

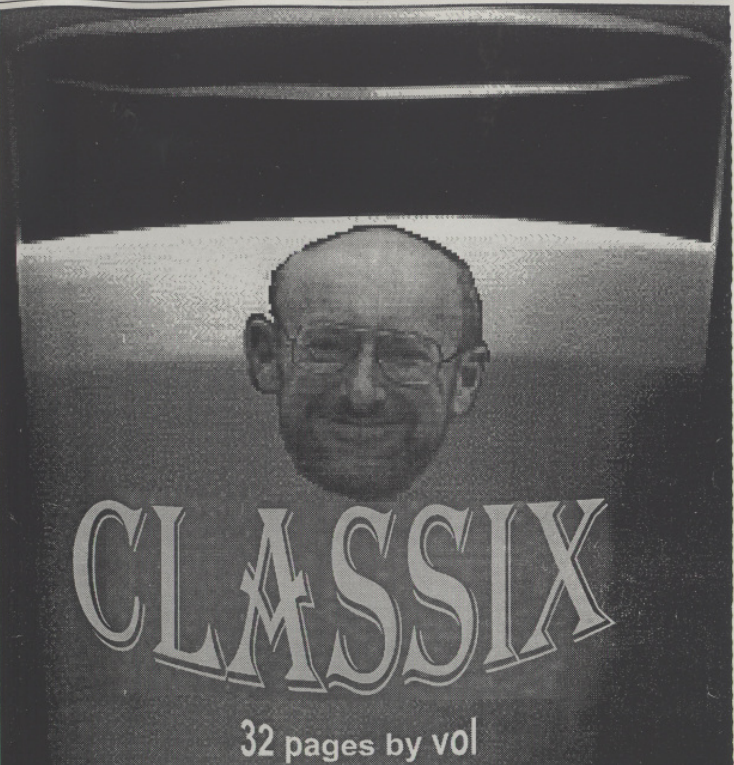
OH, SUGAR!



AMSTRAD

"I've got a gut feeling in my stomach..."

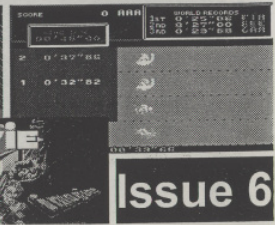
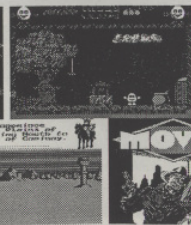
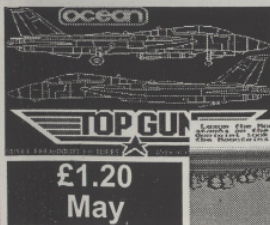
(the man himself speaking eloquently on BBC1)



CLASSIX

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May

Issue 6

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Shouts 'n' All That

Thanks to the following people: St John Swainson, Joyce Cook, Andy Davis, Paul White, Paul Howard, Dave Fountain, Martyn Sherwood, Brian Watson, Michael Bruhn, Michael Coward, Bob Manners, Tom Carlson, Mum, Sis and anyone else who's been forgotten in and amongst the EXAM panic!

This fanzine was produced on a Pentium PC with a little help from MS Publisher, MS Word, Netscape, Paint Shop Pro, WSpecEm Emulator & Z80 Emulator. Much respect to G.Lunter!!! Big respect also to Bournemouth Uni for giving me free Internet access!

Inspiration: Boddingtons, Safeway (for making Boddingtons £3.69 for 4 cans!), Malboro Lights, Rich Tea biscuits, Radio 5-Live, Clive Sinclair, Cheese and Salami Toasties, Acid Jazz, Oasis, Orange Tango and BRADFORD CITY AFC!!!

CLASSIX

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Editorial

Right, plenty to go at this month, so without further pause to consider why Coventry always escape relegation, lets move onwards!!!!



Firstly, I'm on the move again and leaving my lovely (sic) guest house with its charming landlord! So, as from NOW, send all post to my Bradford address and it will be forwarded to me. The reason why I'm not giving you my new address is because I'll only be there until September before I move on again. Any mail which does arrive at Sherwood Lodge will be safe, but I'd prefer it if you could send everything to my home address. If you do need to contact me urgently then I will be down here in Bournemouth for most of the summer so try my e-mail or failing that try my pager.

You may have noticed that there is no Clive Sinclair Story in this issue. This is because I've heard nothing from Richard Coles recently due, I suspect, to him having examinations. Anyhow, next month we'll be publishing a condensed version of the whole Clive Sinclair story for the benefit of our new readers. This will be an amalgamation of Richard's work and also some new material which we have gathered. I know Richard has been struggling recently to dig up information for this section, so this seems the best solution for everyone.

Classix is also pleased to announce that it is now on good terms with both Alchemist Research and Prism PD. As editor, I have a commitment to keep personal feuds out of this fanzine and despite some careless comments regarding myself which were printed in Alchnews 23, this is the way things will stay.

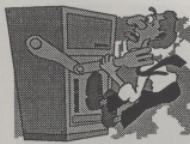
So to clear it up, Dave Fountain has never written any articles attacking me for selling 'rip-off' second hand software and if he was going to call me a "bastard" I'm sure he'd do it to my face. An apology has been printed in AN24 and a notice placed in Issue 4 of The ZX Files, stating that all allegations regarding Dave and myself were unfounded. As a result, Classix has repaired its links with Alchemist Research and its proprietor Andy Davis.

Finally on this subject, from now on all pieces of 'news' passed on to Classix will be checked for authenticity. That means that we will be phoning or writing to the people involved and getting their reaction. This is good journalism and we would encourage this practise among other publications. The printing of 'grape vine' news is dangerous and quite frankly shows a lack of professionalism. And besides, quotes bring a story to life and make for a more interesting read! Views on this subject are welcome.

Erm, next. You may have noticed the emergence of a Crap Games Corner in this issue. St John Swainson, our inaugural contributor, wants other people to write this section in future. So if you've got a bit of a Speccy 'quack-quack-whoops' in your collection, we'd welcome a 500 word contribution with a 'crapness' percentage mark at the end (incidentally, St John's mark for Roadblasters was 5%).

Finally, Classix will probably be wound up once we reach issue 10. More news next issue, but I won't be leaving the scene completely. I passed my shorthand exam by the way, so expect to see more direct quotes used in future issues of Classix and proprietors and editors..... prepare to be interviewed more often!

Well, that's it. My exams are looming so I'd better get my head into the books. There are some great web sites springing up all over the place so if you're on-line have a look at some of them. And if you're inspired by them we'd be more than pleased to receive your own contributions. All the best.... ED.



Writing on the Wall

In **Issue 5**, readers were asked whether **Classix** should continue to concentrate exclusively on 'retro' issues or start to cover new developments as well. Are you happy with what we are doing? Read on.....

ROB COOK, Birmingham.

"Regarding the general comments on covering older software and the contents of the mag, I think that it has got to be included. For a start, I think that the majority of material will be based on previous software or events. Reporting on new software, articles, etc. is great but you won't fill 30 pages with just that - without padding."

He also adds: "Finally, it's good to note that **Classix** does not have a general policy of 'crapping' on every other rival mag. I'd only been a **Spectrum** owner for a couple of weeks before I started receiving a number of mags and leaflets from **Alchemist Research**, **Prism** etc... which spent most of the time running the other down."

ST JOHN SWAINSON, Hertfordshire

"For what its worth, I reckon **Classix** should stay as it is. **Crashed**, **ZX Files**, **Z2**, **PD Power** and others cover the current scene very well. **Classix** is different, which makes it interesting in itself. More importantly, it has got a good spread of well written articles. You can't please everyone. Stick to the niche you already occupy. There you go. I've aired my opinion and very boring it was too."

*Other comments passed on to the editor have also indicated that you like way **Classix** covers 'retro' issues, which means that we'll carry on doing what we do best - drinking lots of be..., er I mean, **Getting All Nostalgic!***

WANTED!!!

Michael Bruhn in Denmark is looking for UK people with whom to swap his **Speccy** software. If you fancy yourself as a bit of a European Free Marketeer then contact him at:
Petersborg 23, 6200 Aabenraa, DENMARK

Page 4

Read All About It!

News from the world of the rubbery-one.....

First off we have good news! In the last issue it was reported that the oh-so-excellent fanzine **The ZX Files** was to close! The reasons for this will not be entered into, suffice to say the problems were caused by the usual boo-boys. Anyhow, editor **Paul White** received lots of letters and telephone calls begging him NOT to stop producing the fanzine and guess what? - he's relented and is to carry on producing it!!!

Issue 3 arrived on my doormat a few weeks ago and I can honestly say that the fanzine is looking better than ever! Inside **Paul** says that he has been really surprised by the number of people who want **The ZX Files** to continue.

"I have received a lot of mail from people who actually enjoyed reading this humble rag, so with my zest for **Speccy** publishing restored I have decided to carry on," he said.

"If **Frank Bruno** can come out of retirement so can I. Just don't expect me to appear in any pantomimes."

Issue 3 of **The ZX Files** is out NOW and costs £1.50 (cheques/PO's payable to **P.White**) from 30 The Rowans, Wetherby, West Yorkshire, LS22 5EB. Oh, and to clear up any confusion, we didn't mean that that **Paul** couldn't take criticism - we meant that some of the people indirectly cited in certain articles couldn't hack it.

oooooooooooooooooooo

Next up is the news that after giving the **Spectrum** community a long and loyal service, **Dave Fountain** has decided to sell his PD library, **Fountain PD**. The news was announced a couple of months ago and **Dave** officially ceased trading on March 26th 1997. The question I hear you all asking is.... "Who has taken it over?"

Well, I can reveal that it is in fact no other than **Mr Martyn Sherwood**, proprietor of **Prism PD**! **Dave** says that he will spend his new found time, "swapping demos, writing my own crap software and writing the odd article."

fountain PD

The logo which stood for quality products and good service.

The transfer was arranged when **Dave** approached **Martyn**, giving him first refusal. From then on it was plain sailing and the deal was done and dusted within a couple of days.

Naturally, **Martyn** was quite surprised when **Dave** approached him with the offer. He said:

"At first we weren't too sure whether it was genuine or not, but in the end we were quite pleased about it all."

No fee was involved (save for a nominal 1p and compensation for some of the discs **Dave** handed over), and **Martyn** is pleased to report that he is currently working on a new catalogue. This will be an amalgamation of both **Prism** and **Fountain PD** titles, with the name "**Fountain**

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PD" being used only on the front cover of the catalogue, to indicate its increased contents.

Prices will also be kept down to a bare minimum, Martyn told us, as Prism asks all customers to supply their own media.

"Software should cost no more than 5p per title", he said.

However, the future of Prism PD has been cast into doubt over recent weeks, with the rumour mill implying that Prism had closed down and that the whole library (including the entire Fountain PD collection) had been sold for £30.

Questioned about this, Martyn assured *Classix* that this was not the case and that Prism PD was getting along nicely.

"Everything is fine at my end", he said. "It's all going on OK".

If you wish to sample the services of Prism PD then you can contact Martyn Sherwood at 13 Rodney Close, Bilton, Rugby, Warwickshire, CV22 7HJ (01788 817473). Send an SAE marked "Spectrum PD Catalogue" and you will receive a free copy forthwith. Oh, and I know that Dave had a hell of a lot of 'classic' games in his catalogue so if you're a retro-freak, PPD is now the place to go!!

In case you didn't know, Martyn also edits the Speccy fanzine *PD Power* (£1.70 for latest issue, SAE for details) and is involved in the running of the 8-Bit Alliance, which caters for, amongst others, the Spectrum. For further details about the 8BA send an SAE to: Leon Brown, 43 Gwydir Street, Toxeth, Liverpool, L8 3TJ.

Speaking of closure, there is definitely one publication which will be folding in due course - 8-BIT.

It was announced in issue 16 of the popular multi-format publication that issue 25 is to be the last one produced by editor Brain Watson. Two of the reasons cited are a major business project which Brian is involved in and also the fact that the editor feels all worthwhile issues will have been covered by the end of the millennium.

Quoting from 8BIT, Brian says: "...I would prefer to close with people wanting more, rather than risk going stale and becoming boring. Stale I could probably just about live with, but not boring."

However, despite the magazine's inevitable demise, Brian intends to keep up the same high standards which has made 8BIT so popular. In the future he plans to produce another 'no adverts' special and also print a special 'writers' issue which will help budding computer journalists to get their name into print..... and get paid for it! (I'm reserving my copy already! - ED).

Brian is also open to suggestions for other articles - preferably on topics which have not been covered adequately elsewhere. He is hoping that someone may step into the gap which 8BIT leaves and come up with some new and dynamic ideas.

"I would hope that anyone who is planning to step in and fill the gap with a similar type of publication will have sufficient creativity to choose another title rather than just tag onto 8BIT's tail," he said.

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Yeah, we've all seen the rubber keys, but how many of you have actually clamped eyes upon the original ZX80? Read on for possibly your first glimpse!

The early ZX years sinclair



Bob Manners, who maintains Bob's Computer Museum on the World Wide Web, talks about the classic computer which he proudly owns.

Sinclair ZX80

The Sinclair ZX80, introduced in 1980, was, for many hobbyists in the UK, the first truly affordable system. Available in kit form, for the user to assemble at home, the ZX80 was a simple machine based around the Z80 processor. The kit retailed for around £100.

ZX80s are relatively hard to find now, since the ZX81, introduced only a year later replaced the machine. The ZX81 featured a higher level of integration, allowing costs (and hence prices) to be reduced, whilst increasing functionality. In addition, the ZX81 was available ready-assembled, which surely must have helped its market penetration with those enthusiasts with a phobia of soldering irons!

The machine features a very simple integer BASIC interpreter, crammed onto a 4K ROM. This BASIC exhibits some strange limitations (string variables and arrays can only have single letter names; a number of common BASIC functions, such as DATA/READ/RESTORE are omitted; there is no support for floating point arithmetic).

The machine connects to a domestic TV, displaying 32 columns of text in mono. The one-touch keyword per key system, which was to become a characteristic feature of Sinclair machines, was introduced on the ZX80. Whilst this approach eliminates the tokenising overhead from the BASIC interpreter, it can drive the user nearly mad trying to find infrequently-used keywords!

My ZX80 is still packed in its original box, together with the manual, schematic and assembly instructions. An invoice from Sinclair (or Science of Cambridge, as they were then known) for repairing a fault is also included.

Any machines which were found not to work after initial assembly could be returned to Sinclair for a fixed price repair costing £10. A 2K RAM expansion pack, taking the total RAM from 1K to 3K, was also provided with this system.

Those of us that browsed at hobbyist magazines in the early 80's will never forget Sinclair's advertising claim that the ZX80 was suitable for controlling a nuclear power station!

Bob's Computer Museum can be found at:
www.swift.eng.ox.ac.uk/rjm/museum.html

Bob himself can be contacted on: rjm@swift.eng.ox.ac.uk

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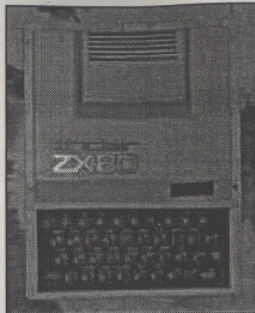
Moving across the pond now and onto another Museum. Curator **Tom Carlson** oversees the **Obsolete Computer Museum**, and he has quite a collection for you to look at - including a picture of that rare item, a ZX80!

Sinclair ZX80

The lucky owner is a guy called **K. Stetemoen** who lives in **Williamsburg, VA**.

Here's what **Tom** says about this little box of wonders:

"\$99 computer! A whole K of RAM. Neat BASIC that filled in complete keywords when you typed the first letter. Its BASIC was also notable in that it made you include LET in let statements, eg. LET A=5. This is actually a ZX81 via a chip upgrade. (No! You can't put a Pentium in it!)"



Ouch! Ed pinches himself - but it really is The Genuine Article!

Sinclair ZX81

Again delving into **Tom's** collection, we find that old chestnut, the **ZX81**. Unlike its predecessor, nearly all of us have owned one of these beasts.

The owner in **Tom's** museum is **Edward Hammond**, although we're not quite sure where he lives - but it's probably in the US.

Tom reflects: "As I recall, I got this computer when I was 12. That would make it 1980. Does that sound right? It was my first, and it was a little intimidating at the start. Although I eventually learned how to do OK with the ZX-81 BASIC, I initially limited myself to "annoy-your-siblings" programs. It went sort of like this:

```
10 FOR X=1 TO 500
20 PRINT "Elizabeth is a Lizardbreath"
30 NEXT X
```

About the time I started to get really good at this and delve into the expanded capability of the 16k RAM module (the ZX-81 has only 1k of on-board RAM), I was distracted by high school, Apple II's and later Macs. Now, I mainly work on a PPC 8500/120.



Technical Specifications:

(taken directly from the Operating Supplement)

- * Depth: 167 mm (6.32 in)
- * Height: 40 mm (1.57 in)
- * Weight: 350 grams (12.15 oz)
- * CPU: Z80Z at 3.25 MHz
- * ROM: Containing 8k BASIC interpreter
- * RAM: 1K byte internal, externally expandable to 16K bytes



Keyboard: 40 key, graphics and function modes, includes 20 graphical and 54 inverse video characters Sinclair calls the keyboard a "touch sensitive membrane".

Display: 24 lines x 32 characters (text). 64 x 44 pixels in graphics mode

Modes: FAST and SLOW modes. In SLOW mode, "the ZX81 will both compute and display simultaneously." In FAST mode, you go 4 times faster, but the display is delayed and jerky.

Storage: Programs and data can be saved onto the cassette [not provided] so that they are not lost when the ZX81 is turned off." Transfer rate to and from the cassette recorder is 250 baud.

Floating Point: "Numbers are stored in 5 bytes in floating-point binary form.... accurate to 9 1/2 decimal digits"

Power: Requires 420ma at 7-11V DC. This is the only piece of the original package I have lost."

If you've got access to the World Wide Web then Tom's site is well worth a visit. If you want to get a closer look at the ZX81 then you can see the following pictures on his site (descriptions courtesy of Tom):

The whole shebang - Close-up of keyboard - 16k RAM add-on - ZX-81 with 16k RAM attached - View of bottom - Side view, showing jacks for cassette, power, and RF signal - Programming Manual - How to hook up your ZX-81 - Operating Supplement.



The Obsolete Computer Museum
www.ncsc.dmi.us/fun/user/tec/cmuseum



Tom Carlson himself can be contacted on: tcarlson@ncsc.dni.us

The men who designed the Spectrum

Part 1: Father of the rubber keys

AWARD-WINNING industrial designer Rick Dickinson is modest about his achievements, which so far include the ZX-81, for which he won a Design Council award, and the Spectrum.

"I don't think I have ever been delighted with anything I have done", says the blond, 23-year-old prodigy. "There always seems to be room for improvement".



Dickinson is a meticulous worker and while both the ZX-81 and the Spectrum are selling beyond all expectations, he adds: "I would never let anything go to production unless I was happy with it".

Graduating from the Newcastle Polytechnic pioneering industrial design course, Dickinson and his classmates are equipped, theoretically, to design anything "from knives and forks to ocean tankers".

Dickinson produced items as diverse as a chain saw and a road tanker during his first year as a qualified industrial designer, which he spent freelancing in Wales.

He had already spent some time working for Clive Sinclair while he was studying for his degree and it was not long before he was absorbed as a full-time member of staff and the company's sole industrial designer. He is responsible for the appearance of Sinclair products down to the layout of the components inside and the pattern of information on the keyboards. His membrane keyboard for the ZX-81 was revolutionary and largely responsible for the low retail price of the product.

Dickinson has learned that price is the ultimate justification and on all his designs he has to bear in mind the cost factor as well as the straightforward appearance of any item.

The membrane keyboard was a has had to cope with numerous tion but, as with everything, it main disadvantage was its in-ensure you have a response it is screen - there is no reassuring key.

For the Spectrum, Dickinson has but again he produced a first by says:

"I like the Spectrum much more quicker to design but much more market and I was really trying chine. It is not for quite the same



Dickinson with 1983 standard issue beard and hair.

great success and Sinclair pirate copies since its inception had its disadvantages. Its ability to register touch. To necessary to look at the click when you touch each

returned to a raised keyboard making it from rubber. He

than the ZX-81. It was much complicated. It is a step up-hard for a super-smart m-amateur market".

The process of design is a long one. Normally it begins when Clive Sinclair outlines his idea to Dickinson, including his demands about size. "He will resolve in his own mind the specifications and he will always say how small it has to be. I think how can it be that small? Yet he is always correct in the end and we produce something which seemed impossible to me in the beginning".

Armed with his brief, Dickinson then spends a few days with his sketchbook, exploring ideas, but he likes to begin work in three dimensions as quickly as possible and is soon modelling in Perspex or plasticine.

The next stage is to produce the finished model in Perspex but obviously it has no components inside - it is produced as a solid block.

That model is detailed, even down to the graphics which Dickinson has painted on. Layout of the interior follows, with the designer using all his powers of logic to ensure that each component is in the best possible place. Perhaps the most difficult part is the keyboard. Dickinson says:

"We spent a great deal of time on that. It is the only interface between the user and the product and it has to be right. We were trying also to cram on more information than anyone had ever done. I believe that form should follow function".

Design of the ZX-81 took about six months. The Spectrum was quicker but with all his major projects Dickinson also has to set aside time for add-ons to existing computers - the work is never finished. His main project now is the flat-tube TV.

His biggest problem with that is that Sinclair has already been working on it for some time.

"That is the most exciting thing with this company, you know; many products are the first of their type, so you are really in on something new".

Dickinson is content with his life in every way. At school he liked the sciences and the arts and his job ensures that he remains involved in both. He spent one year on a foundation course at art college at Grimsby before starting to read for his degree and feels the experience was invaluable. He is happy with his work at Sinclair.

"We all work very closely, very much as a team. Most of the information is in people's heads. There is no time to be formal and put it on paper. It is a good atmosphere in which to work".

For this award-winning Yorkshireman (BIG CHEER! - ED), it abounds with opportunity, too. He has entered the Spectrum for a Design Council award and on his drawing board are the initial stages of the flat-tube TV - another first, and possibly another award.

Taken from the Sinclair User Annual, 1983

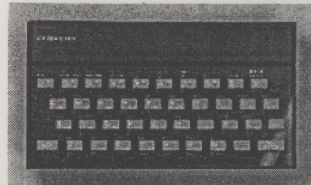
Timeline	
Sinclair Radionics	1961-80
Ablesdeal	1973-75
Westminster Mail Order (was Ablesdeal)	1975
Sinclair Instruments (was Westminster Mail Order)	1975-77
Science of Cambridge (was Sinclair Instruments)	1977-80
Sinclair Electronics *	1979-80
Thandar Electronics * (was Sinclair Electronics)	1980-
Sinclair Computers (was Science of Cambridge)	1980-81
Sinclair Research (was Sinclair Computers)	1980-
Sinclair Vehicles	1984-85
TPD Ltd. (was Sinclair Vehicles)	1985
Anamartic Ltd.	1986-
Cambridge Computers	1988-

* NOT OWNED BY SINCLAIR

Enjoy that?



If you enjoyed that little wander into nostalgia land, then you'll probably enjoy the next issue even more! Yes, we've got a brilliant article about another of the men who made Sinclair the success story of the 1980's - Chief Engineer, Jim Westwood. AND we've also got the complete low down on Clive Sinclair's career, right from his first business venture through to his sad departure from the computer world in 1986. CLASSIX - we've got the dribble factor of Ginger Spice!



Dedicated to Pleasure

M. Coward tells us why he has devoted his entire Web Page to our little rubber-keyed friend.

Ahh, the ZX Spectrum... No other computer has been more of an influence in my life than this little black box of silicon. Those rubber keys, that enormous 48k of memory, and that COOL loading sound it made...

But seriously, the Speccy was my first computer (my dad bought me one in 1982), I was about 7 years old at the time and my first games were Arcadia from Imagine software and Space Invaders from PSION. Later I got Melbourne House Draw which introduced me to the world of computer generated graphics, which I now am pursuing as a career.

My admiration for this computer is so great, in fact, that I have decided to dedicate my own Web Page to it and the many (MANY!) games that are currently available. First and foremost, the Speccy is a games machine. The wide variety of games is quite mind blowing, from action to adventure, there is something that will keep your attention for at least quite a while. True, the vast majority of the games are old and, well...CRAP, but there are those games that you can't help but love and keep you coming back for more.

The Spectrum, now old and out-dated by today's standards was sure to disappear into the tomb of long gone systems like the VIC 20 and the Dragon, but, thanks to the innovative and imaginative thinking of a few programmers the Spectrum has been reborn, now on the high-tech systems of today. This is made possible thanks to the awesome Emulators that are circulating the net.

Games can now be loaded INSTANTLY, instead of waiting for an almost laughable amount of time which we had to endure with the tape method. We can use joysticks/joypads with ANY game and can store our entire library of games on the hard drive, eliminating the hassles of tape storage (we've all had the irritating experience of waiting ages for a game to load only to have the computer reset at the end because of a tape error!).

My Web site contains anything I can think up about the Spectrum that I consider useful or fun. It's difficult to think of things to add to a page that is not already on another Web page, so any ideas or suggestions about the contents of my page are GREATLY appreciated!

You can e-mail Mr Coward at: mcoward@accessone.com
His website can be found at: www.accessone.com/~mcoward/

Frequently Asked Questions

Paul Laycott
provides us with
the answers

WHY?

1. Where can I find emulator games?

The game you're after is probably available somewhere on the net. The best way to search is to use a snapsearch engine (such as the one at <http://drson.vse.cz/snapsearch/>).

Several CDs full of games can be obtained. Speccy Sensations II from Warm Silence Software. Mike Mee runs Emulator Heaven. Phone Mike on (01745) 591704 after 6pm or write to "Annoct", Hylas Lane, Rhuddlan, Clwyd, LL18 5AG, UK.

Until recently, a CD called "Die Speccy" was available quite widely (e.g. from HMV shops in the UK) but HMV at least have removed it from the shelves after finding pornographic demos on the CD! Never mind the copyright violations, eh?

If none of those turn up the game you're after, try asking on the newsgroup, or (shock) going to a second-hand shop and digging around in their boxes of old tapes.

2. Is it legal to use snapshots (i.e. games etc.)?

Formally, using snapshotted game without actually owning a copy of it on a tape is a copyright violation. Nevertheless, ZX-Spectrum games are not being sold any more and using snapshots doesn't harm copyright holders much, if you don't make profit from it and don't distribute snapshots on a large scale. Some companies definitely do not like to have their games distributed (e.g. Ultimate/Rare), whereas others have given explicit permission (e.g. Vortex).

3. How do I fix my worn out ZX-Spectrum keyboard?

If the connectors on the PCB have scratched off the silver from the ribbon, buy some so-called "conductive paint" which is a suspension of fine silver particles. If you let it dry, it conducts. Use a fine brush to replace what is scratched off from the ribbons. This paint is available from most electronics/hobbyist stores (for example from RadioShack in US).

There is a company in Poland that still manufactures keyboard membranes, but they only do a run when enough demand has built up.

4. What peripherals exist for the Speccy?

This would be a big list, so I'll keep it to what I consider are major ones (additions welcome):

Interface 1: joystick and microdrive interface, network capabilities.

Interface 2: joystick and cartridge interface.

Microdrive: fast tape storage (requires Interface 1).

ZX Printer: thermal printer (aka silver bog roll burner).

Keypad extension: keypad for the 128K models that offered extra editing facilities in 128K BASIC.

Multiface: enabling you to save the current state of the machine to tape or disk and enter POKES.

Joystick interfaces: many interfaces exist; Kempston, AGF/Protek, programmable etc...

AMS Mouse: well, a mouse...

BetaDisk: an interface to enable attachment of a 3.5" drive.

Disciple/+DMGT's: interface to enable attachment of a 3.5" drive.

Wafadrive: not unlike a Microdrive.



5. Where is Sinclair Research now? Is Clive on e-mail?

A recent interview in **Wired** revealed that not only does he not use the Internet, he doesn't even have a computer. He keeps a collection of his old babies in his office (at Sinclair Research, which he is still chairman of), but even so he's not particularly interested in them; he could not remember what the machine that followed the Spectrum was called (it was the QL Clive...). It's rather a shame for us lot I suppose, but Sir Clive was always more interested in inventing new bits and pieces than computers in particular.



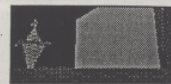
If you have a pressing need to contact the man himself, the current address of Sinclair Research is: **Sinclair Research Ltd., The Penthouse, York Central, 70 York Way, London, N1 9AG.**

6. Where can I get a Spectrum from these days?

Buying a Spectrum these days is quite easy, though you'll be buying second-hand. Frank Davis in the US apparently sells the US machines (TSxxxx) and also sells US versions of the QL. The SAM Coupe, the Spectrum's spiritual big brother, is still being made in Eastern Europe and can be found at computer fairs sometimes. It can run a fair bit of Spectrum software, (comes with a Spectrum emulator). Real Sinclair Spectrums are often to be found at car boot sales, in the classified ads sections of local papers/dedicated FreeAds type papers and in second-hand shops. People sometimes offer Sinclair hardware for sale on the **comp.sys.sinclair** newsgroup. Unfortunately this is often done by an auction, so prices can climb to stupid levels. You're better off looking in those second-hand shops.

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Incentive Software &



By Paul Howard

FREESCAPE™

Probably every reader of this magazine will be familiar with the trade mark Freescape, the revolutionary system used to create a number of 3D games on the Spectrum and other machines. In this article I shall describe Freescape and what it did for the games scene at the time, as well as some background information on its parent company.

In was Incentive Software Limited of Aldermaston, Berkshire (near to where I live!) who developed and used the Freescape system. Until now, they had always blended into the background of Spectrum software, releasing various management games (such as *Millionaire*), adventures (*Apache Gold*, *Winter Wonderland*, the *Ket Trilogy*, the *Karyssia Trilogy* etc...) and the occasional development tool, the most famous being *Graphic Adventure Creator (GAC)* which simplified the creation of adventure games. This came in a professional looking laminated case, like that of a video tape, with a manual (my original copy has sadly fallen to pieces!).

Released suddenly in 1987, *Driller*, the first Freescape game, quickly became a number one seller. It included a 20-page science fiction novella (from which a password must be entered to start the game), various reference sheets, a cut-and-fold 3D mapping model of the planet, and some excellent artwork. I am lucky enough to have a pristine copy of this indisputable classic, lacking only the 3D model.

There have been claims that *Driller* was unplayable and slow, but in my opinion such criticism is unjustified. The short loading time - due to that rare occurrence, a reliable turbo loader - is well worth it to see the graphics of this game, and the slowness of movement doesn't matter; *Driller* is an intellectual game rather than an action game like *Doom*. Though monochrome, the shading is spot on and there are controls to let you view the current area from all angles. You can explore freely, flick switches, pass through doors and destroy certain objects. Unlike such modern virtual reality games as *Tomb Raider* (in which it is possible to stand 'in' a wall and disappear) (and *Wave Race* on the Nintendo 64, where I managed to make my head 'pop up' through floorboards! - ED), the 3D effect, though modest by today's standards, is faultless in this respect.

The only other Freescape game of which I possess a boxed original is *Total Eclipse*, released in 1989. This had two separate parts, but both were also released together in a special edition, which offered an A2 colour poster, mission briefing (with storyline) and the chance to win a holiday to see a real total eclipse in Hawaii!!! While perhaps more payable than *Driller*, *Total Eclipse* simply doesn't appeal to me. I see *Driller* as a very special game, one which broke Spectrum boundaries, and Major Developments (Ian Andrew, Chris Andrew and Stephen Northcott, the in-house team who developed the system for Incentive) deserve recognition for the feat.

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Of course, it wasn't only the Spectrum which had Freescape games created for it. They also appeared on various other 8-bit machines and IBM compatibles. Two other games in the series were Castle Master (usually thought of as the first Freescape game actually to be a game rather than a sensation) and its sequel, The Crypt.

In comparison to modern 3D engines such as those found in Doom and Heretic, the Freescape series is obviously unable to stand up to the competition - but when 'Gobbi the Dog' (a writer for the ZX Files) insulted Driller in favour of the PC game Quake, he was missing the point entirely. Driller was a new sensation, the start of a trend which is still continuing. Quake, for all its underwater special effects and realistic textures, is nothing more than an uninteresting remake of a now stale theme.

The culmination of Freescape was in the 3D Construction Kit, a powerful 128k only program allowing the user to create their own 3D landscapes filled with all the features of previous games. I have seen an unofficial 4D disc conversion of this program, and it isn't at all difficult to place a few solid objects and navigate around them. However, creating room boundaries and complex items (e.g. switches) is much harder and not really very profitable when the best games have already been made. The commercial version of this program was the first and only piece of Spectrum software to include a video tape - in this case, a 'guided tour' of how to use the program. I have never had the opportunity to see this, but would love to do so!

Finally I think it's worth mentioning the existence of a 3D Construction Kit demo game, featured on at least one magazine cover cassette at the time. This game included such delights as an expanding cottage, teleport computer and even a moving enemy - not at all easy to create in three dimensions on a Spectrum!

To conclude, then, any of these games are worth picking up. As I have said, I personally have a penchant for Driller, the storyline and depth of play of which seem so much more profound than those of the games which followed. But I think everyone has their favourite, with Castle Master probably leading the vote. While it is unlikely that any more Freescape games will be produced - despite the existence of the Construction Kit - the ones which incentive released are, without doubt, true CLASSIX.

If anyone knows of any Freescape releases which Paul has missed, please write in and we'll print a list in the next issue.

8BIT

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Where are they now?

FROM MICROCHIPS TO SERVING CHIPS!



This section is dedicated to information regarding the whereabouts or current activities of Sinclair scene personalities. Mostly this means games programmers or magazine writers. Information regarding these people (and especially any not mentioned here) is very welcome!

1. Imagine/Denton Designs (Stonkers, Frankie goes to Hollywood, etc.)

Dougie Burns (programmer): Last seen in Glasgow as a used car salesman.
Marc Dawson (programmer): Project manager for Barbie the Video Game for software house in Manchester.
John Gibson (programmer - ZZOOM/Stonkers): Currently working in the Chester office of Psygnosis and has been for some time.
Fred Gray (musician): Became programmer in Liverpool. Works for Psygnosis, as do most of Denton Designs. Status uncertain since Sony's take over of Psygnosis.
Dave Lawson (director): Last seen running Kinetica Software in Birkenhead.
Ally Noble (artist) and John Heap (programmer): Still own and run Denton Designs.

2. Gargoyle Games/Faster Than Light/Heavy On The Magick, Lightforce etc.]

Roy Carter: is a registered user of Z80 and has given spoken permission to distribute the Gargoyle games. They are (were?) doing things for Psygnosis - not all of them game writing.

3. Design Design (Halls Of The Things, Dark Star etc.)

Simon Brattel: Runs his own company producing system software.
Graham Stafford: Works for Psygnosis, as do most of Denton Designs.

4. LERM (various tape copiers)

Robert Evans: "Not only do I remember Lerm, I did some work for them. Lerm itself was a husband and wife company, in the back room, in the traditional fashion. The husband was a high-flying software type (a.k.a my Maths teacher at school). There was a tendency amongst my group of school friends at the time to use LERM programs more than anything else, because some of us helped Mr Evans (our maths teacher at the time) to write them. If anyone's interested, the company name came from a mixture of Robert Evans' and his wife's initials." - David Smith.

5. Ultimate - Play The Game/Ashby Computers & Graphics (ACG): [*Jetpac, Knightlore etc.*]

Calling themselves Rare and producing console games for Nintendo, e.g. Donkey Kong Country and Killer Instinct for the new Nintendo Ultra 64. Don't like their games being distributed.

6. Realtime Graphics [*3D StarStrike, Starglider, Carrier Command etc.*]

Jez San: Developing 3D systems for anyone with with enough hardware (Nintendo et. al.)

7. Vortex [*Android, TLL, Highway Encounter etc.*]

Costa Panayi: Doing some consultancy design work for a children's toys company in the south of England (believed to be Chicco).

Mark Haigh-Hutchinson: Working for LucasArts, currently on Shadows of the Empire for the Nintendo 64. Mark organises the Vortex Emulation Package for several machines, including the Spectrum. This contains a number of the Vortex games and is freely distributed.

8. OTHERS

Linda Barker [*YS Editor*]: Club president of Prism PD. Wrote a bit in PD Power.

Marcus Berkmann [*YS or SU writer - aka Dr. Berkmann*]: Now writing for the Mail on Sunday.

John F. Cain [*Booty*]: Still lives on the Isle of Man, as he did when he wrote Booty. He has a gold cassette of Booty on his wall!

Alan Cox [*Blizzard Pass*]: Now doing network stuff; has thought about a Linux version of Blizzard Pass. He has a home page where you can retrieve some adventure stuff (but not Blizzard Pass itself, as that is owned by whoever bought the rights from Tynesoft).

Mel Croucher [*ID*]: Writing for magazines; including the Great Moments In Computing strip for Computer Shopper.

Robert Erskine [*Battle of Britain*]: Robert wrote Battle of Britain among other stuff and also ran Microgame Simulations. They published Spec-fx and various books (e.g. "60 Programs for the Sinclair Spectrum" from Pan). He is now working for Smallworld Cambridge on GIS.

Eugene Evans: Currently working in Chicago at Viacom New Media. He's been there for a good few years before which it was Icom Simulations, Inc. the people who did the CD-ROM Sherlock Holmes games, T-MON for the Mac, and Dracula Unleashed.

Glenn Flood [*tape inlay art for Astroblaster and others*]: Programming and drawing still; has a nice web site showing off a lot of his artwork.

Julian Gollop and Nick Gollop [*Chaos, LaserSquad, Rebelstar*]: Owners and programmers of Mythos (UFO, X-COM).

Simon Goodwin [*Crash Tech Tips writer*]: Was still writing for Sinclair QL World when the final issue (July 94) came out.

Simon Goodwin: writes for Amiga magazines and Computer Shopper. He was also seen at the Last Sinclair and SAM show in Gloucester. Messing with both Speccy emulator for Amiga and hardware Speccy emulation for IBM PC; notably on Speculator '93, a QL Speccy emulator currently being converted to run on the Amiga. Reads comp.sys.sinclair.

David Jones [*Finders Keepers, Spellbound, Knight Tyme & Stormbringer*]: Was spotted at one of the Sinclair and SAM shows in Gloucester, where someone was writing a SAM conversion of one his games. Possibly no longer in programming.

John Hollis: John Hollis founded Hollis Research, who develop MIDI sequencers (including Trackman for the Atari ST).

Mark Incley [*Oink!, Klax*]: Mark is the author of the quite well known InkUtils suite of PC utilities, and has a web page where these utilities are available, along with some of the Spectrum games he wrote!

Tony Mack [*Gyroscope, Paper Boy, Super Sprint, Championship Sprint*]: Now writes games for the Sega Saturn (currently converting Cybersled to it).

Teresa Maughan [*Your Sinclair editor - aka Tzer*]: Now writing for The Mac magazine, either that or someone with the same name is...

Fergus McNeill [*Delta 4 - Bored Of The Rings, The Boggit, etc.*]: Head of design at Sales Curve Interactive (SCI), ex-Storm. SCI have just released a Point and Click called "Kingdom 'O Magic" which was designed by Fergus. Fergus has kindly agreed to free distribution of the Delta 4 games, as long as it is free - no money may change hands. He cannot speak for any of his games with the Abstract Concepts logo, as they are owned by Activision. As of December 1996, Delta 4 now have a web site.

Neil Pawson [*Mighty Magus*]: Working for Smallworld Cambridge on GIS. Dave Perry [*Mikro-Gen - 3 Weeks In Paradise, Stainless Steel etc.*]. Runs Shiny Entertainment (MDK, Earthworm Jim). Or someone with the same name does.

Dominic Prior [*part of Gyron team*]: Working for Smallworld Cambridge on GIS.

Dominic Robinson [*Flying Shark, Zynaps etc.*]: With Psygnosis, or at least he was a few months ago.

Jon Ritman [*co-author of Batman, Head over Heels, Matchday, etc.*]: Jon Ritman is reading/posting to comp.sys.sinclair and is the director of a games software company in the UK called Cranberry Source, where Bernie Drummond can also be found. Contrary to previous assertions in this FAQ, he definitely didn't do a Computer Science degree at UCL and he and Bernie Drummond wrote only one Gameboy game (Monster Max). Jon doesn't care if you copy his old games, indeed he thinks it's nice to think of people still playing the old games. Unfortunately, he doesn't own the rights to them. However, he has been given verbal permission by John Woods (one of Ocean's directors) to release them for free on the net. This covers Match Day, Match Day II, Batman and Head Over Heels. The status of Batman is uncertain as Ocean no doubt rented the name for a limited time only. Also see the entry for Richard Turner, below.

Mike Singleton [*Lords Of Midnight, Doomdark's Revenge etc.*]: Mike Singleton is alive and well and writing Lords Of Midnight games for the IBM PC. Chris Wild did PC versions of Lords of Midnight and Doomdark's Revenge.

Matthew Smith [*Styx, Manic Miner, Jet Set Willy*]: Nothing concrete on the father of the miner: (Previous rumours range from him working in some computer store in the south of England to the latest; a motorbike mechanic called Mat living in a commune in the Netherlands; he mentioned to someone that he "wrote some video games in the 80's, got burnt out, ended up in a mental institution"). There is a Matthew Smith contributing to comp.sys.sinclair, but he's not the Matthew Smith. (Or at least that's what he says! There is also now a page dedicated to the question of Matthew's whereabouts.

Phil South [*aka Snouty; Your Sinclair writer*]: Writes for Computer Shopper magazine.

Kevin Thoms [*Football Manager*]: Currently working as a Windows consultant/programmer.

Richard Turner: Richard ran Artic Computing, publishers of Jon Ritman's early games. Artic ceased trading many years ago and Jon thinks that Richard now sells kitchens for a living and is unlikely to be chasing people for using those snapshots (Namtir Raiders, Combat Zone, Cosmic Debris, Bear Bover and Dimension Destructors), but this is not certain.

Sandy White & Angela Sutherland [*Ant Attack, Zombie Zombie*]: Sandy is working on a super new top secret engine while laying about on a beach in Greece. Angela, his ex-partner, owns Perfect Entertainment (ex Teeny Weeny Games).

9. Spectrum people using the World Wide Web

Simon Cooke: was Your Sinclair's technical editor, and has put up extracts from YS issues at his web site.

Stuart Fotheringham: did work on those beautiful graphics in Odin games, Nodes of Yesod, Robin O' the Wood, Arc of Yesod, and Heartland.

Paul Holmes [*from Elite*]: wrote and co-wrote Robotron 2084, Bomb Jack I & II, Wild West Hero, Dustman, designed and co-designed Grand National, Frank Bruno's Boxing and others. He's currently trying to arrange a get-together some time this year for Speccy programmers.

Mark Haigh-Hutchinson [*Vortex*]: pops up occasionally, mostly to mention updates to the Vortex Emulation Package, which is a collection of Vortex games (TLL, Highway Encounter etc.) and instructions for them, and is freely distributable.

Jon Ritman [*of Head Over Heels fame*]: Also co-wrote Batman, Matchday and other excellent games with Bernie Drummond.

Duncan Sinclair: worked on an unfinished Tapper with Paul Holmes.

MORE WEB ADDRESSES:

<http://www.comp.sys.sinclair>

<http://www.heremetica.com/technologia/sinclair/stevo>

<http://www.cs.bham.ac.uk/~dmb/speccy/>

<http://relcom.eu.net/zx/>

<http://www.comlab.ox.ac.uk/ouc/users/ian.collier/index.html>



By St John, "narrowly missing out on the play-offs by about eight places, so not playing the City in Division 1 next season" Swainson.

The Dan Dare Trilogy Published by Virgin

As far as I am concerned, there was only ever one comic worth getting. Forget your *Dandys*, *Beanos* and *2000ADs*, none of them came close to *Eagle*. The reason for *Eagle's* excellence was all due to two characters. *Doomlord* was a photo-story of a person who changed into a monster which used to absolutely terrify me. *Dan Dare* was the star of the show, though, as he went about saving everything that needed saving and generally being heroic. The perfect person, in fact, to star in his own computer game....

Dan Dare

I don't know what it is about these *Classix* reviews, but I always seem to be reviewing my favourite ever games. And this is certainly no exception.

Dan Dare starts with you (as DD, surprisingly) in your little space ship speeding over an asteroid. This is no ordinary asteroid though. It has been hollowed out by Dan's sworn enemy, the evil Mekon (a little green geezer with a disproportionately large head who sits on a hovering platform). Inside, the Mekon has placed an atomic bomb and you can guess which planet he is going to send this deadly contraption on a collision course with. The only hope for the Earth is for Dan to enter the asteroid and detonate its self-destruct system.

The asteroid contains many rooms connected by platforms and lifts. There are 5 keys to collect in order to activate the self-destruct system. Once you find the first, you take it to a special room and a door to another section of the asteroid will slide open. Trying to stop you achieve this task is an army of Treens (the Mekon version of the Stromtrooper - incapable of actually shooting the enemy) and various other gun emplacements.

There is a refreshingly different system of 'lives'. You have two hours of real time to complete the game and only one life. Each time you run out of energy (after being shot or falling a long distance) you collapse and are taken to a prison cell. This takes up to 10 valuable minutes. Every level has its own cell, except the last, which is located near the entrance to that level. In effect, therefore, you have to complete the whole level each time you fall unconscious.

Dan Dare is a huge game. A map will come in handy, especially when you are low on energy or ammunition and need to find more, but is by no means essential. There is a great sense of exploring dangerous new areas each time you enter a new level and, coupled with the fact that every level has something different about it (eg enemies, obstacles, graphics), you always want to get that bit further every time.

Apart from the non-existent music, there is nothing bad about this game. From the cartoon supplied with the game to the colourful graphics to the addictive gameplay to the asteroid exploding sequence at the end, everything is first rate.

Overall - 95%

Dan Dare 2

In all my time involved with computers, this was the game I have most looked forward to being released. I couldn't wait for the follow up to my favourite game Dan Dare and after seeing the screenshots in the magazines, I began dribbling with anticipation. Unfortunately, I don't remember ever being so disappointed after buying and playing a new game.

That's not to say its appalling, its just nowhere as good as its predecessor. The reason for this is that the playability is simply



not there. The idea for the game is good (you must kill new Super Treens in incubation on board a space ship), the enemy forces are nicely varied, the hovering buggy you fly makes a nice change from the norm, the problems you encounter are challenging and the graphics are well detailed and colourful. It should be a good game but it definitely isn't.

This has to be one of the most annoying games ever. The collision detection is so bad you can shoot an enemy several times and he still kills you. Your ship responds sluggishly (possibly deliberately) which produces the feeling you have died because of a lack of response to your commands. Worst of all, you can get stuck under an attribute square. This drives you mad when you need to escape down the passage quickly.

If just a little more time had been spent on this game, the problems could have been ironed out and all the good work that was put

into the rest of the game would have been realised.

Overall - 34%

Dan Dare 3

This is a very easy game to review. All the normal things you look for in a game like addictiveness, playability, excitement, involvement, a challenge, decent sound and graphics do not matter. There is one insurmountable drawback with Dan Dare 3 - it's far too easy.

I completed it on my second go after less than two hours play. And don't forget that I'm a senior member of the I'm Crap At Games Society. What is the point in spending many hours and hundreds of pounds creating a game so easy that you will only ever play it once or twice? I feel sorry for anyone who spent £10 on this when it came out. That's £10 for two hours play. No game is that good.

"I completed Dan Dare 3 on my second go. And don't forget that I am senior member of the I'm Crap At Games Society"

Its such a shame because it would be quite a good game otherwise. I suppose at today's car boot sale prices of 50p a game it's just about worth buying. But its still disappointing because you don't feel you've accomplished anything by completing it.

Overall - 17%



So it's a bit of an odd trilogy, is Dan Dare. It could so easily have consisted of three classic games, but as it stands there is only one. Hopefully, the Dan Dare film that is about to go into production will bring some fame and fortune for Mr Dare and not be the embarrassment that other recent films of cartoon characters have been.

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**He's from London,
He's posh,
He's never had a wash
It's..... BIG Dave F!**

Hi, Dave here!

I've just installed my old but perfect Microvitec Cub monitor due to Channel 5's TV signal (for all overseas readers, it's a new terrestrial TV station just launched in the UK) making it impossi-

ble to use my ordinary television without loss of picture quality. Finding leads for RGB monitors was going to be the greatest problem but fear not, there is a Spectrum specialist out there and he comes highly recommended. He is John Critchley, 2 Forge Cottages, High Street, Ewelme, Oxon, OX10 6HQ. Tel 01491 834403.

John is better known as JRC Camera repairs, he knows his stuff and can make up a Spectrum 128k RGB lead for just about any old style monitor. Make a note of that, it took me hours on the phone tracking down someone who could do what John did!

If you are one of the unlucky few getting interference, you can ask C5 for a free blocker device - this is connected between your TV and Spectrum. Ring them free on 0500 567 328. Cheaper than a monitor too!!!

Right, first request: Paul Lewis from Leicestershire asks me this: "Apart from football manager games, what other stuff did addictive out out?"

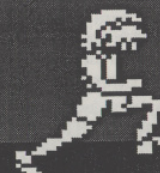
I don't have the official list but here goes: Headcoach (an American football sim) (good job you cleared that up!!!!- ED!), President (similar to Dictator), Kirel (a 3D isometric arcade puzzler) and Software Star (similar to The Cult's Software House). There were three Football Manager games plus an editor suite for the second one called Expansion Kit. There could be more, so feel free to write in with details.

Next! Jon Targett from Bournemouth asks: "I want to write my own adventure games and sell them. I can do most of the programming but how do I go about marketing them?"

Don't use a Sinclair computer if you want to make money out of games. If that is your goal then do it on an Amiga or PC. You'd only be doing it for pleasure on a Spectrum. Zenobi and Adventure Workshop still publish adventures on the Spectrum and while it won't make you a millionaire, you'll have loads of fun. Adventures are a minority area of programming and gaming so don't expect stardom or anything daft like that!

Fountain of Knowledge

Page 23



Emergency!!! Dave pays the next day for eating a chicken vindaloo after 10 pints!

Next question is from one Mr Ivan Biggen who asks: "Can you please explain as simply as possible what the differences are between all the different disc drives and which one is the best. I have a grey 128."

Get a +3 if you like being shafted, get a +D if you are lucky enough to find one. This question is far too boring. NEXT!

The editor asked me recently (following a query a few issues ago from one Mr Richard Hewison, which remained unanswered): "Did you ever find that Archers game or what?"

No I didn't. Woking have more chance of playing in the Champions League than you have of finding that title as a Speccy game.

(ENTER Graham Chapman dressed in military uniform). "NOW STOP THAT, STOP THAT..... NOW, THIS WHOLE THING IS GETTING VERY SILLY. IT STARTED OFF ALRIGHT BUT NOW ITS JUST GOT SILLY. SILLY SILLY SILLY. SO LETS STOP IT...NOW!"

Last but not least this month is Andrew Bailes from Coventry who asks: "Following on from the news that John Ritman games like Match Day are now to be treated as PD, I seem to remember a full 128k version of Match Day coming out but I can't find it anywhere and nobody has heard of it."

"I had a copy once - I bought it for a quid from some shop in Beeston near Nottingham. It is called INTERNATIONAL MATCH DAY, takes ages to load and then crashes most of the time. The only added bits I saw was a scoreboard, teams with funny names and the obvious 128k enhanced sound. It's nice to own but no real massive leap.



A Potty problem answered.....

Now our Dave is a clever chappie, but just occasionally he makes a few help pleas of his own. Last month he appealed for information on a game which was released in about 1984/1985. The aim was to create a machine/invention out of various bits and pieces and he seemed to remember the word "Professor" being in the title.

Our Danish reader MICHAEL BRUHN, from whom it is always a pleasure to hear, was quickest off the mark by informing me that the game was called 'Potty Professor' and was released by a company called Software Farm.

Michael goes on to say that they also released a few hi-resolution games for the Z81, such as 'Forty Niner' and 'Rocketman'. If you want to see a review of 'Potty Professor' then consult Sinclair User, November 1985, page 21.

ON THE PATH
The Pawn - Copyright (C) 1985,
Ltd.
Version 2.3
You wake up on a sunny August
morning, and the air fresh and clear.
If it's a bit of Pawn that you're after,
then Dave suggests that you steer
clear of the Speccy.

But that's not where Michael's help ends. He also goes on to comment about 'Spectral Invaders', which is unofficially claimed to be the first commercially available Speccy game. Last issue (page 27), Ian Paulson queried whether or not 'Planet of Death' should in fact hold this title. Michael offers us the following, from which you can draw your own conclusions:

"About 'Spectral Invaders' being the first commercially available release for the Speccy - I've seen an interview with the whole Imagine team in some old mag, but I can't recall which. But in this article the author of 'Spectral Invaders', David (Dave) H. Lawson, said that before joining Imagine he was contacted by BugByte, as they wanted to be the first to release a game for the Speccy - and they were!"

And as if that wasn't enough, he also offers some information on that mysterious game, 'The Archers'. Now Dave has just said that there isn't much chance of finding a copy of the game and there is still even some doubt as to whether it was ever released on the Speccy. Well, Michael reports to have found a pirate copy of all three parts in amongst some original tapes he recently acquired. He has also seen reviews of the game in Your Sinclair, February 1987, page 66 and Sinclair User, January 1987, page 86. We'll be carrying out further investigation into this game between now and the next issue, by which time we'll hopefully be able to give you a definite answer to this on-going riddle!

STOP PRESSSTOP PRESS***STOP PRESS***

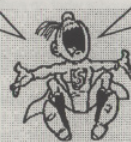
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Crap Games Corner!!



As you are all very aware, the Spectrum is the best computer ever invented. Despite this, however, there have been a fair amount of crap games released for it over the years. We are not talking about just poor games here, the ones that you load a couple of times and then forget. We are talking about those games that are so crap you laugh at their complete lack of redeeming features. Games that make the rest of your software collection

look superb. Games that make you punch anything in sight if you have just spent £10 on them. This column is dedicated to those games: the worse games in the history of the Spectrum.



NO.1: Roadblasters. Published by: US GOLD



This game is something special when it comes to the crap stakes. It is the game which made me want to sample the multiple delights of playing Out Run again. Anything that does that must be crap.

As soon as you begin loading, you become slightly concerned at the tell-tale crap signs. Terrible loading graphics and either a nine minute loading time for 128k owners or a multi-load for 48k owners. Your hopes that such a large amount of code means lots of in-depth gameplay, detail, variation etc., are very quickly dashed. After laughing at some remarkably bad music, things just get worse. That's the great thing about crap games - just when you thought the authors couldn't have done a worse job, it deteriorates.

Roadblasters has you driving through a hostile landscape with other traffic and gun emplacements at the side of road attacking you. You have a gun to shoot them, extra weapons dropped on you occasionally and a limited amount of fuel (replenished by running over massive boulders on the road).

The enemies are either very easy to kill (traffic) or impossible (gun emplacements - the graphics are too poor for you to see them coming). They are irrelevant anyway, because it doesn't matter how many times you get blown up, you always get a new car. The only thing that kills you is running out of fuel. Obvious, really.



The graphics are just funny. Travelling in a straight line is not too bad but cornering is pathetic. Things slow down dramatically, your car turns so it is a right angles to the direction you are heading, you get an annoying skidding sound without losing any control over the car (still going at full pelt), you can virtually drive through other cars without exploding and you wonder what on earth is going on.

To top it all off, each level (which required a multi-load) has very little variation in enemies and exactly the same road graphics and turns. I wonder what they actually put in the multi-load?

US Gold were one of the most successful software houses but I have always been surprised how crap I find most of their games. How did I delude myself into buying so many of them? I'll bet this won't be the last time I find one of their efforts worthy of a place in this column

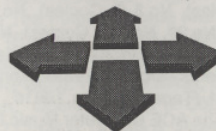


TAU CETI

ROUTINE PROCEDURE

1. Launch using command LAUNCH.
2. Set required height and speed - adjust height with joystick. S - speed increase. X - speed decrease
3. Search current city for Reactor Substation. To find city centre, set bar in middle of top light-blue section. To find Gal-Corp ladder, set bar in middle of bottom light-blue section (only on Reema).
4. If necessary, destroy killer robots and defence fortresses.
5. Dock with Reactor sub station.
6. Access rod room with command RODS.
7. Manipulate any matching rod pieces to make complete rods.
8. Access notepad with command PAD and note down city visited.
9. Access map with command MAP. Select next destination and set cursor onto first letter of your current city. Press FIRE for information and Jump Pad destinations. Note appropriate jump pad for your next city.
10. LAUNCH and head for city centre using city finder compass. When bar wavers and falls away STOP.
11. Set top compass to Jump pad heading. Move to jump pad and stop. Press J to jump to next city.
12. When all reactor rod pieces have been found and matched, go to main reactor core on Centralis and replace rods.

TO USE JOYSTICK - when docked, input KEYS and move joystick for appropriate action e.g. move joystick to left for left control of movement of skimmer.



OTHER COMMANDS WHEN DOCKED OR LANDED

STATUS - gives progress and damage report. SIGHTS ON/OFF - target sights. HELP - lists all computer commands. LOOK - shows view inside a building and lists objects there. WAIT - waits five earth minutes. REACTOR - gives access to main reactor core on Centralis. PAUSE - pauses game. SCORE. QUIT. EQUIP - allows access to a building's repair, fuel and re-arm facilities. NAME - to enter your name. NEW PAD - starts a fresh page

OTHER COMMANDS WHEN LAUNCHED

M	- FIRE MISSILES
F	- FIRE FLARE
A	- FIRE ANTI MISSILE
R	- STATUS REPORT
I	- INFRA RED ON/OFF

THE GAMEPLAY

Tau Ceti is the story of a planet of robots gone wrong, a planet ravaged by plague, and a skimmer pilot mad enough to take on a mission - collecting damping rods from all the cities around the planet to shut down the central power generator, thus killing all the robots.

Go after the less heavily defended cities first. When transferring from city to city slow down to minimum speed. In some of the cities there are lots of baddies around the transporter sites or fortresses and minefields. Lightly armed cities of ten have dots on the horizon. Soon after this they blow up and more than halve your shields. Shoot them quickly as they appear on the horizon. Just waiting around in a safe area will slowly recharge your shields.

Far to the west of the planet is a military supply centre that will fit your craft with a reserve shield.

Navigating can be a bit of a problem to begin with. Use your compass to find the centre of a city. This is very important as it is from here that the directions to the jump pads are taken.

TO BE CONTINUED.....



Sale List



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@ Denotes Budget Game

Denotes Missing Instructions/Inlay

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