August 2021

Issue 33

THE SPECTRUM SHOW

Magazine



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SAM THE SUPERCLONE

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CARNELL SOFTWARE

The games and story

PLUS

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Do you have what it takes?



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Do you have what it takes to clean it up?



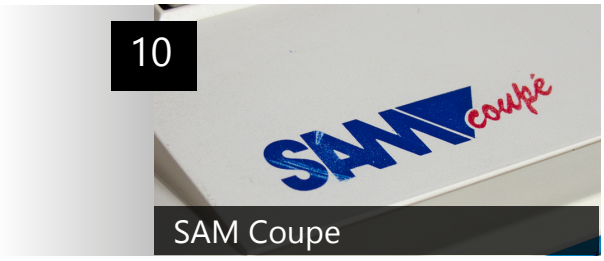
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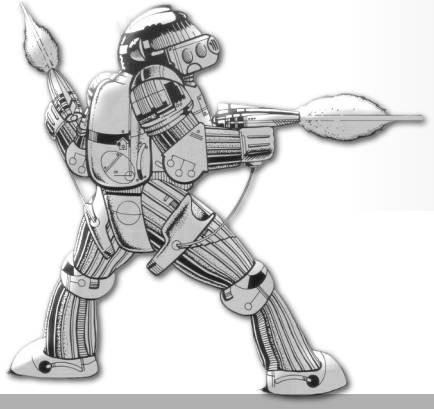






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(C) Paul Jenkinson

EDITORIAL



Welcome to this issue of The Spectrum Show Magazine.

I hope all those who got the printed version of issue 32 were happy with it. It certainly caused me no end of trauma trying to get it finished.

The content was complete in late December, but getting the thing printed was a major headache. Microsoft Publisher does not output CYMK PDFs (what the hell are Microsoft thinking!) needed for most commercial printers. I tried converting all the images to CYMK, that failed. I then tried replacing the default background page colour with a black image, and that failed. I was about to give up, but had to get something done to say thank you to all of you who have supported the show.

In the end I moved to Affinity Publisher, re-built the entire magazine from scratch in CYMK and after a few colour issues, we finally made it. During the process I learned a lot about CYMK and the commercial printing process, I also learned how to get Affinity Publisher to output PDFs in the right format for electronic distribution. If you recall, a few issues back, I tried this and it broke the formatting. Now though, all is well.

Moving on...

One of the features in this episode covers the Sam Coupe from Miles Gordon Technology. At the time it was hyped as the new Spectrum, a machine to upgrade to with ultimately more of everything.

It had more memory, more expandability, better graphics, better sound and a standard disk storage system. But the most important thing was its supposed compatibility with the Sinclair Spectrum.

The machine was sold as the next computer to get if you wanted to upgrade and still keep your software titles. Sadly, as the feature concludes, this was simply not true.

The Sam itself is brilliant, but it was just marketed wrongly to a whole user base who was expecting to be able to run Manic Miner straight out of the box.

Yes, it could run the games, but you had to first load an emulator, then load the game by tape, then try to force a halt with a BREAK button and then try to save it to disk. If you could manage this, you would find that the game ran faster than the original.

I think there was a market for the next Spectrum back then, and we know that this has been filled at long last by the superb Spectrum Next machine. Had something like that been available in 1989 there would have been a greater take up, especially if it could compete with the new 16-bit machines such as the Atari ST or Commodore Amiga.

Sinclair did have plans for other machines that you probably know about. Rick Dickinson, designer of the Spectrum, who has sadly passed away now, had draft drawings of them on his website. They do look tremendous too, but they were never to be.

Sad Feeling

Recently I decided to clear some shelf space and sell a few games from my collection. It was a hard decision, they were a complete set and took me nearly a year to put together for a feature. In the end they were doing nothing, tucked away at the back of a shelf, and the games themselves were not particularly good. I thought it would be easy, but when it came to pack them up, it was hard. I know how long it took me to get them together and how much money I spent. As I sealed them in the box, I felt strange.

The games in question were the complete set of Carnell games. I did keep two of the games back however (duplicates), the ones with original cardboard covers. They are special, and even though I may never play the games again, I really like the boxes.

Back to happiness then, and many deliveries really cheered me up. Two motherboards back from Mutant Caterpillar along with one modern device for a future episode and a box full of random Spectrum stuff. Unboxing video on Patreon. There was a fantastic piece of old hardware yet to be tested and two further hardware items all lined up for this series (or maybe the next).

One of the motherboards came back with a modern ULA replacement. This I was interested in, as the ULA is one of those components that always blows, and getting replacements is getting harder. So to have a modern replacement is excellent.

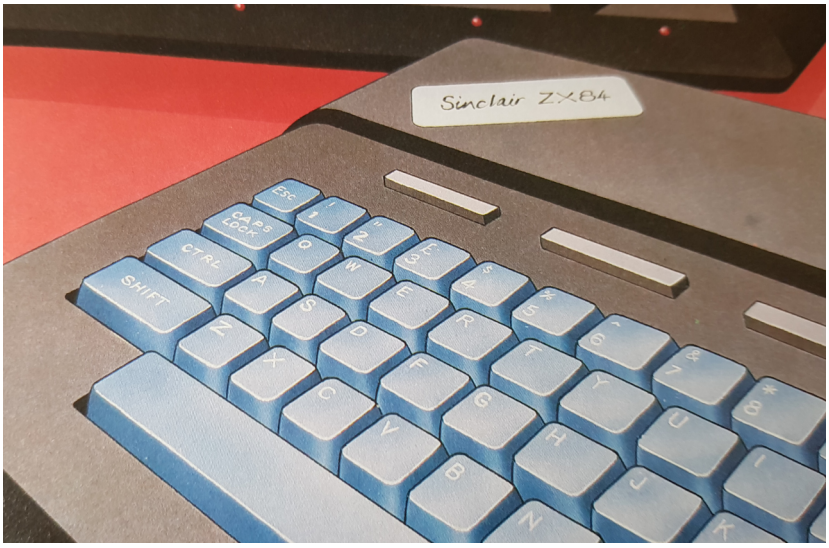
During this time of multiple pieces of hardware, the office looked like Steptoe's yard. A lot of things stripped down waiting to be cleaned and tested. Fun times indeed.

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In The Mags

Non-Spectrum Magazines



Magazines were usually a one-shot deal. You bought them, read them and threw them out. Computer magazines were somewhat different though, and often got stored away just in case you needed that article about servicing your ZX Printer or that game map from Sabre Wulf. Because of this, there are thousands of computer magazines out there. Some common and easy to find, others rare and expensive.

I had a huge collection, and kept everything back in the day. My newsagent always held Popular Computing Weekly for me, and from 1983 to 1985 I bought every single one, and kept them. Very sadly, when life got in the way, I could only save 1983 and a few other random issues. This I will always regret. I also bought Crash (and still have my original issue 1, plus many others), ZX Computing, Sinclair User and Your Spectrum/Sinclair as well as multi-format magazines such as Computer & Video Games.

Some odd magazines I now own were never on the radar back then, so it is always exciting to discover new articles, especially if it was published between 1983 and 1985 - the best years for the Spectrum.

One of the better examples is Which Micro who opted for a front cover in February 1984 announcing Sinclair's next computer, the ZX84.

At the time there was a lot of speculation as to what Sinclair would do after the success of the Spectrum. Technology continually moves, components become cheaper and new ideas become reality. There were rumours of course, but Which Micro opted to go for broke and make a guess at what Sinclair would do next, claiming they had insider connections. The result was the ZX84.

The mock-up looked great with a seperate four-microdrive add-on. The machine had a customised 68000 CPU along side a Z80 with options for more memory and speed. It also had a built-in modem for connection to Prestel and Micronet 800.

With the machine having a Z80, people hoped it would be Spectrum compatible, but it wasn't. The ZX84 was aimed at the small-business market.

Now Sinclair's machine turned out to be the QL, so much of this



article got it right, but there were mistakes. It was was still interesting to see what the magazines were thinking though.

1942

Publisher:	Elite
Year:	1986
Price:	£7.95

1942 was a classic arcade shoot-em-up released by Capcom in 1984. It was set, as the title suggests, in 1942 during World War 2 and sees you piloting a fighter plane trying to get to Tokyo to destroy the Japanese fleet. It's the usual shooting fest, with great graphics and action, and as an added feature, your plane can perform a vertical loop to get out of tight situations.

I love to play this whenever I see a cab at retro events but it's usually quite busy.

In 1986, Elite managed to grab the licence and released the Spectrum version.



As you would expect the game has been cut back a little. There are no background graphics, which at times makes the screen look a bit empty. The sprites are bland but do move ok. Talking of movement though, the game just feels so slow compared to the arcade. After playing the arcade version for around 30 minutes and then moving to this, it feels like you are playing in slow motion. That coupled with the bad collision detection makes it tricky to make progress.

The enemy patterns work well and there are the power-ups like the arcade, improving your fire power, but without the colourful imagery and more importantly the speed, the game seems incomplete.

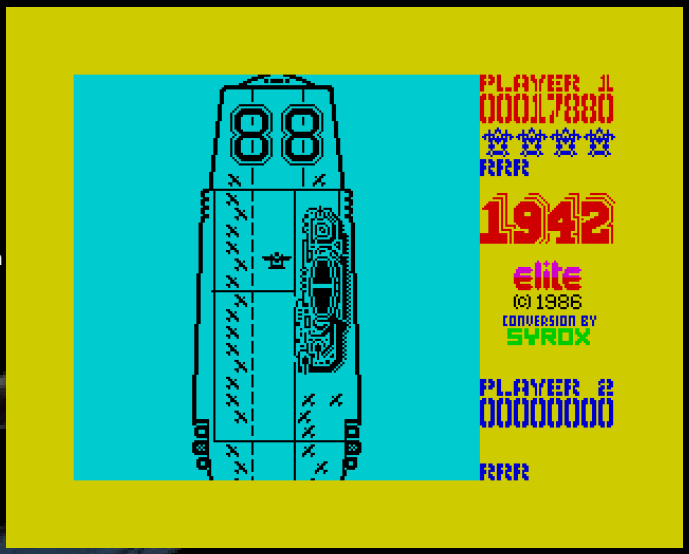
Sound is terrible really when you consider the licence on offer here. There are just a few blips and an awful tune that plays when the game continues after losing a life.

If you can get far enough there is the aircraft carrier to land on and then it's back to the action.

Control is fine but to perform the roll you have to use the keyboard, even if you use a joystick for the main movement and firing. This can become cumbersome in the heat of battle.

Taking the game on its own merit though and ignoring the arcade version, it is a nice little shooter if you can get over the collision detection. There is a variety of landscapes, although they do repeat a lot, with the same islands appearing all the time, plus the enemy planes do that look the same throughout the levels.

Some landscapes turn green later on, but the game just



seems incomplete. The sound is a major issue.. and there is no getting away from that. There aren't even explosion sounds.

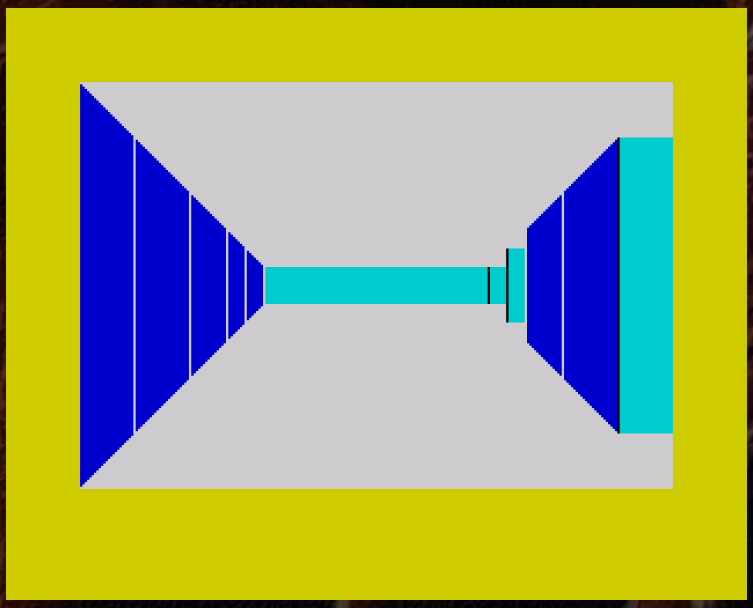
The right-hand panel looks terrible. It's there to reduce the width of the screen to make it more like the arcade, but it's bright yellow for no apparent reason.

To sum up then. A nice little shooter, but a waste of a licence.

LABYRINTH

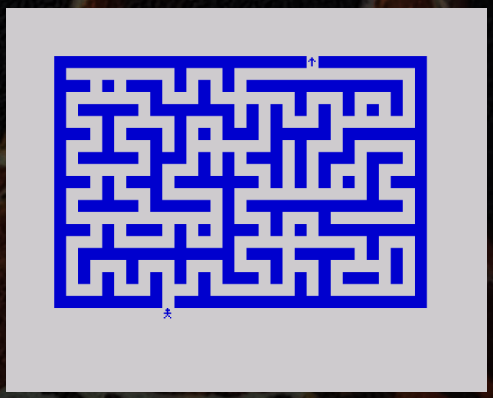
Publisher:	Axis Software
Year:	1983
Price:	£5.95

This is one of the first games I bought along with Gobbleman from Artic Computing and the game really does show its age. The cover intrigued me and it looked really exciting with the inlay boasting a full 3D colour maze that you wandered about in, just as if you were there.



Once into the game and we are shown some brief instructions before being asked how wide and high we want the maze to be. This can be from a few squares in size, to 15 by 10, so there is plenty of scope for setting the difficulty and building up slowly.

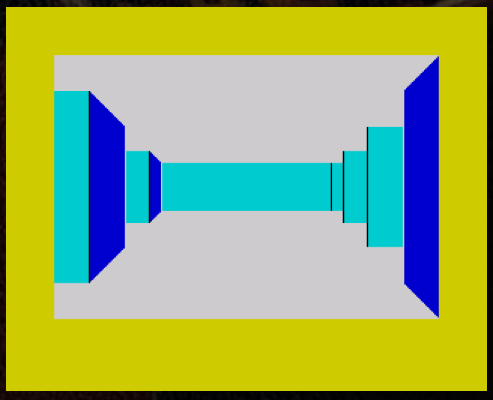
The maze is then generated randomly and you are shown a top-down view of it to start with. Here you can plan your moves and try to memorise the layout. Easy on smaller mazes, not so much use on larger ones.



Once into the maze we get a 3D view. Now this is not what was promised on the inlay and as you can imagine, I was a little disappointed when I first loaded this up.

Using the cursor keys to rotate and move, you walk along in blocks trying to get out. That is the complete game. There are no monsters, no time limits or health to worry about, only the number of moves. It is just a simple maze game.

If you get lost, you can ask for help. You are then shown the map view for a few seconds and then allowed to carry on. You have a limited number of steps to escape though, so a good memory is required for the larger mazes.



If you manage to get to the exit, you can then view your steps, which is a nice feature.

Yes, it's a maze game. The 3D view is OK and works well and the option to set the maze size and see the route you took are good ideas and mean you can tailor the level of play as required.

When I first got this I wasn't too happy, but being only one of two games I had, I gave it some time. Not as much as Gobbleman, but it still holds early memories for me.



Publisher:	Rafal Miazgae
Year:	2019
Price:	£ free

Do you remember those old DOS point and click, saucy adventure games from Sierra? Amongst them was Leisure Suit Larry and his never ending quest for sex. Well, believe or not, Larry has finally made it to the Spectrum in his very own point and click game.



You can use the keyboard, a joystick or a Kempston Mouse to control the on-screen cursor that is used to select various commands and objects within the many locations.

The keyboard and joystick options make the cursor move too fast for me, but you can slow it down by holding the shift key or patch the game from a file on the Spectrum Computing forums. I preferred playing the game using Kempston mouse emulation in Spectaculator. This made using the interface much easier.

The game works on a 48k machine, which is astonishing in itself. If you switch on AY in emulation, you get some nice music too. I tried this on a 128k machine and got screen corruption a few screen in, so stick to 48k.



There are a variety of commands on the left, used to control Larry as he wanders about, talking to people, looking at things and generally getting on everyone's nerves. Objects can be hidden too, so do a lot of looking around.

The game upholds the Larry series well, with lots of funny comments from the people that inhabit this world. I really enjoyed playing this game. Examining things, talking to people, trying out different things, it all brought back memories of the good old games we used to play.

The puzzles are not too difficult: just remember to pay for things like taxi rides or wine, otherwise the game ends abruptly.

A very highly recommend game then and definitely give this one a try.

TROM



Publisher:	DK'Tronics
Year:	1983
Price:	£5.95

TROM is a simple idea but does look like several other titles of this era, including Transversion from Ocean, but this game plays differently.

Your aim is to collect the bits (computer bits and not just random junk!) one at a time and drop them into the furnace. To make this safe you have to move across the top of the fire rather than going in from above. The fire turns red when a bit has been dropped successfully.

The bits are the red things in each corner, the magenta snake things contantly move in patterns and the outer green item will randomly fire at you.

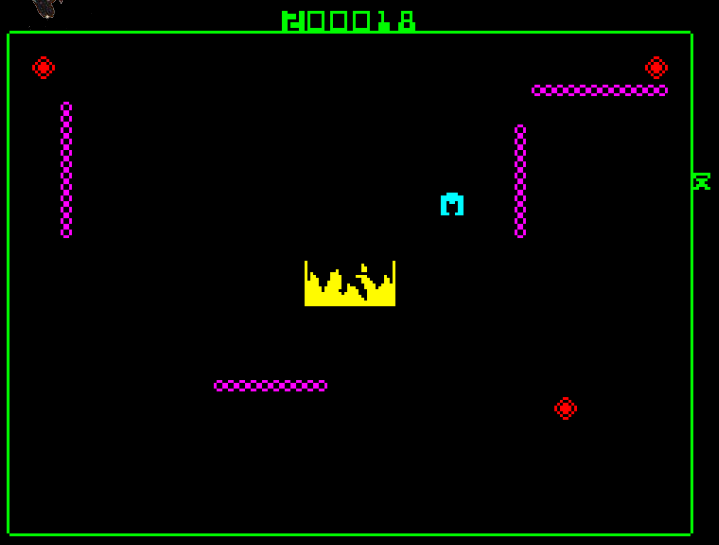
You also have to avoid nibbles. Yes, the computer talk is strong in this game and very reminicent of the film with nearly the same title as the game. There are bytes that bounce around the screen too.

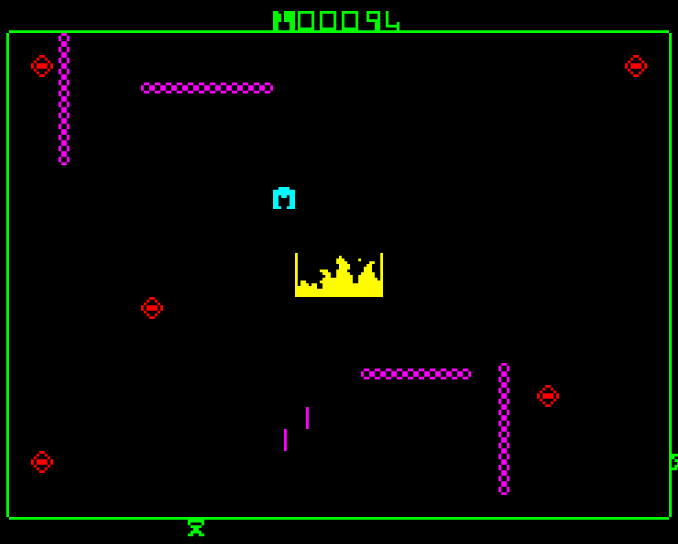
Bits, bytes and nibbles. Yes, It's all set within a computer world and your ship is called a Bit Searcher.

The tricky part is getting close enough to drop the bits into the furnace, while trying to avoid the snakes and dodge the random firing. Once you grab a Bit you head to the furnace. You then have to position your Searcher at the same height as the top and move across. This will drop the bit into the fire.

The graphics are average for this time period and sound just consists of BASIC-like beeps. Things move in character squares. But control is crisp.

Not a bad game, and certainly challenging as the number nibbles and bytes increases as you progress through the levels.






MEET
SAM
THE SUPERCLONE



Rumours began spreading around Christmas 1987 of a computer only known as SuperClone. Not much was known about this as it was, at least according to Crash Magazine, all being done in secret. Even the people designing it had not yet come forward with a company name, although a few months later on, all would be revealed.

SAM COUPE



In March 1988 there were more announcements. A new Spectrum was going to be released, but the biggest surprise was that it would not be Sinclair or Amstrad releasing it, and the name of company was finally made public; Miles Gordon Technology.

Miles Gordon Technology were the company behind the Disciple and Plus D interfaces for the Spectrum, and said they were working on a Spectrum clone with much more powerful hardware that could possibly rival the new 16-bit machines like the Amiga and Atari ST. The name of this beast – the Sam Coupe.

The details looked impressive; higher resolutions, more colours, more ports and a disc drive as standard. The biggest question though, would it run Spectrum software?

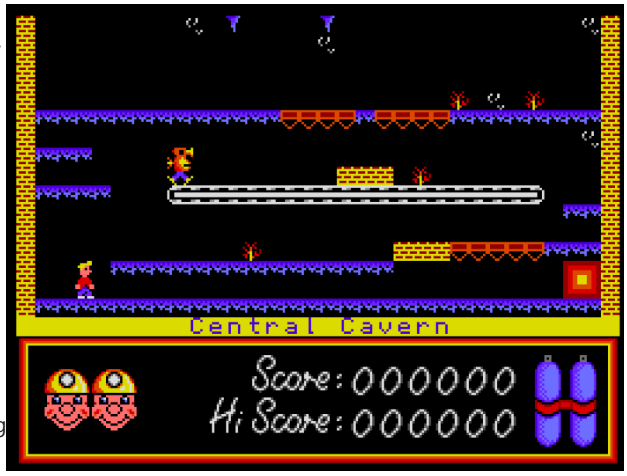
The manufacturers claimed it would, and Crash magazine tested this on a prototype with good results. Time moved on and news was slowly trickled out to the public via magazines such as Your Sinclair and Crash until finally in February of 1989 we got a fuller story thanks to the aforementioned Crash Magazine. An interview with the company providing us with a glimpse of what the machine might look like.

This was to be the next step up for Spectrum owners. The Plus 2 and Plus 3 gave us better keyboards and even a floppy disk, but we were now lagging behind the 16-bit machines and consoles. This new computer would improve screen resolution and give us better text modes, better sound and more colours.

It would give us a standard disk drive and the very best thing, it had a Spectrum emulation option so you could run a lot of your old existing games. Or so it was said. This then was the next logical step for Spectrum owners, but in reality things didn't work out so well.

Launched in late 1989 the machine was a well-built and interesting looking unit. It had a style all of its own. The keyboard was great, very responsive and nice to use.

The expansions on the back seemed never ending with midi ports, a joystick port, expansion port, cassette port, light pen port, scart connector and of course the power socket.



The basic model had 256k of RAM, expandable to 512k or even up to 2.5mb with external add-ons. How would we ever use all of that?

It had a built-in disc drive capable of storing around 800k of data and an option to add a second drive to the unit itself.

A viewer of the show very kindly allowed me to test his Sam for this review.

The demo that the Sam came with introduced the machine to the new users and had some pretty impressive stuff. The display is capable of showing 128 colours and offering no colour clash, a huge step up from the Spectrum.

Sound was also pleasing, 6 channels over 8 octaves, another step up, but there was still that question, what about games and what about Spectrum emulation?

The Sam had a disappointingly small number of commercial games released for it, and only a small number of those worth a mention.

Manic Miner, yes that old favourite, got a Sam port, resplendent with colourful graphics and nice music. This would have blown our minds back in the day.

There is Defenders Of The Earth, again, a lot of colours on screen, nice effects but terrible to play. Prince of Persia, a fantastic conversion easily matching the 16-bit machines and Lemmings, yes Lemmings was also written for it and an excellent version it is too.

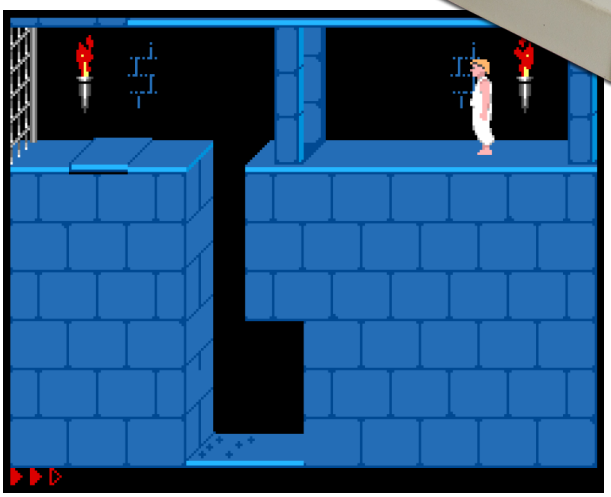
The Sam had several disk magazines supporting it. MAG1 for example along with the long-lived FRED. These showcased the machine and also included news, reviews, coding examples, demos and reports.

These are great to read through, as they were created by enthusiasts for enthusiasts. Some disk magazines even put full games on their disks, or PD games.

Spectrum Emulation

Now onto the important stuff, the Spectrum emulation. To do this you have to load an emulator that copies the Spectrum's ROM into memory, changes a few memory addresses and then drops you into a menu.





There are several different emulators and I have tried them all. Sadly I couldn't get a single game to load initially, and this was really surprising. I expected the much touted feature to be easy to use, but alas, it didn't seem to work at all.

I tried using the old fashioned method of loading games from tape, and even that failed. I swapped audio leads, tried different games and still nothing. Maybe the Sam was just getting old.

I then created a disk containing snapshot files (SNA) that some of the emulators claimed to load. They didn't!

I had to use a PC program called SamDIsk that converted DSK files and wrote them to real floppies so they could then be read on the Sam. The files are visible on the Sam, but the games just refuse to load.

One emulator let you take old PLUS D snapshots, convert them and then load them. That also failed.

To make sure it wasn't the Sam, I tried the Sam emulator and that acted just like the real hardware in that nothing would load. This was very disappointing, especially after 4 days of trying.

I tried 5 different emulators, the Sam emulator and real tape loading and never got to play a Speccy game on it. I then had success using tapes. I swapped out the mono lead for a stereo one, and I finally got some games to load, but that wasn't the end of the story.

I then located a few disk images that already contained game files from the person who lent me the machine and finally I could test out the emulation.

The games ran faster than on a real Speccy. This is evident in both sound and graphics, and takes away that nostalic feeling. It's no fun playing Moon Cresta at that speed! In most cases the slight speed increase would not matter, but I can see it causing issues with fast paced games where timing is important.

At least it works, and for anyone upgrading you could load most of your old games. The idea being you load them via tape and then snapshot them to disc. I say most games would load this way because some custom loaders refuse to work at all.

Miles Gordon did release a device to improve emulation and loading, called the Messenger, but I think it was too late. After many hours of trial and error, the reason for the confusion was not to do with the software or the functionality of the Sam, but rather something missing.

Many of the emulators needed the game to be loaded via tape initially, and then to save them to disk you had to get back to the emulator menu. To do this you press the BREAK button. However, I kept pressing the Reset button, because that's all I could see. I then noticed a small hole on the back of the machine, and a quick trundle through the manual which identifies this as where the BREAK button should be. Closer inspection shows it had snapped off.

Without this, it would be impossible to convert Spectrum games over to the Sam, which is where all the confusion came in. Now that I understood the process, it would still be very time consuming, but in those days that would be the only option.

The Atari ST and Amiga had already poached most of the users by this time though and although a very capable machine in its own right, its demise was imminent.

I am not declaring this machine as bad, far from it. The Sam is a great machine, and specification wise the best 8bit micro. It could almost compete with the likes of the Amiga and Atari ST, with the bonus of being able to run Spectrum games.

Had there been an easier option to transfer games and a way to slow them down to normal speed, this would be the ultimate machine for Spectrum owners to move up to.

It provided all your old games with new hardware, a great keyboard, excellent graphics and sound and the potential to run some excellent new titles using this impressive hardware.

Sadly only a few games pushed it, with the likes of Prince of Persia and Lemmings topping that list. Like any new machine, it will rise or fall based on the content produced for it, and the Sam seemed to have limited support in that area.

I have only covered a small part of the Sam Coupe because I was interested mainly in the emulation aspect, and the move over for Spectrum owners. There are still games being written for this so it's far from a dead machine.

A part of Spectrum history in its own right and a nice, if expensive, item to own.



IKARI WARRIORS

Publisher:	Elite
Year:	1988
Price:	£12.99



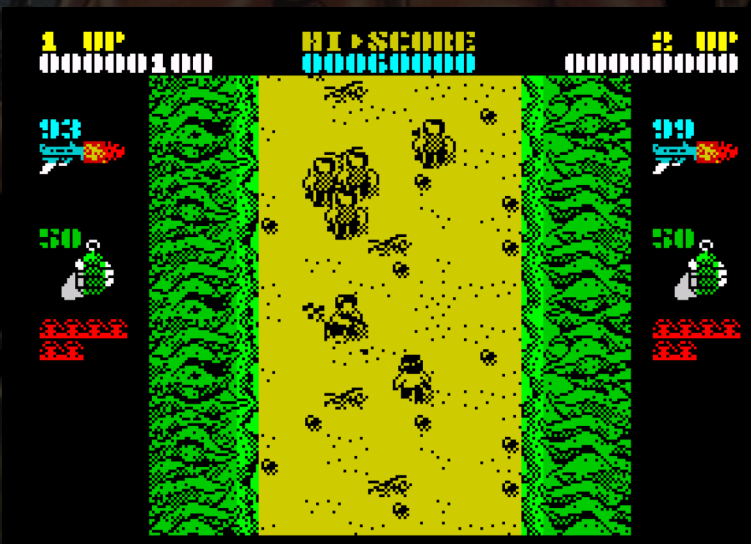
Ikari Warriors was released into the arcades in 1986 by Tradewest, the game being developed by SNK. It was, to some eyes, yet another Commando clone, but the arcade cab had rotary joysticks and allowed two-player simultaneous play.

The idea is to fight your way to the village of Ikari and rescue a General. In the arcade it was General Cook, at least for US and European version, named after Tradewests founder, on the Spectrum version it is General Bonn.

The control made a major difference in game play, allowing movement and fire to be in different directions, a bit like Robotron. This mechanism though would not make it on the Spectrum.

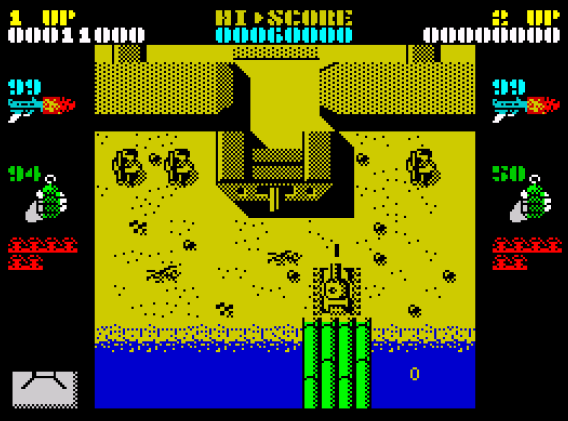
The Spectrum version, released by Elite Software in 1988 shows promise though, with some nice detailed scrolling scenery.

There is an option for two players as well, using a mixture of keyboard or joysticks, but without the rotary control, the player fires in the direction they are moving. In essence making this more like Commando. You do get a toggle option which toggles between firing in the direction you are moving, or firing in the same direction regardless of which way you are moving. This though, for me at least, doesn't address the problem.



The 128k version has some nice sounds. Firing, grenades and death sounds all work well and there is a nice tune on the intro screen. Control is good, but sometimes it is tricky to work out which bits of the scenery you can walk over and which block you. This can lead to unnecessary deaths.

You have two weapons at your disposal, a machine gun and some grenades. You can pick up more grenades as you progress through the game. Grenades are needed to take out enemy gun positions and groups of enemy soldiers that are hiding behind rocks.

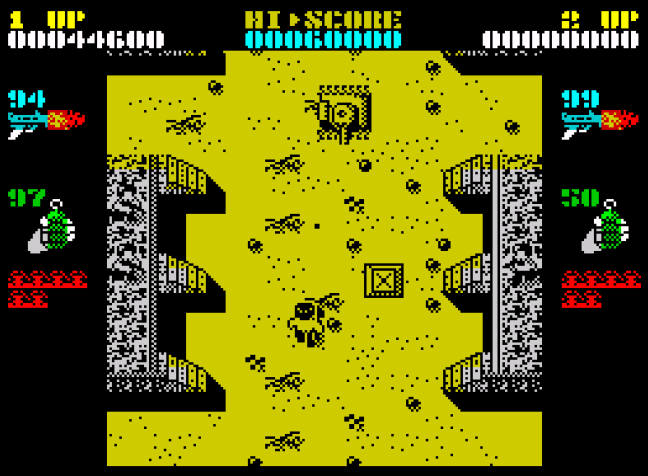


The graphics are very nice with smooth scrolling and the game does look very good. Like the arcade, you can commandeer tanks and trundle about causing havoc.

Difficulty wise it's not bad really. Forgiving enough to get a decent way through and challenging enough to make you want to try again. The demos of the game that are available have a different level layout, so after playing through the demo a few times, moving to the proper game was a surprise.

An interesting note is that the game was previewed two years before release by several magazines, with the author being named as David Perry. However, upon actual release, the game was credited to David Shea. As yet no one really knows why there was a delay, or why the game seems to have been re-written. Maybe another one of Elite's mishaps that kept befalling the company; like the famous Scooby Doo saga.

If you are a fan of run and gun games, then this, as much as it pains me to say, is not a bad offering. Certainly playable considering the constraints of the machine, and worth a play if you feel the urge to run up a field and shoot things.





DODGE CITY

Publisher:	Phoenix Software
Year:	1983
Price:	£9.99

In the Wild West, men were men, horses were horses and women knew their place. The gunfighters walked tall and men had to do what men had to do. Well, at least that's what the inlay states.

This is two games in one, an arcade style game followed by an adventure game. To get access to the adventure you have to complete the arcade part first.

The arcade game sees you riding a horse in the wild west as part of the pony express. You must collect mail bags as you go and try to avoid obstacles and shoot the various enemies that appear.



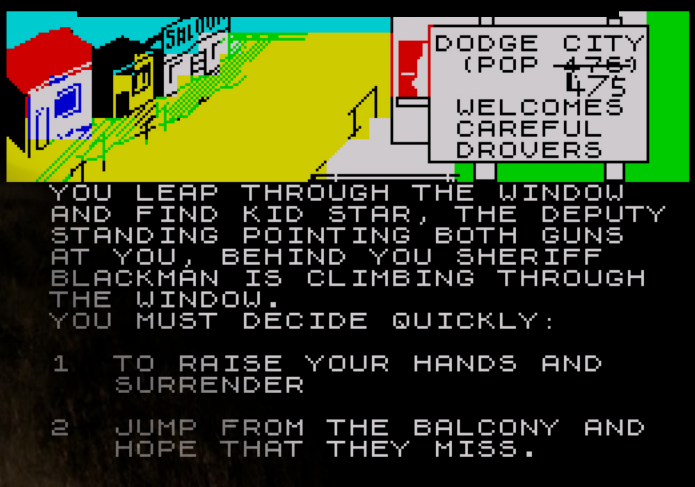
The first level has you riding across the desert with cacti appearing which you have to dodge. There is also another rider behind you that will shoot you. You can try to dodge his bullets, but it's best to just shoot him. He soon comes back though.

This section continues until you have collected enough mail to move to the next level, and there are 12 levels to complete. The next level adds another enemy rider making the game almost impossible and very frustrating. Further levels promise Indian braves, Mexican bandits and Southern Confederate renegades. I never got to see these things!



If you complete all twelve levels not only do you deserve a medal but you get a code of the adventure game. Or you can just use some pokes to get to the game.

The adventure is a multiple-choice affair where a scene is shown and you are given several choices. Get the wrong one and you die. This game is just a matter of learning the right options to win, however, there are some random elements thrown in just to annoy you.



Together both games amount to very little in the way of good game play.

DOOMBASE

Publisher:	Sparklers
Year:	1986
Price:	£1.99

The many underground caverns to the Doombase have been invaded by aliens. To get rid of them you have to collect all the keys required to build a Doomsday device. That is the story on the inlay and although it sounds exciting, it is in fact a sub standard arcade adventure game.

You are equipped with a jetpac and a small number of bombs. These are used to blow up the aliens, however, not all of them are ground-based, so the bombs are pretty useless for most of them.

The caverns consist of brightly coloured lines that form narrow passages. These lead to small open areas where the aliens are waiting. Trying to navigate through these is difficult due to the space you have and also the aliens all fire at you if you are in horizontal alignment with them. You can't fire back though, so you have to take the hit.

The aliens that are below you can be bombed, but your supply soon diminishes. Luckily you can find more bombs lying about.

The graphics, although colourful, tend to just merge into a mess and the aliens and your character are not defined well. Sound is not too bad, but it doesn't rescue this poor game.

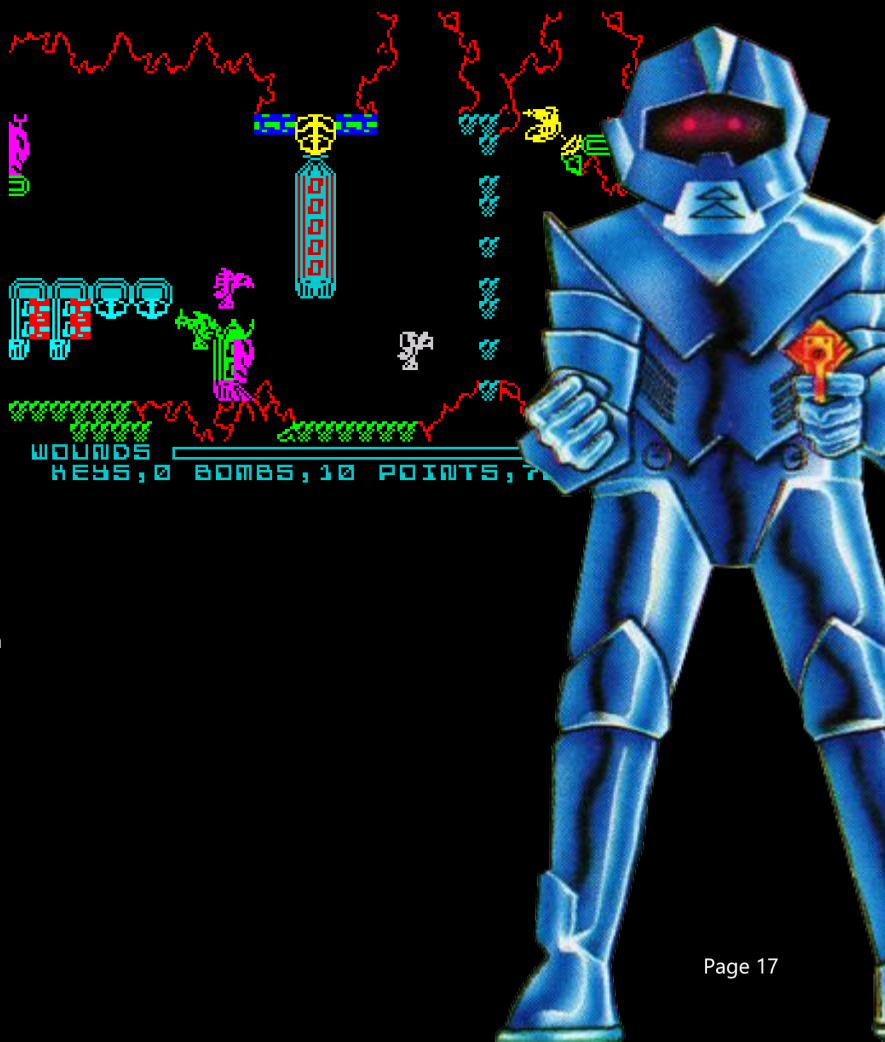
Some aliens home in on you, and when they collide not only do they drain your energy, but also stick to you meaning you can't shake them off.

Some corridors lead to steps that you can sometimes get stuck on, leaving only one way to go, usually through a patrolling alien. That is just bad level design.

Control consists of left, right, thrust and bomb, so to fly around you have to keep jabbing the thrust key. The keys are sometimes not detected meaning you miss with a bomb or fail to avoid an alien or one of their bullets.

Overall, this is a poor game that should be avoided.

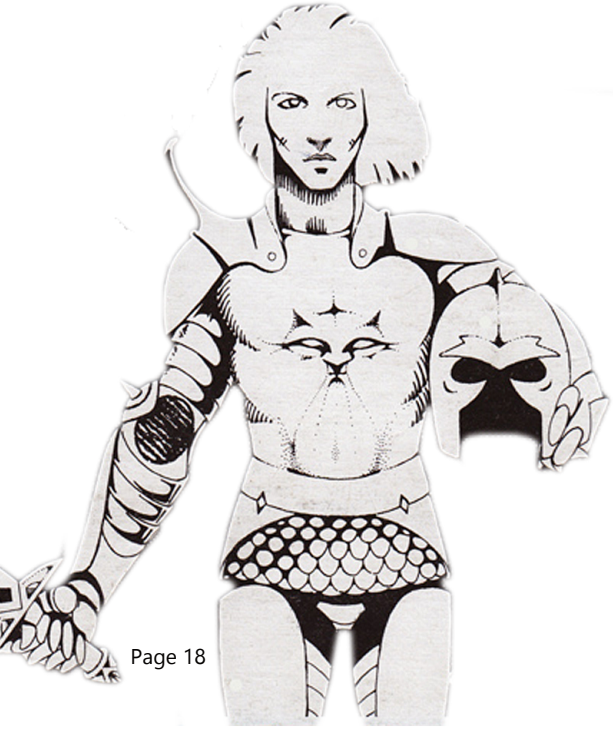






CARNELL SOFTWARE

Roy Carnell and Stuart Galloway were both adventure fans before the term became popular and synonymous with computer gaming. They both collected fantasy fanzines and watched cheap, low budget B movies when ever they could. Between them they would form one of the early companies to produce enticing adventure games, Carnell Software.



Before that though, they made their own board games and even amateur movies whilst aged just 13. This took them into the world of movie production and both attended the Film School in Birmingham , eventually working in the film industry in special effects.

When the ZX81 came along in 1981, they both wanted to write games based on their love of all things fantasy and so in November 1981, Carnell Software was born.



Their first game, Volcanic Dungeon was written on a 16k ZX81 and was initially sold my mail order only.

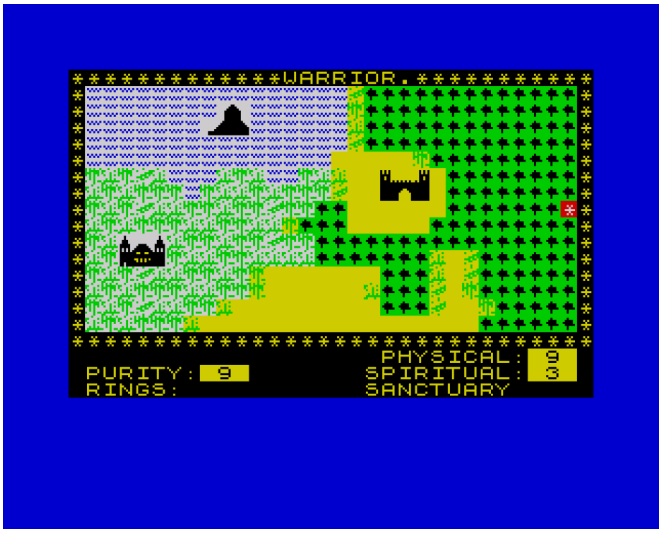
In between their work in the film industry, they moved over to the ZX Spectrum as soon as it was available and began writing the follow up for both machines – work for which had started months earlier on paper.

The Black Crystal, released on the ZX81 and Spectrum, was a mammoth game, supplied on two cassettes and containing seven different sections.

The Spectrum version was almost a direct copy of the ZX81 version, with character style graphics and only a bit of colour to separate it. It was also written in BAISC, so key responses were slow and gameplay stifled.

That didn't stop it being popular with fans of the genre though, despite these flaws.

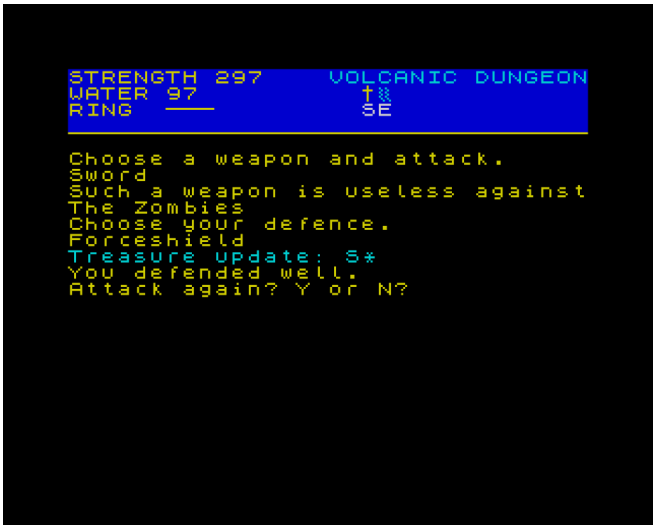
The various stages covered the different elements of the journey starting with a map where you have to move around, locate rings and engage in real-time fights. The fights were difficult to master with numerous keys to remember.



From the map you can get to other areas, each one loading from tape and requiring the correct passcode. Areas included Castle of Shadows, The Shaggoths Lair, The Temple of the Fire Demon and the Tower of Betroth.

The first map also had sub areas such as the Sea of Sand, the Gold Mine and the Room of Pits. These took the form of mini sub-games.

For the game they decided to create a whole world (The Third Continent) in which to set it, taking inspiration from Tolkien. The aim of the Black Crystal was to find the seven rings of creation (sound familiar?) and use them to destroy the Black Crystal. The game was very popular, which meant money was now coming into the company, but also meant Roy and Stuart were struggling to keep up with demand, still working in the film industry.



It seems they then pushed out Volcanic Dungeon for the Spectrum a few months later, again being an almost direct copy of the ZX81 version. It was text only and you had to collect weapons and armour, and working out which of the many monsters they worked best on to finally rescue a princess trapped by the evil witch Magra. More about her later.

The game used random routines to place things differently each game, but did suffer from several major problems. First, if you lost the game by getting killed, the game stopped and dropped you back into BASIC. You then had to re-load it again – another 5 minutes.

Another issue was if you moved away from the game map, kindly included in the manual, you died! Something that adventure fans hated.

The game proved difficult for most, and even the winner of the Volcanic Dungeon championship took nearly an hour to complete the game.

They also hinted at a third game in the series called the Wrath of Magra.

Carnell Software...

In October 1983, they launched full page advertisements, boasting a host of new games. The Adventures of a St Bernard, Starforce One, The Devil Rides and The Crypt as well as their previous title, Black Crystal and finally Wrath Of Magra was marked as coming soon.

The Adventures of a St Bernard was a step away from adventures for Carnell and a step into the world of crap games to be honest.



The game was advertised as a exciting, fast moving, machine code arcade game where you had to guide your St. Bernard across icy landscapes to rescue a woman from the abominable snowman.

There are multiple levels and all of them are a frustrating mess of bad key detection and poor collision detection. You just move your dog left or right to scare off the wolves in the first section followed by jumping over walruses.

If you get killed your dog just flips upside down with no attempt to change the graphics or add any animation. The game has no sound either, so this was a bit of a letdown.

Starforce One – Take on the robot guardians of the central computer in a superbly stylish battle game. This sounded exciting, but sadly was never released.

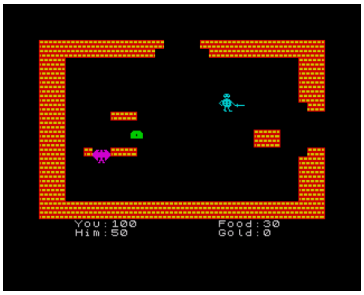
The Devil Rides In again moved away from the adventure scene and Carnell claimed this to be a fast-moving machine code, all action game.

The plot has you as a wizard in a battle with the legions of hell. You are held within a magic circle and must not touch the sides. There are 6 levels in the game, each getting harder but using the same concept. Sometimes the game slows down so much it's impossible not to die.



Christmas 1983 arrived and Carnell were throwing money into advertising. They had adverts in most of the major magazines at the time hoping to cash in on the festive season.

The first game to get released in 1984 was The Crypts and had them back in the adventure market again, or so you would have thought reading the advert.



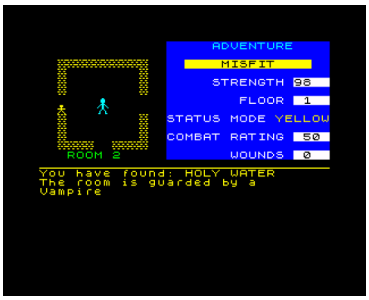
The idea is you have to fight your way through various crypts looking for a sacred Crucifix. To do this you have to first collect the sword and then keep bumping into the monster until it's dead, then check the treasure chest then move on.

The game play is painfully slow, the graphics are bad and sound is well below average. If you do manage to kill the monster, then fireballs appear.

Every so often you get a blood cell attack and here you press the number key corresponding to the key the bat is flying above. There is no need for this section at all. In some rooms you come across a cyclops and if you don't press the P key here, you die.

I did find the crucifix once then took it back to crypt 1 (as per instructions) and nothing happened. I repeated this and got a blood cell attack and was then sent back to crypt 26. All very frustrating.

The adverts continued, but there seemed to be a slow down in game releases. Popular Computing Weekly produced a book about writing adventure games called : Spectrum Adventures – A guide to Playing and Writing Adventures. Included was a type-in game but you could also get the game on tape.



The game was called The Eye Of The Star Warrior written by Roy Carnell and Tony Bridge, the adventure columnist for the magazine. It was never released on its own, and was a one time deal only with the book.

Once loaded, the game takes ages setting up the dungeon but eventually we get to it. Your stats are displayed on the right and a small area is used to show the current room and a little stick man. Using the cursor keys, you move about. If you see something, you have to walk over it, and then type a command such as TAKE. This makes progress very slow.

Entering a room with a monster will give you a chance to run around it or fight it if you think you have the right weapons and armour. If you don't have any weapons there is not much hope of progressing.

The fight takes the form of typed commands. When asked for an attack item you enter SWORD for example. In one instance pressing enter reset the Spectrum, so I avoided doing that!

Playing the game for some time and it actually began to grow on me. It was a cross between Volcanic Dungeon and Oracle's Cave. You collect weapons and use them in combat, moving through



the room trying to find the Eye. It's a pity it's slow but it is written in BASIC.

Moving on and eventually the Wrath of Magra was released. Carnell hoped it would be a big hit and help their diminishing finances.

The game came with a supplied book, The Book Of Shadows and took them back to adventures.

The hero from Volcanic Dungeon is taken to cells by an old wizard, only to find his beloved Edora, the woman he rescued in that game, chained to a wall and possessed by the witch Magra.

Magra had been brought back to life and now seeks revenge for her own death at the hands of the hero. The task is to find and destroy Magra, again.

The game is a run-of-the-mill graphic adventure in the most traditional style. It is in three parts and I seem to recall this was written using the Quill, however, the way in which the location graphics are drawn seem to make me think I was wrong.

The game map is very much in the style of Carnell, a typical grid with exits to all but the external walls. Some locations have buildings to enter but the speed of the drawing lets the game down.

The first problem is finding something to drink. You are told you are thirsty, and if you don't find anything, you die. Wandering about and trying normal things, like "open sarcophagus" causes death. So it is an unforgiving game.

There is also a lack of optimisation. Usually adventures shortened the words to the first four letters, so taking the previous example, "open sarc" would work, but not in this game, you have to type the full thing.

The game also holds a variety of swear words in its vocabulary, and using these reduces your energy. The game is nothing special, and that was proven by the sales.



It didn't do as well as Carnell had hoped and the company were struggling to survive. Eventually it got too much and in June 1984, Carnell Software was plunged into liquidation.



There was still hope though, as Carnell were expecting to strike a deal with another publisher to allow them to continue selling and producing games. A month later in July, it was announced that Mastertroinc had struck a deal to sell Magra and Black Crystal, effectively taking over Carnell, however, it was not certain their other games would be part of the deal.

Mastertroinc set up a new label called Innovision, later changed to Mastervision, to sell the games under, both at their original retail price. Also part of the deal would see Stuart and Roy writing other adventure games for the label.

One of their first releases was an upgraded version of Volcanic Dungeon with included graphics and a new font. The game played the same, but did not come with the large box and added manual like the original.

The last in the Third Continent Series was to be Legacy of Light but this game never materialised. While under the Mastetronic label they wrote Sinbad and the Golden Ship, released in 1986, seemingly their last venture into computer gaming.

The game is a text and graphic adventure that looks to be using a much better engine than previous games. The graphics are drawn quickly but text input is a bit slow. Often entering the wrong thing because the game can't keep up. The location graphics are OK and the opening puzzle gives enough clues as to get you started.

Items are not immediately visible, you have to type SEARCH into every location, which is not only a bad mechanic, but also slows the pace down. The location's exits are also not included in the text, so you have to keep trying different directions until you get it right. Again, another bad mechanic. Some commands are very limiting too. To get off the ship you can't go down, you can't climb down, you can't go sea, you have to dive. As a whole though, the game is fairly nice to play with adequate graphics and long game play. Probably their best graphic adventure.

Carnell ceased to be in July 1984, lasting 3 years and 7 months. They left behind games that you either loved or hated, but all with excellent packages. The earlier titles were very distinctive in their cardboard box, and later, the blue clamshell games looked excellent.

The game quality varied, with some never actually making it to market, but for early adventure fans, Carnell Software will live on.

HAPPY HOUR

AKA Alky Ollie

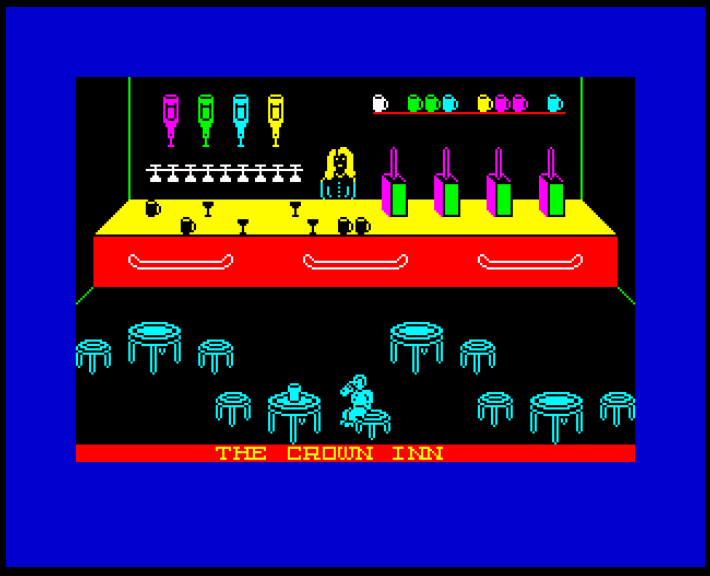
Publisher:	Scorpio Games
Year:	1984
Price:	£1.99



What a wonderfully silly and bad game this is. It is one of those games you have to play to really appreciate how bad/good it is. When I first played this it brought back memories of very early, badly written games with poor response, bad graphics, terrible sound and very little in the way of game play.

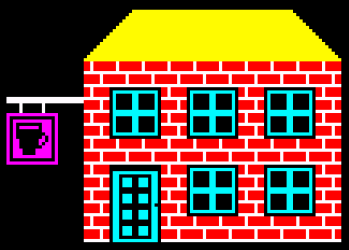
The aim is to visit all 12 pubs in the area by 1am. To do this you control Wobbly Wilf who wanders about in character squares, moving left, right, up and down through the bland and mostly empty map.

Some areas have animals which are very poorly drawn and do not move at all, you just have to guide Wilf past them. There are very small taxis that you can't use, and like the animals, bumping into them causes damage which in turn affects the control of the character. There is a bus stop which when bumped into will summon a bus that Ollie can use to move somewhere else. There is no control at this point, the bus arrives, Wilf vanishes and shortly after he gets thrown off because he fails to pay.



The map has various houses that when entered will cause Wilf to be thrown out. If he goes back home before completing the task, he is asked by his wife why he is late. He then has a few options to pick and if he picks the wrong excuse, he is beaten to death with a rolling pin! Wilf's home is identified on screen by the words 'home sweet home' at the bottom of the play area. Sometimes easy to miss.







There are two other characters in the game, a policeman who pops up when the game ends to arrest Wilf and a punk that appears on some screens randomly, approaches Wilf and punches him.

As you walk about you will see tiny dots on the ground in some areas, these are 50p pieces and have to be picked up. Don't walk into them though as they cause Wilf to fall to the ground. You just have to press the T key.

There is a small map that when activated by use of the M key, will show if there are any pubs in the area close to Wilf. Using the R key will show you a report of how many pubs have been visited.

Visiting a pub is easy. Find it and walk into it. You are then treated to a scene with a large barmaid and tables where Wilf can enjoy a pint if he has enough money. When I played this game, I used this opportunity to have a drink myself, and so turned this into a drinking game. The best way to enjoy it, I think.

Drink too much, or bump into things and Wilf will begin to stagger about. This causes the controls to be even worse, with our hero moving off in the wrong direction often causing more damage.

The game appears to be, and plays like, a BASIC game, but the game cannot be broken into and loads as Bytes. However, you can get into it.. and yes, it is BASIC.

Leaving Wilf on a screen will see him staggering about randomly, but obviously this does not help in completing the game. It is not an easy task, even on the easy level, but it is quite fun for a while.

The game was later re-released by Firecracker Software under the name Alky Ollie. There are differences between them. The original has no tune when drinking or sound for movement and the character in Alky Ollie is obviously Ollie instead of Wobbly Wilf. Wilf's wife is called 'Her Indoors' but Ollie's wife is called Mrs Ollie. The punk in Happy Hour is named Percy and in Alky Ollie it's Spike.





A great drinking game and a game that will make you smile, for a few minutes anyway. The most pubs I managed to visit was eight, by which time the character was almost uncontrollable. I will keep on trying though.





DivMMC
Enjoy Pro One

There are many modern storage options for the ZX Spectrum, and I have a few of them myself. The DivMMC though, is my preferred option.

Many modern storage devices are now available for the Spectrum. There is the full sized divIDE, divIDE2k, the Interface 1bis and of course the SmartCard. There are others too, but those I think are the main ones.

I haven't mentioned the DivMMC Enjoy Pro One in that lot, but now is the time to put things right. The DivMMC Enjoy Pro One is a new device and can be obtained from ByteDelight in several forms. The lite version looks like the 2K one mentioned earlier, and has no joystick port nor case. At the upper end is the divMMC Enjoy Pro and this is the one we are going to review here.

The unit comes in a rather nice case, well suited to any model of Spectrum. It came supplied with a pre-populated SD card, but we'll get onto adding your own things later. The unit has two SD card slots, this is useful because the device lets you write back to the card direct from the Spectrum. So you could have one for games and one for writing, for example.

The unit also lets you save snapshots of games, so again you could use the second SD card for this.

You may notice there aren't any jumpers to set the model of Spectrum being used, and this is because there aren't any. It's completely plug and play. It detects which model is being used and just works. It also has a full through port so you can use it with other devices, for example the ZXHD, an interface I have and use along side the DivMMC pro without any trouble.

It even works on non-standard models and even the Portuguese 2048. Yes, I do own one of these machines and can confirm that it works fine.

The eagle-eyed of you will have spotted a set of small dip switches on the side, and these are used to disable the firmware for update, and to set the joystick ports.

There are two joystick ports, and these can be configured in various states including Kempston, Sinclair 1 and 2 and Fuller. The unit will also detect any other cards with joystick ports or even the built-in ones of the plus 2 and 3, and disable or re-configure its own to avoid conflicts. You can even have a plus 2 or 3 setup with four joysticks. The Sinclair 1 and 2 for the machine, and the divMMC set for Fuller and Kempston.

The two buttons on the top act as reset and NMI. The reset, well it resets the Spectrum, obviously, and the NMI drops to the file browser.

The divMMC comes with EsxDos installed, and has a built-in file browser for basic use and game selection.



EsxDos though is a full system in its own right with many additional BASIC commands for opening tape files for loading or saving, creating folders and renaming things. It can be used, for example, with word processors where one tape can be the loading program via a tape image and another to save files to. Because it is emulating the real tape, existing programs are not affected.

The .tapeout command sets the tape file that all save operations will use so once set for a specific operation for example, word processing, it will remain available.

When I started using this command it took me back to using real tapes and having to load each program in sequence to see what was on it.

The device uses both standard Sinclair commands such as CAT to view the contents of the folder, and EsxDOS commands such as TAPEIN to set a tape file ready for loading. There are equivalents. For example .LS will show you the contents of the current folder and is easier to type than CAT – at least on 48k machines.

The file browser is easy to use. Just press the NMI button (the blue one) and this will drop you straight into the current folder of the card. If you have been browsing before, either by this route or by EsxDOS, the card will go back to the last folder you viewed. From here you can move up and down using the cursor keys, select folders and select the file you want. The file will load automatically, no need to type LOAD or anything like that.

The DivMMC Enjoy Pro One supports SNA, TAP, Z80 and SCR, and has limited support for TRD files. The missing format here is TZX, which this unit does not support.

To get files on to the card, you just plug it into your computer and drag the files or folders across. Easy.

Saving a snapshot of a game is also easy. Play the game, at the point you want to save, press the NMI button, navigate to the folder you want to use to save the file to, and then press the S key and a snapshot will be saved with an auto-incrementing number.

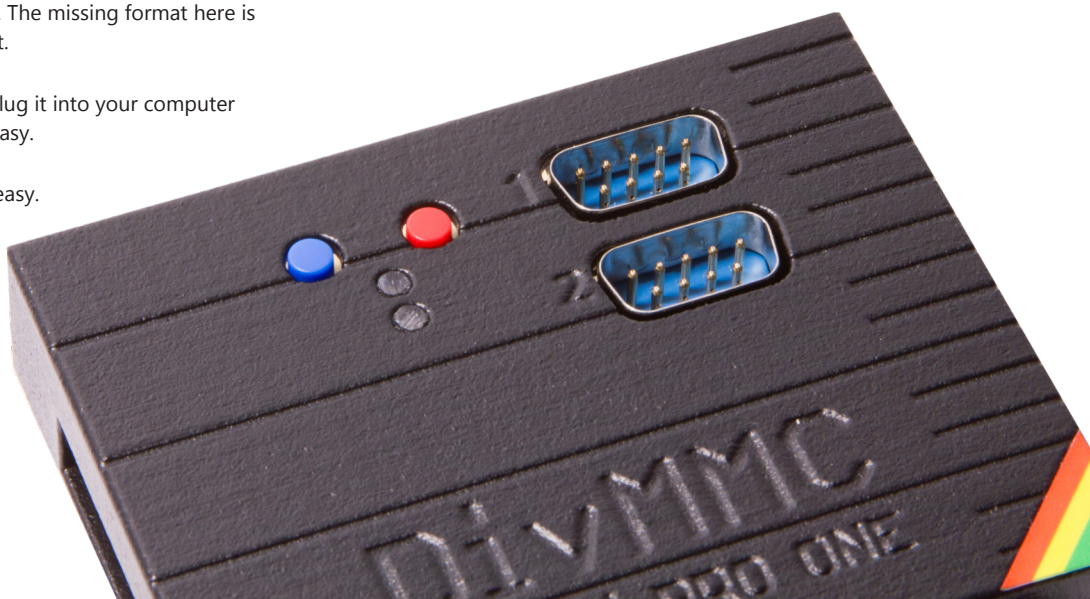
Sadly it's doesn't allow you to name the file, but you can go back later and use the .MV command to rename it. This means that if you save a lot of different games you will have a lot of files named SNAP002,3,4,5,6,7 etc…

To load a saved snapshot back in you just navigate using the file browser, select the file and load it.

Overall, this is a great box of tricks. It looks great and works really well. The jumperless design means I can use it on all my machines without trying to remember the settings, and having it work on the 2048 is a bonus, as my other storage cards just would not work.

The write functions of EsxDos mean things like saving word processor files or screens for testing printers will be so much easier, and the full through port should mean I won't have problems with other interfaces.

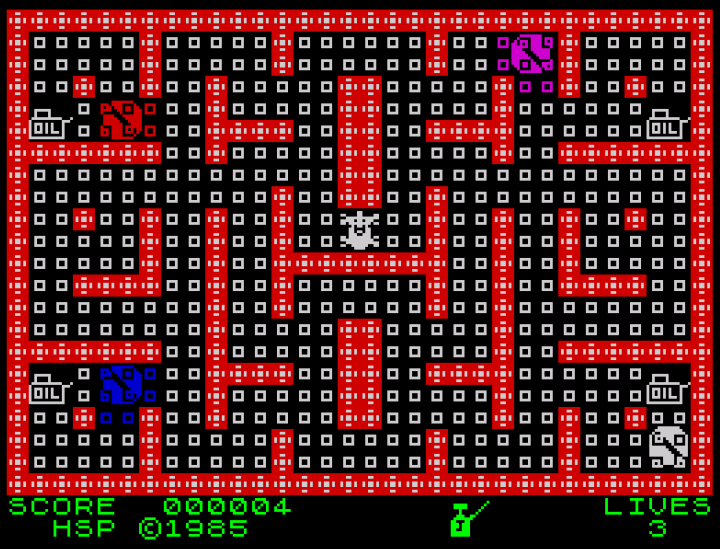
A great modern storage card then, and one that is recommended.



ONE FOR THE ROAD AND MUTATIONS

Publisher:	Tynesoft
Year:	1986
Price:	£1.99

This is a two-game compilation released by Tynesoft in 1986 according to World of Spectrum or 1987 if you read the inlay. The two games included are One For The Road and Mutations. There is an interesting piece of history here, but let's get onto the games themselves first and all will become clear.



One For The Road

One For The Road

The instructions state you have to drive your car around a maze picking up cat's eyes while watching out for marauding road signs. Sound familiar, in a sort of old-school retro way? Maze, collection and chasing enemies. Just wait because things get much better, or worse, depending on your outlook.

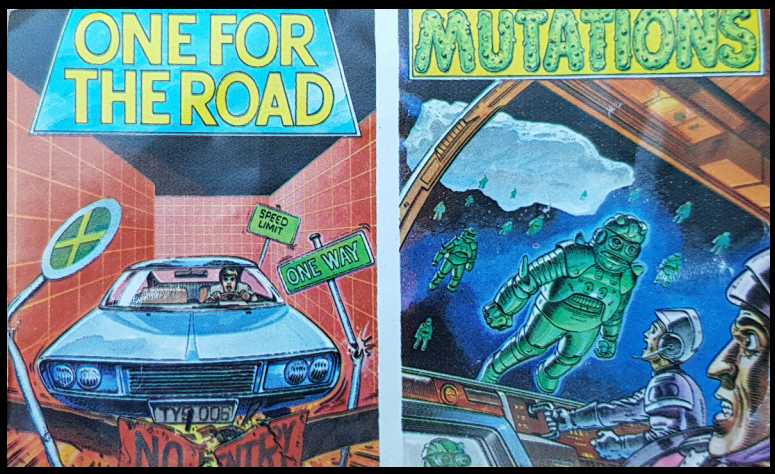
As you can see, this first game is just a Pacman variant. You control a car (instead of the famous yellow character) that moves smoothly through a maze picking up dots. Nothing really special here. There are oil tins in the corners that when collected let you kill the road signs, although I'm not sure how exactly you can kill a road sign! Yes, it's all very familiar and there are even bonus items to collect too.



MacMan

Sound is average but nothing really special considering this was released in 1987. It's more like a 1983 game really, or even a good type-in game from the magazines. Now there is a very interesting comparison. Take a look at this game more closely. Pay attention to the maze layout and sound and you may have seen it somewhere before.

This is actually a game called MacMan that was a type-in from Your Spectrum in 1985. This is the exact same game just with different graphics. Yes, the game released by Tynesoft was a copy of a type-in from two years earlier! A one -off you might think, an innocent mistake? Well let's have a look at the other game then before making any judgements.



Mutations

Here you have to fly around space destroying a series of different aliens. Some aliens are small, others form together into larger aliens, and in turn these come together to form eggs and the cycle continues as the aliens continue to spread.

You fly around using your scanner to locate them and then switch to a 3D space view and destroy them.

There is a strategy to be used here. You can kill all the aliens quickly and complete the game with a low score or be a game-keeper and let them breed, kill a few and wait. This will get you a higher score.

The game is quite good once you get over the bland graphics and buy into the universe in which it is set and story it tells.

But just like the first game, there is something very familiar with this. Many old school gamers may have a feeling of de-ja-vu.

Take a look at this game closely. Look familiar? This is actually Spawn Of Evil from DK'Tronics released in 1983. It's the same game but with slightly modified graphics. The screen layout is the same, the control is the same, the sound is the same and the gameplay is identical. Tynesoft have ripped off another game, this time from 5 years previous.

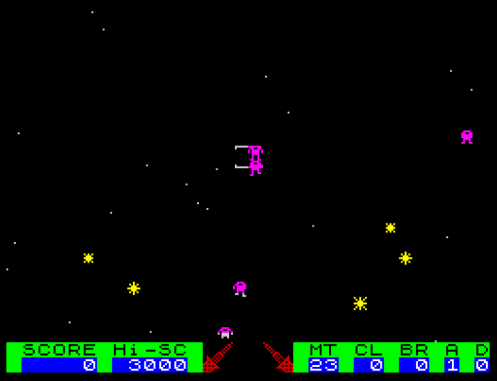
So, I'll be honest. I obviously knew this before I started the review and there are a multitude of other games released by Tynesoft that are just mods of older games. The author of these modded games is a person called Harry S Price.

Is he real? No one knows. He was threatened with legal action when he released a game called Crimebusters which was a modified version of Spellbound. He (of Tynesoft) gave some poor excuse that they could not check games submitted to them etc., etc.. but still seemed to released others that were clearly not legally theirs.

A very interesting and intriguing story but, on the flip side, a nightmare for the original copyright owners. Here was a company releasing old games with modified graphics years after the original release, claiming to be from a seemingly untraceable author. Did they really think no one would notice?

I wonder if anyone actually tracked Harry S Price down, or if he was in fact a real person at all, and not just a made-up name Tynesoft used to divert legal action away from themselves.

Mutations

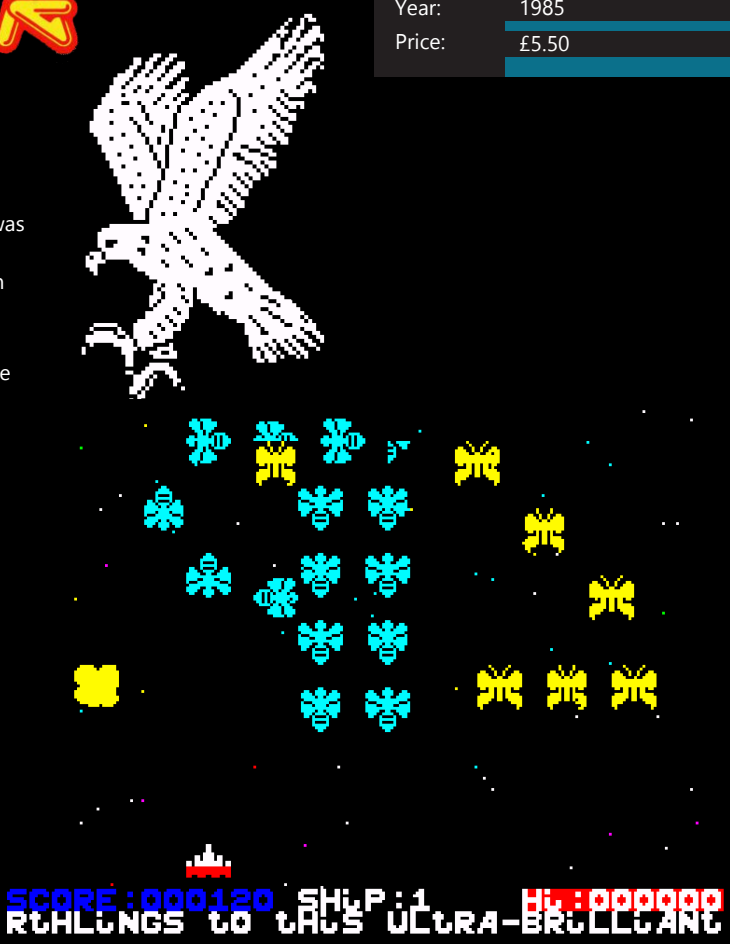


Spawn of Evil



GALAGA

Publisher:	Interceptor Micros
Year:	1985
Price:	£5.50



No guessing what this is, I think the title gives it away.

Galaga was a big hit in the arcades in 1981 and was the sequel to Galaxian. It had many additional features over Galaxian and improved the game in many ways.

There are a few versions for the Spectrum that are mostly Galaxian clones when closely examined, so this one would be interesting to play.

For those who are not familiar with the arcade game, it's a shooter and a good one at that. It takes the classic and brilliant Galaxian and adds more.

More swooping aliens, more colour and more features. It is difficult to review such games other than the obvious.

The graphics are large, I think a little too large though, giving you very little room to manoeuvre. They move in blocks too, but the programmer tried to hide it. Sadly it can be most visible when there are just a few aliens left.

Your ship is very blocky in design, and really needed to be a bit better. I am sure it could be improved by even the most non-graphical person.

The alien patterns are familiar to those who have played the arcade version and the game certainly gives you a challenge. In fact I found it very challenging, as my many failed attempts can testify.

The alien missiles are so difficult to avoid, it can border on frustration, but you just keep trying. The mark of a good game.

Sound is used well, with a few different effects and there is a nice scrolling star field.

For me, I found the screen too claustrophobic with not enough room to avoid things, which made for some short games. That is not ideal to keep the player coming back for more despite the similarity to the arcade game.



If you like shooters, give it a try, but be warned, it is hard.

AntEater

Publisher:	DEFB Studios
Year:	2021
Price:	£free





Anteater was an arcade game released in 1982 and was one of those games you played when all the other good games were taken up. The Spectrum version has only just been released.

It had a strange premise, in that you controlled the tongue of an anteater trying to eat ants. You stood at the top of the screen with a warren of tunnels beneath you, through which ran ants.

Controlling your exceptionally long tongue, you had to navigate the tunnel and grab the ants and eat the larvae. There were however, things to avoid like worms, that killed you if eaten head first, and spiders that travelled along your tongue stopping you from retracting it, eventually killing you when it reached the end.

Extending and retracting your tongue is an integral part of the game, and so is speed. You have to get all the larvae as fast as possible. At the very bottom of the screen are queen ants. Eating these will clear any worms or ants from the screen.

And if that wasn't enough, if an ant hits your tongue, you lose a life. You have to catch them with the tip only.



The game is very well written and looks very much like the arcade version. Control is great making it a joy to play, and the sounds and music feel just right.

An excellent game.



GETTING THE BEST FROM YOUR TEXT IN 1983

SINCLAIR PRINT UTILITIES

Print Utilities (L5/S)
Increase the printing and display facilities of your ZX Spectrum with the Print Utilities program.

Print Utilities enables you to enhance your programs by generating characters of eight different sizes which you can place anywhere on your screen.

Written by Andrew Pennell for a 16K or 48K RAM Spectrum.

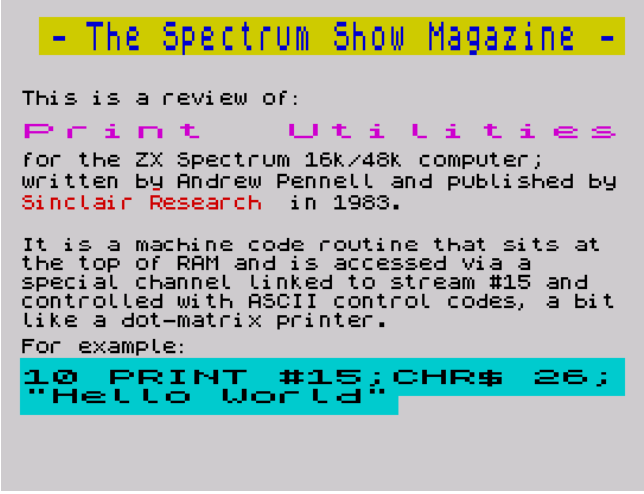
Boxed cassette with full documentation, price: £9.95.

In 1983, Sinclair Research published an application called Print Utilities, which extended the standard text-display capabilities of your ZX Spectrum, giving you a range of different font sizes to liven up your games or serious programs. It was published in Sinclair's big-box format, with a large, full-colour cardboard box and a 6-page printed instruction booklet. It had catalogue code L5/S, which means it was categorised alongside Forth, Micro Prolog, and the Zeus Assembler, as part of Sinclair's range of programming software (I assume 'L' in the catalogue code refers to Languages).

I remember seeing Print Utilities in the Software and Peripherals catalogue that came with my Spectrum, though I quickly dismissed it, as the description was underwhelming. However, my interest in the application

was recently renewed, when I purchased a second-hand copy to complete my collection of Sinclair's 'L' range of software.

Print Utilities expands the standard display capabilities of your computer, supporting eight different character sizes (consisting of 16-column, 21-column, 32-column, and 42-column at either single-height or double-height). The main element is a short (a little over one and a half kilobytes) machine-code library that is loaded near the top of memory, just below the user-defined graphics. The cassette includes versions for both the 16k and 48k Spectrums (one on each side). Further, the tape includes a BASIC demonstration of how to use the library.



Print Utilities works by setting up a new channel and assigning stream #15 to point to it. When you first load Print Utilities, you need to call a machine code routine to complete the setup, and then you direct your PRINT commands to use stream #15 to access the extended functionalities, for example;

```
PRINT #15; "Hello World"
```

The new channel accepts certain ASCII codes that change the printing behaviour. For example, ASCII code 26 is used to switch to 16-characters-per-line and ASCII code 28 is used to set double-height printing. So, for example, to print a title for a game, you might use the command:

```
PRINT #15; CHR$ 26; CHR$ 28; "PLANET OF DEATH"
```

You can also position text with pixel precision, using the AT command, though this time with a pixel offset from the bottom, left-hand corner of the screen (the same coordinate system as the standard PLOT command). So, for example, to horizontally centre our game title, we could extend the previous example to something like:

```
PRINT #15; AT 160,8; CHR$ 26; CHR$ 28; "PLANET OF DEATH"
```

The full list of ASCII control codes is included in the manual though, after you have used Print Utilities for half an hour or so, you will tend to remember the most important codes.

If you are reasonably comfortable with BASIC and understand a little about streams and string handling, you will find Print Utilities very easy to use. The small size of the routine makes it straightforward to include in your own programs. It would be particularly useful for writing



an adventure game, for example, where the slightly narrower, 42-characters-per-line mode produces both a pleasing output and allows more text to be shown on screen at once.

Because text can be positioned with pixel-precision and because the 21- and 42-column modes do not line up with attribute cells, you do have to be careful of colour clash. However, this is relatively easy to deal with, with a little trial and error (or, if you prefer, you can plan your screen layout on paper first).

Print Utilities also supports the ZX Printer (or Alphacom 32), and the different text sizes can be transferred to hard-copy using LPRINT and LLIST (the standard printer channel "p" is modified to accept the additional control characters, so you do not need to specify a stream). The 42-character mode is particularly good for printing program listings, where the smaller character size reduces the amount of line wrapping.

If you were feeling ambitious, you could try to do some rudimentary desktop publishing, though there is no

support for more advanced printers so, with just the ZX Printer, your options are a bit limited.

```
 200> PRINT #15;CHR$ 12;
 205 PRINT #15;AT 160,8;CHR$ 26;CHR$ 28;"P
LANET OF DEATH"
 210 PRINT #15;CHR$ 25;"I am on a mountain
 plateau. To the north"
 220 PRINT #15;"there is a cliff. Exits ar
e down, east and"
 230 PRINT #15;"west. I cam also see:"
 240 PRINT #15'" ,A piece of sharp ";CHR$
24; INK 4;"FLINT"''
 250 PRINT #15;CHR$ 25;"Tell me what to do
"
 260 PAUSE 0
```

Print Utilities is very easy to use. Because the extra capabilities are exposed via a new channel, it is quick to modify existing BASIC programs to take advantage of the capabilities. It's equally easy to use the utility from your own machine code programs, using the standard RST 0x10 restart routine: instructions on how to do this for both screen and ZX Printer are included.

My big concern is that £9.95 would have felt like quite a lot of money when I was a teenager, and I suspect I could have found something similar (though almost certainly not as polished) in a type-in listing. Today, I really like these big-box releases and, in Print Utilities, I really appreciate the clever use of the Spectrum's channels capabilities, to boost text display. Andrew Pennell, who wrote the application, also wrote some excellent books on how to program the ZX Spectrum (and, later, the QL). In his book, "Mastering the ZX Microdrive" (which I recommend any serious Spectrum programmer reads), he explores the Spectrum's channels and streams capabilities at length, showing how you can create a string buffer to capture the output of a BASIC command (e.g., the CAT command). It is clear this same approach underpins the Print Utilities program.

```
48K SPECTRUM PRINT UTILITIES
============================
FOUR widths and TWO heights giving
1111 2222 3333 4444
5555 6666 7777 8888
different character sizes on the printer
and LLISTings too:
```

```
 340>LPRINT 'CHR$ 25;"different character
sizes on the printer"
 350 LPRINT "and ";CHR$ 27;"LLIST";CHR$ 25
;"ings too:"''
 360 LLIST 340,,
 370 LPRINT ''',,
 900 STOP
1000 FOR i=1 TO w/3: PRINT #15; INK k;w;"
";: NEXT i: LET k=k+1: PRINT #15: RETURN
```

Given the small size of the library, I think it would have been a nice addition to the built-in ROM of the Spectrum+ 128k, which followed a year or so later. It could have even been integrated with the standard display stream, so it would work without the need to set up a special channel. By then, I suspect the market for the cassette version would have disappeared, though I think this application deserved to live on longer.

Today, you can download Print Utilities from the World of Spectrum website, and so quickly start to liven up your own software (the cassette original also appears on auction websites quite frequently). I recommend you give it a go. Like me, you might find it starts to make a frequent appearance in your own programs.

Feature by George Beckett

BYTEDELIGHT

Everything for your ZX Spectrum!

www.bytedelight.com



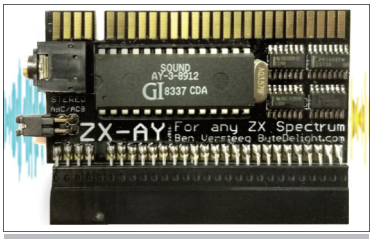
DIVMMC ENJOY PRO

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



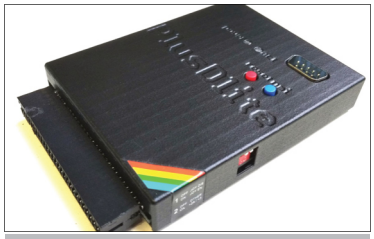
ZX-HD

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



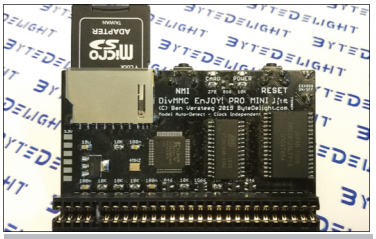
ZX AY

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



PLUSDELITE

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



DIVMMC PRO Mini Lite

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



SPECTRANET

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

DO WE ENJOY THE SPECTRUM

With so much going on in life, do we actually get time to enjoy this wonderful micro and the thousands of games it has to offer?

This may seem a completely weird question to ask, but I was thinking about this very thing only recently. Of course our lives may vary vastly and we may have more or less time to indulge in our hobbies. We may have more than one hobby and we may have a completely separate life that demands more time. But the fundamental question I asked myself was exactly this; do I get chance to enjoy the Spectrum?

I love the machine, I love the era it was released in and I love everything about it from the crap type-in games, magazines, adverts, shops, graphics, music and history, but do I get actual time to enjoy it? Do I get time to sit down in front of a real machine (or an emulator, if you don't have the actual micro) and just play games?

Of course, when making the show and the magazine, I review games and try things out. I test hardware with games and I play new games, but this is all for a purpose, and not just to enjoy it.

Back in the 80's I spent far too long on my Spectrum. I would go directly from work every Friday (pay day) to the local computer shop and buy at least 1, sometimes 3, games and then spend all weekend playing them. I would sometimes not get to bed until 2 or 3am, blurry eyed from trying to get just a bit further in Oracle's Cave or progressing in Adventure One.

My parents took a dim view of this, but still allowed me to get a modem and subscription to Micronet 800. This just made it worse, and I was up until all hours playing Shades and replying to numerous emails.

In between all of this I was avidly writing my own BASIC games and reading multiple magazines to get the latest info on hardware, games and future purchases. I was, and this hurts to admit it, a nerd. Back then that was something to hide, something to be almost ashamed of, especially considering the typical 'nerd' image that people had in their heads.

In those days I fully enjoyed the Spectrum. It was my life and it was something that occupied my mind 100% when I was not working. But what about now, what about the present?

When producing the show I spend a fair amount of time messing about with the Spectrum. Testing hardware, doing Patreon videos and the magazine, but it all seems to be focused on getting the next show out, or the next magazine or the next video. I very rarely sit down and just 'enjoy' the machine.

Take a recent example as a typical experience. The Lo-Profile keyboard, a fabulous piece of hardware, and one that I really wanted to own again. Having got one, I then set about making it work, encountering problems along the way, until finally I was able to use it.



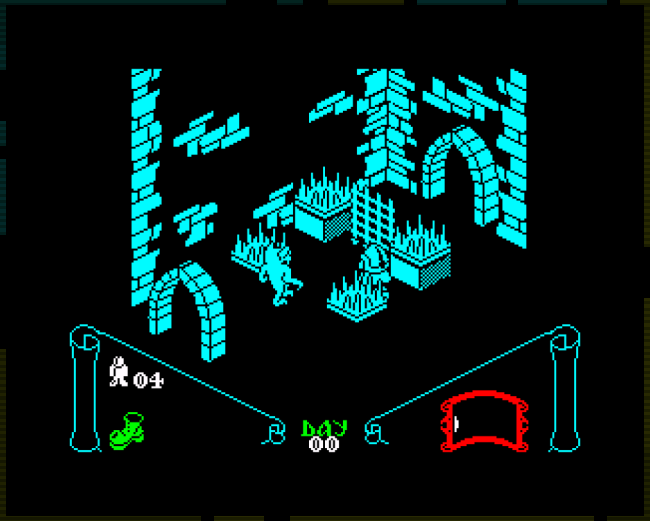
When this point arrived it was a matter of testing a few games and a word processor. I didn't exactly 'enjoy' the hardware. I didn't sit there and think about when I had this keyboard in the 80's and didn't just play games because I wanted to. I was focused on the show, the camera, the lights and the angles to make a good shot.

Enjoying the machine for what it is, is a very important part of the hobby in my opinion. Time is needed to relish the hardware for what it is. Its limitations and its pure brilliance. The way in which talented



programmers made it do things it wasn't supposed to do and times when it made you gasp in astonishment.

I remember first seeing Manic Miner and Knight Lore. The thrill of playing those games for the first time, and the feeling that nothing would interrupt your pleasure. You had all the time in the world to explore these new games, to test out new hardware and to dive deep into the multitude of layers that little black box



had.

This is where, for many, their future would be defined. If you liked making games, picking through type-ins line by line and experimenting with different values, then you may well have become a developer in later life. If you liked plugging things into the expansion port, exploring the many add-ons and expanding your micro beyond what was thought possible, then you may well have become an engineer or designer.

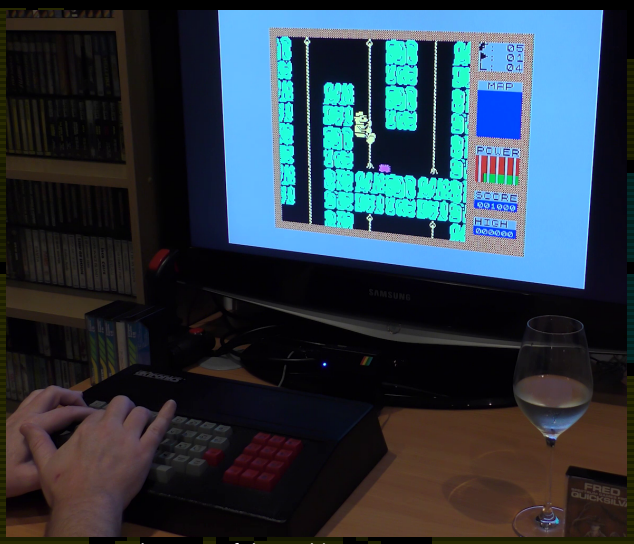
Over the years, for many of us, playing time slowly reduces as real life takes over. In my case in 1984 I was spending far too much time on the computer if my parents were to be believed. I spent every night and all weekend writing games, typing out listings, reading magazines and playing games. I was doing that for fun, as a hobby. Later in life though, it served me well as I am now involved in software development.



As for playing time, well that has reduced significantly since I started the show. Obviously, I play games for the reviews, but importantly, not for fun. It is very rare that I sit down, load a game and spend some time with it. If I do find a spare hour, the camera is always there to record it for a video and I narrate at the same time.

People with other hobbies, I don't think, have this conundrum. If they want to paint, they paint. If they want to go bird watching, they just go, leaving behind life for an hour or so and just enjoying it.

The nearest I got recently was while making a Patreon video. I picked a few games at random, obviously the ones I liked, and just played them. I managed to complete them all including Fred from Quicksilva and 3D Star Strike. I enjoyed that session. There was no script and I just let the camera record.



I must try to do more of those things.

I think it's time I, and maybe you, should start to enjoy the Spectrum. We shouldn't need to write our exploits on forums, we shouldn't need to make videos about it and we shouldn't need to feel the pressure of everything else in life. Just for a brief moment, sit down with a beverage of your choice, load a game and play. Enjoy it for what it is. If you have memories of that game, maybe when you bought it or first completed it, all the better.

SPECTRUM

Just enjoy your

Proteus

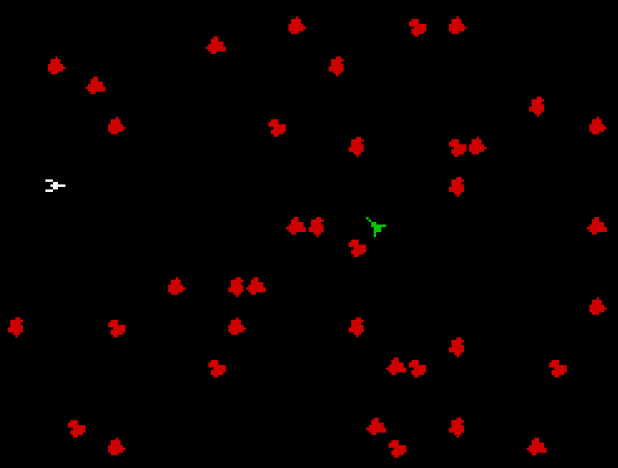
Publisher:	Abacus Software
Year:	1983
Price:	£14.95

This early 16K game has a complex story and even more complex game play. You have to reach the enemy planet to destroy it, flying through 20 quadrants, each containing 12 sectors full of aliens and debris. You have to destroy their transmitters and clear a path through the debris from left to right and wipe out any aliens you meet on the way.

When I first played this, I immediately thought it was a bad Asteroids clone, but soon discovered it was a bit worse that that. The game idea is good, but the control and chase mechanic of the other ships makes this a terrible game.

You can rotate, thrust and fire, just like Asteroids. You can blow up rocks, just like Asteroids, but then there are other ships on screen too. These will rotate, thrust and fire randomly until they are in direct line of fire with nothing blocking them. At this point they charge towards you firing constantly. This ends up with you being destroyed despite holding the fire key down to fire back.

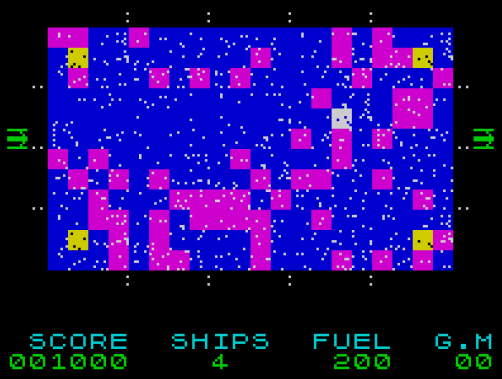
If you do manage to destroy the other ships, you can jump to the map view and move to another sector and start again. In this aspect, it's a bit like Blasteroids, but I never got this far.

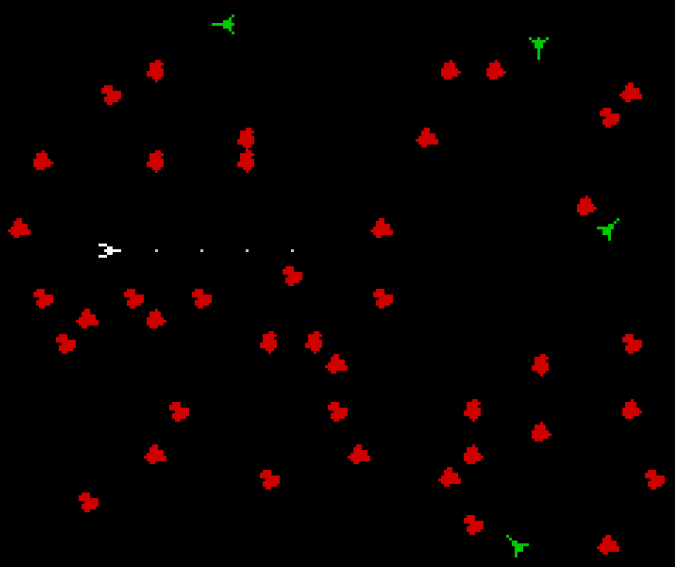


You can fly off screen into the next sector only to be met with more ships out to destroy you instantly.

There is no chance to line up shots with the other ship, they simply lock on, charge and fire leaving you no chance to get out of the way.







manoeuvre around the asteroids, at which point you come into direct line of fire and get destroyed.

Secondly, charge at them firing constantly. This ends with them doing the same and you get blown up again.

Thirdly use the guided missiles. Here you fire a missile and then control it using rotation controls. This seems to be the most successful way, but the enemy ships quickly locate the missile and destroy it.

I have to say. I hate this game. It's so frustrating. There is no skill involved. There is no plan of action that will see you being successful. There is nothing you can do to survive. Using POKEs to stop the other ships firing improved the game, but it soon became a bit dull trying to clear a path.

It's a frustration inducing, jerky game that you should avoid.

The other chore, apart from continually trying to avoid the enemy ships, is the clearing of the path. You have to clear a path between the arrows shown on the chart. This involves a lot of shooting asteroids and then checking the chart to see if you have cleared enough.

I tried to play this three ways. Firstly sneak up on the other ships. As soon as you get near enough, you have to

BONUS GAME!

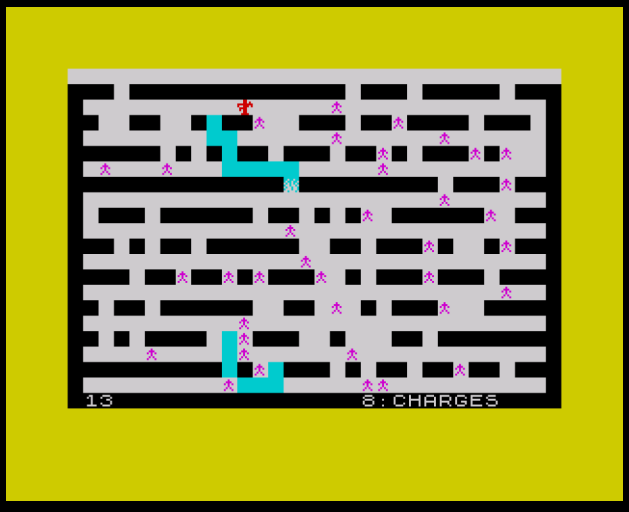
The tape also has a free game on the same tape called Alien Pit Rescue. This is a typical type-in game and does not really help with the £14.95 price tag attached to the main game.

You control an android that has to rescue miners in a slowly flooding mine. You have to pick them up one by one and take them to the surface. The miners at the bottom score more points.

The mine floods slowly and you can't make contact with the water. You can blow vertical paths in the rock, with charges. But you only have 8 of these charges.

It's a dull game with terrible lag on key presses and does not even bring the tape to anywhere near sell-able level.

The best thing about this whole package is the inlay which is really nice.







Publisher:	Adrian Singh
Year:	2019
Price:	£free



Mr Do was an arcade game released in 1982 by Universal and here is a damn good clone coming to the Spectrum at last in all its glory.

Early arcade games had simple concepts often making them easy to pick up but very addictive. Here you have to collect all the cherries and avoid the chasing enemies. Sounds easy?

As you move around the background is eaten away, creating passageways that the enemy can move along, so there is some strategy as to which route you take.

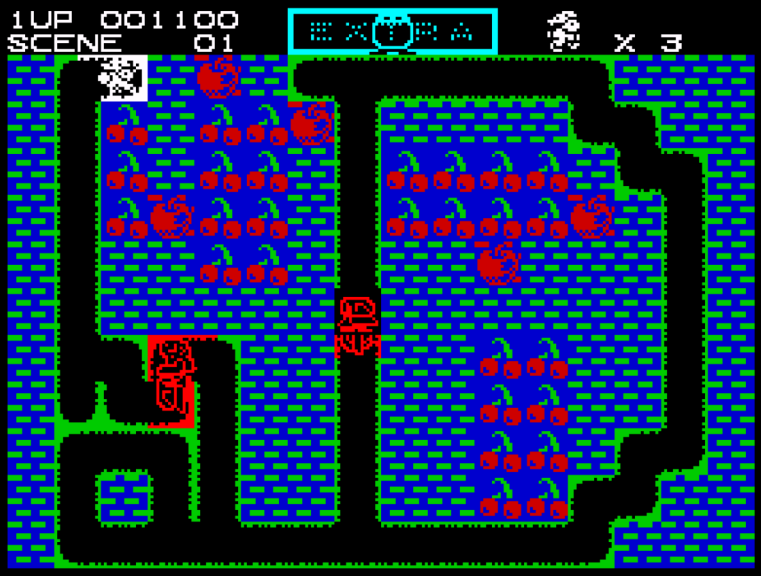
You can move under apples to let them drop down, this will kill any enemy it hits, or you can fire projectiles that bounce around the screen, again killing anything they hit.

There are also bonuses to collect that have various effects. The chasing enemies can also change meaning they can eat through the ground too.

The graphics, by Mark R Jones, are excellent and the sound is superb, matching the arcade for tunes and effects.

Control is good, and it needs to be, and gameplay excellent. This is a great game especially if you like Mr Do. Even if you haven't played the arcade game, still give this one a try.

It is well crafted and represents what a good arcade clone should be.





Mini-Putt

Publisher:	Acolade
Year:	1987
Price:	£8.95

"The wackiest miniature golf game in the world", so the inlay states for Accolade's Mini Putt. There are several miniature golf games for the Spectrum, most do not come up to scratch and early attempts were poor because of a lack of experience and the hardware they were running on.



On to this game then and the instructions are lengthy, which takes away the simplicity of the game for me, but let's have a go. There are four options when loading, Classic courses, deluxe courses, traditional courses and challenge courses, We'll be looking at traditional first.

The game gives us the usual, if limited, obstructions to get around with arrows that move the ball, narrow bridges, trees and if you play far enough, a windmill and an elephant.

To play a shot you move the cursor to where you want the ball to go, press fire, wait for the power meter to get to the right level, press fire again and then try to get the horizontal bar close the middle marker as possible for a straight shot.

Your ball will go flying in the direction you chose and then you have to hope you got it right. Your little golfer will snap his club if you fail or raise his club if you complete the hole on par. He will smash his head to the ground if you don't.

The graphics are bland, very bland, with no texture or scenery at all and the animation is very jerky and stuttering. Sound is absent. Nothing at all, which is a major let down.

You get a small map of the course in the middle of the lower screen which is almost useless and you have no idea what really awaits you. Sometimes I have hit a shot that has bounced around and gone onto a course out of screen with no way back.

The game I could only get to work on a 128k machine using emulation. It wouldn't respond to key presses when set to +2 or +3.

Looking at the Traditional courses, they are also fairly dull although some do pose a challenge especially when you don't know where to hit the ball. This problem continues in other courses too. You have no clue as to where you are supposed to aim so instead you just start bouncing the ball around and hope for the best.



Another issue is that you cannot see all of the playing area, so you can't plan your shot. All too often you play a shot just guessing what is on the other screen, and with the map being useless you can often find yourself nowhere near the hole.

As a whole the game relies too much on arrows that control the ball. Where are the hills, the bumpy ground, tunnels, clowns and the rest of the familiar things?

Sound would have made a difference and some variety, but overall an average game that should have been much much better.

SOFT 888



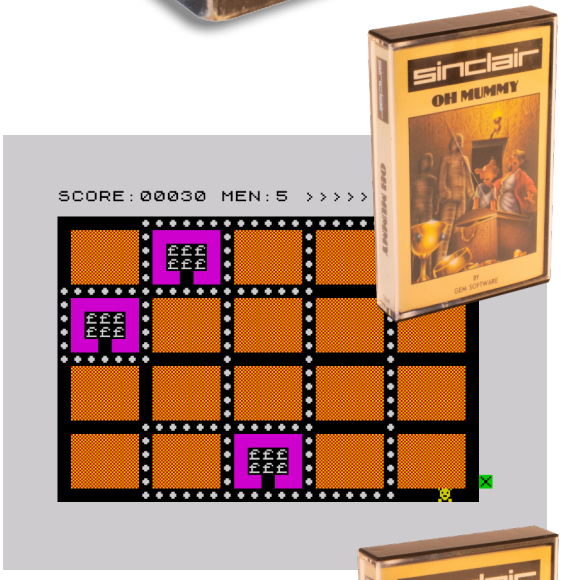
When the Plus Two was released in 1986 it had a set of software bundled with it. These titles are probably easily recognised by anyone around at the time because of the inlay design.

This pack came in this rather nice box, inside which were 6 games that formed the soft 888 pack.

There are two main reasons for bundling games with computers, first, they were cheap and often rubbish and made the computer bundle look better value for the buyer, who of course didn't know what the games were like, or they were stellar titles designed to show off the system. What will these be?

Oh Mummy

In no particular order, first we have Oh Mummy.



Originally released by Gem Software in 1984 and this is in fact a 16k game. Yes, Amstrad bundled a 16k game with the new 128k machine and yes, it's a very simple Amidar clone.

The graphics are 8 pixel character squares and the sound is simple BEEPs. All the hallmarks of a very early 16k title. I suppose it plays OK if you like type-in games and don't mind tiny graphics that move in 8 pixel jumps. This does not show off the 128 machine at all. In fact it doesn't show off the 16k machine either when you think about it.

If you don't know Amidar, you simply paint all pathways gaining points. In this version though when you find a key, you can move to the next level using the exit. You can also get extra points for uncovering things like scrolls hidden in the squares and also there is a hidden mummy that is basically another chasing enemy.

The number of enemies increase as you progress and overall this proves to be a very dull game.

Disco Dan



Disco Dan is again by Gem Software originally from 1984. This game has two main sections, and the story involves stopping nuclear reactors from exploding. The first part has you running down a 3D tunnel and you have to avoid the pot holes and jump over the lasers. Every now and then a mutant Pacman appears, and these have to be avoided or jumped.

This section is quite nice and the graphics are OK with smooth movement. The sound is also well used and the control works well.

If you get to the end of the first section the next part takes the form of a Q-Bert style game. You have to change the colours and numbers on the discs by jumping on them. The aim is to get all discs down to zero. However, the numbers randomly increase, plus there is a nasty thing moving about changing the discs to red. Red discs cannot be jumped on or you'll die.



The controls for this part are tricky, as they are rotate and jump. Two keys rotate Dan through the directions and then you jump in that direction. Different from the usual Q-Bert controls but not too bad once you get used to them.

Alien Destroyer

Moving on, we have Alien Destroyer by Kuma Computers from 1984. As you can tell, this is a Galaxian clone. The graphics are large, but a bit jerky, and control is a bit unresponsive, especially when there are a lot of aliens on screen.



Things speed up as you make your way through the wave, and on the second level, they start to swoop down which really does slow down the game play. The background stars seem to draw on one at a time, and then suddenly a load appear at once which can be a bit strange.

Sound is used well and game play is like a slow, and less responsive version of the arcade game, which just about sums it up really.

Punchy

Now this game when it was first released was called Hunchy and obviously based on the arcade game Hunchback. It was first released in 1983 by Mr Micro. After some legal wranglings, the name was changed to Punchy and the game slightly altered in levels and play. Both games had speech, but this was also changed to remove a reference to Esmeralda. The speech and music are quite good though, but the whole thing is letdown by awful gameplay.



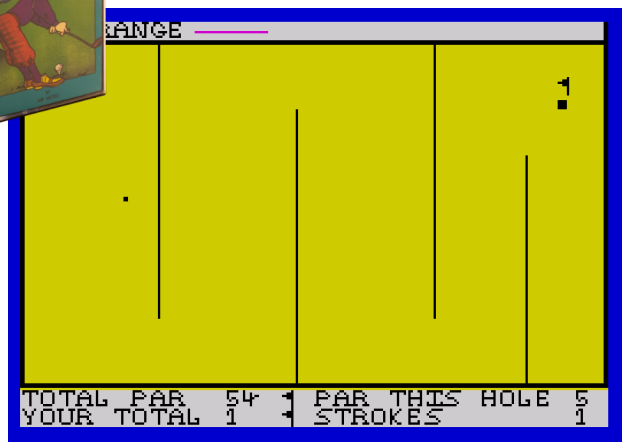
The jump is not high enough and take so long it's difficult to get the timing right. Getting past the first screen, which is identical to Hunchback, is quite easy. You just have to time your jumps. The second screen however, is a bit more tricky. On the arcade this was the rope swing, on Punchy we get a magic carpet. At least that's what it looks like. Whatever it is, it's almost impossible to land on because of the jump mechanism.

If you do get past this, it's onto the familiar battlements and the game continues. Eventually though, you will fall foul of the jump mechanism and the game will end. The speech soon gets on your nerves too, playing far too often.

SOFT 888

Crazy Golf





Another game from 1983 and Mr Micro, and this feels like it is written in BASIC. Yes, Sinclair chose to give away a 1983, 16K BASIC-like game to show off their Plus 2 computer.

You control the range of the shot using Q and W and the rotation of the shot using O and P. Once you are happy, you press ENTER to play. The square ball moves around the screen, bouncing of the line walls until you eventually complete it, and then the next hole appears.

This game is very dull in every aspect. The holes are pretty much void of details. Sometimes there are patterns, but little else. Sound is simple BEEPs and poor BEEPer tunes. Control is slow and the whole thing just plods on

Treasure Island





This title has three distinct sections, the first two of which are not really needed and do nothing for the game. The first section is like a poor man's Frogger, crossing a road with three old women wandering about. The second part has you jumping across barrels until we finally get to the game itself, which looks like a Saber Wulf rip off.

You run around killing pirates and searching for treasure. The graphics look a bit flickery and there are only two sound effects, but a large enough game map. Most of the game is played in silence as you run around, but it is a change from the other titles in this pack.

If I had got these games with my brand new Spectrum Plus 2, I would have though the machine was a bit of a let down. No use of the 128k memory and no use of the AY sound chip.

Yes, they were free, but I think there were a lot better games around than these.

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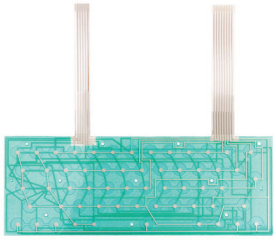


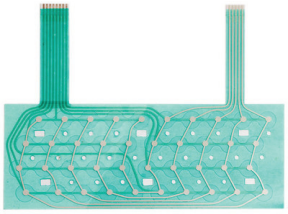
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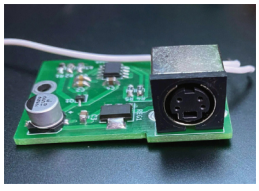
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GRUMPY OGRE'S
Adventure Page



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

I must admit to being pre-occupied of late with that wonderful thing called Shades. If you are unaware of this brilliant game, then check out issue 17.

Having spent a good few hours in the brilliantly described and atmospheric world, it is easy to see the younger Grumpy Ogre being hooked. So many exciting places to visit and I have only touched the surface. If time allows, then I hope to see more of this world.

Adventures have the ability, if they are written right, to take you to other places. To places where things are so different, where the laws of science are irrelevant and where strange beings walk around like it's normal. After all, it is normal in their world, the world you now find yourself in. You are the stranger, you are different and you have to work out how that world functions.

Not so long ago I had a weird brain flicker, whereby I realised that the second Artic adventure was in fact Inca Curse and not, as I always thought, Ship of Doom. With that in mind I began to play it, and to be honest, it didn't draw me in as I hoped it would.

I spent hours playing Planet of Death and Ship Of Doom, but this one slipped past me in 1984. But the question is, why didn't I enjoy it?

I loved the others, I feel at home in the world and I can visualise the locations, despite their very minimalistic descriptions, and there is the clue.

When I played Planet and Ship for the first time, I was enthusiastic, my brain was probably over-excited and made up impressive images of the locations based on sci-fi films. But coming to a new game as a much older and a much grumpier Ogre all these years later, and it just doesn't do the same things to my head.

The simplistic location descriptions do not conjure up the brilliant images of the world I got from the others.

Is this because of age, familiarisation, nostalgia or the fact things got so much better with games like The Pawn?

Let's compare two locations from Planet and Inca.

"I am on a mountain plateau to the North there is a steep cliff"

This is from Planet of Death, and for me my brain produces a vast alien planet that is both dangerous and exciting. Strange plants must be everywhere, vivid colours and odours must be surrounding me, and at any minute I may meet an alien. All that from that simple piece of text and from reading the inlay.

Now, Inca.

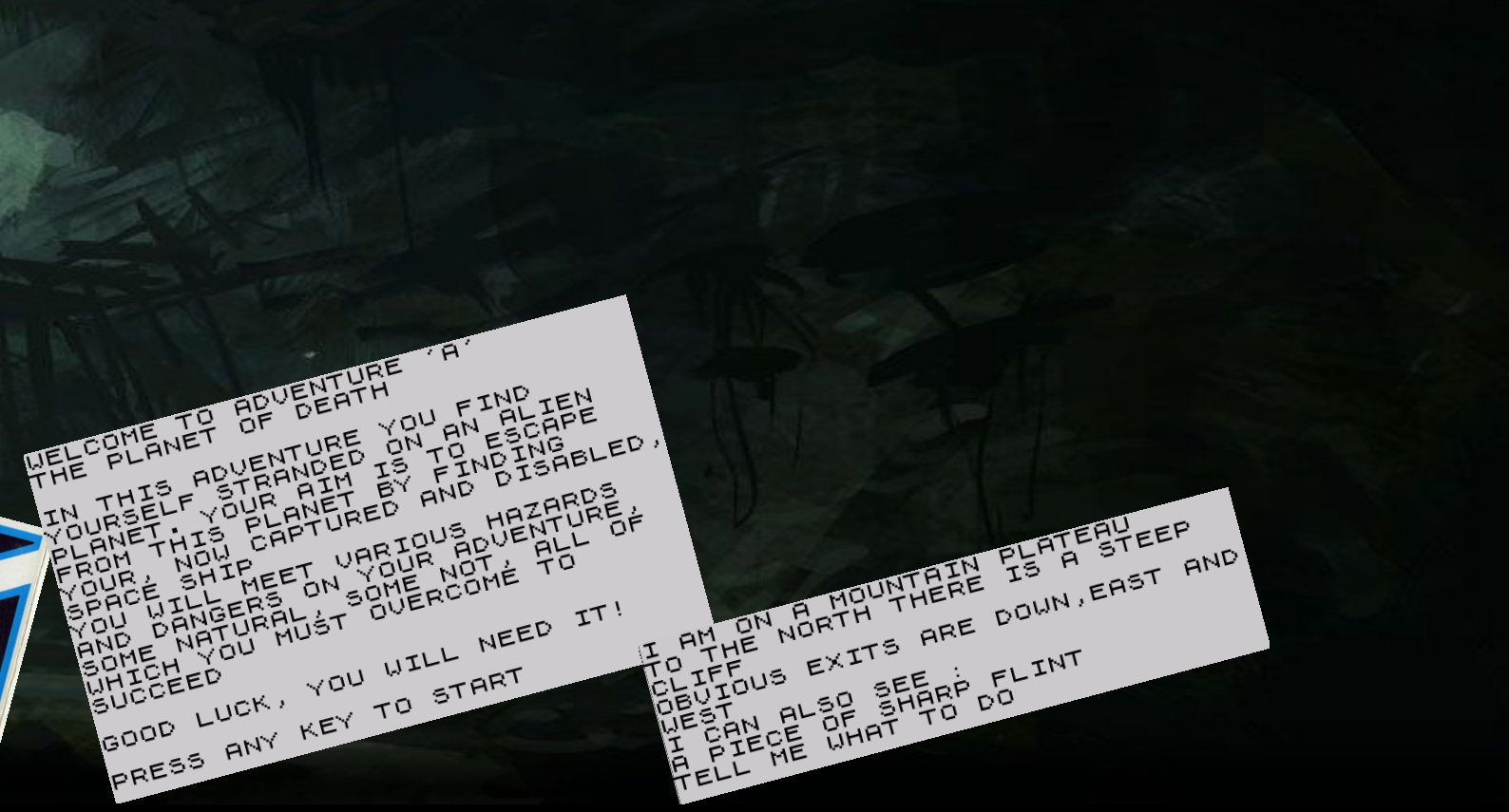
"I am in a jungle clearing"

Yes, Inca is more sparse but maybe because this could be Earth and not a fantastical planet, but it just seems less attractive. It is not an alien world or based in the future. Maybe because I came to it late or maybe it needs more imagination.

Neither of these, if you are coming to the game fresh, incite excitement. They are bland and a victim of space restrictions and programming that was in its infancy.

I was in the back of an old Escort van, being driven home when I read the inlay of Planet. It set the scene, it made me want to play it and it set my mind racing as to what I would find.

Maybe it is this pre-game situation that made it better. I was playing the game



out in my mind before I had even loaded it, I had the dangerous planet already visualised, and I couldn't wait to try to escape.

Maybe a case of rose-tinted glasses, but somehow the second of Artic's adventures didn't capture my imagination as the other early titles had.

Now let's drift on to parsers, and something that deserves a mammoth moan. Yes, it's time for this grumpy old ogre to sip some grog and tear a few strips from the media hype that is 'parser'.

So many games boasted a brilliant parser, with so many intelligent and exceptional computations that it made the early verb-noun games seem prehistoric. They could handle a vast amount of text input and intelligently work out what you wanted to do.

Wonderful! But who actually used it? It is all well and good having a parser that could work out what you wanted to do when you typed "get sword from table, go north, kill goblin and take his treasure" but in reality, I have never entered such a long convoluted action. Why would I?

If you knew the game inside out, and wanted to speed your way to the end by concatenating commands, that's fine, but these sort of commands could not be used unless you knew they would work. One small mistake and the whole 'clever' parser would fall in a heap.

Taking the above example, if the sword was not on the table, then it would be a massive fail.

Many companies proclaimed that their parser was better than the others, but I doubt anyone would use the complex sentence manipulation to better their gaming. They would have to know the game, they would have to have gone through it many times to be able to then put together a string of commands that would actually work. They would have to be certain other game elements, such as moving characters or required items, would not interject. I therefore conclude that the parser-boasting is total hog-wash. And I won't even mention random events that completely mess up any command building.. Oh! I just did..

If I wanted to get a ring and put it in a box that was in a cupboard, I would need to know there was a cupboard in which was a box that things could be placed. To find this out I would have to use shorter commands first.

I appreciate how clever these things are, but are they really needed to the extent of the hype? Yes, very clever, but in reality, just a boast to increase sales.

For more on this subject, watch Get Lamp, or, better buy it. I have it on DVD, and it is fabulous. So many great stories about the early days and many Infocom employees spill the beans about those exciting early days.

RIDER

Publisher:	Virgin Games
Year:	1984
Price:	£5.95

OUR COUNTRY DEPENDS ON YOU!

This early game from Virgin flung you into the role of a secret agent, but the actual story and final goal is never disclosed.



The game is split into two parts, the first has you parachuting out of an aeroplane and trying to land on moving motorbikes.

Here you drift left and right as you slowly descend, and three coloured motorbikes move across the bottom of the screen. Each colour has a different score attached should you manage to land on it.

Landing correctly is tricky, as your secret agent continually drifts about, but once you get the hang of it, it does become easier.



The motorbikes are tiny compared to the main character, which does make things look a bit weird.

If you do manage to land, then it's onto the next stage, riding the bike down a road that is covered in randomly placed mines. There are small sign posts that point left or right, and, according to the inlay, you should follow. However, having played it many times, they don't really point to a safe route.

The viewpoint is from the front of the bike and so you are travelling towards you, which is the opposite of other race games.

In this section you can speed up and slow down too, or just hang in there until the level ends. When it does, you are promoted and are then sent back to the main menu.

You can play on any of the levels from 002 to 007, with 007 being the hardest, with more mines to avoid.

The graphics are very basic but are smooth enough and there is no real perspective with the objects on the road.

Sound is used well for an early 16k game and it does offer a small challenge. It would have been better to automatically progress through the skill levels rather than having to go back to the menu.

I played it through using a few POKES and there was no end to the game. Completing it on 007 level the game ended with the "You have been promoted" message and then sent me back to the main menu again.

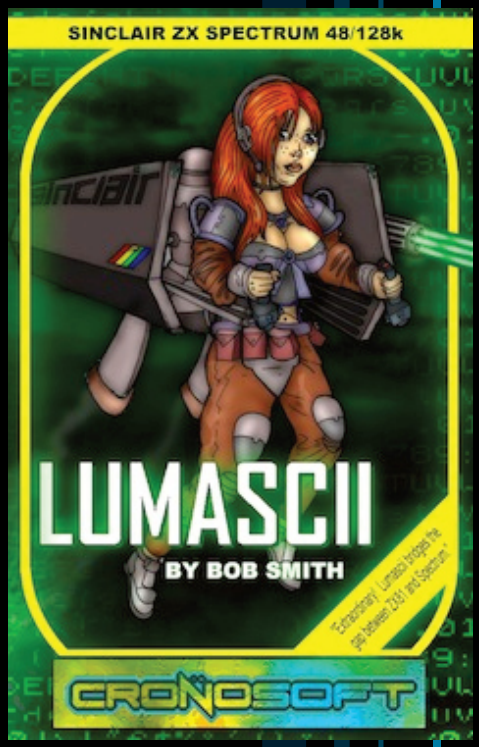
Worth a quick play, but that's about all.

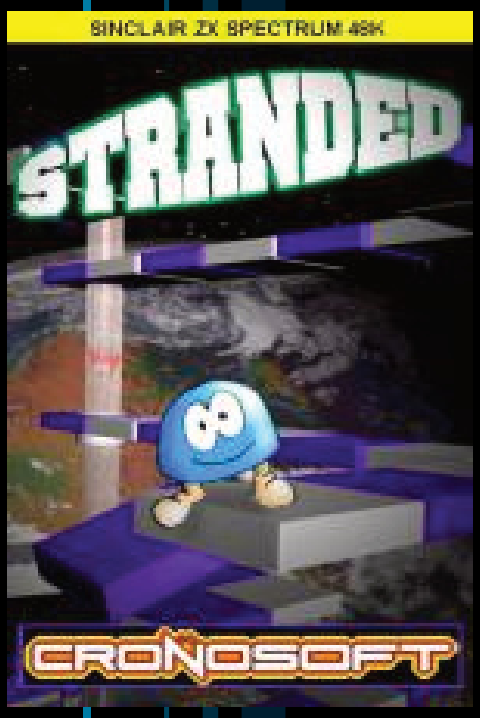
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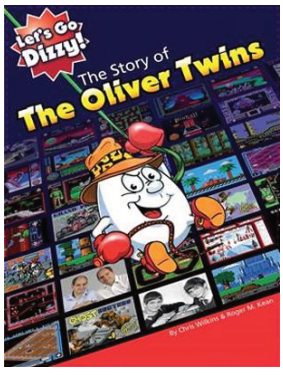
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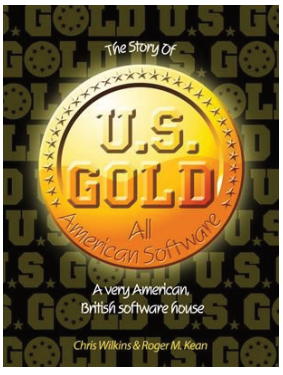
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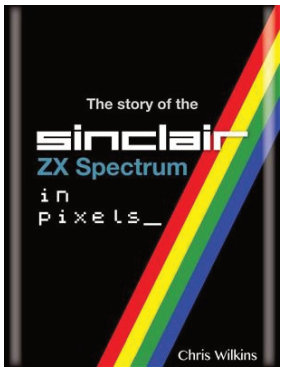
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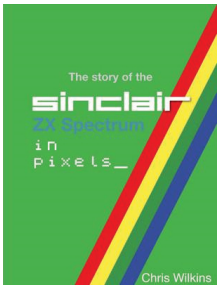


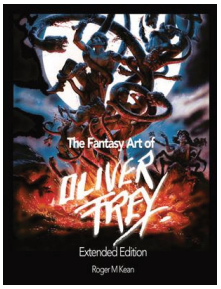


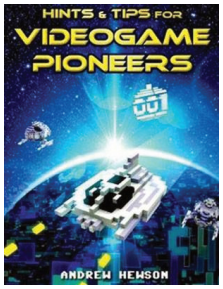












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