

RESET64

THE MAGAZINE FOR ALL THINGS N64!



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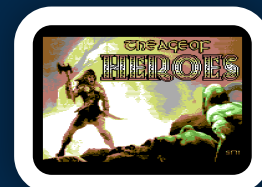
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Welcome Back!



Welcome to the new Reset issue. It's been a long time coming. In fact, 18 months have passed since our last issue! The reasons for this aren't really important, but we're here now and are very happy to be back! Between issues, a lot has happened both in the real world and within the Commodore 64 games scene. We'll forget about the real world stuff and focus on the fun! New C64 games, hardware, books and magazines continue appearing and thriving. I've said this before many times - it's a fantastic time to be a C64 owner! When you think about it, Psytronik Software re-emerged in 2008, with Protovision (even though they never stopped) really getting going again around the same time. The current C64 revolution has continued building, not slowing, and it can be argued that it has been going longer than the actual commercial life of the C64 in its heyday!

The late 2010s has seen the appearance of new Commodore 64 game publishers. These include Double Sided Games, Bitmap Soft (and its PhoenixWare budget label), The Future was 8 Bit and BoBR Games. Of course, the old guard have welcomed them in and it's so great to be involved in a scene where everyone is so supportive of each other! Psytronik, RGCD, Protovision and PolyPlay are all going strong and continue releasing outstanding boxed editions of games on physical media, as well as digital publishing on marketplaces such as itch.io. Of course, no publisher could operate without the game developers. These individuals and teams do amazing work on our favourite computer, producing games that continue to push the system and provide us countless hours of entertainment. A sincere thanks to you all!

The same can be said for C64 themed publications. Old stayers like Eight Bit, Freeze64, K&A Magazine, Fusion and Kilobyte are all going strong (often co-operating and working together), along with the soon to be and exciting re-emergence of Zzap!64 Magazine as a quarterly publication, even featuring some of the original staff that appeared over the many years it was originally published. Heck, even a new Italian Zzap!64 variant has been announced, separate from its UK counterpart.

Hardware wise, there have been so many homebrew projects with smaller scale distribution, including Wi-Fi modems and various storage solutions. Major projects like Gideon's Ultimate64 board and Ultimate cartridge continue to be super successful and amazing products. Individual Computers have given us the Turbo Chameleon, not to mention the C64 Reloaded board and new C64 cases, under the licenced Commodore branding of course (for that extra authenticity). THEC64 Mini & Maxi models are available, as well as the limited edition THEVic20, and continue to be strong products with new firmware releases adding more useful features. One of my favourites of the recent releases is the ArcadeR joystick, which we hope to review in our next issue. I haven't even mentioned EasyFlash and Kung Fu Flash yet!

There are plenty of others that deserve a mention too. Retro news sites such as Vintage is the New Old, RetroGamerNation and Indie Retro News keep us informed on the latest happenings (as they happen). There are a great range of C64 YouTube channels and shows (Beyond the Scanlines and RetroGamerNation amongst the best), Twitch streamers and podcasts to choose from, as well as sites like Commodore Format Archives that relive great memories and provide new content as well.

Well, we hope you enjoy Reset64 #13. Get in touch, and let us know what you think! Take care and see you again in the next issue.

Sincerely,

Kevin Tilley

Reset64 - February 2021

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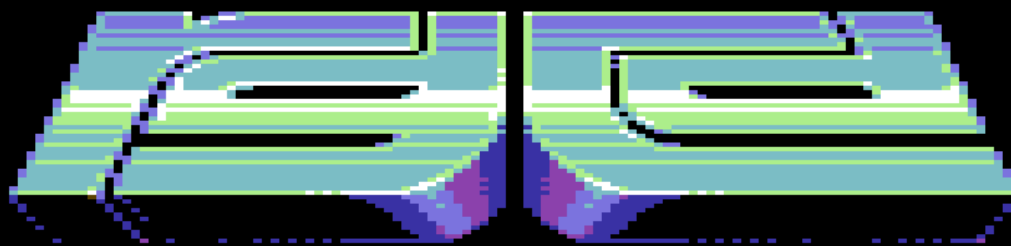
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64K RAM SYSTEM 38911 BASIC BYTES FREE, YO!
R U READY?

By Rob Caporetto

Having been on hiatus for the last few years, 2019 saw the return of RGCD's 16k Cartridge Game Development competition. It was one which saw a record number of 20 entries submitted by Commodore 64 developers for us all to enjoy. All put together by a mix of active coders, plus some who are new to the machine and yes, even ones making their triumphant return after a long time away!

Whilst the results aren't out at the time of writing, the Reset crew says thanks to everyone involved - whether as creators of the games themselves, or the RGCD team for putting another great competition together.

Alongside a quick look at all the entries, the Reset team also offers up their choice picks. Enough of the rambling, and onto the games themselves!



Blastopia DX

Developer: TND Games

Blastopia DX puts you in the line of fire in an intergalactic rescue mission to get back all our camels, which were camel-napped by an alien species after first-contact went wrong.

This involves you flying through each of 8 alien worlds, taking out alien formations to release the trapped camels before landing on the planet's landing pad, to set off the self-destruct and to move onto the next world!

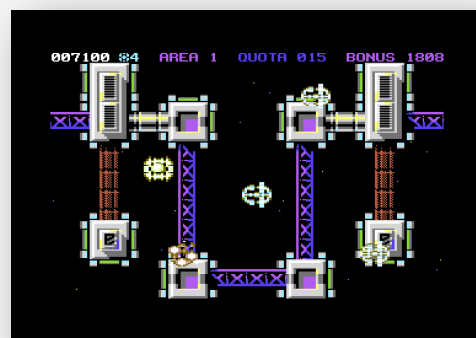


Death Weapon

Developer: C64CD Laboratories

When the Repugnant Swarm strike back in revenge, it's up to you to save the day by taking charge of the Death Weapon and take them out. Each wave is beaten by taking out all of the Swarm's forces, which slowly spawn in a unit at a time.

The big hook with Death Weapon is in its controls - it might look like an ordinary arena style shooter, but the ability to switch between firing forwards or backwards makes a difference to how you take the fight to the Swarm!

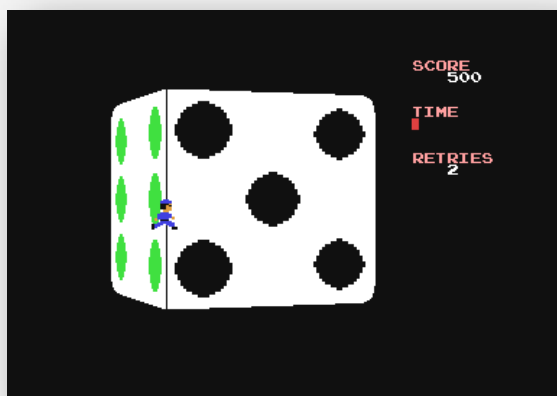


Dice Skater

Developer: Geir Straume (Concept, Code, Graphics) & Sean Connolly (Design, Music, Sound FX)

Dice Skater has you against the clock lighting up the spots across all six sides of a giant die. It sounds simple enough, but as you complete each of its levels, there are new twists and turns placed on you - from spots introducing extra friction, to the need to clear the die in a specific order.

All of these constraints truly give the type of challenge you could expect out of an arcade machine during the golden years of the arcade.

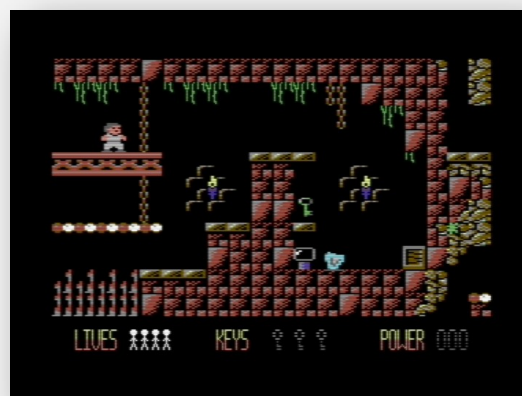


Doc Cosmos

Developer: Simon Jameson

On arriving at an alien world in search of a device rumoured to allow time travel, Doc Cosmos is instead trapped inside a complex. With the device in hand, he must journey between the two time periods to puzzle his way out.

Alongside the alternate graphics, the periods have different jumping behaviours and various obstacles will have different forms. The challenge is in managing the device's charge and figuring out the right way to explore the complex!





Let's Invade 2

Developer: *The New Dimension*

Let's Invade 2 may be this competition's take on the Space Invaders formula... but with plenty of twists added. These range from the introduction of power ups - both those which give you an edge against the enemies, but also... ones which let them turn the tables on you!

This is backgrounded by some visuals channelling the Llamasoft side of the spectrum, alongside some great pumping music which plays alongside the invader blasting carnage.



Neutron

Developer: *Sarah Jane Avory*

Neutron takes its cues from classic arcade hit Star Force, and depending on where you stand, that's either something you can be excited by, or perhaps... rather indifferent to.

Take command of your star-fighter and blast your way through the waves of opposing forces whilst avoiding their attacks. Collect the upgrades to your firepower and take down the end of level bosses in a battle to the death.

With nine levels of blasting mayhem to conquer, there is plenty of challenge with Neutron, making for a release which is exciting for those shooter fans out there.

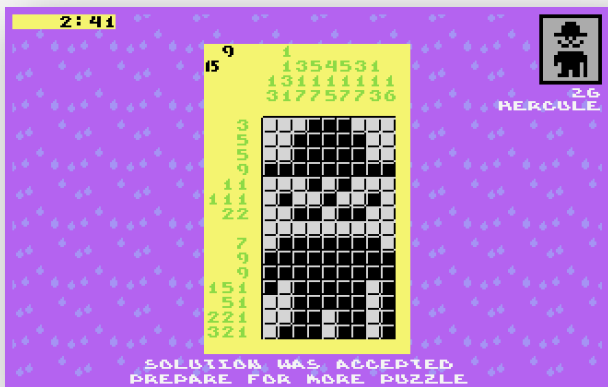


Nono Pixie

Developer: Carl-Henrik Skårstedt
(Design, Code), Marcin Majdzik
(Music)

Nono Pixie contributes a more cerebral entry to the contest - one in which you must work your way through 100 puzzles, solving each by using the numbers on the edge of each row and column to plot the necessary spots on the grid.

There's no timer, no scoring, nor any penalties to have to work through here. It's all about slowly, but surely, working your way through each puzzle, then when you're done... continue from where you left off the next time.

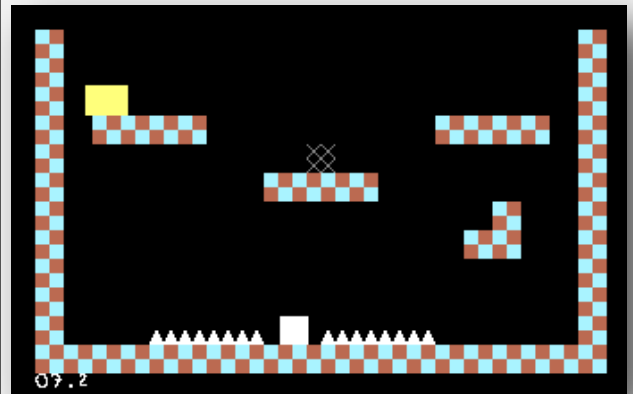


Out of Ink

Developer: Digital Monastery

Out of Ink may look like just another platformer, but it certainly brings its own unique twists to the table. Your goal in each level is to take out all the enemies - typically by bouncing on their heads, then to make it to the exit.

Beyond that? There's plenty of spikes which need to be dodged, along with plenty of thinking. Especially with the need to learn how to use the walls to your advantage in moving about the stage and getting to the exit as fast as possible.



Pocket Dungeon

Developer: Endurion

In Pocket Dungeon, you are tasked with that most important of duty: fight your way down to the bottom of the dungeon, locate the relic, then escape!

Seeing a procedurally generated RPG like this on the Commodore 64 is a unique prospect in this day and age. The variety of generated maps, and the colourful critters you'll have to face and deal with helps make it far more visually distinctive than what's come before.



Relentless64

Developer: Paul Kooistra (Design & Code), Harris Kladis (Graphics), Pierre Martin (Music)

There's no plot here. Nor are there bosses, or pick ups or anything else which gets in the way of the action. It's just you and your Starfighter, with nothing but loads of enemies standing in your way.

Relentless64 focuses more on scoring - taking out each enemy wave increases your score multiplier, allowing you to earn more points. Fail to take out a formation and your multiplier is reset back to 1x.

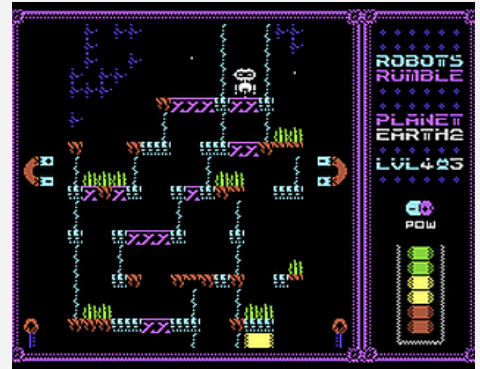


Robots Rumble

Developer: Digital Monastery

Another conversion of a title originally developed for the Spectrum. Robots Rumble has you tasked with guiding a series of robots into a series of lava pools.

This is done by manipulating a series of magnets which pull a robot towards it. Successfully navigating them through the level requires plenty of quick shifting of them in order to make sure you don't lead them into any of the pieces of Kryptonite laying about.



For if a robot was to make contact... the resulting kaboom would make for quite the ecological disaster!

Space Orbs

Developer: Carl-Henrik Skårstedt

Space Orbs is quite the interesting puzzler, and one of the few submissions where a second player comes in real handy. The goal for each level is to clear out the orbs, matching them up in groups of three or more.

The challenge comes from having to fetch them from the other side of the screen. Which is where your partner comes in handy. You'll need to coordinate with them to pass orbs between yourselves, to ensure you can keep the chains running.



Stercore XD

Developer: C64CD Laboratories

The C64CD Labs team are back with a more conventional blaster this time around. In Stercore XD, the defence of said artificial world falls on you as the Repugnant Swarm begin their first offensive.

There's a great amount of unpredictability with how the swarm attacks, and it adds quite the spice to the battling mechanics. As do the visuals, with the stage elements passing both in front, and behind your craft... at quite an astonishing speed as well.



Super Goatron

Developer: Misfit

Super Goatron can certainly be called a little tough to describe. In this single screen blaster, you're up against the clock, as you blast the enemies away before time runs out.

Which sounds simple enough... but there are quite a few twists involved, starting with your craft. You don't just move horizontally on the playfield, but are able to teleport to the opposite side. There's also the ability to thrust, which you can use to hop onto an adjacent wall.

Even still, you can't just fire frantically here, as missed shots can possibly be reflected back at you, ending your day in no short order.



Swarm

Developer: Commocore

Swarm offers one of the more complex submissions - a full on Real Time Strategy game, squeezed into a mere 16k.

The resources you'll be battling over are a series of asteroids located in an uncolonised system. Which of course are a threat you now have to contend with as you work your way through, locating neutral asteroids and setting up resource gathering operations.

Only then can you take the fight to the enemy. This is done by using what you've gathered to build up a fleet of your own to take over the sector!



Tenebrae Macabre

Developer: Digital Monastery

Digital Monastery return once again with a conversion of a Mojon Twins release. The Time Mistress Mega Meghan is trapped inside the crypt of Alicante, and escape can only be achieved by lighting up the magic candles found inside.

Exploration is hampered by the rooms being pitch black in darkness, until each room's candle is found, though help is at hand by the occasional lightning storm illuminating the room for brief moments, giving you a chance to find your way through the tricky platforming.



The Royal Hunt

Developer: Bimbarlade

After far too many boars have been hunted by an obsessed King, they rise up and are out for revenge in The Royal Hunt.

Survival is the name of the game - as the King, you must make your way through an 80 screen maze. With it randomly generated on each play, this isn't an easy task. Especially with the boars hiding away, rifles trained until the perfect moment when you're in their sights. Stealth won't help you here... instead, it's about frantically keeping out of the way until you can dart through the hedges!



Vegetables

Developer: Mike Richmond

Vegetables... a vegetable themed Match-3 puzzler which is about matching groups of them in order to go for the best score. Match-3 titles aren't particularly common here, and seeing another chilled release for the competition is most welcome.

Take your time, make your matches and have a blast trying to beat your high scores, all whilst managing the increasing challenge. A challenge which comes in the form of fixed blocks being added to the board as play goes on.



Ice Cold Beer

Developer: Megastyle

Ice Cold Beer is the lone entry in the competition to originate from the arcades, specifically, an early 80's release by Taito. Your goal is to land a ball in a randomly chosen hole on the board. Getting the ball there requires you to move the bar up and down, by adjusting each edge.

It may sound easy, but the challenge is always the balance between gentle movements, and the pressures of the countdown clock. Especially as doing it faster nets you more bonus points, which of course is truly your objective here!



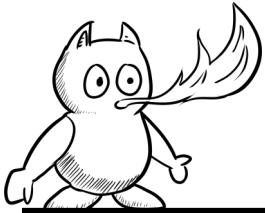
Lala Prologue

Developer: Digital Monastery

A conversion of a Spectrum game originally coded by the Mojon Twins, Lala Prologue has you playing Lala, a student of the Great Witch Academy, who must clean up a mess she's caused when messing about in her teacher's absence.

This requires her to move through the grounds of the Academy, collecting the chemicals and other parts, all whilst trying to avoid the meanies and find the keys to unlock doors located deeper within the grounds.





Our Picks...



Rob:

From all the entries, it's got to be Neutron which really was the one I enjoyed the most. It doesn't bring anything new to the table, instead focusing on doing it spectacularly well! It's slick, tight, challenging and a great shmup experience which feels right at home on the machine. As a pick up and play experience, Neutron is one which certainly can't be beat!



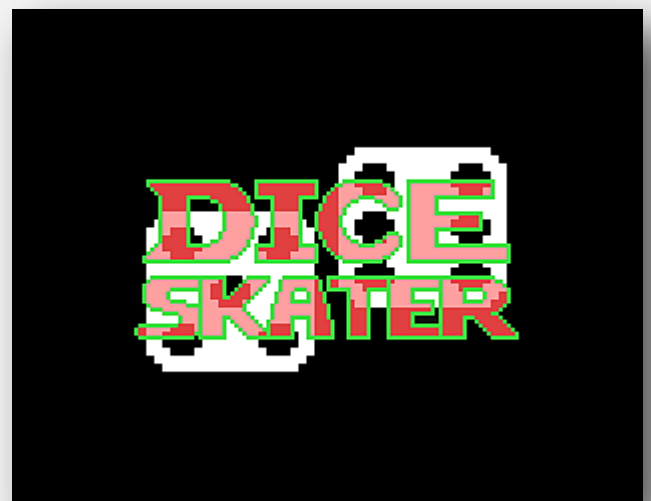
Louie:

Doc Cosmos would be the stand out of the competition. The game was a breath of fresh air to a gaming scene that was starting to get a little stale. The arcade adventure platform gaming on offer is enhanced with the use of seamless shifting timelines, changing the game's graphical style and the main character attributes, to add depth to the puzzle solving element of the game.



Merman:

I really enjoyed Dice Skater. The rotation effect is well done, the rest of the presentation is effective and the controls feel right. What is particularly clever is the progression, with different levels requiring different tasks. It is easy to pick up and fun to go back to. With so many different types of game and the high quality of the entries in the competition, this was one of my favourites.



MIX-I-DISK

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.

Reset Disk Menu (TND)

Code, Character Set and Sprites: Richard Bayliss

Logo: Shine

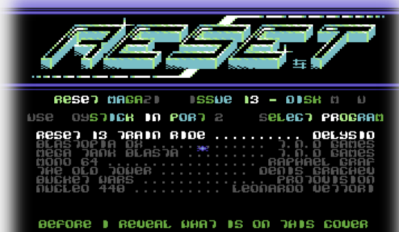
Music: Flex

IRQ Turbo Loader: Martin Piper

The Reset disk menu has been coded especially for Reset64 by Richard Bayliss, with a logo by Shine and featuring stunning new music by Flex.

Use a joystick in Port 2 to navigate the menu. The menu is 100% THEC64 Mini and Maxi compatible too, just make sure you select the Kernal loader for 100% compatibility.

Special thanks to Richard, Shine, Martin and Flex for their efforts in putting this menu together.



Reset Intro: Train Ride (Delysid)

Code: Dr. J

Music: Richard Bayliss

Alex Goldblat (aka Dr. J) once again helps the engine and drives our Reset #13 greets intro, just for your pleasure. An appropriate train themed intro for a train themed issue!

Richard Bayliss has boarded and composed a brand new SID tune titled "Train Ride" that you can sit back and relax with as you take the journey.

The Reset intro is a chance for us to informally say hello and greet our friends in the scene.

Thanks to Dr. J and Richard (as well as the creators of the various graphics and character sets). Choo choo!



Mega Tank Blasta (TND)

Programming and Music: Richard Bayliss

Graphics, Design, SFX: Richard Bayless, Alf Yngve

Music: Richard Bayliss

We are proud to present you Mega Tank Blasta, a new Alf Yngve/Richard Bayliss co-production made on SEUCK, that has also been given an overhaul with Martin Piper's REDUX engine.

Inspired by Blazing Thunder by Hi-Tec Software, Mega Tank Blasta features 2 player co-op shooting action and epic end level bosses. The plot and gameplay instructions are contained within the game.

Thanks to Richard and Alf for providing the game exclusively for the Reset Mix-i-Disk.



Mono Reset Edition (Clay Spoerri & Raphael Graf)

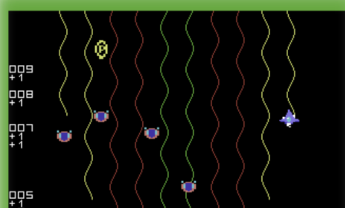
**Programming, Design,
Graphics and Sound:
Clay Spoerri, Raphael
Graf**

Only previously available on cartridge, this is the first time that Mono has officially been available on disk, and for free too!

Each kill earns you points, and with each hit you lose some. Hit negative territory and it's game over man!

This edition of Mono has harder bosses and enemies than the original cart version, as well as other gameplay tweaks. We hope you enjoy it!

Thanks to Clay and Raphael for submitting the game.



Nucleo 448 (TND)

**Graphics & Sound:
Leonardo Vettori**

**REDUX Engine:
Martin Piper**

**Programming and Sound:
Richard Bayliss**

A mysterious message has been received from deep in outer space. It's not good news. A weapon capable of destroying the universe is on it's way, deep within an asteroid named Nucleo 448. Many were sent before you, and they all failed. It's now your mission to try and save Earth. No pressure.

This SEUCK masterpiece, by Leonardo Vettori, has been enhanced by Richard, using Martin Piper's SEUCK engine. The game also features massive levels, powerups and formidable end of level bosses!



Blastopia DX (TND)

**Programming, Design &
Sound: Richard Bayliss**

Graphics: Saul Cross

Richard has enhanced the original Blastopia game and presents you with Blastopia DX. The DX tag means it's way better!

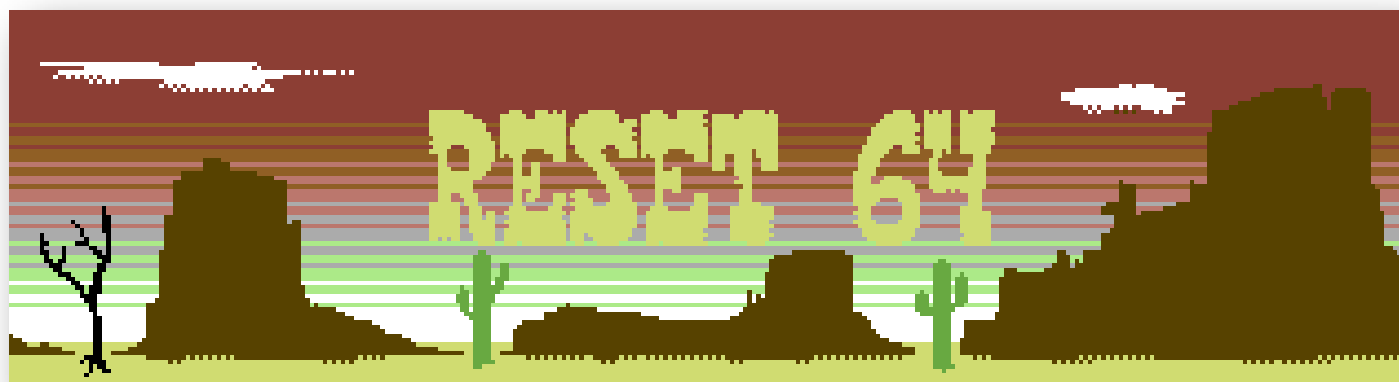
"Planet Earth has been invaded by Aliens. All they wanted are the Earth's camels in order to use them to produce a deadly weapon. Scientists discover the Aliens home planets and Earth decides to fight back. Your mission is to fly through 8 different alien planets, fighting wave after wave of aliens. You must destroy a whole alien wave in order to rescue a camel. Once your quota has been reached, reach and land on to the launch pad and then as you warp out, the alien planet gets destroyed. Can you put an end to the alien invasion, and send the camels home? Good luck fighter!"



Forever Extending Hungry Snake (TND)

Programming, Sound and Graphics: Richard Bayliss

A nice surprise from Richard. Forever Extending Hungry Snake is a small game Richard programmed completely on THEC64 Maxi using old-school disk utilities. Guide your ever extending snake around the arena and eat as much fruit as you can. But beware... there are both positive and negative effect pick-ups that will randomly appear!





Bucket Wars V1.3

(Provision)

Programming: Daniel Hotop
(Oziphantom)

Graphics: Oziphantom,
Robin Levy

Title Screen: Lobo

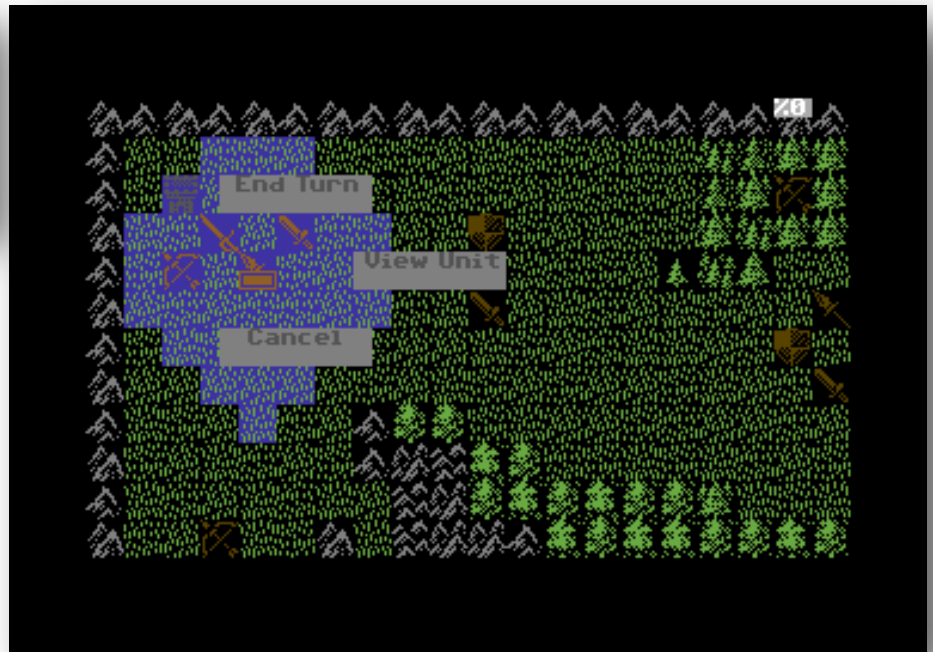
Music: Mibri

Your neighbour has stolen your bucket and now it's all out war! Bucket Wars is a turn based strategy game, with the ultimate aim to defeat the neighbouring Lord and retrieve your stolen bucket.

You, the Lord of your own domain, have 5 different units at your disposal, each with their own strengths, weaknesses and abilities. The opposing Lord also has his own legions, scattered around the land lying in wait. You can always attack first, or play defensive. Either way, that bucket must be retrieved! Be careful though, there are rules to learn and tactics to think about.

On offer are three modes of play (easy, normal, hard). When you begin your turn, you can instruct each unit what to do (press fire on each unit for its movement range in green, attack in red), check their stats, or end its turn. To access the in game menu of each unit, hover your icon over the unit and hold down fire.

To win the game, get your Lord in the centre of the opposing castle, as well as kill the opposing Lord and his units along the way.



Archer



**4 range,
Weak damage,
No defence.**

Armour



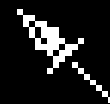
**Solid defence,
Good for
blocking units.**

Fighter



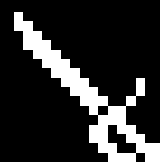
**Decent damage,
Not good against
shields.**

Lancer



**2 range,
Good against
shields.**

Lord



**High HP,
Solid accuracy, Low damage.**

HINTS:

- ◆ Forest & water offer extra avoid.
- ◆ Shields can't move into the forest.
- ◆ Archer can move into water.
- ◆ There are shortcut keys available - V (view units), E (ends turn for active unit or ends round), C (cancel on movement and attack).
- ◆ Keep a close eye on your stats and use the armour to protect weak units.

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Hokuto Force Game Developing Division



Compiled by Kevin Tilley



The 2020 **Reset64 4kb Craptastic Games Competition** is a wrap, attracting a record breaking 38 entries from various teams and individuals. The competition is billed as a chance for entrants to produce a game with a strict 4k memory restriction... silly themes certainly encouraged but not mandatory. It's a non-serious, fun compo for beginners and experts alike.

The panel of judges found it difficult and there was a lot of variation between scores, highlighting the overall quality of

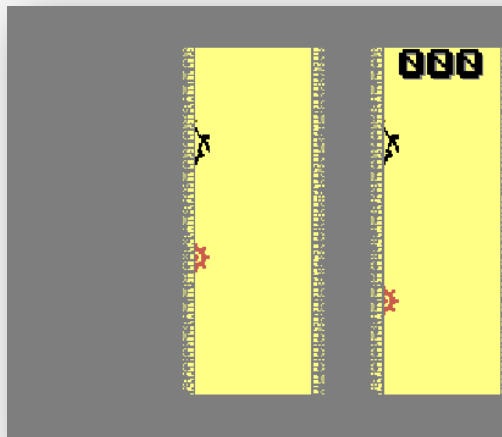


Image: Fall by Megastyle was the 2020 Craptastic winner.

the entries and the closeness of the competition in general!

The team at Megastyle came out winners, with the brilliant Fall achieving 28.71 points out of a possible 35.

The official compilation disk, produced by Richard Bayliss, is available now from the Reset

itch.io page. Results can be found on Ausretrogamer, with a full judges report published in [Vandalism News #71](#). Thanks again to all participants, sponsors and judges!

<https://ausretrogamer.com/2020-reset64-c64-craptastic-4kb-game-competition-results/>

<https://reset64-magazine.itch.io/>



[The RVG SQUAD](#), [Shallan](#) and [Arlasoft](#) have joined forces to host a new C64 gamedev compo, based on Cascade's infamous 1983 game compilation **Cassette 50**.

"This competition is about creating a brand new compilation tape - with any proceeds to be



donated to charity - featuring games by C64 developers of all levels of experience, focusing on great gameplay in a mini-game format while still retaining the look or feel of a Cassette 50 game, such as it was!"

To keep the entries in the spirit of the original compilation, the creators are limited to 4kb and certain tight memory address restrictions.

At the time of writing, the competition has attracted a staggering 31 entries, with more on their way. The hosts have also linked YouTube and programming resources to help and encourage beginner programmers to enter.

<https://itch.io/jam/the-c64-cassette-50-charity-competition>





Golem Books are set to release their latest book **Arcade Imperfect**. Written by Jerri Ellis (with help from Andrew Fisher), the book will have a 500 copy run and features a dust cover with new Oliver Frey artwork.

"Arcade Imperfect is a 300-page history of the classic coin-ops of the '70s, '80s and '90s, and the stripped-down conversions that desperate 8-bit home computer owners had to make do with back in the day. The book is intended to serve as an essential

companion to The Book of the Game of the Film, with the two books between them pretty much covering the entire licensed (and unlicensed) 8-bit micro adaptation story."

<https://www.golembooks.co.uk>

@Golem_Books



TND is hosting its final **SEUCK Creation Compo**. Over the years, the compo has encouraged some outstanding SEUCK games that have shown incredible innovation and imagination.

"Like with the past few competitions the aim of the Official C64 SEUCK Compo 2021 is to create and generate a fully playable game, with aid of using the Shoot Em Up Construction Kit or the Sideways Scrolling SEUCK. The

objective is to make any kind of game genre that you think might stand out in front of the crowd. It will be worth it, since last year's winner managed to create something quite original, well presented and a whole lot of fun. The prize was a fully enhanced version of the game. If you win this year's compo, the same thing can happen to you."

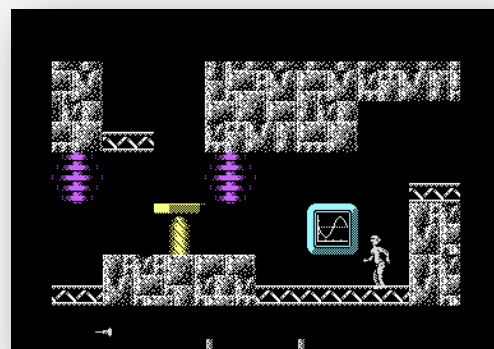
As usual, the winning game will be fully enhanced by Richard Bayliss and ported to Martin Piper's SEUCK Redux engine.

Last year's winner, Synthia (a flick screen adventure game!),

has even been released as a boxed cartridge by [BoBR Games](#).

Entries for the 2021 SEUCK compo close on 30th April. Compo rules and details can be found on the TND website.

http://tnd64.unikat.sk/Seuck_Compo_2021.html





Carleton Handley has just released his latest Commodore64 project, **Runn 'n' Gunn**. Perhaps a first on the C64, the game will be episodic, released as 3 separate missions. Saul Cross has contributed all graphics and sound to the project.

"Runn 'n' Gunn' is a platform game with shooting elements. The player is in control of two characters. Willie Runn can run fast and do a double jump but Wally Gunn has a better weapon. The player can switch between them at will depending on the situation they're in. Some sections need a specific character to be able to complete them.

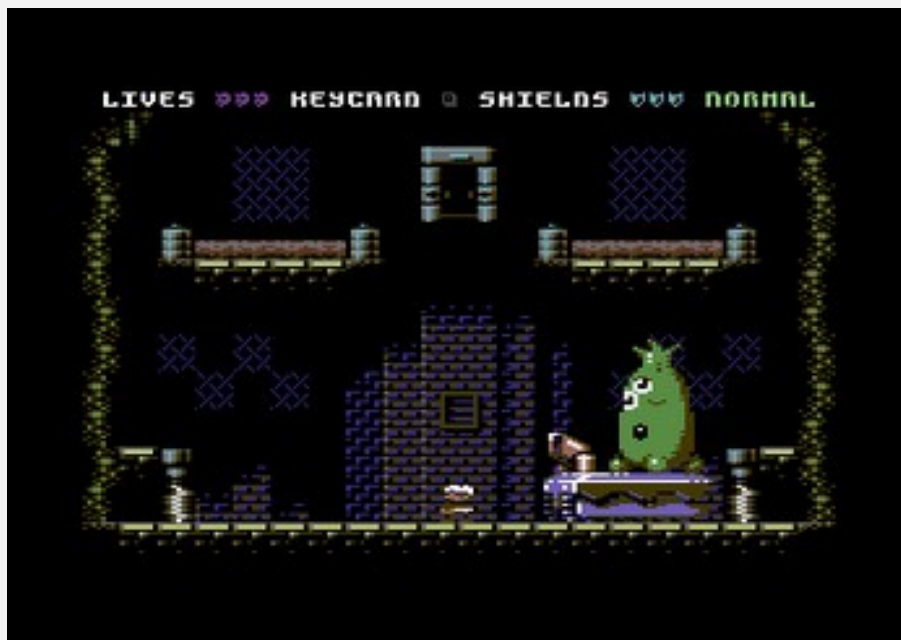
The game features three difficulty levels to suit all skill levels."

"I'll be releasing the game as three separate missions each featuring multiple stages. Each mission is fairly big on their own and tasks the player with jumping, shooting and exploring to reach new areas and defeat the final boss."

Carleton has stated that a physical release, containing all three episodes, is a possibility depending on the success of the game.

@CarletonHandley

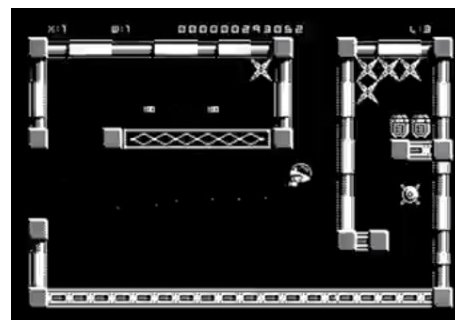
<https://carletonhandley.itch.io/runn-n-gunn>



Simon Jameson (Doc Cosmos) has been working hard on his Commodore 64 port of **Cecconoid**, to be published by [Thalamus Digital Publishing](#). The game is a stylised flick screen shooter, heavily inspired by Raffaele Cecco's 80s classic, Cybernoid.

Simon is making fantastic progress on the game and development is ongoing. He regularly makes live development Streams on Twitch.

@EvolvateGames





Stefan Vogt (Hibernated/Curse of Rabenstein) is close to finishing his latest text adventure project, **Hibernated 1 Director's Cut**. The game has been rewritten from scratch and features additional content in the form of new puzzles and narrative.

Meanwhile, Stefan is working hard on the follow up, Hibernated 2, which is slated for a tentative late 2021 release.

Hibernated 1 - Director's Cut will be released through Puddle and its release is imminent.

@8bit_era

Developer Sarah Jane Avery has provided an update for her amazing looking forthcoming C64 RPG, **Briley Witch Chronicles**, which is based on her series of books of the same name.

"Briley Witch Chronicles is a Japanese-inspired RPG for the C64, based upon the first four Briley Witch novels. It's a story-driven game using turn-based combat, with the player controlling Briley and her cat Smokey as the story unfolds. A dark evil is rising, and it's up to Briley and her friends to put a stop to it! The story flow of the game has been completed, so now it's just a matter of balancing everything! That includes experience progression, weapon/spell damage plus the cost of various items, plus balancing



all the enemies and their weapons. Combat can be challenging, so I'll be adding an Easy mode for players who want an easy time with combat."

@SarahJaneAvery



The team at Megastyle have been working hard on their C64 port of the Atari 2600 shooter, **The Empire Strikes Back**. We spoke to coder, Chris Stanley.

"The Empire Strikes Back will be a long-overdue C64 port of the Atari 2600 original. The idea was suggested by Megastyle artist, Rune Spaans, who is a huge fan of Star Wars and he felt that we could bring a worthy version of this classic game to our favourite 80's computer.

I'd recently finished making Jumpin' Jalopies for the 4k

Crapstastic compo so I offered to take on the task of coding, with Rune being responsible for all the pretty pixels.

As of January 2021, most of the core game routines are in place and I'm currently putting the finishing touches to the title sequence. Still a ton of work to

do of course and I'm trying to fit in as much coding as I can manage in my meagre spare time. We have no intention of rushing things, however, and really want to produce something we can be proud of and that the C64 community will enjoy!"

@ScubaChris72

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

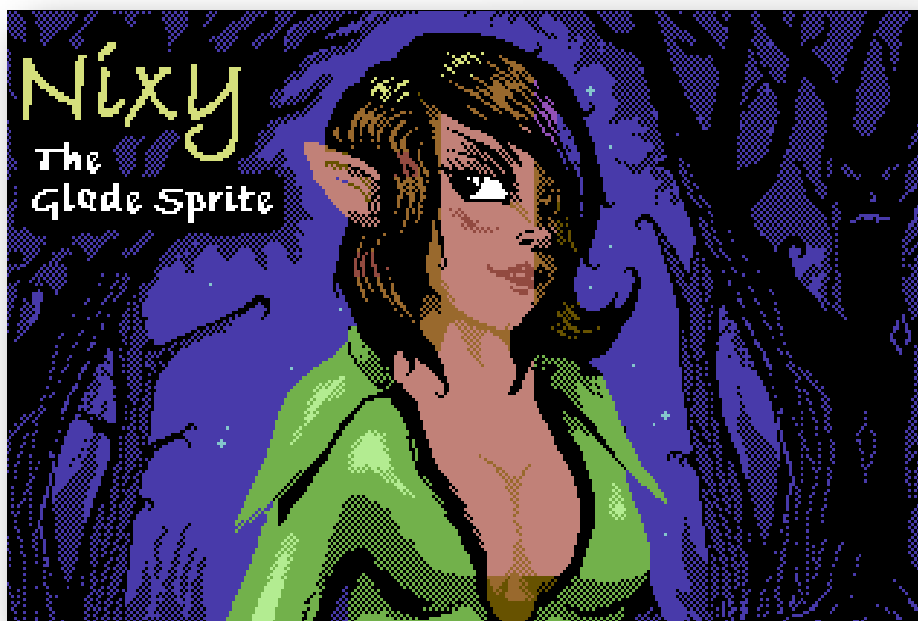


Paul Koller is continuing to work hard on his current Commodore 64 project, **Spelunky 64**, a demake of Spelunky, the 2008 indie 2D platform game by Derek Yu, which has been released on a variety of platforms since its initial release.

"Although progress is not always as fast as I would hope, the last couple of months, quite a lot of stuff has been implemented. Currently you can already play through the complete game (all 17 levels), with all 4 worlds implemented. The 6 different music tracks and multiple (simultaneous!) sfx are also in. It's still all within a single load, due to multiple levels of compression that I used and the procedural level generation! Due to the complexity of the original game, quite a lot of additional features still need to be implemented. I'm

currently working on finishing up the end-boss behaviour. After that, there are still lots of smaller things need to be done, like implementing some additional weapons, and the ability to carry around some enemies (and use them to your advantage)."

@paulko64



Known for their high quality spectrum games, Bubble Soft Games are gearing up for their first C64 release.

"Nixy the Glade Sprite is a sprite tasked with looking after the magical Glade. When the plants and creatures suddenly turn against her she must venture through the forest and the caves

below to try and restore balance to the Glade or lose her home forever!

Nixy has been in development for just over a year now and its finally ready to release. It's a brand new engine created from the ground up with amazing visuals and audio. The game will soon be available on digital



download, tape, disk and cartridge formats."

So far, only the Psytronik disk version has been officially announced.

<http://www.psytronik.net/newsite/index.php/c64/134-nixy>

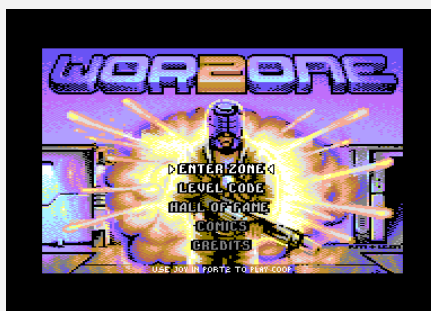
<https://www.bubblesoftgames.com/>

Wor2One is an arena shooter from [Rushing Pixel Games](#), inspired by games such as Wizard of Wor, Xeno Crisis and Tenebra Macabre and lead by Balázs Oszvald (Poison/Singular Crew).

Balázs spoke with us and revealed the following about the game.

"In 2019 I visited a retro themed game jam (Ready Game Jam) with my friends Zsolt Kajtár, Mihály Szemeti and (virtually) László Vincze in Budapest/Hungary. If you are not familiar with game jams, those are events where participants produce a game in a very limited time, actually in a sole weekend.

Our ambitious plans projected dark mazes illuminated by light. Still, as you could expect we didn't meet our goal, the time was not enough to complete the game. At the end of Sunday we had a prototype of two players running in a maze shooting each other. No monsters, no levels, no real gameplay. I had plans with this game idea beyond the game jam. It has much more potential in it, so much as releasing it as a retail product.

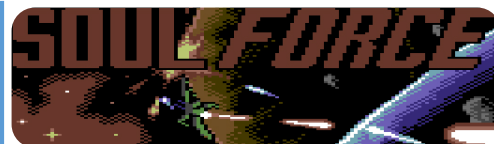


I managed to convince Soci (Zsolt Kajtár) to continue coding and Vincenzo (László Vincze) to compose sound effects and a main theme. A few days ago we have successfully organised the very first, real test run with selected players. Of course, there are issues we have to solve and most importantly create more content. According to responses, the game is very likely to have both a story and score attack mode."

Wor2One appears to be shaping up beautifully, with Rushing Pixel Games planning a full retail release on GMOD2 cartridge format (as well as disk). We'll be watching the development closely!

<https://www.facebook.com/wor2one/>

<https://wor2one.com/>



Protovision has released Sarah Jane Avory's stunning new C64 horizontally scrolling shooter, **Soul Force**.

Featuring 20 levels, full screen bitmaps between each level, parallax scrolling and an arsenal of powerups, Soul Force is an outstanding release that should keep C64 shooter fans busy for a long while.

Soul Force is available now as a digital download from the Protovision [itch.io](https://protovision.itch.io/soul-force) page, or as a physical cartridge edition from the Protovision shop.

<https://protovision.itch.io/soul-force>

<https://www.protovision.games/>





It would be a crime if the amazing **MW Ultra** didn't get a mention in Reset #13! The sprawling arcade adventure/run n' gun has been released by Protovision/Psytronik and is available as a digital download or cartridge/disk right now. We'll have a full review in our next issue!

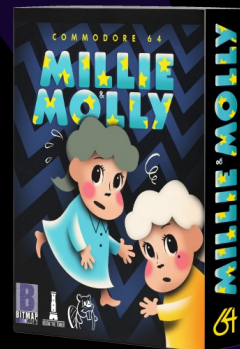
<https://protovision.itch.io/mw-ultra>



MILLIE & MOLLY

BOBR Games /Bitmap Soft/Carleton Handley
 Cartridge/Disk/Tape/Digital Download
<https://carletonhandley.itch.io/millie-and-molly>

Code: Carleton Handley
 Level design: Chun Wah Kong, Patsy Chim
 Graphics: Saul Cross
 Music: Hasse Axelsson-Svala
 Reviewers: Ant & Neil



Puzzlers have been a staple diet of many a C64 owner over the years and we've certainly been spoiled for choice. While many games and genres haven't aged too well on the humble C64, the arcade puzzler is still just as playable now as it ever was. Games such as Tetris, Puznic and the like are proof in the pudding that flashy graphics and clever effects aren't necessarily a requirement, just clever level design and a sound concept is more than enough.

In comes a rejuvenated Carleton Handley. Free from the shackles of deadlines, budgets and locked in designs of the commercial gaming industry, Carleton has

been able to create a game purely on his own terms. Based on an obscure Sharp MZ-700 title from 1984 (Catrap, or Pitmin as it is known in Japan, was also released a bit later on the Gameboy and 3DS), Carleton has borrowed the concept and warped it into 2020 - on the C64 of course! With a fresh coat of paint and a new set of levels, Millie & Molly is proof that sometimes, 64kb and 1MHz of grunt is all you really need.

The game is a single screen arcade puzzler, borrowing gameplay directly from the dawn of time and mixing it with some modern design

sensibilities - something that we aren't too familiar with on the ol' breadbin, but elements which are slowly creeping into modern Commodore 64 gamedev and design. Obvious examples include the omission of a lives counter altogether, allowing the player to enjoy the moment without fear of losing progress, and picking things up later through a handy level password system.

The concept is simple enough. Navigate the levels as Millie, Molly or sometimes both, collecting the collectables, and if you get stuck or make a mistake... hitting the rewind button and trying again. There's



Puzzle games leave me a bit cold on account of me being a bit of a thickie, but when one looks and sounds as gorgeous as Millie & Molly, even I can manage to get the old grey matter to sputter into life.

The cute sprites and animation are a delight to behold, with many lovely details (that screen wipe!). This, coupled with the very well designed and atmospheric music, truly makes the head-scratching worthwhile, even on some of the tougher puzzles.

The difficulty curve is initially very gentle as new game elements are slowly added. However, at some point I felt that curve become something of a rollercoaster as the difficulty spiked and fell rather sharply as the game progressed. Somewhere around level 50 I ended up defenestrating my top hat out of my conservatory window, disgusted at my own dullardness and nincompoopery.

Still, I enjoyed Millie & Molly a great deal and it's definitely my favourite of the seemingly recent spate of "puzzle games wot let you switch characters".

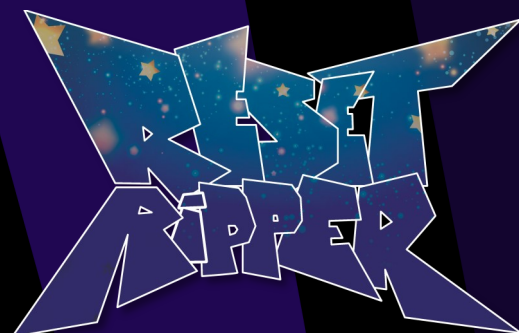
Now, where's me bleedin' top hat?

also digging, climbing, pushing and a variety of monsters that need avoiding. 100 devious single screen levels have been designed, with five themed worlds and eight pieces of music to go with them.

Millie & Molly is available as a budget priced digital download from Carleton's itch page. It can be purchased as a physical edition, on disk and tape format, from BitmapSoft. A boxed cartridge edition is also available from BOBR Games.



"We see too many games that look and sound spectacular but forget that the whole point is to enjoy yourself. Not so Millie & Molly."



With no lives to worry about and the genius rewind feature that lets you undo your foul ups, Millie & Molly encourages you to experiment and doesn't punish mistakes. The game takes you by the hand every now and then, showing you how new elements work on one screen and letting you try out what you've learned on the next. That gave me a deeply satisfying sense of achievement and forward momentum, and even when I got stuck - which was a lot - I was happy to take a risk and see what worked, trying stuff out and rewinding if I got trapped or couldn't progress. No fear, all fun.

We see too many games that look and sound spectacular but forget that the whole point is to enjoy yourself. Not so Millie & Molly. In fact, the only downside to this gorgeous slab of software is that you'll start to see how poorly designed some other games are. First class.



Below The Tower: An Interview with Carleton Handley

The Making of Millie & Molly.

By Kevin Tilley



Carleton Handley has been programming games on the Commodore 64 since the days of fluoro coloured tank tops and roller-skating. Since beginning his programming career at Walking Circles, Carleton has triumphantly returned to the C64 with Millie & Molly, a game that can be comfortably mentioned in the same breath as the esteemed words "game of the year!"

Kevin Tilley chats with Carleton about Millie, Molly and the reasons why developing games on the Commodore 64 in 2020 is, well, still a thing!



Kevin Tilley: Hi Carleton. Thanks for joining us at Reset! First of all, congratulations on the success of Millie & Molly. It's definitely one of the C64 gaming highlights of 2020. Before we start talking about Millie, can you please tell our readers a bit about yourself and your history with the C64?

Carleton Handley: Hi, thanks. I love talking about this stuff so I'm happy to answer your questions.

I received a Commodore 64 for Christmas 1984 and it came packed in with an International Soccer cart. I also bought Chiller and Daley Thompson's Decathlon

and we spent the whole of Christmas playing those games. After a year or so I met a friend who could code and it really intrigued me, so I started messing around with basic and quickly moved to machine code (as we called it then). It was a thrill seeing stuff I'd written show up on screen.

KT: The first of your new C64 games was Grid Pix. How did you find the transition coming back to coding on the C64? How different is your dev setup compared to your days as a professional C64 programmer?

CH: I started coding Grid Pix in 2018 I think. I really enjoyed going back to 6502. There's a simplicity to the hardware and 6502 itself which means everything came flooding back quite quickly. However beneath that there's are hidden complexities and tricks which make a good game shine.

In the 1980s I was lucky enough to have a software development system (PDS) which ran on a PC connected to the C64. Everything was very speedy and it wasn't an issue if your code crashed. These days it's almost the same but I use VICE for most development

instead of C64 hardware. Now I have a real C64, it's handy to test on there as well though.

I use Kick Assembler which actually has a lot more features than the assemblers back then, but VICE debugging is probably slightly worse. Art packages are much better and it's a lot easier to get the data into the actual source code itself.

KT: Why the C64? What attracted you to begin developing on the C64 again after so long away from the machine?

I've been a coder all my career and a game developer for a large portion of that. However for the last 10 years I've been mostly working on dry iPhone utility apps. I had the itch to

to present a nonogram on screen with nice controls". I did this using the puzzles from GB Mario Picross and it was working well. I asked on Lemon64 for some help with graphics for original puzzles and James from RGCD got in touch. This was the driver to complete that project, as it meant I'd have a C64 game published for the first time in over 25 year.

A similar thing happened with Millie and Molly. I was playing Catrap on my 3DS via the virtual console and I thought that it would work really well on the C64. I inspected the ROM of the game and managed to extract their levels. I then knocked up a prototype which displayed these very simply and added controls. Then a similar thing to Grid Pix happened where other people

"I was playing Catrap on my 3DS via the virtual console and I thought this would work really well on a C64."

code a game but didn't want all the hassle of learning something like Unity. I'd dipped in and out of the C64 scene, occasionally browsing forums or playing Thrust on VICE. With my background it seemed a good halfway house.

KT: How do you choose a project to complete? You have some great looking prototypes on your itch.io page. What made Grid Pix and Millie & Molly stand out to you?

CH: I get loads of ideas and often start them with great gusto and they often peter out. Generally it's one key aspect of the game I want to code. With Grid Pix it was "can I get a C64

got on board and I knew I had something good enough to progress to the end. Because that's the hard part. Once the initial excitement of solving the thing you set out to do – in this case show and play Catrap levels on a C64 screen – there's a lot of mundane tasks which have to go into completing a game for public consumption. Frontends, password screens etc.

KT: Both Grid Pix and Millie & Molly were published with 'Below the Tower' as the developer. Can you tell us why you chose this name to develop under? How do you go about selecting other people to work with on your C64 projects?

CH: Below the Tower is my real life company I set up as an app developer. I live in a place called Ramsbottom and there's a big tower on top of the hill (Peel Tower, named for prime minister and founder of the modern UK police Robert Peel). My home office is below that tower, as is most of Ramsbottom to be fair.

I found people for both GP and M&M via the Lemon 64 forum. These days I'm much more active on Twitter and people tend to get in touch to offer their help.

KT: Millie & Molly is based on Catrap, a title released on the Sharp MZ-700, and later Gameboy/3DS. What was it that attracted you to this game and what was the thinking behind bring the idea to the C64?

CH: As I mentioned earlier I owned the original GB version of Catrap and then bought it again on the 3DS as I really liked the game. That version has one major issue though in that the screen has to scroll which somewhat breaks the flow of the puzzles. I thought it'd be really nice if the whole puzzle was visible on a C64 screen and after a quick calculation realised it would be a perfect fit. I guess that stems for other versions which were probably developed for systems with similar screen resolutions. When I realised this I thought it would be a great game to bring to a newer audience who may like it as much as I did.

KT: A brand new set of levels were designed by Chun Wah Kong and Patsy Chim. Was it always the intention to feature original level design in the game?

CH: No. I was originally going to stick the game out for free with the Catrap levels. Then when I got great GFX and sound in there and the game felt like something more than a throw away.

People then told me I should put a small charge on the game when released to stop it being widely

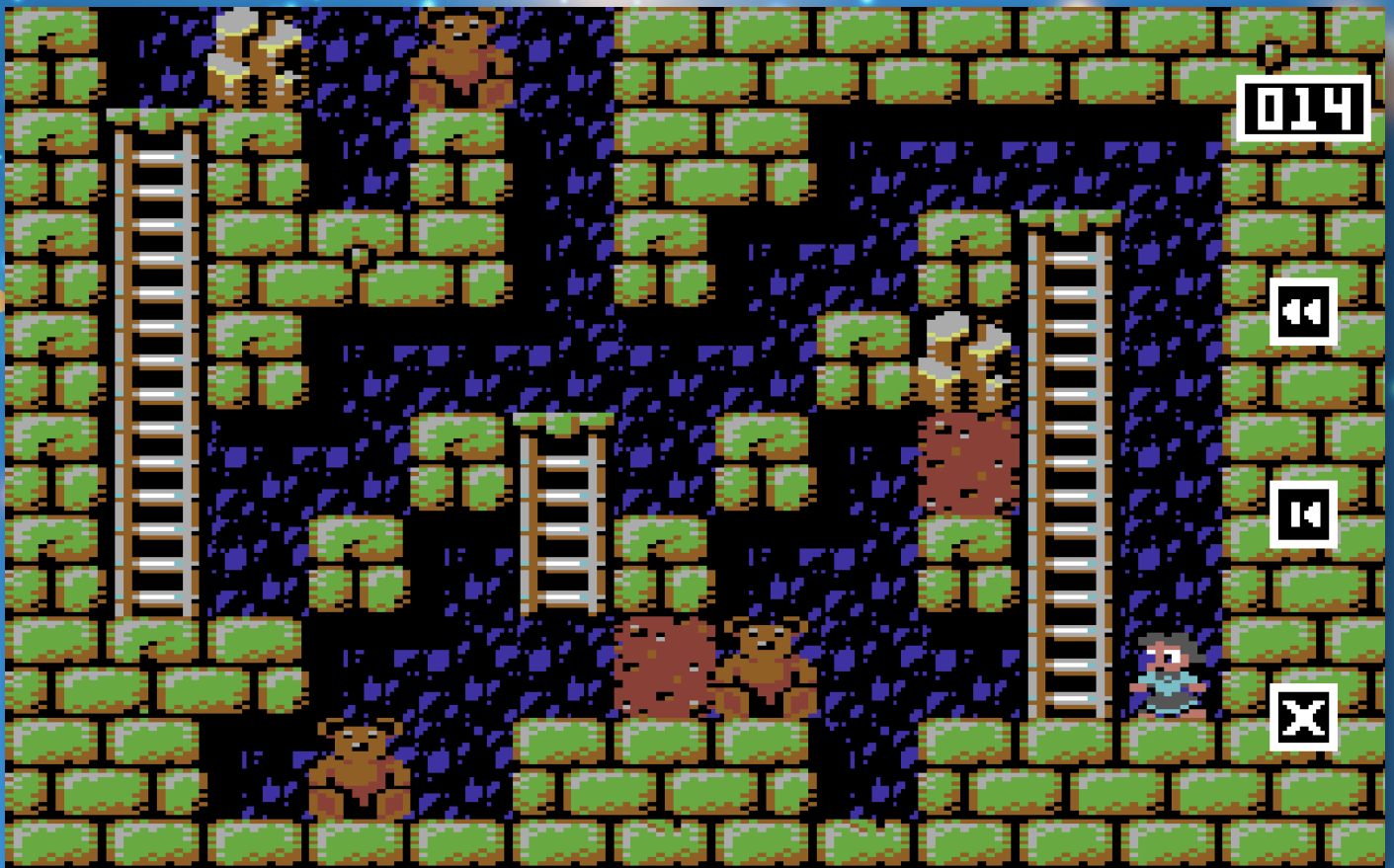


Image: Millie & Molly level comparison (C64)

pirated on the internet. I didn't feel comfortable charging for other people's work so initially I wrote the level editor in the hope I could crowd source levels from people on the internet and release a version with those in. There's something to that end written in the readme included in the ZIP. However there was practically zero response to this idea on Twitter so I was stuck trying to make my own levels. But then luckily Chun had seen my Tweet and he went above and beyond, creating 100 excellent levels with his wife Patsy. He also came up with some other design suggestions which improved the flow of the game.

KT: Saul's graphics and Hans' music both add another dimension to the game. Both are outstanding. Did you give the artists a specific brief, or were they given a large degree of creative freedom to design their particular elements?

CH: The only brief was the tiles had to be 24x24px and there were a few types: dirt, wall etc. Saul came back to me with the original green wall set of tiles and they looked amazing compared to my programmer art. He also totally surprised me by coming back with the Millie and Molly sprites as we hadn't

discussed anything about the protagonists. They immediately felt perfect to me. We then decided on 5 worlds and periodically Saul would send through a whole new tile set which I could stick in and each looked amazing and it was always a surprise to me which theme he'd chosen.



Image: Carleton's Millie & Molly placeholder graphics, pre Saul Cross!



Image: Millie & Molly level comparison (PC/iOS/Android)

Hans provided a tune which I was going to use everywhere in game. It's hard to ask people doing things in their spare time to do more work for you for free. However, once we started getting new worlds in Hans was very keen to write a tune for each one. By that stage the slightly haunting vibe of the music was set so he kept to that style. I think the underwater music is the best tune I've ever had in one of my games.

KT: Bitmap Soft and BoBR Games both published physical editions of Milly & Mollie, on disk and cartridge formats respectively. How did the relationship develop with these publishers? How important are physical editions of C64 games today?

CH: Both got in touch with me via Twitter. I hadn't considered a physical release for M&M until then. They were both very

keen to publish the game so I decided to give them a shot. I didn't want to go around all the publishers trying to pitch the game. As (at the time) smaller publishers I knew these guys would be able to focus a lot of their efforts on M&M.

I love the physical editions I have, they easily match my professionally published efforts from the 80s. And I guess the public like them or there wouldn't be a market. I always enjoy it when somebody Tweets a picture of them playing my games or showing off their copy.

KT: Millie & Molly has received several accolades from both independent and commercial press and has received ratings awards for most reviews, including a Reset Ripper award in this very issue! How is it, as the developer, reading the reviews of your own games in the modern age? As an indie developer, developing mainly

for fun and enjoyment, do you think magazines and zines have a right to be critical of games that are developed on retro systems? How much weight do you place on the reviews you read of your own games?

CH: It's been a real pleasure reading the Millie and Molly reviews as they've been generally very positive and I'm very proud of that. Back in my professional days I had some stinker reviews and I must admit it smarted. However I generally agreed with what they said. Nobody sets out to make a bad game but for all kinds of reasons the final game will likely differ from what you set out to do.

I don't mind valid criticism of my work, it's the random troll comments online I don't like. "This is rubbish". What's the point in that?". Explain to me why it's rubbish, explain your points and I may be able to correct them or implement those suggestions in my next project.

One nice thing about being Indie like this is you don't get external

pressures to either finish a project or change it because "it's what the focus groups want" and that means I'm releasing the game on my own terms. I wouldn't rush out any of my projects and that's why some are on hold and others scrapped.

KT: You have since converted Millie & Molly to mobile systems and Windows. How was the conversion process? Are there any plans to release Millie & Molly on other systems?

CH: I ended a big contract towards the end of 2020 and suddenly found myself looking for work. To add another dimension to my CV I decided to learn how to code in Unity. Millie and Molly seemed like a good game to develop as I learnt the system. It took me 7 weeks overall to get Millie and Molly working in Unity. Very little has changed from the original version, the 16bit Amiga mode, a couple of new graphics effects and sound effects aside. Unity is good enough that publishing to

mobile, Windows and Mac was easy. I've just signed a deal to do a Switch port of the game as well.

KT: Let's chat about Blockheads! It was a concept you had been working on long before the 4kb Craptastic Compo as a prototype. What made you choose this particular project as a 4kb compo entry? Are there any plans to extend this wonderful 4kb game?

CH: I was playing a lot of Celeste at the time and thought it'd been

Image: The wonderful Millie & Molly box art by Flemming Dupont



nice to see if I could code something for the C64 with tight controls like that game. I made a prototype and it felt great to play. Without a game designer though I struggled with how to expand out the gameplay beyond this initial control demo to a fully fledged game so the project was parked.

Then I saw the 4K competition and it seemed a good fit. MonstersGoBoom provided some nicer graphics and I was pleased that people got to play it. The game only came 10th in the competition, so I'm glad I didn't put in the effort to make a full game. That said I have been back and tinkered with a Blockheads Deluxe version.

One regret is the two player mode was very overlooked. I think some of this was down to releasing a couch co-op game when lockdowns started all over the world! I have a lot of fond memories of hours spent playing C64 multiplayer games in my youth. We'd often stay up late playing Summer Games, Pitstop II and all the others.

KT: You are currently developing a new game, Runn 'n' Gunn, for the C64. What can you tell us about this latest project?

Towards the end of development on Millie and Molly, Saul sent me a map file of something he'd been tinkering with. It amazed me how good it looked for the C64. There was a challenge there in getting something like that to scroll nicely on a C64, so I set about displaying the map as a technical challenge to myself. Both M&M and Grid Pix are fairly undemanding technically.



Image: Runn 'n' Gunn is Carleton's next C64 game.

I got the scroller running and tweeted it and there was a big response on Twitter, but again I was struggling a little with turning it into a full game and Saul was very busy with his own stuff, so it just kind of got left like that.

A while later I saw how much people were liking the new release, Outrage, and I remembered the initial feedback people gave for the RnG prototype so I dug it out again. This time something clicked with the direction I wanted to go and I think Saul and I have got an excellent platformer shooter on our hands.

One really nice feature we have is that the two characters – Runn and Gunn – have different abilities. Runn is faster and can double jump but Gunn has the better weapon. The player can switch freely between the two depending on the situation they find themselves in.

I'm trying something new with this project as well. As the C64 scene has been stung with Kickstarter I wanted some way to fund development of my games so I can devote my whole time to

them. To this end I will release mission one of Runn 'n' Gunn as a stand alone game. There's plenty of game in there and hopefully enough people enjoy it that I can work on missions two and three and then release a physical deluxe version later.

KT: Thanks for joining us at Reset, Carleton and we wish you all the best for your future projects!

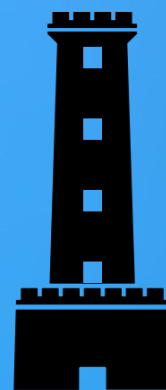
CH: Thanks!, You're welcome.

@CarletonHandley

@ResetC64

<https://www.belowthetower.com/>

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



BELOW THE TOWER

STEEL RANGER



Psytronik/RGCD, Disk/Cartridge/Digital Download

<https://psytronik.itch.io/steeltanger>

Code & Design: Lasse Öörni

Graphics: Lasse Öörni

Music & Sound Effects: Lasse Öörni

Reviewers: Merman & Rob



The year is 2218. The crew of the Scourge, on a mission to locate and track down the machine forces threatening humanity have intercepted a mysterious signal from a barren planet. Cleared to investigate, the Scourge encounters trouble during the descent leaving you as the only member of the crew ready to deploy...

...It's up to you to start the operation to explore this world, and track down the source of the transmission. From this opening, Covert Bitops' Steel Ranger may look like a run & gun action game, but offers so much more. In some ways, it feels very much like a Metroidvania - a more

action focused one at that.

Progress is reliant on finding equipment - either upgrades to your Ranger armour, or keycards. The upgrades offer greater mobility - like transforming into a wheel, or being able to jump higher, or even fly!

You'll also scavenge weapons from defeated machines - you'll start out with a rapid-fire rifle, but will obtain others like laser guns, missiles, grenades and more. You'll also scavenge parts, which can be used to resupply either your ammo or suit power, or purchase suit upgrades.

The planet is vast, and success

comes down to using the weapons and tools at your disposal to explore the variety of nooks and crannies you'll find around the place. Exploration tends to reward you with additional ammo and parts, which will be very handy for survival, especially against the larger boss units you'll encounter as well.

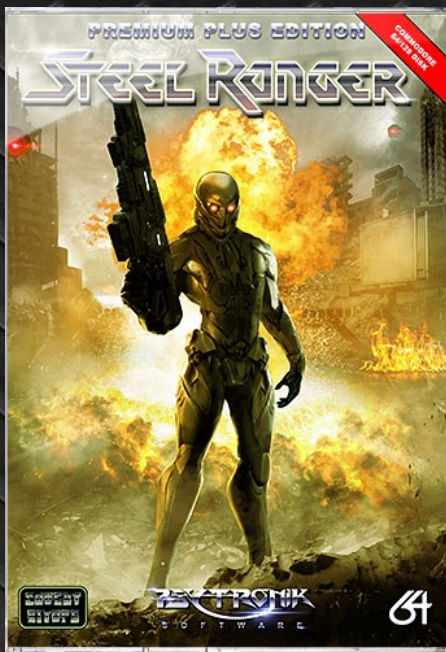
Falling in battle may sound like a penalty, but instead you'll respawn at the opening of the current room, meaning you won't need to backtrack far in the event of death. This also extends to the save system, where you can save and end a session at any point, allowing you to resume at any

As a big fan of Lasse's games, I bought the impressive Collector's Edition from Psytronik filled with extras including the soundtrack CD. And the game itself is great - a mature and well-presented evolution of the run & gun exploration style, with a clever storyline. Elements of Turricon and Metroid combine, with the suit upgrades and security keys opening up more of the huge map. Wheel Mode in particular is a lot of fun, as you look for the secret passages and breakable scenery to uncover more secrets. The multiple weapon types all feel distinctive; having them on the number keys allows quick access when you run out of ammo. I also loved the map screen, which updates as you uncover new areas.

There were some niggles - climbing ladders can be fiddly, and dying in certain spots (notably when tackling the large bosses) can make continuing very tough as you run out of ammo.

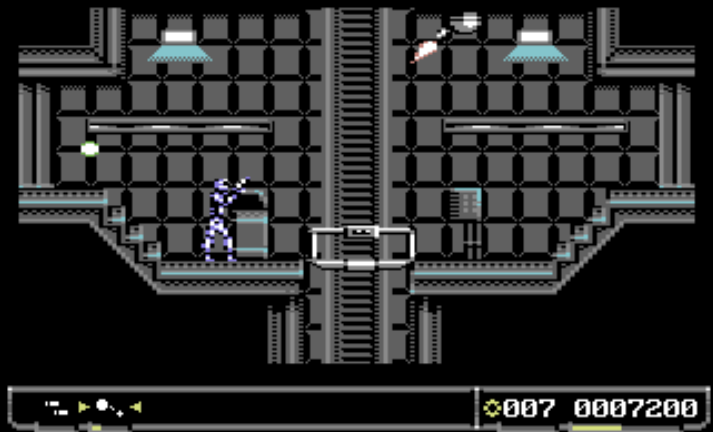
With another great soundtrack and stylish graphics, this is a must-play.





point when starting a new session.

Steel Ranger is available digitally from Psytronik's itch.io page, including both disk and cartridge images. For those who crave a physical release, the disk version of the game is available through Psytronik's store, and is compatible with both PAL and NTSC systems.



I'll admit, I had always found the prior Covert Bitops games a bit rough to get into. The mix of adventuring and action was solid, but controls felt a little too complex for their own good.

Steel Ranger is the first of their games where I feel that doesn't apply, meaning it's far easier to get into and get blasting. Whether it's switching between your vast stockpile of weapons, or using the systems you acquire, it works wonderfully. Even with a stock single-button joystick.

The visuals, featuring mostly mechanical sprites, use the grey tones of the C64's palette well, with most of the visual distinction coming from the array of areas in which you travel. Combined with a great soundtrack, it brings quite a load of atmosphere to your mission.

Steel Ranger absolutely shows the highs of modern C64 gaming, from it's expansive world, to it's balanced difficulty. It may demand a lot from players, but it never punishes you for failure, making it one rewarding gem to play though.



**BEYOND
THE
SCANLINES**

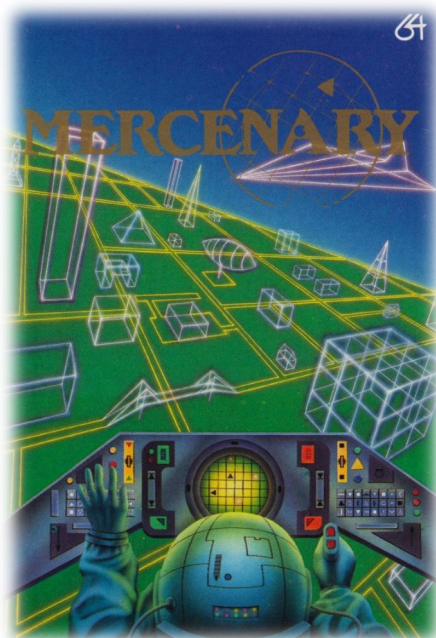
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This time we're heading back 35 years to February 1986.

Christmas 1985 had delivered a sack full of diverse and brilliant games including **Bounder**, **The Eidolon**, **Revs**, **Fight Night**, **Deus Ex Machina** and **Ballblazer** to name just a few. '85 had been a brilliant year for games – the C64's best so far – and Commodore owners looked forward to what 1986 would bring with great anticipation.

As usual, the Christmas rush was followed by a new year drought with less than twenty new releases hitting the shops. Yet, despite new titles being a bit thin on the ground, some amazing software was released, a couple of which, I think it's fair to say, are two of the C64's greatest ever games.

Mercenary, a 3D arcade adventure and exploration game, coded by Encounter programmer Paul Woakes and published by Novagen, was absolutely astonishing. Previously, the C64 had struggled a little when it came to 3D wireframe and vector graphics games but with **Mercenary**, Woakes proved that in the hands of the best programmers there was nothing the 64 couldn't do. A game of exploration, strategy, discovery and the odd bit of blasting, **Mercenary** looks complicated, but is easy to pick up and play and has more depth than the



By Martin Grundy

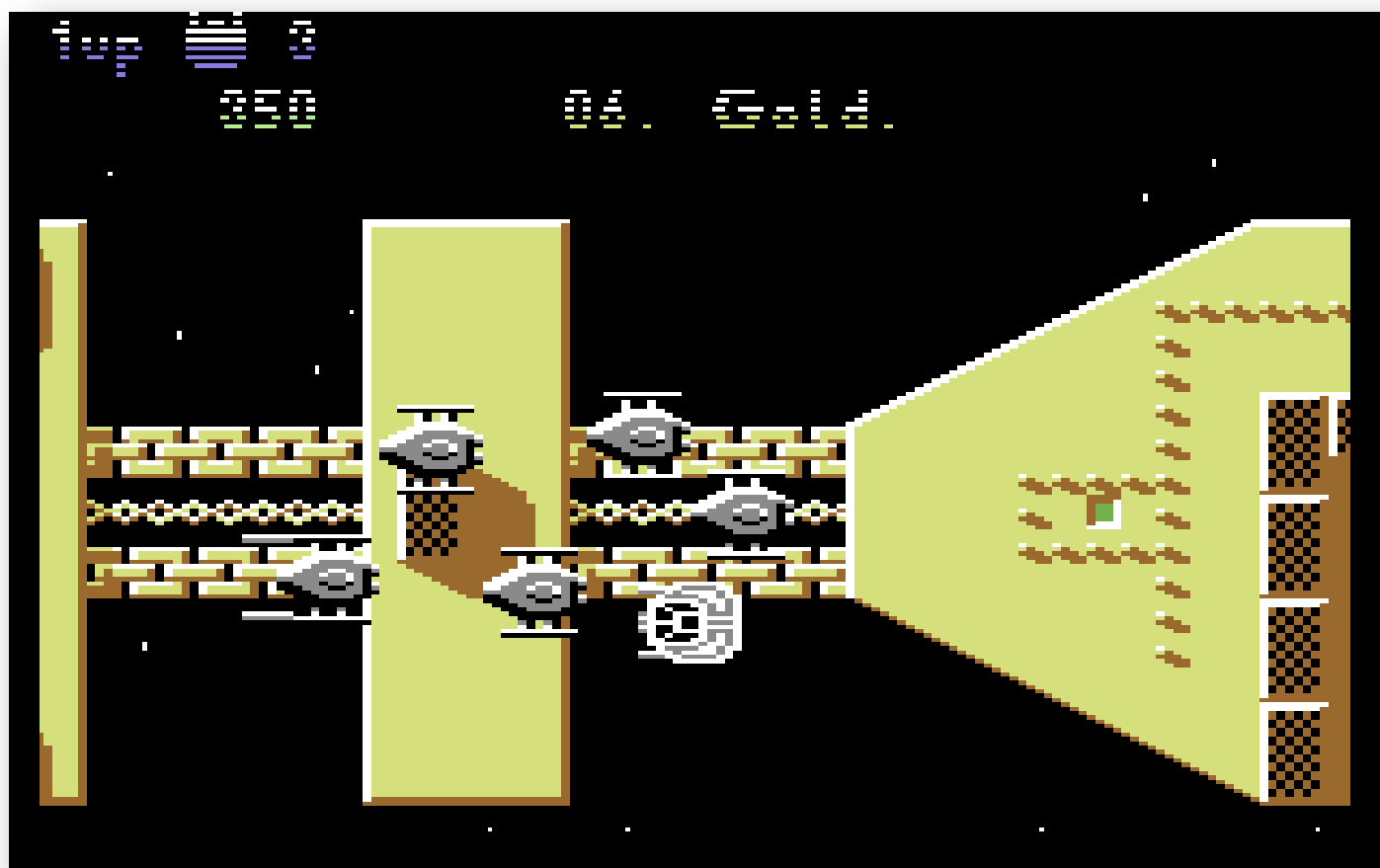
Atlantic Ocean. Exciting, enthralling and totally absorbing, C&VG and Your Commodore scored it 9/10, Your Computer gave it 5/5 and ZZAP!64 awarded it a Gold Medal and the magazine's highest ever score – a whopping 98%.

The other legendary game released that month was Andrew Braybrook's follow up to the outstanding **Paradroid**, **Uridium**. An amazingly fast and frantic arcade shoot 'em up, **Uridium** was adored by reviewers and critics alike. With its 50 FPS action, gorgeous bas relief graphics and white-knuckle action, it wouldn't have looked out of place in the arcades. Like **Mercenary**, **Uridium** was an amazing achievement by one of the 64's greatest ever coders and it was rightly showered with accolades in the press. Commodore User awarded it 4/5, ZZAP!64 bestowed it with a 94% Sizzler and C&VG gave it the maximum 10/10 and Game of the Month status.

Speaking of accolades, two other great games released in Europe that month came from a new US software house with that very name. The first Accolade title was **Hardball**, a

baseball simulation with outstanding graphics, loads of neat touches and a good degree of strategy (and one of the few C64 games to appear in a Hollywood movie – The Prince's Bride). The second was **Law of the West**, a joystick driven adventure in which, as Sheriff of a wild west town, you have to look after the townsfolk, keep the streets safe and go about your business. **Law of the West** bridged the gap between the keyboard driven adventures of the early 80s and the point and click adventures of the late 80s and early 90s. Like **Hardball**, it contains lots of cute touches and





superb graphics, plus a good dose of humour and even a bit of blasting - if the sheriff let things get out of hand.

Two classic arcade beat 'em ups were converted to the 64 in February 86 - **Kung Fu Master** and **Yie Ar Kung Fu**. Both were good conversions but neither quite reached the heights of the arcade originals. Of the two, Yie Ar Kung Fu is arguably a slightly better game - it contains all the features of the arcade original plus a cool Martin Galway tune and is addictive and action packed - but Kung-Fu Master is definitely worth a few plays too. It's loads of fun, also contains a great tune and provides a faithful representation of the arcade original.

Another beat 'em up released that month was Melbourne House's **Rock N Wrestle**. One of the first attempts at a wrestling game on a computer, it was a brave attempt and hopes were high following coder Greg Barnett's magnificent Way of the Exploding Fist. Unfortunately, R N' W couldn't replicate the

brilliance of its predecessor and while it is fun to play for a while its blocky graphics, poor speech and awkward controls prevent it from being the great game it could've been.

Yet while Rock N Wrestle may have been a bit underwhelming it was nowhere near as disappointing as Electric Dreams' **Back to the Future**. One of the greatest films of the decade, Back to the Future was, and still is, loved by millions but the C64 game was an absolute stinker. A dreary arcade adventure with awful graphics and zero playability, it was slated in ZZAP!64 who described it as 'a right little boredom generator' and awarded it a paltry 32%. Thankfully, it wasn't the end of the road for the game's programmer, Martin Walker, who would go on to great things in the years to come with the excellent Citadel and Hunter's Moon.

Outside of computer games, the world was in shock following the Space Shuttle Challenger disaster. 73 seconds after its launch from the United States, a huge explosion killed the crew

of seven astronauts, including competition winner and schoolteacher Christa McAuliffe as millions watched live on TV. In other news, The Soviet Union launched the Mir space station and the Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme was shot dead on his way home from the cinema in Stockholm.

At the flicks, Pretty in Pink, Hannah and Her Sisters, The Hitcher and 9 1/2 Weeks were entertaining movie goers while on the small screen Culture Club's Boy George made a hilarious appearance in an episode of The A-Team.

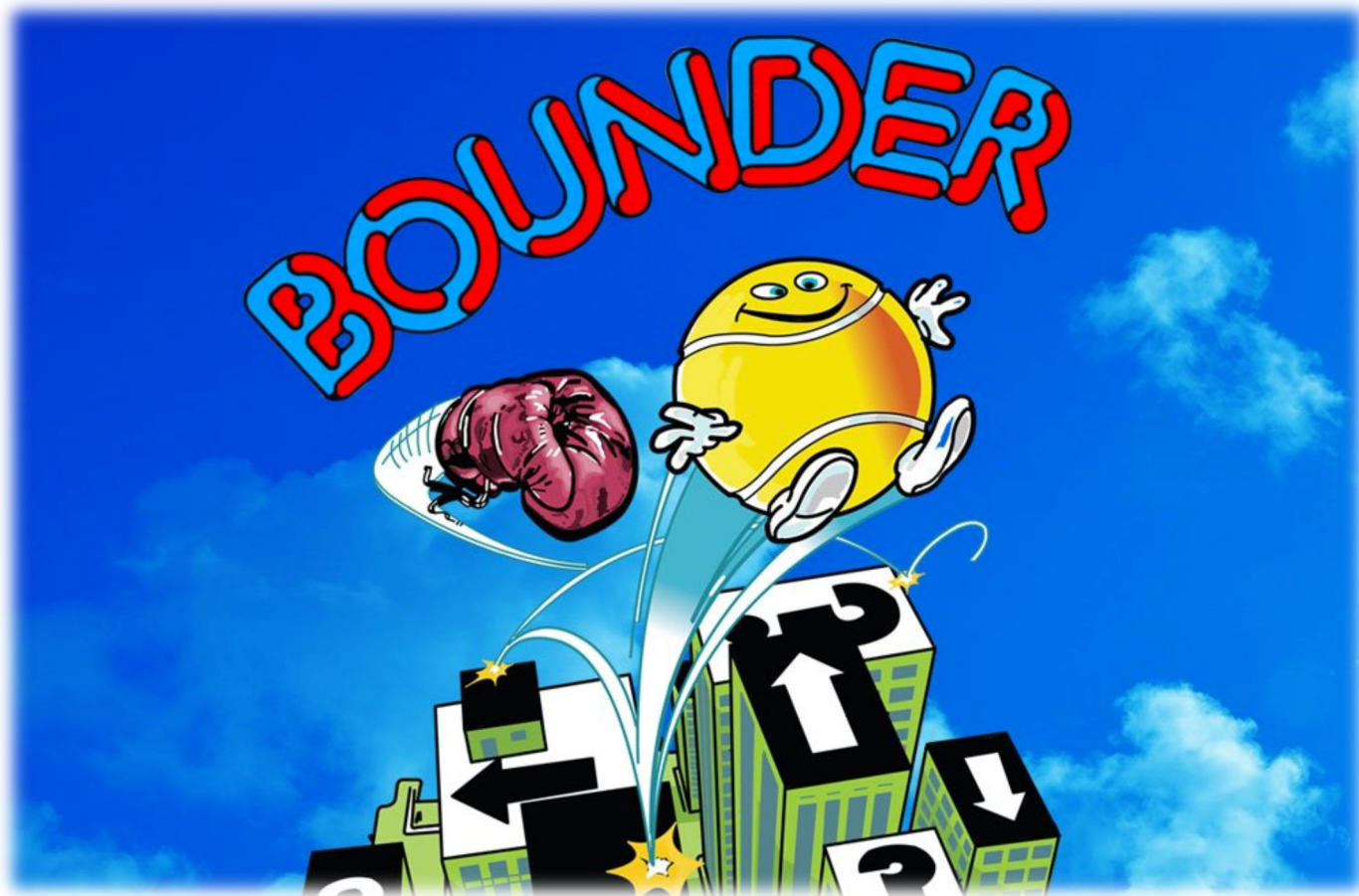
While Boy George was hanging out with Hannibal and the lads, back in the pop charts James Brown was singing about Living in America, Diana Ross was stuck in the middle of a Chain Reaction and The Bangles were lamenting another Manic Monday. I think we've all been there.

Well, that's it from me for another issue. Thanks for reading and join me again for another trip back to the past next time.

See ya, Commrades!

@C64Reloaded





Bounder Bounces Back...

By Gavin Greenhalgh

[@TheGavNinja](#)



Bounder originally bounced onto the Commodore 64 back in 1986 and now, over 30 years later, Matt Risley of Swivel Creations has brought it to our mobile screens. Reset's Gavin Greenhalgh caught up with Matt to chat about the iconic yellow tennis ball and the ups and downs of bringing Bounder back!

Gavin: Hi Matt, thanks for joining me to chat about the mobile version of Bounder.

Matt: Thanks guys for allowing me to do this interview.

Gavin: No worries. The first question I want to kick off with is, quite simply, why Bounder?

Matt: Good question. I wanted to step back into the games industry after a break but wanted to get a license people would remember, but also try and create a game that would work on mobile. Not all retro games would port on mobile so I spent sometime researching many

different games on many different computers to see what would work. I hunted around for ages, spoke to lots of license holders and pretty much everything was tied up, but then started looking at Gremlin's back catalogue. I noticed that they were bought out by Infogrammes, so I thought to myself that there was no chance, but I started to make enquiries and got introduced to Ian Stewart and the rest is history, we struck a deal and Bounder was on its way back!

Gavin: Sounds like you are a retro gamer yourself Matt -

what systems and games do you enjoy playing?

Matt: Absolutely, I play retro games all the time. My favourite system is the PC Engine as it has kick-ass arcade conversions and was well ahead of its time, but also my Megadrive for the shoot-em-ups. My favourite game though is Outrun, the arcade original that is, for its colour, incredible music and beautiful flowing gameplay, that certainly was a world beater when that was released in '86 and made me want to get into the games industry from that point onwards.

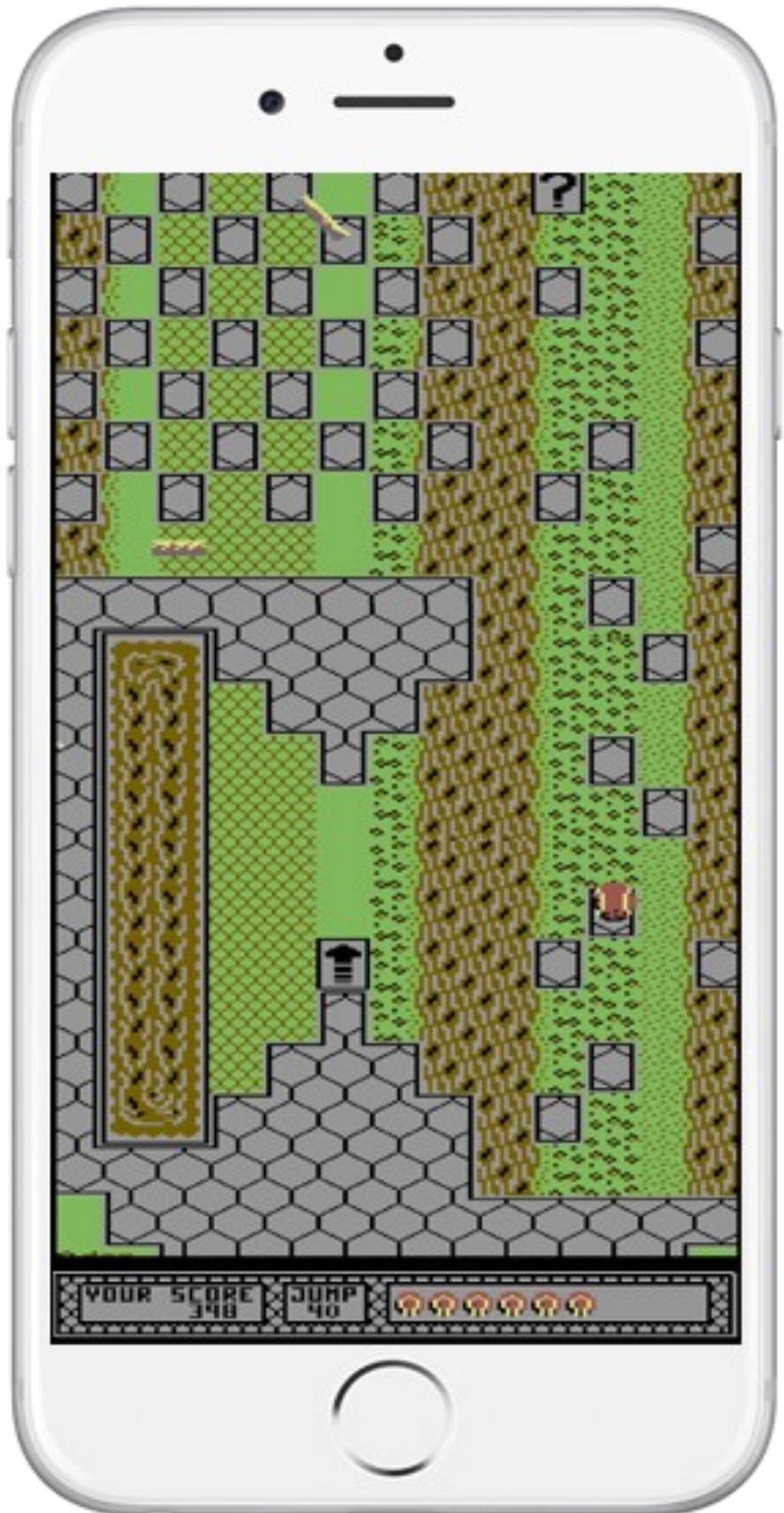
Gavin: Outrun was a great game in the arcades. I played the original recently -at the Arcade Club in Bury, Lancs – and it still holds up well.

Anyhow, back to Bounder. I understand that it is a complete re-coding of the game rather than an emulation? Sounds like a lot of work - so who were the creative team involved and how long did it take to realise?

Matt: I teamed up with Lu Studios for doing this, they are close by to us and we thought it was better to join forces for this game to make it the best we can, this is why we went for the re-coding option (plus Apple don't like emulators!) but that way we could give the gamer more value for money with having all 3 retro versions in one app plus loads of new features. In terms of overall time, it took us around 8 months to make the game.

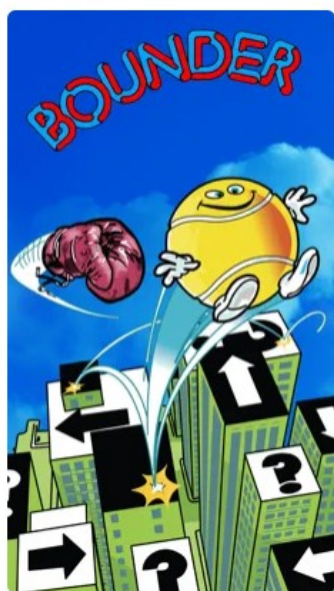
Martin: You mentioned Ian Stewart from Gremlin earlier - was there any input from Ian or the original creators of Bounder on the mobile version?

Matt: Yes I had Chris Shrigley look at it several times and I spoke to him about enemy patterns and other elements of the game. The original was notoriously hard, so it was either watch the whole play through videos on YouTube or turn to the creator, and if anyone was going to know about the ins and outs it was Chris. Ian didn't have loads of input during the development but he was there as a sounding board many times. Both were very helpful in the process and helped us bring Bounder back.



Gavin: Being an interview on Bounder, it would be remiss of me not to ask if there were any ups and downs when creating it. Any particular problems you weren't anticipating?

Matt: Certainly one of the highs were nailing the enemy patterns as each varied level to level, but also the adjustments in the maps between versions, getting that right with the collision detection was rewarding. The lows was certainly marrying



everything up, after all we re-coded these but there are differences between each version that had to be added, so that was the toughest part to solve. The biggest low was the Amstrad version, with very little on it online regarding maps or sounds, we had an Amstrad guru come on board to help us extract everything so we could start getting it all together. Overall it has been a challenge to make it but also fun too.

Gavin: The original game was very well-received back in 1986 - achieving a whopping 97% and Gold Medal in Zzap!64 - but, as you say, most people remember it for being fearsomely difficult. I have the mobile version on my phone and it does play easier than the original and the save option is a godsend! Was this a conscious decision?

Matt: The original was really difficult, very tough and, as you say, had no save options, no

continues, nightmare! Without giving everyone an easy ride, we have toned it down a bit, not just because the originals were hard but also to allow us to test the gameplay properly and we went through each level adjusting that. We are still getting comments that it's tough though, but also challenging and rewarding.

Gavin: Yes I agree, it's about getting the balance right. Bouncer has been out a little while now on mobile, how has the game been received?

Matt: We knew it was never going to have downloads like Angry Birds and also there was only a pocket of the retro gaming community that would play this, many of the retro gamers don't want to play it on mobile, they prefer the original machine which is fine but we wanted to make some noise about Bouncer and Gremlin again and I feel we have achieved that with this App. The reviews online have been positive

and there's plenty on the App Stores which give a good idea of people's thoughts. Overall it's getting around 4 out of 5 or even 5 stars sometimes, so that's good.

Gavin: Sounds like it's been a positive experience then **Matt.** With this in mind, do you have any plans to remake any other retro games, Gremlin or otherwise? Can we look forward to a Thing springing onto our mobile screens or a Monty Mole? Bouncer itself also spawned a sequel, Re-bouncer, any plans on bringing this to our mobiles?

Matt: We'd love to look at other Gremlin licenses but for now it's all about Bouncer and making that a success. Next we are looking at next-generation consoles for a remake of the game, a whole new Bouncer version which will be fun to play and amazing to look at. That's what we have in the works. We are currently talking with several publishers so watch this space...



Gavin: For anyone who hasn't played Bouncer yet, could you remind Reset readers where they can get hold of it and a price point? Are you also free to chat on social media if any of our readers have their own questions?

Matt: Yes Bouncer can be downloaded for Apple and Android phones from their App Stores. It's FREE with limited options and adverts. Or there's a paid version which has everything included, no ads!

<https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/bouncer/id1376014825?mt=8>

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.swivel.bouncer>

<http://www.bouncer.mobi/>

And the best place to get me on social media is on twitter @bouncer_mobile

Gavin: Thanks Matt, I've really enjoyed bouncing down memory lane with you and chatting about Bouncer. Thanks again for your time, good luck with Bouncer and hopefully we'll see some more retro projects from you in the future. Boing!!!

Chris Shrigley on Bouncer...

"The first real game I did (with Rob and Andy), was Bouncer for the C64. Andy and I programmed the entire thing on the Zoom Machine Code Monitor. We designed everything on squared paper and typed every bit of data in by hand. That game got us our first jobs at Gremlin, and we were quite surprised to find out that this wasn't a normal way to write games. Gremlin had a Mainframe and we all had Wise Terminals. We still programmed in assembly language, but it was all symbolic. It was amazing!"

"We were all really into playing Arcade games and programming our own versions of them. We always wanted to do coin-op stuff and computer games was the nearest we could get. We used to roller skate and play tennis at the local park and one weekend, while lying under a tree after tennis, we came up with the idea (a top down scroller featuring a tennis ball as the main character). We spent all that summer working on the game. Andy and I did the programming and Rob did the design. We got Terry to do the art and after a year of hard work and lots of fun, we had a (near) finished game. We mailed the game off to Gremlin (the first company we tried) around November time in 1985 and were asked up to Sheffield to talk just before Christmas, I remember, we were all so excited. We got up there and met Ian Stewart (a very nice guy), who owned Gremlin. They really liked the game and wanted to publish it. We were blown away! He then offered all four of us jobs paying a whopping 6,000 pounds a year. We all started work in January of '86, commuting to Sheffield from Derby every day. I remember meeting Tony Crowther and Pete Harrap, who were both quite famous in the 8bit games world. I was really impressed and amazed to be working with them."



Source:
Andreas Wallström/
C64.COM

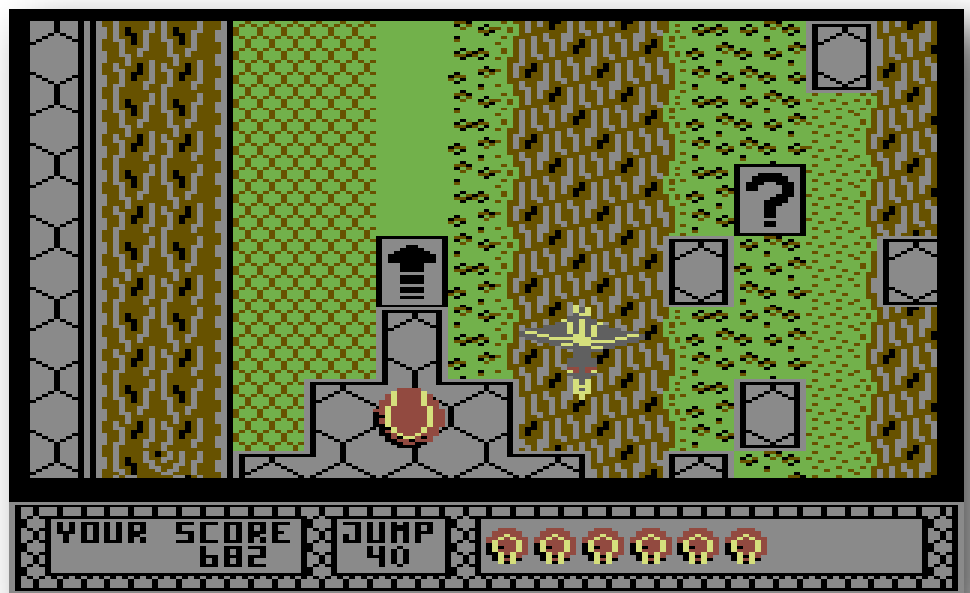
<http://www.c64.com/interviews/shrigley.html>

Used with kind
permission.

Gavin Greenhalgh
@TheGavNinja



Image above: Re-Bouncer was a horizontally scrolling sequel, released in 1987. (image source: [Lemon64](#))



BLAST FROM THE PAST

By Alex Boz



Choo, choo, another Blast Past From The Past steams down the tracks, with the topic of discussion being, you guessed it, what are our favourite Commodore 64 train based games?

We had a tough time jogging our memory on train themed games on the trusty 8-bit platform, but luckily for us, our awesome Reset crew had their train of thought on the job and were able to be on track with their fave train based games. Right, before we go on, I promise, no more (bad) train puns!

Ok, get on board, have your tickets ready and enjoy the ride!



Cameron Jackson:



When I heard about the "train theme" the first game that entered my mind was Kane. Released as a budget title by Mastertronic.

After passing the first level with the bow and arrow (love it when you get multiple birds with one shot) it was then off to the town of Kane via horseback. After a shootout it was then back on the horse for the final level.

It was here that the game would produce frustration and laughter as you had to jump obstacles and speed up to the front of the train to stop it. For me the frustration would be in some pretty tricky jumps that required split second timing and pixel position. Laughter in the form of not getting the jump right and have your rider sail across the screen.

I stopped the train a few times but never managed to trigger the end scene with the President. Perhaps time to saddle up for another try.

Louie Dimovski:



Whenever the topic of train games for C64 is raised, I'm reminded of Express Raider. I guess its to do with my love of the old cowboy TV shows and memorable train robbery scenes.

The combination of a beat'em up and shooter in the game goes a long way to providing an addictive arcade experience. The brawling action on the rooftop levels is fast and fluid as you combat different types of opponents as you move towards the front of the train. While the horse riding levels are a highlight as you master the simultaneous control of your

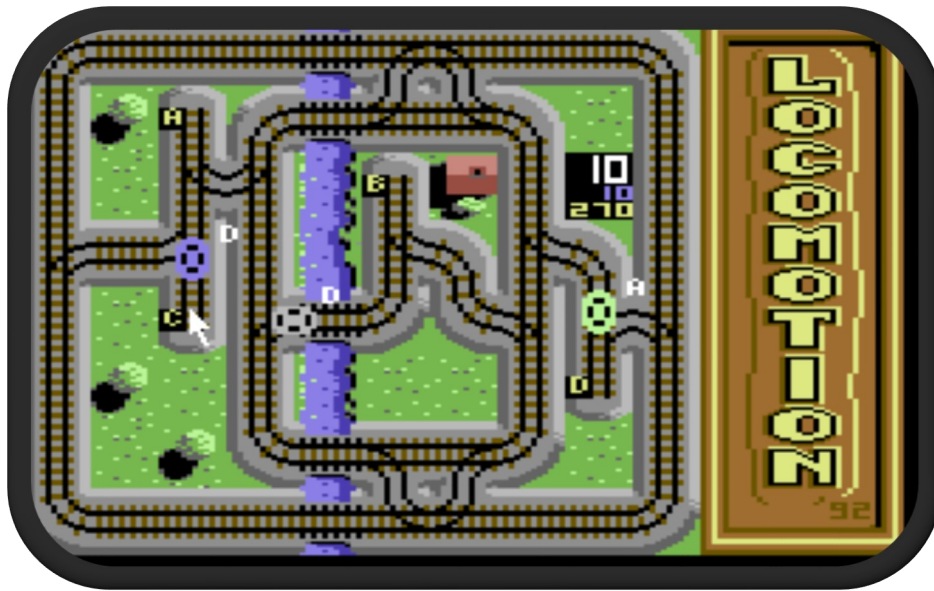
trusty steed and shooting at the enemies on the train.

For me, the graphics are spot on. Yeah, the cowboy character on the fighting levels does look like a sweater vest wearing reject from a 1990s boy band but you have to be impressed with the horse riding graphics or how well the train looks like it travelling across the country side.

Jakob Voos

It is always beyond me how there are great C64 games that had been released in a specific market only and are therefore relatively unknown to the rest of the world. A famous example is Manfred Trenz' Enforcer, but there is also Bburago Ralley and 'Guldkorn Expressen', a perfect train based game only released in Denmark.

You just have to love this game for its huge train sprites and for its concept, because you can flip between driving the train and flying a bee that can, of course, change tracks for you and pour honey into your cereal packed cargo compartments, because the aim of the game is to fill a pack of honey 'Guldkorn' cereals. Breakfast production at its best.



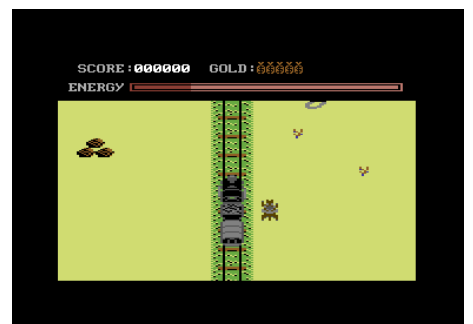
chunky sound effects. Much more fun than arcade conversions Express Raider and Iron Horse, it's obscure but worth checking out.



Frank Gasking

My choice has to be Gold Train. Discovered on Your Commodore magazine's covermount in 1991 (during its shitty phase covering more music/videos than C64 games), the game is based on an arcade (of which the name escapes me). You control a sheriff (?) on horseback who must protect a train from being robbed as it travels one station to the next. With a top down view, the game is pretty simple, but fun enough for a covermount game.

The thing that struck me at the time was the complete lack of sound, and when poking around the code it all became clear. The game was intended for release by Interceptor Software (complete with Chris Cox music) in 1984, but a falling out between the developers and publisher meant the game never saw release - not until the developer (working at Your Commodore) tidied it up for their tape. It was also the first ever GTW I had encountered.



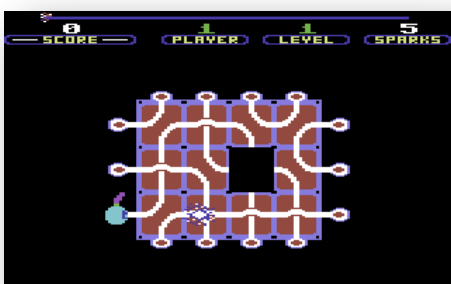
Ant Stiller:

Full disclosure: I wrote about how well chuffed I was with Southern Belle for Blast From the Past waaaaay back in Issue #9 (download it now from <https://>

Mat Allen:

The spec said to think outside the box for this one, but this is more inside the box once you grasp the game being talked about! The Konami arcade Guttang Guttong saw you deliver a train around a constantly evolving track by moving the track blocks around. The concept was "borrowed" for the early Incentive release Confuzion, notable mostly for the fact it contains one of Rob Hubbard's earliest published SID works and was written by Paul Shirley who would later go on to write Spindizzy.

In Confuzion you must instead guide a spark along fuse wire to explode all the bombs on screen by moving the blocks containing said wire. Initially what drew me to the game was a love of sliding block puzzles, but this puts your whole scape in panic mode once it gets going. It's not merciful, that's for sure! But addictive in the process and that's what makes you keep going back for another attempt.



Richard Bayliss:

My Favourite train themed game probably was Locomotion by Kingsoft. I only had a playable demo of this game. This was a puzzle game which required skill, and patience. The idea of the game was to help transport one train from station to another station. You had to trigger train track position, by using a cursor. There were goals in order to complete each stage. Although it was a playable demo given away on a Commodore 64 magazine's cover tape. Locomotion was pretty addictive and fun.

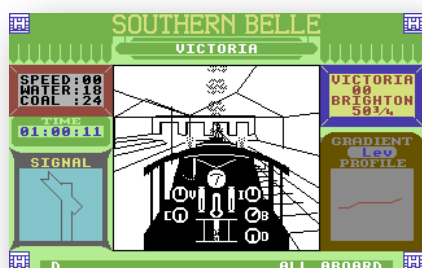
Merman:

Budget games could be very hit and miss, but Train Robbers from Silverbird was hilarious and thoroughly deserved its ZZAP Silver Medal. Riding your horse alongside the rapidly moving train, you climb on top and make your way to the bullion wagon. You have to jump over gaps and duck in the tunnels. Once into the wagon, you avoid the guards and dogs to get to the safe. Then you get back out of the wagon with your haul and try to ride away on your horse. It is filled with comic moments, from falling off the train to being bitten by the dog. It's all backed with a brilliant Rob Hubbard title tune (called Locomotion, from his Final Synth Sample II demo) and

reset64-magazine.itch.io/) but you know what? No-one can stop me writing about this great train game several years later! No-one!

Yes, yes it's all very slow and black and white and what even is a 'blower' but there's something wonderfully, well, nice about having an actual steam train simulator on the C64. The various difficulty levels are well implemented as they introduce more engineer-related duties for you to juggle. In fact, I think I even babbled during one of our RESET podcasts about how Southern Belle is almost like a rhythm game. Madness? Possibly! But as more elements are incorporated into your journey you build up a distinct cadence as you release valves and stoke fires and forget to brake and plough your locomotive mercilessly through Brighton station.

Splendid stuff, really.



Cameron Davis:

Locomotion went largely unnoticed when it first pulled out of its station but a demo on Commodore Format's Power Pack was enough to make me a fan for life.

As an omniscient train network controller you to change the switches to help different trains trundle safely along to their destinations without hitting each other. The game initially tasks you with keeping track of two or three locomotives, but later levels get increasingly hazardous for innocent commuters.

It's a deceptively complex juggling act that requires

quick reflexes and the ability to see seconds ahead of what's happening on-screen at any given moment. It sounds like a recipe for a heart attack but I find Locomotion strangely relaxing. It's just lovely seeing those little trains move along around their little neighbourhood.

There's also a nice level editor so you can make your own network. It's like having your own model railroad, but without the high costs of models, paint, and divorce lawyers.

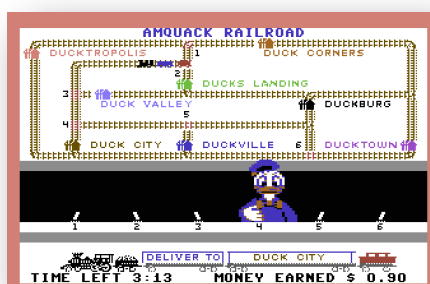


Rob Caporetto:

The game I'd actually nominate is one we're exploring elsewhere in the mag, so instead of that, I'm going for a sub-game of a larger game: Donald Duck's Playground. I'm sure you're looking at this strangely, but stick with me.

The idea is to earn as much money as possible over your shift. The train picking up cargo from one station to deliver it to another. Your job is to flip the switches of the various junctions so the train can reach its destination as fast as possible.

It might sound tedious, but the combination of the track layout, the train's speed, and the pressure to get a journey completed as fast as possible means things can be tense as you frantically try to flip points to get the correct route.



I wouldn't be surprised to see the mechanics expanded upon (and probably to better result) elsewhere, but it's still strangely compelling enough to play. Even today.

Kevin Tilley:

It would be a crime for Anthony Crowther's legendary train'em up not to get a mention!

Crowther's unofficial conversion of the 1982 Sega arcade game, Super Locomotive, is a treasure. The charming graphics combined with Ben Daglish's iconic SID interpretation of Jarre's *Équinoxe 5'*, mixed with legendary SEGA gameplay, means that Loco just oozes charm and playability.

I have distinct memories of Loco being one of the earliest videogames I ever played, often begging my dad to put on the "train game". Funnily enough, it was a few years later that I realised that I could control the direction my train went at the track junctions, as well as use the map to avoid the handcarts and obtain fuel. I have wonderful memories of playing Loco with my siblings countless times.

Loco is a true classic, and easily the best of Crowther's trilogy of train games, which also includes Black Thunder and Suicide Express.



As we reach the end of the Reset line, I have taken copious amounts of notes on train based games I need to play on my C64. Apart from having played Express Raider, I am most looking forward to Ant's nomination, Southern Belle! Hope you all got a few ideas of train titles you could play on your C64 for the first time or revisit ones you had long forgotten. Toot toot!



By Stefan Vogt
@StefanVogt



***Famous Five: Five on a
Treasure Island***
(Enigma Variations, 1992)

The Famous Five - Five on a Treasure Island is one of those games that never really got the attention it deserved. When it came out in 1992 the world had already moved on, as a certain protagonist in a certain series of

books involving a dark tower would have said. Speaking of novels: The Famous Five is a tremendously popular series of books by the legendary British author Enid Blyton, following the adventures of Julian, Dick, Anne and Georgina, who prefers to be called George, and Timmy the dog. I grew up with those wonderful stories about old treasures, smugglers, forgotten passages and ancient secrets. When Enigma Variations secured a deal to produce a computer game from the first of the Famous Five novels, they were aware that only an adventure would be able to properly transport Blyton's heritage to the minds of the avid player. And they were right. Five on a Treasure Island is exceptionally well written. It offers a depth you rarely see in

interactive fiction and the beautiful graphics compliment the gripping tale so well. Famous Five sadly ended up as the right game at the wrong time, published in a decade we today understand as the great decline for titles of that genre. Back in the day I played the Commodore Amiga version, so the C64 port, which actually came last, was completely new to me. I was glad to see that it's a brilliant adaption of a brilliant game. The graphics take some time to load, but it's far from being annoying and worth every pixel you're waiting for. Five on a Treasure Island offers a great experience for both beginners and advanced adventure enthusiasts. You won't find it too challenging but it is all about the story anyway, unfolding so authentic that you're exploring dungeons and

what retirement looks like, we are eager to see more of it!

Stefan 8/10

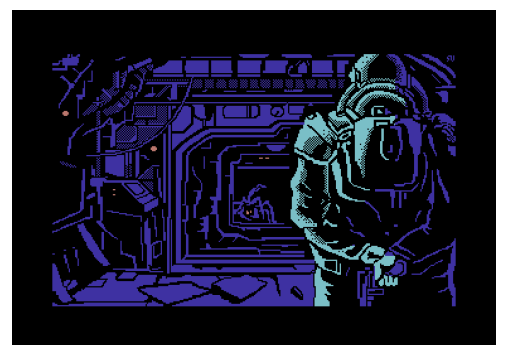
Alien Research Centre 2

(Zenobi / Pension Productions 2019)

<http://www.zenobi.co.uk/2019/08/alien-research-centre-2.html>

ARC is one of those games that could have attracted a lot more attention when released 1986. It came in 1990 though, at the end of the commercial text adventure era. Written by Ian Smith and graced with graphics from pixel legend Shaun G. McClure, the game was nothing but great. I still recommend it a lot to those willing to try an entry level interactive fiction piece first. You can imagine that I was absolutely amazed when I heard the news that John Wilson himself wrote the sequel, and what a great one it is. You once again play the role of Anderson, who has been ordered to go back to the horror, notably 30 years after his last visit. ARC2 is a more classic take on the adventure genre where you're solving riddles while expanding your map room by room. I like how things happen while visiting different locations at certain stages of progress. It's not hard to recognize that John is a master in writing quality adventure games. Science Fiction fans will surely be satisfied by this gem so let's get into your space suit and grill some alien scum.

Stefan 7/10



shipwrecks around Kirrin Island in no time. The game is close to the book, so if you know it, you're at an advantage. That doesn't mean though you won't enjoy Famous Five if you never dipped your toe into the world of Enid Blyton before. There is a chance you haven't, so we won't spoil here. What are you waiting for? Five on a Treasure Island is one of those adventures for the Commodore 64 you just have to play.

Stefan 9/10



From out of the Snow

(Zenobi / Pension Productions 2019)

<http://www.zenobi.co.uk/2019/07/from-out-of-snow-conversions.html>

Never trust John Wilson of Zenobi fame when he promises to retire. Zenobi is one of those software houses especially Spectrum users should remember very well. The UK-based publisher was responsible for countless high quality adventures. 2019 though was a very special year for Zenobi. Not only did John start to intentionally write new games for old systems, he also ported an impressive amount of his catalogue to new platforms, including the Commodore 64. It's safe to say this year was a good one for the breadbin, as countless Zenobi classics finally arrived decades after their Spectrum release. For those of you not aware: John Wilson is the father of the escape room adventure. It was his famous and hilariously funny game "Behind closed Doors", with the plot being set on a toilet, that started it all. From out of the Snow now is a much darker escape room adventure, heavily inspired by Carpenter's "The Thing". As usual, the storytelling is brilliant and captivating. If you're into wonderful spooky 80s style B movie atmosphere and science fiction, this is a game for you. And if this is

FUTURE

The Quill - Intro Texts

<http://8-bit.info/the-gilsoft-adventure-systems/>

As you may have noticed already, the Reset Fiction column has a past.present.future concept. While "past" takes a look at some of the best adventures back from the day, "present" will review current releases. Now "future" deals with adventures to come and we do that by providing you step by step guides and tricks for popular adventure systems. For now we will focus on Gilsoft's "The Quill" as it allows you to create high quality machine code adventures with no programming knowledge at all. Future issues of our column will also cover tools like "DAAD" and "Lantern" but Quill will always remain our recommendation if you target C64 only. It is the beautiful simplicity and rapid development process you have with it, allowing you to completely focus on writing your story, we love the most. Make sure you always download the latest version from the link provided. It is the official repository and also has a special Quill four word parser variant, that is exclusive to the Commodore 64.

THE QUILL MAIN MENU

```
[A] Vocabulary
[B] Message text
[C] Location text
[D] Movement table
[E] Object text
[F] Object start location
[G] Event table
[H] Status table
[I] Save database
[J] Verify database
[K] Load database
[L] Test adventure
[M] Save adventure
[N] Verify adventure
[O] Bytes spare
[P] Objects conveyable
[Q] Permanent colours
[R] System messages
[+] Return to basic
```

Select Facility Required

Image: Quill Interface

We advise you to take a look at the bundled documentation first. It is seriously the most brilliant step by step guide that ever came with the a piece of software. You need about two to three hours to work your way through it, perfect for a rainy Saturday afternoon, and then you have all the knowledge to create your own tales with Quill. Our mission is to build upon that knowledge and provide tricks and tutorials to enhance your experience as an avid interactive fiction author.

In this issue we're going to deal with intro texts. Our goal is showing two pages of introduction before the actual adventure begins. The best way of adding intros to the database is by implementing them as locations, so the first thing to do is implementing our pages as location 0 and location 1. Note that the game will always start at location 0. Press "C" so that you enter the location editor. Since a new Quill database always has some sample code, location 0 is already existing, we just press "A 0" now to amend text to it. Delete the contents you find at location zero and add your own intro text as seen on our picture. Use <SHIFT+Return> for a line break, you may also switch to different colours, the control chars remain amended to the location.

Location 0

John took a look through the window of the carriage. The blood-red moon is truly not a good omen. Here in the woods, far away from any civilization, the children of the night are lurking, waiting to devour the souls of lonely travellers.

The chassis groans loudly under the strain of the bumpy path. There is a light on a hill in the distance. Is that the Wild Boar Tavern?

Image: Location 0

&

FUTURE

Enter will save the information you entered. Back at the location editor, we hit "I" for inserting a new location. Quill automatically counts for you, so the newly created location will be location 1. Here, we're going to enter the second page of our intro text.

Location 1

From the corner of the eye, John can see something floating from the trees towards the coachman, who screams cruelly and fearfully.

As the carriage overturns, John fears the wrath of the grim reaper. With the blink of an eye he thinks of Molly and the children, then everything turns black...

Image: Location 1

Now we've added two pages of intro text to our game. Go back to the location editor and create location 2 by pressing "I". This will be the starting location for the player. We just enter something now that goes well with the story of the content we've already written.

Location 2

John stands in the middle of a dark forest. Trees cast eerie shadows. In the **NORTH** there is strange light on a hill. It's unusually quiet. All that can be heard is the threatening howling of the wolves in the distance.■

Image: Location 2

Now head over to the vocabulary section and add a word which you call CTEXT at position 109. When Quill starts, the database already has a few entries, with 109 being free. So we create a keyword which we then make use of in the status table. There are two tables in Quill, the event and the status table. The event table handles operations that occur after the user entered something. The status table triggers operations before the user is able to enter something, so that is where we place the script for the intro text. We are going to make two entries. Quill uses a CondActs logic, meaning when certain conditions are met, the defined actions are invoked. In our case, we tell Quill that when we're at location 0 we want the user to press any key, goto location 1 and then read the location text of the new location, which is what the DESC keyword is for. The same needs to be added for location 1, our second intro page. After pressing the key, the user gets transported to location 2, where the actual game starts. You should end up with a status table that looks like this.

```
CTXT *      Conds  AT      0
              Acts  ANYKEY
              GOTO    1
              DESC
CTXT *      Conds  AT      1
              Acts  ANYKEY
              GOTO    2
              DESC
```

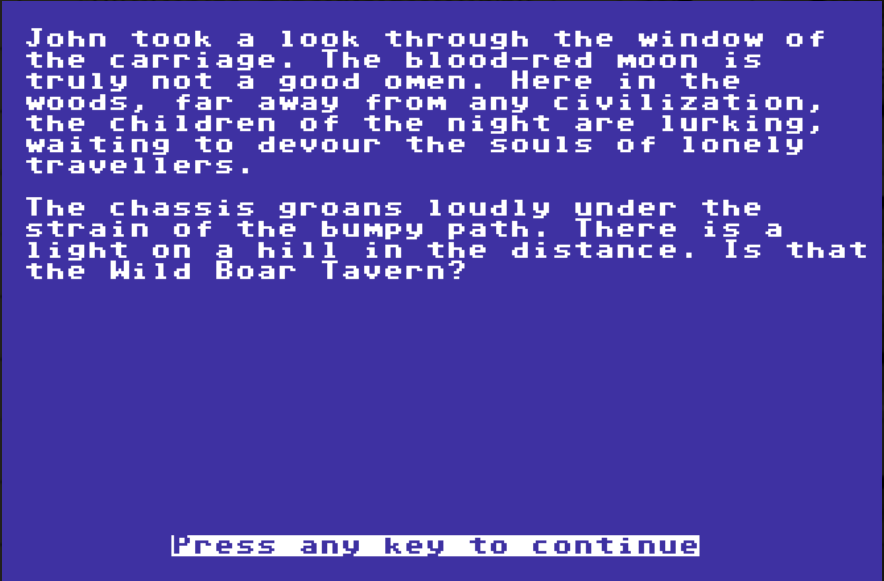
Press any key to continue

Image: Future Status

&

FUTURE

The last thing to do is testing your adventure and see if the intro text is working as expected. As you can see, the game now shows your two intro pages and then heads over to the starting location of your game.

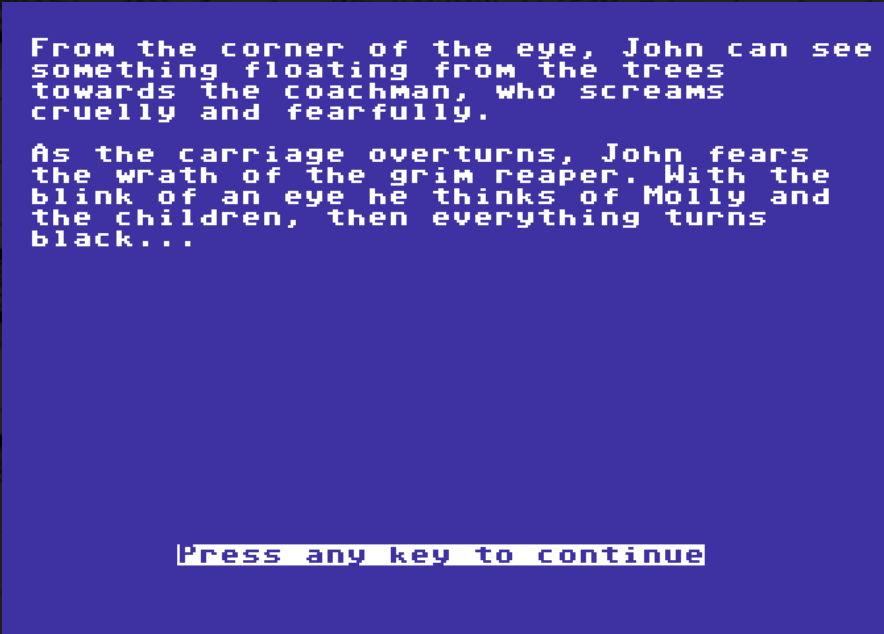
A screenshot of a text-based game interface. The background is a dark, textured grey with a faint, repeating pattern of stylized trees or foliage. A solid blue rectangular box contains white text. The text is in a monospaced font. The first paragraph describes a carriage and a blood-red moon. The second paragraph describes the carriage's movement and a distant light. At the bottom of the box, a prompt asks the user to press any key to continue.

John took a look through the window of the carriage. The blood-red moon is truly not a good omen. Here in the woods, far away from any civilization, the children of the night are lurking, waiting to devour the souls of lonely travellers.

The chassis groans loudly under the strain of the bumpy path. There is a light on a hill in the distance. Is that the Wild Boar Tavern?

Press any key to continue

Image: Game 1


A screenshot of a text-based game interface, similar to the first one. It features a dark, textured grey background with a blue rectangular box containing white text in a monospaced font. The text describes John's perspective from the carriage, seeing a coachman and fearing the grim reaper as the carriage overturns. A prompt at the bottom asks the user to press any key to continue.

From the corner of the eye, John can see something floating from the trees towards the coachman, who screams cruelly and fearfully.

As the carriage overturns, John fears the wrath of the grim reaper. With the blink of an eye he thinks of Molly and the children, then everything turns black...

Press any key to continue

Image: Game 2

A screenshot of a text-based game interface, similar to the previous ones. It features a dark, textured grey background with a blue rectangular box containing white text in a monospaced font. The text describes John standing in a dark forest with a strange light to the north. A prompt at the bottom asks the user to enter a command. The word 'PRESENT' is partially visible in large, bold letters on the right side of the background.

John stands in the middle of a dark forest. Trees cast eerie shadows. In the **NORTH** there is strange light on a hill. It's unusually quiet. All that can be heard is the threatening howling of the wolves in the distance.

John awaits your command.
>

Image: Game 3

Summary of Conditions, Actions and Flags

Conditions

AT	locno.
NOTAT	locno.
ATGT	locno.
ATLT	locno.
PRESENT	objno.
ABSENT	objno.
WORN	objno.
NOTWORN	objno.
CARRIED	objno.
NOTCARR	objno.
CHANCE	percent
ZERO	flagno.
NOTZERO	flagno.
EQ	flagno. value
GT	flagno. value
LT	flagno. value

Don't forget

To set System Message 32 to have "Disc, Tape or RAM?" in The Quill as Illustrated games have a ramsave feature.

Provide Event Table entries to allow the user to turn pictures on and off if you want that function.

Actions

INVEN	
DESC	
QUIT	
END	
DONE	
OK	
ANYKEY	
SAVE	
LOAD	
TURNS	
SCORE	
PAUSE	value
GOTO	locno.
MESSAGE	mesno.
REMOVE	objno.
GET	objno.
WEAR	objno.
DESTROY	objno.
CREATE	objno.
SWAP	objno. objno.
SET	flagno.
CLEAR	flagno.
PLUS	flagno. value
MINUS	flagno. value
LET	flagno. value
SID	regno. value
BORDER	value
PAPER	value
INK	value
CLS	
DROPALL	
PLACE	objno. locno.



Flags

Flag 0	If this flag is set to zero it is light. Any other value means it's dark
Flag 1	holds count of objects carried
Flag 2	decreased when a location is described
Flag 3	decreased when a location is described and it's dark
Flag 4	decreased when a location is described and it's dark and object 0 is absent
Flags 5-8	decreased each turn
Flag 9	decreased each turn when it's dark
Flag 10	decreased each turn when it's dark and Object 0 is absent
Flags 11-24	ordinary flags
Flag 25-26	ordinary flags <A06 but contain 2 nd and 3 rd word in "4 word drive"
Flags 27-28	ordinary flags (but special meaning on other machines so best avoid)
Flag 29	ordinary flag in Quill only but, Picture control in Illustrator Bit 7 (128) set = Draw again, Bit 6 (64) = Always on, Bit 5 (32) set = pics off (text only adventure)
Flag 30	holds the score
Flag 31	holds turns count LSB
Flag 32	holds turns count MSB



By Gavin Graham

<https://gavingraham.bandcamp.com/>

Chiptune music has been around for a long time. Arguably, the first public example of a chiptune was when the Australian made CSIRAC computer that played the "Colonel Bogey March" in 1951. Time goes on and the 1980's roll around. Home computers become prevalent but they had very rudimentary sound generation, that is, until the Commodore 64 was released.

The C64 was essentially a synthesiser built into the hardware along with awesome graphics capability too. Early C64

music was made by playing three channels of basic sounds but as people discovered the nuances of the C64's Sound Interface Device (SID) chip, the sounds became real-time modulated and complex by using pitch and waveform shaping techniques. The growing demoscene culture around the C64 further pushed the limitation of the machine in both graphics and sound.

We didn't really think of it as chiptunes back then though as we lived through that era. The term chiptune took more rise as

those 8bit computers started to slip into obsolescence as then we had a term to refer to the music of those old computers as we enjoyed our newer 16bit machines that had sample playback, etc. Chiptunes today still come in their purest form but also in derivatives. Fakebit, Glitch and 8bitCore, to name a few, all evolved from those original chip sounds. These 8bit sounds have even found their way into today's contemporary music. Justin Timberlake, to name just one artist, enjoys infusing some retro sounds into his music. For



Image: Gavindi in all his Bit Pop glory!

"Bitpop by this definition is a broad category since it allows degrees of variation as opposed to the tighter constraints that constitute chiptunes."

example, his song "Can't stop the Feeling" has a C64 sound in there, as just one example. Maybe not quite as recent and certainly not as subtle as how JT does it, the song Kernkraft 400 by Zombie Nation predominantly used a whole sampled section from David Whittaker's game Lazy Jones.

Some fringe artists now use equal parts 8bit sounds and real instruments in a broad style that sometimes gets broadly categorised as Bitpop. But Bitpop can be many things since it's a broad church and this is only my take, as a humble ex-C64 demoscene musician.

What is BitPop?

I title all my uploads with "[Bitpop/Chiptune]" however

my predominant genre is Bitpop. I include the word Chiptune in as I appreciate that not everyone knows what Bitpop is.

Chiptunes have existed since the 80s but the terminology gained more prevalence as the computers that generates that music fell into obsolescence.

Even amongst those that know Chiptunes, it is a smaller group that know of Bitpop. Using the word 'chiptune' serves as an anchor point for my more obtuse subgenre. Your average listener is unlikely to know what a chiptune is and even amongst the minority that know of chiptunes, they are unaware of bitpop.

Let's start by quoting Wikipedia, Bitpop is a type of electronic music and subgenre of chiptune music, where at least part of the

music is made using the sound chips of old 8-bit (or 16-bit) computers and video game consoles. Bitpop uses a mixture of old and new equipment often resulting a sound which is unlike Chiptune although containing 8-bit sourced sounds. For example, a bitpop production may be composed almost entirely of 8-bit sounds but with a live vocal, or overlaid live guitars. Conversely, a bitpop production may be composed almost entirely of live vocals and instruments, but feature a bassline or lead melody provided by an 8-bit device.

Bitpop by this definition is a broad category since it allows degrees of variation as opposed to the tighter constraints that constitute chiptunes.

This isn't pure SID but I never intended my music to be as constrained. Most of my header & banner graphics and some of my promo art have the motto of "Bitpop - Eight Bit Chiptunes Behaving Badly". I chose this saying as a response to the preconceived notion of some of my listeners and to make a bit of a mockery of myself and the need to label or classify what myself and others are doing.

Backstory...

Back in 2013, I resumed doing music after a long hiatus by remixing music from C64 games. This is a tried and tested formula with websites such as RKO dedicated to C64 remixes. While I appreciate those remixes, it seems that there is a strong leaning towards dance and electronic-dub style interpretations. My approach was to imagine how the original artist vision for the musical pieces were and try to recreate a high-fidelity versions of how the tunes might have sounded in their head. That lead to two albums, the "8 bit Spindle" and "Commodore - Paula, 6581".

Then in 2017 I heard a Coldplay song called 'Something Just Like This' and due to all sorts of machinations in my life, I felt compelled to do my own version but it was already high-fidelity so, what was I going to do that was different?

The definition in Wikipedia lists some rather established names who fit into this genre, though they mostly seem to side more fusing real instruments or

Goals

By bringing these awesome old computer sounds together with vocals and popular music, I am trying to open up the accessibility of these sounds to an audience that otherwise may

never know of Chiptune or Bitpop or even the thriving retro scene that underpins all this. A more longer term goal comes as a form of preservation where fundamental chip sounds aren't just sitting archives, rather they are heard by people that would otherwise not hear them. Perhaps this can act as a gateway to people discovering the more pure side of Chiptunes and computing history - I don't know, but I'd like to hope so.

Technical Brief

I use a few core tools in creating these tracks. Some are new, some are old (and emulated). Let's start with the old since this is where all the sound design happens.

Since the 80's and then being active on the demoscene, I developed my C64 Music & Sound effect driver in machine code then assembly. Like others, my driver has gone through a number of iterations as new innovations and techniques in SID Chip sound modulation and the





most recent iteration (zBlex v6: <https://github.com/gavindi/zblex-v6>) was written in 2013 with two primary goals:

1) supporting as many SID Chips as you care to map into the C64 memory address space. Most C64 emulators support two SID chips at \$20 separation starting from \$D400. My driver makes it easy to support these as long as they fall in the \$20 increments.

2) Every writable register of the SID can be programmed as a wavetable. My wavetable design allows for relative and absolute value modification and conditional looping and jumping. Because of this complexity, it would have been too processor heavy to have one wavetable per instrument or sound as jumps and loops can disrupt the flow of the commands I use in my bytecode. Instead, I've opted to make my tables per register. As the SID Chip has seven registers per voice/channel, my instrument definition can consist of up to seven tables per sound/instrument. It's complex but it allows for a lot of flexibility.

I typically use my driver to create single discrete sounds at various note pitches and then sample those out from the reSID emulated sound into a sample library. Sometimes though, I do create basic sound phrases that may be one to four bars in length and then sample that out into my expanding library of SID sounds.

These sounds may be simplistic as a standard Triangle or Pulse (without width modulation) waveforms or may be as complex as I need it to be. Some sounds may be heavily wavetable modulated or even take two or three SID channels to produce. C64 musicians (and other platforms) have been doing this since the time when we started unlocking the majesty of these sound chips.

Another aspect of my zBlex-v6 music driver is that it doesn't do sampled sounds as its focus is solely on subtractive synthesis.

For my Bitpop music, this isn't an issue as I prefer to offset those 8 bit sounds with high quality vocal overdubs/tracks. In my view, this makes the overall accessibility of chiptunes to a general audience more palatable. Using 4 bit low KHz vocals aren't befitting to my strategy in this regard - not to mention that even at that low sampling quality, 4+ minutes of samples (X2 including backing vocals) won't fit into 64Kb of memory.

Self Imposed Limitations

Also, Bitpop allows for the use of more modern production techniques so I do make use of effects such as chorus, reverb, tape delays and compression. I limit how I employ these effects since I am constantly aware of how they can obfuscate the raw nature of chip sounds.

Another advantage of not being pure chiptunes is that I don't need to concern myself with how many sound channels/voices I use, of which the SID has three. There is however a growing collection of dual-SID music that you can playback with SID player of C64 emulator and isn't adhering to the original C64 design specifications. Side note: I bet this also upsets the "purists" too, so I'm not alone in this!

I do take careful consideration in the level of polyphony in my Bitpop covers. I don't layer as many sounds as I please. For example, I could completely disregard the arpeggio effect and play three (or more) notes to create chords but that would then lose one of the most identifying qualities of chiptunes. More commonly, if I feel I need to add an extra sound at some point in the musical piece, I will sacrifice one of the other sounds that is playing to wedge the new sound in. I do this not always, but mostly.

"I do take careful consideration in the level of polyphony in my Bitpop covers. I don't layer as many sounds as I please."

zblex v6

- * Multi-SID
- * Modulate ANY Register
- * Conditional Bytecode
- * Relative & Absolute Register Modifiers
- * Phrases & Subphrases Support
- * Wavetable Do/While Looping
- * Sequence For/Next Looping
- * Tight Code & Music Structure
- * Not for Musses
- * Made with Love

<https://github.com/gavindi/zblex-v6>

Typically I try to keep my music within a six channel limit in the spirit of DualSID Chiptunes. Sometimes I break this self imposed limitation, but only if I really feel I need to.

Putting it all Together - The Glue:

Here we are with discreetly sampled sounds, lead & backing vocals and production effects/engineering and now they all need to be combined into a Bitpop song. This is where modern music production tools come into play.

Up until recently, I was using Renoise (arguably the best tracker available - and mostly an extremely capable sampler with a tracker attached for data entry) to bring my instrument samples, phrase samples and vocals together into one piece. Apart from production effects as mentioned and they affect the whole sound channel, I would only modify individual samples/sounds as far as pitch and volume.

For example, with pitch modification, unless I wanted to sample an instrument at every pitch along the note scale I intend

to use it at, the arpeggio effect is going to be time distorted since samples play faster or slower according to pitch. For really simple chord progressions that don't change key or greatly vary, this isn't much of an issue but for the more complex chords, I use Renoise's in-built pitch modifier to recreate the arpeggio. It all depends on the use-case.

Let me be clear about this, I do not use any VST's that emulate the SID Chip. I only use samples from my own C64 music driver.

As great as Renoise is, I found that its capability to modify vocal samples to be somewhat limiting in terms of pitch shifting and time stretching. I'm also trying to keep up at releasing at least one song per week and Renoise's workflow has been slowing me down.

After doing six Bitpop albums, I finally took the plunge of moving away from Renoise, going over to Tracktion Waveform 9. It too has an amazing built-in sampler and effects but one thing missing was the ability to create those typical C64 style arpeggios. Luckily, Renoise have made their sound engine available as a VST (Renoise Redux) and I use that for pitch modification/arpeggios. This is the only VST I now use and I

still use it only to modify my sampled SID sounds.

Waveform 9 has incredible workflow and has all the other tools I need for music production. Essentially I think of Renoise and now Waveform+Redux as an assembler akin to compiling code but in this case, constructing sounds from C64 generated sampled sounds.

I've noticed when uploading my music to Bandcamp that in the (meta)tags section there's an autocomplete or suggested tag labelled "8 bit core". Perhaps this is actually an accurate description for my music. At its core, my bitpop is pure 8-bit. There are no real instruments, not strings, not basses and not drums - they're all from an (emulated) SID Chip.

And so...

Though not entirely related though in a similar vein, I think of how the Vampire add-on for the Commodore Amiga has divided the retro community into almost equal parts. There are those that believe that it takes the extension of hardware too far, that it's virtually as if you are using a different computer and not an Amiga. There are those that embrace the modification to hardware and cite that this has continued on for various platforms and part of the joy is seeing how they can distort the original platform and celebrate the flexibility in being able to do so.

Ultimately as I mentioned, I see this as a gateway for an audience that haven't made it over to pure chiptune enlightenment. Just like how restaurants can create fusion culinary delights and like the origin of those cuisines before them have migrated and transformed across cultures so to can music. Blues as a musical genre existed before R&B, yes, we've been mixing styles since time immemorial (which actually dates back to 1189) so even earlier than that!

This is pop music gone off the tracks - this is chiptunes behaving badly - this is my brand of Bitpop. It's not meant to be pure and I don't pretend it to ever be anything other than what it is - hence partly why I'm writing this.

@gavindi

SOUND DESIGN & PRODUCTION

```
INBI_H:
.byte 0xFREDA1 // Frequency Absolute High Byte
.byte 0xFREQR1 // Frequency Relative High Byte
.byte 0xPULSE1 // Pulse High Byte
.byte 0xCTRL1 // Control Register High Byte
.byte 0xADDR1 // Address High Byte
.byte 0xFILT1 // Filter High Byte
.byte 0 // RESERVED
.byte 0 // RESERVED
```

```
INS2_H:
    .byte 0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0
```

```

//----- Repeat/Command, Delay/Index, Waveform Absolute, Waveform Relative
//Format:      |Repeat/Command|Delay|Waveform ABS|Waveform Rel
CTRL1:
// .byte 0, 2, $81, $00
.byte 0, 0, $41, $00
.byte JIU, 2, 0
.byte 0, 0, $40, 0
.byte RETFS

```

```
//Format:      |Repeat/Command |Delay  |Freq Replace |Freq Add
FREQ01:
// .byte 0 ,2 ,07 ,500
// .byte 0 ,0 ,500 ,0
.byte RETFS
```

```

FREQRI:
.byte 0 ,32
.word 0
.byte 2 ,0
.word -10
FREQRIP1:
.byte 4 ,0
.word 10
.byte 4 ,0
.word -10
.byte J10 ,255 ,8

```

```
PULSE1:
    .byte 0,0
    .word $0700
    .byte 32,0
    .word 16
```

```

.word 16
PULSE1P1:
.byte 16, 0
.word 64
.byte 16, 0
.word -64
.byte J1U, 255, 0

```

```
ADSR1:
.byte 0,0,$09,$4a
.byte JIU,2,0
.byte 0,0,$09,$49
.byte RFS
```

```

FILTER
.byte 0 ,0
.word 1500
.byte 32 ,0
.word -20
.byte 10 ,0
.word -10
.byte 10 ,0
.word 10
.byte J10 ,255 ,0

```

```
//***** The address table to the sequences for each voice *****/
```

```
MusicIndex: // This is the pointer table to each voice in the tune
            // It is low/high bytes of each sequence
            // followed by the tempo and voices used in this piece
```

```
song1:
.byte <S1V1,>S1V1,<S1V1,>S1V1,<S1V1,>S1V1 // Low byte pointers
.byte >S1V1,>S1V1,>S1V1,>S1V1,>S1V1,>S1V1 // High byte pointers
.byte 4 // Tempo
.byte 1-1 // Number of voices in this song
.byte 0,0 // Two reserved bytes for future expansion
```

```
//***** INSTRUMENT ZPL DATA *****/
```

```

SIV1:
.byte INSTR,0
.byte F0RSQ,4
// .byte G4,4
.byte JSUBS,<SIVAP1,>SIVAP1
.byte NEXTS
.byte GATEN,1,C4,16
.byte GATEN,0,REMOD,MODPULSIMMODFLT,PORTA,C4,64,63,16
.byte REMOD,MODPULSIMMODFLT,A3,16
.byte JMP,SIV1,>SIV1 // Jump to Start of Sequence
// Note: A SOME SEQUENCE // Jump to Start of Sequence

```

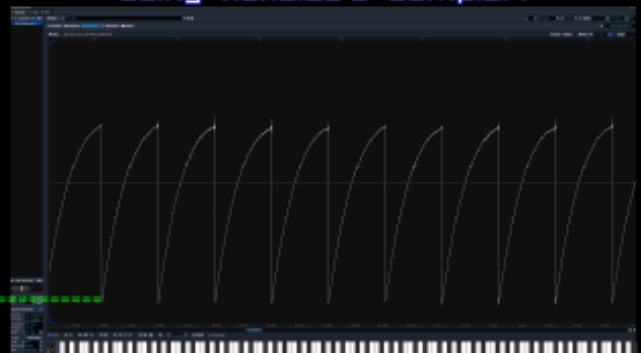
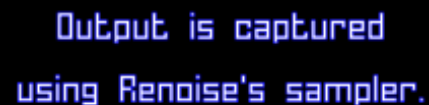
```
//----- Labels are in the format of SnVn[Pn]
//----- for 'S'ong number & 'V'oice number [and optionally 'P'art number.]
```

```

SIV1P1:
.byte 04,4,FS4,8,RETFS
SIV2:
.byte RETFS
SIV3:
.byte RETFS
SIV4:
.byte RETFS
SIV5:
.byte RETFS
SIV6:
.byte RETFS

```

Instruments and sounds are generated with the C64 `zBLEND6 Music & Sound Driver` using its 'zPL' bytecode format.



```
=====Arrangemnts are sequenced
mostly by ear and the samples
are more simple sounds layered
=====rather than modulated.
```



**CAVIN
RAHAN**
+ featured artists

THE AGE OF HEROES



Psytronik, Disk/Tape/Digital Download
<https://psytronik.itch.io/ageofheroes>

Code: Achim Volkers
 Graphics/Design: Trevor Storey
 Music/SFX: Saul Cross

Reviewers: Rob & Kevin



There are tales, grim tales of evil arising from dark lands. An evil from long past has returned to the world, bringing forth its legions to lay waste to everyone... and bring about the end times.

The only thing which can stop them? The Warriors of Light: Anneika and Dhokr.

In The Age of Heroes, you will take the role of one of those Warriors of Light as you take to the lands, and work your way to where the great evil lies in wait and vanquish it.

The world is made up of a number of distinct regions - these are explored from a side-on view, with your Warrior wandering from left to right, vanquishing foes, avoiding pits

and collecting various items. These range from pickups for extra health, gems which serve as keys, and 'orbs of light'. Collecting five of these allows you to activate a powerful screen clearing attack by holding the fire button.

Along the way, you'll be battling various enemies - most of these can be dispatched with an attack or two, but some will take more hits to be successfully dispatched.

On reaching the end of a section, in most cases you'll discover either a gem used to unlock gates further on, or run into one of the bosses. Defeating these involves you dodging and deflecting their attacks until enough have been deflected back to destroy them.

This will reward you with a new weapon, letting you dish out more damage to the enemies you'll encounter.

After this, you'll be taken to a map. As you clear stages, others will be unlocked, and you'll be free to travel to any of these which you've unlocked. Travelling back to stages you've conquered will be imported - as it gives you the opportunity to explore the stages and take out more enemies which earns you experience.

As with many RPGs, experience translates to levels... with this based off your score. When it reaches certain thresholds, you'll go up a level, increasing your health level which becomes ever so important as you venture further on your quest.



Age of Heroes is certainly well executed, with slick presentation, graphics, sound (really, everything you'd expect from the Icon64 crew).

You're not getting anything here that is going to tax the brain cells, but it's nice to be able to switch off the grey matter and just enjoy a good old hack 'n slash. If you think you're just getting an updated Rastan Saga... well, you kind of are, but there's a bit more to Age of Heroes.

We've got level ups, a game map, various thingies to collect and it's all jam packed into a single load.

Kudos to Saul Cross for the excellent soundtrack. A variety of Follin'esque tunes accompany the levels and are a joy to listen to. Graphically, the game is colourful, smooth and the sprites are well constructed. The bosses are especially impressive. However, boss attack patterns are fairly generic and enemies approach like mindless zombies, bah.

Age of Heroes is great fun and there's enough there to keep you going for a while, which absolutely justifies its budget asking price. Well worth it!



Age of Heroes isn't the first side-on game from the Icon64 crew, but it offers quite a few new tricks. The way in which your quest unfolds - region by region, with freedom enough to explore as necessary, as you unlock more and more areas to explore.

The whole package is well presented, with great sprites and backgrounds, and some atmospheric tunes to accompany you, and being able to pick your hero is a great touch as well. Whilst that makes a great setup, the mechanics are a let down. The controls are responsive and well crafted, the real stickler is the difficulty. Getting to the first boss can be challenging, especially with the grinding required to get enough health to survive. On top of that? The bosses offer very little variety in their patterns - with the same technique being enough to take them down.

Age of Heroes offers lots of potential, but the repetitive boss encounters with the grinding required to survive make it one which fails to live up to it.

BEYOND THE SCANLINES

[https://
www.youtube.com/
watch?
v=BhPYMIXOf1A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BhPYMIXOf1A)



"You're not getting anything here that is going to tax the brain cells, but it's nice to be able to switch off the grey matter and just enjoy a good old hack 'n slash."



THE LORD OF DRAGONSPIRE



Psytronik, Disk/Tape/Digital Download

<https://psytronik.itch.io/dragonspire>

Code: Stuart Collier

Graphics/Design: Trevor Storey

Music/SFX: Jason Page

Reviewer: Louie



The Lord of Dragonspire is an action adventure game with RPG elements that provides a modern-day reinterpretation of the Mastertronic title, Master of Magic. The back story is that a Demon Lord has taken over Dragonspire, introducing evil back into its lands. You play a brave warrior on a mission to defeat the Demon before he spreads his influence to your own homeland.

The game is attractively presented with the top section of the screen containing an icon-based command menu system allowing you to interact with items and characters. Player movement is done via joystick with navigation of your warrior depicted in the lower left of

screen and it is here where we come across the first major limitation – the jerky nature of scrolling within the game map, which can be off-putting and may make prolong game play uncomfortable to some.

As you start to play the game proper, you have to deal with the high difficulty curve. Attempts to combat enemies from the outset will result in quick depletion of your health. Making meaningful progress initially involves outrunning enemies and locating items to manage health and increase your skill level. It's not until you upgrade your armoury that the adventure starts to hit its stride as you successfully battle against a variety of nasty creatures and start getting deep into the land of Dragonspire.

Sonically, the game features a smashing backing soundtrack from Jason Page but contains no sound effects and as such any feedback on whether your attacks have any impact will come from the text narrative on screen that describes the action taking place within the game world.

The Lord of Dragonspire does offer an epic adventure but falls short in providing game play that will engage with the typical player due to the technical graphical limitations and the high difficulty. This one is only for the stubborn.



COSMIC FORCE



WavemStudio, Disk/Cartridge/Digital Download

<https://thecommodorestory.com>

Programming & Graphics: Steven Fletcher
Music/SFX: Jason Page

Reviewer: Louie



Cosmic Force is an arcade shooter featuring three different style of game play with the sole premise to protect your colony planets from enemy alien attack.

Things kick off with a Galaxian style of play before moving onto the second defence phase that sees the action switch across to a first-person cockpit view chasing down enemy ships before finishing up with the final phase of defence that sees you skimming your colony planet searching and destroying alien drones before they land. Shooting enemies can result in power-ups becoming available for you to collect and scattered in between the defence phases are a challenge levels that allow you to acquire bonus points and additional lives.

Get through the three phases of defence, you then move on to the next colony and repeat the same phases again, albeit with more aggressive enemies. Cosmic Force offers 108 levels across 9 colonies.

All this sounds like a good premise to a great game, that is unless you get the execution wrong. Unfortunately, this is the case with Cosmic Force. Enthusiasm for the game quickly wanes when you realise that the enemy attack waves are quite limited and are repeated throughout the whole game.



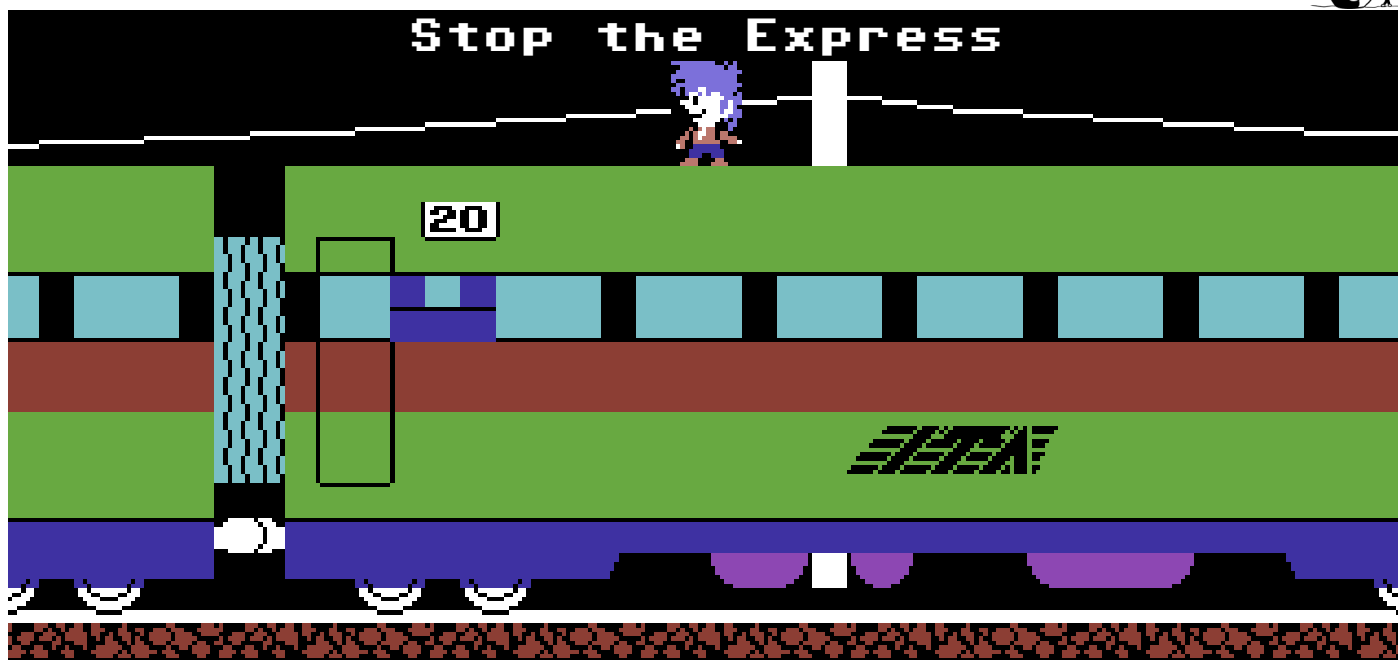
The cockpit phase is a disappointment as aliens don't shoot back and is nothing more than a bonus accumulation stage in disguise, while the Defender section doesn't fare any better with aliens clumped together and stuttering scrolling whenever too much is going on the screen.

Outside of the great in game music soundtrack and title screen, Cosmic Force suffers from poor production values. Sparse graphics, abrupt transitions between levels and uninspired repetitive gameplay all add up to the overall 'budget' feel to the game.





By Rob Caporetto



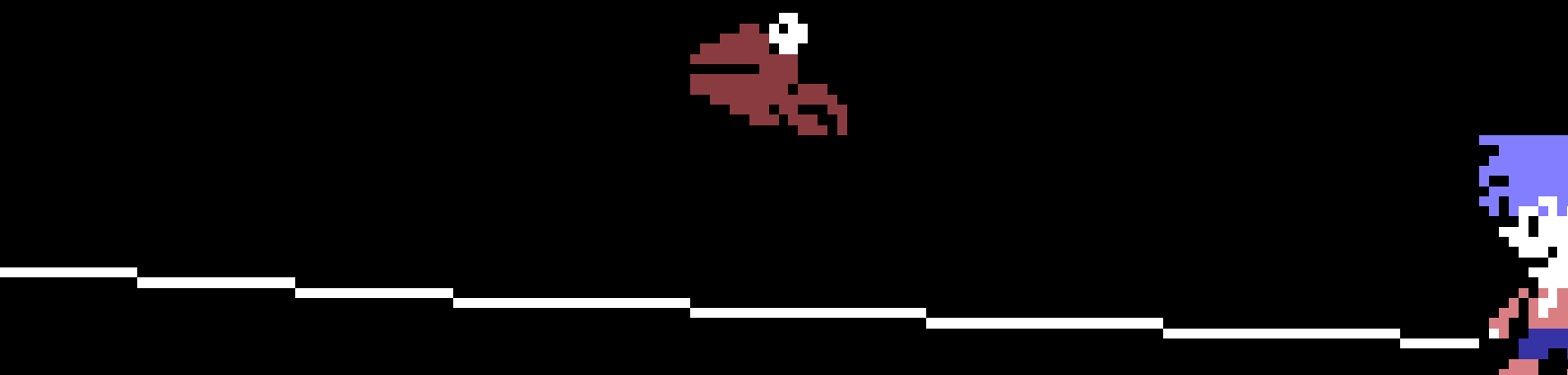
Each issue, the Reset team journeys back into the mists of time to revisit a title from C64 history, and see how it fares today. Does it still stack up, or is it one best left in our collective memories?

Stop the Express may have been published by Commodore, but it's a unique one... in that it was developed by Hudson Soft (yes, that Hudson Soft). Originally released in 1983 for a variety of Japanese computers, it found its way to the West a year later. Your job is simple: Fight your way through the hordes of Redman agents to the front of the ITA Express, and safely bring it to a stop. In the grand traditions of early arcade-esque gaming, it takes a simple concept and amps the challenge up as you beat each stage!

TOP
001800

SCORE
000800

TIME
107



12

There is no doubt that Stop The Express is a relic from the past. However, rose tinted glasses could possibly make it seem better than it actually is!

Cameron Davis

Stop The Express was voted as the fourth best Spectrum game ever by Your Sinclair magazine, and it's a testament to the severe case of Stockholm Syndrome that every Spectrum owner suffered. They thought this was good. They really didn't have anything else to occupy their time, except for feeling an immense sense of regret.

The game is as simple as a glass of water and nowhere near as refreshing. If this was on a

compilation of Atari 2600 games that never got released you'd probably think "yeah, they made a good call deep sixing this garbage". I guess it could be fun to play and provide hours of enjoyment if you've never played a video game before and your idea of a wild Saturday night was sitting alone in a dark room and organising your collection of urine samples.

This game was so dull that I'm going to fill the rest of the word count with a list of my favourite Simpsons characters: Homer, Lisa, Bleeding Gums Murphy, Montgomery Burns as the alien character.

Cam Jackson

I never played Stop The Express back in the day and having played it for the first time I don't think I missed out.

The game is frustrating but did hook me. A dozen tries and I was getting very annoyed at these red looking Elvis guys throwing knives at me. I would lay down to duck the knives. I found the inner Green Beret coming out and I wanted to spin around and knife red Elvis or better yet flamethrower.

It was painful to progress and then be knocked off the train and roll along as it passed by back to carriage 20. I eventually managed to out run them to the end of Stage 1 carriage 11.

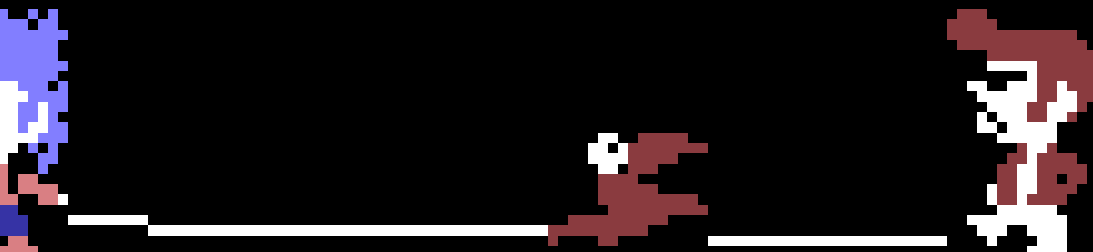
Now Stage 2 and carriage 10. I managed to jump on a Red Elvis by accident, knocking him down. Ah Ha.

DIST. ROUND 1



BEYOND THE SCANLINES

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mTQGTROcxjI>



That's it. Made it to carriage 4 before Game Over.

Not sure I have the energy to keep going but I'm close to the front of the train. Look out Red Elvis I'm boarding again.

Andrew Fisher (Merman)

This was one of those games I missed out on early in my C64 history, but picked up later. Loading it from tape for the first time, I was struck by the clever loading system, with the train showing the number of blocks remaining. The actual gameplay however did not grab me. It felt very repetitive. With hindsight, the graphics are very chunky and the scrolling is not smooth – but despite these drawbacks the

overall effect of riding on a train is put across. It took me a while to work out how to use the strange red "snakebirds" to defeat the thugs, and with some perseverance I was able to clear a train and get that much-mocked "congraturation" message. However it's not a game I went back to. Looking it up online, the 66% review from ZZAP sums it up pretty well. Not as well-made as the Spectrum version, but fun to play for a little while.

Louie Dimovski

Well this is a bit of good fun for about 10 minutes. The graphical style is quite nice from a nostalgic perspective, as long as you don't pay too much attention to the limited character animation.

To its credit, the game tries to mix things up with the ability to jump up and catch birds flying across your path and then have them unleashed upon your pursuers and having the action switch across to inside the train compartment half way through.

But the SFX did stand out for me. I can't help but giggle by the thud sound of my character's head smacking against the metal stanchion when I jump up at the wrong time or the trailing sound of the train rattle going off in the distance after being knocked off.

However, the game offers a somewhat pedestrian and narrow field of play and as such my drive to continue with it once I completed a level was gone and I am itching to play something with a bit more substance.

@rob_caporetto
Beyond the Scanlines

WORMHOLE



Protovision, Disk/Cartridge/Digital Download
<https://protovision.itch.io/wormhole>

Code, Graphics & Music: Thorsten & Thomas Rosenbaum
 Titlescreen: Gergely Sinkó

Reviewers: Kevin & Rob



In 2035, scientists connected Earth to a hostile alien planet, by creating a wormhole. Predictably, the aliens invaded the scientist's laboratory, kidnapping the professor. Your mission (yeah yeah, should you choose to accept it) is to enter the research centre, navigate the wormhole and mount a rescue mission. Equipped with a 'rocket powered hazmat suit', the Earth's safety and future is entrusted entirely to you. No pressure!

Wormhole features different weapon systems to use, and of course, the ability to utilise rocket power (providing you have the fuel) which makes jumping obstacles and platforms *that much easier and quicker*. The game has the player navigating the 15 levels (split into three distinctive worlds); jumping, dodging and shooting in a rather familiar and pleasant style.

Presentation is up to Protovision's usual lofty standards (not even taking into account the superb physical version). The game opens with

the Protovision logo splash sequence then straight onto the loading picture. From the title screen (features a swinging Wormhole logo, filled with a hypnotic swirling effect), the player can jump henceforth into the future, or choose from an impressive array of options. These include settings (keymapping, and that sort of thing), story, selectable trainers and a saveable high score table. A non-cooperative two player mode is also available. In-game presentation includes other neat little effects, such as Turrican style transitioning when starting a new life (it looks pretty cool, if unoriginal) and a nice animated sequence where we are

dropped into the first level via helicopter.

Graphics are colourful and attractive, with varied alien sprites and smooth scrolling worlds. Each world has its own theme and colours, creating welcome variation in the scenery. Sound is also high quality, with an assortment of loading, title and in-level tunes to keep our feet tapping. The level tunes are especially impressive, leaving a channel open for the necessary bleep and bloop spot sound effects. As aesthetics go, it's all done to a high standard indeed.

Wormhole is available from Protovision in a boxed physical

WORMHOLE
 1-PLAYER
 OPTIONS
 STORY
 TRAINER
 HI-SCORES



I wasn't initially impressed with Wormhole. However, with perseverance, I've become quite fond of this quirky title!

The gameplay isn't anything we haven't seen before. It's a standard left to right (sometimes, right to left) platforming affair with shooting and collecting. The game oozes charm, with nicely drawn worlds and a variety of alien sprites, creatures that could come straight out of Starship Troopers - yes, bugs... and lots of them!

One thing that is noticeable is the attention to detail. The variety of options, as well as everything from the title screen, transitioning and the graphics/sound demonstrate that the development team have gone out of their way to produce a highly polished product overall.

Wormhole is a familiar and fun game to play. I'm impressed with the game and also the price point. The digital download in particular is cheap as chips, considering the game is certainly good enough to be a full pricer. You really don't have much to lose here, except a few hours lost in the alien worlds, battling the bugs.



edition (with all the usual goodies and trinkets) on both disk and cartridge, and as a budget priced digital download, perfect for all of the Ultimate, Mini/Maxi, SD2IEC and emulator users.

The first glances of Wormhole made for something which looked like a neat action game. Having played it however, whilst it certainly looks the part, it was another matter mechanically.

For the most part. Generally, the run & gun mechanics work nicely as you make your way through each of the levels. The challenge comes in how you move about. Having separate fuel for vertical and horizontal movement makes your movement feel inconsistent - from freely jumping and flying about at one moment, to walking at a snail's pace on the ground the next.

It's amplified on death as you lose everything you had to hand. So expect to be exploring the levels on foot, hoping to find fuel as you battle on.

Another frustration is dealing with enemies. Collision handling is too tight, with little room for leniency, especially battling enemies with your starting weapon, which you'll really want to be familiar with.

Wormhole is a solid experience, but one which I found to be far more fiddly than it really should have been.



the isle of the Cursed Prophet

THE ISLE OF THE CURSED PROPHET



Psytronik, Disk/Tape/Digital Download

<https://psytronik.itch.io/cursed-prophet-c64>

Code: Achim Volkers

Graphics/Design: Trevor Storey

Music/SFX: Jason Page & Soul Cross

Reviewer: Louie



The Isle of the Cursed Prophet sees you play the role of Oliver Taylor - a desperate husband looking to bring his beloved back from the dead. He dedicates his life to researching how to summon the dead and comes across ancient scripture referencing the Isle of Prophets as a place that holds the key to this ability.

The game kicks off with a fabulous atmospheric introduction showing Oliver driving to meet his charter boat before the switching to a top down view (with great graphics reminiscent of a Nintendo RPG) as he arrives on the isle. It's at this point that Oliver starts to explore the sizeable island, interacting with everything in sight all while dealing with evil animals intent on stopping him achieve his task.

You're initially given little guidance on where you should go and what you need to do and may find yourself getting frustrated with the lack of direction. But as you start to locate keys and items that upgrade your abilities, you get the sense of the game opening up as you obtain access to previously blocked or hidden sections of the island. You'll find yourself constantly back-tracking areas you've already visited but this is far from being a chore as you are always rewarded for doing so.

Cursed Prophet has intuitive controls - the joystick button acts as a broad action function and the outcome of its use is automatically determined based on what objects you are interacting with and the items you have in your inventory - simple but effective.

Once you've uncovered all its secrets and deciphered the clues scattered across the island, you get to trigger one of the best end game sequences seen on the C64 - bringing into conclusion a highly satisfying game experience.



THE SHADOW OVER HAWKSMILL



Psytronik, Disk/Tape/Digital Download

<https://psytronik.itch.io/hawksmill>

Code: Stuart Collier

Graphics/Design: Trevor Storey

Music/SFX: Saul Cross

Reviewer: Louie



The Shadow Over Hawksmill is a platform adventure, set in 1947 where, overnight, there has been a mysterious disappearance of the folk from Hawksmill. Fearing that the ancient dark gods have returned with the view of taking back their world, Inspector Black heads off to investigate.

As the Inspector arrives on the outskirts of town and navigates his way to the locked residences, it's hard not to be impressed with the overall visuals on offer. The graphics are colourful and detailed with some nice rain/lightning effects occurring in the background. The main character is very well animated and moves about with a hint of stutter.

Initially, searching everything will reward you with a key to unlock a nearby door and it's here where the darkness of the game theme is first accentuated as you come across dark shadowy figures roaming the halls. The



Inspector is equipped with a pistol and has no trouble of disposing of the creepy brethren but bullets are limited, so you'll be on the lookout for additional ammunition.

Working your way through the game's 70 screens, you'll find yourself uncovering a hidden underground cavern that you will have jumping, climbing, searching and shooting your way around to locate items that

will unlock other houses in town, free the townsfolk being held captive and locating 10 statutes along the way. But the ultimate objective is to figure out how to get rid of the dark evil that has overtaken Hawksmill.

The Shadow Over Hawksmill is a joy to play through. Yes, those incessant bats hiding in the shadows can infuriate but the game's high production values and logical puzzle designs make it quite accessible to both casual and hardened gamers. This is one of the stand outs for 2020.





By Jari Karjalainen



Loco (Alligata Software, 1984)

Based on the 1982 Sega arcade game "Super Locomotive", originally designed and programmed by Fukumura Mizunaga.

Commodore 64 version by Antony Crowther, with music by Ben Daglish. Published by Alligata Software in 1984.

Sinclair ZX Spectrum version written by Richard Stevenson and David Wright, with loading screen by Nigel Speight.

Atari 8-bit version written by Anthony J. Wilson and Russell Knight. Graphics by Russell Knight and sounds by Antony Crowther.

Spectrum and Atari versions published by Alligata Software in 1986.

INTRODUCTION & GAME STATUS

When Kevin informed me some time ago, that the theme of this issue would be "trains", it took a while to realise that the only thematic game that's possible to write a comparison about is Loco, from Alligata Software. Even that was a bit questionable, because, after all, the game is based on an arcade game with a different title, and there are a few other variants based on the

same original that it would be impossible to fit all that into a magazine format comparison. Therefore, as a first-timer, and most likely the only one of its kind, we agreed that this article shall be focused and limited to precisely the three versions of Alligata's Loco. (Obviously, the blog will have an extended version.)

At the time of writing this, on our native ground, a nice round

number of 40 Lemon64 users have rated Loco with a score of a solid 7.5, while our immediate competitors have a 6.25 from 8 votes at World of Spectrum, and a surprising 7.7 from 27 votes at Atarimania.

DESCRIPTION & REVIEW

Being an arcade game as it originally was as Super Locomotive, the game

is basically a side-scrolling shoot'em-up with a twist. Actually, a few rather major twists, most of which will be dealt with later on, but suffice it to say, that you can shoot in basically two directions with the locomotive's own equipment, and the overhead map below the side-view of the locomotive is the main focus of the game. The idea is to get from station to station and avoid getting killed, but while the arcade original was practically never-ending, Loco only has five levels to get through before the game loops.

Despite Loco's origins, it has its own feel to it, mainly because it's less complex and difficult than the original game, and knowing about Super Locomotive or comparing Loco to it is somewhat unnecessary. It's also a game you don't hear talked about too often in the context of classic C64 games, but a classic it definitely is, if a bit on the cultish side. An odd point of interest could be, is that Loco was the only release Alligata ever had for the 8-bit Atari computers. But perhaps the biggest oddity about Loco is that Crowther re-used his code into two other games on the C64 afterwards: Suicide Express and Black Thunder, and all three games were published by different companies, so there's a big chance you have played at least one version of this game at some point in your C64 gaming career. If you haven't, filling that void from your life is highly recommended. But for now, let's see how the three versions compare to each other.

LOADING

The C64 version of Loco was released with two different loaders: one resembling a basic ROM loader but a fast one, and one featuring multicoloured stripes and the cover saying "now with super fast loading", which, oddly enough, was slower than the original Alligata (Anirog sourced) fast-loader. The SPECTRUM version uses a loading system I've never come across before, featuring a block-based loader only before the exclusive loading screen comes in. It takes exactly double the time to load compared to the C64 re-release, and while it also has a Spanish re-release by Z Cobra, it alters the result

practically none. Rather unsurprisingly, the ATARI version is the slowest of the lot, but not by all that much, for once.

C64, original: 1 minute 51 seconds

C64, re-release: 2 minutes 22 seconds

Atari: 5 minutes 7 seconds

SPE, both: 4 minutes 44 seconds

PLAYABILITY

According to the instructions leaflet, Loco supposedly has ten levels, similarly to how the arcade original does. As such, there could be some minor changes in difficulty levels and whatnot, as you progress deeper into the practically endless loop that the game really is. The differences start from here already.

First, the options. The C64 version has 5 difficulty levels to choose from, as well as two different speeds. Increasing the difficulty level basically adds the rate and amount of enemies coming at you from all directions. The ATARI version has been documented to have options for two different speeds, but the tape inlay doesn't say how to switch them. There are no indicators for such in the title screen, and even by going through the entire keyboard, I couldn't find any key to alter the speed of the game. Thus, I suspect, the tape inlay has false information. The SPECTRUM version neither offers any speed or difficulty level options, and from what I can tell, the game loops after the fifth level. I admit to having no idea on how far the ATARI version goes, for reasons I shall tell you in a minute.

The goal is to get your locomotive through five stations, while avoiding getting hit by on-coming handcars or bombs getting dropped by airships and planes. You also need to keep an eye on your fuel gauge, and remember to try and go through fuel dumps every now and then.

In all versions of Loco, your locomotive moves by itself once you have started the game. Your job is to change lanes (as viewed in the scrolling map below the side-viewed screen of the locomotive and its immediate surroundings) by moving up and down before the track connectors. Pushing the fire button makes you release smoke from the chimney, but note that the



puff of smoke only goes straight upwards for as long as you hold the fire button down, and gets blown backwards with the wind once you have released the fire button. Smoke destroys most aerial menaces. As if that weren't enough, you also need to occasionally release steam (or as we say in the gaming world, shoot forwards). This is done by pulling the joystick to the right, which could be considered odd, but since the need for this arises less often than the need to release smoke, it's forgivable.

The ATARI version is brutally difficult by default, mostly because of the higher default speed. I couldn't find out how to switch to a lower speed, as it apparently should be able to. The C64 version in "fast" mode isn't nearly as fast as the ATARI version by default. Also, the rather awkward collision detection doesn't help, when your smoke clouds don't always hit their targets, but pass through them instead - and even when they do get hit, they don't necessarily always get destroyed. In all of my attempts, I haven't been able to reach any station to receive a flag, so I guess there are no stations in the ATARI version, nor do I believe there are actual levels in it either. The only helpful thing here in terms of playability is that you get full refill on every fuel depot, instead of just a little.

Contrarily, the SPECTRUM version is quite sedate in its pace, almost to the point of frustration, yet it has an acceptable difficulty curve in its progression. Compared to the ATARI version specifically, it also feels more in tune with the source despite its slight shortcomings, such as the missing sixth

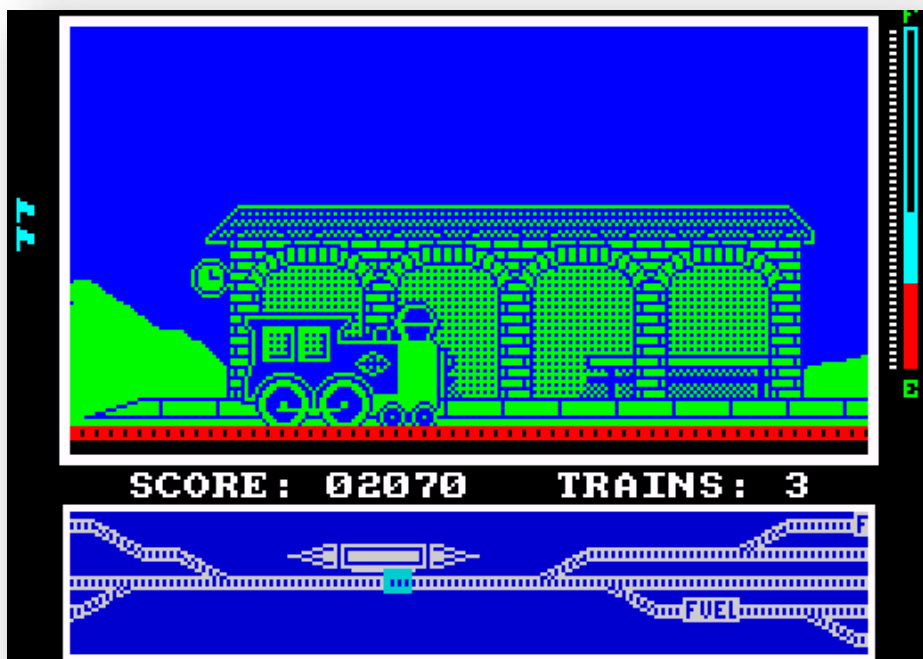


image: Loco in-game: top C64, middle Spectrum, bottom Atari

rail, the lack of a hi-score spotlight and the meagre audio-visuals.

Even though the C64 Loco was made roughly two years prior to the other two versions, it still has more to offer in not only sheer playability, but also the options to make the game more accessible to less advanced gamers.

C64 - 2

SPE - 1

ATA - 0

GRAPHICS

Apart from the SPECTRUM version, the title screen is set into a standstill screen of the in-game action view, including some credits and the game logo. The SPECTRUM version, in addition to having an exclusive loading screen, also has an exclusive title screen, which, unfortunately, is just a less colourful version of the loader with a text scroller slabbed at the bottom of the screen, both halves assembled similarly to how the in-game screens are done.

Speaking of which, the basic setup is the same in all three versions of Loco: the top half of the screen shows a closer view of the locomotive and its surroundings from the right side, while the bottom half gives a horizontal bird's eye view from further away, to act more like a radar.

One difference in the radar screen was mentioned earlier - the SPECTRUM version only has five rails fitted into it, when the others have six. In addition to that, you can see the "enemy" vehicles moving across the area from further away in the radar screen, but only the C64 version presents them in multi-colour, while the ATARI version has different, but single colours applied to each vehicle, and the SPECTRUM version has all the vehicles apart from your own represented in the same light grey as the rails are. Another difference is perhaps more than a cosmetic change, if not a very important one: while the biplanes coming from behind move a bit faster until they're in your immediate vicinity, the ATARI version has them moving at turbo speed up until that point. A rather more important cosmetic change is that the C64 version is the only one that shows water around bridges you need to cross every now and then.

In the side-viewed action screen, the ATARI version has the most colours in use, but the background graphics

are bland and samey throughout the game - no trees, all the mountains are far away in a diminished view, and you don't seem to even get the ever-so important stations, although you do get the odd functionless castle in the background. The most odd thing is the tubish look of the area where your locomotive is travelling in.

The SPECTRUM version still has the least colours, which is to be expected, but at least the background graphics are large and comfortably near your surroundings, and have plenty of variety. And so does the C64 version, but some of the background graphics, such as the station, feel a bit rushed, even for its time. At least the slight rubbishness is balanced with a bigger number of colours and a much higher scrolling speed.

Loco exhibits an early use of a parallax scrolling technique, although not in the same space. In the C64 version, the top half scrolls faster than the lower half, but that's about it. The SPECTRUM and ATARI versions have a bit more to them, with the aforementioned included, and an additional level of the rails underneath the side-viewed locomotive moving faster than the background.

Dying in Loco can be considered oddly spectacular, at least in the C64 and ATARI versions, as the locomotive explodes and bits of it fly into very specific directions. In the C64 version, you get a piece for eight directions, while the ATARI version settles for only the three pieces going in the above directions. The C64 version also features a meltdown-sort of a sound effect before the actual explosion happens, and unlike in the ATARI version, the eight pieces loop around the screen and reconnect again, making for a much longer death sequence. The SPECTRUM version only features a relatively small cloud of dust hovering in the place of the ex-locomotive for a short period of time.

Finally, the obligatory Game Over screen features a circling Game Over text in the top half of the screen in the C64 and ATARI versions, which eventually exits to the left, while the SPECTRUM version has a black screen with a magenta/yellow text in the middle. Speaking of which, the

SPECTRUM version also has a similarly presented, if a bit useless, Get Ready screen.

Although the amount of colours on the screen can be considered an important facet here, the ATARI version loses clearly to the C64 version by animations and details, not to mention just plain old charm. The SPECTRUM version's style has its advantages, but the disadvantages of scrolling speed and a decided lack of colour are more important, unfortunately. On balance, though, I think it's just about as good as the ATARI version.

C64 - 2

SPE - 1

ATA - 1

SOUNDS

Perhaps the oddest thing to note when comparing Loco's three versions is the sheer lack of uniformity in sounds. Firstly, we might as well deal with the SPECTRUM version first, since it offers the least of value here; only two kinds of propeller-like noises for aerial and ground-based traffic, and a high-pitched "ding" for passing through a fuel dump. The only time we hear any music is when you complete a level, and of course it's your usual single-channel beeping stuff, as you would expect. The tune I cannot recognize, but it sounds like a children's song.

So, the C64 version has two variations of Jean Michel Jarre's "Équinoxe 5" by the late, great Ben Daglish (in his first full credit for game music!), both in slightly off-measured renditions. The title screen has more tracks for melodic instruments than the in-game version, due to the requirement of a channel for sound effects. Also, the in-game rendition is a bit faster than the title screen rendition. The sound effects are rather fitting: basic noise for the smoke and steam projectiles; the enemy and bomb explosion noises are just as fitting; the fuel dump signal is an oddly cut crash noise followed by a couple of sharp "ding" sounds; and your own explosion effect is an odd stuttering staccato noise.

The ATARI version has all its sound channels reserved for the rather unexpectedly militant-yet-funny sounding rendition of that old

Glenn Miller chestnut, "Chattanooga Choo Choo". Considering the context, this is the more fitting tune for a game about a locomotive than the one selected for the C64, and as such, I would prefer the ATARI version. However, you only get one single sound effect here, and that is your death noise, which is as explosive as is proper.

The two primary contestants here each have as much of character in their own specific theme songs and the select sound effects, that I'm willing to give them a shared win for this one.

ATA - 1

C64 - 1

SPE - 0

OVERALL

Seeing as this is the first comparison with three official, and very different versions (not counting Tom Thumb, since that's all Commodore) to be featured in the Reset64, the basic scoring had to be done a bit differently again, mostly due to the vast differences in each version. So the results looks kind of odd:

COMMODORE 64: 5 points

ATARI 8-BIT: 2 points

ZX SPECTRUM: 2 points

But this just means that the C64 version is clearly the most preferable version of the lot, while the other two are worth having a go at for their own specific reasons.

	C64	Atari	Spectrum
Playability	8	5	6
Graphics	7	6	6
Sound	7	7	6
Realism	6	4	8
Overall	7	5.5	5.5

Hope that suited the bill! Remember to check out the full comparison featuring the arcade original at frgcb.blogspot.com, in case the subject interests you further.

Jari Karjalainen

<http://frgcb.blogspot.com/>

MANCAVE



Psytronik, Disk/Tape/Digital Download
<http://www.psytronik.net/newsite/index.php/c64/109-mancave>

Programming: Chris Stanley
 Graphics: Roy Widding & David Eriksson
 Music: Roy Widding
 Loading Screen: Rune Spaans
 Reviewers: Ant & Cam, Kev.



(EDITOR'S NOTE: As part of the ultra-professional approach to their craft, our super-star reviewing team of Ant and Cam recorded themselves talking while writing their review of Megastyle's fun romp, Mancave, while in Ant's mancave. We're transcribing the text from the audio we recovered. Apologies for any grammatical errors.)

Cam: --and then the judge was all like, 'Well, since the evidence has been eaten, I've got no choice but to let you go'

Ant: Man, you were lucky.

Cam: Yeah, but then I had to spend the night getting my stomach pumped Richard Gere style. Anyway, suppose we better get playing Mancave.

Ant: That's right! I'm looking forward to this one. It looks like a cute and colourful action game from the team behind Exploding Fish, where you have to clean up the house and return your precious filth mags back to your

packed mancave before the timer runs out.

Cam: Cool cool, OK let's hook up one of these C64s and get playing...

Ant: Ah, just need to get...oh this one doesn't work, I took the power supply apart to make a toaster...wait...lemme just reach and get this precariously placed video cable...

(Two minutes of crashing sounds and screaming like a k-pop audience member)

Ant: Ah. Yes. It looks like that was a load-bearing video cable.

So now we're trapped under twelve cubic metres of old computers.

Cam: Well this is another fine mess we're in. Just like the hero of Mancave, Richard Morningwood, when he realises his wife's coming home soon and will go right off at him for all garbage strewn about the house.

Ant: That's right Cam. And, luckily for Richard, the bright and colourful visuals are much more enticing than the dark and frightening pile of plastic death that is currently entombing us.

Cam: I do enjoy the high-



resolution sprites that are full of character, which is something I would enjoy more if there wasn't a 1541 crushing my spine right now.

Ant: I think I can hear the background music of Mancave playing right now, which its cheerful melodies bouncing around a plethora of fun sound effects.

Cam: No I'm pretty sure that's a vulture circling above us waiting to pick apart our carcass.

Ant: Well never mind all that for now, let's look through the blinding agony of being slowly crushed to death by ancient micros and thousands of pirated disks and talk about the difficulty level of Mancave.

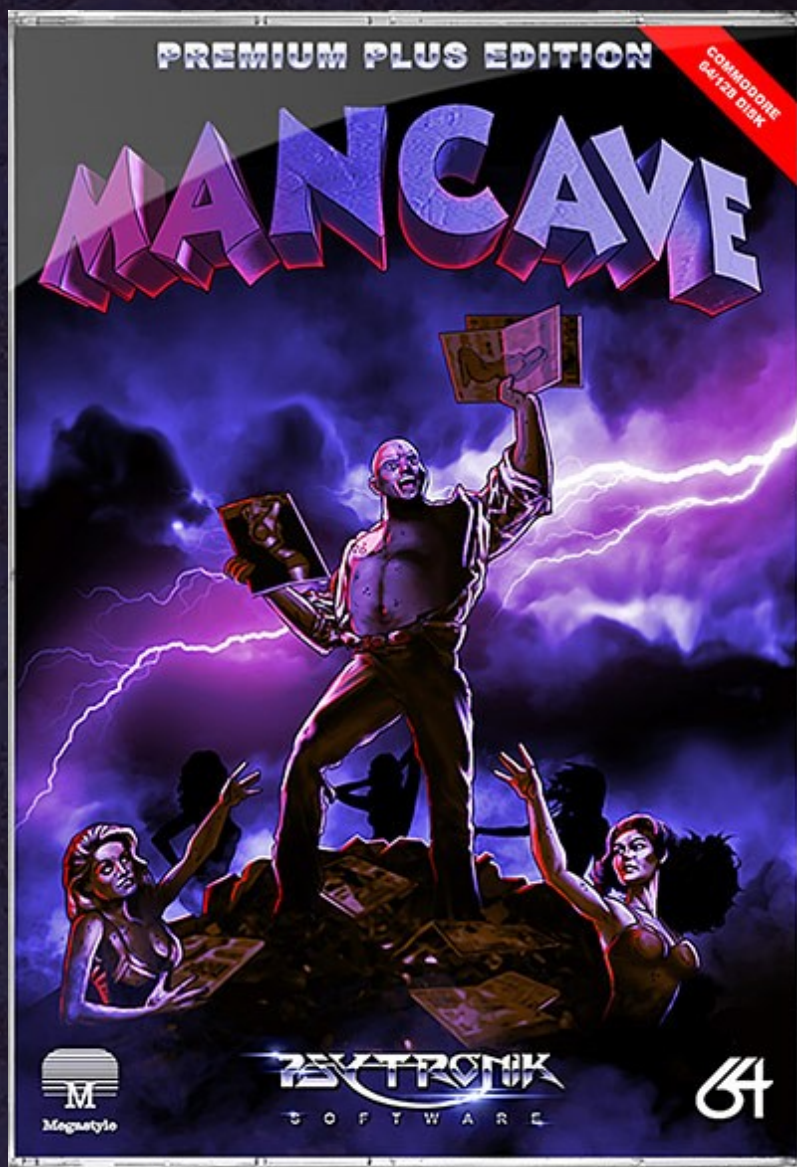
Cam: Oh! Yes. Sorry I was distracted by the gears of a malfunctioning 1530 grinding against my toes. It's a fun game that quickly becomes a pleasant challenge in later levels! Just like how I can't feel my left arm any more!

Ant: I enjoyed the controls. Richard was super responsive to my joystick commands.

Cam: Well, I think we got enough here to base our review on! All we need to do now dig ourselves out of this rubble and write 400 words.

Ant: UGH that sounds like hard work. How about we just die here and Kev will transcribe this tape?

Cam: YES now that's what I call working smarter not harder!

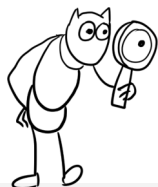


One of the first things you will notice about Mancave, is just how perfectly executed everything is. The graphics are superb, with suitably varied and colourful backgrounds, as well as wonderfully animated sprites. Roy Widding's soundtrack, featuring SID renditions of an assortment of 80's rock classics, not only sounds stunning, but is also perfectly suited to the game. It really is *that* good!

The concept itself is absolutely on brand for Megastyle. Slightly naughty and with tongue firmly planted in cheek. These chasey type games are a dime a dozen on the C64, with Mancave mixing Keystone Capers (except, you're the one being chased) with other single screen platformers, ranging from Lode Runner to Elevator Action. What makes Mancave stand out from the crowd is it's high production values and presentation (trophies and cut scenes included). It also helps that it's damned fun to play as well.

My wife got a laugh out of Mancave. After a few games, she had a poke around my office and found nothing even remotely incriminating, except a slightly worn out copy of Commodore Force #3. I wasn't worried!





Zap Fight 3 (Psytronik)

<https://psytronik.itch.io/zap-c64>

Alf Yngve is back on the scene with Zap Fight 3, his latest creation utilizing the redux version of the SEUCK engine - showing that good shooters can be created with the engine by those who have the talent and design smarts to do so.

The action starts off at a somewhat pedestrian pace, easing you into the game. It starts to pick up as you delve into the later levels, with the rate of enemy ships progressively increasing. There are 5 levels in total with a boss battle featured at the end of each one.

The game does a good job in mixing things up with plenty of environment variations and enemy ships to combat and features a great power up system, that not only increases your firepower but it also transforms the look and size of your ship.

The redux upgrade enhances the game dramatically. As well, Richard Bayliss has provided an attractive front end, linked Alf's loading picture, and composed the thumping trance soundtrack.

Zap Fight 3 is bundled together with enhanced versions of Zap Fight 1 and Zap Fight 2, and is being sold under the title of Zap Fight Trilogy. It is available now from Psytronik as a digital download, with a physical release to follow.

Louie Dimovski - 7/10



Oy Up! (Arlasoft)

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

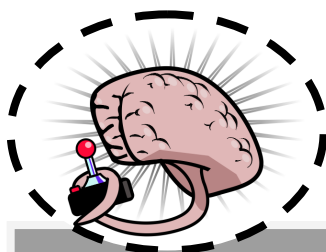
Wow. WOW! Puyo Puyo 2 is easily one of the best puzzle games to have ever existed, with its fiendish yet simple formula winning hearts all over the world on every system it's been converted to. And this Commodore 64 version is just phenomenal!

The core gameplay has been retained faithfully - all the tricks and strategies of the original have been faithfully retained and the difficulty levels offer all the challenge you could want. Setting up chain combos and watching junk blocks fall onto your opponent's play field is as satisfying as ever. The CPU opponents have their own styles to contend with, and if that wasn't enough the two player mode will keep you and a similarly-obsessed friend coming back for months or even years. A match between two comparatively-skilled players is a sight to behold! Speaking of sights, special mention has to go to the graphics. I have no idea how but they've managed to pack all the bright and vibrant visual stylings of the original into our 64K powerhouse, and it looks an absolute treat! A handy practice mode coupled with comprehensive instructions makes learning the ropes a breeze, and if that wasn't enough there's a colour blind option to make the game more accessible.

PUYO PUYO!

Cameron Davis - 9/10





Chiller 2 (Cosine Systems)

<https://csdb.dk/release/?id=198231>



Old Tower (RetroSouls)

<https://retrosouls.itch.io/old-tower-commodore-64>

As an omnipotent, all knowing entity that has been around even before the creation of your pathetic universe, I've seen and done things so utterly fear inducing that the sheer emotion of terror emanating from my hypothalamus has caused entire galaxies to immediately explode in a single moment of space and time. One of those moments was when I played the original Chiller, released by Mastertronic in 1985 (nearly half of your fragile life, a mere moment in time for me). Damn, it was creepy.

Now, a human by the name of Andy Vaisey has released an unofficial follow up with the help of some so called friends. I dared play Chiller 2 and in a sheer instant, 75 billion stars went super nova. I want my mummy.

This 'game' contains all sorts of horrible entities, so terrifying in their nature that I, The Mighty Brain, am considering eliminating your planet and all memory of it's existence. Of course, the single screen platform 'collecting things while avoiding the monsters' challenge is fun and entertaining, so maybe I'll refrain. The game has also been competently designed and put together, especially impressive considering it was created by a bipedal carbon based individual. The fact that Chiller 2 did elicit such an extreme emotional response also gives it merit.

The Mighty Brain - 7/10



Old Tower is a 'mobilesque' multi-platform puzzler that couldn't feel more at home on the Commodore 64. Combining fast, compulsive gameplay, well designed levels and a stunning soundtrack, there is certainly enough going on here to delight puzzle and arcade fans alike.

The game takes place in a tower, with the player defying gravity and only being able to explore the internal edges of the tower as well as platforms. You must collect all of the gems to advance to the next level, while avoiding an assortment of traps and other nasties. To complicate things a bit more, there is a mechanic in which you can switch characters on some levels (think Millie & Molly), with moments where you need to use both characters together to complete certain levels.

The whole package is beautifully produced and designed. The puzzles are well thought out and the controls are immediately intuitive. It truly is a pick up and play game. My 10 year old son completed it fairly quickly, but I was thoroughly impressed that he was engaged enough to sit and play through a C64 game.

Old Tower hit the C64 gaming scene with little fanfare but deserves to be played. I truly hope we see more from RetroSouls on the C64 in the future. A must play!

Kevin Tilley - 9/10





STARS AND SPRITES

Shift-Clr/Home

by Lenard R. Roach

Recently we sat down with Lenard Roach to discuss with him the ins and outs of his new book released in March 2019 entitled "Shift-Clr/Home: More 8-bit Thoughts In A Gigabit World." The following is a transcript of that interview.

RESET: Thanks for taking time out to talk with us, Lenard.

LENARD: No problem. I appreciate your interest in my work and the chance to do a little promotion in your magazine.

RESET: It is our pleasure. Let's get right into it. First, the title. Why "Shift-Clr/Home?"

LENARD: I wanted the title to scream Commodore computer. "Shift-Clr/Home" is a recognizable Commodore command. Any Commodore aficionado who picks up this book should be able instantly see that this is a book about that machine.

RESET: The Commodore 64 on the front cover does help.

LENARD: My cover designer Tim at Monte Graphics and Photography specifically made sure that this volume had a Commodore computer on the cover to make up for the faux pax made by the last publisher of my work.

RESET: We'll have to get into that some other time. Today we would like to focus on this book. What made you decide to release a new Commodore book?

LENARD: I basically write for the sheer joy of writing. My writing coach told me that everything is worthy of print so I put that lesson to the test and by golly if she wasn't right, but to answer your question directly, I accumulated enough stories, essays, and commentaries written from my hand to make another compilation book on my views, work, and adventures on and with the machine. I try to cover about everything one can do with a Commodore from programming to using software and even throw in some reviews on work that I've

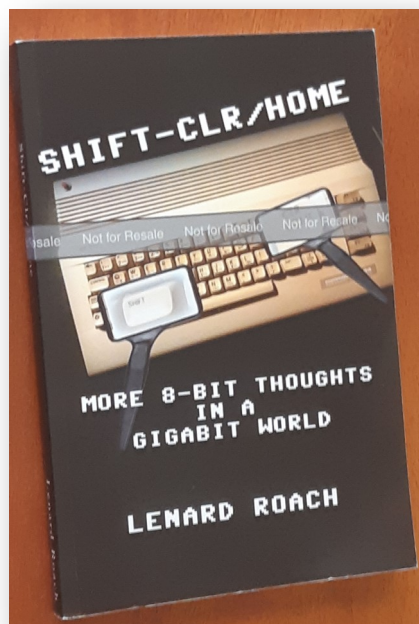
done. I also make an attempt to tell a humorous story or two.

RESET: Your style with this volume is different than "Run/Stop-Restore." Why the change?

LENARD: It was basically that I wanted a change. I figured that I didn't need such lengthy opening commentaries but a short, simple synopsis should suffice enough to tantalized a reader to delve deeper into a section or to move on to the next chapter.

RESET: When we went through the book we found that you talked a lot about your work on a program called "The Ledger." Would you care to explain why you spent so much time on this work by describing it so much in your book?

LENARD: "The Ledger" was the program that I was working on during the writing of those particular parts of the book. It was my pet project at the time so naturally the work got most of the attention. I tried



to reveal a little more about the program in each essay.

RESET: As the writer of the book, how would you describe the volume in summary?

LENARD: This second book is much like the first. It is a compilation book of stories, essays, and commentaries about man and machine but instead of the machine being something like a car, it is a computer, specifically, the Commodore brand of computer.

RESET: What problems did you come across in getting the book to press?

LENARD: My biggest problems were mostly on my end. I tried to release two books at the same and overloaded my friends who helped me edit the book. My laptop also crashed during the writing process and I almost had to start from scratch. It was a year project that got extended an extra year to deal with all these hiccups.

RESET: What are your personal favourite and worst parts of the book?

LENARD: You've already mentioned one thing that did bother me about the book and that's the apparent overkill of talking about "The Ledger." I should have spoken more on other subjects as well. As for the favourites I have to say it's some

of the jokes and humour that I put in the book. I was a stage comedian from 1977 to 1983 so those things are tough to breed out of me. I don't think I could write a serious book even if I was advanced a million dollar royalty.

RESET: We noticed that the book has a different, shall we say, flavour, to it. Is that it?

LENARD: Yes. There are plenty "how to" and "history of" and program guides on the Commodore. I wanted to approach the Commodore from a different angle. I also want to appeal to the former as well as the curious user -- the person who heard about the Commodore from pa or grandpa and want to know more of the "feel" of using the machine.

RESET: Have you had any feedback since the book's release?

LENARD: Only from family, friends, and co-workers who got a copy because I wrote it. They all think the book is a hoot and enjoyable reading. I haven't heard word from the general public yet. Heh, one reader even asked if I had a spare Commodore 64 and hardware so he could experience first hand what I discussed in my books.

RESET: Well, your book is a welcome asset to the Commodore community. Thank you for taking time and effort to bring it out. We noticed that between the covers is some mention to Reset and our help in bringing this book forward. Thanks for the kudos.

LENARD: It was my pleasure. I'm grateful to Reset for giving me another platform to express my Commodore ideas.

RESET: Rumour has it that you are working on another Commodore compilation book. Care to share with our readers what that might be about?

LENARD: Yes, I am working on a third book but most of the work I've done on it was lost when my PC failed. I'm starting over from scratch

but most of the original unedited text was backed up on a flash drive. This book will chronicle the demise of a Commodore club where the reader will read and hopefully learn from the mistakes made by the body and leadership of the club mentioned. It might prove to be interesting reading. That will be up to the Commodore public to decide.

RESET: From what we understand your books are well received.

LENARD: Thanks. I'm finding out that the Commodore community is more tolerable of my Midwestern attitude that I write under than the church community that I've made books for, but that is neither here nor there when it comes to this interview. I'll save those comments for another venue.

RESET: Any final comments?

LENARD: Like anyone who writes a book I hope that everyone within eyesight will buy and read a copy then we pray for a "thumbs up" on social media. I hope that you will enjoy the stories, articles, and essays found between the covers of this book and my previous Commodore book, "Run/Stop-Restore: 10th Anniversary Edition." Both should be relaxing reads that should prove easy to understand as I try my best to deter from using too much technical jargon. My thanks goes out to those who have previously purchased a copy and have shared it with family and friends.

RESET: Before we close, can you tell our readers where they can get their own copy of "Shift-Clr/Home?"

LENARD: I'm marketing right now directly through the Amazon Bookstore, MGP Productions, and The Tech Shop. I also deal with a few sales out of my home in Kansas City.

RESET: Thanks again for taking time out to talk to us, Lenard. We raise a glass to the hopes of great success for you.

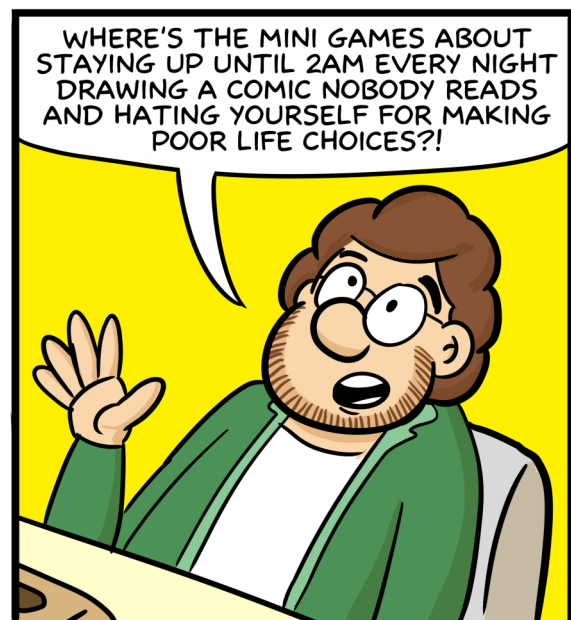
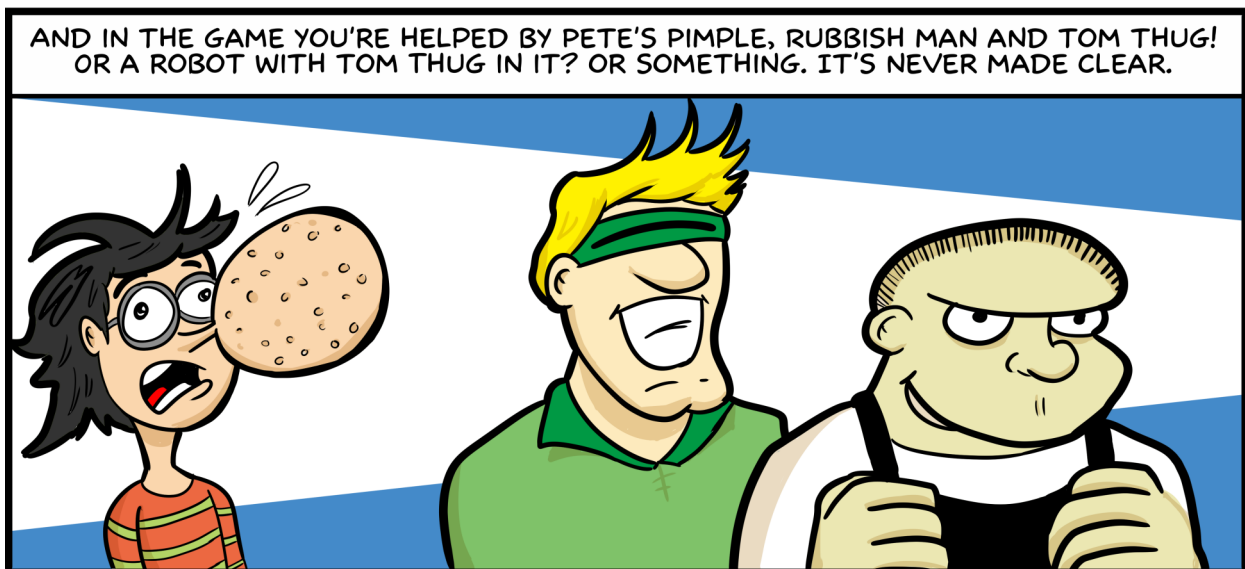
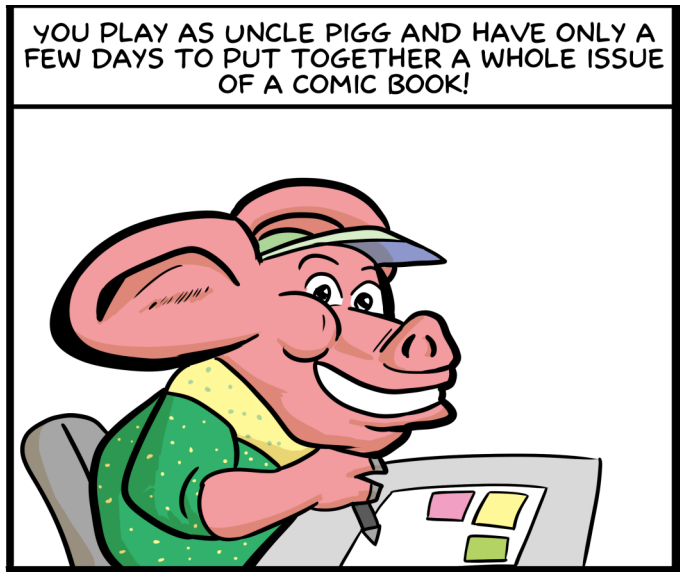
LENARD: Thank you, Team Reset.

John 20:31,
Lenard "Pops" Roach



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By Cameron Davis



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