June 2015

Issue 6

THE SPECTRUM SHOW

Magazine

The Story Of

BOOTY

The remake

ULTIMATE
PLAY THE GAME
SPECIAL Part 2

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Includes material not in the show!

The magazine of the show dedicated to the Sinclair ZX Spectrum

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EDITORIAL

Hello and welcome to issue 6 of The Spectrum Show Magazine.

If I were writing in the style of Your Sinclair I would go all pirate, with lots of shiver me timbers, and swob the deck jargon, but I'm not, so I won't.

The Booty remake feature took quite a while to put together, but the second part in the next issue has a surprise ending!

Although taking a long time, it was by no means anywhere near as painful as episode 40 of the show. That was very traumatic and very nearly caused me to throw the towel in. I won't go into too much detail here, but will put together a 'making of' feature for possibly the next issue.

On to this issue then and we have a real mixed bag for you. Lots of game reviews and quite a lot of features. Not only do we have the Booty remake, but also the second part of the UPTG feature and a special on light guns.

There are several new games reviewed here too, and its really great that authors are continuing to put their time into these creations.

It's a pity that most of my time is spent either doing the show or this magazine, in between my 'real' life. The time spent making games has reduced to almost zero, but if any spare time does crop up, then I try to make some progress.

Baldy was one of my Amiga games I released in 1992, and it is one I always wanted to get onto the Spectrum. Many attempts were made, all failed due to various issues (another feature on that coming soon).

Now finally I have completed it, and Baldy ZX was released a few months ago. It is not a graphical masterpiece, it does not push Arcade Games Designer and it does not try to be clever. It is a port of a very simplistic yet unique Amiga game with a basic premise and easy controls.

Give it a try.

Onto the whinge of the month...

Is it just me or has retro pricing on sites such as eBay increased over the last couple of years?

There are games that can be bought from one site at £1.99 and yet the same game on eBay is up for £6.99.

I sometimes feel like publicly messaging the seller and asking sarcastically "is this the same as this game being sold for £1.99 on site A?"

Hardware in particular has rocketed. When I bought my Plus 2 the average price for a good condition, boxed computer was £60 - £70 maximum. Now I see them selling for over £120.

I suppose if the demand is there, the seller will try to get as much as they can. Oh well... rant over...
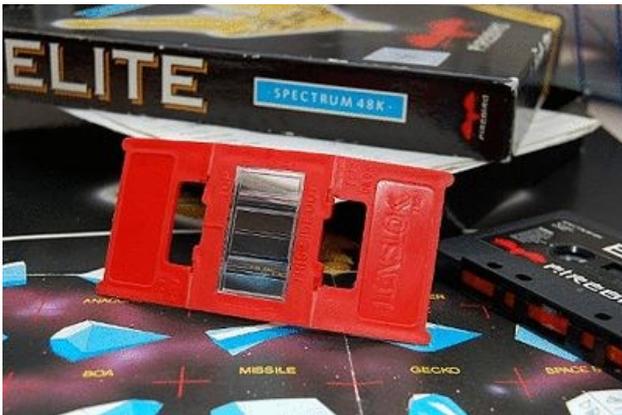

HELP WANTED

I am still looking for any articles, reviews or features for this magazine.

LENS LOCKED

A new type of software protection will be released to the public when it is used to stop pirates from copying Firebird's Elite in September.

The system named Lenslok includes a plastic lens that is held over two scrambled letters displayed on screen. The lens will make this readable, and the user then has to enter the characters before playing the game.

Firebird say they will not be using the system for all of their games just yet, but are confident it will cut down pirate copies.

AGREEMENT FOR SINCLAIR

Sinclair have finally reached an agreement with their creditors that will allow them to continue trading in the short term.

The deal, between Sinclair, Barclays, Citbank, Timex, Thorn EMI and AB Electronics is difficult to report on, as details have been kept secret.

It is thought Sinclair will be allowed to trade up to and past the Christmas period, where most sales will be, and then the situation will be re-evaluated.

V IS FOR TV TIE IN

The very popular science fiction series, V, is to be turned into a game for several micros, including the Spectrum.

The television mini-series proved to be a huge hit and millions tuned in to watch the battle between earth and the alien lizard race intent on taking over the planet.

Ocean have signed the deal and are working towards a Christmas release.

16BIT SINCLAIR

Rumours have been circulating recently about the possibility of a new 16bit computer from Sinclair.

The machine will replace the QL, which was somewhat of a disaster, and if it materialises, will be a competitor for the Atari ST and Commodore Amiga.

Digital Research have confirmed they are in talks with Sinclair about the use of its GEM operating system.

GEM would not run on the existing QL due to memory requirements, with the QL having 128k and GEM taking up 103k with a requirement for a further 128k to run applications.

This means the new machine will have to have at least 256k of RAM.

BANDERSNATCHED

The much hyped mega-game Bandersnatch has had an interesting journey.

Since Imagine went bust in 1984, the rights to the game were bought by Sinclair. They then gave a company called Fire Lord funding to complete the game, but for the QL only.

Fire Lord had amongst its staff former Imagine programmers Ian Hetherington, Dave Lawson and Eugene Evans.

Sinclair's funding stopped a few months ago though, so the game came to a halt yet again.

Psygnosis was then formed from former members of Fire Lord, and took on the project, changing the game title to Brataccas, and writing it for the Atari ST.

The game finally got released last week at the Personal Computer World Show.

COMPUTER NASTY

Domark are set to publish what it calls a Computer Nasty.

The game will be based on the successful Friday 13th movies, but Domark say they will not overstep the mark.

The game involves staying alive – no surprise there then – and saving as many people as possible.

The game will be released for the Spectrum next month.

SPANISH 128 MYSTERY

The brand new computer from Sinclair has been launched, but only in Spain. The Sinclair Spectrum 128 has 128k of memory and expanded sound capabilities, but will not be available in the UK until early 1986.

The delay, it is thought, was part of a deal by Sinclair's creditors, not to launch anything that could compromise Christmas sales of the Spectrum Plus.

Sinclair are trying to play down the release of their new micro, but users are baying for more details with the company not giving out any release dates.

More details are slowly filtering though and the machine, as expected, will have a QL style keyboard. The 128K of memory will be bank switched 16K blocks and there will also be an RS232 port.

The sound capabilities are a bit of mystery as the Spanish machine does not have an AY chip, but it is rumoured that the UK version will. For UK fans, we will just have to wait and see...

PANDORA'S DATE

Sinclair's portable computer will, according to the company, be definitely appearing next year.

Code named Pandora, the machine will be based on the QL rather than the Spectrum and will use the 68000 processor. The target release date is April.

Sir Clive had to re-evaluate this date after the problems earlier this year, but this and the £50m Wafer project are still going ahead.

C5 PLANT CLOSED

The receivers have been called in to the troubled electric vehicles company that produced the Sinclair C5.

After nine months of poor sales and criticism, the company, newly renamed TPD, have debts of over £700k to 110 different suppliers.

It is hoped a buyer can be found for the company so that production of the C10 and C15 vehicles, which are said to be in the advanced stages, can continue.

WILLY TAX

Mathew Smith has written the third instalment of the Miner Willy games, and it is due for release in January 1986 according to Software Projects.

The game, named Willy Meets The Tax Man, is said to have a different graphic style than previous outings, with what Paul Petterson, the sales manager of Software Projects calls, larger pictures.

There has been much debate over this game and players are hoping for another success to follow in the footsteps of Manic Miner and Jet Set Willy.

KNOT IN 3D

New Generation Software 1983

Knot In 3D is a one-of-kind game.

Released in 1983 by New Generation Software , a company known for 3D games, the idea is simple and yet beautifully executed. Take light-cycles, give the player a front seat view and turn the whole thing into a first person 3D game.

You are given a choice of controls and game speed before being thrown into the empty 3D world. The idea is to move around and avoid hitting anything. As you move you leave a yellow/green trail and you can have up to four chasers who leave a red/blue trail.

You must not run into any trails, and survive as long as possible.

Initially the game area seems empty, but it soon fills up with trails that you have to swerve to avoid. Soon the area is full of twisting, turning trails that have to be avoided.

Remember, you are in a 3D world so travel in all planes is possible. If you are approaching a trail you can go left, right, under or over it.

Gameplay is good, with nice colours and smooth graphics that wiz by at a fair pace with no colour clash, and it isn't long before you find yourself entangled in a mass of trails.

I noticed that, when moving up and down, you don't actually turn and head off in that direction, you just move up or down in the playfield, but still continue to move in the same direction. Once you get used to that, the game makes more sense..

Sound is used sparingly, with just a sound when you hit another trail, which is a bit disappointing.
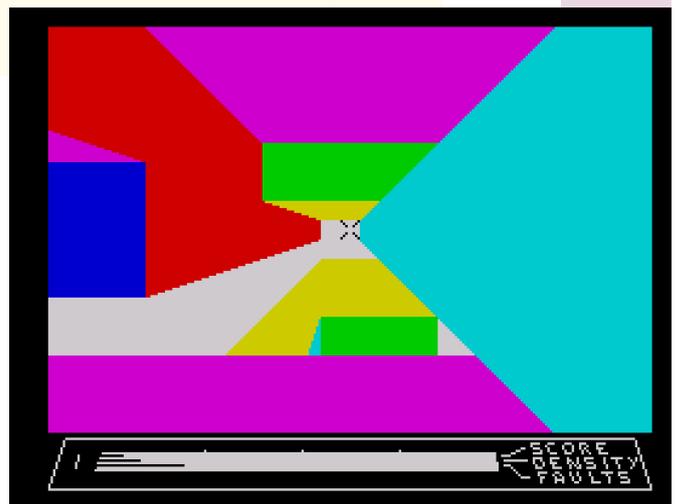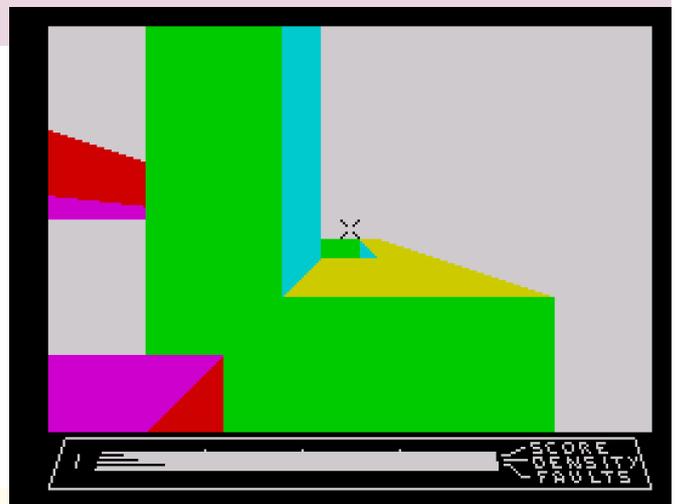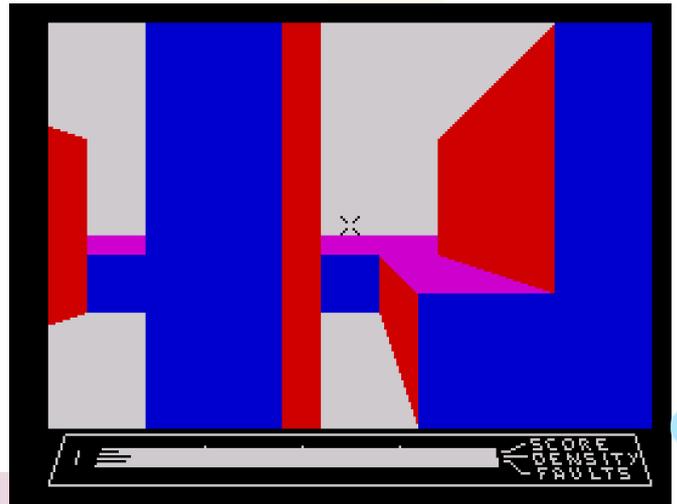
Hitting a trail gives you a fault as displayed on the panel at the bottom of the screen, too many faults and the game ends.

Control can be keyboard or joystick and is generally responsive.

The game was written by Malcom Evans, the man who wrote most of New Generation's better known titles such as 3D Tunnel, Escape, Corridors of Genon and later the Trashman games.

When I first played this in 1983, I was amazed at the 3D world and the solid graphics. Today it's a little dated but still provides a challenge, and you do feel relief when you emerge from a tangle of trails into open space, and ex-

citement as a new trail appears in front of you and you do get a degree of wanting to try again and get a little further each time.

Not a game for everyone, but it only takes a few seconds to load up in an emulator, and it's interesting to see the 3D effect on a large screen.

MRS MOPP

Computasolve 1984

Mrs Mopp was released by Computasolve in 1984, the company's only release. The game sees you playing Mrs Mopp in her kitchen, with a lot of work to do.

Dirty glasses, laundry and rubbish start to appear all around her and it is your job to collect this stuff and put it in the correct place. For example the laundry has to go into the washing machine.

To do this she has to first collect something to put these into, for example a washing basket. Once she has this, she can only collect laundry. To collect anything else, she has to drop that onto it's shelf, and pick up another container.

You cannot put the items in their designated places until you have collected enough of them, which is indicated when she begins to flash.

If Mrs Mopp does too much work, as indicated by a message at the top of the screen, she has to have a drink of wine to keep her going, but drinking too much and she'll get drunk, and the controls start to change, making things much more tricky.

The game reminds me of Ultimate Play The Game's Pssst, but obviously with poorer graphics and gameplay.

As for the graphics, they are basic, with no animation, and it is sometimes hard to tell what the items are until you get used to them.
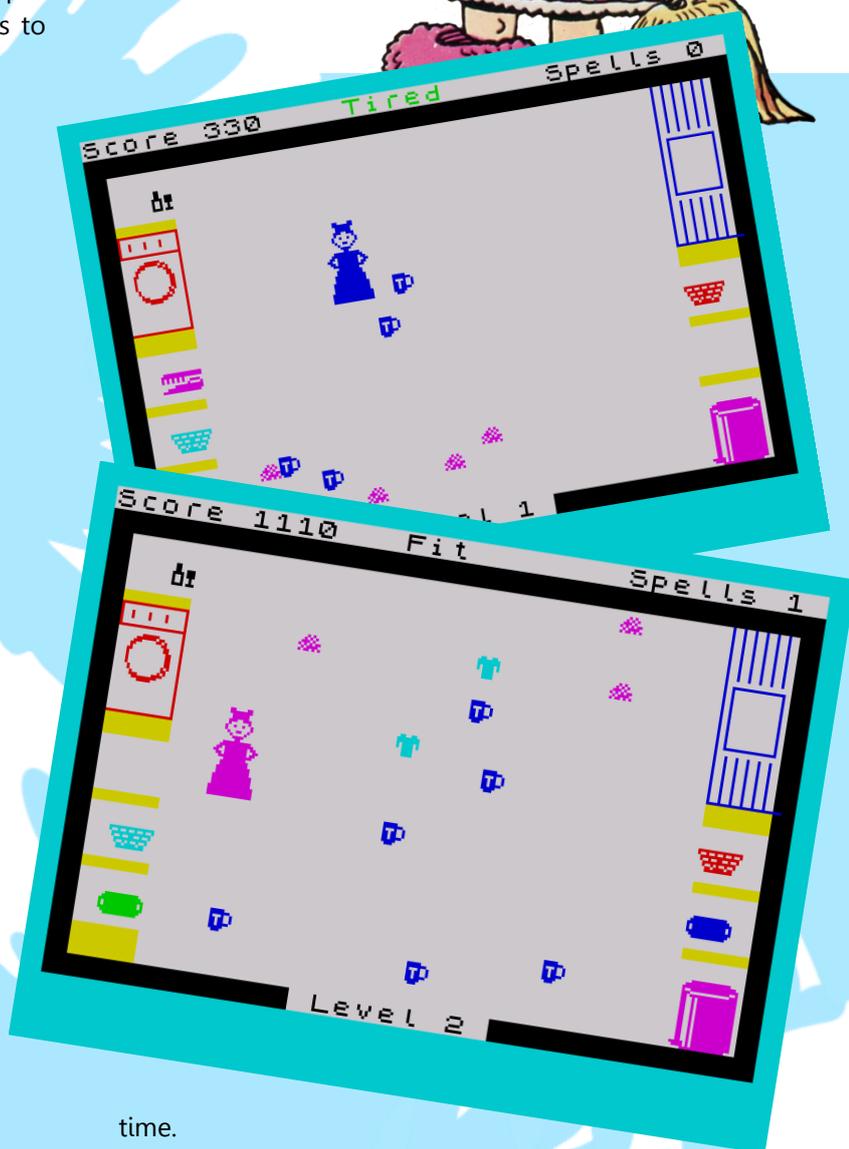
Sound consists of beeps when items appear and a tune when collected items are dropped into the correct place.

Control is by keyboard or joystick and is sometimes too fast, meaning you miss the items.

Level one has just two item types to collect, cups for the sink and rubbish for the bin. As the levels increase, more items are added and this is where things get tricky, trying to keep things clean is a real challenge.

You do have a magic spell that lets you clear away one object., but that's of little use usually.

If you get boxed in. you eventually become exhausted and the game ends, so you have to be moving all the time.

It's not actually a bad game but then again its not god one either.

Once you get the hang of the controls it's easy enough to play and can keep you happy for a few minutes.

Not a chart topper then, and if you can look past the basic graphics, you might just enjoy it.

3D STARSTRIKE

Realtime Software 1984

Released in 1984 by Realtime Software, this game fulfilled the players requirement for a good Star Wars game on the Spectrum.

The arcade machine was a hit, and the home market was crying out for a conversion but the limited power of the humble Speccy would make any attempt a real challenge - step forward Realtime.

This game features all of the scenes from the arcade game and it's surprising the lawyers didn't come calling!

The first stage is in space, fighting Tie Fighters as you head towards approaching Deathstar. It is important to shoot their missiles as it is to shoot them as any impact will deplete your shields.

Next we fly across the death star surface, blasting bunkers and dodging or shooting the missiles. If you get to the next level, the bunkers become towers that require their tops to be destroyed.

Finally we have the trench scene. Dodging the structures, shooting the laser turrets and avoiding those missiles again.

Each stage has an introduction screen with nice graphics and instructions about what to do.

Finally we get to the finale and have to shoot out two rotating pods to allow the battle station to be destroyed.

The vector graphics are fast and smooth giving a good feeling of movement and sound is great, with laser fire and explosions.

This game quickly became one of my favourites. It's easy to pick up and play and one of those games you feel you have achieved something when you complete it.

Control is very responsive, allowing keys or joysticks to be used. and difficulty is set just right, never becoming frustrating.

Obviously there is no music or speech like the arcade, this is a Spectrum, but apart from that, this is just a great game.

Superb, plain and simple!
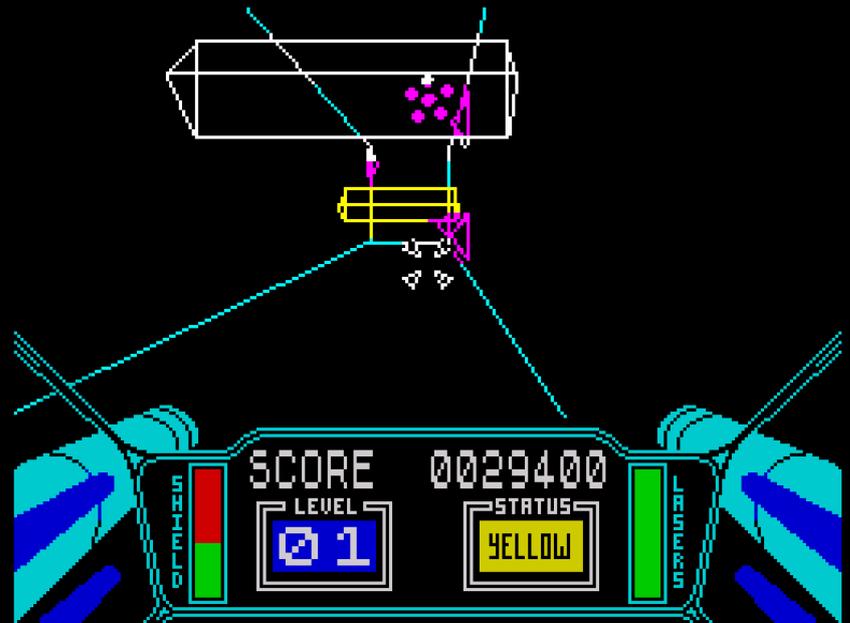
HOW CLOSE?

It is obvious that this game is a copy of the arcade game Star Wars, but how close is it to the famous shooter?

The ship graphics are different, the four wings of the X-Wing are replaced with the two from your Starstrike craft.

The TIE fighters from the arcade are slightly different.

The Deathstar exhaust port now has a force field.

There is no in-game speech or Star Wars music - obviously, or 3D scroll intro.

Apart from that - the gameplay is almost identical.

QUICK ON THE DRAW
LIGHT GUNS AND THEIR GAMES

Light gun games are very popular in the arcades with classics like *House Of The Dead* and *Virtua Cop* , but these types of game have been pulling in the cash since 1984, when *Duck Hunt* from Nintendo hit the arcades.

Light Guns eventually came to the home computer market with several cheap looking, plastic moulded guns appearing for many of the systems.

The Spectrum had several including the Cheetah Defender, the Magnum Light Phaser, Sinclair's own version of the Magnum with their logo on it, and the rarely seen Stack Light Rifle. They all worked in the same basic way, and all had a limited number of games tailored for them.

Sinclair bundled their version of the Magnum Phaser with the Action Pack and James Bond Action pack for the Plus 2 in 1990, but at least they changed the sticker on the side.

The Magnum and Sinclair guns are connected to the Spectrum via a single lead that plugs into the AUX port of the +2 and +3 machines. Be careful however, guns for the +2 don't seem to work on the +3, and vice-versa, as I found out.

The Magnum and Sinclair offerings were, to be honest, cheap looking and badly made. They are light (no pun intended) and easy to hold though, and the trigger feels firm enough, but there is just something that stinks of poor production.

The Magnum came in a pack that included six games, the Sinclair was bundled with its own games collection, so at least you had something to shoot when you got one.

Once connected and everything plugged in, it was time to play.

Games like Solar Invasion and Robot Attack were specifically made to take advantage of the input mechanism, and as a result they tend to lean away from traditional direction control. Instead you get a series of targets to hit in different forms.

Solar Invasion gives you aliens floating in space, while Robot Attack gives you robots to shoot as they wonder about various platforms.

In operation the gun seemed fine, although with the small target area and my small TV, it was sometimes very hard to hit anything in Solar Invasion.

Robot Attack had larger target areas and proved a much more enjoyable game.
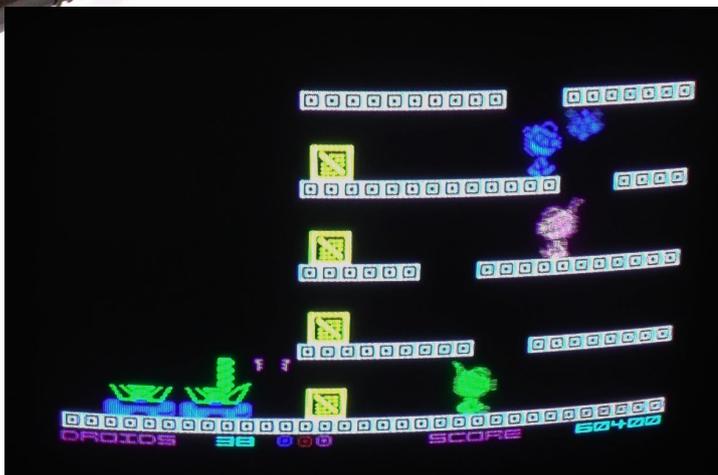
Because the gun was, well... a gun.. you would expect several shooting range type games, and you would not be disappointed. The Magnum came with Rookie, which was a basic target shooting affair, with different scores and screens to get through.

Again the targeting worked well once you had got your eye in, but still felt a little hit and miss.

After investing in a larger TV many of the targeting problems were resolved. Along with some brightness and contrast tuning, because the target were much larger than on the original 14" screen, all of the games proved much more enjoyable.

This was, if you think about it, obvious. The larger the screen, the larger the blanking image (see How They Work

Note: Screenshots on this page had to be taken via camcorder directly from the TV screen.

How They Work

To be able to use a light gun, you must have a CRT television, plasma or LCD sets will just not work. This is because the gun needs to locate the position of the raster line.

The raster line moves down the CRT tube fifty times per second and excites the phosphor dots on the tube to produce the picture you see. This line is used to get the area on screen the gun is aiming at.

When you pull the trigger, the software will blank the screen, only showing white blocks that represent the target you are supposed to be aiming at. If they line up you have hit the target.

Because of this screen blanking, every light gun game flickers really badly each time you pull the trigger. This can be very off putting, especially after a long time in front of the TV.
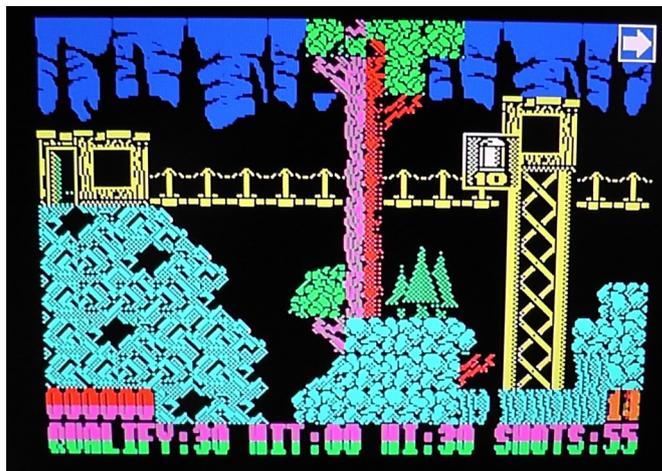
above) so the accuracy improved.

This made quite a big different to the games, in particular those with small targets. A large TV is definitely recommended if you plan to play a few light gun games.

Now on to Cheetah's offering....

Cheetah's offering, the Defender, was a much sturdier piece of plastic, with better styling, and an adjustable sight giving a more robust feel to it. It looked better too, and it worked with a standard Kempston Joystick adapter.

The six games it came with included the usual shooting gallery style affairs like Billy The Kid, which first had you proving yourself shooting cans before moving on to better things.

Sadly, the gun didn't seem to respond as good as the Magnum. There were times when it worked fine and others when, even holding the thing an inch from the screen, it failed to register a hit. This behaviour re-occurred across all of the game I tried on the original 14" screen. Things quickly changed when I re-tested on the larger 21" set.

The game flowed much better as I got used to the controls and once I had my eye in, it was much easier to play.

Next came Billy The Kid, an impossible game to play previously. Now though, the tins and bottle exploded on almost every shot, even the tricky one thrown by the cowboy. I was enjoying things now, this is what it should be like.

Jungle Warfare, another game for the Defender looked promising. It was a kind of Operation Wolf style game with various things moving around as the jungle landscape scrolled by.

This type of game suits the light gun, and of course the arcade game used a similar device. The action was thick and fast and you got immersed in the gameplay rather than trying to make the gun work.

Light guns give the user a different control mechanism from keyboard or joystick, and that certainly has an effect on gameplay.

Like the Nintendo Wii, you feel more in control somehow, more involved in the game. You can't jump about like the Wii, as the cables are only a few meters long, but it does give Spectrum games a totally different feel.

The one glaring thing I did notice was the lack of support in emulators. Maybe it can't be done, but trying to grab video or screenshots from a television screen is not much fun.

Many emulators can now emulate various mice, like the Kempston mouse, so positioning shouldn't be that difficult. The Cheetah uses a Kempton joystick adapter so could be slighter less difficult.

I suppose it may well be down to the software, looking for the vertical blank to detect a hit. Emulating that would be a real challenge.

So, to finish I would say that light guns are a great input mechanism if the software works. The flickering is annoying but it does make a good change from a joystick.

A limited number of games also held them back. Apart from the bundled games with the Cheetah and the Magnum, the only others are the ones in the various Sinclair packs.

If you get a chance, give them a try.
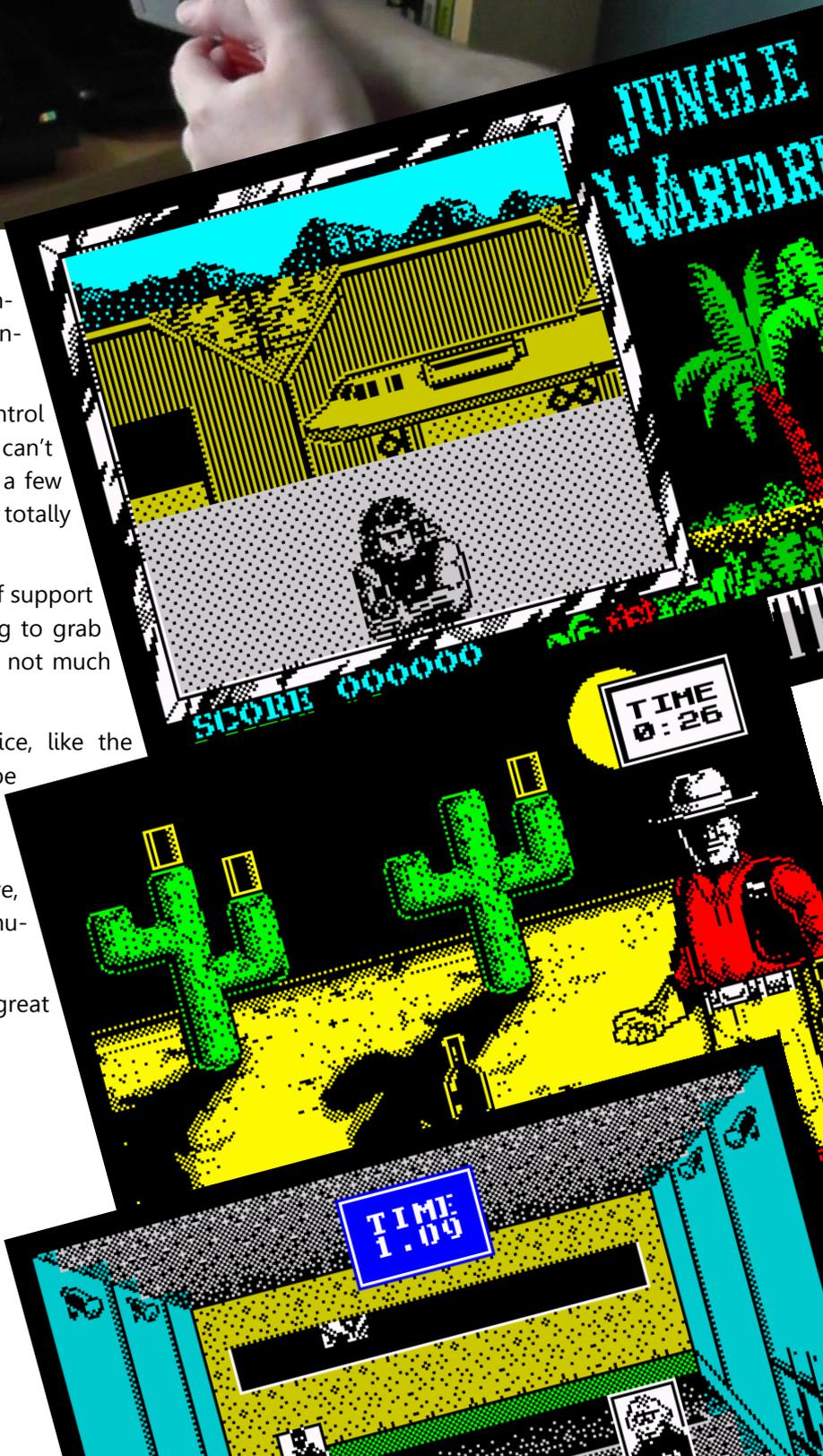
AUTOMANIA
Mikro-Gen 1984

Subtitled Manic Mechanic, you can probably guess what type of game this is going to be.

This was the first game to feature Wally Week, Mikro-Gen's well used character that went on to appear in many other games. This though, although being a platform game, has a nice twist.

The aim is to build cars, collecting parts from one screen, and assembling them in another. Yes the game has only two screens, but the platform layout on the second does change with each level.

Talking of levels, each one has a different car to build, starting with the infamous Citroen 2CV.

The music, although nice at first soon gets annoying, but thankfully you can turn this off. The game starts with some funny credits, which you can skip once you've read them, and quickly get to the game.

The collection screen has ladders, moving platforms and parts of the car scattered about. It is important not to touch anything other than the car parts, so there is a lot of jumping to avoid oil cans and tool boxes.

The jumps are very short, making progress tricky, and the collision is a bit off at times. With a bit of practice though, you'll soon get the hang of things. Sometimes you jump too soon, sometimes too late, and it can get frustrating, but keep at it.

Once you have a car part, its back to the garage to add it to the part-built car. Here, there are more things to avoid like falling spanners and fans, before you can add the part and go back for the next one.

The graphics are large and well drawn, and despite a bit of flickering, are really nice.

The sound, without the music is limited to collection and death sounds, so you have a choice of near silent game or repetitive music.

The pace of the game is slow, sometimes it can feel very pedestrian when compared to games like Jet Set Willy, but the urge to complete a car keeps you going.

Once you complete the car, it drives off and is replaced by another, better one.

If all this wasn't enough, then there is also a time limit to collect each part.

I like this game, but I think it is overly difficult due to the limited jump distance. The collision and jumps coupled with the time limit and the fact you can die if you fall add up to what can be a frustrating game.

I still like it, but that doesn't make it a good game.

Los Amores De Brunilda

Retro Works 2013

There aren't many true role playing games for the Spectrum and certainly not very many that use the time honoured format of the early Zelda games.

Released in 2013 by Retro Works, Los Amores De Brunilda is a rare and beautiful thing.

A perfectly formed and immersive role playing game that does everything right.

Upon arriving at a village you immediately get a weird feeling, and as you talk to the people you realise something is wrong.

The game is very much story driven, which takes you into the game that so very few Spectrum games do.

The style will be familiar to anyone who has been around gaming, a top down view of the area that can be investigated. People can be asked questions and little bits of information soon come out.

You soon find yourself on your first quest – to locate a witch to help your friend recover from a mysterious illness...

The graphics are well drawn and fit this type of game, the music is good and the pace is spot on.

I found myself wanting to explore more, to complete the quests and find out what was happening in this wonderful little world I had stumbled into.

The game will soak up a lot of your time if you allow it to.. for this review I was still on chapter 2 – the witch, and had spent a good 30 minutes playing...

Previously I spent hours working my way through things... it really does drag you in...

I can't rate this high enough, but realise it may not be to everyone's taste.

A highly recommended RPG.
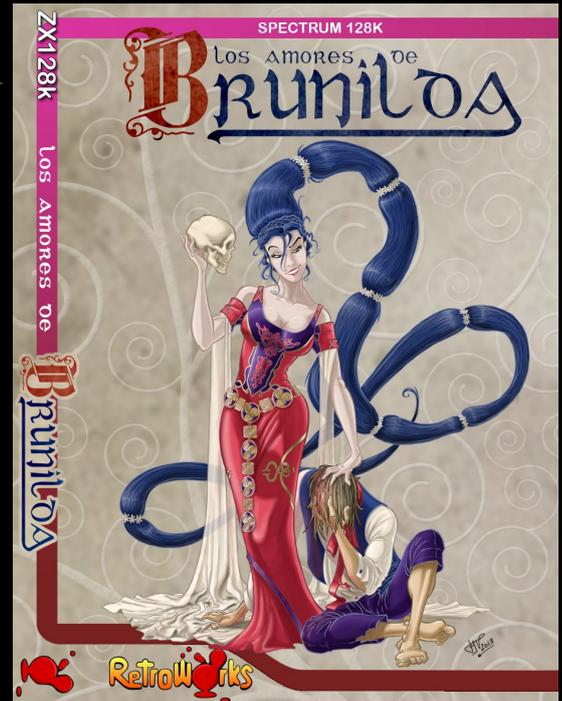
STAR RUNNER

Codemasters 1987

The inlay informs you that you have been selected for 2087 Olympic event of star running.

Star running is a race against the clock over a set distance with added traps and obstacles. A kind of interstellar obstacle course. Think of the arcade game Metro Cross and you wouldn't be too far away.

Level one and you have to avoid fire pits, blocks of something that sends you sprawling, pads that slow you down and the odd floating alien. There are also clocks scattered about that extend your time limit.

Trip up though. And not only do you fall over in a comical rotate 90 degrees sprite kind of way, but you also waste valuable time.

In later levels you also get spikes (or fire - not quite sure) and things that send you back several screens should you come into contact with them.

Because this is time based, you have to choose the best route while at the same time, avoid getting delayed.

The graphics are a kind of 3D, but they really don't help control, as you often find yourself jumping too soon or too late, triggering a flat on your face moment of wasted time.

The screen does not scroll, instead it flips, which is also a bit of a pain, as you can't tell what obstacle is coming next, and sometimes run into it straight away.

Control is good, but there is a pause straight after standing up, having fallen, so you end up just holding the key down.

Apart from the flip screen, the other graphics are well defined and smooth. Sound is very limited to plink plink sounds as you run or fall over.

I managed to get past the first level a few times and the second level is much the same but with a different colour and a few different hazards.

After about ten plays of this game, I had no urge to continue. I wasn't drawn in and couldn't care less what the other levels were like.

Somehow it all falls as flat as the main sprite after tumbling over a block that he was nowhere near.
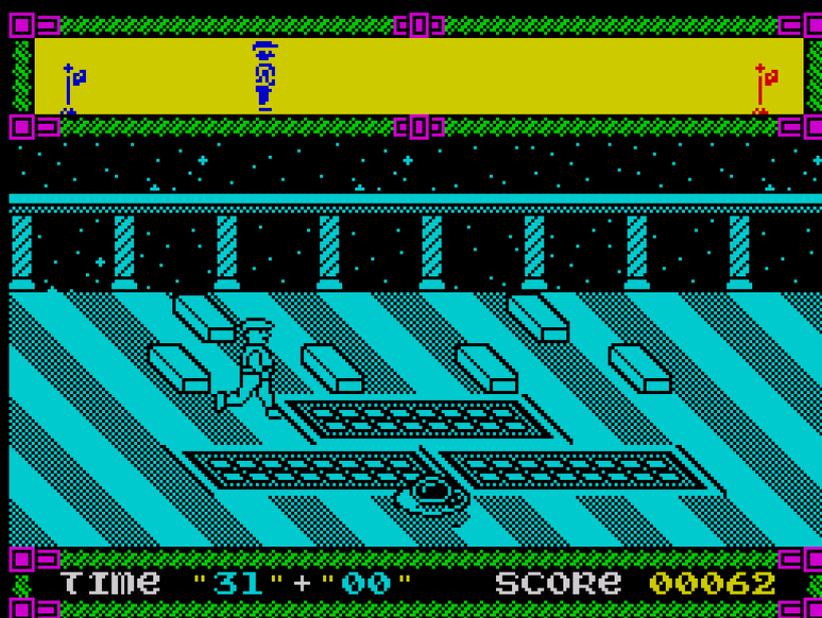
Run away....

TUBARUBA

Firebird Software 1987

Tubaruba is the name given to you, a pesky kid always getting into trouble at school and always annoying the teachers. This year though, they have had enough.

Your grades will be based on how much cash you collect from the school and if you collect £50 then you won't get expelled. So, what we have here is a platform game with a twist.

After a very annoying tune, the game begins and as most school kids are these days, you are equipped with a jetpack.

You can fly around, avoiding things and try to locate the money, which is scattered around in £1 lots.

The first thing that strikes you when playing, is the difficulty, this game is not easy, and too soon you find yourself dead. It isn't clear what is dangerous and what should be collected until you actually touch it.

You can shoot things too, which is recommended for anything that is moving, in fact just shoot anything.

It's like Jet Set Willy crossed with Jetpac with the difficulty turned up to 11 - not a good combination. I struggled to get very far, and often found myself dead for no reason I could work out, all very frustrating.

The background graphics sometimes masked the killer sprites, and sometimes things can pass through walls to kill you!

There are windows that when collided with, will send you to another location. This often sent me to a place where I instantly got killed, yet another frustration.

The graphics are average, but smooth, and control is responsive enough. Sound is adequate, and there is an option to turn off that music. (thank goodness)

Overall.. I hate this game... it's too difficult and I don't think the mix of game play actually improves the genre...

One to forget I think!

THE STORY OF BOOTY
THE REMAKE

Booty was a game originally planned to be released by Rabbit Software under the name of *Jolly Roger*, but due to Rabbit going into liquidation, the author, John Cain Instead got his game released by Firebird with a new name, Booty.

The game was a great success, mixing platform, adventure, arcade and puzzle elements into a single, challenging game.

During late 90's and early 2000's, there was a rash of people creating remakes. Modern versions of old classic games for PCs, myself included. I wrote and released many remakes using a variety of tools, but I think (judging from the hit rate) that Booty in bar far the most popular.

Digging through old records recently I located the development diary for this game, written in 2002, that originally appeared on the Cabisoft website. Now defunct, Cabisoft was the name I used to release my remakes under, and indeed all of my old original spectrum games that never saw the light of day.

Here then, is the extended version, cobbled together from old website pages, source code and a written log of progress. Thrown together to produce the story of the Booty Remake.

Our journey begins in August 2002 and another game calls me to give it the remake attention. This time the game is Booty, and the first task was to play the game to death and of course map it. This process took a few weeks using pokes kindly provided by Gerard Sweeney, and eventually I had a full map and good idea of how everything sat together.

Being a sharing type I decided to upload my map to World Of Spectrum, but to my utter dismay, Gerard beat me to it by a few days! Oh well, I could now get down to working on the game.

With the map complete I set about creating some test images for both background and sprites. Everything was taken from the original Spectrum version, doubled in size, coloured and shaded. These were just test images though, so would probably change as development got underway for real. For now though I wanted something I could throw into the code.

The tool of choice for me at this time was *Click & Create* from Corel, a nice, simple and quick drag 'n' drop authoring program. It was quite powerful too with many graet games

Booty - ZX Spectrum Version

Released by Firebird Software in 1984

Jim the cabin boy had to be guided around the pirate ship and collect all items of booty. Doors require keys to be opened and some booty is booby trapped.

Pirates, rats and parrots have to be avoided, and some floors of the ship move around.

Once all items of booty are collected, Jim has 45 seconds to find the last key that will let him escape to the next booty filled ship.
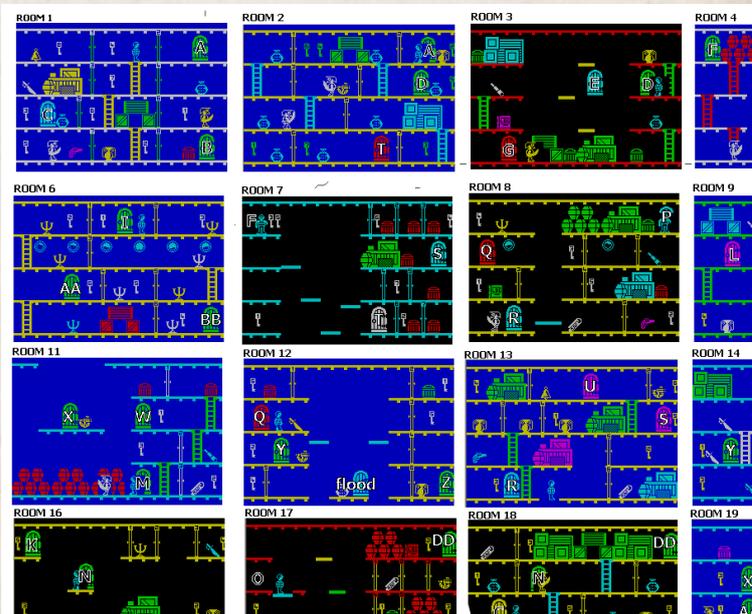
and tools created by it.

The game, I had discovered through a lot of playing, would be much more complex than Arcadia (another of my remakes), but simpler than Scumball (yes, another of my remakes). It would involve vertical and horizontal moving platforms, ladders, doors, vanishing floors, random bombs, keys and an end of game timer.

Initially the main character, Jim, was given no animation at all, just for testing, but once I was happy with how he looked, I added eight frames of animation for walking and climbing. Once added to the empty project, it was easy to get him walking left and right. Things looked good, so I quickly added some backgrounds, and it wasn't long before Jim was strutting about on screen one.

By the middle of October I had most of the graphics converted over included a few pirates, the parrot, the rat, various crates and boxes, barrels, floors and doors. The original Spectrum game had different colours for some rooms so to replicate this I created different sets of backgrounds at varying levels of darkness.

With all this done my first challenge was to get Jim to use horizontal moving platforms. I knew I could do the ladders, so deliberately opted for one of the tricky aspects of the mechanics first. This is where I hit the first major problem, Jim just wouldn't stay on the thing! No matter what I tried he would just fall off or stick to the bottom and get dragged about by his head.

A few days of getting nowhere and finally got him to behave and stay on the platform, but only if you moved at the same time, not like the original at all. I knew this would be a problem and wanted to make the game as close as possible to the

Click & Create

Click & Create was a multimedia creation application released by Corel around 1995. Its simple drag n Drop interface made it easy to use but the end results could look very professional.

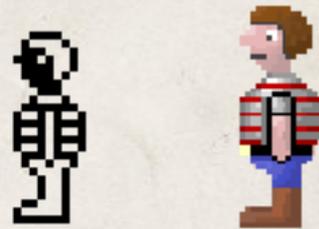Corel was bought out and the product was taken back by the developers IMSI, later becoming known as The Click Team.

C&C was replaced by two products, The Games Factory and later Multimedia Fusion. Both of these were then replaced by Clickteam Fusion.
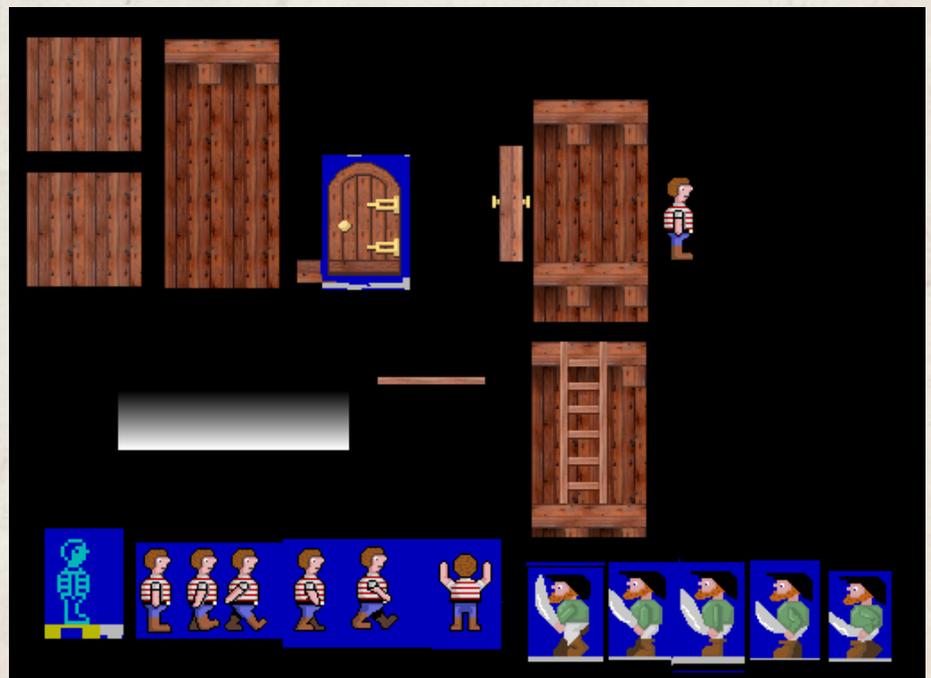
More details can be found on their website:

http://www.clickteam.com

Conversion of Jim...

Background graphics and a few sprites

My Booty Map

The Story of Booty (the remake)

The end of October was quickly approaching and I forged ahead, this time trying to get vertical platforms to work, and this proved much more difficult than I first thought. Jim just refused to stay on them the bloody fool! Not only that but the animation counts goes wrong and he moon-walks backwards as soon as he touched them!

Time for a re-think....

How the game was looking in C&C

It was time for a serious re-think. Three months had passed and what I thought would be an easy game had turned into a nightmare. I only had one room working, but even that had issues with the moving platforms; Click and Create was just not up to the job, but what else could I use?

Having used AMOS in my earlier days and becoming quite proficient at it, I looked for something similar and soon found myself downloading Blitz Basic. Once installed, to my delight, it was so similar to AMOS that I was writing code in no time. I had a block of colour moving around within an hour of loading it up, and was devouring the tutorials and online forums.

..and in Blitz Basic.. Spot the difference.

There isn't one!

If Booty was to be written in Blitz, then I would have to re-drawn most of the images to fit into evenly sized chunks to make managing them more efficient. All the backgrounds were split into 32 pixel blocks and the sprites tweaked to fit into 48 pixel grids. Now I was ready to start all over again.

Because I was now using a real programming language instead of an authoring package, it meant I had to think about how I would define each room, its contents, exit points and associated affects. I opted to use data blocks as I had previously used them in AMOS and they seemed to work in the same way.

Each room would be defined in 20 x 16 data block with different numbers represent-ing a different item of scen-ery. Objects, moving plat-forms and sprites would be configured separately in an-other data block, but review-ing the source code I am not entirely sure how it all fits together!

I think each object has its X

```
;################################ INITIALISE ROOM 2 ################################
Restore r2data
For X=0 To 170
Read r2data
room2(x)=r2data
Next

.r2data

Data 168,12,488,12,168,108,361,108,296,204,168,300,488,300,0,0
Data 40,340,610,50,520,340,240,50,600,150,210,50,210,340,0,0
Data 540,32,520,128,400,320
Data 280,30,0,460,222,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0
Data 0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0
Data 30,240,0,460,144,1
Data 370,57,100,57,570,154,50,249,380,249,90,346,270,346
Data 0,0,0,0,0,0,570,58,0,0
Data 0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0
Data 0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0 ; log,sword,map,nav
Data 0,0,0,0,0,0 ; horiz
Data 0,0,0,0,0,0 ; vert
Data 0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0 ; chest 2-7
Data 0,0,0 ;- pirate 3 x,y, dir
Data 0,0,0 ; bird
Data 0,0,0 ; rat
Data 0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0 ;Sword 2 to 10 - 168
Data 0,0 ;extra vet plat - 170
```

and Y coordinate stored in a serialised data block. No data means the object will not be on that particular level. Any value above 0 wold mean the object getting placed at the XY coordinates. The main loop would then take care of the animation and collisions.

Shiver me timbers....

Like most coders, I wanted to write a game engine, that once complete, could handle the data blocks I threw at it. This particular game engine would grow as I implemented each feature, but at least I had a lot more flexibility.

Within a few days I had all of the graphics converted and imported, the backgrounds drawing and an animated Jim walking around. The moving platforms proved challenging but with a few late nights and lots of alcohol, by the beginning of November 2002 I had Jim working on both horizontal and vertical moving platforms. A huge leap forward from my previous failed attempts.

At this point I re-wrote a whole chunk of code connected with the room definitions. The early code was just to test out theories, so to make it re-usable and more optimised, a re-write was needed. This didn't take long though, and it meant, in theory at least, I could easily expand it if required, but at the same time plough onward and add more rooms.

Next on my list was ladders. I imported all the graphics and added the code to draw them in the correct place, and this all worked really well. Now to get Jim to actually use them!

A few lines of collision check code and Jim scuttled up the ladder and promptly got stuck, not being able to move up or down. Slight modification allowed him to move back down, but still not fully climb to the top and move away. I even re-drew the ladder image to make it a bit taller, but that failed as well.

A few more late nights and still Jim is 4 pixels from the top and refusing to move. Made the decision to completely re-write the climbing routine and after a few hours Jim finally managed to make it. He can now climb up a ladder, walk away and climb down another. He can still walk through doors though, so next will be the door collision and key
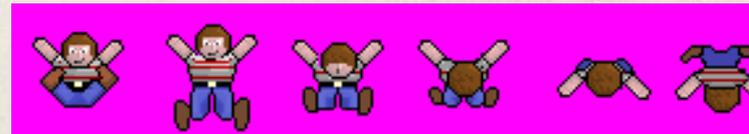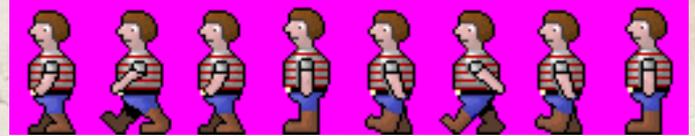
Room For Improvement

Each of the 20 sets of room data was held in an array containing 172 individual elements. The current room was also an array, and the one used by the main loop.

To move rooms, the current room array was copied back to the equivalent room array, and the new room array was copied into the current room array.

This meant anything moved or collected was maintained across all rooms. I may not be the best way to do it, but it worked well and left the main loop completely separate., as it worked solely on the current array.

The Story of Booty (the remake)

The game features numbered keys in each room, each one corresponding to the door with the same number above it. This introduces a nice strategy element, as not all doors are accessible all the time, it can depend on which door you entered the room from. This, of course, had to be built into my game engine.

A few hours of coding and the keys could be collected and used on doors. I had to tweak a few things so that if you were carrying a key and you collected another one, the old one would re-appear in its original start position. The room arrays made this really easy (see previous issue for details).

I also had to take into account movement from room to room. If you had a key and moved to a new room, then I had to trap for that, and place the key back into the current room array before copying it back. Otherwise the key would just vanish from the game! Now all that's in place, Jim can walk about, collect keys and open doors.

I wrote some code to display the current key Jim was carrying and made a sort of control panel at the bottom of the screen. This will also hold the score and number of lives.

The routine to add any carried keys back to the room array had to be modified to write any changed data back, for example doors that had already been opened. The array structure again, made this so easy.

By late December 2002 the game was coming together nicely although I had noticed a speed decrease for each item added to screen. Conversely the game speeded up as items were removed, so at some point I wold have to figure out either how to throttle things at the same speed or to improve my routines. There was still a lot more things to add to the screens like pirates, crates and collectable objects.

The first pirate was added to the game in early January and because most of the engine was in place, it worked first time. He now stomps about bouncing off of doors and changing direction. He doesn't kill Jim on contact as I have yet to write the collision routine for him.

Grabbed a few more graphics from the game and re-sized and re-coloured them. I did most of the treasure items first as I wanted to get some collectable items into the game engine.

Objects imported and the code for collec-

tion was written along with the adding and displaying of the score. Now that is in place the next thing to do is add another room and get Jim to move into it when going through the right door. To finish off the control panel I added a nice background and put in the player lives.

We are now into January and things are moving along at a fair pace, but it was at this point I noticed a glaring bug in the way the game handled the arrays. My notes don't into that much details other than to swear a lot and state that 50% of the code had to be re-written. The end result though was a much improved routine.

With that done I decided to tackle the slow-down issue. With pint of beer in hand, I painstakingly went through the code line by line, trying to work out why the game was slowing down – and then I found it! A huge chunk of code being called every loop that should have only been called each time a room is set-up. I moved this out of the main loop and suddenly the whole game was working at a tremendous speed. So much so that I had to introduce a throttle to slow it down!

TY: 4   TREASURE: 121

doors and collect treasure. What he can't do at the moment is get blown up or move to another room.

Room two would make or break the game engine. If all goes well, adding a new set of data blocks should give me an almost fully playable room. It did! Wow! The game engine was brilliant and I was so pleased that all that re-writing had given me working platform on which to accelerate the game building.

The next room however, room three, would give me a few issues as it had moving platforms.

I had already written test code for this when I first loaded Blitz, so I just had to take that, change bits of it and add it to the game engine. This took a few nights of work but once added Jim glided about smoothly. There were a few small issues with Jim suddenly getting stuck in the middle of the platform, but a few checks and re-positions soon fixed that.

Continues next issue....

This new turn of speed along with the throttle made the pirate flicker, so I had to modify the animation code to take into account this new found performance and now things are silky smooth.

With all this good work something had to break and it was the pirate control code. At the back end of January the pirates would randomly vanish from screen. Adding debug counters showed their XY coordinates going bananas!

A few hours of poking about fixed this but then when the first door was opened by Jim, all the pirates stopped dead and started flickering! This game of debug Ping-Pong really put me off doing any work on the game for a few days. It drove me mad!

Into February 2003 and my first task was to get the bomb working. In the original, if Jim collected a treasure, a bomb would randomly appear and explode, killing Jim if he didn't move out of the way. I re-drew the graphics, imported them and added a bit of random code into the treasure collection routine. Works a treat!

With that in place the first room is 95% complete. Jim can walk around, climb ladders, collect keys, open

Re-coloured and re-sized graphics.

SPEED DUEL   DK'Tronics 1983

The inlay has no story or hints about what the game is, just the loading instructions.

Once the game has loaded we get a choice of tracks and opponent skill level. There is also an option to practice.

The idea of the game is to race a computer controlled opponent around a track and win.

There is just the one opponent, and setting the skill level to 1 or 2 makes things easy, although the track can be difficult to navigate.

Controls can be keyboard or joystick and consist of accelerate, brake, left and right.

Once in the race, we get a view of your car from just behind it and slightly above. As the corners approach, you get warnings from road side signs, and steering the car takes you round them, if you don't overcook the controls, which is easy to do.

The car steers in increments, and it is very easy to keep the key pressed too long or the joystick held in the direction too long. This causes your car to career towards the edge of the road, and you quickly have to drag it back. At lower speeds this isn't too bad, but get above 50 and it can be deadly.

Once you crash, several things can happen depending on the position of your car. If you are pointing directly at the road edge, you will probably suffer a series of instant crashed that end the game. If you are just in front of the opponent car, they will probably crash into you a few times. If you get lucky, and the angle of your car is right, you may be able to carry on again.

And this is the main issue with this game... one crash can end the race..

Graphics wise it's not bad for a 16k game in 1983. The road moves smoothly and the car has a few frames of animation when turning.

Response to control is crisp – which as mentioned before, isn't always a good thing.

Sound is fine too, with a nice engine sound. Sadly there is no skidding sound.

The first track consist of just left hand bends, the others though offer a variety of bends in both directions. Some long, some short, and the more difficult tracks have slight direction variations of the road, meaning you are always correcting your position. The skill level of the opponent is just their speed. Skill level 1 – means they drive at 30mph – so you obviously have go faster to beat them. Speed is in 10 mph steps so skill level 2 takes them to 40mph and so on.

Driving around the tracks at anything faster than 50 is very tricky due to the control system, so this is a challenging game at its higher difficulties. Over all, not a bad game then.

BEAMRIDER

You can also get extra ships by collecting the yellow pods.. but I kept shooting these in the heat of battle!

Firing is done along the gridlines, kind of like tempest and you can sometimes predict which line an alien will go to, and meet them with a laser shot.

Later levels have homing missiles and the action certainly hots up to fever pitch at times.

Graphics are quite basic, but sufficient. The main ship is quite blocky, and really should have been a bit better.

The 3D effect is nice, and control is fast and smooth.

You are the Beamrider, protector of earth, patrolling the Restrictor shields that surround the planet. Anything that appears must be destroyed.

Each sector has 15 aliens and a sentinel. You can't destroy the sentinel until all aliens have been removed. There is a count down at the top left of the screen showing how many aliens are left just in case you get mixed up in the action, and you will.

The intro section is a bit off putting, but once into the game we get a nice 3D effect playing field with a few aliens flying about. It all looks deceptively plane.

You have two weapons at your disposal, lasers and torpedoes, although the game gives them a more sexy name.

Lasers are used for most alien types but cannot destroy the sentinels and some kinds of alien.

Torpedo's can destroy anything, but you only have three per level and because you need them for the sentinel, you have to use them sparingly.

So.. its all out blasting.. Brilliant.

In later levels hitting the sentinel is made tricky by blocking aliens that intercept your torpedoes, very nasty, and also aliens that home in on your position.

Sound is used well, although the constant drone can sometime get irritating.

The game, overall, I like, in fact I think its great and I played it for ages. I still go back to it now and again, which can't be said for may games.

Now.. just one more go....

TERRORLANDIA

Favio Didone - 2014
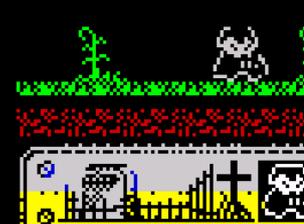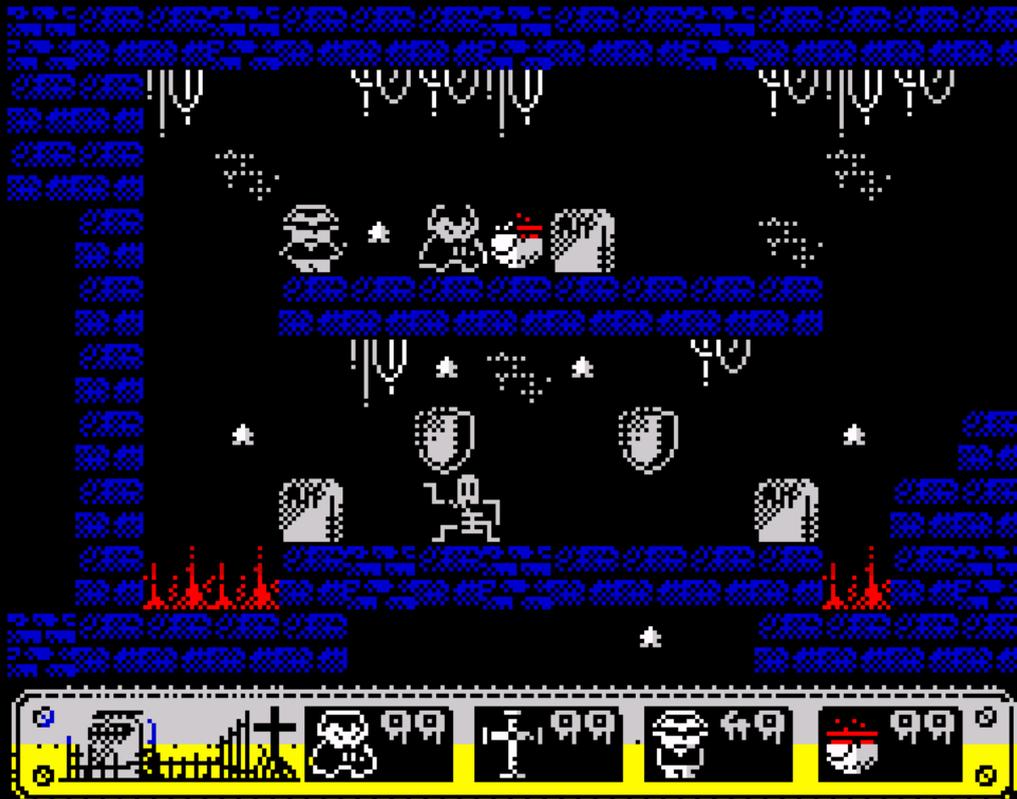
Chilling and terrifying stories coming from the distant Kingdom of Terrorlandia mention dark passageways full of skeletons, bats, witches and vampires.

To end this reign of terror, you step forward and enter the kingdom.

To complete the game you have to collect 24 crosses, and then use them to kill the 24 vampires.

If you have a cross, you can jump on a vampire to kill them, a little unorthodox, but it seems to work.

Bats and skeletons cannot be killed though and reduce your health if collided with.

Witches block some entrances and to kill them you have to have magic cauldrons which can be fond scattered around various screens.

So, in essence collect everything and avoid bats, skeletons and spikes.
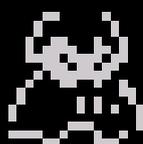
This game uses the Churrera engine that, to be honest I have never got on with. This one though proves that a good game, that isn't almost impossible to play, can be produced using this popular tool.

The jump mechanism is different from most platform games with varying height of jumps, but once you get the hang of things, it becomes easy to move around.

Some rooms mean you have to jump into the adjacent room to collect things, and this can be tricky to calculate, not to mention the moving platforms that you also have to navigate.

Make sure you have collected everything from a room before you move on though, you can get caught out

TERRORLANDIA
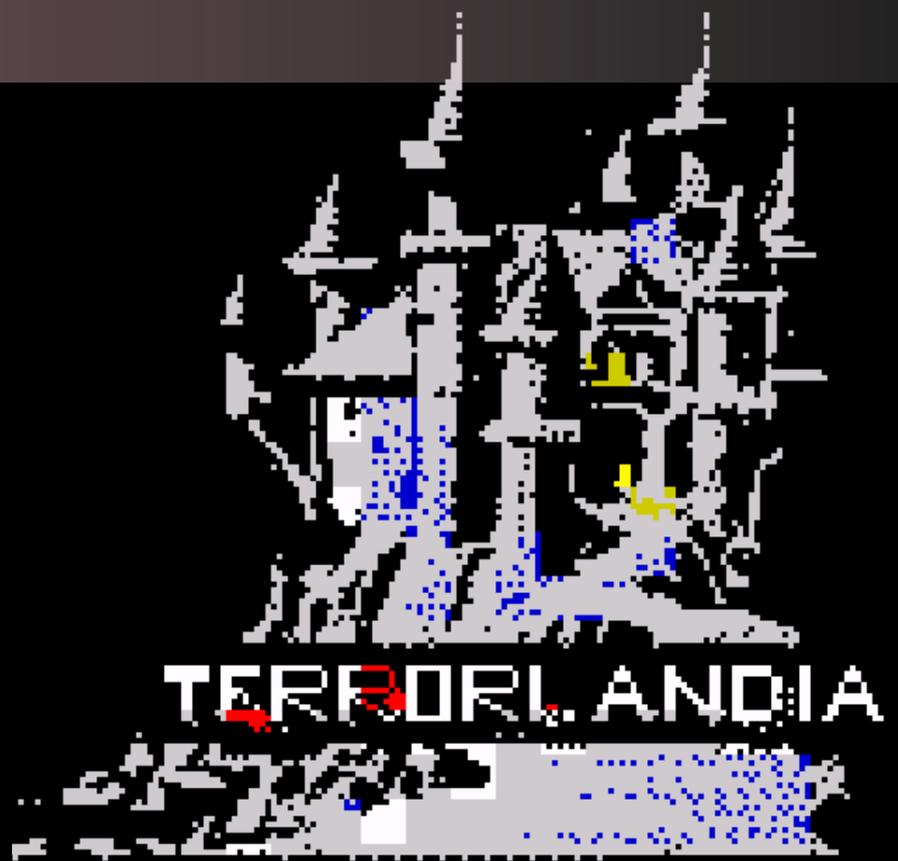
and the route back becomes impossible.

The game is not without its problems, there are some areas you just can't get out of and jumping from the top of a room can take you into the bottom of the room above, which confuses you a bit. Also in one room the game freezes for a while, but does continue after about 10 seconds.

The graphics are well defined and smooth, and control is very responsive once you master the jumping aspect of the game.

There is a nice tune that plays on the intro screen, but sound effects are limited to jumping, object collection, killing vampires and of course loosing health.

Difficulty is set slightly low and the number of lives is very generous, giving you 40 to play with, all this means it's easy to play and easy to progress, something I enjoyed. The lives are used up each time you touch an enemy, so in fact it's not too generous as you might think.

It would have been nice to have a bit of different scenery, the game has three main sets, blue castle interiors, grassy grave yards and red catacombs.

Overall then, a great game that's easy to get into, easy to play and if the few little bugs can be put right, a great game..

Highly recommend.

THE
ULTIMATE
COMPANY Part 2

48K SINCLAIR

CYBE

Scan: Aonghus de Barra

Moving away from the 3D games and Ultimate released a strange game, Cyberun.

CYBERUN

This game though, was not written by the Stampers and some would say it is not therefore a real Ultimate game.

You have to search the planet, locate parts of a spaceship, build your ship and then use it to mine ores. The game-play is similar to Thrust but with more enemies to shoot and is really a mix of Jetpac and Lunar Jetman with in-creased difficulty.

PENTAGRAM

Still in 1986 and the next game badged with the Ultimate logo was Pentagram. Remember this? This is one of the three sequels to Knight Lore, and sees Sabreman return-ing for another adventure.

In this game he has to locate the Pentagram, but obvi-ously it's a little more complex than that, this is after all, an Ultimate Play The Game title - or is it? Produced after the buy out the authors are thought to be programmers brought in by US Gold rather than the Stampers. Back to the game though...

The quest involves locating wells, collecting buckets of water and healing rocks.

Gameplay is very similar to both Knight Lore and Alien 8 and uses a similar game engine, added to this version though are projectiles, so he can shoot the enemies.

Again we see moveable blocks that help with puzzles which have become a staple of isometric games.

This was the last of what might be considered real Ulti-mate games, but Ocean, using other development teams continued to release under the Ultimate branding and the quality was starting to slip.
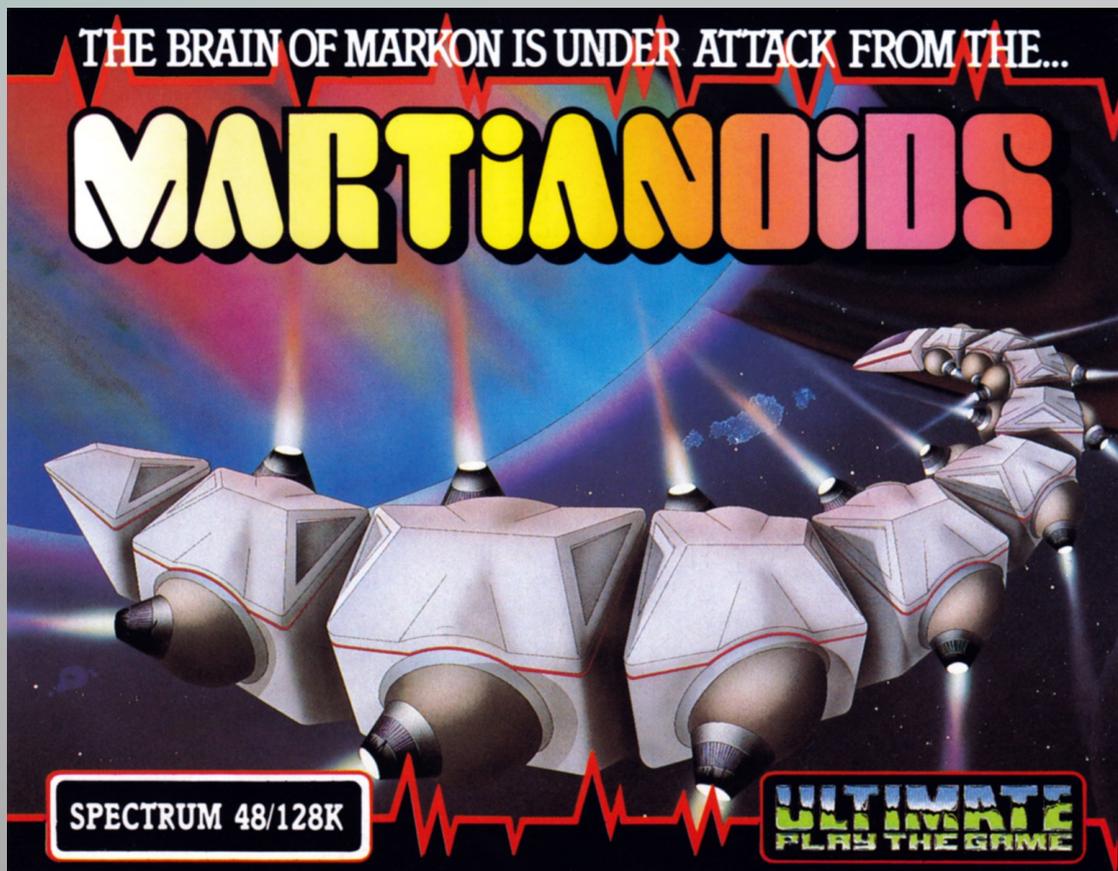
MARTIANOIDS

Martianoids, another filmation type game is somewhat more playable game than Pentagram. You control a robot that has to guide a program to the correct location within the brain of your spaceship.

You also have to keep your battery charge and destroy the invading aliens.

The scrolling is nice and the graphics are large and well-drawn, but it lacks that something special that players have come to expect.

BUBBLER

Bubbler looked like marble madness but played in a totally different, and somewhat terrible way.

The control system is bad, very bad and the rotate-move control should not be used on a game like this, it's just awful to control or get anywhere. You spend too much time looking at the compass to see which direction you are heading..

And the game suffers from the instant death syndrome, in that if you get close to a tower that fires at you and die, you re-spawn in the same place and usually get shot straight away.

A totally frustrating game...
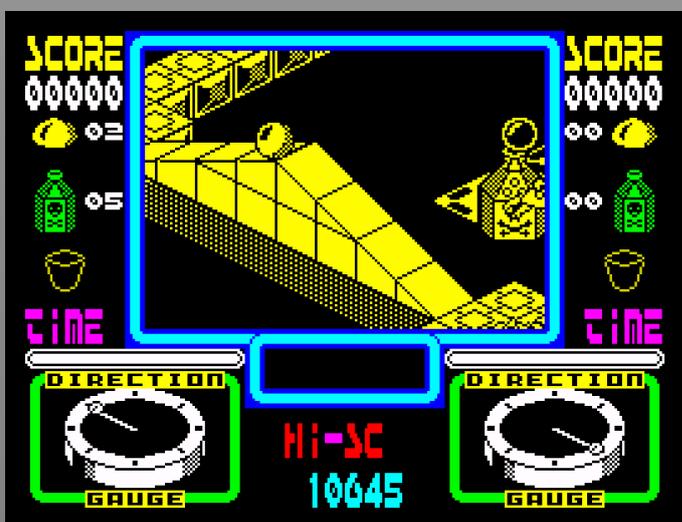
THE AGE OF RARE

Ultimate Play The game had moved on by now, and changed their name to Rare, and enjoyed a long a fruitful career as console developers being responsible for such greats as Donkey Kong Country, Killer Instinct, Golden Eye, the Conkers games as well as the Banjo series.

As an 8 bit company they were revered, averaging a 93% score in Crash magazine, making them the most successful Spectrum publishing house ever, but the story doesn't end here, there are still a few mysteries left.

The Mysteries

First we have the rumour of a third Jetman game, named Solar Jetman.

This game never appeared on the Spectrum, but was released for the Nintendo Entertainment System.

It was thought this game existed for the Spectrum, deep in the vaults of Rare, but nothing has ever been found. Screen shots of the game did appear in Crash magazine fuelling the debate of a playable demo, but again nothing has ever come to light. It was interesting though that the game mechanics for Solar Jetman were quite similar to Cyberun.
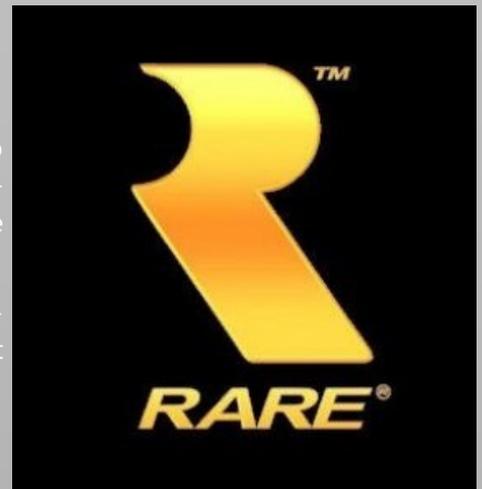
SOLAR JETMAN

Crash magazine featured the game on its March 1991 cover boasting a preview of the new Ultimate game due for release the following month.

The software house Storm who are writing the game claim it will be a multi-load 128k game and will be ready for the public to play in April.

The article featured several screenshots that looked good and showed the game looking similar to the NES version, albeit with less colours.
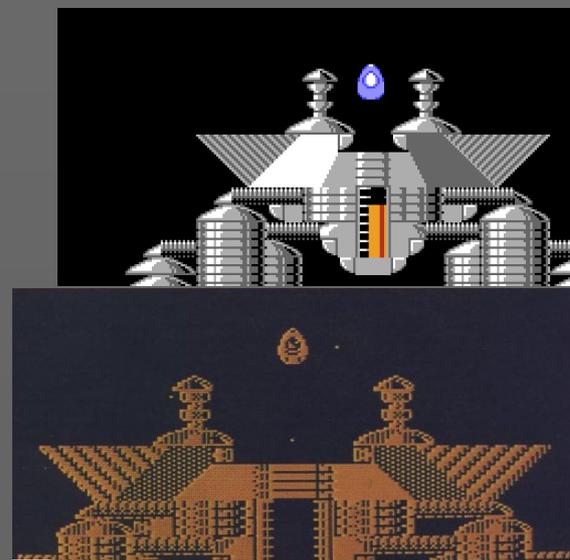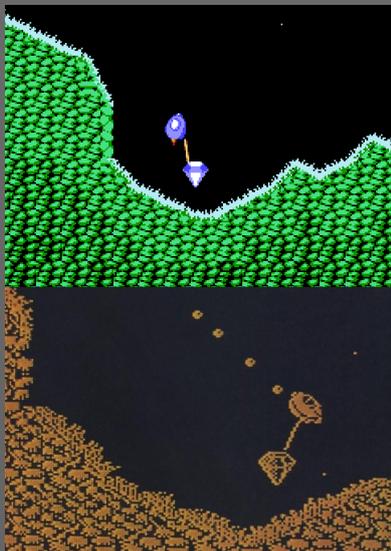
MIRE MARE

And what of Mire Mare ,the third sequel to Knight Lore, mentioned all that way back in this feature?

This is the most intriguing mystery.

Someone claiming to be an ex-employee of Ultimate says that he actually played the game, but there was no way to prove this.

Ultimate denied it was anywhere near ready at the time they were bought by US Gold, maybe to put US Gold off, as the Stampers were said not to be happy with the way their older games were being put out at budget prices.

Art work of the game has also surfaced, but what of the game?

The Stampers maintain the game was only in the design stages so I suppose we will never know the truth.
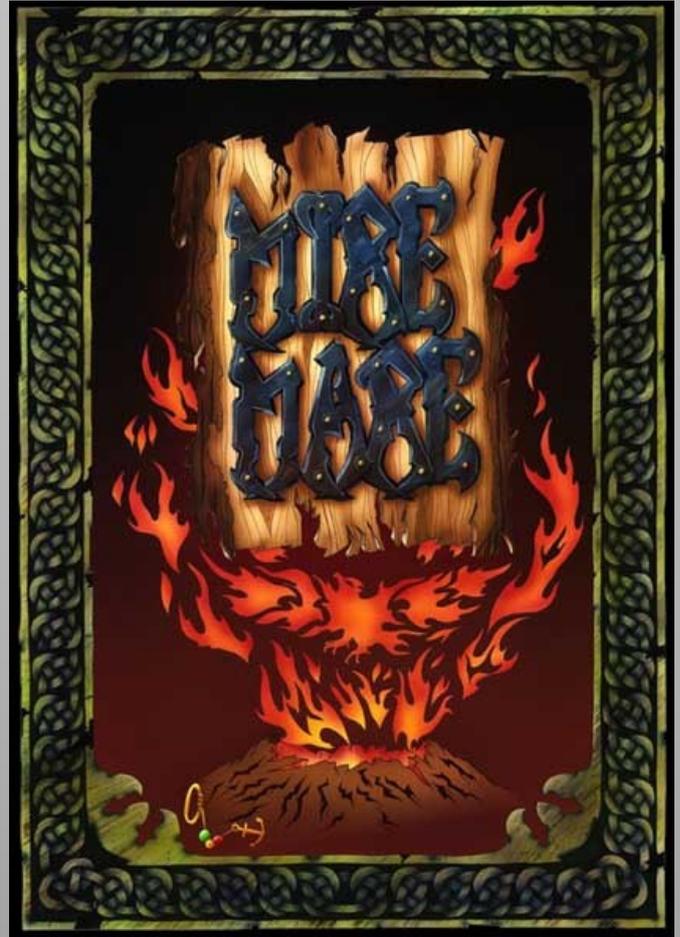
Check out **Land Of Mire Mare**, a fan made interpretation of the game in this issue.

Where Next For The Stampers?

Nothing stands still in the video game industry and for Chris and Tim Stamper the future was to be a very busy one.

Nintendo purchased a share in Rare and in 2002 Microsoft bought the entire company for a record breaking $377m.

Sabreman made a return to video gaming in 2004 with a release for the Gameboy Advanced and rumour that he would also make an appearance on the Xbox.
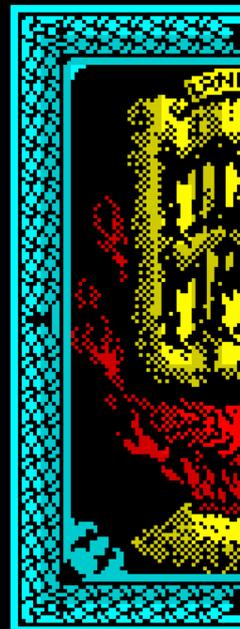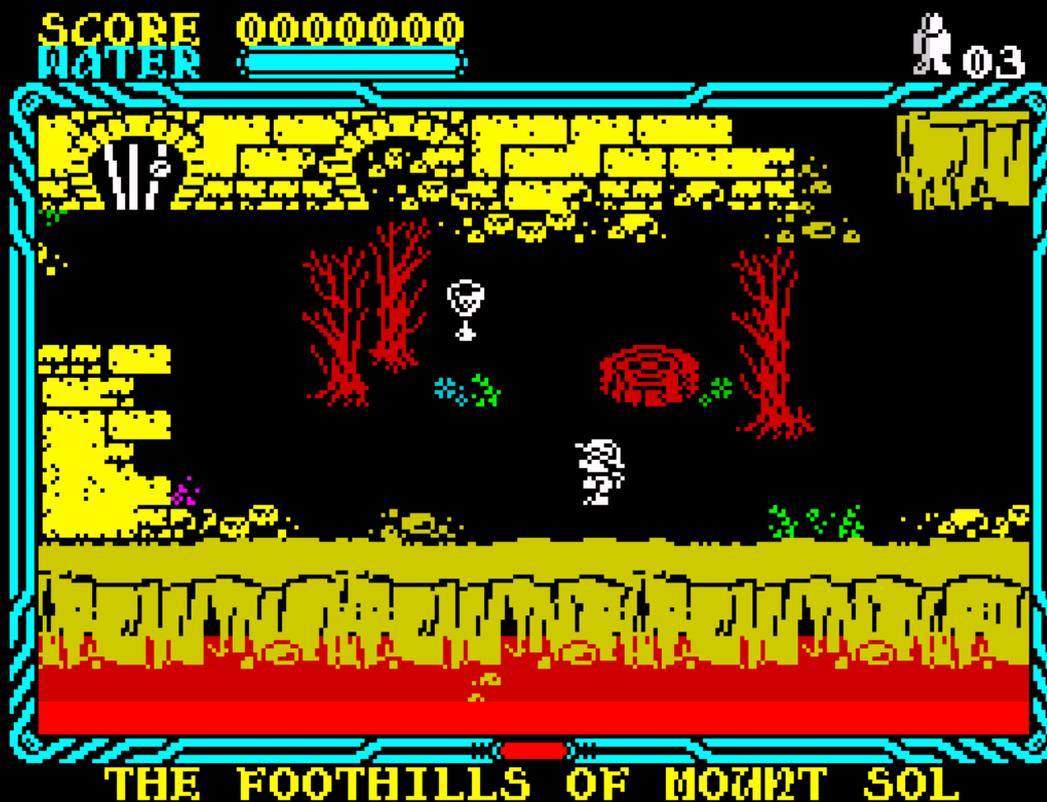

Our old friend Jetman, the character that started everything off way back in 1983 made his console debut in Jetpac Refuelled for the Xbox Live Arcade.

In 2006 Chris and Tim left Rare, leaving behind a legacy of classic games still loved today.

LAND OF MIRE MARE

Luca Bornoni 2014

THE FOOTHILLS OF MOUNT SOL

Land of Mire Mare is a fan made version of the game Ultimate Play The Game never released. For more details about that, see the feature in this issue.

Because the game was never released and there is no screenshots or game art to go on, the author used details from various interviews, hints that can be seen in the map supplied with the Ultimate Works compilation, and a bit of artistic licence. The game was created using Johnathon Cauldwell's Arcade Games Designer and was written by Luca Bordoni in 2014.

The story goes that 3 volcanoes are about to destroy the territory and the only way to stop this disaster is to find three gems and drop them into the well.

Anyone who has played the Ultimate games will instantly recognise the graphic style, brilliantly re-produced by BinMan, and partly based on screen mock ups, that in turn were based on rumours, about how Mire Mare could have looked.

You guide Sabreman on his quest trying to locate the gems, and trying to avoid various monsters along the way.

Luckily he can pick up and use his sword that can be used to kill most of them.

Unlike the Ultimate games however, when using his weapon, there is no animation to accompany it, but this is a small point, and does not distract from the game.

Pressing fire will make the sword icon flash, accompanied by a sound effect, and if Sabreman collides with a destructible monster, it will be killed.

There are various doors that require keys, these can be found and used only once, or he can use an axe to break them down. Carrying an axe though

SCORE 0000035
WATER

THE FOOTHILLS OF MOUNT SOL
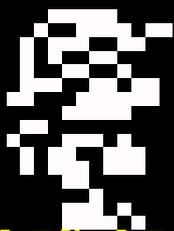
means he doesn't have his sword.

Scattered around the game map are extra lives and bottles of water that replenish his strength, which is reduced when he collides with monsters.
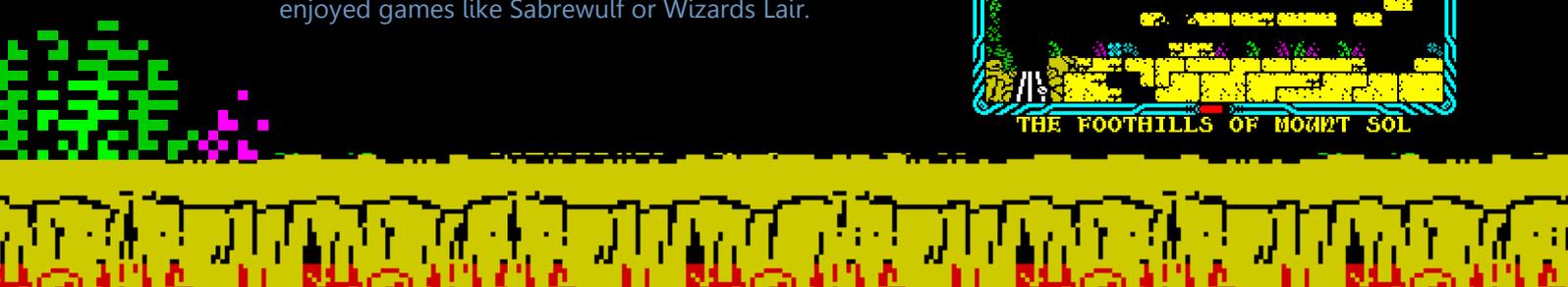
Each of the gems have a guardian that cannot be destroyed, so quick footwork will hopefully get you to it.

Gems cannot be collected unless you have something to drop in their place, so you have to keep an eye out for anything that you can use.

Once you have a gem, it's off to the well to drop it in.

This game does look like an Ultimate game, which is testament to BinMan's great work, and although there are limitations imposed by using Arcade Game Designer, I think the author has done an excellent job of re-creating those golden days of Ultimate.

A good job all round then, and well worth playing, especially if you enjoyed games like Sabrewulf or Wizards Lair.

SCORE 0000190
WATER

MOONSTONE MOUNTAINS

SCORE 0000145
WATER

THE FOOTHILLS OF MOUNT SOL

JET PAC

The 'Acme Interstellar Transport Company' is delivering spaceship kits to various planets in the solar system throughout the Galaxy; and as chief test pilot, all you have to do is assemble the Rockets, and thrust on to your next destination.

As you don't often get the chance of a free trip across the Galaxy, this is a great opportunity to get rich! Stop off on several planets on your journey, collect the odd sack of precious gems, elements or gold, and take them back with you.

Sounds simple doesn't it!

This is the premise of the game, and in essence it is an all-out arcade fest with beautiful smooth graphics, great sound and superb gameplay.

There are four levels, each having a different spaceship to build, and each containing four sections with different aliens.

Your first task is to assemble the ship that is split into three parts. You do this by flying into them, picking them up and then dropping them over the base of the ship.

Once done, you have to fuel it to allow you to blast off and move to the next section or level.

The aliens of each section are not happy about this of course, and do everything to get in your way. The attack patterns vary from straight meteorites to nasty homing beasties, and the aliens look different based on your level.

There are bonuses too, these drop down at random and give you more points, but it is all too easy to be greedy and make a wrong move!

I have to admit that this is my all time favourite game on any system across any year, and it's a game I keep going back to.

This, for me, is Spectrum perfection.
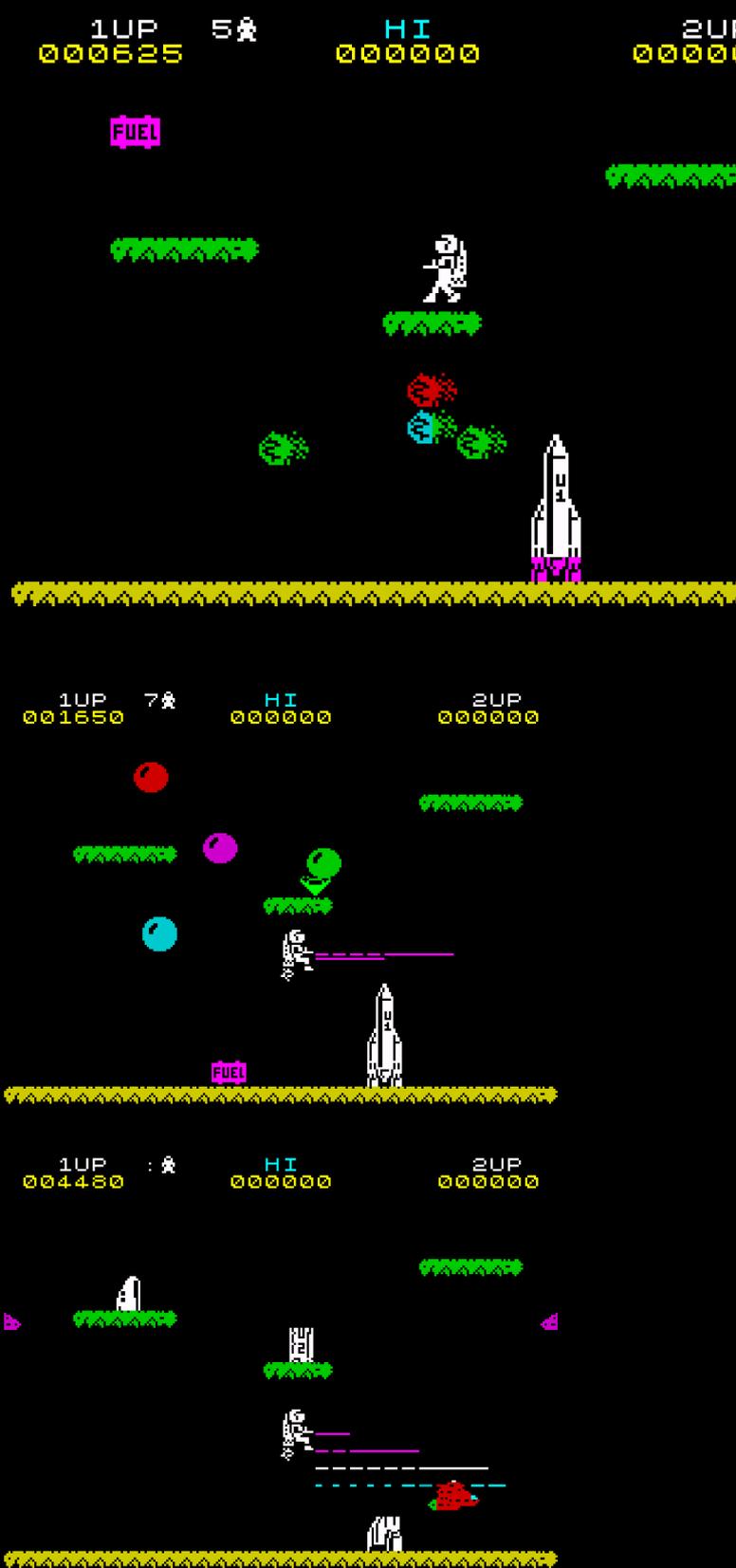
Other Versions

With Jatpac being such a popular game there was bound to be versions for other systems, and there were. Even modern day systems like the Xbox 360 got a version!

A windows 8 version was also released in 2014, working on both desktop and phone platforms. This was officially licensed from Microsoft and looked identical to the original.

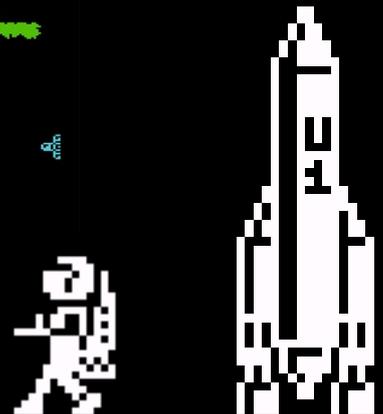There was also an un-official 'advanced' version that was covered in a previous issue, that added different level layouts to the game.

Other 8 bit versions also made an appearance, notably on the BBC and Vic-20.
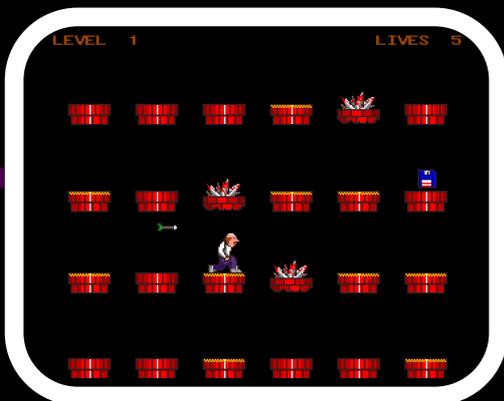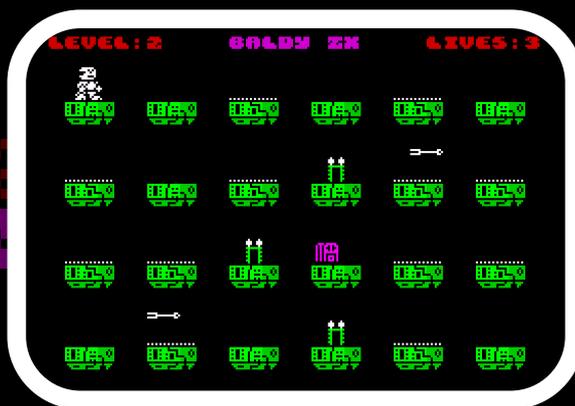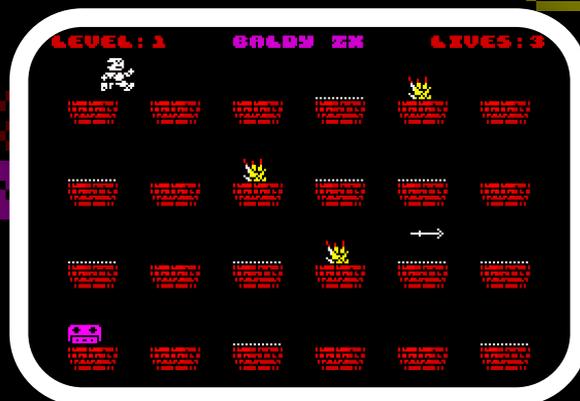
BBC Version

Vic-20 Version

BALDY

ZX

The Amiga game comes to the Spectrum!

Re-created by the original author, this version stays faithful to the original with 20 levels of frantic action.

Amiga version

Spectrum version