

FROM BEYOND



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Issue 9

Nov/Dec 1991

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36 Globe Place
Norwich, Norfolk
NR2 2SQ
(United Kingdom)

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FROM BEYOND ISSUE 9 NOV/DEC 1991

ROLL OF HONOUR :

Many thanks to the following folk who helped create this issue by sending in various contributions...

STORM and Bessie,
June Rowe, Barbara
Gibb, Tony \$, John
Wilson, Jon Lemmon,
Benjamin Fuller, Joan
Williams, Gareth
Pitchford, Scott Denyer,
Delbert Hamster,
Gordon Inglis, Tony
Collins, Mark Evans &
Laurence Creighton: If
I've forgotten to
mention anyone then
please accept my
apologies - all your
efforts are much
appreciated.

*Special Message to
Laurence Creighton
from Bessie: Sorry
Laurence, I'm a twerp.
I've caused you so
much stress, red
herring was indeed a
clue, oh shame on daft
old Bess!*

*Happy X-Mas from the
FB team - see you all in
the new year!.....Tim*

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Loads of reviews this issue - but I still need YOUR input...
Send game hints, maps, letters etc. to our usual address.

EDITORIAL

Thought for this issue: Be excellent to each other!

Happy Christmas!
Shame FB's publication dates mean it arrives in early Nov. rather than Dec. but there you go... I've got no special offers sorted for this issue (unlike last years mega Christmas offers) though I'll get something good sorted for issue 10.

Actually, this issue has been a bit of a bugger to get together. Everything was going quite well until a couple of weeks ago, then the sh*t hit the fan! I've suffered a few hassles with the old Speccy again, and that's one of the reasons I've only contributed one review to this issue (the others being handled by Bessie and Storm - with a couple of welcome 'readers reviews' from Scott Denyer and Gareth Pitchford). I bought a SAM Coupe which I had hoped to transfer speccy adventures to, but it arrived late and had a partially non-functioning keyboard so it had to

be returned. Had I received it earlier, and in full working condition, everything would have been fine. As it is, my Spectrum takes a couple of hours to warm up until it decides it will work properly. (should really get it seen too!) It works okay in hot weather - but now it's winter...

I've now got a replacement SAM Coupe and that works fine - and it has transferred and run all the Spectrum adventures I've tried on it so far.

But that was only a minor problem in amongst a sea of major ones... I've had disks corrupt on me (ones holding FB data), a few mysterious computer crashes at very bad moments, and to cap it all I've just discovered that the batteries (expensive to replace) in my Spell Checker thingy have failed, meaning there may be a few more spelling mistakes in this issue than usual.

Finally, on Tuesday October 22nd, 1991 Andy Hutchinson (YS Editor) phoned up and requested that I send them the stuff I'd done for the YS adventure column on a MAC format disk, as my last column (submitted a few days earlier on paper) was too long to type in - deadline for publication-wise. Most of that day was spent haggling to get the best price for an Apple MAC at my local (fortunately) Apple Centre. Then when I got it home (at 4.20pm) I had to learn all about this new system, how to initialize disks, and also learn how to use the WordProc. package!!! 4pm in the morning saw me put the finishing touches to the Your Sinclair disk file, and it was posted off to YS on Wednesday morning (23rd). If this issue of FB is a couple of days late arriving - then now you know why. I've had to miss the Adventure Probe convention too! (see NEWS).....TIM

NEWS

What's happening in and on the adventure scene?

ADVENTURE-LINK

Adventure-Link is a tape-zine produced by **Alec Carswell** of 16 Montgomery Avenue, Beith, Ayrshire, Scotland KA15 1EL. It costs £1.50 an issue, and issue 1 contains 5 free programs, as well as having all manner of adventure hints, tips, solutions, hacks, reviews, book and fanzine news, compos and lot's more. (Well that's what Alec wrote anyway!)

BARE-BONES

Another new adventure product to hit the streets is none other than the first in a (planned) series of adventure solution books called *Bare-Bones*. I suppose the title reflects the fact that the solutions contained therein are straight-forward N, E, GET HAT, WEAR HAT affairs. Issue one has 14 complete solutions spanning 28 A5 pages. The man behind the

enterprise is **Les Mitchell** of 10 Tavistock Street, Newland Avenue, Hull HU6 2LJ. The price of each issue is £2.00 though issue 1 is available at the reduced price of £1.50. It could build up into a useful solutions library!

ON THE COMEBACK TRAIL

More news of adventure writers on the comeback trail... **Jon Lemmon** of Compass Software hasn't done much programming of late because of other commitments. Jon tells me that his first new release for several months will be entitled: *'THE ANTILIS MISSION'*. The plot features an experimental sub (the ZX3) which was manned (?) by a crew of droids, and which has now sunk to the bottom of the Atlantic. It's up to you to dock with it (travelling in the 1 man mini-sub 'Antillis') and sort out

the ZX3's problems. You won't be surprised to learn that the majority of the DROID crew have malfunctioned and turned nasty. Only 3 remain functional and it's those three that you can control (remotely) to help get the sub to the surface and prevent any of the ZX3's mega-nuclear missiles accidentally being launched. Sounds like a goodie to me.

APOLOGIES...

The Probe convention has come and gone for another year. I had planned to attend but my various problems with computers, sorting out stuff, and having to work on Saturdays (and Sundays) to make up for lost time, means that I missed THE adventure event of the year. Never mind, twelve months soon go by and I'm positive that I'll make it next time. At least I didn't use being in Siberia as an excuse for not attending!....*Tim*

Review System

The NEW FB reviewing system explained...

There now follows an explanation of the new 'FB' reviewing / rating system...

First thing to remember is that the new ratings go from 0 to 10 in each category. Secondly, we have done away with an OVERALL score - opting for the much better PERSONAL RATING instead - that way you'll know what each reviewer personally thought of the game.

Okay, here's a rundown of what's what!

PACKAGING: This comes first in the ratings list 'cos it's the first thing you see when buying a game! (or opening the jiffy bag in which it came.)

STORYLINE: Second on the list of ratings

because it's usually the second thing you see!

OPENING PLAY: A score of 0 = the game doesn't get going very well. The higher the marks the better the opening problems, scenario or gameplay is!

PROBLEMS: This tells you how good the games problems were. The higher the score the better they were, either in originality, complexity, design or format!

LOC TEXT: Tells you how good, atmospheric, interactive, meaningful the location text was.

PARSER: How easy could you type in your commands? Did the computer understand

you? Low score = very poor, high = very good!

GAME DESIGN: Says it all really. High marks mean excellent design in all departments!

DIFF LEVEL: Overall game difficulty level. 0 = easy - 10 = hard.

PLAYABILITY: Speaks for itself. 0 = very poor 10 = you won't want to stop playing!

PERSONAL RATING: This is simply the reviewers personal opinion of the game as a whole! The personal rating is much better than an overall rating.

Well, that's the new ratings system! Any comments on it would be most welcome.

Tim.

| DEMO RATINGS - FB 1991 | | | |
|------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| PACKAGING 6 | STORYLINE 7 | OPENING PLAY 5 | PERSONAL RATING 8 |
| PROBLEMS 7 | LOC TEXT 7 | PARSER 8 | |
| GAME DESIGN 8 | DIFF LEVEL 7 | PLAYABILITY 8 | |

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REVIEW 1

'THE MAPPER' Zenobi Software £1.99



I'm all in favour of people trying to push back the barriers of adventures - just as long as the traditional side of adventuring still shines through in their work. Karl Bunyan has not only managed to be innovative with 'The Mapper' he's also replaced a good deal of what you'd normally expect to see in a PAWed game with a very unusual substitute - what's more is that it works so well that the lack of 'normal' stuff is not even missed. But hey, enough waffle, let's delve deeper.....

STORYLINE

Pollux 3 (the third planet orbiting the Pollux star in the constellation of

Gemeni) has been classed as potentially habitable. However, you find out that it's your job, as a mapper, to take a trip to this planet and, er... map it! Your duties don't simply end with mapping though. You must also report back on anything unusual and study the climate, atmosphere, fertility and such like. Oh yes, and also bring back certain 'native' species as indicated in the Specimen Guide. (More of that in the packaging dept.) You are dropped at a certain point on the planet and have a specific area to map. You are given a backpack, self recharging laser and a knife. Mappers are technically illegal - though the government tends to turn a blind eye to their exploits as habitable planets are in great demand due to overpopulation of the ones we already live on! Don't think for one moment that a mappers life is an easy one... no

previous expedition has yet returned without casualties and information on Pollux 3 is patchy to say the least.

PACKAGING

Quite unusually (for a Zenobi game) there's more packaging than you will have come to expect. The storyline / info sheet is there, but this time it's accompanied by three further sheets containing a specimen guide. Each 'species' of flora and fauna has a bit of info and a picture. It's a nice addition to the game and gets you in the mood. (also gets Zenobi a couple of extra marks in the Packaging dept. The cassette cover, however, is the usual offering!

THE ADVENTURE

The first thing to do is load up the 'Playing Guide' on the B-Side of the tape. not only does it contain some invaluable info on >>

(cont...) the screen layout (which is quite radical) but it also contains info concerning the game system, what to expect from the game, vocabulary examples etc. There's even a hint section that, depending on the level of hint required, gives you a prod in the right direction concerning the games trickier problems, or gives you a blatant shove in the right direction. This 'playing guide' is a bit of a masterpiece in its own right, and shouldn't be missed.

Once you've digested the information required you can load the game itself. The screen\$ consists of four windows, each containing a detailed graphic depicting various aspects of a 'mappers' job, and is very nicely done indeed!

Once the game loads you are greeted by a nicely bordered game name, author, and the utility it was written with. (PAW in this case) However, it's not your

everyday plain old background... the attention to detail that Karl has heaped upon the game starts with a parallax, moving starfield to wet your appetite. (It's wet already, Karl!) A press of 'anykey' sees the starfield and credits disintegrate and the game begins...

Quicker than a flash (quite quick in other words) the screen displays a top-third series of boxes. There's a small one on the left showing your position in the game which displays a 3x3 representation of the surrounding area. Then there's another box which is used to display anything you happen to come across or examine during your travels. Finally there's a larger box which is used to describe various events and happenings... it's a sort of message box. Right at the very top of the screen is a small indicator showing your map reference no: (starts at K7) Below this series of linked display boxes is the text input

area. (where, believe it or not, you enter your commands.)

The first thing you need do (and it's suggested by the author) is start mapping. The area you are assigned to covers a 14x14 grid made up of varying terrain. Whenever you move in any of the traditional adventure directions the small 3x3 map box changes to show the new terrain. All the other boxes stay the same, unless you happen to meet a creature or a sudden death... Yes, you'll start off by experiencing quite a few sudden deaths - normally an instant turn-off, but not this time strangely enough. Why? I don't know really. I think it must be down to the fact that it's such incredible fun exploring the lands and making a map that the sudden deaths tend to become part of the fun. Anyway, once you know where they lie you can avoid them. (Well, on most occasions anyway.) After half an hour of exploration I realised that there had

(cont...) been no traditional text appear to tell me what was going on, where I was, what type of location I was travelling through, etc. Whilst mapping the game all the info you need is contained in the 3x3 map display. The map representation that appears therein consists of detailed udg's depicting hills, forest, marshlands, cliffs, rivers (both ordinary and acidic ones) beaches, broken ground etc, etc. The only time that text appears is when you experience a sudden death. That happens less and less when you know where they occur.

After about an hours play I had mapped about 50% of the games locations. You'll find that drawing a 14 x 14 grid is a good idea, and the 'players guide' shows you how to number it. I'm not a big fan of making maps, but this games system has changed my mind. Mapping can be fun after all!

When you've played the game for mapping

purposes for a while, you'll have experienced quite a few events. Everytime something happens you will see a little picture appear in one of the status boxes. On a 128k machine you are treated to further 'extended' graphics in another box too. Examine your laser and you see a picture of it, the same goes for most other objects you come across too. On odd occasions you'll get a bit of text as well, but every picture basically tells a story! You'll soon find that dangers lurk everywhere on this planet. The way to deal with them comes from the lie of the land, the type of terrain you have to travel over and the possible uses of the games objects. It doesn't take an Einstein to figure out how to overcome most of the problems, but with all the other complications to take into account (like terrain type, how to avoid monsters who live in certain areas, and how to reach certain areas containing problems) things aren't as easy as they first appear.

One thing that definately makes life tricky is the fact that the game is played in 'real' real-time, or so it seems. Fail to make an input for a few seconds and the: 'Time Passes' response 'kicks-in'. Normally, in situations like that, pressing the space bar halts this process, but not in this game! Even typing in a command (but not entering it) doesn't stop the relentless march of time. Fortunately it's not detrimental to the game as a whole, though there'll be times when you'll wander into a location where you will have to asses the situation and get out again pretty sharp-ish if you want to remain alive. Actually, the 'urgent' feel to the game adds to the atmosphere which in turn builds steadily throughout the game. Then there's the unexpected things that keep on happening to keep you on your toes. Some of the deadlier looking flora and fauna turns out to be quite helpful, while the innocuous stuff is potentially deadly. ➤

(cont...) The traditional part of the adventure begins to come to the fore when mapping has been completed.

Actually, you don't need map the whole game to begin to solve the problems. However, getting far enough to know what's going on and what lies where is quite essential to successful play. There are times, however, when frustration sets in because you can, for instance, see an object, know what to do with it, but can't for the life of you work out how to achieve the desired effect. I found the text input side of things to be a bit 'precise', maybe it was to do with the fact that mapping sapped my traditional adventuring prowess? I'm sure that there's no reason why steady progress shouldn't be made - especially with a bit of careful planning

and accurate mapping. The appearance of the rather off-putting 'You can't do that' type of 'blunt' rebuff to a lot of your commands does annoy at times, especially when you know you are supposed to do something to X with Y and you know the choice of words you are using to attempt to solve the problem would normally work okay! But on the whole, the game is very different from the norm, works surprisingly well and should be bought by every adventurer reading this, just to see what they think of it. I liked it very much in the end - it should keep you busy & happy for hours!

GOOD POINTS

The best thing about the game is the way it has been put together. Having a pre-defined area to map makes

things very interesting, and the graphical 'map' representations of the landscape are detailed and are an excellent addition to the game.

BAD POINTS

Playing in 'real' real-time is a bit of a pain, and sometimes the numerous (but necessary) sudden deaths irritate.

CONCLUSION

It's new, a breath of fresh air, and the whole thing works surprisingly well. It just goes to show what the PAW can do in the hands of someone with some new ideas! Congrats to Karl and Zenobi for doing it!

AVAILABLE FROM:
Zenobi Software, 26
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THE MAPPER Zenobi Software £1.99 (48k version played)

| | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| PACKAGING 8 | STORYLINE 6 | OPENING PLAY 4 | PERSONAL RATING 9 |
| PROBLEMS 7 | LOG TEXT 2 | PARSER 5 | |
| GAME DESIGN 8 | DIFF LEVEL 8 | PLAYABILITY 8 | |

STAFF OF POWER

In earlier times, back before the 'GOLDEN AGE', lawlessness and unrest were prevalent throughout the land and malevolence stalked hand-in-hand with greed. These were times when it was not the size of a man's wealth that portrayed his status but how long he managed to keep hold of it. When gold was 'safer' spent than hoarded and when a man's best bedside companion was his sword and not some comely wench. Such was the unrest ..



However all this was to change when Arcon made the ultimate sacrifice to the Gods and in return was given the 'STAFF OF POWER' ... infused with magic, this staff could be used for both 'Good' and 'Evil' purposes but Arcon chose the former. Peace and serenity came to the land and joyful times were had by all. Arcon ruled the land wisely and the people considered themselves to be fortunate indeed. Each morning they gave thanks to the Gods for furnishing Arcon with the staff and for allowing him to rule the land. But one man was not so happy ... Zyx the evil magician had other plans for the staff and the land and one day, disguised as a beggar, he took the staff from Arcon. With the staff in his grasp he revealed himself in his true form and vowed to destroy the king and his kingdom

A meeting of the council was held and YOU were chosen to recover the stolen artifact and if necessary destroy the evil Zyx. However to do this it is imperative that you first locate the four magical weapons a sword, a shield, a ring and a warhorn. Your only 'ally', if such a word can be used, is your knowledge of magic and your ability to cast spells ... use this wisely and you might just recover the weapons required to defeat Zyx and recover the STAFF OF POWER.

NOTES : Throughout the game you will be able to use any 'spells' you may come across. To do this simply type in SPELL (followed by the name of the spell you wish to use) .. i.e. SPELL LIGHT or SPELL THUNDERBOLT and this spell will be used. Be careful though, because each spell can only be used once and some have more than ONE use!!!

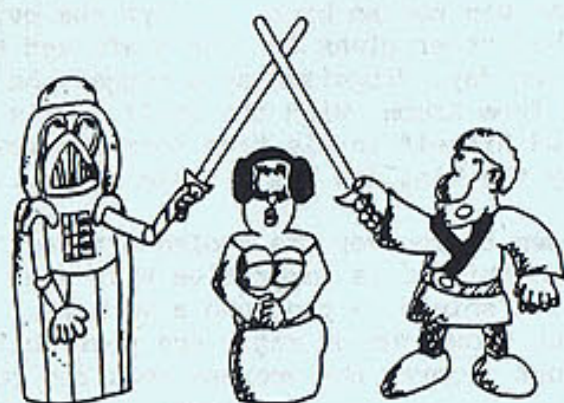


The game will also recognise such commands as FONT ONE and FONT TWO to change the font in which the text is displayed on screen and RAMSAVE and RAMLOAD to manipulate your various game positions to and from MEMORY. Please note that it is necessary to use the following input to pick up any spells ... GET LIGHT or GET THUNDERBOLT or GET LEVITATION.

WARNING ... You only have 400 moves in which to recover the staff ... or else Zyx wins!!!

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LETTERS

Read 'em then write in with your views!

The first to reply to my plea for letters from playtesters (in last issues FB) was Barbara Gibb, and she writes...

So you would like to hear how playtesters work! The following is a generalization of my own routine.

1. The Arrival: My well-trained postman knocks on the door and hands me a jiffy bag. I break off some of my thumbnail as I very carefully open it, so that the bag can be re-used. (I know I can buy a special staple-removing gadget but old habits die hard). I feel inside the bag, and take out a cassette or disc. It may have a few initials written on a label, or even a few words, but best of all I like it when it doesn't have anything at all - I love mysteries and surprises.

2. Equipment: If it's a cassette, it is for the Spectrum. I disconnect the Atari and hunt

around for all the leads to connect up the computer. (I have about 3 cassette leads and they all seem to find their way up to my daughters room where she likes to surreptitiously record my innocent answers to her stupid questions.)

3. Loading: With fingers crossed, I turn everything on, put the cassette into the recorder, & press play. I may have to adjust the volume control, but I must admit that 95% of tapes load without any trouble whatsoever. If I have remembered to configure the PLUS D I snapshot the programme to disc. I check it has saved properly, and I now know I can reload in seconds. The tape is rewound and carefully stored in a special box in case of accidents, and, more important still, to keep it strictly secret, and separate from my other software.

What if it doesn't load?

I try it at all levels of volume on a variety of recorders, and if it still won't work, I disconnect the PLUS D. This doesn't usually cause any trouble, but recently I have had two adventures which flatly refused to load while it was in place. If the tape still won't load I change to the 48k Spectrum, and if it is still not loading, a quick telephone call to a very clever friend usually solves the problem, which is often due to the programmer using certain anti-corruption pokes in the loading screen - change the pokes and I'm on my way again.

By now I should be sure of the title of the adventure, so I find a cardboard folder and mark it with the title and date of receipt - it is only fair to playtest them in order.

4. Playing: I like to play the game blind, i.e. without knowing anything about it. ➤

LETTERS: Read 'em then reply to 'em!

(cont) That way I have no preconceived ideas, and even if the subject matter isn't to my taste, I still have to view it objectively. I make a map (using the little squares method) and make notes of anything that particularly catches my attention. These could be about the screen presentation (first impressions are very important), spelling and grammatic errors, exits that should or shouldn't be there, etc. My first objective is to solve the adventure. I don't often get stuck, but if I do a solution can usually be obtained on request, or a quick telephone call to the author if I know they wouldn't mind me doing so, or, if the adventure is PAWed or QUILLED, taking a quick peek at the database.

5. Testing: Now I know what is what, where the danger lies, where the lamp is, etc. I start the serious testing. I file my rough notes in the folder, and start from scratch. At every location I check the text very very carefully for errors, check all exits,

and do all the silly things I didn't try first time round. This is where I thank the author for including RAMSAVE / RAMLOAD in the game, as I can now play one location at a time, trying to see as many messages as possible. This part needs patience, concentration, and peace and quiet, so I don't recommend attempting it while the family are watching Wogan, Top of the Pops, or any game shows, etc. as the background noise level tends to be very distracting.

6. Final check : I like to run through it at least once again, to ensure I haven't overlooked anything. Also, if possible, I like to leisurely scroll through the database to see if there are any mistakes I have missed while playing the adventure. Most of the grammatic, punctuation and spelling errors are easily spotted at this stage. None of us is perfect, but we can but try.

7. The report: A printer and wordprocessor are vital. I type mine on my old BBC which has a lovely comfortable keyboard, and print out using a Citizen 120D; it isn't an expensive printer but very serviceable, if a little heavy on ribbons. Initially I use the notes I made during section 5, and then check with my rough notes made during section 4. I try to be as precise as I can when identifying mistakes, and at the end I give my General Comments about character set, storyline, and suggestions I may think worthy of a mention, etc. I attempt to encourage the inexperienced writer (A good thing to do - Ed!), while the seasoned writers can often take much more criticism without taking offence. I send one, sometimes two, copies of the report to the person who sent me the tape (never anyone else!) and make a spare one for the folder. I always save the report to disc in case another copy is required due to one reason or another. ➤

LETTERS: Read 'em then reply to 'em!

(cont) 8: Re-testing: I'm usually sent an amended copy. I treat this as if I have never seen it before, and then check the result against my original maps and report.

It's a lot of work, but worth every second when I see the adventure I know back to front and inside out, advertised in FROM BEYOND.

Barbara Gibb.
Liverpool.

Sure seems to be a lot of work, Barbara! I don't envy you having to keep an eye open for spelling mistakes and grammatical errors, though it must be a good feeling to play a game ages before anyone else will get the chance of seeing it. The point you made about encouraging the inexperienced writer should be noted by everyone out there who playtests, or even simply plays a game by someone new to adventure writing. I personally always see that novices are encouraged, even if

their games do often contain spelling mistakes, odd happenings, illogical events, weird inputs etc. To simply and abruptly criticise their efforts without qualification is wrong. Of course you can't forgive everything, and an adventure by a novice writer will still not get great marks in FB if the end result fails to impress.

Anyway, moving on, another adventure playtester writes...

PLAYTESTING IS FUN?

No, that question mark isn't a typing error - this is the question I ask myself sometimes, when I find an insurmountable problem in a game and I haven't been supplied with a solution!

Most times I enjoy playing them, but other times I get a headache trying to figure out the often obtuse input I need to make something work.

What does a play-tester

do, you ask - well, that depends on the game.

Basically, when I get a game, I try to play it through to the end, making notes as I go. More often than not, I get stuck, because I'm not capable of reading the author's mind.

If I have a solution, I refer to it to get past that particular problem. In two recent games, I've got stuck because I didn't know the uses of chemicals, ethyl alcohol and carbon dioxide namely - how many people out of ten would?

That's the trouble with authors - they assume that because they know something, everyone does!

I certainly do see correcting spelling mistakes as part of the job, because if I'm playing and I see one, it completely ruins the mood or atmosphere of the game. (* I'll reply to this point at the end - Ed.)

Different sections of my reports on games ➤

LETTERS: Read 'em then reply to 'em!

(cont...) are numbered - section three, which covers spelling, grammar and punctuation errors, is usually, with a few exceptions, the largest section of all.

I don't know if authors expect play-testers to pick up spelling mistakes - if authors knew they were there, they wouldn't be there, if you see what I mean. Very few people are spell-perfect these days, especially younger authors. I put this down to the phase of education which took the view that spelling and grammar didn't matter, as long as the ideas were there. (* I'll answer this point too at the end of the letter - Ed.)

This is a hobby-horse, I'm afraid - I think the standard of education has deteriorated badly in the last twenty or thirty years.

Getting back to play-testing - assuming that I have completed the game, and everything seems to work as it should, then I go

through it again, trying to trip up the author, as it were.

For instance, if I have just eaten some food, is it gone from my inventory, or can I eat it again, and again.....

Or if I have just killed a monster, can I see the body? No, it seems to have vanished... whoops!

Or if I need to eat in a certain number of moves, am I allowed enough moves to cover the ground to get back to the food supply?

Or, as in a recent game, if I am hit by a poisoned arrow, do I have enough moves to get back to the witch who will cure me? In this case, I didn't. That made the game non-completable, because I ALWAYS got hit by a poisoned arrow in a particular unavoidable location. (Ouch!! - Ed)

This is the sort of thing which I would point out to an author, usually with an alternative suggestion, thus (hopefully) making my criticism constructive.

Quite often I play through a game

umpteenth times, testing this or that effect. If a RAMSAVE facility is present, this eases play testing considerably, but if not... well, imagine inputting about sixty or more moves, then getting killed and having to go right back to the start!

Saving to tape is all very well, but then I have to write down at each saving exactly what I have and what I've done, in case carrying or not carrying an item makes a difference, as it so often does.

This sounds as if playtesting is a boring, tedious chore, and I am reminded of Kez Gray's cartoon for the play-tester of the year, awarded at last year's Probe Convention. The play-tester had a piled-up IN tray, one tape in the OUT tray and the caption "Why do I do it?" which I thought was very apt.

Why do I do it? Because for one thing, I get to see a lot of games before they are released, and I

LETTERS: Read 'em then reply to 'em!

(cont...) certainly couldn't afford to buy all of them.

Then there's the fact that my efforts are really appreciated, by the publisher and quite often by authors, too. It's very gratifying when my suggestions are adopted, and I think that, in a way, this satisfies my creative urge.

Mainly, though, I think I do it because just once in a while, a really super game pops through my letterbox - a game with hardly any spelling mistakes, no bloopers, nothing nasty or objectionable in it and a real joy to play!

So what do I actually do? I think a play-tester's function is helping to make a game as most user-friendly and as least frustrating as possible.

June Rowe,
Cornawall.

The two main points I want to comment on in your letter, June, are that A: If you come across a spelling

mistake in a game it completely ruins the mood for you, and B: You blame the phase of education that put ideas ahead of spelling and grammar.

Taking the first point first... This is very interesting as I should imagine that everyone has a 'threshold' that they reach before spelling mistakes, grammatical errors or just plain bad English starts to annoy them.

Those people who read FB must have a pretty high threshold, as it is (as I'm sure you are all too painfully aware) not wrote using the best English! To find too many spelling mistakes and grammatical errors in a game usually shows that play-testers were not used to playtest it! I found a couple in Zenobi's PHOENIX (reviewed last issue) but made no effort to detail them as they were of absolutely no importance whatsoever to the playing of the game. One or two games I've come across have had rather more spelling mistakes. I've tended to

mention them when they appear, but again, will not go overboard unless they interfere with, or impede ones progress in a game. Obviously it is part of a play-testers job to spot these errors, but I don't really consider it part of a reviewers job to go mad about them, unless, as I mentioned above, they seriously damage the games playability etc. Interesting, huh?

The second point that June made (about the education system) leads me to say this... I envy anybody who can spell and write nicely. I'm certainly not one of them! However, (and this is the interesting bit) it appears to me that my own ideas far outweigh and overshadow my ability to convey them as eloquently as I'd like in print. Not being great at writing hasn't (I hope) made FB any less interesting, readable, poignant or useful. As long as play-testers are there to help authors with their games, then an adventure writer who lacks in the

LETTERS: Read 'em then reply to 'em!

(cont) spelling dept., but who has the ideas to make his or her game basically a winner, can eventually see the game published with grammar checked and corrected - thanks to a playtester.....Tim.

(As those two letters raised several good points I've decided to award June and Barbara a prize of a 25mm figure (yes, the usual!) each. There will probably be something prize-like for any future 'STAR LETTERS' that I publish - so keep 'em coming in!

Changing the subject a touch, this letter (edited highlights) comes from Antonio Pelaez Barcelo and concerns comments I made in the 'State of Play' comment column last issue. This is what Antonio basically had to say...

"Well, I've read in this mag issue number 8 Tim's comments about how well are going the adventure scene in your country. Congratulations,

because if you (Englishmen adventurers) believed Tim wasn't right I'll try to prove he is comparing with the Spanish adventures.

How many companies which sell by mail do you have? A lot! Here in Spain there are only Four! Three of them have their directors as the only writers too (like Tartan, Compass, F.S.F), and only 1, 3P SOFT, is like Zenobi. (Selling other peoples games, Ed.) However 3P SOFT hasn't sold more than ten copies of any of it's 5 games for sale.

There are other kinds of companies which are ruled by fanzines or clubs and they are called 'bolsas', in English 'Bags' - 'Adventure Bags'; there are three of them! These 'Bolsas' publish adventures that people send in - any adventures so sometimes the quality is very low. They only cost £1.99 quids so it's hard to sell better games yourself at a higher price.

One of the adventure fanzines / clubs is CAAD. It was founded with help from the supposedly best Spanish company. It's bi-monthly and issue 13 (June - July) arrived in mid August! They haven't reviewed any games sold by mail order so far - and in issue 13 they review their own 'bag' games. The CAAD club is a club where you pay £7.50 for three fanzines (shorter than FB) and if you want adventures of their 'bag' you have to pay and wait four months. (That was me, some persons had to wait seven months).

'A traves del espejo' or 'throughout the window' is a good fanzine and only costs £1.25 quids. It has very few reviews, but has good articles, I like it!

'CPAC' is the latest club I know, I can only say they have a 'Bag' of very no-good programs (some of them very bad and they have recognised it in their own fanzine) their fanzine is being made on a typewriter and it's very poor quality. ➡

LETTERS: Read 'em then reply to 'em!

(cont...) Only 5 quids a year. The fanzine is supposed to be bi-monthly.

'El Aventurero' or 'The Adventurer' is a fanzine edited by me. All I can say is it has adventure reviews of Spectrum and PC adventures, also role playing sections, comic, fantastic literature and S.F... so we sell it also in role and comic shops (and it's been successful).

Finishing - what is the future for adventures in Spain? There are no good Spanish adventure writers like English ones. There are no good companies (well, 3P SOFT but only a bit because we have just started). Basically there aren't enough strong people to make these things change!

**Tony \$,
The Spanish
Crusader**

The fanzine that Antonio (Tony \$ to his friends) produces is quite some effort. He sent me issue 2 and it's literally packed full of all

kinds of good material. Trouble is it's all in Spanish so I can't understand a blind word of it! (But it looks good though!)

Any one interested in seeing their games converted into Spanish should flick through this issue till they find the 3P SOFT advert which contains full details of how you can become a living legend in Spain. My advice to Antonio is: Keep plugging away, don't give up, and one day you may find things getting a bit better! However, I don't want to paint an overly rosy picture of the adventure scene in this country. Things are pretty good on the whole, though it only takes a fluctuation in market forces here, and a few people upgrading their Speccy's there, to paint an almost entirely different picture. As most adventure writers only write games as a way of making a little extra money to supplement their weekly wage - earned doing their everyday job, then fluctuations in the adventure market are probably easily

tolerated. However, Zenobi make their living from their wares, so any dip in the sales figures must surely be more keenly felt. Computing on the whole is a funny business to be connected with. A blink of an eye can see an otherwise healthy looking sector turn out to be deep in trouble. Crash (and Newsfield) have recently found themselves deep in trouble. Just shows how the mighty have fallen! The one thing that amazes me about adventurers and adventure writers (and companies too) is that they do their best, on the whole, to carry on regardless of the various happenings in the outside world. I think if you aim to enjoy yourself first and foremost, and treat any possible income as a bonus, then you'll be heading straight for FUN CITY! (That's somewhere in Arizona, Ed.)

Right, that's all the letters for this issue... Hold on though, another one has

LETTERS: Read 'em then reply to 'em!

just arrived that simply begs inclusion in this issue and it is from Joan Williams...

Dear Tim,

I have been sorting out all my old notes, games and magazines of late and it occurred to me that every now and again someone special comes along in the adventureworld to make we players sit up and take note. Round about 1984 / 5, a young man called Fergus McNeill was the star, his games were much admired for the humour they contained more than the actual game, but we snapped up anything of them as soon as they hit the streets. Then along came John Wilson, he of Zenobl fame, and how we loved his devious puzzles and slick humour, that was the time when poor old John could do nothing wrong. (Now it seems that he can't do anything right). After those heady days of naive adventuring, Jack Lockerby and Larry Horsfield, both of whom produced some

wonderful games, and still do, although they have gone a bit quiet of late. So who is special enough in the nineties to take on the mantle of those illustrious folk?

Could it be Laurence Creighton, who churns out excellent games with gay abandon, or young Scott Denyer, a newcomer with a lot of enthusiasm, or even Paul Cardin?

I think a good adventure is one that stands the test of time, and as far as I can see, the rising star must be Laurence Creighton, for his consistently good games which are fun to play and jolly good value to boot. There is no doubt in my mind that I will get as much enjoyment from his games in ten years time as I do today and that can be said of the aforementioned stars as well, perhaps not so much Fergus though, the re-releases are beginning to look dated now.

I just wonder which authors have made the most impression on your readers, bearing in

mind that we all like different things and who do you rate as the new star of the nineties?

*Joan Williams
Rugby*

When you take into account the amount of quality games Laurence Creighton has produced over the last 18 months, then he gets the quantity and quality award as far as I'm concerned. It'll be interesting to see what sort of games, authors and people that FB readers vote for in the first FB adventure awards extravaganza. (Don't forget to return your voting forms, and if you've lost yours then use the one in this issue. I've only had about 20% returned so far, so do try to vote at some stage if you can.) Those people who stick with adventuring for a long time, through thick and thin deserve special mention (though I won't mention you because you know who you are). Clive Wilson, Karl Bunyan, Scott Denyer & Laurence Creighton are exciting prospects, don't you think?

Tim.

REVIEW 2

'THE UNBORN ONE' Zenobi Software £1.99



I expressed a wish to see further examples of Clive's adventures in the last issue of FB, and blow me if Tim didn't send along Clive's very latest game, 'The Unborn One' for me to review. What did I think? Read on and find out. Storm!

STORYLINE

Many years have passed since you ventured upon the Darkest Road, beyond Eagleshorn to the pinnacle and the Black Wanderer. Again you and the Silent Song are needed to rid the cause of the plague that now infests the Southlands. The Unborn One, an evil created by the Black Wanderer now resides in the Citadel of

Gor and although is immune to the song, is protected by the hosts, which are not.

Therefore you must gain access to the citadel and do battle with the Unborn One.

THE ADVENTURE

The game comes from Zenobi Software and has the usual cassette cover that we've come to expect from John. There is a nice loading Screen\$, with the title, author, and cat of Zenobi. As I think I got it wrong last time with Kobayashi, I'm not committing myself to naming the artist.

Once the game has loaded you are presented with an attractive screen layout with the upper screen containing four rectangles. The outer two vertical ones show movement cursors, while the two horizontal ones in the middle show the region, and one flashes on and off when you initially meet

a character. The location descriptions are upper case and are of above average length.

At location one you find yourself at:

'The southern pastures stretch out before you. The area is filled with lush vegetation, sweet aromas and sounds of birdcall. As you turn southwards, you can just make out the distant barrier of the Great Rift while to the East the Dark Pearls wood obscures your view.'

So what do you do first? A quick check of what you are carrying reveals that you have a book, which when read, lets you know that EVALL IS A HOLY WORD. Something for the future obviously. What next? HELP. A quick input provides you with the knowledge that you will be on your own. So off you go exploring the various locations.

There are twenty >>

(cont...) locations in the first section of the game and you are free to visit them at your leisure... well, 19 of them anyway. I'll come back to the twentieth one later. Now more familiar to the type of approach needed to progress with a Clive Wilson game (not only Kobayashi Ag'Kwo but now the Darkest Road completed), I've learnt that examining everything possible that is mentioned in the location description or subsequent messages is the order of the day. Success. Various items such as a mallet, a coin an ankh and a stone come to light!! Some will be required in this section while others will be essential in the second part. Also in this part you will come across such characters as the Dark Shroud, Balmazar, The Archer and Corgalis. Corgalis is in the twentieth location, and when you first meet him, he makes for your head and with a flash of claws, you succumb to the darkness. An infamous sudden death syndrome (as Bessie

BugHunter would say). Never mind. Back to the other 19 locations. Surely there is something to provide your head with some protection. There is. Sadly for you though, you will need more than the protection of something for your head. Also you will need something that will destroy it. This you will need to do if you are to complete everything later on. In part two, things get harder, depending largely on which option you choose. Just to explain, you are presented with three routes to the final encounter with the

Unborn One. One is relatively easy, with the other two being harder and with slightly higher potential maximum scores. But like all roads lead to Rome, so all routes in this game lead to the Unborn One and its destruction (Hopefully).

GOOD POINTS

As one would expect from John Wilson and Clive W., it appears thoroughly debugged, playtested and devoid of irritating spelling mistakes. There are lots of problems, some old and some new. The upper screen, in my opinion is better >>

Clive Wilson Facts:

After producing many games for Mastertronic, Clive took the step of writing some games for the ST... They didn't sell well. Clive was about to call it a day when he discovered the PAW, played a few games, liked what he saw and produced a fine comeback effort called 'The Darkest Road'.

'The Unborn One' (Clive's latest game) shows that he's certainly got what it takes when it comes to adventure writing.

(cont...) than his previous games. The location descriptions are good and the database contains over 220 assorted messages so most responses are catered for and lots of subtle help hints have been included to help you progress. Like most PAW-ed games there is the RAMSAVE / LOAD facility to make things a bit better still.

BAD POINTS

The lack of an 'in game' Intro at the start of the adventure is a bit of a minus point. The lack of locations is a bit disappointing too, though at least they are packed full of goodies! Sudden deaths are nothing to write home about - they are just annoying, as is the need to be very precise with some input... an example of which

comes when you meet a character who obviously wants what you have, and with no one else around to confuse who you want to give the item to, you'll be amazed at the fact that you need to GIVE X TO Y rather than just GIVE X. It may not seem worth mentioning, but when you get the 'You can't do that yet' or 'Not at the moment' response to something that simple, then you do start to wonder what else might need special attention as far as the vocabulary is concerned. Once you've learned the correct protocol then things should be okay from then on in.

CONCLUSION

On the whole a most enjoyable game from the pen of Clive Wilson. Initially not too tricky


but will need quite a lot of effort to overcome Corgalis and enter the second part. Having now played and completed Clive's last three games (thanks, in part, to solutions provided by Zenobi via brother Tim), how do they compare? The upper screen location is more attractive, it's more addictive than Kobyashi Ag'Kwo and is crammed with lots of typical Clive problems to solve. If you liked Darkest Road then you'll undoubtedly like this sequel. Clive's games get better and better as he becomes more proficient with the PAW. Roll on the next, Clive. (I couldn't agree more - Ed.)

AVAILABLE FROM:

Zenobi Software
26 Spotland Tops,
Cutgate, Rochdale,
Lancashire OL12 7NX.

PRICE: £1.99

THE UNBORN ONE Zenobi Software £1.99

| PACKAGING 6 | STORYLINE 6 | OPENING PLAY 7 | PERSONAL RATING  |
|------------------|-----------------|-------------------|---|
| PROBLEMS 7 | LOG TEXT 7 | PARSER 5 | |
| GAME DESIGN 7 | DIFF LEVEL 8 | PLAYABILITY 6 | |

REVIEW 3

'STAFF OF POWER' Zenobi Software £1.99



Sue Medley is best known as the editor of SYNTAX disk magazine and co-editor of the soon to be released RED HERRING. Here she turns her hand, rather niftily as it turns out, to writing an adventure.

STORYLINE

Many years ago, when Arcon became king, the Gods gave him a Staff of Power. It was filled with strong magick, for good or evil use, but king Arcon always used it for honest purposes and has been a good and just ruler. The evil magician Zyx, in the guise of a beggar seeking justice from the king, took the staff and cursed the king for his goodness and vowed to

destroy the kingdom. You have been chosen to regain the staff and destroy Zyx, but first you must find four magical weapons...

Thus begins your adventure, but take note that you only have 400 moves in which to complete your task so every move will count. My heart sank when I read this warning as I'm inclined to panic but luckily there is a RAMS and RAML option and I dare say you will appreciate this fact when you enter the forest and find it very confusing at first, it would appear that you can't get very far from your starting point. This is a strange game inasmuch that the location descriptions are rather short and to the point, for example, "You are on a steep hill", giving you no other information with regard to directions you can take so it's up to you to fathom it out. In fact, either going west or up will take you to the

same place which was a bit irritating to map, however, once you come to terms with the lack of directions in certain places, you can stop worrying about your 400 moves being used up and concentrate on the task in hand.

On finding a rope and the correct place to use it, you will find yourself on a beach where you will come across a boulder and would you believe it, you can smash this with your bare hands! Oh yes you can and what is more, you find a light spell which, once lit, will only last you 50 moves. Long enough you may think and I agree, provided you have made use of the RAMS option and found your way around first. Still, no matter, because the oddity of this game is that you don't need the light at all, as I found you could still examine the dark cave that you come across and find a ledge and do

(cont...) whatever you need to do to make progress irrespective of the dark. All these points may give the impression that this game is a bit duff and I must confess that at first, I thought so too, but don't be misled by my ramblings because as you get further into it, the quirky things become irrelevant as problems come thick and fast. This is quite a pacey game, plenty to keep you occupied and it was helpful to be told when you have used up half your moves, it reminds you to get a move on. Finding the correct keys to open doors and using spells makes up the main bulk of the game and provided that you don't run out of time, Zyx can be vanquished. The text, as previously indicated, is very economical, and I have the general feeling that

location descriptions are not very important, I would liked to have seen a bit more 'padding' in some places. It is a good idea to use HINT instead of HELP during the game, as the former gives a hint and the latter won't! If you get stuck at any point (in the forest, for example) then typing a few well known 'adventurey' names or whatever should keep you amused. Talking of forests, I'd say that a compass should be your number one quest item - unless you want to wander round in circles.

GOOD POINTS

Easy to read text, lots of locations & problems and a brisk early pace are the good points.

BAD POINTS

Short location

descriptions are about all that is worth mentioning on the negative side.

CONCLUSION

If you like 'spell' and 'key' problems then this game is for you. It's kept me up into the wee small hours and is reminiscent of the best early QUILLED games of yesteryear. Beginners will find it welcoming, more experienced players will find that it's a nice trip down memory lane! What I took to be a sloppily programmed game has turned out to be a little gem. Great fun to play and really rather good! Nice one Sue.

AVAILABLE FROM
Zenobi Software
26 Spotland Tops,
Cutgate, Rochdale
Lancashire OL12 7NX
PRICE: £1.99

STAFF OF POWER Zenobi Software £1.99 48k version played

| | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| PACKAGING 6 | STORYLINE 6 | OPENING PLAY 4 | PERSONAL RATING 8 |
| PROBLEMS 6 | LOG TEXT 4 | PARSER 6 | |
| GAME DESIGN 5 | DIFF LEVEL 2 | PLAYABILITY 6 | |

HELP-LINE

Not a whole heap of help - but it is quality stuff!

HELP!

Okay, I admit it, the FB help-line section isn't one of the fanzines best supported features. I've got a lot of help-sheets I could simply print, but I'd much rather you sent in your hints and tips, maps and solutions. (The personal touch, don't you know!)

So send your stuff for the help-line section to our usual address. Thanks to Gareth and Mark for supplying me with the stuff on this page.....**Tim**

ALIEN RESEARCH CENTRE (ARC)

A 'Walk-through' solution by Mark Evans of Great Yarmouth, Norfolk.

N, TAKE SCALPEL, S, E, STAB MAGGOT, S, TAKE DISRUPTER, N, N, TAKE PLIERS, S, W, S, EXAMINE DESK,, U, DROP DISRUPTER, PRESS SWITCH, D, U, S, OPEN DOOR, E, TAKE SUIT, TAKE IRON, W, N, D, N, E, E, S, TAKE FULX, N, E, SOLDER WIRE, DROP SOLDER, DROP FLUX, W, CUT CABLE, S, S, TAKE AXE, N, N, E, W, W, W, S, U, S, SMASH GRILLE, D, S, WEAR SUIT, HOLD RAIL, OPEN HATCH, CLOSE HATCH, S, TAKE ACID, N, N, U, S, EXAMINE PAPER, POUR ACID, D, SHOOT GARGANADON (until you hit him), E, THROW ROPE, W, U, N, D, KICK FLOOR, EAST, TAKE CHEMICAL, OPEN PANEL, E, N, D, N, E, E, E, W, S, POUR CHEMICAL, W, TAKE NET, E, N, E, W, W, W, S, UP, S, D, W, THROW NET, S, EXAMINE TRANSMITTER, N, E, E, E, S, D, E, UP, SAY 2749, E, INSERT IC, TOUCH PAD.

CAPTAIN KOOK: Cryptic clues to part one from: Gareth Pitchford of Whitby.

You'll be the one seeing red if you wish to avoid being dead.

A large spinning disk forms a terrible health risk.

If the readout proves difficult then you should know what to do, on the glass you will find you've a much better view.

If something isn't doing much then why not give it a touch.

To get to the hatch make good use of a gift, a non golden ring might just give you the lift.

If you're all keyed up there's only one thing to do, GO PAD, buttoned up after pressing key blue.

Part Two clues will appear next issue...Tim

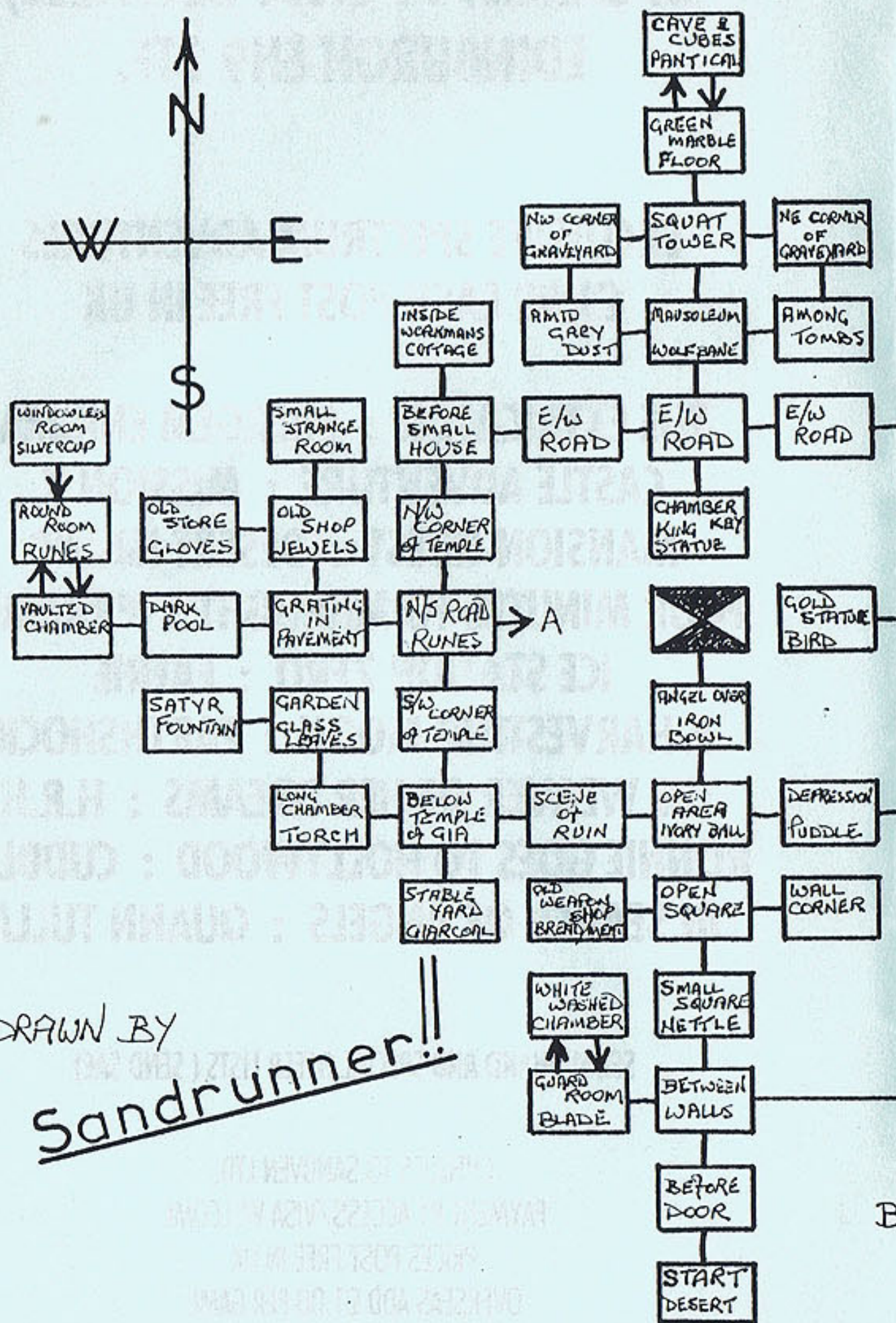
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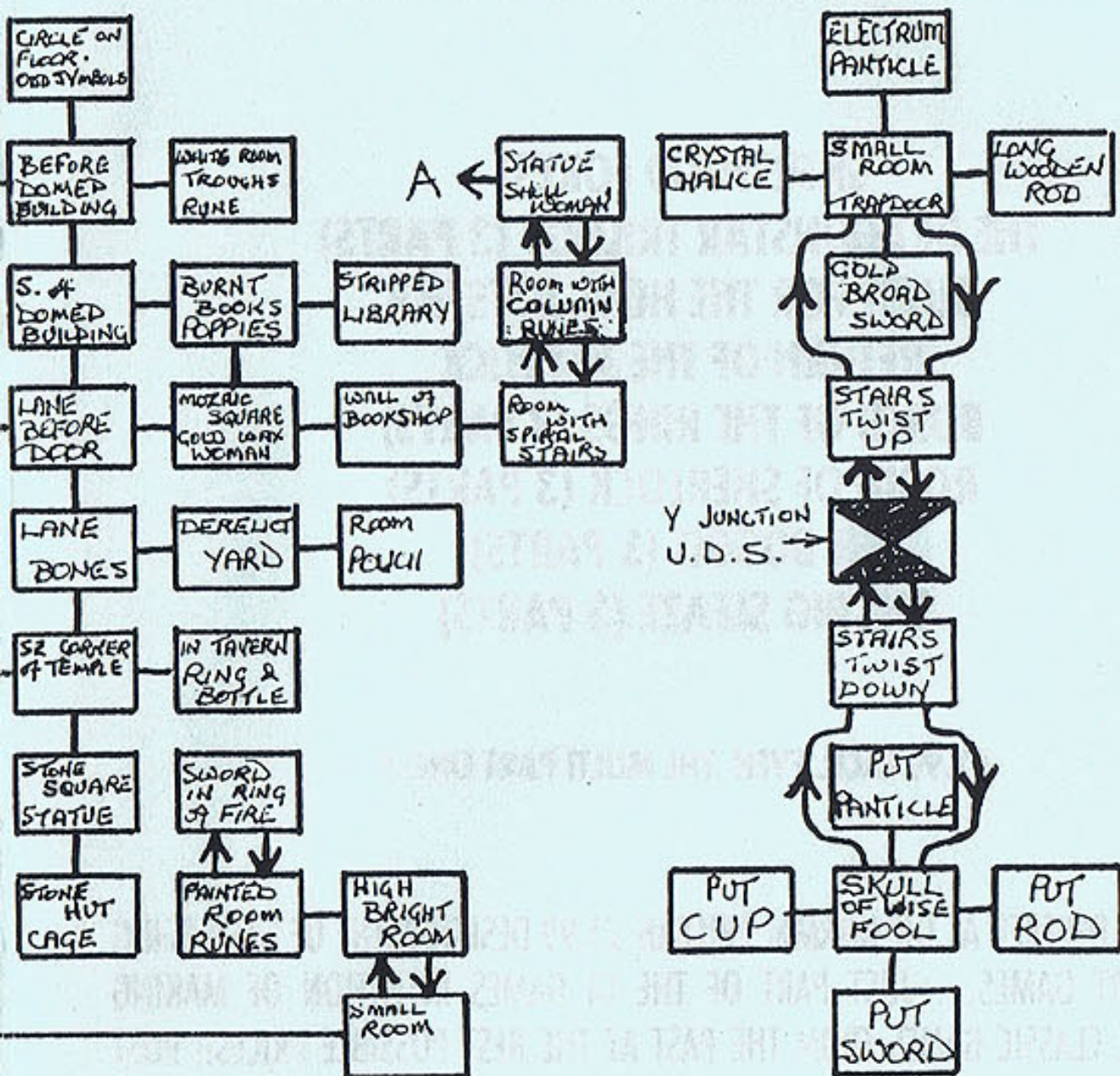


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REVIEW 4

'CASTLE ADVENTURE' GI GAMES £1.99



As you'll all undoubtedly know by now, GI GAMES are re-issuing a whole heap of classic Spectrum titles. This gives us adventurers a chance to catch up on some of the titles we missed in the past, and also gives us the opportunity to take a trip down memory lane and experience the type of games we used to thrill to in those far off halcyon days...

STORYLINE

Once upon a time, there was a princess trapped in a castle tower and naturally you want to save her from the occupants. Um, that's about the extent of the storyline really short, sweet, to the

point and it tells you all you need to know really.

THE ADVENTURE

This adventure was written several years ago by Walter Pooley, and is currently available, as is his other games, from G.I. Games, and comes in a 'Zenobi-style' cassette cover, this time though the colour is yellow.

Once the game loads you find yourself directed into the castle on the quest to rescue the Princess. Unfortunately, before you can do that, many objects need to be found to overcome the assorted problems / creatures / characters. In one location, a fire-breathing dragon blocks your way up, which will only get aggressive if you try to kill it... without the right items in your possession. Elsewhere, you will come across a black knight, a red knight, and a lion, each

of which either restrict your movements or stop you from the all important task of acquiring things.

As you move merrily around the very open castle, you will undoubtedly come across several useful items i.e:- the famous TORCH (but how do you light it?), the area that requires digging (but where is the spade?), the doors (but where is the key? - and more to the point where is Jim Morrison?, Ed!) and the infamous bane of every sane adventurers life the MAZE.

Some items are not readily available. New locations etc. have to be found. The locations and messages provide quite a lot of assistance and soon you will be well into the adventure. Especially if you realise that search and examine are not the same. Bear in mind also that on some older QUILL

'CASTLE ADVENTURE' GI GAMES £1.99

(cont...) games the use of GO EXIT was frequently used.

And so hopefully, you save the Princess, but then, just when you thought it was safe to leave the castle, you are informed that there are now 10 treasures to be found and stored in a safe location. So it is back into the Castle, with the Princess I hope, in search of the treasure. Now things start getting harder with new locations being found and new problems to be solved.

GOOD POINTS

An open game that starts easy and gets harder in the second half. No red herrings. A good typeface. Standard verb-noun input with most problems being overcome by the obvious responses.

BAD POINTS

Basically the restrictions of the QUILL and the amount of memory that was then available are a bit of a bad point in themselves. There is also a tendency for characters and creatures to stand around doing nothing, ignoring you until you unsuccessfully attack them. Also I couldn't find a ramsave or ramload option - though there might be one that goes under a different name than you normally expect.

CONCLUSION

A pleasant bit of nostalgia which kept me at the computer longer than I intended. The easy start encourages you to persevere at it... which now leads us to the final ratings... These

ratings basically reflect that this is not a new game. Many of the problems and their solutions may have been original once, but seem fairly familiar nowadays. That's not to say that I don't welcome these GI GAMES re-issues because I do. (Especially the superb 8th Day offerings!) Well done Gordon Inglis! (The brain behind the GI label)

AVAILABLE FROM:
GI GAMES (Cheques
etc. to SANDVEN LTD)
11 West Mayfield
Edinburgh EH9 1TF.
PRICE: £1.99

Hi, Tim here. Just thought I'd pop up to tell you that there should hopefully be some more GI-GAMES adventures due out in the near future - which can only be a good thing..... Tim

CASTLE ADVENTURE GI GAMES £1.99

| | | | |
|------------------|-----------------|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| PACKAGING 6 | STORYLINE 3 | OPENING PLAY 6 | PERSONAL RATING 5 |
| PROBLEMS 5 | LOG TEXT 4 | PARSER 6 | |
| GAME DESIGN 6 | DIFF LEVEL 5 | PLAYABILITY 6 | |

REVIEW 5

'Star Flaws' Delbert the Hamster S/Ware £1.99



Scott Denyer is relatively new to the adventure writing scene and as such has a lot to learn! His second release on his own Delbert The Hamster label is a spoof of STAR WARS. It looks like a case of too little, too late...

STORYLINE

Basically it's a case of you, Nuke Skyporker, in a struggle of life and death - with the massed might of the evil empire as your evil adversaries. Oh yes, and you've got to save the young princess into the bargain. Names like Daft Radar, Yan Polo and Tobacco The Cookie will all bring back memories of the 'real' film - though they

didn't mean much to me as I never saw it. (What, you never saw STAR WARS? - Ed!)

THE ADVENTURE

Erm... Where do I begin? Well I suppose I could comment on the closeness of the games plot with that of the film, but as mentioned above I haven't ever seen it (I still can't believe it - Ed!) so therein lies the first problem. The humour is totally lost on me for a start off. I must say that I have the distinct feeling that the author had more fun writing it than I had playing it, for the purposes of this review.

Sorry folks, but in my opinion, if you are going to break into the adventure scene in a big way, then perhaps a spoof of an outdated film is not the best way of going about it. I have no objection to this kind of game - if it is well done - but this one is not going to set the

world on fire, more of a damp squib really. Another big, big problem was trying to load the wretched thing in the first place. I'm afraid that I view with suspicion any attempt to tell me to twiddle with my azimuth, however well intentioned it is meant, it generally indicates that the author has had a lot of returns. I struggled really hard to load this and was only persistent because of writing the review, otherwise it would have been straight into a jiffy bag and on it's way back to Scott / Delbert in no time at all.

Having got that off my chest, what do I think of the game? Well - I think it's all very familiar, all been seen before and done better. The puzzles, for what they are worth, were unimaginative to say the least, apart from the use of a sausage and even that was daft. This game will possibly appeal to the

'Star Flaws' Delbert the Hamster S/Ware £1.99

(cont...) younger player who may well appreciate the play on names that crop up, but Yan Polo and Tobacco the Cookie mean absolutely nothing to me so half the point of the game is lost. I can't help feeling that it was written in a rush, I'm convinced that the author is capable of producing something more exciting to play if only he took a little more time. Scott Denyer's Zenobi game Arnold the Adventurer showed great promise but Star Flaws will, in my opinion, not tempt a lot of people to try another of his games. Just to add to the misery, the whole thing is played in real time, which means that on entering certain locations, you are given no time to think, let alone act, rather silly if you ask me. Some messages are difficult

to read, but you are given the option to change fonts and I strongly advise you to do so and take advantage of one of the few good points in this game. I think the packaging is excellent, you get some well presented notes and as a bonus, another game on the other side of the tape, but what this is about I can only guess because it wouldn't load at all so I can only wonder!

GOOD POINTS

The packaging is very good, as are the games info sheets, and if as much care had been lavished on the content of the game itself then this review would have read differently.

BAD POINTS

Read the review and you'll have no trouble

spotting what I thought were the bad bits. Need I say more really?

CONCLUSION

In summing it all up I accept that the horrendous loading problems I encountered may have influenced my opinion of the game but there it is. I still maintain that there is very little in it to appeal to the discerning player but will readily grant that it may appeal strongly to newcomers or Star Wars fans - who will probably think it's the bees knees!!! (I still can't believe you haven't seen Star Wars, Bessie. - Ed!)

AVAILABLE FROM:
Delbert the Hamster
Software (Cheques etc
to S. Denyer)
9 Orchard Way,
Flitwick, Bedfordshire,
MK45 1LF
PRICE: £1.99

STAR FLAWS Delbert the Hamster £1.99 (48k version played)

| | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| PACKAGING 6 | STORYLINE 2 | OPENING PLAY 6 | PERSONAL RATING 2 |
| PROBLEMS 4 | LOC TEXT 4 | PARSER 6 | |
| GAME DESIGN 6 | DIFF LEVEL 2 | PLAYABILITY 4 | |

DEAR DIARY...

The diary of an adventure writer. (Pt.III)

Well, Scott Denyer of Delbert the Hamster software is back again with yet another installment of his Dear Diary feature. Things are looking hectic in the Denyer household as Scott prepares for the terrors of the Probe convention and does his best to write some 6th form essays too!

DIARY OF AN
ADVENTURE WRITER
PART III : "Duplicating
cassettes IS fun!"

20th August:
D.T.H goes international as I sell a game to a bloke in Germany. It's quite a milestone (for me at least!).

22nd August:
Programmed most of the 128k version of *Microfair Madness*. I must confess that converting a 48k version into 128k is rather tedious when you have to copy out all the 48k text first, before adding the 128k goodies.

26th August:
Something happened today that'd stop any programmers heart. Having been programming for 4 hours we had... horror of horrors... a power cut. Aaargh! I think I should invest in a disc drive for quick and easy saving. (Having seen *Datels PLUS D* disc drive and interface in action I'd certainly recommend it to any serious user / adventure writer - Ed!)

2nd September:
The first 'Arnold the Adventurer II' playtest report arrives from 'huggable' John Wilson at Zenobi. It seems to be quite good! I decide to sample the opposition by buying a batch of games and forcing myself to play them all day. It's a hard life for some.

3rd September:
'From Beyond' arrives but...Wot! no 'Star Flaws' review. An apologetic letter from Tim (that's me isn't it,

Ed?) says it's because the issue was packed to the brim. nice one, Tim! (Snarl!).

5th September:
YS comes and Tim redeems himself with a favourable mention of DTHS. Thanks Tim! (Un-Snarl!).

7th September:
I get the text for another Gareth Pitchford game called 'First Past The Post'. I'm going to put it on a compilation called 'Delbert's Hamster Wheel of Fortune' which will also include another 'GP' game and two games by me. it should be out around Christmas.

15th September:
I make the masters for 'Microfair Madness' which is more difficult than it sounds as, due to memory problems on the 48k, some of the text is included on the loader, and called up via the 'extern' command. The games are then duly sent to the playtesters. ➤

Dear Diary... Diary of an adventure writer (Pt.III)

17th September:

I receive a phone call from each playtester telling me that Microfar Madness won't load. I send off more copies, and quietly pray that they are not faulty this time.

19th September:

For the record, I am 17 today. (Many happy returns, Scott. - Ed.) Unfortunately I'm not a true male adventurer yet as I haven't got a beard!! The only adventurous present I got was a copy of the 'Famous 5' game.

21st September:

Today I began copying a load of 'Desmond and Gertrudes' for my Probe convention stall. Tragedy strikes when I realise my master was damaged, and therefore so were all the subsequent copies.

22nd September:

Today was a very hectic day. Re-copied 'D&G's' for the convention, amended 'Arnold the Adventurer II' for Zenobi, plus sending an advert to Probe. I also have to send 'Star Flaws' to

Tim as the original copy wouldn't load.

24th September:

I think it's dawned on me that DTHS is about to become HARD work. Having 6th form essays to write every night makes it more than difficult to run, but I'll do it as I am super human (and modest, too!).

29th September:

Over the past week or so I've been programming a game set in a ghostly castle (Title 'held' at the moment).

1st October:

Spent tonight sorting out stuff for the convention. You know, tapes and instructions etc. I found out I have about 5 copies too few of everything that needs photocopying. Just excuse me while I weep quietly in one corner!

7th October:

Spent half the afternoon photocopying etc. loads of stuff for the convention. I'll need to go up again to get posters and stickers done, though.

12th October:

It's going to be amazingly close as to whether or not I'll get 'MM' to the convention in time. It's still being playtested, and I have to get 50 copies run off - a time consuming task if ever there was one!

15th October:

Had a talk on the phone with Barbara Gibb (playtester) and if I can get an amended tape of 'Microfair Madness 128' to her by Saturday (the 19th), she can playtest it by Monday, giving me exactly 4 days to amend it and duplicate 50 copies. It's gonna be close...

NEXT ISSUE:

Will Scott get to the convention in one piece? Can he copy fifty games in just four days? Can he grow a beard to prove his (adventure) manhood? Will he remain on good terms with me after reading Bessie's review of 'Star Flaws'? The answer to these, and other thrilling questions will appear in the next epic installment of 'Dear Diary'.....Tim.

REVIEW 6

'GUILDMASTERS Vol.I' The Guild £4.00

Gareth Pitchford recently raved about 'The Guildmasters Vol.I' compilation tape to me... Don't stand there raving, I said, do me a review of it, and do you know... he did!

Foreword: The Guild, for those who don't recognise the name, is the new software house run by Tony Collins author of 'The Hermitage' and other adventures. It has various specy games in its catalogue and several compilations including this one 'The Guildmasters Vol.I'.

The Guildmasters compilations are, according to Tony Collins, to be collections of outstanding specy games and if this first one is anything to go by they should be well worth looking out for.

PACKAGING

The Guild have opted for a computer printed inlay with their 'castle'

logo on the front and the compilation title on the side. It's hardly inspired packaging but at least it looks neat. Together with the all important tape you get several pages of notes which include storylines for all the games.

THE ADVENTURES

Several of the adventures have been reviewed in 'FB' already so I've opted for the space (and energy!) saving FB compilation review method giving you a brief-ish story outline and a few comments. Here goes...

INTO THE MYSTIC

The compilation couldn't have got off to a better start. 'Into the Mystic' is a River Software game which sends you, a mug daft enough to put your life on the line, on a quest to locate just where all the magic is going. This seems to be pretty important, or at least that's what Merlin said

when he 'volunteered' you for the job.

Although not believing him for one moment you decide to have a stab at it - you've got nothing better to do, there's no TV to watch, in fact without magic your days will be rather dull. So after bunging on your smock and sandals off you go.

The whole thing doesn't start too well as you run into a band of 'orrible orcs. Luckily a nifty bit of running enables you to escape their grasp and you watch as they camp for the night. A few hours of shut eye later you awake and stare at the sleeping orcs. Your first task is easy, get past them. The question is, "How?"

'Into The Mystic' is the usual puzzle filled, smartly presented and polished 'River' adventure that we've come to expect from author Jack Lockerby. It scored a respectable 79% overall in issue three of FB.

»

CAPTAIN KOOK

This is a classic sci-fi tale that was originally released by 'The Silent Corner'. It's nice to see that the poem that came with the original version is included here. It, together with the brilliant loading screens, set the atmosphere for the two part text only tale which stars you as an alien stellographer. Life isn't as easy as you may think - you start the game awaking from your cryogenic suspension only to find that your ship is on fire with its orbit rapidly decaying! All this would have been more than enough to handle on its own but the cryogenic suspension unit has also gone and retained vital parts of your memory!

'Kook' is a game to please any sci-fi fan. What with its believable plot, and well constructed problems it's no wonder it scored a hefty 82% in 'FB' issue 4. I just wish Paul Cardin would write another soon - The silent corner's been silent far too long... (Do

you know, I couldn't agree with you more, Gareth. Paul Cardin, get writing another game - that's an order. (Well, a request actually))

NYTHYHEL

Nythyhel is the next one on the tape and it was written by Tony Collin's own Pegasus software team. It's a two parter (featuring graphics) that sends you, Professor Jack Slaine, on an investigation of the paranormal and occult. Though not as polished as the improved version ('Methyhel') it's a game with plenty to see and do as you travel round London and finally to France to confront the evil known as Nythyhel. It's a shame that the newer version (marketed by Zenobi) couldn't have been included on the compilation as it incorporated several improved programming changes - even saying that, Nythyhel doesn't let the tape down. Overall a good adventure that just lacks the extra sparkle

of the Hermitage and as such isn't really Tony Collins' best.

BOOK OF THE DEAD

Is a cult classic written by the essential myth team, authors of 'Jekyll and Hyde'. It comes in two GAC-ed parts and concerns a falcon-headed Egyptian goldling's transformation to mortal and his attempt to redeem his soul and return to his rightful place among the gods. It's a real classic that hasn't aged too badly (except in the Parser dept. which is of typical GAC standard) and contains an absolute hoard of devious problems. The graphics aren't bad either though 'DEAD' is a game to be remembered more for its cunning puzzles than having good text or graphics. It's a good addition to the pack, especially as it isn't available anywhere else.

MAGNETIC MOON

This is the final game on the compilation. This three part sci-fi

'GUILDMASTERS VolI' The Guild £4.00

(cont...) tale comes courtesy of Larry Horsfield of FSF adventures.

You play the part of Mike Erlin, 2nd lieutenant of the Stellar Queen. And it's on the Stellar Queen that you start your adventure - held in the tractor beam of a large moon. Being the adventurous kind you volunteer to join the search party - but are turned down! You, however, decide to jump ship, but as you've only got a limited number of moves to do so you'll

have to be quick. This is a good solid adventure which, while not being as good as Larry's epic AXE OF KOLT, will provide hours of enjoyment.

CONCLUSIONS

At £4.00 for 10 'bits' GUILDMASTERS I is the best bargain since the Zenobi 'Indie' tapes. Do yourself a favour - buy it!!!

AVAILABLE FROM

The Guild
760 Tyburn Road
Erdington, Birmingham
B24 9NX. Make

cheques and PO's (£4.00) payable to: GLENDA COLLINS.

Additional... In *INTO THE MYSTIC* to pass through the monestary maze type: E, NW,N,E. To get back to the camp simply type S.

What can I add to that really? Not a lot. Except to say that value for money is certainly guaranteed! There should be a GUILD advert somewhere in this issue of FB, so check out their other wares.

Tim.

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REVIEW '7

'EARTHSHOCK' GI GAMES £1.99



I'm a big, big fan of many 8th Day titles, and it's good to see Gordon Inglis re-releasing them for others, who haven't played them before, to be able to buy and enjoy...

STORYLINE

A story of a post-nuclear world on the brink of destruction! Journey below the surface of the earth to defeat robots and destroy the ark. All you have is a spear, shield, bow and a last arrow. Solve three quests in the middle, each of which will effect the ending differently. Can the robots be destroyed and their doomsday machine, before the sands of time run out.

THE ADVENTURE

One of 11 8th Day titles currently available through GI Games. I'm sure most people are familiar with Mike White's early Quilled adventures that smashed the price barriers, and possibly the controversial H.R.H. but people may not be familiar with this gem of a sci-fi adventure. Written using the Quill and then Pressed, and Patched, it is a game where you start completely in the dark.... literally.

After a couple of inputs though, you receive a message 'Your hand brushes against what may be a lamp.' It is, and soon you are able to explore the early locations. Initially you are on a small dusty ledge in a derelict shaft some way below the surface. The shaft rises above you into darkness, the walls being smooth as glass. The ledge runs to the shaft corners through

dark dust. Your attention is also caught by a bleached skeleton propped up in the corner, its arm outstretched. An examination and search of things proves rewarding and soon you are able to also move up and down the shaft.

At the bottom of the shaft is a wire grill, stopping your progress in that direction, so it is up and out into the bleak world. Very soon you will do something relatively innocent and end up in the presence of the Sha-Man, being given the choice of the objects to choose from, each of which will result in you being sent on a sub plot. Regardless of which one you succeed in, you will get something that will help you at the bottom of the shaft.

Once inside the complex, danger is ever present so it pays to use the Ramsave / Ramload option or save to tape.

'EARTHSHOCK' GI GAMES £1.99

(cont...) Eventually you will be in possession of two coloured items that are needed in the bridge of the Ark and hopefully a power cell. There are four of these cells but the next one is not created until that one is inserted into the machine. Then there is the Doomsday bomb, once you've overcome one of three different endings.

GOOD POINTS

1st good point in a 'sea' of good points is the fact that there are masses and masses of problems in the game. When the game was first released it was a quite novel (and original too) idea to have three sub-plots each of which results in a different outcome at the end. Having said that I can't think of many games that have ever had different

endings depending on what you actually manage to do during the game, so it gets full marks for originality even now, a few years after it was first released. The location text is excellent too. One early location has 19 (!) lines of description. RamSave and RamLoad are always features I like to see in a game, and I'm glad they are present.

BAD POINTS

Only one thing springs to mind really, and that is that you need to save your position frequently due to various deaths, especially when trying to navigate the power grid lattice. But if there's just one thing under the 'bad points' heading then you can tell there's not much wrong with the game, can't you? (Only 1 bad point combined with all

those good ones makes for a really good game.)

CONCLUSION

As you may have gathered, this is my type of game. I finished it years ago thanks to lots of assistance. I needed it then. You will most likely need some help at some stage too. If you haven't already got this game in your 8th Day collection, get it. Maybe not a candidate for a Golden Gauntlet but even so, worthy of the G.O. (Golden Oldie award).

(I'd certainly agree with that, Storm.....TIM)

AVAILABLE FROM GI GAMES

11 West Mayfield
Edinburgh EH9 1TF

PRICE: £1.99

Make Cheques and
PO's payable to
SANDVEN LTD.

EARTHSHOCK GI GAMES £1.99 (48k version played)

| | | | |
|------------------|-----------------|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| PACKAGING 6 | STORYLINE 8 | OPENING PLAY 6 | PERSONAL RATING 9 |
| PROBLEMS 9 | LOG TEXT 8 | PARSER 6 | |
| GAME DESIGN 7 | DIFF LEVEL 9 | PLAYABILITY 7 | |

REVIEW 8

'SANTA MARIA' Zenobi Software £1.99



Barely a month goes by without a Laurence Creighton adventure appearing - and this month's no exception...

STORYLINE

More than two centuries ago, a Spanish galleon disappeared in a storm off the Cornish coast. On board was a fortune in gold doubloons, however this fact was unknown to you when you decide on a holiday in Cornwall and it isn't long before you get to know of the sunken treasure and decide to find it...

PACKAGING

No more than you'd expect to find with a Zenobi game.

THE ADVENTURE

And so we embark on another pleasurable trip into a world of adventure with Laurence Creighton at the helm, and here we have another example of how he likes to confront his players with problems right from the word go, because unless you have paid attention to the text, you are not going to get very far... there are no free holiday cottages in Cornwall so you must find the means of paying your way before you are handed the key. This should be a fairly easy task for LC fans as he is true to form inasmuch that, if having played any of his previous games, one can suss out his mind by now and you'll be in the possession of the cottage key in no time at all ... or will you? Movement in the first few locations is no problem, you can find your cottage very easily but alas, it's guarded by an alsatian, however

you will have seen a butcher's shop on your explorations and it doesn't take too many brain cells to work out what to buy. All this seems deceptively easy at first, for having appeased the dog and acquired the key all you need do is enter the cottage and begin your adventure. Of course, it will be of no surprise to you that the key doesn't fit the lock because you spied a locksmiths shop near the butchers and it wouldn't be there for nothing would it! There is also a worrying smell of gas coming from the cottage just to add to your problems and the locksmith is fast asleep, refusing to be woken up. What a great start to this game, one problem after another so that when you give yourself a pat on the back for managing to overcome all these difficulties you can sigh with relief and finally enter the cottage to search for more clues to aid you in your treasure hunting. ➤

(cont...) Dealing with the leaking gas had me stumped for a while but the answer proved to be so obvious that I missed it! How to deal with an un-openable box, a locked drawer without a key and a wardrobe will keep you on your toes, and having done all of that you will be on your way.

You must also choose the correct person to accompany you, but if you have done everything you should have before you board a boat, then the choice of companion is obvious. Your travelling pal will be most helpful, especially when it comes to doing things that you can't do for yourself, and without his help you won't be going much further. I mustn't forget to mention the cash dispenser at the start of the game... Fail to use

the right PIN number and your card gets snatched... very amusing LC, I'm sure we've all done it in the past. Using common sense when things get tough (like when you start running out of oxygen at one point) will usually see you through. Getting your hands on those lovely doubloons is the least of your problems, and it is here that I have a criticism of the game. Progress is very dependent on chance rather than solving clues. You may think you are on the right track, doing the right things - and you may well be doing things correctly - only to find the 'luck factor' (governed by chance) not swinging your way, and things not happening as and when they really should. This same luck factor also comes into play when

crossing the road. I ended up solving the game using a helpsheet and can say that the problems and general content are pretty much standard Laurence Creighton fare. (i.e. good stuff)

GOOD POINTS

Lots of good problems to solve and NO maze.

BAD POINTS

The luck side of things is a tad annoying at times.

CONCLUSION

This is yet another enjoyable Quilled game from Zenobi and LC to help while away the cold, dark winter nights.

AVAILABLE FROM

Zenobi Software
26 Spotland Tops
Cutgate, Rochdale
Lancashire OL12 7NX

The Treasure Of The Santa Maria - Zenobi Software - £1.99

| | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| PACKAGING 6 | STORYLINE 4 | OPENING PLAY 10 | PERSONAL RATING 8 |
| PROBLEMS 6 | LOG TEXT 6 | PARSER 8 | |
| GAME DESIGN 10 | DIFF LEVEL 6 | PLAYABILITY 8 | |

COMMENT

Do you want From Beyond to appear monthly...?

This is probably the most important page ever to have appeared in From Beyond so read it thoroughly and send your comments (on the enclosed - separate form) back to FB as soon as you can. The future of FB is in your hands!

Right, what's it all about? Well, since FB's first issue I've had several letters from people saying that they wished FB came out monthly rather than bi-monthly. The main reason that FB appears on a bi-monthly basis is that there's a hell of a lot of work goes into each issue. I'd say that doing four pages in a day is exceptional - and I can't always work on it every single day! Sometimes I go a few days without doing anything for it. However, now that people are contributing on a reasonable regular basis - the two new reviewers are doing a good job there too - it might just be possible

to produce FB on a monthly basis! However, there are a few provisos included, and they are.

1... Each issue would be 48 pages long rather than 52, 56 or, like this one, 60 pages long! That doesn't necessarily mean 48 pages is the maximum length per issue - just the normal length!

2... I think that I've managed to crack the publication deadline for a bi-monthly issue, so that each one arrives on your doormat within the first week of the month of publication. Can't say that a monthly issue will always appear in a similar way or time period. It may arrive a week before it's supposed to, or a week after it should! If you do eventually decide you want From Beyond to appear monthly then after the first 6 issues things should settle down to a regular delivery pattern.

3... If you've never contributed to FB in the past then shame on you! A monthly issue needs plenty more input... far, far more than I receive now. If you think you can contribute in any way on a regular or monthly basis then answer YES to that very same question on the questionnaire. I don't want you saying you want FB to go monthly then turn round and expect me to do it all myself!

4... This is very, very important - if FB was a monthly publication, how frequently and for what duration would you buy or subscribe to it? Once again, full details are on the questionnaire, but just remember that it's no good to me busting a blood vessel trying to produce a good end product if only a few readers are going to be subscribing or reading on a regular basis. Right, enough talk, it's time to vote!.....Tim.

THE UNBORN ONE

The twisted trees that lined the 'Darkest Road' had shed many a leaf in the years since you last walked this route and ventured into the area beyond the Eagleshorn, beyond even the Pinnacle in your search for the Black Wanderer. However there was something welcoming about their appearance and their very branches seemed to beckon you onwards in your search for the new evil that is threatening the land.

Once more the 'mysterious stranger' had appeared from out of nowhere and sought your assistance to put right the problems besetting the land. For a vile plague had befallen the people of the land killing them in their thousands and the Southlands were in dire need of some form of salvation. Unless this happened soon the Southlands would become no more than a barren wilderness, devoid of all inhabitants ... save the warped beings that now stalked the night.

This plague was brought about by one known as 'THE UNBORN ONE'. An evil concocted by the Black Wanderer and hidden away until now, just waiting to heed his call. The 'UNBORN ONE' had risen and taken the Citadel of Gor as his nest and it was he who dispensed the plague in all its vile glory.

The Citadel is protected by the 'HOSTS', an evil breed of creature that only the legendary 'SILENT SONG' can destroy. But be warned, the 'UNBORN ONE' cannot be harmed or defeated by the Song it is a creature more deadly than the Black Wanderer and as such is immune to the powers of the Song.

You must gain access to the Citadel and somehow stop the 'UNBORN ONE' from destroying the Southlands, whilst all the time avoiding the evil creatures that protect him.

The mysterious stranger handed you an ancient book just prior to your departure and with his brow creased in worried concentration, had said "Study this well my friend, for these symbols contained within the pages may well assist you in your quest" So with this knowledge and the book tucked safely about your person, you stepped forth upon the 'Darkest Road' once more to destroy the 'UNBORN ONE' and save the land.

**Spectrum 48K/128K+2**

NOTES : At one point in your quest your path will split into THREE and it will be time for you to decide which option to take. Each way will lead to the End-Game but only one will allow you to attain the maximum score. The other TWO routes are also slightly easier to solve ... so assess your own abilities and choose wisely.

This game will accept all the usual commands such as READ, GET, REMOVE, THROW, ASK etc but at times will be necessary to adopt a slightly more complicated input to obtain the object of your desire, such as ASK THE CREATURE FOR "HELP" or SAY TO GOBLIN "GO AWAY". The game will also accept the use of RAMSAVE and RAMLOAD to save and recall your game position in memory. Available exits are indicated by means of the 'arrows' displayed on screen.

Delbert The Hamster Software Presents . . .

micro fair
MADNESS

By Gareth Pitchford



Comes in two parts... packed full to the brim of adventure fun. The game is available in 48k and 128k versions. Please state which version you require when ordering. The 128k features extra text, more locations, which adds up to greater adventuring fun!

Featuring everything you could want in an adventure game . . .

Loadsapuzzles (some hard, some not!), treasure chests, locked doors, lemmings, dragons, forests, giants, dark caves, time travel, evil adversaries, goons, toilets, parodies, hippies, snakes, balrogs, halflings, popstars, many well-known adventuring personalities as you've never seen them before, and we've thrown the infamous "Goblin's Dungeon" in there too!!!

Mike Gorrard makes a tearful farwell performance, also.

Cheques/p.o's payable to "S. P. Denyer"

9 Orchard Way, Flitwick, Bedfordshire, MK45 1LF

Kwik Reviews

'Ronnie Goes To Hollywood' GI GAMES £1.99



Delbert the Hamster (the hamster himself - not the software house) has broken free from his cage and bashed out some quick reviews of his fave games. It just so happens that they are all from the GI GAMES catalogue and are all 8th Day titles. Take it away Delbert...

Ronnie Goes To Hollywood is a rather chucklesome release from GI GAMES written by 8th day software. The plot is quite simple. All you have to do is take the role of a certain (ex) President of the USA. No problem, you think! Wrong again. Despite the simple sounding task of becoming good old Ronald R. you'll soon discover that life

as the President is very tough - as is the game itself! Even with the help of the solution sheet I still found the going to be tough.

For starters you have to get dressed, and this is no mean feat. It took me about four attempts, using the helpsheet, to finally get dressed and get on with my Presidential activities. You need more than clothes to tackle the world too, such as a toupee and a surgical truss!

Once dressed, and once you've dispersed the world's press that have camped on your doorstep, you can waltz off halfway round the globe. But to begin with I went to a massage parlour, (obviously, Ed.) where I was promptly suffocated by some overprotective minders! I didn't mind having to restart, as the way I died made me laugh out loud.

After the restart (having

got dressed again) I went zooming off to all manner of places. I travelled to the Russian embassy, Ireland and Geneva. (How conventional.) Of course, Hollywood was only a short trip away too! Various colourful characters appear too, such as fellow wig-wearer Frank (old blue eyes) Sinatra, The Mafia, and even the lovable Ku Klux Klan!!

One of the main aims to the game is to keep your popularity up with the American public, and this can be adjusted by making the right decision on the White House computer.

Unlike HRH (reviewed next page) the humor in this game is more wholesome and rounded, and less rude!

I thoroughly enjoyed my romp with Ronald (oo-er!), and will say that if you enjoy spoofs then this one will give you a lot of pleasure!

OVERALL.....86%

Okay, next up in this series of Kwik Reviews comes H.R.H by the same programmers and publishers as Ronnie Goes To Hollywood.

H.R.H originally caused quite a stir when it was first released way back in 1986 (ah, the good old days - Ed.), and believe me, certain parts of it are still touch and go today. It was originally priced at the unbelievable sum of £6.95. Has the game, and its humour, stood the test of time?

The games storyline is fairly original to say the least. You've been given the Queen's Giro (for a paltry £250,000) by mistake, and it's your duty to cash it and give her the money. Any attempts you make to dispose of it otherwise results in Willy running off with it. Now you have to find the giro as well. Early in the game you encounter a telephone, and every time you enter the location it rings. Boy! It doesn't half get on your nerves after having to sit

through another 10 seconds of ringing before you can continue the game. The resulting phone call was very (VERY) risque, and had something to do with Prince Andrew and three women, each of which were either positive or negative! See what I mean? I also encountered the words P*SS*D and Durex in this part alone, so I think you should be warned about them! The game is filled with all the other Royal family members, including Prince Phillip and Edward in a kebab restaurant, Maggie T., the Queen Mother,

Princess Michael, Anne and Margaret (who wants some cigarettes!). Diana also pops up - in the bath. I think the game relies too heavily on the humour, and although the puzzles are quite tough, there was just too much 'mickey-taking' going on. The game features lots of 'borderline' humour that even my master (Scott Denyer) wouldn't dare to tackle. That may make you rush to buy it to see exactly what else it contains to offend the senses (and the censors). Actually it's not that bad, it just didn't appeal to me.

OVERALL.....61%



If you have been paying attention over the last couple of pages you'll have noticed that GI GAMES have released a whole pile / enormous stack of golden oldie 'classic' adventures. Bung the big GI GAMES chief - Gordon Inglis - an S.A.E (address at the end of these reviews - on P.52) and he'll more than likely send you a list of the titles available to date along with an order form. If he ain't got a title to suit your needs then I'll eat my sawdust. (I'm a hamster, remember?) Anyway, here's another Kwik Review of another GI GAMES game...

The Extricator was another title released in 1986 - this time by Precision Games. Now I know Gordon (GI GAMES) Inglis had some smart new loading screens done for his games, but this one ain't got one! Instead it's the Precision Games name under the picture of a scarecrow which appears when loading begins. But I digress... what of the game?

Well, the storyline tells you that you are an earth agent who has been assigned the task of extricating a certain Prof. Roberts from the planet ARG. He's being held in the star fleet command HQ, which is made up of various different sectors. Each sector must be played and completed before you are allowed to progress onto the next. But before doing any of that you must first deactivate the security system, and then get the Prof. off of ARG before the system is repaired. Phew! Let's hope the game is as well thought out as the instruction sheet.

You start the game standing on an Alien planet. (eek!). You realise this, because the grass is a funny shade of purple! The only exit is south, so you do the obvious thing and walk south before coming to a hillock, where the only exit is north. Oh! There's nothing to do! The secret to this is very cunning, and you must examine something that is on the

first screen's picture that isn't mentioned in the text. Sneaky! Obviously, someone who hates graphics and instantly turns them off at the start of the game is going to be in for a tough time. The same thing happens a few more times in the game, so if you get stuck examine the picture and you may find a solution. After working out what you have to do you can enter the space base and the game starts to open up nicely. Some of the problems encountered are a bit obvious, but there's a liberal sprinkling of harder ones to keep you on your toes. The first sector is quite easy to play through, and the red sector is definately the most difficult. There are three other sectors in the game, making it great value for money. I think you should rush out and buy it immediately, then rush back in again and send for it instead. A fine example of the 'good old days' in speccy adventure games.

OVERALL.....74%

To conclude this brief dip into the software catalogue of GI GAMES we have the second part in the proposed 'Extricator' trilogy, which is called The Energem Enigma. (The third and final part was apparently not forthcoming!)

The game continues where the first one left off (strangely enough). Professor Roberts has been rescued (by you) but needs four rare crystals (energems) to test his latest invention. These are in the Glenbo Star System on a planet called Edam. (sounds cheesy to me!). The last agent who went looking for them disappeared, and it's up to you to find his equipment and continue your search. It is believed that the 'enemy' also knows of your quest for the energems. Oh no!

The games loading screen is particularly attractive, showing a picturesque valley, the title of the game, and we are told that it was written absolutely ages ago in 1987.

Once the game has finished loading you are presented with a plot resume', credits and useful vocab examples, then it's straight into the game.

You begin in a clearing with exits north, east and south. There's a neat picture of the valley, and I found that throughout the game the graphics were well drawn and complimented the text nicely.

I decided to wander north to begin with, and very soon came across a seemingly uncrossable river. Hmmm! The only exit was back to the clearing, so, returning there and continuing east you will come across... an uncrossable ravine. Great! Luckily, going south from the initial clearing location is much the best route to take to begin with, and I soon uncovered quite a few further locations, including a bandits hideout, a cave and a boat. The boat, however, was in need of repair, so no trips down the river in it just

yet! At the bandit's hideout lies something that, when used with a bit of imagination, will help you cross the river and uncover a load more surprises. It's best if I say no more about the game as it'll spoil your enjoyment of it, and believe me, there's a lot of enjoyment to be had out of this release. The simple summing up statement of: Load it up, enjoy it, and be content with the fact that it was £1.99 well spent, says it all.

OVERALL.....70%

Well, there you have it. A pretty good bunch of oldies from GI GAMES that will give you simply hours of pleasure trying to solve them. Thanks to Delbert the Hamster and Scott Denyer for supplying the reviews.

The address to write to for more info or to order any of these titles is:

**GI GAMES
11 WEST MAYFIELD
EDINBURGH EH9 1TF**

Make cheques and Postal Orders payable to SANDVEN LTD.

ADVENTURES

48K ADVENTURES

| | AUTHOR | PRICE |
|---|---------------------------|----------------------|
| STAFF OF POWER | Sue Medley | £1.99 |
| TREASURE ISLAND (Two Parts) | Jack Lockerby | £2.49 |
| THE MAPPER | Karl Bunyan | £1.99 |
| URBAN | Jason McHale | £1.99 |
| THE UNBORN ONE | Clive Wilson | £1.99 |
| PHOENIX | 'Traveller in Black' | £1.99 |
| TIME WARRIOR | Frank Oliver | £1.99 (without book) |
| (Please state which version required) | | £2.99 (with book) |
| KOBYASHI AG'KWO | Clive Wilson | £1.99 |
| THE GOLDEN PYRAMID | Laurence Creighton | £1.99 |
| BERMUDA TRIANGLE | Laurence Creighton | £1.99 |
| THERE IS A BOMB UNDER PARLIAMENT | Laurence Creighton | £1.99 |
| THE TREASURE OF SANTA MARIA | Laurence Creighton | £1.99 |
| THE DARKEST ROAD | Clive Wilson | £1.99 |
| DEEK'S DEEDS | Jason McHale | £1.99 |
| HOB'S HOARD (Two Parts) | Dennis Francombe | £1.99 |
| THE GOLDEN SWORD OF BHAKHOR (Three Parts) | Dennis Francombe | £2.49 |
| THE LAMBERLEY MYSTERY (Three Parts) | Ian Eveleigh | £2.49 |
| THE LITTLE WANDERING GURU | Clive and Les | £1.99 |
| DEMIGOD | Clive and Les | £1.99 |
| SE-KAA OF ASSIAH (Two Parts) | Clive and Les | £1.99 |
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| NIGHTWING | Clive and Les | £1.99 |
| ONE OF OUR WOMBATS IS MISSING | Mike Gerrard | £1.99 |
| BOG OF BRIT (Plus MENAGERIE free) | Ian Brown | £1.99 |
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| AGATHA'S FOLLY (Two Parts) | Linda Wright | £1.99 |
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| CLOUD 99 | Linda Wright | £1.99 |
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| LIGHTMARE (The village of Delvhorn) | Scott Johnston | £1.99 |
| THESEUS AND THE MINOTAUR (Two Parts) | Tony Collins | £1.99 |
| METHYHEL (Two Parts) | Tony Collins | £1.99 |
| ALIEN RESEARCH CENTRE and HIT | Shaun McClure & Ian Smith | £1.99 |
| Dr.JEKYLL and Mr.HYDE (Three Parts) | Essential Myth | £1.99 |
| BEHIND CLOSED DOORS (The Saga) | The 'Balrog' | £1.99 |
| Featuring - Behind Closed Doors 1,2,& 3. | | |



ADVENTURES

48K ADVENTURES (Cont.)

| | AUTHOR | PRICE |
|---------------------------|--------------------|-------|
| ECLIPSE | Laurence Creighton | £1.99 |
| BEHOLD ATLANTIS | Laurence Creighton | £1.99 |
| THE LEGACY | Laurence Creighton | £1.99 |
| THE LOST TEMPLE | Laurence Creighton | £1.99 |
| DIABLO (Three Parts) | Mark Cantrell | £2.49 |
| GODS OF WAR (Three Parts) | Mark Cantrell | £2.49 |
| JESTER QUEST (Two Parts) | Mark Cantrell | £1.99 |

128K ADVENTURES

| | | |
|--|------------------------|---|
| STALKER | Andy Woods & Pete Page | £1.99 |
| THE PENDANT OF LOGRYN | Jamie Murphy | £1.99 |
| Dr.JEKYLL and Mr.HYDE | Essential Myth | £2.49 |
| CLOUD 99 | Linda Wright | £1.99 |
| THE BEAST | Linda Wright | £1.99 |
| DIABLO (Two cassettes) | Mark Cantrell | £3.49*** Will <u>not</u> |
| GODS OF WAR | Mark Cantrell | £2.99*** operate on |
| JESTER QUEST | Mark Cantrell | £2.99*** 128k+3 |
| TIME WARRIOR (Please state preference) | Frank Oliver | £1.99 (without book) £2.99 (with book) |

PLUS 3 DISK ADVENTURES

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|-------|
| TREASURE ISLAND | Jack Lockerby | £3.49 |
| PHOENIX | 'Traveller in Black' | £2.99 |
| THE UNBORN ONE | Clive Wilson | £2.99 |
| KOBYASHI AG'KWO | Clive Wilson | £2.99 |
| THE DARKEST ROAD | Clive Wilson | £2.99 |
| Dr.JEKYLL and Mr.HYDE | Essential Myth | £3.49 |
| THESEUS AND THE MINOTAUR | Tony Collins | £3.49 |
| METHYHEL | Tony Collins | £3.49 |
| TEACHER TROUBLE | Tony Collins | £2.99 |
| ARNOLD THE ADVENTURER | Delbert the Hamster | £2.99 |
| DIABLO | Mark Cantrell | £3.49 |
| THE CASE OF THE BEHEADED SMUGGLER | Patrick Walsh | £3.49 |
| INFILTRATOR and PAWNS OF WAR | Les Floyd | £3.49 |
| CRACK CITY | Garry Cappuccini | £2.99 |
| PENDANT OF LOGRYN | Jamie Murphy | £2.99 |
| STALKER | Andy Woods & Pete Page | £2.99 |
| AGATHA's FOLLY | Linda Wright | £3.49 |
| JADE STONE | Linda Wright | £3.49 |
| THE MISER | Jack Lockerby | £2.99 |
| BOG OF BRIT (plus MENAGERIE free) | Ian Brown | £2.99 |

NOTE : Purchase MORE than TWO games and you will be free to deduct 25p from the price of each additional game bought, or 50p from each compilation. This applies to TAPE or DISK.



LOOSE ENDS

The place to find out competition results, etc...

Er...yes, usually when you turn to this page you will find out the names of FB's competition winners, and will also see the solutions to the crosswords and other strange competitions we run. Having said all that it's plain to see that it's not the case with this issue. Last issues comp. was designed to run through till December the 20th, so if you've still got your crossword lying around then you've got time (plenty of it) to do it and send it to us. There was also an FB awards form on the other side of issue 8's crossword which enabled you to return it and register your vote for your fave game, author, software house etc., for 1991. I did ask you to hang on to the forms for a while until all the games that were likely to see the light of day for 1991 were released, and you were happy with your choices. I've had a reasonable amount returned so far,

though I've also printed the same form again - just in case you lost the original one from last issue. Please fill it in and return it if you can as it's your vote that counts! Don't forget that by returning it you'll automatically be entered into the FB prize draw. (Prize details on the voting form itself.)

Changing the subject totally, I'm hoping to run a competition in Your Sinclair soon which gives you the chance to win one of five 25mm painted figures which I've just received from Dave Wheatley of Rainbow Miniatures. (See advert on outside back cover.) Yes, they are expensive - but the price reflects the time it takes to paint them, the actual cost of the figures, and the fiddly nature of the work. I'm fast running out of my own painted figs (used as FB prizes) so if you can't WIN them in FB's legendary (?) competitions then you may want to buy

yourself one. My personal prefs. would be to ask Dave to supply a Citadel 25mm figure - (specify the type of thing you want / colour scheme / character type etc.) then leave the rest up to him. "What use are they?" Er... they are decorative, and also make very useful map markers. Imagine mapping a game on paper and then putting the figure on the square you occupy in the game - you'd never lose your place again. Alternatively if you've written an adventure and would like a figure to represent a character or characters from the game, (or would just like to have a character from a game you've played) then write to dave and tell him the sort of thing you have in mind, and see if he can supply it. I used to supply figures (painted) for Compass Softwares earlier adventures. Sold quite a few too! Anyway, enough waffle. See you next time...Tim

STOP PRESS

Late Items of Adventure News...

PHOENIX SEQUEL

The mysterious 'Traveller in Black' - author of Zenobi's *Golden Gauntlet* winning 'PHOENIX' has just finished working on the sequel at this very moment... Its working title is: 'Violator of Voodoo', so you can expect plenty of thrills and chills when it eventually appears! I'll hopefully be doing an interview with the Traveller in issue 10. Who is he?, (or is he a she?) and why the pseudonym?

YET MORE COMPASS SOFTWARE NEWS!

YES... more Compass Software news: Jon Lemmon says he's just bought an Amiga and DTP software, and from now on all his adverts, leaflets and mail-shots will be appearing in the form of the front page of a newspaper. (the Daily Compass presumably?) So if you should happen to get such a mailshot from

Jon Lemmon then you'll know exactly what's happening, and that the earth isn't really being invaded by terrifying aliens or micro mutants! Jon has also just confirmed that there are NO arcade elements in his next adventure (see Page 5 for more details of the next planned Compass release).

SOMETHING FISHY

Red Herring - the new bi-monthly 'multi-format' adventure book - is finally with us. If you trust my judgement simply write out a cheque or postal order for £2.95 (or £4.50 if you live in the rest of the world?) made payable to Marion Taylor) and send it, along with your name and address (of course) to: Marion Taylor. RED HERRING. 504 Ben Jonson House, Barbican, London EC2Y 8DL. It's A5 and 80-odd pages in size, has card front and back covers, and is spiral bound into the bargain.

Issue 1's content is made up of 16 or so reviews, loads of news, some really usefull pull-out order pages for PD libraries and such like, maps, helpful hints and tips etc., etc. If you've had a leaflet from the Red Herring team and haven't ordered a copy yet, then do yourself a favour and buy it now. I'm simply staggered by the quality of it, and my congratulations go to the team responsible for it: Marion Taylor, her husband, Ken (design and cartoons), and Sue (syntax) Medly.

WHAT'S ZAT?

ZAT fanzine (for SAM and Spectrum) is still going strong. I've just had issues 9 and 10 and for just £5.50 You'll receive a 6 issue (one year) subscription. Cheques and PO's to: ZAT (subscriptions), PO BOX 488, Tweeddale, Telford, Shropshire TF7 4SU. It's contains a general 'mixed' content, and is well worth getting.... Tim

Review Roundup

Reviews and Ratings of games in FB issues 1 to 8

| GAME | COMPANY | FB RATING |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| ● SHADOWS OF THE PAST PUZZLED! THE BOUNTY HUNTER THE MENAGERIE THE HOBBLE HUNTER | COMPASS SOFTWARE T.MARSH & J.SKINNER RIVER SOFTWARE STORMBRINGER SWARE COMAPSS SOFTWARE | 80 85 92 73 74 |
| ● INTRUDER ALERT INVADERS FROM PLANETX CRACK CITY THE GORDELLO INCIDENT BEST OF THE INDIES 1 | COMPASS SOFTWARE COMPASS SOFTWARE ZENOBİ SOFTWARE TARTAN SOFTWARE ZENOBİ SOFTWARE | 88 93 80 82 100 |
| ● BOG OF BRIT FAIRLY DIFF. MISSION INTO THE MYSTIC LOST TEMPLE OF INCAS | STORMBRINGER SWARE FANTASY SOFTWARE RIVER SOFTWARE ZENOBİ SOFTWARE | 45 72 79 78 |
| ● ECLIPSE BORDER HARRIER CAPTAIN KOOK | ZENOBİ SOFTWARE SOLE SOLUTIONS SWARE THE SILENT CORNER | 80 38 82 |
| ● GORDELLO'S DEMISE ONE OF OUR WOMBATS LAMBERLEY MYSTERY MAGNETIC MOON STARSHIP QUEST AXE OF KOLT THE MICRO MUTANT | TARTAN SOFTWARE ZENOBİ SOFTWARE ZENOBİ SOFTWARE F.S.F. ADVENTURES F.S.F. ADVENTURES F.S.F. ADVENTURES COMPASS SOFTWARE | - 60 85 79 82 95 84 |
| ● THE LOST DRAGON THE DARKEST ROAD DEEK'S DEEDS BEST OF THE INDIES 2 | TARTAN SOFTWARE ZENOBİ SOFTWARE ZENOBİ SOFTWARE ZENOBİ SOFTWARE | 77 83 40 150 |
| ● BLOOD OF BOGMOLE DESMOND & GERTRUDE HOB'S HOARD TREASURE ISLAND DEEP WATERS 1 DEEP WATERS 2 | COMPASS SOFTWARE DELBERT THE HAMSTER ZENOBİ SOFTWARE RIVER SOFTWARE ZENOBİ SOFTWARE ZENOBİ SOFTWARE | 84 70 68 82 - - |
| ● GOLDEN PYRAMID KOBYASHI AG'KWO PHOENIX BOMB UNDER PAR'MENT BERMUDA TRIANGLE | ZENOBİ SOFTWARE ZENOBİ SOFTWARE ZENOBİ SOFTWARE ZENOBİ SOFTWARE ZENOBİ SOFTWARE | 77 70 90 75 79 |
| | SERIOUS FANTASY GOOD SOLID PROBS 1ST 'GG' WINNER UNUSUAL TALE SPOOF-ISH TALE GOOD SCI-FI 2ND 'GG' WINNER NEW IDEAS SPLIT SCREEN FUN? BRILL COMPILATION CONAN SPOOF SPY SPOOF SOLID FANTASY TALE BRILL QUILL GAME FULL OF PROBLEMS HMMM... NUFF SAID! PROPHETIC TALE DIDN'T LOAD OK! ZOO BASED GAME HOLMES FUN SCI FI GOODIE EVEN BETTER SCI FI BEST GAME SO FAR? BIZARRE TWIST! PROBE CONVENTION X-L-NT FANTASY MISSED THE MARK BRILL COMPILATION HARD BUT GOOD QUITE FUNNY TALE TREASURE HUNT PIRATES+TREASURE BRILL COMPILATION BRILL COMPILATION | |

Review Roundup: Games reviewed in FB issues 1-8

I thought it was about time that an FB review roundup appeared, so there it was. (on the previous page!). And here are a few of my thoughts on the games we've featured since issue 1...

Since issue 1 we've reviewed some 39 adventures... Issue 1, funnily enough, having just about the most diverse contents (game wise) so far! The first *Golden Gauntlet* award went to River Software's *The Bounty Hunter*. In that same premiere issue *Puzzled!* by T. Marsh and J. Skinner also scored very highly being a typical 'good' quality 'quilled' adventure. (being long, full of puzzles and having a few innocent bugs!) It's nice to see that *Puzzled!* has now been re-issued by Tony Collins, and is out on his *'The Guild'* label.

Issue 2 had plenty of goodies in it too! Compass Software's *Invaders From Planet-X* got the *Golden Gauntlet* in that issue, and it remains to this

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day (and to my mind) a classic adventure that's got just about everything you could wish for in a game - and then a little bit more!

Issues 3 and 4 once more had good, varied contents, though a couple of games were well below par...

Issue 5 saw no fewer than seven games reviewed, and the *Golden Gauntlet* went to the best game to date - *The Axe of Kolt* by F.S.F. adventures. This issue also had the best set of games reviewed so far! Nothing (except 1 game) scored less than 79 - and 4 were over 80! A good issue!

Issue 6 saw Clive Wilson's comeback game: *The Darkest Road* score 83, and also saw the release of the best compilation tape to date (to my mind) *Best of the Indies 2* which really appears to be the best of the indies! It scored 150% Overall (out of 100?) and YES it was worth that mark!

Issue 7 was another 'overall' good issue for games - especially the two six-pack compilations of Jack Lockerby games! They weren't rated - though the reviews speak for themselves and they are pure adventure fun from start to finish! *Blood of Bogmole* by Compass Software was notable as it featured some unusual ideas (not always appreciated by many adventurers) and digitized graphics that appeared in an instant and resided in an unused area of memory!

Finally we come to the last issue of FROM BEYOND - Issue 8. A fine set of 5 games reviewed in this issue. No less than three titles from the consistently good pen of Laurence 'QUILL' Creighton and the fourth *Golden Gauntlet* going to *Phoenix* - 7.

ADVENTURES

TAPE COMPILATIONS

| | <u>AUTHOR</u> | <u>PRICE</u> |
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