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CLASSIC GAMES

SHARP

Computer & Video Games' very own contributor, John Ball, has come up with the goods on Sharpsoft's version of Othello.

Complete with loud bleeps, every time it makes a move, the machine plays a very good standard of Reversi and defeated all my attempts to force it into submission.

Even reading John's column on the subject and obeying his guidelines with regard to corner squares and understanding what the computer was up to didn't help.

It had a particularly frustrating habit of turning the tables on me at the end of a game just as I thought I had an unbeatable position.

The screen presentation is simple as Sharp graphics force it to be but simplicity suits Othello and it is a very playable game with a good response time. Only buy it if you can stand to be beaten. It costs £6.90.

- Getting started
- Value
- Playability



SPECTRUM

Reversi, or Othello as it is often called, is a nineteenth century game of territorial acquisition. Strategy and skill are needed to win.

Two versions of the game are currently available for the Sinclair Spectrum, and both run on the unexpanded machine. One is by **Mine of Information**, for Sinclair Research, and the other has been written by **Microx**, based at Worthing, Sussex.

The Sinclair version comes in a very pleasant package, the cassette insert is colourful and packed with information. Beginners should soon become well-versed in the game by simply reading it.

The program loaded without any problems and ran immediately. The game is fairly standard, but with many interesting features.

To begin with, there are nine skill levels, with a three-second response time at level 1.

You can challenge the computer, with either the Spectrum or yourself starting, or you may play against a friend with the computer acting as umpire.

If you are a beginner, you may

Time and motion

The classic board games transfer well to computers who make better than average opponents on all the games dealt with here.

But there is more to choosing a chess, backgammon, draughts or reversi program, than picking one which will beat you every time.

Most important in these programs are a display that is clear and easy on the eye, coupled with pieces which can be easily recognised. Programs which use disturbing colour clashes or badly shaped pieces will hardly help a player trying to give careful study to a critical position.

The program should also draw a player's attention to its move. Both an audio and visual signal should be included to let the player know it's moving and which piece it is changing.

A good response time is crucial. If left to its own devices for long enough most computers can come up with a good move. But long study should be the human player's prerogative — computers are used for their speed.

Finally an easy-to-understand, and implement, move input system will ensure that the program does not start gathering dust after the first few tries. In chess it is difficult to come up with anything better than E2-E4 but this can easily lead to a mistake which is still a valid move and completely ruin a player's chances.

Few programs allow the player to take a move back, try and find one that does.

Other key things to question with regard to chess: does the program always respond to P-Q4 openings the same way? If so you're in for a dull opening repertoire. Does it play forced moves quickly? Does it keep its head when things go wrong? Some programs just give up on bad positions.

TERRY PRATT

- 7 review a sample game at your leisure.
- 8 Half-way through a game you may
- 9 change sides, and at the end of one, you may review all the moves of the game.

The graphics are fair, and there is even a facility to change border, paper and ink colours to your requirements. All in all, this is a most magnificent game.

I wish I could say the same for the Microx version. The purchaser is greeted by a most unappealing package bearing the company's name and the program title.

After sorting out the loading problems, which I have never had with any other cassettes, I was confronted with a page of confusing text which would leave the beginner completely bemused.

The game itself has a rather uninteresting screen display, and makes average use of colour.

When I tried the program on a monochrome television set, the players' pieces were almost indistinguishable.

The program is written in Basic, and there is only one skill level. The computer's moves are average, about equal to the moves of level one on the Sinclair cassette.

The computer does not check if an opponent has had to pass, and if "enter" is pressed without a move being keyed in, your turn is overlooked.

For my money, the Sinclair cassette has to be my choice. Microx Othello is no comparison to Sinclair Reversi, and I would not even consider purchasing it. Sinclair Reversi is available at £7.95 and Microx Othello at £3.50.

Sinclair Reversi

- Getting started
- Value
- Playability

Microx Othello

- Getting started
- Value
- Playability



The growling gravelly voice of Quicksilver's Chess program does not add much to the game.

However, its sharp comments on the current state of play do give this program a slightly more human feel.

There's a surge of pride each time it finds itself in more difficulties than it expected and says so on screen. And after being roundly criticised for a queen sacrifice, "That was a pathetic move!" I enjoyed mating it five moves later all the more.

The program does respond quickly at the lower levels but does not play a particularly good opening and has a tendency to capitulate utterly when things start going wrong.

Still, it will give beginners a hard game and will probably hand out more beatings than it takes.

The presentation on the Spectrum is a problem and the screen takes some getting used to. With several of the pieces barely recognisable from their board equivalents. While good chess players know (by colour and position) where the king and queen start a game, learners will not have such a clear idea.

Probably a bit too gimmicky for the

more serious chess enthusiast and perhaps not enough thought for the complete beginner to help him around the little things most of us take for granted. It costs £6.95 and runs on the 48K model.

- Getting started 6
- Value 8
- Playability 5



The Spectrum's graphics face a severe test when asked to produce a good chess board with easily distinguished pieces.

So far I have yet to see a board which is easy on the eye and doesn't have at least two piece symbols too close for comfort. The **Psion** game, which comes courtesy of Microgen, seems to have trouble with pawns and bishops and I had to look hard in some positions to spot a bishop hiding in a pawn chain.

Given this problem and the usual difficulties with keying-in the E2-E4 format, which usually causes me problems when keen to play a good move with black, it's a pity this game does not include a facility to allow you to change mistakes.

Many an interesting position went down the drain after I simply mispressed a square and sent a rook, pawn or queen into a dangerous position instead of the one I intended.

Still this Psion tape is probably the best Spectrum chess around so if you can learn to live with these shortcomings, you will manage to get some decent games out of it.

The levels are 0-9 and levels one, two and three all play a fast and fair game.

The program allows you to set up a board position to play from and I particularly enjoyed the chance to turn the screen position and moves so far onto the Spectrum printer. Current games can also be saved on cassette. The game costs £7.95.

- Getting started 8
- Value 8
- Playability 7



VIC-20

Bug-Byte is offering the lowest-priced Vic Chess game I have come across but you will already need to have at least 16K worth of memory expansion on your basic machine.

It also takes a step in the right direction by getting away from the over-used notion of chess levels. Instead the Bug-Byte programmers ask the player to input a three-figure number from

0-9.99 to determine the play.

The number before the decimal point is the number of moves it looks ahead at each position. The number after the point refers to the number of positions the computer will consider at each play.

Of course if you start getting ambitious then the computer begins eating into huge amounts of time as it considers vast amounts of data before replying. In play at the lower end of the scale it produced some difficult to understand moves.

The display of the pieces is also a little simplistic and the king and queen symbols are initially confusing. It costs £7.00.

- Getting started 9
- Value 7
- Playability 5



Boss plays chess on the Vic-20 only with the aid of an 8K expansion to the Basic memory.

But it is a marvellous piece of software with levels 0 to 9 taking you from a one second to a four hour response time.

There is a good book opening built into this program and it stayed within a known variation usually to the sixth or eighth move on most familiar openings.

Boss also scores on the display, which is more than just adequate — it is produced with a veritable flourish. It accepts entries in four key strokes and will also run chess clocks on both players which offers the additional challenge of trying to beat the computer while taking less time than it does.

A couple of criticisms though; it is difficult to spot the computer's last move as the pieces don't flash after moving and the tape was not a first-time loader. It costs £14.99 and is distributed here by Audiogenic.

- Getting started 6
- Value 9
- Playability 8



Chess in a 3.5K memory is what Commodore are offering for the basic Vic-20.

The catch is that it comes in cartridge form with the attendant rise in price to £21.70.

But you do get value for money. The game top scores in our getting started category with a simple plug-in operation and a comprehensive booklet explaining what can and can't be done on each of the six possible levels.

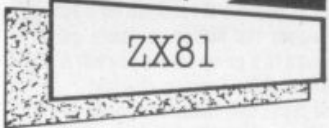
The program has a good pedigree, with the Sargon name behind it and is based on the Sargon II program first devised for the Apple.

The board display is easily distinguished and the six levels well

spaced out with an almost instantaneous response at the lowest level.

It plays a good game and it's very hard to fault this well put together package except on the price.

- Getting started 10
- Value 8
- Playability 7



Artic's 1K Chess is an attempt to get a complex strategy game into the minimum of memory space and as such can only be a compromise.

To make this compromise too much has had to be left out. You are not allowed to Castle, capture en-passant or even promote your pawns and to crown it all even a victory is not acknowledged by the computer. You'll have to spot it for yourself.

The board is little more than an 8x8 square of spaces and inverse spaces with the pieces represented by their initials either in white or black or in black on white. This is the cause of confusion later in the game, when pieces have been forgotten.

Worse still it keeps moving its pieces around the board while it makes up its tiny 1K mind what its next move will be.

Still it does play chess — just — a considerable achievement in 1K.

This is not so much a game as a feat of programming which, in itself, ought to make 1K Chess a collector's item. It does just about succeed in playing chess but don't expect to play too many memorable games on it. Just admire the thought and dedication which made such a thing possible.

A considerable achievement for only £2.95.

- Getting started 7
- Value 8
- Playability 4



Backgammon is a three-thousand year-old game of chance and skill for two people. This Psion/Sinclair version for the 16K ZX81, is most impressive.

The cassette is well packaged, with the insert containing five pages of information including the history, rules and all other aspects of the game of backgammon which are relevant to beginners and experts alike.

The program loaded without much difficulty.

There are four skill levels and the game can run in fast or slow mode. This simply means that if the computer is taking its turn and it is in fast mode, the screen goes blank and it makes up its mind four times faster.

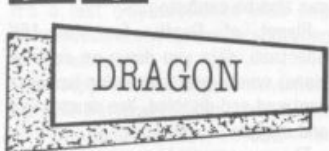
The 81 plays an adequate game at level 1, and plays extremely well at level 4.

The graphics are adequate, with normal and inverse 'O's representing the two players' pieces. Entry of moves is very simple, as is accepting or rejecting the doubling cube — which the computer controls very well.

You only have to press one key, and the ZX81 always asks you to confirm your entries.

Backgammon costs £5.95 from Sinclair Research. There is a Dice program on side B of the cassette.

- Getting Started 8
- Value 8
- Playability 8



Dragon Games 1 and 2 are tape compendiums for this new micro from J. Morrison Micros of Leeds.

All the games are written in Basic and a great deal can be learned by the would-be games programmer who finds time to study the listings.

Othello, on Dragon Games 1, plays a standard game but it does not give any instructions or rules. Breakout is the second game on this tape and in this version of the arcade machine you play against the clock to score as many points as possible. A conventional bat is not used — you simply fire your projectile using the space bar.

Moonlander is the third game on tape one and is a fairly good representation of this well-known computer game. Awari is a copy of the African national game, which for the uninitiated is played with pebbles. Numbers are used to display the counters, but like Othello you are not told how to play the game.

The final program on Dragon Games 1 is called Raffles. In its task is to find

hidden treasure. A sleeping dog guards the treasure rooms. This is a short graphic adventure — and although simple I found it quite addictive.

It costs £5.95.

- Getting started 8
- Value 7
- Playability 7



If you're a keen Reversi — also known as Othello — player, you'll get extra value for money playing BBC Publications' version for the BBC Model A or B.

The games of Galaxy, Gomoku and Mastermind are all included on the same tape, which goes under the name Strategy Games for the BBC micro.

The Reversi game features a well-produced but simple display and I found the move entry system of letters appearing in all the legal positions very easy to cope with. The game plays to a high standard but is not unbeatable.

With the other three games it's good value at £10.

- Getting started 8
- Value 9
- Playability 8



Strip Poker is a game for the adults who are fed up with Space Invaders, Pacman and all the rest. More precisely it's a game for men as it features two model girls gambling their clothes in a computerised round of poker.

Suzi and Melissa each have their own style of play. One is a skilled poker player the other is fairly inept. The game requires a large amount of memory — 40K — and runs on the Atari 400/800 with a disc drive. Versions will shortly be available for the Apple.

For people who are likely to be trying the game out at work it has the sensible device of being able to black out the screen at any time. Useful if your boss (or the children!) turn up unexpectedly in the computer room!

Strip Poker is manufactured by Allrian of Hayes, Middlesex and retails at £27.50.

- Getting started 9
- Value 6
- Playability 7



ADVENTURE GAMES

ATARI

This is your chance to play sleuth for an afternoon as you are challenged to solve the Murder At Awesome Hall.

Colonel Awesome lies dead on the floor of his 20 room mansion.

You must find out who did it, in which room, and with what murder weapon.

Clues in the shape of an on-screen map of the mansion's first floor and ground floor.

After entering a room pressing "Q" enables you to find out who or what is in a room. If any of the Colonel's associates are in the room you can question them.

The computer will also give you a list of suspects, extra clues if you need them, and the solution for the completely exasperated.

This game is not visually exciting and if you do not like solving puzzles can become rapidly boring.

The game runs on a 16K Atari and is available from Calisto Computers at £14.95.

- Getting started 8
- Value 5
- Playability 5



SPECTRUM

Faust was a German who sold his soul to the devil, and hid many treasures.

The player is led near to the treasures and must then find them. The creatures encountered in the quest are mutants from long ago.

That is the setting of this game, which although mainly text, is accompanied by mini-pictures of the objects as they are mentioned.

The screen during play has varied colours, which combined with some simple sound effects make for a quite pleasing Adventure from Abbex of London for the 16K Spectrum at £4.95.

- Getting started 10
- Value 8
- Playability 8



This series of adventures displayed as plain scrolling black text on a pale yellow background, the conversation scrolling continuously up the screen.

In itself this is acceptable. But is spoiled by the fact that when a lot of conversation has been held at one place

Childhood fantasy

Adventure is what all small boys — and most bigger ones — long for. Remember all those childhood books that took you into a world of excitement and fantasy? Didn't you, like me, wish you were one of the Famous Five?

Adventure gaming will take you one step nearer to your dreams, in the comfort of your own home.

Originally written for large mainframe computers, these games have now been brought to the masses via the micro. Adventures are being published in ever increasing numbers for every popular machine.

An Adventure game makes you the would-be hero. You move about from one location to another, examine things, pick up and manipulate objects, and solve puzzles. But all the time danger lurks and hidden enemies may strike at any time.

Your goal may be anything from collecting priceless treasures to saving the world from disaster. You become part of the story, the computer working to calculate what your actions will achieve within the plot devised by the author.

Don't expect fancy graphics in an Adventure — although there are graphic Adventures. Expect words. Your imagination will provide the pictures — just like it does when you read a good book. And like a good book, you will find it just as difficult to put down.

When buying an Adventure first discover if the scenario and degree of complexity suit your tastes. Games reviews will help here. Find out if the speed of the game is right for you as there is a great deal of variation.

From my experience a minimum of 16k of memory is required for a decent adventure and from there on up the bigger the better. A "save game" feature is useful as it enables you to return to a game where you left it at a later stage without having to leave the machine running all night.

If your computer has sound and colour these will enhance a game. But for the purist a good plot is enough.

KEITH CAMPBELL

and the location details have long since disappeared, there seems to be no way of recalling them. The lack of a cursor can also be confusing.

Planet of Death, for the 16K Spectrum, sets you down on an alien planet where your space ship has been captured and disabled. You must find it and escape.

The environment here seemed just like earth to me — very mundane. Most things I tried to do proved impossible or went unrecognised. A weak theme and frustrating game.

Inca Curse, for the 48K Spectrum, places you in a South American jungle outside an Inca temple. This you must explore and return with as much treasure as possible.

Quite a good game with plenty of exploring to do, and points to score, but a disaster from an educational point of view.

Spelling is obviously not the author's strong point! I came across "vandels", an "armary", and "hyroglyphics"!

The publishers claim 3200 to be the maximum number of points to have been scored to date. Could this be the total number of spelling errors in the game?

In Ship of Doom which runs on the 48K Spectrum you are in a space ship which has been drawn into an alien cruiser by a Gravitron beam. The aliens are rounding-up humans to turn them into androids.

Your mission — to press the main computer control button to free your ship. There are endless corridors and rooms to roam about, with some strange devices whose purposes are not obvious.

The control button is easily found, but covered by seemingly unbreakable glass! Quite an interesting adventure, if SF is for you!

Espionage Island, again for the 48K Spectrum, puts you under pressure from the start. You are in an aircraft which has been shot at, and you can see a parachute and lever. Your mission is to find the secret of the island on which you were spying from above, but first you must get there.

The island is populated by natives — and hides a guarded camp.

Are the things you find in the wreckage of your aircraft a clue? Can you penetrate the camp? And will you be able to return to your aircraft carrier base? Quite an exciting Adventure.

This series of adventures from Artic Computing of Hull, seems to improve alphabetically! I can hardly wait for Adventure 'E'. The Adventures cost £6.95 each.

Planet of Death

- Getting started 10
 - Value 6
 - Playability 3
- Ship of Doom
- Getting started 10

- Value 6
- Playability 6

Inca Curse

- Getting started 10
- Value 6
- Playability 5

Espionage

- Getting started 10
- Value 7
- Playability 7



At last a realistic 007 adventure! The mode of play is quite different from most Adventure games, successfully recreating the world of James Bond on a computer.

You are 007, of course, and M takes you to Q to choose your weapons.

You then repeatedly select destinations from a list of cities around the world and the micro takes you there.

On arrival you may be offered a ride by a mysterious taxi, or given clues in the form of one letter of an anagram to enable you to solve where a missing jet with a nuclear bomb has disappeared to.

Meanwhile, you must save London from a threat of destruction by Dr. Death.

An original presentation, from Richard Shepherd Software of Maidenhead, with authentic 'feel' of a James Bond novel. It costs £6.50.

- Getting started 5
- Value 7
- Playability 9



As The Hobbit loads, an illustrated title page is displayed, rather like the cover of a book.

Indeed, the book *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien is supplied as part of the package, and it is advisable to read this before playing, since the game follows the theme quite closely.

Another booklet describing how to play the game is provided and includes hints on the plot and how "English", the command language works.

In play the screen is split in two. A "communication window" at the bottom scrolls independently from the "adventure window" above which gives details about the location and action.

On his first visit to a location the player is rewarded with a colour illustration of it.

The action is continuous, since The Hobbit is played in real time.

The creatures go about their business whilst the player is thinking.

Whilst head-scratching is in progress it is quite likely that more messages

will appear on the screen, such as "Thorin goes east through the green door" or "Gandalf gives you the map". The publishers call this feature "Animaction", and it means there is no unique solution, the game being slightly different every time it is played.

A charming Adventure, requiring considerable time to complete.

The Hobbit comes from **Melbourne House** for the 48K Spectrum at £14.95.

- Getting started 10
- Value 9
- Playability 9



Pimania really IS different! It is a complete entertainments package!

It all starts with a flashing picture of the Golden Sundial of Pi, a prize worth £6,000 offered to the first person to solve the puzzle.

The player is accompanied by the Pi Man, who starts off by laughing himself silly, and proceeds to offer extremely disconcerting comments.

The game offers a series of puzzles and clues, interspersed with funnies. Like a little man who for no reason walks boldly on to the screen and dances the Hokey Kokey to music, a dog that walks up to a tree and barks at it, and a commercial break offering Pimania tee-shirts in grotesque colours and sizes which are all out of stock!

So when the player gets thoroughly frustrated over a problem, the chances are that a good laugh is just around the corner.

The computer program is complemented by a catchy audio number on the reverse side of the tape, "Pimania" by Clair Sinclive and the Pimen. Show business, pork pies, and a deaf-aid among other things feature in this.

I suspect that there are clues hidden in every part of the whole package, and that it will take a very long time to solve.

One thing is certain — it will never bore anyone with a sense of humour!

Pimania is available from **Automata** of Portsmouth and runs on the 48K Spectrum and 16K ZX81. It costs £10 for the Spectrum and £8 for the ZX81.

- Getting started 6
- Value 10
- Playability 10



DRAGON

Go adventuring on your Dragon in the Forbidden City in this text adventure produced by **Apex Trading** of Brighton.

Loading instructions were supplied on computer printout paper and the packaging was poor. Loading was also difficult. The program is short, taking just over a minute to load once your computer accepts it.

It is a standard Adventure. The player has to enter a city, find a treasure and escape. A short introduction to the game gives you three "key words" — the rest you must discover for yourself.

Your location is printed at the top of the screen and the input prompt "what now?" at the bottom.

Various dangers encountered along the way include force fields, lasers and a mysterious green mist.

As with all Adventure games once solved it becomes unplayable. Unfortunately the game did not make full use of the Dragon's reasonable RAM. However it did provide some hours of amusement. Versions available for the Dragon at £4.95 and TI 99/4a at £3.95.

- Getting started 3
- Value 6
- Playability 6



Goblin Caves, for the Dragon 32, comes from **Apex Trading** of Brighton and as with other tapes from this company the packaging was poor and loading presented some problems.

The game is written in Basic and can be listed, so it might prove useful to anyone who is learning the art of programming.

As for the game itself, it's a 3D adventure, the aim being to find and kill a monster with a fire arrow. The arrows are useful protection against any goblins you may come across.

A view of the location you are in is drawn in hi-res graphics. This is redrawn after every move — and becomes annoying after a while.

The player enters the direction he

wishes to face and then presses the 'F' key to move forward. The space bar is used to fire arrows.

As it stands this is a fair game, but improvements could be made. I would like to see the monsters and goblins represented graphically — instead of using text. I also feel it would be a better program if it was re-written in machine code. It costs £4.95.

- Getting started 6
- Value 6
- Playability 6



APPLE

Softporn Adventure is like no other adventure game you have ever played before. Instead of dealing with trolls and wizards you are challenged to find and seduce three women.

The key to the game is the amount of money you have on you. You start the game with a thousand dollars but this will not last you long as whisky costs a hundred dollars a shot and you will need to bribe the manager of the club to get into his seamy disco-casino. The only way to build up your cash supply is to gamble a few dollars in the casino.

If you are hoping for hi-res graphics depicting scantily clad young women then Softporn Adventure is not for you. It's a text only adventure with only written results of your moves appearing on the screen.

UK suppliers of Softporn Adventure are **SBD Software** in Richmond. It runs on a 48K Apple and costs £17.95 — far cheaper than a real night out in a seamy casino.

- Getting started 9
- Value 6
- Playability 6



Deadline enables you to play your favourite sleuth for an afternoon as you weigh up the clues in this superb crime solving adventure.

You get a complete dossier of a crime committed on the 7th June 1982 when the wealthy industrialist Marshall Robner died of an overdose of Ebullion — an anti-depression drug he had been taking for some time. But was it suicide or was it murder?

Your brown folder contains all the documentary evidence. This includes the Coroner's report, a large black and white photograph of the scene of death with a white chalk line showing the position and outline of where the body had been found and a letter from Mr Marshall's Attorneys.

This immensely popular game in America is now available in the UK from **Pete and Pam Computers** running on an Apple II and retailing at the slightly expensive price of £39.25.

- Getting started 9
- Value 4
- Playability 7



The Goblins which gave their name to this Apple adventure, also serve as its most unique feature.

While the player is challenged to pit his wits against a horde of horrible monsters and nasty traps, the Goblins hide in the countryside scenes — presented in hi-res graphics.

If the adventurer is found loitering too long in any particular location, the Goblin will rush in to the attack with a good chance of killing the poor soul off.

The game comes from **Highland Computer Services** of the US and costs £15.95. But it has only brief instructions on the disc and far too many arbitrary deaths.

- Getting started 6
- Value 7
- Playability 7



MAZE GAMES

SPECTRUM

Based on Pacman but adding a few twists of its own comes this latest game from the business software firm **Campbell Systems**.

Gulpman offers good instructions with a comprehensive list of game options.

There were fifteen different mazes to choose from with an option to vary the speed of the Gulpman and his chasers.

Another interesting feature is a laser gun with a limited amount of energy with which you can shoot the chasers.

On the minus side Gulpman has pretty basic graphics. The Pacman, for example, moves around the maze without moving his legs. It would have been more convincing had the program simulated some sort of running motion.

At £4.95 I found this the most playable of the batch of Spectrum maze games tested. The variety of mazes adds interest.

- Getting started 9
- Value 6
- Playability 7



Spookyman sounds more like the title of a new horror comedy film than the name of the latest Pacman type game for the Sinclair Spectrum.

Although the maze looks fairly good the Pacman somehow failed to convince. If you got caught by one of the ghosts the game pauses for an annoyingly long period.

There is also a sad lack of shrinking and gobbling sounds and the characteristic gulp, gulp, gulp, as you clock 200 then 400 and 800. An adequate game but far from exceptional, from **Abbex** of London at £4.95.

- Getting started 6
- Value 5
- Playability 4



Mazeman from **Abersoft** is a particularly fast version of Pacman. The speed improves the playability considerably — just as it does in the arcade original with quick responses.

One drawback with this version is that joysticks are not widely available as yet for the Spectrum and playing Pacman without a joystick is rather like Blackpool without the illuminations.

Again on the minus side the game from the Dyfed-based firm produced no sound effects, bonus fruits or flashing ghosts.

Despite my reservations Mazeman was a reasonable version at under £5.00. I found it difficult to walk away

Dots on the menu

Pacman may well be the last of the great craze arcade games after much mega-hits as Space Invaders, Asteroids, and Galaxians.

Greater competition and an ever increasing number of games releases has created a much greater variety in the arcades and few, if any, definable trends.

But there is an added dimension to the Pacman story. While the game was reaching fever pitch popularity in the US the home computer boom was also beginning to happen. The game was soon converted for the home computer and is now an essential part of the games players collection.

The game takes its name from the Japanese verb *Paku* — meaning to eat — which aptly describes the simple task of steering a yellow chappie around a maze — gobbling up dots, bonus fruits, and power pills as you go.

There are two types of computer maze game. Straight rip-offs of the Atari original and developments of the basic theme which add a number of original features.

Things to look for when buying a straight copy of the Pacman game are bonus fruits, an authentic and steadily accelerating movement of ghosts, multiplying bonus score for ghost gobbling, and an accurately shaped maze.

If your computer has joysticks then make sure your maze game works with them. And beware, playing Pacman without a joystick is rather like fishing without a rod.

If you opt for an original maze game avoid gimmicky graphics, but look for extra features which genuinely improve the playability of the game.

A choice of different mazes is a useful bonus as it is good fun developing strategies and working out the best routes.

EUGENE LACEY

from!

- Getting started 8
- Value 6
- Playability 5



Cute comic character Hungry Horace adds the sparkle to the Psion software maze game for the Sinclair Spectrum.

In this episode he plays cat and mouse with the park attendants, stealing their sandwiches and eating their prize-winning daisies.

There is also an alarm bell which Horace just can't resist ringing, much to the annoyance of the park attendants.

The maze was a little bit on the simple side and a common problem with Spectrum games is the absence of a joystick — particularly acute with maze games — slightly detracted from my enjoyment.

With this one reservation my overall impression was of an amusing game with entertaining graphics and worth the £5 price tag. It comes from Melbourne House originally but is sold by **Psion**.

- Getting started 9
- Value 8
- Playability 7



Spectrum Spectres adds a few novel twists to the maze race range of games available for the Sinclair Spectrum.

You play the part of Eddie the electrician lumbered with the unfortunate task of rewiring a mansion which is haunted by four ghosts.

You travel through the corridors placing light bulbs to score points. If you can touch one of the four generators in the maze you can then send the ghosts back to under the stairwell to score bonus points.

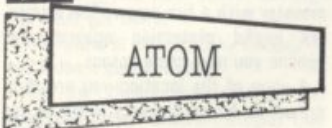
Once you have cleared a complete floor you can move upstairs to the next.

There is an added twist in that the generators only have a limited amount of energy which is shown in points at the top of the screen.

This is a most entertaining and colourful maze game with variety in the mazes and game play.

Spectrum Spectres is manufactured by **Bug Byte** at £5.

- Getting started 9
- Value 8
- Playability 7



The ninth Atom games pack from **Acornsoft** rates as the best of the series.

The three games on the cassette, Snapper, Minotaur and Babies, use graphics and sound effects to the utmost, showing just what can be achieved on the Atom.

Snapper is a version of Pacman, simplified somewhat for the Atom. The changes include turning the ghost pursuers and the Snapper itself into circles (colour circles if you've got the

colour encoder fitted) and some simplification of the rules — you don't get the fruit in this game.

When you have run over an energiser, Snapper's mouth falls open and he can then eat the ghosts until it shuts again.

There is only a few seconds of ghost eating time available to you.

The second game, Minotaur, has impressive graphics too. The object of this game is to take all the gold bars from the boxes scattered around the maze and put them in a safe while avoiding the Minotaur who is out to catch and eat you.

All this is done with 3-D pictures of the passages and various objects to be found in them. If you get completely lost, it's possible to call up a map of the labyrinth to show where everything is.

Another scheme for keeping track of events, is to mark the floor with a big cross so that you can remember where you've been. The game is difficult to win and ends when you have put all five bars in the safe or finished up on the Minotaur menu.

The sound effects in this game tell how far away the Minotaur is — he growls when he is getting close.

The third game on the tape is Babies, which has little to do with mazes. It is a close copy of the LCD watch game, in which babies jump out of a burning building and must be caught before they hit the ground.

The tape costs £11.50.

- Getting started 9
- Value 9
- Playability 8



TEXAS

The Wumpus lurks in his lair deep beneath the ground. In this labyrinth of caves he waits for the unwary to blunder in and present themselves as supper.

This cave dweller is so deadly that none who have ever entered his caves have ever escaped. He wolfs them down so quickly they never have a chance.

The Wumpus that dwells in the Texas Instruments TI 99/4a cartridge is pretty typical of the species.

The amazing thing is that there exists a breed of tough Wumpus hunters who still wamier down into the depths and reckon to have a fair chance of killing the beast.

Their only chance is to fire a special corner-rounding arrow into the correct cave without actually entering it. As Wumpus hunters are only equipped with one arrow, they don't get a second chance.

ATOM

This seemingly hopeless task can be achieved by the more logical amongst us as the Wumpus leaves clues to its whereabouts. In fact every cavern within two caves of his lair bears the taint of the creature.

By noting these, the player can often logically deduce the whereabouts of the creature.

Other hazards in this maze of caverns and passages include slime pits which offer death just as certainly as the Wumpus itself and a bat who bears grudges against those who disturb it.

This bat will suffer intruders once but, on entering his lair a second time, the player is grabbed and deposited elsewhere in the complex.

Among the different levels of the game, it is possible to attempt to track down the Wumpus in a particularly difficult and twisting series of tunnels. Or, the very brave may even elect to go Wumpus hunting blindfold.

A computer maze game with a long history, Wumpus brings the art of logical deduction to life but offers a pinch of luck which means that sometimes the odds are with the Wumpus. If you like working out mastermind problems, you'll probably enjoy Wumpus-hunting.

The cartridge costs £19.35 from Texas dealers.

- Getting started 9
- Value 7
- Playability 8



BBC

Acornsoft seem to be undertaking a one-company campaign to prove that the BBC is the best games machine around.

They've proved their point to me. Snapper is a Pacman variation which is very close to the arcade game and every bit as playable.

Only keen arcade fans will notice the difference between Snapper and the original. It has a slightly different maze layout but the ghosts make life just as difficult around the new format.

Fruits follow the arcade pattern and the Snapper still has four corner energisers to run to in times of stress so he can turn the tables on his opponents.

The tunnel leading off-screen is also there and you have a high score facility as well as the usual catchy tunes. Marvellous arcade fare at £9.95.

- Getting started 7
- Value 8
- Playability 9



ATARI

Larry Bain is a plumber with the Rodent Rooster Plumbing Service who installs pipes throughout the levels of Rat Alley.

This is a maze race game of the Pacman type. Instead of ghosts you are chased by giant rats.

To keep down the rats you are supplied with two cats and two traps. Trouble is the cats are scared motionless and the traps only hold the rats for a few seconds. Although the cats will scare some of the rats there is a breed of super rats running around in this maze who will simply eat the cats.

Periodically replacement cats and traps are dropped in the centre of the maze and these must be picked up quickly before they disappear.

Once you have plumbed one maze completely, another maze commences with smarter rats.

It costs £22.95 from Gemini Electronics.

- Getting started 8
- Value 8
- Playability 8



Atari Pacman is probably the most authentic arcade to home computer conversion ever made, rivalling Acornsoft's Snapper and Commodore's Jelly Monsters.

Books, records, T-shirts, telephones and even suspender belts have all been marketed in the US carrying a motif of the cute little yellow gobbler.

Computer gamers need no introduction to Pacman but for the uninitiated it is a case of running around a maze gobbling wafers, bonus fruits, and power pills whilst dodging the four ghosts that are in hot pursuit.

Not to be played if you have an appointment. Pacman runs on an Atari 400 or 800 and is available in cartridge format from most Atari stockists at around the £30 mark.

- Getting started 9
- Value 6
- Playability 9



VIC-20

With the disappearance of Bug Byte's excellent version of Pacman for the Vic 20 under the threat of legal action from Atari — the owners of the Pacman copyright — Puckman is one of the few authentic versions of the game left.

Puckman has all the principle features of the arcade game. The ghosts chase you through a maze full of dots which you must eat up as you go along. If you eat the power pills in the corners of the maze you can eat the ghosts.

Every so often a bunch of cherries appear in the centre of the maze which are worth a lot of extra points.

The graphics are surprisingly clear considering that the game is written for the unexpanded Vic.

My main criticism is that the Pacman is difficult to negotiate through the maze as the keys that move him tend to stick.

Once you press a key to move him he will continue in that direction even when you take your finger off the key.

Puckman is available from Morris Associates at £5.50.

- Getting started 8
- Value 7
- Playability 6



SPACE ATTACK

APPLE

Pilot the Starblazer on a mission to destroy enemy radar bases which are ruining your chances of a successful mission.

You can only bomb the bases from close range which is particularly difficult to do without crashing into the pylons.

Points are also awarded for bombing the radar out-buildings though you cannot fly on to the next part of the mission until you have destroyed all the radar dishes.

Once the radar installations have been destroyed the Starblazer zooms up to the top right hand corner of the screen and mission two flashes up the message "destroy supersonic tank". This, alas, is easier said than done.

First you must dodge or shoot a barrage of missiles which fly at you at great speed moving left to right across the screen. If you survive this lot you then attempt to divebomb the supersonic tank which — maddeningly — seems to be always out of your bombing range.

A most addictive "shoot 'em out" game.

Starblazer runs on an Apple II in 48K. It is available from Software House at £19.

- Getting started 9
- Value 7
- Playability 9



A dual sensation of flight and speed are the two key attractions in a new 3D-Apple space game from America called Zenith.

Your mission: defend the new space city which is being constructed to house the inhabitants of the old galaxy. The aliens are attacking. Spiralling towards you in colourful geometric shapes.

You wrestle with the joystick in an attempt to keep your ship steady, and get the aliens in your gun sights — as the chequered ground sways to and fro, zooming past beneath you.

Zenith is produced by the new American software house Gebelli.

The games impressive playability and superb graphics put it firmly in the highly recommended category with plenty of action.

It is available in this country from SBD Software at £21.50.

- Getting started 9
- Value 8
- Playability 8



The meteor storm

Science fiction buffs have explored the galaxies from the comfort of their armchairs for decades thanks to authors like Michael Moorcock, Arthur C. Clarke and Frank Herbert.

Now there is an even easier way to stretch your imagination out into the stars — through the medium of home computer space games.

You are now the space hero battling against evil forces intent on the destruction of the earth or even the universe. Pit your wits against alien beings with powers beyond imagination. In fact imagination is only limited to the type of program that you can obtain for your micro.

In this article we tell you some of the things to look out for when buying a computer space game.

Whatever type of micro you own, you may be sure that there will be a number of space programs to choose from.

Buying software by post means that you have to rely on advertisements when making your choice, but you can also choose from the ranks of cassettes on display in local computer shops. And don't forget that magazines, like *Computer and Video Games* publish games.

It is not possible to recommend a set type of space game program as many of the features are matters of individual choice.

Straight forward attack games in the Space Invader vein still have a lot of appeal and some of the latest versions based on this theme are excellent.

Programs are available to take you into the realms of space adventure where deduction, strategy, memory and planning are as much a requirement as quick finger on the fire button.

Micro versions of arcade games like Defender and Galaxians, to name but two from a vast selection, are fast, colourful, highly playable, and in some recent cases extremely authentic versions of their arcade counterparts.

With the advent of the new generation of low priced computers, high standards are expected with this type of program. So look for good presentation with clear instructions.

Where applicable the program should have high score facilities as well as good use of colour and sound. But the main points to look for are excitement and enjoyment without which the games will not hold you attention for long.

PAT NORRIS

SPECTRUM

For sheer frenetic action it's hard to beat conflict with the hordes of Winged Avenger from Workforce.

These outer-space fleets dive out of the sky, scattering bombs in all directions and challenging you to match their fearsome fire.

You are represented on the screen by a small laser base, with left and right controls plus fire and shield.

A timer ticks down from 500 and you have to get rid of wave after wave of aliens. This can be done in two ways, by shooting them or by running into them while they spend time on the ground.

Both are equally effective. But as the aliens have a tendency to swoop down at your position regularly, it is possible to build up quite a score by merely staying still and letting them crash against you — I have wiped out whole waves without touching the controls.

There are speed levels from a sedate 0 to a hectic 6 and the aliens come in three waves. First the small round

variety, then as large green birds which can lose wings without being affected. And finally in a mothership which contains a fuel cell. If this is blasted successfully the timer resets and you can start all over again.

Guaranteed to give you an aching wrist, Winged Avenger, unfortunately, doesn't leave much scope for tactics. It costs £6.95 for the ZX Spectrum.

- Getting started 8
- Value 6
- Playability 4



Arcadia is advertised as the "meanest shoot 'em up game ever" and it certainly does give you a wierd and wonderful assortment of aliens.

They attack in eleven waves of progressive difficulty and come in different shapes and sizes.

You can move from left to right across the bottom of the screen and also thrust forward.

The game makes good use of the Spectrum's colour capabilities but most importantly it lives up to the advertisement blurb and gives you a good

addictive game of space attack.

Arcadia is produced by the new Liverpool software house Imagine and is also available for the unexpanded Vic 20. Both versions are available at £5.50.

- Getting started 8
- Value 8
- Playability 8



DRAGON

Dragon Games 2 features Snake, Lander and Space Invaders. All three are written in machine code. The first two use the highest resolution and so are in black and white — but this does not affect the quality.

Snake is similar to the arcade version. The aim is to gain as many points as possible by shooting the snakes. You move your man around the screen using the cursor keys. He fires when you press the space bar. An entertaining and addictive game.

Lander is another interpretation of an arcade game. It's a standard version which gives you the choice of two landing-pads — worth differing amounts of points. The cursor keys are used to control the craft — and this requires a lot of skill and practice. I found myself playing this game more than any other.

I could suggest a changing landscape as an improvement — otherwise it's an excellent adaptation.

Dragon users will be pleased to see the classic video game — Space Invaders — up and running on their micro. Being in machine code, movement of the alien invaders is smooth. Although not as good as Dragon Data's own version on ROM cartridge, it is better value for money.

From J. Morrison Micros, it costs £5.95.

- Getting started 9
- Value 9
- Playability 8



Enclosed with my copy of Dragon Trek, produced by Salamander Software for the Dragon 32, was a short letter containing the aims of the producers "to offer high quality professionally packaged software at a reasonable cost."

After a battle loading badly produced software from other companies I was sceptical about this claim. However, I am very pleased to say that my fears were unfounded. In fact I think Salamander surpassed their aim.

Dragon Trek came attractively packaged with comprehensive instructions



in a thorough 16-page flight manual.

This is a real time version featuring full colour tactical status and long range scanner displays, hyperprobes, tractor beams and Klingons. A lot of work has gone into producing this tape!

The various displays are all well designed and arranged — easy to read and understand.

The aim of the game, of course, is to wipe out the Klingon fleet. Using various keys you can call on your long range scanner, call up a damage report, go into warp drive, or send your hyperprobe on ahead of the Enterprise to see what's going on.

On challenging a Klingon you can activate your defence screen and choose your weapons — phasers or photon torpedoes. Phaser fire is controlled by your on-board computer and you direct a torpedo using your joystick.

When energy is running low docking with a starbase will recharge them and replenish your weapons.

Black holes and supernovas add extra hazards as you journey where no man has gone before.

I find it difficult to fault this tape, but perhaps the explosions of Klingon ships could be a bit more dynamic.

Excellent presentation along with good use of the Dragon's facilities left me thinking — why can't all software come up to this standard!

At only £6.95 order your copy now — before they sell out! Sorry I have to go, my crew needs me

- Getting started 9
- Value 9
- Playability 10



BBC

As close a copy of the brilliant arcade game of Defender as you are going to get on a home computer.

That's Acornsoft's Planetoids which runs on the BBC Model B. If anything, it is slightly faster than the arcade original.

You have the scanner on the top of the screen to show the entire planet surface, so sneaky landers can't grab humanoids away from the main action without your knowing. The aliens and the sound effects are faithfully reproduced and all the usual controls are there.

These seven necessary keys to control your craft take some getting used to and in moments of extreme panic I still find my fingers thudding down on quite useless parts of the key-

board, but that is part of the skill of the game.

If you are a keen Defender fan from way back (about 1980) and are still unconvinced that the detail can be as close as I've outlined, let me assure you.

The third wave often finds all three pods in smart-bombing position on the screen and the programmer has even included Swarmer "bleed" should you slightly miscalculate on this tactic. Marvellous entertainment and pure addiction at £9.95.

- Getting started 8
- Value 10
- Playability 10



ZX81

Invasion Force is an original and addictive game from Artic Computing of Hull. You are under attack from an alien command ship with a fleet of bombers which form the advance wave.

Below the ships is a wall, constantly moving from right to left obscuring your line of fire.

Your mission is to destroy as many bombers as possible, earning 1000 points for each one downed. Ultimately you will have to gun for the base itself but this is pretty well impossible.

There are two levels of play — which is a bit of a minus as I would have preferred a third faster level.

My only other criticism is that after each game you must go back to the instructions. It would be better if you could simply press a key to continue.

Despite these drawbacks my overall impression was one of an enjoyable addictive game. It costs £3.95.

- Getting started 9
- Value 6
- Playability 7



ATARI

Moonbase 10 — pronounced eye-oh — is an arcade-style space game. It is actually a combination of three games — inspired by the recent flights of Voyager 2 to Jupiter.

The "10" in the game's title refers to one of the four major moons of the solar system's largest planet. Since Jupiter was discovered to be a large mass of inhospitable liquids and gasses, unsuitable for landings.

This game uses the moons Io, Europa and Ganymede as moonbases for your

spaceship. This choice of bases, however, has upset the local bug-eyed population and they are determined to send you back where you came from or destroy you in the attempt. The aliens launch swarms of ships to battle against your probe.

One particularly outstanding feature of this game is the synchronisation of the graphics with a soundtrack on a separate voice recorder. This gives you a full briefing from Cape Canaveral the first time the game is played.

There was a slight snag here though. It was not always easy to synchronise the voice tape with the play tape.

Moonbase 10 provides a fast machine code game with player-missile graphics, redefined character sets, fine scrolling and impressive sound effects.

The game has three phases. To secure each of the three moonbases, the player must pass a docking phase — impeded by swarms of aliens and the nearby moon — and if successful, transport to the surface of each moon for a phase which involves defending the base against more formations of aliens.

In addition there are seven skill levels — from novice to galactic wizard — with variations in scoring and reserve ships. Some hidden features are also promised, although I never managed to survive long enough to experience them.

Moonbase 10 runs on an Atari 400 or 800 in 16K and requires a joystick controller and can be obtained from Centre-soft at £24.95.

- Getting started 6
- Value 6
- Playability 8



PET

A space mayday message brings a swift response from your mothership in Space Rescue.

Five spherical life support pods are stranded on hazardous alien terrain in this Pet game and your job is to bring them safely aboard the ship.

Out of the rescue hatch goes the ship's recovery shuttle which is controlled by means of the Pet's keypad. The shuttle is released by pressing a "2" to move it planetwards and from this moment your score increases by one for every second you survive.

To rescue a pod, the shuttle must be positioned immediately above it, and the "A" key pressed. This manoeuvre can be difficult on the higher skill levels since the shuttle moves quickly but the control key is responsive.

Next, the shuttle should be guided to a position just above the mothership and the pod dropped through the rescue hatch by pressing "D". If you miss the pod drops back to the planet surface.

On saving all five pods, you are invited to dock with the mothership for a bonus of 500 points and then it's on to the next skill level to try and repeat your hard-earned rescue.

Supersoft has succeeded in creating another addictive game purely because it is so hard to master. It costs £8.

- Getting started 5
- Value 7
- Playability 9



NOVELTY GAMES

BBC

Can you throw the switch that stops the robot before he blasts you? That's the challenge issued by **Viking Software** of Bournemouth on their latest tape for the BBC B — oddly enough called **Robot!**

You control a little man being shot at by a big robot. Unfair, I hear you shout. The little man can save himself by dodging the robot until he gets to the bottom of the screen where there's an OFF switch which will immobilise the metal monster.

This is an addictive game — although it's a bit slow having been written in Basic. It costs £4.95.

- Getting started 7
- Value 7
- Playability 7



APPLE

A belligerent old soldier refuses to leave his wartime enclave high in the Cannon Blitz Hills.

For him the war still rages and he will shower anyone who passes below with cannon balls. You must dodge the cannon balls and escape to the next level where a balloon is waiting to carry you safely out of range.

At the third level of this game you have to jump from platforms onto a moving escalator which takes your little man to the top of the hill where he can deal with the old soldier.

A game of impressive graphics with obvious associations with the popular arcade game **Donkey Kong**. **Cannon Ball Blitz** is available from **Spider Software** at £19.95 on disc for the Apple II.

- Getting started 9
- Value 6
- Playability 6



ATARI

Pogoman will make you jump with joy. The idea of the game is to make **Pogoman** jump up and put out the street lights. Points are awarded for each lamp blacked out.

Move the joystick slightly to the right and **Pogoman** will do a little bunny hop.

Cute is crucial

The video games business in America has until quite recently been referred to as the recession proof industry.

Its astonishing growth over the last few years has been due in large part to the wizardry and imagination of the games designers.

As well as the ubiquitous "shoot-'em-up" space games we have had exciting adventure games like **Tutankham** and **Space Dungeon** and more recently sheer fantasy with **Donkey Kong** and **Pengo**.

Most computer gamers will be familiar with **Donkey Kong** and **Frogger** and versions based on these novelty games are now available for most of the popular micros.

There is no need to restrict your purchases to straight copies of arcade hits. There are no rules for novelty games. The only restriction is the breadth of imagination on the part of the programmers and game designers.

Despite this there are some common elements which you should look out for which will collectively contribute to a good game.

Good graphics are by definition crucial to the success of novelty games. The characters must be cute or plausible, well defined, and above all central to the general theme of the game.

Sound effects can often make or break novelty games. Some of the new arcade machines excel here, such as **Pengo** for example, with a trio of tap dancing baby penguins who do a little number for you if you get a sufficiently high score. Your home computer will not be able to provide a song and dance routine but providing the program is a good one, it should be able to produce some impressive sound effects, and this is definitely something to look for when making your purchase.

Graphics, sound, and plot are all important elements of a good novelty game but they can never compensate for a game that basically is not playable. Look for that little twist in a game which will keep you coming back for more.

EUGENE LACEY

Pull the joystick down and you add height to his jump — push up and you stretch him further.

As **Pogoman** moves down the street past trees, office blocks and parked cars a number of obstacles appear in the road in front of him. All these must be jumped over in order for him to continue.

The further he gets the more difficult the obstacles become. A bird swoops down from the sky to try to knock **Pogoman** off his stick.

There is also a guard who rushes out from the right hand side of the screen to knock **Pogoman** down. **Pogoman** runs on Atari 400 or 800 with versions available on disc or cassette.

It is imported into the UK by **Calisto Computers** of Birmingham and sells at around £20.

- Getting started 9
- Value 6
- Playability 8



Those crazy **Duke Boys** have been making moonshine again and gunning the souped-up **General Lee** around **Hazard County** leaving the sheriff in a spin.

This game turns reckless driving into an indoor pursuit.

You are at the wheel of the souped-up **Chevvy** as you drive through farmyards, lanes and twisting country roads.

The sheriff is on your tail and you will need to drive smartly to give him the slip or make a spectacular leap across the river and watch his car nosedive into the water as he tries to follow you.

Hazard Run is based on the popular American TV programme the **Dukes of Hazard**.

The game is available from **Allrian** of Middlesex, running on the Atari 400 and 800 and retailing at £21.50 for cassette and £24.95 for disc.

A good novelty game if a little pricey. But it does allow you to relive the TV series.

- Getting started 7
- Value 5
- Playability 6



VIC-20

Shadowfax brings one of the most exciting chapters of *Lord of the Rings* to the screens of your Vic computer.

The game takes its name from **Gandalf's** horse — the swiftest beast in Middle Earth.

This is your chance to ride **Shadowfax** as you gallop against the **Black Riders** of **Sauron** — the Dark Lord of Mordor.

The idea of the game is to shoot as

many of the advancing **Black Riders** as possible. To kill the **Riders** you must release a thunderbolt by pressing the shift key. Quickly release the key when the bolt is centred on a **Black Rider** — this will explode the bolt — killing the **Rider** — which then glows red and disappears.

If you fail to release the key quickly enough the bolt will pass through your target and leave him unharmed.

The graphics are most convincing — particularly the galloping motion of the horses.

A highly original and addictive game. **Shadowfax** is available from **Postern Limited** of Cheltenham at £9.00.

- Getting started 8
- Value 8
- Playability 8



Hopper is **Frogger** with a whole lot of differences. The game has undergone some **Rabbit Software** replanning on its way into 3.5K of memory for the **Vic-20**.

You still command a hopping creature and it still has to get over a busy road and across a log-filled river to one of five bases in a bank to score, but there the similarities end.

This poor amphibian also needs to negotiate parked cars on either side of the road, he has to avoid houses on a grassy verge in the middle of his adventure and finally he has to swim the river avoiding the brown logs!

All this and a quickly counting down time limit serve to make the game more difficult than the arcade original, but not as enjoyable.

Hopper is rescued by some very suitable sound effects which splodged him around the screen with such an air of dampness you feel he's leaving a soggy trail behind him.

The parked cars and houses are immobile, so add little to the game, five streams of traffic on the road are easily crossed with the two lanes of brown speeders being quite infrequent.

This leaves the river, which is where the difficulties start. It's seldom that a free white route leading to a home base becomes visible in the brown murk. When it does it's usually closed before you get across. So you're left hopping between the logs enclosed on all sides hoping a white space will appear above you.

But this tactic falls down as you are not allowed to hop along the bank at the end to a home base.

Hopper costs £9.99.

- Getting started 9
- Value 5
- Playability 4



ASTEROIDS

DRAGON

Software for the Dragon 32 is gradually becoming available and arcade fans with one of these new microcomputers will be pleased to see two versions of video game favourites for their machine.

Meteor Run — a version of arcade asteroids — and Breakout are two games on a tape titled Arcade Action produced by Apex Trading of Brighton.

Loading instructions were supplied on a sheet of computer printout paper. The instructions were short and precise, but the packaging was poor.

The cassette interface of the Dragon has always proved reliable but loading these games turned out to be a long struggle. Breakout defeated this reviewer — and on listening to the recording I found it to be really quiet.

Meteor Run was also a struggle to load — it's a pity it wasn't worth the effort. It is a short program written in Basic. You control a space craft — using the left and right cursor keys — while dodging meteors represented by red graphic blocks. You have to shoot enemy ships using the space bar to fire your laser.

It held my attention for all of two minutes — but being in Basic it can be listed and may be helpful to beginners.

All in all this was a very disappointing package — one not worth the £4.95 price tag.

- Getting started 2
- Value 4
- Playability 3



ZX81

Electric Pencil Company's version of Asteroids for the ZX81 is the best I have played. It has superb instructions, it is fast, has great graphics and good game options.

The spaceship was cleverly represented by either an 'A', 'V', 'D' or 'C'. Block symbols from keys Q, W, E and R were used for 45 degree angles.

There are four sizes of Asteroids and these were just about right. Their speed varied during the game — getting progressively faster.

The game has five speed levels. Level 3 should satisfy all but those of you who score a billion points for 20p.

There is an option for doubles or singles and the five top scores and names can be displayed.

Firing to escape

Who can resist blowing up asteroids? To have them careering about in the privacy of your own home is sheer ecstasy!

But what flavour do you prefer? This game has been multiplying at an alarming rate and with so many about how do you choose?

The first consideration must surely be how fast, there is little point getting either a game that is so slow that it bores you to death or so fast you find it unplayable.

Next consider the controls you are offered, rotate left, rotate right and fire are universal but what of hyperspace and thrust? Is the thrust of the move stop variety or a true inertial thrust (turn round and thrust to stop yourself moving).

Then you may consider features: How many sizes of rock do you get? Two, three or more? How many saucers do you get, do they fire at you? Have you a wrap around screen? What does the game look like? Does it have hi-res graphics, colour?

Does it have different attack waves (more rocks each wave)? Does the game have an attract mode, full scoring, high score, bonus ship?

Finally, does the game have any special features such as particularly outstanding graphics, sound or speech?

A game that has most of the above features is likely to be fairly close to the arcade original and give you hours of entertainment.

MARK EYLES

A great game for one or more players, this version of Asteroids is manufactured by the Electric Pencil Company at £3.95.

- Getting started 8
- Value 8
- Playability 9



Quicksilver Asteroids for the ZX81 got off to a bad start as it did not supply any game play instructions.

After a lengthy process of key fumbling I managed to locate the correct controls and played a fairly average game.

There were no alien saucers to shoot at for bonus points and the asteroids themselves were just clusters of 'O's.

I found it difficult to tell which way I was facing as the ship is represented by a number from 1-8 — depending on which way you're facing. It will take you some time to master the controls.

Responses are fairly fast and you can turn clockwise (7 or 4), anti-clockwise (5 or 6), fire (1 or 0) and to thrust forward (2 or 8).

Flash packaging fails to rescue a particularly mediocre version of this hit arcade game. It costs £3.95.

- Getting started 2
- Value 5
- Playability 5



BBC

Asteroid Belt is a version of the popular arcade game asteroids for the BBC model B.

Armed with a photon cannon, your mission is to destroy the oncoming onslaught of rocks before they collide with your ship.

The larger asteroids split into two when hit to the sound of a satisfying rumbling noise. These may be, in their turn, split to become two small asteroids which, if hit again, will become cosmic dust.

You have a hyperspace button which will make you momentarily disappear and then randomly replace you somewhere on the screen.

The game is reasonably fast with adequate sound effects.

On the minus side the operating keys were ridiculously far apart and the ship would not turn quickly enough.

A reasonable game but not without a few flaws. From Computer Concepts for £8.97.

- Getting started 7
- Value 4
- Playability 4



SPECTRUM

Meteor Storm is a close copy of arcade asteroids for the Sinclair Spectrum.

The asteroids were represented as geometrical - line drawings drifting weightlessly towards your ship.

The game displayed clear instructions on the screen and also showed you the value of the various asteroids and flying saucers on the screen.

The game kept a running total of the high score and also allowed you to enter the initials of the top 10 high scores of the session on a hall of fame

chart — in true arcade style.

You are also provided with a keyboard overlay which, although it seems just like a gimmick, is actually quite useful in Asteroids where you have five controls to concentrate on.

A most playable and authentic version of the hit arcade game.

The game runs on the Spectrum and is available from Quicksilver at £4.95.

- Getting started 5
- Value 7
- Playability 8



Official Sinclair writers Psion have entered the battle for Spectrum asteroids with Planetoids.

This game is not quite so close to the arcade original as the Quicksilver version though it is none the less impressive for this.

The game has an excellent fire mechanism — the missiles could be fired in quick succession and reached their targets swiftly. The game had the essential five features — rotate right, rotate left, fire, thrust and hyperspace.

This version also includes the missile-spraying UFOs which really add spice to an Asteroids screen and usually warrant a torrent of abuse after one of their more successful excursions.

One drawback was the lack of inertia on the thrust button. This makes the game slightly easier to play but would upset the purists who want to play arcade Asteroids on their own TV sets.

Despite this one reservation, the game plays pretty good Asteroids and is a more than reasonable piece of software for £5.95.

- Getting started 5
- Value 6
- Playability 7



Softek Meteoroids is the third and final version of asteroids we tested.

It too offers most of the features we have come to expect from the arcade original.

However the Softek programmers have also tried to get away from the usual asteroid design of craggy white outline and little else inside. The Softek version features an admirable attempt to simulate the rock-like texture of asteroids.

This version has been written to work with some of the new Spectrum joysticks. An adequate game of Asteroids.

- Getting started 5
- Value 5
- Playability 6



SCRAMBLE

APPLE

Choplifter is the top selling game in the US for the Apple computer.

Superb graphics and superior game play have shot it to the top of the charts.

You play the part of a helicopter pilot on a mission to rescue hostages trapped inside enemy barracks deep inside hostile territory.

Each time you rescue a hostage the computer emits a high-pitched bleep telling you that the hostage is safely aboard.

You can only carry 16 hostages without overloading the chopper so you will have to make more than one sortie into enemy territory.

The number of hostages rescued and tanks destroyed is recorded at the top of the screen.

The game is best played with joysticks although this reviewer played quite an interesting game using paddles. The helicopter can fly backwards, forwards and sideways — leaning into a dive most realistically. It is also quite difficult to control and will take you some time to master just as a real helicopter would.

A most addictive game and easy to see why it did so well across the Atlantic.

The game is available from S.B.D. Software and costs £19.95.

- Getting started 9
- Value 7
- Playability 8



ZX81

Take up the Gauntlet and tackle a thrilling subterranean Scramble challenge for the ZX81.

The object of the game is to fight your way through fortified caves with bombs and a laser gun. You start with three craft and get one more every 6,000 points. These are controlled by: "Q" key for up and back; "W" for up and forward; "A" down and back; "S" down and forward.

"B" and "M" give you control over your guns and bombs, and the game is quite easy to get to grips with.

You are actively encouraged to make a copy of the game but that hardly proved necessary as the game loaded every time and the instructions are also very clear.

The first part of the game leaves you

One way travel

Scramble was one of the hit games of the post Space Invaders boom and still hangs on stubbornly to its prime positions in arcades, pubs and motorway services.

Its addictiveness is due to the challenge it sets you to get further. It's not how much you score that concerns the Scramble fan so much as how far he can get. Can you get beyond the yellow zig-zaggers, or the red fireballs? Or have you got into the maze yet, and if so how far have you got into it? Ultimately, have you shot the robot? This is the supreme test for Scramble aces who have successfully piloted their craft through the preliminary levels.

Any computerised version of this popular arcade game should recreate this graded level of difficulty. This can be achieved by varying the speed of the attacking aliens or the difficulty of the scrolling terrain to be flown over. There must also be some final adversary like the robot in the arcade version. It is crucial to be able to move backwards and forwards as well as up and down. Scramble can only really be enjoyed with a joystick. A good version will enable you to bomb and shoot at the same time.

EUGENE LACY

in the open, then you enter the caverns and take on some aliens. In stage three you encounter the meteors and level four has only a narrow channel to fly down. That was as far as I got (8,300 points if you want to try and beat it).

In all there are six phases to the game which requires a 16K Rampack and costs £3.95 from Colourmatic.

- Getting started 9
- Value 8
- Playability 9



VIC-20

Vic Skramble from Terminal Software is a miracle of memory conservation. How it ever came to be crammed into the unexpanded Vic's 3.5K is a mystery to me.

The Vic's clear graphics are used to good effect with helicopters, planes, oil tanks and missiles all convincing. My main quibble was that this game could not be played by joystick but with one control more than the average joystick can handle, that is perhaps understandable.

As it is, the flight control keys: fast, slow, the crucial up and down, are in the "+" position and take a lot of getting used to. The other controls are laser and bomb.

You are faced with eight challenges in this thrilling and addictive game. First travel overland, bombing as much fuel as you can to keep energy up, blasting missiles and helicopters on the mountain ranges.

In stage two the missiles fire back launching into the air, stage three takes place in the Wiggy tunnel and that's where I met most of my destructions. Stage four is set in the cavern, stage five on the meteor trail, stage six takes you over Rocket City, stage seven offers the dreaded city maze and finally a homing shot makes up the final challenge.

A very valid attempt to reconstruct the arcade original. It costs £7.95. One bug though, a mistaken "shift" combined with "CTRL" (all too easy considering the controls) and the game wanders into the murk of switched character sets.

- Getting started 6
- Value 8
- Playability 8



SPECTRUM

Penetrator is my pick of Scramble-type games for the Spectrum.

It succeeds in being immensely playable yet very difficult and horribly addictive.

Nice touches include a large number of radar scanners which constantly rotate as you fly over them. These are worth more than points, for unless you blow them up, they collect data about your flight plan and enable missiles and enemy paratroopers to track you more successfully.

This is shown in a danger level indicator on your console. The more radar scanners left operative the more likely the missiles are to blow you from the sky. There is only one way to reduce the danger level, blowing up the enemy's neutron bomb store. Four stages to the game before you meet the neutron bomb HQ and try to return to base.

Your controls are very responsive — they need to be — up, down, thrust, brake, fire and bomb.

There has been a lot of careful thought gone into the way the controls work. Thrust and fire are on the same key but operate independently and the whole bottom row of the Spectrum keyboard is given over to bomb.

You can customise your own Penetrator maze. The game allows you to build up your own scenario with radar installations, missiles, caverns and steep hillsides. But it is a time consuming exercise so it's well worth saving the finished product.

In view of all this effort on the part of the marvellous Melbourne House programmers, it's a pity they didn't curb their keenness for presentation techniques a little.

The firing rockets and slow writing out of "Penetrator" is pleasant the first time but pales a little when you are keen to get on with the game and improve your score.

But this is my only criticism of a well-conceived piece of software.

It runs on the 48K model and costs £6.95.

- Getting started 9
- Value 10
- Playability 9



ATARI

Airstrike is a very well executed derivative of the popular arcade game Scramble.

The object of the game is to pilot your spaceship through underground caverns while avoiding numerous obstacles that are placed in your flight path.

The first obstacles to be overcome are surface-to-air missiles and the occasional floating mine. On you way through this part of the cavern you pick up more ammunition and fuel. In the second part of the cavern you may have to deal with a whole series of floating mines.

Once through this part you come across a series of airlocks. The only way to get past these is to shoot the middle out of them and manoeuvre your craft through the resulting hole. You may also encounter the occasional enemy fighter who will try to shoot you down.

Each level has a different colour and your craft carries less ammunition due to the higher gravity.

This really is a most impressive game and the English Software Company are to be congratulated.

Airstrike is available from Gemini Electronics at £19.95. The game runs on an Atari 400 and 800 in 16K with a disc version also available.

- Getting started 8
- Value 8
- Playability 8



FLIGHT SIMULATION

ATARI

If you have ever wondered what it feels like to be at the controls of a 747 thundering across the Atlantic with a plane full of passengers then wonder no more and give it a try.

Jumbo Jet Pilot challenges you to take off, fly to a selected destination and touch the plane down safely again. Sounds easy? Well just you give it a try.

There are nine different dials to keep a constant eye on. Altitude, compass, artificial horizon, pressure gauges, and the instrument landing system — all authentic flight controls.

The game gives you two screen presentations — the view from the cockpit with dials, and a map showing the layout of the airport and your destination.

To begin you have to taxi the plane out on to the runway and then build up speed to the take-off. The sound effects are quite impressive during this part of the game as the roar of the engines build up when the plane gathers speed.

My main criticism of the game is that it is rather slow. Once you have successfully taken off and correctly set the bearings for the flight you could almost go and make a cup of tea. It was just like switching onto automatic pilot, which may be realistic, but personally I also found it a little boring.

Again on the minus side, if you crash the plane you must go right back to the beginning, taxi out and take off all over again. It would have been better if you could resume where you left off or at least if it had a final approach option.

An impressive piece of programming but I feel I could do better for my money.

Jumbo Jet Pilot runs on Atari 400 or 800 and is manufactured by **Thorn EMI** and available from Spectrum computer shops at £34.44.

- Getting started 9
- Value 5
- Playability 5

SPECTRUM

The instrument panel comes into its own in Night Flight, because there's not much else to see out of the windscreen, it's all pitch black.

In **Hewson Consultants** version of flight simulation you are faced with the problem of landing a light aircraft in the night. The screen is divided into two with the bottom half being taken up by

Realistic training

Commercial flight simulators are used in the training of airline pilots and are now so good that they provide a genuinely realistic simulation of flying in a jet.

These simulators use large computer systems and cost anything from a few million pounds upwards, but a more modest range of flight simulation programs for the home computer are now becoming available in the price range £5 to £50!

As with all software, paying a higher price will not necessarily buy you a higher quality program. Here are a few features to look for.

The most technically difficult component of a flight simulator is the representation of the outside world. This should include at least the horizon and a representation of a runway — any additional features are a bonus.

Landing a plane on a runway is the most exciting part of flight simulators and it is important that this part is done as well as possible.

Home computers are not capable of displaying a real instrument panel but it is possible to create an impression of a vast number of gauges and dials which give the feel of a real cockpit. Analog displays like gauges and dials in addition to digital displays are more authentic, interesting and easier to read.

Landing a plane safely is one of the most difficult tasks the pilot has to perform and this should be accordingly difficult and instructive in a flight simulation.

CHARLES DAVIES

instrument readings, while the top half is given over to the view from the cockpit. This remains dark until the landing strip lights come into view.

A very simplistic map shows the world outside as consisting of a range of hills right across the screen at a height of 1,650 feet with one small valley to the west of the runway which itself runs east-west.

Above 2,200 feet the airspace is very congested and there is a high risk of collision.

Apart from the map there are six modes to try out: mode 0 is a demo shown over the last 2½ miles of a successful approach; mode 1 leaves you nine miles from touchdown heading west; mode 2 is the same heading east; mode 3 leaves you heading north and mode 4 asks you to take off first. The final mode is on autopilot and shows you how it should be done but allows

you to take over at any time.

As in most simulations there is a wealth of controls and things to consider and it is initially very confusing.

Raising and lowering the airplane's nose, checking on engine rpm, banking, lowering flaps and landing gear while checking constantly on your heading against the directional beacons, air-speed, altitude and fuel.

Still it is hardly the most complex of simulations and the night idea does give an excuse to bring the necessary memory down to 16K. It costs £5.95.

- Getting started 8
- Value 7
- Playability 7



Many of the features of **Psion's Spectrum** flight simulation are straight out of the cockpit of a Boeing 747.

All information systems are displayed as dials just as in a real plane. These tell you your altitude, rate of climb, speed, wind and weather conditions, and your position.

The program gives you two screen presentations. The first of these shows the view from the cockpit with the instruments described above in the lower half of the screen and the view of the horizon in the top.

The plane can be made to bank, roll, dive, climb and even loop the loop — though you will have to be a pretty good pilot to make it do this.

The second screen presentation shows a map with your plane flashing its rate or progress towards your chosen destination. The airports are represented as flashing beacons with the land and lakes shown.

A masterful piece of programming and undoubtedly one of the best flight simulations yet to be produced for a micro.

Flight Simulation runs on a Spectrum in 48K and is available from larger branches of **W. H. Smith** at £7.95.

- Getting started 9
- Value 9
- Playability 8



ZX81

Flight Simulation is one of the best programs I have ever seen for the **Sinclair ZX81**.

After loading, which takes about six minutes, the program runs a check to see if it has loaded correctly. If it has you may proceed, if not, reload.

The program places you in the pilot's seat of a twin-engined propeller plane searching for the airport beacons in poor visibility.

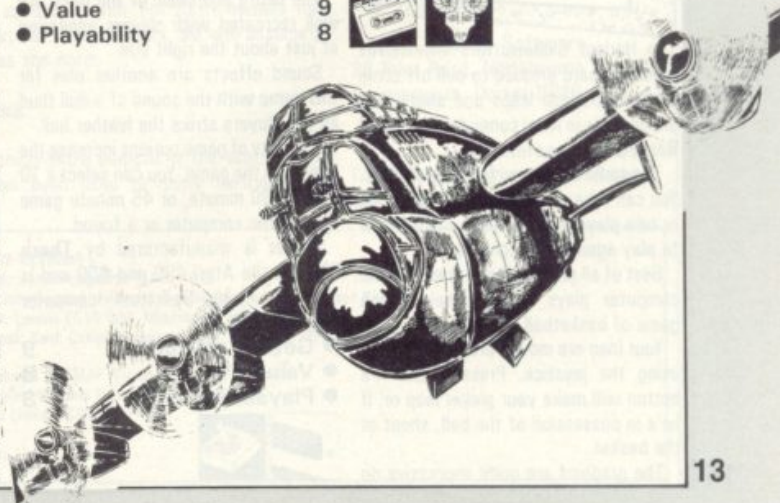
The game gives you three screen presentations. The view of the horizon as seen from the cockpit. A map of the Mediterranean with landing beacons and the position of your aircraft. Towards your final approach you can also request a visual display of the runway and landing lights.

Newcomers to the game can start off by just playing the final approach part of the game. It is a tough test of your skill and it will take you several attempts to touch down safely. More experienced pilots can select a number of extra difficulty features such as 'wind effects' and 'full feature'.

When in the cockpit display the top half of the screen shows a view of the cockpit windows where you will see the horizon formed by the sky and the ground. As the altitude of the plane changes, so the visual horizon will move to display the effects of banking, diving and climbing.

Flight Simulation runs on a ZX81 and is available from **Psion's W. H. Smith** outlets for £9.95.

- Getting started 8
- Value 9
- Playability 9



SPORT GAMES

VIC-20

Alien Soccer is probably going to surprise most of its purchasers.

The program for the Vic-20 claims to be "The wierdest game of soccer you've ever played". It lives up to that claim but not in the way the player would hope, being more reminiscent of pinball than football.

The aliens are there all right, two blue ones on your side set about a goal's width apart and four green ones facing you on the far side of the screen.

On the pitch itself are five large pink creatures which are unmovable and act much in the same way as bumpers on a pinball.

A ball is served up, flicked on usually by the two sets of green invaders as they bounce up and down between the top and bottom of the screen, then bounces into the large pink variety flinging about before heading it out towards your side of the screen which must be protected by your own two aliens.

Send it back if you can, I certainly found it hard to use my two defenders to good effect and the game was over within seconds as a rule. There are five skill levels but level five looked impossible and level one was quite hard enough.

After a while leaping invaders appear on the screen creating further havoc.

The good breakout or pong player may enjoy the game but it was beyond me and the title is sadly misleading.

It costs £9.99 from Rabbit Software.

- Getting started 7
- Value 3
- Playability 4



ATARI

The Harlem Globetrotters themselves would be hard pressed to pull off some of the incredible leaps and shots that are possible in Atari computer simulated Basketball.

The game offers you five play options. You can take on the computer with one or two players or team up with a friend to play against the computer.

Best of all play against a friend as the computer plays an extremely tough game of basketball.

Your men are moved around the court using the joystick. Pressing the fire button will make your player leap or, if he's in possession of the ball, shoot at the basket.

The graphics are quite impressive on

Artful animations

Most computers acquire a library of sports simulations after they have been around for some time.

The Atari now has several sports titles from standard soccer and basketball type games to more unlikely indoor sports such as darts and snooker.

Graphics are important in sports simulations. Look for accurately marked pitches, thoughtful scaling, and authentic movements of the ball.

In games that involve a lot of running, look for authentic simulation of the running motion of the players. Nothing is more ridiculous than a player moving around a sports field without moving his legs.

Of course, computers are not yet sophisticated enough to reproduce all the elements of a game on a TV screen but they are easily capable of giving an enjoyable game if the cartridge has been well thought out.

It should have two player options and also the facility to play against the computer when your friend is not around.

The two player option if it is to be really effective should allow for simultaneous participation by two players.

Finally, sound effects are also important in sports simulations. Check to make sure the computer produces some audible signal whenever the ball is struck or kicked and also when a goal or point is scored. Some of the better sports simulations have authentic sounding effects such as a leather ball being kicked, or the sliding of skis, even the cheering of the crowd has been incorporated in some games.

All these things help to make a good game. The golden rule, however, as with buying all computer games, is to play them first whenever possible.

EUGENE LACEY

this game — the men's limbs move and the ball moves across court in slow arcs to give the impression of depth.

Basketball runs on Atari 400 and 800 and comes out of Atari catalogue in cartridge form or from Spectrum computer shops at £24.99.

- Getting started 9
- Value 6
- Playability 6



Score the winner in the FA Cup final with this latest soccer simulation game and a little bit of imagination.

You control up to four players moving them around the pitch with the joystick and depressing the fire button to shoot.

Up to four players can be moved at any time — the player possessing the ball dictates which of the eleven players in the team can be moved.

The depth and scale of the pitch are well recreated with players appearing at just about the right size.

Sound effects are another plus for this game with the sound of a dull thud as the players strike the leather ball.

A variety of game options increase the appeal of the game. You can select a 10 minute, 30 minute, or 45 minute game against the computer or a friend.

Soccer is manufactured by Thorn EMI for the Atari 400 and 800 and is available from Spectrum computer shops at £29.84.

- Getting started 9
- Value 8
- Playability 8



About the only thing missing from Thorn EMI's darts program is the TV commentator's shriek of, "Wun-hundred-and-eightyyy!"

The game, for the Atari 400/800, takes place inside a public house with a keen, and rather slim-looking, darts player standing a regulation distance away from his board.

When the game is in play, the marvellous graphics are added to by a close-up of the board itself in the bottom right hand side of the screen with a hand hovering close by.

An eye-catching feature of this game is the sound effects which, if you hit a wire and bounce out, respond with a realistic chink and thud.

You begin play by selecting a game from 301 to 901 and choosing a skill level between 0 and 9. The hand holding the dart hovers over the board and you have to judge carefully when to fire as the finger tip hits the part you think you need.

Darts costs £19.95, expensive for a cassette despite the good packaging.

- Getting started 9
- Value 5
- Playability 9



TT Racer brings you all the thrills and spills of the Isle of Man super-bike races.

The game challenges you to race against the clock and see how far you can get along an obstacle filled race track.

Push your joystick forward to accelerate — but not too far or you will crash straight into the crowd losing time.

The track scrolls down the screen as you are shown an aerial view — including rooftops and trees. The track becomes increasingly more difficult.

The sound effects are an impressive element of this game. The acceleration sounds are particularly convincing.

The first major obstacle you must negotiate is a fork junction with an oil slick on one side and clear track on the other. You must make a quick decision on your course and then accelerate away before the slick switches back under your tyres!

Once through this you will have to steer over narrow bridges, wait at traffic lights, and dodge in and out of square green obstacles.

When a minute has elapsed the game ends and you are given a score read-out based on how far you got.

TT Racer is the first of a range of sports simulations for Atari 400 and 800 from Centaursoft at £19.95. £19.95.

- Getting started 8
- Value 5
- Playability 7



SPECTRUM

If you like pretty pretty graphics then Horace Goes Skiing may be just the game for you.

The cute comic book character was first introduced to Spectrum owners last year when Psion Software launched their Hungry Horace game. In that episode the mischievous little gobbler ate the park attendant's sandwiches and prize winning daisies.

The game begins with Horace attempting to get across a busy road as lorries, vans and cars thunder by. You must get him to the other side of the road without getting him killed. You have three lives in which to do this.

Once he is safely across the road he can pick up his skis from his shed, put them on, hobble back across the road and then begin his attempt on the slalom.

The first few flags are widely spaced and can be taken nice and gently. The game gets progressively difficult.

Splendid graphics, an addictive game, and a lovable character in the shape of Horace all for £5.

Horace Goes Skiing runs on a Spectrum in 16 or 48K and is distributed by Psion in W. H. Smiths.

- Getting started 8
- Value 8
- Playability 7



ADDRESS FILE

Abbex Software
20, Ashley Court, Great Northway,
London NW4.

Abersoft
7 Maes Afallen, Bow Street, Dyfed
SY24 5BA.

Acornsoft
4a Market Hill, Cambridge, CB2 3NJ.

Allrian
1000a Uxbridge Road, Hayes, Middx.
UB4 0RL.

Apex Software
115 Crescent Drive, Brighton, Sussex
BN2 6SB.

Artic Computing
396 James Reckitt Avenue, Hull, N.
Humberside HU8 0JA.

Atari International
Windsor House, 185-195 Ealing
Road, Alpertown, Wembley, Middx.
(Any Atari Dealer)

Audiogetic
PO Box 88, Reading, Berks.

Automata Cartography
65a Osbourne Road, Portsmouth,
Hants. PO5 31R.

BBC Publications
Broadcasting House, Portland Place,
London W1. (Any BBC Dealer)

Bridge Software
36 Fernwood, Marple Bridge,
Stockport, Cheshire.

Bug-Byte
The Albany, Old Hall Street, Liverpool
L3 9EG.

Campbell Systems
Rous Road, Buckhurst Hill, Essex IG9
6BL.

Centaur Software
6 Purcells Avenue, Edgware, Middx.

Centresoft
26 Great Cornbow, Halesowen, West
Mids B6 33AE.

Commodore
675 Ajax Avenue, Trading Estate,
Slough, Berks. (Any Commodore
Dealer)

Computer Concepts
Dept. WM1, 16 Wayside,
Chipperfield, Herts. WD4 9JJ.

Electric Pencil Company
1 Mount Vernon, Hull, N. Humberside.

Gemini Electronics
50 Newton Street, Manchester.

Hewson Consultants
60a St Mary's Street, Wallingford,
Oxon. OX10 0EL.

Imagine Software
Masons Buildings, Exchange Street
East, Liverpool L2 3PN.

Mac Games
See Morris Associates for this
address.

Melbourne House
131 Trafalgar Road, Greenwich,
London SE10.

Microx
52 The Strand, Worthing, Sussex.

Molimerx
1 Buckhurst Road, Town Hall Square,
Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex.

Morris Associates
37 St Catherine's Road, Baglam, Port
Talbot, West Glam. SA12 8AJ.

New Generation Software
16 Brendon Close, Oldland Common,
Bristol.

Pete & Pam Computers
New Hall Hey Road, Rawtenstall,
Rossendale, Lancs. BB4 6JG.

Postern Limited
PO Box 2, Andoversford, Cheltenham,
Glos. GL4 5SW.

Program Power
8/8a Regent Street, Chapel Allerton,
Leeds LS7 4PE.

Psion
2 Huntsworth Mews, London NW1
6DD. (Larger branches of W H
Smith)

Quicksilver
92 Northern Road, Southampton SO2
0PB.

Rabbit Software
380 Station Road, Harrow, Middx.

Salamander
27 Ditchley Rise, Brighton, East
Sussex BN1 4QL.

Sharpsoft
86-90 Paul Street, London EC1.

Softek
329 Croxted Road, London SE24.

Spider Software
98 Avondale Road, South Croydon,
Surrey.

Supersoft
Winchester House, Canning Road,
Wealdstone, Harrow, Middx.

S.B.D. Software
15 Jocelyn Road, Richmond, Surrey
TW9 2TJ.

Terminal Software
28 Church Lane, Prestwich,
Manchester M25 5AJ.

Texas Instruments
Manton Lane, Bedford, Beds. MK41
7PA. (Any Texas Dealer)

Thorn EMI
Thorn EMI House, Upper St Martins
Lane, London W1. (Any Atari Dealer)

Viking Software
28 New Road, Northbourne,
Bournemouth, Dorset BH10 7DS.

Workforce
140 Wilsden Avenue, Luton, Beds.
LU1 5HR.

Ratings rundown

Here is a rundown of the categories our review team used to mark the games featured in this supplement.

Each game received ratings in three categories. These are defined as "Getting started": problems loading the tape and a measure of how much help a cassette or disc gives, in making the game easily accessible to the buyer.

"Value" looks at the value-for-

money question and takes into account whether the game utilises all the facilities of the machine, presentation and packaging.

"Playability" refers to the enjoyment the game offers, whether it would hold the reviewers' interest or whether it is a good example of the type of game it is based on.

Each mark was made out of a possible 10 and we hope it will provide an accurate guide.

Symbols guide

The symbols beneath each review provide a quick check on what you will need to run that particular game on your computer. See the details below:



1. The game is available on cassette only. Not in disc or cartridge form.



2. The game is available in disc form only and not on cassette or cartridge.



3. The game needs extra memory to run. For ZX81 owners this will mean a 16K Rampack. For Atom owners we will assume a fully expanded computer as the norm.



4. The game uses a joystick.



5. The game needs something extra plugged in the user port to run. This symbol has also been used to show cartridge-only games.

THE BOOK OF REVIEWS

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GAMES GLOSSARY

Asteroids

The Asteroids came into the arcades courtesy of Atari. It features a small dart-shaped craft controlled by the player which can rotate left or right and thrust or fire in the direction it is facing.

There is one further control, the panic button (hyperspace) which lets you travel to another part of the screen chosen by the computer.

The enemy is mainly made up of large asteroids which sweep across the screen in large deadly groups of rock. When blown up these break into smaller fragments worth extra points.

There is extra danger supplied by two UFOs. The first larger creature you'll meet fairly early on. It tends to spray shots in all directions and often crashes into an asteroid.

The smaller variety is far more deadly in its own shooting and also more difficult to hit. Each cleared screen means you start again with extra asteroids.

Defender

You can't expect to keep a finger on every control button in Defender or you'd end up in knots.

The action, which takes place above an alien landscape, involves some seven control buttons and takes patience to gain proper mastery of your lone craft.

That patience can be rewarded though, as Defender is challenging from the word "Go". The Defender craft can go: up, down, thrust forward, reverse direction, fire, smart bomb and hyperspace.

Ten humanoids wander on the landscape and these may fall prey to raiding alien creatures known as Landers. Landers pick up the humanoids and take them to the top of the screen. If they succeed in getting there the Landers turn into fearsome mutants hellbent on your destruction.

In all there are six alien opponents. On top of Landers and Mutants, these are: Pods are quite harmless but contain the small and persistent Swarms; Bombers seed space with white bombs and Baiters only appear if you take too long clearing a screen of the rest of the aliens.

If all 10 humanoids are captured, the planet explodes and all remaining alien life attacks your craft at once.

Defender games usually feature a small radar screen which shows what is going on at all parts of the planet surface.

Frogger

Frogger has spawned a whole host of computer games with a similar theme.

This game features a frog hero who

If you can tell a Pacman from a Defender and a Galaxian from a Space Invader you probably know your way around computer games.

But if some of the game terms we have used in this supplement, or in the issue itself, are new to you, then this page should supply the answers. In it we take some of the best known types of computer game and describe how they are played and what features these games normally incorporate.

So, if we claim that Penetrator is a "Scramble-type game" and that leaves you just as much in the dark about what to expect, then below there is a full description of Scramble to put you in the picture.

must jump across a road and make his way across a river torrent to five frog-holes in the bank.

The busy road usually features five streams of traffic travelling in both directions at varying speeds, between which the player must hop his frog without wrapping it around any fenders.

Once across the road, the river can be crossed by leaping onto floating logs and onto the back of swimming turtles, until our frog can enter a vacant spot in the far bank. Turtles have a habit of diving though so don't let a frog dally too long on one. Being carried off the edge of the screen (by log or turtle) also results in a note in the funeral column of *Amphibians' Weekly*.

When all five frog-holes have been filled, the game becomes more difficult with extra traffic being added to the road, snakes traversing the bank between road and river and alligators appearing instead of logs in the river.

A timer running down on each frog also adds to the difficulties. The arcade original also featured a small lady frog who could be "picked up" on the logs and offered a lift home for a bonus. Other bonuses can be scored by entering a frog-hole in which a tasty fly meal has come to rest.

Donkey Kong

Donkey Kong is the strange name for a climbing and jumping game which features a starlet-grabbing monster gorilla.

Often referred to as Crazy Kong or Crazy Climber in the computer circles, it has only just found its way onto the home screen.

The game features a gorilla holding a girl captive at the top of the screen and an intrepid hero (Mario the carpenter), who starts at the bottom of the screen.

Between the two is a connecting network of platforms and ladders up which Mario must run to achieve his rescue. Kong hurls barrels down the screen and Mario makes use of his "jump" button to leap over them. He can also grab a hammer and smash the barrels as they approach him.

Once at the top of the screen a new complex is built with Mario, again starting from the bottom with a view to rescue. This time the screen features a series of conveyor belts and deadly fires which travel around on the ladders and belts.

Galaxians

The Galaxians were the sons of Space Invaders. Instead of proceeding down the screen at a leisurely pace, they wavered at the top of the screen before swooping down in batches of two or three (or more often on a solo mission) firing bombs.

The player has the usual left, right and fire controls on his laser base and must take care not to get trapped in a corner. He scores double points for a galaxian hit in mid-swoop and there are bonus points for taking out the red fleet commanders, who usually descend flanked by their generals, dispersing bombs at such a rate that the first instinct is to flee for cover.

That is the essence of Galaxians but with each destroyed platoon, new waves appear at screen top and their attacks become more frequent, more accurate and, all too often, more deadly!

Pacman

The ghostly world of Pacman is made up of a dot-filled maze, a hungry dot-eater and four pursuing spectres.

Pacman variations can be found under a whole range of titles from Vic-men to Gobbleman, Snapper to Super Gloopster and many others. Most dot-eating games are related to it.

The main character is the dot-eater, which travels around the maze, eating every dot he touches. His objective is to clear the screen of dots. He is hampered in this by the four chasing ghosts whose touch is lethal.

The Pacman's main defence against the ghosts, who usually number four, are energiser dots. These pulse in the four corners of the maze and, upon being eaten, reverse the roles for a short while.

This means that Pacman can turn the tables on the ghosts and eat them for bonus points. He is allowed only a few seconds of dominance before the usual hunter and hunted rules come back into operation.

It is also usual for fruits to appear on the screen occasionally and these too can be consumed by Pacman for bonus points. When Pacman has cleared the screen, it refills with dots and the game restarts except that this time the ghosts are a little livelier and a new fruit, worth extra points, appears at this level.

Scramble

Scramble should have a big one-way sign on its cabinet. The screen rolls from right to left, taking the player's craft along it into ever-increasing danger.

Scramble variations often contain the word "Mission" or "Attack" but there are some wierd and wonderful titles about.

The player controls a craft heading right across the screen over hilly terrain. His craft can never turn around and opt out of its mission but he does have some control over his destiny.

His controls are up and down, fast and slow and he can both bomb and fire at his enemies.

The Scrambler is not usually equipped with enough fuel to complete his task, but it is normal to obtain more fuel by bombing fuel tanks on the ground and so (mysteriously) replenish his own stocks.

The enemies come in all shapes and sizes. Most common are missiles which fire up from the ground as your craft passes overhead and alien invader creatures which frequently inhabit caves and fly at the player's craft.

The original Scramble game sent the player through a series of different terrains with new challenges in each section. And most computer Scrambles attempt to duplicate this with a number of different stages.

Scramble requires a cool head which can find the right control in a crisis, but it makes an ideal computer game as success naturally leads to new and more difficult stages.

Invaders

Space Invaders started the whole computer game craze back in 1977 and most gamers know the format backwards. Still, just a brief resume....

The invaders come in waves above the ground and move in rows across the screen one step at a time, firing missiles earthwards.

When one row of the aliens reach an edge of the screen, the whole platoon jump down a line and return back the way they came. When they achieve their slow progression to the bottom of the screen, the game ends.

The player controls a laser base which moves left to right and fires directly up from its position. His aim is to blow up the entire fleet before it reaches the bottom of the screen.

Flying saucers move across the top of the screen in both directions and can be hit for a mystery bonus score. In the arcade original, top saucer scores of 300 were achieved by firing 22 shots before shooting at the first saucer, then firing 14 shots in between each subsequent saucer. Some computer versions have copied this technique.

