

AMIGA

ISSUE 4 / NOVEMBER 1989 / £2.95

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■ In Previews: Batman on the streets of Gotham.

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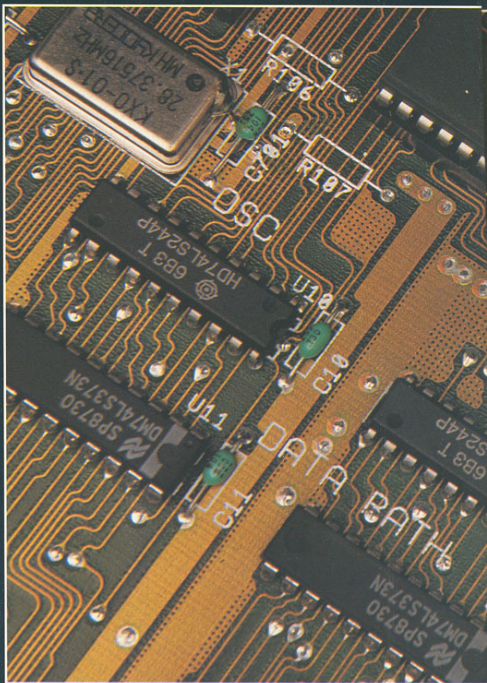
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THE UNTOUCHABLES

Absorbing playable demo of Ocean's latest, concerning the exploits of Elliot Ness cleaning up Thirties Chicago.

SURF: explore the fascinating world of 3D solid modelling with this powerful, but easy-to-use program • **DEMO CORNER:** remarkable ray-traced animation • **ART:** marvellous picture gallery courtesy of Alastair Hearsom • **WORKBENCH HACKS:** the continuing saga of those fun little hacks • **GFXMEM:** displays memory availability with ease.

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AMIGA THE INSIDE STORY 17

EVERYTHING YOU EVER WANTED TO KNOW, BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK: HOW IT CAME TO BE, HOW IT WORKS, AND THE HISTORY OF COMMODORE...

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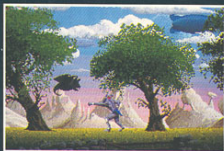
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■ Dare you walk abroad in the Shadow of the Beast?

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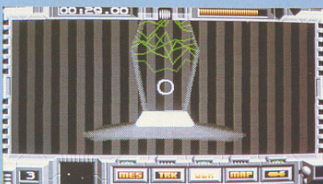
■ When you're running low on energy seek out one of the power units (there's one on each level of the computer) and dock with it...

The future is, and always has been, an interesting place. It's not unreasonable to assume that in the not-too-distant future, the likes of you and me will find we have more time on our hands away from work: and it's not too unreasonable to assume that we'll be spending our increased leisure time in what would now be considered bizarre and unusual ways.

Imagine a machine like a compact disc player, on which you play

not music discs, but discs of the most fantastic dreams imaginable: where you can experience the smell, the sounds, the taste and the touch of any fantasy you like.

That's the foundation of Imageworks' latest 3D romp, in which you play the part of the recently-fired dream-maker Chadd, and must guide your girlfriend through the DreamTrack Corporation High Security Building and retrieve the master recording



■ As long as you're inside, you're regaining energy. Unfortunately, you can only use a power unit once because it destroys itself afterwards.

of your last dream. Why? Well, not everything will change in the future, it seems: corruption looks likely to still be around. Dreamers like Chadd are often showered with gifts from companies in the hope they will dream about them and encourage anyone playing the dreams to buy their products.

That's all pretty harmless, but recently Thought Adjustment Seminars were introduced where Dreamers were 'adjusted' to the

'correct' state of mind. And Chadd has just realised that the subconscious political brainwashing which really takes place at these seminars has turned his last dream into a potential lethal weapon, which could destabilise and undermine the minds of the youth of the Western World.

Using a home-made hacked modem lead, Chadd has linked up to the security computer and is preparing to guide his partner through the many levels of the building to retrieve the master disc stored on the top floor.

Interphase takes place in two parallel worlds: the real world of the building and the abstract world of the computer system controlling security. There are two main displays in the game: a 2D map for each floor of the building, showing the position of the girl and any obstacles, such as doors; and a 3D representation of the world inside the computer, seen through Chadd's eyes. Progress is made by Chadd flying around the computer, altering anything that hinders the girl's progress.

The abstract world inside the computer is made up of several layers which you can pass between by flying through coloured tiles (the layers wrap round for each floor) and on each layer there are various structures representing doors, surveillance cameras and other things that are present in the real world of the building. Suppose the girl arrives at a door in the building that's locked. She'll send a message to Chadd informing him, so that he can call up the map display, see

INTERPHASE

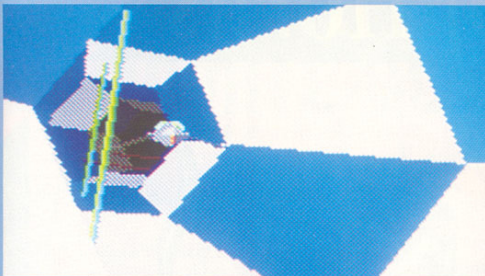
IMAGWORKS £29.99 ■ Mouse



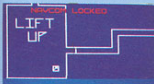
■ That toilet-like construction is a generator for the computer's internal defence craft, which come after you with a vengeance. Destroying the actual craft is simple enough with your front-firing gun, but...



■ ...to destroy the base you will have to hit it with one of the homing missiles that you carry.



■ Flying through the tunnel which connects the floors. Avoid bashing into walls or you'll lose energy.



■ Zoom in and lock onto a door...



■ ...follow the direction arrows...



■ ...through the coloured tiles...

where she is, and home in on her. Then he can follow direction arrows that will appear on his HUD whenever he's locked onto something, until he finds the door. He simply has to blast it to open it, and the girl continues on her merry way.



■ That green triangle is the girl. She's stopped for some reason and is sending you a message.

Obviously the computer is trying to do a good job of keeping the building safe, so there are various security droids around that Chadd can do little about, except keep them away from the girl. Droids become activated when the girl passes in front of a camera that's on, or when she passes over a pressure pad in the floor. As soon as a droid catches up with the girl it's game over time. It's also game over when all Chadd's energy runs out through crashing



■ It does look rather as though this is where you come in...

into too many structures or by taking too many hits from the various craft inside the computer.

Fortunately, there are ways to top up on energy, but it's never easy: especially when you've let reserves get perilously low! The easiest way to deal with the energy craft is to find where they're coming from and destroy the base with a well-armed missile: you're armed with missiles and a weaker front-firing gun when you're flying around. Get the girl to the top floor, retrieve the master disc and you've completed the game.

GRAPHICS AND SOUND

The graphics throughout are great. Everything moves quickly and smoothly and you're left with the impression that there really is a 3D world in there. The sound effects too are great. Overall this is the standard of graphics and sound that we should be expecting from current Amiga games.

JUDGEMENT

Interphase is complex and intriguing to start with. Once you've played a couple of times, though, you'll have the hang of it and will be able to understand what's going on. Then it's a case of carefully planning the route and dealing with the hazards as you come across them. The levels get progressively harder so it's going to take you a while to complete and if you like games that require a little brain power, you'll have a lot of fun along the way. **Andy Smith**

THE RATINGS EXPLAINED

GRAPHICS

Good graphics are an important part of any game: if the power is there, it should be used to the full. Both static and moving graphics come under scrutiny in this rating, but remember, graphic wonders alone do not a great 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 necessarily 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, all answered by a look at the Addiction rating.

OVERALL

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

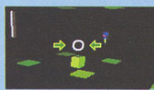
THE TEAM

Andy Smith, who was with ACE right from Issue One, is a 'twelve-hours-a-day' games fan and one of life's natural games-players. He loves any type of game, be it a shoot-em-up, strategy game, arcade adventure... **Bob Wade** 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.

Mike Dunn has been reviewing games for many years and is not afraid to speak his mind. He's done sterling work for us this month - **Andy Smith's** been on holiday again - and we have every confidence in his abilities. You should too. **Pat McDonald** has been Technical Editor on our sister magazine *Amstrad Action* for years now and an Amiga owner for nearly as long. When it comes to the pixel battlefield, **Big Pat's** a major force to be reckoned with.



■ ...to the correct floor...



■ ...locate the door (green box)...



■ ...and shoot it to open it...



■ ...bingo! One less obstruction!

GRAPHICS	9
SOUND	8
INTELLECT	4
ADDICTION	7

OVERALL 88%

DYNAMITE DUX

ACTIVISION £24.99 ■ Joystick



■ **Argh!** The cloud monster! First you have to shoot the clouds that are spinning around the middle one, but look out for the lightning.

Bin and Pin, the Dynamite Dux, are playing a sweet innocent kiddies' game with their friend Lucy when the evil Achacha The Great (the Great What?) materializes from nowhere and kidnaps Lucy! Argh! Shock! Horror! The heroic, daring dux take off after them immediately.

There are six levels to fight through before they can get down to the serious business of rescuing their friend. Eighteen different types of creature oppose them, ranging from the Sumo Pig to the Boxing Crocodile! Bin and Pin start the game unarmed (having to rely on their own boxing skills for self-defence) but dotted along the way are loads of weapons, ranging from simple stones and bombs all the way up to flame-throwers and missile launchers



■ **No, the duck isn't usually spiky-haired: he's just been hit!**

(have you ever seen a blue duck carrying a bazooka?) Naturally, these weapons vary in usefulness: the bombs are great for long-range firing, but they're pretty useless on anything nearby, and the flame-throwers are brilliant to fry enemies at close quarters, but rubbish for anything else.

A great two-player mode is included: you can beat each other up if the action dies down temporarily! Bonus levels have been included to boost the content that bit more and, naturally, every level

has a huge fat mega-nasty just make sure things don't get too easy.

GRAPHICS AND SOUND

Playing *Dynamite Dux* is rather like watching a cartoon: the graphics are bold and bright, and the tune that plays throughout is the sort of bouncy jolly stuff that generally accompanies cartoons. Visually and sonically, it's a very enjoyable game. Colour is used liberally without being garish, and although there's nothing special about the animation, everything has an air of clever design. The range of enemy characters is varied, and some of them are quite amusing: I'm afraid, though, that 'cute 'n' cuddly' is very much the order of the day!

JUDGEMENT

Disappointingly, despite the light-hearted nature of the game's presentation, it lacks an essential element of addictiveness. Though quite playable, it's a bit easy to get through the first couple of levels, and as a result, they become quite tedious when you play through them again and again. Lastability rating, therefore is fairly low. This lack of challenge on the early levels reinforces the general feeling that this game isn't really aimed at the dedicated arcadian or shoot-em-up freak, but rather at the younger, less experienced player. It's an accurate conversion: unfortunately, though, the original wasn't all that hot. **Mike Dunn**



■ **The big fat fire monster in Level One takes some killing!**



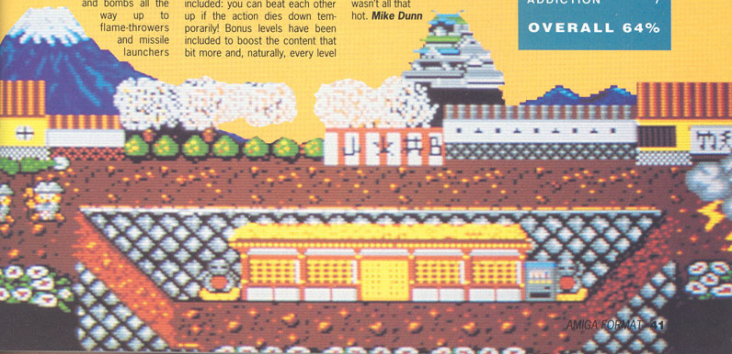
■ **Whack!** The evil little nasty gets a big bunch of fives.



■ **Armed with the flame-thrower, duckie goes to fry meanies...**

GRAPHICS	6
SOUND	7
INTELLECT	2
ADDICTION	7

OVERALL 64%



As a nipper, it's not the most pleasant experience in the world to be kidnapped by a bunch of wicked mages and taken away for a life of slavery and misery, serving the evil Beast Lord.

Still, that's happened to you. And to ensure faithfulness to the master, the mages have imposed years of hypnosis and brainwashing. As a reward for all those years of service, they have turned you into a powerful, agile and swift half-human creature with few feelings and little compassion, especially for the humans who must often be herded together for the ritual sacrifices.



■ Smash all those pillars and collect the bottles to gain some much-needed extra strength.

Until one day there you are, sitting watching the humans being taken to the altar, when suddenly the face of one particular old man stirs some long-suppressed mem-



■ Getting in is terribly easy, but getting out is something else!

ories. But it's too late for you to act when it dawns on you, that the little old man is in fact your father. Now you've turned against your masters and are determined to destroy the Beast Lord himself.

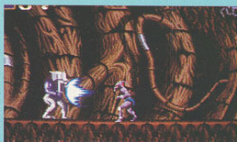
The game starts with the player controlling the creature: the idea is to guide him through the 350 screens of (mostly) horizontally-scrolling platform action until the final showdown with the Lord. As you might guess, the Lord has discovered your rebellion and has instructed the mages to send all manner of 'orrid creatures against you. Contact with any of these creatures causes you to lose energy (you start with an energy count of 12) until death forces a restart of the game. There are also some nasty traps that tend to sap energy, including huge spikes that come up from the ground and (later) down from ceilings. To counter the creatures all you need is a well-timed and well-aimed kick or punch: and to counter the traps

SHADOW OF THE BEAST

PSYGNOSIS £34.95 ■ Joystick



■ Should you manage to duck the flames and punch the blue ball held by that strange creature, above, enough times to smash it, you gain a power-up in the shape of a super-powerful punch, as seen below.



all you need is a little bit of good timing and some good jumping.

Unfortunately, not all the creatures are so easily dealt with. Some of the monsters can only be killed after you've collected an

extra weapon and many of the traps will only be avoided by walking straight into them and then remembering where they are on a later try. Just as much to the point, progress in the game is not

always straightforward either. Sometimes keys have to be found to unlock certain doors, and the keys are always miles away from the door! Things aren't all so black though, there are the extra



■ You've found the key - now you just have to find the right door!

weapons for a start and there are the occasional bottles of potion that can be picked up to restore either some or all of your energy. Make it to the Beast Lord and you'll find that your troubles are only just beginning.

GRAPHICS AND SOUND

The animation, the sprites, the backgrounds and the parallax scrolling are all superb. This is the sort of stuff we want! Add some great, atmospheric music and effects and you're left with one of the best-looking and -sounding

games to have appeared in recent months. A true audio-visual treat.

JUDGEMENT

What the graphics and sound promise, the gameplay doesn't quite match. It's tough and will take you a long time to complete, but the actual game style is very old and very uninspired. Still, make some progress in the game and you'll find it gets very addictive, as you struggle to make it to the next screen or solve the next puzzle. There are, however, some very annoying features, not least the fact that you've only the one life: which means you have to restart from the very beginning every time. Plus there's the frustrating end and beginning sequences which are inescapable.

Andy Smith

GRAPHICS	9
SOUND	9
INTELLECT	5
ADDICTION	7

OVERALL 78%



■ On the surface again. Those spikes can prove lethal, so take care.



■ Careful timing of jumps is needed to avoid both spiders and claws.



■ More timing problems occur in getting past these pulsating eyes...

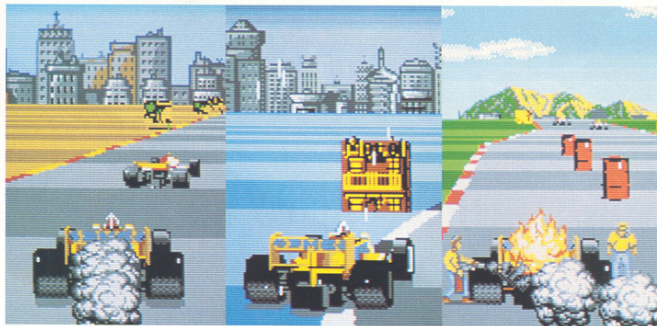


■ Manage to avoid them and you're left with horrible, dangerous bomb-dropping dragons to contend with.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

Psygnosis have been at the forefront of good-looking and sounding Amiga games for well over two years now, ever since *Barbarian* first appeared and wowed the public, if not all the reviewers. One of the biggest criticisms of the game was the fact that it was little more than an old 8-bit style platform game with 16-bit graphics. Unfortunately, *SOTB* still suffers to a greater or lesser degree from the same problems. The game may be massive, it may have fantastic graphics and sound and the puzzles may be more complex, but it's still just building on ideas that are five or six years old, and not stretching them any further either.

Then there are the simple frustrating features that could so easily have been avoided, like the unavoidable deaths and the tedious end and start of game pauses. More time and effort on the fundamental design would have turned this outrageously good-looking game into one that was an absolute corker to play as well. As it is, the effects are of such a high standard that they just show up the basic design's failings. To cap it all, the asking price of £35 is way over the top, even with a 'free' T shirt.



VIRGIN £19.99 ■ Joystick

CONTINENTAL CIRCUS

A game like *Continental Circus* is really welcome after spending the first part of the morning in traffic jams! Fast, powerful Formula One cars roaring around a famous motor racing circuit. Ah, there's nothing quite like it to release tension.

In *Circus*, the player views the car from slightly behind and above, a style which is popular in arcade racing games although it detracts slightly from the realism. Thankfully you don't have to bother about revs or oil pressure in *Circus* and there are only two gears (fast and very fast!) The only time that engine temperature becomes important is when it starts to catch fire!

Naturally, the first priority is finish the race with your car intact, but to progress to the next track you have to achieve a qualifying position. As well as this, there's a time restriction. At the top of the screen, along with your gear and speed indicator, is the countdown timer which indicates how much time you have to reach the next stage of the track.

Other drivers present something of a problem: they get in the way! (Even when you're apparently in the lead: yes, I got to first place and there were still other drivers on the road in front.) Normally on racing games, you can manage to leave any overtaking for the straights: not so on *Continental Circus*! The tight qualification times mean that you have to take every opportunity to

overtake, and if that opportunity comes around a corner at 400kph, you have to go for it!

Smashing into other cars either writes off your vehicle completely, or, if it's a less serious knock, sets the engine on fire, in which case you have to get into the pits pretty quick! After the first level, it starts to rain occasionally; this can really mess up the car's handling. Unfortunately, it doesn't seem to affect the other drivers, so things get really tough.

GRAPHICS AND SOUND

There isn't all that much you can do



■ Oh dear. The car's on fire and you have 17 places to make up!

with a racing game, in terms of graphics: these are fast and smooth, and colour is bright but not overdone. The backgrounds are OK, although the sense of trav-

elling at 390 kph (which is about a kilometre every ten seconds) doesn't really come over! Sound is a bit poor, the FX are limited and there's only a few short little tunes to pass for music, but in this sort of addictive, fast game, you don't really need a symphony.

JUDGEMENT

The first phrase that springs to mind is "just another racing game": there aren't any great features or super-slick ideas, but it is simply a good version of a classic game. For the most part, *Circus* is challenging, but without being frustrating, although there is a tiny bit of annoyance when the car stops just before the finish line! There's plenty of tracks, the presentation is adequate, and all the playability and lastability which made this type of game such a success in the first place have been preserved perfectly. The game is neatly programmed and, although it could be described as unoriginal, is still well worth a peek! **Mike Dunn**



■ The pre-race track view, which allows you to check out where all the tough corners and straights lie before you even start a race.

GRAPHICS	7
SOUND	5
INTELLECT	2
ADDICTION	7

OVERALL 71%

Garfield (the world's fattest and laziest cat, as if he needed any introduction) has dozed off in front of the fridge. The cold is having some effect on his sleep, as he begins to dream of Northern Italy, and the Alps. As any glutton knows, Italy is where lasagna comes from, and on the other side of the Alps is Switzerland, where they make chocolate!

Naturally, both of these fat-foods feature in Garfield's dream. In the first section of the dream, Garfield is skiing down a hill with Odie, because at the bottom of this hill is the lasagna-making factory (a dream of dreams for all self-respecting carbohydrate-consumers!) There are logs, trees, stones and all sorts of other things in the way, which the fat cat must avoid or jump, as well as ski-jump ramps which must be negotiated successfully. Right at the bottom of the hill, there's an extra big ramp, which Garf has to fly off to take him to the beginning of the second stage: inside the lasagna factory itself.

Having fallen through the roof of the factory, Garfield now gets a chance to exercise his energy level. When he plonks himself down in front of the production line, waggle the joystick like mad to make him eat faster. The more he gobbles, the better he feels! When Odie stomps in to announce dessert-time, it's off in search of the chocolate factory.

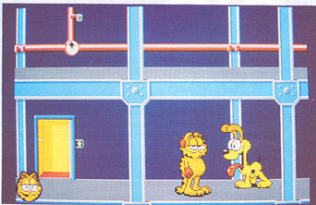
In here are loads of elevators, escalators and poles connecting the platforms. Garfield has to direct the flow of chocolate through the red pipes, so that the pipes dispense chocolate to all the mechanical chickens throughout the factory. The direction of flow though the pipes is shown by the arrows which appear at the pipes' connections. Near to each of these connections is a little red button, which when pressed will change the direction of flow. After all the chickens have been fed, Garfield can enter the control

THE EDGE £24.99 ■ Joystick

GARFIELD THE WINTER'S TAIL



■ And it's Zubbrigen on the right... Well, actually, it's Garfield on the right and Odie on the left: the first stage of *The Winter's Tail*.



■ First floor for junction boxes and pipelines. The sneaky look on Garfield's face indicates he's about to give Odie a good kicking.

room, where the mythical chicken that lays the chocolate eggs lives. Unfortunately, when he gets there, he discovers that the chicken has escaped.

The lake is frozen over. Garfield, feet clad firmly in a pair of skates, takes off over the ice to follow the chicken's chocolate foot-prints (which, of course, he eats on the way). He must avoid the holes in the ice (watch out for Odie, who has a saw and uses it!) and collect any bits of food. Once he gets to the other side, it's into the Swiss Village to find the chicken, at last.

GRAPHICS AND SOUND

What can I say? The graphics in *Winter's Tail* are fantastic: they're perfectly coloured and amusingly animated, and the characters are much brighter and clearer than they are in the Daily Mail! Sound is good too, with an excellent tune that plays throughout. Absolutely brilliant presentation.

JUDGEMENT

Once again though, good presentation is let down by a poor game design. The first section (skiing) is OK: it lacks a lot of content, but it looks good and plays reasonably. Unfortunately, the Lake and the Chocolate Factory are both awful; the former is unplayable, the latter too boring for words. Fans of Garfield with money to spend on cuddly toys and other stuff of dubious usefulness might find it good value, but any gamer who is going to seriously question the importance of buying this. Not recommended to anyone but the most die-hard fans. **Mike Dunn**

GRAPHICS	9
SOUND	8
INTELLECT	5
ADDICTION	3

OVERALL 43%

PAPERBOY

ELITE £19.99 ■ Joystick

Remember this being one of the classic machines in the arcade, years ago? And remember the 8-bit conversions, years ago? So why on earth has it taken Elite so long to come up with the Amiga version? You might well ask.

The paperboy of the title must deliver the "Daily Sun" to all the subscribers in the street. Some houses (the grey ones) don't subscribe, so they shouldn't get a delivery! Extra points can be gained by getting the paper in the



■ Look out for the lawnmowers! Oops, the warning was too late...

mail-box, breaking windows, riding over flowers, and generally being a nuisance. Kids playing with radio controlled cars get in the way, men digging up the roads, joggers, car drivers, skateboarders and generally every sort of intelligent (and unintelligent) lifeform is out to make the delivery job more difficult for the paperboy.

The graphics are OK without being brilliant, and the sound is fairly average. Paperboy is a very old game (five years now), and it shows through. An essentially mediocre product, and not the sort of thing we expect to see nowadays. **Mike Dunn**

GRAPHICS 5 / SOUND 4 / INTELLECT 2 / ADDICTION 6 / OVERALL 41%



DELPHINE SOFTWARE £24.99 ■ Joystick

CASTLE WARRIOR

Fifty years ago, there was a battleground which lay between two nations. Edelwolf The Great and his army fought it out with their opponents and triumphed, Edelwolf taking the crown and uniting the two countries. Peace and tranquility and all that malarkey reigned and everything was hunky-dory. Eventually, Edelwolf died, and was succeeded by his eldest son, Edeled The Good. He was a pretty decent bloke as well, ruling with a fair hand and not imposing too much tax on the population.

However, not everyone in the country was happy. Zandor, an evil wizard, had been banished to a castle on the farthest part of the bleakest corner of the kingdom. He was a fairly grumpy sort of guy, so he decided to get rid of Edeled and seize the kingdom for himself.

Must be a pretty hot wizard, evil or not, because he managed to get himself inside the castle's defences and poison the King's food. Things are looking grim. The

King is ringing death's doorbell, and no-one knows of an antidote. No-one, that is, except Zandor. Edred The Brave (that's you!) has volunteered to find Zandor and force the cure out of him.

There are six levels to hack your way through before you can



■ The blue monster that guards Zandor near the end of the game.

get the antidote safely to the King. The first is the Corridor Of Death leading to Zandor's castle. You must slash your way through a variety of bloodthirsty beasts, including a huge golden snake and a massive green giant (except this one isn't selling sweetcorn) both of

which can only be destroyed by returning their own fireballs. At the end of the tunnel is the Dragon Olisos, who guards the river. This unpleasant character spits fire at you, inbetween attempts to catch you in his wicked, sharp claws.

Next you have to negotiate the underground river. Avoid the rocks and the stalactites which fall on you. At the end of the river is the Jibba, who is tackled in the same way as the dragon. Penultimately you have to confront Zandor, who sits on a throne throwing spells. Kill Zandor with the sword and collect the antidote, and then you can set off home to save your father.

GRAPHICS AND SOUND

Generally, the graphics in Castle Warrior are fine: the tunnel scrolling is a bit poor, but everything else looks good. The dragons are impressive, the animation is smooth, and colour has been used to great effect. Sound is even bet-

ter. Edred's footfalls are convincing, the rest of the FX aren't anything special, but this is made up for by a brilliant tune.

JUDGEMENT

Unfortunately, good looks and good sounds aren't everything. Despite the slick presentation, there's quite a bit missing from the gameplay. The first level moves annoyingly slowly: you find yourself instinctively pushing the joystick forward to move things along faster! The second level looks good, but unfortunately the sheer lack of content makes it very boring after a while and since the fourth level is almost identical in every respect except the graphic, the same applies. This rather lowers the lastability of the game, and as such decreases your value for money considerably. Still, it's well presented, and if you place importance on high-class graphics and sound you'll find it more enjoyable than would someone who couldn't care less as long as it plays well.

Mike Dunn

GRAPHICS	8
SOUND	7
INTELLECT	2
ADDICTION	5

OVERALL 53%

SHUFFLEPUCK CAFE

DOMARK £19.99 ■ Mouse

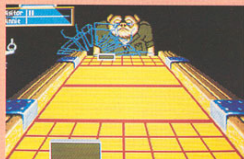
It happens to all of us (well, it happens to me an awful lot!); it's very late at night, and you desperately need to use the 'phone. Unfortunately, the only 'phone for miles is in the back of a crowded bar, and the drinkers at the bar don't look too friendly.

Well, that's the situation you're in in *Shufflepuck*. There's absolutely no way out: you have to use that 'phone. The unpleasant patrons of the establishment will only let you pass if you prove yourself by playing all of them at the old bar game *Shufflepuck*. For that matter, they'll only let you live if you prove yourself at *Shufflepuck*!

Everyone must have seen this game at one time or another. A small disc called a puck is placed



■ Phwoar! The seductively sexy (ahem) Princess Bejin slams a shot past you on the left, while on your right, you knock a shot past *Vinnie The Pig*. Note the adjusted size of the paddle and puck on the left.



on a table, and two players have "paddles" which they use to hit the puck to the opponent's end of the table. The aim is to whack the puck so fast that the other player misses

it and it goes over his side of the table. Simple, you say? Yes, it is.

There are nine players in the bar: eight aliens and an android. These range from the wimpy, bespectacled "Skip" (no relation, thank you very much; anyone who suggests a similarity between myself and him will regret it!!!!) and the droid DC-3, who are both fairly poor, right up to Biff Raunch, who is, err... a teensy bit fast.

You can control the size of your paddle and the responsiveness of the puck: having a super-fast puck is fine when you're serving, but wait until you have to try and return it!

GRAPHICS AND SOUND

Shufflepuck has a great tune, and the bar noises are excellent. In-game FX are very limited, but the graphics are as good as they could be: there's only your oppo-

nent and the game pieces, all of which are fairly adequate.

JUDGEMENT

Well, *Shufflepuck* is a very good game, as far as it goes, but it doesn't go very far. The content is ridiculously limited. OK, so obviously someone has put a lot of time and effort into making this a polished piece of programming, but most people would expect a bit more than this for twenty quid. Simple and fun, but the simplicity is its downfall. **'Skippy' Dunn**

GRAPHICS	6
SOUND	6
INTELLECT	1
ADDICTION	5

OVERALL 49%



■ Note the divider in the middle of the table: this makes the game even harder (which is probably why the player hasn't scored yet!)

SHINOBI

VIRGIN £19.99 ■ Joystick

Hmmm. Revenge of the Return of the Ninjas Comeback Part 4, methinks. All the children of the world's leaders have been kidnapped by an evil ninja terrorist group called the Ring Of Five. The leaders want their darling kiddies back safe and sound, so you, the super master god ninja, must take on the might of the underworld and... well, you know the story, we've done it enough times.

Shinobi looks very poor. The ninja is badly animated (his feet move faster than the floor scrolls, so it looks like he's moonwalking!) and the colour looks like it was planned out on a Spectrum. Some bits are OK, like the huge helicopter, but the general feeling is of a badly-designed, badly-written game that both plays and looks in a very dated manner. **Mike Dunn**

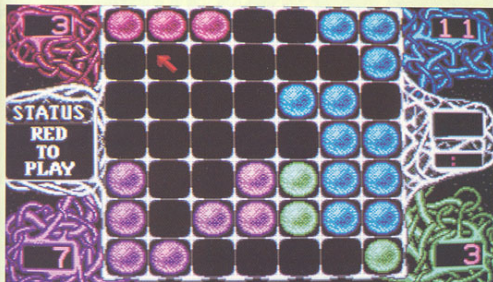


■ The odds are stacked against him, but somehow I suspect our friend the mastergōomēgahard ninja might just about prevail!

GRAPHICS 3 / SOUND 6 / INTELLECT 3 / ADDICTION 4 / OVERALL 36%

INFECTION

16 BLITZ £4.99 (Wow!) ■ Mouse, Joystick or Keyboard



■ Early on in a four player game, blue has established a lead but things change so quickly it could change in just a few moves. Meanwhile, green is on the verge of extinction.

This game should come with a double virus warning, because it's catching. The whole idea is to spread, reproduce, replicate or, to put it another way, infect a playing grid with your blobs before any of the opposition's coloured blobs can do the same.

It's perfectly simple. There's a seven by seven grid with a coloured blob in each corner. The blobs can duplicate into an adjacent square or jump over a square. Thus they can gradually fill in, and move around, the grid. Every time a blob of one colour fills a square next to a blob of

another colour it changes the second blob to the same colour as itself. The aim is to end up with more blobs of your colour than the of other player's. In such a way is a great tactical game born.

One to four players can take part, any or all of which can be computer controlled. They each start with a corner, with one empty for a three player game and two blobs each in a two player game.

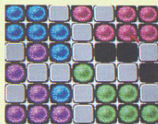
Initially it sounds like Othello (Reversi) but the elements of jumping and reproducing adjacently change the game tactics immensely. One soon learns the

basics, but getting to grips with the deeper tactics is tougher and the computer opponents will always put up a fierce struggle, whatever their skill level.

The grid can also be dotted with blocks which cannot be used, once again presenting new tactical problems. There are a series of pre-defined layouts but you can easily create custom ones.

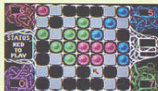
GRAPHICS AND SOUND

The actual grid and blob graphics are very simple, but the way the blobs split and move is satisfyingly gloopy, as is the sound effect for



■ Introducing blocks makes tactical jumping necessary.

this. The best sounds and graphics are on the title screens. This may seem curious, but the game does not need them and they provide an interesting diversion. You can actually 'play' the title screen as a sort of psychedelic paint palette where you can create beautiful effects. The soundtrack for this is also atmospheric and decidedly conducive to sitting in a dark room playing with colours.



■ Purple has already been knocked out and blue is next.

JUDGEMENT

Infection may be simple, but it is also very enjoyable. It's the sort of game you will keep coming back to for another try, every few days for months and years to come. It's good, but the clincher is the price. At under a fiver it's a real bargain which all gamers should avail themselves of. **Bob Wade**

GRAPHICS	3
SOUND	6
INTELLECT	6
ADDICTION	8

OVERALL 83%

MYTH

RAINBIRD Free! ■
Keyboard and Mouse

Myth is set in a world of ancient Greek gods, whose existence is threatened by the rise of Christianity. To keep up humanity's faith in the gods, Zeus, the god-in-chief, decides to set them all heroic tasks, just like the good old

days. Naturally, you're first: you are Poseidon, the god of the sea (though, incidentally, you can't swim), tasked with recovering the Dark Helmet of Hades.

The game starts in front of the gates to the underworld. You carry the barest essentials for the task. Exits lead... ahem! Graphics in Myth are very good, and the parser is OK, but the real high point of it is the humour. If you liked Fish! you'll probably like this, because they're very similar in style; you may even prefer this, it's that good! An excellent adventure. Witty, cunning and just plain good fun! **Skippy Dunn**



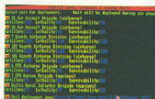
Note: Myth is currently only available to members of Rainbird's adventure society Official Secrets. You can join this society by ringing their Sales Hotline on 0279 660004, or by sending a cheque for £22 or your credit card number to: Official Secrets, PO Box 847, Harlow, CM21 9PH. In return, you'll be sent Myth, together with another free game, six issues of Confidential (the adventure and role-playing magazine) and membership of Special Reserve, a group which claims to offer the cheapest software service around (normally £5).

GRAPHICS 7 / SOUND N/A / INTELLECT 9 / ADDICTION 8 / OVERALL 87%

Each player has a variety of units at his disposal. These include special operations, aircraft, airborne troops, and the divisions that make up his armies. The military units are represented on the map by markers: red for Pact, blue NATO and white for neutrals.

The units are divided into a number of different types, including infantry, headquarters and artillery, and vary in size from regiments to divisions. Unit markers on the map show both the size and type. I found it irritating that stacked units had blank markers, although the unit names are written below the map. This cost me a few headquarters during the game, simply because I forgot where they were!

The detail on units is superb. Assuming you are examining a division you can find the number of squads, tanks, helicopters and so on within the unit, and the



■ Selecting a unit, from the range of troops at your disposal, to deploy during an air strike.

readiness of each component brigade. While there is no real need for this depth of detail, it does show exactly what sort of casualties you are taking, allowing you to adjust your tactics accordingly.

Each unit is part of a larger command, such as British I Corps or the Soviet 3rd Shock Army. When a unit is selected, a yellow square lights up on all units in the same command. It is important to keep commands together, as only units in the same command can

make simultaneous attacks, thus guaranteeing good odds. It took me a little time to get used to this, and when units got lost it took me ages to find their command again.

When playing the game, you're made very aware of just how important it is to marshal your forces in just the right attack and defence formations. There's a lot of subtle variations and options: keep a brigade on full alert, or leave some to rest in case you can advance? This is the underlying, huge strength of *Red Lightning* – the number of tactical variations is staggering.

GRAPHICS AND SOUND

A definite disappointment from this angle. Nothing about the game strikes you as Amiga-like at all. There are some nice touches, in that the plane shapes are displayed, but even then sometimes they bear little relationship to the

actual true outline. Sound is non-existent, which is a crying shame.

JUDGEMENT

If you like shoot-em-ups or arcade action games give this a miss. If, however, you like detailed wargames then *Red Lightning* has been worth the wait. While this sort of game appeals to a much smaller group of people, those who do have an interest will find it well worth the money. Someone has put a great deal of thought into it, and it really shows: even if there isn't a nuke option... **Adrian Stewart £29.99 Mouse**

GRAPHICS	5
SOUND	N/A
INTELLECT	9
ADDITION	6
OVERALL	90%

CONFLICT EUROPE

PSS present a disturbing tale of the effects tactical nuclear warfare might bring about in mainland Europe, if the big red button is ever pressed...

It's nice playing God, as *Populous* players the world over will tell you. Here's a similar theme: a wargame where you're commander-in-chief of either NATO or the Warsaw Pact just after the start of World War III. The Soviet hordes are sweeping the pitiful western forces before them, and the only balancing factor may prove to be that of battlefield nuclear weapons.

At first, you are presented with a map of western Europe. The game is played purely at Corps level, which means all the

only the US Corps can assault a Pact frontline unit and hope to win. The Italian Corps is, I'm sorry to say, the standard joke.

The map isn't hexed: which simplifies play but does mean that travel rates (one square per turn in anything other than mountains) are not very realistic. If NATO doesn't hold a solid line, then Pact units just bypass them diagonally; and if they can reach the German/Dutch border, they've won!

Each turn is separated into two days. Every so often you gain reinforcements to assign to units. These nearly all go to your understrength units, beefing them up for the next struggle, but they can replace battle casualties. If a unit runs out of supplies, with no further ado it is annihilated.

Some function keys call up various information terminals: these contain hints as to how best to proceed. Information includes general war news, reinforcement schedules, population and radiation readouts. An interesting one is the diplomatic screen, where you can issue threats, make ceasefire proposals or just surrender (and forfeit the game).

You receive similar messages, and not just from the enemy: the Swiss premier was most upset



■ Currently showing on the big screen is the effect of the war so far on civilians in the war zone. As this includes the whole of Europe...

when I dropped a few nukes on his precious mountains. Some people don't realise that there's a war on!

Orders can be issued through similar displays. Airpower can be set to various missions, air superiority being the overriding factor: whichever side has this chooses to move first. Other missions include 'Assault Breaker' and 'Iron Snake' (the latter being the destruction of enemy railways, delaying reinforcements).

Then there's the nuke terminal. Having entered the pulse code, you can select various 'response'

fireplans: these differ in multi or single warheads, air or ground burst, and neutron weapons (very effective against armour). Or you can make the first strike, and become what can only be described as a bloodthirsty butcher whose name will live in infamy. Especially if you lose.

The names of these strikes indicate the effectiveness of the strike: from Sharp Stick to Dirty Harry. The Pact fireplans have more suitably Russian names. Of course, using these weapons creates monstrous civilian



■ The teletypewriter provides a constant record of events in the war.

little units like regiments, battalions and divisions are lumped together into one very impressive composite playing piece.

A unit's statistics are composed of armour, air power (local stuff like helicopters and Harriers, presumably) and supplies. In assault or defence, these will be reduced: and, needless to say,

casualties; and then there's the retaliation. Five different openings are available. The first is a simple line-up, one against the other.

Others include a NATO without the good old USA, both sides being unprepared for war, and also both sides having a Star Wars anti-ballistic missile system. It can't be very effective: global thermonuclear war still broke out, ending the game. My own fault for invading Rumania I suppose.

This is the tightrope you must walk, especially if you play NATO.

Sooner or later you're forced to go nuclear. When you're the Pact, how do you respond? Sometimes the computer makes appalling mistakes, using conventional rather than nuclear retaliatory strikes. Most of the time though, it's Mutually Assured Destruction. There really is no alternative.

GRAPHICS AND SOUND

All the graphics and sound in the game are up to Amiga standard, although none of them break new ground. Maybe using HAM pictures

for the static screens would have impressed me more. The samples are used effectively, especially for the nuclear strike sequence. Not a straightforward big bang, but a low, threatening rumble.

JUDGEMENT

I'm quite fond of the game. There are better computer wargames on eight-bit machines, but the gentle charms of losing off an atomic barrage are simply irresistible. I doubt that the interest level is enough to keep propper-heads

like me engrossed for very long, but for normal, clinically sane human beings it's a very pleasant game. **Pat McDonald £24.99**
Mouse and Keyboard

GRAPHICS	7
SOUND	6
INTELLECT	6
ADDITION	5
OVERALL	65%

VULCAN

Cases Computer Systems in Afrika

RT Smith is the most notable programmer in the field. His system of wargames has seen coverage on most popular micros: but how has he used the unique capabilities of the Amiga in *Vulcan*, set in the second half of the North African campaign of World War II?

There's a very nice picture which is used to decorate the front end. You can select a one or two player game, and choose to play the Axis (German and Italians) or Allies (Brits, Yanks and, er, French). For non-participatory fun, make the computer play itself.

The scenario is well chosen. Tunisia from late 1942 to mid 1943 was the centre of the Axis attempt to cut the Suez Canal, and then capture the precious (but largely untapped) oil wells of the Middle East. There's ample opportunity for manoeuvre and counter-thrust, as well as more static warfare favouring the defender.

In 1942, the Torch landings in French-colonized North Africa opened the way for a back-door attack on Tunis and Bizerta, the main Axis supply depots from Europe. Rommel was busy in a confrontation with Montgomery in Egypt, which ended with a nasty scrap at El Alamein in 1943.

So, the idea is for the Germans to survive (hold either Tunis or Bizerta) and for the Allies to take control.

There are five options, avail-



■ The Axis has great air power, so they air-strike frequently.

able in which the history before the battle is subtly different. There's the seizure of Malta by the Axis, Bone Airfield being occupied by German forces, Rommel being annihilated in Libya (which is what Hitler ordered him to do, fighting in Libya taking more time) and also the French colonies remaining neutral rather than joining the Allies.

A system of icons is used to order the various forces about. The unit sizes vary from HQs (typically 300-odd men) to regiments (3,000) up to French divisions which have 6,000 men. Morale and fighting strength are not overly keen in these formations, but boy are they impressive when they are on the move.

A description of the icons: 'movement' will make a unit spread out and move cautiously (there's an option to keep the enemy movement secret). 'Assault' is to deliberately attack a position, taking heavier casualties but also handing them out in fair fashion. 'Travel' is totally non-combat, sticking to roads and shooting along at speed.

If a unit moves, you can order it to dig in. This takes a whole turn, but the unit suffers less damage from attacks, especially from tanks. If dug in, a unit can fortify its position, and this can be accumulated over several turns to make a static strong point.

You can get a report of the unit, plus a quick look at what terrain it's on. You can move units onto the same square (although not more than a division can stack together) and also split them off to send them their separate ways.

Units can run out of supplies very easily if you're not careful: they draw these from their headquarters which in turn must get them



■ The Axis forces take the chance of a brief break in occurrences to check on the current disposition of their various troops.



■ Meanwhile, the allied troops are planning an offensive via the 6th Commando Battalion, who are currently holding the city of Mateur.

via the nearest road. But if stomachs and magazines are full, crashing through massed enemy positions with a frontline tank battalion (maybe 180 tanks strong) is such fun!

GRAPHICS AND SOUND

The graphics used in the game are not striking. There's a very nice pic on the front end, and that's about it. A more dramatic use of the Amiga is in air strikes, when the hexes around a given target are cratered to the accompaniment of suitable amounts of noise.

Another use of sound is for ground attack. There's one sample for each side's infantry and tank units: the length of the sound is an indication of the damage handed

out or taken. Nice touch.

JUDGEMENT

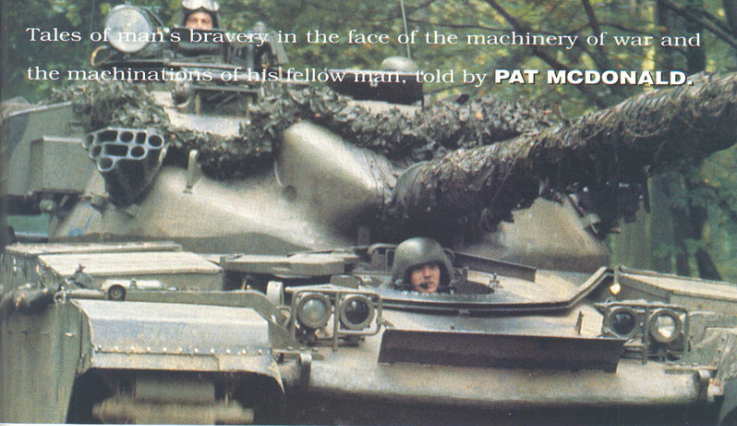
All in all it's a creditable effort that will have you waging war on your Amiga for a good few months. The computer opponent is pretty good, but a human opponent is best: if you can avoid looking at each other's moves!

Pat McDonald £19.95 Mouse

GRAPHICS	6
SOUND	6
INTELLECT	9
ADDITION	8
OVERALL	83%

WAR STORIES

Tales of man's bravery in the face of the machinery of war and the machinations of his fellow man, told by **PAT MCDONALD.**



RED LIGHTNING

Modern tactical warfare from Strategic Simulations Inc



It is the late 1980s, and the unthinkable has finally happened. The Russians are hammering across the North European plain. Can NATO stop the red hordes, or is Europe condemned to life under the Soviet iron fist...?

Red Lightning is a highly-detailed, operational-level game set during World War III, focusing on the Central European theatre of operations. You can play the Pact or NATO in one or two player games. There is a comprehensive rule book that even includes a bibliography! I would recommend



■ Note the typical board-game style hex map. The screen overlaid on this is showing the map of current supply lines for both forces.

studying the rules, because they give some useful hints. The playing area covers Europe from France to Poland, and from Denmark in the north to Austria in the south. Actions in Norway and Iceland can affect both NATO and the Pact, so they are included as 'off the board' regions to which you are also capable of assigning troops should you so wish.

Map size is 54 by 50 hexes, with each hex representing an area of land 25 kilometres across. Hexes contain a specific terrain type, ranging from sea to mountains. The map is easy to read, although national boundaries aren't shown, which would be useful.

The playing window covers an area of fourteen by seven hexes, and can be scrolled along hex rows. When you call up the strategic map it not only shows the military situation, but also allows you to zoom in on the bit of the main map that you want, which saves hours of scrolling around.