

ADVENTURE PROBE

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to issue 5 of 'Probe'.

This month sees more changes as Sandra has taken over complete responsibility for Probe, while Pat is concentrating on adventure writing and marketing.

However, Pat will still be taking an interest in Probe, and will enjoy hearing from you. Meanwhile she will be doing her best to bring you details of new releases, especially those in the budget range.

A new label to watch for soon is 'Medallion' from Incentive who will soon be introducing a range of new adventures written with BAC. These will be around the £8 mark, and from our information so far, will be well worth looking at. More news as we receive it!

Sandra & Pat

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PBM and Friends

This month we start off with some very interesting news in the PBM world. Time Patterns, the company responsible for Starglobe, arguably the best Sci-Fi based PBM game around, have just launched Starglobe 4, the latest in a line of well managed and highly entertaining series of Sci-Fi PBM games. Start up packs, containing details of the game and a questionnaire to fill in about one's starship, costs £2.00, which includes a launch into the game in response to the questionnaire. Subsequent moves cost £1.90.

However, more interesting to the home computer user, is the launch of a Play-By-Modem game called 'Elementals', which should be up and running by the autumn. Details are a bit sketchy at the moment, but for more information I suggest you contact them at Time Patterns PBM/PBT Games, 97 Devonshire Road, Birmingham, B20 2PG.

The second British PBM Convention is being organised, the first was held in London in February, again details are a bit thin on the ground but I hope to bring you more information when I get it.

One of the most fascinating, and most demanding aspects of PBMinig is the ability to join/form alliances with the many other players in your respective games. Almost all PBM games include the forming of alliances, whether they are formed by single players into a small group of adventurers, or by large armies into supportive treaties, to help each other when in need of it. This in turn creates a lot of 'stabbing in the back', spying, where members of one alliance, either change sides or slip information to opposing alliances. A great deal of thought goes into the forming of alliances, protecting the pool of information from infiltrating enemies is just one of the many problems, and joys, of forming your own alliance.

However, you can always join one of the older alliances in your own particular game. They are always open to expansion, and the larger membership the alliance has, the more power it will control and more information you will be able to get from it.

The main way of finding out which alliances your game has is through the many newsletters available. Nearly every PBM game has a newsletter, regularity depends on the game, but they are usually available bi-monthly. The newsletters are filled with information about the game, usually written by actual players rather than GMs. However, the main use of the newsletter is for players to contact other players, either through letters, alliances or even art work (which is usually very good indeed).

This month's review is The Enchiridon from Sloth Enterprises. Like most games from Sloth, The Enchiridon is Fantasy based (Tolkiensque) and the buzz around the PBM world is that it is the nearest PBM game to a computer adventure yet devised. The main plot of the game is to find the Book of Menkar, known as the Enchiridon, and return with it to your home city.

In many respects the game is a lot like Saturnalia, another Sloth Fantasy based game, reviewed last month. However, in The Enchiridon you take control of a leader (you) and from two to seven followers - you can choose how many within this limit.

You must first choose a city, from a list of ten, all with their own characteristics, which will determine certain aspects of the teams characteristics. The game will be played by fifty players, divided into ten groups of five, each group coming from one of the ten cities.

This opens up the need to contact each group from your city to form a kind of alliance to help each other in the game. This may be important, because the unique feature of the game is a cash prize to be divided between the group that finds the book. 10% of the turn fees will be collected together into a prize; when a group finds the book, the game will end and the prize distributed. The player of the winning group will be given 60% of the fund (expected to be £200). The other 40% will be split between the other four members of the winning team - encouraging player co-operation.

The game itself is very much in the Dungeon and Dragon flavour, consisting of underground caverns, magic spells, fighting opponents and many mysterious creatures that inhabit the land and caverns. The variety of equipment you can purchase is vast and trading is a very strong point in the game. You can give each individual in your personal team certain skills, taken from a list in the rulebook, and consisting of such skills as Alchemy, Bargaining, Gambling, Seduction and many more. Also the game is heavily dependent on magic spells, again you can choose them from a list in the rulebook, such as Coolness, Detect Trap, Healing, Street Cred., Zapp, and many more.

Reading the rulebook is a joy, easily understood and really sets the atmosphere of the game. It also has a certain tongue in cheek feel about it, especially the descriptions of the skills and magic spells. All in all a very worthy extension of the Saturnalia format, and a game which I can honestly say will be among my personal favourites for some time to come.

For more information contact Sloth Enterprises at PO Box 82, Southampton, Hants, SO9 7FG.

Well, that's all for this month, until next month.

Watch Your Backs .

Anthony 'Mudrik' Collins

(If you want to know more about PBM you can write direct to Anthony at 17 Larch House, 37 Shawsdale Rd, Bromford, Birmingham. B36 8DG)

ADVENTURE FOR 48K SPECTRUM

SPY TRILOGY a text/graphic adventure in three parts with a bonus fourth game on completion. Reviewed 'Probe 3', price £2.50 available by mail order only from:-

TARTAN SOFTWARE, 61 Bailie Norrie Crescent, Montrose, Angus. DD10 9DT

MORE ON GRAPHICS

Last issue we gave our own and Keith Milner's views on graphics. This issue it's your turn. Your views varied tremendously from a definite "Hate them" to "Love them".

Perry Williams writes "Opinion amongst readers seems to be very much against graphics. I'm going to dissent from this; I think graphics CAN contribute something to an adventure - as long as they're used in the right way.

"Most adventures have what we might call 'location-graphics': each location has a picture, supposedly to 'set the scene'. And I totally agree with Pat and the rest of you who believe that words can normally do this far better. But a bigger drawback is that for reasons of space and ease of programming the pictures of the locations are pretty bare and empty, since they have to be used at different points in the plot. This can lead to pictures which not merely fail to add anything to the adventure but actually work against it.

"Think of 'The Hobbit': 'You are in a clearing with two stone trolls - but they're not there in the picture! Having just outwitted them and turned them to stone, you're more interested in them than the trees and the camp fire. There's an even worse case in 'Red Moon': you enter a storeroom, and the text tells you that there's a giant rat here which attacks you, and you have to fight it. But the picture shows a totally empty room! The pictures simply don't correspond to what the player is thinking and feeling at that stage of the plot.

"Suppose we had pictures related not to locations but to events and characters. So when attacked by a giant rat, you got a picture of a giant rat. When Gandalf appeared, you got a picture of Gandalf. When you examined the map, you got a picture of the map. Not only would the pictures then add something to the game, they could be made an integral part of it, e.g. if the essential information revealed by an EXAMINE command was put not in the text but in the picture.

"One game which already works this way to some extent is 'Neverending Story' - a very simple game, but a very enjoyable one to play, not least because of its use of pictures. I'll not forget the sinking feeling in my stomach when I came face to face with Gmork the wolf! And I received my hint of what to do with the tin not from its text description, which spoke only of 'a strange symbol on the side', but from its picture, which showed that the symbol was a skull and crossbones (poison). The graphics in 'Neverending Story' have attracted high praise; I'm sure it's not just because of their pictorial quality but the way they're used.

"Yes, graphics take up space; and yes, event- and character-graphics may be tricky to program (especially with 'GAC'); but I don't think we should reject them out of hand. The full possibilities of graphical adventures have not yet been explored."

Alan Cook's opinion was shared by several of you, "They take up memory which could be better used to expand the actual game and aren't really necessary". Mark Greaves thinks "They can detract from the atmosphere unless used as help in solving the adventure". Gordon Yacomine "I like them, they break the monotony sometimes". Alan Stewart "Initially good but often repetitive and boring. Prefer text only - more room in memory for detail". Stuart Slicer "They should be there for a purpose, e.g. add clues etc, or be good enough to add atmosphere". Richard Nurden "I quite enjoy graphic adventures. Although, as with anything, the quality is the all important factor. Good graphics - good idea". Andrew Edney "It makes the adventure a lot better and you can put clues in the graphics". Nick Cheesman "Must enhance text like 'Valhalla' although does help pretty things up a bit like 'Sherlock'". Lon Houlston thinks they're okay in moderation. "I like the odd static graphic display as used in most Interceptor adventures but not the rolling 'Dun Darach' variety. There should however be much more emphasis on sound."

If only I could write an adventure with instant graphics that change with events with no loss of text description, put plenty of clues in the pictures, allow for the facility to switch graphics off and add some sound - I'd make a fortune!

ADVENTURING VERSE

Colin Harris of 'Nemesis' received a request for help on one of his adventures 'Angelique', from John Olsen. Nothing unusual in that you might think - you'd be wrong. The request was in rhyme. Not to be outdone Colin replied - also in rhyme. He sent the poems in for us to see and we enjoyed them so much we thought you might too.

THE REQUEST

Dear Arnold's Dad, I write to you
Because I'm stuck without a clue.
Arnold's trials are over - his journeys are done.
We found Lord E and had lots of fun.
We went somewhere else and met lots of folks
Took in the views and enjoyed lots of jokes.
But now my friend, please hear my plea -
(I'm typing this on bended knee);
Your Angelique is in a plight,
She's lost her skirt - it's quite a sight!
Her tartan jeans can come off too,
So tell me what's a girl to do.
I tried to pin it - but no luck,
The zip won't mend, I'm really stuck.
The cactus won't cut, the spikes won't bend.
To all my problems there seems no end.
I've used the axe, I've used the tong,
I've been stuck at this cactus for ever so long!
I've tried to dig, I've tried to burn -
But none of the items will serve a turn.
I tried to attack using acid rain,
But that was another attempt in vain.
I can't use my mirror to reflect the sun
And I can't shoot the plant 'cos I haven't a gun.
It won't blow up though I've got a pump
And I can't get over it though I tried to jump.
So I'll tell you what I'd really love you to do -
Just give me some help, a little clue.

I don't want an answer, that's not what I seek,
Just lift that dark curtain for one little peek.
A step for a hint, just one little word,
'Cos I'm out of ideas - it's really absurd.
I've been here for weeks, I'm nearly insane
I'm worried in case I should damage my brain!
I mustn't do that 'cos it's all that I've got
Tho' when it's as empty as this it's not worth a lot.
So come on dear dad and please be our friend,
If we can't have your aid where may it all end.
We've travelled so far by 'chute, hopper and sail
That it seems a great shame to end up in a jail.
The cactus must die - I've settled on that,
But how to achieve it ... (I tried using my hat).
So give us a hint - I've now run out of time
And if I had longer I've run out of rhyme.

Your games are the tops - they give lots of fun
And I don't know just what I'll do when they're done.
So in the midst of life's problems and all of your strife
Ignore your black cat and neglect your dear wife.
And write some more games full of fun, joke and jape -
Remember everyone sometimes really needs to escape.
So I love to join in with that lighthearted band
As we tramp gaily off to that mythical land.
With Angelique and Arnold - not forgetting Lord E
All we need then is someone special (could be me)!
So good luck dear old dad - may your mind never jade -
AND NOW HURRY UP! WE'RE AWAITING YOUR AID.

THE REPLY

I am assured by those that know of the ways of women like ANGELIQUE
That they never, ever, have far to seek
To sort out clothing when "up the creek".
It is simply a matter of how to begin
To repair a zip with a SAFETY pin!
The problem would appear to be, not with you and not with me

That when confronted with a task our Angelique cannot always ask
The method by which she should apply
The object that first comes to eye
When, after all, to use a mower you mow,
To use a sling you throw
To use a knife you cut
But, what to use a safety pin?
To simply use might be all she'll need
Where all else has failed, will this succeed?
A softer hint I cannot find, but wait you now
I've more in mind ... of the tribulations you have yet to face
With Angelique kept in her place, with the many perils to overcome
Before, at last, the adventure is done
And Angelique finds her suitor, in a manner that couldn't be cuter.
I'll grant you this, there COULD be a bug
The complexity is such that I'd be a mug
To state with absolute certainty that this really couldn't be.
The fact of the matter is, that Angelique with many has been
And conquered this particularly devious scene!
Angie does her best to please, you can even ask her to sneeze!
When she examines the vultures in the sky
There'll be an answer ... don't ask me why!
Maybe you'll wonder, in a moment alone
Does she have a mind of her own?

Here, in Ringstead, in the dead of night
When the elves and pixies are just out of sight
And the friends of Arnold (and Mexican Pete)
Are supposed to be quietly asleep,
As I reach for a cigarette, down to the last carton
Do I hear keys tapping in Dumbarton?

Arnold's Dad (alias Colin Harris)

Have we any more adventurous poets among ourselves I wonder?

SOFTWARE REVIEWS

PEGASUS - Mark Greaves - £2.50 (available by mail order only)

In this text only, quilled adventure, you have stumbled upon what appears to be a deserted Castle.

Before you can say "one, two, three" the ground gives way, and you fall into a room with no visible exits, so the adventure begins

It turns out that you have been captured by a powerful wizard, who will only spare your life if you can find and return to him a Pegasus - tamed of course.

The location descriptions are varied, and reasonably atmospheric. There are several nice touches of humour, and the problems, which consist mainly of finding the right object, in order to be able to pass a natural/unnatural hazard or creature, usually fit logically into the magic environment.

One unusual command is "start again", this sends you back to the start location, without altering the position of any objects in the adventure.

The command is necessary because at certain times it becomes impossible to backtrack to any objects which have been left behind.

'Pegasus', whilst being simple in concept, is good fun to play. I found it a little too easy, apart from one instance where I became stuck, a pedantic command was the main problem.

The game is aimed more at beginners, and they should enjoy it, as I did. On the minus side, the odd little bug does crop up, and in particular, a few of the messages vanished off the screen, before I had finished reading them.

My overall opinion is that despite a few minor shortcomings, the game is pretty good fun for the price of £2.50.

Paul Serbert - Commodore 64

WISHBRINGER - Infocom - Shop around for best price.

I think that it is generally accepted by Adventurers of experience that the Infocom 'text only' games are outstanding in the realm of Adventureland, consistently keeping to a high quality that seems constantly to amaze reviewers in Computer Magazines. When, therefore, Infocom brought out their 'Introductory Game for Beginners' - WISHBRINGER - it was only to be expected that they would set a standard by which all other such games should be judged. In my opinion, this game is a must for all beginners, the completion of which should encourage them to tackle more difficult quests. Personally, as an introductory game I cannot see it being bettered, and it is in this category that it should be judged.

The excellent story does not rely on the well-worn 'collecting treasures' reason for your journey, the object of which is not revealed immediately, so I will not spoil anyone's pleasure by anticipating the author. That bane of many Adventurers - the Maze - is (or rather are, as there are two separate locations which require deduction regarding this route), composed in a satisfying manner so that solving them does not make a Maze-hater, such as myself, froth with frustration. The game has two ways to be played, one by achieving your goal without using any wishes and the other by using one, some or all of the special magic created through the Wishbringer stone, which will produce an almost entirely different game from the former method, although the end result will be the same, except for the final score. You can only get maximum points by not using the wishes.

As a brief outline and without giving away various solutions or surprises, the story casts you as a Postal Delivery Youth in the sleepy seaside village of Festeron. At the start you are daydreaming of freeing a fair Princess from an evil Dragon when your obnoxious boss, Mr. Crisp, gives you a letter which he tells you must be delivered by 5pm to the Magick Shoppe. The time is all-important because you start at 3pm and each subsequent move costs you one minute - and you don't know where the Magick Shoppe is. If you don't deliver it by 5pm - game over!

During your search for this Shoppe you get a chance to learn the geography of Festeron via the Cemetery, Library, Police Station, Church, Cinema, Pleasure Wharf, etc., etc. When you eventually get to the Shoppe and enter (by 5pm or before) the story really starts. After a weird briefing by a mysterious old woman, assumed by the local gravedigger to be dead and buried, you find yourself outside the Magick Shoppe, unable to get back in, and you are in an ever thickening fog. When eventually you emerge into clear surroundings, it is night and the village has horribly altered into Witchville and your existence becomes a nightmare.

Whilst trying to dodge the 'Boot Patrol', which marches at random with little warning around the village arresting anybody it meets (with dire consequences to that person), you have enough problems to make you wish you had never entered the Postal Service. For example, how to 'do a Houdini' from a locked prison cell, or trying to enter a Grue's lair to get certain objects and leave in one piece. There is also a bloodthirsty Hellhound to contend with, not to mention a savage attack by a giant Mailbox, which makes the riddle of how to get a coin from a fountain containing a Piranha fish almost a relief. Finding the Platypus Kingdom and later on in the game trying to rescue a Platypus Princess from a torture Machine add a further twist to the game.

There are many more problems that are worthy of mention, but it would take much too long to describe them, even in brief. The Adventure is generously spiced with humour and should any 'Zork' experienced Adventurers decide to go on the 'Wishbringer' quest, a reference to a certain boarded White House with a small mailbox will be the cause of a smile or two.

In view of all I have written, I can only give an unqualified rating of 10 out of 10 if you are not a fully experienced Adventurer. It would not be fair to judge this game with the experienced player in mind, but I would stress that any such Adventurers who miss playing 'Wishbringer' because of its Introductory Level, will miss one of the most entertaining games devised by Infocom.

Ron Rainbird - Atari

MAFIA CONTRACT II the sequel - Atlantis Software - £1.99

This is the follow up to Mafia Contract, in which you assassinated a rival gang leader for your Boss, Don Capolla. Since then you have been his personal advisor and bodyguard. Capolla's regime is now being threatened by a powerful gang led by Vito Rossi. Capolla has gone into hiding but not before putting out a contract on anyone he fears - including you!

You begin the game in an office, from where you can hear the sound of gunfire - a careful examination of the office furniture is necessary to enable you to leave the room. First you must arm yourself and fight your way out of the house - picking up anything useful you may come across. Vocabulary is important in this graphic adventure, but persevere, especially when you find the car.

The atmosphere is brilliant and although you get killed often, it isn't done randomly and you do learn from your mistakes. The adventure boasts a Ramsave and Ramload facility which lessens the disappointment at dying, and spurs you on to try all sorts of different ways to overcome problems.

This adventure is logical, amusing, puzzling, fun and best of all - CHEAP! I thoroughly enjoyed it and would recommend it to everyone, beginner and expert alike. At £1.99 it's a must!

Sandra (Spectrum)

ADVENTURE FOR COMMODORE 64

PEGASUS - reviewed in this issue of Probe. Price £2.50 from:-

MARK GREAVES, 16 Bucklers Court, Northend, Portsmouth. PO2 7AW

RANDY WARNER AND THE AZTEC IDOL - Scorpio Gamesworld - £2.99

I bought this adventure months ago and still haven't quite finished it. It is a verb/noun, text/graphic adventure that I found great fun to play.

Randy Warner is a journalist who has been sent to uncover the mystery of Wanda Wooman Spin - a little place in South America where lots of people have mysteriously disappeared. To set the scene properly I'll have to quote directly from the inlay.

"It was just another day at the office when Gloria dumped the letter in my in-tray. I looked up at her, granite-faced: maybe I'd invite her to dinner. She turned away ignoring my unspoken invitation. The letter contained a note from God (the Editor) telling me to 'haul my mangy carcass' down to a little place in South America to find out why so many people had mysteriously disappeared there. The thought of the Editor disappearing mysteriously cheered me up a little until a brick with a plane ticket attached landed on my desk.

I arrived at the sleepy peasant village the following day. The welcoming committee had seen to everything. The Hotel was closed and the well had a health warning on it. But I had a job to do and a paycheque to collect, so after finding a Coke machine getting this mystery solved was top priority. I had no idea what was in store for me. Maybe if I had I would have gone to the Ballgame instead....."

And the adventure follows the same vein of humour throughout. I love this type of 'over the top' scenario, e.g. to pay for some goods at the beginning of the game, use your American Express card - it's bound to do nicely!

The game comes in two parts. You have to finish the first part to gain access to the second. I just wish I could finish the game as I've enjoyed it so much. I don't suppose anyone knows how to get into the pyramid do they? If you get the opportunity to buy this one, do so - you won't regret it, it's excellent value for money.

Sandra (Spectrum)

HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY - Infocom - £24.99

This Infocom classic is based on the book of the same name and was co-written by the author, Douglas Adams, and Infocom's own Steve Meretzky (Deadline, Planetfall etc.).

Like all Infocom games it is available on disc only to cope with the uncannily intelligent parser which the company employ. Also in common with all other Infocom products it is text only, and sound is restricted to a very useful keyboard 'click'.

The game starts with you - as Arthur Dent - about to experience what the program describes as 'the worst day of your life'. Not only is your house about to be demolished by the local council to make way for a new motorway, but you learn from your friend Ford Prefect that Earth is about to be destroyed by a Vagon Constructor Fleet to make room for a new interstellar by-pass.

Forget that for the moment though - get rid of your massive hang-over first! Once the initial problems of hang-over and the local council are out of the way you find yourself first aboard the Vagon Flagship (where you can enjoy (?) the Captain's poetry), and then aboard the Heart of Gold. At this stage don't believe everything your computer tells you and eventually you will work out how to operate the Infinite Improbability Drive and may become a changed man (or even a woman!). In case you lose track amidst this identity crisis, typing "Who am I? " will let you know your present persona.

I must admit though that first time around it can be a bit unnerving to discover yourself at a boring party being chatted up by your boring self!

This game is officially classified as 'Standard Level' but be assured that it will take you some weeks of hair-pulling before you come anywhere close to completing it. The game does not boast an exceptionally large number of locations, but it does contain some very fine examples of interaction both with the computer itself and the various other characters in the game.

Even by Infocom's own standards this degree of interaction is exceptional - e.g. if you are close to solving a problem you will be told "That's no good, but you're getting close", whereas if you're totally off track you will be told "An utter waste of time".

Even at its high price of £24.99 this game is highly recommended.

RATINGS

Atmosphere	*****
Interaction	*****
Graphics	N/A
Vocabulary	*****
Value for money	****

John Macvie - Amstrad

ADVENTURES FOR SPECTRUM AND COMMODORE 64 (QUICKLOAD)

THE HAMMER OF GRIMMOLD Recover the fabled Hammer stolen by Valk the evil magician, and kept in the impregnable Citadel. Fool the hooded men and overcome the Gigantic Orc.

REALM OF DARKNESS Recover treasures stolen from the Kings' castle in the face of a fierce dog, a wounded hyena and a fire breathing Mutant Mole.

MUTANT Your job is to exterminate. Your mission is to seek out the Beast that is laying waste to the mountainous regions of a small island.

WITCH HUNT Based on Scottish folklore, this adventure puts you in the clutches of an evil witch. Your quest is simple, find your way home again.

THE JADE NECKLACE Play the part of Phillip Mallow, private eye. Outwit Big Fats and his henchmen. Help the Police Captain put Big Fats behind bars.

LIFEBOAT and MATCHMAKER, all available by mail order for £2.50 from:

J. A. LOCKERBY, 44 Hyde Place, Aylesham, Canterbury, Kent. CT3 3AL

READERS LETTERS

In Issue 4 of Probe I said that Global did 'The Hollow' - it was Gilsoft. But I make apologies to no-one, Global didn't help me with 'Beerhunter' and Gilsoft made a pretty bad game. So if you've got room in your next mag please print what I have put just so they don't try putting me right, when I've already punished myself.

Please will you do me a favour and thank Tony Collins (author of 'Theseus' and 'Nythyhel') who has helped me with 'Nythyhel'. We discovered I had a bug and couldn't finish part 1 so he is going to send me another copy.

I think after adventuring, collecting bugs must be my next hobby. They must all say Ah! well Burke by name, Burke by nature and then they all attack me like the plague. I've got some in 'Adrian Mole' (think I'll send it back). 'Souls of Darkon' had them and I ended up with rocks on my head instead of a plant eating me. 'Johnny Reb' suddenly decided it wasn't going to load for me (thanks to Lothlorien for sending me a new copy, even though mine must have been a year old). I received 'Wrath of Olympus' the other day which I've had to send back because I get Read error b on both sides and can't do anything about it (I think it means Read error Burke!). Why me?

I've just completed 'Ship of Doom' which was a waste of money. I don't know why they didn't include a man (a real live one) in the game as well. He could have stood next to me and shown me how to load my computer. Because that's all they seemed to miss out on, pressing buttons for you. I don't mind a list of useful words being printed but that's taking it too far giving you full sentences. You could hardly not read it because it hits you between the eyes. It is bad value for money, I paid £2.95 but I know a shop in Manchester that is still asking £8.95 for it! One of their other ones is even worse namely 'Planet of Death' which has only 17 locations and you only have to do a couple of things in it. I was very disappointed with these games, even more so due to the fact that we had to live on dry bread and water just so I'd have money to buy them.

Among my favourite adventures is Melbourne House's 'Classic Adventure'; this contains possibly the best location description I have seen (by the edge of the volcano - I defy anyone to produce a picture to represent it in the way that my mind interpreted it). The only company who can get away with both text/graphics without losing out is, to my mind, Level 9. The abstract style graphics add a certain ambience to the overall effect, and the descriptions (although limited compared to their text only efforts) do convey a sense of atmosphere much better than anyone else in the field.

Well, that's my feelings on those points; now to answer your "What do you think?" questions.

1) LENSLOCK - I've only come across it once in 'Elite'. At first I had great difficulty, not helped by Firebird's incorrect instructions - then I twigged it: DON'T FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS! Easy, I've not had a problem since. In the wider context of software protection, anything which makes the pirate's life difficult can only help - but even the best protection can be broken, as is evidenced by the October issue of Your Sinclair and their 'Elite' hacking special. However, if the software companies tried to look after the consumer and cut prices instead of putting out over-priced, hyped trash to line their own pockets (never mind, the kiddies will buy it!), the piracy problem would dissipate in no time. So summing up, I suppose that's a qualified YES to Lenslock.

2) FAVOURITE ADVENTURE - A toss up between 'Snowball' and 'Classic Adventure' - plenty to do, plenty to see, excellent descriptions, a sense of "being there and living" the whole scenario. Terrific!

3) LEAST FAVOURITE ADVENTURE - Despite playing it at the moment, 'Jewels of Babylon', mainly for its vocabulary problem at the start, but also for scanty descriptions, random deaths and also the fact that it contains no less than 3 mazes! ARGHHH! Also a quick summary of 'The Island' by Crystal ARGHHZZzzzzz!

HINTS

SPYTREK - Chris Greaves

In the funeral car, draw the curtains, talk to the driver.

In the store room, pull grating, enter hole.

Give the tramp one pound seven times and he will give you the key for the tower, and the umbrella.

In the bar, the passport is in the crisps, you need the onion.

SEABASE DELTA - Christopher Eng

Fix the airbottle to the hose, give form to auto clerk for new plastic card, use the barrel to make a seesaw, examine the body, the bureau has a pen in it, examine the briefcase to get documents. Climb on the conveyor belt to get to refuse compartment. Use the dental pincers to remove nails from plank. Insert disk into video machine. Wear the diving suit with airbottle to leave base, wear the flippers to cross the food farm.

LORD OF THE RINGS - Simon Lilley

To get past the Black Riders you need the green jewels. Make sure only one is held by all your party and then say "Elbereth". You should have enough jewels if you searched everywhere, for all the Riders at the end of part 1.

MORDEN'S QUEST - Jim O'Keefe

From the waterfall, go north and then southwest. Try climbing the pile of rubble. Can't get the pyrites out? Try "Smash Pyrites".

MINDSHADOW - Jim O'Keefe

The beach - Examine Ocean to discover a ship. Take the shell, you'll need it in Luxembourg. The hut - Go inside; it's made of straw so "Get Straw". The Dory - its frame is made of steel and wood so "Get Steel". The clearing is overgrown with vines and ferns so "Get Fern". In the cave the ground is soft so "Dig", it's strewn with rocks so "Get Rock".

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OBJECTS AND THEIR USES

DRAGONTORC OF AVALON

- Jewels and bows - Give to elves
- Diving rod - To search the leaves and pools

FANTASIA DIAMOND

- Battery - Put into robot

HAMPSTEAD

- Memo and report - Give to Chubby
- Desk - Open it

MORDON'S QUEST

- Blanket - To cross quicksand
- Thorns, berries and bamboo - To make a blowpipe
- Blowpipe - To kill pygmy
- Pygmy - To feed man-eating plant
- Plate - Push and press it

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

- Holy tree - Climb it
- Silver arrow - Use it to kill Simon and drop it with the five touchstones at the stone to finish the game

THE HELM

- Knife - To cut the rope
- Rope - Tie it to hook to fish
- Spade - Dig in canyon
- Board - Drop it over the river

CIRCUS

- Spanner - To mend generator
- Handle - To start generator

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PRECISION CORNER

WORM IN PARADISE - How to score.

- 1) Bite the apple
- 2) Complete dream
- 3) View Elite dream
- 4) Sell organs
- 5) Buy flag
- 6) Find wallet
- 7) Go home
- 8) Use poster
- 9) Sleep in bed
- 10) Drop wreath at memorial
- 11) Work as clerk
- 12) Get valve for free
- 13) Find invitation
- 14) Become a Bison
- 15) Get reward from police
- 16) Work as manager
- 17) Visit Undercity
- 18) Appear on TV
- 19) Wear leotard
- 20) Enter saucer
- 21) Reach top of pyramid
- 22) Block partition
- 23) Reach seat of power
- 24) Stop foam
- 25) Win

BOGGIT

When in dungeon in Part 2. Dig sand. Throw rope (at window) until it finally becomes secured. Insert battery into sword. Wait until the eagle has answered the call of nature. In Part 3 give the credit card to minion in exchange for Duty Free.

MAFIA CONTRACT II

Enter 7534 to open safe (the number is on Capolla's credit card).

BUGS AND AMUSING RESPONSES

SUBSUNK - It is possible to examine the cable and the vacuum cleaner without them being present. Also, if you examine the holster you will find a bullet, if you then take the bullet to another location, go back to the holster and examine it again, the bullet will vanish from wherever it is and re-appear with the holster.

sent in by M. Jennings

HEROES OF KARN - Every time Beren takes the falcon your score goes up by 1%. So to increase your score keep telling him to get the falcon, drop it, get it again, drop it, and so on. These bugs are in the Amstrad versions of the games.

sent in by M. Jennings

VALKYRIE 17 - Examine the safe to find a box and jewelled necklace, get them, take them to another location and drop them. Go back to the safe and examine it again and they re-appear. Spectrum version.

BOGGIT - Use toilet in Bimbo's home. Depending on your sense of humour try a bit of swearing! Spectrum version.

ZACARON MYSTERY PT 2 - You can 'Cut Tree' to make logs WITHOUT making the axe from stick and flint. At the river I tried 'Make Raft' (with logs and vine) and discovered I had made a BRIDGE!!! The response to 'Wear Tights' isn't quite what a lady would expect!

sent in by Tom Frost

PLAYTESTERS/REVIEWERS

We are looking for volunteers to playtest/review adventures on most makes of machine. If you would like to offer your services and help us reduce the mountain of tapes that are beginning to build up, please write in and remind us of the computers you have access to.

GETTING YOU STARTED

EUREKA (Roman) - Graham Robson

If you are having a problem not getting enough money then, after saving man, buy wine and sword. Give wine to your opponents in the quarters of the fighting area, enter arena and kill man. Then buy the chicken and give it to the man who says "Beware the Ides of the March". After the chicken has laid an egg in the sandal stall, go to the chariot racing and say "Done" to the gambler. Buy lucky charm, give a coin to the man operating the lift and get some useful objects. Give the egg to the leper. Buy axe at farmer's cottage, then buy chariot and horse and lastly the sandals.....
.....

ERIK THE VIKING - Linda Friend

On the Mountainside. - D, W, S, Get kindling, Get whetstone, N, W, W, N, N, Get hammer, S, W, S, E, D, Examine bedding, Get horn, U, Examine rushes, Get Blueblade, Exam table, Break table, Get planks, W, N, E, N, N, W, Drop everything, E, S, S, W, Get stewpot, E, N, Get nails, Get scales, N, W, Get hammer, Get horn, Get planks, NE, Repair ship, Blow horn, Drop horn, Pull Ship, Get kindling, Get whetstone, Get hammer, Get pot, Get Blueblade, Get scales, In, Drop everything, D, Get skates, U, W, W, N, W,.....
.....

ZORK 1 - Ron Rainbird

Start west of house. - W, E, Climb tree, Take egg, D, N, Take leaves (reveal grating), S, Drop leaves, S, E, Open window, In, Get sack, Open sack, W, Get sword and lamp, E, Light lamp, U, Get rope, D, Douse lamp, W, Drop all except lamp, Pull rug, Open trapdoor, Light lamp, D, S, E, Get painting, (if still there), N, U, Douse lamp, W, Open case, Put painting in case, Get sword, egg and rope, Open trapdoor, Light lamp, D, N, Kill Troll with sword, Again (until fight ends), get axe, E, E, SE, E, Tie rope to railing, D, Drop axe (remember where you left it, in case you later lose your sword), Get torch, Douse lamp, S, Get bell, S, Pray, E, S, E, In, W, Drop bell and sword, open trapdoor, D,.....
.....

GETTING YOU STARTED (CONT.)

BOGGIT (Pt 1) - John Barnsley

Wait (Until Grandalf 'Tarzans' in through the window and drops a box of chocolates and a card on the carpet), Take card, Read card, Take chocolates, Throw chocolates through window, Examine chest, Open chest, Climb into chest, Take diary, Read diary (make a note of Fordo's birthday 29/2/85), Drop diary (there is now a muffled explosion outside as the chocolates explode!), Climb out of chest, Close chest, S, Examine bowl, Use bowl (!), Examine cabinet, Examine basin, N, Examine door (it has a combination lock - remember Fordo's birthday), 29285 (the door grows wings and flies open!), E (you are greeted by some dwarves and are invited to come on down, you must answer Grandalf's question), Nothing (you are now inside again), Drop card, N, Talk to Grandalf, Say follow me, Talk to Thorny, Say follow me, Out (a theologian appears - the connection between soap flakes and light is 'LUX'), E, N (you meet 3 Trolls), Say Lux,.....
:.....

SNOWBALL

You awake in the dark, lift the lid above you and discover you are in a mortuary. The Nightingale has been sabotaged! Instead of putting you to sleep for the voyage, it will put you to sleep permanently if it finds you. The Nightingale will find you in blue mortuaries on the white level where you start, but you are safe in the green mortuaries on that level, and any mortuary on other levels. To escape from the white level, pull the lever, 'OUT' to leave the coffin, North to the buttons, then press any three buttons to slide a coffin out. Climb on the coffin, which will give you enough leverage to climb up to the next level. Wait until the Nightingale has passed, then go out to the corridor. If, while exploring, you hear the Nightingale approaching, simply hide off the corridor until it passes. Investigate both above and below the lift, picking up what you find. Take the lift to the 'Black' floor, then find your way up into the toroidal walkway, follow it round then up. From here, go South until you reach an airlock. In the airlock, press the yellow button and go South,.....

HELPLINE

JANET LOXHAM, 7 Newbury St., Fulwell, Sunderland. SR5 1NG wants help in LORDS OF TIME. She has scored 900 points but is having problems in the following. How to open the door in Time Zone 3 in the Invention Room (Stone Age). She has entered the plant and dropped the poison to kill the plant but doesn't know what to do to escape death. SYSTEM 15000 - how do you use the message board, she can't get any response? FANTASIA DIAMOND - How do you open the trapdoor, has the wise old man any purpose, and what do you do with the pixie who is locked in the library?

GILL COPPENHALL, 187 Crewe Road, Churchtown, Staffs wants help in SPHINX ADVENTURE. How does she find the Mithril ring, or has anyone got a map or solution she could have?

STEVE LODEY, 5 Felix Rd., Felixstowe, Suffolk, IP11 7JD wants help in VELNOR'S LAIR. He can't get across the lava chasm.

GWYNNE WRIGHT, 118 Dark Lane, Bedworth, Nuneaton. CV12 0JH wants help in BORED OF THE RINGS. Where does she buy a ticket and how does she open the door in the west wall of the treasure hall? Also can someone help her to get started in ZZZZ?

SIMON STEELE, 14 Fair View, Blackwood, Gwent. NP2 1NS wants to know how to complete MISSION ONE 'PROJECT VOLCANO' by Mission Software.

RICK TRAVIS, 242 Fish Dam Lane, Carlton, Barnsley, S. Yorks. S71 3EL wants to know how to get past the Snow Demons at the beginning of Part 2 of THE SNOW QUEEN.

PETER TAYLOR, 13 Mackenzie Crescent, Burncross, Nr. Sheffield. S30 4UR writes "I am carrying a silver goblet full of water, bible and silver crucifix in CLOAK OF DEATH. How do I exorcise the ghost/cloak, what words do I use? In QUEST FOR ETERNITY how do you press red button and how do you repair datalink boards?

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KINGS/QUEENS OF THE CASTLE

MARK GREAVES, 16 Buckler's Court, Northend, Portsmouth, Hants, offers help on the following:-

Castle of Terror, Colossal Adventure, Hobbit, Lords of Time, Neverending Story, Red Moon, Snowball.

LEN JAMES, 37 Northway, Lymm, Cheshire, Hants, offers help on the following:-

Forest at Worlds End, Message from Andromeda, Mindshadow, The Wild Bunch, Warlord.

SIMON LILLEY, 21 Roberts Street, Rushden, Northants, offers help on the following:-

Bored of the Rings, Black Crystal, Dragontorc, Hulk, Fourth Protocol (Pt.1), Inca Curse, Mafia Contract I, Ship of Doom, Spiderman, The Island.

ALAN STEWART, 11g, Craigpark Street, Faifley, Clydebank, G81 5BS, offers help on the following:-

Forest at Worlds End, Message from Andromeda, Return to Eden, Subsunk, Warlord.

GEOFF WING, 171, Beadlemead, Netherfield, Milton Keynes, offers help on the following:-

Colossal Cave, Eureka (1 - 5), Fourth Protocol (Pt.1), Hampstead, Monroe Manor, Neverending Story, Perseus and Andromeda, Tower of Despair, Wizard of Akyrz.

PERRY WILLIAMS, 12 Godestone Road, Cambridge, CB5 8HR, offers help on the following:-

Classic Adventure, Dun Darach, Neverending Story.

DON'T FORGET TO ENCLOSE A SAE WHEN ASKING FOR HELP!

KINGS/QUEENS (CONT.)

GORDON YACOMINE, 30 Finavon Street, Dundee, Scotland, offers help on the following:-

Bored of the Rings, Dun Darach, Espionage Island, Forest at Worlds End, Heroes of Karn, Hobbit, Planet of Death, Subsunk.

JOHN SADLER, 12 Wheatsheaf Close, Wheatsheaf Lane, Wrabness, Manningtree, Essex, CO11 2TE, offers full solutions for:-

Message from Andromeda, Worm in Paradise, and limited help on Warlord.

GRAHAM ROBSON, 169 Buddle Road, Benwell, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE4 8JW, offers help on the following adventures:-

Adventureland, Arrow of Death (Pts.1 & 2), Castle of Terror, Circus, Crystals of Carus, Danger Mouse (Pt.1), Dungeon Adventure, Emerald Isle, Empire of Karn, Erik the Viking, Escape from Pulsar 7, Eureka (Prehistoric, Roman, Arthurian, Germany), Golden Baton, Grand Larceny, Gremlins, Heroes of Karn, Hobbit, Hulk, Inca Curse, Kentilla, Lords of Time, Mindshadow, Mordon's Quest, Neverending Story, Perseus and Andromeda, Pilgrim, Pirate Adventure, Planet of Death, Quest for the Holy Grail, Red Moon, Return to Eden, Ring of Power, Robin of Sherwood, Se Kaa of Assiah (Pt.1), Secret Mission, Sorceror of Claymorgue Castle, Spiderman, Subsunk, Ten Little Indians, Terrormolinos, Time Machine, Velnor's Lair, Voodoo Castle, Wizard of Akyrz.

STEVE LODEY, 5 Felix Road, Felixstowe, Suffolk, IP11 7JD, offers help on the following:-

Classic Adventure, Emerald Isle, Espionage Island, Eye of Bain, Ground Zero, Hampstead, Hobbit, In search of Angels, Inca Curse, Invincible Island, Mountains of Ket, Red Moon, Seabase Delta, Ship of Doom, Snowball, Subsunk, System 15000, Temple of Vran, Urban Upstart.

DON'T FORGET TO ENCLOSE A SAE WHEN ASKING FOR HELP!

KINGS/QUEENS (CONTINUED)

BILL GRAY, 87H Tower Drive, Midton, Gourock, Inverclyde, offers help on the following:-

Barsak the Dwarf, El Dorado, Eye of Bain, Golden Apple, Ground Zero, House of Orion, Inca Curse, Inferno, Ket (1), Magic Mountain, Marie Celeste, Pharoah's Tomb, Raid on Lethos, Ship of Doom, Staff of Zaranol, Subsunk, The Castle, Velnor's Lair.

RICHARD NURDEN, 1 Oliphant Circle, Malpas, Newport, Gwent, NP9 6NT offers help on the following:-

Ashkeron, Eureka, Hobbit, Message from Andromeda, Mindshadow, Quest for the Holy Grail, Seabase Delta, Subsunk, The Helm.

HENRY VANDERMARK, Flevostraat 20, Den Helder, The Netherlands offers help on the following:-

ORIC 1 - Encounter, Zodiac.

SPECTRUM - Circus, Colossal Adventure, Dun Darach, Golden Apple, Golden Baton, Hampstead, Hobbit, Time Machine, Time Switch, Velnor's Lair.

ATARI - Dallas Quest, Hulk, Mindshadow, Pirate, Red Moon, Sea Stalker, Sorcerer of Claymorgue Castle, Strange Odyssey.

JOHN MACVIE, 22 Loanhead Street, Kilmarnock, KA1 3AU offers help on the following:-

Deadline, Enchanter, Fahrenheit 451, Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy, Hobbit, Ultima III, Urban Upstart, Zork 1.

ROSEMARY MOSS, 73 Victoria Road, Blandford, Dorset, DT11 7JR offers help on the following:-

Castle Dracula, Circus, Cracks of Fire, Gremlins, Perseus and Andromeda, Salvage, Time Machine, Treasure Hunter, Williamsburg Adventure.

DON'T FORGET TO ENCLOSE A SAE WHEN ASKING FOR HELP!

KINGS/QUEENS (CONT.)

BARBARA BASSINGTHWAITE, 70 Coronation Avenue, Yeovil, BA2 3DZ offers help on the following:-

10 Little Indians, Circus, Emerald Isle, Erik the Viking, Escape from Colditz, Golden Baton, Hobbit, Java Star, Lords of Time, Red Moon, Return to Eden, Secret Mission, Snowball, Sphinx, Stolen Lamp, Voodoo Castle.

RON RAINBIRD, 62 Coniston Drive, Holmes Chapel, Nr. Crewe, Cheshire, CW4 7LB offers help on the following:-

Adventureland, Arrow of Death Pts. 1 & 2, Enchanter, Ghost Town, Golden Baton, Golden Voyage, Mystery Funhouse, Perseus and Andromeda, Pirate Adventure, Ten Little Indians, The Count, Voodoo Castle, Wishbringer, Zork 1.

BWYNNETH WRIGHT, 118 Dark Lane, Bedworth, Nuneaton, CV12 0JH offers help on the following:-

Circus, Helm, Hobbit, Microman/Project X, Mountains of Ket, Quest for the Holy Grail, Seabase Delta, Smugglers Cove, Temple of Vran, Tower of Despair, Urban Upstart.

JIM O'KEEFE, 28 Sable Close, Beaver Estate, Hounslow, Middx. TW4 7PE offers help on the following:-

Adventureland, Adventure Quest, Boggit, Bored of the Rings, Classic Adventure, Colossal Adventure, Dun Darach, Dungeon Adventure, Emerald Isle, Erik the Viking, Espionage Island, Eye of Bain, Forest at Worlds End, Fourth Protocol, Golden Apple, Gremlins, Haapstead, Heavy on the Magick, Heroes of Karn, Hobbit, Hulk, Inca Curse, Lords of Time, Marsport, Message from Andromeda, Mindshadow, Morden's Quest, Neverending Story, Planet of Death, Price of Magik, Red Moon, Return to Eden, Robin of Sherlock, Robin of Sherwood, Seabase Delta, Ship of Doom, Snowball, Sorcerer of Claymorgue Castle, Spiderman, Subsunk, Terrormolinos, Tir Na Nog, Valkyrie 17, Very Big Cave Adventure, Worn in Paradise.

DON'T FORGET TO ENCLOSE A SAE WHEN ASKING FOR HELP!

KINGS/QUEENS (CONT.)

MARK WHITE, 4 Booths Lane, Aughton, Nr. Oraskirk, L39 7HE offers help on most adventures for Commodore, Spectrum, Amstrad and BBC (not too many problems at once). He writes, "If anyone writes I'd appreciate it if they'd help me a little by stating the adventure (some people don't), the software house - sometimes the same title is produced by more than one company but adventures differ greatly, - the machine they are using, as solutions sometimes vary, particularly codewords and passwords between machines. State the problem clearly, it helps. Sometimes I have difficulty in trying to work the question out. Lastly do they want a nudge, a full explanation or what?"

Mark has brought up some good points but I'd like to add a couple more. If you write to ask for maps or solutions, very often these have to be photocopied, it would be nice to offer to reimburse the person who is helping you - either in cash or perhaps swapping a map or solution you have compiled. Lastly don't forget a SAE, some of our KINGS/QUEENS get dozens of requests for help every week - that's a lot of money in stamps and envelopes!

ADVENTURES FOR THE 48K SPECTRUM

THE DRAGON OF NOTACARE - Read the review in Issue 4 of 'Probe'.

TREASURE - You play the part of a thief who has to find an ancient temple, which is hidden in a large forest, and steal the treasure within.

RESCUE FROM DOOM - Professor Tefal has been kidnapped and imprisoned in the mountain of DOOM and you have been assigned to rescue him. This adventure has pictures to complement the text description of every location except two.

PRICE: £2.50 each plus 30p postage and packaging, or £6 for all three plus 50p postage and packaging. Send cheque/PO to:-
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