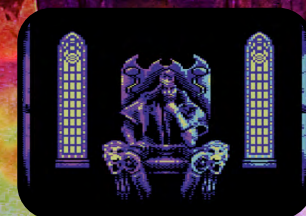


RESET64

THE MAGAZINE FOR ALL THINGS C64!

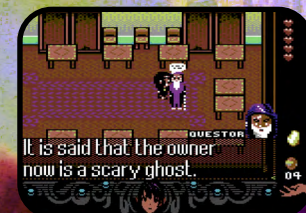


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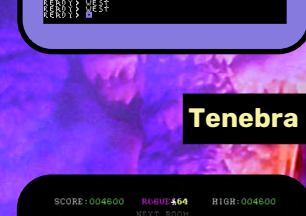
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EDITORIAL

Welcome to Reset #15 - The RPG issue. We're dedicating the issue to the humble cRPG, which was a major genre in terms of the sheer number of releases for the C64 platform. A significant number of them originated from America, mainly due to the high take up of disk drives in the country. This opened up the doors to highly immersive and big multi-disk titles that just wouldn't work on tape and thus the UK publishers more often focusing on smaller, arcade type games. Big players such as Electronic Arts, SSI, and Origin along with developers such as Interplay and Westwood (amongst many other smaller publishers and developers) all made a name for themselves by publishing and producing pioneering adventures on 8 bit computers such as the C64 and Apple IIe. This really kickstarted a genre that is still massively popular today. There are far too many great RPGs to mention in the pages of a single issue, but we've tried to highlight a few of our favourites, as well as give some exposure to some newer ones as well.

Louie has been busy getting the latest on a few big upcoming C64 games, including some awesome looking RPGs. There are certainly a few beauties on the way, and it's great to see the Eye of the Beholder conversion finally released after a long and careful development cycle. Unfortunately, Arkanix' Crimson Twilight couldn't quite make the issue, but we hope to feature this amazing looking C64 RPG in a future issue. We certainly wish the developers, Arkanix Labs (who we have had a lot of positive contact with), all the best.

Unknown Realms is another big title that has garnered a lot of hype, with a massively successful Kickstarter campaign that was funded in early 2017. Unfortunately, a lack of updates (May 29th, 2020 was the last official Kickstarter update) and slow progress has tempered enthusiasm within the scene. We would have loved to have featured the game in this issue. Unfortunately, we never received a response from developers, Stirring Dragon Games. Still, we wish them the best and certainly hope to see the game released in the future. Being high level backers ourselves, we absolutely want it to succeed and be as good as promised!

It's hard not to be a fan of big box RPGs on the C64. The cover art, chunky manuals, maps, novellas and other trinkets mean there is more fun to be had than just playing the game itself. It's so easy to become completely immersed in an RPG before you even begin playing the actual game. The (generally speaking) striking cover art also helps make them highly collectible and I love looking at them, opening the boxes and taking in the enormity and exuberance of the sets. Outside of the C64, several big contemporary cRPGs have had physical releases on other 8 bit platforms. These include Nox Archaist on the Apple II, Realms of Antiquity on the TI-99/4a and the exceptional Realms of Quest series on the humble VIC20 - proving that these massive adventures coupled with impressive big box physical releases really are possible - even for hobbyists!

We truly hope you enjoy the issue and maybe even inspire you to check out the slew of new contemporary releases, RPG and otherwise, that have graced the C64 of late. There's certainly a lot in there, including our own tribute to the legendary Zzap!64 co-founder and cover artist Oliver Frey, who unfortunately passed away in August, 2022. Oliver and Roger have always been great supporters of Reset, offering kind words of encouragement and allowing us to use their IP on occasion. We'd like to offer Roger, as well as Oli's friends and family our sincerest condolences. It's fantastic that Oli's legacy will continue to live on in the relaunched Zzap! 64 and Crash from Chris Wilkins' Fusion Retro Books. Sadly, it has also come to our attention that Roger himself is gravely ill. He is certainly in our thoughts and we pass on our very best wishes.

A big thank-you to the Reset staff, contributors and of course you, the reader, for your continued support. Keep checking the Reset social media channels and keep an eye on our itch page for the latest updates and releases. Happy Holidays!

Sincerely, *Kevin Tilley*

TEAM RESET



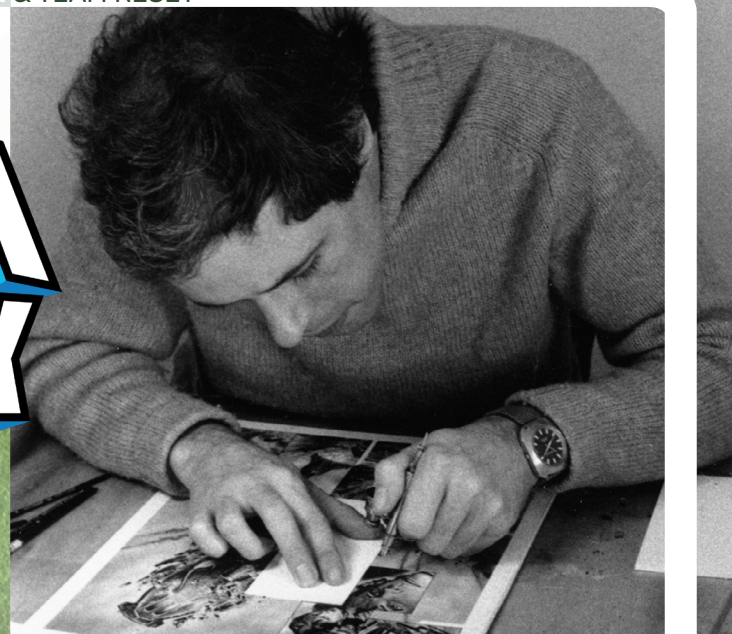
A RESET64 TRIBUTE TO...

BY ANDREW FISHER & TEAM RESET



Newsfield magazines had a secret weapon in the 1980s. The artwork of Oliver Frey graced nearly every cover of CRASH, ZZAP! and AMTIX, as well as the multi-format title The Games Machine and horror magazine FEAR. Within the pages, you would find the margin characters, including the Olibugs, Thing on a Spring and Rockford that added so much character. He also created the famous reviewer portraits, showing different poses based on their opinion of the game.

Interested in film and art from an early age, Oliver Frey completed a correspondence course before moving from Switzerland to London. At film school, he met Roger Kean and the two were inseparable. When Oli's brother Franco moved to Ludlow and became interested in early home computers, Roger and Oli joined him in that small Shropshire town. What started as a mail order



catalogue for computer games became CRASH! Micro Action, the beloved magazine for ZX Spectrum users. In 1985, ZZAP! 64 hit the newsstands, with Oli's cover art for the first issue portraying the Gold Medal-winning game Elite.

The first time I saw Oli's art was on the cover of issue 18. This suitably gory image of the archer being swallowed by a giant worm drew the eye and promoted the Sizzler reviewed within - Beyond the Forbidden Forest by Paul Norman. It would be a year later that I subscribed, but every issue that arrived in the post made a huge first impression with its cover art. As Newsfield expanded, so did Oli's workload. He also took on creating the artwork for games released by Thalamus, producing a distinctive series of covers on a white background. His logo for the company was also inspired and intriguing, the T-shaped face becoming a real mark of quality. Oli and Roger would later reuse the logo for their own publishing company.

When I was a freelancer for Commodore Force, I never actually met Roger or Oli and it was designer Mark Kendrick who drew my likeness as Professor Brian Strain (the Mighty Brian). It would be years later at retro events that I finally met Roger and Oli, having the chance to interview them as part of Q&A sessions at both Play Blackpool and the Pixels event held at the Centre for Computing History. Oli was a gentle, kind presence with a wonderful smile and a big heart. He was modest about his talent, but his art was incredible, as shown in the collection The Fantasy Art of Oliver Frey. Oli did draw my likeness in the classic black T-shirt, for my reviews in the ZZAP! Annuals and again for the revived ZZAP! 64 and ZZAP! AMIGA magazines.

In my computer room, I have a canvas print of Oli's artwork for issue 30, for the preview of The Shoot 'Em Up Construction Kit. It is a fantastic piece, not least because of how much I enjoy using the Kit and writing about it/running a website dedicated to it. It also reminds me of Oli's eye for detail and subtle use of the airbrush, creating lighting effects, smoke, grit, and grime.

Rest in Peace, Oli. Your art lives on.

SEUCK
WORK IN SPACE
ZZAP! 64 #10



THE EIDOLON
ZZAP! 64 #10

Perfectly encapsulating the claustrophobic nerve-wracking tension created by trawling around the caves of your mind in Lucasfilm's fractal classic The Eidolon, Oli's cover for ZZAP! 64 #10 is one of my favourite pieces by him. How to choose a definitive Oli favourite...? Impossible. So - after much deliberation - I decided to go with this outstanding piece. This magnificently moody, atmospheric illustration manages to be both oppressive and menacing, whilst keeping the game's paradoxical sense of humour intact.

Oli's incredible work rate, diversity as an artist and his deep understanding of the games he was illustrating has left behind an unmatched legacy. Raw, cute, visceral, imaginative, terrifying, erotic, energetic, comedic, explosive, contemplative... the list of adjectives goes on and on and on. It's fair to say Oli's magazine covers are what he will be most remembered for - and they are undoubtedly the reason most of us first chose to pick up Crash/ZZAP! 64 or Amtix from amongst the sea of other publications on the rack in WH Smiths at the time.

DEL



APOLLO 18
ZZAP! 64 #35



Whenever I think of ZZAP! 64, the first image that comes into my mind is the Issue 35 cover. Oli's tribute to the Apollo 18 moon mission has always stood out for me due to its muted colour palette, the illustration style used and the relative proportion of the astronaut. I like the clever inclusion of the mythical ZZAP! 64 tower in the reflection of the astronaut's visor - even though the logo was reflected incorrectly.

It's wonderful that Oli's legacy was able to be celebrated prior to his passing through the revival of the Zzap!64 and Crash brands over the past few years. I would like to feel that he would have drawn a great deal of comfort from hearing how we all appreciated his artwork as kids, and that we all continue to hold great admiration for his artistic talents to this day.

LOUIE

X-FORCE
PSYTRONIK SOFTWARE



I enjoyed ZZAP! 64 back in the 90s, and the biggest highlight for me was the cover tape which used to be taped to the magazine front cover. As for the magazine itself. It was fun and quirky The cover artwork by Oli Frey was fantastic. He was a really talented magazine cover and poster artist. After ZZAP! 64 was rebranded as Commodore Force, they began including pull out posters, many of which I had stuck to my bedroom wall. Oli was kind to allow some of his existing artwork to adorn Psytronik Software releases; X-Force featured one of his works. Thank you for the hard work Oli, and rest in peace.

RICHARD

Oli's work was iconic in the sense that it defined the look and feel of gaming in the '80s (and well into the '90s) for me and no doubt a whole generation of players. Always energetic, filled with life and detail that offered a world beyond what you immediately see - his covers demanded attention and respect. His work was head and shoulders beyond the illustrations the competition offered, and made the ones that just used key art provided by publishers look amateurish in comparison.

For me, I always had a soft spot for the 'white background' covers - #37's Pac-Land and #39's Skate Crazy immediately come to mind, and Ant's rendition of #40's Barbarian 2 cover adorns my studio wall - but for me #47's cover is my favourite of Oli's work. It features some of Zak McKracken's oddest items, and even throws in Rocket Ranger and LED Storm for good measure to offer a cover that's just bursting with energy. I love it!

CAM

TERMINATOR 2 ZZAP! 64 #90

Oli's artwork has been a significant part of my childhood, not only from his amazing Zzap!64 covers, but also from his Thalamus artwork. Hawkeye and Creatures are the ones I remember most and adoring whilst browsing games in John Menzies.

As a younger generation of C64'er, I was a Zzap!64 latecomer, not getting the magazine until late 1991. It's hard to pick a favourite cover (issues 86, 83 and 79 being one of many I liked), so I'll mention the most personal to me - the Terminator 2 work he did on the very first issue I brought (issue 78). It brings back fond memories every time I see it, and it was Oli's artwork which drew my eyes to the magazine.

I feel privileged to have met Oli (and Roger) at a retro event in 2012 and be able to share how much his work meant. A very kind and warm person who enjoyed the love people had for his work, and very sad to see the march of time steal yet another legend

FRANK



I very nearly missed the entire Zzap!64 phenomenon, only discovering the magazine at issue #78. After reading my dad's copies of Compute!'s Gazette, which

I loved (but were as dry as heck), I excitedly picked up this unknown magazine (with a tape on the cover... what the?) and stared at the Terminator 2 cover art and eye-catching logo, and wow! It was love at first sight. I read every word in that issue several times over. While not Oli's best cover, it means so much to me purely because that issue opened up a whole new C64 world and it was like the magazine was written just for me. So, I'm going for the T2 cover for nostalgic and personal reasons as my favourite!

I was a massive ZZAP! fan right until the final issue of Commodore Force and always looked forward to seeing what Oli would come up with for each issue. Thank-you, Oli, for ZZAP! 64, your wonderful art as well as your contribution to my childhood.

KEV



LEADERBOARD ZZAP! 64 #15

When getting into gaming magz in the 80s, there was one magazine that stood head and shoulders above the rest on the newsstand - ZZAP! 64. Oli Frey's cover art was just eye popping gorgeous and demanded attention immediately, and from then on, I was hooked!

Picking a fave Oli Frey cover is like picking your favourite child, it is impossible! However, since this tribute is about picking a favourite, here is mine (this was agonising, as I could have picked 3 dozen of them!): Issue 15 (July 1986) stands out to me with the blonde woman with her oversized mirrored glasses that reflected a golfer taking his shot while licking her icy pole (and the teenage boys in the background doing the same). This Leaderboard Golf cover is so out of left field, it just screams Oli Frey - only he could get away with such a cover. I am saddened that we have lost such an amazing talent, but his legacy will live on. Vale Oli Frey.

ALEX

Being one of RESET's cover artists, it's no surprise that I hold Oli's art-style in high regard. Dynamic, bold and emotive, Oli's ZZAP! covers are what first attracted me (and many others, no doubt) to the wonderful mag in my early years as it sat on the newsagency's shelves. In fact it was his Elite cover for ZZAP! #1 that I first laid my eyes on and my homage to this beautiful cover for RESET is a bit of a give-away as to my favourite Oli piece. That said, I want to give special mention to his Red Moon and The Last Stand centerfolds and his Zombie and Knight Games covers as these have always been particularly inspiring as I strived to improve my own art style.

How Oli painted colour and light was gorgeous and completely impossible to me, bumbling artist that I am. That colour and light is why I still love his art today and it is also ironically a good reminder of how quickly the colour and light of this life fades away.

ANT

WIPE OUT (THEATRE EUROPE) ZZAP! 64 #2

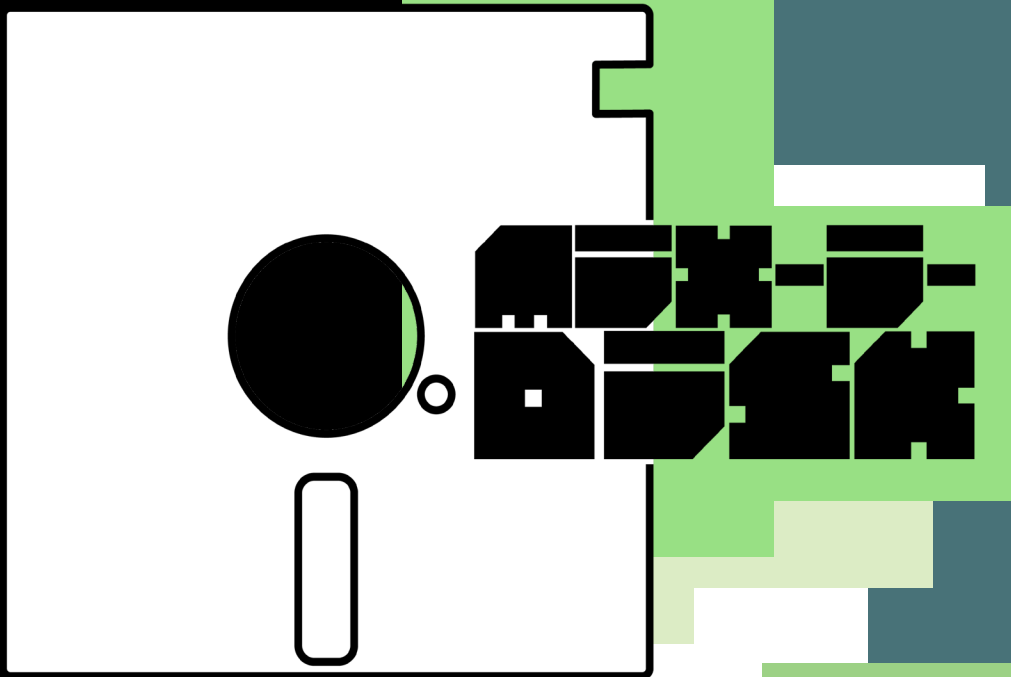


It was incredibly exciting when my copy of ZZAP! 64 dropped through the letter box each month and the thrill always began with Oliver Frey's stunning cover art. My favourite Oli artwork is Jun 85's Theatre Europe cover. As with all Oli's work, it's an outstanding picture by a great artist. Technically brilliant and emotionally powerful, its gruesome, shocking and unnerving, and - like ZZAP! 64 itself - was like nothing else on the newsagent's shelves. The image illustrates 'Theatre Europe', issue 2's nuclear-war themed Gold Medal game, but there's more to it than that. It's a powerful statement about the effects of nuclear war - the threat of which was very real in the mid-80s. The ripped open gas mask, the mutilated face with its melting flesh, the giant bomb blast and its mushroom cloud reflected in the gasmask's remaining eyepiece, convey a fierce anti-war message that captures not only the game but also the paranoia of the age. Striking, haunting, and packing a powerful punch it's an incredible piece of art.

MARTIN

ELITE ZZAP! 64 #1





The Mix-i-Disk is Reset's very own cover disk, which is available as a free download or as an optional physical disk with the purchase of the printed edition from Protovision.

Insert/mount the disk into your drive and type **LOAD""",8,1** and then type **RUN**. After this, you will need to choose which loader to use, either **Fastload enabled** or **KERNAL** (choose **KERNAL** loader if you are using an **SD2IEC** device or a **THEC64**).

Use your joystick in Port 2 to navigate the menu.

Reset64 Disk Menu

Reset64 (2022)

Code
Richard

Graphics
Shine

Loader
Lasse Oorni

The world debut of Richard's brand spanking new Mix-i-Disk loader menu and it's a ripper too! Use your joystick in Port 2 or navigate the menu using the cursor keys.



Reset64 Intro

Reset64 (2022)

Code & Graphics
Richard Bayliss

Music
A-Man

Richard took it upon himself to take care of the Reset greets intro, employing A-Man for the coveted music composer position, and they did a stellar job. If we forgot you in the greets list, consider this your official "hello!"

And, don't forget, we love you!

Tenebra 2

H4PLO (2022)

H4PLO follows up his intriguing rogue-like puzzler with Tenebra 2, containing 35 brand new levels and a heap of gameplay mechanics not featured in the original.

In the words of Haplo, "Guide the hapless protagonist to the exit, but also keep in mind that he is afraid of darkness and refuses to walk in the dark areas."

Special in game hints and toggle keys are included in-game.

Go on then, off you go!

<https://h4plo.itch.io/tenebra-2>



Sub Chase 64

K. Senkel (2022)

Original Game
Roger Merritt (UMI Inc., 1982)

Programming, Graphics & Sound
Karsten Senkel

A remake of Sub Chase on the VIC20, Sub Chase 64 is a port that stays true to the original, but with enhanced graphics and sound. The game can also be played in two player competitive or cooperative modes.

From the original VIC20 tape inlay: "The mines bubbling up from the dreaded fleet of submarines tunneling the water beneath you can be defeated by well-placed barrages of depth charges from your nuclear Sub Chaser. Destroy the subs and you will destroy the danger. The more successful you are, the heavier the attack, so go for a high score."

<https://senkel64.itch.io/sub-chase-64>

Promethean Legacy: Fan the Flames

Arlasoft (2022)

Original Game
Quill118

C64 Version
Arlasoft

Music
Richard Bayliss

Promethean Legacy is an absorbing dice rolling strategy game, originally designed by Martin "Quill118" Glaude for the Ludum Dare Compo, and now it's on the C64 thanks to Arlasoft!

Complete the five 'monument' quests in as few turns as possible, keeping at least one 'sacred fire' burning at the end of each turn.

Full instruction as well as hints/tips can be found on the official itch site. In-game tips are also available.

<https://arlagames.itch.io/promethean-legacy-c64>



Synthia 2 - Revenge of the ID

Eleanor Burns/TND Games (2022)

Game Design, Graphics, Enhancements
Elanor Burns

Front End Code & Logo
Richard Bayliss

Music
Flapsandwich & Richard Bayliss

An insane military AI is holding a group of Pre-War survivors hostage, who happen to currently be in stasis. It's up to Synthia to infiltrate the complex, rescue the sleeping hostages and give human + cyber kind any chance of peace. The full PDF instruction manual has been included in the Reset64 #15 ZIP archive, or can be downloaded from the official Synthia game site on itch.io.

Synthia 2 is a brand new and incredible flick screen arcade adventure, created by Elanor Burns using SEUCK and then enhanced, with a front end by Richard Bayliss. The first game in the series, Synthia in the Cyber Crypt, won the official 2020 SEUCK game compo and can be downloaded from Richard's itch.io page.

<https://richard-tnd.itch.io/>

Knight Trap

Vector5 Games (2022)

Code & Graphics
Jani Parviainen

Title Music
Matthias Hartung

In-Game Music and SFX
Jani Parviainen

Knight Trap is a Pac-Man style ghost chaser in which the player must eat all of the bread to continue to the next maze. You are chased by skeletons, which you can avoid by temporarily turning into a ghost and passing through them. This can only be done by picking up potions, which are scattered throughout the maze. Full instructions are available in-game

<https://vector5games.itch.io/knight-trap>



Troque64

Wbochar (2019)

Coding, Graphics & Sound
Wolfgang Bochar

Music
Hans Axelsson

Testing
Tak Yano & Jani Tahvanainen

Rogue-like. Zombie outbreak. Say no more!

A group of heroes led the zombies into an abandoned mine. Then, on the 64th level, they blocked the drain and the mine flooded. Of course, things can't be that easy and an unknown assailant has unblocked the trogue and the mine is draining. You need to explore the mine and find 8 pumps to flood the mine again and ensure the town remains safe.

Troque64 features 64 levels and is completely keyboard controlled. Various monsters and items are scattered throughout the mine. Instructions, hints and tips can be found in-game as well as on the official Troque64 website

<https://wbochar.com/troque64/>

NEWS

While this issue of Reset64 contains its fair share of reviews and insights of RPG games released in recent years and beyond, gazing forward we can see that there are a number of devs looking to expand upon the genre with their upcoming titles. Let's see what is potentially on the horizon.

WINTERDANE

Revealed back in 2019, Winterdane is a first-person rogue style dungeon crawler with randomly generated levels being worked on by the talented duo of Saul Cross (idea, design, graphics and sound) and John Christian Lønningdal (code).

The project looked to have been making some solid progress throughout 2019 as the bulk of the engine and graphics had been completed while music and sfx were partially done. But development activity all of a sudden went into hiatus by the time 2020 came around, with very little of the project being referenced ever since.

Having reached out to Saul recently, he was kind enough to provide Reset with a quick summation of Winterdane's status: 'The project has not been cancelled but it is indefinitely suspended. There were a number of design decisions needed about the inclusion of certain RPG features and how they might be incorporated which have not been

resolved (my fault)'.

With this confirmation that no progress had been made to the project over the past 2 to 3 years, we asked Saul as to whether there was any indication that development could start up again anytime soon. Saul was philosophical in his response: 'The game development may continue at some stage, but this is dependent on resolving the gameplay decisions, time (as always), and whether John Christian Lønningdal is available and willing to continue with the project for which he already did an amazing job coding. So no ETA sadly'.

In speaking to John Christian Lønningdal about Winterdane he was non-committal about the project's future, citing the lack of motivation and spare time as the primary reasons. So, it does unfortunately look like Winterdane is more likely to be a candidate to the 'Games That Weren't' category than a new C64 release. Pity, it was certainly looking good. ■



MEONLAWEL

Another interesting RPG currently in development is Meonlawel by Commocore. The plot to the game sees you looking to avenge your father who has died at the hands of vampires. Meonlawel will feature hi-res bitmap graphics along with multi-day settings, a turn based combat system and a great variety of weapons. But perhaps what will make the game stand out from other RPGs is that you yourself will be susceptible to becoming a vampire which will alter the game path ahead unless you find an antidote in time.

In speaking to Bartosz Żołyński, the man behind Commocore, about what it will take to bring Meonlawel to completion he surmised: "I have a clear roadmap and it demands 6 months of continuous development for [the game to offer] something interesting and playable".

When asked about his current development focus, Bartosz revealed: "I am working on implementing casting spells from magic books. I needed to re-design the memory layout for it as I plan to do a few animations for spells that will spice the game with some interesting content. Then, the next step will be to create regular shops and black markets where unique items can be purchased".

Before we finished up our chat with Bartosz, he did let slip that he was also investigating the possibility to also include integration with the WiC64 Wireless interface cartridge! "What I am thinking of is to add the possibility to extend the game by providing unique weapons that are not available in the cartridge memory, but might be purchased from a server using game money. Just one of the possible ideas, we'll see, I don't want to go too crazy about it as the game itself is complex enough".

Meonlawel is no doubt an ambitious passion project for Commocore with a lot of potential but it would be impossible to pin a target release date for this project. ■



UNKNOWN REALMS

One RPG project that has been a long time in development - Unknown Realms: The Siege Perilous is a fantasy role-playing game that was successfully crowdfunded by Stirring Dragon in early 2017. The entire project looks amazing, with some Reset members being high level backers.

Described as an exploration-focused, turn-based, 8-bit RPG inspired by the classic role-playing games of the 80's, Unknown Realms has yet to be completed - generating quite a bit of community discussion about the project's future. Many have cited the lack of tangible evidence (i.e. updated screenshots, new video footage, demos) across the five plus years, the unwillingness to respond directly to backer's repeated questions and the developer's themselves admitting that they have already exhausted the funds raised as reasons as to why the project will never be completed.

Stirring Dragon has publicly insisted that they continue to work on the game and that they have a lot of love for the project. However, they are not in a position to provide any sort of revised target release



date and have consistently missed their own deadlines in respect to releasing updates to their crowdfunding backers. Not even a streamed Q&A session with the core development team back in May 2020 was able to shed any insightful information as to whether the game actually existed in any form.

Reset64 has reached out to Stirring Dragon on multiple occasions to seek further details around the future of Unknown Realms (so that we could provide a special feature to our readers on the game) but unfortunately we have not received a response. It is difficult to form an opinion as to when Unknown Realms will see the light of day on the Commodore 64. But they do deserve some credit for not simply running off, ghosting the scene to never to be heard from again. Stirring Dragon is still talking about the game and its development on social media - so that's something! ■

CRIMSON TWILIGHT

While we are on the topic of games that are taking a long time to complete, the C64 community continues to eagerly await new updates on Crimson Twilight by Arkanix Labs.

Described as an immersive old school RPG inspired by the likes of Questron, Legacy of the Ancients and The Legend of Blacksilver, Crimson Twilight has been in development on and off for more than 12 years.

While Arkanix Labs have in recent times released a couple of small side games (The Lost Realms of Murkasada - Episode 1 and Fishing Mini Game) that are designed to give a taste of what Crimson Twilight will be like, updates on the actual game have been somewhat sparse of late.

We were hoping to include a feature on Crimson Twilight in this issue but the guys from Arkanix Labs just weren't able to find the spare time to make this happen. However, as the community has not had to spend a single dollar to support this project and there is clear evidence that a game is in the works, we can certainly forgive the guys over at Arkanix Labs for taking their time to deliver what is certainly looking like a great cRPG experience. ■



MONTE BOYD

Monte Boyd has been quite active on the C64 gaming dev side of late. He has recently released Knights and Slimes, a fun and frantic arcade platformer that can be best described as a hybrid between Bubble Bobble and Pang. Featuring 8 knight characters to choose from, 4 different world areas to play and randomly generated levels, Knights and Slimes has been warmly received upon its release and looks to be a must have game for any C64 gaming enthusiast. We'll have a full review of the game in the next issue of Reset64.

And rolling in just before Christmas, Monte's single screen arcade racer, Muddy Racers has finally seen a release with physical and digital editions available to purchase via Protovision. Zoom through 18 different tracks across three stages filled with tight turns, long straights, off road hazards and crazy jumps! Up to four players can join the fun, or you play the game as a single player challenge!

But Monte is not about to rest on his laurels there as he has been busy prototyping an idea he has to produce a sci-fi run'n'gun style of game called Infeztation. Being his first foray into a game with a scrolling engine, Monte is looking to adapt a unique graphical style for the game with the use of hi-res and mini sized characters. The game is set to feature different weapon types, destructible game environments, light puzzle elements and a progressive story narrative. In speaking to Monte about the status of Infeztation, he revealed that the

project was currently on hold: "I'm not sure how much focus I'll be able to give Infeztation in the short term...I think I need to rework it a bit and create a more realistic [game design] goal". ■

<https://monteboyd.itch.io/knights-and-slimes>

https://www.protovision.games/shop/product_info.php?products_id=386

https://www.protovision.games/shop/product_info.php?products_id=371

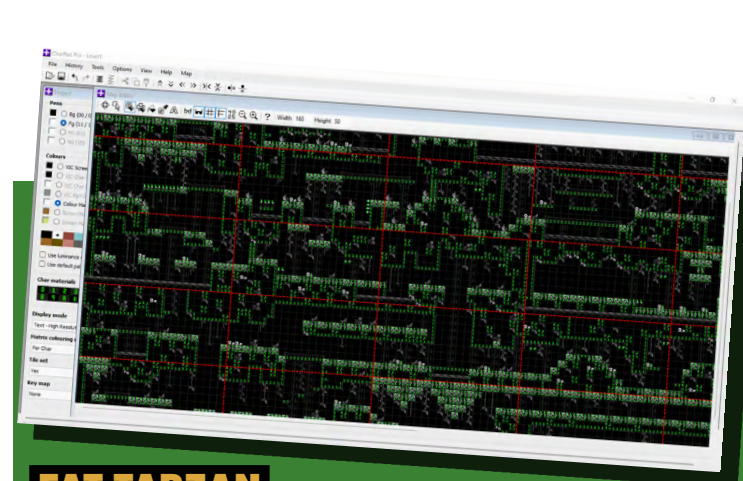
IMPOSSIBLE MISSION 3

Icon64 are currently busy working on the third instalment of the Impossible Mission series for the Commodore 64 set for release towards the latter part of 2023.

This officially licensed project will look to keep true to the spirit of the original title while introducing a number of additional elements to ensure that the game still feels somewhat fresh. At the insistence of the current rights holder, Impossible Mission 3 will introduce a stun weapon while the team themselves have decided to design a game map that gradually opens up as you locate and use objects in specific places.

One feature that simply can't be left out of Impossible Mission 3 is sampled speech. We are interested to hear that the original speech from the first two Impossible Mission games will be reused for this project, including the possibility to dissect them up in a way to construct additional phrases...sounds interesting!

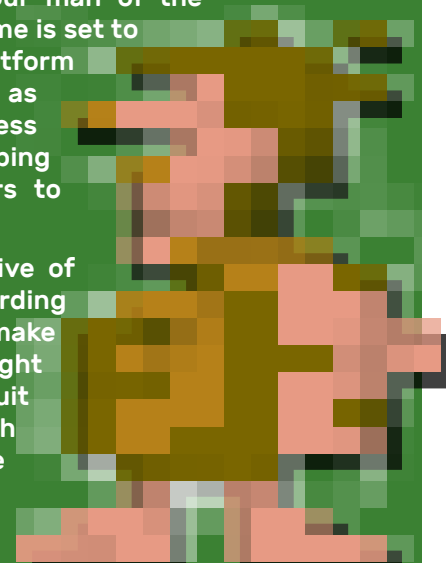
Can Icon64 do the impossible? We don't mean produce a great new C64 game but rather appease fans of the franchise to design a game that meets every element of their nostalgic dreams? ■



FAT TARZAN

Andreas Schincaglia (Wanax) has turned his attention to developing a new platform game intriguingly titled Fat Tarzan. Utilising hi-res mode graphics with a touch of multicolour for the main Tarzan character, Fat Tarzan will feature 3 levels that are filled with hazardous traps for our man of the jungle to avoid. The game is set to feature your typical platform gaming tropes such as locating levers to access locked areas and jumping over enemy characters to avoid losing a life.

So what is the objective of the game? Well, according to Andreas, it is to make the fat Tarzan lose weight by collecting all the fruit contained within each level. Which begs the question, how on earth did he get so fat? ■



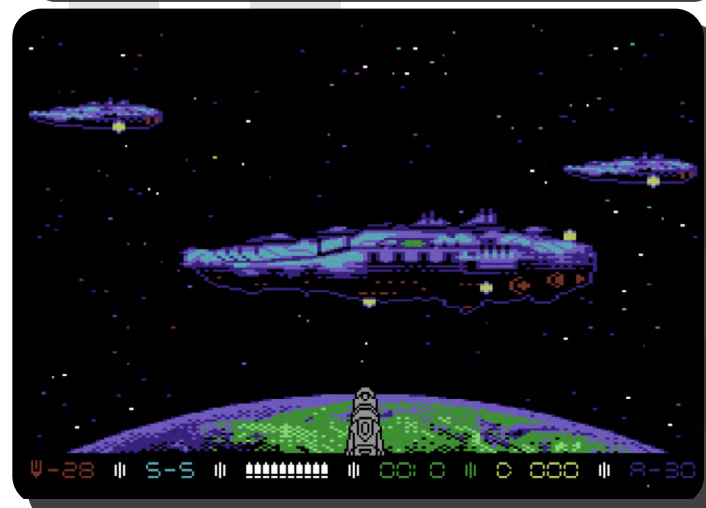
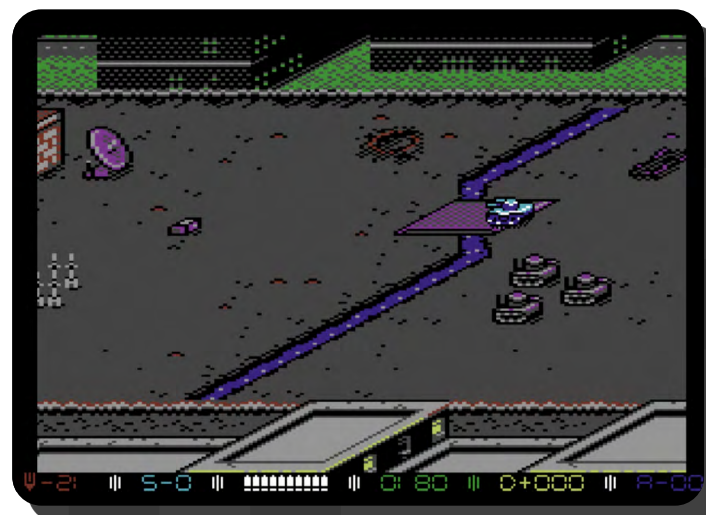


QUASIMODO IS BACK

Hunchback by Ocean Software is one of those early C64 titles that just about all of us would have played at one point. Well, Richard Wilson from rwx designs is looking to bring back the iconic humped-back character through a number of new Quasimodo games.

Hunchback Redux will be a reworking of the classic arcade game. It will feature our hero Quasimodo drawn in high detail and in 5 colours, with improved graphics, visual effects, gameplay and sound throughout. The game will be more expansive than the original and set across multiple levels, with different levels of difficulty. We can look forward to playing Hunchback Redux in 2023. But we don't have to wait until then to see Quasimodo in action as Robert will be releasing a spin-off game to Hunchback Redux called Quasimodo's Christmas Caper. The game is set to be released at the start of 2023 and will be a simple run and jump platform game with the objective of collecting the Christmas treasures and avoiding the Elves. ■

<https://rwxdesigns.itch.io/>



VALE MILO MUNDT

Back in October, the Reset team was rocked with the sad news that our friend Milo Mundt (aka MacGyver) had suddenly passed away at the age of 43.

'C64 Champion' would be a term that would be apt when describing Milo. His passion and joy for our favourite 8-bit home computer saw him be a proactive participant in all corners of the C64 community. Whether it be spending countless hours testing games such as Sam's Journey and Soul Force, sending the latest news and events to various retro gaming blogs and publications, sharing his knowledge and views at various C64 related events or helping out behind the scenes at Protovision, Milo willingly and without much fanfare gave a lot of himself so that we could all enjoy the Commodore 64 well beyond its supposed shelf life.

On a personal level, I got to work quite a bit with Milo over the past couple of years. We argued and debated a lot but we had many laughs at the same time. As much as I admired Milo for his love of all things C64, I will always remember him mostly for introducing me to Modern Talking's Brother Louie - damn you Milo I'm going to have that song in my head for the rest of the day.

Rest In Peace Milo and thank you.



TERRESTRIAL

Just as we thought that 2022 was going to be the first year in a while in which the Icon64 team were not going to deliver us C64 fans with some great gaming goodness, Terrestrial sneaks in for a release a week ahead of Christmas.

Providing a multi-genre arcade gaming experience, Terrestrial sees you take charge of an elite group of soldiers as they try to take back their homeworld from an invading force of aliens. With game levels that pay tribute to classics such as Raid Over Moscow, BeachHead and Cabal, our initial look at the game reveals that Terrestrial is a visual feast that provides fun

and challenging game play.

Terrestrial is being distributed via Psytronik Software and is both PAL and NTSC compatible. The game will be available in cartridge, disk and digital download editions. ■

<http://www.psytronik.net/newsite/index.php/c64/145-terra>



Thanks to the competitors, judges, sponsors and everyone in between for making the Reset64 2022 4kb Craptastic Game Competition such a success. Also, a special thank-you to Megastyle for expertly creating and compiling the official compilation disk.

For the uninitiated, the Craptastic competition seeks C64 coders (new or experienced) to come up with a game that is no more than 4096 bytes in file size when compressed. Silly or wacky game themes are encouraged but are not a mandatory requirement. It was an amazing competition, with 26 entries making the deadline and 1 out of compo entry. Each of these games is an outstanding achievement and it was great to have both novice and experienced coders participating and exploring their ideas.

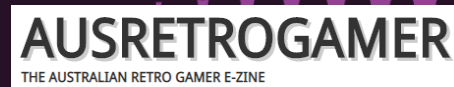
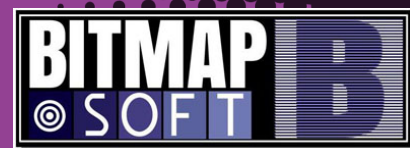
The expert judges this year were Richard Tappenden

(@retrotap), David Simmons (@Jazzcat6581), Louie Dimovski (@RetroGamerNatn), Mika Keränen (@RetroMisfit) and Andrew Hayes (@hayesmaker64). We couldn't have done it without the judges, who extensively played, critiqued and reviewed each of the 26 entered games. There was a lot of variation between scores from each judge, which illustrates just how different concepts appeal to different people! Overall, it was a very close competition and there wasn't much separating each placing.

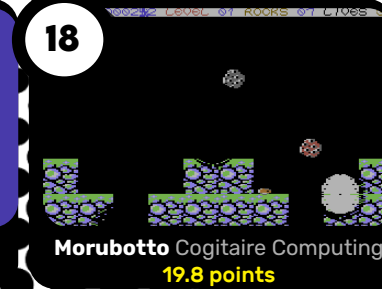
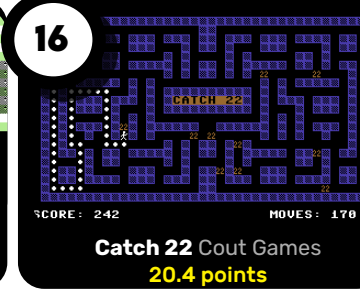
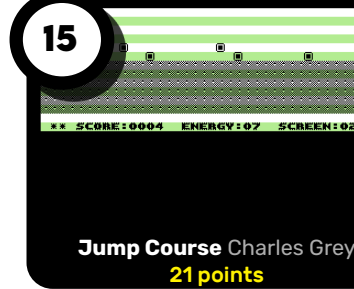
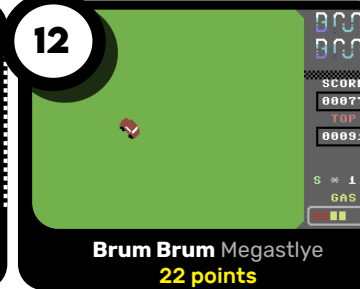
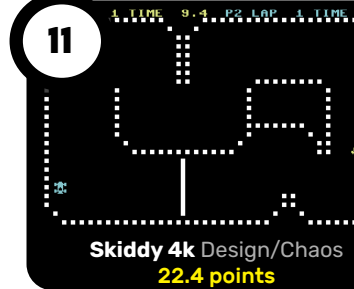
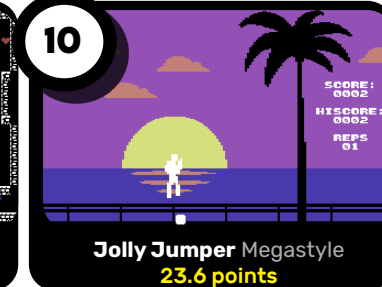
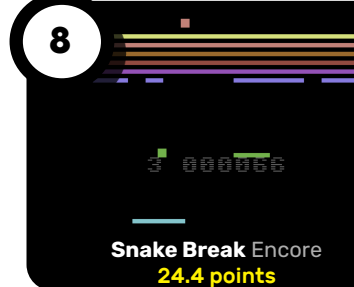
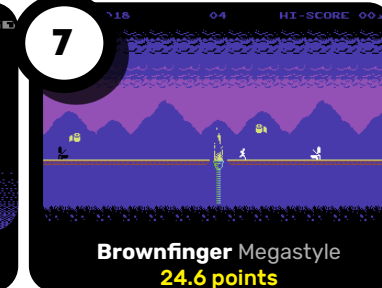
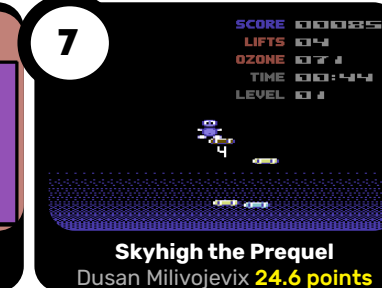
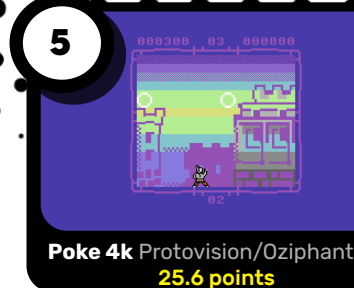
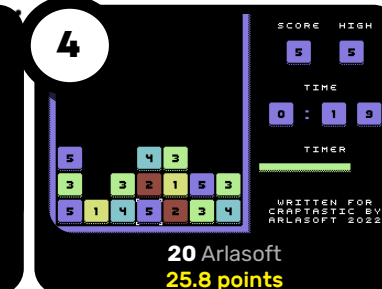
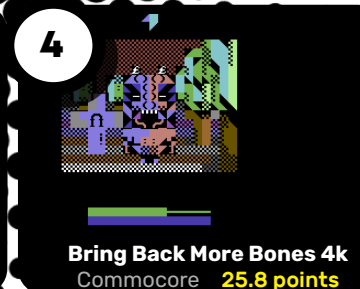
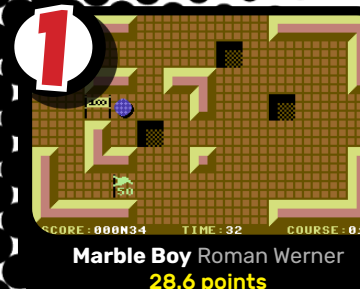
Thanks again to the compo sponsors - Beaver of the Black River (BoBR Games), Bitmap Books, Fusion Retro Books and BitmapSoft. Also, thank-you to our compo supporters; Ausretrogamer and Megastyle. Please pay their websites a visit and show them your support!

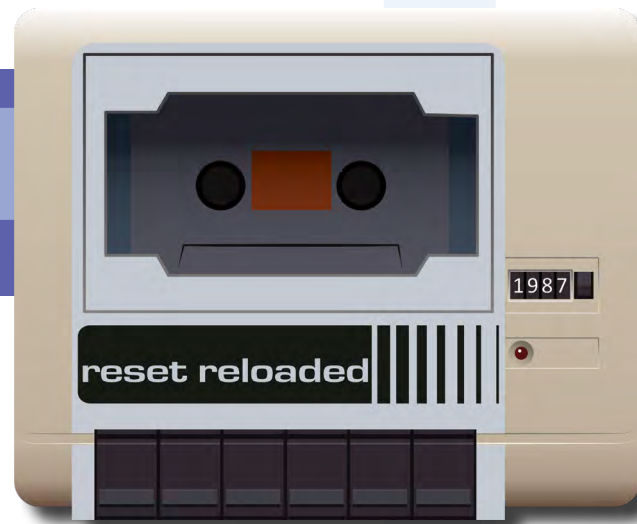
Judges' comments and more information about each game will be published online, via Ausretrogamer, in the near future. Until then, enjoy the games (the official compilation can be downloaded from the 2022 Craptastic page). Congratulations again to all of the entrants and winners. ■

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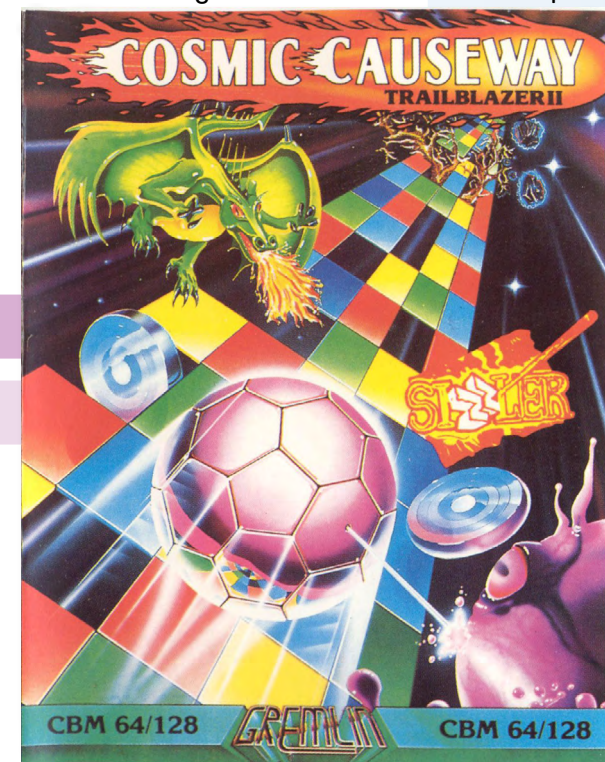
BACK 35 YEARS TO CHRISTMAS 1987

by Martin Grundy

The kids with Commodore 64s. Played Cosmic Causeway, Combat School and Tetris too, On Christmas Day!

The big Christmas Song of 1987 was Fairytale of New York by The Pogues. Sadly, there's no evidence that Shane McGowan was a C64 fan back in the day but if he was, I'm sure he'd appreciate this breadbin-inspired adaptation of his festive masterpiece.

Cosmic Causeway was one of many great games released just before Christmas 1987. A worthy sequel to Trailblazer, it looked, sounded and played even better than its predecessor. With stunningly fast 3D action and superb Space Harrier-influenced gameplay it was an absolute cracker. If only the superb Shaun Southern had got his hands on the official Space Harrier



conversion, who knows what would've transpired?

Also set deep in the cosmos, but moving at a much slower pace, was the atmospheric and absorbing Driller. A combination of exploring, puzzling and zapping, Driller's 3D world was stunning (despite being incredibly slow) and it was awarded a gigantic 96% Sizzler in the 1987 ZZAP! Christmas Special.

December '87 saw some great arcade conversions hit the C64. Combat School proved that there was still life in joystick waggling sports sims and its mix of running, shooting & beat 'em-up-ing was great fun. Activision delivered a solid conversion of the arcade fave Rampage, and official versions of Track and Field and Star Wars were released. The latter two were both good games but felt a bit old hat by 1987.

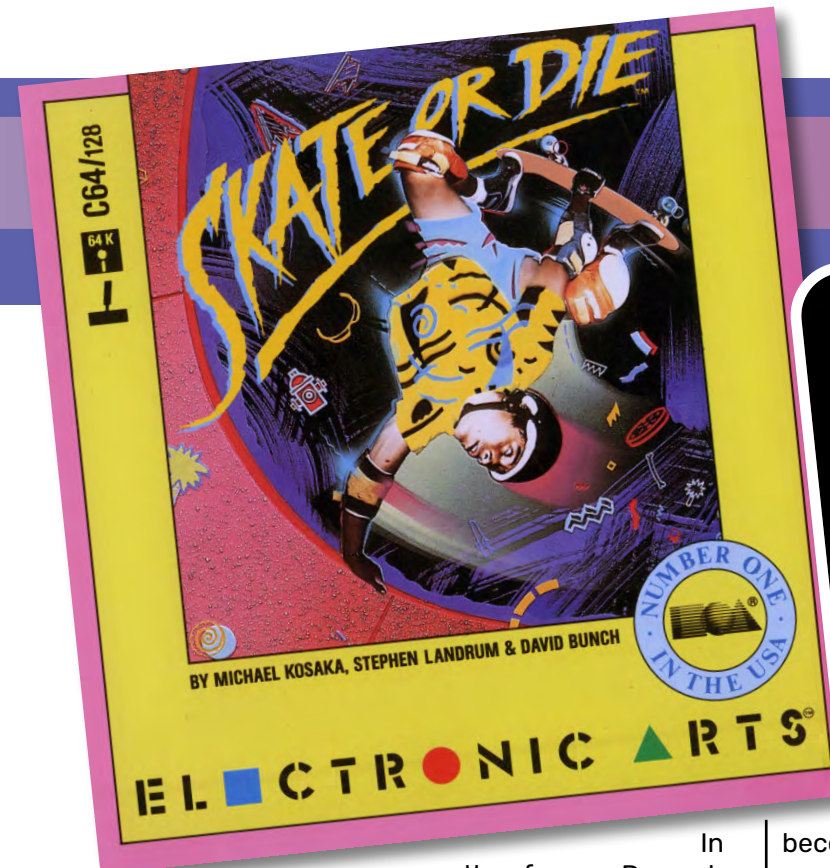
Speaking of licence games, the Inspector Gadget computer game sprang into the C64 scene in December '87. Abysmally designed, riddled with bugs and ridiculously easy, it was a huge disappointment and a massively missed opportunity. I loved the cartoon and was gutted. As were ZZAP! who scored it just 9%. Go-Go Gadget game. And don't come back.

Thankfully, a trio of terrific C64 games helped us get over the disappointment of Inspector Gadget.

Skate or Die was an awesome skateboarding title with superb graphics, ace music and instantly addictive and varied gameplay. One of the first commercially available versions of Tetris dropped onto the 64 with stunning music and ultra-addictive gameplay, and for gamers on a tight budget (or Santa's naughty list), Bulldog's Spore offered loads of addictive Gauntlet-esque action for less than 2 quid. While it lacked visual appeal Spore's gameplay was addictive as hell and it was duly awarded a whopping 97% Silver Medal in the ZZAP! Christmas Special.



COSMIC CAUSEWAY - Being a sequel, COSMIC CAUSEWAY couldn't really be considered as a trailblazer...



In the frozen December hinterland, beyond the C64 games world, the Pet Shop Boys beat The Pogues to the Christmas number one spot with their cover of Always on My Mind. The big Christmas TV movies were Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom and Ghostbusters and more than 26 million viewers tuned in to the Christmas Day episode of Coronation Street to watch Hilda Ogden make her last appearance in the show after 23 years.



SKATE OR DIE - EA's incredible skateboarding sim.

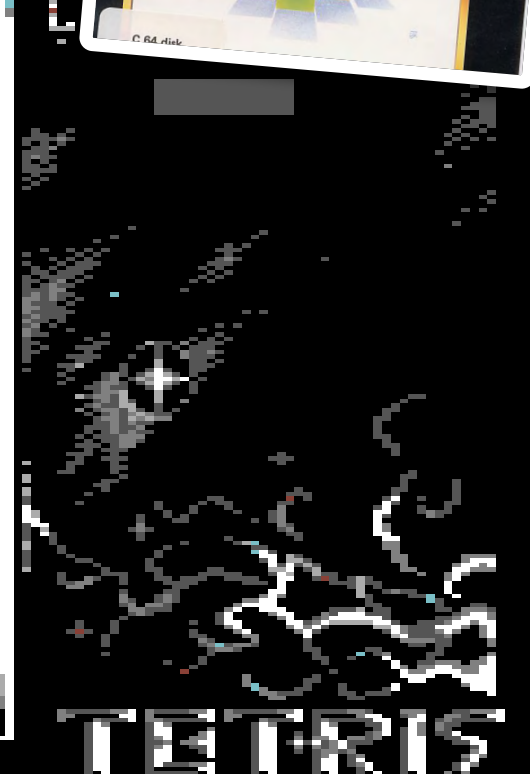
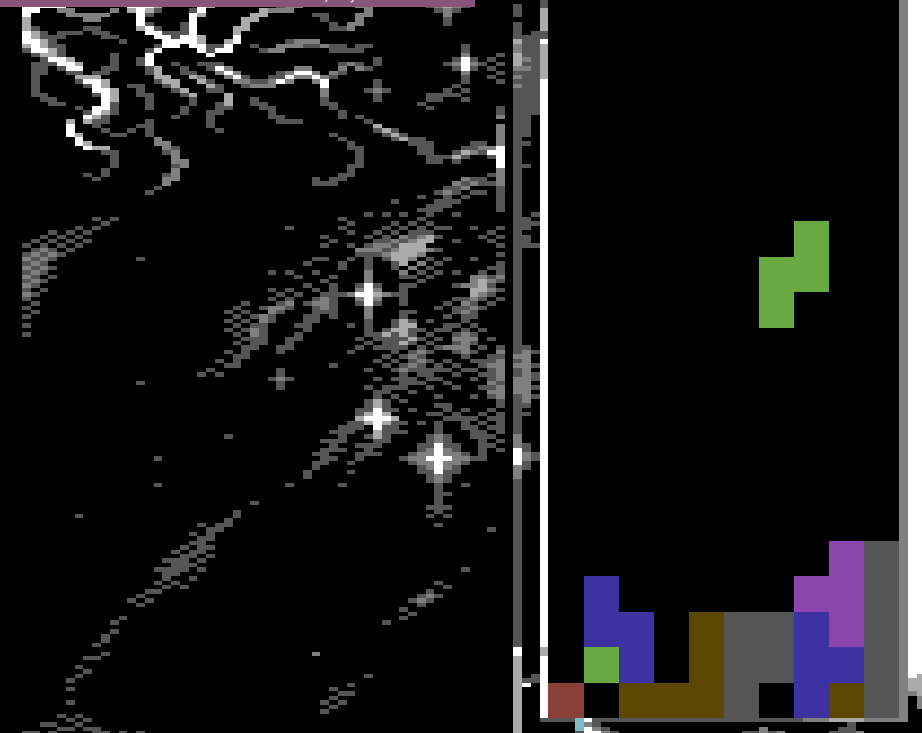
Meanwhile, at the cinema, Three Men and a Cradle, Fatal Attraction and The Running Man were pulling in the punters. The latter would become the subject of yet another sub-standard C64 movie tie-in game a year or so later.

So, time moved on in the C64 world, but some things didn't change.

See you next time. ■



THE MIGHTY & THE SHITEY
ABOVE LEFT - Melbourne House's miserable mishap, INSPECTOR GADGET & THE CIRCUS OF FEAR.
BELOW - Mirrorsoft's masterful version of Alexey Pajitnov's TETRIS.



soulless II THE ARMOUR OF GODS

IT'S BEEN A LONG, LONG TIME SINCE RIZEK WAS FREED FROM HIS BEASTLY IMPRISONMENT AND RECLAIMED HIS THRONE FROM THE EVIL WIZARD KALEN. AS TOLD IN THE ORIGINAL SOULLESS. THOUGH THINGS ARE AT PEACE, THE UNDERCURRENT OF FEAR FOR RIZEK REMAINS IN THE FORM OF HIS MANY MEMORIES OF HIS TIME AS A BEAST. BUT WHEN WORD ARRIVES THAT KALEN IS ON THE HUNT FOR THE HIDDEN ARMOUR OF THE GODS, RIZEK TAKES UP ARMS TO END KALEN'S THREATS ONCE AND FOR ALL, WHICH BRINGS US TO SOULLESS 2: THE ARMOUR OF THE GODS.

Rizek's quest will take him over four areas - starting out in a forest, before making his way to the temple where one of the armour sets is kept. After that, he'll need to journey through a vast cavern network before entering Rizek's temple to finally take him on and bring things to an end.

Each of these areas is contained in a separate load, and as Rizek enters each, progress will be saved allowing you to start a new session from the last area you reached.

Within each, Rizek's goal is to find a number of items before making his way to the exit. Along the way, he'll have to battle through hordes of enemies to find them. Each level is split up into flick screen rooms, containing enemies which will and won't respawn when cleaned out.

Each level also offers hidden crowns, which if found will add an extra life to Rizek's stock, and destroyed enemies can drop life or ammo pickups too.

Starting out, Rizek will be unarmed, but can acquire a pistol located somewhere within the forest. Upon working his way through the temple, he'll acquire the fabled armour, which provides more firepower, and the power of flight. Both of which he'll need as he ventures further into his quest.

Soulless 2 is available from Psytronik as either a digital download, or a physical release. The former includes both disk and cartridge images, whilst the physical version is available as either a disk release, or on a USB cassette containing the digital files.

I came relatively late to the first Soulless, really only getting into it with the revised 2021 edition. But enjoy it I did, so I was certainly interested in seeing how its follow-up would fare.

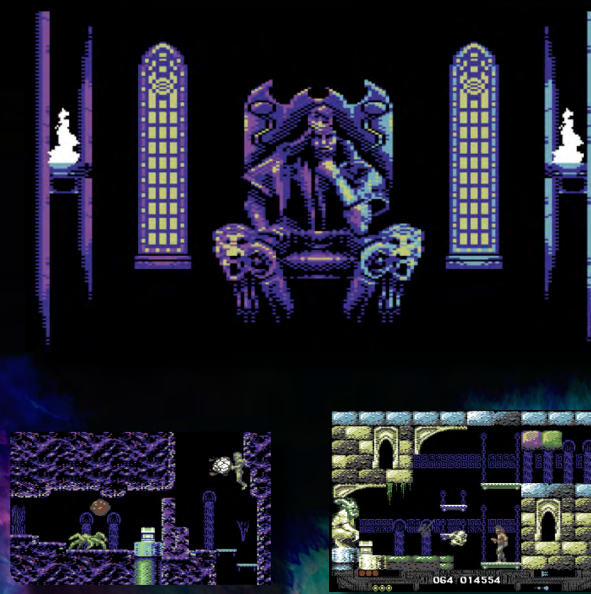
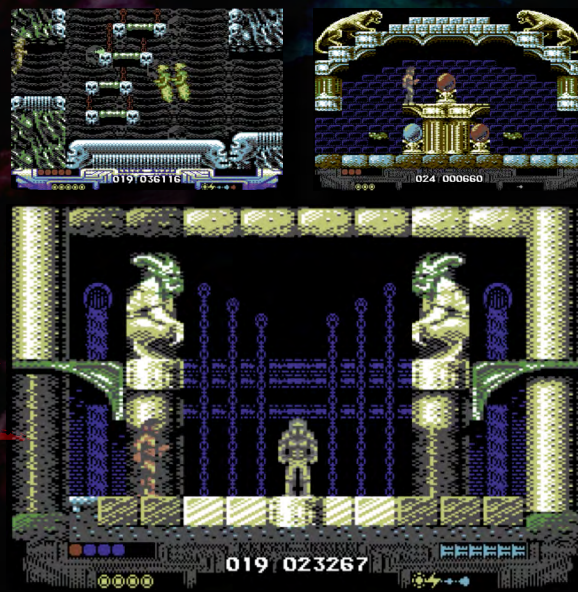
Sadly, it didn't live up to the first for me.

Part of that was down to how much the game felt padded out, which was particularly the case with the first level. The backtracking required to go from the switches to each key's chest got very old after obtaining the first few.

When combined with enemies offering randomised attack patterns, working my way through the first stage took way too many attempts that had I not been playing this for review, I'd have probably put it down.

The big let down is the armour's limited abilities - those being to fly and shoot. Once you finally acquire it in the second level, the first time you power it up just happens to feel like one big let down.

Which really sums up Soulless 2 for me - one big let down.



Soulless 2 had me hooked from the beginning. Featuring a cinematic style introduction, bright vibrant sprites with intricate hi-res backgrounds, atmospheric music soundtrack and a large game world that features over 80 minutes of game play. I thoroughly enjoyed the game.

Borrowing a whole lot of inspiration from the Sacred Amour of Antiriad, I found the game level design provided a good sense of progression and appreciated the shift in game play across its 4 substantial levels, each with their own distinctive look and feel.

Soulless 2 can be tricky to start off with as you jump your way around trying to avoid the nasty inhabitants with no weapon on hand. But once you locate the pistol, the difficulty balances out.

While Rob found Armour of the Gods capabilities to be disappointing, I enjoyed the sense of freedom you experience flying around with the suit - not to mention that the animation sequence when you transition in and out of the armour looks great.

For me Soulless 2 is an immersive and rewarding experience.



The hype train has finally rolled in and was it worth the wait? Yes but with some reservations. Briley Witch is a refreshing breeze wafting through the halls of the C64 gaming community. Its quaint and gentle approach to introducing itself to the player and its strong production values go well together to provide a positive first impression.

I was surprised that I connected with the story narrative given the target audience of the Briley novels and it's Sarah's storytelling that motivated me through to the end of the game.

However, the combat system is something that I can do without. I dislike random initiated turn based combat and I found this element within Briley to be tedious and disruptive, especially when melee attacks would miss on most occasions.



The game world is the perfect size and quests that don't rely much on grinding combat are enjoyable. The intuitive one button control mechanism and the reminder system are well implemented and go a long way to make Briley Witch feel like a professional grade title.



Briley Witch Chronicles was one of my most anticipated C64 releases ever and while it deviated from what I had expected, it delivers a unique and entertaining narrative-driven experience. It cleverly adapts SJA's first four books in the series into a series of roughly four hour chapters, each expanding in scope and scale.

The writing retains the brisk young adult novel flavor, but progression can at times be bogged down by failing to remember key locations. There's a terrific reminder system in place in case you forget what you're supposed to be doing, but remembering where things are is still a responsibility of the player.

My original principal complaint of the game was in the futility of melee combat, which forced you to heavily rely on magic attacks. Thankfully that was addressed in one of the many subsequent post-release updates that the game received, as SJA has feverently worked to incorporate feedback. The game is absolutely worth your time and I can not wait to see what she has in store for the sequels!



BRILEY WITCH CHRONICLES

Coming home to your faithful cat after a stressful day at work, all you want to do is to make a nice cup of tea, light a candle and meditate your troubles away. Sounds like a nice relaxing way to settle in for the evening right? Well, not if you're Briley Forester and you find yourself torn away from the world you know and dumped into the backward village of Maepole.

After a stop/start development period of in excess of four years, Sarah Jane Avory has delivered her highly anticipated story-driven Japanese inspired RPG - The Briley Witch Chronicles. The game loosely follows the first four Briley Witch fiction books authored by Sarah, focusing on Briley and her cat Smokey as they try to survive life in pagan times.

Starting as a slave working for the Baxter family, Briley undertakes simple errands as she explores Maepole and meets many of the locals. It is not long before Briley is introduced to the notion that she may be more than just an ordinary girl and is given an ancient grimoire to help her learn the powers of witchcraft.

Completing various side tasks within Maepole and other nearby locations will often reward Briley with experience and useful items. Experience is also acquired via combat, which is turn-based, with attack and defense strategies formed using physical weapons or attributes along with magical potions.

As Briley builds up her witchcraft, she can conjure magical spells starting from the basic healing and extending out to powerful elemental attacks. Collecting herbs and other key items will also allow Briley to create different types of potions to help her with her quests.

But not everyone in Maepole will tolerate the emergence of another witch within the village. The powerful Whitehead family have an eternal hatred of witches and they will plot, connive and manipulate to get rid of Briley and others of her kind.

And then there is the dark spirit lurking within the deep forest, ready to strike and take revenge. Can Briley find the strength to overcome the odds against her?



Developer
Witchsoft

Game credits

Programming, graphics, and sound
Sarah Jane Avory.

Sprite portraits, additional sprites,
and bitmap touch-up
Paolo Rathjen



Illustration Del Seymour
Inspired by Sarah Jane Avory

Lykia

the lost island

In a dark and mystic evening, a sisterhood of seven druids gather in a forest on the isle of Lykia to partake in an ancient ritual. Unfortunately, things don't go as planned and their magic escapes beyond their control sending lost souls out across the universe to a new location. Where do they end up and what consequences will this have to the balance of the new world? That is for you to uncover in Puls4r's latest Commodore 64 production – Lykia: The Lost Island.

Lykia is a casual paced open world adventure game depicted within a top-down perspective. Our teenage protagonist Nora sees her world turned upside down on her 16th birthday when she accidentally triggers a magical event, while out on an errand for her mother, that results in people in her village disappearing.

The player is initially given minimal direction as to their objective but with a little guidance from Nora's friend, Gomez, the story narrative gradually unfolds. As the game progresses, Nora begins to realize that she is no ordinary girl and that she is somehow connected to all the extraordinary events that are taking place and that it is up to her to restore things back in order.

Nora's adventures take her on a journey through a number of lands and environments. Her interactions with the local inhabitants will trigger quests - which will typically entail searching for people or objects, solving puzzles, and helping out with various errands, all while making new friends.

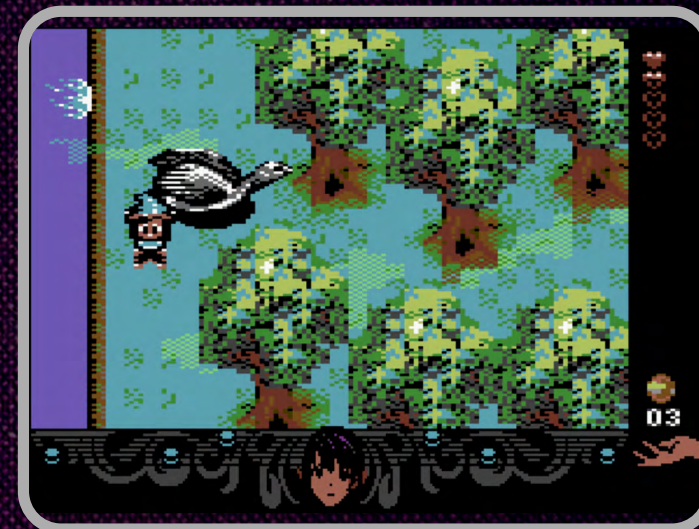
The second half of the game takes place in the vast continent of Rybola. Here, Nora will ride from one location to another on horseback to perform her various quests. The difficulty increases with the introduction of magical monsters, random occurring real time combat sequences and trial/error puzzle sequences.

It is in Rybola that the player starts to understand Nora's true objective – sending the lost magical souls back to where they came from. To complete this task, Nora will need to use her wit to go beyond the Dark Tower and overcome the challenges that lie within the land overtaken by darkness.



I love the SNES aesthetic and female protagonist Nora. I was drawn in by the story despite some problems trying to emulate RAM Expansion. The dialogue system is easy to follow and the inventory screen works well. Playing the Prologue (Nathan's Journey) helped me understand even more, including the navigator item that shows possible exits (indicated by arrows at the screen edges when equipped, or using the handy shortcut key X). The extended palette of the Plus/4 makes the graphics look even better. The day/night cycle and floating clouds really add to the atmosphere.

The game world is vast, spreading across multiple disks and evoking a real sense of place. While the immediate comparison would be Legend of Zelda, this is more adventure than action as the emphasis is on using objects in the right place. Take your time and enjoy every moment. Accessible to newcomers with its hint system and deep enough to challenge experienced players, this is a fine slice of roleplaying.



From the moment I saw the opening intro to Lykia, I was absolutely blown away. The animation, and the detail really sets you up for an exciting adventure.

And Lykia certainly brings that in spades. I really enjoyed the general exploration, along with the mysteries and puzzles of the dungeons. The moment to moment gameplay is really solid, and the amount of tools and tricks in Nora's backpack really makes for some neat gameplay.

Where things struggle for me is with the way the story is delivered. There were plenty of points where I'd complete a quest to help out one character, and find that there was no hook as to where I should be going next.

While I'm thankful for the in-built hint system, I did find it a tad obtuse at times, which left me more confused than it should be.

Lykia offers something we've not really seen on the C64, an expansive action/adventure game channeling the best of those console classics, even if it's a tad obtuse at times.





DEV INTERVIEW

STEFAN MADER

INTERVIEWED BY LOUIE DIMOVSKI

Stefan Mader is not a name that anyone outside of the C64 coding scene will instantly recognise. Having spent a number of years on the PC demo scene and developing games across multiple platforms, including the Playstation title Tunnel B1 with Chris Huelsbeck, Stefan turned his interest to the Commodore machines in 2006 with his C64 game concept, Bugs in Buggyland, inspired by Mayhem in Monsterland. Alas, Stefan's interest in the land of Commodore would shift to the Plus/4, a machine with superior color capabilities, where he would then (with his fellow Puls4r team members) proceed to push the platform to its full capabilities with great titles such as Pets Rescue, Slipstream and AlphaRay.

On the verge of completing development on Lykia: The Lost Island, Louie Dimovski caught up with Stefan to reflect back upon the journey of creating a Zelda style game without any evil protagonists.

LOUIE Hi Stefan, thank you so much for agreeing to be interviewed for this issue. The team here at Reset are great admirers of your work.

STEFAN Wow great, nice to be here. So, what's up guys?

LOUIE Well, we have been busy putting together this great RPG themed edition of Reset while playing through your latest project, Lykia: The Lost Island, which will be released on both the Commodore 64 and Plus/4 platforms.

You have built up a reputation for being a cutting-edge coder for the Plus/4. Is there something about the machine that attracts you over the other Commodore machines?

STEFAN Actually, I started on the C64 as a coder as a youth. I discovered the Plus/4 only recently after doing some C64 demos. Degauss (a famous Plus/4 coder) instructed me on the basics of Plus/4 tech. The thing that stood out most for me about the Plus/4 was being able to display 121 colors at the same time in bitmap mode. Actually, I had a "career" as a PC-4k and PC-demo coder beforehand and I am a very visually oriented coder. If I could, I would do some Neo Geo stuff,



ABOVE - LYKIA's rather gorgeous title screen.

but that's not really 8 bit at all and maybe not so much of a challenge.

LOUIE That's quite interesting, we weren't aware of your history outside of the Commodore environment.

Your recent titles have been released under the Puls4r banner. The team seems to consist of many talented individuals. Who are they? Do they share your passion for the Plus/4?

STEFAN Actually Puls4r was formerly "Plus 4 Allstars" with former "Bauknecht" members. However, more people have joined in the process. Bauknecht was a PC Demogroup and we did some C64 demos first.

After switching to Plus/4, Degauss, Nero and I were the "residents" for a long time. Afterwards, Plus/4 graphics legend Kichy joined, then 5starbuck also joined as a TED musician. This seems to be the core team now, albeit Nero and Degauss mostly do other stuff.

As for Lykia, Kichy, 5starbuck, Olaf Nowacki and I did the core work for the Plus/4 version and c0zmo (awesome C64 musician) teamed up to do the C64 tunes.

LOUIE Having played through your latest project - Lykia: The Lost Island, we are simply amazed at what you have been able to pull off on both the Plus/4 and C64 versions of the game. How did Lykia come about? Who is behind the game concept?

STEFAN Ah.. Yeah so.. We just wanted to do a Zelda like game at the beginning. However, the Plus/4 limitations didn't leave so much room for fighting, since we were limited to having just four or so sprites visible at once without impacting overall performance.

A core design decision we made at the beginning was that we wanted to do a very quest heavy game, rather than focussing on fighting sequences. I started working on the first continent (first disk side) in the game with Kichy. However, he was constantly suggesting that we work with a proper storywriter on the game as Lykia is intended to be a more 'pacifistic' game and we had some difficulty trying to tell a story with a limited number of evil characters in the game. Olaf Nowacki, a text adventure author from Germany, joined the team when the "we need a proper writer" pressure reached its peak. I was pretty happy that he fully understood the 'pacifistic' notion of the game

We just wanted to do a Zelda like game at the beginning. However, the Plus/4 limitations didn't leave so much room for fighting..



ABOVE - C16/Plus 4 blaster ALPHARAY and BELOW - platform chaos in the shape of PETS RESCUE - both coded by Stephan.



and that he also was happy to write the many quests to be included in the game.

The first continent got a lot of refinement by Olaf and the second continent's quests and NPCs were mostly thought out and structured by Olaf. Actually, Olaf is the main force behind the overall story!

LOUIE That is quite impressive as there is quite a bit of a story to tell within Lykia.

You don't usually port your games across to the C64. Why did you decide to do so this time with Lykia?

STEFAN The thing is, my biggest fear about that is getting involved in some sort of platform war. Some of our other games would have looked worse on C64, due to missing colours and some features of the Plus/4 that could not be used (full double buffering and bitmap scrolling without possible DMA errors on C64).

I really would love to do an original C64 game and use all of the platform's awesome features to the max, but our last games were too tightly bound to the Plus/4's capabilities. The C64 version of Lykia was somehow born out of the distress of not receiving assets for the Plus/4 version by the other people in the team. So I chose to spend around a month porting the game engine to C64 instead of waiting. Lykia is not so strictly bound to the capabilities of the Plus/4 since we don't use scrolling and I think it even looks very good using the C64 color palette. I was hoping that c0zmo would be able to elevate the C64 version from the musical side and I think he delivered. The only thing which is a bit sad for me is that the intro couldn't use bitmap scrolling on C64

LOUIE Nevertheless, the introduction to the game is simply spectacular. Was this difficult to code on the

C64?

STEFAN Oh yeah.. I didn't think that it would be so complicated. First thing was having it all in charset mode, which means you have to keep track of around 6 charsets, for both scroll directions. At the start, I had intended to have 8 sprites for the text lines over the scroll area. After noticing that it is impossible to do that (at least on NTSC), I reduced it to 7 sprites, but at one point in the intro there was still one flicker left. Maybe that can get fixed? The vector movie player itself was not so much of a problem. However, on the C64 I had to use a full sprite overlay over the charsets, because white is not one of the charset's intrinsic colors. The movie itself is rendered in Blender, it's really awesome that today there are such possibilities.

LOUIE Lykia does have some impressive graphical effects. Was it difficult to implement things like floating cloud shadows and being able to walk behind objects?

STEFAN On C64 it really was more of a problem to do that. Actually having a multiplexer with 24 sprites and having all sprites sorted and masked with the background really was somehow a bit of a challenge. The game itself was never designed to run at a 100% fluid framerate. On the C64 this whole design approach somehow crumbled as the sprite painting is done on the fly and thus the game runs much faster. Actually, working on Lykia is the first time I really tried to do memory optimised code. On previous occasions I optimized for speed. Actual memory was the biggest challenge this time.

LOUIE Did Lykia's game design change much during the course of development? Did you ever find having to change things to make game play more accessible?



STEFAN Ah...good that you ask.. Actually the whole game was almost complete when we gave it to you for testing (uh oh, this sounds like trouble - Kev) (Hey what do you mean? - Louie) and you know what followed. There were around 100 points in the game to be changed! I am really happy that we got so much professional help and inspiration in this process (Hah! See nothing to worry about Kev - Louie).

One thing that you and most other testers experienced was feeling completely lost at the start of the game.

LOUIE Yes, I do vividly remember thinking that the game was still early in development as I was having some trouble getting the game to open up. I felt somewhat foolish when you told me that the game was near complete. Once you explained the game to me, it all made sense.

STEFAN Well I didn't think that people would get the joystick and run around without carefully examining every room, drawing physical maps and so on. I totally miscalculated the difficulty level of the game in its original state! Luckily we changed a few things around.

One big change was to add an entity called "Clouseau" who can be activated by pressing <F1> in the game. Clouseau tells the player what to do at the next point (or even in the current room) to finish the remaining quests. But beware Clouseau will only help you on the first disc, so maybe the "completely lost" experience might follow some players when they reach the second continent. But at least Lykia features save points so it should be completable in one way or another.

LOUIE What were some of the more technical challenges that you came up against in porting Lykia across to the C64?

STEFAN Mostly the memory layout. On Plus/4 you have all the memory from \$0000 - \$fd00. On C64 there are always some sort of blind spots in between the memory range. I really had to fight a bit with a depth sorted multiplexer. Lykia really needs perfectly sorted sprites since, as an example, Nora alone consists of 3 combined sprites. Since we didn't do the game with multiplexing directly into account I also had to look for sprite flickering a lot, so I wouldn't be surprised if there are still some small flickers left in some places. The frame rate is sometimes a little low but not much can be done about that I think as the game is extremely optimised for memory and not so much for speed.



LOUIE Following its initial game trailer reveal and showcase preview videos, Lykia quickly became one of the most anticipated titles for 2022. How do you feel about the reception the game has received prior to its release?

STEFAN Honestly, the first response we got prior to the trailer was devastatingly negative. I jokingly said to Olaf that maybe this is a sign that we really did a good game. Even some team members were negative about the game overall in the process (I think because of the pacifism aspect) and some people I asked didn't want to test the game for whatever reason!

But yeah I am extremely happy with all the responses now. It seems it pays to stay on the straight way and don't listen to anybody telling you otherwise. The work we did with you on Retro Gamer Nation really pushed the game forward and I can't be more happy with all the people commenting on the trailer and on the RGN special feature. We even got featured in some of the most prolific gaming magazines.

LOUIE Ah, it's really nice of you to say that. I really enjoyed working together in presenting Lykia in the best light possible. So are there any plans for more Puls4r titles for the C64?

STEFAN Next game will most probably be a 256kb racing game for the Plus/4. If all goes well, we will also do a full graphics adventure at some point in the future.

LOUIE Oh wow! Plus/4 owners really have some great things to look forward to.

Once Lykia is released, what is it that you hope gamers will appreciate the most about the game? Is there an underlying message that you hope people will pick up upon?

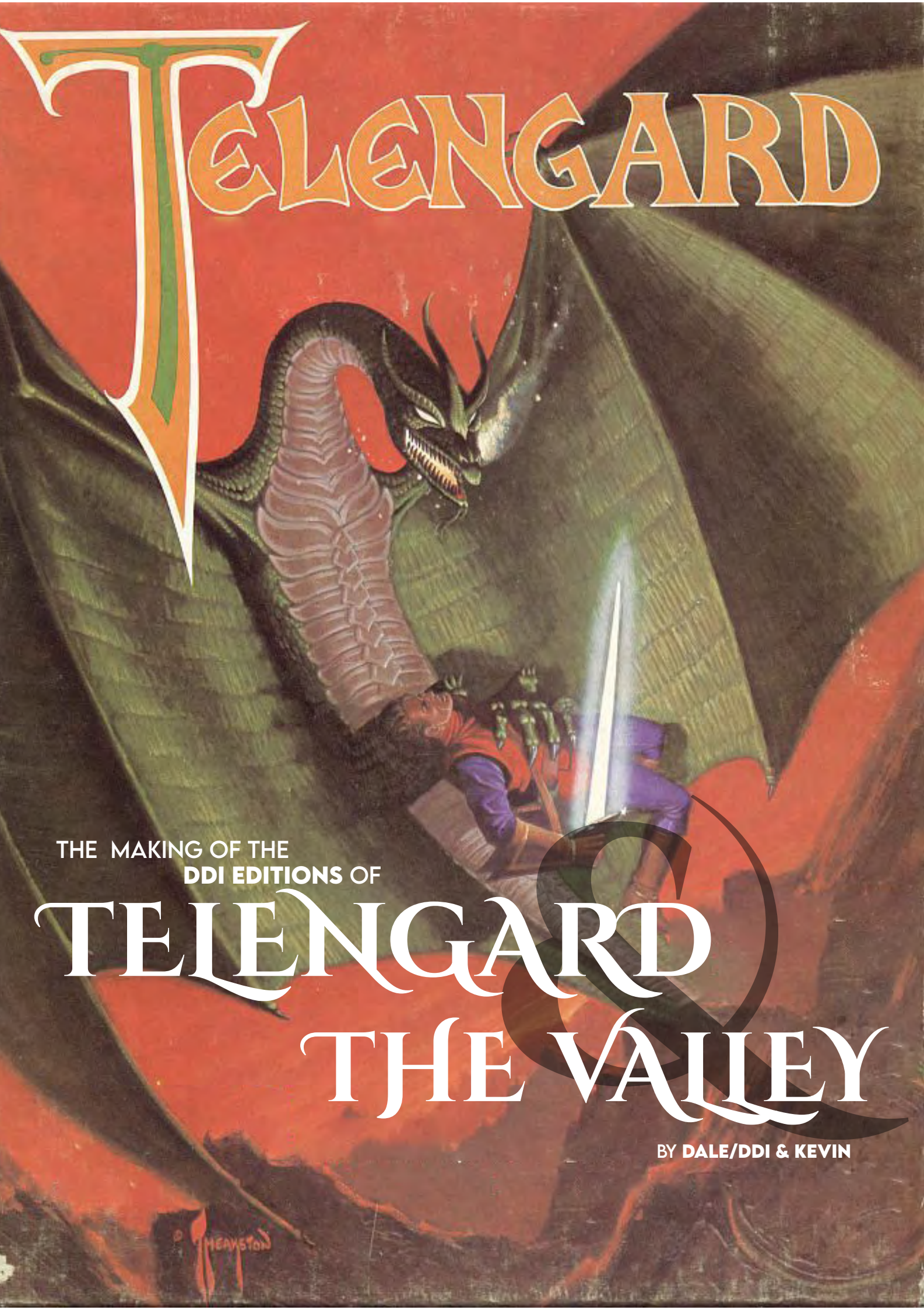
STEFAN Actually the deepest message in the game is that you will succeed even if you don't know anything about what's actually happening around you and why. I think the message the game conveys is a big part of "rejoining what belongs together". Honestly, I hope people will somehow appreciate the immaturity and naive childhood fairytale-like experiences in the game, there is much to discover.

LOUIE Well thank you so much for your time, Stefan. It has been great speaking to you and we wish you all the best with the release of Lykia and your future titles.

STEFAN Wow thanks.. All the best to you, too! ■

...the first response we got prior to the trailer was devastatingly negative. I jokingly said to Olaf that maybe this is a sign that we really did a good game.

ABOVE - part of the incredible introductory sequence from LYKIA.



DALE FROM DUNGEON DWELLERS INC. PRESENTS US LUCKY MORTALS THE STORY BEHIND HIS C64 REVISIONS OF THE CLASSIC RPG TELENGARD, AND THE SLIGHTLY MORE OBSCURE THE VALLEY. TAKE IT AWAY, DALE...

DDI TELENGARD

Telengard got its start back in the late 70's, in the era of mainframe computing and the cherished times of all night AD&D sessions, well before computer gaming took the world by storm. TSR published Dungeons & Dragons in the mid 70's, and it wasn't long after that strategy games started to appear on mainframe systems, usually written clandestinely, and implemented without the permissions of system admins. It was in these simpler days that Telengard was derived from early mainframe based dungeon crawlers. One such early CRPG was Dungeon, coded by the talented Dan Lawrence on mainframe systems at Purdue, and subsequently ported to his new CBM PET micro as Telengard. Avalon Hill, primarily a war game publisher at the time, had started offering computer based strategy gaming for home computers, with Telengard being among its first software titles published for the PET and other micros of the day. In 1982, my high school created a new computer lab consisting of CBM PET systems. There were a handful of games in the lab, public domain mostly, and among them was Telengard. I was mesmerized! How cool it was to be dungeon crawling on this new wonder of a machine called a CBM PET. By 1983, Telengard was published for the C64 and became one of the first games

in my collection. Countless hours were spent slaying, hoarding and plumbing the depths of the Telengard dungeon ... once you enter, you never leave.

As thoroughly engaging as Telengard was for a fast D&D fix, there were a rather large number of situations that caused screen elements to get misaligned, requiring annoying manual re-plots of the screen often. There were also a large number of redundancies for spells, and shallow logic implemented, with character attributes contributing very little to game play. Telengard was clearly a fun game, but it had the feel of being rushed, with a lot of rough edges yet to smooth and game concepts needing further development. Slowly a project took form back in the mid to late 80's to correct and perfect Telengard, without deviating too far from its original design. Over the course of several years, features were casually added and code improvements made. Several more years went by with the C64 seeing very little attention, as college, a new career and family were the priorities of the day. As fate would have it, my enhanced Telengard work disk would become the crumpled play thing of my six month old. All my extensive efforts over the years to code a more perfect Telengard were lost. Discouraged, I resigned my ambitions for improving Telengard, and didn't expect to resurrect the project again.

In 2010, I was pleasantly surprised to come across an old backup disk that had much of my early Telengard work. Within a few years, I resumed the task of perfecting Telengard, with an aim to implement my enhanced version on a cartridge. However, very little of the early program edits were used, as it became clear a better handling of the code was needed to implement everything I wanted to. The Avalon Hill release of



ABOVE - DDI Telengard was released as a bootleg cartridge, complete with a pouch of jewels to get you started on your quest!



OTHER MODIFIED C64 RPG'S PT.1

Kevin takes a quick look at some other modified or converted RPGs that have appeared on the C64 scene in recent years.

ULTIMA SERIES

Ultima III Gold <https://paradroid.automac.se/u3/>

Ultima IV Gold <https://paradroid.automac.se/u4/>

Ultima IV Remastered <http://magervalp.github.io/2015/03/30/u4-remastered.html>

Ultima V Remastered <https://csdb.dk/release/?id=187483>

The first six games of Richard Garriott's classic and hugely influential Ultima series were released on the C64. Of these, Ultima III, IV and V have been extensively reworked and released by various teams on the C64 in recent times.

Ultima 3 Gold and Ultima 4 Gold, released by MagerValp, arrived to enthusiastic praise in 2007 and 2006 respectively (Ultima IV Gold was actually the first to appear). These disk only editions (including 1581 versions) have both been optimised, bugfixed, had their copy protections removed and also feature companion websites with online editions of the full documentation, maps, reference cards and novellas. They really are impressive packages with an absolute bucket load of work done underneath the hood to retain the integrity and appearance of the original releases, but with the enhancements necessary to make the games much more playable. As a bonus, the games come with extensive trainers to help you along the way and are also SCPU compatible, for that extra boost in speed, should you own that hardware device. Very impressive indeed.

MegaValp later on led the development of Ultima IV remastered, released in 2015 by scene group Genesis Project. The edition is an extension of Ultima IV Gold and is a true remaster in every sense. It contains more fixes, enhanced graphics by Mermaid and also includes an EasyFlash cartridge image in the download package. The enhanced graphics really are a sight to behold, with extensive reworking of the intro graphics and dungeon tilesets. Under the hood, the game flies, with the engine being extensively overhauled (inclusive of the super fast EasyFlash data access) as well as various fixes to the dialogue and in-game bugs that were present in the original. Once again, the game has been trained, with an assortment of in-game keys added as a bonus.

Ultima V Remastered, released by Drunella in 2020, isn't quite the comprehensive package of the Gold releases or Ultima IV Remastered, but is still impressive nonetheless, thanks to the speedboost of data access offered by the EasyFlash cartridge format. Perhaps mistitled as a full remaster, this edition is certainly much more playable than the original and also includes music while playing the game. Unfortunately, a list of changes/fixes wasn't included with the game and the author admits that it also hasn't gone through extensive testing, so bugs may still exist. Still, Ultima V Remastered is a fine release and possibly the best way to play Ultima V on the C64.

Telengard was written primarily in BASIC, and uses most of the free memory, leaving very little left for enhancements. A great deal of code optimization was required to reclaim as much memory as possible, with some assembly code being added as well to get things done. An intensive four months coding effort ensued, breaking down the entire lengthy listing into functional sections, and getting intimate with each, making each section as concise and effective as possible, and injecting new features into ever tighter blocks of code.

In the original Telengard, there are several spells that simply don't do much and feel redundant. So a few spells were replaced with new ones, and some advanced such as Ultra Vision that enhances the Light spell and reveals the features in adjacent dungeon cells. To do this required an analysis of the complex algorithmic code that generates Telengard's massive dungeon. There is no large data file that defines the 50 level dungeon, rather the dungeon cells that fill the screen are calculated and mapped out during movement,

creating a staggering two million cell dynamically generated static dungeons within just a few lines of code. Another advanced spell that was added is Arcane Sight, which provides colorful dungeon coordinates nicely plotted within the three column blank area to the left of the dungeon layout on the screen, along with the fabled Sceptre that shows when a character is within 50 cells of finding it. To implement this feature in the form of a new spell, Telengard's screen handling for graphic data was analyzed and modified to provide control for drawing the coordinate data and PETSCII graphics in this area of the screen via new ML routines.

Nearly all of the original Telengard BASIC code was reworked or rewritten to resolve all re-plot issues, add new spells, new logic, a quest feature to find a valuable hidden sceptre, new creative text for encounters, and numerous other enhancements. Among these are a cache of new spells, a new mapping command, real time screen updates for active spells, highlights for hit and spell points in melee, game pausing, expanded

saved game data, new text and spell effects, new help page, new mapping page, new navigational graphics, display of saved characters, game pause, listing of saved characters, and quite a bit more. Nearly every fix and enhancement I had in mind over the span of 30 years was achieved. The end result is a refined and perfected version of Telengard that offers much more depth and richer game play. Implementing this jewel as a fast loading CPR3 cartridge was a crowning achievement for the project.

DDI THE VALLEY

The Valley is another early computer RPG game I came across by chance while sifting through all the small text adventures published by The Guild Adventure Software. The Valley was so poorly written that I initially dismissed it as a game worth looking at. However, I did go back and have a closer look, made a few screen fixes and one-filed the game. I almost dropped interest there, however there was something about the game play that reminded me of Telengard. I then had a look at other versions of The Valley for the C64, and realized that The Guild Adventure Software version was by far the best, and perhaps the only decent effort at a commercial version, if not broken, poorly implemented, bug ridden, and incomplete. So I then took the task much further, fixing several bugs, expanding the game, creating a nice ending, and adding many new features. This was released in 2015 and I nearly left it at that. I then took the project much further with more fixes and enhancements, and creating two custom cartridges for the game. The amount of added code and features compared to the original is extensive, with game play that now works well, is a lot of fun, well balanced, implementing this special RPG as a game that can now be won.



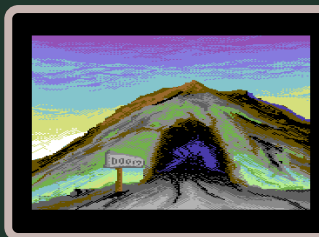
ABOVE - SCREENSHOTS FROM TELENGARD

OTHER MODIFIED C64 RPG'S PT.2

AKALABETH: WORLD OF DOOM

<https://csdb.dk/release/?id=149981>

Akalabeth: World of Doom is a lovingly produced remake of Richard Garriott's 1979 Apple II Ultima precursor. The C64 remake is a very close copy of the original (speed included), although a faster compiled BASIC version of the game has also been released by scene group Genesis Project. The initial edition (before publication by California Pacific Computer Company) of the Apple II release is considered a holy grail for Ultima collectors and is astonishingly rare. It features very basic packaging and is hand numbered, with only a few copies actually produced and likely given out to friends and family of Richard at the time. The C64 version, produced in 2016 by Dungeoneer Games & Simulations, was also released in a limited physical edition that mirrors the original packaging, consisting of a clear plastic bag, disk & label as well as a few other cards. It too was released in very limited quantities, with one copy apparently being sent to Richard Garriott himself.





OTHER MODIFIED C64 RPG'S PT.3

DEMONS OF DEX

<https://csdb.dk/release/?id=150286>

Demons of Dex is an enhanced remake of the contemporary petSCII VIC20 roguelike of the same name, which was designed and coded by Petri Häkkinen and released in 2015. The C64 remake, released in 2016 by Digital Monastery/Hokuto Force contains enhanced graphics and sound, as well as various bug fixes and other improvements. All in all, it is a great conversion of an impressive VIC20 title. Unfortunately, controversy surrounded the release when Petri became upset that the game was ported without his approval/permission and that he and other team members were not credited correctly. It's a shame, because the C64 conversion really does the VIC20 original justice and actually beats it in just about every way.

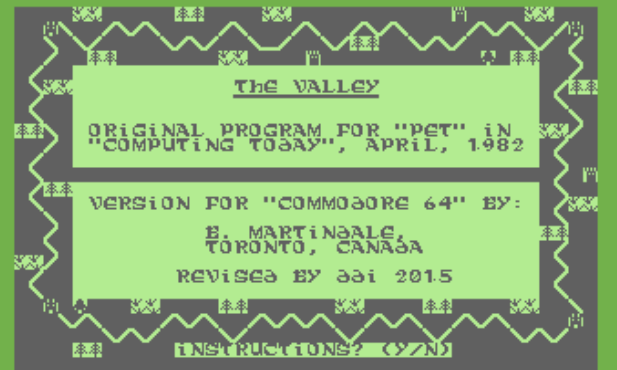


The Valley was initially published as a programming exercise in a British magazine back in the spring of 1982 called Computing Today, and comes from a time when computer gaming was very new. It wasn't even a complete type in program, but more of a modular BASIC program concept that could be coded on any micro. The first working version of The Valley was initially coded on a CBM PET by the staff who had written the article, with some commercial versions of the game appearing later that year for several micros, all with varying degrees of poor game play, and none offering an ending to the game. The Valley does have a wonderful background story attached to the game in the original Computing Today article that is quite lengthy for a game that was not yet a game. This original story was added to the DDI cartridge version of The Valley. A nice intro screen was also created for the cartridge version.

The cartridge version of The Valley implements detailed graphics of the Helm of Evanna and Amulet of Alarian, along with its seven gemstones as LEDs, that must be found to win the game. Code was added to The Valley to illuminate the corresponding LED whenever an artifact is found. Once all artifacts are found, a group of blue LEDs on the back of the cartridge will then pulsate, indicating the game is nearly won. At this point in the game, the character will be high in the Tower of Zaexon and will need to make it out alive and back to one of the castles. A large cast of monsters infest the swamps and lairs, the forests and temples, the lakes and the land between the castles. This horde of mayhem will need to be dealt with to gain enough experience and rank to win as well.

The Valley, being originally coded on the PET, used the PET's number pad for movement. All versions of The Valley for the C64 share this unnatural number key movement, as the C64 does not offer a number pad. However, code was added to the cartridge version of The Valley to enable support for the C128's keypad in C64 mode so The Valley can be played as it was originally meant to be. Both cartridges were designed to be very thin, and fit within an 8mm tape case, along with box artwork on the front, and an image of the 1982 Computing Today cover on the back. Laser etched transparent purple acrylic and custom PCB case pieces were designed for The Valley cartridge, with beautiful game artwork on the PCBs for both versions. The Valley cartridge is an exquisite digital work of art that breathes new life into a very special early RPG that would otherwise have faded away into obscurity. ■

BELOW - SCREENSHOTS FROM THE VALLEY



BELOW - the DDI custom The Valley cartridge.



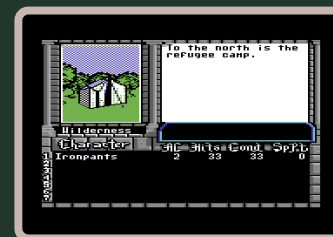
OTHER MODIFIED C64 RPG'S PT.4

ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS GOLD BOX SERIES

<https://csdb.dk/group/?id=146>

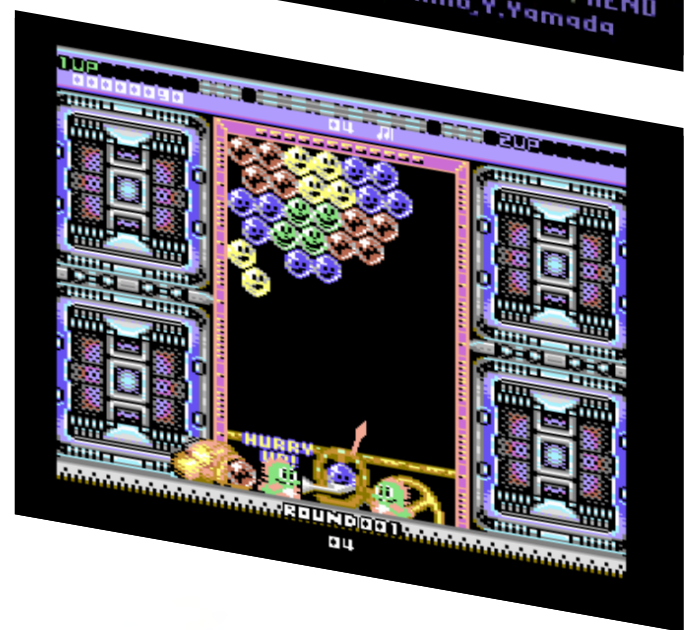
Scene group Nostalgia have released EasyFlash cartridge versions of five of the hugely popular SSI Advanced Dungeons & Dragons Gold Box games in the last few years. These include the first three games of the Pools of Radiance Forgotten Realms series (the fourth, Pools of Darkness, was never released on the C64); Pool of Radiance (1988), Curse of the Azure Bonds (1989) and Secret of the Silver Blades (1990). In addition, they have also released EasyFlash editions of the two Dragonlance games that made it to the C64 (The Dark Queen of Krynn didn't make a C64 appearance); Champions of Krynn (1990) and Death Knights of Krynn (1991). Although not enhanced, these games benefit greatly from the fast data access of the EasyFlash cartridge format, making them much more playable. The original games were all spread across multiple disks, with very invasive disk access. The Nostalgia editions all contain full documentation, ability to save both characters and progress to disk, as well as, impressively, the ability to import your old characters and saves. Some of the games also contain minor bug fixes.

As a bonus, Nostalgia have also released an EasyFlash version of Buck Rogers Countdown To Doomsday (1990), which differs from the AD&D games by being a sci-fi themed RPG rather than fantasy. It was also originally produced and released by SSI using the same Gold Box engine as the AD&D series. In addition, a very recent EasyFlash edition of the completely unrelated but equally important Bard's Tale III: Thief of Fate (1988), from Electronic Arts, has also been released by Nostalgia. Hopefully these EasyFlash RPG rereleases keep on coming as the faster access times of the multiloads really make a world of difference when playing.



ABOVE - POOL OF RADIANCE

ABOVE LEFT - BARD'S TALE III and ABOVE RIGHT - BUCK ROGERS COUNTDOWN TO DOOMSDAY



R

Code

Acied

Music

NM156

Graphics

Hend

↓

PUZZLE

Bub and Bob are back! After (or before, the timeline's never really been clear) blowing bubbles and throwing rainbows in Bubble Bobble and Rainbow Islands, the dynamic duo are reunited in this puzzling classic.

Puzzle Bobble is a conversion of the 1994 arcade classic by Taito, featuring our adventurous dinosaurs at the bottom of the screen operating a bubble launching device. At the top of the screen, and descending ever downwards, are a group of differently coloured bubbles attached to the roof. If they make contact with our heroes, it's game over.

Thankfully, this is where the bubble launcher comes into play. After carefully aiming its trajectory, you can launch a coloured bubble up to the top, where it'll attach to the pile. However, match three coloured bubbles together and they all disappear, as well as any bubbles that were attached to it underneath. Remove all the bubbles from the playfield and you're onto the next level.

The simple premise underpins a wide variety of complex levels, with the difficulty level increasing as you progress.

To round out the package, a two player mode is included. Here, both Bub and Bob (or one of ten computer-controlled opponents) play at the same time in their own respective playfield. Popping bubbles on one screen will send junk bubbles over to the other, so it becomes very competitive very fast.

Support for paddles is included for smoother control, which was not an option on the arcade original.



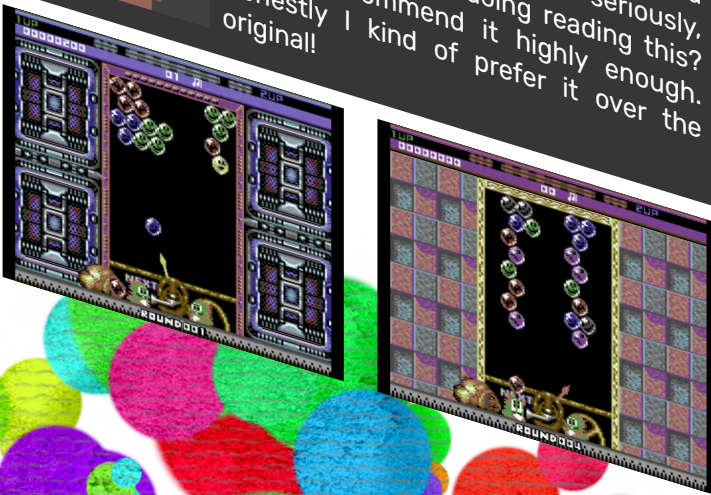
BOBBLE

This is an absolute triumph of technical wizardry and compelling gameplay, and I can't get enough of it! I sunk a small fortune into the arcade original back in the day and I'm just absolutely floored by how close this is to the source material.

I mean not only do they include the Neo Geo boot up sequence, they also include the few seconds of the screen being garbled when the console is booted up for the first time - that is an insane level of attention to detail, and it's care that is found throughout the entire game.

The finely tuned controls (with paddle support! whaaaaaat), the plethora of levels, a two player mode...all backed up by maddeningly addictive bubble-popping action. It's so satisfying to nail a shot just right and watch an entire wall of bubbles explode in a colourful chain reaction.

This is just a ridiculously replete package, absolutely jam-packed with quality, and most importantly, FUN! Look seriously, what are you even doing reading this? I can't recommend it highly enough. Honestly I kind of prefer it over the original!

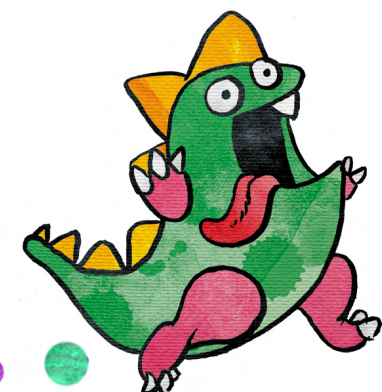


Having never played the arcade version of Puzzle Bobble (YES, CAM! I KNOW!) I wasn't quite sure what to expect. Fortunately I am delighted to report that not only does this game seem like a very healthy arcade conversion but it is a fantastic game to boot.

Presentation is extremely slick and a bit of a technical marvel - full of colour and music and joy. Once the game kicks in you discover a kaleidoscope of bubble-popping mayhem as you effectively play Columns in reverse with a dash of billiards.

Action puzzle-games live or die on their control scheme and Puzzle Bobble even more so due to the precision needed when judging angles so you can nestle your bubble in just the right little niche. This game delivers and then some - I never felt cheated when I inevitably bumbled things and there is immense satisfaction when you land a high-scoring shot.

With a frenetic two-player option included, Puzzle Bobble is almost perfect. It's rare for me to like puzzle games but I can't resist these little dino-bubble-poppers.



POLAR BEAR IN SPACE



Developer
Unrolled Loop Studios

Publisher
Psytronik Software

Graphics, Game Design and Programming
Silvan Reinhold

Gaming Consultant
Dina Smith

Music
Jon Wells



Polar Bear is lost in space with his ship out of energy. Taking refuge on a nearby space station, he needs to find the Krystals that will power the transporter to send him home.

Shooting enemies will drop coloured pods. One of these will award you a Snowball, which rotates around Bear to keep him safe. Beware the red pod that launches the Red Spawn, waves of enemies that will drain your energy. To get to the Krystals, Bear must find the active Terminal. This needs to be unlocked by rearranging the coloured squares, sliding them one at a time. Complete the puzzle in time and you gain access to the platform screens where the Krystals are stored. Here Bear can jump on some enemies to squash them, but must dodge the laser beams, indestructible drones and avoid falling in the water. There are 99 Krystals to be collected in total, so stay chilly and get blasting.



This is an impressive looking debut from Unrolled Loop Studios. From the loading screen image of Bear to the amazing title music that echoes Martin Galway at his best, it is very polished. The instructions screens are worth reading. In game the difficulty is set quite high - in fact, on its initial ZZAP! 64 review

I was one of the reviewers who gave feedback, leading to changes for the release version. These included the enemies in the platform sections no longer respawning and other tweaks to the difficulty.

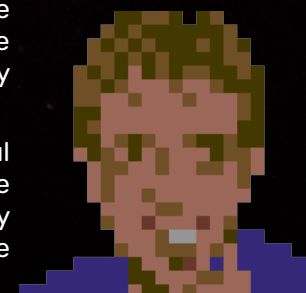
The platform layouts are still quite demanding, and it is easy to accidentally leave and re-enter a screen on top of an enemy. The main thing the shoot 'em up section lacked was a pointer to the active Terminal, as you can spend a long time hunting for it. But with smooth scrolling, well-animated sprites and plenty to blast this one will get the trigger finger working - and it is a long-term challenge to get good enough to complete the game.



New Commodore 64 Developer Unrolled Loop Studios LLC have done a bang up job with Polar Bear in Space. Upon loading, the superb presentation with that unmistakable Sensi style hits you square in the face. This is one slick production that wouldn't have looked out of place as a full pricer back in the C64's heyday.

Gameplay is fast and frantic and fans of the Sensi back catalogue will appreciate the quirkiness and subtle references of older, classic games held within. The difficulty level is certainly challenging and the game has a level of depth that makes it unintuitive, but once you settle in and have a clear understanding of the objectives, it's all systems go. The varied gameplay and action certainly require a level of thought and strategy to succeed.

Graphics are exceptional, with a familiar classic palette and wonderful animation that puts the game in the upper echelon. The Galwayesque music and sfx give a hint of nostalgia and familiarity to what is essentially a refreshing and original game that comes in as a breath of fresh air to the contemporary C64 gaming scene.





Eye of the Beholder

RESET
RIPPER

Word spread across the Reset64 palace – the adaptation of Eye of the Beholder was to be revealed to the faithful C64 community. Sitting upon his golden throne, Lord Kevin of the Farm pondered ‘Could it really be true? We’ve heard it all before haven’t we? Needing to know for sure, Lord Kevin summons his most trustworthy servants (or the only people around at the time) – Handsome Ant of SunLand and New Guy from Lockdowns & Howling Winds. ‘Lackeys, I have a quest for you!’ he cries out. ‘Go out into the dungeons of Retro Land and uncover the truth’. Fearing the wrath of their cruel overlord, the underappreciated duo scurry out to commence their search. Fighting their way through trolls, cynics, and dealing with false leads – they eventually come across a portal with the markings of EotB etched upon its entrance. The trepidant pair step inside to see what it would reveal. To their delight they see it in all its glory. ‘It true, it really exists!’ the Handsome one exalts, tucking his hand mirror into his waistcoat so as to free his hand to allow him to finally grab the prize the release build of Eye of the Beholder for the C64.

Eye of the Beholder is a dungeon crawling style RPG set underneath the city of Waterdeep. You take control of a party of four who have undertaken the task of navigating through a complex underground dungeon in order to uncover the ancient evil that lurks within it. To succeed, your brave champions will have to fight off myriads of evil creatures while at the same time deciphering cryptic clues to unravel the puzzles that lie ahead of them.

The game is best played with a combination of a keyboard and mouse, with the former used to move about while the latter is used to collect and manage items, interact with the game world, initiate attacks and cast spells.

The C64 version includes an auto-map facility and a built-in comprehensive Bestiary while the C128 version supports two screen and 2Khz modes.



It’s easy to get somewhat jaded with your favourite hobby. “I’ve lost the taste for it,” someone once told me of his life-long passion.

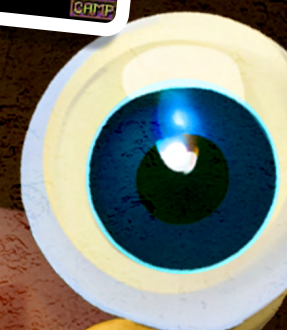
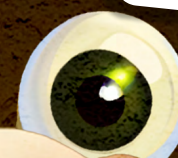
And then along comes something so ground-breaking, gorgeous and fun that you feel reinvigorated – keen to jump in and play it again and again.

Given that The Eye of the Beholder is a port, I’ve been floored by the level of quality and accuracy. The game plays extremely well (with some caveats). How they’ve managed to cram so much into this is truly stunning. Every detail seems to be there! Exquisite artwork and sound design expound the atmosphere and necessary tension of this game.

Mouse-control is satisfactory but a little floaty and things do get choppy during combat – attacks can lag and double-clicking on spells seems hit-or-miss, but given the technical boundaries these are minor indiscretions.

So, what a wonderful adventure this is! Sometimes I forgot I was playing the C64 version, which is ironically the best compliment I could give.

And that’s the beauty of this hobby. Everything old is new again.

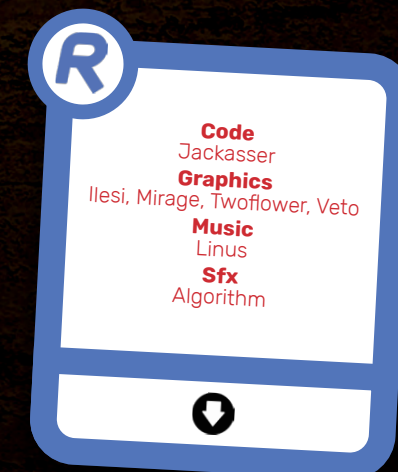


I’ve never been keen on dungeon crawler RPGs and headed into EOTB with the perception that its review process was going to be dull and laborious. Thankfully, I was wrong...well kind of.

Exploring the dungeons of Waterdeep is quite engrossing and I enjoyed the puzzle elements, gradually opening up the game world as you solve them. But the clunky control mechanic is one thing that dampened my experience. Inventory and weapon management is a pain and combat can be a frustratingly repetitive process...and aargh! Why do I keep on throwing my knives away!

There’s no fault to be found in the C64 adaptation, it’s a job well done. The graphical conversion across to the C64 is breath-taking and is effective in driving you to want to see more. The inclusion of the auto map is a godsend. Simply superb production values overall.

As a pure gaming experience, EOTB is a solid nostalgic RPG that won’t be everyone’s cup of tea. Fans of the genre will love it, while the rest will prefer something far less taxing.





TENEBRA

REVIEWED BY KEVIN TILLEY

Tenebra is a 31 level puzzler dressed up as a roguelike. The levels are set in dungeons, with the player able to pick up and use various items to complete simple tasks, as well as start fires and unlock doors.

Obstacles are predominantly puzzle-like gameplay elements. In fact, the puzzles mostly involve the placement of light, whether it be through carrying torches or strategically using the light generated from fires, to light up pathways, open gates and allow movement through the levels. Thankfully, Haplo has included a handy password system and a level re-start key in case you mess things up and can't continue further.

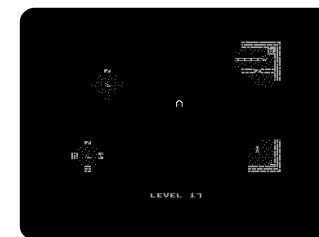
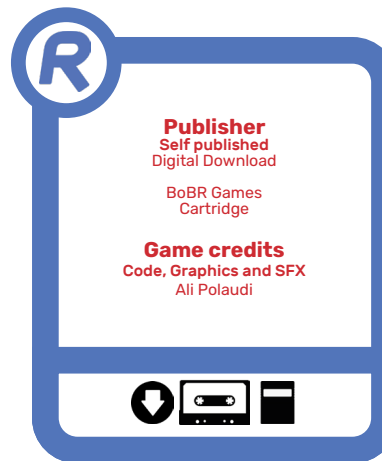
Levels do get progressively more difficult, especially the first dozen or so, and introduce new gameplay elements, meaning the earlier levels are effectively tutorials.

Presentation is minimal but entirely suitable, with a minimalistic yet stylish title screen, tried and tested and perfectly functional monotone roguelike graphics, as well as spot sound effects consisting mainly of the pitter patter of feet and sounds to let you know you've picked up an object. I love the graphical flicker effect which gives the impression of light coming from your torch in your field of view. It's a neat touch (which can be turned off) and looks quite effective!

The boxed physical cartridge from BoBR games is outstanding. The cartridge contains a custom board housed in clear perspex, with LEDs that light up to represent items. It looks super cool and adds to the overall atmosphere when playing the game as well. Haplo has also gone on to release both Plus4 and PC conversions of Tenebra which are well worth a look too.

Ultimately though, Tenebra does suffer from a lack of variety, meaning little replay value and a sense of repetition as you progress, even with new elements being introduced. That being said, the game is another example of why I still love contemporary C64 gaming in 2022. Intuitive pick up and play gameplay offering a good challenge and new ideas. It's beautifully executed, absolutely brimming with atmosphere, is wonderfully designed and is certainly well worth a play-through.

6.5



HIRED SWORD II

REVIEWED BY RANDALL HAILER

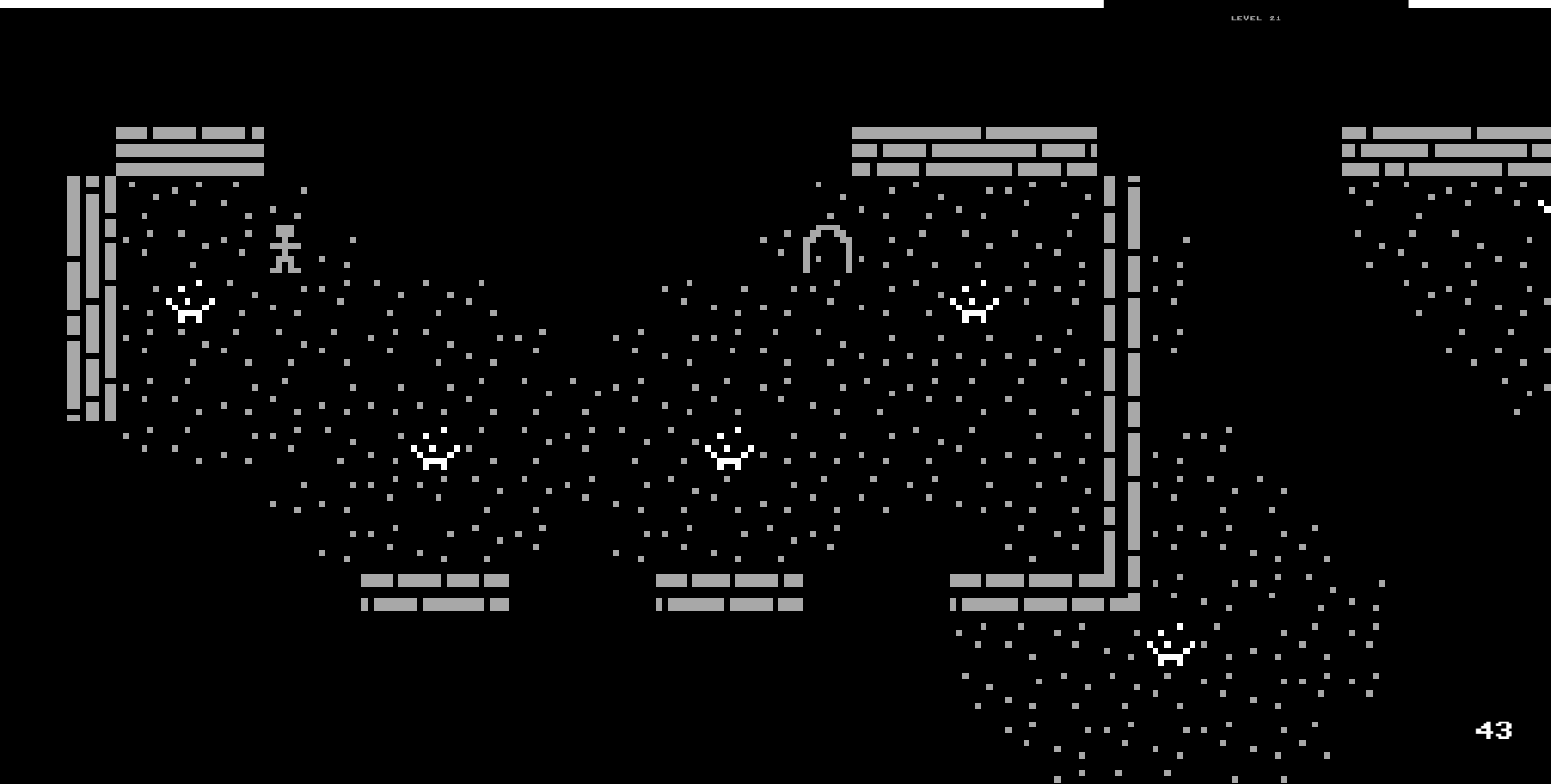
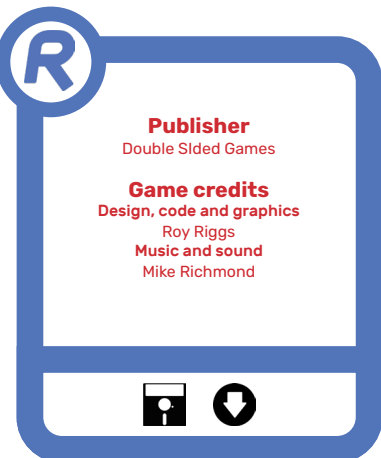
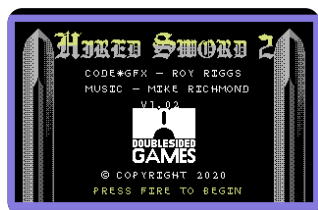
With clear inspiration from the likes of the Ultima, Knights of Xentar, and Al Lowe's classic Leisure Suit Larry series, Hired Sword II delivers a streamlined and accessible role playing experience for the C64. You take the role of a down-on-his-luck adventurer, waking up in a dumpster behind the pub after a late night bender. At first you're just trying to figure out what happened to the elven maiden that you had visions of the night before, with your curiosity quickly leading to a dimension-hopping quest to save the world.

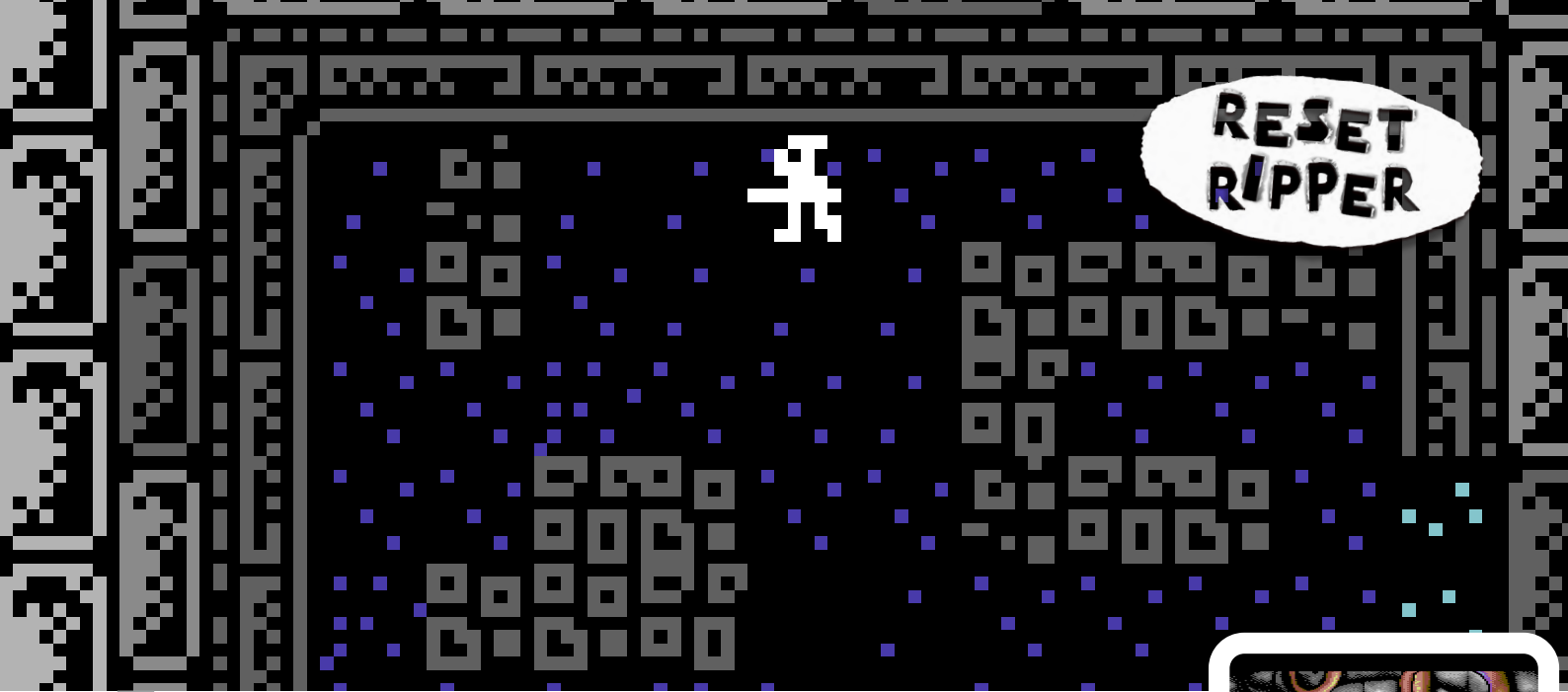
Hired Sword II plays its crass, juvenile humor well, carefully avoiding the expected narrative pitfalls with its clever writing and brisk pace. Combat is turn-based and largely reliant on visual dice rolls...at points you're going to need to do a bit of grinding, but it moves so quickly that it's never a drag. Clocking in at around 8 hours, it emphasizes the nostalgic and fun components of the genre while bypassing many of the barriers that make some older RPGs difficult for modern players to enjoy.

One aspect that may prove divisive is the equivalent to The Witcher's "cards" collected following romantic trysts. While tonally and thematically consistent with the rest of the game, these static, fullscreen scenes induce a significant loading delay that serve as narrative bookends, but both interrupt the pacing of the game and impose an unexpected barrier for when you can play it. Decades ago, you'd have to play it when the parents were asleep, but now you'll have to schedule around when the kids are at school. Oh, how times change.

Those yearning for either a more serious adventure or more complex RPG will be left wanting by Hired Sword II, but others will be treated to a fantastic, light hearted tribute to the aesthetics of 80's single character RPGs. I loved my time with it and greatly look forward to future projects from the developer, particularly any potential sequel.

8





ROGUE 64

REVIEWED BY ROB CAPORETTO

As we've seen elsewhere in this issue, Roguelike dungeon crawlers have seen a resurgence on the C64, as they have elsewhere.

Unlike many of them though, Badgerpunch Games Rogue64 doesn't aim to replicate the experience most offer, but instead give players a streamlined take on the genre.

As Zendar the Explorer, you're tasked with exploring the dungeons of Mordecoom, working your way down to its deepest depths to locate a fabled magical artefact.

The streamlining of Rogue64 happens in a number of ways, starting with its map. Instead of sprawling mazes, each floor is made up of rooms placed on a 5 by 5 grid. Said rooms aren't randomly generated, but chosen from a set of predefined ones.

Within each floor, you'll need to locate the key then make your way down to the ladder which moves you to the next floor.

Next up is experience. Zendar can level up by defeating waves of monsters. Once enough have been beaten, a gem will drop which increasing his strength or max health amount.

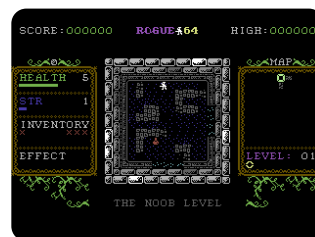
You'll also encounter pickups - from those which restores Zendar's health, to treasures, and potions. Green ones restore health, whilst Red and Blue ones have randomly assigned effects. From freezing foes to clearing out creatures or even temporarily boosting strength, there's a variety of effects left for players to discover.

All of this gives Rogue64 a rather jaunty pace, as the compact maps means you can be moving about quite quickly, and battles are typically taken care of in no short order too.

On the visual side of the fence, Rogue64 uses the C64's high resolution character modes to imbue a sense of personality amongst the enemies you'll face, along with the HUD. There's also a great soundtrack in place which helps keep the adventuring atmosphere intact.

Rogue64 offers a pocket sized adventure with enough unique tricks up its sleeve to be one which is approachable for both new players, alongside genre veterans.

RESET
RIPPER



R

Publisher
BitmapSoft (Cartridge)
Badgerpunch Games (Digital)

Game credits
Code
Ricki Sickenger
Graphics
Henning Ludvigsen
Music & Sound
Sami Louko

LOST REALMS OF MURKASADA

REVIEWED BY KEV TILLEY

In the words of Arkanix themselves, Lost Realms of Murkasada is a "companion series" to their upcoming cRPG, Crimson Twilight. The games are self described as "action adventure/RPG Lite", and that description suits this game perfectly. It's a quick and easy vignette that has been designed to give the player a taste of what is to come - the main course being Crimson Twilight itself.

The zip archive comes complete with a small novella, which contains only the first chapter that corresponds to this very game. Future chapters will be added to the story as more episodes are released. Essentially, we control a bounty hunter that has been tasked to search for a magical golden chalice, which has huge implications regarding the current reign of an evil king.

The game itself is completely keyboard controlled. Presentation consists of a small intro with music, loader bitmap and title screen which are all serviceable. The game interface includes the gameplay area, a status panel and an update panel.

The player must search each screen, including buildings, while keeping an eye on the different player stats. Hidden in the land are various objects such as keys, food, chests, weapons and other dangers. All in all, it works quite well. The graphics, though small, are well defined and the continuous, repeating tune playing through the game is appropriate. The battle music was a nice touch and helps create the necessary urgency when fighting (which is strictly turn/stats based). There are a few humorous touches throughout the game as well. Gameplay itself is simple, maybe too simple to cRPG veterans used to more complex mechanics.

To be honest, it really feels a bit silly giving Lost Realms of Murkasada Episode One a score. I really enjoyed playing through it, but the whole experience is very short as it's only the first part of a much bigger adventure. I certainly do like the episodic nature of the concept and hope the future chapters come to fruition and introduce more complexities.

6



R

Publisher
Arkanix Labs

Game credits
Original Idea
Ray Lejeuz
Code, Graphics & Music
Andy Vaisey
Title Bitmap
Hend
Disk Loader
Krill


9



SCRAMBLE INFINITY


REVIEWED BY ROB CAPORETTO





Publisher
5 O'Clock Software

Game credits
Code & Graphics
Mirage
Music
Dane & Jammer



Conversions of arcade classic Scramble aren't new for the C64 - we've had countless unofficial attempts at bringing it over from even the earliest days of the machine. So seeing another attempt at translating this early shooter certainly needs something special to sparkle out there.

Which is where 5 O'Clock Software's Scramble Infinity comes in.

Taking the set up of the original game - where you take charge of a small fighter and work your way through a gauntlet of 5 levels before taking out an enemy base. You'll also need to keep track of your fuel supplies which slowly dwindle down, but can be replenished by bombing the fuel tanks you fly over.

All of this is brought over well - the controls are responsive, and the collisions are fair, giving you the clearance necessary to navigate the tight corridors found in the final stage before reaching the enemy base.

Where Scramble Infinity shines is in the presentation. From its loader, to the attract screens, it's incredibly well put together. Another surprise is the inclusion of a high score saver, allowing players to remain motivated to continue challenging themselves. This is so important, especially for a score chaser.

The art style takes great advantage of the C64's capabilities, with great colour use, alongside excellent sprite and tile work channeling the design cues of the original game, but also modernising it for today's style.


There's really only one downside to it, and that's the slow ramping of the difficulty compared to the arcade game. Especially as the levels themselves don't change over time, just the pressure the game throws at you in terms of enemy missiles fired, and the rate your fuel is used up.


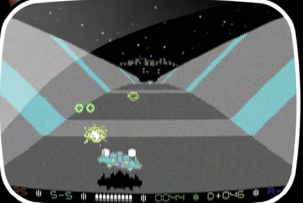
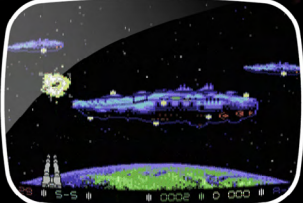
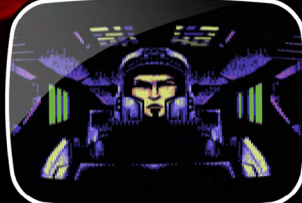
Combined with the generous awarding of extra lives, and any reasonably skilled player can expect to get into a lengthy session as a result.

All up, Scramble Infinity is a great take on the arcade classic which does just about everything right, and is one any casual shooter fan should check out!


8

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BLAST FROM THE PAST

Your Favourite C64 RPG / Roguelike

by Alex Boz (ausretrogamer.com)

I was secretly hoping that no one would ever ask me the question, "What is your favourite RPG / Rogue-like C64" game? It's not because I couldn't dwindle it down to just one, it's because I was never ever into RPG titles, which is both sad and true.

Funnily enough, I really got into text-adventure games early in my gaming years (I loved Transylvania on that other early 80s computer), but as soon as I transitioned to the Commodore 64, it was all fast paced action games, be it sports titles, shoot'em ups, run and gun, arcade conversions and everything in-between - except RPGs.

I think this is the definition of being stumped (for those of you that like cricket analogies), so rather than pull out an RPG that I have never played, I'll rely on our trusty contributors to inform you all of their favourites - pay attention, as there might be gold in these words!

Mat Allen



— Death Knights of Kryn —

There are an awful lot of worthy contenders here, the C64 certainly was not short on excellent RPGs, so picking just one is difficult to say the least. Here I'm going to plump for Death Knights of Kryn, the second in the Kryn series featuring knights, magic, and plenty of dragons to kill with your trusty Dragonlance (once you earn one!).

There's a good story pushing the action along, loads of side missions to investigate, and a worthy challenge to conquer once you reach the end game. One section sees you down in some catacombs with hordes of the undead coming towards you, skeletons and ghouls and more, it's a huge, long battle and quite an overwhelming experience to get all your characters through it intact.

The game was so enthralling that I played through it three times in the end. Just a pity, like all the Gold Box games, that SSI never completed the series on the C64.

Cameron Davis



— Telengard —

I have to give top marks to Telengard. Even by Rogue-like standards it's about as visually appealing as a telephone directory and just as ancient. But there's a definite charm in its presentation and how much it really makes you think you're exploring a mysterious dungeon underneath a quaint village.

The action is pedestrian at first until you start winning a few battles and finding new items to equip. Before you know it, you're actually caring about your character and then the pressure's on to keep the poor bugger alive long enough to make it back up to the tavern for a well-earned ale and a nap. Thanks to the random nature of the proceedings you're always wanting one more go to see if your next adventurer is luckier in the abyss than the last one.

It's not exactly the most complex of RPGs but it's definitely one of the most welcoming and engaging, which is nice.

And best of all, it's written in BASIC so you can always mess about with the code and cheat!

Ant Stiller



— Telengard —

This choice is tougher than the Tarrasque's tooth given that RPGs are my favourite genre and there's a Bag of Holding's worth of 'em for the C64! Do I go with Interplay's classic Bard's Tale? SSI's crunchy Wizard's Crown? Or their Gold Box AD&D games (I am RESET's official Dungeon Master, after all)? What about Wasteland? Or Roadwar 2000, a better Car Wars RPG than the official Car Wars RPG, Autoduel?

So, in a surprise twist, I present Avalon Hill's Rogue-like RPG, Telengard. Why, this game?

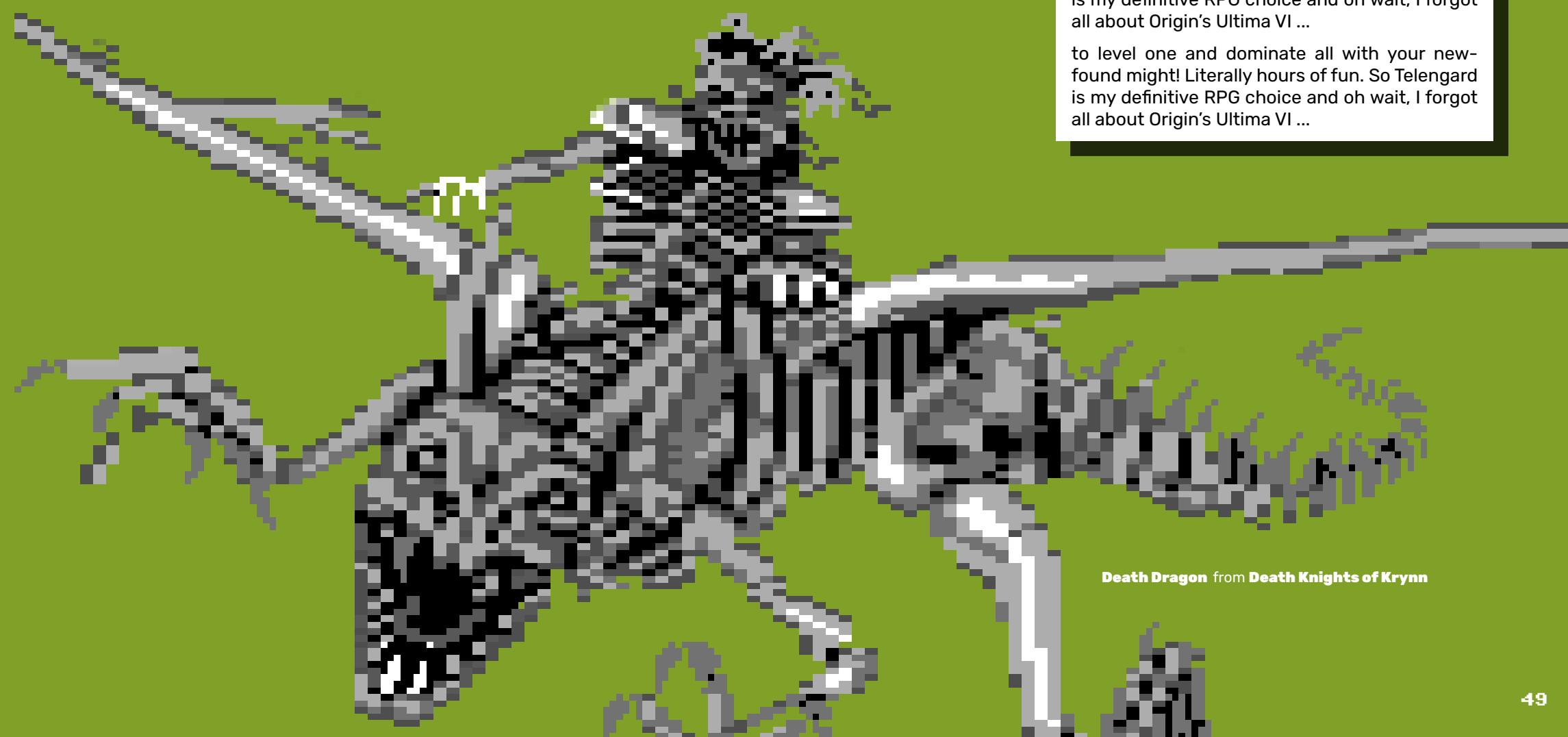
The grey, misty, cube.

Telengard isn't overly special as far as Rogue-likes go. It's slow, blocky and clunky. While it does have some interesting features it's lacking in gameplay depth.

But oh, that cube!

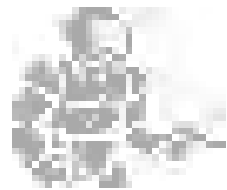
Walk into it and get teleported deep in the dungeon. Survive long enough to stumble upon a ridiculously overpowered item, high-tail it back to level one and dominate all with your new-found might! Literally hours of fun. So Telengard is my definitive RPG choice and oh wait, I forgot all about Origin's Ultima VI ...

to level one and dominate all with your new-found might! Literally hours of fun. So Telengard is my definitive RPG choice and oh wait, I forgot all about Origin's Ultima VI ...



Death Dragon from Death Knights of Kryn

Hársfalvi Gábor

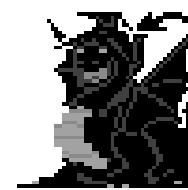


— The Mars Saga —

The Mars Saga game combines the adventure and role-playing features of two great games: the adventure and role-playing features of The Bard's Tale and the turn-based, tactical combat of Laser Squad. At the beginning of the game, it's very lifelike, as you can sort through the CVs of different applicants when accepting teammates. This stage is also one of the most important parts of the game, as it largely

determines the adventures to come, and the skills and weapon skills of the selected players are quite crucial to the game's gameplay. Fortunately, the seemingly complex game is aided by a number of things, one of which is the "Demo" mode that can be launched from the game's main screen, which can be used to observe useful ideas from gameplay guided by an experienced player. In addition, the game's original and unique-looking box contains very detailed descriptions. Beginners can also leave it up to the computer to solve the combat scenes in the game (Auto Combat), but this decision can be modified later. Saving game states is highly recommended, even saving and reloading several different game states is possible, and playing through the game even with frequent use of these is guaranteed to be a challenge! :)

Andrew Fisher



— Curse of the Azure Bonds —

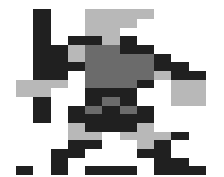
Based on an Advanced Dungeons & Dragons module and featuring that quest's superb cover artwork, this is the RPG I sunk most time into. Sure, I played the original Bard's Tale from tape (painfully slowly) and tried to get further into Bard's Tale 3, but the gripping storyline of Azure Bonds - a party of adventures compelled into

attacking a king by strange blue tattoos - opened into a massive exploration of the Forgotten Realms.

Using a familiar mix of first-person exploration and overhead battle maps, the graphics throughout are impressive, including some gorgeous static bitmaps. The package included a code wheel and Adventurer's Journal, the latter giving more text to read at key points. Transferring characters from other RPGs (including prequel Pool of Radiance and spin-off title Hillsfar) was an interesting touch, along with more varied character classes.

I even purchased the official SSI Clue Book with maps and hints to help me get further. It remains my favourite of the classic Gold Box games.

B.V. Marin



— Pool of Radiance —

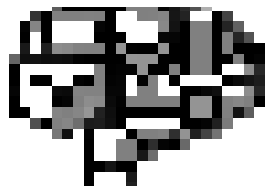
I had moved with my mother to a completely different city within days of graduating, class of '90. Most of my friends were preparing for college while I was languishing in an apartment with no air conditioning and quietly counting the days that led up to being shipped off to boot camp in September.

Before I moved, someone gave me some games that they didn't want; among them was Pool of Radiance, the first of SSI's "Gold Box" AD&D RPGs. Initially, I was heavily invested in Dungeon Master on the Amiga 500, but one day for a change of pace, I popped in the Pool of Radiance disk and broke out the copy protection decoder wheel, and started creating my characters. What started out as a lark wound up becoming an obsession where I would play for 20 hours a day for the next two months.

In retrospect, the 8-bit sound and graphics were terrible, but back then, it was the perfect game at the perfect time; I would do it all over again.

A Goblin from Pool of Radiance

Louie Dimovski



— **Times of Lore** —

Well this certainly was a tough one as I don't recall playing too many RPGs back in the time. They simply were not my thing. The only one I can recall playing to any reasonable degree is Times of Lore.

I remember seeing the advert for the game in the C64 magazines and salivating at the cover art and the ever

so tiny screenshots on offer. I was anticipating the game for months on end until I was able to finally track a copy down here in Australia and when I finally got to play it, I was underwhelmed. I found it to be a bit too slow paced for my liking, remembering that your character felt like he was constantly walking through mud.

Revisiting the game a couple of decades later, I obtained a renewed perspective for the game as I grew fond of the game world, the interaction with NPCs and the general icon driven user interface. The game is still cumbersome...but so am I so I shouldn't complain too much.

The Barbarian from Times of Lore

Rob Capporetti



— **Ultima 1** —

As such a broad genre, picking my favourite RPG isn't easy. But when it comes down to it, the one I've enjoyed the most over the years just happens to be Ultima I: The First Age of Darkness.

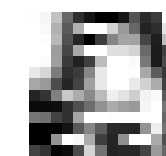
Every series has got to start somewhere, and for Ultima I, it's quite the humble start. It's as straightforward as it'll ever be: journey the lands of Sosaria to obtain a means to defeat the evil wizard Mondain, and smash his source of power: the Gem of Immortality.

This quest'll take you from the darkest of dungeons, to the deepest of space. Blasting off into space might sound ridiculous for a fantasy RPG, but working your way up to becoming a Space Ace by blasting enemy Star Fighters makes for an exciting break from wandering the lands, and exploring dungeons.

All of this makes Ultima I stand out as a distinct RPG experience. It's also one which is incredibly fair to newcomers, which makes it one I'd easily recommend to those curious about RPGs.

Well there you have it folks, the Commodore 64 certainly was not short on RPGs, with many worthy contenders in this lot. As someone that hasn't played RPGs on the C64, I am now looking forward to checking these out, and you never know, I may get hooked!

Kevin Tilley

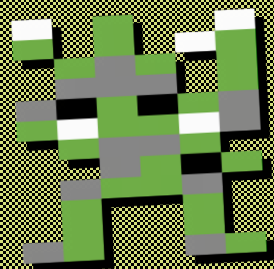


— **Centauri Alliance** —

Everything about Centauri Alliance is appealing. The striking hexagonal box, sci-fi cover art and setting, as well as the chunky manual, field guide and packaged map (which depicts local space as well as the species and planets of the alliance). The story is classic sci-fi; a galactic war set in the early 23rd century. Many alliances exist within the galaxy, each with their own set of ethics, making peace a difficult, almost impossible achievement. The alliance is made up of six distinct species with their own individualistic abilities that can enhance your party.

The game includes highly stylized 3D graphics while exploring the worlds, with lovely depictions of the alien races and other scenes within the game. The 3D combat screen is made up of hexagonal tiles, giving depth to the system, which means it stands out from traditional 2D RPGs of the time.

An Acturian from Centauri Alliance



The Sword of Fargoal

BY ROB CAPORETTO

Each issue, the Reset team journeys back into the mists of time to revisit a title from C64 history, and see how it fares today. Does it still stack up, or is it one best left in our collective memories?

Sword of Fargoal debuted for the VIC 20 in 1982, before appearing on the Commodore 64 sometime in 1983. You play an adventurer tasked with recovering the titular sword, through the dungeons of the evil wizard Umla.

As with many early RPGs, Sword of Fargoal features procedurally generated levels, and to get to the Sword, you'll need to brave anywhere from 15 to 20 of them. But then you've got to make it back to the surface, where you'll be up against the clock. Should any of Umla's creatures catch you, the Sword will be returned to its resting place, and you'll have to get back down there to recover it.

Unlike many games which saw release and would then lie dormant, Sword of Fargoal received mobile ports in the early days of the iPhone created in conjunction with Jeff McCord, its original designer. Thankfully, it's one which is still playable today thanks to the work of GameClub in fixing it up for both modern iOS devices along with various Android ones.

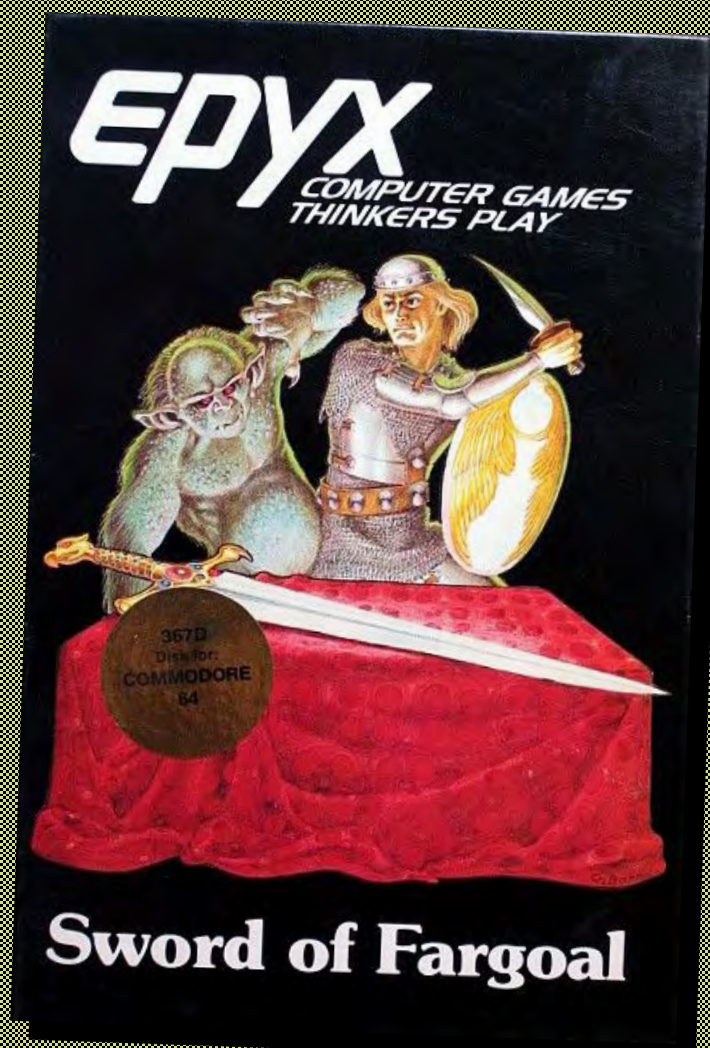
But as always, it's time to turn over to the crew to see whether or not it still is worth a play all these years later...

Another RPG gem that I missed in my formative years! Sword of Fargoal is a cleverly designed Rogue-em-up with some surprisingly modern innovations hampered by technical limitations. I appreciate the simple aesthetic – graphics and sound are functional and there's a nice menagerie of chunky enemies. The fog-of-war reveal of the procedurally generated dungeon gets the exploration juices flowing and the variety of spells, traps and strategies keeps your interest up as you drive towards a unique search-and-retrieve main quest.

Auto-use healing potions, handy "panic" and "skip tile" features, and an interesting gold hoarding mechanic all elevate the game above its peers. Ultimately this is still an exercise of grinding and resource management and as such it does suffer from the proc gen curse of "Oops! I've just been unfairly blatted in two hits!"

This is unfortunately worsened by the treacle-like speed of play. While failing to escape a nasty monster because of a misread keypress is frustrating, thankfully the Sword of Fargoal's siren call from deep within the dungeon depths remains very alluring.

ANT



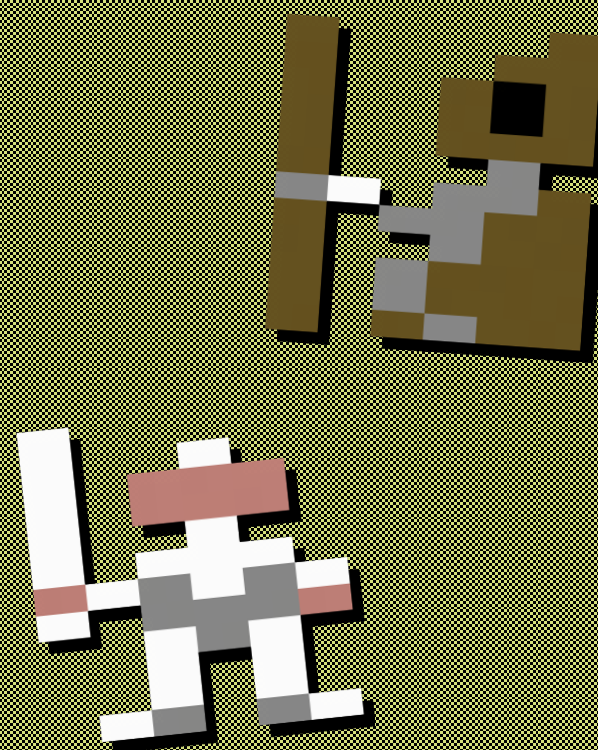
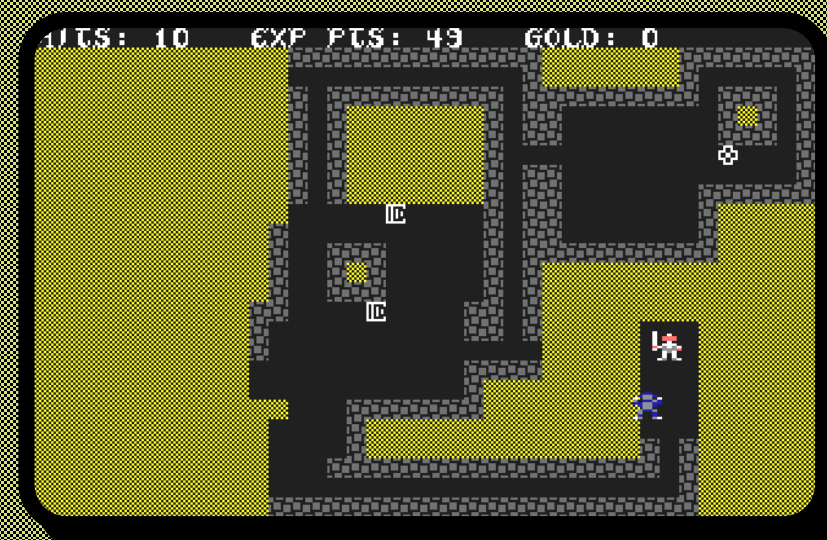
I've always been curious about Sword of Fargoal, particularly as I'd only heard of it with the release of the original iPhone ports (alongside that Kickstarter for a follow-up), so having tried it, I can't help but have mixed feelings about it.

On one hand, the core gameplay loop is good fun – exploring each floor of the dungeon, taking out monsters and finding treasure and items. Finding the temple and donating your collected treasure to earn additional experience points helps with the level up grind, which is paramount to surviving later levels.

The downside to being partially written in BASIC means things can plod on quite a bit at times. There's nothing like trying to run for a Temple to heal up, and be stuck waiting as the game updates the positions of enemies.

If you've got some serious patience, then Sword of Fargoal is well worth checking out on your C64. However, if the core sounds neat, but you're not up for the slowness, then do check out the mobile versions instead!

ROB



Sword of Fargoal is one game that I have always had since getting a C64, being amongst the first lot of games we ever got. Back then, it was a bit slow and unintuitive for 6 year old me, but I do clearly remember loading it up from tape occasionally.

What I know now is that despite the simplicity of the graphics and the sluggishness of the whole package, Sword of Fargoal oozes atmosphere and the slow pace is just part of its charm. It's certainly the first of its type that I ever played and the ominous droning tune, the cheery jingle when you find items or slay an enemy are just some of the touches that help immerse you into the gameplay. This is all supported by the variety of monsters and spells, as well as randomly generated levels and some very clever and unique gameplay elements for the time.

I thoroughly enjoyed picking up Fargoal again and even feel compelled to keep playing, which isn't bad for a game that will be celebrating its 40th anniversary next year!

KEV



Having no awareness of Sword of Fargoal beforehand, I went into the game with some apprehension fearing I would be overwhelmed with statistics and the need to use magic spells to make any decent progress.

Fortunately, the game eases you in and I immediately start enjoying exploring the dungeons and having the map gradually open up to reveal treasures, traps and enemies to battle.

If I had any complaints then it would be the movement speed. I wish that I could zip around the screen at a faster pace and I get annoyed when the ominous Jaws style music snippet plays as it means that I could not move until it finished.

I like the concept of exchanging gold for experience points and having your hit points accumulate the longer you avoid combat. While the initial dungeons feel 'easy', the game came into its own as I would plan out how to grind through the deeper levels – progressing a little further with each game. This game has made me a fan of roguelike games.

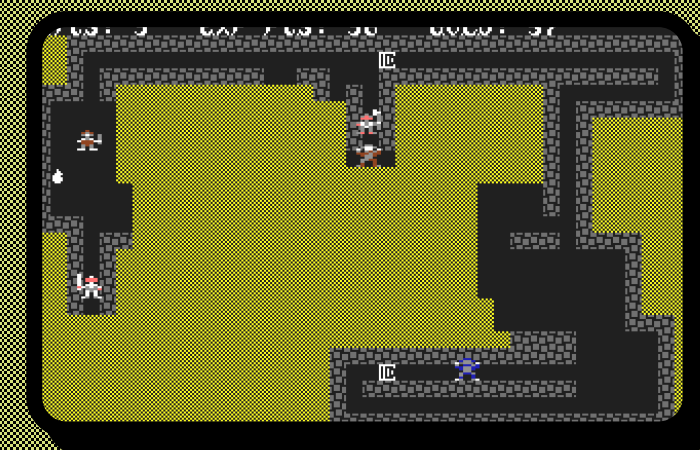
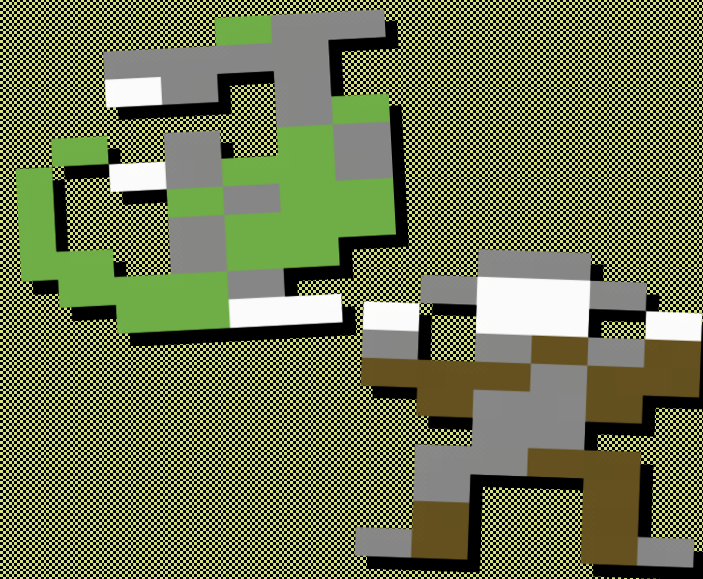
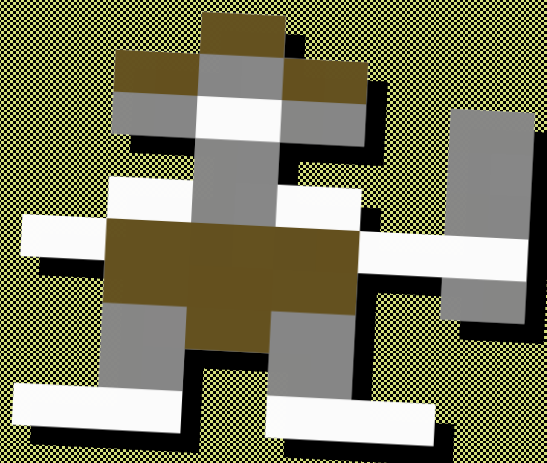
LOUIE

I think I first encountered Sword of Fargoal in the mid 90s, one of my early purchases from the Centsible Software mail order company in the States. It would be another ten years or so before playing the VIC20 original.

The procedural nature of the game means no two games will be alike, and the exploration aspect whereby the map is only revealed as you move means caution is advised early on until you level up a bit (donating your treasure at the temples helps) and gain a few more hit points. Of course, hitting a trap means the dungeon level goes dark again, proving the game isn't fair at all. None more so demonstrated once you finally get the sword and try to ascend to the exit on level 1. Despite that, it's curiously compelling to have another go.

To cliché it up here, at the end of the day Sword of Fargoal on the C64 is a fun if heartlessly harsh experience, but the VIC20 version is better.

MAT



Sword of Fargoal is, like many of the denizens you'll encounter through this game, a strange beast. By all rights it's the complete opposite of what I like in video games. The visuals are rudimentary at best, the dungeon layouts change every time you revisit a level, and there's this maddening pause all the time while it plays some basic spot sound effects to simulate the monsters trawling about the place.

But I can't stop playing the damn thing!

Exploring the dungeons is fun. Knowing there's a goal – that elusive sword – keeps me wanting one more go, hoping that this time the RNG gods will smile upon me. Not having to traverse upstairs to buy new supplies is great. The real time nature means I have to stay on my proverbial toes at all times. Regenerating health and automatically using potions is remarkably forward thinking design. Simple joystick controls (for the most part) make this easy to play for a quick or a long session.

Now if you'll excuse me, I need just one more go...

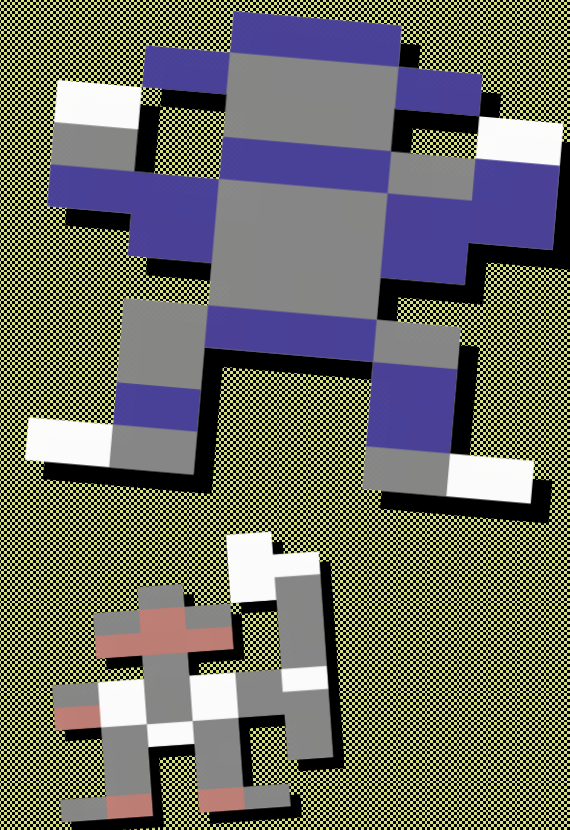
CAM

Epyx/Automated Solutions had a long history with Roguelike games, and this one was pretty good. I didn't get to play it – or its close cousin Gateway to Apshai – until emulation in the 2000s, and without instructions it was initially confusing.

My favourite aspect was always the way the map is revealed, as it feels like you are really exploring. Revisiting with the instructions to hand, the opening stages feel quite forgiving and I was able to breeze through the first few dungeon levels. While the graphics and sound are quite rudimentary (as to be expected of the time), they do not mask the compelling gameplay. Frustrations would include losing your map to a trap, and the slowness of movement once a Light spell is activated.

One clever touch is the way monsters appear from the staircases, giving the dungeon more of a living feel as they roam with the ominous Jaws-like sonic sting. Years later I would play the iOS revival, which is fortunately still accessible thanks to GameClub.

ANDREW





In Reset Fiction we have a Past.Present.Future concept, focusing on classic games back from the day, current releases and development of adventures to come. In this issue of Reset Fiction, we present you a “Future Special”. As many of you know, I recently published a complete rewrite of my classic adventure “Hibernated 1”, which had been recreated using the Z-machine technology that the legendary Infocom used for their groundbreaking games back in the day. The result, “Hibernated 1 Director’s Cut”, is an Infocom style interactive fiction game with tons of additional narrative content and riddles. If Infocom had been asked to recreate the classic Hibernated, the Director’s Cut would have been the outcome.

Infocom shaped the vibrant adventure scene of the 1980s like no other with their sophisticated games, well-written with rich prose and challenging riddles. “Hibernated 1 Director’s Cut” is an ode to their heritage and instantly won many awards. If you want to give it a go, you can download it for free from here <https://8bitgames.itch.io/hibernated1> or order the box edition from my publisher PolyPlay at <https://bit.ly/34NFaeX>

But this “Future Special” is not about me. It’s about the tools I used to create “Hibernated 1 Director’s Cut” and more importantly, it’s about teaching you how to create your own Infocom style interactive fiction for the Commodore 64. The Director’s Cut had been written using Graham Nelson’s

Inform 6 language, a C-style programming language that allows you to target Infocom’s Z-machine. Inform 6 itself though comes with a library too big to execute well on classic hardware. That’s why I used PunylInform, an alternate library by Fredrik Ramsberg and Johan Berntsson, optimized for classic 8-bit and 16-bit targets, and I am also using Ozmoo, an improved Z-machine interpreter for the Commodore 64, notably as well written by these two gentlemen. And who would be a better teacher than one of the creators of PunylInform? So with great pleasure I am happy to leave the stage to Fredrik Ramsberg, who is going to tell you a lot about using PunylInform to create your first Commodore 64 interactive fiction game. Imagine worlds!

PunylInform - a library for retro text adventures

I’m Fredrik Ramsberg, long time text adventure fan and author. Together with Johan Berntsson I have created PunylInform, a library for writing text adventures using the Inform 6 programming language. We first released it in July 2020, and it has been in active development since then. PunylInform was designed to be small enough and fast enough to be suitable for games for 8-bit computers like Commodore 64, Apple II, Spectrum +3 etc. The games are compiled to Z-code story files which can then be run on any platform which has a Z-code interpreter, be it an 8-bit computer, a 16-bit computer or a modern PC or smartphone.

Inform 6 was designed by Graham Nelson in the nineties, and it comes as a package with two main components, the programming language (and the compiler for this language) and the standard library. PunylInform is a replacement for the Inform 6 standard library. While the standard library is powerful, versatile and well tested, it is too big and too slow to work well on 8-bit computers. This shouldn’t come as a surprise, as it was never intended for this kind of use. PunylInform offers the same basic functionality, but a lot of code has been rewritten

to make it faster and smaller, some features have been made optional and a few advanced features have been dropped. When compiled in a minimal configuration, the PunylInform library is about 24 KB in size, while the standard library is 60 KB, and the resulting games are a lot faster than with the standard library.

The Z-code game format was invented by the founders of Infocom in 1979, with the explicit goal of allowing them to port their game Zork from a DEC mainframe to 8-bit computers. The idea behind Z-code is very much the same as for Java - programs are written for a virtual machine (for Z-code, it is called the Z-machine), and an emulator for this virtual machine is created for each platform where you want to run the programs.

An emulator for the Z-machine is called a Z-code interpreter. For 8-bit computers you typically need to bundle an interpreter and a game file and the result is a game that can boot and run on the target platform. On modern platforms, the user typically installs a Z-code interpreter and can use it to open and run any Z-code game file. Johan Berntsson and I have created an open source Z-code interpreter called Ozmoo. It is currently available for Commodore 64, Commodore Plus/4 (and expanded Commodore 16), Commodore 128, MEGA65 and Acorn/BBC computers.

With the newly released Puddle BuildTools, you can set up a build environment which allows you to run a single script to build a PunylInform game for 25 different platforms.

Writing a game

The PunylInform library provides a framework for writing

text adventures. It has a game loop, a parser, a basic vocabulary, a set of verbs, actions and grammar, a player object etc. What you provide is a set of game objects, their properties, attributes and relations. The basic actions like walking around, picking stuff up, dropping things etc, will just work out of the box. For actions which the library can’t know how to react to (What happens when the player jumps over the wall, or shouts “Mellon” outside the enchanted gate?), or when you want something out of the ordinary to happen, you can always provide code to handle the situation - the library will look for code in certain properties of the game objects, run it and see what it returns, thus allowing you to replace the standard behaviour. In some cases you can just provide a string, and the library will interpret this as “Instead of performing the standard action, print this string.”

As a bare minimum, your code needs to:

- Define the name and headline of the game
- Say where the player starts
- Include the files “globals.h” and “puny.h”
- Define a room object in which the player can start.
- Define a routine called Initialise, which will be executed when the game starts. The routine can be empty.

That’s it. This requires about ten lines of code. And there’s a template game called minimal.inf which does this, in the right order, to help you on your way.

An example game

A complete (small to mid-sized) game typically consists of a few thousand lines of code. To get an idea of how the system works, we’ll go through the code of a rather small game here. The game is called Locked Out. It consists of a single puzzle for the player to solve: There’s a locked door with a key in the lock, but the key is on the other side. To get through the door, they’ll need to put a piece of paper under the door, put a small object in the keyhole to push the key out of the keyhole, and pull the paper out to retrieve the key. This is not a trivial puzzle to code, but makes for a good example. Among other things, the source code shows that a lot of the code you need to write for a game, if you want it to be any good, is there to cover actions that are not part of the solution, like the player trying to knock on the door, or putting their fingers in the keyhole. At the end of the article you will find a link to download the game in both source code form and compiled form.

```
Starship Bridge Score: 12/5
which extends outwards to the console of
the ship's positronic mainframe. The
sight is truly breathtaking. It's a
feeling of becoming one with the
universe, of being absorbed by infinity.
The passage aft allows returning to the
quarters.

A hatch fore blocks your way to a
presumed secure area.

>look at glass dome
You look above and dive into the
everglowing void, where innumerable
stars in a million colors illuminate the
surrounding nothingness. Never were you
closer to the endless ocean of the
cosmic aeon, which gifted us the fragile
shell we call existence, only to consume
it again at the end of time, when all
cycles have come to end and all that was
will fade.

>■
```


Code part 1: Constants and includes

The first two lines set compiler options to minimize the code size. Every PunyInform game should typically start with these lines. We then define the name of the game/story and the headline of the game. These constants are mandatory.

PunyInform has a set of about twenty constants to enable optional parts of the library, all of which are listed in the manual. For this game, we choose to define five of these constants. Simple Doors give us an easier way to define doors. Full Directions enables the directions NW, NE, SW and SE. No Darkness turns off the handling of light and darkness. INITIAL_LOCATION_VALUE is different in that every game needs to define it - its value says in which location the player starts. If OPTIONAL_SCORED is defined, it means we can give the scored attribute to objects and locations, and the player will get points when they are picked up or visited. OBJECT_SCORE and ROOM_SCORE say how many points they get for each object/location. Of course, MAX_SCORE sets the maximum score the player can get. Using other constants, you can choose to use a system of named tasks that give points, in addition to the scored attribute or instead of it, or you can turn off the scoring system completely.

To use the PunyInform library, we need to include the library code in the project. We do this with the two include statements. We also include a library extension to provide cheap scenery objects (Cheap in that they use little resources).

Code part 2: Grammar

While PunyInform provides a good set of standard verbs, actions and grammar, most games need to expand or change the grammar a bit and add a few verbs and actions. In this case, we see the need for three new actions - KnockOn, SlideUnder and PushWith. The verbs 'knock' and 'slide' don't exist in the library, so we create them using Verb, at the same time adding their grammar. The verbs 'put', 'insert', 'pull' and 'push' already exist in the library and we merely want to extend their respective grammars to cover some new cases. We do this with Extend. When we need a new action, such as SlideUnder, we create a grammar line which ends with "-> SlideUnder" and then we define a routine where we add "Sub" to the action name, like SlideUnderSub. The action routine may cause something to happen in the game world, but more often than not it's just there to print a suitable default message. We then use code in the game objects to capture the action and make it do something.

Code part 3: The lawn and the mailbox

This is where we start defining the game objects. An object definition starts with "Object" or a class name. Then comes the internal identifier and the name string. We then add "with" and list the properties this object should have. The library defines some 45 different properties, and all of these properties bear meaning to the library. We have "n_to" which defines what happens if the player goes north, "cant_go" which says what should be printed if the player tries a direction in which there is no exit, etc. Each property can either have a single 16-bit value or an array of values. A value can just be a signed 16-bit number, but it can also be the address of a string or routine.

In the code you see here, description for Lawn is a string (address), while description for Mailbox is a routine (address). Referring to descriptions of objects is usually done using

the dot notation in Inform 6, meaning it's written as [object].[property], e.g. "Mailbox.description". Using this notation, we can also note that Mailbox.name holds a word in single quotes. Words in single quotes are dictionary words, i.e. words that the game should recognize in input coming from the player. The name property is used to hold all words that the player should be able to use to refer to an object. In this case, it's just a single word. What's stored in the name property is actually the 16-bit address of the word where it resides in the dictionary, in Z-machine memory.

The "describe" property is used to print a paragraph of text about the item in the room description. In this case, the code is just a string. This means "print this string, then print a newline and return true from the current routine".

The routine in Mailbox.description is called when the player examines the mailbox. It prints a basic description of the mailbox, and then goes on to either print that it's closed, or print what we can see in it (or print that it's empty, if that's the case).

After the property list, we add "has" and a list of attributes that should initially be set to true. An attribute is a one-bit value, so it's always true or false. While the lawn doesn't need any attributes (it would have had "light" if we hadn't turned off the handling of light and dark), the mailbox has the container, openable and static attributes. Container means other items can be placed inside it. Openable means it can be opened, and static means it can't be moved. Since we're not giving it the "open" attribute, it's closed from the start.

Oh, and look at the first line of the mailbox object. An arrow (->) means this object is in/on the last object which didn't have an arrow. In this case, the mailbox is in the Lawn location.

Code part 4: The flyer

Now we're getting to one of the more involved objects. The flyer has two arrows, meaning it's inside the mailbox.

Flyer.invent is used to print the object name and/or extra information about the object's state, when listing objects. The flyer can be slid under the door, and if it's currently under the door we want to print this as the object's state.

As explained in the section on grammar above, you can put code in an object to affect what happens when the player performs an action on the object. The most common way is to use the "before" property. You typically list actions that you want the object to react to, a colon, and code that should be executed. If the code returns true, PunyInform doesn't print anything or do anything further with this action. If the code returns false, PunyInform carries on with the action as usual. In this case, we want to react to the Pull and Take actions. We only want to use special handling if the flyer has been put under the door, so first we check if the flyer lacks the "general" attribute or if it's not on the ground (e.g it's held by the player). If that's the case, we return false, and the library lets the action work in the normal fashion. If we don't return here, we move the flyer to the player's inventory, remove the "general" attribute to signal that the flyer is no longer under the door, and we set update_moved = true. "update_moved" is a library variable that we must always set when we move something into the



player's inventory. Now we check if MetalKey has the general attribute set. If it does, it means the key is on the flyer. If this is the case, we move the key to the player's inventory as well, print an appropriate message and return true. If not, we print a message and return true. That's it.

The "after" routine is performed after an action has successfully been applied. As a safeguard, we remove the general attribute whenever the flyer is picked up, to make sure the flyer is never considered to be under the door when we're holding it. It shouldn't be necessary, since we're already handling it in the before routine, but we do it anyway, as a precaution.

The player should get points when they first pick up the flyer. This is accomplished by giving it the "scored" attribute.

Code part 5: The front porch

The front porch shows another way of throwing in code to interfere with the standard actions: putting a before routine in the location object. Here we want to check for the SlideUnder action. Let's say the player types "slide the flyer under the sturdy door". This is just a set of words, which the PunyInform parser, using the grammar for help, will figure out means the player wants to apply the SlideUnder action with noun == Flyer and second == FrontDoor.

First we check if the player is trying to slide

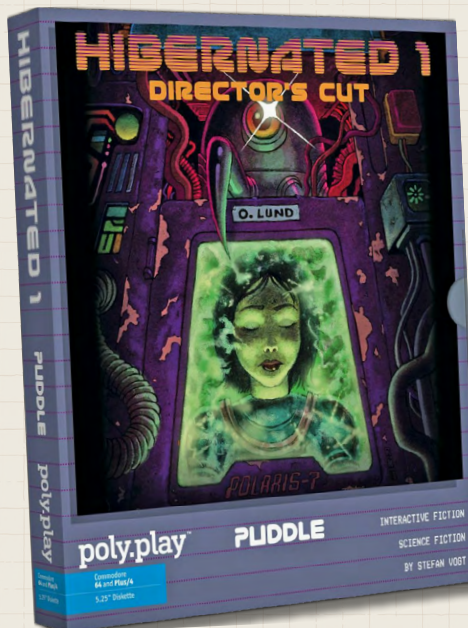
something under the window. That's a negative. We print a message and return. Then we check if they're trying to slide something under an object that's not the front door, or the front door isn't locked. If this is the case, we just return false to let the standard action do the job, i.e. print a message saying that's pointless.

For the remainder of the code, we know that second == FrontDoor, so we don't need to check that again. Now we check if it's the key that the player is trying to slide under the door. If the key is on the flyer and the flyer is under the door (Flyer has general), we perform a different action and return true. We do this with the << >> syntax. If we're trying to slide the key under the door when it's not on the flyer, we just print a message and return true. Now, if noun isn't Flyer, we return false, letting the normal action print the default message. So, after this, we know that noun == Flyer and second == FrontDoor.

If we have already gotten the key out, we print a message and return true. This, along with a lot of other things we do, is really to close off possible paths in the story, to keep the game size and complexity manageable. We don't want to write a full world simulation where all actions can be performed, we want to tell a story, implement all the actions the player has to do, and enough responses for other actions to make the player feel like it's a somewhat believable world.

If the flyer is already under the door (Flyer has general), we say so and return true.

Now we have established that the player wants to slide the flyer under the door, and we've established that there's



no reason why they shouldn't be allowed to do this. So, now we move the flyer to the current location (the front porch), we give it the general attribute to signal that it's been put under the door, and print a message and return true.

Code part 6: The front door

The front door uses `when_open` and `when_closed` to show different descriptions of the door depending on if it's open or not. When the door is open, we can offer a peek of the location on the other side, by checking the current location.

We react to the `KnockOn` action in the before-routine, simply because we think the player may try this, and it should give some kind of reasonable response.

Then come the two properties that are mandatory for a door, when using the Simple Door mechanism. `found_in` lists the two locations that the door leads between. Listing them in `found_in` means the door will be present in both of these locations. `door_dir` must also be an array with two values - the first value says in which direction the door lies when the player is in the first location listed in `found_in`, while the second value does the same for the second location. This is used by the parser to change "enter door" into a command to walk in a direction. In this case, when the player is in `FrontPorch` and type "enter door", it will be transformed to "go north", and when they're in `Entrance` and type "enter door", it will be transformed to "go south".

Then there's `with_key`, which is a property you can add to any lockable object. It simply points out the key that fits the lock.

The `add_to_scope` property is used to say "Whenever the player can refer to this object (because they see it, or hear it, smell it etc), also let them refer to these other objects.". In this case, we say that `SpaceUnderDoor` is

accessible (= "in scope") whenever the door is.

As for the attributes, this object has the "door" attribute to say it should be treated as a door. A door in `PunyInform` is really any kind of portal from one location to another and possibly back again - it could be a bridge, a ladder, a hole in the ground etc, but often it really is a door.

We use the "transparent" attribute. This may seem to indicate that the player can look through the door and see the room on the other side, but that's not the case. Instead, it means that if there's anything in the door, the player can see it. Since we will be placing a keyhole in the door, we make the door "transparent" to make the keyhole visible.

Code part 7: The keyhole

The keyhole can contain a key and nothing else. So, we let "description" reflect this.

The before-routine handles the `Receive` action. This is a so-called fake action, issued by the `Insert` action, giving the object which the player wants to put something in, the chance to react. If the player tries to insert the key in the lock, we just tell them to rephrase it. If they're trying to put the cocktail stick in the keyhole, and the key is in the keyhole, we move the keyhole to `Entrance`. If the player has first put the flyer under the door, we give `MetalKey` the general attribute to say that the key is now on the flyer. We then print a message and return true, signalling that the library shouldn't print a message.

If the player tries to insert anything else in the keyhole, we tell them it doesn't fit.

As for attributes, here we use the `concealed` attribute. This means the library will refrain from telling the player about this object. We also give it the `transparent` attribute, to say that the player can see any object that's inside the keyhole. As noted before, the metal key is the only object that can be inside the keyhole. If we didn't use the `transparent` attribute here, the player couldn't type "examine key" or "push key with stick" and get a proper response.

Code part 8: The key

The key has a before-routine to handle several different actions. If the player tries to take the key (this can be done using the `Take` or `Remove` actions), and the key is currently in the keyhole, we block this action with a message. We also give a custom response if the player tries to push, pull or turn the key while in the keyhole. Finally, if the player tries to "push the key with the stick" and the key is in the keyhole, we issue a different action, essentially changing what the player typed to "insert the stick in the keyhole", using "<<" and ">>". This means the keyhole will get a chance to react, and we have already made sure the keyhole has the code needed to handle this.

Code part 9: The space under the door and the window

The space under the door showcases the use of a "default" clause in a before-routine. We allow `Examine` and `Search` to have their default behaviour. We change

"put xxx in space under door" to "slide xxx under door". For all other actions, we give a response saying you can't do much with a space.

The space under the door also has the "concealed" attribute. As discussed before, this tells the library not to mention this object to the player. As part of that task, the library will avoid listing this object as an option when printing a disambiguation question. This is important because the word 'door' can be used to describe both the front door and the space under the door. Thanks to "concealed", if the player types "open door", they won't get "Which do you mean, the front door or the space under the door?"

The window uses the "describe" property in a nifty way: Return true without printing anything. Returning true from this routine tells the library we've printed a paragraph of text for the window, so the library should consider the object described. Since we didn't print anything, the object won't be described at all. We do this because we're already mentioning the window in the room description (`FrontPorch.description`).

We make the window a door, to make the library give sensible responses if the player tries to enter the window, open it etc, but we stop the player from opening it from the outside using the before-routine.

Code part 10: Inside the house, plus the cocktail stick

There are two locations inside the house, the entrance and your bedroom.

Remember that we included a file called "ext_cheap_scenery.h" at the beginning? This is where we use it. In `Entrance`, we add the "cheap_scenery" property, holding a list of "fake" scenery objects. We could have created an object to represent the shoes and coats, but we really only want to put them in the game so the player can examine them, nothing else. Putting them in as cheap scenery accomplishes this, without wasting an object. Same thing with the paintings. When we create a game for the z3 format, a game can create no more than 248 objects, and cheap scenery can help a lot in adding scenery without using up those precious object slots.

In `Bedroom`, we add an after-rule saying that whenever an action -- any action -- completes in the bedroom, we set the deadflag to `GS_WIN`, i.e. the player has won the game. This will happen as soon as the player enters the room.

Finally, we have the `CocktailStick` object. It's needed as a tool to push the key out of the keyhole. The cocktail stick is in fact held by the player, but since we haven't defined the player object (the library has), we can't use the arrow notation to say it's in the player's inventory. Instead we'll let it start in `limbo` (not in anything), and move it to the player's inventory as soon as the game starts.

Code part 11: The Initialise routine

Every game must have a routine called `Initialise`. This routine is executed when the game starts. For this game,



we want it to do two things: Move the cocktail stick to the player's inventory, and print a text. Whenever we move something to the player's inventory, we must also set `update_moved` to true, to tell the library to check the player's inventory for new objects, giving them the "moved" attribute and possibly scoring points for picking them up.

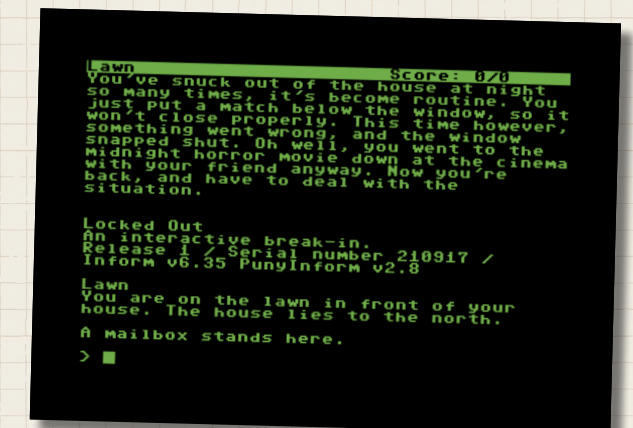
That's it - a complete game.

Playing the game

Let's see this game in action. We compile it with the `Inform 6` compiler and bundle it with `Ozmoo` to get a playable game for `Commodore 64`. In the images you can see some of the text that is produced by the game. The first screenshot was taken when the game just started. The second one was taken some moves into the game, after we have picked up the flyer from the mailbox and examined the front door. ■

FURTHER READING

At the `PunyInform` page (see Links below) you can download the `PunyInform` library and read the manual. You can also access a set of tutorials to learn the library.



Links

Here are some links you may find useful.

PunyInform

<https://github.com/johanberntsson/PunyInform>

Download the game presented in this article

<https://tinyurl.com/punylockedout>

Ozmoo - a Z-code interpreter for Commodore

<http://microheaven.com/ozmoononline/>

Gargoyle - a Z-code interpreter for Windows & Mac

<http://ccxvii.net/gargoyle/>

The Puddle BuildTools

<https://github.com/ByteProject/Puddle-BuildTools>

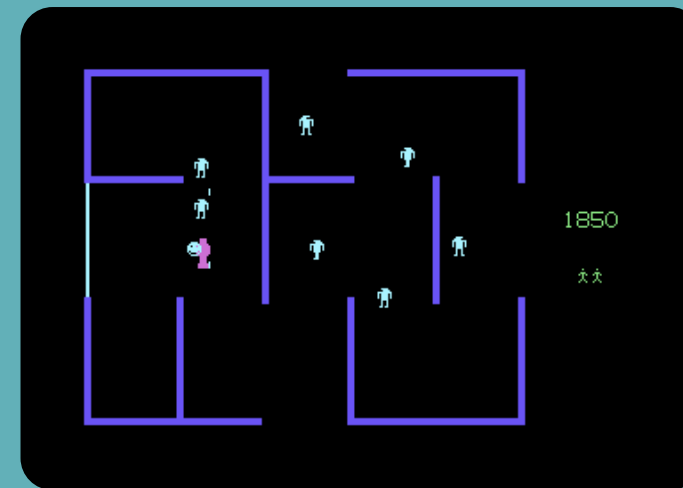
ARLASOFT ARCADE

REVIEWS BY ANDREW FISHER

ARLASOFT WERE AIMING FOR ARCADE ACCURACY WITH THIS SET OF RELEASES AND HAVE ACHIEVED IT WITH SOME STYLE.

GALAGA C64 was inspired by Neil's love of the NES version, which uses a vertical aspect similar to the arcade. This contrasts with many of the C64 clones that have a much wider "landscape" view, affecting the shape and movement of formations. This new adaptation opens with a great attract mode based on the arcade, showing the logo and high scores before the points values. In game the graphics look very good, although I did notice some flicker. The game uses the top and bottom border to give the expanded vertical playing area, the score panel relocated on the right. The enemy movements and changes are spot on, including the small alien that bursts into three. Most importantly, the tractor beam mechanic is intact; the alien can steal a ship, but you can retrieve it with careful firing to double your firepower (albeit making you a wider target). The Challenging Stages are still my favourite element, making you learn the patterns to go after big rewards. In terms of difficulty, it is ever so slightly easier than the arcade game; I found I was able to get further without dying and achieve slightly higher scores. But it is a solid and playable conversion, perhaps only bettered on the C64 in this style by Galencia. Update 1.06 has fixed some minor bugs.

GALAXIAN DX followed, again aiming for arcade accuracy and correct aspect ratio. Using a disassembly of the original arcade game's Z80 code, the basic prototype took just a couple of hours building on the existing Galaga DX codebase. This plays very well and looks arcade-accurate. Presentation is almost identical and control is fluid. I did find it a little frustrating but the difficulty curve definitely seems to match the original. The two-player co-op mode that was introduced to Galaga DX is also here, with the players



"sharing" three lives to score as much as possible. For speedrunners, a target time of 50 seconds for clearing the first wave has been set.

BERZERK was intended as a warm-up for the Robotron conversion, and is an impressively accurate rendition. The graphics are spot on, control feels right and the presentation is eerily identical. The speech, perhaps the most famous aspect, is unfortunately a little indistinct at times due to the low sample rate. It is still fun to hear the robots call the player a "chicken" and to "fight like a robot" if they flee a room before killing everything. On that note, I did come across a (rare) bug that was also in the arcade game. The randomised screen generation can very occasionally create a solid box trapping a robot inside, meaning the player cannot shoot it to get the clearance bonus. However, the trick here is to lure the



indestructible Evil Otto (the smiley face that chases the player after a timer expires on each screen) to destroy the trapped robot and retrieve the situation. For me, the difficulty felt right and very close to the arcade game as the robots get tougher when you score more. Personally though, I retain a slight preference for Berzerk Redux with its improved presentation and speech. That feels like the better interpretation of the theme, and I am lucky enough to own the limited edition cartridge of it. But Arlasoft's new incarnation is very well made indeed.

PAC-MAN is a game that is very familiar to us all, and frequently gets remade (witness the recent Lady-Pac by LC-Games and Jotd's Amiga versions). Arlasoft took a risk here - to get the correct aspect ratio, the maze scrolls vertically so you cannot see the whole thing at once. There is no doubt it looks good, from the superb attract sequence to the intermissions. Gameplay feels very good, although this is an aspect that is going to be tweaked to make it "arcade accurate" - especially in terms of the ghost logic. Other minor bugs and problems have been highlighted, so it would have been interesting to see further updates...

But this tale now has a sad footnote. In May 2022 Nick Sherman uploaded source code (much of which had already been shared with the Arlasoft Collection cartridge image in late 2022) for completed projects and many unfinished works. This came with a caveat - if crackers uploaded the previews/unfinished titles to the Commodore Scene Database (CSDb), then Nick would abandon work on everything - including his promising Theme Park conversion known as Funfair Inc. And the inevitable happened within 24 hours. This is a real blow, as Nick had been so prolific and titles in the pipeline such as Robotron were promising much. ■

DOWNLOAD LINKS

GALAXIAN DX

<https://arlagames.itch.io/galaxian-dx-c64>

GALAGA C64

<https://arlagames.itch.io/galaga-c64>

BERZERK

<https://arlagames.itch.io/berzerk>

PAC-MAN

<https://arlagames.itch.io/pacman-c64>

ARLASOFT



DEV INTERVIEW

NICK SHERMAN

INTERVIEWED BY KEV TILLEY

KEV Hi Nick. Thanks so much for joining us! Before we start, can you tell us a little about your retro coding journey and what attracted you to coding on the C64 in the first place?

NICK In 2019 I moved into software development as a career, after making indie games part-time for about 10 years. I soon found that after programming all day in C#, the last thing I felt like doing in the evening was opening up Unity and doing the same, so I was looking around for something else to do.

By chance I found Shallan's Youtube series "Let's Make A C64 game", after a few episodes it was starting to make a little sense and I thought maybe I could learn

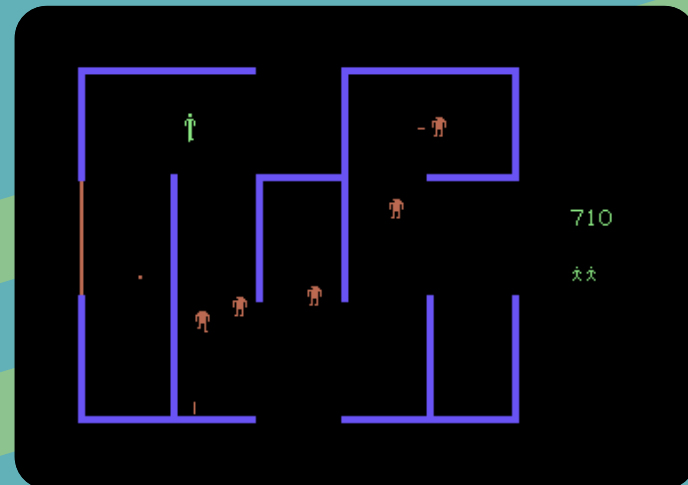


enough to hack together a simple game. I had always thought assembly coding was some sort of witchcraft and that the people who made the games I played as a kid were on another level completely, but Simon is a great teacher and I was really pleased to finish 'Donkey Kong Jr. Game & Watch' within a couple of months.

KEV Can you please tell us a bit about your dev setup? What hardware/tools do you use to code on the C64?

WE WERE LUCKY ENOUGH TO BE ABLE TO SIT DOWN AND CHAT #RETRODEV WITH NONE OTHER THAN NICK SHERMAN, AKA ARLASOFT. NICK BURST ONTO THE COMMODORE GAMEDEV SCENE WITH SOME GAME & WATCH PORTS AFTER LEARNING ASSEMBLY FROM A YOUTUBE TUTORIAL SERIES. SINCE THEN, WE'VE SEEN FIRST HAND HIS PROGRAMMING SKILLS DEVELOP WITH A SLEW OF COMPO ENTRIES, ORIGINAL GAMES, ATARI 2600 PORTS AND MORE RECENTLY, SOME VERY ACCURATE ARCADE PORTS TO THE COMMODORE 64. WE'RE VERY PLEASED TO HAVE NICK WITH US, AND ONCE YOU'RE DONE READING THE INTERVIEW, PLEASE VISIT THE ARLASOFT ITCH.IO PAGE ([HTTPS://ARLAGAMES.ITCH.IO/](https://arlagames.itch.io/)) AND GIVE HIS CATALOGUE OF RETROGAMES GAMES A GO!

NICK I copied Shallan's setup, which consists of KickAssembler with Sublime Text and have seen no need to switch. For graphics I use CharPad/SpritePad, and GoatTracker for music/SFX. All of this runs on various mac laptops that are dotted round the house and synced via Dropbox so I can work wherever and



whenever I have five spare minutes.

For some projects that required quirky SEUCK-style sounds a native C64 program 'The Sound FX Kit' has also come in really handy.

KEV Before the arcade conversions, you coded a series of Atari 2600 ports to the C64. What attracts you to the early years of gaming and these games in particular?

NICK The 'golden age' was so exciting because developers were not only pushing the boundaries of the machines, they were also inventing brand new genres and mechanics that had never been seen before. I was too young to have appreciated it at the time so it's been really fun to go back through the catalogues for all the old machines. I'm also strangely drawn to games that perhaps weren't commercially successful but had some

interesting ideas, and also to systems that failed, such as the Channel F.

The Atari 2600 ports occurred when I was stuck on some nasty bugs in Galaga, so these 'one-day' projects were partly to take a break and partly to rebuild confidence!

KEV You ported 4 arcade games to the C64, which already had conversions (Pacman, Galaga, Galaxian and Berzerk). How were the four games chosen? What was it in particular that made you choose these particular games, especially since conversions already existed?

NICK These were some of my favourite arcade games and I felt the C64 ports didn't capture the gameplay quite as well as they could have. Obviously I understand the original developers would have been working to impossible deadlines and without the benefit of modern



tools, but in all cases better conversions had been made for inferior systems either at the time or more recently, and I wanted to try and correct that.

KEV How important to you was it to port the games as closely as possible to the originals? Did you give yourself any allowances/freedoms to make any changes?

NICK I noticed that ports back in the day tended to stretch everything horizontally to fill the 320 pixels of the C64 screen, even if the original game was only 224 pixels wide. This can almost make it a completely different game even if it looks similar. I tried to get the relative size of sprites/maps as close as possible, putting sprites in the borders or scrolling to make more space and get much closer to the aspect ratio of the arcade machines. I would also study disassemblies of the arcade ROMs and in the case of Galaxian, the trademark sweeping enemy attack waves were ported directly from the arcade code.

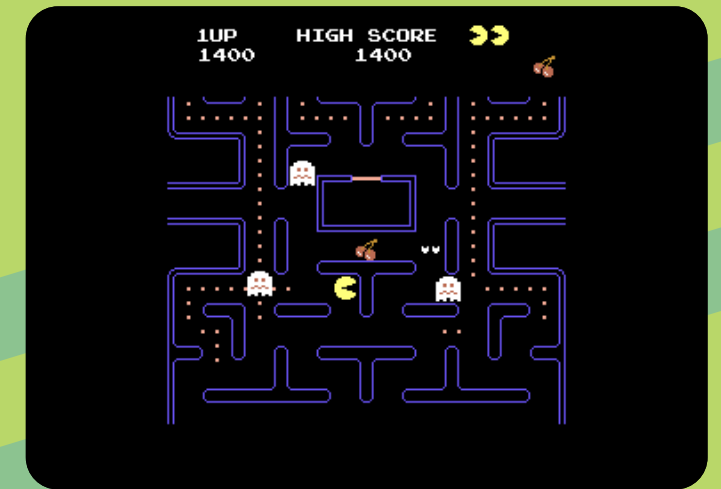
I didn't really want to make any changes, these games are classics and perfect as they are, but obviously some sacrifices had to be made in terms of graphics with some fairly chunky-looking sprites.

KEV The contemporary retro scene is as strong as ever. What is your take on the longevity of platforms such as C64, Spectrum and many many others? Why are their respective scenes so strong and vibrant today?

NICK I think they provide something that modern gaming doesn't, in that you can fire up a game for a quick blast of pure gameplay. No hour-long tutorials,

unskippable cutscenes, or a console (or Steam client) that wants to update every time you boot it up. The number of new games being made is incredible and helps keep things fresh, even on 40-year-old systems.

KEV You mentioned online that you will no longer be developing on the C64. What was the reason for this decision? Is there a chance we will see projects such as Robotron and Funfair Inc. finished on the C64, or even



converted to another platform?

NICK I realised I was having to constantly up the ante to gain the same feeling of accomplishment from each game and it was beginning to feel like a chore. I took a break from development entirely, bought an Xbox Series X to actually play some games for a change, and really got into the likes of 'Slay the Spire' and 'Monster Train'.

Never say never but at the moment I don't feel like returning to those projects, the Robotron code is available and I'm happy to make the Funfair Inc. code available to anyone who might want to try and finish it.

KEV Since leaving the C64 scene, you've been quite active on other platforms, and even made some releases on platforms such as the Fairchild and Atari VCS. Is there a particular platform that is particularly interesting to you from a coding perspective at the moment?

NICK The Channel F is quirky and a lot of fun to mess around with, but realistically there's only about 50 people interested in the system. I recently achieved another ambition to release a game for the 2600, which despite having the same CPU is an entirely different challenge to the C64 and very satisfying when you get something running on it. I'm currently working on an ambitious port of Bomb Jack and after that - who knows!

KEV Thanks for joining us Nick, it's a privilege and a pleasure having you with us. All the best for your future developments, whether they are on the C64 or otherwise. We are certainly looking forward to them!

NICK No problem! I am still doing a few bits on the C64 when the mood takes me, so look out for a small strategy game called 'Promethean Legacy' which will be out sometime in November.

Reset64 would like to thank Nick for his participation in this article.

KATABATIA ◊

(Jeffrey Ouellette - malcontent)

<https://github.com/x0rcy5t/Katabatia>

Katabatia is fast. Ferociously fast. Speeding through the express aisle at the supermarket with one item while shouting “EXCUSE ME I’M IN A BIT OF A HURRY” kind of fast. It’s taken the Rogue formula and somehow not only kept everything intact but made it fly by at Mach 3 speed. Zipping through the dungeons, attacking enemies, finding items and trying to stay alive is a breeze and makes this a welcoming introduction to the genre and a welcome change for experienced players.

While there are comprehensive keyboard controls for every action, you can play the entire game with the joystick which for me makes this super accessible. The menu system is only a long press of the fire button away and it’s a snap to equip newly discovered items. I also really liked the way you can customise your character by choosing which pagan god to support. Each dungeon is a unique challenge and danger lurks around every corner. It’s fast, it’s fun, the music rocks, you fight emus, what more could you want?

7/10

REVIEWED BY CAM



TROGUE ◊

(WBOCHAR)

<http://wbochar.com/troque64/>

Glub! Glub! What a delight!

Troque64 is a wonderfully minimal, if difficult, twist on classic Rogue. You begin at the lowest depths of a flooding mine and must quickly work your way up to the surface, defeating the denizens lurking in the murky darkness.

The real twist is that, in an effort to drown the entire evil horde of misshapen creatures, you must activate eight pumps that increase the rising water level, drastically increasing your risk of an untimely death.

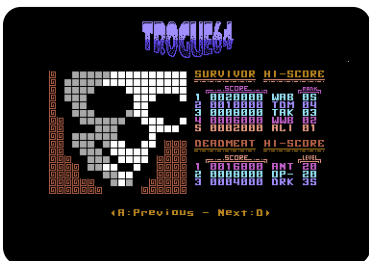
The hi-res graphics are crisp and the monsters are menacingly cute and full of character. Tension is enhanced with atmospheric tunes, especially when the water level catches up with you!

While there are only a small number of different items to collect there’s a real sense of excitement when you find them. Play balance is excellent as you frantically juggle between when to use a health pack, oxygen or a grenade.

Despite some concerns of difficulty spikes and confusion about the XP system, Troque64 is a fun game that really keeps its head above water.

8/10

REVIEWED BY ANT



◊ ULTIMATE QUEST : CATACOMB

(Psytronik Software)

<https://rubygolem.wordpress.com/2014/05/28/ultimate-quest-catacomb-the-beginning>

I’m not sure why it never dawned on me. I mean, the realm that Ultimate Quest: Catacomb is set in is literally called “Grynd”!

Allow me to explain. Ultimate Quest: Catacomb is a grind-fest to end all grind-fests!

It’s not a bad game. A dash of Ultima and a pinch of Telengard. It’s old-school quirky – the spell system is ... odd (and dull), there’s no real inventory system (a personal bugbear), and it’s quite easy to cheese the mechanics once you’ve loaded up on healing salves and spells.

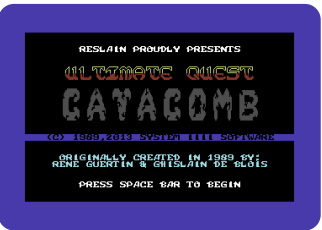
It’s also a little buggy – there’s a glitch in the main town map that made me weep all over my graph paper.

While the game world is big, it’s a lot of meaningless scenery and too many wandering monsters (kudos for using some D&D classics even if I wasn’t expecting to fight Bahamut the dragon-god when I was only level 6!)

UQ:C is quaint but ultimately a victim of its time (a time when dragon-gods bumped into you as you were leaving the tavern, it seems).

5/10

REVIEWED BY ANT



◊ GOLD QUEST 6 : EXTENDED

(Inferior Software International)

<https://csdb.dk/release/?id=218974>

Deviating from its previous SEUCK engine implementations, the sixth installment of the Gold Quest series is a dungeon crawler RPG written in BASIC and featuring PETSCII drawn characters.

Given the choice of four different character classes, you are a brave dwarf stuck in an enchanted mine complex on a mission to free his leader from captivity. The dungeon complex is rendered in pseudo 3D with the layout and location of items and in-game characters randomly generated. To help you find your way around, a built-in auto-map is provided.

Despite being a simple fight and explore game, there is a strategy element as your strength and health values diminish as you venture through the dungeon. Many NPCs that you come across will provide you with choices as to the action you want to take, which will impact your key attributes.

Gold Quest 6 is an enjoyable dungeon crawler that will have you returning for more than just a few rounds of play. Perfect if you like the genre but are limited in time.

7.5/10

REVIEWED BY LOUIE



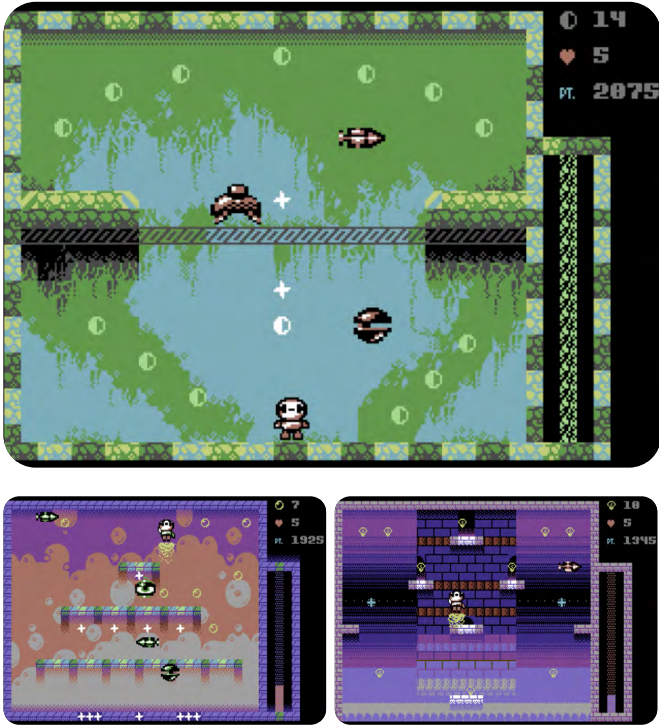
ROBOT JET ACTION ◯

(c64portal.pl)
<https://c64portal.pl/robotjetaction/>

Evil robots are coming to steal jewels and it is up to you my little jetpack carrying robot to collect them all before they do. Containing 35 levels spread out over 5 game theme worlds, you go around collecting enough jewels to open up the exit portal. Each game world is distinct and can be played in any order. Flying around involves holding the joystick button down to apply the thrusters. The jetpack stops working when it heats up too much and needs time to cool down before being able to be used again.

The use of Extended Color Mode has been applied to great effect and when you throw in an amazing sounding SID track, it's hard to deny that Robot Jet Action is pure visual and sonic bliss. The game play itself doesn't quite hit the same heights as every level and game world is played in a similar way. Despite the limited sense of play progression, the gaming experience is good in a workman type of way.

8/10
REVIEWED BY LOUIE

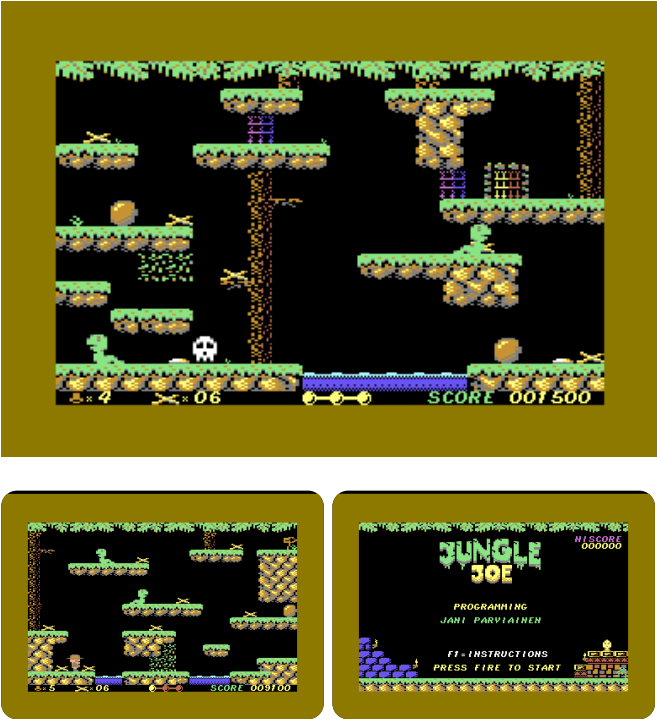


JUNGLE JOE ◯

(Vector5 Games)
<https://vector5games.itch.io/jungle-joe>

He wasn't always called Jungle Joe, but now he uses wood to make platforms horizontally and ladders vertically as he tries to escape. Each level is three screens wide, filled with vines that block the way and sharp spikes, spiders and snakes that kill on contact. Joe picks up extra wood to supplement his supply, pushes boulders onto switches to open gates (and onto spikes to function as a temporary platform) and swings his machete to attack enemies and cut through vines. Joe can also reset the level to try a different solution or route. Bonus points are awarded for collecting Golden Idols along the way. If Joe makes it to the exit, a password is given storing the score and number of idols collected. This is a fun follow-up to Santa's Workout, with good graphics and a lovely title tune. It's well presented, and the passwords prevent you from getting bored with the early levels. But perseverance will be needed to crack the tougher puzzles at higher levels. Head-scratching fun.

8/10
REVIEWED BY ANDREW



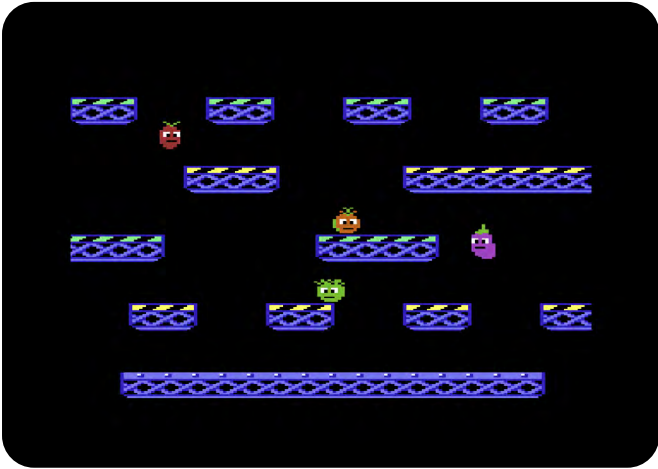
◯ STRAIGHT UP

(Dr. Wuro)

<https://straightup.drwuro.com/>

Listen.. I have to give it to you straight.. Straight Up...

It's a new game from the mind that brought you Frogs. That's right, Dr. Wuro Industries. Again it's another fun and competitive multiplayer game for when you can muster a few friends over for a Retro gaming night. Now given at least in this part of the world we've had quite our fair share of lockdowns, but thanks to ZeHa there is now a single player mode. Giving you the chance to hone your skills, master the timing of your jump and whatever you do, do not fall down. The premise is simple. Jump on the platforms and get as high as you can. The quicker the better at least in the multiplayer games. The platforms can throw you down if you get hit by the sides. And



as expected it can get quite heated as the game progresses. There are a couple of obstacles to make things a little more difficult.

Graphics are cute, and the controls are tight. 4 players are supported if you have a Protovision 4 player adapter. Music is boppy but if it gets much you can always turn it off. You can set the number of rounds and it makes for a delightful party game. Fun to play and simple.

It's fun, it can be frantic, and it's good to see another game make use of the 4 player adapter.

7/10
REVIEWED BY RAJ

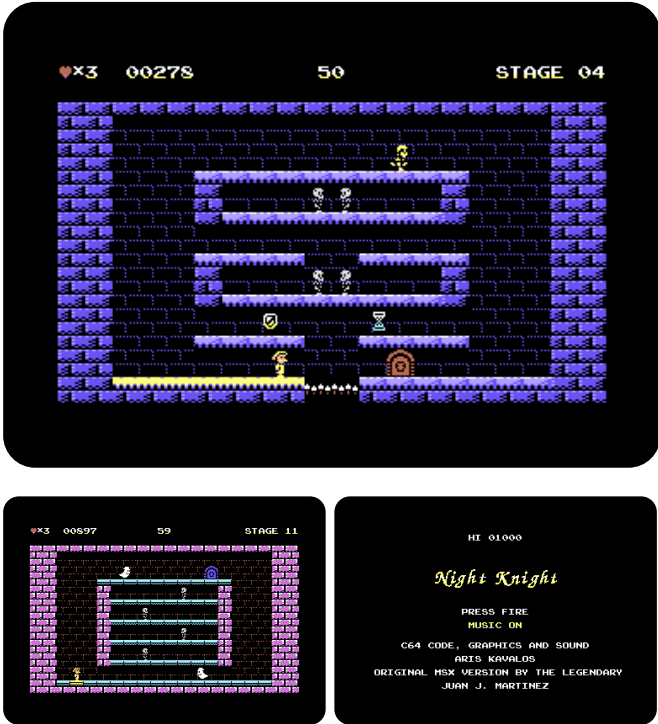
◯ NIGHT KNIGHT

(Aris Games)

<https://aris-soft.itch.io/night-knight>

To break the curse placed on him, Sir Bernard must walk each night around the enchanted castle, colouring in the flagstones that make up all the platforms. When all the stones have changed colour, the key to the exit door is revealed. Power-ups including a shield and an hourglass for extra time can be collected. New types of enemies (including archers, ghosts and vampires) and other features (such as moving platforms, which have slightly jerky movement) are added through the 80 levels – with a password system to help progress (holding P to reveal the current level's password).

The MSX original by Juan Martinez was fun, and Aris Kavalos has created a good conversion for his debut C64 project. Graphics have transferred well from the original, with small and well-made sprites, and the gameplay is a mix of frustrating and addictive. Changing background styles help add to the variety in later levels. Like Bubble Bobble and other classic single-screen games, learning the movement patterns helps. A cute but frustrating game.



7.5/10
REVIEWED BY ANDREW

EMPIRE STRIKES BACK ◀

(Megastyle)

<https://megastyle.itch.io/esb-by-megastyle>

Everyone fondly remembers Empire Strikes Back the movie, and rightfully so. With a tightly written script, passionate performances and impressive special effects, there's no wonder it's the second best Star Wars movie*. The Atari 2600 Empire Strikes Back game is similarly fondly remembered, and now it's back...in C64 form!

The presentation is second to none, and can't be faulted - the visuals are sumptuous, the soundtracks's thumping, and overall it's a dazzling package. But the game is so boring and repetitive it makes the Star Wars Christmas Special a more appealing proposition. Fly around, shoot giant enemies until they disappear, repeat. There's really not a lot to it.

Yeah I get that it's a remake of a 'Classic' Atari 2600 game, but just because something's old doesn't mean it's good, and truth be told the only reason people liked it back in the day was that we didn't have much else. Now we do. Life's too short for pretty but vacant games!

* The first best is The Last Jedi. Suck it, haters!



5/10

REVIEWED BY CAM

RETALIATE DX ◀

(Marcelo Lv Cabral - Digital)

<https://lvcabral.itch.io/retaliate-dx>

I love a good shmup - and with the C64, any new one is really going to need to do something special to stand out.

Something which is quite true for Retaliate DX.

The core idea is that it's a shmup where you can't shoot. At least not at first. As in order to charge up your ship's weapons, you'll need to absorb the shots being blasted your way.

This is a unique way to balance risk versus reward. Your shield has a limited charge time, so timing it to collect as many shots as possible is critical to earn the most points. It's also able to take enemies down, but you'll earn fewer points.

My big problem with Retaliate DX is its reliance on randomisation. From runs with more ammo potential, or fewer waves to beat to clear a stage means that your skills aren't as consistently tested as they are in other shmups.

Retaliate DX has a neat concept, but just needed that additional balance to be a truly great twist on the shmup.



7/10

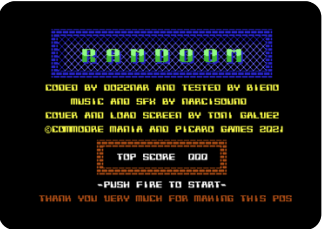
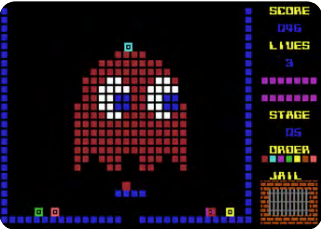
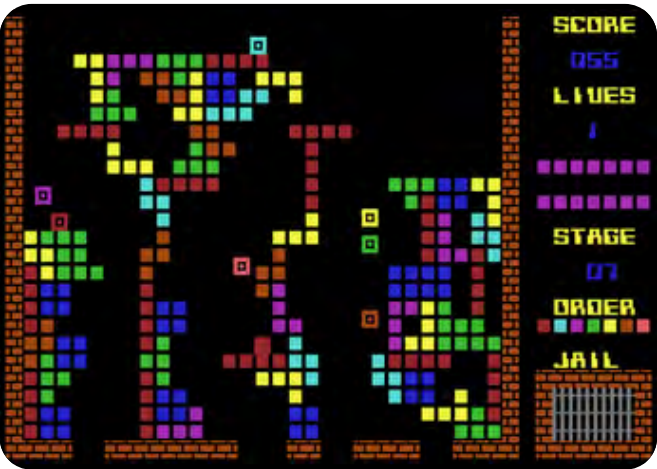
REVIEWED BY ROB



◀ RANDOOM

(Picaro Games)

<https://dozznar.itch.io/randoom>



Some naughty cubes are charging around the screen and your job is to catch them and put them in jail. You must catch them in a specific order, and only catch the one that matches your colour. Once you have caught a cube, your colour changes to indicate which one to catch next. If you hit the wrong cube, you lose a life.

Consisting of 31 different screens, Randoom offers a tough but fun challenge. You start with 3 lives, and can collect more every 100 points. Luckily for me Vinny @ Freeze64 supplied a poke.

The simplistic graphics do not hinder the playability in any way, and some of the screen layouts are devious. The only real gripe I had is there are a few occasions where the contrast between the cubes and the background make it a little hard to spot them, and if two cubes occupy the same space you can only see one.

The music is outstanding and worth a few bucks in its own right, this is recommended arcade fun.

8/10

REVIEWED BY RICHARD

◀ HI-SCORE

(The Future Was 8-Bit / Misfit)

<https://misfit.itch.io/hi-score>



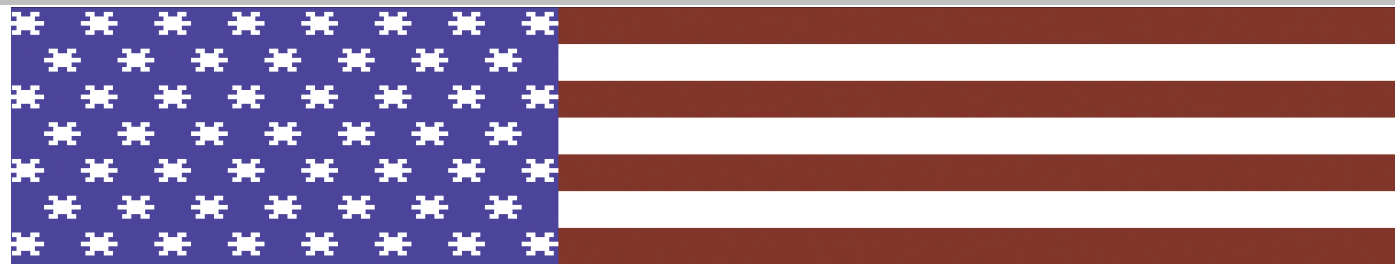
Written to tie-in with the album of the same name from Finnish band 8-Bits High, Misfit admits this is aimed at hardcore players. Choosing one of three pilots - setting the difficulty level, and with a separate high-score table for each - you must wipe out all the enemies in each level before time runs out.

Your ship can face up and down to shoot as it thrusts around, with a limited number of bullets that gradually reload. But beware and don't shoot wildly, bullets bounce off the walls and obstacles making things unpredictable, and turrets will also take pot-shots at you.

This feels like an amalgamation of the earlier Super Goatron and Crazy Blaster games, with funny level names and improved graphics. It is tough, but then that is the challenge - learning the enemy movements and tempering your own firing rate. The music is excellent too. I love the tagline - rescue the universe by destroying most of it!

8/10

REVIEWED BY KEV



STARS AND SPRITES

COMMODORE'S 15 SECONDS OF FAME Pt.1

by Lenard R. Roach

It's been said that everyone gets their "fifteen minutes of fame." For some, the moment happens completely out of the blue, totally unexpected. For others, they train for the moment, working hard for months or even years to make that moment happen.

Here in the 21st century, we are living in a society in which it has become extremely possible for a person to

get their fifteen minutes of fame. Even though this is supposed to be a story about the Commodore computer (hence the title), I still would like to first provide some background from my own life on how I was granted a first, second, and third chance at getting that fifteen minutes of fame.

Allow me to take you back to the year 1977. I was a junior high school student with a strong interest in dramatics, especially in those acting techniques dealing with comedy. For years I had studied the various comedy styles of different comedians of the day and even started to piece together a routine of my own from several of their routines. The annual Oregon Trail Junior High School Talent Show was coming up, and I wanted to be in it. I looked into my hours and hours of comedy routines that I had on cassettes and settled on the one routine that I knew would get me first place at the show - George Carlin's "The Indian Sergeant." Without the use of video recording devices (that technology was only used by the news media in those days), by sheer memory I tried to imitate all the stage movements that George did so that my version of George's routine would mimic his and still become my own.

On the night of the tryouts, I was shaking in my sneakers. I had never done any comedy for groups larger than four or five people. I was standing before a small panel of about ten people who would decide if my routine was good enough to be in the show. When my name

was called, I stepped onto the stage, stood in front of the microphone, bowed my head, raised my head, and then started straight into the routine. Though the time seemed to last a few hours, I made it to the end of the routine in about ten minutes. Many of the judges and spectators who were there for the tryouts were wiping tears from their eyes from laughing so hard. The more serious people watched to see who was coming on-stage next. I gave the judges my thank-yous and walked off the stage.

About two weeks after that performance, while in homeroom I was handed a note from the drama department to go and see Miss Demoth, the drama teacher, at the end of the school day. The adrenaline from the tryouts was well out of my system by then. When I read the note, I remembered the night of the tryouts and all the energy of that night. After receiving the note, I felt that day was the longest I ever had in school, but believe it or not, I made it to the end of the day.

I quickly went to the drama room at the other end of the school. As I walked into the room, there were several students already gathered at some of the desks, talking to each other and reminiscing about that night two weeks ago. Miss Demoth was at her desk, grading the day's tests. I found a desk and chair in the back of the room and sat down, wondering what this was all about. It wasn't too long before Miss Demoth was done grading papers and turned her attentions to the people in the room. "Good afternoon, students," she began. "I won't keep you long since I know that most of you take the bus to get home. You all received notes from the office to come here today. I want to let you know that you all have been selected by the judges and myself to be in the 1977 Oregon Trail Junior High School Talent Show. We will have two group rehearsals and a final rehearsal within the next four weeks, so I want to encourage all of you to work diligently on your craft and be ready for the show on April 22nd. Congratulations, students."

All students in the room breathed a sigh of relief. Many of them, myself included, thought that this was a meeting to announce that we did not make the cut. I couldn't believe it. I was actually going to be in my first show, and I did it on my first tryout. Thank God and George Carlin.

For the next four weeks, during two rehearsals, a final rehearsal, and my every waking minute, I went over and over George Carlin's routine, making the material more and more a part of my own personality. I mastered the routine, adding a few gestures of my own just to see if I could improve on George's routine. On show day, I threw away my improvements, thinking, "How can I improve on perfection?"

Show time - April 22, 1977. The auditorium was filled to capacity with some even standing in the aisles and along the back wall. Moms, dads, brothers, sisters, grandmothers, grandfathers, cousins, uncles, aunts, and in-laws were all in attendance just to see their

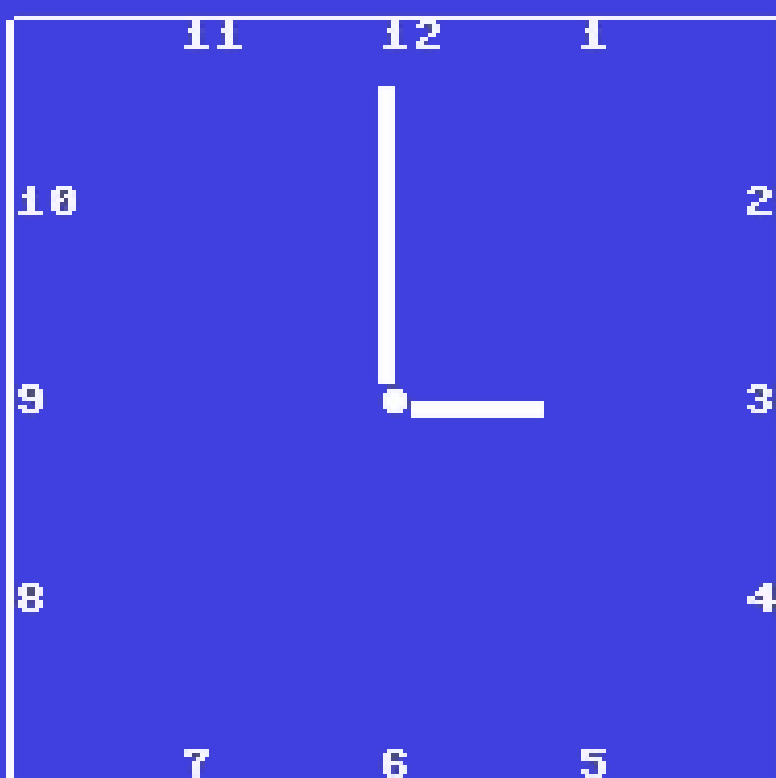
children perform their God-given talents.

In the "green room," each act was given a number give the order of when they were to appear on stage. I was number three. I had to get it together quickly in the green room with the other performers. When the show started, a stagehand came to the green room and called off the numbers in sequence. In a short time the stagehand popped in and called out, "Number three report to the backstage." It was the moment of truth. ■

CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE ...



COMEDY LEGEND - GEORGE CARLIN, PHOTOGRAPHED DURING THE 60S





DEV DIARY

PART ONE by Louie Dimovski

Welcome to the first instalment of the development diary for Yeti Mountain, an upcoming multi-genre game for the Commodore 64. The diary will recall events from my own perspective as the person sharing responsibility for the game's story concept and overall scope and design.

MID SEPTEMBER 2021 - Just a Ski Game
Novice C64 coder Russell Mills (aka Rustlemills) had started working on SkiFree64 - a C64 adaptation of Microsoft SkiFree that was released for Windows back in 1991. Russell contacts me asking if I would have time to test out the controls for even in its early stages. As I load up the game up, I can tell straight away that, multi-directional scrolling and nice graphics, I provide Russell with a couple of ideas around the skier turning mechanism and a suggestion about making some snow bumps a jump feature rather than a hazard and maybe making the game less 'hazard heavy'. The next day, Russell provides a new build with the suggested ideas implemented. I thought to myself 'Wow! that was quite quick'. Tried the revised build and the difference was instantly noticeable and let him know that I thought he did a great job and that the game was far more accessible.



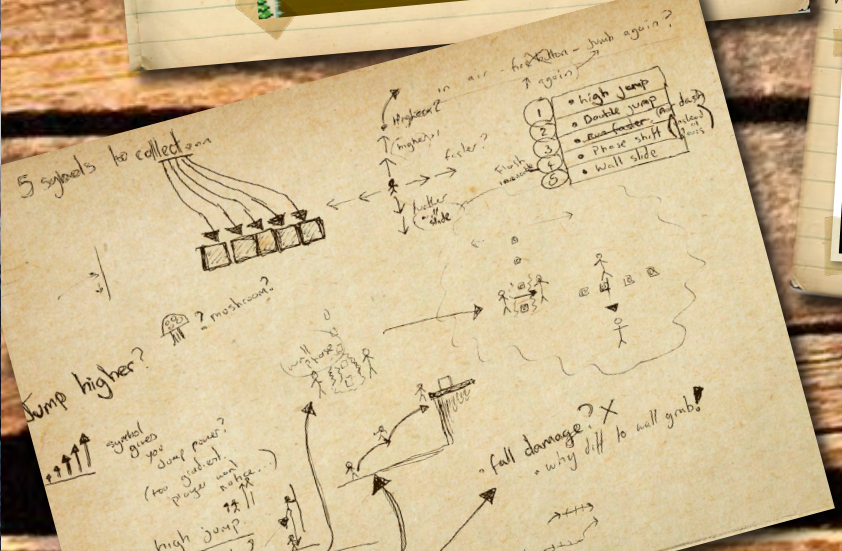
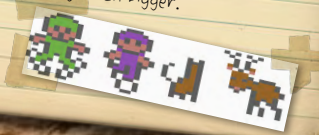
LATE SEPTEMBER 2021 - Story time
Russell asks me if I like to write game manuals and work on story concepts. He has a story idea for SkiFree64 but didn't have confidence with his story writing abilities. Given that I already had a bit of experience with writing manuals, I was quite happy to put a couple pages of text together and ask Russell to send me the concept he had. And it is at this point that the game project is about to take a significant change in direction. Russell's original story concept was about the player going to Yeti Mountain to search for a friend who has gone missing under mysterious circumstances and that the game was to have multiples stages - with the second stage requiring you to escape the Yeti cave while the third stage sees you play as the Yeti itself, eating as many skiers as possible. Seeing Russell's rough vision for SkiFree64 was inspiring and I was now eager to start working away on a revised version of the story concept that would tease the game design out further in a way that would expand out the mysterious element of the story narrative.



OCTOBER 2021 - Too inexperienced to know better
As I formerly join team Rustlemills on the development of SkiFree64, I am introduced to Rely who will be handling all things to do with sound on the project. I quickly realise that between the three of us, we have zero experience at putting together a C64 game from the ground up - what can go wrong! We swap ideas on what the game could look like and start talking about how it would be good to have our player walking around the ski resort in order to choose which ski course they want to play. Russell suggests 'you could cut-back'. He then takes things further with the idea to explore inside buildings and interact with lots of NPCs. Well, if you are up for it Russell, I am on board!



types of people we want our player to talk to, what items and objectives need to be found or completed in order to unravel the mystery of what happened to our missing friend - this isn't SkiFree 64 anymore. This is something much bigger.



NOVEMBER 2021 - Yeti Mountain is Born

We firm on the idea that stage 1 will be an exploration quest game with mini ski games forming part of the mission collection. We go around the ski resort talking to NPCs, some of which will give us quests to perform. Russell goes off and sketches a number of preliminary NPCs for us to use as part of the interactive cut-scenes.

Russell suggests that we could do different types of mini ski games - freestyle, slalom and maybe tricks. I think this is a fantastic idea as it would allow us to show off how good Russell's ski engine is and utilise it to help make the game bigger. I come up with the idea of randomising the course layout to help keep things interesting with repeated tries down the ski slope.

We also loosely come up with a design for stage 2 where it is also an exploration quest type level set inside the Yeti cave and our player has to walk carefully to try and escape.

Rely produces a couple of SID tracks for the game prologue. I think he's nailed the sound I was hoping for to match the game's theme. I would describe it as having a vibe of anticipation and mystery as our player explains the backstory as to why he is heading to Yeti Mountain Lodge. It has a cool mid-tempo beat that is quite relaxing to listen to.

While all this is going on we need to decide on the new name of the game. I suggest 'The Curse of Yeti Mountain', Russell suggests 'Mystery Yeti Mountain', while Rely likes 'Yeti Mountain'. Russell is not keen on using 'Curse' and I am not keen on 'Mystery' so we decide to proceed with Rely's suggestion - 'Yeti Mountain' it is then.



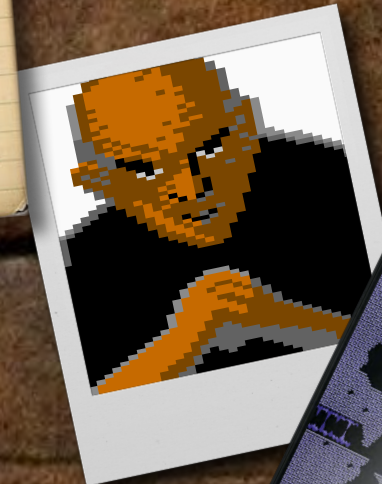
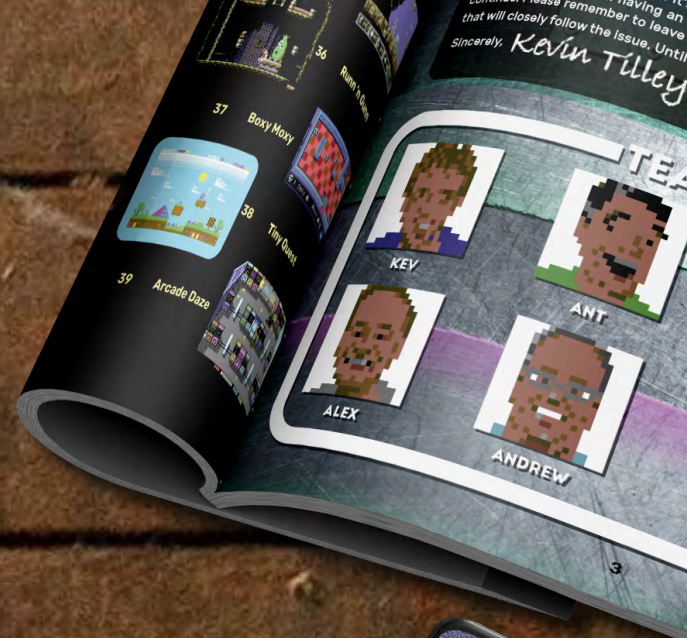
JANUARY 2021 - Stage 1 design finalised

It has been almost 12 months since Russell decided to take up C64 development. What started off as a simple ski game has evolved to a full blown multi game genre title. In his own words, Russell states "Most of the year was trial and error, this year hopefully it's focus and accomplishment...or more likely, I will ask me to do something and I am going to think to myself how on earth am I going to do that". Little did we know how true this would turn out to be.

The initial design of stage 1 was to complete quests to locate fragments of a diary that would help uncover the mystery of what happened to our friend. Russell comes up with an idea that we should change this to increasing trust level instead. The more trust the locals have in us the more they are willing to reveal. Given what we have planned for the ending, the trust level concept fits in very well.

One of my favourite games is Killed Until Dead - so I have this idea of building up evidence before we approach the NPC we call the 'nervous fella'. When ready, we approach the 'nervous fella' and these kicks of a multi-choice interaction chain where you are presented with 4 responses and you have to select the correct one in order to advance through the interaction chain. Getting through all this successfully will reward you with the vital clue as to where we would locate our missing friend.

By middle of January, we have a complete stage 1 story narrative laid out and have come up with a number of new ideas, such as respawning in your resort cabin when you die in the game and adding a Resort Organiser NPC that will help guide you to a number of the quests.



FEBRUARY 2021 - Death by rope entanglement

Russell produces a playable version of stage 1 for us to try out. He has included a few empty buildings for me to use to fill the gameplay with exploration quests that give the player something engaging to do in between the mini ski games.

I find out that I suck at ski games...or at least Russell's version of a ski game which includes a myriad of rope fences that I seem to have no problem running into. I don't even get close to finishing the ski run course. I suggest that we need to reduce the number of roped off sections as it is preventing the player from enjoying what is otherwise an expansive scrolling snowfield.

Russell comes up with an idea to introduce the basic setup of the game at the start via a cutscene to help explain what the player needs to do first. I ask for the game to start off in a car park as the player gets off the bus. Russell is not sure if he has enough chars left to do this but will go away to see what he can do.

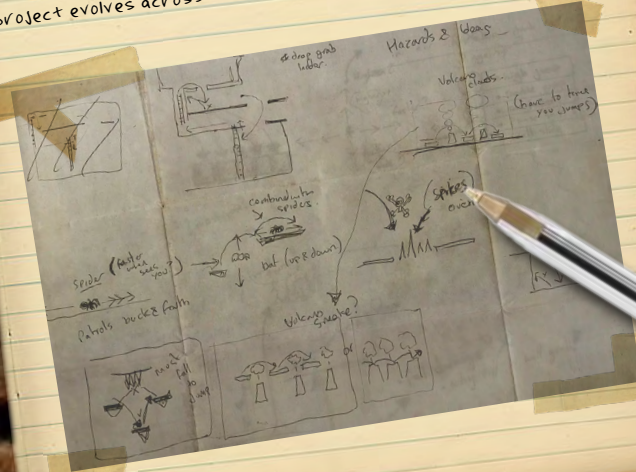
Russell has been able to fit in a bus and a car park that will serve as the starting point to the game. He had to remove chimneys from the resort buildings but I think the sacrifice is well worth it. Russell's first try at the bus is good but I thought it looked too much like an American school bus, so he changes it to look more like a greyhound bus. He has placed an NPC at the character for us to interact with and give us some subtle guidance on some of the first actions we need to carry out to get the story moving.

Russell spends some time refining NPC cutscene graphics and has settled on how he wants the 'Nervous Man' NPC to look like. Hmm, he looks somewhat familiar...

Rely mentions that he found the mobile phone quest a little hard as he could

not locate it (the location of the mobile phone is randomised with each game). I load up the demo again and sure enough, I spend a good 15 minutes walking all around the Yeti Mountain ski resort and its surrounding forests looking for the damn thing...well that is not going to be any fun is it? So, we come up with the idea to restrict the location of the mobile phone within a visible range from the walking paths.

And that is it for the first instalment to the Yeti Mountain Development Diary. Stay tuned for the next issue of Reset64 to find out how the project evolves across the remaining months of 2021.

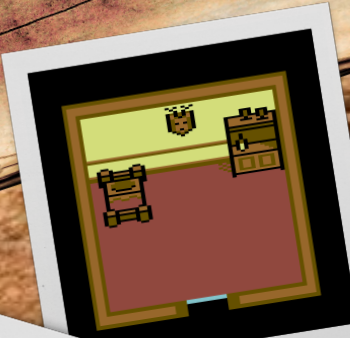
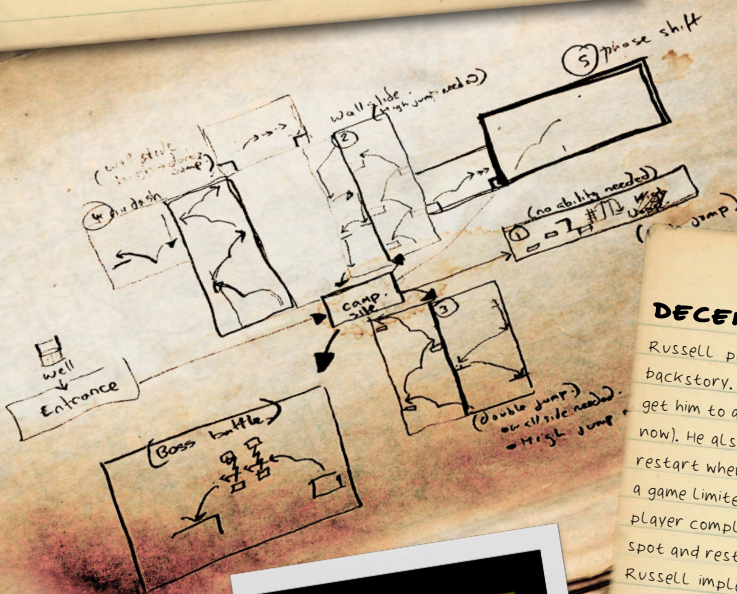


DECEMBER 2021 - So Many Ideas!

Russell produces the prologue images to Yeti Mountain, setting up the backstory. These are looking good for a preliminary version (I have plans to get him to add some animations later on but we won't tell Russell this right now). He also comes up with the concept of adding a room for the player to restart when he dies. I like this idea and confirms that Yeti Mountain won't be a game limited by a set number of lives and that our objective is to help the player complete the game as much as possible rather than being stuck in one spot and restarting from the beginning.

Russell implemented the ski tricks course which includes rails and jumps and flips. It looks awesome. The ski sub games within Yeti Mountain are coming along very nicely. One of the things I want with the Ski Resort is for it to have a bit of a live feeling to it. So, I ask Russell if we can randomise things like NPC interaction, the location of quest items and the ski courses. He says 'no problem' and a few days later Russell confirms that he has implemented the idea.

Russell surprises me with a separate engine for the Stage 2 cave level. I am astonished by what he has produced - a multi-directional scroller with our little player freely jumping around and it looks super fun. This has now just taken Yeti Mountain to another level.



C64 RPG COMICS!!

THE BARD'S TALE



ALTERNATE REALITY



UNKNOWN REALMS



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Dedicated to Milo.

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RESET64

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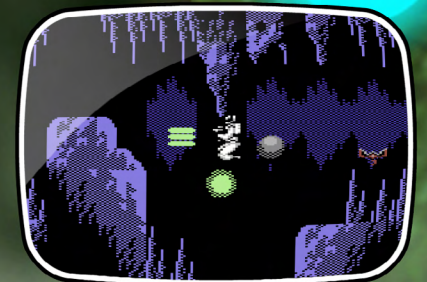
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