

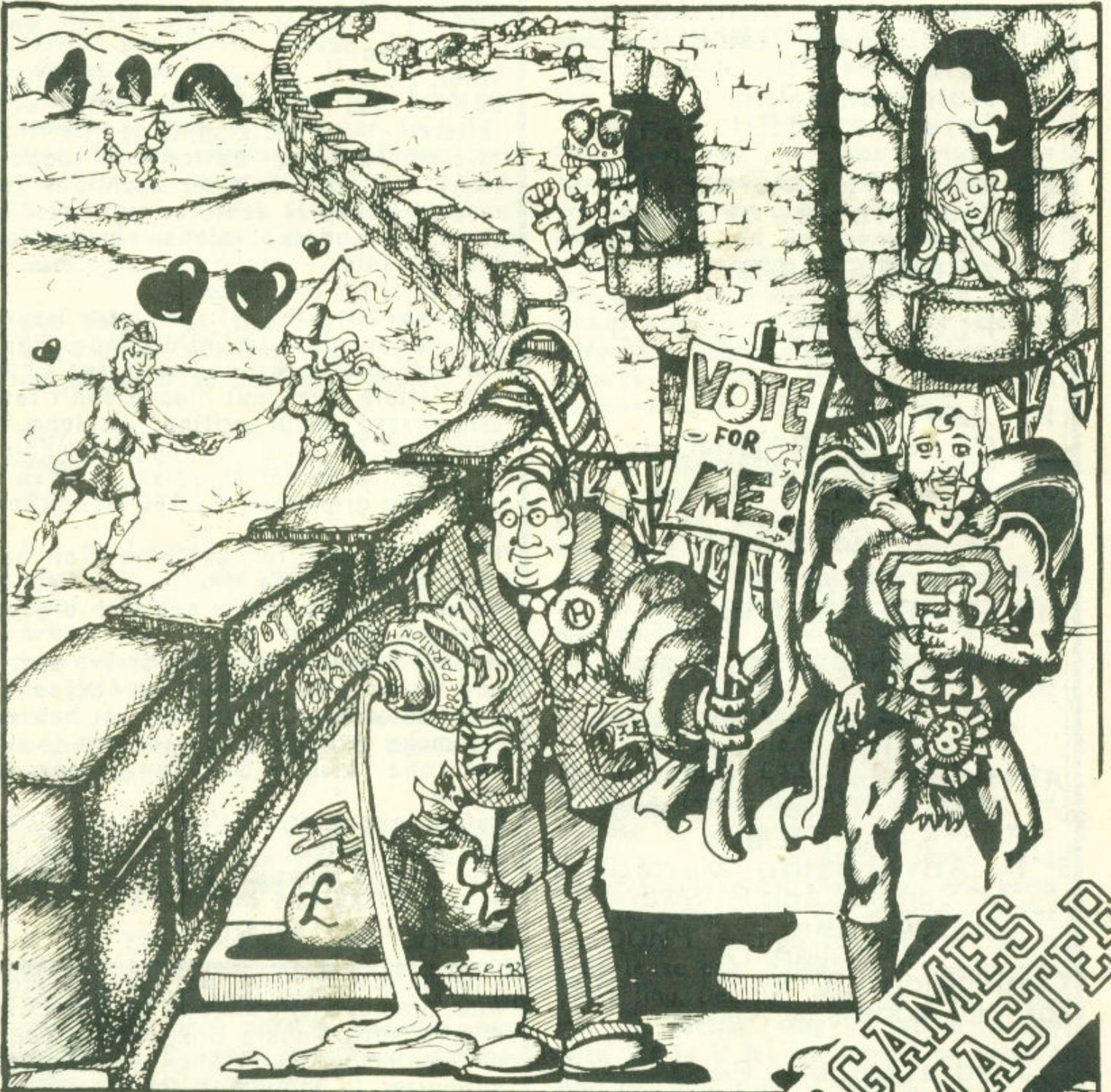
ISSUE 16

OCT - NOV

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ZAX

FOR SAM COUPE & SPECTRUM



REVIEWED

QUEST'S PRO-DOS COLLECTION

**& GAMES
MASTER**

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COVER BY CERIRIDER

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Editor: D. Ledbury

Adviser/Designer: D. Blackburn

Tech Editors: D. Cannon
and A. Davis

P.R./Advertising Managers:

M. Scholes and R. Swann

Design Team: D. Addey,
S. Mullen, D.L.

Contributors: R. Swann, J. Crawford,
D. Addey, S. Kemp.

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EDITORIAL

by D. Ledbury

Reading a recent copy of Tim Kemp's adventure zine From Beyond, I noticed his plea for more response for the letters page, and other sections, from his readership. Tim stressed the fact that he wanted to hear more from the readers, to see he was doing the best job he could. This is a situation that I can well understand.

When I was in charge of the Newsdisk, SAMCo was regularly inundated with letters - not all praising, to be true - that offered opinions, advice and suggestions that went into my brain-box for further Newsdisk features or ideas. In short, the readers opinions helped shape the Newsdisk - and by all accounts, it shaped it for the better.

Now we come to ZAT. For many issues now we haven't had a Letters page. Why? For one simple reason, we haven't had any letters from you! Please don't feel embarrassed about writing, we long to hear from all of you. If you have a point to make, a matter to raise, or even a particular gripe then PLEASE let us know about it!

It is tempting for us to rest on our laurels, but if we did that we would never evolve; which is not such a good thing, is it?

Issue 18 is only a sneeze or two away, and it marks the dawn of our 4th year of publication. Let's hear from you how we can make this birthday issue one to put everyone else's Birthday issues to shame!

Before I shoot off, I'd like to thank YS for the great review, and the issue offer. I'd also like to reassure Jon Pillar that my new spellchecker should help cure my bad spelling - I hope!!

I regret to inform you that Mick Garbett, who has been long associated with ZAT, and recently Square One, passed away on September 11th. Mick was a great supporter to the zines, he was witty, serious, and most of all a great friend to us all. He will be sorely missed. DB.



SOAPBOX

BY *Martin Scholes*

As they used to say on Blue Peter (and still could, for all I know); "Hello there, and welcome to another of my Soapboxes. Winter is rapidly drawing closer and even though it is still officially hanging on the the term; "Summer", the weather has been bad enough for me to have had to light a fire, in the evenings sometimes. Yes, real fires - very HiTec, I don't think! Still, they are nice to sit in front of, toasting muffins and bread of an evening!

But enough of this idle chat, there's work afoot and this issue I shall turn my attention to adventure games.

Why, I wonder, are so many adventure games (the majority, even?) so illogical?

If I go through my front door I know where I am and where I am going. West, North, West again eventually brings me to my favourite watering hole, South, however, would take me to the bus station from where I can catch a bus to my girlfriend's home, whilst North will eventually take me to my parents.

But not so in the world of adventure gaming! As soon as you wake up, boy, are you ever in BIG trouble!!!

If it's YOUR bedroom, why don't you KNOW where your -say money belt is hidden? (Just what kind of a party did you go to last night?- Because, boy, whatever it was you were drinking gave you awful amnesia!

And once you leave your home, how

come you don't know the way to - say the local library? I mean, heck, it is your town!

Fairly detailed maps and lists should be provided as a matter of course.

Certainly, if you are an explorer on an uncharted planet or have suddenly tumbled down a hole in the High Street just outside "Woolies" and discovered a hitherto unknown underground city, a lack of a map is understandable and a sensible part of the game.

But; "Oops, you have just stepped into a goldfish pond in your garden that you forgot you had." Well, silly old amnesia me. I'd be more careful of where I was going...if I knew where I was going. Silly, isn't it? But isn't that what REALLY happen in most adventure games, from home produced efforts to full priced things like Hampstead, for example?

In the supposedly realistic games set "now", we seem to have game players depicted as some sort of zombified amnesiacs from hell, manfully or womanfully staggering down the High Street carooming from shop to shop and building to building. This really is not on as such lack of planning does tend to spoil the gameplay of what could be superb adventures.

There do also tend to be silly errors in some adventures which make me wonder if those producing them ever bothered to properly test the generation system that they are using or the game itself. For example, if the computer tells you that it can see a bottle on the table, why, when you input; "Get bottle" Does it say; "I can see no bottle!" Why? what is wrong with it? Is it insane, stupid or drunk? No, just poorly programmed.

Another example of the all too obvious

lack of Beta Testing was seen a few years ago when a game described a "small book". You had to pick it up and examine it before you discovered that it was your own passport! Gee! And there was me thinking Mr Magoo was short-sighted!!

There is a software house which, to spare any feelings, we shall refer to as; "Adelaide Mansion" and used a very clever adventure game generating system. The games produced on it were very good...except when you got to the same part of the game which always caused a system reset!

The problem with mapping and the like seems to stem from the fact that computer adventures originally grew out of the Dungeons and Dragons craze in which only the Games Master knows where everything is and what's going to happen. Instead of striking out on their own and using their computers to the fullest of their capabilities and producing some amazing adventure software, all too many of them decided to follow all too slavishly the rules and concepts of a games system that was not really designed with the computer in mind.

And the problem of poor testing of programs or games creation systems which are seriously flawed? That is, as the article must have made clear, a matter wholly in the hands of those who design the programs.

Am I an expert on computer adventure games? No more than the average home or business computer user. But before anyone is critical of me on this point let me observe that although one does not have to be an expert on car design, it is very easy for the average car user or owner to spot that the seal on the windscreen is leaking or that the car is using too much petrol to the mile.

That is it for this Soapbox. I do hope to be running a special Soapbox next time on the future of the Sam Coupe and Team Sam which is still alive and kicking. I'd love to hear your views on this, especially if you are a contributor to ZAT and/or a member of Team Sam, so PLEASE let me have YOUR views as soon as possible to the NEW ZAT ADDRESS which is:

33 Dawley Bank, Dawley, Telford TF4 2LQ

Thanks for reading this Soapbox and making it the success that it is. Be seeing you!

BETA BASIC: £15.95

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Back-chat

BY ANDY DAVIS

During the mid Eighties, there was a modem boom. Everyone who was anyone (and could afford it) had their computer 'hooked up' to a modem.

The prime use of a modem was to connect your computer, from even a 'humble' ZX81 to the 'mighty' Commodore 64, to Micronet. Micronet could be described rather like a cross between CEEFAX, 'Your Computer' magazine, and an 0698 chatline. The features were endless, including news, letters, free games and utilities, technical sections, machine user groups and communication to users all over the country, as well as Prestel access (a VERY upmarket CEEFAX) which featured news, sport, weather, travel, and lots of services and information. All this for a local phone call and extra charges depending on what services you used.

[Commodore users also had access to a Micronet styled system called Compunet. Compunet was fairly similar to Micronet, but did have a bad reputation for being mis-used by pirates. DL]

Sadly, Micronet (owned by BT) was plagued by usual faults. The chatline was 3p per minute. Customer services were sometimes poor and eventually they began to ditch 8 bit computers and favour Amigas and PCs (What's new?). When this happened, dedicated hobbyists began to create a smaller, friendlier alternative to Micronet. These small systems were called Bulletin Boards or BB's for short. Anyone with a compatible modem could dial up and get

connected to the services available, like Micronet but on a more down to earth level. The computers running BBs were just simple machines like Spectrums and BBC's (which was the most compatible) with disc drives or microdrives.

The Spectrums entry into the comms world was via three modems. The first and most popular was the PRISM VTX 5000 by OEL. It retailed at £99.99 in the mid 80's and won the BMA Peripheral of the Year award. Now they are available for about £10-£15. Don't pay £25 from a second hand shop [I actually paid £35.00 for mine, and I've only ever used it once! Anyone want to buy a used modem? DL] or an ad in the glossies. Buy them from BG SERVICES who sells them brand new. The other was to buy a GEC Datachat 1223 or VTX711 which were not as user friendly but could work at different speeds.

Modems work by converting computer signals to pulses, sending them down the phone lines, then converting them back again. Modem stands for MOdulator DEModulator which means code to audio and decode to signals again. Each modem has its own speed it transmits and receives data at. This is measured in BAUD or Bits Per Second. The VTX5000 had a speed of 1200/75 which meant it could transmit 1200 bits per second (150 bytes or 1k every 6 seconds) and receive at 75 baud (roughly the speed your eye reads text like this). Speed 1200 is average, but 75 is quite slow. It is possible to alter this speed, but takes major adjustments to the modem. BBCs run at 300/300. PC's and Amigas and good modems run at 2400/2400 and are capable of variable speeds.

Now, there are two different methods of displaying the data received. The nicest and most popular was is called VIEWDATA and is the way Ceefax and Oracle are viewed (BBC mode7 40 column text with block graphics). When

the page is filled up, after a keypress it will be overwritten by a new page. The other way is called SCROLLING or SCROLLY as its more affectionately known. The text is black and white and is usually 64 or 80 column (rather like Tasword 2) and the information scrolls up the screen. The VTX is fitted to receive viewdata as standard, but other programs are available to allow it to receive scrolly. Note: These two systems are NOT compatible and a viewdata set modem will not receive scrolly information.

Micronet has now closed down, but a new service, called Silicon Village has emerged. It's designed like an actual village and has simple graphics depicting each area. It includes a newsagents, featuring daily computing and TV magazines, computer areas, multi user adventure games, special clubs, like adventure helpline, adults only, electronic gay bar, and church, places to meet and talk to other users, chatlines and mailbox utility. Sadly, cost bars a lot of users. Registration is £10. Subscription is £6 per month and costs of 3p per minute AND your local phone call cost.

This is why bulletin boards are so popular, but unfortunately you may have to dial nationally to access one.

The comms scene is complex to start with, but after a short time, you soon get used to all the terminology and how to log on. If you like a good mix of humour and technical material, then log onto a BB today, especially to ask for help, get free games or have a chat with someone. I'll leave you with some contact numbers and addresses. For more information or how to actually 'log on' to a Bulletin Board, then see this issues MEAN BIZ or drop me a line at the Alchemist Research address below. We can even talk directly to each other or swap programs via our modems!

For Modems:
BG SERVICES
64 ROEBUCK ROAD, CHESSINGTON,
SURREY KT9 1JX
Tel:081 397 0763

For Comms Software and Info:
ALCHEMIST PD
ALCHEMIST RESEARCH
62 TITHE BARN LANE,
WOODHOUSE,
SHEFFIELD, S13 7LN.

Prestel DEMO LINE (FREE):
0742 697644 (you can get a local
number from the information section)

Bulletin Boards:
v=Viewdata s=scrolly

LIVERPOOL POST:s 051 428 8924
GNOME AT HOME:v 081 888 8894
CABB:v 081 773 0408
PHANTOM: 0226 340425
CRYSTAL TOWER: 081 886 2813
SPECS: 0772 612462
ASPECTS: 061 792 0260

INFOTEL (Alch. Res. Recommended)
0737 766027 scrolly
or talk to a human (Dave Gorski) on
0737 761911

You can get lots of other contact numbers from this one, especially for Spectrums etc.

D-TEL (Spectrum- currently undergoing revamping):
DAVE WALKER
7 DINSDALE CLOSE
MIDDLETON St GEORGE
Nr DARLINGTON
DL2 1DY

If any ZAT readers are already involved in "comms", please feel free to write in to us about your interests. Just address your letter to the NEW address for ZAT.



MINDGAMES

by JOSEPH CRAWFORD

This issue, we'll be featuring a review of the first ProDOS Adventure compilation from our very own David Ledbury's Quest Software. These titles have been reviewed by both myself, and by Daniel Cannon. (Daniel reviewed Aunt Velma and Desmond and Gertrude.)

Now, as this is David's compilation, we've been as objective as possible with the review. Likewise, some of the gripes I've mentioned may have been due to these being the pre-release version of the titles, and could well have been fixed by the time you buy it. So, without further delay, let's review the titles on this disk....

Corya - the Warrior Sage (By Tony Collins)

"First there was a legend...of warrior...of a man...of Corya the Warrior Sage" as the introduction goes. Reflecting on this, it would appear that Corya is a Conan The Barbarian character; he is in fact one of the illusive Warrior-Sages, who are skilled in both the mystic and fighting arts, and who seldom leave the sanctity of their temple. But if you excuse his broken sword then Corya still makes one pretty mean fighting machine. He can cast all sorts of powerful spells: HEAL, CHERISH, SHIELD, FIRE which are all self explanatory with the exception of the CHERISH spell, which is designed to calm any potential attackers.

The plot goes something like this.

One day, Corya enters the village of Ermahal to find it completely destroyed by a fire. He visits the meeting hall were the village folk are assembled and he is attacked by a terrified mob. With a little action Corya wins them over and is welcomed by the speaker. He tells you that the village is plagued by a Dragon, and he requests your services to hunt and kill it. In true hero style, Corya obliges. He is told that the Dragon lies to the east, in the mountains of Caithen-la-Snthin beyond the Great Forest. He is also given a bit of advice "seek old man of the forest" and with these final words, Corya begins his journey. He has a problem though, his sword desperately needs mending and the blacksmith hasn't been seen in a long while.

The game is split into two parts, and should be loaded after you have completed the first part. Interestingly enough, you can load the second part without having completed the first part. But that's pretty hard to start without finishing the first part!!!

I found the game extremely challenging and enjoyable. The detail paid to descriptions is excellent, especially when you choose to examine something. The atmosphere of the game is brilliant too. I recommend this game to all adventure fans, and I think this will appeal particularly to beginners



because it is so simple to follow. The difficulty level is about right. However, the parser is average and suffers from not having a VOCAB listing, which will get annoying when you try to do a complex procedure. Overall - 90Z

Teacher Trouble (By Tony Collins)

In Teacher Trouble you play Ernie, a pupil, who attends a school which is lacking in every department (get it?). The "goodie" teachers have been locked up and have been replaced by "baddie" teachers. The "baddies", unknown to our hero, are in fact bored aliens! They plan to brainwash all the kids, and make them as thick as they are! As Ernie, it is your aim to get rid of the "baddie" teachers and free the "goodie" teachers. In this Ernie is not without help, his fellow pupil Dillon will help out when needed and he'll agree to follow you if you ask. However, when you need him most he'll refuse to help you. Some mate!

As expected the game is set in a school. However during your lunch hour you are allowed out and can visit the nearby shops for any bits and pieces you may need. The time limit comes into play here, if you decide to extend your stay then rest assured the secretary will be after you. The time limit is based on a school day, and you have one school day in which to complete the game. The day begins at 9.00am and ends at 5.00pm, with every action taking two minutes.

Although the difficulty level is very high the game itself is a good one. It has lots of extra commands, many of which are shortened. For example, "Examine" is not just shortened to

"Exam", it is shortened to "X". The atmosphere of the game lacks in interest, and becomes child-like. The difficulty level puts you off slightly, and I don't think this game will appeal to the beginner. It also features some classic spelling mistakes, which are definitely not INTRESTING!
Overall 80Z

Desmond and Gertrude (By Scott Denyer)

Desmond and Gertrude tells the tragic story of love between a beautiful princess and a peasant. However the mean tyrant of a king doesn't allow his beautiful daughter to marry any old scum, so he builds a wall across the village to seperate the two, and throws her in her bedroom (fitted with security camera). By carrier pigeon (yes this is the plot!) they arrange to meet together by the secret cave. At this point that the game starts.

You can choose to play either Desmond or Gertrude at the beginning, and you must guide their way to this secret cave. The first problem, if you are playing Gertrude, is getting out of the castle (Des has no such problem, he lives at the end of a gutter). Luckily this isn't too difficult, but later on in the game it is possible to get very stuck unless you carefully read the few clues given in the location descriptions. [Clue: hygiene can be VERY useful!]

On top of that there is the wretched wall which prevents objects being used to solve puzzles on the other side of the wall. A challenge but often suffers from grinding to a halt. Overall 75Z.

Aunt Velma's Coming to Tea

(By Scott Denyer)

Aunt Velma's Coming to Tea is an entirely different game. It is the birthday of your dreaded Aunt Velma and she, funnily enough, is coming to tea.

Fully prepared, you have bought her a suitable birthday present and (this is where the plot gets slightly ropy) locked it in the cupboard to keep it safe. However, you discover that you have lost the key, and it is only an hour and a half until she arrives. And the fuses have blown, so you can't see into the dark corners of rooms. There are only 1 and a half hours (about 170 moves) before death rings the doorbell so this game has a fairly tight time limit.

Most of the puzzles are in the form finding an object or two and using it in the right way to get another object for another puzzle. The first job is to fix the fuses, but the garage is locked and a rottweiler dog is guarding the toolshed.

All in all this isn't a very taxing game, but it has its moments, and is a good introduction to adventures if you've never played one before.

Overall 70%.

Overall, I would say that the pack represents excellent value for money. Aunt Velma and Desmond are two well known pieces of software and, like many titles from the well-known Delbert The Hamster Software, have a good reputation. To find them on a pack with two other very good games from Tony Collins' Guild Software is surely a pack worth buying. For those who missed Aunt Velma and Desmond, and beginners alike, this pack is definitely worth the money.

One complaint I will make is the presentation of the games. The white,

mode 3 size characters, are set on a blue background which is definitely an eye-strainer. With all points taken into consideration I can only come up with one final conclusion: buy it.

A few notes from David....

A very nice review of the games!

Joseph mentioned about the "mode 3 size characters" and the colour scheme. As you probably know, the character size is down to ProDOS itself, and I can't do a thing about it! However, I have included the PALETTE system file on the disk, to make changing the colour to a more suitable one as easy as with SAM BASIC. Besides which, I find the font very easy to read on my black and white telly!

Aunt Velma was originally included as a "freebie" with the Spectrum version of Desmond and Gertrude, but as it is such a nice little introduction game, I felt obliged to include it in this game. This, like all the others in the QUEST:PAC (Quest ProDOS Adventure Compilation) series, was an Amstrad CP/M game, converted to run on ProDOS. (Although the original version was converted from the Spectrum.)

Back to Joseph...

Thanks for those few words of wisdom! The compilation is normally priced at £5.50, although it is currently available at the special introductory price of £3.99 - if you get it quickly! It is available from QUEST SOFTWARE, 5 Beacon Flats, Kings Haye Road, Wellington TF1 1RG. Cheques made payable to D.Ledbury. The special price ends at the end of November.

Further compilations will include titles from River Software, and Ken Bond. Titles include: The Miser, The Base, Spiro Legacy, and many more.

On the subject of CP/M, David has been sent details of an American firm that specialises in a large range of CP/M software, and this included a nice collection of Infocom titles! At the moment, David has one of the few SAM's equipped with it's own Infocom game: Hitchhikers Guide To The Galaxy (although he is stuck with the probability drive on the Heart of Gold's deck!), and this piece of news may stop him from gloating about it!

We've also heard that ZAT reader Gareth Pitchford has managed to get an Amstrad CP/M Infocom title running on the Spectrum +3, so this firm may be useful for the Spectrum too!

More news as we get it - although you can be prepared to pay about 20-30 pounds for one of these titles.

Next issue, we hope to feature some Spectrum titles from Jon Lemon's Compass Software label - which David has won a lifetime supply of games from in a recent From Beyond competition! For your chance to win a copy of either QUEST:PAC 1 or the forthcoming Spectrum Delbert The Hamster Compilation: "Delbert's +D Disk Delights", just answer these difficult questions.....

1. What sequence of commands allows you to escape the Goblin's dungeon in "The Boggit"?
2. What was the name of the programmer of "The Boggit" - or of his programming team?
3. What well known book was the Boggit based on, and who wrote it?

Answers to the NEW address: 33 Dawley Bank, Dawley, Telford, Shrops. TF4 2LQ. Please get them to us before the end of November!

As you'll probably have read elsewhere, ZAT is planning another new magazine, to be launched later this year, called TNT.

This mag - whose name actually stands for "Tips N Tactics" - will be designed to provide hints and tips, for both playing and programming Adventures. It'll also be a slight departure for the ZAT team as it will actually be for ALL computers for a change! If you would be interested in taking an active role in this magazine, please drop Darren or David a line at the above address.

News of another release from Quest has reached me: programmed by Gareth Pitchford (yes, him again!), of Microfair Madness fame. Aptly, it is in fact Microfair Madness - or more to the point, the enhanced SAM version! No release dates yet, but it looks to be previewed at the Adventurer's Convention, and on SAM PRIME 2. (For more details on SAM PRIME - see the News section.)

One more piece of Adventuring News that has just arrived... Jon Lemon of Compass Software has now bought a SAM! More to the point, he is now releasing a range of "hybrid" SAM titles. For further details, drop Jon a line at:

Compass Software
111 Mill Road
Cobholm Island
Gt Yarmouth
NR31 0BB

That's all for this issue's Mind Games, but if you'd like to review any Adventure you've really enjoyed, or would like to supply any news items, then please feel free to get in touch.

Till next time, Joseph Crawford

CEASED TRADING By Richard Swann

"Once upon a time, there was a software house. It produced wonderful games for the Spectrum, before suddenly, to everyone's surprise, it ran out of money, called in the receivers, and quickly went out of sight."

The above description could apply to any number of software houses. Since the advent of the Spectrum, there have been a huge amount of software companies that either ceased trading or were bought out by bigger software companies, many of which produced some incredibly popular games while they were around.

The question has to be asked then, if they produced top quality software, why aren't they around now?

First of all, that's the fact that it's all very well producing one hit game, but when you've done it once, you've got to do it again, and again and again. One hit game doesn't sell forever, and it's a software house's job to ensure the games come rolling out. One good example of this is Software Projects, who produced a fair crop of games before releasing the classic Jet Set Willy games, and then pretty much disappearing. I haven't got any information about Software Projects going into receivership, but I think it's safe to assume that they just wound down and stopped. [They seem to have, but apparently the Amiga version of JSW has just appeared from "a" Software Projects, so this may not be true.]

Having said that, it's no good turning out a whole load of games if they're about as exciting as mowing the lawn. If a software house releases a string of hopeless games in a row, then the public catch on pretty quickly, ignore all the games, meaning the software

house runs out of money. One particular example is a little known software house called Alpha Omega, which turned out a load of pathetic games in 1987. Despite a change of name to the Power House and bundling free extras with each game, the quality of the games was as poor as ever, and the company went into liquidation very quickly.

But even if games are good, it doesn't necessarily mean that it's going to sell like wildfire. Remember Deus Ex Machina? It was a superbly original and exciting game (at least that's what people say), but because it was so different to the norm, the public didn't want to know about it. Automata (the producers) released a string of bizarre [cult] games such as Deus Ex Machine, PiMania and My Name Is Uncle Groucho: You Win a Fat Cigar, but sales of D.E.M. were so bad, the company shut up shop quickly (nevertheless, Mel Croucher, the joint head of Automata went on to success in computer journalism, and wrote the SAM manual). [One of Mel's Pet-projects, ID, was later released on the short-lived "Nu-Wave" label from CRL. CRL later folded, owing a lot of money to programmers such as Fergus McNeil.]

The current computer game business revolves around licences. Ten years ago, all games were highly original, and indeed originality was an important factor in games early on. Nowadays, it's very different. The most popular games are those which have some connection with a book, a film, a TV programme, or a famous celebrity. It certainly helps sales - anyone remember World Cup Carnival? In case you don't, it was the official Mexico '86 computer game, with loads of freebies inside the box. It appeared that nobody minded about the game being abysmal (and the terrible reviews which followed), people bought

it because it was to do with the World Cup, and the game landed in the number one spot for weeks! [Even worse than that, the actual game was an aging title formerly published by ARTIC - who had long since passed away - which looked rather dated when it first appeared, and was available at prices such as 99p in some places. World Cup Carnival cost at least £10!]

When software houses suddenly discovered that tie-ins sold, they all made them as quickly as possible. The only snag was that the games needed to be officially licenced by the book, film or TV company etc. before they could be released. This resulted in huge bids from software houses, running into six figures. Those who got the licences made mediocre games and sold them in their millions. Those who didn't made good games which no-one had never heard of, failed to sell them, and promptly went out of business.

Another problem with software houses is over-advertising. Obviously, advertising in a computer magazine, or even on TV and radio, is the quickest way to sell something, especially if its licensed. However, big catchy adverts cost a lot of money, and therefore have to be successful if the company wants to stay in the black. If they fail, the company can easily run out of money.

A good example is the original Imagine, which promised two "mega-games", accompanied by huge advertisements. When they failed to produce the money for the advertising space, they had no choice but to go into receivership. [One of the mega-games, apparently co-funded by Sinclair, ended up being released as the first title from new company Psygnosis: formed from some ex-Imagine staff. The game appeared on the ST and NOT Spectrum.]

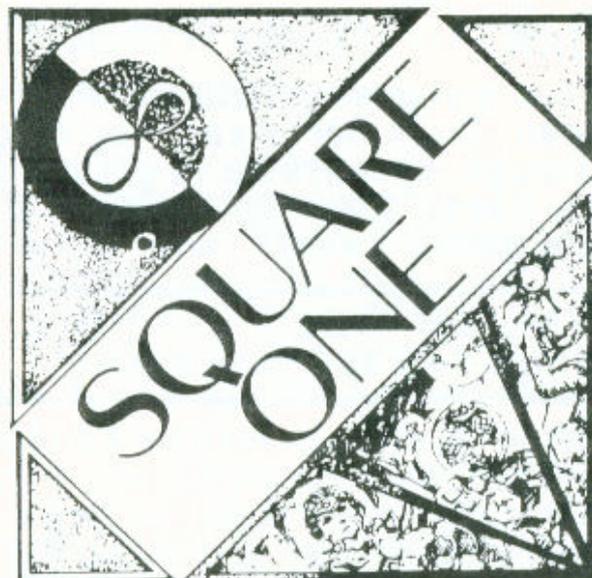
So what happens when a company goes bust? Well, there are basically three things that can happen. Firstly, it can be transferred across to another company (in the case of Imagine to the development team Denton Designs, or, more recently, MGT to SAMCO). Secondly, it can be bought out by another company and incorporated into it (as in the case of Ocean-Imagine).

Finally, it can just disappear off the face of the earth; this normally happens to bad software houses, as good ones are nearly always bought up. [Sadly, this is not always the case. An example of an formerly excellent company was MikroGen. They were forced into receivership after a large investment in a software/hardware game combination (Mikro +) failed to sell, leaving them in severe financial crisis for ages, and eventually leading to their downfall. Unfortunately, the company never returned.]

Listed below are a few software houses which have ceased trading, been bought up, or have changed significantly. If the company was bought up, the buyer is given in brackets. Any other relevant info is also given in brackets, in chronological order:

Abacus
Activision (ceased trading in UK, still existing in US and France)
Addictive Games (Prism)
Advance
Adventure International (US Gold)
Alligata
Alpha Omega (became Power House, ceased trading)
Alphabatim (became Cybadyne, development only)
A 'n' F (Argus, Grandslam, ceased trading)
Anirog
Arcade
Argus (Grandslam, ceased trading)
Ariolasoft
Atarisoft
Automata [Old software rights passed to PLAYERS/INTERCEPTOR]
Beyond (Telecomsoft, Microprose)

Budgie
 Bug-Byte (Argus, Grandslam, ceased trading)
 Carnell (Mastertronic, Virgin)
 CSD (Alternative)
 Cheetahsoft (became Cheetah Marketing, now hardware only)
 Crystal (became Design Design, now development only)
 Digital Fantasia (Adventure International, US Gold)
 Databyte (Prism)
 DJL Software (now development only)
 DK'tronics (hardware only, now ceased trading) [Hardware now published by Datel.]
 Doric (became Dorcas, ceased trading)
 Durell (Elite)
 Fantasy
 Front Runner (Prism)
 Games Machine
 Grandslam
 Incentive (Domark)
 Imagine (Ocean, Denton Designs & Psygnosis)
 Level 9 (Telecomsoft, Microprose)
 Lyversoft
 Lothlorien (Argus, Grandslam, ceased trading)
 Martech (became Screen 7, now part of Alternative)
 Mastertronic (Virgin, now called Tronix)
 Melbourne House (Mastertronic, Virgin)
 MGT (SAMCO [+ SAM TEC])
 Micromania
 Micromega
 Mikro-Gen (CSD, ceased trading)
 New Generation (Virgin)
 Nexus
 Noble House
 Phipps Associates
 Poppysoft
 Postern
 Power House
 Procom
 Quicksilva (Argus, Grandslam, ceased trading)
 Rabbit (Virgin)
 R&R
 Rhino
 Richard Shepherd
 Richard Wilcox (became Elite)
 Severn
 Silversoft (CEI)
 Softek (launched side label The Edge, then phased out)
 Starzone
 Telecomsoft (Microprose)
 Terminal
 Tynesoft
 Ultimate (US Gold)
 Vision
 Vortex (US Gold)
 (This list is by no means exhaustive)



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PLAYPEN

Richard Swann & Co

Due to other commitments, most noticeably with our sister mag SQUARE ONE, Polly Shepherd is no longer able to compile Playpen. So in her 'stead, you've got me! Hope you don't mind; I don't think you will though, because we've got lots of reviews to keep you happy, such as Shadow of the Beast, Klax (Spectrum version this time), the latest in a long line of SAM puzzle games Pazook, and more. So, without further ado, off we go...

SEYMOUR GOES TO HOLLYWOOD

Spectrum / £3.99 / Codemasters

Seymour is another lovable cartoon character from Codemasters, and his first adventure sees him in Hollywood, the land of the stars. Needless to say, Seymour is extremely happy about getting a part in a movie, but unfortunately, the director has gone on holiday and taken the rest of the cast with him, leaving Seymour to make the film for himself. The game is the usual Codemasters arcade adventure, which involves you running around screens using objects A and B to get C which enables you to get past D, etc. Seymour can carry up to three objects, but not all of them have obvious uses, and some are hidden away in the studios. Don't touch anything that might give Seymour an accident, because it probably will, resulting in him losing one of his three lives.

Graphics and Sound are, as usual, excellent, with lots of colour, and limited clash, and a nice tune in the background. However, there's nothing new here, and that's the main problem with the game. If you've played Dizzy, or any of the other Codemasters arcade adventures, then you'll know exactly what to expect, which takes the fun out of the game completely if you know exactly what's going on. To sum it up, therefore, I'd recommend this game to anyone who hasn't got any Codemasters arcade adventures, or who can't get enough of them. Most people, however, will find the game has a limited lifespan, and if you didn't like Dizzy, then you won't like this game either.

VERDICT Playability 65 Addictiveness 52 Graphics 90 Sound 90 **OVERALL 62**

SHADOW OF THE BEAST

Spectrum / Gremlin/GBH / Around £4.00

The plot, as if it were important, sees you in charge of a warrior in a foreign land trying to destroy the big beast that controls the land. This involves searching the whole land in order to find the beast and his companions, and destroy them. The game itself starts out as being a simple left/right scrolling beat-em up. This changes slightly when you enter a building, upon which the game changes to a cross between a beat em-up and a maze game. At one end of the building, there is usually a very large and very unfriendly monster that you must do battle with, such as what can be best described as a huge mouth, or a three headed dragon in a bad mood.

The gameplay has two major faults. Firstly, the "outside" area is far too big, and gets boring quickly, being merely a "move, kill, move, kill etc." type game. The "inside" area is more enjoyable to play, though. Unfortunately, the second, more important fault is with the multiload. Every time you go in and out of a building, you have to load another section. This is time and boring. At least you are actually given the option of whether or not you really do want to load the next section, or if you would rather continue in the present one.

The graphics are well drawn, with some nice parallax scrolling, but the sprite's animation is poor, consisting of only two frames, which isn't really enough for this type of game. Sound is good, with an atmospheric 128K tune.

Overall, if you can put up with the multiloop system, then the game is enjoyable, but there are better games of the same genre around (such as Myth, for example).

VERDICT Playability 72 Addictiveness 68 Graphics 78 Sound 76 **OVERALL 70**

PAZOOK

SAM / Supplement Software / £4.50 Review by David Ledbury.

This is one in a growing series of games written by David Tonks, for SS's off-shoot label Supplement Software. The range has concentrated on games that could all be called "simple, yet addictive" and this is one of these.

Pazook is "inspired" by Puzznik, and like Puzznik the idea is simply to match tiles to make them vanish. Each level has a playing area and a variety of patterned tiles to match and remove. If 1 piece is left, you've lost a life.

There are various tricks to removing the pieces, and you soon pick these up. Graphically, the game isn't spectacular. The graphics are colourful, but lack definition. Sound is from a Sound Machine piece, which isn't terrible, but this is an area where the Supplement Software has been rather lacking in.

However, as stated before, this game's strength is its playability. If you like "match and remove" puzzle games then you'll like it. If not...

VERDICT Playability 79 Addictiveness 74 Graphics 61 Sound 68 **OVERALL 75**

KLAX

Spectrum / Hit Squad / £3.99

Puzzle games appear to be popular with most people, due to their simple yet highly addictive gameplay, and Klax is certainly no exception.

The game sees you controlling a paddle which is at the bottom of a long conveyor belt. Blocks keep rolling down the conveyor belt, and you have to collect them; miss three blocks and the game's over. When you catch a block, you can do one of three things. You can either push it back up the conveyor belt (except it comes back again soon at a greater speed), hang on to it for a minute catch another block (you can only hold a few blocks at a time though), or drop it in the pit below you. The idea is to drop the different coloured blocks into the pit so that they make a line of tiles the same colour (shades of "Connect 4" here). This might be horizontal, vertical or diagonal; the minimum number of tiles in the line starts off as three, but increases on later levels. Just get a set number of lines, and you've completed the level. And so on ad infinitum...

As with all of these puzzle games, graphics and sound take a back seat. Only a third of the screen is really used in the game, the rest is all background, and most of the action takes place in the lower middle half of the screen. Nevertheless, the game is more exciting to look at than Tetris. Sound is limited to a few spot effects and a 128K tune.

However, the game is instantly playable, and you can get into straight away. There's a lot more variety than Tetris, but not enough to make it complicated. The game has that all important "just one more go" factor; I just had to complete a level to see what the next one looked like.

All in all, I think that this game is a lot of fun and totally unputdownable. Grab a copy now, you'll be addicted for ages - I know I am!

VERDICT Playability 92 Addictiveness 97 Graphics 55 Sound 50 **OVERALL 94**

NAVY MOVES

Spectrum / Hit Squad / £3.99 (originally released by Dinamic).

If you've got a copy of ZAT 14, you'll remember I said that Dinamic games are

ridiculously hard. This game is no exception. The plot, sees you infiltrating a naval base to retrieve enemy information. The game consists of three parts. Firstly, you have to make your way across a whole load of sea mines in a rubber dinghy. Then you have to jet ski across the water, avoiding sharks, etc, to get to the base. Finally, you infiltrate the base, blow up everything and everyone, and retrieve the papers.

Now I'd love to tell you what the second and third parts of the game are like, but I can't, because I can't get past the first one, even with an infinite lives POKE! The game is just so annoying, it's unbelievable. You have to position your dinghy between two mines exactly; there's only one right place to land. Then you have to jump over the mines and land in exactly the right position again. If you're even as little as one pixel out, the dinghy blows up, and shoots you into the sea, losing a life.

Like most Dinamic games, the graphics are large, colourful and well animated, even if they become a little undetailed and unclear at times. Sound is limited to some irritating spot effects, usually consisting of the "boom" when your dinghy blows up. Overall, I'm afraid to say that this game is completely unplayable. I suppose some people may find it addictive to keep trying to get past the mines, but most people will find it hard to keep playing the game rather than throwing away the tape, never to load it again. Only buy this if you're a masochist!

VERDICT Playability 10 Addictiveness 14 Graphics 86 Sound 31 **OVERALL 10**

ZOIDS

Spectrum / Alternative / £3.99

For those who don't know, Zoids were miniature robot models which were quite popular in the mid eighties. Around that time, this game came out to accompany it, and was met with varied reactions.

The gameplay is based on the fact that there are two Zoid teams; blue (good guys) and red (bad guys). You've got to locate and build together a giant blue Zoid which will hopefully wipe out the red Zoids and bring back peace.

The game itself is a icon driven strategy game, which was quite original at the time. You control a blue Zoid which moves around the landscape destroying red Zoid cities by means of launching missiles (which takes you into a subgame in which you must guide the missile to its target). Once you've done that, you can get any parts of the giant blue Zoid that are lying around. Once you've done that, you can go to other cities and do the same thing.

As with most strategy games, graphics and sound tend to take a back seat. Nevertheless, graphics consist of well drawn icons, which appear confusing initially, but are pretty easy to understand, and some nice 3D vector graphics. Sound, on the other hand, is completely pathetic, consisting of the odd beep or two. The game itself does take some time to get into, and if you like games you can get into quickly, then you'll probably give up in the first five minutes. However, if you persevere, you'll find that the game can be quite exciting, especially when attacking other cities. However, I found after a while the game started to get a bit repetitive, being merely a "move, attack city, move attack city etc. etc." routine.

In short, I'd say that if you like strategy games and vector graphics, then this game may appeal to you, but if Space Invaders or Tetris is your cup of tea, I'd advise you to look elsewhere. Mind you, for £3.99 you can't go too wrong.

VERDICT Playability 52 Addictiveness 61 Graphics 60 Sound 7 **OVERALL 59**

And that's all we've got this issue as far as Playpen is concerned. In the meantime, if you've written a review you want everyone else to read, then don't be shy, send it in to the ZAT address!

R.S.

PUBLICA DOMINIUS

D LEDBURY
S MULLEN



Mike AJ's a little busy at the moment, so he's asked me to stand in for him this issue. What has he let you in for...?

Last issue, in the internal news pages, I unveiled several plans for new offshoots to ZAT. As mentioned in the News supplement (that MOST of you recieved), the overall choice on the SAM side resulted in a new disk based venture: SAM PRIME.

SAM PRIME is a new diskzine, which has been designed to fill most of the void left by the demise the SAM Newdisk. It will help promote new and existing software - from ALL publishers - and not just from Quest & ZAT Soft. It will feature help for any programming problems people may come across and so on.

As in the Newdisk, Adrian Parker talks about Hardware: although more specifically K-Scope. Andy Wright's ROM Source listing appears in PRIME, and so does a new section called PRIME CLINIC, which offeres help on the SAM Arcade creation systems - from the authors themselves.

The first issue costs the special price of £1.50, and is available NOW! Future issues will cost £2.50, or £2 to former Newdisk Subscribers. Subscriptions cost £15 or £12 to former Newdisk Subscribers. Orders should be sent to: Martin Scholes, PRIME PR, 5 Beacon Flats, Kings Haye Road, Wellington. Telford. TF1 1RG. (Cheques made payable to me.) If you happen to read ZAT in Poland, then

next issue we plan to unveil plans to buy PRIME in Poland.

A large number of issues have already been sold, and he comments have been favourable - and a few sensible suggestions have come back. One or two I may even listen to. (Just kidding, all opinions matter to me ... hence my constant moaning of the lack of letters for ZAT!)

Does all this mean I'm not bothering with the Spectrum? No, it doesn't. At the moment, I'm making some notes on the next stage of evolution of Andy Davis's great tapezine AlchNews. With any luck, this tape should soon become a pretty potent zine indeed. But more on that soon.

Going back to Mike now, Mike has recently joined the top demo writing team Entropy. Entropy, are some of the best UK demo coders on SAM, and have produced some excellent material. But if you are keen on getting Mike's demo disks, then turn to the back page. They are now all directly available from me, at the usual price of £1.50 each. They are ideal if you have the Blue Alpha Sampler, and you wish to show it off.

SAM Quartet 2 - the last ever issue - is finally finished, and hopefully everyone who has ordered a copy from me has got it by now. If not, send a letter telling me off to the SAM PRIME address. When I created SQ, I used manual information storage (ie an old notebook) but with PRIME some of the records are computerised ... finally!

Not too much waffle about SQ, or this'll be renamed the "David Ledbury Promotion Page". But it's 2 disks, costs £2.50, and has a wide range of goodies: arcade, puzzle and adventure games. Utilities and demos.

The replacement 'zine for SQ is out now, SPQ - or more to the point SAM PUBLIC QUARTERLY. This is created by Sam Buchanan, and his address is on the advert in the News supplement. Each disk is £1.50, and is pretty darn good. Issues of SPQ can be obtained direct from SAM PRIME.

We've just been approached by a potential new PD columnist for ZAT, who not only wants to write about the Spectrum side of PD, but also happens to run a PD library. But more on this next time.

Speaking of our Spectrum PD coverage, here's Stephen Mullen.....

I'm happy to be able to start my Spectrum PD column with some good news. There is PD out there!

Firstly, there is Prism PD, which is run in a similar fashion to the 16 bit libraries. Prism was set up in February and according to Martyn Sherwood, the man "in charge", is showing signs of being a great success.

Prism can provide a wide range of software, 300 titles at the last count. These include games, business utilities, short routines, utilities and much more.

They send out titles on three formats: tape, microdrive and +D 3.5" disk. Prism also provides a digitizing and Desk Top Publishing service. If you want more information, bung an SAE to: 13 Rodney Close, Bilton, Rugby, CV22 7HJ.

PD Game Packs

As if that wasn't enough, Robert Frostdick is offering three PD game packs for the Spectrum. The first pack contains four games, one being an adventure and the two further packs contain four and five titles

respectively. Each pack costs £1.50 or £4 if you buy all three. Contact Robert at 1 Northolme Close, Grays, Essex RM16 2NX.

Alchemist PD

The third library in this issue's column is Alchemist PD, run by erstwhile ZAT columnist, Andy David. He offers a vast range of utilities and games, with plenty of titles especially useful for those with an interest in Comms. (For more Comms information, see this issue's BackChat and MeanBiz.)

The fee is competitive to say the least, just 20p per title or 10 for £1.50. Simply provide the tape and the SAE. A full list is available for free if you send a tape and stamp to Andy at:

62 Tithe Barn Lane, Woodhouse, Sheffield, South Yorkshire, S13 7LN.

AlchNews 4

In the latest issue of the aforementioned tapezine, Andy is questioning whether anyone is "out there". He puts this down to the hot summer leading to a poor response to recent editions of AlchNews.

It's not all doom and gloom though. Full details of services provided by Alchemis Research are in the same issue along with full details of the PD library. So prove Andy wrong and drop him a line, and a tape!

Well, I hope that helps to fill the void as far as Spectrum PD goes. This month was all addresses but next time, I'll try and squeeze in some reviews of the top titles.

If you know of a library, or run one of your own, please contact me at either the main address or direct. My address is: 4 Johnson Grove, Liverpool, L12 9LR.

Daniel Cannon's not appearing in this issue's Chip Shop, as we've given him a bit of extra time off to work on Manic Masion without being disturbed. However, next issue sees the first part of a special "Code Breaker" program. But I'm not spoiling it for you!

Although Code Breaker is actually for both machines, some people do think we don't cater enough on the Spectrum technical side. So this following section may be handy for these people.

This issue sees the start of a new series of interesting ROM routines for Spectrum owners, from the ever capable hands of Richard Swann. Without any further ado, it's time to join Richard with

ROMARAMA

By Richard Swann

If you've been following the Code Breaker series in ZAT, then no doubt you'll be able to write some limited machine code programs. However, there are a lot of things which haven't been covered, such as drawing lines, boxes and circles on screen, printing sprites or even multiplying and dividing numbers. The simple reason is because a program to do these things would be quite complex.

But fear not! You are probably aware of the fact that your computer has at least 16K of ROM, memory which you

can read, but not write to. What you may not know that in ROM, there are hundreds of small routines already built in to do something useful, and can be used in conjunction with your main machine code program in RAM. Most of the routines are fairly fast and reliable, and can save memory by not having to write similar routines in RAM.

To execute a ROM routine, you have to put certain values into certain registers (these are the "inputs"), CALL the routine, and get certain results in certain registers (these are the "outputs").

If you were reading the Meanbiz article last month, you will have already come across one ROM routine in the Spectrum. This is the routine called LD-BYTES, and takes the following inputs:

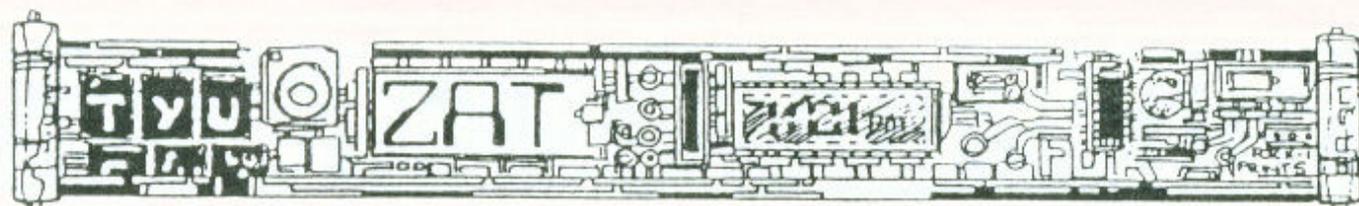
IX = Start of code
DE = Length of code
A = Header type

The value of A can be anything from 0 to 255 (FFh) and determines the length of the tone header (that's the "whee" bit with blue and red stripes at the start!) In addition to this, you need to set the carry flag (done by the command SCF).

The routine is then called by using CALL 1366 (0556h). Its outputs are:

IX = Address of last byte loaded in
DE = Number of bytes not loaded in

This outputs can be quite useful, because if a loading error occurs, you



can inspect the value of the IX register to see what address it got up to.

Over the next few months, I'm going to be printing some of the more useful ROM routines. You can find a full list of Spectrum ROM routines in the book "The Complete Spectrum ROM Disassembly" by Dr. Ian Logan and Dr. Frank O'Hara (ISBN 0 86161 116 0). Unfortunately this book is out of print, but your local library may be able to get you a copy. [See the following item for information on other books, that some people thought out of circulation! DL]

START/NEW Address 4555 (11CBh)

Inputs:

DE=Last address to be NEWed

A =0

Plus the DI command (243d,F3h)

This routine resets the computer, but only up to a certain address. All the memory beyond this address is preserved. When the machine is switched on, this routine is called with the value of DE being 65535 (FFFFh), thereby wiping all the memory.

The best use of this routine is during a crash. By using a multiface, you can restore normality and still keep some of the memory intact. For example, put the following POKEs into memory.

5B00,F3 5B01,AF
5B02,11 5B03,FF
5B04,5F 5B05,C3
5B06,CB 5B07,11
2000,00 2001,5B
2002,01

Now pres the "j" key (which will now jump to 5B00), and you'll find that the computer has reset, but left intact all the memory from 6000 (24576d) onwards.

Next issue, I'll be giving you some ROM routines to do with graphics. Until then, happy programming!

Thank you for another great article Richard.

Richard mentions that several topics such as Circles, and other graphics, haven't been covered in CodeBreaker. In fact there will be some graphic routines in issue 17 CodeBreaker.

Although this isn't really the place to mention it, you may be interestd in a review that Richard has managed to gain for ZAT recently; none other than the Editor of YS! Great work!

Back to more technical matters now ...

I've read recently in some magazines, that a lot of people are crying out after some of the "classic" Machine Code books for their Spectrums & SAMs. So, it is with great pleasure that I'm pleased to list the following selection tracked down by Daniel Cannon, and available still from Computer Manuals Ltd. 50 James Road, Tyseley, Birmingham, B11 2BA. Or you can phone them on 021 706 6000. But what have they got?

Newnews Z80 Pocket Book by Roberts. Priced £12.95 (080842)
Z80 Applications by Coffron. Priced £19.95 (007090)
Programming the Z80 by Rodney Zaks.

Priced £23.95 (002006)
 30 Hour BASIC by Clive Prigmore.
 Priced £9.95 (008549)
 Masterin Machine Code by Toni Baker.
 Priced £9.95 (008303)
 Step by step graphics 3 by Letcher.
 Priced £6.95 (014395)
 Step by step graphics 2 by Letcher.
 Priced £6.95 (014408)
 Step by step Programming 1 by
 Graham. Priced £6.95 (011819)
 Step by step Programming 2 by
 Graham. Priced £6.95 (011823)

The number in brackets is the code number for each title.

It's been a little while since Stephen Wilson's appeared, due to lack of space. But here he is finally, with another....

Intergrate0Bits

by Stephen Wilson

SAM CLASS

Here is a routine to send some data to the sound chip:

I have used Steve Nutting's SC_ASSEMBLER.- I understand he has completed a LERM source convertor to convert source code in BASIC

```
10 SOUND 28,1;20,1;0,255;16,2
20 FOR COUNTER=1 TO 10
30 READ SOUND_DATA:SOUND
8,SOUND_DATA:PAUSE 100
40 NEXT COUNTER
50 SOUND 28,0
60 DATA 10,20,40,80,100,120,140,
160,180,200
```

Line 10 turns the sound chip on; sets generator 0 for note; generator 0 at full volume; generator 0 at octave 3

Line 20-40 send various frequencies to generator 0; Line 50 turns sound chip off.

Line 60 holds the data

IN MACHINE CODE

```
5 PUT 49152
10 ORG 49152
20 LD HL,NOTETABLE
30 LD C,255
40 LD B,15
50 loop:PUSH BC
60 LD A,(HL)
70 LD B,1
80 OUT (C),A
90 INC HL
100 LD B,0
110 LD A,(HL)
120 OUT (C),A
130 INC HL
140 CALL wait
150 POP BC
160 DJNZ loop
170 RET
180 notetable:DB 28,1,20,1
190 DB 0,255,16,2,8,10,8,20,8,40
200 DB 8,80,8,100,8,120,8,140
210 DB 8,160,8,180,8,200,28,0
220 wait:PUSH BC
230 LD BC,32768
240 waitloop:DEC BC
250 LD A,B
260 OR C
270 JR NZ,waitloop
280 POP BC
290 RET
```

TYPE 'A' to assemble it, then B to get to BASIC, and type save "View.C"CODE 49152,68. Then in BASIC type CALL 49152 (or load it in from the disk).

Line 05 tells the assembler where to put it in the memory.

Line 10 tells the assembler this is where the code will lie, (You can make the code run at any address, but store it at a different one)

**** example 2 ****

Here is an example of switching 2 screens, using the Video Port- Port 252.

Remember I said you could set up a screen in 1 page, and switch it with another, well heres an example of it.

It could be used for a slideshow program, but the max amount of screens it can show at once, without loading from disk, is determined by how much memory you have got. (You could use Steve Nutting's Screen Compressor in conjunction with this, to be able to store more screens.)

This is example called SAMC. SLIDE uses only 3 screens, as I am stuck for time.

We will use pages 06 & 07 for 1 screen, 08 & 09, for another, and 10 & 11 for the last one.

(Be careful of DOS which lies below the Screen Page)

Thus Screen1 = (6+1) 7*16384= 114688

Screen 2= (8+1)=9*16384= 147456

Screen 3= (10+1)=11*16384= 180224

SO:

```
10 PUT 49152
20 ORG 49152
20 IN A, (252)
30 LD (TEMP), A
40 LD HL, £55D8
50 LD DE, PALBUFFER
60 LD BC, £40
70 LDIR
80 LD A, Z01100111
90 LD B, 3
100 ; B=COUNTER=3 SCREENS
110 LD HL, SCREEN1PAL
120 LOOP:PUSH BC
130;PORT 252: MODE 4 SCREENS
140 OUT (C), A
150 CALL SET-PALETTE
```

```
160 CALL WAIT
170 CALL WAIT
180 CALL WAIT
190 CALL WAIT
200 CALL WAIT
210 CALL WAIT
220;WE WANT A BIG, BIG PAUSE
230 INC A
240 INC A
250;NEXT PAGE OF SCREEN
260 POP BC
270 DJNZ LOOP
280 LD A, (TEMP)
290 LD C, 255
300 OUT (C), A
310 LD HL, PALBUFFER
320 LD DE, £55D8
330 LD BC, £40
340 LDIR
350 RET
360 WAIT:PUSH AF
370 PUSH BC
380 LD BC, 65535
390 WAITLOOP:DEC BC
400 LD A, B
410 OR C
420 JR NZ, WAITLOOP
430 POP BC
440 POP AF
450 RET
460 TEMP:DB 0
470 SCREEN1PAL:DB ???????
(16 nos of your screen palette nos.
Use program below to view palette
nos)
480 SCREEN2PAL:DB ??????
490 SCREEN3PAL:DB ???????
500 PALBUFFER:DS £40
510 SET-PALETTE:PUSH HL
520 LD DE, £55D8
530 LD BC, 16
540 LDIR
550 POP HL
560 LD DE, £55EC
570 LD BC, 16
580 LDIR
590 RET
```

Then simply assemble the program as usual.

**** How it works ****

Line 20, Loads HL with the start of the table of note values, NOTETABLE. This contains all the data to be sent to the chip. Much the same as the DATA BASIC statement.

Line 30 & 40 loads C with 255, and B with 15- this is a counter to how many times it will read a byte from the table and send it to the sound chip, in this case we are sending a pair of numbers each time we go round the loop, so we are sending 15 pairs of nos.

Line 50 is the start of the loop, marked with a label: LOOP it stores the contents of BC onto the Stack which is a piece of memory set out to do the task of temporarily storing registers. To place a data on it we PUSH it, to get it back we POP, this POP's the last byte PUSHed onto the register that is defined in the POP statement. So now the contents of BC are on the stack: (B=15, C=255)

Line 60 loads A with whatever HL is pointing to: HL points to the start of the NOTETABLE (remember: LD HL, NOTETABLE) (This is a 3 byte instruction) so A = the first item of data which is the 28.

Line 70 loads B with 1, we are about to send a register to the sound chip, so we make b=1 (remember) we now send that piece of data, in Line 80

Line 90 increases the pointer: HL, so now HL points to 1, the data we are about to send. As it is data we make B=0 in Line 100.

Line 110 Loads A with that, and Line 120 sends it to the sound chip, Line 130 increases the pointer: So now we have sent 2 items of DATA, 28, 1 which turns the sound chip on, and the pointer is pointing to the next piece of data: 20

Line 140 now CALLS a subroutine: Like GOSUB in BASIC, it calls a routine called WAIT. We call this routine, because if we didn't, the routine would run so fast, we wouldn't hear the noises, so we need to make the processor slow down, by making it run a little loop for a while, before sounding the next note.

At Line 220, the start of the routine, we PUSH BC, because we will want to use BC, but BC already holds values, we will want to use when we go back, so we temporarily 'SAVE' BC.

Line 230 loads BC with 32768, just any number will do, this is the number of times it will go around the loop, the bigger the number, the longer the loop.

Line 240 Decrease BC by one, so now BC will be 32767.

Line 250 Load a with b, and we test this value against C in line 260. What this really does is test if B and C are at 0.

At line 270, we go around the loop again if B and C are NOT zero, they are not so we go around again. It runs the loop again starting from line 240, and will do so until B and C both = 0.

At line 280, we recover B and C's old values, and the RET, at line 290 takes us back the routine. so we then go back to Line 150, where this brings BC back of the stack again - (remember at the start B=15, c=255).

At line 160 it tests if b=0 and if not, decreases it and then goes back around the routine, this time with b=14. It continues all this until B=0, where at Line 160 we return to BASIC.

Lines 180-210 store the data

At the start, we don't know for certain the value of Basics screen page, so we store it in location TEMP.

In BASIC, the colours for the current screen are stored in a table which is £40 bytes long, starting at £55d8.

We want to let Basic get its colour back, so we store this table in PALBUFFER.

We are changing the colours, because my 3 screens, all had different colours, their 16 colours stored in their 3 respective buffers, screen1PAL, SCREEN2PAL, SCREEN3PAL.

We load A with the page of the first screen (PAGE 7) and make ita MODE 4 screen this is why A=Z01100111, at line 90.

B is used as a counter, 3 in our case, and that is stored on the stack. Next we page in the screen, to be displayed. We then set it's colours using the routine SET-PALETTE.

When calling this, HL should hold the table of the 16 colours to use. When this is finished, HL will be pointing to the next 16, so it is left alone.

We then Use WAIT, to make a pause.

We increase A to the next page, which will be page 9 for the next screen.

We then test if the counter is to 0.

If so, we load BASIC's colour back in , and its screen page no, and then RETURN to BASIC.

*** If you are using your own routines use the following to change colours:

LD HL, ENDTABLE1

LD B, 16
LD C, 248
OTDR

(these are example numbers)
STARTABLE:DB 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
DB 10, 11, 12
ENDTABLE:DB 15

** Using this routine for yourself**

First you will have to decide how many screens you will have. The max is 5. (256K) as DOS is at page 13 (256k), so you cannot overwrite that, and you probably won't want to use anything below 65536. so you have from 65536-229376 =163840 and 1 screen takes up 32768 =163840/32768=5 (a screen in mode3/4 REALLY takes up 24K, but you can use other methods to get a max of 6) (256K, 512K's can double it)

You must decide which screens are going into which pages, I started mine at page 7-11, with the 3 of them at page 7, 9, 11
Change the counter at line 110 to how many screens you are going to use, And you will have to make up tables like SCREEN1PAL, for each of the screens palette. To find a screens palette, use the following program....

```
10 REM S.Wilson
20 PRINT TAB 10;"Palette Viewer"
30 PRINT ""Press 'D' for
Directory""Any other to continue"
40 GET a$
IF A$="D" OR a$="d" THEN DIR 1
PAUSE
50 CLS
60 PRINT AT 0,0; "Which screen to
examine palette of?"
INPUT £2; AT 3,0;f$
70 IF LEN f$<0 OR LEN f$>10 OR
CODE f$<=13 THEN 60 TO 60
80 CLS
90 LOAD f$ SCREEN$
```

```

100 CLS
LET e$=MEM$(&55d8 TO &55e7)
POKE &55ec,e$
110 PRINT AT 0,17;"Palette"
120 PRINT AT 1,0;"Register"
130 PRINT AT 1,10;"Colour"
140 FOR r=0 TO 15
150 PRINT AT 2+r,0; TAB 2;r; TAB
12;CODE e$(r+1)
160 NEXT r

```

To combine all your screens into 1 solid lump of code use this following program.....

```

10 CLS £
20 INPUT "How many screens to code?";n
30 INPUT "What address to start at?";a
LET b=a
40 FOR r=1 TO n
50 PRINT AT 0,0;"What is the name of screen ";r
60 INPUT a$
61 BEEP .1,0
70 LOAD a$ CODE b
80 LET b=b+32768
90 NEXT r
100 CLS
110 PRINT AT 2,0;"Input Name to save code as "
INPUT f$
120 IF LEN f$<0 OR LEN f$>10 OR CODE f$<13 THEN GO TO 110
130 SAVE f$ CODE a,(n*32768)
140 RUN

```

Then assemble the code as usual, and then save it using the filename "view.c". Then make a simple basic prog, like this

```

10 LOAD "view.c" CODE 49152
20 LOAD "name" CODE 7*16384
30 CALL 49152

```

Now as an exercise, you can upgrade this slideshow program to fade away each time a picture shows, and to do some fancy scrolling, while playing a 6

channel music prog. (only joking)!!!!

No, seriously, you could easily add some fancy bits to it, if you are experienced enough.....

Its easy when you know how!!!

Hope you've enjoyed this enjoyable little article, look out for more on the way.....

And that's all for this issue, hope to see you all next time. Same time, same place.

Adventurers Convention

A convention for all Adventure Game enthusiasts is to be held on the 24th October 1992 at the Royal Angus Thistle Hotel in Birmingham from 10am to 7pm.

Admission will be by ticket only. Price - £7.00 each.

A limited number of stalls are available for those wishing to sell or demonstrate Adventure related products. Please ask for further details if you wish to take advantage of this facility.

If you wish to stay overnight in the Hotel, a special room rate has been arranged for those attending the Convention.

To reserve your ticket and for further information please contact Vicky Jackson (after 7pm or at weekends).

Telephone: 081 542 9579
Mobile Tel: 0836 332 656

Address: 128 Merton Hall Road
Wimbledon, London. SW19 3PE.



Game players are a funny breed. They usually spend most of their time waggling a joystick to kill off exotic sprites, or collecting golden keys to gain extra lives. Some however do spend time dabbling in the complexities of programming, with the hindsight of ultimately designing and programming their own games. Programs such as White Lightning and HURG enabled Spectrum users to attempt to create DIY games, but now SAMusers too can have a go with Andy Wright's latest brainchild: Games Master. Reviewed by Daniel Cannon

This is a review of one of the 2 games designer programs available for SAM. I have to say that I'm for machine code every time when it comes to writing games. So don't be too surprised if I slam it (only kidding, some of the features are quite impressive).

The program is called Games Master, from Betasoft. Supplied in the package is a 60 page manual and the boot up disc, containing the actual program itself, a few GM examples, and some sprites. The main GM program is about 20K of machine code and a massive BASIC program called 'The Editor' which allows you to design your sprites, write your GM programs, etc... It has to be said that the editor doesn't look pretty but it does its job.

Central to the operation of GM is a sprite, as Andy Wright describes it - "a computer thingy that combines graphic data with other information". Going into slightly more detail - it has graphic data to describe what it looks

like, a mask which tells the computer the size and shape of the graphic data, a start position, a path which the sprite follows, and something which details what happens when the sprite hits another sprite.

So all you need to is define these bits of information, put the sprite on the screen, and it will pootle off following its own instructions without any more help. Sprites are printed quickly on screen, but put too many on at once and things will begin to slow down.

However, a game just isn't all sprites. The score has to be worked out, rooms displayed, instructions printed, and so on. The rather grandly titled 'Games Master Control Language' is what you program with when using GM. Your programs are split into modules (like small procedures), and each module does a different job. Eg. One could be used to alter the score, another to set up variables, and so on. Programming using modules can take some time to get used to. In one way they're quite powerful, but in another they can be restrictive to program with.

For example, to put a sprite on a screen which bounces around all that is needed is 1 command! Just put the sprite on the screen with the PLACE command, and it appears and moves around without any further programming. Only when it hits something (like another sprite) will the GMCL be needed again. Then another module will be called. This module tells the sprite what to do (you could tell the sprite to explode, or disappear, or whatever). Then the sprite will do whatever you told it to, and GMCL is only needed again when, say, the explosion has died down and must disappear off the screen. So you can get some meteors bouncing around the screen over a starry background with only 10 lines of programming!

However, they can be restrictive. Say you want to limit how many bullets appear on screen when you press fire (eg. one at a time), because you don't want to spray the screen with lead every time fire is pressed. Yep, sounds simple enough. But this took a lot of thought to get around because everything is so automatic - it was very difficult to get GM to check the number of bullets on screen! Eventually I tried a different approach (I timed the time for a bullet to travel across the screen and set a timer in the program, and that worked OK).

GMCL is designed to be used with sprites - so it has a lot of sprite commands (turning, mirroring, etc...). You'll want some text on screen, and a few colours, so commands for these are provided. Sound is also available (the stereo volume changes to follow the sprite around the screen - but my telly is mono, so nothing spectacular happens).

However, little 'real' programming can be done. For example there are no multistatement lines available, the number of lines per module is limited to a screen deep (so JPMOD commands are needed to jump from one module to the next one to carry on programming), FOR NEXT loops only count forwards, only 26 number variables are allowed, IF THEN is very simple, and so on.

The reason that GMCL is kept very simple is so that it runs very fast, and in games that is important. But programming with it is like programming a C64 - very difficult. Luckily there are 2 commands to call BASIC (perhaps for working out some maths) or machine code (for special effects which GM cannot handle) are supplied. But sometimes BASIC and especially code can be fiddly to get to work with GM.

Here's a program which bounces meteors around a starry background. To save space I've used colons to separate lines. You should split them back up to get it to run on GM. This bit is for the starry background, nothing too special here. FOR NEXT isn't as friendly as before, and the step must always be included.

```
PEN 7: FOR A=1,100,1: PLOT RND  
(255),RND (191): NEXT A
```

This bit will make 10 meteors bounce around the screen at different speeds. First add the following to module 1, which puts 10 copies of sprite 1 (the meteor) onto the screen at random positions, with different X and Y speeds.

```
FOR B=1,10,1: PLACE 1,RND (127),RND  
(191),1: SPEED 0,RND (8)-4, RND  
(8)-4: NEXT B
```

Load "meteor.s" into sprite 1. Change the following sprite details: BOUNCES = YES, EGDE LIMIT = YES, MISSILE = NO.

This routine will make the meteors clang when they hit together. First alter Sprite vs Sprite collisions. Where sprite 1 (meteor) hits sprite 1 (another meteor) then you should tell the computer to run module 2. At module 2, type in SOUND 1. This will play the default sound 1 every time the meteors collide. And the default SOUND 1 supplied when loaded is a sort of clang sound.

Not all of Games Master is easy to use as this. I think it's because many of the commands are so like BASIC, yet the idea of using modules isn't. There is also a lack of any 'real' programming commands, and you're essentially limited to a few types of game (platform, maze, shoot em up).

But to be fair it is certainly better than the nightmare days of Hurg and

Arcade Creator, and if people have the will power to sit down and learn a whole new programming language I can expect to see some very good demos and games written using this. The option to call BASIC and code gets around most difficulties. Although code programs are written specifically for the job tend to look a bit more polished and work slightly faster, I can see this doing for SAM games what Quill did Spectrum adventures (lots of games, but not all of them a miracle of SAM programming).

Ratings

Usefulness 75

Presentation 70

Compatibility SAM

Overall 80

To complement this issue's BACKCHAT, Andy Davis continues his look at Modems from another angle

If you're familiar with the world of comms and have an old modem lying around, (90% of Spectrum owners have a VTX5000), then it'll be stuck gathering dust. Pull it out of the cupboard, wipe off the dust and hook it up.

When you switch on, you should be greeted by the usual start up screen. 128 or +2 owners should revert to 48 mode and type OUT 127, 67 or load VTX boot, VTX128, Fireview+2, VTX Editor or Firescroll, all available from Alchemist PD.

Find out your telephone number and load up the appropriate software. If you are contacting a viewdata number, load up Fireview+2 or VTX Editor. Both have frame grabbing routines which allows you to save on phone costs and store now, read later. Scrolling connections will need FireScroll or Scrolling Shades Terminal (SST). I

prefer firescroll because of the excellent screen record option so you can replay it all later. SST features defined function keys and a little clock, so you can speed up certain functions and save time and money.

Dial your number. It should ring twice then silence. Make sure your switch is set to M/NET if you have a VTX5000. When you hear the long tone, flick the switch to ON-LINE and replace the handset. The online light should be lit. Press a key to acknowledge you are there and you should be greeted by the password system. If you are 'cut off' then you are either using the wrong software or the speed is not compatible.

Most bulletin boards need you to enter your full name, calling city and password. When you first ever join the BB (99% are free) you will have to enter your name, address and phone number for the sysop's (SYSTEM OPERATOR) files, so he can get in touch with you if he needs to or if someone has hacked into your access code and is doing some hacking under your name! Bulletin Boards can be prone to idiots who think they can crack the system and find secret information.

After you have entered your password, you can access the whole system. You are noted if you have any messages left for you. If not, you can go to the main menu and either read general letters, send or receive files, alter your setup (the way you receive data) or page the sysop for a chat.

When you call be courteous. Remember it's cheaper after 6pm, so will be busier then. Check opening times. Most BBs will be operating from a standard telephone line shared by the house. If you call after midnight and the computer doesn't answer, hang up.

Sometimes, the computer may be down

and you may wake up the household! Some BBs still require the 'ring twice' technique. Phone up, let the phone ring twice hang up. Wait a couple of minutes for the sysop to setup the computer and run the BB software then call again.

If you would like to run your own Bulletin Board. Remember...

1) You must have permission from the phone owner and arrange a good time to open the BB. 11pm to 6am is usually best.

2) You must have a good modem with auto-answer. The GEC Datachat 1223 is a good choice, but will need modifications to connect to a Spectrum.

3) You must have sufficient memory and a quick(ish) disk system. D-TEL runs a viewdata BB on a +3 using the ramdisk, the +3 disk and an external disk. A good choice would be a +2 and 760k +D

4) You can't set it up and abandon it. Occasionally, people will page you for help or a chat. Areas will need updating and letters to you must be answered or you won't get many users.

5) Decide whether you want to be a machine specific or cater for all tastes.

6) Include a mailbox letters facility for users to leave 'mail' to you and other users and maybe free or cheap software.

The best way to find out how to start a BB is talk to the sysop himself. Dave Walker runs the Spectrum BB 'D-TEL', his address can be found in Backchat. Dave Gorski runs 'INFOTEL' on an Amstrad PC. The BB number is 0737 766027 or talk to him on 0737 761911.

DIALSOFT is a system which allows 2 spectrum owners with VTX5000 modems to send and receive programs to each other as well as chat, down the telephone line. Both users will

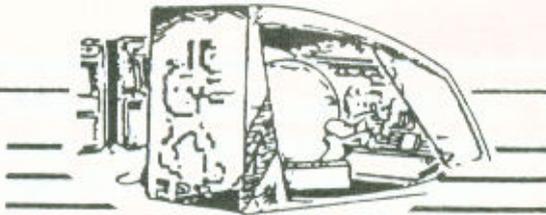
need to load up DIALSOFT and have their modems switched to TX. Now, one dials the other, and both flick the switch to ON-LINE and replace the handset. Now they can chat or send programs.

The system is semi-intelligent. When one user selects Transmit data, the other computer will automatically set itself up to receive the data. The transmitter decides how many files to send and the address in memory of the code or select if to send just basic. The computer will send the data in blocks and only moves onto the next block if the receiver has got the data ok. When transmitting has finished, both terminals switch to chat mode. I've successfully received a PD assembler which was 13k long via dialsoft from Scotland and it only took around a minute. So if you need a program fast and can't wait for the post, use dialsoft!

Customers of Alchemist PD with credit can receive their programs via Dialsoft is the program is Dialsoftable (95% are) so they get their software instantly and save on postage and sending a tape! Contact me for more details.

Beside bulletin boards, there are many multi user adventures. 2 which were available on Micronet were TRASH and SHADES. MUD is the most popular adventure. Avalon is a new adventure system in my area. The number is 0742 671671 but I think it needs speeds of 1200 upwards. You can usually dig up these numbers in computer magazines or universities. In the future, I may be starting my own BB. If anyone is interested then write to me. The same applies if you want more information in comms or anything else which is troubling you.

Any Comments are welcome, especially any problems for MicroDoc!



ARCADE ALLEY

Richard Swann & Co

Hi there, it's that time in the issue to forget about fair play, and do some serious cheating on some games! But before we get down to action, here's a quick reminder on how you POKE a game.

- 1) Type out the listing, and make sure you've typed it EXACTLY as written.
- 2) SAVE your listing to tape for future use.
- 3) RUN the program you've typed it.
- 4) Play the game from the start.
- 5) Cheat to your heart's content!

BMX SIMULATOR II - Infinite time. The POKE will automatically detect whether you are loading side A or side B, and alter the POKE accordingly.

```

10 REM BMX II BOTH SIDES BY RICH
20 CLEAR 24319
30 FOR N=23296 TO 23328
40 READ A:POKE N,A:NEXT N
50 RANDOMIZE USR 23296
60 DATA 221,33,0,95,17,0,1
70 DATA 62,255,55,205,86,5
80 DATA 48,241,33,24,91,34
90 DATA 119,95,195,0,95
100 DATA 33,0,201,34,91,125
110 DATA 195,0,96

```

TRAILBLAZER - Infinite time and jumps

Original version

```

10 REM TRAILBLAZER GREMLIN BY RICH
20 LOAD "" CODE
30 POKE 60027,43
40 POKE 60028,235
50 FOR N=60203 TO 1E9
60 READ A:IF A<>999 THEN POKE
N,A:NEXT N

```

```

70 RANDOMIZE USR 60000
80 DATA 175,50,83,136: REM TIME
90 DATA 175,50,242,138: REM JUMPS
100 DATA 195,8,132,999:REM END
MARKER

```

Budget Rerelease

```

10 REM TRAILBLAZER MASTERTRONIC BY
RICH
20 FOR N=23296 TO 1E9
30 READ A:IF A<>999 THEN POKE
N,A:NEXT N
40 RANDOMIZE USR 23296
50 DATA 221,33,203,92,17
60 DATA 163,0,62,255,55,205
70 DATA 86,5,48,241,33,24,91
80 DATA 34,254,92,195,222,92
90 DATA 175,50,83,136:REM TIME
100 DATA 175,50,242,138:REM JUMPS
110 DATA 195,8,132,999:REM END
MARKER

```

Space 7 - Infinite lives

```

10 REM SPACE 7 BY RICH
20 CLEAR 24514:LOAD "" CODE
30 POKE 65226,0:POKE 65227,91
40 FOR N=23296 TO 23313
50 READ A:POKE N,A:NEXT N
60 RANDOMIZE USR 65156
70 DATA 33,9,91,34,252,97
80 DATA 195,184,97,33,180
90 DATA 196,34,177,196
100 DATA 195,0,215

```

TOOBIN' - Infinite credits

```

10 REM TOOBIN' BY RICH
20 FOR N=24480 TO 24512
30 READ A:POKE N,A:NEXT N
40 RANDOMIZE USR 24480
50 DATA 221,33,203,92,17
60 DATA 156,1,62,255,55,205
70 DATA 86,5,48,241,33,184
80 DATA 95,34,43,94,195,217
90 DATA 93,33,0,0,34,24
100 DATA 241,195,0,120

```

WHOOOPS!

In case you hadn't guessed already,

there were a few mistakes in the POKEs for Magicland Dizzy in issue 13. We're sorry about that. But here is a working routine:

```
10 CLEAR VAL "24000";LOAD "" CODE VAL "24000"
20 POKE VAL "24079",VAL "0";POKE VAL "24080",VAL "91"
30 FOR N=VAL "23296" TO VAL "23303"
40 READ A;POKE N,A;NEXT N
50 RANDOMIZE USR VAL "24000"
60 DATA VAL "62", VAL "182", VAL "50"
70 DATA "183", VAL "115", VAL "195"
80 DATA VAL "94", VAL "94"
```

If you are typing the POKE in 128K BASIC, change line 20 to:

```
20 POKE VAL "24102", VAL "0";POKE VAL "24103", VAL "91"
```

... and everything should be working perfectly normally (I hope!)

Apologies to anyone who couldn't get the routines working!

And to round off this issue's POKEs, here's a routine for this Amiga conversion from Gremlin (which I believe is reviewed in this very issue)...

SHADOW OF THE BEAST - Infinite Lives

```
10 REM SOTB BY RICH
20 FOR N=23296 TO 23367
30 READ A;POKE N,A;NEXT N
40 RANDOMIZE USR 23296
50 DATA 49,0,93,221,33,183
60 DATA 253,17,61,1,62,255
70 DATA 55,205,86,5,48,241
80 DATA 175,50,33,254,205
90 DATA 16,254,175,50,64,92
100 DATA 62,201,50,105,92
110 DATA 205,0,92,59,59,229
120 DATA 125,254,61,40,4
130 DATA 175,195,106,97,175
```

```
140 DATA 205,106,97,0,62,201
150 DATA 50,137,98,33,37,220
160 DATA 205,97,98,175,50
170 DATA 196,129,195,247,115
```

HAYLP!

This is a new section to Arcade Alley, and probably the most useful yet. We all get painfully stuck on games from time to time; I certainly have. That's why we're here to help. If you're stuck on any game at all, old or new, just send a brief description of your problem to HAYLP, ZAT, 33 Dawley Bank, Telford, Shropshire. TF4 2LQ.

If we can help we'll print the solution in the next available issue, and even if we can't help, then we'll print the problem anyway, and if any reader can solve a problem we can't, then send in the solution, and we'll print it and give you some ZAT goodies as a reward!

Yikes! We seem to have run out of space. Never mind, we've got plenty lined up for next issue, so stay tuned for that. In the meantime, if you've got anything remotely resembling a tip or POKE, it should be sent to ZAT at the above address. And please DON'T rip off other people's work, especially mine, otherwise you'll be sorry!

Anyway, see you all next time. RS

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