

ST ACTION

THE WORLD'S ONLY DEDICATED
ST GAMES MAGAZINE

FROM THE PUBLISHERS OF ST WORLD
VOLUME 1 ISSUE 1 MAY 1988
UK £1.30

STA MEGATEST:
10 SCROLLING
SHOOT-'EM-UPS
COMPARED

REVIEWS:

GUNSHIP
DUNGEON MASTER
OIDS
SLAP FIGHT
PREDATOR

BEYOND ZORK

ULTIMA 4, JUMP JET, SECONDS OUT,
GET DEXTER II, ROCKFORD,
LEE ENFIELD, FORMULA 1, WARLOCK,
FROST BITE, TRASH HEAP.

FEATURES:

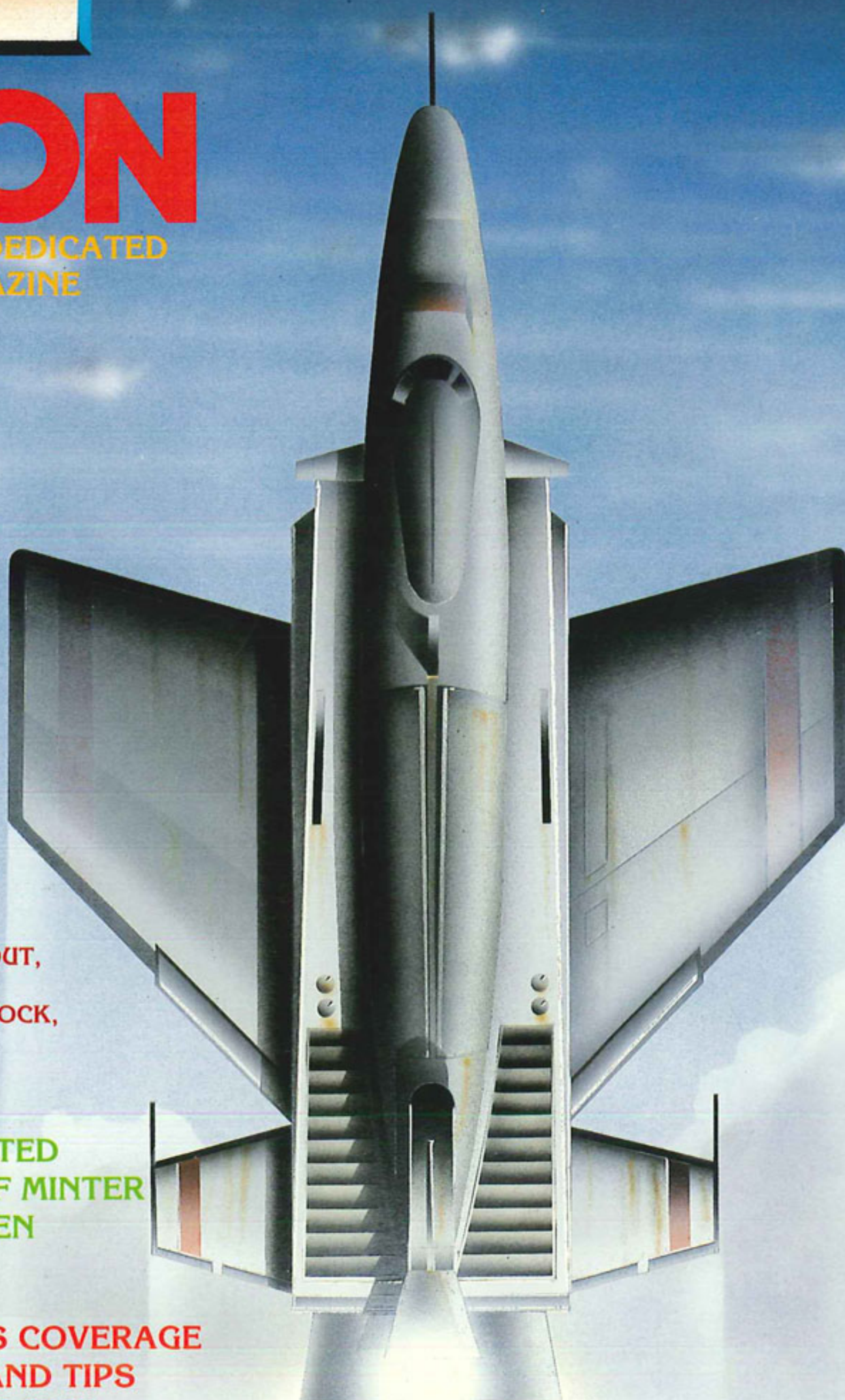
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FACE TO FACE WITH JEFF MINTER
INTERVIEW WITH NOVAGEN

REGULARS:

EXTENSIVE 6-PAGE NEWS COVERAGE
FOUR PAGES OF HINTS AND TIPS
INCLUDING INFINITE LIVES FOR:
BACKLASH, BLACK LAMP, PREDATOR,
RANARAMA, GOLDEN PATH

COMPETITIONS:

WIN A DAY AT BRANDS HATCH RACING SCHOOL
25 ELECTRONIC ARTS MUGS AND TEE-SHIRTS
10 COPIES OF COLOURSPACE II TO BE WON



Hack'n'slash and Shoot-em-up



RIMRUNNER

ATARI ST 520/1040

BARBARIAN

The Ultimate Warrior

FREE POSTER INSIDE

Hit that fire button hard to survive in **Rimrunner**.

The latest game from Palace is a manic shoot-em-up for the Atari ST.

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PALACE

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ST versions (Rimrunner, Barbarian) £14.99 plus 80p P&P.
Amiga (Barbarian) £19.99 plus 80p P&P. Access and Barclaycard holders phone 01-278 0751.

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CAPTAIN BLOOD

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Novagen - nice guys in a 'Mercenary' industry:

Jason Spiller travels into the depths of suburban Birmingham to find two laid-back, laugh-a-minute characters who are quite content to sit back and wait for genius programmer, Paul Woakes, to come up with the latest in a long line of hits for Novagen.

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Life, the Universe and Llamas:

After David Stewart's interview with Jeff Minter (see elsewhere in this issue) Jeff has come up with TEN of his sensational Trip-A-Trons (Colourspace II) to give to the lucky winners of this competition. So brush up on your knowledge of camels and Llamasoft and get to work answering those questions now!

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The List:

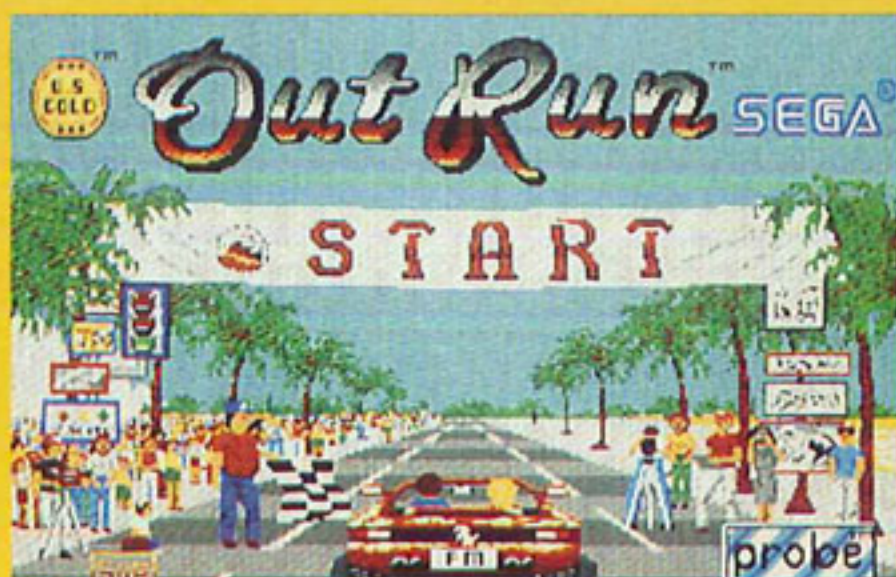
Jason Spiller puts together the first half of a comprehensive list of just what is available for the ST in the entertainment sector, and starts off with arcade games.

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Action News:

All the latest goings-on in the ST games world with, amongst other items: a day at the cinema for Mitch to see the latest Cinemaware products; Telecomsoft announce a new budget label as well as quite a few games; up in the air with MicroProse, and the first interactive laser disk game, Dragons Lair, from Microdeal.

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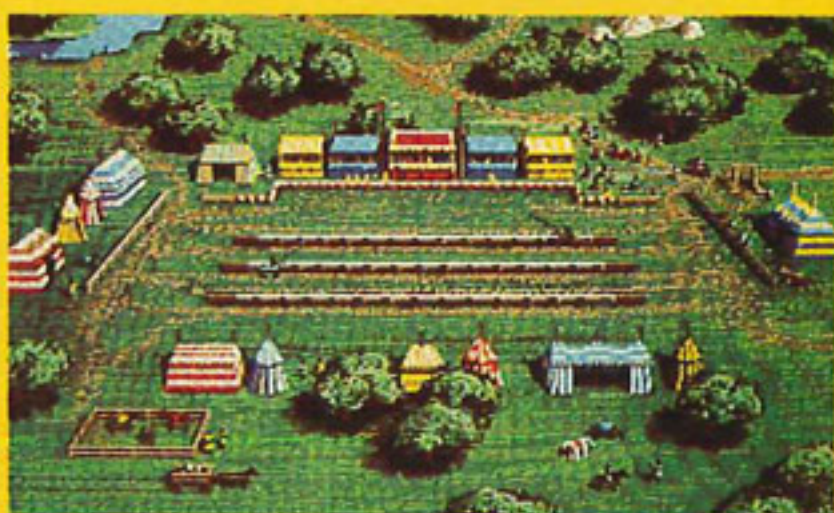
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ACTION PACKED

----- GOLLNER PUBLISHING -----



Hints & Tips:

A regular column where you, the reader, will be invited to contribute to the magazine with any valuable hints, playing tips and useful cheats that you have found for games on the ST. Steve starts out by giving useful information concerning, amongst others, Wizball, Defender of the Crown and Bubble Bobble.

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Test Drive Competition:

Electronic Arts, in conjunction with ST Action, bring you the opportunity to win a day out at the Brands Hatch Driving School, where you could end up being taught circuit racing in an XR3i and eventually get to sit behind the wheel of a Formula First, the latest version of the Formula Ford single-seat racing car, and take it for a spin (hopefully not in the literal sense of the word!) around Brands Hatch.

40

Megatest: Scrolling Shoot-'em-ups:

Often playing into the wee hours of the morning, Nick Clarkson has put together a mammoth seven-page article on ten scrolling shoot-'em-ups available for the ST.

12

Just who do the reviewers think they are?

Our intrepid team of writers, reviewers, slaves, call them what you will, are introduced and prattle on for as long as space has permitted about themselves, their likes and dislikes, and any other irrelevant piece of information that you might wish to forget.

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Tools of the Trade:

Nick Clarkson brings you an in-depth megatest on 17 joysticks available for the ST. He ended up with a six-page report and severe bruises and blisters to his joystick hand!

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Face to Face with Jeff Minter:

Dave Stewart sounds out Jeff Minter on topics ranging from his love of llamas, goats and camels, to his latest visual extravaganza, Trip-A-Tron.

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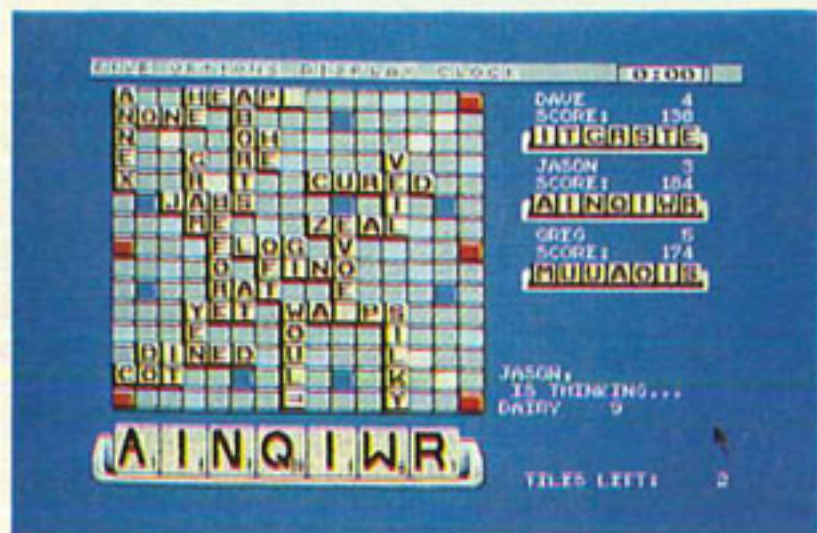
ACTION NEWS

Robtek release colour emulation

If this product works it will be the most revolutionary ever released for the ST. Robtek claim to have produced an emulation package that allows colour software to run on a monochrome monitor and the package is compatible with "hundreds of games". Robtek are also releasing a mono emulator which will enable colour users to run monochrome-only software, such as, many wordprocessors, spreadsheets and database packages. The emulators will be on show at the forthcoming Atari Computer Show at the Alexandra Palace, 22nd-24th April. For further details contact: Robtek Ltd, 4 Isleworth Business Complex, St John's Road, Isleworth, Middlesex, TW7 6NL, Tel (01) 847 4457.

Scrabble De Luxe

Virgin Games are releasing Scrabble De Luxe on the ST on April 1st (no fooling!). The game provides a convincing computerised opponent with 8 skill levels of play for up to four people. The game has a 23,000-word vocabulary and a host of features and enhancements that makes the ST version special, including mouse and menu support.



MicroProse - more programmers please

MicroProse has launched another recruitment drive aimed at the cream of

European programming talent. The project is being headed by newly appointed Software Development Manager, Tony Bickley.

"The quality of European programmers has never been better," says UK boss, Stewart Bell. "consequently, MicroProse has begun recruiting this talent to go and program in the USA, and work on our products for both UK and European markets."

Bickley has an impressive track record; he has in the past worked with Thorn EMU, ASK, Melbourne House and Firebird. He will be overseeing all development work in the UK and liaising with

MicroProse development teams all over the world."

For further details contact: Tony Bickley, MicroProse Software Ltd, 2 Market Place, Tetbury, Gloucestershire, GL8 8DA, Tel (0666) 54326.

Other format to compete with Jez

Rob Northern Computing have developed a special disk format which allows Atari ST and Commodore Amiga programs to be run from the same disk.

The format allows both machines to treat the disk as normally formatted disks thus allowing all the usual DOS functions to be performed whether you are using GEMDOS or Amiga DOS.

The system allows the simultaneous use of 392.5k for ST storage and 451k for Amiga storage and has the side effect of making the disks extremely difficult to pirate.

Rob Northern has worked on disk formatting for over 4 years, developing 1770 DFS for Acorn and the 40/80 Dual format disk for Acornsoft. He has also worked on disk-protection systems for the ST and Amiga. Interestingly enough Jez San, of Starglider fame, is also working on a similar system to be used for the release of Starglider II. Rob Northern

Prism Leisure attacks 16-bit market

Prism Leisure Corporation have announced the formation of three budget labels to cater for the 16-bit market. ST Leisure, Amiga Leisure and PC Leisure have been simultaneously formed to provide low-cost software for us who like a few more bits in our machines. ST and Amiga titles will retail for £12.99 while PC Leisure will be selling at £9.99.

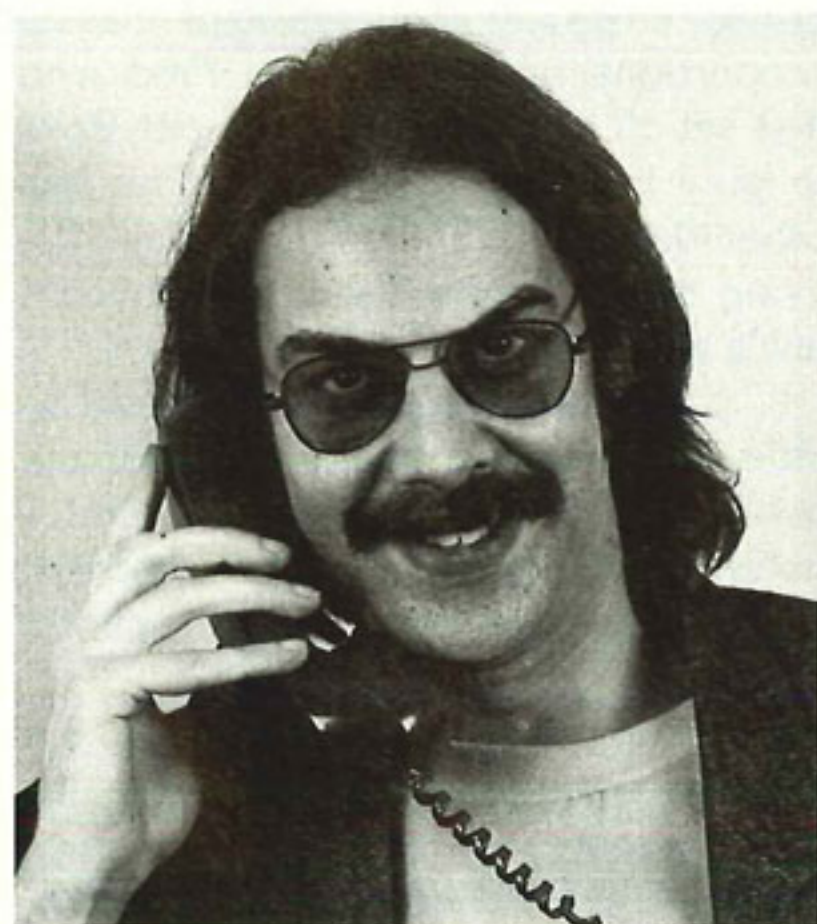
The labels will be launched with a budget of £500,000 for the acquisition and promotion of new products. ST Leisure's first few titles, due for release end of July, are: Terraforce (a very fast sideways scroller), Artificial Dreams, Rocket Roger, Who Dares wins II. Other games due to be released this winter include: 'Z', Pub Games, Battle Stations, Trap, Arac and 'Crystal' a three disk interactive film that has taken 18 months to develop.



claims that, while he knows of San's work, his is completely independent and separate research. For further details, contact: Rob Northern Computing, 4 Orchard Close, Camelsdale, Haslemere, Surrey, Tel (0428) 51402.

Hubbard joins EA

Rob Hubbard, the UK's leading computer musician, has joined Electronic Arts. He is now working for EA's headquarters in San Mateo, which I suppose



no longer makes him the UK's leading computer musician.

Hubbard has been at the forefront of games for the past four years and has almost single-handedly been responsible for making software houses spend time, money and effort on games music.

Hubbard said of his decision: "My time at Electronic Arts convinced me that this was the right company for me to join. It could provide me with necessary support both technically and technologically, to develop my skills as a music artist to their full potential."

Strip Poker 2 Plus

Anco have significantly enhanced the ST version of Strip Poker which now features very high-quality, digitised



Software house with a difference

Budgie UK is certainly a software house with a difference - all its products are Public Domain. Budgie's Camy Maertens claims to have a team of programmers working on games for free distribution and is looking for others who wish to have their work distributed by the label.

The first five Budgie products include: Damoid, a space invader variant written entirely in machine code; Blitz III, a version of the popular blast the buildings game; Football 88, a football management game written in Fast Basic and machine code; and Othello, an immaculate implementation of the classic board game written in Fast Basic.

The games are public domain, that is copyable without infringing any copyright, but Budgie do offer a service for those unable to obtain the products. They charge £2.95 for disk, duplication and packaging. For further details contact: Budgie UK, 5 Minster Close, Rayleigh, Essex.



graphics! The new version is being titled Strip Poker 2 Plus, and means that the normal Strip Poker 2 will not be released. For further details, contact: Anco, 35 West Hill, Dartford, Kent, DA1 2EI.

Lords of Conquest

Lords of Conquest, Electronic Arts award-winning, conquer-the-world strategy game, is to be converted to the ST.

Lords of Conquest is comparable to the famous board game, RISK, but uses the computers power to add depth and variety. Play can be between a single player and the computer or up to three other players. Each player chooses home territories and tries to protect them while trying to capture territories belonging to his opponent. The game is strategically very advanced and requires careful manipulation of resources, such as, foot soldiers, Cavalry and fleets. The winner of the game is the first player to build three cities and protect them for an entire year.

Foxy Lady

Martech have joined the scantily-clad female brigade in a bid to promote their latest game, Vixen. The game is set on a planet Granath which has been under siege for as long as the sky has met with the horizon - which is probably quite a time!

The planet has been at the mercy of dinosaurs for millions of years and they have destroyed all but a few of the mammals and all of the humans. Our lone heroine, Vixen (the foxy lady of Granath) has been bestowed with magical powers with which she must defeat the dinosaurs.

Martech have digitised Vixen in both human state and in transformed fox state, which gives the game a film-like quality...Sounds like an excuse to digitise scantily-clad females to me!

Vixen will be released on all major formats in April and the ST version will sell for £19.99.

1st Home Computer Interactive Laser Disk Game

Microdeal have released a complete home micro interface which enables owners of the ST and a laser disk to play Dragons Lair, the hit interactive Laser game. However, the interface and software costs a total of £120 and requires a laser disk which still costs about £1000. One for the richer games player, I think! For more details, contact: Microdeal, Box 68, St Austell, Cornwall, PL25 4YB, Tel (0726) 68020.

An Afternoon at the Movies

Are you old enough to remember the Saturday morning pictures? Well don't worry if you can't because Mirrorsoft intend to bring those good old days back again. Two of the main ingredients of the kids' 'Saturday Morning Rush' were the 15-minute comedy short and the action serial. A regular comedy favourite with the kids was the 'Three Stooges' and for an action serial what could be better than the death-defying 'King of the Rocket Men'? And how does your youthful reporter know all these old details? Because Mirrorsoft recreated the whole thing at the National Film Theatre on Friday 25th March, complete with a pack of screaming kids to complete the atmosphere.

The occasion was to launch the two newest additions to the prestigious Cinemaware Corporation range. The two titles being The Three Stooges and Rocket Ranger. Representatives of the company, plus two of their lucky teenage kids, made the trip to London from Los Angeles to demonstrate their latest epics and later to lead the pandemonium which passed for group singing in the theatre.

The current Cinemaware titles include Defender of the Crown, Sinbad, King of Chicago and S.D.I. The aim of the Cinemaware games is to create the impression of a movie with opening credit titles, a movie score and incredible graphics. All these aims have already been achieved with the existing games, but critics have complained of a lack of any real substance when the action starts. To this end, the company has promised that future products will 'beef' up this aspect and Rocket Ranger will certainly have more to shout about.

Although the new games are only available for the Amiga at present, they will be released for the ST in July. The Stooges game involves our knuckle-headed heroes in the task of raising enough money to save Ma's Orphanage from the wicked landlord, plus a little extra to pay for the weddings of Ma's daughters. Money is gained by entering a Cracker Eating contest, taking jobs as waiters or entering a crazy boxing match. Needless to say, the action sequences involve bouts of slapstick chases and custard-pie throwing. The graphics displayed on an Amiga are certainly impressive and it's hoped the ST versions will be equally detailed.

It is the year 1941, and flashing through the sky with a rocket pack on his back is the fearless Rocket Ranger who must save the world from the Nazi threat. Whilst foiling Hitler's plans to dominate the Earth from a Lunar Base, the Ranger also has time to rescue kidnapped scientists and their large-busted daughters! One action sequence from this game looks a lot like the arcade classic, Space Harrier. Controlling the small figure of our airborne hero, you must shoot down waves of advancing enemy planes as they fly towards you out of the screen. Further sequences require you to fight a German guard who is built like a brick air-raid shelter and dodge a hail of bullets whilst crossing an obstacle race. Your final task is to assemble a rocket and fly to the moon to rescue the zombie slave women from the Lunarium Mines.

Hidden in one corner of the preview lounge was another (as yet untitled), Cinemaware game. The provisional title is 'Emperor of the Rising Sun' and it is a Japanese martial arts game which requires you to rise from a simple warrior to become the Shogun of Japan. The game appears to be 'Defender of the Crown' with fried rice! The only action sequence so far completed requires you to fend off spinning metal stars with your sword as they are thrown in quick succession by a ninja warrior.

Having been lulled into a false sense of security, journalists were ushered into the cinema to be shown the future attractions on the big screen. The 'old movie' buff and writer, Dennis Gifford, was there to give a short introduction to the movie clips which included the classic Stoogie film containing the Oyster Stew routine, as this is included in the game. The next treat was the screening of the final episode of the Rocket Ranger serial. The latest news is that this serial is also about to be screened on television - which seems a very fortuitous happening! While the computer press attempted to hide in the rear of the cinema, the kids were encouraged to boo and cheer as the hero saved New York from the terrible Disintegrator Ray.

If you missed all the fun and noise in the original 'rush', there is still time to buy a bag of popcorn, put your feet up on the seat in front and prepare to cheer as the clowns and heroes of yesteryear come tumbling back.

Grand Slam lines up Flintstones

Grand Slam Software, formerly Argus Press Software, has obtained the rights to produce the computer game of the Flintstones cartoon. The game will be released across most formats, including the Atari ST.

The game is being developed by Teque Software Development with music by Ben Daglish. In the game, you are taken on an adventure of classic proportions by Barney and Fred who first set off for the Bedrock Super-Bowl to play bowling. However, Wilma has other ideas - she wants Fred to paint the living room in time for his mother-in-law's arrival.

After a day painting, hindered by little Pebbles, you finally head for the bowling alley for the big match. Unfortunately, when you get back you find that Pebbles has gone missing and the hunt is on...

It all sounds a bit domestic, but the graphics look great with very realistic representations of the original characters. The Flintstones is due to be released at Easter, priced £19.95.

Late News

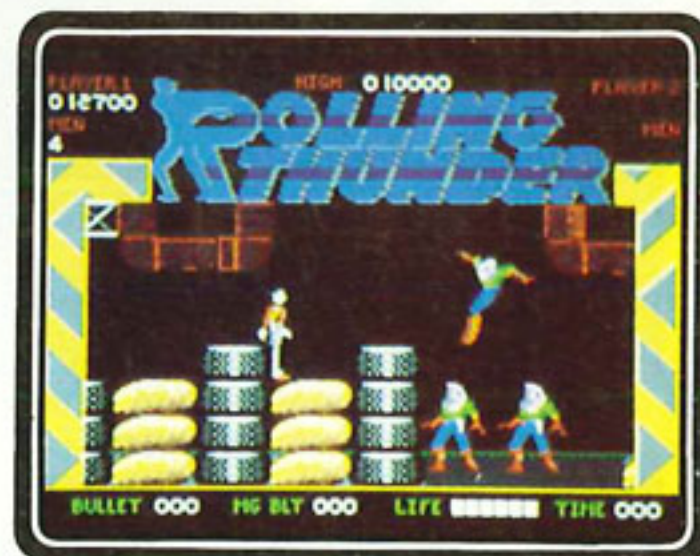
Grand Slam does US deal

Stephen Hall, Managing Director of Grand Slam Entertainments, has finalised a major deal with US leisure house, Datasoft. The three-year agreement will mean that Grand Slam takes over sales, marketing and distribution of Datasoft products in Europe and Australia, while Datasoft will handle Grand Slam products in the States and Canada. Talking of the deal, Hall commented: "Grand Slam is now cemented in the market place, and this is by no means the last exciting new venture that will be seeing the light of day from us over the coming months. We've been spending a lot of time and effort on new products, new marketing opportunities and I'm feeling really very confident and excited about the future."



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Screen shots from Atari ST version.



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Telecomsoft's Revolution

Telecomsoft recently had a press conference 525 feet above London - in the Telecom tower! It was from here that Telecomsoft were showing six new games under development, or about to be released, for the ST market. Also, there is now going to be a new budget label so as to leave Firebird free to develop the more expensive quality games. Under the name of Silverbird, the packaging will be of a format similar to that of the Firebird chevrons, but in silver. Releases for the ST will range from £1.99 to £9.95, with the first release being Thrust, at £9.95.

As for Carrier Command, it is ALMOST complete and looks better each time I see it. Look out for a full review as soon as we can get our grubby little hands on a finished copy.

A galactic trading and space war game with the working title of EPT is under development and promises to feature fast-moving, solid 3D graphics. Projected cost is £24.95 and according to Rainbird is 'Available soon'...



The revolving tower caused problems for some of the guests!



Legend of the Sword

Legend of the Sword is an adventure, available in April for £24.95, that features mouse-driven commands, advanced parser, over 300 individual cameo illustrations, a save facility and an Oops/Undo command enabling you to backtrack from your previous command. Also included is an 'innovative scrolling map feature'.



Icom Simulations signed up

Icom Simulations UK, responsible for Deja Vu and other Macventure products, have been signed up by Telecomsoft and will produce six games for them over the next two years - three so-called

'action-packed' games, and three adventures. The first project is set in the Wild West and features gun-toting cowboys, indians, and various other desperate characters. Deja Vu 2 is also planned. Everyone concerned is said to be excited at the partnership.

Verminator

Due for release in May, Verminator is set in, of all things, an oak tree with 250 locations! Apparently, the game revolves around you playing the part of a vermin control agent, employed by the Tree Council to rid the oak of vermin. From what I've seen of the game, it is fairly reminiscent of Black Lamp in its layout, but with totally different gameplay. Excellent cartoon-like graphics make it one to watch out for. Watch this space, as they say...



Return to Genesis

Return to Genesis is an absolute blinder of a game from Firebird, retailing at £19.95 and available almost as I write this. It is a horizontally-scrolling shoot-'em-up and in order to pick up extra weapons and features, you have to rescue scientists who, in turn, give up their projects enabling you to evade the 'baddies'. 'Fiendishly difficult' according to our Editor. Watch out for a full review next month.

Jezglider II

Starglider II is Jez San's sequel, incorporating a revolutionary multi-format disk. The graphics are truly stunning, with over 80 characters in fast, animated action, and include such diverse creatures as Space Whales, Pac-worms and Manta Rays. The game will be available soon on Amiga and ST at £24.95.



Thrust

Silverbird are releasing Thrust, an 8-bit conversion that is somewhat of a cross between Asteroids and Scramble. It looks interesting enough and, due to its budget price, definitely worth checking out. It should be available by the time you read this article.

MicroProse - High Flyers

Early in February, an invitation came through the post inviting Hugh, our Editor, to 'a day of stunt flying with Stuart Bell and Major Bill Stealey' of MicroProse. Hugh, however, had other ideas and didn't fancy flying upside down, so I jumped at the chance to get back in the air.

On the day in question, everyone finally arrived at the MicroProse base in Tetbury, and we made tracks for Staverton airport, in Gloucestershire. On arrival, numbers were drawn to find the order in which we would take to the air in a Zlin aerobatic aircraft. Unfortunately, I came out with trip 13! To keep my thoughts off this piece of unnerving news I volunteered to be in the first 'spotter plane' of the day. This was a Cessna 152 four-seater and, as we took off, Wild Bill Stealey climbed into the back seat of the Zlin and took off to meet up with us somewhere over the Gloucestershire countryside. Roger, the pilot, pulled up alongside, about 100 feet away and I managed to get a couple of shots of Wild Bill waving at us, clearly enjoying himself, before they peeled off into a series of loops, barrel-rolls and other aerobatic manoeuvres. We were then treated to a quick glimpse of the local area before we came in to land. Jumping out of the Cessna, I immediately made tracks for the waiting helicopter. This really is THE way to fly, and I'm currently pestering Hugh to upgrade the company car to a company helicopter! Somehow, I don't think it'll work... Anyway, we hovered straight up to 50 feet, turned through 180 degrees on the spot, and flew off. The pilot decided to show us what would happen if the engine cut out. However, to avoid damaging the craft and possibly ruining our day out, he flew safely out of the manoeuvre with a couple of hundred feet to spare.

Back on the ground again, I headed off into the crew room for lunch and proceeded to get to grips with Gunship, as there were MicroProse games by the dozen running on different machines. On Gunship, however, I ran into a spot of bother with a couple of Mil-24 Hind helicopters and a few SA-9 surface-to-air missile launchers. Fortunately, 'Wild' Bill was on hand to rescue me and, like a true all-American hero, took over the controls. To the accompaniment of self-made sound effects, such as, 'Let's loose off a Hellfire on this



Wild Bill Stealey clearly enjoying himself

Commie' and 'Dagga, dagga, dagga. That's got the son of a b....!', he shot down the two Hinds, blasted some infantry and got back to base in one piece. Phew! I guess it's all in a day's work, though!

Finally, and I mean finally, as mine



was the last trip of the day and the weather was closing in, Roger and I took off in the Zlin. I didn't get the exact figures for 'g' tolerances on the Zlin, but estimate that it is somewhere in the region of +8 and -5. Suffice it to say that it is enough for most aerobatic manoeuvres, including an outside loop! (This is where the plane does a loop, but is inverted at the beginning and end, and up the right way at the

top of the loop. It's an horrendous stunt to practice, as Roger will testify. He says he only practises them for the final two weeks before the stunt-flying season as, due to the g-forces involved (about -4g), all the blood rushes to your head and bursts all the blood vessels in your eyes and face. Thus Roger ends up with red, sore eyes and a thumping headache for about three days after the stunt.)

We started off nice and gently with a couple of loops and barrel rolls. When I say gently, I mean not more than about 4.5g. Roger then threw it into a 'Cuban Eight', a figure of eight on its side. This is rather fun, as just after you are coming out of the inverted position at the top of a loop and are pointing at an angle of around 45 degrees towards the ground, you roll upright. Most unbalancing! Roger then asked if I would like to take control and fly for a while. I flew around for a short time to get the feel of the aircraft and then stuck it in a 45 degree dive. On asking Roger what the entry speed for a loop was, I was told 240 knots, and so, as the ASI (Air Speed Indicator) touched 240, I gently but firmly pulled back on the stick, and the aircraft rose heavenwards. I must have had quite a g-loading though, as when I leant back to look for the horizon coming up over the tailplane, my headset was pulled off my head! So there I was, upside down, with one hand on the stick pulling through the loop, and my left hand reaching to rescue the headset in order to hear what Roger was saying! I was a bit rusty on the flying after nearly two years out of the pilot's seat, but improved fairly quickly on my successive loops and barrel rolls. After what seemed to be much too short a time, we were on our way back to the airfield where we performed a 'run-and-break', flying flat out down the runway at 50 feet and then pulling round in a high-g turn to come in to land. As mine was the last flight of the day, I helped Roger push the aircraft back into the hangar, so bringing to a close an exciting day's flying.

I must extend my thanks to Major 'Wild' Bill Stealey, Colin Bastable, Fiona Martin and the rest of the MicroProse team, along with Simon Harvey of Headlines PR, for making it a most enjoyable day out. I look forward to another flight simulator press launch with fervour!



The MicroProse team assemble for a 'gang photo'!

US Gold and Co - New Products

Jason Spiller reports on a recent visit to US Gold HQ in Birmingham.

"With its release expected this month, the next product to reach completion is Gauntlet II. I was interested to learn that it was a personal project of the authors of the original conversion, Kevin Bulmer and Richard Costello of Gremlin Graphics. Kevin explained that US Gold were doubtful about a sequel and so he and Richard were working on the game in their free time. Gauntlet II is a direct scaled-down model of the arcade version, complete with original digitized speech. In its current state, the speech alone takes 660K of memory, while the graphics use 300K. Obviously, it is subject to considerable data compression. Like the arcade version, four players can participate in the game at once - a feat which is only possible with a joystick interface which has been developed by Richard. This interface fits in the printer port and has two male joystick connections. Available for £5.95 it is a must for all Gauntlet fans and anyone fortunate enough to own four joysticks.

That famous typographical error, Bill



Alley (otherwise known as Bill Allen), works in an adjacent office to Richard and Kevin. Currently, he is working on a game which stars Mickey Mouse in Disney Towers. Again, the powers that be doubted the viability of a game with Mickey Mouse in it, which is an unusual conclusion to draw about the most popular and commercially successful character ever created. Thanks to an arrangement with Disney, US Gold have carte blanche to use any Disney character in their software. Mickey Mouse (a title has not yet been agreed on) is representative of the current theme in Gremlin Graphics software which incorporates games within the game. In this case, Mickey must combat all manner of spectres, spooks and witches and find the pieces to Merlin's broken wand. Armed only with a water pistol and a mallet, he must enter into rooms on each level and complete an ingenious arcade game.

Last year, Bill developed an incredible graphics and programming device called Keating, which has revolutionized their software production. Obviously, the technical details are kept under wraps, but its task is quite straightforward. Keating enables the development staff to create screens on the ST and, via a Pinnacle with a massive memory, port the screen to a Spectrum, Amstrad or any other computer. It then shows the areas and details which must be touched up. With an inbuilt art package, these modifications can then be filled in. Naturally, this has had a tremendous effect on their software produc-

tion, as well as on the quality of the games. When asked if Keating would be marketed, the technical staff answered in unison: 'Not bloody likely!'

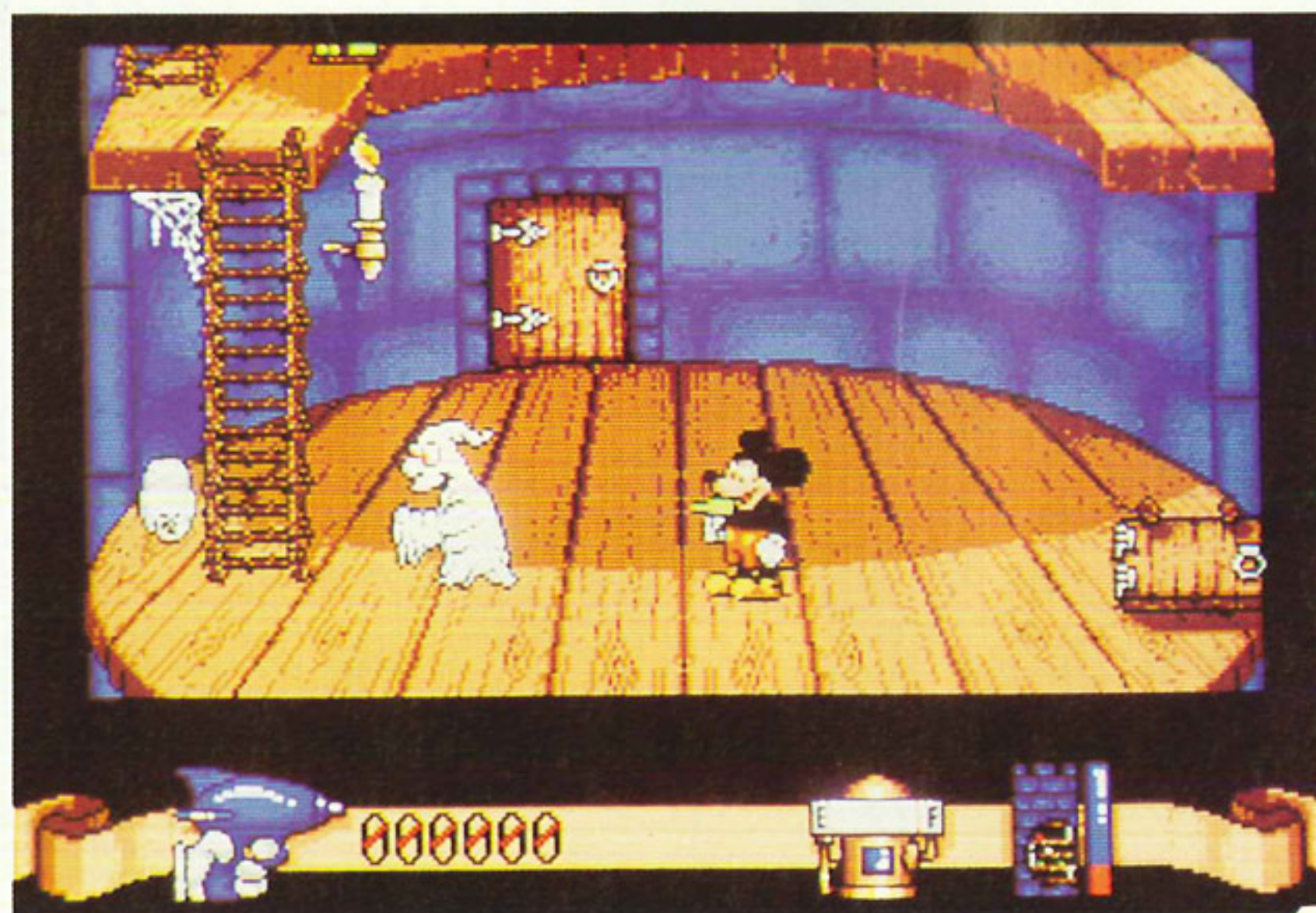
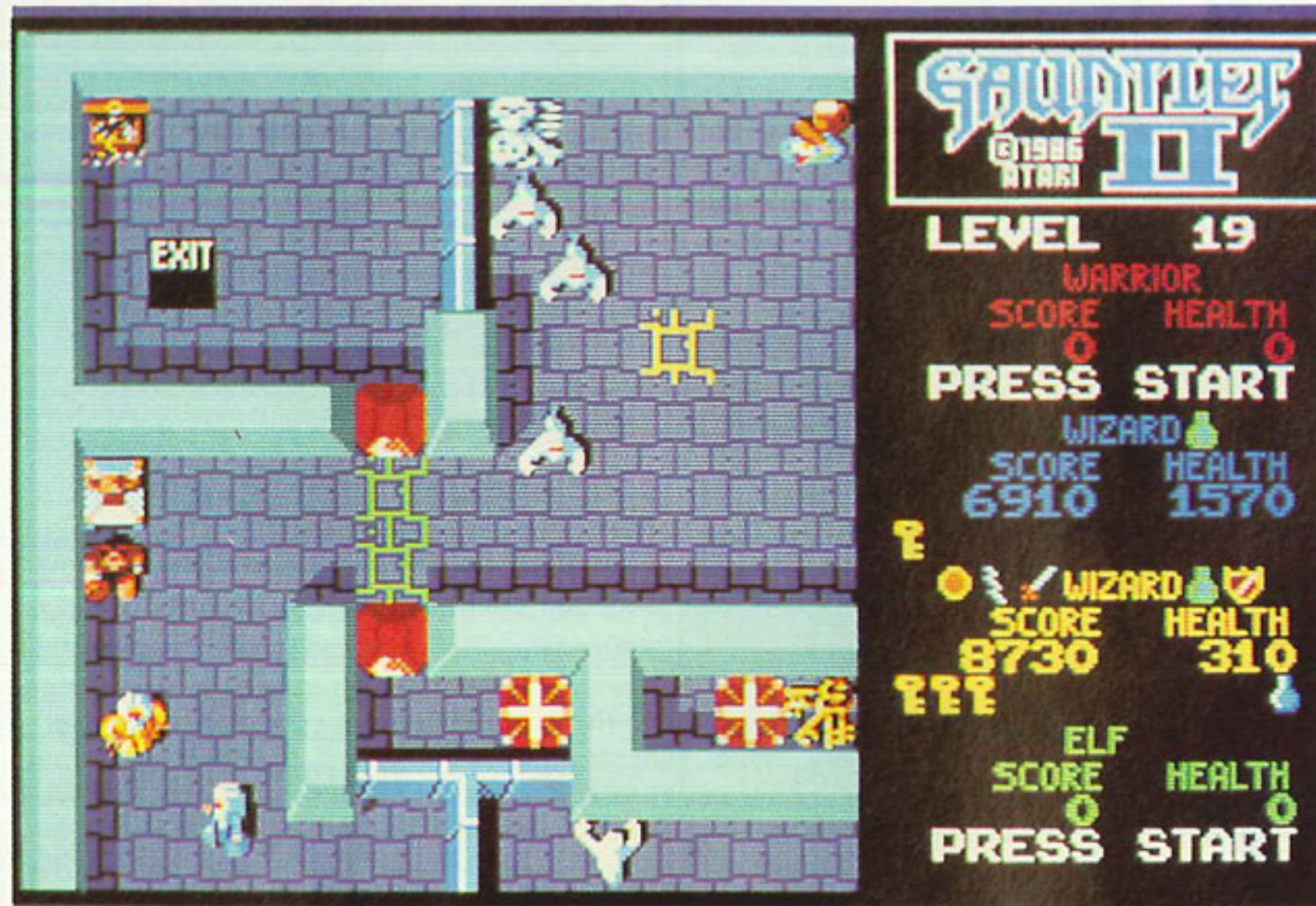
Officially, Richard and Kevin are working on a game called Ramrod, which also incorporates the 'games within a game' idea. I commented on the similarities between the terrains in Ramrod and Dizzy Wizard from Diamond Games - they didn't deny it. The game is currently in the embryonic stages, but the animation that I saw was quite outstanding. Ramrod is a character who must be kept amused during the search for four arcade machines within each level. The machines must be located and played before you can move on to the next level. There are four levels and so Ramrod will effectively contain sixteen separate games, plus the main game itself. Kevin's speciality is the animation at the beginning of the game. For instance, for Guardian II he created a breathtaking animation sequence, which shows the characters from the game on the side of an arcade machine. The animation then moves up and over the machine console and into the screen. Unfortunately, this one sequence would take many disks: 'Oh for the day when everyone has a hard disk drive!'

One of the main reasons for my visit was to report on the progress of the official

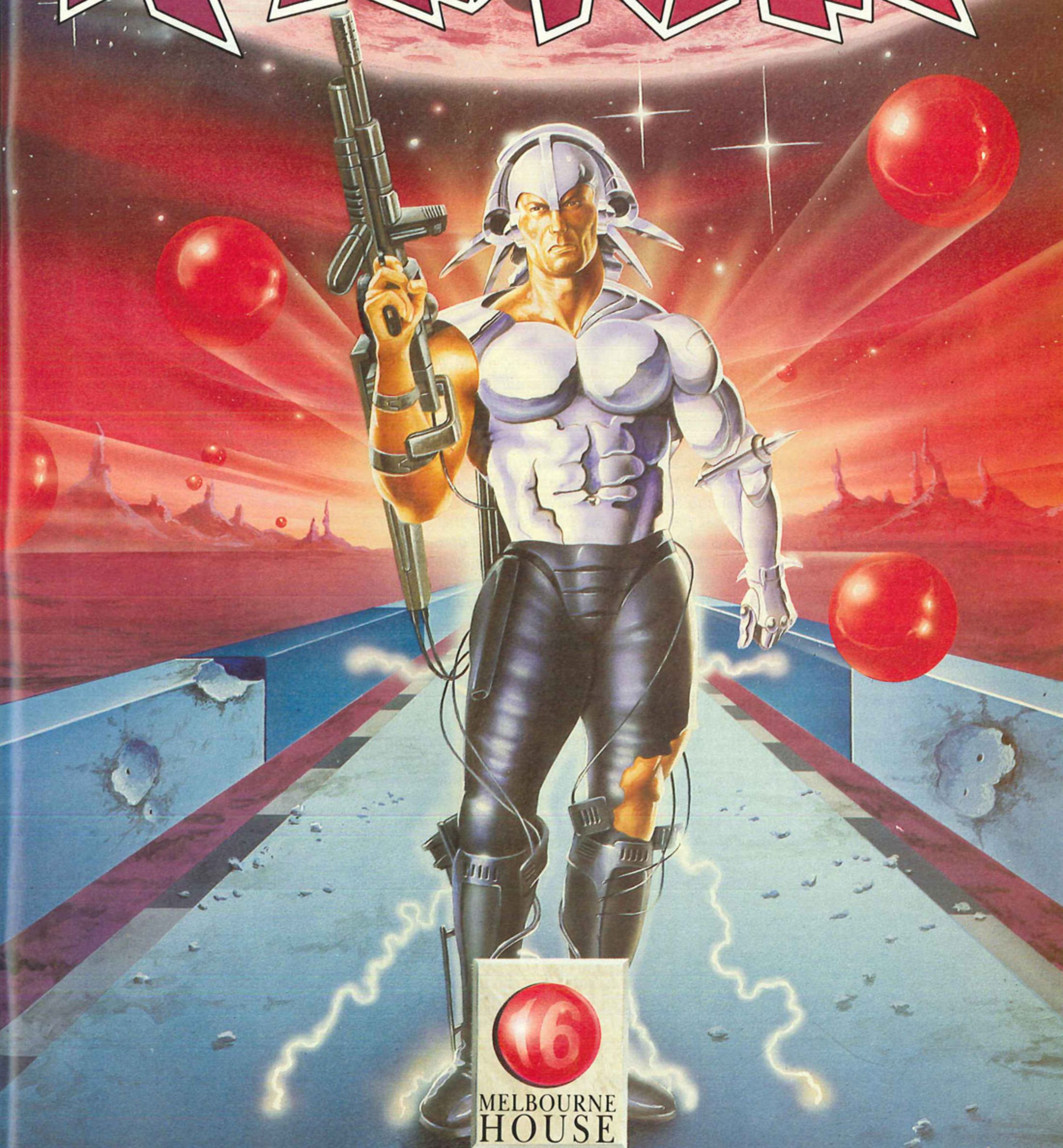
Out Run conversion, which seems to be taking an eternity. I perceived that it was further away from completion than they would have wished, although the remainder of the work was described as: 'Getting rid of the rough edges'. The scenery on the sides of the road is complete and impressive, and there was also evidence that the main features and hazards from the arcade version would be



incorporated in the conversion. However, I was not so keen on the striped track which is supposed to enhance the feeling of movement and speed. In my opinion, the roadside objects would perform the task quite adequately. I think the message has to be, don't expect too much of Out Run - the ST is a home micro and the arcade game is nearer to being a mainframe!



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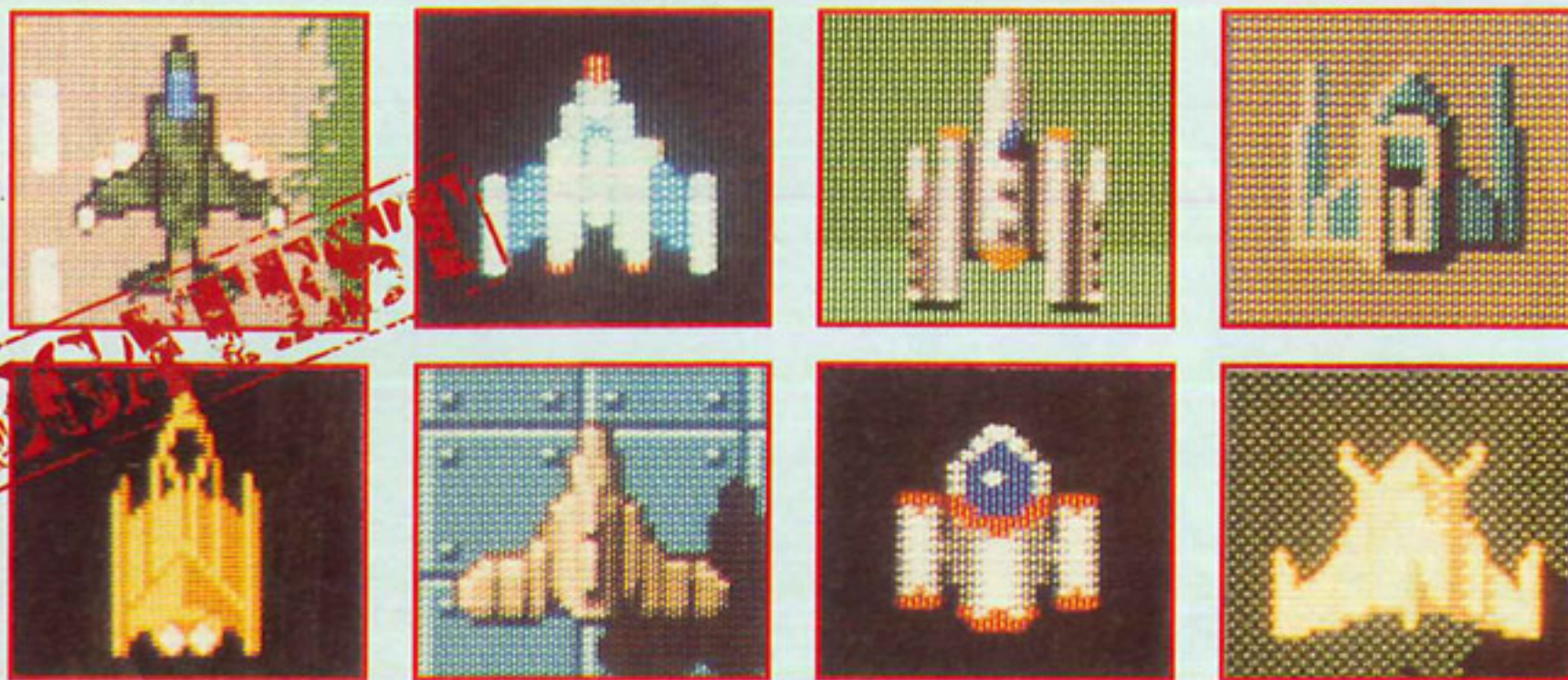
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As everyone should already know, a shoot-'em-up involves the mindless zapping of intelligent alien lifeforms. Combine this with an attractive scrolling effect and you have a definite recipe for success.

The term "scrolling", simply describes the movement of the game's background. This can be either of a vertical, or horizontal nature.

Scrolling shoot-'em-ups have been a part of the games scene for some time now. The phenomenal success of the early arcade games, Williams' Defender being a timeless reminder, secured the fate of the shoot-'em-up for ever. With the ever-improving state of computer technology, games have become louder, faster and clearer. Many of the arcade favourites started to find their way into our homes via a home computer; the invasion was complete, shoot-'em-ups were here to stay.



Of course, there are many features that are used again and again. If the recipe is good, why bother to change the ingredients? All of the scrolling shoot-'em-ups I have come across take the form of the player having to defend his homeland from some sort of evil enemy attack. Often this takes place in the nether regions of space, but one or two more down-to-earth games are also available. The player is usually faced with a real challenge having a definite ending, normally the defeat of his oppressors. The game's action takes place over a specified number of levels, and most scenarios see the intrepid hero having to take on some sort of mothership before progressing onto further levels. Most games see the player taking the form of a futuristic space craft, armed always with some sort of laser gun. All of the modern games have some system by which the player can enhance the capabilities of his craft. By destroying set numbers of aliens, or completing certain sections of the game, a player can build various features onto his craft. The most common additional extras include:

Extra fire power: collecting further weaponry allows a player to destroy more aliens, and is often essential in order to complete a level. Shields or force fields: with some programs the action sometimes becomes a little hectic so to aid survival, shields are often offered and players are advised to accept. Smart bombs: these are also quite common. Since their first appearance in Williams' Defender, smart bombs have become very popular, allowing the player to escape trouble by simply destroying all the enemies on screen. Extra speed: also a common feature, allowing a player to steer his craft out of immediate danger, and more often than not, straight into even more trouble. These are the most common features, but not all programs will include them.

All scrolling shoot-'em-ups need a variety of 'baddies', and these usually come in three forms. The small, moving, enemy craft normally attack in waves; these troublesome creatures use laser fire to destroy a player, although they are not averse to the odd kamikaze attack. Land-based defence weaponry is also a specialty of scrolling games. These guns can be either static or mobile and emit a steady stream of gunfire all aimed at your swift demise. A third type of alien encountered is the level 'guardian'. This is typically a large creature, strategically placed to stop you from completing your mission. Only after a few well-placed zapps can it normally be destroyed.

Whatever type of game you normally play, there's nothing quite like a mindless shoot-'em-up. The sudden rush of anger and raw energy is quite exhilarating. Mind you, just spare a thought for all those involved in the production of the latest zappers, like Xenon, for instance. The amount of thought and care needed to program a successful shoot-'em-up must be phenomenal. So take aim, and enjoy a good blast.

UP



UP



UP



UP

SHOOT-EM

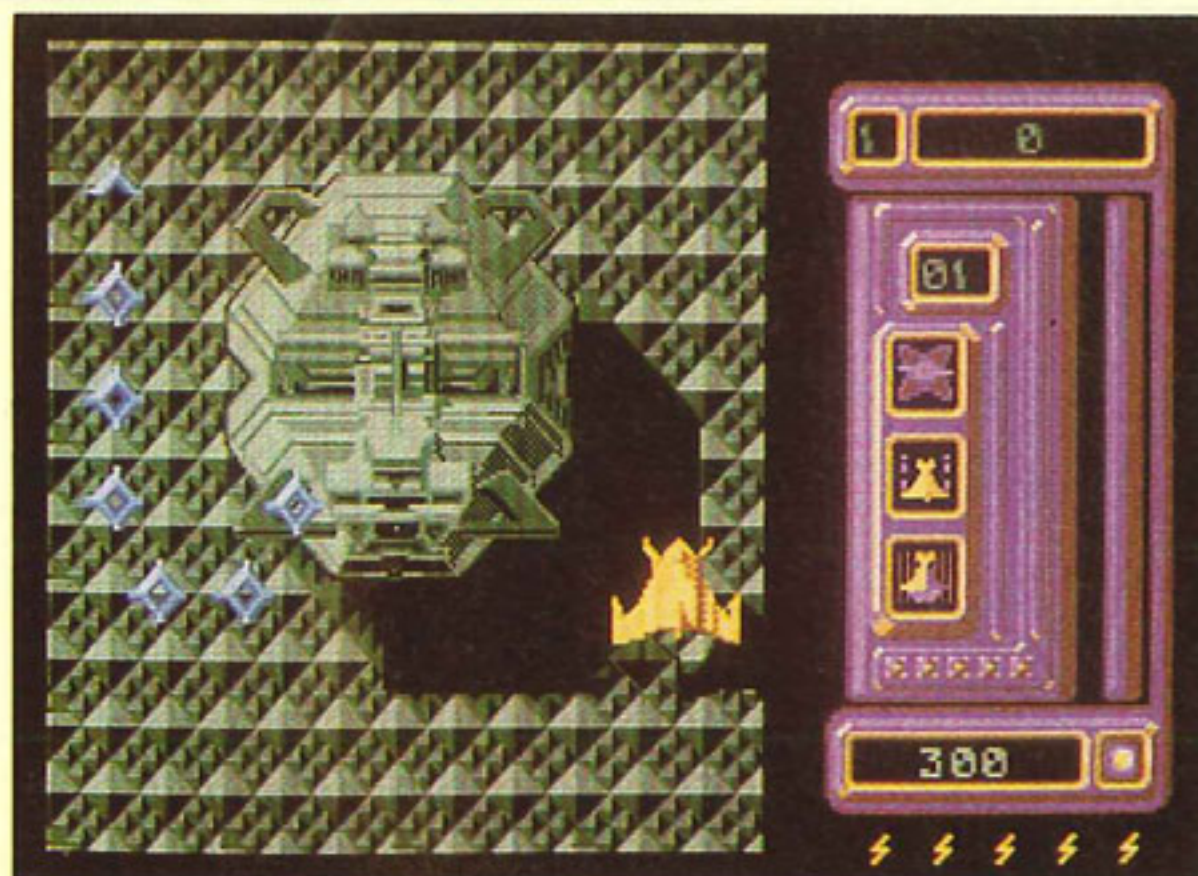
Goldrunner, Microdeal

The Earth is dying, man has so polluted his environment it can no longer sustain him. New worlds have been found. But, between the old legacy and the new hope, lie - the Ringworlds of Triton. Artificial worlds of unknown composition and built by an inconceivable technology, the Ringworlds are inhabited by the most hostile race in the universe. They will destroy anything within range of their awesome weapons. Your task is to penetrate the Ringworld's outer defences and destroy the Ring itself by draining its power. Only a small, speedy craft could complete such a mission. The Goldrunner is such a craft.

Taking on the part of the Goldrunner, your main objective is to destroy all the Ringworld's ground bases. To simply fly up and down the alien station zapping emplacements, would become very mundane. Therefore, included on the Ringworld's surface are numerous tall structures. An error in navigation of the Goldrunner soon sees the unfortunate pilot ploughing into one of the strategically positioned towers. Also guarding the station is a myriad of flying robotic defence units. Contact with these guardians will not destroy the Goldrunner, but your shields will reduce should your craft come into contact with their disrupter bombs.

The graphics used within Goldrunner are all well drawn, the Goldrunner itself being a rather large shape. It is somewhat difficult to judge between what actually are, and are not, targets, so the best policy, as the game suggests, is to blast anything in your way. This strategy works well until you find one of the annoying tall structures that refuses to be destroyed. There are no hidden extras with which to enhance your ship. Add this to the fact that, once destroyed, you have to restart from the very beginning of the appropriate level, and you will realise that careful navigation is required.

The sound effects offered by Goldrunner are a little sparse. But, when the game's musical score and great speech synthesis are heard, it is excusable. I found it a little irritating when the game kept on telling me, "Good shooting!", and, "You're doing great!" - still, these are minor worries. Goldrunner is a good all-round shoot-'em-up, a little difficult, but worthwhile.



A large structure looms tall above the Goldrunner scenery



Another swarm of aliens attacks

Screaming Wings, Red Rat

Ah, how refreshing to find a game set on, or rather above, good old earthly soil. Red Rat's Screaming Wings sees you take on the role of a lonely jet pilot. From what I can gather it looks as if your mission is to fly your attack craft behind enemy lines. Quite what you must do when you arrive there I never really managed to find out. The gameplay saw me taking on a number of jet-fighters, all managing to look strikingly similar to my own craft. After having encountered these rather mundane attackers I came face to face with what I took to be the level 'guardian'. This somewhat larger bomber took great delight in spraying me with its tail gun, and hence I never really ventured far into the game.

The game scrolls vertically over various fields and seas, the enemy fighters always appearing in the same repetitive formations. The game boasts extra features available to the player. Amongst those I encountered were time-delayed shields which, although rather few in number, were very useful because it was difficult to

avoid fire from some of the enemy aircraft. The only other feature I came across was a drone. This little extra provided the player with a mimicking fire pattern and it seemed to move in a pattern symmetrical to your craft's movements, firing at the same intervals.

Overall, the game's graphical representation is poor. The scrolling background is not sharp and seems to become much the same after a short period of time. As I have already mentioned, the enemy aircraft are all very similar, only the grey-coloured ones standing out. Their movements seem slow and sluggish - not at all like modern fighters. I saw the little white dots, supposedly representing the aircraft's huge arsenal, as nothing more than comical. The game's sonics are of the same substandard quality. For me, the best sound was when a panic-stricken voice announced, "Game over man, game over!"

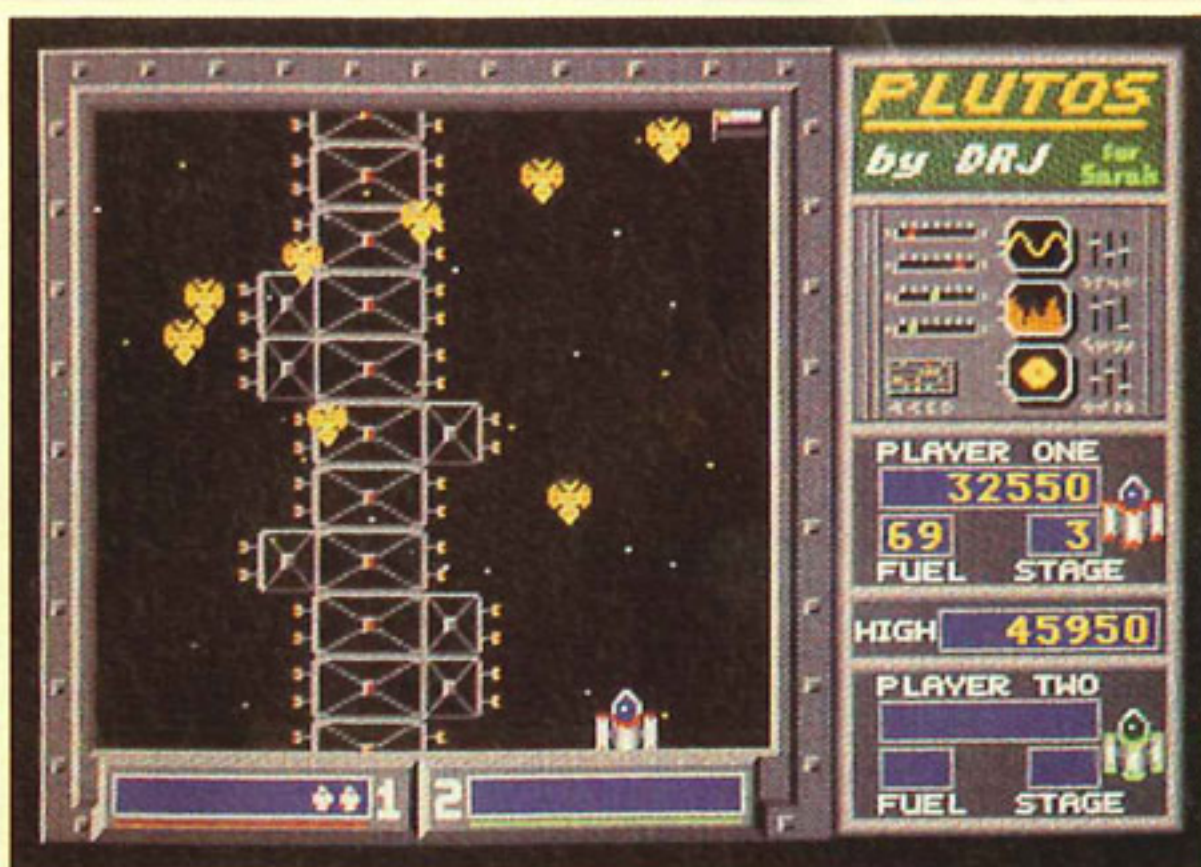
Red Rat's Screaming Wings is well below the high standard players now expect. I would recommend players spend their money on something a little more worthwhile. Screaming Wings surely must be a nominee for the Golden Turkey award.



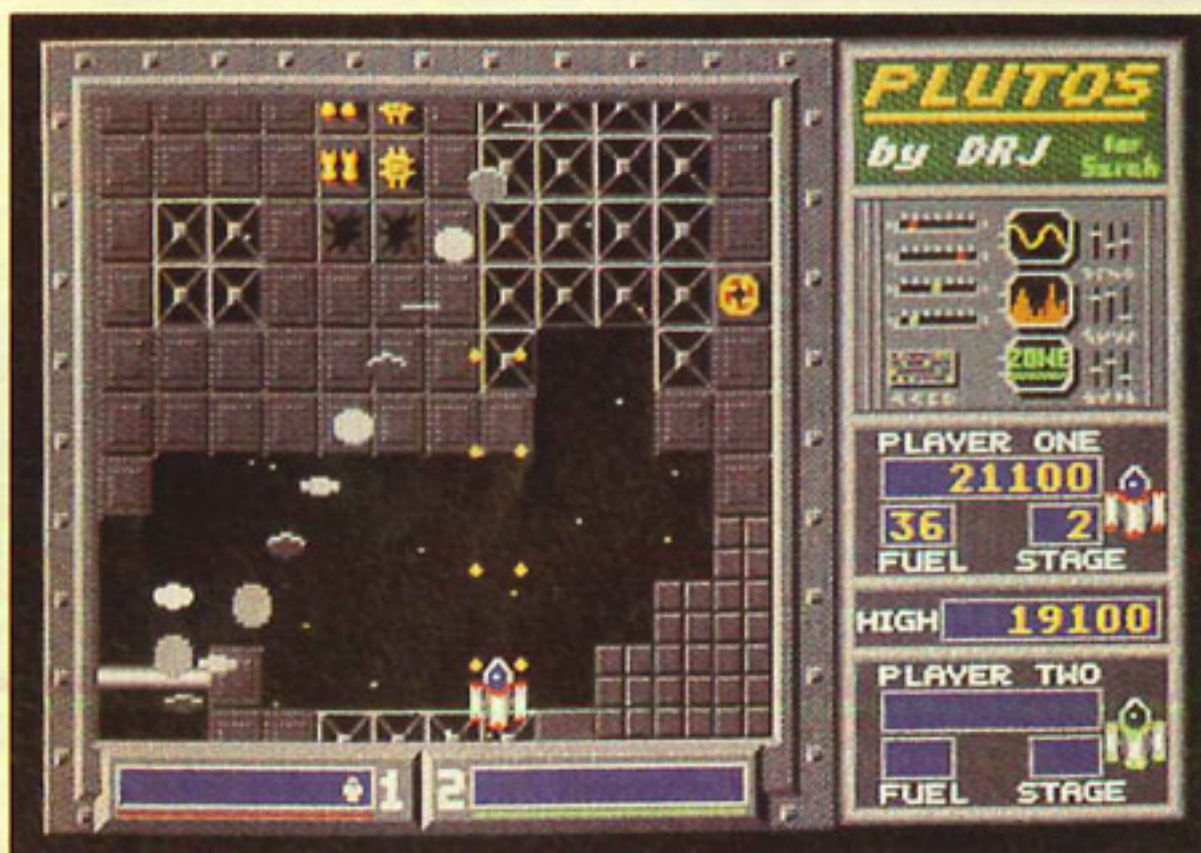
Enemy aircraft attack (yours is the one at the base of the screen)



You attack the large bomber aircraft (Red Rat's equivalent of the sentinel ship found in other games)



Wave after wave of small alien craft cause most of the problems



The rotating metal disk aliens are most people's favourite

Plutos, Microvalue

Amidst the huge jungle of scrolling shoot-'em-ups, Plutos represents nothing exceptionally new. The author, Derek Johnson, has obviously taken a hard look at many of the currently available titles, gathered together their better qualities and formed his own title. In this game, a space fighter, equipped with standard-issue lasers, flies over a smoothly vertically-scrolling mothership. The aim is for the player, using his space fighter, to destroy brightly coloured structures which are positioned on the surface of the mothership. These structures represent various electrical and navigational nerve centres and, with some practice, it is possible to destroy all of them. During all the action your craft's fuel level is constantly dropping. Located with the various other units on the mothership, are fuel dumps. The destruction of these fuel depots helps maintain your ship's energy levels.

Plutos would be too easy if all the player had to do was shoot a few well-positioned emplacements. However, to add to all the confusion the programmer has included numerous attack waves of vicious swirling aliens. These extra-terrestrial creatures come in many different shapes and colours; they are all well drawn and detailed and their movements are particularly smooth. The game is divided into levels, each are more hazardous than the last. Before a player can advance, he is faced with a face! A sign in the middle of the visage tells the player what is required of him. The game's only unique feature is, perhaps, the two-player option. When selected, two players can battle simultaneously for those precious points. I found this option very entertaining.

As I have already mentioned, the game offers nothing staggeringly new; the only thing setting it apart from numerous other shoot-'em-ups is the two player option. But, since Tynesoft have decided to market the game on their budget label, MicroValue, the game is of a low-enough price to generate interest. If you enjoy a good blast every once in a while, but are not the world's greatest games player, then Plutos could be your answer.

Jupiter Probe, Microdeal

From your home base on the earth, you control the Jupiter Probe. Your ship automatically relays photographic images of Jupiter to you and using all your skills you must navigate the probe deep into the territories of the planet. To aid your cause you have three ships, each equipped with twin laser cannon and limited ultrasonics. Ultrasonics cause a massive disturbance to occur all around your ship. This has the effect of destroying all other enemy fighters, but warnings have been issued that some of the enemy mutations have been equipped with sonic shields, and therefore are immune to your ultrasonic weapons. Your Jupiter Probe has also been fitted with shields of its own. When activated, these shields give your craft a limited immunity from any enemy fire. Your on-board battle computer will forecast any oncoming formations, therefore letting you know of any forthcoming dangers.

The game's playfield struck me as being somewhat small,

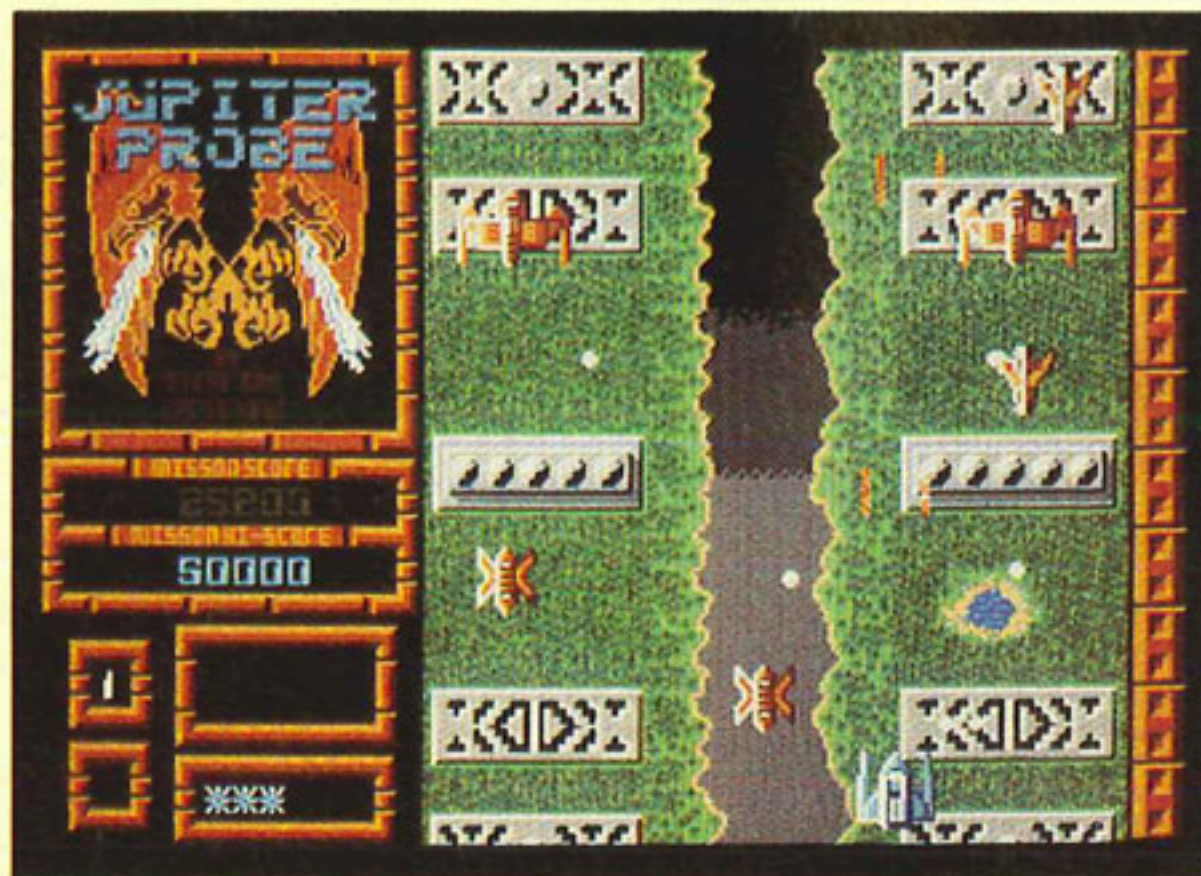
the left-hand side of the screen being used for a score and status display, leaving the actual playable area a little cramped. The first level proved to be all too easy; with only a couple of mutations and formations to blast, it all seemed to be over before it had begun. The next levels did begin to get harder, the small screen soon becoming cluttered. Formations and mutations became a common feature, sometimes both at once. The player would find himself overrun with aliens and progress would often be slow and tiresome.

Graphically, the game is of an average standard. However, I found that neither the aliens nor the scenery really changed much. The sonics are not wonderful although Rob Hubbard's up-tempo tune is quite catchy. But had it not been for the game's extra speech, I could only have described the effects as, at best, adequate.

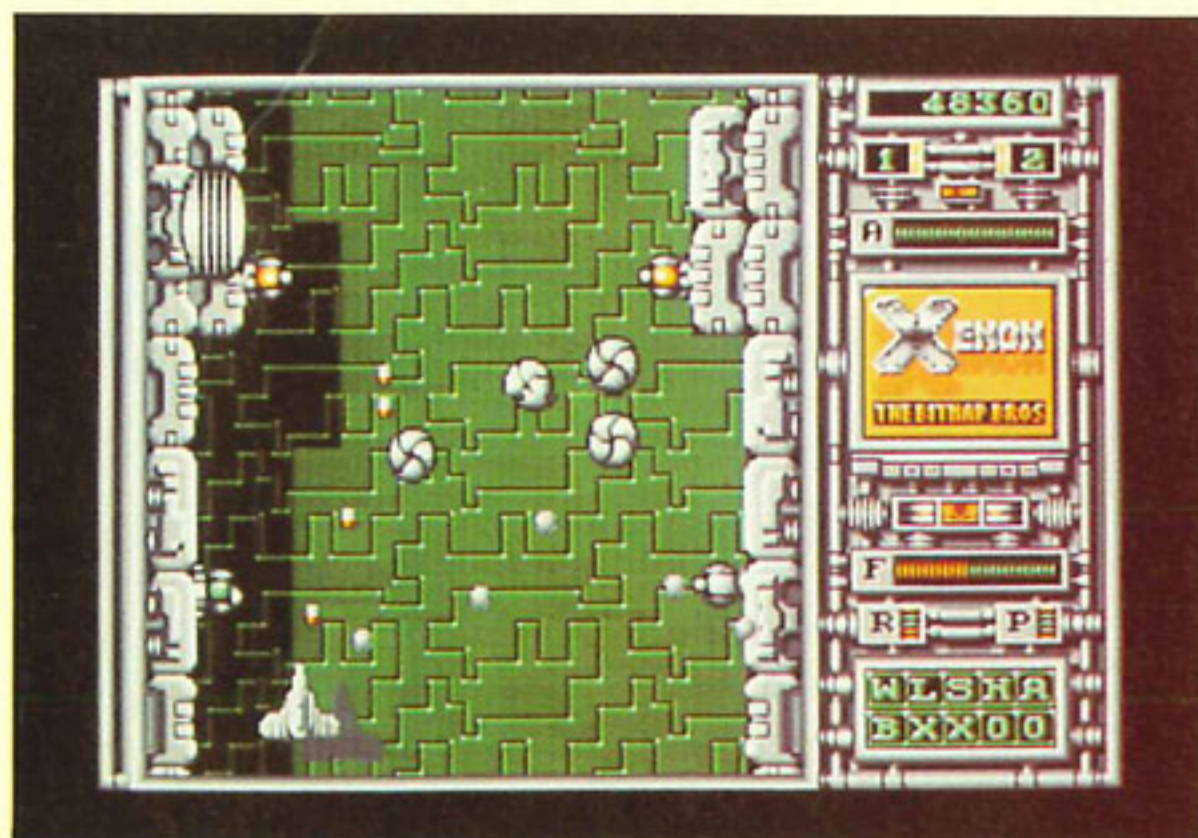
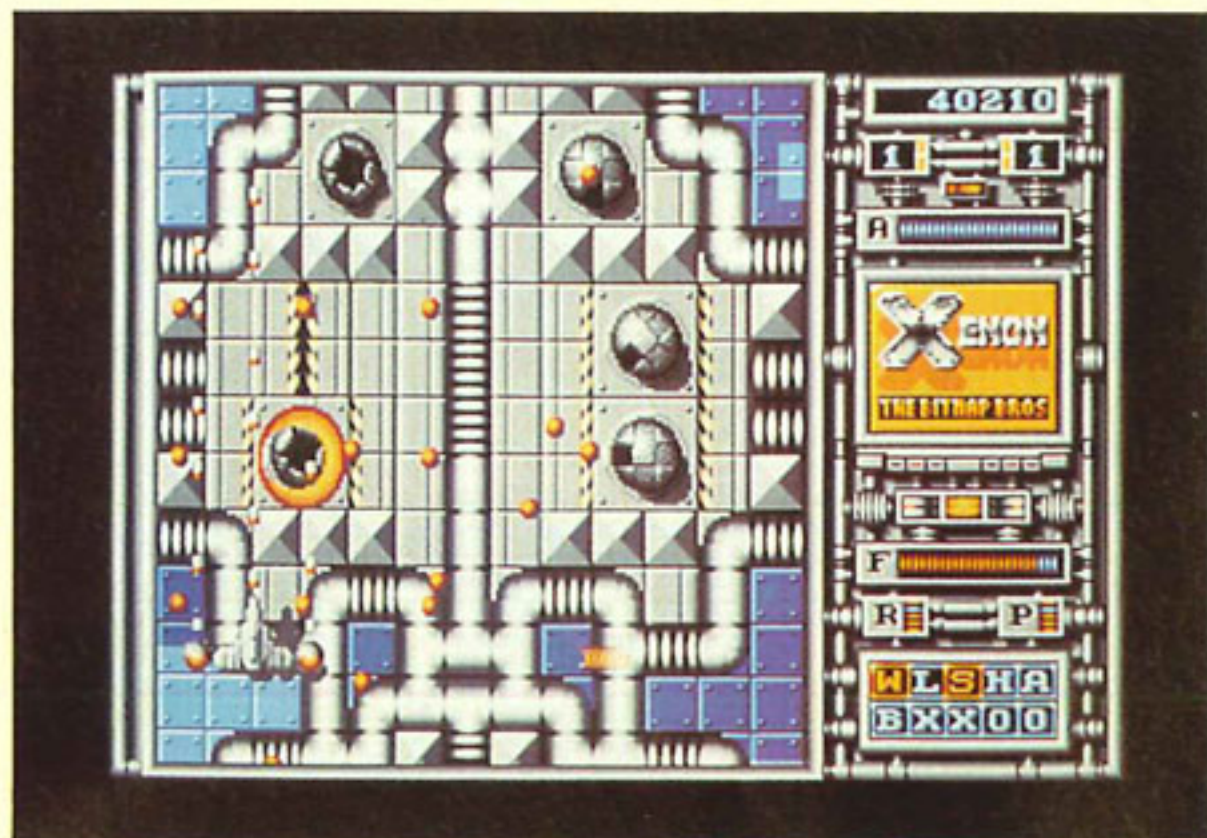
Overall, Jupiter Probe represents nothing of outstanding merit. The game lacks many features and becomes dull and repetitive after only a few sittings. I'm afraid I would not recommend it.



There's always plenty of action and the reduced playing area often seems cramped



A fleet of larger, mutant craft attack - they are announced by the effective digitised speech



Xenon, Melbourne House

The Xenites were once unheard of then, as if overnight, their bases and ships started to appear on fifteen different planets. With them the Xenites brought war. Merchant cruisers once again had to travel armed. The Xenites randomly attacked the merchant cargos and as a result of the chaos no spaceship was safe. Then, completely out of character, the Xenites attacked one of the Federation's star fleets. Just before being taken captive, the Federation's General Xod managed to send a mayday signal. Intercepting the call, you as the only available space fighter, are summoned to Xod's aid.

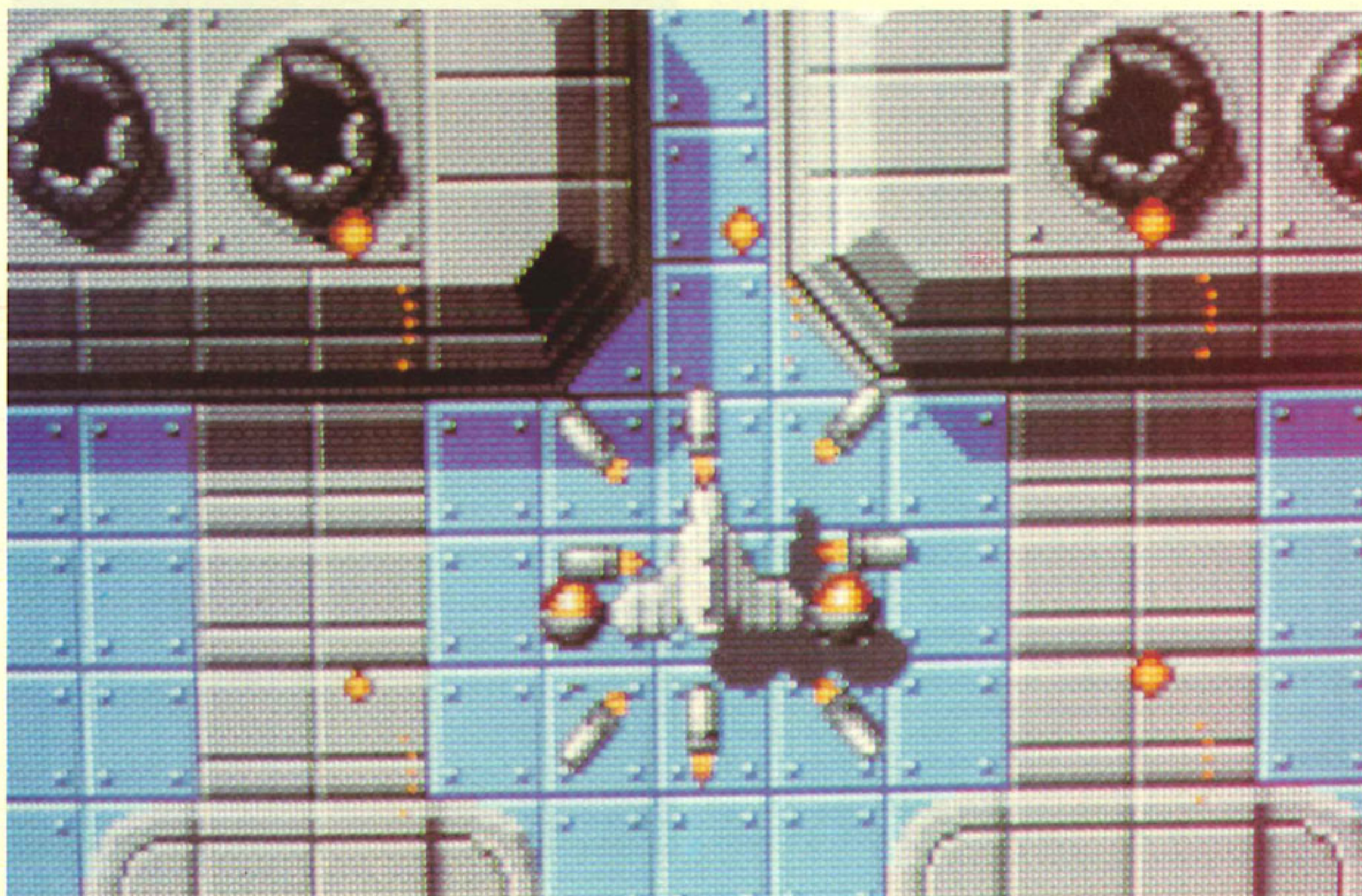
To effect a rescue you have to negotiate four enemy sectors, each sector consisting of four further zones. Your craft is of the latest design and is able to transmute between a fast jet fighter, and a slower, yet highly manoeuvrable, tank-type craft. During your mission you will need to use both, so knowing how to control them well, is very important.

Within the enemy territory are numerous laser-spitting emplacements. Some of these defences are housed within an underground lift system. Once destroyed, these units disappear, only to reappear in the shape of even more venomous defence units, or in a more useful power cell. Collecting these power cells allows a player to enhance his ship with features which include: wing lasers, homing missiles, laser fire, armour, extra speed, increased shot distance, fuel, side lasers, and rotating balls which mimic your fire pattern. It is, therefore, possible to transform your humble ship

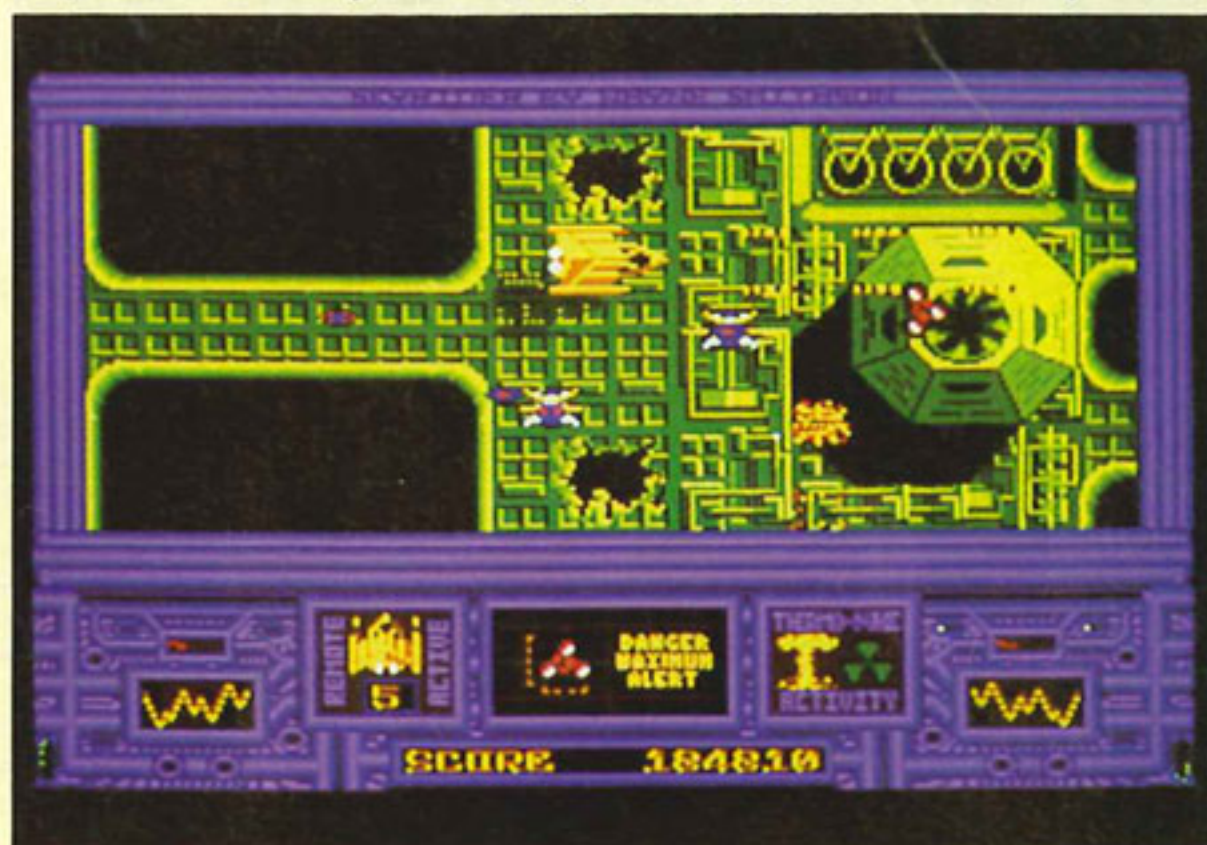
into an awesome fighting craft. The damage caused by a highly equipped ship proves to be exhilarating - quite noisy too!

The game's graphics are superbly drawn, giving that metallic look so often found in the original arcade game. The aliens are all well represented, and very detailed. The emplacements seem to pulsate as they emit their deadly laser balls and the beetle-like ground defence units scurry about in an anxious attempt to defeat the intrepid invader. At the end of each section the Xenites have stationed a sentinel and these huge forms seem intent on not letting anyone pass them. Only after much dodging about, and many direct hits on the enemy, will a sentinel allow you to make progress. The game's sonics are also of the highest standard, speech synthesis being included as General Xod appears and announces, "Sector one". The zappy and kaboom sounds enhance play further and give a wonderful feel to the game.

We at the ST Action office haven't managed to complete level two yet and, having played the game for so long, you'd have thought we may have become bored with it by now but Xenon has been well designed and programmed with the result that the player yearns for that "one last go". It is interesting to learn that this game has simultaneously been released in the arcades on Mastertronic's Arcadia label. I suspect Xenon to be a big hit in the seaside slot halls, but, before you deposit those precious silver coins, I suggest you buy the ST version first and get in a bit of practice. Although Xenon represents nothing staggeringly new, it is well implemented and extremely playable. For these reasons alone, Xenon will surely be the finest shoot'em-up to-date in your collection.



Skyrider - the only horizontally-scrolling game in this supertest...



Skyrider, Creation Software

'Skyrider' is the code name for a remote control fighter unit designed to patrol the earth orbit. Space probes have taken photographs of an alien spacecraft orbiting the earth. The extra-terrestrial beings, although not hostile, do not understand the fragile nature of the earth's atmosphere and their space cruiser has been emitting harmful amounts of radiation into it. All attempts to contact the alien beings have failed and the only option now open is to destroy the ship. The world's finest scientists have been working closely together - the result of their knowledge is the Skyrider system. The earth's radiation level is rising quickly; soon it will be too late. Skyrider is only a prototype; it is a long shot but it will work? It must!

The screen soon becomes very busy as several alien fighters join your own craft. If you remember, your mission is to clear all the deck targets. With this in mind and the alien fighters trying to sap your concentration, it is very easy not to notice the towers or force fields and end up slamming the precious remote into either of these

...but doesn't it bear a striking resemblance to Goldrunner?



obstacles. The control of the ship can be quite tricky, especially when a number of towers have to be negotiated. If you should wish to double back on a target, a swift tug of the joystick in the desired direction will flip the craft and start it on its new course.

The sound effects are all there too! I found myself turning down the sound and running for that soothing 'plink-plink fizz' remedy. The sound gets a little overworked, resulting in the poor player being mesmerized. The graphics of the game are rather intricate and your remote is somewhat dwarfed by the huge starship - some of the emplacements are larger than you! The colours are used to good effect although, with all the action going on, I found my eyes losing sight of the remote. The tone of the graphics are, perhaps, a little dark. Still, if your concentration level is high you should pull through.

To sum up Skyrider after only one sitting would probably not be fair. The game is one of those which you would play for an hour or so and later, when searching your software collection, find and play with renewed excitement. A good first release from Creation Software; may their next be even better.

Slap Fight, Imagine

'Manoeuvre your Slapfighter over the vertically-scrolling landscape of the planet Orac. As you progress further into the game the landscape becomes more and more hostile and enemy life forms group together to attack you in lethal waves. When you destroy certain aliens they sometimes yield a star - pick up the star (by flying over it) and this will highlight the icon at the bottom of the screen. To select the icon, press the space bar and this will award you with the indicated capability...

Well, have you heard something similar to that before? I certainly have, and Slap Fight represents nothing new for me. The game is a direct copy of Taito's original arcade classic; I never came across the game in the arcades, and if it was anything like this conversion I can quite understand why. Now before I go completely off the rails and run down Slap Fight too much, I must say that it isn't really that bad. There is much worse around - take Screaming Wings, for instance. But with all the talk of the game being a good arcade conversion, I fail to see what all the fuss is about. I have encountered far better games from far more humble backgrounds.

As the inlay says, the player must destroy alien craft and collect a number of stars. This process will allow a player to equip the Slapfighter with a collection of extra features. It is suggested that the ship's speed be enhanced first in order to make manoeuvres more swift. A player would be wise to learn the exact whereabouts of the enemy emplacements, as their aim is extremely good and they don't think twice about blasting attacking craft out of the sky.

The game's graphics are your everyday run-of-the-mill type, quite well drawn and, as I understand, an exact copy of the arcade game. I was impressed with the smoothness of the scrolling, it was certainly of a better quality than many of the others I have seen. The sound, too, is good, and I was particularly impressed with the soundtrack. Why then should a game with so many good points in its favour be so lacklustre. I found the game slow and tiresome, and being returned to the start of the program every time I was hit, began to take its toll, and I soon began to become a little weary.

Overall, the game is not as bad as it might seem. Although the idea is somewhat dated, Slap Fight will, no doubt, find its way into many collections. My advice is to play it first.

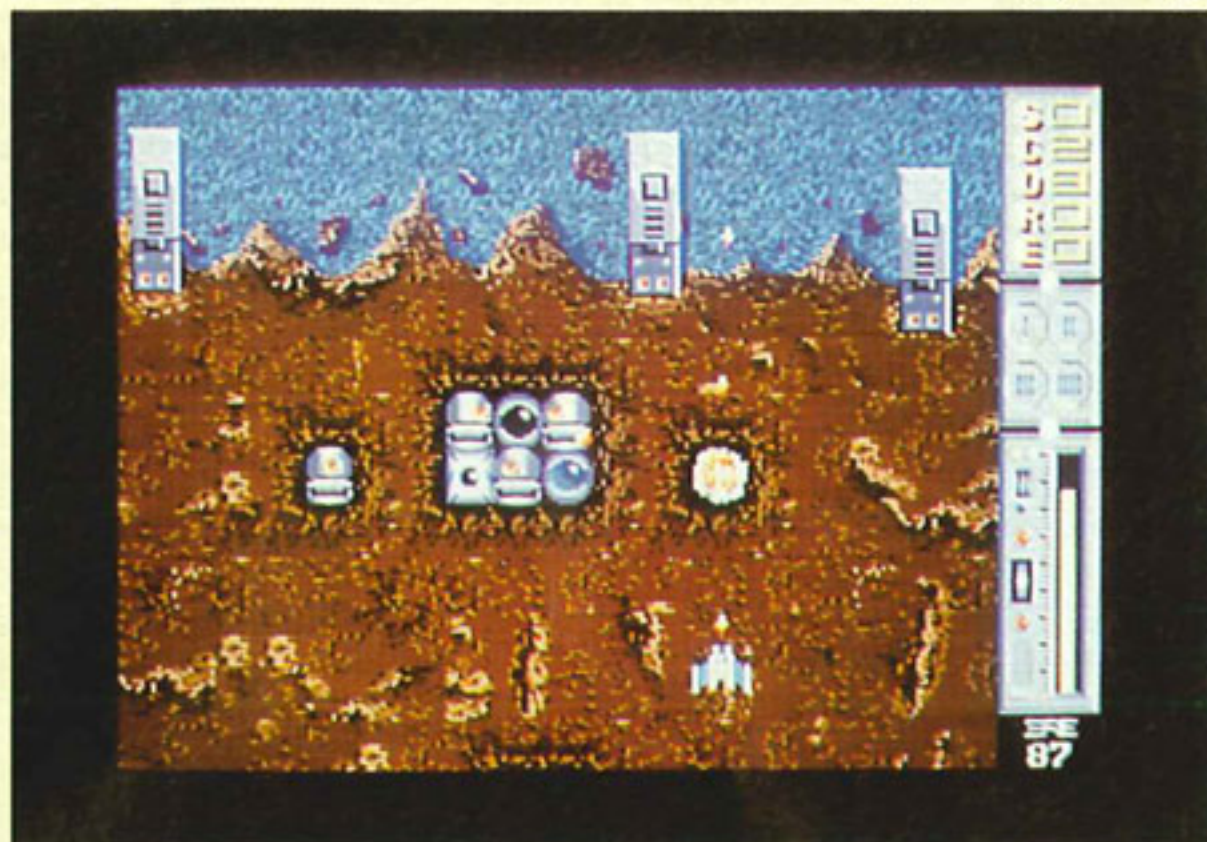


Despite some ground-based objects having shadows, your Slapfighter cannot collide with any of them



Enemy tanks often trundle along a system of maze-like roads

Trauma is one of the more graphically-pleasing games tested and the scenery is certainly varied

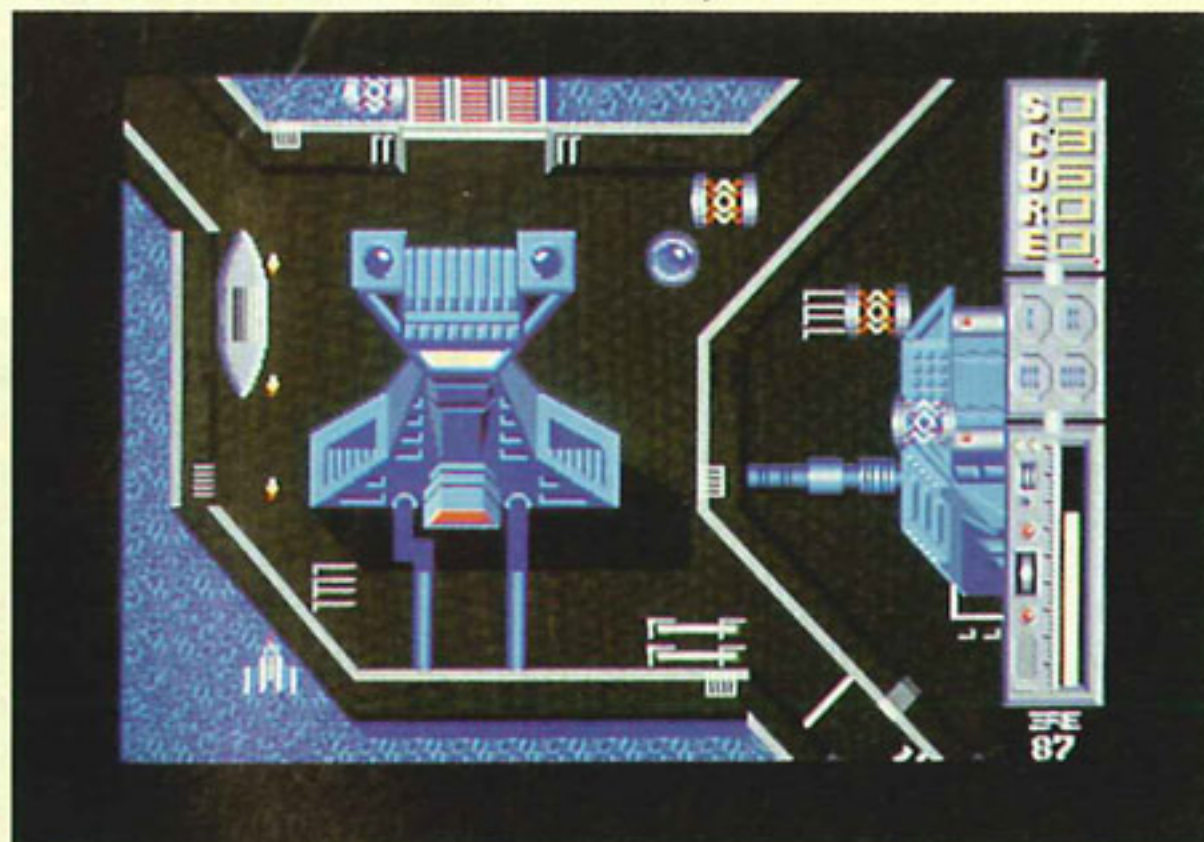


Trauma, ERE Informatique

As with many of the other vertically-scrolling shoot-'em-ups, Ere Informatique's Trauma sticks to a tried and tested storyline. This time the existence of the earth is threatened by a gang of warring space barbarians. These barbarians gain their powers from the force fields created by four energy globes. The globes are hidden at the end of separate territories, and each globe is housed within a huge hypership. All you have to do is infiltrate each territory, avoid the enemy defences and, finally, destroy the hypership, thus retrieving the globe.

To aid your cause you have been assigned a "deluxe" space fighter. However, be warned: you are only given one life in this game. Each time your craft is hit, its power reduces until, finally, you become nothing more than space debris. On the bonus side, power capsules sometimes drift across the screen. Collecting the capsules boosts your ship's power, and often gives you extra firepower.

The enemy come in three separate forms. The first, an airborne attack, consists of numerous pulsating rectangular



lifeforms. These aliens are only deadly when contact is made and the best strategy is to destroy those in your direct path - otherwise leave them well alone. The second defence unit takes the shape of a laser emplacement. These cannons are highly accurate and should be destroyed at the earliest opportunity. The final lifeform encountered is a swirling barrage of aliens. These aliens viciously spit laser bolts and are the main cause of many a pilot's demise. The only other enemies encountered are the hyperships. These huge metallic giants require several direct hits, but are not too difficult to defeat.

Overall, Trauma is a well-thought-out game. It is very easy to play and its difficulty level rises as the player progresses. The graphics are well drawn and are also very colourful. The game's sonics are of a good standard and the introductory music and speech are very well implemented. I really enjoyed this game, mainly due to the thought given to detail by the programmer - it is really simple to get into, and I would recommend it to anyone who is not the world's greatest zapper.



A perfect conversion of a very unspectacular arcade game



Despite its spacey theme, most of the landscape is very reminiscent of Planet Earth

Xevious, US Gold

As to the exact storyline behind US Gold's Xevious, I am a little unsure. You are put in the pilot seat of a space fighter and your task is to fly across changing terrain, locate the mothership, and let her have it. Hmm, it all sounds somewhat dated, and believe me, it is.

Your armour-clad space ship has but just one defence system - the old faithful laser cannon. The action takes place over a number of different terrains, the first being some type of forest; how nice to see some greenery in space. Later, should you survive that long, beaches and long stretches of water are encountered until eventually you manage to reach the Xevious nerve centre. The only enemy resistance comes in the form of what Jason Spiller once described as flying corn plasters; such wry humour. These flying doughnuts come in two forms; both yield their fair share of fire but the ones encountered on later sections are nigh on indestructible, so dodging becomes the name of the game. Aiding and abetting their airborne counterparts are many ground bases, some circular, some square. These sit quite calmly, spitting the occasional laser produce. As with most games of this genre, if it's there, blast it. Xevious's action becomes very repetitive: there are no extras to collect; no new, more deadly alien forms, and no excitement.

The sonics are almost as dull as the game, the usual tinkley soundtrack being repeated monotonously in the background. The spot effects are of a poor standard - the customary kaboom sounds are all I noticed. The game's graphics are exactly the same as in the arcade version; obviously little memory was spare after storing all the characters - they must repeat themselves every two minutes! I must remind potential buyers with money to burn, that the game will not run on machines with upgraded chips. Please, therefore, check with your local dealer as to your machine's compatibility.

Xevious is living proof that the original arcade conversions are not always wonderful. I could best describe Xevious as dull and bland; the action is repetitive and the gameplay slow. If you want a first rate example of a much-dated shoot-'em-up, Xevious is for you. Don't forget the generous offer of the free poster and badge, it makes the game almost worthwhile!

Hades Nebula, Nexus

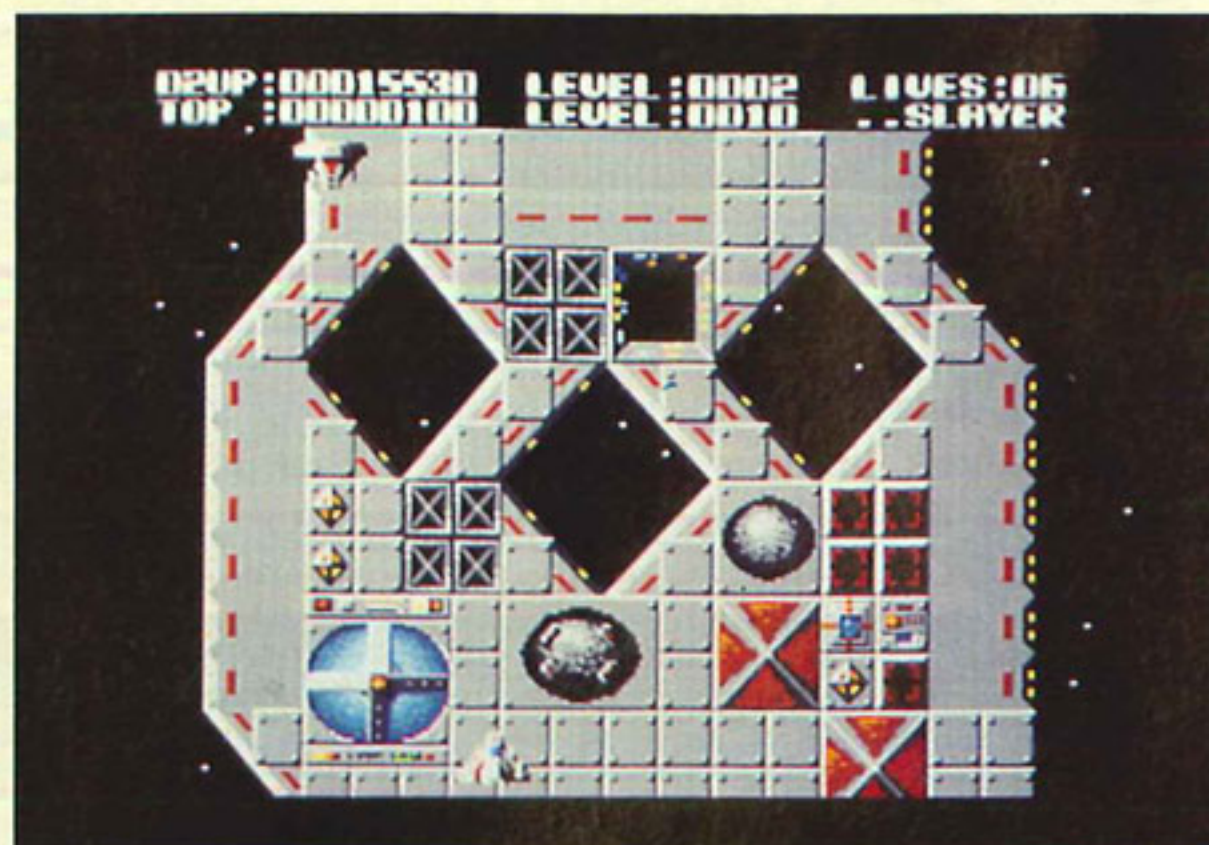
Before I go any further, I must point out that due to the bankruptcy of Nexus Software, Hades Nebula might be somewhat difficult to find in your local software shop. The game's storyline again treads an already well-worn path. Apparently the world's energy supplies are near exhaustion point, therefore the WEC (World Energy Committee) have formulated a plan to get round the impending problem. The plan involves ten gigantic colony ships and, using a Meason Accelerator, the WEC plan to send the ships to the farthest reaches of the galaxy where they hope to find precious energy in abundance. The idea seems plausible, but the evil Emperor Hades has different thoughts. From his fortress, hidden on the planet of Sodini, the Emperor dispatches his entire battle fleet to intercept the Earth's ships, enslave their crews, and sell the ships for scrap. Only Colony 7, due to computer error, escapes the fiendish plot. Arriving ahead of time, the luckless colony stumbles upon the old system of Orion Nebula, only to find that it has been made into a mining settlement, and renamed by the Emperor himself. The crew of Colony 7, and you in particular, have the unenviable task of destroying the Hades Nebula, thus rendering the Empire powerless and freeing the way for the Earth's fleet.

According to the game's inlay card the objective is to obtain a high score - pretty obvious really! The game starts with your ship hovering above the planet's desert-like surface. Scattered on the planet are numerous strangely shaped buildings, various surface

defence units and the odd fuel and laser replenishment pod. The "blast everything" method is recommended and level one, once the safe route has been discovered, poses little threat. The second level takes place in the depths of space, whilst the Emperor Hades is finally encountered in level three. Destroy the Emperor and his battleship, and the earth will be saved, fail and

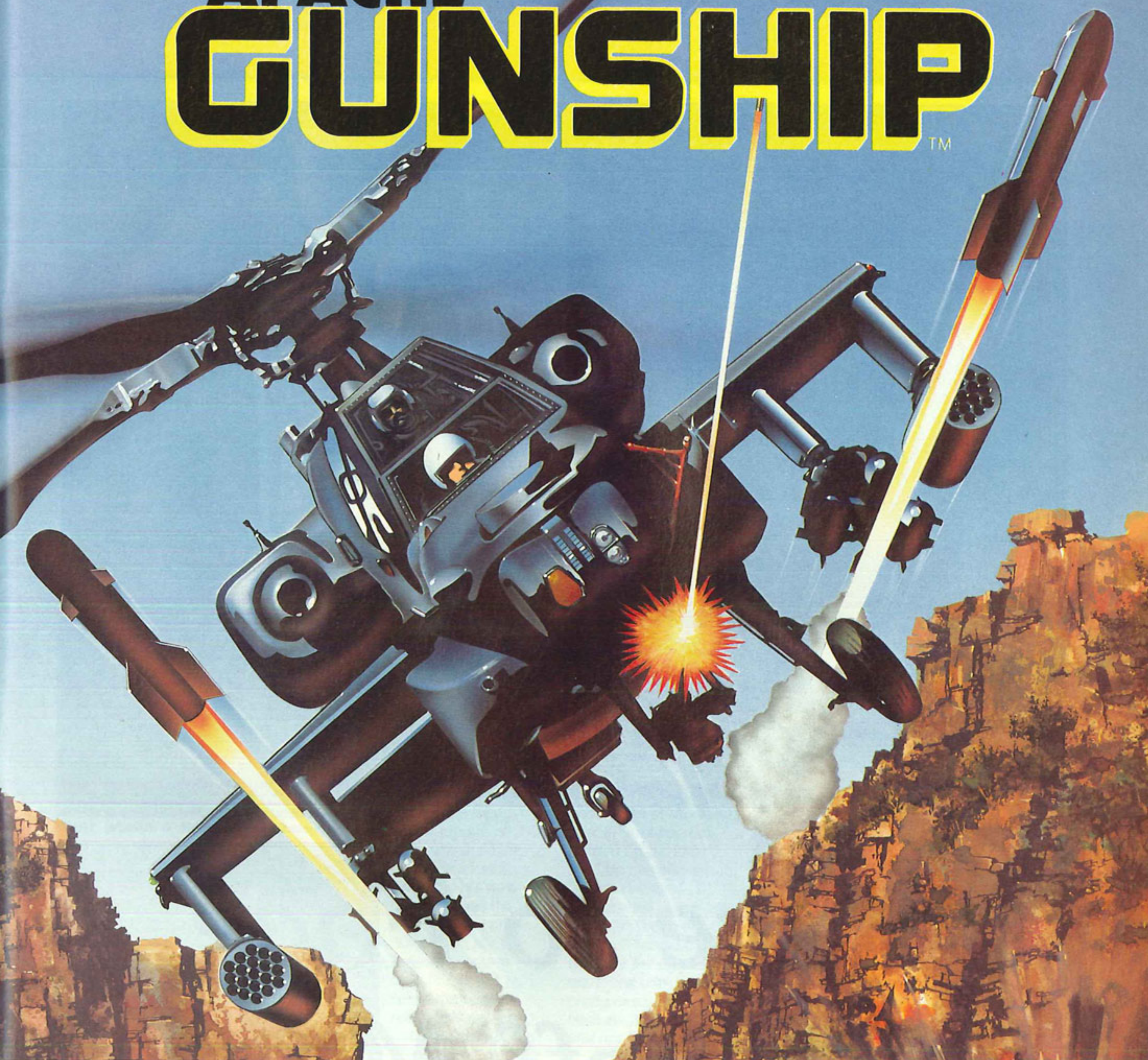
I must confess that Hades Nebula had me stumped; barely managing to complete the first stage I began to loathe the game. It was not until Hugh showed me the error of my ways that I started to see the beauty of the game. The graphics are extremely well drawn, not that you have much time to study them. The secret of the game is to collect the numerous extra features; these include; speed (twice), shields (twice), lasers, side-weapons and diagonal fire. The soundtrack plays continuously as the game is being played and by pressing a single key the contestant can introduce sound effects - good ones at that!

Hades Nebula is a good game. It does, however, have two main faults. For reasons unknown to me, the game seems fit to crash after the player reaches the third level. Anyone managing to reach subsequent levels must consider themselves lucky. The second fault has been diagnosed by myself and it is not really a technical slip-up. I feel that the game is much too difficult in its early stages - players have little chance to progress and I fear many players will eventually give up. If only the programmers had thought out the gameplay a little more carefully. But overall, Hades Nebula is a fine game featuring some outstanding graphics and sonics. If the crash problem had been rectified, it would have been a sure-fire winner.

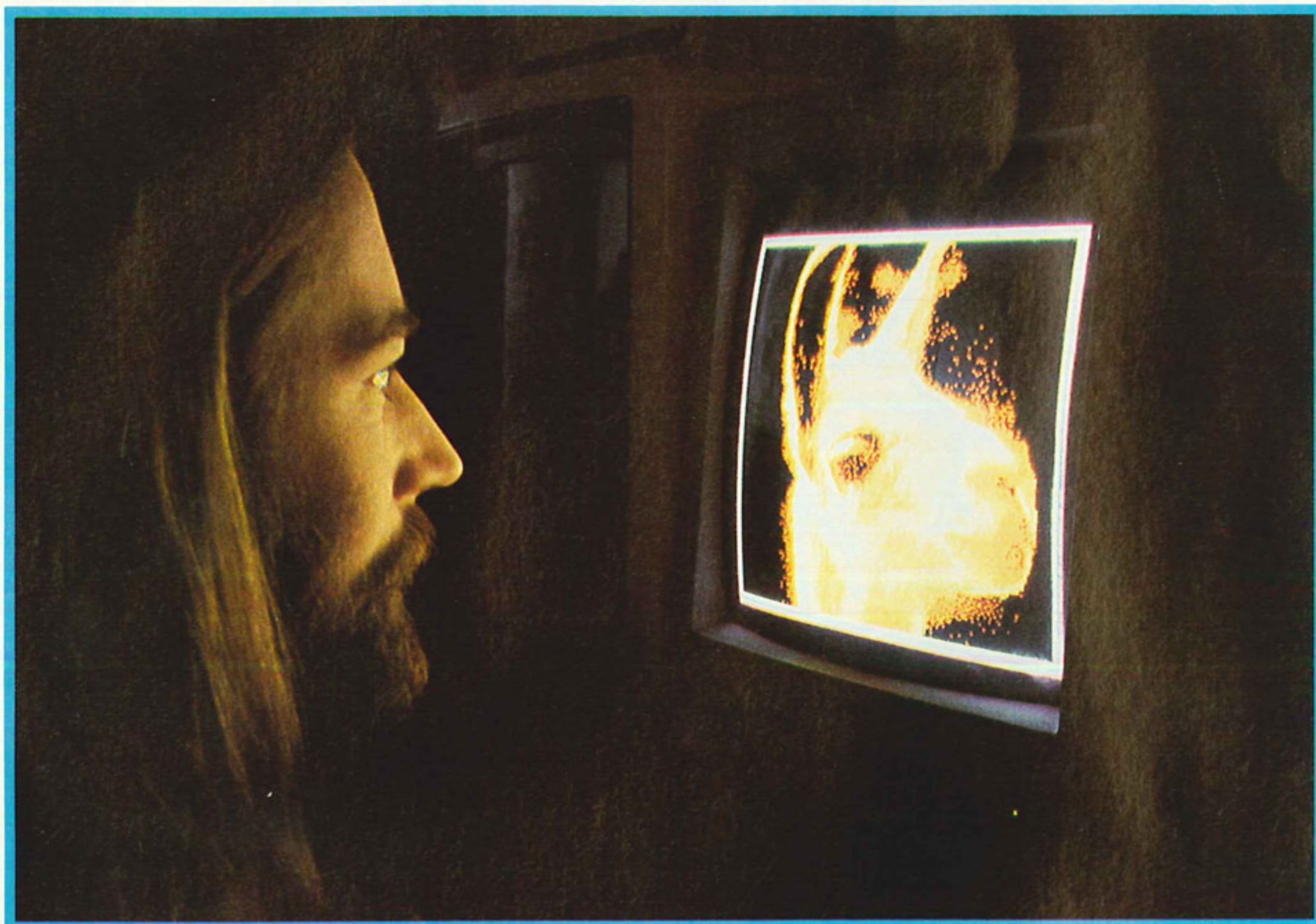


	Graphics	Sound	Addictivness	Overall
Goldrunner	64%	54%	45%	58%
Hades Nebula	83%	70%	72%	78%
Jupiter Probe	54%	52%	52%	53%
Plutos	60%	20%	63%	57%
Screaming Wings	32%	18%	24%	25%
Skyrider	52%	63%	45%	49%
Slap Fight	57%	48%	54%	61%
Trauma	58%	50%	47%	56%
Xenon	88%	68%	84%	85%
Xevious	32%	23%	37%	36%
	House	Price	Difficulty	Telephone
Goldrunner	Microdeal	£24.95	Average-Hard	0726 68020
Hades Nebula	Nexus	£19.95	Hard	Unknown
Jupiter Probe	Microdeal	£14.95	Easy-Average	0726 68020
Plutos	Tynesoft	£14.95	Average	091 414 4611
Screaming Wings	Red Rat	£14.95	Average	Unknown
Skyrider	Creation	£14.95	Easy-Average	Unknown
Slap Fight	Ocean	£19.95	Average-Hard	061 832 6633
Trauma	ERE	£19.95	Easy	01 364 0123
Xenon	Melbourne 16	£19.99	Average-Hard	01 377 8411
Xevious	US Gold	£24.95	Easy	021 356 3388

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Face to Face with Jeff Minter

Written by David Stewart





Llamasoft have been one of the most well-known producers of entertainment software throughout the 8-bit era, mainly for Commodore's Vic-20 and the infamous '64. Llamasoft was, and is, one man, Jeff Minter.

While the booming video-game industry was being tamed by the big corporations and the pin-striped hype-makers, Llamasoft, founded in 1982, continued to produce the most weird and wonderful games, totally original and fashioned by the unique imagination of Jeff Minter. No one else was creating what most people considered to be 'pretty whacky stuff'. These games were almost cult, and each one was stamped with an instantly recognisable mark of Minterism.

Jeff has chosen the ST as the machine he prefers to work with. His first product, the Colourspace light synthesiser, was a big hit. Trip-a-Tron (Colourspace 2) will materialise shortly, and it's amazing.

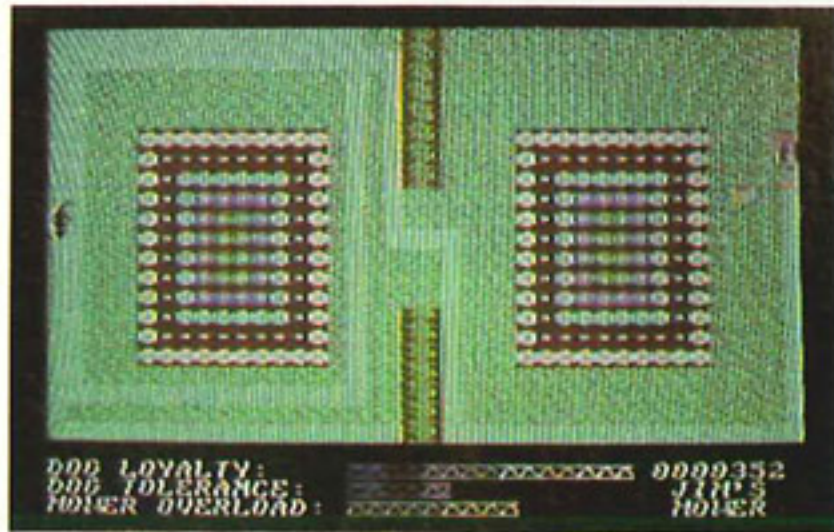
How it all started

Going back to the early days, Jeff's first computer was, yes, you've guessed: "...a Sinclair ZX80, and my second computer, believe it or not, was a ZX81 expanded to 16K!"

The first Llamasoft game was Defenda for the VIC-20, Jeff recalls, "This was a shameless rip-off of the arcade game Defender. At that stage I hadn't got into any original stuff, although my next game was Trax which was moving away from the arcade look-



Matrix (above) & Hover Bover (below)



alikes. Gridrunner followed. This was an arcade theme which had certain elements stripped out with some of my own ideas added, and it did really well." The Commodore 64 was recognised for having the best sound chip of all, but Jeff, who produces all of the sound effects in his own games, gives the VIC-20 some credit. "Once you got to know the sound chip in the VIC, you could make some really odd noises with it. The zapping effects were great - it

was capable of producing some really hard-edged, Williams-type arcade sound effects." The original titles, such as, Gridrunner, Laser Zone and Matrix were pioneering blast-everything games. Hover Bover took a very down-to-earth subject, mowing the lawn, and turned it into a crazy but successful video game. The most unusual Llamasoft games were yet to follow: Attack of the Mutant Camels, Revenge of the Mutant Camels, then Mama Llama, Ancipital and many more. Most of these titles had a distinctive animal theme featuring mainly llamas, goats, sheep and camels; if there is life after death, Jeff Minter will probably become one of these.

The Video-Game Market

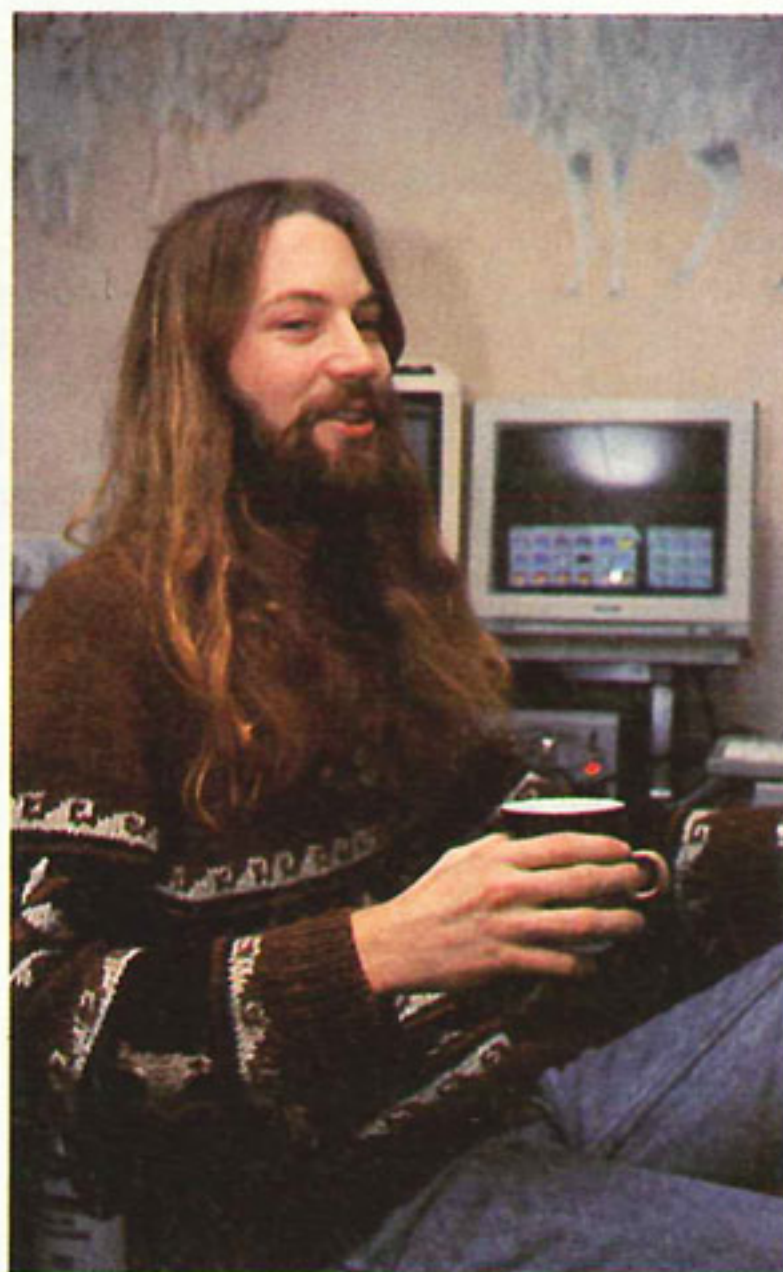
Llamasoft has not released a video game for some time now; Jeff puts this down to changing attitudes: "I've been thoroughly naffed off with the games field. All we've had recently is the big companies pumping out trashy licensed games." Minter's dislike of commercially-processed video games is quite clear and his arguments are sound: "I don't have to buy ideas from anyone else. I'm a designer as well as a programmer. I prefer to work on ideas which appeal to me. It's important to put some of your own personality into your games. The guys who produce the licensed games have to do little in the way of imaginative thinking. They have to satisfy the licence owner and, therefore, have no chance to express themselves. One of the sad things about the computer industry at the moment is that programmers don't try to make a name for themselves. If you load up one of my games and see a big Camel or whatever, you know immediately who has created it - I've always tried to put a bit of myself into my games. My work may not be as polished as some of the more commercial stuff, but they do have a unique and individual style."

Minter feels that it is important to give software an identity which has been created by the programmer.

"When you load up a video game these days, you can't tell who has written it or whether or not it is going to be any good. Most of this kind of stuff is as good as written by a committee." He has also identified similarities between the video game and record industries. "In the games scene these days the software companies, who are the equivalent of the record labels, are pushed and marketed with relentless image-moulding hype; the situation is pretty crazy, after all, you wouldn't buy a Pink Floyd record just because it was released on EMI - I'm just trying to be Pink Floyd and not EMI!"

Vertical scrolling shoot'em-ups are popping up like weeds at the moment and Jeff finds most of them lacking in originality. "We've got vertical scrolling shoot'em-ups coming out of our ears now. Take Xenon for example, a beautiful piece of work, but why doesn't the programmer responsible apply his obviously substantial talents to creating something different and more original. It makes little sense for so many vertically scrolling games to appear on the ST - it's not very hot on scrolling because there's no special hardware facility. This leaves plenty of scope to use effects which do not involve scrolling."

Llamasoft expect to cut through the hype when their first video game appears for the ST, Jeff explains: "There is a big





games project in the pipeline. I still like my blasting themes, so this should be a pretty unique and exciting game for the ST." There is no doubt that this game will be jam-packed full of Minterisms - something to look forward to at the end of the year.

The Man Himself

You couldn't chat to a unique character like Jeff Minter without finding out a bit more about him and the way he works.



Jeff develops his ST software using a Mega ST4 with a 20Mb SH204 hard disk which he admits is full up and needs replacing with something bigger. Most of the programming is done in assembler using HiSoft's Devpac

which he describes as: "The most convenient and comfortable assembler to use. Having the assembler and editor combined is the ideal situation." Even with the Trip-a-Tron source code topping 20,000 lines long, Jeff has not been tempted to use the Tempus text editor. "I don't like to prat around moving between different programs for editing and assembling."

When asked what he would change about the ST if he had been involved in designing it, Jeff had no hesitation: "I would like an enhanced graphics mode with more colours, hardware-assisted scrolling and, Jeez.. a decent sound chip for crying out loud! What a big oversight it was to make a machine as nice as the ST and to give it a poxy AY sound chip." Sounds like Jeff ought to be hacking away with an Amiga. Would this not be an ideal outlet for his creative talents? "Unfortunately, the Amiga is not a very approachable machine. I've not yet found a working environment I feel comfortable with on that machine. Because the ST is a bit simpler, I get on well with it and I know my way around - it's like 'Home' to me now. With the Amiga you have so many things trying to grab hold of the operating system, and so many custom chips trying to interrupt you, it gets a bit overwhelming. The Amiga is an interesting machine, although I would prefer something a bit more clean and open like the ST, but with just a couple of chips to assist with graphical work. There's an overkill of hardware assistance on the Amiga; it can get to the stage where people are using the hardware too much and they're not actually doing anything clever or inventive."

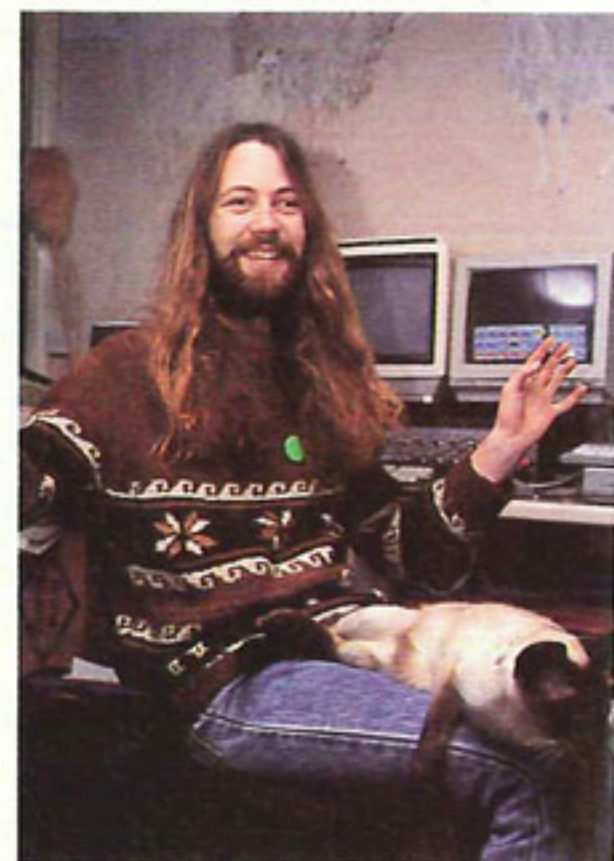


We have a firm ST fanatic here, so what other software does he use with the machine? At this point Jeff produces a copy (sorry, original) of Star Wars, and says with a wry grin on his face: "I use this one quite a bit!". Anything else? "I use NEOchrome for most of my graphical work. It may not be the most sophisticated

paint program, but I feel comfortable with it. I've got a big thing about software being 'comfortable'. NEO has got the best user interface; I like having the magnified hot-spot in view all the time."

Programming is thirsty work, so what's Jeff's favourite drink? "Inka Kola! You can only get it in Peru; it's yellow (this is nothing to do with llamas), and it tastes great." If he wasn't programming computers, what would he be doing now? "Errrm, I might be writing science fiction, or even herding llamas in Peru! I think I'd have to be doing something creative really." What is this fascination with llamas? "I was heavily into camels when I was young. Goats, sheep, llamas... I just love animals." Do you own a llama? "Not yet."

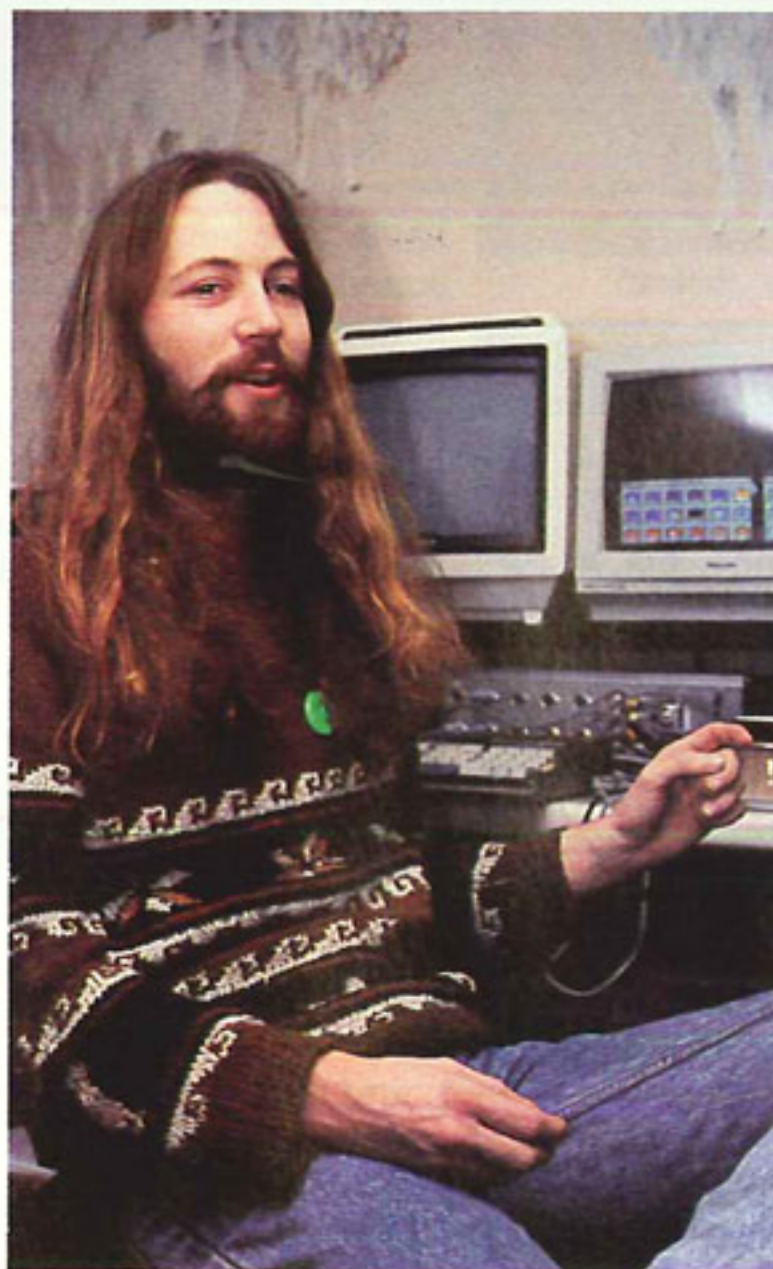
Back up to the northern hemisphere again. Is there anything this man of many opinions particularly dislikes? "Yeh, the way the computer-game industry thinks and works at the moment; where these big companies try and make a lot of money without really promoting the individual artist. I don't like the attitude of a lot of the programmers who are willing to sit there and do conversions but not get up and write anything creative. The computer is the most amazing creative tool, and most of these people are using it in a non-creative manner. The big companies never try anything adventurous. Unless they're sure they're going to make lots of money, an innovative game will not be created or released - people are reluctant to experiment."



Colourspace

The ST version of Colourspace was quite a unique piece of software, a development of the 8-bit Psychedelia but certainly the most radical interpretation of the light synth theme.

For those of you who are not yet familiar with this new breed of entertainment software, here's a brief explanation of what it's all about. The light synthesiser is played in a similar way to a musical synth, but light is produced instead of sound. The light appears in the form of multi-coloured traces of pixels which flow



around the screen under mouse control. Many different effects can be applied to these traces, giving a large number of ways in which



to create Colourspace 'pieces' or performances. The best way to enjoy Colourspace is to perform to a favourite piece of music - Colourspace, therefore, allows you to visually interpret the music, blending sound and vision to give a complete sensation of audio-visual enjoyment. It may sound odd, but this can be an incredibly soothing, satisfying or exhilarating experience, particularly if you enjoy music and really 'get into it'.

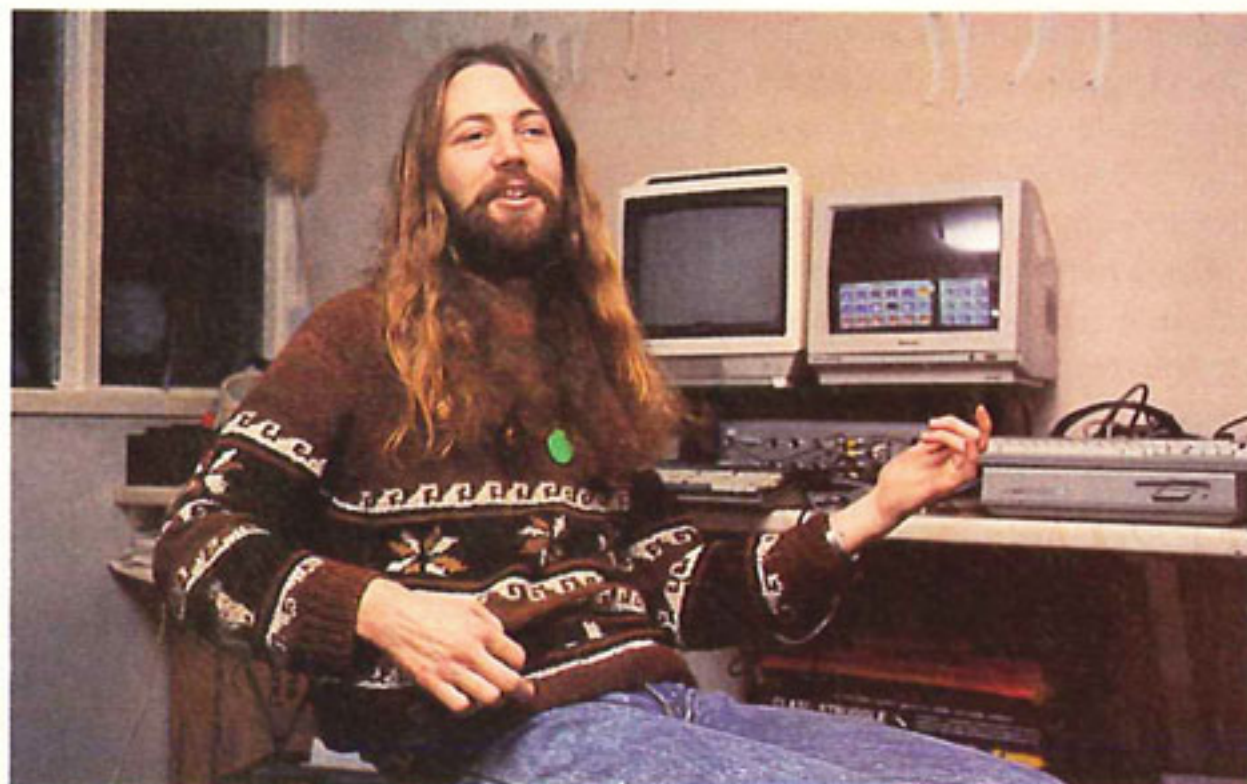
The Psychedelia/Colourspace phenomenon came about before home micros existed, Jeff recalls: "I first got the idea for this sort of thing when I was about fourteen. I put it down to the fact that I used to listen to a lot of Pink Floyd. The first album I ever really got into was *Dark Side of the Moon* (notoriously inspirational); this had a big impact. I used to sit in school and have daydreams about being in a rock band. I had never seen a computer before, but there used to be visions of me doing things with large screens and coloured lights; what I wanted was a light synthesiser."

"Such a device never came on to the market, but after a few years in the video-game field I realised that I could use these computers to create my own light synth. This is how Psychedelia and Colourspace came into being."

Colourspace is reputed to be Jeff's first attempt at 68000 machine code, he admits, "Yeh, this was my first bash at 68000 and Trip-a-Tron is my second. I'm only an average programmer really." How was Colourspace received by the buying public and did they understand what it was all about? "Considering how many ST's there were in the UK, it did very well indeed. At the 1987 PCW show I even had people begging for very early prototypes of Trip-a-Tron. Anyone can use a light synth; I've had 5 or 6-year-old kids playing Trip-a-Tron, they love it and just can't put it down because everything they do looks amazing. It's like a magic electronic colouring book to them."

Jeff has delivered some great Colourspace performances at various computer shows. Marillion's Chelsea Monday and Dire Straits' Brothers in Arms have worked particularly well. So, does the most experienced Colourspace performer have any favourite music for Colourspace? "Pink Floyd's pretty good for Colourspace, or anything else for that matter. I would also recommend Tangerine Dream for beginners, it's progressive, floaty music which is ideal for learning."

The ST's mouse makes an excellent Colourspace controller, but Jeff has given some thought to hooking up other input devices to the program. "I would like to build some custom devices for Colourspace; I've got quite a few ideas, but one of the most interesting must be the guitar-type controller. It has touch-sensitive and graphic tablet-like areas instead of strings. This device would be played in a familiar way, only it will govern light instead of sound."



The Colourspace project is a major Minter occupation at the moment. "The Trip-a-Tron idea will never be totally finished, I'll be adding new bits and enhancing it for a long time to come." Jeff believes strongly in what he is doing. "I think it's a good thing. I can see in about ten years time, light synthesisers being used commonly. People are getting more interested in visual experiences - just look at the rising popularity of music videos. People like something visual to go with what they are listening to, but most of the current music videos are quite meaningless. Colourspace is 'close' to the music, it lets you visually interpret the music and this makes a more valid audio-visual experience."

Trip-a-Tron (Colourspace 2)

If you're already a Colourspace addict, then Trip-a-Tron (Colourspace 2) will absolutely blow your mind. In addition to the usual Colourspace features, it has some awesome new modes which are capable of generating truly stunning effects.

For a detailed review of this fantastic program, you'll have to wait until, hopefully, next month's issue of ST Action. But until then, here's a sneak preview of what Minter's latest masterpiece has to offer.

One of the most distinctive improvements is the addition of a friendly control panel. Jeff admits:

"The user interface in Colourspace 1 is cr..." Many of the Trip-a-Tron functions are accessible via the retracting control panel, and an excellent file selector has been programmed to replace the ridiculous keyboard sequences of 'Space 1'.

There are more symmetry modes, including one which allows the lightstream to be mapped on to an invisible template of any shape. There's a resize option which takes the lightstreams and scales them down to fit into multiple miniature Colourspace screens within the main screen. A waveform editor allows a secondary lightstream cursor to follow the path of a set wave





pattern, working as a kind of slave background lightstream. By adjusting the amplitude and modulation of the waveform, it is possible to generate a mass of different effects.

The starting point of the basic Colourspace effect is the lightstream cursor (lightform). This can be modified with a pattern editor which has been vastly improved in Trip-a-Tron. It is even possible to manipulate the lightform in real-time, rotating it during a performance. The potential for this is mind-boggling.



Every aspect of Colourspace 1 has been radically improved. There is even a starfield editor which allows you to control almost every conceivable factor which determines how a starfield is generated.

Programming Trip-a-Tron

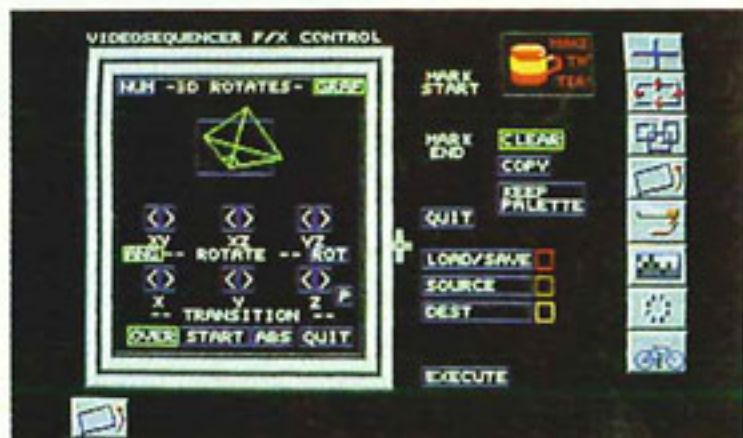
For the more adventurous Colourspacemen, there is a programming language built in to Trip-a-Tron. It's called KML (Key Macro Language, but if you say 'KML' quickly you might notice the word 'camel' creeping in!) and it's a cross between assembler and something else - possibly basic. It's quite simple to use and has all of the essential looping and conditional functions of a programming language.

KML is designed as a dedicated Colourspace control language. It gives you access to all of the variables and modes which are involved in Colourspace, but most fascinating of all, it's a parallel language. It is possible to run up to 8 KML programs at the same time while operating Colourspace too. It even offers the facility to communicate with other STs or musical devices using the Midi ports.

Image manipulation

Impressed so far? Well, we're only just starting to get into the system. Trip-a-Tron is a double-barrelled program; as well as the advanced Colourspace features, there's an image manipulator and video sequencer built in. Phew!

In essence, this facility allows you to take Colour pictures, painted or digitized, and process them in a wide



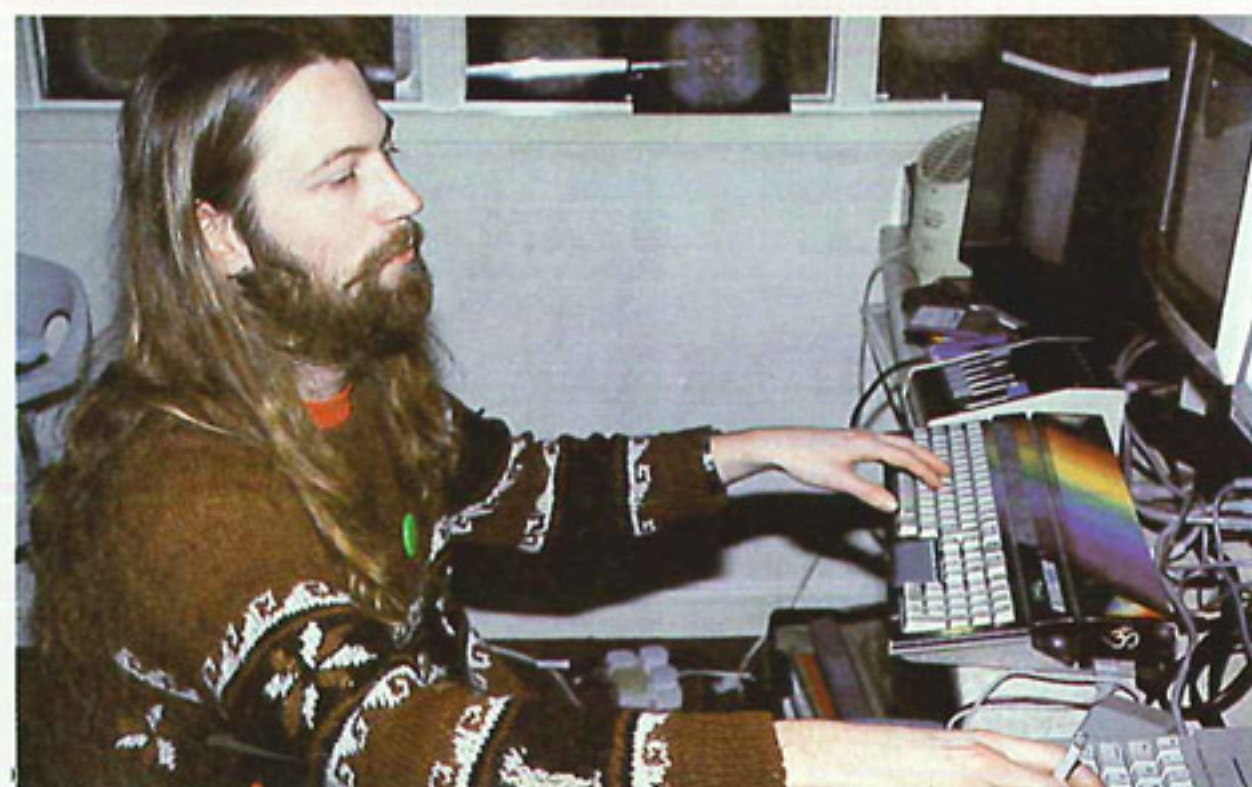
range of different ways in order to produce full-frame animations, many of which are similar to effects you might see on television. It is possible to take a colour image and make it rotate around two axes, spinning off into the distance. This feature does take up a lot of memory - you'll need at least a megabyte to generate a half-decent animated sequence. The image cruncher could be used just to process single frames for Colourspace backdrops, or just for other non-Trip-a-Tron uses.

Is there no end to what this program can do? Just before I tie up this Trip-a-preview, I must mention the built-in 8-track recorder. It allows Colourspace 'events' to be synchronised with rhythms for automatic triggering during a performance.

The possibilities for this program are endless. Jeff is currently working on a video sequence which is being generated especially to go with some synth/rock music which has been written. He hopes to use up to 5 Mega STs



each with a 192 megabyte hard drive, communicating over a Midi link. The end result will feature some pretty way-out Trip-a-Tron effects, and judging by the sample I saw, it should be a fantastic



audio-visual extravaganza. A demo video of this, complete with music, will be available soon.

The End

It sounds really sophisticated - and it is. You can use as much of this power as you like, but if you just want to dive in and play Colourspace, then you'll find it much easier and more approachable than the old version.

Trip-a-Tron is a truly amazing piece of software. If you like Colourspace 1, you'll absolutely freak out over this - it's incredible.





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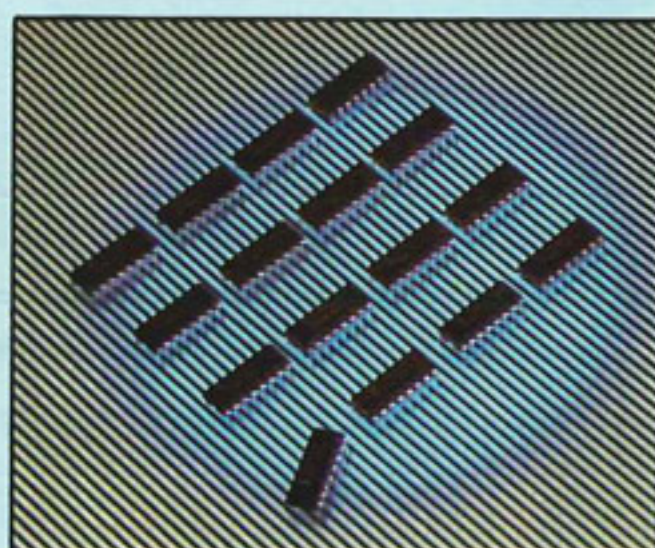
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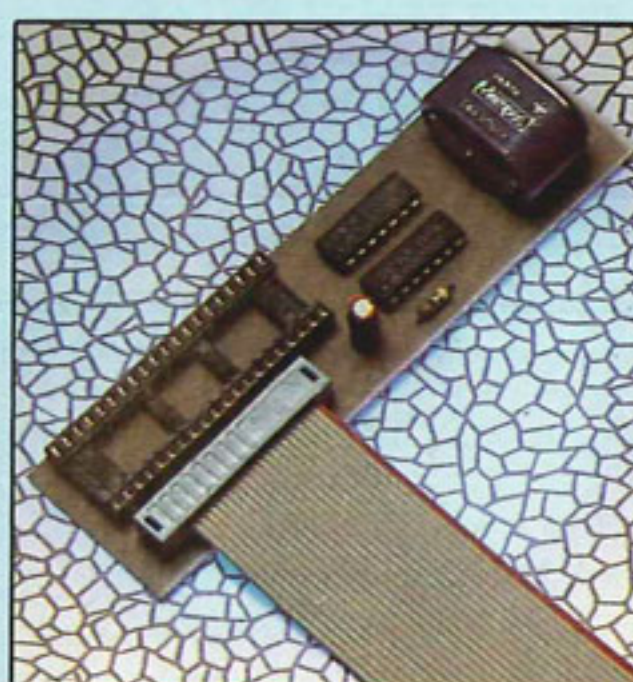
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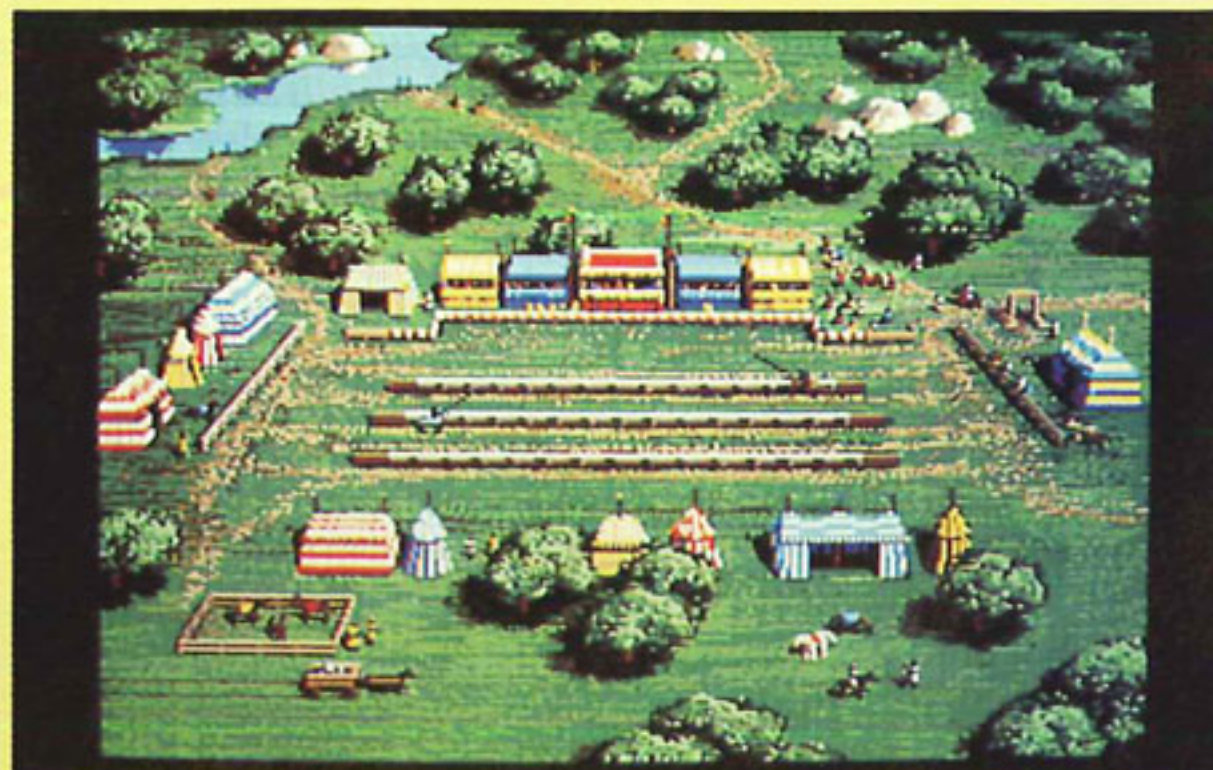
Hello, and welcome to ST Action's amazing tips section. I hope you are enjoying the mag and agree that it makes a change from all the other 'general' ST magazines which are available at the moment. You can contribute to this part of the magazine, with your tips, maps and pokes, and win some software of your choice for your troubles - but more of that later.

Off we go... Compiled by Steve Merrett

Defender of the Crown - Mirrorsoft

Here are a few tips for this graphically impressive strategy game:

- Geoffrey Longsword is the best character as his swordplay is second to none and this is an important factor in the game.
- I personally only buy soldiers for my campaign army but knights are a lot better for attacking.
- Always keep a small army at your home castle, because if you lose your castle then you lose the game.
- Raiding castles is especially handy at the start of a game, for it is a useful way to build up capital for soldiers.
- When capturing other people's home castles, try to capture those close to home then the land you win will be in close proximity.
- Always return home to replenish your army between each turn.
- Never attack land that has just changed hands, as the enemy's campaign army will still be there. When you are attacked, wait to see how many men there are before deciding on your actions; don't hesitate to run if you start losing.
- Always rescue the lady, if only to see the tasteful love scene!
- Never attack a castle unless you are sure you have superior manpower, then choose 'fierce attack'.
- Spies are expensive but are generally worth the money, especially before attacking a castle.



Impact - Audiogenic

Anyone having problems with this impressive 'Arkanoid' clone will be very grateful to a certain Mr. Jonathan Capener, of Newcastle Under Lyme, who has kindly sent in the codes to the first 71 screens.

Level 11 - 'GOLD'
Level 31 - 'WALL'
Level 51 - 'HEAD'
Level 71 - 'ROAD'

Level 21 - 'FISH'
Level 41 - 'PLUS'
Level 61 - 'FORK'
and, of course, 'USER'

Hades Nebula - Nexus

This cheat is getting a bit long in the tooth now, so if I print it, hopefully I will never see it again!

Just enter MONITOR. (including the fullstop) on the high score table.

Barbarian - Psygnosis

For immortality simply press, on the main number keys, 0 then 4 followed by the left-hand minus sign then 0, then 8 and once again the minus sign. Then press 5 then 9 and, voila! Nothing can harm you.

PRIZES, PRIZES, PRIZES

Please send any tips, pokes and maps you may have, to me at this address below and I will print the best and £20 worth of games software will go to any tips that are worthy of such a splendiferous prize! So get hacking and mapping and I will see you next month.

Steve Merrett, Playing Tips (STA), 10 Theatre Lane,
Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 1SR

Arkanoid - Imagine

Another poke that keeps rearing its familiar head! Whilst the game is booting, press Caps Lock and type DEATH-STAR. Then when the game is running, press 'S' to go through the screens to see which one you wish to start on.



Wizball - Ocean

In this multi-colour paint'em-up, the various nasties when shot, release a coloured droplet. These droplets have different properties to either help or hinder:

White droplet - Extra life.

Black droplet - Screen goes dark until colour completed or until you lose a life.

Purple droplet - Make your catelite go berserk and eventually kills it.

Grey droplet - Temporary immunity for your catelite.

Blue droplet - Causes a 'Filth raid' in which blue space ships appear and fly at you intent on your demise.

I personally have found the best order in which to complete the levels is as follows: First complete the first three levels in reverse, this will transport you onto level four. Go straight to level six and, once again, work backwards; you will now be transported to level seven. Complete this and, in turn, level eight, to complete the game and witness the anti-climatic ending.

THE TOTALLY-MEGA INFINITE LIVES POKES SECTION

Thanks very much to MARK LAWRENCE from Basil-don, Essex for the following pokes. The routines were written to run in Atari Basic, the Basic supplied with the machine. However, Atari have now started including a new Basic which isn't entirely compatible with the old version.

The main difference as far as these routines are concerned, is that the DEF SEG statement is not supported, which means that if you have the new version of Basic, you should leave out the line with this statement in it (line 80 in all routines, where it is used).

To determine if you have the new Basic or not, load it by double clicking on the Basic.prg file, then enter

the desk menu and click on About ST Basic. If you have the latest version it will give a 1987 copyright message, whereas the old version gave a 1985 copyright message.

To use each of the routines provided, follow the instructions included in the REM statements. One final point, the Backlash and Black Lamp routines didn't work immediately after I had typed them in. I had to reset the machine, load the Basic, load the routine and run it again. If you have any trouble with the routines not working first time switch the machine off and try again.




```

10 rem *****
20 rem Infinite lives for Predator on the Atari St. Type in this program and save to disk. To use,
40 rem insert predator disk 1 and RUN this program predator should load as usual with infinite lives
60 rem *****
100 bload "a:helil.dat",&h64a00
110 poke &h6904e,&h4a79:poke &h698ce,&h4a79:poke &h6ba76,&h4a79
120 poke &h6e094,&h4a79:cheat = &h64a00:call cheat

```

```

10 rem This routine gives infinite energy and infinite time in ritual combat for RANARAMA on the Atari St.
30 rem Enter this program,insert Ranarama disk and run. To play game with cheats double click on RLOAD.PRG
50 rem ** NOTE ** Must boot from another disk or normal version will be loaded and run.
70 rem *****
80 def seg=0
90 for n=&h7fd00 to &h7fd75 step 2
100 read a:poke n,a
110 next n
120 bsave "rload.prg",&h7fd00,127
130 data &h601a,&h0000,&h0058,&h0000,&h0000,&h0000,&h0000,&h0000
140 data &h0000,&h0000,&h0000,&h0000,&h0000,&hffff,&h2a6f,&h0004
150 data &h2e4d,&h206d,&h000c,&h41e8,&h0200,&hdfc8,&h2f08,&h2f0d
160 data &h2f3c,&h004a,&h0000,&h4e41,&h487a,&h0039,&h487a,&h0035
170 data &h487a,&h0020,&h2f3c,&h004b,&h0003,&h4e41,&h2040,&h317c
180 data &hfff8,&h07e8,&h4228,&h59df,&h317c,&h0002,&h01ac,&h4ee8
190 data &h0100,&h6175,&h746f,&h5c72,&h616e,&h6172,&h616d,&h612e
200 data &h7072,&h6700,&h0000

```

```

10 rem *****
20 rem Infinite lives for Backlash on the Atari St. Type in and save this program,then insert
40 rem Backlash disk and RUN.Program should load and run as usual but with infinite lives.
60 rem *****
80 def seg=0
90 for n=&h6a000 to &h6a045 step 2
100 read a:poke n,a
110 next n
120 cheat=&h6a000
130 call cheat
200 data &h2f3c,&h0007,&h8000,&h3f3c,&h0020,&h4e41,&h4df9,&h0003
210 data &h0000,&h42a7,&h3f3c,&h0001,&h2f0e,&h2f3c,&h0004,&h0002
220 data &h4e4d,&h41fa,&h0008,&h2d48,&h0084,&h4ed6,&h41fa,&h000e
230 data &h43f9,&h0002,&h7dae,&h2288,&h4ee9,&h016c,&h4239,&h0000
240 data &ha3e3,&h4ef8,&h7000

```

```

10 rem *****
20 rem Infinite Energy for Black Lamp on the Atari St. Type in and save this program,then insert Black
40 rem Lamp disk and RUN.Program should load and run as usual but with infinite Energy.
60 rem *****
80 def seg=0
90 for n=&h6a000 to &h6a065 step 2
100 read a:poke n,a
110 next n
120 cheat=&h6a000
130 call cheat
200 data &h42a7,&h7e20,&h3f07,&h4e41,&h4278,&h8260,&h7001,&h3f00
210 data &h42a7,&h3f00,&h4267,&h42a7,&h4df9,&h0003,&h0000,&h2f0e
220 data &h3f3c,&h0008,&h4e4e,&h3d7c,&h6058,&h0156,&h41fa,&h0010
230 data &h43f9,&h0003,&h01b0,&h32d8,&h51cf,&hfffc,&h4ed6,&h7000
240 data &h31c0,&h08d4,&h21c0,&h08dc,&h31c0,&h5944,&h21c0,&h594c
250 data &h203c,&h4e71,&h4e71,&h21c0,&h6d8c,&h31fc,&h4e73,&h1aa2
260 data &h31c0,&h122e,&h4ed0

```

```

10 rem Infinite energy routine for Golden path on the Atari St. First type in this listing,insert a blank
30 rem disk and run. To play,double click on GLOAD.PRG then when the disk stops insert Golden path disk
40 rem and press a key. Program should now load with Infinite Energy.
70 rem *****
80 def seg=0
90 for n=&h7fd00 to &h7fd75 step 2
100 read a:poke n,a
110 next n
120 bsave "gload.prg",&h7fd00,117
130 data &h601a,&h0000,&h0058,&h0000,&h0000,&h0000,&h0000,&h0000
140 data &h0000,&h0000,&h0000,&h0000,&h0000,&hffff,&h4ffa,&h00fe
150 data &h2f3c,&h0000,&h0200,&h487a,&hfef4,&h2f3c,&h004a,&h0000
160 data &h4e41,&h3f3c,&h0007,&h4e41,&h4267,&h487a,&h0034,&h3f3c
170 data &h004e,&h4e41,&h487a,&h0029,&h487a,&h0025,&h487a,&h0014
180 data &h2f3c,&h004b,&h0003,&h4e41,&h2040,&h4268,&h1cd8,&h4ee8
190 data &h0100,&h6175,&h746f,&h5c67,&h616d,&h652e,&h7072,&h6700
200 data &h2a2e,&h2a00,&h0000

```


2	1	2	1	0	1	1	0	START/EXIT
1	2	1	1	1	1	1	0	
1	2	2	1	1	0	2		
1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	
								2

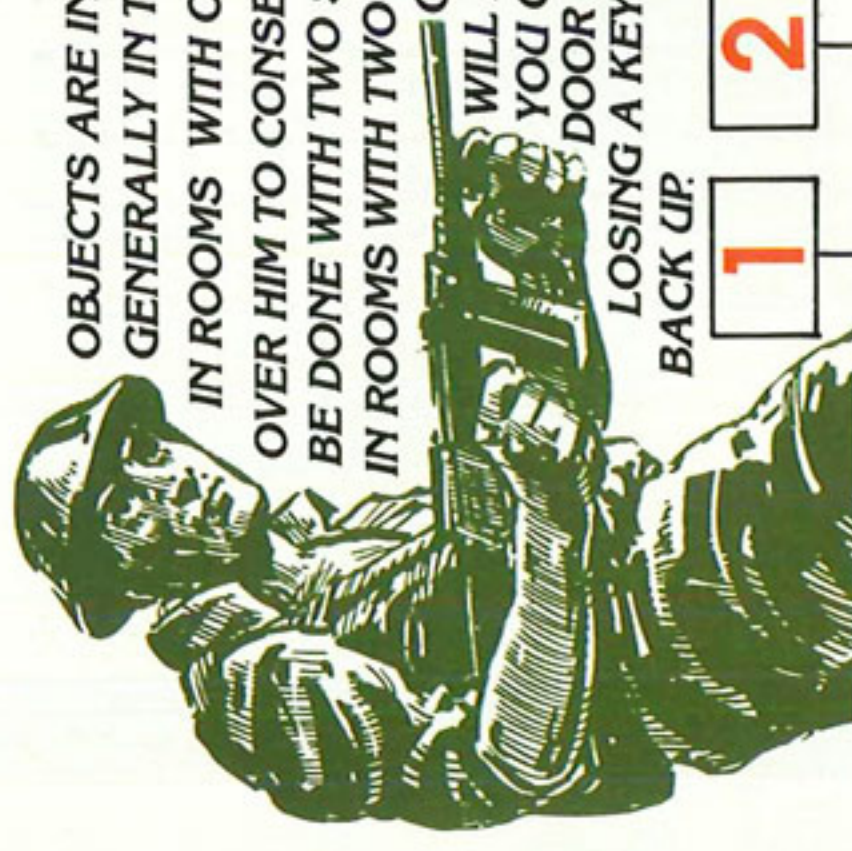
JOE BLADE

OBJECTS ARE IN RANDOM ORDER BUT ARE GENERALLY IN THE SAME ROOMS.

IN ROOMS WITH ONLY ONE SOLDIER, JUMP OVER HIM TO CONSERVE AMMUNITION. THIS CAN BE DONE WITH TWO SOLDIERS, BUT IS RISKY!!!!

IN ROOMS WITH TWO SOLDIERS, STAND IN FRONT OF THEM AND ONE BULLET WILL KILL BOTH !!!

YOU CAN PASS THROUGH A LOCKED DOOR GOING DOWN WITHOUT LOSING A KEY, BUT A KEY IS NEEDED TO GO BACK UP.

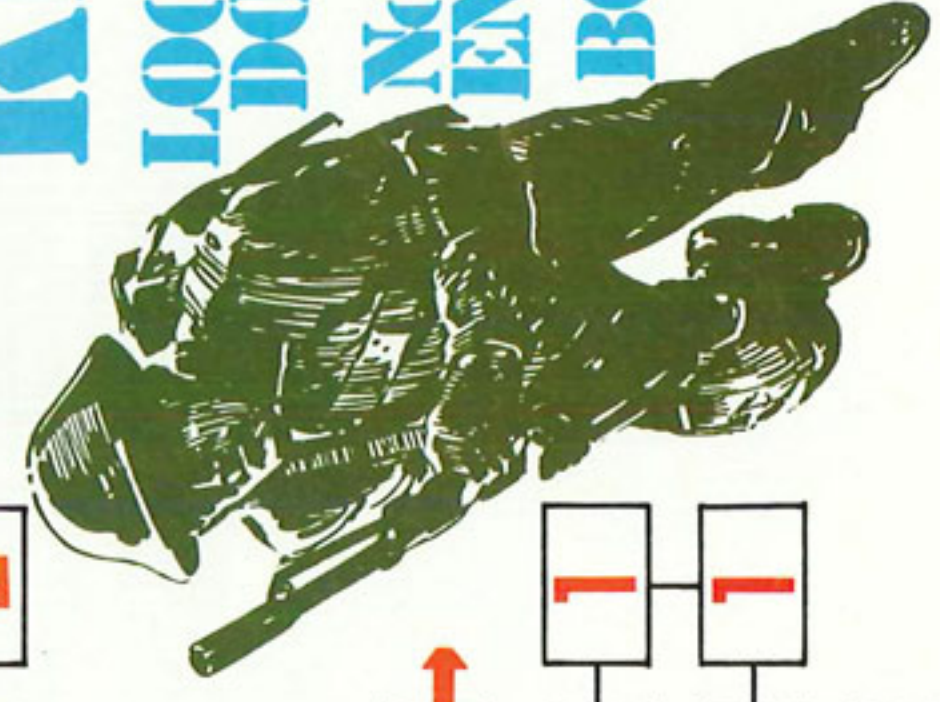


KEY

LOCKED DOOR:-

No.OF ENEMY:-

BOMB:-

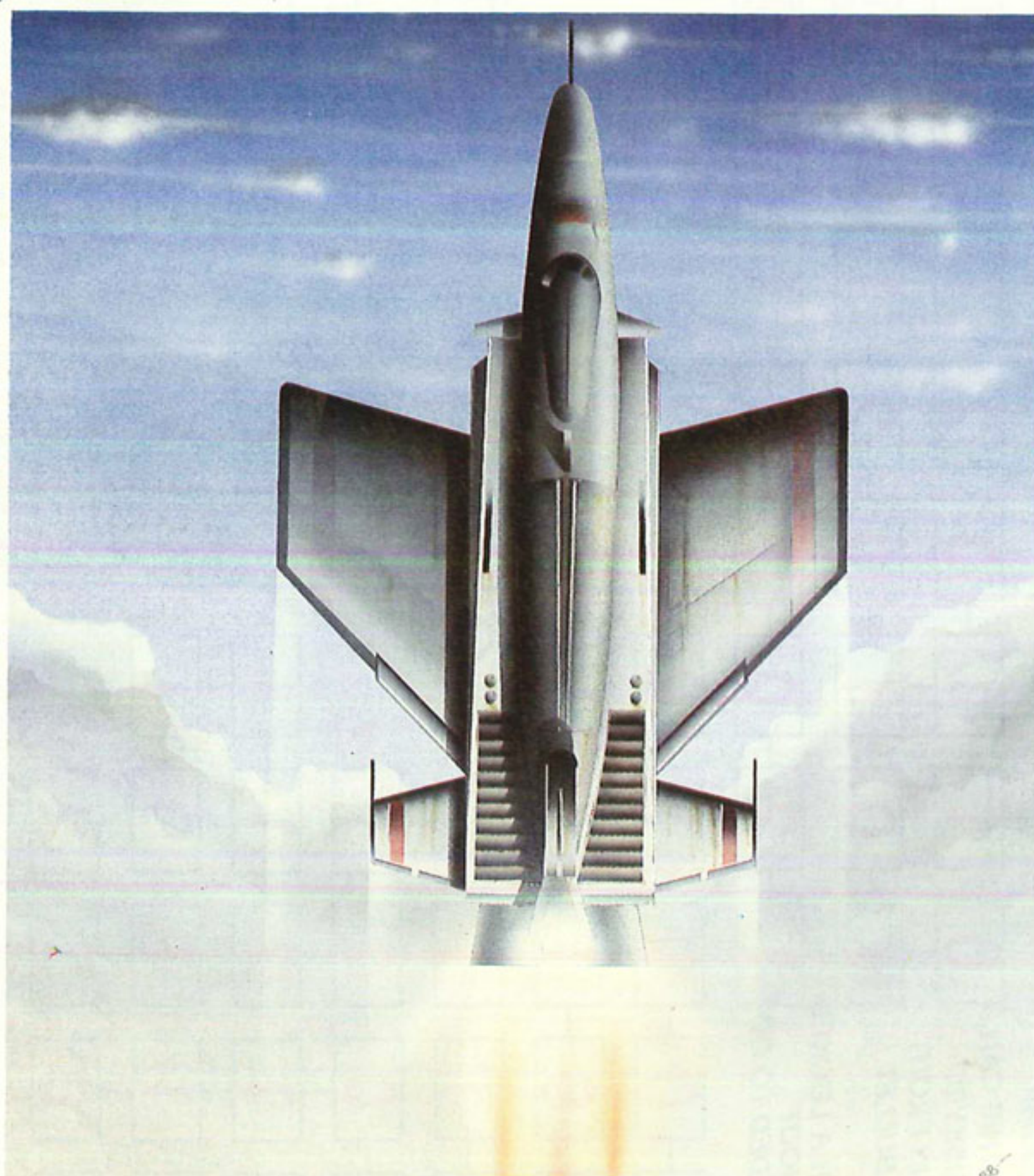


1	2	0	1	0	0	1	2	
1	2	1	1	0	1	1	1	
1	0	2	0	1	2	1	1	
2	0	0	0	1	0	2	1	
2	1	0	1	1	1	2	1	
0	1	0	2	1	1	0	1	
2	1	1	0	0	1	1	2	



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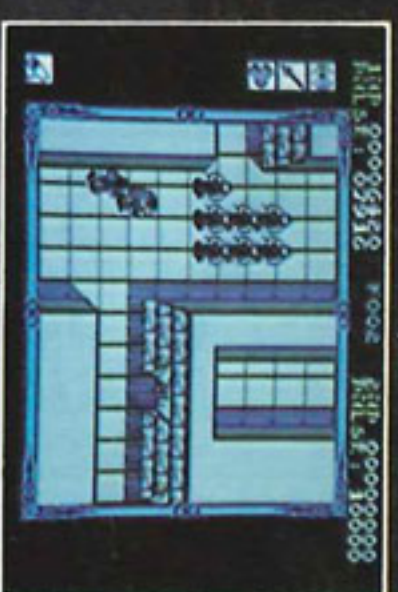
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Prison Break



Unchain your Imagination

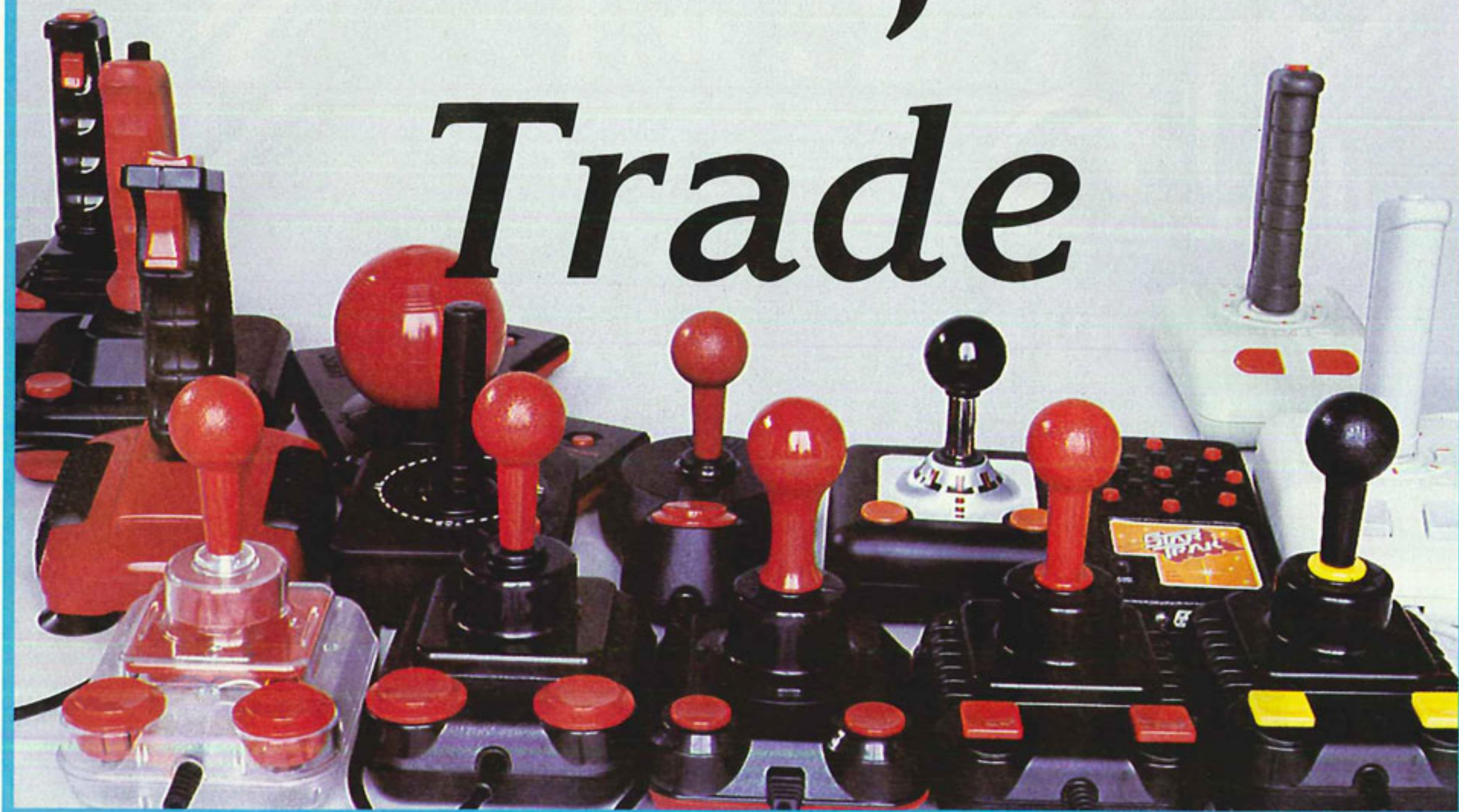
Your friends are prisoners within the mysterious castle. Release the fetters that bind them and chain them to yourself; only then can you make your escape. Release as many as you can for their predicament is dire, though the more you have on your chain the slower your progress will be! Defend yourself with a choice of 8 different weapons! Battle your way through 112 stages of gripping continuous action! Defeat your foes, rescue your friends, escape from every stage; only then is freedom yours!

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Spectrum 48K/128K+2·
Spectrum+3·MSX

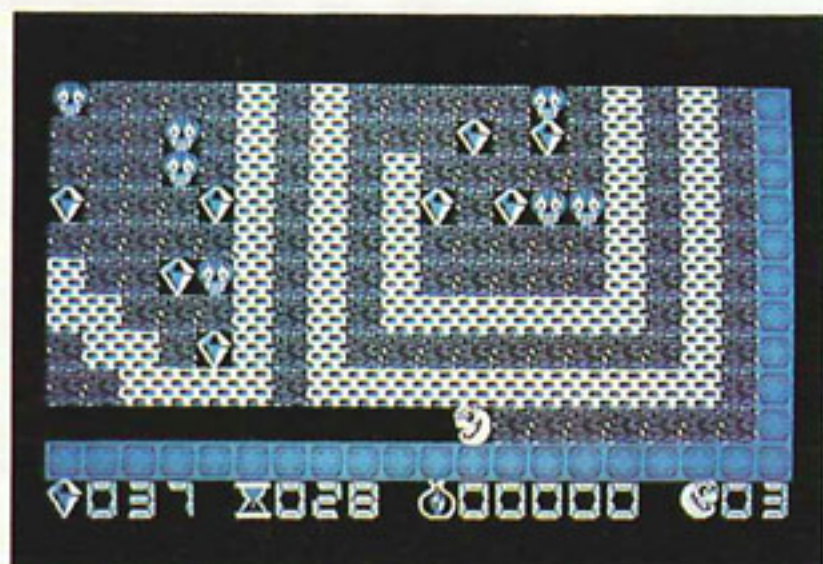
Tools of the Trade



Joysticks have become an integral part of our computer systems, it seems that every home-computer owner has at least one. But, is it the right one? The market seems to be awash with sticks; how, then, can you be sure that you are buying the right one for you? By using our supertest survey, that's how! We at ST Action have gathered together a number of controllers and over the next few pages we will discuss their merits and shortfalls. The final decision is yours, but to help you we have tested the sticks against three different types of game. Each game tests a different aspect of the joystick's design. By deciding which type of game you play most, you can pick which stick would be most suitable for you - Nick Clarkson

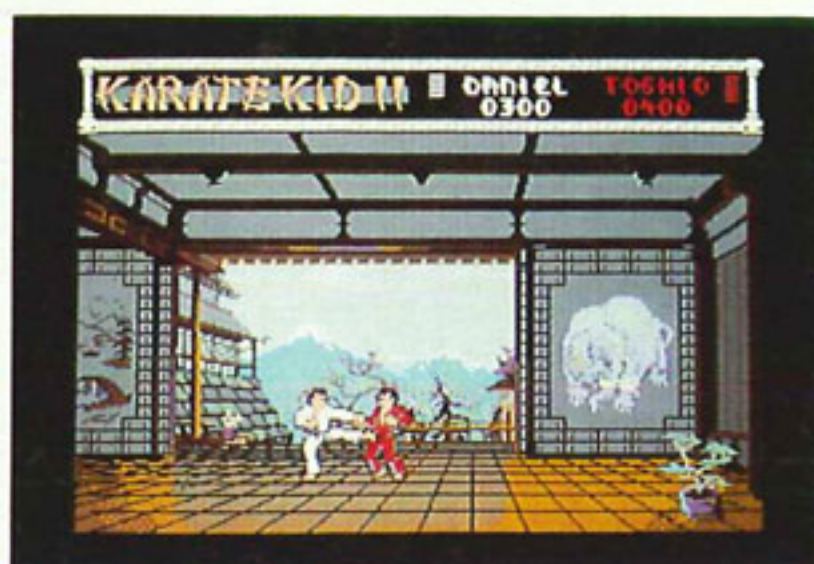
Game A: Skulldiggery

Skulldiggery was previously available from Nexus but it can now be obtained from us at the ST World office. The game is of the fast and furious cave-maze genre, requiring the solution of a number of puzzles, and above all, a keen sense of timing. Joysticks need to be responsive to quick directional changes and to precise, fast positioning.



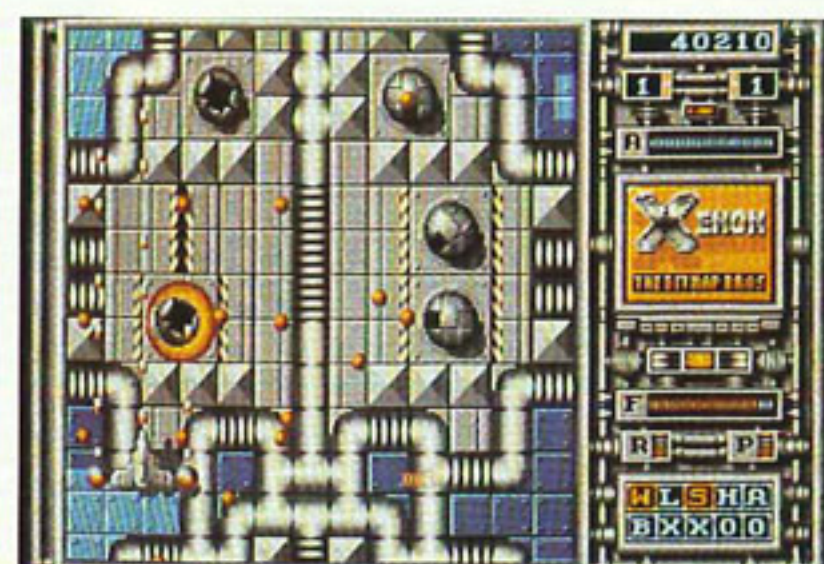
Game B: Karate Kid II

Karate Kid Part II is another of those beat'em-up games, and is available from Microdeal. The game combines the use of all the directional controls and the fire button. To master the game, a player must have total control over his stick. As all eight directions are used, the sticks must be precise in their positioning, and the fire buttons must be positive.



Game C: Xenon

Xenon, from Melbourne House, is the zap'em-up game which has had a simultaneous release in the arcades. The action is fast and sticks will need to withstand plenty of fire button bashing. Movement is also of paramount importance. All directions are used and swift movements to avoid enemy fire are not uncommon.





Star Trak, by R.H. Design

Hmmm, the Star Trak cannot really be called a joystick; by my definition a joystick, as the title implies, should include a stick. The Star Trak comes in the shape of a large, television remote-control unit. Situated on the top section of the unit are the control buttons. These are positioned in a circular pattern, similar to a clock. The centre button is a simple fire button. This can be changed, by using a switch located at the bottom of the unit, between autofire, short burst, and normal modes. Encircling the fire button are eight directional controls, which simply act like a traditional joystick, giving a positive feel when depressed. The outermost circle of buttons are best described as directional fire buttons. These eight buttons, will be of no use in some games but with the karate games they really prove their worth. Experimenting with the outer circle will bring some novel and interesting effects. The controller's cable is inserted at the rear of the unit and the cord length is colossal.

Being such a radical design, the Star Trak is somewhat awkward to use. Only after some perseverance does the unit really begin to show its potential value. The unit seemed to work poorly with game A; however, after a second visit to the game, the Star Trak began to shine. It was with game B that the unit performed well - the above-mentioned directional fire buttons really proved their worth. The unit fared adequately with game C, the directional buttons needing a little effort to master. Overall, the Star Trak is of a revolutionary design and it will need some time for a player to feel comfortable with, but once mastered, the Star Trak will become a force to be reckoned with.



Terminator, by Robtek

Now here is a joystick that certainly is different. The Terminator, as can be clearly seen, looks like a hand-grenade. Firmly grasped in either the left or right hand, the Terminator feels very comfortable. The stick is found on top of the unit and is somewhat short, but it is fully microswitched. The fire button is located under the grenade's handle, although depressing the whole handle will activate it. Every hand-grenade has a pin. The Terminator's pin keeps the handle in place, but I found that it got in the way; after pulling the pin and removing the handle, the Terminator became a much more comfortable unit despite it loosing that aggressive bomb-type look. The fire button, although not incorporating autofire, is quite reliable. The stick itself proved to be somewhat awkward and the diagonal movements in particular seemed difficult to achieve.

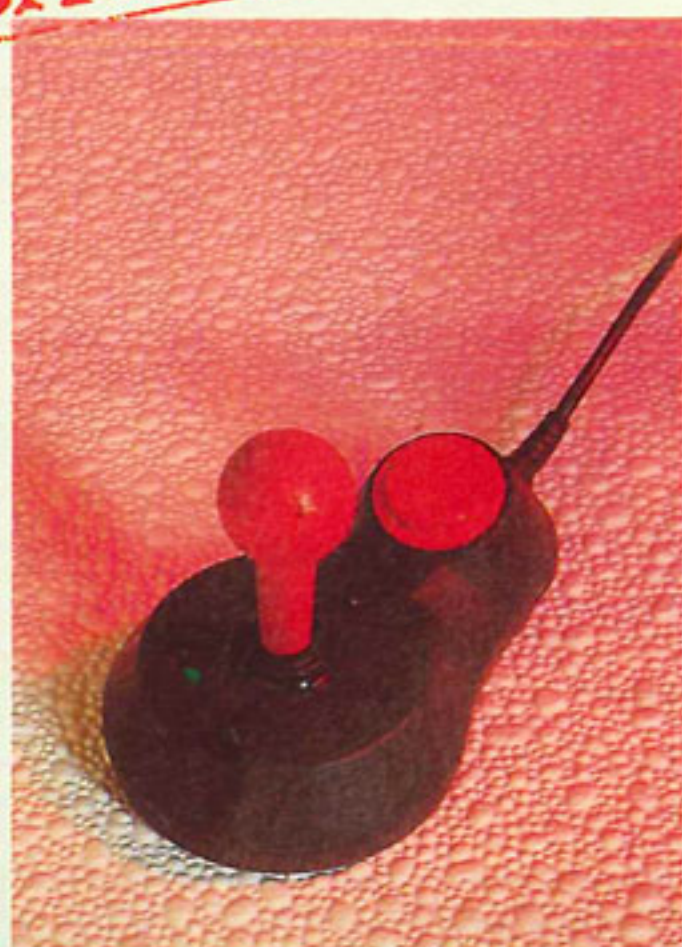
The joystick did not perform well with game A - the directional controls were poor. It was not until the joystick had been used for some time that the player could begin to use it well. As a result of the poor diagonal controls, the Terminator did not perform well with game B. More often than not, I found myself open to attack and not being able to defend myself, ouch! Game C, too, did not perform well with the Terminator. Overall, the Terminator will not make a "big bang" with the gamesplaying public. Apart from its gimmick value, I don't think this joystick will be too big a hit.



TAC-3 and TAC-5, by Suncom

Visually, the TAC-3 and TAC-5 are very similar. Apart from the minor differences in colour and the slight change in the design of the handles, the TACs look the same. But, as we all know, looks can be deceptive, and in this case they are. Both sticks are equipped with three fire buttons: two on the base, and the third on the top of the stick. The TAC-3 has no microswitches either on the fire buttons or on the directional points and, as a result, lacks that positive feel. The TAC-5, however, is fully microswitched apart from the fire button on the top of the stick. The TAC-5's diagonal movements feel very responsive. The special feature included within the stick's design, is that it will turn, thus helping the player aim the stick precisely. Both sticks can be held comfortably in the hand, or positioned securely on a flat surface.

Game A tested the four basic movements of the joysticks. The TAC-3 was not as responsive as I would have liked, mainly due to its lack of microswitches and the height of the handle. The TAC-5, however, does have the greater technical attributes, but unfortunately, due to the moving stick, it too performed poorly. Game B saw the moving handle aid the control of the TAC-5. The directional positioning, combined with the positive fire buttons, made certain that the TAC-5 was a winner. Unfortunately the TAC-3 was not so impressive, the diagonal points proving poor. Neither joystick has an autofire facility, and this was sorely missed with game C. Both sticks performed adequately, the TAC-5 having the slight edge. Overall, the TAC-3 is somewhat of a let down, the lack of responsiveness being its shortcoming. The TAC-5, however, is an interesting joystick, the twisting movements being a help with some games but a real nuisance with others. It is definitely worth looking at.



Elite, by Euromax

If small is beautiful, the Elite from Euromax should prove to be the ideal stick for many gamers. The red and black colour scheme is used yet again; oh why can't somebody think of something new? The Elite is a cheaply-priced joystick and, as a result, is not of the same standard as the more "professional" joysticks. There is no autofire facility with the Elite; the player's fingers will just have to work overtime! The stick's only fire button can be found at the front of the unit, and is well positioned for either left or right-handers. The base unit is, perhaps, a little too large to be held in the hand. After a short period of time I found myself placing the unit on the desktop which helped to reduce my hand fatigue and give me a better response too! The stick itself is of standard design: a short shaft with the obligatory red ball crowning the top. Despite being a cheaper joystick, the Elite is fitted with short travel microswitches. I was somewhat impressed with the Elite's sensitive response and accuracy - it's a little cracker.

The Elite performed on an average level with game A, on the whole acting as requested and only once or twice did it seem to stick. Game B, showed that not only could the joystick cope with sharp directional changes, but it could cope well generally. The Elite performed adequately with game C; the directional movement was average, but the lack of an autofire facility was definitely noticed. Overall, the Elite is a good robust joystick, and wonderful value for money.



Competition Pro

The Competition Pro has been with us for many years now. When it first appeared the Pro 5000 was the only model available. Now, however, the Pro comes in a variety of different guises. The Pro 5000 is still available, although it now comes in two forms; the original black and red livery has been joined by the new clear model. Both models are fully microswitched (excluding the fire buttons) giving that all-important reassuring "click". The stick can be held comfortably in either hand, and because of the fire buttons being situated on either side of the casing, it can be used by left or right-handed players. In addition to the 5000 series, Dynamics have also produced the Competition Pro Extra. This stick is based upon the 5000 models and, indeed, looks like the clear version. The added features of the Extra are to be found with the fire controls. Firstly the buttons are fully microswitched, this gives players a more controlled response. Housed at the rear of the Extra's base is a small red switch where three different firing modes can be selected: normal, autofire and a slow-motion mode! The slow-motion mode interrupts the movement of your playing piece, thus making it seem to slow down. I found little use for this new feature and it would probably only be of use in games where careful precise manoeuvring is required.

When tested against game A, the Pro clearly had masterful directional control - the microswitches proving their value. The comfort of the stick was questionable when it was tested with game B. Holding the stick and suddenly changing the directions soon takes its toll of the gameplayer's paws! Again, with game C, the stick became uncomfortable after a while. The controls, however, proved precise, and the autofire incorporated within the Extra worked like a dream. Overall, either the Pro 5000, or the Pro Extra would prove to be worthy additions to any joystick collection. Recommended.



The Professional

We all know the old adage: which came first, the chicken or the egg? The answer to this question is plainly ambiguous. The first impression of Euromax's Professional, however, is the striking similarity between itself and the Competition Pro range. The Euromax joystick comes in two separate varieties, autofire and non-autofire models. The standard colour scheme is used with the autofire joystick, whilst a very smart yellow and black livery is applied on the standard model. Both sticks have standard, short-travel microswitches, the standard model also having microswitched fire buttons. The base unit of the joystick is, perhaps, a little too large to be held in the hand. It works well when pinned down to a desk top, the stick having a textured surface providing an area for a steadying hand to grip. Apart from the difference in the shape of the base, and the square fire buttons, there is little to say about the Euromax joysticks apart from they very closely resemble the Competition Pro range.

The Euromax performed moderately well with game A. The directional movement was adequate but it did, however, seem to stick occasionally. Game B tested the diagonal movements of the stick and these performed well and the interaction with the fire button was also good. The joysticks worked well with game C and the autofire proved an essential asset. Overall, the Euromax joysticks are good solid units which are worthy of any collection. They are also comparable with the Competition Pro range.



Suncom Joystick

Well this has to be the forefather of them all - even the Competition Pro stick must have had its inspiration from this stick. The unit is exactly the same design as when it first appeared on the original Atari VCS systems, way back in the early 1980's. I, for one, was rather amazed to see that a company still bothers to manufacture the Joystick; I was sure it had died its death long ago. The base unit is square in shape and can be held quite comfortably in the hand. The single fire button is located in the top left-hand corner of the unit. The Joystick, therefore, is of little use to left-handed players unless they are contortionists and can stretch their thumb over the unit. The stick itself is a plastic rod housed within a rubber casing. The usual positive feel of a microswitch cannot be found here either; the Joystick relies on the old-fashioned pad system. As a result of its archaic design, the Joystick is somewhat unresponsive and, as we all know, it is prone to fatal accidents.

Surprisingly, the Joystick worked quite well with game A but, due to its lack of response, it did fail from time to time - often at that crucial moment. Game B proved to be a nightmare for the humble Joystick. The diagonal controls were, at best, poor. I found it difficult to select the moves I wanted, and when I eventually found them, the computer had already decked me! The Joystick was adequate with game C. My thumb soon began to ache due to the lack of an autofire facility, and the movements were sometimes a little quirky. Overall, the Joystick is a relic from the past that should have stayed there. It is slow in its response and prone to serious damage. It is only of any value for its laughability factor.



Cheetah Mach 1+

The Mach 1+, from Cheetah Marketing, is another of those tall joysticks. The unit should be stuck down on a flat surface before use; the obligatory suction cups for this operation can be found on the base of the unit. The Mach 1+ has been designed for either left or right-handed players, and incorporates four fire buttons. The first two are located on either side of the base and appear to be microswitch controlled and are very firm. They did, however, tend to stick occasionally, but perhaps this will cease with wear. At the rear of the base there is the autofire switch, detailed simply with the on/off logo. The stick itself is of the steel-shaft variety, providing durability. Housed within the stick are the other two fire buttons: a trigger-type button and a thumb-activated top button. Both of these buttons feel somewhat unresponsive; no reassuring "clicks" here. Again, the stick is microswitched and feels good and the only poor observation was that the distance between up and down, or left and right, seemed to be a little excessive. I feel that should the stick be used with extra-fast action games, it could have a rather shorter lifespan than some of the other sticks with shorter handles.

The Mach 1+ did not perform well with game A, the swift changes in direction needed a quicker response which the Mach 1+ failed to supply. Game B fared only a little better. The fire buttons worked well but, again, the quick changes in directions were few and far between. The joystick performed adequately with game C, the fire buttons combined with the autofire facility provided good weaponry control, while the directional control was satisfactory. Overall, I thought the Cheetah Mach 1+ was a good sound joystick but it does not appear to perform well with games that require rapid movements. But, having tried it with a flight simulation program, I feel it could earn a great deal of admiration from the more serious game players.



Datex Microphaser

The Microphaser is a Joystick in the true sense of the word. Its appearance is that of the original aeroplane genre. The stick is red and black in colour, its square base has four large, rubber suction pads enabling it to be firmly attached to a flat surface. The stick has a fire button on either side of the base, and an extra button housed on top of the handle. It is, therefore, compatible for either left or right-handed players. Positioned at the front of the base is a small red LED indicator. This illuminates whenever a button is depressed, thus assuring the player that the connection has been made. Underneath the base can be found a small switch and positioning it in the desired position toggles the firing action between normal and autofire modes. The stick itself is constructed with a strong, steel shaft, and like most sticks today, it is also fully microswitched. The handle has been moulded to fit into the player's hand and is very comfortable.

The Microphaser fared well with game A. I expected its high handle to be a minor inconvenience. However, the stick was very responsive which made precise positioning very easy. The same was true of the stick when tested against game B, only the tall handle providing a minor irritation. Game C, was a delight to play. The stick movements were smooth and positive, and the autofire function invaluable. Overall, the Microphaser is a fine joystick. Its sturdy structure suggests it could withstand a great deal of punishment, and I could fully recommend it to any gameplayer.



Microblaster, by Datex

The Microblaster is yet another stick from Datex. Dressed in the now traditional red and black livery, the Microblaster owes much to the Competition Pro joystick range. The stick is fully microswitched, including the fire buttons. Again, there are buttons on either side of the base, thus enabling anyone to use it. As with the Microphaser, an autofire control switch can be found under the base unit. Positioning of this switch allows either normal or autofire modes to be used; the autofire mode, however, is only operational when the fire button is depressed. The stick itself has the standard eight-way movement, and gives off the comforting positive "click" when moved. The joystick is a hand-held unit and although it is comfortable for a while, the player's hand soon tires. I found myself holding the joystick to the desk, the small rubber feet on the base providing an adequate hold.

The stick played well with game A; all of the directional movements reacted positively. The precise siting of the Skulldiggery cavemite was very easy and this, combined with the fire button control, showed the Microblaster to be outstanding with this game. The joystick also performed extremely well with game B, the kung-fu actions tested all the stick's directional movements; the Microblaster truly does have eight-way switches. Game C demonstrated the stick's outstanding directional qualities, and also showed that the autofire function was above average. Overall, the Microblaster is a joystick of an extremely high quality, easily matching the Competition Pro Extra. Recommended.



The Joyball, by Datex

The Joyball, as its name suggests, is not a stick. This controller is rather radical in appearance. The base, shaped somewhat like a boomerang, has sets of fire buttons on both the left and right of the control. The ball itself sits proudly in the centre of the unit. The shape makes the stick ideal for younger players, as not only does it capture the gameplayer's attention, but it also feels very comfortable, especially when nestled in a cupped hand. The unit has two different types of fire button, each available to either left or right-handed players, a normal fire mode and the obligatory autofire. Both buttons produce the desired effect and are very reliable. The Ball, however, even though being fully microswitched, did not perform as well as I expected. The movement was adequate, but only after the player had become accustomed to its awkward handling.

The Joyball, when tested against game A, proved to be very quirky in its positioning. Rapid changes in direction were poorly implemented, the game becoming tedious as a result. Game B did not fare much better. The game requires a good interaction between the stick and the fire buttons. The buttons performed adequately, but the diagonal positioning of the stick was non-existent. Game C befell the same fate - the directional controls not giving the desired results. The only redeeming feature was the autofire which performed with good effect. Overall, the Joyball did not live up to our expectations. Its appearance is interesting, although the handling is poor. Patience and determination are qualities a player would need if he were to succeed with the Joyball.



TAC-2, by Suncom

The TAC, Totally Accurate Controller, range has been around for some time. I can remember selling the TAC-2 from a computer shop way back in 1983. The TAC sold extremely well due largely to the decathlon-type games that were popular at that time. The TAC-2 has a nicely compact base unit that nestles in the player's hands. The two fire buttons, located in the top right and left corners of the base allow the stick to be used by anyone. It was, however, not these factors which made this particular joystick sell well. The actual stick is made of a steel shaft, and the distance the stick has to be moved between left and right is minimal. This ensured that the TAC-2 was nearly indestructible from constant "wagging". The unit houses no microswitches and, therefore, is not as responsive as other "professional" joysticks. The positive feel is also sadly lacking, but the TAC-2 is still an "old faithful".

Game A worked well with the TAC-2; all the movements were executed when required and the sudden directional changes were good. Game B, too, worked quite well. The diagonals, however, were sometimes hard to find and valuable points lost as a result. The stick performed reasonably well with game C, but, like Suncom's Joystick, the lack of microswitches and an autofire facility proved to be its downfall. Overall, the TAC-2 is a joystick that will withstand a "good beating". It is not as responsive as the more modern sticks, but, given its life history, it is clear to see that the TAC-2 is made of strong stuff.



Quickshot II Turbo, by Spectravideo

Like the Competition Pro, the Quickshot range, from Spectravideo, has been with us for some time now. The Quickshot II Turbo is the latest, and for my money the finest, addition to the family. Scarlet and black in colour, the Quickshot is of the aeroplane-joystick type. Positioned on the base of the unit are four suction cups which will adhere the joystick to any flat surface, thus providing a strong hold. The handle itself is ergonomically designed and is equally acceptable to either left or right-handed players. Two fire buttons are housed within the handle, the first is a simple trigger-style button, while the second sits atop the unit and is activated with the player's thumb. Nobby pads are attached to the side of the base, and these provide a useful grip for the player's steadying hand. The autofire switch can be found at the rear of the base; both normal and autofire modes are catered for. An option for the Amstrad C464 is also included, but I couldn't find a use for it!

I was surprised with the Quickshot II Turbo as my past experience with this company's sticks has not been good. The Turbo performed adequately with game A, the directional controls were average; I feel that high-handled joysticks, such as the Turbo, do not work well with maze-type games. Game B tested the interaction of the stick's movement control and the fire button. The Turbo performed exceptionally well, and I was particularly impressed with the stick's diagonal movements. It was with game C that the Quickshot came into its own. The benefit of the autofire facility and the smooth control proved the Turbo to be truly masterful. Overall, the Quickshot II Turbo is a good, sound joystick that will doubtless find its way into many collections. Recommended.

How They Performed...

JOYSTICK	Game A	Game B	Game C
Competition Pro	Good	Good	Good
Competition Pro Extra	Good	Good	Good
Euromax Professional	Average	Good	Good
Euromax Elite	Average	Average	Average
Joyball	Poor	Poor	Poor
Mach 1+	Poor	Poor	Average
Microphaser	Average	Average	Good
Microblaster	Good	Good	Good
Quickshot II Turbo	Average	Good	Good
Star Trak	Average	Good	Average
Suncom Joystick	Average	Poor	Poor
Tac-2	Good	Average	Average
Tac-3	Poor	Poor	Poor
Tac-5	Poor	Good	Average
Terminator	Poor	Poor	Poor

Cheetah Marketing Ltd,
Norbury House, Norbury Road
Fairwater, Cardiff, CF5 3AS

Compumart,
Jubilee Drive, Loughborough,
Leics, LE11 0XS

Euromax Electronics Ltd,
Bessingby Ind Estate, Bridlington.

R.H.Design,
Units 2 & 3, Stonefall Stables
Stonefall Avenue, Harrogate, HG2 7NR

Dynamics Marketing Ltd,
Coin House, New Coin Street,
Royton, Oldham.

MicroProse UK(Suncom)
2, Market Place, Tetbury
Gloucestershire.

Spectravideo Ltd,
165 Garth Road, Morden, Surrey.

Robtek,
Unit 4, Isleworth Business Complex,
57 St John's Road, Isleworth, Middx

JOYSTICK	Price	Supplier	Warrenty	Cable	L/R Hand	Autofire
Competition Pro 5000	£14.95	Dynamics	24 Months	1.4m	Yes	Yes
Competition Pro 500 Clear	£15.95	Dynamics	24 Months	1.4m	Yes	Yes
Competition Pro Extra	£15.95	Dynamics	24 Months	1.4m	Yes	Yes
Euromax Professional	£15.95	Euromax	6 Months	1.4m	Yes	No
Euromax Pro Autofire	£18.95	Euromax	6 Months	1.4m	Yes	Yes
Euromax Elite	£11.95	Euromax	6 Months	1.1m	Yes	No
Joyball	£ 9.95	Compumart	12 Months	1.4m	Yes	Yes
Mach 1+	£14.95	Cheetah	12 Months	1.2m	Yes	Yes
Microphaser	£ 9.95	Compumart	12 Months	1.4m	Yes	Yes
Microblaster	£12.95	Compumart	12 Months	1.4m	Yes	Yes
Quickshot II Turbo	£10.95	Spectravideo	12 Months	1.3m	Yes	Yes
Star Trak	£18.85	R H Design	12 Months	3.0m	Yes	Yes
Suncom Joystick	£ 5.99	MicroProse	90 Days	1.2m	No	No
Tac-2	£10.99	MicroProse	24 Months	1.6m	Yes	No
Tac-3	£12.99	MicroProse	24 Months	1.5m	Yes	No
Tac-5	£15.99	Microprose	Lifetime!	1.5m	Yes	No
Terminator	£19.95	Robtek	12 Months	1.6m	Yes	No



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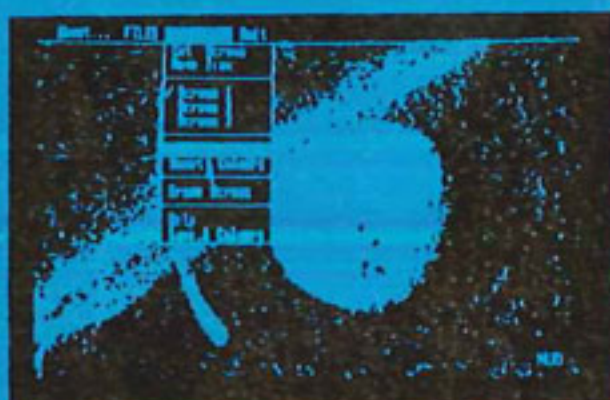
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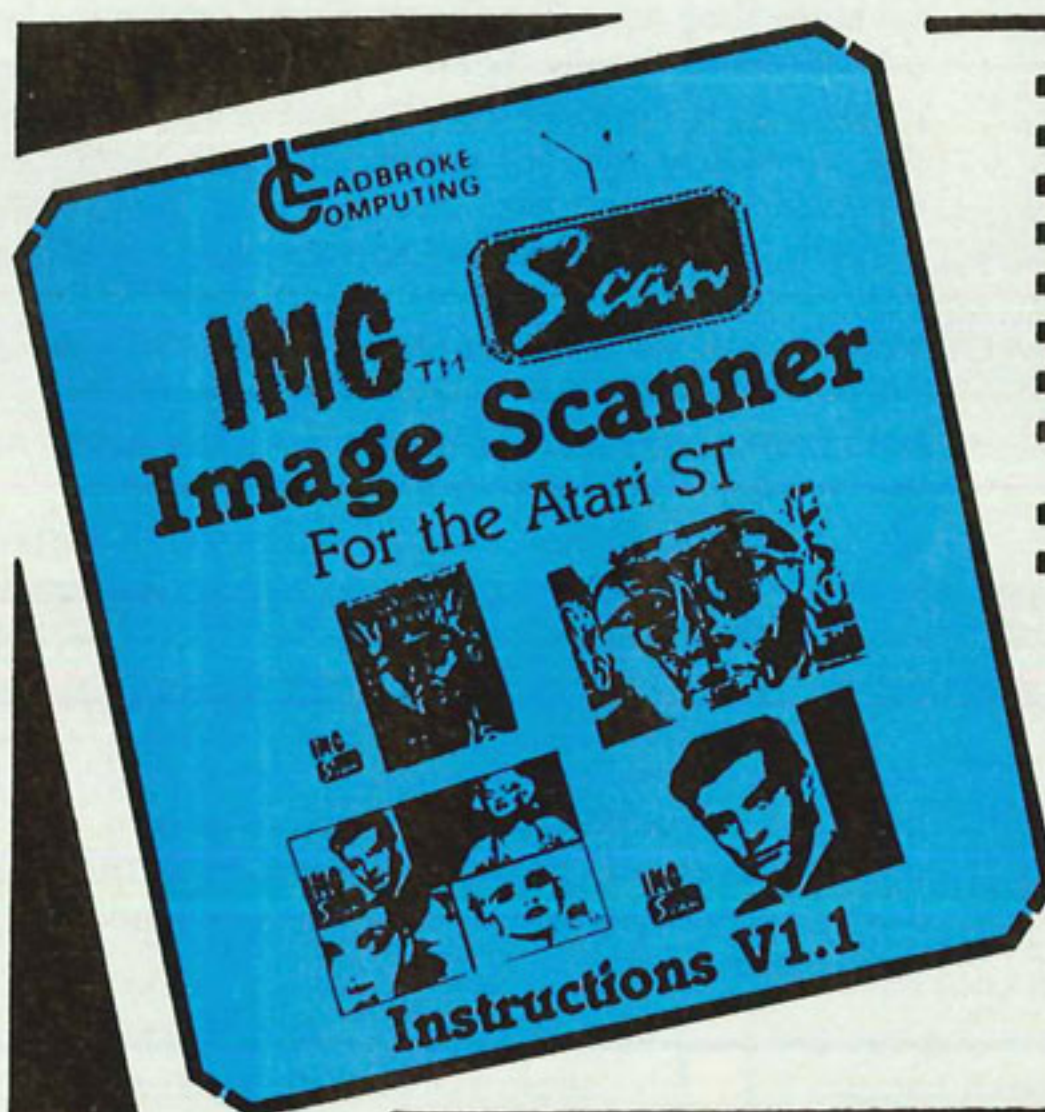
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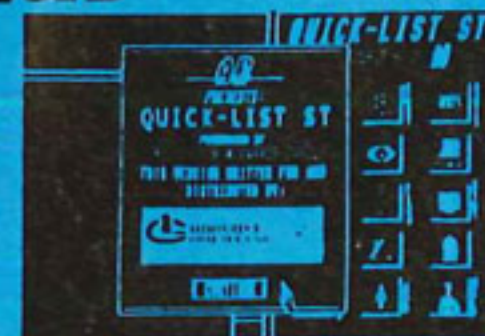
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TEST


To celebrate the launch of their Test Drive driving simulation, Electronic Arts are offering an amazing day out at one of the country's leading racing schools at Brands Hatch. 25 runners-up will receive an Electronic Arts mug and t-shirt. All that's between you and the seat of a Formula First racing car are the following questions:



DRIVE



Layout:	rear/rear	Approximate Price:	100
Engine type:	turbo sohc flat-6		90
Displacement:	3299cc		80
Compression ratio:	7.0:1	0-60mph:	5.8s
Bhp @ rpm, SAE net:	282 @ 5500	0-100mph:	12.8s
Torque @ rpm, lb-ft:	278 @ 4000	1/4 mile:	13.4s
Transmission:	4 sp manual		@ 103mph
Braking from 80mph:	245ft.	Top speed:	153mph
Tires: Dunlop SP Super Sport D4,		lb/Bhp:	11.4
285/55VR-16 front/		Lateral Accel:	0.84g
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The closing date for entries is 10th May. The winner will be the first correct entry pulled out of a hat. The runners-up will be the next 25 correct entries drawn.

The Questions:

- 1) Was is the engine capacity of the Lamborghini Countach featured in Test Drive?
- 2) What is the 0-60mph time of a Porsche 911 Turbo?
- 3) Why is Ferrari's flag ship car called the Testa Rossa?
- 4) What is the nationality of the current Formula 1 Grand Prix World Champion?
- 5) Who is the president of EA?

ST Action Competition Rules:

The Editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into regarding competitions or the results of competitions. All prizes are offered believing them to be available. If, however, a prize is unavailable we reserve the right to substitute an alternative of comparable value. No cash alternatives will be given. Results will be published as soon as possible and prizes despatched as quickly as possible. Please refrain from phoning regarding competition results or prize delivery. Employees of Gollner Publishing Ltd and companies participating in competitions are not eligible to enter.

I would like to enter the Electronic Arts Test Drive Competition. I have read the ST Action competition rules and agree to abide by them.

Answer to Question 1 (litres or CC) :

Answer to Question 2 (seconds):

Answer to Question 3 (under 15 words):

.....

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Answer to Question 4 :

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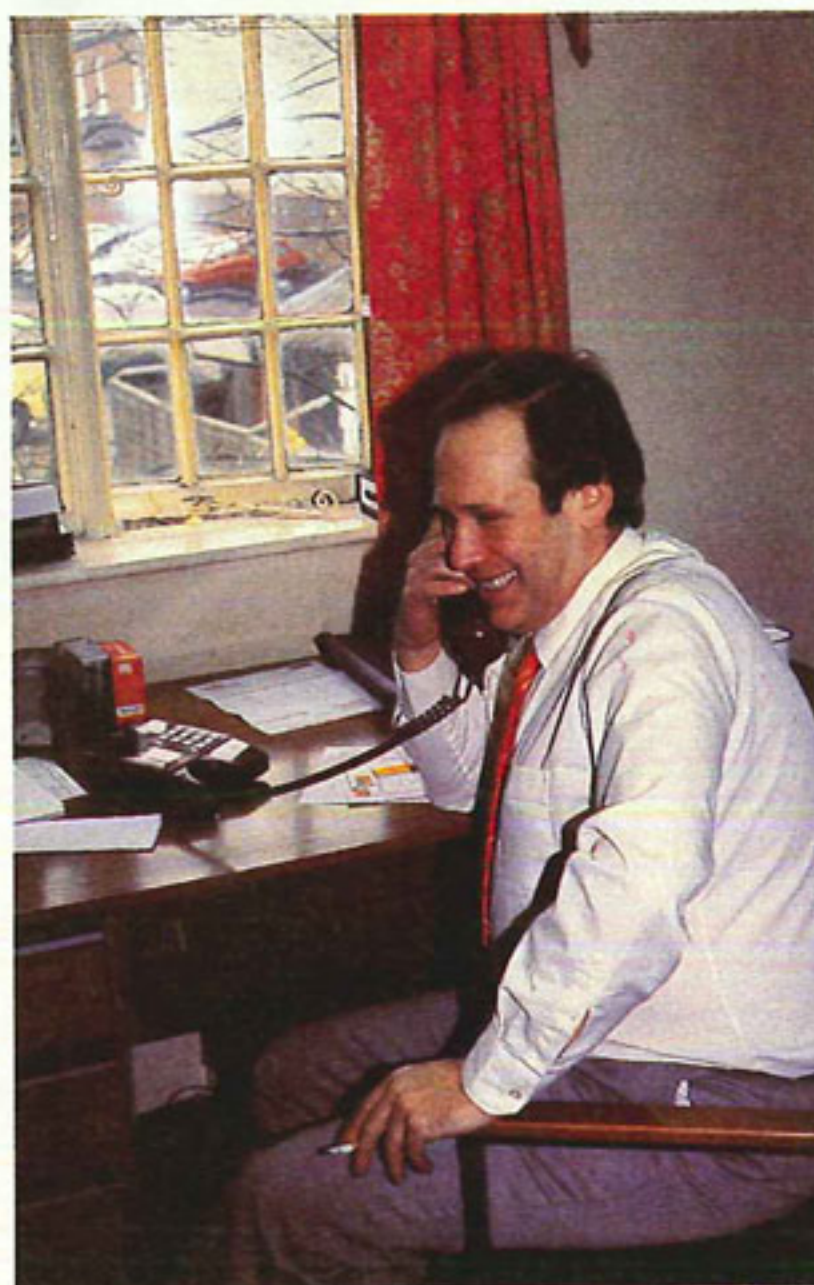
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WIZARD

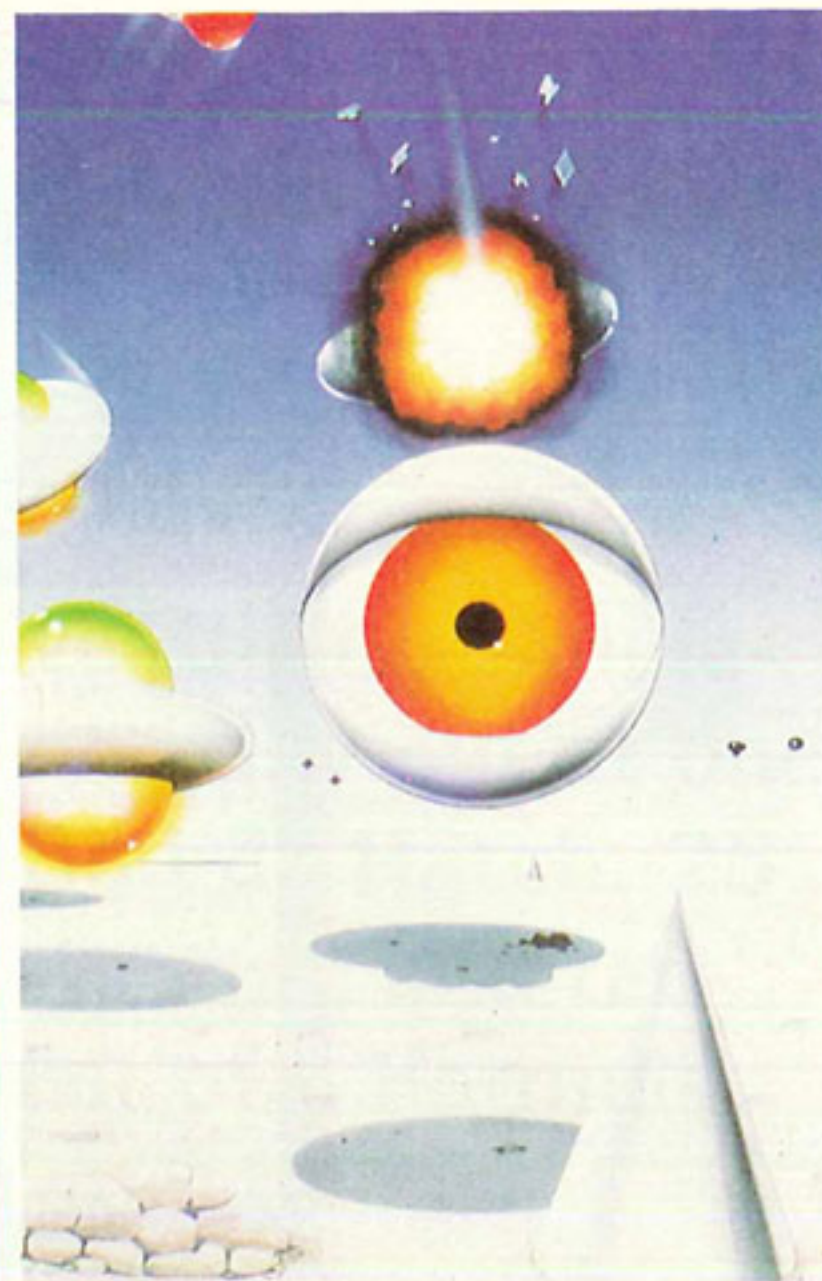
Wandering around the P.C.W. show on the second day I dutifully revisited all the stands for the umpteenth time. I began to notice the transfixed smiles on the pretty promotion girls turning into strained grimaces as they thrust their leaflets and sales paraphernalia in the faces of passers-by, while the stands had lost their sheen and appeal under a hundred thousand sticky little finger-prints. I sought refuge in the galleries and watched the throng of eager little bodies swarm around the stands like soldier ants with bulging goody-bags. Suddenly, *'Hello Jason, you look knackered, sit down and have a beer.'* I quickly glanced at the name above the stand to see which company was showing such uncommon decency and then at the name tag pinned on the gentleman who was now pumping my right arm with great enthusiasm. The company name I knew, Novagen - the gentleman, Tim Boshier, I had never seen before in my life.

Ripping the ring-pull from the can with equal vigour, Tim lead the conversation. *'Bloody good show this!'* I agreed and suggested that he could profit from charging for the beer as I had just spent the last ten minutes in an ever-increasing queue at one of Olympia's ridiculously inadequate bars. In addition to a well-stocked refrigerator, Tim had the letters P.R. written all over him, but I read it from his identity badge. I made the false presumption that the Managing Director of Novagen had employed an expensive public relations man for the show, leaving himself free to clinch big deals or wander around trying to get a better reception on his portable Cellphone. I silently concluded that Novagen must be a pretty big organization and ended the chat by promising to phone up the following week to set a date for an interview.

Six a.m. on a cold winter morning, we started the four hour trip to Novagen who are based in the heart of Birmingham. With new batteries in the tape recorder, pencil sharpened and a hundred probing questions stored in my memory banks, we swept past Spaghetti Junction and the less desirable areas of Brum and straight into a suburb where I was expecting to find the



Bruce Jordan - Company MD



sort of industrial estate which is filled with those enormous new prefab office-cum-warehouses. We finally found the car park at the back of some little shops which, far from smelling of new-laid tarmac with crisp white lines and allotted parking spaces saying M.D., Janitor and Visitor, resembled the Somme and was shared by a girly-fashion boutique called Leather and Lace, amongst others. We met Tim in the car park and followed him through a back door pausing only to scrape half the car park from our shoes. He lead us up a short flight of stairs and into the Novagen nerve centre. The main office took me totally by surprise; it is a tribute to organized clutter and not quite big enough to swing a mouse around on its shortest tether.

Tim introduced us to the rest of the Novagen office staff; Bruce Jordan, Gladys the computer, and a reliable and unargumentative secretary - a telephone answering machine. Tim rushed off to the kitchen and before we could acquaint ourselves with Bruce, came back with coffees and teas quicker than a veteran charlady. My first question was born from natural curiosity. *'What positions do you hold in the company?'*

'Well, Bruce looks after the business and administration and I deal with promotion, public relations, answer the phone...'

'and make the tea?'

'And make the tea.'

'No fancy titles?'

'No.'

'Bruce, what did you do before Novagen?'

'I've based my career around computers in one way or another.'

'How long have you been in the industry?'

'I can remember the time when a water-cooled mainframe computer which completely filled a large room could only manage to generate about as much memory as those calculators that you can buy in petrol stations for a couple of pence.'

'Did dinosaurs pose much of a problem in those days?'

(He grins), 'Funny!'

Tim, on the other hand, has only just come around to the fact that word process-



Backlash - the second Novagen ST-game released to much acclaim

ing is not just for people who can't use a pen. Later, he was to demonstrate the dizzy heights he had achieved on an old 800XL which he affectionately calls Gladys. Tim has a thriving P.R. company which he runs in an adjacent room. 'Do you deal solely with Novagen's publicity?'

'Bruce and I are old friends and Novagen takes up quite a bit of time purely because we are based in the same office, but I also deal with Software Express amongst others.'

'Were you the instigator of that amusing little vaudeville act which Ernst Wienzetti and Peter Fellows put on at the P.C.W. show?'

'They're nice guys doing good business. The little song and dance was their idea - I would have had leggy dancing girls as well.'

He broke off the conversation to answer the phone as he was busy organizing a charity night at some nightclub in town and was arranging the times at which the star guests were supposed to be making an appearance. 'Tell the Carrot he's got to be there by ten!'

'Bruce, how did you meet Paul Woakes?'

'Novagen is fundamentally Paul's company and, at the time we met, he had just written Encounter and wasn't doing a lot with it.'

'Encounter, was that not one of the first games to be shipped over to the States?'

'It was the very first game from Britain to make it into the U.S. software market, although they had been sending stuff over here for years. Anyway, it was pretty successful here and over there. Then, in '84, Paul just happened to mention to me one day that he had discovered a way of making games on tape load in a fraction of the time. I asked him when he had made this discovery and he nonchalantly said, "Oh, a while back," - he's a bit like that. This was when games used to take fifteen to twenty minutes to load and, after what seemed like a lifetime, the tape would end and a message appeared on screen saying 'error at line something or other'.'

'The cause of many teenage suicides perhaps?'

'More than likely! I figured that it was an extremely marketable concept and wasted no time in getting it copyrighted. In

no time at all, companies wanted Novaload in their games and we quickly agreed a percentage that we would receive on every single game sold with Novaload.'

'Money for nothing?'

'The rewards of pure genius!'

'You came into the eight-bit market relatively late, do you regret that?'

'Not really, I hadn't thought about it. I regret that we may have missed out on making some money, but things have turned out just fine.'

'With Encounter selling well and Novaload in full swing, what was next on the agenda?'

'Paul was working on a game which was quite different to the usual popular shoot'em-up type games. It was a bit of a gamble and I was anxious about the amount of time he was taking on it.'

'This is Mercenary, I presume.'

'Right! He goes into the finest detail and seems quite unconcerned with deadlines - he doesn't really work to deadlines.'

'Doesn't have to or won't?'

'A bit of both really.'

'Who thought of the name Mercenary?'

'Paul's idea, he is rather good at thinking up names for software.'

'The computer press seem to be

reporting an imminent demise of the eight-bit machine and some are even predicting obsolescence within a year, did you perceive a change at the P.C.W. Show?'

'No!'

'Do you think it is wishful thinking from the press because they are bored with writing about the same old things?'

'Probably! From our point of view, we are still selling Mercenary, albeit to a lesser extent, on eight-bit and are enjoying re-kindled sales of the game on the ST and Amiga.'

'The basic premise is to adapt then?'

'Exactly!'

'What are your views on companies who churn out straight transitions from eight-bit to sixteen-bit regardless of quality?'

'Some of it is justified. For example, old favourites and software of Mercenary's calibre.'

'You have just answered my next question.' 'What?'

'Were you not concerned that people might ask themselves why they had bought a sixteen-bit machine when they could run most of the software on their eight-bit machine for less money?'

'I reckon if we hadn't brought it out on the ST we would have had complaints.'

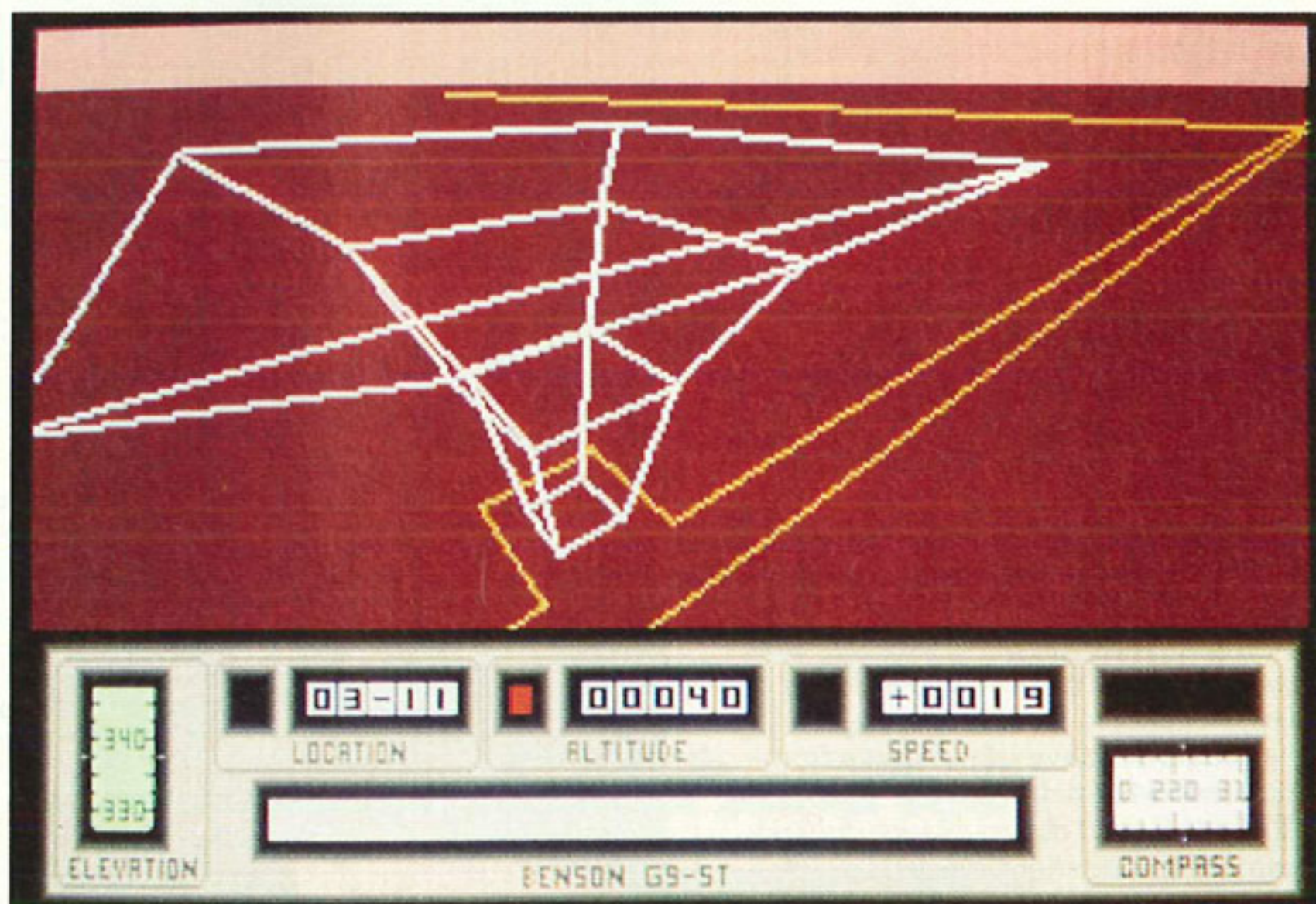
'Does this show in the sales?'

'Definitely!'

'Do you think that it is attributed to the quality of your software rather than its commercial appeal?'

'I think the fact that we have released so few games which are still very popular is evidence in itself.'

We adjourned for lunch where computer-orientated conversation was suspended and chat turned to a variety of subjects ranging from the Grand Prix to the Lombard Rally (Now that's variety! ED). In the afternoon we said goodbye to Tim and followed Bruce to Paul Woakes' house where, hopefully, we would be granted a rare interview. We were pre-warned that Paul was extremely shy, didn't like having his photograph taken and would often go off and do his own thing without warning. They described him as a cross between a moody Marlon Brando and a potty Patrick Moore and I began to wonder whether they were trying to create a mysterious cult



The Mercenary Compendium - Novagen's first ST release



figure or were in fact doing an effective character assassination on an ordinary guy who doesn't go out much.

Paul's home is a large pre-war house nestled comfortably in one of Birmingham's many suburbs. One aspect, however, made his house stand out from the rest - a large and very conspicuous T.V. satellite dish on the roof. Second only to computers, Paul's hobby is watching television. So, in between watching re-runs of Dallas which have been dubbed into Czechoslovakian, what was he working on at the moment? 'I'm putting the finishing touches to *Damocles* for the ST. But the more detail I put into one aspect of the game, the more I have to add to other areas to balance it up.'

'How much detail do you think you have to add before it becomes superfluous, i.e. before your average computer user doesn't notice what could have taken you weeks to achieve?'

'This is necessary detail, such as the direction of the sun as it hits the planets and the shadow it casts. I'm working on the change in directional controls in space at the moment.'

'Explain?'

'Well, a space vessel could be upside down so who is to say what is left or right. Basically there is no left or right in space.'

'That's detail! I think Backlash is great, how did you create that desert scenery?'

'The backdrop came first and I just built the game around it, I cannot explain some of the things I do because sometimes they arrive by chance and sometimes after a process of long experimentation; it is almost impossible to explain in an abridged yet understandable fashion.'

'Which do you prefer to work on: the ST or the Amiga?'

'I hate working on the Amiga because of the difficulty in getting any detailed programming literature - in fact, it's difficult to get any literature at all. The ST is more pleasant to work on and there is plenty of reading material to back it up.'

'What games have inspired you from the past and what did you enjoy playing?'

'I'm not a great games player but I do like simple arcade shoot'em-ups.'

'You surprise me.'

'Really I enjoy creating games much more than playing them.'

'Apart from *Damocles*, what else are you working on?'

'I have discovered a way of stretching the data-holding capacity of a disk, but I'm not willing to go into any detail for obvious reasons.'

'Another Novaload-type money-spinner perhaps?'

'Perhaps, ask Bruce!'

I began this report by describing the show as a glitzy and attractive facade. It covers a bunch of egomaniacs who adopt a dog-eat-dog attitude and make millions out of pocket money - I did this for a reason. It was a real pleasure to meet Tim and Bruce. They joked about their humble office which is totally practical and quite adequate; they drive ordinary production cars although Bruce has been a devoted long-term Ferrari owner in the past. There is no pretence, they work well together and enjoy what they do. Bruce is quiet and thoughtful, whereas Tim is energetic, talkative and great fun. The time they spend waiting for Paul to finish products or mention off-hand that he has invented something which could make another small fortune, is funded by the longevity of their past products. Paul Woakes is no Howard Hughes nor Charles Foster Kane, he is your average suburban genius who plods along at his own pace. He has no deadlines nor visible worries and the time taken over the finest detail is time well spent as his software remains popular for ages.

The basic ingredient for success seems to be: find one unassuming and un-demanding genius, sit back and wait for results. They are thoroughly nice guys in a 'Mercenary' industry.

by Jason Spiller.

STA



Tim Boshier - company Public Relations

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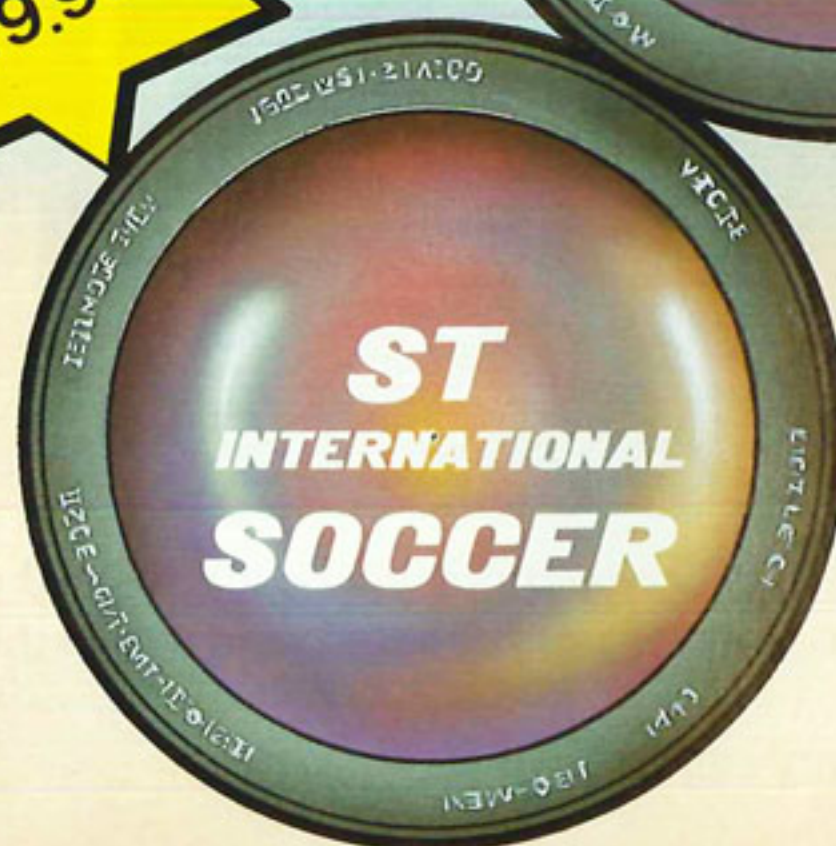
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LEATHERNECK

Real arcade action really comes home in this four player game featuring the crack fighting force 'The Leathernecks'. This game is playable by one, two, three or four players using our unique joystick interface that allows you to plug in two extra joysticks to your ST. (Optional extra at 9.95). Leave the landing craft and any Leathernecks not being played, down on the beach head, then it's all action fighting all the way through the jungle. Good luck Leathernecks!

(Colour only up to four joysticks required).



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ATARI
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SOCCER

If you're a soccer fan, then ST Soccer's the game for you. Superb Hi-Res graphics plus team colours, wind, weather and night play options mean that one or two players have a real hard match with highly competitive play. Animated supporters, electronic scoreboard and on screen refereeing, keep the gameplay fast and furious. Don't get left outside the ground - ST Soccer's playing.

(Colour only one or two joysticks required.)

TANGLEWOOD

Why settle for adventures with one or two characters? Tanglewood has five! And Tanglewood is all graphics (over 700K of them) and it's totally mouse controlled, with no text entry, and unlike other adventures it's nearly always possible to finish - unless you do something deliberately stupid. Tanglewood is also played in real time so you have only ten days to find the mining contracts and some areas are only accessible at night.

(Colour only)



COMING SOON

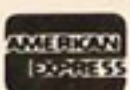
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LIFE, THE UNIVERSE AND LLAMAS!

If you've read David Stewart's five-page interview with Jeff Minter, you'll know what an exciting program Trip-A-Tron is. To mark the launch of Jeff's latest masterpiece, he's offering 10 copies to the lucky winners of this Llamasoft competition.



To stand a chance of winning, the following questions must be answered. The winners will be the first 10 correct entries pulled from the hat after the closing date of 10 May 1988. Most of the answers can be found within this issue of ST Action.

- 1) Which is the rarest South American camel?
- 2) Why is it so rare?
- 3) What was Llamasoft's first game?
- 4) What game was written by Jeff for the C64:
a/ Papa Llama b/ Mama Llama c/ Rama Llama Ding Dong
- 5) What is the connection between Trip-A-Tron and camels?

Answer to Question 1 :
Answer to Question 2 :
Answer to Question 3 :
Answer to Question 4 :
Answer to Question 5 :

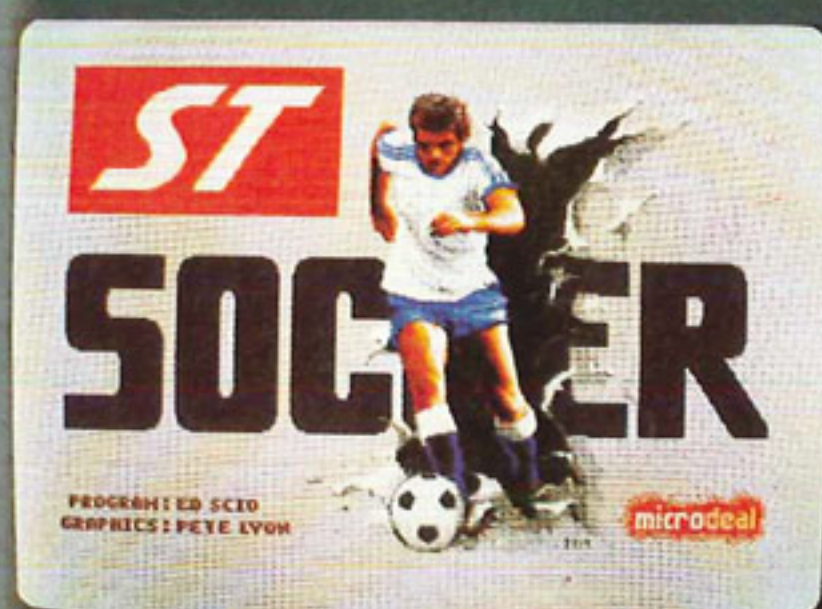
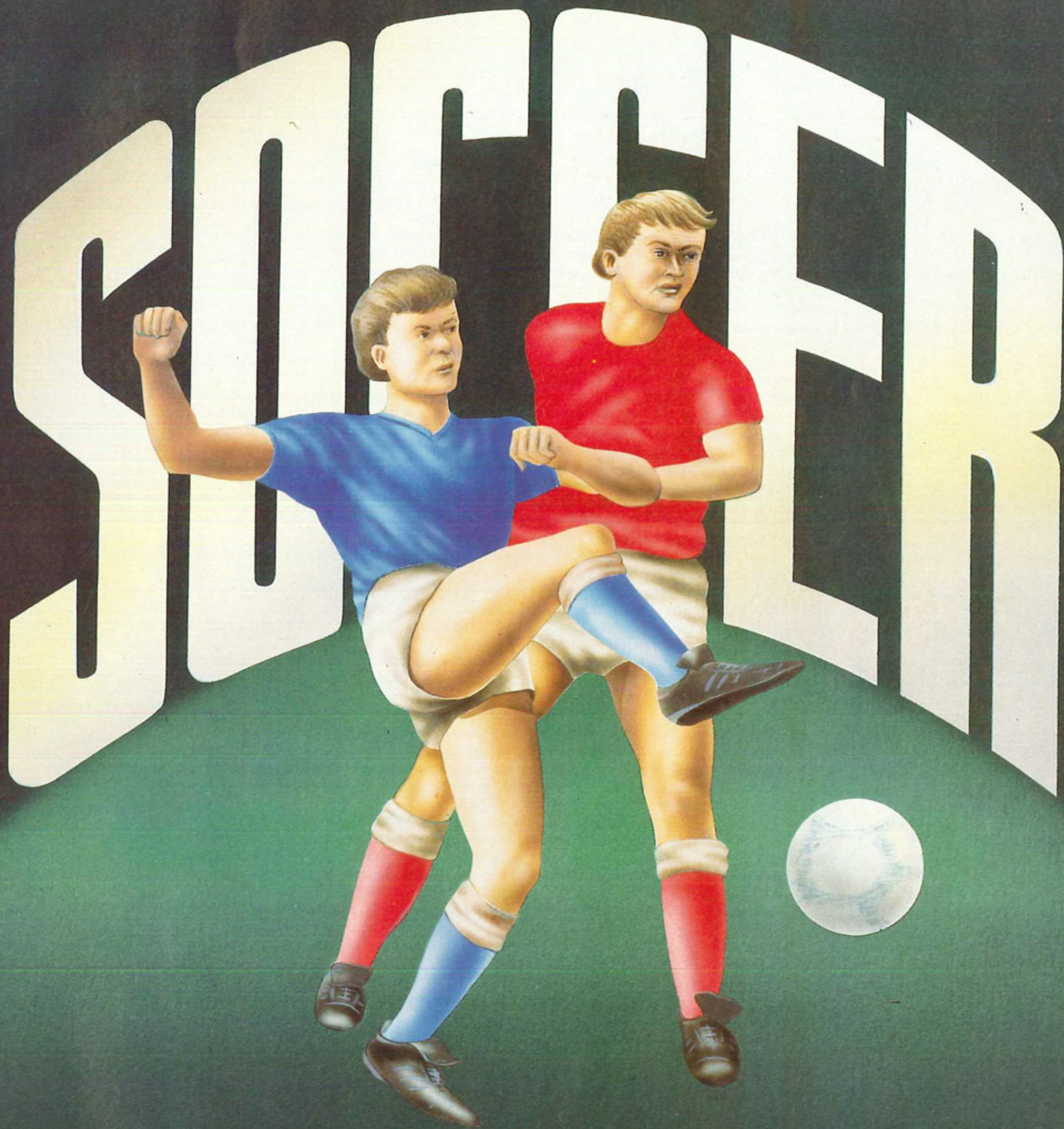
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ST Action Competition Rules:
The Editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into regarding competitions or the results of competitions. All prizes are offered believing them to be available. If, however, a prize is unavailable we reserve the right to substitute an alternative of comparable value. No cash alternatives will be given. Results will be published as soon as possible and prizes despatched as quickly as possible. Please refrain from phoning regarding competition results or prize delivery. Employees of Gollner Publishing Ltd and companies participating in competitions are not eligible to enter.

Send entry to:
Trip-A-Tron Competition
ST Action,
10 Theatre Lane
Chichester,
West Sussex
PO19 1SR

ATARI ST — COMMODORE AMIGA

INTERNATIONAL



PROGRAMMED BY EDDIE SCIO
GRAPHICS BY PETE LYON



THE LIST

This is the first instalment of our look at what is available in the entertainment sector for the ST. Next month will see the rest of the list.

Arcade games

- Academy, by CRL:** Space simulations are based on assumption and rarely manage to achieve what they set out to. This one has a minute game screen and is suffocated with sophisticated features. £19.95
- Addictaball, Alligata:** One of the lesser 'Breakout' clones, with special features and multiple screens. £14.95
- Airball, Microdeal:** An original and vast 3D game containing 150 rooms which are filled with broken glass and pointed edges that threaten to burst your Airball, as well as your ego. £24.95
- Airball Const Set, Microdeal:** In conjunction with the original, you can construct your own screens - as if 150 rooms were not enough! This is reputed to be the first 3D construction kit. £14.95
- Altair, Infogrames:** Representative of the many vertically-scrolling aerial-assault games available. You must avoid swarms of aircraft and destroy a fortress then repeat the same game ad infinitum. £19.95
- Arkanoid, Ocean:** The ultimate 'Breakout' clone and an absolute must for arcade game fans - pure addiction! £14.95
- Backlash, Novagen:** A game with real impact, outstanding adrenaline-boosting action - one of my favourites! £19.95
- Barbarian, Psygnosis:** Points were won and lost in the battle of the Barbarians. This one has more variety but less action. £24.95
- Barbarian, Palace Software:** Banned in Germany and rightly so. If mortal wounding, sickening sound effects and lizardmen playing soccer with decapitated heads is your bag, then you will not be disappointed - cheap horror! £14.95
- Battlezone, Atari Corp:** Ancient arcade classic tank battle in distinctive 3D vector graphics - an inexpensive trip down memory lane! £14.95
- BMX Simulator, Codemasters:** Surprisingly and thankfully the only BMX game available for the ST. £14.95
- Boulderdash Const Kit, Databyte:** Who could resist the opportunity of constructing his own Boulderdash screens. It also contains 16 pre-constructed levels to give you a few ideas. £24.95
- Bubble Bobble, Firebird:** Living proof that there is a place for vacuous and harmless arcade entertainment in sixteen-bit computing - infuriatingly addictive! £19.95
- Bubble Ghost, Infogrames:** An original multi-screen arcade game in which you manoeuvre a bubble-blowing ghost through a castle that is filled with sharp implements - recommended. £19.95
- Catch 23, Martech:** Not a game which oozes immediate appeal and needs to be played thoroughly to be enjoyed. A ground-based search game with terrific vector graphics £19.95
- Chopper X, Mastertronics:** Below average horizontally-scrolling shoot'em-up - budget entertainment for a budget price. £9.95
- Clever and Smart, Magic Bytes:** Clever and Smart you will be if you give this one a miss. A cantankerous game which aborts itself without provocation or reason. £19.95
- Crafton and Xunk, Infogrames:** Cult computer characters in a multi-room game with awkward controls and limited appeal. £19.95
- Crazy Cars, Titus:** A poor 'Outrun' rip-off with poor graphics and appalling game-play. £19.95
- Crystal Castles, Atari Corp:** Directing a teddy bear around mazes and up mountains may sound like an infantile pursuit, but the scenario does little justice to the mildly amusing and entertaining game-play - not exactly outstanding value for money. £14.95
- Dark Castles, Mirrorsoft:** A ladder and platform game with the unusual feature of stereo sampled sound. Fails to inspire. £24.95
- Death Strike, Talent:** A contradiction in terms! Cheap but not cheerful! £9.95
- Deep Space, Psygnosis:** Space 3D games are commonplace, and this, like many others, falls far short of 'Elite' and 'Mercenary'. £24.95
- Eagles Nest, Pandora:** Without doubt the best arcade-style military combat game on the market. With overhead 'Gauntlet'-style game-play, this game offers constant and frantic action - an essential addition to your collection! £19.95
- Eco, Imagine:** Call me old-fashioned but, in my opinion, copulating insects is dubious entertainment - slow but interesting and certainly original. £19.95
- Enduro Racer, Activision:** A mediocre transition of this popular arcade dirt-bike race. There are a number of rough edges which give the game a rushed and unfinished appearance - it could have been a lot better. £14.95
- Extensor, Diamond:** Based on 'Tron', this 3D laser cycle game consists of racing down corridors in a maze. The game-play is bland with no sound effects and little variety. £19.95
- Formula 1 Grand Prix, Tynesoft:** A rear-view, car-racing game inspired by Epyx's brilliant Pitstop - well worth checking out. £19.95
- Gauntlet, US Gold:** A fair interpretation of the popular arcade game, comprising an overhead view of mazes and monsters. £24.95
- Goldrunner, Microdeal:** One of the first vertical-scrolling assault games. £24.95
- Impact, Audiogenic:** More brick busting 'Breakout'-style, with many enhanced features. £14.95
- Indiana Jones, US Gold:** You've seen the film now play an average, multi-level game vaguely resembling it - or see the film ten times. £19.95
- Joe Blade, Players:** A sideways-scrolling combat game which concentrates more on finding kidnap victims than filling body bags. £9.95
- Jump Jet, Anco:** Although comprising a standard cockpit view, Jump Jet still fails to qualify as a simulation. £14.95
- Jupiter Probe, Microdeal:** An average vertically-scrolling aerial shoot'em up with two-player participation. £14.95
- Karting Grand Prix, Anco:** The combination of big tracks, little karts and droning sound effects makes this game an effective soporific. £9.95
- Leatherneck, Microdeal:** The latest in a long line of 'Commando' combat games. £19.95

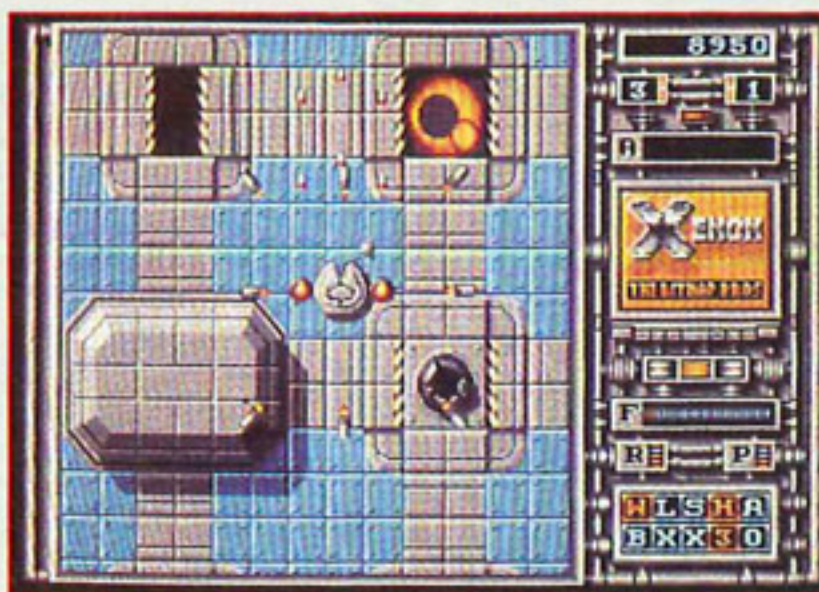
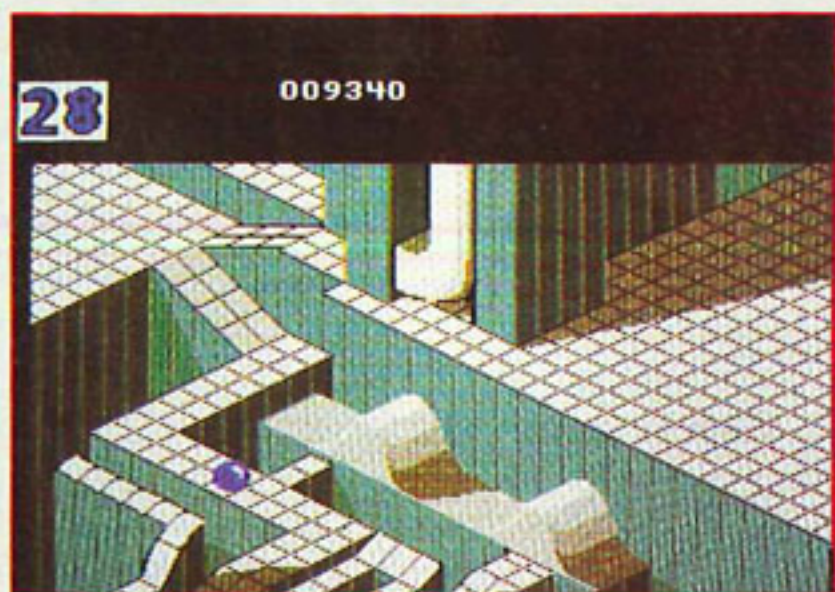




LIGHT SYNTHESIS

ULAM SOFT

Leviathan, English Software: Liberator, Tynesoft:	Based on Zaxxon, this 3D game is somewhat hackneyed and unoriginal but fairly respectable. £14.95 This is the best offering in their so-called 'Microvalue' series, which consists of manoeuvring a hovercraft over a terrain that is haunted by all manner of bogeymen - limited appeal. £12.95
Macadam Bumper, Infogrames: Major Motion, Microdeal:	A D.I.Y pinball construction kit which proves to be more entertaining than it sounds. £19.95 Based on Spy Hunter, this game contains smoke-screens, oil slicks and predictable game-play. £19.95
Marble Madness, Electronic Arts:	A real hybrid arcade game in which you must keep a marble rolling over a three-dimensional mountain range - a must for all hardened game players who need more of a challenge. £24.95
Mars Cops, Arcana:	In your pursuit of U.F.O's, you encounter very little variety. A 3D folly. £19.95
Mean Street, Mirrorsoft:	A graphically appealing game which allows you to act the goat on a motorway. £24.95
Mercenary, Novagen:	A foreboding challenge which has gained a massive cult following. Renowned for its long-term appeal. £24.95
Metro Cross, US Gold:	You direct an unlikely athlete over ingenious obstacles - an enjoyable game requiring lightning reflexes. £24.95
Metropolis 2000, Eidersoft:	An irksome arcade shoot'em-up containing the usual features. £12.95
MGT, Activision:	You must manoeuvre a tank through a crystal palace to achieve this characterless and easily-forgotten game. £24.95
Missing One Droid, Bug Byte:	You direct a dustbin-shaped droid around the screen, obliterating anything and everything in sight - you experience the full extent of the game's variety within the first ten seconds. £9.95
Mouse Trap, Tynesoft:	A mildly challenging, multi-level platform game starring Marvin the mouse. £14.95
Mudpies, Michtron:	Slapstick fun with circus clowns throwing custard pies at each other - presumably, it comes complete with a free screen wipe. £19.95
Ninja Mission, Mastertronics:	A martial-arts game which has sacrificed distinct control for smooth-action characters - not one of the best. £9.95
Oids, Faster Than Light:	Brand new, above average, horizontally-scrolling shoot'em-up. £24.95
Outcast, Mastertronics:	A 'Skyfox' clone which is twice as good and half the price - Outcast by name, not by nature. £9.95
Outrun, Sega:	This is the only conversion of this brilliant and much-exploited arcade car race which is worth buying - ignore the rest and buy the best! £19.95
Pacland, Bug Byte:	This phenomenally successful arcade game goes sixteen-bit - with a sixteen-bit price to match. £19.95
Pengy, Red Rat software:	'Help Pengy save the ice castle from ghouls and ghosts' - say no more! £14.95
Phoenix, Infogrames:	This has nothing to do with the arcade game of the same name. This is an original and challenging game in which you fly across a vector graphic path in space - recommended. £19.95
Pinball Factory, Microdeal:	Another pinball game and construction kit with better controls and more features than Macadam Bumper, improvements which you have to pay for. £24.95
Plutos, Micro value:	The only feature that separates this respectable vertically-scrolling aerial assault game from the others, is the simultaneous two player option. £14.95
Predator, Activision:	'Commando-style' combat game which is based on the film of the same name. £19.95



Prohibition, Infogrames:	You control gun-sights across windows and doorways and shoot gangsters - limited long-term appeal. £19.95
Rampage, Activision:	Make American cities look like central Beirut with the help of Godzilla and friends - simply dreadful! £14.95
Rana Rama, Hewson:	A 'Gauntlet'-style dungeon game in which you direct a frog around a dungeon - easily forgotten.
Roadrunner, U.S Gold:	Highly amusing conversion from the popular arcade game. The characters are smaller but the action is great. £24.95.
Rockford, Melbourne House:	A 'Boulderdash' clone starring the gem muncher himself. Whatever you call it, the game's concept is faultless. £19.95
Screaming Wings, Red Rat:	The worst of a large bunch of vertical scrolling shoot-em ups. £14.95
Sky Rider, Creation:	A horizontally-scrolling aerial assault game. All the time and energy spent on trying to achieve smooth horizontal scrolling should have been used to think up a more original theme - a horizontal Goldrunner. £14.95
Space Pilot, Anco:	A very ordinary space shoot'em-up. Does not work with TOS V1.09. £19.95
Spy V Spy, Databyte:	Reputed to be the first dual-screen game, starring the spy characters from the 'MAD' comic. One of the first and best arcade adventures. The game play is entertaining and amusing - unlike the price. £24.95
Star Raiders, Atari corp:	This space fiasco is never short of aliens to blast. £14.95
Star Wars, Domark:	Based on the battles within the film of the same name, this game brings a whole new meaning to the phrase 'non stop action'! Stunning vector graphics, sound effects and speech synthesis. £14.95
Starglider, Rainbird:	The slickest arcade game available for the ST, comprising vector graphics that almost induce travel sickness and great digitized music - an absolute must! £24.95
ST Protector and Space Station:	The former is an unimpressive 'Defender' clone, the latter is a multi-level platform game with robots and flying ducks to avoid. I can understand the robots in a space station but, flying ducks? £24.95
Supersprint, Electric Dreams:	This conversion from the popular arcade game has lost none of its appeal. An aerial view of the track and four little racing cars, induces the most reluctant to participate. £14.95
Tau Ceti, CRL:	The simple task of skimming across a desert in search of a reactor is complicated with baffling strategy. £19.95
Terramex, Grand Slam:	Flying vacuum cleaners, ferocious foliage and temples in the sky are just some of aspects that help to make this game one of the most unusual and confusing arcade and search games. £19.95
Terrorpods, Psygnosis:	Psygnosis's finest! This moon-based game has outstanding weaponry sound effects and graphics. However, the game play is somewhat confusing. £24.95
Time Bandit, Microdeal:	A classic four way scrolling arcade adventure with plenty of zap. £29.95
Time Blast, Tynesoft:	This dreadful 'Scramble'-style game is priced as cheaply as possible - but not cheap enough! £9.95
TNT, Infogrames:	This 'Commando'-style combat game showed promise with interesting graphics and different types of warfare. However, it lacks impact, which is so important for this style of game. £19.95
Tracker, Rainbird:	Set in a labyrinth, this hybrid game is neither mindless shoot'em-up nor stuffy strategy. If you are looking for something different, then this could be the answer. £24.95
Trail Blazer, Gremlin Graphics:	Manoeuvring a ball over 3D landscape proves to have limited appeal. £24.95
Trauma, Infogrames:	Another scrolling shoot'em up check it out in the test this issue £19.95
Wanderer 3D, Pyramide:	A rather impressive 3D vector graphic space shoot'em-up - supplied with 3D glasses. £24.95.
World's Greatest Epyx, Epyx:	Comprising Super Cycle, Championship Wrestling, World Games and Winter games. A sports extravaganza for an extravagant price. £29.95
Xenon, Melbourne House:	The ultimate vertical scrolling shoot'em up! £19.95
Xevious, US Gold:	A vertically-scrolling shoot'em-up based on the arcade game of the same name. £24.95

Next month, there will be the following categories:
Board, Cards and Strategy games; Simulations; Sports Simulations;
Adventures - Graphics/Role Playing, and Adventures - Graphic and Text.

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Just who do the reviewers think they are anyway?



My name is Nicholas Clarkson and I have been involved with computers for eight years. I am getting married at the end of May to my fiancé Yolande. So, when Hugh offered me this job I was happy to accept - in other words, I needed the money! My favourite computer games include: Boulderdash, Wizball and Sierra Adventures. In addition to computers I am also interested in Indian

cuisine, patchwork quilting, junk food, knitting and listening to music - and if you believe that you'll believe anything. I often sit up until the early hours tapping frantically on my 1040 in order to get work in on time! Hopefully, the Gollner empire will soon supply us all with company cars, I'm fed up with sitting on cold, smokey buses. I'm rarely seen without my trusty walkman and like listening to the likes of New Order, The Smiths and Prefab Sprout.

NC

At the age of fourteen, Samantha Snelling from form 3B was considerably more appealing than the school's computer room. With its keyboard encrusted with crumbs from lunchtime snacks and half a dozen eager boffins jostling for position at the controls, the lone Commodore Pet was, at first, of little interest to this adolescent. However, it was here that I took refuge during wet lunchtimes and, in time, inadvertently developed an interest in computing. I gratefully accepted a Sinclair ZX81 and, like many others, toiled with its limitations. I reckon that anyone who started with a ZX81 and is still interested in computers can be classed as a real enthusiast. After leaving higher education, my career in computers began in a retail software environment, which spanned from Horace and the Spiders to Commando. Over those three years, I must have played hundreds of games and so becoming an entertainment software critic was a natural progression. My other interests are in music and I class myself as a long-term student of the guitar.

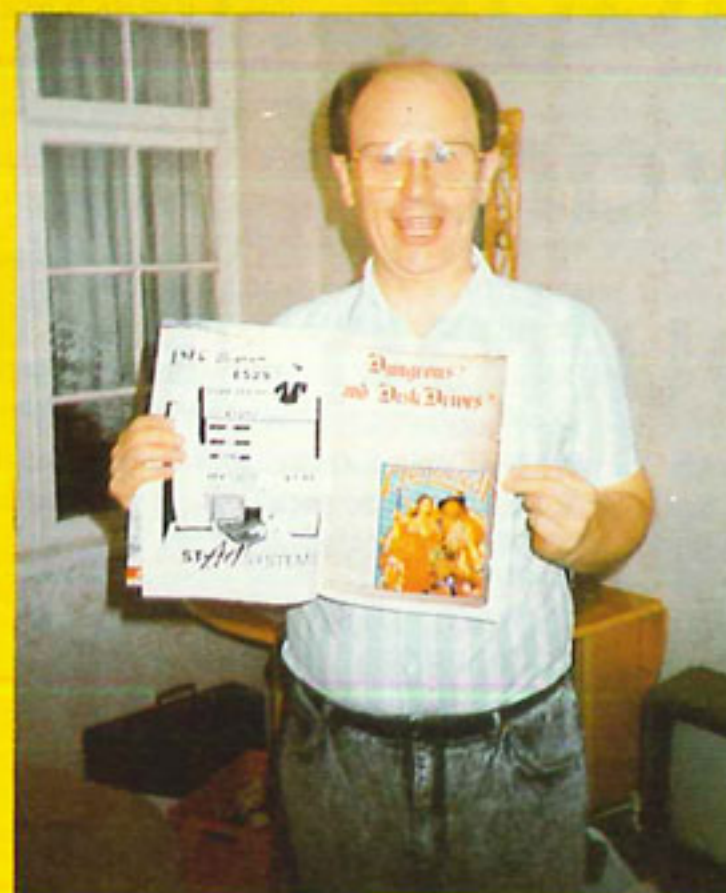


JS

I came into the world of computing and publishing only last year, after previously being in the RAF where I tried to learn to fly. However, my instructors had other ideas! Anyway, after I left the RAF, I joined Gollner Publishing as Assistant Editor and got thrown in at the deep end of the publishing world. I pursue an active lifestyle as a matter of course, and amongst skateboarding (down at Southsea Skatepark and also around Chichester on company business!), unicycling and windsurfing, I, along with Jason Spiller, play as a duo in local pubs with myself providing rhythm on drums. In my spare time, I actually manage to fit in a fairly hectic day at the office! I enjoy playing most games but, naturally, flight simulations are my favourite, with Gunship keeping me awake most evenings. Along with the majority of the ST Action team, I share a fascination for fast cars and am currently working on a 2.5 litre V6 Cortina Mk II Pro-Street custom car with my brother. As for computers, I have used Apricots (didn't like the rolling ball), PCs (can't stand a non-GEM environment for a non-buff such as myself), Macs (nice piece of kit and very much a plug-in-and-go machine, but tacky small screen) and, of course, STs (with which I feel totally at ease).



MM



Andy Mitchell, known to all as 'Mitch', is the resident Dungeon Master of the 'Dungeon and Disk Drive' column in our sister magazine, ST World. Born in Perth, Scotland, Mitch now lives in Larkfield, Kent where his 'day job' is that of a Computer Systems Manager for a large electronic company. Although he admits to being 'over 21' he is a registered adventure addict and arcade game freak. His hobbies include drawing

cartoons, reading science fiction, wrestling with his large, hairy, bearded collie dog and avoiding gardening. Having been one of the first owners of a BBC Micro, he fell in love with adventures early and has been a regular contributor to magazines, such as, the Beebug, Micro Adventurer, ST World and the DEC User. Although his first love is adventure games, he has also seen the dawn come up more than once whilst having 'one last go' at saving the Earth from the Invaders!

In addition to 'playing games' Mitch also spends his time drawing with the Degas Elite art package which he believes is possibly the best piece of software available on the Atari ST. After spending so many years playing adventures, he has become convinced that he has an invisible, 8 foot dragon as a personal friend - Mitch's friends are very worried about him!

AM

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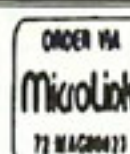
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OIDS

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ MIRRORSOFT ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Surprisingly, the title of this game was not chosen at random from an A to Z of ailments, it is, in fact, a play on the word 'Android'.

A race of evil rulers called the Biocretes have created some android slaves, which they shamelessly abuse and exploit. While these 'OIDS' toil in a filthy and dangerous environment, those heartless Biocretes live lives of gluttony and greed - smart people! However, as a member of a compassionate race, you must free the OIDS from their enforced slavery, by joining an intergalactic organization called 'SAVEOIDS'. Your mission is to pilot a V-Wing fighter which, in appearance and mannerisms, has a striking resemblance to the craft in another game with 'OIDS' in the title, 'Asteroids'.

You are presented with a list of planets which contain varying levels of danger and hazards, ranging from the relatively peaceful planet, 'Novoids', to the impossible realms of Gravodromeda. It is advised that you concentrate your first mercy mission on Novoids. Briefly, the screen displays a cockpit view as you journey through a swirling of stars until you are confronted by a barren planet. Immediately, the screen changes to show a strange and mountainous moonscape and a large

mothership floats down from the top of the screen and jettisons the small V-Wing fighter into space. The V-Wing is equipped with a limitless supply of missiles and a limited quota of devastating Novabombs, which make light work of Biocrete destruction. The craft relies on rear-engine thrust

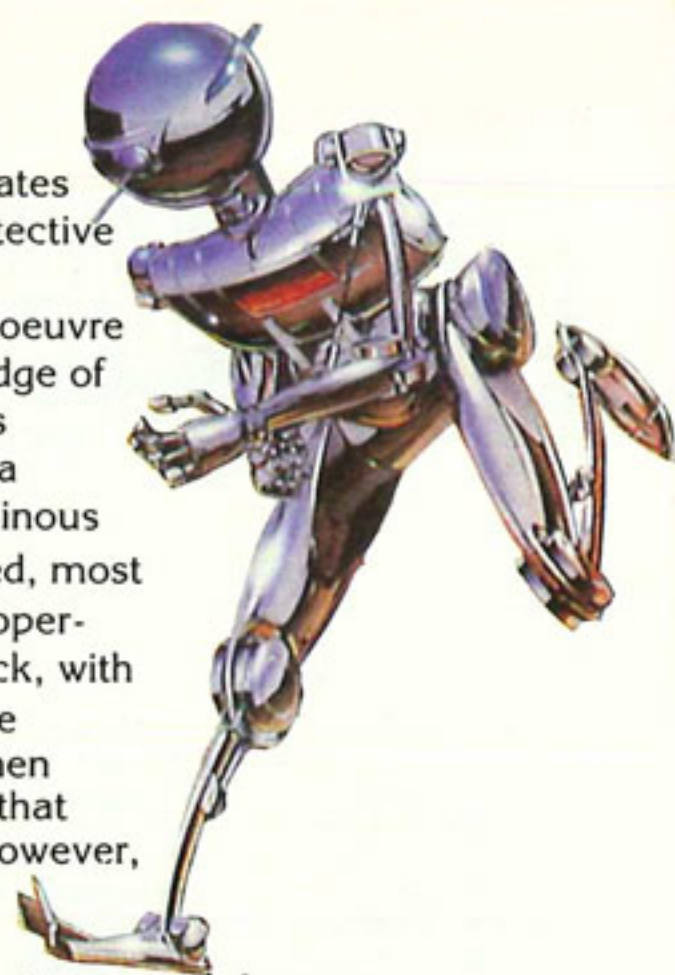
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GRAPHICS : 67%
SOUND : 40%
ADDICTIVENESS : 72%
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for its direction and manoeuvrability and, by manipulating the joystick to the left and right, you can rotate the Slapfighter 360 degrees, while pushing the joystick forwards activates the thrust. Because you only have forward thrust, halting its forward momentum requires spinning the craft in exactly the opposite direction and then applying thrust. However, the tendency is to attempt to steer the craft by pulling back

the joystick which unnecessarily activates and exhausts a protective shield.

As you manoeuvre the craft near the edge of the screen, it scrolls horizontally across a craggy and mountainous terrain. As described, most of the controls are operated with the joystick, with the exception of the spacebar which, when pressed, recharges that protective shield. However, while you are recharging the shield the game continues and if you are forced to use the shield while you are recharging, the recharge cycle is automatically aborted.

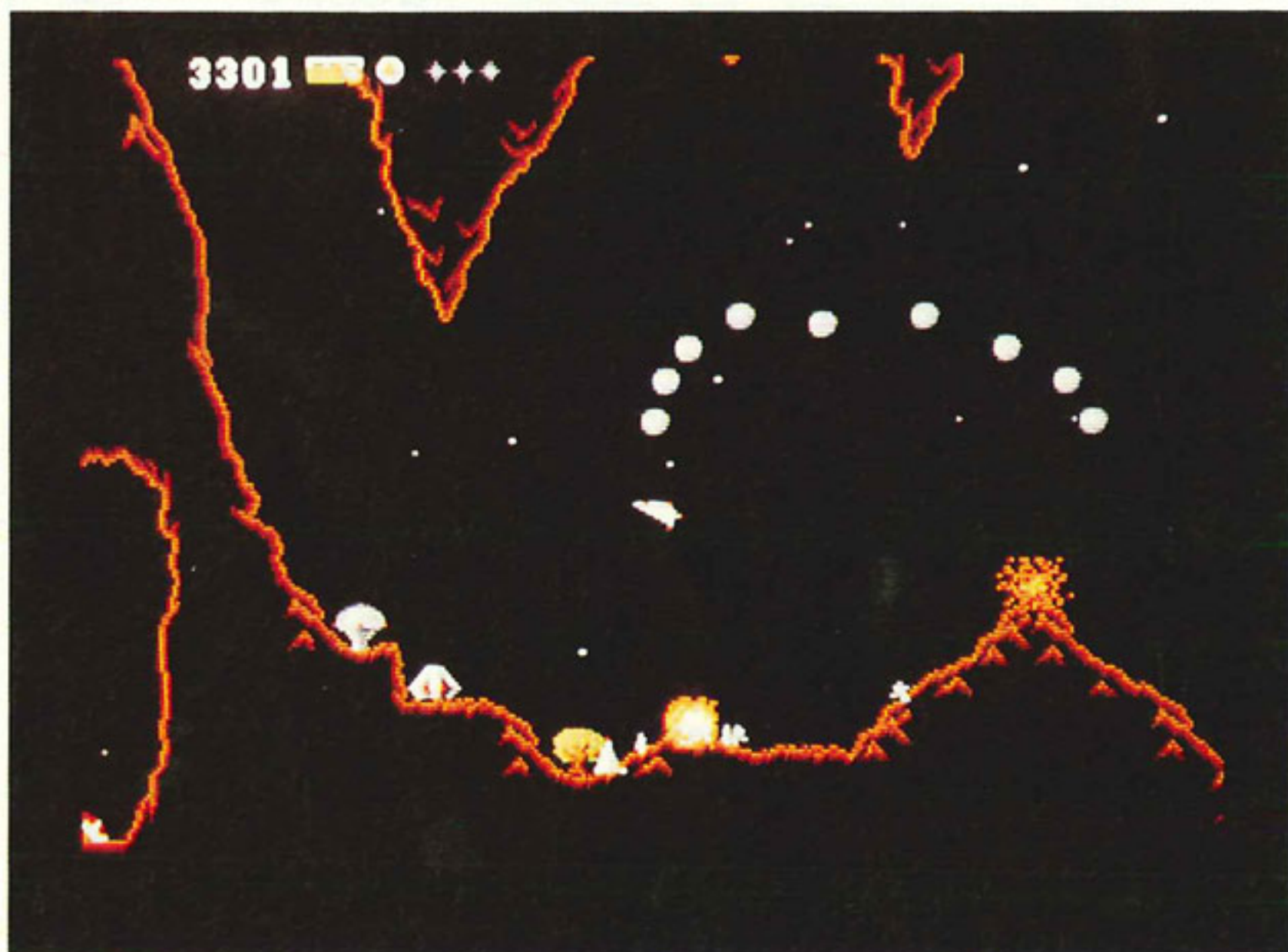


OIDS is an unusual combination of three classic arcade games: the thrust steering technique from Asteroids, the terrain from Guardian and the evacuation of stranded beings from Choplifter. Not only is this a super arcade shoot'em-up, the rescue and evacuation of the OIDS is a constructive contrast to the mindless destruction of the planet surface, which acts as a great incentive to persevere with the game. Combine this with the fact that you never quite master the thrust and velocity steering technique, and you have all the necessary requirements for a game which guarantees long-term interest - the screen designer is just an added bonus!

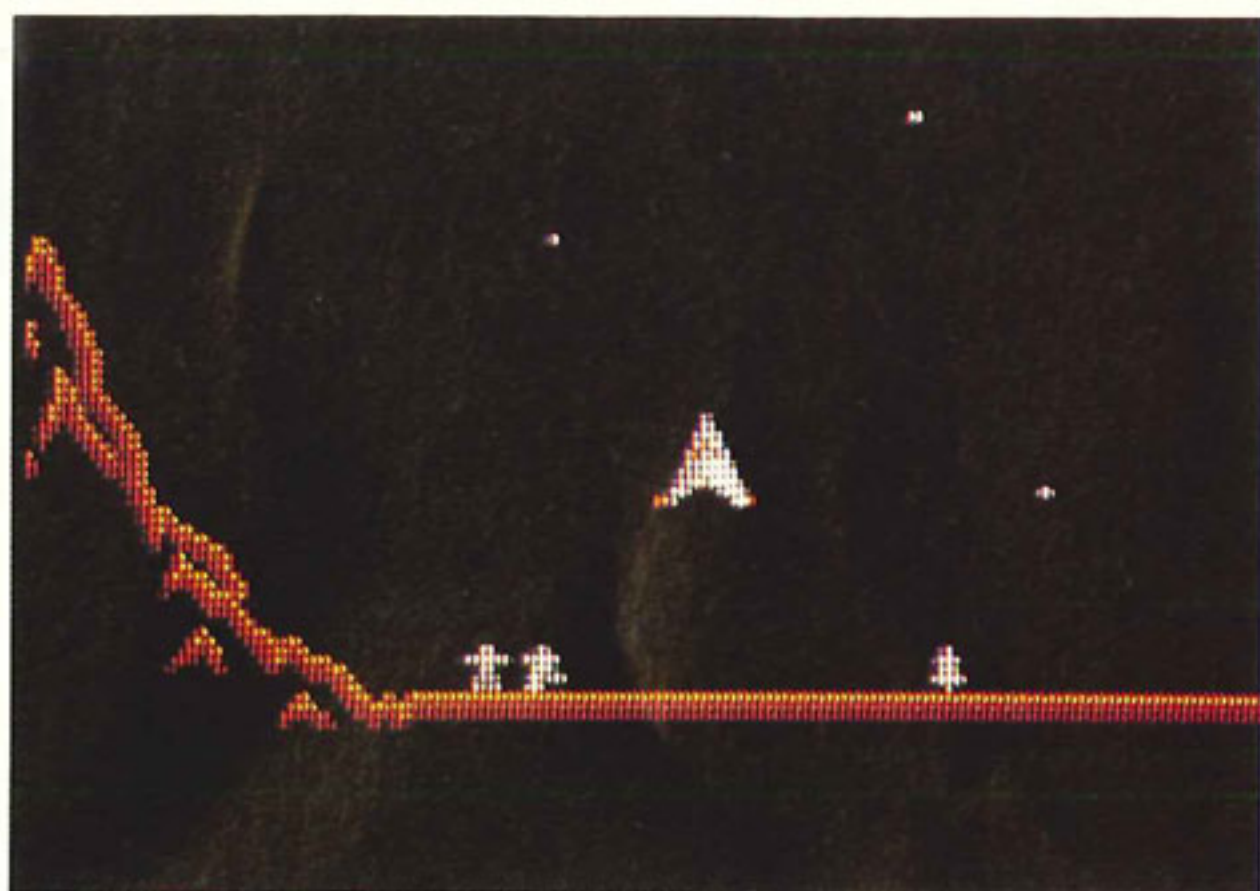
JS

Maintaining the level of these shields is vitally important, although recharging takes its toll on the fuel levels. The shield protects you from enemy fire as well as collisions with the terrain. However, enemy fire is the main cause of shield depletion, although a collision with an enemy craft whose protective shield is also activated results in almost immediate destruction. Fuel is your most precious commodity and constant thrust and shield regeneration takes its toll on your resources. Fuel replenishment relies on your success at picking up all of the stranded OIDS on the planet or, during the course of the mission, landing near a Biocrete fuel station which is represented by a hexagonal pod. You must land within reach of the fuel pipe which protrudes from the side of the fuel station and watch the fuel gauge rise.

Instrumentation comprises a status display, your current score, a colour-coded fuel indicator and shield-charge gauge. Additionally, little robotic figures signify how many evacuees you have on board. Before you can rescue the OIDS, you must destroy the factories in which they are working. However, care must be taken because if you use more force than is necessary, it is possible to inadvertently destroy the occupants of the factory. The Oids run out of the factory remains and wave, which signifies that you must find the



Oids - a mixture of many arcade games, including Choplifter and Asteroids



Close-up: your craft lands to collect several waving Oids



Your ship travelling over the alien territory

nearest piece of flat land, rotate the craft so that the nose is facing upwards and carefully control the landing. The OIDS clamber on board and once the display indicates that you are carrying eight OIDS, you must relocate the position of the mothership and dock.

The planet Novoid presents little in the way of opposition, and this enables you to master the steering of the craft. However, the next five planets introduce increasing amounts of difficulty, with the introduction of enemy vessels and rocket launchers. The planet Intermedix introduces heat-seeking missiles, while the welcoming world of Cosmoids contains squadrons of Hell Jets with the manoeuvrability of Harrier Jump-jets. However, the ultimate challenge is the planet Gravodromeda which, like its name suggests, contains a powerful gravity that constantly threatens to drag the V-Wing to the ground.

Once you have conquered all of the planetoids and have rescued the OIDS, returning to the option screen and selecting 'Editor Menu' places you in the built-in screen designer. The edit screen is almost identical to the game screen, with additional edit functions and controls. With the Shift and Control keys, you can select a variety of terrain and mountain shapes or Biocrete bases and place them on screen. Pressing the up and down cursor keys

displays the selection of mountain shapes at your disposal, while the right and left arrow keys toggle the Biocrete buildings. After making your selection, tapping the 'Insert' button places the piece of terrain or building on screen. There are two parts to the mountain ranges: bases and peaks, which must be placed in vertical columns

At first glance it would be quite easy to dismiss Oids as an over-priced space rescue game. In many respects it looks like a 'Choplifter'-type clone, your task being to destroy various laser emplacements and to rescue some of your fellow countrymen from the evil clutches of their captors. It is not until you get into the game that you begin to appreciate its beauty. The hidden extras, such as, Hell Jets, Heat-Seekers and Burst Orbs all help give the game a solid feel. Included within the program is an Oids construction kit. This final, easy-to-use feature gives the game a personal touch and really completes the package. Oids will be a big hit with many people, I'm already a fan!

NC

on the screen, comprising no more than one base and two peaks. If you try and place more than this in one column, one of the shapes which you have already positioned is automatically erased from the screen. Pressing 'F' displays a map of the entire planetoid, pinpointing the re-fuelling bases and factories and, after you have created your planetoid, tapping the 'P' key allows you to play your creation. Finally, ensuring that you have saved the original planetoid on the Library File, you can save your planetoid to a galaxy on the game disk.

STA

A cross between Choplifter, Spaceport and Scramble, but it still makes a refreshing change from the current stock of ST games. It contains the classic elements of flying a spaceship and shooting at things, but having the task of finding and rescuing the Oids turns this into less of a mindless occupation. The ground-based hazards, gravity pods and teleport gates make for entertaining flying, but the game still manages to be easy to play for long periods without becoming monotonous. The scenery would be much better filled-in, but this could have made the game smaller and less extensive. Oids is a compelling game which has a definite purpose to its scenario. It must be played at quite a leisurely pace and is not for the quick-moving 'alien onslaught' lovers.

DS



Editing a galaxy using the built-in construction set

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DUNGEON

A1

*Be prepared to drool!
After waiting for what
seems like an eternity,
Dungeon Master has
arrived.*

MASTER

-----FTL VIA MIRRORSOFT-----

Stand before the large iron gates to the dungeon, press the ruby button set in the old stone wall, and feel your eyes widen as the rusty doors swing open to reveal the dark corridor beyond. Take a deep breath, select 'Forward' with the pointer and the grey stone blocks of the corridor walls will move forwards. Here in the glow of your flickering torch you must make the first of the many decisions that will determine whether you will ever leave this place. Choose wrongly and you will spend eternity sealed within a magical mirror in the dark Hall of the Champions.

In his desire to gain the Power Crystal, the Grey Lord took one chance too many and unleashed the power of Chaos in his dungeon. Only by recovering the Firestaff from the dungeon's depths can anyone hope to fight the freed evil force. Many champions accepted the challenge, perished, and were sealed in mirror tombs within the dungeon. As the Grey Lord's apprentice you are now given the opportunity to enter the dungeon and resurrect four of the champions to form a fighting force in one last attempt.

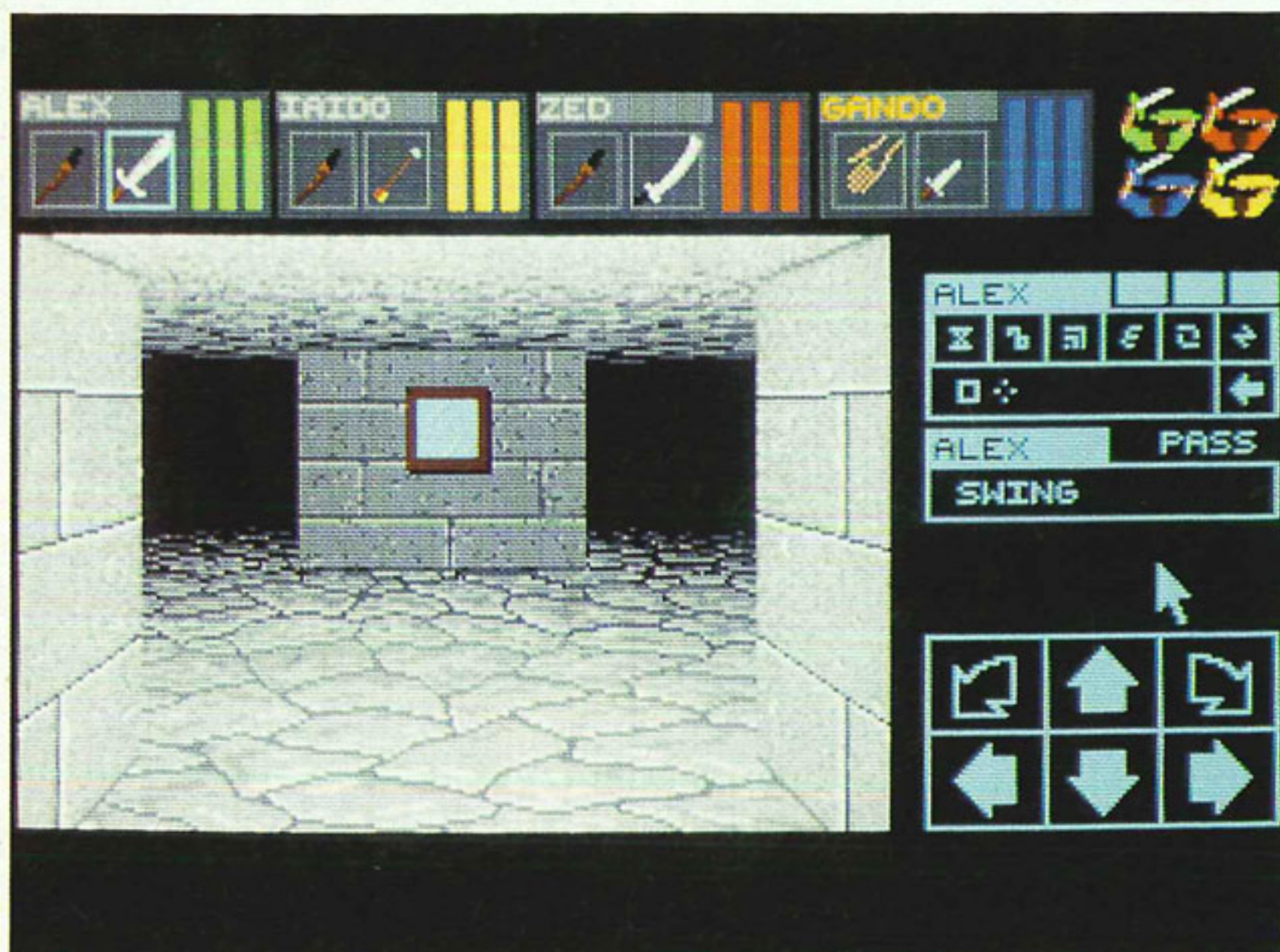
You will be able to view each of

the mirrors in the hall and examine the skills and powers of the heroes. They include an assembly of male and female fighters, magicians, healers etc. Having selected your party you may form them into the order of battle with the strongest in the lead. Before setting off into the darker recesses of the passageways you will need to find provisions and a torch. Luckily, there appears to have been a number of overloaded, greengrocery carts trundling around the area, as a quick search will find the odd apple and corn cob lying in the corners. There is also a full waterskin to be found which should help keep your mouth wet enough to whistle in the dark!

With a torch to light your way, you may now descend the first stairway into the more deadly area of the labyrinth. From here on in, you must pay close attention to detail as each wall and alcove can conceal traps and secret doors. Old portcullis gates may be raised if you press the correct button. Wooden doors will creak open if you can find and insert the correct key, and traps may be avoided if you avoid stepping on that slightly raised flagstone.

As the torch burns down, the whole scene will gradually darken so you had better have someone along with you who is carrying a spare or someone who knows a quick-fire spell. As well as the scattered food, you had better stumble over some weapons pretty quickly as there are all kinds of nasties who will charge at you from the dark and make mincemeat out of your unarmed warriors. Weapons range from the usual hardware of mayhem to the more subtle spell scrolls which will singe the eyeballs of anyone who dares look sideways at you. Should any of your gallant band end up being smashed to a pile of blood and bones, all is not lost. By collecting the bones you may return with them to a magic shrine and have the poor soul resurrected - assuming you have sufficient magic skills.

All commands may be given via the mouse pointer. Movement in the game is achieved by selecting forward and sideways arrow icons. You may view the status screen for any one of the companions and this will create a graphic window displaying his/her clothes, weapons and charts of



Dungeon Master is set amidst a labyrinth of stone-walled passages, and takes on the appearance of a fantasy role-playing game. The player must enter the chambers and collect a party of four "Champions". Guiding the party through the maze, the player will encounter many foes and puzzles at every turn. Unlike the Ultima range, Dungeon Master is icon driven. This process makes the game very accessible and I found it a joy to play. The game's graphics are very well implemented and the sound, too, although a little sparse, is of a pleasing quality. Overall, the game will provide a long-lasting challenge to the most ardent fantasy-playing freak; I think it also provides a good introduction to a would-be role-player.

NC

physical condition. Creation of spells is again carried out by selecting strange symbols from a window, whilst ensuring you also hold any required magical item. The various traps, doors and monsters found in the dungeon are displayed in beautiful, animated detail within the main window. Whenever you are engaged in battle, the 'bad guy' is shown before you swinging weapons and claws in your direction. As you direct the weapons of your companions there are various sound effects to reflect the hack and slash of the battle. You may also throw items down the corridors and this is graphically shown in the main window. Throwing a rock at a door will show the stone launched through the air and bouncing off the woodwork with a satisfying 'clunk'.

The game is supplied on a single disk and is accompanied with a 44-page booklet. The booklet includes an 18-page introductory story explaining exactly how we managed to get ourselves into this fine mess, but it omits to tell us how to get out! The remainder of the book explains the game controls and the meaning of the strange magic symbols used in spell creation.

The majority of the 3D corridors are identically drawn and this means mapping is essential if you are ever to retrace your steps. Whilst running back through the corridors carrying the bones of a dead companion, hoping to find the Alter of Rebirth before your guttering torch goes out, you'll wish you had drawn a better map on the way in! There are many

small details to help you identify a particular corridor, such as, a patch of green slime on the floor or some wall-mounted manacles, but the place is so large that things get very confusing.

The combination of the superb graphics, sound effects and the ease of game control have produced a very strong game which will be a feast for ST users.

I first saw a demo of this game twelve months ago whilst wandering through the hi-tech stores in London's West End. Mirrorsoft repeatedly promised that they would be marketing the game in the near future, but nothing ever seemed to bring its release date any closer. I knew that a game which combined adventure, combat and brilliant graphics was just what the ST needed. For too long we have had to accept revamped eight-bit games which used none of the ST's potential and consequently the results were always less than exciting. Arcade game players could not understand why anyone would want to play a boring text-only game and therefore avoided 'hack and slash' games like the plague. Dungeon Master is sure to be a game which will help change all this.

There is the chore of mapping to be carried out and the booklet does warn that, even with a map, things can get confusing. In the relatively short time I have spent playing the game, I did find the spell-casting sequence a little mind boggling. Dungeon and Dragon fans seem to delight in confusing outsiders by making the magic aspect as bewildering as possible, so I have achieved little success in this aspect. However, I have no doubt that a little confusion is a good thing as it gives the player something to puzzle out and finally conquer. Buy this game today and 'wind up' a Spectrum owner.

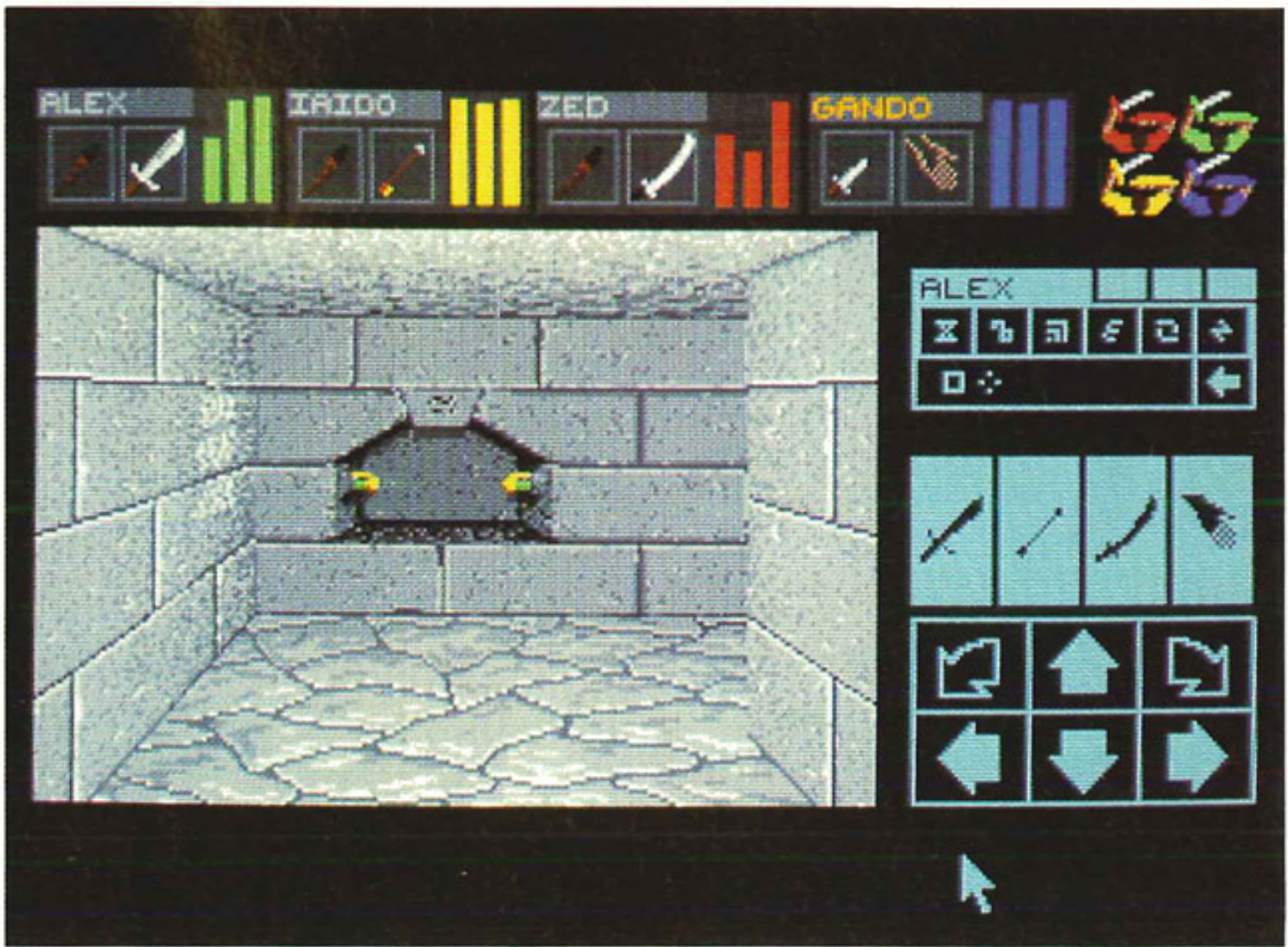
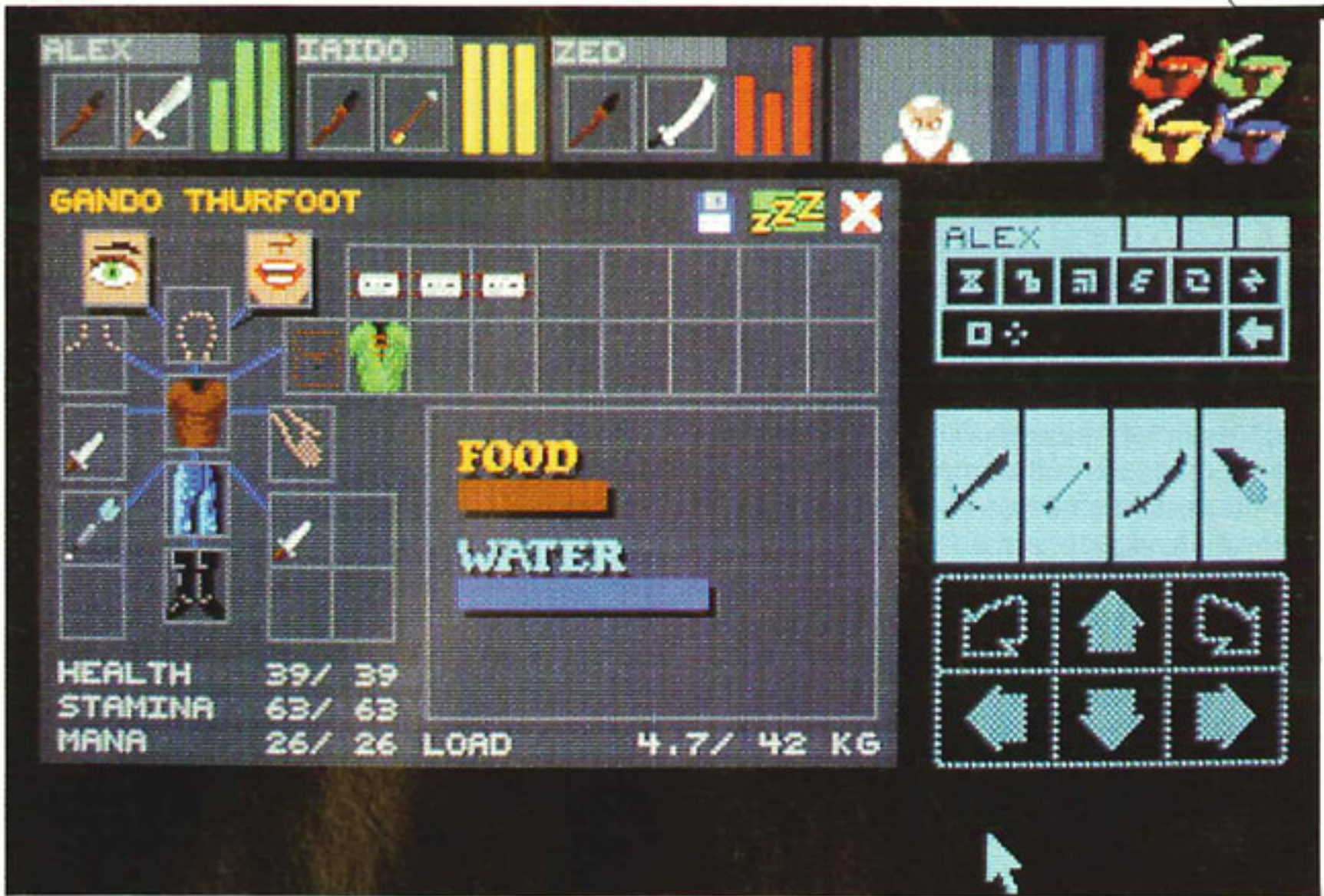
AM

STA

KEYBOARD	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
JOYSTICK	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
MOUSE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
COLOUR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
MONO	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
520ST	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1040ST	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

GAME: DUNGEON MASTER
HOUSE: MIRRORSOFT
PHONE: 01-377 4645
PRICE: £24.99
RELEASE: NOW

GRAPHICS/TEXT : 95%
ORIGINALITY : 85%
PARSER : N/A
ORIGINALITY : 90%
OVERALL : 90%
1ST DAY SCORE : N/A



JUMP JET

ANCO

I first piloted Anco's Jump Jet two years ago on various eight-bit machines and, as far as I can ascertain, the version which is now available for the ST has changed very little.

At the time of its release, there were a number of thorough and realistic aircraft simulations on the market, which emphasized the fact that Jump Jet leans further towards arcade entertainment than realistic simulation. The absence of a long-winded preparation section and a fat interactive operations manual, is the first indication that this is an unpretentious arcade game rather than a simulation. The first screen displays a picture of the Jump Jet and a menu containing four skill levels signified by progressive R.A.F. officer ranks. Each level introduces different aspects of flight and a decrease in the aircraft's tolerance to mistakes.



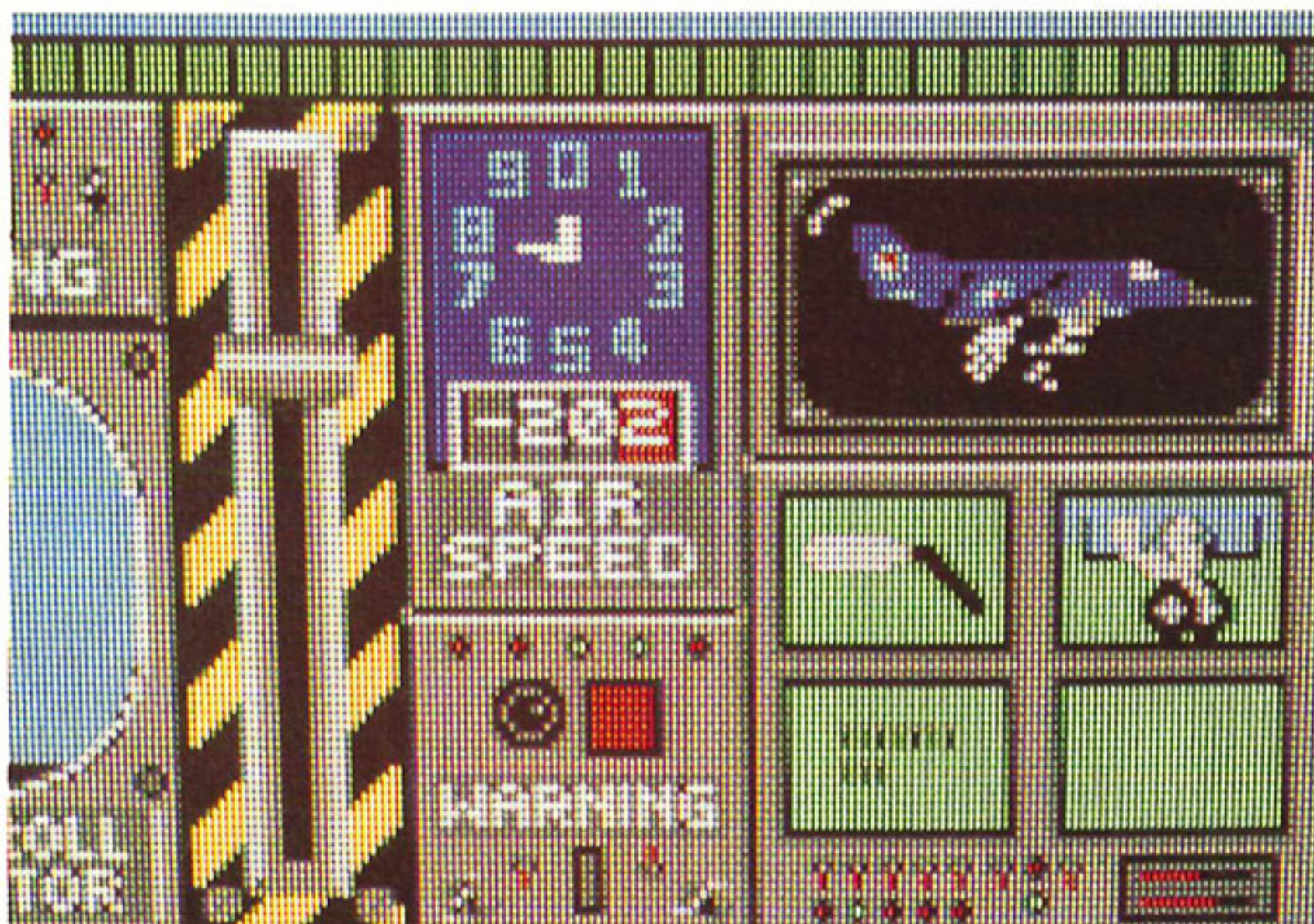
The Harrier takes Off

Jump Jet is the common name for a fixed-wing aircraft which does not require a runway to take off or land. Vertical take-off relies on the ability to alter the angle of the jet nozzles and, once the nozzles are pointing downwards, a massive increase in thrust lifts the aircraft off the ground. Pulling back on the control-column causes the nose of the aircraft to tip up, which eventually results in reverse flight. To accelerate from the vertical lift, the nozzles are set at an angle of 45 degrees and, once airspeed has reached 180 knots, the jet nozzles can be returned to the normal horizontal position. In conjunction with the manual, an odd interpretation of this unique flight theory and take-off procedure is covered in 'Level 1'.

Selecting the 'Practice' level reveals a cockpit instrumentation layout and, through the cockpit windshield, an overhead view of the Jump Jet on the aircraft carrier. A 'Wing-tip' icon on the instrumentation panel shows the position of the flaps, which can be moved up and down by pressing the 'F' key. After ensuring that the flaps are down for take-off, selecting the '3' key activates vertical thrust. The 'plus' and 'minus' keys increase and decrease the power of the thrust and the level is shown on a sliding power gauge. Full power is needed to achieve take-off and, once airborne, you must reduce power to 75 per cent in order to maintain the height and prepare for horizontal movement.

Successfully completing this brief flight lesson enables you to return to the option-screen to select one of the missions. The game-screen returns and, remembering the take-off procedure, you can take off and hover at around fifty feet. Immediately, the screen changes to show a side view of the aircraft carrier and the Jump Jet hovering above it. Once you have climbed to over 200 feet, the screen alters again to show the split-screen display of the sea and sky environment through the cockpit windshield. Finally, you are actually inside the cockpit and, as soon as the Airspeed gauge indicates 180 knots, tapping key '4' activates forward thrust. Before you exceed 300 knots, the flaps and undercarriage must be raised by pressing the 'F' and 'U' keys.

It is acknowledged that the joystick is an excellent substitute for an aircraft's control-column. However, by incorporating the directional controls within the mouse, Anco have foolishly disregarded the opportunity of injecting some realism into Jump Jet. Additionally, with the exception of the more traditional and recognizable aircraft dials, the instrumentation is imaginative rather than authentic. The instrument panel at the bottom of the

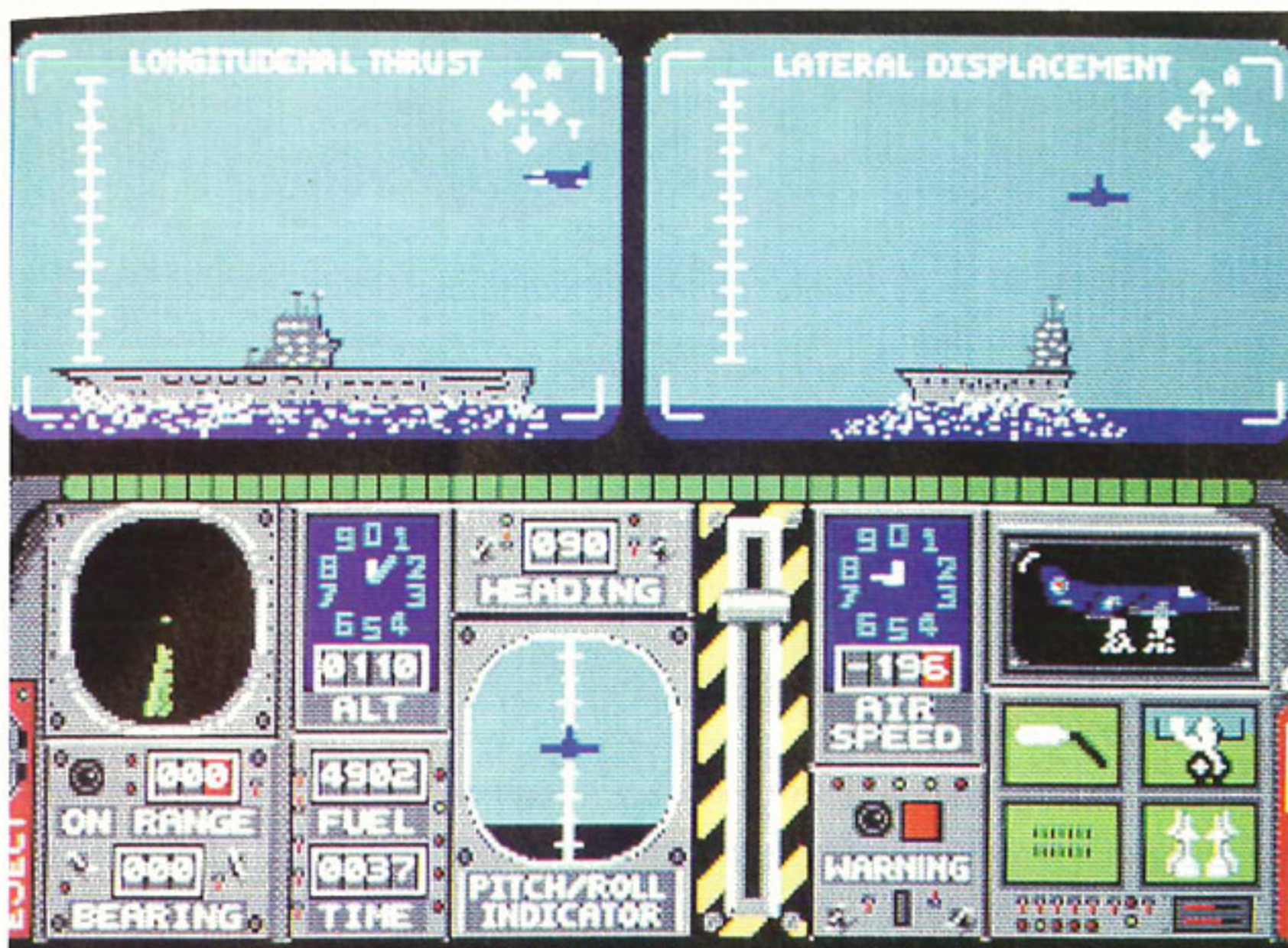


The control panel shows the novel directional controls that make the Harrier so special

KEYBOARD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
JOYSTICK	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
MOUSE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
COLOUR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
MONO	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
520ST	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1040ST	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

GAME: JUMP JET
HOUSE: ANCO
PHONE: 0322-92513
PRICE: £14.95
RELEASE: NOW

GRAPHICS : 45%
SOUND : 30%
ADDICTIVENESS : 36%
ORIGINALITY : 42%
OVERALL : 42.3%
1ST DAY SCORE : N/A



The Harrier Jump Jet prepares for landing on the carrier

screen houses a Sweep Radar, a Heading and Pitch Roll indicator and a weapons inventory. If you attempt a manoeuvre contrary to procedure or are in danger of crashing, a red light flashes to warn you of your mistake and, as you progress up the ranks, you are allowed less warnings before the mission and game are aborted. In addition to the aircraft's decreasing tolerance towards your mistakes, each succeeding level contains more bad weather and rough seas and a greater number of enemy aircraft and missile attacks.

Flying over 5000 feet exposes your aircraft to enemy radar and so it is important to keep a constant watch on the Altimeter. Your own radar indicates enemy aircraft within a five-mile radius and, in preparation for a confrontation, pressing the 'M' key activates 'Attack' mode. With the missile tubes armed and the Weaponry Sights fixed on the cockpit windshield, the solid-graphic enemy aircraft emerges on the horizon - you have no option but to engage your foe. The sights are not

separate from the directional controls and so you have to manoeuvre the aircraft itself to bring the enemy into the sights. Pressing the 'L' key locks the missile on to the target and a 'Lock On' sign illuminates on the Message Bar to confirm. As the enemy aircraft draws near, clicking the right-hand button dispatches the missile and, if the target is destroyed, the aircraft bursts into flames and an unnecessary message lights up to confirm your success.

Missile attacks are frequent in the higher rank levels and because of their size and speed, the radar fails to pick them up. Fortunately however, your trusty and unlikely message bar warns you of the approaching missile and gives the distance and bearing. Turning the aircraft to face the missile, you must judge the distance and anticipate its arrival. Attempting to intercept the missile with your own weaponry is futile, especially when you consider the cumbersome controls. Therefore, pressing the 'C' key releases a decoy material called Chaff, which lasts for about five seconds. If you have anticipated

When you consider the quality of the aircraft simulations which are available for the ST, Anco could not have chosen a worse time to release Jump Jet. Yet again, it would appear that their airborne folly has failed to be accepted as a serious simulation. The outside aircraft views during the take-off and landing scenes fail to present an acceptably realistic simulation. Additionally, although the mouse-controls leave one hand free to operate the keyboard functions, they do not even remotely resemble realistic aircraft controls, let alone emulate them. Microprose effectively disguised the jerky scrolling in F15 Strike Eagle with perspective lines drawn across the terrain, which also enhanced the feeling of movement and speed. In Jump Jet, however, without the Airspeed Indicator and the occasional cloud, it would be difficult to tell whether you were actually moving or just hovering!

JS

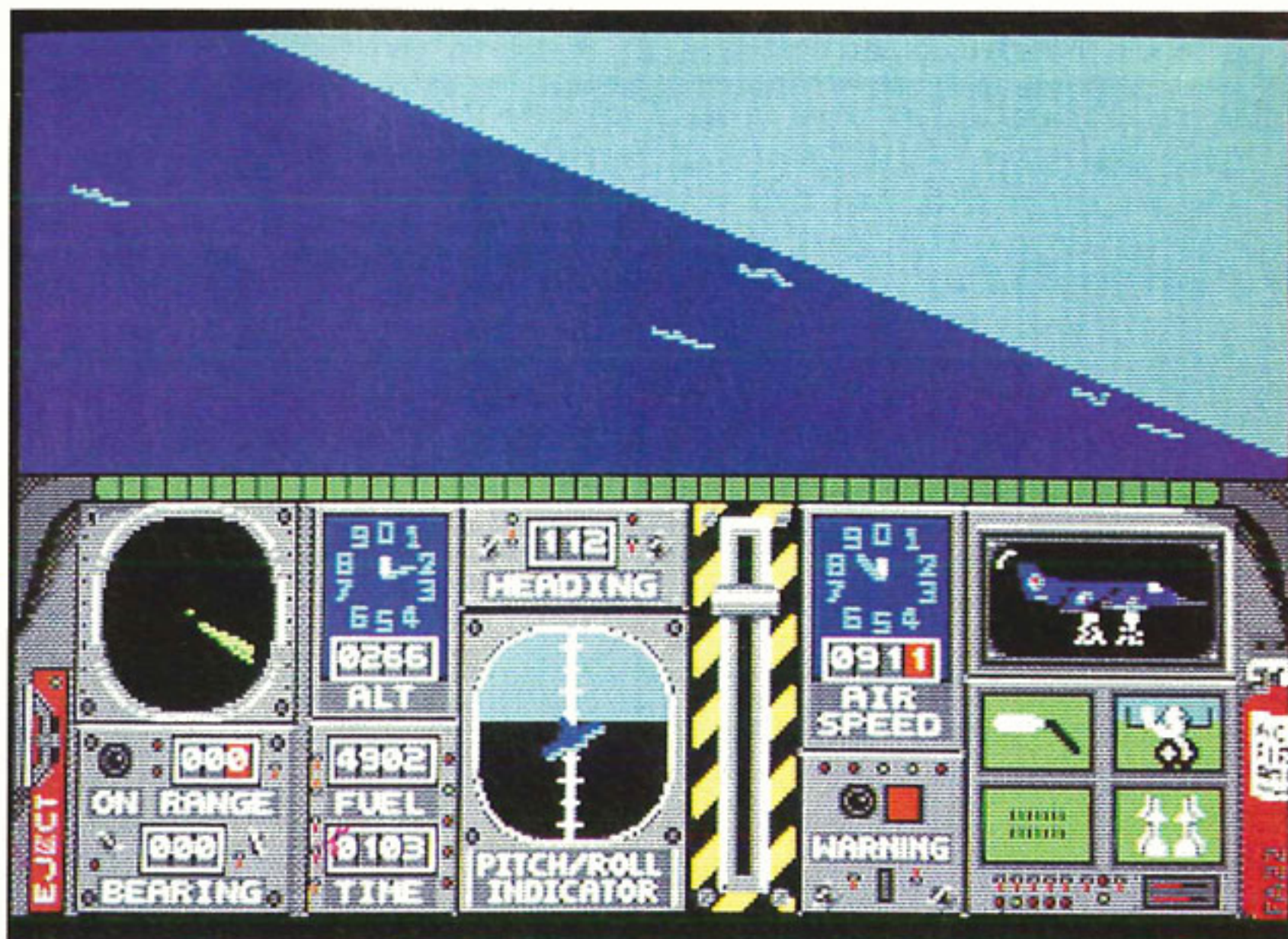
the arrival of the missile correctly, it will home in on the Chaff, allowing you to alter your direction. In the higher levels, the enemy aircraft are also equipped with Chaff, which affects your weaponry.

Combat and pursuit reduces your fuel levels considerably and so you must relocate the position of your aircraft carrier on the radar. The ship is visible within five miles and, as you approach, you must drop below 200 feet and steadily reduce your speed. As your airspeed drops below 20 knots and you are within 30 feet of the landing pad, you are again presented with the view from outside the aircraft. Finally, ensuring that the jet is over the landing pad, pressing the 'minus' key reduces the thrust which brings the Jump Jet down to land.

STA

Oh no, not another flight simulation! Anco's Jump Jet puts you in control of a Naval Harrier fighter. In some ways I found this easier to play than others I have attempted. For instance, getting off the ground presented no difficulties due to the vertical take-off characteristics. But once in the air I found control (via the mouse) quite tricky with a tendency for the aircraft to over-react to my movements. I only really managed to play level 1, and had great difficulty landing and refuelling. Later levels promised adverse weather conditions and enemy encounters to add to the game's overall interest. I, for one, was not overly impressed with Jump Jet, and could, therefore, only recommend it to those who enjoy their simulated flight.

NC



The out-of-cockpit display is far from stunning as a few pathetic clouds stagger past

SECONDS OUT

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ TYNESOFT ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

The crowd roar, the contestants enter the arena. Ding, ding, seconds out its Tynesofts boxing simulation.

Take two martial arts characters, draw a few pagodas and Tibetan mountains in the background, and you have an unarmed combat game in which the fighters display relatively realistic movements. However, put two wrestlers or boxers in a ring and they develop large, cartoon-like bodies and lose control of their limbs. Both big Frank Bruno and Barry McGuigan have endorsed boxing games for the eight-bit market, which must have caused them some embarrassment. Surprisingly, Seconds Out is the first boxing game for the ST and, like Bruno's boxing game, it displays an end-on view of the boxers rather than the traditional side view, adopted in the majority of unarmed combat games.

To win the coveted and fiercely contended WB title, you must eliminate five international boxers. The first contender comes from Millwall, England. Standing five feet six inches tall and weighing in at a massive 120 pounds, the mighty Joe Weed is, as

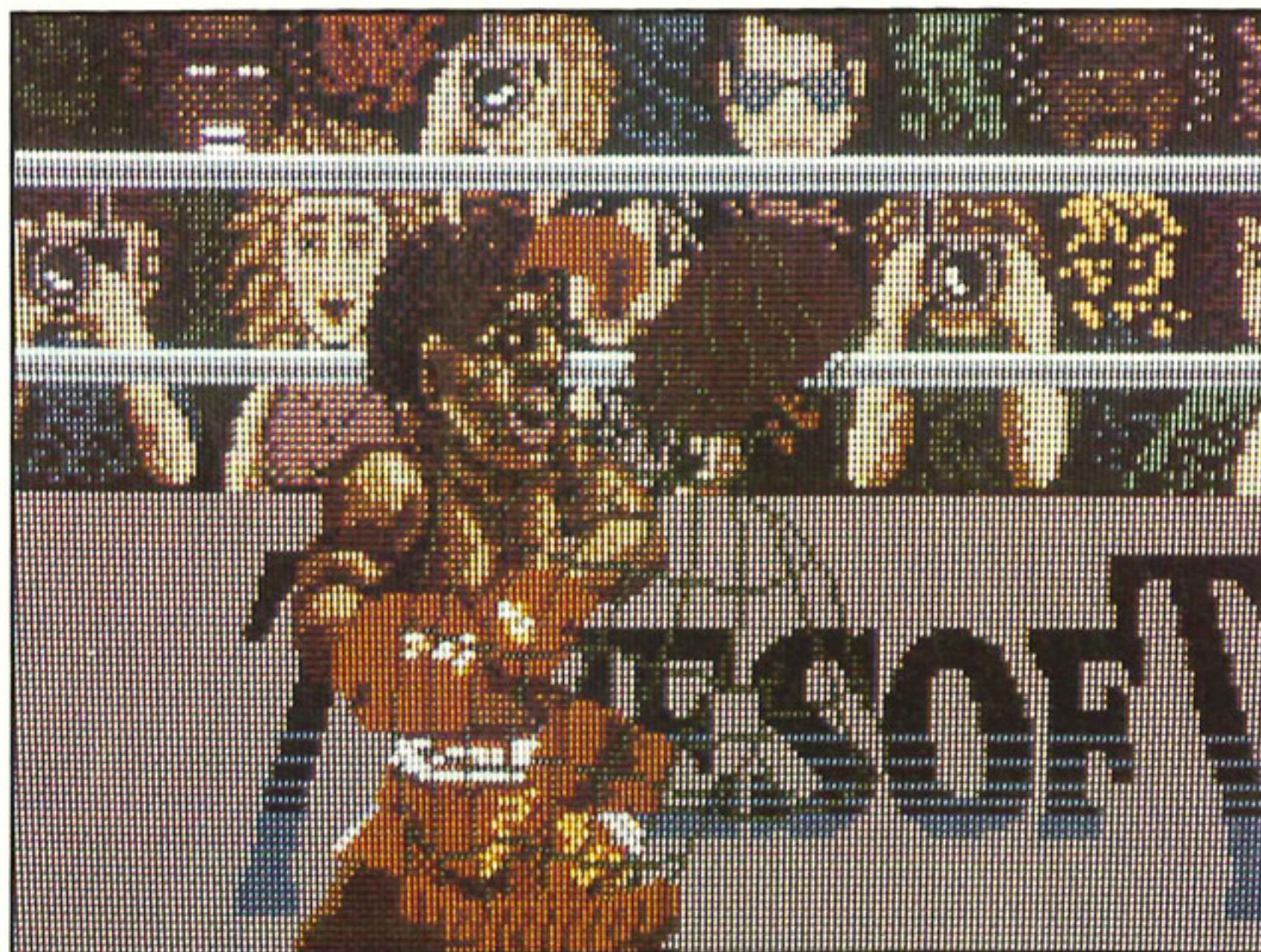
his name subtly suggests, the weakest contender in the game. The game screen is dominated by a boxing ring with your comical and cartoon-like opponent facing towards you. In Bruno's boxing game, the opposing fighter was obscured by the boxer under your control and Tynesoft have attempted to rectify this by creating a see-through, wire-frame boxer. However, both sets of boxing gloves are red and, when the boxers are

aligned, it is difficult to tell which gloves belong to whom. Above the ring, a status display houses an energy gauge that decreases when your boxer sustains a blow and increases as he gets the better of the opposition. Additionally, a glove-shaped 'KO' gauge pulsates to indicate when your opponent is exhausted and, with a right hook, you can knock him out. This runs in conjunction with a Knock-out meter, which rises every time your

boxer's glove makes contact with your opponent's body and decreases when you sustain a hit. The right hook is the only punch that can cause a knockout in this game.

Joe Weed shuffles pathetically from one side of the ring to the other and, in order to swiftly eliminate this embarrassing spectacle and move on to the more serious contenders, you must move your boxer in reach of the retreating Mr Weed by pulling the joystick to the

left or right. Through your wire-frame fighter, you can watch the position of your opponent's gloves and, as he puts his guard down, pushing the joystick forwards brings your guard up. Then, with left and right joystick manipulation, you can hit the opponent alternately with both fists. Naturally, your opponent brings his gloves up to protect himself and so pulling the joystick backwards brings your gloves down to his torso. Quickly, before he can benefit from your dropped guard, you must press the



Fist to fist combat - the sprites are both big and colourful

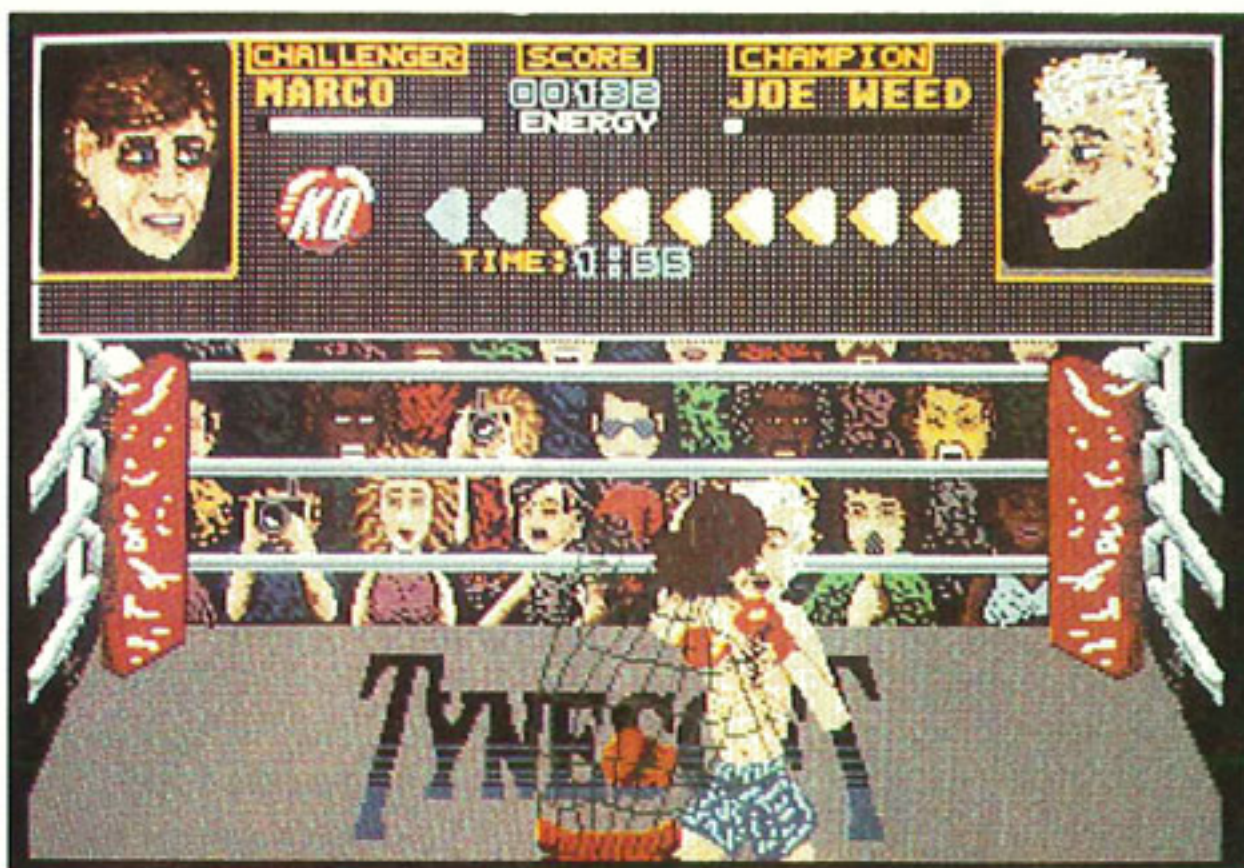
Blisters and perhaps a strained joystick are guaranteed in Seconds Out, enjoyment and long-term interest are not! This is not a game of strategy, technique or tactics; it is a long and drawn-out slugging match. The controls are more distinct than in other boxing games I have played, but with only two types of punches and defensive moves, there is little variety. Additionally, the wire-frame boxer is a pointless exercise, as the side view, which is adopted in the majority of unarmed combat games, is far more effective. The game's strength is its so-called 'amusing', cartoon-like opponents which, in my opinion, fail to enhance the appeal of the game. It would appear that while martial arts is an excellent subject for computer simulation, boxing appears to be a hopeless case.

JS

GAME: SECONDS OUT
HOUSE: TYNESOFT
PHONE: 091-414 4611
PRICE: £19.95
RELEASE: NOW

GRAPHICS : 57%
SOUND : 24%
ADDICTIVENESS : 60%
ORIGINALITY : 49%
OVERALL : 54%
1ST DAY SCORE : 2500

KEYBOARD	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
JOYSTICK	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
MOUSE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
COLOUR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
MONO	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
520ST	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1040ST	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



The player is shown in outline form, and his opponent faces you



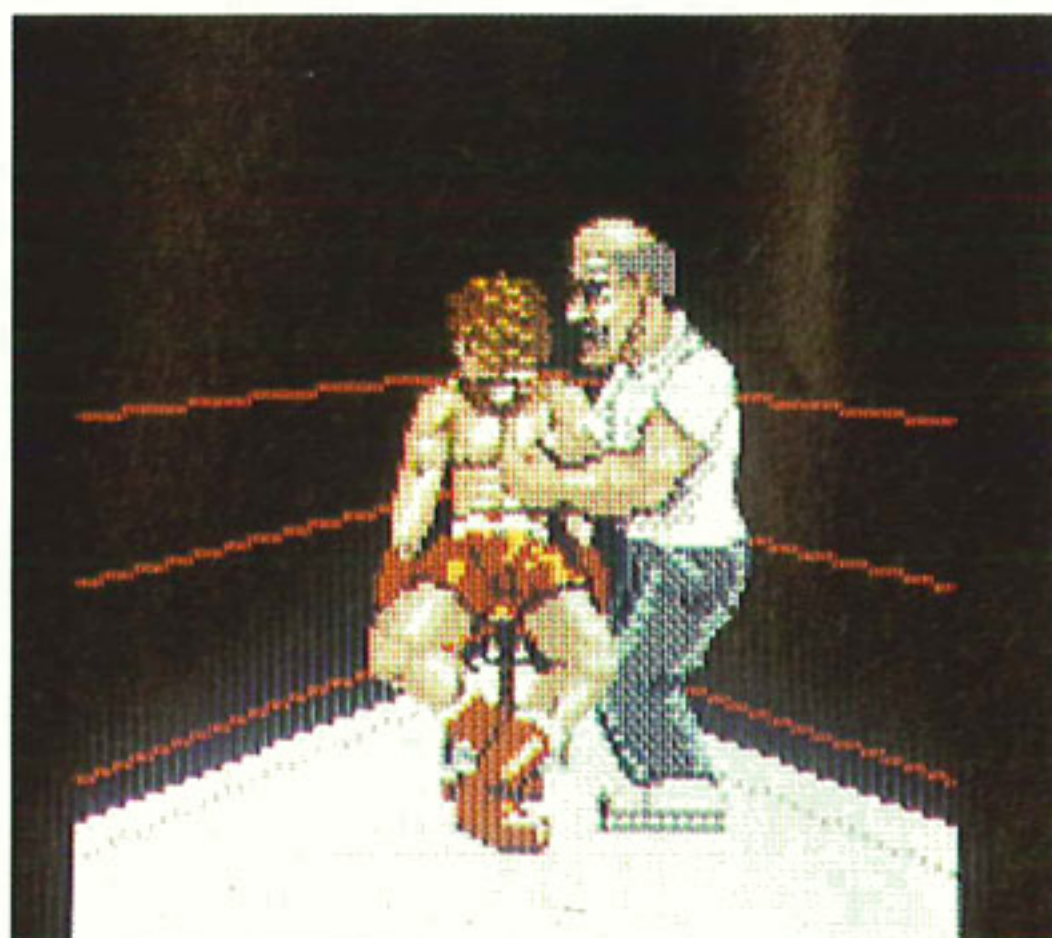
Your first opponent is Joe Weed and he's literally a push over!

firebutton again and continue the assault with body punches.

Eliminating Joe Weed promotes you to the next fight, which is against the Jamaican contender, Bonecruncher Jones. Bonecruncher is described as a slow but powerful puncher and so this bout tests your resolve and endurance, as well as the strength of your joystick! Bonecruncher rarely lets his guard down and so this bout is a tiresome and unenjoyable slugging match. Your only chance of speeding up the process is to wait for the KO meter to pulsate and try for that right hook. The hook is a slow and cumbersome move and, if the opponent manages to hit you while your guard is down, his energy meter begins to increase again and you lose that hard-earned advantage. Between each round, your boxer returns to his corner and, with the joystick, you can control the trainer to tend to him with water and smelling salts. Confusingly, while the boxer is sitting in his corner, his wire-frame body is

filled in with solid graphics!

From Scotland, Mike 'Hammerhead' Hagman is an unlikely candidate for the World Boxing title. Bearded and bespectacled, this Glaswegian more resembles a chemistry teacher than a boxer. However, his forte is the head-



butt and, periodically, he brings his head forward in an attempt to crack skulls with your fighter. Of course, this is against WBA regulations, but as there is no referee in the ring to officiate, anything goes! If you avoid

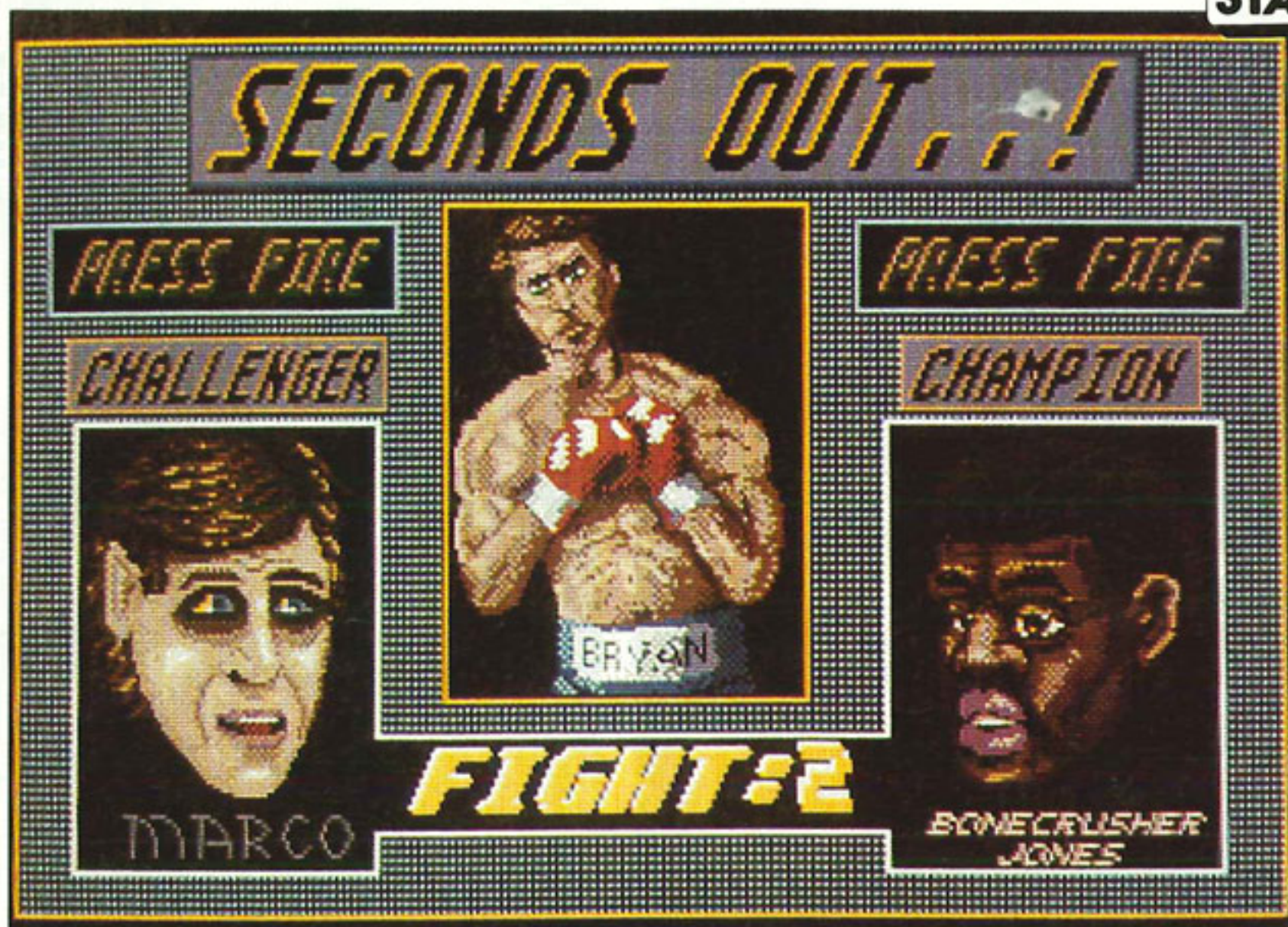
those skull-numbing head-butts, this bout can be easily won on points. With the WB title in sight, the fast and powerful American, John J. Ronco, enters the ring and, immediately, you are forced to go on the defensive. Because a hit only registers if it makes contact with your boxer's body, you must guard and block with the gloves to maintain your energy level. Again, it is unlikely that you will be able to KO this opponent and so this bout also lacks variety.

Usually, when a Russian character is included in a game of this sort, he is called something like 'Ivan the Terrible' or 'Vlad the Destroyer'. Tynesoft, however, have named their undefeated Russian champion Mick 'Masher' Mallone - presumably he is of Irish descent. The champion enters the ring and, because you are weakened from the four previous bouts, Tynesoft have ensured that he remains unbeaten. However inapt his name, your time in the ring is brief and frustrating, and with weary wrists and a dwindling interest for the game, you must return to the beginning and fight each of the contenders all over again.

STA

"Well 'arry, *Seconds Out* is truly a steady contender, know what I mean?" I, being a keen follower of goings-on in the ring, was quite excited when Tynesoft's latest release stepped into the office. I found the game fun to play, the graphics are clear and well drawn. I was particularly impressed with the features on the opponent's faces - Bonecrusher Jones really did look surprised when he lost on points. The game eases you into your challenge by presenting the boxers in their order of skill. Not all of the fighters play fair - would someone tell Hammerhead Hagman that headbutting is not in the WBA rules? *Seconds Out* is a well-implemented game, but don't think it's all action without the pain, my joystick hand was throbbing by the time I was finally decked. Buy it.

NC



Before the fight you get a chance to see who you'll be bashing

BEYOND ZORK

----- INFOCOM -----

The release of a new Infocom adventure is always a cause for celebration amongst adventure fans. The famous ZORK trilogy of games was set in the Great Underground Empire of Lord Dimwit Flathead and the caves and corridors of that ancient land have been the battleground for tens of thousands of adventurers.

This game begins in the last days of the empire when a small group of citizens realise the end is in sight and they decide to hide the final secret in the 'Coconut of Quendor'. The secret will remain safe and hidden until one day, far in the future, some lowly peasant will be called to embark upon the quest and unravel the great

mystery. And that's where you come in!

Previous Infocom adventures have occasionally included a small fight sequence, such as, the battle with the Troll in Zork I. In this game, the fighting aspect has been brought to the forefront and it plays a major part in the adventure. At every turn there are ghoulies, ghosties and long-legged beasts eager to pull you limb from limb and send you home to

Mum in a matchbox. To help prevent this sorry state, the game is littered with weapons and magic items of the most vicious kind. Rusty daggers, fire-blasting rods and spell scrolls to turn things inside out! As with most games of this type, there are 'Olde Shoppes' selling magic and weapons whose proprietors have never heard of the 'Under 18 Rule'. If the 'Olde Magik Shoppe' and its little-old-lady owner seems familiar to you, then a glance at

GAME: BEYOND ZORK
HOUSE: INFOCOM
PHONE: 01-431 1101
PRICE: £ 24.99
RELEASE: NOW

TEXT/GRAPHICS : 70%
GAMEPLAY : 80%
PARSER : 70%
ORIGINALITY : 70%
OVERALL : 72%



the name of the game's author showing a bell. Brian Moriarty also wrote the great game WISHBRINGER, in which the Magik Shoppe and the old lady also appeared.

There are castles, lighthouses, cellars and forests to hack through to explore. There is a Cruel Puppet, a Dust Bunny and an army of Christmas trees to do battle with. There are milk potions, scrolls of forgetfulness and a staff of levitation to wield. The whole potpourri has been mixed well together with a large dose of fun and mystery.

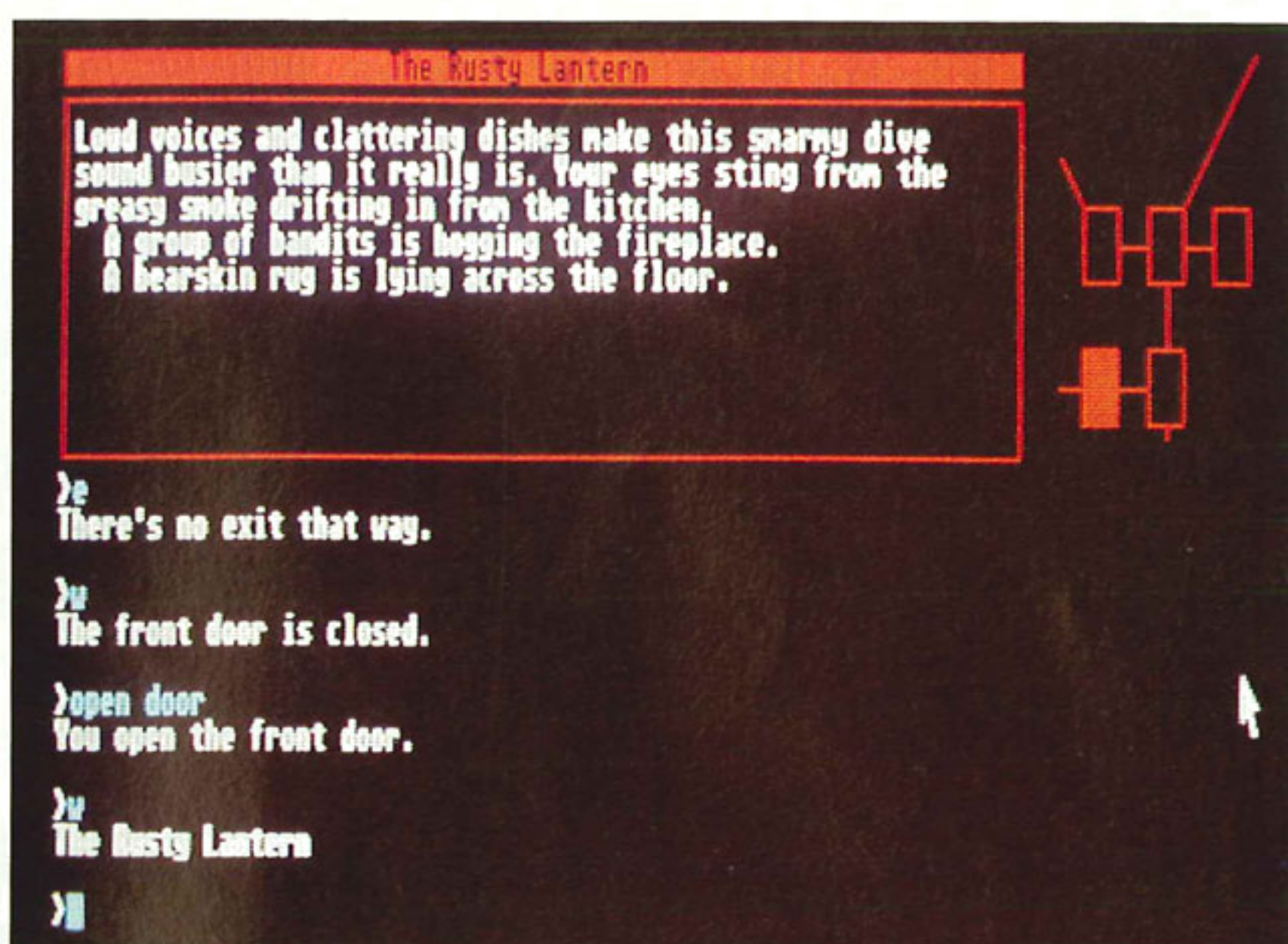
If you had not been told that this was an Infocom adventure, I suspect you would not recognize it as such, for the game has a very different appearance and feel to its predecessors. The game has changed its outward appearance to a completely new format and brought in many new ways of controlling the action.

The first signal that things are not as they were, is the appearance of a graphic loading screen - an unheard of piece of frippery for Infocom. The game then reveals medium resolution, coloured text. Shock, horror! Where are the good old black and white screens of yesteryear? If black characters on a white background were good enough for my granny, then they are

I like the way the screen and keys may be changed to suit personal preferences, and I especially like the map-drawing facility which almost renders the paper map redundant. It's a pity that Infocom is not aware of the numbers of penniless British players who are using a TV screen in place of a monitor. To bring out text games which can only be played in medium mode, and then to insert weird fonts to write their magic words, can be painful to the optics. I am also not so sure that I wish to have these goodies if it means that the game vocabulary is going to suffer. When the room's full description is 'A shadowy room, littered with old barrels', I begin to feel uneasy about standards. When I then type, 'Examine Barrels' and receive the reply, 'I don't know the word barrels', I get downright suspicious.

Not being a great fan of, 'You hit the monster 3 hits' games, I started this game with trepidation. I must confess, however, that if ever I were to be converted, this game would be the one to do it. The text may be shorter, but the Infocom magic is still there. The puzzles and fun are there in the machine - the wrapping is just different. The ST has memory to include both the enhancements and the full text. Let's hope future games can have both.

AM



The all-new screen layout - Infocom's bid to catch up with the opposition?

good enough for me. On the other hand, black on white screens are just great for frying your eyeballs!

The next revelation is the appearance of a small box on the right-hand side of the screen. The box has small lines sticking out from it at various angles. It soon becomes apparent that this interesting shape is the beginning of an automatic map-drawing facility which slowly spreads as you wander through the southlands of Quendor. (Just think, no more spaghetti maps drawn on the back of listing paper!) Movement around the map can be carried out in the usual way giving the north/south commands or by pointing at the map window with the mouse.

The top row of function keys have been preset with the most useful commands and these may be redefined to other commands of your own choosing. You may also define new words to replace words that the game already understands. As the game features a pterodactyl, (try typing that without a dictionary!) you can make the game recognise the word 'BAT' in its place. Having 'taught' the game the word 'BAT' you may now type 'BLAT BAT' to give the beast a severe headache.

A status screen showing your current state may be called up when required or you may choose to have it permanently displayed. The name of the game appears to be: 'Let the player decide the screen layout'.

There is, of course, a price to pay for all these goodies and that appears to be less text. Instead of the usual screenfuls of text we are used to seeing within an Infocom game, the text appears to have been put through a 'Scroll of Shinkage'. The number of words understood by the game has

I enjoyed this game. Its layout differs from previous Infocom games in that, instead of just straight text, it can also display a simple map. I also liked the being able to use the mouse to point the direction in which to move. Another new feature about it, is the split 'windowing'. The first window is used to display information of your choosing, room description, inventory or status. The second window displays your commands and the replies. The map diagram I found particularly useful, especially when used in conjunction with the mouse and pointer. The one irritation being that the diagram did not show closed doors.

I ran this game using both a black-and-white and a colour TV. While it is obviously not as good as using a monitor, it is possible to play the game as long as you read the text carefully.

SK

also been dramatically reduced, and you will meet the dreaded 'I don't know that word' monster more often than you have seen him in the past.

The game pack includes what appears to be a tea-towel souvenir showing a map of Quendor, plus a booklet entitled 'The Lore and Legends of Quendor'. The book has illustrations of the monsters and their weaknesses which is essential reading for all would-be heroes.

STA

COLOUR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
MONO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
520ST	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
1040ST	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

WARLOCK

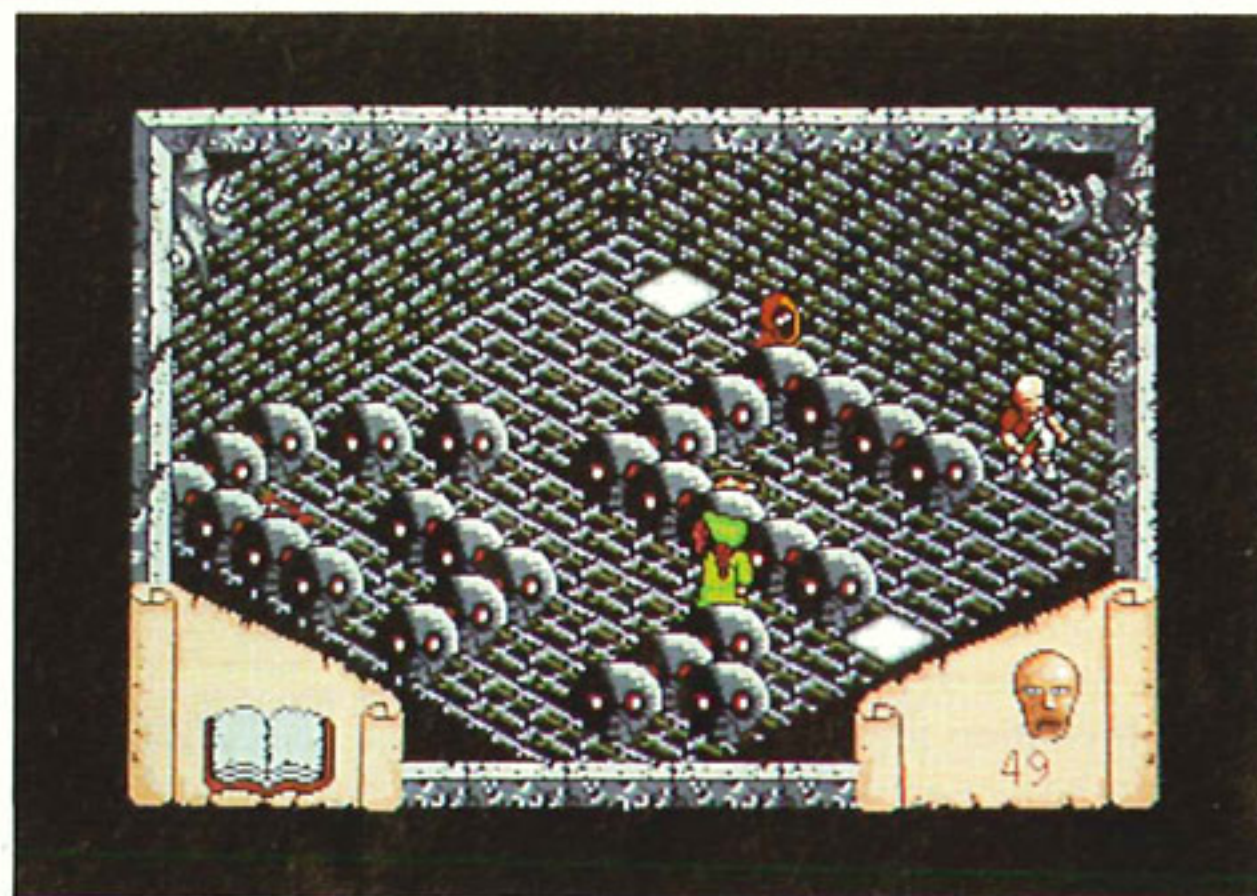
THE EDGE

Computer games that contain wizards, goblins and trolls have never been my goblet of mead. However, one man's poison is another man's potion and so The Edge have made their successful eight-bit arcade adventure, called Warlock, available to ST users. A plexus of three-dimensional rooms are linked together by doorways and you must take the role of the evil Doomlord, whose castle is under siege from the White Wizard and his hordes of do-gooders. You begin the game as a Warlock, but you can change into a Goblin or Troll by moving the character near the so-called Changeling Skulls, which are perched on pedestals around the castle. The Warlock must touch the particular skull that represents the form that you wish him to adopt.

The cursor keys control whichever character you choose to portray, while the 'X' and 'Z' keys project magic blasts and spells. Those awful forces of good emerge from the floor in the form of damsels, knights and wizards, and one magic blast from the 'Z' key freezes the do-gooder, while a second puts them

out of the game for good. If you choose to portray the Troll, you can crush the goody-goodies with brute force, while the Warlock and Goblin demonstrate less crude magical powers. The holes from which the do-gooders emerge can be momentarily sealed with multiple blasts. Warlock contains the usual quota of the sort of objects that have become icons in these magic and lore games. Keys open locked doors, which stand between you and vital resources that replenish your Magic and Might levels. Collecting small orbs increases your firepower with exhaustible Zap spells, which must only be used in emergencies. When you portray the Warlock or Goblin, pressing the 'X' key activates the Zap spell and destroys everything in the room. However, if you are portraying a mere Troll, the Zap spell simply enables you to jump over an obstacle. Warlock has more than one level and you can change levels by dropping through the occasional trapdoor, when the relentless fight against good continues.

You either love or hate role-playing fantasy games!



GAME: WARLOCK
HOUSE: THE EDGE **PHONE: 01 831 1801**
PRICE: £19.95 **RELEASE: NOW**

GRAPHICS: 63% **SOUND: 45%**
ADDICTIVENESS: 50% **ORIGINALITY: 52%**
OVERALL: 56%
1ST DAY SCORE: N/A

Warlock is fairly representative of this sort of game, except for one modification: you portray evil and fight against good. Apart from this uninspired alteration, it is no different from Underworld and Knightlore, which 'graced' the screens of Spectrum users

over three years ago. If you were a lucky Spectrum owner who had an ancient peripheral called a Kempston interface, you could have plugged in a joystick and controlled the little goblin or warlock - you have no such choice in Warlock!

FORMULA 1

TYNESOFT

I have yet to see a car-racing game on the ST that offers the excitement and challenge which was so abundant in Epyx's brilliant Pitstop 2 for the Commodore 64. My hopes were raised after reports that Tynesoft's Formula One Grand Prix resembled the aforementioned classic, but I was justifiably sceptical after discovering that it was to be released in their Micro Value range. Twenty seconds of digitized music and an option-screen displaying six Grand Prix tracks from around the world, showed a promising start to the game. Each track presents a variety of driving environments, such as, the enduring circuits at Hockenheim and Silverstone or the twisting bends of Monaco and Detroit. Additionally, choosing a car from the five major car-racing groups on the world racing circuit today, offers you a variety of performance and handling characteristics. The selection of both track and car are made with the joystick and pressing the firebutton confirms the choice.

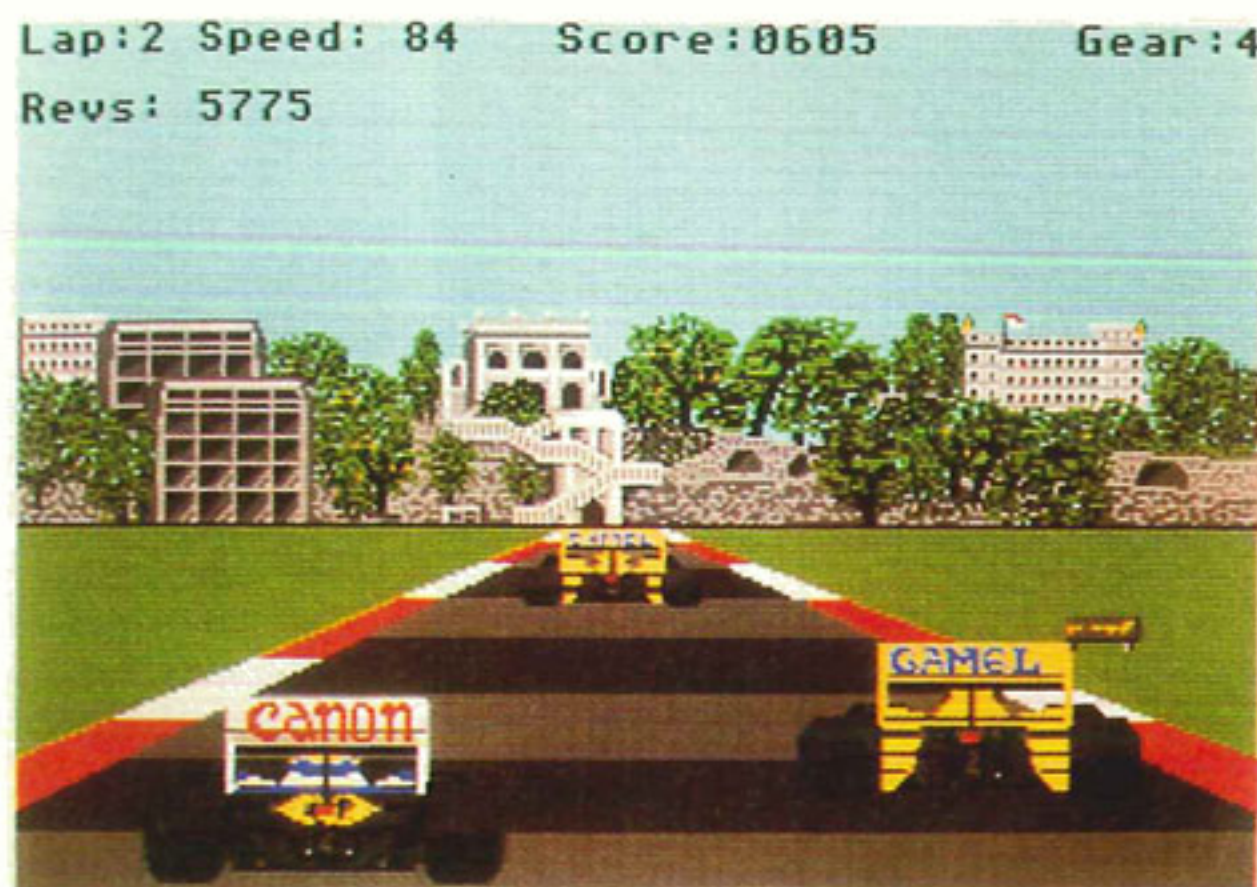
The game-screen is typically representative of recent

car-racing games, which show the rear of the car and the track lying before you. The game itself is quite straightforward; avoid collisions and overtake as many cars as possible during the race. The joystick governs both the forward movement of the car as well as the transmission and, as the race begins, pressing the firebutton and pushing the joystick forward engages first gear. Then, releasing the firebutton and maintaining forward pressure on the joystick causes forward momentum. You must watch the rev-counter to make sure you do not exceed the limit, then, releasing pressure on the joystick, pressing the firebutton and pushing forward once again, changes up into second gear. This procedure continues up to the sixth gear, where changing down is achieved in the same way, except that the joystick is pulled back.

The effect of motion and speed is satisfactorily achieved by the usual red and white curb stones and so the inclusion of a striped road is quite unnecessary. Steering is somewhat im-

GAME: FORMULA 1
HOUSE: TYNESOFT **PHONE: 091 414 4611**
PRICE: £19.9 **RELEASE: NOW**

GRAPHICS: 47% **SOUND: 55%**
ADDICTIVENESS: 48% **ORIGINALITY: 48%**
OVERALL: 51%
1ST DAY SCORE: 500



precise and is complicated by the inclusion of a six gear transmission. Combine this with the unforgiving rev-limits and the fact that any collision with the computer-controlled cars results in immediate destruction, and you

have a game with no flow and little appeal. Finally, Tynesoft have neglected to include the most important aspect in computer car racing - two player participation!

TRASH HEAP

DIAMOND GAMES

And God said: 'Let there be scrap!' And there was. And it came to pass that man eventually ventured into space and the galaxy became an extension to the garbage heap he called Earth. Trash Heap's underlying theme is the science of garbage disposal in space. According to Diamond Games, the galactic council have formed a garbage authority called Intertrash to deal

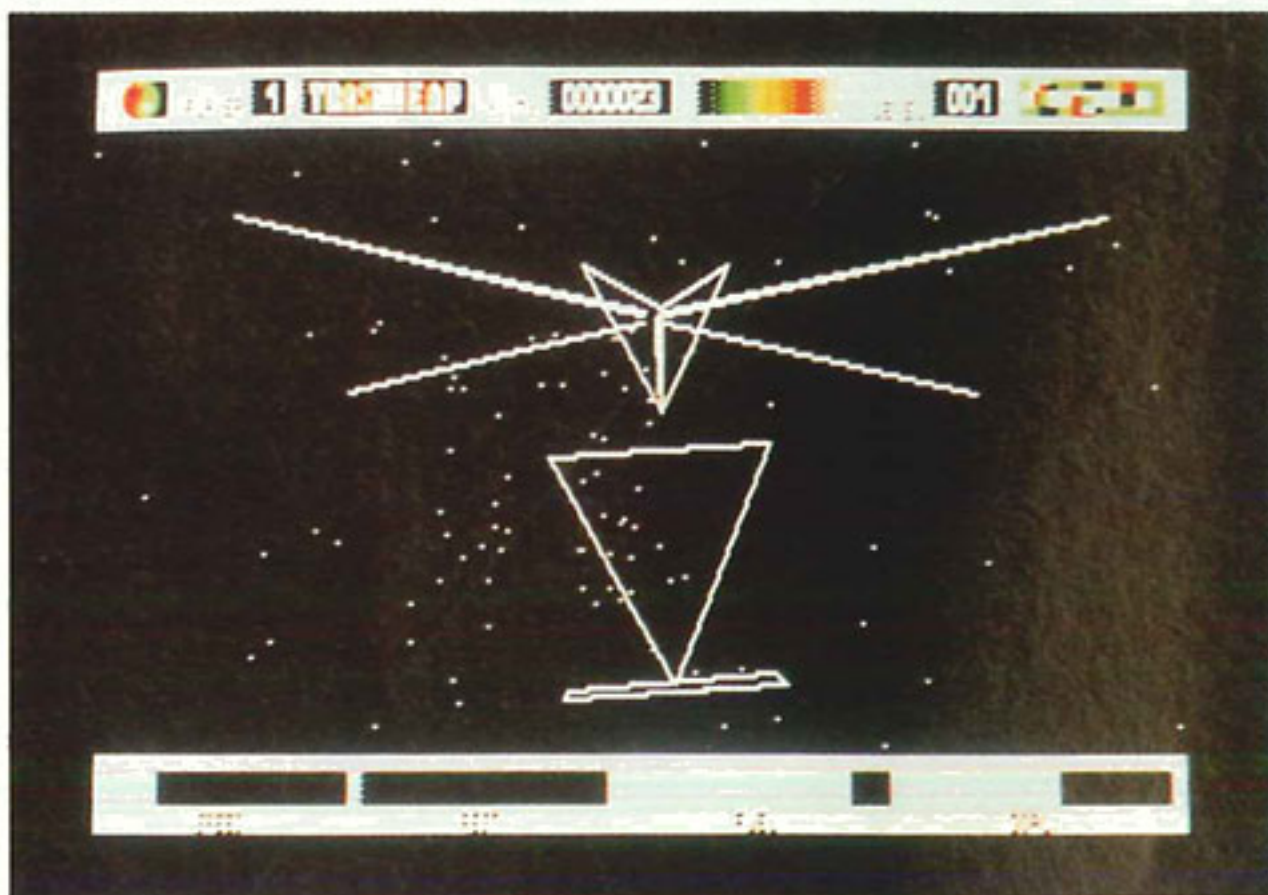
with the problem. However, leaving the garbage problem in the hands of the authorities, you must adopt the persona of a robot whose job it is to take a bottle of liqueur to a drunken emperor in another part of the galaxy. You have the choice of playing Trash Heap in plain vector graphics or in 3D. The 3D effect is achieved in the traditional way, with vector graphics drawn double in red and

green and, with the 3D glasses supplied, you are all set to watch space garbage float by in glorious 3D.

As many as nine players can participate in the game - if you can fit that many around your monitor and, after you have entered the number of players who are participating, the game-screen displays a 3D pyramid which is spinning on a tray in space. According to Diamond Games, this is a 'Pyrathermonuclear', which contains the emperor's high-proof liqueur. The pyramid is mouse-controlled and you must evade the countless hunks of space junk that constantly fly towards you on their eternal journey through the voids of space. This scrap

metal is like a catalogue of space craft that have appeared in science fiction films, such as discarded X wing fighters from Star Wars. At first, the junk appears as specks on the black back-cloth and you must anticipate the direction that it is taking, predict its time of arrival and take evasive action. To add to the confusion, being hit by some pieces of junk does not affect you, while others cause considerable damage.

The 3D glasses and effects are little more than a diversion from the lack of variety in Trash Heap. The controls are unresponsive and the game play is limited in every aspect.



GAME: TRASH HEAP

HOUSE: DIAMOND

PRICE: £19.95

PHONE:

RELEASE: NOW

GRAPHICS: 59%

SOUND: 50%

ADDICTIVENESS: 50%

ORIGINALITY: 55%

OVERALL: 56%

1ST DAY SCORE: N/A

FROST BYTE

TYNESOFT

By way of a change from the usual little humanoids, animals or aliens which scurry across the screens in the majority of arcade games, Frost Byte contains a little character called Hickey. Hickey resembles a roll of plasticine as he turns end over end across the screen and, by eating a selection of so-called sweets, his limited powers of movement can be increased and improved.

For instance, red sweets enable him to move faster, blue sweets make him jump higher and green ones cushion his fall from platforms. The effect of the sweet can only be experienced once it has been consumed, and if Hickey eats a different coloured sweet, the powers within that particular piece of confectionery will supersede the previous one. Therefore, it is not necessary to consume

every sweet you come across as the powers within the existing one may be more beneficial to Hickey's particular situation.

Hickey's ability to bounce relies on his level of 'Twang', which is monitored on a 'Twang' gauge. His end-over-end movements are as awkward as they are unique and the joystick does its level best to compensate. Left and right movements send Hickey worming across the screen, while pushing the joystick upwards enables him to spring up in the air and, as described, consuming a blue sweet increases his jumping capabilities considerably. Frost Byte is a typical multi-screen platform game in which each successive level introduces new hazards,

situations and features. On the first screen, Hickey is standing on a platform above the ground with two bouncing heads to his right and a manic wizard rushing across the screen beneath. Contact with any of the other characters destroys Hickey and so you must manoeuvre him off the platform to the ground, jump over the manic wizard and worm across the screen.

This game is infuriating and compelling, which are two most important aspects in a successful arcade game. If you were a fan of Infogrames Bubble Ghost, then you will adore Frost Byte.



GAME: FROST BYTE

HOUSE: TYNESOFT

PRICE: £19.95

PHONE: 091 414 4611

RELEASE: NOW

GRAPHICS: 53%

SOUND: 25%

ADDICTIVENESS: 45%

ORIGINALITY: 55%

OVERALL: 47%

1ST DAY SCORE: N/A

GUNSHIP

MICROPROSE

A1

The pulsating throb of the heavy rotors thrashing the air is foreboding as the fearsome hulk of the AH-64 Apache appears before your eyes - Apocalypse Now? No, this is merely the loading screen for Gunship, Microprose's latest aircraft simulation.

On this occasion, Major Bill Steele and the boys have exchanged their golden wings for rotors to present their first military helicopter simulation. Pre-flight preparation plays an important role in aviation and Gunship has a lengthy but interesting preliminary section that encompasses complete flight and assignment training. In conjunction with a weighty operations manual, eight preparatory and tutorial screens ensure that you do not enter the cockpit without thorough training and briefing.

Military vehicle identification acts as a simple aptitude test and, from an equipment inventory within the operations manual, a vehicle is randomly chosen and displayed on screen. You must scrutinize the designs on the Soviet and US military vehicles, compare them with the one on screen and, with the mouse, make your selection. A correct answer promotes you to the 'Pilot Roster', which displays the service records of pilots who have attained



The awesome AH-64 Apache helicopter gunship appears on the title screen

high points in the game. Then, clicking on 'Continue' takes you to the 'Default' section which describes aspects of the last pilot's assignment. For your mission, you can increase or decrease the levels of adverse weather, the likelihood of crash landings and the realism of flight.

Five missions are displayed on the 'Duty Assignment' screen and Microprose advise that beginners select 'Flight Training' in the relatively safe skies over Northern America. However, intermediates can choose to patrol one of four volatile areas around the world. Selections are made by clicking on one of the several badges which represent the various US squadrons who are posted in these areas. Each mission yields different aspects of combat, varying levels of military presence and adverse weather conditions. Finally, you are briefed on your assignment, your primary and secondary objectives, the weather conditions and your password. There is a countersign for every password within the operations manual which must be noted. Failure to give this countersign during the mission could mean that you are

pursued and destroyed by your own allies.

The helicopter has already been allocated standard weaponry which can be adjusted to suit your particular mission on the 'Arming' screen. You are presented with an overhead projection of the Apache and an inventory of armament. Adding and subtracting ammunition for the 30mm cannon, fuel, flares and chaff is simply a case of placing the cursor over the corresponding plus and minus signs and pressing the left-hand button. At the base of the screen, a digital readout of the helicopter's weight alters as you add or subtract the equipment. The heavy weaponry which comprises AIM-9L Sidewinders and the devastating AGM-114A Hellfire missiles, must be picked up from the inventory with the mouse, dragged and anchored on the helicopter. The Sidewinders can be placed on the wing-tips, whereas the hefty Hellfires can only be positioned on the interior wing stations.

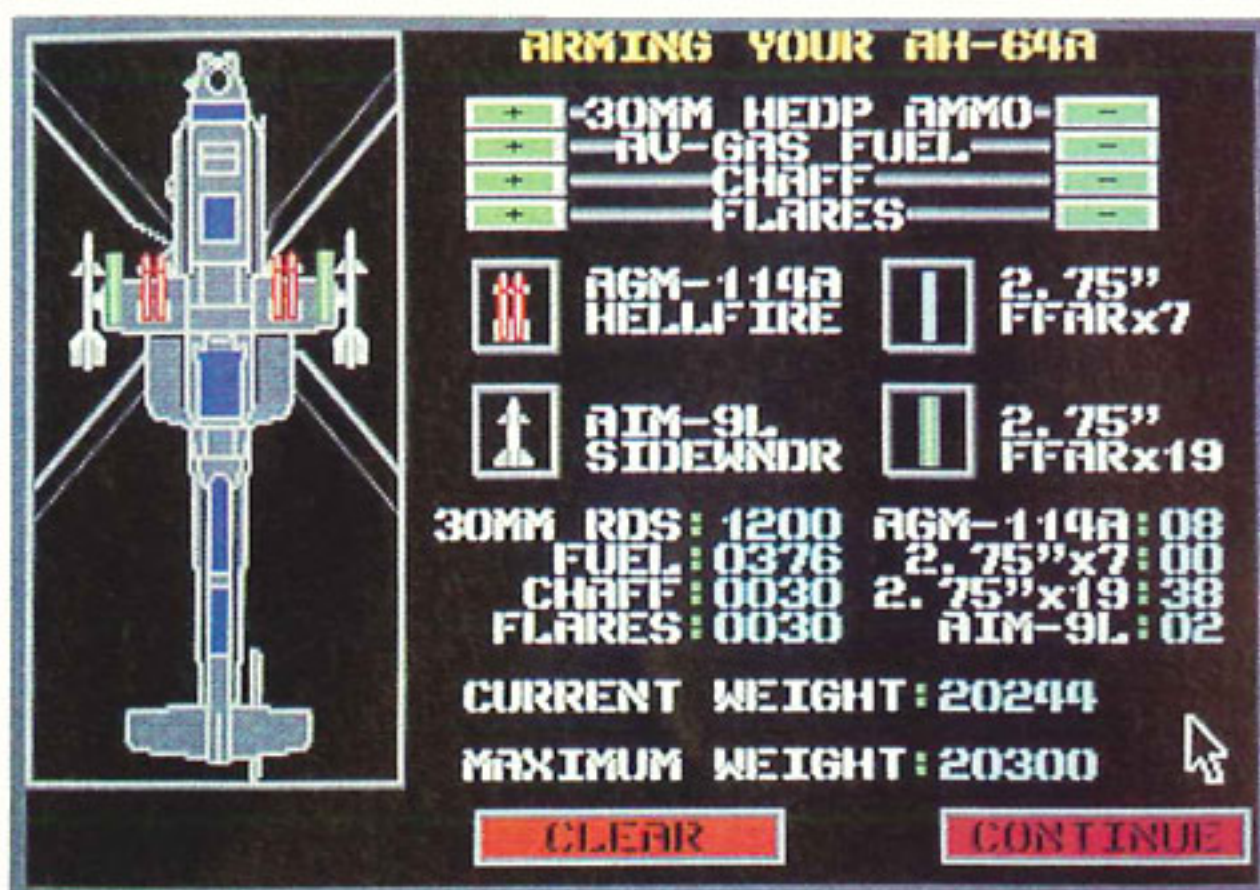
I had doubts about the realism in F15 Strike Eagle, but have no such reservations about Gunship. Additionally, the jerky scrolling has been ironed out, the terrain has far more variation and undulation and the confusion with the numerous key functions has been satisfactorily rectified with the keyboard overlay. To say that Microprose know their subject is an understatement, for they have claimed the field of military simulations as their own. Without doubt, Gunship is their most thorough and realistic simulation to date and, as a result, the element of entertainment has been enhanced rather than sacrificed.

JS

KEYBOARD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
JOYSTICK	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
MOUSE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
COLOUR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
MONO	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
520ST	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1040ST	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

GAME: GUNSHIP
HOUSE: MICROPROSE
PHONE: 0666-54326
PRICE: £24.95
RELEASE: NOW

GRAPHICS : 83%
SOUND : 60%
ADDICTIVENESS : 83%
ORIGINALITY : 76%
OVERALL : 83%
1ST DAY SCORE : 4336



The weapons selection screen - the choice is yours!



The centre console, VDU map and dials close up

Once the helicopter is ready for flight, you can continue with the assignment or go on 'Sick Call'. However, Microprose describe opting out of a mission as tantamount to cowardice.

Finally, you can put all of that theory and preparation into practice. The instrumentation in the cockpit is reputed to be realistic and comprises an Altimeter, Attitude and Artificial Horizon and Airspeed and Vertical Speed indicators. In addition to the traditional instrumentation, the navigational and radar equipment is computerized and the centre of the control panel houses a Zoom-lens screen, which calculates the distance to a possible target and magnifies it thirty-two times for identification. Thoughtfully, Microprose have devised a cardboard overlay which fits over the keyboard to help with the many key commands. Helicopter controls are notoriously sluggish and there is a tendency to overcompensate for the lack of response, so all keyboard and joystick movements must be positive but slight. Tapping keys '1' and '2' power up the Port and Starboard engines and, as the RPM gauge rises to eighty percent, pressing the '3' key engages the rotor. Repeatedly tapping the 'Up Fast' key raises the torque and pressing the adjacent 'Up Slow' lifts the helicopter off the ground. Finally, easing the joystick forward achieves forward momentum and, by watching the Artificial

Thanks to Gunship, MicroProse can really claim they lead the way in military flight simulation. There is just the right balance of strategy and game-play. The controls of the Apache are as realistic as you can possibly get on a computer without resorting to specialist hardware and the in-flight characteristics are second to none for realism. The pre-flight planning, combat tactics and split-second decisions required, such as whether to abort the mission and head for home or forge on to your target when your starboard engine has been taken out by AA fire, just go to prove that this is THE flight simulator to have in your collection. Essential for all gung-ho Nam chopper drivers.

MM

Horizon gauge, you can increase the 'Up Slow' to level the helicopter. The basic concepts of helicopter flight rely on 'Cyclic' (joystick) movements for directional control and 'Collective' (key) commands which alter the altitude.

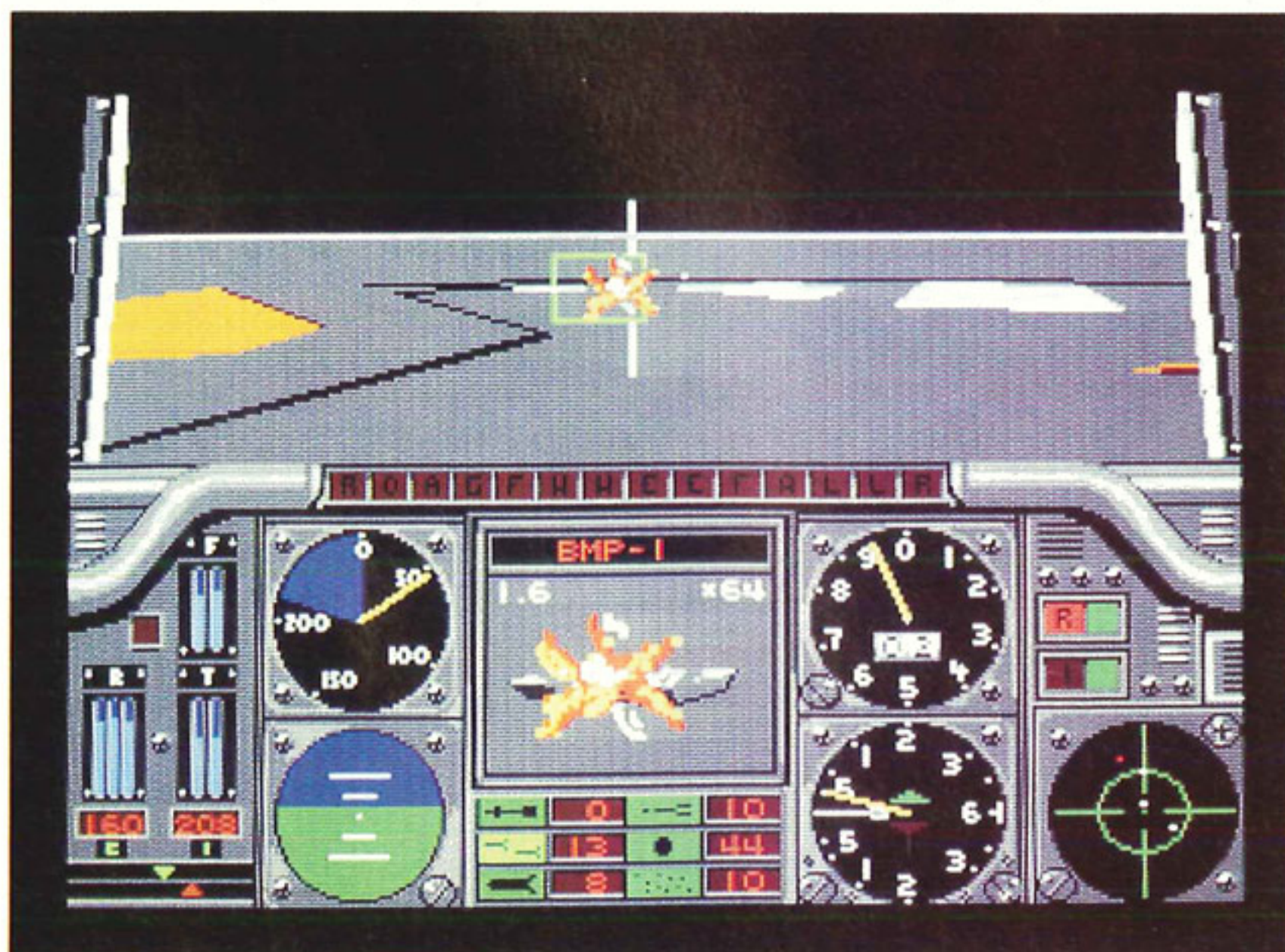
The terrain through the windscreen is far more realistic, changeable and

interesting than the artificial, jerky scrolling that marred F15 Strike Eagle. Whilst keeping your eye on the Altimeter, selecting 'Map' reveals a sector map of the terrain, which pinpoints your current position and enables you to plot the coordinates that were given in the briefing. Suddenly, the radar warns of enemy presence - red dots signify operational anti-aircraft weaponry; white dots indicate enemy helicopters. The threat display gives you time to avoid missiles, and pressing the '9' key activates your 'Radar Jammer'. The right and left cursor keys reveal views from either side of the helicopter and, if an enemy aircraft is in sight, you can change course, pursue and select the 'Target Acquisition-Designation' system. Immediately, weaponry sights appear on screen and you can select the 30 mm cannon or Sidewinder, lock on with the target and activate by pressing the firebutton. SAM missiles constantly and tenaciously chase the helicopter as you near your primary target and you can drop a metallic substance called 'Chaff' to draw the missile away from you. As you near the target on the sector map, you must drop in altitude to avoid the radars, activate the 'TADS', select Hellfire and press the firebutton - **Apocalypse Now!**

STA

Gunship, for me, has to be one of the most compelling simulations ever. Flying the AH-64 Apache is not easy, but thanks to the well-documented manual, I soon managed to get, and stay, airborne. The graphical representations are clear and very well drawn; the sonics, too, are of premium quality. I stuck solidly to the training missions and this helped me to understand the aircraft's habits - and also kept me alive. The game incorporates various scenarios, each with more hostile attacks. With all its different 'extras' Gunship should keep even the most ardent pilot busy for some time to come. I wholly recommend it to anyone.

NC



Blasting the enemy!

SLAP FIGHT

To certain software companies, the much exploited theme of vertically-scrolling, aerial shoot'em-ups is rather like a comfort-blanket or favourite toy, which they seem reluctant to give up. In my opinion, this shows complacency and a lack of ingenuity and originality. Nevertheless, recent aerial assault games have contained variations on the theme which leave the software purchaser in a dilemma as to which title to buy.

Slapfight induced the usual feeling of déjà vu, which was emphasized by reading the obligatory scenario: 'You are the pilot of an aircraft called a Slapfighter and you must destroy the evil aliens which confront you!' Not exactly awe inspiring!

The so-called option screen asks whether you would like to have music accompanying the game or just sound effects - the latter proves to be less obtrusive and more tolerable. Then, without further briefing or preparation, you are presented with the game-screen. The scenario describes the terrain that you are assaulting as: 'The evil and hostile planet Orac'. However, it reminded me of an aerial view of a pleasant suburb, complete with meadows, ornamental gardens, swimming pools and chateaus. The screen scrolls vertically at a fixed and slow pace, while the separately animated Slapfighter moves independently of the screen. If you relinquish pressure on the joystick, the craft remains stationary and the screen continues to scroll relentlessly onwards. However, pushing the joystick forwards increases the speed of the craft and, on reaching the top of the screen, you slow down to the speed of the scrolling.

You can choose to play the game with joystick or mouse, and so my first task was to test which controls

----- OCEAN -----

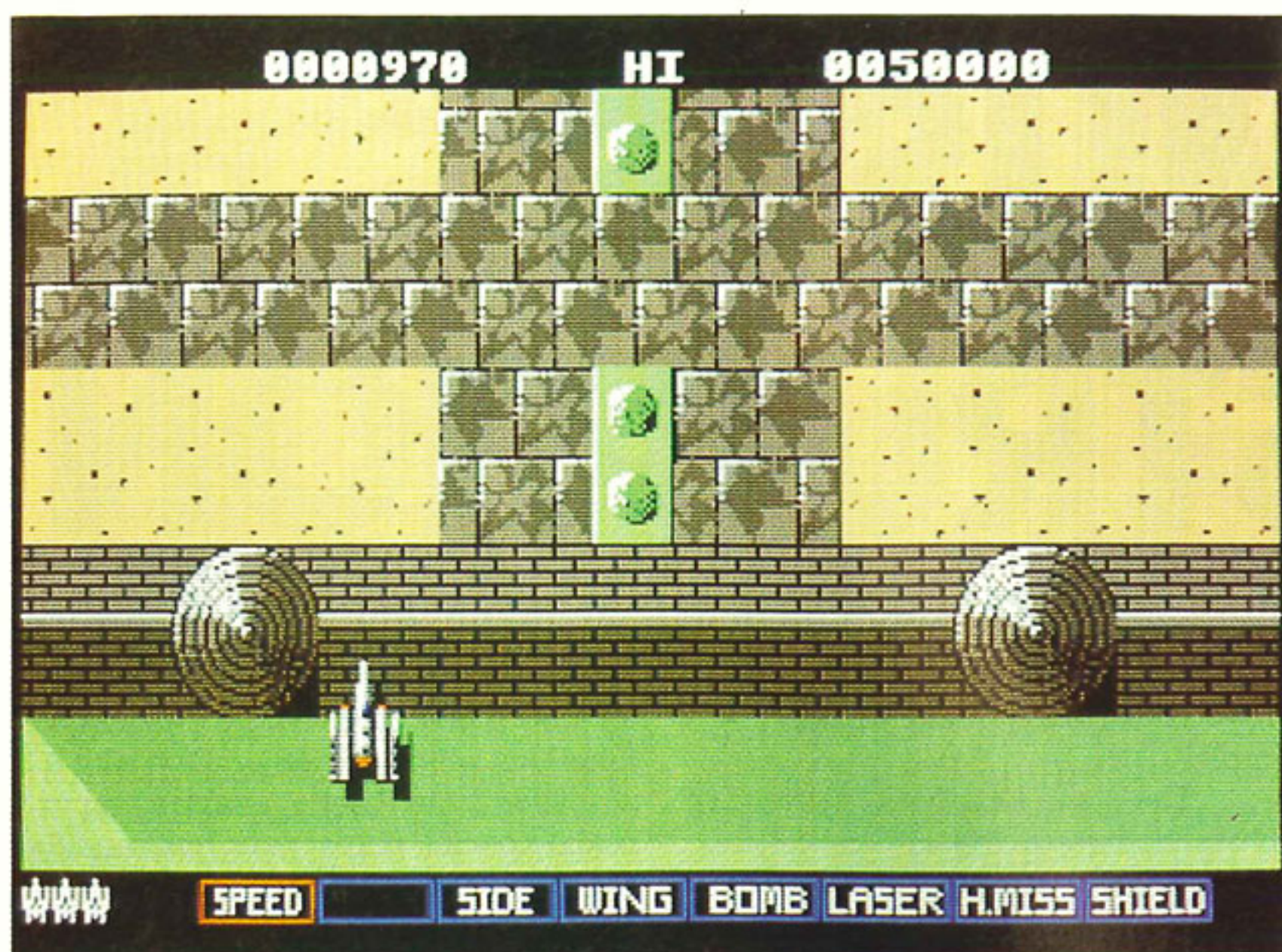
were preferable. Utilizing all eight directional points, the craft can be manoeuvred with more precision with the joystick, while the mouse offers swifter but less precise control. Initially, both controls are sluggish but, throughout the course of the game, you can increase the speed of the craft and the controls. You are soon presented with the opportunity to test the Slapfighter's manoeuvrability and weaponry capabilities as the first wave of opposition appears on screen in a variety of formations. These patrol droids have the ability to emit missiles in all directions with disturbing accuracy and intelligence. However, the Slapfighter is equipped with a single-shot, double-barrelled cannon which, at first, proves to offer little in the way of protection against the better equipped opposition.

Destroying an enemy patrol droid yields a golden star which, when collected, activates the first of six icons at the base of the screen. These

I have an admission to make! The tenacious squadrons of aerial assault craft have finally penetrated my shields and battered down my defences. Inspired by the variations on the theme, my interest in aerial assault games has been re-kindled. Of course, the theme in general has been criminally exploited, but I welcome the ingenuity which has been shown in recent releases. Slapfight's attraction is to be found in the quick succession of the craft's changing capabilities. Without this feature, it would be fairly representative of the many games which make up this most prolific brand of arcade entertainment.

JS



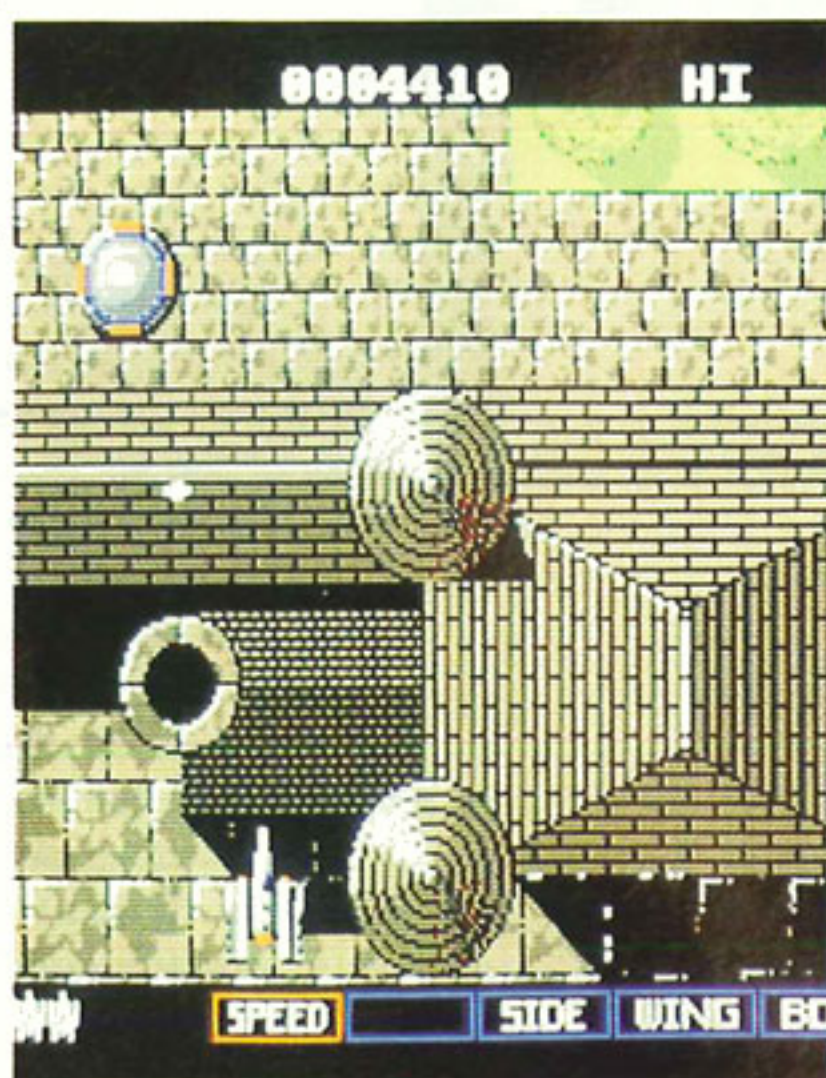


icons yield bonus capabilities and facilities and, if you can direct your attention away from the action and press the spacebar, you benefit immediately from the indicated capability. Representing enhanced speed, the first icon illuminates after collecting the first star and pressing the spacebar introduces swifter flight and control. The next four stars progressively enhance the speed until the craft moves too quickly for the size of the game screen. When you have increased the speed to its full potential, the next star activates the succeeding icon, which increases the power of your weaponry. In addition to the fore cannon, wing-mounted missile launchers emit missiles to the left and right. Naturally, the opposition counteract the increasing effectiveness of your craft.

The golden stars become increasingly difficult to obtain and if you manage to gain the bonus facility within the fourth icon, the Slapfighter grows larger with an increased firepower capacity. The more effective weaponry is very welcome, but the increased size of the craft obviously makes it an easy target for the enemy. By the time you have reached this stage of the game, the terrain has changed from pleasant countryside to an ugly and changeable industrial landscape. The enemy adopt other forms and are far more inconspicuous and, likewise, your own craft

often blends in with the terrain.

The fifth bonus facility is the most useful, effective and devastating. At the touch of the firebutton, a bomb is ejected from the front of the ship to clear the way and it doesn't take long to obtain the next facility. A Laser may be less obtrusive than a bomb, but it proves to be equally as devastating. The enemy may start their attack tentatively but, by the time you have gained your seventh bonus facility, the attack is fierce and frenzied. Briefly reaping the benefits of the Laser, you



quickly gain the succeeding bonus facility - the long-awaited Homing Missile. Now you can dispatch missiles with the accuracy that the enemy have displayed from the beginning of the game. However, this facility is equally short-lived as you quickly obtain the eighth and final bonus capability, a shield which affords limited and temporary protection from enemy fire. The next golden star takes you right back to the beginning and, as the game continues relentlessly, you must again build up your Slapfighter.

STA

Slapfight hasn't lost too much during its transition from the arcades. The graphics, sounds, and general feel of the game have all been carefully preserved. Why then, do I loathe this game so much? I guess it's all to do with my complete lack of interest. After several tries to complete the first levels, I eventually found myself cursing the game. It is not that the game is of poor quality, but that I found it so frustrating, after getting over half-way through an attack wave, to be zapped and returned to the start. If you have the time and patience to play this game, I suggest you buy it now. Otherwise leave it strictly alone.

NC

What, another v-scrolling shoot-'em-up; so how is this one different from all the rest? The play area is large and the scenery well drawn, but there is little connection between this and the backdrop. To begin with, the game is difficult with little in the way of hectic blasting - the biggest challenge is dodging enemy bombs with your slow, lumbering space ship. Eventually, there are more gadgets to pick up and things start to get interesting, but the game never puts you on the edge of your chair. It lacks that certain element which makes games like Xenon so good and, in the early stages, it is positively annoying.

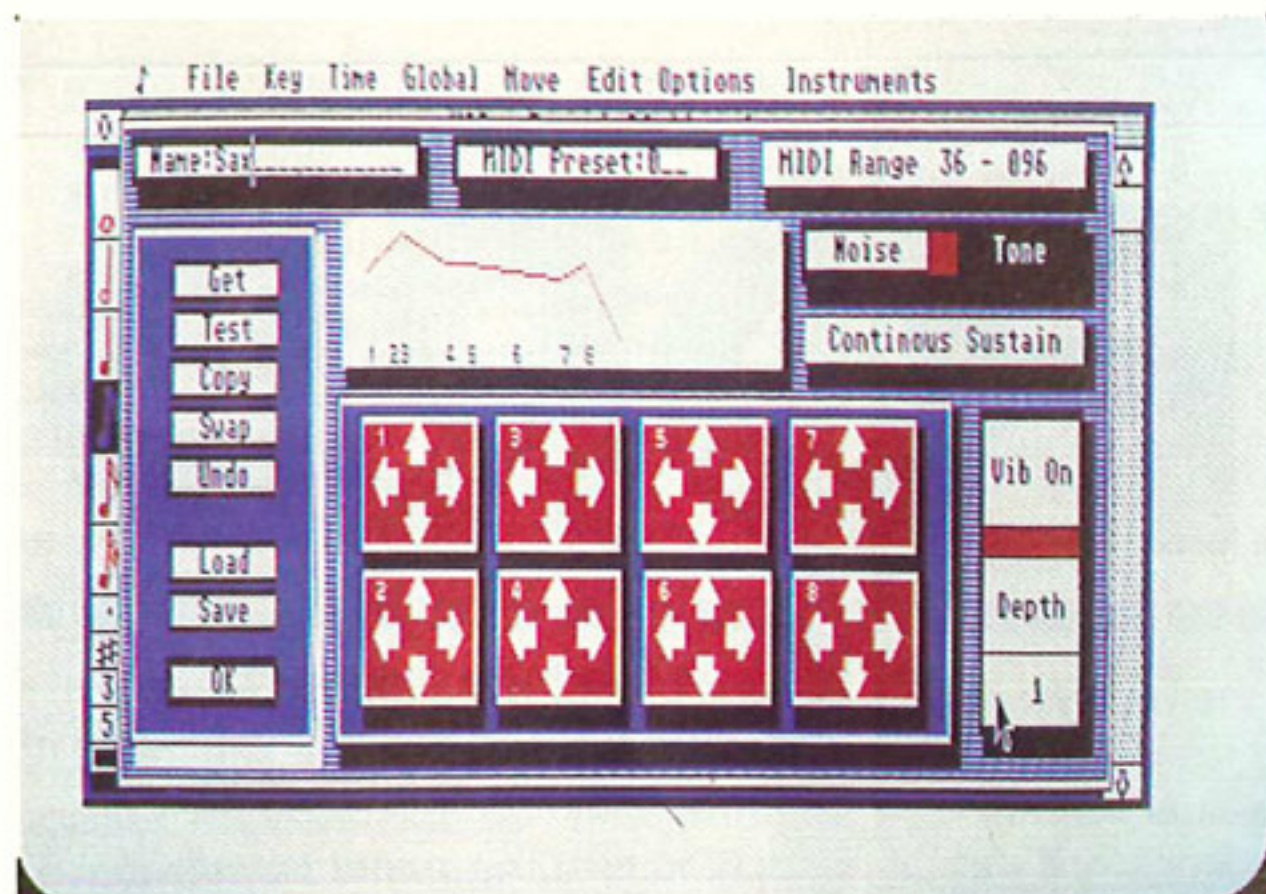
MM

GAME: SLAP FIGHT
HOUSE: OCEAN
PHONE: 061-832 6633
PRICE: £19.95
RELEASE: NOW

GRAPHICS : 64 %
SOUND : 48 %
ADDICTIVENESS : 65 %
ORIGINALITY : 35 %
OVERALL : 58 %
1ST DAY SCORE : 30000

KEYBOARD	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
JOYSTICK	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
MOUSE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
COLOUR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
MONO	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
520ST	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1040ST	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

 ELECTRONIC ARTS



Waveform editor

Preparing a piece of music for printing requires tying some of the notes together and generally neatening up the score. Selecting the 'Tie Modifier' from the note palette, you place the tie on the specific two notes and click the mouse button. You can also tie 'Triplets' by placing the icon before the first note and clicking. Perfecting your score may require a number of modifications and, by selecting 'Insert' from the icon panel, you can add space to your score for these modifications. Ensuring that the 'I'-shaped cursor is the same colour as the notes, you place it over the second note in the score and click on that specific note and all of the following notes until the end of the score.

A sizable score can be split into 'Blocks' by pulling down the 'Edit' option, clicking on 'Start' and placing another 'I'-shaped cursor in front of the first note, clicking and then clicking behind the last one that you want to be affected by the modifications. In conjunction with the 'Edit'

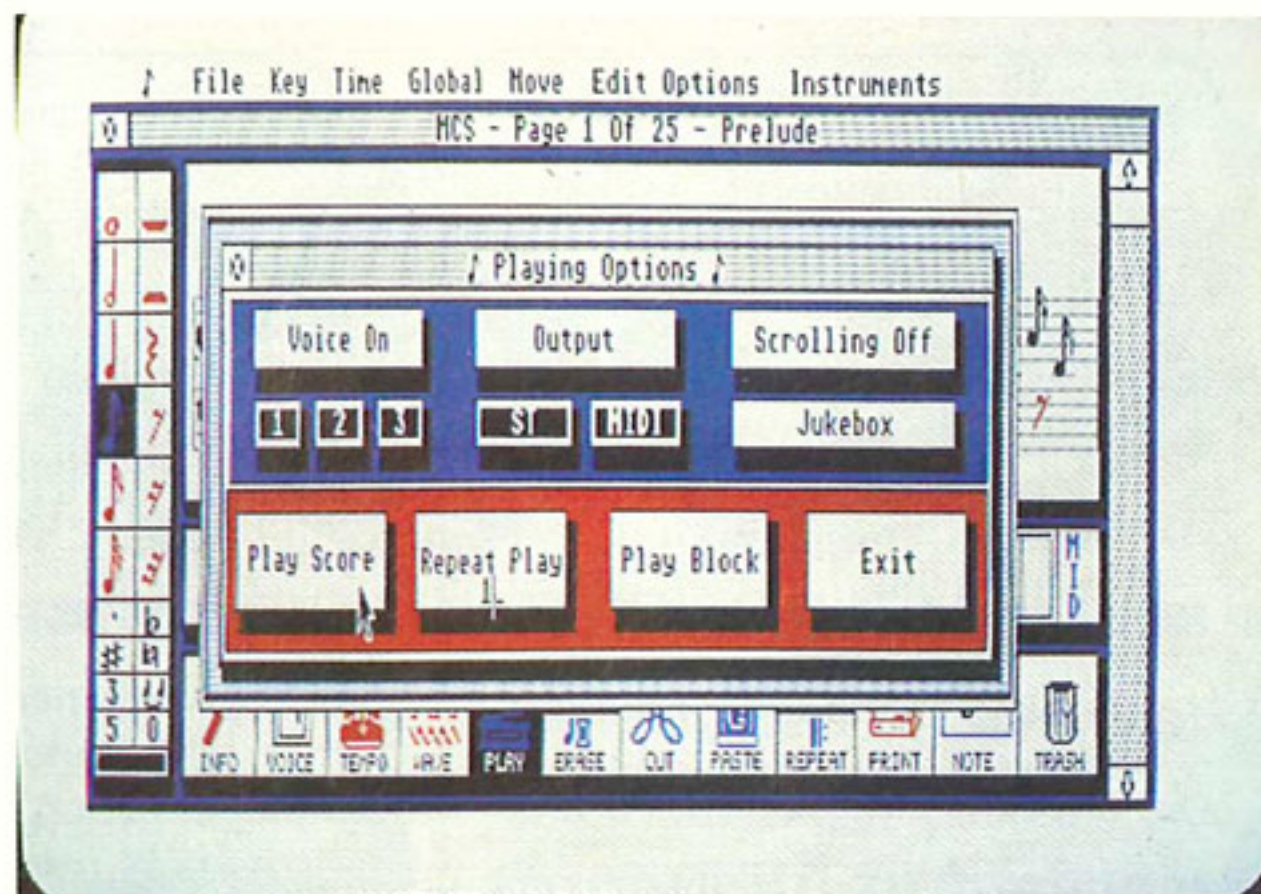
option, you can 'Copy Voices' or 'Cut' and 'Paste' the block elsewhere in the score. Pulling down the 'Instruments' menu reveals a selection of brass, woodwind, string and percussion instruments, which can be inserted in the particular block that you are working on. You can change the instrument within a specific voice by selecting a 'Magnifying Glass' option and clicking on the note at the beginning of the block. This reveals a dialogue window which informs you of the voice, pitch, duration and the assigned instrument of that particular note. Then, selecting 'Start' again and clicking on the note that you have just inspected, renders the block ready to edit. You can exchange the existing instrument for another by selecting 'Replace Instrument', choosing a new instrument that you want to assign to the voice and click on 'OK'.

In addition to the music creation and editing facility, you can invent your own sounds and effects with a built-in Waveform Editor. Selecting the 'Wave' icon from the panel, the dialogue-box asks which instrument is to be used and modified. Then, clicking on the chosen instrument and on 'OK', places you in the 'Waveform Editor'. Selecting 'Test' allows you to listen to the chosen instrument before any modifications and the so-called 'Tone Generator' continues to play up and down the scale until you switch it off again. There are eight 'Wave-point' editors which correspond with the eight numbers on the Wave graph and,

clicking on four large arrows which point up, down, left and right, you can alter the size of the wave. The Wave graph is a graphical representation of the sound generated for each note played. Therefore, if the wave is short, the note will correspond. Periodically, you can press the 'Test' button to listen to the changes and create a list of your own custom instruments in addition to the existing traditional instrumentation.

Electronic Arts have, in all likeliness, found a rather important niche in the music software market with this program. MCS, as a beginner's tool, is nothing short of brilliant. It will enable users, with little or no previous musical experience, to get to grips with musical notation and gradually learn to compose simple tunes. In reality it will turn out to be a stepping stone towards more complex MIDI programs. The front end is very user-friendly and allows all selections and operations to be made using the mouse. One minor niggle though: why can't it run on mono screens?

MM



Playing options

When something is described as simplistic, it can often be misconstrued as basic, shallow, oversimplified or even inadequate. But, how do you quantify simplicity and adequacy? Presumably, Jan Hammer or Vangelis would require and expect more than this package can offer, but at what price? The Music Construction Set's strength is its simplicity - it is also easily affordable!

Invariably, Midi and music packages are so complex that losing the instructions manual would render the software completely useless. Therefore, it is refreshing to use a package which is so unashamedly simple and straightforward. Can music construction really be this simple? Yes!

JS

KEYBOARD	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
JOYSTICK	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
MOUSE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
COLOUR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
MONO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
520ST	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1040ST	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

GAME: MCS
HOUSE: EA
PHONE: 0753-49442
PRICE: £24.95
RELEASE: NOW

GRAPHICS : N/A %
SOUND : N/A %
ADDICTIVENESS : N/A %
ORIGINALITY : N/A %
OVERALL : N/A %
1ST DAY SCORE : N/A

ROCKFORD

■■■■■ MELBOURNE HOUSE ■■■■■

The basic theme behind Boulder Dash can be described in two words, unpretentiously brilliant!

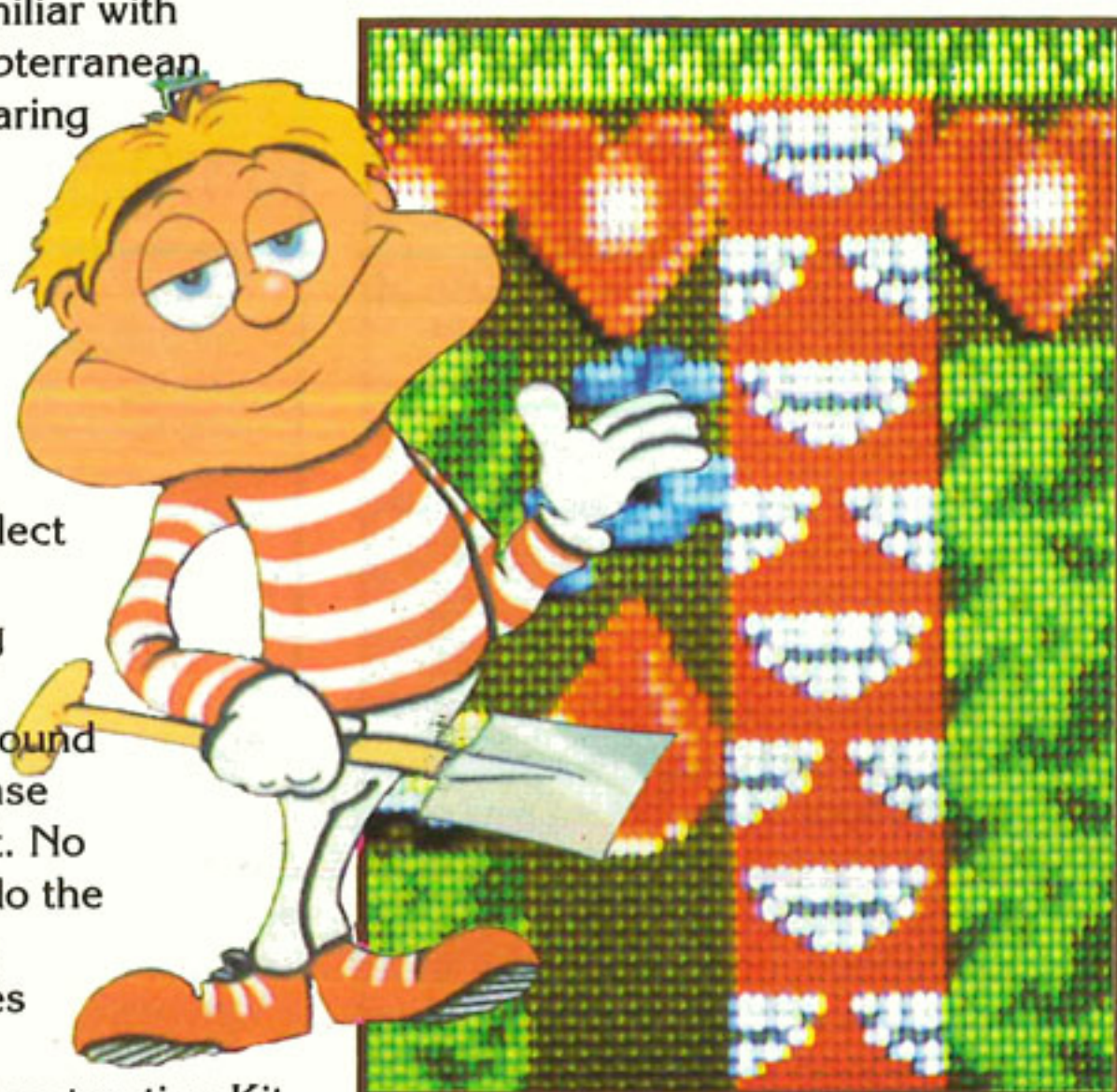
Ask any seasoned arcade game player to name his ten favourite games of all time, and you can be certain that this classic will be included somewhere in the list. If you are unfamiliar with Boulder Dash, it is a subterranean game in which an endearing little character called Rockford excavates earth in search of sparkling gems. Successful completion of a screen relies on your ability to manoeuvre Rockford through the earth to collect the necessary quota of diamonds and, avoiding tumbling boulders and countless other underground hazards, reach home base before the time runs out. No description could ever do the game justice! There are two Boulder Dash games already available for the ST; Boulder Dash Construction Kit, by First Star, and Skulldiggery, which is currently in limbo between distribution companies. The Construction Kit comprises fifteen pre-constructed screens, which were converted from the original eight-bit version, and a screen editor. Skulldiggery, however,

took the fundamental theme a stage further, by introducing simultaneous two-player action on a dual screen. For copyright reasons, Rockford was replaced by a different gem guzzler, resembling Pacman and the boulders were changed to skulls.

Inspired by this re-kindled interest in gem guzzling, First Star have allowed their immaculate conception to be turned into an arcade extravaganza, called Rockford. The

doctor's outfit to suit the particular theme. The game has five separate themes, with four levels per theme which, in turn, have four screens. When calculated, this justifies Melbourne House's boast that Rockford has eighty totally separate screens. These themes or so-called 'worlds', show Rockford's impostor in all sorts of guises to match his situation. An option screen enables you to choose one of the themes by moving a bar up or down the list and pressing the firebutton. The second option asks if one or two players are participating. However, for some unknown reason, I was unable to choose the two-player mode.

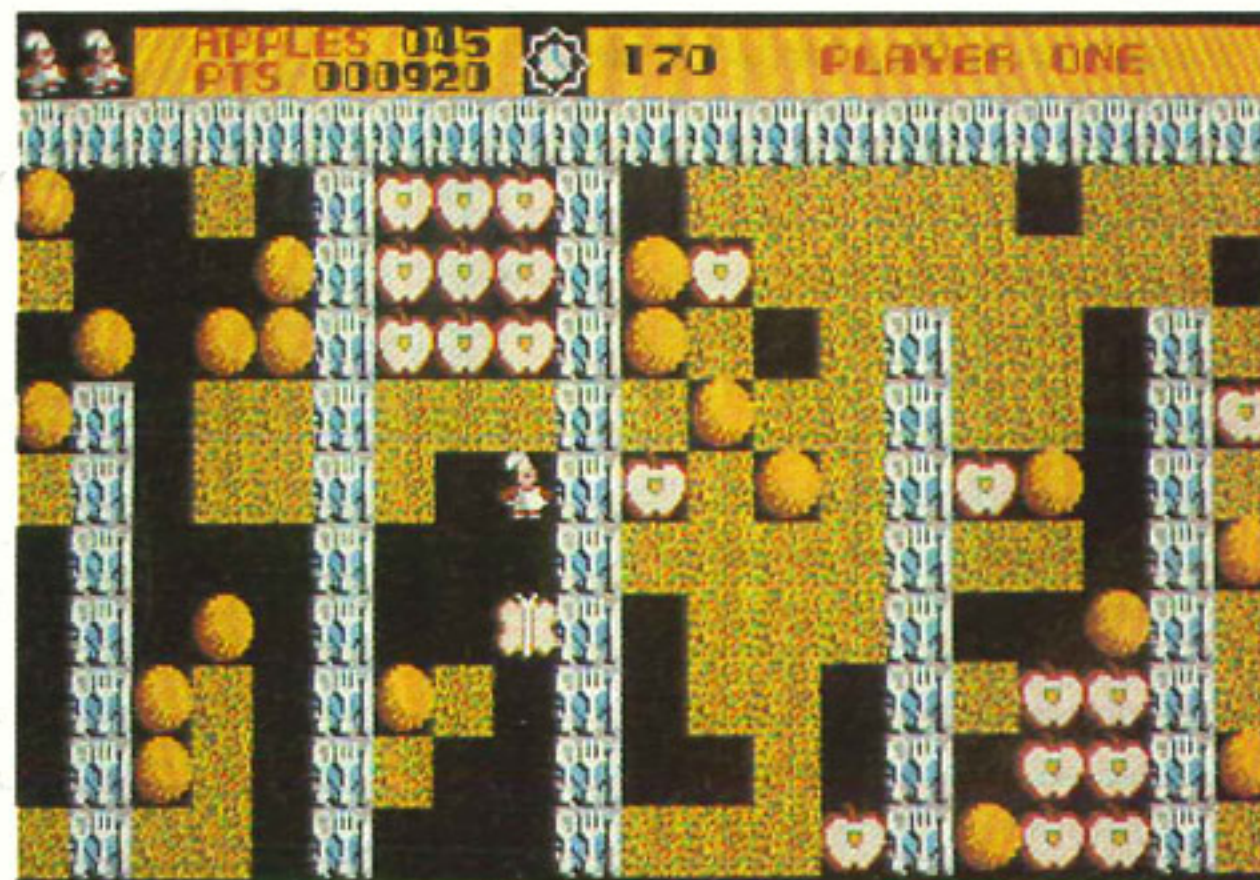
The first theme is called 'Rockford the Hunter in the Caverns of Craymar'. The game-play occupies the entire screen and moving Rockford to the edge of the visible area induces the screen to scroll and reveal the four screens that make up each level. The simple status display comprises the number of items that you have collected, a timer and the number of lives remaining for that specific level. A window in the centre of the screen displays an animation sequence of Rockford in his particular outfit, surrounded by all of the features and adversaries which are related to that particular theme. Pressing the firebutton initiates the game screen, triggers off the timer and starts the game. In this particular theme, the collectable items are Pharaoh's golden death masks, which replace the usual sparkling gems, while Rockford's



game's namesake, however, does not appear in the game. In fact, that famous and much-loved cavemite has been replaced by a small and characterless human, and to make this travesty even more ludicrous, he dresses up in a little cowboy or



The Caverns of Craymar



The Kitchens of Kyssandra

What would the art world say if someone painted Wolfrace wheels and go-fast stripes on Constable's Haywain? How would the music press receive a 12-inch scratch disco-mix of Sultans of Swing? What Arcadia have done with Boulder Dash is tantamount to sacrilege! However, although the theme idea is an unnecessary and totally useless exercise, enough of the original appeal shines through the heavy cosmetics to save the game. The controls are adequately responsive, except when Rockford reaches the edge of the screen, where you momentarily lose tight control of the game. All of the efforts made in tarting up this ageing classic have failed, as the original is immeasurably superior to what can only be described as a gaudy extravaganza!

JS

impostor is disguised as an explorer with safari jacket and matching pith helmet. He is fully controlled with the joystick, with up, down, left and right movements directing him accordingly. Additionally, snapping the joystick

GAME: ROCKFORD
HOUSE: MELBOURNE
PHONE: 01-377 6880
PRICE: £19.95
RELEASE: NOW

GRAPHICS : 63 %
SOUND : 48 %
ADDICTIVENESS : 72 %
ORIGINALITY : 58 %
OVERALL : 65 %
1ST DAY SCORE : 30,000

hazards which are, of course, related to food. Snakes made out of hamburgers and pizzas and flying fried eggs and toast take up the chase, while the boulders have been replaced by oranges. There are some interesting formations in this theme and expected completion of the screens has been timed to the second. For the third theme, Rockford is dressed in his little cowboy outfit in 'The Search for El Dorado'. The general game-play is practically the same as for the other themes, with added features, which

Ever since its first appearance back in 1983, I've been a dedicated fan of Boulderdash and its star, Rockford. After being somewhat disappointed with the Boulderdash Construction Kit, I viewed the release of Rockford with a little scepticism. The game is a copy of the Arcade version, setting Rockford in a number of guises. All the original features are still here, plus a few new ones. How interesting it is to see a computer game converted onto an arcade machine and then back again. Rockford has lost nothing; the gameplay is still as compelling and the action as fast as ever. My only advice to anybody thinking of buying Rockford is - go ahead, it's great.

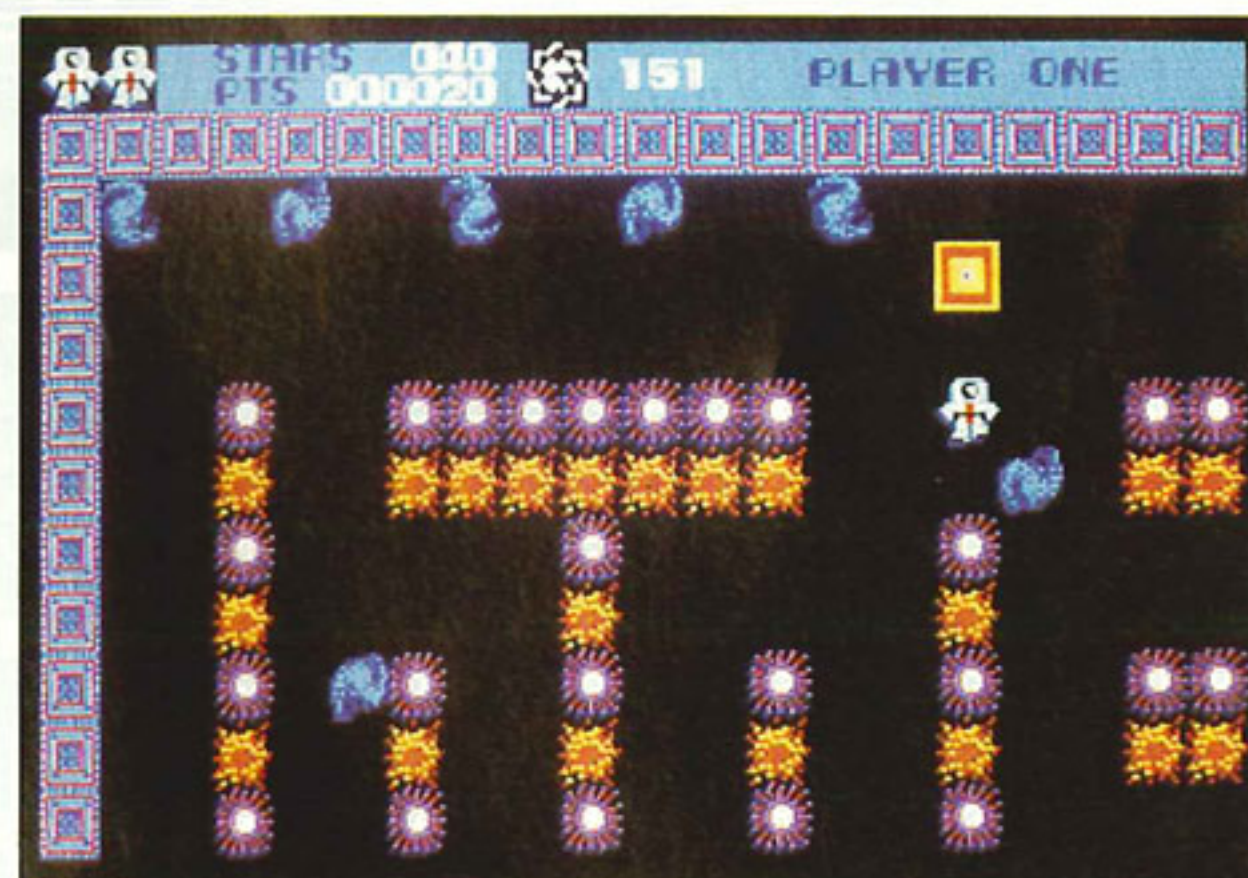
NC

rather gory theme in which he must collect hearts, avoid severed ears and gouged-out eyes, while skeletons and Frankenstein monsters await to be released from their subterranean tomb.

STA



The Search for El Dorado



Rockford in space

quickly to the left or right whilst simultaneously pressing the firebutton, creates a firecracker that can remove the nearest section of earth or collect a gem, without the risk of moving and being crushed by a boulder. Each of its four screens yields an increased quota of snakes, bats and monkeys, which chase Rockford through the shafts that he has dug. You have three lives in each theme and, at his demise, an animation sequence shows a snake wrapping itself around his neck.

The second theme, we are told, takes us to the Kitchens of Kyssandra and, as you might expect, Rockford is dressed as a chef. The useless scenario explains that the treasured apples of eternal youth have been stolen and taken to the greedy Overlord's kitchen. Rockford must collect all of the apples and avoid the

include spinning guns and tomahawks and wagons and trains which, when released, pursue Rockford down his tunnels. The penultimate theme takes Rockford into space and, dressed in a space suit, he must collect golden suns and avoid planets, comets, space-ships and wayward rockets. Finally, Rockford the Doctor stars in a

KEYBOARD	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
JOYSTICK	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
MOUSE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
COLOUR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
MONO	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
520ST	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1040ST	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

One thing that cannot be said about Rockford is that it is dull. Bright, gaudy colours explode all over the screen - playing after a night on the tiles is not recommended. However, the gameplay is excellent. The screens are carefully laid out to ensure frustration until the required technique is discovered and then it's on to the next level. I found the difficulty just right for a non-expert such as myself - no doubt more accomplished players will occasionally find it too easy. Still, the ease of play disappears quite quickly, leaving the hardened Rockford player to struggle on alone. This type of game really is of the 'just-one-more-go' genre and, as such, is wholeheartedly recommended.

MM

ULTIMA IV

ORIGIN via MICROPROSE

With the ending of the dark ages, the land of Britannia now seeks a mortal who will embark on a new quest. This task is to bring a new light into the life and hearts of people who are demoralised and scattered throughout the empire of Lord British.

This quest is known as the 'Quest of the Avatar'. Beginning as an inexperienced adventurer you must travel the land gaining knowledge and power finally to achieve the inner light of a pure Avatar.

The Ultima series of games attempts to combine the two different genre of Adventure and Fighting Fantasy. Viewed through a scrolling window, you must move your character over the large map of Britannia and the surrounding islands. Entering the various towns and castles causes the screen display to change from the countryside map of woods and mountains to a display of rooms and streets. Within the towns you will find a host of other characters with whom you can converse and gather knowledge. Gradually you must persuade a band of companions to aid you in your quest and you will be responsible for

GAME: ULTIMA IV
HOUSE: ORIGIN
PHONE: 0666-54326
PRICE: £24.95
RELEASE: NOW

TEXT/GRAPHICS : 75%
PARSER : 40%
ORIGINALITY : 60%
GAMEPLAY : 50%
OVERALL : 56%
1ST DAY SCORE : N/A

COLOUR ☒ ☐
MONO ☐ ☒
520ST ☒ ☐
1040ST ☒ ☐

their health and safety in the coming battles.

Creation of your own character is achieved as the result of answering the questions of a mysterious gypsy. If it is obvious from your answers that you are the type of person who lets your sword arm speak for you, then you will undoubtedly be cast as a fighter. If, however, you are more a thinker than a doer, the gypsy may cast you in the guise of a spell-casting Magus. Needless to say, the gypsy carefully considered my answers and created my character in the form of a simple fighter - strong in the arm and strong in the head, no doubt! You may

select your merry men from the ranks of Shepherds, Bards, Rangers, Tinkers, Paladins and Druids which roam the mainland and islands through which you travel. Each character has his or her own special skills in war and magic. There are 27 different spells to be learnt and employed by the magicians amongst you, each needing the correct mixture of mysterious ingredients to achieve its efficacy. Spells such as the Iceball require Mandrake Root and Black Pearl to chill the heart of your adversary, whilst a Ginseng and Spider Silk mixture will cause your enemies to fall into a deep sleep.

Within the towns are the various inns, pubs, armouries, herb shops and temples of healing where provisions may be bought and gossip exchanged. In all your dealings with merchants and townsfolk you must behave as a pure-hearted knight, as any evil deed will be sure to cause your eventual undoing. The armouries contain the usual essentials of swords, axes and daggers plus ready-to-wear chainmail and magic plate. Talking to the inhabitants is essential, as each appears to hold one small part to the overall puzzle of your quest. Asking after the health of the landlord may reveal that he has been ill, but cured himself with a local herb. You could then ask where the herb was to be found. Armed with this knowledge you may shuffle off and gather a bunch of spindle-root for your own use. Leaving the towns and travelling the countryside is a risky business, as you will inevitably be set upon by rogues and monsters. When the action does begin you must select a weapon from your



possessions and use the cursor keys to indicate the direction of your strike. The combat screen will show the disposition of the two warring bands and, as each group moves into battle, you must manoeuvre your companions into the best battle order to deal with the differing nasties.

Indicators will show the current strength of each member of your band and you must use their special skills correctly to achieve each victory. Success in a battle will reward you with experience and gold chests. Gold chests must be approached with caution as they may be traps, so a high-dexterity user should be selected as the person to open the chest.

In addition to foot-slogging your way around the empire, you may purchase horses or even commandeer a ship for travel between the islands. Travelling by ship has the additional advantage that you may use the onboard cannons to attack the various pirate ships which ply the seas and bays, thus gaining large amounts of gold.

An even more spectacular method of travel is by the use of magic gates which mysteriously appear with the phases of the twin moons. Entering these gates will whisk you to the far corners of the empire in the blink of an eye, thus saving on the feet and rations.

There are 26 main commands which the game recognises, such as, TALK, CAST, ATTACK, USE and SEARCH. Having selected to 'TALK' to a local, you are able to discuss his name, job and health. The secret of further conversation is to pick out key words from his initial answers in order to ask additional questions. In this way you will find out which innkeeper knows where the deadly nightshade blooms, and the location of the magic red stone. As the time taken to complete this game is in the region of 100 - 200 hours, you are given the option to save the state of your game on a second player disk.

The game pack contains two disks, the first containing the superfluous pretty pictures shown while the opening blurb is displayed, the second containing the actual game. A booklet entitled 'The History of Britannia' is included which details the various character types and their many skills, plus a list of the various nasties to be found skulking beneath the rocks. A second, beautifully illustrated, booklet called 'The Book of Mystic Wisdom' is supplied, and this documents the many spells and potions which may be used in the game.

STA



Rubbish, useless, waste of space. These were my first impressions of the game. I then stopped and read the books that came with it. That helped, but this is a game that is based on a good idea - it's just the implementation that leaves a lot to be desired. I suppose that having put so much into the graphics they could not put as much into the other parts, such as, the interactive side, (i.e. talking to the characters). I found these limitations very inhibiting. On the good side, an awful lot of time and effort has been spent on the story line and the attendant documentation, and I particularly liked the acquisition of spell components, mixing and creating of spells. One last thing: why wouldn't anybody join my party? Is there some location where you can buy soap or an anti-perspirant deodorant?

SK

As the documentation itself states, a large part of this game centres around the conversations with the other characters. Only by quizzing the other inhabitants can you gain enough knowledge to solve the game. Coming from a background of text adventures, I found this game very frustrating as the words recognised by the system are extremely limited. After the hundredth fighter tells you no more than that you need to keep a pure heart, you will be tempted to fit an axe through his helmet!

The crude graphics used in this game did nothing to bring it to life for me, and while I accept that there are many hours of use to be found in this package for already committed fantasy fans, I suspect that it will attract few converts from adventure players.

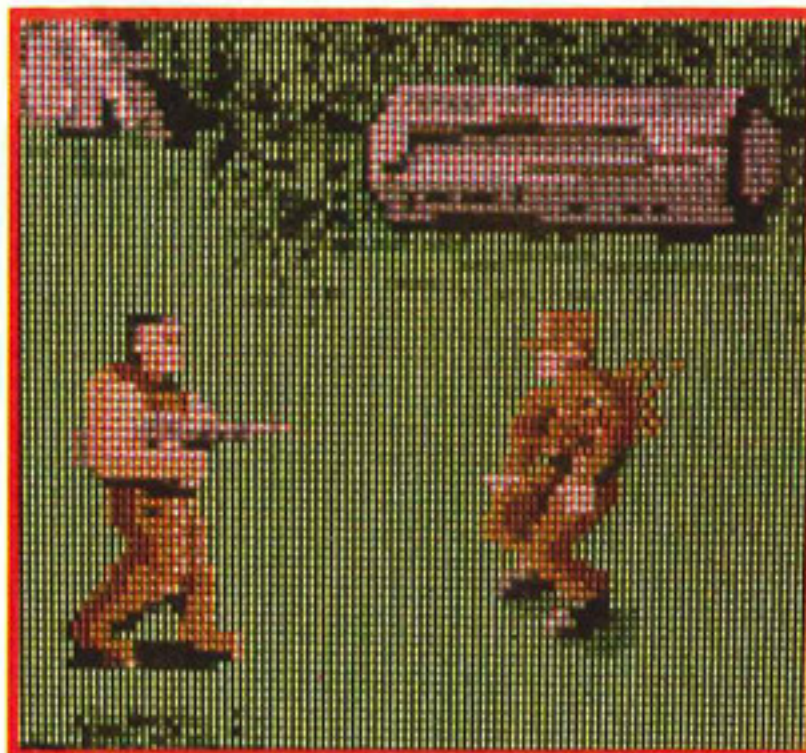
AM

PREDATOR

ACTIVISION

With a physique like an armoured personnel carrier and a name that sounds like a cavalry charge, the mighty Arnold Schwarzenegger has achieved even greater fame and success as a screen commando, than he did in his unprecedented body-building career.

His latest film is called Predator, which received favourable reviews even from the so-called serious press. The Sunday Times: 'The combat scenes are even better than in Platoon!' The theme of military combat is already well subscribed to in the software market and so every new addition to the list must have something original to offer. There are three formats which have been adopted in combat games: the 'Commando' style, which comprises a soldier running across a vertically-scrolling terrain; the side-view with horizontal scrolling, which is used in Player's recent release called Joe Blade; and the overhead view, which is exclusive to Interceptor's brilliant Eagle's Nest. Recently, the onus has been on software companies to make their military combat games less violent. This request was heeded in Player's Joe Blade, which placed emphasis on searching for objects and rescuing kidnapped politicians,



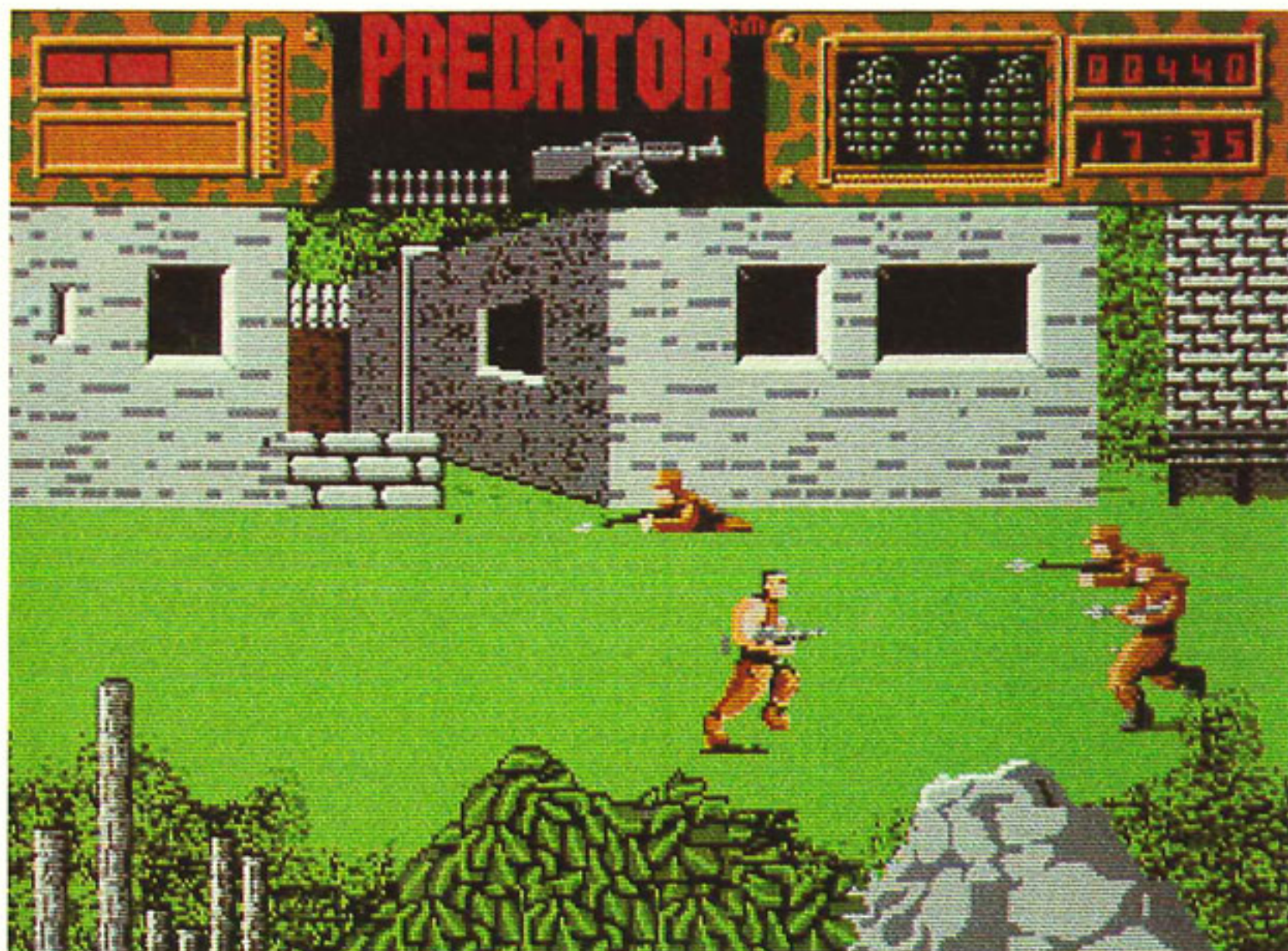
rather than gaining bonus-points with a high body-count. In contrast, Activision appear to have totally disregarded this move to pacifism and, as a result, Predator is bloody and violent.

The loading screen displays a slick animation sequence of the alien Predator's space craft orbiting the earth, which is followed by a digitized picture of Arny baring his mighty chest. After a double-disk-loading ceremony, the game screen materializes to reveal a clearing in the jungle, accompanied by the distinctive sound of an approaching helicopter. Sure enough, a helicopter hovers into view, a rope drops from the hatch and five identical commandos abseil to the ground. The final commando is Major Alan Schaefer who was portrayed by Schwarzenegger in the film and who you must direct in the game. He is slightly different to the other commandos, with a bulkier body and bare arms - presumably, they couldn't find an army shirt to fit Arny's 24-inch biceps. The other commandos run off screen, and pushing the joystick to the right sends Schaefer running after them. The screen begins to

scroll as the character reaches the centre, although he can run faster than the scrolling speed. Although the game scrolls horizontally, there is some depth to the screen and redirecting the pressure on the joystick to diagonal positions, moves him to the back and front of the screen. The status display at the top of the screen consists of a digital timer and points gauge, with life and energy sources indicated by red bars. Initially, Schaefer is armed with an M16 ArmaLite which he nestles under one massive arm, plus three hand grenades, which must only be used as a last resort. Unlike the film in which Arny appears to have an unlimited supply of bullets, your ammunition is quickly exhaustible.

Therefore, a weaponry gauge on the status display indicates the ammunition levels and the number of grenades you have at your disposal. A sniper in a tree makes his presence known at the back of the screen. Pressing the firebutton activates the weaponry and, while the firebutton is pressed, the joystick governs the aiming of the gun. In order to retaliate, you must move within range of the sniper's rifle and each time Schaefer is hit the energy gauge depletes by one bar.

Schaefer quickly catches up with the first of his comrades, who is lying dead in a pool of blood and, suddenly, the screen turns blue, the monitor emits a ghostly sound and a triangular gunsight chases him across the screen. The sights are easily avoidable and if you keep within reachable distance of the dead comrade and wait for the screen to return to normal, you can



Schaefer walks straight into an ambush amongst some derelict buildings

GAME: PREDATOR
HOUSE: ACTIVISION
PHONE: 01-431 1101
PRICE: £19.99
RELEASE: NOW

GRAPHICS : 65 %
SOUND : 53 %
ADDICTIVENESS : 53 %
ORIGINALITY : 62 %
OVERALL : 62 %
1ST DAY SCORE : 3350

KEYBOARD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
JOYSTICK	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
MOUSE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
COLOUR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
MONO	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
520ST	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1040ST	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Predator reminds me of the Rambo, Commando-type games, only this time the action takes place over a horizontally-scrolling background. I was impressed with the sound created by the helicopter rotor blades - could it perhaps have been sampled from the real thing? Running through the jungle is a pretty experience - the backdrops are well drawn and quite convincing. The action, for the first two levels, sees old Schwarzenegger running the gauntlet through enemy territory. The best tactic seems to be to stop only to pick up fresh weapons - otherwise keep moving! Predator is a difficult game but one in which your performance should improve with every sitting. Many people will dislike it but it does represent a challenge. And, unlike in the films, Arnie actually does die occasionally!

NC



Entering level 2 over a log bridge

exchange the M16 Armalite for a more effective and devastating heavy-gauge shotgun. This exchange is achieved by moving near to the weapon, pressing 'Return' once to drop the existing gun, and again to pick up the replacement. Pushing the joystick to the right sets Schaefer running, and before long he is confronted by a flock of birds which in normal circumstances would not be a threat to the mighty Schwarzenegger. However, in this case, every bird that hits him depletes his energy. Obviously, the birds are introduced to waste ammunition, but surely Activision could have thought of something more menacing.

With the ammunition spent on warding off the killer birds, Schaefer may as well get rid of the useless weapon and rely on unarmed combat for his protection. Without a weapon, pressing the firebutton activates the unarmed combat mode. Then pushing the joystick forwards activates a punch; pulling backwards blocks; and redirecting the joystick diagonally sends out a powerful kick. However, not even Schwarzenegger could swat high-velocity bullets and, as he runs into the first ambush, his only defence is to resort to the hand-grenades. Pressing the spacebar throws the grenade a short distance, while the left-hand 'Shift' key sends it further. Another dead comrade offers the opportunity to re-arm Schaefer and, again, the screen turns blue and the triangular sight

chases him across the screen. Again, the sight is easily avoidable and you can return to the body and pick up the new weapon. As you progress through the game, the ambushes occur more regularly and intensely, with the enemy hiding in foxholes and machine gun posts. Eventually, the jungle ends and Schaefer runs into an urban situation, where the enemy take position inside the buildings - time is running out!

STA

I'm still fairly undecided about this one. It is true that the game has a fair amount of action and the animation of the characters is quite good. However, the pace of the game is so slow that, on getting killed for the umpteenth time, I actually timed the opening helicopter sequence - 42 seconds! What a waste of time having to go through that rigmarole every time a new game is started. Overall, not something to shout too loudly about although, knowing my luck, everyone will think it a hit and I'll be left with egg on my face. It could be good if everything was speeded up by a factor of two and the unnecessary bits cut out - enough said. Not my cup of tea.

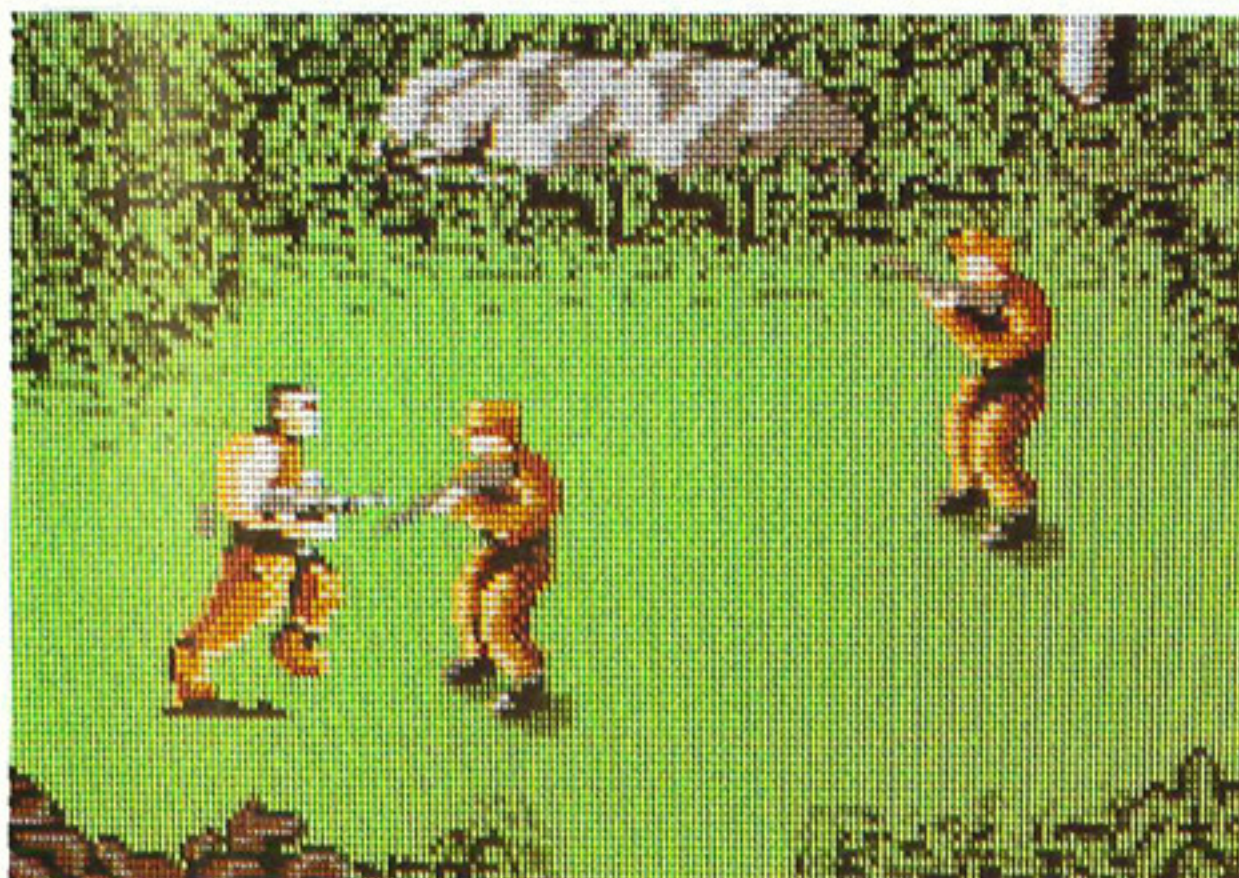
MM

He's big, he's butch and he's bulky - even in pixels! I always treat games which have been based on films with some scepticism, but I was pleasantly surprised by Predator. The animation is quite effective, particularly the helicopter sequence, and the character's running motion is unmistakably Schwarzenegger. Undoubtedly, Predator is gung-ho, violent and bloody, but there is an underlying aspect of strategy which, when correctly employed, increases your success in the game. The weaponry exchange is an interesting feature and the easily exhaustible ammunition forces you to use the weapons wisely. There are a number of failings in Predator, such as the helicopter scene at the beginning of the game, which is a novelty at first, but after the third or fourth time, becomes time-wasting and tedious. Additionally, the seemingly menacing alien's weaponry is easily avoidable, while a pathetic flock of birds prove to be the greatest hazard in the entire game.

JS



Watch the bushes for the hidden enemy



Schaefer finds more bullets to dodge

GET DEXTER 2

INFOGRAMES

Believe it or not, Crafton and Xunk are not the Norwegian entrants for the Eurovision song contest, they are characters from a bizarre game who have gained their French creator, Par Remi Herbulot, a cult following.

Xunks, Stiffians and Swappis? I think Monsieur Herbulot must have been under the influence of a few glasses of Beaujolais when he dreamt up this game. However, although Get Dexter 2 could be described as a freak show on disk, it contains all the necessary ingredients that constitute a successful arcade adventure. The gameplay, like the behaviour of the Ouaks, is often frenetic, thanks to a sea of creatures that constantly swarm around Dexter's legs and chip away at his energy levels. However, the fault with the controls is an obvious oversight, which causes unnecessary frustration and detracts from an otherwise pleasing game. Although weird, bizarre and baffling are all words which could be used to describe this game, challenging, puzzling and amusing are equally apt. To all arcade adventurers, 'Get Dexter 2!'

JS

Monsieur Herbulot appears to have a fascination for one-legged dogs called Xunks and all manner of freakish humanoids. Evidently, his feverish mind has created an equally outlandish menagerie of creatures for his latest production. The ST version of the original Get Dexter was called Crafton and Xunk, and so I presume that Get Dexter 2 is the sequel. Dexter, we are informed, is in the land of a race of people called the Swappis and his primary task is to gain their confidence so that he can travel safely through their secret access to the land of the Antines.

Although Dexter can be controlled with joystick or mouse, I had to combine the two in order to play the game effectively. The joystick, as usual, offers the most responsive directional controls but, trying to pick up the objects which must be collected throughout the game causes some frustration. I overcame this problem by controlling Dexter's movement with the joystick and, on reaching an object, clicking the mouse button to pick the item up and store it in an inventory beneath the game screen. Some of these objects are relevant to solving the game, while others, such as dynamite, mousetraps and guns, protect you from your adversaries. The game screen is drawn in 30/60 degree isometric projection, which creates a three-dimensional effect, and Dexter can be moved in any direction until he arrives at an invisible border between the visible and adjacent screen. Then, with the faithful Xunk rushing to his heel, Dexter moves to the next location. Although Xunk is the only character to have retained his name and identity from the original ST game, he spends most of his time

Get Dexter 2 is the follow-up to Ere Informatique's, Crafton and Xunk. I found the game somewhat tiresome. After the initial, "Oooh, this one look's different!", Get Dexter falls into the rather mundane arcade adventure slot. Sure enough, the graphics are well above average, and the soundtrack and accompanying effects are aurally pleasing. The gameplay, however, is somewhat difficult to master. The dual control between mouse and keyboard, or joystick and keyboard, together with the effect of the 3D style graphics, led to my becoming a little confused. To be fair, I could not recommend Get Dexter; still, if you enjoyed Crafton and Xunk, I see no reason why this latest title shouldn't find its way into your software collection.

NC

bouncing around on one leg, chasing sticks and being distracted by pretty Xunkettes. Therefore, apart from serving as some amusement, his presence is quite superfluous to the game.

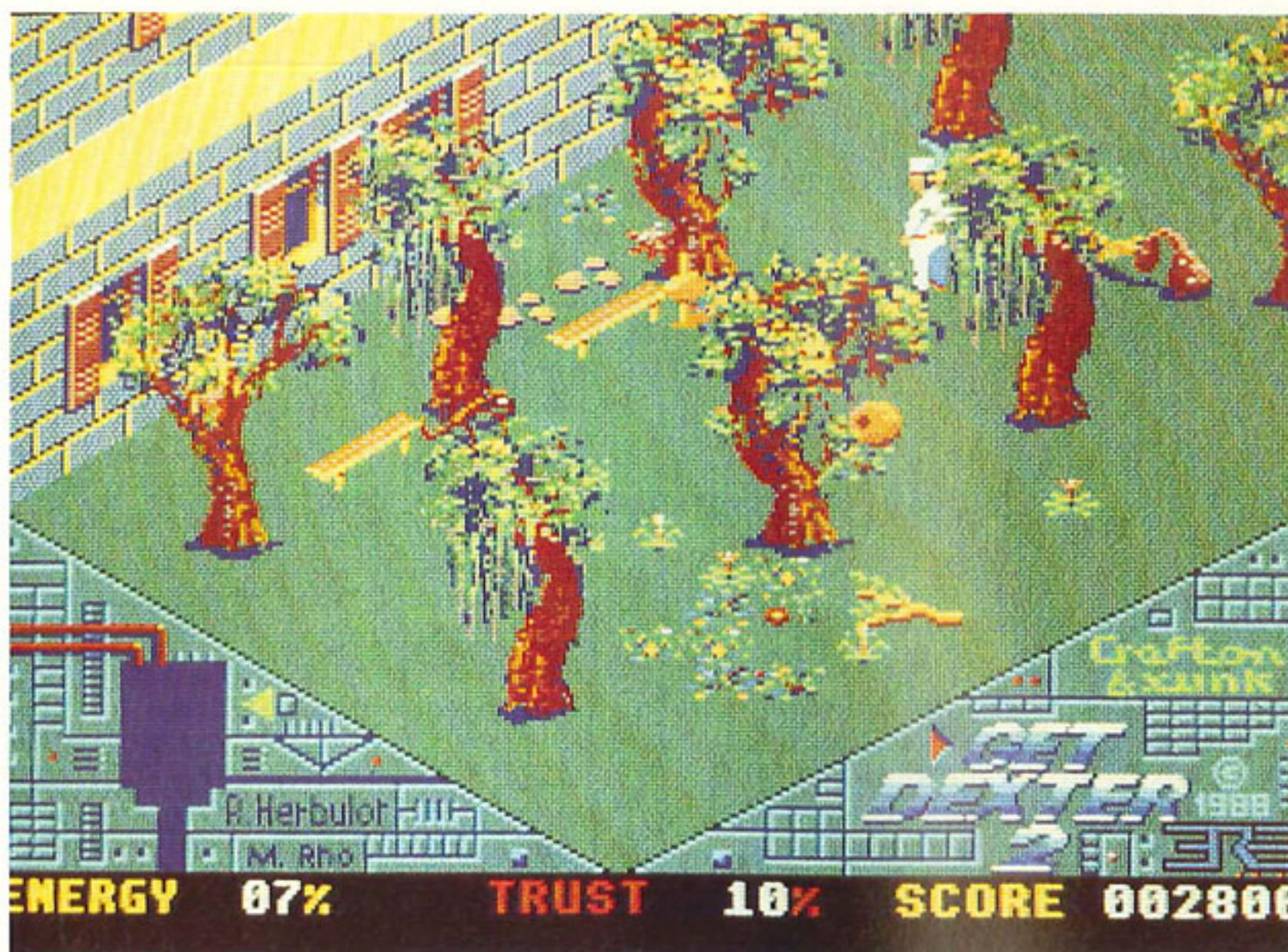
A 'Trust' gauge monitors the increase or decrease in the confidence that the Swappis invest in Dexter, which is dependent on his success at finding the answers to three tests. Monsieur Herbulot and Infogrames are also gauging their trust in the computer-press and, understandably, they have requested that software reviewers do not disclose too many details about the game. The tasks are hidden within the Swappi houses and, avoiding the swarm of weird creatures which crawl across the ground, you must direct



Come into my parlour!



Dexter finds a pressie. Must be his lucky day!



Getting a breath of fresh air.

Dexter into the first house. On discovering the task, a message window appears in the centre of the screen stating that Dexter must discover where the Swappis originate from. With the faithful Xunk at his heels, Dexter sets off on a quite extraordinary journey.

'The Big Book' describes how the Great Swappi leads his people to this strange land and how his spirit is trapped somewhere in the game. Before Dexter can travel to the Antines, he must find four statuettes which are hidden in various locations in the game, take them to a certain holy place and put them on top of pillars within the building. At once, the Great Swappi appears and presents Dexter with 'The Big Book' and you must retrace your steps and return the book to the Swappis. Immediately, their increased confidence in Dexter is indicated on the Trust gauge. These troublesome Swappis then declare that they are ill and Dexter's next task is to find the cure. You must locate a machine, find and combine the two correct ingredients, make a potion and return it to the ailing yellow Swappis. The Trust gauge increases further and you must discover the Swappi's final

request: 'We've lost our Ouak! Who can get him back?' An Ouak, it transpires, is a Swappi dog who has been subject to metabolic tests at the hands of the nasty Stiffians. As a result of these experiments, the Ouaks change from sane to frenetic simply by moving through a portico in one of the screens. You must entice a frenetic Ouak back to the Swappi's garden with a certain object, which can be found elsewhere in the game. But what object?

After completing the final test, the Trust gauge should indicate that the Swappis have full confidence in Dexter and, finally, he can pass through their secret passage and into the Antines. This section of the game looks suspiciously similar to Crafton and Xunk and, avoiding an even more intense presence of unusual creatures, Dexter must locate a grave which is surrounded by ten crystals. Five of the crystals play a short tune and, after the final note, a message appears on screen stating that you must reproduce the tune perfectly to free the occupant of the grave. Using the other five crystals, Dexter must play the tune correctly. What happens next is for you to discover!

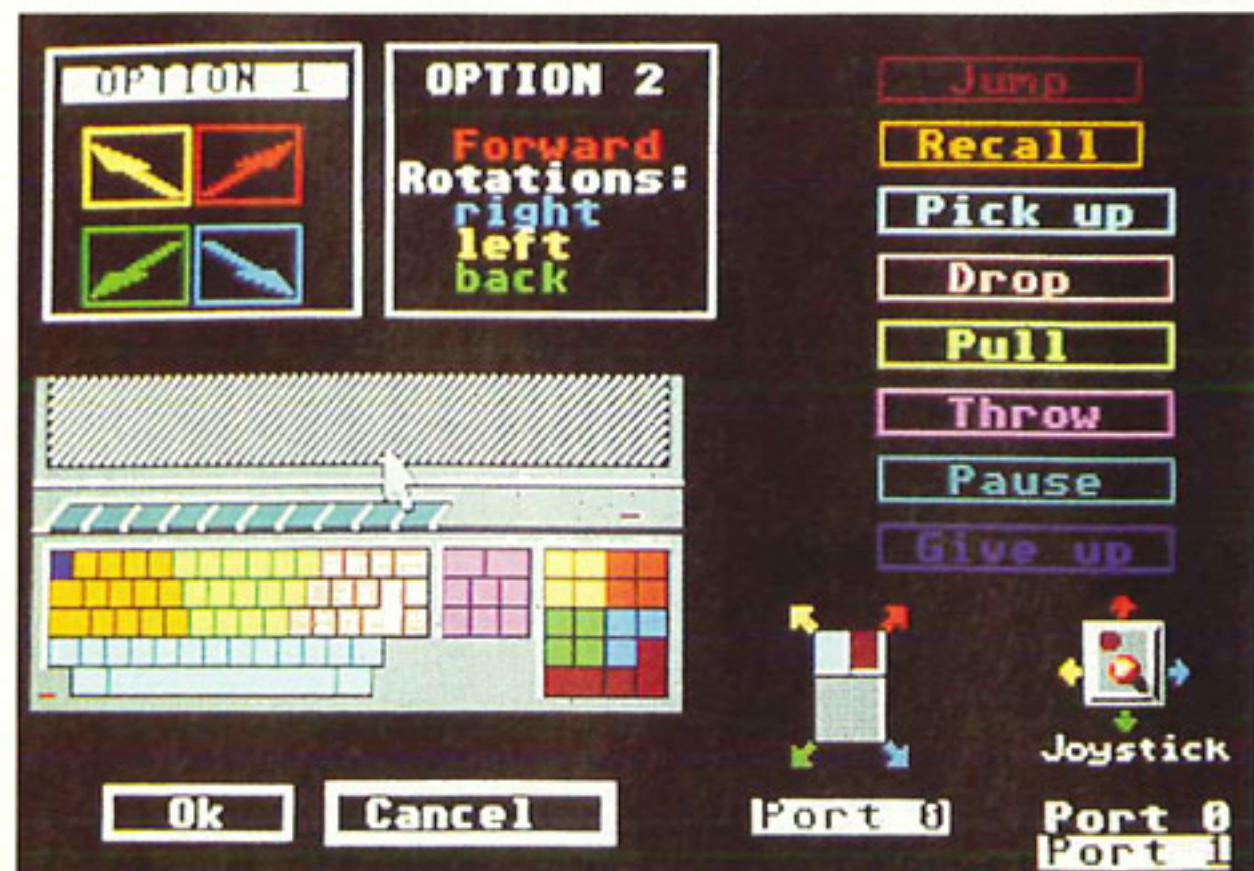
KEYBOARD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
JOYSTICK	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
MOUSE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
COLOUR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
MONO	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
520ST	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1040ST	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I found Get Dexter II very hard to get into, thus somewhat spoiling my initial impressions. However, after great perseverance, the game did start to grow on me. The graphics are rather good, with the animation especially so. The sound effects were, however, rather sparse and this led to a very quiet game. The game itself is like a who's who of computer-generated freaks and, without the monks and good old (Ted?) Dexter himself, you could be forgiven for thinking that you had gone completely off your rocker, what with hopping feet with eyes and huge, purple, sixteen-legged bugs. All in all, a game that you must get your hands on before buying, as you'll either love it or hate it.

MM

GAME: GET DEXTER II
HOUSE: INFOGRADES
PHONE: 01-364 0123
PRICE: £19.95
RELEASE: NOW

GRAPHICS : 62 %
SOUND : 45 %
ADDICTIVENESS : 54 %
ORIGINALITY : 64 %
OVERALL : 59 %
1ST DAY SCORE : 7600



Get Dexter's option screen



Dexter searching within a church

LEE ENFIELD

TOURNAMENT OF DEATH

----- INFOGRAMES -----

*The future of mankind
is at stake; the course
of history could be
irreversibly and
horribly altered!*

In the latest addition to the so-called Time Troubleshooter series, Lee Enfield is transported back to the thirteenth century in The Tournament of Death. As usual, he is pitted against his arch-enemy the Evil Yellow Shadow who, on this occasion, has stolen the Holy Shroud and intends to proclaim himself Pope. The game, we are told, takes place in the Castle of the Count of Savoy and the task is to locate the Holy Shroud before that ghastly Shadow commits the greatest sacrilege and destroys it. The screen is dominated by a still portrait of a thirteenth century knight who is being pursued by a fearsome ogre brandishing a dagger, while the actual game-screen is a little less obtrusive and occupies a mere fraction of the screen. Initially, it is used as a message window containing a scenario which can be cleared to reveal the game-screen by pressing the firebutton.

Dressed in blue jeans and a red shirt, Lee Enfield waits conspicuously for

GAME: LEE ENFIELD -
TOURNAMENT OF DEATH
HOUSE: INFOGRAMES
PHONE: 01-364 0123
PRICE: £19.95
RELEASE: NOW

GRAPHICS : 36%
SOUND : 27%
ADDICTIVENESS : 25%
ORIGINALITY : 47%
OVERALL : 34%
1ST DAY SCORE : N/A

some guidance in this dark and murky thirteenth-century setting. The game scrolls horizontally through the rooms within the castle, which are linked by doorways. Each room is three dimensional and so has some depth to it. Therefore, in addition to manoeuvring Lee horizontally across the screen, he can also be moved to the front or back of the room. Each room has an entrance and exit, usually located at either side of the room but occasionally, at the back. Lee must be positioned in front of the exit in order to travel into the adjacent room. The task in hand is to search for clues to the location of the Holy Shroud and so every object in each room must be searched.

The majority of rooms contain a piece of furniture, a cask or chest that can be searched by drawing near to the object and pressing the firebutton. The hidden item is briefly highlighted on screen and then stored in an inventory beneath. Certain objects are reputed to shape the outcome of the game, while others are supposed to aid your progress. As you might expect, the search is hindered by a weird collection of adversaries, which include the Yellow Shadow's guards, foot soldiers, hooded fiends and even the occasional grizzly bear. If an adversary lurks unseen in an adjacent room, a window appears within the game-screen and the action is temporarily suspended. With the aid of a sinister silhouette in a tunnel, this window warns that an enemy lurks unseen in the next room. Any confrontation with the enemy depletes Lee's energy, which is indicated by a power-gauge at the side of the screen. Your only defence against the foe is to press the firebutton and wrench the joystick to the right, which sends out an ineffective punch.

The presence of the enemy in a particular room is a good indication that there is something worth searching for. However, due to poor response from the controls, avoiding and escaping your many foes is quite frustrating. Usually in multi-screen games, you can escape from an awkward situation by simply moving to an adjacent room. But in this case, the bears,

Infogrames have crammed a game of biblical proportions inside a game-screen the size of a pocket edition of the New Testament. The Tournament of Death has the smallest game-screen I have ever seen and, as a result, you never quite enter into the spirit of the game. The controls are dull and indistinct, causing frustration rather than excitement. Additionally, the constant music which accompanies the game is inapt and, indeed, intolerable and fails to compensate for the total lack of sound effects. The combination of these failings contribute to a game which yields little entertainment and no satisfaction.

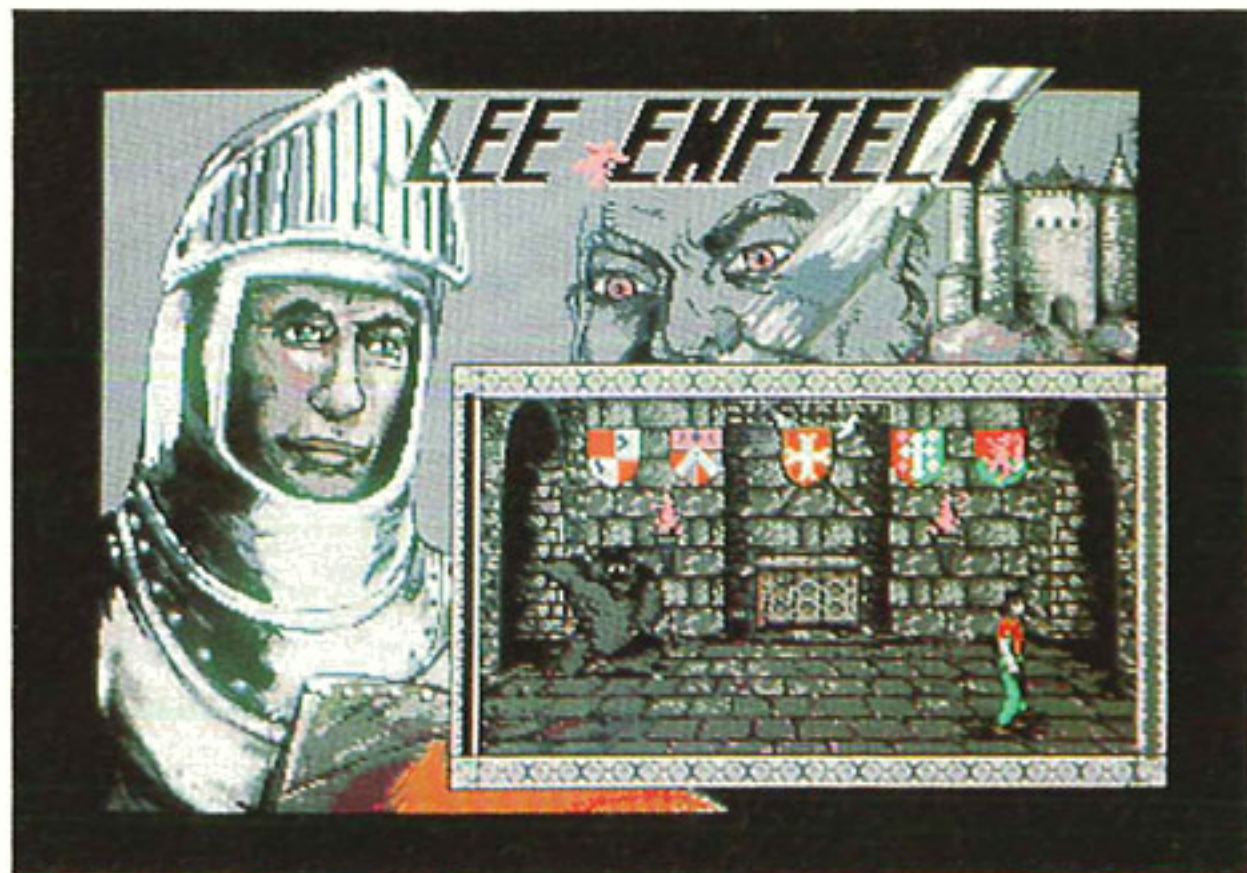
JS

The whole game is compacted down to the bottom right-hand corner of the screen - a free magnifying glass would have come in handy! The control over Lee Enfield is also rather difficult, with the computer appearing to store my joystick inputs resulting in poor old Lee ends up running all over the place unnecessarily. With all these difficulties, it was no wonder that I was only ever capable of running around, busily bumping into walls, whilst ogres and Grim Reaper-type beings set about destroying me with ease. This game can simply be summed up in two words: below average. Not worth raiding your piggy-bank for.

MM

guards and hooded fiends tenaciously follow you from one room to the next. Once Lee is involved in a physical confrontation, you lose complete control of the joystick and the energy gauge slides to the base of the screen. Confusingly, he is then enveloped in a large bubble which proceeds to roll through the castle. Again, the game-screen becomes a message window, which explains that an unseen guardian has intervened in the game.

STA



The most annoying feature of the game is the tiny playing area...



...however, the playing area itself is highly detailed

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