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FREEZE64 ISSUE 88



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Enjoy the read!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vinny". Below the signature is a simple, hand-drawn smiley face consisting of two dots for eyes and a curved line for a mouth.

Vinny@FREEZE64.co.uk

FREEZE64[®]

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

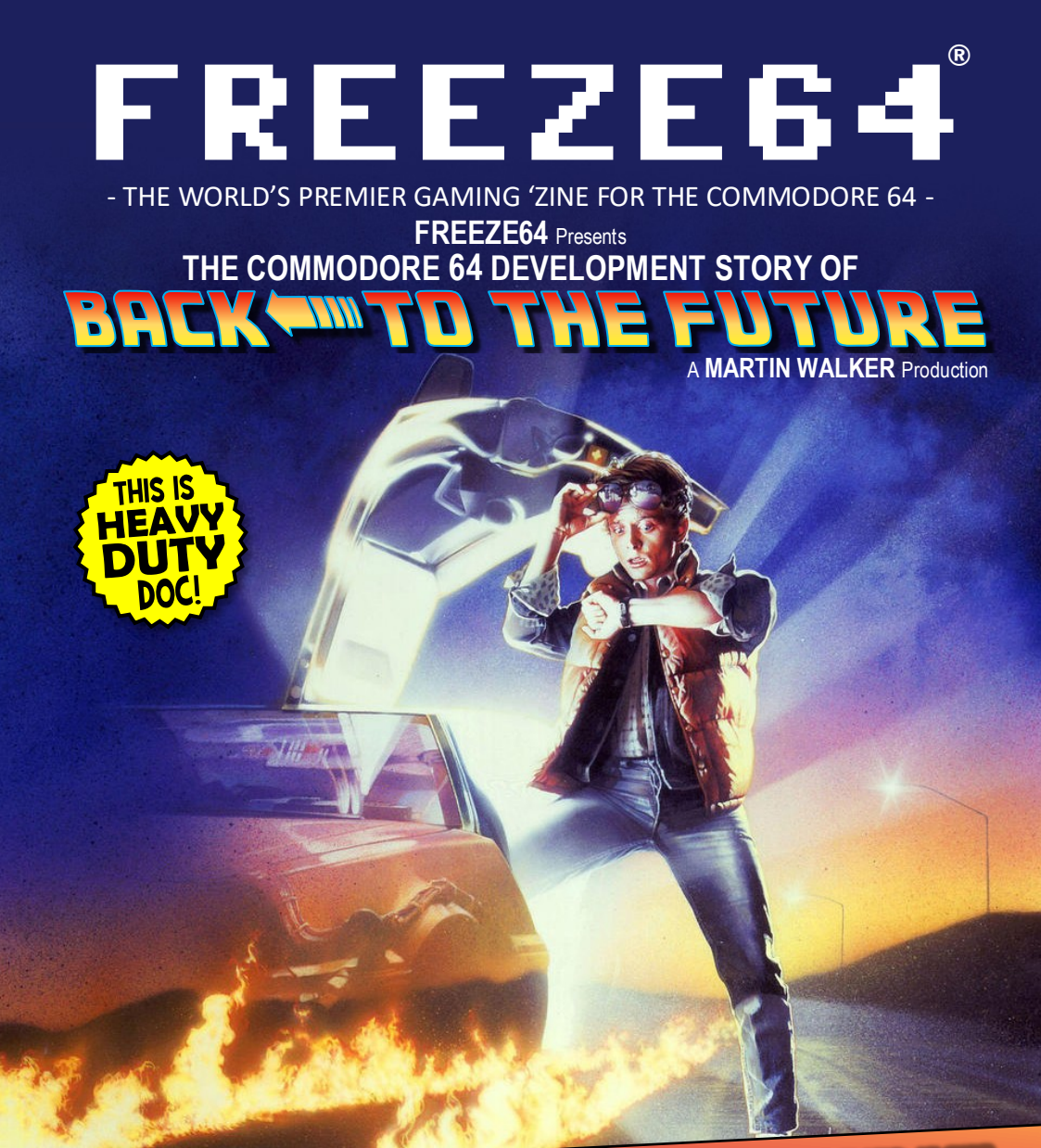
FREEZE64 Presents

THE COMMODORE 64 DEVELOPMENT STORY OF

BACK TO THE FUTURE

A MARTIN WALKER Production

THIS IS
HEAVY
DUTY
DOC!



"88 MILES PER HOUR!"

When this magazine hits 88 issues, you're gonna see some serious SH#T!
Martin Walker returns to chat about developing **Back to the Future** for the C64.

PLUS: LEMMINGS RELOADED | JULIAN RIGNALL'S CCRAPBACK!
HIDDEN HARMONIES | TETRISO | SECRET SQUIRREL
ALL MAPPED OUT | MOULDY CUPBOARD... + **LOTS MORE!**

FREEZE64
ISSUE #88
DARTH VADER

LOAD “ISSUE 88”, 8,1

► LOADING...



ONE-POINT-
TWENTY-ONE
GIGGAWATTS!



DURING THE MAKING OF ISSUE 88

C64 GAMES PLAYED

- Back to the Future
- Gordon Bennet Jr.
- Joan of Arc – D.C.M.
- Lemmings Reloaded
- Tetriso

C64 YouTube VIDEOS WATCHED

- Rescuing Naked C64 Game Cassettes by Green Pixel Retro Lab
youtu.be/ugv9QLBJxWg

Currently

Listening To... ♪♪

- Tales From Future Worlds
by Martin Walker
yewtreemagic.bandcamp.com

“BTF wasn’t soul-destroying in itself, just that we were so tied to the crippling deadline.”

MARTIN WALKER

C64 Programmer
(*Electric Dreams* / *Thalamus*)



02 | LOAD “ISSUE 88”, 8,1

“Are you telling me you built a time machine... out of a DeLorean?”

03 | FOUND ISSUE 88

“I’m your density... I mean, your destiny.”

04 | COVER FEATURE: BACK TO THE FUTURE

Martin Walker’s *Back to the Future* has taken its fair share of knocks over the years, so we’ve decided to shove it into our infamous FREEZE-O-MATIC™ and finally settle the score. Just how bad (or good) is it? Time to find out.

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This time around, Warren is sharing four of his personal favourites, which include: *Rollerboard*, *Mean City*, *Citadel*, and *Garfield: Big, Fat, Hairy Deal*.

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We celebrate the full map to *Elite Systems’* classic *Ghosts ‘n’ Goblins*.

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Martin Walker returns to FREEZE Towers with a candid deep-dive, where he opens up about the making of our cover feature game, *Back to the Future*.

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The game’s development is almost wrapped up, but Chris still has a couple more diary entries to share with us all. Oooo... it’s getting exciting now!

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JAM-
PACKED!



FREEZE64[®]

FOUND ISSUE 88

MCFLY! YOUR SHOE'S UNTIED!

Don't be so gullible, McFly!

It was bound to happen... stick **Back to the Future** on the cover and suddenly the whole issue explodes with iconic quotes from the film. And wow... there are so many absolute belters to cram in.

But we're not here to talk about the movie. Not today. We've got a far more pressing engagement: diving into the Commodore 64 game adaptation and uncovering exactly what works, what doesn't, and why so many players seem determined to put it down. There has to be more to the story, right?

And we're not going to speculate, because we've gone straight to the source. We're speaking with the game's developer himself – the great *Martin Walker*, the mind behind **Citadel** and **Hunter's Moon**. There's definitely a development story to be told.

Good news! **ALL MAPPED OUT** is back! It was the very first thing we ever did with the centrefold in FREEZE64 issue 1, and after ten years it's making a triumphant return. We're kicking things off with the fabulous **Ghosts 'n' Goblins** game map... and if that gets your joysticks twitching, you'll be pleased to know that every new issue will now include a full game map in the centrefold. You know that we love our maps, and we hope you do too.

That's not the only feature returning because **DEMO DEMONS** is also back with another cracking scene demo to share with you. This time it's **The Lab** by *Elysium* — a brilliant slice of C64 wizardry that proves, once again, the demo scene is still very much alive and kicking. These creations just keep blowing us away!

But we don't just have returning features; we also have a NEW, regular feature called **BYTE*SIZED** where we dive into the latest Commodore 64 releases, play each one for a quick five-minute blast, give you our first impressions, and then leave the rest for you to uncover. We want to avoid the over-inflated opinions and leave you to decide if you love the game or not. Just how it should be. 😊

And finally, I've spent time tweaking the FREEZE64 layout so that I can squeeze in many more words in each issue — meaning more C64 goodness for your money, with no extra cost to you.

That's your lot for now. I'm off to play Joan of Arc - Deus Contra Machinam, which was recently released by Psytronik.

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Proprietor | Editor | Publisher

Wow! That looks like a GREAT line-up!

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Jeff Gamon

Kenz @ Psytronik.net

Steven Spielberg & Robert Zemeckis

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BACK TO THE FUTURE



“YOU BUILT A TIME MACHINE... OUT OF A COMMODORE 64?”



GAME PROFILE

NAME: Back to the Future

PUBLISHER: Electric Dreams, 1986

PRICE: £9.95 **GENRE:** Adventure

BY: Martin Walker

C&VG MAGAZINE RATING: 7/10

“BTTF is a nicely presented and cleverly thought-out game”

C&VG – No.53 – March 1986

ONE OF THE GREATEST MOVIES OF ALL TIME MAKES IT ONTO THE C64

And becomes one of the greatest let-downs of all time!

Back in good old 1985, I was about to have the experience of my life – calm down, I was only 14, so nothing scandalous. It started on the one and only occasion when both my parents joined me at The Point cinema in Milton Keynes to watch the brand-new, Steven Spielberg produced, time-twisting extravaganza, **BACK TO THE FUTURE**.

I genuinely had no idea what was about to hit me. Sitting there in the theatre, tucked snugly between my mum and dad, my 14-year-old self was blissfully unaware that the film about to flicker onto the screen would go on to become my all-time favourite, which would stay with me for life. The music. The cast. The sheer, electric excitement of it all. And that time machine – built... *out of a DeLorean*? Every element hit me like a bolt of lightning! I went home that evening believing that one day, I too would time travel. D'oh, what a slacker!

AN ELECTRIC DREAM COME TRUE!

Okay – so I was never going to become a life-preserver-wearing time traveller, but the fantasy did come true in a far more achievable form: a computer game, announced the following year by *Electric Dreams Software*. And I'll be honest with you... back in 1986, the £9.95 asking price was way beyond my reach. It wasn't until two years later when *Firebird Software* swooped in with their 199 *Silver Range* re-release that I could finally scrape together the £1.99 pocket-money price and make those time-travel dreams a reality.



Now here's the snag. The game had already been tainted for me by the *ZZAP!64* review crew, who thought the game was only worth 32%! That single score completely deflated my excitement, and as a result, I never really gave the game a chance. And even now, all these years later, I honestly couldn't tell you whether it was a good or bad game because I barely played it enough to find out.

And so, now feels like the perfect moment to go *back in time* and revisit the game with fresh eyes, and a proper determination to finally discover whether it deserved more than that measly 32% all those years ago.

"BACK IN GOOD, OLD 1955!"

If you've never seen the movie, you're probably not going to clock the many references I've scattered throughout this entire issue. In which case, it might be time to educate yourself and witness one of the greatest films ever made.

But if you genuinely can't be arsed to watch it, here's the gist of both the movie and the game...

It all kicks off in 1985, where teenager Marty McFly hangs around with eccentric inventor Doc Brown – a man who's somehow managed to turn a DeLorean into a fully functioning time machine. After a mishap with the flux capacitor and a couple of irate Libyans, Marty is blasted 30 years into the past, landing in 1955 when his parents were still teenagers.

He accidentally crosses paths with both of them, and things get messy fast: Marty's mum starts falling for him instead of his dad, George. Cue temporal chaos. Marty has now broken the future, and if his parents don't fall in love like they originally did, Marty will cease to exist.

So, his mission in both the movie and the game is simple: fix the timeline, get his mum and dad together, and then rely on 1955's Doc Brown to fire up the DeLorean and send him **BACK TO THE FUTURE**.

I don't think I've missed anything. Oh yeah... and there's Biff, too.

TIME TO POWER UP THE FLUX CAPACITOR!

Because the only copy I own is the *Firebird Software 199 Range* release, that's the version I'm firing up on the *Ultimate64*.



The game loads with the classic Firebird HEX counter and flashing colours followed by a cracking bitmap, which was created by *Martin Walker*. A lovely touch.



Doctor Emmett Brown
(AKA The Doc)



George McFly
(AKA Marty's Dad)



Lorraine Baines
(AKA Marty's Mum)



Biff Tannen
(AKA Marty's Enemy)



Oh – and a quick heads-up for the collectors among you. Firebird actually issued two physical variants of this release: one on a white cassette (the version I own) and one on a black cassette. Both crop up regularly on eBay if you fancy hunting them down; however, keep in mind that the cassettes may be different, but the game is exactly the same.

THAT'S THE POWER OF LOVE!

Once the loading is complete, the title/option screen appears, laying out your controls: F1 to START THE GAME, F3 to SELECT LEVEL, plus two in-game keys – F5 to TERMINATE GAME and F7 to PAUSE/CONTINUE.

Regarding the level select option: the lower the level, the more of the family photo you're shown at the start of the game. In other words, you're gifted a little extra breathing room to carry out Marty's time-critical tasks.



Pressing F1 kicks off the adventure, dropping Marty (that's you) into Hill Valley's town square, right outside Doc Brown's place and Marty's high school – even though none of these buildings actually sit in the movie's town square.

In the background, a chiptune take on Chuck Berry's "Johnny B. Goode" sets the scene, nodding to the film's later moments where Marty (Michael J. Fox) introduces his 1955 audience to a very different kind of rock 'n' roll.

👉 Restore the photo of Calvin Kline



You control Marty with the joystick in port 2. Push LEFT or RIGHT and he strolls through Hill Valley, which is stitched together from five key story locations: the town square, the high school, the café, the school dance hall, and Doc Brown's house/garage. Step into any doorway and press UP to head inside and explore.

So – the aim of the game is simple enough: get George (in blue) and Lorraine (in yellow) to fall in love. At the same time, you've got to keep Lorraine well away from Marty because one wrong encounter, and the family photographs start to fade, and your adventure ends pretty quickly.

And just to make life even more chaotic, Biff (in brown) is constantly prowling around, desperate to deck you and leave you sprawling on the pavement. Utterly annoying because it wastes time – time that Marty can't spare! But the good thing is, you can make Marty punch back by holding the FIRE-BUTTON down and aiming your punch in his direction – though it is a little tricky!



Book of Love Poems

To get George and Lorraine all loved-up!

**A Cup of Coffee**

It momentarily freezes George and Biff.

**A Radiation Suit**

Gets George following you around.

**Electric Guitar**

It will get Lorraine to stand still.

**Skateboard**

Allows you to whizz around the town.



Right from the start, you'll need to figure out where all five game objects (see above) are hidden around Hill Valley. You'll know you've found one when its icon flashes yellow. For example, as soon as the game begins, you'll spot a stack of boxes outside Doc's house on the left. Stand in front of them and your SKATEBOARD icon lights up. Hold the FIRE-BUTTON and push UP, and Marty hops straight onto the board – letting you zip around town much faster than you can on foot.

The same goes for the electric guitar, which you'll find in the school hall. Stand beside the red guitars on the far right of the screen and wait for the guitar icon to glow yellow – that's your cue that it's available. To pick it up, hold down the FIRE-BUTTON and push UP on the joystick. The icon will flip to white, confirming that the guitar is now yours to unleash on Lorraine.

To activate an item, stand beside the character it affects and hold the FIRE-BUTTON while pressing DOWN on the joystick. If you've got the right item and you're next to the right person, their icon will flash green to confirm the effect. For example, grab the Book of Love Poems from the School Library, track down George, and then read to him by holding FIRE and pushing DOWN – he'll freeze for a short while, giving you a precious breather. But make sure that you're in the correct location when he's standing still. It's tough.

And it all gets very confusing. With every character wandering around at once, it takes time and a fair bit of patience before you feel like you're actually making progress. For the first half-hour you'll swear you're going nowhere, mostly because Lorraine simply won't stay still long enough for you to pull off (Oo-er, Missus) anything meaningful.

↓ Find the skateboard amongst the boxes and get Marty whizzing around Hill Valley



It's time for...



VINNY'S VERDICT

*You REALLY have to stick with Back to the Future before it gives you any sense of satisfaction. It's a bit like running a marathon: you slog through that painful stretch where it feels like you're not moving forward, where progress seems impossible... and then, suddenly, something clicks. You push through, the fog lifts, and you finally see that faint light at the end of the tunnel. This is **exactly** like that!*

And I'll be straight with you – it has taken me YEARS to properly figure this one out. The only reason I've cracked it is because I forced myself to keep playing for the sake of honest journalism. But once you push past that initial wall, the challenge reveals itself, and there is something rewarding there. You just have to find it... and then run with it.

But please don't think I'm saying all this just because Martin will be reading it, or out of some sense of obligation to be kind. I'm not. Like many of our readers, I've been frustrated with this game for over 40 years! There's no denying it could have been a far better experience, but as you'll discover in our interview with Martin, he was working under brutally tight deadlines.

And what could have been better? More locations, smoother and clearer character interactions, and much stronger music – that was a huge missed opportunity. I also think it needed far more of the humour that runs through the film, because that spark is exactly what the game never quite managed to capture.

This one is really for the hard-core players – the ones who can spot the challenge buried inside it and accept the game's limitations for what they are.

**"HELLO! HELLO!...
Anybody home?!"**



The real killer here is the relentless time limit – which is pretty ironic when the entire game revolves around changing time and time travel. Those first few attempts feel brutally short, like mere seconds pass before you're slapped with a GAME OVER. You barely get a moment to understand what's happening, let alone form a plan. So, you're forced to learn gradually: location by location, object by object, dying over and over as you piece the whole thing together.

There is a tiny saving grace – and it really is tiny – in the way the music shifts whenever your photos begin to fade or reappear, which means you can stay fully focused on the job in hand.





HIDDEN HARMONIES

With Warren 'Waz' Pilkington



It's time for another instalment of *Hidden Harmonies*, where I take you all on a sonic journey in search of lesser-known musical gems from the golden age of Commodore 64 soundtracks.

This time around, I've selected four personal favourites where I really enjoyed the music – sometimes leaving the game in pause mode or on its title screen, and just savouring the great tunes.

I hope you enjoy this little selection...

ROLLERBOARD

(Pirate Software, 1987)



Programmer: Joost Honig

Musician: Marco Swagerman

Download: csdb.dk/release/?id=17083

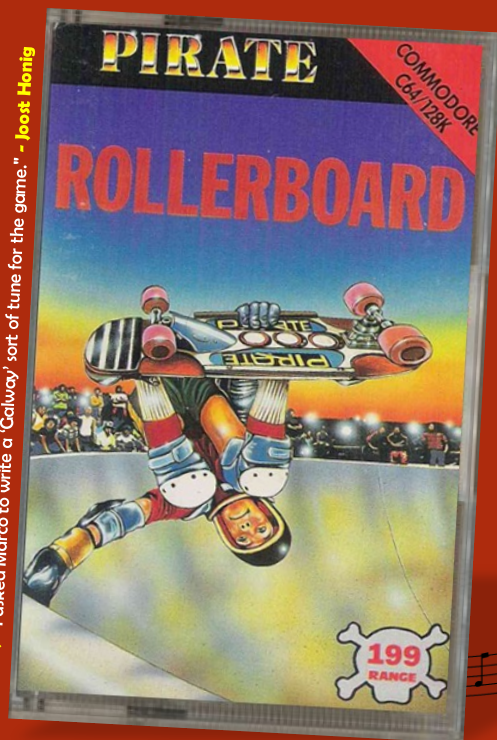
Extra: An interview with Joost Honig chatting about the making of Rollerboard can be found in FREEZE64 issue 27.

Released in 1987, both in Germany by Kingsoft and also as a UK budget title from Pirate Software, *Rollerboard* immediately grabbed my attention the moment I loaded it, thanks to Marco Swagerman's music.

A devoted admirer of *Martin Galway*, Marco makes that influence clear in the title theme, which opens with an unmistakable homage to the classic *Ocean Loader* themes, before a sweeping filter sets the mood for *Joost Honig's* left-to-right skateboarding challenge.

The in-game track is where the music truly flows and comes alive, with its two channels containing a delay that creates a phased melody – a classic *Galway* trademark – that rises and falls just like the skateboarder in this game. This then gives way to its lead harmony that drives you further onwards with some aplomb. And even though the game may be tough at times, the tune keeps pulling you back, growing more infectious with every listen.

→ "I asked Marco to write a 'Galway' sort of tune for the game." - Joost Honig



MEAN CITY

(Quicksilver, 1987)



Programmer: Jeff Gamon

Musician: Paul Meredith

Download: csdb.dk/release/?id=59545

Paul Meredith first composed this tune as an uplifting and melodic demo piece called *Fizzy Pop*, which he sent to various software houses touting for work.

After hearing the tune, *Argus Press*, who owned *Quicksilver*, asked Paul to re-work the theme for their 1987 game **Mean City**. Sounding more aggressive and grittier than the original, the tone suited the mood of *Jeff Gamon's* split-screen game, which was set in a post-nuclear city.

Paul's final offering fits the bill well, keeping the melody of the original piece, but adding some mean sounding lead instruments – along with a powerful two-channel bassline to emphasise the power that you would need to complete the game.

The only slight letdown is the very end part where the last six notes rise to a crescendo and feel a little out of place, but nonetheless, a solid effort.



← Here's the developer of **Mean City**, the great **Jeff Gamon** (who is also a **FREEZE64** Subscriber). Jeff kindly sent Vinny this photo of himself whilst at the recent **Gamescom 2026** event in Cologne, Germany.

I KNOW HIM!



CITADEL

(Electric Dreams, 1989)



Programmer: Martin Walker, D, Phillips, J. Kemp

Musician: Martin Walker

Download: csdb.dk/release/?id=13381

Martin Walker (**"yes, him who we have interviewed in this very issue!" – Vinny**) had established himself as an excellent game developer, with *Hunter's Moon*, which is a favourite of mine. His music was also increasing in popularity, especially after producing such stunning tracks for *Armalyte*, and a lot of the darker, grittier Industrial sound that he composed for the game came to light when *Electric Dreams* released **Citadel** in 1989.

Citadel is a thinking-man's shooter — one where understanding what each robot type actually does is the real key to survival, and where shooting on sight is almost never the smartest tactic.

The four-minute title theme demanded my attention when I first heard it. It sets the tone for the whole game, with a brooding mood, which was apparent from the get-go. Initially, this starts with a strong melody and backing providing an uneasy sense. The marching, pounding drums a minute in underpin the middle section, with crashing cymbals and a stirring violin-sounding lead that gives you a cinematic feel. Then the darkness of the low notes with its haunting melody and drums, building up in volume and power to a final flourish, makes this a tune that befits its stature. It is an underrated tune and one that I genuinely cherish.

Garfield: Big, Fat, Hairy Deal

(The Edge, 1987)



Programmer: Charles Goodwin

Musician: Neil Baldwin

Download: csdb.dk/release/?id=95621

In 1987, *The Edge* successfully acquired the licence to the *Garfield* comic strip and released a fun C64 arcade adventure. It needed something cute and bouncy (and dare I say 'cat-like') and *Neil Baldwin* more than met the brief with this one.

I can remember listening to this tune from a demo before playing the game and thinking how enjoyable it was, and with good reason. The bouncy drums and bass work well together, and there is a gorgeous harmonic main lead that has a bright and breezy feel. This alone would work for any cartoon series; however, there is also the rhythm with the dynamic key changes for the chorus parts where a softer flute-like melody comes in. This flow is further enhanced the second time around, as it has a catchy hook-line that draws you in. That same hook-line is used with the original lead to end the tune as it fades, making it sound more like the closing of a theme. It is all very melodic and effortlessly catchy.

Enjoy listening to these underrated soundtracks. We'll have a few more for you to enjoy in the next issue!

Warren



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VIRTUOSO VINNY

Wow! Another great selection of tunes, which includes two of my favourites!

- **ROLLERBOARD:** I picked this up in 1987, just as I'd wrapped up my computer-college course and started working in our local game shop. I remember hearing the main theme and thinking, "*Hang on... this has to be Martin Galway!*" It wasn't, but it absolutely had that trademark vibe. A cracking tune.
- **MEAN CITY:** Here's a quirky little tune and one I don't recall ever hearing, which makes it a refreshing listen today. That gritty, almost-out-of-tune edge gives it real charm. Simple, but spot-on for the game.
- **CITADEL:** *Martin Walker* is such an underrated C64 musician. People remember him for his games, but I always think of his music — especially *Armalyte* and *Citadel*. His tracks have real dramatic weight and an anthemic sweep, the kind of bold, confident sound that instantly stamps his identity on a game. *Citadel* in particular has that spooky, futuristic vibe, full of atmosphere and tension, and it wouldn't feel out of place as a full-blown sci-fi movie theme. It's a top-tier tune with serious presence and the sort that lingers long after you've switched off the machine.
- **GARFIELD:** Hehehe... this is such a fun, bouncy little tune, and it fits the game perfectly. No surprises in the instrument choices, but it doesn't need anything fancy because it's a simple, joyful track that does exactly what it needs to. Lovely.

A great selection from Warren.

Got any under-the-radar SID tracks that deserve a bit more love? Drop your suggestions in and we'll showcase them to the rest of the FREEZE64 crowd.



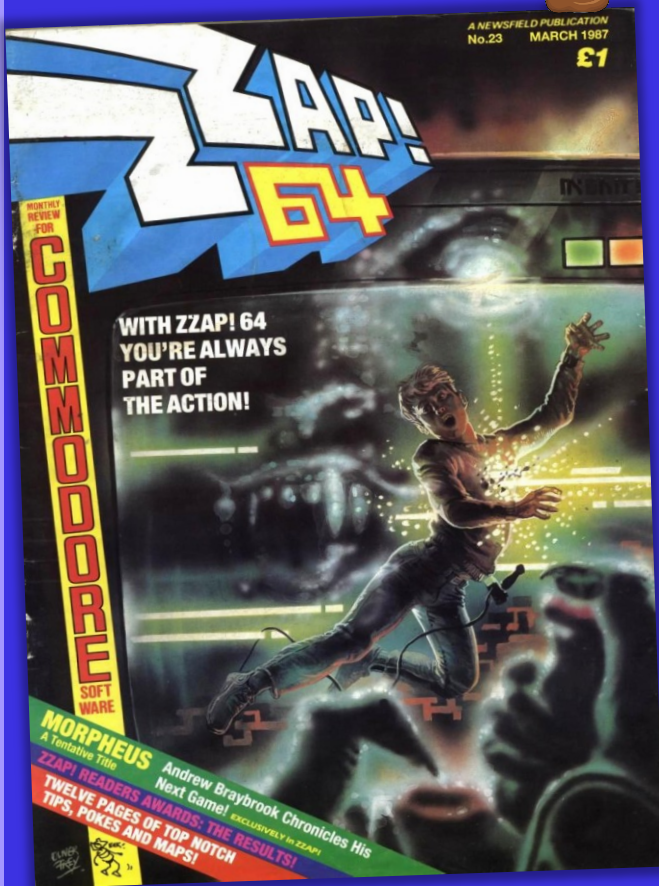


Julian Rignall's **CCRAPBACK!**

A look back at some of the more obscure, weird, and outright terrible old Commodore 64 games



Greetings and welcome to CCRAPBACK, my monthly column in which I take a look at the very worst games reviewed in an old edition of the classic Commodore magazine, ZZAP! 64. This month, I'm continuing to look at the worst games we reviewed back in issue 23—the March 1987 edition of the magazine.



Before we reveal three more low-scorers, here are the top-performing and average scoring games that sit above the 50% threshold:

THE SIZZLERS:

- Brian Clough's Football - **93%**
- Escape From Singe's Castle
Dragon's Lair Part II - **90%**
- Mutants - **90%**

THE HIGH/AVERAGE:

- Nosferatu The Vampyre - **88%**
- Chameleon - **84%**
- Tomahawk - **74%**
- Future Knight - **69%**
- Skate Rock - **66%**
- Footballer of the Year - **64%**
- Falcon Patrol II - **63%**
- Terror of the Deep - **60%**
- Pneumatic Hammers - **58%**
- Knucklebusters - **56%**
- Erebus - **56%**
- Raid 2000 - **56%**
- Blood 'N' Guts - **56%**
- Tiger Mission - **51%**

That's the top and average games, but the three games I'm looking at this month are ones I've long since forgotten about. Which isn't surprising really considering I was reviewing many, many games a month back then and only remember the ones actually worth remembering, rather than instantly forgettable dross like *Codemasters' Terra Cognita*.



DOC?!



**"If you've got a spare couple of quid...
shop around - there are loads of
better budget games than this."**



TERRA COGNITA

(Codemasters)

Programmed by Martin Sexton

Price: T-£1.99

Genre: Shoot-'em-up

ZZAP!64 rating: 39%

Commodore User rating: 9/10



Despite being a measly two quid, this shooter wasn't special enough to stand out from the crowd. I noted, "This is a bland, vertically scrolling shoot 'em up which has many frustrating points. The backdrops make the going really tough - sometimes it's virtually impossible to see where your ship and the attacking aliens are. It's also frustrating having to find out the hard way which squares can be traversed safely and which can't. The objective is to make your way through the program's hundred screens, a task which can only be completed if the landscape is meticulously learned - and personally I don't think this game deserves that sort of perseverance. If you've got a spare couple of quid... shop around - there are loads of better budget games than this."



And that's the thing. Oftentimes people will defend a crummy game saying it was cheap, but certainly by this point in time, there were tons of great budget games - some of which were as good as, if not better than full-price games. I mean, why waste your cash on this 39%-rated game when you could get something like **Thrust** instead?



TERRA COGNITA

Code Masters, £1.99 cass

The Krion are out in force, eager to destroy anything human that gets in the way - which means you, in the seat of your fighter. A mother ship, and safety, is 100 vertically scrolling scrolling screens away, and involves traversing a tortuous landscape and destroying attacking aliens.

The landscape is composed of squares, mostly solid walls which form mazes and corridors - some leading to safety, and others to dead ends. Hitting a wall destroys your fighter, which means it has to take off again from the nearest launch pad. Another hazard is the time shift square, which plunks you back at the beginning of the first screen.

Points are scored by passing



This is a bland, vertically scrolling shoot 'em up which has many frustrating

points. The backdrops make the going really tough - sometimes it's virtually impossible to see where your ship and the attacking aliens are. It's also frustrating having to find out the hard way which squares can be traversed safely and which can't. The objective is to make your way through the program's hundred screens, a task which can only be completed if the landscape is meticulously learned - and personally I don't think this game deserves that sort of perseverance. If you've got a spare couple of quid... shop around - there are loads of better budget games than this.



I don't believe it. ANOTHER vertically scrolling shoot 'em up. I don't want to see any more...



ZUB

(Mastertronic MAD)

Programmed by Phillip Allsopp

Price: T-£2.99

Genre: Arcade Platformer

ZZAP!64 rating: 38%

Commodore User rating: 3/10



Continuing on the budget front – although this one is a Mastertronic “premium” budget with a hefty three quid price tag – ZUB was another cheap, but not very cheerful release.

I opined, “Originality is this program's strong point - it fails in its graphics, sound and playability. The big problem is that it's incredibly boring - there's nothing more to the game than leaping up from platform to platform, trying to get to the top of the screen, avoiding the horrible creature which tries to kill you in the process. The tune which plays throughout is downright annoying and the graphics are bland and don't really add anything at all. Okay, so the program might be only a couple of quid, but when compared to the likes of Park Patrol there's just no comparison.”



Wow! Is that Julian Rignall?



Ooo... nice mullet!



And there it is. Park Patrol was available for the same price around this time and was absolutely brilliant. This wasn't. Which is why we rated it 38%.

PRESENTATION 78%

Pleasant enough title screen and in-game presentation. Annoying flaw where control always defaults to keyboard.

GRAPHICS 47%

Minimal – but what's there is reasonable.

SOUND 62%

Two suitable tunes and a few mediocre spot FX.

HOOKABILITY 63%

Mildly addictive with a straightforward objective.

LASTABILITY 35%

Too dull and repetitive to have any great lasting appeal.

VALUE 49%

Cheap – but not overly cheerful.

OVERALL 38%

A glamorous but tedious clone of Frogger.

PETER SHILTON'S HANDBALL MARADONA!

(Grandslam Entertainment)

Created by Unknown

Price: T-£6.95

Genre: Sports, Football

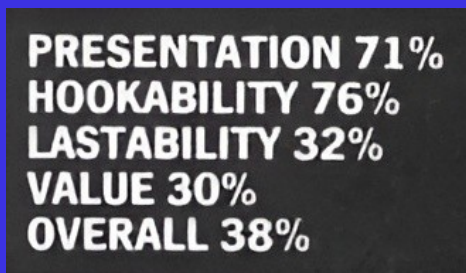
ZZAP!64 rating: 38%



This last game I do remember – but only for its rather odd name, which it was given after the England vs. Argentina World Cup 86 “Hand of God” incident; however, while its name was certainly novel, the game itself wasn’t. Well, it was in that it was a football game in which you were the goalie, but the actual gameplay was pants.

“The biggest drawback is that the program is severely limited,” said I. “It’s great fun trying to keep goal, but once you’ve played a couple of times it becomes apparent that there are a very limited number of attack patterns. There are only three different options and they’re all very similar, offering little in the way of reward or objective. It’s a shame that the program is seven quid - it’s vastly overpriced and not really worth buying. A budget price would have been far more sensible for the couple of hours entertainment that it offers.”

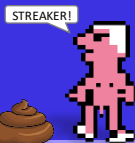
Which is why we only scored it 38%. And to be honest, it would have probably got the same rating even if it was a couple of quid. Because why buy it when you can blah, blah, blah, you know the ropes.



And that wraps it up for this month. I'll be back as usual next issue, looking at the final four worst-scoring games we reviewed in issue 23 of ZZAP!64, and those ones really are stinkers.

See you then!

Jaz





AGENT FILE NO. 000

SECRET SQUIRREL

Welcome dear readers to another instalment of secret messages and quirky elements hidden within Commodore 64 games.



Let's begin with a game that we discussed with its developer way back in issue 58...

CASE FILE 0991-SA-G

GLOBETROTTER



by Ian Potts (*Atlantis Software, 1990*)

After FREEZE64 issue 58 landed, a handful of you got in touch to admit you'd never heard of *Ian Potts* or his games — which, in a way, is exactly what we love to hear. It means we're shining a light on those overlooked corners of the Commodore 64's back catalogue and introducing you to the titles that slipped under the radar.

One such under-the-radar oddity is **Globetrotter**, which is a strange arcade game where you bounce a basketball through a series of increasingly bizarre screens. It's quirky and obscure, and precisely the kind of C64 oddball we enjoy celebrating.

Putting the game itself to one side... our real interest lies in what *Ian Potts* tucked away inside his code.

If you LOAD and FREEZE the game, then hop over to memory location \$1722, you'll uncover a curious little message. At first glance it doesn't seem hidden at all, but give it a moment and its true purpose becomes obvious:

GLOBETROTTER BY IAN POTTS (C)1990
COOLSOFT – WIZARDS OF SOFTWARE
WELCOME HACKER TO THE CODE...

What starts out looking like a perfectly ordinary credit line — the sort of thing you might expect to appear in the game itself — suddenly turns into something far more targeted. That final line is aimed squarely at any hacker bold enough to poke around in Ian's code.

It's a cheeky little message. 😊



```

.0400 0 "nursery rhyme" usr<
.0420 0 "nursery rhyme" usr<
.0440 0 "nursery rhyme" usr<
.0460 0 "nursery rhyme" usr<
.0480 0 "nursery rhyme" usr<
.04a0 35 "object" prg<
.04c0 36 "picture block" prg<
.04e0 0 "picture block" prg<
.0500 0 "picture block" prg<
.0520 0 "picture block" prg<
.0540 0 "picture block" prg<
.0560 0 "picture block" prg<
.0580 0 "picture block" prg<
.05a0 27 "popper" prg<
.05c0 24 "pop graphics" prg<
.05e0 0 "pop graphics" prg<
.0600 0 "pop graphics" prg<
.0620 0 "pop graphics" prg<
.0640 0 "pop graphics" prg<
.0660 0 "pop graphics" prg<
.0680 0 "pop graphics" prg<
.06a0 0 "pop graphics" prg<
.06c0 0 "pop graphics" prg<
.06e0 0 "pop graphics" prg<
.0700 0 "pop graphics" prg<

```

Popper Disk Menu 1.txt

File	Edit	View
0	"NURSERY RHYME"	USR<
0	"* LAND *	USR<
0	"*****"	USR<
10	"NURSERY RHYME"	PRG<
35	"OBJECT"	PRG<
36	"PICTURE BLOCK"	PRG<
0	"*****"	USR<
0	"* POPPER *	USR<
0	"*****"	USR<
27	"POPPER"	PRG<
24	"POP GRAPHICS"	PRG<
0	"*****"	USR<
0	"* PLUS/4 *	USR<

CASE FILE 7891-CY-P

POPPER

by Ian Potts (*Your Commodore*, 1987)

So, here's a little insider intel for you budding secret agents... When you know a coder has a habit of sneaking hidden messages into their work, it's always worth rifling through their other games to see what else they may have tucked away. A good sleuth never checks just one tape.

In Ian's case, though, our investigation came up empty — no bonus messages lurking in any of his other Commodore 64 releases. BUT... our search did uncover something curious inside **Popper**, originally a 1987 type-in and later given away on a *Your Commodore* cover tape in 1990.

So, what did we find? Load up the cover-tape version, FREEZE the game, and then head straight to memory location **\$0400**. Sitting there, like fingerprints left behind at a crime scene, are the remnants of disk files that were still in memory during mastering. You can clearly make out the components that form the game — the main **POPPER** data and the **POP GRAPHICS** block — quietly preserved in RAM like a tiny production footprint.

I'm keeping this case file open because there's still something nagging at me. I want to get to the bottom of that mysterious **NURSERY RHYME** file, and I'm equally curious as to why the disk directory casually drops a **PLUS/4** reference.

Right – time for a peanut butter latte!

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

Until next time...

S. Squirrel

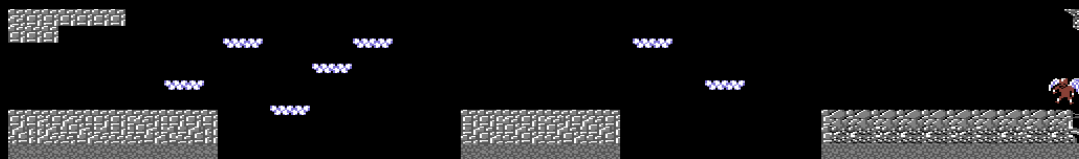


ALL MAPPED OUT...

GHOSTS 'N' GOBLINS

Game maps have long been part of a Commodore 64 gamer's staple diet, so we figured it was high time to dish out a little visual joy in every issue. Each month we'll serve up a full, lovingly stitched-together map for you to drool over. And where better to kick things off than with the legendary arcade classic Ghosts 'n' Goblins, which we so lovingly celebrated in FREEZE64 issue 3.

START



ELITE SYSTEMS LTD PRESENTS

GHOSTS 'N' GOBLINS

PROGRAMMING BY CHRIS BUTLER

GRAPHICS BY CHRIS BUTLER

SOUND EFFECTS BY MARK COCKSEY

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GHOSTS 'N' GOBLINS



WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

Come on... do we really need to spell it out? Evil beastie nabs the Princess, and brave Arthur the Knight charges off to rescue her. Job done.

What most of us remember about G 'n' G is that it sprang from the mind of the talented Chris Butler. After delivering that superb **Commando** conversion for the Commodore 64 just a year earlier, it was only natural for Elite Systems to hand him the reins for G 'n' G. And for me, the result was pure, unfiltered perfection. It's just as brilliant now as it ever was.

VINNY'S VALUABLES:

Them ghosts 'n' goblins can be a right, old rowdy lot, and so you don't want to leave home without the following cheats to help you through the game:

- **INFINITE LIVES:** POKE 2358, 173
- **INVINCIBILITY:** POKE 4170, 10
- **MOON JUMP:** POKE 11466, 249
- **FREEZE TIMER:** POKE 3901,0
- **WEAPON SELECT:** POKE 13608, (1-5)

NOTABLE FEATURES:

- Chris Butler packed an astonishing amount of the game into a single load, but a few stages had to be left out. Those missing levels finally made a return in 2015, when the clever guys at *Nostalgia* released their fully beefed-up edition, **Ghosts 'n' Goblins Arcade**.
- **DL:** csdb.dk/release/?id=139257

GAME INFO

GHOSTS 'n' GOBLINS

Elite Systems

(1986)

By Chris Butler

NO. OF LEVELS: 4



MARTIN WALKER in THE DEVELOPERS' DEN



MARTIN Walker

PRODUCED C64 GAMES FOR:

- Electric Dreams
- Quicksilva
- Thalamus

C64 GAMES WORKED ON:

- Back to the Future
- Chameleon
- Citadel
- Hunter's Moon
- Rupert and the Toymaker's Party

"It had an impossible timescale (a matter of weeks) to be released simultaneously with the film, whereas my other games had many months spent on them honing and polishing."

Luckily for me, I've already had the pleasure of interviewing this issue's guest — way back in FREEZE64 issue 25, when we chatted about the creation of the gorgeous multi-screen platformer *Rupert and the Toymaker's Party*.

This time, though, we're shifting our focus to another iconic character... or rather, an iconic movie. *Back to the Future* takes centre stage as this issue's cover feature game, and Martin joins me once again to talk through its development — and hopefully clear up a few lingering questions surrounding the game's notoriously poor reception.

Hi Martin. A warm welcome back to FREEZE64. I'm really excited that you've agreed to chat about the development of our cover feature game, *Back to the Future*.

I'm honoured to be once again appearing in the pages of FREEZE64!

The honour is all mine... 😊

Now — we all know why we're here... *Back to the Future* (BTTF), which you programmed for *Electric Dreams* back in 1986...

First up, do you remember how *Electric Dreams* secured the rights to such a big movie, and do you remember how much they paid for it?

To be honest, I have no idea of the answers to either of those questions - at the time I was still at the early stages of my game-writing career, and I was just excited to be asked to write this movie tie-in game.

Fair enough...

So — how did you get the gig to produce the game?

I got a phone call from Rod Cousens, the MD of *Electric Dreams*, to ask if I'd be interested in the project, largely I think because I'd had such positive reviews for my C64 game *Rupert and the Toymaker's Party* the previous year (originally commissioned by the same Rod Cousens, this time on behalf of Quicksilva).

Ah — *Rupert and the Toymaker's Party*... you chatted with me about its development in FREEZE64 issue 25. I adore that game. So beautifully designed and fun to play — if a little difficult.

Mad inventor,
Doctor Emmett Brown →



Anyway – *BTTF*... were you a fan of the movie?

Of course I was a huge fan, once I'd seen the film.

Now — it's no secret that the game failed to make much of an impact. Plenty of players were left unimpressed, especially considering the movie was a box-office phenomenon. I remember you telling me before that you were handed a completely unreasonable deadline to get the game finished. How long did you actually have to make it?

The almost impossible timescale I still have in my head is eleven weeks from initial conception to delivery, because the game release absolutely had to coincide with the release of the film itself, to maximise sales potential.

Eleven weeks. That really says it all. It wasn't just a tight schedule; it was a full-blown rush job imposed from above. It's wild that they were willing to bundle up whatever could be produced in that tiny window and shove it out the door just to cash in on the film's momentum. And of course, the blame ends up landing on you, when the reality is painfully clear: no one could have delivered a polished, fully realised game under those conditions.

You did what anyone could reasonably do in that ridiculous timeframe. We know you're capable of producing exceptional games, but with the clock stacked against you from day one, it's hardly surprising the final product turned out the way it did!

And so, you began building the game entirely from scratch. Where were you actually based during this period; were you working out of the *Electric Dreams* offices, or somewhere else?

I worked from my office at home where I created all my games. I'd spent so many years previously working in factories and offices for other people that it was wonderful to work from my own peaceful environment with no distractions.

Tell me about it! I've had the privilege of doing that for the past 16 years. It's bliss.

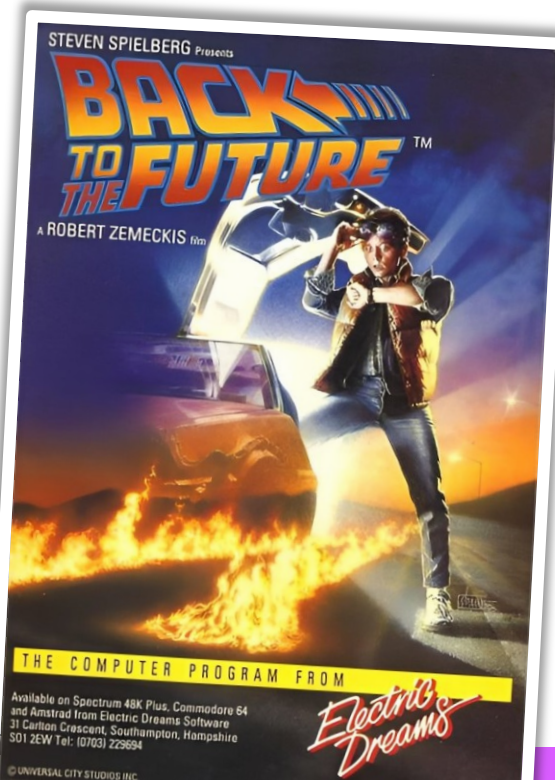
So, how did you go about deciding what kind of game you wanted *BTTF* to be?

*Well, I'd only had previous experience of arcade-style action games, but Mark Eyles (co-designer, appointed by *Electric Dreams*) wanted us to create an adventure game set across multiple locations, so we came up with a compromise combining some real-time interaction within a side-scrolling main area that also connected to a small number of connected rooms relevant to the film's story.*

And the gameplay has many references to the movie plot. How did you go about gathering those; was the spec provided to you?

*Well, given the bogglingly short timescale, *Electric Dreams* actually arranged for Mark and I (along with our wives), to attend a private screening of *BTTF* before its official release. This was a huge buzz for the four of us, sitting in a plush cinema on our own before anyone else in the UK had seen the film!*

Wow – that's amazing! What a treat for you all.



The original *Electric Dreams* poster advert →

So – with the plot all planned out, you began programming the game. Which tools did you use to develop and design it?

What I used is largely lost within the mists of time I'm afraid. I do, however, remember that I'd previously bought some sort of 8-bit video digitiser hardware, along with a second-hand surveillance camera, so I could grab video elements from the film's publicity photos to incorporate into the game, such as the photos of Marty and his family, and his image and the film's logo on the loading screen.

Ah – that actually brings me neatly to the digitising side of things – something Andrew Fisher and I were both keen to understand. Can you tell us more about the process?

The second-hand surveillance camera was bought for £30 from a local office security shop, but sadly I can't remember the make of C64 video digitiser I bought, despite searching the archives online.

And how did you go about creating the dissolve effect of the photos?

That effect was a timed line by line scrambling/unscrambling of the video data to mimic (within C64 limitations) the dissolving photos in the film.

And, as you mentioned, you also created the bitmap loading screen that included a digitised photo of Michael J. Fox?

Yes, it gave me practice using the digitiser, which was important, since we knew that video digitising was going to be a key element.

It's a fab loading screen!

So – with regards to planning out the game and implementing the development process... how did that all work?

We just brainstormed as we went along, trying to come up with game-playing elements that uniquely tied into the storyline of the film itself.

← **George,
George McFly**

The room-based adventure game concept of course suggested that we needed to be able to pick up, use and drop objects, but the dissolving photo concept from the film tied that all together perfectly, letting the player see the real-time results of their object/person interactions.

It's a neat idea and works really well.

Did you have any other ideas that you wanted to build into the game?

To be honest, the timescale was so short, and the deadline so immovable, that we sadly had to abandon any subsequent ideas that we felt we didn't have time to develop properly.

Let's get into the audio side of things...

Now – we all know you're an amazing SID musician... so why is it that you didn't create the music for the game?

Well, you're probably noticing a theme developing here (pun intended), but we were so down to the wire time-wise that Electric Dreams tried to provide us with slightly more development time by farming out any elements they could to third parties. So, the title music, plus the in-game music and game over sequence were created by someone else and slotted in as and when we were able before release.

That's a real shame because I'm positive that you would have done a much better job with the music...

So – that's the music... but what of the graphics... I love the character sprites in the game, and they are nicely animated. How did you go about creating those?

I used the same sprite editor that I'd employed for my Rupert sprites, and had also been studying flip-frame cartoon animation movement for some time, so thankfully I was up to speed with that already. However, given the C64 eight-sprite limitation, I sadly couldn't use the hi-res 'outline' sprite on top of multi-coloured background sprites, as used for my more detailed Rupert character.

Who are
you?



Yes – they would have looked amazing. I remember a few reviews stating that the BTTF sprites were a little chunky. Those outlines would have sorted that out. But hey, I love the sprites... especially the way they walk.

So, with *BTTF* being such a rush-job, did any bugs end up sneaking into the final build that you're aware of — and are there any cheats or hidden touches tucked away in there that you can reveal to us?

Absolutely none of the above as far as I know - are you beginning to appreciate how up against the clock we were? (Answers on a postcard please, if anyone still remembers those).

Looking back on it all, you have told me a few times in previous discussions that you found the game to be soul-destroying. Can you elaborate a little on that, and was there **any** part of the game development that you enjoyed?

BTTF wasn't soul-destroying in itself, just that we were so tied to the crippling deadline that we didn't have any time to enhance or expand our original game idea, as novel as that was. The soul-destroying part was that I went on to write several well-reviewed games that each took many months to develop and tweak to perfection, yet none of these earned me anywhere near as much as *BTTF* did, that I had to rush out in 11 weeks from start to finish.

Ah – seeing as you mention money... apart from *Hunter's Moon*, you previously mentioned to me that, "*BTTF* still made me more money than any of my other games, due to the film tie-in." How much money did you make from it?

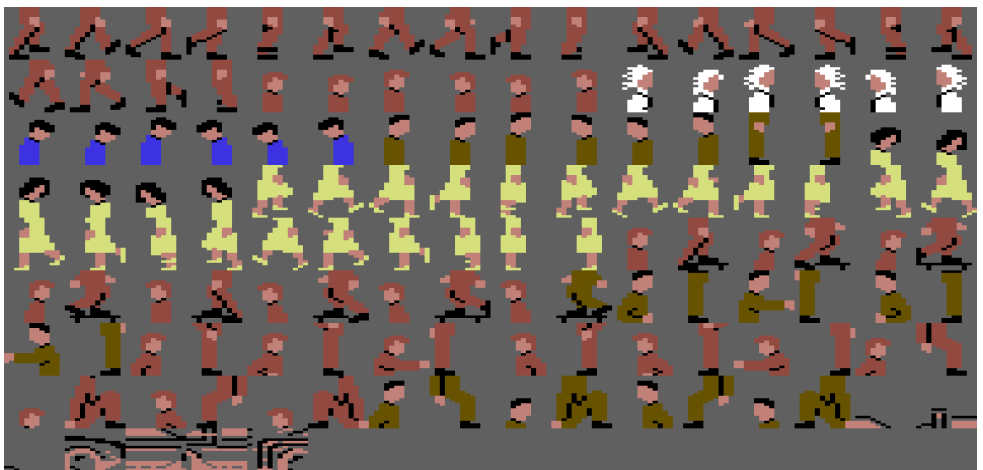
As far as I remember, I earned around £12k in total for it, which was double what I made from the original *Hunter's Moon* royalty advance (and which subsequently earned me not a penny more).

Wow – that's crazy! Now I understand why *BTTF* felt so soul-destroying for you!

And at the end of that stressful time, how did you feel once the game development was complete and you handed *Back to the Future* over for duplication. Did you have any doubts about it?

There was no time for doubts, just a huge sigh of relief that we managed to finish the project on time.

And so, the game was released on schedule and the gaming press at that time weren't too impressed with your efforts. *ZZAP!64* magazine gave it a low score of 32% (ouch!) stating, "*The film is great, more than can be said for the game,*" and *Your Commodore* magazine gave it 5/10 and said, "*Not so much Back to the Future as back to the drawing board.*"...



↑ Martin's character sprites along with the DeLorean, which appears during the ending.

How did you feel about all these low-scoring reviews and comments?

I can understand the ratings and comments, and of course my previous and subsequent games all got significantly better reviews and ratings, which was hugely gratifying given the huge amount of work I'd put into those. The huge frustration for me was that BTTF could have had more depth, variety and polish, given a more realistic timeframe.

I genuinely feel for you. To be handed such a golden opportunity – a game tied to a film that would go on to become an all-time classic – and then shackled with an utterly impossible deadline... it's heartbreaking. That kind of pressure would crush anyone.

So, the BIG question is, if you NOW had an unlimited amount of time to change anything about it to make it better, what would you do?

I've never thought about this before, but pulling ideas out of the hat we could have featured the clock and lightning strike as an action sub-game, had more locations, more objects, more characters, more interaction...

Also – if you got your hands on a DeLorean Time Machine and went back to 1985/86, what would you say to yourself as you were developing the game?

I would say "think very seriously before accepting this commission, because despite the undoubted honour of being asked, the time restrictions could mean that you're unable to do your original concept full justice."

But saying all that... it does appear that C&VG magazine quite liked BTTF and scored it 7/10 saying, "BTTF is a nicely presented and cleverly thought-out game. But will it capture the imagination of games players currently caught up in the all-action Commando/Rambo trend?" What do you make of THAT?

I was grateful for that analysis, as they obviously spotted the originality of our game concept, and I'm sure a lot of people must have enjoyed the game after enjoying the BTTF film.

Looking at the game today, how do you actually feel about it?

It's novel, fun and cute, and I'm still pleased with the basic concept.

Do you still own a physical copy ["I do"]?

No, I sold off all my various computers decades ago, and probably gave away all of my games at the same time.

Two years after *Electric Dreams* released the game, *Back to the Future* resurfaced on Firebird's £1.99 Silver Range. Did you receive any money from that re-release, or was it purely a publisher-side deal?

I didn't even know it had ever been re-released, so no change there then, and certainly no more change in my pocket ;-)

Typical.

I think we can finally lay this one to rest and focus on what truly matters: you went on to create some of the finest games ever released on the Commodore 64. That's the legacy worth remembering. I'd say we're finally done with this chapter. (B²)

I suspect I'm supposed to say 'thank you and goodnight' at this point, so I will. Thank you and goodnight! ;-)

-----===== # -----

A huge THANK YOU to the mighty *Martin Walker* for sharing his frank story about creating *Back to the Future* on the Commodore 64. We'll no doubt have Martin back soon to chat about one of his more successful C64 titles.

Next up, we sit down with another C64 coding legend: the one and only *Shaun Southern*. He drops by to talk through the making of *P.O.D. for Mastertronic*. It's a deep-dive interview you absolutely won't want to miss! ■



LET'S HACK... BACK TO THE FUTURE

If my cover feature didn't already give it away, let me spell it out: playing *Back to the Future* can be... well... a tad frustrating.

Luckily, being the game hacker that I am, I figured you might appreciate a few handy cheats to take the edge off and keep your DeLorean firmly on the road.

So, buckle up — because when this thing hits 88 miles per hour, you're gonna see some seriously helpful cheats!

> BIFF CAN'T HURT YOU

One thing that's always driven me up the wall with this game is how Biff keeps slugging you and flattening Marty over and over, until it feels like you're barely making any progress in the game. So, armed with **ICU64** running under **Vice 2.4**, I played through a few encounters and watched for any changes in the game's code whenever Biff lands a punch.

Almost instantly, **\$1D04** jumps from **\$00** to **\$FF**, which looks very much like the "knock Marty down" trigger. Good — that's our culprit.

Next step: load the game, FREEZE it with an *Action Replay cartridge (ARC)*, and run a HUNT for any routines that reference **\$1D04**. One of them at **\$14B8** checks for that change and then branches off to the "Marty hits the deck" sequence. To stop that happening, we simply bounce the code straight back where it came from with a *ReTurn Subroutine* (**\$60** = **RTS**). So — load the game, start playing, then FREEZE it using an *ARC*, and enter the following:

POKE 5304,96 or \$1468 60

UNFREEZE the game, start playing, and Biff's punch never connects. Marty stays upright. Job done.

When this baby hits 88 miles per hour... you're gonna see some serious shit!



> TUNE SELECT

So, not only do we love sharing our exclusive cheats, but every now and then we also slip in a few cheeky **POKES** that tweak the gameplay in fun little ways. And this time, you'll be able to switch between the game's two tunes whenever the mood takes you.

- For 'The Power of Love'

POKE 11421, 0 or \$2C9D 00

- For 'Johnny B. Goode'

POKE 11421, 1 or \$2C9D 01

And that's not all! You can also control the speed of the tune with the following **POKE**:

POKE 49600, 1-10 or \$C1C0 01-0A

The higher the number you **POKE**, the slower the tune will play. For example, **POKE 49600,10**.

> GAME ENDING

How do you fancy seeing the game ending without having to play through the game? Well — again, we have a few trigger points within the game code, that if you set them the correct value, then they will fire up the ending.

- **POKE 9795, 255 or \$2643 FF**

- **POKE 9801, 0 or \$2649 00**

- **POKE 11818, 255 or \$2E2A FF**



That's your lot for now. See how you get on, and feel free to give me a shout if you need any further **POKES** ■

Your Monthly Hit of Fresh C64 Gaming Action!

BYTE★SIZED



It's time to dive into the latest Commodore 64 releases, play each one for a quick five-minute blast, give you our first impressions, and then leave the rest for you to uncover.

First up, an old puzzle classic that has been revisited by the great Roman Werner...

> TETRISO.

DEVELOPED BY: Roman Werner

DL/BUY: romwer.itch.io/tetriso

PRICE: Name your own price



TetrISO is an action-packed puzzle treat for the Commodore 64, taking classic Tetris gameplay and flipping it – quite literally – into a whole new dimension.

You're building a tower piece-by-piece on a 4x4 isometric grid, slotting chunky 3D-style blocks into place as they fall from above. Rotate, slide, and snap each shape into the gaps below, just like the original... but with a skewed perspective that keeps your brain buzzing.

And the real twist? You're not just spinning the falling pieces; you can rotate the entire tower clockwise to reveal hidden angles and fresh opportunities. It's Tetris with a spatial mind-bend, and it works brilliantly on the C64.

INITIAL REACTION:

LOVE IT! A GREAT CHALLENGE.

> LEMMINGS RELOADED.

DEVELOPED BY: Lunatic Lab Team

DL/BUY: [lunaticlab.itch.io/](http://lunaticlab.itch.io/lemmings-reloaded)

lemmings-reloaded

PRICE: FREE!



Hands up — who loves **Lemmings**? Truth is, that's basically everyone. It's one of gaming's most enduring puzzle classics, winning hearts on every gaming platform it touched.

But this time around, we have a completely FREE fan-made tribute called **Lemmings Reloaded** that brings the *DMA Design* classic back to the C64 with style. The game reimagines the spirit of the original *Psygnosis/Sony* legacy while nodding to the 1994 *E&E Software* C64 version. The game boasts 123 levels – three more than the Amiga original – blending iconic stages, cross-system conversions, and brand-new exclusives. And as you play, 30 SID tracks unlock, which can be enjoyed in the built-in Jukebox, giving the whole experience a rich, hour-long audio backdrop.

A new optional Bronze/Silver/Gold star-rating system adds replay value, with every achievement saved directly on the cartridge. The LEVEL SELECT menu lets you revisit any stage you've reached, check your star progress, and even enter classic access codes.





I'll be totally straight with you: I've been hooked on this for months. Programmer extraordinaire and FREEZE64 subscriber *Jörg Karwath* kindly slipped me a pre-release copy, and from that moment I just couldn't put it down. I genuinely haven't sunk this many hours or had this much fun with **Lemmings** since my first Amiga playthrough back in 1991.

Jörg's work on the Commodore 64 version is nothing short of outstanding: tight controls, smooth flow, and a level of polish that feels almost unreal on 8-bit hardware. Add in *John Henderson's* gorgeous visuals, which fit the game like a glove, and you've already got something special. Then *Nordischsound's* audio lands, which includes a spot-on SID rendition of 'Popcorn', and the whole thing just sings.

And before anyone wonders: nope, I didn't use a mouse – though the option is there. I played the entire thing on a standard *Competition Pro* joystick, and it worked beautifully.

Lemmings Reloaded is everything you'd hoped for running on a real C64, and it's free!

INITIAL REACTION:

A C64 MASTERPIECE!

> GORDON BENNET JNR.

DEVELOPED BY: Stacy Bates

DL/BUY: T.B.C.

PRICE: T.B.C.



Yeah – I'm definitely NOT cutting the grass!



Back in FREEZE64 issue 85, we spotlighted **WAITERWAITER!**, the debut Commodore 64 game from subscriber and all-round top chap, *Stacy Bates*. He's now back with his second title: **GORDON BENNET JNR**, a modern twist on *Jeff Minter's* classic **Hover Bover**.

This time, Gordon uses a Jet Eyed Flyer (JEF) drone to map out the lawn, while the Mobile Intelligent Nature Trimmer (MINT) follows the route and does the cutting.

Naturally, chaos ensues: the grumpy neighbour hoses you if you stray too close to the fences, wasps attack, birds poop, moles wreck your flowers, and a lazy cat sits on MINT, slowing everything to a crawl.

I've had the pleasure of playtesting the game for Stacy and offering a few suggestions along the way, and it's shaping up to be a spot-on tribute to Jeff's original game.

INITIAL REACTION:

A GREAT HOMAGE. LOTS OF FUN!

-----== # ==-----

That lot will keep you entertained for a while. We'll have another, little batch of newbie Commodore 64 games for you in the next issue. ■



HUNTING THE DEMO DEMONS

■ TITLE: THE LAB | BY: ELYSIUM | DATE: 06/06/26 | DL: csdb.dk/release/?id=262146



There's something bubbling away in the C64 demo scene right now. Not just the usual healthy crop of demo wizards doing their thing — no, the last few months have been next-level. The demos have been wild and downright unbelievable. Something is definitely happening... and it's seriously exciting.

Which brings us neatly to yet another jaw-dropping creation. In FREEZE64 issue 84, we showcased **THE HAT** by *Fairlight* and *Genesis Project* — easily one of the most impressive demos in years. And now, hot on its heels, comes **THE LAB**, this time it's a three-disk-side demo from the ever-inventive *Elysium* — which they produced on 6 June 2026 for the *Commodore 64 Demo Competition at X'2026*.

I haven't seen this demo for a couple of months, and so I'm eager and excited to get it loaded up and share some of its visual and audio delights with you. First things first... **LOAD"\$"8**.

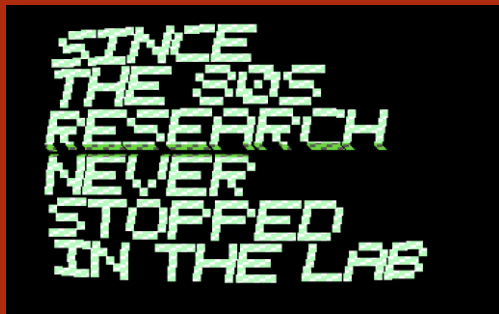


As ever, each disk boasts a beautifully crafted PETSCII directory — the artistry never fails to impress. Smart ideas from even smarter designers.

Let's get this show on the road. A quick **LOAD"\$",8,1** and the bouncy SID tune springs into life, ushering in a PETSCII chequered wipe that melts beautifully into an *Elysium* bitmap banner wrapped in a slick, colour-shifting visual flourish.

Before we dive any deeper, I have a confession: I've never been the best at precisely naming every visual trick these demos pull off. Thankfully, this production lends a helping hand, complete with narration that explains precisely what we're seeing on screen...

But here's the thing: the narration doesn't just describe what we're seeing and spells out the usual limits of demo coding, then promptly shows **The Lab** smashing straight through those constraints right before our eyes. It truly is a lab experiment!



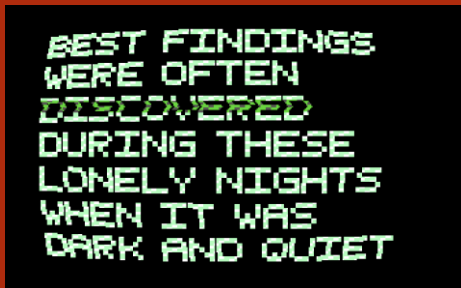
One effect that absolutely floors me — and really sets the tone — is the Eighties green-screen monitor sequence. It looks uncannily like someone has filmed an actual CRT: the screen curvature, the soft grain, the whole analogue vibe. It's extraordinary, and genuinely a wonder to behold. And that's just the start!

Obviously, I can't cram the entire demo into a two-page spread, so here's a very small slice of the magic it has to offer...

The first experiment to be presented is one of a bitmap stretching effect where a multicolour bitmap is horizontally shifted in a rhythmic, wave-like pattern. It appears that the theoretical limits for the shift *was* 48 pixels, but **The Lab** has different ideas...



The clever bods at *Elysium* appear to have smashed the previous assumption with their '88 PIXELS TECHTECH MULTICOLOUR BITMAP.' Pretty impressive, if you ask me.

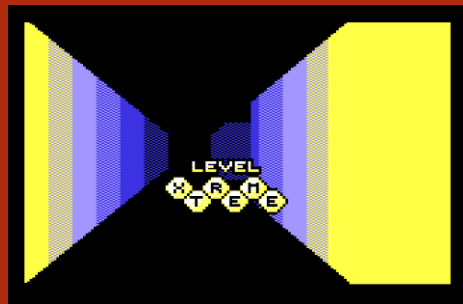


I absolutely love one of the intermission screens (see above) that explains how C64 demo coders stumble upon their breakthroughs — **"BEST FINDINGS WERE OFTEN DISCOVERED DURING THESE LONELY NIGHTS WHEN IT WAS DARK AND QUIET."**

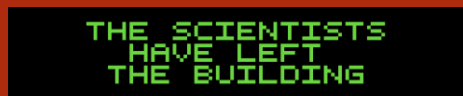
It perfectly captures the spirit of **The Lab**: a project built on experimentation, pushing familiar C64 visual effects past their supposed limits and showing just how far the machine can still be taken.

And the effects just keep rolling in, paired with some of the most gorgeous, colourful bitmaps and the coolest SID tunes to accompany it all.

Throughout the whole demo we're treated to the most amazing 3D vector effects with objects spinning in and out of view, moving into the no-man's-land borders, and being filled with the maximum 16 colours, which is all pretty mind-blowing for a standard Commodore 64.



And for me, the pièce de résistance is a beautifully crafted 3D maze — a technical feat that makes you wonder whether *Incentive Software's* **FREE escape** games (**Castle Master**, **Driller**, **Dark Side**) could be pushed to be faster and smoother. Never say never!



IT SIZZLES!

As with every jaw-dropping Commodore 64 demo we showcase in **FREEZE64**, there's never quite enough time or page space to cover all the wonders packed into each disk side. The clever chaps at *Elysium* haven't just delivered something spectacular; they have also helped us noobs appreciate the visual wizardry they're pulling off in **The Lab**.

I urge you to watch all three sides of the demo, and remember: every single thing you're witnessing is running on a bog-standard Commodore 64.

Treat yourself and pay a visit to **The Lab**... You won't regret it!

BANGER!



It's time to head into...

THE MOULDY CUPBOARD

We kick off this instalment with good news: the Mouldy Cupboard has been on its best behaviour for the past few months, and not a single speck of mould has appeared. Result!

I reckon it's safe enough for me to poke my head inside and see what forgotten relic I can drag out for us all to inspect.

Okay — here's a game I haven't loaded in at least 40 years... **CAVERN RUN 64** from *Bubble Bus Software*. I don't actually remember the game itself, but what I do recall is that around 1983, *Bubble Bus* taught me a valuable lesson: never judge a game by its cover. Their releases usually sported hand-painted artwork slapped onto a plain white background with a corner-clipped title. Distinctive, yes — you could spot a *Bubble Bus* game a mile off, but not exactly the sort of packaging that screamed "Buy me!"

I only really started paying attention to *Bubble Bus* when I decided to hedge my bets with **Hustler**, because playing Pool on a Commodore 64 sounded right up my street, and it absolutely was. I still play it today.

But **Cavern Run 64**? I genuinely don't remember a thing...



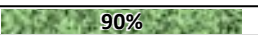
MOULDY PROFILE

NAME: CAVERN RUN 64

PUBLISHER: Bubble Bus Software **YEAR:** 1983

PROGRAMMED BY: The Computer Room

GAME TYPE: Arcade (miscellaneous)

MOULD-O-METER:  90%

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

The object of the game is to get as far into the cavern as you can. You must keep your fuel above zero (amount of fuel you have scrolls up along left side). Select F1, F3, F5 or F7 to start the game. F1 gives you the most amount of fuel. You control the

ship using CRSR (left and right) key to go left and 'Z' to go right, or if using a joystick then move the stick left or right. You automatically go down, you just need to concentrate on left and right. To get additional fuel just bump into the objects marked 'fuel'. The game ends when you crash into anything. Your score is based on how far down the cavern you have travelled. Hit space bar to play again.



Let's get one thing straight: I didn't write those tedious instructions — that's exactly what appears on the cassette inlay. Those are the official instructions! Talk about putting you off a game before you've even loaded it!

LOADING BLANKS...

I'm not exactly bracing myself for any lavish bitmap screens or funky loading tunes here because *Bubble Bus* were firmly in the "blank screen and wait" camp back in 1983, and most of our Mouldy Cupboard finds tend to prove that point.

And sure enough, my suspicions were spot-on: four minutes and fifteen seconds of pure, unbroken, blank-screen boredom. Not a flicker. Not a beep. Just you, the tape, and the slow march of time. How on *earth* did we get through all that tedious loading time! For me, it was a mountain of cups of tea.

BASIC TITLES...

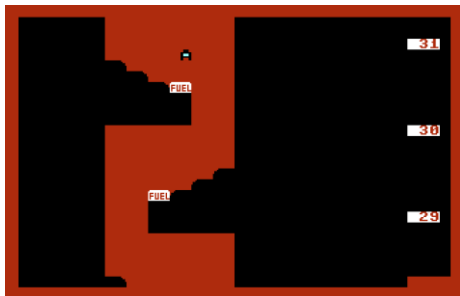
Okay — so it's 1983, and let's be honest: very little on the Commodore 64 was truly amazing unless it came from the likes of *Paul Norman*, *Jeff Minter*, or *Bruce Carver*. Sadly, **Cavern Run** doesn't buck that trend.

Before the titles even materialise, you can see the graphics quietly sputtering into life, which is reminiscent of those old BASIC listings we used to type in, where the user-defined characters had to initialise before anything resembling a game could begin.

Then the title screen shuffles into view (see the screenshot on the opposite page), and it absolutely reeks of PETSCII. The whole thing looks stitched together from character graphics, and my enthusiasm is already packing its bags. Big PETSCII title, a standard copyright line, and a prompt telling you to hit F1 to F7. There's nothing here to linger over, so I tap F1 and brace myself for the worst!

DEEP INTO THE CAVERN...

Up pops a red screen and border, followed by the game screen wiping itself into existence. I think it's meant to represent the cavern you're descending into, but the alarm bells are ringing, because this looks uncannily like something I could have cobbled together in BASIC back in 1983 when I first got my C64!



As this screenshot shows, your tiny craft plummets downward through a jagged cavern dotted with ledges. These ledges hold your precious fuel pods, and you'll need as many as you can hit as you sink deeper into the gloom. Your fuel reserves are shown by decreasing values that run down the right-hand side of the screen — even though the instructions incorrectly stated that it "scrolls up along [the] left side." Oops!

Almost immediately, I slam my craft straight into the first ledge I meet. A grand total of 33 miles travelled. I'm using the joystick in port 2, and the controls feel clunky — as if there's a slight delay between thought and movement. Maybe it's just me.

Second attempt... 74 miles. Progress, technically, but not much. Each game lasts about ten seconds and I'm beginning to wonder if I'm missing something critical that will help me progress more easily and further? Is there more to this than a BASIC freefall and a sub-standard fuel counter?





Nope. It really is as basic as it looks. Just steer your tiny craft left and right and grab fuel pods. That's the whole experience.

It quickly becomes weirdly hypnotic, too. Your brain drifts off and muscle memory takes over: LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT, RIGHT, POD... LEFT, RIGHT, POD... ZZZZZzzzzzz zzz zz z...

The difficulty comes from the game's clunky mechanics. The "scrolling" cavern is just PETSCII being redrawn line by line, which wipes your craft each time. The programmer then redraws the ship, resulting in a constant flicker that makes your craft look like it's glitching in and out of reality. *It's dire! I can't play it any longer! Aaaarrgh!*

It's time for...

VINNY'S MOULDY VERDICT

Do you remember those early-Eighties BASIC cavern-flyers where a tiny spacecraft wobbled through a jagged tunnel of user-defined characters? I had one on my TRS-80 in 1982, and this game is exactly that — right down to the same clunky movement.

Honestly, it feels like someone took an old BASIC listing, ran it through a compiler, and sold the machine-code output as a "new" game.

BASIC game; BASIC graphics; BASIC sound. Back into the cupboard it goes! No regrets!!

---== # ===---

Grab a copy of the game from our EXTRAS page via the www.FREEZE64.co.uk website.

We'll have another quirky Commodore 64 game in the next issue, so don't miss it ■



↑ This is it! There's nothing else visual to see of the game. Piss-poor graphics a la BASIC.



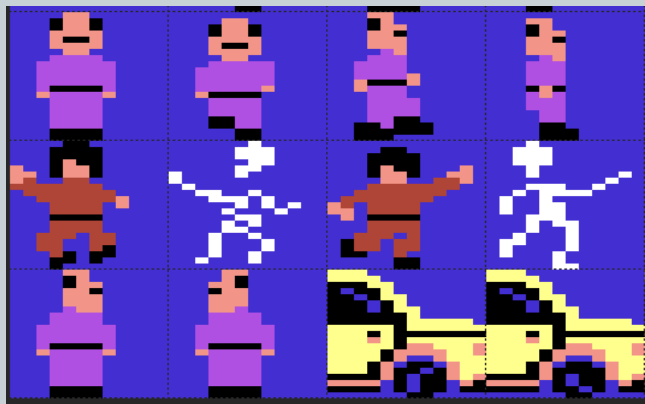
- РДЯТ 17 -

Welcome to Part 17 of our development diary for Operation Vostoka, which is a brand-new Commodore 64 game being developed by *Chris Stanley* and *Roy Widding* of Megastyle.

Chris has now reached a point in the game's development where most of the assets are in place, and it's time to start building the core routines and scripting that will pull everything together...

•Friday 7th February, 2025

So – with all these new sprites and objects recently added, I had to spend a few hours today on general housekeeping within the game. Tying things together, adding names and descriptions to all the latest crop of objects, and linking all the new combo objects together to apply the necessary bonuses.



↑ Additional sprites are added to the mix.

I've now reached a point where most of the game assets seem to be in place, so the bulk of the remaining work will be scripting everything to allow it all to work together as it should.

Having said that, there are still a few major core routines I have yet to work on. I'd like to add a briefing screen at the start of the game to outline the mission objectives and also a debrief after a successful or unsuccessful conclusion. I'm thinking some sort of early Eighties teletype clackety-clacking some text output to the screen should serve the purpose quite nicely.

I also need to think about collision between the player and enemy sprites, and some sort of enemy logic that will allow them to randomly spawn around the game, give chase, and ultimately fight if they collide with the player!

• Wednesday 26th February, 2025

The core movement routines for the player and enemies have been in place for quite a while now, although I have left all of the enemy sprites disabled until I'm ready to work on their logic properly. Suffice to say, it's one of those elements of the game I've been putting off for a long time now! One day soon I'll have to bite the bullet and get stuck into it. Today, though, I at least need to get those baddies randomly spawning on the hall screens.

AgentSpriteData

```
!byte %00000010, 1, 61, 69, $08+SPRITE_MEMOFFSET, $02
!byte %00000100, 0, 225, 197, $26+SPRITE_MEMOFFSET, $00
!byte %00001000, 0, 92, 133, $26+SPRITE_MEMOFFSET, $00
!byte %00010000, 0, 190, 133, $26+SPRITE_MEMOFFSET, $00
!byte %00100000, 0, PiotrXhome, 229, $26+SPRITE_MEMOFFSET, $00
```

↑ The data table defining every game character.

When I first started coding the player movement, I had the inspired idea to use exactly the same routine for moving all the enemy agents as well. Having one unified system is much more efficient and also saves memory. What I did was to create one master table containing the data for all the game characters. The first line contains the player data, followed by the three regular enemy agents and finally Piotr, the vault guard. Each table entry contains every piece of information needed to position, display, and move any given character.

Each line of this table contains the six parameters that define each of the five characters. The table is read every frame, and the parameters are used to update all of the active on-screen sprites.

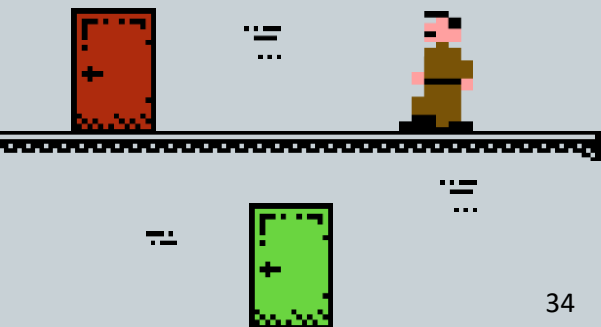
Firstly, there is a mask value which is used to enable or disable a particular sprite. Following this is a control byte specifying whether this character is active (\$01), inactive/unspawned (\$00), currently spawning (\$FF), or fighting (\$FE). The next two bytes define the X & Y position of this sprite. Following this is a pointer to the current animation frame, and finally we have a movement request command. The first digit of this, or 'high nybble', is for LEFT/RIGHT movement. The second digit, or 'low nybble', is for UP/DOWN movement.

For the player, these movement request directions are provided from the joystick input. For all enemies, they will be generated from the enemy logic subroutine. You know, the one I have spectacularly failed to code so far!

Currently, I can manually enter a movement request for any of the enemies within my assembler, enable that character and watch him merrily toddle off in that direction, so I know that bit works fine. My main job for today is to write a separate logic routine for Piotr and get him to guard the vault door the way he's supposed to.

Using the common system I just described, I added some extra conditions that relate only to Piotr. Specifically, he will only be found in the basement of the second hall screen, outside the vault door. When idle he will stand guard, occasionally glancing left and right. If you approach him without wearing a disguise then he will give chase. If you evade him by climbing a ladder then he will return to his post.

Phew! We're so close to the end now, with only a few instalments left to share. Our Operation Vostoka development diary continues in the next issue with the entry for Wednesday 26th February. Don't miss it! ■





■ Tony Brice

MY COMMODORE 64 HEAVEN



We take a fly-on-the-wall look at our **FREEZE64** Readers' Commodore 64 collections.

We're off to Honiton, which is in the lovely county of Devon, UK. I have visited this area many a time, but this is the first time I've stopped off at Tony Brice's house to check out his C64 Man Cave...

Hi Tony. Nice Man Cave you have here. So – when did you start collecting C64 gear?

When the C64 Mini was released. I ended up with two C64 Minis as I got one as a gift and bought my own on release day.

That's spooky... so did I! 😊

I also have a full-size C64 and VIC-20, and the Amiga Mini.

What was the first C64 game you purchased?

Mastertronic's **1985**. I wish I hadn't!

Ah – it's a tough game. So, what are your two favourite C64 games in your collection?

Vinny, you're killing me. How can I choose only two? Ok, so **Paradroid** is my all-time favourite – I've always loved that game, but only actually cleared the ship once. Second, it's a tough call between **Mercenary** and **Enigma Force**.



And what's the worst game in your collection?

Bionic Granny, which I bought on the assumption that it might be good. I think I got **BMX Racers** on the same day so you can imagine how letdown I was. I moaned at **David Darling** on Twitter about these two games, but he just blamed Richard. I've got over my disappointment now.

Let's get on to hardware... what's your favourite C64 gadget that you own?

I've not got it yet, but a friend made sure that he ordered two of the C64 handheld consoles that are coming out in October because we both wanted the special edition one. I'm really looking forward to trying that out, but I hope the screen is big enough to be able to play games well on it. The eyes aren't as sharp as they used to be.

And finally – what's your most recent purchase that you've added to your Commodore 64 collection?

I'm hoping books count here, as I got **John Dale's** book "6502 for Beginners" to support his YouTube channel as I enjoy his tutorials.



We'll have another **FREEZE64** Reader sharing their **C64 HEAVEN** collection in the next issue. ■

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