

Educational Software:

60p each: Romper Room - I Love My Alphabet (BEYOND's Learning Program for 2-7 year olds). **30p each:** ACTIVE COMPUTER LEARNING (ACL) (Programs One & Two), ACL (Programs Three & Four), French Is Fun, German Is Fun. **20p each:** Biology 'O' Level#, ABC.... Lift Off! (4 Copies)#, Countabout#, First Steps With Mr Men (Mirrorsoft)#.

Compilations:

£5.00: The Gold Collection II (Kung Fu Master, Beach Head II, Pentagon, Bounty Bob, Knightlore, Pole Position), Chart Attack (GREMLIN - Shadow Of The Beast, Impossable, Super Cars, Ghouls 'n' Ghosts, Lotus Esprit Turbo Challenge).

£4.50: The Dizzy Collection (5 Smash Hits!), Dizzy's Excellent Adventures (5 More Smash Hits!). **50p each:** Silverbird Magnum Pack (4 Games). **40p each:** Ten Great Games - Tape 2 (5 Games)#, Four Smash Hits (Hewson - Exolon, Zynaps, Rana Rama, Uridium Plus)#, Taito's Coin-Op Hits (Imagine - Legend Of Kage, Renegade, Flying Shark, Rastan)#. **30p each:** Supreme Challenge (Starglider & Elite)#, Sinclair Quality Control - 128k only (Witchfiend & Odd Job Eddie), Martech Compilation (Spacecraft & Weird)#. **20p each:** 128 - 4 pack#, Dixon's Pack (Frog Hopper & Code Name Matt)#, Sinclair Action Pack (Solar Invasion & Robot Attack)#.

Gremlin Graphics Games:

£1 each: Metabolis, Avenger, SuperSleuth, Butcher Hill, North Star, Future Knight, Samurai Trilogy, The Way Of The Tiger, Jack The Nipper II - Coconut Capers, Auf Wiedersehen Monty, Footballer Of The Year, Trailblazer.

UNBOXED SELECTION - Pick any 10 tapes for just £2.50 including postage:

Komplex (By Legend) (8 Copies), Personal Banking System (6 Copies), Haunted Hedges (5 Copies), Snooker (3 Copies), Zig Zag (4 Copies), Road Toad (3 Copies), Confuzion (4 Copies), Spawn Of Evil (2 Copies), Codename Matt (2 Copies), Ugh!! (2 Copies), Travel With Trashman (2 Copies), Jasper, Panic, Blue Thunder, Pettigrews Diary (Shards), Star Trader.

BLANK CASSETTES

Second-Hand C10/C12/C15 Computer Cassettes: Some Need New Inlays And Cassette Stickers. **05=£1.20, 10=£2.10, 20=£5.00, 30=£6.00, 35=£7.00 (ALL PRICES INCLUDE POSTAGE).**

HARDWARE

ZX81: Comes with Power Supply, TV Lead, but no manuals. **£11** Including Postage

ZX Microdrive: Needs Slight Attention. **£3** Including Postage.

ZX Power Supply: Faulty. For 48k/48k+ Computer, **£2** Including Postage.

+3 Tape Lead: Rare item for **£5.50** (Including Postage).

BOOKS

- The Companion To The Sinclair ZX Microdrive And Interfaces. Essential Reference Companion! **£1.80** Including Postage.

- Inside The Sinclair QL - An Introductory Guide To The Hardware. **£2.20** including postage.

- Practical Guide To QL Graphics & Sound. **£2.20** including postage.

CLASSIX

"Getting All Nostalgic"



RICHARD HEWISON RECALLS THE
HIGHS AND LOWS



Plus



DEUX EX MACHINA - WE'VE FOUND 2 COPIES
OF THE GAME THAT'S AS PRECIOUS AS GOLD!

CONTENTS

Issue 2 - May 1996

Page 3 - Writing On The Wall (Your Letters)

Page 5 - Plugged In (Useful Contacts)

Page 7 - The Clive Sinclair Story Part 1 - By Richard Coles

Page 9 - My First Game By Andy Davis

Page 10 - Level 9 (Past Masters Of The Adventure Game?)

By Richard Hewison

Page 14 - Finders Keepers (News From The Games Finder Service)

Page 15 - Fountain Of Knowledge (Dave Fountain Answers Your Queries)

Page 16 - Level 9 Article (Continued)

Page 19 - The Price Of Magik (Reviewed By Lilian Brand)

Page 20 - EXCLUSIVE (Deux Ex Machina Now In Stock!)

Page 22 - Alchemist Research (Exciting PD News!)

Page 24 - SALE LIST (Grab A Bargain Or 50!)

EDITORIAL

Well, here we are again at the start of another issue of Classix. It's a good 2 months since the last one and generally the response has been positive. Some of the various comments from readers are included in the next two pages, the most amusing being from Joyce Cook. She comments that Classix is an improvement on *Spellunkler* (my old 'zine) because it is easier to say!

I don't really see the necessity of me writing a full page for the editorial because I'm sure you'd much rather get on with reading the rather excellent articles which have been included in this issue. I really must thank people like the two Richard's (Hewison & Coles) for their written contributions, Glynn Palmer for all his research, Andy Davis for putting up with my technophobia and also all the others such as Lilian Brand & Dave Fountain. Basically, everybody whose name is contained within these pages has helped to make my life a lot easier! Next issue should be out in July and will cost £1. In the meantime - ENJOY!

James

Writing on the Wall

Your Comments On Issue 1

St John Swainson, Rickmansworth (selected extracts):

Dear James,
Thanks for the games you sent and of course issue 1 of Classix. Very impressed with Classix. A couple of decent articles - are these one offs or do you have further articles by these people? Things have come a long way in terms of print quality since *Spellunkler*! I expect when word gets out about it, you will be selling loads of copies of each issue. How many orders did you receive for issue 1? I keep seeing adverts in other zines for Classix but it will probably take some time for the 'reluctant to write' speccy community to get around to writing. I sometimes review other zines in Crashed so I may do a review of this (Classix) but I don't know - can you review a zine you contribute to?

What do you think about the reviews? Are they the right length? I was thinking of doing an article called something like "Unclassix" with about 5 really poor games. Also maybe something like "Minisenes" with reviews of a series of games like Mask 1, 2 and Venom Strikes Back or the Star Wars games. What do you reckon?

Was your Oasis quote on the cover a result of your love for Oasis or a result of the fact that everyone will know where its from? I saw Oasis live in Manchester about 2 years ago. They were the second support band to the Milltown Brothers who most people have never heard of. What a difference a year can make. Well, no difference for the Milltown Brothers who no one has heard of but Oasis are now a worldwide phenomenon. And I saw them when they were a tiny band when everyone sat down and tried to talk instead of listening to them. It's my claim to fame. Be seeing you.

EDITORS reply: Thanks for the letter St John! Glad you liked the first issue - lets hope the next few impress you just as much. Richard Hewison, who wrote the Philip Mitchell article, has kept in touch with Classix and has kindly sent me an article on Level 9, which is of course contained within these hallowed pages! He also has another trick or two up his sleeve, so watch this space for further gems of wisdom from the former Firebird programmer. Sales of issue 1 were satisfactory although not spectacular, but that is to be expected with a new fanzine. Hopefully the promotional copies sent out to various publications will help spread the word.

No, I don't see anything wrong with reviewing Classix for Crashed - I can never get a reply from them! If you like something, tell as many people as possible about it - they may not know what they're missing out on! Your reviews are fine in length and make very interesting reading. I also think the scoring system is a good idea - very Your Sinclair-ish!

And as to the ideas for future articles, I am happy to print anything which you may offer me! After all, this is YOUR fanzine, so let's have you readers writing what YOU want to see.

The Oasis quote. The story behind it is this: I returned home from the local ale house one night and decided to do a bit of work on *Classix* (I hope that doesn't reflect in the contents of issue 1!). I slammed on the "What's The Story..." album and proceeded to type and manipulate the text. Needless to say, the song "Don't Look Back In Anger" quickly came around and as I was puzzling over the front cover, it just seemed to fit!

I am a big Oasis fan, but at the time the song hadn't even been released, although it had received extensive air-play on Radio 1. The fact it got to Number One a few weeks later pleased me no end! Maybe a Milltown Brothers quote on the next front cover might shoot them to the top of the charts!

Joyce Cook of SOFTSELL, Trowbridge (where it rains a lot!) (Selected extracts):

Dear James

Thanks for the copy of *Classix*. I haven't really had time to read it yet but my comment so far is that the title's a great improvement on *Spellunkler* which was difficult to say. I think the font for the "Ceased Trading" article is going to make the words very difficult to read. Well say something good then! The articles look interesting and I like the little triangular skull and crossbones. The price is good and should go down well. I'll give it a mention in the next newsletter anyway. Which program are you using on your PC? I wonder. I have just changed to Ami Pro which is giving a reasonable result. There isn't much in the way of clip art for this program so I have just ordered some "Fun Clips" which I hope will be more my style. It's fun to experiment anyway.

EDITORS reply: Well, although this extract is only short, Joyce raises some interesting points. Her letters always bring a smile to my face, as she describes matters ranging from her "spectacular leaps down the stairs" in order to answer the phone to her constant battle with the seemingly non-stop rain!

Yes, the title does roll off the tongue a little easier than "Spellunkler" (Mr Carswell are you listening?!?), and it is also easier to fit on the front page!!! And before people try to find some hidden meaning to it, no I wasn't in Maths Class IX (9) at school!!

The font for "Ceased Trading" was actually one taken from the good (bad?) old Amiga. I hadn't got access to the PC on that day, so I had to use Amiga Fox DTP - I must admit that I reduced the font in order to put it onto two pages, which was probably a mistake. That problem shouldn't occur in future.

The triangular skull and crossbones (or the Dairy Lee Triangle with a goatee beard, as I call it!) actually came from a flyer which was advertising a Leeds nightclub! I had some reason to scan it in the past and it has never been erased from the PC. I am at the moment desperately short of clip-art, so you may see him adopted as the *Classix* mascot!! If anybody wants a copy of him, just send me a blank disk (preferably PC formatted!) and return postage.

Plugged In

Alchemist Research: 62 Tithe Barn Lane, Woodhouse, Sheffield, S13 7UN.

Andy Davis heads this impressive set-up which stands unrivalled for service in the Spectrum world. As well as offering FREE support (all you need send is an SAE) for all Spectrum and SAM users, they also produce a quarterly tapezine/diskzine called *Aldnews*.

It costs just £4 for a years subscription or you can obtain a free copy of the latest issue simply by sending them an SAE and the media of your choice. PC owners needn't miss out either - *Aldnews* is available under Z80 emulation, a shareware copy of which is provided with the zine.

So, whether you're struggling to transfer the Hobbit to +D disk or just trying to track down an Interface 1 which will allow two of you to play Delta Wing (See Andy's article), Alchemist Research should be your first point of contact.

Alchemist Software: 126 Hayward Road, Redfield, Bristol, BS5 9QA.

This is the software arm of the Alchemist set-up (stating the obvious huh?). Lloyd Garland and Trevor Mossman run this impressive PD library which not only stocks Public Domain and Shareware, but also former full-price games. (See other parts of this zine for latest licensing information)

Prices are cheap: if you send your own media it costs just 5p per title on disk and 80p per title on cassette. The latest offer from the guys means that you can get 14 emulator games on PC disk for as little as 50p!

Alchemist Software supports cassette, standard +3 disk, +3 3.5" disk, +D 3.5" disk

and +D 5.25" disk. Send an SAE for their latest catalogue, stating whether you want the Spectrum, Amiga or PC version. Oh, and mention *Classix* while you're at it!

Fountain PD: Dave Fountain, 11 Camel Road, London, E16 2DE.

Dave's friendly service comes highly recommended - as well as stocking utilities by the bucket-load, there are also scores of ex-commercial releases including some classic Gremlin titles. (See his advert elsewhere in this zine).

Both tape and 3.5" +D disc are supported and prices are very cheap. Dave is one of the select few who is automatically granted distribution rights to licensed games, as negotiated by Alchemist Research. So, drop Dave a line now and ask for his catalogue and latest newsletter - no SAE necessary.

The ZX Files: Paul White, 30 The Rowans, Wetherby, West Yorkshire, LS22 5GB.

Paul advises me that the third issue of his *Specay/Amiga* diskzine is nearing completion and although I haven't actually seen it yet, it sounds very juicy indeed. Send him an SAE for further details.

Express Software: 7 Manor Drive, Merriott, Somerset, TA16 5NT.

Richard Coles (who has written that excellent first article on Sir Clive!) informs me that his first release is nearing completion. At the moment he's working on some fancy packaging and it all sounds very promising indeed. Of course, we'll let you know about his first effort as and when it's appears. For the meanwhile though, send him an SAE and he'll keep you bang up to date.

PLUGGED IN

Motivation: 16 Montgomery Avenue, Beith, Ayrshire, Scotland, KA15 1EL.

Alec Carswell seems to have had his fingers in a number of pies over recent years, with Motivation being the most freshly baked. Send an SAE for a list of their latest software, PD and shareware.

They also publish a newsletter called Newletter X International which is available, again, by sending an SAE to their HQ. They do take a while to reply sometimes, but try and bear with them.

Softsell: 32 Dursley Road, Trowbridge, Wilts, BA14 0NP.

Joyce Cook runs the most famous (and only?) Spectrum lending library around. She offers thousands of titles for weekly rental, all at very reasonable prices. Drop her a line (not forgetting to include an SAE) in order to gain further information about her service. As a footnote, I do believe that the legendary Deux Ex Machina is available for hire, so there's no need to despair if you can't lay your mits on it.

Relics Magazine: 166 Valley Drive, Gravesend, Kent, DA12 5SH.

Darren Randle tells me that issue 2 of his excellent computer/entertainment magazine is nearing completion. If Issue 1 is anything to go by then issue 2 should be a stormer. Containing articles on topics ranging from Deux Ex Machina to rave music and hardware to adult cinema, every page proves to be a truly rivetting read. Darren should be congratulated for combining different forms of entertainment, so send an SAE for further details and get plugged in!

Adventure Probe: 52 Burford Road, Liverpool, L16 6AQ.

If by any chance you haven't heard of Probe by now, then all I can say is that it is a MUST for adventure fans. I think this well produced 'zine is priced at £2.00 an issue, but drop Barbara Gibb a line in order to obtain further information.

8-BIT magazine: "Harrowden", 39 High Street, Sutton-In-The-Isle, ELY, Cambridgeshire, CB6 2RA.

Brian Watson sits proudly at the helm of the magazine which now boasts 700+ readers. Covering mainly Spectrum, Commodore and Amstrad, 8-Bit provides a lively mix of informative articles and useful information.

The presentation is improving all the time and although they do seem to favour Amstrad PCW's rather a lot, it's definitely worth sending them £2 (cheques payable to B Watson) for the latest issue. Brian also heads the new IEBA group, so if you're interested in joining, mention it when you write.



The Clive Sinclair Story

By Richard Coles

CHAPTER 1 - GENESIS

For me it all started when I was just 3 years old. My parents purchased a ZX Spectrum 16k, for my seven year old brother, James. A strange lump of metal with lovely rubber keys that looked quite nice for chewing!

For me, my brother, my family and the rest of Great Britain this was the start of computing. For the first time just about anyone could save a little and go out and buy a powerful computer that had a large software base and was easy to use - the ZX spectrum.

Of course, there were Sinclair computers before. The ZX80 (#100) and 81 (#40). Cheap and cheerful. A nice introduction, but not really powerful enough for anything. Really simple games and dodgy business software were on the menu, but still in 1982 (the year of the Spectrum's release) there were over 1,000,000 people using ZX BASIC all over the world. It had to be said, in '82, the '81 was the best selling computer of all.

That's all very interesting, but this is really up-to-date compared to the real stuff. Lets start right at the, um, start!

1940. Hitler was bombing Britain as the war was in full spring, but there was a spark of light, for Thora and Bill Sinclair anyway. They had their new baby son to cope with, Clive.

The war carried on. Nappies were changed, cries were heard, the baby was fed and, when Clive was four, the war ended. Clive has survived.

Bill and Thora nick-named their only child "Bambino" because of the letter BAMB on his birth certificate. A silly name by any means, but a smart brain without a doubt. By this age the wonderchild was only three years old he could conversations with some of the most articulate adults! And at the age of ten his teachers just gave up, confessing that they had taught him everything they knew. He went on to become the chairman of MENSA, the organisation open to those with only the highest IQ.

Young Clive displayed an amazing talent to solve the most complex mathematical problems easily, and apparently intuitively. And he could always come up with how he got the right answer.

When Clive was seventeen he joined St George's school in Wethbridge and was accepted by pupils and masters. By now he was a fully accomplished inventor and had developed a radio the size of a lighter!

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

The Clive Sinclair Story (Continued)

Soon after a journalist forecast quite correctly that the name 'Clive Sinclair' would become a household name, but for his parents, Bill and Thora, he was still their little boy and just would not accept that he was any different. Anyway, they could already boast about Clive's cousin who fenced for England.

Anyway, Thora, a down-to-earth Devonshire lass, would just not accept that her little Clive was different until knighted by the Queen for putting Britain back in the technological race with Japan.

In 1962 Clive started his very first company, Sinclair Radionics in Islington. They made and sold radio and amplifier kits by mail order. It did very well, even if it wouldn't make Clive a millionaire. This starts Clive off. He's now got the taste for bigger and better things. But even a mastermind like him didn't know what was going to be ahead. Next stop from radios... the world's FIRST pocket calculator.

Don't miss Issue 3 if you want to read the next chapter of The Clive Sinclair Story!

8BIT

THE MAGAZINE FOR ALL 8BIT COMPUTER USERS

Yes, if you've got a CPC or a SAM,
a C64 or a PCW, a Spectrum,
or whatever...

If it has an 8bit heart,

8BIT is for you

Fileswapping, Email, DTP, Best Buys,
Sources of Software and Hardware,
Repairs, Club News, etc

only £2.00 per issue
BI-monthly

From: Brian Watson
Harrowden, 39, High Street,
Sutton, ELY, Cambs
CB6 2RA



FOUNTAIN PD



11 Camel Road, LONDON E16 2DE

Utilities For Tape / +3 / +D / MDV / OPUS

/ Programming / Graphics / Fonts / Printer Utilities /
/ Sound / Business / Education / Tapezines Etc /

Only High Quality Games Stocked, Gremlin Etc...
We Are PD Demo Specialists - 650+ Titles!

14 Page Catalogue Available Now
Send NO SAE - Just Your Name & Address.

MY FIRST GAME



By Andy Davis
Alchemist Research



Where do I start? There are three areas where I encountered my 'first' game. My first computer was a Commodore Vic 20, the first game loaded on that was 'Blitz', a city bomber type game!

Ok, to the Spectrum. The first game I played was JET SET WILLY. Wow! At the time I didn't have a Spectrum, so used to spend a good couple of hours at a friend's. He had a rubber keyed machine which was immaculate. He even used to place cling film over the keyboard to avoid key wear! He would spend ages intricately cutting the cling film and taping it to the underside of the machine and would not be happy unless the covering was as tight and smooth as skin!

The other games which I used to play were Psion's FLIGHT SIMULATION, CHEQUERED FLAG and ALCHEMIST (surprise surprise!). I'd seen a solution to this game in magazine called TV GAMER. Not surprisingly, this magazine is long gone and I bet none of you ever heard of it! I've still got it and it still looks like it was printed yesterday! The solution came in the form of about 50 photos of various scenes in the game, with text underneath about what was happening and what you were to do. This solution impressed me far more than a review ever did, so I pestered my friend to buy it! He got a version in a gold coloured plastic case. No-one else with a copy seems to have that version! Did I imagine it?

After two years, I decided to get my own Spectrum, a '+'. It cost £25 and came with only a manual. The first purchase was DELTA WING, a budget game originally by CREATIVE SPARKS but repackaged by MAD, the budget label for Mastertronic, who became Virgin Mastertronic and now Virgin Interactive. The game was another flight simulation (anyone made the connection what my hobby is yet?!), but you had the option to shoot the enemy. Looking back, the game is an obvious rip off of Digital Integration's FIGHTER PILOT, but with improved graphics. You got the view of the cockpit, complete with the upper legs of the pilot. When you made a bank in the aircraft, you saw the inertia movement of his legs! On side B of the tape was the same program, but for an interactive two player game. With two Spectrums with Interface 1's, you got to fight each other! Sadly, I made the foolish mistake of selling this game with one of my old Spectrums. I have the game on a compilation CD for the emulator, and on a Crash covertape, but not the IF1 version. So, add it to the growing list James, I want to get the Interface 1's out!

Andy

Andy Davis runs the highly successful Spectrum/SAM Support Group Alchemist Research. For details of the BEST service, send an SAE to 62 Tithe Barn Lane, Woodhouse, Sheffield, S.Yorks, S13 7LN

Level 9 - Past Masters Of The Adventure Game?

*** A History Of Level 9 - A Personal View By Richard Hewison ***

Anyone who grew up on 8 bit adventure games has played at least a couple of Level 9 adventures. In their hay day (in the early to mid 80's) they were the undisputed kings of adventure games in the U.K. Games like 'Dungeon Adventure' and 'Snowball' earned them accolade after accolade from the public and computer press alike. It is unfortunate that once the 16 bit machines came to the forefront, Level 9's creativity took a dip for the worse - but more on that later.

Level 9 Computing (as it was known back then) began life in 1981. The company initially composed of the three Austin brothers (Mike, Nick and Pete). It quickly progressed from being a hobby to becoming a registered company with assets of just £40 and a Nascom 16k kit computer!

Their first few products were arcade games and utilities like 'Missile Defence', 'Bomber', 'Fantasy', 'Space Invasion' and 'Extension Basic'. Each cassette was individually saved from the computer and sent out by mail order to satisfy the demand generated by the classified ads they ran in the 'Computing Today' magazine.

Having seen a version of 'Colossal Caves' running on a mainframe where he worked, Pete Austin thought that they could fit it onto a 16k machine. This resulted in Level 9's own version which they called 'Colossal Adventure'. It was to be their first commercial release and was written in what they called 'a-code'.

From the outset, they didn't just write the game, but they devised and created a writing system that they could use over and over again to create further games. They also had the awareness to write the system so that it could be used on other machines. In the early days they were only able to produce versions for the BBC and Nascom. In 1983 they converted over to the Spectrum 48k, Commodore 64, Oric, Atari 400/800, Lynx 48k and RML 380Z. A few years further down the road they converted the entire range to date onto the MSX and the Enterprise.

'Colossal Adventure' wasn't quite a direct conversion from the main frame original. One very subtle difference was that the food was moved into the otherwise superfluous forest outside. The major difference was the addition of the 'end game'. In the original adventure, the game finished when you picked up the final treasure and the cave announced that it was closing down. You then had to get out in time before the game ended. Level 9 decided to add an end game so they could boast that the game had 'over 200 locations'. The original only had 130.

'Over 200 locations' would become a familiar quote on the Level 9 packaging. Talking of packaging, it changed considerably over the years. The very first version of 'Colossal Adventure' was distributed in a re-sealable plastic bag with an 8 page manual, an advert for their other releases and an envelope and clue request card. The envelope had an illustration on the front showing a man with an olive branch in his hand and a bird homing in on it. The words "Fly back with a clue" were printed in the top left hand corner. The clue card was for individual questions. Only later on did they start offering the complete and comprehensive clue sheets.

'Colossal' was followed by 'Adventure Quest', which was their first attempt at designing a game themselves from scratch. They then rounded the trilogy off with 'Dungeon Adventure'. This became known as their 'Middle Earth' trilogy although they were eventually bundled together

under the 'Jewels of Darkness' title by Rainbird in 1988. They were also updated by having graphics added. More on the graphics later!

Level 9 then turned their attentions away from the fantasy setting of Middle Earth and launched themselves into the future by writing 'Snowball', a science fiction adventure with 'over 7,000 locations'. Set in the year 2304 A.D. you were cast as secret agent, Kim Kimberley whose mission was to protect the interstar transport known as Snowball 9. Level 9 deliberately chose a sexless name so that the player could imagine themselves as male or female. Thankfully you didn't have to visit all 7,000 locations! They were spread throughout the spaceship on various levels accessed by a lift. The game began completely in the dark, and you were soon puzzling over how to avoid the killer nightingales that roamed the ship.

Up until then, the Austin brothers had worked on their own. They had coded and designed each of their adventure releases. However, for their next game they turned to a game designed by a fan of theirs, Sue Gazzard. After a bit of tinkering with the initial premise, 'Lords of Time' was released and went down quite well. As with most of their games, there were numerous references to the number 9 throughout. For example, there were nine time zones to explore.

The packaging was updated in 1983 once sales proved them to be a success. Gone were the plastic bags and in were cardboard boxes with cut out front windows showing the cover of the instruction booklet inside. Distinctive L9 logos covered the window borders. Their distributor, Microdeal, had such a large order for Christmas 1983 that the Austins had to recruit as many of their friends and family as they could to meet the demand which ran into thousands. 1984 was to see another change to the packaging, with black plastic wallets replacing the boxes, each one adorned with a cover illustration and surrounded by the now famous black and white L9 logo's.

They had always planned to return to the Snowball universe and add the second of what they would call the 'Silicon Dreams trilogy'. Part two was called 'Return to Eden' and was (in my own opinion) a very tough game to complete. It also marked a turning point for their games. On selected machines, Level 9 took the decision to add graphics to each and everyone of the locations. Other companies had a few locations with graphics, but the Austins decided to go further. Unfortunately, the graphics weren't particularly inspiring. They consisted of component parts, (rocks, trees etc) that were added to build up a picture. On the Spectrum, the usual colour problems occurred so the graphics looked very blotchy. They didn't go down too well with the some fans, but at that time it was thought good commercial sense. Although they weren't brilliant by any stretch of the imagination, I felt that they added a needed splash of colour to the display and they had a murky quality all of their own.

'Return to Eden' was released in October 1984 and had a number of almost subliminal political statements embedded into the game design, along with some very tricky problems that had me stumped for months! As with most of their games, there were subtle references to previous games and certain inputs that could be tried too. Try the old 'plover', or 'xyzy' phrases from 'Colossal' in any of their older games to see what I mean! The title also followed a bit of a biblical theme which was to be followed up in the third and final instalment.

There was also an interesting change in the packaging artwork for 'Eden'. The original design had a robot fighting a carnivorous looking giant plant with a cityscape lurking behind. Possibly due to the similarity between the robot and a certain popular comic book of the time, they changed the artwork to a Godfrey Dowson painting of a different (humanoid looking) robot staring from the jungle towards a gleaming city in the distance. They might also have changed it because the original drawing wasn't particularly good! This lead to Level 9 repackaging all of

their earlier releases in the newer plastic wallets and adding cover illustrations by Godfrey Dowson.

Increasing sales during 1984 meant a company re-organisation and the recruitment of new staff. Disk versions began appearing for the first time on the C64 and BBC and they began writing games for the latest additions to the home micro boom, the Amstrad CPC and Memotech machines. Pete Austin became so swamped with on average 100 clue requests a day that he had no time left to design the games, so they decided to change the clue requests from individual problems to a fully comprehensive clue sheet covering everything.

Having tested the water with their first 'illustrated' game, Level 9 went into overdrive with a collection of four more graphic text adventures in two years. The price range varied according to whether they felt the game was as large or difficult as their previous adventures.

Their next graphic release in early 1985 was 'Emerald Isle'. It was only the second of their games to have been initially designed by a freelance contributor. You began the game hanging from a tree in your parachute, and soon found yourself entering a city. From here you would discover a competition where the prize was to become ruler of the island! As with 'Eden' it was quite a tough game to finish, but I spent a good few months on and off battling my way through to the end. The graphics were of the same dubious standard as 'Eden' although they were now taking up practically half of the screen in height and width. One snippet of trivia - 'Emerald Isle' was originally to feature a cannibal cook pot scene. This was removed quite late on in case it was seen to be racist. It was also the last of their adventures written with their 'old' system.

The new system was written in 1985 and it improved on speed and compression and added multi-tasking and a radical new parser. Another change saw the reduction in packaging size to a small black micro cassette box. This debuted with their next release, 'Red Moon'. The theme of 'magik' was strong in this fantasy game, and it had a very atmospheric plot behind it all. The graphics were still dodgy, but this didn't matter when the game was this good. Another new element was introduced into 'Red Moon'. For the first time, a few role playing style stats were implemented into the fighting scenes. This seemed to alienate a few adventure players, whilst others (me included) felt that it gave the game an added depth. It was also the first Level 9 game that I solved without having a full score. In fact, I was quite a few points short when I completed it. Apparently this was a deliberate ploy by the Austins to allow more players to be able to finish their games.

'Red Moon' had only one real fault in my opinion. Iron would inhibit the use of magic, so if you were carrying anything made of iron or an item of that kind was in the same location, you were unable to cast any spells. Unfortunately, the game treated the save game feature as a spell so if you were carrying iron, you couldn't save your game position!

The release of 'Red Moon' in July '85 began Level 9's most intense release schedule yet, with a new game approximately every six months. Late '85 saw the publication of the concluding chapter in the 'Silicon Dreams' trilogy. Following 'Snowball' and 'Return to Eden', 'The Worm in Paradise' wrapped up the series in fine style. Set 100 years after the events in 'Eden', 'Worm' was by far the most political game that Level 9 had released. The themes present throughout the Silicon Dreams trilogy were very 'adult' in style and this is what made them so fascinating.

Appropriately, the game began with you in what turned out to be a very symbolic dream, chasing a giant worm that emerged from a rotten apple which then crashed through a wall to freedom. The dream ended when you climbed onto the back of a sleeping behemoth, took one of it's scales as a shield and approached the acid spitting worm head on, (if you knew which end was

the head!). All of the usual robots, droids and technical hazards were there to thwart you, but the thing that finally defeated me was the infuriating Enoch Transport System. It was like a giant hub with differently coloured segments. You had to navigate this system to get to various locations, like flower shops, job centres, unemployment offices etc. Obviously the aim of the game was to save the planet but unfortunately I never got to find out what happened at the end.

By now Level 9 were at the pinnacle of their achievements. In the eyes of the press and their fans, they could do no wrong. Exceptional adventures were still being crammed into a minimum of 32k.

In the mid 80's they also produced a number of licensed adventure games for other publishers. Virgin Games released 'The Growing Pains of Adrian Mole', the second of two games based on the books by Sue Townsend. Mosaic Publishing released the first ('The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole aged 13 3/4') and they also published an adventure based on Terry Jones' 'Erik the Viking' in 1985. Level 9 then followed these up with a game based on that epic of Radio 4 dramas 'The Archers'! The text was allegedly created by the series own script writers to maintain the authenticity. However, I have my doubts that this game was ever released. Both 'Adrian Mole' games and 'The Archers' were multiple choice style games rather than real adventures, whilst 'Erik' had very basic graphics and very terse location descriptions. However, this didn't stop the first 'Mole' game from selling over 165,000 copies!

What turned out to be their last 8 bit only game was released in mid 1986, just six months after 'Worm'. 'The Price of Magik' was the sequel to 'Red Moon' and it continued the theme of 'magik'. A crazed magician had succumbed to the terrible price of magik, and it was your task to become as powerful as him, defeat him and yet avoid the same fate. It was another enjoyable and atmospheric adventure with dozens of objects and two hundred odd locations to explore. It also had a nice feature at the very end. When you had finished, you were given the option of a good or bad ending. In the good ending, your future showed that you would live in a luxurious castle and rule wisely. In the bad ending, you defeat the crazed Myglar but in the process your quest for magik turns you stark raving mad, and you are locked up in a mental asylum!

This was the last time that Level 9 employed their construction kit style location graphics. Having used them in five games, they decided that it was time for a change. The changes though were far more dramatic than even they could have foreseen. The 16 bit revolution entered the fray and Level 9 adventures were sadly never to be the same ever again.

The way ahead for games in 1987 was generally agreed to be on the 16 bit machines like the ST, Amiga and maybe even the IBM PC. With this thought in mind, Level 9 employed the services of John Jones-Steele to write for them a new adventure writing system for their next generation of adventures. Steele was a veteran of programming, having written many 8 bit games in the past, including the Melbourne House text adventures 'Colossal Adventure' and 'Mordon's Quest'. The brief was to devise a system that would allow for 'real' characters to inhabit the game worlds they created, and allow people to recruit them and have many characters performing the same task at once to solve certain puzzles. The game was also to allow digitised paintings for location graphics, and a host of other features.

The original idea for this system was possibly born out of their aborted attempt at setting up a multi-user phone adventure game which they were to call 'Avalon'. It was going to include a thousand computer players and allow many more people on line at once than M.U.D. It was also planned to be much faster than M.U.D, although how they expected to achieve this on networked Amigas was anyone's guess. Why this idea never appeared is not known, but the influences it had on their KAOS system are obvious.

CONTINUED 3 PAGES ON —

FINDERS KEEPERS!

You may or may not have noticed that apart from producing a fanzine dedicated to the bygone Speccy days, we also run a Games Finder Service. No promises are made, but we will (for a nominal fee), attempt to find any Spectrum software title which you might require. In practise it all sounds well and good, but have we actually managed to re-unite ant Speccyites with long lost titles? Or have we managed to track down that adventure game which Mr Smith from Croydon has been looking for for years? Well actually, yes! Thanks to out flyers, ads and plug which many people keep giving us, the Games Finder Service is going from strength to strength! Detailed below are some examples of how we have helped make some people very happy!

Skool Daze: Richard Coles from Express Software was out very first customer! He wrote to us, asking if we had per-chance come across this title from Microsphere. Published in 1984, Skool Daze is a platform game which is set (unsurprisingly) in a school. The aim is for you, the naughty pupil, to remove your school report from the staffroom safe. However, in order to obtain the combination to the safe, you must nit all four shields which hang on the school walls. And believe me - there are plenty of people who are determined to get in your way!

Anyhow, Richard was in luck. We had this title in stock and soon he was re-living his Skool Daze! Unfortunately however, there were a few loading problems but we managed to sort these out and Richard even got a token refund for the inconvenience caused. Success number one!

After finding some hardware for a customer in Oldham (less said about that the better - those of you who are in the know will understand!), Andy Davis became out next satisfied customer. Being a fan of flight games, Mr Davis was looking for Heathrow ATC. So, we put out our feelers and pretty soon we came up trumps. Andy, the mastermind behind Alchemist Research, is now sitting at his computer happily landing 747's - another satisfied customer!

From here, things started to take off (bad pun, I know!). Thomas Eberle from Sintech got in touch and to date we have managed to provide him with no less than 16 titles! These include the classic Elite, the zany E-Motion and also a brand-spanking new version of Chips Challenge! And he's not the only person outside these islands to drop lucky - Michael Bruhn from Denmark now proudly owns the full Ultimate Collection. Okay, so we didn't find them all, but we did provide him with Underworld and Nightshade.

Richard Hewison is an ex-Software producer for former greats such as Firebird, Microprose and Image Works (to name but a few!). Anyhow, he did work on quite a few titles for the Speccy but unfortunately found himself without the finished product. As a result of him contacting us, we have now found for him Predator 2 and Action Fighter.

The list goes on: Carl Murray was well-chuffed with the rare copy of Laser Genius by Ocean which we managed to locate, and within weeks of this success we also informed Carl that Killed Until Dead would soon be on it's way to him. Andy Davis can now play Delta Wing in two-player mode (see his "My First Game" article in this issue), with Julian Thorpe now taking on the Aliens in the US version of the game. Julian had nearly given up all hope of finding a copy!

So, if you're looking for that elusive title then get in touch. Utilities, Games and even Hardware - we'll try our darned hardest to seek it out. And remember - you pay nothing until we find it! See flyer enclosed for further details.

FOUNTAIN OF KNOWLEDGE

With DAVE FOUNTAIN of Fountain PD

In this new section, which we hope will become a regular feature, Dave Fountain will attempt to answer any queries which you have regarding Spectrum software. He wants to make this an 'open page', which means that if you have anything to add, please feel free to write in. After all, it is YOUR fanzine and so it is YOU who should be getting involved. Away!

Mr Prichard from Surrey is looking for a sequel to CHAOS. But does it even exist?

Julian Gollop's original masterpiece is now available from all leading PD libraries, and did indeed spawn a sequel (although it's doubtful Julian had a hand in it). It was called LORDS OF CHAOS released by Blade Software.

A demo version was put out on a YS covertape (date unknown but is also featured the first DIZZY game) and was released as a full price title. The gameplay had taken on a 'War boardgame' style similar to Laser Squad (by the same house) instead of the enclosed area full of homicidal wizards. The scrolling area was vast and the sprites were very detailed and colourful.

Thankfully, the Goocy Blob was still a spell to use/abuse alongside all the familiar monsters and some notable additions; Pixies, Elephants, Trolls and a very handy Spider.

The game is available for hire through Softsell. No pirate copy is known to be in existence.

Richard Hewison is looking for The Archers by Level 9. But did it ever appear on the Spectrum?

Level 9 were infamous for programming more text and graphics into one 48k adventure than Ocean managed with 128k's worth of Never Ending Story! Still, apart from the usual Middle Earth and sorcery doings, the game does sound very intriguing!

Personally, I have never seen a copy or see it in anyone else's collection (so far), which would suggest that it failed to appear on the Speccy. I'm on the case though so look out for more info next issue. I wonder if Eddie Grundy was in it...

Paul White has asked me to find The Great Giani Sisters for him. However, Michael Bruhn of Denmark seems to think that the game was withdrawn because of certain "copyright problems". So what's the story Dave?

The Great Giani Sisters did receive a limited amount of time in the shops before it was withdrawn. It was indeed banned because Nintendo took the games' creators, Rainbow Arts, to court complaining that the Giani Sisters looked and felt too similar to the Mario Brothers. The court agreed and the game was withdrawn.

HOPEFULLY THIS SECTION WILL RETURN NEXT ISSUE, WITH TWICE AS MANY PAGES

By now, Level 9 had joined forces with Telecomsoft to have their games published under the highly regarded 'Rainbird' label. This freed Level 9 from having to worry about marketing, packaging and distribution of their new games. Whilst the new system was being written they updated their previous two trilogies and gave them pictures (in the form of the old 8 bit graphics) and in some cases, more text. The Middle Earth trilogy of 'Colossal Adventure', 'Adventure Quest' and 'Dungeon Adventure' were released as 'The Jewels of Darkness' and 'Snowball', 'Return to Eden' and 'The Worm in Paradise' were released as the 'Silicon Dreams Trilogy'. These compilation packages were released on all of the major formats, including the 8 bit machines in 1987.

The design for the first of their new style games was well under way. With so many monsters getting the raw end of the deal in adventures, Level 9 decided to let them have their revenge, and from this idea 'Knight Orc' was born. You were cast as an oppressed orc in a magical world which you just had to escape from.

'Knight Orc' was released in the July 1987 and was generally well received by the press. For the first time in a Level 9 adventure, the game was split into three separate parts. The first part (which was really an introduction to the intricacies of the new system) was called 'Loosed Orc'. Part two was 'A Kind Of Magic' and the final segment was 'Hordes of the Mountain King'. In the first part, you had to collect enough rope to be able to swing across a chasm to get into the next part. The rest of the game had you recruiting characters and collecting spells. The very end had you escaping through the mysterious main door and out into the real world! Moving between part two and three was uniquely devised. By wearing a visor, you moved into part three which revealed that you were really in the modern world. There were objects and puzzles that you could only take or solve by being in part three. By wearing the visor again you would re-enter the fantasy world of part two.

Only veteran Level 9 adventurers realised the link between 'Knight Orc' and the earlier 'Silicon Dreams' trilogy. At the end of 'Knight Orc' you were told that no more were you a mere orc slave in Reveline's lifesize adventure game. Reveline's dreams and the visors were an integral part of the 'Silicon Dreams' trilogy, but the link was never obvious unless you had played their previous games.

Pete Austin did a sizeable amount of research into making the magic system and other elements of folk lore consistent in 'Knight Orc'. A deliberate decision was made not to mix and match lore and myths from different sources (countries) so they focused mainly on British mythology.

On a personal note, I found 'Knight Orc' to be lacking the atmosphere and puzzles of their earlier games. Once you had sussed out that you had to recruit say twenty characters at different points and get them to perform a task simultaneously, the puzzles became easily solved. Nine times out of ten you would come across a puzzle or obstacle and due to the nature of the system, the way to solve it was immediately apparent. The text wasn't very imaginatively written either. The graphics (on 16 bit) were at least a great improvement over their old 8 bit ones. They had digitised Godfrey Dowson's paintings as location graphics, and had opted out of the idea of having a picture for every location. The only aspect I didn't particularly like was the ugly border they had around each graphic. This would be used in their other 16 bit releases, with a different border for each game. You could reposition the graphic window by using the mouse and dragging the picture up the screen if you wanted to see more of the text without turning the pictures off altogether.

For their next release in September '87, Level 9 had reverted to publishing the games on their own. 'Gnome Ranger' made it's first public appearance on sale at the PCW show that year. With text specially written by Peter McBride (who had written the short novellas 'The Darkness Rises' for the 'Jewels' compilation, 'Eden Song' for the 'Silicon Dreams' compilation and 'The Sign of the Orc' which was included with 'Knight Orc') the game was their first real stab at a humorous adventure. It was based around the exploits of Ingrid, the Sloane Gnome. She was banished into the wilderness by her exasperated family and she had to find her way home again.

'Gnome Ranger' was once again written using their new system, which had now been given a name - KAOS. I'm not sure whether this was an acronym or not, but it certainly didn't reflect on the games themselves. As with 'Knight Orc', the game was split into three separate adventures which had to be played in order.

I never really made up my mind whether I liked 'Gnome Ranger' or not. The humour was a nice enough change, but it became quickly tiresome. Any word that began with the letter 'n' had a 'g' added to the front (a bit like gnome really!), so the prompt became 'What gnaw?'. The graphics were again digitised paintings on 16 bit, and they were a lot more colourful than those found in the 'Knight Orc'. Unfortunately, the games design was again limited to recruiting characters and performing synchronised actions with other characters. In many ways, their new KAOS system was not very flexible at all. It churned out games with very similar puzzle elements, which made solving them rather easy.

Level 9's next step was to sign up with Mandarin, an affiliate label of Database publications. One of the reasons for the split from Rainbird was because the Austins were apparently not too happy that BT spent more time marketing and promoting the Magnetic Scrolls adventures (The Pawn, Guild of Thieves, Jinxter, Corruption and Fish!) than they did on the Level 9 titles. In two years Level 9 delivered three products for Mandarin, 'Time and Magik', 'Lancelot' and 'Gnome Ranger 2: Ingrid's Back!'. 'Time and Magik' was another updated compilation of three of their previous releases, 'Red Moon', 'The Price of Magik' and 'Lords of Time'. They included the usual digitised graphics and other features. 'Lancelot' was based on the Arthurian legend of Lancelot and his quest for the Holy Grail. A lot of background research had gone into the game, but it was just a shame that they then didn't fill it with good and challenging puzzles! The graphics were now machine drawn renditions as opposed to digitised paintings, but this didn't really make that much difference to the end product. 'Lancelot' was also the most bug ridden game (on the ST) that they had ever released!

By now the KAOS system was really showing its limitations to the full. Every new release played in the same way as the previous one. Puzzles were unimaginative and easily solved if you could work your way around the bugs. 'Lancelot' was a major disappointment to me and a number of other Level 9 fans.

'Gnome Ranger 2: Ingrid's Back!' was an improvement only due to the humour employed in the story. The puzzles were still the same type as before, and there were still serious bugs (although less than in 'Lancelot') which meant that I solved the game ten points short even though I had done exactly the same as someone else who had got a full 1000/1000 points.

Another year went by and then in 1989 Level 9 emerged with what was to be their last adventure release. 'Scapeghost' told the tale of a murdered detective who has three nights to clear his name and get his own back on the gangsters who killed him. The game was designed by Sandra Sharkey but for me anyway it was to be the final nail in the coffin. It suffered from all of the problems the earlier KAOS games had, and sunk without a trace.

The Austins admitted that they just weren't making enough money from adventure games anymore. They had taken steps in late 1988 to move over to completely graphical strategy style products in future. From this idea was born the H.U.G.E systems (wHoley Universal Graphic Environment). The first game to employ this system was 'Champion of the Raj'. Two years after they first began touting it, the game was published by P.S.S. in 1991. It was very much like an Indian version of the Cinemaware game 'Defender of the Crown'. Unfortunately, Level 9's attempt at producing arcade style sections failed to capture the public's imagination and it flopped badly. Magazine reviews were particularly cruel. At about the same time, Level 9 had a brief flirtation with U.S publisher Cinemaware, famous for their 1Mb only Amiga games - TV Sports Football, TV Sports Basketball and the B movie inspired 'It Came from the Desert'. The Austins were commissioned to convert the latter onto the PC in 1990.

The second H.U.G.E game ('Billy the Kid' for Ocean) was abandoned and never saw the light of day. A number of programmers and graphic artists were made redundant in 1991 and this marked the end of an era which had lasted almost a decade.

On a personal note it was sad to see a company who I was a big fan of in the early to mid 1980's go so badly wrong once the 16 bit revolution happened a few years later. I firmly believe that the downfall began with the KAOS system. It was just too limiting and restricted the game designs too much. The subject matter took a turn for the worse too. I would have preferred to see a second 'Middle Earth' or 'Silicon Dreams' trilogy, or a third 'Magik' game than any of the titles they produced from 1987 onwards. One day soon I will return to 'Worm' and finish it off, and try and get a full score in 'Red Moon'. I can't say the same for 'Gnome Ranger 2' or 'Scapeghost'.

A summary of Level 9's adventure releases to date:

Colossal Adventure, Adventure Quest, Dungeon Adventure, Snowball, Lords of Time, Return to Eden, Emerald Isle, Red Moon, The Worm in Paradise, The Price of Magik, (All 8 bit only), Knight Orc (Rainbird), Gnome Ranger, Lancelot, Gnome Ranger 2: Ingrid's Back (latter two both Mandarin), Scapeghost.

Compilations :

Jewels of Darkness, Silicon Dreams, (both Rainbird), Time And Magik (Mandarin).

Licensed :

Erik the Viking, The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole, The Growing Pains of Adrian Mole (Virgin Games), The Archers. (All Mosaic except for 'Growing Pains'- all 8 bit only)

Strategy :

Champion of the Raj (P.S.S - 16 bit only), Billy the Kid (Ocean - never released - 16 bit only).

Conversions :

It Came from the Desert (Cinemaware - PC only)

Others :

rqFORTH for the BBC, rqFORTH toolkit for the BBC, Compass for the Lynx, Extension Basic for the Nascom.

Arcade :

Fantasy, Space Invasion, Bomber, Missile Defence (all for the Nascom).

(Where not stated, all games published by Level 9)

The Price Of Magik

A Reader's Review

By
Lilian Brand



EDITORS NOTE: After reading Richard Hewison's excellent article on Level 9 adventures, we thought you might appreciate a review of the game itself. Lilian, a dedicated adventurer, has given it a once over. This should help you decide whether you adventure fans want to purchase it from us or not. As well as having The Price Of Magik currently in stock, the Level 9 titles Lancelot and Silicon Dreams Trilogy are also on our books. So if you're an adventure fan, there's plenty of quality for you to choose from! Anyhow, enough waffling and on with the review:

THIS is a Level 9 game and sequel to Red Moon. You begin outside the house of the Red Moon with two ways of gaining access: through a door or up a vine. Before entering, thoroughly examine the outside locations and manipulate items found there. Items missed here may be needed later and it could be a long way back to the start if you don't have something you need.

There is a gentle start to this game, with many things to collect and examine in the first few locations. This does not last long however, as before long you have to start drawing a map. This is an extensive game and it took me quite a while (hours in fact) to map out and involved more than a few sheets of discarded paper.

There are some locations which at first cannot be passed because of inhuman obstacles, which include a bloodworm, a walking skeleton, a moving statue, a slug and a werewolf.

At various points in the game you are given the names of spells you can cast, if the correct items are being carried. I spent quite some time trying to get past some of the obstacles by casting spells at them, until I realised that their destruction is a lot easier as long as you are carrying a weapon, or have something to give them. Some are never totally defeated though, as they come back as ghosts.

Casting spells at an object in one location when I couldn't figure out what to do, I suddenly found myself at a different location - or so I thought at the time. I then typed "Look" and realised that I was at the original location, and had in fact been shown another. This is useful when trying to avoid baddies who move around.

I found obtaining a suit of armour a slight problem until I did a favour for a ghost. There are no treasures to collect as the aim of the game is to collect and use 18 magic spells, during which time you go from being an Apprentice through various stages to a Great Magician.

Using the Lenslok provided you can be restored to life at the same location. I may have been using it wrong, or maybe there is a bug in the game, but if you die, use the Lenslok and get the code wrong, you are restored at the same location. If you get the code right you are restored at the beginning of the game and have to start all over again.

Typing "Examine All" gives a list of all objects carried with their descriptions and wording of any papers, books etc.. Side one of the tape loads the 48k version, side two the 128k version with pictures. Overall, I found this quite a complicated but interesting game to play.

EXCLUSIVE!

At last! After many hours of searching, we've finally found the Jewel In The Speccy Crown!

DEUX EX MACHINA

Ask any veteran Speccy fan which game they would most like to own and the answer would be, I am sure, DEUX EX MACHINA. Knowing this, we set out to find this game - one which had been likened to "Gold Dust". And guess what - we've struck lucky!

My heart was in my mouth when I first realised that I had actually got a copy - there it was, in amongst the other pile of software which I had lugged back from the local car boot sale. I couldn't believe it!

So often I have been asked if I can get hold of it - the only other copy available is apparently in Joyce Cook's lending library. The thing is now that I've found it, I am not sure I really want to part with it! But don't despair! I have managed to buy up a second copy from another source, although it did cost me a fair bit and won't actually be in my possession for a good month or so.

Having never previously owned a copy, I can now see why it is so sought after. It must be the only game which can fetch more now than its original retail price! The plot is so original (and weird to boot!) that it grabs you by the throat and gets you hopelessly hooked.

VITAL FACTS:

Producer: Automata UK. Memory Required: 48k
Retail Price: £15.00 Language: Machine Code
Release Date: October/November 1984

Here's what some of the computer press said about it at the time:

"It's like a breath of fresh air...it is a completely new computer experience...brings the drama of the widescreen epic to computer software...a brave new idea" (POPULAR COMPUTING WEEKLY)

"New from Automata, this is like nothing else you've seen! Audio cassette takes you through the game simultaneously - John Pertwee, Frankie Howard, Ian Dury talk, Mel Croucher plays. Mind-blowing!" (SINCLAIR USER, NOVEMBER 84).

"There are a few things in life that can be called Global Certainties - this is one of them - that eventually an Automata game on the A side should meet an Automata hit-single on the B side, fall in love and mate. This is the result..." (CRASH, November 1984).

"Playing the part of a mouse dropping may not be everybody's idea of fun or even good taste but you will soon forget that representation when you start to play the new Automata masterpiece, Deus (sic) Ex Machina."

The plot seems simple enough. It takes place in the future and a large computer rules the political roost. The last mouse crawls to its extinction within the machine and as nerve gas kills it the ultimate mouse dropping is released by the rodent.

That is taken into the machine and the game, which takes up two sides of a cassette tape and an audio soundtrack, starts in which you must create a lifeform within the machine. You can take that lifeform, if it survives, from birth through middle age to old age, playing a series of weird games. Those make more sense when you listen to the soundtrack and realised that author Mel Croucher is trying to put a series of complex political, philosophical and theological points across".

The article concludes: *"Croucher has cleverly manipulated the elements of computer gaming and brought in concepts usually only found in movies. The result is a piece of software which even those people who usually find games boring and computers even more so, will enjoy and play time and again."*

In final analysis Deus (sic) Ex Machina is a game to be played first and talked about later. So, go ahead and do it. We won't look but we will guarantee - well, almost - that you will be intrigued. Gilbert rating - 9. (JOHN GILBERT, SINCLAIR USER, 1984).

So as you can see, Deux Ex Machina was very well received at the time. I'm sure there are many people who didn't buy it at the time (after all, the price was very steep!) and now regret it. However, you may still have a chance to own it!

I've decided to put up one of my copies up for sale. I won't name a price, because that is up to you, but all offers will be considered up until June 15th. Whoever makes the best offer will be the proud owner of a game (in excellent condition with full instructions and audio tapes), which has become the Holy Grail of Spectrum game playing. I look forward to hearing from you - James.

ALSO KEEP YOUR EYES PEELED IN FUTURE ISSUES FOR THE OTHER COPY OF DEUX EX MACHINA - I MAY JUST OFFER THAT FOR SALE, ALONG WITH 5 OTHER RARE AUTOMATA TITLES. WHAT A COLLECTION THAT WOULD BE!

Spectrum Software Scene

Alchemist Research

& ALCHEMIST SOFTWARE

Right, well I should imagine that by now you'll be thinking, "Oh no, its that game again!". But before you skip this page, take this into account: Andy Davis and his crew at Alchemist Research are resurrecting the dead! Yes that right! Software that you thought was lost forever is now available again!

Over the past few months the guys at ALCH have been 'negotiating' a number of deals, by which they are allowed to distribute certain software titles. Games by Matthew Smith such as Manic Miner and Jet Set Willy are now available through Alchemist Software (send an SAE for their latest catalogue - address in the "Plugged In" section). Distribution rights have also been passed on to the following reputable organisations: Fountain PD, WoMo, and IPD. It must be stressed however - NON OF THESE TITLES ARE PUBLIC DOMAIN.

After having much correspondence with Andy, it would appear that I can now print a pretty much comprehensive list of the distribution rights acquired. However, Andy is also asking for YOUR help! ALCH are currently doing research into "lost titles" which may eventually become available to the public. So, if you can think of a game or utility which should be on any of the following lists but isn't, then drop Andy a line at the address given elsewhere in this issue. If it is found that your claim is correct then you may claim a **free credit** from either Alchemist Software or Fountain PD. This will be redeemable against software or tapezines (i.e. ALCHNEWS). Get racking those brains!

* Indicates incomplete list.

Matthew Smith: Manic Miner, Jet Set Willy, Jet Set Willy 2, Jet Set Willy 3, Jet Set Willy: The Final Mission, Jet Set Willy Editor.

Vortex Software*: Alien Highway, Tornado Low Level (TLL), Cyclone, Revolution, Android One, Android Two, Highway Encounter, H.A.T.E.

Llamasoft / Jeff Minter*: Gridrunner, Metagalactic Llamas.

DK Tronics / Don Priestley*: Trapdoor, Flunky, Dictator, Spawn Of Evil, Maziacs, Popeye.

Jullian Gollop*: Chaos, Rebelstar, Rebelstar 2.

Psychedelic Hedgehog / Andy Remic: Shadow On Glass, Moon Magic, Specimen, Sponge, Land Of Falanor, Liberator, Mango Jones, Monster Munch, Assassin, Space Worm, International Cricket Manager, Freaky Footy, Saga Of A Mad Barbarian, Green Sonja, Specimen II : The Apple Quest, Demon Slayer, Termination, Not The Lord Of The Rings.

Gremlln Graphics: Alien Evolution, Alternative World Games, Auf Wiedersehen Monty, Avenger, Bloody Valley, Bounder, Convoy Raider, Dark Fusion, Deflektor, Footballer Of The Year, Future Knight, Jack The Nipper, Jack The Nipper 2 :Coconut Capers, Krakout, Lotus Esprit Turbo Challenge, Metabolis, Moley Christmas, Monty Is Innocent, Monty On The Run, Rocco, Sam Stoot Safebreaker, Star Quake, Super Sleuth, Supersports, Technonop, The Final Matrix, Thing Bounces Back, Tour De Force, Toyota Celica GT Rally, Trailblazer, Wanted : Monty Mole.

They cannot distribute licences or film tie-ins.

Theodore Develgas*: Morbus Gravis, VGA 1, VGA 2, VGA 3, VGA 4, Dinosaurs, EEC 1993, Black & White Vol 1, Black & White Vol 2, Hot Tyre, Popstars, Talking Hedz, Piggy Punks, Nous, Twinz, Christmas Special, Bombed, Sound Demos Volumes 1-10, Solaris, Gundhead, Top Ten Demo, Slapfight Demo, Renegade Demo.

Miscellaneous Titles: RDS Assembler And Utilities (RDS Software), 007 Spy, 007 Titles (007 Software / GA Bobker), Jonny Reb II (Lothlorien), Dumpy, Linotype, Any Other Programs (Bradway Software), Pagesys, Multistore (Miles Kinloch), Emulate Magazine (Barry Plewa), Input Listings & Articles (Marshall Cavendish).

IF YOU CAN ADD TITLES TO ANY OF THESE LISTS,
PLEASE CONTACT ANDY DAVIS IMMEDIATELY.
THANKOU FOR YOU CO-OPERATION!

THE WHOOPS CORNER!!!!

Yes, I'm afraid that there was rather a large QUACK QUACK OOPS in the last issue of Classix. Due to some rather tired editing, the pages for the Phillip Mitchell article got a mixed up and as one reader has pointed out, the article was a bit "out-of-sync". You should read it in the following order: 1st page, 4th page, 3rd page, 2nd page and finally 5th page. Sorry for those who got confused!



Sale List

PROPRIETOR:

James Waddington, 11 Finsbury Drive, Wreze, Bradford,
West Yorkshire, BD2 1QA.
Tel: 01274 590559 (After 7pm Weekdays)

Please make cheques and Postal Orders payable to J. Waddington. Cash CAN be sent but it **MUST** be well sealed. UK readers please remember to add 25p Per Item (50p EEC, 75p REST OF THE WORLD) for Postage and Packing (unless stated). Items are sold on a first come, first served basis. Unless alternatives are stated, refunds will be given in the form of a cheque. Full refunds (excluding postage) will be given for items which are found to be defective.

@ Denotes Budget Game

Denotes missing inlay/instructions

Adventure Games:

£3.00 each: Lancelot (Level 9 - condition as new!). **£2.00 each:** The Price Of Magic (Level 9), Talisman - The Magical Quest Game (Adventure Workshop), War In Middle Earth, Silicon Dreams Trilogy (Level 9) (Return To Eden, The Worm In Paradise, with Snowball missing from the collection). **£1.30 each:** ZZZZ. **£1 each:** Twin Kingdom Valley, Inspector Flukeit. **80p each:** Kentilla, The Never Ending Story (128k Only, The Quest For The Holy Grail (2 Copies), Yes Prime Minister (Big Box Version), The Big Sleaze@, Excalibur. **50p each:** Valhalla, Blizzard Pass (and H.A.R.D.). **40p each:** Adventure Quest (SU Covertape), Jewels Of Babylon (SU Covertape)#, Bulbo & The Lizard King (2 Copies)#, Mountains Of Ket (Crash Covertape), Ship Of The Line (1982)#, Temple Of Terror (SU Covertape), A Shadow On Glass (CRASH Covertape), Apache Gold (CRASH Covertape), Circus#. **30p each:** Dizzy, Red Door (YS Covertape)#, Shadowfire#, Behind Closed Doors (SU Covertape)#, Valkyrie 17#, Seven Parchments (SU Megatape 18)#. **20p each:** Valhalla#, Dun Darach#, Kentilla# (2 Copies). **10p each:** Planet Of Deaths#.

Covertapes:

30p each: (YOUR SINCLAIR) Beaut Box (March 1993) (CRASH) Crash Presents..... September 1990, December 1990 (2 Copies).
20p each: (YOUR SINCLAIR) Special Covertape - Kat Trap & A Nightmare On Robinson Street# (2 Copies). The Magnificent Seven - No.1 (3 Copies), No.3, No.4#, No.7 (2 Copies), No.8. (2 Copies), No.8. Six Pack - No.1 (2 Copies) Four Pack - No.1 (2 Copies), No.2, No.3 (2 Copies), No.4 (4 Copies). Christmas Collection Jan 1991. Exclusives - With Imagine: Play For Your Life (2 Copies)#, With Dinamic: Dustin#, With Martech: Blind Panic#, With US Gold: People From Sirius#. Assorted Covertapes - No.1 Alien Evolution (Gremlin)#, No.2 Samurai#, No.3 Army Moves#, No.4 Flashpoint (2 Copies)#, No.5 Movie#, No.6 Chaos (2 Copies)#, No.7 Fernandez Must Die#, No.8 Rebelstar II (3 Copies)#. Double Decker Tapes (2 tapes feature Qarx + Skate Or Die Demo) (2 Copies)#. (SINCLAIR USER) Double Hits - No.2. Six Of The Best - No.2 (2 Copies), No.3, No.4. Great Eight - No.12 (2 Copies). Megatape - No.2#, No.3, No.19#, No.20# (2 Copies), No.23#. Enigma No.1. (CRASH) Crash Presents - October 1989#, December 1989#, January 1990#, April 1990#, July 1990# (2 Copies), August 1990, January 1991 (Tape 2)#, May 1991# The Crash Sampler#, The Crucial Crash Tape#.

10p each: (No Cases) YS No.1 - Samurai + Playable Demo#, Y.S. No.2 - Chaos + Zythum (2 Complete Games)#, YS No.3 Rasputin Demo Tape#. Crash No.1 - Sneak Preview Tape 1988 (Dark Side & Last Ninja 2)#, Crash No.2 - Sneak Preview Tape (Batman & Savage).

Sporting Games:

£1.20 each: World Cup Carnival (Official 1986 World Cup Game With Badges etc...). **60p each:** Emlyn Hughes International Soccer, The Sports Pack (6 Games). **50p each:** World Games, International Karate (1985). **40p each:** International Rugby Simulator, Winter Olympiad '88, Pogostick Olympics, Kick Boxing (Firebird). **30p each:** American Football (Mind Games 1984), Barry McGuigan's World Championship Boxing@ (3 Copies), Daley Thompson's Supertest, Daley Thompson's Supertest (128k Only), Daley Thompson's Decathlon, Hyper Sports (1984)#, International Cricket, Monte Carlo Casino, Nick Faldo Plays The Open@, Olympiad '86, Pro-Golf@, Rugby@, Sailing, Snooker, Sporting Compilation (Paxman Promotions 1987)#, World Cup (By Artic), Grand National#, Winter Games#. **20p each:** 4 Soccer Simulators#, Crazy Golf (Mr Micro)#, Daley Thompson's Decathlon# (2 Copies), Daley Thompson's Super-Test#, Olympic Spectacular, Barry McGuigan's World Championship Boxing#, Ian Botham's Test Match# (2 Copies), Matchday II#, Super Cycle# (2 Copies), Test Match, World Class Leaderboard#. **10p each:** Handicap Golf#, International Cricket#.

Motorsport:

40p each: Full Throttle. **30p each:** Battlecars (Games Workshop, 1984), BMX Simulator (3 Copies), Formula Grand Prix. **20p each:** Buggy Boy#@.

Flying Games:

60p each: Biggles (Mirrorsoft, 1986). **40p each:** Blue Thunder (Richard Wilcox Software, 1984), MIG 29 Soviet Fighter, Spitfire 40 (With Improved 128k version), 1942@, Harrier Attack@, Arcade Flight Simulator, MIG Busters, Ace of Aces@. **30p each:** Spitfire, Afterburner@, F1 Tornado, ACE (By Gamebusters), Airwolf#, The Empire Fights Back, Fighter Pilot# (3 Copies), Flak, Airliners#. **20p each:** The Empire Fights Back#, The Flying Formula#.

Arcade Games:

£1.00 each: Batman - The Movie, Viz (Double Cassette with Bonus Game), Bubble Bobble, Rick Dangerous 2, Four Great Games. **90p each:** Back To The Future, Where Time Stood Still, Escape From The Planet Of The Robot Monsters, Impossible Mission (Epyx). **60p each:** Gift From The Gods (Ocean, 1984), Beach Head (US Gold), I Of The Mask. **50p each:** Armageddon (Ocean), Operation Wolf (2 Copies), Back To Skool@, Infiltrator, Paperboy, Terra Cresta, Rick Dangerous@, Ghosts & Goblins@, Werewolves Of London, Bravest@. **40p each:** Star Wars, WWF Wrestlemania#, The Detective, Skool Daze@ (2 Copies), Short Circuit@, Postman Pat, Back To The Future@. **35p each:** Rollaround. **30p each:** Amaurote, Barbarian - The Ultimate Warrior@, Double Dragon II#, I Ball, Legend Of The Amazon Woman#, Spy Hunter@, Star Runner, Alcatraz Harry#, Gift From The Gods#, Grid Runner, Mad Marta (Mikro-Gen)#, Mission Omega#, Nonterraqueous#, Renegade III#, Bubble Bobble#, Side Wize#, Magic Land Dizzy#, Beyond The Ice Palace#, Big Trouble In Little China#, Traxx, Combat School@, Gauntlet@, Paperboy#, Raid Over Moscow, Rambo - First Blood Part II (3 Copies), Renegade (3 Copies)#, Skate Or Die#, Trantor - The Last Storm Trooper#, Uridium (Hewson, 1986) (2 Copies), Xarax, Xcel, Zub. **20p each:** American Turbo King#, Combat School#, Gnasher#, Overlander#, Crystal Castles (US Gold)#, Hysteria#, Yeti#, Ghost Hunters#, Moto (By MAD)#, Stormlord#, L.A. Swat#, Laser Tag#, Phantomas#, Thundercats, Exodus#, Tarzan#, Time-Gate#, One Man And His Droid#, Roadblasters#, Psytraxx#, Mr Freeze# (2 Copies), Gauntlet# (2 Copies), Black Crystal (Maps 1 & 2), Black Crystal (Maps 3,4,5 & 6)#, Highway Encounter#, W.A.R. (Martech)#, Batman#. **10p each:** Bubble Bobble (5 Levels Only)#, Haunted Hedges (2 Copies), Tapper (US Gold)#.

Management Games:

80p each: League Football. **50p each:** Premier II Superleague, Classic Trainer. **10p each:** Football Manager (Addictive, 1982)#.

Strategy:

50p each: Software House (Run Your Own Company!). **30p each:** Koronis Rift. **20p each:** Colossus Chess 4.0#, Millionaire (Curry's).

BLAST FROM THE PAST

Last month, St John Swainson reviewed Dr Destructo. Here's what Your Sinclair said about it in October 1987:

DR. DESTRUCTO

Bulldog / £1.99

RICHARD This is one of those games with a story behind it. In fact, just about every game on the market has a little story that goes with it. In Dr Destructo you have to fly your intrepid little aeroplane through the defences surrounding the island base of the evil and eponymous Doctor, destroying his ships, aircraft carriers, oil tankers and so on.

At the same time you have to shoot down as many of the enemy aeroplanes and helicopters as you can, while avoiding the satellites, space shuttles and other nasty things. But you couldn't do without them, because it's by shooting them down and causing them to crash onto whatever is at the bottom of the screen that you - very gradually - destroy whatever it is at the bottom of the screen. Every time a wrecked enemy plane crashes onto a ship or aircraft carrier etc. it make a little hole. If you can get another wreck to hit the same place, the hole gets deeper. When the hole reaches the bottom of whatever it is, a pretty little waterspout appears. Three waterspouts and the whatever it is should sink, and you go onto the next screen. Once a screen, you have a bomb, which seems to destroy a number of building blocks the target is made up of: use it wisely - you wouldn't have thought that it was easy to miss an aircraft carrier, but I managed it.

This is a budget game, and perhaps we shouldn't expect too much from it. On the plus side, it has a certain appeal, although very little addictive quality. On the minus side, the graphics are clumsy and the game play becomes repetitive and boring... You're doing the same thing, screen after screen after screen. Just hold down the fire button and keep zooming across, if you're lucky you'll clobber enough enemy aircraft to knock holes in the target; if you're not, you'll run into something and loose a life. If you loose a life, you start again. I certainly haven't noticed any real element of skill in the game, but what the hell, it's a cheap shoot 'em up. As budget games go, OK: but only just.

YS CLAPOMETER

Cheap but less than
cheerful aerial shoot 'em up
with little variety or
originality.

Graphics	■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■
Playability	■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■
Value for Money	■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■
Addictiveness	■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

TOTAL 5

Platform/Ladder Type Games:

80p each: Codename Mat, Curse Of Sherwood, Donkey Kong (128k Only), Everyone's A Wally, Manic Miner, Underwilde. 70p each: Jack & The Beanstalk (With Currah Speech), 50p each: Impossible Mission, Caves Of Doom. 40p each: Murray Mouse Supercop, The Trap Door@, Olli & Lissa 3. 30p each: Booty (2 Copies), Cylu, Deviants, Ghost Hunters, Kauckle Busters@, Finders Keepers#, Olli & Lissa, Nifty Lifty (Curry's), Jet Set Willy#, Digger Dan (3 Copies). 20p each: Doomsday Castle.

Miscellaneous:

20p each: Defenda (Curry's), Sinclair Action Pack Light Gun Games# 10p each: A.T.M. RAM#, AWARI#, Your Financial Options#, Fun To Learn (Curry's).

Quiz Games:

£1.50 each: TV Special (Krypton Factor, Blockbusters & Every Second Counts), Trivial Pursuit.

Oldies:

70p each: Spy Hunter (Original US Gold Version), Mikie (Imagine, 1984), Southern Belle (Hewson, 1985), Jet Set Willy (Software Projects, 1983). 55p each: Psytron (Big Box Version) (2 Copies), Ghostbusters. 50p each: The Rocky Horror Show (CRL, 1985). 40p each: Ad Astra (Gargoyle Games, 1984), Alchemist, Moon Cresta, Tau Ceti, Stinkers (Imagine, 1983) (3 Copies). 40p each: BC's Quest For Tires (Software Projects) (5 Copies), Corruption (CRL)#, Road Toad (DK Tronics). 30p each: Jet Set Willy (Richochet)@, War Of The Worlds (CRL)#, Fighting Warrior (2 Copies), Galaxy Attack (Sunshine, 1983), Gridrunner (Salamander Software, 1983), Orbiter (Silversoft, 1982), Pyjamarama (Mikro-Gen)#, Spectrum Safari (CDS Microsystems, 1983), Surfchamp (2 Copies). 20p each: Avenger (Abacus Programs)#, Arcadia#, Alien (Ultimate, 1984)#, Dictator (DK' Tronics, 1982), Zip Zap, Zzoom (Imagine, 1983) (3 Copies), Avalon (2 Copies)#, Ant Attack#, 3D Luna Attack#, Transylvanian#. 10p each: 1984 (Incentive Software, 1984), Rabbit Shoot 16k (Phipps Associates, 1983).

Classic SINCLAIR Games & Utilities:

£1.50 each: Zeus Assembler. 50p each: Hungry Horace. 40p each: Survival (10 Copies), Computer Scrabble (3 Copies), Make A Chip (9 Copies). 30p each: Crazy Golf, Treasure Island, Alien Destroyer (2 Copies), Horace Goes Skiing (6 Copies), Embassy Assault, Chequered Flag (4 Copies), VU File (& Gazetteer), VU Calc, VU-3D. 20p each: Chess (3 Copies). 10p each: Match Point (3 Copies)#, Stop The Express#, Cyrus Chess#, Hungry Horace (2 Copies)#, Horace & The Spiders (2 Copies)#, Disco Dan#, Alien Destroyer, Reversi#, Scrabble (2 Copies)#, Chess (2 Copies)#, Chequered Flag (2 Copies)#, VU File ZX81#, VU-File#, VU-Calc#. 5p each: Horizon Starter Pack (Features the "Thro' The Wall" bat and ball game) (4 Copies), ZX Spectrum+ User Guide Companion Cassette (also features "Thro' The Wall").

Other Utilities:

£4.00 each (including postage): Learn Basic Programming On The Sinclair ZX Spectrum. £2.00 each: GRAPHIC ADVENTURE CREATOR, The Artist II (A Past SINCLAIR USER Classic). £1.50 each: Paintbox (Graphical Programming Software), Machine Code Test Tool (Tutor & Debug Program). £1.00 each: H.U.R.G. (High Level User Friendly Real Time Graphics Designer by Melbourne House), Tasword Two (2 Copies). 90p each: BARGAIN OF THE MONTH!! - GRAPHIX by Icon (Icon Driven Computer Aided Design Program) (Microdrive Compatible!!!) (2 Copies). 60p each: Beat The Clock (Time-Telling Practise For 5-8 Year Olds). 50p each: Mini Office. 40p each: Morse Tutor (Binary Star Technology)#. 20p each: Currah Speech, Personal Banking Service.