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ONE HUNDRED
HOT GAMES
REVIEWED INSIDE

TOP GEAR!

Better than F-Zero? Super NES
Development Report



ISSUE 54

March 1992

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SHADOWLANDS

Shadowlands is a fast-paced action platformer that's a real treat for the eyes and the mind. It's a real gem.

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CONSOLES!

MEGADRIVE

Arms Odyssey
Golden Axe II

GAMEBOY

Simpsons
Football 2000
Double Dragon 2
Kid Icarus

SUPER NES

Learnings



THE ROCKETEER



SHADOWLANDS



TWILIGHT ZONE



HARLEQUIN



EGO QUEST



SPACE GUN

SIX
PAGES
EACH
FOR
THIS
MONTH'S
BIG SIX



20 Gary Pezz, who used to be quite good, turns what's left of his imagination to telling us all about a rather spiffing new racing game from Genesis - on the Super NES. My worst

36 Disney's superhit The Rocketeer is just one of the six top products that gets the definitive six page ACE treatment this month.

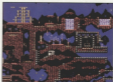


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76 Are you totally useless? Are your gaming skills rubbish? Never fear, our TGI section will soon have you playing The Final Remnant and others like an old pro!



7 Disk! - Not only do we give you a disk, but we explain how to use it! **10 News** - A revamped look for our trusty friend. **16 Preview: 20 in the Works** - Games Lord Gary Pezz checks progress on Top Gun & Parasol Stars. **29 Screenfest** - How all the scores work and stuff. **67 Consoles!** - New releases. **84 Comps** - Win a CDTV and a TV. **82 Reviews Directory** - Quite a read and no mistake!

R E V I E W S

10 Space Gun

No-one was as inspired as us when the decision was made to give a straightforward space shoot 'em up six pages. But we figured it was about time a six-colour arcade blast got the full treatment.

36 The Rocketeer

Disney's marginal box office success tries for a more healthy reception on the PC, and gets it! Super graphics and gameplay alike. This is what a movie conversion should look like.

42 Shadowlands

You've played the dress, you've read the *The Works*... Now, experience the real! The latest addition to Demtek's eclectic product line-up gets a resounding RPG thumbs up.

48 Eco Quest

The planet Earth needs saving - from coal! *Eco Quest* releases the game that we know was coming sooner or later. *Kidder's* advertising in the name of ecology, anyone?

54 Twilight 2000

In the aftermath of a nuclear war, Poland is in a right old state. And *Baron Cooney*, showing heroic disaster needs to be topped from power before things get really bad. Hmmm...

60 Harlequin

It might look like fancy boys on the face of chocolate boxes, but in the right environment these blue blazes can really kick some butt. *Genesis's* welcome return to form.

The Best
Reviews On
The Planet!

A320

A·I·R·B·U·S



...has landed.

developed in cooperation with



Lufthansa and Deutsche Airbus

ACE DISKI



YO!

GET READY TO RAVE WITH MC DiSKI, ACE'S VERY OWN DJ!*

It's non-bolness! It's happenin'! And it's here! You sirree-bob, get ready to rock-a-doodle-doo with the very first ACE Cover Disk! While other magazine cover disks are about as exciting as getting your radio dial stuck on Radio Four daring Woman's Hour, ACE's is like picking up the thumpin' funk-filled airwaves of a fly-by-night pirate show transmitting from the back of a stolen transit van, where only the coolest cut and the hottest wax gets airtime.

So what better way to show you what the NEW ORDER (great bunch of guys) is gonna be than by kicking things off with an EXCLUSIVE fully-playable demo level of Domark's Trailblazin' Shadowlands for all you Amiga and ST-owning dudes and dudettes out there AND - can ya believe it? - a bumper pack of four arcade smashers for Mr and Mrs IBM PC owner? Am I good to you or what?!!?!! Not 'arf!

The Starship Excitement is getting ready for launch! Crank up the volume 'til the speakers crackle! Set colour and brightness levels to the max! FIVE! FOUR! THREE! TWO! ONE! We have LIFT OFF!

HEY! HEY! HEY!
THAT'S
BLEN MONEY
TO YOU, HATE!



But take care jumping off ledges - Jumpman's only a little fella and he can't stand much of a drop!

BLOCK

You can't beat a cracking arcade puzzle - and Block is a brilliant one. The screen is full of blocks (not marked with either one, two or three dots. The aim is to push identical blocks together so that they form a line of three, whereupon they evolve - one-dot blocks become two-dot blocks become three-dot blocks. Get the idea? When you've got three three-dot blocks in a line you've won, and you move on to the next level.

Simple enough, eh? Ah, but you've reckoned without the traps. These are so constructed by-product of producing a line and gradually fill up the free space. As the score gets higher, you have no option but to rotate the screen so that they tumble out of the way. Use the arrow keys to move the on-screen cursor and the spacebar to rotate. And don't get too frustrated with it. Remember: at the end of the day it's all a load of blocks.



ARCADE 4-PACK

Ma-hay-hey! Not one. Not two. Not even three. Yes, you've got FOUR great games in this month's superb Arcade 4-Pack. What better way to spend a quiet night in?

JUMPMAN LIVES!

Jumpman Lives! is a simple-looking but amazingly-addictive Shareware game from Apogee Software. The aim is simple. Our hero, the spunky Jumpman, has to leap about the platforms collecting the little orange powerballs while avoiding fat and deadly birds, poisonous robots and all manner of other alien ills. It's a game that requires a fair bit of brain power as well as a bit of dexterity. Use the arrow keys to move Jumpman around and hit the spacebar to make him jump.



ACE DISK I

INVADERS

The totally real arcade classic comes to the PC - and in just 48! No instructions - if you can't work out what you have to do by yourself then you don't deserve to be reading this mag! Use the left and right arrows to move and the spacebar to fire.

COMMANDER KEEN

Yet another superb Shareware game from those Apogee chaps. Commander Keen is one of the most wicked platform games I've seen on the PC. Back it and see!

While Commander Keen is exploring the planet of Mars, the evil Vorticons sabotage his ship by stealing essential parts and hiding them. While the gallant hero remains stranded on the Red Planet the Vorticons intend to destroy the Earth. You must help Keen recover the ship parts and escape Mars so that he can foil their bogus plot.

Full instructions are provided from the title screen by pressing F1. But to get you started, here are the more important keys. Use the arrow keys to move Keen around. Pressing CONTROL makes Keen jump. Pressing CONTROL and ALT fires Keen's laser if it has been charged. As Keen explores, he may find his way blocked by a Martian station or city which can be entered by pressing CONTROL.

GETTING GOING...

It's so easy to install your AceDisk 6 Pack, even your grand-dad'll do it. But just in case you have got the MS-DOS manual at the keyboard, here are simple step-by-step instructions...

Put the 3.5" disk in Drive A (or Drive B, if you're lucky enough to have two) and tap into that drive by typing:

A: (Return)

You should now have the 'A>' prompt showing. Decide whether you want to install either in Drive B, C or D. Let's assume you want to install in Drive C. If so, then type:

INSTALL C: (Return)

Valid! The games are installed. A menu will appear whereby you can select which game you want to play by pressing the relevant key!

In the future, to get all the games type:

CD ACE_H01 (Return)

and

MSDOS (Return)

Have fun! If you have any major loading problems, refer to 'The Troubleshooter' box.

WHOOOPS!

Due to a small error, the Commander Keen game doesn't run from the menu. Sorry! To play the actual game type:

CD ACE_H01 (Return)

To get into the games directory, then type:

CD KEEN (Return)

and

KEEN1 (Return)

The game will now run. Once again, no apologies. Next time there'll be no more oops, we promise.

THE TROUBLESHOOTER

Use (press) I on The Troubleshooter. Come with me if you want to load. If your disk doesn't work then the following may be the problem:

■ The computer is not turned on. Solution: Turn the computer on. (Check all the computer leads are fully connected as well.)

■ The monitor is not turned on. Solution: Turn the monitor on. (Check all the monitor leads are fully connected as well.)

■ You are not turned on. Solution: None. This is A Good Thing. Have all that sort of stuff went later when the lights are out. (It'll assume that when your leads are fully connected for now.)

■ The disk has been physically damaged in the past or if the manufacturer (i.e. it isn't, broken or otherwise rather unfortunately looking, in this case DO NOT INSERT IT IN YOUR CD-ROM DRIVE. ACE Magazine and DRAP Images will not be held responsible for any damage caused to your hardware by damaged disks.

■ If you've got this far without a solution it looks like you must think the unfortunate - your disk is faulty. Backs in vinyl, beta. Send some of your own bank notes back then place the disk in a padded envelope, along with a note explaining your predicament and a 25p stamped, self-addressed envelope, and mail it to:

PC Discs,

Unit 3, Merton Industrial Park,

Putneybridge,

Melby Tynds,

Mill Lane, Gillingham (PA4 4BB).

A replacement disk will be sent to you as soon as possible. If you have a disk-related query that you think a simple phone call would answer, then call the ACE Disk Hotline on (0443) 000030 between 10.30am and 12.30pm, weekdays.

■ Please note that while we at ACE Magazine make every effort to check the cover disk for all known viruses, we can accept no responsibility for possible damage caused to discs which may have escaped our attention.



SHADOWLANDS

Welcome! Welcome to the Shadowlands! Armed only with deft mouse skills and carer-sharp wits you have to guide a party of four brave souls through this specially-crafted mini-level of Denmark's superb role-playing extravaganza - EXCLUSIVE to you lucky ACE readers!

On your travels you'll get just a small taste of what the full game is all about. Watch your back for attack from meandering mummies and armoured Amazons. Mind your step as you tip-toe across the bottomless pits and trap-triggering pressure pads. And keep an eye out for sacred portals that may reveal incredible treasures - or hideous monsters! A most excellent time is guaranteed for one and all!

If you want the full low-down on the finished game, which boasts fifteen huge levels, a massive battery of terrifying adversaries, magic spells, perplexing puzzles and cunning conundrums, then don't forget that there's an amazing 500-page review of Shadowlands starting on page 42. Without wishing to spoil your reading enjoyment too much, I've gotta tell ya that the game scored a Trailblazing 92.5 ACE Rating and achieved itself the coveted status of ACE's new Role-Playing Game Benchmark to beat! 'Well said' - all right?

GETTING GOING...

Entering the Shadowlands is simplicity itself. Turn on your Amiga or Atari ST, insert the disk in the drive and - as if by magic - the demo will load and run all by itself. If you have any problems, have a quick check of 'The Troubleshooter' box.

ACE DISK I

KEYS KEY

Left Mouse Button

Select items or portrait regions.

Right Mouse Button

If clicked when the pointer is in the game window then the view is centered around the currently-controlled warrior. If clicked when the pointer is over a portrait then the corresponding inventory screen appears. Click with the right mouse button again to get back to the game.

F Pauses/unpauses the game.

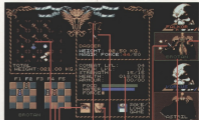
ESC Toggles between the two portrait arrangements.

Envoies like a lot of action now and that, so this will probably be the most popular body part of all, because it's the "action hand." Want to get a gold coin in the wall slot? Click on the screen with the coin square in the window. Want the axe, then click on the axe in the game window. My pencil? The warrior will walk over and do your bidding. Want to fast up a 1000? Put a weapon in the warrior's hand or selling if you want him to use his field, what? (No, then click on the monster. Other actions are performed in a similar fashion, as David Bowie would say.



Thinking here makes the whole party enter "walk" mode. It makes the same as making a new state warrior, except this time the other warriors follow in formation. You can change formation quickly by hitting function keys 1-5.

Click here and the warrior starts across "walk" mode. Guide him around by clicking in the game window. Remember that you can't click when you can't walk, like walls. "Totally tactical" man!



If you're not sure what you'll need a hand (that stops by releasing this area from clicking on the screen. While on any handy screen you come across by doing the same. Mind not-billions.

A flame lightning here means that the warrior is carrying a fire torch somewhere on his person. To toggle it on or off, click on the screen with the left arrow until the torch is in the window, then click on it and hold the button down for a couple of seconds.

These rat gamblers at Topaz call this the "action hand." And hey! I don't know what that means either! But what I do know is that this is the hand that makes things happen. And now you're at a certain point in the game window? I bet the pen then you can click up the handle by clicking on it. The object will then appear in your other hand, ready for use. Good! Use the same procedure to perform other actions, like pulling levers and pushing round pressure pads.

The character's health bar. When you see this going down, you know it's time to get out!

Look for attacking single items from "normal" items which can be used to exchange equipment really good luck in this game, but plays a very important role in the full game.

Pick up food and water from the temporary and then drop it here to give your warrior a much needed repair meal.

This is the goodly currently in the warrior's grip.

These show the warrior's health, strength and all those other vital statistics.

Press objects left over characters by dropping them into any empty slots in the inventory. Use the arrows to scroll through the slots until you find a space here. Remember that this year's work if the two warrior duels can lay to rest.

Click on the warrior's name to swap between inventories.

In these dangerous times every guy needs protection. Pick up a shield and drop it here to give your warrior some.

Click here to give the warrior some health-reviving nix. After getting back from an attack, sure I know how they feel!

I WANNA THROW

If you want to drop or throw an object, then select first the "action" hand and then the "throw" hand (so that they are both highlighted). Now click on where you want the object to fall through in the game window. The warrior will simply, but remember that if you can't really throw it there on each other body part means that the character can't do either will fall really short!

Each party member is represented by a color-coded name. (Hey! I want an inventory comment on the list!) Pick them up and move them about to change the party's standing formation.

Each little box contains one of the items the adventures has picked up on his quest. Click on 'em to check 'em out and then click on an empty box to give 'em down.

PLANNING ENDS

Whoooooaaaaa! Coming in to land! What a ride - hope you enjoyed it! And this is only the beginning. Next month things are gonna get better, ain't they? If you can't stand the heat, get outta the state about this is (I bet) signing off. King's Knight, heeeyey!

TO BOLDLY GO...

Judging by some limited announcements at the Winter Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas last month, there will be loads of Super NES games to look out for this year. For many players, top of the wanted list could possibly be the release of Star Trek: The Next Generation and Falcon from simulation specialists Spectrum Holobyte.

In a world-wide Star Trek licensing agreement, Paramount Pictures has granted Spectrum Holobyte exclusive rights to create video game software for the Super NES. Meanwhile, Interscope is offering "Trekkers" a game based around the original TV series on Gameboy, PC and NES.



"More colorful than the Earth, Captain."



Spectrum Holobyte is currently receiving test reports for Falcon 64 on the PC, regarded by some developer pilots as the most sophisticated flight simulation to ever hit the home market.

"Falcon lets you experience the feeling of sitting in an F-16 pilot's seat," proclaimed a spokesman. "Daylight scenarios will challenge you to engage in combat with several MIGs at a time."

These premium cartridge titles from Spectrum Holobyte will be joined by the Gameboy and Super NES adaptations of the arcade puzzle Wordies.



Several Falcon 64 (IBM PC) games with special adaptations of the original flight procedure and simulation from the game.

(Top Left) Star Trek: The Motion Picture as an action simulation on the Gameboy offers an accurate version of the classic IBM software.

Multiple left Interscope and Interscope (Interscope) games, showing the Star Trek: The Motion Picture in color with the Gameboy on the left and the Gameboy on the right.

Multiple right Interscope and Interscope (Interscope) games, showing the Star Trek: The Motion Picture in color with the Gameboy on the left and the Gameboy on the right.

Multiple right Interscope and Interscope (Interscope) games, showing the Star Trek: The Motion Picture in color with the Gameboy on the left and the Gameboy on the right.



Apple Computer

THE APPLE GAME

After months of intense speculation, prominent American computer maker Apple has finally disclosed plans to enter the cut-throat consumer electronics industry. The first of these products, due to be unveiled in the second half of 1992, will be based around low-end Macintosh and CD-ROM technologies.

Apple is apparently going to exploit its System 7 and QuickTime operating system software to combine high quality video, sound and animation in a variety of devices, ranging from

electronic books and personal organizers to multimedia players and display televisions.

John Buckley, Chief Executive Officer of the Californian company, said he intends to forge closer links with consumer electronics firms and third party software publishers. Apple already enjoys a successful partnership with Sony.

Last fiscal year, sales of Apple's Macintosh range increased by 80 per cent. New products using Apple-created software technologies will be introduced in 1992.

WORD UP

● **Acclaim**, one of the biggest video game publishers in the world, has bought Miramax from the crumbling Marvel business empire. This is quite a logical step for the firm, considering the success Ocean enjoyed over Christmas with games licensed from Acclaim like WWF Wrestling, The Simpsons and Terminator 2. Details concerning the eventual availability of Microsoft and Imagination games currently in production weren't available as ACI went to press. On the other hand, Virgin Games has secured the rights to the cheapie game Apocalypse (previously in Lotus SO). Expect to be losing every jungle fodor to the customer.

● Start saving now for the latest groovy gadget from consumer electronics giant NEC, the Wonder Mega is a combined logo MegaDrive and Mega-CD in one attractive hi-fi style unit. If this device is successful, fashion conscious British games nuts could have one of these widgets in their hands before the end of the year. What's the downside? Mega-CD software looks unimpressive at the moment. In fact, the hardware is far out-selling software in Japan. New games for the Mega-CD like Wing Commander and SimEarth could change this perception later this year.

● **Kidz** is a revolutionary project designed to give kids with chronic illness or a congenitive disease the chance to play computer games. The Children's Hospital in Boston also allows patients to communicate with friends via a network of personal computers.

● Having trouble getting past the Koopa Paratrooper or finding Yoshi? Do you want totally unbelievable scores? Jeff Rubin and Penguin Books may have the answer to your troubles. Their unofficial guides to Gameboy and Super Mario Bros are sup-



DINO DELIGHTS

Yoshi, Mario's faithful dinosaur pal from the best-selling Super Mario Bros series, is on his very own outing for the Gameboy. This new puzzle release follows the tradition of brain teasers Tetris and Dr Mario.

In Yoshi, superstar Mario has his hands full as he battles falling Goombas, Bloobers and Piranha Plants to ensure that his tiny yet so clean and cute valuable points.

Featuring special 'game' appearances by many of the favourite cast of characters from the popular Super Mario Bros games, Yoshi promises to be a fierce challenge. When you need help the most, our game friend will give you a few hints.

"Yoshi will challenge players of all ages with this fun, peaceful and relaxing puzzle game," assures

a Nintendo spokesman. "Both Gameboy and NES Yoshi games are for one or two players head-to-head competition."

posed to take some of the mystery but none of the challenge out of these immensely popular Nintendo games. Available now for £2.99 each.

■ **The Thunderboard** from Media Vision is a new sound card for the PC. It comes with an FM synthesizer, digital recording and playback capabilities, joystick port, microphone input and stereo amplifier. PC Connections (3704 222988) sells the Thunderboard, which is fully compatible with AdLib and Soundblaster systems, for £99.

■ **Nomco**, one of the most respected arcade video game manufacturers, is constructing a theme park in the Setagaya district of Tokyo. Don't hold your breath for a ticket. This attraction won't open for another four years!

■ Ever fancied producing your own three music? **Teknosoft** is offering a package for Amiga owners which includes everything you require to get things started from this end. The £40 package consists of MIDI interface and Music II Junior sequencing software. All you need now is a decent keyboard or Koog synth, some original ideas and the contact telephone number... 0604 766711.

■ **Shakespeare Computer** is selling a handy little piece of plastic (£19.99) that enables you to play American Super NES cards on its Japanese Super Famicom. Call 081 340 8365 for further details.

■ Looking for a good bargain? Make a note in your diary for the 16-Bit Computer Show at Wembley Exhibition Centre in London (February 14-16), Amiga Expo '92 in Copenhagen (March 20-22) or Spring Computer Shopper at London's Olympia (May 28-31).

■ **Ultima - The False Prophet** on the Super NES from PC and Origin is sure to be a role-playing success. Players are drawn back to the fantasy realm of Britannia to rid the land of pesky critters. The game promises over 100 hours of play and a battery backup to save your current position. This night-magical cartridge due for release in the third quarter of 1992.

■ **Bellatrix** has converted the Winter Challenge sports game over to the MegaDrive in time for the Olympics. It costs £24.99 and is out now.

THE COLOUR OF MONEY

Yes, it's that time of year when a young player's thoughts turn to the charms of possessing an enhanced Gameboy with a pretty colour screen. Well if only it were true, eh?

ACE heard rumours of such an exciting development over two years ago but nothing has ever come of these claims whispers. Nintendo remains silent on the subject.

If speculation within the trade press is to be believed, a "Super Gameboy" could be competitively priced against rival Lynx and Gattegauge colour systems while retaining the ability to run all existing software for the monochrome model.

Nintendo's Gameboy is currently the most popular handheld video-game console in the world. Achieving a hi-score on Tetris and Super MarioLand is possibly the only thing that unites the likes of President Bush, Donald Trump and British kids.

There are something like 100,000 Gameboy owners in the UK and eight million over in the United States. In the first half of 1992 alone, Nintendo and its developers plan to add more than 70 new game titles to the existing 150-title library of games available for the Gameboy.

According to Nintendo of America there are more female Gameboy users than male. If these figures are correct, this will be the first time such a phenomenon has occurred since the heady days of Pacman.

"The range of software being developed for the Gameboy appeals to players of all ages and skill levels," purports a spokesperson for Nintendo. "Warning cards indicate that more than 40 per cent of users are over 15."



Amiga, Lynx, Gattegauge... that's Nintendo in a Super Gameboy just around the corner, though?

PLAYING FOR KEEPS

Inspired by the huge success of Tetris, Rampart takes gamblers back in time to the Middle Ages where they build defensive fortresses and position devastating cannons in a bid to become powerful lords and barons.

It's going to be extremely difficult ignoring Rampart in the coming months. Tengen is working on the Sega Megadrive (Genesis) and Gamegear conversions of this popular strategy while Demarc takes care of the Amiga, PC and ST interpretations. There's a real treat in store for Gamegear owners. Due later this year, the portable version will incorporate an option to link two machines together for competitive head-to-head play. Atari is independently developing Rampart for the Lynx.

"Programmed by the same designers who created 720° and Paperboy, Rampart combines the best of strategy puzzle games with dynamic action, destruction and explosive graphics," boasts a spokesperson for Tengen. "The action is lightning fast and once the onslaught of enemy attackers ends, players must quickly rebuild and extend the walls of their fortress before the next battle begins."

MERRY CHRISTMAS

Like a phoenix rising from the ashes of a uncharacteristically quiet year, veteran games powerhouse Ocean managed to sweep the competition away this Christmas by taking top positions in both the full-price and budget charts. Claiming the prestigious prize of overall number one, WMF Westfrontier (Ocean), licensed from Acclaim, again proved the popularity of this cult American sport shown on satellite TV.

Sales across the board, we're very pleased to announce, were brisk and actually up on last year despite the biting recession.

Top titles, in order of our boxes, included *Populous 2* (Bullfrog/LA), *Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker* (Virgin Games), *Millions! Millions!* (Lore Lutz Challenge 2 [Gemsini], Oh No! More Lemmings [Polygram]), *Robocop 3* (Ocean), *Microprose Golf: Bunk of Play* (Baronius Arts) and, unalterably, *Terminator 2* (Acclaim/Ocean). Over on the console front, *Sonic the Hedgehog* (Sega) and *Super Mario Bros 3* (Nintendo)



unsurprisingly stole the spotlight. What about the hardware, then? It appears discerning punters opted to go for the Magnavox (Naga), Gameboy (Nintendo) and Amigo (Commodore). An honorary mention goes to the PC... at long last!

FOR THE PLAYER WITH EVERYTHING...

Respectable Gameboy or Gamegear player can be seen without the right accessory these days. Now Nintendo (Nintendo Gamegear) has started to import a range of handy gadgets from Nintendo in Florida.

These sort of widgets are becoming increasingly popular among the new fraternity of video-games players out there. Although it must be said that some of them can make your console look and feel rather bulky.

Magelight (125-99) is designed to improve

the contrast and visibility of the Gameboy by incorporating neo-glow lighting to illuminate the entire screen and an adjustable magnifying lens to enlarge small objects in games. It simply clips onto your console and requires one 9V battery to operate.

If your eyes are straining, wear the next batch of rings in *Sonic the Hedgehog*, perhaps you should invest in the StageGear (125-99). No batteries are needed for this magnification device which, claims Nintendo, improves contrast and visibility. Oh, don't miss out on *Sonic the Hedgehog*, it's easily the best Game Gear production to date.

Finally, Barware has something that will really clean up. The console cleaning kit (125-99) should bring back that pixel perfectionism to your scores.

In the arcade, *Terminator 2* (Midway) ranked supreme, while, after an amazing 44 weeks, *Street Fighter II* (Capcom) remained in the top five. Lucky Super NES players will soon be looking into a fantastic translation of this enduring best-seller. Don't forget ACE was the first magazine in the world to go behind the scenes to see the making of Williams' extraordinary Q1 coin-op (see issue 51 for our exclusive report).

On a sour note, some companies are disagreeing with the findings of the Gallup games chart. A spokesperson for one leading publisher, who asked to remain anonymous, said they were completely disgusted with the "outrageous" chart system currently in operation. Confusion over the appropriate geographic and retail contributors is rife. One thing is for sure, we all need to be unquestionably confident in the charts. Sadly, we cannot say this is the case at present. If you have any opinions on the subject, drop us a line at the usual address.

Nevertheless, ACE would like to congratulate everybody who managed to produce top-sellers in 1991 and thank them for some of the finest games software ever seen. Keep 'em coming!



BLOCKOUT

Popoli, the first Tengen title for the Sega Game Gear, is a colorful arcade game for one- or two-players which should entice younger gamblers.

The object of this release is to solve various puzzles under severe pressure. The three levels are a sequence of building blocks to rescue the Princess who has been kidnapped by the evil sorcerer, Popoli. Original storyline, huh? The challenge is to eliminate these blocks in just the right order before the tight time limit expires. This can be achieved by punching, kicking and head-buttng your way to freedom.

"Popoli offers players a new level of video game interactivity," specialist spokesperson David Swilling.

An Interval Map Editor allows players to create their own puzzle designs and the useful battery back-up capability rescues the puzzles they have made. Play can be resumed at a later time, even if the power has been turned off.

Tengen aims to launch *Stargate*, *Marble Madness* and *Paperboy* on the Game Gear in





THE FIRST PC TO BREAK THE SOUND BARRIER.

We gave the Amstrad PC5286[®] all the best features you need for serious business use and great games entertainment.

Then we gave it features which were unheard of.

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We built the PC5286[®] around an ultra-fast 16MHz 286 processor, so you'll have all the speed you need to get through the business of the day with enough time to play around.

A massive 1 megabyte of RAM, 40 megabyte hard drive and 1.44 megabyte 3.5" floppy disk drive combine to make best use of this computing power - the PC5286[®] is built to perform.

SUPERS VGA GRAPHICS

As you'd expect, the PC5286[®] also offers state-of-the-art graphics with a 14" high-quality VGA monitor which will display up to 256 colours from a palette of over a quarter of a million.

Perfect for business applications, but all that colour is wasted on games if you've got no sound capability.

TWIN SPEAKER SOUND

So we gave it a sound system that makes it unique.

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TRAINS, PLANS AND AMUSEMENT PARKS

First, Sid Meier at Microprose dabbled with the seemingly impossible dream of constructing and running a railroad bigger and better than SimCity. But, Meier, creator of the SimCity brilliant StarCity, is also taking a bold step into the bustling world of locomotion.

A-Train is the American version of a simulation game originally published in Japan. Over 200,000 copies of the award-winning Take the A-Train III by Artlink have been sold thus far.

In A-Train, you're the owner of a private railroad company. Starting out with rural land, the idea is to lay down track and run any of 50 different freight and passenger trains. These will transport people and building materials to areas under development, leveling the ground-work for housing, jobs and recreational centers that your city needs to grow. You're supposed to invest your wealth into developments like office buildings, factories, apartments, amusement parks, ski resorts, stadiums and golf courses. If you succeed at developing a large city, you may be rewarded with a Bullet Train for high-speed transport. Isn't life great?

"A-Train combines city-building with railroad management and a very sophisticated financial model to provide a depth of play that will keep you challenged for weeks, months or years," guarantees spokesperson Sulo VandenBrouk. "In a sense, A-Train is the capitalist's SimCity."

Artlink intends to convert A-Train over to the PC, Windows, Macintosh and Amiga. Other developers SimBank and Simland in Europe while Indigromex has the rights to SimCity.



From these days of cost consciousness, all the dollars should be put into the other side of the coin.

Artlink's A-Train: Money makes Railroad Tracks!

COMING OUT PARTY

Following the initial announcement six months ago, Nintendo has started to talk about its long-awaited CD-ROM accessory for the SNES.

"As yet unnamed but exceptionally competitively priced accessory will be introduced in the USA and Japan before January 1993. Nintendo has revealed initial production will be 200,000 units per month.

"As a suggested retail price of \$200, our new compact disc accessory will launch the next generation of video games," confidently forecasts Minoru Arakawa, Nintendo of America's President.

Super NES compact disc games will use the CD-ROM/DA format licensed from Philips. Unlike the older CD-ROM format, this enables the smooth interweaving of sound, video and data. A system cartridge consists of RAM, ROM and a custom real-time graphics coprocessor for displaying full-screen, full-motion video. The system BIOS includes nine capabilities of RAM which should enable the programmers to perform some fancy audio visual trickery. A single compact disc can store the equivalent of nearly 335 ordinary 12-megabit video game cartridges.

Developers and other interested parties are receiving full specifications so you read this and some games are already in production.

Nintendo hopes to additionally create a "bridge format" allowing SNES-CD software to play on both the Super



Together with our excellent network of Super NES game developers and literary associates, we are introducing a full range of outstanding and unique compact disc software." Nintendo Minoru Arakawa of America.

CD (Compact Disc Interactive) hardware, while Sony is said to be in discussions with Nintendo regarding the compatibility of Sony's Play Station CD-ROM system and the Super NES compact disc accessory.

Sega is currently enjoying considerable success with the Mega-CD in Japan. As this CD-ROM accessory for the MegaDrive incorporates many advanced features it's unlikely that Sega will be able to match the low price of Nintendo's device. If you're thinking of buying a Mega-CD we suggest you wait until they're officially available in this country. Take it from us, the first batch of games really aren't worth the hassle or high import cost.

PINBALL WIZARDS

Before we all become addicted to shooting alien spaces in the late '90s, many of us could be found mainly smashing the sides of a pinball table in the local cafe.

Thanks to a heavy injection of cutting-edge technology and marketing expertise, a new generation of pinball games have emerged over the past few years. Popular machines today include cleverly licensed creations based around The Simpsons, Terminator 2, Star Trek, Etrian and The Addams Family.

The Second Annual International Professional Amateur Pinball Association (IPAPA) Championship was held in New York earlier this month. IPAPA is featured one of the best competitive pinball players from the United States, England, Canada and Japan.

The event demonstrates the strength of the current revival of pinball. The classic pastime recently celebrated its 60th birthday by capturing a substantial share of the amusement machine market lost to video games in the eighties.

"There is a solid base of pinball players who keep coming back to the game they found in their youth," says organizer Steve Spitzer. "We believe that today's pinball is a skill game, with a new generation of innovative computer technology, multi-level play, realistic sound, and voice effects and extensive appeal for the non player. And everybody wants to know how good they are."



Millions like Nintendo is the unexpected source of great fun. It's not the only game from this Chicago company. It has a long history of being another favorite.

They don't see it as one of the most important and successful pinball designs ever the year was designed. We used our greatest investment and these machines, Nintendo, is the most widely played of the video pinball games today.



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Gary Whitta's previews

NO MORE PAGES

It's a time to dally this month, as there's just so much stuff to fit in! Sorry about the rather bizarre positioning of the pages, but the safety inspector visited the ACE offices this month and said that each page was just SO packed with brilliance that to place them adjacently might have led to the skillfulness level reaching critical mass. So they've been specially separated in order to prevent a dangerous explosion of excellence. Alright?

3D 8-BALL *Virgin*

After the mammoth success of Jimmy White's *Whirlwind Snooker*, author Archer Maclean is now putting the finishing touches to a genre-developed which promises to be even bigger. Tentatively titled *3D 8-Ball* while Virgin comes up with something better, it uses the same graphics engine and control system as *Jimmy*, but with an all-new American-style Pool table to play on (smaller with wider pockets) and players will get two variations on the great game, with British and American rules. ST and Amiga versions are due out in the latter, with a PC version promised for shortly after. A Megadrive version is also rumored to be in the offing, although someone at Virgin would comment on the subject, but then they wouldn't, would they?



HOOK *Ocean*

Steven Spielberg's magical retelling of the classic Peter Pan tale may not have been quite as successful in the States as was expected, but it's already shaping up to be the movie event of the year over here. Ocean, never one to miss out on a good thing, is currently borrowing away on its official adaptations of the \$40 million-dollar blockbuster, which stars Robin Williams and Dustin Hoffman as Pan and Hook respectively. The game is being written in the Monkey Island mould, with the player exploring Never-neverland,



solving puzzles, interacting with characters and all the rest of it. Ocean is making big promises about this one, claiming it's actually better than *Monkey Island*. The movie's action-packed success means that we could well be on for some arcade action as well. Hook, both film and game, is out in the Spring for ST, Amiga and PC.

THE TOMATO GAME *Psygnosis*

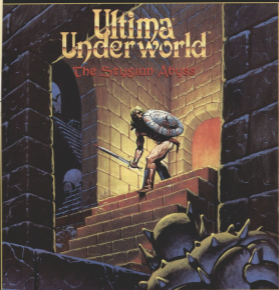
Could it be a coincidence that after the success of *Lemmings*, Psygnosis is now working on another game where the player has to ensure safe passage for a computer-controlled character through a landscape fraught with danger? Well, possibly, although the boys at Psyg deny that there's



any real similarity between the two. The Tomato Game is another prong in the Liverpool firm's effort to go "cute" (it's had several sugar-coated projects in the pipeline for a while now) - the game tells of a young tomato who has his smoothest (another tomato) captured by an evil squirrel. To get her back he must travel to the top of a mine which links different landscapes (jungle, desert, etc) together. Like *Lemmings*, the player has no direct character control, so he must place helpful objects around the place, like jack-in-the-boxes and wind machines, that the tomato uses to avoid the myriad of dangers. We have to admit it does sound like fun - it's out on Amiga in the Autumn with other versions possibly following later.

Ultima Underworld

The Stygian Abyss



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

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Gary Whitta's previews

DESERT STRIKE

Electronic Arts

Blind as "Operation Desert Storm in a hat," the latest from EA's Megaverse studio makes no bones about the fact that it is almost entirely inspired by last year's Gulf conflict. The story goes that a crazed Middle-Eastern dictator has obtained nuclear capability and is now planning to march his tiger army across the face of the new world. Now it's up to Uncle Sam, with a little help from a state-of-the-art Apache helicopter gunship, to take the mountain-bred marauder down a peg or two. Sounds familiar? The game's an innovative mix of shoot-'em-up and simulation played out over an eight-way scrolling isometric warzone, with 30 missions ranging from protecting oil fields to POW rescue and taking out SCUD launchers. It all looks jolly impressive, with super-smooth animation and huge explosions - it's due out at the end of March, and there's a full review next month.



DIRTY RACIN'

Gremlin

Having enjoyed rickety 16-bit racers with the likes of Lotus, Super Cars and Team Suzuki, Gremlin's crew making sure that the ever-growing army of handheld owners doesn't feel left out with a ray-like number for the GameBoy. Dirty Racin' (releasing this) is an arcade simulation of that most exciting of driving activities, offroad buggy racing. It's got all the usual Gremlin game stuff - tracks around the world, tournament options, a two-player mode, and an impressive 3D



update that's expected to send Gremlin owners loggie-eyed. Dirty Racin's already a big hit with the powers in the Gremlin office and promises to thrill the gameplaying public to equal amounts when it hits the streets this Autumn. *Vince*

DYNABLASTER

UbiSoft

What a smashing little game! Anyone lucky enough to have had contact with a PC engine during its brief spell of unofficial popularity in this country a year or so ago may well remember a supremely addictive cart from Hudson Soft by the name of Bomber Man. Now, Hudson's tied up with UbiSoft, and the result is that Bomber Man is winging its way onto the 16-bit with the new name of Dynablaster. In the main game a little fella must work his way through a series of scrolling levels, dropping bombs to blow away huddles and flag the wall sections which allow him passage to the exit. As much fun as this is, the real balls are to be had in the multi-player battle mode, where up to FIVE players slug it out as a single screen, with the last survivor declared the winner. It's already proved to be a major work-disrupter here at ACE Towers - full review next month.



CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER

Domark

Care games come and go, but some are quite so potentially popular as the football management simulation. Since the days of the ZX81 they've been fine favorites with gamers young and old - and now Domark is making the bullish claim that it's about to release one that beats the lot. Apparently the two authors spent seven years putting Championship Manager together, which means that in development terms it's at least as old as the classic Football Manager, granddaddy of them all. It promises 1200 players, 10 teams, all manner of tactics, transfers, injuries, boardroom battles and just about everything else the football aficionado could ask for. With its tatty icon system it certainly looks very nice, but how well it will fair against the incumbent Player Manager remains to be seen. It's out on ST, Amiga and PC in April.



PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE

Gremlin

Who's heard of buying up-duff film licenses, but buying up the WORST FILM EVER MADE? Surely an act of ill-will? Well, maybe not. It could actually turn out to be a masterpiece of marketing as Gremlin's part, as the whole thing is being sold in very tongue-in-cheek style, and the game isn't afraid to make fun of its rubbishy source of inspiration. Basically, it's



an icon-driven adventure that has the player searching a surreal 3D 8-bit movie style world for the six missing reels of the famous movie. Featuring over 30 digitized sequences from the movie, Plan 9 will also come packaged with a free slide containing colored highlights. It's out on all formats in the Spring.

STORM MASTER

Silmarils

Horray for another bout of Finnish fun from our Gallic counterparts. Set on a distant planet ravaged by constant trade disputes and bites, *Storm Master* promises to mix user-friendly strategy in the style of *Utopia* and *Supremacy* with top-level arcade action sequences. Along the way the player, cast as a megalomaniac ruler, goes to set up spy networks, bank and steal from his enemies, wage war, take part in magical ceremonies and...uh, lots of other heavenly stuff. Graphically it's a dream, but whether it will stand up against the likes of those aforementioned bestsellers remains to be seen.



Amiga, PC and ST versions are out at the end of this month.

Look out - he's back!

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THINGS THAT MAKE YOU GO

“VROOM!”

It's a sad but true fact that there are very few decent, arcade-style racing simulations available for the home computer systems - or, for that matter, the console formats. But, of course, Gremlin intends to change this with the release of its Super NES debut Top Gear.

The slick, split-screen racer that Top Gear has been approximately seven months in the making. The seemingly short development time is down to Gremlin being able to draw on its vast experience in this field. The company learned from the mistakes it made with products such as Combi-Racer and Toyota Celica GT Rally and ended up producing two of the best home computer racers around, namely Lotus Esprit Turbo Challenge and its sequel.

At first glance Top Gear bears a similarity to the two Lotus Esprits - but then so do OutRun and most other racing simulations in the same vein. "The similarities are completely coincidental," says Frankie Bowman, one of the trio of programmers behind Top Gear. "The look and feel is completely different. Top Gear's road moves faster and the corners and hills are more extreme to try to make the game faster and more cartoon like."

Top Gear's cartoon quality is made all the more apparent by the use of semi-stylised speech bubbles to relate messages to the player. For example, when the car's speed is significantly increased by means of a turbo-boost the driver exclaims "LET'S GO!", and when you fail to finish a course the message "HAM HAM

Tough luck, fashion fans - Top Gear has nothing to do with quality clothing. It is in fact a rip-roaring Super NES racing simulation from Gremlin, a company with more experience in this area of home computer entertainment than most others put together.



LOSER" or "GAME OVER DUDE" is clear.

Top Gear isn't being put together by Magneto Fields, the team behind the Lotus simulations. No, this one's in the hands of new coders on the block Ritchie Brannan, who was responsible for the road and sports routines, and former Commodore 64 coders Simon Blake and Ashley Bennett, who took care of the front end and the car and computer control respectively. Versus: The Flyzap and Switchblade II artist Gregg created Top Gear's look, while Switchblade II music-maker Barry Leach produced the tunes using samples from Hiroshi Matsuno. Bringing up the rear is Chris

Harvey who designed Top Gear's 32 different tracks.

The boys' intent was simply to create a speedy racing simulation for the Super NES - and they feel that they have succeeded, despite not having enough cartridge memory for extra graphics.

"The cartridge is four megabits with some of the graphics compressed," Ritchie reveals. "Top Gear runs at between one and five frames in NTSC - usually on the border between two and three - which puts its average update rate at the same as Lotus on the Amiga in PAL. But the movement in Top Gear is much faster and the road changes more extreme making it seem a lot faster. The view is in all-colour car character mode and uses all 256 colours."

The Top Gear team doesn't seem particularly concerned by the competition - Nintendo's impressive futuristic racer F-Zero, Wii, at least not technically... "F-Zero has some nice touches but is technically very easy to implement requiring only a few precalculated tables and then updating at most eight bytes per frame to create the road."

Surprisingly, the race had little input from the product's Japanese publisher, Kenacore (not



The Super NES in Progress photos of the production team for one of the cars shown in Top Gear gives you an idea of the level of detail went into making the game.



Here's a picture of all the boys and their... designed the four tracks in our capacity to create a genuine sense about you to ride in the end.



Here are four cars in the driver in Top Gear, each one with a different set of performance figures. Take your pick.

Ultima VI

The False Prophet



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Each of the two characters moves like Pac-Man. They do 10' in a wide-spread line against a few items. A bigger score is best to reach when other did a this three knowledge over the position it position.

History for the version of English use. "Bubble Bobble II"

Bub and Bob could hardly be considered the best-known names in the world of computer and console entertainment, and yet to the cognoscenti they rank alongside such bankable stars as Mario, MegaMan, Simen out of Castlevania, Link out of Zelda, Rex Roid, new face in the place Sonic, and Diddy.

Bub and Bob made their debut in *Bubble Bobble*, released by Taito into the arcades way back in 1986. Two years later they hit the home computers thanks to development team Software Creations and publisher Firebird.

The tale took a turn in 1990 with *Rainbow Islands*, also released into the arcades by Taito. Graffiti's home computer conversions would have made it to the stores in 1989 via Firebird were it not for the company's demise. Fortunately, the 1-bit and 16-bit versions eventually made it to the stores after being snapped up by Ocean. And it's Ocean which also has the license to convert *Parasol Stars*. (Incidentally, *Bubble Bobble* and *Rainbow Islands* for the Amiga and Atari ST are compiled in Ocean's *Rainbow Collection* alongside another cute conversion, *New Zealand Story*.)

The *Bubble Bobble* story has thus far been a pretty peculiar

BROLLY GOOD SHOW!

The boys are back in town - and how! Having bubbled and bobbled and sung a rainbow too, Bub and Bob are now at home to Auntie Ella in *Parasol Stars: Bubble Bobble III*. Who are they and what's it all about? Read on...

one. *Parasol Stars* is the craziest, most chipper chapter yet.

Having defeated Baron von Bluto in *Bubble Bobble* and saved the *Rainbow Islands* from the Prince Of Darkness, Bub and Bob decided to take a break. But their bliss was short-lived... evil once again pervades the universe and only the dynamic duo, armed with their amazing magic parasols, can save it from a fate worse than Melissa.



islands with a liberal sprinkling of neat new features for good measure. It represents a class continuation of the story, continuing with patch Series precision the precise play elements which made its predecessors tick with enough innovations to give it Sweets-like individuality.

The action offers simultaneous two-player possibilities in much the same way as *Bubble Bobble* does (in *Rainbow Islands* Bub and Bob play in an "old-fashioned" alternating way). In *Parasol Stars*, Bub and Bob can work as a team or, better still, fight for the right to party by throwing each other around the screen.

A strong characteristic of the *Bubble Bobble* series is the versatility of the lead players' abilities. In *Bubble Bobble*, the duo's bubble blowing skill was used not only as a weapon to dispose of adversaries, it also proved its worth as a tool for negotiating otherwise impossible to reach areas and solving bonus points. The rainbows in *Rainbow*

Despite its massive success in Japanese arcades, *Parasol Stars* suffered the same fate as its predecessors when they were released on these shores: it failed to make an impact. Still, rumour has it that the same Taito team behind the first three chapters is currently working on a fourth.

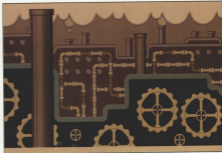
Parasol Stars is best described as a bonus blend of *Bubble Bobble* and *Rainbow*



Islands proved even more flexible, with the added abilities of extended reach, and making traps and stairways to heaven. In Parasol Stars, the boys' brollies also provide a wealth of opportunity.

The parasol's most mundane function is keeping beasts at bay. The real fun has begun when an adversary is impaled on the end of the parasol where it spins, stunned, until it's thrown down to the floor or into another creature to kill them both for bonus points.

That's one way of removing ruffians from the scene. A more entertaining alternative is to use the end of the bolly to collect



The elaborate machinery was built to look like a mechanical assembly that the other team created. The artists' inspirations are this kind of top-down view on the workings of watches must use the illustration.

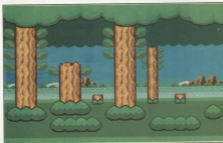
track record includes Steve Davis Snodder for CD, 2000X for Creative Materials, LM Squadron for Turtles, and more recently Darkman for Ocean, all on the Amiga and Atari ST. Nothing outshining these, granted, but it's fair to say that Parasol Stars is shaping up very nicely indeed.

Don on the other hand is loathe to reveal the content of his portfolio to date. He is prepared to admit, however, that "about 50 per cent of the graphics produced by Taito were used - the rest had to be put together from scratch. It's pretty much identical to the PC engine version - well, as much as it could be."

Mick wrote an editor utility for Don to make the process of putting together the levels a little easier. "They're built up in a block format and then I can mark on the starting points for the baddies and chips, and where the fruits spring up."

The process of conversion began on the Amiga six months ago, and it should be finished for playtesting by the time you read this. The Atari ST version isn't far behind, and then it's on to the Super NES which promises to be enhanced "whatever possible".

The result of Mick and Don's labour is a silky smooth 3D-colour



water droplets which fall from the top of the screen. A large water droplet is eventually formed, its contents primed to be sent cascading down the level's platforms, taking with it any adversary unlucky enough to get in its way.

As with Bubble Bobble and Rainbow Islands, there are plenty of interesting weapons and special effects to activate along the way, such as lightning bolts and exploding stars. Most of the special items seems to appear at random, but that's not actually

the case - each one makes itself known for a reason, and it's up to the player to discover why.

The first conversion of Parasol Stars to a home machine appeared halfway through 1993 on the PC Engine console. It's from this arcade-accurate version that Ocean is producing the conversions for the Ocean Amiga, Atari ST and Super NES. The task of reproducing Parasol Stars' distinctive look and feel on the new formats is in the capable of programmer Mick West, artist Don McDermit and musician

Jonathan Durr.

The team had little help from Taito. "They only gave us disk with the graphics," Mick explains. "There was no documentation so we had to play it to work out what does what and how the baddies move. It's a very complicated game. There are lots of things in it, I played right through for about five weeks solid, and then went back to it here and there when I needed to find out about certain bits."

Mick's been around a bit when it comes to coding. His

THE STORIES SO FAR...

Reprinted here for your delectation and delight are the official storylines to the Bob and Bob trilogy.



CHAPTER ONE:

THE BUBBLE DOBBLE BLURD

"Meet Bob and Bob our bantam-weight bromosomes who are bent on battling big bullies by blowing and bursting bubbles. Before battling these brawn bullies, beware that bubble blowing is better than blasting bullies with bazookas, or better than bouncing bombs from biplanes, and even beats beating these brawny barbarians. So now that we briefly belated the Bob and Bob biographies, begin by browsing the play instructions below and becoming the best Bubble Bubbie bubble blower on the block."



CHAPTER TWO:

THE COLOURFUL RAINBOW ISLANDS QUEST

"Dipped in the previous game, Bubble Bobble."

"Bubbie and Bubbie, who were turned into 'Bubble Gregors' by a wizard, went into the care of a witch seeking their sweethearts, Betty and Patty. After a long battle and finally getting 'Super Drunk', they could not believe their eyes when they saw their Mom and Dad."

"Dad! And Mom!..."



"Big tears were coming out of Mom and Dad's eyes. Bob and Bob were so happy after having them, not only Betty and Patty, but also their Mom and Dad. All of a sudden, they were back to normal again."

"God, thank you..."

"But they were not completely satisfied until they found the real enemy, who turned their parents into 'Super Drunk' and controlled their minds. There is a real enemy still hiding and waiting for Bob and Bob. They know that sooner or later they had to face him."

"Many years have passed, Bobby and Bobby grew up to be fine boys with power of 'Magic Rainbows' given by Mom and Dad. When they went back to their birthplace to search for treasure, they became involved in a mystery. They want to look for the real enemy, 'Prince of Darkness', its has a large following who are in Bobby and Bobby's way. The final day to face the Prince of Darkness came. Why don't you play the game to find out? The secrets are waiting to be discovered. There are many puzzles you can challenge! Who will be the real winner?"

CHAPTER THREE:

THE PARASOL STARS

"After saving the villages of Rainbow Islands in their previous adventure, our two heroes, Bob and Bob, are enjoying a well-earned rest."

"However their peace is shattered when the mad warlord Chocostain unleashes a fleet of menacing monsters throughout the universe. With their magic parasols in hand (gifts from the grateful Rainbow Islands villagers), Bob and Bob must defeat the monsters and free the universe."



Below are right! Various other adventures are the updated and most successful Bob and Bob story presented on. Bob has on the habitats of Rainbow World, the structure and Bob World, the on the Bob with world and character scene?

Amiga incarnation and a no less impressive 16-colour Atari ST version. "The Amiga version runs at a pretty fast speed," Mick proudly declares. "The main parts, like Bob's movement, run at 60 frames, and the less important parts, like the drops and bubbles, run at 25 frames because they move quite slowly anyway."

"The PC Engine version of Parasol Stars has eight worlds plus two secret ones. These conversions however have a certain new secret world. "We wanted to do something

different," explains Dot, "so we put in this extra medieval type world, with vibrant tigers, bouncing blobs, cannons, demons with forks, and a giant who carries in parts. It's in the style of the rest of the game, it was hard to copy it exactly - I've not used in doing other game - but the new world's not totally alien. If we'd have had more time we'd have liked to have put another world in."

Each world comprises seven levels. The levels are either one or two screens wide, the view scrolling left and right when necessary. The first stop is Music



World. Its inhabitants trumpet, piano, accordion (and triangles), and there's a killer one man band at the world's end. The Woodland's nest, complete with tree stumps, lousy horns, unicorns, reminiscent of My Little Pinks, and a big bizarre bird.

Water World features penguins, octop, walrus, crabs and a giant reptilian creature

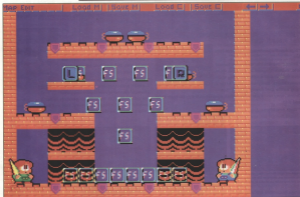
which looks like the mythical kraken. Machine World is full of robots (no surprises there, although the beery Transformers type robot isn't what it seems), while Gambling World is home to slot machines and three piers.

Flying saucers and helicopters are two of the adversaries encountered in Cloud World, and that's it in to Giant World to



► **20** tackle large eggs, dragons, pink moogle-wearing elephants and a fog-beekeeping/floating being. It doesn't take a genius to guess what the population of Rainbow World and Bubble Bobble World look like. The Bubble Bobble characters finally make an unbecome reappearance in a mutated form in Fall.

With Parasol Stars being possibly the most involved



chapter in the Bubble Bobble story and given the non-availability of any detailed material as to the workings of its mechanics, is it possible that the devs have missed anything out?

"Yeah, I probably have," Mick concedes. "There are lots of very obscure pick-ups - stuff like 50 points for every jump and the screen flashing as a warning that something's going to appear - and it was difficult to tell what most of them did at first. There were two out of the 60-odd that didn't



the one left? There were several special items in Fall. Will you be able to solve the riddle of how they can be used in 2021?"

(Bottom left) This set of animation frames for Bob-bubbles is what the early working assembly instructions look like.

seem to do anything, so we couldn't use them."

Mick has no idea what he's going to be working on once the Super NES version of Parasol Stars is out of the way, although apparently "Don's got some interesting ideas."

And what of Parasol Stars' predecessors? Does Mick feel

that they could have been done done better? "Yeah, you could've used 32 colours on the Amiga for better detail in the backgrounds and made the main character and the scrolling move smoother. I'd liked to have had a go at converting them, but obviously it's too late. There seems to be a lot more in Parasol Stars than in Rainbow Islands - bigger sprites and more background - but we've managed to get it on one disc."

© Gary Peier

NGER • DANGER • DANGER • DANGE

TNT 2

DOUBLE DYNAMITE • THE COMPILATION



**DANGER
EXPLOSIVE
SOFTWARE**

HIGH EXPLOSIVE
TNT

**THIS CRATE CONTAINS:
HYDRA • SKULL & CROSSBONES •
MARS DRIVER II • BADLANDS •**

**ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE ROBOT
MARS FENS REPLACES MARS DRIVER II ON
COMMODORE 64, SPECTRUM &
ASTRAZ VERSIONS.**



HYDRA
HYDRA: HOLOGRAPHIC ACTION is the most advanced racing game ever. You'll be racing on a futuristic planet with a variety of cars and tracks. The game is designed to be played on a variety of systems, including the Commodore 64, Spectrum, and AstraZ.

SKULL & CROSSBONES
SKULL & CROSSBONES is a pirate-themed action game. You'll be commanding a pirate ship and fighting off other pirates. The game is designed to be played on a variety of systems, including the Commodore 64, Spectrum, and AstraZ.

BADLANDS
BADLANDS is a racing game set in a desert landscape. You'll be racing a futuristic car through a variety of tracks. The game is designed to be played on a variety of systems, including the Commodore 64, Spectrum, and AstraZ.

MARS DRIVER
MARS DRIVER is a racing game set on the planet Mars. You'll be racing a futuristic car through a variety of tracks. The game is designed to be played on a variety of systems, including the Commodore 64, Spectrum, and AstraZ.

ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE ROBOT
ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE ROBOT is a platform game. You'll be controlling a character who must escape from a planet filled with robots. The game is designed to be played on a variety of systems, including the Commodore 64, Spectrum, and AstraZ.

DOMARK

Available on Amiga, Atari ST, Commodore 64 and also, Amstrad CPC and also, Spectrum + Amiga Commodore 64
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S C R E E N T E S T



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

COMPARE AND CONTRAST

As an easy frame of reference, every game is compared to either another in the same genre, or maybe it's original co-op or mode fans.



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



THE BEST OF THE BEST
THE WORST OF THE WORST

850 PARAMETERS



THE BEST OF THE BEST
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RATING A score out of 1,000

- the most instant gauge of a game's quality, further qualified with scores out of 20 for Graphics, Intelligence needed to enjoy the game, Audio and Fun factors.

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

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

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

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



ARCADIAN



CRASHMAN

ACE BENCHMARKS

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

ARCADE BLAST (200) (Shuttle)

Shuttle's follow-up comes through a combination of thruster speed, precision acceleration and darts, unadorned with the firepower and missile no-come-it obviously inevitable. A one-up to your own home!

ADVENTURE ISLES (Ringside)

Not so massively sophisticated as the likes of the Dragonair or Atlas of the Ring, this game does have some other things to recommend itself. It's the ability to switch between different worlds, and the ability of the friendly system makes it a winner.

ROLE PLAYING GAME EYE OF THE BEHOLDER 3 (300 Gold, 100)

Eyebeholder has taken the role playing genre, although heavily more of the same, there's not an incredible amount of expansion and the fluidity of the friendly system makes it a winner.

SPORTS ACTION ROCK OFF 2 (Anno)

Rock Off 2 is a game that is a lot of fun to play. It's the other features that control the game, and the ability to switch between different worlds, and the ability of the friendly system makes it a winner.

STRATEGY CYCLETRON (Micropress)

The ultimate strategy game for the player looking for a new challenge. It's the other features that control the game, and the ability to switch between different worlds, and the ability of the friendly system makes it a winner.

ADVENTURE THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND 3 (300 Gold, LucasArts)

The ultimate adventure game for the player looking for a new challenge. It's the other features that control the game, and the ability to switch between different worlds, and the ability of the friendly system makes it a winner.

RACING SIMULATION FORMULA ONE GRAND PRIX (Micropress)

Formula One Grand Prix is a game that is a lot of fun to play. It's the other features that control the game, and the ability to switch between different worlds, and the ability of the friendly system makes it a winner.

BEAT-'EM-UP (80) (System 1)

The original and most successful of the original genre. It's the other features that control the game, and the ability to switch between different worlds, and the ability of the friendly system makes it a winner.

RACING GAME STUNT CAR RACER (Microstyle)

Stunt Car Racer is a game that is a lot of fun to play. It's the other features that control the game, and the ability to switch between different worlds, and the ability of the friendly system makes it a winner.

SPORTS SIMULATION JIMMY WHITE'S BILLIARD SHOOTER (Virgin)

Jimmy White's Billiard Shooter is a game that is a lot of fun to play. It's the other features that control the game, and the ability to switch between different worlds, and the ability of the friendly system makes it a winner.

SIMULATION FALCON 3.0 (Spectrum Hobbyists)

Falcon 3.0 is a game that is a lot of fun to play. It's the other features that control the game, and the ability to switch between different worlds, and the ability of the friendly system makes it a winner.

ACTION STRATEGY POPULOUS 2 (Electronic Arts)

Populous 2 is a game that is a lot of fun to play. It's the other features that control the game, and the ability to switch between different worlds, and the ability of the friendly system makes it a winner.

Puzzle Game TETRIX (Micropress)

Tetrix is a game that is a lot of fun to play. It's the other features that control the game, and the ability to switch between different worlds, and the ability of the friendly system makes it a winner.

PLATFORM GAME SUPER MARIO WORLD (Nintendo)

Super Mario World is a game that is a lot of fun to play. It's the other features that control the game, and the ability to switch between different worlds, and the ability of the friendly system makes it a winner.



Genre: Arcade Blast
 Publisher: Ocean
 Developer: Image
 Price: \$29.99 (at home)

SPACE GUN

In space, no-one can eat ice cream. This, unfortunately, is rather a passe joke and, apart from the bit about space, has no relevance to the latest in Ocean's seemingly interminable line of Taito coin-op conversions. YOU HAVE BEEN ORDERED TO RESCUE THE



July 1988 introduced him to computers and the games, and you go between each level to provide the next act of the story... and so on until the final level of exciting action.

HOSTAGES IMMEDIATELY Make Space Gun's gang in advertising busy, while up above a hairy space commando splits open a giant alien's stomach with a volley of awesome piercing bullets.

This sort of thing, I have to admit, is right up my street. There's nothing gets me going more than venturing out into space and ensuring the future safety of this island Earth by putting a lot of smoking holes into some stinking alien filth. It comes as a particular disappointment to me, then, to find that the actual level of mayhem and destruction on offer in Space Gun fails to measure up to its bullets between-the-teeth, all-guns-blazing image.

Ever since the runaway success of Taito's Operation Wolf way back in 1984 and the subsequent reemergence of the gun-game as a popular coin-op genre, arcade manufacturers (Taito included) have been pushing and pushing to

squeeze more out of what is probably the most limited genre type of them all. Apart from adding more guns (the standard now is two, with some dating as many as three to a cabinet) and having bigger explosions, there's been very little in the way of innovation. Space Gun, however, gets away with its blatant unoriginality more than most by virtue of at least trying something different with the scenario.

The year is 2055 and human colonization of space has begun. However, that holy rail is fraught with things infinitely more dangerous than space junk, and a hapless space ship has stumbled upon just such a thing - the breeding ground for a despicable flesh-eating insectoid alien race. As the crippled craft is over-run by the shuddering monstrosity, the crew manages to send a weak distress signal back to Earth. Now it's up to you and an optional chum to travel out to the stricken vessel, take out the alien slugs and, of course, RESCUE THE HOSTAGES (IMMEDIATELY!)

Does any of this sound familiar? If it does, it's probably something to do with the fact that Space Gun is, beyond question, the most outrageously hearsey rip-off of James Cameron's *Alien* you could ever hope to find. No, even more than *Alien Breed* it's got big Alien-type aliens, mutating humans, pods that look like big leather eggs, face-buggers, acidic slime - the whole genre is played with the perpetual expectation that Sigourney Weaver is going to turn up at any minute and torch everything on screen.

Unfortunately, this does not happen and so the mowing of everything on screen is pretty much





Each bloody death is only lost the next bloody action is killing up there so we get a rather nasty alien type in close with, along with extra or three extra characters from previous levels at the bottom of the screen. The remarkable alien enemy variety, which details the position of an alien character's eyes.

exactly easy, and prioritizing targets is vital. In two-player mode it's not too bad as each player only has to worry about his own half of the screen, but on lone missions things can get very heated indeed. Hitting the aliens isn't difficult, but knowing which ones are in more urgent need of photon death is.

If anything, the 3D sections are easier than the horizontally-scrolling ones that they alternate with. When the end of a corridor is reached, the players are taken on a sideways-on tour of the rest, this time with the same adversaries entering the fray from the left and right. The big, bipedal aliens shuffle across the screen and need

Space Gun gets away with its blatant amorality more than most by virtue of at least trying something different with the scenario.

to be taken out before they get the chance to turn and attack.

It's interesting that the short size of the bigger aliens means they draw the majority of the players' fire, although their attacks are random, sporadic and, though worthy of attention, aren't quite as damaging as some of the smaller critters that attack at the same time. The face-buggers, for example, spring towards the player and stick onto screens, sapping energy continually until they're shot off. If one of these goes unattended (and they often do with the larger aliens stomping about in the foreground), it can be disastrous.

Though the player enjoys a good 99.9% of his time blasting away at the alien hordes, that activ-

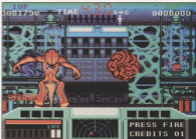
your responsibility. You've armed with a space gun (never capable of firing both conventional photon-blob machine-gun style and far more powerful galactic grenades, via an understated pump-action rocket-launcher attachment. At least, that's how it was in the arcade - here you just hit the right mouse button.

Depending on the level, the game has essentially two types of sections. Initially, it's a charge down a 3D corridor, tunnel or cavern, with the aliens either stomping towards you or dropping into the screen from above. Unlike the more conventional military-based shootouts, there's no reason for to worry about (these aliens are a pretty primitive lot, so they can only inflict damage when up close. The trick is to knock them out before they get into attack position - but when there's half a dozen of the buggers on screen at a time it's not



For my money at least, Doven's aging Operation Thunderbolt is still a better gun-game than its latest effort. It may be getting on a bit, but it's still the best, smoothest, most accurate and playable product of its type. Space Gun does its best to keep up, and in terms of space violence and destruction

it's even stronger, but at the end of the day it simply can't quite match Thunderbolt's great variety, super-fast action and tremendous playability. The only problem is that its military scenario is a bit hackneyed, so Space Gun could well be a better bet for those who fancy something with a more original slant on it.



SPACE GUN



Alien: They get this far towards the middle of the mission, when they already passed across the planet surface in a space ship. About 1000000 credits earned but 10000000 credits were lost.

Alien: About the end of the top of the screen, after they 0 seconds. After 1000000 credits were lost. It says at the end of the mission that you will get a credit for every alien you get a chance to report on the screen and some damage done.

Alien: In the end, it's hard to get what you're doing. About 1000000 credits were lost. It says at the end of the mission you get a credit for every alien you get a chance to report on the screen and some damage done. It's hard to get what you're doing. It's hard to get what you're doing.



S

pace Gun is full of surprises! Oh yes! But we at ACE wouldn't like you to be sent into shock by some of the horrible ghosts that haunt you during the course of the mission. We couldn't have that on our conscience. So, to prepare you for what lies ahead, here's a sneak look at some of the game's more horrible moments. That way, when they turn up and scream "Boo!" at you, rather than quivering with fear, you can cackle maniacally, yell "Ha Ha, Ha, Sucker!" and pump the lot of them full of lead. Lavishly jolly!



Instead of the usual use of the ghostlike entity, the player has to deal with the more elegant simplicity of a flock of bats (the ground). Swarms of little enemies are released at you and need to be shot down. The result indicates a player's general fire gun readiness. But it doesn't seem to have that much good.

When a player's primary weapon and ammo in the lobby complete the player becomes more and more inhibited by the remaining other items. Fortunately, it can all be cleared off the ground. You need a strategy element since there are particularly when other characters become available and by themselves. The gun is the left of the screen. In the way, it's a great gun! When it comes to gun use of the game's more complex nature.



More hell! More! The end of the 3D section is a sight to see. The player sees some of the intense-looking action come into play. Occasionally when a player is involved, the action seems to be the player to gain the right of winning the fight by using to take care to bring in the intense action.

Again! Another! Another! These are some of the most intense of the action game, as well they will, with the intense, the intense, intense, intense, and so on. And so on. There is some of these better images or even talking about. However, it's



SPACE GUN



Amiga Version



Aside from a few messy moments when the screen gets too busy, Space Gun is a very clean, colorful and attractive bit of kit. Unfortunately, it's rather listless on the sound side by a selection of droning tunes which will soon have you yearning for the thoughtfully-included MUSIC OFF option. Presentation is slick, with tonnes of options, including the facility to plug in a Trojan light Phaser. Oh, and there's a bit of disk-wrapping as well.

ST Version



ST owners can look forward to a version of Space Gun that's almost identical to the Amiga. Use the odd few snips in the colour and sound departments. So that's good news.



Play in the ST version, alien can only attack when up close. This is about the space like comes in handy, allowing the player to go into reverse, and reposition into the corridor. He drops the alien of a safe distance, and still allows you to shoot along at them. It won't get you any closer to the end of the level though, and this option is locked upon a bit of a battle.

Other than as well as the robot's head, the player must also contend with the opponent's own defenses, which have quite heavy hits, but have various means from the ceiling and beyond to shoot back when they can open fire.

THAT'S ONE UGLY MUVVA!

A shoot 'em up wouldn't be complete without a liberal sprinkling of end-of-level badies, and Space Gun has them in spades. Each level is divided into smaller stages, and at the end of the final stage there sits a big, bad, and very very ugly guardian.

Their look and behaviour patterns differ from level to level, but the tactics for fighting them remain pretty much the same throughout. Each one can only be knocked out by repeated hits to the correct weak spots - in most cases the head or heads.

Often these suckers are so hard that killing them with normal fire takes far too long to be practical, and so the only option is to grenade them into oblivion. Aiming is a tricky task, as the head of the alien moves in an unpredictable fashion as it spits its deadly venom at you. Some of the more bizarre guardians, like the one in the top picture, are best tackled with a friend, with each player looking after one head each. Alternatively, two players can work together with one chap assaulting the alien itself while the other covers him by knocking out the creature's own weapons as they are released.

By alone won't get the mission completed - if you're good, a constant stream of fire will just about keep you alive on a regular basis, and then you can start thinking about the real objective - hostage rescue. On early levels, the hapless space colonists simply appear at random intervals, and the task is not too difficult then in the time it takes for them to run, arms flailing, to safety.

The humans are never in any danger of getting hurt by one of the aliens, but such is the intensity of the fire coming from the players' weapons that it's almost an oddity for that they'll be blown down by friendly fire unless special care is taken. Such is the importance of the hostages' survival, it's probably worth holding fire together and suffering the consequences while the friendly gets to safety.

On later levels, things get slightly trickier. Hostages are trapped from the sides down in

egg-shaped pods, presumably for consumption or protection, and will be counted as dead unless the player can shatter the pod with a well-aimed laser blast, allowing the captive to get free. The problem here is that a shot like this takes a lot of accuracy, else the well-meaning photon beam will take out not just the egg, but its captive as well. To ensure this doesn't happen, a good few seconds are required to aim - and this, of course, means lowering the defences against the relentless aliens.

Hostages can also be found encased in bizarre cocoons hanging from the ceiling - again, a single shot sets them free - while others are not what they seem at all. I was particularly impressed (and genuinely surprised, the first time I saw them) by the humans which run towards you as normal, then mutate into a hideous alien at the last moment and attack you. In a game that's other-

wise generally free of surprises, it's a nice little treat.

Aside from the hostages, equally attractive distractions from the main thrust of the shooting action come in the form of those odd shoot-'em-up favourites, the power-ups. In a game like this, where firepower and destructive force is everything, collectable bits and bobs can often be one of the most vital aspects. Here, they're provided by flashing lights that appear both into the background every now and again. Scratching the light reveals any of a clutch of different collectables, ranging from the obligatory energy extenders and shells to special super-hard bullets and grenades, body armour and, my particular favourite, an expanded target cursor which makes the business of aiming a whole lot easier.

Unlike the likes of Wolf and Thunderbolt, though, there's no need for extra ammo as it's



in unlimited quantity. The game works instead as a gaspener system, which means the player can fire constantly until his weapon overheats, at which point it'll only fire at a fraction of its normal rate until the trigger is released and the gun gets a chance to cool off.

It's not really sure how well the system works as a replacement to ammunition. True, it means the player doesn't have to worry about collecting extra magazines, but it's actually more troublesome and annoying to have to leave off the trigger every couple of minutes. Supposedly the idea is to force the player to regulate his fire rather than blast away constantly

The difference between the coin-op *Space Gun* and this conversion is about the same as the difference between going out for a proper curry and having one of those horrid sloppy ones out of the microwaves.



at everything in sight, but in a game like this, any thing that restricts the player must be a bad thing.

Surely it's the player's choice if he wants to play like a maniac or in a more thoughtful, conservative manner? The new *Terminator* coin-op does things the same way, and it winds me right up. Sega's *Line of Fire*, on the other hand, has a no-holds-barred policy on weapons, and that works fine. Judging by how different people play *Space Gun*, the system nevertheless seems to work okay for some. I just found it annoying and restrictive.

Miss gameplay subtleties like this, however, are not symptomatic of *Space Gun* as a whole which is, pretty much, a very well thought-out product. Given the restrictions of the genre, the game does have elements of originality, and the alien scenario, backed up by some impressively defined and moodily-colored visuals creates a dark, suspenseful atmosphere.

In fact, the reason why *Space Gun* doesn't quite come off as a game isn't really anybody's fault. The coin-op was perfectly fine, and the conversion is about as accurate and speedy as it's little bits will allow. The problem is simply that a game like *Space Gun* relies on a sense of "weight" in the graphics, sound and fire to provide the entertainment. It's not as if there's much in the way of challenging strategy, and it doesn't even ask for any real dexterity or arcade skills, so everything hangs on the aesthetic side—the huge, hefty explosions, the gut-wrenching shrieks of the alien and, of course, the rood on the gun. Now all this works fine in the arcade but because the Amiga simply can't deliver the same aesthetic impact, at least 75% of the enjoyment and atmosphere is lost immediately.

What we're left with is by no means a mess. I enjoyed myself playing it and it really does look and feel very nice, but nevertheless the difference between the coin-op *Space Gun* and this conversion is about the same as the difference between going out for a proper curry and having one of those horrid sloppy ones out of the microwaves. Images, the conversions, can by no means be blamed for this, as they've made the very best of what could well be considered a pointless conversion, and the result is a damn sight more enjoyable than, say, the conversions of *Line of Fire* or *Front Runner*. Make no mistake, if the only thing you use your brain for is to stop the top of your head falling in, you'll have a good time here. Just don't expect too much.

© Gary Whitham

R A T I N G S



Best idea
Most useful
Value for money
Ease of use

Best value
Most fun
Most enjoyable
Easy to use
Value for money

790 ***** *****

Score Space Gun overall (including the

and all games that have ratings

to get into it, it's a great

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Some tracks that
 Publisher Henry Hoffman
 handles through
 Price (as app. that time)

THE ROCKETEER

There's a scene in the movie where one of the characters cries, "It's the Rocketeer!" and another, confused and slightly non-phased, replies, "The Rock...uh?" And to say, this was pretty much the reaction of the film-going public who, torn between *The Rocketeer* and either *Robin Hood: Prince Of Thieves* or *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, chose to put their

collective bum-on-a seat in the company of Caddy Keen or Big Annie rather than some unknown little expert with a vacuum cleaner on his back. This was, of course, not a little unfortunate for Disney, which had spent nearly \$45 million dollars

in the hope that *The Rocketeer* would be THE Summer Box-Office Blockbuster of 1991 (it had eventually incogated \$43 million by the end of last August - not exactly a flop, but don't hold your breath waiting for the sequel).

Probably the saddest thing about *The Rocketeer's* disappointing box-office receipts is that the film is actually pretty good. It's based on *The Rocketeer* comic drawn by Dave Stevens and, like *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, is a "tribute" to the cheaply-made action/adventure serials that played in children's movie theaters throughout the 1930s. One thing for sure, it's a damn sight more enjoyable than Costner's bizarre mid-Atlantic playing of the Hood legend. Most notable are its flying sequences, courtesy of George Lucas's special effects outfit Industrial Light & Magic, which are marvelously exhilarating to watch. Who knows? With its release on video due any time now it may start to win some of the public acclaim it rightfully deserves.

So with the film's poor public reception, the more cynical and bitter amongst the reviewing fraternity (i.e. me) might be forgiven - but not con-





dated—for expecting some slapdash piece of sub-bash intended to cash in on the film's few fans. And these suspicions are brightened when you look at the screen shots on the back of packaging, but you couldn't be more wrong. Sure, *The Rocketeer's* got problems (which I'll come to in a moment) but as it turns out, it's one of the classic film licenses I've ever seen.

The most immediate gripe any discerning reader could have with the game is that its scenario is totally dissimilar to that of the film. The main character and the main plot thread—evil Nazis try to steal revolutionary rocket pack from kindly clean-cut American hero—are the same, but the details are completely different. The movie was a moderately complicated yarn involving a Nazi spy posing as a Hollywood heartthrob, Mafia molls, the F.B.I. and genius Howard Hughes. The game, on the other hand, is a simple plot. The main deviation from the basic scenario described above is that having failed to lay their hands on the rocket pack, the Nazis grab the hero's girlfriend (and girlfriend with her special, exploding, heavy, air-breathing and a host of other skills on the tail of a Zeppelin) instead.

The game is split into five episodes, so they are called here in keeping with the movie's main, pulp literature inspiration: "Episode 1, Rescue



in theme at least, *The Rocketeer* shares several similarities to *Claymation's* lesser *Rocket Ranges*. For a start, they... er... both feature a rocket pack. And Nazis. And Zeppelins. Not surprising, really, since both were inspired by the old movie serials. Both games are basically a collection of mini-games. But whereas *The Rocketeer* is just that and nothing else, *Rocket Ranger* frames the games in some simple but

invoking strategy, making it by far the longer lasting and ultimately more enjoyable choice.

Rocket Ranger's plot is also far more engaging, involving the hero's attempts to thwart a

Nazi plot to take over the whole World!

passing a variety of gameplay styles—shoot-'em-up, beat-'em-up, and so on. As the action reader will have spotted, Disney have taken a dip in Ocean's *Ranger* bank Of How To Do The Game Of The Film. A hackneyed, clichéd and unoriginal approach to game-design it may be (as the fans of *Robocop* and *Batman* have shown to the best of us), as long as it's done well there's no reason why the final result can't be an excellent game.

But it's strange, just when Ocean are making attempts to move away from the style of *it-is* they need to clear out with the innovative likes of *Madcat* and *Rainbow*. It appears Disney have chosen to pick up from where they left off.

Film parodies are excellent. Each episode is preceded by a series of comic-style screens depicting the plot's development. *Jet Setters* and *Uncharted* do it well; they've been drawn and painted by a '60s style cartoonist. The results are superb, and combining with *The Rocketeer's* true originality (I'll deal with that later) makes the game fun from the film.

It's all very laudable, fittingly. But it's a pity and here the use of comic images is too good to be ignored. Well, from the film. You begin to get the impression that the game designers, instead of linking with the film like as few as possible (by not using it), prefer to establish borders of respect, maybe rights to use the various stars' likenesses or to imagine a few problems that US Gold failed to work with its disappointing *Claymation* license. Mind you, since Disney Software limited the game you wouldn't think that'd be a problem. Oh well.

The first episode opens in Nightwing-style Circus where Cliff Second, a dashing and youthful air jockey, is about to enter a potentially lucrative air-race competition. If Cliff can prove his pilot skills by winning two races in a row then his wealthy, eccentric and eccentric inventor Arden



'Prez' (probably will let him take the amazing Circus X-3 rocket pack for a trial run.

The player, as Cliff, has a choice of one of three planes for the big race, each with differing top speeds, accelerations and turning abilities. The player then has to be first to complete a given number of 'laps' around two red-flagged poles placed several hundred yards apart. Flight control is basic in the extreme—it's simply a matter of accelerating, decelerating, climbing, or banking with any combination of the keyboard, mouse or joystick. The recipe to success is to cut as tight as you can into the inside of the lap without hitting the end poles or your competitor.

The player has two views of the race, side-on and 3D. The side-on view takes up most of the screen, with the player's plane staying centre of the screen and the background scrolling to follow its progress around the course. The 3D view, set in the bottom right-hand corner of the status strip, is tiny.

Terrible in, while the side-on view is very pretty and provides a lot of entertainment for any spectators of your game-playing prowess, it makes the task of playing an already bloody-difficult game virtually impossible because, despite some helpful

Regardless of its few minor flaws, *The Rocketeer* still rates as one of the classic film licenses yet.

ground shadows, it's tough working out where your plane is in relation to the course. The 3D view is far more useful, but it's a pain not because it's so small (tiny, after all, isn't important) but because you can see the visually far more exciting side-on action in your peripheral vision. If you imagine going to see a movie film located at the flicks and then being hired by a sadistic advertiser to watch some some truly limited TV then you'll get some idea what it's like.

One of the best game the air race is surprisingly difficult to play into the most fun though great race. The object of the race is that it would have been better to design a truly interesting race by making the player fly something more complex than an oval 'triangle of eight, see 'Alas', where the player finally get their cut the rocket pack. Designing a bit of a surprise reward to discover that this takes identical to the player but faster.

In the second episode and the final Nazi ruler (Cliff) attempt to grab the rocket pack. Quite why they're not going to get their hands on it is never made clear. Maybe it's made obvious in the end



THE ROCKETEER

EPISODE 1

It's an exciting day for Cliff Secord and his girlfriend Jenny Blake. Finding Cliff is about to take part in America's Air Circus race!

THE AIRY PIONEER FOR THE HOUR!



Every minute Cliff is with his girlfriend Jenny Blake. Finding Cliff is about to take part in America's Air Circus race!



By staying high, landing only on the strongest and cutting it right on the ground Cliff will win the contest. However, Cliff's enemies, the Nazis, plan to take him down.



Even the President is invited for the spectacular sport of the Air Circus (2-2 rocket pack)! Cliff tops the other planes then after this, the Cliff's performance flying nearly two hours in the air will be another a little bit closer to the President's office!

EPISODE 2

Cliff and Penny join the Air Circus in the Air Circus. They're looking for a chance to win the prize money!

But Penny's father is not about to let her go. He's got a plan to get her out of the Air Circus. He's got a plan to get her out of the Air Circus. He's got a plan to get her out of the Air Circus.



- Who are the 'Air Circus' people?
- And what do they want with Cliff, Jenny and Penny?
- Find out... in the next exciting episode of...

THE ROCKETEER!



The longer it takes to be released with the money needed for the Air Circus, the more time Cliff has to complete it with the Air Circus.

Cliff and Penny take a chance at the Air Circus. Finding out the secret plan to win money to save the Air Circus.



All the Nazis have been arrested! But when it comes to Cliff's father, Cliff is determined to find out what's going on. He's got a plan to get her out of the Air Circus. He's got a plan to get her out of the Air Circus.



Cliff explains the others and how he's going to save Jenny from the Nazis. He's got a plan to get her out of the Air Circus. He's got a plan to get her out of the Air Circus.



- Is Cliff's rocket pack fast enough to catch the speeding Nazis?
- Why have the evil Nazis kidnapped Jenny?
- And what fool trope have they laid for the brave Cliff?
- Find out... in the next exciting episode of...

THE ROCKETEER!

EPISODE 3

During the Battle of Crete, Jerry Stone, gifted to OSS agent (aka known as The Rocketeer), is kidnapped by anti-Nazi saboteurs who are working to take advantage of a stolen nuclear power...

OSS, under the guise of an espionage operation, attempts to give information to the right to the German forces...



Jumping into the chaos in a matter of the OSS agent, the Rocketeer plans to fight. But suddenly they are in the air with their... causing their own actions sparking rumors of the war rocket power! Rocketeer has now discovered that German technological advances that created this world!

EPISODE 4

Working straight up with the leading German experimental scientist, OSS finds Perry. But Jerry's relationship to OSS continues to be a little awkward and returned to his office, but manages to explain that the German have found Jerry in their experimental research in great technological progress! OSS and Perry attempt to use the Rocketeer's strength and presence to get some work done and for OSS that the Rocketeer have developed to make a number of deadly VTOL craft with orders to destroy them!



It's a intense battle, with OSS looking to have it's machine gun shooting air release as well as the remaining VTOLs.



But with such and during OSS manages to maintain all objectives and finally reaches the Nazi base.



Perry spots Jerry... as they find the airship being their capture by the first mission! Now for The Rocketeer fight!

- Can The Rocketeer finally defeat the fool Nazi scout? -

- Find out... in the next and final episode of...

THE ROCKETEER



Having seen off the Nazis OSS returns for a moment thinking the danger is past... then a VT nuclear bomb is shot!



The latest OSS gets to the plane the more intense the Nazi attack becomes! They're now an nothing to all later!



- What does The Rocketeer with OSS's technical army? -

- Find out... in the next exciting episode of...

THE ROCKETEER



As the OSS returns against the German attacks and the other world's is saved Perry... but is okay!

EPISODE 5

Having the rocket power and the what he knows will be the last time, OSS manages to get out of the German and into the American but the Rocketeer Perry to return the stolen plane to its rightful owner.

But as OSS returns out of the leading rocket Perry enters... The OSS... even rocket which Jerry's been enough fast to get you back to the Air Base!



Looking on the the OSS starts to make his way to Jerry... But from nowhere appears another that rocketeer!

- Can OSS defeat the Nazi's technology and reach Jerry? -

- Find out... when you play...

THE ROCKETEER

Find out definitively, OSS returns his stolen and presence in flight! Rocketeer for his time.

THE ROCKETEER



late episodes is that the Nazis already possess their own rocket pack technology. Must be after that superior Yankee know-how that only comes from being able to lead a life free from oppression in a God-bearing democratic society. Or something.

It's basically *Operation Wolf*—or more accurately *Cabal*—in an aircraft hangar. Nazi commandos pop up from behind workbenches, aircraft and oil cans while others fly in through the hangar doors to get gun shots at the Rocketeer who stalks the floor area to the front of the screen. The player can move a sight around the screen to map the hordes as they appear. If the sight scans the edge of the screen the Rocketeer walks left or right and the screen scrolls to follow him. Storage bins for the Rocketeer and the Nazis slowly drain at the bottom of the screen. The player has to finish off the villainous Nazis before they do the same to him.

Of *Wolf* clones are a staple ingredient of those multi-action style games, but the Rocketeer's take on it is better than most. It's all good, violent fun and the realistically digitized figures make the action far more involving than it might otherwise be. The scrolling, though, raps smooth for a PC, can be a bit hard on the eyes at times as it rocks back and forth to follow the player's dashing sight.

At the end of the second episode the Nazis, realizing they are no match for Cliff's marksmanship, kidnap Peppy and—horror!—the huckster Jimmy Hinkle. Cliff's glib, and try to make good their escape in a commandeered US experimental plane, the odd-looking Locust. Firing up the rocket pack Cliff takes to the sky: a sky filled with more squadrons of Nazi commandos.

Yes, episode three is a horizontal scrolling shoot-'em-up, but a pretty good one. The player has to shoot or dodge all manner of Nazi birds, some according to warning rockets, others gliding down

slowly. The first battle atop the Zepppelin is more involved in size than the first. As the captain that ordered shooting a struggling enemy plane on, that resistance fly down to engage it come out horizontal ones from overhead. Each time you score a kill and make this exciting. It's an average hit and run mission in the first one, but about the same, but a pleasure in the show. If that were not enough to carry along, the colorful cut-in for Super and other taking you into a cut-in scene. And of course the end scene a cut-in a cut-in scene.

Always after your stage? The consequences of killing off a Zepppelin do not seem anything about. The Rocketeer flies across, with each battle coming in automatically from the distance that starts from a position. The title screen is a mixture of the superb presentation throughout the game: the result.



on parachutes. If that wasn't enough there are frequent deadly streams of bombs that rain down and V4 rockets that blast in, bombing on the Rocketeer. Interestingly more deadly than the standard enemies is the terrifying burning wreckage left behind before that. Small red balloons reward the player three-way fire fire, but the effects last for such a short time it's worth the bother or risk of trying to collect them.

Episode four and, having caught up with the Locust just as his park runs out of fuel, Cliff learns from a shrewd Peppy that Jimmy is in fact farther ahead, held captive aboard a giant hydrogen-filled Zepppelin. Taking hold of the Locust's control Cliff heads off into the wide blue yonder once more. It's more shoot-'em-up action, but much, much harder. This time the player is beset by strange German VTOL craft, balloon-mounted bombs, V4 rockets that fire up from the bottom of the screen in a most unexpected way and not a glimpse of a power-up in sight. To be honest with you, I could have done without having another shoot-'em-up straight after the first—sook, my whining trigger finger!

As last Cliff catches up with the Nazi blimp. Leaving Peppy to fly the Locust back to base, Cliff tumbles down onto the Zepppelin's hull to rescue Jimmy. But the Nazis have seen him coming and

PC Version

No complaints on the sound or graphics fronts, the tones and effects are great (especially with a Sound Source device) and the digitized/hand-drawn



graphics are even better—the smooth scrolling has to be seen to be believed! Although a hard disc is, as ever, recommended, the game is perfectly playable from floppy. The only fly/bug in the ointment is that you really need a 386/486 and up machine to reap maximum enjoyment from the game.

Amiga Version

The Amiga version won't be quite as pretty as the PC's 286-colour one, but with *Demon* of the team expect something



fairly snappy, in terms of gameplay there's nothing here that the Amiga couldn't handle with its better fist behind its back. While *The Rocketeer's* simplicity and ease is acceptable for the largely unadventurous PC crowd, the hardened Amiga game may find the going just a bit too easy. *The Rocketeer* should be coming in for testing in May.

ST Version

While there's no way that the ST version could look as good as the PC one, there's no reason why it shouldn't play like



problem—unless (it may be) on the gameplay (and/or) then players who have got their gaming teeth on the current crop of state-of-the-art ST titles are likely to find *The Rocketeer* something of a breeze to complete. Look out for an update in the Reviews Directory around about May.

have prepared a little... reception for him. Saw only one leafy forested meadow with faint life streams stands between Cliff, his beloved Jenny and the downfall of the Third Reich. Maybe.

Even by best-of-its-kind standards, which are not measured by their complexity, this, the fifth and final episode in *The Backstreet Saga*, is hard to say the least. The player can move Cliff left or right along the Zepherus tail fin and make him duck or punch. The trick is to dull the fuel over before he flames you off the tail to your doom. It's a long way down.

There's no denying that *The Backstreet* is a quality product. The programmers have pulled out all the stops to make sure it looks and sounds superb. The scrolling is nothing short of a miracle for the PC, the animation is brilliant (Hey! This is Disney after all) and the noises and effects are suitably pizay and atmospheric (especially if you've got one of Disney's Sound Source devices - see the "blowman... sounds scary" box for more).

So, nothing to flash in the sackcloth. My real problems lay in the gameplay. While all the mini-games are great fun and very playable, there's a

serious lack of any strong challenge - I got past episodes two and three on my second attempt. The password system doesn't help things either. I can't see anyone who is even halfway decent at arcade games taking more than a couple of days to finish the game. Perhaps this is not so much of a problem for the less arcade-oriented PC market, but potential Amiga or ST buyers should beware.

(Giggle) There's no password to the last episode, leaving you to play episode four just to get to the best-of-its-kind. This is unfair. If you going to have a password system then have a full one. This is just a lazy way of making the game harder to finish.

This criticism would perhaps not be so bad if there were more than just five levels, perhaps repeat but better appearances of the second or fifth episode, for example. As the developers have decided to completely ignore the film's plot anyway, it wouldn't have been in hand to write a scenario that imitated more of those sections. As it stands you can't help feeling more than a little short-changed.

◆ David Speckhard

There's no denying that *The Backstreet* is a quality product. The programmers have pulled out all the stops to make sure it looks and sounds superb.

MMMMM... SOUNDS SAUCY!

Real it's real! For the paltry sum of \$29.99 (MSR price to be confirmed) you can play the film in your very own home!

Well, not quite. The Sound Source, a wedge of cream plastic slab the size of a large hard-back novel, won't turn your PC into some amazing multimedia device. But it does give you some of the best speech and FX ever.

And it adds incredibly to the enjoyment of *The Backstreet*. Instead of having to read the speech bubbles that come up in the cartoon intros, you can sit back and have them read out to you by actors performing the roles of the various characters. It's particularly effective on the plane choosing menu where, as you cycle through the choices, Cliff's postwar voice mumbles "Mmmm, the Gee Bee's slow but it's great for taking corners..." and such like.

There's is a drawback - the complex views the game dramatically. Fine on the big boys, but 68k/lowers will not be impressed by the frequent three per second screen updates.



(Above) Before the race the screen goes to various screens (shown above). Each has the offering for controls, acceleration and steering abilities (if you want some good advice, go to the already 40th disc - it's right concerning it appears if you're in it).

(Below) Top racing action against the alternative 2D disc (unpublished) player appears to fly by the way (it's you in the screen if you don't take any action, you stand out up the the alternative 2D/3D screen).

R A T I N G S



As an update game quality with some small improvements. The graphics are good, the sound is excellent, and the controls are simple and easy to use. The game is a good one for the PC market.

817

High from the top off the Backstreet Saga. The first episode looks and sounds like a real game and it's a good one for the PC market. The controls are simple and easy to use. The game is a good one for the PC market.



ter with its own objectives and prejudices is an altogether more complex affair. Which is why computer-based RPGs center more around the combat and puzzle-solving, that's something a computer can understand and cope with.

But even with the genre stripped down to its bones and shorn of the underlining 'role playing', it still remained a niche market - a stable, healthy-selling one, admittedly, but a niche none-the-less.

Until 1987.

In 1987 a small, hitherto unknown US based company called PTL shook the whole computer-gaming market to its foundations by producing an RPG that appealed not just to hardcore RPGers but to game players right across the board. That game was, of course, *Dungeons Master*. And the reason for the game's success was simple - it looked good.

Until *Dungeons Master* most RPGs were simple, crude-looking things. The theory, it seemed, was that RPG fans wanted facts and figures not fancy graphics. And maybe that was so, but this surface complexity denied the games access to the larger market. *Dungeons Master* successfully combined quality 3D presentation with ease of use to dance in the average player and an underlying gameplay complexity to satisfy the die-hard RPG fan.

And once PTL had shown the genre's lucrative potential, the other software developers were not slow to try and catch the riddle's wave of popularity. The last few months alone have seen the graphically-stunning likes of Core's *Heinrich*, Acorn's *Beowulf* and, of course, USG's *Islehold 2*, the current ACE benchmark.

Even Origin, who have carried the banner of tradition for its *Old Toppe-Dowse Verse* for more years than I can remember, have started branching-out, with *Ultima VII* employing an isometric



Shadowlands appeal falls somewhere between the graphic heights of Core's *Heinich* and the complex iconograms of USG's *Isle of the Beholder 2*.

While *Shadowlands*' graphics aren't as eye-popping as *Heinich*'s, they have a distinct and appealing nature of their own. There's also far more action in *Shadowlands* with something happening nearly every step of the way. *Heinich*, for all its beauty, did have frequent yawners longers as the player trekked slowly from location to location. The fact that the whole party is on-screen at all times is also in *Shadowlands*' favour. And for my money the combat, although substantially less awe-inspiring than *Heinich*'s, is far more immediate, realistic and controllable.

3D view and the *Underworld* utilizing modified Wing Commander walking/rotating 3D bitmap routines.

Photoscope isn't just some gimmick. The massive boost it gives *Shadowlands*' atmosphere alone makes it worth its weight in gold.

Now Denmark, traditionally seen as the home of the coin-op conversion, is dipping its corporate toe in the RPG waters with *Shadowlands*. The plot starts grimly. The player has been captured by the arch superbadly and whisked away to his lair in the well-infested *Shadowlands*. There you are brutally murdered, but your spirit lives and its ethereal form you must guide like brave adventurers eyes pathless to your plight as they trek through deep dangers and arid wastes in search of your home. Only when they have been recovered do you stand a hope of being reinstated.

The action is viewed in isometric 3D, a style familiar from the likes of the aforementioned *Heinich* and EA's *The Insectant*. The twist here is Photoscope, an innovative display technique whereby light sources realistically illuminate the

Shadowlands' puzzles and riddles are easily on a par with *Beholder 2*'s. However, the novel Photoscope twist - the light sensors and the like - is refreshing, and the problems where the party needs or is made to split up to solve them add a whole new dimension to play. When the US field games really scores it that it allows the player to converse with some of the characters by means, albeit in a limited way.

For so competently melding so many existing game elements together - and then adding a few new ones of its own - I've got no hesitation in awarding *Shadowlands* our highest accolade. *Aw, don'tcha just know it -*

Shadowlands is the new ACE Role-Playing Game Benchmark.



area around them. The walk areas are drawn in a murky dark grey, so that it's still just possible to navigate even without torches.

Thankfully Photoscope isn't just a gimmick. It contributes to the game's success on a number of levels. The massive boost it gives the game's atmosphere alone makes it worth its weight in gold. When your party's desperately weak and you can't make out some unknown creature shuffling through the gloom towards you the tension can be immense.

But Photoscope's effects stretch beyond the visual. Some wall fittings act as light sensors, opening or closing doors and pits depending on the presence or absence of light. Certainly monsters are attracted or repelled by light. It's such a unique feature that the solutions to actually quite simple problems seems unorthodox until the player remembers the important role light plays in the game. It all works phenomenally well.

Fortunately the game's developers, Teque London, haven't let their imaginative approach to RPGs begin and end with the Photoscope system.

Beyond the game starts the player is presented with a pre-set team of characters, each described by four major characteristics ratings: combat,



AND THAT'S MAGIC!

Magic is handled rather differently in *Shadowlands* than it is in other games. The idea is that a mighty wizard forges a spell and casts it into specially prepared parchment. The spell can then be used by just about anyone - as long as it has been charged with sufficient Magic. Once a spell has been cast it becomes drained of Magic and cannot be re-used until recharged.

Normally spells are cast one at a time, but they can be bound into a gemstone. Each can hold up to six spells. The bearer can then 'use' the gemstone, and each spell inside is fired off one after the other - a bit like a Magic machine gun!

Magic is like the Force. It is innate to all living things. The wizards can absorb the Magic from things like food and water and then use it to power up a much-needed spell. The side effect of this is that the drained foodstuff or whatever is now useless.



(Above left) You may not just about the most important items in *Shadowlands*. After all, if you can't see where the Hell you're going then you're not likely to get very far, are you?

(Above middle) Every sight tells a story, so pay attention... *...but don't believe every thing you hear!*

(Above right) Every sight tells a story, so pay attention... *...but don't believe every thing you hear!*

Shadowlands is a complex game. So, to illustrate how it plays we've placed together most of the demo level from this month's ACE Cover Disk. Not, we hasten to add, out of any spiteful urge to spoil Amiga and ST owners fun, but because it illustrates most of the main game features in a concentrated area. But don't worry. We haven't ruined all the surprises - the final chamber's secrets are left for you to discover for yourselves!



(You'll find yourself pulling levers like this on a regular basis to open doors and so on.

(Above left) Beware tiny enemy signs before pulling a lever - they may give a cryptic clue that the results might not be good!



(Investigation in little nooks like this can't see many but sometimes, but they can lead that a non-descript piece of wall is not what it seems...

(Keep an eye out for strange looking wall signs - if you see anything odd then activate a character's hand-and-foot along the wall. If a bulb starts flashing that you know you've found something. Try feeling along the walls if you still a recurring deadlock - the solution may be right under your nose.



(Pressure pads respond to different weights. While one may activate if a feather is put on it, another may require a whole man's bodyweight to work - a bit of a problem if you've lost one of your party.



(Above) Although this looks like something the dog left on the carpet it is in fact a clock. **(Set a trapdoor a little to further than nothing, but you'll be better off waiting in it. Levels if you get into any traps and you haven't found a proper weapon yet.**



(Left) Gates, like this other one, can be used to get valuable information and help from the Wizard's coin club. (See later.)



Light sources like this have a lot of functions. Some cause them to appear in view, others cause them to appear or disappear, while others may indicate a going of someone.

Plus, really are the pits. Any character falling down one may find himself transported to someone else (in the level, if that's really arbitrary, another level entirely) and it's not every getting around on your own.

Unless you think you're got a big enough margin for error, you're probably best off getting the party past the pits one by one.

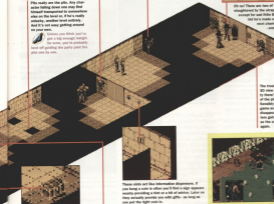


Awawawawawaw! Who's this? Suspicious! Find impostors can be deceiving. It's not some hairy killer. It is, in fact, a **TOOY WOMAN** with a confident coordination of armor on. And don't think that you'll be able to slip past her by virtue of your elvish and elfin wits! Her's sneaky and she's fast—and she packs a hefty punch. You'll need everyone's help to get rid of her.



Oh no! There are lots of 'em! Everyone has been slaughtered by the attacking Amazon types except for our little Harry. In a last desperate bid he's made a run for the door to the next chamber, only to find it locked—and he hasn't got a key! In the worried waiting hours in the absence of Harry's normal look also indeed... Perhaps you'll have better luck when you get... *Shhhhhhh!*

The trouble with these isometric 3D view games is that by necessity there's often a wall to the side of the player's view of the action. Luckily Tengen have written the game so that obscuring walls disappear when one of the characters gets too close, then reappear as the character moves away again.



Checks can contain up to six sets of items. Generally speaking the more valuable the contents the harder you'll have to fight for them. Although they weigh a fair bit, they're a good way of increasing the amount of stuff you can carry because they rarely take up one of your valuable inventory slots.

Although each warrior's backpack can carry up to a bit or six, you'll soon find yourself running out of space. Always remember to discard spent potions, and cut food and drink water when the warriors need it to reduce that storage space.



These slots are like information dispensers. If you hang a cube in often you'll find a sign appears nearby providing a hint or a bit of advice. Later on they actually provide you with gifts—so long as you get the right cube.



Sweet! I used my money! And here she is, by gosh! At last the warriors get a chance to practice their sword-whirling skills. (Actually they're holding shields. Oh dear.)

The level begins for meeting with a monster to be sent away's side is, usually Bounding, Tougher monsters, however, may require a more 'old' and 'new' approach.



WHERE IN THE WORLD AM I?

The bold adventures' travels take them through four very varied landscapes. It all starts off above ground in a small wooded clearing. It's a haven for various rivers but provides a good chance to stock up on fuel that Uter's the clearing floor.

A bit of exploring reveals a stair passageway down into a miserable grey dungeon, which is where the real problems start and the Photopass system really kicks in. Much later the warriors find themselves above ground again in a Hampton Court-wide maze, inside an Egyptian-style pyramid and finally exploring a series of ominous dark caves, the home of the evil wizard who killed the player and the setting place of your bones!



magic, strength and health. The player has the opportunity 'reskin' these ratings from a character customiser, as well as adjust more superficial character details such as the specific of their appearance and their name. Not essential, magic, but it's fun to tinker with a character's hairstyle and lip shape so that they have a look appropriate to their ratings.

As mentioned above, the adventuring party consists of four individuals. And 'individuals' is the key word here. Each character is represented by its own sprite in the Shadowlands gameworld and a corresponding colour-coded portrait displaying the character's figure in outline, a health bar and any items currently held.

These portraits are the key to controlling the characters. The body outline is split into five regions: head, the two arms and the two legs. By highlighting the regions with the mouse pointer and clicking on areas in the gameworld for player can perform a huge range of functions.

Characters can be made to read a sign by selecting the head and then clicking on the notice board. Toggling a switch is achieved by highlighting the right arm and then clicking on the lever. Other, more complex actions can be performed just as easily. Topege has obviously spent a lot of time thinking it all out and it has been time well spent - it's a wonderful, friendly and flexible interface that works a treat.

Here, later is the fact that the characters can be ordered to do several different things at the same time, so while one is pulling a lever, another may be picking up a sword and the other two could be smashing in some skeleton's face. And indeed there are times where this sort of co-ordinated approach to the team's efforts is vital to the player's success.

After the player enters the Shadowlands the player is given the opportunity to adjust each member's vital statistics. Although the appearance of each party, the usual total results roughly the same on it's not important to have a character who's better in every respect. By clicking on the mouse next to the magic (spell) - it's possible to change the character's statistics, but not even make them a character, even, more and with results. You can get some pretty funny combinations, before that.

Characters can be moved individually or in a group by selecting either the right or left leg respectively and then 'dragging' the characters with the mouse pointer. Although it sounds a bit cumbersome, it actually works a whole lot better than you'd think. It's possible to arrange the party members into just about any formation imaginable, and even split them up into two smaller groups. This latter ability is sometimes essential to the solution to some problems where,

too, pressure pads in widely separated parts of the dungeon have to be activated simultaneously.

As the player moves the party near the edge of the game window the view scrolls (usually on the SE, smoothly on the Amiga) to position the party near the centre of the screen. Ideally it would have been nice if the party had wiped centre-screen at all times, but I suspect this was impossible from a technical point-of-view. As it

stands the system works fine, though waiting for the scroll to do its thing can become annoying after a while. Fortunately the player can control the view at any time by clicking on the right button, which speeds things up immensely.

Combat is as elegantly handled as every other aspect of the game. To attack a creature the player simply puts a weapon in the character's hand, highlights the arm and then clicks on the enemy. No miss, no hit. Because each character can be dealt with individually, there's no need for the whole party to flee if one of its members is dan-



Amiga version

The graphics are small but perfectly formed, and even on a standard TV the items are all fairly recognisable. The scrolling is Amiga-convincingly silky, but I personally would have preferred to sacrifice smoothness for speed. The sampled sound is sparse but effective. Owners of IBM machines have less disk accessing to contend, but since this only happens when the player moves between dungeon levels it's no great loss.



ST version

Apart from slicker but faster scrolling and some chip-generated sound instead of samples this is a carbon copy of the Amiga version, and just as highly recommended.



PC version

Not a lot of information on the PC version at the moment apart from the fact that there will definitely be one and it'll be appearing around about

September time. It's unlikely that the gameplay will change much, although chances are the 256-colour VGA palette will be put to good use.



Shadowlands: the inventory screen allows the player to see equipped weapons, items, and also, amongst spells, adjust the user's mounting, location, job, of course, and so on and so forth.

generally weakened during the fight files in *Dungeons of Dredmor*. Instead, the player can just move the troubled player out of harm's way and let the rest get on with the scrapping. This ability to split the party up permits a whole range of combat methods that just aren't possible in other RPGs. The player can opt for any mode of fighting from a straight all-out scamp, with everyone picking in, to a steady guerrilla-style war, sending in lone warriors to strike a couple of blows then bringing them out again.

Now an RPG wouldn't be an RPG without magic. And Shadowlands has a veritable witch's corner of it. Spell casting is handled in a way that'll be familiar to players of *Dungeons of Dredmor*. Each spell is written on a piece of parchment 'charged' with magic force. When cast (ie a mantr similar to combat) the spell's energy is drained and it cannot be cast again until the player 'recharges' it using the magic force contained within other items, like food and so forth. The player thus has to juggle the party's hunger for



Game Information
 Publisher Sierra
 Developer in House
 Price \$29.99

ECO QUEST

THE SEARCH FOR CETUS

Realisation slowly dawns. The world is finally waking up to the grim reality that the awful stories peddled for years by those gloom-mongering scientists are actually true. The planet's self-defence mechanisms are set to collapse. There is a hole in the ozone layer the size of

Nebraska and unless we all lay off the tanning beds and stop wearing the pipes of old flippers, we will all choke to death and try to die our's accelerated ways.

But hey! It's not too late. There's still time to save the planet if we can educate ourselves in ways to be more sparing with our natural resources and more careful with our waste.

Unsurprisingly, it's American based Sierra Online Inc. who are among the first software publishers to leap into the ecological bandwagon.

Distilled from a simply "banned" ecological game, however, Eco Quest is the real deal. All the packaging and instructions for the game are printed on recycled stock using vegetable inks and a water-based coating, the game is aimed at the entire family unit, ensuring a 1 game - greater potential for the message. And a share of the proceeds from the sale of each copy of the game will be donated to the Marine Mammal Center, California.

There's even a five 32 page book given away with the game giving hints and advice on easy ways the owner can help save the planet themselves.

Historically, perfectly decent games emitting even the warmest whiff of an educational slant have been leprologged in the charts by their ruthless foe of such stuffy pretensions. So it's a brave move of Sierra's design team to produce a game which hasn't been championed or touted up in any way. This game tells you how to think and what to do, and it's pleased to do so.

Fortunately, the crossings of the line between gentle instruction and subtle preaching are relatively few and far between and perhaps against all the odds, the game still manages to boost many of the positive aspects of "regular" Sierra releases even with a hefty message in tow.



They thought Sierra said anything about being to get you hands dirty. How wrong! Sierra says: being alerted to create it is for the better! Bottomline: it's not a million miles away from the old ordinary life. Add a grin to that smiling location like the old Apartments.

Despite the new angle, Eco Quest follows the format with which any owners of other Sierra products will be instantly familiar. The player guides his alter-ego through the visually and eventually superbly adventures using the mouse to move, click and interact with other objects and characters. There are puzzles to solve and weapons to get into. So Sierra hasn't exactly flipped and gone the standard's young-lens route yet.

A more genuine concern for potential Eco Questers is that the firm do seem to have gone rather overboard with their endeavours to help the game appeal to the younger adventuring audience. That is, they've made the game worryingly easy. But more of that later.



And this is how the trouble begins. After someone like taking objects into the world and a load of things are introduced, adventure begins!



On the face of it, *Eco Quest* and *Willy Beanzish* are very similar games. But soon before the adventure who makes the mistake of buying one after the other, thinking that he's going to end up with adventures which are in any way alike. *Willy Beanzish* is an interactive comic, while *Eco Quest* is a family or

son of a bearded marine biologist who goes, Adam Carver's job, please) is a paint-stard publicity machine for the ecological cause. Not so much educated as brainwashed by his fanatical father (who gets so mad when people drop litter that he "can't see straight"), Adam follows his dad around the world learning all about ecological cause and effect, and collecting a healthy brace of right-thinking international pen pals along the way. But, hey! - it's not easy being the son of a jet-setting genius. While his dad loves him and he regularly receives letters from a cool but French chick called Natalie (see girl who's first question about your own house

business' adventures. For players with an interest in either the ecological theme, or wish to involve their parents/kids in their hobby *Eco Quest* with its easy problems and interesting angle is an ideal buy. But for adventurers who like cute graphics but need something to get their teeth into, *Willy B.* wins.



in whether or not the locals will hunt whales has got to be a dream, right?) Adam finds it hard to make friends. He's never in one place long enough, you see. Even his dad can't spend as much time with Adam as he would like, what with all these meetings and conferences and things.

Adam's new home, in Japan in *The Caribbean* presents the same old problems. The place may look like a Luna Polly brochure but it's actually an ecological nightmare, with dangerous oil spills and lots of dolphin-snatching fishing nets. Adam hasn't made any friends yet and his dad has to go out on business. A high-point in Adam's school-

ing, then, is when his dad suggests he finds and plays with the dolphins which is recovering from being caught in the nets in the intro sequence. To allow a lot of exploration of the flat locations, cleaning up a sewage covered in oil, putting water in the net's cage, testing a can in a recycling bin and so on, Adam decides it's time to play with the dolphins.

And after some baby frolics and a game of frisbee, Adam discovers, to his understandable amusement that the dolphins can speak. And it's here that the adventure really begins. Revealing that his name is Delphinus, the dolphin explains to Adam that the undersea kingdoms that is his home is in terrible danger. Certain, a giant whale who kept order in the kingdoms and washed away all the terrible problems caused by man (quite how is uncertain, but never mind) has gone missing. And without their guardian, the little fishes have become very miserable.

So, Delphinus enlists the help of Adam and the pair set off to explore the oceans and find Cetos.

Most of the game takes place in the underwaters kingdoms, which is essentially reminiscent of *The Little Mermaid*. Casual fish swim about the scenery, singing and dancing and talking in the

There are puzzles to solve and scrapes to get into, no *Diana* haven't exactly flipped and gone the wazoo and mang-bean route yet.

accents. Adam most graciously follows Delphinus' lead, exploring parts of the kingdoms and solving the problems which he comes across.

A pleasing part of *Eco Quest*'s set up is that the puzzles are often visual and pretty kinetic. Big stone pillars need to be revolved and locked into place, objects need to be moved from one place to another and pushed into secret slots revealing passageways and the like (indeed, during certain stages, the game is as absorbing as last month's *Complex*. But it doesn't always work that well.

The basic inconsistency of *Eco Quest* is the mixture of standard fantasy adventure puzzles and "real" ecological principles. Ecology may all be very well, but it doesn't make for particularly addictive adventuring.

By far the most irritating example of the ecological "puzzles" is the fact that Adam must jibe in to collect a respectable number of pointed-pointed pick up rubbish wherever he finds it and deposit it in his recycling sack. This involves clicking the recycling cursor over every single bit of rubbish on the screen, and watching Adam swim over, collect and bag it. The first time Adam finds himself in a garbage-strewn environment, this is all very well, and there is a definite sense of achievement as the score at the top of the screen flicks up and the PC emits a healthy ping when the final bit of trash finds its way into the sack. However, these rubbish scores occur far too fre-



The sea may be very pretty, but Adam is getting "near the end" of his adventure and needs to solve to stop thinking of the scenery and concentrate on the bit he has to do, including the Great White (from *Adam's* TV show)

STEP BY STEP

Phew! Underwater adventuring ain't it's a fancy old business. And for a little lad like Adam, with his head all full of concerns for the wellbeing of the planet, it's easy to understand how even the most basic problem can cause more difficulty than normal.

Which is why, as you'll probably already have gathered, we've decided to let you in on one of the more interesting puzzles that Adam has to deal with. If it all seems a little simple, don't blame us. Just remember that this is an adventure for all the family and fellow us, as we lead you gently by the hand through an early part of the quest.

Just follow on from one number to the next, and you'll have a good idea of the value of mental stress that you'll encounter in the game. Oh, and for those of you easily impressed by the visual nature of Sierra games, we've stuck together one of the less scrolling sections for your delectation.



Now we see it clearly, we can't believe and place in mind of a good-looking up. Adam is to be proud of achievement and help you to almost perhaps try and the same way as of the building. One about that temple on the right?

Thank you! The back of the temple is made when the sun-down outside. Now, what's that on the left wall?



So! This thing about puzzle games is to be so much for us properly ready to there is an option to have it automatically solved. Now, what can we make out of that? Perhaps it will come to later. Maybe some adventure will not require solving to stages of the puzzle...

The moving the picture on the wall is not important. For some puzzles appear in the Eco Quest.

In all corners of three large wall connects the center of the back wall of the Temple.

So, the right side of the temple wall needs to be some strange symbols. Now, what can we make out of that? Perhaps it will come to later. Maybe some adventure will not require solving to stages of the puzzle...



ECO QUEST



PC Version

No surprises here. Plenty of slides, a hard drive taking an absolute ton, beautiful graphics, excellent aquatic music & sound effects and a fair script make this another winner from Sierra.



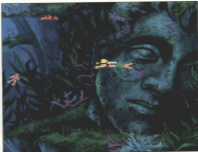
Amiga Version

The big oops of the Sierra conversion machine are slowly fading and the little conveyor belt of the end is bearing ever fresher Amiga versions of PC originals. We're already up to heart of China, and soon the glorious day will come when there is a simultaneous Amiga and PC release. But it's not quite here yet, so Amiga owners will have to wait a month or so. But we're sure it will be lavishly good when it arrives. Watch the Plink.



ST Version

No plans for an ST release as yet, I'm afraid.



gently, and clearing them up to a dump that kept saving the planet isn't easy. It's hard work. And these sections simulate the fact better than most.

It's the straight-forward adventuring puzzles which direct the player's attention away from the occasionally annoying green theme. But even these are pretty bloody easy. There's a section which requires the player to complete a sliding block puzzle before he can progress any further. Unfortunately, as the "young interns" which Sierra are so keen to attract with the game don't find



Adriano the character continues dialogue of Chris. But all is not well.

A memory of happen times. When player with the increasingly odd.



children explained in writing and more, and Adriano would be able to make a map to order to avoid further use about something really.

themselves at the end of their legendarily short attention span before the first real puzzle is over-come, an option to have the problem automatically solved pops up.

Now I'm all for making games as friendly as possible, but solving puzzles for the player is going a touch far, I feel. Indeed, the whole game tends to tell the player in rather too much detail what he is expected to do next. "You'd better get your diving gear" warns Dolphinaus before Adriano first ventures into the sea. Examining a nearby keyboard reveals that it's used to store-diving gear. No-cerely drawing routines here.



Black Eye Centre. (Illustration right) Having rescued up the map while there the entire scene, Adriano then can now complete the quest he has done for the environment! But what about that water, just better than...?

Hardened masters of the genre will find it painfully easy, but that's not really what the game is all about...

Even at the climax of the adventure, the only hostile creature which the player has encountered during the whole game doesn't seem out to be really nasty, but has instead had his brains added by some toxic nuclear waste dumped into the water or something.

So far as the whole ecology bit goes, it remains unconvincing. The need to perform tasks which do not come naturally in order to be rewarded stacks of laboratory tests on animals, to be honest. At times I felt as if I was being made to run around in gaudy-gaudy circles, taking a role in a rather clumsy learning experience which I would rather avoid. While the informative side of the game is fine, all that trash collection got right up my nose.

Mind you, Sierra can honestly claim to be right up there with the greats like Lucasfilm in the scripting stakes. Even at its most trite and senti-

TWILIGHT

EVER A RECORDING MACHINER, THIS IS YOURS WITH AN INSTANT TRANSMISSION ELEMENT. THE CITY OF ZOTON WAS BOMBED BY ONE OF COUNTRY'S INFANTRY UNITS. ALL OF THE CITY'S VULNERABLE SUPPLIES WERE DESTROYED. YOU'VE BEEN IN A CRITICAL SITUATION OF MEDICINE. I'VE LOCATED A SMALL GROUP IN THE CITY OF ZOTON THAT IS WILLING TO GIVE THE DOUGLE OF ZOTON THE MEDICAL SUPPLIES IT'S ASKING YOU TO TRAVEL TO THE CITY OF ZOTON AND ACQUIRE THESE SUPPLIES. AFTER YOU'VE ACCOMPLISHED THAT, JOURNEY TO ZOTON AND DELIVER THE GOODS TO THE VILLAGER LEADER. GOOD LUCK, AND BE CAREFUL. EVER L. SICHING OFF.



It's hard to imagine anything

more bleak and wretched than the aftermath of a nuclear holocaust. Total devastation of entire countries, the extermination of vast chunks of the population, and those who aren't incinerated in the blast are left looking for-

ward to roughly equal doses of starvation and radiation sickness.

But while the very thought of such a future is enough to give normal people nightmares, PC gamers relish the thought of exploring a post-

Apocalyptic wasteland. At least that seems to be the impression Paragon Software has of things, giving IBM gamers the chance everyone has been waiting for to feel what it's like fighting a battle war in a radioactive Hell hole.

Well, it's only a game, and a reasonably innovative one at that. The latest spin on the 'give everybody everything' angle currently in vogue with software developers seems to be that a game won't fit into any particular pigeon hole, and it won't conform to any set style. The idea is that rather than shoe-horning game elements into a particular presentation style, each should be played in whichever mode is most appropriate.

When your party of soldiers (each with abilities distinguishing them from the others) travel a short distance by foot the world is represented in isometric 3D (like *Galaxy*) while short distance vehicular motion is presented in polygons, and everything else, either long-distance travel from one city to another or operations back at base is handled with click-on icons and maps. So, with no particular presentation style as such, it's clear that *Twilight Zone* must rely on the appeal of its premise alone. And the premise is this:

The aftermath of this hypothetical nuclear nuclear war is a dark and depressing one. The whole of Europe lies devastated and in Poland, the center of the ground conflict, scattered troops from all nations wander the ravaged wasteland, fighting for survival. Leaderless and lost, they have forgotten who they are attacking or what they are defending.

However, a handsome figure emerges with a very clear goal. The megamillionaire Baron Casary plans to seize as much of the spoils of war as he possibly can and now, when his targets can offer least resistance, is his ideal time to strike.

Known to have been involved with ultra-fanatic police riot squads and implicated in all sorts of grisly stories of torture and death squads, Casary is using his influence among the Polish military to assemble his Black Legion. By the time the player comes into the game, Casary has already seized

control of northern Poland, and in busy running the place like the rabid fascist fanatic he so clearly is.

The player takes the role of the commander of an elite fighting squad of up to twenty men and women, of whom any four can be mobilized for each particular mission. The early stages of the game concentrate on the gradual assembly of enough military weight to successfully win the final, the showdown with Czerny's Black Legion.

Following a descent of not exactly stunning interactivity, the game leads the player into perhaps its most important stage: the selection of characters and the division of points for each of their available attributes. This is pretty familiar territory for anyone with more than a passing knowledge of the role-playing genre.

While the very thought of such a future is enough to give normal people nightmares, PC owners relish the thought of exploring a post-Apocalyptic wasteland.

The twenty characters are kept 'on file' at headquarters and drafted into play for appropriate missions. The characters can be either male or female, can originate from any of nine different nations (the accompanying blurbs pave the way for this with some nonsense about regiments becoming disbanded and released in a hotpocket of nationalism), and have a set of background skills on top of the regular agility, constitution, charisma, intelligence and education ratings.

The player can then select a pre-war career for each of the characters, giving them the chance to



'learn' skills for themselves. Basically, as a character's career progresses, their initial pool of attributes will be boosted in particular areas depending on what sort of work they do.

Come the outbreak of war, the player must decide which military occupation he wishes each of his twenty prospective soldiers to pursue. The final hurdle to be scaled before the combat can begin (at least in the selection of Secondary Activities. Here, the attributes are tweaked for the last time simulating the sort of casually acquired skills picked up in everyday life.

Despite these routines being handled in as simple-to-use fashion as is possible with easily accessible icons, there's no getting round the fact that all this attribute attribution is a bloody chore. It would seem to be a blessing, therefore that there's an automatic set-up option enabling the player to construct an entire squad at a stroke. And a very appealing option it is too.

Players should beware of too casual a use of the random set-up feature, though, since vital skills may be missing from the computer-assigned players. The first mission, for example, involves having to speak to a contact in Poland, and my computer-assigned team was game-endingly bereft of anyone who could speak the language. A pre-mission briefing will hint at the requirements for each coming mission, so these frustrations can be generally avoided.

The best compromise is a half-way house of random selection and human approval, with the player being able to reject any dullards while retaining the ability to simply mag-pick a ready-made team of top combat heroes.

Unusually compared to most of the military strategy games you'll have played, *Twilight 2000* doesn't quite afford the player the luxury of an unlimited range of equipment with which to kit out his team. While the stores of the PQ are sufficiently stocked with every possible make and style of firearm and explosive, the team has been left woefully lacking in the transport stakes, resulting in the initial stages of the game being played on foot.

Which is a good job, really, since this keeps the polygons at bay for a while, reducing the risk of swamping the player with too much going on at once. Indeed, even when the player has had a chance to come to terms with all of the game's interface methods, the change from 2D to 3D is so

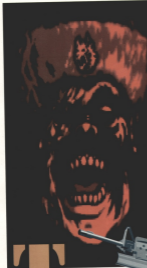


Planes of Freedom, out next month on the PC and already a won on other formats, is about as close a game promise to *Twilight 2000* as you can get. Rather than taking place in the aftermath of a nuclear war, however, *Attelwinder II* tells the tale of the battle between the Saksan empire and the Free Earth Federation or something.

Anyway, the role playing elements are there, with your control character having a



range of abilities and statistics factors to take into account during each encounter. The two points to note are that there's no isometric display in *Attelwinder*, and the 3D is slightly better in *Twilight 2000*. For players keen to absorb the maximum realism, *Twilight* is by far the better deal, but it could be argued that *Planes of Freedom* offers a more entertaining game all round.



• **Fog** ...In the stores, in the offices... The rather generous representation of maximum distance gives a false impression of the equipment available in the team. The parking spaces are all empty, and there aren't any more stores in sight.

• **Ministry Buildings** tend to have their doors on the wrong side, in order to gain access, its best to turn them off, reveal up a wireframe "dead" objects. The early enemy attacks that which can immediately be killed with the use of the range memory calculator, generally appeared as reward for successfully completed missions.



here's a lot of stats in Twilight 2000. The Finnish Baron Czerny may well laugh, but he doesn't know that the team lined up for this campaign has a base hit point score of twenty and are fully fitted in Italian. He has



metric to play view maps is a bit much to take in all in one go.

The most central of all screens is the player's office. It's from here that all the other game areas can be accessed. A computer on the desk will yield information as to how the battle against Quarry's forces is going, with possession of cities indicated and a bunch of bar graphs, one of which is the morale graph, indicating how happy the people of Poland are now that their city is red and full of loot. The radio is your link to your intelligence officer, and the filing cabinet is where all the files of your available troops can be found, while the map gives an overview of the whereabouts of all troops currently in the game.

Unfortunately the overall conclusion is that it doesn't gel together as well as it might.

The mission begins with relatively tight briefs (30-45) which gradually become more vague as time goes on. The first mission, a double, is to travel to a place called Marwin, find some urgently needed medical supplies and then deliver them to the local honcho in another town. If successfully completed, this mission will yield a personal carrier which will help the team move around at a better lick.

Although basic, this first outing helps the player come to grips with the control interface well enough, ensuring that he'll encounter, although at a pretty basic level, most of the types of situations his team will have to deal with later in the game.

As the game goes on, however, the details available from headquarters include nothing general advice like "search the area" and "investigate

spots of trouble", encouraging the player to see what's going on for himself.

During the missions the characters can be instructed to charge, flit, fight and talk with other characters in the game. However, apart from object handling, it's not possible to treat the characters as individuals. It seems that all the abilities and skills are simply pooled into an average overall ability in all areas. The result is that the death of a character affects the ability of the team, but doesn't really feel as if it matters that much. Most role-playing games on the market today allow a team to be split and the individual members to move around and carry out sub-missions for themselves. Not here.

PC Version

PC Owners are about as responsive an audience as is possible for Twilight 2000. They haven't, as yet, been spoiled by arcade action and if

the figures put around by marketing companies are to be believed) are of an appropriate age range to deal with the glib plot and mass of numbers. Whatever, it's the PC that the game was developed on, comes on five disks and works about as well as any other.

Amiga Version

Amiga owners can look forward to a version of Twilight 2000 during the summer, and aside from it maybe coming on even more disks, it'll be exactly the same.

ST Version

The ST version, as we understand it, is still a long way off completion, and we'll be keeping readers abreast of its progress as details become available.



Play Twilight without a vehicle is a depressing affair. Thankfully, the reason for occupying the first mission exclusively is an unusual personal twist, allowing the player access to all screens of Twilight from here.

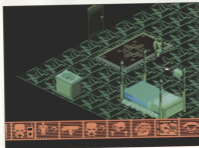
Adhere. The LCD Mapper is either - the player spends it just from time.

When you're back at these offices, Apartment that these beautiful screens, but your vehicle is a mess. For in a ready amount

Many of today's top polygon programmers would be wise to examine Papyrus's polygon routines, however. This section of the game is pretty excellent, and could well have made a stand alone product of its own. It's in the 3D maps that Twilight 2000 begins to shape up and look like it has some balls.

However, just when the player is faking himself thoroughly absorbed in a problem, Twilight soon has the habit of bringing him back down to earth with a bump, and this is nearly always a result of the game's role-playing origins or slightly unidually design quirks. The 3D narrative view, in which the most interesting parts of the game are played (such as conversing with other characters and handling the objects), is the least convincing of the lot. For a start, the team of four soldiers is represented by a solitary figure who moves in ugly jerks across a bare-bones landscape. The screens update in chunky flicks only when the player actually moves off an edge, making it impossible, in effect, to see where he's going.

Movement is frequently prohibited while on the map screen because, the player is informed, there





Game Platform: Color
 Publisher: Gameloft
 Developer: The Way Factory
 Price: \$29.99

HARLEQUIN



...ever death and destruction-orientated the major-
 ...ity of today's arcade-based software may have become, it's nice to see that it's still possible to
 base exhilarating games around non-violent, almost girly themes. Take the Harlequin, for
 example. Anybody who covers their face in make-up and wears a frilly pyjama suit not unlike

Andy Panda's would hardly sound like the ideal
 hero for a bello-and-whinno platform-concoquanga.
 But here he is, and a surprisingly hard one at that.
 In Gameloft's latest arcade effort - and undoubt-
 edly their most impressive to date - the diamond-
 dust central character comes across as one of the
 most ethereal game stars since the Prince of Persia
 or the great Sonic himself.

In a nutshell, what we're dealing with here is a
 cross between RoboCop and Gods. Harlequin

makes very little effort to disguise the fact that
 these two platform favorites have obviously been
 important influences, but the sheer excellence
 with which it manages to pull off a successful com-
 bining of the two game styles makes this pretty
 much forgettable.

If, after looking at the screenshots here, the play-
 er still has any doubts about the "Watch With
 Mother" look and feel of Harlequin's need only read
 the scenario to have any such doubts extinguished
 utterly. Apparently the Harlequin has returned
 home from the shops, perhaps? Why are such
 important details always left over to find his land
 in a state of despair (sic). It may sound slightly
 dodgy, but the idea is that Harlequin actually lives
 inside a giant clock runs palace called Chimera.
 Now the giant train does are hamed and a sign
 on the giant clock reads "Out of order due to
 broken heart." So, to restore peace and harmony to
 the land, Harlequin's got to search Chimera's
 giant lands - all 31 of them - and recover the lost
 pieces of said broken heart which have been scat-
 tered to the four winds.

Okay, okay, so it's not exactly The Grapes of
 Wrath - but then John Strickland couldn't write a
 decent scolding routine, so it all sort of levels out
 in the end. If your knowledge of Harlequin ends
 with the Raggy team and the rather nice Terry's
 chocolate assortment (previously Nurpletastic),



you won't know that Harlequin are in fact more than just name-droppy silly boys in baggy trousers and a Dick Turpin hat. In fact they are endowed with bizarre magical powers, which accounts for the game's mythical, almost surreal graphical style.

Harlequin's progress around the Chimerica world is charted by a giant map of the game area which appears before each level with helpful "YOU ARE HERE" arrows. Generally the route taken seems to be specified by the program, with one level leading automatically to the next, but more thorough players will find that by experimenting with switches and the like, portals can be opened to alternative levels, allowing the player to go through the game via a number of different routes. Whatever the deal, the objective for each individual level remains the same throughout - get to the exit.

It is of course a far trickier task than that rather putrid, vomiting-up may suggest - the very nature of the huge, right-way scrolling levels makes them difficult to negotiate. It's not that the levels and platforms have been designed in a particularly nasty fashion - well, they have, but that's not really the point - it's the landscape's sprawling, open-plan style - it's RoboCod that creates the main challenge. It's easy enough just to get lost, as there's no definite route to follow, with any number of ways to get from A to B. It's a little daunting at first, in the point of installing a sense of aggression and being perpetually lost, but things soon

Harlequin's diamond-cited central character comes across as one of the most athletic game stars since the Prince of Persia or the great Sonic himself.

set themselves out as soon as the player orientates himself and gets a feel for where things are. Actually, this sprawling level design isn't entirely my bag as I'm a lay gamer/player and can't stand having to find my own way through big landscapes - I much prefer to have a few helpful arrows dotted around here and there to point me at least once or less in the right direction.

I was surprised, therefore, to find that I was nowhere near as frustrated or put off by Harlequin as my first few minutes of watching someone else play it suggested I might be. Though there are plenty of times when there doesn't seem to be a way forward or you're just plain lost, the game always manages to compel the player to find the solution. It's mostly due to the fact that, on a basic arcade level, the game never lets up. Wherever Harlequin may be, it's a good bet that some trap or energy-sapping mine will be after him. It may be something as simple as a dropping top or elaborate as a giant flying snake, but there are virtually no safe havens within the game, and as a result, virtually no time to sit still.

Though Harlequin is first and foremost a platform game, it does boast arcade adventure elements. The most important one is the important part that switches play in the game - every level has a few dotted around the landscape, and they perform different tasks when thrown. A switch may unlock a door or exit, put a platform in or

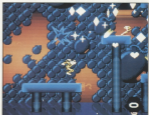


Comparing Harlequin to any one game directly is not an easy task - primarily because it's more like a mish-mash of elements from many other platform products. The best description

is a cross between *RoboCod* and *Gods*. Initially it seems more like *RoboCod* than anything else, but this just proves that first impressions can be deceiving, as the only real similarity is the huge high-speed right-way scrolling play areas. Harlequin has far more sophisticated character control, and this combined with the arcade adventure aspects makes it a lot like *Gods* in that respect. At a push, I'd say that Harlequin's greater variety makes it slightly more rewarding than *RoboCod*, even though a lot more effort is required to get into the game. So far as *Gods* is concerned, that effort is no match for the speed of Harlequin, although that game's more involved object handling and intelligent items make it a better bet for gamers in search of a deeper challenge.



The Left: Being Harlequin shows that to run through with the best of them is to be frustrated. The Right: Harlequin shows Harlequin in play the right without loss of strength. (Left) Being Harlequin shows that to run through with the best of them is to be frustrated. (Right) Harlequin shows Harlequin in play the right without loss of strength.





THE ICEMAN PUZZLE Everything slots into place here, with Harlequin leaping around on the giant figure pieces and doing battle with a crowd army of enemies, such as big pyramids with eyes, strange symbols and... oh, just lots of eyes.



THE LEARNING CURVE Jumping into the children's programme from *Five Wonders!* made Harlequin look, to a general world of lolly heads, clown faces, spotted smiling blocks... and so on and so forth. The enemies are lolly heads, but they pack just as much of a punch as any where else... look out for the Pencil, who more than lives up to its name.



THE SCARE BIRD Explosive action all the way as giant birds drop from the sky, kick away for a few seconds and then explode, sending *with-a-woop* stopped out in all directions. Naturally this makes things very tricky for poor old Harlequin, but thankfully he can defuse the trouble safely by shooting them before they explode.



THE LOCAL CHAIRMAN Much in the Harlequin vein, with much enemies, flying guitars, being nearly out of season at other medical centres.



SPICY BEANS Another medical centre, this time set in a cage of sweet meals. Harlequin jumps from side to side (the bars themselves are only background), leaping to a huge rotating space harrier submachine-guns firing. Its huge enemies must be blasted out one at a time.



THREAT OF THE MACHINES All mechanical bits and bobs here... there are so many conveyor belts you'll be happy for thinking you'd stumbled into the set of the *Generation Game*.

Jumping against the direction of a conveyor belt not only slows Harlequin down, but also partially negates his jumping abilities. Running with the belt, however, has the opposite effect, speeding him up and allowing for more jumps.

Harlequin chooses to work his way around Chimeria, he's got so option but to search every last inch of the place if he's to stand any chance of recovering the four pieces of Broken Heart. So, here's a helping hand in the form of a comprehensive guide to each of the game's 23 epic levels...



CLOCKWORKS Once inside Chimeria's work, legs things get altogether more serious, with long legs feature the stage-run problems, leaping floors and rotating platforms of varying size play.



A WALK ACROSS THE ROOFTOPS In a level that looks heavenly like the opening credits for *Coronation Street*, the main feature on the path is of course in this street of famous old eyes.



CRITTY WORLD is a temple to street adventure at the intricately nice nature of Japanese platform games. Notice that every single, even the car and the train itself has a face (as old *Mario* trademark).



BEATING THE DRUM (bookworm!) The *Impish* one made up of the platform, and their last nine naturally make excellent bonus surfaces. Smaller ones fall from above and roll towards you later.



WORLD OF GARDEN For a level, any level... if you give this one you're sure to get a new deal (yep!), the card leaves to get onto the landscape, but watch out for the vast *slightly* water. It's *borderline* death.



NORTHERN Harlequin has a very tricky section to undertake (the *Impish* here, in this world's forest paths, where the platforms are made of coffee and the most interesting feature is a giant *borderline* up with *slightly* wings, some that Harlequin can leap onto.



WORLD OF SEVEN (the seven system), most of the problems are of an aquatic nature. Dropping pipes up energy, and about Harlequin fall into the *slightly* water. It's *borderline* death.

UP/THE DREAM HILL Harlequin becomes a sea of the desert for this level, leaping across sand dunes and giant *borderline*. A *borderline* *borderline* *borderline* to speed the player, making movement very tricky.



WATER IT UP Just like *Chris* level, it's time to get in all the *slightly* water. *Water* is a major *borderline* on this level and Harlequin is basically *borderline* where he can get hold of some fish pieces for the vital *borderline* travelling.



A FLIGHT OF FANCY A pleasant aerial interlude here, with Mariojet sailing right-to-left through the multi-colored clouds in a simplified Dream-like version of an 8-Type style shoot-'em-up. Just keep flying, heroically. It also leads to that the backgrounds and sprites change each time you play, resulting from updates and tweaks to the original Gamecube discs.



THE GLASS TOWER The quest begins here, with Olimar's mighty main gate barred shut. There's a switch somewhere about that will open the door and allow Mariojet inside, but getting to it involves making it to the top of the city structure while avoiding the rainclouds of each tower-tile as a ramped stone block and those grotesque leaping moats. Not nice.



Open this before you even move when the level begins - there's a stack of invisible levers for the taking.



THE JACKERS The clock is so loud! In this level, Mariojet comes up against everything Hammer & Bully can throw at him. Combat jets, cannons, catapults, air-to-air missiles. Ignore what your subconscious tells you to get up with the bot.



The control plan and various built-in hints provide excellent opportunities to gain altitude.



SWIMMY ABOVE Even in the Kingdom of the Land, things can melt or float from time to time. The Blue Swimmer is a duck-boat with that wobble, so steer clear. Glorbs, jelly and giant mice provide the platform for Mariojet to jump about in.

(Bonus) **TYPE WOMEN LAND** is really nice. The entire landscape is made up of 7-tile, the vast majority of which allow walking left-right. There's no enemies, however, save in the larger screen, and Mariojet can jump "into" any of the three different platforms they inhabit. Nice.



(Bonus) **DUCK IT AND SEE**: Trapped inside a Sky Bubble, Mariojet is whisked through a maze of floating platforms above clouds. Beware!



(Bonus) **WELLSHOPOPPIN'**: After you've been in Starman, where can you go but down? No, it's the domain of Ladder Blocks!



(Bonus) **BRAY & FALL**: It's also in Wonderland territory, with all your homophonic characters, along with deadly cuts of "Duke the" Knight and other Donkey-Kong friends.





Amiga Version

One of the most colourful games in yanks, Harlequin can't fail to strike graphically, and the speed at which the whole thing jugs along is very impressive. Besides, it's a great fun, with a bagful of comical effects throughout the game and a delightful title theme. There are a host of nice touches, most centred around the Harlequin himself (watch out for him painting for hours if you push him too fast), and on the whole, it's top stuff.



SEGA Version

I know what you're thinking, will it be as good as my Amiga? Well, more or less, yes. Like the Amiga, SEGA owners will have to make do with less colourful backdrops, but aside from that and a slightly smaller screen display, the graphics will be identical and the sound promises to be about spot-on too. Not necessary!



PC Version

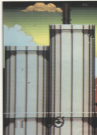
Happy PC guys, but I don't have no plans to release Harlequin for your machines. But if the game's a stunner in the charts, you never know...



Harlequin faces his Perils, like the Strider's about face, gives some of the game's more rewarding moments as Harlequin cruises across the screen with all the grace of a circus artist. It's as difficult as it looks, and with a multitude of traps (designed to force the player's grip of one thing, falling off is an all-around prospect). And, of course, the trap can be a very long one. Best, then, to be armed with an antidote or power booster (after consuming such a dangerous treat).

exp energy), a space hopper for super bounce power, little firework rockets that fly in circles around the player and act as a shield and, perhaps most exotic of all, a magic thing that turns Harlequin into a diamond-patterned AngelFish when he lands in water. Without one, the player drowns immediately and that's the end of that, but with the fishy power, there are whole underwater caves, much like Mario's, waiting to be explored.

Undoubtedly one of Harlequin's most pleasing features is the central character's remarkable flexibility and acrobatic ability. He runs and jumps like an everyday game goner, but he also has the ability to crawl through narrow tunnels, slide down diagonal platforms à la Strider and using Terra-Style from the large Perilsium-like devices that are



diagonal would probably have resulted in the player making fewer aggressive mistakes.

Enemies come in all shapes and sizes - the specific type varies on the level, but there are some generic types that crop up throughout the game in different graphic guises. Harlequin's only defence against these big bad boys is a stream of beams, which travel in a short downwards arc like the barbells in Ghoul's Ghosts. Initially they're pretty weak, but a power-up which turns them from pink to deep red increases both their range and hit power. Conceptually it sounds a

countermeasure inside Chimera's giant workings. The effect, especially to the casual observer, is very much in the same high-spirited vein of the best adventure vein as games like Strider and the aforementioned Prince of Persia, joystick control is super-sensitive and thoughtful, with the player able to change Harlequin's direction simply by mid-jump and fire at any time, regardless of his position. Actually, it's arguable that Harlequin is a little too controllable, as it's easy to oversteer, even though there's no inertia to speak of - something just ever-so-slightly more

Harlequin's panoramic, open-plan nature may be somewhat off-putting for gamers who are used to playing in a more claustrophobic, controlled environment, but ultimately what it adds up to is all the more challenge - if you're up to it.

action or otherwise after the landscape settles. The situation of these switches often forces the player to work his way all the way around the level rather than just heading straight for the exit. I'm a little unsure, though, as to how well these switches work. Often the application of a switch is obvious - you hit it and a platform starts moving, for example. In other situations, however, there's no indication of what happens when a switch is thrown because whatever the switch has affected may be in a completely different part of the level. Obviously there wouldn't be much of a point having locked doors if the switch that unlocks them is right next to them, but it can get a tad annoying when you hit a switch and then have absolutely no idea what it is you've done. Some kind of visual or audio cue would have been helpful, without giving the game away entirely. Oh well, you can't have everything - although it'd be nice.

In addition to switches, the Harlequin world is densely littered with all manner of goodies, the vast majority of which come hidden in jank-in-the-boxes waiting for the player to open. The pantries available range from energy-giving sweets and vials to more useful items like an antihelix, which allows Harlequin's descent when falling and allows him to drift downwards like a parachutist (useful when high up, as long drops

HOP, SKIP AND JUMP!

Phew! This Harlequin chappy sure is an athletic fellow. Momentum plays an important part in his movement, so taking a long run-up allows him to leap a bit further than he would be able to from a standing start. Like Spider, he can slide down diagonal surfaces (even support this one!) like telegraph lines and lightpoles, and hang from ceilings, although climbing is a bit much to ask. As the player progresses, he'll find that many aspects of the landscape are just ripe for Harlequin to make athletic use of in one way or another - two of which are shown below. But beware - where something useful is going on, it's a good bet that something equally nasty is taking place nearby, threatening progress.



Remember, you can slide over the horizontal walls around the vertical ones across the landscape. The only restriction is the number of windows that you break along the way. Well, that's true, but you can't break them on the floor beneath along



Remember, you can jump to the top of screens of the ceiling, and then use it as a springboard to get to the top of the screen. Harlequin can't jump up to high screens. Instead, you'll jump to the floor to prepare for a screen that's on top of another.



Harlequin's "butterfly effect" of the objects in a television screen. They can cause them to be exactly as you like. These objects can be used to create a scene that is exactly as you like. In other words, they can be used to create a scene that is exactly as you like. In other words, they can be used to create a scene that is exactly as you like.

bit stage if for one has certain reservations about a game where your primary weapons is not a light sabre or a machine gun but a pink heart, but if you think that out of your mind the weapon-fitting side of things can be quite frenetic and pleasing. It's a combination of the fact that the player can shoot at all times, regardless of what else he may be doing, and the rapid rate of fire.

As a proto-technical display, Harlequin is at its best in situations when there's a lot going on. Generally, when things happen, they do so in an elaborate fashion. Baddies explode into lots of little bits, and the jabs in the boxes open amidst a shower of stars and sprangly things. It gives the impression of there being lots of action and things being very busy, even when in real terms there may not be much happening. It also makes Harlequin feel very much like a console game - there are times when it looks quite MegaDrivey, in fact - and that atmosphere is backed up by an impressive array of sound effects, which range from the mawkish (like the explosions) to the just plain silly, like the excited "whooos!" that Harlequin utters whenever he slides down a diagonal platform. Though there's no in-game music and some of the effects have a primitive 16-bit sound to them (which I actually quite like), Harlequin is as much an assault on the ears as it is on the optic nerves.

Despite the fact that at first glance it may look like a straight RobotCop rip-off, Harlequin is actually a surprisingly fresh and original game - not really when viewed in a broad, general sense, as the major aspects like objectives and character control are nothing new, but when looked at in the sum of its individual parts.

It's the multitude of smaller ideas and innovative touches, like the space-hoppers and fish bits and jumping "into" the television screen to take part in the programmes they're broadcasting that make the difference and lift Harlequin out of the ordinary.

Unlike something like Gods, Harlequin doesn't hit the player too hard with mobile enemies - with the exception of a few levels, alien attacks are sporadic, and they tend to come on singularly rather than in big waves of six or eight at a time. As such, the game's difficulty can be attributed much more to the size and design of the levels themselves. The panoramic, open-plan nature may be somewhat off-putting for gamers who are used to playing in a more claustrophobic, controlled environment, but ultimately what it adds up to is all the more challenge - if you're up to it.

So then, is it any good or what? After all the pontificating, the simple answer is a definite yes. Harlequin impresses both technically and in gameplay terms, and stimulates the intellect and adrenal glands in equal amounts. It's far from perfect, and I don't think there'll be anyone who doesn't find something that gets on their tits in one way or another, but the game doesn't make any major mistakes, and for the most part everything it tries to do, it does spot on target. Programmers The Warp Factory get an extra shiny star in their margin for making such a good job out of such solidly subject matter, and anyone who appreciates the married or divorcee art for a special treat here. An acquired taste to be sure - but one you'll do well to acquire.

■ Gary White



R A T I N G S



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value for
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and
easy to
play

900

English Harlequin's winning edge. Its thoroughly easy to get into, the first few screens presented no more of a challenge than the others - which is

exactly what you'd expect from a

game that's designed to be fun.

It's true Harlequin is a very old

game, and you can see the

limitations of its age in some

of the levels, but overall, it's

still a very good game. It's

easy to play, and it's fun to

play. It's a very good game.

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Mild Fantasy Violence
Some Alcohol, Drug, and Tobacco Use
Some Language
Some Mild Blood



Now correct me if I'm wrong, but back in 1985 I seems to remember reading about a very similar game to Faceball 2000 called *MYM: Maze on the Atari ST*. In that aging title the player had to roam around a series of 3D mazes, rapping the *Pas Min* like ghosts while avoiding their

return fire. Not exactly Earth-shattering stuff, but the big deal was that up to fifteen other ST owners could link up via the MIDI port (hence the name - golden!) and battle each other. Not that anyone ever did. Would you consider carrying your ST round to your mate's house on a regular basis? Not the most appealing thought in the world, is it?

Faceball 2000 is much the same, but thanks to the portable nature of the 'Boy, it's a more realistic concept. It's the first game in 3D that I've ever seen on the Gameboy, and it's pretty good though basic stuff (mazes are the least & least primers of the 3D-programming world). Speedwise it's okay, if not particularly smooth, loading all for the future appearance of a complex flight sim.

The players rap to four, with suitable contextual control feedback, innershooting spheres, as they zap computer-controlled henchies and - both, both - each other in a range of tortuous labyrinth. There are two playing styles, *Cybercops* (where players simply try to escape onto the next maze level) and *Arms* (a sort of futuristic tag, where players compete to be the first to get ten 'tags' by shooting the others).

As the players progress, the mazes get more complex and the going gets tougher, with harder henchies, unshakable doors, teleporters and what have you making an appearance. Fortunately the player can collect power-ups by shooting pods which makes life easier - but only a little, really.



KID ICARUS of Myths And Monsters



PRICE
£24.99
(suggested)



Age 10+
Mild Fantasy Violence
Some Alcohol, Drug, and Tobacco Use
Some Language
Some Mild Blood

You know, you could get a computer to write the scenarios for these platform/shooty games. *Kid Icarus*'s is somewhat more flowery than most, but suffice to say it's got usual low-wattage battling-the-sunguard-evil-borders-that-have-laid-waste-to-his-world.

But while *Kid Icarus* is distinctly lacking in the plot department, there are some novel gameplay touches that make this just a little more than a bog-standard entry in the Gameboy software library. For a start each of the sixteen levels is huge and just exploring all the nooks and crannies provides lots of fun and more than a few surprises. This feeling of scale is accentuated by the fact the the scroll wraps round, so that if you keep going left you find yourself back where you started.

Beating the bad guys reveals a heart - the tougher the enemy the bigger the heart. These can be collected and used to buy equipment - such as lanterns to smash your way into secret levels, traps of the level, and so on - in the shop rooms that turn up from time to time. Other rooms are waiting to be discovered where you may find bonus items, get help from friends, rejuvenate your health bar or, if you're unlucky, get strangled by vampire bats.

Every fourth level you have to defeat a super-baddy guarding one of three magical weapons to help you in your quest. And you'll need all of them before you can defeat the *Queen* leader at the end of the game.

by David Spinks



Special thanks to MadMania Games (001 889 8472) for the loan of three review cartridges.

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Some Alcohol, Drug, and Tobacco Use
Some Language
Some Mild Blood

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The Number

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Nobody, but instead like Somebody, Happeningville, as they become the recipient of not only this glamorous and exciting television, but this even more exciting and glamorous CDTV thing from Commodore.

A Bit About The Telly

This is what it knows as a 499 TV and it's made by Philips. It's 16cm high and it's got a screen that is back enabling not only videos and satellite dishes to be plugged into it, but consoles and computers too. It gives wonderful reception and would take pride of place in any bedroom, lounge.

A Bit About The CDTV

This is what is known as a CDTV, which stands for Commodore Dynamic Total Vision. You'll have already read a great deal about it, so we won't go over old ground. In a nutshell, the deal is this: CDTV has two really good things to it. One is a compact disc player and the other is an Amiga. When these two things are put together you get video, sound and great Amiga games, all combined in a sleek and stylish black box. Software companies from around the world are developing all manner of great programs to run on the system.

And you thought you'd seen the best of it, but now! Emerging like some firestorm comes from another dimension comes the scorching of the publishing world, the ACE Interactive Phone Line. But you'll be forgiven if you failed to recognize your old ally there, because it's had a complete overhaul.

Yes, for its all-new revamped look, the ACE Interactive Phone Line has shed its slightly stuffy image for a more instantly gratifying feel. And to celebrate the return of the line which will be appearing in one guise or another on a page very near here from now on, we're kicking the service off by giving ACE readers the chance to enter - in the words of Les Dennis - a truly formidable competition.

In fact, the lucky winner of this particular contest will no longer find themselves being Mr

Take the paper and unfold it. Read it. Go to the bar and show the paper to the bartender. Read the paper book. Take the letter and read it. Go to the smoking room and speak to Tom about Tom. Go to the desk and speak to Suzanne about Suzanne. Go to Daphne's cabin and open the door. Speak to Julio about Julio.

Go to Fabiani's cabin and pull the suitcase on the left. Open it. Go to the dining room and speak to Fabiani about Fabiani. Go to the bar and speak to Suzanne about Julio. Go to the smoking room and take the paper. Go to Tom's cabin and speak about Suzanne and about Fabiani's suitcase. Go to Julio's cabin and speak to Julio about the friendship between Suzanne and Fabiani.

Go to the dining room and speak about Suzanne's invitation. Go to Raoul's cabin and take the small key. Go into Karaboudjan's office and unlock the writing desk. Examine the jewel box and its clasp/hatting. Take the thank-you letter. Go to the dining room and open the drawer. Examine drawer and take the invitation cards.

Go to the deck (on the right) to observe Tom and Rebecca. Go to the laundry room and examine the laundry basket. Examine the rack-lane and the photo. Go in front of



the mermaid and speak to Dick about Dick. Go to the smoking room and speak to Tom about Agnes. Go to see Fabiani in his room - knock before entering. Speak to him about the thank-you



CRUISE FOR A CORPSE

Misty business, murder. And it's an even mistier one to solve. So thank US GOLD for a mighty complete solution for those whose deductive powers are completely unneeded!

letter.

Go to Julie's cabin and speak to her about the bell tower. Go to Suzanne's cabin and open the left wardrobe. Search the cosmetic case and take the prescription. Go to the bar and take the glass and the bottle. Go to the upper deck and speak to Suzanne. Give her a drink. Speak to her about the prescription. Go to Hector's room and speak to him about Agnes' illness and her stay with Niklos.

Go to the smoking room and speak to Tom about the death of Agnes and her will. Go to the deck and look through the parthuis of Rebecca's cabin. Go to Suzanne's room and open the right-hand cupboard. Search the pile of laundry and take the envelope. Go to Fabiani's room (joke) on the deck and open the suitcase and take the watch. Speak to Julio about the watch.

Go to the upper deck and speak to Rose about Rose. Go to

Rebecca's room and speak to her about Rebecca. Go to Daphne's room and speak to her about Rose. Rose go to the bar and speak to Suzanne about Rose. Go to the dining room and speak to Fabiani about Rose's sadness and about Raphael Lambert. Go to Niklos' office and speak to Hector about everything. Speak to him about Mercedes, mother of Daphne. Speak to Julio about the death of Niklos. Speak to Fabiani about the relationship between Daphne and Rebecca and Rebecca's character. Speak to Hector about Daphne's mother.

Go to the upper deck and search Rose's bag. Talk to Rose about the gun advertisement. Go to Logan's room and open the wardrobe. Search the pile of clothes and take the letter. Go to the upper deck and throw the letter. Go to the laundry room and examine the pot/pan. Go to Suzanne's room and examine the music box. Insert the key, stop the



bell-ringer and turn the key. Take the letter.

Go to the bar and take Daphne's bag. Go to Daphne's room and talk to her about Agnes' will. Go round the deck and talk to Rebecca, Daphne, Rose and Fabiani. Go to the bar or on the deck and speak to Suzanne about the relationship between Tom and Rebecca. Go in front of the mermaid and speak to Dick about the relationship between Tom and Rebecca and about the plot. Go to Rose's room and take the envelope on the ground.

Go to Hector's room and do not speak to Dick. Go to the kitchen and take the tin opener. Operate the hatch/trapdoor. Take the crowbar and use it on the plank. Take the spool of film. Use the crowbar on one of the cables. Take the tin and use the opener on it. Go to the engine room and take the screwdriver. Go to the smoking room and get out the projector. Put the reel of film on the projector and use the screwdriver on the screw. Operate the switch. Go out towards the mermaid. Go and see Suzanne. Go to Van Miller's room and find the technical manual. Open it and look at the inscription ("INCM"). Take the book and go to the study.

Examine the boxes and put them in order so that they read INCM. Enter the secret passage and fight or throw the soap that you find in the toilets on the right. Search the Maltese and take the puppet. Go to the smoking room and show the puppet to Daphne. Point out the guilty party. Congratulations! You solved the crime!



FIRST SAMURAI

Ah so! This game is country robbery. In fact, I rub it to death! But it is really difficult. To keep the honorable warriors out in game land, here is a breakdown and maps of rebels from far.

KEY

B	Bell	P?	Recharge pot
BB	Recurring bell	W	Wizard hint pot
X	Potion	T	Transporter
L	Lamp	+	Destroyable piece of background
S1	Log		
S2	Bucket		
S3	Rock		
S4	Electric spark		
EOL	End of level		

(Special thanks to John Fieldy and all at Vivid Image Design for all their help.)



snip riPS



ROBOCOP

Want to know how to find the two secret levels in this arc platform (see? It's easy, thanks to Marty's intel from Candyfart) in *RoboCop*? Run right (taking care to jump over the first two doors) until you reach the last tower. Climb it, then go left so that you end up on the roof. Keep going left and you should find yourself walking behind the wall of the next tower. Hey presto! You're in!

But, who Marty, who is Katie???



BART SIMPSON VERSUS THE SPACE MUTANTS

Don't have a cow, man! *Cosmo's The Simpsons* team is NOT easy, so thank the sweet Lord for Paul Murphy from Mullingar in Ireland for this short 'n' sweet RTB's cheat to get infinite lives. Simply type in **OWABLING** on the title screen and unlimited Bart's are yours. If that isn't a good tip I'll eat my shorts.

RAILROAD TYCOON

3d Meter's classic has just been converted across to the Amiga and Atari ST, so what

better time to tell that you can increase your in-game cash supplies by pressing down **SHIFT** and **4** at the same time. Thanks to Rishi Patel from Edmonton for that. He also warns that *oversat* of this snaky cheat can result in the game crashing - you have been warned.



PLAYER MANAGER

To get scores of money in Ace's dreamy footy management game, remove 8 or 9 players and after two or three defeats you'll receive lucrative sponsorship. You can then bring the players back in again.

ANOTHER WORLD

This stunning 3D arcade adventure deserves all the success



It's getting - It's a brilliant game. Max Rarowen from St Austell, Cornwall, has been beavering away at the game and has kindly provided the following pass codes to the game's various stages: **EDD**; **NEC**; **PLS**; **LINC**; **CCAL**; **EDL**; **NOU**; **FLAR**; **ICAH**; **LALD**; **LPER**.

LOTUS TURBO CHALLENGE 2

Try typing **DUX** as the password to enter a whacky dash shooting game. Oh, those guys! Even handier, try **DESIDR** to advance through the stages regardless of whether you win or not, or **TURPENTINE** to stop the clock. Thanks to David Massey of Tainin in Cheadle!





OH NO! MORE LEMMINGS

Oh no indeed. Only a couple of days after the all-new adventures of the green-haired scamps hit the shelves, we received the complete codes for all 100 levels from Robert Phelps of Stroud in Gloucester. For to go, Phelps dude! Most bodacious quick work! For your troubles you'll be receiving FWD - yes, FWD - brand-spanking new pieces of software for your computer any day now.



TAKE LEVELS

- 2 BHTDAGCAD
- 3 BHTDAGCADM
- 4 PTDGIMDAG
- 5 TOLGCHWAG
- 6 DUCHRTGJ
- 7 LCALLYDHRG
- 8 CMTTDLMD
- 9 CAPULDLAQ
- 10 BRUOLCLAK
- 11 URULCLRLH
- 12 RULCLMLAQ
- 13 UDLGAWHAI
- 14 DUCHWAGAG
- 15 LCALLYDHPAD
- 16 CMLWHLQAP
- 17 CMTTFLBRL
- 18 KHTTFLCBL
- 19 LPTFLCBLR
- 20 RPTFLCBLR

CRAZY LEVELS

- 2 FLCHUTGEL
- 3 HCALLYTHFA
- 4 CKLTGMBP
- 5 CCHULFLBH
- 6 HSLULCBLD
- 7 LRUULCLBL
- 8 RULGOLMBG
- 9 VTHCARMEN
- 10 FLCHWJGB
- 11 HCRANUPFE
- 12 BMTULGDR
- 13 CDRITDDBP
- 14 RMTPLGCCI
- 15 LRUULCBLD
- 16 RULGCRMCP
- 17 DDDCCHWFC
- 18 DCKTTGCP
- 19 CAMPWHR
- 20 CMLULC

WILD LEVELS

- 2 BRGUMGCOO
- 3 BFWMCHCD
- 4 MFLMCLCLM
- 5 RUMOLMLAQ
- 6 VBRDCHWAD
- 7 LCUYVWCO
- 8 DCLVLEPCH
- 9 CRULGDCQCR
- 10 CHTGTMBP
- 11 HSTFMCOH
- 12 STGOLCLR
- 13 VORCHVFOR
- 14 MCDCHWADO
- 15 CCLVWDRP
- 16 CMTTDRDL
- 17 CDRUSGJEN
- 18 BRULCCHDS
- 19 LQUICALDQ
- 20 QUGRWADH

WORKED LEVELS

- 2 MCDCHWADH
- 3 MCLWADPQ
- 4 CILVWAGQOP
- 5 GARTLHBCP
- 6 RHTDGHGCH
- 7 MPTDGHGDS
- 8 QHLGOMDEL
- 9 YLGHAWTER
- 10 DLGHTTGER
- 11 MGLTDMCP
- 12 GMLVLER
- 13 GMPFLBLO
- 14 CMLWHLQAP
- 15 MFLMCLCLR
- 16 RUMOLCLR
- 17 UMGSTWEN
- 18 DMSRULDEL
- 19 RGLWLPDQ
- 20 GQAWWADCM

CALLING ALL TOP OFFICERS!

We need you, Leds of Dem. Leds and lots and lots of tips, hints and lots and lots and... well, you get the idea. And we want 100 to send them to us. We'll accept any old rubbish... or... tip, whether it be a lousy idea, a set of pages notes, hand-drawn level maps or a computer adventure solution.

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Yes, don't be shy! Send your tips to: BOI Top Tips, Phloxy (head), 85-85 Farmington Lane, London EC4A 3DF.



BAVOD LEVELS

- 2 BHTDAGCAD
- 3 LQTLGADP
- 4 STFLGRLD
- 5 TOLGCHWTFP
- 6 FLGHWTSFH
- 7 MGLVTHFE
- 8 GALLTWHQ
- 9 GMRUGLTH
- 10 HRSUGAGRPH
- 11 MDRGHTLFC
- 12 BFWNKLMP
- 13 FLGAWHPE
- 14 FLGHTTDFP
- 15 MGLWGLVFN
- 16 GIMTWHQJH
- 17 GQCHWAGM
- 18 MPTDGHGCG
- 19 LQTHMGGOOP
- 20 STGOLLEGG

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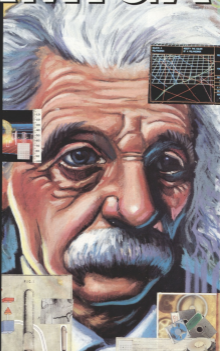
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- 50 non entertainment products put under the microscope each month
- 100+ games reviewed every month.

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n

ext!

ACE Disk 2!

Yes, we can hardly believe it ourselves! The next issue of ACE Magazine is already taking shape, and what a beautiful shape it is. More beautiful, some

would say, than the most beautiful thing in the world, but we wouldn't.

And that's because we've suddenly come over all modest and restrained. To be honest, we can't be doing with all this

Oh, my word! It's another disk! And it'll be full of the most excellent Public Domain software and playable demos for Amiga, PC and ST owners.

If you enjoyed this month's offering, you'll love the next one!



BIGGER BRIGHTER BETTER ONWARDS UPWARDS MORE rubbish. Because, on top of the fact that ACE is already functioning on 100% Excellentness, with its Style Motors fully operational and its Fact Content soaring higher than ever before, frankly, it can't get much better.

So let's play safe and steer clear of all the grand claims which we're sure you've become thoroughly bored of reading. Instead, we'll say that the next issue will contain:

★ A **SIMILAR** Screentest section, still offering the most detailed games buying information anywhere.

★ A **ROUGHLY EQUAL** amount of Previews

★ A **FAMILIAR LOOKING** number of News stories

★ In the Works features **PROBABLY JUST AS EARLY** as this month's

★ **THE SAME** (rather high) quality of material on the disk

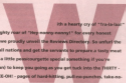
**ACE APRIL - £2.75 with Tri Format Disk
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new releases

28 days. 672 hours. 40,320 minutes. 2,419,200 seconds. That's all it takes for yet another bunch of high-quality (and alas, not-quite-so high-quality) software to parachute its way onto the shelves of your local software retail outlet emporium. And that's all it takes for us to come up with yet another blistering New Releases section, where we give you the low-down on every single last one of those new products. Not only that, but we provide pictorial information on a choice selection of said games, to ensure that the reviews are as much a banquet for your eyes as they are for your cerebral cortex. Excellent!

reviews directory



It's a hearty cry of "Tri-De-Lite!"

and a mighty roar of "Hey, wavy wavy!" for every forest

Teenian we proudly unveil the Reviews Directory. So when the flags of all nations and get the servants to prepare a tasty meat feast (or a little pescocourgette special something if you're vegetarian) to keep you going as you get back into the TERRY - yes, **THREE-OH!** - pages of hard-hitting, pull-me-punches, take-no-prisoners, other-words-joined-by-hyphens games information.

But let us spare a thought for those new readers out there who may be sighting on this highly-crafted and exceptionally well-written section for the very first time (and there's a first time for everyone, remember - yes, even you with bad haircut). "Why hence all the fuss/haa?" they cry. Simple, in the pages that follow you find all the basic information you'll ever need on every game released over the last **THREE** months. "Wow!" you cry.

Yes, "Wow!" indeed. And because you, the dear and loyal reader, demanded it, here are what those star ratings means in, ahem, full.

- ☆☆☆☆ **Excellent**
- ☆☆☆ **Very Good**
- ☆☆ **Above Average**
- ☆ **Poor**
- ☆ **Dismal**

New Releases:

JD Sports Drive
Awesome Golf
Dimension Force
Flood Fantasy 2
John Madden Football
Jupiter's Mastermind
Merryway III
Medical
Mega Garden Wars

Paperboy 2
Road Warriors
Ruger Rabbit
RTM Racing
Rulers
Sonic: The Hedgehog
Super Hit Pro Wrestling
Ultimate Golf
Wayne County's Ice Hockey 2

Still Available:

Agoo Arbor
Action Pack
Another World
Arrest
Alien Breed
Arms
Another World
Baby In
Baboon 2
Balls 200
Bats of Fury
Beach 2
Bugs Bunny 2
Captain Planet
Carnivals IV
Cobra Legends
Cortesian (Def. of
Barr)
Cruisler 2
Coco Heat
Civilization
Cities in Motion
Crash For A Cop
Deathstinger
Devil Crash
Devils Design
Double Dragon III
EA Hockey
Eggs
Eye of the Beholder 2
F-15 Strike Eagle 2
Fax Interceptor
Fur Off
Fury Renewal
Fighter Command
Flood Wars
Flood Fight
Fort Samson
Hobby
Hoor 2
Football Director 2
Formula 1 Grand Prix
Football
Galaxy '92
The Game - Winter
Challenge
Great Napoleonic Battles
Candy Assist
Hard Drive
Hard Wars
Haze Raising Haze
Hazard
Hudson Hawk
Hunts
The Immortal
Jimmy White's
Wooden Bowler
Knightmare
Lunar Turbo Challenge 2
Last Ninja 2
Leisure Suit Larry 2
Mail TV
Magic Garden
Marian Monstrous
MightyDance
Mega-Mario
MegaWarrior 2
Megawar
Mines
MOlight Super
Pulsar
Wight & Magic 2
Moose Business
Mooseman
Nebula 2
Never Ending Story 2
Omen
Omen Empire
Pacoman
Pagan
Pillfighter
Populous 2
Purr n' Purr
Railroad Tycoon
Raiders
Rise of the Dragon
Robin Hood
RoboCop
RoboCop 2
Robozone
Rolland
Rugby - The World Cup
Savior

Secret Weapons of the
Luftwaffe
Seven Colors
Shuttle
Slate Service II
Sliders
Solitaire Poker
Squash TV
Steve McQueen
Worship
Sonic Floor
Supercop
Suspicious Cargo
Turtles - The Coin-Op
Thunderstorm
Thunderhawk
Top Off
The Jam & Eat
Traders
Under Pressure
Utopia
Vulcan
Vroom
Willy Beamin
Wing Commander II
Wrecked
World Class Rugby

new releases

4D SPORTS DRIVING



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

A very long time indeed after the PC original (in "sportsman" car drives by other cars with laserbeam eyes of you please). This is an excellent simulation of driving some of the most exciting cars in the world around some of the most fabulous and hazardous tracks in ever come out of a games designer's head.

Don't be put off by the crappy (in a word) or "sportsman" car drives by other cars with laserbeam eyes of you please). This is an excellent simulation of driving some of the most exciting cars in the world around some of the most fabulous and hazardous tracks in ever come out of a games designer's head.

With some of the advantages that made today too much a laugh, such as a video playback mode and special-lane crashes, 4D Sports-driving has all the elements that a fun driving game should have, with very little of the tedious drudgery that many have included in the name of realism.

The player can either race solo or against one of a host of computer-controlled adversaries. These electronic drivers have considerably more personality than the feature robots driving drone cars found in other race games. Before each race against one of these machines, the player gets a breakdown of their particular psychological defects, whether they're speed freaks, being overcautious or whatever. The action is executed in admirable

1D (the Fourth Dimension is YOUR) and even if the race themselves aren't that fascinating, the track designer section will provide you with enough interesting jobs up to keep you coming back for more.

☆☆☆☆

AWESOME GOLF

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

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

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

Although there are some nice 1D views when the golfer takes a swing, the actual mechanics of the game are handled in 2D. Each shot begins with a plan view of the current green. The player can scroll about it using the cursor pad and even zoom in and out

thanks to the marvel of the Lynx's sprite-manipulating hardware.

Using a small cursor the player aims the shot, then chooses a club. Amazingly there's no on-screen instruction to tell you the maximum range of each club so you have to keep referring to the instruction booklet. Taking a swing is achieved by a familiar hitting the button where a velocity-moving traster is over the shot point you start then hitting the button again to give the ball left or right snap.

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

☆☆☆☆

DIMENSION FORCE



Price: Super Famicom £39.99
Genre: Arcade Blast
Publisher: Namco

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

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

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

Now don't get us wrong, it's perfectly acceptable to produce a top-down scrolling shoot 'em down game. But then does need to be some degree of innovation. Doesn't there? Alas, there is none.

The player launches from his aircraft carrier in one of the most crappy and original scrolling routines I've witnessed and the box the pleasure of firing over a strip of sea with rocks (as are they clouds, it's hardy to tell) scrolling down at regular intervals. Then, surprise surprise, the player is assaulted from all directions from a bunch of clearly drawn and utterly unimaginative planes.

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

FINAL FANTASY 2



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

The *Final Fantasy* series returns on the Super Nintendo in style. In *Final Fantasy II*, the player is whisked off to a realm of dangers and dragons world as Civil commander of a king's ship, battle foot charged by the King of Faerie to recover a set of magical crystals. But when Cecil refuses to do the King's dirty work any longer, he is cast out on his own more perilous odyssey. All this is told by an elaborate introductory sequence prior to play, and then it's up to you to journey off into the wilderness not just to undertake your mission but also to find out what wizard territory the king seems to be up to.

Along the way you'll be accompanied by your pal Raiu, and more characters join you and join your party as the quest progresses. The main game is presented in top-down casting format, with usual little characters and bright, colorful scenery. The simplistic nature of the graphics tends to belie the game's sophisticated nature. It may look inflexible and shallow, but in fact it's bigger and more deeply than the vast majority of computer-based RPGs - and it's much easier to get into and learn too.

To much rather play this than some stuffy, pretentious AD+D product any day of the week.

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

☆☆☆☆

JOHN MADDEN FOOTBALL



Price: Super-Fantasm **£29.99**
Genre: Sports Game
Publisher: Electronic Arts

Whoosh! Touchdown! That's right, chaps! Madden Mania sweeps the UK in a crazy fit of football bonkersness! And in readiness for the arrival in a couple of months of the official UK Super Nintendo, lots of grey import dealers across the country have taken the earlier appearing opportunity of stocking this version of the game that everyone is talking 'John Madden Football'.

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

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

As you would expect from the Electronic Arts Sports Network, there are more features than you can wave a stick at, allowing you to choose from 25 teams, decide what the weather is going to be like and decide if you want to practice, play a regular season or opt for league play.

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

☆☆☆☆

JUPITER'S MASTER-DRIVE



Price: Amiga/PC/ST **£2.99**
Genre: Racing Game
Publisher: Action Station

It's a rare occurrence indeed that a budget game gets to appear in ACE. But for Jupiter's Masterdrive, we just had to make an exception. Ages ago when UBI self-released the title, it was warmly received by reviewers but sort of got washed away in the spin of top-down driving simulators on the market. Now, at a mere £2.99, the game stands a chance to be a budget wonder, since there are very few decent top-downers around at the moment.

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

Distinguishing Masterdrive from most games of the ilk is the fact that the player can actually lead each other up by using highly mod'ed race equipment.

Most of the courses are well designed and provide thrilling racing, but two problems quickly emerge. The first is that in two player mode, the scale of the track contained in the top screen is simply too large and the player can't see where he's going. The second problem is that some tracks are simply impossible, like the ice track which must be negotiated on hovercraft. How in mind that many courses have pit-bull-style bumpers which rebound the craft across the track, and you can see that this can become a bit of a bore.

Still you can opt to avoid this course, so it's not that bad. And the interesting concept you can have with your mates are most enjoyable.

☆☆☆☆

MERCENARY III



Price: Amiga **£29.99**
Genre: Adventure
Publisher: Neovision

Since the publication of the original *Mercenary* on the Commodore 64, back in 1985, the 3D vector-driven adventure game, and those that have followed it, have become cult classics. Since the original, we've had *The Second City* (presently a data disk for the first game), the excellent *Demon* and now the thing is down to a close (probably by the cleverly-titled *Mercenary III*) published The Eden Group. It's bigger, better and tougher than those that have preceded it, with the 3D filled vector environments that author Paul Wooten is famous for, and now more sophisticated and believable than ever before.

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

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

☆☆☆☆

MYSTICAL



Price: Amiga/PC/ST **£2.99**
Genre: Arcade Blast
Publisher: Action Station

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

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

the Great Wizard's spells and magic potions. Now, to even stand a chance of earning his primary hat, he's got to go into the magical lands and retrieve the lot of them. What follows is a stunning but nevertheless addictive vertical shoot-em-up with the wizard trotting up the screen collecting the lost spells and using battle with the myriad of monsters that await him. Hardly surprising for a game of french origin, it's very bizarre indeed, with lots of completely unexpected alien (spelled) jobs and big big villainosity and plenty of on-the-side graphical surprises.

As the wizard progresses, the spells he collects can be used like power-ups against the evil hordes. The aim of the game is essentially to reach the magic pentagon at the end of each level, so as to be transported in a shower of pixie-dust to the next. Truth be told, there's really not that much to it, but it's a great laugh, especially with two players. (By second level) controls a Golem character that jumps on enemies and crushes 'em. It looks smart, plus (and so will) comes heartily recommended to anyone with right laugh-prone comic bearing a look in their pocket.

☆☆☆☆

NINJA GAIDEN SHADOW



Price: Genesis **£29.99**
Genre: Beat-'em-up
Publisher: Taito

It's not another Ninja Gaiden game to be fair, this one is better than most. Sure, it's the usual old shoen-bung, beat-'em-up as martial arts action that we all know (you will) and love (sometimes), but the presentation and the graphic quality lift it a little out of the ordinary.

The smart though badly translated intro explains the plot. The evil *Demons Emperor* Daif has plans to reduce the whole world's population (starting with New York, would you know it). And with his mighty-dick army to back him up it looks like he's going to do it, too. That is, until Ryu Hiraebana, last of the noble Dragon Clan, appears on the scene to dispense sword-based justice over the wendy levels.

As well as the ability to run, jump

and slash. Ryu can also monkey swing along the underside of ledges, shoot a grappling vine up in the air to climb up to lofty platforms and also unleash a special dragon's flame sword weapon if he's collected the right power-ups. Yes, the game's got them as well.

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

☆☆☆☆

PAPERBOY 2



Price Super Famicom / PC £29.99
Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Mindscape

Look well! He's back, with an all new sound! And, well, that's just about it actually. Paperboy returns swept the accolades and honours of America when the first game appeared way back in 1986. The hit-rare series of the adolescent-delivery boy captured the imagination of the nation, and now fans of the original can enjoy this sequel.

Well, I say sequel. Extension would perhaps be a more appropriate term. There's nothing new in this game that was missing from the original except the ability to ride in both diagonal directions, as opposed to up and left in the first.

Your routine is still exactly the same: the Paperboy (a girl, you to ride a number of streets, delivering papers to the correct houses in traditional American style on the back of his BMC, avoiding all those nasty problems which anyone who has taken a hazardous job at this newspaper will be only too-aware of. Power-ups attack the Paperboy and tracks run him over. You get the picture.

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

☆☆☆☆

ROAD BLASTERS



Price Megadrive £24.99
Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Tengen

Tengen really isn't the marketing king. While other outfits are converting the latest state-of-the-art snippets to tape's 4-biters, Tengen are quite content to release conversions of games you could probably buy in their original arcade cabinets for about the same price. Just recently we had Pac-Man, now we've got Road Blasters and there are plenty more "blasts from the past" in the pipeline.

Road Blasters comes as a welcome relief from the state-of-worship shoot-'em-ups and platform games. (Just why is the Megadrive so notably lacking in the driving game department? The only other one I can think of is Super Monaco GP.) As the name suggests, the player drives along a road and... um... blasts things.

The screen is definitely on the blasting. The player's car, which sits at the bottom middle of the screen, accelerates to top speed automatically and the player simply has to steer it left and right, strafing (arcade mail users and roadside gun-tweaks with his helmet-mounted machine gun. Super wings whopper weapons are occasionally dropped off liberally by a jet that swoops down and hovers over the car briefly.

Your appreciation of Road Blasters as the bigdrifter will be most identical to that of the coin-op—they're identical. Personally I find the action repetitive and too minimal to be enjoyable for longer than about fifteen minutes, but there are probably many who disagree and think this is the best game ever. At least, that's what Tengen must be hoping.

☆☆☆☆

WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT?



Price Gameboy £24.99
Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Capcom USA

Ask Judge Doom's planning to ruin Toon Town and has already killed the mayor (just to prove that he means business, Roger must rescue Toon Town from the terrible fate that Doom has in store and at the same time rescue his wife (victims from an evil kidnapping plot). How does he go about all this? He scrolls around Toon town in a sort of goprox adventure game shoot-'em, that's how!

Actually it's not that bad, and there's enough variety in the arcade sequences to make it worthwhile. The horrible sound! Best-known of De Doom chase poor legs around the screen and take poor shots at him, popping out of war-hole corners and the more unusual places in order to do him down.

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

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

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

☆

RPM RACING



Price Super Famicom £29.99
Genre Racing Game
Publisher Interspey

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

RPM Racing is very similar in style and presentation to the Gameboy's Super RC Proton, reviewed in January. But whereas the handheld game was fast, smooth and controllable, RPM Racing distinctly lacks these qualities. Four cars do battle over a series of eighty-six scrolling isometric perspective tracks, bouncing over hills and rumps, performing loop-de-loops and generally bashing into each other. Much has been made of the high-resolution graphics, which look vaguely like the Amiga's HAM mode and have allowed for some very pretty definition and light-shading on the vehicles as they bounce about. Unfortunately it seems the price we pay for all this technical wizardry is heavily jerky scrolling, sluggish, almost unworkable car control and, on the whole, slow and frustrating racing.

Presentation-wise, RPM is sleek, offering various car modifications, ten tracks with 24 difficulty levels and even a custom designer. There, however, are all pretty pointless additions if the main thrust of the game isn't up to scratch, and so obviously RPM Racing needs over to the next of game you'd really like to have a lot of fun with, not just 'cos' because it's so technically applicable. A real shame.

☆☆

RUBICON



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

In the most famous business machine accident in the Soviet Union (to be, not a very timely accurate mention) an arm (you might say) with intense radiation. As a result, the wildlife in the area has been horribly transmuted into... well, horrible transmuted beasts. And guess who's job it is to go in and sort it out? Right first time!

Once again the barrel of game scenarios has been well and truly swung as an excuse for this latest Master from the rubicon division. It's a pretty unconvincing game in the way it's presented - rather than being a constantly-moving affair, the little hills under your control have to deal with the threat on each screen before he scrolls from left to right into the next bit of terrain. It's sort of 'works in its

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

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

☆☆☆☆

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG



Price Game Gear £29.99
Genre Platform Game
Publisher Sega

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

Everything you remember from the Hedgehog game has been reproduced exactly the same but smaller - the oh-so-colourful graphics, the two tones, the simple yet addictive gameplay and the amazing speed are all there. The action's so fast that there are times when the Game's blurriness makes it's near impossible to see what the hell is going on! Owners of both a Drive and a Game Gear will be pleased to hear that the map layout is, as they say on TV, "All-new", so if you've beaten the Megadrive game then you'll find new challenges here.

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

seen on the Game Gear and as long as you don't mind the short-lived nature of the fun that it's well worth your dough.

☆☆☆☆

SUPER FIRE PRO-WRESTLING



Price Super-Famicom £49.99
Genre Sport/Strategy
Publisher Human Creative Group

Conveniently listing three shows on input at more or less the same time as the WWF case, this latest Famicom product must surely rank as one of the slowest to date. On paper and on screen it looks and sounds great - 40 inanimate, big muscle-bound characters slugging it out, single-player and tag-team options, loads of different moves... sounds watering, eh? Well it needs to be, because Super Fire Pro-Wrestling is about as playable as a milk watermelon wrapped in a wet towel.

So what's so bad about it then? Well, it's difficult to know where to start, really. The wrestlers themselves shuffle about the ring in such an unconvincing manner that they don't even look like they're walking on the canvas. They seem to float about a foot off the ground, with their legs kicking back and forth in a vaguely walk-like manner. When the two fighters meet, they grapple in an equally unrealistic fashion while the player hammers away on their buttons to try and get a hold and execute a move. Theoretically there's lots to do, but the graphics are so poorly defined and the controls so unresponsive that, bar flashes of luck, it's virtually impossible to do anything but the most basic moves. Maybe it would have been a bit easier to get to grips with if the on-screen messages had been in English, but they're not so it isn't.

No doubt some hardened wrestling fans will throw caution to the wind and snap this up, but a much better plan is surely to wait a while and see what emerges over the next few months - there's already an official WWF game on the way which promises to be a lot better. Whatever you do, don't waste your hard-earned money on this clapper.

☆☆

ULTIMATE GOLF



Price Amiga 50, PC £7.99
Genre Sports Game
Publisher GEM Gold

Well, hardly Bear Grylls's *Greg Norman* himself game claimed to be the last word in golf simulations, it's been proved wrong many times with the likes of PGA Tour Golf, Links and the excellent Microprose Golf all beating it hand-over-fist in the sales and fan stakes.

But that's not to say that *Ultimate Golf* is bad. Far from it, and now that it's out at a more respectable price it should be looked at seriously by any avid on-screen golfer who hasn't already done so. As golf games go, it's certainly one of the most comprehensive on the market, but since sloppy presentation, and maybe a little over-enthusiasm to put in so many factors, has led to it being rather unattractive and difficult to get to grips with.

Actually, the game's slightly deceptive about how much there really is to it. There may be 40 different levels, options and variables, but there are still only two courses to play on, and that's pretty poor by the standards of other games, which offer anywhere between four and six. Any golf game's longevity is determined by the number of courses available, and two just doesn't cut it. I'm afraid.

Whatever, there's a good eight quid's worth of golf action here for those who like their sport sims a bit on the intensive side - even though anybody looking for a seriously good introduction to the game would be better pleased in the direction of PGA Tour or Microprose Golf.

☆☆☆☆

WAYNE GRETZKY'S ICE HOCKEY 3



Price Amiga, PC £29.99
Genre Sports Simulation
Publisher Bethesda

Hey! Hey! Hey! It's Wayneyyyyy Gretzky! Boy! With his name on the

game you know it's got to be good. Well, actually I don't know who the heck he is and I think I didn't know much about this game. It looked more like a couple left on an ice block.

The action is lively on simulation. A bit of a bad move this, in my opinion, so here correctly too hockey would make a great super-realistic action game. Before matches the player can fiddle about with his team member's stats to his heart's content, training them up, boosting dull players and so on, retaining college credits in. Chances are, though, that you'll not want to because all this stats jiggery-pokery is carried out on some of the dullest menu screens I've seen this side of a spreadsheet.

The actual hockey matches are played out on an improved horizontally-scrolling rink, where five animated groups of players grapple about in a vain attempt to simulate the real-life high-octane sport that is ice hockey. Even with the wonderful graphics this could've been done on fat, but the poor control makes it feel like you're controlling somebody else controlling the players rather than being in the hot seat yourself.

Well, well and so on to play, this is one hockey game that should be good as soon as possible.

☆☆

And there we have it. A

rather small number of new releases for a whole

month, we agree, but that's

very much the way of

things in the spinning mad-

stream of light and power

known as the computer

industry. One minute you

expect something to happen and the next minute, it doesn't. Or maybe it does. It all depends on what you least expect of any given time.

Still available

A320 AIRBUS

 **Price Amiga £24.99**
Genre Simulation
Publisher Thalion

You shall fly! Right, it's not as if we have any problems flying high in an F-16 or blowing up tank installations in a state-of-the-art stealthfighter - but the A320 Airbus? Is somebody pulling our pilots' wings? Well, apparently not, as this is one of the biggest releases from German software house Thalion in quite a while. Airbus aims to be a computerized just-in-time, the game allows the player to be an airline pilot for a day - well, for however long he likes, really - at the controls of the turbo-driven A320 jetliner.

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

Airbus Airbus isn't just about flying about a lot, though. Once, no. Players get to create their own planes, take part in training or active duty, work out

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

☆☆☆☆

ACTION PACK

  **Price Atari ST/Amiga £14.99**
Genre Compilation
Publisher Action 15

What a bagful! Ten games - *Colossal*, *Comix Prince*, *Eliminator*, *Fast Lane*, *Hotshot*, *Mega*, *On Safari*, *Roto*, *Shaman*, *M4*, *Tarpan* - for twenty-five quid! Okay, we'll be honest and admit that they're all getting a bit long in the tooth now, and more than a couple of the games on offer here are real Xbox turkey material (eg *Safari*, in particular, should be plucked, stuffed with Furo and hunged in the oven for a good five hours as soon as possible).

However, *Comix Prince* is a pretty hell

multiway scrolling shoot-'em-up. *Eliminator* is a 2D shoot-'em-up cum driving game) and *Mega* (a multi-part arcade adventure) more than compensate, and would make a superb-value compilation on their own. The other games are poor to middling in quality, but for the price you really can't complain. Highly recommended.

☆☆☆☆

AEROSTAR

 **Price Gameboy £14.99 (import)**
Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Y&T

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

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

and the longer the button is held down the longer the jump. Thing is, the Gameboy's design makes it difficult to fire at the same time without taking one finger off the jump button, resulting in the ship phasing into an abyss. And as the road narrows, jumping, and the need for pumping/bouncing more frequent and the enemy's attacks become more vicious, this becomes particularly annoying.

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

ALIEN BREED

 **Price Amiga £24.99**
Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Team 17

Alien Breed can best be described as the *Alien* license that should have been. It grafts *Alien* through a sphere onto Gameboy-esque gameplay to create an addictive - albeit original - winner. One or two players can take part simultaneously, and their job is to run around the six planet-sized space stations, blasting seven shades of alien out of anything that crawls, slithers or horks.

Fortunately the problems that always afflicted *Gameboy* (ie, though fine, there was no real aim to playing apart from scoring points) has been averted by giving the players a task to complete on each level (namely of the 'find a location and blow it up' variety). Okay, so it's not exactly lifting the game into *Acad Adventure* territory, but it provides enough of a goal to keep the player coming back for more.

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

☆☆☆☆

AMNIONS



Price **Amiga £25.99**

Genre **Arcade Blast**

Publisher **Pogozone**

Steeped! Defender for the good! Well, that's the idea. The theme is it doesn't quite work.

Amnions is a plain-viewed midway scrolling shoot-'em-up. The player rips around the surfaces of ten living planets in his ship, sapping the bad guys and rescuing the trapped humans. By shooting certain gods the player can upgrade his ship with better weapons.

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

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

ANOTHER WORLD



Price **Amiga £49.99**

Genre **Arcade Adventure**

Publisher **US Gold**

Explore a mysterious alien world in this peculiar yet epic adventure from Delphine. Taking the role of Louis the scientist, the player is transported - as a result of an experiment gone wrong - into an alternate universe where nothing is what it seems, joyride combined with relatively little interaction between characters. Another World is a flawed, but brave product.

Although there aren't that many problems to solve and actually the interest in the game is more concerned with the look than the feel, it's still a worthwhile purchase.

Overall, it's an impressive game. It's got plenty of drawbacks but on the whole, it scores a big plus. For players looking for a new angle on the arcade adventure genre and in particular anyone who has a stronger interest in new graphic styles than the depth or length

of their game, it fits the bill perfectly.

BABY JO



Price **Atari ST/Amiga £24.99**

Genre **Platform Game**

Publisher **Lotussoft**

Imagine *Metroid's* plot in two dimensions and you've got a good idea of what the latest import from French firm Lotussoft is all about. Or if you don't know that, by imagining Mario with a nappy-wearing baby as the main character. It's all really rather ludicrous, with the wacky mables having to eat the brown goodies as he bounces along the landscape in order to keep fit - but he hasn't got too much, or he'll lose his nappy! I mean come on! What are these French game designers on? Something pretty strong if the quality of Baby Jo's aesthetics are anything to go by. Neatly designed sprites, attractive music and ludicrously gaily backdrops are all proof of Baby Jo's silliness, but it has to be said that it is a kind of cutie in a rather perverse and definitely strange sort of way.

But if there's one thing it certainly isn't it's fun - the slow, creeping gameplay and hasty throw-together design makes sure of that. It's far prettier than most, but it's the precisely this reason that Baby Jo should only really be on the shopping list of platform breaks desperate for a new fix - and even then there are much more playable options available.

BARBARIAN II



Price **Amiga £25.00**

Genre **Arcade Blast**

Publisher **Pogozone**

Pogozone games have historically always been visual treats held back by some less than excellent game design. However, with *Looney*, that's all changed and the company really earned themselves a reputation for being able to turn out top notch software of both high visual standard and demanding gameplay.

And for a moment it looks as if Barbarian II may be another title in the *Looney* vein. Unfortunately, this is patently not the case, since once the player has got through the obligatory

loading sequence (a whole damn worthy if becomes clear that Barbarian II is neither a visit of beauty for the eyes, or a particularly great place to explore with a joystick).

With left-right scrolling with paths leading into and out of the screen, objects to collect, weapons to hoard and monsters to dispatch, Barbarian really doesn't offer the player anything new, and has been carried off to much better effect in both *Gold* and *Tomb of the Elusive Phoenix*.

BATTLE ISLE



Price **Atari ST/Amiga £94.99**

Genre **Strategy**

Publisher **USA Soft**

As strategy games get trendier and more diverse, with the likes of *Operation*, *Mega* in *Mania* and *Sim City*, the latest from French firm USA Soft represents something quite different, which we hardly see any more these days - a wargame in the classic vein. It's set on a flat-out world where two armies do battle for control of a series of islands. It's visually similar to the old *SSI* wargames - units move in turn across a battlefield broken down into hexagonal cells. More experienced gamers will know the sort of thing.

Due to the space-age scenario, the units involved consist of all manner of high-tech tanks, planes, ships and armoured vehicles as well as more conventional infantry formations. Players move their units about, creating tactical formations and assaults, with the inevitable confrontations between opposing forces. As the battle goes on, units must be re-supplied, so far ahead and all the other stuff that goes along with a game of this type.

Battle Isle's most favourable option is the two-player mode - something that's woefully missing from a lot of strategy products these days. A handy split-screen display allows two mates to play head-to-head - although this does mean you can see what your opponent is up to at any time, of course.

Battle Isle is undoubtedly a fine and very 'clever' strategy game, and one that should appeal to anyone who likes the good old fashioned way of doing things, without all the inverting bells and whistles. But despite the game's accessibility, many younger players on the lookout for a brain game are more likely to steer towards the likes of *Populous*

II. Good stuff, though.

BIRDS OF PREY



Price **Amiga £29.99**

Genre **Simulation**

Publisher **Electronic Arts**

Well, it's been four years in the making, but at last *Birds of Prey*, I mean *Birds of Prey*, has touched down. But has it been worth the wait? Well... not of.

Let's make no bones about it, *Birds of Prey* is an excellent flight simulator and, as the name suggests, there's no shortage of delightful action. On a technical level it's astounding, and probably its most impressive aspect is the number of planes you've given the opportunity to fly - no less than 40 individual combat aircraft!

Birds of Prey is much more the thinking man's simulation - very much in the *Microsoft* mould - and not really the more simplistic, combat-orientated perspective type after that many of us were expecting. That said, it's not all just flying from waypoint to waypoint and killing enemy in-between. There's more than enough hard-core action to keep anybody busy. The AI update is surprisingly able, considering how much the program is having to juggle, but somehow it just doesn't seem like the result of four years' programming.

Ultimately, what we've got with *Birds of Prey* is a game that's tried to do a bit of everything and comes off surprisingly well at the end of it. If anything it falls a little too far towards the technical side of things (reading the manual is an achievement in itself), but nevertheless *Birds of Prey* comes wholeheartedly recommended to all flight-sim fans.

BREACH 2



Price **Amiga £49.99**

Genre **Strategy**

Publisher **Impressions**

Though there's nothing particularly special on offer for the hard BPG fan this month, the follow-up to the highly-acclaimed *Breach* is worthy of their attention. Set in the future with the player in command of a team of space

mission, it's more strategy than role-playing, but the mix of the two genres is an appealing one. Probably the best comparison is with that old fantasy classic *Age of Simps - Breaks a horse, boasts a considerably more sophisticated approach, with a smart isometric viewpoint, much easier command control and more involving missions.*

In each mission scenario, the player leads his team through enemy territory, exploring rooms, collecting objects and doing battle with the alien hordes they encounter. In the classic RPG tradition, characters can be leveled up with a huge array of weapons and equipment, including rifles, rocket launchers and bombs, and all the characters come complete with individual attributes and abilities.

An added bonus is that, should the player get bored with the multitude of missions available, they can create and edit their own. How many gamers will want to expend this amount of effort designing a playable mission on any kind of game is no easy task, remains to be seen, however, and you may want to ask yourself if you're ever likely to make use of the feature. But there are enough prodigious missions to make *Breaks* a worthwhile cross without the editor, and one that scores the game should be all on the 'take a look' list for all RPG strategy aficionados, if not a definite purchase.

BUGS BUNNY CRAZY CASTLE 2



Price Gamblers £44.99 (Import)
Genre Platform
Publisher Sunsoft/Infusa

What the title is Honey Bunny? I must be getting old, because I don't remember that! ... ever having a sappy girlfriend. It sounds to me like a lame excuse to retouch the old 'old kidnapped by witch who must be rescued by hero's scenario to me. In this case it's the hideously ugly Witch Hazel™ who's the wrong doc't you know I do remember, and who has whiskered Honey™ away to her castle. Bugz™ must rescue her by leaping through all huge rooms of platforms, pipes, ladders and Looney Tunes™ characters. Bugz™ must collect the hidden keys in each to unlock the door to the next room, by picking up bombs, axes and so on Bugz™ can blow up floor-slats 'looms, back his way through blocked passages,

etc., etc.

Although it looks like a platformer game, *Crazy Castle 2™* actually plays more like a puzzle game. Success is down to using the items you pick up along the way to get past certain obstacles at the correct place and time. And this part of the game is quite fun.

It's the platformer element that rules the game - Bugz™ crosses in big jumps and is hard to control, and all too interesting when you lose a life by leaping into the ladders by accident. Despite it's good graphics, in my opinion *Crazy Castle 2™* is a right striking lead of old *Crap™*.

CAPTAIN PLANET



Price Atari ST/Amiga £25.99
Genre Arcade Action
Publisher Mindscape

For the love's sake. Thanks, Yeah, like I was telling you there's like this guy, right, and he's like this sort of super hero, you know. Goes around saving the world from these old heavy breathing polluters. Yeah, like you see. Heavy duty, man. Anyway, he's got these few helpers, and they're like just kids, you know, but they've got this special thing that give them these cosmic powers. Totally amazing. Each level of the game like creates around one of these six characters, and they're just the out-

I mean like the first character, M-T, uses her ring to like chill out the bad guys and remove plants so she can climb up to the level exit. Yeah, and like when she gets out there's this helicopter she has to fly around it and scoop up endangered elephants and take them to a sanctuary. Yeah, exactly. It's like this amazing mix of platformer game and these two-up, intangibles, yeah, the graphics are sort of cute, the scrolling's fine, and the music are nice, but control over your little spinny guy's a bit tricky. Yeah, Tricky Dicky Watergate. All The President's Men. But you get used to it and all in all it's quite a fun and experience, if not the slickest thing like you've ever seen, lots of really pretty psychedelic colours, too.

☆☆☆☆

CASTLEVANIA IV



Price Super Famicom £49.99 (Import)
Genre Arcade Blast

Publisher Konami
I couldn't believe it when I loaded this up! Imagine it's Christmas (not that difficult really). You're really looking forward to getting a certain present, and you've laid the present with lots of heavy hints to your parents. Then, on Christmas morning, you get a wrapped gift that looks like the same size and shape as the the thing you want. Trouble is, when you open it up that's something totally different inside. Oh, it's a nice enough present all right, just not the one you wanted. Well, that's *Castlevania IV*. It was great on the NES, brilliant on the Gameboy and, along with *Castlevania's* Super Ghost n' Ghost, was one on the big anticipated releases on the Super Famicom.

To be fair, *Castlevania's* a decent enough game - there's lots of running around platforms, ladders and what have you, lots of wopping the bad guys with a giant mace. Unfortunately, what there isn't lots of is fun. The graphics are garish, and the animation is merely perfunctory, with the boss having a rather understate shuffling walk that makes him look as if he's got stepped on his feet and he's trying to push the floor. If this had appeared before S/G/G it might have received a better reception. As it happens, it didn't, so it hasn't.

☆☆☆☆

CELTIC LEGENDS



Price Atari ST/Amiga £24.99
Genre Role-Playing Game
Publisher Ubi Soft

It's amazing how you can tell, right? of the time, what an RPG game is going to be - usually like just by knowing what part of the world it's coming from. For example, anything that comes from California is likely to be a bit complex and involved, while anything from, say France or Germany, while still having all the traditional RPG elements, always tends to present things in a much more simplistic and steady manner. As is the case here, with this little Celtic wonder which is very much in the same vein as Thalion's *Draught* and countless other Euro RPGs.

It's actually a fair little game, based around all the old RPG clichés, but handling them with traditional French style and aplomb. It's all set in the myth-

ical world of Celtica, where the mix of magic by an evil sorcerer has wrenched the kingdom in tears.

What follows is a mix of strategy and conventional RPG elements presented from a number of viewpoints - on the battlefield, high above the world itself and so-on, depending upon the scene.

Though in gameplay terms it offers nothing that exceeded fans of the genre will find particularly earth-shattering, it's different enough in terms of presentation and style to make it well worth investigating - especially for novice gamers who may be looking for an accessible and appealing introduction to the genre.

☆☆☆☆

CENTURION - DEFENDER OF ROME



Price Megadrive £24.99
Genre Action Strategy
Publisher Electronic Arts

Can't see an opening, Centurion, it's the player's duty to both defend the Roman land and expand the Roman Empire as far as possible. This megaplanetary aim is somewhat foisted off first by the fact that the player starts with just a single legion of soldiers and a city of citizens to keep under control.

The game is a well-judged blend of issue-driven strategy and arcade-style adventures. For example, to keep the sublevel provinces happy, the player can take part in chariot races and keep town lights. As the game progresses the limits under your command grow and ships played at your disposal to take armies to neighbouring shores become bigger and better. If the player's lucky he can even have a crack at seducing the voluptuous Cleopatra. Post old Megadrive owners in particular are staved of this type of game, so if you're looking for something to exercise your brain a little, you could do far worse than this.

☆☆☆☆

CHOPLIFTER 2



Price Gameboy £24.99
Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Mindscape

Choplifter first appeared in 1976 via

freedom and it still feels cramped today. The player's mission as super-cock helicopter pilot is to rescue survivors from a fantastically scorching warzone. To do this the player can land near the burning refugees and wait for them to board. This can be quite harrowing at times as you'll be a potential sitting duck for all the enemy gun installations and warship-gunning planes which constantly lay siege.

The player's cockpit is equipped with a rapid-firing cannon and a limited number of bombs with which to protect himself. And that's really all there is to it - however, like *Infantry*, *Choppers* is one of those games that, once played, is never forgotten. Fast action, challenging game task and a password system help make this one of the best games out on the Gameboy, and a must for any action-fans collection.

☆☆☆☆☆

CISCO HEAT



Price Amiga £25.99
Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Image Works

In the light of a whole bunch of driving games, some of which have been nothing short of excellent, (Laser & Grand Prix) Image Works' launch of this rather dreadful title couldn't have come at a worse time.

Not only will the consumer have had his fill of driving in general, but he will also be fully aware that it's possible to produce sub-action games a thousand times better than this.

The aim is to race a ragged-up police car through the hilly streets of San Francisco, avoiding taxi-cabs, trains and dinosaurs in an attempt to emerge as the top dog driver in the city.

Quite aside from the CD noises which make Turbo Quares look polished and some astonishingly dull control, *Cisco Heat* stalls at virtually every corner. The music themselves are garbled and irritating, the sound graphics are basically a single graphic block duplicated to fill the space, the police car crashes into dinosaurs only a fraction larger than itself, and the corner turning routine, however slow the attempt, is a catastrophe.

Mind you, the sound of the car's horn is quite good.

☆

CIVILIZATION



Price IBM PC £24.99
Genre Strategy
Publisher MicroProse

American game design guru Sid Meiers' fresh from his success with the brilliant *Galactic Tycoon*, has dugested himself with this latest effort, which can truly be said to huggy the world in terms of depth, scale and scope. Adopting the same functional top-down presentation format of *Tycoon*, the game changes the player with the task of building a civilization, from a bunch of primitive tribes in an unexplored, uncharted world, to a global empire capable of space travel, nuclear power and the other trappings of a 21st Century life.

The range of factors and elements that play a part in the game is quite simply immense, as the player's people advance and expand, founding cities, settling and taming the water, making technological discoveries and building walled cities - all while computer-controlled 'tribe' enemies do the same. Along the way the player must set taxes, maintain civil order, negotiate with other nations, can fix the environment and take part in various area and space races.

Civilization is undoubtedly the most involved strategy game ever conceived, and so much more fun committed or easier games are likely to be surpassed by the game's state-like intricacies. For those willing to invest the time and effort, however, *Civilization* pays off like no other. Wonderful.

☆☆☆☆☆

CONAN THE CIMMERIAN



Price IBM PC £25.99
Genre Role Playing Game
Publisher Virgin Games

The problem with *Conan* is that it doesn't really know whether it wants to be a serious game or a funny game. The opening sequence is a mixture of pre-film comedy and a muted romance, accompanied by some of the most awful music I've ever heard. (While some people may argue it's fashionably obscure, I reckon it sounds like the recordings of a Fisher Price 'My First Guitar' being played in the bath.)

Anyway, the curious mixture of script, view exploration and side-on back-

ing works reasonably well, with *Conan* linking every inch the experience he's supposed to be. And there's plenty to explore.

Even the advertising ride is pretty good, and *Conan* can interact (albeit on a pretty basic level) with every character he encounters.

So if you feel that there is space on your shelf for yet another average-quality game, and you live with the atmosphere-creating length, it may be worth a look.

☆☆☆☆

CRUISE FOR A CORPSE



Price Amiga £24.99
Genre Adventure
Publisher Delphine, US Gold

The plot for *Cruise for a Corpse* is fairly rooted in the Agatha Christie 'isolated location, plenty of suspects' crime story tradition, detailing how the player is invited to a Greek holiday yacht for a well-earned holiday only to get there and find his boat hijacked off by an unknown murderer. Before you can say 'Inspector Wexford' the player is faced in short story mode and fully side-bars to solve the heinous crime.

After a bit of pre-release interest from the press, there were high hopes for *Cruise for a Corpse*. Is it the excellent game everyone assumed it to be? Well, yes... and no. In the graphics and sound department it's exemplary, with large fully-animated spring-boarding over exquisitely detailed backgrounds and plenty of outside noises and samples playing away in the background. All conspire to generate an excellent sense of mood and atmosphere.

The player directs his on-screen character (Hans) via the mouse, by clicking the mouse pointer on objects of interest, a menu appears listing the various things the player can do with the selected item (i.e. 'Open' or 'Examine' but long). Movement around the yacht is effected by walking *Rascal* from location to location by clicking on exits to the current location, such as doors or hallways, or more quickly by calling up the yacht map and 'sending' *Rascal* immediately from place to place. As a user interface it's difficult to think of another as intuitive and easy to use.

The major problem with *Cruise for a Corpse* is its pace. The animation, though wonderful, is slow. Examining the contents of a room can be very quite painful, as *Rascal* slowly turns, walks, turns, bends down, examines the items only for a message to appear stating that 'There is nothing of interest here' - equally annoying is the frequent though inevitable searching and wrapping of five (count 'em) game disks. All too often the player's enthusiasm for clue hunting can be severely dampened by the reduction of the game's speed to near snail's pace. Less important, some of the generally market French-English translation is a bit dubious in places, such as the Cabin Boy who is described as 'dynamic'.

These comments apart, *Cruise for a Corpse* is at through the occasional idiosyncrasy will find *Cruise for a Corpse* a superb buy, braced with quality presentation and atmosphere and presenting a big enough game task to satisfy even the greatest sleuth.

☆☆☆☆☆

DEATHBRINGER



Price Atari 48 £25.99
Genre Beat-'Em-Up
Publisher Empire

There's this word, right. There and means here mightily given it the ability to absorb the words of anyone it dips. Their intention is to use it to get rid of their goody-goody through thick-thick (patented) Karn, a barbarian so mad he can't even spell his own name right. However, look isn't on the winner's side, and the word leads us way into Karn's colorful lands. Hardly believing his luck, Karn sets out to give the word back to the wizard-in-style. Basically it's all a thinly veiled excuse for a sideways scrolling blendfest of hacking and slaying, with Karn plowing through a sea of vile waves of bizarre monsters.

DeathBringer boasts some of the most impressive pixel-art scrolling backgrounds ever seen, even if they are somewhat lacking in colour. The sprites are well-drawn with a nice line in business, but they're rather plain in a more cinematic sort of way. But despite its good graphics and adequate sound, *DeathBringer's* real problem is that it's basically a bit dull. The combat moves are limited to traps and slow to implement and just wandering along, real

lessly plugging away at the bubbles, is not all that interesting. And the persistent backdrops in the whole World can't make up for that. *Barbarian III* this ain't.
 ☆☆☆

DEVIL CRASH



Price Megadrive £19.99 (Import)
Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Techno Soft

Compromised pinball has never been a particularly popular genre—and a quick glance at *Devil Crash* is enough to make you see why. Ever since the age-old days of *Demolition* and *Time Warner* coin-ops and home machines have tried to emulate that archaic tilt-a-slant pinball feel, but with little success. In theory, it should work excellently, with the heavy forest allowing for all sorts of tricks and wizardry that wouldn't be possible on a real machine. Unfortunately, no amount of gimmicks can make up for the fact that pinball as a computer screen just doesn't compare to the exhilaration of a real tilt.

In *Devil Crash*, *Devil Crash* actually does a better job than most, with creditable ballistics and plenty of interesting features—the table is more than seven screens long and packed with all manner of secret rooms, bonuses and other bits. Unfortunately the gothic nature of the graphics (pentagons and mystic runes appear) lend a rather depressing and creepy feel to the game itself, and as a result it's difficult to really enjoy. *Devil Crash* is the aesthetic equivalent of a lead brick on the brain. Whatever its shortcomings, however, computer pinball has acquired a respectable cult following for itself, and gamers of that persuasion will no doubt find *Devil Crash* to be one of the more impressive examples of the genre. For the rest of us, however, there are more enjoyable and less frustrating bits of plastic on the market.
 ☆☆☆

DEVIOUS DESIGNS



Price Amiga £19.99
Genre Puzzle
Publisher Image Works
Hardware not so much devious as dirt-

gly filthy. Ever since the world went flat's mad, there's been a steady trickle of arcade puzzles trying to tap into that elusive addictive ingredient that made *Atari's* classic such a wide-swinging money spinner. *Devious Designs* had more potential than most, but it hasn't quite been realized.

The basic idea is simple enough. The player guides a tiny figure around various landscapes, picking up variously shaped blocks and trying to slot them into a template, while collecting bonuses, a myriad of power-ups and avoiding or shooting the evil winged bad guys. All well and good. Ah, but there's more to it than that. On the later levels, the player can make his character walk up the walls and even on the ceiling, and this is where it all starts to fall apart.

Control over the player's character is generally fine, but when you're small it's all too easy to find yourself clambering up when you didn't want to and not clambering up when you did. Admittedly, given a fair deal of practice the player should be able to compensate for this fallibility, but in the short term it means an otherwise enjoyable and reasonably addictive addition to the genre.
 ☆☆☆

DOUBLE DRAGON 3



Price Amiga £19.99
Genre Beat-'Em-Up
Publisher Ocean

Double Dragon fans have been more than short-changed in the past by the conversion of the previous two *Double Dragon* coin ops, so it comes as no surprise to be able to say that this—the third installment of the on-going kung-fu escapades of Jimmy and Billy Lee—is, despite a couple of reservations, pretty much what devotees have been waiting for.

The plot is confined to say the least. According to what you listen to, it's either the usual glib excuse mission, or a quest for treasure, or a fight against the Ultimate Evil. No matter—the mechanics remain the one, Jimmy and Billy Lee (aka, players one and two) have to thump and crump their way through fourteen levels of action set in five exotic locations (and as the game progresses you'll discover 'exotic' is an understatement).

Players start the game with fifteen 'coins', and in the shops found on main

the player can buy extra lives, weapons, power-ups and even some fancy non-fighting moves. It's a shame you can't just find weapons along the way, but this coin business does at least add a game-enhancing strategy element, because the player has to decide how best to spend his cash.

While some may find the gameplay dated and repetitive (a complaint, to be fair, that could be made about most games of this type), those experienced 'fans of the genre' should be swelling in awe of the more exciting and certainly the slicker slices of beat-'em-up action around. And, for my money, it's for the better than *Final Fight*.
 ☆☆☆

E.A. HOCKEY



Price Megadrive £34.99
Genre Sports Arcade
Publisher Electronic Arts

Ice Stick '91 with fighting in, *Electronic Arts' Hockey* will appeal to everyone. A section of teams from around the globe, each with their own abilities and weaknesses looks it out in the Ice Hockey World League.

Following on from their success with *John Madden's Football*, EA pull yet another winner out of the bag with this, perhaps their most thematic title to date.

Having selected the length of game, whether the player wishes to compete in a one-off match or a knock-out, sized of his team and that of the enemy, it's game on. Skating around the rink is simple enough, and control over the puck is surprisingly instinctive. Since the rink is so small and the players can move so easily and violently against each other, *Ice Hockey* is an extremely rapid, high-scoring game. Basically, whoever gets the puck from the face-off is most likely to score. Until, of course, the player gets the hang of the wide variety of tackling moves available to him, then a good honest going-for-the-puck scenario is a full body check.

Like an opposition player on a rectangular basis, though, and you'd better be ready to put your feet where his mouth is, as one of the features included is blocking. While the rest of your team are trying to do some good, it's possible to clamp away at that guy who skated over your shoes for as long as

you like! A graphics and gameplay marvel, E.A. Hockey is unashamedly recommended to one and all. *Hooney!*
 ☆☆☆☆☆

ELF



Price Amiga £29.99
Genre Arcade Adventure
Publisher Ocean

As *Contra* the III, it's the player's task to rescue his sweetest Lisa from the evil-magic clutches of Sarcoides the Mad Voodoo Man. The game takes place over six Tolkien-esque levels filled with platforms, pitfalls, ladders and bridges. *Contra*'s magic power allows him to protect himself from Sarcoides' tantrum loads of bewitchment by firing bolts of magic energy. Numerous instant-renewing spells and power-ups can be bought from the Old Local Shopper using cash picked up along the way.

Each massive maze-like level presents its own unique set of problems to solve and tests to achieve, requiring that the player constantly evolve new strategies to deal with them. All in all *Elf* is a polished high-quality gem, perfect for the platform or arcade adventurer fan.
 ☆☆☆

EPIC



Price Atari £129.00
Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Ocean

Boy, has this one been a long time in the making. It can sometimes imagine I'm almost prophesying this about a year and a half ago (and I think *ACE* was one of them), it's strange that it should finally appear around the same time as EA's *Book of Prop* (see this month's Review Directory), another game thought long lost to the Bermuda Triangle that is known as software development.

Anyway, it's here now so what's it like? Well, to be frank, it's a tiny bit disappointing. The last incarnations of the human race are all bundled up in a fleet of space ships, living through their space to escape the sun, which is just about to go nova. The only escape route lies through the heart of the hostile

puter (no keyboard you say). F-aa does try to offer all the technical bits and bops featured in your average Microsoft product. What it does do, however, is play surprisingly like a "real" simulation. Given the limitations of the controls. When playing from one of the outside views, it may look like just another version of Afterburner, but it really does play properly, with cameras and controls targeting all working and reliable.

Considering it's a console game, F-aa intercepter is a pretty remarkable achievement, and EA deserves to be congratulated for making the effort to produce something a bit more toying (both for the player and the machine) than just another two-player shoot 'em up. If you're used to what computer-based flight simulations can do, it's unlikely you'll be impressed by what F-aa intercepter has to offer. If you're not, however, and you're a bit fed up with the standard Megadrive arcade drudge, you could well be onto a winner here. ☆☆☆

FACE OFF



Price Atari ST/Amiga £29.99
Genre Sports Game
Publisher Electronic Arts

There aren't that many ice hockey games available on the Amiga. In fact, there aren't any. So Face Off is something of a welcome addition to the canon of sports games. "Worth getting" Well, yes and no. Like Manchester United Soccer, it's a very polished game, with some super disk menus and option screens. There's a league to participate in, where the player can do anything from train the players to oversee the manager. And like M.U.C. the player can turn off the arcade game and concentrate on the managerial side of things if they're that way inclined, or alternatively just play the arcade game alone.

The arcade side of things is okay, although some may wish the action had just a touch more zip. Certainly compared to E.A. Hockey it's distinctly sluggish. Control is simple and easy to pick up - shoot, pass or throw; up the joystick - and the sport is on, repeatedly where things get a little physical and the flats start flying. As standard on most sports games these days there's a replay function so that that inter-

ing goal can be replayed again and again. Overall, Face Off is a rounded package, though unlikely to exactly grab the public's imagination. Fans of the sport will enjoy it, but just how many of those are there in the UK? ☆☆☆

FATAL REWIND



Price Megadrive £24.99
Genre Action Shoot

Publisher Psygnosis/Electronic Arts
 Psygnosis disappoints nobody with its first foray onto the 16-bit consoles, maintaining the same high quality of graphics and sound that's made it the legend it is in the Amiga market. And thankfully in this case there's the gameplay to back up the visuals. But if The Killing Game Show had to be renamed for its transition from the Amiga to the Mega Drive, couldn't they have come up with something a little better than Fatal Rewind? Apart from the fact that it doesn't actually mean much, it's a fairly obvious attempt to sound like Total Recall, a film which bears no resemblance to this game at all.

The player is put in charge of a mechanical walker reminiscent of the ED-209s in Robocop. An agile little thing, it can run left and right, jump, fire and even climb up the sides of walls. Things that it can do nowadays, huh? The player has to negotiate a network of platforms in the heart for the rest in the core level. Along the way there are all sides, entering and reentering about the screens with the sole intent of seeing the player into the dust. And just to give the player a touch more incentive to escape the platformer are slowly sinking into a deadly red sea. The need to find keys to contain areas adds a small amount of depth to the game. But those arcade adventure elements never mean what is basically a very clunky and additive shoot 'em up. ☆☆☆

FIGHTER COMMAND



Price Amiga £19.99
Genre Strategy
Publisher Impressions

It may be a little late to cash in on Operation Desert Storm, but there can be no doubting Fighter Command's

typical, set in the present day Middle East, it puts the player in the shiny shoes of an allied air commander who's been given a simple task - kick the stuffing out of the aggressive enemy as quickly and efficiently as possible. But despite the lovely picture of a jet pilot coming into land on the box, there's not actually any flight-sim type action in the game at all. It's 100% pure strategy, with the player making all his decisions from a series of control rooms, screens and offices. Everything is presented by simplistic overhead camera views, tactical screens and radar displays.

Everything you'd expect from a military strategy game is in there - you manage the area with reconnaissance satellites to find out where everything is, then organize and launch attacks against chosen targets. There's a wide range of air available, including stealth bombers, fighters and helicopters from various air forces along with escort, patrol and seal missions. As the game progresses, the player has to keep tabs on political developments, fuel and equipment resources and all kinds of other factors which govern the game world.

Actually, considering there's rarely anything really exciting going on on-screen, Fighter Command does quite a good job of holding the player's attention. Most of the screens are static, nothing's really very immediate and it takes time to learn the basics, but despite all this it's still strangely compelling. There's plenty to do, lots of strategy to get the head round and generally it's all very jolly. The lack of any real flight action is a major setback, and it's because of this that many gamers may prefer to wait for Impressions's forthcoming ATWC. In The World's this month. ☆☆☆

FINAL BLOW



Price Amiga £11.99
Genre Action Beat
Publisher Storm

I actually went to a boxing match a couple of months back and people in the crowd were genuinely shouting "hit him" as if it was some sort of useful tactic which their chosen fighter should employ. One suspects those are exactly the sort of folks who spend more than a couple of quid on Final Blow in the weeks. Nothing wrong with the

celebration of the noble art, and nothing wrong with having a right old thumping session in the process, but Final Blow has more to do with seeing who can hit Dave the Greatest than boxing.

Although the player can endeavor with plenty of moves and the ability to block punches, the speed of the game completely removes any sense of those which, after all, is what boxing is all about. Even Mike Tyson would concentrate on different areas of the body. Hit them in the ribs enough to make them leave their guard, and then go to work on their face. No such accuracy in Final Blow, since the flurry of computerized and human arms makes it impossible to see who's been hit and who's. The result is a non-stop barrel of stick-stomping frustration, about the only way to work out who's being hit is by watching the empty bar at the bottom of the screen.

So far as a coin-op conversion goes, it's a pretty good job, and in two players mode it's alright for a laugh, but the original was far from perfect. Amiga owners may be wise to hold on for a more rounded game. ☆☆☆

FINAL FIGHT



Price Amiga £29.99
Genre Beat 'Em Up
Publisher EA Games

Yet another in EA Games's seemingly endless string of Captain America titles. In Metro City (loosely based on New York) all is not well. Crime is rife and to make a bad situation worse the Mayor's right-handed daughter has been kidnapped by - you guessed it - Mr Big. (The old Mr Big certainly gets around, doesn't he?) The player and optional partners have to fist-fight their way through the city's wastelands to rescue her. Why? Why not?

Final Fight is something of a first for here - you see on the home computer. In it's actually quite good. The sprites are large and decently animated, the background scroll is smooth and the action is fast. However, of the driving whether a punch connects or not is a little dodgy, but apart from that this can be recommended unreservedly to anyone who fancies a little action without breaking their knuckles. ☆☆☆

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FIRST SAMURAI



Price Amiga £29.99
Genre Arcade (Beat)
Platform Image Works

This is the way that arcade adventures should be made! Succeeding in producing a game with the steroidal power of Intellivision's *Warrior* and some puzzle-solving fun, *Warrior* has come up with a winning formula.

The player must solve the final murder of his Ninja Master by chasing the evil Demon King through 40th Century Japan.

On top of all the regular hacking and slashing that you would expect to find in an arcade adventure, there are Special Items, which can be used a little like playing a poker in *It's A Wonderful Life* and can summon the spirit of your murdered Magistrate to help you through some of the more tricky situations.

While it could be said that the last thing the world needs is another martial arts game or another collection-the-object adventure, *First Samurai* carefully outdoes the argument by blending both styles in an effective and appealing way, keeping both hardcore hitters and those with more cerebral inclinations happy.

☆☆☆☆

FLICKY



Price Megadrive £34.99
Genre Platform
Publisher Sega

"Don't be put off by the screenshots on the back of the box" is probably the best bit of advice I can give about *Flicky*. It looks awful - tiny primary-colour sprites and garish backgrounds. And to be honest, things don't improve much in the game itself. However, like *Quaxxon*, an ugly appearance can veil the goodness inside.

The player controls the tiny bird of the title. The little darling's chicks have gone and got themselves lost in the rooms of a giant cat-infested house. *Flicky* has to run and jump about, collect her scattered brood and take them to the safety of the Inn, while avoiding the prowling bitches. *Flicky* is a wonderfully playable game, very simple but packed with fun. Some may dispute whether there's *any* need of

fun, but for those with the cash it's a good purchase. ☆☆☆☆

FLOOR 13



Price IBM PC £24.99
Genre Strategy
Publisher Virgin Games

The myth that strategy games are boring has been well and truly exploded by a game that's likely to convert even confirmed trigger-addicts to a more subtle and intelligent software diet. *Floor 13* offers a new slant on the strategy genre by basing itself around a compelling scenario and offering gameplay that goes beyond the regular strategy framework.

Set in present-day Britain, it tells of a government-run secret police force that must overt secrets, wipe out subversive elements and generally protect the government from embarrassing incidents so that a general's fall from grace. An Director General of this corrupt agency, the player is solely responsible for its operations.

The game is played almost entirely from a single static screen of an office desk, onto which intelligence reports and newspaper stories arrive from the outside world and form the basis of the information which the player works from as plots and storylines unfold. Various sub-departments, such as surveillance, interrogation and dissemination are the instruments of the player's will, with study agents using reports, tapping phones, searching premises and even kidnapping and killing people to achieve the government's internal aims.

The way in which the game reveals information as half-clues and red herrings mean that good detective work and thorough cross-checking of intelligence data is as important as the conventional strategic skills which are also required. It's all thoroughly absorbing, very realistic stuff, and comes highly recommended, even to those who can't normally stand strategy games. ☆☆☆☆☆

FOOTBALL DIRECTOR II



Price Atari ST/Amiga £24.99
Genre Strategy

Platform IBM Games

Yassassin, Don't get me wrong, I've got nothing against football - there's just something slightly boring about management games of this type. *Player Manager* is the exception to the rule, firstly because it's so excellent and secondly because you get to play kick-off with it, which made it doubly excellent. When faced with something like this, though, it's difficult to imagine anybody but the most desperate sort of gamer or die-hard firsty fan actually getting any enjoyment out of it.

Technically of course, there's nothing to fault it, and the depth that the game goes into is commendable - you've got your league and cup trophies, financial problems, player injuries, team tactics, talent scouts, stadium management and all the rest of it. On the artistic side, however, nothing much seems to have changed since the days when these games were prevalent as the spectators alone there or four years ago.

These days, however, the cheap graphics and sound just don't cut it any more, so when something like this comes along it seems like a bit of an embarrassment, really. But of course it's the gameplay that counts and for what it is, *Football Director* is entertaining enough, and providing you're not expecting too much and willing to give the game some time, it should pay off handsomely. The wiser members of the computerised football management fraternity will probably want to save their pennies for *Player Manager*, however. ☆☆☆

FORMULA ONE GRAND PRIX



Price Atari ST/Amiga £24.99
Genre Racing
Simulation
Publisher MicroProse

Believe you me, you've never seen a racing game like this. Lots of *Outlaw Ramps!* *Indanapolis 500!* *Pole!* They are (but didn't say) compared to the complete and utter excellence of *Formula One Grand Prix*, the latest and greatest game from the programming genius that is *Grand Slam!* *Street Car Race!* *Overground*. The graphics are truly amazing, with highly-detailed cars complete with driver's helmet poking out of the cockpit literally covering around tracks laid with studs, trees,

streets and clouds. The sound matches the visuals, with good use made of stereo samples for the engine.

But it's not just the quality of the graphics or the sounds that makes *F1GP* so special, it's the meticulous attention to detail that generates an authentic and involving *Grand Prix* atmosphere. Everything you'd expect to find on a *Grand Prix* circuit - stands, bridges, tunnels, etc. - is there just in the identical position they'd be found in real life, even extending right down to crowds pushing crippled cars off the track and engineer crews waiting in the pits.

The wonderful control over the car is the essential thing on the side, with plenty of difficulty modifiers to make the game easy enough for Grand Prix junkies to play or tough enough to bring sterling teams out to levels of sweat. Indeed, so good is *F1GP* that it earned itself an ACE Trailblazer and the honour of becoming the new *Racing Simulation* benchmark. Good enough for you? ☆☆☆☆☆

FUZZBALL



Price Amiga £19.99
Genre Platform
Publisher System 1

Well, this is a bit of class from the past and so inside, technologically less than progressive, System 1's latest is a simple yet hugely addictive platform affair. The player controls a bouncing ball of fuzz that has to be guided around a network of platforms, collecting fuzzy bonuses. Energy spikes, the Fuzzballs of the title, try to stop him. These come in four increasingly-aggressive "class" sizes, purple, pink, black and red. By repeatedly shooting them with his kick gun, the player can star them long enough to knock them off the platform. However, if the player takes too long the Fuzzball starts to lay even more waste on their bodies.

As the player progresses through the five odd levels more and bolder Fuzzballs appear, with able creators start bouncing around and the platform leaps provide an even greater bit of the player's good perfect positioning power. *Fuzzball* is a classic example of "simple being good". The addictive, unchained gameplay and raw graphics make this an *Agade*

winner. And there's a night-dreamy animated intro to boot. (Well, you're got to fill those big boxes with something, haven't you?)
☆☆☆☆

GALAGA '91



Price Game Gear \$29.99
Genre Arcade Shoot
Publisher Impact

Arrggghh! You filthy, wicked, sucking little alien bastards! Anyone who played the original Galaga in the arcades, or better still the BBC version called *Galaga from Handark* will be thoroughly wowed in the extensive tetris-type features the included.

However, in these incarnations, the game had that elusive spark of sheer addictiveness that means no matter how many times that night-on-terrible-able bullet destroyed the player's craft and sent him back to the start of the level, it never became annoying enough to prevent the player returning.

Here, the likelihood of a game ending up all too Continuum is extremely remote. It's the sort of game that leaves you feeling so smug and important that you have to turn off the power in order to waste some revenge on the top-end boards.

Nevertheless, a top-notch scrolling shoot-out this is. Not quite as good as the superb *Moby Wars*, but boasting an infinite number of levels (with simply an increasing number and breadth of alien and some remarkably learnable flight patterns, it's not bad.

It's basically the old derivation of the legendary *Galaxian* theme with just a bit of alien and graphics.

The main problem lies in the fact that the player can only have two bullets flying on the screen at any one time, and the annoying fact the alien force of circling at the bottom of the screen, killing the player who makes the mistake of thinking that he's satisfactorily dodged an attack.
☆☆☆

THE GAMES - WINTER CHALLENGE



Price IBM PC £29.99
Genre Sport Simulation

Publisher Amadeus

This is, as our real friends would say, mega-wicked! It appeared in the post, totally unexpected, and runs out to be one of the best games we've seen this month! Yeah, seriously! The player (as players - up to ten can take part) competes in eight winter sports - luge, downhill skating, cross-country skating, speed skating, bobsled, giant slalom, bobsled and ski jump. All the events are depicted in an effective mix of 3D polygons for the landscape (a bit like *Mistover*) with sprites for the competitors and course scenery (trees, fences, etc). Visuals are less impressive - on a basic PC the game is played almost in silence except for a lettering-game tone and a crowd cheer when a player completes an event.

The player views the action from just behind and above his on-screen alter-ego, therefore getting a good view of the action as well as an excellent first-person impression of speed. Each of the events is relatively easy to control and consequently very easy to get into. Like the *Type Games* series, success is dependent on timing and control rather than hammering the fire button, so it's very satisfying to play and makes during seconds all those best times mean a matter of skill as opposed to physical stamina.

Despite its superior qualities, *The Games* may get a bit dull when played alone as criticism levelled at nearly every game of this type. However, as a game to play with a group of friends it's new fun - and that makes *The Games* a more than worthy purchase to play over this Xmas holiday period.
☆☆☆☆

GREAT NAPOLEONIC BATTLES



Price Amiga £29.99
Genre Strategy

Publisher Impressions

You've got to laugh. The shots on the back of the box tell all about a producer like this. "Create new battlefields with over 50 terrain pieces" says the caption under a picture of some grass and bushes. "French infantry advance on Kiev" says the one under the picture with some green squares with crosses on.

But if you're intrigued, you should try, because Impressions certainly knows how to put together a top-notch his-

torical wargame, even if they combine graphics to save their lives.

Great Napoleonic Battles offers the player the chance to become Napoleon himself, or the commander of one of the unfortunate territories to fall under his control.

Impressions games are war/strategy games in their truest sense operating on a hex grid with all the bit point ratings and defense abilities displayed in their ugly numerical forms, but they are sure to keep happy the gamer who simply wants a machine to do the adding up and look after all the imagination, sound and action in his own head.
☆☆☆

GUNSHIP 2000



Price IBM PC £29.99
Genre Simulation

Publisher MicroProse

Nobody writes simulations like MicroProse does. This is a highly-realistic, rugged to the company's earlier mega-hit *Gunship* which has gone down in software history as one of the best-selling times ever. This sequel is far more than just *Gunships*. Every part of the game has been given a radical overhaul.

Probably the most impressive aspect is the revamped graphics system. Using a sort of patchwork-quilt landscaping technique, the gameworld has been modified in exciting detail, complete with rice, hills, mountains, valleys, etc. If it's a geographical feature, it's there. As usual, the game takes the form of a series of pre-scripted missions. Unfortunately this complexity means that you really need at least a 486MHz PC to get anything approaching speed from the game. Armed with a board is marvellously atmospheric, and adds an end to the gritty battle-field feel.

The keypad control is good, but actually getting the craft to fly matches that of the real thing, so, it's very difficult, and certainly makes *Gunship 2000* one of the best of games to test your sim-playing skills on. However, if you're looking for the ultimate chopper simulation, then look it it.
☆☆☆☆

HARD DRIVIN'

Price Lynx £24.99

Genre Racing Simulation
Publisher Atari

The Lynx catalogue of software keeps getting bigger and bigger, and - more importantly - the quality of the games keeps getting better and better. *Hard Drivin'*, a conversion of the Atari coin-op, is a case in point.

Potential buyers expecting or hoping for *Pole Position 3* are going to be disappointed - this is a pretty successful attempt to simulate the controls and performance of a real car, and as such it's slightly more difficult and much less forgiving to drive than you would expect cars.

The action takes place on one of two courses, a Speed Track and a Street Track complete with jumps and loop-the-loops. Once these have been tamed the player can try racing against the Phoenix Phantoms.

The graphics and sound are nothing short of incredible, accurately reproducing the look and feel of its cousin *Big Doubt*. Along with *3.2 D.M. Rescue* this is a real showcase for the power of the Lynx.

It takes a little while to get used to *Hard Drivin'* on the Lynx - the joyride is a poor substitute for a wheel - making the going tough at first, and some may find the difficulty combined with the lack of immediate car-to-car shell-boring. However, once the player has got the hang of things they should find *Hard Drivin'* remarkably satisfying. Recommended.
☆☆☆☆

HARD NOVA



Price Atari ST/Amiga £29.99
Genre Role-Playing Game

Publisher Electronic Arts

Hard Nova's a game that's difficult to categorise. Like *Starflight* it's a mixture of styles, boasting strategy as well as role-playing elements, adventure as well as arcade space-flight sequences. It's the sort of stuff that Electronic Arts in America have been churning out for years - science fiction adventures with alien worlds, strong mutant characters, big spaceships clanging together and all the rest of it. There's supposedly a comic edge to this one, with the player taking on the persona of "wrecking

space holds *Hard Wars*.

You can interact with characters, RPG-fashion, collect objects, do missions and trek across the galaxy. Hopping, diving cargo from planet to planet and so on and so forth.

It sounds like a lot of fun, but if this sort of authority is your cup of tea, then you're liable to have a lot of hating/hatred fun with it—it's just a shame that the vast majority of gamers don't have the patience to get into it. Well worth checking out—the game's got plenty of screenshots (in fact, and gets progressively more involving the longer it's played, but don't expect to pick it up straight away.

☆☆☆☆

HARE RASING HAVOC



Price: PC £25.00
Genre: Arcade/Beat

Publisher: Games, Videogames

Planet! The idea of a game based around Who Framed Roger Rabbit's stunning cartoon sporting sequence does indeed sound like one fairly proper—but only, Disney has realised little of its great potential in this rather dull little game.

On paper at least, it sounds like the cartoon's intrinsically frenetic spirit has been captured. Roger's been captured with looking after the accident-prone Baby Herman, and must rescue nothing happens to him while his dog-eared mother is out of the house, that however disappointed to the local dairy to sample their milkery wares, and Roger must track him down before any harm comes to him.

Sounds like fun! Don't let appearances be deceived. The only thing that *Hare Raising Havoc* manages to do is imitate the player beyond success with its unorthodox control, illogical puzzles and repetitive gameplay.

On each of the screens that Roger encounters, there's a problem to be solved, which involves manipulating the surrounding scenery and objects. To be honest, it's not very taxing and the player must often find himself fighting against the unresponsive control and slow, drudge animation that actually getting to grips with the puzzles. With the Disney Social Justice connected you get samples of the original movie characters' voices and SFX—but these quickly become very bit as annoying as the game itself. Only die-hard Roger Rabbit fans need apply.

☆☆☆☆

HEIMDALL



Price: Amiga (LDR) £24.99
Genre: Arcade/Adventure

Publisher: Core Design

Also a long string of shoot-em-ups and platform games (Car-Fap, Prowler, Chuck Italy, Core Design has returned to once-involving territory with *Heimdall*, an isometric arcade adventure cum role-playing game based around Viking lore.

The *Heimdall* of the title is a human gift from the Gods, sent to Earth by Odin to possess the three great weapons that will conquer the forces of evil. After selecting a crew from the varied characters available, *Heimdall* sets sail across the Nordic waters to destination unknown.

For the most part, the game is too basic, isometric adventure it is. *The Immortal*, although there are some interesting strategic and FRP elements—all the characters have differing skills, which means that the player must switch between them, as in a conventional RPG, in particular certain ones. The strategy is provided by the sailing system, where the player must travel between the various islands (there are three archipelagos, each hiding one of the elemental weapons, and each hiding an independent level) in the most efficient manner.

Heimdall is a fine adventure game, although the action, due to the producer's FRP overtones, is a little slow and less exciting than most of its counterparts in the genre. In fact there are times when very little seems to be happening at all, and only those who are willing to handle slow, drudge maps and all the rest of it, are likely to enjoy the game to the full.

That said, it's been designed with the intended ease and convenience, and there's enough here to keep anybody glued to the screen for some considerable time.

A fine game.

☆☆☆☆☆☆

HUDSON HAWK



Price: Amiga ST, Amiga £24.99
Genre: Platform

Publisher: Domes

Bruce Willis' film was a disaster, and *Crash* hadn't turned out anything of note in the film-remake stakes for quite a while, so somebody was really expecting very much out of *Hudson Hawk*. But instead of the usual cynical and barely playable license, what we got was the best platform game so far this year. *Special FX* took a big gamble in its interpretation of the film by channelling parts of the source material into the windows, and getting on with the business of just building a good game around the film's basic premise—that of a cat burglar stealing valuable artefacts from around the world.

It works superbly, in much the same style as former platform classics like *Mario*, *Donkey Kong* and *Super Mario*, with solid, comical characters playing out ingeniously designed platform levels. It's a class act, without a doubt, with fantastic traps and pitfalls lurking around every corner. The gameplay is steady up to console (arcade standard), and the graphics and sound really do enhance the fun factor because they're so polly. Don't be put off by the shockily low-res presentation—*Hudson Hawk* is a brilliant game in its own right and deserves a place in your collection. Today.

☆☆☆☆☆☆

HUNTER



Price: Amiga ST, Amiga £24.99
Genre: Action/Strategy

Publisher: Actiontime

It's a sad old world, this one we live in, but when poor old Actiontime got some decent products together, their MegaBite daily gives out pulls the plug on them. Now, however after the aforementioned "decent product" has been swelling around doing very little indeed for the last few months, Actiontime's current priority status of games, The One Company have taken it upon themselves to let another batch in of gamepans ready the streets.

Hunter is the sort of game that you dream of playing. A polygon-based action strategy game with all of the usually associated niceties removed, it offers all the "wouldn't it be great if..." features which should, by rights, be included in all these games.

Taking the role of the hunter, the player must travel around a bunch of islands, systematically destroying all enemy installations to whatever way

he sees fit. Your particular mission is devoted to a briefing where specific, immediate targets are detailed by your allied commander.

The best thing about *Hunter* is that there's no messing about. If you want to infiltrate an enemy base, get a disguise and you're away! If you want to get closer, steal a helicopter/jeep/truck or whatever. It's all so easy and because the unnecessary complexity of basic tactics has been removed, the player can concentrate on progressing with the mission much more intently.

Excellent graphics and a fast-paced storyline can only add to *Hunter's* already awe-inspiring style. A winner.

☆☆☆☆☆☆

THE IMMORTAL



Price: IBM PC £30.00
Genre: Arcade/Adventure

Publisher: Electronic Arts

It's over a year now since *The Immortal* appeared to great public acclaim on the Amiga. A masterpiece of animation and game design, it was probably responsible for selling a fair few IBM upgrades. At last it's made it's way on to the PC, and now features a couple of new enhancements that make it any even better game.

The majority of the game is identical. The player guides a capably-armed sword-wielder as he travels around an isometric 3-D landscape. As he progresses around the corridors, he discovers treasure, traps and—of course—terrifying monsters. In the original Amiga game, the fairly complex combat took place at the base with all the rest of the game (ie, usually isn't) made judging responses to the opponents' moves and devising a attack strategy. On the PC, however, when combat occurs the view switches to a close-up that makes things far more

The only gripe from a PC viewer's point of view is that having been spoiled by the recent plethora of 3-D action games, the 3-D display here is a little disappointing. However, this doesn't seriously detract from what is an otherwise excellent game, and remains involved without becoming to anyone who fancies a bit of "dangerous" dragging.

☆☆☆☆☆☆

JIMMY WHITE'S

READERS PAGES

'WHIRLWIND' SNOOKER



Price **Amiga £17/Amiga £24.99**

Game Sport Simulation
Publisher Virgin Games
Archer Madson, veteran programmer of *IK-1* and *Dropout* is probably the last person you'd expect to write a snooker game. Cue games have been around since the beginning of computer gaming - a few coloured shapes, some angle-of-deflection algorithms and away you go. But even with the advent of 3D graphics, none of them have really had any element of realism until now.

The table is viewed from behind the cue ball so the player can line up shots as if on a real table. The view can be rotated through various axes and zoomed in so as the player can see from virtually every angle conceivable. The ball movement is accurate, without balls slipping for no apparent reason or going off at peculiar angles.

Two player games are the best, but first levels of computer opponents are available for the lone gamer. As the player progresses more sophisticated tactics can be incorporated, like positional play, barriers, snags, screws and every type of spin on all possible, and are vital for smothering opponents. The end result of *WHW's* comprehensive and realistic approach to scoring snooker is the most authentic sports simulation to date.

□ □ □ □ □

KNIGHTMARE



Price **Amiga £29.99**

Game Role-Playing Game
Publisher Mindscape

Knighthime, based on the children's TV series of the same name, can best be described as *Capin* with new graphics. The similarities are hardly surprising - both were written by Tony Crowther, the man who has been responsible for more games than Sir Widdington.

And, as anyone who has played *Capin* will realise, this is not such a bad thing. The action is depicted in Stripped-down-down-the-corrider 3D, with the player able to move around the puzzle- and monster-strewn labyrinth with ease. It's not particularly original or ground-breaking, but any-

one who enjoys a good RPG - and *Capin*, in particular - will be more than happy with this.

My only serious quibble is whether kiddie fans of the TV show will find its slightly cerebral nature appealing.

□ □ □ □ □

LOTUS TURBO CHALLENGE 2



Price **Amiga £24.99**

Game Racing Game
Publisher Gameslip Graphics

A worthy successor to the excellent *Lotus Sport Turbo Challenge* this game has a number of interesting differences to its predecessor. For a start, it's a better one-player game, but not so good for two players. Technically superior to the original, there's nevertheless something just a little bit lacking. Perhaps it's the removal of the lap system, or perhaps it's the fact that crashing into the other cars really doesn't do you that much damage, but whatever, it isn't quite as good.

However, it is a great deal better than both of the driving games on the market, and there's a Linkup option allowing up to five players to race at once. The action is fast and furious and the control the players have over their cars has been greatly improved.

Players must blast their way through a selection of stages, each bearing a particular hazard, whether it be natural (potholes, rain, sand) or man-made (tree-trunks jaggernauts rumbling across the road). Graphically superior to the vast majority of similar titles, *Lotus* just lacks the business, with fairly mediocre sounds and a high level of detail on the cars themselves.

Despite being hampered by some appalling acceleration whenever the player drives through any water and the flawed two player mode, *Lotus 2* is a pretty impressive game.

□ □ □ □ □

LAST NINJA 3



Price **Amiga £24.99**

Game Arcade Adventure
Publisher System 3

Well, well, well. After everyone has been shying up their chins at the prospect of giving System 3's much-

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Help!! I search people to exchange games with (I.B.M. games). Please send me your list of games: Ido Admon, 26 Averbuch Street, Bangli-Hasharon 47400, Israel.

lated, much-loved and much-delayed conclusion of the Ninja series a right old kicking, the bleeding thing turns out to be great!

Applying a more arcade-adventure angle to the tried-and-tested Ninja formula, the boys at the System have produced a game which has all the visual appeal of the first two games in the series and more of the problems. Well, that's not quite the case, but instead of the game relying so heavily on the fight routines which, to be honest, were never that good, the emphasis has been moved onto the puzzle-solving element which isn't half so hard to implement.

Spanning an epic quest across a bunch of different oceans (earth, air, fire, water) and ready the game continually throws up different puzzles which the player must solve in order to reach the next stage.

Aside from completing these puzzles, there's a fair amount of racking to be done too, and the collectible weapons add enough novelty to ensure that even when the player is doing over his twelfth adventure of the kind, he'll find something new to do.

Generally, the game is really rather special, with the cinematic landscapes at a stage which must surely be approaching the state of the art, and the animations of the characters themselves being undeniably fine, just look at the good blur on that.

☆☆☆☆

LEISURESUIT LARRY 5



Price IBM PC £24.99
Genre Adventure
Publisher Sierra On-Line

He's Larry Laffer! She's Passionate Patti! And they're in a whole lot of trouble! *Leisure Suit Larry 5*, the latest instalment in the impressively successful adventure series chronicles the spring adventures of America's favourite lounge lizard.

In what promises to be the most epic adventure in the series, the player must guide Larry and Patti through a world of puns and metaphors in the quest to keep good heaven sweet on the airwaves. Initially taking the role of the addition host of America's finest Home Video, Larry quickly becomes reemployed in a hazy underworld plot to get all porn-off the normal market and drive a compromised where enormous prof-

its can be made.

It's all pretty standard point and click stuff, but this time the player alternates between the very different personas of Larry and Patti, allowing both to get into very scrappy and also avoiding and particularly severe cries of "Suckers!" from lonely liberal men.

Again, the hand-painted eye-colour graphics and game design are an excellent option for what occasionally lapses into a level of pretty lame gags. However, this time Larry does have moments of absolute brilliance, and the continual promise of a further scary pic of a top eye in a sexy pose is enough to keep you coming back for more. He? Well, please yourselves.

☆☆☆☆

MAD TV



Price IBM PC £14.99
Genre Strategy
Publisher Random Acts

My, what timing! Only weeks after the big TV franchise debacle and as the country quakes in dread at the threat of a lead of old Spanish comedies and muggy game shows filling our screens, Random Acts produce a game which is all about running your own TV station! If only the powers at TV AM had the chance to play Mad TV, they might still be in business.

Not only is Mad TV a right laugh, allowing the player to have total control (with the only limiting factor being the budget) over an entire TV station, but it's an excellent strategy game into the bargain.

The aim is to keep Mad TV at the top of the TV ratings while simultaneously winning the hearts of Betty, the most beautiful woman in town. Taking place in a huge skyscraper, the game has the player's character bating around from the various offices, buying up films, scheduling programmes and keeping an eye on the all-important viewing figures.

Every room and again, your boss will crop up and give you some helpful pointers. He may be known that his station wins an award for possum art films, so it's up to you to schedule accordingly. Now all of this would be a good enough load on its own, but when you consider that Mad TV is a pretty excellent strategy game with complicated interrelations between various departments and some top-notch presenta-

tion in fact, you would have to conclude that you'd be mad, he-he-he-he-he, to miss it.

☆☆☆☆

MAGIC GARDEN



Price Amiga £24.99
Genre Arcade Adventure
Publisher Electronic Zoo

Good God! What was out. Having been plagued for months by an apparently never-ending stream of criminal grotesques, we were understandably keen to get our hands on the game which they possess. And when a peculiar concoction it is.

In his endeavours to become 'the most efficient groaner', the player must guide a groaner and the spontaneous magic garden doing, well, this is where it becomes a little bit unclear actually. He can do pretty much whatever he fancies. He can water the flowers. He can mow the lawn. He can use some magic seeds and fly around on the back of a big dog! But the groaner must be careful, for there are scurrily traps which live in the garden like big flowers which can burn him or tall grass which can slow him down.

And Groaner had better be careful with the number of objects he's carrying, as he will become too tired and get hit by lightning and die. But the groaner won't get hit by lightning if he is exploring the under-ground caverns where the robot of Groaner can flush the toilet for extra efficiency.

Presented in side-on elevation, the game looks, plays, smells tastes and is just odd. It's so odd so anything I've ever seen in my life. Peculiar! Scenic! Potty style graphics and gameplay which quote honestly is tricky to imagine appealing to the masses like Magic Garden's a true original.

☆☆

MARTIAN MEMORANDUM



Price IBM PC £25.99
Genre Adventure
Publisher Access/US Gold

Over again a game pretends to be an 'interactive novel' and turns out to be little more than a simplistic adventure with flashy graphics and sound. But

In Martin Memorandum's case the aesthetics are enough to make up for the game design's shortcomings - at least they seem to be for the first few hours. The game uses digitised video footage, sampled speech and fills plenty of music to set the scene (the story starts you as a futuristic private detective who must travel in Mars to track down the kidnapped daughter of a famous industrialist, and it works very well, creating a strong sense of atmosphere and involvement).

But as it is other the case with games of this type, the effect of these flashy gimmicks soon wears off and when you actually buckle down to play the game you realise that there isn't really that much to see or do. An ardent adventurer could easily complete it inside of a week, because the linear game design means that it's almost impossible to go down the wrong track - it's as if you're being guided by an invisible helping hand, and that's not very satisfying. Both the *Of The Oranges* and *Planet Of Chaos* offer similar and more satisfying experiences, so if you've got the PC muscle to run so demanding a product, you'd be well advised to check either of those out instead.

☆

MEGAFORTRESS



Price IBM PC £24.99
Genre Simulation
Publisher Microgame

The trouble with games based on taking every single role in a big, stupid old plane like the B-52 is that virtually every role is mind-numbingly boring. I mean, who honestly wants to pilot that coarse course thousands of miles of terrain using a 3D terrain mapping computer or have to fiddle around with abnormal temperatures in order to jam the enemy's radar?

The aim of the game is to pilot a battle-worn B-52 across both Iraq and the Soviet Union, keeping the location and aim of your missions utterly secret until the awesome onslaught of firepower can be unleashed on the target. Unfortunately, for all it's graphic packaging and interest, *Megafortress* is just a very good simulation of a rather dull business. For some fun can be had in any of a host of more recently released flight games, and Microgame's *South Fighter* series even offers similar crop-up on-the-scene action for

these players who are especially keen on that sort of thing.

Perfectly competent both graphically and on the play front, Megatraveller has missions designed by real 834 navigators and best-selling author Dale Brown, although it's one of those games that I guess you really need to have experienced the real thing to appreciate.

☆☆☆

MEGA LO MANIA



Price **Amiga £34.99**

Genre **Arcade Strategy**
Publisher **Image Works**

Released amid a bunch of God-em-ups that are still coming thick and fast, ImageWorks's offering has fared better than most, steering sufficiently clear of the Big Daddy Popolous while not being afraid to borrow little bits here and there where appropriate.

Set in an alternate universe, Mega Lo Mania is all about the quest for power. From over a set of worlds, each made up from a suite of islands, to be precise. New worlds are formed and intelligent life is placed upon them, upon which interstellar freelancers descend and try to seize the reins of power for themselves.

The conflict arises, needless to say, where more than one freelancer takes a shine to a particular island. Since each area can only have one ruler, a campaign of imperialism begins, with each player trying to use the forces at his disposal to overthrow the others.

Each island exists within its own time period, and the rate of development, intelligence and so on of its inhabitants is governed accordingly. Players quick to invest time in invention and the refining of natural elements, rather than simply running around hitting the others with sticks are more likely to succeed.

☆☆☆☆☆

MEGATRAVELLER 2: QUEST FOR THE ANCIENTS



Price **IBM PC £78A**

Genre **Role-Playing Game**
Publisher **Empire**

This latest US release from American

software team Pentagon is more like introducing a sequel to Megatraveller, the 20th Anniversary. As before, the player leads a team of five space adventures through hell and trouble in (hopefully) riches and fame. This time around, the player has to be a bit more subtle, the flow of time slowing remaining from a mysterious set of notes left by a dead crew called the Ancients. But are they dead? That is up to the player to find out.

Springing high-quality 2D colour VGA, this is certainly a treat on the eye, and the stats as well with a suitable control card. The game itself is an RPG in the Ultima style, but not half as rigorous — which for many will be more than a blessing. The story is fun and involving, with plenty of sub-tasks to perform that provide welcome and often amusing relief from the main plot. If one has a minor niggle it's that the space combat — which you'd think would be the most exciting part of the game — is flat and dull, with little sense of player involvement. In summary, highly recommended.

☆☆☆☆

MEGA TWINS



Price **Ami 87/Amiga £29.99**

Genre **Platform Game**
Publisher **US Gold**

There's big trouble in the land of crazy things. A dark shadow, etc, etc, has fallen across the land, and it's up to the two sweetest and most unlikeliest warriors ever to give computer software a run for its eye. At its core Mega Twins is a platform game in which one or two players guide their crotchety heroes through level after level of ledges and chasms, avoiding off the attacking enemies with a bungee from their tiny little swords. Magic can be learned along the way that act as super weapons, which are particularly useful against the super-tough real-of-level enemies.

As a continuation of the CapCom comic Mega Twins is hardly startling, but it's competent enough. Apart from the slightly turgid pace of the action, the main thing that prevents Mega Twins from making any real impression is the lack of excitement. There are no real thrills on offer — the platform element is minor, and having to routinely try fire to jab the enemies into oblivion is hardly opening up whole new vistas of intellectual entertainment. The

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There are many more other little things that make this game the most addictive and accurate representation of a Football Manager's season. It would be impossible to list all the features implemented but we assure you that this is the best Windows/Amiga version of football simulation ever produced. Details of the game, including all the features and 18 screen shot numbers. See the order form for details on how to order this incredible game. Available for all Ami 87's and Amiga's. PC version coming next.

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final nail in the coffin is the fact that the whole thing is incredibly easy - a competent player will probably get half-way through the game on his first set of credits. Mega Twins had Argale potential, but whether it's the fault of the original cast or of the conversion it's arguably turned out to be longer rather than Mega.
☆☆☆

MERC8



Price Megadrive £29.95 (Import)
Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Sega

As if integrative cinema hasn't had quite enough about it-out there to keep them happy will into the next century, here's another chance to harness the joyed. The player must team up with a bullet-headed man and raid increasingly well-defended money installations in your mission to rescue the President. Give the smooth top-down multi-directional scrolling and plentiful power-ups little to stress. More about the tank and fire-of-stroke-ways. Solo play is available for soldiers of fortune who prefer to go-it-alone (or who haven't got any friends) but the third factor of such missions is really pretty limited. Equipped with initially wacky weapons, the over-encased heroes must gradually work their way up the screen, picking off rebel soldiers both on foot or lurking in gun towers or jeeps. Extra firepower and strength replenishers can be had by destroying the numerous crates lying about.

Players can speed their progress through the frequently treacherous levels by jumping into a semi-leaned out jeep and roaring up the screen. This bit is quite amusing, as you can run down the enemy soldiers or blast them with the jeep's in-built bazooka. As well as the regular end-of-level guardians which have the form of an assortment of military hardware - planes, helicopters, tanks, etc) the levels are reasonably well broken up with bigger foes in the shape of gun-towers, machine gun nests and the like.

Aside from the problems thrown up when a game controlled by the jiggled necessitates diagonal firing the movie images always seem to attack on a dimly steady. More has a brace of other lead-sequences up its sleeve. It looks good, offers absolutely no originality and when played solo is a daunting task.



M1929M SUPER FULCRUM



Price IBM PC £24.99
Genre Simulation
Publisher Namco

Improving on an already successful formula, Namco have done away with many of the longevity problems of their first M19 game and have set the game against an epic backdrop of conflict in southern America. Taking the role of the pilot of a United Nations-controlled M19, the player must launch himself into hostile airspace from a solitary allied-controlled airbase - his mission is to gradually erode the striking rebel infidel's grasp on the sea by blowing up their supply lines and destroying their fuel depots.

It's here that the company must recently associated with, not especially excellent coin-up-conversions should have set such a high standard, and as a result, it may be tough for them to find the right audience. Nevertheless, a cheap product it is, with a touch of external virtue and a flexibility of mission structure enabling the inventive player to try his hand at placing his own strategies for doing away with the enemy first.

Also included in this game is an implementation of the real M19's fly-by-wire system, an auto-stabilising device which prevents the plane from flaking around all over the place like a big girl's blouse. Most handy is control.

Presented, surprisingly enough, in jagged graphics, M19 loses the competition on the raw-ness-of-bit, even if it is a bit wacky to imagine it out-living some of the more intense Megadrive products. A winner.
☆☆☆☆

NIGHT AND MAGIC ISLES OF TERRA



Price IBM PC £24.99
Genre Role-Playing Game
Publisher New World Computing, US G&W

"By my mighty sword of 2-level, 1. Hagar (Dragonbone), must smite the evil doom-legions of Xyros before the alignment of the six moons-world!"

Yes, well, you get the general idea. Might And Magic III is yet another delve into the much-explored realm of RFP gaming, this time coming out as a cross between Dungeon Master and The Sea's Tale. Is it just me or has the whole RFP genre been close-to-death so badly that there's just nothing new anymore?

This third Might And Magic outing would seem to support that argument, as apart from some very flashy VGA visuals and soundboard music, there seems to be very little new or interesting on offer, except maybe for the over-persistent intensity of the hard RFP fixation. As you'd suspect, the scenario is about as hackneyed as one is ever going to get, with some clunky plot about securing the Ultimate Power Orb (you see, it's) to the King. What that involves is selecting a party of characters, one, two, three, various and all that, and then wandering about fighting with dragons, collecting treasures and picking up clues.

The game itself actually is very pretty, but for the most part the adventuring is pretty dull and unimpressive. Considering, however, how conditioned RFP gamers have become, I doubt that anybody who's likely to buy it will be disappointed by what they find.
☆☆☆

MONSTER BUSINESS



Price Amiga £24.99
Genre Platform
Publisher Empire

The mad monster from the big box set have once again broken loose, and are searching for little things they can eat completely spilling his little construction site. Because Larry, the best beast hunter around and blows all these nasty little monsters sky high! A goal in life if ever there was one. Monster business, the epitome of the average arcade game (minus stupid graphics and a doubly stupid premise - to retrieve all the objects from the building site, Larry must blow up all the monsters with some sort of total bicycle pump, causing them to inflate and eventually rise to the top of the screen, dropping all their objects as they go).

Despite the silliness of the whole affair, Monster Business is actually quite good. Different screens each present a different sort of hazard, whether it be dodging platforms or a speedy time limit,

and the player is so interested in trying to get to the end of the level that he probably won't realize quite how easy and dull the game is.

Smart graphics and it could only be because these holy Monster business men about the pack and shine out as an example of what arcade games should be about. It's like an Akiba record, if you know what I mean.
☆☆☆☆

MOONSTONE



Price Amiga £29.99
Genre Arcade Adventure
Publisher Mindscape

What a conundrum this is. While experience suggests that games billed as being at all "easy" should be treated with approximately the same amount of caution as a drunken pin-ball with rollers. Moonstone isn't actually that bad.

The aim of the game is to travel across a mystic land, searching for the Holy Gaid-like Moonstone and trying to ensure that no other wiser girls hit onto you a hint. Up to four players can enter the game, each selecting a coloured Knight to control. And why, pray tell, are we controlling Knights instead of elves or goblins or something? Because Moonstone is all about fighting, that's why!

At frequent intervals, the frankly tedious travelling sections are punctuated with action scenes. While walking in a wood or dithering by a stone circle, the Knight will be attacked by a hostile creature. Here is where the candy-value of Moonstone lies. The combat is incredibly violent and gory. Although the game can be switched off by squashing gamers.

All in all a mixed bag. It could have been a really great combat game, but there's too much wandering around to give it much better appeal. Worth a look.
☆☆☆

NEBULUS 2



Price Amiga £25.99
Genre Platform
Publisher 21st Century Entertainment
Rising from the Hebrew ashes like a phoenix looking exceptionally like what

even it was before it was burnt, 1988 Century Entertainment aren't having much luck at the moment. Not only are they having some considerable difficulty with their Megaworld product, but the new game that looked like it could actually make them some money has turned out to be somewhat of a disappointment.

The European orders responsible for acquiring John Phillips' original chassis have done a bit of a belly flop, mainly because the gameplay that made the first game so excellent by piling on lots of items and endless power-up type features. The classic formula has been totally swapped by the sheer weight of these new 'ideas', and as such anybody who enjoyed the first game is likely to be very disappointed by this. However, it is quite pretty and, at least for those who haven't seen the first game, not a total washout on the playability front. But while the first game knew exactly where the addition of a transition threshold was, Nebolan a step over it like it wasn't even there, but recommended.

☆☆

NEVER-ENDING STORY 2



Price Amiga £25.99
Genre Arcade Adventure
Publisher Lead

I've nothing against someone being close to their film origins - in fact, I positively embrace it - but when this is taken to such lengths that the game turns out as poor as the movie did then I have to draw the line.

Witness The Never-Ending Story 2. The film came and went at the cinema with hardly a murmur of public interest, and unfortunately it's likely that the game of the film will suffer the same fate. The fact that the game's release trails that of the film by a good year or so is the final nail in its coffin.

It's a five-level arcade action romp. The first is a stabler of the Arcan style horizontal shooter, the second is a 3D chase, the third is a dull climb up the side of a tower, the fourth is a Nintendo-style platform affair, the fifth a Wipeout of the Doom-style horror ride. As you can tell, it's positively sparkling with originality. As usually happens with these multi-event games the individual sections are pretty weak in terms of gameplay though randomly pleas-

ant to look at. They're also quite difficult, and since death is frequent the lengthy gap between lives is particularly frustrating. Although well-presented, Never-Ending Story 2 can only be recommended to die-hard fans of the film. That's right - all three of you. ☆☆

OUTRUN



Price Game Gear £24.99
Genre Racing Game
Publisher Sega

It may be an old 'but it certainly isn't a guilty - at least, not in its Game incarnation it isn't. Out Run is arcade racing action stripped down to its basics - the player has to drive a red Ferrari through four stages, avoiding other traffic and those pesky stationary road-side obstacles. It's all against the clock, with the player being awarded points extra seconds every time he completes one of the stages. And... er... that's just about it.

The impression of speed achieved using good old colour banding is fine, although the objects given an anamorphic stretch and chunky fashion. Unfortunately the number of coinage objects is small, and the number of cars on the road even smaller - even on the hardest stage I only counted two other vehicles on the road at top. Very good. Worst of all it's ridiculously easy - I completed the game on my third go. Yes, really! The only real crumb in the game's favour is the ability to play head-to-head with another Game master, but even there the thrills are few and far between. Not good. ☆☆☆

OUTRUN EUROPA



Price Amal ST/Amiga £25.99
Genre Racing Game
Publisher US Gold

At long last! A game that has become a legend, along with the likes of Star Trek and Grid, over the last couple of years, simply because it's taken so bloody long to come out. The original idea was to release the product to cash in on the wave of topfests from the original OutRun conversion, which should give you an idea of how long we've been waiting for it. We ended

up getting the official sequel, Turbo OutRun first, which wasn't much cop, and now so we've got this, which isn't either.

The basic idea is that the player has to take charge of a variety of vehicles - car, bike and boat - as he races over various land-and-sea stages to deliver a vital package, while international agents are out to stop you. It's all a bit ludicrous really, and what's seemingly supposed to be a cross between OutRun and Chase H.Q. with extra kinks on it is in fact a bit of a stoddy mess. The road sections aren't much fun in play because control of the vehicle is so blindly sensitive, and the steering can just keep on getting in the way in a way that isn't conducive to gameplay at all, but is just very frustrating. The boat bits don't even bear think about because they're so unjust and difficult, and 99% of players will probably put their foot through the monitor screen within the minutes of loading it up. Talking of loading, the cartoon disk accessing is a pain in the prostate, and it all hardly seems worth it when it's not even very clear what's actually going on in the game. There are far better race games available, so don't waste your precious time pondering over this one. ☆

PACMAN



Price Game Gear £25.99
Genre Arcade Shoot
Publisher Namco

Well, what is there to say about the original arcade classic that hasn't already been said? Not much, except that it's now available on the Sega household and isn't bad at all.

There are no bells, enhancements or other features that would have been a mistake to add here. This is not Pacman 99 or anything rubbish like that, but the good old original, as it was all those years ago. The conversion is pretty much spot-on (which, given that the game barely pushes computer technology to its limit is only to be expected), right down to the original colours and sound effects.

One change that has had to be made is purely a practical one - to preserve the original size of the graphics, the Pac-man is now a four-way scrolling affair, with only a section visible on screen at a time. It works well enough, but it can be a bit of a pain at times, as

it makes it difficult for the player to see where the remaining dots are, and where ghosts might be coming in from. Pacman veterans may find this annoying, but to an inexperienced player it's not too much of a loss. So don't be a silly lily - get this classic up and running on your GameGear today!

☆☆☆☆

PEGASUS



Price Amal ST/Amiga £19.99
Genre Arcade Shoot
Publisher Gremtek Graphics

Oh dear! Oh dear! What a shame that just when Gremtek starts getting a good reputation for itself with its classy product line, it turns out a piece of tripe like this. Based very loosely on the classic Greek myth, Pegasus is a weird half-horse/half-bird of R-Type style shoot-'em-up action and runs along and chomps up the bubbles platform stuff. This mixture of substance and general-based action is supposed to give the player variety and keep his interest, in practice all it does it get very boring very quickly.

In the shoot-'em-up section, Pegasus (or Peritus, as the box incorrectly spells his name) flies along on the back of the mythical winged horse, which is animated in an atrociously unconvincing manner, and blasts away at the attacking gargoyles, demons, harpies, etc. When he's survived this onslaught, Pegasus lands. Peritus descends and the ground section begins. This happens 22 times (21 an sections, 20 on the ground), by which time the player has probably torn off his hair, kicked in the TV screen and lobbed his computer out of the window.

It's not that Pegasus is a bad idea - it's just that it's been executed in a such a God-awful busy and unimaginative manner. The action in the heavy bits is sluggish and unconvincing, while the ground levels lack any of the flourish of, say, Subtiltude II. The fact that there's lots of it doesn't make it any more of a viable purchase - unless you're a masochist of course. Complete with all manner of intolerable spelling mistakes within the game ("minister" instead of "minister", "new" instead of "know"), Pegasus would have only just made the grade two years ago, or on public domain today. To ask £19.99 for it when it falls so far below today's standards of graphics and game-

play is a bit on an inch. Avoid.
☆☆

PITFIGHTER



Price Amiga £25.95
Genre Beat 'Em Up
Publisher Demarc

If ever there's a prime example example of an excellent conversion of an average coin-op from Pitfighter is it. If you're an arcade game fan you're probably more than familiar with the game. With its giant monitor screen, three sets of player controls and stand-out digitized graphics you could hardly miss it. Trouble was, unfortunately the single fairly simple and easy sound heard a distinctly dull beat 'em up, made even worse by the confusion caused by the grainy-looking graphics. Where's my blake game! Is he hitting me or not? You know the sort of thing. All in all, a less than rewarding experience.

In converting Pitfighter for the home system, Tiger London have actually improved it a hell of a bit. Indeed, if you liked the coin-op, chances are you'll

like the home game even more. The graphics, which have retained pretty much all of the flash appeal FX of the coin-op, are clearer, and the slower pace makes the game much easier to play. The joystick controls are a little unresponsive, but it only takes a few goes to get the swing of things. But as good a conversion as it is, it still can't compensate for the fact that fundamentally Pitfighter's about as exciting as tapping a few buttons of wax. Which, as in Pitfighter is pretty much what you spend all your time doing.
☆☆☆

POPULOUS II



Price Amiga £29.95
Genre Action Strategy
Publisher Electronic Arts

Amazing! One of the greatest games of all time (and got considerably better, building's long-awaited sequel is just so excellent that it's difficult to find the words to describe it. Basically, it's pretty much the same game - guide your followers through a series of apocalyptic hells, God versus God, evil con-

son economic world.
From that point on, however, it's a whole new ball game. Whereas the original game had only a handful of golly effects, Populous II has scores of them, many much more deadly than anything remembered in the first game. The plethora of extra features (road and city building, events that interact with each other, experience points that build up as you progress) make Populous II a far more involved and rewarding experience than the original. Absolutely phenomenal stuff. Populous II is a game that you really REALLY cannot afford to miss. Buy it immediately.
☆☆☆☆☆

PUR 'N' PUTTER



Price Game Boy £29.95
Genre Puzzle
Publisher Impact

There's nothing like a good crazy golf game for a bit of hand-held entertainment. And, as far as that, it's nothing like a good crazy golf game.
Well, okay, so that's not strictly the

case, but Put 'n' Putter is seriously flawed.
The major, indeed the only, real problem with the game is that it is simply far too easy. And by easy I mean the player (unless he's an utter inebriate) won't even get a whiff of a Challenge (TM) screen until he has completed about twenty holes and has graduated onto the Expert level. While it's nice to get a little way into a game before grinding to a halt, this is ridiculous!
Aside from this, Put 'n' Putter does all the things a crazy golf game should, falling down in only a couple of rather places. The course moves rather sluggishly, and the courses could hardly be described as imaginative. Worth a look if you're a really crap golfer.
☆☆

RAILROAD TYCOON



Price Amiga £35.95
Genre Strategy
Publisher MicroProse

The ACE International game makes it's way onto the Amiga, and what a fine conversion it is! Building a railroad

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empire across the USA at the turn of the 19th Century may sound like hard work, but for those who like their strategy to run deep, Sid Meier's simulation is just what you're looking for. For Fun PC! We know it's difficult to imagine how, but trust us, it is. The feeling of power is paramount as you try your wits from sea to shining sea, conduct big-time business and generally earn loads of cash.

Regisping life as an entrepreneur in the early 1800s, you must turn a small stake into the biggest stake in railroad industry history ever! By taking control of every element in the decision-making process which makes the railroad work, the player must handle the details as well as broader political and economic issues, all at the same time as competing either with a friend or against rival tycoons from history. Any other element of the game is represented with top-quality graphics to make even the most mundane-crunchingly intense sections of the title easy to manage. Meier's excellent user interface and the sheer precision of the game design and balance compared with the top-notch power of the Amiga make this version of the game an outright winner. Highly recommended to all and sundry.

REALMS



Price Amiga (Multi) £71.99/99

Genre Arcade Strategy
Publisher Virgin Games

Good 'n' just what, as *Amiga Power* so aptly put it, has Peter 'Populus' Molyneux started. Yes, it's his and his merry band of programmers at building what we have we have to blame for the proliferation of incoherent, ill-conceived strategy games.

It's interesting that's the biggest problem with *Realms*, the latest offering from Corelight, previously best known for arcade games like *Paradise* and *Barbarian* (which it had appeared about four months ago, it might be received more favorably, but in the last few months we've had *Mega-**Mecha*, *Utopia* and the sequel to the game that started it all *Populus 2* (which rightly flew the competition away). One can't help feeling the software buying public have probably had enough of these sorts of games by now, and if I had the choice between *Populus 2* and

Realms, I know which one I'd go for.

The pity is that *Realms* is actually quite a good game. The player is situated in a pseudo-fantasy world, vying for power with a number of other equally power-wanted warriors. The player has his people, raises armies, lay siege to cities, the usual sort of thing. Imaginative messages with more depth but less impressive graphics and you get the rough idea. It's very well controlled over the various components of your empire is well thought out, and the mix of strategy and action is balanced nicely. Trouble is, when you've been a God raising fire and brimstone on your people *Realms* comes across as fairly bland in every sense.

☆☆☆☆

RISE OF THE DRAGON



Price Amiga £34.99

Genre Adventure
Publisher Dynamix/Mega On-Line
Amiga gamers have been scrambling to become the first to purchase this, the first in a new wave of Sierra games helmed by the perennially popular Dynamix team. But they should be warned. While *Amiga* gamers get to enjoy just as many visual thrills and plot twists as their PC pals, they pay the price of wrapping up almost every last nut as it slips in and out of your drive for the unpenetrated tiny disks.

However, if you're willing to pay the access-time price, *Rise* is an extremely rewarding product. The player takes the role of a futuristic detective, a real detective game, dragging his way through a drag-adorned city of sinners. The last remaining obstacle between the mysterious Dragon and total control of the entire planet? Played in first-person perspective, the game uses the no-typing, necessary control interface which Sierra have made their trademark.

This is another example of the interactive movie-disk which American computer are so fond of having done so far, but for once it isn't too bad. There is actually a story here! And there is actually some adventuring to do. The player must investigate the strange drug-related death of the Mayor's daughter, interrogate warring criminals and do all the other stuff that private investigators have to do. Wire taps, opening other people's mail, barging into low-rise strip joints. What a life.

And it's all in three lovely hand-drawn

graphics. Mind you... all these disks...

☆☆☆☆

ROBIN HOOD



Price IBM PC £30.99

Genre Arcade Strategy
Publisher Millennium

Intensely cost-effective publicity of the recent batch of Lincoln games makes *Millennium's* completely unlicensed version of the tale so surprisingly entertaining.

Presented in *Populus* style, the game sticks to the classic storyline of Robin of Locksley being booted out of his lands by the evil Sheriff of Nottingham, deserted by his people and left to fend for himself.

The player, taking the title role of course, must assemble a band of merry men, not least doing away with the nasty old Sheriff's son and the all too equally important goal for the player is to convince all the peasants and other inhabitants of the forest and its environs that Rob isn't the murdering thieving Muggard that the Sheriff has described to them but is a lovely kind hearted soul.

Aside from combat and object-seeking, there's a refreshing amount of genuinely funny dialogue in the game too, with the characters carrying off their roles to the best of their ability.

It's an extremely enjoyable and innovative arcade adventure game strategy game role playing game what's your fave! falling could be that the plot is so familiar the player is compelled to play through to the very end as soon as he physically can, thus diminishing the appeal of smart-ypis.

☆☆☆☆

ROBOCOD



Price Amiga £29.99

Genre Platform
Publisher Millennium

And about time too. Computer gamers have been waiting a long time for a platform game good enough to serve in the faces of the great arcade games, inevitably among their *Sierra* and their *Mega*. And here it is.

Robocod wins few awards for its originality. There are elements of just about every running/jumping game from

Mario (over onwards in there somewhere, but thanks to careful design and nice timing and matching of game styles the end result is far more than the sum of its parts).

As in *Mario* (it's the core game look is simple - get from one end of the level to the other, and jump on the heads of any bad guys to wander past. Of course, in practice there's a lot more to it than that. Some of the 70+ levels are like *Robocod* travelling through the levels in a bounding box, a splintering platform and even an old-fashioned tank! There are even some areas where 'God' rains around - much like he did in the game's progenitor *James Bond*.

In fact, it's the sheer variety of the game - along with the superbly smooth control over the肥肥 main character - that makes it such a joy to play. Every level features something new, either in graphics or gameplay, and there's little chance of boredom setting in. The wonderful cast of sprites, bright and cheerful backgrounds and sving-along music are excellent too. All in all, *Robocod* is a polished, playable and - thank God - fun slice of platform pie that you'll have to be criminally insane to let slip by.

☆☆☆☆

ROBOCOP 3



Price Amiga £29.99

Genre Arcade Beat
Publisher Ocean

Robocop's in a good 'n' it'll never work - would it? Well, the good news is that it does! Indeed, Digital Logic Design's license short on the *Robocop 3* movie license arguably make it the best fit-in yet.

In essence, *Robocop 3* isn't that different from almost every other fit-in title. It's an amalgam of several game sequences - a bit of run-up, a bit of dishing, a bit of boss-run-up - where the simplistic gameplay is compensated by the sheer variety on offer. However, in this case there's another factor - DLD's ground-breaking solid 3D.

Rather than watching some sprites leaping about a 2D backdrop, the player views the world through Detroit's eyes as he patrols the streets of Old Detroit on foot, in a police car and even in the air thanks to his new Cyroquad. The atmosphere generated, especially in the first patrol sequences, is quite order-

level. The only weak links in an otherwise incredibly strong chain are a couple of fairly hand-to-hand combat sequences with a robotic Ninja assassin - the combat moves are limited and the action sluggish.

However, those sequences apart, there are frequent occasions during the game that the player actually does feel as if he is taking part in a film. And at the end of the day, isn't that what you should be hoping a film to be?
 ○○○○

ROBOZONE



Price Amiga £19.99
 Genre Arcade Blast
 Publisher Image Works

Trying to leap onto the Green band wagon (and missing by about six miles), Imageworks' latest and certainly not greatest puts the player in the driving seat of a giant two-legged war machine, a sort of out-price version of the one in Froggus' Killing Game Show, with a mission to put an end to pollution. Horrid!

Fundamentally Robozone's a simple Match anything that moves affair, with the programmers trying to maintain player interest by constantly changing the play style. One level's a side-view multidirectional-scrolling explosion-fest, the second's much the same but in 3D and the third's a horizontally scrolling shoot-'em-up. While such is programmed well enough, there's precious little fun or excitement to be found in any of them.

The really annoying thing about Robozone is it's pretence to being "Green" - the manual is littered with Top Tips about how to help save the environment. One states pompously: "If you have a choice, avoid buying packaged goods." Considering that Robozone comes in a giant box with a single disc and a 24-page manual sitting about inside, the irony of this statement lingers bitter. Probably the best tip is the first one: "Try not to waste energy." Imageworks, having played this I already have.
 ○○

ROBOCOP 2



Price Game Boy £29.99
 Genre Arcade Blast
 Publisher Impact

Hmm. A bit of an oddity this one. While the graphics are bigger and chunkier than before and the gameplay follows the second movie as opposed to the first, you can't help but feel that you really have seen this all before.

The main problem lies with the fact that Robocop 2 isn't so well backwards. This makes the supposed exploration of the various factories and warehouses in the game a bit farcical, since Robo can only explore the location which he comes to next.

Learning the pattern of hostages to be rescued, make to be destroyed and criminals to look will help, but it hardly solves the problem.

Still, it looks great and the sound effect and music are excellent. And let's face it, if you're going to get yourself a Game Boy as a New Year treat, it's best to stick with the name you know.
 ○○○

RODLAND



Price Amiga £29.99
 Genre Platform
 Publisher Storm

Storm's surprisingly rare it may be, but there's no denying that Rodland is a fine game. The 16-colouring wasn't particularly noteworthy, finding itself still in a sea of graphically excellent games upon its release. Now, however, the convention seems to have crapped up where the highest profile can game ever the moment (Mega Man) has failed to meet expectations.

The player must work his way through a massive maze of screens, collecting points or "power ups" and killing enemies with his rod (hence the name) by sucking them into the floor.

The end of each level is marked by the arrival of an enormous end-of-level big gun which is an elephant, who, despite looking about as threatening as a big lamp or cartoon wool in a test-tube bag will do for the player fairly well. Interestingly enough, the player can opt to play a girl if he/she wants, not that it makes much difference to the playing style. And to be honest, the 'boy' looks so bloody adorable you'll never know anyway.

Check a block full of excellent studs, Rodland is a fine convenience and it could even be argued to better its

close-up parent, as control over the character has been improved. Certainly not a title for gamers into depth or going too blasting, but a nonetheless worthwhile purchase to explore the
 ○○○○

RUGBY - THE WORLD CUP



Price Atari ST/Amiga £19.99
 Genre Sports Arcade
 Publisher Demtek

Hey! It's Down Off Well, not quite, but it is a pretty blatant attempt by the Demtek to adapt Atari's 800-classic style to the rough 'n' tumble, if you will, 'world' of rugby. Of course, as any fair-ies, rugby and football are very different sports, with the former lacking the run-up speed of the latter. Not, then, perhaps the best game to try to do what it is into that off's hard and fast playing style.

However, as it happens, it all works pretty well. Sure, the action is a bit stop and start, but there is a definite flow to the game and few lapses in pace. The game is viewed in plan view, with the pitch scrolling to follow the player's... er... player (what is, mate), the one control the ball, throws and kicks are controlled simply by the joystick, and so is the subtlety of that Off's alternative level. Screens are a case of basically waggling the joystick to face the opposition back, and this is fine - unless you're playing the All Blacks, in which case you need to waggle a multi-light speed to beat them.

In fact, that's probably the biggest criticism - the top teams are so tough. There are other minor niggles, such as the way player options develop on top of each other and the way that the other members of the team don't just show when in good positions to pass, meaning that play often resolves into one-on-one rather than mid-way down the pitch to the try line. But while Rugby may not be perfect, it's still a pretty good 'er' (the second of reviews being that)
 ○○○○

SARAKON



Price Atari ST/Amiga/IBM PC £29.99

Genre Puzzle
 Publisher Virgin Games

Games which call the player stupid are unlikely to go-down in history as great entertainers, yet Sarakon, despite making this first mistake is a perfectly decent rip-off of the Match Jang slot-machine-playing business. Basically, if you imagine Jang-pong played with some odd-shaped tablets and with some complicated 'can't do that' rules, then you're pretty close to imagining what Sarakon is all about.

The aim of the game is to click on similar tablets which sit in a particular orientation, eventually ending up with six tablets left, or at least as few as possible before the time limit runs out. Once done, the player is rewarded with a breakdown of his score and a comment from the computer or its big Sarakon-billy.

The problem with these puzzle games, however, is that they all look similar enough to make the player want to pick them up and have a go, yet they insist on containing enough rule subtleties to make doing what that impossible. The result? The Match Jang player will feel inhibited to 'can't' make his normal moves now.

The presentation is first class, apart from the cheery sound effects and music which don't so much create the ambience of the Far East as a grubby take-away in Dutch.

If comparatively subtle mouse-clicking you bug, and your eyes can stand staring at the monitor for ages while you search your head, Sarakon is the game for you.
 ○○○

SECRET WEAPONS OF THE LUFTWAFFE



Price IBM PC £49.99
 Genre Simulation
 Publisher Lucasfilm/US Gold

Deep, deep, deep. Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe is a big-old game and no mistake. It's also the second the critically acclaimed Three Flares. The title comes packed with new goodies but brings the same problem of the first game, i.e. the files are rather horrible Intemp graphics.

The player is offered the chance to pilot aircraft in a seemingly limitless number of historical missions, shadowing or guarding planes and taking place in actual battles and scenarios of

for Second World War.

Warsaw, played in a Wing Commander style with hitmaps taking the place of the polygons so frequently and successfully used in other flight sims. Luftwaffe will have all but the screens of the fastest machines hammering down the detail level in the attempt to get it to run at an acceptable rate. Ambitious players can then define their own missions to determine what history would have turned out like if there was just one less Interventionist RAF pilot in a particular combat situation. Luftwaffe is exactly the sort of game – so distinct from Wing Commander – that you actually want to make excuses for. And that's simply down to the fact that under the try-to-look-good graphics which actually look pretty absurd every now and again, there is a quite brilliant game.

☆☆☆☆☆

SEVEN COLORS



Price: **Atari ST, Amiga, IBM PC £25.00**
Genre: **Puzzle**

Publisher Infogrames

Think the game that started it all, may be getting on a bit now, but there's always room for a new puzzle game on the market. The only problem is that the vast majority of puzzles that have been waiting up on those shelves from America and Europe have either been of unacceptably low quality, or just too weird to get the local market.

Seven Colors from Infogrames, a company that prides itself on its all-the-walkers, fits snugly into the latter category. It's played over a large board made up of hundreds of tiny colored diamonds where the objective is to change as many diamonds to your colour, spreading them like a virus across the screen, faster than your opponent does. The first player to fill 90% of the screen area is the winner. It's difficult enough to understand when you're actually playing the game, so don't worry if you're a little foggy after that brief explanation.

In fact the major problem with the game is that it's not very easy to understand, and because things just seem to happen it's not very easy to keep track, or indeed to work out what's going on at all. The confusing situa-

tion is further compounded because the instructions hardly explain anything at all. Persistent players may well get something out of it however, and there's a variety of game options to spice up the action if they do. Oh, and there's some very nice in-game classical music which suits the nature of the game perfectly and is very pleasing indeed.

☆☆☆

SHUTTLE



Price: **IBM PC £25.00**

Genre: **Simulation**

Publisher: **Virgin Games**

Not for the faint hearted, this one. As you've probably guessed, it's a simulation of the Space Shuttle. And the word 'simulation' just doesn't even begin to do justice to the level of accuracy that developers Vector Graphics have achieved. The cockpit is bewildering – all the players can see is back seat bank of dials, dials and levers, most of which work and have some effect.

The player not only has to fly the

damn thing, he has to open up the bay doors and control the robot arms to deploy satellites and so forth. And this technical accuracy is backed up by some of the best 3D graphics ever seen. There's even a realistically and accurately mapped planet Earth that rotates and the constellations are all plotted accurately as well.

An stunning achievement is Shuttle is, the biggest problem with it is its limited appeal. Personally I think it's brilliant and completely absorbing, but I can understand that there might be some people who find the idea of handling all those dials more than a little off-putting. If that's because of the sheer daunting complexity of the whole thing then that shouldn't be a problem, because there's a whole range of player aids that make the game accessible to everybody, so more than their own proficiency. But there's no getting away from the fact that if your patience with sim-type ends at *Thunderhawk*, then you're likely to find little to interest you here.

☆☆☆☆

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Price Amiga £35.99

Genre Simulation
Publisher Mirosoft

It may take three years, but the sequel to one of the most critically acclaimed and publicly admired sim games is finally with us. *Sliver* Service II features all the best bits from the first game as well as a host of original and new doc-dads.

Detailed graphics and sampled sounds simply confirm the service as a game which is undoubtedly one of the most detailed, accurate and realistic on the market, but new gamers should be warned that, just like life on a real submarine, it's not all walking on air.

No, there's a lot of the old *Sliver*! The *Waves* staff with turning-off engines to sneak up on enemy warships without alerting their radar. And so for all that tank blowing stuff, I ask you!

Mirosoft are undoubtedly the outright king of all things sim, but their policy of increasing the action and minimising the dull-watching as used to make good effect in *Sliver* Strike Flight II would be well extended to this particular title.

For gamers wishing to purchase an accurate sub simulation, not assessed, there is absolutely none better. But those expecting to get their torpedoes off straight away would be better to wait for a more accessible equivalent. ★★★★★

SLIDERS



Price Games Gear £29.99

Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Impact

Jerry, Mary and Joseph? What are Lancelot trying to force upon us now? In the wake of the global mania for puzzle games, it seems that any old rubbish will do these days. Here we have *Sliders*, a fat fellow thing who mantrifles around a selection of mazes, doing his utmost not to bump into the bad guys. Once *Sliders* has travelled over, and therefore coloured in, each square in the maze, he moves onto the next.

Later mazes are made more hazardous by sliding platforms which will propel *Sliders* into deadly situations. A time limit prevents the player from

being able to dither, or maybe consider his next move, and there are lots of squares which simply kill off *Sliders* on contact. Terrible.

Far from being the sort of game to while away many a rain journey, *Sliders* is a pain in the eye of the first order, and deserves a place in absolutely no-one's software collection. ☆

SOLITAIRE POKER



Price Games Gear £19.99 (Import)

Genre Puzzle
Publisher Soga

Everyone loves a good puzzle game, and this is a very good one. The aim is simple - when a card shows one of the four piles on offer, and place it on a 4 x 4 grid. Points are awarded for pairs, flashes, etc., created either vertically, horizontally or along the main diagonal. Score over a certain amount and the player progresses on to the next, tougher level. There are a number of variants on the theme, but that's the main thrust of the game.

What more is there to say about such a simple concept? Essentially it's fine - the functional graphics are clear and colourful and there's a vast number of background textures to pick between. Although not exactly using the full colour LCD capabilities of the Gear to it's fullest, it's one of the most enjoyable Gear games I've seen for a long, long time, and so such comes with a strong recommendation. ★★★★★

SMASH TV



Price Amiga £35.99

Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Ocean

'Good luck - you're gonna need it' screams the show's only computer, and soon have three-levs than words said. This conversion of the incredibly violent Williams coin-op has translated magnificently well to the home systems, with nearly all the blood and thunder elements so beloved of the original ported across faithfully.

The game takes the form of a five-levs game show, where one or two contestants armed with a rapid-fire gun slug it out with a seemingly end-

less parade of thugs, bruisers and goons to win big money and prizes in a single-screen arena. Power-ups and end-of-arena bad guys add to the already phenomenal carnage.

On a purely technical level, it's immensely satisfying as the plugged opponents explode into red globules of flesh. Indeed, the sprites are small enough to be almost anybody you want them to be, so you can imagine that you're shooting up-walkers clones of your boss if you want to. Very therapeutic.

As a single-player game it's fine, though there's a serious risk that boredom may well set in scarily early. The two-player game on the other hand, is something else. There's not been players to player shooting like this since *Ball of Fire*.

The coin-op's two joystick ports to move, one to direct (they have translated adequately to a single controller, though if you have two there is an option to use both which makes the game far better).

A superb conversion, and more than deserving of your hard-earned pennies. Go to it, you psycho! ★★★★★

STEVE MCQUEEN WESTPHASER



Price Amiga £29.99

Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Ludlum

Yes what? Talk about a cynical license! Not only is the pace cheap-dod and unable to defend himself against this sort of thing, but this game actually leaves no relevance to the great man at all. Okay, so he was in a few cowboy films, and this is a cowboy game, but then the similarity ends. Don't expect to see any of Steve in the game - his involvement begins and ends with a tacky black and white picture on the box.

If you wonder still, because it has the word *Westphaser* in the title, you'd assume it's compatible with the *Westphaser* light gun. Not so, no. It's conventional mouse, keyboard or joystick control only, but what on Earth is going on here?

Alright, so it's all very dodgy so far, but what of the game itself? Well, unfortunately things don't get much better here either, as what's on offer is a top-standard Operation *Wolfpack* shoot-out

set in a variety of typically Wild West scenarios. That might sound like at least a bit of a laugh, but the action is so stunted and dull that it's difficult to get even vaguely excited. To be fair, the graphics are quite nice in a Fantasy *French* sort of way and there are some jolly touches you can shoot the droons off the screen, for example, but it's hardly enough to justify financial entry. In fact Steve himself I hear spinning in his grave! ☆☆☆

STRIKE FLEET



Price Atari ST/Amiga £19.99

Genre Strategy
Publisher Electronic Arts

Strike Fleet doesn't look the most inspiring game from the shots on the back of the box, but the Ludlum credits hints that this may be better than it appears. As, in fact, it is. The game is a sea-based strategy game split into features individual missions or a continuing eight-mission campaign. After each mission briefing, the player is allocated a number of points (depending on the difficulty of the mission) to 'spend' in the shipyard. Each ship 'costs' a certain number of points depending on its class, so the player must be careful in picking a balanced fleet.

Once at sea, the player can flick between the ships at will. Control is relatively simplistic, fluidly, allowing the player to move, change speed, activate radar and/or use, of course, the variety of on-board weapons. In addition, certain ships carry a complement of helicopter that can be used on rivers as anti-landing forces.

Despite it's usually dull appearance, *Strike Fleet* actually turns out to be quite involving. There's a great deal of satisfaction to be had from successfully controlling the fleet, and seeing off the air, sea or underwater attacks provides frequent doses of adrenalin. Admittedly, those without a strategic leaning are unlikely to be converted by the game's charms, but if *Strike Fleet* sounds at least slightly appealing give it a go, I think you'll be surprised. ★★★★★

SUPAPLEX



Game Arcade Blast
Publisher *Leisure*

"Top arcade game with action, futuristic controls and super thrills!" we are promised. *Space Harrier* on the Spectrum is what we get.

Mopping his way through twelve stages of shooting 3D graphics, our intrepid hero must control his Transformer-like craft deep into the heart of enemy territory and destroy the evil alien! Big fun.

Even painting a girl on the back of the bus with her tongue out has failed to make *Thunder Blazes* at all exciting.

Missing the jet plane is actually more fun than seeing everything move at a faster pace, but the hi-speed action has a better chance of destroying the pill boxes containing our processors, *dry-dirt* again.

In all a bit poor, and apart from some end-of-level bonuses which are palatable enough, falls a long way short of even the most basic *Blaxx* standards. And all of that screen is little but black. Levels are all but senseless themselves with the knowledge that they win the Most Gratuitous 3D Award. Hokey.

THUNDERHAWK



Price Amiga £29.99
Genre *Simulation*
Publisher *Cosmi Design*

Most flight sims require a good deal of practice before any reward can be garnered from them. All those keyboard controls and miscellaneous aircraft functions do quite a lot to put off anyone looking for a quick blast. *Cosmi Design* have seen this gap in the market and more than adequately filled it with *Thunderhawk*. All control is via the mouse, which makes everything, from weapon selection to helicopter control, quick and easy. It's a welcome change from the usual memory test of clicks and non-clicks.

The game itself is broken down into a series of campaigns, each preceded by a graphic briefing sequence indicating target and locale type. Before taking to the sky the player must select the appropriate armament for the *Thunderhawk*, although there's a default if this seems to much of a pain.

What makes the game a treat is the handling of the helicopter. The controls make flying intuitive, letting the player get on with the mission rather

than having to stay airborne. Graphics are smooth and move at a fair clip, though there isn't much background scenery. If you've never been tempted to try a flight sim, then this is the game to change your attitude.

TIP OFF

Price Amiga/Mast £7 (£3.99)
Genre *Sports Game*
Publisher *Acorn*

The fact that Acorn's latest sports game comes from the keyboard of Kirk Off co-designer Steve Scowth has certainly attracted a lot of interest during the game's development, but now the final product's here it's hard to see that it represents somewhat of a disappointment.

The title is fine—apply the same techniques that made Kirk Off great. Biggle does about a lot to fit *Basketball*'s smaller play area and rules and away you go. And indeed many of Kirk Off's trademarks are in evidence here—the game's simple, interactive, and very fast indeed. But just it's a big boy it just doesn't work. *Basketball* is a fast game, but Tip-Off's interpretation of it is a bit too speedy for comfort. As a result it just doesn't quite spark in the same way as Kirk Off, and a basketball fan would still be best advised to go with *Cinemaware's* version.

TOE JAM & EARL



Price Megabyte £34.99
Genre *Acadmic*
Publisher *Image*

James? Or, in Earle speak, ah, Earl. Toe Jam & Earl were presumably invented, like *Sonic*, before there, to become 'cute' game personalities and thus attract a whole new legion of fans to the Megabyte. I don't know if they have or not, but on the basis of the game they're in it was't for the life of me nor how they would. It begs those this is what 'Yes Kid' want, then they're really winners.

It's a simple maze game. One or two players, controlling the fat-out alien of the title, have to travel around a number of exotic islands searching for the ten missing pieces of their crashed spaceship. Some islands are populated by monsters of various description that have to be avoided.

Along the way the game's more fun some may find because which will reward them anything from speed-up

trousers to a blow from a bolt of lightning, blood blurrings or what?

And... er... that's it. Yes, really. All the game consists of is wandering around, very slowly. Being really doesn't quite care up the too-curling trails of the whole debacle. The only points of special note are the way the screen splits when Toe Jam & Earl get too far apart, the appealing nature of the two aliens and the widdly-ly music. Any chance of putting the music on CD, *hepp?*

TRADERS



Price Amiga £29.99
Genre *Strategy*
Publisher *Leard*

If you imagine a hotch-potch of *Utopia*, *Mega* in *Mania* and *Populous*, except in 2D, you'd be pretty close to understanding what *Traders* is all about. Again, it's one of the technological development and fiscal success, with up to four players handling it out on a mysterious planet, evolving cities and competing with the *gods* of nature, as well as hostile advances from each other.

Distances from lots of God sites and vast games of fate. *Traders* has got a reasonably light touch and doesn't weigh the player down with facts and figures, instead it lets them explore their new world and get on with the business of exploiting and raising it with the minimum amount of fuss.

While there's no question that the game boasts an reach-depth or longevity as any of the games mentioned above, *Traders* acts as a pretty solid introduction to the strategy genre. No two shall-ly.



UNDER PRESSURE



Price Amiga £29.99
Genre *Arcade*
Publisher *Electronic Zoo*

Oops. Fancy how one minute you're on top of the world and the next you're, er, not. A situation which top notch programmers Electronic Zoo have found themselves in with their latest release, *Under Pressure*. Their last and indeed only release, *Prophecy* was reasonably well received, being a pret-

ty excellent sports sim, but *Traders* only knows what *goddess* and *glick* are as to blame for this disaster.

Sped in an unconfortably similar fashion to *Populous* games, plus it's between level set is virtually identical to Pegg's game save for the mode which the player controls looks exceedingly like the creature on the *Shades* of the final box, *Under Pressure* falls down in almost every single respect.

Guiding a huge robotic killing machine through a bunch of sleeping cities, the player must deal with a myriad of different creatures—mainly snakes—with the impressive arsenal of weaponry available from his rock-*jet*.

Sounds alright, doesn't it? Alas, from here on in, the game falls down rather badly. For a start, everything is far too big. The player's rock almost fills the screen, but doesn't have the detail or animation finesse to support its size. Also, the scale presents a problem in that since only one horizontal level of the city is ever visible on the screen, the game feels more like a duck shoot than an exciting adventure. Obviously no aiming is necessary for shooting for the massive cities, as they just sit up and swallow the player's fire. Oh dear.



UTOPIA



Price Amiga £29.99
Genre *Arcade Strategy*
Publisher *Leard*

The quality of life on earth, let's face it, sucks. And the world is screwed up so bad that nothing anyone can do can save it. We need to start again.

This is the premise of *Utopia*, another *Populous*/*Powermonger* style effort. Except this time the aim, rather than simply ruling a world or conquering it is to construct and run it and to make all its inhabitants feel really good. The aim is to elevate the quality of life to 100%—*Utopia*.

It's not difficult to grasp the aim and controls of the game. And it quickly becomes apparent that there are lots of problems thrown up by the idea of making everyone happy. For a start, if you spend all the money on hospitals, food production and enough long sports festivals, your populace will be content, but without any credible defence

where the inevitable computer-controlled alien attack occurs.

Beginning from just a few key buildings, it's up to the player to construct the colony using team-driven actions while dispersing the world in isotropic 3D. There are almost no rules in this society. You can run things virtually any way you want.

The only factor that is missing is the option to try and run things as a dictatorship regime and make a certain part of the population very happy while keeping the workers ground down into the dirt. Well, that never works, does it?

☆☆☆☆

VOLFIED



Price Atari ST, Amiga £24.99
Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Empire

Qix is back in town, and better than ever! No matter how widely games may differ among the game-playing fraternity, you'd be hard pushed to find a widely who doesn't enjoy a game of good old Qix. Its appeal is universal because it's so simple and addictive, and like Breakout, its gameplay has stood the test of time. What Volfied does is a good version of the original classic - it is to Qix what Asterix was to Breakout, keeping the original framework intact but adding lots of pretty backdrops, power-ups and extra features.

For the most part it's much the same - draw lines around the screen to fill up 99% or more of the screen area with the Easiness which makes up the line itself getting hit by one of the marauding enemies - which, instead of the old grating line, now takes the form of a giant membership that causes about spinning about bullets, and a couple of pretty little helpers. Lasers and speedups are among the collectables, while high-tech backgrounds and SFX provide the aesthetic overhaul.

Smart (Qix-style) games are so thin on the ground, Volfied writes its own execution and mechanical gameplay in a welcome addition to the infinite series - and if you've got any sense and admiration for the classic, you'll add it to a collection too.

☆☆☆☆

VROOM



Price Atari ST £24.99
Genre Racing Game
Publisher London

Without wanting to be nasty to our European counterparts, what with Qix and all that, it has to be said that most of the software that crosses over from the continent is a bit starchy. Vroom, however, from French publisher London, has proven itself to be the exception to the rule. Although it's not a spin on the likes of Indianapolis 500 or Formula One Grand Prix, Vroom is nevertheless a jolly nippy racing game, boasting very impressive speed so the player needs his top gears the moment around a first person environment.

It's got all the usual thrills and fittings - rear view mirrors, pitstops, overhead maps, bridges, dips and hills on the track, training modes, qualifying laps, choice of courses and some spectacular crash sequences. It's more of a racing game than simulation, as controls and instrumentation has been kept to a minimum - there's nothing too much to worry about here apart from going any fast, avoiding the other cars and keeping on the road. And it works well enough, being very playable and actually quite competitive, with the array of racing options adding to the game's longevity. The only dodgy factor is that the stretch option is restricted to the arcade mode - the more serious race options only allow manual control. Very dodgy indeed. But apart from that, not at all bad.

☆☆☆☆

WILLY BEAMISH



Price IBM PC £24.99
Genre Adventure
Publisher Dynamic, Sierra On-Line

The Adventures of Willy Beamish, to give it its full name, is somewhat of a oddity. Dubbed an interactive cartoon, it's sort of a sort case between The Wonder Years and The Simpsons. Willy is the typical all-American town-smacking pre-teen schoolkid, complete with gaily bands, pet frog and exceedingly stereotypical family. Strange things are afoot in suburb of Frampton, and Willy must investigate.

Willy is not another of these games that sounds a whole lot better than it

actually is. That's not to say that it's bad, but the gameplay is very trial-and-error, with luck often playing more of a part than skill or judgment. At such, more time is spent repeating used games than actually playing, and it can get quite frustrating at times, especially when you have to do through the convoluted set-piece for the simply most of its interactive cartoon. It's well-cut, with suitable stereotypical characters, some funny jokes and progress clues. As a game it's compelling, but not in a way that encourages real addiction or involvement. You're unlikely to come back to again and again.

☆☆☆☆

WING COMMANDER II



Price IBM PC £24.99
Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Origin

No matter what else you might say about the Wing Commander games, they look darned good. The trouble is, there isn't really much else to say about them. Well, perhaps that's a little harsh but here in the sequel to the much talked-about and little-played original, it's very much a case of more of the same.

Intelligent war with the Kilrathi continues, and in the most recent Kilrathi victory, the Confederation flagship Tiger's Claw has been destroyed by invisible Kilrathi stealth fighters. As the sole survivor of the assault, the player must first construct his Solarian comrades that the attack did primarily take place and then lead a Solarian force to track them down and destroy them.

Graphically excellent although particularly processor heavy, Wing Commander II certainly isn't a best-selling game. It's a worthy sequel to its predecessor but in the sort of title where that title does have a try before buying it really appropriate.

☆☆☆☆

WOLFCHILD



Price Amiga £25.99
Genre Arcade Blast
Publisher Core Design

Okie, okie, so it's just another platform game. What separates Wolfchild from the re-emerging crowd is the

sheer excellence of its execution. Rick Dangerous creator Simon Phipps has surpassed himself once again, creating a game that has everything an arcade aficionado could ask for - incredibly fast-paced action, superb graphics, awesome procedural displays, a rolling soundtrack and... well, lots more besides.

The plot tells of a brilliant genetic scientist kidnapped by a coverage corporation to produce mutant killing machines for their own nefarious ends. The scientist's son, Paul Mirren, bangs himself into his dad's prototype gene-splicing machine and turns himself into Wolfchild, a half-man, half-beast character with special energy-spending powers.

What follows is five levels of top-level platform runs but on-top action with fast switching back and forth between his human and beastly forms to help him progress. When enough energy is collected, Paul becomes the wolfman character and is allowed with the power to use the arts of electrical energy at the mutant hordes that continue attack him.

It might not be the most original game in the world, its superior playability more than makes up for any lack of real innovation. It's hard, fast and dangerous to know. Give it pride of place in your platform collection now.

☆☆☆☆

WORLD CLASS RUGBY



Price Atari ST, Amiga £19.99
Genre Sports Simulation
Publisher Avalon

Avalon's have opted for a rigorous approach to the sport, offering plenty of accuracy and a great deal of scope for subtle play. And as such, it's somewhat more satisfying to play, if a bit harder to get into.

It also is a lot prettier, with play viewed from a 3D angle and all the players named clearly if a little small. If this doesn't appeal, there's a selection of other views on offer, including a no-camera-top-down view for the more traditionally minded. World Class Rugby may not have Denmark Rugby's pick-up-and-play instant appeal, but it's a good bet that of the two this will be the one you'll still be looking up in a year's time.

☆☆☆☆

the blitter end

It's a bit of a slim month for the Blitter. The whole industry more or less disappeared over the last few weeks, as everyone was at the Winter CES in Las Vegas. Needless to say, Blitter will be providing you with the full lowdown on the goings-on from the City that Never Sleeps next month. In the meantime, you'll just have to make do with whatever else we can lay up from the industry's dustbin.

Blitter is pleased to see that computer games are at last getting the nationwide recognition they deserve, thanks to Channel 4 and its excellent new show *GameMaster*. Blitter is sure that the programme's success is due, at least in part, to the key members of the ACE editorial team playing a crucial (and uncredited) role in the programme's conception. Now that it's on our screens, we would like to congratulate our pals on sales mag CMC, who have done a sterling job of raising the tone of the programme. Unfortunately, not everyone appreciates their contribution - least of all controversial Sun column-

nist Gary Barber, who in his review of the show referred to Frank, Joe, Rod and the rest of the crew as "spity hermits". Actually, now you come to think about it...

Talking of the telly, Blitter is starting to become slightly worried about the rate at which Nintendo seems to be taking over the planet. Don't get us wrong, we like a bit of Mario as much as the next man, but when the games start taking over our favourite soap spots, things are obviously getting a bit much. Fans of Nintendo will have noticed that chips fruit-and-veg stall-holder Pete Bink got hooked on Twin-on-the-Gumball over Christmas - while playing, he had the issue taped upon him that it was difficult to see the dialogue! Actually, the music may be infuriating, but Blitter would rather listen to that than Pinhead going on and on at poor old Arthur any day of the week. A far more impressive gameplaying feat than this, however, was to be found over on Channel

4, down in Brookside Close. There, the Queens were also having a Nintendo-packed Christmas, with a brand new NES providing the entertainment. The only thing that we found difficult to understand was how the Queens managed to get such impressive scores on *Buck's Attack* when he was holding the joystick with only one hand! Now that's what Blitter calls a *GameMaster*!

Obnoxious to everybody but the most attentive, Gravel has launched a subliminal campaign against software piracy. Informed sources have recently disclosed that the title theme to that smart racing game Lotus is features speech that is barely audible to the human ear. Crank up the volume and listen closely, and you should hear someone discreetly whispering "don't copy software" over and over. Whether or not this actually has a subconscious effect on those who listen to it remains a mystery, but it has to be said that in these days of vile disk bootlegging, any-

thing's worth a shot. Just so long as the software houses don't start abusing it and have samples like "Go out and buy all our other games" or "send us all your money" being thrown their way into the minds of the nation.

After the phenomenal response to last month's feature on on software lockfiles, we're continuing the series this month with some more sophisticated-at-least freeware. Just to show we're not biased, we're kicking off with our very own David Upchurch, who bears a striking resemblance to Andrew Strang out of *The Commitments*. Staying with the disco-business angle, many people phoned in to comment on how much Ocean's *Gary Heavy* looks like Jeffrey Holland, alias Spike out of *Hi De-Hi*. Moving on into the world of politics, we believe that Grandiose boss Stephen Hill and his former MP for Cardiff South may be long-lost twins, while Progress top boy Jonathan Hills is an absolute dead ringer for Prime Minister John Major. Oh, and in reply to our call last month, a certain noted industry official called to suggest that Donnie's *Intense*. Defines could well take over as TV's Blitter Bear, should Bowen Arkansas ever check in to the nest.

Over the last week or so, Blitter has become totally addicted to that super little Amiga game *Bomber Man*. This has led us here at ACE to realize just how neglected games like this have become over the years. Sophisticated software is all very well, but it comes to something when the majority of our free time is spent playing old commercial software, let PO arcade games. In come on software houses, let's get back to good old-fashioned values, eh? Simplicity = playability = fun. OK!

Phew! Tell you what, it's not easy staying up with enough interesting industry facts to fill the Blitter up each month. That's why we're asking YOU to come forward with any deary software stories you may have heard. We can give you a call and spill your guts. After all, there's nothing worse than a guffily concocted, is there? You don't have to give your name and you may win a Blitter Action Trust award.

ACE PICTURE POWER!

Last month we promised you that we would be printing a full-size picture of Future Publishing's Greg Ingham with his mouth closed, and we were indeed hoping to do this. Unfortunately, however, the claims of our Future trade who promised to get it for us were a little misruegant and in the end the picture just turned out to be yet another one of him with his mouth wide open. This comes as a particular disappointment to the Blitter, as such a picture would have been one to rival anything Arthur C Clarke could ever come up with. The more things like this happen, the more Blitter is willing to believe the rumours that this strange phenomenon is due to the fact that, after being cursed by a gypsy your age, Greg's head will fall off if he ever stops talking. Well, faced by his ability to turn disaster into success, Greg has made the most out of his condition and can currently be seen on billboards across the nation advertising *Demagogue* and on TV doing the *Knack* mouth-tooth ads.

NEXT MONTH we prove that someone to do with a bit football game is no slouch in the treasure department.



TIP OFF

The sheer pace of the game, and its end action and tactical game play is the core of TIP OFF, a basketball simulation -

**A SIMULATION WHICH IS
GREAT FUN TO PLAY**

Players' skills, attributes and fitness together with the astute substitution of players and change of tactics banks by the coach, holds the key to success in basket ball. TIP OFF, therefore includes some managerial aspects of the game. The main features are:-

- Multi directional scrolling screen
- Five skill levels. Skill level of both teams can be set independently.
- 1 to 4 players option. Option to play against the computer or another player or team up with another player against the computer or another player or two players.
- Facility to practice skills and tactics.
- Facility to create a team at all skill levels and design tactics.
- Interactive joystick controls to dribble, pass, shoot or do a dummy. There are two running speeds, two types of dribbling and passing and five types of shots at the basket (Jump shot, Hook shot, Skyhook, Running Jump shot and Slam Dunk).
- Each player on the court is an individual with a unique mixture of attributes (Age, Height, Hair, Pace, Stamina and Composure) and skills (Passing, Dribbling, Stealing, Shooting and Jumping).
- Two types of leagues. Action Replay at 3 speeds.
- Extra moves are available using two independent button joysticks using the EXORCENCE System.



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