

No. 11 APRIL 2007

ZXF IS BACK!

Check out our new (old) look inside

25 years of the ZX Spectrum

**Looking back on favourite Spectrum
moments**

POSITIVE SPIN

Bunny's new direction

**WINSTON
GAME X
IZZY WIZZY
and more...**

**new Spectrum
software
reviewed
inside**

SPECTRUM
SPECTRUM SOFTWARE REVIEW
WIN A ZX
SPECTRUM SE!



ISSUE NO. 11 April 2007

Editor

Colin Woodcock

Reviewers

Colin Woodcock

Gareth Hicks

Andrew Owen

psj3809

Phillip Byrne

Other contributors

Paul Dunn

Andrew Rollings

Jonathan Cauldwell

Website

www.zxf.magazine.googlepages.com

ZXF is copyright © C Woodcock 2007;
all contributors retain their own copyrights.

MANY HAPPY RETURNS

Today (23 April 2007) marks 25 years since the 'launch' of the ZX Spectrum - or, to be more accurate, since the day that Sir Clive Sinclair announced to the world that the Spectrum was coming. Sadly, Sir Clive has always had a bit of a problem with the whole making-sure-something-works-before-you-launch-it thing, so it was a while between this historic day and people actually getting their hands on them. Well, it's not like that ever happens any more <cough> SONY </cough>

25 years of the ZX Spectrum, then, and to celebrate, a brand new issue of ZXF. It's been two years since the last issue of ZXF and five since I first started work on the magazine. During that time the scene seems to have grown stronger with each year that passes. When I started writing ZXF, it was quite hard to find new games for the Spectrum; now it seems that hardly a month goes by without someone bursting into WoS forums, all starry eyed with pride, to announce their new title in eight bits and 48K.

ZXF has a 'new' look, one with which I'm sure you are already familiar. In part this is to make it a fresh challenge for me, in part it's pure nostalgia, but mostly it's because I want to present the Spectrum scene as very much alive and kicking, just as it always was. It's also a slimmer issue this time round. This is because I plan on making a printed version available through www.lulu.com (keep your eyes on WoS forums for the announcement when this is ready) and more pages equals higher cost. But the pages are bigger, with more on them, so hopefully you won't feel too short changed. But this is very much an experimental issue; as always, I need your feedback. And your ideas. And your letters.

Happy birthday Speccy. Here's to the next 25.

Colin

CONTENTS

4 NEWS

It might be 25 years old, but there's plenty still going on in the world of the ZX Spectrum.

9 DIY

Win the prototype ZX Spectrum SE.

10 REVIEWS

An extra large helping of Spectrum gaming goodness.

16 ZX 25

Fond reflections on the Spectrum and 25 years of ZX history.

20 TOP TWENTY

Your favourite games and adventures right now.

21 PATHWAY TO ADVENTURE

Our very own text adventure under the spotlight.

22 INTERVIEW

A chat with Paul Dunn about Spectrum stuff.

24 ON THE SCREEN

Some pretty pictures to look at.

26 PREVIEW

Coming soon to a Spectrum near you.

BACK COVER

What a lot of Spectrum stuff... but can you identify it all? Write to ZXF if you think you can.

So much has happened in the Spectrum world since ZXF issue 10 it would be impossible to list it all here. Instead we've concentrated on some of the goings on in the lead-up to the big 25...

PRESERVATION SHOP OPEN

If you have gaps in your Spectrum software collection, the chances are that filling these via ebay involves either a) paying ridiculous prices or b) ending up buying a lot of 100 titles just for that one you're after. The Spectrum Preservation Team know just what this is like. Over the years they've forked out a small fortune of their own cash in pursuit of those super-rare titles they're after and ended up with enough superfluous titles to stuff a small shed with. Happily, this veritable software

mountain is now open to the likes of you and I to purchase from, giving us the chance to fill those gaps at reasonable prices and in a parcel small enough to actually fit through your letterbox, as well as giving the team the chance to make back some money on all those purchases they made (essentially for our benefit, by the way). The shop received a makeover in January and can be searched according to publisher as well as for individual titles. It can be found at www.ptshop.co.uk.

NEW RIDERS RELEASE

For those of you who don't know, the AY Riders are an eclectic collection of AY programmers (the AY chip, of course, being the music chip in all 128k Spectrums). Not only have they released 4 albums of new AY music in MP3 format, they've even performed live in Warsaw in 2004 (see ZXF07). Things have been a little quiet from the band since their fourth album, with the exception of a cover of Madonna's 'Hung Up' last year. But then in April a new single was released from the redesigned website at <http://ay-riders.speccy.cz/>

The release consists of two new tracks, *Satellite One* by TDM and *Factor6*, and *Breath of Air* by X-agon. True to form, the Riders are once more pushing the boundaries with these tunes, which feature eight and six channel sound respectively. How is this possible on a three channel sound chip? you cry. Well, it's not; in this case the effect has been achieved by using in the first case three and in the second case two Spectrums together. Now that would be interesting to see performed live.

YS3 LIVES ON

Long before the likes of ZXF and ZX Shed came along to try to feed your unending hunger for irreverent Spectrum commentary, Nathan Cross was there to pick up the lost souls still wondering about in dazed confusion after the departure of Your Sinclair. YS3 (the title 'YS2' was already taken by the YS covertape) ran for 14 issues from 1999, appearing to take its final bow in October 2002. Since then, Nat has worked on PC remakes of Spectrum games, namely **Target; 2006** and **Advanced Lanwmower Simulator 2000**. Yes.

The magical month of April 2007 seems to have done its magic yet again, however, for YS3 is back. The new version of the magazine is to be published in blog format and can be found at www.ys3.org. Already up on the site is a promise to review all eight thousand games available at www.worldofspectrum.org, along with the first seven reviews... (pass me that calculator).

If you missed out on the YS3 experience the first time around, you can download all previous issues from Nick Humphries' mini site at www.ysnry.co.uk/ys3/.

STORAGE MATTERS

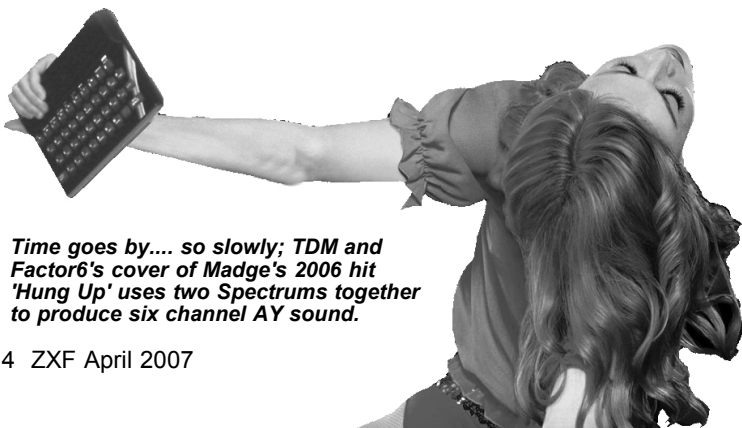
We love SD cards, right? Fair enough, being small enough to be vacuumed up does give an interesting new spin on the whole Hoover-interfering-with-software-loading thing; that small foible aside, however, the notion that something smaller than a Smith's Square Crisp could be packed full of Spectrum software (and we do mean packed) and linked up to an actual Speccy is something rather lovely to dream about. N'est pas?

Dream no more, for such a device exists and, unlike many of the great Spectrum hardware projects of today that blatantly discriminate against those of us with the soldering finesse of a drunk elephant, you might actually be able to buy this device very shortly. *Ready assembled.*

In fact, the ZXMMC+ interface boasts not one, but two SD slots, and the transfer speed from card to memory is so fast it's the same speed as memory to memory transfer. On top of that it also offers 512K of nonvolatile, battery backed RAM that will run Gary Lancaster's operating system ResiDOS and 512K of flash ROM. It has a Kempston Joystick port, an Interface 1 compatible RS-232 port, an Interface 1 compatible Network socket (nice to know all those thousands of ZX-Net users are being looked after) and just in case anything's been forgotten there's a pass-through edge connector. The interface is currently expected to cost somewhere between £20-35. More details at www.zxbada.bbk.org/zxmmcp/

The ZXMMC+ has been developed out of the ZXMMC internal interface, a small SD card device for 128K machines that sits between the Z80 processor and its socket on the Spectrum's circuit board (you relocate the Z80 itself to a new socket on the interface). In turn, the ZXMMC has been developed out of the ZX BadaLoc project, a new Spectrum clone capable of running at processor speeds of up to 21.25 MHz (ie, nearly six times the speed of the original Spectrum), the details of which you can find at www.zxbada.bbk.org.

By no means, of course, is this the first attempt at building a new mass storage device for the Spectrum that takes advantage of modern media capacities. The most notable of recent attempts include the ZXCf interface, reported on in previous issues of ZXF (the most recent version of which - the ZXCfK - includes a Kempston joystick



Time goes by.... so slowly; TDM and Factor6's cover of Madge's 2006 hit 'Hung Up' uses two Spectrums together to produce six channel AY sound.

interface alongside its Compact Flash card socket; for more details see <http://user.tninet.se/~vjz762w/>, and the darling of the demo scene, the DivIDE. The DivIDE interface has also recently been through an upgrade in the form of the DivIDE Plus, a design which you will soon be able to purchase from RWAP Services. RWAP, a long-standing supporter of the Spectrum, is currently in the process of taking pre-orders for a production run of the interface, which will allow you to connect both a CF memory card and a standard IDE hard disk (or CD-ROM). Like the ZXMMC+, the DivIDE Plus also has 512K of RAM and ROM, the former allowing better firmware to be written for the interface (and Garry Lancaster has prepared a version of ResiDOS for this). Also the DivIDE Plus has a through connector. Cost will be approx £55.

RWAP has already had a small test run of the DivIDE completed (see below); ZXf thinks this interface looks mighty mighty fine. But it doesn't end there. RWAP also manufacture brand new versions of MGT's Plus D disk drive interface and the DivIDE Plus firmware is currently being updated to allow the Plus D to be used alongside it. More info at www.rwapsoftware.co.uk



NEW SPECTRUM BOOK

It was a year overdue, but the print run of Andrew Rollings' **The ZX Spectrum Book - 1982 to 199X** finally arrived on his doorstep the day after Boxing Day. 1000 copies, many of them pre-ordered by the denizens of World of Spectrum forums. Was it worth the wait? It most certainly was.

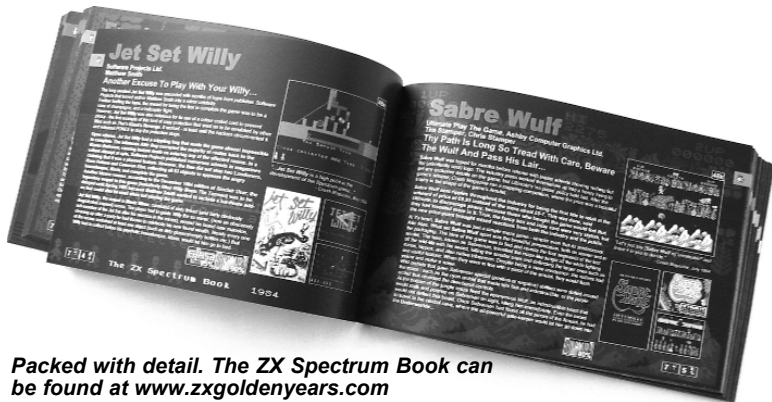
Playing it straight the whole way through, Andrew kept forum regulars updated on the book's progress as we waited, making drafts of all completed chapters available along the way for proof-reading - this was a challenge that a number of posters rose to magnificently, resulting in an extremely high quality end product. The facts, the layout, even the spelling are practically faultless as a result of this process, making it a testament to what can be achieved through honesty, perseverance and a genuine desire to hear and act upon feedback.

A self-publishing effort, The book is split into chapters that cover each of the years 1982 to 1989, with an extra

chapter for 1990 onwards. In total, over 230 games are chronicled at one page per game, making the book the thickness of a Spectrum as well as the length and width! For each title covered, a surprising amount of information is crammed onto each page, with screenshots (in-game and loading screen), inlay and magazine ratings. The depth of research is superb, and I found myself learning lots of things I didn't know about the story of various titles within the first few pages.

Each chapter is prefaced with an introduction to the year's events by Nick Humphries and the whole book has a foreword written by noneother than Sir Clive Sinclair himself.

This is a highly informative and entertaining read which I have no doubt will come to be regarded in the future as something of a Spectrum milestone. The shame of it is it's a limited print run. I can't help but think a high-street presence at Christmas would help fill many a thirty-something stocking.



Packed with detail. The ZX Spectrum Book can be found at www.zxgoldenyears.com

AND YOU ARE...?

Name: Andrew Rollings

Your Spectrum claim to fame:

Erm... I wrote and self-published a shiny book that looked like a Spectrum that some people seem to like. I'm working on another couple of similar projects too. The book is called "The ZX Spectrum Book 1982-199x" and I suggest anyone who hasn't bought one should go to the site (www.zxgoldenyears.com) and order it, because I've got less than 200 left!

First got a Spectrum in:

1983 - after begging and pleading for months... I even bought a Spectrum game before I owned the actual machine, in an attempt to make the parent creatures realize how much I wanted one... The game was Pimania by Automata, and the sneaky trick worked like a charm.

Favourite Spectrum model:

Sinclair 128k: The raw throbbing

power hidden behind the sleek monolith like exterior... it certainly made me want to jump up on the desk and brandish a thigh bone as a weapon anyway.

The Spectrum's great because:

It was the first colour computer I owned, and at the time it was an incredible piece of technology. The possibilities were endless, the games were great, and it kick-started the whole UK games industry. I think it's fair to say that those truly were "the days".

The C64 can best be described as:

A crock of... Oh, wait... I'm working on a C64 book with Andrew Fisher... erm... I'll stay silent on this one.

You owe the Spectrum because:

It defined my childhood, and started me on the path to a career in computers.

Current Spectrum projects you're most interested in (other than yours):

Nick's YSRNRY project... That's just fantastic, and I'm envious I didn't think

of it... Not that I would have been able to execute it anywhere near as well as he has... Nor would I have stuck with it as long. In fact, he was the inspiration for the ZX Spectrum Book.

Top 3 Speccy games for an indefinite desert island secondment:

Jet Set Willy 2: I preferred this to the original. Smoother, faster, fairer, and more to explore. Kirel: A sadly underappreciated, but rather excellent puzzle game. Quazatron: As good now as it was then... and begging for a decent "in character" remake.

Emulation or The Real Thing?

I'm going to have to say emulation... It's just so much more convenient.

Your greatest Spectrum achievement would be to:

Successfully track down and restore Durrell's unreleased Deathpit to a beautifully loading txx file. Coming to a WOS near you soon.

BBC'S 25TH

British Spectrum users all have a soft spot for the BBC micro. Don't you try denying it. Playing Thrust in the maths room through a wet lunchtime might not have matched the delights of Pyjamarama, but for damned sure it was better than the shenanigans going on in the lunch hall.

Those of us who got to know the BBC a little better soon grew to love its implementation of BASIC, which celebrated its 25th birthday last July. Coinciding with this event was a new release of J G Harston's BBC BASIC (Z80) for the Spectrum. This had actually been around for a while, but as a ROM file you had to blow onto an EPROM to switch with your Speccy's 16K ROM; far too much hassle for the likes of moi. July 2006, however, saw the release of a .TAP version for loading into RAM. Harston started this project in 1985, but abandoned it when he started using up too many EPROMs. Lucky for us, then, that he discovered the joy of emulators a few years ago and decided to resume his work. Hurrah! Download it from <http://mdfs.net/Software/BBCBasic/Spectrum/>.

EMULATOR WATCH

Spectrum emulators updated in the past year (and a bit). Stay up-to-speed at: www.worldofspectrum.org/emulators.html

Warajevo (PC/DOS) to version 2.51 in 02/06
 ZX Spectr (PC/DOS) to version 3.2 in 12/06
 DSP (PC/WIN) to version 0.6 beta in 02/07
 EightyOne (PC/WIN) to version 0.43c in 12/06
 EmuZWin (PC/WIN) to version 2.7 r2.8 in 02/06
 RealSpectrum (PC/WIN) to version 0.97.36 (14b, 'Finale') in 08/06
 Speccy (PC/WIN + Symbian Series 60 cell phones) to version 1.2 in 03/07
 SpecEmu (PC/WIN) to version 2.4 in 02/07
 Spectaculator (PC/WIN) to version 6.30 in 03/07
 ZXSPIN (PC/WIN) to version 0.622 in 04/07
 UnrealSpectrum (PC/RUS) to version 0.36.2 in 03/07
 ZXMAK.NET (PC/RUS) to version 0.5 in 02/06
 Fuse (UNIX) to version 0.8.0 in 04/07
 ASp (Amiga) to version 0.88 in 01/07
 CBSpeccy (Amiga) to version 0.25b in 02/07
 ZX-Live (Amiga) to version 0.38 in 03/07
 ZXSP-OSX (Mac/OSX) to version 0.6.6.2 in 04/07
 Spectrian (Symbian Series 60 + UIQ cell phones) to version 1.60 in 02/06
 PocketSpeccy (WIN CE) to version 0.0.1b in 10/06
 ZX-Pilot (PALMOS) to version 0.6 in 08/06
 ArmZX (PALMOS) to version 1.51 in 01/07
 ZX68 (PALMOS) to version 0.3 in 05/06
 Read Play ZX (Siemens G5) in 05/06
 GP2Xpectrum (GP2X) to version 1.3 in 12/06
 SpeccyDS (Nintendo DS) to version 0.2 in 12/06
 DSPEC (Nintendo DS) to version 0.2b in 12/06
 ZZ Spectrum (JAVA) to version 2.2 in 08/06
 JZX (JAVA) in 02/06
 QAOP (JAVA) to version 0.12 in 02/06

Other key emulators:

SimCoupe (SAM Coupe emulator for DOS, Windows, Linux, BeOS, OS X, Pocket PC, QNX, Amiga and PlayStation Portable) to version 1.0 in 07/06
 VB81 (ZX81 emulator for Windows) to version XuR (XavSnap unofficial release) in 01/07

ZXF was privileged to be around to report on the emulator scene when it went through what could be viewed now as one of the most exciting periods so far in its development. This was the time during which Windows emulators really stole the torch from the DOS gang, building in feature after feature, until even the mighty RealSpectrum became eclipsed by these advancements. The 'first generation' of windows emulators, such as Z80 and ZX32 had really just been about getting the basic Speccy up and running in a window and couldn't hold a candle against the sheer range of models, drives and peripherals emulated by Ramsoft's DOS behemoth. That all ended with the next tranche of emulators, which included a number of new emulators that would see little in terms of future updates, but ended up focusing on two main applications: Jon Needle's Spectaculator and Paul Dunn (et al's) ZX SPIN, both of which grew mightily during this period.

In the 24 months since the last issue of ZXF, SPIN has continued to be developed, whilst Spectaculator has had no more releases except a small update recently (6.30) to make it fully compatible with Windows Vista and Core 2 Duo processors. Jon Needle is known to be working on a version 7, however, which will include the support for the Plus D interface he's been working on for a few years now as well as support for RZX rollback. Keep an eye on www.spectaculator.com.

So SPIN is now at version 0.622, which updates TZX support and adds in the MGT +D; barring any further bugfix updates, this is to be the last version for a while whilst Dunny ties up some loose ends with BASin and embarks on his next major project, Spec-OS (it's a PC operating system based on/inspired by the Spectrum - see our interview with Dunny for more information). The last SPIN version that ZXF covered was 0.5; check the change log with the latest release and you'll find a long list of features that's been added since then, including a boost loading tones option (to send them to a real Speccy at the other end of a 3.5 jack cable), support for the Russian Pentagon clone and its .TRD/.SCL formats, support for the DivIDE interface, the ability to record your Spectrum's screen output as one very large animated GIF file (clever), support for the handful of programs that used the 128K's MIDI port (you can direct this output to your PC's MIDI hardware on your sound card), and much more accurate "ULA snow" contention (before you ask, I have no idea).

My own favourite updates to the SPIN system, however, have to be two of the updates to the cassette system. The progress bar that shows you how far through a block you are is something I've been after for a long

time; varying it's colour according to the colour of the loading bars on screen was a nice touch. And "Tape Wobble and Hiss" emulation is nothing short of genius. And yes, by the way, it sounds exactly right. The latest version of SPIN can be grabbed from <http://homepage.ntlworld.com/paul.dunn4/ZXSpin.zip>

Mike Wynne's EightyOne is now much more than a ZX81 emulator, covering all Sinclair and Amstrad Spectrums, the complete Sinclair-Timex range, the Jupiter Ace and now Andrew Owen's Spectrum SE (which has Andrew very excited). The system now supports the ZXCf and divIDE interfaces and as of version 0.43 there is 'real disk' access for these devices, which I presume to mean you could slot a ResiDOS formatted CF card into your PC's card reader and have your emulated Speccy pick it up just like your real one would. Nice for transferring software. There is even CF support now for the Jupiter Ace. If you haven't yet experienced EightyOne, you should check it out at the earliest possible opportunity, if only for its wonderful TV screen interference emulation. If anyone ever gets round to emulating a rolling TV it'll be Mike. www.chuntey.com/eightyone/ is the official link, although Mike's website has been down for a bit; you can still pick up a copy at WoS of course (see the link in 'Emulator Watch').

The emulator of choice for Linux users, Fuse, has also had a recent update to version 0.8.0, adding emulation of the TS2068 (the Timex-Sinclair US version of the Spectrum, in a groovy, non-compatible kind of way) to an already extremely extensive range of emulated models (that includes the Timex Portugal models TC2068/48, as well as the Russian Pentagon and Scorpion clones, and the Spectrum SE). Also added in this update from Philip Kendal et al is Interface I and microdrive emulation, DivIDE support and support for RZX rollback. The Fuse core, incidentally, is to be found in a number of other emulators, including EightyOne and my favourite PocketPC emulator PocketClive. <http://fuse-emulator.sourceforge.net>

Not a Spectrum emulator, but an update that has to be mentioned also because it's just such a great piece of software, is version 1.0 (yes, sometimes they do get there) of SimCoupe the Sam Coupé emulator. SimCoupe has been compiled for a quite staggering number of platforms now and this version adds in a GUI for those platforms which don't have one native to their environment. The long list of new features also includes real disk support, although I can't seem to get this to work. www.simcoupe.org.

So where next for emulation? Visit <http://hem.passagen.se/tiletech/ace.html> and check out VACE3D. Hmmm...

1988: ROCK 'N' ROLL

Nick Humphries appears to be a guy with an ability to take something big (say, for example, the year 1988) and present its key features in a sequence of straightforward sentences. Which is my kind of reading. Reading Andrew Rolling's *The ZX Spectrum Book*, I was struck by how clearly and concisely Nick had written the introduction to each chapter/year. That he also appears to like making video documentaries of a quite astonishing quality can only be to our benefit also. We're not talking your average YouTube video fare here (which, incidentally - when it comes to reviews of ZX Spectrum games - chills me to the bone); each chapter combines well selected game-play clips with key images and messages (not forgetting, of course, the thumping eighties soundtrack). It's not a format Nick has created, of course, but all credit should go to him for recognising its potential for the telling of

the Spectrum tale, and the sheer skill with which he has implemented this idea. I don't think anyone would contradict me when I say these episodes are easily of broadcast quality.

By the time you're reading this, the 1988 chapter should be available (it's release is scheduled for today, 23 April). We've had a sneak preview of this, the year that Nick asserts represents the peak of Spectrum gaming, and can confirm that this episode is every bit as good as its predecessors. There's great use of CG graphics this time round, with an absolutely fabulous Christmas tree animation in the latter part of the chapter. The game coverage is top notch as usual and we particularly liked the section covering the release of the PC200 (and the teaser for the approach of the Sam Coupe). So that's seven chapters done now; 55 minutes of Spectrum viewing bliss. Here's to the next one.



A great year for games... a not so great year for 'Sinclair' hardware...



AND YOU ARE...?

Name: Nick Humphries

Your Spectrum claim to fame:

Getting called a sexist crawler by T'zer when a jokey letter to YS ever-so-slightly missed its mark. Years later, she emailed me telling me she loved the YS Rock'n'Roll Years, so no harm done.

First got a Spectrum in:

1985 - 48k+, bought by my father because it was cheap at Dixons. Was absolutely devastated at the time because my best friend had a C64, but I soon got over it :)

Favourite Spectrum model:

The 128k+ - the last of the true Sinclair machines, and a design classic. Only Sir Clive could make heatsinks sexy.

The Spectrum's great because:

It was a triumph of power and price, with everything the computer can do available at your fingertips, be it through BASIC or POKE'd Z80 machine code. I felt I could write anything on that machine, and often did in BASIC, and loved it in spite of its odd 48k BASIC entry system ("Twister" for your fingers), and it didn't actually *matter* if the resulting program ran slowly. It *ran* and that's all you cared about at the time. Coupled with a passionate fan-base that exists to this day, together with mainstream magazines that shared in the excitement of the era, it defined my childhood and I will cherish those memories forever.

The C64 can best be described as:

Expensive, but good when used well. Some games, like *Psycho Pigs* UXB, really do benefit from multicoloured graphics, and the SID chip music can

add alot to a game's atmosphere, but aside from that there's very little to get excited about once you scratched the surface. I tend to think of it in terms of an early PC: a base machine which offers much providing you're willing to buy extra bits and bobs to take advantage of it properly. It's a shame that its power is wasted when most of its games use the horrible blocky low-resolution mode, together with straight ports of Spectrum graphics!

You owe the Spectrum because:

Without it I wouldn't have gone into computer programming as a career. As it happens, the coding part of my career is getting smaller these days as my job concentrates more on other areas of the business, leaving me more pure coding time to do silly things in interesting ways - an enjoyable pastime started way-back-when on the humble 48k+.

Current Spectrum projects you're most interested in (other than yours):

The WoS magazine scans project is top of my list right now, not just in terms of research for the documentary, but for the warm fuzziness that comes with reading about the excitement in the industry during its first tentative steps, back when, frankly, we didn't have everything handed to us on a plate.

I'm also tracking the Sinclair/SAM related videos being made and uploaded to Google Video and YouTube very closely. Something big could come from that, and I look forward to the day someone comes along and completely overshadows my documentary! It's exciting times for a relatively young medium for retro gamers.

The free 'zine scene also interests me as they're the most obvious examples of pure passion. Whilst ZX Shed seems to have gone to ground, ZX Format was always an excellent read, and YS3 is

now back in blog form and cracking me up once more.

Top 3 Speccy games for an indefinite desert island secondment:

If I was recommending to someone else: 1) Head Over Heels, 2) Buggy Boy, 3) R-Type ...purely because HoH and R-T are the best examples of their genre, and Buggy Boy is the *largest* most varied fun driving game I know of.

And if it were me, it would be three of the largest, funniest Zenobi text adventures as I've always been meaning to get into them properly but have never had the time to dedicate to getting into them properly due to Real Life Stuff always getting in the way.

Emulation or The Real Thing?

I'd say emulation - loading from tape is no fun anymore. The effects some loaders use to display loading screens are entertaining at first, but gets old really quickly. Give me a fast TZX-loader any day :) I do miss the old joysticks, though. Oh, to only need to use a Powerplay Cruiser these days rather than the 14-button monstrosities that are required to play PC and console games these days.

Your greatest Spectrum achievement would be to:

I really am far too proud and self-congratulatory about the documentary. It's a new medium created using tools I wrote myself to tie together a lot of free tools that have come about over the past few years. I can still watch the documentary chapters over and over to this day, yet rarely do I look at the other parts of the YSRnRY website. I bore other people senseless when I describe how much joy I'm having in putting together the latest chapter, ranging from what research is in progress through to details of the animation I'm currently working on.

AND... AKTON!

Akton Films is the brainchild of Paul Ruiz, who has set up this organisation out of "the necessity to express the creativity of anxious minds [...] its objective is to shape that creativity in a series of cinematographic shorts that conjugate varied film genres with the most recent video edition and manipulation technologies."

An amateur film site, then. And one with a definite Sinclair bias, as it happens. Before you shudder at the thought of yet another YouTube Spectrum game review by paulsthebest3uk ("You die and you're dead, ok?" [I love him really]) I should point out that this is rather a different kettle of fish altogether. **The Sinclair Gate**, is described at the Akton site (<http://espectrum.speccy.org/akton/>) as "a work based on an elaborated script that conjugates the science-fiction with great myths of the computers of 8 bits." Right. Download the trailer for this mini-film and you should start to get a better feel for the sort of project being undertaken here. Real people sucked into an eight bit world, on the run from nasty Spectrum graphics - that's the sort of thing we're guessing here. And it has to be said, it does look rather exciting.

With music by the award-winning musician Aritz Villodas (check out some of his very impressive music at <http://es.geocities.com/aritzmusic/>), **The Sinclair Gate** will be a fourteen minute film in Spanish (English subtitles are planned), about eight minutes of which will be blue screen work. ZXF asked Paul to elaborate a little on his summary of the film and he replied, "A mixture of sci-fi and action, with some bits of terror. An adventure through another realities to fix one terrible menace. Everything mixed with lots of references to the classic videogames of the early years of the Spectrum." Luckily, you won't need to puzzle too long over this, because the completed film should be available very soon.



Welcome to a new world... A nightmare world... Hero person and heroine person reappraise their enjoyment of eight bit entertainment software in *The Sinclair Gate*.

REFUELLED BY RARE



It's official: the Loony's back. Just in case you weren't aware (unlikely, but you never know), Spectrum games by Ultimate have been denied for free distribution at WoS since... well, since always. Given that many of these titles are often judged to be amongst the greatest games ever produced for the Spectrum (although, IMHO, not being able to have something often seems to make it more desirable), this has caused no small amount of consternation over the years amongst the Spectrum community. There are those who bang their fists in frustration and demand that companies like Ultimate should be brought to justice for not letting us play with their stuff, and there are those who find the most perplexing thing of all to be why such an assertive fuss is being made over intellectual property when nothing seems to be being done with it. I count myself amongst the latter group.

Ultimate, of course, went on to be owned by U S Gold, went on to become Rare and ended up being bought by Microsoft (for \$377 million), who are the current owners of this label. January 2007, incidentally, marked the departure from Rare of its founders, Tim and Chris Stamper.

All of a sudden, Microsoft appear to have realised there might actually be some life in those dusty old games

they've been withholding from us all these years. And, as if by magic, we now have an 'official' Jet Pac remake.

Before you get your hopes up, the game is only available to users of the Xbox 360 (which counts me out for starters), and then only through online download (for 400 points - which, apparently, is cheap). It's a slick, colourful, high definition (apparently) affair that's received good reviews, although those truly in the know have dutifully pointed out that the 'unofficial' PC remake, **Jetpak - Solar Crisis** (available at <http://retrospec.sgn.net>) is better. If you don't have 400 points, there is also a free trial version.

What's got most Speccy fans excited, however, is that the original Spectrum game is included in the download, making this the first time you can legally acquire and electronic copy of this game. Yes - somebody at Microsoft has actually written/stolen (not my place to say which) a Spectrum emulator!

Is this the first of many Ultimate remakes? Well, the border artwork for the 'retro' version (see below) seems to indicate that Rare are certainly aware of their Spectrum heritage. An interview with the programmers on the Rare website hints that they might be working on a further Ultimate remake "that will make our fans real happy".



DO NOT DO THIS

How have the BBC celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Spectrum? By showing you how to destroy it.

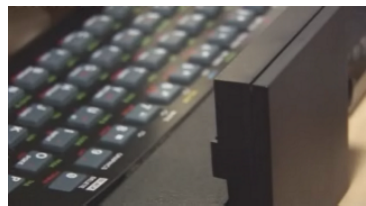
To be fair, the idea that the Spectrum 16K could be upgraded to a 48K model by plugging in a RAM pack to the edge connector is one of those myths like Kirk never saying, "beam me up Scotty," well... sort of...

To put the matter straight, it was the ZX81 that could have its memory upgraded (from 1K to 16K) using a RAM pack. As it says in the Spectrum manual:

WARNING. Do not try to use the ZX 16K RAM with the ZX Spectrum. It will not work.

The 16K Spectrum *could* be upgraded to 48K, but it required an *internal* upgrade. If you buy a Spectrum advertised on ebay "complete with 48K RAM pack," therefore, don't be surprised if it isn't working when it arrives (probably one of those "working when I last tried" it auctions).

A shame then that the BBC's video commentary this morning, showed "a 32 kilobyte memory upgrade" being attached to the back of a Spectrum.



Tut tut. In fact, ZXF thinks that the interface shown isn't even a ZX81 RAM pack - perhaps they couldn't find a Spectrum RAM pack (ie, because it doesn't exist) and used a joystick interface instead.

Not to worry; the dear old Beeb soon made up for this error in research. Later in the day a text article was added and a picture of the Spectrum (with a WoS link) graced the home page itself of bbc.co.uk, one of the most viewed websites in the world. So ok. You're forgiven.

Nice one Auntie; WoS and the Spectrum on the home page on bbc.co.uk (WoS is a bit slow at the moment as a result...)



WIN!

WIN THE PROTOTYPE ZX SPECTRUM SE!

To celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the ZX Spectrum, that very nice chap, Andrew Owen, is giving away a stack of goodies including the original ZX Spectrum SE prototype. And all you have to do to enter is write some software for it.

In order to do that you'll need a Spectrum SE emulator. Windows users should download Mike Wynne's EightyOne, Macintosh users should download Frederick Meuner's port of FUSE and Linux users should install Philip Kendall's FUSE. Naturally, all of these emulators are available from www.worldofspectrum.org/emulators.html.

The ZXSE has 272K of RAM, including 27K of integrated VRAM - that's four Speccy screen areas or two hi-colour or hi-res screen areas to you. It is also possible to mix resolutions using interrupts. And of course there's the trusty AY sound chip, available on the normal Speccy 128 and Timex 2068 ports. Full details of the ZX Spectrum SE specification are available at www.sinclairfaq.com/cssfaq/reference/se-reference.htm. You'll also find a great article about the ZXSE in ZX Shed issue two.

Categories will be chosen based on the quantity and variety of entries received. Potential categories include:

- Best overall entry
- Best BASIC entry
- Best compiled BASIC entry
- Best machine code entry
- Best action game
- Best adventure game
- Best puzzle game
- Best demo
- Best utility
- Best novelty entry

The competition will be judged by Andrew Owen, the creator of the Spectrum SE and Colin Woodcock, the editor of ZXF.

The rules are as follows:

1. Entries must make use of one or more of the additional facilities of the Spectrum SE (e.g. the additional RAM or video pages).
2. Entries must be submitted in .TAP file format.
3. Entries must be accompanied by source code.
4. By submitting an entry you grant ZXF the right to publish your entry.
5. The judges' decision is final.
6. ZXF reserves the right to vary the categories.
7. Additional prizes will be announced during the competition period.
8. The closing date is September 24th 2007.
9. All entries must be either completely original works, except where permission to reproduce other people's work has been obtained.
10. BASIC entries can be submitted in any language supported by the SE, including Sinclair BASIC and BBC Basic.

To make it even easier for you, ZXF will be publishing a web page on the ZXF website with utilities for the ZXSE to download, such as screen drivers to allow use of the additional graphics. Look out for the web page at the usual place: www.cwoodcock.co.uk/zxf
Get coding!



Above: The ZXSE prototype in a rack-mount case, using a Cherry keyboard with Kempston joystick, headphones, volume, NMI, dual CF slot, LED and PS/2 slots visible.

Those Commodore fundamentalist mutants: it's not just the Spectrum they have their greedy eyes on. Oh no.



Those pesky Commodore fundamentalist mutants. You thought our hero Izzy saw them off with his weapons-grade confectionary in *Gloop*, didn't you? Well, they're back. And this time they've plans so evil I hesitate even to speak of them.

We've all spared a thought or two every now and then to those "what would have happened if the *Loki* had been built?" sort of discussions; now consider for a moment a chilling alternative: *What would have happened if the Spectrum had never been built?* 25 years on from the pivotal moment in history that was April 1982, that's exactly what the CFMs intend to find out. Those dastardly fellows have somehow managed to get their hands on the plans for a time machine; once built, they intend to use it to prevent the Sinclair ZX Spectrum from ever being invented. Yes.

As luck would have it, Izzy is on the case once more. In the years since his last encounter with these decidedly unsavoury characters he's learned that bubble gum isn't always the most efficient method for dealing with today's brand of well-equipped bad guy and obtained himself instead a bronze certificate in magic. That's right. The spells he can now cast include 'hover' (freeze a mutant in mid-air), 'mutate' (turns mutants into, er, other mutants) 'diddums' - as in 'ahh' (increase your energy by one point), 'turnaroo' and 'speedy' (slow mutants down). Be careful, though: not all spells work on all mutants. And it's not like Izzy can just cast them straightaway, either - for each spell he first has to collect all the ingredients required for it, and even then spells can't be cast until he's also acquired plenty of 'magic points'

CRITICISM

"At first this looks like a fairly standard platformer - the sort of thing that could perhaps be put together with something like Platform Games Designer with a little bit of love. But then you start noticing and getting into all the extra bits, like the little games of *Play Your Cards Right* and the bomb code cracking sequence - stuff that you can't help think doesn't need to be there and yet it's a particularly nice touch that it is. Working out which spells you have and which will work on any particular screen is tricky, but it's this sort of detail that draws you into the game and keeps you involved in it once the initial novelty has worn off."

with which to cast them. By sheer chance, however, those clumsy CFMs have left all the ingredients you need just lying around in their secret hideaway castle whilst they work on their time machine (as we all know, baddies' Achilles' Heel is to leave lying around the place all the bits and pieces required to bring about their demise) and magic points can be accrued by picking up the playing cards also lying around in the castle (and maximised further by gambling on them).

Your magic and magic points are only there to help you along your way, however; the key to your ultimate

Producer: Cronosoft
Retail price: £2.99
Author: Jonathan Cauldwell
Web: www.cronosoft.co.uk

CRITICISM

"What I like most of all about this game is the detail, such as being able to increase your magic points by gambling on the playing cards (Bruce Forsyth, anyone?) and the bomb decoding sequence. They show the depth of thought that's gone into its creation (the C5s are a nice touch too!) When I started playing *Izzy Wizzy* I thought it was going to be easy to complete, but that apparently generous energy level you start off with soon gets dangerously low - and then you have your first bomb to arm... Great stuff."

success lies in good, old fashioned explosives. Three of the CFMs' bombs have been left - you guessed it - lying around the castle for you to find. They have in this case at least had the good sense to encrypt the bombs' arming mechanisms, however, so to arm them you have to crack a 4 digit code sequence. Despite the fact that this is a code put together by Commodore enthusiasts and therefore not likely to tax you too much, this job stresses you mightily and your energy drains whilst you do it. So be quick.

And when it's all over and the dust has settled, don't shed any tears for those CFMs. They were going to use those bombs at 25 Willis Road, you know. Just you think about that, son; just you think about that.

COMMENTS

Control keys: 2 jump/up, W change spell/down, 9 left, 0 right, M cast spell, H hold
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2
Keyboard play: good
Use of colour: bright and cheerful
Graphics: Straightforward; cheerful, smoothly animated sprites; some nice additional touches throughout
Sound: Basic spot effects
General rating: You come because it's Cauldwell, you stay because it's great.

Use of computer	80%
Graphics	75%
Playability	85%
Getting started	85%
Addictive qualities	80%
Value for money	90%
Overall	83%

TURBOMANIA

Retail price: **Free**

Author: **Jonathan Cauldwell**

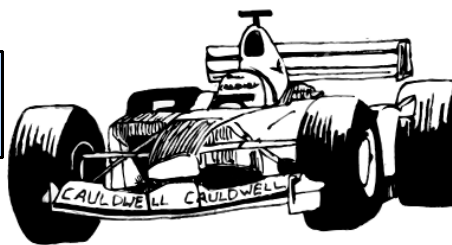
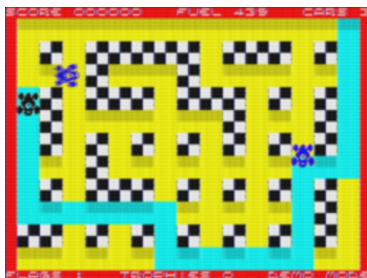
Download: <http://members.fortunecity.com/jonathan6/egghead/id7.html>

It's not easy being six times Formula Retro racing champion, Tim Wrangle. One minute you're basking in a lifestyle of burning rubber, chequered flags and spurting champagne; the next a freak hole in the fabric of space and time transports you from a carefree practice lap to a sinister parallel universe where Formula Retro is a different sport altogether. One that bears more than a passing resemblance to Pac-man, in fact...

Turbomania was a Cauldwell release in late 2005 for the 16K Spectrum (yes, you heard correctly). Your task is to drive your Formula Retro car over every inch of the track - turning it blue in the process - whilst avoiding the evil baddie cars out to get you. Along the way various treats pop up to increase your score or fuel, or to freeze the baddies still for a few seconds. Oh yes, and there's a traffic camera too - that's not a treat at all, oh no...

Of course, Cauldwell being Cauldwell, it can't be just that on its own. Clearly determined to make every last byte of that 16K work for him, there's a whole host of other bits

and pieces thrown in, making Turbomania feel a very complete title for a 16K game. At the press of a key you can reconfigure the maze, for example, so that bits previously boxed in become accessible (and you might just box in one of your pursuers too). There are also quite a number of little games you can play to get an extra life at the end; these include a symbol matching game, a traffic light reaction speed test (hit the right colour when it displays), a quick car race in the fashion of Decathlon (watch that keyboard now) and a Simon-esque 'follow the leader' memory game. Shoe-horn, anyone?



CRITICISM

● "What's this then? Pacman with cars? On first loading this seems a very simple game graphically, implying that it is a simple game in terms of play. However, after playing for a couple of times a few 'extras' are revealed both within each level and between levels. I particularly liked the latter, which provides a series of mini games within the main game, adding extra interest to the gameplay. Of the extras offered within the levels, the 'transform' button gives Turbomania an angle which other maze games lack. As hinted at earlier, fans of Pacman will like this game, though they might feel frustrated that there is no wrap-around tunnel feature. I think that could have improved playability further. Great bleepy rendition of Formula One theme though!"

● "16K, you say? 16K?? Aren't 16K games supposed to consist of three screens with a dragon at the end? How did all this fit into 16k? Ok, I suppose the mini-games by themselves can't take up all that much room; the thing is, each time you encounter a new one you're left wondering just how much there is in Turbomania you've yet to see. This is top notch stuff. Now wouldn't it be great if someone somehow could squirt it into a ROM cartridge?"

AND YOU ARE...?

Name: Jonathan Cauldwell

and weaknesses.

Your Spectrum claim to fame:

Back in the day several of my games appeared on Crash, YS and SU coverpages. I'm still developing for the Spectrum today and only the Shaw brothers have written more games for the machine.

First got a Spectrum in:

June 1984, a second hand 48K with 60 pirated games and a faulty power lead. It cost £100 and took months of saving to achieve.

Favourite Spectrum model:

The Spectrum 128K, it was everything the 48K had but with more memory and 4-channel sound.

The Spectrum's great because:

It's so simple. Everything is accessible, so it's a good machine to test your programming skills.

The C64 can best be described as:

Another great games machine of the Spectrum's era, with its own strengths

You owe the Spectrum because:

It was how I first got into programming, and led to a career developing simple video games.

Current Spectrum projects you're most interested in (other than yours):

Dunny's SpecOS sounds like an interesting project, porting Sinclair BASIC to the PC. I'd like to have a play around with that when it's finished.

Top 3 Speccy games for an indefinite desert island secondment:

Halls of the Things, Target Renegade and Chuckie Egg.

Emulation or The Real Thing?

Emulation for development, the real thing for gaming.

Your greatest Spectrum achievement would be to:

Write a game so different that people outside the retro gaming scene sit up and take notice. I doubt it'll happen though.

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable

Joystick: Kempston

Keyboard play: good

Use of colour: very good

Graphics: generally straightforward; a very nice chequered flag effect

Sound: Basic spot effects

General rating: How 16K games should have been...

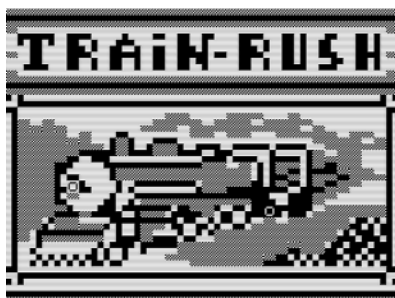
Use of computer	90%
Graphics	75%
Playability	80%
Getting started	90%
Addictive qualities	80%
Value for money	100%
Overall	86%

TRAIN RUSH

Retail price: **Free**
 Author: **XavSnap**
 Download: <http://zx81.ordi5.free.fr/>

Train Rush was the first new game of 2007 for the ZX81. In it, your job is to guide a steaming locomotive across various American routes, avoiding obstacles and making as much money as possible along the way. Make it through the first route and there's another one waiting for you. And so on. A high score awaits proclamation of your amassed fortune at the end.

You control your train with up and down keys whilst the scenery fairly rockets past - which, actually, is rather an issue: even at the slowest speed setting (and there are nine) the velocity is ridiculously extreme (heaven knows what it must be like in the dining carriage). This makes control rather difficult and death within seconds somewhat inevitable. The ZXF office isn't in possession of a real ZX81 and had to make do with emulators (EightyOne and Xav-Snap's own update to vb81); it's possible then that this is an emulation issue rather than intentional.



COMMENTS

Control keys: 6 down, 7 up
Keyboard play: poor, due to speed
Graphics: Good, with UDG support plus some great text train pictures.
General rating: A slickly presented game let down by its excessive speed.

Use of computer	80%
Graphics	85%
Playability	50%
Getting started	40%
Addictive qualities	60%
Value for money	100%
Overall	69%

ALIEN MIND

Retail price: **Free**
 Author: **André Baune**
 Download: www.zx-team.de/andre/

Alien Mind was released at the MICROFAIR in Germany last March. Your task is to get the box with the X on it onto the platform with the X on it. Sound simple? It's not.

Taking the form of a character that looks suspiciously like Horace, you can move up and down the various screens with ease. The boxes you encounter are a little better acquainted with gravity than you are, however; once pushed off

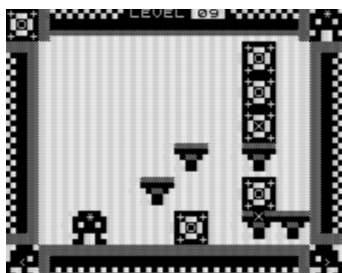
whatever's supporting them, they fall until they hit something else - a platform, another box or the ground. It's the X-Box you're after, however; there's only one per screen so once it's stuck it's stuck and you're going to have to re-load the level.

Alien Mind is a great little game that you can get addicted to very quickly. My one qualm is that being able to restart levels with no penalty makes it just a tad too easy; a fixed number of lives would have been better.

COMMENTS

Control keys: 5 left, 6 down, 7 up, 8 right, O options
Keyboard play: good
Graphics: Simple and effective.
General rating: A great little puzzler.

Use of computer	80%
Graphics	70%
Playability	92%
Getting started	85%
Addictive qualities	91%
Value for money	100%
Overall	86%

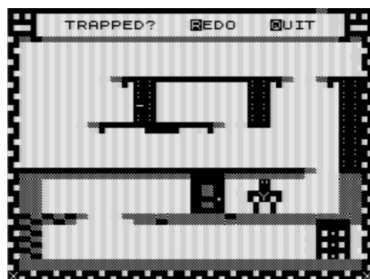


YOOGOR

Retail price: **Free**
 Author: **André Baune**
 Download: www.zx-team.de/andre/

Released at this year's MICROFAIR in Dietges, YOOGOR, André Baune's latest offering for the ZX81, stars Yoo, previously featured in two of Baune's other titles ZXOKO-BAN and IZXOLA, in his quest to find his lost shield within his castle.

Yoo's quest has also been made all the more difficult by the fact that he appears to have chosen something of a deathtrap to live in - clearly such basic household fittings as stairs were not on his tick list when first he viewed the property - as a result he must climb his way up and down between the various levels, sure in the knowledge that a careless slip will introduce his soft and potentially squishy body to the hardness of the stone below...



Guiding Yoo around the castle takes a little getting used to. To climb down from a platform you must be perfectly positioned on the edge, and since the left/right keys take don't respond instantly to your press, overcompensation can sometimes lead to that aforementioned sticky ending. The puzzles in this game, particularly those concerning the operation of the various gates, are also very tricky.

COMMENTS

Control keys: 5 left, 6 down, 7 up, 8 right (alternate version: N left, M right, 1 up, A down)
Keyboard play: a little tricky
Graphics: basic ZX81 characters, Yoo himself is nicely animated.
General rating: fiendishly difficult, but endearing all the same.

Use of computer	80%
Graphics	75%
Playability	75%
Getting started	70%
Addictive qualities	75%
Value for money	100%
Overall	79%

CANNON BUBBLE

Producer: Computer Emuzone

Retail price: Free

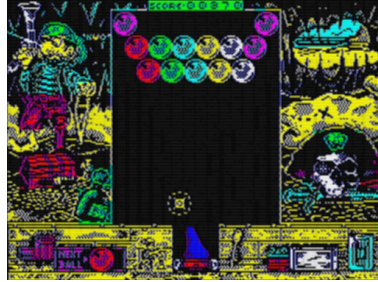
Author: CEZ Team

D/oad: cezgs.computeremuzone.com

Arrrrrrr, Jim lad! So ye wants to be a pirate, does ye? Out here on the open seas, alls ye needs is a thirst for rum, a hunger for treasure and a sharp eye in the bird's nest to spot that Depp fellar comin'. Arrrrr!

When Linux coders made their own version of Taito hit *Puzzle Bobble*, they replaced Japanese decoration with penguins and snow, and the result was the delightful *Frozen Bubble*. Now it's the turn of the Spectrum, and for this the CEZ Team have chosen a nautical theme of pirates, seamaidens and sharks. And why not?

Your task as an apprentice pirate is to acquire cannon shooting skills over 30 levels of increasing difficulty. Coming (as they do) in a range of different colours, the cannon balls must be grouped according to colour in order to be cleared from the screen - shoot a ball at a cluster of two or more balls of the same colour and they simply fall away, along with any



other balls hanging on below. Fail to clear the screen, however, and it's back to deck scrubbing for you...

Your task is aided by occasional bombs that blow up any balls in the immediate vicinity, and by skulls which wipe out across the whole screen all balls of the same colour.

If that's not enough to satisfy you, there's also a two player mode where you can go head to head against a soldier of His Majesty over three rounds, an activity which will, no doubt, find its way into plenty of drunken Friday evenings across ZX Spectrum land.

Cannon Bubble was presented at Madrix in March 2007.

CRITICISM

● "The graphics on Cannon Bubble are an absolute treat to look at... so good in fact that they can distract you from the game whilst you're playing! The music is great too. Whilst a simpler version of this game would easily have fit into a 48K Spectrum, it's these trimmings that make the end product so polished and such a delight to play. This is great stuff!"

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable

Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2

Keyboard play: good

Use of colour: excellent

Graphics: sumptuous backgrounds

Sound: some pleasing AY ditties

General rating: fantastic... as long as you liked Puzzle Bobble

Use of computer	80%
Graphics	90%
Playability	85%
Getting started	80%
Addictive qualities	75%
Value for money	100%
Overall	85%

BLIZZARD'S RIFT

Retail price: Free

Author: Jonathan Cauldwell

Download: <http://members.fortunecity.com/jonathan6/egghead/id7.html>

That lucky lucky Digby Blizzard. He's only gone and found The Hainoure, legendary lost ship of space adventurer Henri Latrine. Latrine, as we all know, disappeared whilst exploring alien tombs in a distant corner of the galaxy, chock full of riches and mystery alien goodness. Alas, none of those goodies are to be found on the wreckage of The Hainoure, however the black box flight recorder has the details of every planet Latrine visited.

Blizzard's Rift is a biiliig collect-em-up in the style of Thrust. At each of the tombs, each of which is scattered across the galaxy, you must manoeuvre your ship very carefully using your thrust and rotation controls to avoid walls, enemy fire and that age old henchman for Gravity, the ground. Contact with any of these spells instant destruction. And you've limited fuel. Each tomb has gems to collect and a teleporter to take you back to the local star sector. But be warned: leave a tomb early and you might find it empty on your return...



CRITICISM

● "This is quite a tough game, although you kind of know that's going to be the case wherever Thrust games like this are concerned. Perhaps it's because they seem in some way just that little bit more realistic than games like this appeal. After all, you never know when zero gravity piloting skills might come in handy, do you? A great game, although music would make it better."

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable

Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2

Keyboard play: the controls take some mastering

Use of colour: good

Graphics: good

Sound: spot AY effects

General rating: fiendish, but fun. A must for Thrust fans.

Use of computer	80%
Graphics	80%
Playability	75%
Getting started	60%
Addictive qualities	85%
Value for money	100%
Overall	80%

Producer: Cronosoft
Retail price: £2.99
Author: Jonathan Cauldwell
Web: www.cronosoft.co.uk

Greed is good. Greed is right. Greed, in all of its forms - greed for life, for money, for love, for knowledge, and greed for ZX Spectrum games - has marked the upward surge of humankind. Greed works.

In Jonathan Cauldwell's GameX your mission is to pursue your right to wealth through trading in no less than sixteen titles on the cut-throat Spectrum games market, buying when their value is low, selling when their value is high (please note, share prices can go down as well as up). In addition to the money you make through games that perform well, you can also accrue capital by playing games you've bought shares in (your score is converted directly to capital).

The games range from *Muncher*, a Pac-Man clone and the first of the games you encounter (you play this as soon as you start to raise some initial investment capital), to *Skatepig*, a Manic Miner style platformer with a pig on a skateboard (naturally); from *Rescue*, a Thrust style gravity basher, to *Mr. Spud*, a burger construction task also seen as a minigame in Cauldwell's recent *Egghead 4 - Egghead Entertains*. And so on. Of course, it's

CRITICISM

"One has to wonder what goes on in the mind of Jonathan Cauldwell that a pig on a skateboard should suggest itself as a natural variant of the Manic Miner theme. Pigs and pork products do seem to crop up a great deal in his games, however, and who am I to interfere with any therapeutic process he should choose to work such issues through? Personal development issues aside, GameX is sheer quality, which you realise from the moment you see the superb loading screen. How all these games - each with their own levels - have been squeezed into 48K is beyond me; each title would be a worthy 16K game in its own right. My one piece of advice would be to avoid buying into 'The Dead' - because that's the social group to which you will belong if you try to play it."

CRITICISM

"GameX is an incredible release and the best yet from Jonathan Cauldwell. The amount of mini games he's managed to cram in just 48k is incredible and priced at only £2.99 you just can't go wrong. The graphics are crisp and well detailed, sound effects are minimal but do not detract at all from the game. Gameplay is excellent on all the mini games and you'll be trying time after time to gain more shares in order to play some of the games you haven't tried yet. My one gripe is the actual shares. Stock Exchanges/shares to me are pretty boring and do not make for a good game. The idea behind the game is very good but I think the vast majority of people will be confused by some of the shares/dividends/ stock going up and down will simply just want to try as many of the games as they can. Nonetheless, this is one of the best games for the Spectrum and would also be a major Crash Smash back in the 80s. A brilliant game that you'll be playing for many months."

not all fun and sound effects: death in GameX comes in the form of the taxman (a clever pairing of life's two certainties), who catches up with you just as soon as your tax score (incremented each time you have an encounter with a nasty in any of the games) reaches 100%.

In case you're wondering, 16 into 48 goes just three times (that's right, GameX is not a multiloader), so that's 3K per game that Cauldwell's had to play with here - and that's before you take into account such factors as screen memory (that's 6K gone, for starters), the actual trading element of the game (share prices are displayed down the right hand side of the screen), the intro screen, the high score table and a whole host of other memory eaters. Cauldwell's well known for his ability to cram more into a byte than a supersized Mcburger, but here he's just getting cheeky.

COMMENTS

Control keys: 2 up, W down, 9 left, 0 right, M fire, Z buy/sell, H hold

Joystick: Kempston

Keyboard play: good

Use of colour: good

Graphics: Great sprites, smoothly animated; some simple, but effective effects (eg. burning city in Zapehall)

Sound: Spot effects

General rating: Without a doubt, Cauldwell's masterpiece. You need to play this game.

Use of computer	95%
Graphics	85%
Playability	90%
Getting started	90%
Addictive qualities	95%
Value for money	95%
Overall	92%

FARMER JACK

Producer: Cronosoft
Retail price: £2.99 cassette
Author: Bob Smith/Lee du-Caine
Web: www.cronosoft.co.uk

Business is not going well for Farmer Jack this year. His wholesome organic homebrew was a big hit in the off-licenses until a nasty competitor came along and flooded the market with cheap plonk. Thankfully the customers weren't fooled by the usual corporate sheen and Jack's sales continued to dominate the market. But the bully-boys aren't going to stop there, it seems... Peering through the curtains one evening, alerted by the fact that clanging, thrashing, mechanical sounds don't ordinarily come from his peaceful fruit allotments, Jack sees metal monsters smashing through his crops, destroying his harvest in front of him.

Each screen in **Farmer Jack in Harvest Havoc** is one of Jack's many allotments. His task is to save his crops from the merciless corporate machinery in one of two ways: he can simply trundle round in his tractor collecting up all his fruit before the monsters get to it, or he can use

the supply of boulders scattered around each screen - and a few handy bombs he has - to destroy the monsters. Just be careful to get away from the bombs before the fuse runs out, or tractor parts will be added to the spray of twisted metal left strewn all over the field come morning...



CRITICISM

● "I honestly don't understand the dreadful rating (39%) this game got given by Retro Gamer. Apparently RG editor Darran Jones downgraded the rating from the original figure awarded by the reviewer. Naturally all reviewers

have their own preferences and opinions vary, but you only have to look at this game - and listen to it - to know instantly that this scores much, much higher than that. Farmer Jack is a simple game, but what it does it does with style. The graphics are extremely pleasing to look at and the music is superb. It's the kind of game your six year old could get into, and to hell with the PSP. In fact, this is exactly the sort of game we need more of to get that generation interested in the Speccy.

Darran Jones. Tch, eh? Not one of his best editorial decisions, I fancy.

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: good
Use of colour: excellent
Graphics: very good
Sound: superb AY tunes and ditties
General rating: beautifully presented and great fun to play.

Use of computer	80%
Graphics	80%
Playability	85%
Getting started	90%
Addictive qualities	85%
Value for money	90%
Overall	85%

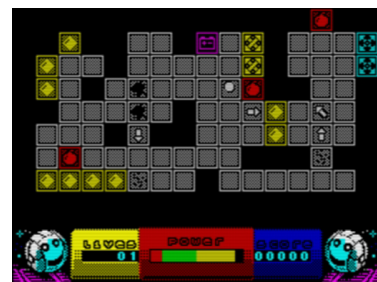
IRON SPHERE

Producer: Cronosoft
Retail price: £2.99 cassette
Author: Ian Munro
Web: www.cronosoft.co.uk

By now, mad professors really should have learned to be more wary of thunder storms. As men of science, the usefulness of a good lightning conductor where the protection of top secret laboratories and their illegal experimentation is concerned should have been disseminated long ago. Alas, the inhibition of short-term gratification for the sake of long-term benefit just doesn't seem to interest the likes of Prof. Roland Iron-Sphere. Like many others before him his laboratory's been hit by a stray lightning bolt and he now finds himself transported into his own experiment. He's only himself to blame.

In fact, Professor Iron-Sphere is now an actual iron sphere. Who would have thought a random discharge of electricity could have such a sense of irony? In order to escape from this nightmare, Rolly - as he's known to his friends - must now collect up at least one diamond from each of the screens he passes through. Once he starts rolling, by

the way, he can't stop, so if you end up falling into the inky darkness below or colliding with a bomb it's because you didn't plan ahead enough. There are all sorts of tricks on each screen to make this more complicated still, such as platforms that crumble once you've passed over them and arrows that throw you in their direction (whether it's safe to do so or not).



CRITICISM

● "Iron Sphere is a very addictive puzzle game in which you have to move around the screen to collect the diamonds. The graphics are excellent

and clear and crisp and the gameplay is very smooth but at times you will feel frustrated just as you are about to collect a diamond only to fall off the screen! Some of the puzzle games out for the Speccy have been very good and this is no exception, yet again you'll be coming back for one more go and it's well worth saving your progress in an emulator if you want to progress much further with the game. Great use of colour, very good screens with a lot of tricks and surprises, an excellent game."

COMMENTS

Control keys: O left, P right, Q up, A down, space pause
Joystick: Support unspecified
Keyboard play: once Rolly starts, he doesn't stop; quick thinking required
Use of colour: good
Graphics: Rolly would have benefited from a little more detail
Sound: basic beeper tunes
General rating: a great little puzzler.

Use of computer	70%
Graphics	70%
Playability	75%
Getting started	75%
Addictive qualities	85%
Value for money	90%
Overall	78%

ZXF LOOKS BACK OVER 25 YEARS OF ZX HISTORY

ZX WHY?

What made the Spectrum Britain's best-selling and most influential home computer?

PRICE

Of all factors, cost was probably the most important in the Spectrum's success. At under £200, the Spectrum was a genuine price breakthrough for a computer of its power, and later the cost of a 48K model would drop still further, from £179 to £125. Of course the ZX81 had also been a cheap computer, and it had sold well (without the success of the ZX81, there might never have been a Spectrum) but over the ZX81 the Spectrum had more memory, better graphics, colour graphics, sound and (I would argue) looked and felt better. The Spectrum was not just a cheap computer, therefore, it was a cheap and desirable computer.

'EDUCATIONAL'

Sinclair was keen to promote the Spectrum as a powerful educational tool. The message was heard by parents up and down the land. For those that didn't hear it direct from Sinclair, their teenagers would be only too happy to repeat it for their benefit. Of course gaming was the real reason why most of those kids wanted Spectrums; would the machine have sold so well so quickly if it had been marketed as such, however?

SPECS

It would, of course, be a mistake to claim the Spectrum represented the state of the art in computer technology for the time. It's colour clash, for example, would become derided by the users of other machines in competitive playground banter. But how many of us Spectrum wannabes even noticed colour clash before we got to know our machines? When your mate showed you Sabre Wulf on his new computer he'd just been bought for his birthday (because it was educational) were you thinking to yourself what a turn off the occasional spots of colour clash were? Well, I know I wasn't. Hi-res graphics, colour, sound and that enormous 48K memory were all you needed to know

AESTHETICS

The design of the Spectrum - by Rick Dickinson, who won a Design Council award for his design for the ZX81 - was quite unique. It looked good then and it

looks good now. Can you honestly say the same of other computers of the era? At the time they might have looked more like how we felt computers should look, but now they look just dated and, well, yellow. It would be many years before Apple 'revolutionised' the IT world in its iMac with the novel idea that what a computer looked like was important. Sinclair was there first.

GAMES

Over nine thousand of them, in fact. Amongst them titles you just *had* to have. Amongst them classics considered now to have created design principles coders continue to follow today. Manic Miner, Sabrewulf, The Hobbit, Daley Thompson's Decathlon, Knight Lore, Skool Daze, 3D Starstrike, Trashman, Elie, Fairlight, Match Day, Tau Ceti, Way of the Exploding Fist, The Great Escape, MOVIE, Exolon, Head Over Heels, Cybernoid... the list is endless (and we haven't even touched on the coin-op conversions). And they're still being made today.

Perhaps most important of all was that Spectrum games could be copied - all it took was a tape-to-tape stereo, and most of us had access to one of those. Sure, it was illegal - and we all occasionally spent time fretting over those stories about the police raiding some-teenager-somewhere's collection of C90s - but the cassette of copied games represented two important things: free software for your Speccy in the receiving and mates in the giving. At the time, these were pretty much the only boxes in a teenager's life that needed ticking.

MAGAZINES

Whichever your personal favourite was, once the Spectrum magazines transformed themselves from boring type-in anthologies to funky social commentators, a new cultural dimension was added to the whole computer ownership thing. You couldn't take your Spectrum to school, but a copy of CRASH slipped into the bag easily. On the issue of making friends, the magazines provided important information on *which* games were the most popular. Well-chosen titles and a tape-

to-tape recorder didn't just equal friends, you see; it equalled *status*.

BASIC

Instantly on power-up, the BASIC language was there waiting for you. It took just two lines of code to demonstrate to the average schoolboy what that meant and to hint at what was achievable:

```
10 PRINT "hello"  
20 GOTO 10
```

What made Sinclair BASIC special? Technically speaking, it wasn't the best on offer - its ability to loop was restricted to FOR...NEXT and GOTO, and its handling of sub-routines was even more, well, basic. Where it shone, however, was in its handling of user errors: immediate feedback via in-built syntax routines - which not only rejected incorrectly formatted statements, but also highlighted where the errors were in your code - made Spectrum BASIC very easy to learn through trial and error. And colour and sound were accessed through a small number of conceptually very straightforward commands - INK, PAPER, BRIGHT, etc (compare this, for example, to the complicated system of PEEKs POKes and CHR\$ stuff on the C64) - making graphics and music extremely accessible. Throw in a very comprehensive and readable BASIC programming manual by Vickers and Robin Bradbeer and the end result was a system very much orientated towards persuading the beginner there was a great deal that they - *they* - were able to achieve with it. The bedroom programmer was born. Once you'd mastered BASIC, the next logical step was to assembly language and the speed and power of machine code. The strength of the British game producing industry today is often attributed to the easy route into programming offered by the Spectrum.

In BASIC lies the Spectrum's legacy, and also its irony: we told our parents that a Spectrum would be good for our education, when really we wanted it for the games, but even the most die-hard gamer couldn't avoid learning just a little about BASIC; it turns out, you see, that we all got educated after all.

ZX WHEN?

Key Sinclair/Spectrum dates from the last 25 years. Much of the eighties information has been taken from Planet Sinclair (<http://www.nvg.ntnu.no/sinclair/>), where you can learn a great deal more of the finer details.

1982

- 23 April. Clive Sinclair announces the launch of the ZX Spectrum at the Earls Court Computer Show. The new machine will sell at £125 for 16K RAM and £175 for 48K; orders will be delivered in 'two weeks'.
- April. First issue of *Sinclair User* (ECC).
- May. First issue *Sinclair Programs* (ECC).
- July. Spectrums start in production after a problem with the ULA chip is resolved.
- October. Advertising Standards Authority upholds complaints against Spectrum ads due to "appalling delays" in delivery.
- Month unknown. Rick Dickinson, designer of the Spectrum, wins a British Design Council award for his ZX81 design.

1983

- January. Sinclair Research valued at £136m; N M Rothschild & Son purchase 10% of the company, making Clive £13.6m.
- February. Computer division of Sinclair Research moves into specially converted premises at 25 Willis Road, Cambridge (previously Barker & Wadsworth mineral water bottling factory).
- March. Clive Sinclair wins *Young Businessman of the Year* award.
- May. The price of the Spectrum dropped to £99.95 for the 16K model and £129.95 for the 48K model.
- June. Clive Sinclair is knighted.
- July. ZX Interface 1 and Microdrives launched (£49.95 each, but £79.95 when bought together).
- September. Interface II ROM cartridge/joystick interface launched (£19.95). Sinclair flat-screen pocket TV launched at £79.95.
- Autumn. Manic Miner, the "definitive Spectrum platform game" released by Bug-Byte Software for £5.95.

1984

- Early 1984. The software company *Imagine* goes bust, the whole thing being captured (somewhat spectacularly) by a BBC documentary.
- January. Sinclair QL launched at £399.
- January. First issue of *Your Spectrum*.
- February. First issue of *CRASH* (Newsfield).
- May. First reported delivery of a QL to a customer - returned within a week. ASA upholds complaints on QL delivery claims.
- October. Spectrum+ launches at £179.95

1985

- 10 January. C5 vehicle launched at £399.
- 20 January. Spectrum+ price dropped to £129.95, 48K Spectrum discontinued. Upgrade of Spectrum to Spectrum+ offered for £30 (and a DIY kit for £20).
- February. QL production suspended.
- March. Production faults on C5 halt production for three weeks. Unemployed teenagers hired to drive C5s around London, Manchester, Birmingham & Leeds.
- 14 April. C5 banned in Holland.
- 25 April. ASA upholds complaints on unsubstantiated claims in C5 adverts.
- April. Hoover cut C5 workforce to 12 from 100 & production from 1000/week to 100.
- 2 June. Sinclair Vehicles confirms it is looking to sell company.
- 17 June. Robert Maxwell announces rescue bid for Sinclair Research, which has

- £15m debts (but aborts in August).
- 13 August. Hoover stops C5 production.
- 24 August. QL price cut from to £199.95.
- August. Final issue of *Sinclair Programs*.
- 23 September. Spectrum 128K unveiled at Barcelona Computer Fair, result of joint venture with Investronica and Sinclair.
- 6 November. TPD Ltd (ex-Sinclair Vehicles) goes into voluntary liquidation with debts of £6.4m.

1986

- January. *Your Spectrum* relaunched as *Your Sinclair*.
- 13 February. Spectrum 128K launched in UK for £179.95.
- 7 April. Amstrad pays £5m for all rights to existing Sinclair computer products, and commits £11m for outstanding orders and work in progress.
- 3 September. First Amstrad Spectrum, the *Spectrum +2*, launched at the PCW show at Olympia. This will sell for £159.

1987

- 30 May. The industry gets its first look at the *Spectrum +3*, the first Spectrum to feature a built-in (3") disk drive. The machine is launched in the summer for £250, but soon has its price cut to £199.
- August. Sir Clive Sinclair launches his new portable computer, the Z88 at the PCW show (under the new company *Cambridge Computers Ltd*).
- August. Format magazine launches to support users of the MGT Disciple/Plus D disk interfaces (& later the SAM Coupé).

1988

- Late Autumn. The Spectrum +2A is introduced to replace Amstrad's original +2. The new machine is soon criticised for its poor compatibility with older Spectrum software.

1989

- December. Miles Gordon Technology (MGT) launch their 'spiritual successor' to the Spectrum, the SAM Coupé. The late launch means the it misses the Christmas market. A ROM problem also means replacement chips have to be sent out.
- Month unknown. The Pentagon (unofficial Spectrum clone) appears in the USSR.

1990

- June. MGT go into receivership.
- August. Alan Miles and Bruce Gordon purchase MGT's assets and form SAM Computers (SAMCo) Ltd to continue marketing the SAM Coupé.

1991

- 30 July. Z80 (Shareware Spectrum emulator for the PC) released.
- September. Newsfield in liquidation.
- November. Europress Publications buy Newsfield's assets; *CRASH* magazine returns after a month's absence.

1992

- April. Final issue of *CRASH* as Europress sell it off to Emap. The title is

- incorporated into Sinclair User.
- 15 July. SAMCo goes into liquidation.
- November. Stock from SAMCo bought by West Coast Computers; SAM Coupé re-released as SAM Elite.
- Month unknown. Scorpion (unofficial Spectrum clone) 'launched' in Russia.

1993

- April. Work starts on *Warajevo* (PC Spectrum emulator) in war-torn city of Sarajevo to distract the authors from the horrors of the Bosnian War.
- May. Final issue of Sinclair User.
- July. *Dalek Attack* the final 'commercial release' for the Spectrum goes on sale.
- September. *Your Sinclair* finishes, doing it in style with 'The Big Final Issue'.
- December. comp.sys.sinclair (CSS) news-group opens; over 200,000 posts since.

1995

- 30 November. The *World of Spectrum* website (WoS) launches.

1996

- January. First CSS Crap Games Competition launches (annual event ever since).

1997

- February. TZX ('virtual cassette') format for Spectrum emulators developed by Tomaz Kac. The name TZX was suggested by Radovan Garabik in a discussion on CSS.

1998

- April. Last issue of *Format* magazine.

1999

- July. Fuse (Unix Spectrum emulator) launched.

2000

- December. WoS Forums opens.

2001

- December. *Spectaculator* (Windows Spectrum emulator) launched.

2002

- May. ZXSpin (Windows Spectrum emulator) version 0.1a released.
- July. First issue of ZXF (yay!).
- August. First issue of *SAM Revival* magazine for the Sam Coupé.

2003

- 13 March. Cronosoft, a new commercial label for 8-bit software launches with its first Spectrum release, *Egghead in Space*.

2004

- October. *Your Sinclair* 'issue 94' published as supplement to *Retro Gamer* magazine.

2005

- August. First issue of *ZX Shed*.

ZX WHERE?

Is the Spectrum the most cloned computer in the world?

If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery then the Spectrum has plenty to blush about. It's been estimated there could easily have been as many as 100 different unofficial versions of the Spectrum made worldwide (it's been suggested there were 50 in Russia alone).

Of course there were the official versions also. These were the result of Sinclair's various partnerships with other companies, such as *Timex* in America and *Investronica* in Spain. It was with Investronica, for example, that the Spectrum 128 was developed, going on sale in Spain almost half a year before it was launched in the UK (Sinclair had a whole pile of Spectrum pluses it wanted to get rid of over the Christmas period before launching it). The Timex variant, the TS2068, with its higher resolution video mode, was more advanced still (albeit hopelessly incompatible with Spectrum software without an emulator cartridge), but Sinclair chose not to incorporate any of that technology into the Spectrum range (it's rumoured that the *Pandora* portable computer project that Sinclair was working on before the Amstrad deal in 1986 was based on some of this technology, although Amstrad dropped the project just as soon as it had hold of the Sinclair reigns). Perhaps the best of all of the official clones were the Timex *Portugal* variants of a variant - the TC2068 (note the C) and TC2048, which were based on the TS2068 hardware but re-engineered to be almost 100% compatible with existing Spectrum software. The best of all worlds, then, but we never saw them here.

Ironically, the unofficial clones also often ended up more advanced than the original hardware we were stuck with in the UK. Our Soviet friends, for example, to whom we refused to sell the machines to (because they might use them to launch a nuclear attack on us, presumably) became quite adept at smuggling Spectrums back home to the motherland. I did used to wonder what it was about the Spectrum that had appealed so much to the Eastern Europeans; apparently (I read this once and can't remember where) it was just that it was small enough to stick down your jumper. Fair enough, if it's true; imagine trying to smuggle out a Commodore 64 that way.

Once Spectrums were across the Iron Curtain, they got reverse engineered by hobbyists so that equivalent machines could be put together using the parts and components available locally. Amongst the many local variations, a few machines became notable, the most famous of which is undoubtedly the Russian *Pentagon*. The Pentagon wasn't a computer you bought in a shop, it was a design circulated amongst enthusiasts that you put together yourself. For this reason, no two Pentagons are likely to look the same, since the casing would be up to you and dependent on what you had available. But a fairly 'standard' approach was to mount the motherboard inside a PC-type case and connect a separate keyboard and monitor.

But here's the deal - the Russians didn't stop with just reverse engineering



Above: The Timex-Sinclair 2068 (I have no idea why that number) was an officially licensed Spectrum 'clone'. Software could be loaded via cartridges (see bottom) that were plugged in under that panel on the right. Below: Not much is known about the Diagra except that it's a Russian and by a company called Dynamo Computer. For what it's worth, I think it looks just fantastic (and it's probably more Spectrum compatible than the TS2068. All images this page sourced from *Planet Sinclair*.



the Spectrum, oh no; and here we see the benefits of allowing technology to 'evolve' in this way. In addition to adopting the Spectrum as their preferred platform, they also adopted a disk interface as 'standard' - the BETA disk interface developed for the Spectrum by a UK firm Technology Research Ltd, with its TR-DOS operating system. Quite why it was this system which should be chosen - which made pretty much no impact whatsoever in the UK market it was intended for - instead of more popular formats over here such as the MGT Disciple/Plus D format is probably a question which will never be answered. Nonetheless, whilst we were all still faithfully loading software into our machines via cassette, the disk drive had become in the Soviet Union a standard storage medium for Spectrum software. In the manner that is so often identified as a key characteristic of eastern European societies (and also, incidentally, of the Spectrum and its software), restriction and limitation had become the source for ingenuity and innovation.

The importance of the eastern European clones in particular to the longevity of the Spectrum cannot be underestimated. Although we are now enjoying in the UK a bit of a purple patch



for new Spectrum software, for many years following the end of the Spectrum's commercial life, releases such as this were extremely thin on the ground. In fact, it was the eastern European scene that pretty much kept Spectrum software alive, in particular through the demo scene, still vibrant in many of these countries today. If you want to see a good example of what can be achieved on a Russian machine, get hold of a copy of *Fire and Ice* (see ZXIF issue 7) and a Pentagon enabled emulator and be prepared to be blown away. **ZXIF**

WOS TOP 20

- 1 **ELITE** Firebird (1985)
- 2 **TARGET; RENEGADE** Imagine (1988)
- 3 **THE GREAT ESCAPE** Ocean (1986)
- 4 **R-TYPE** Electric Dreams (1988)
- 5 **EXOLON** Hewson (1987)
- 6 **MANIC MINER** Bug-Byte (1983)
- 7 **SABOTEUR** Durell (1986)
BOMB JACK Elite (1986)
ATIC ATAC Ultimate (1983)
- 10 **ZYNAPS** Hewson (1987)
ROBIN OF THE WOOD Odin (1985)
NETHER EARTH Argus (1987)
THE LORDS OF MIDNIGHT Beyond (1984)
HEAD OVER HEELS Ocean (1987)
BATMAN Ocean (1986)
LA ABADIA DEL CRIMEN Opera Soft (1988)
- 17 **WHERE TIME STOOD STILL** Ocean (1988)
VULCAN CCS (1987)
TURBO ESPRIT Durell (1986)
SKOOL DAZE Microsphere (1985)

These are the top twenty games and adventure games as voted for by you the public at **World Of Spectrum** (see www.worldofspectrum.org/bestgames.html) 25 years after the Spectrum's launch. Disagree with this ordering? Then get over there, find you favourite games and **vote!** Listing correct as of 23 April 2007.

ADVENTURE TOP 20

- 1 **THE WORM IN PARADISE** Level 9 (1985)
- 2 **THE PRICE OF MAGIK** Level 9 (1986)
- 3 **SNOWBALL** Level 9 (1983)
- 4 **RED MOON** Level 9 (1985)
- 5 **LORDS OF TIME** Level 9 (1983)
THE HOBBIT Melbourne House (1982)
- 7 **DUNGEON ADVENTURE** Level 9 (1983)
- 8 **THE GUILD OF THIEVES** Rainbird (1988)
- 9 **RETURN TO EDEN** Level 9 (1984)
- 10 **RE-EVOLUCION** Software Atlantico
- 11 **COLOSSAL ADVENTURE** Level 9 (1983)
THE BEAST Marlin Games (1988)
- 13 **SORDORAN'S SHADOW** Beyond (1985)
- 14 **MORDON'S QUEST** Melbourne House (1985)
- 15 **VALKYRIE 17** The Ramjam Corporation (1984)
RUNESTONE Games Workshop (1986)
- 17 **KNIGHT ORC** Rainbird (1987)
- 18 **KILLED UNTIL DEAD** US Gold (1987)
KAYLETH US Gold (1987)
- 20 **VELNOR'S LAIR** Neptune (1983)

DARE YOU JOURNEY IT?

Pathway to Adventure



FLOAREA SOARELUI

Producer: ZXIF

Price: Free

Authors: Colin Woodcock and Serban Ovidiu Morcan

Web: zxf.magazine.googlepages.com/zxf

I could hardly review my own game, could I? Luckily, Interactive Fiction enthusiast Andrew Owen was at hand to draw his sword and step into the fray. Here's his say.

Floarea Soarelui is comedy text adventure set in post-revolutionary Romania. You play Bula; the archetypal village idiot in communist-era Romanian jokes. Imagine that you have copied the TZX file to cassette and downloaded and printed the inlay, with its picture of a large sunflower on the cover. Bula would mistake the resulting product for a tub of low-fat spread.

Having scraped the toast crumbs off the inlay, you will discover that your mission is to infiltrate a small village and steal a super-car for your shadowy task-masters. Well, it says it's a super-car -- it looks suspiciously like a Triumph Herald to me. You must also discover how it was built when the village has been completely isolated for the past 20 years. You have one thing going for you -- you were born there.

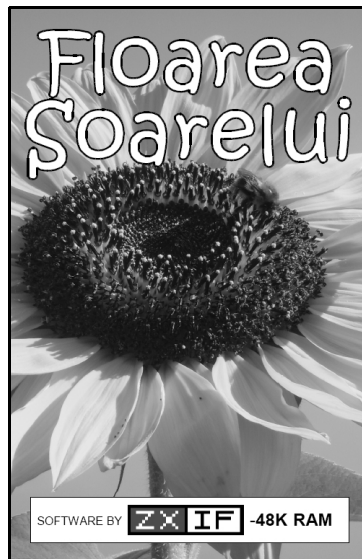
As the game commences you find yourself in an aircraft, high over the Transylvanian Alps. But not for long, as a green light comes on and someone boots you out the door. Thankfully you remember your

training and soon find yourself in a wheat field. Now it's up to you. As with all text adventures, your actions are determined by typed commands, such as NORTH, LOOK, GET, and so on, which are recognized by a parser.

I wanted to like this game. Who wants to give a bad review to a game that is clearly the product of hours of hard work without thought of reward? I was happy to ignore the urban conceit that country dwellers are stupid. I was prepared to put up with the white-on-black 32-column display that cannot be adjusted. I wasn't expecting the parser to be up to the standards set by Infocom and Magnetic Scrolls. But despite a novel concept, good characters, well thought out puzzles, and good writing, I ultimately found the game frustrating.

It may seem unfair to compare Floarea Soarelui to more recent offerings but, thanks to events like the annual IF competition, fans of the genre have come to expect more. Written in just 48K with Gilsoft's PAW, Floarea Soarelui cannot hope to compete and I suspect only hard-core Spectrum text adventure fans would be willing to put up with the game's limitations:

There are no AGAIN, OOPS or UNDO commands. There are no synonyms (you cannot READ a sign, or refer to the SHOPKEEPER as a



It's a tub of marge. No wait... it's a ZX Spectrum game

WOMAN). You cannot refer to people in the third-person. Words that are not understood elicit a blanket response, meaning that if you mistype a word you may think that an action that is in fact allowed is not possible. Objects that are present in descriptions are absent from rooms. Buildings are disconnected from the map and must be ENTERED and EXITed. Items do not subdivide (you have 10 dollars but you cannot drop one dollar). And it is not possible to produce a transcript of the game.

I managed to map out the game area and eventually located the car, but then I got stuck when it came time to pay a bill. I'm not sure how far I got as there is no SCORE command. I really wanted to finish the game and I may even continue playing it, but I really wish it had been written with something like Inform 7, rather than the aging PAW. I did try converting the game to run on WinPAW but I found that experience even more frustrating than the game itself and would advise average users to stay away from that particular tool. For the very patient, the game still has plenty to offer. For me though, the Spectrum adventure has had its day.

Copyright © Andrew Owen 28-02-07. First publication rights assigned to ZXIF.

The mayor's daughter disappears into the bedroom.

What next Bula? EXAMINE MAYORS MOTHER

She holds on to a 1,000 lei note with surprising strength for someone unconscious.

Now what Bula? GIVE DOLLARS TO MAYORS MOTHER

You push the ten dollar note into the Mayor's mother's free hand. Miraculously, she releases her grip on the 1,000 LEI note. Even unconscious, a true Romanian recognises a good exchange rate.

What now Bula? ■

PAUL DUNN TALKS TO ZXF ABOUT EMULATORS, OPERATING SYSTEMS AND TEENAGE REVELATIONS...

If the name 'Dunny' doesn't ring any bells for you, it's still a fair bet that you're running software of his on your PC. His emulator, SPIN, competes only with Spectaculator for popularity and comprehensiveness amongst Windows users (and SPIN is free), and his ZX BASIC development environment, BASin, is the sweetheart of all good Crap Games authors each year. His new project is to develop a Sinclair OS for PCs; with its heritage of innovation and dedication, this is something I'm looking forward to enormously.

[ZXF] The latest version of SPIN (0.62) was released about a week ago; amongst other tweeks, you've added in support for the MGT +D interface. Have you been working for a long time on this release?

[Dunny] Not really, no. Woody developed the +D floppy driver as a side project from TRDOS; the two controllers are very similar. The actual emulation took me about half an hour.

So this, would you say, is a fairly minor update?

Yeah, it's no big thing. Other than the new TZX decoder, that is.

You sound a little less than enthusiastic for the new TZX spec in your 'what's new' file...

Yeah, cos it should have been better, with hindsight. It looked reasonably good on paper, but implementation wasn't very straightforward. And it's very hard to run a flashloader from it.

For the less technically minded amongst us, what are the main benefits for an update to the TZX format?

We can now encode pretty much any loading scheme out there, there were a couple that couldn't be stored as .tzx, so an update had to be made.

Previously, that would have been probably a new block added in as a special case, but instead we got a general purpose data block - which is all well and good, but could well be abused easily.

In what sense?

As it can store any loader at all, it might be used often, and in that case flashloading and other tape tricks would be incompatible - at least, without a significant rewrite, which is something I'm personally no longer willing to do - as you probably already know.

I followed about two pages of the TZX update thread before giving up with a headache...

You're not the only one.

Am I right in thinking that the new format will also cover ZX81 files?

It should do, yes; it was designed with those in mind, if I recall correctly. Mike Wynne would know more about that than I do.

And other computers too?

Yes, I think so. The Amstrad, obviously (the CDT format is pretty much the same as the TZX format) and I think the C64 could be done with it too, but couldn't swear to it.

The new TZX format adds these

machines to the range of tapes that could be archived using it or improves existing emulation?

I think it adds the ability to describe any format that involves beeps on a tape. It won't work for variable volume pulses, but anything else should store well.

So it's a fairly major step forward, then. Have emulator authors for other machines been involved in this work or is this something that's been developed purely within the Spectrum scene?

It's been done by the Sinclair scene, I think - the ZX81 scene is pretty separate from the Speccy, but they all congregate in comp. sys.sinclair, and as Mike Wynne is in both camps, he's had a lot of input.

So this is something which other machines might pick up in the future?

They might, yes, but the C64 camp have never been interested in the TZX format, even when it explicitly supported C64 blocks.

I have to confess, I don't know a lot about the organisation of other scenes for other machines... I don't know if they're quite as anal about tape preservation as we are.

I dunno about that. The Amstrad scene adopted it and renamed it... The C64 scene appears at first glance to be about the experience of the machine, rather than preserving the software.

I think also the prevalence of disk drives amongst C64 users has 'demoted' tape in it's relative importance... They don't view it in quite the same misty-eyed way that we do.

Oh yes, that's certainly true.

You've been developing for the Spectrum for several years now. I still remember the joy I experienced when I got SCREEN\$, your Spectrum screens screen saver, running on my PC a long time ago. People then used to comment that they could hear the games load in even though there was no sound. Do you still get feedback from that application?

Not any more, no. I was going to extend it to include speedlocks and other loaders, but I lost the source in a HDD crash so haven't really done anything with it.

Do you use SCREEN\$?

Yeah - it's the default screensaver on

my son's user settings. I don't use a screensaver, as it just tends to get in the way.

Is your son a Spectrum fan?

Yeah, he is. He started off with JSW/MM and has gone from there. He makes his own levels for JSW and codes a little in BASin.

I was going to ask if he'd learned any BASIC yet...

He has - about enough for him to get a leg up into Oblivion scripting and Morrowind too, his 2nd favourite game at the moment.

When I look back on my ZX Youth, it's learning BASIC that was probably the greatest thing I got out of owning a Spectrum. Of course I enjoyed the games too, but it's surprising how far a little knowledge of BASIC can go.

Yeah, being able to actually mess around with the machine was fun, especially as it was quite a lot harder to do on the other machines of the time (or at least do anything good with it). The recent Cybernoid editor proves that speccy BASIC is the mutt's.

What is the 'highlight' of your own Spectrum memories?

Ooh... I think the first time I typed in a type-in, and it worked... and then finding that my "improvements" also worked. Also, figuring out what a fantastic command "LET A=A+1" is - that was a real revelation.

Talk us through that revelation

Oooh... well, I was about at the level of comfortable with PRINT and I had a good idea how loops worked, with FOR .. NEXT; but getting something to move under your control was impossible with what I knew. A friend at school said, "you need to use a variable, mate," and then showed me what the LET <var>=<var>+1 actually did - a variable was modified to add one to itself, which seemed like magic. From there followed an understanding of the ways to use logic and variables, and from that point I learned much faster. I've since had similar "ahhhhh!" moments on the PC, but they don't beat the way that one felt.

It almost seems impossible to believe these days that such playground conversations ever took place.

Oh yes, programming was very, very big at my school. I couldn't imagine it now, with the way that coding is done now; it was all so much more personal then.

Did you have the Spectrum versus

C64 thing going there too?

Not to the extent we see now, with the flamewar and all. Our school had BBCs, C64s, Speccy 128s and RM Nimbus machines available to code on (if you were a 6th former, that is, for the bigger RMs), so we had people programming on all of them at lunch time, so everyone learnt what was possible on each machine. We did squabble occasionally though.

I see what you mean about coding being 'personal'... is this something you're trying to re-capture with BASin?

I suppose so, yes. It was when I was younger, coding in BASIC; I'd just learnt what "machine code" as it was called then was and the amazing speed you could get with it, but it was way above my head at the time. Tried it, didn't like it. So I used to imagine a machine with a fast enough processor that you could code BASIC, and get the performance of the speccy as it was in machine code, if you see what I mean. I honestly believed that CPUs would get that fast

When did you have this idea?

Ooh, probably some time I was trying to write a fast game in BASIC, so, likely around 14 years old. So with BASin I decided that I probably had enough CPU power to do it - a 1.7GHz PC should surely be able to do BASIC as fast as M/C was back then. So I built BASin, as an emulator and then hooked into the ROM to add in the editor. Before popular demand slowed it down to real Speccy speed, it was designed to run as fast as possible - as it turns out, even my PC could only manage about 25 times the speed of the old 3.54MHz CPU, which is nowhere near fast enough. So it got turned into a development environment instead. But it's done well, so I'm happy

I'm not embarrassed to say I love BASin; I've already written a game for it (for Cronosoft's Cassette 50 project) that I could not have managed if it weren't for BASin. I get the impression from the forums that it is used quite a bit.

It seems to be, yes. I get emails about it still - mostly bug reports, but they're few and far between now.

Are you pleased with the feedback you've had on this project? It sounds like it started out as quite a personal app.

Yeah, I'm very pleased. I've had a teacher email me to tell me that his school children are using it to learn the first steps of coding on - and these are all primary school infants.

Oh that's a fantastic outcome.

Yep. It seems to be best for the very young now, as the expectations of teenagers is probably a bit higher than even most compiled BASICs can achieve, apart from BlitzBASIC which seems to have a massive following.

The latest release of SPIN is to be the last in a while?

Yes, I'm afraid so, and the upcoming release of BASin similarly will be the last. ZXSpin emulates pretty much every piece of popular hardware and some obscure stuff too. And it emulates very, very accurately.

As long as you implement that beeper editor in BASin...

We'll see about that... I've been meaning to finish it for a long time now,

but I have other plans.

And this is all to make way for your new project?

Yep, you've probably seen the first screenshot [see below]. That is the result of a *lot* of hard work, surprisingly enough.

Is that a Toshiba there?

Nope, a Panasonic CF-41 mark 1, 486 DX/2 50 Mhz, barely runs windows 95, but is a perfect test bed for the new project.

I have a Pentium laptop gathering dust under this desk that I've been loathe to throw out... Would that do?

That will run it (hopefully) like a dream. If you recall my earlier statement about a fast Spectrum - this is it.

And this is an actual PC operating system?

Yes. You *could* replace Windows with it, but I'd not recommend that.

So... given that my old laptop already boots up straight into RealSpectrum... how will your system be better?

LOL. It's not a spectrum. This has higher screen resolution, more colours and an improved BASIC which has no emulation layer between it (the "ROM") and the CPU.

Based, presumably, on Sinclair BASIC?

Yes. Every command that isn't rendered useless by the hardware will be in there. Same sinclair font, same initial 16 colours etc

What sort of access to peripheral devices will be possible? I mean, for example, the hard disk.

Yes to that one, and the floppy; but disk access will be a ways off yet.

Do you mean by that accessing Spectrum formatted disks?

No, probably not. These will either be a custom file format for the OS or FAT formatted disks, which would be better, I think.

So initially, saving and loading will be restricted to the hard disk?

Yes. It will be open source GPL,

though - so any features that people really want... they can add themselves.

How will files be transferred to the hard disk in the first place?

I expect that I'll have to build an installer program in the OS itself, it will be distributed as a floppy disk image which you write to a blank disk and then boot from. Currently the boot process is about 2 and a half seconds, but that's because it's not actually doing anything yet.

The system will load standard Speccy software?

Again, no. The CPU is different, so no machine code routines. The display is different, so Speccy BASIC programs won't work without modification. BEEP will probably work fine though.

Ahh, I understand... so we would need someone to write a Spectrum emulator for the new system!

That's what the SPECTRUM command will be for. It would probably be quite easy to build a very simple emulation for old Speccy software in .TZX or .TAP format. SPECTRUM Cybernoid.sna MODE 48k would be ok.


So the emphasis here is on building a system you can do things with rather than something which is compatible with all existing spectrum software (for which you could use an emulator)?

Yes, exactly. This is for me, mostly, to be a spectrum that ran at the speed of the ROM on a GHz rated PC so I could do, what would have taken m/c, complex graphics etc in BASIC.

Any idea as to when a beta will become available?

Probably halfway through summer, but you know what my release projections are like!

Final question - one that I've been asking a number of people this issue - what would your greatest spectrum achievement be?

Hmm... on the speccy, it would have to be completing Cybernoid twice in a row. About the speccy, it's SCREEN\$ - cos that was all faked, not a bit of it emulated. 

The Sinclair OS booting up on Dunny's 486 laptop. The platform will expand on the existing capabilities of the Spectrum, focusing on an immediately accessible, fast-running BASIC language.





This stunning image is 'Monique', winner of the Graphics Competition of the Forever 7 Party in Slovakia. To look at it here (TV screenshot) it's hard to believe it's a Spectrum screen.



'Kidsoft' came second in the Chaos Constructions 2004 Graphics competition (St. Petersburg, Russia). It's by Kasik.



'Love Lust Sex' came third in the Forever 8 Graphics competition It's by the UK's own Raww Arse.

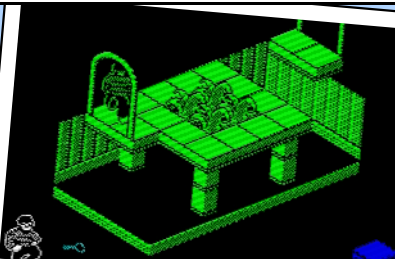
'Evil Genius' was the winner at the UK's Raww.Orgy 2007 graphics competition. It's by K-0s/RA



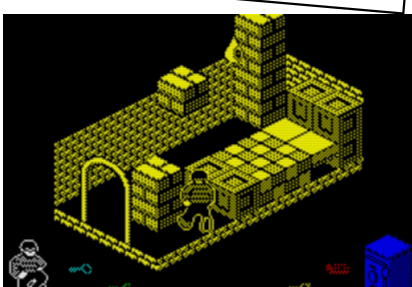
J·U·S·T·I·N

ZXFAVE!

The owner thought surrounding that key with toxic plants was good security? Shouldn't have left that movable block there then...



One step forward and you'll fall between the cracks, just like your granny warned you...



You can't see the top of that tall column, but there's something important for you up there...

Justin's finally hit the motherload... or has he? Slipping silently across the moonlit lawn, the mansion appears to ooze money. Unfortunately for Justin, the owner's discovered the benefits of exotic plants and creatures as an effective security system. Poisonous plants and creatures, that is...

Justin is a tribute to 1988 Spanish Dinamic release *Dustin* (which was also translated and released in the UK as a YS covetape, although at the 'Play again?' prompt the translators forgot that the English for *si* is yes and you had to press 'S' to continue...) and other unspecified titles. It's a beautifully presented 3D isometric game (and we haven't seen any of those for a while) in which your mission is to locate and blast open the four safes of the mansion and feast on the gold within. Justin was originally written for the Amstrad CPC and this is a Spectrum port, with graphics by Radastan.

Inside the mansion, Justin must avoid the venomous imports and patrolling guards, and solve a variety of puzzles left for him in order to get around the mansion and locate door keys, the safes and the TNT he needs to crack them open. And he has just one hour to do it in. As he moves furtively around the mansion, the

clock at the bottom of the screen ticks away...

To find the various bits and pieces he needs, Justin often finds himself having to use the blocks he encounters in rooms to serve his purpose. Some blocks can be moved by pushing them, some disintegrate when Justin stands on them (but they'll hang around for the few split seconds necessary for you to launch yourself back off them towards the next one, so they do have some use). In one room, a guard walks round in circles carrying a block on his head and that's pretty much all you have to work with. Getting the timing right on your jumps is occasionally very, very important; Justin has the rather handy skill of being able to change direction whilst he flies through the air mid-jump (that's the criminal mind, you see - no respect for the laws of motion). You will need to use this skill on a number of screens if you're going to progress to the next one.

With all those meanies floating around whilst you're trying to achieve pixel-perfect precision jumping, you could be forgiven for finding Winston just a tad on the hard side. Luckily a cheat exists, (thanks to 'goodboy' at WoS for pointing it out): enter GOODY at the define keys menu and you get infinite lives.

CRITICISM

"Justin is a pretty game to look at when you first load it in. All those old memories of the excitement 3D isometric caused when it first came to the market come flooding back, and it *is* impressive that someone's sat down and taken the time to bring the genre back to the Spectrum... But I'm afraid to say, the enthusiasm died quickly for me once I started to play. The task at the start is to collect keys to gain access to the rest of the mansion... I played this over and over, and each time died a quick, merciless death. The combination of nasties with seemingly random movement and the deadly plants you have to manoeuvre around got me every time; after half an hour of this I found I just didn't want to try any more. To be fair, I never was much of a whizz at 3D isometric, so a fan might wonder what on earth I'm whining on about. It is an extremely well-presented game and I don't feel good about criticising it... perhaps a more easy first stage might encourage lightweights like myself to have played on a little longer."

Retail price: Free

Author: CNGSOFT/Radastan

Web: <http://cpce.emuunlim.com/>

CRITICISM

"First the criticisms: Justin is a hard game, made harder in places by occasional incidences of what are either bugs in the programming or intentional cheating bastness. The first spider you encounter moves straight through the plant in the middle of the room, for example, and there's a green room with a raised platform around deadly plants where, inexplicably, you fall between the first two squares. If someone hadn't posted an infinite lives cheat on WoS a few days after the game was initially posted I think I would have ended up screaming at this game. The drawing of Justin seems a little at odds with the isometric perspective and I miss the tick-tock footsteps of the Ultimate classics. But never mind any of that; this is a great game that matches the scope of any of the 3D games of the eighties. The graphics are an absolute treat and there are plenty of puzzles between those screens where a pixel in the wrong direction means death. So there you have it: ZX Spectrum isometric games still being written in the 21st century; talk about fantastic."

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: a little difficult
Use of colour: monochrome
Graphics: very good
Sound: spot effects in-game; a rather frantic little AY tune
General rating: a great 3D isometric puzzler, a little hard to get into - you need the poke

Use of computer	95%
Graphics	95%
Playability	80%
Getting started	75%
Addictive qualities	90%
Value for money	100%
Overall	90%

PREVIEW

Coming soon to a
Spectrum near you!

THE RETURN OF EADWIG ADDLETHORPE



Last time we saw Eadwig Addlethorpe he was having trouble rounding up his pigs for slaughter. Now that the pig breeding season's finished, however, he has time to spend on his hobby of tulip gardening. Sounds straightforward so far? We're not even started.

In **Quantum Gardening**, a work-in-progress by Jonathan Cauldwell, we learn that Eadwig's discovered how to manipulate quantum realities as a gardening strategy. Put that in your pipe and smoke it, Titchmarsh (or don't, as the quantum case might be). The various realities available to him are presented as a board game surrounding the main screen and he can choose which one he wants to enter through dice that fall onto the screen. Oh yes, and he's being pursued in the meantime by last year's crop of borlotti beans and deadly giant bees.

Proof if proof were needed that Jonathan exists in a different reality already. But we knew that anyway, didn't we?

THE RETURN OF JOFFA SMITH

The Spectrum community has gone and got itself all excited by the return of a legend to his ZX coding roots. Jonathan (Joffa) Smith is best known for his work on such games as Green Beret, Cobra, Batman the Caped Crusader, Daley Thompson's Supertest, Mikie and Hypersports. All of them heavyweight titles from the eighties, from perhaps the biggest producer of them all during that period, **Ocean**. Following his work on the Spectrum, Joffa went on to develop titles for the 16 bits, such as the SEGA

Megadrive, the SNES and the Atari ST. He's also - and this is *really* cool - contributed to the whirly computer screen animations that played in the background aboard *Rew Dwarf* for series II and III.

But now he's coding for the Spectrum again and **Saucer**, a game he plans to release soon as part of the 25th birthday celebrations, is shaping up to look like an absolute treat. The most recent demo available was released in January, and nothing's been heard about the game's development since. Although it really is quite an early demo (so far as I can't tell,

you can't even die in it yet - and I'm usually pretty good at working that out), the quality smacks you in the face all the same, just as soon as you load it up. The animation and the responsiveness are quite superb - it has the *feel* of a 1980s £9.95 title, if you know what I mean - and I was quite happy to just sit there firing away at everything on screen for the hell of it. Definitely one to look forward to. And what an amazing talent, to be able to come back to this after so many years and knock out code such as this.

Got me a bomb...



Got me some wheels...



