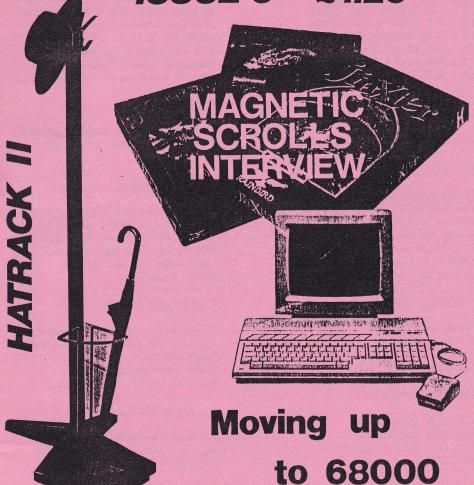
Adventure Workshop

ISSUE 3 £1.25



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LETTERS

I'll be only too pleased to read your to read your letters, but if you want a personal reply, please enclose a stamped addressed envelope. If you don't want your letter printed in this magazine you must write 'NOT FOR PUBLICATION' on the top.

CONTRIBUTIONS

These are always welcome, and keep the magazine going! I'd prefer your articles typed with a small margin (but hand-written ones are also welcome!). Make sure the ink is as dark as possible, so the text will photocopy clearly. You may like to send me a drawing or a cartoon too.

FORMAT

This is an amateur magazine printed on an irregular basis as a nonprofit hobby.

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PRODUCTION

I, the Editor, design the whole magazine and paste up the artwork. Mandy Rodrigues of 'Adventure Probe' then photocopies it with the help of her husband.

FINALLY ...

Thank you for seeking out this magazine and for taking the time to read it.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Paul Bennett writes from Northants ...

Having received the first two copies of 'Adventure Workshop' I thought I should write in and give you my initial reaction. I was reasonably impressed with it considering that it is only just in existence and the only negative comment would be about the story entitled 'Head's Cases', this story did not impress me and seemed more a page filler than anything worthwhile. That aside I believe that your magazine will be as much a help as was 'Adventure Contact' in its day.

It was nice to see the first of many pages of letters at the back of issue two and not so surprising to see a letter from Gerald Kellett who seemed, along with yourself, to virtually have kept the old magazine going. I remember purchasing the FIX from him to extend the scope of the Quill prior to upgrading to the PAW. I hope

to read more from him in future issues.

I would like to take this opportunity to publicly give a big THANK YOU to both Gilsoft and Incentive for the support (lack of) they have shown for the AMIGA. I no longer intend to wait until next year, which Gilsoft has told me over the phone since '87. At least Incentive were honest and said that they had no plans to rewrite the STAC for my machine.

The program I now use is HATRACK II, a program which I would recommend to anyone on Gilsoft's waiting list. I have now got the time to sit and get to grips with this utility and after learning its ins and outs for the past month feel ready to tackle a full adventure. I will keep you informed and also request help at various times.

One final thing. Is there any plans (sic - Ed) to introduce a list of playtesters for finished programs? If so I would be willing to test out one or two on the Amiga.

Jeremy Dean writes from Stevenage...

I reckon you've got a smart magazine here. It would be a shame to see it go down, like so many do these days. Certainly, 'Adventure Workshop' is one of the most professional fanzines around that I've seen, but I think it was slightly spoilt by

the writing on the back of the last issue, and the 'joke'.

It was good to see Sean Ellis involved, I hope he writes some more STAC routines for you. Ian Eveleigh's article on virtual reality was interesting, but I find myself disagreeing with him; of course, the hardware is limited at present, but it's a step in the right direction! I see the day when we will experience a whole fantasy world before our eyes, that cannot be distinguished from the real world. This will give new meaning to atmosphere in games! I suspect though that it'll never be wholly 'real', which is a good job if kids are not to be lost in such a world for good! And what's to stop some people mis-using the system, to make propaganda games, or worse still, highly realistic porn games? Just like many of the seedier demos you get in Public Domain libraries!

I look forward to the next issue then, and I hope you can keep up the high

standard.

LINE ADS

FOR SWAP: my STOS for your SHOOT 'EM UP CONSTRUCTION KIT. BRIAN MARCH, 8 HEATHERSLAW ROAD, FENHAM, NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE, NES 201.

STA.C.

Simple Solution

Part (3)

We must type some text into Room 5 in order to see it on screen. So if we now go to the Main Menu screen then press the 'R' key, this takes us to the room creation part of STAC, press the 'insert key' then the 5 key, now press return until you get to the room description long bit, now type in SIMPLE SOLUTION this will need to be positioned in the centre of the line so press the Space Bar key until the text is centralised, this is because it is much nicer to see the text in the centre of the screen. When you are happy then return to the Main Menu screen which will now be called MM. Go to the High Condition part and make sure that your input is exactly the same as issue (1) now create room 8 and in the description long bit type in PRESENTS and centre it. Create room 9 and this time type in SCHOOL and centralise it, create room 6 but enter no text then create room 10 and again insert no text. Now we must create MESSAGE 1 so from the MM press M then insert 1 then this message will contain our intro text which sets the atmosphere and tells the player what the aims of the game are, as we have no intro text at the moment just type in a few words. This now concludes the intro part of the game apart from some music which I hope that one of you will be good enough to provide. So come on with some ideas, puzzles, music & graphics etc, or is there nobody reading this column??? Don't forget to save what we have done...time to go or that blasted cat will have my cod's Head Broth...One Eye.



PURE MAGNETISM

Paul Rigby interviews Magnetic Scrolls!

This article was collated way back before the introduction of the Magnetic Windows concept, in the good ol' days of the roller-blind graphics, in fact. So all of the following comments should be taken in that context. Even though the facts are slightly dated they are still applicable to the general game design that Mag. Scrolls use and will, I sincerely hope, be of interest and, who knows, of use to the loyal readers of this magazine.

Magnetic Scrolls have become giants in the adventuring field. They are now, with the recent collapse of Infocom as an independent software house, the only big name still devoted to adventures. In an exclusive interview, I chatted to the lost souls of Scrolls. The technical bods who lie behind the radiant personality of Anita Sinclair. How do Scrolls develop their games? What computers do they use? Graphics? Sounds?

Jumping in the deep end, I enquired about the meat of a Scrolls adventure, the

raw code. Do they use a propriety assembler? (? - Ed)

"No, it's purely an internal thing. The machine we do most of our development on is a DEC Microvax. Fundamentally, we believed we could write a faster assembler for that machine than the one that we had bought in. Also, there were very subtle modifications that we wanted to make to it to make our lives easier for when we write for the ST, Amiga and Apple Mac. The advantage with the in-house assembler is that if something goes wrong with the system we can fix it ourselves. Whereas if the bought-in product goes wrong you have to describe it to the company, hassle them to get it fixed, etc."

I'm sure that you're all aware of the commercial adventure utilities presently on the market (eg; PAN, GAC, etc), you may have also heard of company adventure language systems. Level 9 had their own system, Infocom had IIL, and so on. How

about Scrolls? Do they have an adventure system?

"We have a big program - the general framework. The structure is the same across all our games. The parser, and so on are a large part of the basic code. On this big program we have lots of hooks where you can hook in things that are individual to the game. So rather than having a series of building blocks we have a whole building which we gut and then refit, as it were. We try very hard not to touch things like the parser. Once you get someting like that to work well - it's as well not to shake it too much."

The add-on bits vary in size. It depends on the game. However, I do know that Scrolls try to make the hooked-on pieces of code as small as possible to minimize the time and cost of developing a new game. Although every new Scrolls game that has appeared has demanded a new series of 'hook-code' routines, it is surprizing how common the code is between games. A copy of the 'Guild Of Thieves' can be constructed from the code included in 'Fish!', for example.

The main code is also the controlling code. It contains a variety of 'switches' that turn different routines on and off. For example, in 'Corruption' the bit of code that activates the multitude of characters that wander about can be switched

on and off.

So if you can imagine it, Scrolls have this whopping great piece of source code sitting, whale-like, in their DEC. Attached to them are lots of little pieces of hook-codes that can be switched on and off. If you switch hook-code A and B on you get 'Corruption'. If you switch C and D on you get 'Jinxter'. It is the compiler

which grabs the main source code and sorts out what hook-codes are either on or off. All the 'on' hook-codes are kept in the main source. The 'off' hook-codes are rejected. After the compiler has done it's job you're presented with a finished game. Simple!

These switches do provide a few problems though.

"Sometimes there are very subtle distinctions with these features. Usually, what will happen, you'll be half way through the game coding it up and you'll discover something strange going on. After some consultation you may realize that a particular switch in the parser needs to be switched the other way - making a subtly different decision. Then you will have to go back and recompile the relevant

part of the code with this switch set the right way."

Subtle switches, set in the wrong position, are the normal cause of 'bugs' in any new game which result from the author not realizing the relevance of a peculiar switch. Debugging involves sifting through the code trying to locate these switches. Other bug-types include code which has been written that comes into conflict with the source code features. Strangely, though, there are some occasions when, if you fix all of the bugs - the game stops working! This is usually the result of a bug's side-effect being coded around (rather like putting polyfilla on a large crack in the wall) rather than fixed or removed at the outset. It is also possible to accidentally patch over a side-effect because the bug is not immediately visible. Whatever, the end result means that removing the bug will not only remove the side-effects, but will make the side-effect fixes you coded earlier, fall over. Consequently the game collapses like a pack of cards. The moral here is - get your bugs as soon as you find them and don't make do with temporary 'fixes' just because it makes life easier!

It is a little-known fact that Magnetic Scrolls have been coding a game on the DEC for years. Whilst the likes of 'The Pawn', 'Guild Of Thieves', 'Jinxter', etc were being coded this game was constantly being worked upon. The game has no name. It will never be released. There is no plot, yet this game contains all of the features of the more well-known products - if not more.

Confused? Actually this 'game' is a development program, an area to test routines, to act as a platform for new ideas. Almost like a flight simulation of

the adventuring world, this 'game' forms the practice for the 'real thing'.

"If we didn't do this there would be, by now, ten versions of a parser or something stupid like that. So say we found a drastic bug in 'Fish!', for example, and we fixed it there. Then the game that was being developed in paralled to 'Fish!' for later launch would also have to have the bug fixed in it. That's more work than fixing the one version of the parser on the DEC. Also each game has a variety of versions for different machines. If every version was developed independently it would take three weeks to fix one bug!"

On the subject of assembler, is this the primary language?

"We write as little assembler as possible. The actual games themselves are written in pseudo-code, which is then interpreted by our DEC. Traditionally, though, the 68000 machines have had a lot of assembler because we started out that way. The 8086 PCs have a lot because you need it to boost performance. In the Archimedes version it is entirely written in C. This is a special case because the Arch's development system was a kind of brother to the system we use for the UNIX machines. The interpreter part of this system is written in C. It was easy to port to the Arch. The Archimedes was fast enough to run the game under C. For the future stuff there'll be quite a lot of C in all versions."

You don't really write assembler unless you really have to - believe me, it's horrible!! So what Magnetic Scrolls have done, in the past, with their games, has

been an essential requirement. This may be surprizing to some people to hear that a text/graphic adventure needs this power - it surprized me I'll tell you!

I couldn't resist asking about the comparisons between the ST and Amiga.

"Well, they're both a pain in the neck, in many respects! We spent a very short time using STs as development machines and it was grief with a capital G! For example, I was searching the office for invoices today because I've got two dead 1040 STs that have to be returned for repair. They are only five months old! That is just typical of STs. If you came around here you'd find half the STs without any screws in at all. So we can quickly take the lid off and push the chips back in! The reason the rest still have their screws is because they are still under warranty! We have another half a dozen which just don't work at all.

"The Amiga tends to break less. Only one has died and that was a couple of years old. However, Amiga disks go down more often. On the programming point of view it is slightly easier to program an ST than an Amiga. You have to know less about the ST to get simple things to work. Our earlier stuff on the Amiga took longer than the ST, for sure. Although, that was due to the Amiga' higher learning curve."

Although, later in the conversation the lads did say that the Amiga was easier in some respects because it has more powerful screen modes. So you worry less about

the choice of colours, consequently the artists have an easier time of it.

Speaking of art, the Scrolls team commented that there is a certain limit to how far you can really go, as far as gameplay is concerned, with pictures and the present hardware. Not just the fact of how many colours you can have on-screen at once, but the mere fact that the game has to load each one. If you included high-res pictures in a graphic adventure it'd take so long to load each picture from disk that the player would turn them off through boredom and frustration. So Magnetic Scrolls believe a balance must be found. I did wonder, though, whether Scrolls had ever considered digitizing their screens.

The title pictures are all digitized from the artwork. Every picture we have ever shipped in the games has been hand drawn. Actually, one of our artists went on at me for ages to give digitization a shot. We took a few paintings he'd made and digitized those. But he changed his mind. Mainly because it is very difficult to take a digitized image and make it look as good as a hand-drawn image. You are getting two processes that are trying to do the same thing and they get in each other's way. If you digitize something the digitizing software introduces different levels of grey, for example, into your picture. If you were doing this by hand, you would, maybe use a stipple instead. So you would get less palette entries and more varied colours. With digitizing you end up with seven greens, three reds and so on. They end up looking very flat."

You can't even hand-draw over a digitized picture with any success, according to

Scrolls, because it looks obvious and false.

Stipple, by the way, is the effect of making more colours appear on screen than there actually are. So if you put red next to grey you'll get a sort of pinky colour. Imagine you have some trees near you and some trees in the distance. The distant trees could have a green blue stipple while the nearby trees would have a richer green mix. Hence stippling can enhance distance between objects. Magnetic Scrolls uses trained artists for this process.

I wondered whether Mag. Scrolls had ever dabbled in high peformance graphic

hardware/software.

"Yeah, a little bit. I once nicked a space shuttle picture from a Quantel Paintbox. The interesting thing about the Paintbox is that they come with hard disks with a couple of hundred megabytes of capacity. But they don't go very far because each image is one megabyte large!"

One question I was dying to ask was whether Mag. Scrolls ever considered an artificial intelligence (A.I.) language. Infocom used LISP, which has A.I. features.

"That might be a better way of doing it than the way we do it — but, then, that's our problem. The end result will be no different. There is a hassle, though, which is the speed. LISP can be a lot slower than more simple systems. PROLOG is even easier to program but you use more of the computer's resources. Actually, I don't think the end-user would know the difference between a game coded in assembler and one coded in LISP. A.I. languages are a misnomer because there's nothing intrinsically intelligent about them. They are just easier to use, compared to assembler, for example."

NEXT MONTH IN 'ADVENTURE WORKSHOP'

There's an exciting interview with ZERO adventure columnist MIKE GERRARD! Find out what he really thinks about adventuring and the world of adventure related magazines, and much more!

We'll be taking a look at Public Domain in 'Adventure Workshop' issue 4 - what's on offer, and where you can get some great software without paying the earth! Issue 5 will see a further article on this subject.

Me've some tips for not just the experienced adventure writer, but also for the sheer beginner. They're sure to be useful no matter how long you've been writing adventures, as the tips apply to every writer.

'Adventure Workshop' will be continuing its range of features for the 16-bit computer market. That means more articles for users of not just STAC, but STOS, HATRACK II, TALESPIN, AGT, and 68000 machine code, whatever else we can lay our hands on! Be sure that no other magazine is solely dedicated to writing adventures on 16-bit machines like 'Adventure Workshop'. And we've the experts to help you, whatever your problem with programming, or even planning your game: top names such as Sean Ellis (Incentive), Gerald Kellett (Kelsoft), George March (Geordiesoft) and many more.

Beside all the great features in 'Adventure Morkshop', you'll also find a satisfying addition of the odd short story, poem or general article. But we're always on the lookout for more material - we can't get enough! Maybe you've got something you could share with us? Articles on using any program that'll write a 16-bit adventure are very welcome, but you might just have a small, but handy tip: why not send it in? You'd be surprised at how many readers would find your tip invaluable! We're also very keen to receive questions that you might be dieing to know the answers to - 'How do I do a combat routine with STAC?' or 'How do I think of names for my characters?' - send us your question and we'll be only too pleased to answer it! What's more, someone else might also want to know the very same thing, and by putting the answer in the magazine, we can benefit other readers too.

AMOS Avenue

By John Ferris

Article number three already! Right, so far we have a parser and a decoder but nothing to parse or decode. I have heard adventure games described as interactive databases, what you type determines what data you recieve. When I use the word data I am referring to messages, text, object info. etc. in one mass.

In the good old days all the data was stored in DATA statements tagged onto the end of the program. This worked alright except that the data was stored twice, once in the code and again as variables. With the advent of disk drives the data was kept on the disk and read in when required. This worked well unless you owned a C64 and a 1541 disk drive. This drive was about the size of the average microwave oven and almost as fast as a turboload tape. I believe some Infocoms took eleven seconds to respond to a command!

Right, to begin with, I'll define the way our data is to be stored and used.

- 1. All data is stored is sequential files on disk.
- All data is read into memory at the beginning.
- Any graphics data is stored on disk and loaded when needed, then discarded.

Yes, I know I'm ignoring the data BANKS which could store the graphics, but that will come a lot later!

What data do we require? Peruse the following list...

R\$(N) The location description array. EX(N,12) The location exit array. M\$ (Y) The messages array. V\$ (X) The verb array. N\$ (X) The noun array. ADS(X) The adverb array. DD\$(X) Takeable object description array. Takeable object examine array EX\$(X) OC(X,1) Takeable object condition array. Counter array. Z(X) VS(X) Verb Synonyms. (Next article)

We need some programs to produce these arrays and write them to the disk in a way that the adventure 'game can read and use them. These programs are actually quite simple, if laborious to write.

I have to confess this is the second draft of this article. In the first draft I described the programs in outline and left you to write them. Since then I've had enough spare time to improve on my own programs and integrate them into a single Adventure Database Editor (Nice catchy name, eh?) I've even used a load of procedures in writing it! The listing looks quite neat until you use the 'FOLD/UNFOLD' option to have a look at the procedures. Structured programmers had better take a deep breath and buy a box of Kleenex...

The program is about 16K long, so a printed listing in Workshop is not a sensible option. So, if you would like a copy send me a jiffy bag containing a formatted disk, your address and return postage and I'll

send the program back to you. My address:

John Ferris, B Frankwell Drive, Coventry, West Midlands, CV2 2FB.

The disk also contains an adventure outline containing the common routines needed to run an adventure and instructions. This way everyone is on the same level and you can all have a laugh at my programming style!

The Database Editor and the outline adventure are eventually destined for the Public Domain. The version you'll recieve is a pre-PD release so please don't distribute. Naturally your comments are welcome (but please don't be too rude!) If and when the PD release is issued, then I'll be more than happy to update your disks.

Enough pie in the sky! A brief overview of the ADE follows:

Program 1. Location Editor.

This is a simple program which deals with R\$(N) and EX(N,12).

- 1. Enter Location data. Once selected this asks for a room number, then a Line Input asks for the text. You can use the cursor to move back and forth along the text to edit it. Next it reads the exits in the order n,s,e,w,u,d,ne,se,nw,sw,in,out.) O means no exit. Finally it asks if you want to enter location N+1.
- 2. View data. This is a loop from 1 to TOTAL (TOTAL= max value of N so far) displaying R\$(X), then looping through EX(X,12) and asking if you want to see the next location or go back to menu.
- 3. Add text to string. A Line Input can only take 255 characters at a time, so for longer descriptions you need this routine. It asks the for the location number then displays the description. You then type in the extra text.
- 4. Edit exits. This asks for the room number, prints the description then asks for the exit data again.
- 5. Save locations. Saves the locations and exits in a format which the Adventure Outline can understand.
- 6. Load Locations. Loads a location file from disk.

Program 2. Vocabulary editor.

This deals with V\$(),N\$() and AD\$(). It first asks if you wish to edit verb, noun or adverb.

- Enter Data. Asks for (for example) the verb number, then asks for the verb.
- 2. View Data. Similar to the location description program.
- 3. Edit Data. Asks which number, displays the data then you type in the corrected data.
- 4. Save. Saves a sequential file to the disk.
- 5. Load. Obvious.

Program 3. Takeable Object Editor.

Takeable objects are treated differently to other nouns. Usually the takeable objects are the first nouns in the array. This program is written to cater for these takeable objects. This would fill EX\$(), OD\$() and OC(,1) in one go!

First the program asks you to load in the N\$() array and asks how many takeable objects are in the array. For example, the answer might be be the first twenty. The program loops through the first thirty nouns like so:

NOUN: axe

Object discription? [OD\$()] a large iron war axe

Examine message? [EX\$()] The axe is blunt and rusty.

Exists at start? YES puts OC(N,0)=1, NO puts OC(N,0)=0

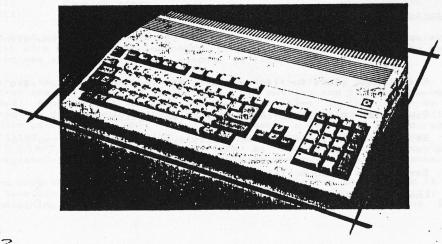
Begins where? [OC(N,1)]

And so on for all the takeable objects. When it gets to the end of the takeable objects, it asks you for a filename to save. To explain the object condition array, OC(N,0) indicates whether or not an object exists in the game or not. If =0 then the object is in limbo, awaiting to be either found, created or swapped with an empty bucket of water! When set to 1 the object enters the game at the location given in OC(N,1). The GET, DROP, EXAMINE, INVENTORY and the location description routine use both values. For example, the GET routine looks at OC(N,0) to see if the object exists and then at OC(N,1) to see if it is in the same location as the player. If so, then OC(N,1) is set to 979, i.e. the players pockets.

Program 4. Message Editor.

This edits the messages and saves them in a sequential file. Again, it is easy to use. Options similar to the location editor.

That's all for this article. If you do get the disk from me, have a look through the outline adventure. It doesn't do anything but see if you can follow the "logic". Next time I'll go through the GET, DROP, EXAMINE, INVENTORY and the location description routines and have a go at dealing with synonyms.



This month's section is all about the pitfalls of the story line in a game and how you get it to run like a book. What I mean by this is the page entry command on the menu. This command lets you restart a page whenever you enter it. This is okay if you want to, but to get a game to run like a book it's best not to use it. Instead you want to pick a variable, say 'talk' or like the one in the manual conversation and use this to make your adventure run from one page to another. Let's start from the first location and have your first character say "Hello" and the next replies "Hello". If you have a page entry which sets talk to zero everytime you enter the page, they greet each other over and over again. Do away with the page entry and go on to the next page and hold a further conversation with someone else, then go back to the first page and now your players don't talk to each other until you add more text. This way you can get your players to hold a conversation and give the game a storybook feel. They can then say certain things when you have certain objects, ie a torch or a gun etc.

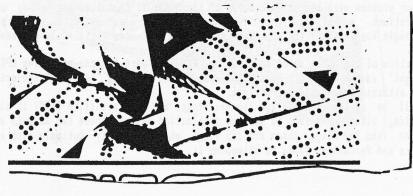
Extending this even further you can have your players only say comments when you've been to a certain room. The conversation can be the real core to your game, like if you enter a pub for the first time a certain conversation can take place, then the second time you enter, not only can the next conversation start, but it can make a different person (ie drawing) appear and a new conversation take place.

The page entry can be a help, by using it you can of course make a monster reappear everytime you enter until you change its variable to something else and on the drawing condition the drawing won't be drawn, hence you can enter the next stage of the game.

Another need for page entry is if you want some sound in the game. You can have a cry or shout when you enter a place. The sound you get on the disk is limited but with a change in the pitch you can get some good sounds.

One more point to remember when you're getting your masterpiece to take shape is to test it not only with the autotester that comes with the program but to go through the game as if you were playing it and use the restart page if you want to test only that page. If you don't, then the variables will be as you left them and the page won't work. If you haven't a page entry because you want the game to run like a book as I said before, you can put one on just to test it. Set the variable to one of your settings and see if the drawings appear and the conversation takes place the way you want it to.

Next month I'll tell you how you can make objects move in the night and how you can get real light from a torch...



REVIEW OF ATARI BT VERBION OF ADVENTURE GAME TOOLKIT (AGT)

BY GERALD KELLETT

There are a few disappointments with the ST version of AGT compared to the PC version, the first is that none of the documentaion has been 'corrected' for the ST and constantly refers to 'COMPILE.EXE' and 'RUN.EXE' instead of 'COMPILE.TTP' and 'RUN.ITP' (it being a further disappointment that they are '.TTP' and not '.TOB' or better still '.PRG' files, since this seems to prevent auto-run and auto-booting files). Also redundant references to MS-DOS and PC BIOS and such like have been left in the ST DOCs.

A biggger let-down is that the programs corresponding to 'AGTMESG' and 'AGTMUM' in the PC versions are missing from the ST version.

Also you only get one example adventure, 'Alice', with the ST version, others are available, but on seperate discs, including some that are mentioned in the docs as being included, so these may have been 'hived off'.

The documentation, all on disc unless you purchase a printed version when you register as a user of the shareware, is comprehensive. There is however quite a bit of dupliction between the contents of some of the auxiliary files and the main documentation file, particularly of the first part of this file. There is also some duplication within it (tables detailing the Meta-Commands apppear again in the appendicies, which can, as I did, be printed out as a Quick reference guide, they could have been placed into a file specifically for this purpose).

The Meta-Commands (hereafter to save my typing fingers: MCMDs) and Meta-Launguage (MLANG) bear a strong similarity to PAW's CondActs and Process Tables (but there's only one MCMD table), and anyone who has used PAW should have no trouble getting to grips very quickly with AGT.

Although it is described as a language, MLANG is used more like PAN's Process Table entries than STAC's 'languagesque' condition tables.

Many of the MCMDs perform in one command what would take several PAW CondActs (and probably also several STAC commands, althought I'm not that familiar with STAC, but I am familier with GAC on the Spectrum).

A minor problem with the extensiveness of the MCMDs is that they are 'wordy' with no abreveiations, a bit hard on the typing fingers. (A small dedicated editor program with single key entry of the most frequently used MCMD word parts would not have gone amiss).

Examination of the MCMDs shows that AGT has leanings more towards producing RPGs than 'straight' adventures, with many MCMDs specific to handling 'treasure' (objects with points attaching) and object groupings.

As well as having true flags (ie bit flags) and counters (like STAC) it also has variables, although I fail to see the distinction between these two as both seem to function like PAW Flags. There are 255 flags, which is plenty but only nine each of Counters and Variables, which is skimpping it.

Considering that both the machine ranges AGT is implemented on have a minimum of 512V of RAM, the fact that there are only 198 rooms/locations available does seem restrictive, particularly as there does not seem to be a way of implementing chained multipart adventures.

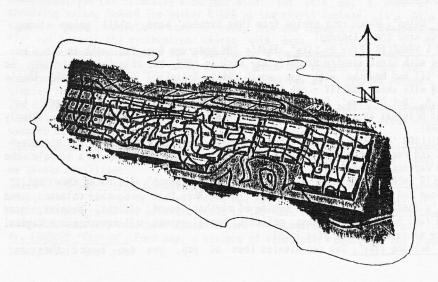
AGT was written back in 1986, using Turbo Pascal 4 (on the PC anyway, I don't think this is available on the ST, so may explain the delay in porting it across, since it probably had to be modofied to a version of Pascal that is available on the ST. That and the fact that it is only comparatively recently that PCs with 31/2" drives, (whose standard format discs the ST can read and is probably the route by which it was ported), have become widely spread.)

Since AGT was not written in machine code, and presuming that it was ported to the SI by compiling the Pascal source file onto the ST, I can't understand why 'AGTMSG' and 'AGTNUM' were omitted (assuming they were written in Pascal too).

Even with the gripes, I still think the ST AGT looks very promising. It's big plus is that it is available on both the ST and PC (and probably in the near future the Amiga and Mac).

STOP PRESS: There is, I have just found out, already a version of AGT for the MAC, Since AGT was written in Pascal, providing the Pascal source text can be 'ported' across to a machine, and memory permitting, then with probably no modifications (other than for any version dependant extensions) AGT can be implemented on the Amiga.

Further there is a version of AGT for the ST called AGT(BIG) which allows more of everything, however it is not compatable with the 'small' version, but does solve some of my gripes.



1991 was the year Bryan Adams reached No.1 - and stayed there for 16 weeks!! ifasily beating Slim Whitman's 11 weeks in 1955. We also lost several star names. and ones less known. We lost Eric Clapton's son, and also nearly lost Eric Clapton, who'd have been killed if he'd have taken the same plane as guitarist Stevie Ray Vaughan. We also lost several jazz stars - Slim Galliard, Stan Getz, Miles Davis and others. And a singer by the name of Frederick Bulsara, who changed his name to Larry Lurex, then to Freddie Mercury. Rock will never be the same again...

We had hit albums by a series of major acts last year, most of them just in time ior Christmas! Acts such as Dire Straits, Genesis, Michael Jackson and U2, who buttled it out for the top, though with debatable levels of quality. But it was the year that R.E.M and Public Enemy proved beyond doubt they were the hottest acts -I'd hated them both before, but this year I was firmly converted! And brand new acts such as Seal came along, though I wish they'd stop remixing his songs -

there's seven mixes of 'Killer' alone!

The year's most controversial event though wasn't a film, or a Rolling Stones' song, but a rap album. N.W.A's 'Efil4zaggin' was put out, then seized by the Obscene Publications Squad, who thought it highly offensive! Whilst in America, it reached No.1, over here it was banned, until in court, the case was dismissed, leaving Island Records with a clear victory for freedom of speech.

1991 was also the year LP sales became so poor that many stores, such as WIISHITHS and Woolworths began to sell off their vinyl albums and clear their shelves, so if you haven't switched to tape or compact disc yet, be warned! Yet new formats such as Philip's DCC and Sony's Mini-Discs were already on the horizon.

Alas both are now said to be 'near-CD' quality, so we can forget those!
On the home front, it was the year my brother finally proposed to his long-standing girlfriend. Now she's his wife! They were lucky to find a fantastic house as well, and I wish them both a happy marriage!

Now read on to see what my personal favourites of 1991 were. If you disagree,

why not send in your own?

Favourite Albums

1. YES 'Union'. Sheer rock genius from this Sixties' band, still going strong

due to so many great lineups!

2. JON & VANGELIS 'Page Of Life'. That's JON Anderson from Yes, with an album he recorded with Greek maestro Vangelis way back in 1989, but it's taken this long to release it! And how the wait was worth it!! Romantic, powerful music that's bringing with sheer QUALITY - not to be missed!

3. R.E.M. 'Out Of Time'. Oozing with classic melodies, it just couldn't be ignored! Original as well, despite Beatles and Simon & Garfunkel references. Simply

4. MARILLION 'Holidays In Eden'. Aylesbury's band, back with a set of stunning hallads and rock pieces, evocatively sung by Steve Hogarth on top form - he's the

guy who replaced Fish! A gem.

5. PUBLIC ENERY 'Apocalypse '91: The Enemy Strikes Black'. I'd hated them until I sat down and listened to one of their albums. Then this one was released, and hey! It's fantastic!! A powerful fusion of rhythms, sound effects, samples, hard hitting rap, humour, seriousness, politics, social issues, all woven into a magical tapestry of noise. One to play loud!

6. UZ 'Achtung Baby'. You can dismiss them as pop, you can ignore them as

superstars, but you can't dismiss their music. Rewriting their own style, U2 gave us yet another great album. With unusual production reminiscent of King Crimson's '21st Century Schizoid Man', and maybe The Doors, I couldn't fail to like it. Haunting tunes, fascinating lyrics and grabbing instrumentation, it was an album to

study for years to come.

7. ROXETTE 'Joyride'. Sweden's most famous band since Abba returned with their second album, packed with loveable melodies and catchy production. Sheer pop, but with tracks like the acoustic 'Watercolours In The Rain' they proved they could employ other styles just as well. The only problem proved which tracks to release as singles! Consistent and cheerful, an album to be warmed by.

B. PROFESSOR GRIFF 'KAO'S II WIZ #7# DOME' (pronounced 'Chaos To Wisdom'!). Ex-Public Enemy, Griff put out this fabulous collection of intelligent and lively tracks, showing rap was far from dumb. As is usual with rap albums, the tracks are joined together with superb interludes, made-up scenes that make a point, and always keep you entertained.

9. RUSH 'Roll The Bones'. From the most consistent rock band in the world came another fine album, but just too fine this time to really move you. Parts of it are

dull, though it's always well-played, well-worded and astute.

10. SEAL 'Seal'. With production by ex-Yes singer Trevor Horn (that's TRUE!) and a set of great tunes, 'Seal' made a damn fine debut album, complete with Trevor Rabin of Yes as one of the guitarists. (But he's impossible to spot!) Impressive stuff, once you get to know it.

Other goodies came fresh from T'Pau, Genesis, Prince, Erasure, Fish, PM Dawn, De La Soul, Ice Cube, ex-Bangles' singer Susanna Hoffs, Queen, and Guns N' Roses, who finally released a third album... and a fourth as well, under the guise of the two 'Use Your Illusion' records. I'm off to buy them both soon!

Favourite Singles

1. U2 'The Fly'. Not for the average song or the above-average drums, vocals and bass guitar, but for the totally amazing GUITAR! If you listen to this on headphones, you can literally blow your mind! Yet it's not a riot of endless screaming noise, indeed the guitar STOPS at the start! Instead, it's U2's finest moment - sheer irresistable rock 'n' roll, like you thought had disappeared. 'The Fly' cut through the synthesized charts with ease, straight in to No.1, and straight through your soul! Not a sampler or a drum-machine in sight!

2. MARILLION 'No One Can'. Here, we had a minor hit record, but one that grabbed your heart and wouldn't let go. Described by one fan as "a perfect record", it was

simple, romantic and a joy.

3. QUEEN 'Innuendo'. Another hit to enter at No.1, it was even longer than 'Bohemian Rhapsody', and almost as good! The Spanish guitar, from another Yes maestro Steve Howe, was the icing on the cake. Magic!

4. MARILLION 'Dry Land'. Another minor hit, and a classic! A really beautiful chorus, and a smashing song, actually written by Steve Hogarth's old band, before

he joined Marillion!

5. QUEENSRYCHE 'Silent Lucidity'. A total clone of Pink Floyd's 'The Wall', complete with strings by Michael Kamen who worked on 'The Wall' himself! Yet a magical track, from the acoustic intro to the Rush-like rock. I thought Queensryche were thrash-metal, but their album 'Empire' is stunning progressive rock!

6. ERASURE 'Chorus'. Pure pop, a mixture of electronic doodling and fantastic

tunes, their best yet!

7. R.E.M. 'Shiny Happy People'. Like Erasure, you just couldn't resist this one the strings and vocals from Kate Pierson of the B-52s made this even better. Dangerously commercial for R.E.M. though!

B. QUEENSRYCHE 'Best I Can'. An adrenalin stirring slice of magic. The

full-length album version is a masterpiece!

9. SEAL 'Crazy'. It couldn't be disliked, a blend of blatant disco rhythms with rousing vocals and that magical Trevor Horn production stamp.

1 O. <u>ELECTRONIC</u> 'Get The <u>Message</u>'. Classic pop with Johnny Marr proving he was the real force behind The <u>Smiths</u>, and Bernard Sumner of New Order adding great vocals. I might have put their album in my other list, but I never heard it!

11. EXTREME 'Get The Funk Out'. Sounding as though they were singing something else in the chorus (!), Extreme broke through in '91 with this riotous example of their heavy style. Great fun!

12. POP WILL EAT ITSELF 'X Y & Zee'. Their album's rubbish, but this single was a rare breed - a remix that shines over the original! With codles of ace lyrics, it

was a real fun tune!

Other gems came forth from the talents of Enya, Right Said Fred, Extreme again, Yes, R.E.M., Prince, Oleta Adams, the Rebel MC, PM Dawn, Guns N' Roses, Kate Bush, Marillion again, De La Soul (with a SERIOUS Christmas song!), Susanna Hoffs, Salt N' Pepa, Queensryche, The KLF (with Tammy Wynette!!), Queen again, DJ Jazzy Jeff & The Fresh Prince, C+C Music Factory, Altern 8 and Cubic 22 all providing much diverse entertainment. Now for the failures...

<u>Worst Single</u>: HAMMER 'Too Legit 2 Quit'. Completely inept. Soccer fans are more musical than this racket! However, I really liked his next single, 'Addams Groove'! So he was saved from the next award...

Worst Act: WET WET. A fun pop band who turned into a 'serious' soul outfit, desperately trying to prove themselves. They even grew their hair long in a bid to be taken seriously. What a joke!

Most Disappointing Album: GENESIS 'We Can't Dance'. After years of outstanding material, they finally gave in to the drumsound, production, vocals and songwriting of Phil Collins. This was more like a new solo album! Tony Banks was virtually inaudible.

<u>Bring 'Em Back!</u>: Jimi Hendrix, The Doors, Freddie Mercury, Blondie, ABBA, Roxy Music, Cream, Haircut 100, Soft Cell, John Lennon, and all other great musicians who've left the Earth.

<u>Send 'Em Away!</u>: The Farm, Dire Straits, Hammer, Vanilla Ice, most remixers, \overline{lob} ...

<u>Ihings To' Look Forward To:</u> GENESIS - a possible compilation of all their B-sides and rarities, from when they used to be great; PINK FLOYD - their new album (?) and tour; YES - their new album and tour too; FISH - a possible LIVE album; ROGER WATERS 'Amused To Death' (If it's half as stunning as his last album!); PUBLIC ENEMY & ANTHRAX - a whole joint album (and solo albums!); R.E.M. - their next album, already half-recorded (or finished?!?).

ADVENTURE STANDARDS

by Steve Clay

At present I am playing adventure games from various companies, also I am writing a game using PAW. One particular aspect of adventure games that, I feel, could be improved is the standard vocabulary, ie: the most often used verbs such as EXAMINE and TAKE/GET. Why can't writers realize that to type EXAMINE, EXAM or (even worse) EXAMI every time the player wishes to discover more about an item is tedious to say the least. What is wrong with using X for EXAMINE or EX? I realize it's poor English, but surely the idea is to make the game user-friendly. Other helpful abbreviations are 6 and I for GIN and TONIC, er... GET and TAKE, H for HELP, even O and C for OPEN and CLOSE.

Another mysterious verb is RAMSAVE/ RAMLOAD. The variety of strange synonymns currently in use is staggering, you can choose from MEMORY SAVE, MEMORY LOAD, RAM SAVE, RAM LOAD (note the spaces), QSAVE, QLOAD... I wonder what is wrong with RS and RL?

The use of verbs which toggle various functions is under-used. With the use of just one flag a verb can be used to switch functions on and off. Example: FX - if flag is 0 will set flag and turn sound FX on, if flag not 0 will clear flag and turn sound off.

Moving on, an improvement in the OPEN DOOR field is long overdue. Any player will tell you that having to enter OPEN DOOR WITH BRASS KEY KEY, when, if the player is carrying the said key, OPEN DOOR should suffice, is irritating. If the author wishes the player to use the longer input then perhaps a higher score could be given for using it, ie: OPEN DOOR - 2 points, OPEN DOOR WITH BRASS KEY - 4 points.

We arrive now at character interaction. It is in this area that the documentation of a game often falls down. The need for the player to know how to communicate with non-player characters (NPCs) is vital in many games. For starters we have the method of SAY TO THIEF "PICK NOSE", using PAW this can be truncated to THIEF "PICK NOSE". An entry in response of ____ THIEF calling the process table dealing with the THIEF will do the job.

Once the player has found a way of communicating with the THIEF it would be helpful to know what the NPC understands. Each NPC should be capable of receiving a greeting from the player, such as HELLO or GREETINGS even if the response is BOG OFF CREEP, it should be there. The best system I have seen is the token words. The writer highlights certain words in the responding or opening speech of a character. (Highlighting can be achieved by colouring, inversing or printing token words in capitals.) Example:

PLAYER: INNKEEPER "BEER"

INNKEEPER: Yes, sir. Are you new in TOWN, have you any LODGINGS?

PLAYER: INNKEEPER "LODGINGS"

INNKEEPER: Well I can offer you lodgings for 4 shillings a night, YES or NO?

If the gaining of information is vital to the quest, such as in detection games, then a limit on the number of questions the NPC will answer before leaving can be imposed.

All in all, writers, look at the game from the player's point of view and try and make your game easier to play.

MOVING upto 68000 - part 3 by Gerald Kellett

Here is the last part of my articles on 68000, I had thought it would not get written in time to be included with the originally planned run of these articles in 'pre-split' 'Coder', but since Chris decided it was of no great interest to '8-bitters' and that the full run was only going in what became 'Adventure Workshop', and what with the delays with both 'Coder' and 'Workshop', so despite this being written many months after the other parts it has still managed to follow on without any gap!.

The table of addressing modes (termed the Effective Addressing or EA, Fig1), is as comprehensive as I can make it, but the text book I consulted (which only had the addressing modes given seperately with the description for each instruction, not very usefull) was not all that clear on what modes are allowed where. Some Op codes only have one addressing operand, with others either the 'source' or the 'destination' is fixed, so the addressing mode only applies to the variable one.

Although word (16 bit) length addressing is allowed it is not of use, firstly, on the ST anyway, most programs 'live' beyond the range addressable by just a word address, secondly care should be taken that the upper word of any address register is zero if used, some ops only affect the lower word in word addressing.

Notes:

1=as source EA only 2=as destination EA only 3=as static bit only ?=I'm not sure! skr is any of: ASL, ASR, LSL, LSR, ROL, ROR, ROXL, ROXR. bitm is any of: BSET, BCLR, BCHG. cc in Scc is any of the condition codes as given below.

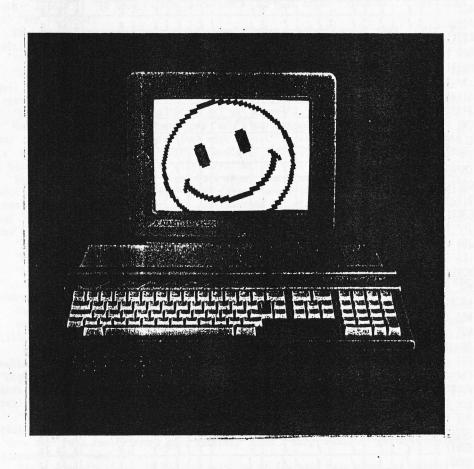
cc = T , F , HI, LS, CC, CS, NE, EQ, VC, VS, PL, MI, GE, LT, GT, LE .

F=False, T=True, HI=unsigned 6T, LS=unsigned LE, CC=Carry Clear, CS=Carry Set, PL=PLus, MI=MInus (ie top bit set), VC=oVerflow Clear, V8=oVerflow Set
These conditions also apply to Bcc, but in Branch instructions, BF is more usually given the mnemonic BRA and BT does not exist but performs the BBR.

The DBcc instructions use these too, DBF - likewise usually DBRA - is the direct equivalent of Z80 DJNZ, well almost, the loop terminates when the loop counter (any D reg) goes negative (don't ask me why, it's not very convenient that way!). DBT is allowed, but since it does not loop at all but simpley performs a DEC Dreg, and since this still has to have a branch address even though it is not used, it is less efficient in both memory and processor time than using a SUBQ #1,Dreg, so why it's not used to perform something useful like with BT becomes BSR I can't see.

The following Ops affect all the testable bits of the CCR depending on the result of the opperation: ADDI, SUBI, ADDQ, SUBQ, ADD, SUB, ADDX, SUBX, NEG, NEGX, ASR, ASL. These Ops affect the CCR and or SR by loading it: MOVE to CCR, MOVE to SR, STOP, RTE,

RTR. STOP is similar to Z80 HALT, except that it does not just wait for an interupt, but sets the level of interupt, enables interupts and then waits for one of the specified level. CMP, CMPA, CMPM Ops affect all bits except the extend bit.



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Phew! It took quite some time to compile these tables so although this part is short & sweet its pack full of info! And that's it! I may return to the subject at a later date.

HEAD'S CASES I'II: Dial M For Mozzarella by George March.

It wuz' startin' ta' rain 'gain as I left Shirley's Bar - Christ knows why 'da hell I keeps goin' back 'dere, I mean 'da meals's so bad even 'da trash cans gits' poisonin'! 'Don't know 'bout Cordon-Bleu, bud' I reckoned it shoulda' 'Cordoned off' - jus' fa safeties sake ya' unnerstan'! Bud' I shouldn't grouse so much - I mean it 'ad only rained twice since 'da week began - once fa' t'ree days an' 'den fa' four!

So I heads down east t'irty t'ird, inna' Chelsea, an' 'den I seez' 'dis kid waitin' at 'da bus-stop...

"Hay! Gotta' light, mac'?" 'ey sez' fumblin' a roll-up.

"Nah! Jus' 'dis damn heavy raincoat, kid!" I sez' an' 'den 'da kid even 'as 'da gall ta' ask if I 'ad any spare change - 'ow 'da hell should I know? I ain't finished spendin' it yit'!

"Listen, maan!" 'ey drawls "Gimme all ya' money!"

Hell, I could tell 'dis cheap punk 'adn't any respect fa' age at all, 'less it wuz' inna' bottle! - Which wuz' jus' whut' I hit 'im wid' - Christ, if I wannid' ta' waste a bottle ah' Jack Daniels I would've added Coke to it! Hell, I jus' knew I hadda' git' outta' 'dis damn city furra' while, so a couple ah' weeks later...

Gee' 'dis wuz' some early start to a summer vacation - well, it wuz' still 'da middle 'ah December! - an I jus' gits' inna' 'da office ta' hang 'da 'CLOSED' sign onna' door when 'da phone went - I just managed ta' grab it quick a'fore it shot out 'da door - ma' h'informant, Ewan Huzami, a Welsh Pakistani, wuz' onna' line, bud' 'ah told 'im ta' jump off quick a'fore 'ey got electrocuted!

"Hiya', Huzie', whaddaya' want?" I sez' "An' make it quick!"

"Hi'-Ritch'-a-case-fa'-you-down-Chinatown!" 'ey squealed all in 1 word.

"Err, not 'dat quick!" I sez' ...

"...Just yur' style!" 'ey finishes, an' 'da phone dies jus' as 'ey gimme' 'dee address - I'd 'ave ta' send flowers ta' its funeral!

Well, I las' case a'fore we leave I t'ought!

Wendy Day, ma' secretary, wuz' waitin' outside inna' car, an' we headed inna' Litle China a'fore we left fa' 'da airport.

'Da cops wuz' swarmin' all 'round 'dis little hole inna' ground - so I climbs

outta' 'da car an' wanders over...

"Urgh!" I sez', bendin' over an' starin' inna' 'da darkness, all'I could see wuz' some guy's body floatin' face down inna' shi... Err, effluent! - 'Nuthin' really! - An' 'den I seez' 'da letter taped ta' 'da edge ah' 'da manhole...

'Da case ended here fa' me an' I left it ta' 'da cops, 'dis guy killed 'imself I could tell - it wuz' a SEWER-SIDE note! When we h'eventually gotta' 'da airport, 'dere wuz' 'dis really weird guy outside, goin' mad, wavin' 'is arms 'round, screamin' and' shoutin'....

"It's wrong to fly... If God had meant us to fly he'd have given us wings!" an' 'dis wuz' 'da pilot! - I wuz' startin' ta' git' a bid' worried!
"Oh, God!" sez' Wendy as we gotta' 'da desk, searchin' t'rough 'er 'andbag. "I'm beginning to wish we'd brought the coffee table with us!"

"Huh?" I sez' totally lost "Whut' 'da hell for? You' already brought 'da kitchen

"Err, I think I've left the tickets on it!"

"Ya' mean you ain't got 'da tickets?"

"Nope!" she shrugged...

"Ain't surprised really!" I sneered "I still got 'em!"

Bud' we still hadda' couple ah' hours ta' waste - 'efta' we got 'da luggage

checked out - 'till 'da plane took off fa' Miami, so we dumped 'da bags an' headed inna' 'da bookstore...

I kinda' t'ought Wendy wuz' comin' onta' me - maybe ma' luck wuz' changin' 'efta' all? - When I seez' 'er joinin' 'da queue fa' 'dis foreign guy signin' copies 'uv 'is new book, '36 New Swedish Matin' Positions' - 'till I gits' onna' plane an' reads 'da cover properly! Geez' nivva' knew a book on chess'd sell so well!

An' we'd only bin' on 'da plane a couple ah' minutes, bud' I kinda' figured sumt'in' wuz' wrong when I seez' 'da pilot needed a dog an' white stick ta' giita' 'board! Bud' I didn't mind 'dat so much as 'da funny guy wid' 'da beard an' 'is "Wha' mean? We no goes Cuba?" - Aah well, annuda' day annuda' disaster!

An' 'da plane started ta' jerk as 'da jerk started 'da plane. Bud' we all sa'

down an' decides ta' grab a couple ah' hours sleep...

A huge bang went off an' I sits bolt upright - sum'times I still wakes up at night shakin' an' covered in sweat - see 'dat's whut' 'Nam does fa' 'ya - makes ya' furget' ta' switch off ya' 'lectric blanket! An' 'da wife's memory still haunts me bad sum'times, when she left I couldn't sleep fa' weeks - 'da bitch'd taken 'da bed!

"So, err..." I sez', lookin' round, real worried, as 'da stewardess wanders past widda' bandages. "How often 'da 'deez t'ings crash, 'den?"

"Oh, just the once!" she sez' widda' Jack Nicholson grin "They never seem to be

able to get off the ground after that... Why?"

"Oh, nuthin' really!" I sez' watchin' Wendy chewin' 'er knuckles as 1 ah' da engine's propellors drifted off inta' 'da breeze "Jus' do me a favour an' ask 'da pilot if 'ees ever flown a 90-ton glider a'fore? 'Cos 'ey's gonna' git' plenty ah' practise now!" I sez standin' up, as I tries ta' stagger ta' 'da flight deck...

"Oh, really, sir, there's nothing at all to worry about!" she sez' "After all

we're only 2 miles away from Miami, not far to go!"

"Only 2 miles?" I asks jus' a little bid' suspicious!

"Err, yes... Straight down!" she winces - wid' a grin like a shark in shock - I kinda' preffered 'da Jack Nicholson one myself' bud' I always wuz' a bid' 'uv a Joker!

'Da co-pilot wuz' lyin' on 'da floor, covered in ketchup, when I gits' onna' 'da flight deck...

"Kismet, Hardy, Kismet..." 'ey coughs.

"Kinda' reckon 'dis guy's got serious hormone problems! Not only is 'ey a lousy actor, bud' 'ey t'inks 'ees Nelson!" I sez' ta' 'da pilot - bud' seein' as 'ey wuzza' real short guy, 'ey wuz' prob'ly only a half-Nelson!

"He said Kismet, you idiot, not 'kiss me'!" screams 'da pilot fumblin' fa' 'da

microphone...

"'Ees talkin' 'bout a frog?" I sez'.
"No, he means it's his end, his fate!"

"So is it piles or are 'is shoes too tight or whut'?"

"Aargh!" screams 'da pilot 'gain as 'da fuel guage hits zero...
"Look at him!" sez' 'da pilot "Shot in his prime, by flying metal!"

Well, I sorta' squints at 'da guy on 'da floor an' sez' "Urgh... Nah, I t'ink it's 'is head!"

"No, that was the last hi-jack!" sez' 'da pilot.

"So, where wuz' 'ey hit 'dis time?"
"In the cockpit!" winces 'da pilot.

"Oh... Pity 'ey wuzn't celibate! 'Mouldn't 'ave mattered so much... Hurt jus' as bad dough!" I groans, as 'da pilot squeezes 'da mike - Mike didn't seem ta' mind

too much 'dough, I wuz' gonna' keep an' eye on 'im fa' 'da resta' 'da flight! - an' screams "Tower, tower, we're 600 miles out of Miami with 3 of our engines out, we're running out of fuel and there's no instant de-caff' left... What shall I do, over!"

'Dere wuz' silence furra' few seconds an' 'den 'da guy inna' control tower sez'

"Ok, Jeff, repeat after me... Our father which art in heaven..."

Now, Jeff, bein' 'da nouvous type, screams an' staggers fa' 'da parachutes 'as

fast as 'is dog could drag 'im!

So I runs out 'efta' 'im an' 'den I seez' 'da bearded guy 'gain, standin' inna' aisle, holdin' a bag wid' a bomb - So I grabs some guy's breifcase an' t'rows it at 'da terrorist, bud' it missed 'im an' hit 'da bag instead an' she fell 'gainst 'da wall - bud' Wendy wuzza' tough old broad, she wuz' still awake, so she stands up 'gain 'an hits 'da bearded guy an' 'ey collapses like a South African revolution...

So 'da pilot calms down an' 'wuz guided back ta' 'is seat - maybe now 'ey could actually git' 'dis damn crate offa' 'da tarmac! Geez' whutta' helluva start to a

vacation!

We h'eventually gotta' Miami, found 'da hotel an' went straight upstairs - jus' ta' unpack ya' unnerstan'! - 'an as per usual wid' hotels 'da place wuz' 'inna helluva' state - Florida ta' be exact! - still bein' built an' wuz' mostly in ruins - sorta' reminded me 'ah ma' ex-wife, bud' Christ, if I wannid' ta' feel 'dat sick I could 'ah jus' listened ta' 'New Dick-'eds Onna' Block'! Jesuz, talk 'bout a small apartment! 'Ivry time I stood up I kept bangin' ma' head onna' cistern!

'Bud at least it really wuzza' 5 star joint jus' like 'dey advertised 'efta' all

- I could see 'em t'rough 'da gaps inna' rafters!

'Dere wuzza' 'nuther typical airport foul-up when we started ta' unpack - 2 'uv our bags were still in 'da Big Apple - an' ya' knows why 'dey call it 'da Big Apple? 'Cos it's rotten ta' 'da core an' fulla' worms! - an' we seem ta' 'ave picked up 'dat guy's briefcase frum' 'da plane, bud' we couldn't be so nosey as ta' try an' force our way t'rough a heavy welded casin' an' t'ree combination locks ta' look inside, could we? Yeah, why not!

'Da briefcase wuz' fulla' bags 'ah flour an' some blocks 'ah clay, wid' bits, 'ah clock attached - 'least I t'ink 'dats whut' 'dey were? 'Dere wuz' a h'envelope inside 'da case as well - addressed ta' some guy only a few blocks down frum' 'da hotel! - Geez' I can't even lose a couple 'ah cases at 'da airport wid' out 'da

crooked kind fallin' inna' ma' lap - some vacation!

Geez', 'da foist t'ing ya' should know 'bout goin' away, is ya' shouldn't 'ave! Stay at home next time, 'least 'dere's no foreigners ta' git' inna' way! I mean come lunch time 'dere wuz' more Germans inna' pool 'dan 'dere wuz' in Berlin! Bud' I realized I wouldn't git ridda' 'dis damn case, so I could eidder' dump it inna' ocean or 'and it ta' 'da cops...

I decided onna' cops, let 'dem 'andle t'ings once inna' while, no sense me endin' up wearin' a plywood suit - 'dat's a coffin ta' you - or floatin' down 'da river wearin' concrete sneakers, when 'dey could send some quy floatin' downna'

river ta' jail!

I h'eventually found Wendy down a'side 'da marina, Christ knows why? 'Be a miracle if she could tell a yacht frum' a yak - Marina 'dat is, poor girl! Bud' 'den 'gain Wendy knew more 'bout cars, or at least she'd test driven a few back seats, 'dan she did 'bout yaks, err, yachts - mind you, I've seen yaks 'dat could float better 'dan some 'ah 'deez crates, National Geographic can be very educational I'll 'ave you know!

Bud' hell it wuz' only a vacation!

STAC'S MORE PROBLEMS

by George March

Have you ever had 1 of those weeks? Where there's nothing you can think of that cures a problem? When there's nothing in the manual or the help bages of any magazines that helps either?.. Well, do you remember my HDVSYS review in a previous issue? (Anyone who's read it that is?) And now I really loved that program? (A-Hem!) Well, at the very end of that review I said 'I think STAC or an ST PAW is more my style', but maybe I was wrong, at least in the case of STAC, maybe?

I've had STAC for just over 3 months now, and yes there is an awful lot you can do with it, it's a pretty good program, but definately NOT worth the 39 pounds 95p most none 'Special Reservists' have to pay for it! And yes, it has got some really good ideas going for it (OBJLNG / OBJSHT, WHEREIS?, etc, and its String\$ capabilities. Not that I can think of any immediate use for String commands allowing you to chop characters off the front and end of a message? Even though all 3 of those commands I've given above, and MORE besides, can easily be produced by FAW on a 48K Spectrum, even though I have got a 128!) but, well, I'm sorry to have to say it, but even though it should be more than easy to produce any of the routines with STAC and a 520ST that I've produced with PAW and my original 48K Speccie, it isn't, I just keep coming up against new problems, mostly of the 'Mismatched Numbers' variety..

So, if anyone (such as Matthew Conway, Dave Blower, etc) out there can nelp me with a few problems I have, like these, please write to Chris' and he'll get them printed, not just for me but for anyone else who might like to know?

- Why, if STAC allows you to chop characters off the start and end of a String / Message, with CUTST\$ / CUTEND\$, and to add characters to the end of a String / Message , with ADD\$ / ADDCHR\$, why doesn't it let you add characters to the start of a String / Message?
- Even though the STAC manual does say that it's capable of an AGAIN routine, how do you implement it? Can anyone give me a routine?
- if CONTROL-N saves the present screen positions (like PAW's SAVEAT), and CONTROL-O restores these original positions after printing new location descriptions, messages, etc (like PAW's BACKAT), where's the command for printing any messages, etc, on specific line numbers or column positions (like PAW's PRINTAT 'line no' 'column no')? Or can anyone give me a routine? I can't see why, but no matter how hard I try STAC on my 520ST still looks like it was done with GAC on my 48K Spectrum! (A-Hem!)
- When I use the RETURN key in STAC, whilst writing a message, etc, to just go onto the next line so I can carry on writing (like PAW's EXTEND-MODE, the number 7 and then the DELETE key, which puts the cursor at the beginning of the next line down, without ending input of the message), the bloody thing just ends my messages instead! Anyone help me with this?
- 5) Can anyone find me a set of decent Wear / Remove routines as good as those in PAW? Why on earth STAC doesn't have these Wear / Remove routines built in I do not know! Even the original

version of Quill did, and that was eons ago!

Well, enough of my problems, here's something that might help any new STAC users without a decent exits routine! These are an addition to Matt' Conway's 'Inventory' and 'Available objects in a room' routines from way back in 'Adventure Coder' issue 3, in which he created a set of routines allowing commas and the word 'and' to seperate a list of items, followed by a full-stop. Well, from those routines I've been able to write some lines which display any available exits in much the same way, eg, 'Obvious exit(s) north, east and downwards.'. Firstly we'll need 6 new objects, using numbers 1 - 6 for example.

No.	Short Description.	Weight.	Initially At.
1)	north	0	0
2)	south	0	0
3)	east	0	0
4)	west	0	0
5)	up	0	0
6)	down	0	0

Which do NOT need a weight and MUST be 'not-created'! Then, just as Matt' said, we'll need to enter these object's short descriptions, as above, into the message table as well, except that these 6 messages should have numbers 8000 higher than the real object's number, for example with object no' 1's short description (no need for a long description!) being 'north' then message 8001 should also be 'north', etc, upto message 8006 'downwards' or 'downstairs', etc.

Now we could also slightly change Matt's addition to SPECIAL 17 'start up information', from..

1 MESS\$ 1 2 MESS\$ 2 3 MESS\$ 3

into..

9914 MESS\$ 1 2 MESS\$ 2 3 MESS\$ 3

Which saves us having to write another full-stop when we can just use the one already given in STAC's 'OSTART' file. Now as Matt' said in 'Adventure Coder' issue 3, the above line in SPECIAL 17 simply sets up Strings 1, 2 and 3 to hold the same text as messages 9914, 2 and 3, and we'll need another 2 messages, which are..

Messages ..

- 2) 'and' 'Notice the spaces at either end of the message'.
- 3) ', 'Notice the space after the comma'.
- 12) 'Óbvious exit(s) ' Notice the space after the last bracket'.

9914) '.'
9927) 'It's a bit too dark to see anything!'

So firstly for LOW FRIORITY ..

IF VERB "EXITS" THEN SPECIAL 20 LF WAIT

And for SPECIAL 20..

- 1) IF CONNECT "north" > 0 THEN 1 TO 9998
- 2) IF CONNECT "south" > 0 THEN 2 TO 9998
- 3) IF CONNECT "east" > 0 THEN 3 TO 9998
- 4) IF CONNECT "west" > 0 THEN 4 TO 9998
- 5) IF CONNECT "up" > 0 THEN 5 TO 9998
- 6) IF CONNECT "down" > 0 THEN 6 TO 9998
- 7) MESSAGE 12
- 8) REPEAT
- 9) ((FIRSTOB 9998) + 8000) MESS\$ 0
- 10) IF CNTOBJ 9998 = 1 THEN 1 ADD\$ 0
- 11) IF CNTOBJ 9998 = 2 THEN 2 ADD\$ 0
- 12) IF CNTOBJ 9998 > 2 THEN 3 ADD\$ 0
- 13) PRINTS 0
- 14) FIRSTOB 9998 TO O
- 15) UNTIL ZERO? FIRSTOB 9998

Now the way STAC's CONNECT X command works is that it generates the number of the room which is connected to the player's present room by the direction given in verb X, and so if the room number in X is greater than O, then it must be a real room number! If so, the routine then moves the object number, with the same direction name into room 7978, prints message 12 and then prints the messages with the same direction names of any available exits, with commas and the word 'and' seperating them, etc. It then puts the object back into room O (not created) for when the player moves off into the next room.

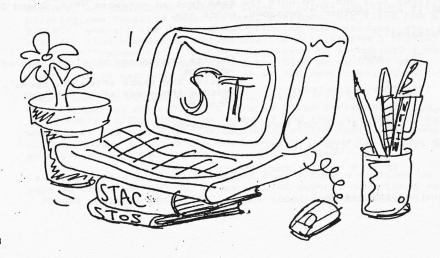
This must NOT be the same room as is used, by Matt', for an 'Inventory' or 'Objects present' routine, as it generates some really funny messages (as I found out!)...

'Obvious exit(s) north, east, a packet of Sunflower seeds and down.'

Yup! That's exactly how my original idea turned out, had me scratching my head for a few seconds I admit! And I suppose you could always put a SPECIAL 20 at the end of SPECIAL 15 (which describes the present room on entry), instead of having the EXITS command in LOW PRIORITY!

Well, that's it from me for now, if you've got any comments, suggestions, help you can offer me or other people, etc, the address is..

George E. March, 8 Heatherslaw Road, Fenham, NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE, NE5 20J



Hatrack II Interactive Adventure Creator

A Review

By John Ferris

Hatrack II is the first commercial adventure creator for the Amiga, written by Tony Heap of Heyley Software, price 29.95.

When you open the envelope you find a 100 page A4 manual and a wallet containing the program disc plus the quick reference and registration cards. My first impression was one of quality and professionalism. The manual is a delight, produced with Wordperfect plus a laser printer it is clear, easy to use and ring bound, the latter prolonging the life of the manual. It starts with a tutorial which leads you through the process of writing a simple adventure. At the end of the tutorial I felt I knew the system pretty well and the rest of the manual was therefor easier to understand.

The Hatrack disc boots up to a Workbench screen, the program is run by clicking the appropriate icon. Hatrack will run in 512K but to write a really large game 1Meg would be better.

The program first loads in a set of default files and then presents you with an empty window. Using the mouse you select the Location Editor. A window opens up containing headings under which you write your text and exit data. Each location has a summary description, which is used when the game is played in brief mode. The main description is where you put your flowing prose. When the description is printed out in the game, the words "You are " are automatically printed before the description. If you wish to write the game in the first person, all you need to do is to alter several messages in the default message file. Exits are easily dealt with, against each direction type either destination location number (eg south leads to location 2), leave blank for no exit or type 999 for a blocked exit. As with all the editors, the location Editor contains some useful functions such as "Search" and "Goto".

After quitting the Location Editor you can move onto the Messages Editor. A window opens and you can type in any messages you can think of at this stage or edit the default file. Messages can actually be entered whilst in another editor, see later. The layout is similar to that of the Location Editor.

If you are following the manuals advice, the next editor you will use is the Objects Editor. Again simplicity is the key:

YOU SEE a book
YOU GET the book
KEYWORD book
MULTOBJ

(this is the noun) (used when dealing with synonyms)

Next you enter the examine message. This is automatically added to the messages file, and the program notes that message 56 is the examine message for the book. Next follows a clever

message 'nich is printed when the player types WHAT IS THE BOOK. You might use the message "It's a number of sheets of paper bound together and held in place by a leather cover." There then follows object variables such as carry status and weight.

Vocabulary is dealt with using the easy to use Words Editor. Predefined object keywords (like "book") are added for you. You add a word, define its type (verb, object etc) and give it a number.

User variables are defined easily. You type the variable name (or token) eg DOOROPEN, give it an initial value and then you can actually add a comment to what the variable stands for. Great!

Then we come to the Puzzle Editor. It is here any non-programmers will start to worry. Yes, it's time to get down to the nitty gritty. The 23 predefined puzzles perform the mundane chores like look, examine, movement, get, drop and so on. Puzzles are written in simple BASIC style IF THEN ELSE ENDIF statements. Non-programmers will be able to pick it up very quickly, although everyone will need to refer frequently to the relevant pages in the manual as there's a lot of information regards variables, mathematical operators, printing messages and so on. After reading all this, I began to realise the sheer power and flexibility Hatrack allows. To those who have used GAC, this will seem like cloud 9! A simple example:

IF VE=PULL AND OB=ROPE AND LC=20 THEN
IF UV(BELLREPAIRED)=1 THEN
ME(47): UV(BELLRUNG)=1
ELSE
ME(48)
ENDIF
ENDIF

If the player types "PULL ROPE" in location 20, If the rope is repaired then print message 47, and set the variable BELLRUNG to 1. Else print message 48, saying the bell is still broken.

By clicking on the PARSE gadget Hatrack then translates the puzzle to a form it can understand, rather like a compiler. It reports any errors for correction or gives the "okay" message. The really excellent part of the puzzle system is the way you can add messages or variables whilst writing the actual puzzles. For example, when you get to ME(47), just type "ME(" then click on the MESSAGE gadget. Tell it that you want a new message, type in the message and hit enter. The number 47 is added automatically and on you go. Variables are added likewise.

The last window is the game options screen, allowing you to set the game title, text colours, the screen layout and so on.

As soon as you press the QUIT gadget from here your masterpiece starts running. This is where the interactive bit comes in. Whilst your game is running, you can jump out of

it, alter a puzzle, message, add a word or whatever, then jump back in and see what your changes have done to the game. This really speeds up the game development.

That was a reasonably quick run through just to give the general idea of how the program works. In my opinion Hatrack II is a very good program. It is very easy to use, its strength being its flexibility. The puzzle system epitomises this, you should be able to implement even the most contorted mind-benders with few problems. The parser is up there with Infocom, with IT, THEN, AND, ALL, OOPS and cursor key retrieval of past commands. I could not ask more of an adventure generator, except perhaps for graphics and an upgrade is in the pipeline. Standalone adventures can be created using one of the programs on the Hatrack disc, there's even a hard disk installation program for the fortunate amongst us. Heyley Software have come up with a winner. The author, Tony Heap is to be congratulated, and I extend my commiserations to those companies who appear to have missed the boat, so to speak.

A final note to remember. Good as it is, Hatrack II will not write adventures on its own. It requires an author with imagination, patience and attention to detail to turn words on a screen into a small reality in a players mind. Buy Hatrack and GO FOR IT!

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