Adventure Workshop

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ISSUE 4

£1.25

EDITORIAL

☞ Welcome to the fourth issue of 'Adventure Workshop'. Since the last issue, a big change has occured in the world of home-based adventures. I refer of course to the closing-down of the longest running adventure magazine of them all - 'Adventure Probe'! It was unique, being like a big family of friendly readers where everyone was welcome, no matter what computer they used. Ironically, Probe had just celebrated its sixth birthday! But I'm glad to say that it now looks as though someone else is taking over the running of the magazine; the readers had taken it into their hands to get together and keep it going, such is their dedication. Without Probe appearing every month, there would be a big gap in many people's lives. Here's to its continued success!

On the home front, I've been getting to grips with my brand new Atari STE! And as you can see, I got a new printer as well! This means I can make Workshop look even better. What's more, I can now accept your articles on 3.5" disks! (So long as they've been formatted in the standard MS-DOS format.) That means other computers (not just the STE) can be used, so long as the text you send me is in 'ASCII' form - that is, plain characters and no embedded commands such as italics or underlining! It would save me an awful lot of time typing up if you were to send me stuff on disk - naturally, I'd send the disk back afterwards - think about it!

If there's anything different you want to see in this magazine, don't be afraid to write in and tell me. You might be having trouble with a routine in your adventure writer, well why not write to me and I can try and sort it out for you! That's what Adventure Workshop is all about - it's here to help you!

One idea I've had is for a "Readers' Page" - that is, a page entirely written by you, on whatever you want! It doesn't have to be about adventures - politics, music, art, films, sport... maybe there's an issue you've been dying to get off your chest - why not write about it? Put forward YOUR views! What's more, I won't dismiss your page if I disagree with it - the page is fully YOURS - write what you want on it!

Before I go, one thing that puzzles me is this: I was advised to go for the Amiga, as the ST was "dead". So how come most of my Workshop readers use STs?? Where are the Amiga users? If you're out there, I want to hear from you! Why did you choose your computer? (Be honest - did you buy it for games?) ST users can also write in - why did you opt for the ST (or the STE) instead of the Amiga? I know one of the reasons I went for the STE is that it's currently £100 cheaper! Even with the extra 1Mb memory I had fitted! Another reason was the great number of utilities for the Atari. But what about YOU? Maybe you own a different computer, like the PC or the Archimedes - what made you go for your computer? And what do you think to the other computers you didn't want to buy? Let me know. STOP

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MAILBAG

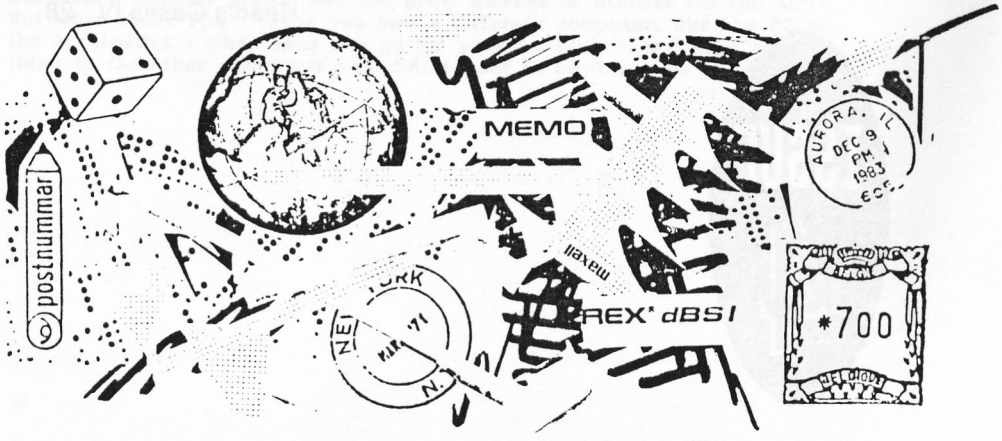
Just one letter this issue, from Gerald Kellett, BSc:

The current 'buzz' in the programming world is 'Object Oriented Programming (OOP)', mainly in the incarnation of the programming language C++. Well, way back in the days of 'Adventure Contact', I broached the subject of having things within an adventure set up so that the 'adventure engine (AE)' would not just allow you to manipulate items only in ways that the adventure programmer had envisioned, but in any way that the objects properties allowed. The way I envisioned this was to have an item so described, ie: a fairly full listing of the properties and attributes, that the AE would be able to determine if the manipulation the player wished to perform was valid. This would allow what I described as 'free form' adventures, leading to the concept of 'participative fiction' (ie: the 'story' generated was a combination of the basic scenario, locations and objects put into the adventure world by the programmer and the manipulations of this world by the player).

What has this to do with OOP? Well for adventure programming OOP is a bit of a double-edged sword. In OOP an OBJECT consists of data and all the routines (or rather usually calls to common library routines for) manipulating the data the OBJECT contains. Thus OBJECTs are self contained information processing entities, which can be pulled out of one place and plugged into another without concern as to what sort of data they contain since they take their processing baggage with them (within a particular OOP enviroment that is).

The price paid for this is that access to the data within a OBJECT is only via those manipulations the OBJECT contains, you can't just go 'poking about' in the data however you please, so are somewhat 'black boxes'. Another anology is comunicating with another computer device through its ports, you can only send and receive data from it through these ports, you can't access its memory directly. If you need to add a new manipulation you have to create a new OBJECT, and while data can be shared through a sibling/daughter OBJECT relationship (ayone who has produced ST resource files will have some idea of how this works, since this operates in a semi-OOP fashion) things get a bit tricky.

The advantages of OOP for adventure programming? Well it is highly modular, tends to operate bottom up (in a similar way to LOGO), and once you have created an OBJECT (or more usually designed an OBJECT class - ie: a 'hollow' OBJECT with a shell of routines but null data) you can use it *ad infinitum*. Adventures would consist of a Master OBJECT within which all the adventure elements resided, the Master OBJECT would be the AE, and locations and items would be OBJECTs it contained.



SOMETHING ·—· FROM ·—· NOTHING

— by STEVE CLAY —

And now for something a little different. I take it that most people reading this are adventure writers. (I'm in trouble if they're not!). So,accepting I'm correct, have you ever drawn a blank when trying to create new puzzles? Of course you have!

Here is a little challenge! Take a mail-order catalogue or similar.(Something with lots of pictures. No not the Sun.) Randomly pick three or four pages and from each select an article.

Using the current Index catalogue I picked;
Page 111 an electric carving knife
Page 185 a bathroom cabinet
Page 282 a wall clock
Right! Now try and create a puzzle using those three items. For starters we use a bit of artistic licence. The knife now becomes a small sword with rotating blades,operated via a switch on the side. The cabinet now becomes a tall mirror-fronted closet. The clock is okay!

Here we go;
I stand in a small, dimly lit room. A clock hangs on the eastern wall. Opposite this is a full length closet with mirrored-doors. Also visible; A small sword.
X MIRROR: It is made of melodic glass! There is a small inscription at the foot of the right hand door.
READ INSCRIPTION: In tune at 4!
LOOK THROUGH MIRROR: I can only see my handsome reflection!
GET KNIFE AND X IT: I take the knife. It has a pad on the grip. The blade gives it a savage appearence.
PRESS PAD: The blade whizzes around! All right!
X CLOCK: The fingers move!
MOVE FINGER: Hour or minute?
HOUR: Enter number 1-12!
4: Okay.
MINUTE 12: Okay. The clock chimes and then strikes; 1,2,3,4. There is a huge crash as the glass explodes. Showering the room. Something stirs from within.....
A huge troll appears amid the ruins.
ATTACK TROLL: I attack with knife. Unfortunately it is low and power and does little damage. Which isn't the case with what the troll does to me.

I admit it won't win prizes and it could be greatly improved. However the fact that there is something to be improved on shows how easy it is to get something for nothing!

MIKE GERRARD: The Workshop interview.

Conducted by Christopher Hester.

Mike Gerrard is well-known to readers everywhere as the man behind the adventure columns in 'ZERO' and 'Amstrad PCW Magazine'. He was also the driving force behind the 'Your Sinclair' column until recently. But he also writes for other markets too! I decided it was time to find out more, so I started by asking Mike just how he got into writing about adventures...

It was a well planned accident. I'd always wanted to be a writer, and eventually after years of doing it part-time (and writing as well) I became a full-time freelance writer just about the time of the boom in home computers, and in home computer magazines. I bought a Dragon, heard about adventure games from my brother, Pete, who was at university at the time and spent more time playing 'Colossal Cave' than he did studying, I think. Anyway, he said he thought I'd like adventure games, and I did. I entered a competition in 'Which Micro?' magazine to review a piece of software, and I sent in a review of 'Pimania', which I'd just got for the Dragon and which was the first bit of computer journalism I did. They asked me to do some more, then I got on to another magazine to see if I could do some reviews for them, and the rest is a mystery.. I mean is history.

So what are your plans for the future - to carry on as you are?

For the immediate future I plan to continue as I am, just sitting here answering your questions and drinking a cup of coffee. One thing I like about freelance writing, though, is that you never quite know what's going to happen next. Sometimes this is bad news, if nothing does happen, but more often it's good news. A couple of years ago I started travel writing, and I've done quite well at it, writing for papers like the Telegraph, Guardian, Sunday Times and so on. I want to carry on doing that, as you get to go to all kinds of exotic places. I mean, in two days' time I'm off to Walsall! But last year I did get to go to Russia, Minorca, Greece, Egypt, Poland... and a few more countries too. So naturally I want to do more of that.

It sounds like you're on to a winner there, Mike! And I thought you just stayed at home with a pile of adventure games to review! But are there any other forms of writing you've been involved with?

I also write for the radio, and have just finished a script for the Monday Play, and have another idea about to go into the BBC so I'm hoping they'll say yes to that. I'd love to do a sit-com series, and become rich and famous, so you could say that's one of my plans for the future. And if you can give me any advice, Chris, on how you managed to do it, I'd be very grateful.

How did you know I write the scripts for Cheers and The Cosby Show?? Well, all you have to do is... hang on, there's a deal coming through on the fax... Tell me about your plans for your computer columns while I call my agent...

I hope I'll be carrying on doing my adventure columns... that's if the Editors and/or readers aren't sick of me wittering on by now.

So how do you see the development of magazines like the ones you write for?

I think adventure-related magazines will probably carry on more or less as they are. There's a small but enthusiastic group of people who will continue to support them, but I don't think they'll get much bigger readerships than they have now. On the other hand, I don't think they'll fade away either (this is probably the kiss of death, me saying this) as I'm sure there'll always be enough people to keep them going, no matter how adventures change... there'll always be people who want to play adventures, and read specialist magazines about them.

What do you think of your brother Pete's similar work?

To be honest (just for a change) I don't read my brother's work very often these days, not about adventures anyway, as we write for rival magazines and I'm certainly not about to buy the one he writes for. I occasionally look and usually find he's as amusing as ever... well he must be, he's using the same jokes!

You once did a joint adventure book with Pete for Duckworth - any plans for another collaboration?

I can't see us collaborating on anything else at the moment. We're both busy doing our own things and I can't see what it would be if we did something together. Also, when we worked together we were both living in London and so had chance to meet and chat and of course that's how ideas come up and you end up doing something, but since then we've both moved and live about 150 miles apart and don't see each other that often. And of course the adventure scene has changed tremendously... can you imagine publishing that book now, a proper glossy book, with a full-colour cover, and with solutions to just four adventures in it for £3.95! It would sell zero copies today, whereas at the time there just weren't any solutions available and it seemed quite a mammoth task just compiling two full solutions each.

So what led you to do your last book, 'Adventures On The Spectrum', on your own?

I published my last book myself because I didn't think anyone else would do it. I also just wanted to have a go. I figured that I could reach enough people directly through my Your Sinclair adventure column to make it a viable proposition. I had to sell between 200 and 300 copies to break even and cover the actual printing costs, and I thought I could do that. I have done, and so have ended up making a profit on it... not enough to retire to the Bahamas, and in fact probably not as much as if I'd spent the same time writing articles for magazines, but it was still very satisfying to do, to have complete control yourself, and to produce a book that otherwise wouldn't have existed. Proper publishers would need to sell much more than that to cover their own costs, which are so much higher with offices to maintain and so on, but I could keep the print-run low and do it all from home and make it possible that way.

I must thank you for your continuous support for my magazine. Personally, what's your honest opinion of it?

I do like it, when it eventually arrives. I like magazines that are done by enthusiasts, and it's lively and well laid out. I like the snippets and cuttings that get bunged in, which make it different. I think the Editor puts in too many things about music, but then I suppose that's what part of magazines like this are all about, you can do things that you can't do in 'proper' magazines. I certainly wouldn't cancel my subscription (ahem) because of it.

I see Zenobi have published your own adventure game, 'One Of Our Wombats Is Missing'. How did that come about!?

'Wombats' came about because I was asked to review 'The Quill' when it first came out donkey's years ago (or wombat's years ago maybe). I started to do an adventure on it to find out how it worked, and enjoyed putting it together and it just went on from there, really. I did it more for fun and curiosity, and sent it to one software house who turned it down - the fact that they didn't publish Spectrum adventures may have had something to do with it, which sounds like a daft place to send it but I did it because I knew the people there and they said they'd consider it. But after that I didn't bother, left it on the shelf till John Wilson of Zenobi somehow heard about it and

asked to see it and said he'd like to publish it, a decision he's probably regretted ever since.

Is it a good thing, do you think, that people like Zenobi are taking control, or do you think they're a sad reflection on the lack of big-company support for homegrown games?

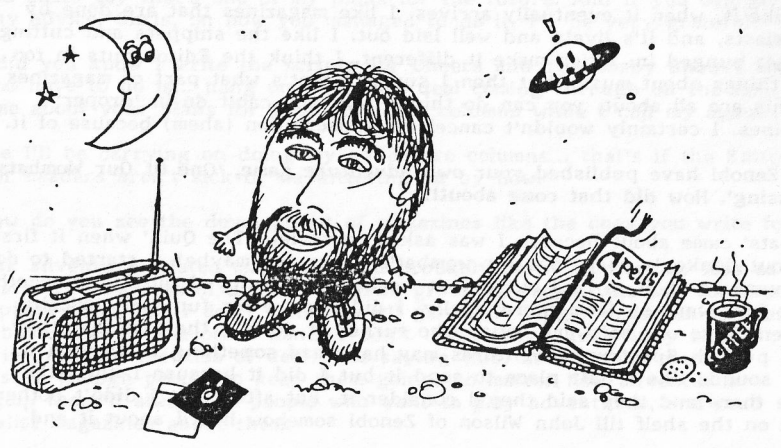
I don't think John Wilson is "taking control" as you put it. That makes it sound as if he's muscling in or something. All he's doing is what anyone else could do if they wanted to, publish adventures, but he's the one that's done it and good luck to him. One of the reasons is that he's very reliable and offers a good service (or so his wife says). I get lots of letters from readers who praise him, and it might look like bias if I printed them all, so I just print the occasional one to let people know... just like the ones about certain companies who offer a very poor service.

I do think it's a shame that the gap in the market opened up which Zenobi then filled, because it means we don't get adventures from the likes of Level 9 or Delta 4 or anyone else any more. But the reason we don't get them is that not enough people bought them in the first place, so you can't really expect people to carry on producing them if they're losing money on it. John Wilson is doing something similar to what I did with my book... if you know the big boys won't do it, do it yourself on a smaller scale. It's better than sitting around moaning about it.

Finally, when you're away from a computer and anything to do with adventures, how do you like to spend your free time?

Free time? What's that? When you're self-employed like me you work all the hours you can, but when I do drag myself away from the computer I spend most of my time reading... newspapers, magazines, books. I've always got about two or three books on the go. At the moment I'm reading 'All Played Out', Pete Davies's book about the World Cup, and 'My Traitor's Heart', a book about South Africa by Rian Malan. I also like music, mostly Sixties stuff, seeing as that's when I grew up and got interested in music. The last three albums I bought... to give an indication of my tastes... were 'The EP Collections' by The Kinks and The Searchers, and 'Hums Of The Living Spoonful'. Real contemporary stuff, yes?

Readers might also like to know that Mike Gerrard publishes a twice-yearly magazine himself. Check out the page opposite! And we all thought he just wrote adventure columns!



Passport

The New Magazine of International Writing

The first issue of Passport ~~will be~~ was published in October, and in addition to being an outlet for new writers, will be publishing the best fiction and non-fiction from established authors, both in Britain and from around the world.

Issue One contains:

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An extract from Chinatsu Nakayama's collection of stories, the first publication in English for this highly praised Japanese author

An interview with Martha Gellhorn

Julian Critchley on "The Backbench Bazaar"

Ken Smith on the journey that led to Wormwood Scrubs and "Inside Time"

New fiction from Philip Oakes, Michael Carson, Moy McCrory, Nicki Jackowska, John Hopkins, N.J.Warburton

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STAC'S MORE PROBLEMS 2

by George March

I don't know what it is, but every time I try to get STAC to look just that little bit better (than it actually is to start with, anyway!), I keep coming up with so many horrible, little problems! It never looks any better than GAC on a 48K Spectrum!

For instance, the original version of an Inventory that the manual gives, or its awful habit of printing the entire short description of an object when an item is picked up/dropped, etc, instead of just missing off the adjective! What I mean, is that when my old favourite, PAW, lists any items using GET/DROP, etc, the indefinite article (ie: adjective) infront of it, describing the number of items being mentioned, is missed out. For example...

"You can see SOME juicy Blackberries, A Penknife and JOHN'S bent nails."

And...

"You pick up THE juicy Blackberries and crush THEM into a pulp."
"You give THE bent nails back to John."

Instead of STAC's...

"You pick up SOME juicy Blackberries and crush IT into a pulp."
"You give JOHN's bent nails back to John."
"You put down A Penknife."

Meaning any old Penknife, not just the one you're carrying, very unspecific! So the PAW message used would be "You pick up the ", ie, a specific article! Now the only two ways I can think of (at this moment in time!) to combat this mess in STAC (for my first version), is to fake it with copies of the object's short description using messages. Now to start this first idea you'll need to enter the object's short description into the Message Table, as well as the Object Description Table. These short descriptions should have message numbers 100 higher than the real object's numbers to work, eg...

Object no.	Object itself	Message no.
1	A Torch	101
2	Your Penknife	102
3	Some bits of wood	103

Also make sure that these messages DO NOT need any form of adjective ("My", "Your", "A", etc) infront of each object name, ie, message 101 is simply "Torch", message 102 "Penknife", etc. With alterations to messages...

9919 "You put down the " (Remember the spaces at the end!)
9920 "You pick up the "

IF (NOUN1 < 10) AND VERB "get" THEN MESSAGE 9920 MESSAGE (NOUN1 + 100) GET NOUN1 WAIT

IF (NOUN1 < 10) AND VERB "drop" THEN MESSAGE 9919 MESSAGE (NOUN1 + 100) DROP NOUN1 WAIT

This kind of approach can be used for any and every description of a specific article...

"You throw THE stone up at the window"
"You give THE letter to the Postman"

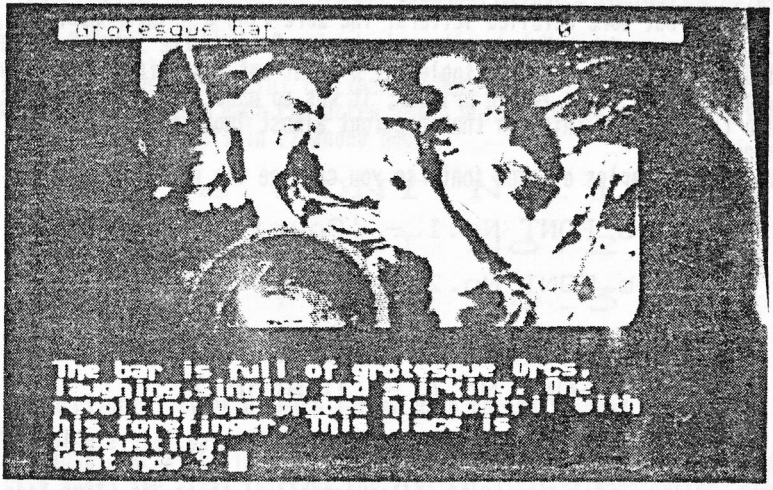
Or you could try my second approach, using STAC's String$ commands to alter messages copied into strings...

Please note that the (absolutely useless) STAC manual mentions that upto 16 String$s are available for you to fiddle on with! These strings can be used to store/manipulate a sequence of upto 39 characters (letters/numbers) long, as mentioned on page 56 of the manual, though page 18 says 79 characters long? So much for proof reading!

Now in my previous idea you only needed straight messages, for example, 101 is simply "Torch", message 102 "Penknife", etc. But, for this second version (which would be a hell of a lot longer mind you!) you'd need those self same messages, AND also copies of those messages put into some blank strings, and then you'd need some fiddling with String$ commands, ? MESS$?, ASCII$?, ? CUTST$?, PRINT$?, etc, which was far too much bother, so I scrapped it! Maybe you'll have better luck!

Now if anyone wants to offer any help (doesn't matter how small!) to me or to the magazine in general, my address is...

8 Heatherslaw Road, Fenham, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE5 2QJ.



HANDY TIPS: Star LC-10

by Christopher Hester

The Star LC-10 is a 9-pin dot matrix printer. It offers four resident fonts (ie: type styles) that you can use when printing in Near Letter Quality Mode, or 'NLQ' for short. When you first switch on the printer, it's working in Draft Mode, and you need to select NLQ Mode to use the four fonts. The reason is that in NLQ Mode, the Star prints each line twice, which enables it to print over each letter with more dots of ink, giving twice as much detail, or quality, as you get in Draft Mode, where a line of text is only printed once. Draft Mode just doesn't allow enough detail for several styles of text.

Don't just stick to the first of the NLQ fonts - try each one. Font No.1, 'Courier', is like a standard 'typewriter' font, and the second NLQ font 'Sanserif' looks to me like the style you get from those early Amstrad printers, with flat-shaped letters. Whilst 'Courier' might be best used for an 'official' letter, to a bank, or a business, 'Sanserif' would appear to be the font you'd use for friendly letters.

The third and fourth fonts available are 'Orator', in two versions. The first uses capital letters only, but with smaller ones for lower case letters. This is odd, but in practice can look quite professional. Don't dismiss it. The second variant of 'Orator' uses lower case letters, but they're larger than usual, giving an 'American', or 'Modern' feel to it. The drawback with that one is that letters like 'q' and 'f' have had to be squashed to fit the larger size. This is because the printer only has so much space on its print head, that it uses to print each character of text on the page. Nine pins of space, to be exact. Each letter is in fact made up using just these 9-pins, which are a bit like 'pixels' on your computer screen. More costly printers have a 24-pin print head, so they can produce not larger, but more detailed letters. The more pins a printer has, the better the output it can produce. Yet despite only having 9 pins, the Star LC-10 has been so well designed that I was once fooled by a print out I saw from one - I was convinced it was off a 24-pin printer, it was so good! The 'Orator' font is a superb testimony to this, in that the font almost looks too good for a 'mere' 9-pin printer!

Here are examples of each font, so you can see the differences:

```
This is FONT No.1 - 'Courier'

This is FONT No.2 - 'Sanserif'

THIS IS FONT No.3 - 'ORATOR 1'

This is FONT No.4 - 'Orator 2'
```

You might think that was all there was to it, but these four simple fonts can offer much more variety than you think! You can also use them in a wide range of additional modes. The Star LC-10 offers several of these; in Elite Mode, each letter is slightly compressed, giving the result below. You can use this mode to fit more letters on a line.

This is FONT No.1 - 'Courier'

This is FONT No.2 - 'Sanserif'

THIS IS FONT No.3 - 'ORATOR 1'

This is FONT No.4 - 'Orator 2'

Then there's Condensed Mode, which is actually what I'm using for this text here. That's to make it easier for copying in the magazine, but normally this mode is too small to be of much use. Certainly it's not advisable for long letters! But look at the same fonts again using Condensed mode, and see how much they've changed!

This is FONT No.1 - 'Courier'

This is FONT No.2 - 'Sanserif'

THIS IS FONT No.3 - 'ORATOR 1'

This is FONT No.4 - 'Orator 2'

You can now see that I'm using 'Orator 2' for the main text here. 'Courier' is not too good in Condensed Mode because of the way it uses 'serifs' - those are the little ledges around each character that end each part of the letters. 'Sanserif' mode doesn't have these, hence its name 'Sanserif', from the French 'sans serif', meaning ''without ledges'', see?

One use of Condensed Mode is to create text small enough to fit under a picture and give a caption. Or you could use it for a large table of figures where you need to fit text in there as well.

The next mode that's highly useful is Expanded Mode. This is the opposite of Condensed Mode, and expands each character being printed to twice its original size. Here are the four fonts in Expanded Mode:

This is FONT No.1

This is FONT No.2

THIS IS FONT No.3

This is FONT No.4

Note how the horizontal lines of each letter have become thicker.

In the Star manual, it also lists two more useful modes - Emphasized Mode and Double-strike Mode. The first thickens the VERTICAL lines of each letter, resulting in bolder text, whilst Double-strike Mode thickens the HORIZONTAL lines instead, again to give you a bolder looking text when you print. If you select the two modes at once, you'd expect both the horizontal AND the vertical lines of your text to be thickened. This does indeed happen - but only in Draft Mode! If you've selected NLQ Mode instead, you'll find that Emphasized Mode has no effect on your text! This is

odd, as if it works in Draft, so why not NLQ?

You might think that was the end of it - not so! There IS a way to achieve vertical thickening of NLQ letters! But you won't find it in the Star manual! The point of thickening the text in the first place, is to make it bolder, and darker. If you're using a weak ribbon, this can be crucial to making your text more readable! In Draft Mode, using both Emphasized (vertical thickness) and Double-strike (horizontal thickness) leads to truly impressive results. So I was determined to get the printer to do the same thing in NLQ Mode. I succeeded! And the result proved to have other benefits as well! Read on...

What you must do is this: it sounds daft, but it works! Select Condensed Mode and then select Expanded Mode as well! This gives the following result, like we saw before:

Condensed AND Expanded text!

You'd think that the two modes cancel each other out, but not quite! The result should look just like the normal text size you get with standard NLQ letters. If you turn on the computer, and select NLQ, the text looks like this:

Normal NLQ text.

But if you compare this to the Condensed and Expanded text, you can see the difference:

1. This is not the same.

2. This is not the same.

The standard NLQ text (1.) isn't thickened, but the condensed and expanded text (2.) is! So you've succeeded in getting an Emphasized effect in NLQ, but that's only half the story. If you can Emphasize AND Double-strike your Draft letters, then now it should be possible to use the trick above as a method of Emphasizing NLQ text, and then select Double-strike as well, to get ultra-thick letters! And you can do just that, but it's more than just a way of thickening up your NLQ - it gives you access to a whole new range of unexpected NLQ fonts!

What happens is that the Star condenses the text, but when it expands it back to normal, somehow the vertical lines are thickened. When you then select Double-strike, the horizontal lines are now thickened, but the vertical lines corrupt this effect to the degree that the Star produced a whole new design! So instead of the normal NLQ font, you see a sort of compromise of this, which looks like so:

This is FONT No.1 - 'Courier'

This is FONT No.2 - 'Sanserif'

THIS IS FONT No.3 - 'ORATOR 1'

This is FONT No.4 - 'Orator 2'

Next time I'll explain another trick the Star has - you can design your own NLQ!

Writing tips

There follows a collection of adventure writing tips from around the world;

Are your graphics letting your adventure down? Do your trees look like lolipops? Then what you need to do is to stop all this pretence and admit you can't draw. Stick to writing text-only games!

Run out of ideas? Need a puzzle? Then why not hack an old game and pinch all the puzzles! I'm sure nobody would notice!

If you make it big in adventures then relax! You can now churn out any old twaddle and no one will have the courage to tell you!

If you wish to make money from another source then why not send stupid tips in to magazines! Some give you lots of money for doing so. (Not this one we hasten to add)

And now it's time to **Ask Aunt Pru!** Our resident (for this issue only) agony aunt!

Dear Aunt Pru,

In my brillo adventure(what is being wroted by me!) there is a mouse who needs some cheese! How do you fit the cheese into the computer? Do you need an interface? The mouse was easy I just crammed it through the joystick port.

Yours STUCK.

P.S The mouse is starting to smell. Is this normal?

Dear Stuck,

What a pity you didn't write sooner. What you should have done was liquidize the mouse. This saves a lot of room. As for the smell, well I think it's only natural,don't you? The cheese problem is a little difficult. Why not try cottage cheese or one of those smelly french cheeses? Anyway whatever you decide keep at it, your game sounds a real winner.

Disclaimer: Following Aunt Pru's advice would be an immensely stupid thing to do!

HATRACK II

INTERACTIVE ADVENTURE GENERATOR
FOR THE AMIGA
THE REASON I WON'T BE WAITING FOR GILSOFT
BY
PAUL BENNETT

Way back in '87 I upgraded to an Amiga and initially gave up any idea of creating an adventure whilst I got to know my new system. Within a couple of months however I was again bitten by the bug and knowing my limitations looked around for a creator.

I first tried Gilsoft, having used the Quill and, for a short time the Paw, on the Spectrum. Even then, way back in '87 I was told "We have plans for one sometime next year." It has been the same each year since. Then the gods looked down upon the owners of the ST and decided to make it up to them by allowing a mortal to create STAC. GREAT! thought I in my foolish youth, Incentive will soon realize the market for an Amiga version exists. Well at least they were honest and told me that they had no plans to produce one.

The public domain was my only realistic option unless I took time out to learn machine code or some other fast language. PD did not yield any program worth having and I all but gave up.

Then, in the middle of last year, I bought a magazine with a disk containing an adventure created using HATRACK II. I thought at first that it would just be a typical PD program which in it's unhelpful way would give limited help to the novice. The asking price of £29.95 seemed a lot to risk because at that time I had never heard of HEYLEY SOFTWARE. I wrote, asking for details, and received more information from which I made the decision to buy.

If anyone were to ask me what I want in an adventure creator I would point to HATRACK II and say that is very close. The package that came through the post, although I still expected it to be typical of PD, surprised me and I would say that it should allow the novice to create an adventure close to the standards of an INFOCOM adventure. With a lot of thought you may well exceed them.

The package contained the following items:-

a) An A4 sized ringbound manual with 108 pages of well written documentation which allowed me to quickly size up the potential of the package.
b) A large disk wallet which has the room for up to four disks. I keep all relevant disks together.
c) A registration card which once returned allows you to gain assistance and information on upgrades.
d) A quick reference card - very useful.
e) A copyright notice.

The manual takes you from loading up the program, through a small adventure where it explains everything in readable English without going overboard and treating everyone as though they need to learn their alphabet. Topics includes installing it on a hard disk using the supplied program, how to commercialize your masterpiece and it even has words of wisdom on naming a software company.

The program itself contains a startup file which immediately gives the user a chance to develop his/her ideas but allows you to change any messages or puzzles already there. If fact they suggest that you do on several occasions. Your creation can be up to 255K which should give any idea you have free rein especially when you consider you can have up to the following:-

a) Locations	998
b) Messages	999
c) Puzzles	999
d) Objects	499
e) Words	999
f) Variables	399

All these items are edited using their own windows but all the main components are interconnected, eg. allowing the user to enter a message when working on the object window or create a new variable whilst writing a new puzzle. This alone makes this program user friendly but the icing is in the fact that you can be testing the adventure, realize a mistake has been made and instead of leaving the test just pull up the relevant window. After making the adjustment, close the window and carry on where you left off checking immediately the results of your changes. In fact once you have entered a start location the adventure is continuously running allowing the author to write and test almost simultaneously. A saving in time for anyone.

The puzzles are made up of statements containing IF.. THEN.. AND.. ELSE.. ENDIF.. which along with the use of words instead of numbers (optional) and the naming of puzzles would allow even a beginner to quickly debug his program. If, for example, you were to see a puzzle named OPEN CHEST which had a variable called CHESTOPEN, you would know what it did without thinking too hard.

Graphics. We all know that you do not need graphics in an adventure but people (reviewers) like to see them. I personally like them if they are up to and above the quality of Magnetic Scrolls. The Amiga unlike it's lesser cousins has the capability to show graphics of the right quality so why not? Unfortunately Hatrack II does not have graphics at present but when I spoke to Tony Heap on the telephone he stated that the graphic version is complete apart from the new manual and demonstration adventures. This means that we do not have too long to wait.

What it does allow is a graphic compass on screen which allows the player to use the mouse to go in any direction. This compass can be designed on an art package and using the program included for the purpose be inserted into the completed adventure. Also up to 40 different commands can be put on the compass, commands which the player would otherwise have to type in. A game could be made which is totally mouse driven should an author want and although I prefer to continue typing I could see the reason behind putting in this facility.

The program does lack certain things which I believe should have been included. It does not have a printout facility within the program itself. This does not prove a real problem because the program allows the user to edit an adventure on a wordprocessor if preferred anyway so all you need to do is use this to get a printout. I just find it a bugbear to have to load up another program.

The second item it lacks at present is the use of the real time clock to cause events to happen within the adventure if too much time is taken between moves. True interactive characters could have been created in this way. The strange thing is the program uses a system to time the player during the course of the game.

These two minor points should not detract from what is a very professional program which both the novice and the serious author should have. It is simply a case of wanting to have my cake and eating it. I can now forget Gilsoft and like the many 16 bit users supported them in the years gone by whilst on the 8 bit computers and, having waited until "next year" for the last five years I can tell them to (censored). HATRACK II would be a winner even if there were any other decent contenders. If you would like it I have given you the address below. You will find the same friendly response that I did.

HEYLEY SOFTWARE 27 WINNINGTON ROAD MARPLE STOCKPORT SK6 6PD

GAMESCAPE

Reviewed by Javier Diaz Soto

There are at least six adventure utilities for PC distributed by shareware. None of them allows graphics at the moment and none of them seems to override the excellence of Tim Gilbert's 'PAW'. Among them I have selected 'Gamescape' due to its comprehensiveness, its sheer capacity and also because it includes all the basic structures needed for an adventure. This utility is distributed by its creator, Dennis Drew (Missoury, USA), using Microsoft's 'QuickBasic 3.0'.

CONTENTS

In just one disk you get:

- .Instruction manual (brief and informative).
- .Compiler and Runner in a file.
- .Three little example adventures:
  - .STARTER (holds basic structures for any adventures).
  - .SAMPLE (just what it means).
  - .TEST (test all of Gamescape's commands).
- .Two shareware utilities:
  - .LIST (Lists text files with autoedition commands).
  - .FIXWS (Transforms a 'Wordstar'-format file into an ASCII format file).

And... that's all (you don't need much more). Perhaps a short and flexible word processor that supports all IBM graphics characters could be included, so that you can easily add more 'colour' to your games, but Drew recommends that you buy one in shareware (with a good corporate sense).

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

Just a few words to define shareware philosophy: You shouldn't pay for your copy more than material and duplication costs (because if you do, you are being tricked...). This allows you to examine the utility, test it, and see if it meets your needs. At last, if you consider it'll be valuable to you, if you are going to produce adventures for its distribution, you must pay to be a registered user (then, the price is approximately $60, which is a reasonable price). Otherwise your program will become Drew's property (yes!). If you register you will receive additional thingies.

WORK PLAN

First you create the game database with a word processor and save it with an ".ADV" extension. Afterwards you compile it using "GSCAPE [name].ADV". The compiler will create six files: "[name].ADn" (n = 1 to 6). At last you execute the adventure with "GSCAPE [name]" (no extension included).

ALLOWED INSTRUCTIONS

We now get to the important part of the system. Here is where you can see its power and flexibility, and its higher or lesser complexity. Gamescape has three main code functions:

- .SEGMENTs (main commands).
- .IFs (conditions).
- .DOs (sequential instructions).

SEGMENTS

They start with ">" and allow:

```
.COMMANDS   (answers to what the player typed in).
.LOCATIONS  (unlimited number, 1600 characters per location,
             exits, special locations (limbo, pockets...)).
.MESSAGES   (unlimited number, 800 characters per message).
.OBJECTS    (up to 300, 20 characters without spaces,
             special objects (last mentioned object)).
.NOTES      (to document the database, ignored by the compiler).
.INCLUDE    (allows the introduction of code modules
             in the database).
.WORDS      (up to 300 * (1 + 3); 3 synonyms per word).
```

IFs AND DOs

IFs are conditions: if they succeed then you continue execution on the next entry of the command, otherwise they exit the whole command and search for another command. There are 17 different connecting:

```
.LOCATIONS with ACTUAL LOCATION or with OBJECTS.
.RANDOM NUMBERS BETWEEN 1 and a maximum.
.FLAGS with its value.
.FLAGS with FLAGS.
```

DOs are more common 'imperative' commands. They allow:

```
.CLEAR SCREEN, x seconds PAUSE, WAIT UNTIL NEXT KEY STROKE.
.GAME POSITION LOAD and SAVE, LOADing other parts of the game.
.CHANGE LOCATION, PUT an OBJECT in a LOCATION, INVENTORY,
 DROP (TAKE) JUST MENTIONED OBJECT (ALL OBJECTS).
.PUT TO SCREEN: ACTUAL LOCATION, PRESENT OBJECTS, MESSAGES, FLAGS...
.BASIC TYPE SOUNDS.
.GIVE value to FLAGs (RANDOM or concrete), ADD (SUBTRACT) values
 (FLAGS) to FLAGS.
```

FINAL ANALYSIS

```
.Simplicity and friendly use, very good to start doing adventures.
.BASIC error messages (to debug more easily your programs).
.Merging messages, comments, whole IBM set...
.Possibility to split adventures in modules ('unlimited' adventures).
.Flags can take 'real' values (ie: 7.0045), some characteristics
 are unlimited.
.Commands that allow automatic manipulation of objects.
```

Negative points:

```
.No graphics (like all others...).
.Limited vocabulary, few automatic actions.
.Poor player command structure (verb noun).
.Error correction can get tedious.
.No word processor included.
```

All in all it is a GOOD utility and the game complexity versus creation complexity ratio is VERY good.

AMOS Avenue

By John Ferris

Is there any AMOS users out there who still have not upgraded to version 1.23 yet? If not, then do so pretty quick! I was surprised how easy it was to upgrade! See the AMOS PD library for some interesting disks!

When the player has finished reading the first location description he or she will want to either get something, examine something or list the inventory. Routines like this are the basics of any adventure and are not really difficult to program:

1. GET and DROP.

GET N1. DROP N1. Where N1 is the first noun in the sentence.

We have (for example) 30 takeable objects defined as the first 30 nouns in the array. The first thing to do is check that N1 is less than 31. If not then print a message like "I can't pick that up." and return to the input routine. Next check that N1 is not 0, if it is 0 then print a message saying "I don't know what one of those is!"

```
If OC(N1,0)=1 And OC(N1,1)=R Then OC(N1,1)=999 : Print K$: Return
Print "I can't get that!":Return
```

Going through the code, if N1 exists in the game And N1 is in the present location R then put N1 in the players pockets (i.e. location 999) Print Okay and Return to the input prompt.

A GET ALL routine could be a loop from 1 to 30 containing a similar line.

Drop is simply the opposite:

```
If OC(N1,0)=1 And OC(N1,1)=999 then OC(N1,1)=R: Print K$ : Return
Print "I can't drop that!":Return
```

Don't forget the N1<31 and N1=0 checks!

2. EXAMINE N1

This is slightly more difficult as the player should be able to examine everything in the game, including a 400 meter high cliff. In GAC this was solved by using what it called LOCAL conditions, things that happen only in a specific location. So we can modify to program control to look like this:

```
TOP:
Gosub HIGHPRIORTITY
Gosub INPUT (includes parser etc.)
Gosub LOCAL
IF LOCALFLAG=1 Then LOCALFLAG=0: Goto TOP
Gosub NORMALCONDITIONS (GAC called them LOW priorty)
Goto TOP
```

So, directly after input the local conditions can be used to deal with examines that do not concern the first thirty nouns. If a condition is true then a flag should be set to prevent the program going through and printing "I see nothing interesting" after printing a ten line description of the object!

The examine routine for the takeable objects is:

```
If OC(N1,1)=999 Or OC(N1,1)=R then print EX$(N1):Return
Print "I see nothing interesting.":Return
```

In other words, if the objects either in the players pockets or the present location, print the message and leave. Remember the checks for a valid N1!

The LOCAL subroutine is going to seem a bit messy. Its a simple On R gosub R1,R2,R3...RN statement. YUK! I hear the structured programmers saying. True, it's messy but it works and is quite flexible but is a very long section when there's lots of locations. One such example could be:

```
R3:
If N1=38 Then Print M$(46):LOCALFLAG=1:Return
Return
```

First point, I use LF instead of LOCALFLAG. Second, the above assumes that the verb is examine. If you use the LOCAL subroutine just for examines, then check that the verb is examine before entering it.

3. INVENTORY (I)

This is a simple loop that goes through the takable objects checking to see if they are taken. If so, the object description is added to a string which is printed out at the end of the search. A counter, I, is set to 1 when the first carried object is found. If I=0 at the end of the search, then nothing is carried:

```
For T= 1 to 30
If OC(T,1)=999 Then I$=I$+OD$(T)+",":I=1
Next
If I=0 Then I$=I$+"nothing at all." else Right$(I$,1,1)="."
Print I$:I$="I am carrying: ":I=0:Return
```

Simple, isn't it? The only clever bit is replacing the last comma with a full stop. It runs into trouble with long inventories but otherwise it is quite a good workhorse.

4. HELP

The command help is rather underused these days, and yet is is reasonably easy to implement. There are problems, though. How much help can you give in a game? Is a help routine going to cut sales of your hint books? (OWCH!) Is it going to make your game too easy? Those are questions for you to answer for yourself. But remember, too much help could mean Adventure Probe is out of a job! A mention of your game in any section (except Worst Game I Ever Played..) in any magazine is a positive thing!

Help is a routine that can be stuffed into the LOCAL subroutine, since problems tend to be localised. For example, in location 5, a helpful message concerning the Tedious Locked Door could be available until the door is opened.

Other help routines could be a little more imaginative. How about having a helpful character hanging around. Clues for cash!

5. Location Descriptions.

I call this routine ROOMPRINT. The routine prints out the location description along with any objects that are in the room. In a graphic adventure, this routine would also display the graphics.

ROOMPRINT:

```
Print R$(R)
For T=1 to 30: If OC(T,1)=R And OC(T,0)=1 Then Q$=Q$+OD$(T)+ "," : Q=1
:Next
If Q=1 Then Right$(Q$,1)  =".":Print "Nearbye is ";Q$
Q=0:Q$="":Return
```

This prints the present location description and prints out what objects are lying about in a similar fashion to the inventory command.

6. SYNONYMS

One of the hardest words I've ever tried to spell. One essential purchase for any adventure author is a thesaurus. I picked up a copy for a pound in a cut price bookshop in Leicester. Loads of atmospheric alternatives to otherwise dull descriptions.

In an adventure synonyms appear in two places, verbs and nouns. Verbs are the most likely source. For example, the verb TAKE can be also GET , OBTAIN and PICK (UP). DROP could be LEAVE, DISCARD, JETTISON, DIVEST, DESERT... Take heed, thesaurus's can also be dangerous!

Solving this problem had me puzzled for a while, but then I came up with what I think is a reasonable solution. It requires another array which I shall call VS, or Verb Synonyms. It consists of :

VS(*verbnumber*)

When the decode routine has found a verb it gives it a number, V. Now, if GET was verb 1, TAKE was verb 2 and er...OBTAIN was verb 45, you'd have three verbs with the same meaning. They all mean the same as verb 1, or GET. Therefore, The data in VS(V) would be as follows for verbs 2 and 45:
VS(2)=1: VS(45)=1.

So, when writing out your list of verbs, put the primary word first, and then all the synonyms of that word at the end of the list. You'll end up with a list of say fifty different verbs followed by twenty or so synonyms. The simple line V=VS(V) will ensure that the program knows what it's talking about. The same can be done for nouns, although it would be slightly harder.

That's this article over and with it most of the hard stuff. All this theory is getting me down, so it looks like we'll have to write a game. Only a small one but it will put all this theory into practice.

ALICE

An award-winning short story by Harold Dixon.

Swirling shrouds of mist enveloped the streets that evening. There weren't many people about, and Alice felt a little uneasy in the gloomy silence especially after leaving the brightly-lit shops.

She thought she heard a footstep, someone following! Not wanting company in this gloom, and wanting to get home as quickly as possible, she quickened her step. To her consternation the step behind began to quicken too! She walked faster - the footsteps kept pace! In alarm she stopped for a moment and looked back - icy fingers of fear ran up and down her spine as she saw down the street a weird white figure approaching eerily out of the gloom!!

She ran in panic - fear mounting as the mist seemed to get thicker before her, and she heard the footsteps behind matching her - pace for pace!!! She turned down a side-street hoping to evade her pursuer, but the figure followed, and then to her utmost dismay, a high wall loomed up ahead - it was a cul-de-sac!!!!

She turned quickly, looking for a way out, then blessedly she saw a gate set in the wall, and made for it. Suddenly she felt a sharp tug at her heel - fate had dealt a wicked blow - her thin-heeled, tightly-strapped shoe had got firmly wedged down a grating - she was trapped!!!!!

Hysteria mounted in her as she first struggled to get free scrabbling desperately at her tight shoe-straps, she glanced back to see the dreaded apparition fast approaching - it was really too much, she swooned in fright!!!!!!

A few moments later, she opened her eyes to see the white figure bent over her - she rubbed her eyes to clear her vision - thousands of horrific thoughts flashing through her mind in seconds - then she saw the object of her fear - a man in a white overall, it was Mr Wells the Chemist - she had left her purse on his counter!

ZEN AND THE ART Of Filling That Awkward Half Page Gap

It's like this, dudes. Articles are needed for the magazine! C'mon, I know you've all got something to offer, so send it in! Or the mag will go bust. Really! It's like that, dudes...

But enough of that - I know however many times I ask for more contributions, the response is pathetic - prove me wrong! The best material I get is from new subscribers who are so impressed with the mag, they're itching to contribute! Before you know it, they've written six parts of a series!! Now that's what I call dedicated! (Vol.22, out now on CD and tape.) But what about the rest of you? I see - can't be bothered. Thought so. Not that I really blame you - what right have I got to demand articles from you, the reader, anyway? But without them, the mag ceases to exist! Whilst the 'glossy' magazines can afford to pay staff writers and freelance journalists to write for them, I can't. If you want a full colour magazine, stuffed with adverts and naff all about adventure writing, then go buy that instead. But if you want a mag that deals with its readers directly, this is the one for you. (It's called 'Adventure Workshop', remember - the name gives it away - a 'Workshop', where anyone can come and get help for their programming problems, and share their experience with others.)

Well, I don't know about you, but the Genesis concert on 1FM was a bit good. A shame they had to play those ten-minute songs off the new album though! And of course the best bit was the medley of oldies - nostalgia! So that concludes this paragraph's indepth look at object-orientated exits in adventures. Next issue I'll be dealing with coding expandable messages, surface structured locations, a 3D parser system, and the new Roger Waters album. Or hopefully, your own routines and articles... ?

The State Of The Adventure Scene Today

by Ian Eveleigh

Here we go... the state of the adventure scene today... time to harp on about ''the good old days'' when a Speccy game used to be under 6-quid (and you'd still have change for fish & chips on the way home.) Well, er, no actually! Let's try a new approach. Now, heck, call me radical if you like, but I'm going to suggest that (get ready to duck) the adventure scene is, in fact, DEAD! Yup, a real gonner! Kicked the bucket. A corpse. A stiff. (I bet Chris puts 'OO-ER' in brackets here...) *(Chris - actually, I was going to put 'An EX-adventure scene! But when I purchased this adventure scene from this establishment not half an hour ago, you assured me it was just resting!')*

Come on, face it. When was the last time you went into a computer shop and bought an adventure? No, not including those puffy animated/menu driven jobs. I mean a MAN'S adventure! Think back... Bet it was a Magnetic Scrolls game. (Or a Level 9 one if you're a real tight git!) And how many games have you bought since then? One? (Ooo! Someone just said ''No, two ACTUALLY.'' Well done!) Bet it was a Zenobi game? Thought so.

So let's just re-assess the adventure scene shall we? Right. There's Magnetic Scrolls, and there's Zenobi, and there's bugger all else. Mmm. Ok, maybe DEAD was an over-reaction - more sort of near-dead, twitching with its last grasp on life.

The problem is adventures are getting pushed out because they're just not money-makers anymore. *(Because any one can now produce one? - Ed)* Kids want the thrills and spills of 'Sonic The Hedgehog' or the cute and colourful challenge of 'Lemmings'. They don't want a BOOK! That's where the money's at. Why buy a 400 quid computer to look at text when you could have mega impressive graphics displays and attention grabbing action?

Thus adventures have been left to a small group of die-hards. Magnetic Scrolls keeping up the on-the-shelf front (but only just, and even they have had to edge towards WIMP; but more tactfully done than most.) and then there's good old Zenobi (but then I would say that, wouldn't I?) churning out some good old purist gear.

There is one other problem, I'm a victim of this one myself - 8-bits are just proving too small to write effective, Nineties adventures on. Programmers really need the space of a 16-bit, but, Sod's Law, there is a lack of quality writing utilities on the 16-bit machines (especially ones that are on more than one machine). This is a real dead area - it appears Gilsoft have abandoned us, and there's no real hope on the horizon. Personally I'd love to code my (already developed) second adventure, but I just cannot find a suitable and flexible enough 16-bit utility, and after becoming accustomed to the slickness of my own PC and some very hot UNIX based machines just over from the U.S. that I use for many hours a week, there is NO WAY I could go back to the sheer stubborness of an 8-bit. I guess we just have to hope for a miracle in this area. Any suggestions?

Let's face it, adventuring has been reduced to a very select hobby, and it's now up to US to keep it alive. Don't moan about big companies not releasing adventures - would you? No. So it's time to look to the future - it's time to support the smaller software houses, support magazines such as 'Probe' and 'Coder' - even contribute! C'mon, let's give this corpse some shocks...

ST PUBLIC DOMAIN

An overview by George March

When Chris sent me John R. Barnsley's disk-based catalogue for the 'ST Adventurer's PD Library' I thought 'Oh God! Somebody's trying to plug more useless stuff!', as from my 'ADVSYS' review in an earlier issue you'll realise I didn't really care for much PD stuff (unless it's free on the front of a magazine!). But, the first thing that struck me was, what a great 'rainbow effect' for a loading screen! Which clears, with a key press, to give you the usual desktop. From here you can select to load and view a PD (Public Domain) section, of which there are plenty to choose from!

The 'AGT' (Adventure Games Toolkit) Adventure disk section first gives details of the general AGT games layout, and then a list of game commands you may encounter whilst playing, function and cursor key uses available in AGT adventures, and then it lists a comprehensive evaluation of 32 available games created with the AGT (from AGT.15 to AGT.47), including 'normal' adventures, children's, and adult (nudge, nudge, wink, wink, say no more!) adventures as well as many spoofs! The list, given in the form of a smallish (but not necessarily brief!) storyline for each game, also includes helpful hints and whether there's a solution disk available for it (the hints and solution disks are available even before you buy a game!).

The Adventure Demo disk section lists 17 disks (from DEM.1 to DEM.17) with DEM.4, DEM.9, 12 and 15 (which features four Infocom demos including 'Zork I' and 'Planetfall', almost try before you buy?) being compilation disks. There's even a scrolling demo for 'STOS' on DEM.7 and a demo of Mrs Linda Wright's ST version of the 'Jade Stone' on DEM.8!

The Budgie Licenseware section lists prices of available Budgie disks including single-sided and double-sided adventures (BU.29, 'Death Camp', and BU.43, 'The Village' were both written by our own 'STAC: The Simple Solution' columnist, Dave Blower!), pro' (Productivity/Utility) series, demo disks and magazines on disk. Listing 72 single-sided disks (from BU.1 to BU.72).

Some other goodies in the adventure section include BU.53 'From Little Acorns' (a mouse-driven adventure from a guy called Simon Brown. The name rings a bell?) and BU.68 'Blackscar Mountain' by Terry White (reviewed in 'Adventure Probe' Vol.3 Issue 8, way back in August '89).

The Budgie double-sided disk section lists 22 compilation disks (from COM.1 to COM.22) with COM.19 holding Dave Blower's 'Death Camp' and 'The Village', and COM.21 holding 'Blackscar Mountain' and 'Shards Of Time'.

The Budgie UK Productivity (Utility) range all priced at 3.95 (still not bad really!) lists 18 utility disks (from PRO.1 to PRO.18).

The Budgie demo disk section (priced at 2.95) lists just 2 disks, BDEM.1 and BDEM.2.

The Budgie Magazine disk section (again 2.95) lists 9 disk-based mags (Gee, I'd never have guessed!), BMAG.1 to BMAG.9, which all give reviews, help sections, etc. BMAG.9 includes 32 different STOS routines!

A last Budgie disk gives a short listing of up-and-coming disks including 'Seventh Heaven', another Dave Blower adventure on a single-sided disk, and 'Ascendent', a 68000 assembler.

The Children's and Education disk section lists 22 disks (from CE.1 to CE.22). Mostly kid-level utilities such as CE.1, 'Colouring Book' (a series of outline drawings which children can fill with colour using a mouse, or create their own images using simple drawing tools available) and CE.19, 'Mr Ben'. There's also some higher level utilities like CE.2, 'GCSE Mathematics', CE.3, 'Chunnel To France' (an English-French utility/game) and CE.17, 'Solar System Geography', etc, etc.

The Clip-Art Collections section lists 8 sets of Clip-Art disks used for Desk Top Publishing, 4 disks to each set:

Set 1 (the first disk holds 29 files, the second 26, the third 31 files and the last 24 files).
Set 2 (the first disk holds 27 files, the second 23, the third 27 files and the last 28 files).
Set 3 (the first disk holds 57? files, the second 51?, the third 70? files and the last 58? files. There's just so many files on this disk I think I lost count somewhere!).
Set 4 (the first disk holds 29 files, the second 12, the third 23 files and the last 25 files).
Set 5 (the first disk holds 21 files, the second 33, the third 37 files and the last 19 files).
Set 6 (the first disk holds 19 files, the second 30, the third 28 files and the last 24 files).
Set 7 (the first disk holds 20 files, the second 21, the third 21 files and the last 13 files).
Set 8 (the 4 disks in this set all seem to be listed in one lot, with 134? files over the 4 disks!).

The General Adventure Disk section ists 41 disks (from ADV.01 to ADV.48), with ADV.02, 03, 07, 08, 09, 12, 18, 19, 20, 25, 33, 37, 38, 42, 43 and 48 all being written using STAC. ADV.27 is an ST Adventure Writing System (written in 'GFA BASIC 2' by R. D. Foord), ADV.34 is a 'Starship Columbus' of which I did a review in an earlier issue (please read this back issue before buying ADV.36! You have been warned!). Though as in the case of the Other Games and Entertainment disk section, some disk numbers in this section (ADV.04, 10, 11, 30, 31, 39 and 45) are blank. They're included but no info is given for these disks.

There's a section on general help with PD software, a section dedicated to a disk-based magazine called 'ST NEWS' (Vol.2 No.s 1 to 8, Vol.3 No.s 1 to 7, Vol.4 No.s 1 to 4, and Vol.5 No.1 available). With compendiums for volumes 1 and 2, and one entitled 'The Final Volume'. All of the above with hundreds of adventure solutions).

The Map section lists 10 disks (from NO.1 to NO.10) with complete on-screen maps and hints for loads of different (some well known, some not so well known) adventures.

The Music and Graphical Demos disk section lists 51 disks (from MGDEM.01 to MGDEM.51), mostly sound effects demos, with MGDEM.36 being a STOS demo disk with loads of files including a 'Star Trekkin'' demo (Yup, that stoopid song again!). Though disks MGDEM.04 and 05 have messages saying they've been moved to the Budgie Licenseware section!

The MIDI section lists 20 disks (from MIDI.1 to MIDI.20) with various music utilities for many different synthesizers, a good section this!

The Sampled Music section lists 69 disks (from MUS.01 to MUS.70) of various groups/singers, from Kylie Minogue (MUS.01), to the Pet Shop Boys (MUS.03 and 58), to Alice Cooper (MUS.07 and 08) and the

California Raisins (MUS.12), with Queen (MUS.15, 16, 30, 45 and 52), Genesis (MUS.20), Kraftwerk (MUS.19) and Jean Michel Jarre (MUS.51) along the way, etc, etc, etc. Loads of good samples! Though MUS.41 is included but has no listing!

The Printmaster Graphics Library disk section lists 4 disks (from PM.01 to PM.04) containing hundreds of additional graphics for use with the 'Printmaster' software package, and each includes utilities for printing, cataloguing and converting these files to 'Degas Elite' format and vise-versa.

The Shareware disks section lists 9 disks (from SW.1 to SW.9) including on-screen maps, adventures (SW.2, 'The Grimoire' and SW.3, 'Toil And Trouble' were written by Pat Winstanley! Both done with STAC), and utilities (SW.7 is the Adventure Games Toolkit as I mentioned earlier. Basically just an Interpreter/Compiler package which needs ASCII text files to work, like ADVSYS), SW.8 is the AGT Source Code disk and SW.9 is a STOS created Shoot-'Em-Up Construction Kit!

The Slideshow disk section lists 23 disks (from SLD.01 to SLD.23) of various forms of digitised piccies. Plenty of 'Adult' disks as well, this PD Library isn't just for games, and the games aren't just for kiddies!

The Special Solutions disk section lists 12 disks (from NO.1 to NO.12) with solutions for loads of RPGs ('Bard's Tale', 'Dungeon Master', etc, etc).

The ST Adventure Solution disk section lists 8 disks (from ST.1 to ST.8) with solutions for hundreds (no kidding!) of (some well known, some not so well known) games (approx. 26 full solutions to each disk) from companies such as Magnetic Scrolls, Level 9, Sierra-On-Line, Rainbird and Infocom, etc.

The Adventure Related Utilities and Others disk section lists 66 disks (from UTIL.1 to UTIL.66) of great utilities like 'ST Writer' (UTIL.1, which can be used to write the ASCII text files for SW.7, the Adventure Games Toolkit and ADV.36, containing the ADVSYS), 'NEOchrome' (UTIL.2, which can be used with STAC), 'Ani ST' (UTIL.3, the PD version of the 'Aegis Animator'), a STOS Upgrader (UTIL.7), 'Doctorin' The House' (UTIL.39, a Virus Killer), STOS Maestro Samples (UTIL.40), STOS 1.62 Updater (UTIL.53), a Degas Elite Support disk (UTIL.57), and an Ani ST Art disk (UTIL.61), etc, etc, (and on, and on, and...).

As a general overview this disk-based catalogue for a PD library, including general visual layout for the catalogue, the huge lists I've already given and much, much more (I cannot emphasise enough how much I liked it!) is really very good! There's hundreds and hundreds of Shoot-'Em-Ups, adventures, utilities and samples, etc, on this one disk. Try writing to the address below for a catalogue, it's well worth it!

Mr John R. Barnsley, 32 Merrivale Road, Rising Brook,
Stafford, Staffordshire, ST17 9EB, UK.

HEAD'S CASES 4 "DA CASE A DA BAR-STOOL PIGEON"

It wuz' 5 ta' 6 on a Tuesda' afta'noon in Octoba', I wuz' supposed ta' meet Wendy at Shirley's Bar at 7, bud' as usual I nivva' gits' 'dat far, 'dere wuzza' quick rap at 'da door - it wuz' only a few seconds ah' M. C. Hammer, bud' it got ma' attention!
By 'da huge, padded shoulders an' floppy Fedora silhouetted 'gainst 'da glass inna' door, I recognised 'da shape alright, a swindler an' hard street thug - she wuzza' big girl wuz' Kerry! I kinda' reckoned 'er an' 'da boys 'ad come fa' 'da money - bud' I wuzn't worried, I 'ad a switch-blade taped ta' ma' ankle an' a .45 in 'da top drawer - jeez' some days ya' jus' can't git' ridda' 'deez damn debt collectors! So I wrote 'er a Latex cheque quick, an' headed out ta' 'da bus..

Hell! - Ya' can't even cross 'da street properly in Greenwich Village anymore 'deez days, wid' out some damn fool gettin' in trouble - ma' ol' pal, Paddy Goldberg Enrami (a Pakastani Jew frum' old Ireland), wuz' lyin' in 'da gutter jus' outside 'da office, so I wanders ova' to 'im..

"Hay, Paddy! Ya' want me ta' call ya' a doctor or sumt'in'?" I sez' grinnin' at 'im.
"Arr, t'anks thur', Ritchie, ould son, oi h'appreciates that, oi does!"
"Ok, Pads, yu'r a doctor!"
"An' yu'r a complete an' utter bar-steward, thur', Ritchie! Does it properly oi sez'!"

A couple ah' minutes later 'da docs arrived, an' I sees 'da h'ambulance takin' Paddy away, so I jumps in 'da back as it drives off!

"So!" I sez' ta' Paddy "Whut's wrong 'dis time?"
"Aaargh, oi'm aalroight, oi ownly took a couple ah' hundred asprin fa' the heed ache las' noight!"
"I think he means t'night?" sez' 'da medic.
"Naa', Tuesda'! Aye, las' noight oi sez'!"
"Look, Buddy!" sez' 'da h'ambulance guy "T'day's Widinsday', if ya' took 'em all on Toozday, you'd be dead by now!"
"Ah, well 'den!" sez' Paddy "Oi must ah' tooken 'em on Monda' 'den!"
"Urgh, yeah, ok!" I sez' ta' Paddy, I wuzn't gonna' argue, I mean 'dis goof wuz' so stoopid 'ey even kept an empty bottle ah' milk in 'is fridge fa' people 'dat 'ad black coffee! An' I remember when Paddy foist came over frum' Ireland in '77, an' 'da day we went ta' 'dat pizza place - still makes me feel lousy, when 'da guy at 'da counter sez' "Ok, mak, ya' wan' it cut in 4 slices or 6?" an' Paddy sez' "Arr, no, laddy, yuz' got it wrong, the name's Paddy, not Mack, an' oi reckons it'll 'ave ta' be in 4, oi doesn't t'ink oi'll be able ta' eat 6 slices!"
"Arr, jeesuz', Ritchie.." sez' Paddy "Ev'rytoime oi closes me oiyes, oi seez' these terrible pink blotches in front ah' them!"
"Hay! - Jus' fa' 'da record, ya' 'iva seen a psychiatrist, Paddy?" I sez' wid' a sneer.
"Hell, no!" sez' Pads' "Jus' these damn pink blotches!"

It took a couple ah' hours fa' 'da docs ta' pump Paddy's guts dry, bud' 'dey gave 'im 'dem back, an' 'ey wuz' soon on 'da

streets 'gain - 'reckon sum'body shoulda' taught 'da idiot 'da green cross code! - So Paddy follows me outta' 'da hopsickle, hospticle, err, medical place where 'dey keep patients, an' we races 'cross 'da carpark..

"We'd better use yu'r car!" I sez' ta' Paddy "Mine's bin' a bid' bugged lately!"
"You meanin' it's under hoigh surveillance then, Ritchie?" 'ey askes.
"Nah!" I sez' "Jus' gits' in a cranky mood in hot weather!" so we climbs inna' Paddy's wagon, an' we headed fa' Shirley's bar! Wendy wuz' waitin' fa' us when we got 'dere..

"Hiya', fatso!" she sneers as I squeezes ma' legs under 'da table an' sa' down.
Maybe Wendy wuz' right, maybe I should lose some ah' 'dis stomache - bud' I wuz' divorced so I kinda' reckoned I'd already lost 24-stone ah' ugly flab! Ya' know 'bout 'da only t'ing I eva' 'ad in common wid' ma' ex-wife wuz' 'dat we wuz' married on 'da same day! - An' it wuz' gettin' to a point where I'd 'ave ta' cut down on 'da beer an' 'da burgers soon.
Ya' know once upon a time I use ta' be able ta' walk down 'da main street an' dress straight off 'da peg - bud' 'da neighbors take 'dere washin' in at nights now, so it kinda' ruins 'dat idea!
Bud', like I wuz' inna' pretty lousy mood already t'day, afta' I'd bin' ta' 'da docs - 'told me ta' cut down on 'da fatty foods an' lay off 'da cigars - 'told me ta' try suckin' a lollypop 'iv'ry time I wannid' one - trouble is I could nivva' git' 'da damn t'ings ta' stay alight!

So I finishes ma' Jack an' staggers ta' 'da john ta' take a leek - I coulda' taken a cabbage I suppose, bud' I'd taken 'da cabbage ta' 'da zoo las' week an' it wuz' 'da leek's turn 'dis time! 'Dere wuz' water all ova' 'da floor when I enters, I kinda' wondered whedda' Shirley'd 'ad a foutain fitted, 'till I seez' all 'deez bits ah' paper an' t'ings stuffed down 'da toilet! So bein' 'da nosey type I sorts t'rough 'dem foist, an' I wanders back ta' 'da bar..

I ordered anudda' drink off Shirley an' sa' down 'gain, Shirley wuz' lookin' kinda' cute an' kinky t'night, bud', like I wondered whedda' a guy ah' 'is age should be wearin' skirts 'dat short? Shirley wuz' cryin' when 'ey brought 'da drinks 'round - foist time I eva' seen unconscious drinks a'fore!
"Hay, whut's all 'da tears fa'?" I sez' sippin' ma' Jack an' fallin' asleep, bud' not furlong! - 'Da slap roun' 'da ears off Wendy took care ah' 'da cobwebs in ma' head!
"You're our 1 millionth customer!" he howled - s'bad 'nough cryin' in ya' own beer, without some schmuck doin' it for ya'!
"Really?!" I sez', I didn't t'ink 'da place wuz' 'dat big? "So whut's 'da problem?"
"Ever since I inherited this place from my father I've been gettin' these really awful guys comin' round.."
"I know what ya' mean!" sez' Wendy scowlin' 'cross 'da table at me!

"No.. I mean they're after protection money.. I just can't afford it anymore, they're tryin' ta' steal the bar off me, Ritch'!" wimpered Shirl'..
"Hmm, h'interestin' story, almost as h'interestin' as 'dis photo' I found you'd tried ta' stuff downna' john!"

"I was young!" 'ey wimpered "I needed the money!"
"Not 'dat kinda' photo'!" I sez' "I mean't 'dis!" an' I 'anded ova' 'da piccie I'd found..
Ha! I knew 'dat guys ugly mug alright, No Hung Dong, 'da h'international jewel t'ief an' Chinese eunich!
"An' I can tell ya' Shirl', I won't rest fa' 1 minute 'till 'dis guys mug's a'hind bars!" I sez' wavin' 'da photo in 'da air!
"Urr..!" I sez' ta' Wendy "ya' wonna' 'nudda' beer while we're waitin'?" So we finished 'da candle-lit dinner - it 'ad ta' be, Shirl' ain't paid 'is 'lectric bill in months, an' we headed out ta' 'da car..

'Da car wuz' waitin' fa' us as we left Shirley's, bud' so were 2 hoods wid' Tommy gunz'..
"You's freeze!" I shouted, 'da hoods wuz' gonna' make a move fa' it, bud' Tommy 'ad already done a runner, droppin' a grenade as 'ey made off. 'Da h'explosion ripped Wendy's car apart - Wendy gotta' go, 'dey gotta' go! - t'rowin' us all ta' 'da ground! 'Da car wuzza' real wreck - bits ah' metal ev'rywhere, an' 'den 'dis guys skull rolls outta' 'da wreckage..
Paddy stood up, dusted 'imself down an' picked up 'da head fa' me ta' see!
"jeezus christ, it's Mr Silverstein 'da pawnbroker!" I screams.
"Nah, couldn't be, Ritchie! 'Tis h'an h'amazin' resemblance, that oi'm sure, but oi still reckons Silverstein's a helluva' lot taller than this!" an' 'den 'da head spoke!
"Arr, christ!" I sez' ta' Paddy "'Da guy's a jew! Hay, Pads, ya' unnerstan' any Jewish at all.. At all?!"
"Arr, 'course oi does!" sez' Paddy "If it's shpoken in oirish 'dat is!"

Suddenly 'dis great big guy comes ova', carryin' 'da hoods, 2 roofracks an' 'da gangsters boss, Tommy Gunz, so 'ey dumps 'em onna' ground, an' 'da cops carries 'em away..
Jeezus, I needed a drink kinda' quick, like, so we staggers back ta' Shirley's..

Frum' where I wuz' standin' I could sense 'dere wuz' sumt'in' diff'rent 'bout 'dis guy, maybe it wuz' 'da way 'ey ate 'da glass afta' ey'd finished drinkin', maybe it wuz' 'da way 'ey cracked walnuts wid' 'is eyebrows, hell knows?
An' well 'ey mighta' bin' bigger'n 'da h'Empire State Buildin', bud' so wuz' King Kong - an' 'ey mighta' 'ad a big, hairy chest - unlike ma' dainty, liddle' self I admit! - bud' so did Lassie!
An' well I usually t'ink I nivva' forgets a face - bud' wid' 'dis guys mug I'd not only make an exception, I'd try ma' best! - bud' I guess 'ey wuz' a bid' like a rabid, Cat Vindaloo - one smell an' ya' feels like t'rowin' up 'gain!
'Ey began ta' tell me 'is story, I listened.. Well, it wuz' easier 'dat way!

'Seems 'ey'd bin' waitin' fa' 'dis jewel t'ief, No Hung Dong, ta' come t'rough frum' Chicago, reckoned No Dong 'ad hidden some stash at Shirley's Bar years a'fore Shirl'd inherited it! 'Dey'd arranged ta' git' t'gether fa' dinner at Shirl's.. Bud' 'dat wuz' 3 years ago, 'ey'd bin' waitin' eva' since. bud' No Dong still 'adn't showed, guess 'ey knew jus' how bad 'da food really wuz'!

"Bud' whut's Tommy Gunz Little Dick gotta' do wid' all 'dis?" I sez' - I kinda' recognised Little Ritchie Sukka, 1 ah' 'da hoods frum' outside - 'dey all turned round ta' stare at me.. You'd

t'ink I'd said sumt'in' wrong?
"Little Ritchie's Tommy's hitman, came ta' beat up on old Shirl' 'ere, 'force 'im ta' sell 'da bar, I guess?" sez' ' da big guy.
"So who the hell made you Sherlock Holmes, with all the best lines, yet?" screams Wendy, headin' ta' 'da bar furra' 'nuther drink, an' Paddy headed outside ta' call a cab - christ knows whut' 'ey wuz' gonna' call it, bud' 'ey wuz' gonna' call it anyway!

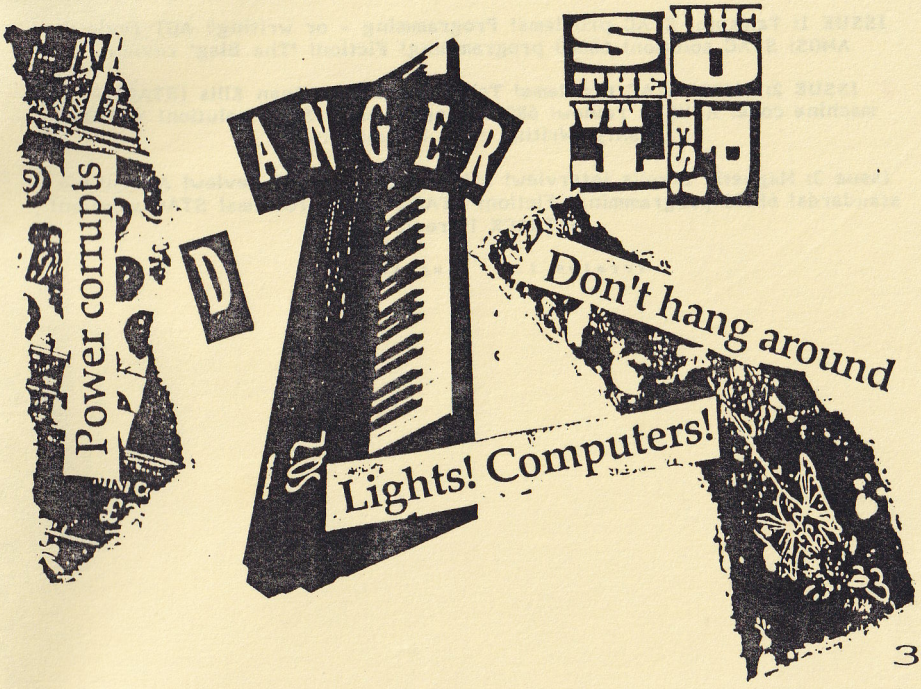
Bud' by 'dis time, wid' a few stiff drinks inside 'im, Shirl' wuz' jus' a mite unhappy 'bout 'da whole t'ing!
"Hell, no Little Dick's gonna' knock me up!" 'ey screams, reachin' unner' 'da bar furra' pump-action shotgun!

"You or anybody else wants ta' take this bar 'way frum' me an' they're gonna' git' theirs in spades!" 'ey yells an' squeezes 'da trigger, blowin' a hole bigger'n an Oprah Winfrey pay cheque in 'da west wall!

Seems 'da big guy wuzn't such a bad guy afta' all! 'Ey wuz' workin' unda' cover fa' 'da cops when No Hung Dong'd ripped off 'da fancy Clancy diamonds, an' hid 'em in 'da wall whenna' new extension wuz' built!
Kinda' lucky Wendy'd hid 'da resta' 'da dough in 'er bag when 'da cops came 'gain. I wuz' startin' ta' wonder 'bout a season ticket for 'deez boys, 'da 'mounta 'rides down town' I'd 'ad ta' take since I started workin' as a dick' fa' hire!

'Least I'd actually git' paid 'dis time an' 'da only stiffs ya'd git' in 'dis bar in future were spirits inna' glass!

'Da End



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BACK ISSUES: These are available at the same price as the current issue.

ISSUE 1: Talespin! STAC problems! Programming - or writing? AGT review! AMOS! STAC solution! 68000 programming! Fiction! 'The Blag' review!

ISSUE 2: AMOS! STAC problems! Talespin! Fiction! Sean Ellis (STAC) - machine code! ADVSYS review! 68000 programming! STAC solution! Virtual Reality! Writing tips! Humour tips!

Issue 3: Magnetic Scrolls interview! AMOS! Talespin! AGT review! Adventure standards! 68000 programming! Fiction! STAC's more problems! STAC solution! HATRACK II review!

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