Alien is best remembered for the genius of Swiss artist HR

From the moment film first came to flickering, monochrome life filmmakers have been exploiting SF as a means of showing how beautifully the new medium could be made to lie. As early as 1902 George Melies's pantomime-like A Trip To The Moon was astonishing audiences with such now-staple SFX (special effects) as fast and slow motion, multiple exposure, mattes, stop motion, dissolves and fades — but little in the way of story.
The relationship between *Blade Runner* and *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, the book on which the film was based, is both complex and fascinating, for while they obviously deal with similar subject matter they have dramatically differing views on it. Scripts written as early as 1973 earned Dick's scathing contempt, aiming low, he claimed, and failing to achieve what they aimed for. In 1981, however, the Oscar-winning writer David Peoples was hired to do a rewrite which astonished Dick: 'Peoples did a terrific job... in some ways [he] improved over the book... the book and the screenplay form two parts of a single whole. Each reinforces the other.'

The development of this 'look' in *Blade Runner* proved so disorientatingly close to what the subgenre's inventor - William Gibson - had visualised that he had to stop watching after 30 minutes. This closeness was due in part, no doubt, to a drawing on similarly pessimistic sources for a near future vision. At the same time, however, cyberpunk writers are much more aware of film than was ever the case with conventional SF writers. John Shirley, for example, has described future life as being 'fast-edited' by corporate advertising, a commercial imposition of simultaneously multicolour text and imagery onto a black background. Yet the environment is quite different, and the artificiality of the medium is often overlooked. The result is that the environment becomes iconic - a symbol of the concentration camp guards. The nature of the androids' evil is most chillingly conveyed by the crew itself seemed a part of the scene where they find a spider. In a post-apocalyptic world real animals are almost extinct, but the androids ignore that, puzzled and confused by why the insect needs eight legs. Four are clinically snipped off with some nail scissors, while their retarded human friend looks on in horror. Ridley Scott, by contrast, looks on as replicants as 'supermen who couldn't fly', biotechnological triumphs doomed to tragedy by a commercially imposed four-year lifespan. When Rachael recalls one of her

Giger's Alien, Watcher and derelict spacecraft; yet the Nostromo itself was no less impressive a creation. Despite the slick look of Ron Cobb's preproduction interior designs, Scott insisted that in their execution they mimic the dirtied down, lived-in realism of Star Wars's rebel resistance. Similarly, costume ideas produced by Moebius emphasised pockets, ribbing and patches so that the crew itself seemed a part of the Nostromo. In embryo form the result contained much of what has become cinematic cyberpunk: jury rigged hi-tech, gloomy, film noir lighting and all-powerful corporations.

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Shirley involved in writing for the US Max Headroom series. Another factor in this unique relationship between cyberpunk film and print is the stress laid by both on the environment of their stories. *Blade Runner* is saturated by corporate advertising, symbolised best by the all-pervasive blimp - and has everything from plugs to doorkeys to the street-crossing signs redesigned for realism and 'look'. Similarly, Gibson's *Neuromancer* seems to 'labor almost any significant object with a corporate tag (Chubb keys and Braun drones), while the environment is quite vividly evoked: '... in an arcades... Under bright ghosts burning through a blue haze of cigarette smoke, holograms of Wizard's Castle, Tank War Europa, the New York skyline' (p. 15). With
both films and books, therefore, the backdrop to almost any scene should, at best, contribute to the concern and emotional depth of the characters. A cinematic masterpiece of this process is, of course, Ridley Scott and the best example his 1982 masterpiece.

**Blade Runner**

A thoughtful and difficult film based on Brian W. Aldiss' novella 'A Boy's Life' and Philip K. Dick's novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*? (see side columns), *Blade Runner* suffered from being rushed in production, carried by the other action-adventure variety; and from a disastrous marketing campaign. Now, both films and books are re-cast in their proper perspective, carrying the highly inappropriate aura. Therefore, if you want a little off the shelf hero in a complex and encrypted narrative, you have to ask yourself: 'is it worth the trouble?'

Jaredon: 'Science fiction, but about a very real and very disturbing topic. It is a film about what it means to be a human being, and the film's creators have done an excellent job of exploring this theme. The action sequences are intense and exciting, but they are not the focus of the film. Instead, the movie focuses on the characters and their struggles. It is a film that will leave you thinking long after you've finished watching it. I highly recommend it.'

Runner: 'I've seen it twice, and I still can't figure it out. It's like a mystery novel that never ends. The characters are all so confusing, and I don't know who to trust. The world is a strange place, and I don't know what's real and what's not. I can't even remember what happened in the beginning of the movie. It's like a dream, and I can't wake up.'

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**Design**

What *Blade Runner* is most known for, however, is that 'look'. Design is an important element in why Scott decided to do the film, and upon its completion he remarked 'in *Blade Runner* I would go as far as to say the design is the statement'. To help with this design work Ridley Scott called in Syd Mead, an artist who first worked for Ford's Advanced Vehicle Studio in Michigan state. By 1970 he had his own design company, which contributed to numerous mass production projects. Meade, an artist who first worked with Ford's Advanced Vehicle Studio project, originally prepared his own design for the film. His original brief was to be the futuristic cars featured in *Blade Runner*, most notably the flying tank-like vehicles, carrying blood to their destinations. The actual realization of these designs came to influence the broader look of the film. The replicated cars, which look almost identical, are seen to be the coldly commercial backdrop for Batty's death. *Blade Runner* retains this design throughout. The punk element of this cyberpunk story is implanted memories for Deckard she speaks of a spider with an 'orange body, green legs'. It is not clear what he is building or the nest until the spider's egg hatches. When the spider is born, it is the spider's nest. As Dick's own novel subtly admits the notion of Nature as a spider, the spider's nest is a cutesy pet is a false one. Whereas his novel holds out with Doc's own idea of a society devoted to an artificial toad, *Blade Runner* embraces the cause of the replicants from the beginning. They, like us, are creatures abandoned in a wilderness of meaninglessness with short moments of life. Their rage against that harshness echoes our own, but now it is only through awareness of their artificial nature they could indeed grab more life from their corporate benefactors. The end result of the endorsement of their attempt makes his film truly cyberpunk beyond any of its powerful visual design.

In other matters, however, book and novel diverge. Both recognize the irony of attempting to stop a perceived evil by using an identical evil. A central, entropic theme of *Blade Runner* is that 'you will be required to do evil however you go. It is the basic condition of life, to be required to violate your conscience. That Deckard is the ultimate shadow, the defeat of creation'. (p135). Deckard's retirement is a depressing and shocking in the novel, with Luba Luft's killing a lot more powerful than the ultimate execution of Zhora in the movie. That Deckard recognises the horror of his actions, but continues them, places him in a position early akin to the Nazi guards whose dies he plays.

At the same time it is clear a two-hour movie cannot hope to contain all the ideas contained in a 183-page novel. While *Blade Runner* has produced the most spectacular cinematic depiction of the future yet seen, Dick's novel focuses on a more realistic approach. The novel begins with a mortal and life-threatening situation of Penfields which can evoke hundreds of emotions, yet the main point seems to be the
FEATURE

self-evident in the costumes of Pris, numerous participants in the crowd scenes, and the B-52-like parody of Rachael. Why punk fits is its revolutionary view of society as inherently corrupt and oppressive which, for LA in 1982, seems an obvious truth. In Blade Runner, replicants are foil by starry luminescence and beautiful punk vision of tomorrow, today’s short-term commercial values are critiqued mainstream in any of punk’s increasingly dated music.

Max Headroom

The idea of a computer-generated talking head originated with George Stone, of the Ram Jam Corporation software house, and he subsequently worked as a scriptwriter on the Channel 4 film. Initially the concept was for Max to host an awards program for Chrysalis Records. Max was too good for such a limited forum, however, and Max Headroom: 20 Minutes Into The Future was born as a Channel 4 film. The look quite clearly owed a great deal to Blade Runner, the poor wardrobe, dark lighting, punk villains and – of course – retrofitted technology predominant. And appropriately enough, the film’s Network 23 TV reporter hero – Edison Carter – and pirate TV station housed in a pink bus seem to have influenced Network 7 in turn.

The story of the reporter’s own network continuing to run blipverts that compressed 30-second ads into three seconds and exploited unemployed or old or disabled people was nothing special. The use of hacking, however, was good and quite suggestive of Gibson’s cyberpunk space idea. In one scene, for instance, Carter’s controller tries to save him from the villains by manipulating the security systems of an office block, an effort opposed by another hacker leading to an excellent computer game controllable with real people instead of sprites.

Another cyberpunk idea was Max himself, a computer-generated personality based on Carter’s memories which raised questions about artificial intelligence and life. If all your memories were perfectly transcribed onto a machine, would it be you?

The film made a sufficiently big impact on American TV executives for them to commission a six-episode series at a cost of well over $1 million per episode. Episode 2 is a slightly toned-down version of the Channel 4 pilot, developing it into a series format. Some nice cyberpunk lines retain their power: “hands are worth more than the hands,” for instance, as a villain as they take Carter to the bodysuit bank to be cut up for spares. In addition snaking of advertising and futuristic news stories broaden the depiction of a run-down world, much as happens in Robocop. An interesting change to the original is an emphasis on Victorian-age typewriter keyboards suggestive of Brazil’s attitude to technology.

Episode 2, “Rakers,” features features take over as the cyberpunk sport developed by the networks despite its violence. Carter gets involved through his controller, who, having been involved in the theft of his brother becomes a contestant.

Body Banks, returns to more firmly cyberpunk territory with the case of a woman seeking a donor for organs needed to keep her alive until she can be immortalised by the Max Headroom process.

A donor is caught when coming into the city to sell her blood (many people strapped for cash do this in America now, and is swiftly taken to a special hospital. Carter is naturally called in to investigate and a nice homage to Blade Runner is made when Jackson asks him to be “kind to animals” as payment for a favour.

The idea of a permanent underclass of people is brought up by this episode, but is unfortunately never fully explored. In the Sixties, its like ‘part of the problem’, but in America and a War On Poverty launched which fell afoul of Vietnam costs. Since then this kind of underclass has been accepted again; one famous American journalist has even argued music sounds better in New York City because of its ‘extremes of wealth and poverty’. The current Thatcherite revolution has, of course, itself been accused of perpetuating and worsening the condition of a British underclass.

Episode 4 – Security Systems – was quite obviously inspired by cyberpunk writing with high-power corporate manoeuvres embroiling Carter in a fight with Security System Inc’s artificially intelligent computer A-7. It is a story of power, of course it’s been accused of perpetuating and worsening the condition of a British underclass.

The final two episodes are considered to be best. War has a corrupt TV programmer conspiring with urban terrorists to stage events, while The Blanks concerns a politician manipulating the media and attempting to destroy blanks – people not hooked into the media networks. Unfortunately, despite some interesting ideas, the excellent presentation and a nice line in TV self-parody, the series has now been cancelled due to high costs and lack of immediate success.

Next month, Stuart Wyne will examine cybertype in print, and reply to Mel ‘why do I look like a French paratrooper?’ Croucher’s ill-founded criticism of Blade Runner on page 18 of this issue. He’ll also look at Robocop, a new cyberpunk classic about to appear on video.
IS BRAD REALLY BETTER DEAD THAN ALIEN?

ELECTRA-money, ELECTRA-sweat-shirts and VIP days out . . .

Those new guys at Electra have a treat in store for potential superheroes and galaxy rangers with their first release Better Dead Than Alien starring the one and only Brad Zoom — hero of nothing in particular.

Better Dead Than Alien is a tongue-in-cheek, addictive shoot-'em-up with titillating B-movie heroics as Brad has a go at defeating swooping aliens in 25 zones. Take a look in the reviews for full details on how Better Dead Than Alien plays.

Brad Zoom will be appearing on the Electra stand at the Personal Computer Show (PC Show, Earls Court, 16-18 September) and all prize winners will get a chance to meet him (if he's not too busy defending the planet that is . . .). There are 11 tickets for a VIP day out at the show courtesy of Electra. In addition to an expenses-paid day out, the first-prize winner receives £100 cash to spend on all the glorious software available and wins a Better Dead Than Alien sweatshirt. 10 runners-up each get a Better Dead Than Alien sweatshirt which they can pick up on their day out.

What do you do? Simple; put words into Brad's mouth and tell us what he's saying in that speech bubble as he stands contemplating another day of heroics. Best speech bubble wins!

Answers on a postcard or back of a sealed space suit to BETTER DEAD THAN ALIEN COMP, THE GAMES MACHINE, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB.

Don't forget to write your name and address either! Entries must reach TGM HQ by August 18 and follow the competition rules as detailed in the masthead.
THE BIGGEST POSTER EVER SEEN

DELUXE PHOTOLAB — £69.95 — is the latest in a string of graphic packages from Electronic Arts. Developed by Digital Creations, it combines three programs to create and manipulate near-photo quality pictures. Robin Candy investigates.

The name ‘Photolab’ brings to mind the stink of developer and fixative, the snap of lens changes in the enlarger. In fact, this suite of programs’ title is a misnomer; it will let you fiddle with digitised photographs — if you have a digitiser — but its real functions are threefold: a painting utility, image processor and poster maker.

As such, it is designed to complement the existing range of Deluxe graphics products and act as a print-driver for end results. Its usefulness to you depends on what input and output peripherals you have; but even if you don’t own a digitiser, fine results can be achieved from artworks already existing in DeluxePaint, although without a colour printer you are not going to see the full benefits.

Let’s take a whistle-stop tour through the three programs.

Photolab runs on any Amiga, but requires at least 1Mbyte RAM. The program caters for display in low resolution, high resolution, hold and modify (HAM) and extra-halfbrite — all interlaced or not. As usual, these define the display area and number of colours available in the palette. Extra-Halfbrite is a neat trick which effectively doubles the on-screen colour-range to 64 in low res and 32 in high. The low res palette consists of two banks of 32 colours, first bank user-defined. The second bank repeats the colours of the first but displayed at half their brightness. For details on HAM and Interlace, see the panel.

The Paint utility

In the work area, the tools are at the top of the screen under the menu bar and alongside the palette; it’s a good arrangement because your eyes only have to look in one direction for clicking. Also the cursor’s coordinates are displayed — a small but useful feature which many utilities neglect.

The drawing tools will be familiar to any art utility users: DOTTED and CONTINUOUS FREEHAND lines, STRAIGHT LINE — solid lines from and to specified points using click-drag-release techniques, CURVE — similarly defines arcs between two specified points.

That this is primarily a graphics modifying program is reflected in the flexibility of the areas. Usual is that it allows large areas to be painted quickly with a random pixel effect, the longer the left mouse button is depressed the denser the effect becomes. Less so is that the distance from the cursor which the airbrush affects can be defined by pressing the right mouse button and dragging the mouse until the desired area has been achieved; a useful feature allowing for fine airbrushing of small areas.

Shapes are catered for in three forms: RECTANGLE, OVAL (you can make circles with it) and POLYGON. In familiar Deluxe style, the split icons create outlines or filled shapes. Under the heading of polygons, freeform shapes can also be constructed and filled. If you start and finish points miss by a few pixels, a straight line is automatically added between the two, thus avoiding the irritation of diving into magnification to dot in the missing, enclosing pixels — it’s another thoughtful touch. Shape tools use the click-drag-release techniques to construct the shape which is not fixed to the screen until the left mouse button is released.

The FILL tool fills enclosed areas with either the currently selected foreground or background colour; any fill in progress can be aborted by pressing the spacebar. Through FILL CONTROL there are four options: SOLID (default option), TRACE EDGES, BRUSH PATTERN and GRADIENT. SOLID speaks for itself, TRACE EDGES adds a one-pixel outline around the boundary of the area being filled, BRUSH PATTERN fills the area with a pattern made up of the brush in use, GRADIENT fills the area with a range of colours fading into each other, ranges being preselected in the palette. Photolab sets graduation of the gradient through the familiar dither slider, and the gradient direction can be altered.

Paint’s Colour Palette in HAM

“Extra-Halfbrite is a neat trick which effectively doubles the colour-range”
The BRUSH SELECTOR, depicted as a pair of scissors, uses click-drag-release to box and pick up rectilinear areas of the screen. Clicking the icon's lower half lets you corral an irregular shape for use as a brush.

The program also has MONEY and ZOOM and TEXT. In text-mode the cursor is replaced by a rectangle showing the maximum size of the letters within the font selected from the library of any art utility.

Through Modes the way paint is laid down on the pages can be altered. The paint modes include BLEND and SHADE, useful when producing smooth shading. Shading is an interesting function: within a drawn gradient all the graduations of a single colour can be painted in bands which run from full colour saturation to none at all. This procedure reverses all are powerful commands, particularly useful when shading complex shapes or creating effects which would normally take hours to achieve.

Under options the fill and magnify modes can be altered.

Posters

The second program, Posters, is a resizing layout system and printer-driver which can be used to print your masterpieces as postage stamps or over many sheets of paper, as billboards up to 100 square feet.

Normally, what it does is print a ready-made picture into the work area, which is made up of a grid, each rectangle representing one printer page. The original artwork will then be resized, keeping its aspect ratio (though this can be turned off for distortion), to cover as many pages as you want. The poster grid is easily defined for each page dimension to suit either your intended design or printer paper.

Through PRINT REQUESTER, the resulting image is printed in vertical or horizontal columns off the grid. Single pages within a large poster can be selected for printing in case any error occurs. It can be set for continuous paper feed or single sheet feed; either way the result can be pasted together.

During printing, the smooth function does anti-aliasing, while white background tells the printer not to print colour register zero, so objects drawn on, say, a red background, can be vignetted if the red is set to the zero register.

Colours

The final program is for processing and storing pictures. As its name suggests, the program is primarily concerned with colours, be it changing specific or even switching display modes. It's most powerful function is to allow artists to import several pictures and combine elements from each while matching colour harmonies from different palettes to an optimum.

Once a picture has been loaded, the colour statistics display shows information about the picture. One of any colour in the picture. It gives values for RGB, HSV and yellow, cyan and magenta levels. As well as the components of a colour, the program also gives a readout on the percentage of total pixels that are that colour. Just beneath the statistics display is a submenu called MATCH PALETTE which matches the picture to the palette of another picture. The picture is then used to generate another picture while trying to preserve the appearance of the original as much as possible.

The Paint program is good enough to sell as a stand-alone art utility. While it isn't the most powerful drawing program on the Amiga, it has all the major tools, includes powerful black and fill commands and incorporates several improvements over DeluxePaint II in some details. Posters is only useful if you possess a high quality colour ink printer which the program is capable of exploiting to the full.

Conclusion

The Paint program is good enough to sell as a stand-alone art utility. While it isn't the most powerful drawing program on the Amiga, it has all the major tools, includes powerful black and fill commands and incorporates several improvements over DeluxePaint II in some details. Posters is only useful if you possess a high quality colour ink printer which the program is capable of exploiting to the full.

Colour printing, professionally, is done by using four standard ink colours: cyan, magenta, yellow and black. By overlaying these, full-colour images can be achieved, although proper pictures require very accurate and sophisticated techniques to achieve a high-quality result. Nevertheless, by using the separation function in Photolab set to those four colours, you could print out four images for each colour register using black ink on your printer. These four black-and-white images would then be used by a printer to overlay the four colours in register to provide an acceptable end result in full-colour. A fiddly process, but one which could be employed in adding simple colour pictures to DTP projects.

"It has all the major tools, includes powerful commands and incorporates improvements over DeluxePaint II!"
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BRIAN JACK
SUPERSTAR CHALLENGE
TAU-CETI
PARK PATROL

AND MANY MORE!
LEAD REVIEW

45 • WHERE TIME STOOD STILL

Denton Design use their expertise learned on the successful Great Escape and come up with the ultimate 'movie' game; Where Time stood Still. Set in a land that time forgot you are pitted against prehistoric man and beast in a desperate attempt to return your marooned party to civilisation. This one's going to be a monster.

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BARBARIAN II

Journey to the depths of Drax's dungeons hacking and slaying vile creatures as you go... until you meet the dread sorcerer face to face. Take the role of either the wig-wielding Barbarian or provocative Mariana in your quest to free the land of Drax's menace.

BIONIC COMMANDOS

Control a Synthetic Life Form and fight your way through hordes of aliens in an effort to save the world from the deadly Skryskis. Super-smooth scrolling and incredible sound FX – the trade marks of Thalamus – combine with great gameplay to provide hours of finger bustin' blasting.

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

Help the rebel alliance as they battle against the Empire in Domark's Star Wars sequel. Destroy the Probots, trip the AT-ATs and dodge asteroids in this vector graphic epic.

VIRUS

The Archimedes version (titled Zarch) blew our minds (which explains a lot) and we raised our eyebrows when news reached us of an Atari ST version. Curse us for having doubts! Virus is incredible, hardly discernible from the BBC original – you won't believe your eyes.

NEXT MONTH...

More games than you can wave a joystick at... we'll have Road Blasters, Fire And Forget, Marscops, Bard's Tale Ill, more of The Empire Strikes Back and the 16-bit versions of Street Fighter.
Return of Zarch

**VIRUS**

**Firebird**

**ATARI ST:** £19.95

**BETTER known, perhaps, under its Archimedes title Zarch, this ST Firebird conversion of the Superior Software game has been done by its author David Braben, co-author of the classic space combat/trading game *Elite*. As Superior Software hold copyright to Zarch, Firebird were forced to use another, hence Virus.

An alien force has invaded your region spreading in its wake a red virus which chokes the life out of the very heart of the land. To combat the threat, a hoverplane is made available to patrol the region, armed with missiles and a laser cannon and controlled, by you, via the keyboard or mouse (the former being slightly easier to master the intricate ship controls.)

Two further spacecraft have been added to the alien forces infesting the ST version; an Attractor uses a tractor beam to pull the hoverplane into the ground if it gets too close and a mystery spacecraft appears later on in the game armed with a lethal new weapons system. Otherwise the gameplay is similar to Zarch (reviewed TGM002 81%).

The ST's large colour palette is extensively used in Virus by any other name repetitive but the execution makes it stand out from other games. While the ST's 16-bit processor can't match the speed of a RISC machine, the scrolling is still rapid. Sound is limited but effective and the ST's colour range is extensively used. The impact of Virus comes not so much from its impressive graphics and technical prowess but from the closeness with which the ST version replicates the original 32-bit RISC game.

**ATARI ST:** OVERALL 83%

**BRICKBAT**

**BRIX II**

**PC Leisure/Prism**

We reported in TGM008 (page 7) the Prism Leisure Corporation's resurgence, and following last month's Arac conversion, this game is the second in a series of five PC Leisure budget games for 1988.

It has a lot in common with one of the oldest and most basic types of computer game, the Breakout genre. Programmed by Richard L Wright, it is his first game.

Breakout games enjoyed something of a revival last year with the superb Arkanoid. Brix II adds to the formula by having four bats, each on one side of the screen, rather than the usual one. Parallel bats, (top and bottom, left and right) move in tandem so not too many keys are needed. Other special features include big bats, trick bats, speed bats.

In theory Brix II sounds interesting, but the execution is poor. When the centre of the screen is filled with bricks there is very little time to react to rebounds and with such unimaginative designs and use of colour there isn't much incentive to persist.

The screen editor is a lot easier to use than actually playing the game, but unfortunately there's no save option so the point is a little questionable. Using the editor to review the game's 20 screens shows the programmer's own lack of inspiration for this unattractive and overly difficult Breakout clone.

**PC Diskette:** £9.99

Apart from the fact that Brix II autoboots, it's difficult to find much worth praising in this program. Sound FX are dire, while the graphics are poorly designed and make unimaginative use of a non-EGA palette. 'User-defined keys' in fact merely offer a choice between shift, ESC and CTRL keys. Avoid.

**OVERALL 17%**

An unattractive and overly difficult Breakout clone.
Children Without Brains sound more like a pop band than programmers (and behaved like one at last year's PCW Show when Thalamus signed them up.) They're a four-man Dutch team.

Many centuries ago a prosperous and thriving civilization was raided by the Skryksis, a vicious band of space nomads who built huge industrial radiation plants on their planet. These eventually poisoned the atmosphere and destroyed most life. Those that did survive retreated underground and swore revenge on the nomads. They built a synthetic warrior to fight for their cause - half human, half machine - it was capable of withstanding the crippling conditions above ground and sufficiently armed to tackle the heavily guarded sectors around the radiation plants.

It was decided that computers would not react fast enough to the type of opponent the Synthetic Life Form (SLF) would have to deal with, it had to be guided by remote control, a task entrusted to a veteran soldier called Hawkeye - the fight for justice begins.

**Power surge**

The game takes place over a horizontally parallax-scrolling landscape, with you in control of the SLF. The various environments in which you engage the enemy include cities, icy plains, dusty deserts and ultimately the Skryksis central base. The enemies encountered attack in droves and take the form of flying creatures, giant robots and prehistoric animals. In an attempt to counter their destructive efforts the warrior is armed with an impressive array of weapons: a hand gun, machine gun, laser rifle and - most devastating of all - a rocket launcher. All weapons (apart from the hand gun) have limited ammunition, although reloads can be performed by picking up the correct icon.

Horizontal parallax scrolling

As well as beating off the incessant enemy attacks, four puzzle pieces have to be collected to complete the current level. Your inventory of icons is indicated on the panel above the play area. Once all four pieces are collected, you are whisked to the bonus screen where a power, bullet, laser and rocket bonus are awarded. These are displayed as a subtotal before the SLF is sent to deal with the next of the 12 levels.

In development for the better part of a year, Hawkeye's large, well-animated graphics bear the polish marks of dedication and are the game's most outstanding feature.

**COMMODORE 64/128**
Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £12.99

Graphically and aurally very professional, it falls short of Thalamus's previous high standard in gameplay, which is run-of-the-mill. Control of the warrior is at times finicky as pixel perfect accuracy is needed to reach some of the platforms. Hawkeye is a good version of a tried and tested game format.

OVERALL 80%

**OTHER VERSIONS**
An Amiga version is under consideration.

"Large, well-animated graphics bear the polish marks of dedication"
Against a silver moon ... an awesome shape emerges ... rumbling towards its destiny.

**STRATEGY SIMULATION**

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Gremlin Graphics Software Ltd., Alpha House
50,000 tons of awesome power knifes its way through an ink black sea!

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POOR CHOICE

SHACKLED
US GOLD

This US Gold version of a 1986 Data East arcade game was programmed by Choice Software, who tend to specialise in conversions. Their previous games include World Games, California Games and Kung Fu Master.

For reasons that are less than obvious, all your friends have been kidnapped and imprisoned in the cells of a huge underground complex. Naturally you set out to rescue them and in the dead of night enter the complex. Viewed from a similar perspective to Gauntlet a second player can join in to help explore the dungeons and rescue imprisoned friends.

A friend in need
Masses of stupid but heavily armed guards pack the corridors and dungeons of this strange place. Cell doors can be opened by blasting them with a weapon and if a friend is inside he will be freed to follow after you. Usefully your friends are all armed with special weapons - perhaps that's why they were imprisoned - which you may use once the friend is rescued. Once you have freed as many friends as you think are on a level you can leave it via the exit - usually behind a special locked door.

There are over 100 levels necessitating a sensible multiload system on cassette versions. To see them all fully use is made of various objects left behind by zapped enemy guards and big monster enemies. The objects include 'speed-up', 'shot-speeds' and 'extra defence'.

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

The Commodore game comes complete with some very nice background music and smooth scrolling. Graphics are bland however and provide little incentive to fight on to the higher levels.

OVERALL 47%

OTHER VERSIONS
An MSX version is planned.

"Unoriginal and repetitive playability, a very unattractive game!"

VERSION UPDATE

It plays to improve your word power

SCRABBLE DE LUXE
Leisure Genius

Atari ST: £19.95
Amiga: £19.95

FOLLOWING last month's De Luxe version of Monopoly on the Commodore 64 come 16-bit conversions of Scrabble De Luxe, originally a monochromatic 128K Spectrum game.

The new Amiga game is in fact Leisure Genius's first for that machine and features an attempt to improve upon the rather flat ST presentation with subtle shading on the plastic-looking tiles and more attractive board colours. While not in any way striking these changes are for the better, although the ST's cardboard-looking wooden tile finish and simplistic board in no way impair playability.

Options include setting a timer for moves, forcing the computer to make its move instantly and even having the computer display what words it's thinking about using.

Gameplay is identical on both machines: up to four players can take part, three of which can be computer-controlled, each having a tray with seven letters. In turn players make up words from their tiles (yes, this is the bit for people who don't know Scrabble), fitting them onto the board by using a letter already there. For instance, you might put GA and ES around M to make GAMES.

The words all score points according to the point values of the letters, and any special board squares which are covered. At any time the computer can be asked to juggle the tiles displayed on your tray or give a hint. The latter is particularly useful when playing a computer opponent on skill level 8.

The 16-bit versions have just 4,000 more words than the 20,000-word vocabulary of the Spectrum, and on higher levels some of the obscure ones seem almost specially designed for the game and aren't in most single-volume dictionaries. At the same time words like 'mount' and 'vinery' aren't included in the vocabulary, so a dictionary is useful for checking your own words when the computer challenges.

Unlike most boardgames, this loses little in its computer translation - and the 16-bit opponent can prove very tough indeed. If you like word games both conversions should prove very attractive.

ATARI ST: OVERALL 68%
AMIGA: OVERALL 70%

Unlike mat boardgms, the lses little in its coputr trrrerl - mge

AMSTRAD
Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £14.99

The Spectrum has minimal sound FX and graphics that are both monochrome and poorly detailed. This, combined with unoriginal and repetitive gameplay, makes Shackled a very unattractive prospect.

OVERALL 43%
DOWNHILL IN Epyx Style

THE GAMES (WINTER EDITION)

Epyx/US GOLD

It may have missed the Winter Olympics at Calgary in Canada but The Games is just in time for the Summer Olympics. The delay was due to the American version containing references to Epyx sponsorship. They sponsored the American US Olympic Committee and as is irrelevant to the UK and European markets all references have been removed. The Summer Edition of The Games will follow.

Like previous Epyx programs in the Olympic Games series, The Games's seven events start with the Opening Ceremony, lighting the Calgary Olympic Flame.

Up to eight players may compete in or practice any number of events; high scores can be saved to disk.

The luge is first, a sport requiring intense concentration as you slide through a heavily loaded closed track at horrific speeds. It's similar to the bobsleigh run but without any protection of the body - the luge competitor needs to keep from hitting the track walls, take curves tightly and avoid the straights. Once moving down the track, the event becomes a simple matter of memorising the route, and maintaining a steady course using left and right on the joystick.

Second is cross-country skiing. Power, continuous rhythm and sheer determination are all qualities skiers need to survive the punishment of crossing one, two or five kilometres of snowy terrain. The rhythm method

The skiing continues with the slalom shown through a third-person view as you and an opponent race down the slope, snowing between the flags. 350- and 400-metre slopes are the challenge; each has two skill levels. The skier must keep close to the flags to reduce drift and record a good time - missing the sequence or hitting the side incurs a fault. The slalom is simple in gameplay and style but requires rhythm control and coordination throughout.

The sport of speed skating has already been recreated in Epyx's Winter Games. And for the event here, the skaters are displayed head-on and the track is shown around the outside. While merely a reworking of Winter Games, this event is enjoyable, using the familiar rhythm control method as the player times joystick movements with the motion of the skater's arms and legs. As always practice makes perfect and Epyx veterans shouldn't have any problems. It's an improvement on the Winter Games version in graphics and general feel.

The seventh and final event, downhill, is also graphically the crudest. Viewed in first-person perspective, you race down the mountain passing through gates. At the start, up to four cameras can be set up along the route to record progress - the view changing to third-person perspective as you pass them. The simple graphics of gates rushing past make it a fast event and help capture the thrill of downhill racing. To become proficient, remember the layout of gates and gradually increase your speed to set new world records.

The Games ends with the closing ceremony with each country awarded its medals, the Olympic Flame going out and the night-time sky lit up by fireworks explosions.

With Winter Games already available there's a sense of déjà vu with The Games (Winter Edition). Epyx have stuck to their familiar control methods - which are now showing their age. The sporting and competitive element which made earlier Epyx products so successful is lost in ridiculously difficult events such as figure skating. The concept is rather tired.

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

True to the Epyx standards, the graphics for much of the game are excellent with animation to match - sound is also suitably atmospheric. The opening and closing ceremonies, medal awarding screens and overall presentation is of a high standard. Disk access occurs for each event meaning cassette owners get a raw deal once again.

OVERALL 75%

OTHER VERSIONS

“There's a sense of déjà vu, the style is now showing its age”

Concentration, steering and snow goggles are essential for the luge...
A WRONG CHARLIE

STARRING CHARLIE CHAPLIN

US Gold

Some nine months after TGM001 showed screenshots of the ST version, the game has at last been released for some home computers. The programming house responsible is Canvas; their people wrote Wizard Warz and converted Road Runner. Conversions for Spectrum and Amstrad are by Tiertech.

Besides being a renowned actor, Chaplin was also a respected director/producer – the US Gold game has you taking on all these roles.

To begin with, as a prospective film-maker you must select which of the available scripts he will shoot – the best place to start is a of the considerably more scripts than on the 8-bit offerings with an option to save and even a little music during the public showing. If playability had been better this would have been a very good game.

OVERALL 57%

SPECTRUM 48/128
Cassette: £8.99
Diskette: £12.99

Monochrome graphics are well suited to this machine and these do look very nice – in a Skool Daze-ish way. But sound FX are minimal and lend little atmosphere to this dull game.

OVERALL 51%

OTHER VERSIONS


"... a nice idea but with little action."

VERSION UPDATE

The conversion of the sentry?

THE SENTINEL

Firebird

Amiga: £19.95

ONE of the most original games ever to appear on home computers. The Sentinel caused something of a sensation in ZZAP 64! magazine where the Commodore 64 version of this original BBC game was judged unrateable and 'the best game ever written for a computer'.

TGM001 carried news of an ST conversion and an 'imminent' Amiga one. The delay in the latter's release seems to have been justified, however, by the addition of an especially atmospheric soundtrack.

Gameplay remains essentially unchanged, with you becoming a Synthoid in a quest to overthrow the Sentinel's rule on 10,000 worlds. The battle is fought in terms of energy over solid 3-D landscapes from the Synthoid's point-of-view. On the first battleground, for instance, the Synthoid is placed at the lowest part of the landscape while a Sentinel clone rotates at the highest point on its special pedestal. The gaze of the Sentinel drains energy from wherever it looks, so survival depends upon staying ahead of this lighthouse-like absorption beam.

The Synthoid moves by creating a replica of itself and transferring across into it. Once in the new shape, you should conserve energy by guiding the cross-sight over to the old shape and absorbing its energy. An object can only be absorbed if its base square can be seen, so to absorb the level's Sentinel a player must constantly seek high ground, achieved by using energy to create boulders upon which the next Synthoid replica can be placed.

Energy can be collected by absorbing trees growing in the landscape. Each is worth one energy point; it's worth delaying the final assault on the Sentinel until as many trees as possible have been absorbed, because the amount of energy held at the end of a level determines how many levels you can jump for the next turn.

At the end of each level a code is given for the next, so ultimately it's possible to reach level 10,000.

On later levels the Sentinel is aided and abetted by several Sentinels, and there can be as many as five death-beams sweeping the landscape. Fortunately for 16-bit owners there's a help function giving an in-game map on demand.

To begin with The Sentinel may prove frustrating, although the mouse control option helpfully cuts down on the keys needed, but once the first landscape has been mastered you will be hooked on one of the most compelling games ever. Scrolling remains stepped, like Driller, but is much faster on the Amiga and, together with some excellent music, makes this a first-rate conversion of a first-class game.

AMIGA: OVERALL 94%
HOLM IS WHERE THE HEART IS
THE FAERY TALE ADVENTURE

Finally there's a Microillusions game not designed by the infamous Reichart Von Wolfsheld; instead one David Joiner, looking very menacing on the packaging in his award-winning black armour, lays claim to this graphical adventure. The Faery Tale Adventure has been an expensive import, but now Mediagenic have taken over distribution the price has become more reasonable. Once upon a time they didn't have many different openings lines to a story, not even in the Magical Land of Holm where a Master at Arms and his family lived in a peaceful little village. The Master at Arms had three children, Julian, Phillip and Kevin who were as different as could be. Destiny, it might seem, would be very different for the brothers - but eventually all were to be dedicated to one, all-important mission.

In the past the village had been protected by a talisman, but now it was without help, and but little spirit draining, he told of an evil Necromancer who held sway over the land, of Malbareth the Seer who had predicted such a thing, and of a remedy; perhaps.

The quest to defeat the Necromancer was dangerous, but the brothers undertook it with a proud determination.

VERSION UPDATE

RETURN TO GENESIS

Amiga: £19.95

A GAME which began as a Steve Bak demonstration of high-speed, two-way horizontal scrolling on the ST (TGM9006 81%) has now, somewhat ironically, ended up on the Amiga.

The game's scenario, which involves cloning and intergalactic war, is effective window-dressing around a fast-reaction, shoot-at-everything-but-scientists game. Each world has 12 scientists who must either be rescued or killed before the spaceship can go on to the next level. The almost inevitable alien fleet patrolling these worlds is especially lethal when attacking from the rear since inertia makes it tricky to turn and shoot. Of course it's perfectly possible to outrun these ships, but at the required speeds reactions are strained to the limit.

Collisions with the heavily detailed scenery can't directly harm your Nomad skimmer, but rebounding into the pursuing enemy invariably does. At first death seems all too close, but after practice you can survive - though the game is never easy. Some help is offered by rescued scientists, however, and once collected they can add triple-fire lasers, smart bombs and even invisibility/invulnerability to the ship. Any such selected add-on is lost when the ship is destroyed.

The Amiga's Return To Genesis is virtually indistinguishable from the technically flawless ST original. On the Amiga the effortless scrolling is a little less obviously 'impressive', but the appeal of the graphics and the exceptionally tough, but fair, challenge remains intact. It's a pity that the later levels - easily seen, as with the ST version, in the ten-level demo - are not of the same excellent standard as the earlier ones.

AMIGA: OVERALL 77%

OTHER VERSIONS

In the process of being written are conversions for the C64 and IBM PC, both for £29.99 on disk.

"While no longer state-of-the-art, Faery Tale is an intriguing arcade adventure"

The Faery Tale Adventure has some nice, thoughtful features - ghosts of the killed brothers give advice to the siblings that follow them on the quest. There's a lot of walking to be done, however, and the whirr of the disk drive announcing new enemies to battle can become wearisome after a while. Solving the game requires lots of mapping, fast reactions to kill the ogres who often carry valuable items, and patience. While no longer state-of-the-art, nor quite as atmospheric as Where Time Stood Still, this remains an intriguing graphic, virtually-arcade adventure that has hardly dated.

AMIGA Diskette: £29.99

Graphically pleasing rather than astounding, some unconvincing animation is compensated for by realistic touches such as the welter of blood when someone is convincingly killed, and the bubbles surfacing overhead should a character walk under water. A nice tune and adequate sound FX accompany the graphics, making this an attractive and compelling game.

OVERALL 79%
Project Stealth Fighter

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COMING SOON

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OWN GOAL

PETER BEARDSLEY'S INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL
Grandslam Entertainments

Software houses have rapidly realised the sales potential of licensing major football celebrities to adorn the covers of their games. Gary Lineker and Peter Shilton have already been snapped up and even the inimitable duo Saint and Greaves are soon to make the perilous journey onto home computers with Elite Systems. Now, Peter Beardsley, one of Liverpool's most successful attackers of recent times has been signed up by Grandslam Entertainments to promote a game by Teque Software Design – authors of many Grandslam products including The Flintstones, Terramex and Chubby Gristle.

Peter Beardsley's International Football recreates the European Championships in which the cream of the teams meet to decide the Champions of Europe. One or two players can take part in the football action, each having a free rein to choose any one of the 34 teams on offer. Eight teams play in two groups through the first qualifying rounds, the four successful teams go through to the semi-finals to decide who meets in the final.

To begin you select the length of the match (it can be from five to up to 20 minutes), choose a one- or two-player league and begin the championships. The matches are played over a pitch made up of three horizontally scrolling screens. A full complement of 22 players take part, but the referee and linesmen seem to have vanished. You are supposed to control the player nearest the ball (highlighted by an arrow over his head), unfortunately the computer often selected a player some distance away making it difficult to gain possession. The goalkeeper is also under your direct control and comes into play as and when necessary.

Corners, goal kicks, throw-ins and free kicks are all catered for, the strength of a ball kick or throw-in is directly proportional to the length of time the fire button is held down. This’s a simple method, but unfortunately it fails to include back-kicks, chipping and slicing the ball. 

Tough and simple
If only the real life European Championships were as easy as the computer game. Within minutes of beginning the game, we discovered a nasty cheat whereby simply running along with the ball, occasionally tapping it, reduces the opposition to mere bystanders, leaving only the goalkeeper as a last ditch defence. A normal game is extremely tough to play as the defenders are very quick off the mark and annoyingly brilliant at intercepting free balls. While attempting to do nothing more than concentrate on the action of football, the computer game leaves out fundamental elements. Tactics are very difficult to employ and the other players rarely move into good positions from which goals can be scored, making a run through the defences the only successful option. The cheat makes it a very easy game, without which it's almost impossible to win. The final nail in the game's coffin is the computer's frequent inability to intercept and keep the ball.

VERSIPN UPDATE

PHANTASM
Exocet
Amiga: £19.95

Last month we reviewed the ST release (TGM008, 73%) of this Tau Ceti clone, now converted for the Amiga by Keith Jackson.

The action takes place on an enemy moon where, before your ship can take off, you must find an enemy's stronghold 'reconstituted' and located somewhere in 64 different zones. Exploration offers a classic Tau Ceti pilot's-eye-view skimming across the 3-D landscape. Enemy ships, tanks and fortresses appear on the horizon and realistically grow bigger as you approach them. Lasers, missiles and antimissiles are your prime weapons in battle, with death inevitable if shields or fuel reach zero. Four skill levels, including a special training level where you cannot score, provide plenty of long-term challenge – but by comparison with Pete Cooke's original, the lack of depth is disappointing. One improvement is the replacement of a damage report window with a display panel which blanks out system icons as they're destroyed. (This has since been added to ST versions as well.) Apart from the superior music, however, the Amiga game is virtually identical to the ST one.

AMIGA: OVERALL 73%

ATARI ST
Diskette: £19.95

Graphically, Peter Beardsley's International Football is very good, the players are detailed, neatly animated and move well, with good use made of the ST's colours. Sound is likewise of a high standard, with a series of jolly football tunes continuously playing and some effective soccer sounds – such as the crowd cheering when a goal is scored.

OVERALL 52%

AMIGA
Diskette: £19.95

In all respects this version is very similar to its ST counterpart. The tunes are slightly slower adding a more sedate atmosphere to the action. Gameplay has been tweaked a little allowing the player a better chance of intercepting and keeping the ball.

OVERALL 55%

OTHER VERSIONS
Peter Beardsley is to make an appearance on the Commodore 64/128: cass £9.95, disk £14.95, Amstrad CPC: cass £8.95, disk £14.95, Spectrum 46/128: cass £6.95 and MSX: cass £8.95. A PC version is being considered.

"Tactics are difficult to employ and players rarely move into good positions"
HOP AND GLORY

HOPPING MAD
Elite Systems

Inspired by Cataball – included 'free' on one of Elite's Trio packs – this imaginative game idea has been expanded and improved on the Commodore 64 by Chris Coupe's coding and Mark Cooksey's graphics. Spectrum and Amstrad conversions have both been done by Neil Lataarche (coding) and Lizzie (graphics).

This distinctly surreal game comes to us unencumbered by a convoluted scenario explaining why four balls might be bouncing, in sequence, across various landscapes. It is difficult to imagine what could motivate four relatively normal looking balls to go globe-trotting collecting balloons. Perhaps there are things in life that are better not known.

Hopping Mad has 14 levels of increasingly bizarre landscapes, all of which require the balls to collect ten balloons before accessing the next level. Collisions can dematerialise any of the four balls and when all are lost a life is taken. There are three lives to begin with, easily lost to such assorted enemies as Venus flytraps, bees and sharp rocks on the first level. Later levels have the balls bobbing on the sea bed, trembling though a haunted forest and basking under a Wild West sun.

Ball-bursting objects change according to the level – from starfish to ghosts to cacti. Point bonuses vary similarly, with apples being the most fruitful on level one. Even more points can be gathered by quickly completing the game to receive a time bonus. Once a level is finished you start the next with all four balls. Gameplay across the three 8-bit versions (no others are planned) is similar, only varying slightly in difficulty.

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

Colourful sideways scrolling games are a forte of the Commodore and without even trying, the machine presents Hopping Mad in its most colourful form. A jolly intro tune and effective sound FX make this an enjoyable, if less than amazing, challenge.
OVERALL 67%

AMSTRAD CPC

Scrolling is smooth but, as on the Spectrum, at the price of some dull graphics with a four-colour, mode-one palette unimaginatively utilised. While not making best use of the machine, it's as rewarding to play as the Spectrum game.
OVERALL 64%

"An enjoyable, if less than amazing, challenge"

SPECTRUM 48/128

This version scrolls well but the need to avoid colour clash makes the balls a rather dull black – in fact the graphics are generally unremarkable. Sound FX are perfunctory, but there is a nice intro tune. Gameplay is much the same as on the C64, albeit harder.
OVERALL 66%

VERSION UPDATE

SKYFOX II
Electronic Arts

PC: £24.95

Written by American company Dynamix – creators of Arcticfox, Skyfox II was reviewed in TGM 004 (Commodore 64/128, 85%).

Using keyboard, mouse or joystick, take off for deep space in the new, improved Skyfox II Warp Fighter to battle with Xenomorphs through ten possible missions. These include escorting starbases and passing asteroids.

The style of presentation is different to Skyfox, but the gameplay is similar, involving launching, navigating to a target with the subsequent destruction and return to base to complete the mission.

The full range of EGA colours are not used, but the subtle shadings create an effective atmosphere of future war. Sound comprises only moderate explosions and laser sounds – nothing in the Mach 3 league. Apart from the greater speed and slight improvements in graphic definition, the gameplay is a direct copy of the Commodore 64 version. While not an outstanding game, Skyfox II is certainly an improvement over the original Skyfox in graphics, sonics and gameplay – and it offers a nice intro tune. Gameplay is much the same as on the C64, albeit harder.

OVERALL 77%

Commodore 64 version. While not an outstanding game, Skyfox II is certainly an improvement over the original Skyfox in graphics, sonics and gameplay – and it offers a nice intro tune. Gameplay is much the same as on the C64, albeit harder.

OVERALL 77%

A Skyfox in sequel's clothing – with great speed and shading
DOZING AWAY...

KILLDOZERS

Lankhor

Lankhor is a well-respected French software house, with a number of successful releases in that country – especially in the adventure field. Strange, then, that the company’s first UK release should be one of their weaker arcade games.

Controlling one of a selection of four differently equipped Killdozers your objective is to trundle around a flick-screen maze, viewed from above, and rescue engineers from the clutches of the evil supercomputer Unicom. One engineer is held captive on each level; rescue him Unicom. One engineer is held clutches of the evil supercomputer rescue engineers from the maze, viewed from above, and four differently equipped Controlling one of a selection of with three different weapons which are accessible at any point, to blast the hordes of robotic aliens in your path.

I tank, therefore I am Killdozers attempts to provide a combination of arcade, role-playing, adventure and strategy game features. But unfortunately these elements merely give a confused feeling.

The point of most maze games is to solve puzzles and progress... but not so with Killdozers, you simply trundle on through blasting away. The limited action quickly becomes tedious, the overall task is neither rewarding nor challenging, and Killdozers is a disappointing launch product for Lankhor.

A Killdozer construction set is supplied with the game, incorporating few restrictions – although you have to use the graphics already provided – it is easy to use and clearly documented. Designer mazes can be saved out to a data disk, but they won’t run without the utility present. The construction set is an interesting addition to the package but hardly makes purchase worthwhile.

A ST-RATEGIC STEP TO A 16-BIT FUTURE

QUADRALIEN

Logotron

Logotron’s first ST release marks their determination to be almost exclusively 16-bit from now on. Quadralien’s programmers, Astral Software, have had one previous release – Xor – which was converted to the ST for Atari. The vast orbital nuclear-fission complex called Astra represented the cutting edge of 21st-century technology – and all the dangers contained therein. When Astra went on security alert, allowing no visitors and blocking all control transmissions, its makers declared a crisis. When telemetry indicated that control devices had broken down, making an orbital meltdown imminent, most people panicked.

You don’t panic, and are subsequently floated across to the Astra from a shuttle and installed in its control room. Your aim is to shut the complex down by controlling its complement of workerdroids. The Astra is made up of three levels leading up to a central core complex. Passcodes are required for access to all but the first level. Each level is made up of six rooms – each several screens big – which must be cleared of all radioactive material before temperatures rise high enough to kill you.

For each room there is a choice of six droids, from which two can be picked to carry out the clean-up operation (presented in overhead, flick-screen fashion.) One droid can absorb up to 25 radioactive items before needing to be scrubbed at an information point, others can carry only five but are more energy-efficient, can carry bigger energy charges or have a better laser system. Also important when selecting droids is whether they have a Geiger counter and/or carry detonators.

Repellors

In room one gameplay consists simply of finding the material and absorbing it, later on puzzles and arcade elements come to the fore. Puzzle elements derive from red attractor and blue repellor crates which react with each other according to type. Shoving the correct crate can mean the difference between smoothly getting to the radioactivity and having to laser your way through. Also to be puzzled over are coolant barrels which when pushed down utility chutes lower the temperature. These barrels are rarely located close to the chutes and have most influence when temperatures are high – and dangerous. Directional forcefields allowing one-way access, magnetic tracks spinning crates around and non-laser rooms strain the old grey matter further.

Arcade action comes on the tougher rooms where the quadraliens responsible for the control malfunctions are to be found. Most are contained in special multicoloured chambers, but when shot zoom around at high speed, draining energy at a frantic rate if they contact your droid – killing them requires good tactics and fast reactions. While it
There are no conversions and sampled sound FX.

"... the task is neither rewarding nor challenging, Killdozers is disappointing."

ATARI ST
Diskette: £19.95
Killdozers is an uninteresting game, befeft with reasonable 16-bit graphics and sampled sound FX. Unfortunately the frequent, laborious disk access and poor playability are not hidden by cosmetic frills. The flick-screen technique is needlessly slow, making the whole game a nonstarter.
OVERALL 37%

OTHER VERSIONS
There are no conversions planned.

"If you enjoy a challenging strategic puzzle you should like Quadrailen."

VERSIO UPDATE
Impossible dream

IMPOSSIBLE MISSION II
US GOLD

PC: £24.99
FIRST reviewed in TGM006, with a version update in TGM007. Conversions continue to trickle out for this sequel, with more still to come. The PC version has been programmed by Novotrade Software Studios - they wrote the original game - while the Amstrad game - in a shining example of Glasnost - was done by Andromeda of Hungary.

Basic gameplay remains true to the impossible Mission formula, platforms-and-ladders, running and jumping to collect items while avoiding the six types of sentrybots. Both versions load in towers as they come, with the Amstrad cassette player needing to be zeroed for the moment when you die. One advantage of the PC game is that it can be saved.

Sound on both is minimal. The PC version has colour, but there are no user-definable keys. It is a rather old coin-op on the ST.

OVERALL 72%

VERSIO UPDATE
Side Arms

Side Arms is released on the Commodore 64, version reviewed in TGM004.

Atari ST: £19.99

SIDE ARMS is released on the Commodore 64, version reviewed in TGM004.

SIDE ARMS is released on the Commodore 64, version reviewed in TGM004.

OVERALL 71%

OTHER VERSIONS
An Amiga version is due for release about now for the same price as the ST, a PC version will be slightly more expensive at £24.95 and should be released in September.

"If you enjoy a challenging strategic puzzle you should like Quadrailen."

VERSIO UPDATE
Side Arms

Side Arms is released on the Commodore 64, version reviewed in TGM004.

Atari ST: £19.99

SIDE ARMS is released on the Commodore 64, version reviewed in TGM004.

Square machine and 64 version were dual-player games. The objective is to destroy the alien guardian and the snake-like mother alien infesting the final stage - stage ten. The hero is a trooper armed with a jet-pac, a laser which can be upgraded to any of five other weapons.

For the most part, the graphics are very good; the warrior is devoid of anything more than subtle, grey colouring, but collecting the power-up capsule turns him into an eight-way-firing supersoldier, graphically not much different but far more devastating in effect. The background landscapes are high in detail and scroll smoothly.

Later levels have vertically and horizontally scrolling caverns, limiting your movement even further - agility, speed and accuracy are essential. Large, fast-moving aliens, unfairly small bullet sizes, death-by-contact rock faces and stationary spacecrafts take up vital space in each cave, making it a tough, fast game. The game is joystick- or mouse-controlled, although the former fails a long way short of providing the precision required to stay alive. Without the mouse, the game is very hard to play.

ST Side Arms contains more gameplay than it did on the Commodore, but, with only one warrior to control, it becomes merely another shoot-'em-up with better than average graphics and sound - the tune playing throughout is well done and unobtrusive, other effects are limited to laser-fire and explosions. However, it is an enjoyable action-packed game which has come across well from the coin-op.

ATARI ST: OVERALL 72%
OVERHEAD KILL

THE FURY
Martech

After the Page 3 glamour of Vixen Martech’s latest game reverts to the more conventional appeal of full-blooded violence. Programming is by Creative Reality, who also produced the 2000 AD licences Sláine and Nemesis The Warlock for Martech.

In the late 1980s an extraordinary relaxation in American laws allowed the first Rim Race track in the Arizona desert. 20 km in diameter, the track claimed 438 lives during the two weeks of races. By 2010 the races’ phenomenal popularity led to an even bigger track being built in orbit around Raal’s moon. Media attention was subsequently heightened by the death of a driver in a mysterious incident known as The Fury. The disaster has been attributed to passing through into another dimension.

The Fury is essentially an overhead-view, sideways scrolling, shoot-'em-up, race game. Moving the joystick left accelerates the car, while moving right decelerates it and up and down moves the car in the appropriate directions. Pressing fire releases the selected weapon on Killing Races – whether winning depends on exceeding your race kill quota. The other two types of races are Time Runs – to continue, you must beat a qualification time – and Tag Races, where the car is selected as “it” and has to suffer constant damage. Touching another transfers the tag. In both these races weapons aren’t allowed, so only by ramming can a kill bonus (in Galactic Graits) be earned. Money isn’t the only incentive to violence, however, price range, for example, shield power is increased but only at the cost of higher fuel consumption. While it is suggestive of a horizontally-scrolling Allekat, poor graphics and restricted gameplay make The Fury distinctly second-rate. Blasting enemies off the road provides some fun, but the non-violent races lack excitement and it’s irritating that with so much empty screen the vital damage indicator is both small and hard to read.

AMSTRAD CPC
Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £14.99

With a noticeably smaller playing area than the Spectrum, the blandness of the in-game graphics – every car is identical – is yet more apparent. Sound FX are functional but nothing special, which describes the game itself.

OVERALL 53%

OTHER VERSIONS
A Commodore 64 version will be released in July at £9.99 on cassette and £12.99 on diskette.

“Poor graphics and restricted gameplay make The Fury distinctly second-rate”

VERSION UPDATE

Polishing a cliche

SIDEWINDER
Mastertronic

Atari ST: £9.99

Originally an Amiga-based arcade coin-op, this superb vertically-scrolling shoot-'em-up earned 93% in its Amiga home computer version reviewed in TGM008. Three months later Binary Designs (Glider Rider, ST Road Wars) have translated the game for the Atari ST.

The scenario is off-the-peg standard: lone fighter against the huge enemy ship and its massed defences. While originality is not the game’s strong suit, its intelligent and graphically polished reworking of a computer cliché is. Each of the game’s five sections, loaded from disk, features a distinct and quite beautifully detailed landscapes ranging from leafy hydroponics farms to the fleshy, Alien Syndromeish level 5. Probably the best part of the landscapes, however, is the immensely satisfying explosions which accompany their destruction. In addition once the flames burn out you can see the often still glowing wreckage left behind – a nice, realistic touch which together with incredible sound effects helps make gameplay so addictive.

The objective of the game is simply to survive the enemy onslaught while making as high a score as possible. Alien defences include vast numbers of gun turrets, ground crawlers and kamikaze fighters, the numbers and ferocity of which depend on the five skill levels, changeable in-game. Helping the player are power packs giving rapid fire, more powerful shots, shields and a hover (temporarily arresting the sideways scroll to allow complete devastation of the immediate area).

The only real ST flaw is the slight jankiness of the sideways scroll, which – as on the Amiga – gives the player some very useful room to manoeuvre in the game’s margins. Graphically, however, the ST game is extremely close to the Amiga and, incredibly, scrolls twice as quickly, making this version a lot faster and harder to play. Sidewinder on the Amiga was a great game making good use of the machine; ST Sidewinder is even better.

ATARI ST: OVERALL 94%

Faster, furiouser, and more satisfying than the Amiga version
A GREAT ESCAPE
WHERE TIME STOOD STILL
Ocean

It used to seem time would never stand still for Denton Designs — they've been one of the most imaginative and successful programming teams in the Spectrum's history. And for years they kept surprising us with Gift Of The Gods, with the first major icon-driven arcade adventure — Shadowwire — and with the exquisitely bizarre Frankie Goes To Hollywood. But we've had to wait almost two years for this Spectrum 128K-only game, which picks up stylistically where the team's 1986 The Great Escape left off.

The adventure begins with a plane crash on a remote, Himalayan plateau hundreds of stormblown kilometres from the aircraft's flight plan. The crash destroys the plane — but miraculously leaves passengers and pilot unharmed. As the stunned survivors mill around the wreckage, the pilot, Jarret, takes command. His marooned fellow companions are not natural survivors: Clive is wealthy and overweight while his daughter and her fiancé Dirk also appear used to the easy life. Jarret has his work cut out if he is to successfully return his entourage to the relative safety of civilisation.

The use of food
Presented in scrolling, isometric perspective, Where Time Stood Still is monochrome but has numerous features — a bridge, a native village and waterfalls, for example — so perfectly detailed that colour would be just a distraction (even the ST version will be monochrome). At the bottom of the screen the group's strength, health and ammunition are displayed as bars. Each character has an individual inventory, selected from the group menu, and can be ordered to walk over and pick up nearby objects. If one character should 'use' the food or drink carried, the group collectively benefits. Similarly the number of points scored depends on how many characters remain in your party.

Normally you have full joystick control over Jarret, but care should be taken not to set too fast a pace or others may be left behind. Alternatively if you do nothing they might wander off on their own.

Should Jarret die, you are given the choice of remaining characters to control. If they are still together whatever you pick will be leader, if not you have to go it alone. Dangers to watch out for include pterodactyls that carry off people to their deaths, a swamp monster and rock falls. Most dangers are announced with a snatch of ominous music, giving at least some chance to respond. Fortunately each team member has a gun, but care should be taken not to act recklessly.

The lack of a game-saving function can mean too much repetitive retrafficking of your path, but by holding down FIRE you can make the survivors run a lot faster — albeit at the cost of a greater energy drain. And with so many different things to be discovered, from mysterious temples to pygmy natives, this is one game you simply won't be able to give up on.

VERSION UPDATE
THE FLINTSTONES
Grandslam Entertainments

Spectrum 48/128 Cassette: £8.95
Amstrad CPC Cassette: £8.95, Diskette: £12.95
Commodore 64/128 Cassette: £9.95, Diskette: £14.95

From the Amiga and ST versions (TGM006 76% and 75% respectively) Fred Flinstone, man of prehistoric suburbia, has the task of family life on his hands in these 8-bit conversions by Teque Software Developments. The game plan is identical to previous versions with four games rolled into one package.

Fred's first job is to redecorate the cave, while trying to stem young Pebbles's artistic talent for graffiti, and not lose the energetic paintbrush (a squirrel). Having painted the cave, Fred takes the car to the Bedrock Bowling alley — however, the road is a hazardous one so expect a few wheel changes en route. Fred enters a ten-pin bowling challenge with his old buddy Barney Rubble; achieving double Barney's score makes Fred the winner. Fred troops wearily home to discover Pebbles has done a runner, and he has to search for her amid the platforms and ladders of a building site.

All three 8-bit conversions mirror their predecessors well — with graphics that retain the impressive cartoon-like qualities. However, playability remains hard — especially the painting scene. The Commodore version moves at a fair rate, while the Spectrum and Amstrad CPC versions are slow enough to cause frustration.

A reasonable rendition of the Flintstones theme tune — written by Ben Daglish — bubbles during gameplay on all three versions except Spectrum 48K.

SPECTRUM 48/128: OVERALL 65%
AMSTRAD CPC: OVERALL 68%
COMMODORE 64/128: OVERALL 63%

"An instant classic on the Spectrum"

From beyond the cave: happy families in prehistoric suburbia — Commodore 64/128.
ut five years ago for the Commodore 64 and Apple II computers, Strategic Studies Group has restructured this to incorporate menus and a new Advanced Game – included in this third edition PC version. Since Electronic Arts are now distributing the Australian-based SSG's products in the UK, expect to see a lot more in TGM.

Reach For The Stars is a game of interstellar domination with four empires racing to explore, colonise and conquer a wraparound 34 x 23 2-D galactic grid.

Completely devoid of any kind of scenario and with some nice, but abstract graphics, the game's appeal rests almost entirely on how it plays. Up to four players can take part; but if only one plays the computer controls the other empires, at any of three skill levels. The aim is to win the most victory points by the end of the game, which is typically set between 40 and 150 turns, but may be extended to last until one player has control over the entire galaxy. Victory points are awarded for the development of colonies, destroying enemy ships, conquering enemy planets and destroying enemy colonies. The essential rule of combat is concentration, the bigger your fleet the bigger your margin of victory over the lesser force. This naturally places great emphasis on the economic power of your empire in churning out starships. All production depends on the number of resource points (RPs) generated, these in turn derive from the population, industrial capacity and social level of a planet. Both industry and society require spending RPs to develop and maintain standards. However the better the society the higher the population growth which must be supported at higher costs. Growth should thus be limited to what is necessary to man transport ships. In a basic game...
Decisions on what planets should produce are made. The best tactic is keeping out of trouble, building up an economic base to support a final military burst as the end of the game approaches. In the Advanced Game, however, restrictions on movement make it both slower and more strategic. A number of different strategies are helpfully detailed in the manual for this.

**Buoy scouts**

During play there are two basic types of turn, which alternate each round. Odd numbered turns allow production and movement to take place, while even numbered turns are movement only. Movement orders are given through a Task Force Control window and all ships must be formed into Task Forces to be moved. Initially scout ships are most important, and as they progress reports are filed detailing aspects of the systems they visit. Both the destinations of scouts and production details can be turned over to the computer if you should wish. Scouts are obviously important for exploration, and their destruction is a useful pointer to the location of enemy fleets. In the Advanced Game, however, there are no scouts and strong limitations on industrial capacity. Navigation technologies must be developed, for example, before starships can be much use and special armies developed for invasions.

**OVERALL 62%**

The game's appeal is strictly limited to enthusiasts.
Captain Cobra Courageous

Marauder

Design and programming for this arcade shoot-'em-up is credited to Arcanum Software Developments, a four-person team led by Mark Kelly. It's their first game for Hewson, but follows Captain Courageous which was released through English Software.

Long ago, on the heavily defended planet of Mergatron, the stolen jewels of Cymandius were buried at the core of its security systems. That violent and acquisitive civilization has since fallen, although the rusty defences remain operative. Nevertheless Captain CT Cobra has resolved to recover the jewels in his quest Marauder battlecar.

Cobra's struggle is depicted as a vertically scrolling shoot-'em-up with the Marauder fighting its way through the massed Mergatron defences with laser and smart bombs. Enemy weaponry ranges from guns to exotic tanks, from missile launchers to air attack (launched if the battlecar dailies.) Security beacons perform various functions when shot, dependent on their colour. Extra smart bombs, lives, control reversal, a jammed laser and a life lost are some of the features awarded by the beacons.

Global War

Dream Warrior

Tarran may sound like a game title, but in fact it is the name of the programming team which has designed this powerfully plotted entertainment. Programmer Colin Reed, graphic artist Stefan Unowski and audio artist Anthony Lees make up Tarran. Their previous release for US Gold was Captain America, and their third, still in development, is a game about the Cold War, called Berlin.

Governments have withered, leaving power in the hands of megacorporations, and the biggest of these is Focus Corp. Its superiority is owed to a weapon which projects dream demons into minds of opponents, sending them insane. Focus has crushed all opposition and overuse of the dream weapon is slowly sending the world psychotic.

Battling to preserve their sanity four astral scientists - or Asmen - have found out how to defeat the dream weapon. Before they could implement countermeasures, however, three were visited by Ocular - the most fearsome of fantasy demons who imprisoned two in the dream offices of Megabuck Inc and the third on a nightmarish two-headed snake the size of a planetoid. All these phantasms are plagued by demi-demons, guarding the captured Asmen and protecting the black hole through which Ocular can be found. You, the fourth Asman, must rescue your friends and confront Ocular.

Megaibuck's offices are long, horizontally scrolling corridors divided into two sublevels of two, each sublevel linked by a lift. Shooting demi-demons releases different coloured globes which have to be quickly picked up before they dematerialise. Blue globes contain psychic images building up a picture of one of your friends - once completed, the friend is released. Other globes release access cards for lifts and safes, the latter restore energy to maximum when opened. Green globes boost hopper energy so that you can jump from giant demons which appear suddenly, lobbing powerful bombs at you - shoot them to earn a big bonus. Care must be taken to avoid shooting your dream image, though, since awakening it also wakes you - ending the quest.

As soon as sufficient hopper energy is gained, you can jump to the Wyrm planetoid where more demi-demons wait to be shot. In this dream, however, the planetoid can only be reached by walking between the twin snake heads and transforming into a sloop. The sloop must then be flown through alien attack waves back to the hopper. Gravity and the abrupt change of control methods in this stage makes it very difficult. On all levels the dream warrior only has a single life.

Once the psychic images of all your friends have been recovered,
BIONIC COMMANDOS

Capcom

Ocular. Each of the demon's six eyes must be blasted to complete the game.

Oddly, despite a novel-sounding scenario and interesting presentation, gameplay is both unoriginal and repetitive. Running left and right shooting things soon becomes tiresome, especially after abruptly dying in the difficult sloop section. Nevertheless the urge to see Ocular might provide a certain addictiveness.

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

Dream Warrior's presentation is highly polished and very professional; the main figure is nicely animated, background graphics are fair and the sound FX are reasonable, although nothing very special.

OVERALL 51%

OTHER VERSIONS

"Despite a novel-sounding scenario, gameplay is unoriginal and repetitive"

VERSIO UPDATE

Arcade psychedelia

BIONIC COMMANDOS

Capcom

Atari ST: £19.99

Our feature on page 92 points out that new Capcom coin-ops entering arcades later this year will have simultaneous computer conversions through GO!. Meanwhile, conversion of existing coin-ops continues with the release of the Spectrum and ST versions of Bionic Commandos, the all-action arcade game featuring those psychedelic soundtracks reviewed in TGM007 (Commode 64/128, 88%).

Bionic Commandos is a highly playable and generally well-implemented conversion of a great (if not entirely successful) coin-op on both machines.

The ST game begins with some colourful background graphics, small, detailed characters and a speed of action befitting the coin-op. With the advent of the second and third levels, the ST's colours are put to superb use, the rockface, platforms and brick walls really show what can be done with a 16-bit machine. Its tunes, given the lack of effectiveness in the ST's sound chip, are extremely well done, varied, lively and on par with those of the Commodore.

The Spectrum version comes a close second in musical entertainment, while not having the raw power of the Commodore game or the finesse of the ST, there are some excellent tunes. Spectrum characters, platforms and background graphics are limited to one colour, but Bionic Commandos remains a pleasant game to look at.

In both versions, gameplay is very similar, with the ST hardest because attacks by guards, birds and other foes are constant. The speed with which the commando moves on the Spectrum (much quicker than on the Commodore) is a definite benefit, resulting in an easier game to play but no less difficult to master. The Commodore's scrolling has been replaced by a flip-screen technique, which, while a little unsettling to look at, doesn't affect gameplay.

SPECTRUM 48/128: OVERALL 86%

Atari ST: OVERALL 91%

The Spectrum's speedy commando acts more bionically than his counterpart

On the ST, colour and even sound keep this Capcom conversion zipping along
Lords Of Conquest has striking similarities to certain well-known boardgames. Eon Software, the designers, have written over 24 games – they created Cosmic Encounter, the now-classic boardgame which retails in the UK under the Games Workshop banner. The ST version of Lords Of Conquest was written by Thaiean Software.

Lords Of Conquest follows the age-old tradition of warfare in a battle for territory and may be played against up to three players. With territory come the rewards of resources and wealth; from these ultimately come power.

Twenty maps of territories are included although they can also be generated by the computer or designed by the player to recreate conflicts from any era.

Once a map is chosen, the computer randomly distributes the resource centres and cities. Their positions can be changed but initially only one resource is allowed in each region. Cities and centers can be added together and sent to the stockpile for use in the development stage. It is at this stage that horses appear in pasture areas – adding greatly to military strength when conflict takes place – the number of horses increases as new pastures are created through capturing regions. The shipment phase is used to prepare players' forces for attack or defence. On the lowest skill levels, only the stockpile may be moved to other regions primarly a defensive move. Higher levels allow the player to move all forces to regions likely to be attacked or position them for an offensive. Boats can carry horses and weapons from one region to another (provided both have coastlines).

Takeover bids
Conquest follows. When two opposing regions clash, the result of the conflict is determined by weighing up each side's military strength, and the number and computer opponent) providing further variations in strategic play. Lords Of Conquest uses some powerful strategy elements. The computer opponent starts as a relatively passive opponent at beginner level, increasing in strength with higher difficulty levels. The gameplay is not over-sophisticated but the computer opponent's toughness and the unpredictability of other human players make it a challenging game.

The strategy idea is age-old, drawing on ideas from boardgames such as Risk and Diplomacy and, to a certain extent, Othello. Nevertheless, it's good to see this type of classical strategy game on the Atari ST.

OTHER VERSIONS
It's already available on the Commodore 64/128 priced at £9.95 cassette and £12.95 disk. Electronic Arts are considering importing an Apple II version but have no release dates or prices as yet.

"Not too sophisticated but toughness and unpredictability make it challenging"

VERSION UPDATE
BUGGY BOY
Elite Systems

Amiga: £24.99

ALREADY available on the Spectrum, Amstrad CPC, Atari ST and Commodore 64/128, Elite's conversions of Taito's fun Baja Bug racing game conclude with the Amiga version. The buggy is smaller than its ST counterpart, having a very slightly squashed appearance.

The sound effects are surprisingly poor, just the title tune, noise of the engine and a musical interlude when collecting bonus flags. The high degree of playability that existed on other versions is still present – but without effective sound it's not as entertaining as the ST game.

AMIGA: OVERALL 77%
RETURN OF INVADERS FROM OUTER SPACE

BETTER DEAD THAN ALIEN

Electra

This decidedly comic release marks the establishment of a brand-new publishing house, although the primary programmers—Oxford Digital Enterprises—are well-known for such games as Domark's Trivial Pursuit and Grand Slam Entertainments's The Hunt For Red October.

As chronicled by the Better Dead Than Alien comic, brave adventurer Brad Zoom has spent four years travelling through space in his rocketship Argo. Finally on April 11, 1954, the Argo touched down on Mars. Contrary to Brad's expectations, Mars turns out to be warm, and when he takes off his helmet he finds the atmosphere strangely congenial.

Unfortunately before Brad relays this fantastic information to Earth he comes under unprovoked attack by hordes of aliens. Brad naturally replies with his trusty laser rifle before legging it to his rocketship. The Argo's engine lights first go, but once in space Brad finds he has been followed by the foul aliens. If he's ever to see Earth again Brad must blast his way through wave after wave of attackers in a distinctly Space Invaders type escapade.

Blast asteroids

Brad's spaceship is, but for asteroid attacks, confined to the lower quarter of the screen while row after row of aliens slowly descend toward it, taking occasional potshots. Unlike conventional Space Invaders however, when the aliens reach the bottom of the screen they loop around to attack again. At certain stages during the mayhem one of the aliens may glow green and, if shot, a canister is released. Should the Argo be in a position to pick it up, special powers are bestowed.

ATARI ST Diskette: £19.95

The ST has speedier background scrolling, although a little jerky, while control response is better. Nevertheless since the aliens move faster too, this version is tougher than on the Amiga. Sound FX are not quite up to Amiga quality, but a poor performance is still met by digitised laughter—and a good one by applause.

OVERALL 83%

AMIGA

Diskette: £19.95

Backdrop scrolling is jerky, control response is distinctly sluggish but gameplay remains highly addictive due to the great password system. The Amiga's superior sonic capability is exploited with an 'argh' every time the Argo is hit, and generally very good sound FX throughout.

OVERALL 81%

OTHER VERSIONS

No other versions planned.

"Great presentation, addictive gameplay and an infectious sense of humour"
YOUR SEARCH FOR THE ULTIMATE

A bead of sweat gently strokes your brow. Fingers tortured with anticipation. Eyes riveted to the screen. Nothing can stop you now. The record score is one carefully aimed F16 missile away. Ready. Aim. Fire!

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THE PERSONAL COMPUTER SHOW
11-18 SEPTEMBER 1988
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MONTBUILD LTD., 11 MANCHESTER SQUARE, LONDON W1M 5NB.
Street Fighter is the latest in a series of ten Capcom coin-ops to be converted for all the major machines by GO!. All the versions have been programmed by Tiertex.

You are Ryu, a fighter highly skilled in martial arts, and as such are pitted against an international array of dangerous opponents. Two adversaries must be defeated in each of the nations visited - the world tour begins in Japan and each country constitutes a load of fighters punch and kick their opponent in an attempt to reduce his energy. Ryu has a multitude of moves at his disposal including jumps and somersaults. All are accessed via the joystick in the usual beat-'em-up style - using combinations of directions with or without the fire-button. However, success can usually be achieved by using just one or two moves which unfortunately leads to repetitive gameplay.

Come flail with me

Some of Ryu's more vicious opponents are equipped with death stars and rice flails which can cause horrific injuries. If either fighter's energy is reduced to zero he is knocked out and loses the round; otherwise the one with the most energy at the end of the round wins. Whichever fighter is successful in two out of the three rounds wins the match. If Ryu wins a round by a knockout he scores bonus points for the amount of time and energy remaining. He is permitted to lose three matches before the game ends. If he manages to defeat two opponents he has a chance to score extra points in the bonus round where he must smash as many bricks as he can with his bare hands. Ryu subsequently travels to the next country where two fresh opponents are waiting to do him harm.

Street Fighter includes a two-player option in which players contest an initial match between Ryu and Ken, the winner going on to fight the computer opponents.

Knocking things down in the land of the rising sun - Commodore 64

from tape or disk. The bouts involve large figures battling it out against a suitably atmospheric, scrolling backdrop - Pagodas, Mountains and Cityscapes.

Each match consists of three timed rounds in which the two players respectively, priced £24.99 and £19.99 respectively.

"Success can be achieved by one or two moves which leads to repetitive gameplay"
A RIDE DOWN SKID ROLL

ROLLER-SKATING, according to Gremlin, is now the only way to show how 'def' you are. But when you, and a couple of friends, set up a challenge in a disused car park to seriously improve your street cred, too many crashes and you hear your defness called into question. The Commodore 64 development team is no less than eight people, including Greg Holmes (Jack The Nipper 1/2) and Ben Daglish. Spectrum programming is by Tony Porter (The Eidolon and MASK) with graphics by Kevin Bulmer (Gauntlet II).

The main game takes part in the multidirectional car park where each level has been laid out with cones, flags, jumps and hurdles, represented by an eight-way scrolling, overhead view. There are numerous non-regulation hazards such as oil spills, potholes, remote-control cars, other skaters and sand. The objective is to get around the course in the shortest possible time, with the minimum of crashes, while executing enough stunts to impress the four judges.

Once you arrive at the finishing point the judges hold up score cards which determine whether you must retake the course or not. If you succeed in qualifying, you have a choice between going up to the next floor of the car park challenge or taking the championship course. The latter entails a long multiload for what is effectively another game. On the Commodore only there's a rubbish collection section, so that if you fail to quality for round one, you must collect all the rubbish before time runs out to go forward to round two.

CHAMPIONSHIP

The championship course is a horizontally-scrolling race against the clock with a great many pits to be jumped, and scaffolding to be ducked under. Waggling the joystick left/right builds up speed, but it can be tricky unless the skater's direction has been firmly established. If you complete a championship course you may go on to the next level, or return to the car park challenge.

Both sections have four levels and all eight must be completed to finish the game. On the championship section the levels are building site, park, London Underground and a street scene.

VERSION UPDATE

BACK TO AN OLD DIMENSION

DARK SIDE

INCENTIVE

COMMODORE 64/128: OVERALL 78%

SPECTRUM 48/128
Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £12.99

The multidirectional scrolling on the car park level is very smooth, and although in monochrome, detail is excellent. By way of contrast the championship section is a lot more colourful, but an irritating control method makes it just as tough as the frustrating car park level.

OVERALL 78%

OTHER VERSIONS

"It has graphic appeal, but gameplay is tough and frustration builds up"
As with the original Barbarian, the game's design and concept originated with non-programmer Steve Brown, a top graphic artist with Palace. Richard Joseph is responsible for the atmospheric soundtrack while Mike Van Wyk and Maria Whittaker ensure, once more, that the packaging stands out from the crowd.

Having fought his way through all Drax's powerful champions, seeming to destroy Drax himself and rescuing the grateful Princess Mariana, our Barbarian hero might have thought his lifestyle would become a little less barbaric. Unfortunately, as with all truly evil sorcerers, Drax has proved difficult to defeat. Risen from the ashes of his corpse, he has fled to the deepest dungeons of his black castle, determined to avenge himself on the Jewelled Kingdom - and more specifically the Barbarian and Mariana.

Rather than passively await Drax's vengeance, the Barbarian and Mariana decide to destroy the evil sorcerer in his lair. Princess Mariana, it turns out, far from being merely a royal bimbo, is an exceptionally gifted fighter. In the multiloaded game you can choose to play either character, both are well-armed; the Barbarian carrying a battle-axe and the princess a sword. Either character is capable of a wide variety of combat moves necessary to avoid injury. Energy is displayed in the top right-hand corner of the screen and when at zero, one of five lives are lost.

**Shock horrors**

To confront and kill Drax a warrior must fight through three multiloaded levels before finally entering the fourth level - the Sanctum of Drax. Each of the first three levels is defended by six different types of monster. To fully explore the 28-screen maze which makes up each level, great timing and tactics are required. On Level 1, The Wastelands, opponents range from apes to Neanderthal men to horrific dinosaurs which can effortlessly bite off a person's head.

The caverns provide an equally tough challenge with orcs, crabs and trolls, while the dungeons contain massive dungeon masters who appear expert in Thai Boxing. Each monster has its own energy level which can be diminished by well-judged blows, although the best move is a decapitation stroke if you get a chance. Skill with the sword or axe alone will not bring victory, however, there are two magical objects on each level which must be found to survive later levels. An axe increases strength, for example, while a shield prevents instant death from the demon's fire. Once collected, objects are displayed at the bottom of the screen beside a sword which acts as a compass - always pointing North.

While exploring the Dungeons Of Drax it's advisable to watch for pits - and jump over them. Should you land on the rim then frantic joystick-waggling is needed to regain balance. Some pits, however, have monsters inside which gobble up unwary adventurers. The neatly picked bones they subsequently spit out show the great attention to detail which makes this such an attractive and playable game.

After playing what seems like hundreds of unremarkable 8-bit games it's astonishing to find a game which can shock, not simply through the black humour of dinosaurs biting peoples' heads off, but in the superbly drawn and animated opponents. From the quick-waddling dinosaur creature to the living idol on Level Four, the monsters constantly amaze.

- **Barbarian may get a buzz out of this demonic creature if he's slow with his axe arm**

**COMMODORE 64/128**


Combat, it has to be said, isn't quite on the same level as on the original game, but this is more than compensated for by the range of opponents, all of which have their own attack patterns. This is a brilliant arcade/adventure on disk and although we haven't played the cassette version yet, each level seems substantial enough to make multiload a very minor irritation.

**OVERALL 94%**

**OTHER VERSIONS**

Conversions are expected for the Amstrad, Spectrum, Atari ST and Amiga. 16-bit versions may take longer than the others but hopefully they'll make as full use of the machines as the CBM 64 game - unlike Barbarian I.
ALL HELL LET LOOSE...

Take the mighty HAWKEYE through 12 levels of arcade combat action with dazzling graphics, perfect parallax and 12 aurally amazing pieces of music. He has the power, but can you control it?

OUT JULY FOR COMMODORE 64/128
coming soon for Spectrum, Atari ST and Amiga

ZZAP!64 GOLD MEDAL AUGUST 88
96%

Gold Rush
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BOARD OF THE RINGS

WORLD DARTS
Mastertronic

Just in time for Christmas 1986 Mastertronic released a highly successful Spectrum darts game called 180 by Binary Design. When Mastertronic put together their Amiga-based arcade game Sport Simulation they had an Arcadia version of 180 included as World Darts. Now, two years later, the game is again being released for home computers – this time with arcade-quality graphics and sound.

This famous pub-playing game has been converted to the home computer in full world championship form with eight opponents. Play begins at the quarter-final stage of the championship with just three games to become champion. Alternatively you can enter the final direct for a two-player competition. Games are played in a series of legs, in each of which the objective is to be the first to score exactly 501 points. The board is divided into 20 segments, with a double-score ring on the outside, a treble-ring halfway in and a bullseye offering 25 or 50 points depending on accuracy. To make things harder, the last score must be a double. Players take turns of three throws to work toward 501, and at the start of each turn an announcer calls out who is to throw.

180
During play a disembodied hand wanders across the board with dart in hand. The hand is only partially controlled by joystick, so the skill is in guiding it into the area you want to hit and pressing fire at just the right moment. Difficult to begin with, especially with a time limit, after some practice treble-twenties shouldn’t be too difficult. During one-player games your opponent is shown inside a dart hall making his three throws; while he doesn’t take long at all, the disk access is a bit irritating. A wealth of options such as 99 not very different skill levels, up to 15 legs per match and a box suggesting what you should aim for, indicate some thought has gone into it, but ultimately the repetitiveness of the action may prove inescapable.

AMIGA
Diskette: £9.99
The bane of the Amiga turns up again here with disk accessing required before each turn, yet even during two-player games no extra graphics are required. Graphics are generally very good, but never astounding. Sound FX are similarly professional with a superb, Northern-accented digitised voice announcing whose turn it is. A good game of darts, but the Spectrum version made better use of the machine.

OVERALL 55%

OTHER VERSIONS
No plans for any other versions.

“Some thought has gone into it, but repetitiveness of action may prove inescapable”

VERSION UPDATE

ALTERNATIVE WORLD GAMES
Gremlin Graphics

Spectrum 48/128: £7.99
HERE we have a sports simulation with tongue firmly planted in its cheek. The player is encouraged to compete in such wacky events as sack racing in Naples, boot throwing in the Colosseum, pole climbing in Verona, and running up the walls of Venice.

Once the competitor’s identity and country of origin have been established, they are faced with a bank of nine video monitors. Using the joystick each monitor can then be accessed in turn to demonstrate a game. When the player has decided which game to attempt, switching to the ninth monitor gives the option to either practice or compete in their chosen event.

If in practice mode, at the end of the race you are asked whether or not you wish to continue practising, in compete mode a score card is displayed, you can then chart your success. As Alternative World Games is multi-load, it’s best to attempt the events in sequence; manual positioning of the tape is possible, but is frustrating, and ultimately time consuming.

Graphically Alternative World Games is good, with nicely animated sprites bounding around the solid, colourful backdrops. Overall a playable alternative sports game that’s fun, but thankfully does not tax the joystick as much as some games of this ilk.

SPECTRUM:
OVERALL 79%
Roman Firezone, Final Frontier

Take command of what was once the greatest Empire in the known world, the Roman Civilisation, spread its influence through Europe and avoid the inevitable collapse and sacking by the barbarians around the continent.

The main display is taken up by a map of the European continent made up of 28 regions with the heart of the Empire – Italy – taking centre stage.

At the start of the turn, your position can be saved to disk, a new game started or old game loaded in. The first phase in the turn is to set up an economic plan. A tax rate must be set up for the turn, increasing the treasury coffers – this also leads to inflation and lack of popularity.

The personnel phase follows with 21 commanders controlling the military forces of the Empire. Each officer has a loyalty and ability rating and a ranking from Senator up to Commander level. Commanders have an army. As each turn is up to 25 years in length, officers come and go.

Trust and loyalty are secondary to gaining power in the Roman Empire. If the leadership is unpopular, rebellion occurs throughout the ranks; commanding officers and their armies may even march on Rome itself to try and establish a dictatorship of their own. Armies bribed to remain loyal to the Emperor proves costly for the treasury.

Civil wars can erupt, officers starting rebellions against the Empire if the regime’s popularity is low. Rebels and Loyalists to the Empire fight amongst each other. Rebel victories can pave the way to the conquest of Rome itself, drawn out civil wars lead to large scale unpopularity and a greater chance of rebellion in the further regions. If a rebel army reaches Rome, the leader takes over as Ruler of Rome. A new popularity rating is given and play continues but under new imperial leaders. Control can be changed by initiating further civil war although the resulting change could be for the worse. Following civil wars comes the final phase of foreign wars.

Around the European continent lie the barbarians: Gauls, Carthaginians, Macedonians, Celts, Goths, Numidians and more, all intent on seeing Rome burn and their own territories expand. While the Roman Empire grows, the barbarians also take control of countries, move their forces and fight battles. While not a collective band fighting as one against the Romans, the barbarians are a formidable threat because of their sheer numbers.

The personnel phase is designed by Dr George Jaroskiewitz, an expert on Rome.

SPECTRUM 48/128 Cassette: £9.95, Diskette: £14.95

The vector graphics featured in Star Wars are very much in evidence, their standard competes against the best of the genre: 3-D Starstrike and Starglider. Fast moving and colourful sprites scroll smoothly around the screen and animation is good, especially of the AT-ATs.

OVERALL 87%

Ruler of Rome, a new popularity rating is given and play continues but under new imperial leaders. Control can be changed by initiating further civil war although the resulting change could be for the worse. Following civil wars comes the final phase of foreign wars.

Around the European continent lie the barbarians: Gauls, Carthaginians, Macedonians, Celts, Goths, Numidians and more, all intent on seeing Rome burn and their own territories expand. While the Roman Empire grows, the barbarians also take control of countries, move their forces and fight battles. While not a collective band fighting as one against the Romans, the barbarians are a formidable threat because of their sheer numbers.

Annals Of Rome certainly provokes thought and questions, particularly as to how Rome survived so long with the threat of barbarian attacks all around. Considering the game’s potential depth, player interaction is limited. At times the player watches the action unfold and can do nothing.

Disappointing, considering the Amiga potential.

OTHER VERSIONS


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PSS

Like the Amiga version of Power Struggle, Annals Of Rome is another conversion of a PSS strategy game already available on the 8-bit machines. Further conversions are planned for Battlefield Germany, Firezone, Final Frontier and Fortress America. Annals Of Rome was designed by Dr George Jaroskiewitz, an expert on Rome.

Take command of what was once the greatest Empire in the known world, the Roman Civilisation, spread its influence through Europe and avoid the inevitable collapse and sacking by the barbarians around the continent.

The main display is taken up by a map of the European continent made up of 28 regions with the heart of the Empire – Italy – taking centre stage.

At the start of the turn, your position can be saved to disk, a new game started or old game loaded in. The first phase in the turn is to set up an economic plan. A tax rate must be set up for the turn, increasing the treasury coffers – this also leads to inflation and lack of popularity.

The personnel phase follows with 21 commanders controlling the military forces of the Empire. Each officer has a loyalty and ability rating and a ranking from Senator up to Commander level. Commanders have an army. As each turn is up to 25 years in length, officers come and go.

Trust and loyalty are secondary to gaining power in the Roman Empire. If the leadership is unpopular, rebellion occurs throughout the ranks; commanding officers and their armies may even march on Rome itself to try and establish a dictatorship of their own. Armies bribed to remain loyal to the Emperor proves costly for the treasury.

Civil wars can erupt, officers starting rebellions against the Empire if the regime’s popularity is low. Rebels and Loyalists to the Empire fight amongst each other. Rebel victories can pave the way to the conquest of Rome itself, drawn out civil wars lead to large scale unpopularity and a greater chance of rebellion in the further regions. If a rebel army reaches Rome, the leader takes over as Ruler of Rome. A new popularity rating is given and play continues but under new imperial leaders. Control can be changed by initiating further civil war although the resulting change could be for the worse. Following civil wars comes the final phase of foreign wars.

Around the European continent lie the barbarians: Gauls, Carthaginians, Macedonians, Celts, Goths, Numidians and more, all intent on seeing Rome burn and their own territories expand. While the Roman Empire grows, the barbarians also take control of countries, move their forces and fight battles. While not a collective band fighting as one against the Romans, the barbarians are a formidable threat because of their sheer numbers.

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Disappointing, considering the Amiga potential.

OTHER VERSIONS


“Disappointing, considering the Amiga potential”
LUKE'S VADER FIGURE

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK
Domark

The Empire Strikes Back is the second game in the Star Wars trilogy to be written by George Iwanow (Vektor Graphix) and released by Domark. Split into four parts, it charts the rebels' flight for survival from the inhospitable ice planet, Hoth. After the destruction of the Imperial Death Star, Lord Vader is alive, well and bent on revenge.

The first part of the game has you in the role of Luke Skywalker skimming across the frozen wastes of Hoth in your snow speeder. Your task is to destroy the many probots sent out by the Empire to find the rebel base and transmit its location.

As well as the probots, their message pods must also be stopped. The robotic spys are not going to hover around whilst you shoot at them - they fire back. You start the game with five shields, which are depleted every time a fireball hits the snow speeder's fragile hull. Success awards entry to the next level and larger foes in the shape of AT-ATs (All-Terrain Armoured Transport), and their smaller but faster companions the AT-ST Walkers (All-Terrain Scout Transport).

Again Luke is seated in his craft, this time his mission is to defeat the AT-ATs by firing tow cables at their legs (effectively tripping them up) or repeatedly shooting their heads. The AT-STs are fast - shoot the fireballs they spew out before blasting them.

Where it's at at
The third section gives Luke Skywalker a break and involves the swashbuckling hero, Han Solo, on board the Millennium Falcon. TIE fighters and their fireballs have to be shot or avoided as you escape from the Empire. If this screen is successfully negotiated, the fourth and final game is entered. Han and friends have escaped and from the claws of the Empire, only to run into a deadly asteroid field. Only the pilot's skill can guide them through the hail of space-rocks and on to the safety of a large asteroid.

During the game, point bonuses can be scored by shooting a specified number of enemy craft or letters of the alphabet. If the letters J-E-D-I are hit in sequence, you will be rewarded with limited invincibility. A useful weapon when up against the might of the Empire.

SPECTRUM 48/128
Cassette: £9.95
Diskette: £14.95

The vector graphics featured in Star Wars are very much in evidence, their standard competes against the best of the genre: 3-D Starstrike and Starglider. Fast moving and colourful sprites scroll smoothly around the screen. Animation is good, especially of the AT-ATs.

OVERALL 87%

OTHER VERSIONS
During the first week of July, versions will be released for the Commodore 64/128: cass £9.95, disk £12.95 and the Amstrad CPC: cass £9.95, disk £14.95. An Atari ST and Amiga version will be released in the third week of July, both retailing at £19.95

"Competes against the best of the genre"
MATCH PLAY

INTERNATIONAL SOCCER
Microdeal

Microdeal had some problems with their latest 16-bit football game. First versions sent out had the computer opponent doing most peculiar things, including kicking home goals and running off the pitch at every opportunity. This has now been rectified and readers who may have purchased the bugged game can return it to Microdeal's Freepost address and receive the second version free of charge. International Soccer was created by the familiar duo of programmer Ed Scio and graphics artist Pete Lyons. The sport of football has been covered often on home computers, and Microdeal's International Soccer continues the trend. From the main screen, most of the standard football options are available, including alternating the length of each half (from five to 45 minutes), choosing night or day to play, the strength of the wind, the surface of the pitch (wet or dry), team colours and any of five team formations.

Not falling foul
International Soccer plays like a standard football game, with 22 players spilling out onto the pitch — the player currently under your control is highlighted by a symbol under his feet. The nearest team-member to the ball is defaulted to be controlled although this can be overridden (the goalkeeper is under direct player control as well, adding an extra element of fun to the game.) A small problem encountered with the manual selection method is that cycling through each player takes up valuable time while the ball runs loose.

The game features corners, goal kicks, penalties, throw-ins, fouls and tackles as well as a whistle-happy linesman pacing up and down the side of the pitch. Nine skill levels are built into the game, although the computer opponent is difficult across the board. On screen, there's no score board or indicator level for the amount of power put into a kick, as such, medium power shots are difficult to achieve and it's easy to under-emphasise a kick. International Soccer is certainly the best football game on the ST yet, in direct competition with the Grand Slam game, it succeeds because it not only provides a variety of football options but it keeps the pace of the game going. ST owners unfortunately still haven't got anything in the Match Day II league but International Soccer is a good substitute.

VERSION UPDATE

ARCTICFOX
Electronic Arts

Spectrum 48/128:
Cassette £8.95

DYNAMIX, the people behind Skyfox II (reviewed in this issue on the PC) are the team responsible for ArcticFox in its original Commodore 64 form, then released through the now-defunct Arlossoft at the beginning of 1987. It's taken a year for the 280 version to surface with Mark Fisher of Comtec being responsible for the translation.

The ArcticFox of the title is a massive tank patrolling the icy wastelands around the Arctic Circle. Its alien attack force has landed near the North Pole intent on reclaiming Earth's atmosphere to convert it into a deadly alien environment. ArcticFox is the only military hardware in the vicinity which can stop the process.

Using a first-person 3-D view, the commander moves the tank around the region, climbing hills, negotiating crevasses and mines. If it all gets too dangerous, the tank can dig in and hide under the snow, although resurfac- ing at the wrong moment can often lead to fatal results. The game ends if ArcticFox is destroyed or the Earth's oxygen level reaches zero.

The original Commodore 64 ArcticFox had a speed which crippled any lasting appeal or gameplay. This should have been rectified with the Spectrum version but in many ways the game has become worse. The multiload version is still there on the 48K version, showing an inevitable burden, there's an all-in-one load for the 128K version, but the lack of any sound whatsoever in either is a severe drawback to say the least. Colour is ill-used, with nothing more than light blue and grey to create the effect of travelling through a polar landscape. Graphics are primitive wireframe shapes moving past, while movement is faster than on the Commodore game, at times the graphics look confused in appearance as the computer desperately tries to maintain perspective, not always succeeding.

The lack of varying scenery, together with the long periods of inactivity between conflicts, only highlights the limited gameplay. This said, there's some atmosphere to the game, sneaking over a hill and observing a target in the distance guarded by rocket launchers and tanks brings forth tension and excitement quickly mounts. Unfortunately, it soon falls back into the depths of tedium once the target is eliminated and you are faced with the prospect of another long haul across the frozen wastes. ArcticFox is not a very successful format conversion of a not very exciting game.

OTHER VERSIONS

An Amiga version is planned priced at £19.95

“Continuous action, fast and smooth flowing gameplay”

The players look good, but their skills leave much to be desired

OVERALL 78%

ATARI ST Diskette: £19.95

International Soccer has all the elements of a good soccer game, continuous action, fast and smooth-flowing gameplay. In the background the crowd get into the swing of things doing the ‘Mexican wave’ in time to one of the five tunes accompanying play.

OVERALL 46%
NOTHING STANDS IN YOUR WAY

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Atari ST £19.99d Amiga £24.99d

CAPCOM
GIANTS OF THE VIDEO GAMES INDUSTRY
To finish a tower Mickey - once it's empty he must these monsters leave spells for the King's ogres as well. Ogres by dropping hammers on them. The second subgame overhead-view-maze-game with the balcony is eroded. On both floors.)

Should a bubble be missed, part of the balcony is eroded. On both these subgames Mickey has three lives to lose before being kicked out. To retry the subgame Mickey must find another key by killing more monsters and different subgames are added. One subgame involves jumping from platform to platform, evading monsters while trying to turn off four taps. Another is a Donkey Kong variant with Mickey hammering in corks to prevent them dripping while watching out for monsters. Finishing is achieved by bashing the big ogre when his shield disappears.

Once all four towers have been completed, Mickey crosses the Devil's bridge to face the Ogre King. While avoiding the King's fireballs Mickey must shoot him with the water pistol to finally end his horrible reign.

**OTHER FORMATS**

Conversions are planned for Commodore 64/128 and Amstrad CPC, both £9.99 cass, £14.99 disk, with an imminent ST version at £19.95.

**VERSION UPDATE**

**Jester one of those games**

**BLACK LAMP**

**Amiga: £19.95**

**JOLLY JACK** the jovial jester appears as if by magic on the Amiga. His quest is to rid the medieval kingdom of monsters and dragons by collecting nine magic lanterns. His may also gain the bonus of marrying the princess if he is successful.

The Amiga conversion is of the same standard as the Atari ST game (reviewed in TGM004, 86%) with colourful cartoon characters and detailed backdrops. Basically a platforms and ladders variant, and while still highly enjoyable, Black Lamp could have been improved for the Amiga. Music comes in the form of a speedy Greensleeves tune - which grates after a while - and is accompanied by suitable sound effect.

**AMIGA: OVERALL 85%**

Jester draws on his ability to find lanterns

**“A surprisingly addictive game”**
VERSION UPDATE

**FOOTBALL MANAGER II**
Addictive Games/Prism Leisure

Amiga: £19.99

The players pitch in to do their best for the manager – Amiga

Spectrum version is easier than on the 16-bit machines, and the players are more independent – less likely to play follow the leader. Despite the lack of ‘pretty’ graphics, the Spectrum game is the most playable of all.

AMIGA: OVERALL 63%

SPECTRUM: OVERALL 68%

HOT on the trail of the Atari ST version reviewed last month (65%), come the Spectrum and Amiga updates.

To begin, you choose a team from the available 92 which is placed in the fourth division with half a million pounds in the bank and companies clamouring to offer sponsorship. From here, the only way is up... through the ranks to the first division, and to win the major division and league cups on the way. As team manager you have to make all decisions to get the best out of your men. As long as your club is solvent it remains in the league. If liquid assets fall into the red however, bankruptcy and defeat soon follow.

The Amiga version is virtually identical to the ST game, no attempt has been made to enhance it. Control of the

**PC SHOWCASE**

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In next month's issue we're giving away a free supplement devoted to the glitter and excitement of this famous annual computer entertainment beanfeast. We'll bring you details of the stands, the people, celebrities and events and all the things you can expect to see and do at the show. And don't forget, this year is extra special because the show has expanded and is now at Earls Court! Why not avoid that 'lost' feeling? Make sure you have your PC SHOWCASE Guide with you. It's yours, free, in the next issue of THE GAMES MACHINE!

PC SHOWCASE, Guide to the 1988 Personal Computer Show is exclusive to THE GAMES MACHINE, CRASH and ZZAP! 64
THE AVENGERS

NIGHT RAIDER
Gremlin Graphics

Sydney Developments is a name associated with Canadian ex-TV commentator Michael Bate, who designed games like Dambusters, marketed through US Gold. This is his first through Gremlin Graphics, as Acme Animations. Other titles Bate is known for during his seven years in computer games include Killed Until Dead and Ace Of Aces.

Launched in 1939 the battleship Bismarck was one of the most fearsome weapons in the German Navy and a major threat to Allied convoys crossing the Atlantic to the Britain. It was thus one of most important intelligence coups of WW2 when Norwegian secret agents received information on the ship's course. A Royal Navy Battle Group led by HMS Hood was despatched to find and sink the Bismarck.

Unfortunately in the first incident of the pursuit the Hood fell foul of a lethal battery from the battleship's massive guns. All but three of Hood's 1400 officers and crew were lost. Attacks by Swordfish biplanes earned a measure of vengeance later that night by crucially damaging the port rudder. Limited to only eight knots per hour, Bismarck became a sitting target and more Swordfish strikes were launched the next day.

The next generation of torpedo bombers, represented by a prototype Grumman Avenger, had meanwhile been secretly shipped to the carrier Ark Royal. During the last hours of the Bismarck the Avenger was used to serious effect, knocking out four gun turrets. Subsequently the Avenger was used to serious effect, knocking out four gun turrets. Subsequently the Avenger was used to serious effect, knocking out four gun turrets.

What the flaks going on? Bismarck is sighted

E-Boats

Besides the all-important mission against the Bismarck Night Raider allows newly recruited pilots to practise any of the mission stages, and several other combat missions as well. Once training has been completed the pilot is given a choice of straws to determine which mission he undertakes first. You may refuse a few missions, but not too many or you might be withdrawn from flying.

After a mission has been accepted the view changes to the Pilot's cockpit from which the plane is flown and the torpedo dropped. Although guns can be fired from this position most air-to-air combat involves the tail gunner's view which can selected at any time. No less vital work is done on the engineer's screen where various systems must be set correctly for landing or flying, throttle set and a camera activated if you want to playback an attack on the battleship. The fourth, and final screen is the navigator's which allows a destination to be selected presenting a marker on the pilot's screen that must then be followed.

Long missions require frequent returns to your home base, the carrier Ark Royal, and to complete a mission you must make a successful landing. For this reason it's a good idea to keep an eye out on the navigation screen for German mine fields, E-boats (small torpedo boats), and U-boats (submarines). Seemingly inexhaustible waves of enemy Dornier aircraft are also shown on the navigation screen.

The game opens with digitised pictures of Hitler and Churchill accompanied with some superb sampled speech. By comparison the game itself is disappointing: enemy craft are represented by sprites which always present the same view of themselves. Constant attack from enemy fighters can become repetitive as well, though hunting down U-boats is quite exciting.

What the flaks going on? Bismarck is sighted

TGM TX 009:8-8867/116
ROB STEEL’S GETTING ADVENTUROUS

STEEL SHAVINGS

Rob Steel’s befuddled brain strikes again ... What is the point of reviewing mail-order adventures if one is going to leave out the address where interested parties can buy the games? Last month I examined two such games and neglected to include the addresses. To put it right: Investigations is available from Graphtext, 162 Bourne Avenue, Hayes, Middlesex UB3 1QT and Skelvullyn Twine may be ordered from Eighth Day, 18 Flaxhill, Moreton, Wirral, Merseyside L46 7UH.

While I’m in apology mode I may as well make myself look a complete idiot (no comments please): I can’t spell Jekyll, it has two ‘L’s not one as was printed last issue and one of Eighth Day’s previous games is titled Ice Station Zero not Zebra.

This month I get corrupted (couldn’t happen to a nicer guy) thanks to Magnetic Scrolls and journey into the future using my mind (doesn’t seem possible does it?). Mindfighter from Abstract Concepts comes in attractive packaging that provides hours of entertainment even before the game is loaded.

THE REALM

Cult
Spectrum 48/128 Cassette: £1.99

D & H Games are more famous for their football orientated software, it was therefore with interest and some trepidation that I loaded this adventure from their new budget label, Cult, hoping that it wouldn’t be a Football Frenzy.

The first point of interest is the staggering in-depth game background included in the packaging. It is: ‘Wandering through the wilderness to the North of Thryll town, you come across a strange wood. Dare you step beneath its brooding eaves?’. Makes you want to rip the cassette box open and plunge in doesn’t it?

After ingesting the scenario I started the game loading and waited. The first screen to appear asked if I was male or female, once I had decided and input my answer the adventure proper began.

A garish green screen sat before me informing in black text that I was south of the wood. A very basic, childish graphic stared back at me from atop the written descriptions. This was obviously the spooky wood the scenario was daring me to enter ... in I went.

The text descriptions are sparse, treating you with such dripping prose as: ‘The forest. Exits are North’ and ‘The Cottage. Exits are North and Northwest’.

Regardless, I trudged onward.

The first place of interest was the wizard’s cottage in which I found a book of spells, a furry creature and a carrot. The wizard asked me to stay and guard his magic book until he returned. Deciding not to trust him, I tried to leave (with the book), unfortunately magic powers were working to prevent me from doing so. I discarded the spellbook for the time being and walked out of the cottage to explore the surrounding wood.

A one-carrot game I came across an old woman, a minstrel (who sang a ballad for me) and a fair maiden. All these characters were there for a reason.
CORRUPTION

Rainbird/Magnetic Scrolls
Atari ST Diskette: £24.95

The world has waited with bated breath for this latest release from Magnetic Scrolls. Anita Sinclair and Co have set themselves a standard by which all adventures - especially their own - are now judged. Does Corruption compare favourably or are the creators of The Pawn and Guild Of Thieves following the Level Nine/Infocom trait of late and resting on their laurels after initial success?

High finance and commercial intrigue are now subjects, of which more people are becoming aware, thanks to the coverage and interest shown in the near recrash of Wall Street late last year, the number of company shares being offered to 'the man in the street' and the successful movie starring Michael Douglas, Wall Street. Magnetic Scrolls - themselves no doubt recent experts in the world of money matters due to their phenomenal success - hold out their hand for the band wagon to stop and let them on with their latest adventure, Corruption.

You have been framed by your new business partner and, if that were not enough, an irate drugs baron desires to make you history. As the plot unfolds you discover that your wife, Jenny, is having an affair with David (over lunch she asks you for a divorce), David is wanted by the fraud office and Theresa feeds the ducks during her lunch hour. Intrigue, intrigue...

I scored 30 points by simply following instructions and passing on bits of gossip, however, what was required of me from this point became a little vague.

In the picture

The now-expected high standard of graphics, parser, atmosphere and interaction are all present in Corruption - although the picture content is strange. They depict people in their offices after they have left, and cars in the carpark which you watched drive off only seconds previously. I found playing in text-only mode best.

I have the feeling that the game is too clever for its own good. It's impossible to grill people about topics you hadn't discovered yet and tell them things you have yet to find out. On occasions information you do know is impossible to pass on to supposedly interested parties. This ultimately leads to frustration and confusion.

The packaging is well presented, thoughtful, and contains useful (and useless) items for the game. These include a casino chip, Filofax-style documentation, the ultimate gamblers' and business entertainment guides and an audio cassette which needs to be played at certain times during the adventure.

Unfortunately these do not help make the game better. Corruption is like unto a jelly that won't quite set, it has all the best ingredients but they just don't gel. I didn't enjoy their previous adventure, Jinxter, and although implemented very professionally and no doubt heading for success, for me Corruption is no better.

Success corrupts and great success corrupts greatly: the Jinxter jinx is still on Magnetic Scrolls.

ATMOSPHERE 68%
INTERACTION 77%
OVERALL 73%

TGM TX 009:8-88 69/116
MINDFIGHTER

Abstract Concepts
ATARI ST: £24.99

Some months ago, Anna Popkess and her man, Fergus McNeill, travelled the picturesque route to Ludlow to meet me. I had seen all the promotional pictures for the adventure (the brooding shot of Anna and Fergus sitting next to a withered tree) and was pleased to discover that Anna is even better looking in the flesh; Fergus is taller. They were here to show me their first adventure, Mindfighter - created using Fergus's utility, SWAN.

My hopes for Mindfighter were high as I loaded the ST version. They soon faded... The scenario concerns a boy named Robin - played by your good self - and his ability to mind-travel through time. He inadvertently stumbles across a very bleak future for mankind. Robin wakes into his nightmare atop a mound of rubble in a desolate, ruined cityscape. The screen is split in two, with moody graphics framed within an oblong window above the scrolling white text. The parser is obviously quite sophisticated - understanding ALL, IT, OOPS, RAM SAVE etc - unfortunately the actual vocabulary is ridiculously small.

One of the features pointed out to me by the creators was the program's ability to think. If one is faced with a locked door to the North and the correct key is being carried, the single input, 'N' results in the game replying 'Robin unlocked the door, opened it and went North'. If Robin is attacked and wants to dispose of his assailant, typing 'Kill Guard', for example, not only produces a retaliation but one carried out with the most useful object Robin has in his inventory. This feature ends those annoying Magnetic Scrolls-type typing lessons.

Input: 'Unlock door'
Reply: 'What with?'
Input: 'Key'
Reply: 'Which key?'
Input: 'Unlock door'
Reply: 'Which brass key? The old brass key or the new brass key?'

Swanning around
However, the relief for finger soreness soon fades to insignificance as the unbelievable lack of attention to detail raises its ugly head. The most obvious irritant is in the mapping. Travelling North from location A to location B does not necessarily mean that moving South from B returns you to A. This happens all too often and is boring, tedious, frustrating, annoying, confusing and pointless.

There are further idiosyncrasies: Robin may be holding a rag and, if in possession of the lighter, can quite happily burn it. However, if he should drop the rag he can no longer burn it as it appears no longer to exist, and yet there it is resting on the ground. Trying to pour the petrol out of the jerry can is equally frustrating and can take a ridiculous number of inputs before the solution is found - all logical commands fail. Death comes fairly frequently to Robin, and the toughness of the problems coupled with the lack of help and logic incorporated in the game make each death easier to live with. A good idea with nice packaging, it's sad the game is such a let down.

Available for most 8- and 16-bit formats, Mindfighter will probably do better than it deserves to. I hope Abstract Concepts's next adventure will be a substantial improvement, after all the authors are very nice people.

STEEL TIPS

I've had so many requests for a tips section to be included in my adventure column that I can no longer ignore your cries. I begin briefly with help for two adventures, both available on 8- and 16-bit machines.

TIME AND MAGIK
Part 2
Mandarin/Level Nine
To get the coins from under the grate, wave the horseshoe.
To cross the chasm, drop the scroll and the acorn then read the scroll.
The Tracers let you carry more.
To open the tower door say 'Humak'.
To destroy the mummies, say 'Obis' then say 'Ollabin'.
To get passed the watchdog, put the pills in the meat then give it to him.

BALLYHOO
Infocom
Punch out either the blue or pink dot to get the ticket into the turnstile.

Map of ENCHANTER (Infocom)

ATMOSPHERE 57%
INTERACTION 34%
OVERALL 45%

Lions prefer to dine alone. Banana lollies are a monkey's favourite treat.

This month's tips are only a start-up pack, but if you have any tips or maps that you would like to add to my own to pass on to TGM readers, please send them to: STEEL TIPS, THE GAMES MACHINE, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB.
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FANTASY GAMES

John Woods continues his sandwich course on how to play various roles by getting flushed looking at The Power Behind The Throne, becoming a Fantasy Hero and using all his force to examine the Star Wars campaign pack.

FANTASY HERO
The Roleplaying Game Of Epic Adventure

Fantasy Hero has been around for three years without gaining wide recognition or popularity, which is a pity since the system, designed by Steve Peterson, includes a number of unusual and appealing features. It deserves to be played more widely. Fantasy Hero is clearly written with the experienced gamer in mind — not necessarily someone who has been playing for years, but one already familiar with at least one roleplaying game system. So the rulebook doesn't go through the usual 'What is a Roleplaying Game?' section save for a token paragraph. Instead the introductory chapter gives an example character sheet and explains in brief what each entry represents, followed by a similar overview of the game's combat system.

At this point the reader is directed to a very brief solo adventure at the rear of the book to be played using the example character. It explains the necessary rule mechanics as they are required, and is a very easy way to introduce the game; after working through the first chapter and the solo adventure, players or referees already have a good idea of the basic game concepts, and subsequent chapters therefore make sense more quickly.

First the rules properly cover character creation — one of the most appealing parts of the system. Whereas in most games, players roll dice to randomly determine character abilities, in Fantasy Hero there's no element of luck whatsoever. Instead players create a character with exactly the skills and abilities they require by spending a certain number of character points. Each characteristic (intelligence, dexterity and so on) has a certain basic score which a player increases by allocating points. The total-points-cost depends on the level of the increase and the usefulness of the characteristic purchased. Thus to buy up dexterity — a crucially important factor in combat — by a single point costs the same as increasing comeliness (physical beauty) by six points.

Character points can also be used to buy skills (such as riding, medical ability, knowledge of exotic languages, combat abilities (skills with particular weapons such as crossbows or clubs) and knowledge of magic spells.

Exactly the same system is used to allow PCs to progress with experience — after a successful adventure the referee awards players a few more character points to allow further skills to be bought. But what if the initial total of character points is insufficient to create the type of character you'd like to play, for instance if a wizard needs to buy several expensive spells? Either other less important characteristics can be traded off for additional points, or one or more disadvantages are imposed. These are the most entertaining part of the generation procedure, and range widely in seriousness and consequent points value. For example, a character may choose to be.hunted and thereby gain from one (occasionally pestered by the village blacksmith for an unpaid bill) to 13 (fanatically pursued by an entire goblin clan) character points.

Other disadvantages possible are physical or psychological limitations (ranging from a slight limp to blindness, mild claustrophobia to suicidal overconfidence), distinctive looks and more. The combination of the free choice of abilities plus suitable disadvantages makes it very easy to generate exactly the sort of character you wish to play with a minimum of fuss. Starting characters can have impressive abilities in limited fields but have to make sacrifices elsewhere — a wizard of any note is no use at fighting, for instance. This means that cooperation between characters is of vital importance from the start.

The skill system is both elegantly simple and of sufficient scope to cover almost all situations. All actions are resolved by a roll on three-sided dice. The score required for success (to pick a lock, seduce a princess, decapitate a troll or whatever) depends both on the circumstances and on the character's skill in the relevant ability. The combat resolution procedure is novel and easy-to-use, with characters being able to perform a number of actions each round as determined by their speed, the faster characters being able to act sooner and more often.

These are rules for the effects of exhaustion and knockout blows as well as the usual hit point type of damage, so a fight with fists and feet is more likely to end in one combatant unconscious, whereas swords and bows usually kill.

Fantasy Hero is a generic system, intended not for a specific fantasy world but rather to be tailored by referees to suit their own preferred setting. To this end there are no great lists of equipment prices or pages and pages of maps or monster descriptions. Instead the book includes enough details to give the referee guidelines, examples of some common types of monster such as giants and skeletons and some pages of advice on designing and running your own campaigns. From this basis the rules can be adapted to any world you like — even the magic spells are designed to be created by referee and players to suit themselves. The flexibility of the system is reflected by

The skill system is elegantly simple yet covers all situations

The skill system is elegantly simple yet covers all situations

Fantastic four: this month's crop includes Steve Peterson's neglected classic Fantasy Hero, a Star Wars supplement and a duo from Games Workshop

goblin clan) character points.

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the fact that Hero Games have produced a number of other products using the same basic rules adapted for totally different settings Justice Inc is a Twenty RPG. Champions is a superhero game and Danger International is modern-day roleplaying.

This is little-known system certainly deserves more players. The rules are very clearly written and attractively presented, and the game offers wonderful opportunities for referees who are prepared either to develop their own background material or to spend a little time customising adventures intended for other systems. Well worth tracking down!

IN BRIEF

Games Workshop's Power Behind The Throne (£39.99) by Carl Sargent is the latest release in the Enemy Within series of adventure modules for Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay.

They have kept the sturdy, attractive hardback format of recent releases, but the adventure's style is somewhat different. Don't expect to find the same level of political intrigue in these adventures. Where previous scenarios in this series have been fairly typical action-packed mysteries with rather linear plotlines (too linear on occasion — things can get awkward for the referee if players think of courses of action the designers didn't anticipate), this adventure is a more open-ended political thriller.

Set in the city of Middenheim, the adventurers become involved in the politics of the city. The adventure is a more open-ended political thriller, with players having to face political intrigue and manipulation. The adventure features elements of intrigue and political maneuvering, with players having to navigate the complex political landscape of Middenheim.

Carl Sargent's latest is an open-ended political thriller

MSX-II COMPETITION

Nightdare Computers had a marvelous Philips 8220 MSX-II computer as first prize, and Konami offered copies of their great games in the runners-up.

The game title (left to right) was:

Nemesis II, Metal Gear, Vampire Killer and Usagi. And the winner is: Adrian De-Tervile, Beds L12 7DH. While the runners-up are:

Mike Blaser, Cheshirs SK9 4HP; Ken West, Dussor, Midlesex HAG 87D; Peter Mearns, Hans 2G6 6SB; RD Ruston, West Midlands B62 5NH; James Minnion, Manchester M10 9RT; B Sherry, Essex SS15 9SB; Ben Dodson, Manchester M11 8AL; Johnson Tang, S Wales CF2 4NH; Justin Grantham, Berks SL3 2LU; Peter Andrew, London SE20 6BJ; Thomas Lynch, Birmingham B13 7LR; Paul Beharrell, Milton Keynes MK11 1NS; John Harman, W Yorkshire W82 2EN; David Puhan, W Yorkshire HD3 4DL; Mark Bilingworth, Leeds LS19 5LY; Howard Glyn, Tyne & Wear NE25 6BD; Andrew Huntley, Co Durham DH6 8PP; Jo Potts, Cheshire WA14 2ND; Scott Mackie, Scotland ML3 9TF; Shane Reed, Dudley DY2 8RZ.

HELLO SAILOR

A day out at sea on a modern warship, courtesy of Electronic Arts for five winners and a chum or warship, courtesy of Electronic Arts for five winners and a chum or warship.

The answers were: 1) Stariyte, 2) Worlds of Warcraft, 3) StarCraft, 4) Wizball, 5) A Jagged Alliance.

TGM PARTY HEADQUARTERS

We wanted to create a top software chart, and three voting winners, drawn from the hat, each receive software vouchers for £50. They are: AR Fussey, Leamington Spa CV31 1HG; Derek Wong, Surrey CR4 6EB and Wayne Learyd, Leeds LS13 4EH. The resulting Top 10 Software Chart can be seen elsewhere on the page.

BATTLE OF THE PHASERS

To celebrate Laser Tag — the game — GM offered an all-expenses-paid day out in metropolitan Birmingham to attend a Laser Tag battle, as well as giving away copies of the game and a Laser Tag set. The winners are: 1) Stariyte, 2) Worlds of Wonder, 3) Compact Disc player.

The winners are:

Jonathan Williams, Gilos GL7 3SD; John Shollicar, Gilos GL7 3DA; Robert Colliver, Halesowen DY4 7HF; Craig Talbot, Worcs DY13 8TP; Mark Bakor, Bumdon B60 1JP; Anthony ByoO, Birmingham B33 9UW; Andrew Huntley, Worcs B60 1JP; David Richards, Worcs DY10 2UE; David Haigh, Redditch B97 6LY; Craig Talbot, Worcs DY13 8TP; Mark Millichope, W Middlesbrough TS3 4YJ.

TOP TEN SOFTWARE

As voted by THE GAMES MACHINE readership. This is not a machine chart, we went by title, although some games are obviously only available on specific machines — so they did very well!
In 1983 a coin-op was released called *Dragon's Lair*. The game centred around the tasks of the gallant knight Dirk the Daring and his attempts to rescue the fair maiden Daphne from the evil dragon's castle. Along the way, Dirk encounters a wide, and at times very weird, variety of traps and creatures as he progresses ever nearer Daphne and the final confrontation with the Dragon. A fairly standard adventure plot, but what made the game stand out were the extraordinary cartoon graphics and the presence of a laser disc player within the cabinet.

The pictures were created and brought to life through the talents of an ex-Walt Disney graphic artist — their standard is very high. During the game the player is required to perform the correct rapid joystick actions with near split-second timing in order to succeed through encounters. At key moments in each scene, the laser disc displays a sequence based on the player's actions, with good or bad results.

*Dragon's Lair* was revolutionary in its use of a laser disc as a storage medium for graphics, providing obviously much more realistic and detailed pictures than computer-generated graphics, and allowing for traditional film animation on a scale a computer would consider luxury. There were short intervals for laser disc access, but the phenomenal results rendered the short pause unnoticeable.

Not surprisingly, home computer versions were eventually to appear with Software Projects producing two 8-bit games; *Dragon's Lair* and its sequel *Escape From Singe's Castle* — both games met with moderate success. Now Microdeal has created an experimental system using the *Dragon's Lair* laser disc, a disc player and an Atari ST, to bring the coin-op into your own home. The system has been worked on almost since the ST first came out; the fruits of that labour have now come to light following an intensive period of playtesting and debugging.

**Knight Law**

For £19.95 the purchaser of the *Journey Into The Lair* package can expect to receive the laser disc containing the entire set of graphics and sound of the original arcade machine (over 20,000 frames can be held on the 12" disc) and the 3.5 floppy disk holding the controlling program. The cable connections are purchased separately for £19.95. Both TV and monitor output is possible. TV output is through the aerial, but stereo amplification is required for a monitor. Without a stereo monitor it's only possible to have one channel in operation (unless the left and right channels are linked together), the single channel playing either the speech (screams and other dialogue) or music and sound effects. In the
THE GAME TESTED

The graphics and sound in *Journey Into the Lair* are straight from the arcade machine, and as such cannot be faulted. Interaction between game player and laser disc player is a little rough, the action just stops and then pauses awaiting your input. However, the pause does give you time to think, which is a lot fairer than attempting demanding action. The on-screen show of the system through additional laser discs, although they are not interactive, the main processing is poor value for the input phase, the game status can be saved to 3.5" disk, storing the player’s achievements, score, location and number of lives.

The earlier rooms only require one command to pass through successfully; this situation doesn’t last long. Further rooms contain multiple hazards requiring multiple actions in a set sequence - deviate from the next and Dirk perishes to be replaced at the start of the encounter again.

The laser disc player used to review *Journey Into the Lair* was a Pioneer LD-700, although conventional players can be connected up and used, through the configuration software. To use different machines, the relevant software is loaded in to configure the connected player to operate with the program.

The system works by making the player run the automatic sequence from the disc leading up to the input phase, the on-screen action then pauses to bring the system back under ST control to await input. Once word input is made, the machine scans the disc and runs the resulting death or success sequence.

The graphics and sound from the laser disc are identical to the arcade machine’s

Players progress through trial and error … and jumping toward those flashes could be an error

Who’s buying?

With no other plans for leisure software, *Journey Into the Lair* is an expensive experiment, but one that has worked incomprehension as it brings to light the possibilities of using laser discs for game entertainment. We wondered who was likely to buy it, and asked Microdeal’s John Symes.

‘It’s reasonably debatable,’ he replied, ‘the product is not aimed at anyone in particular, but obviously it’ll be a specialist area … either that or someone who spoils their kids rotten!’

But isn’t the real problem the fact there’s no one buying a laser disc player? How many have been sold in the UK? Roughly 50,000 units, but most of them aren’t interactive; the main bulk are the cheap £70 versions that were sold three years ago. Though there are new interactive versions coming into the country this year, currently available in the States and doing well.’

Which makes for a small user base to sell to. So how are sales of the package going?

‘We’ve been shipping *Journey To The Lair* since May - mainly on a retail basis rather than going into the shops. Actually, we are pleasantly surprised with how this is selling. But then the project has been a kind of a experiment, an adventure of our own.’

Like all prototypes, *Journey Into The Lair* paves the way for future systems. Unfortunately, Microdeal are not considering expanding on the system through additional laser discs, although they are working on an icon-driven interactive video language which could exploit the technology used in the *Lair* system.

Laser disc and ST software £99.95
Interface cable £19.95
Disc player £400-£800

Interestingly enough . . .

A Dragon’s Lair arcade machine can be picked up from around £495, depending if it is working or not . . . According to David Piper at coin-op specialists Death Leisure: ‘Laser players are real trouble.’

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TGM TX 009: 8-88 75/116
PLAY BY MAIL

POSTE HASTE
THE GAMES MACHINE's regular
Play By Mail column

This month we chronicle a popular Jade Games strategy PBM, but first a steamy It's A Crime report from that Big Apple over the Atlantic, as the TGM B-Team pours gasoline into beer bottles.

New York, New York (so good they named it twice) is a mean, tough city with many an apple tree in sight. But through KJC's It's A Crime, you can join in the street-kitted, proto-Cyberpunk fun, without getting fruitleaves down your front.

We've got parallel action going on here; the TGM A-Team's bid to dominate the New York chasms is on hold - because of space limitations, but never fear - the B-Team, controlled by our shoot'em-up supremo Robin Hogg, has taken the plunge in a different game. His gang began in predictably aggressive fashion. One Pro and two 'Cruits were sent into an adjacent block and by uncapping a fire hydrant, flooded the street, doubling the gang's territory. At the same time, a Punk and two other 'Cruits made judicious use of Molotov cocktails to take over that block as well. A fine start indeed, but there was a setback. Less successful were efforts to sell street dope, and buy submachine guns at an 'insultingly' low price. Once the gang does manage to get some heavy firepower, however, watch out its expansion rate could grow even faster.

A meeting with a former gang leader has emphasized the problems of trying to knock a gang off early - even if you win, he told them. It could easily leave you fatally vulnerable to another gang. Alternatively, playing safe - not one of Hogg's problems could mean the gang failing to build up the resources necessary to survive the long term.

Reports in the New York City Post indicate arson is the favourite method of 'most gangs' at the moment, including the tastefully named 'Yorkshire Rippers'. Please send any complaints to KJC!

Next month, we will have reports from the streets on both teams, though playing different games. A-Team leader, Nik Wild, says, "Robin's gang will never survive, because he's a suicidal nutcase." Robin Hogg, meanwhile, claims Nik hasn't a chance, his gang's too old and dead: that's why they're called the A-Team. "What was that you said? Eh-Eh...

The most important part of the game, however, is probably combat. In army-to-army combat you divide the number of your competition games being fun with TGM's sister magazine GRASH, the winner standing to receive a hand-built stone castle - albeit only 10 cubic feet big. The actual game itself, includes 100,000 locations and has a special internal mail system to encourage communication between players. There's even a bimonthly newsletter carrying readers' announcements and details of occasional pub meetings. These help players by allowing trades to be arranged, which can take place over thousands of miles.

In the drive to gain yet more territory, longboats may be required, which must be carried by armies. Care should taken - if abandoned in cities, longboats can get broken up for firewood! Other important orders allow armies to be disbanded, if lost or proving too much of a drain on resources, and for forces to be transferred between armies and settlements.

The most important part of the game, however, is probably combat. In army-to-army combat you divide the number of your armies into the number of the enemy's armies and subtract the result from 100%. The winner standing to receive a hand-built stone castle - albeit only 10 cubic feet big. The actual game itself, includes 100,000 locations and has a special internal mail system to encourage communication between players. There's even a bimonthly newsletter carrying readers' announcements and details of occasional pub meetings. These help players by allowing trades to be arranged, which can take place over thousands of miles.

Each player begins the game as a relatively powerful knight, the lord of a province measuring 10 x 10 squares. In this province you can place a city, fort and temple. To build more settlements, other provinces have to be taken over. Armies are the principal means of achieving this, five of which are supplied to every player.

A key demand of the game is keeping track of where your armies actually are - it's perfectly possible to get lost and have to discard the enemy. To move an army you write '10' - the number of the army movement order - the name of the army's general, and up to four compass directions. Alternatively, scouts can be sent out to search for armies and habitable provinces. Further armies can be created, like buildings, at a cost of a few Tallons. Armies have to be maintained, though, and money to do this comes from buildings or settlements which are defended free of charge by their own garrisons.

THE CHRONICLES OF 'THE KNIGHTS OF AVALON'

Jade Games

Besides being recommended by some Poste Haste readers, this game has won awards as the second-best new game of 1987 and third-best strategy and tactical game at a recent PBM convention. There are even two special platoons among five boxes representing centre, reserve and flank forces. A similar format is adopted in attacks on settlements. Occasionally useful in such battles are power cards which can be given by game entities and traded, or obtained by achieving a special position in the game. More generally trade is used to earn money to payroll yet more expansion. On the whole trade items are an investment which grow in value as turns go on. In play the game is, in fact, relatively simple compared to something like New Order.

The startup pack is free, with turns costing 60p for 7 orders and additional orders are 12p each. If you want to play, contact Jade Games, PO Box 54, Southsea, Hants, PO5 1TD. As with Dark Blades turns are processed on an Atari 1040STF.

We, on the other hand, can be contacted at POSTE HASTE, THE GAMES MACHINE, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB.
Move over BROTHERS!!! Make way for...

The Great Giana Sisters

"This is one of the most addictive arcade adventures I have ever played, the gameplay is fabulous."

Zzap Gold Medal.

"Having been totally addicted to the original Super Mario Bros., it is no mean feat to say that I found the Giana Sisters as compulsive."

C + VG.

A TERRIBLE TWOSOME WHO'LL STOP AT NOTHING TO SEND YOU OUT OF YOUR MIND

Where one famous double act stopped short, another begins. Headbutts and demons, platforms and pits — all delivered with a glamour and style that neatly disguises the cunning tricks and tantalising terrors of a couple of wild cats.

C + VG.

A TERRIBLE TWOSOME WHO'LL STOP AT NOTHING TO SEND YOU OUT OF YOUR MIND

CBM 64/128 - £9.99t, £11.99d
Amstrad - £9.99t, £14.99d
Spectrum - £8.99t, £11.99d
Atari ST - £19.99d
Amiga - £24.99d

Rainbow Arts

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Units 2/3 Holford Way, Holford, Birmingham B6 7AX. Tel: 021 356 3388
When you're on edge and the aliens get tough...

SCREAM!!!

Stick a singing alien on your head and groove with ACE and ALIEN SYNDROME

Win a singing hat, and Alien Syndrome for 8- and 16-bit formats

They say in space no-one can hear you scream - but play Alien Syndrome, the hottest arcade conversion to come from Ace, the Softtek International/The Edge arcade-action label, and you'll hear a different story.

Alien Syndrome hit the arcades last year, a resounding success because of its detailed graphics, giving birth to traditional hordes of marauding aliens. The game has already been converted for the Sega console, but it is the home computer versions which really capture the magic and excitement of the coin-op original.

Alien Syndrome's action is set in five space stations, viewed from overhead, overrun by genetic experiments that went wrong - aliens! They've captured scientists and set a time bomb to blow each level apart. Enter and defeat them, fail and scream yourself to death. The conversion is as accurate as possible for each computer, maintaining the high graphical standard and immense playability of its arcade counterpart.

In short, it's great.

So then, how do you fancy getting one for free, from Ace? Of course you do. and how about winning a unique singing alien hat? Can you stand it?

The singing alien is really a baseball hat equipped with a built-in radio and headphones topped off with a swish Alien Syndrome logo. The hat is part of the first prize along with a copy of the game on any of its formats (Spectrum, Commodore 64/128, Amstrad CPC, Atari ST and Amiga).

For 25 runners-up there are copies of the game too.

To win one of the prizes spot all TEN differences in the pictures below, cut out the coupon, fill in your name, address and required format and send it to: ALIEN SYNDROME COMP, THE GAMES MACHINE, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB. All entries must reach TGM HQ by August 18 and entrants must also abide by the competition rules as detailed in the masthead or be fed to the green wobbly monsters on Level One.

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PICTURE A

Name
Address

Computer owned

Postcode

PICTURE B
Novice or Grand Master, choose the Ultimate in Chess Software - Sargon III

Sargon III is the result of over 21 man-years of development. It will play at precisely the level of difficulty (or simplicity!) you need. It will give hints, take back moves, replay for you - it will even change sides. Sargon III contains an opening library of over 68,000 opening moves, and it stores over 100 Classic games in Chess History. In the US, it has won the PC World magazine Microcomputer Chess Tournament. And in field trials on 6502 and 68000-based computers, it has beaten its main rival, Chessmaster 2000.

If you have never played chess before, Sargon III’s manual will take you from the fundamentals, in a specially-commissioned section from the US Chess Federation.

And if you are a Grand Master, Sargon III will rise to the occasion - it’s beaten a Chess Master rated 2209.

Sargon III will be available at £19.95 for Commodore 64, Atari (8-bit) on disk, and £24.95 on PC, Amiga and PC.
CONFRONTATION: COIN-OP

With Robin Hogg, pictures by Cameron Pound and thanks to Alan and Avril at Sunspot, Manchester

SLOT NEWS

TAITO is rapidly becoming unstoppable with the revolutionary 3-D racing game Continental Circus. Already the largest European order ever has been made for it and Electrocoin, one of the UK's larger amusement machine manufacturers, is beginning one of the biggest ever production runs for a coin-op. A full report next month.

Data East, lacking a real success since Kung Fu Master - the game responsible for spawning plague of beat-'em-ups on arcades, consoles and home computers - could recreate that success soon with Dragon Ninja, soon on general UK release. Some extra elements make it worth a look.

SNK will soon have Chopper 1 and Gold Medalist in the arcades to take your money. The latter game is just in time for the Seoul Olympics and will bring back all those (painful) memories of Hyersports, Track And Field and joystick waggling. Most events have been seen before, such as swimming, 100m sprint, discus and long jump, but events like boxing and high bar are new.

In the States, Atari has a new video game titled Toobin. It's a race game set in a tube moving along a river, with missiles and crocodiles to avoid and gates to negotiate. It looks likely that the game will reach the UK by the end of the year.

Finally we move north to Britain's Number One place for entertainment: Blackpool. The famous Pleasure Beach there has recently opened The Avalanche, the first bobsleigh run in the UK. The massive ride has taken a year to construct and it's now ready in time for the summer season. One million-plus visitors are expected to use the ride this year and we'll take a further look at it in a future issue of TGM.

P47 FREEDOM FIGHTER

Jaleco

From all the coin-ops this month, this two-player aerial shoot-'em-up gave me the most pleasure. It doesn't have particularly outstanding graphics, the sound is kept in moderation and it doesn't break any new boundaries, but it's simple, great fun to play and cash-drainingly addictive!

Over northern France, one or two Allied fighter/bombers fly above enemy-occupied regions, dropping bombs on guns, tanks and enemy positions, while shooting down oncoming squadrons of bombers, missiles and fighters. Strains of Nemesis emerge in the capsules left behind by destroyed waves of enemy aircraft. The now-standard (ie unoriginal) end-of-level opponents include a long train armed to the proverbial teeth with guns and antiair cannon, a hideously large Tiger tank, behemoth bombers and other multiple-hits-required enemies.

Hogg's pick of the month: splendid graphics, lurid action in P47 Freedom Fighter

VINDICATORS

Atari

Indicate: 1a. to provide justification for, 1b. to maintain the existence of, 1c. to uphold - that's what the dictionary says, but Atari's latest machine is more vindictive than vindicative.

Once again they have taken ideas from their own ancient machines and written a hit game around them. Reworked this time is Battlezone, the tank controls and general game idea having worked their way into this 1988 version. Atari have taken the futuristic, eye-catching cabinet of Xybots and replaced the controls with paddle-like steering

80/116 TGM TX 009:8-88
mechanisms for tank movement. These take a little getting used to but Battlezone veterans shouldn't have any problems.

Viewed from above, one or two players control a future tank progressing through three zones in space stations scattered throughout the galaxy in a bid to find the exit before the fuel runs out. Three types of enemy tanks are out to stop the Vindicators, three types of gun turrets spin and lock onto the tank to try and blow it away, grid runners, electric poles and homing mines also appear in later zones.

There's a bonus screen at the end of every space station, in which the tank has to get out in ten seconds before the entire station explodes. Fuel and bonuses can be collected here but don't hang about! Once through, it's onto the next station with wall guns to avoid, lava chasms to cross, more complex station layouts, less fuel pods, more tanks and other foes. Keys open doors to the next zone a la Xybots. Resource points can be expended to buy increased shot power, increased shot range, tank speed, extra shields or a turret/gun rotation facility – you can face one direction and fire in another, tricky to control but well worth forking out the resource points for.

Despite usual Atari presentation – excellent sound, high-quality graphics, striking cabinet design and excellent speech – the actual gameplay is shallow.

Finding the exit before the fuel runs out. Three types of enemy tanks find the exit before the fuel runs out. Three types of enemy tanks are out to stop the Vindicators, three types of gun turrets spin and lock onto the tank to try and blow it away, grid runners, electric poles and homing mines also appear in later zones.

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Drone in three space stations or later zones.

Eventually through to the alleyways and freeways of New York, The Rally Bike, viewed from above, wends through each city, while trains and trams charge straight at you, trucks try and bash you off the road and bikers swarm all over the place. Typical Sunday driving really. A helicopter flies overhead dropping crates containing bonus items: a turbo for the bike, boost score and attached guardian bikers on each side of the vehicle protecting the bike from hazards along the route. Fuel is perpetually drained. Stopping at gas stations tops up the tanks, but knocks you down a couple of places in the race. Rally Bike rides along at a sensibly moderate pace, the length of the screen together with the small bike gives freedom of movement and sufficient warning of obstacles ahead. This all changes for the worse with later cities, less and less room is available on the roads, the rival bikers get faster and the road layouts get worse. On the Los Angeles section, a truck taking up the entire road proves almost impassable, but the continue-play option solves this otherwise very awkward, unfair problem. Rally Bike sports some slick, varied, nicely defined graphics, great presentation together with easy-to-get-into, simple gameplay, Taito certainly know how to inject life into their coin-ops.

F-1 DREAM

While we wait for LED Storm, Forgotten Worlds and Last Duel, Capcom fill in with this racing game. It's the Grand Prix season and in a Formula One car very similar to Nigel Mansell's Williams, you participate against computer-driven cars on four multiway-scrolling Grand Prix circuits seen from overhead.

A qualification lap establishes your starting grid placing. Once in the race, turn on the turbo and work your way through to first position and keep there. Hairpin bends, the other cars and rapidly worn tyres pose race problems.

F-1 Dream doesn't aim to be anything above its station; the gameplay is addictively simple, the graphics are more functional than overwhelming in detail, so's colour and animation. In fact, the game is visually very low-key. What it does have, though, is good playability, with simple controls (although the turbo buttons combination is awkward to achieve at first) and generally a fun atmosphere pervading the whole.

The overhead Grand Prix circuits of Capcom's F1-Dream as the start gets under way

Combining Xybots and Battlezone in Atari's Vindicators

Dodging between two trams on their lines – Rally Bike

"Fill 'er up, and make it snappy!"
WIN A MASSIVE SWATCH WATCH!

and more Swatches and games!

perfectly timed prizes from

Ocean

COMPETITION

Time will never stand still for you again once you're the winner of a massive Swatch watch courtesy of Ocean – unlike the four adventurers in Ocean's epic arcade adventure quest Where Time Stood Still written by Denton Designs. Reviewed this issue, Where Time Stood Still proves to be another winner from Ocean, coming in at 95% (page 45).

The game details the adventures of a quartet who, after a disastrous plane crash, find themselves stranded on a remote Himalayan plateau – where time stood still. The barren wasteland is inhabited by prehistoric creatures in search of a man-sized snack. The object of the game...? to get out ALIVE!

Where Time Stood Still is graphically reminiscent of Denton Designs's earlier game, The Great Escape, with a multidirectional scrolling landscape in monochrome. Tyrannosaurus Rex, pterodactyls, swamp creatures and many other prehistoric foes make up the monster pack in Where Time Stood Still, due for release on Spectrum 128K and Atari ST.

Forget about the creatures for a moment and concentrate on the questions below – they could win you a giant Swatch Watch Wall Clock measuring almost seven feet in length. The clock is part of the first prize along with a wrist-sized Swatch and a copy of Where Time Stood Still on either Spectrum 128K or Atari ST. For five second-prize winners there's a Swatch and the game; ten runners-up each get a copy of the game. Send your entries on a postcard or the back of a sealed envelope along with your address – and don't forget to state which computer you own – to WTSS COMP, THE GAMES MACHINE, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB to arrive by August 18.

1 A stitch in time saves...
what?
(a) lime, (b) nine, (c) putting the cat out

2 At the beginning of Where
Time Stood Still, which character takes charge of the stranded passengers?
(a) Jarrett, (b) Jarett, (c) Jarret

3 Which of these titles was not written by Denton Designs?
(a) The Great Escape, (b) Frankie Goes To Hollywood, (c) Magnetron

For comparison: the wrist-sized Swatch and the Swatch Clock
OUTERBOARD

Trouble is brewing down under, there's a mutated spider in space, four world-powers are hunting for microfilm and you've got to kiss the belly-button of the player to your right. There is no cause for alarm, it's just another installment of boardgames . . .

EVERYBODY NEEDS GOOD ONES

As we go to press, Scott's newspaper serial has caused Des and Daphne to separate, while turning Mrs Mangle into a nervous wreck - and Charlene has lost her job. Meanwhile, Rosemary has discovered that her mother, Helen Daniels, is having an affair with her fiancé . . .

Sound familiar? It's Neighbours - pinnacle of daytime television. At last a boardgame has been based on the ups and downs of the folk in Ramsay Street - so now you can involve yourself in Neighbours 24 hours a day.

The game should be in the shops by the time you read this. Released by Crown & Andrews (Brit: Quiz and Dare), it features all the soap's characters. The aim of the game is to travel around the board building up a script with action and scripted cards, manipulating the plot with every move.

'The beauty of The Neighbours Game,' say Crown & Andrews, 'is that you don't have to be familiar with the TV series to play, although it does provide slightly more entertainment value if you know the basics of the programme.'

The Neighbours Game is priced at £11.99 and we'll be reviewing it next month.

Random House, the giant American book publisher, recently entered the toys and games field with success, and is now turning to the UK market. The launch product, Quizard, combines a traditional general knowledge/specialist quiz game with an electronic overlay (looking like a mutated spider) complete with flashing lights and buzzers. Having chosen a set of questions from one of three books of ascending difficulty - Wizard, Champion or Master - the players compete to answer questions either by hitting a buzzer before the electronic overlay designates time-up or by being buzzed to answer. Quizard, which should appeal to all ages, sells for £22.50.

ESPIONAGE

Espionage Ltd, £12.95, 2-4 players

Originally devised in 1984, Espionage is re-released this summer. As well as being treated to a massive dose of marketing hype, conversions for all major computer formats is in hand by Grandslam Entertainments - check it out at the Personal Computer Show (Earls Court, September 16-18.)

Espionage is a strategic spying game in which opponents look to attack each other at every opportunity, and become Master Spy. To achieve this acclaimed status, players must pick up one or all four rolls of microfilm placed at the centre of the board and return to their base camp.

To accomplish the operation players each have a 12-strong spy team comprising six courier agents, four secret agents and two surveillance agents. Defence and attack elements are carried out by the surveillance agents, while couriers and secret agents manoeuvre the microfilm. All three types have different movement patterns (similar to chess pieces) and how to use them to the best advantage is learned during play.

Attacking other players is a relatively simple operation - if in line with a member of the opposition and there is a free square behind it, an attack can take place. Money is handed out at the beginning and as you eliminate opposing players a cash reward is given, similarly a reward is given for retrieving the microfilm.

The winner is the first person to collect all four microfilms or the player with the most cash when all four microfilms have been captured.

The verdict

There are no dice involved in Espionage, it's purely a strategy skill game - only to be played when your mind is in gear. The rules are clear, intricately explained and include diagrams describing sets of classic moves. Espionage will take several games to get to grips with as players learn to make situations work to their best advantage, but having mastered the basics, there's a fascinating and enthralling game to be discovered.

ICEBREAKER

Brainless Games Ltd, £19.95, 4 or more players

Sam Lai and Anne Powell devised Icebreaker last year as a spontaneous idea to save a party from falling apart at the seams. Now with a grant from the Department Of Employment, they are marketing it through their own company, Brainless Games.

The rules are incredibly simple - they have to be for a drunk party game - and entertainment is the aim. On the throw of a dice players travel around the board following the instructions on the squares as they land on them. There are penalty sections - 'Take a drink' appears regularly, as do forfeits. The forfeit sections instruct the player to take a green, red, blue or yellow card and carry out the instructions printed thereon. This forfeits range from sticking five coins up yer bum (with clothes on) and walking the length of the room to sulk on a baby's dummy (provided in the packaging). By the time the game is in full swing, players are hopefully sufficiently intoxicated to make it immaterial how silly the forfeits are. Be warned, some of them get very personal.

Scoring points is achieved by performing the forfeits, the winner is the first one to top 2,500. As this usually takes two-and-a-half hours, a smaller win score can be decided on at the beginning.

A party game for long late nights

The verdict

Well packaged, Icebreaker comes with all the essentials you need to play it: the dummy, a length of rope (?), tape measure and toenail clippers. The board is sturdy so there's no need worry about spilling drinks over it. It has to be played as a late-night party game when all concerned are in the right frame of mind. Icebreaker is immensely fun and an original and a daring product which has been well put together - it comes highly recommended from Ludlow party goers.

TGM TX 009:8-88 83/116
Heavily committed to MSX? Fed-up with reading about the latest music software for everything but your system? OK This is YOUR article, as Jon Bates gives you the story behind music and MSX

The Japanese are not noted for fast one-line answers. Instead they observe, retreat, think and do lots of sums, consult with upper and lower management, and only then cautiously stick a toe in the water. The initial launch of MSX in the United Kingdom was a similar process. The system as you know is well-thought out. Programs are usually stored in ROM cartridges which slot in the top just like games consoles. The big thing is that it doesn’t matter what make of MSX you have, the program runs on it. The set launch period was Christmas 1984 and there was a fair amount of pre-launch publicity surrounding it dating back to the late-summer of 1983. ‘Fourteen manufacturers all committed to the same standard... 64K RAM... 32K ROM... uses Micro Soft extended basic...’ etc. The only notable question mark was that the machines were still using the Z80 central processor which many felt not to be a step in the right direction as it was already quite old and had been superseded in the micro market (Clive Sinclair was quoted as saying that MSX ‘froze technology and software where it would be more profitable to look ahead’.)

Anyway as the launch date neared it was easy to spot that most of the manufacturers were having second thoughts about the UK market. Only three main manufacturers had pushed their campaign past the point of no-return on the runway and were committed to take off: Toshiba, Sony and Yamaha. Since this is the music page and not a history lesson it is with the latter I shall concern myself.

No easy rider
In Europe Yamaha are known primarily for motor bikes and secondly for musical instruments. Looking at the company prospectus – the global issue that is – a rather different picture emerges. Motor bikes are only a minor part of their operation. Like many Japanese corporations, they have spread sideways and are really in the business of leisure commodities, to which end the manufacture of instruments fits in very nicely, not to mention the skis, golf clubs, furniture, yachts, holiday centres, and even hotels and bathroom suites (a rep from a rival company once told of the symbolic joy he experienced whenever he used the bathroom in one of their hotels!)

Mr Yamaha started off 101 years ago as a manufacturer of a type of harmonium (a pedalled wind-blown reed organ) and it was only during the Fifties that they got into electronics. Now they are the world’s largest manufacturer of musical instruments and just for the record the last three years has seen them move significantly in the UK with a take-over of what was their original agency outlet, the opening of a company shop in London, the take-over of one of Britain’s oldest and best known manufacturer of drums, and I would guess future expansion into actual assembly and manufacture over here. Computers fit well into this structure.

First reports from the Japan computer fair of March 1984 even caught the UK agency on the hop, which lead to one amusing phone conversation I had with one of the directors who was trying to conceal his lack of information by quoting from the very same article that I had in front of me. The model emerged as the CX5 and made its appearance in October of that year. Basically it is, of course, just the same as all the other MSX machines, and has 32K for you to play around with. However, what it had, already bolted on underneath, was a...
chip was of the same sort that tone module, known as an SFG01. More of this later. To complete ROM program.

Inside this were an FM chip and a printer configuration. MIDI-in and the package, you got a plug-in more than one sound at the same However, it was multitimbral. This computer to have these built in at the right outputs. This was a first, the only establishments were quick to pick up starting price of a staggering £599. No joke chips

The FM (frequency modulation)

Yamaha’s CX5 and CX5 MkII—the sound quality is probably the best from any computer still to output when using the full potential of the FM chip. To use both MIDI-in and out meant that you couldn’t access the FM chip. Come to think of it, why on earth sell a MIDI-equipped computer with separate non-compatible keyboard, other than to paper over a large crack in the design? Without any extra cartridges, you could call up, by the rather obvious command of CALL MUSIC, a resident music program that turned the keyboard into a self-accompanying instrument. Sounds were chosen from an internal memory of 46 voices which, on reflection, are not the best examples of FM programming I have come across. It had routines that gave you auto bass lines plus chords and could record what you performed into the memory. However the drums for this function were taken from the standard MSX sound chip and so were atrocious in comparison with the FM voices. Quite frankly I wish they had not bothered.

Let’s have a look at Yamaha’s ROM cartridge software. Throughout I shall be quoting the catalogue numbers as often this is how they are quoted in adverts. Another point to remember is that only the programs that start with the number ‘5’ or ‘3’ are disk-compatible.

No swap for beer

First of all is the step-time program called the Music Composer. This has appeared in two versions and the Mk 1 has the prefix YRM 101, the Mk 2 being YRM 501. Mk 2 has a few refinements but essentially they are the same beast.

The program commands up to eight nonophonic lines simultaneously, all with individual dynamics and accents using the internal voices. Sounds and MIDI channels can be changed with the frequency of socks and it has lots of memory-saving repeat and return signs, just like real music – musicians have always been super idle when it comes to putting pen to paper. You hold down the note you want on the keyboard and the cursor on-screen runs around the note values; release the note when the cursor is on the one you want and the note appears on screen. You don’t even have to have a keyboard because the notes can be entered from the owner’s keyboard.

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No exaggeration

In the original package of programs there was a rather strange program called Music Macro (YRM104 and YRM504) which was supposed to enable computer whizos to write music in the form of a program. In practice this program stayed on the shelves of the dealers as it was really too slow and besides which, the CX5 was marketed through music dealers who found it as much use as a handbrake on a canoe.

The real fun starts with the voicing program (YRM102 and YRM504) for the internal FM chip. For the first time you could see the FM system graphically displayed with voltmeters and bar graphs. I could never understand why they chose this – it would have made much more sense swiped through 90°, as you could then see the sound envelope as it should be. Also available was the first program anywhere for voicing the CX7 (YRM 103) using the same bar graphs but spread over two pages to cram all the information in.

Nowadays I have voicing programs coming out of my ears – well let’s say that quite a few float into THE GAMES MACHINE office – but it would be no exaggeration to say that despite the age and the fact that these were pioneering programs, they are still very easy and simple to use. Quick on the heels of these were the DX9 voicing program (YRM105), RX drum machine editor (YRM 302) and DX21 voicing program (YRM305).

Yamaha also scored with one of the first MIDI recorders to hit the mass market with the catalogue number of YRM301. Although quite simple in comparison with the 16-bit programs like the Steinberg that are now commonplace, it’s certainly worth mentioning, I still find it a useful tool and one that I can configure material on very quickly. The quantization is quite basic, but it does have an easy graphical display and punch-in and out features coupled with editing that make it quite a bargain at its original purchase price of £35. It’s mouse compatible, chains files and sections of songs and supports the disk interface as well as cassette.

"Music Composer is the best step-time program that I have ever worked with"
Yamaha had to refund money when users complained of the CX5 MkII’s lack of compatibility.
FOUNDATION'S WASTE

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Stoke-on-Trent
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Facsimile: (0782) 577024
Gismos and sinister-looking black boxes are only part of the confusing range of add-ons for anyone who wants to spice up their home-grown videos. Some are ludicrously cheap and effective, others horribly expensive and practically useless – it takes Mel Croucher to sort the sheet from the goats.

Ask yourself this before you invest in any video add-ons: is your purchase going to enhance your work by tarting up the visual image or is it going to ruin it? I was watching The Singing Detective last night, which has won every award going. It is visually superb. On replaying it, I listed the following video techniques: number of cuts, 306; number of fades, three; number of wipes, zero; number of camera special effects, zero; number of zooms, seven; number of scrolls, one. In other words the greatest impacts were achieved by simplicity. For most of your needs you can forget about vision mixers and distracting effects – what you need is a simple cable to copy short scenes from a camcorder or a VCR to another video. It doesn't matter what sort of connecting plugs your machines happen to have: all leads come in a choice of two types, an extension lead or a copying lead. The extension type passes a signal from a pin at one end to the same pin at the other, but the copying lead mirrors the signal. It sends signals from Audio-In to Audio-Out and Video-In to Video-Out, and this is the type you want.

In the world of computing, it's difficult to know whether to laugh or cry sometimes when I come across the sort of accessory dreamed up by an enthusiastic woodlouse. In videoville things are much the same.

**YUPPIE ACCESSORIES**

What a naff idea! A whoopee cushion for camcorders! Looking like a giant enema, this rubber inflatable is supposed to act as a rest for your camcorder in 'unlikely situations'. You pump it up until it gets nice and squishy, plonk it on the nearest 'unlikely situation' (a dwarf, spiked railings, a spiked dwarf?) and support your camera in its mobile embrace. I have always found a tripod does the job very well, or failing that a simple device that you can usually find just below the head which I will call 'the shoulder'.

**JESSOP VARI CUSHION, £16.95**

What a naff idea! A whoopee cushion for camcorders! Looking like a giant enema, this rubber inflatable is supposed to act as a rest for your camcorder in 'unlikely situations'. You pump it up until it gets nice and squishy, plonk it on the nearest 'unlikely situation' (a dwarf, spiked railings, a spiked dwarf?) and support your camera in its mobile embrace. I have always found a tripod does the job very well, or failing that a simple device that you can usually find just below the head which I will call 'the shoulder'.

**LONGREACH 'STEADY READY CAM', £39.95**

A highly effective wobble-eliminator, for mobile camera work. This one wouldn't seem out of place in a sex shop window; designed to hug into your neck and grip your breast, it offers hands-free support for most camcorders. Nice idea, tacky name though.

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**VIDEO ANORAK, £24.95**

Designer raincoats for camcorders, what will they think of next (wellies for your tripod, funeral services for dead battery packs)? These made-to-measure camera coats only leave the lens and eyepiece exposed, which is jolly useful for all you out there who can control your machine's wee buttons by telepathy. If you want to film in the rain, save yourself grief and nearly 25 quid by doing what I do – wrap the damn thing in clingfilm!

**SUPERINTRO, Hall Video Productions, £15.00**

Got an old 48K/128K Spectrum knocking around? Then have I got news for you. This cheap little lump of software is bloody marvellous! Titles in four different fonts, fade or wipe of text and/or graphics, scrolls, splits, dissolves, auto timing, come on now! For 15 quid this has got to be a bargain.

**VIDEO TITLES 64, MRVP Ltd, £39.99**

Even better news if you possess a Commodore 64, this video title program is smooth as Bob Monkhouse in butter. Complete with a cable for direct video connection, it offers variable scroll speeds, instant cuts between titles, and a choice of 16 colours, but the fonts are very limited. Mind you, any half-decent programmer can do wonders with it. Compared to the extortionate prices asked for clip-on titlers for camcorders, both this and the Superintro utility are excellent value for money, and a doddl to use.

**BAUER VTG-1000 CHARACTER GENERATOR, £316.00**

Four type fonts, scroll, 20-page memory, curtain and fades. Yes folks, for an extra 300 quid, this does everything that the last two do. Which way to the funny farm?
TAKING THE MIKE

In my recent survey of camcorders, one problem cropped up time and time again: crudity sound. The whirr of the zoom-servos, intimate sniffs and swears from the camera operator and the omnidirectional built-in mike picking up everything but the sound you really want. Unidirectional mikes are the answer, the type of plug-in device that looks more like a cattle-prod covered in a foam sheath.

GUN MICROPHONE, The Widescreen Centre, £39.50
You get what you pay for, and while this looks like the mikes listed below, the sound quality is poor.

AUDIO-TECHNICA 9300 'SHOTGUN', £55.95
Complete with a converter for general purpose use, foam windshield and sexy pistol grip, this mike focuses on sound sources a bit like a zoom lens. Audio quality is acceptable, but nothing to write home about.

SONY ECM-K120, £79.30
An electret condenser boom mike, with three settings for narrow beam, uni and omni. Pinpoint accuracy up to about 50 feet, with a very good dynamic range.

SENHEISER ME-88, £142.00
Oh yeah! I mean, this is a superb piece of kit! Professional quality, broadcast standard results, and capable of picking up a sparrow fart at a hundred paces! If you are serious about location recording this is the mike for you. Even the carrying case is a joy to unzip.

FADER/MIXER JUNGLE

Ah well, if you won’t listen to my comments about cuts being better than fades and wipes, you are welcome to waste your money on a host of machines that will transform your videos into a gimmick-infested buttock pain.

VAF Mk3, ACT Electronics, £24.95
No frills cheapo, no frills result. Fade to black.

VPC-1000, Video Tech, £79.00
It's been around since 1986, and I still can't fault it. Mind you, it only does one thing for your visual image: fade to black at any speed.

VIVANCO VCR-2044, £179.00
Cheap and cheerful, with a pair of yummy Starship Enterprise fader levers, this machine would be fine except for one thing: there's no brilliance control. This makes it as useful as the famous knitted condom.

VEC-2000, Video Tech, £185.00
Highly recommended. Automatic fades to white or black, two dozen wipe patterns, an extra video output for duplication (and how sensible that is!), three-channel audio, and a nice robust casing. Simple and effective.

VIVANCO VCR-3044, £279.00
Four yummy fader levers this time, and the all-important brilliance control too. With luck you may be able to hire this baby from your video shop.

SANSHU VX-00, £299.95 recommended retail price, but discounted to £299.95
Unlimited wipe patterns, window facilities, and a host of useless special effects labelled with the magic word 'digital'. You know those naff adverts for local boutiques that you get at the cinema? They use stuff like this.

ENHANCERS

If you have video footage with perfect content but lousy definition, all is not lost. Video enhancers can cure sick tapes, or at least slap on a few bandages. Cheap they are not!

VIVANCO 1044, £99.99
Allows you to fritzt with about the contrast and sharpness, with the useful addition of noise reduction when all those snow-patterns ruin the soundtrack. By using the bypass switch you can get a 'before and after' image by plugging in two monitors, which is very useful.

JVC JX-C7, £270.00 recommended retail price, discounted to £225.00
A combi-machine, featuring a video image enhancer, colour corrector and stereo sound mixer. The JVC takes images from two simultaneous sources ranging from clapped-out VCRs to video discs, and joystick control offers separate adjustment of the red, green and blue signal components. (The joystick is designed for butterflies, though, and the ham-fisted will find it oversensitive.) There's no memory or sequencer facility, and for this sort of money that is unacceptable.

BAUER-BOSCH VED-200, £379.00
What is the matter with these guys? A black box which does little more than alter colour, sharpness and contrast, plus a fade lever. I reckon you can get all that for less than 99 quid simply by reading through this article, so where does the £379 price tag come from? Bauer-Bosch indeed!

There is a state-of-the-art machine which is just zapping its way into the shops, but I ain’t gonna review it! The Panasonic WJ-MX10 (£1,200) has on-board genlock. This means you can mix images from any source (computer, TV, video disc, you name it) and then do almost whatever you like with the results. When we start getting into the four-figure bracket for add-ons, I reckon the whole field of camcorders is straying into pro-am use, and that, dear reader, is a very different can of worms.

NEXT MONTH: THE FUTURE IS NOW. In the Christmas edition (TGM002), I predicted the future of satellite television in the UK. I got the manufacturer and the price right! (Amstrad, £199, check up if you don't believe me), I got the maverick mogul right (Rupert Murdoch), I even got the size of the dish right (600mm).
But there was one big cock-up in my crystal ball gazing: I got the date wrong. Cheap multi-channel satellite TV is not due in the next couple of years, it will be here in the next couple of months! Dates, channels, prices, programming, filth, smut, scandal, digitised pudenda all in your sofa-ray sizzling ... er, um, more technophilia next month folks.
In the meantime there’s flth, smut and scandal—well, at least the latest on satellite TV—in this month’s TGM news section.

CONTACTS

MRVP (Video Titles 64), Sandwich Road, Eastry CT13 0DP
JESSOP (Varn Cushion), Jessop House, Scudamore Road, Leicester LE3 1TZ
CHERISHED VIDEOS (camcorder designer coats), 46 Moorfoot Ave, Chester-le-Street DH2 3A
LONGREACH (Steady Ready Cam), Lower Bristol Road, Bath BA2 3DW
AUDIO-TECHNICA ('Shotgun' mike), Lockwood Close, Leeds LS17 5UU
A.C.T. ELECTRONICS (VAF Mk3), Unit 7, Blue Lantern Arcade, St Columb Major, Cornwall TR9 6RR
All other products mentioned are available from your local video specialist or direct from the big boys.
CAPCOM COUNTDOWN

November 1987, London: US Gold's offspring GO!, only three-months-old, signs with Japanese coin-op producer Capcom. The licence deal costs GO! £1.2 million for ten of Capcom's latest arcade games. Seven months on, Capcom and GO! have three exciting new games zooming simultaneously toward arcades and home computers... Richard Eddy reports

When the Capcom deal was signed, a term in the contract stated Capcom would develop Commodore 64/128 conversions of their arcade games for the States and GO! could then produce any further conversions it wished. In fact, GO! imported the first two and we saw what the Americans came up with in Side Arms and Gun Smoke— and we were not very impressed; in fact GO! didn't release the Commodore Gun Smoke in the end.

David Baxter instituted a policy change when he joined GO! as Product Manager, enforcing their option to develop British conversions in parallel with Capcom's American games. The first to go this route was Bionic Commando, UK version written by Software Creations, who converted Bubble Bobble. 'I wanted it developed in the UK so I could keep track of programming progress,' explains David. 'I didn't want the risk of having the American version delivered only to find it of poor quality. I was much happier overseeing the production of Bionic Commando here.'

And as it turned out, the American version wasn't up to much, certainly not of a standard David was happy to release; Software Creations proved it could be done better and across all formats (see the ST review in this issue.)

But, as David points out, there's an intriguing twist to the tale: "The Street Fighter [reviewed this issue] project was an interesting one. Over here we commissioned Tiertex [authors of 720°] to convert it for the Commodore. Their brief was to make it as near as possible to the arcade machine— large sprites and scrolling backdrops— and they did.

'However, over in America a different attitude was taken— their version of Street Fighter looked more like Yie Ar Kung Fu, with static backdrops and smaller characters. The two versions are both good, but are practically different games— so we'll be releasing Commodore Street Fighter as a double A-side with both UK and US versions on one cassette.

The outcome of this experiment is that GO! now develops all UK conversions and then releases their Commodore 64/128, Atari ST and Amiga versions in the States. And this wraps in the three brand-new Capcom coin-ops— featured on these pages— to be released Christmas/Next Year, which should hit your home computer screens at the same time.
Last Duel

Grab your tricycle and head off into dangerous zones in space... Okay, so a tricycle may not sound the most awe-inspiring of vehicles to take you through a vertically scrolling shoot-'em-up but consider it impressively armed to the teeth with weaponry which can be added on while fighting and the fact that at a flick of a switch it can be transformed into a battle fighter, and you may be interested...

Last Duel, set for an early-1989 release in the arcades and on computer, is a typical Capcom game, almost a step back in trends so that it’s simple to play but very addictive, and then making use of new technology to add stunning space graphics. It’s a bit sick too; when you attack a large end-of-level-alien with the laser, instead of simply blasting it from whence it came the laser rips shreds from its slimy skin revealing its bowels beneath.

The computer versions are being written by Tretex who say they can do a very good conversion within the machines’ varying limitations. Luckily for them, it’s little more than a pretty vertical shooter, though once again certain elements of parallax scrolling may have to be scrapped. Tretex like the Capcom coin-ops, converting them playable, graphically superb and they are definitely excited about the conversion prospects...

Release date: January, formats: Commodore 64/128, Spectrum, Amstrad CPC, Atari ST, Amiga.

“When you attack a large end-of-level-alien, the laser rips shreds from its slimy skin revealing its bowels beneath.”

THE HISTORY OF CAPCOM

Now with over 200 game development staff and projected sales last year of $71.4 million, Capcom had a shakier start. The company was founded in June 1983 by Kenzo Tsujimoto at a time when the arcade game industry was feeling the pinch of an acute downturn. From Capcom’s headquarters in Osaka, Japan, Tsujimoto expanded to an American base in Sunnyvale, California. Like other coin-op producers, Capcom has had its critical ups and downs; here’s the list of five years of hard effort...

COMMANDO
The famous vertically scrolling game which has been cloned time after time. Elite Systems produced competent conversions in 1985/6

SECTION Z
A shoot-'em-up which had little impact in the UK

GHOSTS AND GOBLINS
One of the all-time classic platform games with many levels — converted excellently — again by Elite Systems — and soon to be released on the Encore label

1942
An only-average vertically scrolling shoot-'em-up with doddering planes... the same applied to Elite Systems’s conversions

SIDE ARMS
That two-player horizontally scrolling megablast. It’s snaz in the arcades but not so hot on home computers. The Atari ST version is reviewed in this issue

BIONIC COMMANDO
Called Bionic Commandos in coin-op form, the recently converted action/platform game is probably Capcom’s most original title

GUN SMOKE
Great fun in its coin-op format, but the GO! conversions were poor and the Commodore 64/128 wasn’t even released

STREET FIGHTER
Should be in the shops now on home computers. Street Fighter is a playable beat-'em-up which packs a real punch

1943
The sequel, which improves greatly over its predecessor, will be released through GO! later this summer (now we await 1944, 45 etc...)

BLACK TIGER
A hack-'em-down through a multidirectional scrolling backdrop of fantasy worlds — currently undergoing conversion

TIGER ROAD
One of the biggest martial arts games ever. Playing Lee Wong you bash your way through many screens and defeat Ryu Ken Oh, a child kidnapper. The conversion will include five multiloads

And of course LED Storm, Last Duel and Forgotten World, featured here.

Tsujimoto: shaky start

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TX:002 Dec/Jan 87/88
Robots In Video! Mel Croucher's Violence In Software! Getting In To Satellite TV! Licensed To Kill - The race for the latest Licensed! Not A Penny More - An adventure story! Robin Candy paints with Degas Elite (ST) Interview with Stephen Blow, the man behind the Ocean/Imagine adverts! Previews! 38 pages of Reviews!

TX:003 February 88

TX:004 March 88

TX:005 April 88

TX:006 May 88
Battle Between Prog - Axion's Taskforce fighting robots! John Gilbert assesses the impact of microchip technology on model trains and spiders! Interview with Bulletin 1000! Grow Your Own Radio - Mel Croucher on the broadcasting revolution! TGM has a go at KJO's Play By Mail game! Boardgame news! John Woods plays a Nordic RPG bid and indulges in gruesome reading from How! A double dose of Mercy Dash! Forever musical! Jon Bates rehearses Alien ST instruments!
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THE GHOST IN THE MACHINE

From Sunday Sport to computer trade papers, Britain's press is blazing with lurid tales of 'haunted' computers. And serious psychical researchers suspect there's no smoke without fire. TGM has the facts in the cases of Messrs Dawson, Hughes and Webster.

Report by Barnaby Page

I t all happened at once. In the space of ten days - late May, early June - Fleet Street caught on to the image of the 'ghost computer' (News Of The World), finding titillating tales in the pages of the Daily Mail, the New York Times, the Independent, The Guardian, The Times, the Mirror, the Express, the Mirror, the Mirror, the Mirror.

But for David Dawson it started in early 1984, when he took his family away from the cramped, dirty city to the idyl of rural Worcestershire, to a rambling great house in the village of Dunley, to a garden alive with lovingly tended climatis and campfire, to houses in the paddock beyond . . . and to Norman.

'The girls nicknamed it Norman,' recalls Dawson as he discusses the - well, he wisely won't speculate on what it could be, saying 'it's not causing any bother, we've accepted it and we've lived with it.'

Accepted and lived with the way that 'you can see something down the stairs out of the corner of your eye but when you look there's nothing there'. Accepted and lived with 'plenty turned upside down in the night, electrical gadgets switched on when there was no power, cups in the kitchen which start rattling'. Got used to the family collie avoiding certain rooms ('she'd stand at the door and shiver').

For months, the Amstrad continued to mystify the Dawsons, occasionally producing an archaic word in some 'normal' software (New Word 2) and a modem plastic object, warped that goes creak in the night in every three or four months. As they settled into The Red House, the family learned to think little of Norman - though, of course, the Dawsons don't call it Norman, they call it Katheryne.

'Norman is a name that we dislike intensely.'

And according to the Sunday Sport newspaper's interpretation when they published Dawson's tale in a short tract in their newspaper, the computer was 'Norman' - but the computer message put them straight.

Dawson takes the newspaper's macabre embellishments in good humour - after all, it was he who contacted the soft-porn-and-shock weekly, the Daily Mail, to write up the story.

Evidence: the text of the Dawsons' spontaneous printout reads as follows:

I cannot speak to Thee. My name is not NORMAN, but Katheryne De Wyche. You will see me often, but I will not hurt thee. Please do not offend me, I mean no harm to thee or anyone living. My life was short, but happy on this spot, although my home was a house before this one.

If the Amstrad was not used by a client of his at the Amstrad Computer Show in London's Olympia in May, then it was unplugged at the wall.

'We were playing with it, installing the thing in the games room, installing New Word 2. We'd just about got the thing installed when mum called us for dinner.'

They left the room. Now the computer was on its own.

'Then we heard the printer running, and the stencils.'

It was unmistakable: no scurry past the corner of the eye, no warp that goes creak in the night in this time was unmistakable: no 'effect which could have been accidentally accounting for mystery.'

And according to the Daily Mail's editorial, the Amstrad was not on its own.

'ghost computer' ('the image of the Amstrad which TGM exclusively photographed for this report).

'I thought the kids had been playing an engine, but they couldn't have been they were with me.'

And there was no file on the disk which could have been accidentally printed.

For months, the Amstrad continued to produce archaic words in some 'normal' software (New Word 2) and PCW8256 hardware supposedly makes impossible.

It happened every three or four months. As they settled into The Red House, the family learned to think little of Norman - though, of course, the Dawsons don't call it Norman, they call it Katheryne.

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'She saw a yellow glow from the machine and this time it was actually unplugged at the wall!'
The cleaner was refusing to clean to the Amstrad’s and the cleaner to a little-used photo studio upstairs at the headquarters of Database Publications, unplugged it, and set it down by a running in film. That night he played the video back. Nothing. The next night, nothing. Three months nothing. Then, at the beginning of March, it sat happened at one's. Hughes says: 'I'd very much like to call in an exorcist (in the days of clairvoyance, says: 'I'd very much like to call in an exorcist (in the days of clairvoyance, says: 'I'd very much like to call in an exorcist (in the days of clairvoyance, says: 'I'd very much like to call in an exorcist (in the days of clairvoyance, says: 'I'd very much like to call in an exorcist.' Then Bunkall gave Stiles a verbal report, and his view was that there was nothing paranormal about it. Says Stiles, 'I always find it a bit difficult to be' ordinary characters.

Now the Amstrad Computer Show was approaching, and Hughes saw the opportunity for a press release. It was all fame for the showpiece of Database Publications, the 'Yesterday's today's' brand: an 'overclocked' machine (News Of The World) as centrepiece, the video as illustration. It was there, in the show and behind the scenes at The Chantry Secondary School in Bognor Regis. And Hughes saw the tape - which at the end of June he was still trying to get from Hughes, who had promised to send it. And when the single-drive machine (if a second drive is an add-on, which wouldn't have come in the package from Dixons), are more convenient.

In any case, it was never published by a rival firm. And as Cassirer says, 'generally people who have had experiences which they think are paranormal, hence the architects' request for anonymity?

But he advances a theory of induced power, the architects' firm (which now has a new, well-behaved Amstrad) is near the perimeter controls of Manchester Airport, and American scientists have already produced equipment that will power a portable computer by picking up radio waves. One could power a cathode-ray tube display, which uses more energy than a portable's LCD? TGM contacted all the architects we could find, and all seemed cheery bemused by our strange enquiry - save Halliday Meecham Architects Ltd of Styal, Wilmslow, which has steadfastly refused to reply to our approaches by phone and letter. Who knows what evil lurks on the Knighton Road?

Indeed, what is there to know? The Society For Psychical Research and its mainstay like Cassirer (also a council member at the Irish UFO Research Organisation) have toiled for more than a century at investigating the spontaneous phenomena - that is, anything that's not a controlled experiment. And healthy scepticism is a tool of their trade.

As Stiles puts it, 'there are so many things that can play up with electronics... you've got to be very careful, dealing with the paranormal. It's frequently a claim, but it's very difficult to rule out normal causes.'

Cassirer recalls innumerable inexplicable cases of the traditional haunted house going electronic - 'switching on and off is very common. And often it seems to happen in parallel with the sudden rash of reports of unexplained materialisations in the Victorian era.'

'There are all sorts of fashions for these things... I've no idea why.'
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- Sega games to swap. Transbot, Ghost House, Fantasy Zone, Super Tennis, Spy Vs Spy, Zillion or Out Run, any offers? Ring or write to: Townley - Sunday evenings and ask for Nishi.

- Dutch Amiga fans wish to swap software. Everyone welcome, overseas preferred. Answer with a software disk to: Chyropicsoft, (Arthur Swart), PO Box 551, 2146 AA Hoofdonk, Holland. Eastern Europe explicitly wanted!

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- Mega Monthly, new fanzine for Sega Master System owners, packed with news plus reviews, issue One. June 1st. Send cheque/PO for £7 to: Chris Jackson, 13B Terrace, Letchworth Road, Litching, Kings Lynn, Norfolk PE32 9QK.

- Iswor, the new Doctor Who fanzine. Issues 1.2.3.4 available now. They contain news, reviews, competitions, artwork, merchandise, books and more. Some superb interviews with CWS, DNov & others. £1.50 per issue, 3 Daneway Gardens, Leiston, Suffolk IP16 4XJ.

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STREET BACK, BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!
The first National Computer Games Championship ever to be held in Britain is well under way. Contestants struggling to reach the exciting finals at this year's Personal Computer Show at Earls Court.

**THE GAMES MACHINE** reports from the first qualifying rounds

Darren Lowe, Edinburgh Commodore winner, outposes TQM's Robin Hogg

The pace hotted up as Stephen Smithwhite took up the challenge and promptly set the score to beat of over 138,000. Could it be beaten? The answer looked like 'yes' as Stuart Campbell and Brian Wardlaw took up the challenge, the battle raging on between both players as they passed the 100,000 mark with moderate ease. But sadly for them both, Stephen's score proved too high to reach, the last few grains of sand in the digital hourglass ran out, leaving Stuart on just under 110,000 and Brian close behind with over 103,000. Formidable scores nevertheless.

Over on the Commodore tables, the conflict proved just as deadly. High scores being achieved right from the word go! Neil White and Mark Young pulled out all the stops in a very close, almost dead-heat – Neil eventually drew ahead to 69,600, Mark finishing just 2,400 points behind. With the next two contestants, a clear winner emerged as Darren Lowe competed against Jonathan Lowe. Eight minutes passed and Darren topped 70,000; by nine minutes Darren looked unstoppable, and went on to finish with 89,200. And that clinched it, the remaining contestants put up a brave fight but Darren's score remained tops and he was declared the winner.

We congratulated the winners and other semi-finalists, and...

EDINBURGH
Saturday June 11

The start of the National Computer Games Championship began in earnest at the first venue, in Edinburgh, capital city of Scotland and probably one of the most attractive cities in Britain.

On the way North on Friday June 10, the Newsfield cavalcade stopped off to admire the view from the top of a hill (small mountain is a more apt description) before driving into Edinburgh, getting lost and then miraculously finding our destination – Fet Lore Boys Club, part of the National Association of Boys Clubs, our hosts for the championship.

By evening everything was set up and ready to go, whereupon our thoughts turned to the next day's conflict.

Saturday morning, and they came out of nowhere; they came from all regions of Scotland, hungry to commence battle on the Rum and Commodore.

**FEATURE**

THE NATIONAL COMPUTER GAMES CHAMPIONSHIPS PROGRESS REPORT

As we go to press, the third qualifying round (Midlands), held in Birmingham, is taking place, while 20 successful semi-finalists from the Scotland and Wales/ South-West heats, already held, sit back and relax their wrists, ready to renew battle on August 16 and 18.

First, then, we travel to that silvery-grey city, often referred to as 'the Athens of the North', in the company of TGM's Robin Hogg and CRASH's Mark Caswell.
A week later, and the action moved south, the adjudication this time in Nailsworth. The National Computer Games Championship is sponsored by US Gold in association with the National Association of Boys Clubs and the Personal Computer Organisers has arranged for the semi-finals to be held at Nailsworth. Few would know, but whilst the only person to get over a 10,000 barrier was Adrian Harvey with 10,370.

As the contestants wandered off into distance, prizes in hand, a small voice was heard to say: 'How the hell am I going to explain all these blown fuses to US Gold?'...

Qualifiers for the semi-finals to be held in London

The Commodore - The Great Giana Sisters
Adrian Harvey (winner) 10,370
Stuart Wiffs 9,555
Robert Bains 5,785
Robert Moore 5,785
Tom Miles 4,805

With just three more qualifying rounds to go as we write (Birmingham July 2, London July 9 and Leeds July 16), arrangements are well in hand for the semi-finals. The first will be held on Tuesday August 16, inside the main terminal area at Manchester Airport. There had been problems setting up the Northern Ireland qualifying round, which was to be held on the Lame-Stranraer Sea-Link ferry. Worries about potential disruption should the National Union of Seamen's strike spread, were made groundless when the ferry ship in question was suddenly dry-docked for repairs! However, the National Association of Boys Clubs has arranged for the Northern Ireland contestants to be flown straight to Manchester Airport to compete directly in the semi-finals.

The second will be held in London on Thursday August 18, on the concourse of Waterloo Station, thanks to the cooperation of British Rail and Network Southeast. The old station has undergone an astonishing change and is now regarded as one of the finest railway stations in Europe. Network Southeast is responsible for planning and marketing of all British Rail suburban services on those routes radiating from London which serve the South of England.

A massive investment programme costing £160 million will continue the work already started to improve the environment at every national station. Network, including the building of three entirely new stations. For the computers, the distinctive blue-grey-banded trains are already providing a brighter and more serviceable view than ever before, most of them feeding into the Network's completely rebuilt flagship - Waterloo. It will make a fittingly hi-tech backdrop to the battle for Earls Court.

It won't only be the semi-finalists competing in Manchester and London, there will be an additional celebrity challenge of the two venues between two well-known personalities, the winners also to compete in turn at their own PC Show finals.

After the semi-finals, we will be left with 12 finalists (three per machine per venue.) They will all enjoy an expenses-paid weekend in London, attending the Earls Court Personal Computer Show, September 16-18, competing for two prizes of £1,000 worth of hardware/software through US Gold and Centresoft.

The battle will be perfectly visible to the public through a massive, multiscreen video wall sponsored by Pepsi Cola. And when, at the end of the day, the names of the two champions are known - one Spectrum, one Commodore - both will fight it out for the overall champion status on an Atari ST game in the Pepsi Cola Challenge. But all this is in the future. Next month we will get up to date with the remaining qualifying rounds. TGM11 goes on sale the day before the Personal Computer Show and so you can be sure in that issue you will find details of who is taking part in the finals.
We welcome complaints from the public about advertisements in the press, on posters and in the cinema. It helps us keep advertising standards high. But we also monitor a considerable amount of advertising, and take the necessary action ourselves.

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"Unless the software houses wise up quickly, their gross profiteering is going to kill the 16-bit industry in this country..." writes T White from Nottinghamshire, in a plea not to see 16-bit games go the way of the original, expensive console product. His letter earns £40 of software from READEPAGE.

AN UNFAIR PRICE
Dear TGM,

Ask any ardent 8-bit owners why he won't upgrade to a 16-bit machine and they will invariably tell you that the prices of games on these machines are far too high. As an Atari ST owner I can't argue with that line of logic, after all it's absolutely true.

When I bought my machine some 14 months ago I did so on the assumption that software prices would plummet once STs became mass market machines. Now that there are 120,000 ST owners in this country alone, it is well past the time when software prices should have fallen. But they haven't, instead we are now faced with a concerted effort by the software houses to extract massive profits by keeping prices in the £20 - £25 range.

Indeed, some software houses have even increased their prices over the past year. Elite, Ocean and Tynesoft are the three names which spring immediately to mind which is hardly an encouraging sign for us owners.

True, there are some games retailing for £10, but these so-called budget games consist mainly of old converted 8-bit titles which sell on the said machines for £1.99. Thus £10 can hardly be termed a bargain.

So why not have a fixed date like the last that TGM comes out on July 20, it usually always wrong? For example if you say "our 16-bit mag, would mean cutting down reviews, a loss of adverts for 8-bit games and omission of all the miscellaneous technology features. This would leave the magazine looking very thin indeed. To overcome the thickness, articles on ST and Amiga hardware would have to be brought in, leaving TGM as just another 16-bit mag like ST User and Amiga World etc.

Another comparison for us owners. TGM is dedicated to electronic entertainment. Not many people buy Amiga's or STs just to play games and a 16-bit games-only mag would not have a large enough market to sustain it.

Anyway, I don't know what all the complaining is about. The majority of TGM is dedicated to 16-bit anyway and by featuring other systems, TGM has a guaranteed readership which will soon be challenging ASCII and Amiga owners. You've never had it so good. When you're playing Xonon and Carrier Command, spare a thought for us humble Spectrum 129 owners. We're the ones who have things to complain about, yet we don't mean constantly (and at least we don't have to fork out £25 for a game).

While I was reading the letters in TGM008 and getting greener and greener with envy at people saying 'my Amiga's only got 4,096 colours', I seethed upon reading Gary W Daley's letter, about CBM 64, Spectrum and Nintendo. Talk about overindulgence! If he has money to throw around, he can lob some in my direction! What's even worse is that he blames you for the lack of Nintendo games. What does he want Newsfield to do, make a take-over bid for Nintendo? Perhaps he should have considered a console better before shelloting £100.

Just to tie up, would it be possible to lengthen Readepage, put game tips in Information Desk and have reviewers' names on the reviews? This would make a much better reviewing system though there isn't much wrong with it at the moment.

And lastly, a big thank you from this Spectrum 128 owner for stating if games have Spectrum 128 music or not. I think ORASCH should take a leaf out of your book.

Jonathan Williams, Gloucestershire

On launching TGM, our brief was to follow the market, not invent it, which explains why we do review 8-bit product. The more people move toward 16-bit, or even 32-bit, the less TGM will deal with 8-bit. Makes sense!

Readepage is still the same number of pages, but it will no doubt increase in time. As you can see, Information Desk is now incorporating some tips - so's Rob Steel in his adventure column. But reviewers' names are still an unpopular notion around here - we think of ourselves as a reviewing team, and sometimes as many as five people's opinions go into a single review.

SHINY COVERS
Dear TGM,

I wish to say to Agustin Malave from Spain (TGM006) that although he has a 16-bit computer, it does not mean that everyone has a 16-bit computer. There may be other magazines available but it does not mean that they are going to change the magazine just for you (I hope!).

My next point is to do with the publication dates. Why oh why are they always wrong? For example if you say that TGM comes out on July 20, it usually means it's coming out two days after that. So please have a fixed date like the last. Tuesday of every month or something like that? It may make a lot of people less confused.

Third and last point is to do with your printer. Just how many have you got, how many pages can it print, and how do you mean that they are going to change the publishing system? You've never had it so good.

Steven Payne, London

THE AMAZING MULTIPLYING CUTEY-POO

First point agreed with! Second: we always give the publication date accurately (except once when the schedule went back a week), and it's always a Thursday, middle of the month (some months have five Thursdays). Newspapers aren't supposed to sell a magazine on sale before that date, but some do, and some get their magazines a few days late. About that there is nothing we can do.

TGM is printed by Carlisle Web Offset, up north in Carlisle, Cumbria, although the covers are done by another printer Carlisles contracts out to. They make the cover so shiny by spraying a spirit varnish on immediately the ink is dry, and then drying the varnish under ultra-violet lights.

AFTERBURNER AGAIN
Dear TGM,

I write to back up a claim by Kenneth Jackson (TGM006) that you are slightly unfair in your reviews for the SEGA.

A few weeks ago I went out to buy Afterburner, not too sure about spending £25 on a game you had told me had no runways or continuing features. This is where I suggest you switch on your Sega, get ready to follow some instructions and be surprised.

1. Fly to the end of Stage 6 and destroy the mega-baddy, with missiles not guns, your plane will then automatically land on a runway.

2. If, before Stage 10 you manage to lose your first three lives, try pushing your directional controller up and press both fire buttons at the same time, when GAME OVER appears (if you find a way to use it after Stage 10 please let me know) you will then continue but the score starts from zero.

Now, I suggest you rewrite the review of Afterburner pronto, or I will summon a crack team of F-14 Thundex cats, four Space Harriers and a few of the OutRunners from the nearest available arcade to flatten your nice little offices into the ground!

Chris Cole, Plymouth, Devon.

The problem is not so much being unfair to Sega, as it is those handling...
PLAYING A ROLE
Dear TGM,
With regard to John Woods's review of Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay, in TGM002, first he mentioned the characters advancement scheme being too unrealistic, the fact that you get experience points and spend them on skills or characters changing jobs. But a good GM would not let them do this straight away. He would make the characters find a suitable teacher to teach them the skills. This makes it more realistic.

Second, he said: 'The combat system, too, is simplistic, with characters being either dead or alive'. Has he not discovered the critical hits table where the blow may not do serious damage, and gradually works up to totally destroying the opponent, doing varying degrees of damage?

I agree with his description of The Enemy Within and Shadows of Bagenhagen in terms of gameplay, but these supplements have a large amount of background on the Empire, especially the first one, which makes them worth having.

He also says it is suitable for uncomplicated scenarios. I advise him to refer to A Rough Night At The Three Feathers in White Dwarf magazine, issue 94. In fact the adventures can be as complicated as the GM feels necessary.

I would recommend WHFRP to anyone — and I don't work for Games Workshop.

Michael Cracknell, Kent

because you wouldn't believe how many people forget to add their names and addresses otherwise! For forms like word-squares, a photocopy will do as well. Multiple entries are no problem either, but mark your envelope on top with MULTIPLE ENTRIES, otherwise they won't get sorted in time.

PRESTEL HARD TIMES
Dear TGM,
I write on behalf of a large minority of Prestel/Micronet users; can you shine a little light on the goings on within the system.

For the past couple of months since the 'NEW' Micronet arrived there has been little to prove the change was for the better. Updates are thin on the ground for the Amiga and ST which have had the worst coverage you could ever believe, to tell the truth, it has been appalling. We have had maybe 6 or 7 reviews and the letters page is still inoperative, which is puzzling me: are you going to continue to promote their MSX II and Universal Simulater combined.

A feature on how they can create hit after hit would go down well, I think, especially with more-3-D fast, filled-graphic simulations on the horizon.

However while playing Carrier Command I noticed a few features that puzzled me:

Your explanation on how to attack the enemy carrier may work, but during play I found that waiting near Terminus did just as well, however, onto the questions:

After a high altitude attack on the enemy carrier (which seemed to do absolutely nothing, even with at least seven missiles blasting into it), I found I was running out of fuel. In shear Kamikazi bravado I flew my lone fighter right at the cannon tower of the ACC Omega, or at least I tried to, instead I bounced off — I just couldn't believe it, no matter what I did I just bounced off, not only that but the carrier then set sail in retreat at a speed of roughly 600 mph, even my Manta couldn't catch it. Why fog asks ache as Mel would write it?

However, the sight of an aircraft carrier whirling round my viewscreen, accompanied by a by-pass of Marauder fighters against the background of clear skies and blue seas is one I will not readily forget. Realtime in my view, are the best in the business and Firebird chose well in them. Full marks all round to the BEST piece of software ever (until next month).

Stephen A Graham, Carlisle, Cumbria

MSX COVERAGE
Dear TGM,
I pleased by your coverage of MSX Computers. But there is one thing you don't seem to be sure of: MSX-I and MSX-II. Whenever you mention an MSX game you class it as MSX-II. The majority of MSX owners in this country own MSX-I computers, and virtually all games released are for MSX-I (which are compatible with MSX-II computers).

Another point: you never review MSX cassette software. Why? The majority of games released for MSX are on cassettes. Why haven't you copied the very good MSX version of Terrain? It has been released. In fact lots of cassette games have been released in the last few weeks but you don't seem to know they even exist. For example the long-awaited Elite (Firebird), Hunt For Red October (Grandslam), Indy Car, Gunsnoke (US Gold) and Eye from Endurance to name but a few.

J C Halsted, Chester, Cheshire

It's very strange, but rather like the Sega games situation, British software houses seem almost unkeen to promote their MSX software. We keep asking for it (and we are aware it's around), but it never arrives. A blitz for next month, then....

READERPAGE is your opportunity to let us know what you think about virtually every subject under the sun! Space is at a premium, so don't be disappointed if you don't get printed first time round. The editor reserves the right to edit letters in accord with their spirit to get them to fit, or to use only parts. Write to READEPAGE, THE GAMES MACHINE, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB.

110/116 TGM TX 009:8-88
The letters come thick and fast to this month's INFORMATION DESK, Robin Hogg provides dazzling answers to your many questions

First off is ANDREW KYPR of Melbourne, Australia who asks about Amiga conversions.

Are Gunship from Microprose, Gauntlet, Gauntlet II or Out Run from US Gold coming out for the Amiga? If so when will they be available?

Conversion work has yet to be started on the three US Gold titles - they're unlikely to appear before September. US Gold generally aims markets simultaneously - when you see the TGM version updates you should be able to buy them soon after. Microprose, by contrast, does not distribute in Australia, although you may buy from them direct, or obtain the game from the TGM mail order section. However, don't order Gunship until you see our update, probably sometime next year.

Closer to home, DANIEL SMITH wants to know about transatlantic Amiga problems...

Can you put American software on to an English Amiga without having to translate the game to PAL format? I want to know this because American TV is different from English TV.

Imported American games will in fact run on an Amiga and British TV set-up, but only at the cost of a two centimetre black band at the bottom of the screen. This problem does not affect Amiga owners lucky enough to have a monitor.

Speaking of which, JUSTIN MOY of Crawley, W Sussex asks ...

Can you connect an Amiga to a 1901 monitor?

Yes you can, but not easily. The Amiga and 1901 monitors are of different polarities, therefore, although a picture can be produced on the monitor, it will roll. Probably the best solution - if your monitor is...
out of guarantee - is to get Trilogic to open it up and add some special circuitry. This allows the monitor to be used with both an Amiga and CBM 64. According to Graham Kelly of Trilogic, the 1901 gives a surprisingly good picture, almost up to that of a Philips.

The price of the conversion is £30, and a special next-day delivery service is available for £12 each way. The company's address is Trilogic, Unit 1, 235B New Works Road, Low Moor, Bradford BD12 0GP © (0274) 691115. Alternatively special polarity-reversing leads priced £14 can be purchased from Trilogic. This gives just 16 colours however and is only really suitable for word processing.

A seasoned adventurer, Tony Olindo,Goole, Humberside, writes next, with tips on his quest in FTL's excellent Dungeon Master.

HELPFUL SPELLS
LO YA - raises stamina. LO VI - increases health. LO ZO VEN - poison, used by throwing. LO VI BRO - antidote to all poisons. LO YA BRO - magical box. LO YA BRO DAIL - increases wisdom. LO YA BRO NETA - increases vitality. LO OH BRO ROS - increases dexterity. LO FUL BRO KU - increases strength. LO ZO BRO RA - pure mana. LO FUL - magical light. LO ZO - anti-matter spell that can open some doors. LO OH EW RA - magical sight. LO OH EW SAR - hides you from monsters. LO OH RA - makes room lighter. LO DES IR SAR - makes room darker. LO ZO KATH RA - frees power gem. LO MUSTER must have a hand free and once dropped the gem cannot be retrieved.

OFFENSIVE SPELLS
LO FUL IR - fireball. LO DES VEN - bolt of poison. LO DES EW - harms non-material beings. LO OH VEN - cloud of poison. LO YA BRE ROS - leaves a trail of poisonous footprints. LO OH KATH RA - lightning bolt.

DEFENSIVE SPELLS
LO YAR IR - magical forcefield (protects party). LO FUL BRO NETA - magical fire shield (protects party).

LEVEL 1
For the best starting team possible choose the following characters: Tiggy (most starting mana for a wizard), Markus (journeyman priest), Stamm (journeyman fighter) and Halk (journeyman fighter).

LEVEL 2
Very straightforward, just find the keys to the doors.

LEVEL 3
Chamber of the Guardian - You have to go into the chest. Keep pressing the buttons until it comes out. Use the mirror on the gem on the other wall to open a secret room.

The vault: To open door across pit cast LOZOP spell. To cross pit throw an object on the pressure pad behind the door.

The matrix: Follow passage until you reach a fork. Before you there's a never ending passage. Turn right and go down next passage on your left.

Continue down passage until it ends then turn left. In the second alcove on your right there's a button - press it. Carry on left and a secret alcove will have opened with a key in it.

Time is of the essence: Drop all the objects you don't want. It's a case of pressing buttons and getting by the traps before they catch you. Get the key at the end.

Carry on the gem. Place an object on the pressure plate to keep the pit closed. To kill the monsters in here get them to chase you back to the pit and when you're safe you can use LO DES EW or the vorpal blades. When you've been into all the passageways return to the room where you first emergered. In that room there are invisible pits, only faintly outlined on the floor. To close them again stand on the plate. Go to the other passage and explore all the rooms. One has a button that opens the door in the big hall. The best way to kill the Knights is to get them to do a spell into the invisible pit. Close the pit and when they stand over them open the pits again. Kill them all as one has a key you need.

LEVEL 3 & 14
Level 13 is simple if done correctly. First use the vorpal blades to kill the 'magical monsters. Then go down the northern passage and round the corner. The monsters do not follow you but stand at the exit. Now you can use the box safely as miniboss. When they cast a spell at you, you can dodge around the corner. When all are dead climb down one of the pits using the rope and enter level 14. The trick!

LEVEL 7
Don't worry - he may be strong and powerful but he's as thick as a door knob. Use all your magical boxes but one on him. Circle him and keep attacking until he dies. Then use the ZO KATH RA spell to free the Gem and place the Firestaff on the Gem. Now you're one powerful fighting force. Go up a level to find the Dark Lord. When you see him use the magical box on him and cast a flux cage against him. Whirl round the other side and cast another as it only does one side, now fuse it and he's history. (There's a trap which allows the console to be killed, but it has to be done outside - you get the idea.)

LEVEL 9
To open the riddle room - lightier than air is the box, Anatheca. In the room where the wall fires fireballs, go to first pressure pad, place object on it, backstep one and sidestep fireball. Now you can stand on the pad without being fried. Repeat until you reach the end.

LEVEL 10
When you come out here go forward then turn left. Go forward once more, then around the last block and forward until you get to the last exit on your left. Take it then go south once more. Go around the bottom block again and through the left exit. You are in a room with two doors. In between them is a key. Use it to open the right door. Step on the pad ZOOM and make a step off to the right side of the forcefield. Pick up the rightmost box and step back on to the forcefield. Every so often a passageway appears, timing is needed here to make an exit.

LEVEL 11
The clockwise room - if you go around the corridor and turn back towards the clock and Gauntlett if that allow for up to four- player action. Do we need to buy a different adaptor for different games?

You'll be pleased to hear, Mr Moffett, that you won't have to go out and buy another adaptor each time. The one adaptor (priced at £6) is rechargeable with any game which has the four-player option and the necessary software routines to utilise the adaptor. Microdeal informs us, however, that Amiga ST adaptors are different in design and could, if plugged into the wrong machine, cause damage.

Back up North again for two questions from a very of Dumbarton in Scotland.

Does the latest breed of Commodore 64/128 have a new sound chip? I'm interested because my new 64 sounds quieter - toned down. And could you tell me where I might buy Lords Of Midnight and Darkman's Revenge for the 64, or alternatively The Best Of Beyond compilation - now that Beyond is no more?

Commodore haven't changed the SID chip in the Commodore 64 - there's no reason to, as it's one of the best around. SID chips do have very minor differences in their filters from machine to machine (unique quirks in effect.) As for the problem with microsound a better question is what's your TV that's muffling the sound chip signal or the TV channel used for computer screen display is slightly off. If that's the case?

Your second problem is not beyond help, you could try Byrle, 19, The Broadway, The Bourne, Southgate, M6P 2B (01) 882 8842. These classic games are getting on a bit which means you can purchase them at budget prices.

The final question belongs to k Fitzpatrick, from Kirkby in Liverpool, who asks:

Do you know a lead for the Sega which allows the console to be linked to a monitor? If not, can you give me the pin-outs from the Sega to make a lead.

According to Sega, there are no leads available. However, their technical department revealed the pin layout as:

1. Audio
2. Ground
3. Composite Video
4. 3 Volts
5. 5 Volt
6. Red
7. Compo site Sync
8. Blue

Take care, though, because Sega pin layout goes against the normal convention.

If you have any queries concerning computers and Electronic Entertainment or would like to pass on your hints, tips, games, or PC software, POKES, write to INFORMATION DESK, THE GAMES MACHINE, PO Box 49, Market Harborough, Shropshire, SY14 7DB. You can also computer MEX with I-D TGM.
BEFORE HE DASHED OFF TO RESEARCH BACKGROUND PLOTS FOR "ALIENS IV, STAR WARS IV (PART ONE) AND BACK TO THE FUTURE AGAIN," MEL REMEMBERED TO KNOCK OFF ANOTHER ORIGINAL QUIZ TO TEST YOUR REFLEXES AND PROVE AGAIN THAT YOU ARE A PERSON RENOWNED IN COMPUTER KNOWLEDGE (17 OUT OF 20 WILL DO NICELY.)

1) What does the acronym RISC stand for?
2) What does the acronym HAM stand for in computer graphics?
3) What games are lurking in this film? 'NO CLAP BOT-AID', 'IRA DONKA', 'YER DIC NOB'
4) Who said: 'The true object of all human life is play,' a) GK Chesterton, b) Samantha Fox, c) Jesus Christ
5) As a percentage of total UK sales, what is the predicted software revenue for 16-bit games by Christmas 1988, plus or minus 5%?
6) Name the castaway in Lost In Space
7) Which is the odd one out, Joy Stick, Dot Matrix, Anna Deptor, Virgin Games
8) In which countries do the following magazines exist: Happy Computer, Ordinateur 2000, Sinclair User?
9) Name The Fantastic Four superheroes of Marvel Comics.
10) True or false? This photo shows the Oliver Twins shrunken to microscopic size and living in amput hair.
11) Who took Video Killed The Radio Star to Number One in 1979?
12) In the first three months of this year, what was the biggest selling microcomputer in Britain?
13) How do you make Cutie Pooh?
14) What have the following got in common: Einstein, Archimedes, Conqueror, Missile Control and Medusa.
15) What has the following got in common: Paul Chapin, Rod Keen, Bunny Mauders, Jonathan Swift III, Loo Queequeg, Dr JH Watson
16) What is the difference between a 3V6" and a dongle?
17) In the first episode of Star Trek, what was the Captain's name, and who played him?
18) Which black athlete featured on the original cover of Code Masters' "The Race Against Time," and who has replaced him?
19) Where is silicon most commonly found?
20) True or false, the heroine featured on Ocean's "Where Time Stood Still" has constipation, a shovel-shaped tail and ET stuck on her chest.

ANSWERS

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NEXT MONTH

IN THE GAMES MACHINE!

- THIS IS THE BBC
  All 32 bits of it! Journey with the TGM team into the bowels of an Archimedes 310 as they explore Conqueror, Missile Control and Medusa. And Jon Bates reveals some secrets about its musical capacity.

- PC SHOWCASE
  Newfield Exclusive! A detailed guide to the 1988 Personal Computer Show at Earls Court, London (September 16-18). All the glitter, excitement, people, stands, celebrities and events.

- CANDY FROM A BBC
  Robin Candy takes an in-depth look at GFA Artist, one of the few available graphics utilities for the Archimedes.

- PARSEC PIXEL+
  Amid embarrassed shuffling of feet we quietly promise, heads bowed, that this incredible utility will appear in time to be included in at least one issue of TGM... next month maybe.

- COMPUTER FRAUD
  Money stolen by the techno-thief will, this year, exceed cash robberies from banks, cars, houses and muggings put together. Mel Croucher investigates computerised fraud and exposes a new breed of criminal.

- CYBERPUNK
  Stuart Wynne concludes his mini-series by having a quiet read.

- THE TELEREVOLUTION
  TV will be set alight by the satellite boom. Mel Croucher risks square eyes to report.

PLUS THE GAMES MACHINE'S incomparable look at the very latest in reviews - previews, boardgames, roleplay, adventures, play by mail, competitions, techno-gadgets, graphics, (breathe here) not to mention Jon Bates and his personal listen-to-music software for the Archimedes. Eurekal! TGM010 displaces air on your newsagent's shelves from August 18.

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TGM TX 009:8-88 113/116
Your plane has ditched on a mountainous plateau somewhere in deepest Tibet. You and your companions are alive but recovery from the impact is short-lived - a large shape is moving towards you. As it gets closer you rub your eyes in disbelief: a Dinosaur! Where are you...and when? Now you learn to survive in a world untouched by modern life - a world frozen in time. Stunning graphics and startling action in this thrilling innovative game.

You are one of the Elite - a handpicked crack trooper in battle against a formidable enemy. You'll need all your skill to take advantage of every situation, stamina to keep on going where others would fail and courage to face the ceaseless bombardment by enemy troops, helicopters and artillery. If you survive Army Moves you'll have some great tales to tell!
The Award winning film by Oliver Stone has been stunningly transcribed to the software entertainment medium creating a Blockbuster Computer Game. Hailed as the "Best Film Tie-in to date"—the program has received brilliant reviews on all formats. Special boxed pack containing a FREE film poster, game picture and audio cassette of Smokey Robinson's classic song "Tracks of my Tears".

Eons have passed... yet despite apparent annihilation in the original ARKANOID game: Dimension controlling force "DOH" has come back to life, and occupying the huge space-craft ZARG, has entered our Universe. ARKANOID type space-fighter MIXTEC runs through long forgotten computer data until it finds the answer to this threat... "VAUS 2" is launched and speeds towards the threatening alien presence, before it can extract its revenge... "The Revenge of Doh"
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