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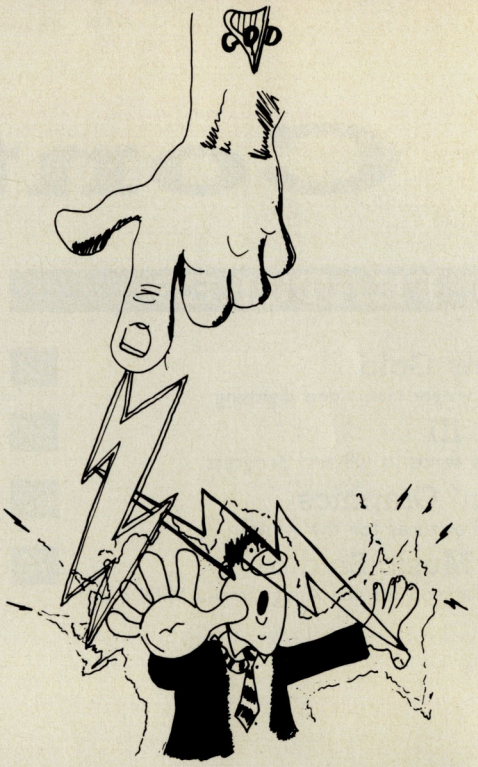

Welcome

■ **So, you see I was just walking down the street on** a Monday afternoon thinking to myself my god what have I done, when out of the sky came the hand of computer god. He plucked me up, told me "You're gonna do what I say". Oh, jeez not another lunatic trying to convice me that computers were a good idea, and that 'yes' the Commodore Amiga was the next best thing to sliced bread. It didn't look anything like sliced bread, you couldn't eat it, it didn't fit in the bread bin, it didn't look, or taste too good with a pile of baked beans on it.

Pazowed down in front of the screen computer god began to teach me all kinds of new words ('Pazow' was one of them). He convinced me that 4,096 colours was a lot of colour so I could paint by numbers until the cows came home or until computer god wanted to play the latest strategy game.

After two months in front of my workbench shrine I was ready for baptism: they called me Gieves Software Starchild No 1 (after my father) and they prayed that I would be a good computer child so new to that world, computer planet Wacky.

He did it, he said, because Your Amiga had gone monthly and that he needed a right hand man. I am that man: Gieves Software Starchild No 1. I say "Welcome".

Julian Woodford

Amiga Update

Joysticks

■ **Joy Sticks? Who is she** anyway? Or why does Joy stick? Why does joy stick ? Joy Stix — the rap hip-hop aceed reggae country band with control of your movements.

Enough kitsch, what about some faxts.

De Gale Marketing have recently released the first of a family of four joysticks: the *Quick Joy Supercharger*. It is designed primarily as a gameplayer's stick with 8 directional controls, 6 microswitches and 2 fire buttons. It has a pistol grip handle and 4 annoying little sticky pads guaranteed to stick anywhere you don't want them to. But you can interface with the Atari, and Amstrad CPC's at the Supercheap price of £12.95, inclusive of VAT.

De Gale Marketing
81, Tottenham Court
Road. London W1A 1EY

ISM Ltd.

■ **ISM Ltd handles and** develops quality software for clints in the UK and in the USA. Their releases are within the parameters of already successful US and European products. ISM's releases are in liaison with Antic, Top Ten, Triangles and Computers Anywhere; they include *Zoetrope* (an animation system), *Cardiac Arrest* (a medical simulation), and a *Day at the Races* (a horse race track simulation).

ISM Ltd. Grove House,
Ventnor Rd. Apse Heath.
Isle of Wight PO36 OJT
Tel: 0983 864674

Video and Titling Software

■ **Video wipe Master is "a** wipe effective generator" intended to control the transition between either one or two video sources. It has more than 20 professional wipe efects and 10 masks that include a circle, a heart, and a square. VWM is compatible with conventional paint packages so you can, if you want to, create your own masks.

Video Generic Master is a new titler that works in full overscan and offers up to 300 lines of scrolling, and 8 different fonts in 3 different colours. Its "immediate benefits are its simplicity and screen control."

Video Wipe Master and Video Generic Master are both available at £69.95 each, from HB Marketing.

■ **NEW from Dynamics is** the*Competition Pro PC* joystick, based on the company's *Competition Pro 5000*. The info' says that it has an attractive two-tone grey colour scheme; Lord knows why when you've got your hand round it for hours on end. Maybe it's supposed to make you put your hand round it in the first place.

As well as being suitable for use on the Amiga it's also compatible with Atari, Amstrad, and Commodore and costs £15.95 inclusive of VAT.

Also from Dynamics is a special deal that combines their new Competition Pro PC Joystick and four top-selling computer games: Wizzball, Tai-Pan, Victory Road, and Baseball. It also includes the A-D Games Card to help PCers interface digital joysticks — so Amigos it's not much use to you. But if you want those games and the joystick then it will cost you £49.95 including VAT.

Dynamics Marketing Limited
(BDCoin House. New Coin Street, Royton. Oldham.
Lancashire OL2 6JZ
Tel: 061 626 7222

New for Old

■ **Panther Peripherals are** offering, until the end of August, to take your old Amiga A-1000's off you in exchange for an Amiga B-2000 plus £699, inclusive of VAT.

The company are offering a free collection and delivery service in the Greater London Area. So, if you want the new machine bundled with Kickstart and Workbench 1.3, and you're not quite sure what to do with your old one then this is the offer for you.Interested? Then talk some to Jonathan Richards on 01-446 8431.

Panther Peripherals. Rowlandson House 289-293 Ballards Lane Finchley, London. N12 8NP.

Digi-View Gold

■ **Digi-View Gold is an** improved version of the Digi-View video digitizer designed specifically for the Amiga 500/2000. The new hardware design requires no gender changer, thereby relieving, interference in the system and improving the final image. Along with the new hardware is the version 3.0 software featuring line art mode, letting true two colour digitizing for sharp logos, extra halfbrite mode, and overscan digitizing for video use. It is also fully IFF compatible so all images can be used for desktop publishing, presentations and video use.

There is a newly designed filter wheel for cleaner colour input that comes as part of this package. £199.95

New Tek, inc.
115 West Crane Street, Topeka, KS 66603. NT 6
Tel: (913) 354-1146

The Uncanny X-Men

■ **The Edge have recently** aquired the rights to Marvel Comics's *The X-Men*. This aquisition follows that of *Peanuts/Snoopy* and *Garfield* and should be on release for Christmas. Cult favourite, Wolverine, will receive particular attention.

Knitting Patterns

■ **Mr Morris "of Reevy** Road West, Buttershaw, Bradford" (right in the heart of textile country) has devised a knitting programme for knitters "when he noticed the difficulty his wife (called Irene), had following intricate patterns."

The programme will print out patterns in the form of letters and numbers that are more easily recognisable than the typical black and white drafting of the garment. At the moment it's only available on the Commodore 64 but who knows, it might be the Amiga next. Keep your eyes on this column for some more funky stuff on clothes — and you think I'm joking.

Harry Morris: (0274) 603896

Weather Permitting

■ **Yes, now you can receive** FREE weather satellite pictures. By getting the latest Microtext Teletext Adaptor you can obtain CEEFAX's Met Office pictures on a normal Teletext TV. On the Amiga each of the pictures sent are presented as an index of names. Any of the sent pictures can be displayed by pointing and clicking on with the mouse.

Microtext: (0705) 595694

3D Models

■ **Design 3D, another 3D** design package for the Amiga, is now on release. It exploits all of Amiga's graphics capabilities and lets the user design objects in 16 colours. There is a shadowing optimiser through 4 light sources and 4 design windows with 3 facets of the object, and a perspective view.

HB Marketing claim that it is easier to use than the existing 3D design packages for the Amiga though at £79.95 that's for you to decide.

HB Marketing Limited, Brooklyn House. 22 the Green, West Drayton Tel: 0895 444433.

Alternative and Summit Get Some More Budget Titles

■ **The budget titles** they've got are Dinamic and Martech products. The Dinamic releases include *Game Over* and *Army Moves*; Martech games include Nigel Mansell's *Grand Prix, Mega Apocalypse*, and *Tarzan*.

Alternative Software Tel:0977 797777.

Quasar

■ **New from White Panther** is *Quasar*, another saga of past races able to control "all things of air, fire, and soil". They didn't have sway over water, because, like all water is ruled over by the Great Lord Neptune. Neptune's kingdom (water) is polluted and in revenge he creates a flood and steals the Talisman, the Eye of Quasar. Apart from sounding as though it's something out of a futuristic Black Adder it combines Tolkein with Hellenic, astronomy with nemesis. I wonder what the game's like, what you have to do, how you have to do it, when and more importantly, why — wait for the review for more extensive blah blahing.

White Panther Publishing: 01-384 2701

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Now available - Vortex 'System 2000' hard disks, offering versatile high-capacity storage, suitable for use with the Amiga 500 and Amiga 1000. The units are of a high specification, with a formatted capacity of over 42Mb and an average access time of 45Ms. The system consists of a hard disk base unit, cables and an Amiga interface module, with utilities software including an autoboot facility and a hard disk backup utility.

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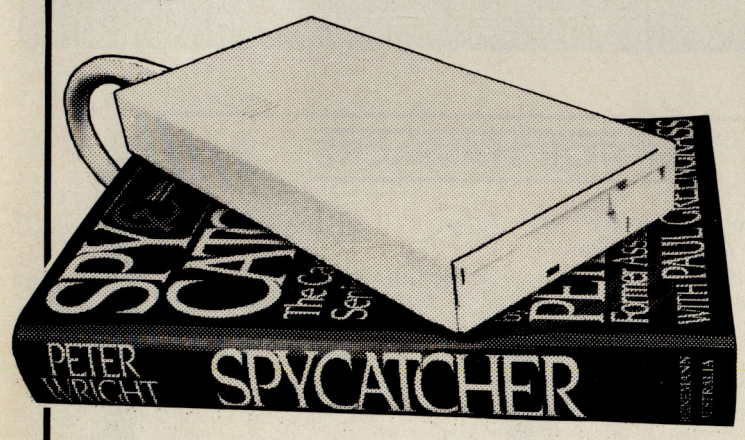

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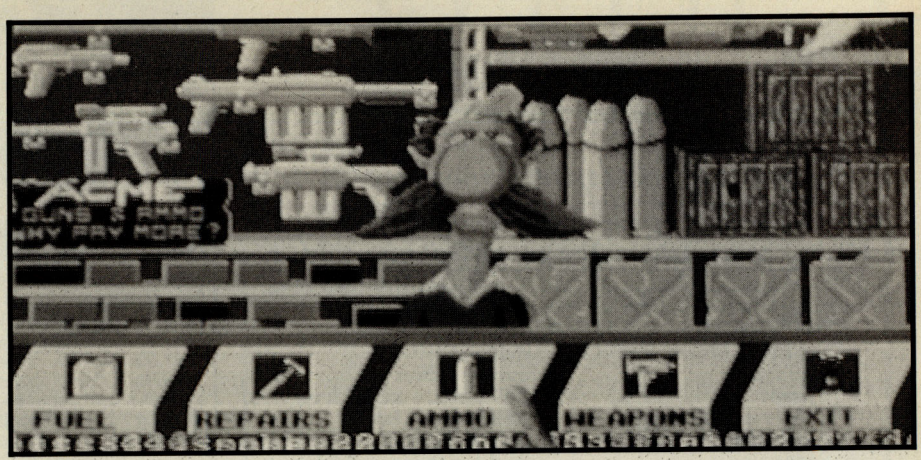
REVIEW

Motor Massacre

Kevin Crosby's driving will never be the same now that he's played this latest offering from Gremlin.



■ **On first appearance this game did** raise a few alarm bells in my head. A cursory glance at the disc inlay displayed a game which, to all intents and purposes looked like just another birds-eye view style car game. "Shouldn't take too long to review this one", I thought. But how wrong could have I have been? Allow me to explain.

Motor Massacre is set in a Mad Max-style post apocalyptic society in which everyone drives around in souped up armoured vehicles blasting merry hell out of each other (a little like the Hemel Hempstead roundabout system).

As a result of the failure of Ed Slu's nutritional food substitute. Real food is the only valuable commodity around. Practically anything can be purchased with a decent cheese and pickle sandwich

In order to survive in this hell-hole of a world you must travel around the city street collecting equipment that will help you win in the Arena — a barbaric stock car fight to the death which is the only way out.

The game begins on the road. As I mentioned before you are given a birds-eye view of the streets where your red sports car is awaiting your instructions. You can steer clockwise or anti- clockwise and have forward and reverse gears. You can drive quite happily round the streets, blasting other vehicles, avoiding roadside missile bases etc. but this doesn't get you very far in the game.

To get ahead you must park your All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) outside one of the half dozen or so buildings and explore inside.

Now on foot you must run round the various rooms in the building hunting for food (useful for trading later), better weaponry/equipment (radar, smoke generator etc), ammo for your weapons and first aid kits to replenish your health bar. As is customary in these sort of games, the buildings are inhabited by flesh-eating zombies with just one thought on their microscopic little mind — **KILL!** So it's zap them before they zap you.

Once you've trundelled around all the buildings you can find, and have picked up all the food and equipment around, you can visit one of the Gas Stations in the area. No Tiger tokens or Air Miles to be gained here. However, in addition to the customary fuel and repairs, one comes to expect at a garage here, you can also purchase more weapons and ammo which may come in handy later.

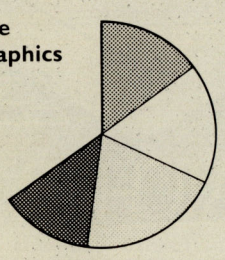
The last item you need is the Arena pass which grants you access to the final battle between you and all the other motor gladiators gunning for supremacy. Great care must be taken here as you can not only lose yourself valuable damage points in crashes but you must also watch out for treacherous landmines and bottomless pits.

Once completed the usual congratulatory message appears and it's all start again.

Motor Massacre,s major let down, to my mind, was its presentation. Both graphics and sound were not what we have come to expect from Amiga games. They were merely acceptable. Having said that there were a few nice touches like the way the zombies exploded and the gameplay itself which is enough reason to give this game a go. *YA*

MOTOR MASSACRE

Title: **Motor Massacre**
Supplier: **Gremlin Graphics**
Alpha House,
10 Carver Street,
Sheffield,
S1 4FS.
Tel: **(0642) 753423**
Price: **£19.99**



Graphics: **15**
Sound: **17**
Gameplay: **20**
Value: **16**

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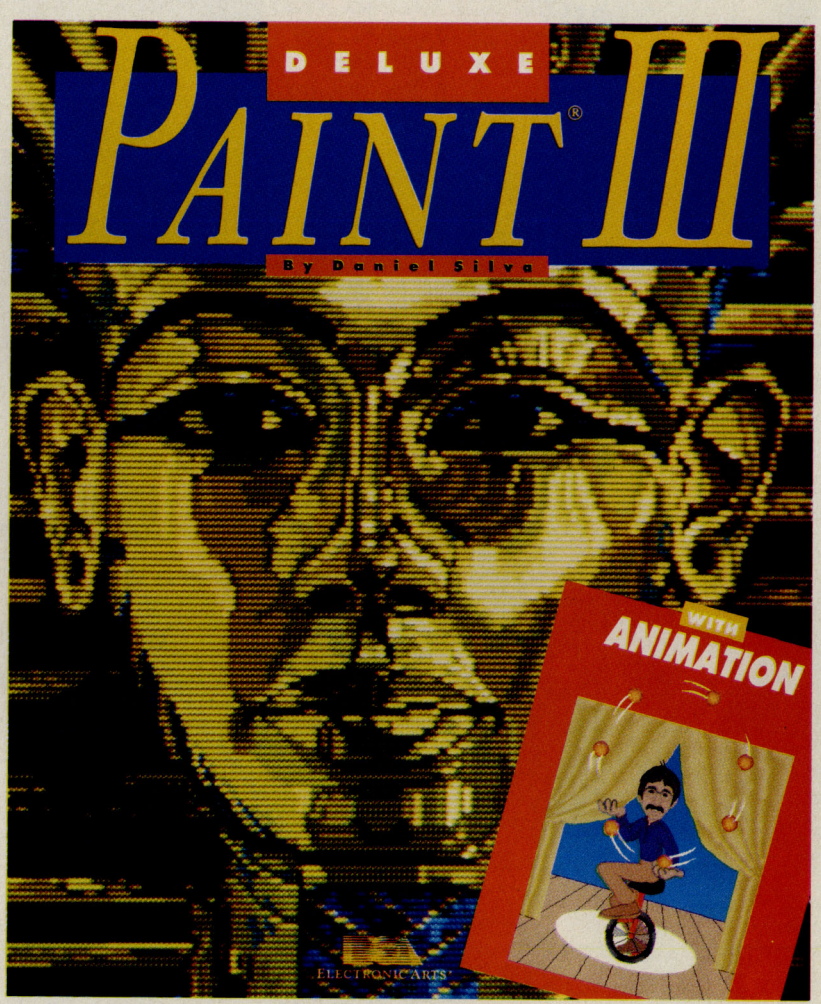

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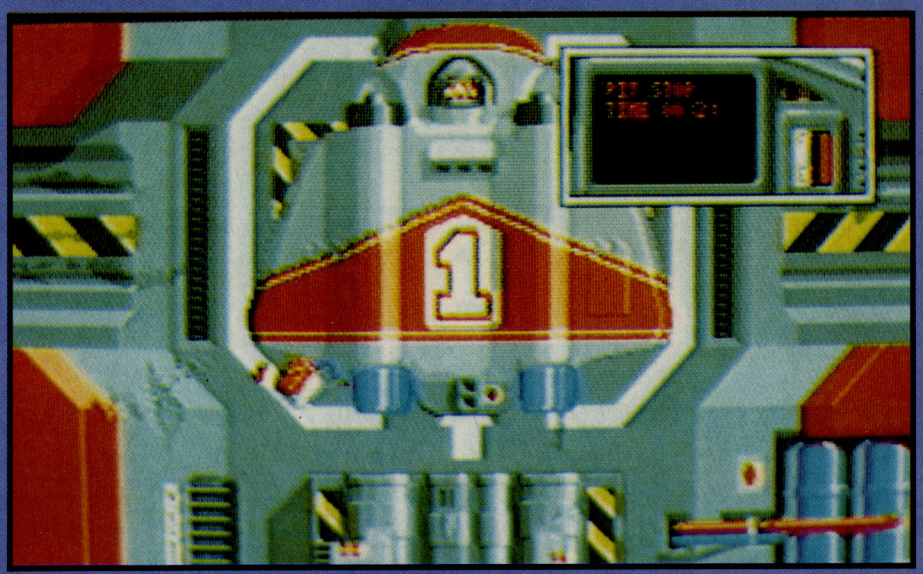
REVIEW

Amiga Previews



Powerdone for you and me.

Powerdrome *Electronic Arts*

■ **Electronic Arts plan to take racing** into the future with the long awaited Amiga version of Powerdrome. The game takes you through the six race competition for the Cyberneute trophy. However, this is no ordinary racing game as each course is in mind boggling 3D and stationed around a different planet. It's therefore vital that you tune up your racer before each race and fit it with the right filter to suit the courses unique gravitational and atmospheric conditions. If that wasn't enough, you also have to contend with some of the meanest pilots in the galaxy and your competitors for the championship points.

Contact number **0753 49442**
Release date **June**

Timescanner *Activision*

■ **At last, a coin-op conversion for pinball** fans as Activision is set to release the conversion of Sega's *Timescanner*. The game will consist of four levels which are Volcano, Saquarra, Ruins and Final. Each level features a table that scrolls over two screens and can feature up to six flippers, a three ball multi ball feature and what is described as "realistic ball movement". If this screenshot is anything to go buy it is certainly worth a second look.

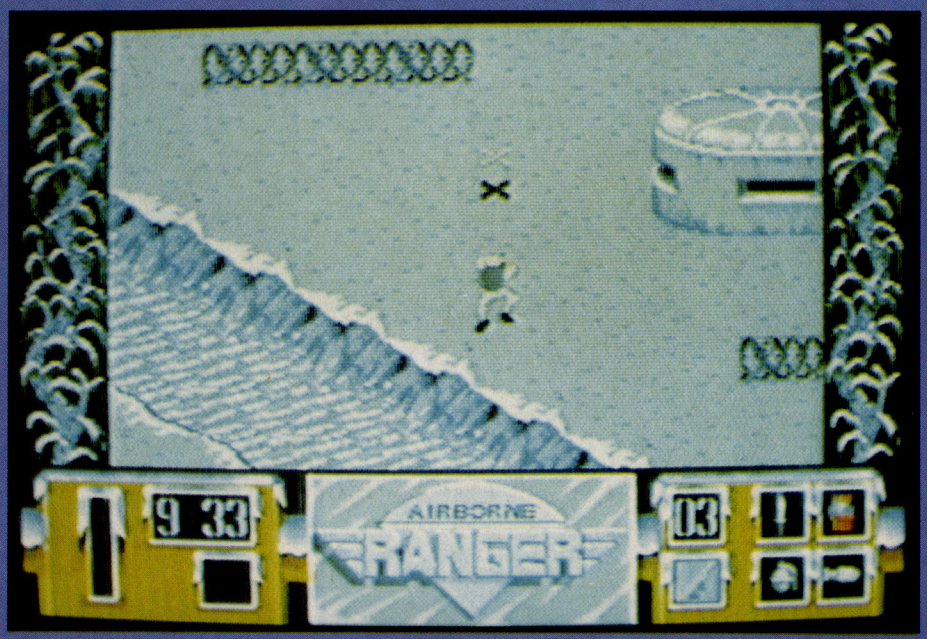
Contact Number **0734 316665**
Release date **Soon.**

Times of Lore *Origins (Microprose)*

■ **Times of Lore is a role-playing game** with a difference, as it is played exclusively with a joystick. No typing at all as your character is controlled by joystick movements and adventure style actions such as pick up and cast spell are selected from a series of icons at the bottom of the screen.

The screen display looks similar to *Gauntlet* but this game requires a lot more thought as you are charged with the quest to save the kingdom from marauding barbarians to the south, and orcs invading from the north. A military option is impossible and you must find a magic solution. During this intriguing game you will raid orc camps, infiltrate castles, through secret passageways, and talk to some curious characters while looking for help and clues. *Times of Lore* is being written by *Ultima* authors Origins and so you can be sure of it's quality and lasting appeal.

Contact Number **0666 54326**
Release date **June.**



How to do the dirty, on your computer.

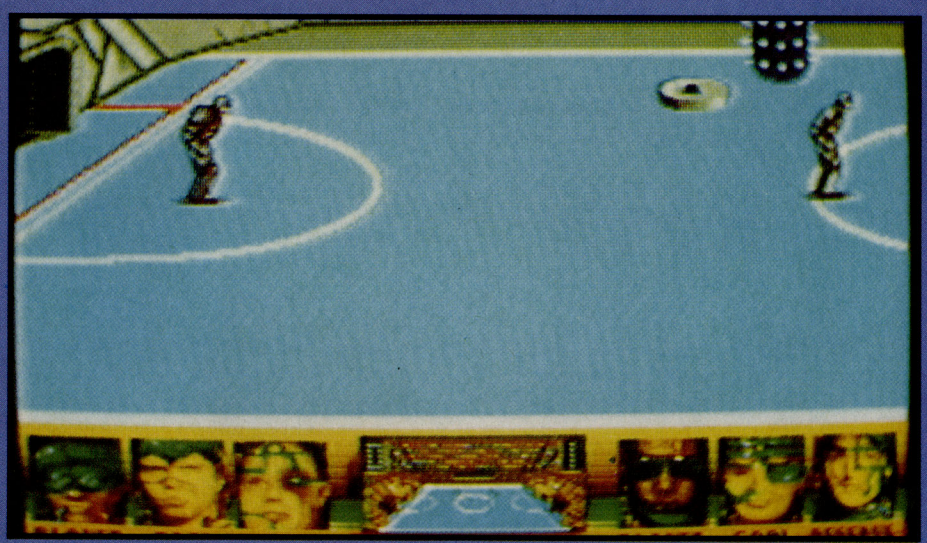
Airborne Ranger *Microprose*

■ **When this first appeared on the C64,** 18 months ago, it was one of the best simulations I had ever played and soon the wait for an Amiga version will be over. The game will cast you as a Ranger who is sent on missions to do jobs that can't be done. After a full briefing in which you will learn of your objective, and rules of engagement, you can select the arms you will take with you and prepare to be dropped behind enemy lines.

This is a game in which you can really get into the action. You can actually hide behind walls, crawl along trenches, sneak up and knife patrolling guards.

What makes this game impressive is the variety of missions ranging from attacking an artic airbase to kidnapping an enemy officer in the desert.

Contact number **0666 54326**
Release date **June**



Oh, puck where's the ball.

Skateball *Ubisoft*

■ **Skateball is a futuristic sport that** packs a punch and aims to be a combination of soccer, ice hockey and rollerball. You control a two man team (with one sub) whose objective is to score four goals or wipe-out the players in the opposing team. Succeed in this and you'll qualify for the next round.

To make things interesting the games are played in an ice stadium so it can be difficult to keep your feet. And the arena is littered with ramps, cravasses, mines and spike traps.

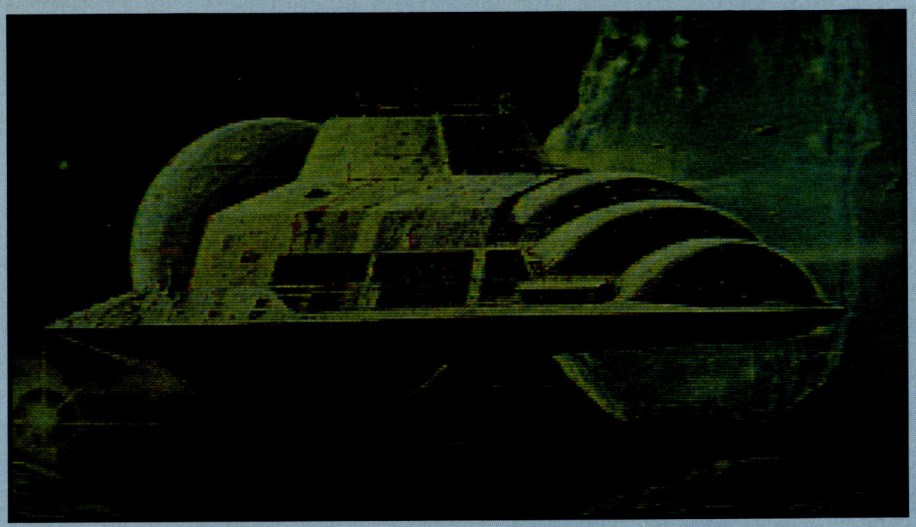
Release date **soon.**

Zombi *Ubisoft*

■ **When there is no room left in hell, the** dead come back to Earth. Which by coincidence is exactly what is happening in this forthcoming arcade adventure game. Luckily, four people didn't lose hope and decided to face the onslaught of zombies as well as face the gangs of hooligans that will do anything to survive. Naturally, you take control of these brave, unarmed heros and direct them, one by one, into the depths of a ruined building. Through clicking icons and directional controls you can search rooms and cupboards and try and find a solution to this lost cause. Meanwhile the zombies are closing in ..

Release date **soon** *YA*

DigiView Gold is the latest version of the daddy of Amiga digitisers. Although colour digitising is now available, the DigiView approach makes inexpensive quality digitising available to anyone with the right equipment. Mark Webb takes another look.



Uniquely, Digiview digitises into HAM mode.

Snap!

■ **DigiView was first responsible for** stunning Amiga owners with digitised HAM (4096 colour) pictures. The demo's appeared in all the magazines, and the discs winged their way around the country. This "Gold" version of the software is now one year old but remains state of the art as far as digitising on the Amiga.

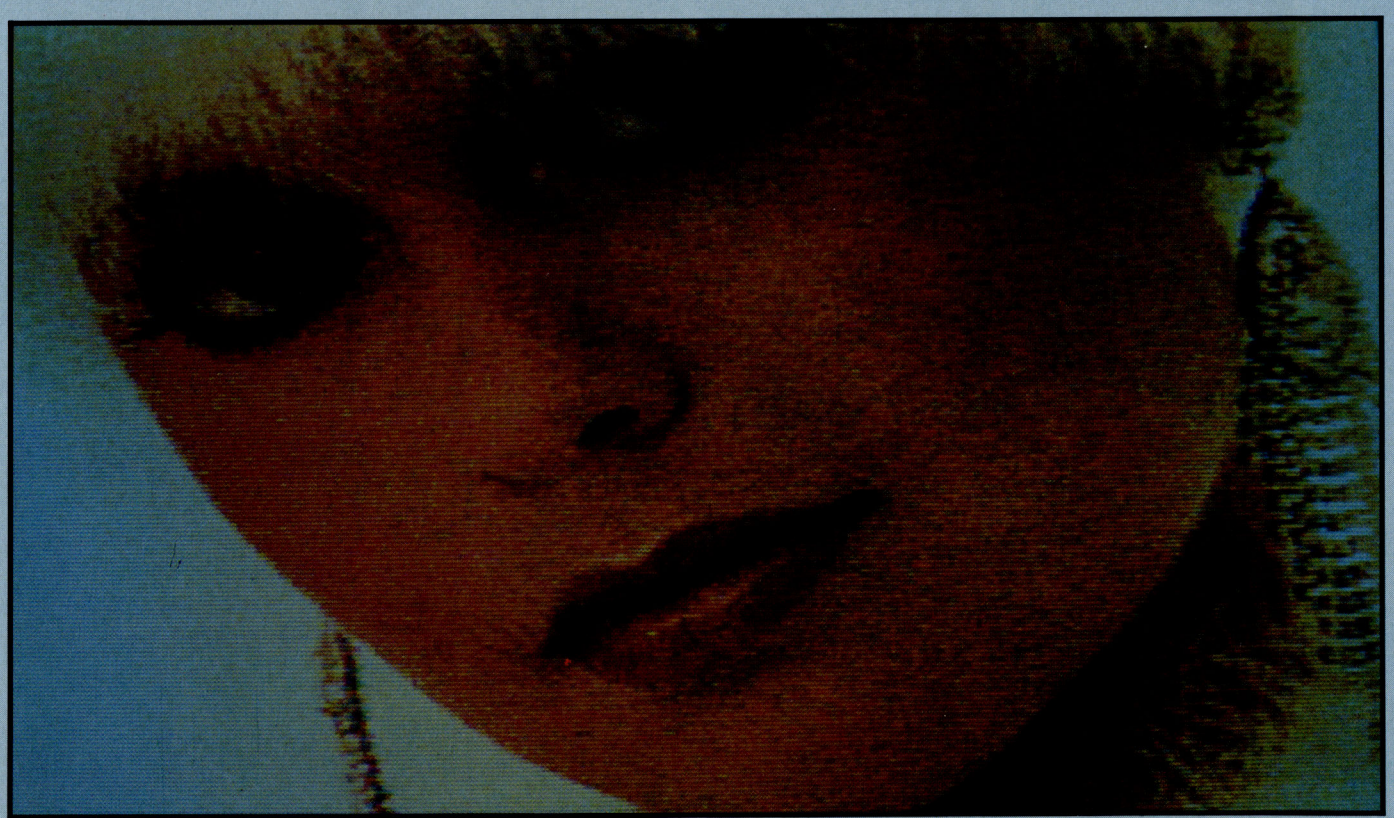
Our comparison chart runs *Gold* off against *DigiPic*, a British contender, from Precision. Both these products take the same approach, digitising in black and white, only creating colour images by digitising in sequence through a red, green and blue filter.

As a consequence you can only digitise something which keeps still during the process. So, if you want to digitise from videos you'll need a digital freeze-frame to get colour. Good results in black and white are possible with a conventional "pause". If you have a camera then you can digitise good quality colour prints laid flat. *DigiView* has an excellent "line art" mode for digitising black and white photographs, or drawings, and turning them into line drawings on screen.

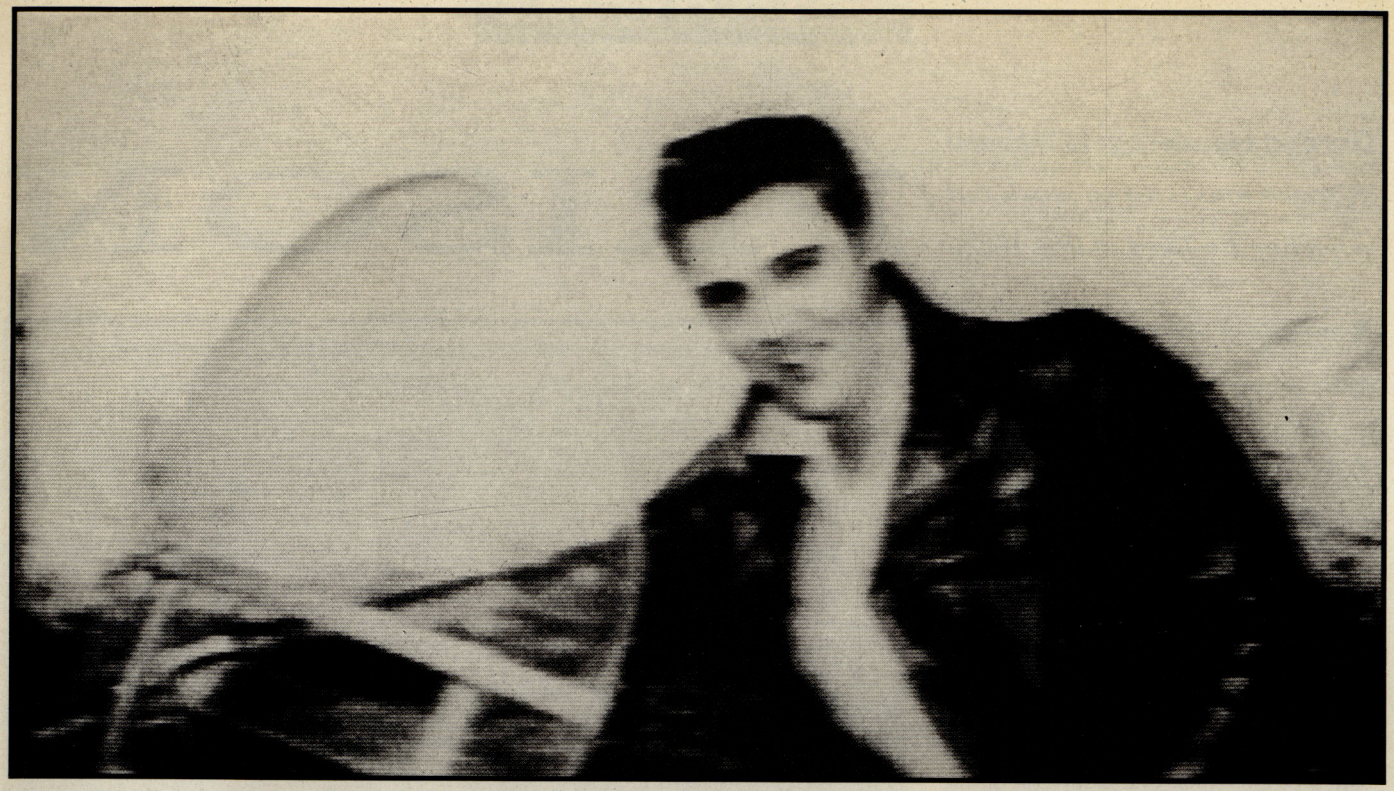
Features

There are different digitising options for different camera types, all explained clearly in a refreshingly good manual with photographs to demonstrate what should be going on.

So that you can make use of your digitised pictures in other programs, *DigiView* will save the picture as an IFF file as well as in its own format. The picture can be preprocessed in a number of ways to increase the sharpness, to "soften" a picture, and to change its palette. You can also digitise to a preloaded palette to match other prepared artwork. If you choose to change the number of colours used in a picture then *DigiView* will dither the new



Create the right conditions and Digiview will create excellent pictures.



Digiview is a slow digitiser so a still frame was necessary to capture this picture.

colours to give a best possible representation of the original.

Any changes can be undone by returning to default settings. Further processing can be carried out on files saved in the internal format but not on IFF.

Pros and cons

As supplied *DigiView* does not feed a camera signal through to a separate monitor, nor can it do a quick "capture" to help you set up the shot. This is only a problem with a video camera. You can get round this with camcorders which have their own monitors; and if you're working from a video recorder, a television can act as a monitor. The parallel port is taken up by the *DigiView* unit, awkward for most printer users. You have to save, swap cables, reload and then select the print option. The PAL version is restricted to black and white on a 512K machine. With a second drive attached, the best you can achieve is lo-res with vertical overscan. NTSC and PAL versions of the software are present on the disk. A1000 owners will need a gender changer for their parallel port.

The quality of pictures achieved with *DigiView* is very high. The user interface is remarkably good, although you cannot easily move around directories in the file requester. The results definitely justify the cost. You can get into digitising very cheaply if the home video equipment is already available.

Extras

NewTek back up *DigiView Gold* with a range of equipment which the home user can acquire as budgets permit. None of the equipment is essential for digitising but will help improve the quality of your pictures and automate some of the procedures involved.

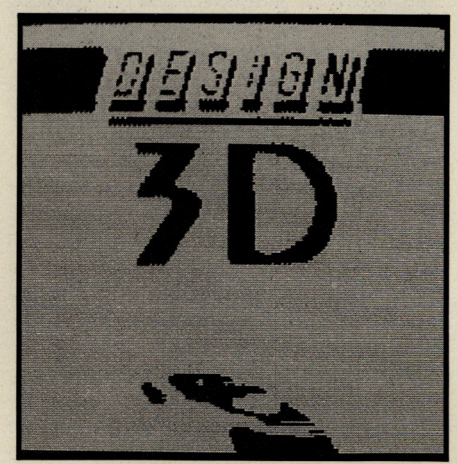
First off there's the recommended Panasonic *WV-1410* black and white camera and the *CS-1L* copy stand for digitising flat artwork. There's *Digi-Droid*, an ingenious motorised filter wheel which can come under *DigiView* software control for colour digitising. Finally there's NewTek's *Digi-Paint* which is capable of editing in HAM mode.

One item which NewTek don't provide is the distribution amplifier to allow camera connection to both *DigiView* and monitor. They send us in the direction of Tandy's (Radio Shack) for a 1×3 baseband distribution amp (15-1103).

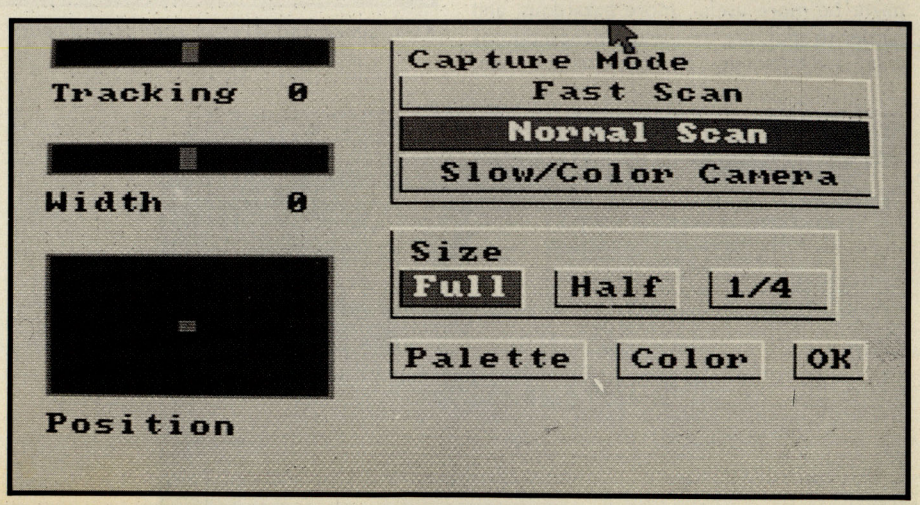
Factfile

DigiView Gold is published by Aegis Developments and is available in the UK from HB Marketing.

YA



Results of line-art mode.



Digitising from a paused video — only in black and white.

Gordon Hamlett gets trapped in space and tries to work out whether he likes it like that.

PRISON

■ **Sometimes the courts feel it neces—** sary to sentence a man to a fate worse than death. It would not, normally, be a case for celebration. But this time it does at least offer the faintest possibility of escape, and the chance to prove your innocence.

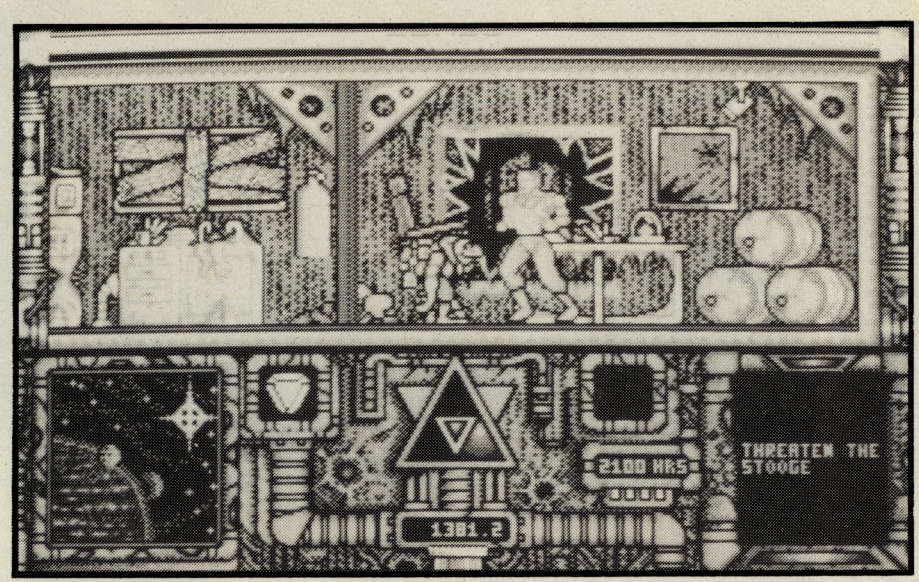
You are Jag Edwards, who had worked as an undercover cop trying to break a drugs ring. Just as you thought you had everything tied up, you were framed by a person or persons unknown. You are banished for life to the planet Altrax, an old mining settlement, long since worked out, and now deserted apart from society's misfits.

Normally, there would be no escape, but in *Prison* you have the opportunity to find a, mysteriously lost, one man escape pod. The only problem is that everybody else on the planet is looking for it too.

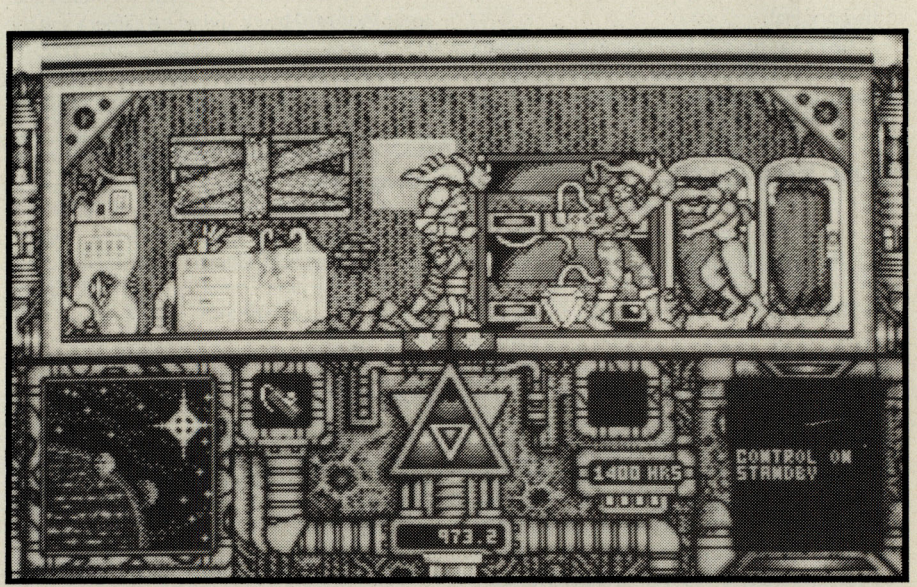
The game boils down to a fairly simple maze arrangement in which you have to beat up the baddies and solve a few puzzles along the way. A menu gives access to the various commands necessary for solving the game, such as searching a location, sleeping, manipulating objects that you have discovered, and saving your current position.

You are told to search a location when a small light on your control panel blinks on and off. What you are not told, however, is which part of the location to search. This can prove crucial. For example, to get through to a certain part of the game you'll need to use a door, but this is frequently blocked by rubble. Several locations away there is some high explosive, but watch out for those booby-traps. Nearby is the booby-trap control mechanism. Once you've found that, you can pull the correct wire, disarm the bomb and pick up the T.N.T.

Other hazards come from monsters that have to be kicked and thumped to death. Some monsters though (the stooges) are willing to trade some of your items for other stuff that might be more useful. More hazardous, and harder to spot, are the various mines, booby-traps, and bottomless pits that litter the place.



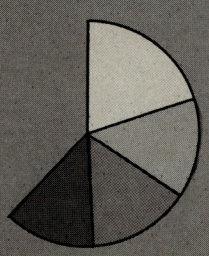
Stooges can be helpful but not if you threaten them



Kick, punch and wrestle your way through combat situations

PRISON

Title: **Prison**
Supplier: **Chrysalis Software Ltd**
Price: N/A



Graphics: **20**
Sound: **14**
Gameplay: **15**
Value: **13**

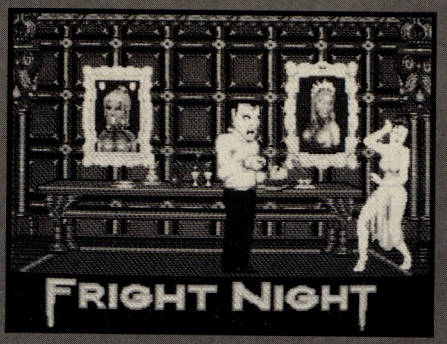
Prison looks excellent with its atmospheric back drops and original aliens. The problem comes with the game's linear structure, where there is really only way forward. Once you've discovered that, the game becomes very repetitive, although there is a save game facility to prevent the need for permanent backtracking.

Because the useful items are always in the same locations, and the flashing light tells you whether or not to bother looking, the game becomes just a shade too easy. Once you solve this type of game, there is no great desire ever to go back to it. I'd suggest that its long term appeal is somewhat limited.

GRH *YA*

Don't cross me

Duncan Evans files his teeth and goes for Fright Night's jugular.



'This looks a bit dodgy.'

■ **The horror, the horror! No, not the** editor, but Microdeal's foray into the world of the undead, the pallid looking, the long toothed, and the nightmare world of film conversion.

Yes, this is *Fright Night*, the game with a bite. Literally.Well, nearly

Microdeal reverses the usual Transylvanian expectations: instead of playing a frightened young chap who is convinced that vampires live next door, and tells all to an unbelieving police force, you are that vampire next door.

You are, in fact, Jerry Dandridge, an honest, hard sleeping sucker of blood, whose home has been invaded by all manner of horrible things: bank managers, social workers, traffic wardens — that sort of thing. Needless to say you spend your time in this hell-house searching for victims, while avoiding the ghosts of past victims.

Each night you emerge from your nice, warm coffin, and have to bite a set number of necks before returning to your resting place. The six hours you have to do this are indicated by a shadow passing across the moon.

Erm, yes; just like the film. Have the programmers actually seen it? Anyway, as your very large character moves from room to room hands burst through the floorboards, in true horror movie style, and green ghosts of past victims (including a topless young woman) 'cycle' around in a frenzied manner.

All these attacks have a detrimental effect upon your deathforce, as you'll notice when layers of flesh begin to vanish from a vignette of your head. Yuck !

The game starts on Monday night,but your progress through the rest of the week becomes increasingly more difficult as someone keeps adding floors onto your house during the daytime.

Jerry's actions are limited to crouching and leaping when he's in pursuit of dinner. When dinner is in sight it's only necessary to move over to it and let Jerry auto-bite. His biting is accompanied by a very funny slurping noise. This also serves to restore valuable deathforce, which decreases all too quickly.

The fang-fodder do have some recourse, mind you, as they will throw bibles, crosses, holy water, Donny Osmond tapes and the like, at you. The effect these items have depends on the extent of the religious belief of the victim.

Apart from the growing house there are few other things to worry the potential vampire. No objects to collect, no locked doors or anything other than the avoidence of ghostly sprites.

■ **Initially *Fright Night* is very impres-** sive with a great title page, and some wonderfully atmospheric music. Just pump it through your hi-fi, turn the lights down, and treat yourself to excellent backgrounds and the prospect of a jolly good time.

You know that something is wrong when the game virtually reverses the plot of the film it's supposed to be based on but, what the hell, put that down to artistic licence. And those sprites are rather large and well animated.

The trouble starts when you get a couple of sprites on screen at once because everything starts to jerk and slow down. Considering that nothing is scrolling this is ridiculous — Steve Bak should really have done much better.

Things start to get worse when you get to day two where, from being very easy, the game progresses to being very difficult in one leap. Has this been playtested or what ?

A sinking feeling starts to set in when you realise that's all there is to the game. No objects to collect, no real strategy, nothing. The whole game feels like Pete Lyon spent ages on the graphics, and Steve churned the code out in a weekend. I find it difficult to believe that anyone has been working on this game for so long that the film sequel, *Fright Night II*, is now on general release.

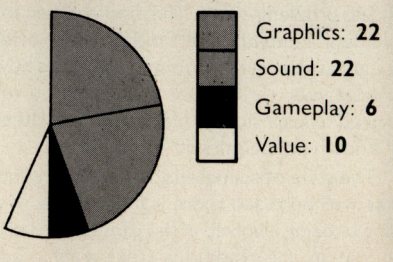
There are some nice touches to *Fright Night*: the sprites are large, and well animated, the backgrounds are well drawn, if a little ghoulish and perverse in parts, but the gameplay is woefully inadequate.

It was fun for an hour. ***YA***

'Looks like a nice place to spend the night.'

FRIGHT NIGHT

Product:**Fright Night**
Supplier: **Microdeal, P.O. Box 68, St. Austell, Cornwall, PL25 4YB.**
Telephone:**(0726) 68020**
Price: **£19.95**



Graphics: **22**
Sound: **22**
Gameplay: **6**
Value: **10**

POLICE QUEST

Gordon Hamlett looks at some Softly Softly and not too tasking ware

■ **With large numbers of American cop** shows on our screens, there must be many readers who feel that they have more than a passing acquaintance with police procedure over on the other side of the Atlantic. *Police Quest* from *Sierra*, marketed by *Activision*, gives you the opportunity to put all that theory into practice.

The game was written by an ex-police officer and this soon becomes apparent when you start to play the game, because the amount of detail is considerable. You will have to learn and use all the appropriate radio calls, some thirty three of them, ranging from 11-82 (traffic collision, property damage only) to, the one that everybody knows, 10-4 (message received)

The game is set in the town of Lytton. You and your colleagues are on the trail of a major criminal known to the press as Death Angel, a major drug trafficker. If you prove to be a competent enough police officer, you will be asked to work as an undercover agent with one of the perks of the job being that you are allowed to grow a beard! (GRH has suffered from hairy face syndrome ever since I have known him — Ed).

But before you get to make your big arrest, and cover yourself in glory, there is all the rest off the routine police work to be done. Petty crime, traffic offences and all the routine meetings that you have to attend — miss your first briefing and it's game over time. It is no good shooting first and asking questions afterwards unless you are sure that you are going to get the right answers. You have to make your cases stick in court.

Lytton has over 100 streets that you will have to patrol. When you are driving around, you are presented with a top-down map of the town. It is up to you to decide whether to drive within the rules or switch on your siren and flashing light. Otherwise, everything is in 3-D and you can walk just about anywhere. You will also be able to access the police computer in order to glean information on suspects.

Control of the game is a combination of joystick/mouse movements, function keys, and the usual adventure style sentence input. Most of the vocabulary required is listed for you; I found no problems there. The mouse is used for movement control. The function keys offer quick access to certain commands such as how you drive your car and use your gun. You will also need to learn how to play poker, that other well known police pursuit!

The style of animated adventure certainly works well here and there is much more of a feeling of being involved in the game than there ever was in the traditional text/graphic adventure. The graphics are bright, and colourful, and there are no problems trying to work out what is what.

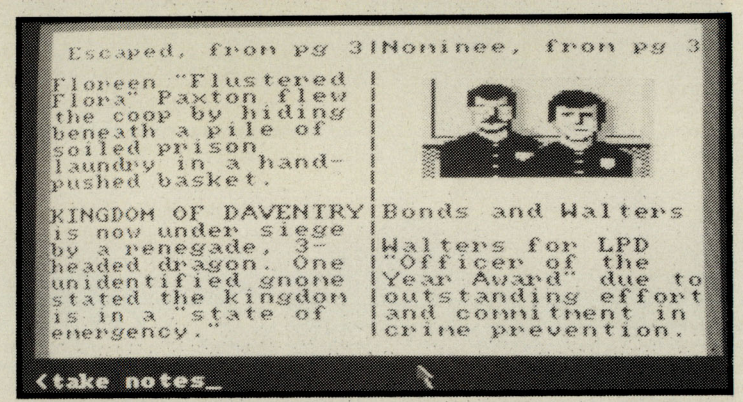
Documentation is first class. There is a large map of the town, several reference cards and an instruction booklet giving details of how to behave, what codes to use, and even a step by step guide to getting started. Other companies would do well to take note.

Using the mouse to move round takes a bit of getting used to, especially when it comes to entering rooms. Although you specify where you want to move to using a cursor, you have to remember that you cannot walk through solid objects — you must walk around them — there is no artificial intelligence built into the program.

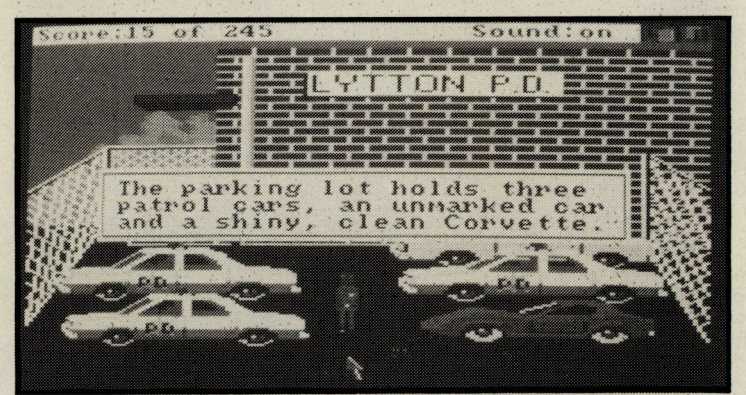
That minor quibble apart, the only other thing that is likely to annoy some people is that the attention to detail is almost too great. Everything has to be done exactly according to the book and you will find yourself caught up in tangles of red tape when really, you want to be out playing Dirty Harry. Even little niceties, such as personal hygiene, have to be observed. A policeman is required to shower every day.

The depth of detail in *Police Quest* is extraordinary and anybody looking for a realistic police adventure should look no further.

YA



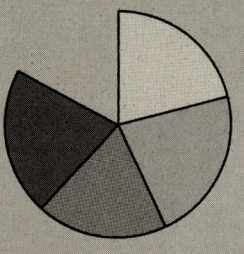
Newspapers provide a source of information



Walk round your car before entering it — someone might have tampered with it

POLICE QUEST

Title: **Police Quest**
Supplier: **Activision**
Tel: **0734 311666**
Price: **£24.99**



Graphics: **21**
Story: **22**
Gameplay: **19**
Value: **21**

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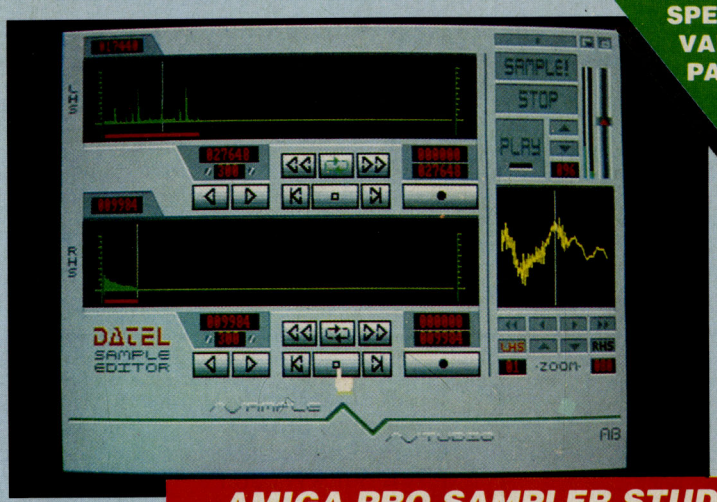

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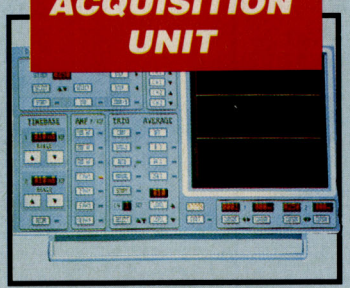

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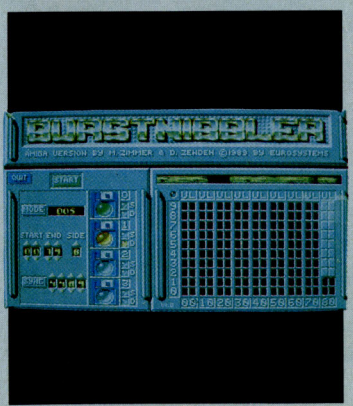

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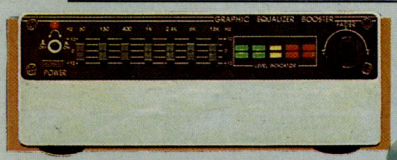

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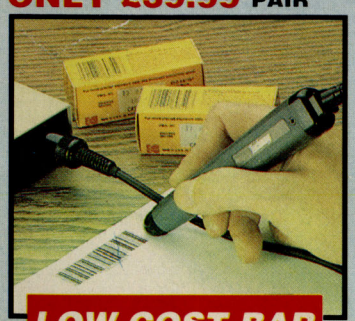

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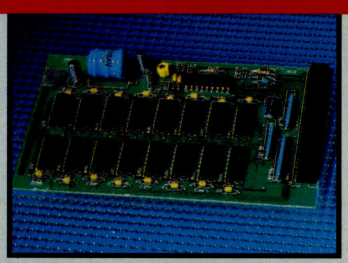

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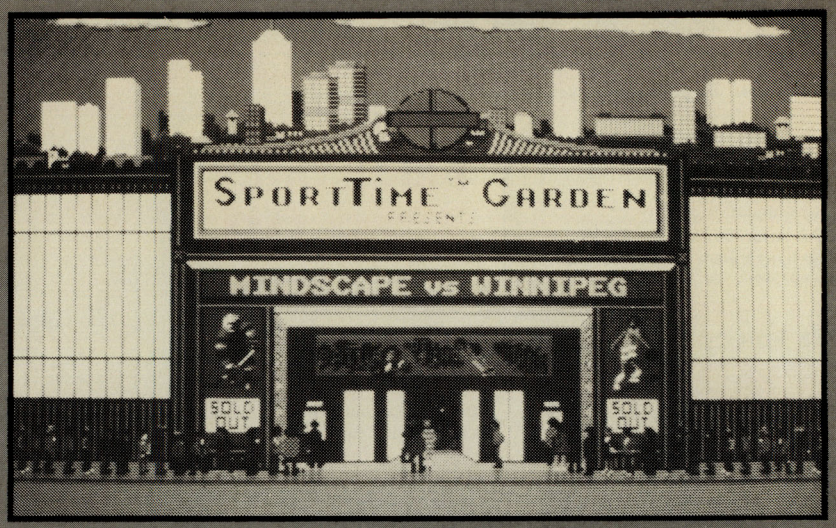
Ice and

Duncan Evans cuts a dashing figure as he skates through Mindscape's answer to TV Sports Football



Wayne Gretsky where are you, in Winnipeg?

■ **I don't know what you think of when** the name Mindscape is mentioned, but I'm immediately reminded of *Balance of Power*, and cold war machinations. Well, this latest offering from Mindscape, newly set up in this country, is comepletely different to that, and owes more to Cinemaware's *TV Sports Football* than anything geo-political.

In *American Ice Hockey* you are assigned the role of coach and players (yes you can be more than one player in the game) — the newest bunch of wetnoses to hit the ice hockey circuit. Thankfully, you can change your team's name, and indeed most other preset pieces of data such as the division you compete in, number of games per season, games played in each division, conference, and SportTime playoffs.

The first thing you'll notice about your team is that they aren't very good. 'Useless' might be a favourable term.

Despair not, help is at hand. Well, some sort of help anyway. You are given 250 trading points which can be used to send your team to training camp, can help sign rookies from the minor leagues, and can be used to facilitate player trade. Yep, get rid of the has-been and draft some star youngster to get your team on the right track.

When you get down to the playing side you can either be the coach yourself, or have the computer make those decisions for you. For newcomers you might want to let the computer make the calls for a while, to see what it does.

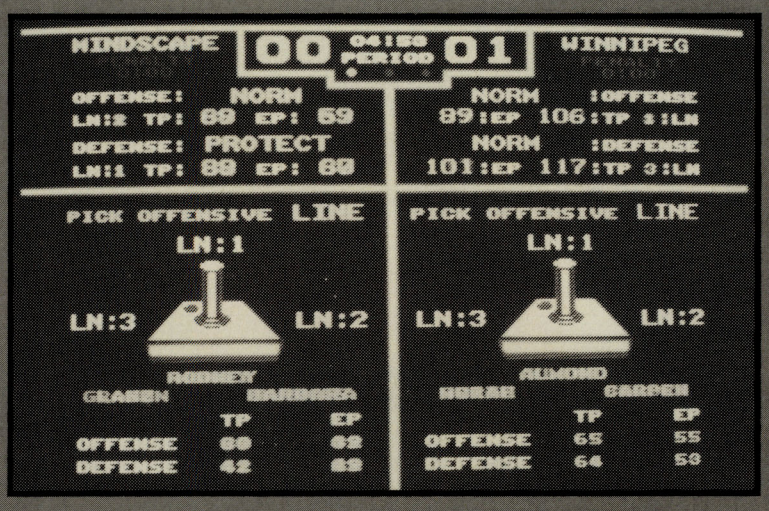
Basically your team has offensive and defensive lines of players. The longer a player is out on the ice, the more tired he becomes, and his efficiency goes down. This is worst for older players than for the young legs. The point is that unless you pull an old line out and send a new line of players in, then you're going to have dead men on the ice.

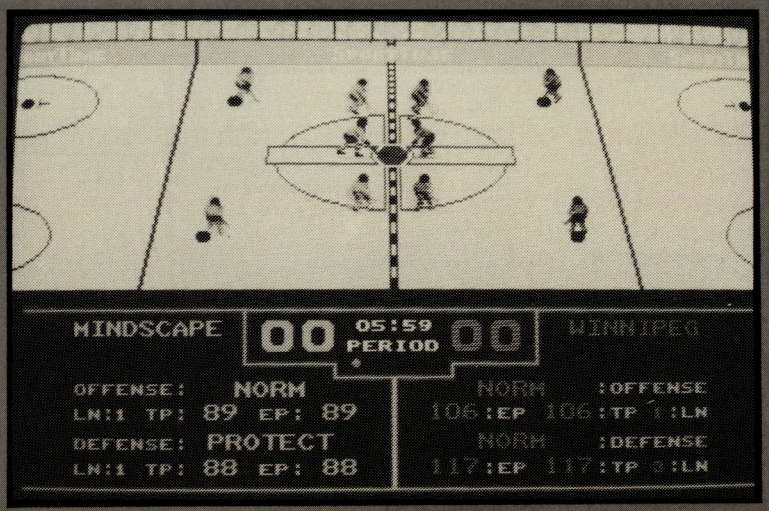
The problem's arise when you're third string offense are complete rubbish and you're losing by one in the third period. What now coach?

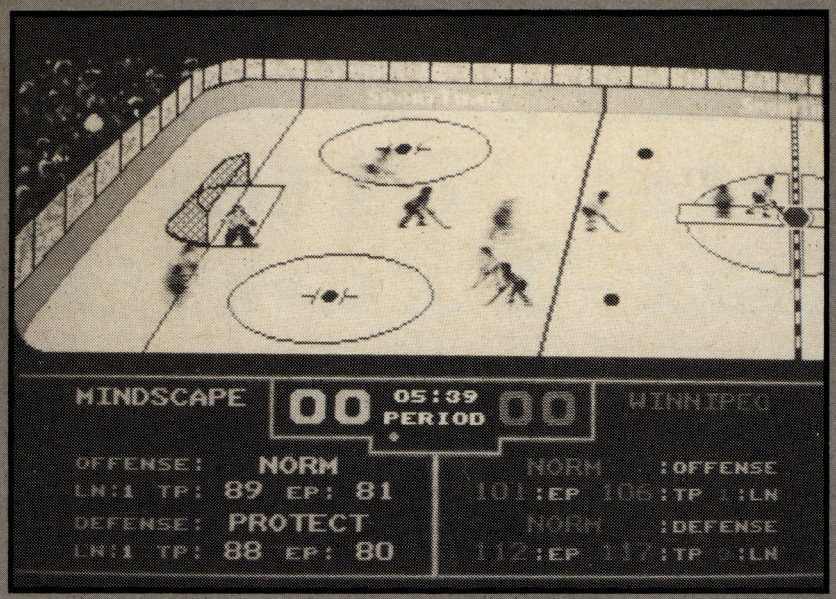
Then you've got to consider what sort of tactics your offence and defence should be employing. Get rough and try to keep them out, or throw caution to the wind and really go for it ?

Oh well, you could just play the team and leave the strategy to the computer. You can play the goalie or the centre, but the best part is that you can hack and slash to your heart's content!

You don't like the opposing goalie ? A stick in the chops will soon wipe the smile off





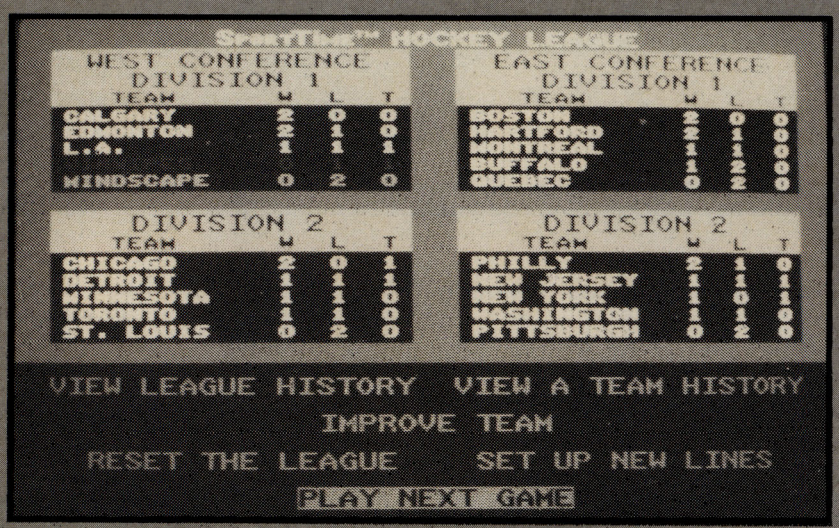


See, the whole point of the game is to go in completely the opposite direction to everyone else.

his face. Beware though, 'cos the other team aren't going to be happy, and if the ref sees you then it's off to the Sin Bin.

Don't expect to get very far in your first year: it takes practice, skill, and more importantly, good players (which you don't start with) before you'll be up there challenging for the SportTime Cup.

easy



The Galgary Flames, lah, lah, lah, the Galgary Flames.

■ **Whether *American Ice Hockey* is a** good game or not is a moot point if you don't like ice hockey. I'm glad to say that I do, and it is.

It doesn't have the style and glamour of *TV Sports Football*, and the graphics aren't much better than on the PC and C64 versions of this game, that I've seen. Plus, the sound effects and music are someone's idea of a joke. One that isn't funny. This is an Amiga, not a Spectrum you know.

Where this game scores is that it has depth, playability, and it's a lot of fun. Even the novice player can get a lot of enjoyment out on the ice, hacking away at everything that moves.

The management side, whereby your team is improved season after season, is an excellent idea, and certainly scores over Cinemaware's product in that respect. If you want to simply play a management game then you can. Just leave the computer to do the biz on the ice, and maybe even call the tactics for the team yourself.

What is very strange is that all the records that are kept last up to nine years, all the players ages are rated from one to nine years (after which they stay at that age and must eventually be retired). This smacks of being a programming dodge on the C64 that has been carried onto the Amiga for convenience sake. Ho, hum.

The action down on the ice is quite frenetic, and the animation is pretty good, making up for the lack of flashy graphics elsewhere.

This is one game for fans of the sport only, as it doesn't have the style to carry it through to the unconverted. But if you are so inclined then get down there and get ready to face off. *YA*

ICE AND EASY

Product: **American Ice Hockey**
Supplier: **Mindscape, PO Box 1019, Lewes, East Sussex, BN8 4DW.**
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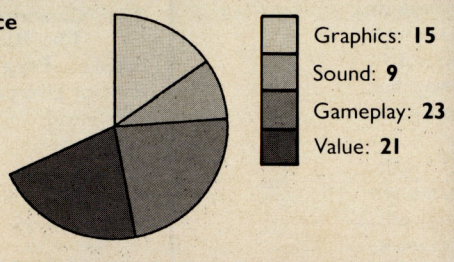

REVIEW

Captain Fizz Meets The Blaster-Trons

Dave Reeder treads "where no man has trod before" — and soon wonders why it looks familiar

■ ***Deja vu*** **can be rather a curse. No** sooner had I powered up this "most exciting simultaneous two-player game you and a friend are ever likely to play" than I realised two things — first, whoever writes the ad copy for *Psygnosis* had better brush up on English grammar and, secondly, I had seen it before. And I wasn't impressed then either!

In fact, this is turkey time. The game plays like an 8 bit title because it is an 8 bit title — virtually the same as the coding team's earlier "spectacular fast-action game...with 20 levels of nerve-racking excitement", then known as *Icarus*.

The idea is this. Across a split screen, you and a friend (if you have a friend after trying to get any of them to play this game) have to clear 22 levels of nasties, after they have cloned you — hence the two screens, obvious isn't it? You can play alone, if you prefer, but *Psygnosis* claims you can't complete the game on your own.

All the features you'd expect of a split-screen, multi-alien, clear the levels game are here — aliens, locked doors, keys, energy pills, endless corridors, sliding doors, energy walls, blitter bombs, etc etc. Everything you'd expect, that is, apart from a pounding soundtrack and dazzling graphics. This ain't a bad game — it's just not an Amiga game.

Still, there is some excitement to be had — the aliens need some clearing, there are a few puzzles to solve, the need to cooperate at times with a partner promotes a useful social skill. Whether that is worth nearly £15 of your money is a question for you to answer.

My answer? Just don't ask — I've now got two versions of a game I don't enjoy and find ridiculously easy. Just imagine this — a friend came round one evening, never plays computer games and got to the end of level one without any help and without losing a life. That's an easy game!

YA

CAPTAIN FIZZ MEETS THE BLASTER-TRONS

Title: **Captain Fizz Meets The Blaster-Trons**
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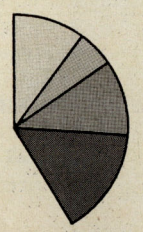

Graphics: **10**
Sound: **8**
Gameplay: **8**
Value: **10**

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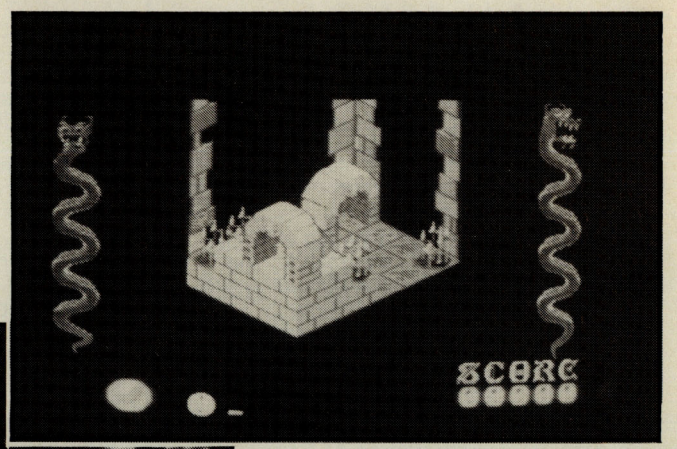
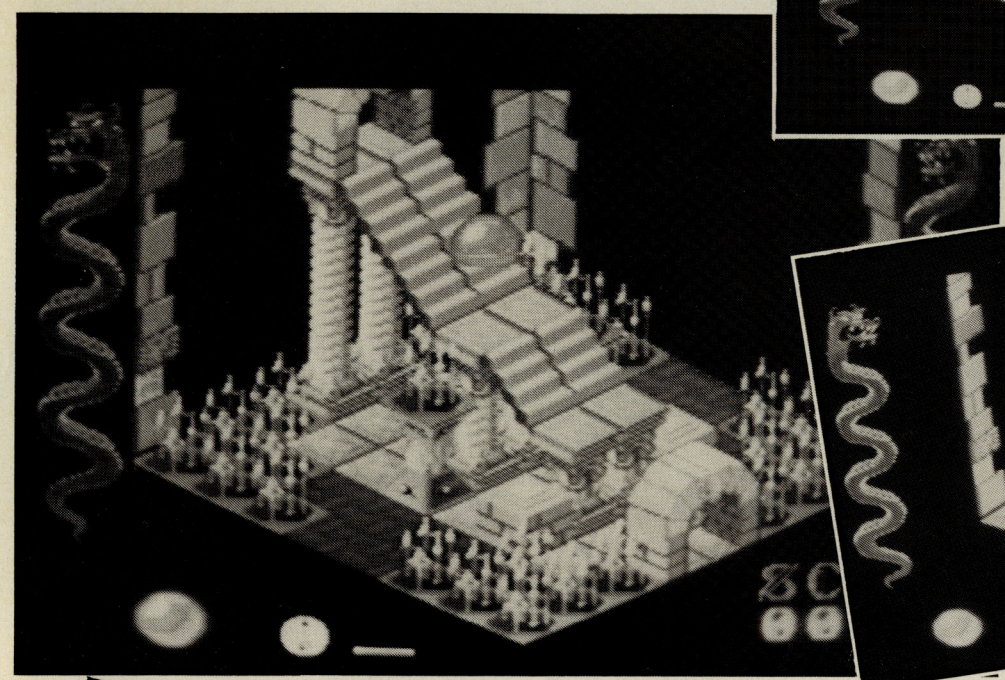
REVIEW

Airball

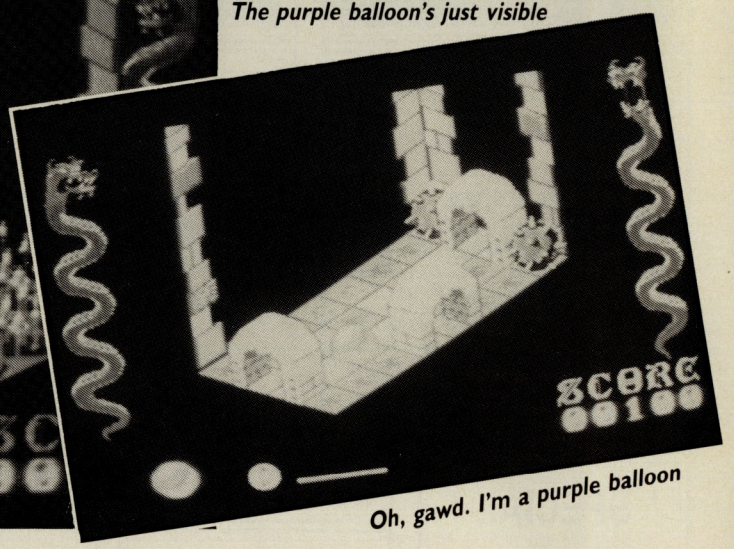
A haunted castle, a hero who's full of hot air and searching for the hidden spell book — Dave Reeder braves the on-screen dangers.



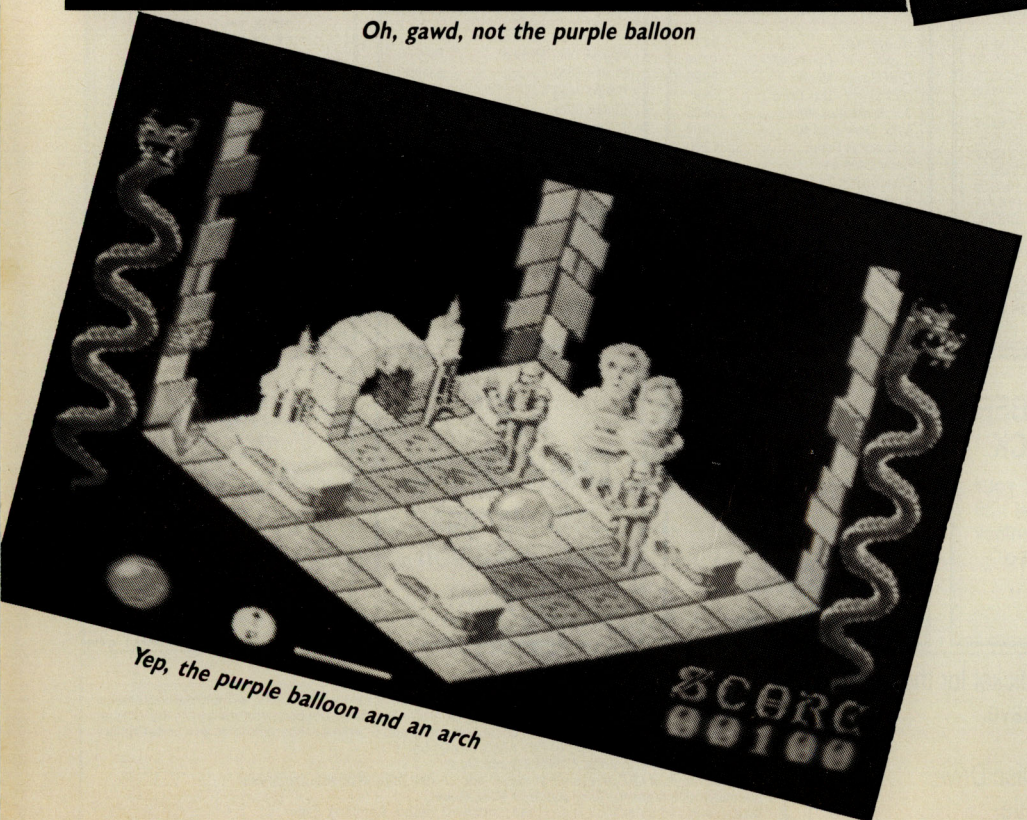
The purple balloon's just visible



Oh, gawd, not the purple balloon



Oh, gawd. I'm a purple balloon



Yep, the purple balloon and an arch

■ **As a punishment for having the temer-**ity to trespasss into the wizard's domain, he turns you into a balloon. The only way to regain your normal shape is to search his castle's many rooms and floors for a book of spells — find this, return it to the start room, and the wizard will then tell you how to complete your quest.

In addition, many rooms have objects placed in them at random — these can be collected for extra points, etc. Equally, your balloon nature means you are vulnerable to two dangers. The first, a slow escape of air, can be cured by finding pumps and filling yourself with air again. But the second, contact with a sharp object, is fatal.

You can roll or bounce (over objects or up stairs) and pick up objects. The game has usual volume, pause and keyboard/joystick options as well as a screen position adjuster.

It starts well. A pre-game introductory sequence — optional if you press the spacebar during a short countdown — sets the mood well. An ornate castle room, subtly furnished with pastel shades, appears, and a teenage boy (representing the player) sneaks across the screen. Suddenly, the wizard slides into view, gestures, and before you can say 'eye of a

Spot the purple balloon; the moon's a balloon? Where's David Niven?

newt' the boy vanishes and, in his place, is a bouncing balloon. This wizard does not mess around.

Sadly, it all seems to go downhill from there. It's almost as if that introductory vignette, plus the attractive title screen, has sucked the creativity from coders Ed Scio and Pete Lyon. There are good things in the game like Paul Shields' pounding and compulsive music soundtrack — but the game is given away by its 1987 copyright notice.

Is it an early Amiga game, now repackaged, or an old 8-bit scenario brought screaming into the 16-bit arena? I don't know. What I do know, however, is that whoever coded this must have spent a lot of their youth playing Ultimate classics, notable Nightlore and Alien 8. It's all here — the lozenge shaped rooms, the blocky structures, the odd crystal shapes, the objects that move from game to game, the enigmatic control panel and lack of coherent instructions.

Now I could cope with all of that if the game was of equivalent quality — it isn't. The plotline has been used too often. The balloon hero, although a nice idea allowing some graphic versatility, is too difficult to control with any real accuracy. And so on, and so on.

What is of interest are some little touches — a series of rooms lit only by some kind of phosphorescent glow, the need to pump the hero with air and the music. For the rest, I don't see myself returning to the game too often; not even for the mapping challenge that it represents. There's just not enough variety or machine-stretching coding to make it much more than a curiosity.

A shame that, because the programmers have talent, the rooms are well designed, the music pounds along pumping your adrenalin — it just doesn't lead anywhere. *YA*

Trouble time for the purple balloon

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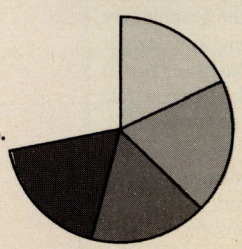


Graphics:**18**
Sound:**19**
Gameplay:**17**
Value:**18**

REVIEW

Manhunter New York

New York has been invaded by alien beings.

Tony Hetherington helps them out.

■ **The Place is New York. The time is** the future. It is two years since the aliens invaded, and occupied the world. Now you are a Manhunter, contracted by the aliens to track human activities, monitor their movements and report subversive activities to your alien masters. As the game progresses you'll delve deeper into the underground, discover the true nature of the Orbs (the invaders) and decide your own destiny.

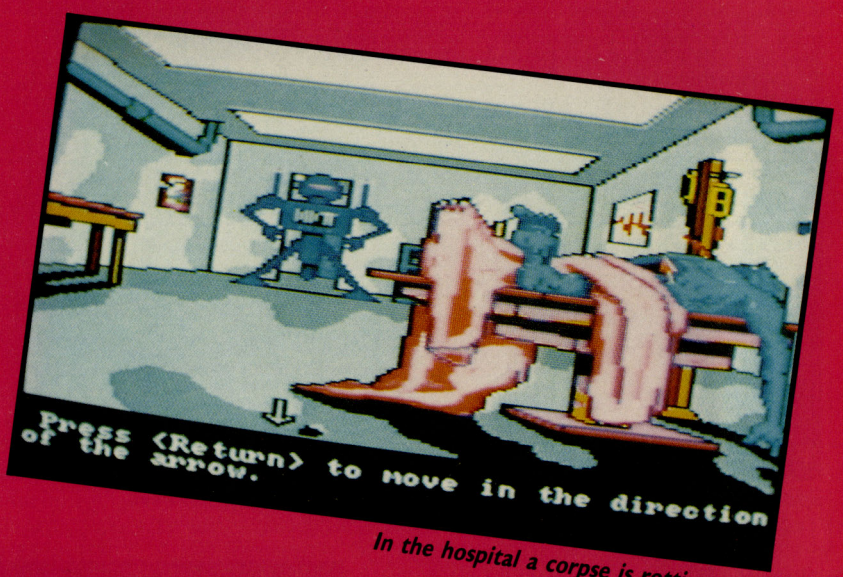
Manhunter New York is one of Sierra's range of animated adventures in which your actions are controlled by mouse, and involves a minimum of typing. As the game begins you are woken by an Orb and told to track down a target with your scanner. This leads you to the hospital and the corpse of another Manhunter, to a bar full of thugs, to a church, and then deep into the adventure.

As in any adventure you will collect objects for later use as well as take notes on your electronic notebook which forms part of your scanner unit.

Movement is carried out on a map of New York (also supplied in the pack) which you can zoom in on to get a closer look. However you must know the address of a place to visit before you can go there.

The style of Manhunter has you as the central character of an animated film. So there are sections of the game just to watch. This isn't an opportunity to go and put the kettle on as these sequences often contain important clues.

As Zork Zero depends on it's text, Manhunter will stand on it's graphics and the atmosphere it can create. ***YA***



In the hospital a corpse is rotting.

Throw knives between his fingers. If you succeed you live, draw blood and you die!

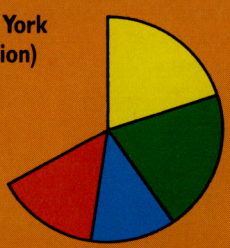
■ **The hooded figures and distorted** faces of the people you meet piles on the games atmosphere of a world under alien control. You shouldn't expect a warm reception as you start out working for the Orbs and gradually infiltrate the underground. After that you must decide whose side you're on, and act accordingly.

For computer animation the graphics are good and it is quite fun tracking your target and plotting his movements. But the game is also punctuated with arcade plays that would look more at home in the past than the future and spoil the game. Why, when you've created such atmosphere destroy it with a simple pop balloons game, or a maze game.

These games will either become a minor nuisance, major stumbling block, or light relief, depending on your perspective. My choice would be to opt for Zork Zero.

MANHUNTER NEW YORK

Title: **Manhunter New York**
Supplier: **Sierra (Activision)**
Blake House.
Manor Farm Road.
Reading.
BERKS. RG2 0JN.
Price: **£24.99**



Graphics: **20**
Sound: **20**
Gameplay: **12**
Value: **15**

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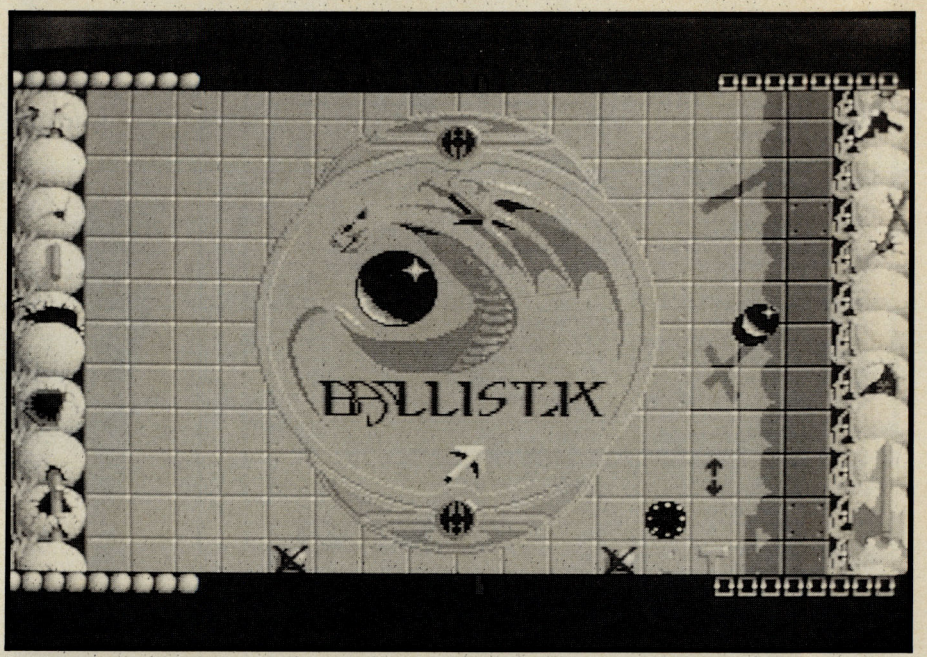
Ballistix

Dave Reeder tackles the game that requires a lot of balls — on screen, that is.



■ **I don't know what I was expecting, but** it wasn't this. A recent convert to the Amiga, I knew that great graphics and thudding soundtracks were the order of the day. What I hadn't realised was the sheer nail-biting excitement of a good 16 bit game.

And then along comes a great 16 bit game. Based to some extent, as the coders cheerfully admit, on *Crossfire*, the game is a furious combination of pinball, air hockey and futuristic gladitorial combat (remember *Rollerball*?).

The idea is simplicity itself — you must put the puck into your opponent's goal, using a steady or carefully controlled stream of balls, fired from a small pointer on screen. If only it were that simple — your opponent is doing exactly the same, of course, and the screen soon becomes filled with an enormous number of balls.

Then the problems begin! Dotted around the 130 levels (50 for one-player; another 80 for two-player) are pinball-like elements — bumpers, fenders and attractors. Some of these help, some hinder. In addition, special effect squares appear at random which can be good or bad — shield your goal, invert opponent's joystick control, slow your own control, etc. There's also a healthy bonus for collecting the letters RICOCHET.

So far, so neat. What sets the game apart, however, is the sheer speed of the action and the excitement of the gameplay. This can be changed, however, as a comprehensive set of options allow you to fire from different positions, change the balls' speed, alter the number of balls permitted, tweak the auto repeat rate and so on.

Those features suggest a very good playing life for the game and, although there may be too many levels for comfort (passwords allowed), I don't believe you'll tire of its action. What will certainly keep your attention on the screen is the very high quality of the graphics — 32 colours, hardware scrolling and sprites.

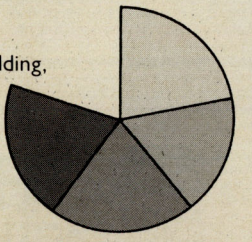
In other words, this is one game written for the Amiga's strengths — and it shows. So expect background screens that are consistently interesting, title screen figures that are impressive and action sprites that are entirely convincing. Sound too is excellent — a steady music score plus encouragement from the crowd keeps the adrenalin pumping.

This is a stunning game — lots of excitement, great graphics, unusual gameplay and so on. What is even more worthy of note is that this is programmer Martin Edmondson's first Amiga game, following two well-received BBC games. The same team are now working on a multi-level, sideways scrolling blaster. I can't wait.

YA

BALLISTIX

Title: **Ballistix**
Supplier: **Psygnosis**
Port of Liverpool Building,
Liverpool L3 3AB
Tel: **051-709 5755**
Price: **£19.95**



Graphics: **22**
Sound: **17**
Gameplay: **21**
Value: **20**

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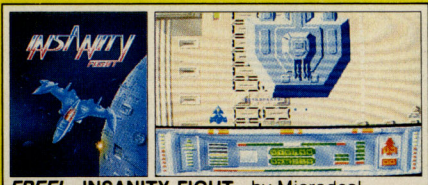

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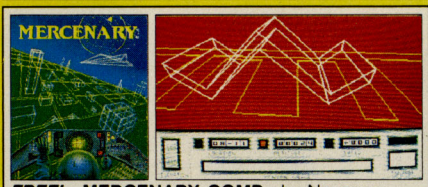

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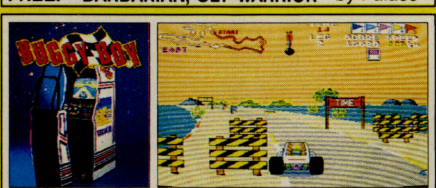

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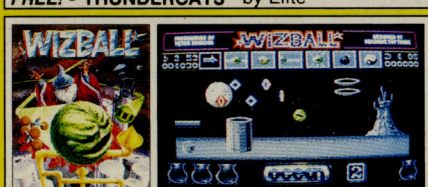

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ALTERNATE REALITY — THE CITY

■ **You have been kidnapped!**

As if that was not bad enough, your captors turn out to be aliens taking you to some unknown place on the farside. When you awake from your drugged sleep, you find yourself in a room with only one exit. Above the door is a panel consisting of a series of rapidly changing numbers which freeze as soon as you walk through the door. Once outside your are confronted with the city of Xebec's Demise.

The numbers fix your major statistics for the start of the game,in stamina, charm, intelligence, strength, wisdom, skill, hit points and wealth. It is impossible to make any sort of rational decision as to when to walk through the door — the numbers are spinning too fast and at several different rates. Instead, try to concentrate on hit points — the higher this figure, the better your chance of survival.

The object of the game is not clear. Do you aim to escape, or merely adapt and survive? Certainly, in the initial stages, survival is paramount. It is all too easy to get killed, especially if you wander around at night when thieves and monsters will cut your throat as soon as look at you.

You start off in the town square stark naked. Fortunately, there are some shops around where you can buy clothes.But unless you are particularly lucky with the amount of money received, you won't be able to afford a weapon.

The easiest way of earning extra money is to take a job in an inn, tavern or bank. There are a variety of tasks although you may not be suitable for all of them. For example, you need a lot of strength to become a bouncer, or a great deal of honesty if you want to work in the bank.This is not straightforward because the statistics shown at the top of the screen are not the only ones monitored throughout the course of the game.

As you explore, you will meet many different life forms, some benevolent, some not so. As well as attacking monsters, you can also try to trick or charm them, if your attributes are high enough. But be warned, this can be misconstrued as being an act of evil.

You are Kidnapped by aliens!

Many entrances to streets and buildings are hidden behind secret doors so you will need to go round walking into walls in order to see if they are real or not! *YA*

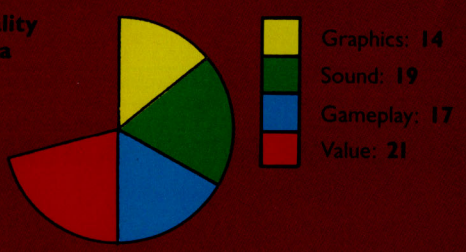
There are three main problems with *Alternate Reality*. The first is mapping. The display is in 3-D and unless you can map very accurately, you will not be able to work out where the secret rooms might be. In theory there are supposed to be subtle changes in the shading of walls to mark each section but, I must confess, they were too subtle for me. Some people love mapping, others loathe it. Personally, I wish it had been made just a little easier.

At the start of the game, you are likely to get very frustrated as your characters get killed off. The trick is to save your position frequently. Also, don't leave your save game disk in the drive because dead characters get wiped completely. Following this method, all that happens is that you have to restore the game from your last saved position.

Finally, you will notice that there are several areas of the game where access is denied you. This is because other modules in the series are planned: dungeon, palace, arena, wilderness, revelation and destiny. If these modules appear, then *Alternate Reality* will become a role-playing game well worth investing in. But it is a big 'if.' To date, I have only seen the dungeon module for the C64 (and very good it is too) but no- one seems to know whether Datasoft will ever get round to releasing any other modules for the Amiga. It would be a great pity if they didn't.

THE ALTERNATIVE REALITY

Title: **Alternate Reality**
Supplier: **Datasoft via Grandslam**
Tel:**01 247 6434**
Price:**19.99**



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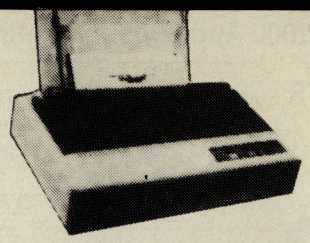

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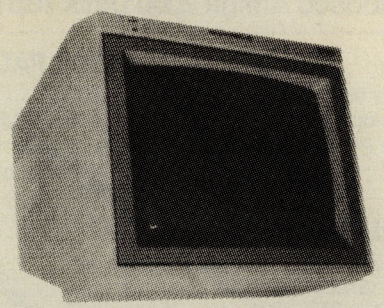

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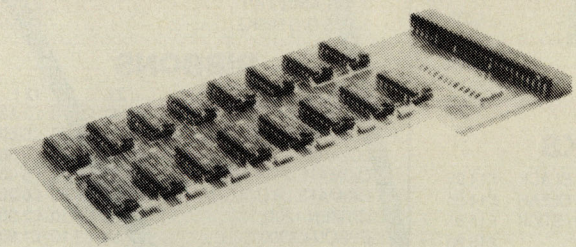

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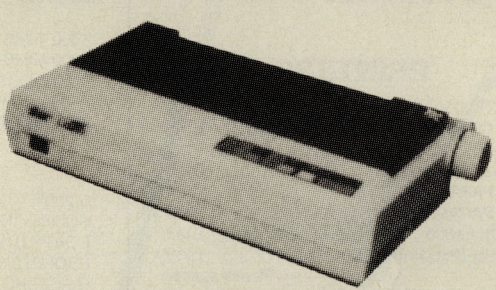

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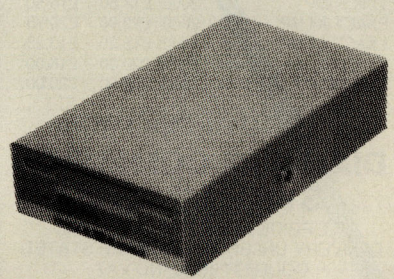

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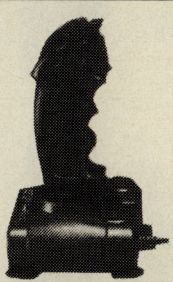

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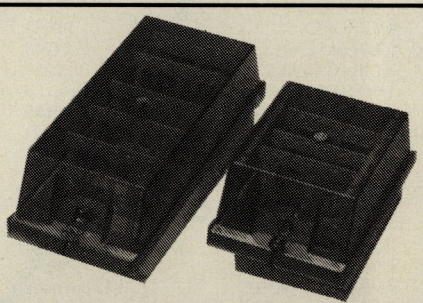

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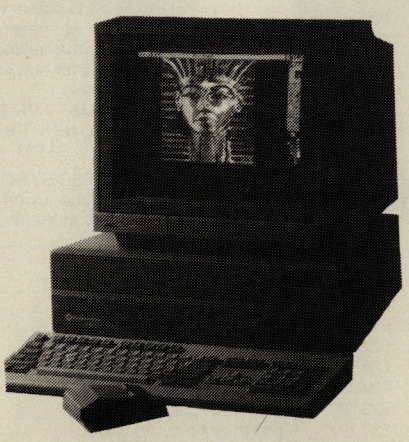

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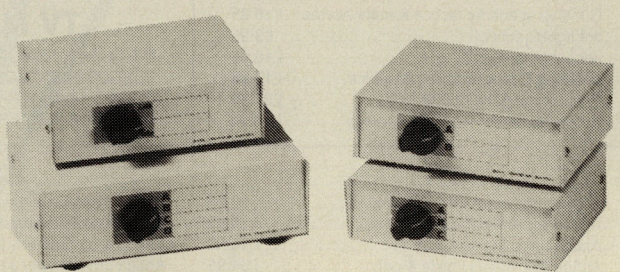

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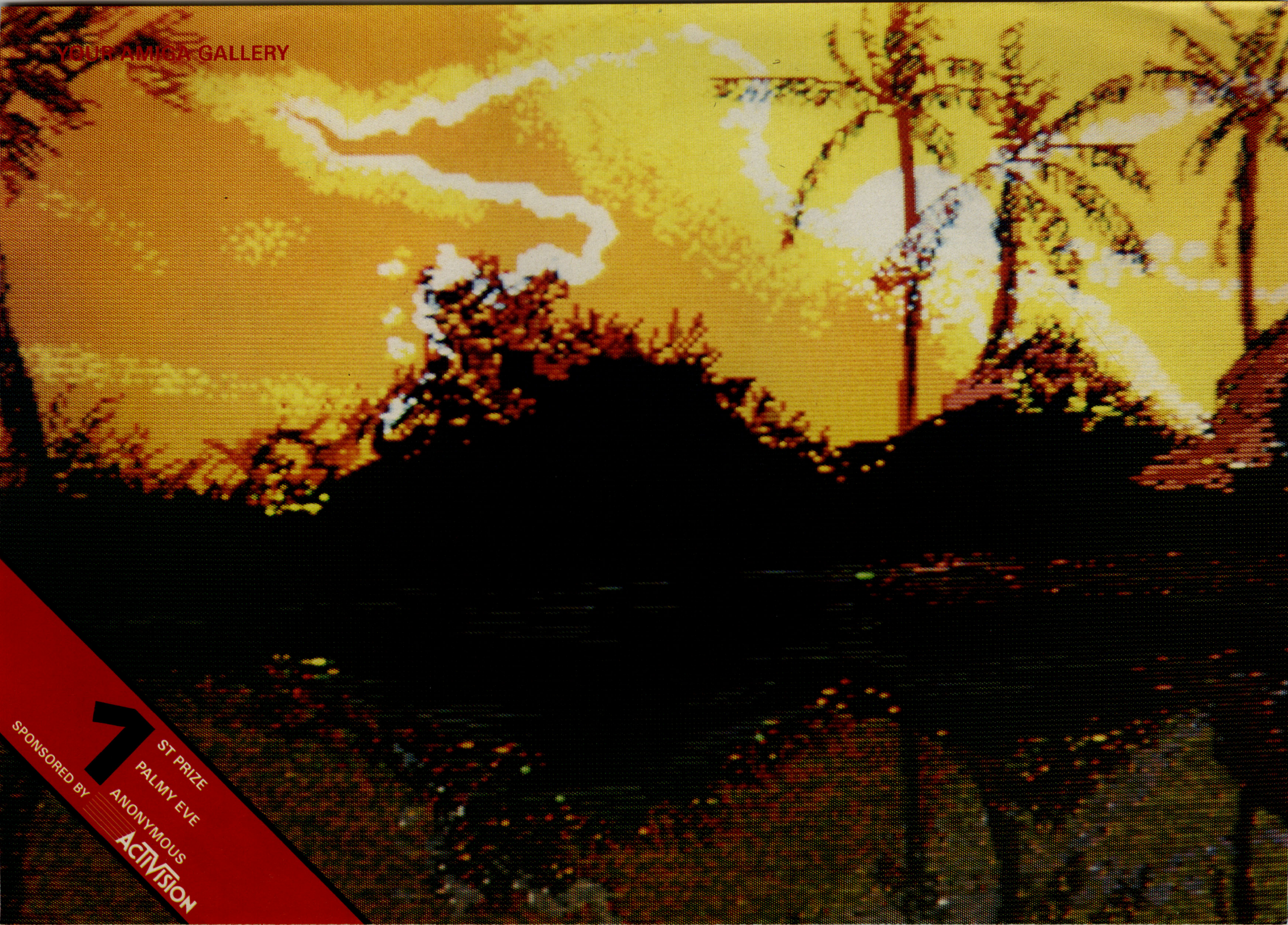

1ST PRIZE
PALMY EVE
ANONYMOUS

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2ND PRIZE
NOVATRON
BY BOB LANGENDOEN
BIERULIET, THE NETHERLANDS
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YOUR AMIGA GALLERY

Gordon Hamlett bares his teeth and shakes his wallet: is this worth it?

Blood Money

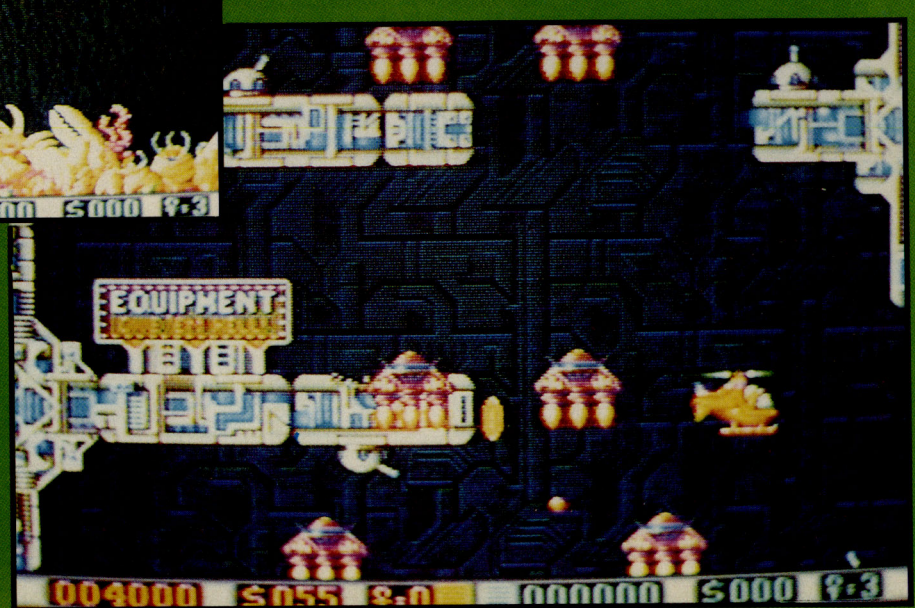
■ **Many of you will probably have come** across *Menace*, a shoot-em-up game, distributed last year by Psygnosis. *Blood Money* is the follow-up game to *Menace*. In the game you play the role of Spondulix who seeks adventure on safari on four different planets. First you can pilot a helicopter gunship on the planet Gibba. Next you can rent a submarine to wage war on the undersea world of Grone. If you have the stamina you can then borrow a jetpack for fun and games on Shreek. Finally, if you're not too worn out, it's time for mayhem in a rocket ship on the planet Snuff.Since the version tested was a normal retail version and in no way doctored, this review is based purely on an assessment of the first two levels — I haven't managed to reach the others yet!

The basic format is a standard four-way scrolling game with fixed borders to confine your movement. Apart from score panel, the entire screen scrolls without parallax effects. The path you must follow is rather like a maze where you have to change direction from time to time. Other obstructions are included to force you to weave about and, on occasion, pass through narrow openings such as constantly opening and closing gates. As you shoot the nasties coins appear in the air. Catch these to add to your bank balance. From time to time you encounter weapon shops. In these places you can exchange your hard earned cash for the usual range of weaponry. These include missiles, neutron bombs and higher speed drives for your vehicle. If you feel you need the help,there is an option for two players.

Inevitably, your progress is impeded by alien nasties of various types. These either fire at you or simply make life difficult by passing in large numbers across your way. The nasties tend to come as descrete waves. Overall they appear to have pre-programmed routes, although some appear to home in on you. Complete a planet and, provided that you have enough cash, you can move onto the next.

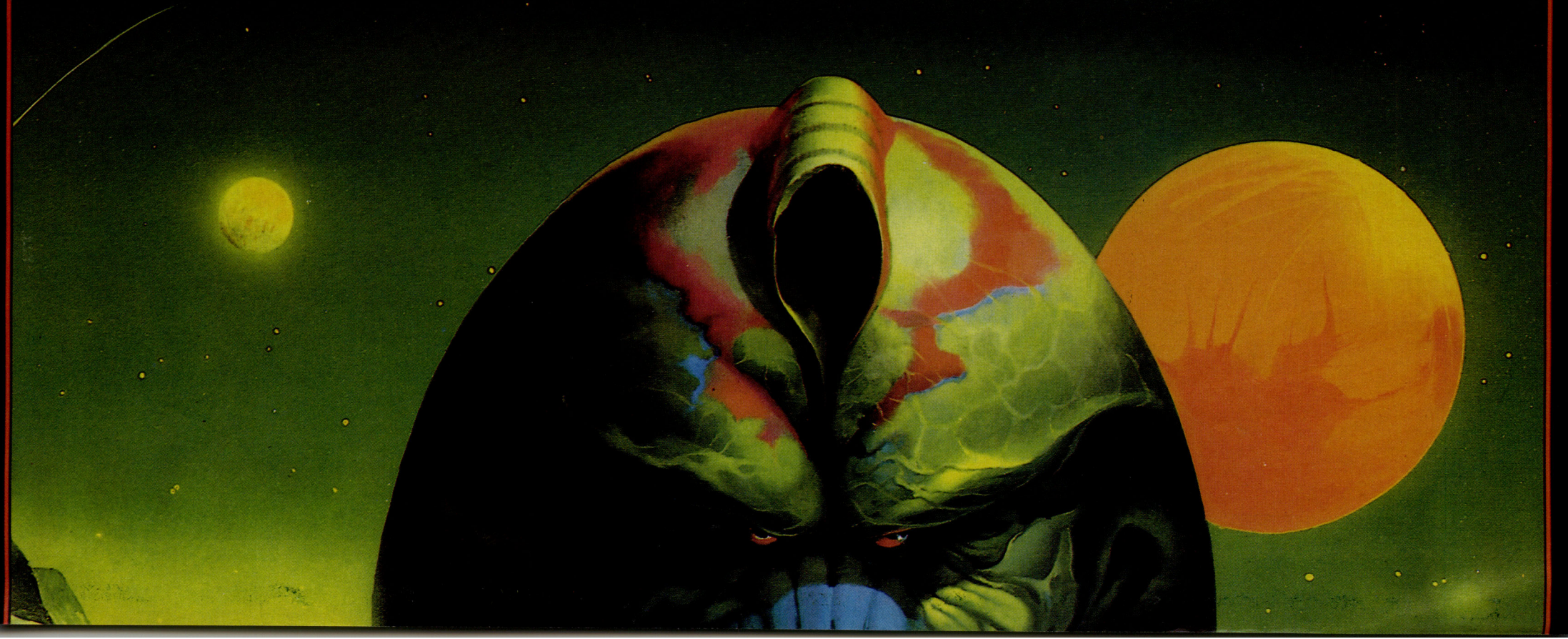
OK, which way are the jellyfish going?

A crab highland reel with a submarine.



A helicopter and some rockets.

Blood Money



FREE WITH YOUR AMIGA

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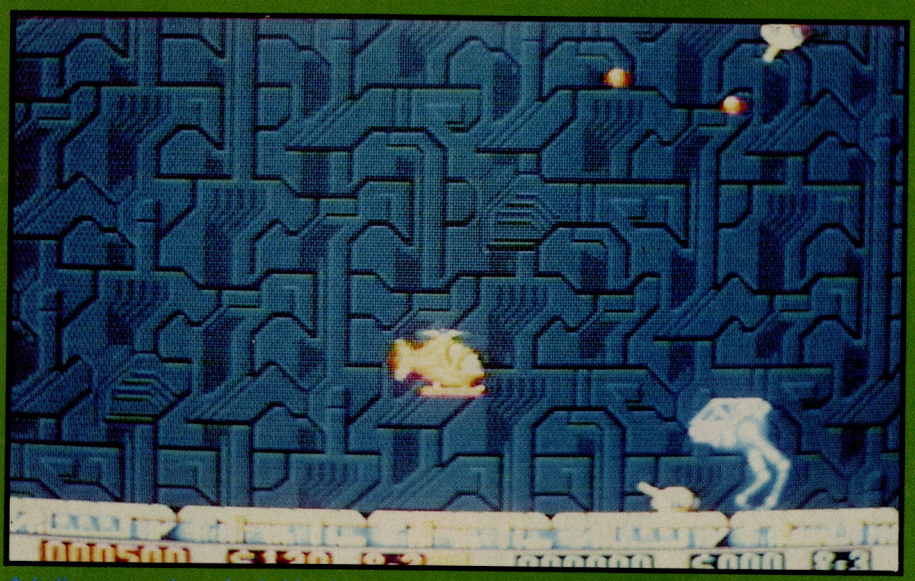
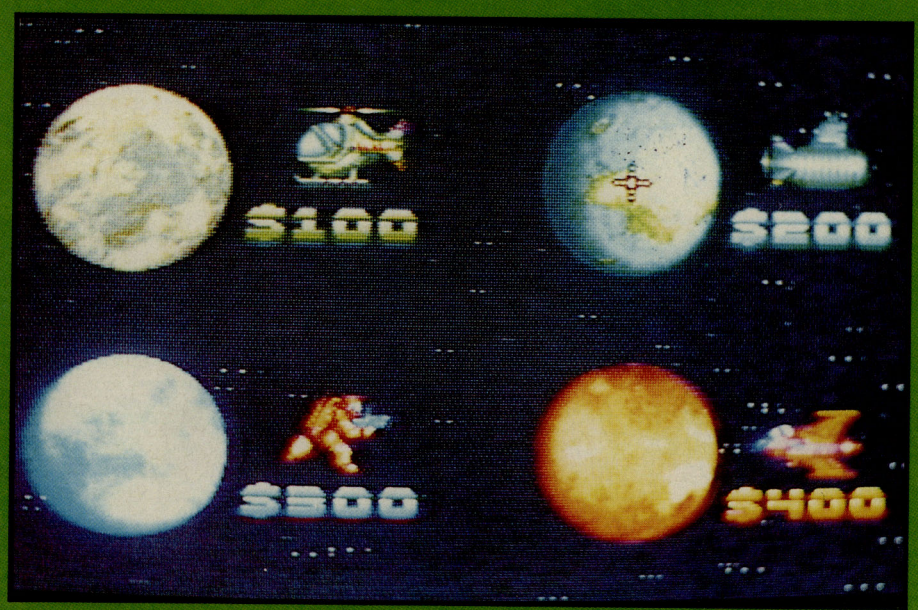


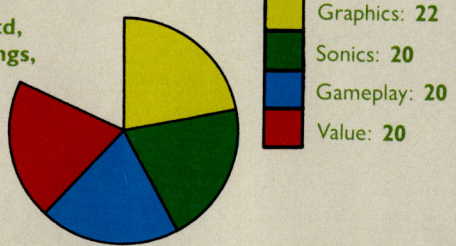
A helicopter and a robotic biped.



A helicopter, a spaceman, a submarine and a rocket.

BLOOD MONEY

Title: **Blood Money**
Supplier: **Psygnosis Ltd, 122 Century Buildings, Tower Street, Brunswick Business Park, Liverpool L3 4BJ**
Tel: **(051) 709 5755**



Graphics: **22**
Sonics: **20**
Gameplay: **20**
Value: **20**

The game comes on two disks and starts with a startling piece of rap music and some interesting graphics. Once the introduction is finished the planets are held on one disk so that only one disk change is required.

By now you will have realised that a lot of the design of this game is somewhat derivative. Indeed, I didn't really notice any significant areas of inovation. The graphics are detailed, nicely coloured, and of a good arcade standard. The animation is tolerably good, and given a lot of coverage in the instruction booklet. The in-game fades, and information screens, use some interesting tricks, and are smoothly put together. The introductory music is impressive, with a variety of sampled tit-bits that make it comparable to some of the better demos around. After hearing it a few times, however, it lost it's appeal and I began to doubt the value of it's inclusion. The in-game tune is quite laid back, and although being nice to listen to, it doesn't have that frenetic quality which is needed to enhance the game's excitment. If you don't like the music, there are always the sound effects. These are reasonable but don't really have the speaker-bursting quality of vintage Jeff Minter or *Sidewinder*. What's wrong with good ear blasting explosions?

In terms of gameplay, this is not an easy game.Unfortunately, I suspect that it is difficult for the wrong reasons. I mentioned earlier that the attack waves appeared to be pre-programmed. To counter their predictability some phases were incredibly busy with so much going on that it was very difficult not to be hit by a wandering missile. *Menace* used a similar pre-programmed format, but since it was much less busy, the game was over easy. I would have liked to see more homing nasties which are more difficult to "read" rather than over-busyscreens.

Despite this reservation, I thoroughly enjoyed the game even though it had me howling with frustration on many an occasion.(Because you kept losing? -Ed.) I would have preferred the omission of the introductory music in favour of more levels, or other difficulty options (what happens when you've completed the beast?) On the whole it's a competent, well programmed blaster, which, whilst not breaking the mould, will have you bashing for many an hour.

3RD PRIZE

SEA OVER LAND

BY M. A. OAKS

SANDBACH, CHESHIRE

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4
TH PRIZE
EL CAMINO
BY SUSAN C. INGRAM
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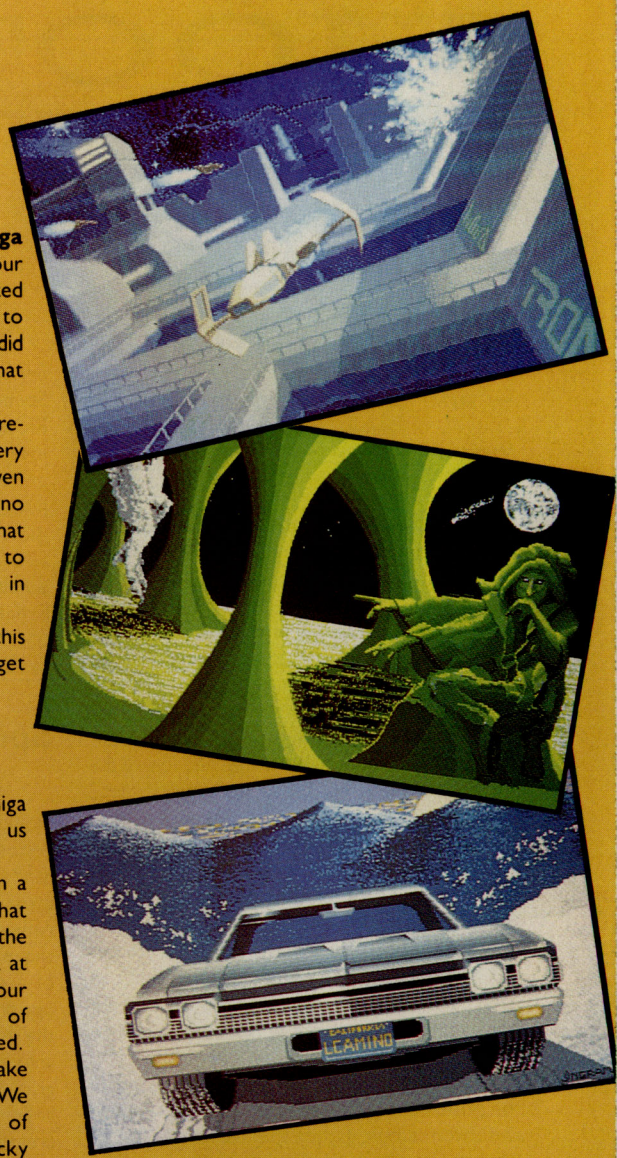
YOUR AMIGA GALLERY

Amiga Gallery

Your chance to show off your artwork and win some great prizes



■ **Back in the last issue of Your Amiga** we started the readers' Galley. This was your chance to show off your Amiga generated artwork to the world. Well, your response to this competition has totally surprised us, as did the quality of the majority of the pictures that we received.

As of this issue of *Your Amiga* we have re-vamped the presentation of the readers' gallery so that we can show your pictures off even better. Gone, are the small pictures with no detail. In, are full page, full colour pictures that you can pull out of the magazine and use to brighten up that small piece of wall space in your study, bedroom, living room, etc.

Even better, Activision has joined us this month in sponsoring the competition. So get your pictures sent in.

What to Send

If you have designed a picture on your Amiga you are particularly proud of send it in to us — we want to see it.

You should send all your pictures in on a clearly labelled Amiga disk, making sure that your name, address, telephone number and the name of the pictures that we should look at are obvious. Once we receive your disk your picture will be added to our database of readers' art and your disk will be returned.

When you send pictures to use please make sure that they are your own original work. We have received a large number of pictures of popular characters such as Garfield and Micky Mouse. Many of these pictures are of great quality but because the characters are copyright we can't re-print them in the magazine.

Your 'Palmy Eve' winner, whoever he or she is.

So What Do You Get

If your picture is chosen for inclusion of the gallery then you will receive a framed copy of the page as printed. Further more, the picture chosen as the best overall, will receive prizes from that issues sponsor. This month *Activision* will be giving away £50 worth of software to the best picture. The runner up will receive £25 worth of software. Activision will supply a list of products that the winners may choose from.

So there it is — your chance to become recognised as a great Amiga artist. So send your pictures in.

All entries should be sent to:

Amiga Gallery
Your Amiga
Argus House
Boundary Way
Hemel Hempstead
Herts
HP2 7ST

All entries will be judged by the Your Amiga editorial team and no correspondence will be entered into. Any picture that is sent to the magazine is sent on the understanding that it may be used in Your Amiga.

SHOOT-EM-UP CONSTRUCTION KIT

Tony Hetherington takes aim — and shoots himself in the foot

■ **Shoot-em-up Construction Kit, or** SEUCK as it is affectionately known, was a smash hit when it first appeared on the C64 18 months ago, and is now at last available on Amiga. Included are the extra graphic, sound and memory capabilities this amazing machine can offer.

Unlike previous game creators, that are in fact only options on a single game, SEUCK offers full control over the design and feel of the game, and allows you to create a masterpiece without keying in a single line of code. Through a series of easy to follow, pull down, menu controlled screens you can build up the objects that will represent the players and enemies in the game, the background they will fight on, and how they will behave. The game SEUCK creates can be played by one or two players that can even operate in separate areas of the screen. For example, a boat could fight its way down a river while an armoured car patrols the bank.

SEUCK is supplied on two disks including the game editor, extensive sound effect library, and three sample games that illustrate exactly what can be done and these should be your first taste of the action. Once you've tried the editor's options and changed a few sprites, alter the animation of an object or change some of the games parameters then play it again to discover how you've changed it.

SEUCK also neatly breaks down the games creating task into useful blocks (explained in the accompanying boxes) that will discipline the most unruly mind so that you design and build games that will actually work. Once the thought that you can create a best-selling game in ten minutes has been clobbered by the reality of creating 100 sprites, 56 objects and 140 background blocks you can approach the task more realistically.

In its basic form, SEUCK can be used to create horizontally scrolling shoot-em-up games, but as you begin to learn from the sample games and devise your own tricks of the trade the results will become more varied and interesting. So much so that you may want to pass it on to your friends, or even approach a software house, with a view to having it published. To finish off a game a set of utilities are included that let you save it so that it can run on its own (without the SEUCK editor). It even lets you add your own loading screen created using a graphics package such as Delux Paint.

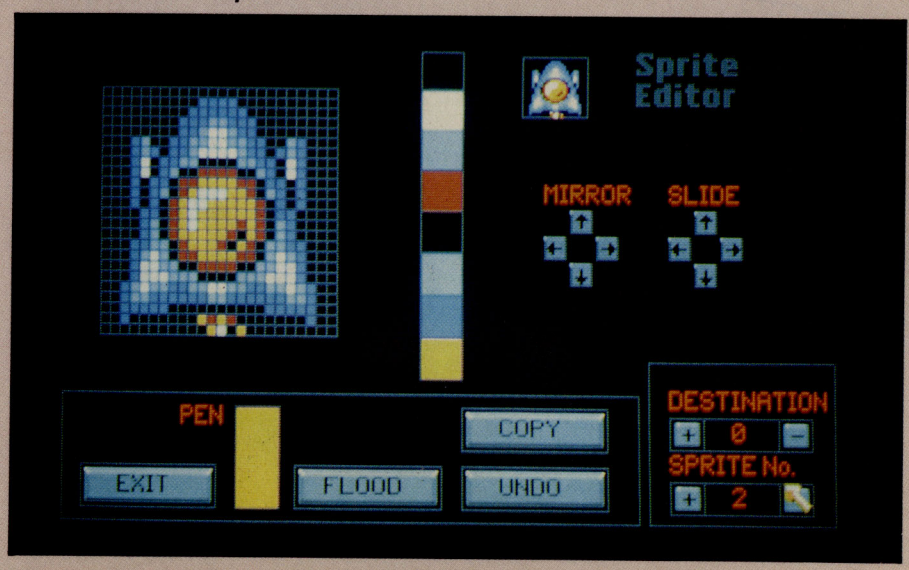
The original SEUCK was created by Sensible Software, authors of Microprose Soccer and Wizball, but the Amiga team of Richard Leinfellner, Jonathon Hare and Richard Joseph have expanded it and created a slick, professional and useful package. Whether you just want to try out a few games ideas or create games for your friends or clubs then you will find SEUCK easy to learn and will be ably guided by a well written manual packed with hints and tips. Eventually, you will learn more of the varied tricks, such as how to animate the background by flipping screens and using static sprites.

Sprites

Sprites are the 24 by 24 pixel building blocks of the game and are created in a sprite editor by simply clicking on the square to be filled in. Up to eight colours can be used in sprite creation but these can be selected from the Amiga's full palette of 4096 colours by adjusting the red, green and blue sliders. To ease the task of creating up to 100 sprites there are also options to copy an already existing sprite, flood the sprite with a single colour, mirror the image in four directions, and slide the sprite around the grid. Sprites can be joined together to form larger creatures or once the sprites have been created they must be linked together to form objects that the games players one and two, enemies, bullets and death sequences when you kill, or are killed. Each object can have up to 18 frames of animation (although 5 or 6 should be enough) or these can be split into 8 groups of pairs that represent the animation when the object moves in the direction. Directional animation can produce some nice effects, for example, cause ships to bank as they turn. You can also set an option that will decide whether an object, once it has turned, will stay turned, or revert back to its normal forward state.

SEUCK supports up to 600 enemies in a game that can be selected for 35 different designs. However, there is more to designing an enemy than simply stringing together a few sprites. The Edit Enemy Bits screeen allows you to set options that determine how the enemy will behave. These include the speed (between 1 and 10) that an enemy will move along its path, the number of hits (1-10) you need to destroy it, the points (0-10000) the player will earn for killing it, the direction or directions in which the enemy fire (which ranges from directional to four directions at once), the fire rate (from 100- not at all to 0- rapid), bullet speed, the number of bullet object and explosion graphics to use, and what will happen if the player collides with the enemy or the bullet and whether there are explosion graphics to use and what will happen if the player collides with the enemy or the bullet and whether they are destroyed or just stopped. For example, if an object was a collectable item such as treasure than the object and not the player would be destroyed.

Construction kit Sprite Editor.



Background

The background screen is constructed from 32 by 32 pixel blocks that are created in a block editor that's similar to the sprite editor. Up to 140 of these blocks can be defined, edited and saved and then used to construct a game map that can contain up to 32,000 blocks.

The completed map can then be split into levels by positioning the start and end position of up to 22 levels. Although a surprisingly small section the edit level option (which for me is linked to the background creation) control a lot of the game. For each level you can determine the scrolling speed (1-4), the time duration of a level, and whether the level will be static, scroll or push scroll where the player's movement controls the rate of scrolling. Finally, you must decide what will happen at the end of the level 1-1 whether the first screen of the next level will automatically appear, scroll down or whether the player will loop pack to the start of the level.

It's worth noting that you don't have to tell your players about the start and end of each level and build up apparent levels from five or six others which could represent swamps or hills which take different times to move through (by setting different speed levels). In the *Blood 'n' bullets* sample game the automatic appearance of the first screen of the next level is used to make the gates open.

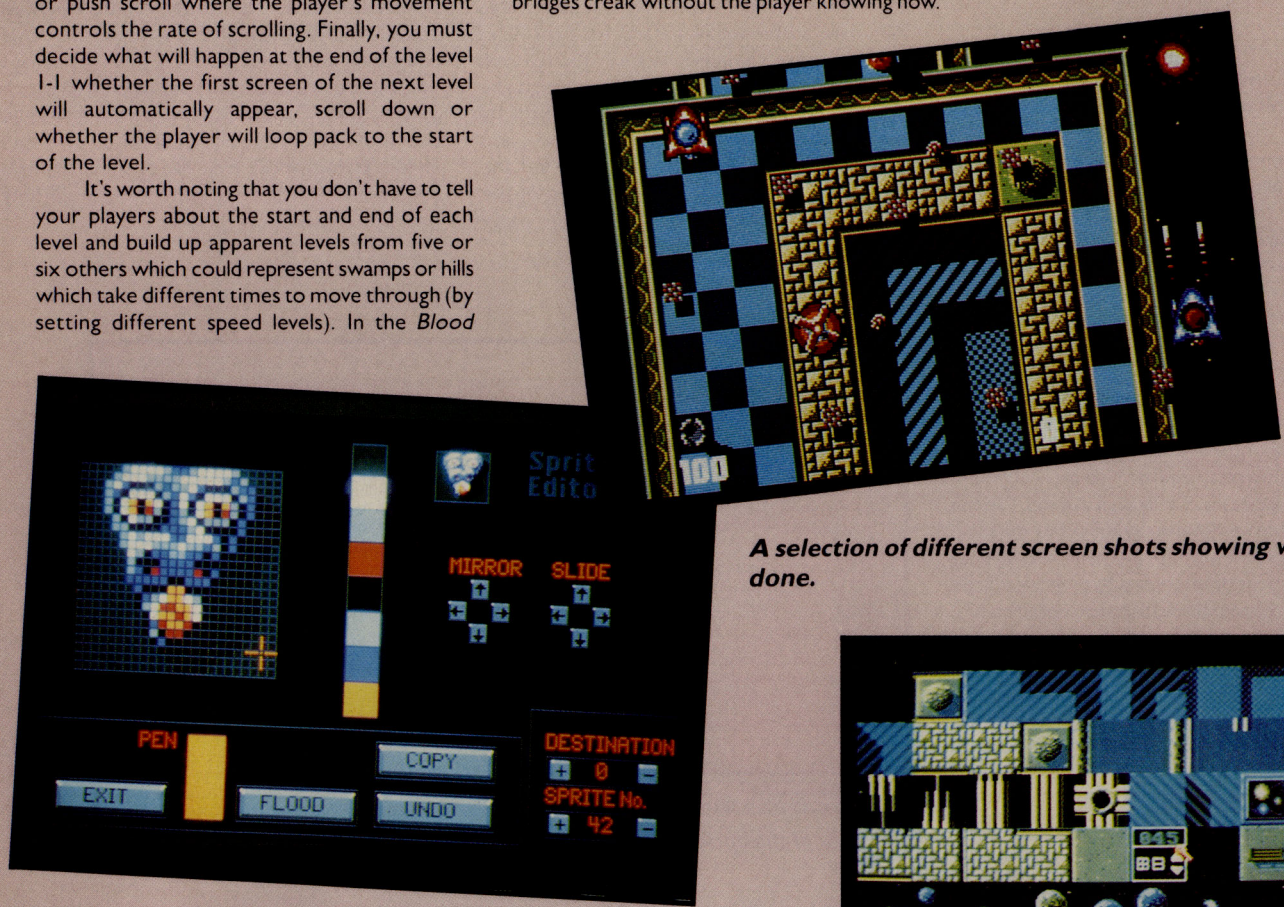
Sound FX

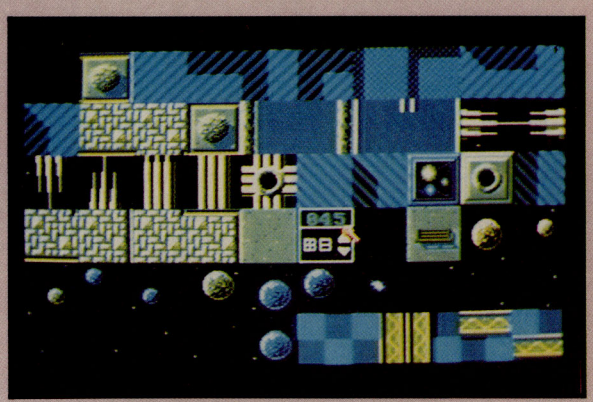
Adding sound, speech and musical effects to a game can give it that professional feel and so SEUCK is supplied with 60 sampled sounds, although you can add your own as long as they are in the standard IFF format. You can use up to 50 in a game but this is limited to the amount of sound RAM that is displayed at the bottom of the sound editing screen. Here you can alter the replay rate (speed) of the sound to customise it to your needs and to create new sounds. These sound effects can be keyed into the firing of bullets and the shooting of enemies and the players. However, you can also trigger sound effects using invisible objects so you can make bridges creak without the player knowing how.

The Games

Three sample games are included on the disk that clearly show what can be down with SEUCK and include a commando type game, a simple space shoot-em-up and the intriguing *Psychoblast* which shows that you don't have to scroll the screen of the play move all over the place to create a good game. In this you are restricted to moving within a small square in the middle of the screen and must survive the onslaught until the time runs out.

These games are ideal for trying out ideas before you attempt your own creation. ***YA***





A selection of different screen shots showing what can be done.

Attack Waves

Setting the attack waves of your enemies can be great fun as you simply place them on their starting position somewhere on the scrolling game map and then move the joystick to plot the path it will move. You can even make them pause and then move off again. Through this you can set patrol routes for guards or get you aliens to attack in formation. If the formation is rigid or you want to create a giant super monster you can join enemies together and move them by defining the path of the leading object. Be warned however, that super monsters act like groups or objects so the player may shoot part of it leaving the rest (e.g. the head) floating in mid air.

SHOOT-EM-UP CONSTRUCTION KIT

Title: **Shoot-em-up Construction Kit**
Supplier: **Outlaw, 7 The Old Gorge, Caledonian Road, London.**
Tel: **01-278 0751**
Price: £24.99

Populous

Gordon Hamlett drifts into meglomania and new worlds

■ **There have been more games than I** care to remember where the objective is for one man to take on the world against overwhelming odds when we all know that it doesn't really happen that way. Every action is but a small part in some grand global strategy.

Change the emphasis slightly though and imagine that your are in command of everything that happens in the world.

Populous aims to do just that. The eternal struggle of good versus evil gut as seen from a God's point of view.

Naturally, you want your supporters to flourish so how about a judicious piece of divine intervention, nothing too drastic. Perhaps you could flatten a mountain or two allowing them to build motr easily. Or drain a swamp. On the other hand, your opposite number has the same sort of ideas so it might prove helpful to distract him and his people somewhat. A nice little volcano in the middle of his castle could be fun, or a flood, or an earthquake.

There are a total of 500 different worlds for you to conquer, each one offering a whole new series of challenges and requiring different tactical approaches. For example, workers die more quickly in the desert and proliferate more slowly in icy wastes. As you complete one level, so you are given a password allowing you to access the next.

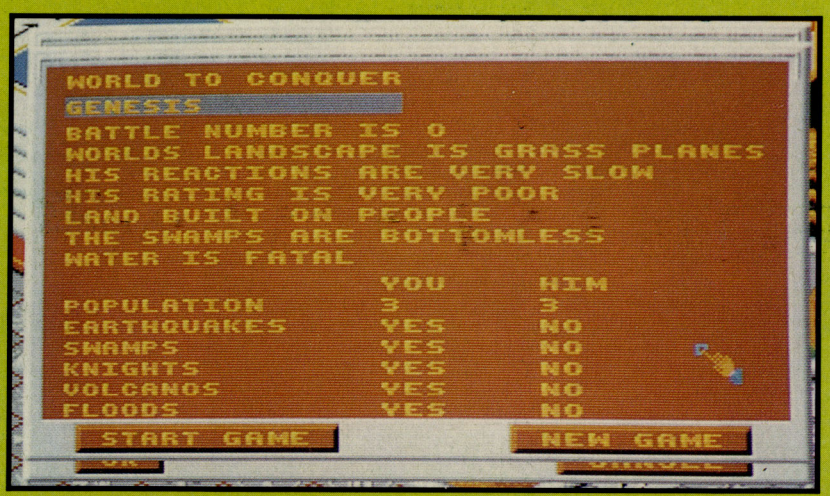
As each game begins, so your populace, known as walkers, will try to settle. All they heed is some flat land to build on. Buildings can range from simple huts to mighty castles depending on how much land is available. Small buildings let you settle quicker but larger edifices are easier to defend when the enemy comes invading. You can raise and lower land levels (ie flatten hills and fill in swamps) more or less at will, using only small amounts of manna (your energy supply).

One of your walkers is designated as leader and he is important as he is the only person that you can control directly. The other walkers follow his directions implicitly although their intelligence levels do increase as the game progresses. Your leader in turn has control over a totem — an ankh for the forces of good or a skull. These totems are known as Papal Magnets. By placing it where you want on the way, you can instruct all your workers to head for it, settling as they go.

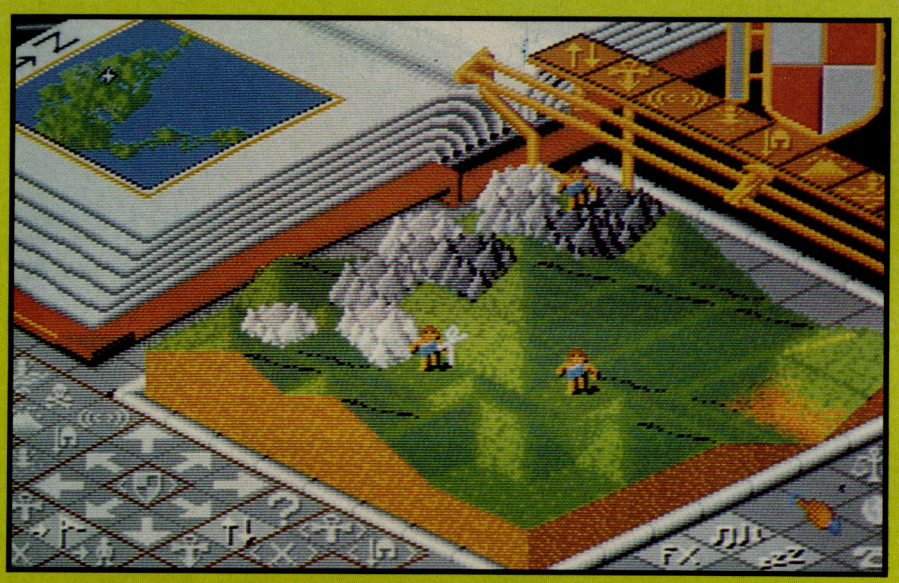
The more people you have, the more your manna increases. When it reaches the required level, so you can unleash the forces of nature on your opponent in order to try and hinder his development. In order to gain control of a world, you have to totally remove all the other side's forces and this in turn means combat.

When walkers from the two sides meet they will automatically start to fight, the stronger person being victorious. You have no direct say in the outcome of battle although you can increase the strength of your walkers by letting them bump into each other whereupon they merge into one bigger, butcher walker and so on. The shield in the top right hand of the screen gives details of the strength of any party that you are interested in.

You may also care to unleash a knight on the unsuspecting world. Providing that you have sufficient manna, your leader can be knighted and he will then wander off burning settlements and killing people for you. As this then leaves you without a leader, the next person to touch your totem is automatically promoted. Should the situation get really desperate, you can invoke armageddon. Everybody moves to the centre of the world and slugs it out until only one side remains.



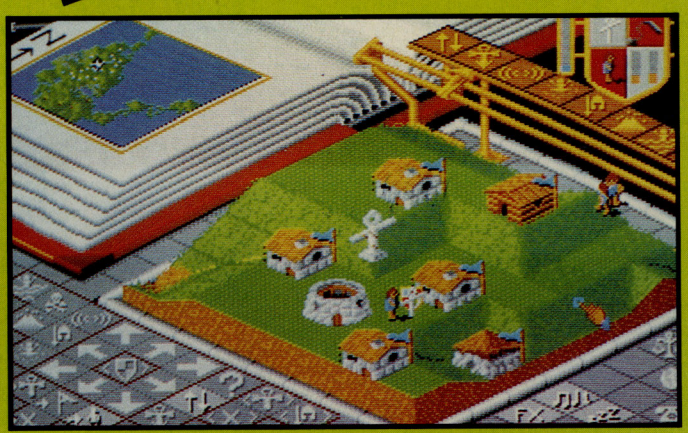
Just a few of the options on offer.

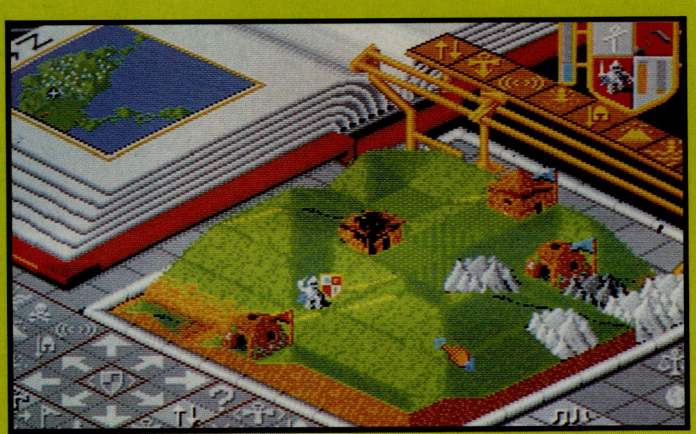


In the beginning, there are no dwellings. Your leader looks for somewhere to settle.

Development is slow in the icy waters.

Your community begins to grow.





The Knight leaves a trail of destruction behind him.

Although *Populous* looks extremely complex to begin with, you soon start to get the hang of it. To help you on your way, there is a step through tutorial giving you some idea of what the different commands do. What the tutorial doesn't help you with is what strategy to follow, so it might be worth while setting up the computer to play against itself for a few games.

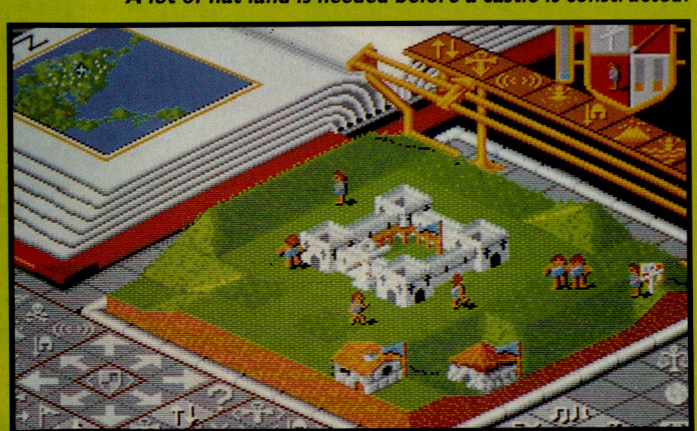
Other options here include human v human, human v computer, and a modem link.

All the controls are icon controlled and this is what takes getting used to as there are thirty one of them! Commands include eight way scrolling of the large map (the book of worlds in the top left hand corner shows the entire playing area), zooming to various characters and invoking the assorted natural hazards. My one slight complaint of the game is that the armageddon icon should not have been hidden away in the midst of the others. It is a bit too easy to click on it accidentally (well, I managed it anyway!).

Not only does the game play well, but it looks and sounds good too. The graphics are clear and bright and the optional music slightly reminiscent of Clannad. Should 500 worlds prove to be an insufficient total, then you can create your own as well as tinker with just about every parameter within the game.

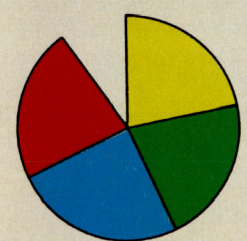
It is difficult to know what else to say about *Populous*. This review has barely scratched the surface of the features contained within the game. Just occasionally, a game comes along that makes a significant impact in computer game history. I believe that *Populous* is such a game. Go and buy a copy today. *YA*

A lot of flat land is needed before a castle is constructed.



POPULOUS

Title: **Populous**
Authors: **Bullfrog**
Supplier: **Electronic Arts**
Tel: **0752 49442**
Price: **£24.99**



Graphics: **22**
Sound: **21**
Gameplay: **25**
Value: **25**

All your favourite characters although you would never guess it when you start playing the game

THE REAL GH

Gordon Hamlett braves a confrontation with the spirit world

■ **Many, many, years ago, a game called** *Ghostbusters* was released to coincide with the blockbusting film of the same name. It was difficult to miss because it had been hyped just about as far as it is possible to hype a game. All this hype was necessary because when you actually looked at the game, it wasn't really very good. Nevertheless, lots of people bought copies of the game, which was just as well, because the rumours going round at the time about how much the license had cost involved some extremely large figures.

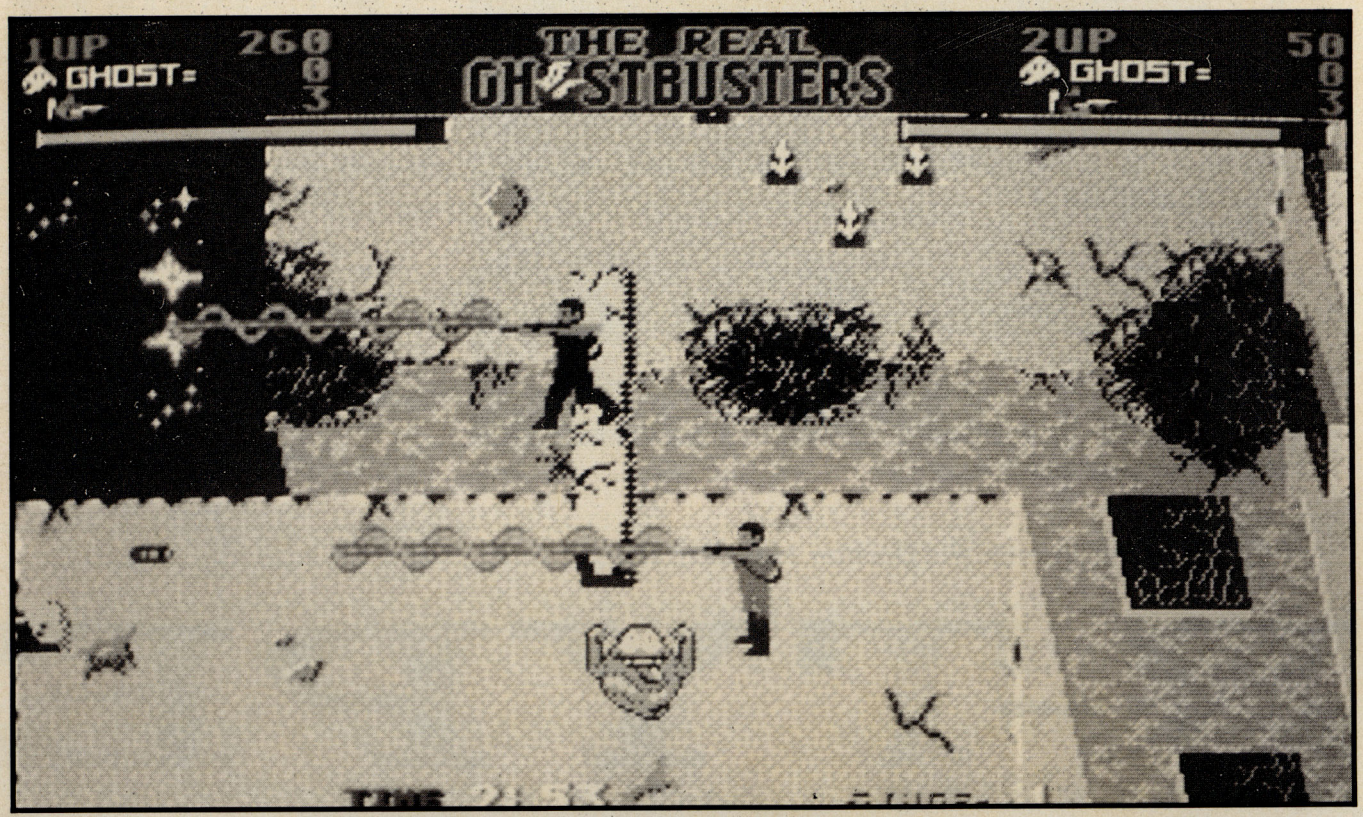
The Real Ghostbusters is currently showing on television so it seemed only natural to produce a game based on that as well. Would the public be duped twice, or do Activision have another winner on their hands?

You can enter the haunted house either singly or with a friend (ie the game has a 1 or 2 player option). The object is to destroy as many of the various spirits as possible while you make your way to the end of each of the ten levels and then face up to the wrath of a guardian ghost. Destroy him and he drops a key allowing you to enter the next stage.

There is a whole range of 'undead' creatures just waiting to welcome you as one of their number. For your defence you have a gun and an unlimited supply of ammunition. Shooting the ghouls merely destroys their bodies. If you want to trap their souls for ever, and score lots of bonus points when you reach the end of a level, then you have to use your proton beam. This weapon, which has a limited fuel supply, shown by a decreasing energy bar at the top of the screen, sucks up the last trace of any spectre.

Each level has to be completed within a very strict time limit otherwise one of your five lives is lost. There are various items that can be picked up *en route* to help your cause. Carried by spooks, hidden under oil drums, or protected by circles of rising and falling spikes, you pick up bonuses that increase your fire power. You recharge your proton beam, get a temporary coat of invulnerability, or enlist the help of a friendly slimer who whizzes round your head killing off everything he/she/it touches.

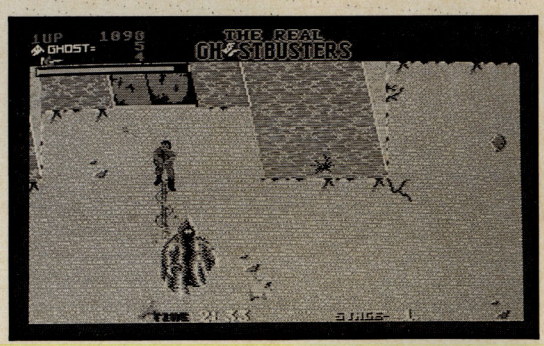
Slimer to the rescue



Ghosties and ghoulies and long leggedy beasties

HOSTBUSTERS

The big bad baddy



I can't say that this game aroused any great passion in me. It's just another shoot-em-up that seems to lack any addictive qualities.

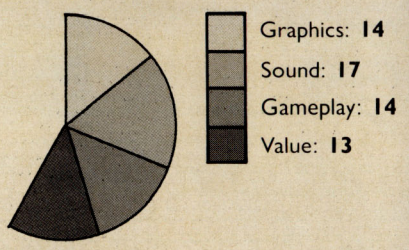
There are a couple of elements within the game that annoyed me intensely. The first is that every time you get killed, you have to go through the entire loading sequence again, waiting for it to load from disk. Surely it would not have been too difficult to assume that if you started playing the one player game, the chances were that you were going to continue in a similar vein and go straight back to the start of the first level.

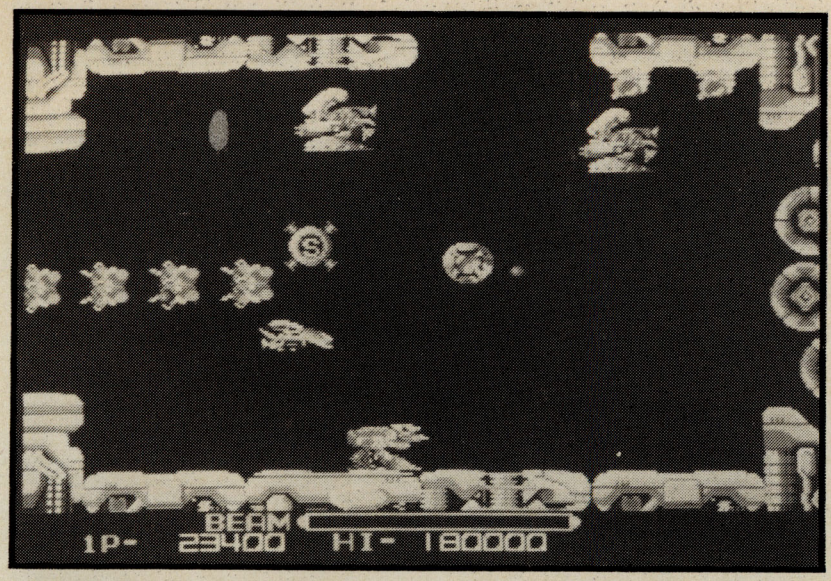
That is a fairly minor point, but the next is more serious.Well, it is serious when the screen does not start scrolling until you are very close to the edge of it. The result of this is that you are frequently getting shot at, and killed, by creatures that you can't actually see!

The graphics are adequate, if not particularly exciting, for an Amiga game. The music though is a pretty good rendition of the tune that we all love/hate. *YA*

THE REAL GHOSTBUSTERS

Title: **The Real Ghostbusters**
Supplier: **Activision Blake House, Manor Farm Road Reading, Berks. RG2 OJN.**
Price:**£24.99**





Two bonus weapons to be picked up

E-Type R-Type in an R-9. Gordon Hamlett tries it out.

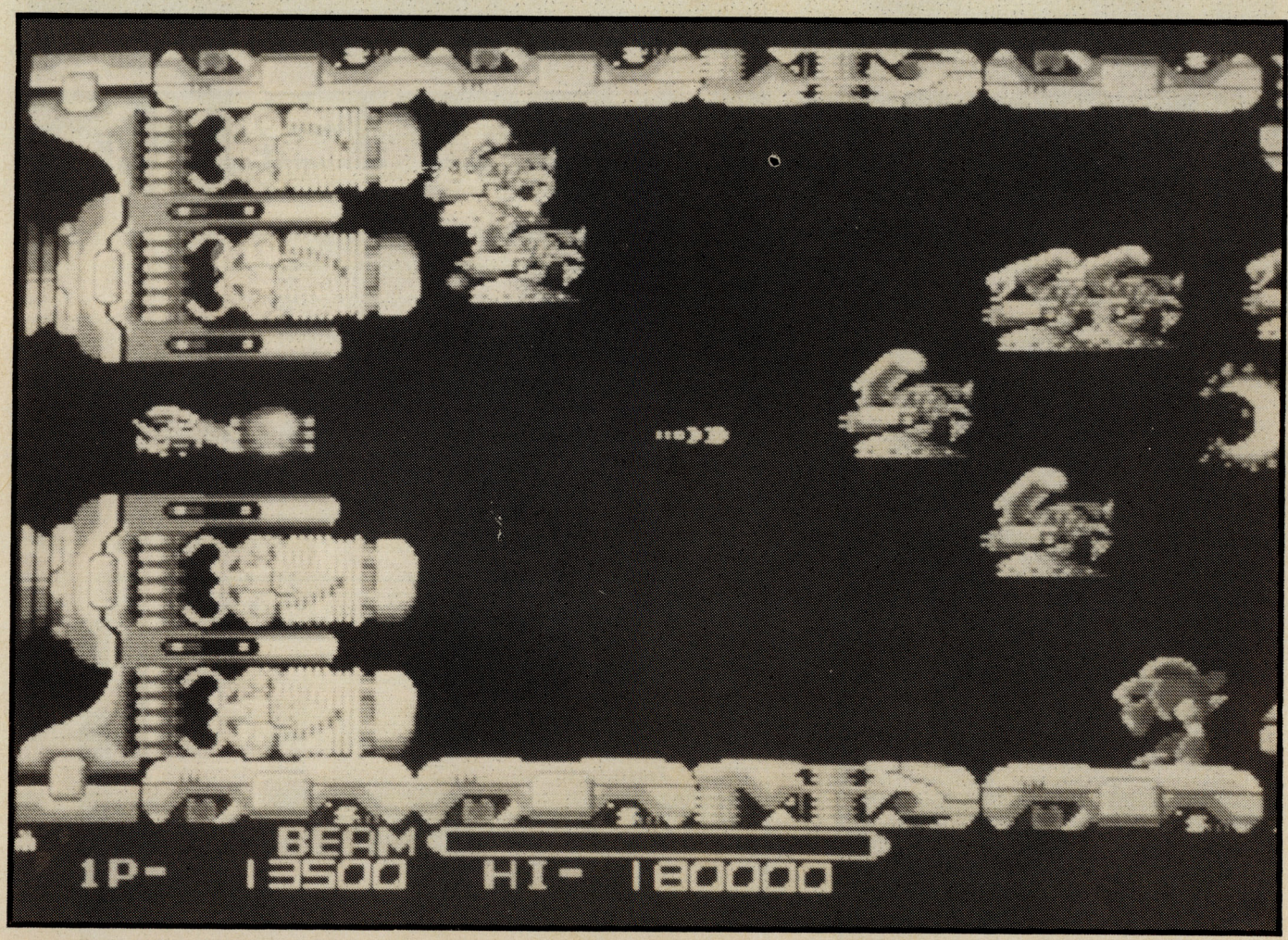
R-TYPE

■ It has been a long time in coming but, at last, the Amiga conversion of the arcade game *R-Type* has arrived and well worth the wait it is too.

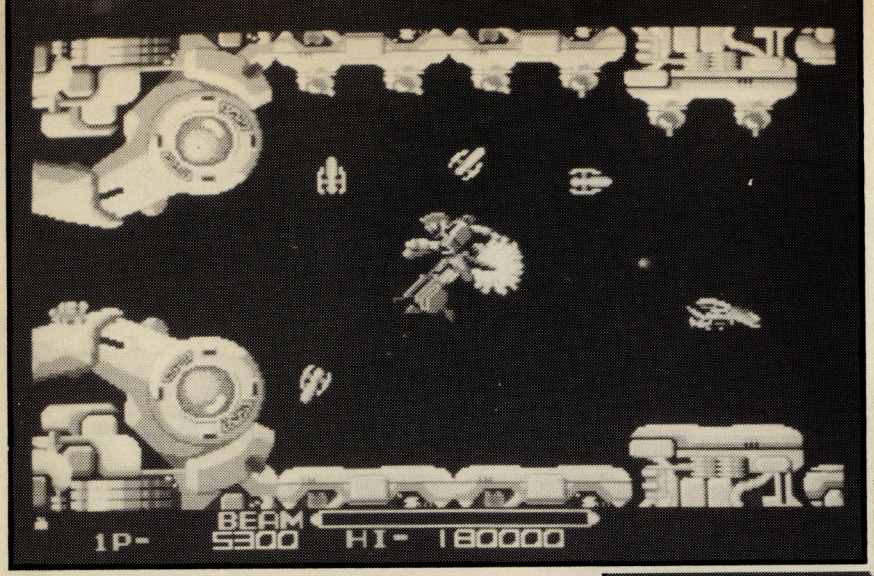
However, the story line is scanty at best. There is the inevitable evil empire (the Bydo Empire) that is trying to subjugate the whole of mankind. The only hope is you flying in the latest weapon technology: the R-9 fighter plane. In other words, we have a shoot-em-up on our hands.

But never mind the story line. To quote Shakespeare, in an alien context, 'the play's the thing'. (trust you to quote Hamlet — Ed).

The background is a strange mixture of nature intertwined with technology: a lethal background to snag you on if ever there was one. Just as lethal are the myriads of enemy craft, hurling themselves in your general direction. There are squadrons of assorted flying craft although these always appear in the same place at the same time so you soon learn the patterns. Then there are all the ground based gun emplacements and mobile missile launchers that seem to track your every move. Finally, at the end of each stage of the game, there

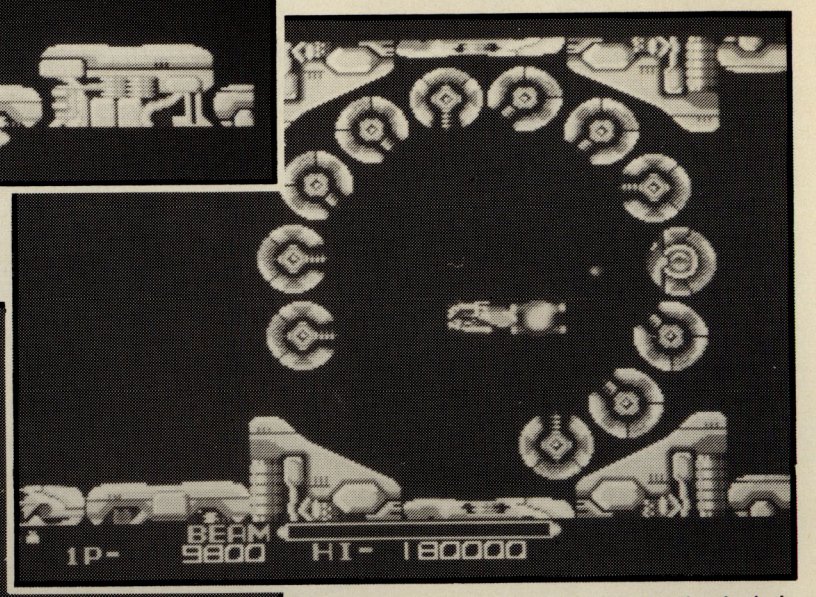


A hostile reception at the start of level 12

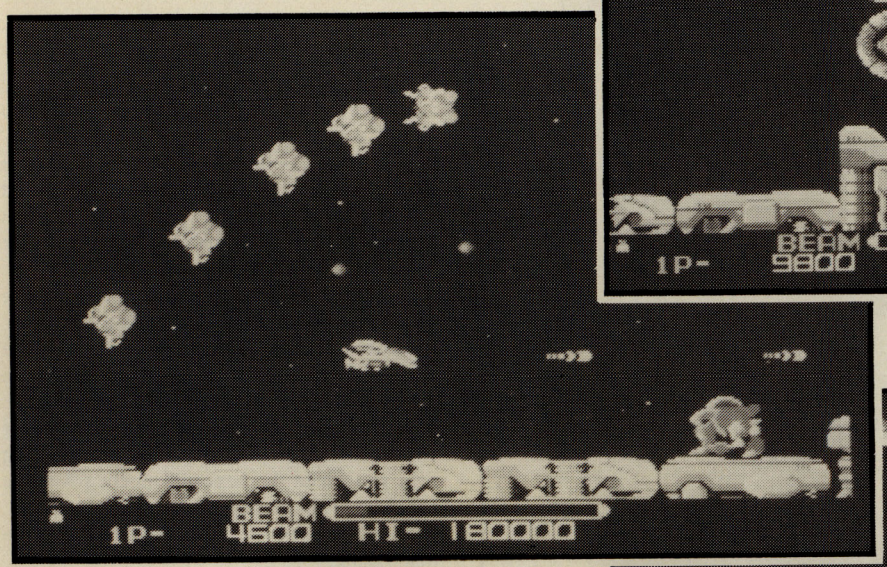


Missiles, missiles everywhere nor any place to hide

These include a reflection laser from which shots bounce off the ground, anti aircraft and ground lasers, homing missiles,extra speed, and shield orbs. In addition, the first jewel gives you access to 'the Force'. This is an additional craft that can either attach itself to the front or rear of your craft, giving you extra firepower, or can be released to clear a path in front of you.



Inside the death circle

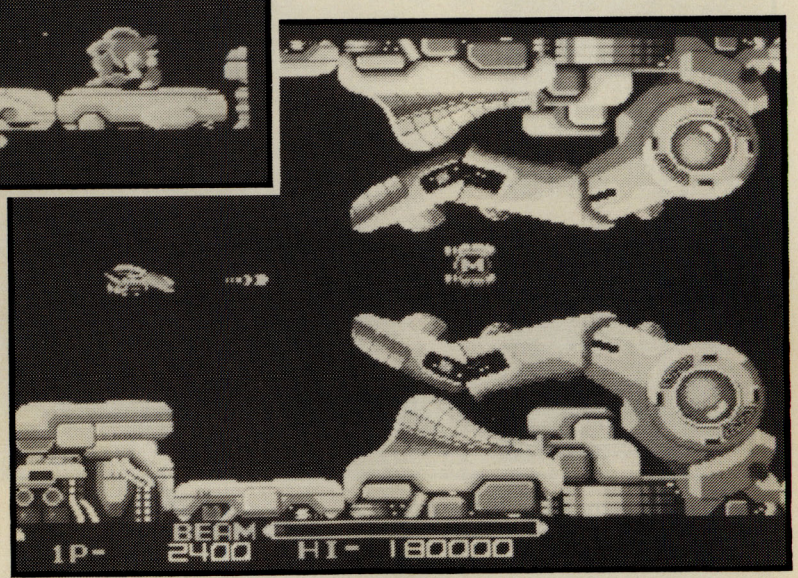


Squadrons of craft fly predetermined patterns

is one really mean enemy that has to be blasted several times before succumbing to your firepower.

On your hi-tech bow you can vary the strength of each shot. The longer you hold down the fire button, the more energy goes into the blast. The disadvantage with this is that you are still getting shot at whilst all this is happening.

Also in each stage, there is one craft that, when shot, reveals a large floating gem. Collecting this adds bonus weapons to your plane.



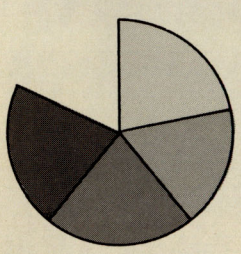
About to pick up the homing missile extra weapon

The first thing to strike you about *R-Type* is that it looks great, and sounds pretty good too. Fans of the arcade game are certainly not going to be disappointed. The second thing to occur to you is to scream for help. The air seems alive with enemy planes, bullets, and missiles; so alive that you begin to wonder how you are ever going to survive.

But the game is incredibly addictive, and the more you play, the further into the complex you start to get. The balance between difficulty for difficulty's sake and hard but fair is a fine one, but the authors have done a good job.I found the joystick still in my hand long after I'd intended to stop playing. A great game for shoot-em-up fans. ***YA***

R-TYPE

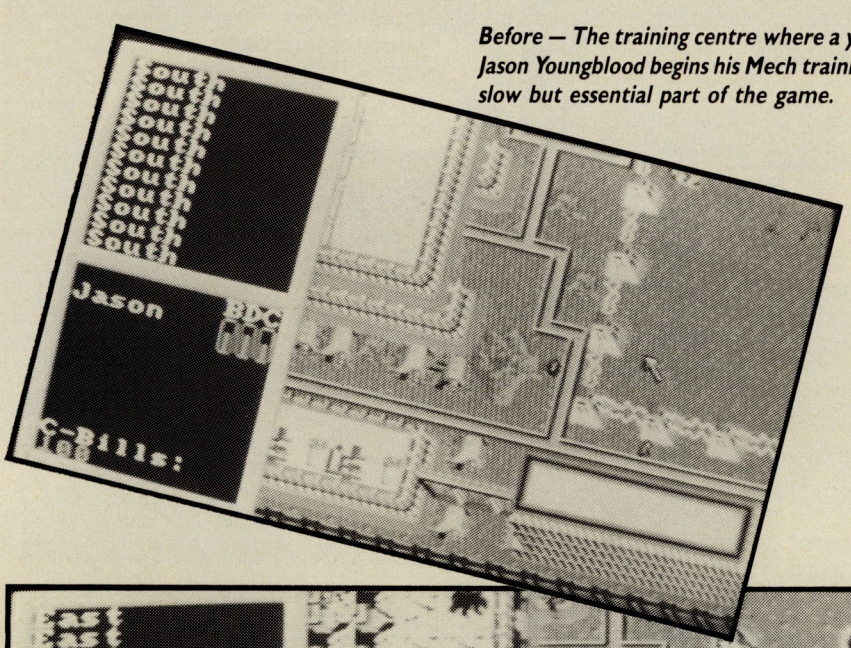
Title: **R-Type**
Suppliers: **Electric Dreams**
Blake House,
Manor Farm Road
Reading, Berks,
RG2OJN
Price: **£24.99**



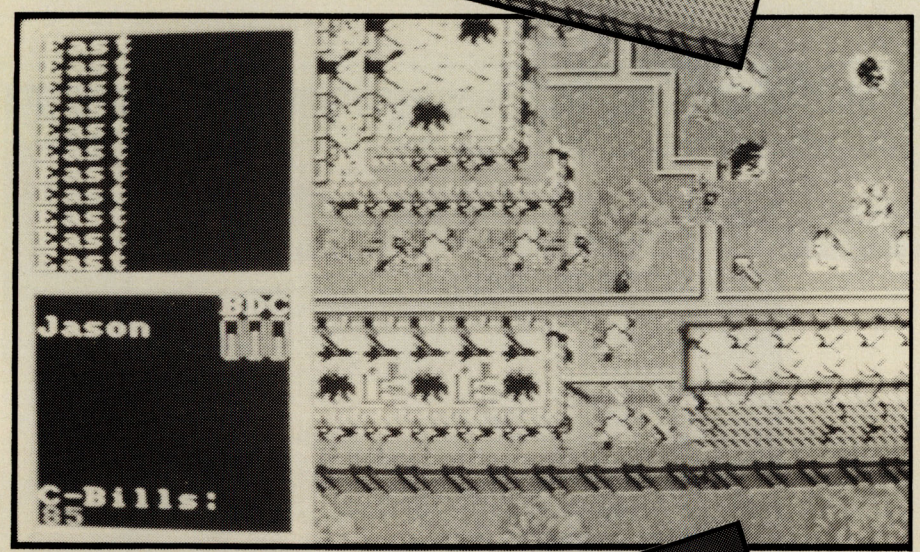
Graphics: **22**
Sound: **17**
Playability: **22**
Value: **21**

REVIEW

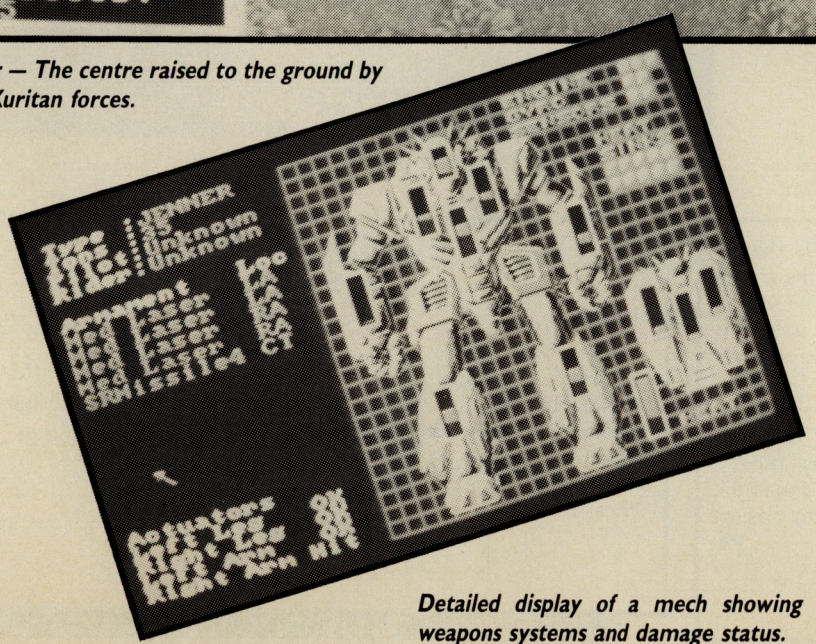
Battlete



Before — The training centre where a young Jason Youngblood begins his Mech training. A slow but essential part of the game.



After — The centre raised to the ground by the Kuritan forces.



Detailed display of a mech showing it's weapons systems and damage status.

Tony Hetherington dons a metal suit and steps out to save the world yet again

■ **In the 31st Century five successor** states are locked in battle for power so intense that the massive war machines (known as the mechs) are more valuable than any human life. You enter the game as Jason Youngblood, son of the legendary Jeremiah Youngblood, and trainee mech pilot for the Lyran Commonwealth. Your mission is to prepare for war.

Your training is carried out both in the combat arena and in courses to improve your weapon, technical and medical skills. But the mech training is the most important. You'll have to complete a series of tests from basic controls up to pitched battles as you perfect your skills. Then suddenly, during a training fight you realise the opposing mechs are trying to kill you, and that the Kuritans have invaded, throwing you into hostile territory and into the main game.

As the plot unfolds you learn of other rebels and of a massive store of mech parts. Your mission is now clear. Seek out these rebels and supply them with mechs powerful to find this mech store that will mean the end of the Kuritans. At the moment you're on foot and unarmed and with 4 million locations to explore there's a long way to go!

Fighting mechs are detailed and complex machines each with their own strengths and abilities that can range from the fast and lightly armed locusts to the slower chameleon that bristles with missiles and lasers. At the school you'll get a chance to practise with three mechs but once the game really starts it's a question of using what you can find. Your first journey on foot must be to Starport and a rendezvous with a fellow rebel who owns a mech.

From then you must scour the country for more rebels to build up your party of soldiers and mechs using military skill to win battles, medical skill to patch up injuries, and technical skill to plunder ammo and parts from stricken mechs. One rebel you can find is a technical expert and can save you fortune in buying spares and seems always able to patch up a mech when you need one. Unfortunately, the Kuritans have agents that try and infiltrate your group which can mean big trouble if you

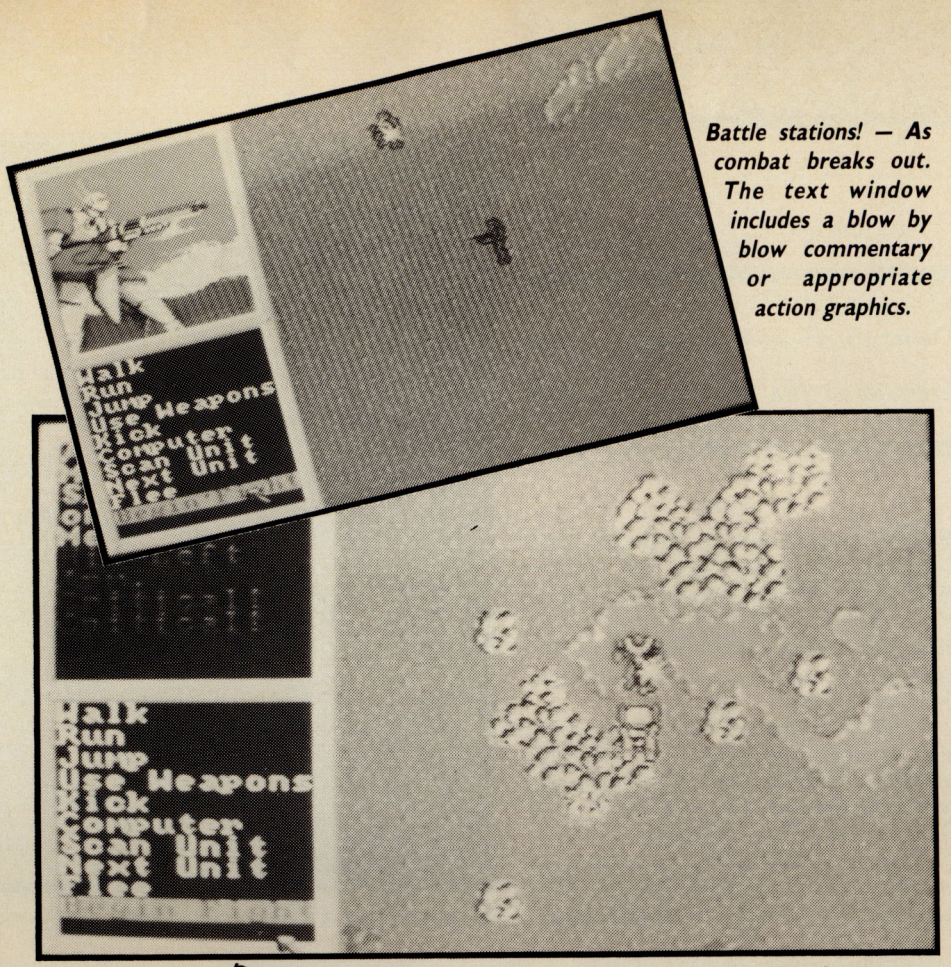
ch

put him in charge of a Wasp while you're on foot.

During battles it's up to you to devise your own strategies and tactics particularly when more than one mech is involved on each side. This will largely depend on the mechs you have and what you're up against but will also involve grabbing the best terrain and either keeping out of range of machine guns or getting up close as quick as possible so you can kick out missile systems that would normally blast you before you could get a clear shot.

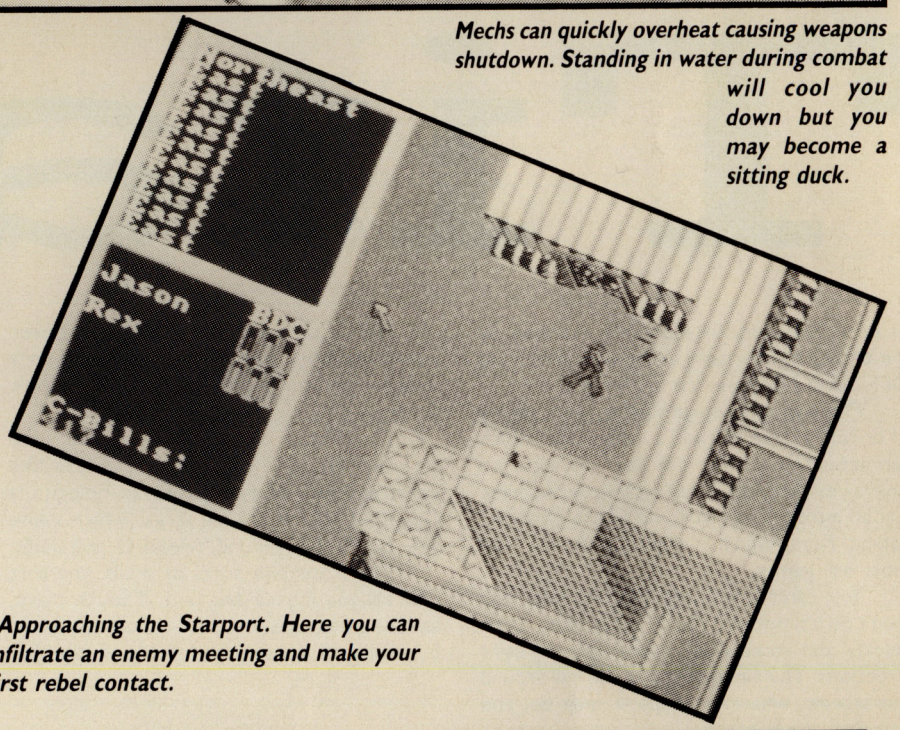
Battling mechs although great fun and useful (for parts and money to buy repairs and customised weapons) is only half of the game. But you also have to track down this hidden store of mech parts. This trail will lead you into adventure style sequences that reveal Infocom's past interests.

The result is a curious mix of strategic combat, adventure sequences and role-playing character and party development all based on a successful science fiction board game. ***YA***



Battle stations! — As combat breaks out. The text window includes a blow by blow commentary or appropriate action graphics.

Mechs can quickly overheat causing weapons shutdown. Standing in water during combat will cool you down but you may become a sitting duck.



Approaching the Starport. Here you can infiltrate an enemy meeting and make your first rebel contact.

■ **So this is Infocom's first foray into role-**playing. Quite a change from it's usual brand of text adventures which possibly explains why it is based on the *Battletech* board games. The mechs and game mechanics are already in place so all that is required is the plot to link the battle sequences.

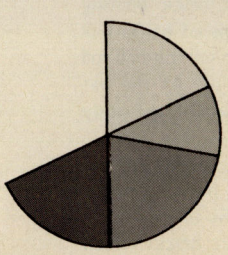
The training part of the program is slow. In fact it's very slow as you painstakingly learn how a mech works and some basic tactics. Considering what's to come, I understand why it's required as you wouldn't last five minutes without it. All I can say to those about to embark on the game is to persevere as things will start happening very quickly and earned skills are invaluable later on.

The main game is incredibly addictive as you battle mechs, explore new territory (the screen only shows the areas you've been) and gradually piece together a party and the clues that lead to the mech store.

It's unfortunate that you only find out how good the game is by playing it for a while. This may put off many players and reviewers but once the depth of game is revealed you'll be hooked. Hours will seem to disappear, lawns will be left uncut, day and night will merge into one and the house will fill with yells of victory as the Lyran Commonwealth strikes back.

BATTLETECH

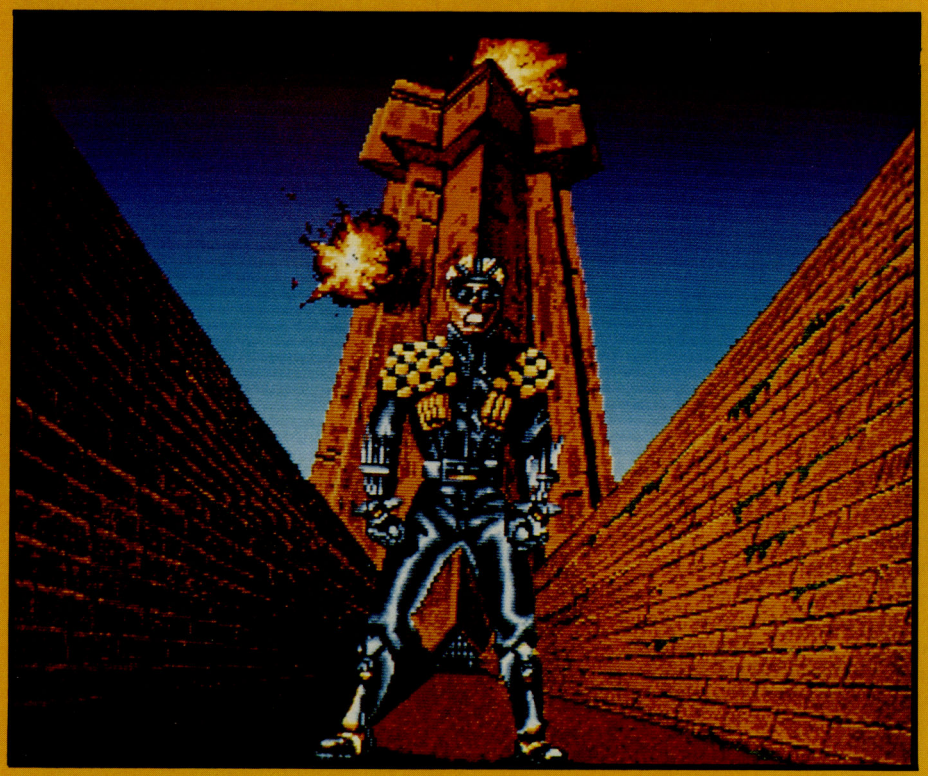
Title: **Battletech**
Supplier: **Infocom (Activision)**
Blake House, Manor Farm Road, Reading, Berks RG2 0JN
Tel: **0734**
Price: **£ 24.99**



Graphics: **18**
Sound : **10**
Gameplay: **22**
Value: **18**

Titan

Duncan Evan's thought he'd looked at his last bat and ball game until he was given Titan.



How to free a packet of crisps, and a repressive society.

■ **Ball games, don't ya just love 'em.** *Breakout, Arkanoid, Impact, Ball Breaker, Tonic Tiles, Addictaball, Transputer, Arkanoid 2, Traz, Giganoid*, you've seen them, played them, eaten them, and reformatted the disc. Guess what Titus has just released ? Go on, just guess.

Titan isn't anything legendary, anything large, or even anything interesting. Nope, it's another bat and ball game, but without the exciting wobbly bits that made most of the others on the list worth playing.

There's some flowery prose regaling you with the tale of an escaping leader of some repressive society and freeing a packet of crisps or something, but this is entirely irrelevant as the only thing you need to know is where the OFF button on your computer is.

Play starts in a small square, with a lining of bricks, a large ball and a square bat, which can actually run over the ball, forcing it to reverse its direction. This first level is of course just an introduction to some of the concepts behind *Titan*, which is slightly different than most ball games.

You can't lose a life for example, you aren't on a timer, and the screen scrolls, rather quickly and somewhat nauseatingly, in eight directions. The aim is to guide the ball around the screen, whatever shape it may be, and demolish those bricks.

Although this sounds about as exciting as a weekend in Margate (and it is), there is a further complication in your brick beating quest. The bat moves in terms of half a ball at a go. This means you either hit the ball full on, at 45 degrees, or not at all. As the bat is joystick controlled this makes it tediously cumbersome.

Further levels introduce more of the features of *Titan*, but you'll have to force yourself to play past level eight to see some of the less dull ones. There are bricks which only your bat can destroy, not the ball, and lead to enclosure-like displays where you open a hole in one wall in order to force the ball through and into the destructible bricks.

Further on are scenes where passing over a potential brick point five times, leads to a solid, indestructible brick appearing. So don't dither.

Even further on (still awake are we ?) the screens change to become maze-like constructions and even have exit holes (a la *Gauntlet*). There are oil slicks, which cause your bat to slide around, teleports, and skulls.

There are two sorts of skulls, the sort that kill you if your bat or ball touch them, and the green ones that your bat can eat (yuck) but will still cause loss of life if the ball encounters them.

Add to all this, bricks which move under their own steam, ones which you can move into position yourself, and some odd spot effects, and you have what might have been a decent game.

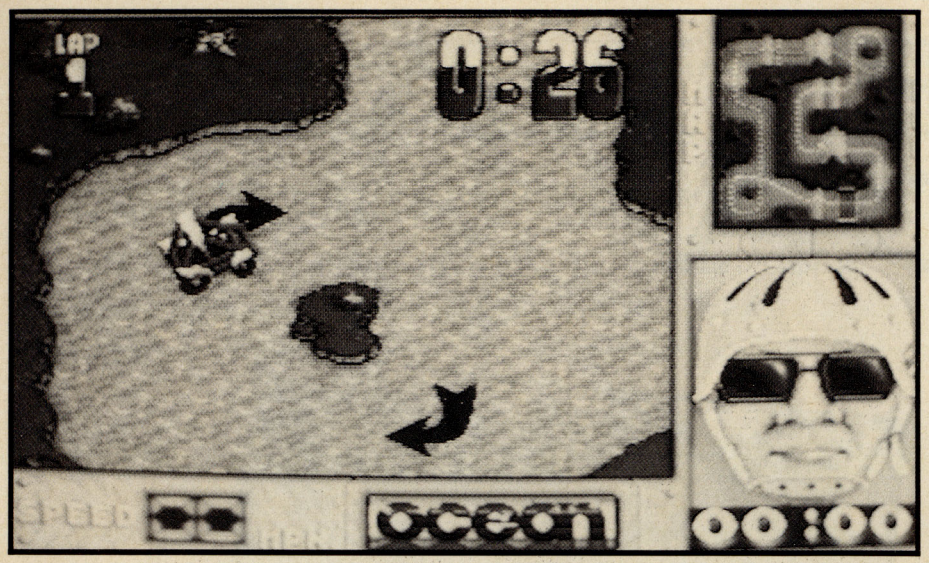
Alas it isn't. The scrolling, though full screen, isn't quite good enough, and will make you feel ill before long. The worst fault though, is that *Titan* is just so damn boring. It's party time in yawn city, so spend your pennies elsewhere comrades.

YA

TITAN

Title: **Titan**
Supplier: **Titus**
Unit 4, Stannets,
Laindon North Trade Centre
Basildon,
Essex SS15 8DS
Tel: **(0268) 541126**
Price: **£19.95**

Graphics: **10**
Sound: **13**
Playability: **5**
Value: **7**



As if hovercraft, speedboats, jet-skis and inflatables weren't enough, an exhausted Dave Reeder has had to cope with meteors, quads, buggys and supercats. Not to mention the assault course.

Run The Gauntlet

■ **Based on the television series, the** game pits four teams from the UK, US, Holland, and Australia against one another in a series of challenges. Up to three players can compete, but only one at a time versus the computer.

The challenges involve a random selection of three different types of event — on the water, around a track, and around assault course. This gives you a chance to master four power vehicles on water (hovercraft, speedboat, jet ski, inflatable) and land (meteor, quad, buggy, supercat) respectively, plus a range of skills around the course, such as swimming and net climbing.

All events are timed, so if you fail to complete the course before the other players you receive a penalty maximum time. After the three events, the total time for the three segments is added and the player finishing last is disqualified. The others compete in the next challenges until a final winner emerges who claims the Run The Gauntlet trophy.

I may have been at a slight disadvantage with this one as I've never seen the TV show. I also wasn't quite prepared for the computer to cheat quite so much. However, despite the odds, and a joystick in tatters, I'm a convert.

The adrenalin pumps from the start and only goes into remission when the music and graphics stop, annoyingly, during disk changes. A title screen, with digistised sound and graphics from the TV series, and then we're away into pure excitement — choosing the teams! Seriously, even that is impressive in this game, showing that an attention to detail raises 'yet another sports simulation' well above the pack.

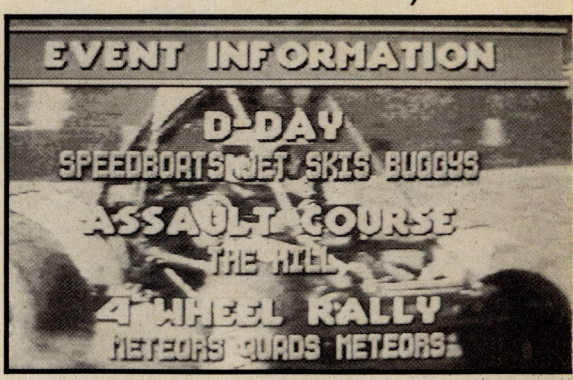
But then it is into pure action. The screens are full of colour and detail — specks of white water and reflections of flags for the water events, for example — and the playing areas are well laid out. A main screen holds the action and, to the right, a smaller one shows a map of the course, or a power meter. And the maps are the key to the motorised events as some of the courses are too complex to be seen clearly on screen. The feel of the game (coded by Mark Rogers and Chris Kerry) is the Ocean style, bringing back memories of chunky Match Day, and Commando, from years gone by.

In this game, however, there is a great deal of variety. In effect, you have 12 different packages. A problem that occurs quite quickly is how to get some practice in when event selection is random. In general the events require little actual skill: water and off road sequences demand nifty steering and a good memory of the course, the assault course demands a fast moving joystick. Yet the courses are well laid out and there are some really great little touches. In the assault course, for instance, your character climbs walls and logs by exhorting himself to greater effort.

For the events, except perhaps for the assault course, gameplay is set at about the right level (although I found the keyboard much more precise). That's OK but there's not a lot you can do when the computer cheats so outrageously. Its boats cross spurs of land, for example, or collisions always affect your buggy, not the computer's. Not that it matters, there's a clean quality to the game that makes it quite compulsive — sharp graphics, crisp music, well-designed scoring screens and so on.

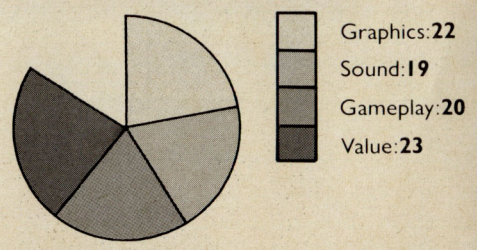
If you're looking for a selection of simulations, this could be a good choice. There are a variety of skills to be mastered, and the random nature of the game ensures that you won't get bored with the same events. I don't think I'll tune in to the TV show, but I can't wait for the game to come back to me from the photographer who's taking the screen shots!

YA



RUN THE GAUNTLET

RUN THE GAUNTLET
Title: **Run The Gauntlet**
Supplier: **Ocean Software**
6 Central Street
Manchester
M2 5NS.
Tel: **061 832 6633**
Price: **£24.95**



REVIEW

THE LAST INCA

Gordon Hamlett thinks that maybe it will be the last

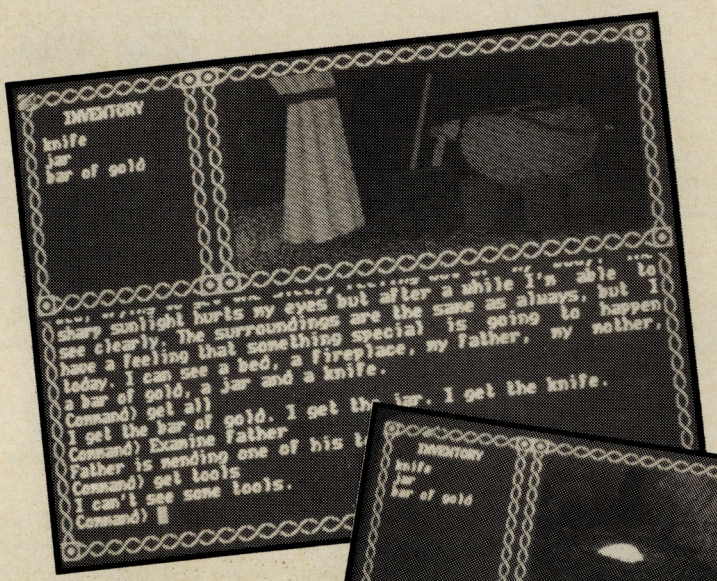
■ **Traditional adventures are something** of a rarity these days as most companies have diversified into either role-playing games or animated cartoon style stories. *The Last Inca* comes from a company new to me, Free Spirit Software who have licensed it from an American company Axxiom.

The story goes like this: there was once an evil wizard, called Zulphosi, who was captured by three wizards living in the Galapagos Islands. His imprisonment lasted for many years but, eventually, after the last of the three wizards died, he managed to bribe the guards and buy his freedom.

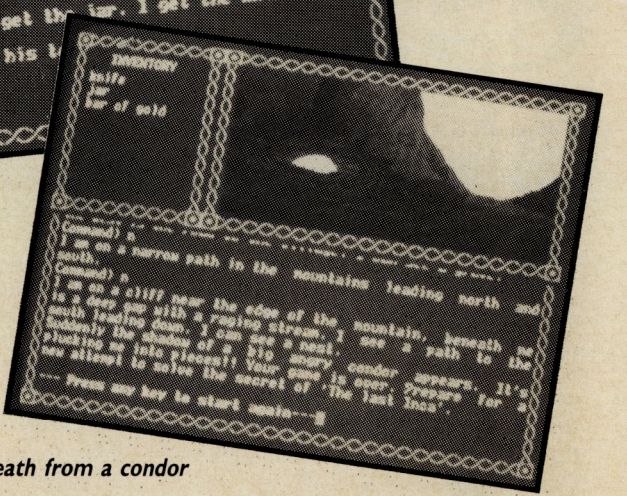
Now, he seeks revenge on your people, the Incas, for the sole reason that you were strong allies of the wizards. In order to wreak his vengeance, he needs to find the Crown of Power. The only way to stop him is to find it before he does. And it is up to you, as the Inca warrior chosen, to meet the challenge.

On your quest you will need to overcome a voracious condor, explore an underground complex, deal with medicine men, trolls, and discover why a little old man is sitting on top of a monolith. There are the usual locked doors that will need to be opened, and you will also come across traces of ancient civilisations and fabled gems.

The game has ten predefined function keys giving you easy access to the most frequently used commands, although you can redefine these as you see fit. There are the usual load and save commands, and you can also get a printout of the text.



What! No tools?



Instant death from a condor

The Last Inca is a perfect example of everything that an adventure shouldn't be! Leaving aside the rather hackneyed story line, and the relatively small size of the game (only sixty odd locations), we come to the major problems.

The parser is quite simply unacceptable these days. I saw this type of thing years ago on the Spectrum. A typical example is in the first location where you see your father busy mending tools. However, when you try to get or examine the tools, you are soon told that there are no tools. The same applies when he goes to exchange the tools in the store because parties promptly deny the existence of any tools.

The instruction book suggests that you say "hello" to your mother, but the program doesn't recognise 'hello'. Speaking to the medicine man, the program referred to him as 'd.' This seemed to be some sort of internal code so I tried 'say to d. ...' The program very quickly crashed.

The location descriptions are brief, and none too helpful. They are also littered with spelling and grammatical errors. By wandering into certain locations you can be killed instantly: a very poor adventuring technique. Also, there is an annoying tune which adds nothing to the game, although it can be toggled off. Why not use sound effects instead?

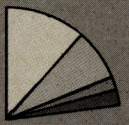
The graphics are poor as well: if you are going to have a little old man sitting on a monolith why not have a picture of the scene instead of a featureless grassy plain?

I am really at a loss to know why this game was ever released. Games from Infocom and Magnetic Scrolls have been around for a long time now, showing us what sort of thing can be done with an adventure game. It must be obvious to even those who hate this type of game that *The Last Inca* is several classes below Infocom and Magnetic Scrolls.

Do not waste your money. *YA*

LAST INCA

Title: **The Last Inca**
Supplier: **Free Spirit Software**
P.O. Box 128
58 Noble Street
Kutztown, P.A.
19530, USA.
Tel: (215) 6835609
Price: **N/A**



Graphics **6**
Storyline: **4**
Gameplay: **1**
Value: **1**

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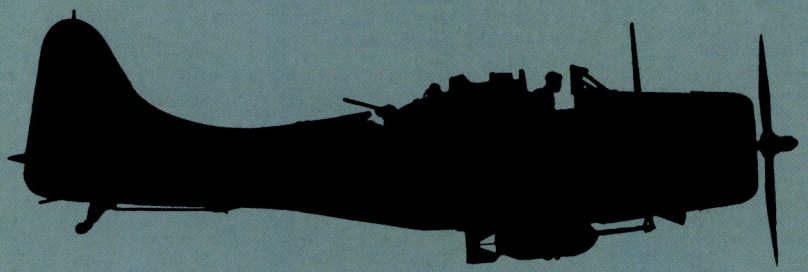
REVIEW

Battlehawks 1942



LucasFilm Games — will their latest offering live up to expectations. Kevin Crosby takes to the skies

■ **The guys at George Lucas's games** division have been busy again. This time with a World War Two naval air combat simulator which strives to put you in the pilots seat at a number of authentic clashes between the American and Japanese fleets. So what makes this one special?

Well, for one thing, you have an incredible number of options available to you in the form of various training missions. This gives you experience in gunnery fundamentals, fighter escort, dive-bombing and torpedo runs.

Each of these allow you to get used to the handling of your plane under various circumtances without the hassle of being shot at (which does tend to spoil ones concentration during training).

Having ploughed your way through the rigourous training you can now go into active service and join one of four famous battles.

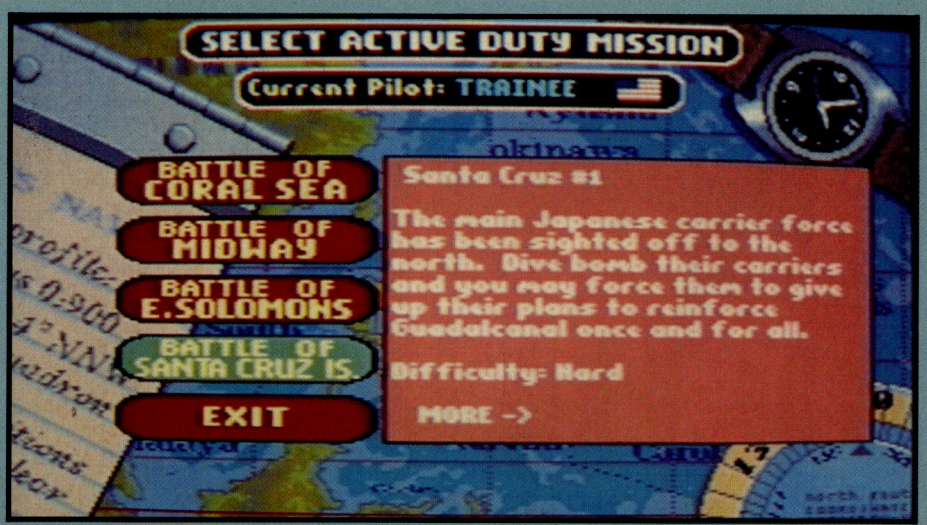
The Battle of Coral Sea is the easiest of the four missions: all you have to do is join in a dive-bombing attack on the Shoho, a small Japanese aircraft carrier.If you sink it you'll save New Guinea from a sound thrashing!

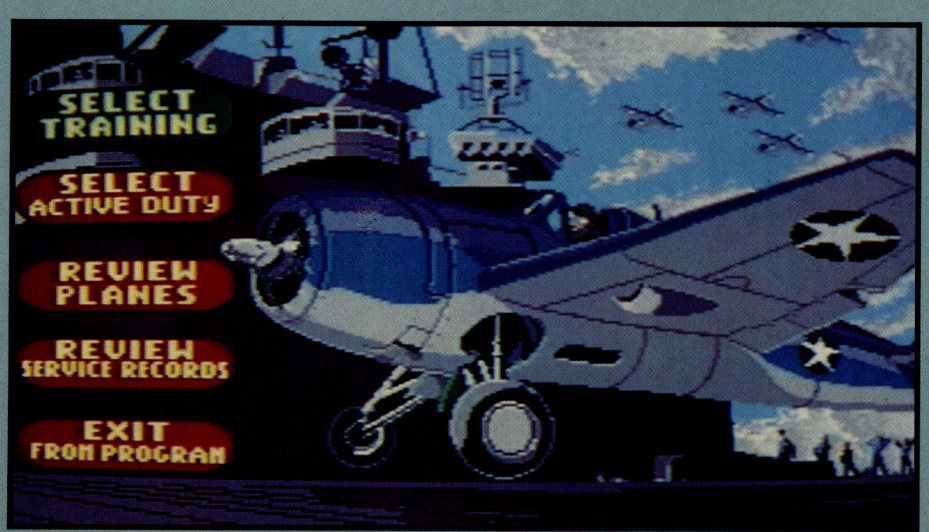
The Battle of Midway is a moderate mission.This time you join Lt Richard Best on his crucial dive-bombing attack on the carrier Agaki.

The Battle of the Eastern Solomons is a harder mission still. This has you flying a torpedo bomber in an attack on the light carrier Ryujo to prevent her from launching an attack on Guadalcanal.

The Battle of Santa Cruz Island is the hardest mission of all: the main Japanese carrier forces have been sighted off your North coast

Development through training.



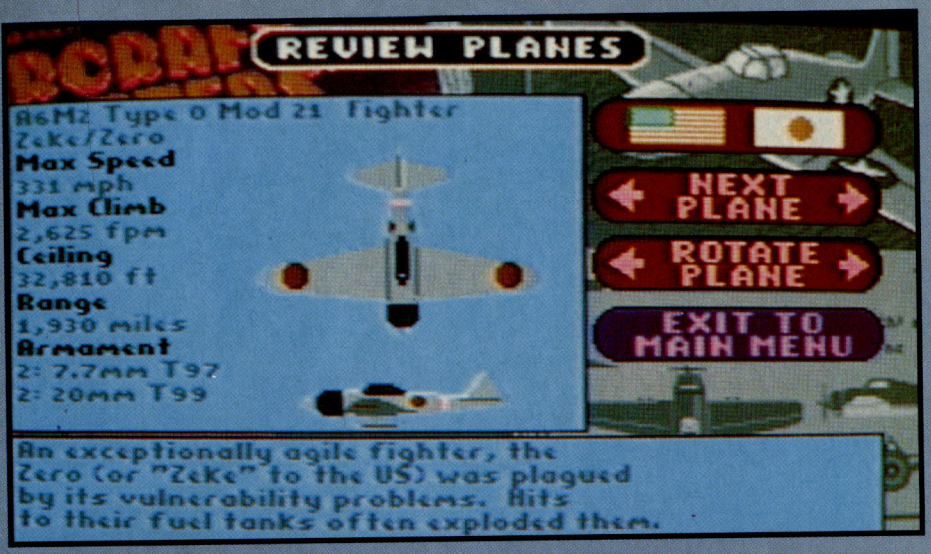


so you have to dive-bomb in a serious way reinforcing Guadalcanal once and for all.

Not only do you have these choices but you also have the option to be in a wide variety of planes on both sides.So, you can beat those nasty yanks at the controls of a Japanese Zero instead.

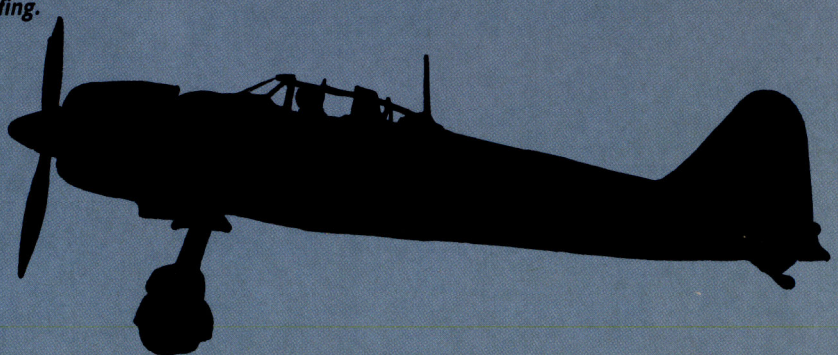
Assuming you've gone through all the training you need and you've selected one of the missions you must now plough your way through the thick of a battle: shooting down enemies, that swarm around you, using your forward and rear guns, avoiding their fire whilst carrying out your mission — not an easy task, but then whoever said war was easy?

Chocks away.



Aircraft I.D.

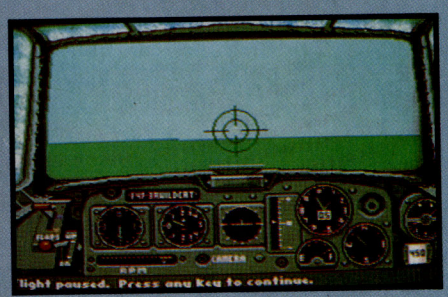
Briefing.



Graphically, *Battlehawks* is superb. The cockpit control panel looks accurate, and the controls do actually move, when their function is selected. Speaking of functions, the handling of these planes seems quite accurate. In fact, fustratingly so. I was stalling may plane with mind-numbing consistancy to begin with but, as with most things, practice makes perfect (well, a little better at least).

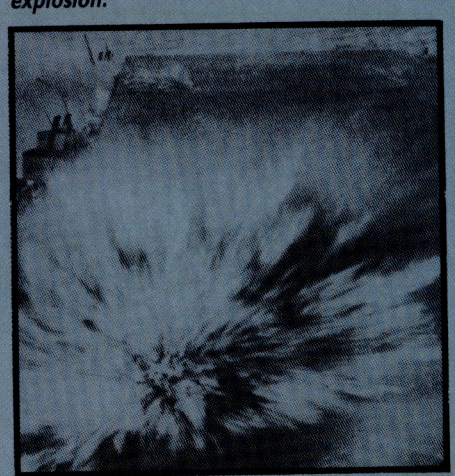
The sound effects were also pretty impressive. Accurate gunfire and engine noises all helped to conjure up the realism of this simulation, although the sound of the engine did seem to die away every so often leaving just the gunfire effects. However, hitting the "S" key a couple of time seemed to bring it back. Maybe my 1 Meg upgrade is playing up.

Possibly the most impressive part of this package is the documentation, which goes into some detail about the planes, the people, the training, and the battles themselves. Using archive photos, quotes from pilots of the time, and accurate historical accounts, an interesting and informative background is provided to a technically excellent game. Well done George, another winner. *YA*



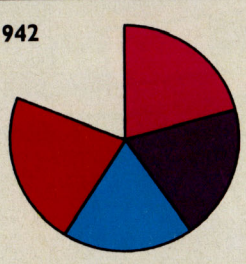
Your cockpit.

The booklet accompanying the game is captivating itself. The picture below was this photographer's last: he was killed in the explosion.



BATTLEHAWKS 1942

Title: **Battlehawks 1942**
Supplier: US Gold
Units 2/3 Holford Way
Birmingham B7 7AX
Tel: **021-356 3388**
Price: **£24.95**



Graphics: **21**
Sonics: **19**
Gameplay: **19**
Value: **22**

STEVE DAVIS WORLD SNOOKER

Steve Davis World Snooker *proves interesting to the point of excitement!*

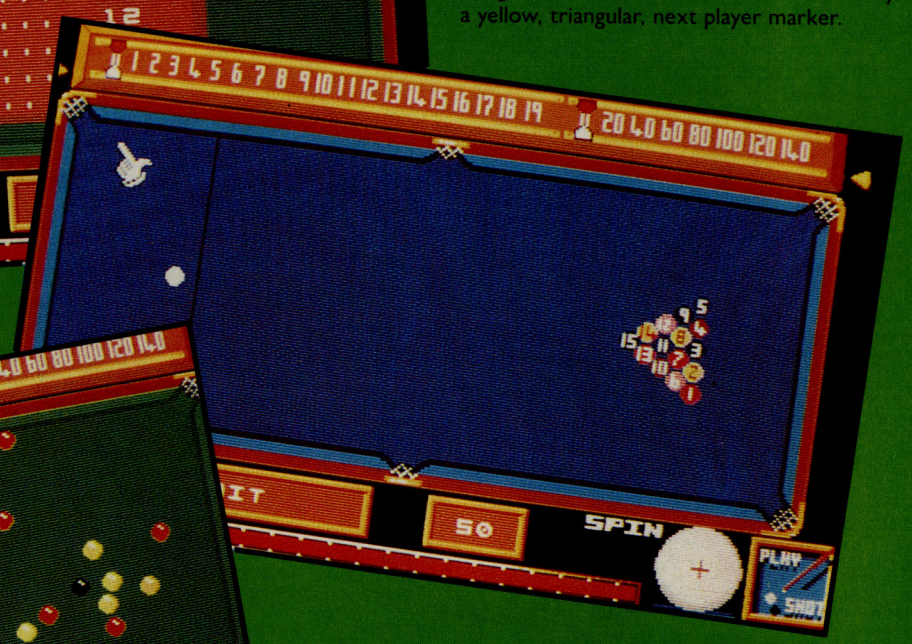
■ ***Steve Davis World Snooker*** **is an** accurate simulation of six different baize games. It gives you two types of snooker — 10 and 15 ball — US Pool (where the balls are numbered), UK Pool (where the balls are coloured), English Billiards and Carom Billiards. The game package is therefore similar to, but an expansion on, the 8-bit *Steve Davis Snooker* package offered by CDS in the past. *Steve Davis World Snooker* is a "fully updated and reprogrammed 16-bit version", drawing on an international range of games.

Carom Billiards is probably the least well known. It's very similar to English Billiards but you play it without pockets. "Without pockets, what about trousers", I also hear you ask? No, you don't need trousers either. In fact there isn't a prerequisite for having to cover your legs at all... You could, as my cat does, hook up your Amiga next to your bed and play snooker in (or out of) your pyjamas. But, when your balls are on the table, what you do get is one red and two white ones. Points are scored when your white ball cannons (a carom) into both the red ball and your opponent's white ball. The other games, apart from US Pool, I was more familiar with, having passed many mispent hours of my youth in seedy bars shooting whisky, pool and snooker. I've never played 10 ball snooker before, though apparently it is played on half and quarter sized tables and, as it is on Amiga, is a useful learning and practice game.

Steve shooting down the page.

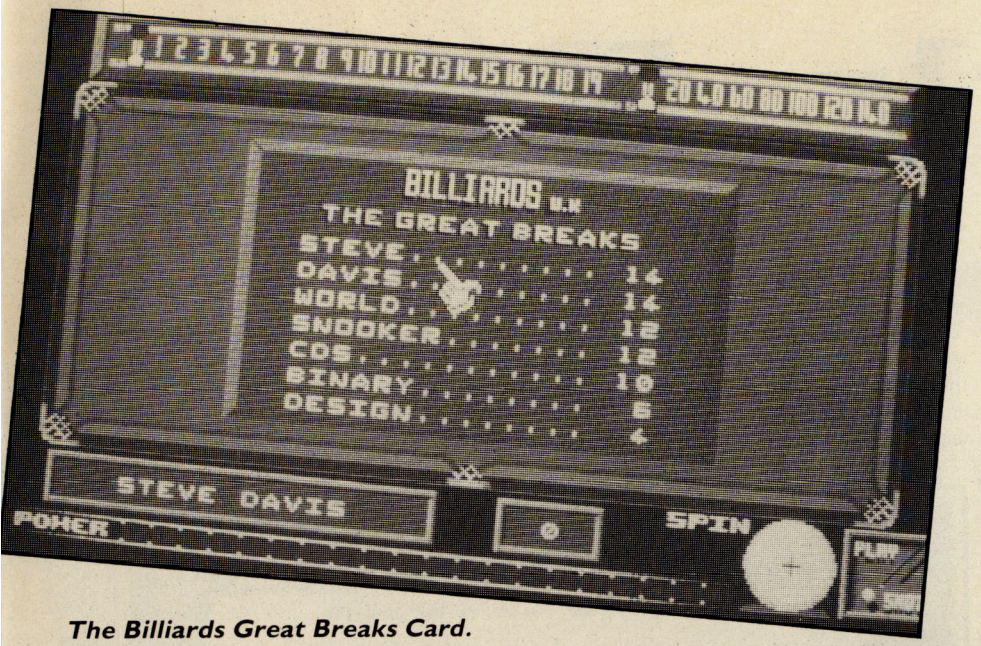
The game also has a good program display and extensive programme controls. The program display has an easily used menu bar, prompt and break windows, and shot control icons. At the top of the display there is a traditional snooker Score Board. If you score a high break then you can chart your success on a High Break Table. Game flow is maintained by a yellow, triangular, next player marker.

Yes, the gloved hand shows Steve on top again.

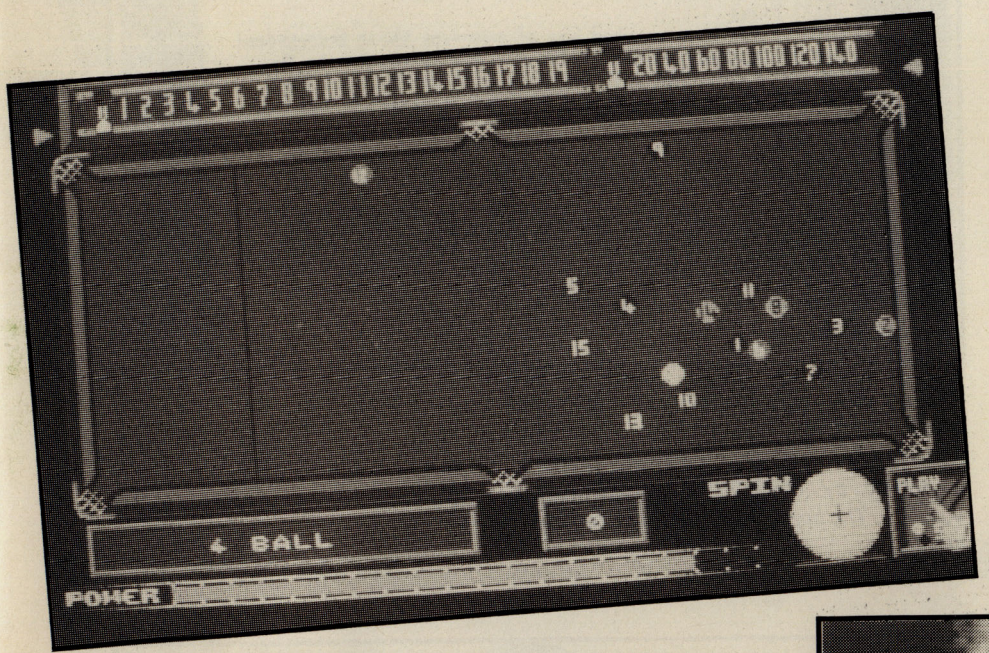


USA Pool.

15-Ball Snooker.



The Billiards Great Breaks Card.



Split those balls.

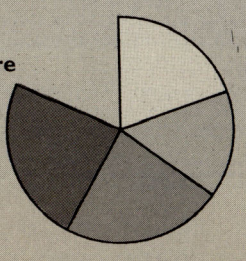
The program controls come provided with a cue line up, shot power scale, spin function, re-positioning of cue ball, coloured ball nomination and, for USA Pool, pocket nomination. This feels like the real thing. It doesn't give you that awkward chalky moment when your cue slips off sweaty knuckles, rips a hole in the baize surface, chipping the white into someone's beer. No, it doesn't do that. But it is competitively rewarding, at times frustratingly so because us humans always seem to lose to super alien Steve. It's unnerving. You've just made your biggest break, of 4 or less, and noted it on the High Break Table, when the alien fiend runs riot over the table. Snooker, Billiards, Pool, Steve shows you how it's done: snookers, plants, pots....If you do manage to beat him at novice level, then you can move on up to take more complex punishment at Club, Amateur, Professional and then World Level.

A practice option allows the human to practice "without an opponents playing shots continuously." You'll need this. You'll also need what the menu and user manual call Further Help. This has a shot prediction, in practice mode , to show you in advance how bad you're going to be, and a zoom-in view which displays one sixth of the table over the whole screen. There are also three features on the Extras Menu not normally available during a game.

The Slow Replay lets you see how bad you've just been, Take Back allows you to play your last shot several times, and Set Up lets you move your balls around the table to practice different shots. Take Back and Set Up are only allowed during practice mode, "for tuition and amusement". This typifies the comprehensive research that appears to have gone into this game. Accompanying the disks is an easy to read manual that is nearly superfluous partner to these self-explanatory games. The games are so similar to their non-computer originators that the game's manufacturer, CDS, should have no difficulty in convincing you that *Steve Davis World Snooker* is, like Steve, interesting. Even though I haven't won...yet..and my highest break is 8...and the cat's very good at it.. ***YA***

STEVE DAVIS WORLD SNOOKER

Title: **Steve Davis World Snooker**
Supplier: **CDS Software Limited, Nimrod House, Beckett Rd. Doncaster DN2 4AD**
Tel: **0302 321134**
Price: **£19.99**



Gameplay: **23**
Sound: **15**
Graphics: **20**
Value: **24**

St-st-ee-ee-ve-ve.

REVIEW

Zork Zero

Tony Hetherington travels back in time

■ **The Zork trilogy is a classic in computer adventuring, and most gamers will have explored at least part of the underground empire, fallen foul of a grue, or been amazed by the products of the Frobozz magic company. Now you can travel back to the time before a single adventurer stood in the open field, west of the white house, to the time of Zork Zero.**

The Great Underground empire was, in it's heydey, complete with condos and underground railways until King Dimwit, one of the 12 ruling Flatheads, builds an offensive statue of Megaboz the wizard who had rudely interupted a banquet and lain a curse on the kingdom. 94 years later it is your job to save the land, and remove the curse. This tricky task involves locating and collecting, in true Zorkan style, 24 objects belonging to the Flatheads, and then following the instructions displayed on a rebus in the gallery. Unfortunately, these instructions are in puzzle form and obscured by a menagerie of flat animals magically stuck to it.

This unlikely, but believable story, is backed up by the usual Infocom packaging, including the Flathead calendar, a scrap of parchment, and the blueprint for an underground housing estate.

But the game also features graphics.These don't appear as illustrations to each and every location. Infocom still relies on it's colourful text to do that. Instead the graphics appear as illustrations in books, on screen maps (that link location icons) and as graphic games and puzzles that you must solve with your mouse to gain entry to secret rooms, passageways, and collect valuable items.

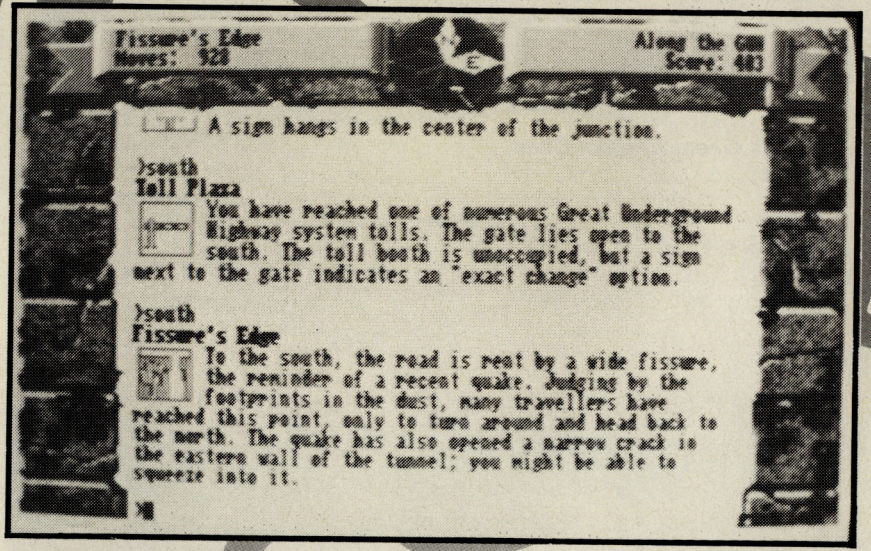
The screen display also has a graphic border and a compass rose at the top of the screen so on you can click on the direction you wish to travel. But from then on it's back to the keyboard to type in exactly what you want to do.

These graphic touches do add to the game, particularly the map through which you can move quickly from one end of an area to another, but the most important feature is the Jester and to a lesser extent the Encyclopedia Frobozzica. The latter is an invaluable source of information about almost anything you could find in the game and the former helps and hinders your progress through it. This can range from riddles to solve and games to play to planting red clown noses which can clutter up the number of objects you can juggle with useless items.

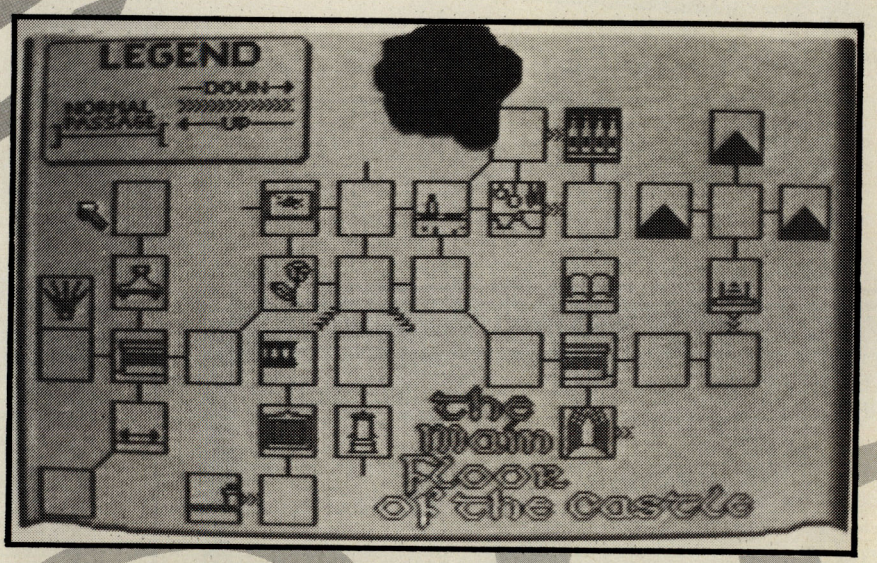
Peggleboz is one such game and is a variation on solitaire but there are also games such as Snarfem and Double Fanussi to test and bewilder you.

Zork Zero may be restricted to a castle and it's surrounding walls but the excesses of the Flatheads ensure that this includes such unlikely locations as a mountain, lake, underground highway, marsh, 200 storey office block, desert and family vault.

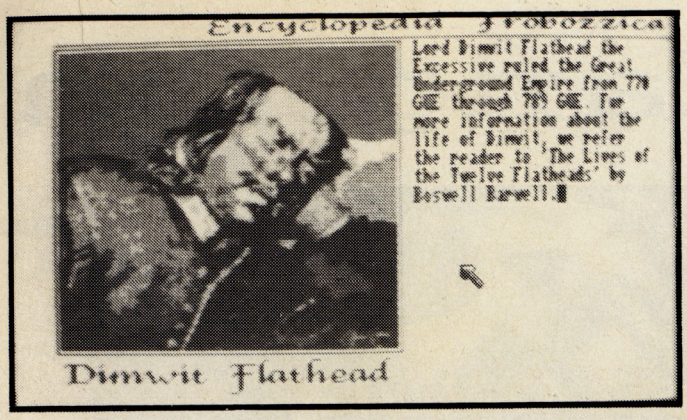
Should you get stuck then the program also includes the online hint system. This can give you anything from a gentle nudge to the answer to a rap on the knuckles.



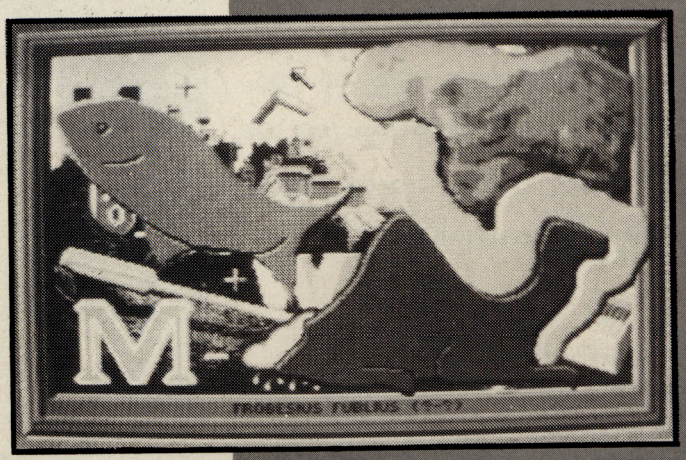
The new look Infocom adventure. The text is still the same high quality but now each location has an icon, and movement can be controlled by clicking on the compass headings. The border indicates your general area.



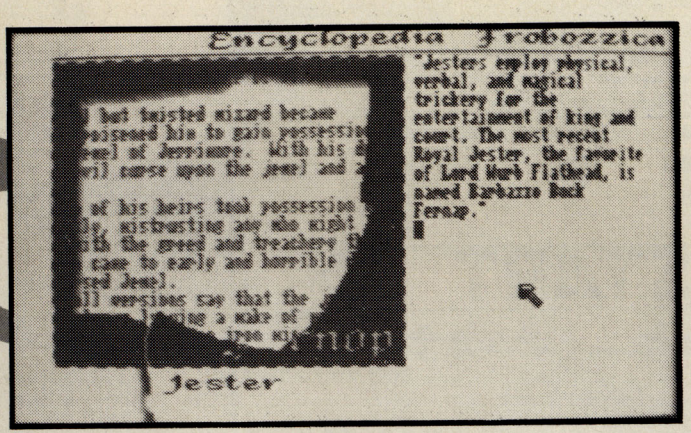
An online mapping feature links the room icons for a specific area. Only locations you have visited appear on the map and it can be used to travel quickly by clicking on the room you wish to visit.



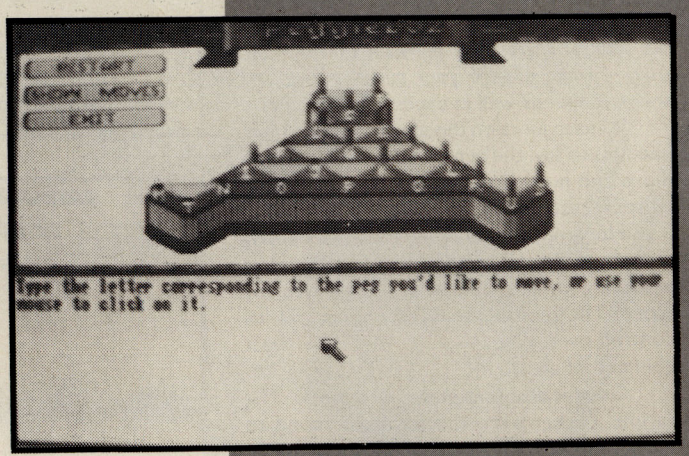
Encyclopedia Frobozzica. When Infocom add graphics to a game they make them worthwhile. This is a page from the Encyclopedia that includes some important clues.



The Rebus. This hangs in the gallery and holds the solution to braking the wizard's curse. Unfortunately, the picture is obscured by flattened creatures. Here, I've managed to remove two and parts of the puzzle are appearing but it still makes no sense.



Another Encyclopedia entry this time of the Jester. He helps and hinders you throughout the game with puzzles and riddles.



Peggleboz. Fancy a game of peggleboz? It's just one of the many graphic puzzles solved with the mouse and the your brain.

An Infocom game with graphics! The idea would have been quite ridiculous a few years ago, but with the advance of role-playing games and graphic adventures the old master had to learn new tricks. In fact the graphics add and enhance the game instead of simply replacing the text descriptions. I doubt that there are enough graphics to make the game appeal to those who stand on the graphic side of the adventure argument. They'll probably go for the icon style adventures such as *Deja Vu* or the graphics of Zak McKraken.

Existing Infocom and Zork fans well revel in another chance to explore the underground empire and tackle some of the most ingenious puzzles in adventures. The Jester character is a stroke of genius as he both helps and hinders you at the same time, so you must resist the temptation to strangle him.

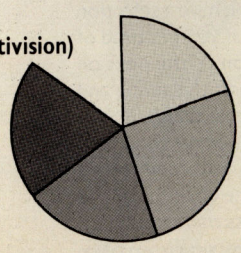
The game was penned by Steve Meretsky, author of *Planetfall* and *Leather Goddesses* as well as co-author of *Hitch Hikers Guide* so the humour isn't entirely unexpected.

I dislike the online hint feature as it is too tempting, particularly in a game like this where you have about seven puzzles to solve at any one time.

Zork Zero represents Infocom back at its best. After a shaky period the where they seemed to lose direction. *YA*

ZORK ZERO

Title: **Zork Zero.**
Supplier: **Infocom (Activision)**
Blake House
Manor Farm Road
Reading.
Berks. RG2 0JN
Price: **£24.99**

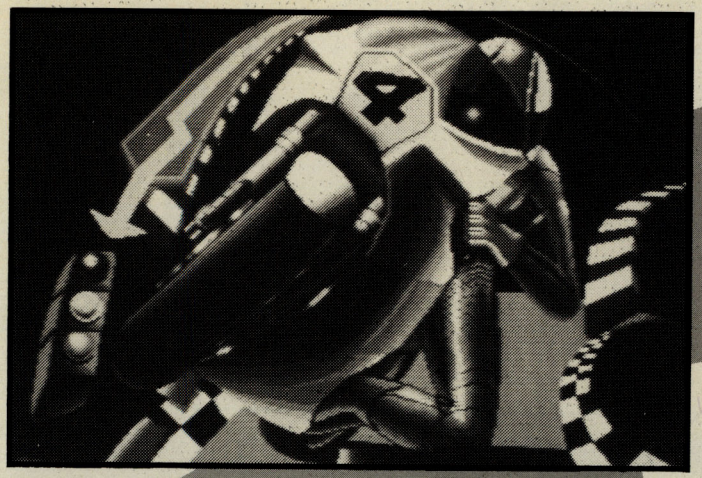


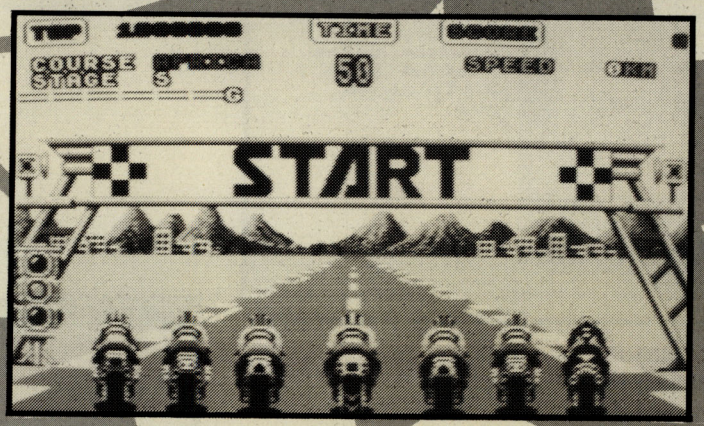
Graphics: **20**
Sound: **25**
Gameplay: **20**
Value: **22**

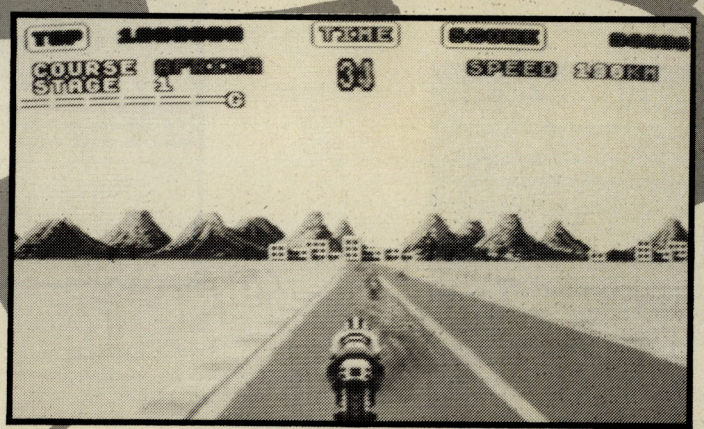
REVIEW

Super Hang-On

Heralded by many as the most eagerly awaited coin-op conversion this side of Pac-Man, Super Hang On has an awful lot to live up to. Kevin Crosby throttles it







■ **It probably won't come as a great shock** to discover that *Super Hang On* is the sequel to the immensely popular road race game *Hang On*. Nor will it astound you to know that the gameplay is remarkably similar to it's predessesor released last year.

The aim is to compete, in record time, at various motorcycle race tracks around the world. To survive each track you must hurtle round at top speed avoiding obvious obstacles, like the edge of the road, and other cyclists. Additional forward momentum can be gained by hitting the action button on your joystick, or mouse, once your speedo colour changes to red (about the 280 MPH mark). It's at that point that you can engage your turbo boost, and travel at speeds well in excess of 300 MPH.

At each junction the scenary changes and, needless to say, the bends in the roads become more and more treacherous to the point of joystick destruction!

However, the other alternative is utilising the mouse. This I found tricky, at first, but, after practising with it, it certainly improved my score. The mouse's sensitivity gives you full control over your bike, in even the most confined of areas.

Graphically the game is superb. The various backgrounds change from round to round; country to country until, eventually, you're greeted by a cheering crowd at the finish line. Each part of the world has a different number of rounds Africa being the easiest, Russia being the hardest. You get to choose where you want to race and, not surprisingly, the scenery befits where the race is supposed to take place.

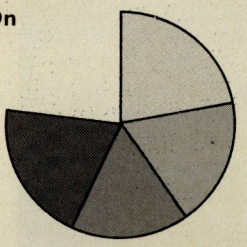
Soundwise the game offers a fair degree of choice. The background music can not only be switched in and out but you have a selection of tunes to choose from. So if you get tired of hearing one you merely go on to the next on the list. Other options include the saving and loading of your own high score tables.

So what can I say? It's another road race game, a nicely programmed one, but there's certainly nothing new with the concept or the gameplay itself. However, pats on the back are in order for an excellent conversion from coin-op to Amiga. It's well worth getting if you have less than three such games in you collection already.

YA

SUPER HANG-ON

Title: **Super Hang-On**
Supplier: **Activision**
Tel: **0734 311666**
Price: **£24.99**



Graphics: **22**
Sonics: **18**
Gameplay: **17**
Value: **16**

KICK OFF

BLISTERING PACE
PIXEL PERFECT PASSING
SUPERB TACTICAL PLAY

A Soccer Simulator which is not only accurate and realistic but is also great fun to play

Whatever your style of play may be, be it playing the Long Ball or playing the Sweeper, your players will be in position to receive the passes, control the midfield and tackle an advancing striker. Each player on the field is an individual with a unique combination of four attributes - Pace, Accuracy, Stamina and Aggression. Watch out for the Brazilians at the International level, they are dynamite.

* Full size multi-directional scrolling pitch with scanner showing all the players on the field.

* Option to practice and learn ball control, take corners and practice penalties.

* 5 Skill levels, International to Sunday League. The levels of both teams set separately. The ultimate challenge is the defeat of the star studded team of Internationals by the Sunday League of no hopers. A super human test of skill and concentration.

* One or two players option. * 4 distinct tactics.

* League competition for 1 to 8 players. Load and Save League facilities.

* Simple controls to dribble, shoot, pass, chip or head the ball or do a sliding tackle.

* Amazing ball simulation takes account of the ground and air friction. Direction changing breeze at the higher skill levels

* 9 types of Corner kicks, Penalties, Yellow and Red cards and a host of other features like players getting tired by the end of the game, time wasting, injury time, etc.

AVAILABLE ON	
AMIGA	£19.95
ATARI ST	£19.95
CBM 64 Cassette	£9.95
CBM 64 Disk	£14.95
IBM PC Comp.	£24.95

PLAYING IT IS EASY
MASTERING IT WILL TAKE TIME - A LOT OF TIME

AMIGA

AMIGA

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Telephone No.: 0322 92513/92518.
Mail Order by Cheque, Postal Order, ACCESS or VISA.
FAX No.: 0322 93422.

DPAINT III

Deleuxe Paint III, or what's a nice paint program like you doing running around with those crazy animators? By Lewis Tilley.

■ **"It's come. It didn't come like I thought** it would, but it's come!" or words to that effect, were once muttered by that creative genius, Winnie the Pooh upon completion of a poem he was beginning to think would never get written.

The new *DPaint III* packaging box slashes a red banner across its corner showing a juggler in the spotlight. Above his head the sub headline "WITH ANIMATION." appears. Inside the cover of the manual is the same Dan Silva peddling on a unicycle while juggling balls in the air. If you flip the lower outside edge of the manual you will discover that these aren't really balls but the solid forms of the cube, sphere and pyramid of his employer, *Electronic Arts*.

You get the idea very clearly that this is an animation package. But what kind of a new PAINT program has Electronic Arts released? Very little has changed, and what is changed has made this first and best of all the pre HAM paint programs even better.

Before we get into animation, here is a simple list quoted from the manual's contents page:

What's New

THE MAJOR ADDITIONS:
Animation;
Extra Halfbrite;
Overscan Painting;
More Brush Modes and Fill Types;
Filled Freehand Shape Tool;
Filled and Outlined Shapes;
Improved Perspective Documentation;
Improved Printing Controls.

ASSORTED OTHER CHANGES:
Flipping Pictures, More "About" info, Automatic Outlines, Brush handles, Choose Font Requester Replaced the Font Menu, Stenciled Brushes, and more Preferences.

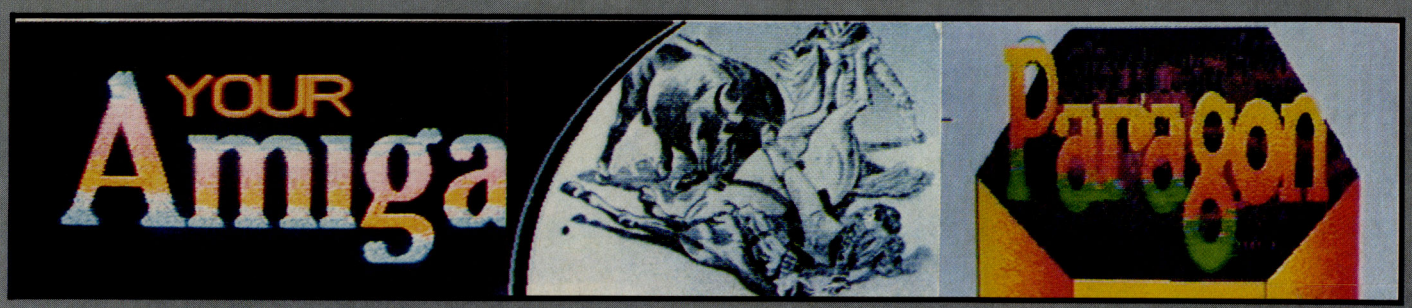
The Extra Halfbright addition to the palette frankly confused me with its interlaced (read intermingled) positon among the brighter colours. Perhaps I shall become accustomed to it as I find more use for the new mode, but the idea of using the same colour (hue) for a shadow by merely reducing its value with no change of hue violates all the contributions of the French Impressionists.

Overscan Painting has long been a most desirable addition for those who work for the electronic media. The direction towards an animation system demanded a screen filled to its outer limits. Bravo!

The two new brush modes are Tint and extra Halfbright. I had hoped the Tint would work like those mysterious veils that *Digipaint* and some other HAM programs use. There is little or no adjustment of the value or variation of the tint. These modes are continued in the Fill Types with the addition of Brush and Wrap.

When you fill with the "Brush" the image automatically adjusts to the size of the space to be filled. This astounding new tool, which may even out-perform the wrap from *Photonpaint*, is called "Wrap". Of course there is no subtle shading which HAM can give, but the crisp quality of the distorted brush is good. Animators should find this most useful. The "Boundary" fill tool used by some HAM programs has been added, too. You can now fill over a gradient area.

The Filled Freehand Shape Tool is a great time saver. With the same sure freedom of a



No need for H.A.M. with the 32 colour Medium Resolution.

The magic tool used to make these "word patterns" is "WRAP", one of the new additions to the "Fill Types of DPAINT III.

drawing line the area you surround is filled. Shape is too often destroyed by a painter's involvement with line.

Filled and Outlined Shapes does two tasks at the same time. It not only fills the shape with whatever you have requested in the Fill Type, but traces a line around it with the Spacing requester settings.

Hidden away in the Assorted Other Changes is a new feature for anyone who uses lettering or type in the images made with *DPaint*.

The need to access different fonts was so great that we all made the effort to reprogram in some way the old *DPaint II* pull down Menu for fonts. That menu is gone. In its place now is the magical menu of ANIMATION. Where is the font Menu? Double click with the right mouse key on the familiar "A" Tool of the typographical facility. You will be presented with a Choose Font Requester. I think one of the finest set of fonts is produced by the *Zuma Group inc. DPaint III* will make them available to you if you insert the ZUMA disk and type in the DISK NAME: Fonts/. An announcement for the sale of *Kara Fonts* was enclosed in the box with *DPaint III*. I have not yet had a chance to review this particular brand.

Even old hands with *DPaint II* are going to give thanks for the excellent rewrite of the chapter on Perspective. The previous manual did not treat this complex process with much clarity. Now, you will be able to ZOOM a title up along a clearly plotted path in a three dimensional world of perspective. That is what this remarkable animation program is capable of doing.

The animation addition to *DPaint III* is an entirely new approach to a traditional approach to animation. Most of the additions and changes that have been made in the paint program will aid you when you tackle the animation tutorial.

We will continue in the next issue with a further review of *DPaint II*, the Animation Years.

YA

REVIEW

Fonts 'n' Graphics

Enhance your text and graphics for final presentation via paper or video tape

■ **The choice of typeface or illustration** can make or break a document. Some new add-on packs of fonts, clip art and video backgrounds may add the required sparkle to your latest Amiga production.

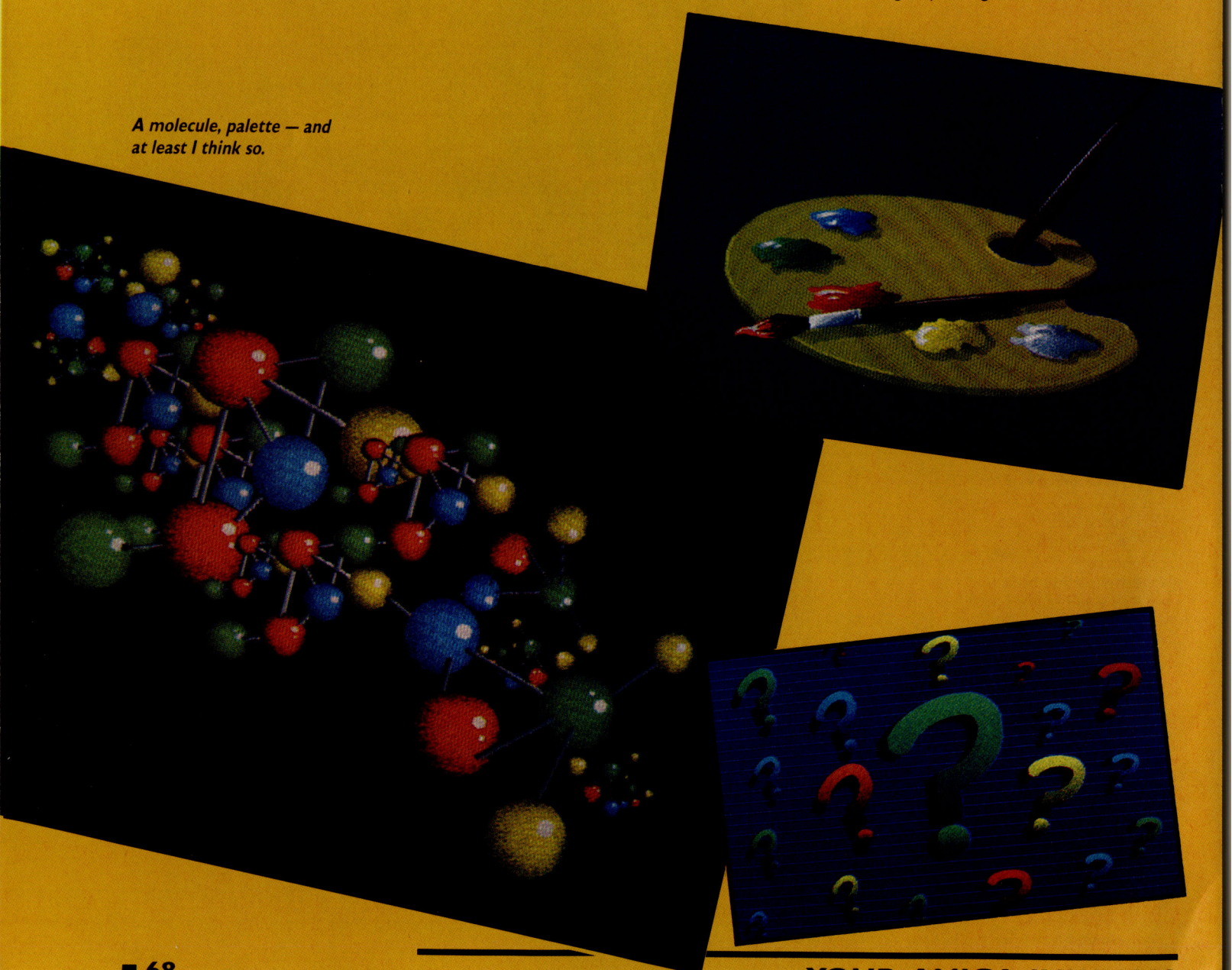
Fonts

Different fonts can subtly change the feel of a page of text. The standard Amiga bit-mapped fonts are used widely in different point sizes in both word processors and paint programs. Two new sets of fonts have recently been released by New Horizons. *ProFonts* are intended for use with their *ProWrite* word processor; *Free Spirit*, in their Media Line range, are for general use.

All these fonts can be used simply by adding them to the system (Workbench) disk used to start up any application. In this way programs, like *Deluxe Paint*, *NotePad*, or *PageSetter*, can take advantage of the new designs. However, I was disappointed that the Media Line packaging/documentation only shows scantily what the new fonts will look like. Whereas *ProFonts* contained some stapled sheets, with the full range printed out,it had no demo screens.

The *ProFont* professional collection has a narrow range of designs: platinum, pyrite, quartz, schist, zircon, beryl, coal, gold, granite and marble.Its point sizes are more expansive, starting at 11 and continuing up to 58. The designs are business-like and not at all showy.

On the "fun" disk there's a large range of styles that includes basalt, calcite, feldspar, flint, graphite, gravel, gypsum, obsidian and sand.Tired of the geological categories yet? The number of sizes is not so comprehensive although the 75 point signal flags are amazing; and serpentine, ultra galena and jade are attractive and readable. Architect and hieroglyph aren't what they sound but merely provide little icons like disk, knife and fork, gun, pointing hand etc.



A molecule, palette — and at least I think so.

One exceptional thing about the *ProFont* disks is the System Mover which you run in order to move the font files of your choice to a system (Workbench) disc. This idea has been stolen from the Mac environment and helps makes the installation procedure hassle free. Although only useful for fonts on the ProFonts disks, the System Mover program is invaluable in itself, allowing the "click and pick" easy installation of printers, keymaps, libraries, devices, handlers, CLI commands and CLI scripts.

The *ProFonts* disks are accompanied by a handy little manual with details about Amiga fonts, advice on using different sizes and styles, plus instructions for the System Mover.

The Media Line fonts come with no installation utility but with brief instructions on how to copy the fonts to a system disk. Other instructions show you how to use the CLI ASSIGN command to force the application program to look for the Media Line fonts, instead of its own. The designs are jazzy and attractive with large sizes supplied for banner headlines and advertising layouts (more for the paint program than the secretary's wordprocessor I'd say).

Clip Art

■ ***Conventional Clip Art* in Free Spirit's** Media Line range offers black and white high resolution clips which will load as pictures or brushes into most packages thanks to the IFF graphics standard.Signs, sportsmen, Christmas and other familiar signs appear; and there are some nice bits of artwork.

Clip art is arranged in directories and can be viewed from the Workbench, since each item has a compressed version as an icon. All the clip art (over 200 items) is shown on a couple of stapled photocopied sheets with brief advice on using the pictures with *Dpaint II, PageSetter, Photon Paint, Pagestream, Deluxe Photolab, Digipaint* and *Professional Page*. Printed output from bit image graphics can come as a bit of a disappointment, compared with structured graphics output from *ProDraw*. But it's cheap and can be effectively used.

Video backgrounds

■ **Thirty pictures are included on two** disks in Media Line's video and animation backgrounds pack. The IFF pictures are in overscan (which eliminates blank borders when transferring to video tape). Interlaced lo-res, with a standard VideoScape 32 colour palette, is used so that the backgrounds will not disturb object rendering in an Aegis animation package.

The backgrounds also work in *Aegis Video Titler, Turbo Silver* and *Sculpt 3D Animation* (Byte by Byte). HAM (Hold And Modify) applications can also use the backgrounds. A ClickMe icon displays the complete set of backgrounds contained on the disk,each with its own icon representation. Brief instructions explain how to copy the backgrounds to your own work disks.

Judge for yourself whether the backgrounds might prove useful. Certainly they would add a professional touch to an animation or video caption. Is anyone in the UK creating this sort of thing? If you are, drop us a line at *Your Amiga* with some examples. Free Spirit promise further resources including video animations, IFF animation sets, colour and font sheets, structured fonts and 3D objects.

Mega Collection

■ **Now's the time to mention an epic col**lection of fonts and clip art called the *Masterpiece Professional Font Collection* from Arock Computer Software. It's impossible to describe the overwhelming range of 110 different fonts except to say that they are fairly authentic copies of original typeface designs. There's nothing overly flashy and all seem to work as interesting and readable font styles. They were scanned and retouched in *Dpaint II*, transferred as brushes into Calligrapher Font Editor, and converted into loadable fonts.

There are also four disks of colour fonts and digitised border designs — from floral to pharonic — plus two disks of colour brushes. Utilities can be supplied to let you use colour fonts in application programs and to ASSIGN your font directory and move the font data onto the right disk.

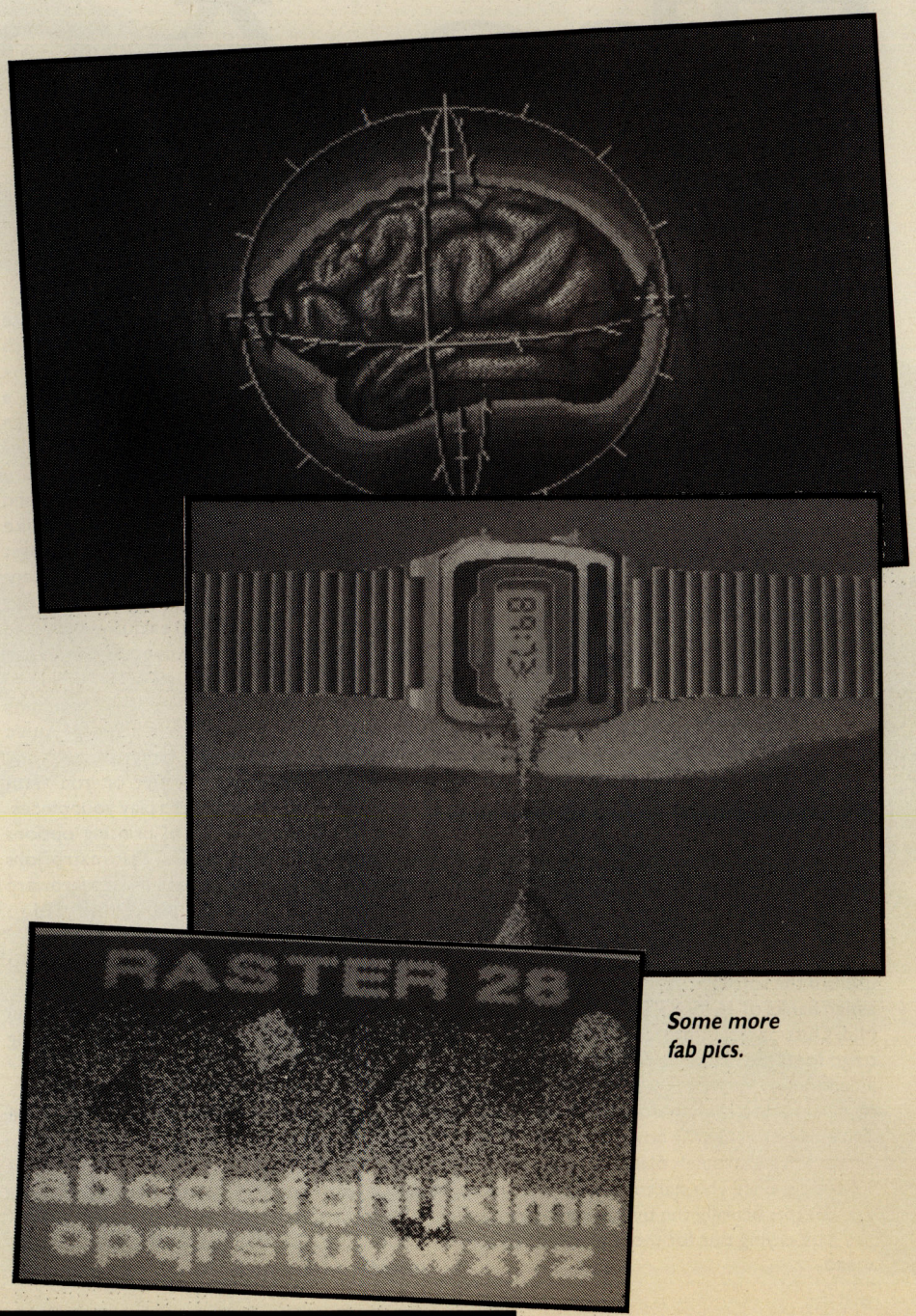
I've seen nothing to top this collection. Again the fonts are supplied big for use in paint programs for designing display advertising or magazine covers or posters. You wouldn't want them popping up in a business report!

Factfile

■ **New Horizons'*ProFonts* are available** from ProWrite dealers such as Amiga Centre Scotland.

Media Line *Clip Art, Video Backgrounds* and *Fonts* are available from Commodore dealers. The American contact is: Free Spirit Software, P.O.Box 128, Kutztown, PA 19530, USA.

The Masterpiece Collection is available from dealers. The American contact is: Arock Computer Software who are at P.O.Box 731, Springfield, MO 65801, USA. ***YA***



Some more fab pics.

The Amiga Studio

As the nation's professional sound studios look for better computers to drive their Midi set-ups, many are turning to the Amiga as a logical upgrade from "certain 16 bit machines I could mention". Darrin Williamson looks at what the home enthusiast needs to get into the world of Midi music

■ **Right, so you've got your Amiga and** you want to get into producing professional quality music at home but don't really know what to get or more importantly, what to get first. Surprisingly enough, it doesn't cost the earth to get started. After all, if you've got an Amiga, already so you already have the heart of the system.

So what do you need in addition? Keyboards, drums, a large Bank loan? The latter wouldn't be a bad idea, but in actual fact the most important thing you need is memory — loads of it. Although an A500 can potentially run many of the music packages, none of them really leave enough room to store a usable chunk of song data. For example *Midi Magic*, one of the simpler sequencers around takes up 82% of a 500's memory, leaving just enough for a verse or a chorus. The minimum you can realistically get away with is one meg, although the more the merrier.

Next thing you'll need is a Midi interface. This is a small box that converts the serial port into a full compliment of Midi sockets (IN, OUT and THRU). More sophisticated interfaces cater for more than one Midi Out. This proves very useful if the software you're planning to use can assign banks of 16 Midi channels to each of the Midi Outs on your interface. A good interface to go for is the Datel model which sports three independent Midi Outs (therefore allowing up to 48 separate channels of Midi information). You may be wondering how you could possibly use up 16 Midi channels of info, let alone 48, but believe me once you start amassing your sound sources (particulally the multi-timbral models) you'll be crying out for more channels so plan ahead.

Next you'll need some software. As you will have no doubt noticed, in the pages of *Your Amiga* there's quite a wide selection of titles available which cater for a variety of needs. Firstly, and probably most importantly is your sequencing package.

This will act as your recording system and, from a Midi point of view, replace a multi-track tape recorder, allowing you to record "tracks" of data which build up to form a song. Without going into too much detail, a sequencer gives you almost infinite control over both the recording and the playback of a piece of music recorded into it. Several good ones exist for the Amiga, including the almost industry standard Steinberg Pro 24. My personal choices would have to be Circum Designs' *Midi Magic* for dabblers, and Micro Illusion's *Music X*, for people who are taking the whole thing seriously.

Other bits of software you may find of use are patch editors and notation packages. Patch editors allow you to tweak all the parameters of a synth or sampler (which can often be a nightmare from its own front panel), and then store your new, improved sounds onto an Amiga disk. Customised Editor/Librarian packages are available for most popular synths, expanders and samplers although manufacturers like Soundquest (distributed by MCM amongst others) do produce Generic Patch Librarians which you can use with any Midi gear. These are are capable of doing system exclusive bulk data dumps which, these days, covers a wide range of gadgets.

Notation packages take sequencer data files and score them out as traditional music notation. This is only really useful in education, if you're a serious songwriter, or you want someone who reads music to play your pieces. Most offer a wide range of printing options catering from the humblest of 9 pin matrix jobs to the top-end postscript laser. The Hardware Traditionally people use a piano keyboard to input Midi data. However, these days whatever instrument you play, someone, somewhere is churning out a Midi version. Everything from saxaphones to violins can be plugged into an Amiga Midi interface, and used for inputting data.

Some of the more popular Midi controllers include the *Casio DH- 100 Digital Horn*, the *Akai EWI* and *EVI* wind, and valve controllers, the *Casio PG-380 Guitar Controller* and the *Roland Octopad* Midi drum pads.

By far the most popular form of Midi controller is the keyboard and, in these days of modular rack-mounted synth expanders, what better controller than a master keyboard? Virtually all manufacturers have at least one in their range which can cost from a few hundred pounds to three or four grand. Obviously, as with most things, you get what you pay for, but this doesn't mean that you're automatically going to get rubbish if you purchase on a budget. For the cost conscious there's the Cheetah range from 200 to '700, and from Kawai, there's the K-1. The K-1 is a full function synth with a velocity sensitive keyboard and multi split point capability (several sounds mapped out across the keyboard at one time). It has some jolly good sounds to boot, all for just six hundred notes:can't be bad.

Once your ideal controller is sorted out you'll need some sound sources to get the most from your sequencer. After all you're hardly doing the Amiga's capabilities justice by merely asking it to play back one sound you've recorded. What you need is a unit that will do the job of several synths. In other words you need multi-timbrality.

Once again, most synth manufacturers have keyboardless versions of their most popular models, several of which stick out as good purchases. My personal favourite at the moment is the Roland U- 110 PCM sample player. This has on board 99 preset sounds which are all digital versions of actual instruments. So you can give accurate pianos, strings, choirs, basses, etc, all at the touch of a button. And it has none of that tedious messing about editing and looping samples you've created yourself. Plus, with the aid of your micro you can instruct the U-110 to play up to six of these voices independantly, and polyphonically, across separate Midi channels.

Furthermore, there is room for expansion, thanks to the inclusion of four ROM card expansion slots, all of which can be filled to the brim with even more sounds, ranging from latin percussion to electric guitars. Mind you, there are certainly some bargains to be had with products released a couple of years ago, such as the Roland MT-32, which has nine polyphonic voices. It includes a separate bank of drum sounds, comparable to many drum machines I've come across.

Speaking of drums, some form of drum machine comes in very useful as part of your MIDI set up, as it will not take up any of your valuable memory with rhythm parts as most sequencer packages support MIDI time codes which can instruct your drum machine to keep time with the computer during recording and playback. The best budget unit around at the

moment is the *Alesis HR-16* and its counterpart the *HR-16B* which features a differant palette of sounds. At the slightly more expensive end of the market, within the reach of mere mortals, is the *Roland R-8* which has some of the best sounds, and play options, available on any beatbox under the '1000 mark.

At this stage you're bound to need some form of mixing facilities. If the bank balance is still looking pretty healthy, after all the other stuff I've just made you buy, then you could go for the *Yamaha Digital* mixer the *DMP-11*. The desk is fully digital from input to output so you can expect noise-free operation. Also incorporated into the unit's circuitry is a multi-effects unit which allows you to add processes such as reverb, echo, chorus and noise gating.

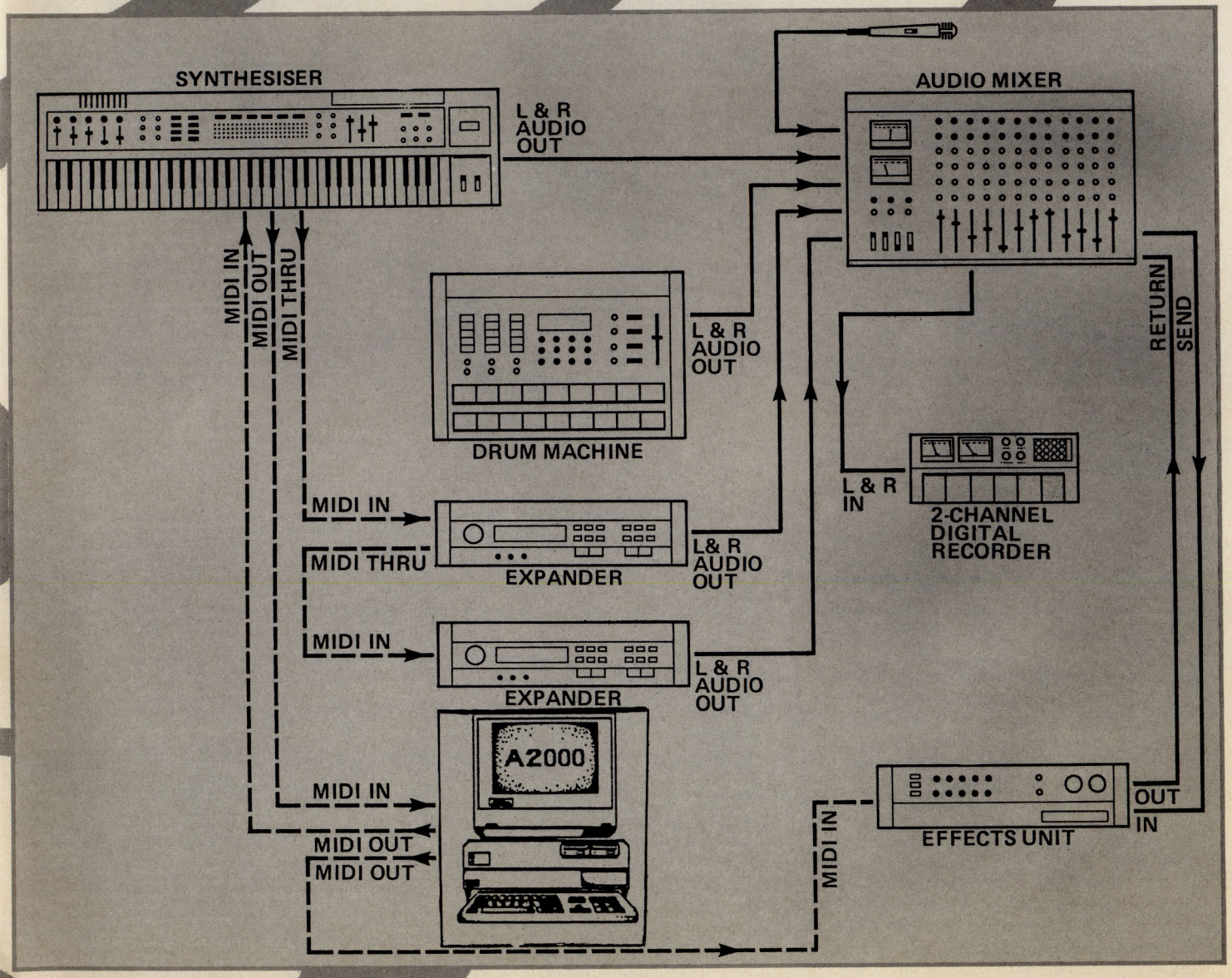
For the rest of us, with a less than telephone number salary, Alesis are coming up with a desk in the next couple of months which, due to its monolithic arcitechture, is very quiet but packed full of features — all for around £600.

Finally we should look at the area of effects, as that's what makes a good piece of music sound like a professional piece of music. This is particularly the case as we're dealing with purely electronic sounds which tend to sound terribly dry and lifeless without some form of natural reverberation. Fortunately obtaining these effects doesn't always mean buying more kit as many expanders come with effects built-in. For instance, the *MT-32*, which I mentioned earlier, has built-in reverb which can be altered to a small degree from its front panel. However, with a little help from an Editor package for the unit you can alter the type of reverb and can even switch reverb off certain notes. Useful? Incredibly useful! With the drum bank mode you can put lashings of reverb on the snare sound, and none at all on the bass drum. These kinds of options help cut the costs enormously, but don't replace the need for stand-alone effect units.

And at this stage that is the main problem. Not what to get next, but how to pay for it all. So to get started your bare essentials are the extra memory, a sequencer package, master keyboard, synth expander (MT-32 or equivalent) with some kind of drum bank and some form of mixer. If possible the mixer should be bigger than the one you currently need because of the expansion possibilities.

YA

Recording



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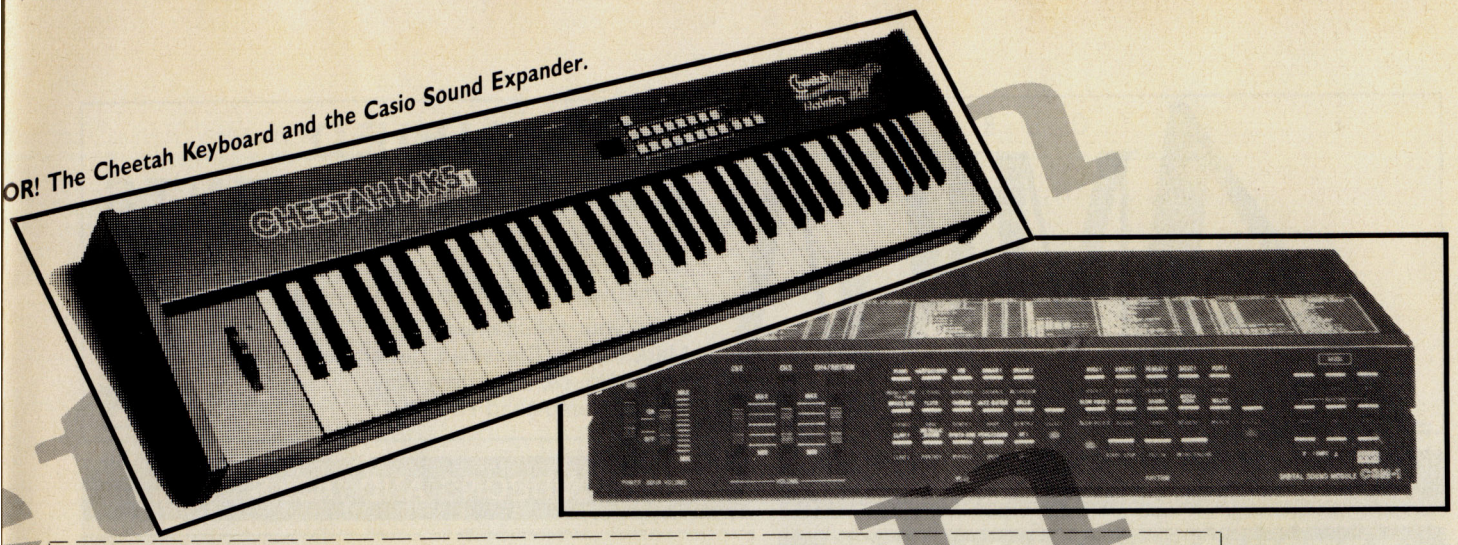

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5. Kraftwerk .....

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Norbury House, Norbury Road,
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5 electronic pads complete with stand.

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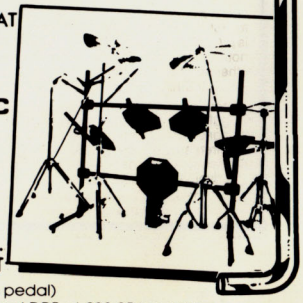

(Excluding cymbals, cymbal stands and drum pedal)
Trigger Level Adjustment Module to link MD8 and DP5 at £39.95 inc. VAT.

16 BIT CENTRE

ALL PRICES INCLUDE VAT AND COURIER SERVICE

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All Printers Include Lead And Ribbon

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