



FREEZE64

- THE WORLD'S PREMIER GAMING 'ZINE FOR THE COMMODORE 64 -

THE
C64
IN 2021



EXCLUSIVE FREEZE64 INTERVIEW!

ANDREW BAILEY

chats with FREEZE64 about the making of *Druid* for Firebird Software, and also discusses a few more of his Commodore 64 releases.

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

- ▶ TOXIC FRENZY: DIARY OF A GAME BY JASON OAKLEY
- ▶ MINI GAME REVIEW OF NEPTUNE LANDER ELITE
- ▶ OUR JULIAN ZZAPSBACK TO ZZAP!64 ISSUE 24 – APRIL '87
- ▶ THE MAKING OF SNARE WITH ROB STEVENS
- ▶ CHRIS STANLEY TAKES US THROUGH HIS C64 HEAVEN



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FREEZE64
ISSUE #42
JAN'2021

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▷ LOADING...



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ISSUE 1

3

EXCLUSIVE
INTERVIEWS

25

SCREENSHOTS

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COUNT

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“I first got in to programming when a friend got a Sinclair ZX81 and we started by typing in games from magazines and then modifying them.”

ANDREW BAILEY
C64 Programmer



FREEZE64

FOUND ISSUE 42

IT'S 2021 AND THE C64 IS STILL HERE!

And FREEZE64 is also here to support our beloved machine and its followers with yet another issue of your favourite Commodore 64 fanzine...

So what do we have for you? Well – first up you'll notice that our cover feature game for this issue is the fab Firebird game **Druid**. We'll load up the game and remind ourselves of why ZZAP!64 scored it 88%, and then we'll take a quick peak at some of the elements that go to make up this fine game.

Andrew Bailey pops in for a chat about his time programming *Druid* for the Commodore 64. He also discusses the making of a couple of other Firebird titles that he created.

My good friend **Rob Stevens** is back for another chat! This time round he reveals the process to the making of his *Thalamus* hit, *Snare*, which he programmed back in 1989. But that's not all we have from Rob...

We also share the journey that Rob and I went through to discovering his first ever game for the Commodore 64, which was never released! **Discovering Trooper** reminds us just how much undiscovered C64 content is still out there!

WE DON'T DO REVIEWS is back with a mini review of a game that not only do we award a *FREEZE64 SIZZLER*, but it is also our *FREEZE64 GAME OF THE YEAR 2020*. **Neptune Lander Elite** gets put through the mill and comes out smelling of roses.

If it's new and exclusive POKES 'n' CODES you're looking for, then you've come to the right place because we have a collection of sweet cheats for *Neptune Lander Elite* and also *Showdown* – both recent C64 releases.

DIARY OF A GAME is back with a short series on the making of our very own **TOXIC FRENZY**, which we released on Christmas Eve. A big THANKS to *Jason Oakley* for creating the game and for also sharing the development process with us all.

And finally – the lovely **Julian Rignall** ZZAPSBACK to April '87; Secret Squirrel shares two new case files; and **Chris Stanley** pops in to share his *MY C64 HEAVEN* collection.

Enjoy the new issue and see you in #43.

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WOW! This looks like a DEMON of an issue!

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So don't even think about it!

FREEZE64

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DRUID

ENTER INTO THE MAGICAL WORLD OF DRUID.

Back in the early eighties, Firebird Software were renowned for publishing C64 titles via their 199 budget range; but as we hit the middle of this software defining decade, the games became a little more serious, and depth and quality were injected into each new release, which in turn demanded a higher price...

One of those more expensive titles (more than £1.99) was Druid, an arcade Gauntlet-style, multi-level, fantasy themed game that was sold on cassette for a whopping £7.95 – a few weeks' worth of a spotty teenager's pocket money. The game was released in the autumn of 1986 after programmer Andrew Bailey impressively took only 5 weeks to produce the game for the Commodore 64.

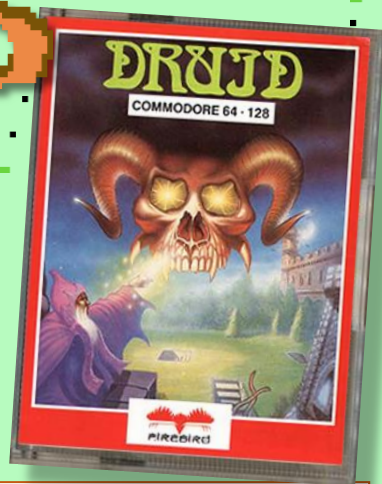
WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

Up until now, Belorn has been a peaceful land with a balance of power maintained throughout. That is until four demon princes appear through an inter-dimensional gateway in the dungeons of the evil Acamantor and rein havoc on the peaceful people of Belorn.

The task of destroying the evil princes and closing the gateway has fallen on you, the last of the Great Druids.

The evil princes are lurking in the darkest depths of the dungeon, and can only be destroyed by your most powerful spell, which must be transmitted by touch.

Throughout the dungeon, you will find spells of formidable power hidden within chests. These spells will aid you in your quest and also revitalise your life essence. Use these resources wisely against the constant advancing army of nasties.



GAME PROFILE

NAME: DRUID

PUBLISHER: Firebird **YEAR:** 1986

TEAM: Andrew Bailey, Dene Carter,
Bob Stevenson, David Hanlon

OUR GAME RATING: 9/10

*"A great 2-player game and a real
'fix' for Gauntlet junkies."*

ZZAP!64 – 88% - Oct 1986



THE TITLES

It's not often that I separate out the title sequence of a game from the main feature, but *Druid* possess something a little more than just a plain, old title screen...

First up, an animation ident sequence opens the titles, and then up pops a standard credits screen along with a few sprites and the title *SID* tune by David Hanlon. After a few seconds, a TOP DRUIDS (AKA highscores) list is displayed with all the names being 'APPRENTICE'. You're then treated to a DEMON SERVANTS screen, which displays and animates all the enemy sprites and their names – a cracking idea.



And finally, a Druid bitmap image is displayed, which has a small animated sprite of the enemy laughing – well I think he's laughing!



It's a cracking title sequence and a great use of the C64's memory, which would probably have been left blank – what a waste that would have been!

PLAYING THE GAME

The action starts pretty quickly with your druid being placed deep within a forest and surrounded by trees and foliage that block your path and forces you in various directions. Movement is achieved with either keys or the joystick pushed in any of the 8 directions, with the lower part of the screen suitably scrolling as you move.

But chaos comes pretty quickly in the form of advancing ghosts who are intent on draining your life energy, which is indicated in the display panel at the top part of the screen.

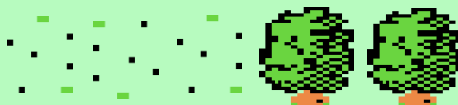
Fear not, because help is at hand in the form of a three missile spells: *water, fire, and lightning* – all displayed in the dashboard at the top of the screen.



Frantically tapping the FIRE-BUTTON will dispense one of your deadly spells, which you can cycle through with a press of 'P' on your Commodore 64's keyboard.

You don't always have to take a violent stance against the enemy because a passive retreat behind the foliage can also provide you with salvation. Oh – and don't think that walking into water is going to help as, for some reason, it will quickly drain your energy!

At certain points on the map you'll stumble on wooden chests that offer you a top-up on your spells along with more powerful items such as keys, invisibility, Golem, and chaos.



The **invisibility** spell can be cast using the '-' key on the keyboard, which partially turns the druid invisible, allowing you to pass by the enemy creatures without them chasing you down. But be warned as the spell only lasts around 10 seconds.



If you do decide to grab a **chaos** spell, once acquired it can be cast by pressing the CLR/HOME key on the keyboard and will send out a deadly smart bomb affect, killing all enemies currently on the screen.

And finally, there's the **Golem**, which, if you're indulging in a 2-player game, becomes the second player and supports you on your quests. For the purpose of this review, I was only able to play a 1-player game and so the Golem is automatically controlled by the computer and can be activated with the 'E' key. Once on screen, you can tap the C key to cycle through the three commands: *WAIT*, *FOLLOW* or *SEND*, which help to control the Golem and support you on your quest.

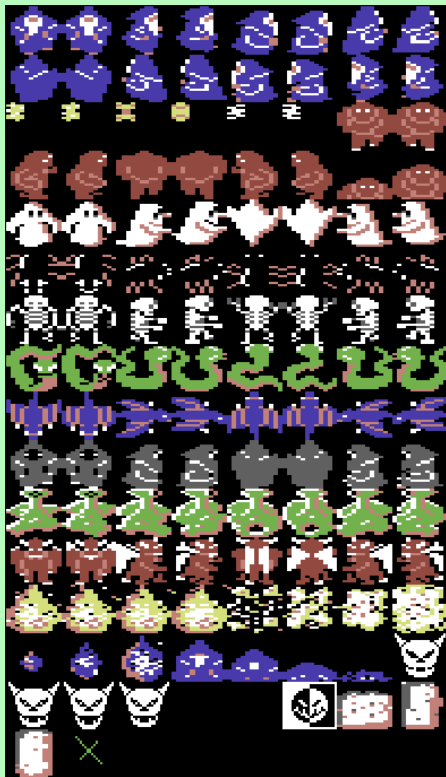
Completing the first level requires you to collect as many items as possible, defeat the enemy in your path, make your way over the bridge, and head to the stairs in the far-most bottom-right of the game map, where you will automatically enter level 2.



GLANCING AT THE CODE

SPRITES

The beautifully designed sprites by Dene Carter sit within memory location \$5400 - \$7280. There are 122 sprites with most of them being multicolour, and a handful being single coloured sprites.



QUICK CHEAT: INFINITE LIVES - POKE 34068, 173

CHARACTER SET/TILES

The game's character set that makes up the game screen sits in \$4000-\$4FFF.

SID TUNES / MUSIC / SFX

The SID tune by David Hanlon sits within \$C120 - \$C91C. Unfortunately there is only one tune. David also produced the music for the second outing of Druid, The Enlightenment.



VINNY'S FINAL THOUGHTS...

My first ever encounter of Druid on the Commodore 64 was when my neighbour (*now a FREEZE64 subscriber – thanks Russ*) purchased the original on tape and popped straight round my house to play it on my machine. Admittedly, I wasn't blown away by Druid, and it took me a few weeks to really get into the game – coming back to it every couple of days.

Playing the game today, I was highly impressed within seconds of seeing the title screen and then having my first proper play of it after 30 odd years. I had forgotten how playable and enjoyable the game actually is – and in just 1-player mode. I then remembered how much fun a 2-player game was back in the day.



DAN'S THOUGHTS...

FREEZE64 subscriber, C64 tinkerer and breadbin repair man Dan Tootill shares his views and wisdom on Druid...

I hardly have any memories of Druid apart from the game-over screen with the little tune and chomping skull - I remember seeing that many times. I can't have played it for long enough to get a feel for what it was all about, so I was curious to pick it up again after all this time...

Druid might look like Gauntlet or a better-looking adaptation of Cavelon, but there is more to it than that. There are strategic elements to the game such as choosing which item to take from a chest, or the right moment to unleash one of the druid's special powers. The background graphics are detailed and varied enough so it feels less like wandering around the same dungeon for eternity. Druid boasts an amazing loading screen, multiple title screens and a catchy hoedown of an intro theme to set the tone. The sound effects may be basic and have an air of Atari VCS about them, but this doesn't spoil anything. The characters are all single sprites, but they are well drawn, nicely animated and are effectively used.

The presentation throughout is spot on; beautifully drawn and designed backgrounds; fun, chunky and colourful sprites; and an organised dashboard.

If I was to fault anything about the game, it would be its small area of play, which is only half of the screen.

Although Druid looks like Gauntlet, plays like Gauntlet, and well, let's be honest here, is really Gauntlet, it's still a far more superior play than U.S. Gold's version. If I had the choice of playing either of the two, I'd always opt for Druid – every time... though I'd still load up Gauntlet now and again just for the nostalgia.

If you've never played Druid, then TODAY is the day to load it up on your Commodore 64 and get immersed in arcade fantasy.

Despite finding 8-bit games easier to play than I remember, I found the difficulty level just a tad too high. There is a lot of scope for instant death, with enemy sprites respawning incessantly and the need to reach for the keyboard throughout gameplay to cast a spell. Taking my eyes off the screen and one hand off the joystick to invoke a spell all too often left me open to attack, as did the pixel-perfect positioning required to open a door or replenish energy. I uttered a few 'incantations' of my own, as I looked up from the keyboard and noticed how dead I was. Perhaps this is one of those games that might be more playable on TheC64 or RetroArch than a real C64, since both give you the option to map keypresses to joystick buttons.

It's fairly addictive and I still found myself going back to it a few times to see how much further I could get.



Dan Tootill



THE MOULDY CUPBOARD

► SAVING SUPA CATCHA TROOPA FROM THE DEEP, DARK CUPBOARD!

I'm sure, by now, you're starting to get the idea that the Mouldy Cupboard is actually a bottomless pit that contains an infinite amount of quirky Commodore 64 games...

One of those titles plucked out this time round is from a not-so-well-known software publisher by the name of Abrasco. Those of you who know me well will know that one of my favourite C64 games – purely for nostalgic reasons – is *Sam's Jam*, which is also by Abrasco. The thing is, I have played *Sam's Jam* to death, but I don't ever recall playing **Supa Catcha Troopa**, and so I am not holding my breath on this one...

Released way back in 1983 by Abrasco Ltd, *Supa Catcha Troopa* was programmed by *J. Budd*. Not much is known about the programmer, and it appears that this was his first and only C64 title.

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

To be honest with you, there's not much to go by on the cassette inlay:

You are their only hope as they parachute down relying on you to save them from the perils of the sea. Catch them in your boat or throw a net overboard so that they can clamber to safety.

Be quick for they jump in pairs, sometimes in threes, in the hope that safety in numbers will buy them time. Should you miss them, they will try to swim to safety, but beware because the shark could catch them.

Look out for the pterodactyls as they swoop in with an ear-piercing screech and pluck one of your men out of the boat.

• *Their lives depend on you. Don't let them down.*



Judging by the minimal instructions, it looks as if this is going to be an arcade style game. Let's load it up and take a look...

LOADING...

Ah – after a minute or so it becomes evident why the instructions are so short; there are more instructions provided during loading...



The aim of the game can be summed up in the first line of instructions, which reads: "USE YOUR JOYSTICK AND ROW THE BOAT TO CATCH THE PARATROOPERS AS THEY FALL. IF YOU MISS, POSITION YOUR BOAT OVER THE MAN AS HE SWIMS AND PULL YOUR JOYSTICK BACK TO LOWER A NET FOR HIM TO CLIMB."

Right – I think that's enough instructions for one day. Let's get the rest of the game loaded...

STARTING THE GAME...

The game finally loads after 4 minutes and 10 seconds, and up pops the game screen running a demo.

The game screen is made up of the sky (in grey with some clouds and the sun), the sea (blue – obviously), and three main islands – one on the left, one in the middle, and one on the right. At the top of the screen you'll find the current score, your life count, and the highest score. Also on the screen is a hungry shark swimming around waiting for his next meal, and two pterodactyls waiting to swoop in on their helpless pray.



A quick tap of the FIRE BUTTON and we're straight into Level 0. Why ON EARTH it starts with a ZERO is beyond me!

Anyway – the action starts with your helicopter flying in from the left to the right of the screen, and at a certain point, your paratrooper ("troopa") automatically launches himself out and towards the sea.

Waiting below is your boat, which you can manoeuvre using the joystick left and right. Your main task is to catch the descending troopa before he plummets into the sea. If you do catch him, then all is well and it's onto the next troopa. But if he should hit the water, then you have a second chance to save him using your fishing net, which you can hurl into the sea above the paratrooper as he swims past.

If released at the correct moment, the troopa will grab onto the net and start climbing up. You need to be pretty quick as a hungry shark is darting through the waves looking for his next meal.



Fortunately, your troopa is a little savvier than you'd think, because if you're not quick enough with your net, then he'll continue towards the closet island to safety, but unfortunately this means that your score remains static.

You start the game with 6 lives, and the more troopas you rescue, the more points you score, and the further you'll get into the game. Later levels have more troopers jumping out of the helicopter at one time!

VERDICT

It's incredibly basic in style and execution, but the sweet, little sprites add to its cuteness. With its limited sound effects and rudimentary music (#Michael row your boat ashore#) the game isn't going to WOW anyone, and you're really just playing to chase a highscore. I suppose we can give it a bit of a break seeing that it's from 1983... But any later than that and it would most certainly have sunk without a trace!

We have made the game available for you on our EXTRAS page via www.FREEZE64.co.uk.

We'll have another Mouldy Cupboard game in our next issue. Don't miss it ■

DIARY OF A GAME

TOXIC FRENZY

THE MAKING OF TOXIC FRENZY BY JASON OAKLEY

PART 1

Welcome to the start of a short new series of diary entries from retro gaming programmer extraordinaire, Jason Oakley who charts the making of his FREEZE64 game, TOXIC FRENZY, which we released on Christmas Eve.

The game itself is a cute remake of the Game and Watch LCD game OIL PANIC, which was released by Nintendo way back in May, 1982. It's certainly a big challenge to take on, but Jason was prepared and up for it...

Jason's diary starts on Saturday 19th September when he comments: *"The Github repository for my game was created on September 19, 2020. But the first commit with any meat was on Tuesday 22nd September, 2020."*

• Tuesday 22nd September, 2020

Added libs, charset, sprites and koala image. The 'libs' used are the ones by Derek Morris. He created them while writing his book and has shared with the Commodore 64 community.

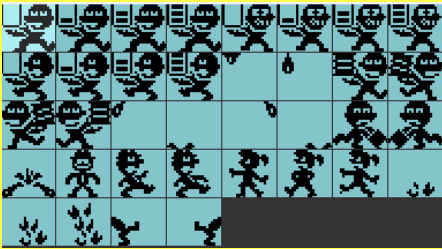
The original Koala Paint image was created using Multipaint and looked something like this:



I tried keeping the colours and design exactly like the Game and Watch LCD screen version of this game. I also designed a lot of the sprites I needed using SpritePad. Then I imported them into CBM PRG Studio and did all future editing and adjustments in that. I haven't created a customised charset as yet.



The sprites in SpritePad began as this:



I've re-ordered them to make my coding easier and added other sprites as required.

• **Wednesday 23rd September, 2020**

I had some initial issues with the Koala Paint image code to draw the bitmap on the screen. I didn't fully understand how the code worked. Once I worked it out, I ran the code again in the Debugger or VICE emulator and suddenly I had my bitmap displayed correctly! I was surprised as I hadn't expected it to work... or at least not properly. I also wasn't sure if I had drawn the image correctly while avoiding colour clash due to having too many colours in the one 8x8 character block.

I also updated the code to have constants and added more direct addresses to constant labels.

• **Thursday 24th September, 2020**

I *thought* I was beginning to understand Zero Page and wanted to store variables there. Unfortunately, I couldn't get it to work, so I just used normal memory addresses for variables.

I fixed a sprite that wasn't displaying correctly and tidied things up a bit and defined sprite name constants.

• **Friday 25th September, 2020**

I sorted out a lot of sprite positions by setting them up one at a time and manually adjusting X, Y, enable and other values until they showed up in the correct position.

“I thought I was beginning to understand Zero Page and wanted to store variables there.”

I also tweaked the background a bit so it would line up with the sprites correctly. I soon discovered that even though I had merged a bunch of sprite usage into 1-2 sprites, the lowest number I could display on the screen at one time was 9 sprites! The Commodore 64 only has 8 sprites it can display at once and so began my first attempt at multiplexing a sprite. I decided the two 'misses' sprites may as well be the ones multiplexed. They displayed similar information and did not change too often. I also found some 6502 code online to help with defining points to add to the score as well as updating the score when you add the points. This was just updating the score variables (3 bytes – one each for hundreds, tens and units). I tested some output and it worked nicely, so that saved some trouble.



• Sunday 27th September, 2020

I used self-modifying code to update the score sprite display. I was happy with the result as it was also something I'd not done much of in the past, but it worked! Also, during testing I picked random numbers from 0-9 in each score digit position. I soon discovered during my previous coding that I hadn't tested the number '9' (number 9... number 9...) as it didn't display anywhere. Now it does! I also realised it seemed silly to display a score such as 005 or 021 since even the main Game and Watch game didn't show leading zeroes. I soon fixed that; however, just leaving off the '0' in the tens column is not useful if the score is 104 — it showed 1 4 instead! Oops! Soon fixed that as well.

• Monday 28th September, 2020

I've had enough of getting sprites and stuff to display in the main game part and so I decided to try coding a title screen. Initially I just wanted a basic design so that when I hit FIRE to start it would jump to displaying the bitmap and sprites. I'd later come back to do the 'proper' design of the title screen.

I got a bit carried away and was soon busy making a whole design for the title screen! I redefined some characters to build up a big logo and wanted to have some delicious rasterbars behind the main logo.



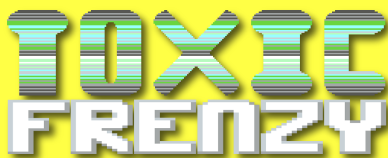
- My first take of the title screen -



I was very happy with the basic logo design with funky rasterbars behind it. I also added rasterbars behind the *PRESS 'FIRE' TO START THE GAME!* line, which went right across the screen into the borders and also a colour-sweep through the text at the bottom. You can see a little bug where the letter "O" in JASON is missing. It's there but it's coloured black. I soon fixed that issue. I discovered it was going to be too much to make the PRESS FIRE rasterbars reach all the way into the borders so I turned that off and they were a little more stable. I was using Derek's libraries to do the raster stuff, but could not get it to be stable and there was some flickering in the TOXIC logo.

• Tuesday 29th September, 2020

I added some sprites with movement under the TOXIC logo. I found a Windows program on *CSD.B.DK* that lets you calculate values for Sine Waves, so I got it to output data to move my sprite letters up and down in a wave. *OldSkoolCoder* helped me stabilise the rasterbars in the logo.



I was excited! It was coming together as I had pictured it in my mind, and with little planning. This idea just hit me and I went with it! However, I wasn't that keen on the letters seemingly being led in their up-down movement by the last letter sprite, so I recoded it to go the other way. I also had to move these sprites to the same memory bank as the charset as there was no longer enough space for the sprites and charset in the same bank as the main game graphics.

In the next issue, Jason jumps to Wednesday 30th September, 2020 where he continues with the coding of Toxic Frenzy ■



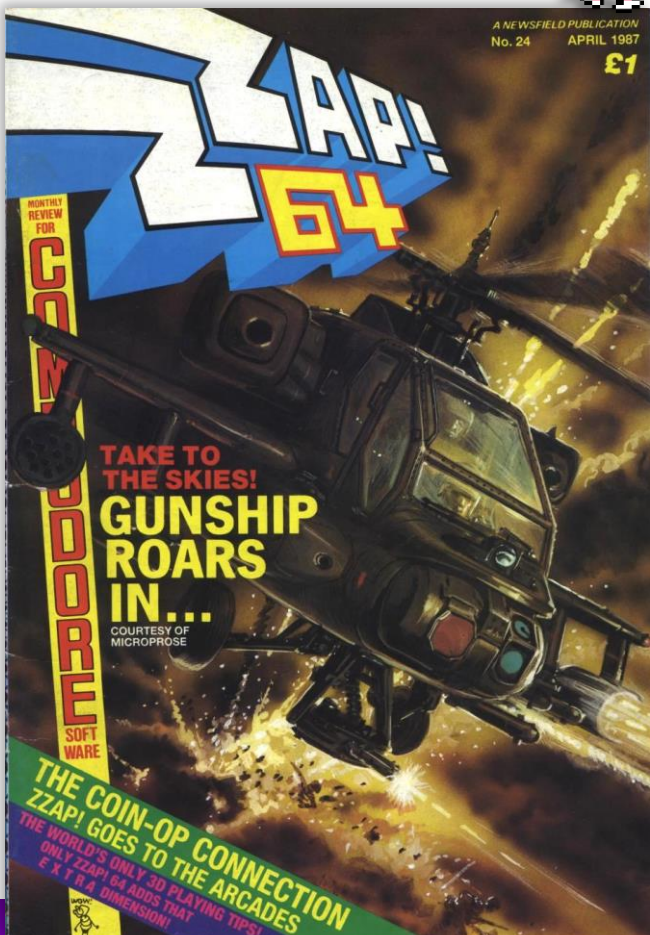
Julian Rignall's **ZZAPBACK!**

Greetings and welcome to the latest instalment of **ZZAPBACK**, a regular monthly column in which I take a trip back in time to look at the top games reviewed in an old edition of the classic Commodore magazine, **ZZAP! 64**. This month, I'm going back to early 1987 and delving into issue 24—the April edition of the publication.

In the last issue of **FREEZE64**, I noted that there weren't many decent Commodore 64 games released in March of 1987 – mostly due to the post-Christmas glut of software that hit the magazine a month earlier and caused a software drought four weeks later. Things certainly looked up in April, however, with 26 software titles reviewed in this issue. Sadly, though, only one was good enough to earn itself a Sizzler, and nothing was considered high quality enough to be awarded a Gold Medal.

And even then, the game that Sizzled did so controversially. Microprose's terrific flight combat simulator roared into the office and became the magazine's cover story. The controversy, however, came when we reviewed the game. New staff addition Steve Jarratt and I absolutely loved the game. Gary Penn did not.

"Yet another program under the dubious heading of a 'flight simulation,'" said Gary. "But like most flight simulations available, this isn't an accurate simulation of flight – it's more of a technical simulation of how to control a helicopter. Which is why it's slow, tedious, unrewarding, and not at all atmospheric. The vector graphics aren't remotely realistic, and only serve to dampen the atmosphere – and my enthusiasm – even further. To be fair, though, for what it's worth, **Gunship** does offer more than the run-of-the-mill flight simulator. At least the disk version does – the cassette version is a complete waste of time and effort."



And therein lies an interesting aspect of our review. There were actually two scores awarded to Gunship – one for the disk version of the game, and one for the cassette. It turns out the disk version was great. Packed with missions, it was generally very well presented and a huge amount of fun to play – so much so that we rated it an impressive **94%**. The cassette version, however, was far from good. Its missions were all multi-loaded, and the excellent save game and statistical analysis features from the disk version had to be manually saved and loaded to another cassette every time you played. Despite the game itself being excellent, the cassette multi-load made it absolutely miserable to play and we duly awarded it **72%**, which I think was pretty generous.

Still, the disk version was superb, and I excitedly said in my review that, "*The sheer depth of this simulation is incredible...*"

There's a huge amount of detail which adds to the realism and only becomes apparent after the chopper has been flown. Little things... such as the way missiles disappear into the distance, taking several seconds before they hit their target – also, the targets within the CRT rotate as the chopper flies around them, making flight seem more realistic. The five scenarios are varied and there are many missions within them for a pilot to complete. The instruction manual is the best I've ever read for a computer program. Not only is it enlightening, it's also a very interesting read in its own right. Every aspect of the simulation is covered, and there's a wealth of information regarding flying tactics, military equipment (both allied and enemy), the Apache's avionics, and the conditions and scenarios of the different missions. Gunship is immensely enjoyable, being exciting and rewarding to fly."

[illegible]

However, when I summed up my review I did warn potential players that the cassette version wasn't great. *"If you want to buy the (rather expensive) cassette version, you should consider the drawback of the multi-load system – it's very frustrating."*

Steve Jarratt also noted that the cassette version, *"takes an unreasonably long time to load and does not include as many options as the disk version. This seriously flaws an otherwise excellent program – try before you buy."* However, like me he lauded the disk version of the game, saying, *"Gunship represents the state of the art in flight and combat simulators. It is highly impressive in both documentation and programming. The vector graphic landscape runs very quickly considering the amount of features being moved around, which helps to give an authentic feeling of flying. This, combined with the brilliant combat scenes makes for a very realistic and exciting piece of software."*

I must say that back in the day, Microprose used to absolutely load up its boxes with all sorts of great goodies – such as incredibly in-depth instruction manuals and keyboard overlays.

And they were needed. Gunship, like many of Microprose's other flight combat simulations, is a complicated game to play and you really need to read the instruction manual to be able to fly it. Fortunately, there's a Gunship wiki online that details the many, many keys used to fly the game, but it's still very tough to control it successfully. When I played it, I managed to take off and fly around, shoot a few opposing vehicles, but very quickly got blasted out of the sky by enemy ordinance because I couldn't press the chaff button quickly enough. It's a very demanding game!

The vector graphics are quite speedy, and while they do lack detail, you can still see enough to figure out what's what on the battlefield, especially when you use your on-board CRT to target enemy vehicles. Ultimately, Gunship is still a seriously impressive program. Considering the limitations of the C64, squeezing an in-depth flight combat simulation into the system's tiny memory was – and still continues to be – a quite remarkable achievement!

And that wraps it up for this month. I'll be back in 30-or-so days with another ZZAPBACK column—this time looking at issue 25.

See you then!

Jaz 😊



SECRET SQUIRREL

► REVEALING HIDDEN SECRETS IN C64 GAMES

Welcome my budding investigators. It's time for another helping of secret messages hidden within Commodore 64 games.

Our first case file is a recent release with a cheeky message hidden within the code...

CASE FILE 0202-SB-ELN **NEPTUNE LANDER ELITE** by C64Mark (Bitmap Software, 2020)



If you take a quick peek at page 27 (make sure you come back!), you'll see that we have a lot of love for this gorgeous arcade Moon Lander-esque game produced by the great C64Mark. The game is beautifully crafted with precision... but did you know that the programmer also decided to include a cheeky, little message within the game code at \$BDD3? The message reads:

DEAREST SECRET SQUIRREL, YOU WILL NEVER FIND ME. NEVER. LOVE AND KISSES, YOUR ARCH ENEMY THE INCOGNITO IGUANA.

Damn that dastardly iguana! He's on the loose again!



CASE FILE 5891-SA-MR **RING MASTER**

by Darrell Etherington (Anirog, 1985)

Back in the early eighties, Anirog Software seemed to have a knack of producing some weird and wonderful games for the Commodore 64, and none weirder than Ring Master, a game based on circus performance!

Hidden away in this wacky game's code are a few strange messages by the programmer, Darrell Etherington...

At \$13A4 there is a message that reads:

SPECIAL THANKS TO D.DUNN FOR A BUG – WHOOPS I MENT MUSIC NOT A BUG!!!!

Note the incorrect spelling of 'meant'.

Further along at \$15E3 we have:

HIYA – HOW NOSY....DISASSEMBLING MY PROGGY

I'm guessing it should say 'nosey' ☺

```
..bddd3  dearest secret squirrel, you wil
..bdf3  l never find me. never.love and
..be13  kisses, your arch enemy the inco
..be33  gnito iguana.critical impact det
..be53  ected. ship destroyed transmiss
..be73  ion lost. ship out of range
..be93  velocity too high. ship destroy
..beb3  ed elite commander hall of fam
..bed3  e enter your name !!!!!!!!!!!
..bef3  !!!!!!! well done, comma
..bff3  !!!!!!! you successf de
..bff3  nder
..bff3  ully explored the
..bff3  epest recesses of space
..bff3  rest well, new adventures await
..bff3  .. trainingcheat modefuel bon
..bff3  us collected extra ship
..bfd3  bonus score pickup JFHJ BBBB
..bff3  K QMEQM ↑↑↑↑)B++++BUBBBBBB BB
..c013  BM BRE RUselect level 00S0:
..c023  NLESCOREsavedCaac64mark
..c053  080000osk 050000stacy
..c053  010000phaze101
..c053  010000phaze here
```

There's more at memory location \$1E49...

GOD THE TV WAS BORING TODAY
KERNAL JUMP VECTORS

And at \$1F63...

**DAVE LOOK AT THE SIZE OF BUSTY BERTHA!!!
I REALLY MEANT 1984!**

And believe it or not... there's more at \$394D...

THIS PROGRAM IS COPYRIGHT 1985 BY
DARRELL ETHERINGTON AND GOOD LUCK TO
DAVE DUNN IF HE FINDS ALL THESE
MESSAGES.

It looks as if Darrell was having some fun at the expense of Dave Dunn who produced the music for Ring Master. There MUST be a story behind all these message. If ONLY we could chat with Darrell and ask him about these intriguing messages locked away in his game's code. Well – actually, we CAN chat with him because he's our interviewee in an upcoming issue of FREEZE64.

So Darrell... what's with all these strange messages in your game code?

"Now, I had to give those screenshots some thought. I'm pretty sure what happened was Dave Dunn, a friend at the time, was my music creator for this one and I think he played around and inserted a new version directly into the code. He sent it back to me, so I added a few bits for him to stumble across, and it just became a bit of a joke that we left in. It's so long ago, I can't remember exactly, and I sadly lost touch with Dave. I know most games always used to have a few bits left in - even if it was just a good old hidden cheat mode!"

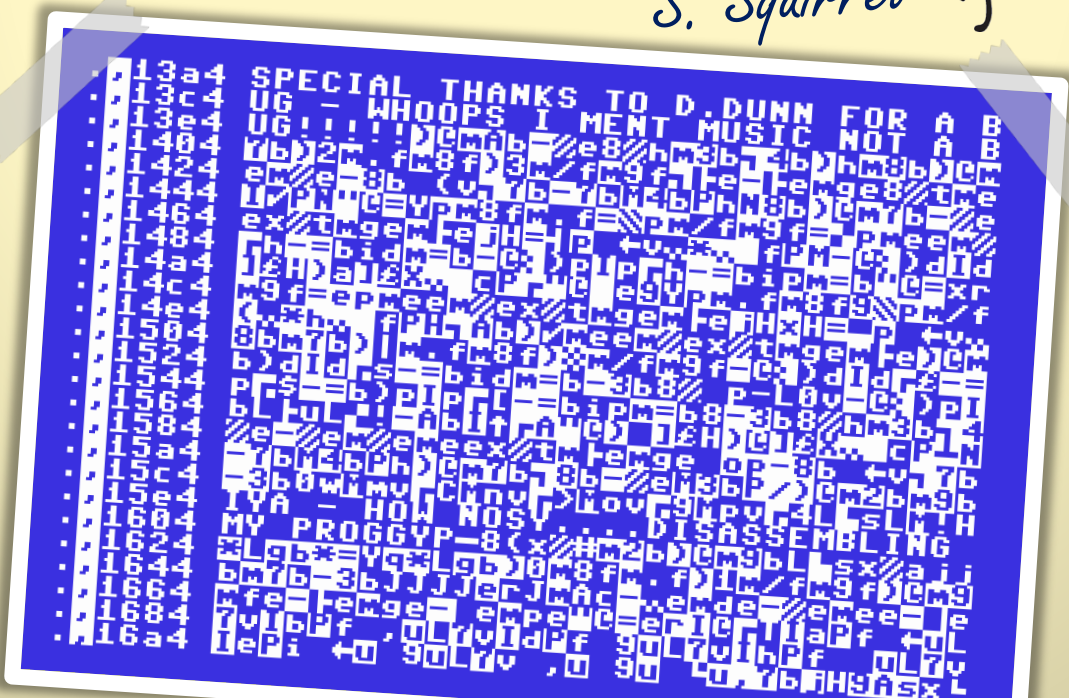
Another case successfully closed 😊

Right – I'm off to have a bar of Wholenut.

That's it for this instalment. More in the next issue of FREEZE64.

Until next time...

S. Squirrel 



ANDREW BAILEY in DEVELOPERS' DEN



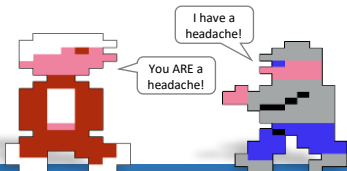
ANDREW BAILEY

C64 GAMES:

- Druid
- Demons of Topaz
- Enlightenment: Druid II
- Headache
- Microcosm



“WHEN IT CAME TO GETTING MY OWN HOME COMPUTER, MY DAD INSISTED ON A ‘PROPER’ KEYBOARD, SO WE GOT A VIC-20.”



Back in 1985 I started building my large collection of Commodore 64 budget games on tape. I made a conscious effort to buy every single Mastertronic and Firebird Software title that was released for the C64, and it wasn't long before I stumbled upon a game by our interviewee for this issue, Andrew E. Bailey.

The first of his games to enter my collection was Headache, which is an incredibly simple arcade platformer from Firebird Software, which scored 3/5 in Your Commodore magazine – not bad for his first game. Andrew went on to produce two more C64 budget titles before hitting the big time with the fully priced Firebird release, Druid in 1986.

Thirty four years on, we catch up with Andrew and chat about that golden era of 8-bit games, and how he played an important part in C64 gaming history...

Hi Andrew. A warm welcome to FREEZE64 and thank you for taking some time out to chat with us and sharing your C64 story with our readers...

Hi Vinny, no worries. Thanks for talking to me.

For the FREEZE64 readers who may not have heard of you, please tell us a little about yourself...

I'm originally a Brit born in the late sixties and grew up with 8-bit computing. After University I moved to Australia to work on 8-bit consoles. I started my own company, got married, had 4 kids, and then moved to Vancouver, Canada where I now work on supporting the Call of Duty titles for Activision.

You obviously have a love for computers... but when did you first get into computers and programming?

I first got into programming when a friend got a Sinclair ZX81. We started by typing in games from computer magazines and then modifying them. When it came to getting my own home computer, my Dad insisted on a 'proper' keyboard, so we got a VIC-20 (with extra RAM cartridge). The games I wrote on this were mainly in BASIC using the built in character set. I made a set of Space Invader type games.