

January 2021

Issue 32

THE SPECTRUM SHOW

Magazine

100 EPISODES

Looking back over the last 8 years

SPECTRUM NEXT EMULATION

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ARCADE SOFTWARE

The games and story

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DK'TRONICS KEYBOARD
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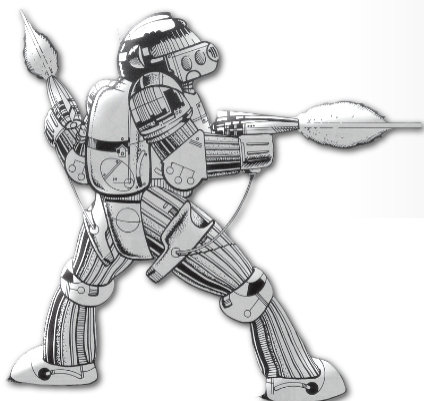
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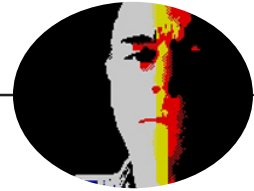
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EDITORIAL



Welcome to this very special issue of The Spectrum Show Magazine. This issue will be available as a real printed magazine you can have on your bookshelf, on your table or even in your toilet. Wherever it may live, I'm sure it will get some attention.

All my top-tier Patrons were offered this free of charge as a thank you to them for supporting the show and allowing me to continue working on future episodes.

There was a very limited print run, only 80, with most going to my Patrons. The remaining ones were available to buy at a very reasonable price with discounts for other Patreon tiers.

Because this issue is going to print, the format has had a slight tweak to accommodate normal print sizes. This shouldn't cause too much trouble, but let me know if it does.

The Spectrum Allure



Part of the allure of the Spectrum was planted firmly in the era it reigned supreme. The 80's were a mesmerising time. So many home computers to choose from, so many options, so many games and so many magazines. Compared to today, it really was like the wild west - anything could happen tomorrow!

The next mega-game could be released, the next micro could be released, the next new magazine could be on the shelf or the next great peripheral could be advertised.

Even today, the landscape is forever changing, with new products and games being released for the machine.

The Yandex competition always produces some great examples, and this was no different this year. Small companies are also still producing excellent new hardware like the Vdrive, which will feature in the new series.

I won't ignore the other major allure, and that was software copying. It happened and there is no point in denying it. The playgrounds of the UK were full of kids swapping games because it was easy to do so.

I have said many times that I copied a few games but did then buy them if they were any good. I bought them because I was a collector. I wanted the games on my shelf, I wanted to see the artwork and I wanted to admire them.

Some people copied masses of games and set up stalls in local markets. They took things to the next level, an unacceptable level.

Moving onto happier things then, and episode 100. No doubt you will be aware of this, it is plastered all over the front cover, after all. It was amazing to reach that milestone, but as it was uploaded, the next series was already underway and I was setting up and testing various pieces of hardware.

It is odd that sometimes I don't feel like reviewing something, and then when it is all plugged in and working, it is absolutely brilliant.

I have received two particularly exciting pieces of hardware, both of which I have a very personal connection to. These will be rebuilt, cleaned and hopefully, if they work, be featuring in a future episode. One item I have had since January 2020, and it

has taken this long to finally start thinking about putting some time aside to get it back to a working condition.

Media Questions

There have been several requests for me to continue releasing the shows on DVD or Blu-Ray. I did create series one and two on DVD, along with many extras, and sold those, but moving to the next series would be troublesome.

Firstly I switched to 720p and later 1080p. This takes up more space so DVD is out of the question. Blu-Ray has a limit of around 3 hours, which won't fit all the episodes on, unless I drop the resolution or have multiple discs.

Not to mention the work involved in building the menus, processing orders, making extras and posting them out. So here is a little challenge. If there is anyone who thinks they can do this, get in touch and I will consider what to do. It must involve professional printing and duplication via a reputable company. I don't want home burnt discs and ink jet inlays.



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On The Cover

The Story Of *That* Image

The cover of this issue should be familiar to most of you. It was an attempt by me to replicate and reproduce the image first seen in *The Complete Spectrum* magazine. The magazine featured in Episode 100 and issue one contained two images of various Spectrum setups. The first one was the basic setup, and the second was the ideal setup.

Those images certainly looked good in the magazine. Bright colours, well laid out and really well photographed. In episode 100 I decided to try to get a better version of those images by scanning them in, lining them up (as they straddled two pages) and cleaning them up.

I had to scan them page by page and then try to join them, removing any bad merges and attempting to smooth out the slight difference in background colours produce by the scanner. I then tried to remove the text boxes that described each item, but this process proved a step too far. So, what was the next option?

In my enthusiasm I thought I would actually reproduce the image, the first one only, in my office. I had a large red background sheet and most of the equipment. The ZX Spectrum, Interface One, two Microdrives, Interface Two and the Alphacom 32 printer. The two items missing were the cassette recorder and the television.

It took a bit of tracking down but I managed to get hold of the tape recorder on eBay for a reasonable price. It is a Sharp RD-620E and after a bit of cleaning, it was ready. The TV proved more tricky to find, and in fact I never saw anything even remotely like it. Because time was ticking, I opted to use my own 14-inch TV as a substitute.

I set up the background on a desk and began placing each item in turn onto it, using the magazine image as a guide. This took a while but eventually it was ready and I snapped a few images on my phone. This was a mistake, but at the time I was just so pleased to have it all set up just like the original.

After putting all the items away and tidying up the room, I reviewed the photographs the next day and to my dismay (yes, I know I should have checked!) they were not up to my expectations.

Gritting my teeth I started all over again, this time on the floor, giving me more room to get the angle right. Once everything was in place, I used my normal DSLR camera to grab a lot more images from various angles, and the end result is much more pleasing. The closest one to the magazine was used in the episode and can be seen on the front cover.



LOOKING BACK

The Spectrum Show



Many of you may know the story of how The Spectrum Show came to be a thing, almost by accident really, but for those who have forgotten let me explain.

I was tasked with doing a video presentation at work and to brush up my editing skills I decided to do a short 15-minute video about a subject I loved - The Spectrum. It was rough around the edges, my delivery was not good and the content, looking back, seemed rushed. I threw it out onto Youtube to see what feedback I got, and was surprised when viewers seemed to like it.

That was the end, or so I thought, until shortly after seeing the video a friend was clearing out his loft and offered me a few Spectrum things he had found. This included a 48k plus, a Wafadrive and about ten games. I gladly accepted these and was really looking forward to trying out the Wafadrive, not ever having one before.

While setting it up I wondered if the people who had seen the original video might just be interested in this nice bit of hardware. I thought they may be and so filmed it all. Then I got the bug and the show started to take shape.

What were my influences? I used to watch a few retro videos (not always on Youtube). Amongst them were Classic Games Room and the greatly missed Weekend Gamer TV (the old one from years ago and not the ones now found on the internet). If you have ever seen any Weekend Gamer TV videos you will know where some of my ideas came from.

With a format ready and a games collection slowly building, I started to plan the next shows. It took up a lot of time, but back then I had more than enough. The shows got longer and the editing a bit better. New sections were added and new friends made.

The hardware was a particular favourite of mine. All those things I had seen as a child advertised in magazines that were unattainable could now be bought online and I could

finally get my hands on them. This, more often than not, turned out to be disappointing.

Things like the Stack Light Rifle that looked the coolest thing ever, but in use it was terrible and the software support was non-existent. The RD Digital Tracer was also a very intriguing device but yet again, although technically clever, came with an interface that was a modified cassette box and the resolution and accuracy left a lot to be desired.

Sometimes though you got a gem, and that's when I really enjoyed the time spent testing things out. The Heart Rate Monitor was something I had always wanted to track down and try out. Luckily a viewer sent me one to review (and subsequently buy). The VTX 5000 modem was superb and I got a real buzz from using that to get my little Spectrum online again.

The game reviews are always mixed and often changed at the last minute. Sometimes I review games I like and want to play and share, sometimes I go for games I have never played. This either makes me feel like I wasted a few hours or get hungry for more, depending on the game.

I could quite easily sit and play the old Imagine, Ocean, Artic Computing or Quicksilver games for hours, but that doesn't really make for a good video, so those moments are reserved for when an episode is complete and I have a few days to relax.





Like hardware, there are some real treats to discover software wise and some abysmal titles never to be played again. This is all part of the show and when a really great game appears, it's brilliant to spend time testing it on real hardware and emulation before reviewing it.

The constant flow of new games always amazes me too, and some of the games are superb. Sadly I don't have much time to write games like I did, but occasionally I sit down with AGD and test out new ideas.

The VTX 5000 Review Story

The modem was bought from eBay on 1st November 2018. It sat in my collection for a couple of years waiting for the right moment. That moment came in 2020, around March time. Although my house was up for sale and Covid had not yet hit, I thought I would have a few weeks/months to set it up and at least get some footage. At this point I did not know of any bulletin boards still accessible via phone lines.

My plan was to set it up, film it and if it worked, try to create a mini BBS using an old work laptop just so I could demonstrate it. I searched for software to do this and had a few in mind, but I first needed to test it. I used a 30m length of telephone wire to get a socket to the room I was using and once plugged in, it worked fine. This had to be done during packing up in readiness to move, so time was short.

In April I grabbed the first bits of footage of the box, unpacking and setting up. The main screen worked and the menu system seemed fine. At this point I discovered a viewdata BBS still running in the UK. I now had to plan some more time to set up and film again. This happened towards the end of April and by then the feature was beginning to sound like it would be perfect for Episode 100.

Connecting the viewdata BBS was quick and easy and I have to say it was a joyous moment. Seeing my little Spectrum talking to the world was fantastic. Now came the next stage - scrolling bulletin boards.

This took a long time, almost four weeks of trying out different programs, different settings and even different phone sockets in the house. Eventually though, after much frustration, I came to the conclusion the VTX had not been upgraded to allow scrolling systems to work.

I now had 21gb of video footage and then Covid hit, and then the house move happened. The feature for episode 100 wasn't put together until August 2020 when I had finally moved, set up the office and started to script the show. Episode 100 was published in November 2020, over two years after buying the modem.



LOOKING BACK

The Spectrum Show



The older shows included a month by month news section covering the news as it happened from 1983 onwards. To do this I scoured my many magazines and picked out the best bits of news. Initially there was plenty of it, but as time moved on, like the magazines, the news got thinner.

There were some very interesting stories in the news that came as a surprise to me even though I bought Popular Computing Weekly every week for four or five years. The fact that the MOD confiscated a software protection system and slammed the creator with a non-disclosure notice was intriguing and something I should try to find more about.

The show's opening titles are another thing that have evolved over time, with the current ones being my favourite. The video quality has also improved over the years starting at the standard DVD resolution of 720 x 576, moving to 720p for series two and finally going to 1080p from series 6 onwards. There are no current plans to move to 4K though.

As each move to better quality happened, this was backed by upgrading the equipment used to produce it. My camcorders improved and my DSLR was upgraded a few years ago too. I do actually record in 4K as it gives a better picture quality



and I have the option to re-frame during editing.

The shows moved slowly from 15 minutes up to 30 minutes, and I think that is the ideal length for this kind of video. Given that target does leave me room to manoeuvre and I can swap out game reviews if the main feature is longer than normal or add another game review if it is short.

I have done several specials that are longer and indeed episode 100 was over an hour long. It was though, a very special episode and does take a huge amount of time to complete.

I usually do most of the work myself but sometimes people offer their help which is always appreciated. Material provided by other people is always interesting, not only does it mean I have a short break from doing it that month, but also I get to see what others are doing. Mat Dolphin did a great feature on the video digitiser, the Vidi-ZX. The one he tested I don't own, but I do have a similar device that I hope to be putting through its paces soon.

Geoff Neil has also put a lot of effort into the later shows. Initially starting with a playing tips section, he soon moved to other things including Hidden Gems and of course his Jet Set Willy mods section.

Later we came up with the idea about having a chat part of the show. This was another accident. We were on the phone discussing the next series and pondering what to do. The conversation drifted to other subjects and the idea was born. It has been a staple part of the last



few series and we still find things to talk about.

I once compared this section to meeting a mate down at the pub and just having a chat. After recording usually about 30 minutes of audio I then have to cut it down to the five or six minutes needed for the show.

I introduced Type-in Corner after I went through some old tapes I had and discovered a few games missing from the internet. I used those games up pretty quickly and so moved to finding and typing out others. With the help of Bootlegger, we managed to get over twenty games not seen in over 30 years, typed out and playable.





And now for a confession. Episode 100 was meant to be the last one, it seemed like a perfect number to go out on and in fact I had been planning to end there since episode 50.

Covering all the magazines was something I wanted to do, but I was not ready for the sheer frustration it caused. I even missed a few out, which was very annoying!

That was the way of the industry though and everyone was learning as they went along. The talented moved on to machine code, formed companies or

So why did I decide to carry on? There were many reasons to stop after all. I will be getting married soon, I have a new home and I have other hobbies I like to pursue with my future wife.

So for now... the show will go on.





1983

A YEAR IN NEWS

1983 was an exceptionally exciting year for Spectrum owners, with new companies, new hardware, new software and a vast array of news flooding the magazines.

Here is a pick of the stories from that great year.

In January, Bug-Byte, the Liverpool-based software house, was set to be one of the first major companies to move away from trading only via mail order. The decision was based on the rapid growth of the software industry and the acceptance of high street chains to take on computer games.

At the same time, senior staff from Bug-Byte broke away to set up their own software company, Imagine. Dave Lawson, Mark Butler and Eugene Evans would start to produce titles for a range of machines with their first game, Arcadia, ready to go.

With the move to the high street, Curry's MD spoke out about the lack of training for staff. As new computers started to become a common commodity, sales staff had no idea how to sell them to the public. Dixons sent 300 of its staff on a 2-day intensive microcomputer course.

Sinclair moved ahead with their plan to grab the best titles and re-sell them under its own label. The latest batch to get the Silver-label treatment were the four Artic adventure games.

Timex announced their version of the Spectrum, the TX2000 in Las Vegas, with both 16 and 48k models available, and a new joystick was launched, the self-centering Competition Pro, a joystick that went on to have a very long life.

Pixel appointed Quicksilver, an up and coming successful software company, to market and sell its range of titles for the ZX81 and Spectrum.

In February Spectrum sales hit 200,000, with Sinclair stating more high street stores would now be stocking the machine. Meanwhile board-game makers were worried about the numerous computer versions of their products that were appearing. Many games had already been produced unofficially and were selling because of the brand name.

Virgin, mainly known at the time for its music business, moved into the computer games market, creating a new branch named Virgin Games.

In March, Micronet 800, the microcomputer section of Prestel, was launched with special discounts for the first 10,000 subscribers. The race was now on to produce a peripheral that allowed the ZX81 and Spectrum to connect to it.

Sinclair had their own problems and had to recall batches of faulty Spectrum power packs for any Spectrum purchased since January 1st.



New interfaces arrived for the Spectrum to provide connectivity to match bigger machines. RS232 and Centronics interfaces were available from Cobra Technologies, marking the start of a flood of printer interfaces.

Sinclair, late again, stated they were to start offering RAM upgrades for the 16k machine very shortly, though they were still trying to work out exactly how to provide them though. They also announced their much anticipated storage device, the ZX Microdrive, was nearing completion with the final design now frozen and ready for production.

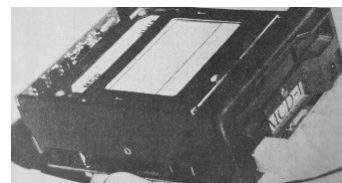
Away from Sinclair, and many software companies were worried about a new scheme that allowed users to try out software and return it. The so-called "Buy 'n Try" scheme allowed users to first buy a title and then exchange it at a later date without paying anything further. This, according to software companies, condones piracy. Quicksilver had already made plans for legal action.



Clive Sinclair was awarded Young Businessman of the Year by the Guardian newspaper. He was 42.

In April, Sinclair put a halt to their planned adapter to connect the ZX81 and Spectrum to the new Micronet 800 service. Luckily, other companies were working on

similar devices and it wouldn't be long before Sinclair owners could connect to the world.



Without the Microdrive many companies were trying to beat Sinclair to a cheap mass-storage system and a low cost disc system looked set to roll out for many microcomputers. The oddly named BATS-NCI drive uses 3 inch discs that can store around 200k of data. Interfaces have already been built for a number of systems including the ZX81 and Spectrum.

On the software side, Quicksilver released a massive 14 new titles this month for a variety of micros including the Spectrum. Games such as Astroblaster and Frenzy would be good sellers.

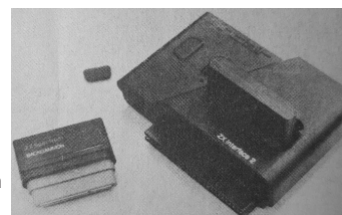
On the high street, price wars were starting to appear. Prices for the Spectrum were cut by high street retailer W H Smith. In an aggressive price battle, they reduced the 16k machine from £125 to £99.95 and the 48k machine from £175 to £129.95.

Sinclair's Interface One, required for the new Microdrive, was rumoured to provide local area network functionality along with an RS232 port. User would be able to link up to 64 Spectrums together. Expected release date was set for May or June.

In May DK'Tronics entered a deal with K-Tel, providing them with software titles to sell under its own label to record shops and distributors.

Another potential disc system to get interfaces for the Spectrum appeared, this time it was the Cyborg 5.25 inch drive. Said to have been compatible with over 25 micros, each disc could hold 360k. The race was now on and Sinclair had to deliver it's own cheaper system.

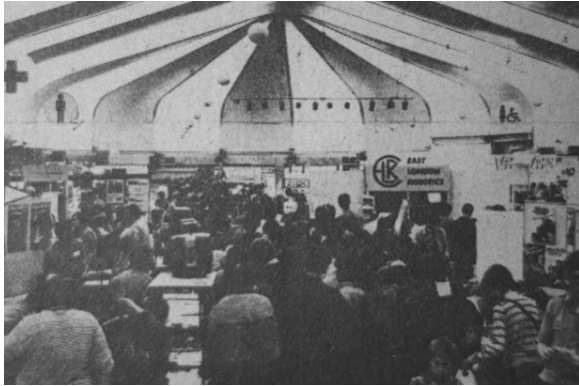
Sinclair and Psion joined forces to produce a new interface and software distribution method, the ROM. The interface named Interface Two would be able to load games instantly via a small ROM cartridge.



Softek started legal action against Silversoft for breach of contract. Silversoft were selling a game, Slippery Sid, that was made using Softek's Super C Compiler. This, according to Softek, should not have happened without permission. Interesting link between the two companies though, in that the compiler was written by the same person who wrote Silversoft's Orbiter game, Andy Glaister.

The first tape-based magazine was produced for the Spectrum. Created by Argus Press, the tape named Spectrum Computing saw its first issue this month. Holding over 80k of data, it was the first of many issues and the first of many tape-based magazines for the Spectrum.

*Images used from original source



In June the ZX Microfair held at Alexandra Pavilion boasted a huge amount of new titles for the Spectrum. Amongst the games launched were Gun Law, Black Hole, 3D Combat Zone and Cosmic Debris.

After being awarded Young Businessman of the Year, Clive Sinclair became a knight when he was given the title in the Queen's Birthday Honours list. Sinclair Research are valued at £135.9m with Sir Clive owning around £129m.

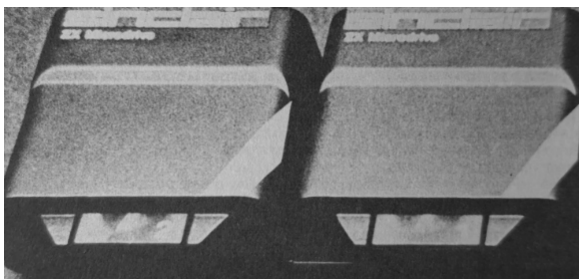
News on the future C5 electric vehicle from Sinclair Research kept trickling in, with the latest guess being that it would be a three-wheeled vehicle powered by a new type of lead-acid battery.

In software news, a new company started to advertise in June, promoting two 16k games. Little did we know this was the start of Ultimate Play The Game's dominance of the Spectrum games scene. Jetpac and Psst were stellar games that made many other available games look simple and badly written.

July arrived and with it came a crime against computers. 3000 Spectrums were stolen from a warehouse in Hornsey as they sat waiting to be sent to retailers by the distributor, Prism. Later in the year most of them were recovered when the thieves tried to sell them to the same retailers that were expecting them from Prism.

News on the eagerly awaited Microdrive was always gladly received and Sinclair claimed that the first deliveries of the cheap mass storage devices would be in September. The public waited patiently, as they always did with Sinclair's products.

Quicksilver opened a new office in America, one of the first UK software houses to do so. Unfortunately it was short lived.



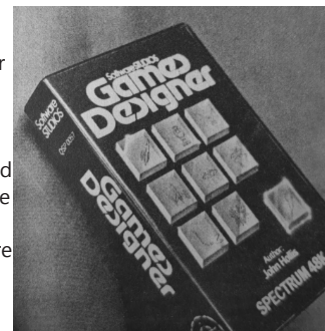
In August, Melbourne House stated they had nearly completed what was destined to be the most famous adventure game on the Spectrum, The Hobbit. Costing £14.95, it included a full copy of the book by J R R Tolkien. After release most magazines were awash with requests for help along with hints and tips. Never before had an adventure game stirred up so much interest.



The Spectrum got a new printer in the form of the Alphacom 32, a rival for the ZX Printer. This was a re-badged version of the US Timex printer, but produced larger prints and did not produce the burnt paper smell of the Sinclair device.

Sales of the Spectrum exceeded 500,000 with an average output of around 6,500 per week being sold. That beat the ZX81 figures for the same time period and Sinclair were delighted, expecting more sales once the Microdrives were released.

September, and Quicksilver released a program that allowed users to make their own games. The Games Designer, as it was called, provided several formats (Invaders, Asteroids etc) and allowed users to change the graphics, attack patterns and sounds. Sadly, you were not able to save out your own games. A fault that all other games designer packages failed to address.



Sinclair released a modified version of the Spectrum's motherboard to fix issues with certain television sets. The new revision (version 3) included a modified ULA chip but this created other issues for some users. Reports that some games written that use the IN command would no longer work arrived at Sinclair and in various magazines, but the number, according to Sinclair, is very small.

Ultimate Play The Game announced two new titles for the Spectrum, both 48k. Lunar Jetman was the follow up to Jetpac and a new game called Atic Atac was centred in a haunted house.

A few weeks after Quicksilver released Games Designer, Melbourne House released its own game creation tool, HURG.



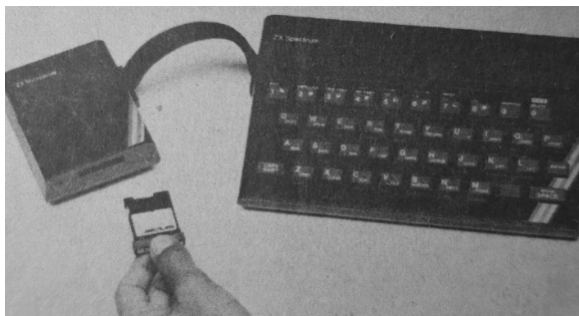
Like Quicksilver's offering, you could not save out games without the main package being loaded first.

Quicksilver also announced a few Christmas games including one called The Flea. This was later changed to Bugaboo The Flea.

In October, Sinclair's ROM interface, Interface 2, was made available for mail order. Costing £19.95, the unit allowed use of the new ROM games which would cost £14.95.

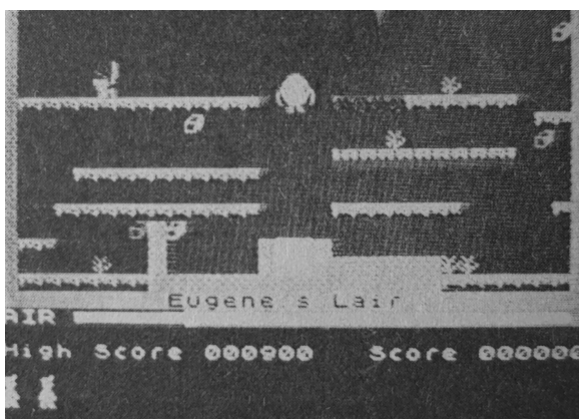
Melbourne House, after the success of The Hobbit, announced their next adventure game. Sherlock, obviously based on the famous detective created by Arthur Conan Doyle, would see the player trying to solve a murder.

The first game to use Interface 1's networking feature was released this month. Hunter Killer by Protek was a modified version of a type-in game published in a magazine.



Sinclair struggled to produce enough Microdrives to meet orders and in some cases even admitted they were production problems. Software for the device is also non-existent with Psion claiming this was due to a shortage in the cartridges.

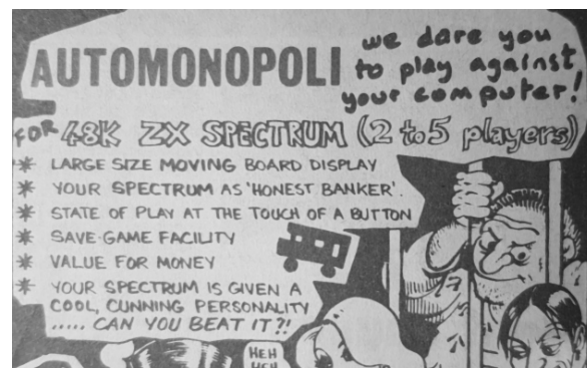
November arrived, and the build up to Christmas was in full swing. Take up of the Microdrive by software houses though was very slow, almost at a stand still. Richard Shepherd Software, notable for games such as Transylvanian Tower, claimed to be making plans to release its Cash Controller software for the device. However, lack of duplication facilities for the new format meant they had to release on cassette and provide a save to Microdrive option instead.



The award for the stupidest name for a software package must go to the Irish company Micro-Kraft. It released a pack of three tools that allowed users to protect their software. Basic Protectrum, Machine Code Protectrum and Anti-Copier Protectrum performed different tasks to keep your games safe.

Several companies released games that were compatible with the new speech unit from Currah. The unit allowed games to speak words and phrases, and companies such as Ultimate Play The Game, Artic and Bug-Byte were already producing titles which worked with it.

In December, Bug-Byte software lost their claim on one of the most famous Spectrum games. Manic Miner, written by Mathew Smith, was sold by the Liverpool based software house, and Mathew left to set up a new company, Software Projects. Software Projects would now sell the game leaving Bug-Byte with only their remaining stock of the game to sell.



Automata had appealed for financial help as it battled board-game makers Waddingtons. The target for Waddingtons was Automata's computer game, Automonopoly. In July Automata changed the name as part of an agreement. The title was renamed Go To Jail, however, this seems not to have been the end of the matter. The court case was set for January.

Sinclair proudly announced the completion of the one millionth Spectrum. This major event took place on December 9th at the Timex plant in Dundee.

And finally...

Did you ever get so angry while playing a computer game? Well a company recognised this and produced a 17 inch foam baseball bat so you could take out your frustration on anything that was within reach. Named the Byte Bat, it could be yours for just £7.



KONG'S REVENGE

Zigurat Software 1991

Take the arcade game Donkey Kong, Nintendo's fantastic and well-loved classic platformer, enlarge everything so the main character is nearly a quarter of the screen in height, add a few elements to the game play and what you end up with is Kong's Revenge.

It is a very impressive looking game and the developers have done a great job, but the game falls down badly in the most important area, playability.

Let's start with the game in general though. The aim is to get to the top of the scrolling screen, reach Kong and throw him off. Kong has kidnapped Mike's girl and Mike is set on revenge. Mike, the main character is not having any of this and begins his journey upwards.

There are seven levels to get through, each featuring the usual mix of ladders, barrels and fireballs. The graphics are monochrome and the screen scrolls in all directions as Mike moves around. The detailed backgrounds are great and graphically the game is very good.

Control is a bit hit and miss, sometimes you can try to jump a gap in the girders and end up plummeting downward. It takes a while to get used to how jumps work.

New elements added to this game are switches that turn on various things like moving platforms and bridges. To operate a switch you have to just walk into it, but this can cause inadvertent operation. In these cases you have to jump over them to avoid doing it by accident.

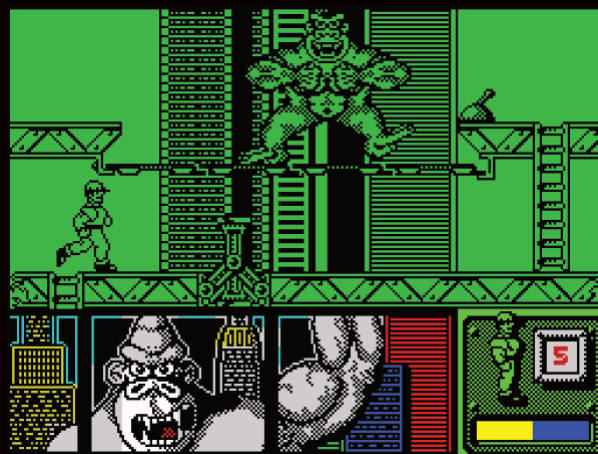
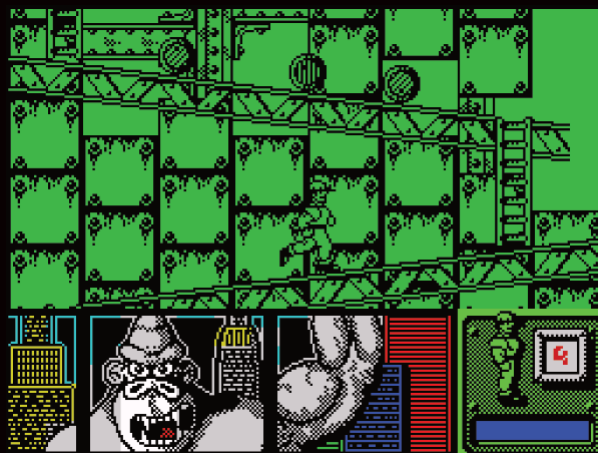
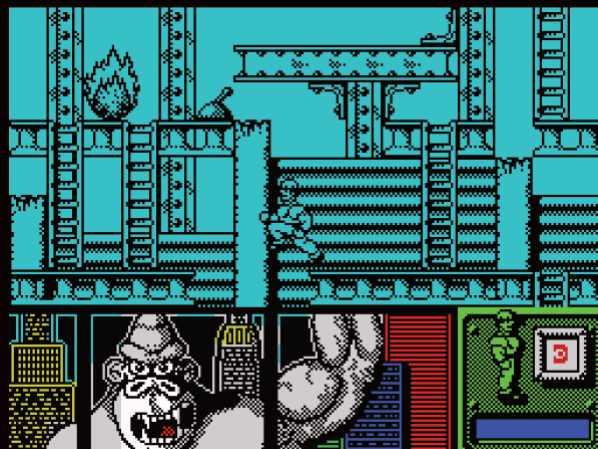
Mike can also punch barrels. This is used quite a lot as the rate of barrels in some areas proves far too much to jump.

Sound is used well and everything would be great if it wasn't for the difficulty. Just getting past the first two minutes proved impossible. You have to climb a ladder, jump a gap and time things so the fireball moves down one ladder as you move up the other. You then have to throw a switch to turn on the moving platform, then get back to the ladder before the fireball comes back up. This section is so frustrating that in the end, after ten minutes of trying, I used a cheat to get me further.

Sadly things did not improve and it wasn't long before I was heading down the screen headfirst.

The game has so much potential which is offset by the difficulty.

The last level moves completely away from the original and turns into a run-and-gun game. Mike has to make his way across the roof of a building with some nice background graphics, shooting the ever-moving head of Kong. Once complete he has to blast his way to his girlfriend, who for some reason is naked! I'll let you see that for yourself!



SARDONIC

Penisoft 2019

It's not very often we get new shoot-em-ups on the Spectrum, so I was eager to play this one when I saw it arrive on the forums. Shoot-em-ups are my favourite genre, so this would be a tough test for this newcomer.

Sardonic is described as a character-based shooter. That means that all the graphics move in character squares (8 pixels) rather than being pixel smooth, but to be honest, it really doesn't matter for this game. The action is fast enough for you not to notice as you dodge left and right trying to destroy the aliens and collect the powerups.

During the intro we get some nice music before the action begins and then swarms of enemy aliens start to drop down the screen, firing at you constantly. This vertical shooter is great fun to play and follows the usual format, but that isn't a bad thing.

Blast anything you see, dodge the alien bombs and pick up various things along the way. Great!

You have smart bombs that can be used to destroy everything on screen and these are replenished throughout by picking up the 'B' icon when left behind by a recently destroyed ship.

You can get extra firepower too, which doubles your laser shots and this is essential if you want to get far. Each time you are hit, you lose this upgrade, so immediately look for it as soon as possible.

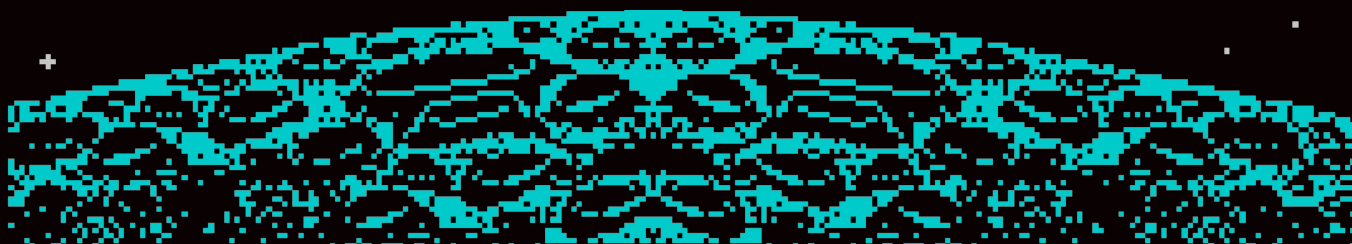
You can pick up extra points by collecting the P symbol and extra lives by collecting the L symbol.

The game plays really well, and it's a hectic pace. Because of the character movement everything moves quickly so you have to be alert.

The enemies vary in colour and look, and move differently. If you get far enough, there is an end of level boss and then it's back to more blasting.

This game is very reminiscent of early games, but seems better and really is a good blast.

I really enjoyed this and if you like shooters, definitely give this a try.



MAZE DEATH RALLY-X

Tom Dalby 2018



Maze Death Rally X is a conversion of the 1981 arcade game Rally-X – and a damn fine conversion too. The game involves driving around a maze and collecting flags whilst avoiding the chasing cars and other hazards such as oil.

If that was not enough, you have limited fuel so have to ensure you don't run out. You can collect fuel on your journey, so you need to keep an eye out for it.

As the levels increase, the number of chasing cars grow, so the learning curve and playability gives you plenty of game time.

The game has continuous music that's is similar to the arcade game, and the graphics are really well implemented.

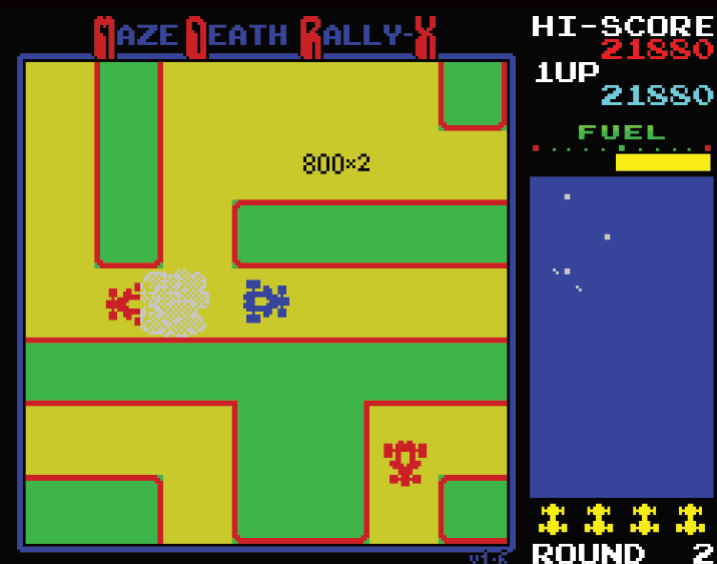
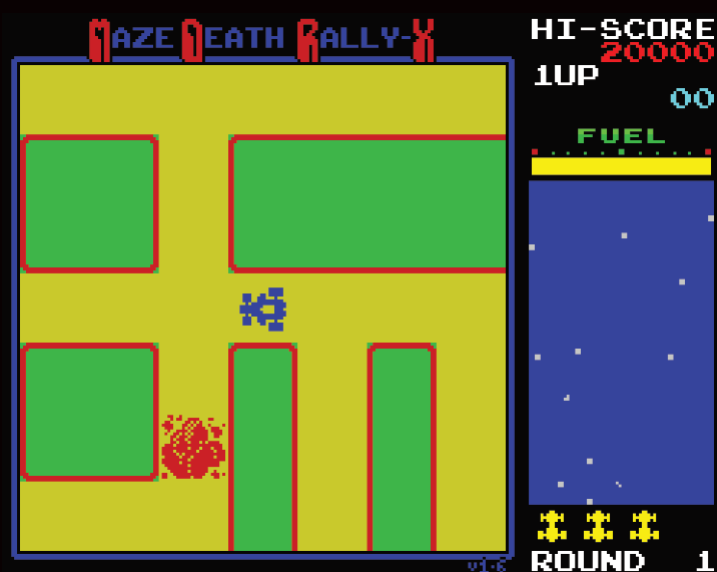
There are other version of this already on the Spectrum (Maze Death Race from PSS being one), but this one is by far the closest to the arcade, and is really great fun to play.

The map on the right of the screen shows the position of the flags that need collecting, yourself and the chasing cars which is very useful.

If the cars get too close you can always lay down a smoke screen to block them, but you have a limited number of these at your disposal.

The control can be a bit of a problem at times and it's difficult to say what is happening, but when you approach a turn or corner, the car can try to turn itself, but at the same time you hit the key and the car seems to spin around and go back the opposite way.

Apart from that though, this is a thoroughly enjoyable game and certainly worth checking out.



MISSION JUPITER



Here we have a horizontal scroller with very little in the way of a story. You are on Jupiter and have to survive the ten levels of, as the inlay puts it, arcade action.

Being a Codemasters game you would expect at least a half-decent game, and sadly, despite being written by Derek Brewster, that's all it is.

The play area covers the bottom half of the screen, presumably to allow better scrolling. The top half is used to display scores, current level and lives. There are also meters for fuel, which is needed for your jetpack and laser power. Extra fuel and power can be collected from the ground as you march or fly along.

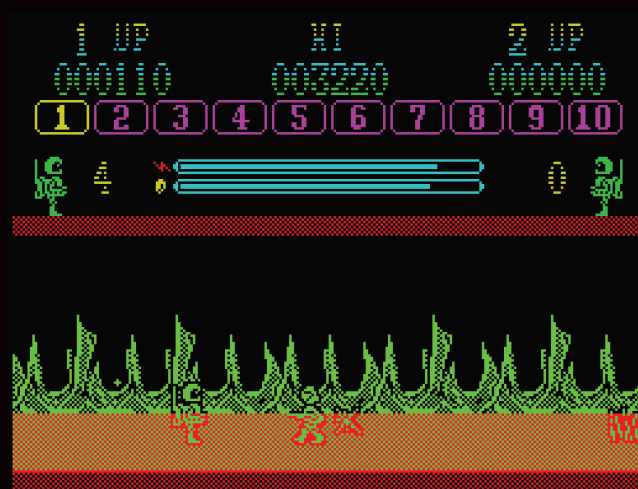
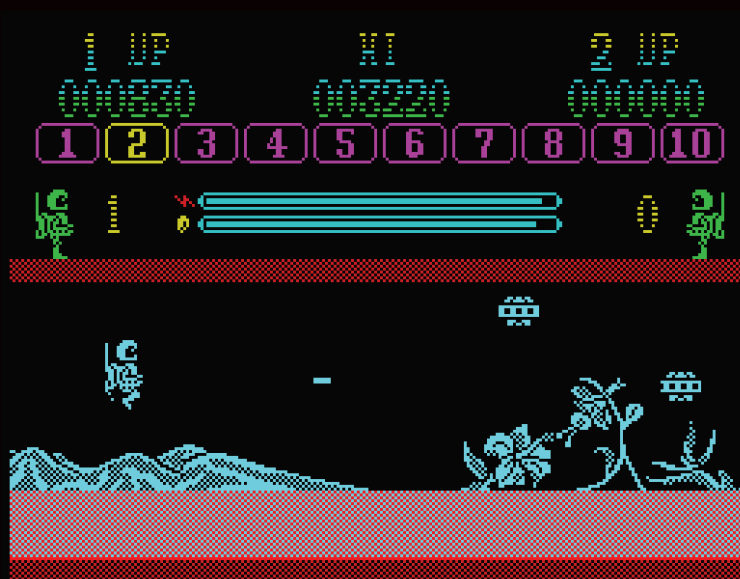
The graphics are monochrome and in some parts quite detailed, but the colour scheme used on some levels start to hurt your eyes. Also because of the monochrome scheme, enemy bullets are difficult to spot over the textured background.

Sound is minimal with footsteps, laser fire, collection and explosions, some of which are definitely from older Mikro-Gen games.

Control is OK, and sometimes a bit tricky as you walk and fly across the landscape. The enemy aliens come in a variety of shapes, but there is nothing really outstanding about this game. It was though, to be fair, only a budget release.

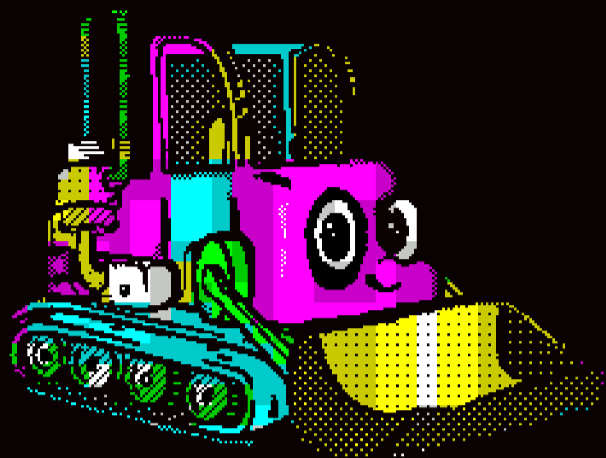
Playability is fair and the game isn't too difficult. I managed to get to the third stage without any problems, so there is the one-more-try element, but the graphics style really does start to irritate you after a while.

A half-decent game, worth a quick blast, but don't expect to return to it.



DIRTY DOZER

Miguetelo 2019



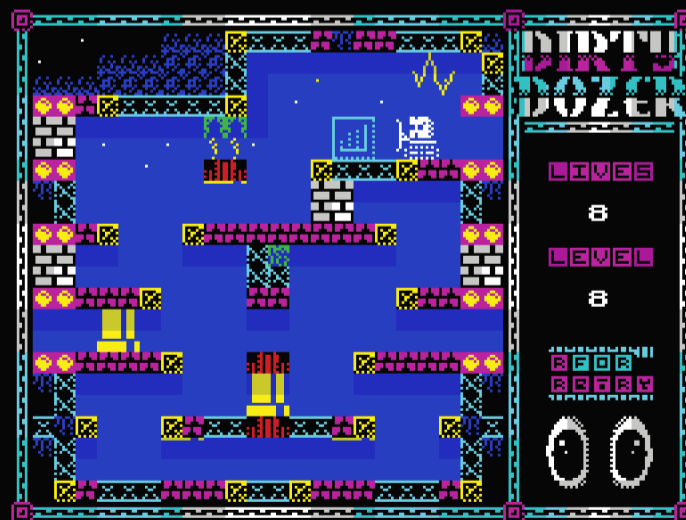
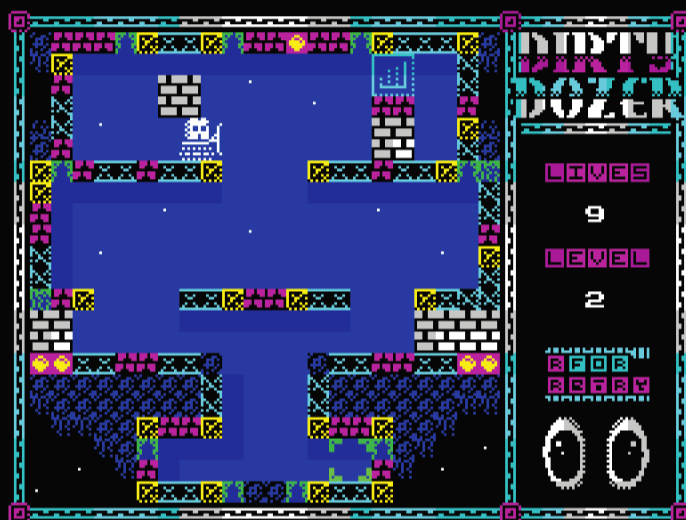
Miguetelo always has the ability to create original games, bringing together various genres, usually a mix of puzzles and platformers. This had already happened with Robots Rumble, released more than a year ago, or even Double Bubble, in 2016. Dirty Dozer doesn't differ too much from his other games, so anyone who appreciates his style, just like us, will have strong reasons to look forward to this new challenge. Will this new game be up to it? We will see...

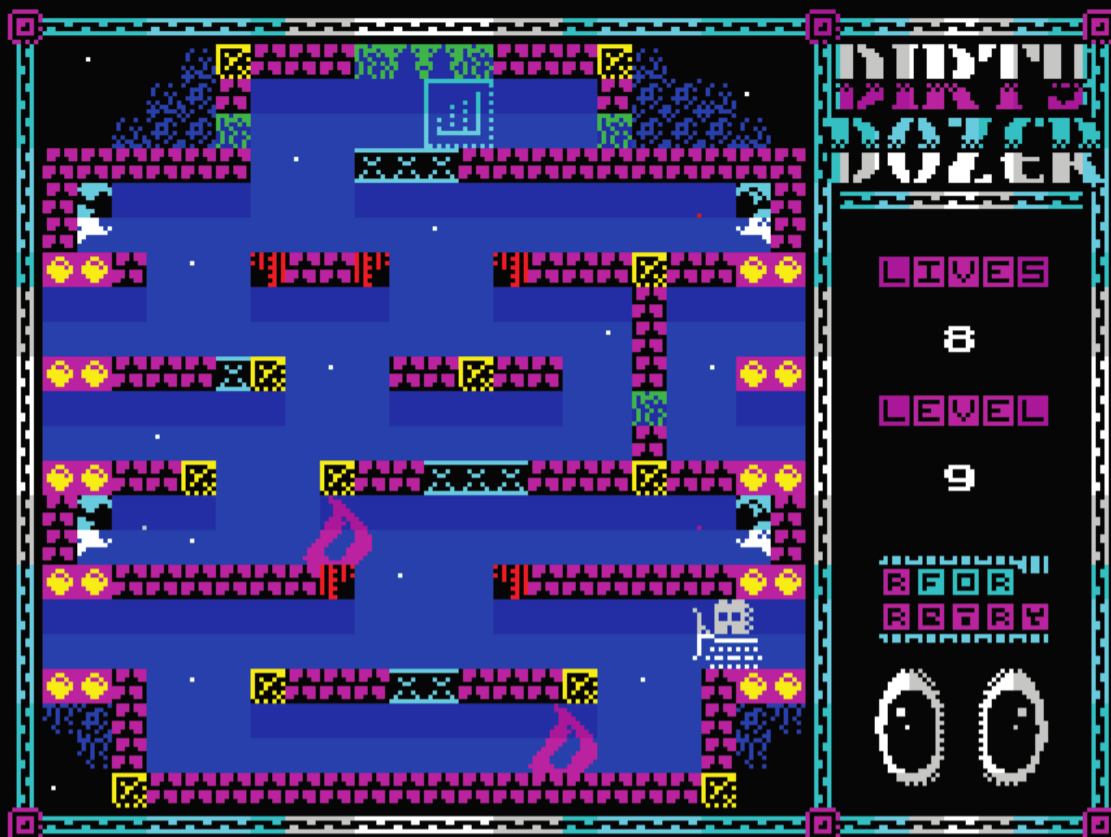
Just take Sokoban, add a few pinches of platformer, a few more of an arcade game, and voilà, it's Dirty Dozer. Just an aside: this was one of the games we found more difficult to define. It is a platformer, but also a puzzle and even an action game.

We should also explain briefly what Sokoban consists of: it is a puzzle in which we move cubes or boxes to be positioned in specific places. There are many obstacles in the middle, and you can move only one box at a time, being careful not to get stuck against the walls, so it takes a lot of mental gymnastics to solve the riddles. This is also the case in Dirty Dozer, as the ultimate goal of each of the 22 levels is driving a bulldozer (hence the name of the game) and placing the boxes in the spots indicated for that purpose.

However, unlike the magnificent SokoBAarn, for example (yet, another Sokoban-inspired game), which features puzzles to be solved in a slow, almost foot-to-toe way, this does not happen in Dirty Dozer. Not only because there is a time limit to complete each level, but also because the remaining arcade elements then appear.

The first levels are quite peaceful, but at some point the moving obstacles begin to appear. Lightning patrols some paths, and even the famous tubes that crush those who pass underneath (reminiscent of the Monty saga), are frequent at the most advanced levels. But there is worse, because some gargoyle-like beings shoot fireballs that will make you restart the level with one life less if they hit.



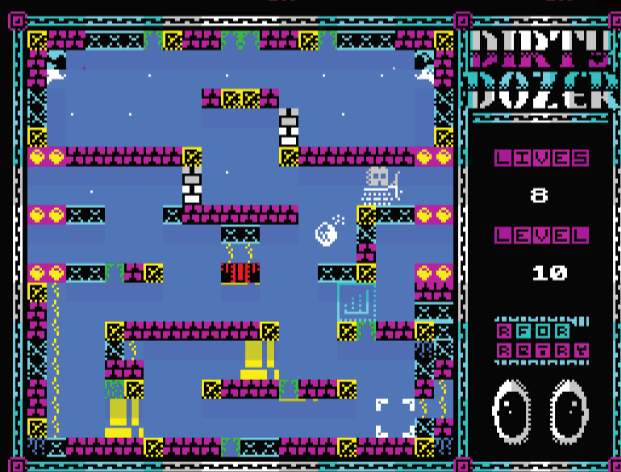


In addition we have an extra element to consider, not only will we have to select the path carefully, so the box is not stuck at a point that cannot be moved later, but the box can't be hit by any of the enemies as well. Add to that the bulldozer is not easy to control with the box at the same time, sometimes taking milliseconds to move the box safely, while deflecting the bulldozer off an enemy.

On the other hand, the bulldozer has the ability to destroy brick blocks. And it will have to do this even before starting to move each box, as the vast majority of those brick walls prevent the box from reaching its destination. However, even before destroying the blocks, it is advisable to outline the path to be taken, or you may fall or be stuck in a place where you cannot reach the box later. As you can see, there are plenty of problems for those who accept this challenge.

The screen layouts are very well thought out by Miguetelo. Most often the shortest route is not the right one to be taken (were you expecting anything else?), and on some levels you will find mobile platforms and transporters to take you to places otherwise unreachable. Thumbs up for Miguetelo, who even added abundant colours, creating stunning visual screens.

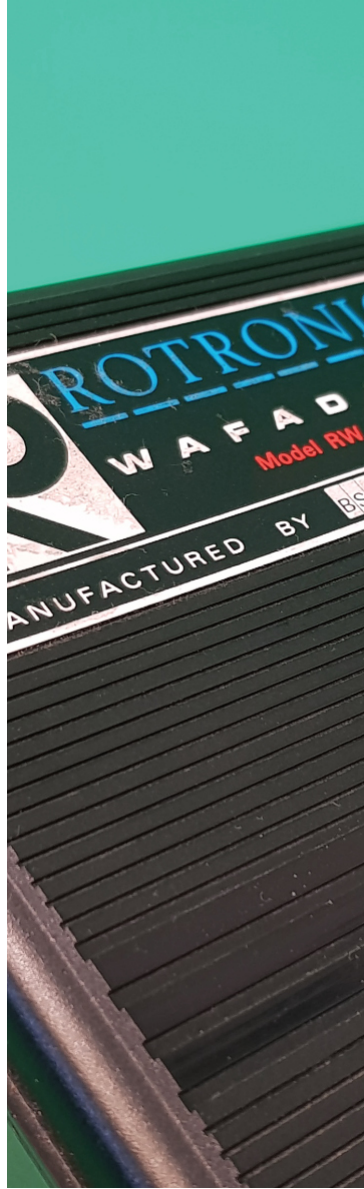
The music is nice and plays along on each level although it can be a little repetitive. Luckily you can turn it off. Not because it wasn't good at all, simply because you need full concentration for a game like Dirty Dozer, and the music was diverting us from this.



Dirty Dozer is thus one of the best games of 2019, if not in size, though 22 levels can still be hard and long enough for most people, at least in terms of quality. It's ground-breaking, reminding us of some of Denis Grachev's games (though it was created with Arcade Game Designer), as well as Dave Hughes, and has the power to grab us to the last level.

Also the physical edition containing extra levels was prepared by Bitmap Soft, a new publisher that started operating in 2019.

Review by André Leão

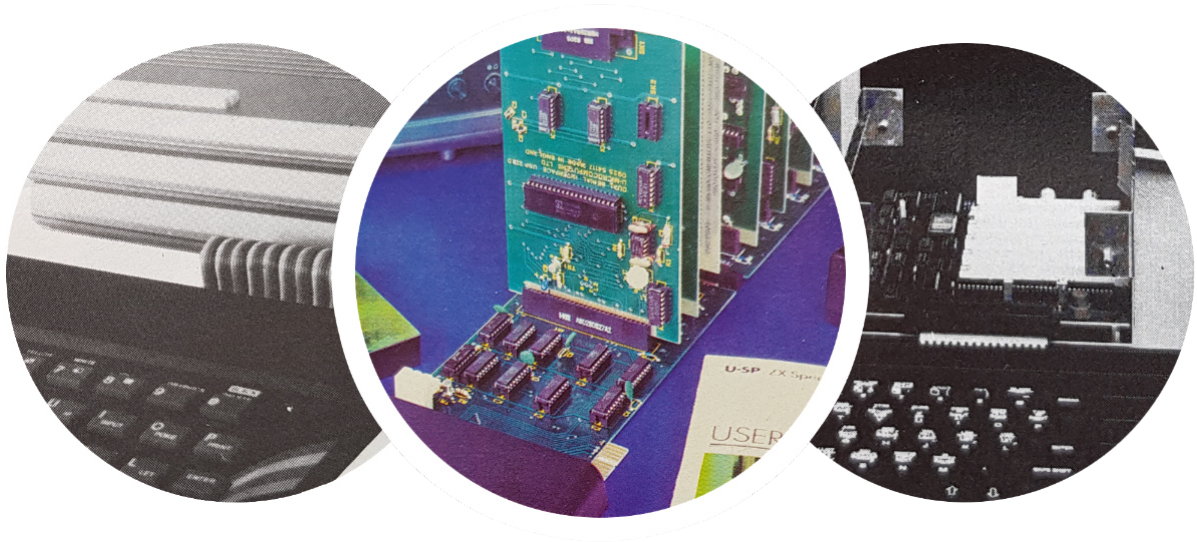


STRANGE INVENTIONS

As the original creator of the ZX Spectrum Hardware Index (in 1986) that still forms the core of the hardware listed on Spectrum websites, I catalogued a lot of equipment.

The Spectrum, along with the ZX81 before it, had some truly innovative hardware. Peripherals that expanded the machine beyond its limits and gave the user much more flexibility.

There were though, some strange and wonderful items to be found.



It is a credit to both Clive Sinclair, for producing a machine with the expansion options, and the companies, who continued to push the little machine forward. There are the big names of course, The Sinclair ZX Microdrive and Interface 1 for example, I am sure everyone has heard of. Providing not only fast storage, but networking and a serial port too, and I'm sure this was on the top of many people's shopping lists when it was announced. The Wafa drive, a competitor to the Microdrive produced by Rotronics and incorporating dual drives was another well known storage device and for printing there was the ZX Printer and Alphacom32 printer.

The numerous keyboards that gave users a proper full travel experience, the most popular being the DK'Tronics one. There were disc interfaces allowing us to connect various types of drive to our Spectrum, The Disciple and Plus D interfaces being popular but expensive.

Light guns, Light pens, Joystick interfaces, Interface 2 and many, many more. No doubt you'll have favourites of your own but what about those odd things, tucked away in the back of magazines. The ones that no one bought. The Spectrum had some weird and wonderful peripherals. Let's start with a few you may know.

The RD Digital Tracer. Not a drawing tool but a tracing tool. This plastic arm allowed you to trace pictures from paper. Not something you would rush out and buy, but it did what it claimed, albeit in low resolution. I reviewed this in episode 51 and although sturdily made and having an interface made from a cassette box, it actually worked well if you had a steady hand.

The Cheetah RAT. The infrared joystick controller. I reviewed this in Episode 34 and it worked well, but was cumbersome and suffered from poor contacts that meant it did not always respond.



The Logotron Spriteboard. Now this is one piece of kit I would like to see. I am not sure if it was ever released as the adverts say Coming Soon. It boasted up to 30 programmable hardware sprites.

The Graphpad. Yes, the Spectrum had a graphics tablet. It must have been magical to draw on this and see it appear on screen at the time. I suspect the limited resolution and colour usage of the machine hampered it a bit though.

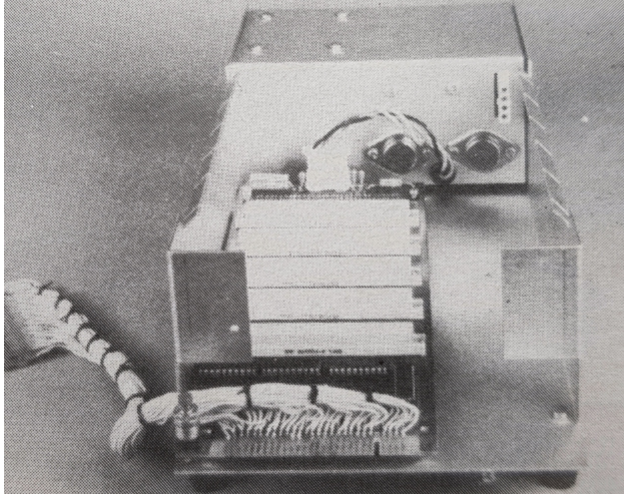
The Volex Teletext adaptor. This device could view pages of teletext just like your television. You did have to unplug the aerial from the TV first though, so if you TV already had it, then there was no point in having the device.

The VTX 5000. For many people, myself included, this was their first venture into the realms of digital communication. You could log on to Prestel and Micronet 800 along with a host of other viewdata bulletin boards with this great piece of equipment. Later rom updates and software allowed access to scrolling bulletin boards too.

The Micro Command. You speak, your Spectrum obeys, so the advert stated. I reviewed this in episode 61 with varying results. There was also Big Ears from William Stuart Systems, a lesser known but similar tool.

Strange Inventions - weird and wonderful expansions

Muckbus - (Microtext UK)



The Muckbus is a box that sits behind the Spectrum and extends the expansion port allowing multiple devices to be connected in a neat, vertical way. There is also an optional power supply so you can avoid frying your Speccy if you have a lot plugged in.

Although a logical idea, it doesn't address the problem of devices being incompatible. There were a lot of things planned for this device including a disc interface, 80 column video adaptor and printer port.

USP Card expander - (U Microcomputers)

Another similar idea to the Muckbus is the USP Card Expander. Not as nice to look at or as expandable as the Muckbus, but it does offer similar functions and the additional boards were available. These included a Centronics printer board, RS232 board and multi I/O board.

I would be quite worried if I had that many boards hanging off the back of the machine, and they do say you would need to build your own power supply to accommodate them.



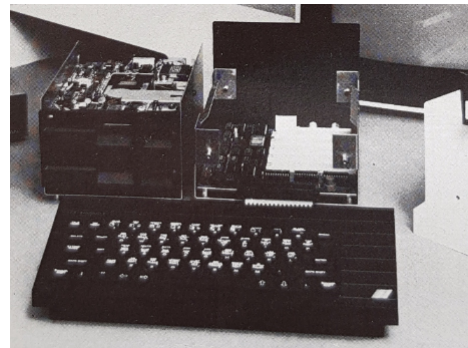
Basicare Expansion (Basicare microsystems)



The Basicare Micro System took a different approach to the multiple device connectivity problem and has each individual expansion in its own case that can stack up. This does look more professional and the optional modules included memory expansions, I/O cards, sound modules and printer modules.

Microframe - (Gordon Micro)

The Microframe gives the user a large external box in which can be fitted disc drives along side various other expansion cards including 256 channel I/O and memory.



The Heart Rate Monitor

The Heart Rate Monitor (Magenta Electronics)

This little black box allowed you to monitor your heart rate, as the name suggests, on your Spectrum!

This device can't have sold many units and I had never seen one in the wild, that was until someone contacted the show and asked if I would like to borrow one for review.

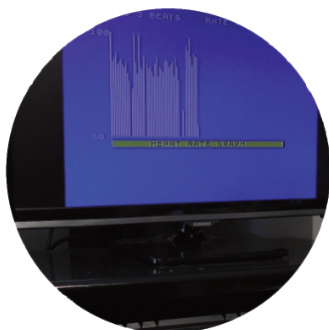
The Heart Rate monitor was manufactured by Magenta Electronics and first appeared in magazines around mid to late 1983. It was advertised as something to aid health and fitness, and something that was safe, reliable and easy to use. Reading the advert it looked amazingly like those fitness apps you can get on mobile phones. The ones that read your heart rate, calculate steps and other stuff. But this was in 1983, on a Spectrum.

The unit itself is unremarkable when you see it. Measuring 12cm by 8cm and 3cm deep, it has a single 3.5mm audio socket on one side and two small blobs on the top. It came supplied with a tape containing four programs, two for 16k machines, the other two for 48k machines. Alongside this standard C12 was an audio lead and an instruction sheet.

The version advertised is slightly different from the one I have though as the advertised version clearly states, it takes power from the Spectrum, with no need of batteries. The unit I have requires a PP3 battery and does not connect to the expansion port.

After recovering all four programs (2 for 16k, 2 for 48k) it was time to set this thing up and see if it still worked.

Before that I had to open the unit up to fit the battery and this gave me a good look inside. I am not technical, so have no idea what the components are, but it was remarkably clean for its age.



Connecting the audio lead from the ear socket of the Spectrum to the socket on the heart rate monitor produced random bleeps – this is to be expected according to the manual. To load the software the manual suggested you



disconnect first. This I did and loaded the first program. According to the manual this gives you a digital readout of your heart rate.

With the software loaded I was now getting a readout of my heart rate. I had been clambering around with lights and cameras (and was obviously nervous and excited), so it looked a bit high, and don't forget, this is a Spectrum and a 35 year old piece of hardware.

It was tricky getting your finger in the right position to get a steady reading. You had to adjust the position and then try to keep it still if you got a good steady beeping. The instructions claim you can get good readings from your middle finger, thumb, cheek or ear lobe. Not sure I would want to stick this on my ear though!

Next I loaded the second program, an altogether more impressive piece of code, and something I had envisioned when I first heard of the Heart Rate Monitor. Setting a lower and upper limit first, you then set the beats to count per reading, the manual suggest 3, and the software then proceeds to draw a graph of your heart rate over time. This was really impressive. Here is my little 48K Spectrum monitoring my heart rate!

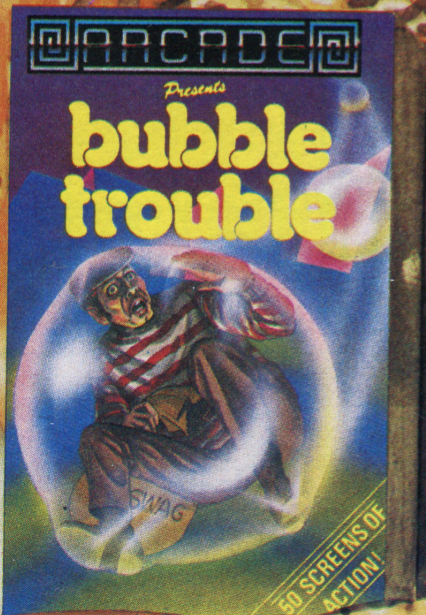
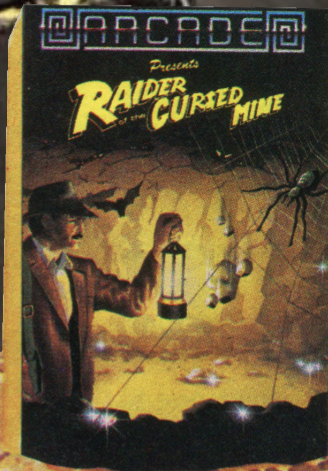
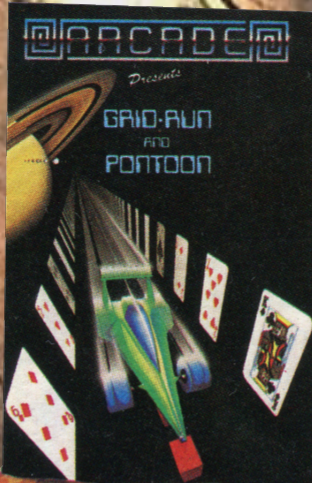
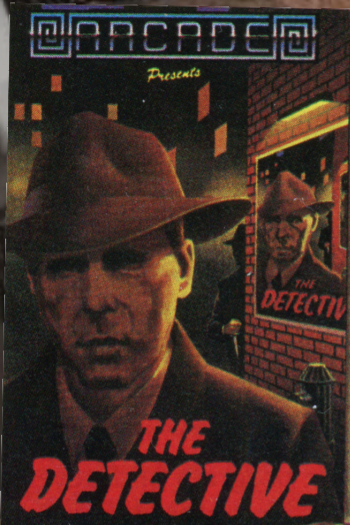
Again, any slight change of position will cause the reading to stray a little, or vanish or shoot off the top but overall it does what it says it does. For you technical out there, it takes 50Hz readings and adjusted accordingly giving a 1 in 300 resolution which equates to an error rate of 0.33% if a good signal is obtained.

I can understand why this may not have sold well. Everyone knew the serious market was small, being dominated by word processors, sound or graphic programs. Take that to the next level with some hardware that only appeals to a tiny percentage of an already small market, and the sales must have been minimal. For one to survive in a working condition is miraculous, and to actually get to see one myself is an added bonus.

Review in episode 90.

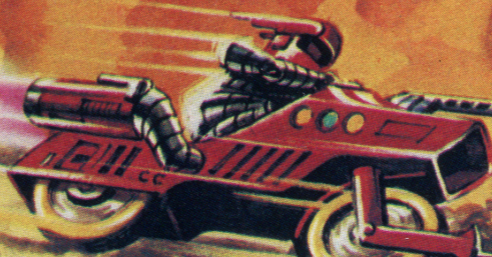
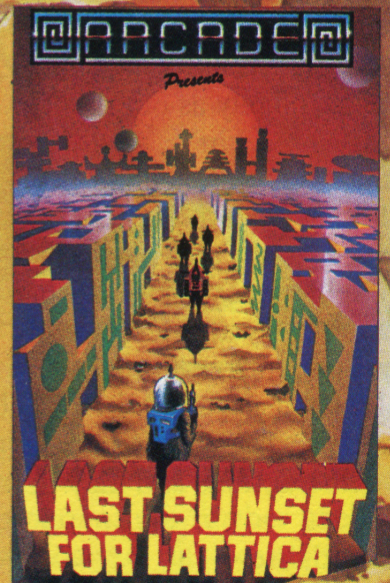
ARCADE

SOFTWARE



COMING
SOON!

THE ZONE



Arcade Software were not the best known software company, in fact even avid Spectrum users in the early 80's could have easily overlooked them.

They were not the most prolific company either, producing only 10 games and one compilation, one of which is missing in action and one that never got released.

Their adverts may be familiar, but the games were a mystery, at least to me. With a bit of digging around I managed to get all of their available games from three different places so I can finally see what the company were selling. It will also give me a good opportunity to play some games.

Here then are then are the games of Arcade Software and the covers do look different from most other games being sold at the time. Ocean Software went for bright, cartoony-like covers, mainly created by the brilliant Bob Wakelin, Quicksilver opted for fantastic sci-fi art work and DK Tronics, well, did their own distinctive thing. And then there was Arcade Software with their mix of subjects and styles that somehow fitted the games, but managed to remain disconnected from each other.

Trying to pin down the order in which the games were released was troublesome, so I can only go for the first dates they appeared in magazines as a guide.

June 1983: Grid Run and Pontoon compilation

These two games seem to have been released together and not separately, which is unusual, but once we play them we can see they were not good enough for that.

Grid Run looks like a poor Pacman clone but the game play is much different. You still have to clear the dots, but you only have two keys to control your car, or Grid Runner. These keys move your red car inward towards the centre of the track or outward.

You can only do this at the holes in the maze though and obviously you have to avoid the chasing car.

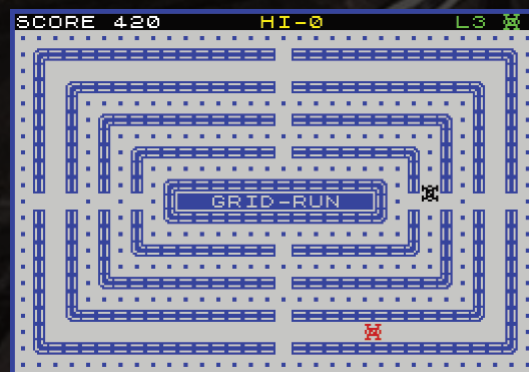
The graphics are character based and the sound isn't too bad for an early game, with some nice machine code effects for various aspects of the game.

The game is quite playable once you get into it, trying to time your moves so that you don't hit the other car that seems to randomly switch lanes.

Interestingly the author, Bruce Rutherford, was unhappy

with a review of this compilation and wrote back to Home Computing Weekly, putting the reviewer straight on a few things. The reviewer however responded, pointing out the flaws in the game.

The reviewer thought Grid Run required very little skill to play, I'm not sure how I stand on that as you do you have to have good timing, although pitting timing against randomly moving objects is not really skillful.



ARCADE SOFTWARE

Pontoon is, as you would expect, based on the card game of the same name. The music is terrible and sets the scene for an equally terrible game. The cards are huge and the game play is a bit dull.

The computer deals its own hand that you can see and then shows you yours. You can then stick or twist and the winner is the one who gets closest to 21.

The sound is BASIC beeps and to be honest there is no real excitement at all.

Raider of the Cursed Mine - June 1983

This game, although not original, isn't as bad as the title may have you believe. First the story; you are, as the title suggests, a raider of mines. Heading off into the great unknown in search of diamonds. However, one mine you enter is inhabited by evil spirits, and they are not happy with you stealing their jewels.

The mine is displayed on screen as seven horizontal tunnels with three lifts, one at each side and a central one. Some tunnels are blocked by spider webs and so you have to navigate around these to grab the diamonds.

The evil spirits have many ways in which to kill you. Some throw rocks at you, a ghost pops up, moves about and then vanishes randomly, and then there are the bats. These just take away points, but the others will kill you. If you walk into a web, you will be trapped and a spider will arrive to kill you anyway.

Using the lifts you have to carefully navigate around and collect all the diamonds, and the key to this game is patience and timing. While in the lifts nothing can kill you but your bonus reduces, but that's better than death. You only get one life too, so you have to be extra careful.

The graphics are smooth but small and not well defined, but they do the job. They look like pre-shifted characters too, but that doesn't detract too much. The sound and control are good but sometimes the controls jam leaving you motionless and open to attack, which can be very frustrating.

Overall not a bad game, and one I quite enjoyed.

The Detective - October 1983

This game makes no sense but then again it shouldn't need to. The story is something to do with a detective trying to track down the mob and break into their safe. However, as you can see it's a shoot-em-up.

This is supposed to represent Dagger Alley and you have to get through it, however, for a 40's gangster plot it sure looks like a space shooter to me.



The game very much reminds me of Arcadia from Imagine software. Each level has a different set of aliens moving in different patterns. There is also this centipede-like thing that can't be destroyed and a dog that chases you off the screen!

The inlay states that if you make it to the final level, you get to have 10 guesses at the safe combination. Needless to say, I never made it that far.

It's not a bad shooter, the action is fast and the graphics are 1983 standard. There are some good sound effects too. It's certainly a challenge to play and you do want to keep going to see what the next level is like. As the level gets to an end, the last few aliens speed up making them harder to hit.

The movement of the main character, although smooth, always ends in 8 pixels, so the position is always fixed. This means your shots have to be 8 pixels offset. In other words you can't shoot an alien directly below, you have to be 8 pixels left or right, very odd and annoying.

Last Sunset for Lattica - October 1983

In this game you have to find and defuse a bomb hidden in a complex maze. Oh dear, this is a very bad Berzerk clone. The walls are deadly too and the movement is very quick so it's difficult not to keep bumping into the walls.

The sound is OK but everything else is a bit awkward. There are far too many enemies about shooting at you, and this means it isn't long before you're dead.

Slowing things down and not going in firing at everything and the game does get a little better but there are places where the rooms don't match up and you are bounced back to the previous one.

I did find a key at one point but never found a use for it!

You also fall foul of instant death syndrome. Getting shot by an alien, you are resurrected at the same point and get shot again, very frustrating.

A simple game that could have been much better but it's far too frustrating to enjoy.

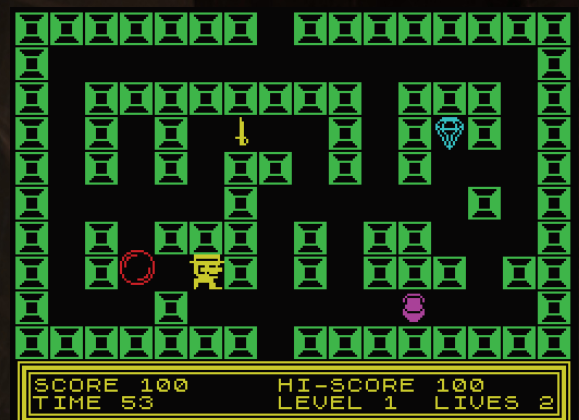
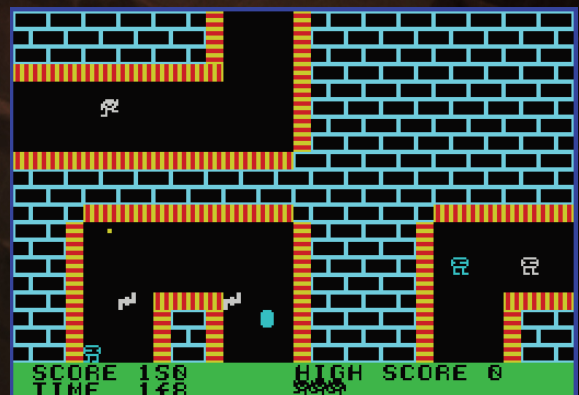
Bubble Trouble - 1984

Here we have a simple yet enjoyable maze game where you play a burglar out to steal as much as you can. You can select the difficulty and starting maze and then the game begins. The maze is easy to navigate, but some of the colour schemes used make your eyes bleed.

A single chasing bubble wanders about with no real intelligence at all and you simply have to avoid it and grab the goodies. Once they have all gone, you can grab some bonus points while waiting for the timer to run out. Once it runs out, a new maze is drawn and it all starts again.

Movement is smooth, but the sprites are a bit dull. Luckily control is good meaning you don't get caught easily. Sound is basic, with a few tunes and spot effects, but nothing that sounds anything other than basic BEEPS.

Once you complete a few mazes there is no change in game-play so you can either try a harder difficulty, or give up and play something else.



ARCADE SOFTWARE

The Prize - June 1984

This game came with a full page advert claiming you could win £5000 of prize money, however, reading the inlay the dreadful truth comes out. For each copy of the game sold, 20p would be set aside for the prize. This will keep being added to until £5000 is reached. If it doesn't get that high, then the prize will be however much has been reached. That means to make the £5000 prize, they would have had to have sold 25,000 copies.

I never heard of anyone actually winning this prize, unlike other games that offered something.

Anyway, to the game and here you enter a maze, find the inner chamber, find its secret and win. This is just like Last Sunset at Laticca. The maze looks the same, only instead of a man running about you control a spaceship. I think this is an updated version, there are some different elements like moving walls, where the instant death syndrome gets you!

There are fewer enemies about, which is good and it plays at a more leisurely pace. Some screens are easy to get through, others, especially the ones with moving walls, aren't.

Control is good and the ship responds well. Sometimes you come across an energy base where you can get a shield to protect you. I also found a room with a mysterious box in it but nothing happened when I collided with it.

Later I found another object I think was a code pod. You have to collect these in numerical order. This one was '2' so obviously not the first one. Not a bad game once you get into it and master the moving walls but it's still a pain when you get repeat instant deaths.

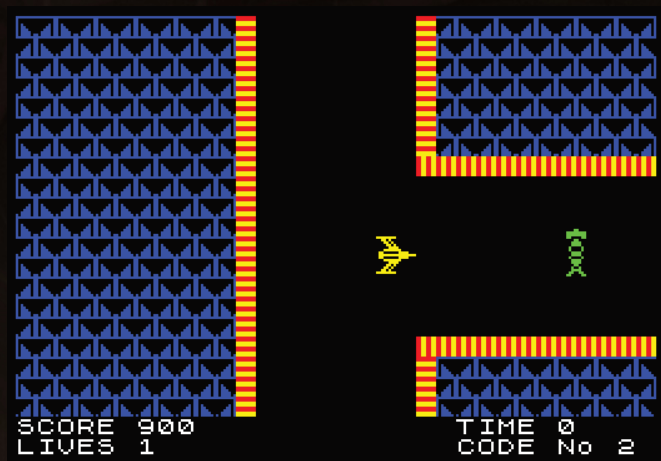
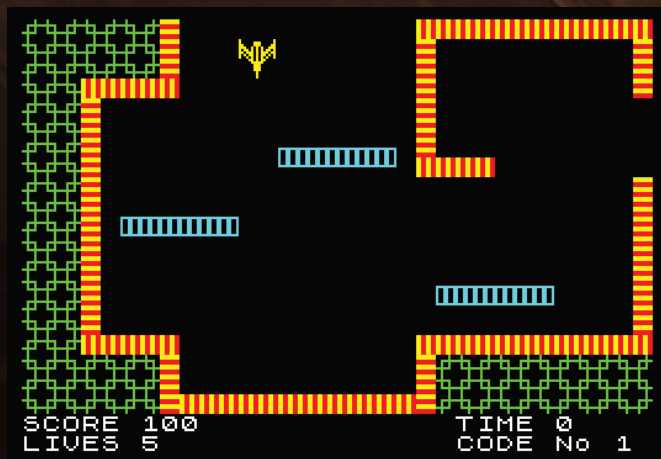
Incidentally. The game was still being advertised in August 1985... so the prize had still not been claimed.

Therbo - December 1984

Now this game has me completely baffled. I have read the convoluted instructions, played a few games and still have no idea what I am controlling, or what I am supposed to do. Sometimes things respond to my control, sometimes they don't. Sometimes a goal is scored but I don't know how or why, and sometimes things just explode. Sometimes I get control of the Therbo, whatever that is, but then have no idea what to do with it.

It's all a mess and not very clear, and as such I didn't enjoy playing it at all. My first game I apparently won five nil!

The graphics are non-descript. I think one is a tank of some kind and when you control it you can shoot, but I don't know what at. Sound is a mixture of basic BEEPs and machine codes effects but at the end of the day it's all an unplayable mess.



The Zone

As 1984 came to an end, a new game was advertised called The Zone. The company claimed it could take years to complete this adventure game and that it would have full screen hi-resolution images and a large vocabulary.

Micro Adventurer stated: "The game would be loaded in four parts and will adapt the puzzles you face based on how well you solved earlier ones." That all sounds pretty impressive stuff for a Spectrum.

Whatever the game was like, we will probably never see it as it wasn't released, or at least there are no reviews of it anywhere.

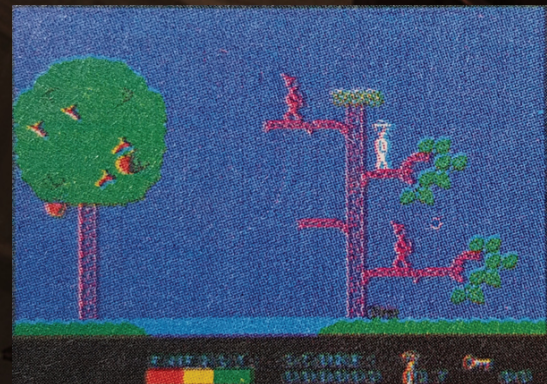
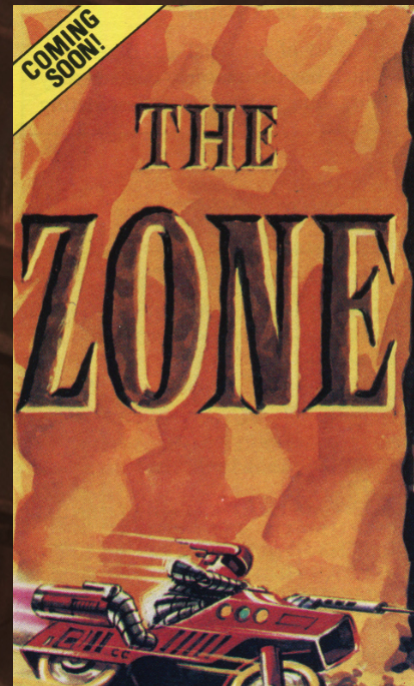
Raiders of the Lost Ring

All fell silent for Arcade Software after this until February 1986 when a new game was sent to magazines for review, the follow up to Raider of the Cursed Mine, called Raiders of the Lost Ring.

The magazines were not impressed with it, Crash claiming.. "it was just another Jet Set Willy rip off with uninspiring graphics."

The screen shots don't look too impressive either.

This game is also missing in action, but it seems to have been completed and reviewed in several places along with the inlay being shown. Where could it be now?



The End

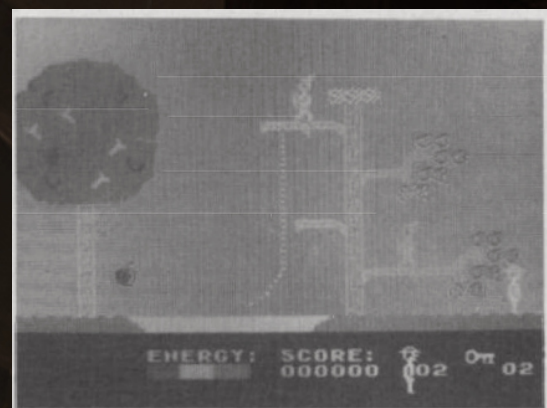
And that was the last thing we heard about Arcade Software. No more games or mentions in magazines, no news stories, no bankruptcy details. It seems they slipped away quietly into obscurity.

The games they left behind, like so many small software houses of the time, are a mixture of below average, simple arcade games and mediocre maze games.

They aimed big with The Prize, offering some incentive for people to buy it, but in fact it was never won and that the small print meant the actual amount would be far less, may have gone against them.

They produced nothing outstanding, and nothing different to all the other companies out there.

Maybe this is why they vanished quietly. At least we have most of the games and of course, those impressive inlays.





SPECTRUM NEXT EMULATION

The Sinclair ZX Spectrum Next was a massive success on Kickstarter and the second run smashed through the £1m barrier in days. Anyone who owns the machine knows it's a fantastic computer, and anyone who has backed the new campaign will be in for a real treat. If you didn't manage to get one, you can still experience the machine via emulation. Here's how.

If you want to experience the Spectrum Next for yourself, there is an emulator that will allow you to do this, but like all emulators, you don't get to 'feel' the machine but do see its capabilities.

#Cspect is a very capable emulator, but is tricky to setup. If you follow these guidelines, you should have your Spectrum Next emulator running smoothly and be enjoying some of the free games available.

First you will need to download a few things, and these are all listed at the top of the opposite page.

Step 1: Getting the files.

Create a folder on your computer. It can be anywhere and be called anything, but for this example, we are going to name it SpecNext.

Extract all the files and folders from the #Cspect zip file, into this folder (see right)

Next extract the SD card image into the same folder (SpecNext).

Now extract the oalinst.exe from the oalinst.zip file into the same folder.

- 3xAV
- Beast
- dll_src
- DMA
- i2C_Sample
- Layer2
- LowResDemo
- Mouse
- Plugins
- ay8912.dll
- beast.bat
- beast.nex
- CSpect.exe
- CSpectReadme.txt
- i2C_Sample.dll
- known_issues.txt
- mod_player.bat
- mod_player.nex
- NXtel.bat
- NXtel.nex
- OpenTK.dll
- OpenTK.dll.config
- parallax.bat
- parallax.nex
- Plugin.dll
- ReadMe.txt
- snasm.exe
- SNASM.rtf

Step 2: Installing.

Run the oalinst.exe to install the required sound drivers.

Run the OFSmount.exe to install OFSmount.

Rename the SD card file to cspect.img

You are now nearly ready to start using the emulator, but first we need some ROMs and to create a small batch file to configure and run it.

WHAT YOU NEED

#Cspect - Spectrum Next emulator
<http://cspect.org>

OpenAL (for sound)
<https://www.openal.org/downloads>

SD card Image
<http://zxpectrumnext.online/cspect/>

Games
<https://www.spectrumnextgames.uk>

OFSmount
<https://www.osforensics.com/tools/mount-disk-images.html>

Step 3: The ROMS

Before we can run the emulator, we need to copy two ROM files from the SD card image into the SpecNext folder.

Run OFSmount.

Select MOUNT NEW and select the Cspect.img file. Click Next.

Select the partition and click Next.

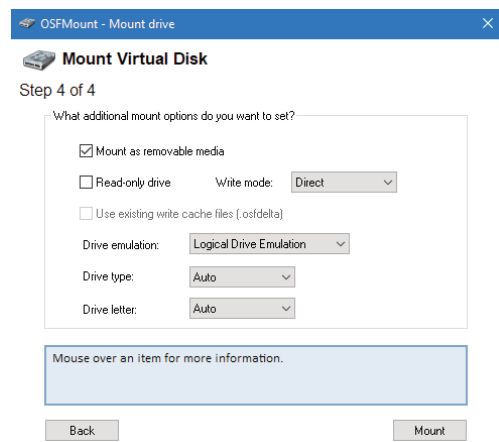
Select Mount as removable media, untick Read Only. Click Mount.

A new virtual drive should now be visible in Windows Explorer. You can view the contents just like you do with USB drives.

Copy the two files below to the SpecNext folder.

enNextZX.rom and enNxtmmc.rom

Back to OFSmount. Select the virtual drive and click Dismount.



Step 4: The batch file

Now create a new text file in the SpecNext folder called Cspect.bat

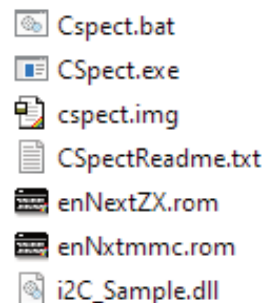
The name isn't important, but for this example we will leave it as that.

Edit this file and add the following line:

```
Cspect -nextrom -tv -mmc=cspect.img
```

Save the file.

You should now have a list of files like the one to the right.



Spectrum Next Emulation

Step 5: Running the emulator

To run the Spectrum Next emulator, just double click the Cspect.bat file you created and you should see the Spectrum Next welcome screen.

#Cspect has many settings you can use during this launch procedure within the batch file including speed, screen size and joystick.

The -tv option I used disables scanlines and is my preferred way to use the emulator. All of the options are to be found in the ReadMe.txt file in the SpecNext folder.

To explore the Next, press SPACE and then ENTER to load the file browser. Here you can view the contents of the SD card file, and depending on which one you downloaded, you can play a few games or watch some demos.

Step 6: Adding new games

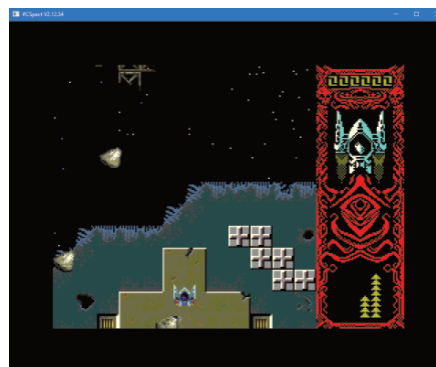
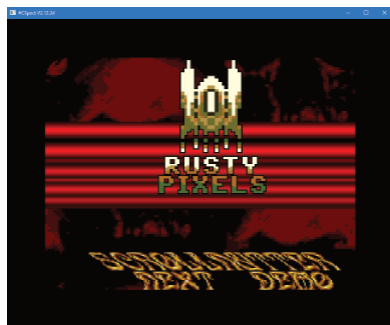
Now the tricky part, adding new games to the SD card file.

First, download the game you want to play. This will typically be in a ZIP file. Extract the contents to your hard drive. Usually all games come in their own named folder, keep this structure.

Using OFSmount again, mount the SD card image as removable media.

Now drag the game folder into the GAMES/NEXT folder of the SD card image using Windows Explorer.

Dismount the image and re-run the emulator. The game should now be visible within the browser to select and run.



Games Of Choice

Now you have your emulator set up, here are a few free games to try.

Warhawk - demo



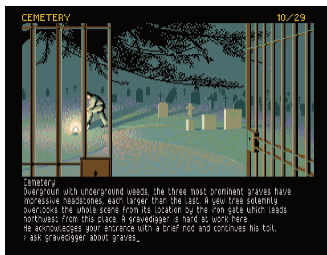
This excellent shooter comes as part of the SD image and is definitely worth a blast. The superb music of the original C64 release is included, and the gameplay is fast and frantic.

Lords Of Midnight



This game comes on the SD image and updates the original Spectrum version.

Magnetic Scrolls adventures



If adventures are your thing, there's no better collection than the re-mastered Magnetic Scrolls games. Here you can play The Pawn, Guild of Thieves and Jinxter and bask in the brilliant graphics and engrossing game play.

Next Shift



Here we have a very colourful puzzle/action game based on the creation of the Spectrum Next.

RAMS (Real Arcade Machines)



This wonderful set of games takes you back to the 80's arcades with versions of some classics. You can play Galaxian, Donkey Kong and Pacman, with more planned.

Curse of Rabenstein



An excellent graphic adventure with atmospheric descriptions and challenging puzzles.

Scramble



If 80s arcade games are your thing, then this version of Scramble is superb. Arcade quality implementation and great to play.

End Note

The Spectrum Next games scene is very active with new games being written and released on a regular basis. Some are free of charge, others ask a small donation to help the authors keep going.

There are also many physical games you can get, released in cases on SD card for the real hardware.



Domark – 1986

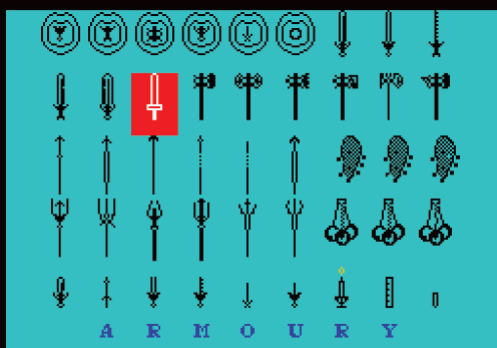
Fighting games on the Spectrum are varied and plentiful and range from poor boxing games with blocky graphics to the brilliant Exploding Fist where karate is the art of choice. Games involving weapons are also varied, with guns, whips, barrels and swords being popular. The most familiar game, Barbarian was very popular and proved a hit, and so Gladiator follows on from this and tries to improve things.



Gladiator does expand the genre a little by allowing the selection of weapons and armour before each fight. This gives you the chance to try out daggers, knives, axes, tridents and swords. Each type has its own benefits but from reading the hints, the longer weapons seems to be better.

Once into the game we get a nice backdrop complete with 3D-like scenery and a crowd, randomly shouting things by means of text. The two fighters appear opposite each other armed with the weapons of choice and the fight begins.

You can move left, right, up and down and have a multitude of attacks and defences, all performed by a combination of movement and fire button.



The graphics do look nice with decent animation and if you pick the right weapons and attack from a distance, you should be able to win the first fight and move on. Things move smoothly and control is normally responsive and it certainly is a challenge.

As each fight is won you move to the next one and the background changes. Most of these are as detailed as the first, however, there is one in a graveyard that looks pretty poor.

Overall a good attempt to improve the fighting genre giving a choice of weapons and different backgrounds. It has decent playability but I think the sheer number of moves available would be mostly ignored and just the basic lunges used.



However you play it, I think you would enjoy the first few fights before it becomes repetitive.

TRANSVERSION

Ocean – 1984

This early game is a simple dodge and collect space affair, and has been re-written recently and put out under the name of Sector. This though is the original version, written when games were not as sophisticated, 16k was enough and programmers were only just starting to get to grips with what the Spectrum could do.

You control a ship that has to enter the Galactic Grid and eliminate the Alien Pods. To do this you just have to move over them. However, patrolling the grid are guardians and these will fire at you if they are in your line of sight. This means they are predictable, but still tricky to avoid.

The graphics are simple and move in character squares and the control can sometimes be a little sticky but it's a fun game to play and by no means easy.

Sound is limited to a few blips, and zap, but they work well.

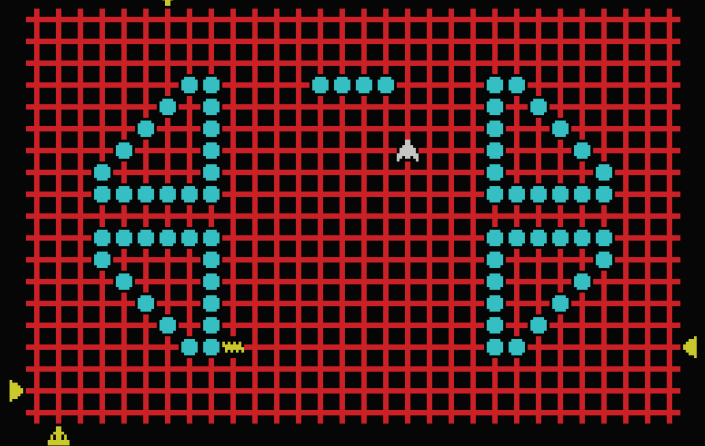
Each level has a different layout of pods, so things do change keeping the challenge going.

The only let-down for me was when you die and all the pods you previously removed are put back, so you are starting all over again. This can get very frustrating.

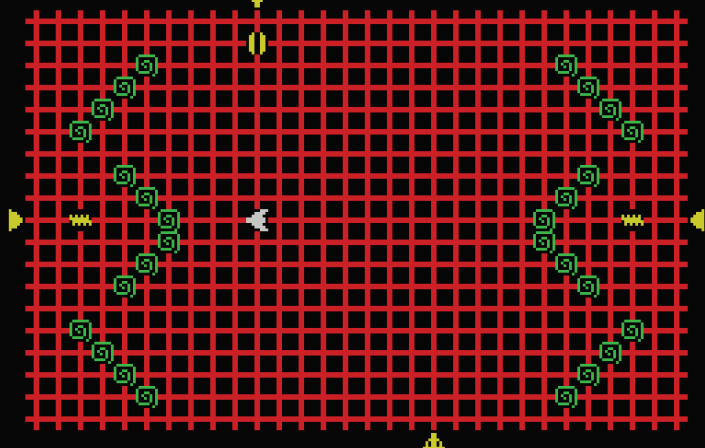
A nice little game then showing its age a bit, but worth a quick go.

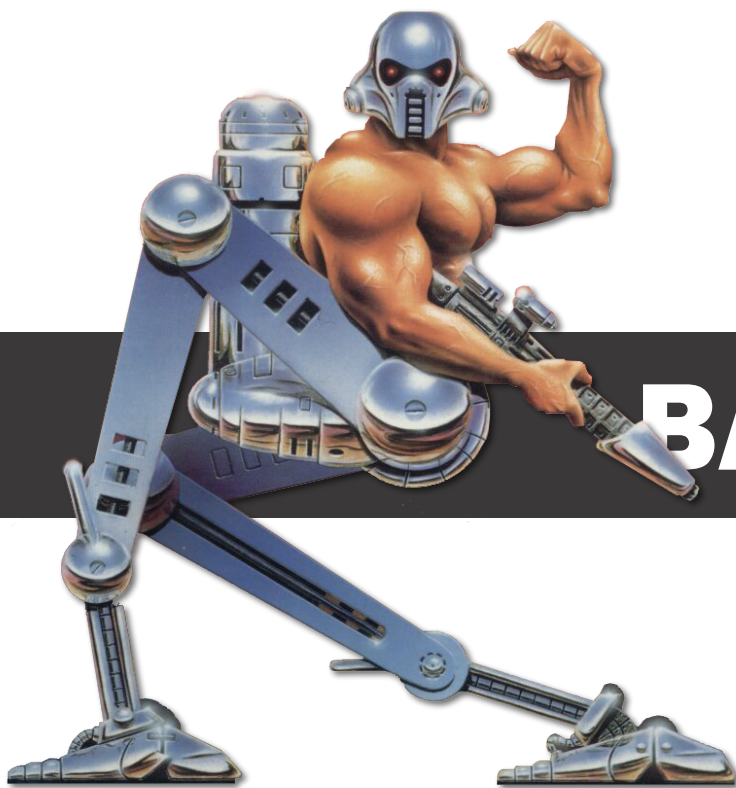
For a better experience, try Sector.

SC:000030 HI:000000 L:01 LIVES:4



SC:000098 HI:000000 L:02 LIVES:4





BADVERTS

In the early 80s, the industry was young and bedroom coders toiled away for weeks producing what they hoped would be the game to make them millionaires. Fuelled by press reports of high-earning programmers, the last thing on their mind were adverts and promotion. That was something the larger companies did, and their first attempt would probably be a small text only advert hidden away amongst the many others in the back pages of computer magazines.

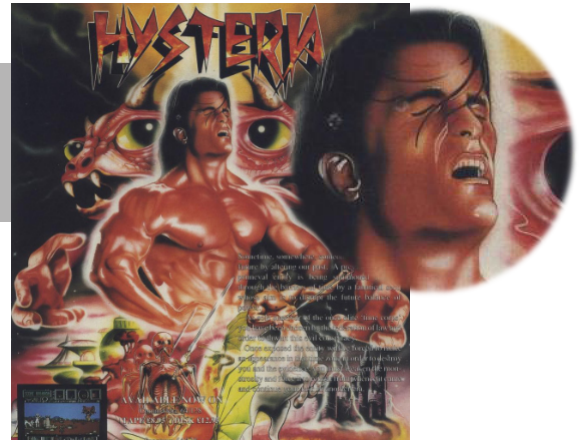
As the competition grew, so did the need to make more of an effort to get your game noticed. There are many examples of badly drawn adverts and game inlays to be found in the archives, but there are some truly terrible attempts much later in the years that followed.

Some are just badly drawn, others, like the one used to illustrate this piece, don't really make sense. The half-man half-robot is from a game called *Extreme* released in 1991. The artwork is great but you would have to question the design. No armour at all on the human element, which would be an easy target for enemies. Yes, I know it's just art to illustrate a game, but sometimes these things get under your skin.

Let's now jump back to those badly drawn adverts and take a look at the full page colour advert for *Blood 'N Guts* released in 1986 (c64). There are so many things wrong with this so it's difficult to know where to start. The cat seems to be scared by what is under the man's loin cloth. The heads are disproportionate to the bodies and the axe is being held the wrong way. The grave stone has a frilly bottom and the cup seems to be full of ice cream. This is one of those pictures you can stare at and see more things over time.

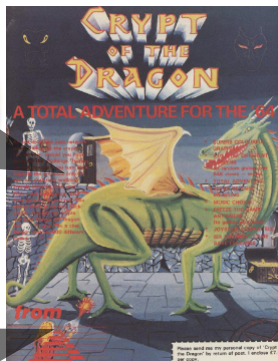


Hysteria, released in 1987 evokes different feelings. The expression on the character's face is not that of anger or pain, so it leaves the viewer confused as to the game's content. What is his other hand doing and why are there giant hands about to grab him?



Times Of Lore released in 1989 is a bit of a worrying image. The hero seems to have sat on an ant's nest judging by the strange bumps on his lower regions. The expression on the beast's face does not look dangerous and maybe the animal is worried about the ant bites.

Heroquest has a mixed up image that doesn't really explain what the game is about. There is a man with a helmet with one horn that has mutated into a serpent. Half of a woman's body also seems to have been glued onto the helmet too. It is no wonder he's looking a bit bemused by the whole thing. This game was never released for the Spectrum, so maybe they had a rethink after seeing the advert.



Bad adverts were not just limited to the Spectrum, as we saw from Blood 'n Guts. Crypt of the Dragon was advertised in 1984. The dragon would never get off the ground with those wings and that magic spell looks rubbish. What is that thing coming out of the door too? The game seems not have been released. Maybe another victim of poor artwork.

The Vic20 did not escape either, take Krazy Kong as an example. There seems to be a sailor with a big nose hitting the giant ape in the stomach. The ape has sticking plasters on his nipples and the woman seems totally disinterested in the whole thing.





Paul Jenkinson 2020



The evil Dr Game has set out on a mission to steal all of the classic video games from the world and keep them locked in his castle for only himself to enjoy. Every cabinet, every motherboard and every ROM has started to vanish from the world as he slowly gathers his collection together.

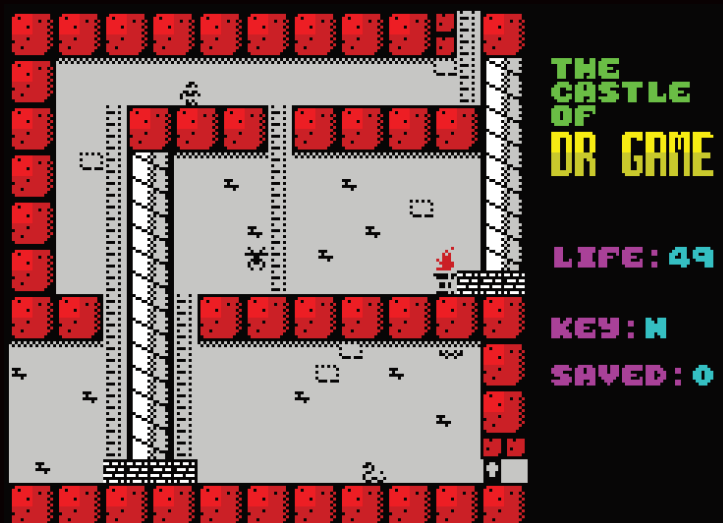
Gamers are angry and have sent you to the castle to get them back, so humanity can once again enjoy these classics.

That is the story behind the game and as we shall see, the arcade games play an important role. The game was written using a modified Arcade Games Designer engine call AGDx Mini. This allows games to be written that use 8 x 8 pixel sprites instead of the larger 16 x 16 used in the normal AGD. This presents challenges and also expands the options, for example you can have so many more sprites on screen at once with AGDx Mini.

The game is a standard platform exploration game where keys need to be found that open doors to new areas. There are the usual host of enemy sprites to avoid ranging from fire pits to bats and snakes. There are ladders to climb and screens to navigate, and even some secret rooms to find.

The main difference though comes in the form of the game screens. Some rooms of the castle have been made to mimic real arcade games and although there is no playing involved, it should bring back some nostalgia for these games as well as provide a challenge in trying to get through them. For example in the Donkey Kong room you have to get to the top avoiding the barrels.

Sound is limited to short blips produced by the



AGDx BEEP engine and control is simple with four directions and jump.

Your health reduces if you come into contact with any of the enemy sprites but if you are lucky you may find a secret room with a health boost.

Exploration is the key to this game and even knowing the full route, it takes about twenty minutes to complete, so this will give you a nice challenge.

The graphics are small, as mentioned before, but add a certain charm to the game. There is some nice scenery as you move around with very distinctive differences. Making a map is important if you want to complete this game. That or having a very good memory.

If this is your style of game, give it a try and see if you can save the games from the evil Dr Game.

A banner for the Spectrum Computing website. The background features a close-up of a woman's face with a starry, cosmic pattern overlaid. The text 'SPECTRUM COMPUTING' is prominently displayed at the top. Below this, there are three feature boxes with icons and text. At the bottom, the website URL 'spectrumcomputing.co.uk' is shown.

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-  ZXDB DATABASE
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spectrumcomputing.co.uk



KEMPSTON PRO

JOYSTICK INTERFACE

When Sinclair released its Interface Two, there were several flaws in the design. It could only use 16K cartridges and it was only compatible with Sinclair's own joystick format. Other manufacturers thought they could improve on this.

The 16K Limit is tricky to get around because of the way the interface swaps out the Spectrum's own 16K ROM for the one on the cartridge. This is why games load instantly.

The joystick port problem though was much easier to fix. RAM released their own version supporting 3 joystick standards and Kempston answered by releasing their Kempston Pro Joystick Interface, supporting four standards and having three ports.

The Kempston interface, costing £19.95 when new, was a simple device, as was the concept of the ROM project anyway. When plugged in, the ROM was switched and the game on the cartridge was instantly available. You could use the keyboard or one of the four joystick modes; Kempston, Cursor, 6-0 key emulation and 1-5 (Sinclair) emulation.

The interface itself was a sleek looking thing and looked neat when plugged in. The Kempston logo was embossed on the top and the joystick ports were easily accessible. The ROM slot did not have a cover like the Sinclair version so was easy to use but prone to collecting dirt.

Interestingly, the manual notes that the interface can be used to play ROM games from Sinclair, and "now Parker Brothers". This never came to completion though as Parker pulled out of the games market without releasing any ROM games. Their prototype ROMs, in the form of digital images, can be downloaded though, and used in emulators.

Some websites are offering EPROMS with the games on for use within interfaces such as Sinclair's Interface 2 and of course the Kempston Pro Interface.

Of the three (we'll ignore the AGD one as no one seems to have ever seen one!) interfaces, the Kempston offers the most options and is only missing a reset button provided by RAM. It's smaller than the RAM too, making this the ROM interface of choice.

On a side note, the 16k limit has been beaten now via use of clever paging, and is part of several new interfaces.

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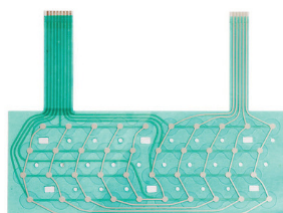
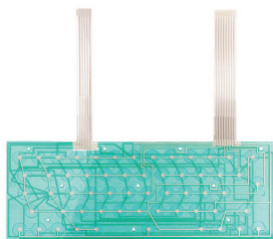


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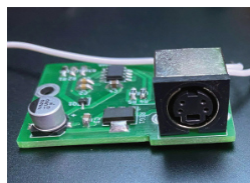
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Microdrive replacement
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Uses SD card as storage
Fits into original ZX Microdrive case
Interface 1 needed



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S-VIDEO



S-Video card
Replaces the modulator
Provides S-Video output.

£15.88

Prices correct at time of publishing

SPiKY Harold

Firebird – 1986



After playing, or rather trying to play this game, I have reached the conclusion that I hate it. But let not that deter from this review.

You play Spiky, a hedgehog that is preparing for hibernation and has to collect 57 items of food and then get back to his hibernation room.

It's a platform game like so many others at the time, but to be honest it looks really nice. Upon starting though, despite the nice looking sprites, it is almost impossible to get past the first screen. It's unreasonably hard and the jumps have to be pixel perfect, and I mean, absolutely perfect.

Eventually I got lucky though and could explore some more rooms.

Harold moves well but the jump is a little odd and is something you have to get used to. He pauses for about half a second while the crouch animation runs and then he jumps. Difficult to get your timing with this and it is probably the major issues that causes frustration. Moving around it's a case of working out the enemy patterns and then navigating the rooms to avoid them. Not as easy as it sounds and it can be frustrating as the jumps have to be so precise in every room.

The graphics are nice, as mentioned before, with some nice textured backgrounds and decent sprites. Harold himself does flicker a bit though, but is large and looks the part.

As you move around you will find things to eat. Sometimes it's food, sometimes it has strange effects like reversing the controls, and this makes an impossible game even more impossible - if that can actually happen! The collision detection and spacing of the enemy sprites makes this one of the most frustrating games I have played in a long time.

There are places that you know you have to get through but just can't because of the room layout. Most of these times you also don't have an alternative route so you just lose life after life until the game ends. The game could have been so much better had it been a little easier, with more space to jump and less restrictive collision detection.

Sound is terrible. An ear grating version of Flight of the Bumble Bee plays throughout and it drives you crazy. I couldn't find any way of turning it off either.

Why was the game made so difficult? It just ruins what could have been a decent platformer but in the end you just end up wanting to throw it out of the window.

At least it only cost £1.99. But still, I would have felt robbed had I bought this, even at that price.

This is certainly no sonic.



GOLD MINE

DK'Tronics- 1983

This game, unusually, has a demonstration and instruction program on the tape. It takes you through how the game works and gives you a little demo. I am not aware of many games that have this kind of extra, and only Time Gate from Quicksilver spring to mind. It's nice the first time you see it, but for any other times after that you want to play the game, you have to start forwarding the tape to find where it starts.

Onto the game itself then.

You control a miner who has to collect gold nuggets. Yes, it's as simple as that, but obviously there needs to be some danger and skill involved somewhere. The nuggets are marked on screen as a yellow rocks. However, they can also be other things, so it's a random element thrown in to be aware of.

When you run into them you will either be rewarded with some cash, a rock fall that fills the tunnel with solid rock, which you have to dig around or even worse, water that floods the tunnel.

Digging uses up energy, so things like rock falls will mean you using more energy and you have to keep an eye on it.

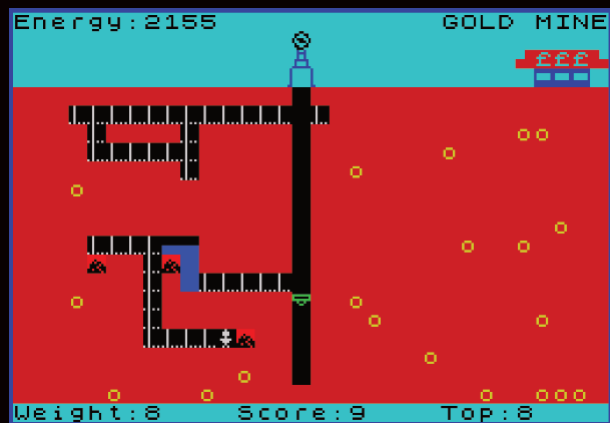
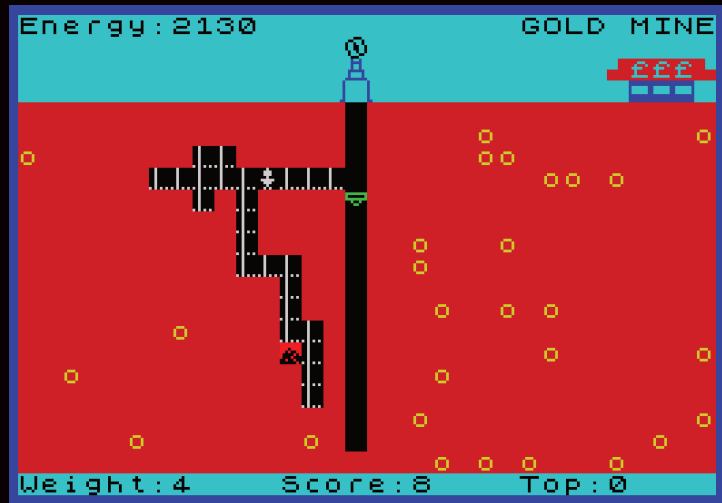
Once you collect a few nuggets you can head back to the surface using the lift which is the only way out. You then head to the bank indicated top right of the screen to add your cash. You can only carry 15 nuggets so it's advisable to head to the bank before that, and when you have a clear tunnel to go back down, and enough energy to make it.

At first the game seems a bit dull but there are a lot of things to consider when playing. At least in this game there are no chasing enemies and how well you do is down to limiting your load and keeping an eye on your energy. Well, that and the randomness of course.

The graphics are small and character-based and move in 8-pixel jumps, as most early 16k games did.

Control is OK, but can sometimes feel unresponsive and the sound is standard beeps.

Yes, it is nothing special but it's worth having a quick go if you like this kind of thing.



GOLD MINE

"PROSPECTOR'S GUIDE"

© 1983 Simon Goodwin

Sole distributor DK'TRONICS

INSTRUCTIONS

The aim of the game is to mine out gold nuggets. A preliminary survey indicates the position of impurities in the rock. Some of them are gold. Others turn out to be dangerous patches of flawed rock.



DK'TRONICS KEYBOARD

There were a surprising number of replacement keyboards for the Spectrum over its lifetime. Sinclair released a keyboard upgrade for the old rubber-keyed models allowing owners to get the improved Plus style keyboard, and of course there were many third party offerings.

Fuller Electronics offered a few models including the FDS and FD42, Nordic had a few, mainly from Fuller as they bought the company and sold their products, Saga had some really great ones including the Emperor and Crusader, and Stonechip produced a neat little replacement with built-in amplifier. The Lo-Profile was a favourite too and others included the Mancomp, Cheetah, LMT and Transform. Probably the most well known and purchased though must have been the DK'Tronics Keyboard.

There were two versions of this keyboard. Version one had no space bar, the space bar was placed close to the SHIFT and ENTER keys like the original 48k model. Version two though, released around June 1984, introduced the space bar and this for me is the classic DK'Tronics keyboard and one that I have been looking forward to using.

Late last year I managed to grab one at a good price that

seemed in good condition. On its arrival the keyboard was in great shape. However, the Spectrum inside it was not. I sent this off to Mutant Caterpillar for a full service and repair and it wasn't long before I had it back and was ready to install it into the keyboard.



Some keyboards had you bolting the lower half of your Speccy underneath them but the DK'Tronics version was a full replacement. You extracted the motherboard from the original case and placed it onto the base of the DK unit, fixing it in place with a few screws. There is also space for Interface One if you wanted and there is even a special connector bar to use.

Once screwed in, you connect the two ribbon cables to the keyboard, place the top half of the keyboard on top, a few more screws to secure it and you are ready to go.

Brand new keyboards had blank keys and you had to place the stickers on yourself. This could be scary and I dread to think how many people got this wrong. I certainly did! I had to return mine (in 1984) to the shop and ended up getting a Lo-Profile instead.

The unit is quite large, measuring 30.5cm by 24cm with a sloping face going from 7cm at the back to 4cm at the front. This provides a nice typing angle. The back case is styled with lines and recesses that give it a unique look. The keys are well made and really solid feeling, giving great feedback and make a great sound when in use.

Around the back you get access to all the ports and you can see where the Interface One would have fitted. There is also room inside the keyboard for the power supply, but I opted to leave mine outside.

In use, the unit feels really sturdy. The keys have decent travel, and you get a really positive experience. The space bar is a great addition, making typing so much easier, and because the stickers have the full legends on them, programming is simple.

I love this keyboard. It looks fantastic, it sounds fantastic and works very well. It was such a pleasure just using it and you get more out of it if you use it for something other than games.



Writing letters or typing out programs will give you the full benefit of solid keys and great action.

If you bought this at the right time, you also got a nice compilation tape of four DK'Tronics games. Invaders (an early Space Invaders clone), Maziacs (the excellent maze explore game), Jumbly (a block shifting puzzle game) and Zig Zag (a 3D maze chase-em-up).



If there is anything negative to say, I would say the angle of the back can sometimes makes it hard to push in interfaces. Anything that goes vertically straight up will not fit without some force being put on the edge connector. This case came with a Nidd Valley Extender bar, so I can use this if I need it, or a normal 56-way extender cable.

Some users modified their cases, adding a power switch or reset button, some even added lights. I wanted a clean, untouched keyboard, and I'm really glad I waited for one to come along.

An excellent unit then, it makes me want to just sit here typing.



Version 1 - no spacebar

TIKA TACA

Climacus 2019

Take Ultimate Play The Game's hit Atic Atac and re-write it in much the same style as Knight Lore, and you'll end up with Tika Taca. Climacus have produced an excellent version of the great game but because of the 3D, some elements are not the same. This does not distract from the game at all, and in some ways makes it very different, requiring a different approach to the puzzles.

The idea is the same; collect the parts of the key to escape the castle. The castle consists of many floors and rooms, each having doors that randomly open and close. Some doors require keys to get through and these are colour-coded. Some rooms have trap doors that drop you down to a lower level.

As with the original, you have to have the correct coloured door key to get through the same coloured doors, but unlike the original you can only carry three items at a time. When you bump into a new object to collect it and have a full inventory, one will be dropped to make room for the new item.

Players that know Atic Atac will think how would that mechanic work when you have monsters like Dracula to get past, well the answer is strategy. You have to be holding a certain item (just like the original) that will deter the monster, and this means having only two other items (usually keys) in your possession. So you will need to know the ones you require to be able to proceed.

The game gives you the choice of several characters and each has their own secret passage to be used. Running around is great fun and for me much easier than the original. Maybe that is down to a limited number of sprites or even the size of sprites, but there does feel to be more room to manoeuvre.

Sound is used really well and all the elements are here. Even the game map is the same as the original.

The graphics are brilliant and the objects have been recreated really well and are instantly recognisable. Control is good and responsive, and I really enjoyed playing this.

Get this now, highly recommended.



BYTEDELIGHT

Everything for your ZX Spectrum!

www.bytedelight.com



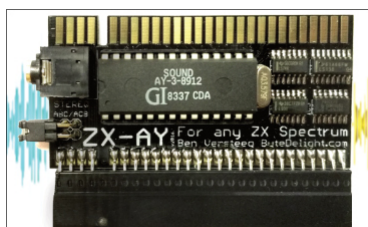
DIVMMC ENJOY PRO

- Autodetection of ZX Spectrum model
- Independent of clock signal
- Two configurable joystick ports
- Two SD card sockets
- Throughput edge connector
- Very cool 'toastrack looking' case
- Compatible with the +3e ROMs



ZX-HD

- Connect your ZX Spectrum to a HDMI TV
- No need to modify your ZX Spectrum!
- 64 colour ULApplus on your ZX Spectrum
- ZX Spectrum 128 video memory support
- Synchronous to ULA timing
- Throughput edge connector



ZX AY

- External 3-channel interface
- For any ZX Spectrum
- Crisp stereo sound
- No Mods to your Spectrum
- BEEPer throughput



PLUSDELITE

- Based on the PlusD
- Up to 80 track DS DD
- Maxi capacity 800KB
- Snapshot functionality
- Integrated Kempston



DIVMMC PRO Mini Lite

- All the features of the full version minus the case, joystick ports and dual SD slots.



SPECTRANET

- Ethernet interface for the ZX Spectrum
- Connect your Spectrum to the internet.
- Developed by Dylan Smith

1994

Visions 1984

TEN YEARS AFTER

George Orwell got it wrong. The year things went wrong was not 1984, but actually 1994. It's time to turn off the computer and save mankind.

That is the story for this mediocre platform game that tries very hard to be Jet Set Willy but sadly fails. It has some nice ideas but they are not very well implemented.

There are several screens consisting of brightly coloured girders and lifts that work in one direction. Your task for each screen is to collect the key that opens the door at the top left of the screen. There are other objects you can collect, but these just give you points. You must not touch the cyan cameras, these are deadly, and they also fire things at you. You have limited strength and limited time, but this is not a game you can rush.

Because the lifts are so tricky to get on and off, there is a lot of waiting to be done so you can make the jump. The screens are designed so that you have to use them too.

Later screens have horizontal platforms with spinning blades to jump over while trying not to fall off the platform.

Amongst the annoying enemies is a large bird-like creature that if you collide with it, picks you up and drags you all the way back to the start of the screen.

The graphics are quite basic and have limited animation and there is no smooth movement. The sound seems to be BASIC beeps and this game does remind me a little of a compiled BASIC program.

Controls are not too bad, but there are just too many things on the screen to make this enjoyable.

A game to stay clear of then unless you like a really tough challenge.





Zeppelin Games 1988

2088

2088 is a strange kind of cross-breed with elements from other games that come together to create a quite nice shooter. The story is non-existent, it's just a points game.

The elements used from other games include the main character who is a bit like Jetman, the space snakes that are like Centipede, the horizontal and vertical laser turrets like Transversion and the overall gameplay which is like Robotron.

PLAYER 1  HI-SCORE 
00002042  00002042  PLAYER 2 
00000000  00000000 



To complete a level you have to destroy all the space snakes. Shooting them in the head will reduce the overall length of the snake, but shooting them in the body causes them to split like Centipede.

Also on the screen are various other aliens that can be, for the most part, ignored. The laser turrets leave behind blocks that form barriers to movement, and so these need shooting too, or the snake starts to bounce off them.

Once you clear a level, you jump into your spaceship and head off through an asteroid field towards the next one. This part of the game is just a dodge game with a few things to collect on the way.

PLAYER 1  HI-SCORE 
00009560  00009560  PLAYER 2 
00000000  00000000 



The graphics are large and move well and sound is really nice. The gameplay is very reminiscent of Jetpac, even down to the ship in between levels.

The action is fast and frantic and if you like any of the those games this takes parts from, then you'll like this mashup.

PLAYER 1  HI-SCORE 
00012466  00012466  PLAYER 2 
00000000  00000000 



BUYING A MICRODRIVE

IN 1987



In 1987, after much indecision, I finally got round to buying a ZX Microdrive.

I had wanted one since its launch and followed the prices as they dropped slowly as interest waned. Sinclair tried to address this by releasing the Expansion pack in 1985.

In 1987, I finally decided to purchase one, but things didn't go well as my diary explains.

My plan was simple. I had the cash and wanted the best deal I could get. I would call up the major shops, get their best price and then travel the 30 minutes into the city centre and buy it the next day. How hard could it be?

In my diary I recorded the conversations after the first phone call as I had the feeling it would not go well. As such, I will replicate those notes as accurately as I can, obviously editing out some of the swearing and comments. In each instance my opening line was the same for every call; "Do you have Interface One and the Microdrive in stock please?"

First was WH Smith. The giant chain well known at the time for stocking a large selection of goods for a range of popular microcomputers. The call started well with a pleasant enough chap enquiring if he could assist me.

I gave the question which was met by a short silence. He asked me to hold on but didn't mute the phone or attempt to cover the mouthpiece. Because of this I heard the conversation with someone called John, who had no idea what his colleague was talking about.

"What's a Microdrive, John?"

"No idea. Why?"

"There's a bloke here who wants one."

I presume by the silence, the other man just shrugged at this point. He pondered what to say upon his return and not wanting to sound like he was clueless, he told me politely that they didn't stock them.

With the first call complete and WH Smith having no idea what a Microdrive was, my hopes were still quite high. I think staff training should be implemented to explain the use of the Mute button, or the use of the thumb over the bit of the phone you talk into!

Next on my list, and I had more hope with this one, Boots. Another large retailer that held a lot of stock and was always popular with school children who went around and typed rude words on every computer on display.

The response was pretty much the same, with long pauses. At one point the man said he would go and have a look. This took a few minutes during which he didn't go anywhere. I could hear him chatting to someone else about everything apart from the Microdrive.

He returned when he remembered I was there and informed me that after an extensive search, they didn't have any "minodrives". Trying to be helpful, he suggested I try WH Smith.

Well, two down and no sign of anyone actually knowing what a Microdrive was. I still had a few more shops to call and was hopeful at least one of them had what I was looking for.

My next call was to a small retailer called Microbyte. As an independent I was hoping they had a better idea of what I wanted or even may have one on the shelf waiting for a new owner. After my initial question the tone was less than optimistic.

"I don't think so." Was the reply, followed by an awkward silence.

I prompted for more information and he reluctantly agreed to actually check. A few minutes later, after he had made a cup of tea, he returned with the bad news that they didn't have any. He was then shamed into trying to be helpful and suggested I try Boots or WH Smith.

Now at this point, my enthusiasm to get one of those great little device was growing less and less. Each call made me feel I was wasting my time and that I should either try mail order, or actually look at moving to the Plus 3, or even another format altogether.

My next call was to Comet. Another (at the time) huge retailer with masses of stock, but also known for its less than intelligent staff. Would my luck be in this time?

My initial question was met with a very quick response, and the man promptly said he would put me through to the right department. Sure enough, after a few rings, a man answered who purportedly worked in the computer department. I repeated my question and again this seemed to hypnotise the person. He went quiet for a very long time. Eventually though he gave in and suggested I speak to Fred.

Fred eventually arrived and enquired how he could help. My question was put to him with little hope of getting any kind of informative answer.

"You mean for the Spectrum?" was his reply!

He actually knew what I wanted. I confirmed this was the case and he said he would go check the stock room. At this point the phone was placed on the table as he disappeared into the stock room. At least that's what he said he was doing. As I listened to the buzz of the place he was in, I heard various people walking about, clattering, dropping things and swearing until the intrepid Fred returned. Sadly it wasn't good news.

"Sorry, no. We don't have any in stock. Have you tried WH Smith or Boots?"

So close and yet so far. The first company to actually know what I wanted, but I still wonder if



Fred really did go into the stock room, or whether he just went to the toilet.

Onward with my task then and the next store was Laskys. I often visited this one when in the city. It sold many things from Hi-Fi stacking systems, video recorders, cameras and of course computers.

With my question asked, the person provided the now familiar pause before asking me to hold. He didn't put me on mute, he just tried and failed to cover the mouthpiece. The result was that I could hear him shouting around the store to ask other salesmen what I was talking about because he had no idea.

I couldn't hear the responses, but I gathered they were all negative. He finally came back to me and suggested I try WH Smith or Boots.

Was I never to own one of these wonderful little devices? I did try several other stores and got pretty much the same reply.

A new Spectrum had been released by Sinclair, the Plus 2, but the differences were not enough to entice existing users over and to sell their trusty 48 or 128k machines. This meant there was still a market for them, people wanted to buy them. Was this just a rose-tinted vision I wonder, and had the Spectrum market dropped so much that major retailers were backing off.

Sinclair were about to launch the Plus 3 with built-in disc drive too, so this could have had an effect. After all, the Microdrive could not contend with the speedy three-inch disc. Again though, this was a new machine but the major difference was software. Companies were already boasting about new games on disc. They were preparing and building the market in readiness for users to sell their old kit and flock to this new shiny machine.

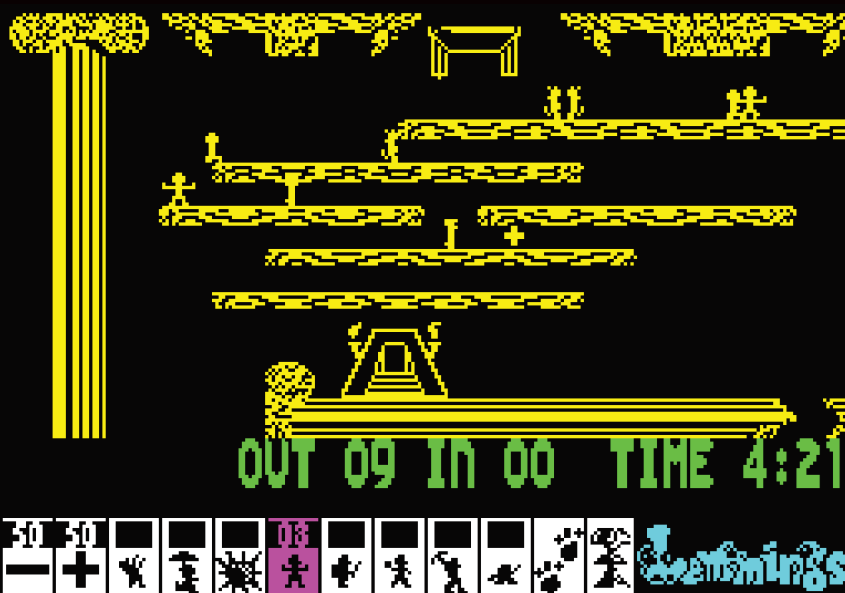
In reality, this would not happen. If you had a 128k Spectrum and did not want to sell it and then save up more money to buy the more expensive Plus 3 model, the only cheap option for storage was the Microdrive. Something that, seemingly, was not available in 1987. In the end I got one via mail order. It stayed with me for many years and held a lot of code, games and programs I wrote, sadly long since lost.

The lack of knowledge in major retailers should not come as a surprise. A common joke for myself and a few friends that worked in 'real' computer stores was to walk round PC World and ask really complex questions. It was great watching them squirm.

In the end I got mine, but I wonder how many others gave up?



Prognosis 1991



The Lemmings are here! Finally they arrived on the Spectrum in 1991 after there heralded invasion of the 16bit machines. The game was unique for its time and in case you have not seen or heard of it before, the premise is simple. Each level sees a steady flow of Lemmings, all mindless and stupid. To get them home you have to change their thinking.

Each level contains a trapdoor, out of which fall the Lemmings one by one. As they land, they set off in a direction and you have a few seconds to decide how best to save them. Somewhere else on the level will be a doorway, and you have to guide these little fellows to that.

The Spectrum version of the game contains 60 levels with 15 being Fun, 15 being Tricky, 15 being Taxing and the last 15 being Mayhem. Some levels are longer than the screen so you have to move the cursor to the right or left-most side to scroll.

The levels contain a variety of obstacles including rivers, high drops, pillars and netting. To get the Lemmings to overcome these obstacles you have to change one or more into a fixed type. You have ten types to choose from and these are shown at the bottom of the screen as icons. On the 16bit machines these could be clicked, however, on the 8bit Spectrum, you

use the keyboard of joystick. More on this later.

Setting a Lemming to be a digger will set them digging downwards, making a hole through which the others can fall. Setting a Lemming as a bridge builder will set it off building a bridge to cross ravines or rivers.

Each type can only be used a set amount of times per level as shown on the icon and things start out easy with only one type to choose from - the digger. Selecting the icon (using either Z or X to move between them or using the number keys) you then have to move the cursor over the Lemming you which to turn into a digger and press select again.

The same mechanic is used for all the other types and it is up to you how you use them to rescue as many Lemmings as possible. Sometimes the number required to complete the level is less than the number that arrives through the trapdoor, this indicates some of the small chaps will have to be sacrificed. Later levels require the use of different types to complete.

There are other icons to select too. You can increase or





decreased the amount of time between each Lemming arriving, you can nuke all the Lemmings (needed when you just can't complete the level) or nuke the entire level. On the 16bit machines you got a nice tiny voice and a lovely pop! Sound on the Spectrum though, all is quiet apart from the 128k AY music that plays along. It is a jolly tune and can be turned off, but unlike the 16bit versions, the tune is the same for each level.

The gameplay is pretty much the same as the 16bit version, however, there are some problems.

The cursor movement is odd. You hold down a key (or move the joystick) and the cursor moves as it should. Then for some reason it accelerates and often overshoots its intended target. This can become very frustrating especially if time is tight. There is a hacked version of the game that uses the Kempston mouse, but despite trying four different emulators, I could not get it to work.

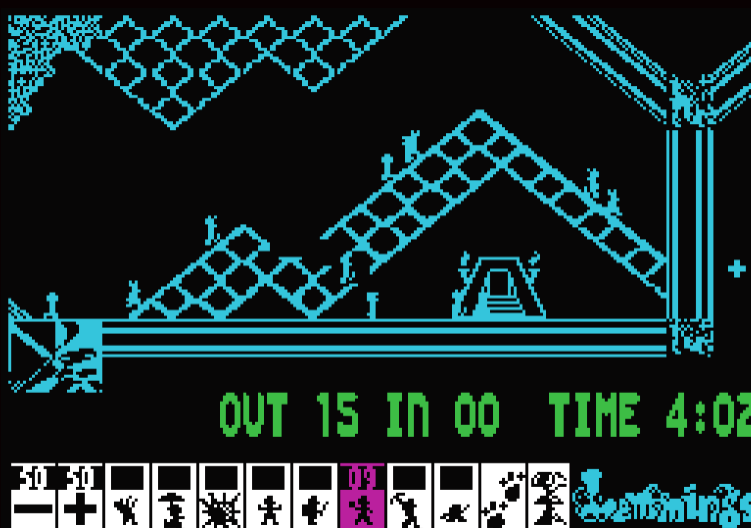
The graphics seem to have been digitised from the original and as a result lack definition. The bricks used on levels such as six are unclear and could easily be made to look much better. Some of the landscapes are OK, the rocks are fine for example, but again this differs between levels, some just have solid colour.

The characters themselves are small but animated well, but I feel they have lost some of their characteristics making the game less appealing.

The game remains challenging and the learning curve has been implemented very well, introducing new types as you progress. The first levels do not set a number of Lemmings to be saved, so you can experiment as much as you like.

Completing a level will give you a code so you can go back and pick up the game where you left off.

A good game then, but the graphics certainly could have been better.



SUBSUNK

Firebird 1985

You are Ed Lines – a famous reporter sent to write about life on board a submarine. All of a sudden the ship gets attacked with the crew being taken. You have managed to hide under a bed (not the smartest of boarding parties are they?) and that's where the adventure starts. Your mission is to get to the Telex room and send the message Sub-Sunk.

The first thing to realise is that the game uses the old two word text parser so all the puzzles in the game are fairly simple, it is usually a case of trying to work out what two word combination is needed.

Most rooms are accompanied by a simple but well drawn and colourful graphic in the top one third of the screen. I have read that this and its sequel were both written in the Quill adventure creator and it does have that feel about it.

One annoying thing is every time you enter the sonar room it has to beep three times before you can continue. Funny the first time around it, soon gets annoying as it's a room you will travel through a fair few times.

None of the puzzles are difficult but they all require a fair bit of backtracking, which can get a bit monotonous. It is therefore a good idea to make a map of each room and object, also it is possible to make the game impossible by doing somethings in the wrong order. Do not enter "disassemble vacuum" if you want to complete the game until you have vacuumed the dust up.

Despite these things the game does have a sense of humour and whilst a tad basic at times it does make it more playable than some of its rivals at the time. Worth a play but don't expect too much from it.

Review by Lee Price



SEABASE DELTA

Firebird 1985

The sequel to Subsunk, written once again by Colin Liddle and Peter Torrance.

Having sent the message in the previous game the enemies have now taken the sub into there underwater base; can you escape back to the surface?

The graphics have been given an upgrade and tend to draw in a similar way to those in The Hobbit. Unfortunately, the parser system is still the same as before; the old verb-noun configuration. So, its back to the simple puzzles and word guessing strategy of before.

The humour is still present but this time it is funnier. Also the backtracking across the map is still present. The backtracking this time is done via a tube train car.

One thing that is annoying is the ability to die rather too easily, such as in the airlock if you're not careful.

This is a game where you should save often as restarting will cause you to quit in frustration.

This is not a game to introduce someone to the world of the text adventure but is more aimed at those who have an interest in the genre.

Review by Lee Price

```
I am in a LARGE TUBULAR WALKWAY,
through the transparent walls of
the tube I can see the murky
depths of the ocean.
The walkway extends to the EAST.
I can also see:-
```

```
BRIEFCASE
PLASTIC CARD
DEAD BODY WITH POCKETS HANGING
OUT
```

```
I await your command.
```

```
>GET CARD
```

```
OK.
```

```
I'm ready for your next move Ed.
```

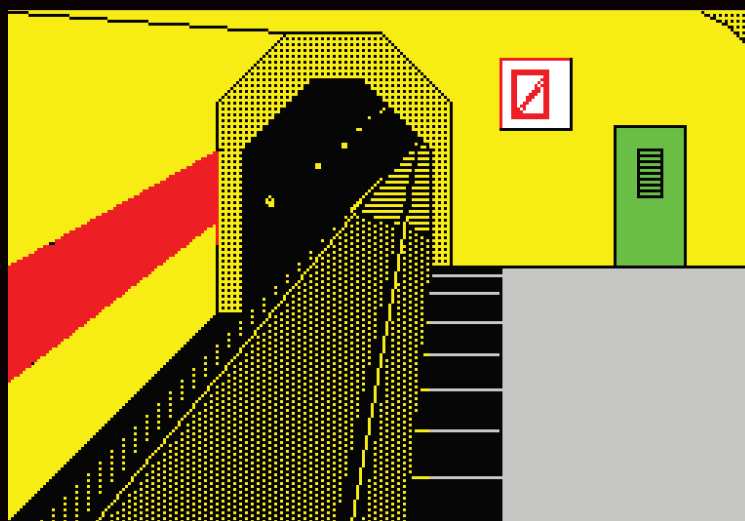
```
>READ CARD
```

```
TRAVEL PERMIT issued to and for
the use of agent-
```

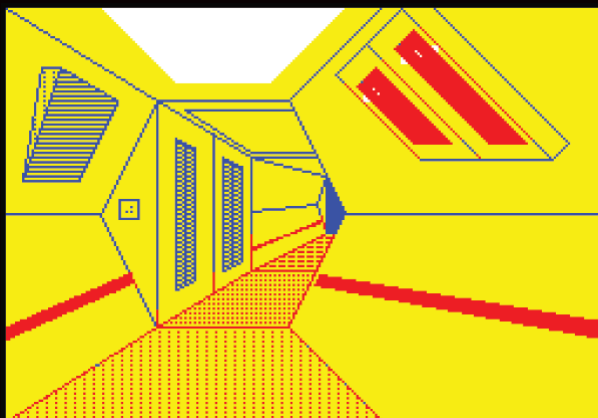
```
Major I. RON. FOIL
```

```
I'm ready for your next move Ed.
```

```
>
```



```
I am on the platform at STATION
"ALPHA".
I can also see:-
TORCH
TRAVEL-TUBE CAR
What now Ed?
>EXAMINE TORCH
Well every adventure's got to
have one of these hasn't it?.
I'm ready for your next move Ed.
>S
I can't go in that direction.
I'm ready for your next move Ed.
>GET TORCH
Well every adventure's got to
have one of these hasn't it?.
OK.
I'm ready for your next move Ed.
>TORCH ON
I can't do that Ed.
I'm ready for your next move Ed.
>LO
```





OVERLAYS and HELPERS

I spend ages flicking through my magazine collection. Reading reviews and features, seeing what was available and often finding some surprises along the way.

Many companies bundled things with their games. Anything from a small booklet (Mini Office), in-depth instructions (F-16 Combat Pilot), novelty item (Surf Champ) and keyboard overlays. These came in many forms including cardboard cut-outs, plastic panels and even a complete top case covering.

Let's take a quick sideways step first though, to other keyboard coverings that supposedly improved the Spectrum's 'dead flesh' feel. There were a few that spring to mind including the Kelwood K-Board. A solid piece of plastic that fitted over the rubber keys and gave the user a more solid, plastic feel when typing. There was also the Games Board from Mervic Marketing. A similar looking cover but with removal buttons so you could just have the keys showing for the game you were playing. None of these though were bundled with games.

Finding overlays that came with games from the companies is not an easy task. Many websites don't mention the things included in the box, and the producers didn't really go out of their way to advertise them.

Probably the most prolific company to provide overlays were Quicksilver and because they were never advertised, many games you buy are missing this integral element, especially for collectors.

ATTENTION SPECTRUM USERS:

- Are you being zapped by 'finger drift'?
- Fed up with being eaten by monsters?
- Put new life into your game and hit the right key every time with the new

GAMES BOARD

Enjoy these great features:

- ★ Instantly attached/detached
- ★ Games board masks unwanted keys
- ★ Improves scores up to 50%
- ★ Compatible with all games and software
- ★ Can be used with joysticks for even faster control
- ★ Can be used with all hardware add-ons
- ★ Ideal for young children
- ★ Keys can be inserted in any position
- ★ 10 keys supplied. Full set of keys available with the add-on kit

Patents pending

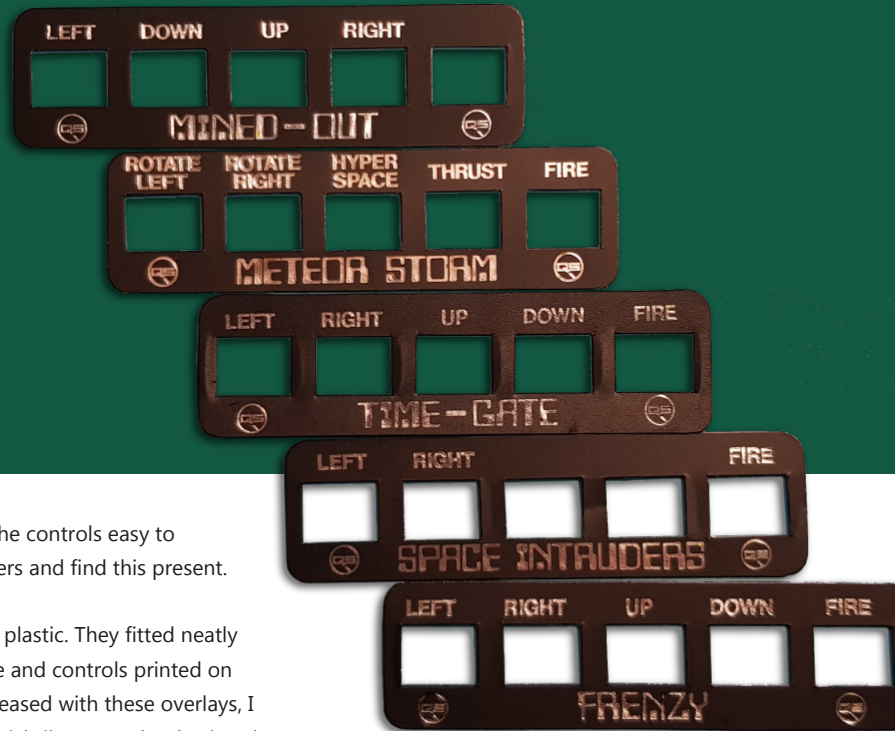
All this and more for just £9.95
From your local computer shop or direct from:

MARVIC MARKETING LTD
FREEPOST (No stamp required)
Stretford, Manchester M32 8EL

Telephone: **061-864 2010**

VISA

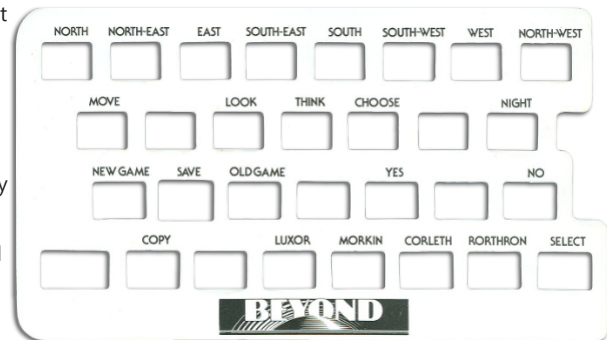
A REAL KEYBOARD
£28-50



They not only added value for the player, but also made the controls easy to remember. It was a nice surprise to open up Space Intruders and find this present.

The Quicksilver overlays were small and originally made of plastic. They fitted neatly over the right-hand number keys and had the game name and controls printed on them. It is not easy to say how many games Quicksilver released with these overlays, I know of about ten, but there could be more. Over time Quicksilver moved to having the same items but made of cardboard and attached to the inlay. This meant to use it, it would ruin the inlay, as it then made it incomplete.

Moving away from Quicksilver, overlays were sometimes provided if the game required a lot of keys, for example a flight simulator or real-time strategy game. Elite came with a cardboard full overlay that had all the game's controls printed on. Having not to remember which key did what would certainly helped the budding space pilot.



On a similar theme, Lords of Midnight also came with a full overlay, helping adventurers gather their troops, view different directions and swap characters without having to consult the manual.

If you had a game where keys were numerous or hard to remember that did not come with an overlay, then Print N Plotter came to the rescue with their Do It Yourself kit. These came in packs and allowed you to make your own overlays for the full keyboard.

The black plastic sheets were pre-cut and just needed a poke to get rid of the bits where the keys were. They came with ready printed stickers for typical game controls along with blank ones so you could write your own. Other companies also offered similar products making life easy for the gamer who liked a lot of keys with their game of choice.

I can see how they would have helped games with numerous keys, but I am not sure of the usefulness for games like Space Intruders that had just three keys. It definitely added value to the game, but its usefulness could be questioned. Especially if you upgraded to a Spectrum+ or later model.





GRUMPY OGRE'S

Adventure Page

Welcome back to strange places where your mind wanders freely and your brain shifts into a higher gear.

It would seem I have lost my font, and despite going on various quests to find it, I have failed. I now have to revert to this one in the hope it is readable. I covered usage of fonts in adventure games many issues ago, so there is little point in labouring the subject.

A recent browse through Sinclair User magazine (and the latest Retro Gamer magazine) prompted me to think about the Sinclair ZX Microdrive. It was a late delivery of cheap mass storage for the Spectrum, and one of its potential uses was in the adventure game market.

Sinclair User gave a few ideas including The Hobbit with every location in full-screen graphics, which is a nice thought, but there is so much more the Microdrive could have offered.

With 85k of storage, games could have been much more in-depth, much richer in content, and I am not just talking about graphics. With careful game planning and use of compression, adventure games could have been massive.

There are several strategies at play here, first the game could be loaded in separate parts, maintaining your inventory. This would of course mean enduring loading times as you passed too and from different locations that were stored outside the currently playing environment. The other option is very careful and cunning game design.

Take a typical example; You are in a massive mansion with 100 rooms to explore. Many puzzles and object, and eventually you get to the cellar with the objects needed for the next part. If all the criteria were met, a portal would appear, allowing you to continue to the next section, which would be loaded in. At this point there would be no going back so the game must only allow moving if the player had the right objects for the next section. Maybe even design the game that every object is used and removed from the player's inventory before they get to that location.

Add to this, the potential for compression and the games could have truly been massive and spectacular.

I did, in my early years, write an adventure that loaded in

location graphics as you played. This was done using X128, the DOS emulator that when configured right, would just keep spooling the virtual tape until it hit the location to load. This was pretty much instant and the game is very much enjoyable. Using it on a real tape player would be a nightmare, but I suppose it could be modified to work on Microdrive or even a more modern device such as the divIMMC. Categorically, it will never be released, so don't get your hopes up.

Not only the Microdrive should be mentioned at this point, what about the Wafadrive. That had more capacity thanks to its varying sizes of cartridge, so this could potentially have been used to store 128k of compressed data. Imagine the adventure game written for that!



The South car park isn't very inspiring. Behind you to the South you can see the rear car park, Northward is the North car park. The entrance to the showroom lies to your East. There is a poorly parked plastic car close by.
>>examine car
It's cheap and probably driven by a complete git.

>>"L"

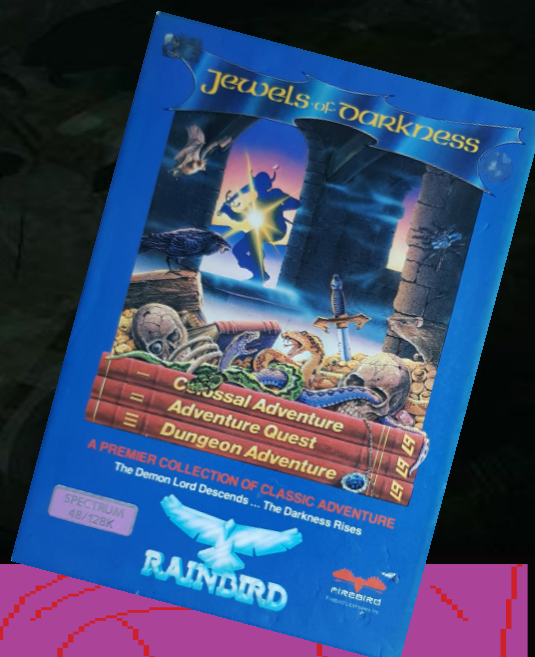
I suspect the Wafadrive was not mainstream enough, but strangely it had more games released on it than the Microdrive.

Of course when discs came along with the Plus Three, some companies released games on that format. Sadly they didn't really take full advantage of the format with massively extended gameplay. Rainbird / Level 9 released their three early titles, Colossal Adventure, Adventure Quest and Dungeon Adventure on a compilation called the Jewels of Darkness Trilogy with added graphics and extended descriptions.

Magnetic scrolls, purveyors of excellent adventures on the Amiga, also released their games for the Spectrum disc format. Well known and loved titles such as The Pawn, Guild of Thieves, Fish and Jinxter could all now be played on your Spectrum.

Moving to more modern times and we can even play those superb Infocom games on the Spectrum thanks to the Z-Engine emulator, ZXZVM. I covered this many episodes back, and it was, to be honest, mind blowing that games of that calibre can be played on the Spectrum.

It is a little sad that the Microdrive was too late and as such, never really caught on with game players nor companies. Had it set the standard at release of the Spectrum or shortly after, I think we would have seen some excellent games that used the extra storage and speed.



```

There is a large padlocked grate
set into the ground.
What now? OPEN GRATE
The grate is unlocked.
What now? D
You're in a tiny rocky cave
below a grate to the surface. A
low crawl leads west into
darkness.
The grate is open and light
streams in through it.
What now?

```

```

SCRUB 10/5
the southwest, forming a copse. To the east is the
rickety old jetty and a wheatfield lies to the south.
Dragging an extremely heavy trunk is an old frail man,
wearing a white sash.
>help man
I don't understand elp
>help man
A grateful smile appears on the old man's face. Your
extra weight makes the trunk move quite easily and you
soon arrive at the castle's drawbridge. The gatekeeper
notices you, lowers the drawbridge and drags the trunk
into the castle. The old man follows him, disappearing
into the depths of a place he obviously knows well.
Scrub
This part of the scrub seems a lot healthier than the
regions which lie to the northeast and east; there is
actually some grass growing here amongst the tangled
undergrowth! Southwestward leads into a wood,
southward to a copse and southeastward to a field of
golden wheat. Westward takes you onto the side of a hill
which rises up above the scrub and to the north is the
moat of a homely castle and its drawbridge.
>

```

REDISCOVERED REALMS

Paul Jenkinson 2016

A compilation and re-imagining of old adventure games.

If you enjoy text adventures then this little compilation should suite you. Each of the four games has been re-written using the same modern engine used in my previous games, *Bounty* and *Broken Friend*. The original BASIC games, written between 1983 and 1986, have been recreated and improved to provide some easy-to-medium challenges for those who like this style of game.

There is no fancy parser, just the usual verb-noun input, but the location text is description, easing through each of the varied games.

The games range from modern factory life to the cliched fantasy environments and the whole package is accompanied by a nice booklet explaining each game and providing details about the conversion process.

The puzzles are logical, mainly because the games were written in the early 80s, but never stray into the absurd or impossible.

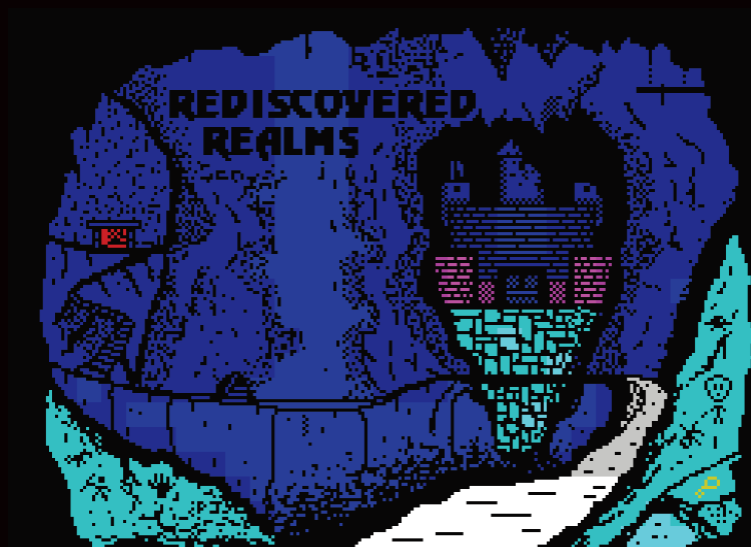
There have been many small changes to the games, some just add extra puzzles, others affect how the game works. For example, when addressing an object you can then refer to it as "it". So you can "examine axe" followed by "get it". One game had a bug in that actually stopped the player completing it if a certain action was done. This only came to light during the conversion.

SAVE and LOAD are non-existent as this compilation is aimed at emulation users and I wanted to stick to the originals as close as possible.

A decent set of small text adventures that can act as an introduction to the genre or provide some easy contemplation for adventure players.

Although the genre has somewhat faded, the arrival of the Spectrum Next seems to have created a surge in this style of game.

If you like text adventures give this compilation a go.



Kitchen Department

> e

A mass of small offices cluster around this narrow, dark corridor. There are doors in all directions.

> s

The kitchen department sprawls out before you, littered with half built units and workbenches, none of which are of an use to you. A door leads North and some iron stairs lead down. To the South the department merges into another room.

> i

You are holding....
A Tape Measure.

> ■

Grain Store

> s

Very little light reaches this far into th stores, only broken roof tiles allow thin shafts to illuminate the dirty floor. A doorway leads North.
There is a dead bird here.

> get bird

You get the bird.

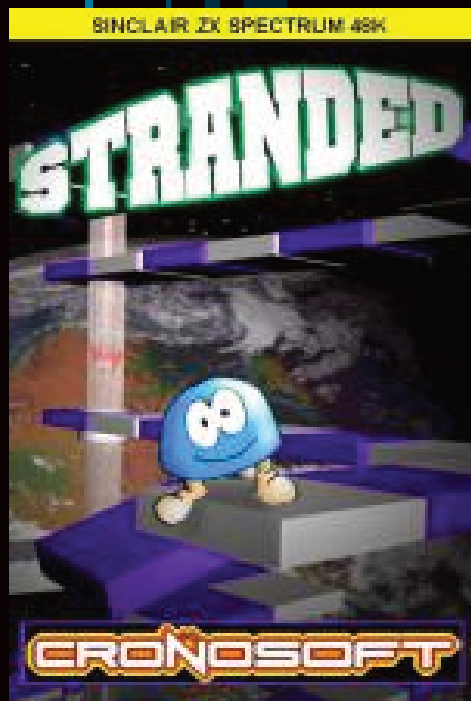
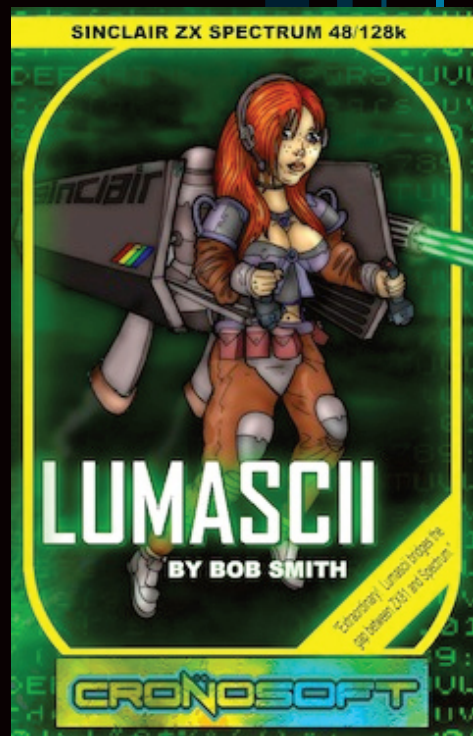
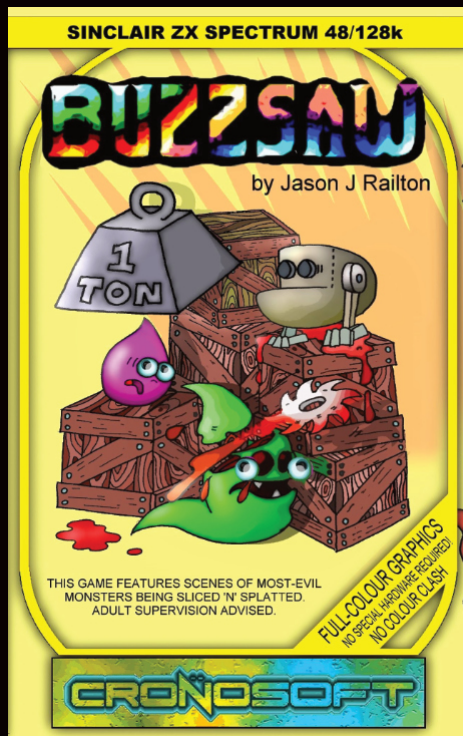
> n

Piles of grain create a mini vista in this dark and moist building. Light shines in from the yard to the East and through the peaks of grain can be seen a doorway to the South.

> ■

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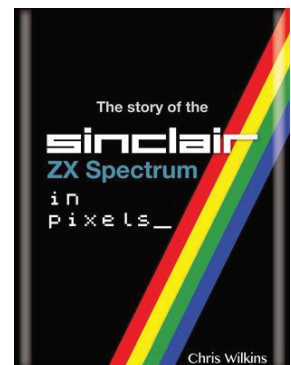
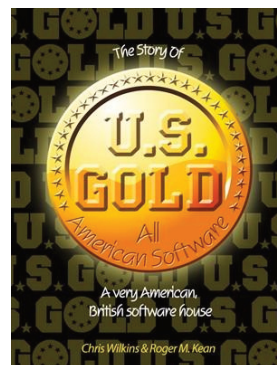
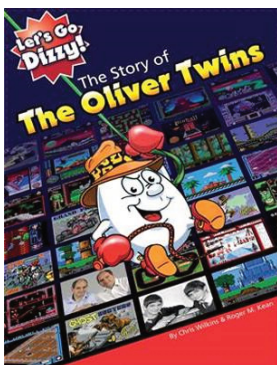
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