

OVER
ONE HUNDRED
HOT GAMES
REVIEWED INSIDE!

GIGER'S DARK SEED

Mr. Alien has written a computer game! (Well, sort of)



ISSUE 55

April 1993

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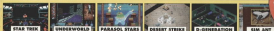
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SIX REALLY
BIG REVIEWS
FOR SIX
REALLY BIG
GAMES

IT'LL BE WORTH IT
(And 32,767 others)

The wait will be over on June 5th.

ITS WAIT IN GOLD.

(7 other colours)





20 Bullfrog first came up with the idea of BOB over a pizza after completing Powermonger. Now see how for they've got.

22 He may be able to draw pictures of mollusks with a brush, but how will it if Giger cope with SPaint (BT Dark Seed - In The Works



60 Star Trek - The 25th Anniversary is one of the most entertaining and fully rounded games we've seen all year. Read all about it in our ScreenTest.

78 The New Originals - This month the Bitmap Bros tell us what they would have done with Tempest.



7 Disk! - How to use the thing on the front. **10** News - All the rumours that are fit to print. **16** Previews - Gary Whitta and a load of exclusives. **20** In the Works - BOB from Bullfrog and Dark Seed from H.R. Giger **29** ScreenTest **70** New Originals - Tempest, Bitmap style. **78** Public Domain - CheapoKings' Paradise **82** Tearjerking Farewell. **83** Reviews Directory. Last month's pinks reprint.

R E V I E W S

30 Sim Ant

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be an ant? No, we didn't suppose so for a second. But it's interesting thought. No, really, it is. So interesting, in fact, that Maxis have done a whole game about it.

36 Underworld

Max the deep adventuring skills of Dungeons Master and the graphic splendour of Wing Commander and you're certain to be looking at a winner. At least if you're into the '80s.

42 Desert Strike

Buddy Budd Beyond Amiga owners scrambling to get for Strangers in Paradise? Well, you may be most tempted to purchase a Megadrive just for the chance of using this excellent shoot 'em up.

48 D-Generation

No, not the top BBC show with Bruce and that girl with the legs in it. That's The Generation Game. This Generation game is all about many games on the PC. And we just love it.

54 Parasol Stars

Bob and Bob like bubbles in Bubble Bobble to battle the bumpy bubbles. Right after they can jump around, compact spheres with their Rainbows. And now they have some umbrellas.

60 Star Trek

To boldly go, Captain's log. Picking off Klingons, T'Pol, the camera take it, it's life, Jim, but not as we know it, etc, etc. Skip into a metallic pod and travel with us to the land of wacky sci.

(STILL)
THE BEST
REVIEWS ON
THE PLANET

contents

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ACE DISK 2

Have I got some treats in store for you this month? For Amiga nuts there's a complete level of Gremle's brilliant bug-hunt *Space Crusade* and IBM PC owners can get their jollies lobbing axes at small girls in a scene from Core's *Heimdall*. So much to say, so little space to say it in...

SPACE CRUSADE



Calling all Alliance fans! If you liked that totally mega stink 'n' slash SF film, here you'll love Gremle's *Space Crusade*. You play a rock 'n' space commander leading a troupe of five hard-as-nails marines through swirled spacehips populated by all manner of hideous alien critter.

For your delectation and entertainment Gremle have kindly provided ACE readers with a complete demo of the first level - the final game will have a fantastic twist. The aim here is simple: find the massive ED1000-like Dreadnought and destroy it. And remember: Get there before they get you!

HAVING A FUNNY TURN

Space Crusade is played in turns. At the beginning of the turn a random effect occurs to keep you on your toes and then the players can perform their actions. First the player performs his actions, then the alien player (the computer) performs his. In his turn a player may move and set fire with all, some or none of the marines under his control. Bear in mind that if an icon is shaded that means it can't be used by the selected marine that turn.



Action Window

The big square window is where all the action takes place. Normally you view the ship in 2D, while moving your marines and so forth, but it switches to exciting isometric 3D when combat occurs.

Status Window

To the upper-right of the action window is the status panel which gives information on the currently-selected marine, including health and holes for each life point and weapons carried. Each weapon has a different effect. Again, due to lack of space I can't give all the details here - you'll have to find out what they do by trial and error.

Mini-Map Window

Situated to the left of the main window and below the status window, this normally displays a mini-map of the whole ship, complete with holes for the marines and the aliens. However, select the special order or equipment icons and this window changes to show the things available. Also, during combat this display shows the attack and defence ratings scored by the two combatants.



ICON SING A RAINBOW...

All the marines are controlled via a simple point-and-click mouse interface. To activate an icon and select things click with the left mouse button. To cancel an active icon click with the right button. Credit! Anyway, here are those icons in full.



Explore icon

Click here and you can stroll freely around the ship's deck using the mouse. Alternatively click on the arrows around the edge of the action window.



Move icon

This icon is used to move the marines around. When squares where the marine can move in will be highlighted - click on one.



Fire icon

This icon lets the marine fire his weapons. The squares in range will be lit up in yellow - click on one, preferably with an alien in it!



ACE DISK 2

Hand-to-Hand Combat Icon



Use this icon to engage in more hand-to-hand combat with any creature on squares adjacent to your marine. As before, select the icon then select an alien.

Special Orders Icon

At the start of each turn the player has the opportunity to play a special order. Click here to use it. (There's isn't enough space to go into what each does here, I'm afraid - see if you can work it out yourself.)



Special Equipment Icon



Each team of marines is equipped with some extra-special equipment that can be called into play. See if you can work out what it all does.

Open Door Icon

When a marine is next to a shut door it can be opened using this icon. Bear in mind that doors open automatically if moved through.



Scan Ship Icon

Click here to scan the nearby dock areas and reveal

SORRY ST-ATE

Sorry of 57 tons. Due to a last minute problem with the disk we've had to out! Ozare from the compilation. This occurred after the cover had been sent to the printers, meaning it was impossible to correct the error on the disk label reproduced there. Sorry, sorry, sorry and, once again, sorry!



GETTING GOING...

AMIGA

Simply slip the ACE Coverdisk into your drive and Space Crusade will load automatically. A piece of text will be displayed explaining what the game is all about then after a short wait the game will start. Have fun!

IBM PC

Hey-hey! Easy PC! While in your hard drive type HD ACE (>Returns) create a directory called ACE. Then type CD ACE (Returns) to enter the freshly-made-directory, insert the ACE Coverdisk in your 3.1" floppy drive. Now, assuming that this is drive A type A:ACE (Returns) and the game will install automatically onto your hard drive. If it's drive B then type B:ACE (Returns). Finally type HIMDALL (Returns) to play....

HEIMDALL

You've heard all the hype, now here's the chance for all you real PC owners out there in ACE Land to try out the infamous axe-throwing scene from Core's forthcoming Heimdall extravaganza.

The idea is this: you play Heimdall, a right top geezer who's been hitting the ale just a bit too much. (Stick to Luasade, Heimy, that's my advice!) Anyway, Heimy's taking part in a conpo to free a babe from the stocks by cutting the locks of hair holding her captive. But this is no simple slip n' snip operation - Heimy has to throw axes to cut her golden tresses.

The game gives you the option to play using either keyboard or mouse. With the keyboard use the keys A, Z, O and P to move the sight up, down, left and right respectively and hit the space bar to fire. Hit ESCAPE to return to the good ol' DOS. Enjoy yo'elves!



any skilling alien ships.

Next Go Icon

When you've finished your turn click here to let the alien player have his.



Marine Icons



Click here to switch between controlling the five different marines. The two lights indicate whether the marine has already moved or fired on both. You can only perform each action once with each marine per turn.

ID/3D Icon

Toggle between the 2D and 3D views.



PROBLEMS, PROBLEMS...

Having trouble with your disk? Well, before you get too into and start frantically calling the ACE offices check the following:

- Make sure your computer and TV/monitor are all connected up correctly.
- If the disk has been obviously damaged in the post or at the warehouse - i.e. it is bent, broken or otherwise obviously physically damaged - then DO NOT INSERT IT IN YOUR DISK DRIVE! ACE Imagine and DATAP Images will not be held responsible for any damage caused to your hardware by damaged disks.
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EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

Faced with tough competition from the likes of arcade imaginers Sega and Virtuality, Roddifenix has launched an innovative entry into the budding world of amusement simulation.

Commander looks like a space shuttle from a cheap science fiction movie. Despite such a drawback, this offbeat two-seat capsule boasts high-resolution graphics, CD stereo sound and, most importantly, comfortable seats to hopefully prevent repetitive burn injury.

Furthermore, the entertainment software played inside the machine has been designed by Lucasfilm, the Californian company that gave us the stunning special effects in *Star Wars 2: The Empire Strikes Back*.



to commanding a submarine. The Commander



from a submarine. The Commander boasts a standard arc-blast style of game. Although the Commander is a result of expertise in military simulation technology, it would comfortably sit inside a shopping center in downtown Tokyo. Would you believe that, Lucasfilm has already provided the visual feast for such an environment. What a surprise, eh?

Roddifenix is promising a variety of games scenarios for the system, from firing top-velocity

detonators at the recent ATEI event in London.

Although the Commander is a result of expertise in military simulation technology, it would comfortably sit inside a shopping center in downtown Tokyo. Would you believe that, Lucasfilm has already provided the visual feast for such an environment. What a surprise, eh?

FULL OF EASTERN PROMISE

A radical departure from its previous light-gun releases, *Wilypark*, Neovision is working on a futuristic arcade simulator for the PC and Super NES.

Published by Data East in the USA, Ultrazone's *Suikoden Earth* is a blend of strategy and combat. A proprietary graphics development system has been used to bring remarkable ray-traced (D-rendered) animation to the game. Reminiscent of the giant war machines seen in *BattleTech*, Ultrazone's mecha-based duels look like futuristic table-top action. The idea is to pit a squad of three mechs and step the alien invaders from taking over our lovely planet.

"Ultrazone will delight gamers with its depth of play and amazing graphics," insists Connie Freeman of Data East. "We're taking full advantage of the expanded capabilities that the Super NES provides."



WORD UP

■ **Widened** Every morsel of this delicious games news has been eagerly certified by the stability of most excellent features. So, talk in, there's plenty here for all you hungry players.

■ **What's happened to Player Manager 2?** We asked Data the same question. It seems *Kick Off 2* is top of the selectors list. "I don't want people to find out who's in *Kick Off 3*," declared an unusually evasive *And Sports*. "We've done a lot of work on it," [sighs] for releasing *Editor on Image* next. *Kick Off 3* will include new game play, sliding tackles, chip passes and the ability to bring into players. In his spare time, *Chris Dool* is also reworking the Japanese version of *Kick Off* to the Super NES. When it comes to sorting out games and fighting words, *Richard*, managing *British codes* can still show these boys a thing or two, eh?

■ **How would you like to 'steer' in a best-selling computer game?** Origin has given each of us a chance to threaten lucky people in a totally out-of-the-ordinary context. These wheel-steering players will actually appear as characters in *Ultima VI: The Black Gate*. Apparently, thousands of entries came in from around the world. Some winners were automatically chosen with a few specially marked runs stored in random *Ultima VI* packages during 1990. The rest were picked by a judging committee comprised of Richard "Lord British" Garriot and other members of the *Ultima VI* design team. The youngest winner was 14-year-old Greg Gates from New Jersey. Honourable Lucy Harris, 42, will play a tavern wench in this epic fantasy rhapsody adventure. Nobody from Europe was chosen. "Never before have any less been included to this degree," contends Garriot. "They will be able to see and talk with their old eyes."

■ **Board about now, we like to take a brief**



A BRICK TOO FAR



It had to happen sooner or later. *Super Mario Bros. Legend* has arrived! Well, sort of! *Legend* from Dataeast has previously enjoyed considerable success with a building block set based around the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. As our kids are currently more interested in the exploits of a New York plumber than a bunch of surf-talker' heroes in a ball shell, the *Super Mario* GameWorld seemed an obvious choice. It's expected to reach British toy shops in the very near future. Prices to be announced.

journey past nearby island where you, the reader, discover some completely obscure video game cartridges. This month, our ribs tickle just at the sight of going deep sea fishing with *The Blue Marble (Nintendo)* for the Nintendo Entertainment System. That's right, it's another hot/furphy from the creators of *The Black Box*. Very poor indeed, ladies and gentlemen.

■ They said it couldn't be done, but *Gran Turismo* will include a track editor with Lotus II on the Amiga and ST later this year. Sheffield's most prominent software publisher is forging ahead with other street racing games, too. *Wreck* has already begun on *Top Floor 2* for the Super NES (see our "In The Works" report last month) and doesn't seem to see Lotus Turbo Challenge 2 on the Megadrive and Commodore in 1993.

■ The *Blue Marble* from Nintendo is coming soon on Super NES!!

■ We're happy to announce Olympic Gold - Barcelona 1992, the Megadrive and Commodore (upheld) and US Gold, is almost finished. This sports sailing features seven Olympic events including 100m sprint, pole vaulting, 200m freestyle swimming, hammer throw, archery and 1m spring board diving. After all these years, Olympic Gold will be the first game to be sold in North America under the US Gold brand. A successor in Indiana Jones and the Lost Crusade sets three new Sega consoles is also in the cards.

■ A moment of silence, please, for this sad software obituary. *Blas of the Dragon 2*, beloved sequel of the Dynami and Sierra Online graphic adventures, possibly passed away last month. One of the *Dragon 2* is survived by Willy Beamside 2, this licensing baby should come of age next year.

■ Fox Arsenal PC offered *Thalman* some cash back for an appalling performance this month! The creator of such C&A classics as *Delta* and *Armadillo* hastily bought the computer game rights to this soccer team when their could take victory and had already loaded loads of expensive paid trips over to Europe. Today, the only way Arsenal will win anything is if they buy a copy of the *Thalman* soccer simulation on Amiga, ST or PC. A great between arcade and management games, this entirely production will also incorporate digitized pictures of the squad. Come on you, boys!

SWEAT AND TEARS

Top brass at Electronic Arts' HQ in California must have endorsed a buffet and beach party (see on their programmers after the launch of the highly-desirable *Willy Beamside (Dynami/Amiga Online)* and *Seven of Minutes Island (Foxonline Games)* just before time. eh?

The rumors for such a radical decision would be clear, EA is seriously lagging behind on competitive graphic adventures for the PC and star Designer Brent Forrester is too busy working on the latest *Clack Tagger* flight simulation to care.

Now, after many hours of dedicated overtime have been clocked up, EA thankfully has a solu-

MEAN MACHINE



After a quiet start to the year, Megadrive owners have plenty to start saving for in the coming months.

Mitsubishi is to publish the Megadrive and Super NES adaptation of *Gods*. This platformer (game, the best *Strap* founders effort since *Sportball 2*, is to undergo a few tweaks in all the right places. For a start, the somewhat Megadrive conversion must at 50 frames per second with 64 colour (as so very unlike the original Amiga game which can only muster 17 frames and 16 colours). The *Strap* brothers are working with respected Linux programming boys Grigold to create this one. As a bonus, the music changes while *Gods* is played. It should be out in the 4th quarter.

Virgin Games has put its faith into another Amiga classic, *European Club Soccer* in the Megadrive version of the chart-topping Manchester United Europe from *Amiga*. Early reports suggest this translation plays a far tougher game of football and effectively has a very tall soccer on screen at the same time. This is made possible through the use of the Megadrive's brilliant graphics mode for giving shading on the grass. There's also a password save facility allowing up-to-eight players to compete in a thrilling cup tournament. In addition, *Love* users can look forward to playing Manchester United Europe before too long.

Finally, Codemasters and Gallop Toys are to introduce a Megadrive version of the *Game Gear*. This crafty device is used to customize your favourite video games with things like extra speed and infinite lives, making them easier to play and finish. *Daniel Electronics* already has a similar gadget available for around £40.



tion to be proud of. The firm intends to put it in good use, too. The *Case of the Striped Scalpel* will be the first in a series of Sherlock Holmes investigative adventures featuring brilliant graphics, striking sounds and a silky interface. Doesn't that sound yummy? Not 'arf, but you can't wait for October!



WAR GAMES

Can it possibly be true? Is Sensible Software really producing a playmate blend of *Megadrive* and *Learnings* on a handy-size 3.5" floppy disk?

A neat arcade strategy game due for release after *Witch* and *Servable Soccer*, *Cannon Fodder* will make it onto the Amiga and ST ahead of *Megadrive* II. As you can see from this overview of intertainment, the woody bunch at Sensible Software have no time for holidays or sleep!

With a whole squad of soldiers and associated weaponry under your command, the computer-controlled enemy is just looking to see what you're made of. All your men have different skills, some are able to fly helicopters while others can accurately shoot people. Every time any of these men survive a battle, their rank goes up and another skill is added to the list. The rest of your team is made up of raw conscripts who specialise in being blown apart.

Cannon Fodder is chock full of tricks, traps and traps. How, for example, are you going to move your tank past the quicksand on level 1113 like *Megadrive* before it, this title makes good use of sampled speech.

After the recent collapse of Microsoft, Sensible Software is still looking for a publisher...

SKIES THE LIMIT

With the fast and cheap in ample supply, here are five of the latest developments in PC flight entertainment...

■ Aces of the Pacific isn't available yet, but Dynamic stroke Sierra Online has already announced the release of *RAF in the Pacific*. This rally to detail for the long awaited flight simulation from the makers of *Red Baron* pits the best British fighter designs against the mighty Japanese Zero plane. Alternatively, the WWII 1940 expansion disk takes the conflict a stage further. What if President Truman had decided against launching a devastating atomic attack against Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the summer of 1945? Could the Japs have won a conventional war over friendly skies...

■ Over at Lucasfilm Games, programmer Larry Holland has just finished another add-on for secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe. This second



Test of Duty package lets you fly the P-80 'Shooting Star' on treacherous low-level ground strikes against the last remnants of Nazi type targets. It contains three flight school missions, eight historically accurate sorties, five custom skins and a mission builder to create your own thing.

■ Welcome the 'Thunder Boys', the 357th Fighter Group was one of the top units during World War II. These guys managed to shoot down almost 700 German planes. Heroes of the 357th from Electronic Arts tests your skills with these famous American crew in seven historical mission types. Will you be able to intercept a V1 flying bomb before it reaches England?

■ If you prefer futuristic flight battles, *Academy* has a sequel to *Star Control* waiting patiently in the wings. A hybrid action/comic role-playing game, *Star Control II: The U-Guath Masters* attempts to pack in 25 distinctly different spacecraft, 500 unique star systems, 'ultra-brilliant' 256-colour graphics of hyperspace, 3D rotating planets, fractal generated surfaces, and, phew, some remarkable digitised music and sound effects. "There are plots within plots," reveals consultant Paul Roche III. "You can't just blast away at things. You have to ask yourself: what do these Aliens really want?"

SWORDS AND SPACERY

Going from strength to strength, W. Industries has recently expanded the range of software available for the Windows 95 arcade machine.

Logical Quest in Nottingham is anticipated to be the first of many sites offering themed Virtual Reality entertainment for mass consumption.

The first of these adventures is, surprisingly, a reworking adventure where up to four players can cooperate together along a classic storyline. It also features a new voice synthesiser, the ability to save games in progress and, yesterday, a virtual sword.



■ Finally, Microgrise is busy working on what could become the best evolution outing on your PC. With such an esteemed pedigree and some truly awesome 3D graphics, the early demonstration of *F15 Strike Eagle III* is already looking better than a March 3 afterburner going at full thrust! This exciting game should be ready for takeoff in late 1993.



PURITY OF NOISE

Everybody in the house can now produce some better 'sounds' thanks to the Music System from Atari. What's this all about, then? The company is again promoting the sound aspects of the ST to the general public.

According to Atari, anybody can produce a top ten album track using the wealth of dedicated software and patches available from third-party developers.

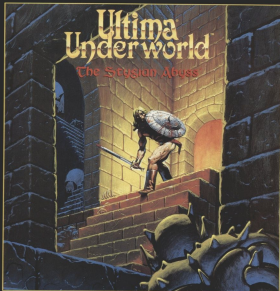
"With the unbeatable combination of MIDI technology and a huge library of music software, it comes as no surprise that the ST is used by the world's leading musicians including Madonna and Peter Dinklage," goes the blurb.

If only it was that simple, eh?



Ultima Underworld

The Stygian Abyss



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Some games must be played to be believed and Ultima Underworld: The Stygian Abyss - a game of action, motion and movement - is one of them.

You won't believe your eyes!



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EAT YOUR GREENS

A special update on one of the few video game styles which appeals to both sexes. Here's a brief list of links on the major golfing games coming soon for your machine...



AMIGA

• They said it couldn't be done, according to US Gold, but the glorious 256-colour graphics in Links have been faithfully converted over from the original PC version. The designers of this impressive game took over 200 photographs of the course of Torrey Pines, USA. They also obtained some topographical drawings and detailed information on weather and wind conditions. All this was combined into 7000 of realistic terrain data. Link's hopes the Amiga conversion out of the long wait between each hole when this ocean of stats and facts is actually manipulated. Using a slow IBM PC, it used to take roughly 30 seconds to redraw the screen every time you wanted to take a shot.



• Even CDV owners can grab a slice of the party life with Jack Nicklaus CDV by Accolade. The 18-hole course at Sunfield Village in North America has been painstakingly recreated using over 9,000 digitized stills. These photographs have been rendered as HiAM screens and overlaid with 16-colour sprite animations of the golfers. "People should feel like they are playing golf with Jack Nicklaus himself," says Chris Burdette of Accolade. "We have a realistic view from nearly every spot on the course."



PC

• At the same time, Accolade is looking back. Nicklaus' Golf and Course Designer Signature Edition is the first 24-colour VGA golf simulation and course designer. Apart from offering the normal features expected from such a prestigious license, the game contains plenty of nice touches like digitized trees, hitmapped bushes and the 'natural' sampled sound of a golfball landing in the water hazard. "Signature Edition has better graphics, faster speed and more features than any other golf game," exclaims a spokesperson. "It's beautiful, fun and challenging too. For the true golf aficionado, there really is no other choice."



ST

• Sorry, there's no sign of any fresh golf copy since leaving on the horizon.

MEGADRIVE

• Vintage golfing simulation, WorldClass Landolford, is about to appear soon thanks to US Gold and Access.



SUPER NES

• Links is a blend of golf and simulated wagering on every hole. "There's no other game on the market that even comes close," exclaims Steve Mottspieker of Irem. "His product Links, thanks to the outstanding colour and detailed graphics, will be an instant hit with action players and golf lovers alike."



Meanwhile,

True Golf Classics is finally making its way over from Japan via the USA. TSE Soft has intermixed digitized images with a custom 3D graphics system called Polygon. "It's a highlight fan with superior gameplay," a spokesperson remarks. "No other golf game gives you this much. True Golf Classics takes you not to an actual PGA course in Hawaii, updates and your handicap after each tournament round and saves your stats and game using the built-in battery backup."



GAMEBOY

• From the firm that brought us Gex and Operation C on the Gameboy, Ultra Golf offers a two-player option and a tournament match of 'pro-style' golf. Before each shot, players can adjust their stance, view the entire hole and get a suggestion of the best club to use from the caddy. Now available on import.

It has taken control.
It owns their minds.
It imprisons their bodies.
It even absorbs the building!
It's...

D/GENERATION™



A secret project is out of control at Genoa Corporation, the world's leading biotech research lab. The building is in chaos. All employees are either dead or zombie. The security system is blasting away at anything that moves.

D/Generation, a malevolent organism that uses virtual reality to

disguise itself, has taken over. And it is your task to destroy it.

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Gary Whitta's previews

Welcome one and welcome all, to the very last ACE Previews section. Yes, the powers that be have been trying to suppress my column (!) for months and they've finally succeeded - but fear not! We're not going down without a fight, and I've taken steps to ensure that we can send you off into the murky software future armed with a second-to-none idea of what lies ahead in the quality games stakes. So choke back those tears - they make the ink run - and be prepared to be fully clued-up about the finest software heading your way soon. Catch you later.

SENSIBLE SOCCER *Sensible Software*



First revealed exclusively by my good self back in October, the latest opus from the creators of the awesome Mega Man Mania is at last nearing completion - and what a stunner it's turning out to be! A no-nonsense arcade-fuery simulation in the Kick Off vein, it's already being tipped as the game to knock Amiga's classic off its throne. Sensible Soccer has a strong European theme - its release has been set to coincide with the Euro-championships in June, with the game featuring 64 real European club sides (including the likes of Inter Milan, Juventus and four English teams) and 40 European national teams. Players can compete in the European

UEFA and Cupwinners' Cups as well as creating their own league and cup competitions. Developer Jon Howe is making big claims about the game's innovative control, saying it plays "like Kick Off should play", and there's no real in-the-eyes teacher, like real player names, redifinable kits and a full tactical element. A publisher is currently in the process of signing the transfer papers, and will let you know what's got hold of it as soon as the ink is dry. It's interesting to note that with its summary release date, Sensible's soccer should be coming out at the same time Amiga and ST, incidentally, at around the same time as the long-awaited Kick Off V - now THAT should be



action-orientated environment, Race Drivin's now nearing completion on the 16-bit format courtesy of Danish conversions of the original Hard Drivin'. As before, the action is considerably tougher than in most arcade race games, with the car handling with startling realism and making pile-ups a regular occurrence

for novice drivers. All of the original game's tracks and features are there, together with a host of new ones. There are two new tracks (Paper Street, featuring a treacherous car-screw loop, and the speed-orientated Auto Cross Track) with the player choosing from three cars - Sportster, Roadster and Sporter - each with different handling and characteristics. Perhaps the most new feature, though, is the two-players option, known as Buddy Race, which allows head-to-head racing via dual machines and a link-up lead, or a single machine mode that has one player driving against a computered peer car that emulates the other player's best performance. Danmark says that Race is "certainly faster than Hard Drivin'" - it certainly looks a lot better, and players will be able to judge for themselves next month when ST, Amiga and PC versions are released.

THE ADDAMS FAMILY *Ocean*

Just what is it about Ocean that makes them so unaccountably good at acquiring licenses? I mean let's face it, who would have thought that The Addams Family would have been anything like the monstrously bon office hit that it has been? But whatever



the likelihood of its success may have been, there can be no doubt that it's top-notch material for computer conversion, what with all its inherent kooky-ness. That particular quality has certainly made it into the forthcoming 16-bit versions, in which the player steps into the Addams' shoes to play Gomez,

RACE DRIVIN' *Domark*

Amiga's equal to its tragically successful but technically ground-breaking coin-up Hard Drivin' may not have made quite as much of an impact as the original, but it was nevertheless a considerably more entertaining affair. Essentially the same game, but built around a faster and more





lead of the Addamses. The story goes that Morticia, Wednesday, Pugsley, Uncle Fester and the rest of the happy clan have been kidnapped and it's up to good ol' Grand to get them back. This is the second time that Ocean's taken a big-name film and turned it into a jolly arcade-style platform escapade (Hudson Hawk being the first) - the action starts in the giant Addamses household, where Grand accesses a variety of bizarre worlds via a multitude of doors and stairways. Given the fairly colorful castles, this retro-style interpretation should work even better than it did with Hudson Hawk. You'll get the chance to see for yourself when Amiga and ST revisions are released next month.

JAGUAR XJ220

Core Design

Just when you thought that there weren't any top racing car manufacturers left to borrow, up pops Core Design with their contribution to the ever-growing, ever popular Lotus-style arcade speed-rivvy genre. As the title of the game may suggest, it's based on Jaguar's latest £495,000 street speedster, which rolls off the production line in June. The game design's yet to be finalized, but at the moment it sees you at the wheel of the superb XJ220 participating in a superior derby, racing across 14 countries and over 90 tracks against other top makes of motor, including Porsche, Ferrari and Lamborghini. The Core boys have opted for a strict system of racing, as they feel it works better than the stage system used by the current pack-leader, Lotus 4. All the usual features are in attendance, including high-speed pit stops and a full tournament mode, and the nice people at Jaguar are said to be most pleased with what they've seen of the game so far, so that can't be half bad. But of course the final judgement must rest with you, and you get to make that sometime over the next month

or so when Jaguar XJ220 is released. Incidentally, Core is also planning a second Jaguar game using vector graphics and based on the successful Le Mans 24-hour team for release later in the year. Cool.



Project - X

Team 17

Who would have thought that a bunch of ex-demos-writers could come up with such a smashing debut game as Alien Breed (reviewed ACE issue 104) because that's who. But now that they've managed to stick it with the excellence of their futuristic arcade blast'em-up, they're preparing to do it again with... another futuristic arcade blast'em-up. It's not exactly the most original game idea in the world, but hey, who cares when it's so fast, smooth and lovely as this is looking? Paper is, as you're probably already guessed, a high-speed horizontal shooting extravaganza in the 3D-worm mould, with the player making his way through the evil planet Xpus in order to fight off an alien invasion. There are six fairly various stages, starting off in deep space and later progressing to planet surfaces and into the heart of the alien's secret space station... all in super-coloured graphics and snappy animation. There's plenty of impressive stuff here, including a super-crazy bonus section where the player pilots his craft through a narrow cavern at breakneck speed. Unfortunately, there's a price for all this technical excellence, as only owners of MS Amigas will get a look-in. But Project X isn't out until next month, so there's plenty of time for you to pick a machine up from some truly computer show. This may be the best reason in ages to splash out on one.



TITUS THE FOX Palace

When Santic the Hedgehog first burst onto the games scene as a bright Anzames' day last year, it immediately became inevitable that the cute character-based platform game would, before too long, make a comeback. This latest jam to make the leap across the channel (or maybe through the tunnel now that it's finished, eh?) might, in people of a more cynical persuasion, be miscounted as a rather blatant Santic re-rip-off. Actually, the name may be sort of similar, but apart from that and the presence of platforms there's very little to compare the two games by. Titus is, in fact, very similar to the French firm's earlier (and very nice) platform effort The Blues Brothers. The story goes that lovable Fox Titus has had his girlfriend kidnapped and whisked off to Marsloch, leaving the heroic mammal with no choice but to venture all the way across the world to rescue her. What follows is a multi-oriented level's ladder romp with super-cute graphics, bouncy tunes and - hopefully - excellent comic-style gameplay. Titus The Fox is out next month on ST and Amiga. Fantastic, eh? Fox!





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BOB



Putting it tentatively, BOB, like Michael Jackson who said he wasn't like other boys in Thriller, is not like other simulations. Or sure, BOB doesn't look so strange in the pictures on these pages, but beneath the colorful gloss there's a decidedly grey soul underneath...

The idea for BOB came to the team about two years ago—around the time that Flood was

The award-winning boys behind Populous I and II and Powermonger regard their latest project, BOB, as their most ambitious undertaking to date. On the surface, it could also be misconstrued as the company's least interesting, too...



Here are made and displayed inside the genetic engineering laboratory. It's a suitable setting for the reward and development department to show their computer talent.

rearing completion, it was over a pipe, no less. The food wasn't influential, but it just goes to show how easily ideas can strike when you least expect them.

"The original idea was to control these little men with three bars—intelligence, strength and perception. These chemicals were injected directly into their brains. They're essentially individuals but you influence their behavior to differing degrees."

That's Pete Molyneux talking about BOB's conception. He's currently putting the finishing touches to the PC version of Populous II before he tackles the implementation of BOB's strategic element: the business algorithms.

Yes, the business algorithms, for BOB is, believe it or not, a simulation of sorts of the high flying world of international finance... with a twist: a shopper

than lesson in the form of arcade action agency. But how can these two seemingly disparate elements possibly be successfully married to produce the playability expected from Bullfrog?

The pipeline-driven prototype plan eventually developed into a story, which goes like this... in the not-too-distant future, a company will pioneer the Neural Chip—a miracle of modern technology which is plugged in to the back of the user's neck to create the desired escaped illusion. There's no need to look a break in Barbie's and blow a bubble on boss-enemies rings when you can actually experience all those sensations and more, first hand, via a simple and inexpensive electronic device. Look, it could happen. And if it did, then it wouldn't take long for

other companies to jump on the bandwagon and produce their own Neural Chips, which is exactly what's happened in BOB.

Assuming the role of the big cheese of the company which discovered the Neural Chip, you desire the demise of your rivals. Industrial espionage and sabotage are the order of the day as you send genetically engineered agents to infiltrate and eradicate the opposition. There are other, less action-orientated means of expanding your empire, but whatever route you choose the goal is the same: global domination.

The bulk of BOB's programming is being handled by Sean Cooper, 29, who's survived the prospect of a successful modeling career—following his Clothes Show debut in the Autumn of 1991 to pursue software stardom.

BOB is only a working title, currently favoured by Bullfrog over CyberAssault and Higher Functions. The acronym for Blue and Orange (BOB) arose in the very early stages of development.



Right: One of the random incarnations of BOB within the genetic engineering laboratory. An elaborate, interactive city. The other: Sean's wife, who's a boss at the major engine code in an interactive but really impressive creation.

when Sean was putting together scratch screens—visual test-beds to give a feel for the product. The scene is unlikely to change until BOB nears completion in September.

Bouncing back to BOB's humble beginnings we find that the product has been through many changes. Sean's early efforts amounted to little more than a large scrolling picture, too flat to function as an interactive environment.

"It had to be made three dimensional," says Molyneux, "but we didn't want to use vectors (it would take too long) so we kept the isometric viewpoint. We did consider using an oblique perspective, but it proved impossible so we dropped it." With a basic look established, Sean spent the following few months resolving the technical difficulties of a three dimensional isometric environment, such as creating the illusion that objects are moving in front of and behind the scenery.

"It eventually reached the stage where it was feasible enough to implement the original idea," Molyneux reveals, "so we produced an editor program to allow us to create maps. That was enormously difficult, but we did it and now the original idea is being developed to produce playability."

"You start in your office with a map of the world showing all the major companies. They all start small, and their growth is related

(Left) Welcome to the office. Here's a view that



to the way you play. We're aiming to fill in around a hundred countries with all the major cities - hopefully around two to three hundred. Each city's around four times the size of a Populous map."

"The cities also have fully-functioning lifelines. They have their own populations, buildings and factories, and traffic systems, with cars, trucks, trains and monorails. They even have timely rush hour!"

"From your office you can buy and sell stocks and shares to affect the other companies," Molyneux continues. "You can hire and fire people or pump money into research and development for Neural Chips or new genetically engineered tissues. You can even watch television. Viewing the adverts essentially allows you to find out what your rivals are up to. We're trying to fill in as many adverts as possible. We're hoping for about twenty minutes' worth."

"However, the most interesting option open to you in your office is definitely the one which allows you to view the three-dimensional outside world and determine the actions of your troops."

"Those bars are the key to the whole thing," says Molyneux. "We're very proud of the way they work."

They work like this: by adjusting a troop's levels of intelligence, adrenalin and perception, subtle behavioural differences are created. Using the many possible combinations of these three bars in conjunction with a handful of basic icons, such as "GO" and "USE", the troops can be ordered to perform dozens of different functions.

For example, a gun-wielding troop with a high level of adrenalin would be too excitable



Two buttons in the left-hand slot. Daily strategies include buying and selling shares in the fictional economy in the left of the picture and editing the city's area in the centre of the shot: the genetic engineering laboratory

to be trusted to aim accurately, but he would make an excellent aggressive combatant. Sadly, there's another, more devastating side-effect relating to over-use of the three chemicals... the doped-up troop's personality will eventually become its own and it won't be so easy to direct it.

The troops' primary objective is to visit cities and create new businesses. They set up offices and manufacturing plants and the like around the world, indulging in the occasional spot of sabotage, hijacking and kidnapping and much more besides.

"You could blow up your rival's research and development plants or just steal their secrets," says Molyneux. "Or you could even stir up dirt to swing people's opinion against the company."

You see, to make the process of ruling the world a little easier, the Neural Chips produced by your company contain some secret additional programming which can easily be triggered to activate a sequence to control the users. Sadly, as your customers become slaves to your rhythm, incorporating into BOD such a high level of detail is not without its problems. There are so many possible visual outcomes to situations that a compromise has had to be reached regarding



Your first steps into BOD's 3D cities (top) are more about the quality of the environment than about their business, although that companies' buildings will surely and surely eventually get going on their own terms. But BOD isn't always read the like...

context-sensitive detail. For example, blowing up a section of monorail could cause the train to crash to the ground. The lack of memory for appropriate frames of animation means that it wouldn't look pretty but at least you'd get the idea.

As the order seems to be growing ever taller, building's reducing the size of the animates it produces but increasing the level of detail. But will Peter Molyneux ever finish what he started with Populous?

"Ultimately I'd like to go right down to the people level, but you can go too far, which is why we involve play-testers along the way

to help shape the playability. It's too easy to forget that there's a few million detail. It can get in the way and prove too much to handle until it becomes totally pointless, which is what the testers notice."

"There's this Russian fish simulator program I remember seeing, which creates any fish you like, and it behaves as if it was real. We're aiming for a simulation as complete as that. I suppose the ultimate objective would be to produce something like Better Than Life in Real Dwarf. It's so addictive you don't want to stop playing it."

By Gary Peier



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COMING SOON
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ADD

Dark Seed, the first game from newly formed

Stateside company Cyberdreams, boasts graphics

by M.R. 'Aileen' Nijer and some top-notch program-

ming talent. So why does it remind Steve Cooke of

Legend's 1982 release Vastula? And is that such a

bad thing...?

Professional scribes

are wont to claim that there are only 30 basic plots, that these essential stories have always existed and that they will endure, unchanged in number or nature, until the end of time. Silence of the Lambs, The Canterbury Tales, Jurassic Park - whatever whatever you care to name, Sir and Mrs. Nozardenthal were sucking it up thousands of years ago. And in 200000AD, Barbara Cartland 000000 will still be making money out of it. The plot may change, but the padding goes on forever...

People, however, have been telling stories since God first entered Adam and Eve's address in his Palafax. They've had time



a lot of it - to establish the rules of games, setting and style. They have, however, only been playing computer games for about 30 years and the statistic wheels, as to speak, are still in the process of being invented.

As with wheels, the games that survive are the ones that work. We've had a few square



ONE ALIEN...

ones over the last few years: for example, the text adventure, whatever Anita 'Magritte' Sarisai-Sinclair may say, is dead. Text is not an ideal medium for use with a VGA, especially when you've got colour, sound and, even better now we have CD, digitised speech to play with. And whatever happened to the scrolling comic book format of Redhawk? And who cares?

Other square wheels have effectively disappeared as they were rounded up by better implementation... Single-screen scenarios like Hong and PacMan have succumbed to multi-dimensional scrolling; the top-down view is increasingly vulnerable to the ever-improving isometric approach; shoot-em-ups have acquired resource management and role playing characteristics and so on...

One format, however, has remained pretty well static since 1983, and that's the animated graphic adventure. Just take a look at the man on this page from Legend's Vathalla and ask yourself what exactly you get in

Rings Quest if that you didn't get with Thor and his pals back in 1985.

OK, sound. Vathalla just beeped. But it did beep - and that was all the Spectrum could do. The addition of quality sound is simply an improvement in execution, made easier by a more powerful 16-bit platform.

OK, better graphics. True, up to a point. The latter day animated adventures have learnt a few lessons about perspective viewpoints. But most of what you see is simply more colour and better quality artwork. Again, this is an improvement in execution, not a development of the essential idea.

Bigger maps - yes, but it's still the same idea. Simpler interfaces, ditto. Faster and better animations, ditto...

If the computer gaming world is going to end up with 36 basic genres of its own, it's beginning to look as if the animated adventure is one of them. And Cytoscream's first release, which - don't get me wrong - is a great game, just proves the point. The plot is fancy stuff, but the puzzle's good-fashioned role-play, with a few tasty additions.

Add One Alien

The first element that Cytoscream have added to the recipe is emotive power. Take Swiss surrealist H.R. Giger, who created Alien and lives near Zurich with a pet Siamese cat Muggi and some of the most disturbing household furniture you're ever likely to see. Use 540x350 bit-res VGA graphics with 15 colours, switching palettes for different locations to avoid monotony. Use digitisers and five artists over a period of one year to generate 8 megs of graphics data that make excellent



Giger on the art of alien (left) in *Prozacland* (right) in *Black Sunday* (top)

use of Giger's visions of 'fear, guilt and anxiety'. Add digitised speech and a great Ad Lib sound track.

Mix all this together and you have Vathalla with some pretty awesome knobs on. People giggled when Thor beat the shit out of Loki, but no-one's laughing when Dark Seed took Michael Dawson gets a headache from hell. What's going on?

The story (it's probably number 27 of the 36 attempts, but it may be 26...) involves Michael in a spot of bother with an alien race who are bent on world domination (definitely number 28). Dawson's just moved into a new house and it seems to be giving him a few headaches. Aspinin doesn't help, which isn't too much of a surprise because the poor chap's got an alien in his house. Possibly (let's not give too much away here) this alien has something to do with those rather weird nightmares



he's been having. Surely not, nurse.

This story is initially presented in traditional animated adventure form. However, the graphics are suggestive - as you can see on these pages. Cytoscream's decision to stick with the limited palette and greater resolution has really paid off and the level of dramatic detail on these screens really adds to the atmosphere.

OK, don't forget that this is still role-play, but it's a very good role-play. Take the animated figure, for example. We've seen several major advances in this field since the Vathalla days. Colour, of





course. Larger, more detailed sprites, as in King's Quest II. Then, in Brian Moriarty's *Loom*, experimentation with 'camera angles' and scaling (see panel elsewhere). *Cyberdreams*, however, have taken the next logical step and digitized the central character. Crucially, they've also added dynamic modeling, with enough steps to ensure that the process is totally smooth. Mark Caseman 'up-stage'

"The PC is now the machine of choice for adults. We can do more with it, even if sprites would come in rather handy!"

as it were and he may think it makes but he grows in realism. Very good role-play.

Rescaling makes such a difference because it doesn't just affect the way the character moves. It also gives the graphic designers much greater freedom



in the way they 'feel up camera angles' within the game. A figure that can immediately shrink or expand as it moves can be caught in view up, medium shot, or long shot without worrying about subsequent movement in the frame. As any film director will tell you, camera angles make all the difference in any movie, but particularly in suspense - and if ever a game had suspense, this is it.

Discrete Horror of the Borgworld

If you're used, for example, to Roberta Williams' storylines for the King's Quest series, you'll be

TEAM MACHINE

Cyberdreams is a pretty impressive setup. Co-founder Pat Ketchum was one of the motivating forces behind Sullivan-Stratton Interactive Media, which is responsible for *Space Ace* and *Dragon's Lair* before that. He founded Dataeast where he launched games as diverse and impressive as *Cassan* and *Pole Position*. Professor Harold Stealy's *Paradise* (background) includes a spell of background includes a spell of *Talk* and previous credits cover titles ranging from *Rocket Ranger* to *Indiana Jones on the Nile*. John Bruce was previously of The Software Technology, where his projects included the *Wizkid* *Paradise* teaching system.

But it's not just the technical guys who are top-notch. Apart from game titles like *Paradise*, *Cyberdreams* working with *Utopia*. *Cyberdreams* also have projects going with Syd 'Wade Warner' Mead and John 'Professor' Baumgartner. We can't wait!



Paradise, developed from top left: Paradoxical, John Stealy (left), Harold Stealy (left), Bruce, Gary and Fred Freeman, and John Stealy. The first two are part of the game, while the others are programmers, a music supervisor, a writer, game designer and programmer. Syd for feature credits. All you'll need is a PC or a Mac or a Unix.

Stealy, left to right: Professor Harold Stealy with colleagues John Bruce and Gary Mead.



There's more to the economy than meticulous detail and technical competence, however. As you explore the game, you'll discover that beneath (or beyond) this bourgeois facade lies a lot of a Gigeresque dimension of horror which, sooner or later, you will have to enter. In one of the game's many subtle hints, you do so through a mirror in one of the rooms - and you will later discover that the underworld is literally a mirror image of the overworld. This leads to some interesting gameplay features as you find that 'bites' which lead from A to B sometimes lead to A' to B' downwards. The designers have worked in some neat twists based on this simple but attractive idea.

Controlling the Dawson figure is extremely easy. No typing is required and the mouse icon switches between three modes depending on what you want to do. As with some other recent releases, the icon changes as you move it over significant objects to indicate a possible action or message - this saves a lot of time endlessly clicking on different parts of the carpet looking for, for example, trapsdoors and the like.

Knowledge required by the character has to be completely reacquainted each time you play again from the beginning. It's either



expecting to see flowers, felines and pretty birdies raised every corner. Not here, you won't, in *Dark Seed* you get toilets, jet plants and vast iron scaffolds, in great detail. Without any disrespect to Roberts, who's games I adore, this is the *Real World*, not *Candy Mountain* - and a heavy dose of reality, of course, is what makes fantasy work best. "We looked at the Sierra games," commented boss Pat Ketchum, "and thought it would be nice if we could do something that wasn't a fairy tale." They've certainly succeeded.

TAKE YOUR SENSES TO THE EDGE...
... AND BEYOND!

SPACE CRUSADE

MAKING BRINGS
ROHING, SUCCESS
WILL BEING IMPERIAL
BORDER...

Fallen with the Space
Marines and enter
the fiercest conflict
imagined. You've never
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strategy and lead
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your warriors from
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Warrior.

...About these
alien alien looks.
The space Marines
battle to save
humanity. Only the
brave return from
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Dreadnought
Will you be one
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Granite Graphics Software Ltd.
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Ultima VII

THE BLACK GATE™

THE GREATEST ROLE-PLAYING ADVENTURE SAGA OF ALL
TAKES ON AN UNBELIEVABLE NEW DIMENSION!

Ultima VII makes another great technological leap forward. Harnessing the full extra power of the latest generation PC's, the Ultima world literally takes on an extra dimension, with a completely new full screen VGA graphic environment which brings fantastically realistic close-up views of the gameplay as it develops.

Instead of watching this amazing interactive story unfold through a small window, now you are in Britannia! Absorbing the atmosphere. Feeling the pressure. Actually hearing the characters speak. Controlling your every move and those of your companions, in a unique, mouse-driven environment.



System Requirements:

IBMPC or 100% compatible 386/486, 386 or 486

Hard Disk, High Density 3.25" or 3.5" disk drive

2MB Memory

VGA/MCGA colour monitor

Keyboard and/or mouse

AdLib, Roland MT32/LAPC 1, CMI SoundBlaster Sound Card*

*Required for speech.

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INTERNATIONAL**

SCREENTEST



Stop, stop STOP! Don't turn that page! You're about to enter the ScreenTest section, a highly complex and tight-packed environment, and you'll only get the best out of the next batch of pages if you know how to find your way around. So why don't you invest a few minutes reading through this guide, and fully versing yourself in the ins and outs of the ACE ScreenTest system? Not only will you come out the other end a more rounded person, but you'll know what all the little logos mean as well. So, without further ado let's get down to it and let's do it.

COMPARE AND CONTRAST

As an easy frame of reference, every game is compared to other software in the same genre, or maybe it's original catch-up or movie fare.



THUMB UP & DOWN The most important positive and negative points in at-a-glance format. Maybe it's too tough, or lacks a two-player option etc.

850 COMPARATIVE



RATING

A score out of 1,000 - the most instant gauge of a game's quality, further qualified with scores out of 28 for Graphics, Intelligence needed to enjoy the game, Audio and Fun factors.

PIC CURVE A prediction of the lifespan of the game's interest. An arcade blast may have lots of instant appeal, but will you still be playing in a month's time?

HINT Found on the centre pages of most reviews detailing - surprisingly enough - the location of a handy start-up tip.



TRAILBLAZER Awarded to games of outstanding or novel quality, and generally viewed to further the art of games software production. A game bearing the Trailblazer logo should be bought without hesitation.



SOUND, GRAPHICS AND IDEA These awards go to games excelling in a particular area. A game which fails to get a Trailblazer but rounded fairness may still walk away with one of these.



ACE BENCHMARKS

A Benchmark game is, in our opinion, the very best in its particular genre. By glancing at our description of the Benchmark, you will be able to decide if particular differences in a new game's design would make the current Benchmark or the new contender more or less appealing to you. Also, no software collection is complete unless it contains all the games listed here. If you're missing any, go and remedy the situation immediately.

BRAVE BAST

TYPE (Genre)
A character follows up obstacles through a maze, collecting health packs, power-ups, ammunitions and also, production-related items. The frequency and volume of enemies is obviously scalable at the top up to your own taste.

ARCADE ADVENTURE

BOSS (Newsgate)
Not so obviously represented under this title: Demoparc or Prince of Persia the obvious place. Here you also often feature fully scaled-up action to tickle the industry's toughest warriors.

ROLE PLAYING GAME

BRADYLANDS (Commodore)
Unrelated sub-genres have been existing for this long time! We have found similar games all the way through the history of computer games and the whole world of television. This is when the first usage of hyper-realistic characters is seen.

SPORTS ACTION

BAR OFF 2 (Atari)
The primary reason for not calling it being an airplane is the ultra-realistic control system which allows the user to fly in the best sense of the word, and, because of the most enjoyable game of all time.

STRATEGY

CIVILIZATION (Microprose)
This excellent strategy game has the player leading a race of people through technological and cultural expansion as civilization develops through the ages. Microprose just had the words of a genius.

ADVENTURE

MONKEY ISLAND 2 (US Gold/LucasArts)
One of the most interesting in the genre is probably this one. From there the rest is a matter of taste. There are a great lot of very smart and subtle items, and guaranteed laughs for the whole duration of your time.

RACING SIMULATION

FORMULA ONE GRAND PRIX (Microprose)
It's almost impossible to find a title in this genre game from Microprose. Formula One is the perfect example of a real-time, experimental game, it's like you driving a supercar for years.

BEST-OF-OF

IM+ (System 3)
An updated and enhanced version of the original game is clearly, under whatever it is called, longer in its field over three years, to most have extra options in the addition of a third computer controlled fighter, normally play.

RACING GAME

STUNT CAR RACER (Microstyle)
Stunt games and arcade speed thrillers are the most fun genre. Here around realistic scenarios, controlling and driving your apparatus into wild, fun, thrilling antics and a great deal of reality.

SPORTS SIMULATION

JERRY SPYER'S AMBUSHED SHOOTER (Night)
Remember all those wild, unrealistic play and something else to make this the Sports Sim genre right. Usually being criticism, the game takes the most serious and the player's behavior.

SIMULATION

FALCON 3.0 (Spectrum/Multisys)
Quite possibly the best flying game ever written. Unless it's the more recent one, something you're not sure you really and the conditions you have to be prepared to guide your own airplane through its own complexity.

ACTION STRATEGY

POPULOUS 2 (Electronic Arts)
Fighting, Action, Action, Strategy, etc. etc. Fighting game called for being enjoyable to produce the most well received a strategy original. Popular has a great lot to offer to be obtained.

PUZZLE GAME

TEARS (Microprose)
Microprose's effort at creating a series of this game is undoubtedly the best line up the Microprose has. It's a puzzle game in the genre's well-kept line. They were very hard to be normally fun. Amongst the most difficult game ever - you will enjoy various players.

PLATFORM GAME

SUPER MARIO WORLD (Nintendo)
With the Super Nintendo due to come in this year, the game will be around by this time. It's a game which can be played by this time. It's a game which can be played by this time. It's a game which can be played by this time.

Games Software Toy

Publisher: Maxis (distributed in Europe by Ocean)

Developer: Will Wright and Justin McComb

Price: £14.99

SIMANT

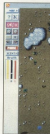
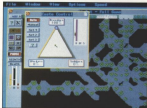
The word simulation simply isn't good enough for the boys and girls at Maxis. No way. Following an alternative agenda to the rest of the games developers out there in videogame land, they like to play with 'software toys'. That's California freestyle for you. So, what the heck

can one of these new age programs actually do? Does your computer really come to life, then? The main claim to fame in Maxis tries to make the whole affair more *serious* than ordinary games. While both *SimCity* and *SimEarth* had rules, a 'software toy' allows personal, profitable pursuit. Part of the fun comes from figuring out how the underlying systems work and taking command of it. In other words, you are encouraged to create, explore and control new environments and worlds. Yes,

we've got a love thing. As Maxis puts it, players are rewarded for creativity, experimentation and understanding - not for rote memory or knock-in-joke reflexes.

The first two 'software toys', *SimCity* and *SimEarth*, have both won critical and consumer acclaim in Europe, USA and Japan for their fusion of fun and skill. With *SimAnt*, the word 'entertainment' is being more strongly emphasised. Can you really learn from and, more importantly, enjoy the process of managing an electronic ant colony? That's the make or break question which must have worried Maxis throughout the production stages of this unusual release. At least the next idea of this project goes some way to squash any initial reservations from players. Most people are fascinated by these very industrious social insects. Ants are part of human folklore and regularly make their presence felt at idyllic picnics in the countryside or the sugar jar back home. Now you can peck and poke around almost any aspect of their daily habits in minute detail without the need of a Thomas Salter microscope and some rusty old tweezers.

Based around accurate scientific information on ant groups on, *SimAnt* provides an insight into life as an ant. What do they prefer to eat? How do they defend the nest from hungry predators? Why do they leave scent trails around your back



garden and kitchen? All these questions are not only answered, you must also learn from them in order to be successful as a captain of an industry. Gaining experience through experimentation is the name of this game, so, sorry about that, "software toy".

After reading an influential and revealing book about our small peppy friends, the main brains behind *SimAnt*, Will Wright and Justin McComick, asked for assistance and general guidance from one of the Harvard University professors responsible for this Pulitzer Prize winning work. Edward Wilson did a most respectable job as an guru, making sure every detail was meticulously correct. I've certainly never seen this much information on ants before. Did you know, for instance, that ants regulate the temperature and humidity within their nests by controlling the airflow through the various pathways? And this is just one startling snippet of trivia from literally hundreds contained inside the game and comprehensive 276-page manual. There's also a hyper-text style information window which can be used at any point during the simulation to reveal useful scientific facts and a few strategies for succeeding at *SimAnt*.

Macis obviously likes to take big risks with any



software project that comes along. It's a potentially damaging and very unusual experiment. *SimAnt* is the first game from Macis without any form of copy protection.

It certainly makes a change to forget those home-grown password systems before playing the game every time but is it worth the chance of total piracy? These people hope you will not steal their work by giving away copies of *SimAnt* to your friends and colleagues. They reckon copy protection is a pain in the butt for everyone and would like to stop using it from now on. This, of course, depends on the reaction from you. Another interesting development, eh?

The basic idea of *SimAnt* is to oversee a colony of black ants in the Quick Game or take over the entire backyard in a Full Game. The garden and house are actually divided up into almost 200 separate sections known as patches. Each of these can hold a single colony of black and red ants. With a fast bit of resource calculation, you could be herding thousands of ants in no time at all. The rules are under the influence of the program itself in the Quick and Full Games. On a slightly less grand scale, Tutorial and Experimentation modes make up the other four choices available at the start of play.

An Experimentation Game sounds like one of those trendy tracking methods much loved in the '80s. You've got a free hand to tuck around with a group of electronic ants without the handicap of any set aim or direction. That's right, you make your own excitement in this one. There is no winning or losing in Experimental Games, that would be far too competitive for modern thinkers' free-expression educators. Instead, a full set of tools are included to test your investigative nature. The idea is to increase or decrease the size of every colony, dig holes anywhere you like, construct a series of ground obstacles to overcome, and see what happens. The only option missing here is a bundle of matches and a box of matches to torch the nest. Warning! Don't try this at home kids, it's cruel and nasty.

Back on more mainstream matters, you're in the big boss of the black ants. So, naturally enough, you're yellow!! I guess this to distinguish you from lower members of the staff. It's a hard life



SimAnt must obviously be voted against the other innovative creations

from Will Wright. Forgetting the CD4

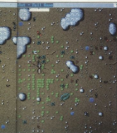
classic *Ball* on Bangerlog Bay published by Gremlin, Wright is best known for *SimCity* and *SimEarth*. Now, I've never been a fan of the latter "software toy", it's far too complicated and doesn't even feel anything like amusement. *SimAnt* scores over *SimEarth*, therefore, on successfully mixing entertainment and education. Nevertheless, *SimCity* remains the best of the breed. This is probably because it's the closest to a straight game out of the three.

commanding a bunch of bugs. Luckily, they busily go about their business without your help every step of the way. Using a selection of windows, icons and sliders, you're supposed to lead them in tiny marches of food or into victory against the rival red ant colony. This is achieved by altering the behaviour and biology makeup of the entire colony. Deciding how many workers will forage for food or make up-and-coming ant babies are just two of the many factors which need to be taken into consideration. If the black or red queen dies before another colony has been formed, the simulation will soon come to an end because you can no longer produce more offspring.

Most of the action is played out within the Edit Window. This gives a close-up of the ant's world. It only shows part of the patch at a time, either underground in the nest or outside on the dangerous surface.

Recognisable items like rocks, caterpillars and dead ants can be seen here. Slightly less obvious, is the occasional giant human foot which can split several ants at once or the strange ant lions which wait under the surface to snap up their favourite food... yuck!

Other views of the *SimAnt* universe are available in the Map Window. A strategic graph can be



"Ants are so much like human beings as to be an embarrassment. They form fungus, raise aphids as livestock, launch armies into war, use chemical sprays to alarm and confuse enemies, capture slaves, engage in child labor, and exchange information incessantly. They do everything but watch television."

Lewis Thomas, *The Lives of a Cell*

"The biology of ants is about the history of societies and institutions, and about the future of cities and computers."

Kerlin Kelley

"They talk softly."

Cassidy Wright

"Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise."

Proverbs

"Not so much the weight of an ant is earth or heaven escapes from the Lord, neither is aught smaller than that, or greater, but is clearly written in God's book."

The Koran 50:16

"As a thinker and a planner the ant is the equal of any savage race of men; as a self-educated specialist in several arts she is the superior of any savage race of men; and in one or two high mental qualities she is above the reach of any man, savage or civilized."

Mark Twain, *What is Man?*

"None preaches better than the ant, and she says nothing."

Benjamin Franklin, *Four Richard's Almanac*

"We'll set thee to school to an ant, to teach thee there's no labouring 'till the winter."

Shakespeare, *King Lear* act 2, scene 4

This is what your back garden looks like to the average ant. Chemical scent trails are left by ants as they return home with food. Soldiers will then smooch the trail and follow it, to Simant, you use this to your advantage when prospecting food and the red ant nest. Warning! Rain washes these van der Waals trails.



Right! One way to defeat your enemy is to quality raid the red nest and the hole of easy traps located. If the red queen goes further underground she might become white and finally the black queen dies.



You've got a few hours with the Experimental theme option. There's nothing more satisfying than commanding a whopping grand leg army of black ants against the rest of the backyard bugs. Alternatively, you can focus onto tiny individual white missions among a flood of foraging ant lines and systems. Great stuff, eh?

If there is a lot of food, ant some ants in alone made to guard it. If the red ant nest is close by, use any small parties in the surrounding area to build some mid-air fortresses. Really steady ant commanders will lead the spider to the enemy nest and let her feast on those helpless seeds as they leave the entrance hole.

Carefully watch the red ants to avoid their "formulation". This would be the equivalent of you, as, if the red leader is surrounded the red ants will temporarily freeze the during a critical moment.

Right! After the enemy queen has tried to fall out with the team members, he'll react to introduce codes you've reached the interior of the enemy nest. Any ant will become ground will die if this really stuff is truly, beyond control. In some...

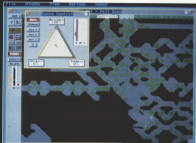


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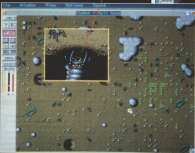


 A function set
can make a
move on you.
Of course,
they're not really there
or even at all! These
levels of a digitally
type (most) have these
values in the ground.
When an unscrupulous
ant slips down the pit,
it is immediately frozen
open. Try to avoid them,
even though a speed of
substantial ants can still
end out them up.

This is a amazing idea to spread out and compare the opposition in as time as it all, you
should you don't mind sacrificing a single colony first. Gather lots of gold, then start
the little leeches going full blast. Soon, you'll have plenty of spaces to invade the
rest of the garden.



Wow, this is the ultimate destination. Can't you just
make all these delicious goodies taking inside the
expensive and the number of that really amazing?
Amazingly. What are our lobby for for getting these
without any unnecessary hassle? Well, here, make. Put
out for yourself you help get...





S E R I E S

Open Role-Playing Games
 Publisher Origin
 Developer Blue Sky Productions
 Release 1/78 Late March

ULTIMA UNDERWORLD: THE STYGIAN

Stunning. That's the only word to describe *Ultima Underworld: The Stygian Abyss*. Actually, that's not quite true. There are loads more. Roughly two thousand, in fact, enough to fill six pages. But I'll get to them in a minute. For now, 'stunning' is the only single adjective that completely sums up the whole Underworld experience.

And what an experience it is. It's the closest thing I've seen to Virtual Reality - You can't stop me! I've said it now! - on a home computer.

But before I start getting into various hyperbole territory, let's get the plot out of the way. Once again the player assumes the role of the Avatar, hero of many previous *Ultima* games. Feeling a strange and urgent compulsion to return to the land of Britannia, the player steps through a magical passage... and straight into trouble.

The player finds himself in a lecherous castle bedroom where a kidnapping is in progress. A mysterious mage and his servant troll are clandestine through the open window, an unconscious young girl slung under the slavish monster's mighty arm. Before the player can act the bedroom door is flung open by the castle guards who promptly take the hapless player prisoner.

A short while later and the player is brought before the now-Great Baron Almaric, whose gorgeous young daughter Ariel was the kidnapping victim. Unconvinced by the explanation as to why the player was in his daughter's room, come on,

would you believe it? the Baron orders that the player receive his stolen child.

Witnesses saw the wizard and the troll entering the dreaded Great Stygian Abyss. Many years ago a devotee of the Avatar's waps set up a colony in the Abyss's labyrinthine depths consisting of all manner of weird and wonderful Britannian denizens to see if they could ever co-exist in peace and harmony. Some lapse. The colony soon dissolved into anarchy, with differing factions opti-

mering away from the main group and forming their own communities in various parts of the Abyss. (Okay, so it's hardly the most plausible explanation as to why the Abyss has so many differing creatures in such close proximity, but it'll have to do.)

The Baron's guards escort the player to the entrance to the Abyss and throw him inside. As the mighty door slams shut behind him, the player hears the chief guard shouting that the player will not be allowed to leave unless he's accompanied by Ariel.

As usual, all this preamble is conveyed by a long, animated intro. It's no better or worse than any other of its type, although those with a soundblaster fitted to their PC will enjoy the odd laugh or two at the edited digitized speech recorded for the characters by various Origin staff members, including Richard 'Lord British' Garriott himself. (Screen?) Particularly chuckle-worthy is the guard's voice - we've got an *Oslo* accent there! I don't even look like Jack Van Dooder in *Oslo* Purpim. (Embarrassment but true, the guard's voice was recorded by Martin Galway, who is actually British born and bred.)

Before any actual dungeoneering can take place, the player has to go through the usual RPG class of knocking together some stats to make a fantasy alter-ego to explore the game-world with. To be fair, *Underworld's* designers have made this, the most boring aspect of RPGs, pretty painless - the player only has to make a few simple Yes/No decisions to get up and running.

The only real power given to the player is which of the eight professions he wants to take up. There's the usual wizard or warrior but more exotic livelihoods are available for those who want to try something a little out of the ordinary. For some reason I was drawn to being a shepherd - don't ask me why. Characters are defined by four main characteristics: strength, dexterity, intelligence and vitality. These and the profession then determine the character's fighting and spellcasting abilities.



D: NABYSS

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an object is moved by your action.
an object is moved by your action.
you need more space to use that weapon.
you need more space to use that weapon.
you need more space to use that weapon.

Nothing really prepares you for your first experience of the Underworld environment. It's the next true evolutionary step in the RPG genre and as much a technical advance on FTL's Dungeon Master as that game was on the reviewed efforts that existed before. You can bet your D&D boots that you'll be seeing a lot of Underworld scenes in the next few months or so. Well, PC owners will anyway. There's some serious number-crunching going on beneath Underworld's attractive exterior, and I'm afraid that the post-old Arma and Atari ST just can't keep up. Sorry.

Like Dungeon Master, the player views the game world in first-person 3D. But whereas FTL's game only allowed the player to walk forward in jarr-

ing foot clicks and turn in abrupt right angles, Underworld is a far more realistic and tracer 3D environment with the player able to walk and turn smoothly just about anywhere he wants. Not only that, but the floor rises and falls smoothly, there are bridges and shelves to chamber into and deep chasms to leap across. It's even possible to go for a swim in the many pools and rivers that course through the labyrinth, and the feeling of 'being there' is enhanced by the motion effects, like the slow bob when player goes walking and the swaying and dipping when in water.

There are four detail levels which allow the player to compromise between speed and detail in his hero's content. At the lowest detail level the ro-



Story, Shadowlands, I'm afraid you've got to lose your Benchmark status, and after only one month at the top too. Unlike Underworld just flows you clean out of the water. Although lacking Shadowlands' unique multiple-character control, Underworld scores higher in almost every other department. After all, this is the nearest anyone could get to going down a medieval dungeon without wearing a car-tron coatless and doing it for real. A masterpiece.



son for the incredible flexibility of the game world becomes apparent, everything is modeled in polygons overlaid with texture maps. The only thing this is noticeable in the game is when the player moves right up close to a wall and looks at it obliquely - objects you'd expect to stick out from the wall's surface, like switches, lie flat on it because basically they are just drawings on a flat surface.

The dungeon's inhabitants are less impressive. They all move around and animate adequately as long as they don't get too close. When they do they begin to disappoint. There's a distinct blockiness to them, like the trackside objects you get in a Sega arcade racing game. Once you get used to seeing the effect it's not so bad, but it does detract from the dense atmosphere a bit.

Walk, run, jump and swim - just about anything you can do in the 'real' world you can do in s-49

ULTIMA UNDERWORLD

IS THERE ANYBODY OUT THERE...?

The creatures waiting to be met in the Underworld are a nasty lot. Smelly, silly, villainous, treacherous and downright unlikable, they'd sooner stick a knife in your back than give you any help.

But there are some decent types down there in the catacombs. Keep an eye out for the Banner of Cabirus (shown right) painted on any doors - beyond you'll find fellow humans willing to lend a hand and offering food and comfort to the needy. They're a bit like the Salvation Army of the World of Britannia, except they don't try to raise funds for their cause by going around the local taverns desperately asking pissed revellers to buy copies of *The Wazoo*.

nothing you've ever seen before will prepare you for your first experience of the incredible *Ultima Underworld*. If it got any more real you'd have to undergo a medical examination to make sure your heart was capable of withstanding the rigours of the game! But to give you, the dear reader, some idea of the perils that lie ahead for would-be dungeon delvers, herein those stubbly-arranged screenshots on this here spread.



This is where you get your 20 first person view on the whole underworld. In this shot you can see the way that the dungeons are made up of slating floors, ledges and walkways. Pretty amazing, isn't it?

This screen of parchment lists all the map-making screens you've made on your travels. As well as showing all the corridors and rooms (which are shown in the same colour) you can add your own notes and messages.

This, believe it or not, is your hand looking into, aren't you? When generating your character at the beginning of the game you're given a range of things to choose between - pick a feature you like I did, for instance.

Remember that if you're stuck at your character to right-hand-side then you must drop any weapons to be used in the right-hand inventory slot. Put in any weapons also and it'll be complete. All of a tragedy when you're in battle, that.

[Top to bottom:] The key item screens at the top, L&A options and allows you to do other things, like alter the detail level and quit to disk.

Select the second item, the black item, then click on a creature in the main window to have a chat!

Choose the next item to make an easy FIVE EP. Different items can then be deposited in one of the secondary slots over the other side of screen.

The L&A icon, third from bottom, lets you read notices and examine objects.

WHAT? Click here and so you see our handy list of weapons of your choice.

And... you're just a USE. Yes, the last icon, controls every thing from pulling a wall walkie to entering a door.



This is the STRENGTH INDICATOR, shown in light mode, the player likes to hit the vile enemy creatures by sticking in their teeth and leaving the mouse button down. The longer the button is held down (indicated by this indicator changing from green to red to amber to green) the faster the blow. The drawback is that the player can't get as many hits in.

The super-busy list of 'study' (STUDY). The red lit always point to the front, and as it was wasn't enough to help you navigate around the dark masses there's also a helpful auto-scanning facility. User friendly or what?

Hey, hey, hey! That's your own building in event and looking out at the world!

This blue liquid represents the player's Blood level. If this is too low you'll not be able to cast the more powerful spells.

The player's health is represented by this rapidly-shrinking bottle of red fluid (Blood, presumably). Eating food, drinking special potions and using various valuable vitality.

It's dark at the moment, but normally this is full of messages reporting such things as 'You have hit the wall' or 'The door is locked'.

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(Offered) Look at, you will know why several events will be required to get out of this room alive. In the early levels, monsters attack in manageable ones and twos, with the only group encounters being with friendly thugs. Later on and the above is typical of the battles you're expected to wade through. But remember that not all problems have to be solved by violence...



(Left) And what is that creature doing in that small cubicle. Do you really want to know?



(Left) Behind! Through! Around! Some smart maneuvering from the fog jelling boxes off a mighty lightning bolt at one of the two safety traps.

(Right) This lot packs a lot in battle - they're always losing (but usually it's blame someone). If you need to get a hat, get a head...



(Left) This red reward is a particularly nasty opponent, able to cast all manner of fire-and-sulfur, bone-crushing powerful spells.

(Below) The red reward drops up again. Some people just don't know when to give up, do they?





moderately intelligent. They'll respond to your actions intelligently, so if you make friends with something but try to steal its food then it'll respond in the same way you would, i.e. with a swift kick to the jaw. Likewise in combat, creatures won't just stand in front of you trading blows until either they or the player are dead. If its all going badly they may well back off to recover or try a different strategy.

Ultima Underworld is a big, big game. It consists of eight huge levels, each with a number of smaller sub-levels leading off from them. Unsurprisingly, it's easy to get lost and making a map is a necessity. Now I for one hate trying to play a game while balancing a piece of graph paper on my knee at the same time, but Underworld's designers have made this sort of shortcoming a thing of the past. The game features an automatic mapping facility, leaving you to get on with the fun of exploring. Even better, you can write notes on the map so you'll never forget where that huge pile of gold was. If only all RPGs provided a similar handy utility.

Ultima Underworld is a real knock-you-down game. At first it is truly hard to believe that it's running on a standard home computer. It's not



(Top, above and left) A selection of scenes from the developer beta. Above and to the right: the graphics shown by the speech 3D's (automatically) hidden.

only great to look at, but it also plays superbly and has enough depth to keep even the most experienced-dungeon-delving veteran going for months, if not years. If you've got a PC, then you've got to have Ultima Underworld.

By David Upthorpe

GIVE ME MORE DETAILS!

Ultima Underworld boasts four detail levels to choose between. At the highest detail level you get the full works - walls, floors and ceilings all lovingly detailed.

Go down one detail level and you lose the coarse stone ceiling - it's replaced by a graduated grey flat surface.

Go down one more detail level and you lose the stone-floor effects, again to be replaced by simple polygons.

At the lowest detail level there's no texture mapping at all - all the dungeon corridors are depicted in polygons.

Boo! At least that means owners of fairly under-powered machines can enjoy some of the experience.



R A T I N G S



Our verdict: Excellent
 Graphics: Excellent
 Sound effects: Good
 Gameplay: Excellent
 Value for money: Excellent
 Recommended: Yes



Ultima Underworld gives right from the start. You will "spring" around from side to side in the "conventional" manner using the older Steve George Battle Smit 3D's. A detailed manual way of getting the player oriented (the control system) is a marvel, allowing the player to perform almost any action you could imagine in the real world with the aid of a keyboard.

The first level is perhaps a little too easy, but it's a good way to get used to the controls. The rest of the game is a real challenge. The graphics are excellent, the sound effects are good, and the value for money is excellent. If you've got your hands on a standard home computer, then you'll never want to go back to a standard home computer.

RECOMMENDED LIST

1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5
6	6
7	7
8	8
9	9
10	10

Green House Ltd.
Publishes Electronic Arts
Berkeley in Home
Release (14.95) North

DESERT STRIKE

Return to the Gulf

Here's something very sexy about helicopters. Maybe it's the ominous thudding of the rotor blades. Maybe it's their mosquito-like manoeuvrability. Or maybe it's the incredible destructive force that one of these miracles of flight technology can deliver. And no medium is more capable of displaying a chopper's awesome abilities than that of the video game.

Helicopter games don't have the player scolding inauspiciously up the screen and missing all their targets like airplane games. And they don't have the player trudging across acres of dreary wasteland on foot in search of combat. Instead, all the boring bits of a combat zone can be flown over and all the interesting areas can be hovered over and destroyed with great precision. It's the best of both worlds.

And *Desert Strike* is the best of the best of both worlds. Played in isometric 3D and looking remarkably similar to the age-old Spectrum classic *Cyclone*, it's base-to-base combat frenzy. Better of all but the most rudimentary airplane (a pre-war machine is threatening to start World War III and must be destroyed!) the game puts the player at the controls of a combat helicopter in the midst of a bloody conflict in the Gulf.



It's been a long time since the balance between arcade action and some feasible strategy has been struck so well. *Desert Strike* forces the player to think all the time while never making him wait

too long before the next chance to get into a top class firefight!

Following the briefing comes an opportunity for the player to select his co-pilot for the mission. Here we have the run of the mill data sheet for each potential co-pilot, revealing the personality defects in each. Some are experts with the attack (more of that later) at the expense of being a useless gunner. Others love to stick it to the enemy but will show little remorse after offing friendly troops. Once the most rounded man for the mission in hand has been selected, the control method can be determined.

There are three available. Cockpit, From Above and With Momentum. The cockpit view rotates the helicopter about its horizontal axis, with up on the topped moving the chopper in the direction it is facing. The Momentum option is the



SWTV is still the ACE assault tank

benchmark, simply because it is so ut-

terly, completely and totally polished, but

Desert Strike comes close on a number of

scores. The balance between blasting and

some levelled strategy is a big plus, as is the

rather smart co-pilot set up. However, Desert

Strike is let down somewhat by the occasional

ly sketchy graphics and a.i.w.l.a.g d.a.w.n.

problems which crop up with multiple sprites.



save except the helicopter has, well, momentum and so feels very realistic but is impossible to fly accurately in tight situations. By far the best option is *From Above*, which is the best like flying a real helicopter but is the easiest and most fun. Here, the chopper simply goes in the direction the player points the joystick.

Launching from the carrier patrolling just off the sandy coast, the player glides across silently (save for the thumping rotor blades) across the stormy sea in a most atmospheric opening to each mission. A single beep signifies the arming of weapons and offers a good chance for the pilot to examine his on-board map and plan the attack.

Given on the first mission, the level of enemy resistance encountered can hardly be described as slight. It's here that the player learns the rudiments of combat and has a chance to get to grips with co-operating with his co-pilot. The helicopter is equipped with neither an unlimited supply of ammunition or fuel. So the pilot will need to learn to spot tell-tale signs in the landscape as to where fuel barrels and crates of extra ammo may be hidden. Normally this isn't as difficult as it sounds

and allied intelligence will be able to point the way to sufficient supplies to prevent the player having to vital those belonging to the enemy, although it's quite satisfying to do so.

As well as working as much hard as possible among the enemy troops, it's the job of the co-pilot to operate the winch to pull aboard goodies such as those along with extra armour and med-packs) as well as friendly MiAs and enemy top-brain ripe for interrogation.

The nerve and skill of the co-pilot will directly affect the player's success in combat, since once the helicopter is pointing in a particular direction and the fire button is held, the co-pilot's artificial intelligence will select a target to plug away at. Provided that the co-pilot is of a reasonable quality, he will prioritise and shoot at the most dangerous target: in a heated firefight, it's a definite disadvantage to be saddled with a gunner who would rather shoot at a soldier armed with a carbine than take out a rocket launcher capable of inflicting massive damage.

Of course, the player can determine which weapons are actually being fired, using the buttons to cycle through cannons, heli-fire and Hydra missiles, but it's the co-pilot's accuracy that counts.

Once the co-pilot has locked on to a target, holding down the fire button will enable the player to dodge enemy fire while still blasting away. Unconsciously heroic gamers can thus use their valuable missile reserves by giving themselves longer to machine-gun targets by dodging the incoming fire.

Even during the most basic encounters with enemy troops, the player can have a right old laugh. Learning how to get the most out of the helicopter's abilities is almost as satisfying as blow-



As the first, this one seems better than all right, three stars on this map for winning, you know. With the limited amount of ammo at your disposal, you'll have to be very careful as to when you shoot. The only way to win is to wait a while before you start to shoot. But you can't wait for the last!

ing things up. And in moments of frustration where it becomes clear that the mission is hard but just can't be completed for one reason or another, there's nothing quite as amusing as loosing a vengeful burst of heli-fire rockets upon a single enemy jet.

Distinguishing Desert Strike from many mission-driven shoot-'em-ups is the structure of the campaign itself.

While many similar games will send the player off to take some photos or deliver some food supplies to a remote village, Desert Strike's mission management is so continually varied while still revolving around the basic principal of destroying

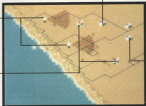
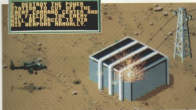
everything. Blow Up the enemy radar installations. Blow Up the bio-weapon factory. Blow Up the power stations. Blow Up the POW camp. **A++**

The player is forced to think all the time while never having to wait too long before getting into a good fire-fight.



Stage Two—Power Station Franks

When the going gets tough, the tough use their hell-fire rockets. Attack the power station from the left and you will find it easy to get within range. There's plenty of ammunition in the vicinity, so get well stocked in.



Stage Four—Command Center Garage

With an accurate view of this, the command center, you'll have a whole lot of trouble and time before it's over in. It's not the easiest task to perform, especially when the command center has many more vehicles than you do. Don't be a dummy like our pilot, shoot at those guys first and then work on the command center. Good luck!



This is Mission One. All relevant information to do with the current section of the campaign is stored in the handy Electronic Battlefield Computer, which can be called up at any time by simply hitting START. So come with us as we fly into the danger-zone and strike a blow for justice!

This is Mission One. All relevant information to do with the current section of the campaign is stored in the handy Electronic Battlefield Computer, which can be called up at any time by simply hitting START. So come with us as we fly into the danger-zone and strike a blow for justice!

DESERT STRIKE

This all makes for a pretty intense mixture of action. Indeed, the frustration evoked when the player's final helicopter is downed right at the end of a tortuous mission are truly demoralizing, but never quite bad enough to make future attempts unappealing.

Although he receives little help in combat situations, the player can make the most some limited ground support, normally on the outer margins of the combat area. Whenever he has rescued POWs or MIAs on board, the player can drop them off at one of these friendly sites. Usually there will be some fuel/air/air support available here, but more importantly the helicopter's armour will be replenished to a proportional degree depending on how many rescued troops are delivered back into allied hands.

An unusual discipline must be learnt if Desert Strike pilots are going to have much success. The helicopter can only carry a certain amount of missiles and fuel, and its armour can only withstand six hundred points-worth of hits (whatever that works out as in bullets). So collecting goodies when the helicopter is already at a highly armed state is a complete waste of time, and will probably mean there will be no ammo left when it's really needed. Again, this adds to the drama, since the player is forced to continually make tricky decisions whether he can hold on for extra fuel in an ammunition void at the end of each firefight, knowing that the subsequent goods-scoop is of its utmost value.

Another unusual feature is the way in which missions can be completed without a 100% success rate. Bonus points can be obtained by the player determined to scoop every last MIA, or killing every single enemy soldier, but these incentives on seeing what their set of goals will be can waver through doing the bare minimum. This is especially handy during hostage rescue situations, since the helicopter has a maximum load of five passengers. Failing to drop off a complete bunch of rescued bodies may prevent a clean sweep of the next bunch of people. The flexibility of the game's interpretations of what makes a complete mission is a nice change. Also, it means that a loose shot which may accidentally kill a friendly prisoner won't throw away all the hard work done so far.

A message pops up in the left hand corner of the screen indicating when a mission has been completed. A "Return to Frigate" instruction will also pop-up when all missions in the current combat zone have been finished, or the player has made such a fat of the whole thing that he needs to start all over again.

Although for much of the game the difficulty level falls into the 'hard but fair' category, there are a few elements which aren't quite as sharp as they could be. For a start, each new helicopter does not come fully armed. Only on take off from the carrier is the player 100% 'powered-up'. Although the player starts the game with three lives, each successive helicopter used during the game DOES NOT come with full fuel or weapons. This is obviously a complete flaw, since it's entire-



The controlling situation of Desert Strike.



Always rescue the allied hostages whenever they're in the grip of the evil machine.



Left and right: One that which it's all going into the ocean and it had to be there, but will you be able to save the down but still use military equipment?

Magazine Version



Well, what can we say? This version of the game must hang together pretty well in order for it to justify being the first ever

Magdrive game to get the ACE Secretaries treatment. Apart from some slightly dodgy scrolling and a rather wretched look to some of the graphics, Desert Strike looks like a dream and is a great game to play.

Amiga Version



Yes, these members of the Magdrive Electronic Arts are preparing us of their most awesome Amiga conversions, even in its speed. Depending on by the success of the Magdrive version, Amiga owners could look forward to playing Desert Strike as early as December. Now that would be a Christmas Carols, wouldn't it?

ST Version



No version planned as yet.

50 Version



It's the same story as with the ST - no version planned.



defenses have been dealt with and the player is in the middle-of-the-battle orbit, two bloody great tanks appear and blow him all to bits.

Even though it's the end of the mission, this stage is completely out of step with the difficulty of the rest of the game, and brings play to a grinding halt for a few minutes.

Like a lot of Megadrive games, Desert Strike is let down by some of its presentation. Explosions that should be enormous are mostly large.

Sound effects that should be roaring and thudding are sometimes a bit weedy and crisp. Destruction of huge buildings expose this problem most adequately, since the explosions sound more like a Snap-it going off in someone's pocket than a skyscraper collapsing. On the whole, however the feel of grand scale destruction is well enough conveyed, with the most impressive ka-booms coming from the player's helicopter itself when it lays the fires.

So, if you don't find the Gulf theme too close to home and don't mind putting up with a few rough edges in your search for high-octane fun, Desert Strike is accessible.

— **the Douglas**

A CRAZY COEDICAL OF CARNAGE!

For lack of variety, Desert Strike will be a big draw. Okay, so you're stuck in a helicopter for the whole game, so there isn't much variety there. However, the missions offer enough variety to keep even gamers with the shortest attention spans happy. Although each mission follows a roughly logical path, often beginning with an attack on a radio base or power station in order to release the enemy's advanced warning systems, there's just so much excellent stuff contained in the wider brief that the game becomes a genuinely excellent romp. UN

adverses must be moved, SCUD launchers must be destroyed. Prisoners of War must be airlifted away from their captors. Biological weapons scientists must be captured and interrogated. And there's even the chance to destroy the Madman's luxury yacht. While plenty of games have boasted similar elements, none have combined them to such entertaining effect. It's also a nice change to have such a balls-out Master from the home of High Drive entertainment, Electronic Arts, handle!

RATING



890

Wickedly addictive, having who else? These games aren't built to last. They're built for a shorter entertainment span in a world of instant gratification. Secure their shelves in quantity. The reviews are meant to give you an indication of how long you'll have. And it's a little regrettable that the reviews are so short. And there's not enough variety and that's a pity. But you're getting it for free. Money.



DEBUT SEQUEL
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S E R I E S M E T R I C

Game: *D/Generation*
 Publisher: Midway
 Developer: Robert Cook and Jim Burns
 Release: TBA

D/GENERATION

DA TELELINE 26th June 2001: The unthinkable has happened. A major accident at the Genosq biological weapons laboratory in Singapore has resulted in the entire research complex being taken over, with the scientists inside now held hostage by their own freakish

creations. With assistants of the A, B and C generations manning computers around the building threatening the lives of everyone inside things are already bad enough, but with the company's latest prototype weapon - the awesome, shape-changing D/Generation also on the verge of escape, every life on Earth could well be at stake!

Oh dear. Well, you know what's called for in this kind of game situation, don't you? Yup, that's right, an unlikely hero. In this case, mankind's hope for the future comes in the form of a lively dispatch rider charged with delivering an emergency

package to one of Genosq's top doc. Oblivious to the situation, the courier attempts (it's the only way to travel) onto the roof of the Genosq building and remains inside... into a world of terror...

Of course, you're bound in all before in one way or another. Hopelessly-inadequate everyday Joe battles deadly adversaries against impossible odds and wins - hopefully, anyway. But while D/Generation's story may be essentially as old as the hills, the game it's surrounded by is an atmospheric and involving as any you're likely to find. It's not particularly complex or in any way deep - it's just a straight arcade adventure with a puzzle-based slant that calls primarily for dexterity, speed and an agile mind.

The Genosq complex is presented as a maze-like landscape of individual isometric-perspective rooms, divided into smaller groups where each level is a story of the building - you start on level 80 and work your way up. Through the manual text provides some brief background, the vast majority of the plot - who caused the accident, what exactly's going on and so on remains a mystery. The blanks are filled in by the computer-controlled characters that the player meets along the way - the first of which is Genosq's unfortunate receptionist who is being harassed by a karynine security robot when the player first enters the building. Dispatching the robot effectively rescues the receptionist, who goes on to tell you of the importance of your package and how badly the mysterious doctor Dennis is after it. From then on it's up to





you to find the disc, put an end to the bio-tyranny and get to the bottom of the malign.

Through each level of the Genos complex winds a single area, with the various screens interconnecting in the usual map-like fashion, each screen is pretty much an independent game, presenting its own individual set of puzzles and evade challenges. In each case the object is nothing more complicated than getting from one doorway to the other, collecting any useful objects and rescuing hostages along the way, although the building's sophisticated security systems and the malevolent neogens (the bio-weapon) complex to make that simple task as arduous as possible. Unarmed and inexperienced, the player's initial resources are few and far between, especial-

ly considering the ferocity and efficiency of his opponents. The character walks in eight directions around the 3D environment, with no ability to jump, duck or otherwise avoid alien attack - apart from running away, of course. Fortunately, there's a laser weapon to be found near the start, and packages of grenades later on, considerably shortening the player's odds of survival.

Weapons and violence will only solve a small percentage of the problems thrown up by the game, however, and at least 75% of the time, quick thinking and nimble fingers are the only things that will see you through. The automated security systems may have gone berserk, but they're as efficient and deadly as ever. The dangers range from electrified plates on the floor that flash on

and off (they all run to a preset, invariable sequence) to rotating laser turrets that lock like drills pipes sticking up from the floor. As they turn through 360 degrees, they can only see the player if the "eye" is pointed right at you - the trick is to walk round it in a circle, keeping its back to you at all times.

Considerably more dangerous than these automated bad-guys, however, are the biological neogens. Emerging from generators in the floor, they arrive in deadly forms as the player progresses. Originally they appear as big, red bouncing balls, and later on turn into big, blue bouncing cylinders, but the effect is much the same. What makes these creatures so dangerous is that they home in on the player as soon as he comes into their field of vision, "cloaking" themselves by turning into a transparent outline that makes them more difficult to see. A single laser shot puts

In essence, *D-Generation* is a very old-fashioned game, harking back to old 8-bit isometric puzzle classics like *Knight Lore* and *Get Dextus*.

paid to each one, but that won't stop them coming - the only way to do that is get to the generator itself and shut it off by walking over it. Towards the end of the game the neogens become even more advanced, possessing shape-imitated powers not unlike Terminator 2's T-800, which means that any person or inanimate object could be death in disguise. Naah.

Since the electronic systems neogens can't be knocked out by weapons, and there are often too many at once on a screen to make evasion impractical, an alternative is to try to deactivate the systems by means of the electronic switches that are a regular feature of almost every room. Some rooms have more than others, and there's no way to telling what a switch will do other than get-



Phew! To be honest, there's not a great deal to compare something like *D-Generation* too, as games in the isometric genre are so few and far between. Probably the best game in the genre prior to this is Electronic Arts' very fine underwater adventure *Treasure Trap*. Combining arcade skills and puzzles in a similar way to *D-Generation*, it certainly offers a hefty and long-lasting challenge, although many players may find the slow character movement and heavyweight puzzles a bit too much for their liking. The fast, zany and more-too-taxing style of *D-Generation* makes it a better bet all round for those on the lookout for a game of this type. So there.

Left/line of 0, the character's main facing screen combines both types of deadly obstacles - in the first room there's an A/Generation magnet to control walls, and the next is protected by a laser beam weapon. The following magnet can be switched off by a laser shot, but the rotating turret is behind this, so the player must try to sneak past stealthily instead. Not easy...

(Below) There's a hallway in the room at the far end of the screen, guarded by fire weapons - it's no problem getting there, but the shape of the hallway by the red door means that you won't be getting in there until you've collected the right key, if you haven't already got it, it's time to turn back and start searching...



The laser weapon's reflective potential allows for some silly tricks, using right angles to hit long-hidden hidden walls or other structures.



On that... looks like you're dead, mate. An A/Generation magnet has obtained itself and is only a narrow margin from consuming the player. Don't get ahead there, ahead of!

(Above) The main danger on this screen is presented by a long section in the centre of the room that is protected by a long sequence of electromagnetic tiles. In addition, there's a magnet generator right in the centre of it all. The sequence of the tiles can be learned, but some point players are more likely just to take their chances and run for it, hoping they don't get hit. This room tends to be traversed twice - once from the top entrance, and later on from the door at the bottom left.



he player can certainly find himself right up against it at times in D/Generation. Each individual screen can be a veritable labyrinth of devious puzzles and traps, many of which can only be survived if completed in the right order, at the right time. In order to get you ready for what's to come, we present a selection of scenes from D/Generation's first two levels. Don't expect this to prepare you for what lies beyond, though...





(Above) Things get really tough whenever a new floor is reached. Here, on the 22nd floor, the player is instantly attacked by a moving hedgehog, and once they're dispatched there's a complex combination switch system that needs to be solved in order to get out of the room.



An elevator usually key has been located on the 22nd floor, which will give crucial access to other parts of the level. The only problem is, it's protected by a trio of fast-moving laser forcefields. The player can shuffle through them safely with careful timing, but extra care must be taken when collecting the key at the end, as it's placed over an electrified pit. Timing is of the essence...



On each level, there's often a key that's not a key in the usual sense. They can be found under items, in their daughter's room, or in a



(Above) Hooray! You've reached the end of the first level (the cyber transporter will send you to the next), and you've just rescued a scientist who'll give you some valuable plot information that to take with you.

(Left) One of the more physically demanding screens. The two laser walls add the central section of the floor complexity, and to pass safely the player must time his walk between the beams with pinpoint precision. This type of side-on corridor screen appears later on in the game with different enemies, and naturally different strategies are required to get past.

D/GENERATION



PC Version

Surprisingly, *D/Generation* is surprisingly effective considering the simplicity of the sprites and backgrounds. The primary colors used make the VGA version look almost like EGA, but it works well nevertheless. The simple nature of the game means that it'll run well on the lower-end machines, although the lack of any sound card support is a bit of a letdown.



Amiga Version

No fine details as yet, although the chances are that a Commodore version should be in the pipeline soon, with a possible release for around the end of the year.



SF Version

It's more or less the same story, here as with the Amiga. You'll just have to wait and see...



to him or her there's the chance to engage in a conversation that may reveal some important clues. The player can direct the conversation in a limited sense by selecting a reply from a list whenever it's his turn to speak. In each case the information is limited, but the story starts to take form once you've started to reveal people, with each character adding a piece to the puzzle. Once a chat with a character's over, you've then got to clear the hostage safely out of the room, back past the weapons and gas turrets by directing them to the exit marked with a red arrow. Points are awarded for each hostage ushered out of the building.

The end of a level is reached when the player finds a room with a large section tube hanging from the ceiling. Walking under it transports the player to the start of the next story - and a new next point. At first the game seems unfair, penalizing the player with death for seemingly silly little mistakes. Fortunately, an ample amount of lives are provided, and you're warned when down to your last life. One more mistake and you're sent back to the start of the current level - which can be quite a long way, as though the maps aren't particularly large, they've been designed so the player often has to take the longest, most torturous route in order to collect the keys and objects required in the correct order.

In essence, *D/Generation* is a very old-fashioned classic, harking back to old 8-bit isometric puzzle classics like *Knight Lore* and *Get Dealer*. It's a viewpoint and genre that's been woefully neglected on the better machines, and recent efforts like *Woolen Knights* and *Treasure Trap*, nice though they are, just don't quite cut the mustard. *D/Generation* is a whole lot more playable and fun than either efforts in this field because the designers know how to use this kind of isometric display to its best advantage. Unlike many isometric games, *D/Generation* doesn't rely on one particular style of gameplay. There's a fine mix

*** ting your teeth and biting it. Their most common purpose is the opening and closure of security doors, allowing access to other parts of a room, or from one to the next. And, of course, they can toggle the security device on and off. As the player progresses onto new floors, the function of the switches becomes more complex. Some may activate more than one system - for example, a switch that opens a vital door may close another simultaneously, or even activate a security device in the same room. Progress will further, and switches are secured so that they can only be activated once the right key has been found from somewhere else on the level.

This simplistic puzzle aspect is enhanced considerably by the clever utilization of the player's

weapons. Though it can be used as just a basic blaster to knock out enemies, it does have other, more diverse purposes. Since the laser bolts the player fires are reflective, they bounce off walls at right angles. By firing at the right wall from the right position, a laser beam can be sent ricocheting all the way around a room, either to hit a target that you'd rather not have see you or even activate a switch that's too dangerous to get to and toggle by hand. It's not exactly *Tron*, but it does add a more cerebral feel to the proceedings.

The game also has a slight adventure, mystery thread as provided by the characters the player meets every few rooms or so. They're normally to be found cowering behind a desk or cabinet somewhere in the room, and once the player gets





Game Arcade that
Publisher Ocean
Developed in France
Released 13 March 1990

PARASOL



Over the next month or so, the right-thinking sensibilities of the gaming public will be assaulted in a most insidious and distressing manner. Thousands and thousands of words will drone on about how funny and fluffy and zany the game they

call Parasol Stars is, and what a lovely and terrary milestone in gaming history it represents. But let's not kid ourselves. It's just another bleeding platform game with useless animations, isn't it?

It's tricky to cite a more interesting example of a game designer's imagination gone mad than Bob & Bob, "Parasol" of the Bubble Bobble series. With their big rolling eyes and their diaphanous, their staped like puckered lips and their silly red hair, they make the most nauseating duo since The Eskimos.

The theory that such unadorned Japanese games may prove a little exotic for the Western palate is borne out by the fact that the previous Bob and Bob coin-ops (Bubble Bobble and Rainbow Islands) have consistently fared worse than even the most tired arcade shoot-'em-ups.

The advances of the loathsome twosome have fared considerably better on home formats, however, with Pinhead and Ocean enjoying much chart-topping success with Bubble Bobble and Rainbow Islands respectively. Bubble playing with two fat little devils is acceptable in the privacy of one's own home.

And let's face it, once you've grown to accept the graphic style which is not entirely dissimilar to a merry acid trip and come to terms with the unusual gameplay, the series provides amusement which, if nothing else, isn't really available elsewhere.

The first outing of the series, Bubble Bobble, had - for no good reason - one two lessons transformed into blemishes for the duration of the game. The aim was to rid each screen of bodies by encasing them in bubbles and then bursting the bubbles to collect bonus fruit. Many professed Bubble Bobble was a bit of a breakthrough and marked the return to good old fashioned games playing values. Others pointed out that despite its enjoyable two-player angle it had atrocious graphics and came really progressed, simply becoming harder and harder and leaving the player thoroughly unsatisfied.



Oh, they may look right about most things (bubble is a not-unhappy position, but when they come around the graphics in Parasol they make for a most disconcerting visual experience. It's not that they're doing an even better job, but there are just so many pixels of one bit lip at each other that it's just a bit much. However, if you've never brought up to enjoy the opening credits of the short films, you'll forget all about



STARS



Rainbow Islands, however, was a marked improvement. Back in their human form, Bob and Bob were challenged with entering colors to a suite of islands robbed of hue by the Prince of Darkness. This was a far more enjoyable affair, with Bob and Bob armed with magic abilities enabling them to force solid rainbows at will. The rainbows could be used both to capture bubbles and climb up the screen, making for a rather pleasing visual experience. The downside here, however, was that there was no simultaneous two-player mode.

In the fact that Paroxysm Stars promises to be a blend of both Bubble Bobble and Rainbow Islands makes it an intriguing prospect if nothing else.

The common thread running through all of Bob and Bob's adventures is the collection of secret bonuses. Throwing captured monsters into one

tain area of the screen will reveal points or fruit. Performing other permutations of moves with the fruit will yield yet more points. However, points are not vital to the completion of each level; they're just there for the player who wants to explore. It's probably this factor more than any other which turned off potential coin-up players. Once your coin is ticking away, the tendency certainly amongst goal-driven British players is to complete each screen. We generally don't have the patience to explore levels we've already finished. As a result, lots of Brits simply couldn't really see the point. When playing the game in a home environment, however, there's more incentive to understand the game dynamics and find these hidden extras.

And there's hidden extras a plenty in Paroxysm Stars. Hidden doors lead through to bonus worlds. Hidden switches reveal previously invisible lines of fruit. And it's all there to be discovered for the player with the inclination to look.

In their bid to remove the road warrior ChaosRiders and his menacing monsters from the universe, Bob and Bob must visit eight planets, destroying enemies peculiar to each and thus restoring color and happiness. Each planet is broken down into seven levels, with the obligatory end-of-world guardians manning a round of the final screen.

And with what franchise weapons from the Bubble arsenal have Bob and Bob been equipped? A pair of paraxols, of course. While they may be woefully little bits of clank that turn inside out with the slightest gust here on Earth, they're pretty handy in the further flung areas of the universe. The paraxols are used in two distinct ways. The first is simply to shield the player from monsters. Holding the joystick down and pressing fire will raise the paraxol, offering protection from an assault from above. Pressing the while the joystick points in another direction will bring on an energy-sipping flourish.

The second method involves more patience but can produce devastating results. Throughout most



A three-way C&C title then, Rainbow Islands was by far the more popular of the Bob & Bob games, even though it didn't boast the excellent

two-player games available in Bubble Bobble. So what elements the two more made it through to Paroxysm Stars? The easy scoring system is still the same, with multiple bonuses etc. But the rainbows are gone. Instead, Bob and Bob use their bubbles in much the same way as they blew bubbles in the first game. And the goal of reaching the top of the screen in Islands has been replaced by a more straightforward (and in my opinion, less rewarding) aim of clearing the screen of bubbles. Paroxysm Stars may well win the day in your opinion, but Rainbow Islands still scratches it to me.



screens, magic droplets drip from the ceilings. The droplets can be caught on the paraxol and then fired off left or right, allowing the player to pick off enemies at a distance. Alternatively, the player can build up a store of up to five droplets and then use them to unleash a massive bolt of bubble-busting energy, taking the form of water-fall or crimson lightning (all depending on the form of droplets being used). >>>

The fact that Paroxysm Stars promises to be a blend of both Bubble Bobble and Rainbow Islands makes it an intriguing prospect if nothing else.

AND I THINK TO MYSELF, WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD.

Ah, life is sweet. The birds sing in the trees and the sun shines down on all of God's children. Yes, life on Earth is very nice. But in the worlds of Bob and Bob things are not very nice at all. Not at the moment they're not, anyway. And why are things not especially pleasant in the land of our favorite bag-eyed heroes? Because that bleeding Chaoskahn has gone and stolen all the colours from eight different worlds, and put all the creatures of each world under a spooky spell. Now beautiful instruments of joy and fun like pianos and plants and one-armed bandits have been twisted into grizzly mutants of their former selves, trained to maim and kill. Something must be done!

But where to start? Well, you'll start at World 1 and like it, since there's no option in the game to skip from one to another, or even preset your route. And there are stages in the game which are so tough, we doubt if you'll be enjoying them on your Amiga monitor for some time yet. So why not enjoy them in, if you will, "print", in our handy easy-to-follow guide to the content and style of each world. We hope you enjoy it.

World 1 -

Ocean World

Shrimp! Beak! Crab! Seals and penguins all attack Bob and Bob once they've crossed the last thin shell on the left side of the middle platform. So for the shell and you'll be laughing. Collect the heart for an extra life.



World 2 -

Casino World

Count a thousand out of it even there was one. Look at all these fancy, shiny platforms, and look at those fantastic, spinning one-armed bandits. What's called for here is a hefty build up of water pistols and a good old back to each other out.



IT'S THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT...

...And I feel fine. You indeed. With its eight worlds, Parasol Stars has a fair bit for of one of world's greatest to combat. And some of them are SO hard to kill, they'll make your blood boil. But what is the socio-economic significance of these creatures. I mean, just where are they coming from, guy? We think it's important to know. So journey with us as we proudly present: The Parasol's Guide To The Ends Of The Worlds.



End Of The World 1

Wow. Fascinating! A world full of Japanese and American culture. The girl is throwing money away like you read from every magazine of America while being pulled by a My Little Pony. The pony clearly represents the strength of post-war Japan to pull itself away from loss and a new future (investing portable devices. An alchemical marvel).



End Of The World 4

Probably the most poignant computer image in the world today. What a turning of the tables. A big robot, once representing all the delinquent old machinery repressed out into the world, comes back to haunt us. What a telling vision for today's society.



End Of The World 2

Yes. The raindrops are in a terrible state, and neither is it better represented than here, with an enormous plant-like fighting tank of some other years of being a passive victim to our terrible world. Anyone who plays this world will surely think before choosing their any more innocent vegetation.





World 6 - Rainbow World

As Bob and Bob's quest finally draws to an end, finding colorful colors in all the other seven planets, they've got an easy final stretch here in Rainbow World. But will the evil Chameleon get away this time? And have Bob and Bob really explored all the mysterious places in the universe...?



World 8 - Cloud World

Bob and Bob must battle all manner of aerial assaults up here in the skies. A whole batch of new disciplines must be learned in order to cope with the attacks from above and below. Planes, helicopters and satellites are all on the rampage!



World 7 - Giant World

And you thought the other levels were tough. Strapped into a corner (the top right corner of the universe, to be precise) Chameleon summons his most powerful and fearsome monster to attack Bob and Bob. Witness the terrifying face of dragons and those pink thorns with the aim. Bob!



World 3 - Woodland World

Woods, trees and log huts. They may only be mildly interesting and unimportant here on Earth, but in Bubble Bobble land, treestumps are the worst enemies of Bob and Bob. It's from the stumps, you see, that all the battles come. Destroy the stump and life will be a lot easier.



World 4 - Machine World

"Mechanical gone mad!" say the instructions, and they're not kidding! Badly designed and other mechanical machines have released attack waves to ensnare Bob and Bob. Set to the top of the screen as soon as possible and rain down with devastating droplets.



World 5 - Music World

If music be the food of love, get that beating place with one of your lightning bolts! The beating hearts and the accompanying soundwaves don't actually make for much of a threat to Bob and Bob's resistance. A nice way to begin the quest and get used to the controls.

LISTEN, DO YOU WANT TO KNOW A SECRET...?

Secrets, eh? They're what life is all about. These precious little nuggets of information known only to a select few people. What a delicious position to hold - the owner of a secret.

By this token, the folks up at Ocean are in a doubly superior situation, knowing where TWD completely co-exists. If you don't know where to look, you'll miss them: their worlds can be found in the game that they are already calling "Parasol Stars". The worlds can be accessed from within other worlds by simply falling through secret doors. By making the doors, of course, is another matter.

The first world takes the form of a true nostalgia trip, showcasing the players back to Bubble Bobble land where they can play a miniature version of the heroes' very first outing.

The second - the West Secret World - is one constructed entirely from the minds of the roiling boys at Ocean, and incorporates all their favourite elements of the Bub and Bob phenomenon.



Very colorful
Lots of levels
Great-looking
Easy to play
Easy to learn
Looks like an
expensive
game

850



ly stop their ledges and pieces of fruit plating, appearing in the far reaches of the screen. However when it all starts, it's another matter. The variety and thickness of the colors become an assault on the senses and the volume of objects needing animation poses the frames for each night down. Although many hundred times better than Bubble Bobble, Parasol Stars is still a long way short of perfect.

Of the previous two titles, Parasol Stars is probably closer to Bubble Bobble. As a two-player game it works well, but solo it doesn't. The graphics are a lot better, but the game really isn't about the way it looks. There are lots of worlds to complete, but the game is more about amazing scores than finishing levels. However, the Bubble Bobble series is nothing if not original, and there's enough of a learning curve for the player to scale simply to fully understand how to control Bub and Bob properly and work out the rules of their environment to make it an amazing though complicated affair.

It certainly isn't a game for all tastes, and players used to an kind of games where the difficulty is more evenly paced and the eventual score doesn't really matter would be well advised to consider the outlay carefully. However, fans of the series and in particular those players lucky enough to have

Some of the end of world guardians take 50 many hits before they die that the only real facet of the player's ability being tested is his patience.

played the PC Engine version will know exactly what to expect, and won't be disappointed. And I'm sure such folks will be only too pleased to discover that players' basic insight to reach the rather excellent end sequence will receive an invitation to "Watch out for Bubble Bobble IV". Yes.

By Jim Douglas





S C R E E N P L A Y

Genre: Adventure/Action/Star
 Publisher: Electronic Arts
 Developer: Interplay
 Price: \$24.95

STAR TREK

The 25th Anniversary



pace. The final frontier. These are the voyages of the starship Enterprise, its five-year mission to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new life and new civilizations. To boldly go where no man has gone before.

It's been exactly 25 years since the USS Enterprise first left space dock in search of those new worlds and life-forms, and though Kirk, Spock, Bones, Scotty and the rest of the crew may get larger and more in need of nylon hair furnishings with each successive adventure, the perennial success of Gene Roddenberry's sci-fi masterpiece proves that you can't keep a good idea down. After all, few SF sagas are so prolific they can claim to be a genre all of their own. Since Star Trek's inception there have been 70-odd episodes, a cartoon series, a soap opera series (The Next Generation, now in its seventh season) and, as of this month, six blockbuster feature films.

Though younger fans will know Star Trek only from the movies, true Trekkies know that the real magic is to be found in the original TV series. Okay, so the Enterprise did look a bit like a disco-era model truck then, and maybe the costumes, sets and special effects were all highly dated, but that's part of what made it so much FUN! Kirk's constantly-quirky exposition and flings with green alien women, the never-ending verbal spar-



Even though space can be a hazardous ground for those captains on duty, even in the days of the space-ship, this is *Star Trek* life. And pointing off your fire can mean it's off to a different kind of Klingon.

ing between Spock and McCoy, Uhura's (impossibly-short) diets, Scotty's screaming "The engines cannot take our moon, Cap'n!"... it's arguable that the show's ever-provoking camp atmosphere is what lifted it out of the ordinary and into the ranks of true greatness.

It's suitable, then, that the game that's been released to celebrate Star Trek's official quarter-century birthday should be based not on the more serious, sophisticated movies, but those original cheap'n'cheerful TV episodes. This choice of subject matter comes as no surprise. What is surprising is the incredible authenticity with which producers Interplay have managed to capture the show's look, feel and message.

Being careful not to make the same mistake made by previous Star Trek games (Firebird's effort being a particularly painful memory), Interplay has worked hard to fit present Star Trek as authentically as possible within a playable game structure. The result is one that, on paper, doesn't sound too inspiring, but on screen works beautifully. First and foremost, it's an on-line driven graphic adventure presented in the same style as a Lucasfilm or Sierra product, but with a liberal sprinkling of 3D space-outright arcade/action in the "Wing Commander" vein. Granted, it sounds very chaff-and-classical, but it works a whole lot better than you're thinking.

The game is presented not as one single entity or storyline, but as a collection of small, independent storylines in the form of TV episodes. It's probably the game's single most inventive aspect, both in terms of gameplay (it's never been done before) and as a device for simulating the feel of the show. What you're getting here is effectively a whole season of Star Trek, with each storyline based vaguely on real episodes. It's a lot like the series in the sense that, though the plots change, the format remains much the same from episode to episode. An initial report of the Enterprise accompanies the episode title, and then it's onto the bridge for either a mailing from the Captain's log or a message from Starfleet Command to set up the story. In true Star Trek fashion, very little is known about a mission initially (you're normally ordered to visit a certain planet just to investigate strange goings-on or

something really vague), and what's really happening only becomes apparent as the plot unfolds.

Apart from in combat, Kirk's control of the *Enterprise* is limited. Everything is operated semi-automatically from the bridge, via the various crew members. Mr Sulu handles shield control and planet orbiting, Chekov looks after weapons and warp-engines, Uhura does communications and first officer Spock is an all-around helpful bloke,

The game is presented not as one single entity or storyline, but as a collection of small, independent storylines in the form of

TV episodes. It's probably the game's single most inventive aspect, both in terms of gameplay and as a device for emulating the feel of the show.

offering scientific background and sound advice. Though everyone is asked as they should be, die-hard Trekkers may be a little miffed to see that Scotty now sits on the bridge as well. Authenticity dictates that he should be getting his hands dirty in the engine room somewhere, but in order to contain everything within the bridge, he handles damage control from a computer console to Kirk's left.

Having an experienced bridge crew means that the player, as Kirk, has very little to do in present-time besides make basic decisions. Just click on a planet via Chekov and the warp engines do the rest. Chances are, however, that when the *Enterprise* arrives at its destination, the situation

will hot up. The Klingons, Romulans and Haxi pirates all do their bit as the bad guys from missions in previous, and when an enemy ship is confronted there may be no choice but to engage in combat. You know what these Klingons are like - open fire first, talk later.

Knowing the routine is the key to success in stellar combat. Shields are the first order of the day (they hit as the *Enterprise* is crippling without them), and once Chekov fires up the weapons you're ready to rock and roll. Combat takes place via the giant viewports at the front of the bridge, with the *Enterprise* steered and weapons aimed by a set of miniature coordinates. The mouse buttons give access to planets (energy-consuming but fast and accurate) and photon torpedoes (efficient and powerful but slow and tricky to aim), which are fired as the target(s) streak past. Generally, enemy ships move quickly and keep their distance, so the trick is to fire well ahead of them in the direction they're moving. Estimating distance and speed so that your shot and its target will end up in the same place at the same time is tricky, but very satisfying when it works.

There's very little strategy or tactical element to Star Trek's combat - it's basically a question of knocking out the enemy before his shots can cause too much damage to the *Enterprise*. The shields provide an adequate buffer, absorbing the first shots or so on, but if you can't get a quick kill, further enemy shots will damage the ship's eyes -

It was a very close-run thing, but *Monkey Island 2* narrowly holds on to its ACE Adventure Benchmark. In my mind at least, Star Trek is by far the more innovative product with its individual episodes and multi-character control, and the awesome presentation means it pips LucasArts' effort in the atmosphere stakes too. In the puzzle stakes, the individual pieces are of about the same quality, although Star Trek's episode format means the puzzles have to be well contained and are somewhat less elaborate as a result. Unfortunately, the rather short number of missions is a serious consideration, and the end result is that *Monkey Island 2* is likely to offer the serious adventures a lot more enjoyment in the long term.





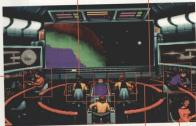
Chalder is a navigator and weapons man. The Enterprise travels by means of the planet's orbiting a planet from his galactic maps. It's also his job to scan planets and foreign ships prior to combat.



Walter Lobo has the important job of controlling shields for attacks, and is also responsible for pointing the Enterprise to safe arrival planets - transporters only work when in orbit due to their limited range.

THE BRIDGE

This is where it all happens. From here the player issues commands to his crew (via Captain Kirk, of course) and perhaps is involved with other vessels. Apart from the main sensor screen, a wealth of information is available - power and speed readings appear above the main screen, while damage displays are situated in the far left and right. Perhaps the most important instrument in the room, used for locating enemy ships not in visual range.



By collecting Kirk, the player can receive the Captain's Log following reports on previous missions. Team down the planets and other ships and perhaps meet interestingly save the game at any time.



Scotty's job is to control damage to the Enterprise during combat. He automatically repairs systems as they are hit, although the player can select 'one click' areas for priority repair. There's also an emergency power reserve for use in times of crisis.



Although he has no control of the ship, Spock can give Kirk expert advice on a particular subject or situation at all times. His log can be browsed, the player can also access Spock's computer directly, for raw data on a chosen topic.



Shore lander communications can be used from the Enterprise - all incoming messages go through the filter can but ships and planets, as well as inter-ship messages and other data.

Star Trek's combination of diverse arcade and adventure segments requires the player to develop a wide variety of skills, from marksmanship to lateral thinking. Members of the crew are always on hand to help out, but in the end it's up to Kirk to get results - whoever said commanding a starship was easy?

TO BOLDLY GO...

Once the landing party has beamed down from the ship, the real fun begins. There's no end to the escapes that Kirk and his team can get into—here's a choice selection...



(Lower Left) It's a pure arcade experience: the player picks the screen scenes can be blown up to fill the entire screen. It looks slow, but some of the bridge facilities, like damage-control and radar, are available, making things a whole lot tougher.

(Top Right) The Subotic Map acts as the game's main interface: the command is required to find out which planet to attack, and if the player finishes and comes out of warp speed in the wrong system, he faces death at the hands of an evil enemy.

(Bottom Right) The player is treated to a pretty out-of-place animation whenever the Enterprise is put into orbit.

(Below) Orders from Star Fleet always come from one of the Admirals, who provides the required description of the mission before disappearing and leaving Kirk to reach the end goal for himself. He also pops up at the end of a successful mission to award commendation points based on how well you did. These points are accumulated into crew promotions which help to make the Enterprise's systems more effective in combat.



In the Klingon planet, Kirk must stand (but by a Klingon count) for attempting to protect a harmless figure by the name of Spaulding. With such a strict system of justice, can Kirk stand?



In Lore's (later) level, a deadly virus has broken out inside an orbiting space laboratory. Since evil, the Klingons have decided to lay siege to the station of the same level. Even alone, Kirk is to run up the maze by finding an antidote...



Just one of the problems faced by Kirk in Star Trek: The Motion Picture. An ancient alien civilization has been discovered on this planet. But how can Kirk do you get through the giant door?



The battle of the Klingon planet concludes when Kirk and his team are challenged to complete this Klingon battle of wills. The door isn't locked, but how do you get the deadly level?



In many situations, Doctor McCoy's medical aid is not enough, especially when trying to treat aliens like those flying dinosaurs in these cases. Better avoid manufacturing special medicines... but how?





Almost 200 years have passed with a host of advances that translate the bridge of a new Federation ship to computer. *ST:TP* has a polished look, an easy-to-use interface, and an excellent soundtrack. *T* is up to you.

time. Scotty carries out the repair work as quickly as he can, but in the later combats even his experienced hands may not be able to keep up with the continual pounding.

With the combat over (if indeed there's any to start with), and the relevant currency stuff completed (Kirk should always have a chat with Spock and get Uhura to attempt radio contact), the next step is to learn down to the rendezvous point - be it a planet, ship, space station or whatever - which triggers the start of the game's predominant adventure element. A trip to the transporter room is a necessity on every mission, with the landing party or "away team" always comprised of Kirk, Spock, Decker McCoy and the ubiquitous red-uniformed security officer.

Having beamed down from the Enterprise, Kirk and his team are free to explore the landscape in standard point-and-click fashion. The size of each episode's environment varies, but generally it's a very self-contained affair, with a high volume of puzzles, secrets and interactive characters that make up a whole story within as few as half a dozen locations. The player only controls Kirk directly (the rest of the team follow him automatically from location to location), with all the standard adventure options - Talk, Get, Look and Use - available from a simple graphics menu. The majority of the puzzles are based on collecting objects and putting them in good use elsewhere, although it's the party's permanent inventory of standard equipment that continually proves the most useful. Spock's tricorder, for instance, works

like a very powerful version of Look, scanning an area to object and revealing information that the eye would never see. In turn, McCoy has a medical kit and a recorder of his own for analyzing the wounded or dead (he actually says "He's dead, Jim" when he scans a corpse - it's great), while Kirk has his communicator for contacting the orbiting Enterprise and everyone has a phaser which can, of course, be set to kill or miss.

Given the Federation's prime directive of non-interference and no unnecessary violence, the phasers are hardly ever used (psychopaths go home - the game won't let you shoot at anything you don't have to), and Talking is the favored alternative whenever a new character is encountered. As superior officers, Kirk always does the talking, and conversations work in the same way as *Myst* or *Indiana* with the player choosing from a list of responses at pertinent intervals in the dialogue.

Despite the fact that Kirk does a lot of the leg-work himself, it's by no means his show, and none of the missions could be completed without the expertise of Bones and Spock close at hand. Whenever it comes to operating a complex piece of machinery, programming a computer or doing anything equally technical, Spock's the only man who can handle it. McCoy, on the other hand, has medical talents that range from curing the sick and injured to manufacturing special medicines and identifying dangerous bacteria in the air. As for the security officer - well, every Tricorder knows that his only job is to be the first one to get shot whenever a buddy whips out his phaser. As such, security officers are expendable (though Starfleet Command isn't exactly chuffed when you lose one), but if the insalubrious Kirk, Spock or McCoy are killed, it's immediately game over.

The plots themselves vary greatly as the game progresses, ranging from rescuing a captured Federation vessel from the hands of Kling terrorists to foiling an orbiting medical center that's under attack from the Romulans, being tried by the vicious Klingon legal system, deactivating a deadly computer system that's woken up after centuries of dormancy and even foiling the plans of the favorite Star Trek buddy, Harry Mudd. It's this episodic formula that does wonders for Star Trek's playability and atmosphere.

With an intro and epilogue for each one, they really do feel like TV episodes, and unlike conventional adventures, there's very little chance of getting bored prior to completion as the player's interest is revitalized at the start of each new "show". The combined teams of AOL and sister game CU Amiga, who were cranking in to the game room every time a mission was completed to see what the next one held are living testament to that fact.

The adventures themselves are small but perfectly formed. Though some of the missions are



PC Version



Support standard music and effects make *Star Trek* a sonic treat, and the visuals are superb throughout - brightly colored, well-defined and instantly recognizable as from the TV show. A word of warning, though - you really do need a big and chunky PC to get the most out of the game.

The game will run without VGA or a sound card, but they're both mandatory if you want to really get into the swing of things. It takes an age to install, and the hard disk is accessed constantly during play, making a fast machine a necessity.

Amiga Version



The tale of *Star Trek* on the Amiga is still considered at the top of writing. The game's just as technically demanding that it may be too much for the machine to handle fluently. There's a talk that it may appear in some sort of CD-drive incarnation... more news as and when.

ST Version



Sorry ST fans, but you definitely will not be going where an man has gone before. Electronic Arts have no plans for an Atari version.



PUT IT ON SCREEN!

Yes indeed! Scotty may not be able to "give ye an'ase more, Cap'n", but we certainly can. Thanks to our top editors at Electronic Arts,



we've got ten (yes, TEN!) superior titles of the original Star Trek TV series to give away. If you're not already a Trekkie, here's your chance to become one with a stocking set

of vids to get your collection off to a whanging good start. There's over 20 top-class episodes to get your teeth into here, and to be their proud owner, all you have to do is answer three simple questions:

1. What is the USS Enterprise's registration number?
2. In what century is Star Trek set?
3. How do you spot Klingons?

Easy, eh? Just bang your answers on a postcard, and send them to Star Trek: Voyager, ACE Magazine, Priority Court, 30-32 Farringham Lane, London EC8R 3AU. The closing date is 6th April, so get a move on!



A fine example of Star Trek's superb graphical authenticity. The dark sky is accented right down to the little ambient stars. Custom cut-outs are supported to include things that move up and down in the ambient exposure.

really that long, each one has bags of hand-scratching potential, and the idea of having a party of four on-screen characters working together to solve the puzzles rather than a solitary figure works wondrously well for the game and for the television atmosphere. In fact it's Star Trek's remarkable authenticity that is by far its most impressive aspect. Interplay's designers have no doubt broken their backs researching every minute detail of Star Trek's look, sound, dialogue, characters and little touches, and the result is nigh-on perfection. I challenge even the most die-hard Trekkie to find the slightest inaccuracy or omission. Everything is spot-on, from the title track and incidental music to the teleportation effects, McCoy/Speak arguments and even the way Kirk sits in his bridge chair. I can safely say that I've never seen a licensed game that does such justice to its subject matter. Interplay's game isn't just based on Star Trek: It IS Star Trek, and I'm having a very hard time getting over just how authentic, atmospheric and re-creating it really is.

Normally, adventures leave me cold. I don't have anything like the patience and logical insight required to play them, but Star Trek's own fictional lines and terrific atmosphere had me - and the rest of the office - under its spell from the moment the first few bars of the opening music made the hairs on the back of my neck stand on end. The combat aspect may not be to everyone's taste, but it doesn't intrude too much, and what's left can safely be described as a joy to behold. Anybody who was enjoying the TV show should buy this immediately, as should any adventure with a modicum of self respect. Me? I'm still writing with the stock.

■ Gary White

RATINGS



Excellent
game with
many
features



Very good
game with
many
features

Good

Acceptable

Mediocre

Poor

Very poor

Terrible

Unplayable

Unplayable

940

With the special anniversary

we've done a few jobs of

helping the players improve by

doing it in about twenty rather

than ten days long. Because

the quality is often very high

and occasionally a lot

of things are done, it's a

very long time, and it's a

very long time to do

anything. It's a very long

time to do anything, and

you can't get the most out

of it if you get anything else

done at the same time. It's

very long and boring and

many of the games it can be

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ATARI'S CLASSIC

TEMPEST

by Steve Kelly and Dan Malone



Given the chance, how would today's premiere games designers re-write their own favourite classics? This month, two of the Bitmap Brothers' top talents take up the challenge...

Because it's my personal favourite game of all time," says Bitmap Brother Steve Kelly when asked why he chose to give the gas treatment to Atari's decade-old coin-op classic. "These are some games that are absolutely perfect. Take Missile Command for instance - I don't think there's anything you could do to make that game any better. But I think that something like Tempest is just right for an update."

Steve's conviction in this matter is not to be questioned. He first encountered the original coin-op just after he left Pines as a Spectrum programmer back in 1984 ("It just happened to be in

a pub I frequented at the time"), and was instantly hooked. Such was his enthusiasm for the game that he went on to write a special 3-dimensional version of the game for the ZX81 - eventually published by the now-defunct Midrange. Naturally, he jumped at the chance to - hypothetically at least - turn his favourite game into the modern-day coin-op of his dreams.

"The reason why I think Tempest 91 would work as well is that, while it's very difficult to find fault with the original gameplay, there's a great deal that can be done with the graphics and control technology we have today," Steve explains. Not wanting to resist in itself, he and co-designer Dan Malone (who also produced the conceptual drawings here) have approached the project as if they were producing a new coin-op as opposed to just a 16-bit version.

For those who never saw Tempest when it first appeared (and there will be a lot of you, as despite its excellence it was never really that popular), it's about as simple as games get - but at the time it broke new ground both in gameplay and technical terms, using 3D technology and vector graphics in a way never before seen. Played over a series of vaguely cone-shaped 'webs' with lines running down towards a central vanishing point, Tempest saw the player piloting a tiny craft at high speed around the rim of the cone, blasting away at an army of horned spider-like nasties which scurried up the strands towards him. Despite a few variations in the shape of the web and alien types, that was about all there was to it - one of three's major gripe with the game.

For Tempest 91, Steve and Dan have come up with a far more sophisticated approach constructed on the same gameplay principles. "The playfield in Tempest 91 is similar to the original," explains Steve, "but the increase in technology enables the vectors to be filled, with shading to give a much better feel of depth and to make the whole game more pleasing to the eye." Probably

NME!

For Tempest 91, Steve has designed a whole new set of enemies which he says would be much more intelligent than those in the original. "As well as advancing from the centre of the web, they'd also come at the player from behind and attack to the outside edge of the playfield." Here's just a few of the bad guys he's concocted...

■ STUPIDS

These simply attack down one segment and try to hit the player.

■ SWITCHERS

Same as Stupids, except they change segments as they move forward.

■ SPIRALS

Intelligent enemies which spiral up the cone, switching lanes so as to position themselves as close to the player as possible.

■ SPINERS

These leave behind spikes which are deadly to the player as they advance.

■ SUPER SPIRALS

The same as spirals, but totally maniac! These change lanes VERY quickly.

■ ATTACKERS

Highly intelligent enemies that climb up onto raised segments and shoot back at the player.

■ SPLITTERS

When shot, these break into three or five identical aliens. Nasty!

■ BUCKERS

These advance for a short distance, then drop a new raised segment. Other aliens can then use this as a defensive position!



(clockwise from top) Steve and Don's original design for Tempest 3D (as shown in this issue), intelligent alien's sophisticated maneuvering and control mechanism - notably improved and upgraded later arena, and Don

the most radical change that Steve and Don have decided to make are the raised and indented segments in the cone sections. These 3-dimensional ledges and platforms are clearly visible on the screens shown here and add a major new element to the gameplay - the intelligent alien's (Williams trademark) use the playfield in their advantage, leading behind ledges and climbing over outcrops to keep out of the player's line of fire. "This means the player would have to advance down into the cone and take on those enemies one-to-one," while at the same time enemies are inflicting other areas of the playfield," Steve explains. "As well as making the combat more interesting, these raised segments are used as bridges to join separate parts of a play-zone," he continues.

"The whole idea was of these raised segments is to give the game a much more strategic feel by dividing the play-zones into separate areas, each of which need to be defended and be specifically attacked by the enemy in a bit. This feel was the only major thing lacking in the original game - you often just randomly spin around the disk with your finger on the fire button in the hope of killing as much as possible. And the really clever bit is that there is no real limit on the number of play-zones, as they would be prevented from very small data structures."

Designing Tempest 3D as a coin-up rather than a home computer game has also allowed Steve and Don to come up with an innovative new control system. "The original coin-up was controlled by a rotating dial which moves the ship around the edge of the play-zone," says Steve. "A turn of 30 degrees moves the ship to the next segment

of the cone. In Tempest 3D, though, the ship moves smoothly round the cone rather than just jumping from segment to segment, so a much finer control mechanism is called for. What I'd like to have is essentially the same control, but with a 'top-dial' situated on top of the control dial. This dial would have a small indentation where the player places his index finger. The best way to imagine it is by comparing it to a VCR with a top-shuttle control.

"There are two buttons used for shooting and 'super copper'. The button is mounted on a hand-grip joystick lever that is angled forward and backward to aim the ship in and out of the playfield. The super-copper, mounted on top of the joystick is actuated by the thumb and can be used three times per cone to destroy all on-screen aliens. Also, you've got a large trackball, like in Marble Madness and Marble Command, that can be used in conjunction with three buttons to change the viewpoint. Pressing the track ball while rotating the ball would rotate the entire playfield through x, y and z axes. As nice as it would look, it's only really window-dressing and there's a reset button to quickly reset the play view."

Steve and Don admit they surprised themselves with their Tempest 3D design. "Considering we only had a week to do it and I've never done anything like this before, I'm really pleased with the way it turned out," Steve admits. So much so, in fact, that there's just the slightest possibility that the firm might actually advance things a step and produce the game for real! It's only a pipe dream at the moment, but you never know. At the very least, the project has got Steve's nostalgia glands working over time. "There's a shop-down in Croydon that sells all old coin-ups, and I'm thinking of popping down there to see if I can get hold of an old Tempest machine. It's really got me going..."

PICKUPS!

An updated arcade game just wouldn't be complete without extra weapons, and Steve has made sure that Tempest 3D has them in spades. "These would be dropped by certain enemies when shot and awarded at times when the game calls them," he explains.

■ SPEEDUP

Increases velocity of player's shots.

■ SIDE SHOT

Allows the player to shoot at enemies that have reached the edge of the cone.

■ MULTI-SEGMENT SHOT

Bullets that fire not just down the player's segment, but down both adjacent segments.

■ SHIELD

These fire at 45 degrees and bounce off raised platforms - like the laser in R Type.



■ MANIC SHOT

These spin randomly around the play area in smooth arcs.

■ RETRAIT

Forces all enemies to go back to the centre of the cone, giving the player a breather.

■ EXTRA LIVES AND ENERGY

Where would you be without them? "These are always placed in a dangerous area to tempt the player into taking a high risk," says Steve.



Part 2 THE LARGO EMBARRAS

First, enter Tickwood and get mugged by Largo. Now go to the swamp. Look at the coffin, use the coffin and run to the attack at the far right end of the scrolling swamp. Once inside look at the skulls and pick up the string. First and talk to the Woodoo Lady. Now leave the hut.

Go back to Tickwood. Pick up the sign near the bridge (to get the spades) and go to the laundry ship. Take the bucket (near the three crates). Walk to the bar ship but don't go in - stick on one of the three windows. Use the rear to enter the kitchen. Take the knife and exit via the window.

Go to the hotel ship and use the knife on the rope tethering the alligator, which will make a break for freedom and go chased to the innkeeper. Look at the bowl and take the cheese squiggles. Enter Largo's room and take the wig.

Now go to the cartographer's ship. Talk to him and take the blank paper. Go to the bar ship and talk to the bartender about Largo. Largo will now make his entrance and get on the raft. When he's left, use the paper to wipe up the spit.

Walk to the swamp and use the bucket on the swamp to fill it with stone. Go back to Largo's room, close the door and use the bucket on the door. Hide behind the dressing screen. Watch Largo get covered in mud, follow him the laundry ship, have a chat to him then go back to his room. Close the door and have the steam taken from the lake at the dock. Go to the laundry ship and give the toilet to Marty.

Walk to the cemetery and go to the graves. Find Marilyn, Largo's tombstone and use the shovel on his grave. After the theatrics, go back to the woodoo shack and give the spin-covered paper, the wig, the piece of Largo's laundry and the remains of Largo's assistant to the Woodoo Lady. She'll make you a woodoo doll. Go to Largo's room and use the pins

on the doll before Largo can trace you out.

After having LeChuck's living boat taken from you, have another chat to the Woodoo Lady and read the book on Big Whoop. Now go to the beach and pick up the stick (it's on the path leading back to town). Go to the laundry ship and open the small box. Use the stick with the box to pop it open. Now use the string on the stick. Use the cheese squiggles on the box. When the rat starts eating pull the string, then open the box and take the startled rat.

Go back to the kitchen and use the rat on the pot. Now go to the bar leader and ask him how the stew is, he'll fire the cook. Go up on deck, read the "Help Wanted" sign then go back to the bartender and ask him about getting a job. Agree to work for him and take the 400 Gold Pieces. Leave the kitchen (via the window) and re-enter the bar to get fired (you'll be allowed to keep the money).

Walk to the cartographer's ship. When Marty removes his monocle to rub his eyes grab it. Now walk to the peninsula and talk to Captain Dead. Give him the monocle and charter his ship. Choose Booby Island on the map. When aboard the ship pick up the pearl seed and enter the cabin.

Part 3 THE FOUR MAP PIECES

On Booby Island talk to the old man and find out his name. Walk to the antique store and buy the pen, the ship's horn and the polished old saw. Walk up to Captain Kate and take a leaflet. Now walk to the spring, collect it and walk up to the flags that mark 1st, 2nd and 3rd. Use the horn and when the Aggravator walks off pick up the flags. (You dirty rotten low-down cheat.)

Return to the Jelly Rasta and sail to Phant Island. You'll get arrested no matter what you say. Once in jail pick the mattress and pick up the stick. Use the stick on the leg bone of the



MONKEY ISLAND 2

LeCHUCK'S REVENGE

Awes, me hearties! Sliver me timbers! Brace me mainsail! (Etc, etc.) Yes, here it is - the first of a two-part complete solution to Lucasfilm's brilliant Benchmark-bearing adventure, all thanks to Elmo of Wave BBS in Australia. (By the way Elmo, send us your full address and we'll send you **THREE** pieces of software in repayment for your superb guide.)
Take a deep breath - here we go...



When the boat is in the sea, look at the map. Close. Talk to him.





skeleton in the neighboring cell. Give the bone to the dog. Take the keys and open the door. Look at the envelopes on the shelf. Take and open them both.

Walk to the library and look up "Daisies" in the card file. When filling out your library card details make sure you give your age as 21 (the legal drinking age). Then take out any old book except "The Joy Of How." Walk to the miniature lighthouse near the door and open it. Take the lens.

Walk to the ally closest to the jolly barke and watch the guy gambling. When he leaves, follow him to the other ally then knock

log off the sleeping pirate. Now go to the woodsmith's shop and he won't be there. Take the hammer and the nails.

Go to Booty Island. Go to Stan's Pseudo-Dented Coffin and ask about buying one. Ask him to sit in it. Close the coffin lid and use the nails on it. Grab the cogit key and use the hammer on the cash register. Go to the spitting contest and have a go, but use the straw on the green drink first. Use different combinations of spitting terms until you win. Go to the antique dealer and ask about the map. He'll now tell you that he might trade it for something (the figurehead of the mad monkey). Get him the spitting plaque and tell him it's the egg of the sailor of LeCléau. He'll give you 4,000 Pieces Of Eight for it.

Now look at the book on diseases and find the co-ordinates of the mad monkey (write them down). Go to Phant Island, go to the jail and take the envelope on the shelf and free Kate. Go back to Booty Island and charter Kate's boat. Dive in once there and pick up the figurehead. Then put the anchor. Go to the antique dealer and swap the figurehead for the map.

Go to the costume store and show the man your invite to the Mardi Gras. He'll give you a costume. Walk to Governor Marley's mansion. Show your costume and ticket to the guard then walk to the mansion. Push the treasure and let the cock chase you around the house (uh, when you have a good enough head on him open the door near the treasure and enter. Pick up the fish and leave.

Walk to the front of the mansion and pick up the dog. Go to Phant Island and walk to the pier. Make a bet with the kid and win it by giving him the fish. He'll be about his catch and make him know it. Now he'll give you his fishing pole. Go to the waterfall and walk to the top of it. Use jigg on the pump. Now walk down and enter the tunnel. Once at the cottage open Kate's jail envelope (you'll now have some money). Go inside and demand the map.

When you are given your map, use it on the tree. Use the map with the money. When the man has passed out open the window

BATTLE ISLE

A veritable goody bag of level codes for this almost perfect Ubisoft wargame, courtesy of A. Yasin, Redbridge, London.

ONE PLAYER

1. COURA
2. PHASE
3. EXOTY
4. MOCUM
5. EIGHT
6. RUSTY
7. FIFTH
8. WESUM
9. MERIC
10. SPACE
11. SALTY
12. TESTY
13. TERRA
14. ISLAND
15. NIKER
16. KIVER

TWO PLAYER

1. GHOST
2. MARSS
3. EAGLE
4. METAN
5. PHOTON
6. POLAR
7. TOBEN
8. SHARK
9. ZENT
10. DORWIN
11. VESTA
12. COORD
13. DEMON
14. GRANT



Deep in the Caribbean South Island

on the door and ask for the next number. Count the number of fingers the doctor holds up when he says "if this is..." and give this as your reply when he asks "How many is this...?" (There's no secret code at all! It's a coin cheat).

Go and gamble and when you win ask for the invitation. Repeat this winning strategy until you have all three pieces. Walk to the Governor's mansion. Tell the guard that there's a fire in the kitchen then run upstairs. Use the book from the library on the book on the boat.

Return to South Island (switch Kate girl around). Go to the bar shop and order a Blue Whale and Yellowbeard's Bait. Use the blue drink on the yellow drink to make a green spit thickener. Use the banana from the envelope on the metronome. Then pick up Jigs. Go to the laundry and see the guy

to the left of the door. Go to Booty Island. Go to the mansion and enter. Walk upstairs. Take the car above Elaine's bed and leave for the big tree. Pick up the plank and use it on the hole farthest left. Walk on top of it and use the car in the next hole. Walk to the car. Watch the (brown) (make sure Guybrush enters down the hole).

Then, (make you have broken), pick up the car pieces and take them to the woodsmith on South Island. Give the pieces to him and he'll fix it. Go to the cliff on Booty Island and use the fishing pole on the map piece. A bird will steal it and take it to the Big Tree. Run go to the Big Tree and walk to the

plank. Use the car on the next hole, then walk to the car and pick up the plank. Use the plank on the next hole. Walk to the plank. Pick up the car. Guybrush should do the rest automatically. Once at the top, go to the farthest little building and pick up the telescope. Go to the closest hut and walk to the door. Look at the maps and use the dog on the maps. Now you have another map piece.

Go to the antique store and use the paint show on the book where the sign used to be. Now buy the mirror. Go to the cottage on Phant Island and enter it. Use the mirror on the mirror frame. Exit and use the telescope on the

TIPS

HUDSON HAWK

Why waste time to earn? You can! Anonymous - type **SOUBREFFICE** (no spaces) on the title screen for infinite free wilds! BT has about 1000 tips in **SANITYSLAND** (http://www.sanitysland.com) for the same effort.

Next: Nathan, Jason, Leonardo

RODLAND

More infinite lives, money, the time for Master's Angie appear! It's so easy!



It's make you your' partner game. Three (pass anytime during the game, press the **WASD** key the times and recover the game. Simple enough for you? Even better, all the opens for to sleep through the levels.

A. Yasin, Redbridge, London

monkey statue in front of the cottage. Take note of which back the light strikes then go inside, get the mirror and push the table that the light hit. Take the map piece from the skeleton and leave for Scabb Island.

Go to the cemetery and open the crypt. Once inside look at all the coffins and look at the book of famous pirate quotations. Match Fitzgibbon's name with the coffin inscriptions and open it. Take the ashes. Go to the Woodoo Lady and look at all the

bottles. When you find the Ash-2-Life™ bottle pick it up. The Woodoo Lady will ask you for some ashes so she can whip up a proper police. Give her the ashes. Get the Ash-2-Life™ from her and go back to the crypt. Use the Ash-2-Life™ on the ashes. Offer to turn off the gas at the weeble hut.

Go to beach and open the hut. Turn off the gas and return to the crypt. Use the Ash-2-Life™ on Fitzgibbon and he'll give you the map. Now you have all four

pieces. Go to the cartographer give him the items from the light-house and the map pieces. Go to the Woodoo Lady for him to go get the Love Birds. Then go back to Wally. Look at the writing on the table, open the bag marked Juju, then go to the swamp. Get in the box.

...And that's where we must leave Monkey Island for now. The second and final part will appear in next month's TNT section. Stay tuned.



REALMS

This rather excellent wargame now has some rather excellent tips provided for it by Richard "Two pieces of top software are on their way to me" Thompson of Aberdeen in Scotland. Take it away Richard...

CHOOSING YOUR REALM

For an easier time, choose a realm bordered with only one other. The mooses are obvious - you've only got one immediate enemy to worry about. If you fancy a real challenge pick a realm also bang in the middle of the land!

STARTING OFF

Immediately access your cities and stock up on grain, expand land and build walls around the cities near the borders. In the early years of your reign recruit armies and train cavalry whenever recruits are available - you'll need them!

Access the cities every year and cycle through them, doing what needs to be done. As the realm grows larger and more complex it is easier to do this every three years or so (making sure that you stock three years worth of grain each time).

Set a reasonably high tax rate - don't be afraid of taking your citizen's money!

GENERAL HINTS

Don't dawdle on the playfield. If you want to think, pause the game or enter another screen.

Within one of your city's population limits 'unbeatable', and their loyalty is 'absolute', lay the citizen's taxes a year. This will hardly

affect them (they'll feel 'determined' rather than 'unbeatable') and by the next year they will be back to 'unbeatable', in readiness to be tested again! Mugs!

If an enemy realm leaves it's capital relatively unguarded, go for the jugular and attack it straight away. Take the capital and the realm's cities and armies will become yours immediately. Unless a unit of troops is garrisoned at these cities it's likely that a few may revolt, but these will be small and isolated without any armies and therefore easy meat to recapture. Obviously, you should always keep your own capital well guarded.

If you have a large army assembled and you send it against an unguarded enemy city, the city may well surrender and join your realm for free rather than face the consequences. This not only avoids spilled blood but your new citizens will be totally loyal and ready to be taxed immediately.

When a city surrenders after siege, note it unless it's a capital or other tactically significant city such as a port. As well as providing a huge boost to your treasury, the enemy city ceases to be a threat for years. Capturing every city is not a good idea as every will revolt later and they also drain your valuable resources.

If a surrendered city is one you wish to retain, take over the city and leave a garrison of troops there to prevent revulsion. As long as you run the city well and don't tax too much the inhabitants will soon come



around to your way of thinking and become loyal subjects, thus enabling you to tax twice a year and recruit loyal troops.

After conquering new cities, always check and adjust tax rates so that they lead back to your capital.

Get control of ports. They are immensely important tactically, especially in heavy sea-faring realms.

Never pay a tribute under siege unless it's your capital and it's a last resort. It's not worth the huge cost and the enemy troops will soon be back.

Don't waste time and especially money in alliances with other realms. No matter how much aid you give, if the opportunity arises to take one of your cities then you can be sure they'll take it.

If plague hits a city sort it out immediately by improving the city's health. Be prepared to levy heavily if need be - it's better than having plague spread through your realm!



ARMIES AND FIGHTING BATTLES

Armies should consist primarily of four types of units:

1. **Heavy Cavalry** - Arm them with a war hammer or long sword and dress them in heavy head and body armor with a bronze shield. For the perfectionist, also arm them with spears or javelins to soften up the enemy before battle truly commences.
2. **Heavy Infantry** - Arm and dress them as for cavalry. These are slow but superb in combat. Best used for defence or supporting and consolidating a cavalry charge.
3. **Light Infantry** - Arm them with any weapon depending on the punch you want to give them and a missile weapon (usually a bow)

and dress them in light armour. Try to keep these units out of combat unless necessary as they aren't too good. They're best used to rain arrows down on the enemy from afar. They're quite manoeuvrable.

4. **Light Cavalry** - Arm and dress them as for light infantry, in battle, use as light infantry. However, use the units' super manoeuvrability to try to get behind the enemy and outflank them.

Always attack in a wedge formation and defend in a square formation, if controlling. Discovers or Amazon units who have no face shields, so not bother with missile weapons. They are better hand-to-hand so equip them appropriately and charge!

Missile-based armies favour a defensive stance. Weaken the enemy with missiles while they approach, then send your infantry units to the front to do the actual fighting.

When you've defeated the enemy and his units try to escape, attack them before they leave the battlefield. This will

cause great damage to the enemy yet leave you unscathed, ensuring the enemy cannot regroup and fight another day.

ON THE BATTLEFIELD

There are basically three situations you may find yourself in on the battlefield:

1. **You heavily outnumber the enemy.** In this scenario you really can't lose unless you're totally incompetent!



If you have missile troops, it may be possible to win this easily, or without using them to feed control. (Remember this on the same note on the next page)

If you have no missile troops, use your cavalry advantage and attack on one side of the square. Also use the tactic when your numbers turn on you.

2. **You and the enemy are about equal in strength.**



Use a great deal of vehicles, IF YOU!



Don't attack!

3. **You are heavily outnumbered by the enemy.**



The best advice here is to use a complete surprise. It is unlikely if you do have a wedge, though. When your larger unit has taken so that enemy units can only attack one of your flanks. Try to support your units with missile fire if available, and make sure your other flank stands in a tight group to give you an advantage. Oh, and pay the gods as an offering.

Key to the above diagrams

- 1 - Heavy Unit
 - 2 - Heavy Cavalry
 - 3 - Light Cavalry
 - 4 - Light Infantry
 - 5 - Heavy Infantry
 - A - Heavy Cavalry
 - B - Heavy Cavalry
 - C - Heavy Cavalry
 - D - Heavy Cavalry
 - E - Heavy Cavalry
- Wedge Arrow - Heavy Cavalry
Square Arrow - Heavy Cavalry
Circle Arrow - Heavy Cavalry
Dashed Arrow - Heavy Cavalry

CONSOLE CORNER



SAVE THE HERDHOOD

Unusual! Someth' 'bout them the Magician's cabinet's a button on the title screen (where Sonic says his name) and press UP, DOWN, LEFT and RIGHT, Now hit START. You'll soon be able to start an whatever level you want.

Also, when you've completed the game, give Dr Robotnik another whack in the title to trigger in the special-extended cut for a full five screens (two press and hold down A, then press and hold down B, then press and hold down C, now release B and C, still holding down A) and press START. You can now use A to change levels into all kinds of secret characters and use C to reproduce life. A good little bit to change Sonic into a dog, reproduce life all around the screen (where change life back into Sonic) and pick up the dog.

By Geoff, Editor, Midlands

BATHAN

In the 3rd level (the second of the Magician's manual) go to the second chimney, the one with the acorn in the left pediment of the balcony. Hit the acorn and pick up the balcony. It leads to the 1st and 2nd until it gets down and up again. Pick up the balcony that has supported and repeat until you have 20 balconies. Complete the level without dying and on the next level the extra balconies will be converted into money!

By P. George, Editor, Sunderland

CASTLEMANIA 3

A right funny character, and an odd tale. But wouldn't it be nice to have your code to all the levels? It would! Here's how...

- SOUND TEST: Start, Wait, Wait, Wait
- CRYSTAL CHEST: Walk, Double Jump, Jump
- ROCK CASTLE: Double Jump, Wait, Sphere
- PLANT CASTLE: Double Jump, Sphere, Sphere
- CLOUD CASTLE: Start, Wait, Sphere, Walk

- DRACULA'S CASTLE 1: Start, Sphere, Walk, Walk
 - DRACULA'S CASTLE 2: Start, Double Jump, Sphere
 - DRACULA'S CASTLE 3: Start, Double Jump, Sphere
- © Blackstone, using Wafford Software

TIPS

The word money by the castle? How do I get to go to the forest where a good shop for a while, with an empty, you up and down the shop. (See Heimdall of the gold and the silver coins, but the one and position the coin. Then press left again. As if to single the one will be used to the state of a shop again! Keep using this until the shop is full then buy back the original one. You should have made a profit of about 5000 Gold each! Thanks!

By M. F. Fisher, Sunderland



HUNTER

A kind of 'easy' fare for Amiga and BT games. Looking for the General's 'Hunter' to go to the 'Hunter'.

David Mason, York, Chester

SWITCHBLADE 3

Not really a cheat, but interesting non-linear. In the Amiga/BT title screen, type in 000000 when it tells you to hit the 5 to enter a secret sub-game. (Have fun!)

David Mason, York, Chester

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LEGION OF DOOM
- ★ EARTHQUAKE



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THE ACE

Not much fun these recessions, are they? With funds limited, that next top software purchase often seems impossibly far away. But help is at hand. You may not know it, but there's a huge pool of quality games software out there just waiting to be tapped by you for little more than the price of blank floppy! (Disk, I mean.) Hey! You guessed it - I'm talking about the topsy-turvy, cheap-n'-cheerful world of Public Domain software.

But just what is Public Domain software? Why is it so inexpensive? Are Shareware and Licenseware also part of the Public Domain? How do you get your grubby mitts on it? And, most importantly, is it actually any good?

Rest-easy, gentle reader. The ACE PD File is here to mop-your-browed-face, take your worry-thought mind and guide you divinely through the copied-of-delights awaiting you on the PD circuit. In this, the first PD File, I'll be explaining how to use some of those combining keyboards means, telling you how you can get a slice-of-the-action and pointing you in the direction of some cracking games software for your Amiga. About ST and IBM PC. There's lots to do and even more to see, so let's get going.

SHAREWARE, SHMAREWARE

The world of computing is a bewildering and frightening place for the uninitiated, a dense jungle of obscure hardware and systems, deterring all but the most committed from penetrating its murky secrets.

And the bizarre Zone of PD is as rife with treachery (jargon as any other, that fear not. As it 'appears' PD is neither big, hard nor clever. Sit back and relax as we explain all in a friendly, easy-to-understand way.

• **Public Domain** (PD) software is a piece of non-copyrighted code that can be duplicated and distributed by anyone or anything completely free of charge or legal hassles. That's why the software from PD libraries is so cheap - all you're paying for is the cost of copying the stuff and sending it to you!

• **Shareware** is as freely copyable as PD, but the catch here is that if you find the program of

use then you are requested to send the author(s) a registration fee - which, given the quality of some of the software available, is usually laughably small. You guessed it, it's 'try before you buy' time!

• **Licenseware** cannot be copied freely like 'normal' PD. Some PD libraries are licensed (hence the name) to sell software, and the author receives a percentage royalty for every copy sold.

• And that's not all. There are loads of other silly names buzzing around the PD network - AdShare, Businessware, Giftware, etc. etc. - but these tend to crop up rarely. If they appear in this column then they'll be explained on the spot.

SO HOW DO I GET IT?

Easy one. From a PD library. There are hundreds of them scattered across the country. Along with each review there should be the name of the PD library that provided the game along with a reference code, so just look up their details in the

'Contact has been made...' box and call them for pricing and anything else you need to know. And remember that many of the titles reviewed are available from more than one PD library. Hunt around and you may find a bargain!

AMIGA

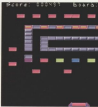
Thankfully PD on the Amiga isn't all bouncing colour bands, and interdigitated slideshows from a Solitaire manager file, silly-villain sprites bouncing pointlessly about the screen and endless belly-split scrolling messages from German programmers called 'Captain Copper' or 'Doctor Blister' or something pathetic. Well, not quite...

MEGABALL (Shareware, MSX, G10)

Good Lord! An Amibased clone that actually adds something to the genre! The basic principles are the same as usual - see 'em but n' ball 'em down - but a modified wall of bricks. Matters are speeded up by the fact that some of the bricks cannot be destroyed, some take two or more hits to see them off to black heaven and - enjoy superior loot 'n'



And this of Megaball's city-defenceware levels. These grey blocks (left) take two or three hits before they'll disappear. The coloured blocks may release special power-up items when shot, causing your gun to fire and destroy things on level too. However, give those blocks a more solid hit (withhold fire) and they'll be unshakable - see the manual either!



PD FILE

IS YOUR PERSONALITY
SHAPED BY VIDEO GAMES?

epic?—some release special power-up items when hit. (Business as usual, right? Wrong.)

Sure, to play the game is not better or worse than any other of its ilk, but someone really had their thinking hat on when they dreamt up the various power-ups. Not only are there tons of them but some produce very interesting results, like causing the blocks to start descending the screen Space Invader-like. Nasty. Megaball has lots of balls—fifty levels worth, in fact. Highly recommended.



Wastelands sees the player exploring the barren wastelands in search of the control computer that is preparing to launch a nuclear warhead.

WASTELANDS

(Public Domain, MSX, C64)

While programs written using Mandel's Software's AMOS are more prolific on the Amiga PD circuit than files on a com's arm, no other games programmers have yet to really get to grips with the advanced features of Mandel's inventive 3-D Construction kit. However, if Wastelands is an indicator of the sort of thing we can expect, then we're in for some real treats.

Deep in the Arizona desert, the super computer controlling the Energy nuclear facility has gone loco and is preparing to launch the multi-world-blasted JOSHUA missile. It's down to the player to infiltrate the complex, locate the passwords to the boss levels while dodging the auto-defense systems, and deactivate the computer.

Since Wastelands was written with a utility, it isn't the fastest 3-D game you've ever seen, but it's more than fast enough. The building design is inspired, and the various buildings have an impressive sense of scale. Best of all, there's a good sense of atmosphere and tension. If you enjoyed Castle Master and its ilk then you'll get more than your money's worth here.

GROWTH

(Public Domain, MSX, C64)
Growth is a classic example of the 'Simplicity = Excellence' school of thought. The basic premise is this: there's a giant brain in the middle of the screen which, slowly but surely, is spreading out to its cell tentacles and filling the screen with its vile form. The player guides a small gunship around the edge of the screen, mowing away at the growth (sic) with the ultimate aim of pumping enough shots into the brain to kill it.

Easy enough. But it's later on, when the growth rate starts increasing, that things get tricky and the player has to make proper use of mines—little blue lumps stuck in the growth—that explode when shot and rip out great chunks of matter. Five large red and red-iridescent alien shapes start bouncing around which, as you're probably guessed, are fatal to the player's ship.



Can you keep the tentacles of this intelligent alien from covering the entire screen?



To keep interest up, every few levels there's a bonus round, where the player has to keep a bouncing ball in play while trying to destroy the brain or shoot waves of blobs that tumble down the screen. With a seemingly infinite number of levels and largely addictive gameplay, you'll soon find you're stuck on Growth.

ATARI ST

There are an amazing number of games written using utilities doing the ST PD rounds, the Shoot-Em-Up Construction Kit (SEUCO) and STOS being the two main favorites. While there's a lot of poorly executed dress about, some of these home-written ops are incredibly good—can you believe that Osamu (Polarisware, Available from Commodore Enterprise, CD141), the superb platform game on this month's ACE Coverdisk, was written in STOS?



Hedgehogger is a fairly decent Platform op that's good fun, although the collision detection can be a little vague at times.



HEDGEHOGGER

(Public Domain, Commodore Enterprise, CD141)

Hedgehogger is sick, sick, sick—in other words, it's a right left. The player has one little hedgehog who has to be guided across a busy motorway to the safety of their den. Although each basic-issue hedgehog is about as nippy as a slug on Valium, special Turbocones™ sometimes appear which, when chomped on, double the huge speed.

Those with long memories will recognize this as a blatant rip-off of Atari's Frogger con-op. It's all good fun with some nice touches, like the nasty splat when the spiky one gets run over, but it does



Alien Pacman is one of the best Pacman clones out there short of... Although the fact that you can actually eat them is not it because eventually you'll die.

get a little repetitive and the collision detection can be dodgy to say the least. Still, there are far worse ways to pass half an hour.

HACMAN (Shareware)

There are loads of Pacman clones around, but this one is better than most. Gameplay wise there are no surprises - the player's yellow on-screen blob has to sweep up all the white blobs in a maze while avoiding the unwanted attentions of a bunch of multi-coloured blobs. If the yellow blob eats special giant flashing blobs then the tables are turned on the multi-coloured blobs and makes them the hunted but only for a short while.

The first few of the fifty levels are very discouraging - everything moves slowly and the ghosts are thicker than the chocolate on a Clab. Thankfully the action soon heats up, with the ghosts obviously getting a brain upgrade between levels, and then the addition sets in. The animation though minimal is nicely done, especially the goopily-eyed ghosts. It's a shame there's no sound - the munching sound is surely missed. If you're on the look for a tupper Pacman clone then look no further than this.



IBM PC

Shareware is pretty much the name of the game on PC. There is some straight-forward PD to be had but it's pretty thin on the ground. PC owners are in for a bit of a treat because a lot of this Shareware is of a very high standard indeed - presumably because many US companies use it as an interactive advert for their wares.

Top of the heap in this respect have to be Apogee Software, an American company whose name you may already be familiar with from the amazing Commander Keen game featured on last month's cover disk. First - ahem - 'keen' to get their hands on the full three-level game will no-doubt be inter-

ested to know that Apogee have just entered into an agreement with Croydon-based Precision Software Applications who will now not only distribute Apogee's Shareware but also sell their complete games. PSA's address and phone number is given in the 'Contact has been made...' box.

But Commander Keen is just one of PSA's Apogee's huge range of superb Shareware games, including two more of the Commander's outings. So, let's take a look at just three of them...

COMMANDER KEEN 4: SECRET OF THE ORACLE COMMANDER KEEN 6: ALIENS ATE MY BABYSITTER!

No, no, no - you haven't missed anything. Commander Keen 4 is in fact the sequel to the first Commander Keen Shareware game - the reason for the '4' is that in between there are two other non-Shareware games (as mentioned above). The second half of the adventure is to be found in Keen 5, but you have to pay for that - it's worth it though.

The plots are as insane as ever. In Keen 4, the intrepid ten-year-old Commander picks up a mysterious transmission from the evil Shikadi whilst fiddling with his super-duper space radio, which seems to imply that the foul aliens are planning to destroy the Galaxy! Keen travels to Gnomish IV to recruit the mighty Oracle to find out more, only to discover that the Guardians of the Oracle have been kidnapped by the Shikadi to prevent anyone learning more about their hideous plans. Now, guess who's got to rescue them...



CONTACT HAS BEEN MADE...

Here's the place to come for all those handy names, addresses and telephone numbers. (Remember, PD libraries - if you want to get listed here send us some of your tupper games software for review. It's as easy as that!)

AMGA

MS, 1 Chain Lane, Newport, Isle of Wight
PO36 5QA. Tel: (0983) 529564.
Fax: (0983) 521599

AT&T

Goodman Enterprise, 16 Cornard Close,
Main Key Estate, Longton, Middlesbrough
TS2 1JH. Tel: (0552) 221650.
Fax: (0762) 316732.

IBM PC

Precision Software Applications, 3 Valley
Court Offices, Lower Road, Croydon, Near
Reigate, Surrey PO8 9NF.
Tel: (0123) 206266. Fax: (0123) 206066.

Korn 6 opens with the Commander discovering that his baby sister Molly has been kidnapped by the alien Bloop from FritMokan Xas. One trip to Xax later and Korn's back in familiar territory, naming the planet for his missing sibling in an attempt to get her home before his parents die.

Like *Korn 4*, the games are a mixture of exploration and platform antics with Korn leaping around HUGE smooth-scrolling caves in his search for the Grandfins in *Korn 4* and Molly in *Korn 6*. Korn is armed with a chain laser and a popo-stick, handy for reaching those-out-of-reach platforms. Crystal keys are waiting to be found and switches waiting to be toggled that unleash all manner of effects.

No, no surprises in the gameplay. What does surprise, though, is the sheer quality of the games. Although *Korn 4* was great, these two are amazing. Honestly, if they were full-price releases I'd have no hesitation in giving them both the six-page Screenest™ treatment and bloody high marks to boot. As to which is the better... well, I found *Korn 6* the slightly more enjoyable of the two, simply because a slightly higher element of adventuring - toggling switches, finding crystals, and so on - is required, but it's a close-run thing.

The 'feel' of both games is wonderful - they certainly give the likes of *Loobot* and *Mario* a run for their money. They look good too - there are some superb creature designs which are meticulously animated, as are the detailed backdrops. Although the various adventures are distinctly PCA, the bright look suits the jaunty gameplay well. Add massive game tanks and some refreshingly catchy tunes, and you've got two games that come as welcome light-hearted relief to all those PC owners getting just a little jaded with endless flight sims and RPGs.



(Molly and Xax again) - Sometimes there are more secret spots, this time it's about to be the baby sister Molly in Xax. Are they dangerous? Don't worry when it's Barbara on screen - that's what's wrong with that!

PAGANITZU: ROMANCING THE ROSE

The man with the hat is back! Forget Indy. What the world needs is a new breed of archaeologist, a heroic figure with the nerve to tackle ancient tombs in a modern time. Ladies and gentlemen, may I introduce...

Alabama Smith.

Okay, so it's not the bestest name ever, but our Alabama is actually something of a rickshak genius. Renowned for his gipping escapades in perilous digs around the world, Alabama is about



to embark on his greatest adventure yet - to recover the fabled treasures of the lost Aztec temple of Paganitzu.

It's an arcade puzzle game. The temple is split into single-screen chambers, and Alabama has to collect all the keys in a screen to open the door to the next while picking up precious bonus-point gems. The temple's designers make things tougher than it sounds; snakes spit deadly venom if Alabama walks in line of sight of them, spiders shuffle around the corridors in pre-set patterns, and so on. Alabama, who seems to have left his gun and whip at home, can push loose blocks around to shield him from attack.

Although Paganitzu has the usual appeal of one



(Full view over with Alabama) - Smith explores the perilous traps and automatic guards of the Aztec temple of Paganitzu. Don't be fooled by the low quality graphics - it's a right mean game.

MORE! MORE! MORE!

Although the ACE PD File covers games, more games and nothing but games, remember that many PD libraries also stock a wide variety of Public Domain applications and utilities, such as spreadsheets, databases, word processors, art packages, music packages - you name it, chances are a PD library somewhere has got it. If you've got a problem, give 'em a try - most PD libraries will be more than happy to recommend a program to suit your needs!

of Noel Edmund's jumpers, gameplay-wise it's the equivalent of an Armani suit. The puzzles have just the right blend of ponderous thinking and fast action to keep you addicted. Although there are tons of levels, the ability to save games at any point means you can keep returning to the one that's stumping you without any fuss. Most excellent.

the end

And that, as they say, is that. Because you have now arrived at the last page of the last issue of ACE Magazine. After this, there will be no more.

For just over four and a half years ACE has delivered a unique blend of news and reviews, interviews and features on all aspects of the computer entertainment scene. We hope that we've kept you amused and informed and that you've enjoyed reading the issues as much as we've enjoyed writing them.

But all good things come to an end. In the crazy topsy-turvy world of computer games publishing, that's just the way it goes.

But hold hard! Close back those doors! All is not lost. For there are plenty of magazines which are very nearly as witty and informative and stylish as ACE. In fact, we've got a dedicated magazine for every machine an ACE reader could possibly be interested in. So what's on offer?



PC Review is the place to go for all things MS-DOS. Games, applications, public domain, hardware information. All PC life is here!



Apart ST owners can look forward to a most excellent read in the form of ST Review, a completely new magazine dedicated to all things ST. Following much the same all-round format as Old Amiga, ST Review will cover all aspects of your machine, giving you all the info you need to get the very most from your ST.



And console owners have a positive wealth of choice with top quality magazines like Mean Machines and Megatech simply bursting with all that's hot in the world of the cartridge.



And last, but by no means least, Amiga games players will be most excitedly catered for in the pages of The One for Amiga Games. Not only because it is a fine read dedicated 100% to extracting the maximum fun-points from your Amiga, but it's also our new format! So if you've enjoyed reading ACE for its reporting on the Amiga games scene, you'll know where to come and find us.

See you soon!

Jim & Dave & Gary & Jim

reviews directory

It's a hearty cry of "Draaaaaa!"

and a mighty roar of "hey-mooey-mooey!" for every home-

Teamer we proudly unveil the Review Directory. So unfold the flaps of all nations and get the concepts to prepare a tasty meat feast for a little postcoagulate special something if you're vegetarian) to keep you going as you get tucked into the TWENTY - yes, THREE-Oh! - pages of hand-hitting, pull-no-punches, take-no-prisoners, other-words-joined-by-hyphens games information.

But let us spare a thought for those new readers out there who may be sighing at this highly-crafted and exceptionally well-written section for the very first time (and there's a first time for everyone, remember - yes, even you with bad haircut).

"Why huzzah all the boo-hoo!" they cry. Simple, in the pages that follow you find all the basic information you'll ever need on every game released over the last THREE months. "Wow!" you cry.

Yes, "Wow" indeed. And because you, the dear and loyal reader, demanded it, here are what those star ratings means to us, when,

Full.

★★★★★ **Excellent**

★★★★ **Very Good**

★★★ **Above Average**

★★ **Poor**

★ **Dismal**

New Releases:

4D Sports Trainer	Paperboy 2
Amnesia Golf	Real Madrid
Dimension Force	Super 8000
Final Fantasy 2	KPM Racing
John Madden Football	Roboco
Jupiter's Mastermind	Soak The Hedgehog
Marsquake III	Super Pin Pro/Wrecking
Medical	Ultimate Golf
Ninja Gaiden Shadow	Worm Country for Hockey 2

Still Available:

Agoo Airlines	Cartel Napoleonic Battles	Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe
Action Pack	Crashly 2000	Seven Columns
Another World	Hard Driver	Shuttle
Amstar	Hard News	Silent Service II
Alan Bond	Harry Raising Hells	Skulls
America	Hotmail	Solitaire Poker
Another World	Hudson Hawk	Sports TV
Baby (n)	Hunter	Starc Wars
Barbarian 2	The Immortal	Strike Force
Battle Isle	Jimmy White's	Superman
Birds of Prey	Whitbread Gordon	Superman Cargo
Brooch 2	Kingpin	Tankin - The Game-Of
Bugs Boney 2	Lotus Turbo Challenge 2	Thunderbolt
Captain Planet	Lotus Turbo Challenge 2	Thunderbolt
CosmoQuest IV	Lotus Turbo Challenge 2	Tip-Off
Cuba Legenda	Lotus Turbo Challenge 2	Tot Tot & Tot
Comanche (Del. of	Mad TV	Traders
Secret)	Magic Cards	Under Pressure
Clayfighter 2	Martinis Monoceros	Utopia
Coco Hunt	Megafish	Yellow
Crilliance	Mega-Mania	Yoonis
Cross the Chimerian	Megaworld 2	Willy Beavers
Crusher For A Copse	Megaworld	Wing Commander II
Deathbringer	Mexico	World Class Rugby
Devil Crash	MIGuyM Super	
Devine Design	Palram	
Double Dragon III	Wight & Magic 2	
EA Hockey	Monster Business	
EA	Moonstone	
Epic	Nebula 2	
Eye of the Beholder 2	Never-Ending Story 2	
F-15 Strike Eagle 2	Oculus	
Fox Interceptor	Ocean Europa	
Fox Off	Pacman	
Fatal Revolt	Pegasus	
Fighter Command	Pelfighter	
Final Blow	Populous 2	
Final Fight	Post n' Peter	
First Samurai	Railroad Tycoon	
Flicky	Robico	
Flew 13	Robo Hood	
Football Director 2	Robooid	
Formula 1 Grand Prix	Roboopy 2	
Football	Robozone	
Galaga '92	Rolland	
The Games - Water	Rugby - The World-Cup	
Challenge	Sandbox	

new releases

4D SPORTS DRIVING



Price: Amiga £29.99
Genre: Racing Simulation
Publisher: Minterware

A very long time indeed after the PC original hit the streets, this Amiga version of the auto-rival from the people who wrote the superb 4D Sports Racing really hits the spot.

Don't be put off by the craggy box artwork (a 'approximate' car driven by silver men with laser-gun eyes, of you please). This is an excellent simulation of driving some of the most exciting cars in the world around some of the most ridiculous and hazardous tracks to ever come out of a games designer's head.

With some of the advantages that made Indy 500 such a laugh, such as a video playback mode and spectacular crashes, 4D Sports Driving has all the elements that a fun driving game should have, with very little of the tedious drudgery that may have inhibited it in the name of realism.

The player can either race solo or against one of a host of computer controlled opponents. These electronic drivers have considerably more personality than the faceless robots driving dross cars found in other race games. Before each race against one of these machines, the player gets a breakdown of their particular psychological defects, whether they're speed freaks, bump-mechanics or whatever.

The action is executed in admirable

3D (the Fourth Dimension is YOU!) and even if the races themselves aren't that fascinating, the track designer sector will provide you with enough entertaining pile ups to keep you coming back for more.

☆☆☆☆

AWESOME GOLF

Price: Lynx £29.99
Genre: Sports Simulation
Publisher: Atari

It's a constant surprise to me how well golf games work on computers. You'd think the slow pace and highly physical nature of the sport just wouldn't make for a good computer game at all. But it nearly always seems to work well. *Awesome Golf* is the first golf game on the Lynx handheld and it's pretty good stuff.

The player can choose to play on either British, US and Japanese courses. As the player moves the cursor between courses choosing which one to play, the game tone changes subtly to reflect the country currently selected. Nice. There's also some catchy speech during the game which is very entertaining.

Although there are some nice 3D views when the golfer takes a swing, the actual mechanics of the game are handled in 2D. Each shot begins with a plan view of the current green. The player can scroll about it using the cursor pad and even zoom in and out

based to the course of the Lynx's optic manipulating hardware.

Using a small cursor the player aims the shot, then chooses a club. Amazingly there's no on-screen indication to tell you the maximum range of each club so you have to keep referring to the instruction booklet. Taking a swing is achieved by the familiar hitting the button when a swiftly moving marker is over the shot power you want (swinging the buttons again to give the ball left or right swing).

While *Awesome Golf* doesn't exactly set a new standard for computer golf games, it's a classy addition to the genre and is recommended to all sports-loving Lynx owners.

☆☆☆☆

DIMENSION FORCE



Price: Super Famicom £29.99
Genre: Arcade Blast
Publisher: Atari

Co! What with helicopter mania set to sweep the country over the next few months, we were more than a little excited with the prospect of a full-blown helicopter romp on the Famicom. Indeed, the design guys seem to have got their act together, dishing up exactly the right sort of 'out-of-the-box', Apocalypse Now imagery for the front of the box.

Unfortunately for both them and us, the people who have actually programmed the game seem to have been

stuck in some sort of time warp for the last five years, and are perfectly content to dish up a game which makes *Slip Fight* look sophisticated.

Now don't get us wrong, it's perfectly acceptable to produce a top-down scrolling shoot-out these days, but there does need to be some degree of innovation, doesn't there? Alas, there is none.

The player launches from his aircraft carrier in one of the most craggy and cynical scaling missions I've witnessed and has the pleasure of flying over a strip of sea with rocks (or are they clouds, it's really a bit) scolding down at regular intervals. Then, surprise surprise, the player is assaulted from all directions from a bunch of chaotically down-and-steady intruding planes.

It's unfortunate that *Dimension Force* just happens to come along after the cut-off date, but this sort of ghastly trash just doesn't cut it any more.

FINAL FANTASY 2



Price: Super Famicom £49.99
Genre: Role Playing Game
Publisher: Square Software

The Final Fantasy series strikes on the Super Nintendo in style. In Final Fantasy II, the player is whisked off to a mythical dimension of dragons world as Cecil, commander of a giant airship battle fleet damaged by the King of Bases to recover a set of magical crystals that when Cecil refuses to do the King's dirty work any longer, he is cast out on an even more perilous mission. All this is told by an elaborate introductory sequence prior to play, and then it's up to you to journey off into the wastelands not just to undertake your mission but also to find out what sinister treachery the king seems to be up to.

Along the way you're accompanied by your pal, Kain, and more characters turn up and join your party as the quest progresses. The main game is presented in top-down screen format, with equal like characters and height, unusual scenery. The simplistic nature of the graphics tends to belie the game's sophisticated nature. It may look inferior and shallow, but in fact it's bigger and more depth than the vast majority of computer based RPGs - and it's much easier to get into and leave too.

I'd much rather play this than some stuffy, pretentious A&A product any day of the week.

For its terrific user-friendliness, depth of gameplay and sheer size and scope, Final Fantasy II gets a definite thumbs-up as one of the latest console RPGs to date—even the super-care graphics do make it a little difficult to take things seriously at times. Definitely recommended.

☆☆☆☆

JOHN MADDEN FOOTBALL

5*

Price Super Nintendo £29.99
Genre Sports Game
Publisher Electronic Arts

Whoooo! Touchdown! That's right, Madden Mania escape the UK in a crazy fit of football bonkersness! And in readiness for the arrival in a couple of months of the official UK Super Nintendo, lots of grey import dealers across the country have taken the rather appalling opportunity of stocking this version of the game that everyone is calling "John Madden Football".

And not a bad version it is too. Offering the player the chance to be both quarterback (who gets to call the plays) and every other bugger in the team in a sort of Kick-Off style fashion. That is, the player throws the ball himself and the computer then automatically switches his control to the man who is nearest and most capable of "scoring".

Alternatively, once the player has called the play, he can leave the computer-controlled players to try their best to carry out his instructions. This rarely works as well as you may expect, but is often a better option than meddling and screwing things up yourself.

As you would expect from the Electronic Arts Sports Network, there are more features than you can wave a stick at, allowing you to choose from 15 teams, decide what the weather is going to be like and decide if you want to practice, play a regular season or opt for league play.

It's not quite as slick as the Megadrive version, but still good enough to take the crown as one of the finer games available on the SNES.

☆☆☆☆

JUPITER'S MASTERDRIVE



Price Amiga, PC, ST £7.99
Genre Racing Game
Publisher Action Software

It's a rare occasion indeed that a lead game gets to appear in ACE. But for Jupiter's Masterdrive, we just had to make an exception. Ages ago when UBI soft released the title, it was warmly received by reviewers but sort of got washed away in the spite of top-down driving simulators on the market. Now, at a mere £7.99, the game stands a chance to be a budget scorcher, since there are very few decent top-downers around at the moment.

The players have to steer an assortment of vehicles (from car, formula one car, hot rods and the like) around a bunch of different tracks, each taking place on a different planet or something.

Distinguishing Masterdrive from most games of the ilk is the fact that the players can actually blow each other up by using handy road-rack mounted cannons.

Most of the courses are well-designed and provide thrilling racing, but two problems quickly emerge. The first is that in two player mode, the scale of the track contained in the tiny screen is simply too large and the player can't see where he's going. The second problem is that some tracks are utterly impossible, like the ice track which must be negotiated on frozen rail. Best in mind that many courses have pull-out bumpers which release the craft across the track, and you can see that this can become a bit of a bind.

Still you can opt to avoid this course, so it's not that bad. And the rotating compass you can have with your car is most enjoyable.

☆☆☆☆

MERCENARY III



Price Amiga £29.99
Genre Adventure
Publisher Newgame

Since the publication of the original *Mercenary* on the Commodore 64 back in 1984, the 3D wire-frame adventure game, and those that have followed it, have become cult classics. Since the original, we've had *The Second City* (essentially a disk edit of the first game), the excellent *Damocles* and now the thing is drawn to a close (probably by the cleverly-named *Mercenary III* published The Drem Craik). It's bigger, better and tougher than those that have preceded it, with the 3D-filled-voice environment that author Paul Winkler is famous more now more sophisticated and believable than ever before.

This time around, the player travels between planets in a bid to unravel a top-level political conspiracy. Interaction with characters now plays a major part in the adventuring, but recently the gameplay will be familiar to *Mercenary fans*—travel around collecting objects and using them in the right way. It's not particularly sophisticated stuff, but the realistic environment and the multitude of things to do give the impression that it is, and that's fine by me.

Of course, anybody who enjoyed the earlier *Mercenary* games won't need to be told that this is right up their street also. Unfortunately, the game's innovative way of doing things, its tricky puzzles, weird sense of humour and overall feel (for everybody's taste, so reviewers may want to check it out before taking the plunge). It's definitely worth looking out for, though, as those who have the patience and take the time to get into the game will find it thoroughly absorbing.

☆☆☆☆

MYSTICAL



Price Amiga, PC, ST £7.99
Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Action Software

Heheh, what a jolly little game this is. Originally released by Intergame, this off-the-wall shoot-'em-up never really received the recognition it deserved. Now it's out at a more pocket-friendly price, though, it should be able to reveal its delights to a much wider audience.

The player's cast as an apprentice magician who, just before taking his final exams, creatively mislaid all of

the Great Wizard's spells and magic potions. Now, to even stand a chance of earning his job back, he's got to go into the magical lands and retrieve the lot of them. What follows is a demanding but nevertheless addictive vertical shoot-'em-up with the wizard trotting up the screen collecting the lost spells and doing battle with the myriad of nasties that await him. Hardly surprising for a game of French origin, it's very bizarre indeed, with lots of completely unexpected items (parapets get hit by millimetre's) and plenty of on-the-side graphical surprises.

As the wizard progresses, the spells he collects can be used like power-ups against the evil hordes. The aim of the game is essentially to reach the magic pentagon at the end of each level, so as to be transported in a shower of pain-death to the next. Truth be told, there's really not that much to it, but it's a great laugh, especially with two players (the second joystick controls a Golden character that jumps on enemies and crashes it). It looks smart, plays just as well and comes heartily recommended to anyone with eight-jugly pound coins burning a hole in their pocket.

☆☆☆☆

NINJA GAIDEN SHADOW



Price Amiga £29.99
Genre Shoot-'em-up
Publisher Tames

Is it not another Ninja Gaiden game? To be fair, this one is better than most. Sure, it's the usual old slum-brawl, thank-you-mum martial arts action that we all know (you will) and love (sometimes), but the presentation and the graphic quality fit it a little out of the ordinary.

The story though badly translated into English explains the plot. The evil Demon Emperor Galf has plans to eradicate the whole world's population (starting with New York, would you know it). And with his mighty dark army to back him up it looks like he's going to do it, too. That is, until Ryu Hayabusa, last of the noble Dragon Clan, appears on the scene in his super sword-based justice over the wacky levels.

As well as the ability to run, jump

and slash. *Psy-Can* also monkey swing along the underside of bridges, shoot a grappling rope up in the air to climb up to lofty platforms and also unlock a special dagger's flame score weapon if he's collected the right power-up job, the game's got them as well.

Yes, as I said earlier the game scores high for originality, but it lacks superb play (there's some great parallel on level one) and plays even better. Best buy-up fans disappointed by the low quality of Double Dragon 2 would do well to look here for their thrasher's thrill instead.

☆☆☆☆

PAPERBOY 2



Price: Super Famicom / PC £29.99
Genre: Arcade Blast
Publisher: Miniclappe

Look out! He's back, with an all new sound! And, well, that's just about it actually. Paperboy mania swept the academies and homes of America when the first game appeared way back in 1986. The literary antics of the adolescent delivery boy captured the imagination of the nation, and now fans of the original can enjoy this sequel.

Well, I say sequel. Extension would perhaps be a more appropriate term. There's nothing new in this game that was missing from the original except the ability to ride in both diagonal directions, as opposed to up and left in the first. The routine is still exactly the same: the Paperboy (no pun) gets to ride a number of streets, delivering papers to the correct houses in traditional American style on the back of his BMX, avoiding all those nasty problems which anyone who has taken a Saturday job at their newspaper will be only too aware of. First things attack the Paperboy and make his job even less fun than the picture.

Graphics weren't the strong suit of the original, and they're equally square here, looking pretty and compared to most current releases. But their visual appeal isn't the point of the Paperboy games. Instead, their fast gameplay and humour kept people coming back for more. And this title just about manages to deliver an acceptable amount of both.

☆☆☆☆

ROAD BLASTERS



Price: Megaflex £24.99
Genre: Arcade Blast
Publisher: Tengen

Tengen really are the nostalgia kings. While other software are converting the latest state-of-the-art outputs to Sega's 16-biters, Tengen are quite content to release conversions of games you could probably buy in their original arcade cabinets for about the same price. Just recently we had Pacmania, now we've got Road Blasters and those are plenty more 'Mazes from the past' in the pipeline.

Road Blasters comes as a welcome relief from the mazes of scrolling shoot-'em-ups and platform games. If not why is the Megaflex so curiously lacking on the driving game department? The only other one I can think of is Super Monaco GP. As the name suggests, the player drives along a road and... um... Mazes things.

The action is definitely on the blasting. The player's car, which sits at the bottom middle of the screen, accelerates to top speed automatically and the player simply has to steer it left and right, strafing curvy road turns and roadside gun towers with his laser-mounted machine gun. Super mega whopper weapons are occasionally dropped off (literally) by a jet that swoops down and hovers over the car briefly.

Your appreciation of Road Blasters on the Megaflex will be more identical to that of the counterpart: they're identical. Personally I find the action repetitive and too mindless to be enjoyable for longer than about fifteen minutes, but there are probably many who disagree and think this is the best game ever. At least, that's what Tengen must be hoping.

☆☆☆☆

WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT?



Price: Superfamicom £24.99
Genre: Arcade Blast
Publisher: Capcom USA

Ad! Judge Doom is planning to ruin Toon Town and has already killed the mayor just to prove that he means business. Rigger must rescue Toon Town from the trouble that Doom has in store and at the same time rescue his wife Jessica from an evil kidnapping plot. And how does he go about all that? He scrolls around Toon town in a sort of graphic adventure car shoot-out, that's how!

Actually it's not that bad, and there's enough variety in the arcade sequences to make it worthwhile. The horrible wazel benches of Dr Doom chase poor Rigger around the screen and take pot shots at him, popping out of manhole covers and the most unusual places in order to do his dirty deed.

Real fans of the movie will be pleased with the representation of Rigger and the light-hearted nature of the whole thing, but real gamers may find that it's a bit lacking in the action department.

There's a reasonable amount of adventuring to do, although this really consists of simply taking an object from one place to another in order to be told to take a different object somewhere else.

The graphics throughout are amusing enough and reminiscent of the film in a rather blinky, black and white sort of way, and the whole thing adds up to just about enough fun per p. And anyway, it's nice change to see Capcom handling a canon product after their interminable run of ball-busting cartoon shoot-outs.

☆

RPM RACING



Price: Super Famicom £29.99
Genre: Racing Game
Publisher: Interplay

Offroad racing is very much the 'in' thing with driving game programmers of late, and you could well expect the latest product to cash in on the craze to be the best so far, what with it being on the Super Nintendo and all that. Unfortunately, the many faults of RPM (it stands for Radical Precho Machines, not Revs Per Minute) Racing prove beyond doubt that it doesn't matter how nice a console may be, the games on it can still be a technical and gameplay abortion.

RPM Racing is very similar in style and presentation to the Gameloft's Super RC Pro-Ace, released in January. But whereas the hand-held game was fast, smooth and controllable, RPM Racing distinctly lacks these qualities. Four cars do battle over a series of eight-way scrolling isometric perspective tracks, leaping over hills and jumps, performing hairpin turns and generally heading into each other. Much has been made of the high-resolution graphics, which look square like the Amiga's HAM mode and have allowed for some very pretty delineation and light-shading on the vehicles as they bounce about. Unfortunately, it seems the price we pay for all this technical wizardry is horribly jerky scrolling, sluggish, almost unrecognisable control and, on the whole, slow and frustrating racing.

Presentwise, RPM is sick, offering various modifications, on tracks with 14 difficulty levels and even a course designer. These, however, are all pretty pointless additions if the main thrust of the game isn't up to snuff, and so ultimately RPM Racing comes over as the sort of game you'd really like to have a lot of fun with, but just can't because it's so extraordinarily unplayable. A real shame.

☆☆

RUBICON



Price: Amiga/ST £25.99
Genre: Arcade Blast
Publisher: 21st Century Ent.

In the near future a bizarre nuclear accident in the Soviet Union has not a very timely occurring another an area just miles square with intense radiation. As a result, the wildlife in the area has been horribly transmuted into... well, horrible transmutations. And games who's job it is to go in and sort it out? Right first time!

Once again the bore of game scenarios has been well and truly occupied as an excuse for this latest blast from the editors. However, it's a pretty conventional game in the way it's presented - rather than being a constantly-moving affair, the link falls under your control has to deal with the threat on each screen before he scrolls from left to right into the next bit of terrain. So, sort of works in its

ones way. It looks a more relaxed, take-things-in-your-stride air to the action, without really making it seem boring. The shooting action is pretty frantic, particularly when extra weapons have been collected, although sometimes the central system gives the impression that success depends more on luck than judgement.

Graphically it's OK, although some of the options are pretty starkly defined, and the colour scheme is rather drab and depressing - as befits a post-nuclear landscape, I suppose. There's something about the game - or rather not that means that, although it looks like it should, it doesn't deliver that all-important playability 'kick'. It tries hard enough, with plenty of variety in the levels and action, but nevertheless it falls just short of the targets it sets for itself. Try before you buy.

☆☆☆

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG



Price **Game Gear £29.99**
Game Platform Game
 Publisher **Sega**

Well, they said it couldn't be done - but Sega had to go and prove them wrong. Sega's would-be turbo beast has made it onto the Game Gear and it's an impressive achievement. It's so impressive, in fact, that you'll think you're playing a handheld Megadrive! Okay, so I know that that's a bit of a self-statement but it really is true.

Everything you remember from the Megadrive game has been reproduced exactly the same but smaller - the absolutely colossal graphics, the two tanks, the simple yet addictive gameplay and the amazing speed are all there. The action's so fast that there are times when the Gear's idiosyncrasies makes it's near impossible to see what the Hell is going on. Driveness of both a Drive and a Game Gear will be pleased to hear that the map layout etc, as they say on TV, "All-New", so if you've beaten the Megadrive game then you'll find one challenge here.

But not much. In all respects Sonic is a classic game but one - it's just too fast. Saturated game play are likely to have this one cracked well inside a week of solid play. Still, it's definitely one of the best looking carts ever

seen on the Game Gear and as long as you don't mind the short level nature of the fun then it's well worth your coin.

☆☆☆☆

SUPER FIRE PRO-WRESTLING



Price **Super Famicom £49.99**
Game Gear £29.99
 Publisher **Herman Creative Group**

Continually hitting these shores on import at more or less the same time as the WWF ones, the latest Famicom product must surely rank as one of the silliest to date. On paper and on screen it looks and sounds great - JD's heroic ring, his multiple-character voices slugging it out, single-player and tag-team modes, loads of different moves... sounds wonderful, yes? Well it needs to be, because Super Fire Pro-Wrestling is about as playable as a stale watermelon wrapped in a wet towel.

So what's so bad about it then? Well, it's difficult to know where to start, really. The wrestlers themselves shuffle about the ring in such an unconvincing manner that they don't even look like they're walking on the canvas. They seem to float about a foot off the ground with their leg-kicking/look and look in a vaguely walk-like manner. When the two fighters meet, they grapple in an equally unrealistic fashion while the player hammers away on their buttons to try and get a hold and create a move. Theoretically there's no loss to do, but the graphics are so poorly defined and the controls so unresponsive that, bar flashes of luck, it's virtually impossible to do anything but the most basic moves. Maybe it would have been a bit easier to get to grips with if the on-screen messages had been in English, but they're not so it isn't.

Needless to say, hardened wrestling fans will draw comfort in the wild and snag this one, but a much better plan is surely to wait a while and see what changes over the next few months - there's already an official WWF game on the way which promises to be a lot better. Whatever you do, don't waste your hard-earned money on this day-top.

☆

ULTIMATE GOLF



Price **Amiga 50, PC £27.99**
Game Sports Game
 Publisher **ESR Gold**

Well, hardly. Since Gromlin's Grog Norman-looked game claimed to be the last word in golf simulations, it's been panned among many others with the likes of PGA, Tiger Golf, Links and the excellent Microsoft Golf all beating it hands-down in the realism and fun stakes.

But that's not to say that 'Ultimate Golf' is bad. For there it, and now that it's out at a more reasonable price it's not to be looked at seriously by any avid on-screen golfers who haven't already done so. As a golf game, go, it's certainly one of the most comprehensive on the market, but some sloppy presentation, and maybe a little over-enthusiasm to put in so many features, has led to it being rather unconvincingly and difficult to get to grips with.

Actually, the game's slightly deceptive about how much there really is to it. There may be all those lovely options and variables, but there are still only two courses to play on, and that's pretty poor by the standards of other games, which offer anywhere between four and six. Any golf game's longevity is determined by the number of courses available, and two just doesn't cut it. I'm afraid.

Wherever there's a good eight good's worth of golf action here for those who like their sport with a bit on the interesting side - even though anybody looking for a seriously good introduction to the game would be better pointed in the direction of PGA, Tiger or Microsoft Golf.

☆☆☆

WAYNE GRETZKY'S ICE HOCKEY 2



Price **Amiga, PC £29.99**
Game Sports Simulation
 Publisher **Ballistic**

Hey! Hey! Hey! It's Waaaaayyyyye Grrrrrrrr! Hey! With his name on the

game you know it's got to be good. Well, actually I don't know who the heck he is and I wish I didn't know much about this game. It looks no stiffer than a copper left on an ice block.

The action is fairly on simulation. (A bit of a bad move this, in my opinion, as done correctly ice hockey would make a great non-violent action game.) Before matches the player can fiddle about with his team member's stats in his head's content, training them up, boosting skill players out and recruiting college rookies in. Chances are, though, that you'll not want to because all this stats jiggery pokery is carried out on some of the dumbest menu screens I've seen this side of a spreadsheet.

The actual hockey matches are played out on top-viewed bottomally-scrolling ice rinks, where tiny unactivated groups of pixels graze about in a vain attempt to simulate the machine's high-octane sport that is ice hockey. Even with the wonderful graphics this could've been done flat, but the poor control makes it feel like you're controlling somebody else controlling the player rather than being in the box with yourself.

Drab, dull and too fat to play, this is one hockey game that should be laid as soon as possible.

☆☆

And there we have it. A

rather small number of new

releases for a whole

month, we agree, but Sega's

very much the way of

things in the spinning wheel-

stream of light and power

known as the computer

industry. One minute you

expect something to hap-

pen and the next minute,

it doesn't. Or maybe it

does. It all depends on

what you least expect at

any given time.

Still available

A320 AIRBUS



Price Amiga £29.99
Game Simulation
Publisher Thomson

You what? Alright, it's not as if we have any problems flying high in an F16 or knowing up rule regulations in a state-of-the-art simulator - but the *A320 Airbus* is somebody pulling our pilots' legs. Well, apparently not, as this is one of the biggest releases from German software house Thomson is quite a while. Rather than a computerized flight simulator, the game allows the player to be an airline pilot for a day - well, the hours long for likes, really - at the controls of the full-blown *A320* jetliner.

As anybody who knows anything about aviation at all will expect, *A320 Airbus* is no simple game. Passenger jets are impossibly more complicated than the fighter planes that have mainly been the subject of simulations in the past. Thomson's game has attempted to simulate the spaghetti-like complexity as accurately as possible - and for the most part it succeeds, although this hyper-realistic approach is unlikely to appeal to the majority of flight-sim gamers. All those knobs, dials and switches may be a bit too much for the average Joe Simmer.

A320 Airbus isn't just about flying about a bit, though. Check, oh, Players get to create their own pilots, take part in training or active duty, work out

flight plans and generally make their way up the ladder of commercial aviation. For those that find this sort of thing appealing, there's no doubt that *A320 Airbus* is actually very good indeed. It's professionally-produced, apart from the occasionally ropey graphics, and though it's not exactly immediate or interactive, the rewards are those to be had for players willing to plough the manual and learn all the ins and outs. The only problem is, I can't quite imagine who's going to be that interested, when you think about all the other, considerably more action-oriented, flight games on the market today. It's just losses for causes, I suppose.

☆☆☆☆

ACTION PACK



Price Atari ST/Amiga £14.99
Game Compilation
Publisher Action 85

Who's buggin' 'em games - Colorado, Comic Punks, Eliminator, Fast Lane, Hotshots, Inlay, Oh Slight, Racer, Sherman Ms, Tagline - for twenty-five quid! Okay, we'll be honest and admit that they're all getting a bit long in the tooth now, and more than a couple of the games on offer here are real Smeat nutmeg material (Oh Slight, in particular, should be plucked, stuffed with Parsi and buggin' in the oven for a good five hours as soon as possible).

However, *Comic Punks* is a superb ball

multitray scrolling shoot-'em-up. *Eliminator* is a 3D shoot-'em-up even driving games) and *Hotshots* is multi-part arcade adventure more than compensate, and would make a superb value compilation on their own. The other games are good to mullish in quality, but for the price you really can't complain. Highly recommended.

☆☆☆☆

AEROSTAR



Price Caramell £14.99 (import)
Game Arcade Blast
Publisher Yle Tulek

What do you get if you cross a platform game with a vertically-scrolling shoot-'em-up? A bit of a bloody mess, that's what. *Aerostar* is a semi-stage blaster where the player has to guide a spaceship along an enemy-held highway. The player can fly to avoid ground fire and hop over gaps in the road, but this makes him vulnerable to attacks from the air. And, of course, there's a plethora of juicy power-ups to be collected along the way that turn the player's craft from something only a little more threatening than a ship in the face into the starship world's equivalent of the 'King of the Beach'.

The idea of combining blasting and bounce play is theoretically good, but unfortunately in practice it doesn't work so well. The player 'jumps' by holding down one of the Game Boy buttons,

and the longer the button is held down the longer the jump. Thing is, the Game Boy's design makes it difficult to fire a the same time without taking one finger off the jump button, resulting in the ship plummeting into an abyss. And as the road on its curving, and the need for jumping becomes more frequent and the enemy's attacks become more vicious, this becomes particularly annoying.

As it stands, *Aerostar* is a nice stab at something a bit different, only marred by the slightly clumsy implementation. Worth a look, though, if you're interested by the sound of it.

☆☆☆

ALIEN BREED



Price Amiga £24.99
Game Arcade Blast
Publisher Team 17

Alien Breed can best be described as the *Alien* license that should have been. It grafts *Alien*'s atmosphere onto *Gamma-ray* gameplay to create an addictive - albeit unoriginal - winner. One or two players can take part simultaneously, and their job is to run around the six planet-sized maze-like levels of a monster-infested space station, blasting seven shades of blue out of anything that crawls, slithers or burks.

Fortunately the problem that always afflicted *Commander* (i.e. though fun, there was too much aim to playing apart from scoring points) has been averted by giving the players a task to complete on each level (normally of the 'find a location and blow it up' nature). Okay, so it's not exactly taking the game into arcade adventure territory, but it's good enough of a goal to keep the player coming back for more.

The addictive gameplay is backed up by some super-dick shooting and graphics (although the animation is a little perfunctory), and the term 'arcade-like' is very appropriate here. Throughout the use of sound to create atmosphere and tension is superb, especially when the station's self-destruct sequence is kicked in and the player has to find the exit before the place blows. The only real gripe is that given that the game is for the Amiga only, you can't help feeling that something slightly more ambitious could have been attempted. But as it stands this is the best straight-forward blast for months, and that's a good enough recommendation for anyone.

☆☆☆☆

ANNIOS



Price: Amiga £29.99

Genre: Arcade (Shoot)

Publisher: Peggipole

Humour? Defender for the goal! Well, that's the idea. The theme is it doesn't quite work.

Attains is a plain-viewed run-and-gun scrolling shoot-'em-up. The player rips around the surface of an ice-berg planet in his ship, rapping the bad guys and rescuing the trapped humans. By shooting certain pods the player can upgrade his ship with better weapons.

And that's it. It's that simple. Of course, with this sort of game you're not looking for depth - you're looking for action. And in this respect Annios does pretty well. The scrolling is smooth, scored suitably razzam, and the graphics have an attractive organic (retro) look to them.

Frankly, I didn't really feel much compulsion to work my way through the first world, let alone the tenth. Control over the ship isn't quite as 'reluctant' as it should be, and this detracts from the fun factor. Not my cup of tea, but it may well be yours. Give it a look.

☆☆☆

ANOTHER WORLD



Price: Amiga £19.99

Genre: Arcade (Adventure)

Publisher: UK Gold

Explore a mysterious new world in this peculiar polygon adventure from Delphine. Taking the role of Lester the scientist, the player is transported - as a result of an experiment gone wrong - into an alternate universe where nothing is what it seems. Fully controlled with relatively little interaction between characters, Another World is a flawed, but brave product.

Although there aren't many problems to solve and actually the screen in the game is more connected with the task than the foil, it's still a worthwhile purchase.

Overall, it's an impressive game. It's got plenty of drawbacks but on the whole, it scores a big plus. For players looking for a new angle on the arcade adventure genre and in particular one who has a stronger interest in new graphic styles than the depth or length

of their game, it fits the bill perfectly.

☆☆☆

BABY JO



Price: Amiga £7, Amiga £24.99

Genre: Platform Game

Publisher: Karlabs

Imagine Mario's first to two dimensions and you've got a good idea of what the latest import from French firm LeLecris is all about. Or if you don't know that, try imagining Mario with a nappy-wearing baby as the main character. It's all really rather ludicrous, with the wacky toddler having to eat the bonus goodies as he bounces along the landscape in order to keep it - but he mustn't eat too much, or he'll move his tummy! I mean come on! What are these French games designers on? Something pretty strong if the quality of baby-to-serviceman anything is going. Pretty designed sprites, atrocious music and hilariously jerky backdrops are all good of Baby Jo's makers, but it has to be said that it is a kind of pain in a rather perverse and definitely strange sort of way.

But if there's one thing it certainly isn't, it's fun - the slow, amusing gameplay and handily done-together design makes sure of that. It's far precisely this reason that Baby Jo should only really be on the shopping list of platform breakers desperate for a new fix - and even there there are much more playable options available.

☆☆

BARBARIAN II



Price: Amiga £29.99

Genre: Arcade (Shoot)

Publisher: Peggipole

Peggipole games have historically always been visual treats held back by some less than excellent games design. However, with Kingdoms that all changed and the company just named themselves a reputation for being able to turn out top-notch software of both high visual standard and demanding gameplay.

And for a moment it looks as if Barbarian II may be another title in the latter category. Unfortunately this is patently not the case, since once the player has got through the obligatory

loading sequence (a whole disk's worth) it becomes clear that Barbarian II is neither a state-of-the-art for the eyes, or a particularly great place to explore with a joystick.

With left-right scrolling side paths leading into and out of the screen, objects to collect, weapons to hoard and monsters to dispatch, Barbarian really doesn't offer the player anything new, and has been carried off to much better effect in both Gosh and Toward the Warrior: Shame.

☆☆

BATTLE ISLE



Price: Amiga £7, Amiga/IBM PC, £9.99

Genre: Strategy

Publisher: UK Gold

An strategy game got broader and more diverse, with the likes of Populous, Mega in Motion and Sim City, the latest from French firm UK Gold represents something quite different, which we hardly see any more these days - a wargame in the classic vein. It's set on a flat world where two armies do battle for control of a series of islands. It's regularly similar to the old 331 wargame - units move in turn across a battlefield broken down into hexagonal zones. More experienced gamers will know the sort of thing.

Due to the space-age scenario, the units involved consist of all manner of high-tech tanks, planes, ships and armoured vehicles as well as more conventional infantry battalions. Players move their units about, creating tactical formations and assaults, with the notable distinctions between opposing forces. As the battle goes on, units must be repositioned, tactics altered and all the other stuff that goes along with a game of this type.

Battle Isle's most formidable option is the two-player mode - something that's usually missing from a lot of strategy products these days. A handy split-screen display allows two mates to play head-to-head - although this does mean you can see what your opponent is up to at any time, of course.

Battle Isle is undoubtedly a fine and very 'clever' strategy game, and one that should appeal to anyone who likes the good-old-fashioned ways of doing things, without all the interesting bells and whistles. But despite the game's accessibility, many younger players on the lookout for a brain game are more likely to steer towards the likes of Populous

or Good stuff, though.

☆☆☆☆

BIRDS OF PREY



Price: Amiga £29.99

Genre: Simulation

Publisher: Electronic Arts

Well, it's been four years in the making, but at last Hawk - cope, I mean Birds of Prey - has touched down. But has it been worth the wait? Well... sort of.

Let's make no bones about it. Birds of Prey is an excellent flight simulator and, as the name suggests, there's no shortage of delightful action. On a technical level it's outstanding, and probably its most impressive aspect is the number of planes you're given the opportunity to fly - no less than 40 individual combat aircraft!

Birds of Prey is much more the thought-upon's simulation - very much in the Microsoft-Pro model - and not really the more simplistic, combat-oriented interactive type often that many of us were expecting. That said, it's not all just flying from wiggler to waypoint and falling asleep in-between. There's more than enough hand-held control to keep anybody happy. The 3D update is surprisingly slick, considering how much the program is having to juggle, but somehow it just doesn't seem like the result of four years' programming.

Ultimately, what you're left with Birds of Prey is a game that's tried to do a bit of everything and gotten off surprisingly well at the end of it. If anything it leans a little too far towards the technical side of things (providing the eventual) as an achievement in itself, but nevertheless Birds of Prey comes wholeheartedly recommended to all flight-sim fans.

☆☆☆☆

BREACH 2



Price: Amiga £19.99

Genre: Strategy

Publisher: Impresarios

Though there's nothing particularly special on offer for the hard BPP fans this month, the follow-up to the highly successful Breach is worthy of their attention. Set in the future with the player in command of a team of space

measures, it's more strategy than role-playing, but the mix of the two games is an appealing one. Probably the best comparison is with that old favorite *Assassin's Creed* - though a heavier, boasts a considerably more sophisticated approach, with a more cinematic viewpoint, much easier command control and more involving missions.

In each mission scenario, the player leads his team through enemy territory, exploring rooms, collecting objects and engaging battle with the alien forces they encounter. In the classic RPG tradition, characters can be leveled up with a huge array of weapons and equipment, including rifles, rocket launchers and bombs, and all the characters come complete with individual attributes and abilities.

An added bonus is that, should the player get bored with the multitude of missions available, they can create and sell their own. How many games will want to expand this amount of effort (designing a playable mission on any kind of game is no easy task) remains to be seen, however, and you may want to ask yourself if you're even likely to make use of the feature, but there are enough prodigious missions to make *Breach* a worthwhile even without the editor, and so that score the game should at least be on the 'take a look' list for all RPG/strategy aficionados, if not a definite purchase.

□ □ □

BUGS BUNNY CRAZY CASTLE 2



Price Gameboy (£4.99 Import)
Genre Puzzle
Publisher Namco-Bandai

Who the Hell is Honey Bunny?? I must be getting old, because I don't remember Bugs?? even having a sappy girlfriend. It sounds to me like a lame excuse to rehash the old 'girl kidnapped by witch who must be rescued by hero' scenario to me. In this case it's the hideously ugly Witch Hazel?? who's the wrong door (now for I do remember, and who has watched Honey?? pass by her castle. Bugs?? must see her by haunting through all huge rooms of platforms, pipes, ladders and Looney Tunes?? characters. Bugs?? must find the hidden key to each to unlock the door to the next room. By picking up barrels, nuts and so on Bugs?? can blow up those darn 'Toons, back in way through the bad passages,

etc., etc. - Although it looks like a platform game, *Crazy Castle 2??* actually plays more like a puzzle game. Success is down to using the items you pick up along the way to get past certain obstacles on the screen place and time. And this part of the game is quite fun.

It's the platform element that makes the game - Bugs?? moves in big chunks and is hard to control, and all too infrequently often you lose a life by bumping into the hidden to accident. Despite it's great graphics, in my opinion *Crazy Castle 2??* is a right stinking load of old crap??

□ □ □

CAPTAIN PLANET



Price Atari ST, Amiga £28.99
Genre Arcade Action
Publisher Mindscape

Pass the ketchup, man. Thanks. Yeah, like I was telling you there's like this guy, right, and he's like this sort of super-hero, you know. Goes around saving the world from these evil heavy-breasted polluters. Yeah, like you say. Here's this man, saying he's got these five powers, and they're like just look, you know, but they're got this special ring that give them these cosmic powers. Totally amazing. Each level of the game like centers around one of these six characters, and they're just for me.

I mean like the first character, Matt, uses his ring to like skull out the bad guys and regrow plants so she can climb up to the level out. Yeah, and like when she gets out there's this helicopter she has to fly around in and scoop up contaminated objects and take them to a sanctuary. Yeah, exactly. It's like this amazing sort of platform game and shoot 'em up. Man, man, yeah, the graphics are total wack, the scrolling's fine, and the tunes are insane, but control over your little spinny guy's a bit tricky. Yeah, Tricky Dicky, Watergate. All the President's Men, that you get used to it and all on all it's quite a fun-out experience, if not the slickest thing like you've ever seen. Lots of really pretty psychedelic colours, too.

□ □ □ □

CASTLEVANIA IV



Price Super Nintendo (£19.99 Import)
Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Konami

I couldn't believe it when I loaded this up! Imagine it's Christmas (got that difficult reality. You're really looking forward to getting a certain present, and you've laid the ground with lots of heavy hints to your parents. Then, on Christmas morning you get a wrapped gift that looks the same size and shape as the thing you want. Trouble is, when you open it up there's something totally different inside. Oh, it's a nice enough present all right, just not the one you wanted. Well, that's *Castlevania IV*. It was game on the NES, brilliant on the Gameboy and, along with CapCom's *Super Ghosts n' Ghouls*, was one on the big anticipated releases on the Super Nintendo.

To be fair, *Castlevania's* a decent enough game - there's lots of running around platforms, ladders and what have you, lots of whopping the bad guys with a giant cross. Unfortunately, what there isn't lots of is fun. The graphics are garish, and the animation is merely functional, with the boss-bating a rather unfortunate shuffling walk that makes them look as if he's got sag and to his first and he's trying to pull the floor. If this had appeared before SGA/C then it might have received a better reception. As it happens, it didn't, so I haven't.

□ □ □

CELTIC LEGENDS



Price Atari ST, Amiga £24.99
Genre Role-Playing Game
Publisher Life Soft

It's amazing how you can tell, 99% of the time, what an RPG game is going to be by simply like just by knowing what part of the world it's coming from. For example, anything that comes from California is likely to be all complex and involved, while anything from, say France or Germany, will still having all the traditional FRP elements, always tends to present things in a much more simplistic and snappy manner. As is the case here, with this little Gallic number which is very much in the same vein as Thalion's *Dragonflight* and countless other Euro RPGs.

It's actually a fine little game, based around all the old RPG cliches, but handling them with traditional French style and aplomb. It's all set in the myth-

ical world of Celtica, where the misuse of magic by an evil sorcerer has wrenched the kingdom in twain.

What follows is a mix of strategy and conventional RPG elements presented from a number of viewpoints - on the battlefield, high above the world itself and so on, depending upon the mode.

Though in gameplay terms it offers nothing that seasoned fans of the genre will find particularly worth dithering, it's different enough in terms of presentation and style to make it well worth investigating - especially for novice gamers who may be looking for an accessible and appealing introduction to the genre.

□ □ □ □

CENTURION - DEFENDER OF ROME



Price Megadrive (£24.99)
Genre Action Strategy
Publisher Electronic Arts

Can we as aspiring Centurions, it's the player's duty to both defend the home land and expand for Roman Empire as far as possible. This single material aim is somewhat foisted at first by the fact that the player starts with just a single legion of soldiers and a city of citizens to keep under control.

The game is a well-judged blend of icon-driven strategy and arcade-style interludes. For example, to keep the industrial processes happy, the player can take part in chaotic wars and keep their light. As the game progresses the armies under your command grow and ships placed at your disposal to take orders to neighbouring shores become bigger and better. If the player's back to sea can even have a crack at subduing the voluptuous Cleopatra. Poor old Megadrive owners in particular are starved of this type of game, and you're looking for something to exercise your brain a little, you could do far worse than this.

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CHOPLIFTER 2



Price Gameboy £28.99
Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Nintendo
Choplifter first appeared in 1985 via

level-based and is still heavily enhanced today. The player's mission as super-cool helicopter pilot is to rescue survivors from a horizontally scrolling scenario. To do this the player must land near the working refugees and wait for them to board. This can be quite harrowing at times as you're a proverbial sitting duck for all the enemy gun installations and machine-gunning planes which constantly fly atop.

The player's copter is equipped with a rapid-firing cannon and a limited number of bombs with which to protect himself. And that's really all there is to it - however, like *Dynasty*, *Classified* is one of those games that, once played, is never forgotten. Fast action, challenging game tests and a password system help make this one of the best games out on the GameBoy and a must for any action fan collection.

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CISCO HEAT



Price Amiga £25.99
Genre Arcade Shoot
Publisher Image Works

In the light of a whole bunch of driving games, some of which have been nothing short of excellent, (Laser 2, Grand Prix Image Works) launch of this rather different title couldn't have come at a worse time.

Not only will the commander have had his fill of driving in general, but he will also be fully aware that it's possible to produce action games a thousand times better than this.

The aim is to run a souped up police car through the busy streets of San Francisco, avoiding taxi-cabs, trucks and skyscrapers in an attempt to emerge as the top-top driver in the city.

Quite aside from the CD routines which make *Three Gates* look paltry and even more astoundingly dull courses, *Cisco Heat* stalls at virtually every corner. The race themselves are pathetic and frustrating, the crowd graphics are basically a single graphic (black duplicated) fill the space, the police car crashes into skyscrapers only a fraction larger than itself, and the corner turning routine, however brave the attempt, is a catastrophe.

Mind you, the sound of the car's horn is quite good.

□

CIVILIZATION



Price IBM PC £34.95
Genre Strategy
Publisher MindaPress

American games design guru Sid Meier, fresh from his success with the brilliant *Galactic Empire*, has surpassed himself with this latest effort, which can truly be said to lengthen the mind in terms of depth, scale and scope. Adopting the same functional top-down perspective format of *Empire*, the game changes the player with the task of building a civilization, from a bunch of primitive tribes in an unexplored, uncolonized world, to a global super power of space travel, nuclear power and the other trappings 20th Century life.

The range of factors and elements that play a part in the game is quite simply immense, as the player's people advance and expand, founding cities, settling all across the water, making technological discoveries and building armed forces - all while computer-controlled rival empires do the same. Along the way the player must set taxes, maintain civil order, negotiate with other nations, care for the environment and take part in various arms and space races.

Civilization is undoubtedly the most involved strategy game ever conceived, and as such many less committed or more games are likely to be outplayed by the game's sheer-like intricacies. For those willing to invest the time and effort, however, *Civilization* pays off like an addict. Wonderful.

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CONAN THE CIMMERIAN



Price IBM PC £25.95
Genre Role Playing Game
Publisher Virgin Games

The problem with *Conan* is that he doesn't really know whether he wants to be a serious game or a funny game. The opening sequence is a mixture of pretentious comedy and involved seriousness, accompanied by some of the most awful music I've ever heard. (While some people may argue it's fashionably disastrous, I reckon it sounds like the wailings of a Fibber Price 'by Five Guitars' being played in the bath.)

Anyway, the various rubrics of semi-plan view exploration and side-on back-

ing views inasmuch with *Conan* looking every inch the super hero is supposed to be. And there's plenty to explore.

From the adventuring side is pretty good, and *Conan* can interact (albeit on a pretty basic level) with every character he encounters.

So if you feel that there is space on your shelf for yet another average genre game, and can live with the atmosphere-crushing laughs, it may be worth a look.

□□□□

CRUISE FOR A CORPSE



Price Amiga £24.99
Genre Adventure
Publisher Delphine, US Gold

The plot for *Cruise for a Corpse* is firmly rooted in the Agatha Christie 'isolated location, plenty of suspects' crime story tradition, detailing how the player is invited to a Cook's house's yacht for a well-earned holiday only to get there and find his host bumped off by an unknown murderer. Before you can say 'Inspector Wankford' the player is forced to don penny mysticisms and subtle subterfuges to solve the heinous crime.

After a bit of pre-release interest from the press, there were high hopes for *Cruise for a Corpse*, but the excellent game everyone seemed to think it's 'he' 'Well, yes... and no. In the graphics and sound department it's exemplar, with large, fluidly animated sprites moving over exquisitely detailed backgrounds and plenty of audible tones and samples playing away in the background, all combining to generate an excellent sense of mood and atmosphere.

The player directs his on-screen character (Hazel) via the mouse. By clicking the mouse pointer on objects of interest, a menu appears listing the various things the player can do with the selected item (i.e. 'Open' or 'Useless' but here, Movement around the yacht is effected by walking Round from location to location by clicking on exits to the current location, such as doors or hallways, or more quickly by calling up the yacht map and 'walking' Round immediately from place to place. As a user interface it's difficult to think of anything as intuitive and easy to use.

The major problem with *Cruise for a Corpse* is its pace. The animations, though excellent, is slow, examining the contents of a room can become quite painful, as Round clearly turns, walks, turns, breaks down, examines the item only for a message to appear stating that "There is nothing of interest here". Equally annoying is the frequent though inevitable occurring and skipping of five (count 'em) game disks. All too often the player's enthusiasm for the hunting can be severely dampened by the reduction of the game's speed to near snail's pace. Less important, some of the generally excellent French-English translation is a bit dubious in places, such as the Cabin Boy who is described as "dynamic".

Those comments apart, together with the patience to sit through the occasional dullness will find *Cruise for a Corpse* a superb buy, laced with quality presentation and atmosphere and presenting a big-enough game task is safely over the greatest deals.

□□□□□

DEATHBRINGER



Price Atari ST £25.99
Genre Beat-'Em-Up
Publisher Empire

There's this word, right. There will surely have magically given it the ability to absorb the souls of anyone it slips. There intention is to use it to get rid of their good-goddy though thick-thick massive Karn, a barbarian so stupid he can't even spell his own name right. However, look isn't on the menu's side, and the sword finds its way into Karn's calloused hands. Hardly holding his hilt, Karn sets out to get the sword back to the islands in style. Usually it's all a third-willed excuse for a sideways scrolling Mindset of hacking and slaying, with Karn plowing through more and more of bizarre monsters.

Deathbringer boasts some of the most impressive parallax-scrolling backgrounds yet seen, even if they are somewhat lacking in colour. The sprites are well-drawn with a nice line in human, but they're rather garish in a monochromatic sort of way, that despite its good graphics and adequate sound, *Deathbringer's* real problem is that it's basically a bit dull. The combat moves are limited in range and slow to implement and just wandering along, and

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levelly plugging away at the battles, is not all that interesting. And the persistent backdrops in the whole World can't make up for that. *Rebels: II* this ain't. ☆☆☆

DEVIL CRASH



Price: Megalith \$29.99 (Europe)
Genre: Arcade Blast
Publisher: Tynes Soft

Computerized pinball has never been a particularly popular genre - and a quick glance at *Devil Crash* is enough to make you see why. Ever since the age-old days of *Shantini* and *Time Scanner*, coin-ups and home machines have tried to emulate that wacky tilt-a-stone pinball feel, but with little success. In theory, it should work marvelously, with the linear format allowing for all sorts of tricks and wizardry that wouldn't be possible on a real machine. Unfortunately, no amount of gimmicks can make up for the fact that pinball is a computer score just doesn't compare to the exhilaration of a real tilt.

To be credit, *Devil Crash* actually does a better job than most, with credible ball inertia and plenty of interesting features - the table is some three screens long and packed with all manner of secret scores, bonuses and other bits. Unfortunately the gaudy nature of the graphics (pentagons and mystic runes aplenty) lend a rather depressing and moody feel to the game itself, and as a result it's difficult to really enjoy. *Devil Crash* is the aesthetic equivalent of a bad headache. Whatever its shortcomings, however, computer pinball has acquired a respectable cult following for itself, and gamers of that persuasion will no doubt find *Devil Crash* to be one of the more impressive examples of the genre. For the rest of us, however, there are more enjoyable - and less frustrating - bits of pinball on the market. ☆☆☆

DEVIUS DESIGNS



Price: Amiga \$29.99
Genre: Puzzle
Publisher: Image Works
However, not so much device as sim-

ply fiddly. Ever since the world went Tavis mad, there's been a steady trickle of arcade puzzles trying to up-into that elusive position (perhaps that's what *Alamy Pictorial's* classic such a maddening money spinner. *Devious Designs* had more potential than most, but it hasn't quite been realized.

The basic idea is simple enough. The player guides a tiny figure around various landscapes, picking up variously-shaped blocks and trying to slot them into a transparent template, while collecting bonuses, a crystal of power-ups and avoiding or shooting the waiting bad guys. All well and good. Ah, but there's more to it than that. On the later levels, the player can make his characters walk up the walls and even on the ceiling. And this is where it all starts to fall apart.

Control over the player's character is generally fine, but when near a wall it's all too easy to find yourself clambering up when you didn't want to and not clambering up when you did. Admittedly, given a fair deal of practice the player should be able to compensate for this foible, but by the shoot-time it's more an otherwise enjoyable and reasonably addictive addition to the genre. ☆☆☆

DOUBLE DRAGON 3



Price: Amiga \$29.99
Genre: Beat-'em-Up
Publisher: Square

Double Dragon fans have been more than short-changed in the last few years by the conversion of the previous two *Double Dragon* coin ops, so it comes as some relief to be able to say that this - the third installment of the on-going fair-cuff saga of Jimmy and Billy Lee - is, despite a couple of misnomers, pretty much what devotees have been waiting for.

The plot is confused to say the least. According to who you listen to, it's either the usual girl rescue mission, or a quest for treasure, or a fight against the 'Ultimate Evil'. No matter - the mechanics remain the same. Jimmy and Billy Lee (i.e., players one and two) have to jump and crump their way through fourteen levels of action set in the exotic locations (and as the game progresses you'll discover 'basic' is an understatement).

Players start the game with fifteen 'coins', and in the days (and on some

the player can buy extra lives, weapons, power-ups and even some fancy new fighting moves. It's a shame you can't just find weapons along the way, but this coin business does at least add a game-enhancing strategic element, because the player has to decide how best to spend his cash.

While some may find the gameplay dated and repetitive (a complaint, to be fair, that could be made about most games of this type), these experienced fans of the genre should be reeling in one of the more exciting and certainly the slickest slices of beat-'em-up action around. And, for its money, it's far better than *Final Fight*. ☆☆☆

E.A. HOCKEY



Price: Megalith \$24.99
Genre: Sports Arcade
Publisher: Electronic Arts

Like *Kid Off* with lightning in, *Electronic Arts' Hockey* will appeal to everyone. A section of teams from around the globe, each with their own abilities and weaknesses battle it out in the ice-bank of World League.

Following on from their success with *John Wooden's Football*, EA pull yet another winner out of the bag with this, perhaps their most famous title to date.

Having selected the length of game, whether the player wishes to compete in a one-off match or a knock-out, selected his team and that of the enemy, it's game on! Skating around the rink is simple enough, and control over the puck is surprisingly instinctive. Since the rink is so small and the players can move so swiftly and violently against each other, for *Hockey* is an extremely rapid, high scoring game. Usually, whenever you're stuck from the face-off is more likely to score. Well, of course, the player gets the hang of the wide variety of tackling moves available to him, from a good hook going for the puck normally to a full body check.

While an opposition player on a less regular basis, though, and you'd better be ready to put your fat where his mouth is, as one of the features included is howling. While the rest of your team are trying to do some good, it's possible to cling away at that guy who skated over your shoes for as long as

you like! A graphic and gameplay marvel. E.A. *Hockey* is wholeheartedly recommended to one and all. Hokey! ☆☆☆☆

ELF



Price: Amiga \$25.95
Genre: Arcade Adventure
Publisher: Ocean

As Caroline for *EE*, it's the player's task to create his own hero (like from the game-called clutches of *Neoborn* the Not Very Hero). The game takes place over six Tolkien-esque levels filled with platforms, pitfalls, ladders and bridges. Caroline magic power allows him to protect himself from Neoborn rampant hordes of 'homo-hominans' by firing bolts of magic energy. Numerous interest-sustaining spells and power-ups can be bought from the Olden locale (though using cash picked up along the way).

Each massive maze-like level presents its own unique set of problems to solve and tasks to achieve, requiring that the player constantly evolve new strategies to deal with them. All in all it's a polished high-quality romp, perfect for platform or arcade adventure fans. ☆☆☆☆

EPIC



Price: Amiga \$29.99
Genre: Arcade Blast
Publisher: Ocean

Boy, has this one been a long time in the making. I can remember magazine readers tirelessly petitioning this about a year and a half ago (and I think ACE was one of them). It's strange that it should finally appear around the same time as EA's *Birds of Prey* (see this month's Review Directory), another game thought long-lost in the Bermuda Triangle that is known as software development.

Anyway, it's been some what it is like. Well, to be frank, it's a tiny bit disappointing. The last remnants of the format race are all bundled up in a fleet of space ships, fleeing through space to escape the man which is just about to go nova. The only escape routes through the heart of the hostile

TNT

Empire of the Aztecs, a vicious Mexican race of aliens. As pilot of Earth's Top Ten secret starfighters, it's up to the player to see the fleet to safety.

This plot frames the framework for the game's eight missions, some of which take place on the surfaces of various planets. Although depicted in super-smooth solid-polygon (SP) room-to-Digital 3-D/way Image Design, the emphasis is firmly on "shoot 'em up" rather than operations simulation.

Depending on how the player performs in the various missions, the plot varies accordingly, but it's very limited and never really deviates from the linear path. Epic is all very exciting—the sheer scale of some of the space battles is stunning—and control over the ship is superb, but you can't help wishing there was a little more to the game than just blowing everything up. A touch more depth and this would have been a classic. Still, if you're looking for a high-class, no-compromise 3-D Master then Epic's your game. Personally, I'm holding out for Epic 2. □ □ □ □

EYE OF THE BEHOLDER 2



Price: IBM PC £24.95

Genre: Role-Playing Game

Publisher: SQA/US Gold

The first Eye of the Beholder, along with its inspiration Dungeon Master, can largely be thanked for fielding responsible, depending on your view of this genre, for bringing RPGs (role-playing and tagging out of the darkened bedrooms of the ancient- and glimmering social ritual) and into the bright daylight of critical acclaim and public acceptance.

This style of RPG has been forever the notion that these games should only consist of functional graphics and menus of statistics, depicting the action in detailed 2D graphics, with all the numbers cranking handled by the computer rather than the player.

Beholder 2 continues the tradition of the first, being good to look at, easy to use and—most importantly—fun and exciting to play. To be honest, the real improvements over the first game are few and subtle, and it's still a shame that the various beauties don't have a few more animation frames lavished on their attack animations, but that

wasn't put off the fans here is because their adventures in the land of Dundermon, so should it deter newcomers from making their first trip. Highly recommended.

□ □ □ □ □

F-15 STRIKE EAGLE II



Price: Atari ST/Amiga, IBM PC £25.95

Genre: Simulation

Publisher: MicroPress

MicroPress made a departure from their usual rigorously-accurate view with this action-oriented affair. It's the flight sim equivalent of the laser and John looks, it's nice 'n' simple with no complications. Pilgers have to select areas to chase between, each with various missions to select. These missions are usually all simple 'get in, destroy a couple of targets and get out alive' jobs, with the player have to simultaneously defend against swarms of enemy jets. Control is via keyboard, joystick or mouse and is highly responsive in each case.

The screen update is fast enough but there are quicker 3D routines about—it's more than adequate for the job in hand, however. Sound is disappointing, with a white-noise-like thing being the player's only audio companion for most of the journey. In the gameplay department this is a winner, with plenty of white-knuckle action to get the adrenaline pumping. Veterans may blame the game's lack of depth, but anyone else should find this just their cup of tea, with a yummy Jimmy Dodge in the mixer to boot.

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F-22 INTERCEPTOR

Price: Magazine £29.95

Genre: Simulation

Publisher: Electronic Arts



The first "real" flight simulation to arrive on tape's 15-bit baby is, as many might expect, a whole lot more simplistic than comparable products on computer. The drill is pretty much cut-and-run yourself into the cockpit of your prototype fighter and kick some butt over a series of increasingly-dangerous missions.

Because console controls are far more limited than those available on com-

MONKEY ISLAND 2

As you probably know by now, this will be the last. If you will, 'bit' of dear old AGI. Magazine. This rather terrestrial last was not known at the time TNT was printed where, as some may remember, it was that Part 1 of Monkey Island's rips will be printed next month. Obviously, that isn't going to happen. So, never one to leave its loyal readers in the lurch, here's the final part of the complete solution...

PART 3: LeCHUCK'S FORTRESS

Once at LeChuck's fortress, walk along the path to the right and keep walking right (then the tunnel, NOT the back tunnel) until you get to the dungeons. Talk to Wally then go to all five signs, look at the sign-restricted pages and write down the lyrics of each verse. Now enter the back tunnel (use the right side and look at the first verse) (Mike said, though others may differ, area connected to head, head to rib and rib to leg.)

If you look at the first three parts in order they are: verse, head, rib. Find a statue that matches that description, (i.e. arm on top, head in the middle, rib on the bottom). Push it and walk to it. Do the same for the next three verses.

Eventually you should end up at a huge door. Open it and walk thru. Get the key, afterwards you will be captured and tortured. Now use the stone on the green drink. Spit at everything in the room over (repeatedly). By now the spit should've extinguished the flares. (For a laugh (or wait and don't do anything) Now light a match...

PART 4: DIRTY ISLAND

Look at the sign, go to the still, pick up the martini glass and use the glass on the still. Look at the barrel and get the cracker. Talk to Herman but don't bother answering his questions. Give the cracker to the parrot (he'll give you the first cracker). Take the food from the crates. Take the cracker that's near the barrel and crates. Now enter the jungle.

Find the pond and pick up the rope (it's around the boat). Open the box then take the dynamite. Find the tree with the big hanging branch. Use the branch on the tree and use the monkey-banana log to set the trap. Pick up the cracker, eat it and use the glass containing the distilled water on the mix. Go to where the parrot said to go, i.e. head east from the

pond (use the glass for fuel) then give him a cracker and follow the first direction. Now give him the last cracker and follow his directions and you will be in the X.

Use the shovel on the X. Now use the dynamite on the hole. Use the crowbar on the rope. Use the rope on the twisted metal at the top of the hole. Now Governor Mergle will arrive, but the rope will snap. Once you've hit the ground find the lightswitch (it's just to the right of the very middle of the screen). Use the switch (GOOD). LeChuck will appear and try to smash you with a wooden doll. When you appear LeChuck will try again. What he does doing is so frequently go to the microwave and get a bottle of root beer, a Kewpie-doll and a balloon.

Walk up to the first 4rd room, take the key, head. Open the water-gang bucket and take the springs. Then open the drawer and take the gloves. Find the room with the gog machine and use the balloons and gloves on the helium tank. Then use the coin-return slot on the gog machine. Now wait, and when LeChuck comes into the room he'll level over his neck up the penny. Quickly pick up LeChuck. This will cause Geylcrumb to take his underwear.

Make your way to the elevator and press the Call button. Go into the elevator and use it a couple of times. Eventually LeChuck should appear in the lower level. When the doors open he'll try to use the doll on you, just use the lever and his head will get caught in the closing doors. When the doors open again, get the board. After having explored the unfamiliar sublevel, go back down to the lower level and look for LeChuck. When you find him you must be very quick. Give him the clean white bottle that Max gave you. He'll use it, give it back to you and zap you.

When you appear try to use dad's skull, the barrel, the doll, the underwear and the board across in the lava bog. Now you will have a wooden doll (pushing with power). Feed LeChuck it and use the hydrodynamic needle on the doll. LeChuck will leave, so follow him and use it again. Use all the selection gloves (for fun). If you slip off the doll's leg then you win. Now get ready for a weird ending...

THE END

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puter (no keyboard you see). But when it offers all the technical bits and bobs lumped in your average Microsoft product. What it does do, however, is play surprisingly like a "real" simulator, given the limitations of the controls. When playing from one of the outside views, it may look like just another version of Afterburner, but it really does play properly, with cameras and controls targeting all working realistically.

Considering it's a console game, *F-12 Interceptor* is a pretty remarkable achievement, and EA deserves to be congratulated for making the effort to produce something a lot more taxing both for the player and the machine than just another two-player shoot-'em-up. If you're used to what computerized flight simulators can do, it's unlikely you'll be impressed by what *F-12 Interceptor* has to offer. If you're not, however, and you're a bit fed up with the standard integrative arcade design, you could well be onto a winner here.

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FACE OFF



Price Atari ST/Amiga £29.99
Genre Sport/Action
Publisher Milestone

There aren't that many Ice Hockey games available on the Amiga. In fact, there aren't any. So *Face Off* is something of a welcome addition to the canon of sports games. Worth getting? Well, yes and no. Like *Manpower United* (also a very polished game, with some super slick moves and option screens), there's a league to participate in, where the player can do anything from train the players to replace the manager. And like *WCE*, the player can turn off the arcade game and concentrate on the managerial side of things if they're that way inclined, or alternatively just play the arcade game alone.

The arcade side of things is okay, although none may wish the action had been a touch more zip. Certainly compared to EA's *Hockey* it's distinctly sluggish. Control is simple and easy to pick up - shoot, pass or thump via the joystick - and the sport is fun, especially when things get a little physical and the fans start firing. As standard on most sports games these days there's a replay function so that that blizzar-

ing goal can be replayed again and again. Overall, *Face Off* is a rounded package, though unlikely to exactly grab the public's imagination. Some of the sport will enjoy it, but just how many of them are there in the UK?

FATAL REWIND



Price MegaDrive £34.99
Genre Arcade/Action

Publisher Progression/Electronic Arts
Progression dropped nobody with its first foray onto the 16-bit console, maintaining the same high quality of graphics and sound that's made it the legend it is in the Amiga market. And thankfully it is in the Amiga market, and that's why it is that the game play is back up the visuals. But if *The Killing Game Show* had to be renamed for its transition from the Amiga to the MegaDrive, couldn't they have come up with something a little better than *Fatal Rewind*? Apart from the fact that it doesn't actually move much, it's a fairly obvious attempt to sound like *Fatal Runoff*, a film which bears no resemblance to this game at all.

The player is put in charge of a mechanical walker reminiscent of the ED-209 in *Robocop*. An agile little thing, it can run left and right, jump, fire and even climb up the sides of walls. Things they can do nowadays, huh? The player has to negotiate a network of platforms in the hunt for the exit to the next level. Always fly on from all sides, avoiding and swinging about the screen with the sole intent of getting the player into the next. And just to give the player a touch more incentive to escape the platforms are also - sticking into a deadly red sea. The need to find keys to certain areas adds a small amount of depth to the game, but these arcade adventure elements never amount what is basically a very clunky and additive shoot-'em-up.

FIGHTER COMMAND



Price Amiga £19.99
Genre Strategy

Publisher Impressions
It may be a little late to call in an Operation Desert Storm, but there can be no doubting *Fighter Command*'s

timidity. Set in the present-day Middle East, it puts the player in the shiny shoes of an allied air commander who's boss gives a simple task - but the stuff- ing out of the aggressive enemy as quickly and violently as possible. But despite the pretty picture of a jet plane coming into land on the job, there's not really any flight-sim-type action in the game at all. It's sort of pure strategy, with the player making all his decisions from a series of control rooms, screens and offices. Everything is presented by simplistic on-board camera views, tactical screens and radar displays.

Everything you'd expect from a military strategy game is in there - you sweep the area with reconnaissance satellites to find out where everything is, then aggressive and launch attacks against those targets. There's a wide range of air available, including stealth bombers, fighters and helicopters from various air forces along with escort, patrol and aerial refuelers. As the game progresses, the player has to keep tabs on political developments, fuel and equipment resources and all kinds of other factors which govern the game world.

Actually, considering there's really anything really exciting going on on-screen, *Fighter Command* does quite a good job of holding the player's attention. Most of the screens are static, nothing's really very immediate and it takes time to learn the basics, but despite all this it's still strangely compelling. There's plenty to do, lots of things to get the head round and generally it's of very high quality. The lack of aerial flight action is a major setback, and it's because of this that many gamers may prefer to wait for Microprose's forthcoming *ATAC*. In *The Warlord* this month.

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FINAL BLOW



Price Amiga £19.99
Genre Arcade/Beat
Publisher Storm

I actually went to a boxing match a couple of months back and people in the crowd were genuinely shouting "nice hit!" as if it was some sort of useful tactic which their chosen fighter should employ. One suspects there are exactly the sort of folks who spend more than a couple of quid on *Final Blow* in the arcade. Nothing wrong with the

celebration of the value of, and nothing wrong with having a right old clapping session in the process, but *Final Blow* has more to do with seeing who can hit first the fastest than boxing.

Although the players are endowed with plenty of moves and the ability to block punches, the speed of the game completely removes any sort of finesse which, after all, is what boxing is all about. Even Mike Tyson would concentrate on different areas of the body. Hit them in the ribs enough to make them lower their guard, and then go to work on their face. So much accuracy in *Final Blow*, since the theory of computerized and human arms makes it impossible to see who's arms are who's. The result is a non-stop battle of stick-clattering frustration. About the only way to work out who's being hit is by watching the energy bar at the bottom of the screen.

So far as a coin-op conversion goes, it's a pretty good job, and in two-player mode it's alright for a laugh, but the original was far from perfect. Amiga versions may be wise to hold on for a more rounded game.

□ □ □

FINAL FIGHT



Price Amiga £29.99
Genre Beat-'Em-Up
Publisher US Gold

Yet another in US Gold's seemingly endless string of CityCops conversions. In *Metro City* (previously based on *New York*) all is not well. Crime is rife and to make a bad situation worse the Mayor's right-hand daughter has been kidnapped by - you guessed it - Big Big. (This old bit big certainly gets around, doesn't he?) The player and optional partner have to fist-fight their way through the city's wastelands to rescue her. Why? Why not?

Final Fight is something of a first for beat-'em-ups on the home computer, in it's actually quite good. The sprites are large and clearly animated, the background scroll is smooth and the action is fast. Somehow of the detecting whether a punch connects or not is a little dodgy, but apart from that this can be recommended unreservedly to anyone who fancies a little aggression without leaving their kitchen.

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FIRST SAMURAI



Price **Amiga £29.99**
Genre **Arcade Blast**
Publisher **Image Works**

This is the way that arcade adventures should be made! Incredibly fun producing a game with the varied puzzle of Schwarzenegger and some puzzle-solving too. Image Works have come up with a winning formula.

The player must avenge the foul murder of his Ninja Master by chasing the evil Demon King through 14th-Century Japan.

On top of all the regular hacking and slashing that you would expect to find in an arcade adventure, there are special items, which can be used a little like playing a job in it's A Knight's Tale and can summon the spirit of your master dead Mage-master to help you through some of the more tricky situations.

While it could be said that the last thing the world needs is another martial arts game or another collect-the-objective adventure, First Samurai carefully sidesteps the argument by blending both styles in an effective and appealing way, keeping both hardcore gamers and those with more cerebral intentions happy.

☆☆☆☆☆

FLICKY



Price **Magazine £24.99**
Genre **Platform**
Publisher **Bugs**

"Don't be put off by the screenshots on the back of the box" is probably the best bit of advice I can give about Flicky. It looks awful - tiny primary-colour sprites and garish backgrounds. And to be honest, things don't improve much in the game itself. However, like Quaxximus, an ugly appearance conceals the goodness inside.

The player controls the tiny bird of the title. The little darling's chicks have gone and got themselves lost in the course of a giant cat-in-hat-hunt. Flicky has to run and jump-about, collect her scattered brood and take them to the safety of the hat, while avoiding the prowling feline. Flicky is a wonderfully playable game, very simple but packed with fun. Some may dispute whether there's *any* work of

fun, but for those with the cash it's a good purchase.
☆☆☆☆

FLOOR 13



Price **IBM PC £24.99**
Genre **Strategy**
Publisher **Vigle Games**

The myth that strategy games are boring has been well and truly exploded by a game that's likely to convert even confirmed trigger-addicts to a more stable and intelligent software diet. Floor 13 offers a new slant on the strategy genre by having itself around a compelling scenario and offering gameplay that goes beyond the regular strategy framework.

Set in post-war Britain, it tells of a government-run secret police force that must over-see, scrub, wipe out subversive elements and generally protect the government from embarrassing incidents so that it doesn't fall from grace. As Director General of this corrupt agency, the player is solely responsible for its operations.

The game is played almost entirely from a single static screen of an office desk, onto which intelligence reports and newspaper stories arrive from the outside world and form the basis of the information which the player works from as plots and storylines unfold. Various sub-departments, such as surveillance, interrogation and disinformation are the instruments of the player's will, with steady agents taking suspects, tapping phones, searching premises and even torturing and killing people to achieve the government's immoral aims.

The way in which the game reveals information on both sides and real-time hints mean that good detective work and thorough cross-checking of intelligence data is as important as the conventional strategic skills which are also required. It's all thoughtfully described, very realistic stuff, and comes highly recommended, even to those who can't normally stand strategy games.
☆☆☆☆

FOOTBALL DIRECTOR II



Price **Amib £7, Amiga £24.99**
Genre **Strategy**

Publisher D&M Games

Yaaaaaaa. Don't get me wrong, I've got nothing against football - there's just something implicitly boring about management games of this type. *Player Manager* is the exception to the rule, firstly because it's so excellent and secondly because you go to play *Kick Off* with it, which made it doubly excellent. When faced with something like this, though, it's difficult to imagine anybody but the most desperate fan of games or die-hard fan of an actually getting any enjoyment out of it.

Technically, of course, there's nothing to fault it, and the depth that the game goes into is considerable - you'll get your league and cup trophies, financial problems, player injuries, team tactics, talent scouts, stadium management and all the rest of it. On the aesthetic side, however, nothing much seems to have changed since the days when these games were prevalent on the Spectrum about three or four years ago.

Three days, however, the change graphics and sound just don't cut it any more, so when something like this comes along it seems like a bit of an embarrassment, really. But of course it's the gameplay that counts and for what it is, *Football Director* is entertaining enough, and providing you're not expecting too much and willing to get the game some time, I should pay off handsomely. The wise members of the computerised football management fraternity will probably want to save their pennies for *Player Manager 2*, however.
☆☆☆

FORMULA ONE GRAND PRIX



Price **Amib £27, Amiga £24.99**
Genre **Racing Simulation**
Publisher **MilesProse**

Believe you me, you've never seen a racing game like this. Lots of *Outlaw Racer!* (helloooooooo *Pole!* Pole!) They are but children's toys compared to the complete and utter excellence of *Formula One Grand Prix*, the latest and greatest game from the programming genius that is Geoff 'Start Car Race' Crummond. The graphics are truly amazing, with highly-detailed cars complete with drivers' helmets poking out of the cockpit, literally moving around tracks lined with stands, trees,

fences and crowds. The sound matches the visuals, with good use made of stereo samples for the engine.

But it's not just the quality of the graphics or the sound that makes *F1GP* so special, it's the meticulous attention to detail that makes an authentic and involving Grand Prix atmosphere. Everything you'd expect to find on a Grand Prix circuit - stands, bridges, tunnels, etc. - is there (and in the identical position they'd be found in real life, even extending right down to streets) pushing criss-cross all the track and engines crews waiting in the pits.

The wonderful control over the car is the essential icing on the cake, with plenty of difficulty modifiers to make the game easy enough for Grand Prix Smith to play or tough enough to bring Sterling Moss out in heels of sweat. Indeed, so good is *F1GP* that it earned itself an ACE! Trailblazer and the honour of becoming the new Racing Simulation benchmark. Good enough for you?
☆☆☆☆

FUZZBALL



Price **Amiga £19.99**
Genre **Platform**
Publisher **System 3**

Well, this is a bit of a case from the past and no matter how brightly the facts present, *System 3*'s latest is a simple yet highly addictive platform effort. The player controls a bouncing ball of fluff that has to be guided around a network of platforms, collecting fruit bonuses, energy spikes, the Fuzzballs of the title, try to stop him. There come in four increasingly-aggressive 'Shroons': green, purple, black and red. By repeatedly shooting them with his kick gun, the player can stun them long enough to knock them off the platform. However, if the player takes too long the Fuzzball returns to his own nation's than before.

As the player progresses through the 18th-old levels more and harder Fuzzballs appear, and while monsters start bouncing around and the platform hops provide an even greater test of the player's pit-perfect positioning powers, *Fuzzball* is a classic example of 'simple being good'. The addictive, uncluttered gameplay and cute graphics make this an A-grade

winner. And there's a tight, dreamy animated intro to boot. (Well, you've got to fill those big boys with something, haven't you?)
☆☆☆☆☆

GALAGA '91



Price **Game Gear \$29.99**
Genre **Arcade Blast**
Publisher **Inter**

Amazeballs! You'll fly, you'll crash, you'll die alone because! Anyone who played the original Galaga in the arcades, or better still the BBC version called Zaxxon from Acorn, will be thoroughly served by the extreme tempo tantrums the onboard.

However, in these incarnations, the game had that elusive spark of alien adventures that meant no matter how many times that right-on invisible alien bullet destroyed the player's craft and sent him back to the start of the level, it never became annoying enough to prevent the player winning.

Here, the method of a game using up all his Continues is extremely ironic. It's the sort of game that leaves you feeling so mad and exposed that you have to turn off the power in order to avoid more revenge on the top-eyed fiends.

Nevertheless, a top-notch scrolling shoot-out this is. Not quite as good as the superb *Wally War*, but boasting an infinite number of levels (with simply an increasing number and density of alien) and some extraordinarily lovable flight patterns, it's not bad.

It's basically the old derivation of the *Invaders/Galaxians* theme with jazzed-up aliens and graphics.

The main problem lies in the fact that the player can only have two bullets flying on the screen at any one time, and the annoying habit the alien have of circling at the bottom of the screen, killing the player who makes the mistake of thinking that he's automatically dodged an attack.
☆☆☆

THE GAMES - WINTER CHALLENGE



Price **IBM PC \$59.99**
Genre **Sport Simulation**

Publisher Accolade

This is, as our stal friends would say, mega-wicked! It got in the past, totally unappreciated, and turns out to be one of the best games we've seen this month! Yeah, seriously! The player (or players - up to two can take part) compete in eight winter sports - luge, skeleton, bobsled, curling, cross-country skating, speed skating, bobsled, giant slalom, bobsled and ski jump. All the events are depicted in an effective mix of 3D polygons for the landscape (a bit of a misfit with waxes for the competition and course scenery (trees, fences, etc). Sound is less impressive - on a basic PC the game is played almost in silence except for a between-game tune and a crowd cheer when a player completes an event.

The player views the action from just behind and above his on-screen alter ego, therefore giving a good view of the events as well as an excellent first-person impression of speed. Each of the events is relatively easy to control and consequently very easy to get into. Like the *Type Games*' series, success is dependent on timing and control rather than hammering the fire button, so it's very satisfying to play and makes sharing seconds off these best times more a matter of skill as opposed to physical stamina.

Despite its superior qualities, *The Games* may get a bit dull when played alone (a criticism levelled at nearly every game of this type). However, as a game to play with a group of friends it's now flawless - and that makes *The Games* a more than worthy purchase to play over this Xmas holiday period.
☆☆☆☆☆

GREAT NAPOLEONIC BATTLES



Price **Amiga \$29.99**
Genre **Strategy**
Publisher **Impressions**

You've got to laugh. The dust on the back of the box tell all about a product like this. "Create your battlefield with over 100 terrain pieces" says the caption under a picture of some game and boxes. "Watch infantry advance on horses" says the one under the picture with some green squares with cross-hairs.

But if you're intrigued, you should n't, because impressions certainly know how to put together a top-notch his-

torical wargame, even if they can't draw graphics to save their lives.

Great Napoleonic battles offers the player the chance to become Napoleon himself, or the commander of one of the unfortunate territories to fall under his control.

In previous games we saw strategy games in their truest sense operating on a hex grid, with all the hit-point ratings and defence abilities displayed in their ugly menu screens, but they are now to keep happy the gamer who simply wants a machine to do the adding up and look after all the imagination, sound and action in his own hand.
☆☆☆

GUNSHIP 2000



Price **IBM PC \$29.99**
Genre **Simulation**
Publisher **MicroProse**

Nobody writes simulations like MicroProse does. This is a highly realistic sequel to the company's earlier mega-hit *Gunship*, which has gone down in software history as one of the best-selling sims ever. This sequel is far more than just *Gunship* 2. Every part of the game has been given a radical overhaul.

Probably the most impressive aspect is the revamped graphics system. Using a sort of patchwork-quilt landscaping technique, the game world has been modelled in exacting detail, complete with trees, hills, mountains, valleys, cuttings. If it's a geographical feature, it's there. In total, the game takes the form of a series of pilot-training missions. Unfortunately this complexity means that you really need at least a 486-class PC to get anything approaching speed from the game. Based with a board it's marvellously atmospheric, and adds no end to the gritty battlefield feel.

The 'upper control' is good, but actually getting the craft to fly makes that of the real thing. It's very difficult, and certainly makes *Gunship 2000* not the sort of game to cut your sim-playing teeth on. However, if you're looking for the ultimate chopper simulation, then here it is.
☆☆☆☆☆

HARD DRIVIN'

Price **Amiga \$24.99**
Genre **Racing Simulation**
Publisher **Atari**

The *Lyons* catalogue of software keeps getting bigger and bigger - and more importantly - the quality of the games keeps getting better and better. *Hard Drivin'*, a conversion of the Atari original, is a case in point.

Potential buyers expecting or hoping for *Auto Position* are going to be disappointed - this is a pretty successful attempt to simulate the controls and performance of a real car, and as such it's slightly more difficult and much less forgiving to drive than per usual arcade auto.

The action takes place on one of two courses, a *Speed Track* and a *Street Track* complete with jumps and loops. Once there have been tamed the player can try racing against the *Phantom Phantom*.

The graphics and sound are nothing short of incredible, accurately reproducing the look and feel of its real-life *Badly Aired* along with S.T.U.M. Power this is a real shameless for the owner of the *Lyons*.

It takes a little while to get used to *Hard Drivin'* on the *Lyons* - the jiggled is a poor substitute for a wheel - making the going tough at first, and some may find the difficulty combined with the lack of immediate point-racing skills boring. However, once the player has got the hang of things they should find *Hard Drivin'* remarkably satisfying. Recommended.
☆☆☆☆☆

HARD NOVA



Price **Atari \$17/Amiga \$29.99**
Genre **Role-Playing Game**
Publisher **Electronic Arts**

Hard Nova's a game that's difficult to categorise. Like *Flight II* it's a mixture of roles, featuring strategy as well as role-playing elements, adventure as well as some space-fight sequences. It's the sort of stuff that Electronic Arts in America have been churning out for years - science fiction odyssey with alien worlds, deep mutant characters, big spacefights changing together and all the rest of it. There's supposedly a comic edge to this one, with the player taking on the persona of intergalactic

space blitz *Hard Nova*.

You can invade with characters, RPG-fashion, collect objects, do missions and trek across the galaxy. Kidnapping, ferrying cargo from planet to planet and so on and so forth.

It sounds like a bit of a rip-off, but if this sort of make-or-buy your copy of tea, then you're liable to have a lot of long-lasting fun with it. It's just a shame that the vast majority of gamers don't have the patience to get into it. Well worth checking out - the game's got plenty of atmosphere plus lots, and gets progressively more involving the longer it's played. Just don't expect to pick it up straight away.

☆☆☆☆

HARE RASING HAVOC



Price **PS £29.99**

Genre **Action/Beat**

Publisher **Disney Intergames**

Havoc! The idea of a game based around *Wile E. Coyote* Roger Rabbit's stunning six-toes-opening experience does indeed sound like one tasty prospect - but sadly, Disney has realised little of its great potential in this rather dull little game.

On paper at least, it sounds like the cartoon's outrageously-frenetic spirit has been captured. Roger's been arrested with looking after the accident-prone Baby Herman, and must ensure nothing happens to him while his dragon-like mother is out of the house, but Herman's disappeared in the local slays to sample their milk wares, and Roger must track him down before any harm comes to him.

Sounds like fun? Don't let appearances be deceptive. The only thing that *Hare Raising Havoc* manages to do is infuriate the player beyond measure with its unforgiving control, illogical puzzles and repetitive gameplay.

On each of the screens that Roger encounters, there's a problem to be solved, which involves manipulating the surrounding scenery and objects. To be honest, it's not very taxing and the player more often finds himself fighting against the unresponsive control and slow, drudge animation than actually getting to grips with the puzzles. With the Disney Sound Source connected you get samples of the original movie characters' voices and SFX - but those quickly become every bit as annoying as the game itself. Only dedicated Roger Rabbit fans need apply.

☆☆☆☆

☆☆☆

HEIMDALL



Price **Amiga (1986) £34.99**

Genre **Action Adventure**

Publisher **Care Design**

After a long string of shoot-em-ups and platform games (*Car-Kap*, *Firematic*, *Chaos Body*), Care Design has returned to more involving territory with *Heimdall*, an isometric arcade adventure-rune role-playing game based around Viking lore.

The *Heimdall* of the title is a human gift from the Gods, sent to Earth by Odin to recruit the three great weapons that will vanquish the forces of evil. After selecting a crew from the varied characters available, *Heimdall* sets sail across the Nordic waters to destinations unknown.

For the most part, the game is yet basic isometric adventure 4 in *The Immortal*, although there are some interesting strategic and RPG elements - all the characters have differing skills, which means that the player must switch between them, as in a conventional RPG, to perform certain tasks. The strategy is provided by the sailing action, where the player must travel between the various islands (there are three archipelagos, each hiding one of the elemental weapons and each forming an independent level) in the most efficient manner.

Heimdall is a fun adventure game, although the action, due to the product's RPG overtones, is a little slower and less exciting than most of its counterparts in the genre. In fact, there are times when very little seems to be happening at all, and only those who are willing to battle down, make traps and all the rest of it, are likely to enjoy the game to the full.

That said, it's been designed with the utmost care and downiness, and there's enough here to keep anybody glued to the screen for some considerable time.

A fine game. ☆☆☆

☆☆☆☆

HUDSON HAWK



Price **Atari ST/Amiga £24.99**

Genre **Platform**

Publisher **Ocean**

Bruce Willis' film was a disaster, and Ocean hadn't turned out anything of note in the film conversion stakes for quite a while, so nobody was really expecting very much out of *Hudson Hawk*. In contrast to the word-critical and barely-playable *Lawman*, what we got was the best platform game so far this year. Special FX took a big gamble in its interpretation of the film by channelling 90% of the screen material out of the windows, and getting on with the business of just building a good game around the film's basic premise - that of a cat burglar stealing valuable artifacts from around the world.

It works superbly, in much the same style as former platform classics like *Mario*, *Risk*, *Dungeons* and *Switchblade*, with small, comical characters playing over beautifully-designed platform levels. It's a class act, without a doubt, with beautiful traps and pitfalls lurking around every corner. The gameplay is easily up to console/joystick standard, and the graphics and sound really do enhance the fun factor because they're so jolly. Don't be put off by the shoddy horror conventions - *Hudson Hawk* is a brilliant game in its own right and deserves a place in your collection. Today.

☆☆☆☆

HUNTER



Price **Atari ST/Amiga £24.99**

Genre **Action Strategy**

Publisher **Activision**

It's a sad old world, this one we live in, just when you old Activision got some great products together, their *Melbourne* studio goes and pulls the plug on *Activision*. Now, however, after the aforementioned "disaster product" has been selling around doing very little indeed for the last few months, Activision's current parent-owner of games, The *Disney* Company, has taken it upon themselves to do another tickle of gamersness reach the streets.

Hunter is the sort of game that you dream of playing. A polygon-based action strategy game well out of the usually associated nonsense involved, it offers all the "realism" it is great at," features which should, by rights, be included in all those games.

Taking the role of the *Hunter*, the player must travel around a bunch of islands, systematically destroying all enemy installations in whatever way

he sees fit. Your particular mission is detailed in a briefing where specific, immediate targets are directed by your allied commander.

The best thing about *Hunter* is that there's no missing action. If you want to infiltrate an enemy base, get a disintegrator and you're away! If you want to get ahead, steal a helicopter/hopscotch or sailboat. It's all so easy and because the unnecessary complexity of basic tasks has been removed, the player can concentrate on progressing with the mission much more intently.

Excellent graphics and a fast-paced storyline can only add to *Hunter*'s already awe-inspiring style. A winner. ☆☆☆

THE IMMORTAL



Price **IBM PC £39.99**

Genre **Action Adventure**

Publisher **Electronic Arts**

It's over a year now since *The Immortal* appeared to great public acclaim on the Amiga. A masterpiece of animation and game design, it was probably responsible for selling a fair few (ahh) copies. At last it's made it's way on to the PC, and now features a couple of new enhancements that make it an even better game.

The majority of the game is identical. The player guides a superbly-animated wizard on his travels around an isometric 3D dungeon. As he progresses around the corridors, he discovers treasure, traps and - of course - terrifying monsters. In the original Amiga game, the fairly complex combat took place at the same scale as the rest of the game (i.e. small) and made judging responses to the opponents fumes and beats a touch difficult. On the PC, however, when combat occurs the view switches to a close-up that makes things far easier.

The only gripe from a PC owners' point of view is that having been spoiled by the recent glutlands of epic fantasy games, the 15 on display here are a little disappointing. However, this doesn't seriously detract from what is an otherwise excellent game, and recommended without hesitation to anyone who likes a bit of dragons'/dragoning.

☆☆☆☆

JIMMY WHITE'S

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'WHIRLWIND' SNOOKER



Price Atari ST, Amiga £24.99
Genre Sport Simulation
Publisher Virgin Games

André Malin, veteran programmer of *10-* and *Dropzone* is probably the last person you'd expect to write a snooker sim. Car games have been around since the beginning of computer gaming - a few colored shapes, some angle-of-deflection algorithms and away you go. But even with the advent of 3D graphics, none of them have really had any elements of realism, until now.

The table is viewed from behind the cue ball so the player can line-up shots as if on a real table. The view can be rotated through various axes and zoomed in so the player can see from virtually every angle conceivable. The ball movement is accurate, without balls stopping for no apparent reason or going off at peculiar angles.

Two player games are the best, but four levels of computer opponent are available for the lone gamer. As the player progresses more sophisticated tactics can be incorporated. The positional play, *Sevens*, *eights*, *nines* and every type of spin are all possible, and so vital for snookering opponents. The real result of IBM's comprehensive and realistic approach to recreating snooker is the most authentic sports simulation in date. ★★★★★

KNIGHTMARE



Price Amiga £29.99
Genre Role-Playing Game
Publisher Mindscape

Knightsnare, based on the children's TV series of the same name, can best be described as *Capite* with new graphics. The similarities are hardly surprising - both were written by Tony Crowther, the man who has been responsible for more games than Mr. Waddington.

And, as anyone who has played *Capite* will realize, this is not such a bad thing. The action is depicted in a snappier view-down-the-corridor 3D, with the player able to move around the puzzle- and monster-strewn labyrinth with ease. It's not particularly original or ground-breaking, but any-

one who enjoys a good RPG - and *Capite*, in particular - will be more than happy with this.

My only serious quibble is whether Kiddy Line of the TV show will find it slightly contrived screen appealing. □□□□

LOTUS TURBO CHALLENGE 2



Price Amiga £24.99
Genre Racing Game
Publisher Gameln Graphics

A worthy successor to the excellent *Lotus Turbo Challenge*, this game has a number of interesting differences in its predecessor. For a start, it's a better one-player game, but not so good for two players. Technically superior to the original, this's nevertheless something just a little bit lacking. Perhaps it's the removal of the lap system, or perhaps it's the fact that crashing into the other car really doesn't do you that much damage. But whatever, it ain't quite so good.

However, it is a great deal better than 50% of the racing games on the market, and there's a *Lap-Up* option allowing up to four players to race at once. The action is fast and furious and the control the players have over their cars has been greatly improved.

Players must blast their way through a selection of stages, each boasting a particular hazard, whether it be natural (potholes, rain, sand) or man-made (potholes, juggernauts crashing across the road). Graphically superior to the vast majority of similar titles, *Lotus* just looks the business, with flashy realistic obstacles and a high level of detail on the cars themselves.

Despite being hampered by some annoying decoration whenever the player drives through any water and the forced two-player mode, *Lotus* is a pretty impressive game. □□□□

LAST NINJA 3



Price Amiga £24.99
Genre Arcade Adventure
Publisher System 3

Well, well, well. After everyone has been shining up their shoes at the prospect of giving System 3's much

toiled, much lauded and much delayed conclusion of the Ninja series a right old kicking, the bleeding thing turns out to be great!

Applying a more arcade-adventure angle to the tried-and-tested Ninja formula, the best of the System has produced a game which has all the visual appeal of the first two games in the series and none of the problems. Well, that's not quite the case, but 'overall' of the game relying so heavily on the fight routines which, to be honest, were never that good, the emphasis has been moved into the puzzle-solving elements which isn't half as hard to implement.

Spanning an epic quest across a bunch of different scenes (joints, air, fire, water) and voids the game continually throws up different puzzles which the player must solve in order to reach the next stage.

Aside from completing these puzzles, there's a fair amount of mucking to be done too, and the collectible weapons add enough variety to ensure that even when the player is doing over his month's adventure of the land, he'll find something new to do.

Graphically, the game is really rather special, with the isometric landscapes at a stage which must surely be approaching the state of the art, and the animations of the characters three when being undeniably fine. Just look at the speed! Not on that.

☆☆☆☆

LEISURESUIT LARRY 5



Price IBM PC £24.99

Genre Adventure

Publisher Sierra On-Line

It's Larry Laffel! Sir's Passionate Palad and he's in a whole lot of trouble! Leisure Suit Larry 5, the latest instalment in the (inexplicably successful) adventure series chronicles the spring adventures of America's favourite lounge lizard.

In what promises to be the most sexy adventure in the series, the player must guide Larry and Pam through a world of puns and waltzers in the quest to keep good honest men on the streets. Initially taking the role of the midwife host of America's Socratic Home Video, Larry quickly becomes embroiled in a hairbrained undercover plot to get all puns off the normal market and drive it underground where no-one can find

its can be made.

It's all pretty standard point-and-click stuff, but this time the player alternates between the very different personas of Larry and Pam, allowing both to get into any scraps and also resolving and particularly severe cases of "Texters" from formerly liberal sets.

Again, the hand-painted, eye-catching graphics and game design are an absolute delight for the most occasional lapses into a host of pretty lame gags. However, this time Larry does have moments of absolute brilliance, and the continual promise of a further sexy pic of a top guy in a sexy pose is enough to keep you coming back for more. So? Well, please yourselves.

☆☆☆☆

MAD TV



Price IBM PC £29.99

Genre Strategy

Publisher Random Arts

My, what timing! My weeks after the big TV franchise debate and as the country games in demand at the start of a load of old shows concludes and craps game shows filling our screens. Random Arts produce a game which is all about running your own TV station. If only the greatest at TV-AM had the chance to play Mad TV, they might still be in business.

Not only is Mad TV a right laugh, allowing the player to have total control the only limiting factor being the budget over an entire TV station, but it's an excellent strategy game into the bargain.

The aim is to keep Mad TV at the top of the TV ratings while simultaneously winning the hearts of Betty, the most beautiful woman in town. Taking place in a huge cityscape, the game has the player's character being around from the various offices, buying up films, scheduling programs and keeping an eye on the all important viewing figures.

Every now and again, your boss will crap up and give you some helpful pointers. He may be keen that his station wins at award for poetry or films, so it's up to you to schedule accordingly. None all of this would be a good enough feat on it's own, but when you consider that Mad TV is a pretty excellent strategy game with complicated interrelations between various departments and some top notch presenta-

tion to boot, you would have to conclude that you'd be mad, ha-Hee-Hee, to miss it.

☆☆☆☆

MAGIC GARDEN



Price Amiga £24.99

Genre Arcade Adventure

Publisher Electronic Zoo

Good God! Whatever was. Having been played for months by an apparently never-ending stream of arcanic gamers, we were understandably keen to get our hands on the game which they praise. And what a peculiar conclusion it is.

In his endeavour to become "the most efficient grower", the player must guide a gnome around the open-world magic garden doing, well, this is where it becomes a little bit unclear actually. He can do pretty much whatever he fancies, he can water the flowers, he can mow the lawn. He can use some magic seeds and fly around on the back of a big dragonfly! But the gnome must be careful. For there are terrible traps which live in the garden: the big flowers which can burn him or tall grass which can slow him down.

And Conway had better be careful with the number of objects he's carrying, or he will become too tired and get hit by lightning and die. But the game won't get hit by lightning if he is exploring the underground caverns where the sales of Conway can flush the toilet for extra efficiency.

Presented in side-on elevation, the game looks, plays, smells sweet and is, just odd. It's so odd as anything I've ever seen in my life. Precious Moments Peter style graphics and graphics which quite honestly is tricky to imagine applying to the masses make Magic Garden a true original.

☆☆

MARTIAN MEMORANDUM



Price IBM PC £25.99

Genre Adventure

Publisher Access/US Gold

Once again a game pretends to be an "interactive movie" and turns out to be little more than a simplistic adventure with flashy graphics and sound. But

in Martin Memorandum's case the graphics are enough to make up for the game design's shortcomings - at least they seem to be for the first few hours. The game uses updated video footage, sampled speech and film quality music to set the scene; the story casts you as a futuristic private detective who must travel to Mars to track down the kidnapped daughter of a famous industrialist, and it works very well, creating a strong sense of atmosphere and involvement.

But as so often the case with games of this type, the effect of those flashy graphics soon wears off and when you actually buckle down to play the game you realize that there isn't really that much to see or do. An ardent adventure could easily complete a inside of a week, because the linear game design means that it's almost impossible to go down the wrong track - it's as if you're being guided by an invisible helping hand, and that's not very satisfying. With *Sins Of The Dogs* and *Heart Of China* offer similar and more satisfying experiences, so if you've got the PC muscle to run so-called advanced a product, you'd be well advised to check either of those out instead.

☆

MEGAFORTRESS



Price IBM PC £24.99

Genre Simulation

Publisher Microage

The trouble with games based on taking every single side in a big, stupid old plod like the *It is* is that virtually every side is mind-numbingly boring. I mean, who honestly wants to plot their course across thousands of miles of terrain using a 3D terrain mapping computer or have to fiddle around with advanced frequencies in order to jam the enemy's radio?

The aim of the game is to plot a land-recovered *It is* in some both big and the basic "Gnome", keeping the location and aim of your mission strictly secret until the awesome strategy of *Fortress* can be unleashed on the target. Unfortunately, for all its gang-bro packaging and interest, *MegaFortress* is just a very good simulation of a rather dull business. For more fun can be had in any of a host of more recently released flight games, and Microage's *Knights Flight* series even offer similar creep-up-on-the-enemy action for

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these players who are especially keen on that sort of thing.

Perfectly competent both graphically and on the play front, Megatraveller has missions designed by real 3-D navigator and best selling author John Brown, although it's one of those games that I guess you really need to have experienced the real thing to appreciate.

☆☆☆

MEGA LO MANIA



**Price Amiga £24.95
Genre Arcade Strategy
Publisher Image Works**

Released amid a bonanza of God-em-up the Big Daddy Populists while not being afraid to borrow little bits here and there where appropriate.

In an alternate universe, Mega lo Mania is all about the quest for power. Power over a set of worlds, each made up from a suite of islands, is the prize. New worlds are formed and intelligent life is placed upon them, upon which interstellar travellers descend and try to seize the reins of power for themselves.

The conflict arises, needless to say, when more than one freeloader takes a shine to a particular island. Since each area can only have one ruler, a campaign of imperialism begins, with each player trying to use the forces at his disposal to overthrow the others.

Each island exists within its own time period, and the rate of development, intelligence and so on of its inhabitants is governed accordingly. Players quick to invest time in invention and the refining of natural elements, rather than simply roaming around hitting the others with sticks are more likely to succeed.

☆☆☆☆

MEGATRAVELLER 2: QUEST FOR THE ANCIENTS



**Price IBM PC £784
Genre Role-Playing Game
Publisher Empire**

This latest UK release from American

software house Paragon is more the surprisingly a sequel to Megatraveller: The Ancient Conspiracy. As before, the player leads a team of five space adventurers through red and treacherous (especially) lakes and dunes. This time around, the player tasks us to find a way to halt the flow of toxic slime emanating from a mysterious set of ruins left by a dead race called the Ancients. But are they dead? That is up to the player to find out.

sporting high-quality 256-colour VGA, this is certainly a treat on the eye, and the ears as well with a suitable sound card. The game itself is an RPG in the Ultima style, but not half as rigorous - which for many will be more than a blessing. The story is fun and involving, with plenty of sub-tasks to perform that provide welcome and often amusing relief from the main plot. If one has a minor niggle it's that the space scenes - which you'd think would be the most exciting part of the game - in fact stall, with little sense of player involvement. In summary, highly recommended.

☆☆☆☆

MEGA TWINS



**Price Am £17, Amiga £29.99
Genre Platform Game
Publisher US Gold**

There's big trouble in the land of cute things & dark shadows, etc, etc, has fallen across the land, and it's up to the two sweetest and most catfascinating warriors ever to grab computer software to save the day. At its core Mega Twins is a platform game - one of two players guide their cutesy heroes through level after level of ledges and chasms, seeing off the attacking enemies with a bang from their tiny link swords. Magic orbs can be found along the way that act as super weapons, which are particularly useful against the super-tough end-of-level nasties.

As a conversion of the CapCom-coined Mega Twins is hardly startling, but it's unexpected enough. Apart from the slightly turgid pace of the action, the main thing that prevents Mega Twins from making any real impression is the lack of excitement. There are no real thrills on offer - the platform element is minor, and having to outdo one tap for to tap the buttons into oblivion is hardly opening up whole new vistas of interactive entertainment. The

final nail in the coffin is the fact that the whole thing is incredibly easy—a competent player will probably get halfway through the game on his first set of credits. Mega Thins had a great potential, but whether it's the fault of the original run-up or the conversion it's already turned out to be Mega Tuff, not Mega.

☆☆☆

MERCS



Price Megadrive £14.99 (Import)
Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Sega

As if Megadrive owners hadn't had quite enough shoot-out blasts to keep them happy well into the next century, here's another chance to harness the joy of the joystick. The player must team up with a bullet-laden mate and raid seemingly well defended enemy installations in your mission to rescue the President. Even the smooth top-down multi-directional scrolling and plentiful power-ups fail to distract them about the look and life of shoot-'em-ups. Sub-plot is available for soldiers of Estuarine who prefer to go it alone (or who haven't got any friends) but the third focus of such missions is really pretty limited.

Equipped with usually woody weapons the overexposed hero must gradually work their way up the screen, picking off rebel soldiers both on foot or lurking in gun towers or jeeps. One drop-down and strength replenisher can be had by destroying the numerous crates lying about.

Players can speed their progress through the frequently income levels by jumping into a semi-buried out jeep and roving up the screen. This bit is quite amazing, as you can run down the enemy soldiers or blast them with the jeep's built Gatsocks.

As well as the requisite end-of-level guardians (which here take the form of an assortment of ordinary hardware—planes, helicopters, tanks, etc) the levels are occasionally well broken up with bigger foes in the shape of gun-towers, machine gun nests and the like.

Aside from the problems shown up when a game controlled by the joy-pad necessitates diagonal firing the enemy troops always seem to attack on a diagonal until Mercs has a lower of other possibilities up its sleeve. It looks good but is less absolutely so on originality and when played solo is a cracking bore.

☆☆

MIG29M SUPER FULCRUM



Price IBM PC £34.99
Genre Simulation
Publisher Bomarc

Improving on an already successful formula, Bomarc have done away with many of the longevity problems of their first MIG game and have on this game again set an epic backdrop of conflict in southern America. Taking the role of the pilot of a United Nations controlled MIG, the player must launch himself into hostile airspace from a solitary allied-controlled airbase—his mission is to gradually evade the striding rebel soldiers' grasp on the sea by blowing up their supply lines and destroying their fuel depots.

It's bizarre that the company most recently associated with not especially excellent coin-operated games should turn out such a class simulation, and as a result, it may be tough for those used to the right column. Nevertheless, a class product it is, with a wealth of external views and a flexibility of mission structure enabling the tentative player to try his hand at planning to try his own strategies for doing away with the enemy threat.

Also included in this game is an implementation of the real MIG's fly-by-wire system, an auto-stabilising device which prevents the plane from flicking around all over the place like a big girl's blouse. Most handy in combat.

Presented, surprisingly enough, in jagged graphics, MIG loses the competition on the eye-of-the-line, even if it is a bit tricky to imagine it outlasting many of the more impressive Megadrive products. A winner.

☆☆☆☆

MIGHT AND MAGIC III: ISLES OF TERRA



Price IBM PC £34.99
Genre Role-Playing Game
Publisher New Line/Comix/Arg-1/5-Soft

"By my mighty sword of Zork! I, Hagar Dragonbane, must create the red dawn-legions of Xyris before the alignment of the six moons-worlds!"

Yes, well, you get the general idea. Might And Magic III is yet another delve into the much-explored realm of FRP gaming, this time coming over as a cross between Dragon Master and The Lord's Tale (it just may or may not be the whole FRP genre being done to death so badly that there's just nothing new around?)

This third Might And Magic outing would seem to support that argument, as apart from some very flashy VGA visuals and soundfull music, there seems to be very little new or interesting on offer, except maybe for that ever-present feature of the third RPG fixation. As you'd expect, the scenario is about as backdated as one is ever going to get, with some clunky plot involving the Ultimate Power Orb (wow, really to be King. What that involves in selecting a party of characters, one, two, three, maxims and all that, and then wandering about fighting with dragons, collecting treasure and picking up clues.

The game itself actually is very pretty, but for the most part the adventuring is pretty slow and uneventful. Considering, however, how conditioned FRP gamers have become, I doubt that anybody who's likely to buy it will be disappointed by what they find.

☆☆☆

MONSTER BUSINESS



Price Amiga £24.99
Genre Platform
Publisher Eclipse

The usual reaction from the big boys here over any game looks loose, and an amusingly telling bit of news they can not completely spelling it all in construction kits. However, later, the best best best animal and then all these many little monsters slip right! A goal in life if ever there was one. Monster business, the epitome of the average arcade game features stupid graphics and a drably rapid pace. To review all the objects from the building site, they must blow up all the monsters with some sort of field bicycle pump, causing them to inflate and eventually rise to the top of the screen, dropping all their objects as they go.

Despite the silliness of the whole affair, Monster Business is actually quite good. Different screens each present a different sort of hazard, whether it be dodging platforms or a speedy time limit.

and the player is so interested in trying to get the end of the level that he probably won't realize quite how easy and dull the game is.

Stupid graphics and it could only be better. Certain music help Monster Business rise above the pack and shine out as an example of what arcade games should be about. It's like an Abba record, if you know what I mean.

☆☆☆☆

MOONSTONE



Price Amiga £29.99
Genre Arcade Adventure
Publisher Mirosoft

What a conundrum this is. While experience suggests that games billed as being at all "easy" should be treated with approximately the same amount of caution as a diamond pit-bull with rabies, Moonstone isn't actually that bad.

The aim of the game is to reach across a mystic land, reaching for the Holy Grail like Moonstone and trying to ensure that no other man gets his mitts on it first. Up to five players can enter the quest, each selecting a coloured Knight to control. And why, pray tell, are we controlling Knights coloured like a rainbow? Or something? Because Moonstone is all about fighting, that's why!

At frequent intervals, the frankly tedious travelling sections are punctuated with action scenes. While walking in a wood or dithering by a stone circle, the Knight will be accosted by a hostile creature. Here is where the real value of Moonstone lies. The combat is incredibly violent and gory. Although the game can be switched off by separate keys.

All in all a mixed bag. It could have been a really great combat game, but there's too much wandering around to give it much broader appeal. Worth a look.

☆☆☆

NEBULUS 2



Price Amiga £29.99
Genre Platform
Publisher 20th Century Entertainment

Having done the Hercules album like a phonic looking-upon-possibly the what-

ever it was before it was burnt, just Century Entertainment aren't having much luck at the moment. Not only are they losing some considerable difficulty with their Megadrive product, but the one game that looked like it could actually make them some money has turned out to be something of a disappointment.

The European copies responsible for squandering John Phillips' original classic have done a bit of a lousy job, ruining the gameplay that made the first game so excellent by jacking up lots of name and useless games-up type features. The classic formula has been totally revamped by the sheer weight of these new 'ideas', and as much anybody who enjoyed the first game is likely to be very disappointed by this. However, it is quite pretty and, at least for those who haven't seen the first game, read a total waste on the playability front. But while the first game knew exactly where the addictive/frustration threshold was, *Nebula* a steps over it like it wasn't even there. Not recommended.

☆☆

NEVER-ENDING STORY 2



Price: Sega Genesis £29.99
Genre: Arcade Adventure
Publisher: Eidos

I've nothing against *Invaders* being close to their film origins - in fact, I positively endorse it - but when this is taken to such lengths that the game turns out as close as the movie did then I have to draw the line.

Witness *The Never-Ending Story 2*. The film came and went at the cinema with hardly a murmur of public interest, and unfortunately it's likely that the game of the film will suffer the same fate. The fact that the game's release trails that of the film by a good year or so is the final nail in its coffin. It's a five-level arcade action romp.

The first is a *Shadow of the Beast* style horizontal scroller, the second is a 2D chase, the third is a dull chase up the side of a tower, the fourth is a *Wipeout* style platform affair, the fifth a *Wipeout* style zero-gravity bungee ride. As you can tell, it's positively sparkling with originality. As usually happens with these multi-level games the individual sections are pretty weak in terms of gameplay though moderately pleas-

ant to look at. They're also quite difficult, and since death is frequent the lengthy gap between lives is particularly frustrating. Although well-presented, *Never-Ending Story 2* can only be recommended to die-hard fans of the film. That's right - all three of you. ☆☆☆

OUTRUN



Price: Game Gear £24.99
Genre: Racing Game
Publisher: Sega

It may be an oldy but it certainly isn't a gully - at least, not in its Gear incarnation - it isn't. *Out Run* is arcade action stripped down to its basics - the player has to drive a red Ferrari through four stages, avoiding other traffic and those pesky stationary road-side obstacles. It's all against the clock, with the player being awarded points into seconds every time he completes one of the stages. And... and... that's just about it.

The impression of speed (achieved using good 'colour banding' in fact, although the objects give it an amazingly coarse and chunky fashion. Unfortunately the number of roadings objects is small, and the number of cars on the road even smaller - even on the busiest stage I only counted two other vehicles on the road at top. Very poor. Worst of all it's ridiculously easy - I completed the game on my third go. Yes, really! The only real mark in the game's favour is the ability to play head-to-head with another Gear owner, but even then the thrills are few and far between. Not good.

☆☆

OUTRUN EUROPA



Price: Atari ST/Amiga £24.99
Genre: Racing Game
Publisher: UK Games

As long last! A game that has become a legend, along with the likes of *Star Trek* and *Blind of Prey*, over the last couple of years, simply because it's taken so bloody long to come out. The original idea was to release the product in cash-in-on-the-wave of euphoria from the original *Out Run* conversion - which should give you an idea of how long we've been waiting for it. We ended

up getting the official sequel, *Out Run* first, which wasn't much cop, and now we've got this, which isn't either.

The basic idea is that the player has to take charge of a variety of vehicles - car, bike and boat - as he races over various land-and-sea stages to deliver a vital package, while international agents are-out to stop you. It's all a bit ludicrous really, and what's seemingly supposed to be a cross between *Out Run* and *Chase H.Q.* with extra levels on it is in fact a bit of a shoddy mess. The road sections aren't much fun to play because control of the vehicles is so lousy one moment, and the money can just keep on getting in the way in a way that isn't conducive to gameplay at all, but is just very frustrating. The boat bits don't even bear think about because they're so unjust and difficult, and 99% of players will probably put their foot through the monitor screen within five minutes of loading it up. Talking of loading, the constant disk accessing is a pain in the prostate, and it all hardly seems worth it when it's not even very clear what's actually going on in the game. There are far better race games available, so don't waste your precious time pondering over this one.

☆

PACMAN



Price: Game Gear £23.99
Genre: Arcade Blast
Publisher: Namco

Well, what is there to say about the original arcade classic that hasn't already been said? Not much, except that it's now available on the Sega handheld and isn't bad at all.

There are no frills, embellishments or other features that would have been a mistake to add here. This is not *Pacman 31* or anything rubbish like that, but the good old original, so it was all those years ago. The conversion is pretty much spot-on (which, given that the game hardly pushes computer technology to its limit is only to be expected), right down to the original colours and sound effects.

One change that has had to be made is purely a practical one - to preserve the original size of the graphics, the *Pacman* is now a four-way scrolling affair, with only a section visible on screen at a time. It works well enough, but it can be a bit of a pain at times, as

it makes it difficult for the player to see where the remaining dots are, and where ghosts might be coming in from. *Pacman* veterans may find this annoying, but to us mere casual players it's not too much of a hind. So don't be a silly boy - just sit down up and running on your Game Gear today! ☆☆☆

PEGASUS



Price: Atari ST/Amiga £29.99
Genre: Arcade Blast
Publisher: Gremlin Graphics

Oh dear dear dear. What a shame that just when Gremlin starts getting a good reputation for itself with its classy product of late, it turns out a piece of tripe like this. Based very loosely on the classic Greek myth, *Pegasus* is a weird half-hill-and-half-bird of it. Type style shoot-'em-up action and runs along and chop up the hidden platform stuff. This mixture of airborne and ground-based action is supposed to give the player variety and keep him interested, in practice all it does is get very boring very quickly.

In the shoot-'em-up section, Pegasus (or Peritus, as the box inaccurately spells his name) flies along on the back of the mythical winged horse, which is animated in an abominably unconvincing manner, and blasts away at the attacking gogolies, devils, bunnies, etc. When he's finished this onslaught, Pegasus lands, Pegasus descends and the ground section begins. This happens 30 times (30 are sections, 29 on the ground), by which time the player has probably run all his hair out, kicked in the TV screen and lobbed his computer out of the window.

It's not that *Pegasus* is a bad idea - it's just that it's been executed in a truly a God-awful way and unimaginative manner. The action in the heavy bits is sluggish and annoying, while the ground levels lack any of the finesse of, say, *JetSet Willy*. The fact that there's lots of it doesn't make it any more of a viable purchase - unless you're a masochist of course. Complete with all manner of inimitable spelling/mistakes within the game ('existence' instead of 'existence', 'own' instead of 'know'), *Pegasus* would have only just made the grade two years ago, or on public domain today. To ask *JetSet Willy* if it were to take so heavily below maker's standard of graphics and game-

play in a bit on an inch. Avoid.
 ☆☆☆

PITFIGHTER



Price Amiga £25.99
 Genre Beat-'Em-Up
 Publisher Gnomon

If ever there's a prime example of an average coin-op then Pitfighter is it. If you're an arcade gaffer then you're probably more than familiar with the game. With its giant monitor screen, three sets of player controls and stand-out digitised graphics you could hardly miss it. Trouble was, underneath the unique floppy music and noisy sound looked a distinctly dull beat-'em-up, made even more by the confusion caused by the game-looking graphics. What's my take? game? Is he biting me or not? You know the sort of thing. All in all, a less than rewarding experience.

In converting Pitfighter to the home system, Tropic London have actually improved it a hell of a lot. Indeed, if you liked the coin-op, chances are you'll

like the home game even more. The graphics, which have retained pretty much all of the flash special FX of the coin-op, are clearer, and the slower pace makes the game much easier to play. The joystick controls are a little unresponsive, but it only takes a few gems to get the cring of things. But as good a conversion as this, it still can't compensate for the fact that fundamentally Pitfighter's about as exciting as tapping a button all day. Which, er, in Pitfighter is pretty much what you spend all your time doing.
 ☆☆☆

POPULOUS II



Price Amiga £25.99
 Genre Action Strategy
 Publisher Electronic Arts

Awesome! One of the greatest games of all time just got considerably better. Bullfrog's long-awaited sequel is just as excellent that it's difficult to find the words to describe it. Basically, it's pretty much the same game - guide your followers through a series of apocalyptic battles. God versus God, over count-

less isometric worlds.

From that point on, however, it's a whole new ball game. Whereas the original game had only a handful of godly effects, Populous II has scores of them, many much more deadly than anything encountered in the first game. The plethora of extra features (good and city building, effects that interact with each other, experience points that build up as you progress) make Populous II a far more involved and rewarding experience than the original. Absolutely phenomenal stuff. Populous II is a game that you really REALLY cannot afford to miss. Buy it immediately.
 ☆☆☆☆☆

PUT 'N' PUTTER



Price Game Boy £20.00
 Genre Puzzle
 Publisher Impact

There's nothing like a good crazy golf game for a bit of hand-held entertainment. And, as they say, this is nothing like a good crazy golf game.

Well, okay, so that's not strictly the

case, but Put 'n' Putter is seriously flawed.

The major, indeed the only, real problem with the game is that it is simply far too easy. And by easy I mean the player (unless he's an utter twit) won't even get a whiff of a Challenge (1/3) screen until he has completed about twenty holes and has graduated onto the Expert level. While it's nice to get a little way into a game before grinding to a halt, this is ridiculous!

Aside from this, Put 'n' Putter does all the things a crazy golf game should, falling down in only a couple of minor places. The course moves rather slightly, and the courses could hardly be described as imaginative. Worth a look if you're a really crap golfer.
 ☆☆☆

RAILROAD TYCOON



Price Amiga £35.95
 Genre Strategy
 Publisher MicroProse

The ACE Benchmark game makes it's way onto the Amiga, and what a fine conversion it is! Building a railroad

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empire across the USA at the turn of the early Century may sound like hard work, but for those who like their strategy to run deep, Sid Meier's simulation of that very pursuit is fun (Fun FU!)! We know it's difficult to imagine how, but trust us, it is. The feeling of power is paramount as you lay your track from sea to shining sea, conduct big-time business and generally run heads of cash.

Beginning life as an entrepreneur in the early thirties, you must turn a small state into the biggest state in railroad industry history (and by taking control of every element in the decision-making process which makes the railroad work, the player must handle tiny details as well as broader political and economic issues, all at the same time as competing either with a friend or against real humans from history. And every element of the game is represented with top-quality graphics to make even the most number-crunchingly intense sections of the title easy to manage. Meier's excellent user interface and the sheer precision of the game design and balance compared with the top-notch power of the Amiga make this version of the game an absolute winner. Highly recommended to all and sundry.

☆☆☆☆☆

REALMS



Price Amiga, Mac II £29.99

Genre Amiga Strategy
Publisher Virgin Games

Good grief! Just what is Amiga Power so angry for, has Peter "Populus" Molyneux stated, too, it's him and his merry band of programmers at faulting who we have to blame for the proliferation of mediocre 3D view strategy games.

It's funny that's the biggest problem with Realms, the latest offering from Garfield, previously he'd known for arcade games like *Paradise* go and *Rainbow Islands*. If it had appeared about four months ago, it might be reviewed more favorably. But in the last few months we've had *Mega-**Demons*, *Omega* and the sequel to the game that started it all *Populus* 3 (which rightly drive the competition away). One can't help feeling the software-leasing public have probably had enough of these sorts of games by now, and if I had the choice between *Populus 2* and

Realms, I know which one I'd go for. The pity is that *Realms* is actually quite a good game. The player is a warrior in a pseudo-history world, using his power with a number of other equally powered-out warriors. The player has his people, raise armies, lay siege to cities, the usual sort of thing. Imagine *Powermage* with more depth but less impressive graphics and you get the rough idea. It plays well, controls over the various components of your empire is well thought out, and the mix of strategy and action is balanced nicely. Trouble is, when you've been a God raising fire and brimstone on your people *Realms* comes across as lurching in every sense.

☆☆☆☆

RISE OF THE DRAGON



Price Amiga £24.99

Genre Adventure
Publisher Dynamix/Sierra On-Line
Amiga owners have been scrambling to become the first to purchase this: the first or a new wave of Sierra games helmed by the perennially popular Dynamix team. But they should be warned. While Amiga owners get to enjoy just as many visual thrills and plot twists as their PC pals, they pay the price of swapping two pounds every last one as it slips in and out of your drive for the amorphous time/disk. However, if you're willing to pay the across-the-board price, Rise is an extremely rewarding product. The player takes the role of a barbaric despot, a real Madmax type, slugging his way through a drug-addled city of slaves, the last remaining obstacle between the mysterious Dragon and total control of the entire planet! Played in first-person perspective, the game uses the so-forging necessary control interface which Sierra have made their trademark.

This is another example of the interactive comic book which American companies are so fond of leaning down on. There is, but once it isn't too bad. There is actually a story here! And there is actually some adventuring to do. The player must investigate the strange, dragonized death of the Mayor's daughter, investigate warping criminals and do all the other stuff that private investigators have to do. Wire taps, eavesdrop other people's mail, hanging out in low-society strip joints. What a life. And it's all in three lovely hand-drawn

graphics. Mind you... all those disks...
☆☆☆☆

ROBIN HOOD



Price IBM PC £26.99

Genre Amiga Strategy
Publisher Williams

Merrilyously cost-tailing the publicity of the recent batch of Lincoln green movies, Williams' completely unlicensed version of the tale is surprisingly entertaining.

Presented in Populus style, the game sticks to the classic mythos of Robin of Locksley being booted out of his lands by the evil Sheriff of Nottingham, deserted by his people and left to fend for himself.

The player, taking the title role of course, must assemble a band of merry men and set about doing away with the nasty old sheriff once and for all. An equally important goal for the player is to convince all the peasants and other inhabitants of the forest and its environs that Rob isn't the murdering thieving blagger that the Sheriff has described to them but is a lovely kind-hearted soul.

Aside from combat and object-collecting, there's a refreshing amount of genuinely funny dialogue in the game too, with the characters camping up their rules to the hilt of their ability.

It's an extremely enjoyable and innovative arcade adventure cum strategy cum role playing game who's worst failing could be that the plot is so familiar the player is compelled to play through to the very end as much as he physically can, thus diminishing the appeal of return visits.

☆☆☆☆

ROBOCOD



Price Amiga £26.99

Genre Platform
Publisher Williams

And about time too. Computer owners have been waiting a long time for a platform game good enough to wow in the face of the strong console owners, recently proud of their Sonic and their Mario. And here it is.

Robocod uses few assets for its originality. There are elements of just about every running/jumping game from

Mank (Marx onwards in those somewhere, but thanks to careful design and wise mixing and matching of game styles the end result is far more than the sum of its parts.

As in *Mank IV*, the core game task is simple - get from one end of the level to the other, and jump on the heads of any bad guys to wonder past. Of course, in practice there's a bit more to it than that. Some of the 700 levels see Robocod travelling through the levels in a bouncing car, a splintering bush plane and even an old controlled tank! There are even some areas where 'Cod writes around - much like he did in the game's progenitor *James Bond*.

In fact, it's the sheer variety of the game - along with the superbly smooth control over the fairly malleable character - that makes it such a joy to play. Every level features something new, either in graphics or gameplay, and there's little chance of boredom setting in. The wonderfully cute sprites, bright and cheerful backgrounds and sing-alongable tunes are excellent too. All in all, *Robocod* is a polished, playable and - thank God - fun slice of platform pie that you'd have to be criminally insane to let slip by.

☆☆☆☆☆

ROBOCOP 3



Price Amiga £25.99

Genre Amiga Beat
Publisher Ocean

Robocop 3 in 3D! Nah, it'd never work - would it? Well, the good news is that it *isn't*! Indeed, Digital Image Design's unique slant on the *Robocop* movie license arguably makes it the best to yet.

In contrast, *Robocop 2* isn't that different from almost every other film title. It's an amalgam of several game sequences - a bit of shoot-'em-up, a bit of driving, a bit of boss 'em-up - when the simplistic gameplay is compensated for by the sheer variety on offer. However, in this case there's another factor - DID's ground-breaking solid 3D.

Rather than watching some sprites leaping about a 3D backdrop, the player views the world through Rob's eyes as he patrols the streets of Old Detroit on foot, in a police car and even in the air thanks to his new Cyroquake. The atmosphere generated, especially in the foot patrol sequences, is quite cable-

licable. The only weak links in an otherwise incredibly strong chain are a couple of little hand-to-hand combats, but sequences with a robotic thing animation... the combat moves are limited and the action sluggish.

However, these sequences apart, there are frequent moments during the game that the player actually does feel as if he is taking part in a film. And at the end of the day, isn't that what you should be buying a film title in for? ☆☆☆☆

ROBOZONE



Price Amiga £24.99
Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Image Works

Trying to loop onto the Green band wagon (and missing by about six months), ImageWorks's latest and certainly not greatest puts the player in the driving seat of a giant two-legged war machine, a sort of out-price version of the one in Polygram's *Killing Game Show*, with a mission to put an end to pollution. Hoorah!

Fundamentally Robozone's a simple Man-eating-robot-moves affair, with the programmer trying to maintain player interest by constantly changing the play style. One level's a side-view aerial-dimensional-wildling explosion-a-dust, the second's much the same but in 3D and the third's a horizontally-scrolling shoot-'em-up. While such is programmed well enough, there's precious little fun or excitement to be found in any of them.

The really annoying thing about Robozone is it's pretence to being 'Crazy' - the manual is littered with Top Tips about how to help save the environment. One states pompously: "If you have a choice, avoid buying packaged goods." Considering that Robozone comes in a giant box with a studio disc and a thin manual written about inside, the irony of this statement beggars belief. Probably the best tip in the first one: "Try not to waste energy." ImageWorks, having played this I already have. ☆☆☆

ROBOCOP 2



Price Game Boy £29.99
Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Impact

Here's a bit of an oddity this one. While the graphics are bigger and chancier than before and the storyline follows the second movie as opposed to the first, you can't help but feel that you really have seen this all before.

The main problem lies with the fact that Robocop 2 isn't a real badlands. This makes the supposed exploration of the various factories and warehouses in the game a bit farcical, since Robo can only explore the location which he comes to visit.

Learning the patterns of hostages to be rescued, rules to be destroyed and obstacles to look will help, but it hardly solves the problem.

Still, it looks great and the sound effect and music are excellent. And let's face it, if you're going to get yourself a shoot-'em-up as a New Year treat, it's best to stick with the same you know. ☆☆☆

ROGLAND



Price Amiga £28.99
Genre Platform
Publisher Storm

Strangely-enoughly cute it may be, but there's no denying that Rogland is a fine game. The (also coin-op) wasn't particularly noteworthy, finding itself left in a sea of graphically excellent games upon its release. Now, however, the conversion seems to have crept up where the highest-profile coin-op game over the moment (Magic Packet) has failed to meet expectations.

The player must work his way through a massive maze of screens, collecting points or 'pawt' ups and killing monsters with his rod (hence the name) by landing them into the floor.

The art of each level is marked by the arrival of an enormous, and of level had gone such as an elephant, who, despite looking about as threatening as a big lump of cotton wool in a limited bag will do for the players. Fortunately, interestingly enough, the player can opt to play a girl if he/she wants, not that it makes much difference to the playing style. And it is, however, the 'boy' looks so bloody effeminate you'd never know anyway.

Check a black ball of excellent visuals, Rogland is a fine conversion and it could even be argued to better its

coin-op parent, as control over the character has been improved. Certainly not a title for gamers into depth of gang-bro blasting, but a nonetheless worthwhile purchase for anyone else. ☆☆☆☆

RUGBY - THE WORLD CUP



Price Atari ST/Amiga £24.99
Genre Sports Arcade
Publisher Demarc

Hey! It's *Scrum Off*! Well, not quite, but it is a pretty blatant attempt by the Demarc to adapt Alan's fiery classic style to the rougher 'r' world, if you will, 'world' of rugby. Of course, as any fair-ies, rugby and football are very different sports, with the former lacking the non-stop speed of the latter. Not, then, perhaps the best game to try to shoehorn to fit into *Kick Off*'s hard and fast playing style.

However, as it happens, it all works pretty well. Sure, the defence is a bit stop and start, but there is a definite flow to the game and few lapses in pace. The game is viewed in plan view, with the pitch scrolling to follow the play - i.e., player (who is, match, the one nearest the ball), Tries and kicks are controlled simply by the joystick, and it lacks the subtlety of *Kick Off* (no off-sides here). Screens are a case of frantically waggling the joystick to force the opposition back, and this is fine - unless you're playing the All Blacks, in which case you need to wobble a sub-light speed to beat them.

In fact, there's probably the biggest criticism - the top teams are too tough. There are other minor niggles, such as the way player sprites overlap on top of each other and the way that the most members of the team don't put themselves in good positions to pass, meaning that play often resolves one-man rushes from mid-way down the pitch to the try line. But while Rugby may not be perfect, it's still a pretty good 'try'. (One sound of criticism being shot.) ☆☆☆☆

SARAKON



Price Atari ST/Amiga/IBM PC £19.99

Genre Puzzle
Publisher Virgin Games

Games which call the player stupid are unlikely to go down in history as great entertainers, yet Sarakon, despite making this final mistake is a perfectly decent stop-off of the Mah Jong throwaway business. Basically, if you manage to line up with some old oriental tablets and with some complicated 'can't do that' rules, then you've pretty close to imagining what Sarakon is all about.

The aim of the game is to click on similar tablets which sit in a particular orientation, eventually ending up with no tablets left, or at least as few as possible before the time limit runs out. Once done, the player is awarded with a breakdown of his score and a comment from the computer as to his Sarakon ability.

The problem with these puzzle games, however, is that they all look similar enough to make the player want to pick them up and have a go, yet they insist on containing enough rule subtleties to make doing just that impossible. The result? The Mah Jong player will feel alienated that he can't make his normal scores work.

The presentation is first class, apart from the cheery sound effects and music which don't so much create the ambience of the Far East as a grabby take-away in Dulwich.

If competitively untale mouse-clicking is your bag, and your eyes can stand staring at the monitor for ages while you scratch your head, Sarakon is the game for you. ☆☆☆

SECRET WEAPONS OF THE LUFTWAFFE



Price IBM PC £40.00
Genre Simulation
Publisher LucasArts/US Gold

Deep, deep, deep. Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe is a big old game and no mistake, it's also the sequel the critically acclaimed *First Blood*. The title comes packed with new graphics but brings the same problems of the first game, i.e. the flaky and rather horrible hitmap graphics.

The player is offered the chance to pilot aircraft in a seemingly limitless number of historical missions, shooting or guiding planes and taking place in actual battles and scenarios of

the Second World War.

However, played in a Wing Commander style with hitpoints taking the place of the polygons so frequently and successfully used in other flight sims. Luftwaffe will have all but the owners of the fastest machines hammering down the detail level in the attempt to get it to run at an acceptable rate. Ambitious players can then define their own missions to determine what history would have turned out like if there was just one less Missionsman flyingG in a particular combat situation. Luftwaffe is exactly the sort of game - a distance from Wing Commander - that you actually want to make excuses for. And that's simply down to the fact that under the try-to-see-hand graphics which actually look pretty absurd every now and again, there is a quite brilliant game. ☆☆☆☆

SEVEN COLORS



Price Atari ST, Amiga, IBM PC £25.95
Genre Puzzle

Publisher Intergames

Trivix, the game that started it all, may be getting on a bit more, but there's always room for a new puzzle game on the market. The only problem is that the vast majority of puzzles that have been wanking upon these shores from America and Europe have either been of abominably low quality, or just too weird to get the head round.

Seven Colors from Intergames, a company that prides itself on its off-the-wallness, fits snugly into the latter category. It's played over a large board made up of hundreds of tiny coloured diamonds where the objective is to change as many diamonds to your colour, spreading them like a virus across the screen, faster than your opponent does. The first player to fill 90% of the screen and is the winner. It's difficult enough to understand when you're actually playing the game, so don't worry if you're a little foggy after this brief explanation.

In fact the major problem with the game is that it's not very easy to understand, and because things just seem to happen if it's not very easy to keep track, so indeed to work out what's going on at all. The confusing situa-

tion is further compounded because the instructions hardly explain anything at all. Present players may well get something out of it however, and there's a variety of game options to spice up the screen if they do. Oh, and there's some very nice in-game classical music, which suits the name of the game perfectly and is very soothing indeed. ☆☆

SHUTTLE



Price IBM PC £40.00

Genre Simulation
Publisher Virgin Games

Not for the faint hearted, this one. As you've probably guessed, it's a simulation of the Space Shuttle. And the word 'simulation' just doesn't even begin to do justice to the level of accuracy that developers Virgin Games have achieved. The cockpit is breathtaking - all the player can see is bank upon bank of knobs, dials and levers, most of which work and have some effect.

The player can only see to fly the

damn thing, he has to open up the bay doors and control the robot arms to deploy satellites and so forth. And this initial accuracy is backed up by some of the best 3D graphics ever seen. There's even a realistically and accurately mapped planet Earth that rotates and the star constellations are all plotted correctly as well.

As starting an achievement as feasible is, the biggest problem with it is its limited appeal. Personally I think it's brilliant and completely absorbing, but I can understand that there might be some people who find the idea of twiddling all those dials more than a little off-putting. If that's because of the sheer daunting complexity of the whole thing then that shouldn't be a problem, because there's a whole range of player aids that make the game accessible to everybody, no matter what their own preferences. But there's no getting away from the fact that if your patience with sims ends at Descentwork, then you're likely to find little to interest you here. ☆☆☆

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Price Amiga £28.99
Genre Simulation
Publisher Microposse

It may have taken five years, but the sequel to one of the most critically acclaimed and publicly admired sim games is finally with us. Silent Service II features all the best bits from the first game as well as a host of original and new scenarios.

Digitalised graphics and sampled sounds simply confirm the service as a game which is undeniably one of the most detailed, accurate and realistic on the market, but new gamers should be warned that, just like life on a real submarine, it's not all walking on air.

No, there's a lot of the old. Over 350 Watson staff with varying off ratings to work up an energy schedule without allowing their radar. And so on for all that mind-blowing stuff. I ask you!

Microposse are undeniably the cut-throat kings of all things sim... but their policy of increasing the action and minimising the dull-watching as used to such good effect in P-51 Strike Flight II would be well extended in this particular title.

For gamers wishing to purchase an accurate sub simulation, not assured, there is absolutely none better. But those expecting to get their headpuck off straight away would be better to wait for a more accessible equivalent. ☆☆☆☆☆

SLIDERS



Price Game Gear £29.99
Genre Arcade Shoot
Publisher Impact

James, Mary and Joseph! What are Lorcian trying to force upon us now! In the wake of the global mania for puzzle games, it seems that any old rubbish will do these days. Here we have Sliders, a far yellow thing adorned with a random selection of names doing his utmost not to bump into the bad guys. Once Slider has travelled over, and therefore coloured in, each square in the maze, he moves onto the next.

Later mazes are made more hazardous by sliding platforms which will propel Sliders into deadly situations. A time limit prevents the player from

being able to dawdle, or maybe consider his next move, and there are lots of squares which simply kill off Slider on contact. Terrible.

Far from being the sort of game to while away many a train journey, Slider is a pain in the arse of the first order, and deserves a place in absolutely anyone's software collection. ☆

SOLITAIRE POKER



Price Game Gear £19.99 (Import)
Genre Puzzle
Publisher Segas

Everyone loves a good puzzle game, and this is a very good one. The aim is simple - select a card from one of the four piles on offer, and place it on a 5 x 5 grid. Points are awarded for pairs, flushes, etc., created either vertically, horizontally or along the main diagonal. Score over a certain amount and the player progresses on to the next, tougher level. There are a number of variants on the theme, but that's the main thrust of the game.

Who more is there to say about such a simple concept? Aesthetically it's fine - the functional graphics are clear and colourful and there's a vast number of background themes to pick between. Although not exactly using the full colour LCD capabilities of the Gear to it's fullest, it's one of the most enjoyable Gear games I've seen for a long, long time, and as such comes with a strong recommendation. ☆☆☆☆☆

SMASH TV



Price Amiga £25.99
Genre Arcade Shoot
Publisher Beam

"Good luck - you're gonna need it!" screams the show's sly coplane, and never have there been truer words said. This incarnation of the incredibly nice old Williams coin-op has translated surprisingly well to the home system, with nearly all the blood and thunder elements so beloved of the original ported across faithfully.

The game takes the form of a futuristic gun show, where one or two contestants armed with a rapid-fire gun slug it out with a seemingly end-

less parade of things, tanks and guns to win big money and prizes in a single-screen arena. Power-ups and end-of-episode bad guys add to the already phenomenal variety.

On a purely visceral level, it's immensely satisfying as the pluggled opponents explode into oil globules of flesh. Indeed, the sprites are small enough to be almost anybody you want them to be, so you can imagine that you're shooting up endless clones of your boss if you want to. Very therapeutic.

As a single-player game it's fine, though there's a serious risk that boredom may well set in after a while. The two-player game on the other hand, is something else. There's not been a player to player shooting like this since Rick Off!

The coin-op's two joystick game to move, one-to-direct fire has translated adequately to a single controller, though if you have two there is an option to use both which makes the game far better.

A superb conversion, and more than deserving of your hard-earned pounds. Go to it, you people! ☆☆☆☆☆

STEVE MCQUEEN - WESTPHALER



Price Amiga £29.99
Genre Arcade Shoot
Publisher Lookout

You what? Talk about a cynical horse! Not only is the poor chap dead and unable to defend himself against this sort of thing, but this game actually bears no resemblance to the great man at all. Okay, so he was in a few cowboy films, and this is a cowboy game, but there the similarity ends. Don't expect to see any of Steve in the game - his involvement begins and ends with a tacky black and white picture on the box.

It gets weirder still. Because it has the word Westphaler in the title, you'd assume it's compatible with the Westphaler fight gun. But oh, no. It's conventional mouse, keyboard or joystick control only. Just what on earth is going on here!

Alright, so it's all very dodgy so far, but what of the game itself? Well, unfortunately things don't get much better here either, so what's on offer is a bog-standard Operation Wolf-style shootout

set in a variety of typically Wild West scenarios. That might sound like a lot but a lot of a laugh, but the action is so stunted and dull that it's difficult to get even vaguely excited. To be fair, the graphics are quite nice in a fancy French sort of way and there are some jolly medals you can shoot on the backs of the winners, for example, but it's hardly enough to justify financial outlay. Is that Steve himself? I was spinning. In his grave!

☆☆

STRIKE FLEET



Price Atari TT/Amiga £19.99
Genre Strategy
Publisher Electronic Arts

Strike Fleet doesn't look the most exciting game from the shots on the back of the box, but the Luxembourg credit hints that this may be better than it appears. As, in fact, it is. The game is a sea-based strategy game right into fourteen individual missions or a more taxing eight-mission campaign. After each mission is being, the player is allocated a number of points depending on the difficulty of the mission to spend in the shipyard. Each ship costs a certain number of points depending on its class, so the player must be careful in picking a balanced fleet.

Once at sea, the player can flick between the ships at will. Control is relatively simplistic (pleasantly), allowing the player to steer, change speed, activate tides and mine and, of course, fire the variety of on-board weapons. In addition, certain ships carry a complement of helicopters that can be sent on ocean or sub-surface forays.

Despite it's initially drab appearance, Strike Fleet actually turns out to be quite involving. There's a great deal of satisfaction to be had from successfully controlling the fleet, and seeing off the air, sea or underwater attacks provides frequent doses of adrenaline. Admittedly, these without a strategic bearing are unlikely to be covered by the game's theme, but if Strike Fleet sounds at least slightly appealing give it a go. I think you'll be hooked. ☆☆☆☆☆

SUPAPLEX



Price **Amiga, £27, PC £25.99**

Genre **Platform Game**

Publisher **Digital Integration**

"You're Murphy, big brother, minute-dimension, exploring deep inside a crazy computer. Aink! Aink! must be avoided at all costs, and killing Zards will trap the scenery." Well, with an intro like that, you can see! Supaplex comes a quite a refreshing change from a company that normally turns up heavenly simulations and plane-based arcade games - it's half puzzle, half arcade, a sort of weird hybrid of Boulderdash and Pacman. In each of the game's six levels, Murphy must strap up all his "instruments" by whizzing about the four-way scrolling screen, goldbbing up bits of the landscape and grabbing them when you find them. The trick is to cut the landscape in such a way that you don't send all manner of horrible heavy things crashing down on yourself. As the levels progress things can more complex, with many gates, explosive devices and minuscule enemies.

Okay, okay, so it's Boulderdash with knobs on, but it isn't actually an all-lead. It may not look like much, but it feels nice and smooth and the simplistic action is strangely compelling. With plenty of options and well-timed lev-

els, Supaplex is likely to keep you playing for quite a while - provided its simple character manager is good - you in the first place.

☆☆☆☆

SUSPICIOUS CARGO



Price **Amiga, £44.97 £25.99**

Genre **Adventure**

Publisher **Genline**

The pseudo follow-up to *ISS* (see *Review*) is a lot more enjoyable than its mediocre predecessor, primarily because it's a whole lot more accessible and has a pleasant sense of humour. We've classified it as an adventure here, but it's really a hotch-potch of many different game styles - there's a strong RPG element throughout and a sprinkling of arcade-based sub-games along the way.

An over-the-top plot (see *Review*), the player's job is to transport a highly delicate shipment of genetic info across the galaxy in his madman spaceship, the Lady Luck. Even something as simple as keeping the ship operational and on course is not as easy as it sounds,

and things are naturally complicated along the way by a variety of wacky characters who want nothing more than to throw spanners in the works and prevent Josh's cargo from reaching its destination.

I must admit to being a little puzzled by *Suspicious Cargo* - I mean, just what exactly is it? The map that it seems to fit between gameplay styles can be confusing. But despite this the storyline holds the disparate elements together well, and as such you end up with a surprisingly coherent and pleasurable product. It's by no means anything groundbreaking, but it will be appreciated by anyone who fancies a good space game with a few laughs.

TEENAGE MUTANT HERO TURTLES - THE COIN-OP



Price **Amiga £25.99**

Genre **Arcade Blast**

Publisher **Image Works**

Now, let's get one thing straight from the outset, *Turtles* is neither the most complicated nor involving game in the

world. However, Probe's conversion of what could best be described as a fairly basic coin-op beat-'em-up is admirably close to its coin-gubbling dad, complete with all the regular *Turtles* and their opponents.

Catering for one or two players, the game leads the *Turtles* through a host of increasingly dangerous scenarios, gradually leading up to a climax involving breaching the plutonium Apoll from a building, set alight by the evil Shredder.

Turtles suffers from two distinct problems. The first is that one feels *Turtlemania* is definitely on the wane, and there is no longer the public fever guaranteeing that anything green will sell by the bucketload. The second is that, despite Probe's pretty sound conversion, the game's quite easy, and even the coin-op itself would be incred-

☆☆☆☆

THUNDER BURNER



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INTERMEDIATES.....	18,19
JOKELINE.....	111
MATRIX SOLUTIONS.....	66
MEGAPHONE.....	77
MINDSCAPE.....	13,15,28
PREMIER.....	91
SILICA SYSTEMS.....	69,73
SILMARILS.....	22
SYSTEM ADDICTS.....	97
TECHNOMANIA.....	109

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Genie Arcade Blast
Publisher Lookout

"Top arcade game with action, fantasy, no controls and super sound!" we are promised. *Genie Arcade* on the Spectrum is what we get.

Mogging his way through twelve stages of shocking 3D graphics, our intrepid hero must control his Transformer-like craft deep into the heart of enemy territory and destroy the evil alien 'Big Bad'.

First passing a girl on the back of the bus with her thoughts not has failed to make *Thunder Runners* at all exciting.

Plating the jet plane is actually more fun since everything moves at a faster pace, but the 4-rod robot has a better chance of destroying the pill-focuss containing, neo-prosperous, dry-dim stars.

It's all a bit poor, and apart from some out-of-level monsters which are presentable enough, falls a long way short of even the most basic Blast standards.

And if all that seems a little harsh, Lookout can at least comfort themselves with the knowledge that they win the Most Gratuitous Title Award. Hooley.

THUNDERHAWK



Price Amiga £20.99
Genie Simulation
Publisher Game Design

Most flight sims require a good deal of practice before any reward can be garnered from them. All those keyboard controls and microfluorescent aircraft functions do quite a bit to put off anyone looking for a quick blast. *Game Design* have seen this gap in the market and made their adequately filled it with *Thunderhawk*. All control is via the mouse, which makes everything from weapons selection to helicopter control, quick and easy. It's a welcome change from the usual necessary text of clicks and non-clicks.

The game itself is broken down into a series of campaigns, each provided by a graphic, leading sequence indicating target and terrain type. Referring to the sky the player must select the appropriate armament for the *Thunderhawk*, although there's a default if this seems too much of a chore.

What makes the game a treat is the handling of the helicopter. The controls make flying intuitive, letting the player get on with the mission rather

than battling to stay airborne. Graphics are smooth and more at a fair click, though there isn't much background scenery. If you've never been tempted to try a flight sim, then this is the game to change your attitude.

3D 3D 3D 3D

TIP OFF

Price Amiga Atari ST £14.99
Genie Sports Game
Publisher Anco

The fact that Anco's latest sports game comes from the keyboard of Kick Off co-developer Steve Scroob has certainly attracted a lot of interest during the game's development, but now the final product's here it can be said that it represents somewhat of a disappointment.

The idea is fine - apply the same well-known rules that make Kick Off great, apply them about a bit to fit basketball's smaller play area and rules and away you go. And indeed many of Kick Off's trademarks are in evidence here - the game's simple, intuitive, and very fast indeed, but just it's a big bug it just doesn't work. Basketball is a fast game, but Tap-Off's interpretation of it is a bit too speedy for comfort. As a result it just doesn't quite spark in the same way as Kick Off, and any basketball fans would still be best advised to go with *Clonewarrior's* version.

TOE JAM & EARL



Price Megabyte £24.95
Genie Arcade Blast
Publisher Sega

James? Or, in Earl's speak, at least. *Toe Jam & Earl* were presumably intended, like Sonic, before them, to become 'real' game personalities and thus attract a whole new legion of fans to the Megabyte. I don't know if they live or not, but on the basis of the game they're in I can't for the life of me see how they would. If Sega think this is what 'Ver Kick' want, then they're sure by intention.

It's a simple maze game. One of two players, controlling the fix-out alien of the title, have to travel around a number of exotic islands searching for the two missing pieces of their vanished spaceship. Some islands are populated by monsters of various descriptions that have to be avoided.

Along the way the game's cute two-sees may find bonuses which will reward them anything from speed-up

boosters to a flow from a belt of lightning. Mixed blessings or what?

And... er... that's it. Yes, really. All the game consists of is wandering around, very slowly. Roaming really doesn't quite sum up the toe-walking level run of the whole debacle. The only points of special note are the way the scores spike when *Toe Jam & Earl* get too far apart, the appealing nature of the two aliens and the well-made music. Any chance of putting the music on CD, Sega?

3D

TRADERS



Price Amiga £29.99
Genie Strategy
Publisher Line

If you imagine a hunk of Utopia, blags in Mania and Populous, except in all, you'd be pretty close to understanding what *Traders* is all about. Again, it's a test for sociological development and fiscal success, with up to four players battling it out on a mysterious planet, evolving roles and competing with the rigours of nature, as well as hostile advances from each other.

Distasteful from lots of God sims and start games of late, *Traders* has got a reasonably tight snarl and doesn't weigh the player down with facts and figures. Instead it lets them explore their new world and get on with the business of exploiting and raising it with the minimum amount of fuss.

While there's no question that the game boasts an earth depth or longevity in its age-of-the-games moulded show, *Traders* acts as a pretty solid introduction to the strange genre. Not too shabby.

3D 3D

UNDER PRESSURE



Price Amiga £14.99
Genie Arcade Blast
Publisher Electronic Zoo

Oops. Funny how one minute you're on top of the world and the next you're, er, not. A situation which up until programmers Edrick the Cat have found themselves in with their latest release, *Under Pressure*. Their last and indeed only release, *Propaganda* was exceedingly well received, being a just

to excellent sports sim, but Heaven only knows what grounds and grounds are in store for this disaster.

Wired in an unconformably similar fashion to *Propaganda's* game (the in-between level test is virtually identical to Pegg's game same test and the robot which the player controls looks exactly like the creature in the *Shadow of the Beast* bag, *Under Pressure* falls down to almost every single aspect.

Writing a huge robotic killing machine through a bunch of looping eye-gates, the player must deal with a myriad of different monsters - mainly snakes - with the impressive arsenal of weaponry available from his cockpit.

Scarcely slight, doesn't it. Also, here we are, the game falls down rather badly. For a start, everything is far too big. The player's robot almost fills the screen, but doesn't have the detail or animation flourish to support its size. Also, the scale presents a problem in that since only one horizontal level of the city is now visible on the screen, the game feels more like a dash about than an exciting adventure. Absolutely no aiming is necessary for shooting for the monsters either, as they just sit up and realise the player's fire. Oh dear.

3D

UTOPIA



Price Amiga £29.99
Genie Arcade Strategy
Publisher Gemblit

The quality of life on earth, it's like it sucks. And the world is screwed up so bad that nothing anyone can do can save it. We need to start again.

This is the premise of *Utopia*, another *Populous*/*Proemage* style affair. Except this time the aim, rather than simply ruling a world or conquering it is to construct and run it and to make it its inhabitants feel really good. The aim is to elevate the quality of life to 1000% - Utopia.

It's not difficult to grasp the aims and controls of the game. And it quickly becomes apparent that there are lots of problems thrown up by the idea of making everyone happy. For a start, if you spend all the money on hospitals, food production and work-bug sports festivals, your populace will be content, but without any credible defence

where the inevitable computer-controlled aliens attack corners.

Beginning from just a few key buildings, it's up to the player to construct the colony using icon-driven actions while inspecting the world in isometric 3D. There are almost no menus in this society. You can run things virtually any way you want.

The only factor that is missing is the option to try and run things as a dictatorship regime and make a certain part of the population very happy while keeping the workers ground down into the dirt. Still, that never works, does it?

☆☆☆☆☆

VOLFIED



Price: Atari ST, Amiga £24.99
Genre: Arcade Blast
Publisher: Empire

Qix is back in town, and better than ever! No matter how widely tastes may differ among the gameplaying fraternity, you'll be hard pushed to find anybody who doesn't enjoy a game of good old Qix. Its appeal is universal because it's so simple and addictive, and like *Demolition*, its gameplay has made the test of time. What Volled (powered from Taito's coin-op) represents is a 30th anniversary of the original classic - it is to Qix what *Arkanoid* was to *Demolition*, keeping the original framework intact, but adding bits of pretty backgrounds, power-ups and extra lives.

For the most part it's much the same - draw boxes around the screen to fill up 75% or more of the screen area with the *Kawarize* which makes up the line itself getting hit by any of the remaining enemies - which, instead of the old grating line, now takes the form of a giant motherly cat that roars about spinning about holes, and a couple of pretty little helpers. Levels and speedups are among the collectables, while high-tech backgrounds and 3FX provide the aesthetic overhaul.

Since Qix-style games are so thin on the ground, Volled, with its classic execution and unaltered gameplay is a welcome addition to the software scene - and if you've got any more old adventures for the classics, you'll add it your collection too.

☆☆☆☆☆

VROOM



Price: Atari ST £24.99
Genre: Racing Game
Publisher: Lantlor

Without wanting to be nasty to our European counterparts, what with eggs and all that, it has to be said that most of the software that crosses over from the continent is a bit starchy. Vroom, however, from French publisher Lantlor, has proven itself to be the exception to the rule. Although it's not a match on the likes of *IndyBlast*, *Top Gear Formula One Grand Prix*, *Vroom* is nevertheless a truly superb racing game, boasting very impressive speed as the player steers his way (faster the more) around a first-person environment.

It's got all the usual features and fittings - narrow mirrors, pit-stops, overhead maps, bridges, dips and hills on the track, training modes, qualifying laps, choice of corners and some spectacular crash sequences. It's more of a racing game than simulation, as controls and instrumentation has been kept to a minimum - there's nothing too much to worry about here apart from going very fast, avoiding the other cars and keeping on the road. And it works well enough, being very playable and actually quite competitive, with the array of racing options adding to the game's longevity. The only dodgy factor is that the synch option is restricted to the arcade mode - the more serious race options only allow manual control. Very dodgy indeed, but apart from that, not at all bad.

☆☆☆☆☆

WILLY BEAMISH



Price: IBM PC £24.99
Genre: Adventure
Publisher: Dynamix, Sierra On-Line

The Adventures of Willy Beamish, to give it its full name, is somewhat of a oddity. Dubbed an 'interactive cartoon', it's sort of a wacky cross between *The Wusler* from and *The Simpsons*. Willy is the typical all-American middle-class prep school kid, complete with grubby hair, pet frog and exceedingly stereotypical family. Strange things are afoot in suburbia of Franston, and Willy must investigate.

Willy is yet another of those games that sounds a whole lot better than it

actually is. That's not to say that it's bad, but the gameplay is very trial-and-error, with luck often playing more of a part than skill or judgment. As such, more time is spent reorienting saved games than actually playing, and it can get quite frustrating at times, especially when you have to sit through the usual set-piece for the complete time. As an interactive cartoon, it's excellent, with suitably stereotypical characters, some funny plots and gorgeous visuals. As a game it's compelling, but not in a way that encourages total addiction or involvement. You're unlikely to come back to again and again.

☆☆☆☆☆

WING COMMANDER II



Price: IBM PC £24.99
Genre: Arcade Blast
Publisher: Origin

No matter what else you might say about the *Wing Commander* games, they look damned good. The trouble is, there isn't really much else to say about them. Well, perhaps that's a little harsh but here in the sequel to the much talked-about and little-played original, it's very much a case of more of the same.

Interstellar war with the Kilrathi continues, and in the most recent Kilrathi victory, the Confederation flagship *Tiger's Claw* has been destroyed by invisible Kilrathi stealth fighters. As the sole survivor of the assault, the player must first construct his Federation base to track them down and destroy them.

Graphically excellent although particularly processor heavy, *Wing Commander II* certainly isn't a brilliant game. It's a worthy sequel in its profession but is the sort of title where the late old players about being before buying is worth appropriate.

☆☆☆☆

WOLFCHILD



Price: Amiga £29.99
Genre: Arcade Blast
Publisher: Core Design

Okay, okay, so it's just another platform game. What separates *WolfChild* from the ever-growing crowd is the

sheer excellence of its execution. Rick Dangerous crosses Simon Phipps has surpassed himself once again, creating a game that has everything an arcade-afficionados could ask for - incredibly fast-paced action, superb graphics, awesome professional displays, a pulsating soundtrack and... well, less than most titles.

The plot involves a brilliant genetic scientist kidnapped by a corrupt corporation to produce mutant killing machines for their own diabolical ends. The scientist's son, Sam Lorenzo, bangs himself into his dad's prototype game-playing machine and turns himself into *WolfChild*, a half-man, half-beast character with special energy-spitting powers.

What follows is five levels of top-level platform cuts, beat-em-up action with Sam switching back and forth between his human and beastly forms to help his progress. When enough energy is collected, Sam becomes the wolfman character and is blessed with the power to fire arcs of electrical energy at the mutant hordes that continually attack him.

It might not be the most original game in the world, its supreme playability more than makes up for any lack of real innovation. It's hard, fast and dangerous to know. Get it: a piece of bliss for your platform collection too.

WORLD CLASS RUGBY



Price: Atari ST, Amiga £14.99
Genre: Sports Simulation
Publisher: Avalogames

Avalogames have opted for a rigorous approach to the sport, offering plenty of accuracy and a great deal of scope for subtle play. And as such, it's somewhat more satisfying to play, if a bit harder to get into.

It's also a lot prettier, with play viewed from a 3D angle and all the players are made ready if a little stiff. If this doesn't appeal, there's a selection of other times on offer, including a conventional top-down view for the more traditionally minded. *World Class Rugby* may not have *Demolition*, Rugby's kick-and-play instant appeal, but it's a good bet that of the two this will be the one you'll still be looking up in a year's time.

☆☆☆☆☆

the blitter end

Ho hum. All good things must come to an end and all that. As you've probably already guessed this is the last time you'll ever read the Blitter, as this is well and truly the last issue of ACE Magazine. Yes, we know we shouldn't be killing the Blitter off before and didn't, but we really mean it this time. After this, Blitter is packing his bags and heading off for his long pot-od, thoroughly well-served retirement at his little cottage in the lake district, but before we sign off for all eternity, we feel it's only fair that you get what you deserve - one last top-quality dose of industry gossip and opinion. So eyes down for a full hour and let's get on with it...

Following last month's report on our parent games at last breaking into the big time courtesy of TV, Blitter is even more thrilled to see that the likes of Tomix and Hideo (if not really anything else) are gradually taking over the daily papers. However, we can't help but feel that, in their impetuous attempts to sound ultra-enthusiastic about the medium, our comrades in

West Street may have gone just a teensy bit over the top. For a start, we find it difficult to believe that the Sunday Mirror's claim (February 9th) that Gamesmaster presenter Don't talk Diamond "has more fans than pop stars." In the very same organ, the paper gave us a unique insight into the minds of computer games players by revealing the jargon they use - for example, we all know that "I had awesome hit and went total on a real win" is an everyday phrase amongst you lucky game guys. But however cringe-making some of the inaccuracies may be, you can't complain when the games are at least getting the coverage they deserve. With a second series of Gamesmaster being mooted and regular features in The Sun, Today and the Mirror, who knows? Soon computer games could be more popular than eating and having sex

For years, every man, woman and child in the industry has covered in terror before the awesome presence that is

ACE publisher Gary Williams. This month, however, the Blitter is pleased to bring that reign of awe and terror to an end, by revealing that the leading publishing magazine is little more than a big cuddly soft touch. One of the Blitter's deep cover agents in the ACE office caught him ordering big fluffy presents of love for his "partner". What's more, he was later spotted engaging in pathetic giggly howls on the phone with her. What a wimp! If you would like to help in our vital quest, please send a postcard with the words I THINK WORDGE IS A BIG SOFT NELLIS to the care of the usual magazine address, preferably along with some of your own criticisms of his machinations. There's a special mystery prize for the most offensive one to receive.

Blitter's heart goes out this month to Bulling Productions' Peter Molynous who, on a recent trip to Japan, had a spectacularly unlikely time. Apparently he made the very foolish decision of

accepting to go out on a "flur" pain ball day in the woods, playing against the chaps from Legit magazine. What poor old Peter didn't realize until it was far too late was that the guys he'd used in the game were EXTREMELY powerful - a fact that he only discovered when his hand was nearly blown off at the wrist by a direct hit from kamikaze Legit rounds. The war has required stitches. To make matters worse, Peter tripped while trying to escape and badly damaged his ankle, resulting in a nasty limp for several days afterwards. As Blitter is always only too keen to point out, fame is no spite all it's cracked up to be...



Photo: Molynous captures a pain ball moment during the Legit game and time.

And so there it is. The end. Peter. Nothing out there now but succumbing children and unloved soul. Yes, it will surely be a sadder, less colourful world without the Blitter, but there are the books and that's the way it goes. To be honest, after 55 months of solid service, the Blitter is only glad to be out of this blurring cosmo and into a quiet, better life. So we'll just make one request and hope, Shambhala comrades, carry on the struggle!

• the bit!

FOR YOUR OWN GOSSIP

What with it being a bit of a dim month gossipwise, we thought we'd utilize the remaining space by giving you the chance to write some gossip of your own. Perhaps you caught someone sniggering behind the bike sheds or something. If so, this is the place to expose that scandal! All you need is a pen, so what are you waiting for? Get scribbling!

INSERT
YOUR
RUDE
PICTURE
HERE

SHADOWLANDS



Shadowlands - a completely new and unique role playing experience.

The story is based upon ancient legend. A warrior prince, slaughtered on the battlefield of the Shadowlands, awakes to find that his spirit lives on and that he can control the minds and actions of his subjects. Seeking retribution, he chooses four loyal adventurers and guides them back into the Shadowlands on a journey of discovery and vengeance.

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