

TROUBLED WATERS

Alligators, anacondas and mine-laying helicopters are just some of the hazards that must be negotiated as you take a trip up the river to rescue a group of stranded scientists in River Rescue. Originally developed for the Atari VCS video game console, River Rescue is now available on a range of popular home computers.

River Rescue is a pure shoot-em-up arcade game, with no pretensions towards being anything more. It is produced by Creative Sparks, Thorn EMI's software division, and the backing of such a large company is quite evident. It is available in versions for four home computers: the 48K Spectrum, Commodore 64, the Atari machines and the unexpanded Vic-20, and is supplied in a specially designed bubble pack instead of the usual music-cassette case.

Included with each version is a small instruction leaflet, which is extremely readable and helpful. This contains an invitation to join the Creative Sparks Software Club — membership is free, and benefits include introductory offers, news and competitions.

The game itself is basically very simple, but features enough action to satisfy any arcade addict. You control the river rescue power boat, and it is your job to rescue a group of scientists who are stuck in the upper reaches of the river. Why the scientists need rescuing in the first place is not explained, but the instructions tell you that you must take them to hospital, so presumably an accident of some type has occurred.

While attempting to pick up the injured scientists, you must steer your craft, which travels at considerable speed, around islands and logs, all the while blasting away at every alligator in sight. The Vic-20 version is a little different, with added hazards in the shape of anacondas and dug-out canoes. At intervals along the river bank you will see various jetties; it is from these that you must rescue the boffins. The successful transfer of a scientist to the other side of the river increases your score considerably, but you also score points by killing the alligators that infest the river.

Extra points are to be gained by transferring the scientists in groups, although your boat has a maximum capacity of nine scientists. This makes matters a bit more tricky, because all hands will be lost if your boat hits an obstacle. Therefore, you must choose whether to go for a high score and risk losing everything or play safe by transferring your passengers one at a time. To make matters worse, a helicopter — an aircraft in the Spectrum version —

is likely to appear at any time and drop mines in the water, which must be blown up before you can proceed any further.

The Vic-20 version is conveniently supplied in cartridge format to avoid the tedium of cassette loading. Here, there is an option of either three or six stranded scientists and you have six lives per game. Furthermore, the points scored in each 'life' are carried over into subsequent incarnations, which makes things considerably easier. In this version, though, you have an extra three rivers to navigate.

River Rescue is an all-action, shoot-anything-that-moves type of game that has been carefully designed to make the play difficult enough to keep you occupied for some time, although it could be argued that it lacks the imagination necessary to make it really special.

River Rescue: For the 48K Spectrum, £6.95
For the Atari, £8.95
For the Commodore 64, £7.95
For the Vic-20 (unexpanded), £9.95

Publishers: Creative Sparks, 1st Floor, Thomson House, 296 Farnborough Road, Farnborough, Hants.

Author: Kevin Buckner

Joysticks: Kempston/Interface 1 (Spectrum)
Commodore-compatible joysticks (Vic-20 and Commodore 64)
Atari-compatible joysticks (Atari)

Format: Cassette;
Cartridge (Vic-20 only)

To The Rescue

River Rescue is seen here running on a Spectrum. The first photograph shows the title page, which gives a good indication of the graphics to come. The second photograph shows the game in progress. The boat is carrying one scientist to safety where he can join the others who have been rescued.

