

C+VG'S CORKY CRIMBO COMPO

Predicting what will be the biggest games at Christmas is a tricky business, as you can find out for yourselves in this C+VG competition. We're giving you the chance to air your views and tell US what you think will be the top games on the 25th of December.

What we want you to do is list what you reckon will be the five top games on the Gallup All Formats Top 30 at Christmas. If you agree with what we say in this booklet, you can use some of the games we've already listed. If you disagree, include other titles. It's totally up to you — but choose wisely, because if you're one of the ten entrants who guess closest, you'll win those titles for your machine!

So, get your thinking caps on, consult a clairvoyant, fill in the form below and send it off to C+VG Christmas Prediction, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU to arrive no later than December the 5th. Entries postmarked after that date will be disqualified.



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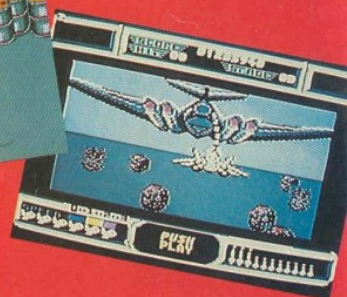
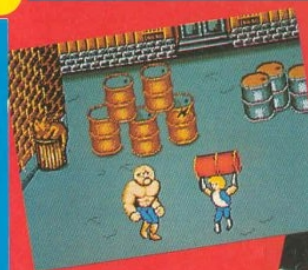
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C+VG'S CHRISTMAS CRACKERS



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With Christmas just around the corner, C+VG has gone crackers to bring you C+VG's Christmas Crackers: THE definitive guide to the big games this Yuletide.

On the following pages, we fully reveal the games the experts (that's us) are tipping to top the charts during the festive season. There are fourteen titles in all, each previewed in-depth and lavishly illustrated with multi-format screenshots to tell you why they're destined for the big time.

As well as obvious stormers like Operation Wolf, we've also listed a few dark horses — the games that some are leaving for dead. We think that Christmas could throw up more than a few surprises! See whether you agree.

Will our predictions be correct? Only you the consumer can answer that question for us — but hopefully our guide will help you choose the best games for your personal list.

Editor — Julian Rignall. Written by — Julian Rignall, Eugene Lacey.



(OCEAN/SPECIAL FX)
Spectrum/C64/Atari ST

While you've busily tucking into your Christmas dinner, dinner dinner dinner, *Batman* should be perched high in the charts.

This is the second Ocean game to feature the dynamic Bat-person. The first was written by Bernie



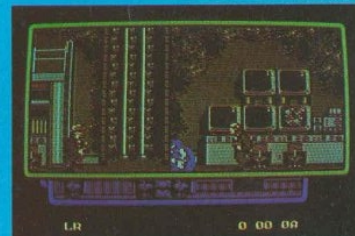
Drummond and John Ritman a couple of years ago and appeared on the Spectrum and Amstrad to a rapturous reception. It was an isometric 3D game, and was filled with puzzles. The latest Bat-game is a complete departure, and is more of an arcade game, presented almost like a typical Batman DC comic strip, with windows opening like comic frames every time Batman enters a new location.

Obviously, the player takes control of Batman, and the objective is to defeat the Joker and Penguin — Batman's most hated enemies. There's a large map to explore, and items have to be used in the correct places to complete the quest and rid Gotham City of its two

biggest pests.

First shown at this year's PC Show, *Batman* is looking very promising indeed. The ST version sports some lovely graphics, with cartoon-like characters that are beautifully animated. The attention to detail is superb, and if the gameplay matches the high graphical standard, players should be in for a treat.

The C64 version is also looking good; the graphics are detailed, and the window system works very well without any noticeable slowing down of the action when there are several windows open at once.



On the Spectrum *Batman* is monochrome, but the lack of colour is made up for with some very detailed characters and smooth animation.

Potential super-heroes should find *Batman* an engrossing game. Ask for it to be put in your Bat-stocking!



OPERATION WOLF



(OCEAN)
Spectrum/Amstrad/C64/Atari ST/Amiga

Ocean's conversion of this blistering Taito coin-op is the hot favourite for the Christmas number one slot — and one look is all you need to see why.

The programmers have pulled out all the stops to bring all the thrills and spills of the arcade original, as the player battles through six scenarios in an attempt



to infiltrate and escape from an enemy camp.

The original arcade machine has a replica Uzi sub-machine gun mounted on the front of the cabinet, and the idea is to shoot enemy soldiers and vehicles before they have a chance to shoot back. Each shot sustained

is added to the damage meter; a full meter means death.

Although the action requires an almost non-stop hail of fire to ensure survival, the player has limited ammunition; so every shot counts. When things are

getting particularly hot one of the player's fire rockets can be launched to destroy a tank, helicopter or group of soldiers.

The mission starts in the enemy camp, and the screen slowly scrolls horizontally from left to right as the player slowly moves along. Soldiers pop up from all angles and are quickly blasted. Soon armoured cars enter the fray, along with tanks and helicopters.

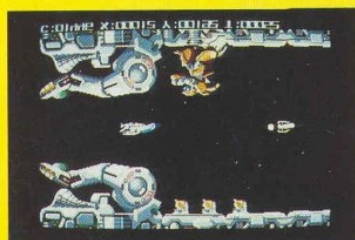
Complete this and it's onto the jungle, where the action really hots up. Next comes the powder magazine, then the village and concentration camp before finally making a bid for freedom at the airport. As well as the action becoming increasingly more difficult, civilians also wander around the screen — shoot them and damage is added to the bar.

Operation Wolf has been converted perfectly to all formats. The gun control method has been represented with a joystick-guided crosshair on the 8-bit versions. On the 16-bit formats, a mouse is used to guide the sight, giving an excellent arcade feel. The graphics and sound are as good as they can be, an overall all conversions ooze quality and playability.

If *Operation Wolf* isn't doesn't occupy the top slot at Christmas, there's no justice in the world!



R-TYPE

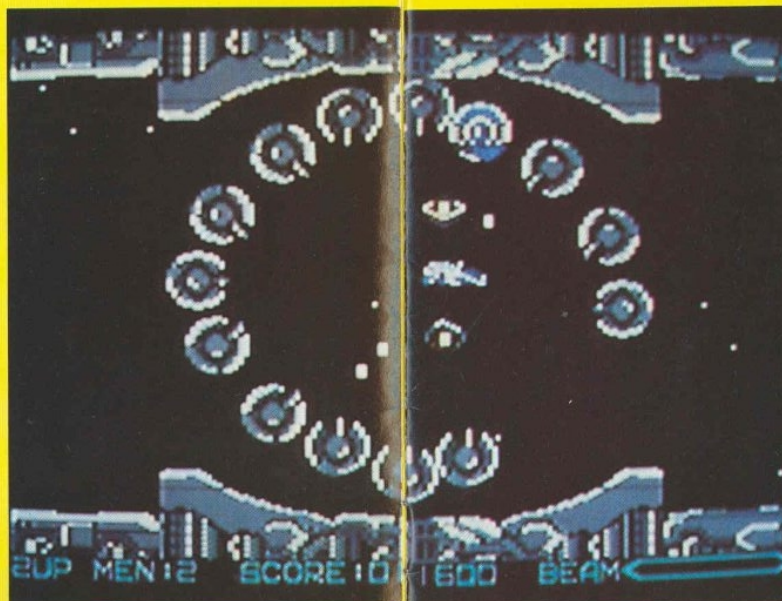


(ELECTRIC DREAMS)
Spectrum/C64/Atari ST/Amiga

Irem's classic horizontally scrolling shoot 'em up has gathered a very large following in the arcades over the past year, and there's no reason why it shouldn't increase that following when it's released on the home computers.

The reason for its success is its combination of fabulous graphics and frenetic action as the player takes on the mighty Bydo forces over eight levels.

Each level is populated by hordes of aggressive alien

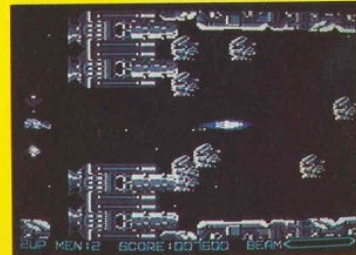


craft, and there's a giant guardian at the end of each one.

At the start, the R-9 craft that you control is armed only with a beam-up laser — if fire is depressed, a powerful laser bolt is emitted; a quick press releases a much weaker bolt. Fortunately extra weapons can be picked up en-route, the first of which is the all-important pod. This rotund, rotating piece of machinery fits to the back or front of the craft and

offers protection from enemy bullets, and can also destroy the weaker ones if they simply run into it. If desired, the pod can be detached to float before or behind the craft to destroy aliens before they come close.

Two floating laser cannons can be collected, which position themselves above and below the R-9 to add extra width to firepower, and homing missiles are picked up to give extra destructive powers.



There are three types of extra lasers: helix; a colourful side-beam laser which creates widespread damage to alien forces; reflective lasers, which bounce around the screen until they hit a target — very satisfying.

Reviewed last month, *R-Type* was received very favourably. Electric Dreams seem to have caught the spirit of the original, especially with the ST and Spectrum versions. Needless to say, if you're a shoot 'em up fan, this should be high on your Christmas list!



THUNDER BLADE



(US GOLD)
Spectrum/C64/Atari ST/Amiga

Activision might have the rights to *Afterburner*, but US Gold have *Thunderblade*, the sequel to the thrilling Sega air combat game. Although it didn't quite have the impact of its predecessor, Sega's helicopter flying game has gathered quite a following.

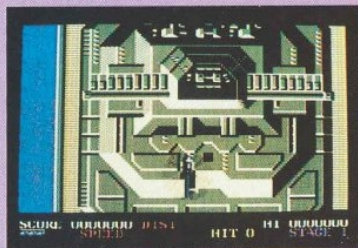
Two versions are available, a mechanical sit-down version, which spins around when the joystick is moved, and a stand-up version takes the form of a



conversion kit for *Afterburner* machines.

The player takes control of the *Thunderblade* helicopter and flies three different missions, each having four sub-missions. The action starts off with a vertically scrolling section where the chopper is flown high above the city. The craft can fly up and down, effectively in and out of the screen, as well as being able to move in all four compass directions. Tanks litter the ground, and fire missiles up at the helicopter, and planes also provide extra hassle.

If the end of the level is reached, the scene switches to a first person 3D view, with *Thunderblade* flying into the city, much like the canyon sequence in *Afterburner*. Buildings loom up and are flown around



— crashing into one causes the destruction of the chopper. Tanks and planes are again in evidence, and they're blasted with chopper's bullets and air-to-ground missiles.

The final section of the first level is another vertical scroller, with *Thunderblade* flying over a massive aircraft that is simply bristling with guns. These are destroyed before they launch volleys of white missiles. When the top of the plane is reached, the nose cone is blown up to progress to the second level, not before a huge points bonus is given for the number of enemy craft brought down and destroyed.

Next the action shifts to an urban district, with the helicopter flying over a county scene, with the third



and fourth levels set over a river, and finally at a refinery.

Like Activision, US Gold have had to work hard at this conversion to try and capture what is a very complex arcade game. With three distinct sections to each level, it's inevitable that the game comes as a multiloop.

From what we've seen, the game looks quite good — at the expense of speed. Surprisingly, the Spectrum version is very impressive, although it suffers from

monochromatic graphics which makes it difficult to differentiate between your and the enemy's missiles. The ST version is looking good, although it tends to slow down on the 3D sections.

Still, that won't put off avid *Thunderblade* fanatics. But the big question is, with two flying games, which one should you choose? Well, we think you should judge for yourselves — or read the reviews next month.

AFTER BURNER



(ACTIVISION)
Spectrum/C64/Atari ST/Amiga

It's a pretty safe bet to say that Activision's conversion of this stunning Sega game will be flying high in the charts this Christmas.

The arcade machine appeared earlier this year, and what an amazing game it is! It comes in three different cabinets; a deluxe sit-in version, a standard sit-in and a huge stand-up. The deluxe version is the best, and pitches the player backwards and forwards and from side to side as he flies his F-14 against an entire enemy airforce.

The action begins with the plane blasting off from an aircraft carrier, from then on you're on your own. The action is viewed in 3D from behind the plane, and enemy craft flying in from over the horizon to attack. The player's aircraft is armed with an unlimited supply of bullets and 50 air-to-air missiles. When an enemy plane is in range, a target box appears around it and a missile can be launched to bring it down.



Bullets are only effective for short-range combat — which isn't particularly desirable.

Enemy planes launch their own missiles, which are dodged: if one hits the plane it explodes in spectacular fashion and crashes to the ground, ploughing a long furrow into the earth. Sometimes a heat seeker or enemy plane attempts an attack from behind. The only way to shake them off is to flip the plane over, causing the entire screen to rotate while the aggressor is shaken off.

There are 23 levels in all, including two canyon runs where the plane is guided down the centre of a valley to take out enemy forces, and three friendly air bases, where the plane lands to re-arm and refuel.

Activision has certainly had their work cut out bringing Afterburner to your screens, but we think they've managed to capture the excitement of the arcade original. The whole thing hinges on the fact that the arcade game is very fast indeed, and fortunately the programmers have managed to retain this feature on nearly all the home computer versions. Not without costs however — some of the graphical detail is lost on the C64 version, and the Spectrum version, of course, is monochromatic. The ST and Amiga versions are really the ones to look out for — they've been programmed by Argonaut Software, better known for *Starglider* I and II.



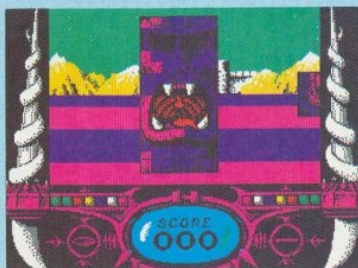
SAVAGE



(FIREBIRD)
Spectrum/Amstrad/C64/Atari ST/Amiga

Firebird characteristically pin their Christmas hopes on a brilliant original game.

Called *Savage*, it introduces a hero of the same name (remember the guy in the magazine ads who turns from a wimpy looking school kid into an Arnie Schwarzenegger lookalike after discovering what 'a real computer game can do'. Well, this is the particular



Mr Savage we are dealing with here.)

In this three-level game developed by Probe for Firebird, Savage tackles his foes who were foolish enough to kidnap his girlfriend. I mean — you have to be kind of stupid to cross a guy like this.

All three levels load separately on the 8-bit versions. **Level One** is a sort of *Rastan Saga*-type affair in which our hero dashes from right to left flinging his axe at the spiders and other assorted nasties that attempt to thwart his progress as he seeks his sweetheart. The graphics are most impressive — particularly on Amstrad and Spectrum — huge, non-

clashing, and colourful — really above and beyond anything that has been achieved on this type of game on these machines before.

Level two is a scrolling 3D *Space Harrier*-like arcade game — dodging and blasting and pounding. Again the standard of graphics and animation is outstanding on 8-bit.

Level three sees our hero transform into a bird — no, not a pigeon, but a warrior-like eagle — as he seeks out his betrothed. The bird must search a complex maze to discover the whereabouts of the incarcerated one — in base, manly language, a bird searches for his



'bird'.

Loud, over-the-top, superlative-type noises are reaching us from Firebird about the quality of the sound and animation on the 16 bit versions (not due out until Jan), which we are not dismissing at this stage — given that they come from a company that quite often live up to and even surpass their own P.R.

The trouble with *Savage* though — in terms of topping the Christmas charts — is that it is just not seen as a big, mega license, and therefore not considered to be in the running for major honours this Yuletide. Its a shame that brill, original games can't be in the running when it really counts — but that's the way it is. And only you, Mr Punter, can change if you want to.



SDI



(ACTIVISION)
Spectrum/C64/Atari ST

Although the subject of nuclear warfare isn't exactly the thing to encourage Christmas cheer, SDI from Activision should provide plenty of festive fireworks for a blasting fanatic with time, and the entire Soviet



arsenal of missiles, to kill.

Converted from the relatively unknown Sega coin-op, SDI puts the player in control of an SDI satellite, the last line of defence between a massive salvo of enemy missiles and the so-called free West. Gameplay is similar to Atari's years-old *Missile Command* in the



respect that a cursor is used to target the satellite's lasers and destroy the targets.

As well as enemy missiles, other satellites float onto the horizontally scrolling screen, and launch missiles at the player's satellite, which are either dodged or shot. If all the forces are destroyed, the action begins

afresh on the second of six levels. Failure to shoot down every missile results in a compulsory second stage, where enemy missiles are shot down as they approach from over the horizon.

What makes SDI a winner is its simplicity — it's just a straightforward reaction game that tests reflexes to



the spirit of the arcade original — especially with its unusual joystick/mouse control method.

Spectrum and Commodore incarnations are soon to be forthcoming, and also look like good imitations of their arcade parent.

It's true to say that SDI never really made it in the



their limits. The gameplay is very frenetic, and although it doesn't exactly tax the brain, provides plenty of enjoyable entertainment.

The ST version is reviewed in the magazine, and carries an impressive 81% overall mark. As you might gather, it's an excellent conversion, and fully captures

arcades — but such is the quality of the conversions, we at C+VG reckon that it could well be a Christmas hit.

ROBOCOP

(OCEAN)
Spectrum/Amstrad/C64/Atari ST/Amiga

Robocop, the brilliant but violent comic-style film was released earlier this year, and was a massive hit. Ocean grabbed the licence, and for the last nine months have been working on a game-of-the-film, which is about to come to fruition.

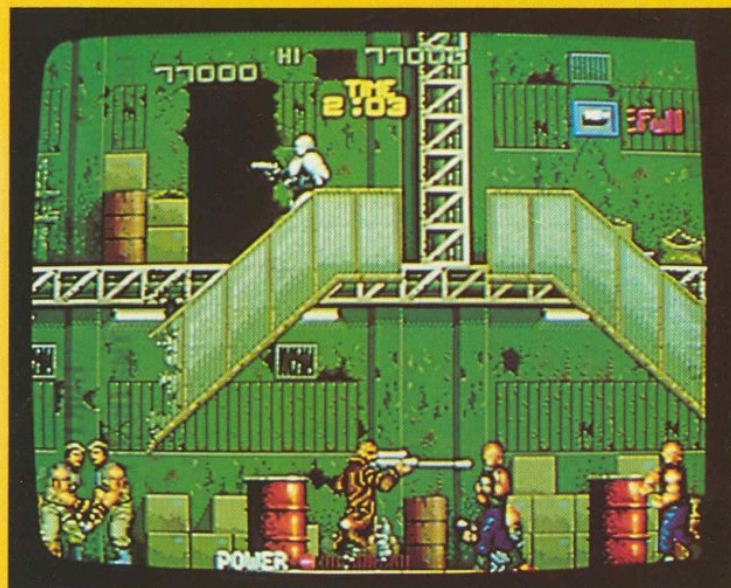
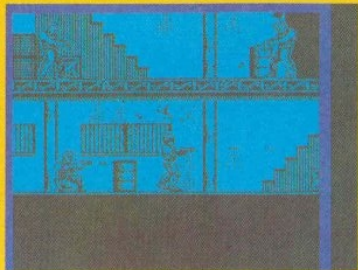
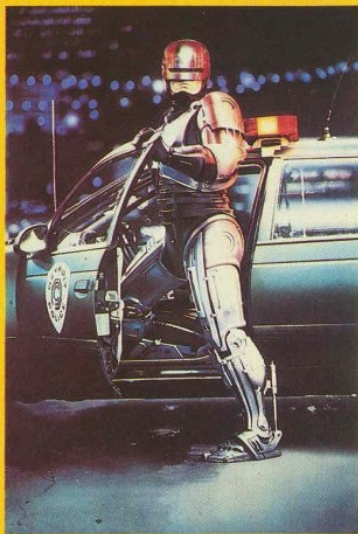
The film is set in Detroit in a few years time. Crime is rampant and the police force, now privatised and



owned by the enormous OCP Corporation, is stretched to its limits. Body armour and full-face helmets are mandatory, and life expectancy is short.

When the central character, Murphy, is shot down by a gang of ruthless criminals in a particularly grisly scene, his body — declared clinically dead — is requisitioned by OCP for use in their Robocop project. The result is Robocop, an unstoppable and emotionless cybernetic law-enforcer that's part man and part machine. Initially all goes well, but when Robocop malfunctions and starts remembering Murphy's memories, he embarks on a mission to track down and destroy the gang members who shot him.

The film is action-packed, and is ideal subject matter for a computer game. As with Platoon, Ocean's last film-tie-in, Robocop will be a multiloader game and



feature nine levels.

The first is a horizontally scrolling shoot out, followed by a 3D view where Robocop apprehends two rapists. The next is similar to the first, but with motorcyclists, and then Robocop attends a photofit session where he identifies criminals. Level five is a raid on a drugs warehouse — another horizontally scrolling shoot 'em up.

After that is a confrontation with Dick Jones, an evil OCP director, and his robotic killing machine, ED-209, followed by an escape from the OCP tower. Finally there's another shoot 'em up section — this

time in a junk yard — before confronting Dick Jones again; this time to kill him.

So far we've only seen the ST version — but that is looking brilliant, with a clearly recognisable and beautifully animated main sprite. We hope the other versions will be of similar standard.

By the way, Ocean have pulled off a neat coup — the Robocop video will carry a 20 second advert of the game just before the film starts. Apparently it is reckoned that it'll be seen by between 5 and 8 million people. With backing like that, can the game fail to do well?

WEC LE MANS

(OCEAN)
Spectrum/Amstrad/C64/Atari ST/Amiga

Konami's brilliant race game was launched at the same time as *Out Run* a year and a half ago, and was unfortunately upstaged by the Sega classic. This is a shame, since *WEC Le Mans* is absolutely superb. Hopefully Ocean will be able to capture some of the success it deserves this Christmas with their belated conversion.

The game is a simulation of the 24 hour Le Mans race, with the player driving a turbo racing Porsche around the famous Le Mans track through day and night — and adverse weather conditions.

The original arcade machine comes in two formats: a standard stand-up model, and a deluxe sit-in which spins and bumps the player as he races along.

The car is viewed from the traditional *Pole Position* viewpoint of above and behind the car, and the objective is simple: complete a lap within the time limit to gain extra time for the next lap. There are plenty of other racers, and as the player progresses through the race they become increasingly numerous, making driving trickier. The Porsche can take some punishment — driving on the verge merely slows it down — but hitting another car causes it to flip spectacularly and crash onto the track. Valuable seconds are lost as it's repositioned so the player can continue to race.

The conversions are currently being programmed in France, and are set for December release. The C64 and Spectrum versions are both looking promising, and hopefully this high quality will also be in evidence on the 16-bit versions.

With *WEC Le Mans* being the only 'big' driving game this Christmas, it should prove a big hit with the speed aficionados.



DOUBLE DRAGON



(MELBOURNE HOUSE)
Spectrum/Amstrad/C64/Atari ST/Amiga

Melbourne House's big game this Yuletide is a conversion of the popular *Double Dragon* arcade game.

For those who haven't been in an arcade for the last two years, *Double Dragon* is a one or two-player beat 'em up, where two tough street fighters go to rescue a girl whose been kidnapped by a rival gang. This means visiting the wrong side of town — and they're made very unwelcome. Members of the opposing gang attack at every available opportunity, and beset the heroes with hands, fists and a variety of weapons.

Fortunately the heroic duo can give as good as get, and are able to dish out a good selection of kicks and punches — and can also give an opponent a knee in the face if the opportunity arises.

Sometimes baddies wield weapons, including whips, baseball bats and knives. If the opponent is knocked down, the weapon is dropped and can be picked up



by the player and used against the enemy. Oil drums and crates can also be similarly picked up.

Big bullies are frequently encountered, and are defeated to progress to the next part of the landscape.

Double Dragon is an ideal home computer game, although the preproduction C64 and Spectrum versions we've already seen we're a little disappointing. Hopefully the finished versions will be a lot better.

GUERRILLA WARS



(IMAGINE)
Spectrum/Amstrad/C64/Atari ST/Amiga

Similar to *Ikari Warriors* in look and feel, SNK's *Guerilla Wars* is set for a Christmas launch.

One or two players take the role of guerillas, who have to penetrate deep into enemy territory. Armed with some grenades, a sub-machine gun and their wits, they battle an entire army as they progress up the horizontally scrolling screen to destroy the stronghold of an evil despot.

The mission starts on a beach, and immediately



enemy soldiers attack. Some are hidden behind obstacles, others run in a kamikaze attempt to take out the guerillas. Booby traps and barriers litter the way, and these are blown up with a well-aimed grenade.

Next comes the swamps, where the enemy is even stronger, followed by a town. The scene of the final battle takes place in the stronghold itself, where the dictator throws everything he's got at the heroic duo in an attempt to stop them completing their mission.

With the solo game, the odds are definitely stacked against the player — a partner helps to increase the chances of survival. To help matters a little more, there are extra weapons to pick up along the way, as well as additional grenades and bullets.

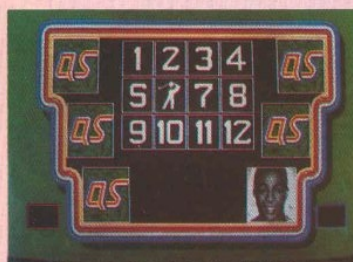


The ST version is looking very good, and although the scrolling isn't particularly smooth, the fact that there are loads of sprites on-screen tends to draw you away from the fact.

Spectrum and Amstrad versions seem to have captured the frantic element of the original game, and overall impressions are favourable.

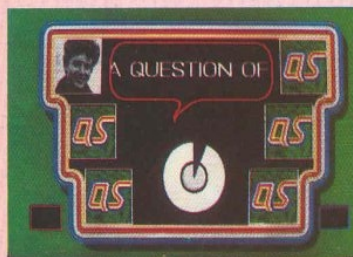
Guerilla Wars should keep *Ikari Warriors* fans very occupied over the Christmas break — if you're into carnage, go for it!

A QUESTION OF SPORT



(ELITE)
Spectrum/Amstrad/C64/Atari ST/Amiga

Featuring digitised phrases like, "Eeeeeee! Well DONE lads", and, "Watch it Bill! We're gonna do brilliant



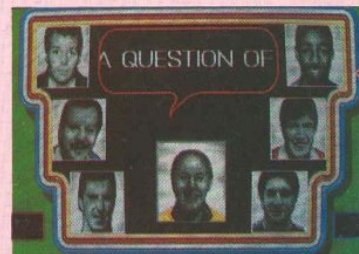
next time", the objective of this game-of-the-telly programme is to make the audience as embarrassed as possible by molesting the contestants in many varied and unwholesome ways.

Not really. No, *Elite*'s latest licence is, as you might guess, a sport trivia game. The game is beautifully presented, with plenty of digitised pictures of your favourite sporting stars, and has more questions than

you can shake a hockey stick at.

Points are awarded for correct answers, and there's a digitised mug shot of everyone's favourite Question of Sport host, David Coleman, to jolly along the proceedings.

As with *Trivial Pursuit*, *A Question of Sport* is best appreciated when multiple players are pitting their wits against one another; although in the single-



player mode the game is still fun.

The game will be virtually the same on all formats, although the 16-bit versions will have better graphics and more questions.

From what we've seen so far, *A Question of Sport* looks like it'd make an ideal Christmas game for all the family, and provides a perfectly valid excuse for not playing charades!



DRAGON NINJA

(IMAGINE)
Spectrum/Amstrad/C64/Atari ST/Amiga

Ocean really are flexing their muscles this Christmas with a brace of hot coin-op licences.

Dragon Ninja may be slightly over-shadowed by the real biggie in their pack — *Op Wolf* — but the Manchester games firm are so confident of its qualities that they're prepared for it to go head to head with its main rival in the martial arts coin-op conversion stakes — *Double Dragon*. We do not have the space to bring you such a head to head in this feature, but rest assured C+VG will bring you full and comprehensive reviews of both of these games when they appear.

The coin-op is enjoying a run of popularity amongst arcade goers right now. Its tough eight levels and one or two player options make it a good game to play in the arcades with a friend.

Your warrior(s) have the usual kick, jump, flying-kick, and super punch, as well as various weapons



that you can pick up.

The meanies are the usual motley crew of bad dudes that have come to expect in *Street Fighter* and *Double Dragon* type affairs. There are shuriken-throwing ninjas, kamikaze ninjas who burst into flames and dash at you, plus the usual collection of Ninja tartettes clad in skin tight leotards and fishnet stockings!

What is it about Japanese coin-op designers — they

always manage to squeeze in a bit of stocking top there somewhere! At the end of each level there's a real bruiser. Real man so-and-sos like the Fire-Breathing Fat Man (no relation to a certain G. Williams) the Armour Clad Giant, and the Green and Gruesome Giant Ninja — all of these before you confront the dreaded Dragon Ninja himself.

If you succeed in kicking the you know what out of this lot you get to the final screen where you rescue

Main rival *Double Dragon* shown for comparison



the president of the USA — and an ever so grateful Mr George Bush buys you a burger!

Our information on these versions is that they are developing nicely. Coded in-house by the same team that produced the excellent *Target Renegade* we are expecting big things from this game. Watch it soar.

