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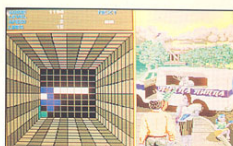
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Disk Extra

YOLANDA

HERCULEAN TASKS POSED IN PLATFORM FORM FROM MILLENNIUM

■ **BRIMBLE'S BEAT:** Bach goes modern in Allister Brimble's musical interlude

■ **ZOOM:** Small, but perfectly-formed screen blanker, mouse accelerator and CLI summoner ■ **MOUSE COORDS:** Keep a track on where your mouse is

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Walking around the dusty halls of Eris Post Office reveals this useful location-finder. So why do they still lose the mail?



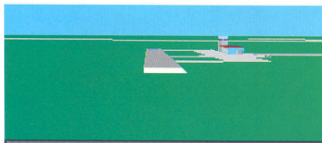
Ah... isn't that thoughtful, putting a bed in the waiting room while they search for your 'misplaced' packages? Just five minutes... ZZZ.



Who cares if they're asleep at this time of night, let's go and strafe the living nightlights out of the place... DAKADAKADAKA!



I honestly don't remember seeing one of these buildings amongst the towers in the Pride of the West Midlands!



"Please fasten seatbelts, extinguish all cigarettes and pass the used sickbags to the stewardess on leaving the plane. Thank you."

You, the Mercenary, have just managed to get it together to blast away from the hostile world of Targ when a message flashes up on your computer terminal. "Distress call from Eris State President, Dialis Planet 5, Gamma system - the comet Damocles is on a collision course with Eris. Assistance required urgently. Large reward."

Those last two words are particularly interesting... they involve money! After toying with the idea for a while, you think "Sod it, I want a holiday!" You send a brief reply to the President, then decide to cruise around taking it easy for a while. After a few months, the

cash supply is finally beginning to dwindle... looks like it's time to check out the missions available. What about that Eris problem? Could be mucho moolah for that one, you think, so it's off to the Gamma system.

Benson, your computer, takes you in to land at Eris Spaceport, where a VIP limo has been thoughtfully left so that you can make your way to the President's office. The premier is a little miffed that you've taken this long to arrive and has, in fact, decided it's a good idea to leave the planet along with the other evacuees. Oh well, I suppose you'll have to look for the clues yourself...

DAMOCLES

NOVAGEN £24.99 ■



Who cares if they're asleep at this time of night, let's go and strafe the living nightlights out of the place... DAKADAKADAKA!

GRAPHICS AND SOUND

Damocles' 3D world has been superbly designed, using solid and smoothly animated polygons to build a believable world to explore. One point where solid 3D games often fall down is by the incompetent use of clipping - when sections of buildings and objects often appear and disappear at odd moments to save memory. Damocles manages quite happily to conquer this obstacle, so that everything you see approaches to full size in a very realistic way. Unfortunately the sound doesn't match up to the quality of the graphics. All the effects are far too thin and synthetic to create any atmosphere, so the volume will usually end up in the 'off' position during play.

LASTING INTEREST

The sheer size of Damocles is quite remarkable (to use a famous sports idiom). The big cities lie on huge continents, which sit on massive planets surrounded by a vast solar system. Simply flying from place to place eats up an incredible amount of gametime. All the locations have their own specific atmosphere, depending on the planet and the purpose of the building, and even the trivial locations have objects lying around the rooms.

Leaping straight into the game and zooming from place to place won't get you very far, though. You really need to have your thinking hat firmly attached to your noggin to link all the clues, and it will still be a rather long time before you manage to

In *Damocles* – Novagen's long-awaited follow-up to the highly-successful *Mercenary* – you play the hardy soldier of fortune that rose to fame after his antics on the planet Targ. This time, as well as struggling for personal financial gain, the future of a planet is at stake. The comet *Damocles* is on a collision course with the planet Eris. You must follow the trail of clues in an attempt to find the mega-destructive *Novabomb* and the necessary triggers in order to destroy the comet.

Unfortunately, since the entire population of Eris has fled to safety, the only clues available are by way of documents left lying

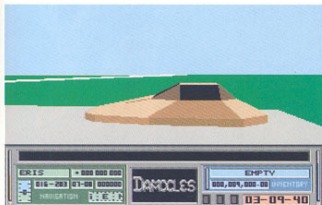
around various locations on Eris. It's surprising exactly how much information can be gleaned from a discarded fax message.

The trail of clues leads you to the whereabouts of the bomb and the triggers, but the post-office being as it is, they seem to have been... er... 'misplaced' somewhere along the line. You must use the clues and some pretty hefty lateral thinking to find your way around the Gamma system, picking up and making use of a variety of items along the way.

But don't worry too much about the outcome. After all, it's all for you – and every man for himself! **Maff Evans**

CLES

Joystick and Keys



Vauxhall Calibra? Thing of the past! Feast yer eyes on this beautiful little mover! One careful Presidential owner...

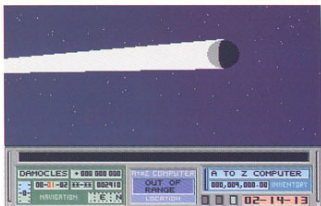
get the *Novabomb* and triggers together, never mind stopping the comet. If you have a lot of things to contend with in life – like work, eating and sleeping – then think twice before you play *Damocles*, as these things will almost certainly be ignored!

JUDGEMENT

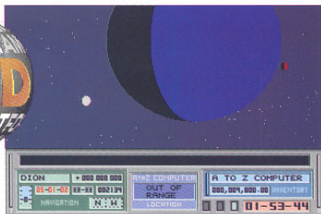
After the incredibly long wait, the inevitable doubts about how good the game would actually be began to creep in. The original *Mercenary* and the *Escape from Targ* extension were hailed as ground-breaking games and managed to secure their place in the software hall of fame. So how does *Damocles* compare (doubts not withstanding)? You can all breathe a sigh of relief, since the answer is most definitely 'very well indeed'. **Paul Woakes** has

included all the aspects that made *Mercenary* such a hit along with more additions than anyone could have hoped for. The solid 3D works brilliantly, the vast playfield is just begging to be explored and the puzzle element is conducive to long hours sat in front of the monitor. Even in this day and age, with a myriad of 3D adventure games vying for the public's attention, *Damocles* is a shining island gem in the software sea. If you're not convinced, then try it as soon as possible – here our case rests.

GRAPHICS	8
SOUND	3
INTELLECT	8
ADDICTION	8
OVERALL	92%



The deadly comet *Damocles* itself, hurtling through the blackness of space towards the impending destruction of planet Eris.



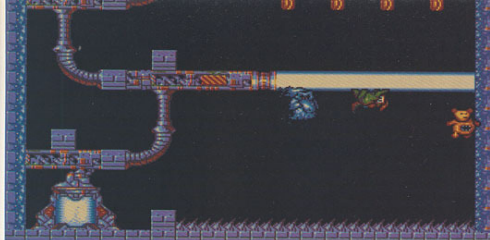
Where's the map...? Now then – Dion... Oh! There it is in front of us! Better get the brakes on sharpish!



This building looks important. What can it be? Unfortunately the computer doesn't seem to want to tell us!



Get lost? Nah, no problem. All we have to do is follow these here road signs... now which exit do we need...?



Quiffy crawls along a handy beam to get away from a nasty ghostie, but time is tight - if that beam turns off then it's a deadly plunge past the psycho teddy to the spikes below.

FLOOD

ELECTRONIC ARTS £24.99 ■ Joystick

After coming up with the graphically superb Fusion and the highly successful deity simulator Populous, Bullfrog have pushed off in yet another direction by releasing... wait for it... a good old-fashioned platform game!

In Flood, you play a tubby little fellow by the name of Quiffy. He is the last surviving member of the Blobbie race, his comrades having been wiped out by the evil Psycho Teddies and the dread Bulbous-Headed Vong. Life in the caverns is hazardous for a lonely young Blobbie, but it could always be worse... the caverns could get flooded! Ha-ha! This is when the phrase 'famous last words' has a poignant ring...

Cavern religion has long told of 'The Coming of the Taps of Wrath', a fearful time when the old and near-forgotten water demons will begin to fill the caverns with water. It looks like the priests were right - the flooding has begun. This is the last straw for Quiffy, who has decided to get his lil' of green butt outta there.

You must fight your way through a series of caverns, battling the dangers of deadly traps and vicious monsters. The exit to each cavern is in the form of a teleporter, which is linked to a 'social conscience' computer. The computer will only allow the portal to open when there is no rubbish lying around, so Quiffy must pick up all the rubbish in the cavern before he can escape.

Occasionally, Quiffy may find a weapon along the way, including dynamite, grenades and a pretty awesome flame-thrower - just right for blizzing those evil trash-scattering Vong! **Maff Evans**



These snails seem to be impervious to the effects of the flood, so a quick grenade lobbed into their midst seems to be in order!



No time to enjoy the ride down - those cans need to be collected.



Let those shuriken fly to blast the creatures out of the caverns.



Aren't boomerangs fun? Right, this one up the left nostril... first go! Bah! Missed! Oh well, back to the acting!

GRAPHICS AND SOUND

As you'd expect from Bullfrog, a lot of care has been put into the game's presentation. The graphics are well drawn and coloured, with a huge dollop of the 'cute' factor that seems to be all the rage at the moment. The sprites have a cartoon-like appearance, but the use of colour and shading gives the characters a solid appearance not usually seen in cutesy games. The sound is equally as impressive, featuring a suitably bubbly soundtrack to introduce the game and a whole host of jovial splishing, ticking, clanking and yelping effects to back the action, which polishes up the whole appearance with Bullfrog's own special brand of digital Mr Sheen.

LASTING INTEREST

The game begins easily enough, but the going starts getting pretty tough around Level Seven, and there are over 30 more still to do! This should keep platform fans wrenching their joysticks around well into the night for weeks. However the game does prove to be rather annoying at times - especially on some levels which require a fair amount of luck to complete - which isn't really a good thing with games of this type.

JUDGEMENT

Producing such an irreverent and jovial game as Flood is quite a brave venture for Bullfrog, but in all fairness they have managed to produce a playable and good-looking game. Even with its annoying little quirks, there are few straightforward platform games that can manage to keep leap-and-collect fans playing for as long as Flood will keep them captivated. The cute sprites and jolly sound are well up to the standard we'd expect from Bullfrog, but it's doubtful whether the game will have a similar effect on the market to that of Populous. Nevertheless, Flood is one of the best games of its type - it's just that the genre is in some danger of wearing a little thin these days.



GRAPHICS	8
SOUND	8
INTELLECT	3
ADDICTION	7
OVERALL	84%



You've finished Level One and here you test out one of the new weapons which might just show the guy in the tank (inset) who's boss around here.



MIDNIGHT RESISTANCE

OCEAN £19.95 ■ Joystick

A family is locked away, frozen behind sheets of glass, so the rescue operation must begin – a do-or-die mission is essential.

Midnight Resistance is a scrolling shoot-em-up, much in the mould of that classic old arcade game *Green Beret*. Your route is simply to follow the scrolling landscape, dealing with whatever comes into view by blasting it. Your task is to travel on foot through this strange world of mechanized mayhem, blasting everything in sight and rescuing your enslaved family. Be prepared for anything, what you'll meet next is always unpredictable.

As well as soldiers fighting for the enemy, there are round steel blades that crawl across the screen dipping and diving at your head just waiting to turn you into mincemeat. Then there are the big guys, kitted out with steel tanks and a tough guy image, who take a lot of killing. Tanks and planes are common biggies, but there is the odd monster or two as well and getting rid of them can be very tough. A great number of hits are often needed, but with a more powerful weapon you can wipe them from existence quicker.

After each level there is a special weapon screen where you

can buy new weapons. Each one is locked behind a sheet of glass and you have to pay for them with keys collected from dead foes throughout the level.

Weapons available include three-way guns, fire beams, barriers and automatic machine guns, besides the normal rifle that remains with you throughout. Losing a life results in the loss of any special weapons you have, as well as any keys collected. However, the keys are scattered around you as you die and are still there to be re-collected, along with any special weapons you had, if you come back to life.

Team up with a mate and you can increase your firepower and chances of survival with the simultaneous two-player option. The other hero can be distinguished by the different colour of armour he wears, but when you reach the special weapon screen you'll have to share what's available.

Mark Hill

GRAPHICS AND SOUND

The graphics on *Midnight Resistance* are well drawn and give a pretty variation of backgrounds throughout. The wide range of scenery indoors and out makes first-time exploration fun to start with and the graphics provide an incentive for repeat playing. A rather dull background tune and average sound effects accompany the far more accomplished graphics.

LASTING INTEREST

The sad thing about this shoot-em-up is that the gameplay is dated, a bit of a blast from the past. One problem is the limited options available. When you have the same old route to follow every go, the sections you've mastered become repetitive. It does mean, however, that you can learn your way through and each new discovery adds to the excitement.

The main problem is likely to be the frustration level caused by repeatedly dying at the hands of some of the very difficult guardians encountered.

JUDGEMENT

It's a very good game for its genre, but doesn't bring much new to the field except some swish graphics. A good conversion that will certainly appeal to fans of games like *Green Beret* and *Gryzor*, but will leave those in search of originality and variety out in the cold.

GRAPHICS	7
SOUND	5
INTELLECT	2
ADDICTION	6
OVERALL	69%



Stand up here and you'll soon be suffering from more than just a splitting head-ache!



Concealed behind glass and still wearing her evening dress, your Mether appears on screen.

SHADOW WARRIORS

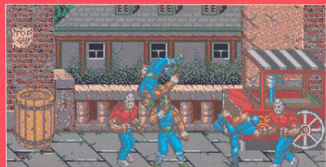
OCEAN £19.95 ■ Joystick

This is one of the ever-growing band of scrolling beat-em-ups with a Ninja origin. Your task is to fight through six of the toughest neighbourhoods in America.

Using attacking moves you attempt to defeat the ghoulish Assassins that rule the streets and try to become the greatest

Shadow Warrior of them all. Swing kicks and flying neck throws are your only other attacking moves and the ability to live three lives completes your defensive approach.

Graphics are colourful and give a realistic effect of a typical suburban neighbourhood, but the

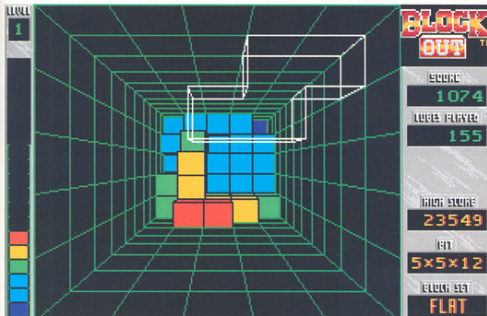


A bit of argy-bargy in the neighbourhood as you send a thug flying.

sprites behave like a horde of drunken zombies – realistic too, perhaps? A simultaneous two-player option gives the game a light at the end of the tunnel, but

otherwise the action is far too similar to many a fighting game that has gone before. Only recommended for hardened beat-em-up addicts. Mark Hill

GRAPHICS 5 / SOUND 3 / INTELLECT 1 / ADDICTION 2 / OVERALL 42%



Quick! Twirl that block around and fit it in the corner! After all, this is only the easy level with a standard sized well and flat blocks, so you can't let it win for Gawd's sake!

GRAPHICS AND SOUND

Sound in the game is rather minimal, the most noticeable piece being the classical loading music. Elsewhere in the game sound is used sparingly, providing only the odd effect when a layer is completed. The graphics, although simple, portray the action very well indeed. The clear, colourful displays and smoothly shifting shapes floating down the shaft go together to make a well-presented and good-looking puzzle game.



Just what is needed - a nice cup of tea while the game's paused!

BLOCK OUT

RAINBOW ARTS £19.99 ■ Mouse/Keyboard

With the follow up to *Tetris* arriving in the form of *Welltris* (reviewed elsewhere in these pages), it's not too surprising that similar games should appear. American development company California Dreams have been rather quick off the mark and have come up with their own interpretation of the falling shapes genre with *Block Out*.

The game is based in a square well shape, with falling blocks having to be constructed into patterns on the floor, but this is where the similarity to *Welltris* ends. Instead of the shapes being

flat tiles, *Block Out* contains solid 3D objects which can be rotated in three axes. The idea is to place the shapes in the well to form layers, which when completed are removed from the playing area.

If any gaps in the layer are blocked off from above, then the next, higher layer must be completed before access to the holes can be gained, thus making the going harder. If the blocks mount up filling the well, then the game is ended and you start again.

There are three basic modes of play corresponding to different block sets - Flat, Basic and

Extended. The flat set has shapes only one block deep, so it's easy to form them into layers. The Basic set contains more irregular shapes and the Extended set can be of any proportions, making the game particularly tough to crack.

Different game types can be created from an options page, determining the block set to be used, the size and depth of the well and the starting speed of the game. So a massive eight-by-eight well 20 blocks deep with extended blocks piling into the shaft would undoubtedly be rather hair-raising!

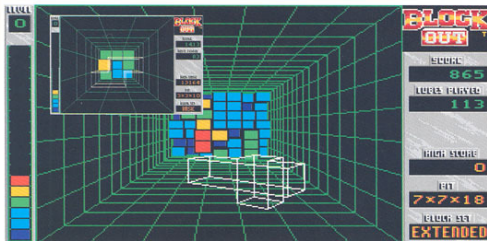
Maff Evans

LASTING INTEREST

The action is fairly easy to get into, the only real hassle being the 3D rotation to get the pieces to fit. However the system isn't that complex and soon becomes second nature. As you'd expect the going is pretty compulsive, and even if you do think you've mastered the art of layer building, shifting the options around could add considerably more challenge than you'd expect!

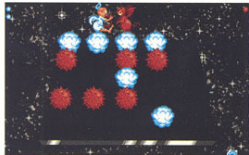
JUDGEMENT

On first sight, *Block Out* could well be passed off as a *Welltris* rip-off. This is unfair, since *Block Out* is a true 3D puzzle game, with the player having to think not only in width and height but also in depth. Don't dismiss the game out of hand! Have a try and you'll see that it has enough of its own character to stand up as a challenging game in its own right and for many people will have more appeal than *Welltris*.

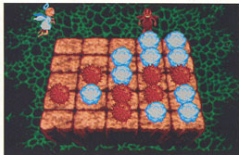


ABOVE: Look at the depth of that well! It's so far down that you can't see the holes properly. Maybe that's why this game is going so badly. INSET: A narrow well - not recommended for claustrophobic players!

GRAPHICS	7
SOUND	4
INTELLECT	6
ADDITION	8
OVERALL	8.4%



Body-checking the angel to line up your move.



The devil tries to block the angel's diagonal line.

ANTAGO

ART OF DREAMS £19.95 ■ Joystick

Immortality's a drag. Ask any angel: it's all hanging about on clouds, twanging harps and wearing long dresses. One day, though, during a brief respite in the war between good and evil, the cherubs got together with the devils. Between them they created a game to fend off the monotony and they called it *Antago*.

An *Othello/Checkers* hybrid, *Antago* has few rules but bucketloads of strategy. The angel and devil face up across a board, five squares by five. Each takes it in turn to place pieces on the board with the aim of getting five of their own in a row. The angel uses cute clouds, while the devil plays with huge spiked balls.

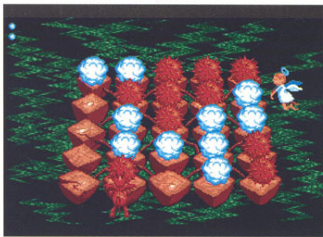
The players can only reach the very edge of the gameboard, so they are unable to directly affect the pieces in the centre. However, when a new piece is conjured where one already exists, the new ball or cloud forces the present one a square forward, with a knock-on effect down the line.

If there's already five in the row then the last piece is simply pushed off the board into oblivion.

Subtlety and cunning are required as lines are manoeuvred to create a winning row (any row of five will do). When the board clogs up with red and white blobs, the skill of disguising your poten-

tial line becomes increasingly important: with just one piece, you try to bump the balls to produce a winning line from nowhere. The one rule is that you can't knock the last piece placed by your opponent into the void. It can be moved, but not destroyed.

Trenton Webb



It's tit-for-tat as the two players keep blocking each other's lines.

GRAPHICS AND SOUND

Antago is cute. The Angel sports a night-shirt and halo, the devil a pot-belly and horns. Floating around the board they body-check each other mercilessly out of the way. They even drop subtle hints about the speed of play, filling their nails, looking bored or reading hymn sheets between slow moves. These caricature sprites are juxtaposed with swirling surreal backgrounds and backed up with an eerily atmospheric theme tune, making *Antago* an instantly attractive game.

LASTING INTEREST

Playing against the machine, interest can be sustained with a batch of pre-generated boards. These add extra conundrums and complications. The game's real charm, though, lies in one-on-one contests against a friend, when it's a head-to-head, knives-drawn, back-stabbing fight.

JUDGEMENT

Undeniably cute and instantly playable, *Antago* is destined to be an occasional game rather than a lasting passion. Even its twee characters and wild backgrounds cannot compensate for the lack of long-term solo appeal. In one-on-one mode it's great, but alone even the horde of pre-configured boards can't sustain long-term interest.

GRAPHICS	8
SOUND	5
INTELLECT	7
ADDICTION	6
OVERALL	65%

PYRAMAX

ARC £19.99 ■ JOYSTICK

The Thaalians were an ancient race that over the years developed machines and robots to serve them - but when the androids rebelled the Thaalians had no defence against their own creations. The robots constructed a great pyramid of six levels, at the very top of which was the crystal of Thaal which held the knowledge of the entire Thaalian civilisation.

As Max Danger, intrepid intergalactic explorer, you must make your way through

all six levels to reach the crystal of Thaal and to learn of its vast intellect. To do this you must explore each room and touch the touchstone which you will find in each - once you have touched every touchstone on the level you will progress to the next.

Along the way you can collect handy objects such as spells which act as smart bombs or extra energy, as well as bonus objects which do naff all except boost up your score.



Max Danger, intrepid explorer and... erm... green frog-like thing.

The graphics are a bit limited and show little detail but the sprites move smoothly. The whole thing slows down noticeably when more than three objects are moving about on screen. Sound is narrowed

down to an annoying little tune, footsteps and explosions. Overall, gameplay is spoiled by the lack of sound during play and the difficulty level is simply too high - reaching the end is too great a task. Jason Edgell

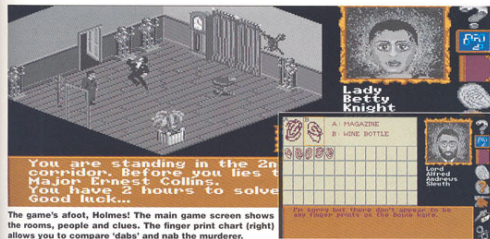
GRAPHICS 5 / SOUND 4 / INTELLECT 4 / ADDICTION 5 / OVERALL 52%



The tabloids announce the crime and its solution with their customary restraint and tact.

MURDER

US GOLD £24.99 ■ Mouse



The game's afoot, Holmes! The main game screen shows the rooms, people and clues. The finger print chart (right) allows you to compare 'dabs' and nab the murderer.

Murder's been committed. It will be two hours before Scotland Yard's flat-foots arrive at the old country house, so as Britain's greatest detective you've the chance to catch the criminal and claim the fame.

Murder's the name and crime's your game. The tabloids announce your arrival at the scene and then it's time for some clue sniffing. Using questions, fingerprinting and the faithful old notebook you must find the murder weapon, identify the culprit and book 'em Danno (Murder One).

The isometric 3D mansion's halls and rooms must be searched for clues. Using a mouse either to dictate direction or to act as a magnifying glass for close-up inspection of people or objects, the trench-coated sleuth is off on the trail. For in-depth grilling of suspects, slap the eye-glass over

a suspect and hit the 'question' icon. Using a number of variables you can ask suspects about themselves, others, relationships, objects and places. If the right person's asked the right thing it should eventually become apparent who topped who and with what. Of course you can't be expected to remember twenty different versions of the same story, so with a crafty click on the notebook you jot it down.

All entries in the book are cross-referenced as they're made. So if you discover that Mister Bates was arguing with the victim in the hallway, shortly after picking up the bread knife, then the info's stored under clues and people.

The other major source of clues is fingerprints. In time-honoured fashion the sleuth can dust anything he sees lying around for 'dabs'. If the victim was stabbed,

getting prints off the four knives is a priority, but other 'unconnected' objects may hold the key to the mystery. Identifying the prints requires use of the comparison chart, where all the fingerprints you take during one game are logged. This often leads to great amounts of chasing people round, waiting for them to put an object down so you can dust it.

Once you've established who did what, it's time to grab hold of exhibit 'A,' click on the cuffs and wait. If you're successful then a banner tabloid headline proclaims you as the greatest living detective since Miss Marple traded in her zimmer. Fail and you're ridiculed, without a clue as to whether you had the right person and the wrong weapon, wrong person and right weapon or if you were just totally and utterly wrong.

Trenton Webb



What was Margo King doing with the ashtray in the bedroom?



Better check the floorplan to save to time and shoe-leather.



Look in your notebook to review the clues you've collected so far.

GRAPHICS AND SOUND

Starting with a scream, *Murder* sounds promising, yet there are few effects. Taps drip and gravel paths grate, neither hindering or helping the game. The black-and-white isometric 3D screens help capture the murder mystery atmosphere beautifully.

The objects are easily visible, but all the suspects look identical, repeats of the same stock types - butlers, maids, flapper dress or dinner-jacket. The side-screen graphics make up for this with identikit faces, enlarged finger prints, and the 'hand-written' notebook.

LASTING INTEREST

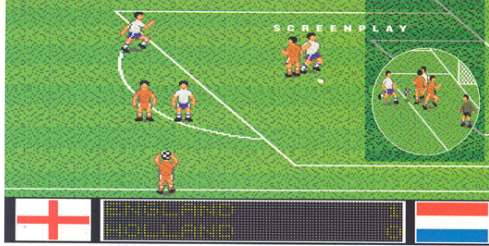
With a different murder to solve every single day for over 30 years and four skill levels - amateur to supersleuth - there's plenty to keep you busy. The harder levels simply mean bigger rooms, more suspects and increasingly complex plots. Finding the enthusiasm to solve these crimes may be a problem, though. It's fun announcing 'who-dunnit' but detection requires dogged questioning and isn't the glossy glamour job that messers Magnum and Lansbury make out on TV. Saying the same thing to thirty different suspects gets tiring. The determined will love it, but for others the novelty of getting the butter banged up for 25 years will wear off after a few murders (he wrote).

JUDGEMENT

A puzzle game with a real difference, *Murder* blends the genre of the adventure, where precise questions elicit the best answers, and arcade-style games where speed is important. It's not just the two-hour time limit, but getting to objects before the prints are wiped by that swine with the hanky.

Murder needs intuition and a nose for a lie if you're to solve the crime and claim the glory. When that fails you can fall back on methodical police work, quizzing everyone, dusting everything and guessing. *Murder* taxes the mind and patience, but if you want to commit them rather than solve them an action game might be a better idea.

GRAPHICS	7
SOUND	2
INTELLECT	8
ADDICTION	6
OVERALL	81%



Not so much a football game as a football sim. Everything's seen from the stands, as the realistic players head, tackle and slide for glory. Even the set piece moves are under your guidance, so express yourself.

EMLYN HUGHES INTERNATIONAL SOCCER

AUDIOGENIC £24.95 ■ Joystick/Mouse

This soccer game has already spent a few weeks bobbing about above the murky depths of the Amiga charts which, one presumes, has less to do with the somewhat dubious licence than with the quality of the game itself.

It's simple enough. The idea is to pick the best players from the squad, give them the benefit of your tactical prowess and, with adept joystick waggling, stuff some opposition. While it is pitched as a mish-mash of tactics and action the most appealing aspects of the game will take the reflexes and subtlety of movement rather than any heavy duty teasing of grey matter.

There are more options than you'll ever find useful - you decide how long matches are, whether to play auto-goalie (a good idea at first) and other such domesticities.

Let's say, just for the hell of it, that you fancy running the England show. You're presented with the opportunity to practice with some friendlies, or enter a cup and league competition with class opposition. The players have the kind of bland names one expects but it doesn't take long to change the likes of Green and Jones into Gascoigne and Lineker. The names of international opposition are inane enough (Cousteau and Bleriot play for France) to merit being left alone.

Each player has various attributes indicated on an extremely simple table and you can manipulate these to suit any requirements. Once all this fuss is over you can get down to some real fun. Everyone knows that a good game is simple to play and difficult to master. *Emlyn Hughes*

starts off with the right idea. It doesn't take long to learn how to win the ball and distribute it. Scoring, and therefore beating the opposition, is a wholly different ball game.

Tricky joystick manipulation will give you the power to put the ball any place you please, but these skills need time and practice to be developed. The way to win is to get the measure of the pitch and work from there. The players will do the rest, at your command.

Unlike so many soccer games the offside rule has been included and it seems impossible to find players in an offending position.

No doubt everyone who brings this home will have a good fiddle with the match options. But the game is essentially a knock about, and a jolly good one at that.

Colin Campbell

GRAPHICS AND SOUND

You can sense that this game has graduated from the 8-bits - the visuals are 'functional'. Players, while a tad stiff, do not suffer chronic arthritis. The crowd sound is cheerful and wonderful so despite being merely a random bag of muffled crowd cheers, beeping horns and unintelligible chants, it adds to the atmosphere and should be turned up. But kill the music at the earliest opportunity.

Pick that squad, then alter their abilities to give you max power.

LASTING INTEREST

Definitely one of the more durable footie games mainly because of its wide range of shots and passes. Victory over all the computer opponents will take time and there are enough surprises to make it a good wheeze for two players.

JUDGEMENT

It lacks speed, tactical difficulties are virtually non-existent and shouldn't be taken too seriously, but nevertheless it's a lot more fun than a Saturday afternoon at Wycombe Wanderers.

GRAPHICS	6
SOUND	6
INTELLECT	3
ADDITION	8
OVERALL	78%

EVERTON FC INTELLIGENSIA

AMFAS £19.95 ■ Joystick/Mouse

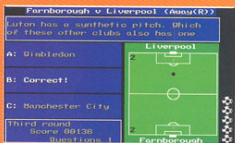
A straightforward soccer quiz with a format based loosely on the FA Cup. Choose a team, find out who the opposition is and try to win by correctly answering more questions than you goof on. If you are drawn at home against the likes of Tranmere Rovers then there are only a few questions to answer. However, a trip to Old Trafford in the quarter finals is far real football trivia nuts.

The questions are multiple choice with three possible

answers. Most are straightforward text affairs along the lines of "What was the name of the dog who found the World Cup when it went missing?" There are a few picture questions, usually "Who is this?", the answer mostly being Carlos Valderama or Andy Roxburgh - try not to mix them up.

The designers have dispensed with pretty images so in the visuals department, this is a pretty dismal offering. It's just a quiz game and doesn't

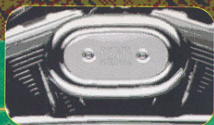
pretend to be anything else. Unfortunately, despite the obvious attraction of obscure soccer facts, there is little to whet the appetite. Sadly so many of the teasers are nothing of the sort and if you don't know who won the Littlewoods Cup in 1988 a process of elimination will put you in good stead. There's also



Get it right and the ball moves into scoring range.

chronic repetition of questions. There are nearly 1,700 - but who wants to answer 50 of them 300 times before we see them all? *Colin Campbell*

GRAPHICS 2 / SOUND 3 / INTELLECT 5 / ADDITION 5 / OVERALL 53%



Sturgis

HARLEY DAVIDSON

MINDSCAPE £24.99 ■ Mouse

Anyone involved in the world of Harley-Davidson motorcycles will undoubtedly be familiar with the biker rally in Sturgis, South Dakota. Like the Beetle owners' 'Bug Jam', the Sturgis rally is the place to be once a year for riders of these much-revered two-wheeled machines.

In Mindscape's licence, you play a rider based in Maine who only has ten days to reach Sturgis. Belting down the highway at full pelt is not the way to do it, though - this way you will either come a

cropper on a pothole or two and end up in hospital, or get picked up by the police for speeding! A couple of bad things that it is best to make sure you avoid.

There are regular stops on the way that will allow you to buy some extra kit for your bike, some clothes or even have a tattoo. If you feel up to it, you can take part in a special event. Take care on the way, be a helpful soul and pick up hitch-hikers if you want, but get to Sturgis on time - the festivities are waiting! **Maff Evans**



There isn't much time for sightseeing, so pull past those annoyingly slow drivers and hit the open road ahead.

GRAPHICS AND SOUND

The presentation of *Harley-Davidson* is pretty nifty, with some nice digitised pics and location shots, but the actual road sections are not that exciting. The perspective 3D road effect is fair enough, but the sprites are a little limited and are only adequately animated. The sound, too, is a shade weak and could do with perking up.

LASTING INTEREST

Even though there is a long way to go and the events are fun, the actual road-driving that takes up most of the game is pretty repetitive and uninspiring. The feel of a trek on the open road astride a powerful machine doesn't quite reach its full potential and could bore casual bike fans after only a couple of days.

JUDGEMENT

The chance to ride a classic bike across the United States is a romantic and appealing thought, isn't it? Unfortunately, despite its slick presentation and humour (using biker slang at every opportunity), *The Road to Sturgis* hardly captures the feel at all. What we have is a basic 3D driving game that has a few extra elements thrown in. The special events are worth playing for, and maybe just to dream of doing the run to Sturgis for real will attract some gamers, but ultimately, most Harley fans will find themselves unfulfilled, end up ignoring the conversion and stick to the open road with the real thing.

GRAPHICS	7
SOUND	4
INTELLECT	3
ADDICTION	5
OVERALL	67%



Pull into the bike shop when you hit a town to stock up on fuel and anything else that you may need to keep runnin' free.



Burning off down the strip in a most impressive fashion.



Picking up hitchers is a good way of making new friends.



It's nice to meet a friendly face in the stop-offs of a long journey.

COMBO RACER

GREMLIN £19.99 ■ Joystick/Keyboard

There's been a garage full of racing sims over the past year. So one has to be either very special or different to merit a second look. *Combo Racer's* claim to fame is simultaneous two player action, with rider and passenger working together for speed.

Combo Racer has all the elements that a strong racing title requires. It offers a variety of courses for seasons of high speed action, and gives you the chance to try something outrageously daft at no personal risk. It even comes with a course designer to help out in the lasting interest stakes.

Controlled by joystick in the traditional manner (up to accelerate, back to brake) etc *Combo Racer* is easy to get to grips with. Precise changes of direction, speed and gears are required to even qualify, let alone race. The opposition's good enough to leave crash victims for dead and even the very best must struggle to win, while the undulating tracks, complete with tunnels, are varied enough to test a riders ability.

What makes *Combo Racer* different is the two player mode, which allows racing in pairs. In a



The course designer allows you to create your own racing nightmare (top left). When racing though it's staying on the road that is important: one slip of line, corner too fast, or have a badly positioned passenger and a crash (top right) is the only possible result.

one man game the computer takes care of the passenger's fiddly bits - shifting their weight to give the bike greater traction. In two player mode one person takes the handle bars, the other dons a helmet and controls the passenger. He plays a vital role because if he's not perfectly positioned a

terminal flip out's all too probable. Crashing costs time and loss of face. In *Combo Racer* it also affects the bike's performance. Each collision costs 3% engine damage, and after a few shunts you soon lose the title of Racer and start looking at a funky *Combo Moped*. Trenton Webb

GRAPHICS AND SOUND

Speed's the soul of any racing sim and *Combo Racer* moves with eye-numbing rapidity. Corners loom with frightening suddenness, a factor complicated by the dips and rises on each course. The bike responds well, hanging on line if controlled properly, but dishing out big penalties in the form of crashes to the careless. Soundwise the game lacks convincing effects, with a simple engine sound and a tolerable intro theme.

LASTING INTEREST

The big plus points should be the track designer and the two player mode. The course creator breathes life into it, but only for people who find racing itself inexhaustibly entertaining. The two player option is disappointing, with the passenger's involvement limited to corners. Even there it's simply a matter of pushing the stick to one side - not scintillating gameplay.

JUDGEMENT

A first-class racing sim, but *Combo Racer* lacks the magical spark of a classic. The course designer will only interest die-hard bikers, while two-player games are too limited to be of consequence. *Combo Racer* is a commendable entry in a packed field, but lacks the poke to take pole position.

GRAPHICS	7
SOUND	2
INTELLECT	2
ADDICTION	6
OVERALL	69%

WILDLIFE

MD PRODUCTION £TBA ■ Mouse

The word Green now has two meanings: naivety or environmental concern. A fact that has to be borne in mind when playing *Wildlife*. In this photo safari, your job's to take interesting pics of animals and shoot a few poachers. After selecting one of four continents and being told which three animals to snap, you're whisked off to the country in question. Use the icons to grab your camera components, then use two lenses and a rifle

to complete the assignment. As the landscape scrolls horizontally across from right to left poachers and animals pop up. You select either the camera or rifle, place the cursor over the target and start shooting. Occasionally there's medi-kits, to heal damage the poachers' bullets have done to you, and more film to grab.

Wildlife has a whole flock of albatrosses hanging about its neck. The game style itself is original, following in the



There's only one way to deal with poachers - shoot 'em.

same tracks as *Safari Gubs* (sorry, *Guns*) but lacking the facility to examine the pics you've taken, a feature of *SG*. It's also too easy and lacks involved gameplay, all you need is a quick mouse hand and it's game over. Finally and

most importantly the game's very pretty, but there's no addictive hook. Essentially *Op Wolf* without gameplay or graphics, so you'd have to be very green indeed to find *Wildlife* appealing. Trenton Webb

As the Iron Curtain finally comes down on the Cold War, out from the depths of mid-Eighties Reaganesque jingoism sails *Red Storm Rising*. Based on the techno-thriller by Tom Clancy and Larry Bond, this simulation pits the best of the Russian and US navies against each other in a fight to the finish.

In a game based over four different time zones, commanders can fight battles beneath the sea any time from 1984 to a factitious future where new developments in weapons technology make death-dealing easy. As an American nuclear submarine commander, your job is to sink Ruskie freighters, carriers, destroyers and subs who, not surprisingly, want to do the same to you.

Commanders have a selection of screens to watch as they prey beneath the seas, with cursor shots of sinking ships thrown in for good measure. The skill comes not only from being in the right place to strike, but also from accessing the correct charts and weapons to be effective. The main game's viewed on a tactical map and so subs and ships are only seen as blips on a radar screen.

There's masses of other information a budding Cap'n Nemo must take into account while sailing. Many things make the art of detecting enemy shipping without being detected yourself difficult. Thermal ducts in the water can mask or distort sonar, while certain bits of nautical kit function better at different depths and speeds. Acoustic signatures can be compared to identify a ship class, while the detection levels can be watched, letting you know just how sly you've been.

These toys for the boys would be incomplete without weaponry. It's here that RSR metamorphoses from a diverting undersea drive into a true game. Torpedoes have manifold abilities, and can be fired undetectably and unjammably on wire, or can hunt ships on their own with sonar in preset left or right search patterns.

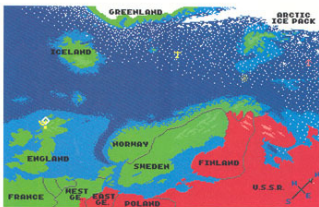


Mission complete, and it's time for medals and back-slapping.



RED STORM

MICROPROSE £24.99 ■
MOUSE AND KEYBOARD



The war map, hunting ground for nuclear submarines of each and every persuasion. Will you be the hunter or the prey, though?

Missiles can be launched at shallower depths, but make you rather obvious. You need to know which defence systems which ships pack, because it's stupid to give away the element of surprise with a weapon that will not sink the opposition. Once they realise you're about it's kill or be killed.

The action is largely key controlled, so the MicroProse standard 'punch out chart' is essential. As the hunt takes shape decisions have to be instantaneous and correct. It's the thrill of the chase, the sudden strike from the deep followed by a charge for the welcoming anonymity of the ocean. In the middle of a battle the quick reference chart can save

your life, when a reload's needed and you can't remember the key stroke sequence. This speed of action contrasts with the authentic, but terrifying, slowness of the 7,000-ton beast you control.

Simultaneous reading and playing is never a totally enjoyable experience, but it's vital if you're to weather the storm. The list of variables is truly immense, but there are a few manoeuvres that must be learnt – skills which the practice options are designed to build. Once armed with experience it's time to start out on single raids and eventually go for the big one, the Red Storm campaign – the Russian hordes en masse.

Trenton Webb

GRAPHICS AND SOUND

RSR is an odd simulation, because there's no 'cockpit view' – only maps, charts and the virtually useless periscope. This lack of the 'being there' sensation doesn't detract from the excitement. When the torps start scraping the paint from your ship, palms perspire and tempers fray. Zooming in and out of the tactical map, commanders must make the right call at the right moment. Lives – your crew's and your nation's – depend on success.

As with any game where there's a 'run silent' option, the sounds of RSR are no great shakes. The prop chugs away in the background, but little else. Even when a direct hit's scored and you watch mighty warships sink beneath the waves, there's no fury from graphics or sound. Explicit violence is not the reason you persevere with RSR.

LASTING INTEREST

Controlling a nuclear sub takes skill and practice. Add this to the challenge of a full-blown war, the outcome of which your actions actually affect (the game doesn't slavishly follow the book – the scenario starts with the same premise but changes as you sink more shipping) and RSR has

RISING



1134 hours 06/01/84

Captain, we have a sonar contact, bearing 022 degrees!
Navigation shows coastal water.

Your Orders, Sir?

All hands, Battle Station!
NO, Report Ship Status
Review Mission Orders
Computer Log

The crew report a sonar contact. Track it, identify it and kill it. Use any of the weapons available, just as long as it works.

massive potential in the staying-power stakes. The lack of stunning graphics will inhibit the short-term player who wants to see large vessels flying through undersea trenches, but not the long-term strategist or war techie. They'll relish the test of continual battle with a diminishing supply of weapons, attacking more dangerous targets with an increasingly damaged boat.

JUDGEMENT

In RSR valour is banished to the brig: cold-headed actions and cool nerves see you through. It brings the complexities of modern sub war to the small screen with polish and finesse, if

not graphic greatness. RSR is complex enough to challenge, yet structured to allow the player greater freedom as skill develops. Get too cocky, by jumping in at the deep end on ultimate difficulty level, and your next port of call is Locker 3F, Jones D. Develop your sub skills, though, and you could blast the pride of the Russian navy into scrap, unseen and safe.

GRAPHICS	4
SOUND	1
INTELLECT	10
ADDITION	8
OVERALL	89%



The main playing screen is the tactical display. From here you must guide the sub to naval victory or at least survival.



The sea is not always cruel: Using the thermal properties of the ocean it can help disguise your presence.



Controlling your torpedoes on wire, they can sneak up on enemy shipping undetected giving you a chance to escape.

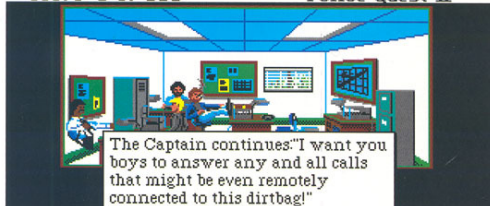


As your torp heads off after a ship using its own sonar, commanders must dodge the incoming enemy fire.



Score: 8 of 300

Police Quest II



The Captain continues: "I want you boys to answer any and all calls that might be even remotely connected to this dirtbag!"

The quest begins with a none-too-complimentary analysis of your quarry. At the police station you must gather all available information; other detectives may know something vital that could blow the case open. You'll also need to gather a certain amount of hardware, such as your gun and cuffs.

POLICE QUEST 2

SIERRA ON-LINE / ACTIVISION £34.95 ■
Keyboard / Joystick / Mouse

Police Quest 2 revolves around being a police officer at work: detective Sonny Bonds, on the homicide squad in the fictional American town of Lytton. No choosing skills for a personalised character - Bonds likes his job and he isn't going to change.

Arriving at the police station one morning, you receive a note about a retrial for Jessie Bains. Bains is the "Death Angel", a murderer with whom Bonds has crossed swords before - what do you think Police Quest was about? A few minutes later, urgent news is flashed to you. Bains has escaped and he has a hostage - what now?

What you don't do is leap into a patrol car and drive to the crime scene. Such positive action lands you in trouble. This is a "true to life tale of high police adventure", as the box proudly proclaims, written by an American ex-policeman called Jim Walls!

First of all you have to get the paperwork sorted out. Don't worry about that hostage - he's been dead for hours. Believe it or not, the entire police station has the same attitude towards the public good as the very responsible guy who designed Chernobyl.

Asking your captain for help doesn't do a lot of good either. He's exactly the stereotype you see on every American cop show: angry, busy and short on friendly words. Well, not exactly all that busy. He gets through an awful lot of ice lollies and telephone calls and then he turns round and tells you to get on with the job.

This is how a real police officer behaves? The USA does have a very high crime rate, especially murder, but Lytton's law enforcement community just doesn't care. If this is a "true to life tale of high police adventure"

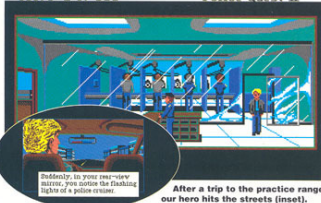
I'll take something like *South American Death Squad Simulator* any time - I bet they'd show more concern and compassion for their fellow man.

I'd love to know what to do next on the administrative side but I haven't a clue. You just don't find that sort of thing out from Dirty Harry films. How do you get further? Well, you can spend hours just trying to get ten minutes into the game. Playing *Police Squad 2* can be as predictable as the forms you get to fill before you have the chance to get the cuffs out.

Pat McDonald

Score: 2 of 300

Police Quest II



Suddenly, in your first-view mirror, you notice the flashing lights of a police cruiser.

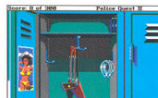
After a trip to the practice range our hero hits the streets (inset).

GRAPHICS AND SOUND

It's a pretty game and no mistake - better looking than Hero's Quest. When you adjust the sights on your gun you couldn't ask for a clearer picture of what's going on. Driving around Lytton is a bit tedious as it all looks the same. The speed at which the graphics move puts me in mind of a Citroen 2CV - it gets there but it takes time. Audiwise there isn't a lot. I was promised a 30 minute original stereo theme tune... somewhere.

LASTING INTEREST

This game will have you running around the ceiling in frustration. It's a three-disk game and there's whole a lot of accessing going on. This sort of one-solution puzzle can become highly irritating and, as such, is not recommended for the beginner. You can't so much cut your teeth on this game as blunt your teeth on this game as blunt your chainsaw blade a bit. It's very, very difficult indeed.



A policeman's locker's not a happy one (happy one), but the decoration helps lift the mood.

JUDGEMENT

Police Quest 2 can make you livid. After spending a good few hours getting totally fed up it's all too possible to want to blow away your captain in frustration. This costs your badge and leaves you still far from solving the Jessie Bains Case.

If you think you could be a real American police officer, then go for it. The game is good EXCEPT that it requires an immense effort to play. When I play a computer game I expect progress not blood, sweat and tears. Some will find emulating the job of a modern American 'tec enthralling, but most will find it far too realistic - with its heavy procedural bias - reminding them of a hard day at the office. Not the ideal way to relax after a hard day at the office.

GRAPHICS	7
SOUND	4
INTELLECT	8
ADDICTION	3
OVERALL	69%



Alien Encounter. This mission has three objectives, but since you teleport into the middle of a bug-eyed aliens' convention it means staying alive is the most pressing matter on your mind.

BREACH 2

IMPRESSIONS £24.99 ■ Mouse/Keyboard

If you've ever fancied getting your hands on a phased plasma rifle with a forty-watt range and bagging yourself a bug from Planet X, now's your chance, as Impressions take us once more to the Breach, dear friends. Of course, *Breach 2* is the sequel to Omnitrax's classic original.

A futuristic combat/role-playing game, *Breach 2* gives you control of a bunch of star-warriors struggling for peace, justice and freedom. Each individual squadie has a predetermined supply of arms, ammunition and medical supplies, which have to be employed within a team strategy to complete a mission. It's either a search-and-destroy sortie where everything's fair game, or military intelligence (surely a contradiction in terms) tasks where information or prisoners must be liberated.

Seen from an overview map, the troopers stand on or in the various geographical features. These affect everything from the amount of cover to movement rates. Even the fighting's subservient to the map, working on the principle that it's only possible to shoot what you can actually see. And if a bad guy's hiding around the corner you won't know he's there till you step round and take a peek.

Moving's simply a case of drawing a line between the trooper's present position and his destination. Shooting's a matter of facing the right way and clicking on the man, creature or thing you want to blast. If you're lucky, a hit's calculated and they die in an acrid cloud of laser-induced smoke.

Each soldier in your squad has a set of statistics. Health points and vitality are the most crucial, determining movement and how long the man will live. Both can be recovered with rest or medipaks.

Different stats come into play when troopers try to 'crack' enemy computers or during other, more avant garde, activities. Like all actions in *Breach 2*, success or failure is governed by role-playing percentages, with the Amiga doing the cross-referencing instead of your poor, tired finger.

The real key to *Breach 2* is strategy. Since this is based on the actions of a small group, the battles should be short skirmishes where single shots tip the balance, not drawn-out artillery duels. Continual awareness of the group's status is essential. Superior troop strength almost



Making life difficult for yourself with the mission designer kit.

guarantees success, but correct use of equipment can be a real time-saver and a life-saver. A well-placed grenade or neutron bomb could avoid turn after turn of futile laser fire.

Initially *Breach 2* is confusing, with troopers only accessible in a certain order and missed mouse-clicks causing unintentional buddy blasting. Once you are over this hurdle though, it's the missions that cause the real problems – and that's just as it should be.

Trenton Webb



At the river crossing, battle is joined. Use those grenades!

GRAPHICS AND SOUND

Breach 2 doesn't look too good, with small repeated sprites overlaid on a basic map, but it doesn't need to be stunning. The squad are purely pieces in a highly-evolved chess game and the map's no more than an easily viewed information system, that relates details of terrain and cover quickly.

Sound, on the other hand, is not something that wargames generally stress, but *Breach 2* scores strongly. With neat laser shot effect and quirky death cries tied in with a laid-back jazz number to signify victory, this is something of an exception to the rule. While no sonic cathedral, the sounds suitably heighten the fun to be had when zapping defenceless individuals.

LASTING INTEREST

Breach 2 is packed with good scenarios that can be linked into a campaign, gradually increasing in difficulty – from tough to mission impossible level – as your surviving squad leader grows in power. The initial set-ups alone will keep determined warriors in battle fatigues for months. As a last ace up its sleeve, though, *Breach 2* throws in a mission designer. This allows you to give the enemy or yourself more firepower for serious carnage.

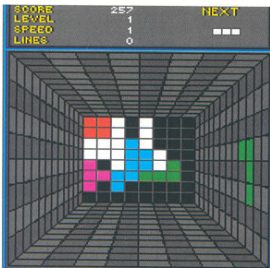
JUDGEMENT

Breach 2 is slow, but strangely absorbing. Once the game as a concept is understood, players can start to use the mechanics of each scenario to their benefit, exploiting the strengths and limiting the weaknesses of a squad. Which makes *Breach 2* the obvious choice for those who like their wars to be personal, face-to-face, hate-filled affairs.



The element of surprise is vital. Having forded the river the marine is ready to deal out some punishment. Lock and load, rebel slime balls.

GRAPHICS	3
SOUND	6
INTELLECT	9
ADDITION	5
OVERALL	79%



Everyone else has gone off to church, so it's time for some serious tile flinging while they're all away!



GRAPHICS AND SOUND

With a game like *Welltris*, there isn't really much need for super snazzy sound and graphics, since the gameplay is all that really counts. Having particularly bad colours on screen could make the going a little daunting though! Fortunately, *Welltris* has been very well designed. The graphics are sharp and clear, with some rather pretty side-screens to make progressing through the levels a bit more interesting. The sound effects are rather atmospheric too, if a little sparse, with an echoey 'clunk' as the pieces slam together when a line is completed and a ghostly howl when a wall is locked up. Unfortunately the tune makes a return to the overly jangly and twee Russian folk songs. After all there is a picture of a rock band in the game, so why couldn't we have a more rockin' soundtrack?

LASTING INTEREST

If you start playing *Welltris*, don't plan on having much of a social life! The first game is all you need to get hooked, then it's just one more game, then another, then another, then...

JUDGEMENT

No other puzzle game has managed to break the bounds of originality quite in the same way as *Tetris* when it first appeared four years ago. The game was so addictive that many people still play it today! *Welltris* isn't quite as original - after all, it is a follow-up - but the principal is just as challenging as ever, and the new variations make it seem almost as fresh as when *Tetris* first appeared. Whether you consider yourself a puzzle freak or not, get hold of a copy of *Welltris*, then try the real challenge of tearing yourself away from the game!

GRAPHICS	7
SOUND	4
INTELLECT	6
ADDITION	9
OVERALL	88%

WELLTRIS

INFOGRAMES £24.99 ■ Keyboard



A high score has been reached, so out comes the vodka and everyone has a right good singalong! These chaps certainly know how to throw a good celebration knees-up!

Whenever puzzle games come under the scrutiny of the reviewer, no matter how eloquent the prose, talk returns to the all-time classic *Tetris*. This time around it just can't be avoided - *Welltris* is the follow-up!

The original had the player manipulating falling blocks so that they formed lines in a vertical, rectangular grid. *Welltris* follows the same principal, except the action takes place in four planes instead of one. Sound confusing?

Well it's actually quite simple. Shapes made up of squares fall down the sides of a square 'well'. While they're on the sides of the well, the player can move the pieces sideways around the walls and rotate them through 90 degrees. When the piece hits the bottom of the well, it slides across until it hits a wall or another piece.

The idea is to make solid lines either vertically or horizontally, which are then removed allowing the remaining pieces to slide

towards the middle, thus freeing up space around the walls. As an occasional extra a larger bonus piece appears which, when fitted into the grid, gives an extra boost to your score and advances the speed up to the next level.

If any piece leaves a square on the side of the well, then that wall turns red and no piece can be moved onto it for three moves. If all four walls turn red at one time, then no more pieces can appear and it's game over. **Maff Evans**



A multitude of options is available to suit your own needs.



"Ow 'bout it eh? Just a quick go at *Welltris* back at my place?"



Russian popsters rock it up - so why the weedy game music?

Vietnam in 1966. 400,000 American soldiers fighting a war on foreign soil, for a cause few understand. The US military, winning hearts and minds at the point of gun, rules the air. The VC, baptised by fire at Dien Bien Phu, rule the jungle.

This is now your problem: your squad was returning to base in a helicopter when the 'bird' went down. Stranded 57 miles from 'home' walking's the only option. Armed with minimal ammo, a few grenades and two days' supply of food, the Lost Patrol is under your command. The only obstacles that lie in the way are minefields, VC patrols, hostile villagers, booby traps and falling morale.

In this unique icon-controlled graphic adventure, you must guide the team across the main game map to the last outpost on the road to hell - Du Hoc, the only place you can call home. A compass is used to guide the boys by clicking on one of the points. The team walks at three

different speeds - double march, normal and extreme caution. It would be better to travel at 'gee Mom, I'm scared' pace, checking every blade of grass, but the food supply won't allow it.

Your grunts can search areas, rest and dig in for the night. Traps can be laid with either grenades or claymores. Food consumption must be strictly limited. No vast list of options, but enough to survive in Charlie's back yard.

Using recon info, scouts work out the lie of the land terrain-wise but not Charlie-wise. The enemy just pops up, in small parties or large groups toting heavy machine guns, and each has a different arcade sequence to decide the encounter's outcome.

One-on-one confrontations are beat-up sub-games. Both troopers stupidly put down their guns and try to punch the living daylight out of each other. Group encounters have the marines pinned down in a foxhole. Standing up to shoot or throw

grenades and ducking to avoid the Cong in a Op Thunderbolt-style blast. Against the machine gun bunker, grenades are the only option, and they're in short supply. So soldiers need quick, accurate and careful throwing.

Other interactive elements of *Lost Patrol* (aka *Nine go mad in Indo China*) are the minefields, snipers and dealing with villagers. Minefields require a bayonet and some slow digging if you're to get past without going 'poof'. Snipers are a pain in just about any part of the body. Your chosen marksman scans the tree-line with a telescopic sight, seeking the virtually invisible muzzle flash of the VC

who's taking your squad apart man by man. Dealing with locals gets very heavy indeed, with two of the four options being kill one and kill all - we are talking Mai Lai simulator here. Questioning them can earn food, while searches reveal tunnels.

The men who are under your command are a fickle bunch, considering you're trying to save their necks. Cut the food supply down and they complain. Make them march too fast or too long and they whinge about lack of sleep, and if morale drops they run off into the bush. Suicidal for them and the rest of the platoon.

Trenton Webb



One of the neatly art-worked incidental screens.



At war with the VC. Blast them before they shoot you!

LOST PATROL

OCEAN £24.99 ■ Joystick/Mouse/Keyboard

On patrol with the lost boys. The red 'X' marks your current position, but you must decide the quickest, safest route to get the squad back to Du Hoc. The occasional graphic helps while away those hours in the bush. Inset: the team starts look pretty grim. A rest may help them get some strength back and boost morale, but will the food supplies take it?



Facing the sniper is a tense business. The sights have to be used to scan the tree-line looking for a tiny muzzle flash - then shoot!

GRAPHICS AND SOUND

Lost Patrol is a joy to watch. Packed with still and animated screens, it captures the war-weary mood of the GIs and the natural beauty of Vietnam. These still frames are backed up with digitised sequences of troopers romping through the jungle, M-16s at the ready. These can be turned off to speed play along, but are vital to the game's structure. Motivation stems from the desire to see the next scene as much as getting back to Du Hoc for a warm can of Bud'.

The movie idea is supplemented with a great theme and the occasional excellent effect: the metallic lock and load sound as the snipers force rounds into the breach, for example. Some

may damn *Lost Patrol* as a series of impressive graphics strung together with a tenuous plot. But with Vietnam accepted by popular cultural as the first TV war, its story can only be captured using film techniques. Any other genre would have lacked the 'Nam feel that *Lost Patrol* exhibits.

LASTING INTEREST

Lost Patrol stresses the graphic element, and so has massive instant appeal. Yet there are only 28 intermediate scenes, 5 digitised sequences and 10 arcade or interactive sub-games. There's a lot to see, but it can get repetitive meeting the same VC patrol sub-game time after time. Even the arcade sequences get dull once the best techniques



A change is not always as good as rest, as the weary troopers of your squad continually let you know, so a kip's often the only option.

for overcoming the obstacles or enemies are learned. A bunch of weary troopers would not attack VC patrols merely to nick their supplies, but once you've sussed the sub-game this does become a practical proposition.

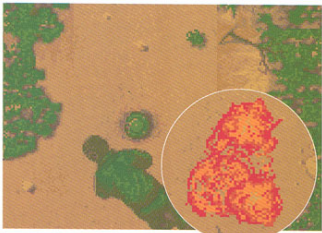
The *Lost Patrol* will feasibly find their way home with in a few days. The pictures may lose some of their appeal after repeated sightings, but there's still enough of a game buried beneath the graphics to justify the project. All the same, only the die-hard and the foolhardy will see everything and still make it home.

JUDGEMENT

Lost Patrol looks good and plays well enough to capture the atmosphere of America's worst national nightmare. There's little

unity in the squad, no will to survive, and you as Sgt Weaver must turn these city boys into jungle warriors. Holding them together as a unit you must balance their whining with just enough military discipline to see you through. *Lost Patrol* lets you go 'in country' for a short while and earn a little glory - or at least a Purple Heart - without the necessary trauma of being shot at while there and spat on when you reach home.

GRAPHICS	9
SOUND	4
INTELLECT	6
ADDICTION	6
OVERALL	79%



One brave platoon member tries to negotiate a minefield. Unluckily he doesn't make it and you're treated to the dead GI screen.



The river crossing is no hassle but it does slow you down. Still, you get to watch the animated screen of boatmen while you wait.



A GI encounters a lone VC in one of the combat sub-games.



A grunt's life is not a happy one, all walking and no killing!



The Arabs get serious. These two are unkillable, unlike their brothers on other screens, but you need to get both the torch and the ammunition before entering the caves. Life's like that for explorers.

TUSKER

SYSTEM 3/ACTIVISION £24.99 ■

Joystick/Keyboard

According to legend there is a secret place where all the elephants go to die. Next-door to this proboscidean hospice is the elephant's graveyard, ivory city! Your old man spent his entire adult life searching for this mysterious place and since he's croaked you've taken over his mission.

Tusker's set in the horizontally-scrolling style. As the intrepid grave robber you bounce through the wilderness, bashing evil Arabs and topping terrible beasts in a bid to solve the ancient mystery. There's a rucksack full of kit to pick up on your quest, each bit with a specific use.

What to do with the gun is pretty obvious; once you've found

the bullets, blow things to kingdom come. Similarly any underground exploration requires a light source. So select the torch and what do you see? Darkness. That's how it will remain until the matches are used to set the damn thing alight.

The epic adventure begins in the burning desert, a land populated by poisonous snakes and big guys wearing bed linen. Don't get cocky though, because even when you've beaten these ordinary foes there are some unnatural enemies to avoid: a deadly whirlwind that saps energy like there's no tomorrow, and a massive hand that seeks to crunch the brave adventurer up like so much used Kleenex. **Trenton Webb**



"I saw this one in Raiders" Tusker jnr said, going for his gun.

GRAPHICS	8
SOUND	6
INTELLECT	7
ADDICTION	6
OVERALL	68%

GRAPHICS AND SOUND

Bright, brash cartoon graphics capture the feel of swashbuckling adventure. The simple and clean game design is only marred by the odd problems. Tusk jr has stepping over minute pebbles, or walking around obstacles. The flick-screen scrolling is annoying, since the hero can't see what's up ahead. The theme is a moody, slow-paced tune that's almost but not quite totally inappropriate for the fast pace the game encourages. The effects are unconvincing, but that's in keeping with the cartoon style of the graphics.

LASTING INTEREST

This running around lark is all very exciting, but can get dull if you don't get anywhere. After a few sorties around the desert, the caves become apparent, and after that the jungle. There's ever more stuff to collect and more combinations of kit to discover, but with only four lives getting far takes repeated playing. Every survival trick must be learned before you stand a chance of reaching somewhere new.

JUDGEMENT

If Tusker gets the hooks into you it will last for aeons, as you hack through masses of undergrowth and villains. Even with the combination factor for items, though, the game cannot be viewed as anything radically different from the avalanche of horizontal arcade adventures that have gone before. That said there's nothing wrong with Tusker, it's just that it will never be a contender, no matter how much pushing and shoving you do.

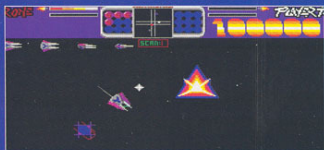
PHOTON STORM

ARC £19.99 ■ Mouse

Jeff Minter, long famed for his psychedelic video game 'trips', has come back after a long silence with a rerelease, *Gridrunner* (reviewed last issue) and a new game in the shape of *Photon Storm*. This game places you in control of a flying 'dart', zooming through space collecting dangerous plutonium pods. The pods have been lost and are scattered

throughout various sectors. You must fly around collecting as many as possible while fighting off waves of alien attackers. If all the enemies in a wave are destroyed, you can jet through the portal to the next sector, storing any pods you have managed to protect.

As you'd expect from Jeff, the appearance of *Photon Storm* is bright and colourful,



The Photon cruiser gets attacked by a blue square! Move that cursor round and shoot it dead or head for the pyramid.

with cycling psychedelic colours used liberally throughout. The action of the game itself is frantic and should appeal to fans of his earlier work, but those unfamiliar with the Minter 'freakout' scene may find themselves frustrated due

to the strange and sometimes unwieldy control method. Unfortunately, *Photon Storm* - despite its fast and frenetic pace - doesn't break any new ground over Minter's older games and this limits its appeal. **Stuart Hancock**

GRAPHICS 6 / SOUND 4 / INTELLECT 2 / ADDICTION 6 / OVERALL 62%

The mere idea of a Last Ninja

Two is a strange and wonderful paradox, but it does give hope to the Dodo. It could mean two things; either the Last Ninja One was a downright fibber or it was in fact the penultimate ninja. The game itself is a shuriken-em-up outing combined with an element of puzzle solving. To add to the interest, and to give that real coin-op feel, there is also a clock to play against.

Not surprisingly, you get to play a highly-trained yet caring and pyjama-clad Ninja of the first water. You even have a name – Armakuni – possibly you were descended from a race of French fashion designers versed in

Ninjutsu. Certainly this is the way you look until the rather eccentric joystick controls have been mastered. Best advice here is not to bother with finding things or beating people up – nope, you should really spend some time working out a way to move from one place to another without walking into invisible walls. Although the isometric pseudo three-dimensional movement is a pain in the jrmjams, it does fit quite happily with the scenario.

This, Norman 'Ninja' Wisdom script sees you standing around with the rest of the chaps a few centuries back in time, when suddenly you are whizzed into the future and find yourself standing

on a bandstand. Willing suspension of disbelief or what?

At the outset, the idea is to explore locations and pick up the odd weapon (rather absent-mindedly, you neglected to come toolled up). The further you get into the game, the more places there are to explore and the more people there are to amaze with your deft fighting skills. Once you're really into the game... there are hundreds of places to explore and... you get the idea, I'm sure. The idea is to get home in one piece so that you and the rest of the lads can design some really neat French clothes or defeat the evil Shogun, Kunitoki. **Tim Smith**



It began as a growth on his big toe... a Ninja gets a right biffing.

LAST NINJA 2

SYSTEM 3 £24.99 ■ Joystick



Behind you!!! Behind you!!! Yet again the severely uncoordinated Ninja gets into trouble with the brutish occidental thug. Lucky you've got so many other interesting bits to look at on screen...



Nelly ninja gets it in the neck neurosis... not his day, really?

JUDGEMENT

The sad thing is that the ideas are all there; the 3D movement is a step up from the run-of-the-mill vertical or horizontal stuff. The attempt to mesh intelligent puzzle solving with brute force has merits... it's just that none of these elements really come close to working together. The feel is wrong purely because you have to work so hard to communicate with the game that you lose the interest in the scenario, and, as for poor old Armani, you couldn't really care less about him. That said, if you were committed enough to want to pit your game-playing skills against the game then it might see you through those long autumn afternoons.

GRAPHICS AND SOUND

The scenes have that pleasant blocky form along with the smoothness of movement only found in gazelles – with lumbago. Little Armakuni does a great Michael Jackson moonwalking backwards if you forget to press J on the keyboard to alter the joystick orientation (so handy for those fight scenes when timing is of the utmost importance). As for the sound, there is very little to speak of aside from the soundtrack, which is nice enough but does leave you wishing that they'd never invented that bloody flute voice on the synth. This really is quite a disappointment because the possibilities for some sickening thuds and whistling leaps are endless.

LASTING INTEREST

The one saving grace is that it is not merely a 'kick the shoot out of everyone's session and neither is it a 'my brain hurts' exploration game. If you really commit yourself to it, there is a chance that some enjoyment can be extracted from the playing time. In true terms of lasting interest, however, you have to give the game more than it gives you.



A gate, a wall, a ninja. It's up to you to work out the, er... puzzle.

GRAPHICS	5
SOUND	4
INTELLECT	6
ADDITION	4
OVERALL	58%



Oh dear! Who's been a naughty Cyberspace Hacker, then?

The year is 2058. Technology has improved so vastly in the last 20 years that every association and company is linked into a common computer network. The centre of the world's technology scene is Tokyo, particularly an area known as Chiba City. This is where the Cowboys hang out.

Cowboys are 21st Century hackers, using state-of-the-art machines called Cyberdecks to 'jack' into the alternate reality that houses the mega-corporations' computer systems. This place is Cyberspace. Fortunes can be made by someone who's expert at travelling in Cyberspace, but the risks are costly. One false move can result in death.

In *Neuromancer* you play a down-and-out cowboy who has lost access to Cyberspace, lost his money, lost his deck and is fast losing credibility in the hacking world. You awake with a groggy head in a run-down bar called the Chatsubo. From here you have to find your way around Chiba City, attempting to recover your deck and find enough information and equipment to upgrade to Cyberspace entry level.

Walking around Chiba City is achieved by moving a cursor around the screen so that it points in the direction you want to go, then holding the button. When you find someone, you can select an option from a series of bubbles to speak to them. Only by planning conversations carefully will you glean anything from the inhabitants of the city.

You can also access computer matrices with a deck (once you have one), which could either give you money or useful information to help you further in the game. Upgrade enough and you can regain your status as a top Cowboy and solve the mysteries being perpetrated by the conglomerates in Cyberspace. **Maff Evans**



Feeling dry? Then pop into the bar for a drink and a chat!

NEUROMANCER



ELECTRONIC ARTS £24.99 ■ Mouse



Ooer! Looks like you've strayed into the rather dubious area of town. Better behave yourself or you could get picked up by the fuzz.

GRAPHICS AND SOUND

One of the main charms of William Gibson's book and the whole genre is the dark, oppressive and generally run-down atmosphere that it evokes. Unfortunately, although *Neuromancer* the game has some nicely drawn and animated screens, the atmosphere of the whole thing is much too pristine. Where are the rough grobo styles? Where are the deteriorating buildings retro-fitted with new hardware? Where is the shady, smoggy feel of a high-tech city? Left out, it seems. The sound does little to back up the atmosphere either, consisting of a few weak tunes and the odd thin spot effect. The presentation does its job – but unfortunately, that's about all.



The proprietor of this bar drives a pretty hard bargain!



Try telling this guy that arcades are trivial and there'll be trouble!

LASTING INTEREST

As is the way with most role-playing games, *Neuromancer* has a fair amount of depth to the gameplay. The clues help you gradually find your way through, but a great deal of thought and memory are required to make it all the way. It will be some time before you manage to get past the problems in Chiba City and jack into Cyberspace, and since Cyberspace is where the serious gaming begins, it will still be quite a while before you complete the game.

JUDGEMENT

Up until now, there has been little in the way of Sci-Fi Amiga RPGs for techno-buffs to get their teeth into, so *Neuromancer* (despite



Check out the bulletins, they could provide some useful info.



Stick to the right bars and the girls there may help you out.

having been around on 8-bit for some time) has an original edge. The gameplay is involving and should have role players struggling through for some time. Fans of the original book may be disappointed, however, since the atmosphere is rather removed from the gloomy scenes evoked by the novel. Nevertheless, *Neuromancer* is still a more than reasonable adventure and stretches the old grey matter for a good while.

GRAPHICS	7
SOUND	3
INTELLECT	7
ADDICTION	7
OVERALL	81%