

THE GREAT NEW PACKAGE FOR AMIGA OWNERS

AMIGA

ISSUE 3 • OCTOBER 1989 • £2.95

FORMAT

COVERDISK 3



XENON 2

PLAYABLE DEMO OF THE SHOOT-EM-UP OF THE YEAR

PLUS

COMMS PACKAGE, ART GALLERY,
MUSIC DEMO, WORKBENCH HACKS



MUSIC ALERT!

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SOUND SENSATION FROM MUSIC X

DIGIPAIN 3 • ADVENTURES • EDUCATION • VIDI AMIGA

REGULARS

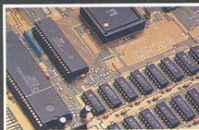
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■ In Preview: Knight Force, out soon from Titus.



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ROMBO VIDI AMIGA 119



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XENON II, MEGABLAST

Probably the best shoot-em-up in the world, and this month's playable demo

ACCESS: excellent and beautifully-presented communications package • **DEMO CORNER:** chillin' music demo created especially for Amiga Format • **DPAINT CLIP ART:** for use in conjunction with our DPaint tutorial • **WORKBENCH HACKS:** two more fun hacks • **POPDIR:** Workbench directory utility.

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AFTER ALL THE DELAYS, MUSIC X FINALLY ARRIVES: AND LOOKS SET TO CHANGE THE FACE OF MUSIC MAKING ON THE AMIGA...

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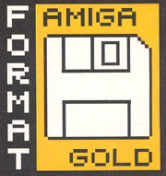
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■ At the start of the game, the flying alien must be destroyed and the pod collected to gain a drone.

US GOLD £19.99 ■ Joystick

STRIDER



Russia and the Russian army are going to look very different seventy years from now, or so Capcom and US Gold would have us believe, with this conversion of the highly successful coin-op.

It's the eternal struggle of Good versus Evil again, as you take on the persona of Strider Hiryu (Hurrah!) to do battle with The Lord (Boo! Hiss!) and his wicked minions in various parts of deepest, darkest (and sometimes coldest) Mother Russia.

After being dropped off in Red Square, you must guide Strider across platforms

destroying KGB agents with your trusty sword (which moves so fast it's just a blur) before they fire at you. As well as moving left-to-right, you also have the ability to jump straight up, leap left-right (doing a rather gymnastic somersault in mid-air), crouch and slide (which looks a lot like an American baseball player sliding for a base). Using these moves you have to jump chasms and leap from platform to platform, destroying the guards and taking out any ground-based or flying installations that happen to get in your way.



■ Now you can stay out of the firing line to let the drone do the work.

RATINGS EXPLAINED

Mid- and end-of-level guardians make an appearance, and discovering how to polish them off will pose you a couple of problems. You could try to make life easier by picking up a couple of extra weapons: such as a drone, carried onto the screen by an airborne alien who releases it if you destroy him. This drone then circles round you and fires boomerang-like shots that can be used to take out hard-to-reach baddies.

The drone will also run along a platform occasionally, clearing a path for you. Other extra weapons include an extended sword, which gives you a limited number of huge, far-reaching swipes.

Make it to the end of the stage and defeat the end-of-level porky big 'ard monster, and you're transported to the icy wastes of Siberia for the next round where you'll have to fight off blood-thirsty dogs and the occasional mechanical gorilla. In the second and third rounds (for the third round, you're in a jungle in the southern lowlands, which are infested with boomerang-lobbing nasties) the action is pretty much the same: leap around the platforms, select the correct routes to take and destroy the end-of-level guardian.

Should you manage all this without losing all three lives (for each life you can take three hits, but any hit causes the removal of any extra weapons previously collected), and complete each stage of every level within the time limit (well, you didn't think things were going to be easy, did you?) it's back to Moscow to face the Grand Master of the Red Army.

GRAPHICS AND SOUND

One of the main attractions of a coin-op is its graphics, and, obviously, home users want graphics as close to the original as possible. Thankfully, *Strider* comes very close. Not only does it retain the impressive coin-op background graphics and sprites, but the smooth and fast animation remains too.

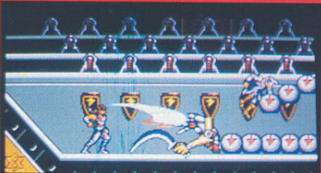
Sound is also good: the standard coin-op jingles are fine and effects throughout are satisfying, although the digitised speech is not the best ever heard.

JUDGEMENT

This is good stuff. Capcom did the biz with the original and USG have done the biz with the conversion, producing an enjoyable,



■ The athletic Strider pulls off an excellent back-flip to get to the pod. But will it provide a drone or an extra-long sword?



■ This time it's a sword, which is bound to be jolly handy for dealing with those hard-to-kill end-of-level guardians.



■ Stage Three is set in the snowy wastes of Siberia, and the mid-level guardians are in the form of mechanical animals!



■ These robots should learn never to turn their backs on a mean sword-wielding dude like you! Things are looking bad for them.

playable, addictive and exciting game. Arcade fans who like their games spiced with plenty of action and rushing around are certainly going to enjoy this. It's no great mental exercise, but the immense playability is guaranteed to bring a smile to the face of every arcade action fan. 'Red Andy' Smith

GRAPHICS

Good graphics are an important part of any game: if the power is there, it should be used to the full. Both still and moving graphics come under scrutiny in this rating, but remember, graphics alone do not a game make...

SOUND

With stereo capabilities the last thing you want to hear are Spectrumsque beeps, right? Title tunes and effects all add atmosphere to a game and good sound can greatly increase your enjoyment.

INTELLECT

How much real thought do you have to put in to play the game? Just because a game's mindless doesn't mean it's bad, but a game with a high Intellect rating says immediately you'll need to think to gain maximum enjoyment.

ADDICTION

How easy is a game to pick up and play? How much sheer fun will you get from it? Will you keep coming back? Important questions, answered by the Addiction rating.

OVERALL

A percentage mark that takes into account all the ratings, plus added extras like price, packaging, documentation...

THE TEAM

Andy Smith, left, who was with ACE right from Issue One, is a 'twelve-hours-a-day' games fan and one of life's natural gamers. He loves any type of game, be it a shoot-em-up, strategy game, arcade adventure... Bob Wade, right, started reviewing with Personal Computer Games and has worked for Zzap!64, Amstrad Action and ACE. There's no-one in the business with a better idea of what makes a game.



GRAPHICS	8
SOUND	8
INTELLECT	2
ADDICTION	8

OVERALL 91%

ACCOLADE £24.95 ■ Mouse

JACK NICKLAUS' GOLF



■ The first hole of Jack's Greatest 18 is introduced by the world-famous golfer himself.



■ The overhead view shows a problem: a lake lying between the tee and the green.



■ The drive is successfully played and sits nicely on the fairway.



■ At the new ball position it's 214 yards to the pin, which calls for a 4 wood to be employed.



■ The shot was straight, but short; however, a pitching wedge will get you on the green.

GRAPHICS	5
SOUND	2
INTELLECT	5
ADDICTION	6
OVERALL 78%	

A golfing legend, winner of more major championships than anyone else, much demanded course designer and all-American hero: the Golden Bear. A golf game can't come with a much better endorsement than Jack, but does it live up to his reputation?

Three courses are available: Castle Pines in Colorado, Desert Mountain in Arizona and Jack's Greatest 18. The Greatest 18 are culled from some of the most famous courses in the world, such as St Andrews, Augusta, Pebble Beach and Royal Lytham.

One to four players can take part, any or all of whom can be computer controlled. There's a choice of several opponents of varying ability, including Jack himself, who is of course incredibly good. There is also a choice of game type: 'stroke play' or 'skins.' In skins the players play for prize money on each hole, the prizes increasing as they go along. Stroke play is the usual score-per-stroke, with the overall score plus or minus par kind of system.

Before playing each hole you are given an overhead view of it, which can be called up again while playing. You also get Jack's words of wisdom on the hole. Then it's off to the tee, where the view is from behind the player, looking towards the green and the pin.

The club is selected from a driver, two woods, eight irons, two wedges and a putter. Once the club is chosen and the shot aimed,

the tricky part of swinging the club has to be done. This is a matter of timing mouse clicks to initiate the swing, to stop the power bar going upwards and then to stop it going down (for the accuracy). Mistiming clicks will result on the upswing in shots going long or short and on the downswing in the ball hooking or slicing.

The computer players do everything automatically: and slowly too. A lot can be learnt from watching them, particularly if you have a similar shot to play. There are various factors affecting a shot - windspeed and direction, sand, slopes and rough. On the putting surface there are only breaks to cope with, but the aiming of putts is very tricky.

If you are not happy with your performance you can always go off to the driving range and the practice green, or even practice on a few individual holes.

GRAPHICS AND SOUND

The courses are picturesque, with trees, bunkers and lakes making up some lovely views. The only problem is the terribly slow speed at which the graphics are drawn. The view is redrawn for every shot so there is a lot of hanging about waiting for it.

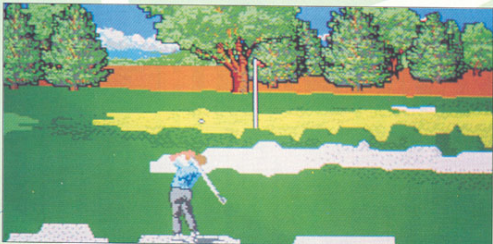
The sound is limited but what is there is good: some excellent sampled speech at the beginning and realistic hitting and bouncing noises during play.

JUDGEMENT

The slow speed of play is annoying but not terminally so: just chill out, relax and take your time playing. The three courses are challenging and dangerous and the opponents provide good competition. It's a game you will be playing for years to come; as long as the old back injury doesn't flare up again... **Bob Wade**



■ A dangerous tee shot awaits because of the overhanging trees on the right. Why not aim left and slice the ball back towards the pin?



■ A good chip from the edge of a well-protected green gives you a chance to hole that putt for another par.

SYSTEM 3 £19.95 ■ Joystick

DOMINATOR

It's comforting to know that some things will never change: the Queen's speech on Christmas Day, Amstrad returning record profits for some quarter or other and Earth being attacked by hordes of nasty, slimy aliens.

No-one's yet produced a game based on the first two, so this must be a game based on the latter. The aliens in question are a touch nastier and slimmer than the average two-headed, green-skinned jobs though, because they would actually like to eat Earth and its inhabitants! What's needed is someone to jump into a spacecraft

and fly right into the mouth of the boss alien, to blast away at its vital organs. Fancy the job?

In case you hadn't guessed, it's a multi-stage, horizontally and vertically scrolling shoot-em-up (scrolls vertically for the first stage, horizontally for the second and so on). The idea is to survive each level by shooting at and destroying the waves of flying aliens (and ground installations later on) and avoiding crashing into the host monster's insides. Survive to the end of the level and you have to take on a guardian before moving to the next stage.

As you'd expect, there are

extra weapons to collect including rear guns and a time-based auto-fire facility, plus extra lives and smart bombs. The weapons are collected by flying over weapon icons that appear periodically. Fortunately, any extra weapons you do collect are carried from stage to stage, but if you lose one of four lives, you lose the weapons.

GRAPHICS AND SOUND

The backgrounds are well drawn and menacing, but the sprites are dull and uninspired. The collision detection is ever so slightly off, and on more than one occasion you'll be

shouting "That was nowhere near me!" As for sound: well, it's just as bad. The title music is fine but the effects are mediocre and surprisingly slow. Destroy a wave of aliens then stop firing, and for a moment you will still hear shooting. *Dominator* will not be remembered for graphics and sound.

JUDGEMENT

Some would argue whether there's room for yet another shoot-em-up in the marketplace anyway, and others would argue that there's always room for a game that offers a good blast, especially if it has new features.

What there isn't room for is a game with no new features, that doesn't offer a good blast and has limited lasting interest. *Dominator* certainly qualifies on the last three. *Andy Smith*

GRAPHICS	4
SOUND	2
INTELLECT	1
ADDICTION	3
OVERALL	28%



■ Sneaking through the first stage while trying to avoid being grabbed by those large 'arms' that shoot out from the sides.



■ Make it to the end of the stage and there's the end-of-level guardian to be destroyed before you can progress any further.

LINEL £19.95 ■ Joystick

SKATE OF THE ART

Twenty stages of viewed-side-on skateboarding action. Controls are limited: scoot (for speed), lean back, lean forward and flip are the ones you'll use most as you move left-right across the screen at great speed, jumping obstacles and shooting up and down ramps.

Though there are twenty of them, the levels are all short and it's simply a question of remembering which moves come in which order and hitting the fire button at just the right moment to get through them. Should you misjudge a jump, however, you go sprawling

across the road and have to restart the level with one of your initial five lives gone. Make it through the stage and you are rewarded with a 'flip' bonus, decided by how many jumps you did, plus a time bonus, decided by how quickly you finished.



■ Flipping in the Underground.

Skate of the Art, so far from being state of the art, is basic stuff indeed. Although it looks all right, it is simple in design and quite frustrating in gameplay. Even hardened 'boarders out there will find their interest evaporating quickly with this one. *Andy Smith*

GRAPHICS 6 / SOUND 5 / INTELLECT 2 / ADDICTION 3 / OVERALL 38%

DIGITAL INTEGRATION £24.95 ■ Keyboard and Mouse or Joystick

F-16 COMBAT PILOT



■ Flying low and fast in a dogfight mission. There's an enemy in range and targeted so prepare to let loose with one of those AMRAAM missiles, then get out of there quickly...

If you didn't want to be a fireman when you grew up, chances are you wanted to be a jet fighter pilot. And for all but a very few of us, a combat flight sim is the closest we'll come to realising our ambitions.

DI's offering, based on the popular General Dynamics' F-16C, has Mirrorsoft's excellent Falcon – based on the same plane – to contend with, so the new game will have to be good to compete.

For a start, there are four basic games: training (always a good place to start), separate missions (five in all), a campaign game and a dogfight option.

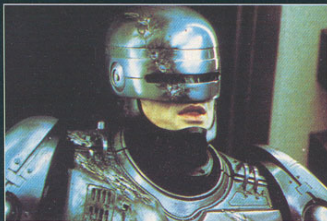
Training allows you to experiment with the plane, practice landings and even gain familiarity with the weapons. Once confident, try the separate missions which you need to complete in order to be able to take part in the campaign game. These missions include a

OCEAN £24.99 ■ Joystick

ROBOCOP

Unlike most film tie-ins, the computer versions of Robocop were developed at the same time as the Data East coin-op, so Ocean had a choice: to either make a game purely based on the film (something like Platoon) or to make a straight-forward conversion of the coin-op. In the end, the game has wound up closer to the arcade machine rather than as a pure, original interpretation of the film.

The game is set in the Detroit of the future, where the police department is being run by a corrupt private company called OCP.



The company has big plans to robotise the police network, but a small setback with the prototype machine (ED 209) means they have to re-think their plans, eventually coming up with the idea of a half-human, half-robot cyborg.

All they need is a volunteer body donor. A young cop called Murphy just happens to fit the bill after being badly shot up in a vicious attack. OCP robotises Murphy and puts him on the streets without completely erasing his memory, and he soon goes rogue and sets about hunting down the gang who nailed him.

It's a multi-stage 'strolling' shoot-em-up, with the player controlling Murphy as he wanders about his business of upholding the law. Baddies appear at first-floor windows and on the street and the general idea is to either shoot them or clock 'em on the jaw with a titanium-packed punch.

They shoot back, every hit they score reducing your energy until it runs out: game over time. Fortunately there are extra fire-power symbols and extra energy that can be collected by smashing

scramble scenario, in which the idea is get airborne ASAP and down some aggressive enemy MIGs, and an air-to-ground one in which you have to tackle an enemy tank battalion. Other scenarios include reconnaissance, runway bombing and bombing missions deep in enemy territory.

Complete every mission and you're allowed to join one of eight squadrons fighting a campaign game, in which the plan is to invade the country against an offending enemy force. You decide the missions and where to hit the enemy in order to hurt him most, and to help in the fight you can send up to four other aircraft on separate missions against other targets. Wipe out the enemy force and you'll be promoted to another squadron where things begin to get somewhat tougher.

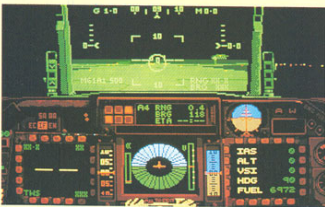
The only way to get to the campaign game, though, is to complete each mission and save the results to disk (creating a

pilot's log). If you've had enough of the solo stuff, connect up a couple of machines with a modem cable

and take on a human opponent in a gripping dogfight that will really keep you biting those fingernails.



■ Even with electronic ground control assistance, landing's no picnic.



■ Taxing onto the runway ready to take off for a night mission.



■ Check the mission and select your weapons accordingly...

GRAPHICS AND SOUND

Everything is viewed from within the cockpit – never from a position outside the cockpit, so you don't see an external view of the plane – in fact, colourful 3D with options to let you see what's happening behind and to either side. Though the instrument panel is laid out in a standard fashion you are able to switch the position of some of the instruments to suit, which is handy. Sound is great, and though most of it's limited to the drone of the engines, it is well done.

JUDGEMENT

There's plenty of action to suit the combat-hungry and the attention to detail will please and delight the flight purists. Once you get into the campaign game or take on a human you'll find yourself playing for hours at a stretch and coming back to it time and time again. As DI keep proving, when it comes to simulations – especially ones involving aircraft – they're very hard to beat. **Andy Smith**

GRAPHICS	8
SOUND	5
INTELLECT	5
ADDITION	8

OVERALL 94%



■ Robocop patrols the streets of downtown Detroit, shooting punks he meets on the streets and who fire from first floor windows.

through marked crates. Collect the symbol and your gun suddenly has things like three-way firing or super-big shots. Sadly, the extra weapons only last for a set number of shots; use them sparingly.

Reach the end of each stage and there's an end-of-level guardian to be destroyed before progressing to a bonus stage where you can practice your shooting or have a bash at putting a photofit together. For each level

the object remains, effectively the same, to work your way through the stage and destroy the end guardian. All that really changes is the setting: in the junkyard, inside the drugs factory and so on.

GRAPHICS AND SOUND

The title and in-game tunes are all right but not brilliant, and the same can be said for the spot effects and the occasional burst of digitised speech. The back-

ground graphics and sprites are good and the whole thing is smoothly animated. Just about the standards expected from a coin-op inspired game.

JUDGEMENT

It's a nicely put together platform shoot-em-up which fans of the film will be well pleased with. As a game in its own right it stands up, but it's not terrific and you'll complete it sooner rather than later.

From then on, the only real reason to keep playing lies in constant attempts at improving your score. **Andy 'Half-Human' Smith**

GRAPHICS	8
SOUND	7
INTELLECT	2
ADDITION	7

OVERALL 73%



■ OCP's first attempt at a robot cop (ED 209) is the first end-of-level guardian, and a mean one too! So shoot him in the head!

RELINE £24.99 ■ Mouse and Joystick

OIL IMPERIUM

A one-to-four player money-making game based on the glamorous life of an oil company tycoon where time is money.

Playing solo, the first thing to do is decide which company to head and then think about how to spend the juicy five million dollars you're given at the start of the game. Buy a yacht? Pay your Poll Tax? But five 'very, very big ones' don't set you too far. In fact, they just about buy you permission to drill in one of the eight available regions of the world. Fortunately you'll have enough change to set up a derrick and a storage tank.

By this time it'll probably be the end of the month (game time) and as the game runs in monthly turns, that means the other companies get to make their moves.

Now you're in business. The field is producing and it's time to sell some of that black gold and turn it into greenbacks. The price of the oil depends on supply and demand and can range from about \$3 per barrel to over \$20. But selling isn't always easy, you have to get it to market by entering one of the arcade sub-games, in which you have to build a pipeline from a before the computer builds one

from c-d. Complete it, and the dosh starts rolling in, allowing you to think about setting up new rigs and more storage tanks. Then it's a case of increasing your profits and becoming rich.

This is all well and good when things are going smoothly, but accidents happen and occasionally you'll be informed that either your storage tanks have blown up or some oilfield is on fire. For the latter case you can send in fire-fighters — there's no guarantee they'll put it out — or play another arcade sub-game where you run around planting explosives to seal the burning wells. And if you want to get nasty you can hire saboteurs to do some evil deeds aimed at your



■ Murray: It's a gusher! All you need to do now is sell the stuff.

competitors...or hire investigators to protect yourself.

GRAPHICS AND SOUND

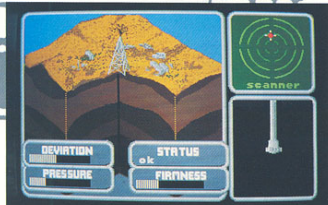
Sound effects are limited but are OK. As are the frequent, but jolly, tunes. The graphics are fine, everything is well drawn and the animation in the subgames is satisfactory. It's not a visually or aurally stunning game, but then it's not designed to be.

JUDGEMENT

Initially, Oil Imperium is good fun. The computer players are tough but not as devious as real human players and if you play with a couple of friends you'll have a great

time. There are several games to play — different victory conditions but even so it soon becomes boring and after a couple of hard sessions you'll find the gameplay very repetitive. Nicely done and highly enjoyable in the short-term, but lacks the detail to keep your interest up. **Andy Smith**

GRAPHICS	7
SOUND	5
INTELLECT	5
ADDICTION	7
OVERALL	66%



■ Keep the red dot in the centre to avoid smashing the drill head.

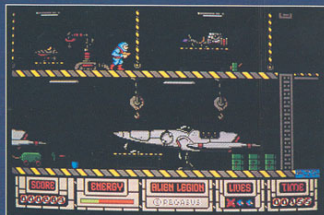
GAINSTAR £24.95 ■ Joystick or Keyboard

ALIEN LEGION

Eek! Guess what? Aliens have invaded and only you can save the world from misery and damnation. In the guise of Captain Cosmo, you must work your way through this horizontally-scrolling platform cum shoot-em-up blasting away at the little alien baddies and avoiding their shots. Moving around is mostly left-right with short and long

jumps to enable you to hop between platforms or across gaps. Every hit the aliens make reduces your energy bar, which can be topped up by grabbing potions.

Not a bad game, it looks and sounds all right and it'll take a while to work through four levels; but it's simple and adds nothing new to this genre of game. **Andy Smith**



■ Run along the platforms, shoot the aliens, collect the energy potions: you know perfectly well what the drill is by now...

GRAPHICS 5 / SOUND 5 / INTELLECT 2 / ADDICTION 6 / OVERALL 52%

Roll up! Roll up... for yet another game set inside the Big Top! Our eponymous hero fiendish Freddy may be a wizz in the ring, but he's no financial magician, and now the fastest bully-boys from the bank want the \$10,000 they lent him back, and they want it back by tonight. There's only one thing poor Freddy can do: make the money by taking part in six circus events, to earn dollars rather than points when he is judged at the end of the event.

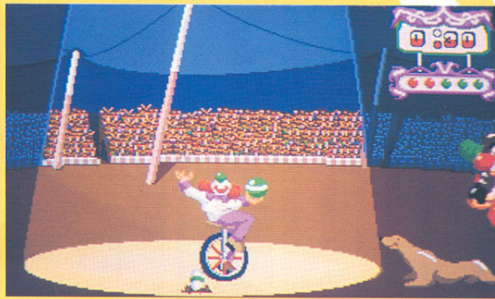
Event Number One is High diving. Climb to the first board, the lowest, jump off and go into a tuck until a prompt tells you what stunt



■ Knife throwing: pop the balloons before the timer runs out and try not to stick too many in the spinning girl...

to perform (sitting in the Lotus position, standing like King Tut and so on) on the way down. Then you must press fire and move the joystick to the correct position to perform the stunt, before returning to the tuck and wiggling the joystick in an attempt to stay on target to enter the pool. For each height of board you perform successfully, not only do you climb to the next board, but the pool also becomes smaller: right down to cup size.

Event Two: unicycle juggling. Ride left-right and catch and juggle the objects thrown by your seal assistant. Occasionally a rival clown will lob bombs and rockets at you which have to be caught and lobbed off-screen before they



■ Unicycle juggling: catch the bombs and rockets before they land and explode.

FIENDISH FREDDY'S BIG TOP OF FUN

MINDSCAPE £29.99 ■ Joystick

explode. This clown character is a nasty piece of work because he does his best to disrupt you during every event, so beware!

Event Three: trapeze. Swing from trapeze to trapeze by timing your release. There are paper hoops and flaming hoops to jump

through as well, so timing is all-important.

Event Four: Knife throwing. Fling daggers at balloons pinned to a revolving wheel: which just happens to have a girl tied to it! Pop the balloons and miss the girl and you get a fresh set of knives,



■ This fine figure of a lunatic prepares to high dive into a sponge.



■ Thankfully it's wet, so he'll have a soft landing.

a new set of balloons and a shorter time limit.

Event Five: High wire. Balance your way from one end of the rope to the other by some athletic and skillful joystick wiggling. Sixth and finally: Human Cannonball. Position the landing target (the distance depends on how much gunpowder you allow your assistant to load before that awful clown comes and messes things up), enter the cannon then launch yourself when the cannon is at the right (hopefully) angle. And there you have it. Fail to earn the approval of the judges and the ten grand, and it's curtains for the circus.

GRAPHICS AND SOUND

Sound first: the jolly circus-like tunes will really start to get on your nerves after a while, which is a shame because the effects that are there are good; there's just too few of them. The graphics are great, the animation is lovely, the characters have a humorous cartoon quality and the overall look of the game is impressive.

JUDGEMENT

What's not so impressive is the gameplay. Each event is simple to play and the tedious amount of disk swapping (three disks total make up the game) gets on your nerves sooner rather than later. FF's BTOF ends up being another cobbled together collection of slightly better than average games which look loads better than they actually play, and once you've seen all the various screens you'll tire of it quickly. **Andy Smith**

GRAPHICS	8
SOUND	6
INTELLECT	3
ADDICTION	6

OVERALL 59%

VIRGIN MASTERTRONIC £19.99 ■ Joystick or Keyboard

GEMINI WING

grounds conspire to make the game look good. Sound is good too, with arcade jingles throughout and occasional spot effects.

JUDGEMENT

Yet another vertically-scrolling shoot-em-up. All the bits are there – extra weapons, guardians and so on – but there's little that's all new (the trailing Gunballs are nice but not revolutionary). It's about as difficult as you'd expect from a conversion (with the classic unreasonably difficult Stage Three) but the simultaneous two-player option increases the fun for a while.

Andy "Flash Gordon" Smith

GRAPHICS	8
SOUND	8
INTELLECT	1
ADDICTION	7

OVERALL 68%



■ Mutant millipedes and other creepy crawly nasties make dive bomb attempts as you make your steady way through Stage One.

The *SonDay Spirit* newspaper has a good deal to answer for: not only are its endless 'Mutant Martians Turned My Son Roger Into A Hatstand' stories of a, shall we say, dubious nature, but now it's managed to upset the rest of the Universe with a particularly insidious example of the dubious art of hack journalism.

So, what do you when you're an alien with a grudge? You invade Earth and attempt to destroy it, naturally. Which is just what the rest of the sentient universe has decided to do. But guess what?

They hadn't figured on you being a pilot in the crack *Gemini Wing* space fighter squad.

Thus the scenario is set for this vertically-scrolling shoot-em-up involving one or two players. Duck, dive, bob and weave your way through stage after stage of invading aliens, dealing death to anything that happens to get in the way of your forward-firing lasers. Quite apart from the flying nasties, there are ground-based worm-like aliens that join in the hail of fire, so get in quick to destroy them before they obliterate you.

To make life a little easier you can pick up the occasional extra piece of fire-power called a Gunball, which some aliens drop when they're destroyed. Fly over these to collect them, after which they trail behind your craft until used. In a particularly tight spot, hold down the fire button and a Gunball is activated, functioning rather like a smart bomb. The effects, however, vary: for example, you have the Spirling Circle of Death which explodes and takes out any aliens it hits as the discs fly away from your ship: then there's the awesome Windscreen Wiper of Death (a lovely, lovely name) which shoots out from both sides of your ship and destroys any aliens that get in its way as it cuts a swathe up the screen.

At the end of each stage there is an end-of-level guardian to dispose of before starting out on the next, more difficult, level. Just like its coin-op parent, *Gemini Wing* offers the player the chance to continue the game when all lives are used up, although only three restarts are allowed.

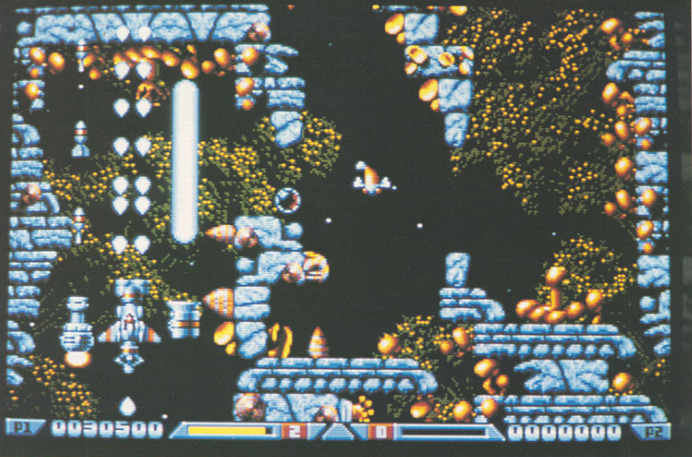
GRAPHICS AND SOUND

Colourful sprites that are smoothly animated and well-drawn back-



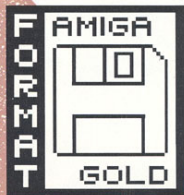
■ The balloon-blowing end-of-level walrus or turtle type thingy.





MIRRORSOFT £24.99 ■ Joystick

XENON 2



■ Catch the bubble to gain some cash and that 'Z' for a smart bomb.

There's only one thing wrong with gaining a reputation (dubious or otherwise), and that's having to live up to it.

The Bitmap Brothers certainly have a reputation to live up to: a very good one, after the high standards they set with their earlier releases *Xenon* and *Speedball*. These darlings of the press (have

you ever noticed how it's almost impossible to flick through a computer mag without seeing them in pop star pose at some bash or other?) have decided that gamers want a good ol' blast, and reckon they can deliver the goods with *Xenon 2: Megablast*.

'Megablast' is actually the name of your ship in this five



■ The first end-of-level guardian.



■ In the extra weapons shop.

stage vertically-scrolling shoot-em-up where it's just you against the Xenites. You remember the Xenites, don't you? Well they remember you, from the original *Xenon* game, and they haven't forgiven you either: which is why they've planted five time bombs throughout history that need destroying. And yup, you're just the person for the job.

Your journey through the game follows the path of evolution with the aliens for each stage reflecting the period: from simple creatures dating back to prehistoric times up to and including metallic nasties from future space. As you would expect, almost everything is aggressive so it's best to blast everything that moves and anything that doesn't, too. Initially you're armed with a front-firing gun, but extra weapons can be collected by shooting and collecting power-up symbols that occasionally appear on screen. By far the best method though is to collect the small bubbles that appear on screen after certain aliens or waves of aliens have been destroyed. Why? Because these bubbles are actually money that can be spent in the weapons shops that lie halfway through and at the end of each level.

There's an impressive array of weapons available, from things like side-shot and rear-firing cannon to missile launchers and lasers. And, as you might expect, the more destructive the weapon, the more it costs: so keep going after those cash bubbles!

And those extra weapons are going to come in very handy once you come across the end-land,



■ Side shots are needed here!



■ Destroy this chap and the pod on top spews out masses of aliens.



■ Buy Nashwan power and you get 10 seconds of total destructive power. Shame it's only 10 seconds!

later in the game, mid-too) of level guardians. But beware: you may find you've just splashed out on a porky rear cannon to find the next level crawling with aliens that cling to the sides of the scenery, so life can seem a little unfair at times.

There are a couple of things going for you, though. Every time you lose a life you restart with all the extra weapons you'd collected and there are a couple of 'continue game' options too. And to make a nice change, the scenery doesn't kill you no matter how often you bash into it.

GRAPHICS AND SOUND

Well, with the intro and in-game music written by Bomb The Bass, it should be, and is, good. The effects are fine too, though not as impressive. As you must have

GRAPHICS	9
SOUND	9
INTELLECT	3
ADDICTION	9
OVERALL	93%



■ Approaching a meeting with the second end-of-level guardian.

seen from the demo of the game on this month's Coverdisk, the graphics are terrific. Not only are they well-drawn and colourful, but everything in the game moves quickly and surprisingly smoothly. A winner in the graphics and sound departments.

JUDGEMENT

The age-old problem: it's just another shoot-em-up, some would say, and there are plenty of them around already. So what makes

this stand out? The gameplay. It's fast, furious, addictive, tough, playable and it sounds and looks fantastic. *Xenon 2* has everything a shoot-em-up needs and more besides, making it arguably the best of its type to appear to date and a definite 'must purchase' for anyone who doesn't mind wasting the odd hour or two enjoying some mindless blasting. A word of advice though, make sure your joystick has very rapid auto fire: life can be hell otherwise. **Andy Smith**



■ Another guardian, this time with a very dangerous extending claw!

PSS £24.99 ■ Mouse or Keyboard

WATERLOO



To wargaming fans, the name Dr Peter Turcan may, as yet, be unfamiliar. But ST and PC fans have experienced Peter's earlier work *Borodino*, a wargame based on the conflict between Napoleon and the Russian Prince Kutusov. Now Amiga owners have the chance to re-fight one of Napoleon's most famous battles in this one or two player simulation.

Most wargames give the player an unrealistic view of the battlefield: failing in the attempt to recreate history because they invariably allow the player to see things that the historic commanders were unable to. *Waterloo*, however, is the closest a wargame has come to sticking a player in the commander's boots.

You view the game through the eyes of either Napoleon or Wellington, and issue orders to your subordinates – who in turn issue orders to their subordinates – based on what you see from your position on the battlefield and messages received from runners. To familiarise yourself with the game system and the battlefield you can view the action through the eyes of other commanders on the field, or from major landmarks.

The orders you're able to issue vary in complexity from vague commands like: 'Lobau, give support to Reille' (leaving the computer to decide how Lobau can best give his support to Reille) to things like: 'Lobau, form a defence line from the east flank to Fichermont linking with D'Erlon'.

Once you've decided which orders to issue (eight per turn, each turn representing fifteen minutes of real time, the battle lasting from 11.30 am until 9.30 pm), the orders are sent by messenger to their destination. Obviously, the further away this is, the longer it's going to take for the orders to get through (if they do at all, because riders are just as prone to getting themselves killed as anyone else) so things can become very confusing: just as the battles were.



View: It looks like the sandpit, with a light infantry regiment of Alten's division in line formation. The range is about 1/2 mile south.

■ Looking south from Wellington's headquarters. Time to issue some orders.

GRAPHICS AND SOUND

Forget sound, it's not important. The 3D display however is great. It takes a short while for the screen to update, but that's survivable. A short animated sequence of the cannons firing, which is optional, is a nice touch, but for the majority of the time you're looking at blocks representing the units.

JUDGEMENT

If you're looking for a wargame that's fast, simple and easy to play then look elsewhere: but if you're looking for a wargame that provides real challenge, will keep you playing for hours on end and which takes time to play well, then this is for you. The game system is easy to get to grips with but it's not for your casual browser.

Andy Smith

GRAPHICS	7
SOUND	N/A
INTELLECT	8
ADDICTION	8

OVERALL 92%



Mail: Orange, an order has arrived from Wellington. Order Perponcher to defend La-Haie.

key

■ Of course, by the time the orders get there it may be far too late...



■ The stick-men graphics may not be brilliant, but they do the job.

HEWSON £24.99 ■ Joystick and Spacebar

ASTAROTH

In a series of catacombs, deep below ground, Astaroth, the Angel of Death, rules over a fetid underworld domain. Surrounded by the vile minions she has summoned up to protect her, she is free to satisfy her evil will.

No-one has dared to face this she-devil. Until now. A single, lone man, Ozymandias, has decided to enter Astaroth's forbidding lair to defeat the demones.

The catacombs are represented by a series of interconnecting flick-screens, which are entered via left and right, top and bottom. Ozymandias walks and can jump, but has no immediate defences save for ducking from flying bats and harpies which inhabit the carved tunnels. Only forward planning and quick reactions can save him from the variety of beasts which inhabit this world: contact with Astaroth's underlings serves only to rid Ozymandias of his mind powers, shown by a shrivelling brain icon. As each brain disappears completely, so a life is lost. Five lives later, Astaroth has won.

As Ozzy makes his way through the labyrinth, he can collect up to nine mind powers which are stored in bell jars in different locations within the catacombs. The powers confer upon Ozymandias different abilities, such as levitation (to float up to higher floors); pyrokinetics (creates fireballs); night vision (enables him to see in those rooms which are in darkness); and so on. Specific mind powers are needed to defeat Astaroth's three Guardians – the Sphinx, the three-headed Hydra and Marilith Demon – and only once all nine have been collected can Ozzy attempt to face the Angel of Death in combat.



■ (Above) Contact with the green bell jar, above, provides Ozymandias with the power of levitation: the results of which are shown in the picture (Right).

GRAPHICS AND SOUND

Pete Lyon's morose graphics are undoubtedly very good, even though they have been unashamedly ripped off from HR Giger's Necronomicon designs. Ignoring artistic plagiarism, however, it must be said that the phallic and vaginal symbolism is far from tastefully done – especially since it plays no part in the game



■ Now, what does that pillar on the left look like? I ask you! The symbolism is quite obvious...

and has obviously been included in an effort to increase sales through sensationalism. The accompanying soundtrack is pleasant enough, but is too up-beat to serve as an atmospheric accompaniment to the task at hand.

JUDGEMENT

The Amiga isn't being pushed very hard, technically: since *Astaroth* lacks any scrolling, the sprites are pretty small and the animation minimal. However, while the CPU sits there twiddling its electronic digits, the game still manages to provide poor collision detection and poor, slug-like movement for the main character. Not impressive.

This lack of speed makes avoiding the many obstacles initially tricky and ultimately infuriating, while the simple search 'n' collect gameplay is only marginally spiced up by the addition of progressive mind powers. *Astaroth* is a jaded old game concept tarted up with graphics of a sensationalist nature to add some much-needed interest. Bit of a sheep in wolf's clothing, really.

Steve Jarratt

GRAPHICS	7
SOUND	5
INTELLECT	5
ADDICTION	4
OVERALL	41%

SHOGUN

Come to terms with the strange ways of a new culture, making your way to the very top in Infocom/Activision's feudal Japan

Ayyyee! Toranaga sama! Yes, time to put on your favourite silk kimono, warm up the saki, and boot up Infocom's *Shogun*.

First the novel, then the TV 'mini series', now the computer game. Hardened hack'n'slashers may be disappointed to learn that the game isn't a run-o'-the-mill karate game and doesn't even offer the chance to slaughter hundreds of Ninja (well, maybe one or two). It is the adventure game of the best-selling novel and it sticks pretty much to the original format.

In the year 1600, European rivalry is ferocious and based upon religious differences. The Catholic nations of Portugal and Spain have spread their spheres of political and religious influence to the Far East. Their bitter rivals, the 'heretic' English and Dutch traders, are trying to get in on the act. The arrival of the Dutch ship 'Erasmus' piloted by Englishman John Blackthorne brings an interesting situation to the tense balance in Japan where the ruling samurai



■ You've got them dancing feet.



■ Ooh-err! Rampant about-to-be-goings-on in the bathtub.



■ Mugshot of Rodrigues, the Portuguese pilot. And rather an ugly mug he is too.



■ On shaky foundations: earthquakes causing severe problems.

lords are vying for individual power. Quite intriguing.

The basic aim of the game is simply to survive this strange culture, earn respect and become a high-ranking Samurai. Etiquette is king: forget to bow and it's as good as 'bye-bye head'! *Shogun* hardly classes as a real adventure game in the traditional sense, but more like living parts of the life of John Blackthorne via the individual scenarios which make up the game. Producing *Shogun* as many mini scenarios does cut down the enjoyment somewhat because you're stifled in choice of action and movement. For a few scenarios, movement is limited to one and only one area in which you have to make the right decisions to get the full points. Very restrictive.

As for graphics, the pictures are adequate, not great. Some do seem to convey the image of Japan as they are intended to do 'in the exquisite style of Japanese court painters...'. There does seem, however, a great difference in quality of the graphics: some would hardly be adequate on a C64. The graphics are few and far between, though, which does offer a more digestible break-up of the text so that it doesn't really distract.

The amount of puzzles is negligible, yet the toughness of the game is high due to the day-to-day problems you face in this different culture. The game even seems to get easier as you progress further, which again is unusual. The main problem created by the mini scenarios is that they are linear: you must get past one to move on to the next, and can't try something

else as you would do in a conventional adventure.

The game, though, has plenty of atmosphere and feel to it, and the textual descriptions are up to

the usual high Infocom standard. Anyone who has seen the TV programme or read the book will enjoy this different approach, although without any prior knowledge of the storyline you could have difficulty getting the gist of what's going on. The scenarios do jump around, so it's easy to lose yourself on what's going on in the outside world. I still can't see the point in some characters who are mentioned and then seemingly forgotten about.

In my opinion, *Shogun* is the first real 'interactive fiction' work by Infocom. It is an enjoyable read and play, but it is more of an experience in style than a really good adventure. There aren't many games in which you get urinated upon! As it stands it is worth a go, but for myself it's a question of 'Sayonara Anjin-San!' ■

GRAPHICS	7
SOUND	4
INTELLECT	7
ADDICTION	7
OVERALL	76%

ZORK ZERO

Infocom/Activision take a step back in time to the days before the *Zork* series.

There are *Zorks* and there are *Zorks*, but now there is the latest *Zork* which is the first *Zork*: *Zork Zero*. Confused? Well, I certainly was. After the famous *Zork* trilogy came the innovative *Beyond Zork*, and now the game which acts as a prequel to the originals has arrived. Bigger is certainly is: but is it any better for that?

Zork Zero begins with a prologue set over 90 years before the start of the game proper. Megaboz the Wizard kills the royal family and sets a curse on the Great Underground Empire. One of your ancestors witnesses this and it's thanks to him that you have the vital piece of information which gives you an advantage above all the other glory (and treasure) seekers. So off you tramp, collecting



■ Jester is being helpful for a change, but he still doesn't like losing to clowns like you.

the necessary objects, travelling the massive Underground empire, facing some angst-creating puzzles, playing games and facing the soon-to-be infamous Jester.

Remember the Wizard in *Zork II*? Well, the Jester must be his predecessor: he appears to give tricky puzzles and hindrances. Yet he also offers help and gives you useful items. Life is one big joke to ■

► this guy, but you'd love to punch him in the mouth when he turns you into something that would not be out of place as a really nice pair of alligator skin shoes!

On your travels through the Great Underground Empire not only do you have to deal with the Jester but also some murderous problems. These puzzles are reminiscent of the original *Zorks* and often just as tough. A nice break is the use of visual puzzles or games such as Tower of Bozbar or the Zorkian card game, Double Fanucci. These can be played as a by-the-by once they've been solved, simply for a bit of light entertainment.

The landscape in *Zork Zero* is quite huge, set in the time before the 'White House' which is the familiar starting point in the originals. In fact, many of the open ends eventually get explained by the end – an added incentive to play through to the end. The abode of the curses' original victim – Lord Dimwit Flathead the Excessive – contains everything from a massive underground lake, a 400 storey office and a closet large enough to sleep an army.



■ Scouring the Encyclopedia Frobozzica: I wonder why the Jester didn't like his portrait?



■ Flattened slime monster and sundry other squished creatures. Is this really art?

Excessive indeed, making the Underground Empire finally appear to be 'Great'.

Graphics are minimized in this particular Infocom 'graphic' game, limited to the occasional graphic depiction of the games, the portrait and pictorial descriptions in the Encyclopedia Frobozzica. Not a full-blown graphic adventure, the text is

enhanced by only a pretty border, so it retains the old feel of the older *Zorks*. However, it features the same rich, flowing text found in any classic Infocom adventure, and the graphics do actually enhance the game without spoiling the flow.

Zork Zero holds your attention, but never really pulls you in completely. Atmospherically, the old *Zork* is there, but seemingly dated: where are the other characters? Just a few scattered beings are present, who are solely an extension of the puzzle without trace of intelligence. This isn't a major flaw, as the game returns with a fantastic parser, on-screen mapping, and the incredibly useful mouse-controlled movement compass. It's so much friendlier than other Infocom games, and so damn good to look at, even without pictures. ■

GRAPHICS	8
SOUND	9
INTELECT	8
ADDICTION	9
OVERALL	92%

graphic adventure game is enjoyable, although it is slow in places with frequent disk loads. Every action causes the green light and 'dwhir' to occur, which is just about acceptable because you'll be busy scouring the windows for your next choice of action. Quick movements around the landscape are a problem: even more so if some object is moving or some sound effect is in action.

The sound effects are very well sampled and clear but, as usual, there is never enough. To make up for this I have this unexplainable



■ A warning for people who play on railway lines.

urge to smash every window and mirror in the game or wait around in the train station for the unforgettable 'Aw! Abooooooaaard'

Graphically the game is good – colourful, concise and clear – anything too extreme could make the game unplayable with the mouse control. In fact everything within the graphic window can be manipulated, obviously with varying results. Mobsters, cacti and clear stumps all have the same intelligence and are treated the same, but it simplifies the game to such an extent that the computer does the work.

Deja Vu II isn't mind warping in the typical puzzle adventure sense, but death or trouble occurs via the simplest of decisions: getting on the wrong train, walking around without your clothes, hitting passers-by. Commonsense things really, but easily overlooked in this adventure.

Altogether, *Deja Vu* is a really good and enjoyable romp. Its not a traditional tough text adventure, which will give it a wider appeal. Pretty pictures, good sound, it's easy to use, requires no typing skills and there isn't a bug-eyed monster in sight. An adventure for lazy nights – slouch back in a comfortable chair, put the mouse on your lap and get engrossed in the criminal underworld of *Deja Vu II*. ■

GRAPHICS	9
SOUND	4
INTELECT	8
ADDICTION	5
OVERALL	82%

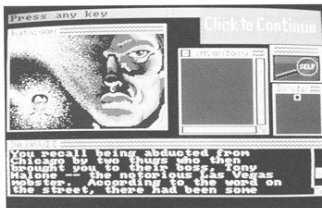
DEJA VU II

LOST IN LAS VEGAS

When the boys from the Mob decide to interview you over the head with a brick, Icon Simulation/Mindscape leave you dazed

Life sure is tough. One minute you're snacking in Chicago, the next you're abducted, grilled by a Vegas mobster and then beaten senseless. Fun times.

Your task is simple to raise a mere 100,000 in pretty green within seven days or face the consequences. We've heard it all before, but the muttonheads following you are pretty mean sovabatches and will rather pull out their own finger nails than let you survive. The odds aren't in your



■ Bringing back memories of the night before.

favour, matey. Can you sort out the real clues from the dross? If so, you may avoid the cold metal against your head and live to tell the tale back in Chicago.

The sense of *Deja Vu* hits you from the onset – very reminiscent of the original. I almost thought

they'd sent me the first by mistake. The gameplay is identical, the same mouse-controlled action which, once you get used to it, is so easy. Click on the action and double-click on the object: what could be simpler?

Wandering around this true



■ So you thought you could escape the Mob?

ARTHUR

The legend of the Sword in the Stone is brought to life by Infocom/Activision.

The land and times of King Arthur have always been a popular basis for computer adventure games, going right back to the Spectrum's heyday. And why not? They have always proved extremely popular and it seemed only a matter of time before those masters of the genre, Infocom, got involved.

Fortunately, *Arthur* isn't one of the communal everyday quests for the Holy Grail or a happy 'big lads' chat' around a Round Table. In this version of the perennial favourite, you play the part of Arthur (as the title suggests) before he is invested King or, indeed, before Excalbur is even drawn from the stone.

The aim of *Arthur*, therefore, is to claim your birthright as King of England by drawing the sword, and challenging the possible usurper, King Lot. Of course, life tends to be a touch more difficult: side quests, problem characters, troublesome creatures, swamps and riddles of the usual Infocom devious nature. All in order to gain various kingly virtues of Wisdom, Experience and Chivalry to prove to Merlin that you are ready and able to be once and future King.

Arthur isn't completely alone and helpless in his quest. Merlin

you are likely to come across. Also you have a magical torc which oh-so-handily shows a hint menu. This can come in useful if you're in a dire situation, but the temptation is always there for you to take a peek at a problem you could have solved normally in a few seconds.

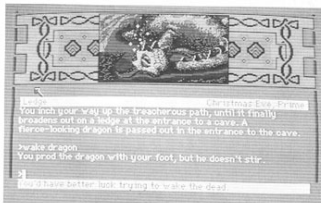
Graphically, *Arthur* is the most impressive of the Infocom 'Graphic

game rather than put pen to paper at every move.

Arthur isn't one of the toughest Infocom adventures, but then it has its moments. A few puzzles are quite brain-tickling, but these are few and aren't especially devilish. Others problems are quite tough, but most are blatantly obvious.

Atmospherically speaking, however, *Arthur* is supreme. You feel drawn deep within the story and have a deep desire to return to the computer. The final drawing of the sword will leave you elated, yet with a tinge of loss. You don't want the game to finish – and why should you? Arthur would have many more adventures ahead of him. It's a shame ours ends as Arthur becomes King.

Live the legend, become the boy Arthur and claim your birthright. I can guarantee hours of pure enjoyment. ■



■ **Some drinking partners, those dragons are! It's pathetic really...** has given him certain powers to allow him to interact with several creatures – an Owl, a Salamander, a Turtle, a Badger, and an Eel – all of which have their respective powers that are easy to apply to the situations

range' with pretty, if small, still pictures in every location. These aren't the ultimate, but they certainly enhance the game's feel: and if you're a die-hard text only fan, these can be switched off. On-screen mapping is an extra bonus if, like me, you'd prefer to play the

GRAPHICS	9
SOUND	7
INTELLECT	9
ADDICTION	7
OVERALL 89%	

GOLD RUSH

"Go West, young man!" is the cry from Sierra On-Line

"GO WEST YOUNG MAN" was the cry in this 'true to life historical simulation' and '3-D animated adventure game.' Sounds too good to be true doesn't it? So warily I set off, trekking as a famous 49er, or even a 48er as in this game...

You start the game after an irritating prologue in Brooklyn as a 'young city slicker' looking for excitement and Big Money by striking it lucky in the Gold Rush Country. Deciding how you're going to travel is one of the choices which will enhance the adventure – you can go cross-country on wagons and steamers, cross over at Panama or sail around Cape Horn. This choice is actually the highlight of the game – playing each individual expedition hoping it will be better than the previous one.

The graphics are crude, the animation is not particularly smooth and the gameplay is tediously slow, even in 'fast' mode. It is obvious, however, that the game's authors had researched the game, and planned each graphic screen, (which have to be individually loaded) which would be fine if it



■ **Life sure is lonely in the great outdoors: camping in the wild with the seasoned veterans.**

worked. The game's control interface is unhelpful and confusing at best, and the written descriptions are a nonentity. Puzzles are few and general common sense can reach through these – else you face an inglorious death. The non-player characters appear solely to be information givers, inept to do anything else except, perhaps, ignore you.

In reality, it seems a travesty to release such a slow, crude and basic game to Amiga owners who should rightly expect something better – in either graphics or game-

play. The game looks like it was created for a 12-year-old American kid studying American history – it even feels like educational software and not something to play for sheer enjoyment. Go West Yoon... No thanks, I think I'll remain a city slicker, I won't have to go through all that again. ■

GRAPHICS	4
SOUND	3
INTELLECT	2
ADDICTION	5
OVERALL 38%	



■ **Black knights always act cocky, but they seem to regret it later.**



■ **The moment of truth: are you able to draw Excalbur?**



■ **A cosy little get-together with that friendly chap, King Lot.**