

SOFT CENTRE

*The third in our series of
pull-out-and-keep
software surveys*

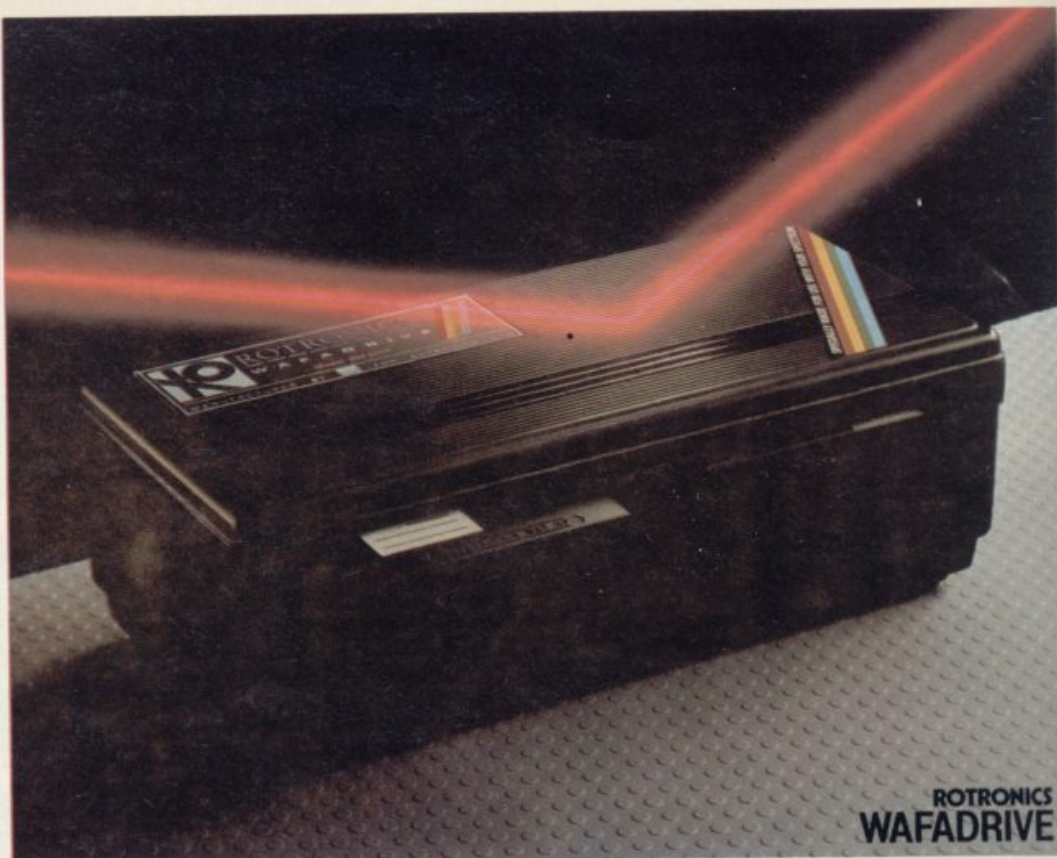


How much would you expect to pay for a dual 128K fast access storage system for your Spectrum that included Centronics and RS232 interfaces and free word processing software as standard?

Chances are it's a lot more than £129.95. But this is what will buy you the incredible Rotronics Wafadrive unit. There are no extras - this price includes VAT and postage.

Integrated System

The Wafadrive is a complete system which contains the micro interface, two 128K drives, RS232 and Centronics ports, all in one attractively-styled, compact unit. There is a minimum of connecting leads and no extra boxes to clutter the desk top. Like the majority of professional systems, the units are dual drive. This offers the optimum balance between system flexibility and cost. Built-in serial and parallel interfaces allow the direct connection of just about any popular printer.



A fast reliable dual-drive storage system

Fast and Reliable

The Wafadrive achieves very fast loading and saving, but not at the expense of reliability. Extensive research and the use of high grade materials ensure that the Wafadrive will give years of dependable operation. Data integrity is on a par with floppy disk. The fully interchangeable wafers are available in three sizes - 128K, 64K and 16K. Low capacity wafers give faster access. They are therefore most suitable for program development applications. The high capacity wafers are suitable for more general data storage. Loading rate is well over ten times as fast as cassette!

Software

Armed with the comprehensive user manual,

blank wafer and word processor supplied, you can use your Wafadrive straight away. There is also a rapidly growing range of software to enable the programmer and games player to exploit the Wafadrive system to the full.

Wafadrive for the 16/48K

Spectrum is available now. Versions for other popular home computers are under development.

Send a 16p stamp for a full colour brochure and information on software and accessories.



FOR USE WITH THE SINCLAIR SPECTRUM

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___ ROTRONICS Spectrum Wafadrive(s)	@ £129.95 each
___ 16K wafer(s)	@ £3.45 each
___ 64K wafer(s)	@ £3.65 each
___ 128K wafer(s)	@ £3.95 each
___ Heathrow/Nightflight II (48K: Hewson)	@ £14.95 each
___ Space Wars/Seiddab Attack/Luna Attack (48K: Hewson)	@ £14.95 each
___ Bear Bover/Wong's Loopy Laundry/World Cup (48K: Artic)	@ £9.95 each
___ Starbike (48K: Softek)	@ £7.95 each
___ The Artist - graphic utility (48K: Softek)	@ £9.95 each
___ ZAP machine code development package (48K: Hewson)	@ £19.95 each
___ RS232 lead	@ £9.95 each
___ Centronics lead	@ £9.95 each

All prices include VAT and P&P

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Buffer Adventure

BUFFER MICRO has not strayed very far from home to find a setting for **Buffer Adventure** for 48K Spectrum. It has used its shop as the major location, though if some parts of it are really as structurally unsound as they prove to be in the program, the staff had better take care. The adventure is pure text, designed on the Quill interpreter.

You must search through the shop network of apparently ruinous rooms for a credit card. When you find it you will naturally be able to buy all the electronic goodies you have always wanted. The crumbling emporium has a number of staff members around who, even if they are swinging from the chandeliers, may help or aggravate you in some way. A tip — watch for moody Mike, a dangerous chap to cross.

The program style is amusing and reasonably intricate in the difficulties to be overcome. If becoming severely puzzled is the sign of a reasonable adventure, this program meets that test. There is every chance you will be spending a long time working out what to do with a sheep. A sheep?

Richard Price

BUFFER ADVENTURE
Memory: 48K
Price: £6.95
Gilbert Factor: 6

Butterfly

BUTTERFLY, from Pulsonic, is a simple game programmed entirely in Basic and consequently is rather slow when compared to other modern arcade games. You are a spider, chasing and eating a minimum of 12 butterflies per minute to survive.

The hazards of life on the windowsill are represented by the purple spider eater which lurks behind the curtains and who looks like an over-fed Pac-man. A joystick would help in raising the game from the level of mediocrity but unfortunately it is not designed to be joystick-compatible. Being in Basic, that could be remedied easily. Also the spider is a little slow to react and though it is possible to catch your prey, a good deal of practice would be necessary to enable you to catch the required 12.

Unfortunately, little attention has been paid to producing an interesting screen layout. The spider is fairly convincing but the butterflies are somewhat lacking in sparkle and the background is dull. Although the program costs only £1.99, it is what one would expect to find as a magazine listing, not as a commercial program.

John Lambert



BUTTERFLY
Memory: 48K
Price: £1.99
Gilbert Factor: 4



Character Generator

ONE OF the disadvantages of the Spectrum is that its character set, along with the built in UDGs are worthy but not particularly exciting for use in one's programs.

ISP has produced a program which, while it offers six sets of characters, allows you to design a full set from scratch, save it to tape and then put in your own program by using two simple POKES to call it when required.

The Character Generator is a very user-friendly program, menu-driven, with good screen prompts and simple keyboard drills. It will appeal to even the most unconfident programmer as it produces impressive results quickly and easily.

Characters are defined by cursor movements on an 8 x 8 grid. With a full erase or fill capability, endless doodling and re-shaping is possible. Individual characters can be displayed separately or you can view the full set. UDGs are defined in the same way.

In your programs, a set can be used in conjunction with the standard Sinclair face and can be switched in and out at will by two POKES. The six sample sets vary in quality but the Gothic script is particularly impressive.

Richard Price

CHARACTER GENERATOR
Memory: 48K
Price: £8.95
Gilbert Factor: 8

The Computer Cookbook

THE SPECTRUM dons a white hat and apron in a new program from Bug-Byte, **The Computer Cookbook**. The package comprises two cassettes, the first containing a menu planner and the second details of recipes.

It is difficult to see how anyone would prefer loading a lengthy program to obtain a recipe rather than opening a cookbook but Bug-Byte thinks otherwise and employed a respected freelance chef, Ian Hoare, to provide a series of recipes for dishes both traditional and exotic.

The recipes are reasonably clear, if necessarily brief, given memory limitations. One useful feature is the facility to determine the correct quantities for any number of people up to 200.

The menu planner is of rather more interest, permitting you to choose a meal based on the size of your purse or the ingredients in your store cupboard.

When all is said and done the program remains a souped-up database.

Genuine cooks would do better to buy a general-purpose filing program and use it to store their favourite recipes.

Chris Bourne



THE COMPUTER COOKBOOK
Memory: 48K
Price: £9.50
Gilbert Factor: 5

K-Tel 48K SPECTRUM



Defusion & Worms

DEFUSION and **Worms** are the latest K-Tel double offering. **Defusion** sets you the task of defusing bombs. You move Happy Larry along paths of blocks, avoiding static booby traps and collecting bonus-point flags.

The Hitman, a boot, chases Larry and will kill him if he can. The bombs also have a count-down timer which is shown on them. As Larry moves along the paths the green blocks are exhausted and he cannot return over them unless he moves the nearest path towards him.

The graphics are blocky and uninteresting and the movement is slow. There is a Pac-man-ish style about it but the concept is dated.

Worms, written apparently entirely in Basic, is a seven-screen game in which the player must manoeuvre the head of an ever-growing worm either to collect various objects or avoid others.

The graphics are simple UDG shapes, movement is slow, the idea is rather pedestrian. Little sense of involvement is possible, though very young players may derive some pleasure from it.

Richard Price

DEFUSION/WORMS

Memory: 48K

Price: £5.95

Joystick: Kempston

Gilbert Factor: 3

Dix Mille

DIX MILLE, from CCS, is based on an old French dice game which is broadly similar to the English game of Poker Dice, although it uses six dice.

The principle is very simple. You throw the dice, various combinations are allotted scores, and you then decide which dice to retain, which to throw again, or whether to pass them to the next player.

It can be played by up to six players, of which the computer may or may not be one. The instructions on the cassette insert are not entirely clear but by playing with the computer for a few throws the process becomes simple.

The dice are portrayed graphically but that is the only graphic content to the game. Therefore the screen is not particularly attractive. It seems to be the kind of game which is better played with real dice; the computer adds nothing and even seems to take away some of the potential excitement.

The makers claim that it requires the "strategy of a Bridge player and the dash of a Poker player" but it is a little difficult to see the game in those exalted terms.

John Lambert

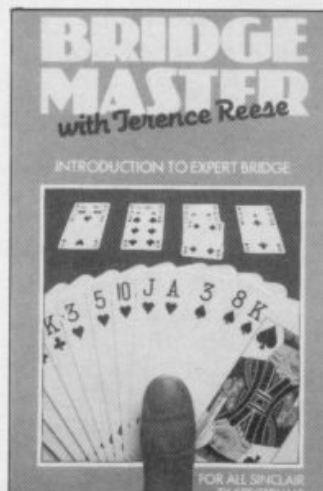


DIX MILLE

Memory: 48K

Price: £2.99

Gilbert Factor: 5



Expert Bridgemaster

EXPERT **Bridgemaster** combines a computer program with a parallel audio cassette commentary to introduce those who already know a certain amount about the game to more expert play.

Terence Reese, bridge correspondent for *The Observer* and a player of international standing, acted as consultant in the preparation of the program. The tutor package uses 26 prepared deals which are loaded with the operating program and bases its play on the Acol bidding system.

It is possible to play each hand without the voice-over and then return to it to analyse the hand. Not all the hands are full hands, as some are used to demonstrate more advanced techniques like squeeze-play, cue bids, trump coups and the like. The computer will play the card automatically if required or alternatively you may play all the hands yourself.

A display of all hands is possible at any time and the hands can be re-started or re-dealt, though in the original form. There is no built-in print-out option. There is a bidding screen and a play screen.

Richard Price

EXPERT BRIDGEMASTER

Memory: 16K

Price: £12.95

Gilbert Factor: 7

The Fall of Rome

HISTORIAN Edward Gibbon in his book *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* reckoned it was Christianity which caused the end of the empire, corrupting the moral fibre of that warlike race. **The Fall of Rome** from ASP Software places the blame firmly on those hordes of Visigoths, Goths, Ostrogoths, Huns, Saxons and countless other exotically-named barbarian tribes.

The Fall of Rome is a strategic war game in which you have to steer the vast empire through 60 years of fierce fighting as the barbarians march into your provinces. At the beginning of the game in 395BC you control the Mediterranean and most of southern Europe, from Britain in the west to Syria in the east. Your task is to survive for 12 turns of five years each and try to preserve as much of your empire as possible.

The mechanics are moderately simple for a war game. Each province generates an income which can be used to maintain permanent legions and raise new ones, as well as temporary units which disband at the end of a term. Units have offensive and defensive values and while some must remain in their province, others can be moved to a neighbouring province as reinforcements. The money can also be shifted and it is possible to use the order in which you deal with the provinces to transfer the cash a considerable distance through a chain of provinces.

When you have finished arranging your forces the computer takes a leisurely minute or two to generate the barbarian hordes, some of which appear to breed like flies. You then have the opportunity to fight.

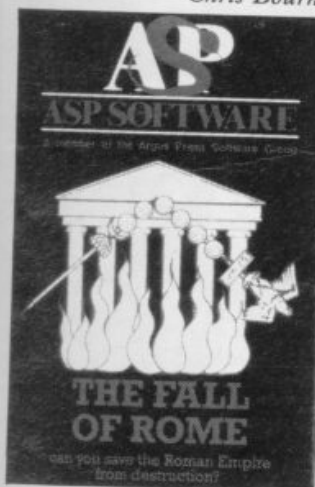
The game is slow, much of it being written in Basic, and can become frustrating at times but requires much in-

telligent thought to play skillfully. There is one serious bug in the program; it is possible, if a province has become isolated, that there is nowhere where money can be transferred from that province. Unfortunately the program does not tell you at the time, so that if you try to transfer money you will be asked continually to transfer it somewhere else, with no possibility of escaping the loop. Perhaps ASP will clear the problem in future editions.

Bugs apart, the game appears to catch the flavour and likely events of the times reasonably accurately. All the provinces and tribes are given their Latin names, the map is clear, and the instructions adequate. We found that it is virtually impossible to retain Gaul and Illyria — modern France and Yugoslavia — for more than a few turns and, as happened eventually in history, the barbarians manage to capture Italy, leaving you to fight on in the east. At the end of the game you are given a rating based on the resources remaining.

In itself it is a fine game but its faults, which could so easily be rectified, make it unlikely to win too many converts.

Chris Bourne



THE FALL OF ROME
Memory: 48K
Price: £6.99
Gilbert Factor: 6



Flix

FLIX from Softricks is an attempt to reproduce one of those popular plastic puzzles in which the little squares have to be manipulated to reform a scrambled picture. The picture is that well known image from Vogue of the woman in a blue dress created for the Spectrum by Print 'n Plotter.

There are four difficulty levels ranging from division of the picture into a 3×4 grid to 32×24 . There is also the facility to LOAD your own picture for scrambling; two extra ones are provided. A third option is to attempt the competition in which the picture is already scrambled at the highest level of difficulty.

Softricks offers a Microvitec colour monitor with a Spectrum interface to the person who can solve the puzzle in the fewest number of moves. It is reasonably difficult to unscramble the picture at the easiest level. Overall, the game is very well-designed and fun to play, with easy-to-use controls.

John Lambert

FLIX
Memory: 48K
Price: £5.95
Gilbert Factor: 7

48/80 Forth

FROM East London Robotics, **48/80 Forth** is a full, integer implementation of the language, based on Fig Forth, with additional words defined to use the colour, sound and graphics capabilities of the Spectrum. While it will work on the 48K machine it can also be used by users who have the ELR 80K memory upgrade.

To use the Forth editor it has to be loaded from tape and will give a total of 16 screens, 32K on the 80K version. Each screen consists of 1,024 bytes, made up of 16 lines of 64 characters.

The instruction booklet supplied with the tape gives a very brief introduction to the language and shows how a word can be defined. It also explains the operation of the stack and has a few examples to show loops, conditionals and variables. Beginners, however, will need to buy a book on Forth to obtain the best from the program.

The booklet has a complete glossary of all the predefined words and the appendices list the error messages, memory maps and the necessary information to write your own machine code definitions.

Overall, this is a reasonable but average implementation. If you have the memory upgrade, however, it becomes a far better proposition because of the space available.

John Lambert



48/80 FORTH
Memory: 48/80K
Price: £14.95
Gilbert Factor: 7

Friendly Face

MICRODRIVE UTILITY

ADDS microdrive commands to basic
MERGES with Masterfile & Tasword Two
COPIES operating system to cartridges



Friendly Face

THE FRIENDLY FACE microdrive utility, from Monitor, is intended to provide a user-friendly software interface between the user and a microdrive.

It is designed so that it can be MERGED into your programs and will then give a standardised method of LOADING and SAVEing to tape or drive.

Included with the standard form are two additional versions designed to be MERGED with Tasword 2 from Tasman Software and Masterfile from Campbell Systems.

Part of the **Friendly Face** advertising claims that it "adds microdrive commands to Basic". Perhaps someone should tell the company that all the microdrive commands are already in Basic.

If you are experiencing difficulty becoming used to a microdrive, this program may be of some use but £7.95, or £14.95 on cartridge, for a 1K Basic program is scarcely good value.

John Lambert

FRIENDLY FACE
Memory: 16K
Price: £7.95
Gilbert Factor: 4

FROOT LOOP



NTD Software

Froot Loop

FROOT LOOP is a very standard arcade game in which you have to eat apples and, occasionally, blue bananas, while avoiding the guards and making your way round the screens. They are divided into progressively smaller units.

The game is designed to be used either with keyboard control or with a Kempston joystick, which works satisfactorily. There is a range of skill levels, of which the advertising material reports that number six is "impossible".

This is scarcely an exaggeration. It is, however, almost equally difficult to determine from the instructions how to blast your way through impenetrable walls.

There is a time limit to the game and it becomes progressively more difficult, especially if you make mistakes and lose lives when the guard increases speed.

The graphics, though smooth, are essentially boring and the concept is far from original. It is doubtful if it would enthrall even the most enthusiastic arcade player for long.

John Lambert

Laserwarp

THE PROSPECT of winning £100 for the month's highest score of more than 5,000 may well attract people to Mikro-Gen **Laserwarp**. The program is another variation on the Space Invaders/Galaxians format.

The laser base moves from left to right across the bottom line and you fire away. There are nine progressive screens, each featuring a different bunch of aliens. They will throw bombs and missiles at the laserbase as they slice the sky or whirl around. Some go straight on at you and not all can be blasted, leaving you no option but to race across from one side to the other, dodging all the time.

There is a practice mode which allows the player to enter and play on any one of the nine screens. In the final screen the Master, evil threat to the entire universe, swanks behind his force field. If you survive long enough it may be possible to terminate him.

The graphics are strong and bright and move at a smart rate. The laserbase fires at a slow speed, so aiming is necessary — you cannot just lay waste whole swathes of aliens. **Laserwarp** is a tough, zappy program but cannot be called an original concept.

Richard Price



Les Flics

THE INITIAL difficulty you encounter with **Les Flics** is reading the cassette cover. In its wisdom, PSS decided to write it in Clouseauspeak, that devastating version of English employed by Peter Sellers in the *Pink Panther* movies. Fortunately for your health, you are not called on to play the scourge of the Surété but the pink-tailed thief who, doubtless for reasons of copyright, is trying to steal a gemstone called the Purple Puma.

The idea is all great fun but the game is rather less than the sum of its concepts. The main screen is a town map; you have to run round the streets avoiding the police, Les Flics of the title, trying to discover the whereabouts of the Purple Puma.

The graphics are poorly-designed; little attempt has been made to control colour overflow when moving characters collide and the people and objects are for the most part single-square characters of little visual interest.

PSS wasted a good opportunity in **Les Flics**; the game could so easily have been a Spectrum classic. Instead, it is just a run-of-the-mill fix for joystick junkies.

Chris Bourne

Make Music

MAKE MUSIC, published by Buffer Micro Ltd, is one of the best music programs available. It permits you to create three-track harmonies, using two octaves of piano-style keyboard for each track. It is designed to be used in conjunction with any sound board which uses the AY-3-8912 chip, for example Fuller, ZON or Timedata.

Using the ZXM Timedata board, you can produce good-quality harmonies with a minimum of practice. Unlike some other music programs, it allows you to hear the music as you play. It also remembers your tunes. So you play on one track at a time and hear the other two while you play. You can also ask the program to repeat sections of music automatically, or to move rapidly forwards or backwards through a recorded tune.

The volume and tone of each track can be altered and recorded tunes can be edited. The only disadvantage to **Make Music** is that the instructions are not entirely clear and so the exact order of operations needs some thought but that does not detract from its overall quality.

John Lambert



FROOT LOOP

Memory: 48K
Price: £3.00
Gilbert Factor: 5

LASERWARP

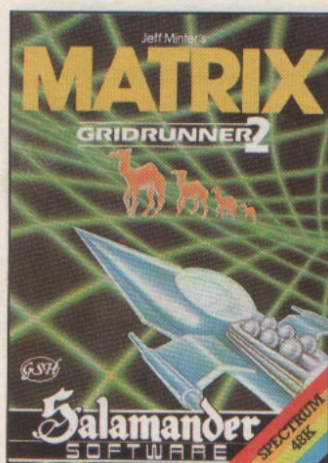
Memory: 48K
Price: £6.95
Joystick: Kempston
Gilbert Factor: 6

LES FLICS

Memory: 48K
Price: £5.95
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor
Gilbert Factor: 6

MAKE MUSIC

Memory: 48K
Price: £6.95
Gilbert Factor: 8



Matrix

MATRIX from Salamander is the second in Jeff Minter's Grid Wars series, and is based on the arcade classic Centipede. The centipedes move along a grid, which is gathering solar energy for Earth, and as well as attempting to collide with your spaceship they may also drop bombs on you.

At later levels the droids are aided by deflector shields which send your laser fire scattering in all directions except the one at which you aimed, and the now notorious cosmic cameloids, whose presence on the screen decreases your score until you have eliminated them.

Spectrum owners accustomed to the complex graphics and vast playing areas may feel dismissive about the Minter style. He writes simple games which are challenging and appeal particularly to zapper addicts.

The real strength of Matrix is its sheer speed of operation and the delicate game balance, which seems pitched at just the proper level to convince you that you could easily improve your high score if only you had another attempt. That is one of the core secrets of an addictive game.

Chris Bourne

MATRIX

Memory: 48K

Price: £6.95

Joystick: Kempston, Cursor

Gilbert Factor: 7

Micro Mouse

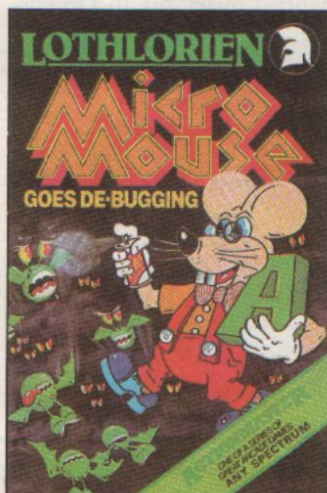
HAVE YOU wondered how your computer corrects the errors in your programs? Electronics buffs may mutter something about currents or pulses but if you have played Micro Mouse by Lothlorien you will know that there is a harassed rodent rushing around the Basic lines spraying bugs with Datakill.

The screen display shows a short program. The determined insects pace about stealing essential figures and letters from the display while Mouse, our helpful hero, goes to the corner storage boxes to collect and re-locate them in their proper place.

If Mouse is carrying a letter it is unable to use its can of spray. The more he is trodden on by the bugs, the more letters are interfered with. If he does not get on with the job fast enough the system will crash.

Action is smoothly machine-coded and the graphics are attractive and colourful. The idea is novel and quirky though there is not the excitement which gives an arcade game a compulsive appeal. Despite that, the game becomes progressively difficult and provides good entertainment in a new style.

Richard Price



MICRO MOUSE

Memory: 16K

Price: £5.95

Joystick: Kempston

Gilbert Factor: 6

SPECTRUM MONITOR



Monitor

THE LATEST Picturesque version of its Monitor program, 2.1, for the 16K and 48K Spectrum has all the features of the old versions, plus some new ones. It is also microdrive-compatible. Facilities are provided to output to a range of commercial printer interfaces—Kempston, Euroelectronics, Morex, all of Hilderbay and Interface One, in addition to the normal ZX printer.

Being one of the few monitors which can work on the 16K machine. Picturesque has a cult following and it will not be disappointed.

The new commands allow the 16K monitor to be used in conjunction with the 48K assembler and include a trace facility. That permits a program to be single-stepped with a continuous front panel display of all the registers. Breakpoints can be set separately from the main program and a skip to the next RET can be performed.

Users unfamiliar with monitor programs will find it reasonably user-friendly. All the necessary commands are available—display, insert, delete, re-locate, fill—and a disassembler which does not shoot off the screen before you have read it.

John Lambert

MONITOR

Memory: 16K

Price: £7.50

Gilbert Factor: 7

Moons of Tantalus

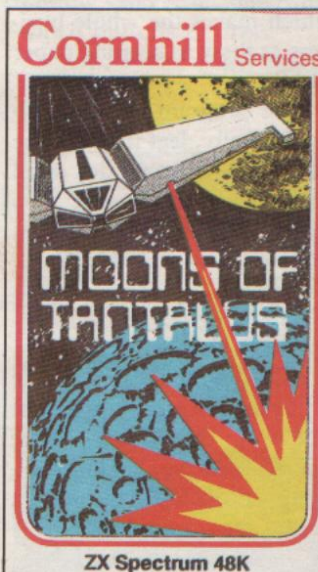
THERE ARE three stages to the Moons of Tantalus, an arcade game with adventure plot. While protecting your moon mining community from attack, you have to refuel a rocket; then you must fly to another moon and try to establish an orbit; finally you must destroy the attackers based there.

To play you have to go through a very slow and confusing set of instructions, all set in double-height characters. Those instructions and the control keys are not included in the cassette insert, so you must remember to note them before they disappear. Once into the game the graphics are good and move very smoothly.

Unfortunately, a bug in the program appears which, while it makes it possible for you to increase your score indefinitely, also means that if you begin to refuel you are shot to pieces immediately.

It is not an original scenario but the execution is novel. The game, except for the unfortunate bug, is well produced.

John Lambert



MOONS OF TANTALUS

Memory: 48K

Price: £5.95

Gilbert Factor: 5



Multi File

A DATABASE program needs to be straightforward in operation and should require as little fiddling with the tape recorder as is humanly possible. The ISP **Multi File** is a little complicated in this area.

The program offers a record-card-format filing system with up to 10 headed fields. Each field name can be up to 10 characters long, with the ensuing data allowed up to 19.

Data is contained in separate date files which must be loaded into the control program. The instructions recommend that you keep a written note of program, file names and security codes, which makes the whole business as fussy as keeping paper files.

The program will sort alphabetically, leaf through the cards, produce an index of all first field data, and also search for a specific entry in the 100 or so records in each data file.

The program is well-presented but the screen prompts are vague at times. The search option did not live up to the promise of the leaflet and the loading system, probably inevitably, causes minor aggravation.

Richard Price

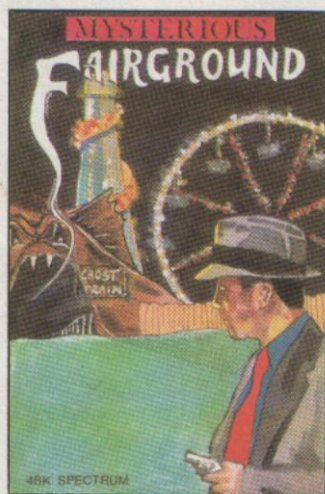
Mysterious Fairground

IN **Mysterious Fairground** from Buffer Micro the five treasures are concealed inside the stalls and rides of a fairground. Some of the rides are inhabited by extremely unpleasant characters and progression is a tough business, involving some ingenuity on the player's part.

Keyboard entry is the standard verb/noun combination, as always with Quill derivatives, and locations are labelled at the top of the screen. A little help is available which you will definitely need at certain points. There is very little interaction with other characters, that being difficult on the interpreter used. For those who prefer the type of adventure where speech and combat sequences are included that is a definite limitation.

Mysterious Fairground, although giving a rather bleak, empty feeling at times, is no easy nut to crack and compares favourably to other ready-to-wear text games. If the setting appeals to you it will undoubtedly get those brain cells straining.

Richard Price



New Venture

LATEST RELEASE from a new software company, Falcon Computing, is **New Venture**. It is a management game where you are put in charge of a shop and you can choose the type of goods you want to sell. They cover newspapers, sports equipment, clothes, shoes and groceries. While others have risen from such lowly beginnings it is unlikely you will join them.

Each month you have to re-stock and is often left to chance as to which line will sell well. For example, as a newsagent it is almost impossible to sell more than £500 worth of newspapers from a city centre shop and while fireworks sold well in November, the gift items flopped miserably in December.

To liven the game you are offered the chance to buy sundry luxury items at different stages. That might be a microcomputer, a holiday, or even a fall-out shelter, most of which you will not be able to afford. The ultimate goal in the venture is to be offered a Falcmobile.

If you like this kind of game and do not want to strain your intellect, it will pass a rainy afternoon.

John Lambert

Odyssey of Hope

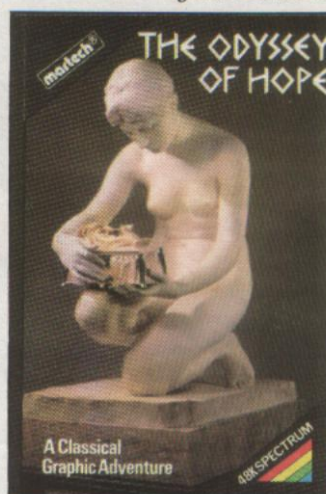
THE ODYSSEY of Hope from Martech is an interesting adventure game based on the ancient legend of Pandora. She was the first mortal woman, created by the gods of Olympus, and because of her insatiable curiosity she released into the world all kinds of diseases and misfortunes. Fortunately, Hope was released at the same time but that has been stolen by some unnamed evil and your mission in the adventure is to recover it.

The story is well-introduced with some amusing graphics. As with most mythical adventures, you need no knowledge of Greek mythology to complete the adventure successfully, although it can give some helpful clues.

The various locations are well laid out and reasonably complex, with the frequent hazard of being drowned or bitten by snakes.

There is a certain amount of independent action in the game — that is to say characters move round you a little — but it is not a game to be compared to such giants as Valhalla or The Hobbit.

John Lambert

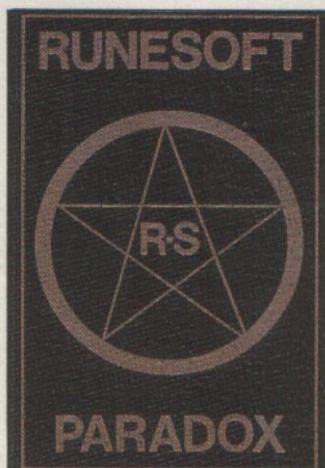


MULTI FILE
Memory: 48K
Price: £9.95
Gilbert Factor: 6

MYSTERIOUS FAIRGROUND
Memory: 48K
Price: £6.95
Gilbert Factor: 6

NEW VENTURE
Memory: 48K
Price: £5.95
Gilbert Factor: 4

ODYSSEY OF HOPE
Memory: 48K
Price: £6.95
Gilbert Factor: 6



Paradox

MOST ADVENTURE players will begin their travels by exploring and then constructing a consistent location map. If the locations are variable, appearing first in one spot then another, it may well cause considerable irritation at any point in the game.

Paradox from Runesoft seems to make a virtue of that problem. The insert claims that the magical world created in the program is full of nightmare and hallucination. Realities, and locations, change constantly.

How this has been achieved on the Quill interpreter is difficult to see but it certainly militates against the urge to explore. The reviewer after perishing miserably, quickly, on more than 50 occasions, soon lost his patience with the world of **Paradox**.

The program is a pure text adventure divided, we are told, into four main sections. They are the Tunnel, where death may well be the happiest way out, since quitting is not allowed; the Gameboard, the Crystal Palace and the Rooms of the Magician. The Lords of Chaos have chosen you to guide their disorientated hero. Chaos certainly rules the program and you will need persistency and clairvoyance to get anywhere.

Richard Price

PARADOX

Memory: 48K
Price: £5.95
Gilbert Factor: 2

Reichswald

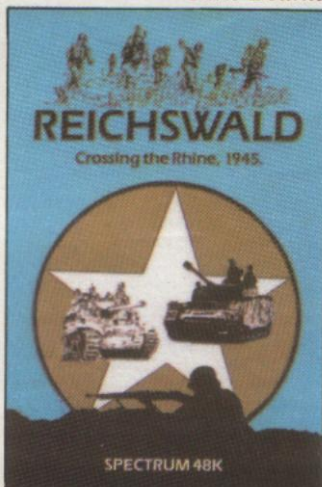
REICHSWALD simulates the crossing of the Rhine by the allied armies in 1945 and you are in control of units of the American Ninth Army. Your task is to capture one of the bridges or, alternatively, inflict serious damage on the enemy.

You have a number of armoured and infantry regiments, engineers and reconnaissance units; they move across a map laid out in squares; speed of movement depends on terrain. The fastest type of movement is what non-wargamers would call very slow.

Once the pieces have been moved you must wait for the computer to move the German forces and then conduct any battles. The computer takes several minutes to go through its moves and the resulting battle becomes a tedious war of attrition.

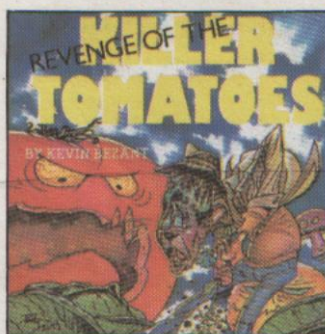
The surprise is that dedicated wargamers may enjoy the masochistic experience. We for our part cannot understand why M W Gamesworld has managed to transfer all the disadvantages of simulation wargaming to the Spectrum when computers are so clearly suited to writing complex games which can be played at speed.

Chris Bourne



REICHSWALD

Memory: 48K
Price: £5.95
Gilbert Factor: 3



Revenge of the Killer Tomatoes

VEGETARIANS may be deeply disturbed by the warped concept of **Revenge of the Killer Tomatoes**, from Visions. Set in a rapidly-mutating market garden, the game features crazed tomatoes, psychotic swedes, manic mushrooms and mobile cabbages, all of which cause Smiffy, the weeder, a pile of grief.

To earn pay and points the player must steer Smiffy between the moving furrows of cabbages and grab the weeds which are around. Every time Smiffy treads on a cabbage he loses points. Meantime the screwy salad items float about the screen, chasing the gardener. They kill on contact. There are 10 levels of difficulty, customised keyboard movement and the option of Kempston joystick.

The main point in the game is the movement, as weeds appear relatively infrequently. Evading the moving lines of cabbage is similar to the Frogger style of play and the rampaging vegetables are like heavy traffic, though they will divert frequently to chase Smiffy. At lower levels of play the evasion portions are a little dull but the action develops into more complexity on higher levels.

Richard Price

REVENGE OF THE KILLER TOMATOES

Memory: 48K
Price: £6.95
Joystick: Kempston
Gilbert Factor: 6

River Rescue

IF YOU have piloted a power boat, forget **River Rescue**. The real thing is far more exciting than the game, by Creative Sparks, which leaves much to be desired as a commercial product.

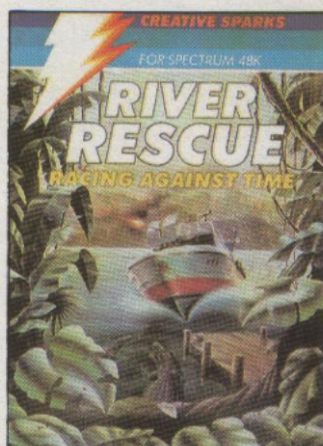
Perhaps the most glaring fault is the complete lack of instructions. Nowhere in the program or on the cassette insert is there any indication of which keys to press to obtain joystick and two-player options; there is not even a message explaining how to start the game.

If you manage to press the appropriate keys you will be rewarded with a green background and a blue river which scrolls horizontally. You have to pilot your powerboat, avoiding crocodiles and logs, and negotiating islands and bends.

The boat has a gun which can be used to clear objects from the river if you feel aggressive. The crocodiles disintegrate immediately but the logs require three hits.

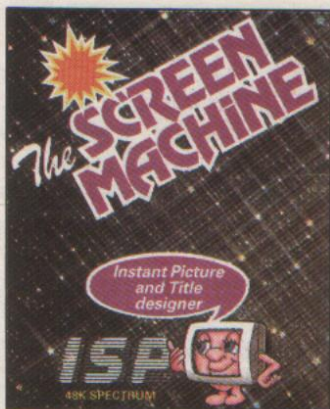
If your taste runs to Skramble without the bombs, aliens and fuel dumps you will no doubt be overjoyed to play **River Rescue** — assuming you can determine which buttons to press.

Chris Bourne



RIVER RESCUE

Memory: 48K
Price: £6.95
Joystick: Sinclair, Kempston.
Gilbert Factor: 3



Screen Machine

USING the Spectrum's functions it becomes laborious and time-consuming to produce a screen display which can be used as a title or loading logo. For the average programmer it is much simpler to use a custom-built screen editor on which complicated designs can be roughed-out, altered and then saved on tape when complete.

The **ISP Screen Machine** provides a flexible and relatively simple system for the production of such displays.

Circles, arcs and blocks can be drawn, filled or unfilled. Paper, ink and border colours can be altered without affecting the design. There is a graphics mode with a full set of UDGs which are useful in building a design.

The designs are based mainly on character cell blocks and the user should not expect to produce a fine-line masterpiece. There does not appear to be a printer function.

The general impression is of a versatile editor which will be a boon to the amateur programmer, helping him to enliven his efforts and giving very acceptable screen displays for the minimum of effort.

Richard Price

SCREEN MACHINE
Memory: 48K
Price: £8.95
Gilbert Factor: 7

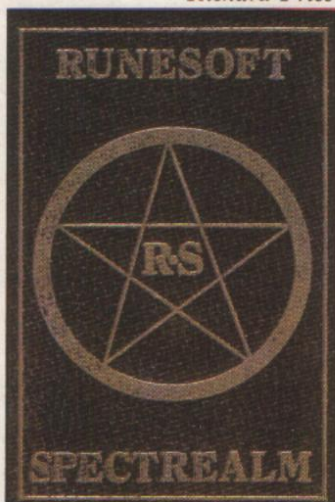
Spectrealm

ECONOMIC simulation and strategy games can often be either mind-boggling in their complexity or too simple to give much stimulus to continue. **Spectrealm** from Runesoft, is fairly well between these two extremes. Spectria is a rather under-developed land with a corn-based agricultural economy and no real assets at the beginning of play. As governor of the small barren place, it is your task to ensure that the people remain well-fed and contented, mainly so that you can make sure of re-election at the end of your term of office. One year is the equivalent of a turn. The aim is to remain in power for 100 years — long-living folks, these Spectricians.

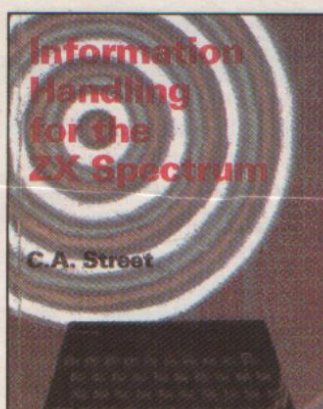
Everything depends on good harvests. A bad year will bring famine and discontent and those electors who are still alive may not take too kindly to starving.

If you lose, only suicide remains. **Spectrealm** is a convincing and well-paced program which could easily become compulsive if you enjoy strategy games. It also features a full load/save facility to let you get to bed during an unfinished game.

Richard Price



SPECTREALM
Memory: 48K
Price: £5.95
Gilbert Factor: 6



Spectrum Information Handling

SPECTRUM Information Handling Routines is a collection of 30 programs used in the book *Information Handling for the ZX Spectrum*, published by McGraw Hill. The book is a good introduction, containing many ideas and explanations. It covers basic programming, loops, branching, strings and Boolean algebra in detail. Then it moves to simple data file handling, and various methods of collecting, checking and organising the data.

A few of the programs use short machine code routines. They are held in the program as **DATA** statements and **POKEd** into memory as required. In one program it is put into a **REM** statement, with no warning as to what could happen with a micro-drive attached.

It seems excessive to charge £6.95 for a tape which can be used only with a book when that book already contains the listings. The only reason to buy the tape can be laziness on the part of the purchaser. In the first half of the tape, for example, the programs probably do not average more than 20 lines apiece, and one has only eight.

John Lambert

SPECTRUM INFORMATION HANDLING
Memory: 16K
Price: £6.95
Gilbert Factor: 3

Spoof

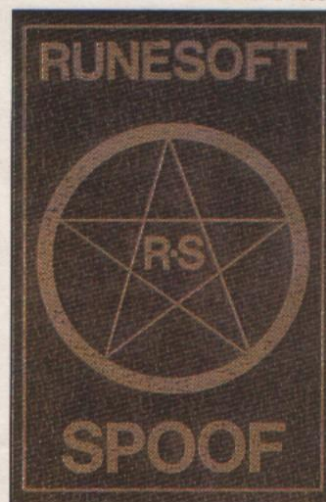
AFTER a long career of portentous and mysterious adventures the grim, hardened explorer may well have lost his sense of humour somewhere in the depths of his copious backpack. Never fear **Spoof**, by Runesoft, will go some way to restoring that essential character trait.

Using the Quill interpreter, this classic text adventure invites you to participate in the hunt for Spoof the Magic Dragon. That may well be intended to mislead, as there appear to be a number of other sub-quests.

As you leave the obligatory village in your role as Yaw Ning, the deeply-bored citizen, you will discover signs pointing to such typical destinations as The Secret Mysterious Hidden Cavern.

Despite the spoofy style the adventure is well-constructed and contains all the necessary problems to make an adventure the brain-racking experience it should be. The authors have made good use of the Gilsoft system and its minor limitations do not intrude on the action. The humour gives a real lift to the program without interfering with the journey and its problems.

Richard Price



SPOOF
Memory: 48K
Price: £5.95
Gilbert Factor: 7



Stuart Henry's Pop Quiz

RADIO disc jockey Stuart Henry lends his name to **Stuart Henry's Pop Quiz**, a program for music fans from Bellflower Software. The program is more than a simple quiz. There are 768 questions spread over six rounds and the computer chooses questions at random. Each round also has a mystery tune, and each time you answer a question correctly you have the opportunity to guess another note in the tune. The first player to guess the complete tune wins the round.

The questions start easy and gradually become more difficult, until round six provides some really esoteric teasers which will sort the genuine pop buffs from the rest of the herd. The questions cover a range of music styles, from the early 1960s, through glam-rock to punk and the new wave.

The response time for the questions and answers is fair, although it is a pity more use could not have been made of sound in the program, given that it is about music.

A fine quiz program and one that deserves to do well.

Chris Bourne

STUART HENRY'S POP QUIZ
Memory: 48K
Price: £5.75
Gilbert Factor: 7

Super Bridge

IF YOU are a beginner at Bridge you will find Buffer's **Super Bridge** a useful supplement to the terrors of the card table.

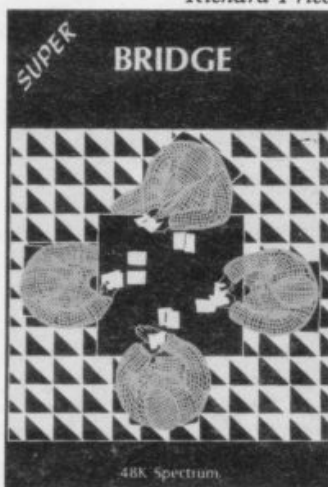
The program is not intended as a tutor, though the instructions contain the rules of Bridge and some useful tips. As the program is designed round the Acol system, some explanation of that bidding convention might also have been included but there are plenty of books if you are interested.

Super Bridge is a playing program and has three main displays, all of which are muted colours and easy on the eye, an important feature for a game which can last a long time.

Screen prompts leave no doubt as to what you need to do next. At the end of each hand there is the choice of viewing all four hands or going to the next deal.

Super Bridge is a versatile and well-made program which will assist players in live games. The only criticism, albeit minor, is that the program allows only one human player. With an option for two there would have been the opportunity for a pair to sharpen their skills.

Richard Price



SUPER BRIDGE
Memory: 48K
Price: £6.95
Gilbert Factor: 7



Temple of Vran

THE PERILS and deep places of the magic mountain lie behind our reluctant adventurer in **Temple of Vran**, second of the programs in the Ket Trilogy from Incentive Software. The sound of running water and the scent of lush grasslands greets him as he emerges into daylight again. He has retained some useful items to see him through the troubles to follow and must now search for the temple of the mad sorcerer.

Those who have played **Mountains of Ket** will know that text adventures from Incentive are well-crafted and abound in tough puzzles. The combat routine in the first game has been modified and improved to allow a choice of weapons, thus giving more realism and variation.

Temple of Vran is ingenious and original in its design. The player can identify strongly with the central character and, through the provision of status indicators, the game can mirror at least some of the complexity of role-playing scenarios. Enjoy yourself, but remember, take care.

Richard Price

TEMPLE OF VRAN
Memory: 48K
Price: £5.50
Gilbert Factor: 8

3D Bat Attack

WELCOME to Transylvania. The dubious delights of the vampire's tower await you in **3D Bat Attack**, by Cheetahsoft.

The tower is built in four levels, each connected to the others by a lift. Play begins on the lowest level and the foolhardy explorer must collect the gold blocks on the passage floors. Heads of garlic are also scattered round the place and must be eaten to provide some protection against the four vampire bats which squeak about the maze seeking a quick snack of your Type O.

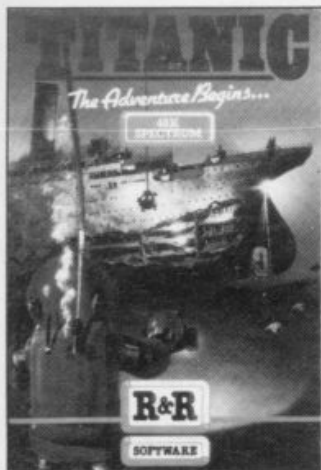
A map and radar are provided to show the position of both adventurer and bats, and there are ten levels of difficulty available.

The keyboard movement takes a little getting used to as the cursor keys are doubled up — using Capshift — to enable the player to rotate as well as move. The rotate facility can be confusing but the map shows the whole floor, including the location of the garlic. The graphics are competent and clear and there are comprehensive instructions.

Richard Price



3D BAT ATTACK
Memory: 48K Spectrum
Price: £6.95
Joystick: Sinclair
Gilbert Factor: 6



Titanic

ON APRIL 14, 1912 the Titanic sank taking a reputed fortune in gold to the bottom of the sea. In the game from R & R Software, your mission is to find the wreck and to recover the gold.

To start you have to raise finance for the trip and then buy your supplies. That follows the strategy type of game where the first time you play it is rather like pot luck but subsequently you learn what is useful and what is not. Next you have to find the wreck. If you have the NASA map from the first section that will help as otherwise you may suffer the same fate as the Titanic.

Once you have found the wreck you move on to the last section of the game — finding the gold. Each of the three levels on board contains more than 150 locations and your divers must explore them. Their time is limited and if they are not careful they may meet creatures from the deep.

Titanic tries to be a jack-of-all-trades and cover as many different types of game as possible but in the end is master of none. The response times are slow, being predominantly Basic, and too much reliance is placed on random factors.

John Lambert

Trans Express

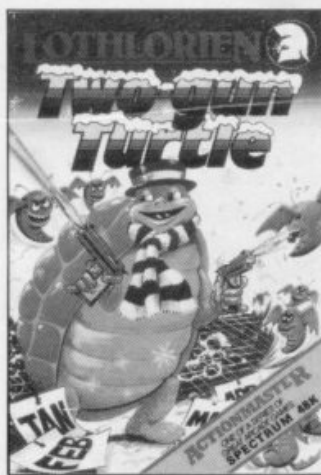
TRANS EXPRESS from the oddly-named Romantic Robot is a utility program which will allow microdrive and tape users to transfer programs freely between the two. The first use of the program is its microdrive-to-microdrive commands. From an enhanced CAT, files can be selected in any order and they are then saved in that order. That is useful for speeding of loading. The transfer can be either from drive one to drive two or the same drive, in which case you are told when to swap the cartridges.

The microdrive-to-tape section of the tape has a similar function but the programs are output to a cassette. It is a very simple way of making a security copy of a part or the complete cartridge.

Another program on the tape allows you to transfer tape programs directly to a microdrive, the program changing the relevant LOAD and SAVE commands in both Basic and code to microdrive ones. Finally, routines are included to allow tape-to-tape transfer. Both programs worked very well.

For microdrive users it is a valuable utility but its inability to copy itself means a frustrating wait while it loads, something surely it is designed to avoid. Tape users will also find uses for it. Each of the functions is available separately at £5.50, tape-to-drive and drive-to-drive together at £7.50, or all together at £9.50.

John Lambert



Two-Gun Turtle

GARDENING games are rapidly becoming a genre in the arcade-action field and Lothlorien has produced a little number with **Two-Gun Turtle** for the 48K Spectrum.

An armed turtle is entrusted with looking after a patch of strawberries which is assailed by a variety of mean creatures. The bugs will carry off the fruit if not driven away or destroyed.

A calendar counts the days on the bottom line and, during the winter period, snow will fall occasionally. If the turtle catches a snowflake a bonus is awarded. Movement is by definable keys or Kempston joystick.

Although the concept is simple, the action is fast and dangerous, requiring good reaction speeds and care in firing; a shot in the wrong place will wipe out a strawberry and ruin all the good work. The bugs whizz menacingly round the screen and will chase the turtle, which adds to the general tension.

The graphics are colourful and very smooth and put a fine polish on an exciting and compulsive machine code program.

Richard Price

Urban Upstart

DEPRIVATION, desolation and danger are the order in the squalid urban wasteland of Scarthorpe, setting for the Richard Shepherd Software **Urban Upstart**. The scenario is a typical inner city area with all its attendant problems of crime and poverty. Anyone with sense or money has already left town, which is what you are trying to do. Do not think it will be easy — vicious football fans, keen-eyed coppers, even the dreadful weather, all conspire to keep you entombed in your home on Grime Street.

The program is a text adventure with graphics illustrations, responding to all the conventional inputs.

The portrayal of the town is inventive and convincing and the unexpected can occur at any time. Help is not much in evidence but if you are streetwise you could go far.

Urban Upstart is a cut above the average text adventure and should become compulsive entertainment. There are many locations, full load and save facilities and a pile of surprises.

Richard Price



TITANIC
Memory: 48K
Price: £7.95
Gilbert Factor: 5

TRANS EXPRESS
Memory: 16K
Price: £9.50
Gilbert Factor: 8

TWO-GUN TURTLE
Memory: 48K
Price: £5.95
Joystick: Kempston
Gilbert Factor: 7

URBAN UPSTART
Memory: 48K
Price: £6.50
Gilbert Factor: 8



Whodunnit

THIS EXCELLENT program is a simulation of the popular board game 'Cluedo'. It is, however, much more than just a simulation. Events, personalities and objects are multiplied so that far more logic and careful thought are needed to reveal all the vital information about the suspects and to solve the murder.

It resembles the kind of logic problems which appear in puzzle magazines, but, since you can question the computer repeatedly the less logically-minded will not be frustrated continually as they can gather as much information as they need, simply taking longer to solve the puzzle.

The mystery is different every time you play, with a random combination of the various elements and can be enjoyed equally by players of all skill levels.

Up to four people can compete to track the murderer. The only disadvantage is that the screen layout is very dull. Illustrations at relevant points would improve its appearance radically and would hold the attention of the players even longer.

John Lambert

WHODUNNIT
Memory: 48K
Price: £2.99
Gilbert Factor: 8

The Width Of The World

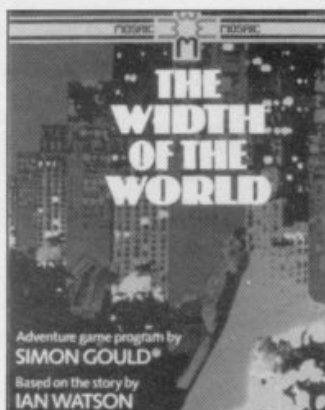
MOSAIC PUBLISHING has coined a new word to describe its program, **The Width of The World** — bookware. The game is an uninspiring text adventure, limited in the number of locations and the number of problems to solve.

You play the character Alan Roxbury, whose wife Sarah disappeared some seven years ago when over-population caused the world to expand in some mysterious way, creating gaps in the fabric of space into which Sarah disappeared. The depressing tale is told in the accompanying booklet, an unexceptional piece of writing by Ian Watson.

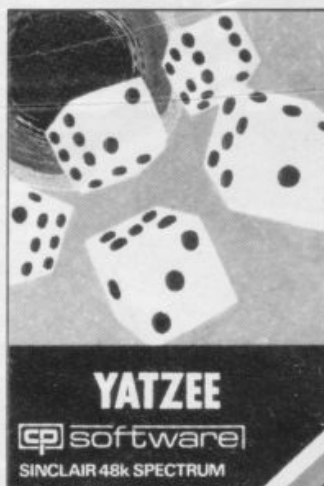
Your task is to discover one of the gaps, pass through it and rescue your wife. Most of the usual two-word commands are accepted by the program, which also includes a few long-winded graphics pictures of locations.

It is unlikely that many people will readily identify with a middle-aged Volvo driver who smokes Gauloises and makes maps of the world for a living. In the case of *The Width of The World*, for bookware read boreware.

Chris Bourne



THE WIDTH OF THE WORLD
Memory: 48K
Price: £9.95
Gilbert Factor: 4



Yatzee

IN GAMES of chance like dice, atmosphere can add excitement and tension. Rubbing the dice, calling on whatever weird gods you cultivate, cursing — all those contribute to the buzz.

On computers dice ends up more like a fruit machine. **Yatzee** from CP Software suffers inevitably from the problem. Each game consists of 13 turns, each of three throws. There are 13 scoring options and you must choose one of them each turn to get the best score from the dice which have been thrown. They include poker combinations, e.g. full house.

The instructions are clear and comprehensive and keyboard use is simple. Players can specify how many games they want to play or exit to the beginning if they wish.

The graphics are straightforward but the screen colours are a little stark, which begins to tell after half an hour's play. Although it is not the smash-hit type of program it could certainly be useful in informal or formal teaching sessions and will help children to grasp number concepts and matching.

Richard Price

YATZEE
Memory: 48K
Price: £5.95
Gilbert Factor: 5

ZX Draughts

THE CP Software **ZX Draughts** program offers to play you at 10 levels of difficulty. Pride, however, precedes a fall and the player who opts for the highest level will find the computer looking 10 moves ahead, with a response time of about 13 minutes for every move.

It is a game designed for the Karpovs of the draughts world. A less than mediocre player selecting the lowest grade of play was soundly beaten. The higher levels play with a degree of skill which amazed us. The cover material warns you not to be fooled by the "easy games at level 0." The level of skill the programmers clearly expect from the player is very high and we did not find the games at all easy.

The board is laid out clearly using colours designed to be equally visible on colour and monochrome television sets, and moves are made using a co-ordinate system—i.e., 1-8 and a-h—which is used commonly in chess. The program is easy to use with excellent instructions, a rare factor in modern games programs.

John Lambert



ZX DRAUGHTS
Memory: 48K
Price: £5.95
Gilbert Factor: 7

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