Commodore Free

A free to download Magazine dedicated to Commodore computers.

Issue 84

Commodore Free Remembers CRL

CONTENTS

Editorial

When I decided to do a feature about CRL I hadn't really thought it through. Get a couple of interviews and a quick write up of the company, then a few games reviews. Yep, that should be an easy issue to produce. Well... I was totally WRONG!

It took some time, not only to track people down, but then get them to agree to give their time. In fact the issue tool longer than any other issue to produce, making sure facts were right and then questioning people – I did get some rejections and a few downright no answers, This could have been due to the time it takes for an interview but some people just don't like being questioned. However, in the end I think I gained enough people to have a good insight into the company. Say what you want about CRL – they were very influential, and dare we say, ground-breaking! It would be pointless to say more in an editorial, as you have a full issue of the company ahead of you.

I would like to thank (in no particular order):
Graeme Mason
Martyn Carroll
Frank Gasking
Andrew fisher

for their help with the issue (in varying ways), and of course to all the people interviewed who agreed to give their time and answer questions about a company they used to work for.

Sadly, real life got in the way of compiling the issue and so that added to the burden and delayed things even more.

Right. That's all the blurb out the way, so what can we expect to see in this issue?

Well, it's interviews with some past CRL members and some of the CRL games reviews (for games I enjoyed playing)... the usual mix of news and a brief history about the company.

Again, I would like to thank the various people involved for agreeing to be interviewed, and of course for their time and interesting answers.

Best regards,
Nigel
Editor Commodorefree.com

Amiga News

New EasyNet Update

News from Amigakit
The latest EasyNet update is available today from the live update server and is also available **on floppy disk.**

Changes since last version for v0.178:
- program re-structured for EasyNet Pro release
- added DownloadBuffer tooltype
- Additional DNS settings user checks and notices added to help users

- Wireless manager now refreshes when stack is goes online
- Network Configuration Help window updated
- GUI bug fixes: Query device and Scan Wireless Networks

http://www.amiga.org/forums/showthread.php?s=c8325163948ea6af30ce51f2152c16f5&p=771123#post771123

Top 15 Amiga 500 Games renowned for their music

Amiga News from Gamer Headlines From the article

"If you were an 80s or 90s kid and old enough to be gaming at the time, you should remember the Commodore Amiga. The iconic Amiga 500 was a personal computer way ahead of its time, and when I say a PC – well, it was used mostly as a gaming machine due to its advanced graphics and sound. It was a true multimedia machine (maybe the first).

What really made the Amiga 500 and its successors like the Amiga 500+ stand out was the music this computer could produce. Arguably, it had one of the best, if not the best, sound outputs of the time, whereas other machines and game consoles still had bleep and beeps. While most game systems utilize mono sounds at this time, the Amiga 500 could create stereo sound, handle four channels, and later on synthesize music instruments like drums, flutes, and the piano at the composer's disposal. Even a synthesized voice could function as a sample voice. Hey, remember I'm talking about 1987 when the Amiga 500 was launched – before many of our readers were born. It was truly an advanced piece of hardware."

Read the rest here:

http://www.gamerheadlines.com/2014/0...r-their-music/

The Gadget We Miss: The Video Toaster The gadget that revolutionized TV in the 1990s.

An article about the original Video Toaster for the Amiga
"Television is a complicated, expensive business. Or at least it used to be: in the 1980s, it cost a small fortune to get the equipment to shoot and broadcast your own TV show that looked as good as the big networks. However, one gadget changed all that, making it possible to produce good-looking TV shows with multiple cameras, titles and special effects without a big network budget. By doing this, our gadget set the stage for the cable TV and Internet broadcasting revolution: the Video Toaster."

Read more here

https://medium.com/people-gadgets/th...r-93509e978549
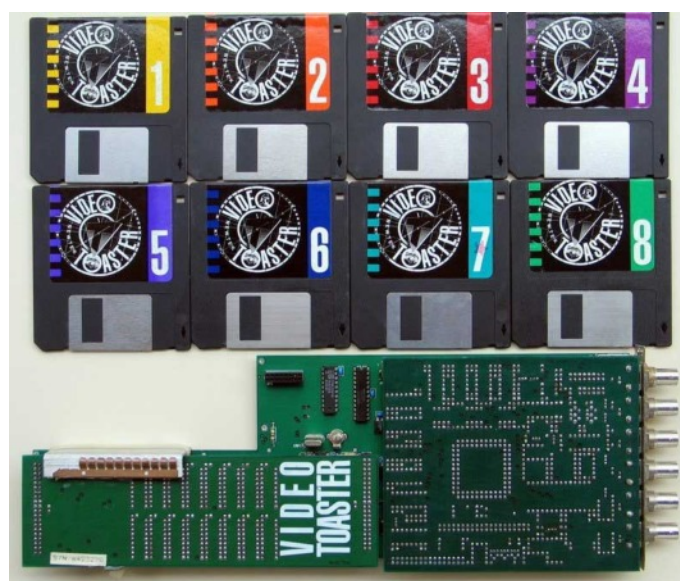
New DVI A1200 Back plate for use with Indivision 1200Mk2cr

News from Amigakit
We have designed a new custom back plate for use with the Amiga 1200 and **Indivision 1200Mk2cr**. Production is now complete and the back plate is now available from AmigaKit.com

It fits into the rear trapdoor below the floppy disk drive and secures the DVI connector from the Indivision 1200Mk2cr

UK Product Link:
http://amigakit.leamancomputing.com/...oducts_id=1206

Europe Product Link:
http://amigakit.leamancomputing.com/...oducts_id=1206

USA Product Link:
http://www.amigakit.us/product_info....oducts_id=1206

Canada Product Link:
http://amigakit.leamancomputing.com/...oducts_id=1206

New articles on Obligement

The following articles have been added to the website of the French Amiga/MorphOS magazine Obligement (http://obligement.free.fr) during the last few months:

- Old articles from Amiga News 57 to 59 : Review of SampleLink 1.1, Review of HyperCache, Comparative: word processor from 1992-1993, Hardware : Picasso II, Review of Directory 4.0, Review of Vista Pro 3.04, File: history of Tecsoft, Hardware: Retina, Review of PageSetter 3, Hardware: A1230 Turbo+, etc.
- Interview with Frank Sauer (graphist of Agony).
- Interview with Igor Modino et Luis Guirado (Armiga project).
- Interview with Robert J. Mical (Amiga développer, from 1987).
- Review of MorphOS 3.6 and 3.7.
- Review of Soccer Kid.
- Review of webcam viewers for AmigaOS 4.
- Review of Gribouillis 3.1.500.
- Hardware: Dexlan USB 2.0/IDE/SATA adapter.
- File: Commodore monitors (update).
- Tutorial: utilization of Synergy on MorphOS and AmigaOS 4.
- Tutorial: installation of MorphOS (update).
- Special quiz about the anecdotes from Amiga history.

Articles in Spanish:

- Análisis de MorphOS 3.6 y 3.7.
- Entrevista con Szilárd Biró.

Rendez-vous on http://obligement.free.fr

NetSurf 3.2 released

NetSurf 3.2 is primarily a bug-fix release. In addition to fixes, a disc cache feature has been added, and a little work has been done to improve CSS3 support. Several of the front ends have received quite a bit of attention, with new features and improvements; notably the GTK, AmigaOS and Framebuffer front ends.

Download: http://www.netsurf-browser.org/downloads/
More information about
NetSurf: http://www.netsurf-browser.org

Pack Chrysalis 3.7.1 available for MorphOS 3.7

Association WArMUp offers the pack Chrysalis 3.7.2 for MorphOS 3.7. a quick way to obtain a complete, pre-configured environment containing a selection of software, games, and emulators for MorphOS.

The pack isn't official – and is installed after a clean installation MorphOS 3.7 (registered or not). To install the package, simply mount the ISO image, open "Chrysalis" volume, and click on the "Install Pack Chrysalis" icon.

The ISO image is freely downloadable from the following link:

warm-heartedness[/download/pack/chrysalis.iso](/download/pack/chrysalis.iso)

List of changes:
- Added a Documentation directory in the ISO
- Added a Tutorial directory in the ISO
- Added a tutorial on Synergy written by Sergius and translated into English by Morphun
- Added a tutorial on how to install E-UAE and WHDLoad written by Jambalah
- Added a Spanish translation of the tutorial Jambalah realized by Diezi7
- Added SoundBankster 1.2
- Added Spreedy 1.0
- Added DefICons Installer 1.1
- Added FileTypes Installer 1.2
- Added many Spanish translations Diezi7
- Added InstallerGen 1.0
- Added Tips in WBStartup
- Updated InstantUnpack 1.1
- Updated ACE 1.7
- Updated GenesisPlus 1.7
- Updated rhLaunch 0.8
- Updated gtranslator 2.01
- Updated InstantZip 2.1.3
- Updated MPlayer (24/07/2014)
- Updated ScummVM 1.7.0
- Polynet the bar is replaced by an Ambient launch bar
- Polynet bar is moved in the WBStartup/Disabled directory
- Deleted obsolete files
- Fixed config file rhLaunch
- Changes of E-UAE configs files (for compatibility with AmigaForever ROMs)

MorphOS 3.7 Released

Official Morph OS announcement

The MorphOS development team is proud to announce the public release of MorphOS 3.7, which features various bug fixes as well as other minor improvements. For an overview of the included changes, please read our release notes.

We strongly urge new users to carefully read our installation and troubleshooting guides before they attempt to install MorphOS for the first time. Existing users can upgrade via the familiar procedure but are encouraged to read the guides as well. MorphOS 3.7 is available for download in our files section.

For more information head over to here:
http://www.morphos.de/news

BitJam 191 available

In this podcast you can listen to the following music: Estupendo, Soda Club, tu $$ u10.special, Count Floyd !, Whether digital gardens, Ka go goo, upper Hurry, Carbodynamix !, Pom-pom-pom, Space.2k2, White line fever, Susified, Fanfare for the Common, Pandamonium, No sense of time, Out of space, Slide aside, Dadoob funky fresh and Rust and stardust.
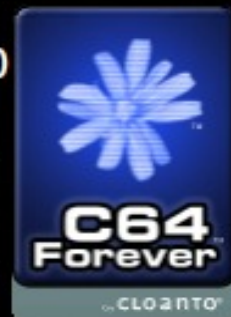
http://www.bitfellas.org/page.php?100

Commodore Plus 4,Vic And Pet News

20 Games That Defined the Commodore VIC-20

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QcQa54miYvY
1981 Adventureland (Adventure International)
1981 Sargon II Chess (Commodore)
1981 Blitz (Commodore)
1981 Radar Rat Race (Commodore)
1982 Omega Race (Bally Midway/Commodore)
1982 Choplifter (Creative)
1982 Gridrunner (HES)
1982 Gorf (Bally Midway/Commodore)
1982 Alphabet Zoo (Spinnaker)
1982 Wacky Waiters (Imagine)
1983 Shamus (Synapse)
1983 Lode Runner (Broderbund)
1983 Q*Bert (Parker)
1983 Frogger (Parker)
1983 Jetpac (Ultimate)
1983 Galaxian (Namco/Atarisoft)
1983 Ultima: Escape from Mount Drash (Sierra On-Line)
1983 Donkey Kong (Nintendo)
1983 Pole Position (Namco/Atarisoft)
1983 Ms. Pac-Man (Namco/Atarisoft)
Compare the list with Retro gamer here:

http://www.retrogamer.net/top_10/top-ten-commodore-vic-20-games/

For the interested a list of games downloadable as Prg files can be found here:
http://awesome.commodore.me/vic-20/vic20-games/

And
http://www.zimmers.net/anonftp/pub/cbm/vic20/
Or, how about the 12 things you didn't know about the VIC?
http://www.maximumpc.com/article/features/12_things_you_didnt_know_about_commodore_vic_20?page=0,1

Rocket Science – Plus/4

Bauknecht has released a new demo for the Commodore Plus/4. Titled Rocket Science, the demo was released at the Evoke 2014 party in Germany where it reached the number 1 place in the "All Platform" category. This demo is a PAL-only version and was created by Stephan (code) and Ingo (music). It's well worth a look, even if you just watch the YouTube video, with some really amazing effects and music.

http://plus4world.powweb.com/software/Rocket_Science

Or watch it on YouTube:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SnDX0reRdeM

Temple Of Terror for the plus 4

Temple Of Terror is a text adventure with graphics, re-leased on a number of 8-bit systems. The Commodore 64 version of the game has recently been ported to the Plus/4 by Csabo with some major bug fixes as well as providing the game with some updates.

Being faithful to the original, but the C64 and the ZX Spec-trum versions were very buggy.

A review of the game is available here (although not the plus 4 version):

http://ffreviewermalthusd.blogspot.ca/2013/12/temple-of-terror-zx-spectrumcbm64amstra.html

http://plus4world.powweb.com/software/Temple_of_Terror

Warning demo released for the unexpanded Pal VIC 20

Backing up my previous comments about 2014 being the year of the VIC Author: viznut/pwp
has released on August 2nd, 2014 (Assembly '14 Real wild demo compo) a demo called Warning for the unexpanded VIC-20 (PAL) featuring some great VIC music and a lovely ending.

Download: the demo from here:

https://onedrive.live.com/?cid=05ef0a8eae2a4f4a&id=5EF 0A8EAE2A4F4A%21734
Read more and discuss 'Warning' **here:**

http://sleepingelephant.com/ipw-web/bulletin/bb/viewtopic.php?t=7065

Minesweeper Mini released for the VIC

Minesweep Mini (aka Minesweeper Mini)
has been released by Donkeysoft for the unexpanded VIC-20. It's Mine Sweeper for the VIC.

Created in Commodore BASIC, the listing is unprotected so you can BREAK at any time and list out the code. Instructions are in the program by way of a scrolling introduction.

Read more and download the file here:
http://sleepingelephant.com/ipw-web/bulletin/bb/viewtopic.php?f=2&t=7120
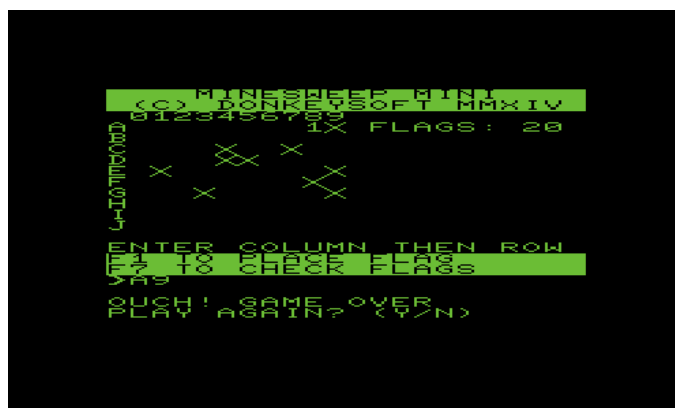
TED – Bil Herd

Bil Herd talks about the 30 year old TED chip that was used in the Commodore C16, C116, Plus / 4 and 364. Bil had the lead in the development of these computers and he used the TED (Text Editing Device) chip in the design. TED chip was used for video, audio, DRAM refresh, timers and keyboard / joystick input.

http://hackaday.com/2014/09/02/30-years-later-ted-finds-his-voice-a-commodore-story-part-i/

Part 2 is available here:

http://hackaday.com/2014/09/15/30-years-later-ted-finds-his-voice-a-commodore-story-part-ii/

Assembler party Demo competition

I don't seem to be printing enough PET entries in the news section, so please help me to be more informed and send out news to others. Anyway, I did find this demo entry (that is really good) for the PET.

You can download the file from here:
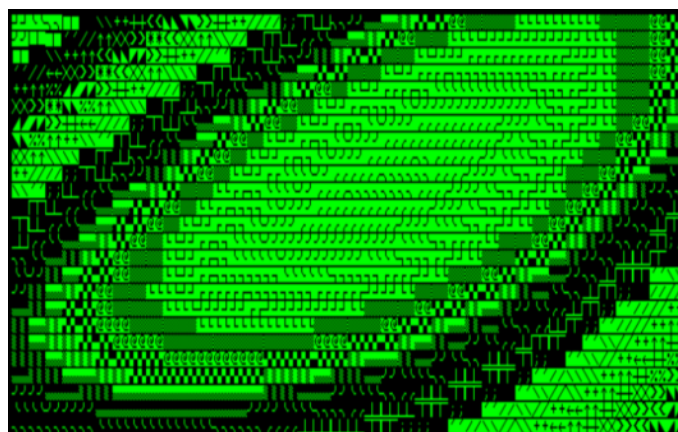http://demozoo.org/productions/118678/

It was released at the Assembly Summer 2014 Real wild demo competition entry, and reached 2nd place.

Platform: CBM 8032
Notes: 1 pulse wave, no custom characters
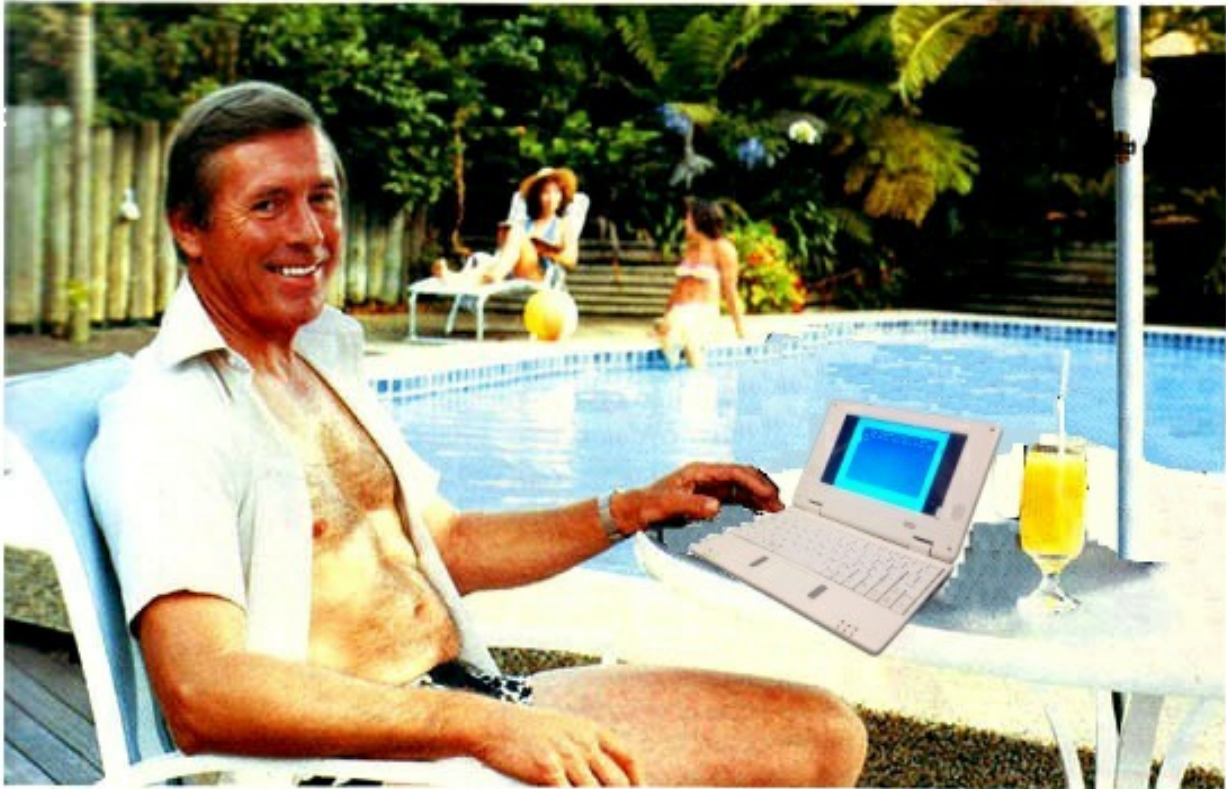Title: We Are Computers
Author: oobc

Commodore 64 And 128 News

Digital Excess Tools Disk

Recently released by: Digital Excess. The download has a number of tools, and although each is listed separately as entries in CSDB, I have put them under one news entry.

Sampler version 2 (The program states)
With this little program everybody is able to handle digi-fx quite easily. It also converts Amiga 8-bit samples to c64 4bit-samples, so you can use them in most of the known music editors, including digi-voices.
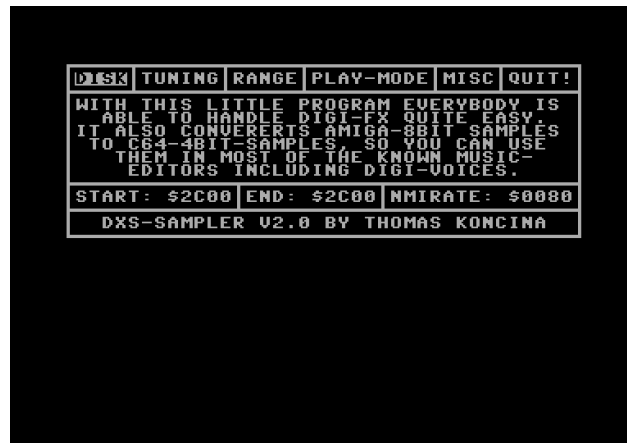dxs-sampler v2.0 by Thomas Kkoncina

http://csdb.dk/release/?id=132398

also part of the D64 are the following tools:
-**Final Font Artist V2.0**
-**FLInterlazer V1.0**
-**Graphics-Ripper 1.0**

-**Playfield-Editor V1.2**
-**Multi-Graphics-Displayer**
-**Bob-Getter V1.0**
-**AMICA-Paint Crashsaver**
-**3x3 Block-Matrix-Creator**

Die Ringe von Coplar [German]

This is a German-language release on what seems to be four disks, along with a manual (although all are in German). It appears to be a game written in BASIC.

Released by: TUGCS
It can be downloaded from here:
http://www.tugcs.de/Ringe_von_Coplar.zip

DirMaster V3.0.0

Released by Style, this is an amazing tool for Commodore 64 users. DirMaster is a Windows-based GUI application designed to help Commodore enthusiasts explore and manage their disk image collections.

Some of the new features in v3.0.0:
•   .d4m (read/write), .hdd (read only), .m2i (read only), .nib (read only)
•   .lbr & .spy archival formats
•   explorer file preview panel integration
•   export to .png, .rtf and .html formats
•   extra love for GEOS freaks
•   disassembly/hex viewers, REL file display, cset and image format displayers
•   batch processing w/ external script integration
•   experimental OpenCBM support
•   Rewritten and comprehensive online documentation

You can download the Zip file with the setup program from here:
http://style64.org/file/DirMaster_v3.0.0_Win32-STYLE.zip
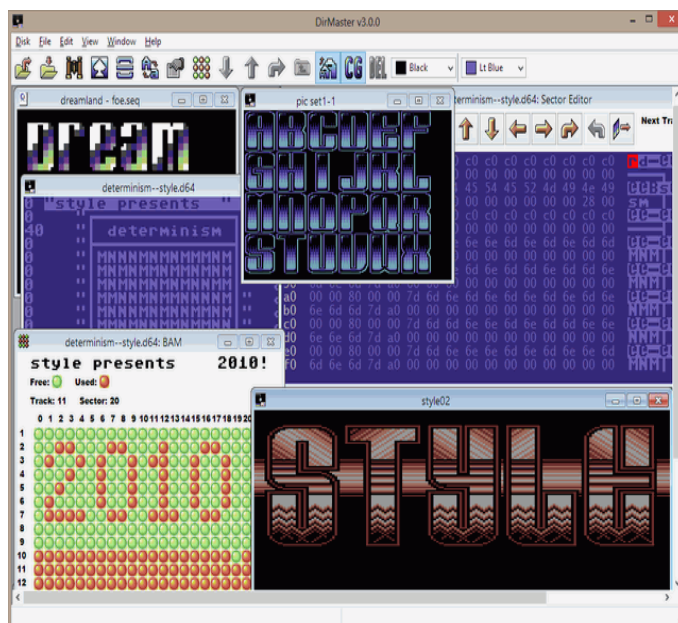
Reset issue 04 released

Featuring reviews of Commando Arcade, Guns 'N' Ghosts, Bellringer III and the Protovision 4 Player Compilation. Frank Gasking presents his "Where Are They Now" feature, trying to track down Commodore 64 personalities who were well known after its commercial era. We also have an exclusive interview with Tomcat/Nostalgia about the making of Commando Arcade. Neil Grayson joins Reset with the first part of his "History of Commodore Format" series. All of the regular favourites return, including Games That Weren't, C64 Endings, Deep Thoughts, The Mighty Brain, a minty-fresh Blow The Cartridge comic and much, much more.

Contributors:
Writer, Art – Anthony Stiller (Ant)
Writer – Ray Carlsen
Writer – Merman
Writer – Frank Gasking
Writer – Karl Burnett (POLYGAMe)
Writer – The Mighty Brain (TMB)
Writer – Jari Karjalainen (Last Chance)
Writer – Lenard Roach
Comics – Cameron Davis (Gazunta)

http://reset.cbm8bit.com/?dir=issue4

CBMXfer 0.40 RELEASED

CBMXfer version 0.40 has been released by Steve J. Gray

CBMXfer is a freeware file transfer program for the PC which lets you transfer files to
and from a Commodore IEC or IEEE drive attached to the PC via X-Cable (OpenCBM-compatible
cable, including Zoom Floppy USB) or CBMLink cable. It is also a Commodore file viewer.

CBMXfer is a front-end (GUI) for several command-line utilities including:

* OpenCBM.... Device driver and utilities to connect a Commodore IEC drive via "X-Cable"
or USB (Zoom Floppy adapter)
* CBMLink.... Talks to a Commodore computer via serial cable
* VICe....... Emulators plus C1541 utility – Works with Commodore Disk Image files (like D64)
* NibTools... Low-level disk "nibbler" utilities using parallel port cables

http://www.6502.org/users/sjgray/software/cbmxfer/cbmxfer.html
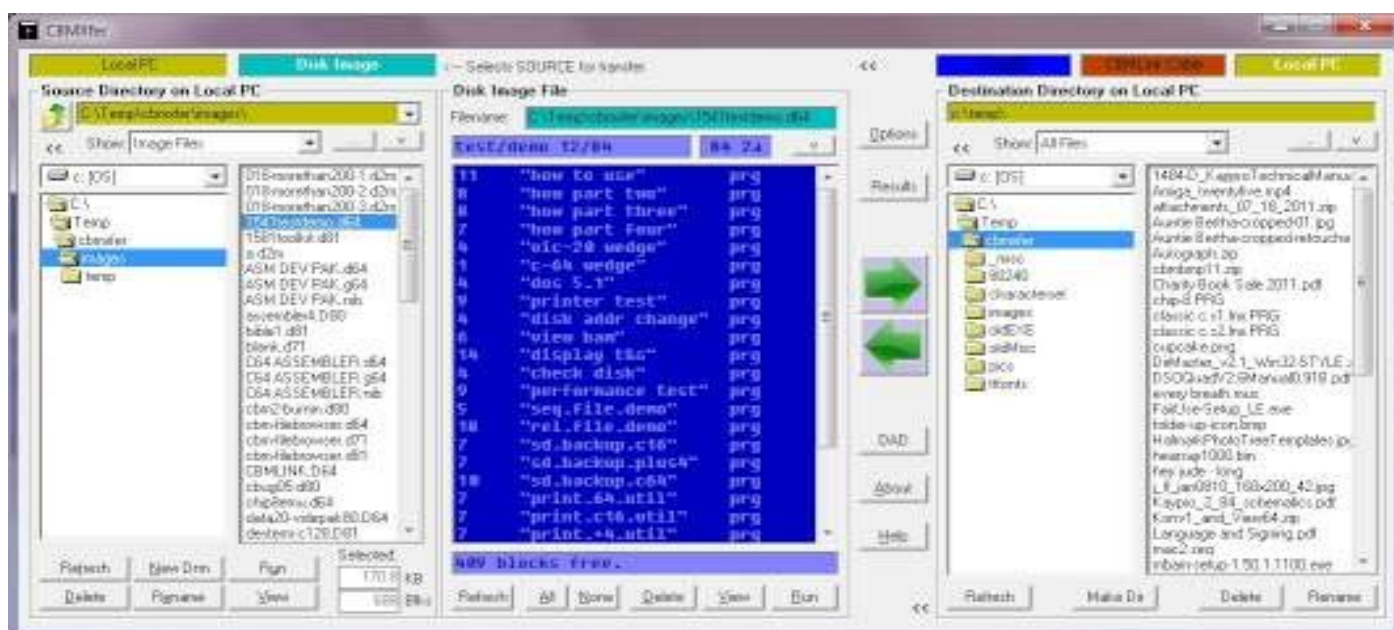
Super Cars 4 - FOR THE C64 RELEASED

Roberto Ricioppo has recently released a SEUCK game. In the game you have to drive your car through the dangerous streets and try to shoot at the Enemy, But you must be careful because the enemy can shoot back. You can download the game from the TND web page.

http://tnd64.unikat.sk/f_s.html

Sprite Pad V2.0 Beta 1

Subchrist Software has released a new sprite designer package for the C64, You need to run the software on a PC though. The package supports the following features (amongst others):

General Program Features...
- Edit and animate multi-colour and high-resolution sprite images.
- Flip, Reflect, Slide, Animate.
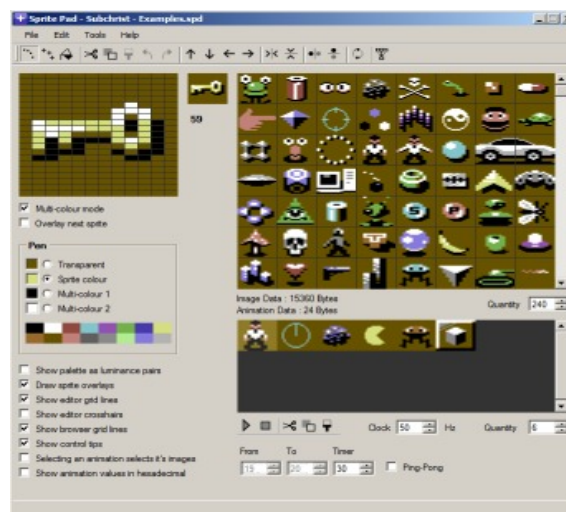- Rotations. Free rotate with variable angle limiter, auto-generate rotation sequences.
- Overlays. Allows the designing of two sprites as one.
- Import/Export data in a variety of useful formats.
- Multiple Undo/Redo.

http://www.coder.myby.co.uk/spritepad.htm

Lunar Blitz RX

http://cosine.org.uk/products.php?prod=lunar_blitz_rx&4mat=c64

TMR has released an updated version of his Lunar Blitz game for the c64. I don't feel this is one of TMR`s better releases and, personally I prefer the original VIC version of the game. Anyway, here is what Jason says about the release.

Based on the VIC 20 classic **Blitz**, the original C64 version of this little game was actually written for **Jason**'s mum to play after the keyboard (and in particular the space bar) on his trusty white bread-bin breathed it's last and couldn't run it any more.

The game itself is very simple; your spaceship is running low on fuel and needs somewhere to land and the only place anywhere within range is a deserted alien city. As you make repeated passes, getting lower each time as the fuel decreases, you can drop bombs to flatten the city with the space bar or a joystick fire button and make it relatively safe to land on.

Trivia: This remixed version of **Lunar Blitz** was built from the same disassembly of the original Lunar Blitz that the VIC 20, C16 and Atari 8-bit versions were built from.

Gamebase 64 – v12

The team at GB64 have released a new version with more than 24450 items, 450 more than the previous version.. GB64 was created to maintain all the software that was and is made for the Commodore 64 computer.

http://www.gb64.com/

Password Supplier V1.0

Released by: Graham
This tool could solve many a head scratching moment when asked to enter a password, You can choose the password length and type of characters to include, then just remember the long complex string of letters and symbols depending on what you selected, and Bingo! You have yourself a password.

Hmmm... so what's wrong with just entering password?!?

http://csdb.dk/getinternalfile.php/131389/pwdsupplier_10.zip
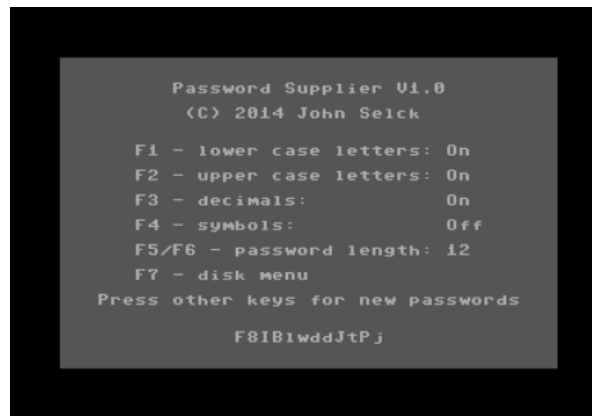
Relaunch64 V3.3

Relaunch64 is an IDE (text-editor) for C64 assembler-coding on Windows, Linux, and Mac OS X. Relaunch64 has a clean and intuitive user interface, yet it offers many features that make coding faster and easier.

This editor works together with common cross assemblers. Currently supported assemblers are 64tass, ACME, ca65, DASM, DreamAss, Kick Assembler and TMPx. Other assemblers might work as well, but syntax highlighting may not be 100% correct.

http://www.popelganda.de/relaunch64.html
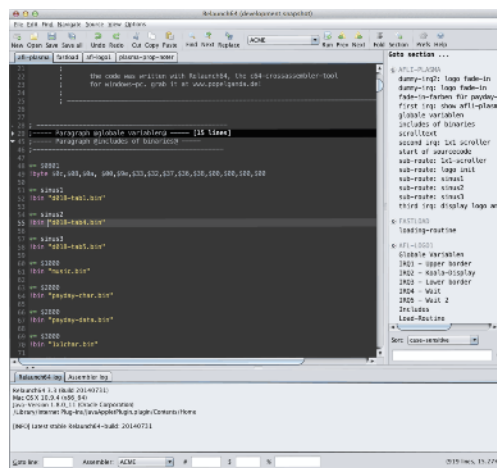
The Tree Angel 3SID

A piece of music using 3 SID chips, Of course you will need 3 to hear the effect back yourself, so why not just sit back click the YouTube video and chill out, It is a very nice relaxing piece of music.
Download from here:

http://csdb.dk/getinternalfile.php/131442/treeangel.prg

YOUTUBE
"The Tree Angel", composed by Yogibear and Hermit, using 3SID. Visuals and recording done by Dees Productions. Have a nice day and we all wish and hope Yogibear's mom will get well soon!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tBHoN-cxgAE
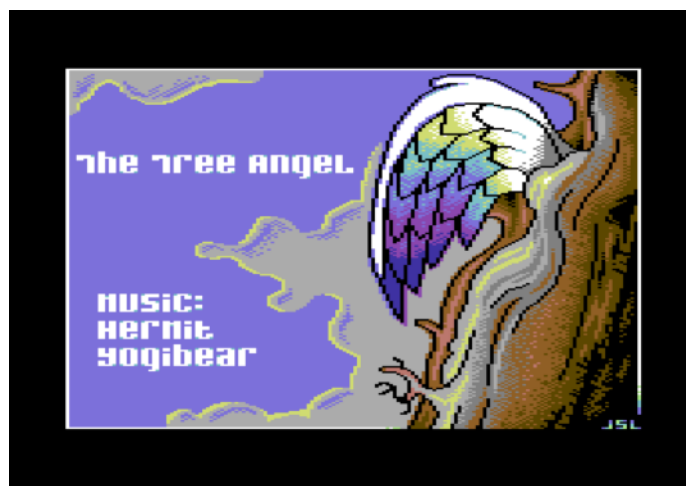
Burnin' Pen '64

At Evoke 2014 as a re-spin on the Namco game Flaming Finger, the game was used to test light pen routines. You basically draw on the screen using the light pen to get around a maze and collect prizes and are rewarded with Commodore Graphics over this 16 level maze

Check out this guy playing it on YouTube
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gy92NMfnXYY

Download here
http://csdb.dk/getinternalfile.php/131527/Burnin'_Pen '64.d64
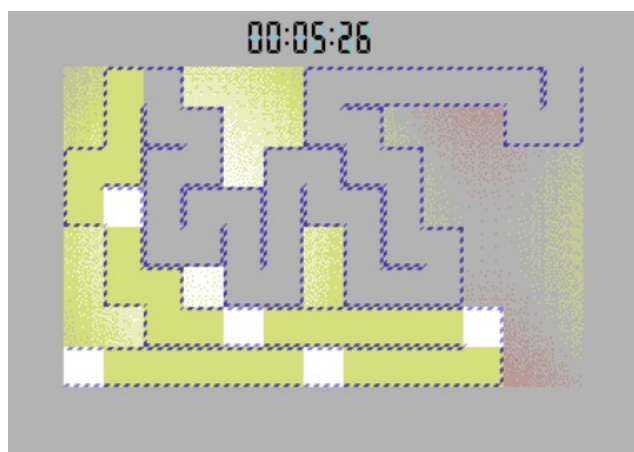
Magic Desk Compatible Cartridge Generator 2.0

A program that can be used to generate Commodore 64 cartridges in Magic Desk format, with programs that can be selected from menu. All programs must be in PRG format (first 2 bytes are the load address). Cartridge can be configured with CFG file (more advanced option), or just by placing prg files in prg directory (name of the file will be used as menu name; you can make arbitrary order of files by placing NN_ prefix, N – number, which will not be a part of the menu name.

The archive has all the tools to create the cartridges (even a PDB layout schematic).

http://csdb.dk/getinternalfile.php/132281/MagicDeskCompatibleCartridgeGenerator-2.0.tar.gz

---

BASIC 7.80 language extension for the Commodore 128

TEXT sent in by a reader ....
Hi, looking on some forums, I recently found an interesting BASIC extension for Commodore 128 that makes you able draw on 80 columns page (VDC). Unlike BASIC 8, you can use the same BASIC 7 tokens to draw in graphic page (i.e. BOX, CHAR, CIRCLE...) I think it could be a nice news for CF magazine. Here is forum link:

http://c-128.freeforums.net/thread/21/introducing-basic-7-80

Ciao Gian Piero.

COMMODORE FREE
Wow! It takes some time for this Bad boy to draw on screen, although the wait was definitely worth it
The download for the extensions are here:

https://sites.google.com/site/h2obsession/CBM/C128/images/BASIC780.ZIP?attredirects=0
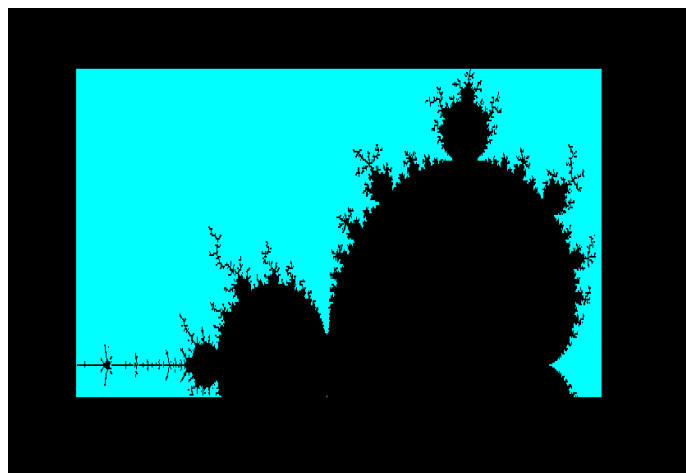
Commodore Fan Gazette number.4
Released recently by: Non Solo Amiga community

In this issue:
• Editorial: Ready ... Return!
• Operating Systems: Super Powers A 8 BIT!
• Application SW: Emulate all AMIGA! (on Windows)
• Application SW: 4 Steps with AmiBridge (on Icaros Desktop)
• Video Game (Play): Darkness
• Video games (Compo): C = 64 16KB Cartridge Game Development Competition, 2013
• Video Game (Play): Commando Arcade by Nostalgia
• Video Game (Play): Atari Arcade conversion TETRIS
• Video Game (Play): The VICE Squad
• Video Game (Play): PowerGlove
• Video Game (Play): VICcy Bird
• Video Game (Play): Flappy Bird
• Video games (Replay): Blitz
• Hardware: 1541 Ultimate II for the C = 64
• Charts: Game Parade
• Cyberculture: You go ON STAGE! (first part)
• Cyberculture: CommVex 2014

http://www.commodorefangazette.com

Komoda Issue 10 RELEASED

https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/16069876/index.html

Issue 10 of the Polish Commodore magazine; Komoda has recently been released.

Contents from google translate (so they may be close ish)
FRESH ....
What two horns, it is not jeden.
I love being a Turtle! ....
Several major of the world
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.
Tai Chi Tortoise ....
Not so scary SEUCK ..
Ninja on Foothills ....
Mario Bros ....
Purple Turtles ....
Skool Daze ....
Twin balls ....
No errorów for 20 zł,
or tamer myths .....
Coverdisk ....
Top 10 ....
Johnny shows ......
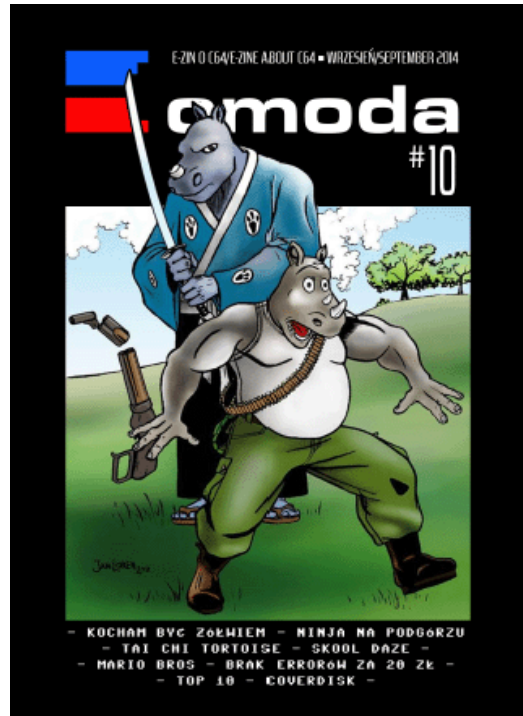
Menel Disk magazine issue 14 in [Polish]

Recently Released by: Ekstremalni Troglodyci is a disk magazine for the Commodore 64 (it's in Polish) so if you can read the language, then download it from here:
http://csdb.dk/getinternalfile.php/132792/MENEL14.D64

Sweeter than lemons!

General News

Cassiopei supports C128 in C128 mode

VIA EMAIL

------------------ Original Message -------------------
Subject: Cassiopei supports C128 in C128 mode
From: Jan Derogee
Date: Sun, September 21, 2014 11:26 am

Hereby, I let you know that the Cassiopei now fully supports the C128. Meaning that the Cassiopei now works with the C128 in C128 mode!

The Cassiopei is a device that uses the cassette port to connect to the computer, it uses a fast-loader to speed up its data transfer to 2850 bytes/sec.
http://jderogee.tripod.com/projects/Cassiopei/Cassiopei.htm

Normally you would need to type in LOAD and wait to load the fast-loader, but on the C128 that is not required if you make a boot disk. Cassiopei can do that with a single press of a button. So now, just switch on your C128 with the boot disk installed and select the program/game you want to use/play. Even if you want to start a C64 game from C128 mode, that is no problem. See the video below that demonstrates how easy this is and how to make the boot disk. For the C128s that do not have a disk drive, the Cassiopei still works, but starts just a bit slower.

"the C128 and boot disk. functionality"
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QT4w8sUSiLw

The firmware/manual and PC software can be found on my website:
http://jderogee.tripod.com/projects/Cassiopei/Cassiopei.htm#Downloads

For those who are not familiar with upgrading the Cassiopei, the video below will show you how to do this.

"how to upgrade the firmware"
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hsnFnv1Q930

(snip)

Kind regards,
Jan Derogee

The secret of the 6500/1

The Commodore 6500/1 is a "single chip computer" which is used in the Commodore 1520 plotter / printer. Nobody knew what was present on the chip, so the cbm-hackers mailing list started a number of projects to discover its secrets. Now the firmware is available.

http://e4aws.silverdr.com/hacks/6500_1/
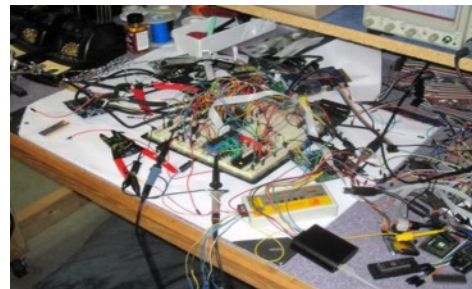
X500 Evo CASE

The X500 is a retro computer casing designed by Loriano Pagni. With the case you can build a PC that looks like an Amiga 500 computer but uses a Modern PC mother board and processor.

http://www.mfilos.com/

Tapuino, the $20 C64 Tape Emulator

Peter Edwards has created a piece of hardware for Commodore 8-bit computers. The device can replace a Commodore Datassette, created from the Arduino micro controller with an SD card reader and an LCD screen. The schematics and software are available on the web page.

http://www.sweetlilmre.blogspot.co.uk/2014/07/tapuino-20-c64-tape-emulator.html
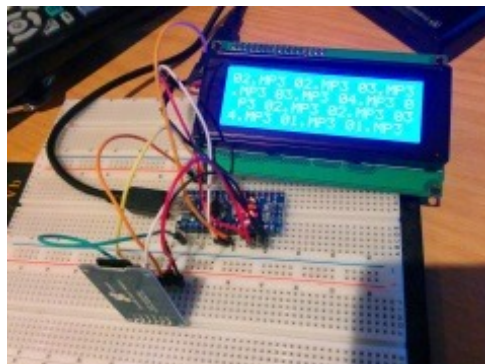
Project Hermes

Ian Stedman is working on an expansion module for the Amiga CD32 intended as a replacement for the Para Vision SX-1 and DCE SX32 / Pro extensions from the nineties. The features are: 8 MB SRAM, Parallel ATA (IDE) / CF, Floppy, real-time clock, and a clock port connection.   More information is available on his blog here:

http://ianstedman.wordpress.com/

CDTV – SCSI Controller

CDTV – SCSI Controller / AztecMonster

Epsilon has a blog about installing a SCSI controller for CDTV. The CDTV SCSI Controller is a modern extension which was developed in 2013 and makes it possible to connect a Commodore CDTV to external SCSI devices. The AztecMonster card is a SCSI-to-CF card interface.

http://classicamiga.blogspot.co.uk/2014/08/cdtv-installing-scsi-controller-and.html

TPUG film shoot in Starbucks

http://www.tpug.ca/2014/10/starbucks-minidoc-shoot/

On Sunday September 7, 2014 TPUG was invited to participate in a film shoot for a mini documentary-style promo for Starbucks. They contacted us and wanted us to re-create our Occupy Starbucks event from a couple of years ago. The notice was short, but we managed to gather quite a few members and spent the afternoon at the Starbucks near Kipling subway station with the film crew.

The resulting film(s) can be viewed here:
http://www.YouTube.com/Starbucks

John Easton took a bunch of photos giving us a look behind the scenes.

Lost Treasures Commodore productions line

On the Dust Layer Blog, you can view some photos of the Commodore production line in Hong Kong from December 1992. The photos were taken by Robert Baker Production Engineering at Commodore in Westchester, USA, and in Hong Kong.

http://dustlayer.com/blog/2014/8/16/lost-treasures-the-commodore-production-line-in-hong-kong

AMIGA FOREVER AND COMMODORE 64 FOREVER

Amiga Forever
http://www.amigaforever.com
http://www.facebook.com/AmigaForever

C64 Forever
http://www.c64forever.com
http://www.facebook.com/C64Forever

RetroPlatform Project
http://www.retroplatform.com
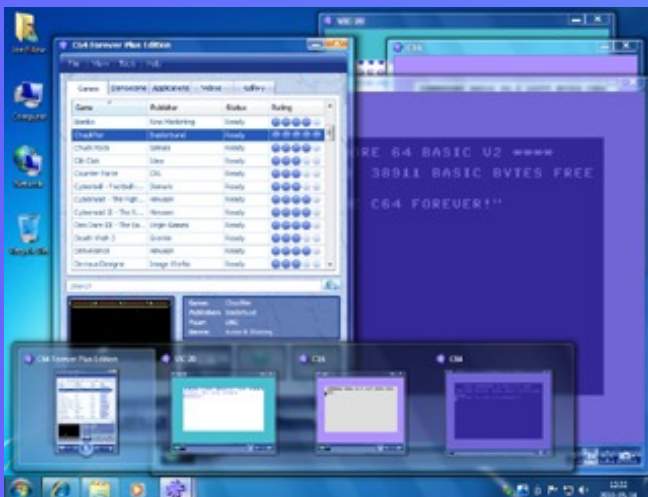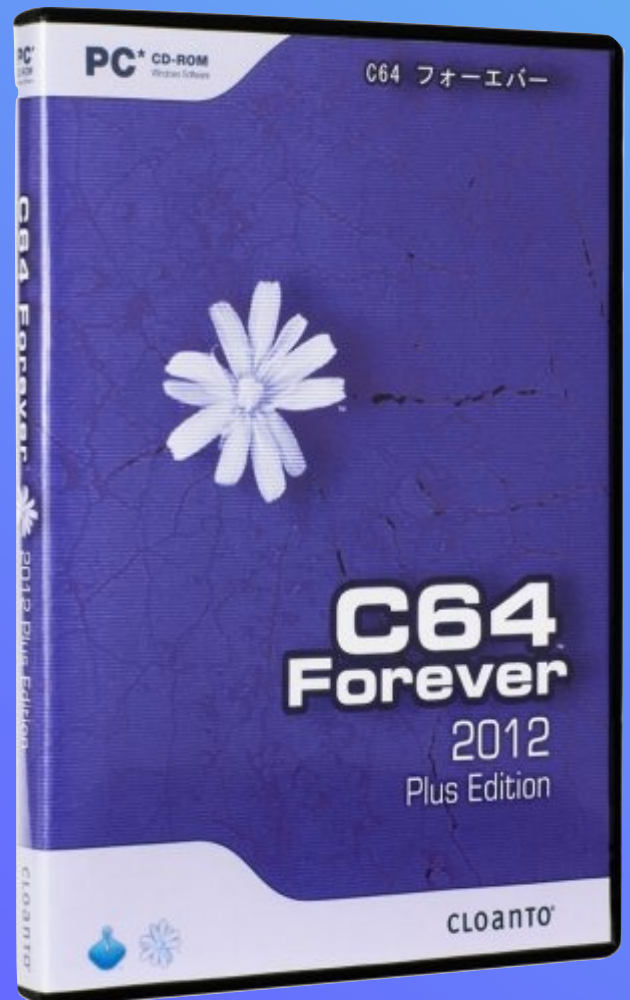
CBM .prg Studio

A handy Commodore 8-bit program development utility for Windows
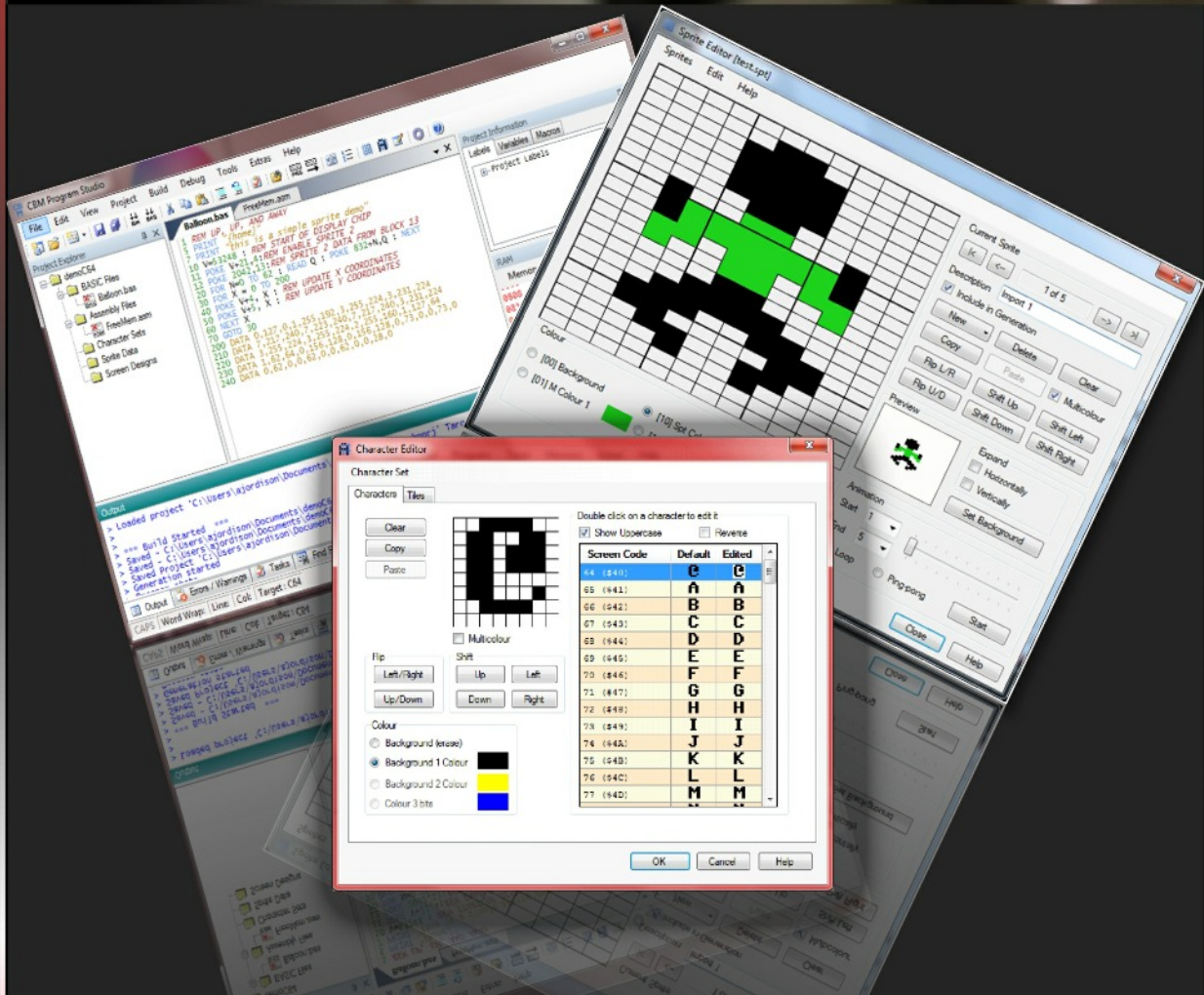
CBM prg Studio is a Windows IDE which allows you to type a BASIC or machine code program and convert it to a '.prg' file, which you can run on an emulator or the real hardware. It also includes character, sprite and screen editors and a fully featured 6510/65816 debugger.

The following machines can be developed for:

- Commodore 64 (and SuperCPU)
- Commodore 128
- Commodore VIC 20
- Commodore 16
- Commodore Plus/4
- Commodore PET BASIC 2 machines, e.g. PET 2001
- Commodore PET BASIC 4 machines, e.g. PET 4000/9000

http://www.ajordison.co.uk

CRL Lost in Time

CRL `s in-house programming team worked on Spectrum, Commodore and Amstrad games.

Jay Derret (17), *graphics designer and programmer,*

Andy Stoddart (20), *programmer on Spectrum and Commodore*

Ian Foster (17), *Spectrum and Commodore,*

Jeff Lee (18), *Rocky Horror Show, Jeff gave up programming to become CRL`s in house press photographer*

Richard Taylor, *who was not an in-house programmer.*

Yvonne Walters, Guy Spooner, *administrative back-up,*

Tim Vernon, *stock boss*

Belinda Carling, *Clement's personal assistant*

We have to think about the underdogs of history, and while some companies are talked about regularly - and with what many regard as "rose tinted glasses" – other companies seem to be missed out of history altogether. One such company (in my personal opinion) is the British company "Computer Rentals Limited" - more commonly known by the abbreviation CRL. Although many people see the company as a production house churning out game after game of questionable quality, they did manage to release a number of very innovative and critically award winning games. The company has also seen many computing firsts, including (and most notably) the first game to be awarded a 15 or 18 rating for its graphical content.

Because the company is often forgotten, I thought I would give a brief overview of the company and its legacy, especially to us the "Commodore users". Later in this issue of Commodore Free are some brief reviews of some of their games I used to play and interviews with some of the workforce and creative minds behind these games.

So as already stated, CRL was an abbreviation for "Computer Rentals Limited". This UK company was set up by Clem Chambers at the age of just 18 with a loan from Dad. Clem started Computer Rentals Limited in 1982, and as the company name suggests, he rented out computer equipment. However, as the loan money dwindled Clem realised that the real money was in computer software, specifically the creation of computer games. Clem used the same name CRL to start a games company, albeit with the now shortened or abbreviated name. As sales started to pick up with (and attract) big orders from UK companies like WHSmiths, Clem took another 30K loan, – this time from the bank – to help cover the distribution and manufacturing costs of such large orders. CRL was based in Kings Yard in London, but actually starting out in just a small office space. Soon Clem`s media presence would grow, and people started calling him the "Computer Wiz Kid". Soon Clem would be no stranger to awards, winning a number of computer related accolades.

Clem, now at the age of just 21, must have been among the youngest people to run a Public Limited Company. And while the number of titles started to grow, the success of these titles was (sadly) less impressive. CRL were never big chart hitters, although Clem does insist this to be down to piracy, which, at the time was rife in the industry. But CRL did manage to have very steady sales. Many magazines slammed the games with dismal reviews and write-ups of the company. Clem claims this is because CRL didn't advertise much in the glossy press. He hinted that such magazine were biased in their reviews, and based them more on the amount of adverts each publisher placed in the magazine rather than on the games quality. The titles bubbled under the charts but kept the company going, and even with the aforementioned software piracy, CRL managed to sell a large number of games. CRL also joined forces with another older software house called Silversoft. Clem said, "You can describe us as affiliated companies and we wish we were half owned by US Gold..."

CRL did however release some very successful titles including Sirius 7, Sorcerer's Apprentice, Dracula, Jack the Ripper, and Frankenstein. Clem cleverly ensured that Dracula and Frankenstein were awarded "15" certificates from the British Board of Film Censors. These games featured digitized graphics with people looking like they were covered in blood and in gory poses; programmer Jeff Lee claims this was "just tomato ketchup and that no actors or programmers actually died or were injured in these gory game productions". Clem, in this issue of Commodore Free, says the BBFC titles were obtained because "This would encourage more sales" – others have suggested it was a conscious effort on the part of the programmer to "protect the youth of the day from such scenes." (Designer Rod Pike has been quoted in interviews as saying as a parent he was worried about the impact of the graphics, on vulnerable children). Either way, these were among CRL's most successful titles! Jack the Ripper and Wolfman even gained "18" certificates because of the high graphical content (as animated images rather than just static pictures). This again drove up sales of these items from under-age people wishing to play the games and wanting to see what all the fuss was about. You could say the games gained a "cult following", mainly from the people they were not aimed at!

Amongst the major scoops CRL had was to release Commodore's international cartridge Football game on tape and disk. They updated the graphics to have CRL logos in-game and of course on the boxes, but basically it was just the same version, although CRL gained the rights to the tape/disk versions.

Clem said he just phoned them and they agreed! From today's point of view you would say this was just unimaginable, although Clem was quite matter-of-fact when he said that Commodore wanted to be a hardware company and were not interested in releasing the game on disk or tape.

Some of CRL`s published games even achieved critical press success, including Tau Ceti and Academy. CRL were also the first company (in 1984) to release a game based on a TV series with the title Terrahawks. One thing that CRL can't be accused of is having a "same style formula". The games were so different, and in some cases such as "the light synthesiser" Tubular Bells based on the Mike Oldfield album – were so weird that no one knew what would come next from the company! CRL also released a number of simulations, strategy, and management games. They even tried a musical tie-in working on the game "War of the Worlds", although the game had to be pulled from production. They even worked on titles like the driving tie-in "Highway Code". Sadly, only a few games were released for the Amiga and ST and the company closed, mainly due to funding being pulled (Clem explains why in this issue of Commodore Free).

CRL also had other budget labels. They were Alpha-Omega, The Power House and Scorpion (for US re-releases). The label called NU-Wave released the already mentioned "Tubular Bells". The Power House label was later bought by

Ashley Hildebrandt from CRL in 1988; he used to run it for Clem. Although its not clear what the arrangement meant (and I didn't ask that question during the interview). Sadly though, the label didn't last very long.

CRL closed its doors at the start of the1990s. For some time Clement Chambers remained an important figure in the world of technology and industry. He appeared as an "expert" on television and in the news. He also wrote for magazines, most notably "Wired". Clem went on to write his first novel, The Armageddon Trade, which was published in 2009.

My final comment is this ....
In my opinion CRL broke the mold and produced some truly original and imaginative games. They released some programming testosterone into a world filled with suits and formula software. Yes, you could easily say the games lacked the polish of some of the larger software houses of the times, but then – I have said, and keep saying, that "great graphics and sound doesn't make a great game." Without smaller companies such as the likes of CRL we could have been stuck with the same recycled formats, and be playing the same unimaginative games over and over again, albeit with updated sound and graphics. While we can all list CRL games that were, or were not truly original, I have reviewed a few games I used to play and remember quite fondly. Time may not have been kind to them, but heck! I don't look as good as I used to ....

CRL also left behind a number of unfinished creations some for the Commodore 64 can be seen here

http://www.gamesthatwerent.com/gtw64/results/gy/0/gh/0/gc/CRL/gco/0/ga/0/gs/0/go/0/
CRL GAME PICTURES

http://www.mocagh.org/loadpage.php?getcompany=miscgame&npp=25&whatsnew=0&start=0&series=CRL

http://retro.lonningdal.net/home.php?page=Publishers&publisher=CRL

A list of games produced by CRL is available at:
http://gamesdbase.com/all_publisher_games-crl_group.aspx

http://www.worldofspectrum.org/infoseekpub.cgi?regexp=^CRL+Group+PLC$&loadpics=on

Wikipedia article:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CRL_Group

CRL budget labels:
Alpha Omega
http://www.gamebase64.com/search.php?a=5&f=1&id=443&d=45&h=0

The Power House
http://www.gamebase64.com/search.php?a=5&f=1&id=3043&d=45&h=0

Interview with CRL founder Clem Chambers

Q. Please introduce yourself to our readers.

Hi, I'm Clem Chambers. I started CRL in 1982 when I was 19. I invented a few things a long the way even I have trouble believing, like putting the "massively" in MMORPG, getting the first film certificate for a computer game, and a few more like producing some of **the first** (the first) multimedia CDROM (for the CDTV), and lots of other stuff that didn't make me a billionaire. I currently run ADVFN.com, the biggest socks and share website in Europe etc. I have a series of thrillers which you can buy on Amazon. As a gamer you will get them.

Q. I found some information that said you started the company CRL, with a bank loan of 30K. What persuaded the bank to loan such a young man a relatively large amount of money?

No, it was £10K from the *Bank of Dad*, but I blew £7.5K of it, so basically had £2.5K to bootstrap the games idea on. The bank stuff came later when the orders exploded. How did you know that even? :) The overdraft was Hell.

Q. Was creating a "games" company after the trial of a hardware rental store an easy move? What was the first game released? Was there ever a period where you thought this isn't working, and thought about closing down CRL, or did sales steadily grow?

The games idea was just an idea waiting to happen. I placed an ad in Pop Com weekly and Your Computer – and boom! In came the games. The "clever bit" was ringing up Smith, Boots and Menzies and getting orders. Big fat, how am I going to deliver that, orders? (BTW, there was no shop; just the cheapest office in London – down the road from where the Krays were born.)

Q. Having some of your games rated 15 was not only the right thing to do, but must have boosted sales from people buying them because they were 15?
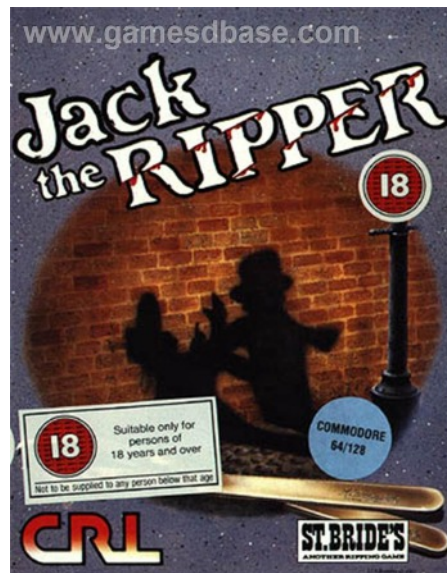
I wasn't trying to save kids from obscenity, I was trying to sell tons of games. It was a clear no-brainer troll. They added a clause in the video nasty bill saying games could be submitted to the BBFC if the publishers were worried. I got worried in a hurry. I could smell the headlines.

Q. Can you tell our readers about some of the proposed film ties-ins like the magic roundabout, or what prompted them, and what percentage of sales would they want from CRL for the license?

You have to understand that the phones of famous people do not ring. So if you call you can get a deal for peanuts if you don't look rich and stupid. We did that a lot. Successful people like youngsters, they *like* that; it's them 10 years before. They are normally generous. It's a shot to nothing with the next up-and-coming star. *Fear* is the mind-killer.

Q. How did you manage the

company? Was everyone on friendly terms, or was everything pressured and maintained to tight deadlines?

CRL was a club for runaways. We were all teenagers sleeping under our desks. There was a lot of pressure for sure, but deadlines came and went. When it got serious you just didn't sleep for a month, delivering the code. We stayed up all night for months getting stuff shipped. For some people it was a dream, to others it was a nightmare. One guy's hair went white during a particularly hard "death march." It went back to normal after, though. That's pure *Edgar Allen Poe*. Friends wouldn't be the right word; more like comrades in a war, in the same trench.

Q. Was it disappointing receiving a bad game review, and did you feel any of the negative reviews and comments (with hindsight) were actually justified?

We didn't spend a lot on advertising. It

was as simple as that. It was a corrupt world. Big advertisers got great reviews: they also went bust *fast*. So we stayed innocent and survived longer.

Q. Did a bad review affect the whole team's morale, or was it just a case of, "Well, it's out there – let's move on to the next project?"

It was something that we kind of expected really. We were so young, other things were more important to us. Lots of the crew were used to rejection. Heck, why else would you live in a warehouse writing C64 games and sleeping on foam fold out beds?

Q. A number of people would send in demos. Were any of these demos ideas (should we say) "borrowed" to create full games?

Never, if we couldn't ship it we weren't interested. If we liked the ideas we would try and contract the coder to finish his 'scrolly demo.' A lot of cash went down the pan that way. But those were the breaks.

Q. How was a game project run? Would an idea be passed around a team, or would mock screens be drawn, and who would then follow the thought process to completed package? Were you very hands-on with the project, and did you do any coding or art work?

People did what they wanted, we backed it with PR, a bit of money and a lot of hope. In those days teams (in the modern sense) didn't exist. The money was so small things had to be done on 4-5 figure amounts. A smash hit was 20,000 copies. Piracy was rampant, so you only ever sold a copy per pirate. I went to see a house and saw my game posters on the wall. We were everywhere! The games reached lots of corners but we didn't get the sale. Piracy kept us on the edge of oblivion. That is just the way it goes. No IP protection and you are toast. It was the beginning of the apocalypse of static IP.

Q. How much was Richard O'Brien actually involved in *The Rocky Horror Show* game?
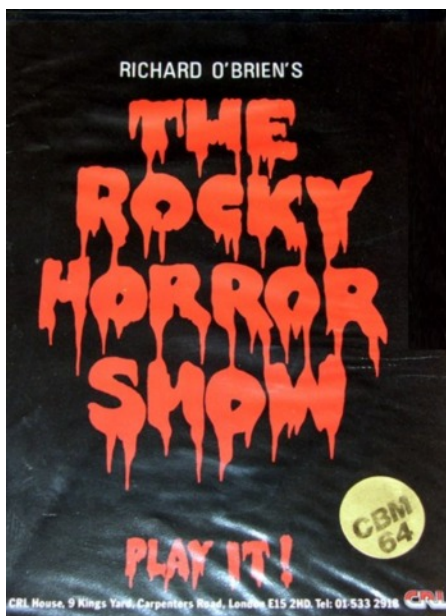
A lot, and not very much. We met him a few times and his genius made a big impression. The show is all the blue print you need. The Rocky guys were great... off the hook. They made a big impression on the people involved. You have to recall not one of the team was out of their teens. It was a blessing from the Pope. Richard is a unique genius.

Q. Can you tell our readers what was your favourite CRL game, and why?

That's hard... the one which will probably be seminal was ID, that Mel Croucher and I came up with. One mag said it was, the best computer game ever. You can't argue with that. I was trying to do something like 25 years ahead of its time by creating a high art computer game range, Nu Wave. It had ID, Deus ex Machina (MSX), Tubular Bells and Worms. We really upset EA by releasing Worms, it was a work of brilliance and they had funded it – then they snuffed it out. We took it up. In any event NuWave is probably a good idea now, but

maybe not. But if you don't have piracy protection the fans will love you as you die of starvation. Sadly that's the key to keep IP. People don't buy what they can steal, for all the denial you will hear. That was the key to the console explosion. You had to buy the cart. At least to begin with.

Q,. *Tubular Bells* was an interesting title. Was Mike Oldfield actually involved in the program's development?

No he wasn't, it was a giant rights clusterf*k, but it went ahead.

Q. Did you get much feedback from people who bought the games?
A load for the adventure games and the wargames from CCS. We were too busy tumbling forwards to take much attention. We were forever making payroll...

Q. Were there any unfinished or unreleased titles, and what happened to them?
Tons, they went to code heaven.

Q. I presume it was difficult making the transition from 8-bit machines like the C64 to 16-bit?

No, it was just the cost went up and the risks with it. You have to remember all those companies went bust, it wasn't an 'if' it was a when. The business was, and is still (to an extent) just a game of business *Russian Roulette*. Even the platform holders went bust. Exactly who has made money? Microsoft, Sony? Computer games – it's like the airline business, semi-doomed by its own business mechanics. Show me the

business model?

Q. Do you have much material – design documents, artwork, tapes and disks – left from the past?

Nope all gone... I thought I had a lot of artwork but that is missing too. Dagnabit, its going to be worth a ton.

Q. Why was the company finally closed, and what prompted is final shut-down?
Basically the company went bust when EA tore up its distribution contract with the company. We were cheaper to kill than keep their word. It was very ugly.

Q. Do you look back at CRL with fond memories, and would you ever think about starting another games company?
I feel like Colonel Kurtz in Apocalypse Now... "the horror, the horror..." but some people's memory gets rosier as time passes, some people's gets bleaker. I'm in the latter camp. It was historic, but in the end we failed. I guess I should look at the legacy and maybe I will one day. The trouble with the computer games business is that you got so many knives in the back, that it kind of ends up as the enduring memory. It was a kind of Hollywood Babylon II. The lifespan of a game is so short people were forced to be very predatory and I guess I never adapted to that. I took it very personally. Computer games were the Last Chance Saloon for a lot of douche bags; my only excuse was I was too young to know better. The douche bags just rained down. I wonder if the biz is still that way (I suspect it is). Everyone went bust. That is the takeaway. I suspect little has changed.

Q. If you had the option to go back in time and start again, what would you have done differently (with the benefit of hindsight)?

To me its like H.G. Wells' time machine – you can't change the outcome. The girlfriend still dies whatever you do. If I had hindsight I'd take the newspapers back and would back the horses and the FTSE and be infinitely rich. Corporately the answer was, "Sell your company, start a new one." From a content point of view, it was the Ocean model. Cleave with distribution and do

film licenses, then do consoles early. Always hop to the new format first. The big one would be move to Silicon Valley and start an online service, then a search engine, then a social network. Hell, I could have moved to Silicon Valley in 1985... duh! But then I could have bought Apple for fruppence in the 90s. You can't look back, (as) we are all entombed in space-time for eternity....until one day.... :)

Q. Do you feel CRL were innovative?

Yes, possibly way too much

Q. What machine did you see at CRL and thought "WOW," this is truly special?

You were always in a state of wonder. But you were thinking of making payroll, so the wow factor was chilled by that. The Z88 was amazing. Still is.

Q. What fills your time now?

Well I run ADVFN. The stock markets are the biggest massively multi-player game in the world. The points are real. I like that.

Q. You mentioned writing, and some of your books have been published. Can you let our readers know what types of books you have written, and how our reader would purchase one, should they feel inclined to do so?

You can get all my fiction on Amazon. Just type my name. *Kusanagi* is free so that will give you a taste of the rest. I think you will find a strong computer game aesthetic in them.

Q. Do you have any comments you would like to add?

Nope, thank you for taking the time to remember CRL,

and a big thanks to the readers that bought the games.
Now out on Kindle, my thrillers and a new investment book.

Clem on Amazon UK:
http://www.advfn.com/ct.php?ct=NDI0NTM=

Clem on Amazon US:
http://www.advfn.com/ct.php?ct=NDI0NTQ= *

Forex Scope* - Easily spot *spiking currency pairs* - A new tool exclusively on ADVFN <http://bit.ly/1eleouB>

Q. Clem, thank you. Just one question that is bugging me: How did CRL get the rights to distribute International Soccer on disk and cassette from Commodore? Who released it on Cartridge?

We asked Commodore if we could license it for disk and cassette and they said yes.... they weren't into software, they were into hardware – so software languished....we got a pirate copy of it on disc, which was everywhere at the time, and we hacked off the warez stuff, put new loaders on... and voilà! That was a nice win... I had actually forgotten about that....

'Compelling'
Zoe Strimpel, CITY A.M.

CLEM CHAMBERS

Kusanagi

...SO VALUABLE, SO DESIRED AND SO POWERFUL THAT THE RULES OF CIVILISATION NO LONGER APPLY
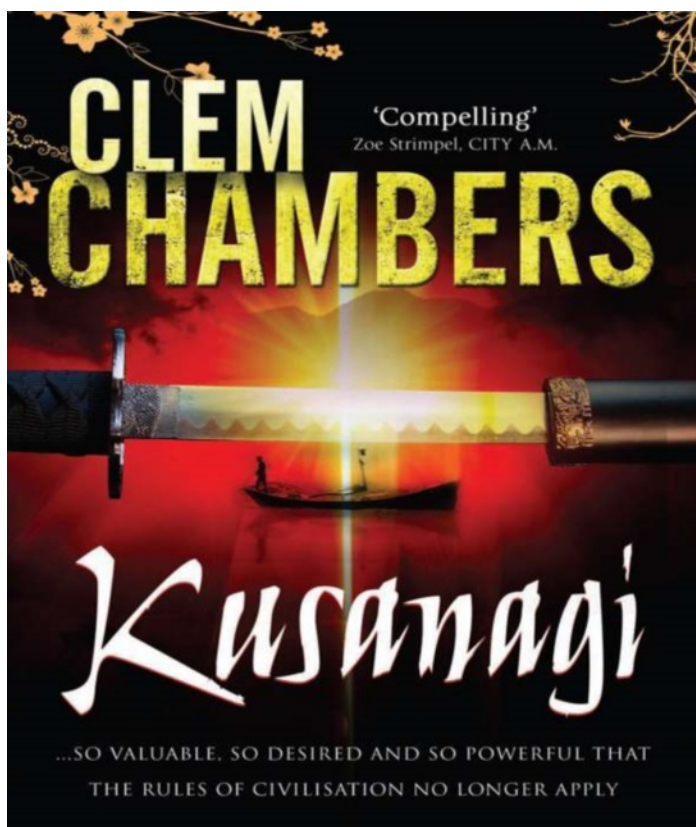
Interview with CRL Programmer Jeff Lee

While the number of CRL's title releases was impressive, the quality of those releases left a lot to be desired. The company can't be criticized for boring its audience with a formulaic, in-house style as the games varied as much in style as they did in quality, from TV tie-ins to sport simulations. Why have most people forgotten about CRL despite them covering so many bases with games that were sometimes very playable? Duster in hand, I decided to brush away the cobwebs and uncover some of the history about the company through one of its prolific programmers, Jeff Lee, who after striking up a conversation with Commodore Free, helped out with some editing for the magazine. (Some people never learn do they?)

Q. Can you give our readers a little history on CRL?

In 1981-82 CRL rented out computers under the cryptic name of Computer Rentals Ltd. I also have a vague memory that there was some involvement in importing optical equipment for opticians. It was quickly found though that the rentals market was negligible given the low and diminishing costs of personal ownership. So the company switched its attention to games and went on to put out hundreds of titles between 1983 and 1990. Most gamers from this time remember *Tau Ceti*. And then there were Rod Pike's Gothic horror adventures, such as *Dracula*. Most titles, as you say in your intro, aren't exactly a hissing and a byword among the retro-ati.

Q. How did you manage to get a job there, and what did you do?

Paul Stoddart, who started working there in 1984, was a friend of mine. He showed me some designs for a children's educational product that Paul Mee, CRL's then development manager, was working on. I coded up a demo and got a contract to work it up while doing my A-Levels. Shortly afterwards I got an in-house job, and the product was dropped so I could start on *The Rocky Horror Show* for the Spectrum.

Although I worked on a few games in my four years there, my main contribution was as a production assistant for the escalating output. Clem Chambers, the owner and MD, had big ambitions for CRL. These culminated in a distribution deal with Electronic Arts in 1987. Even before this the release schedule ran at a breakneck pace. My main contribution was twofold. Firstly, I made production masters from developers' data. Secondly, I provided packaging and promotional photography. Taking screenshots required me to be a gamer of sorts. However, there was only time for completing a few levels: the exposed film had to be biked to a photo finisher and then returned to Mike Hodges (development manager 1987-) so that he could pick the best shots for the inlay cards.

CRL also had a budget label, Alpha Omega, and a label for more unusual stuff, Nu Wave, so the output was huge. I got to work with a lot of different people. I also got to do some weird things. A couple of sales guys took me to a city farm to photograph a pig for the launch of *Oink!* Happy days.

Q. You are mostly known for your creation of *The Rocky Horror Show* on the spectrum. What was the brief for this game? Were you told what should be in or out, or did they just let you watch the film and decide yourself?

Ian Ellery (development manager 1985-7) designed the game. He gave me a drawing of each room, told me what the characters should do, what the player's objective was, and what smaller things to add later.

Q. Two versions came out – one for the C64 and an enhanced version for the C128. Did you have any involvement in coding these on the Commodore machines, and were you involved in other products?

Paul Stoddart coded the C64 version in tandem, so he'd ask how I did something on the Spectrum, and then usually coded it differently for the C64. My only other off-Spectrum *Rocky Horror* involvement was supplying Richard Taylor with my original Z80 game code for his Amstrad conversion. Paul did the enhanced Commodore version with some new graphics by Jon Law. But *The Rocky Horror Show* struggled to sell. The later versions tried to boost sales, but you'd never think from the saturation advertising that the product had a tough time. Even the orders on my Speccy 128 version that was shipped with the newly launched machine were nothing like anyone expected. I checked today and found, weirdly, that *Rocky Horror* was voted 8.19 by 91 reviewers on World of Spectrum. I'll concede that it got OK-ish reviews back in the day. And CRL visitors used to play the C64 version

for ages. But the endorsement surely had mesmerising powers? The market was the real judge.

You'd be surprised if you knew which titles really sold. We often were. We'd sometimes compare our sales figures with the charts and play 'spot the similarity'. We'd either wonder 'how did that get in the charts?' or 'where's that game then?' We'd half-jokingly theorise that reviewers moonlighted for *Micro Dealer*, *The Daily Mirror* or whoever.

There was of course some correlation between charts and sales. For example *Tau Ceti* and the Gothic horror adventures. Yet few people remember titles like *Derby Day* or Show jumping. Even *Highway Code*, something that would now fall to the wayside like a book on an operating system, was still selling when I was on my way out after four years. These early titles quietly sold under the radar of the charts. Their creators have surely retired to the Cayman Islands. And reviews didn't always fit with sales figures any more than the charts did. *Ballbreaker*, a 3D Breakout game (also by Richard Taylor), divided reviewers, and it never made it to the C64 (for technical reasons), but if it did, I believe it would have been CRL's biggest title.

As for my other involvements, I did all sorts. Nothing I'd want to draw attention to though! I only admit to *Rocky Horror* Spectrum because it's followed me around. The site you gave

links for to other products with my name on is a curious place. I notice that Paul has no credit for the map chase on *Blade Runner*. And did Jay really program *Room 10*? He seems to be the default credit for CRL titles when a retro site doesn't know the author. I also don't remember his brother, Jared (now Jayenne Montana), working on many of the titles he's credited with. That's online memorialisation for you: an on-going process as a reference.

Q. You joined CRL towards the end of the 8-bit computer boom. Do you wish you were there at the start?

Obviously there was more money to be made from less product, so yeah! It sounded pretty hellish though. Doing your own duplication. Driving stock in vans and cars directly to distributors in the middle of the night.

Q. What was 'The Zen Room'?
A lot of software houses expanded their operations from small premises such as Porta Cabins and rooms above shops. We were no exception. CRL had two office moves that eventually brought us to a former warehouse. The offices there were named The Zen Room after a scene in *The Rocky Horror Show* and a room in our game version of it. The Olympic Park Energy Centre now stands in place of the Zen Room.

Q. What was Clem Chambers (founder) like as an employer?

He was the self-confessed megalomaniac that many chiefs of software houses had to be to make so much happen, yet, at the same time, he had to inspire people's self-confidence and motivation. A tricky manoeuvre when you're dealing with a teenage workforce. He was fun.

Q. Did you ever receive 'star status' fan mail, etc.?

Our warehouse guy, a guy called Guy, used to show me the occasional letter from a gamer that, in passing, commended *Rocky Horror*. It wasn't exactly like being a rock star. But it was nice I suppose.

Q. Most people, when asked about CRL, usually think 'produced lots of games of questionable quality', but the horror fiction is what I mainly remember them for. Would you like to comment on the games produced, the quality, and some of the reasons maybe why they were produced?

That's a tough question. Everyone I've met since the 1980s who knows the video games says something similar. An author once lured me into an interview by saying kind things about us – I did some digging and found less than complimentary comments in his blog.

I wouldn't defend our poorer products, but I'd say that in any market a range of products only exists if it suits a range of pockets and the needs of those who reach into them. CRL managed to make a living from this for many years. That's why we sold the range of games we did. You'd have to ask the people who bought those games about why they bought them.

A wide diversity of products can divide opinion. As you say in your intro, there was no in-house style. This was because Clem encouraged diversity. He enjoyed being the centre of attention for all the people he attracted around himself. There was a "family" feel to it all that extended to the freelances who regularly visited. I think he wanted anyone who could make an acceptable game to have a chance of getting it to market.

Q. In a previous interview, you said, "We approached games as if they were artworks, often at the expense

**of any commercial sensibilities."
What does this mean?**

Clem, Mike, Jay Derrett (now rightly fêted for his C64 music) and Paul Stoddart (C64 coder for *Death or Glory* and *Rocky Horror*, among countless titles) leaned towards getting products finished sooner. Jon Law (graphics and loading screens on too many products to mention) and Ian Foster (C64 coder: *Cyborg* and the street chase in *Blade Runner*) could get precious over technical and design considerations as though games were artworks. With hindsight, Ian Foster and Ian Ellery tended so far towards concentrating resources on fewer titles that it was inevitable they'd leave. There was a tension between these two approaches to games production. Not that this neatly divided us down the middle. There were other factors to debates.

Q. So did you all get on or were there problems (especially from all the testosterone in an all-male environment)?

You'll always get differences of opinion in a creative environment. CRL meetings had a mix of incredulity and joviality. We were incredulous that anyone could hold views that differed from our own (hardly unusual), and jovial in a way that overpowered our incredulity. This was the glue, I suppose, that kept us together and functioning well. There were a few women who worked in administrative and secretarial roles. Workplace research since those days suggests that a better gender mix can neutralise unproductive internal competition and encourage creative approaches. I can only ever remember two female developers. They were freelances who worked with Fergus McNeill (*Bored of the Rings* and countless other text adventures). I don't remember us having female applicants though. They'd have had to be able to work well with children and animals to cope with us.

It seems strange that gender imbalance has become an issue in today's IT industry. We were lucky then to have had quite a light atmosphere at CRL, considering.

Q. Was there a bank of routines to use or did each coder have his own

code for routines? Presumably there would be a skeleton code for things like scrolling shoot-'em-ups etc.? And if so, did you work on any of this?

There was nothing akin to a code library, if that's what you mean. People did borrow the odd small routine. You have to remember though that royalties means paying people for what they've done. How would we have divvied things up if code were pooled? A substantial contribution to a game meant that a coder would be entitled to a percentage. The only obvious example I can think of was Jay's use of Paul's *Death or Glory* map scroller for writing *Traxxion*. Outside this, payment for helping freelance projects was occasionally a bone of contention. The justification for us helping them was that we were lucky to have cushy in-house jobs. Most developers were teenagers scraping a grand or two while working from home.

Q. Turning to products that resulted – or in this case, didn't – why was *War of the Worlds* C64 abandoned?

You'd need to ask Jeff Wayne. We suspected that he felt that the Spectrum version hadn't received the kind of glowing reception he wanted.

Q. *The Image System* was later bundled with the Commodore 64. This must have been a good money-maker for CRL – of course, it was

ported to other systems. Was it used in-house?

It had enormous orders from WH Smiths. We didn't use it ourselves though. Jon worked on Koala Pads a lot. We also used in-house design utilities. These enabled us to instantly test graphics in our games. Paul coded a C64 sprite designer. He and I coded modular map designers. I nearly fell over when I first saw *Shoot 'Em Up Construction Kit* (SEUCK). I couldn't believe that we hadn't thought to cobble our C64 utilities into a design suite. Many other software houses will have reacted the same way.

Q. Why did you leave coding and move onto writing?

What do you call two men in raincoats in a cemetery? Max Bygraves. But seriously, this was a promotional picture for Dracula that was sent out to magazines and other bods. Mike, the development manager (right) is in a Gothic mood with a CRL sales guy.

I went back to school in later life. I even ended up in Academia for a while. My original PhD idea was to research the meanings and uses of nostalgia for middle-aged gamers. It wasn't what I ended up doing, but by coincidence, I was interviewed in 2012 by Graeme Mason for an article in *Retro Gamer* the interviews are here http://jdanddiet.blogspot.co.uk/2012/05/crl-feature-extras-interview-with-jeff.html

and here http://jdanddiet.blogspot.co.uk/2012/06/crl-feature-extras-interview-with-jeff.html.

This inspired me to write the historical novel, *The Hype Game*. The book was based on life at CRL, along with stories that I'd picked up from freelances, and ideas from the materials I'd already amassed for potential academic research. There's so much useful source material that's been scanned and put online by enthusiasts. I also gleaned titbits from 1980s developers on social media.

Q. Yes, I read *The Hype Game* when it was around. You mentioned the demos from freelance writers and home users that were sent into software companies quite regularly. Was it like that? If so, what was the quality of these games and ideas like, and were any released without modifications?

Good question. It was exactly as described in the book. Most of the demos were spirited but unpublishable. Clem was good at nurturing borderline things that had potential though. And something would occasionally blow us away. Later in the eighties, SEUCK left us inundated with games that were hardly distinguishable from each other.

Q. Another question related to your book: how much code was (should we say) 'recycled' from demos that were sent in to the company?

Ah yes, you're talking about the fishtank thing. A few visitors to the Zen Room spotted the uncanny similarity between a CRL product and a demo posted on Compunet. The product shall remain nameless!. Reverse engineering wasn't common practice as far as we

knew; however from about late 1987, freelances sometimes told us about bits they knew or suspected had been 'borrowed' from Compunet demos for games.

Q. Do you feel *The Hype Game* failed to live up to your sales expectations? Also, did you learn anything from the process? I was a big fan of the book, as it painted a more realistic picture of the programmers and the problems they faced rather than a rose-tinted history.

Discovering the retro scene over 25 years later was puzzling. Today's orthodoxy to 8-bit gaming in the UK is that plucky Brits built an industry from the ground up by transcending the limits to technology. It's all heroics and flag waving. Very neat and tidy. I don't remember working with anyone who held such views at the time. Nor have I heard this story from anyone I've met since who was involved. Additionally, prominent figures in the early games industry have become something of a fixation. Perhaps this is the rise and rise of celebrity culture? Perhaps it's all about stories that grow in the telling? That's why I

like Dan Whitehead's *Speccy Nation*. His book articulates obscured yet interesting games. He also sets many of them in their historical context.

So this is all why my book had chapters that interrupted the drama. They encouraged readers to ask themselves what interests are served by a story, what nostalgia is for, and so on. This amount of deviation from orthodoxy meant that I expected niche sales. That said, they weren't as catastrophic as *Rocky Horror*! The surprise though was that it didn't seem to be gamers who bought it. True, a couple of people asked me if the scenes about building

The Hype Game

Jeff Lee

The novel was originally put out under the pseudonym 'Marwood Packard' [see the CF review in issue #69] before eventually revealing the author's true identity

the trade stand related to Microprose. And I have been asked about the team meeting scenes. Apart from that though, the feedback / questions were mostly about the chapters that interrupted the narrative. These readers seemed to know little about retro gaming, so my attempt to introduce a different history was difficult for them to understand because they didn't know the more standard version. Perhaps it should have been written for a non-gamer audience? Non-gamers seem interested. Maybe all retro-gaming needs to cross over into mainstream culture is a bit of explanation about the basics?

Q. You volunteered to work on Commodore Free as a sub editor. What in the heck possessed you to do such a mad thing? Do you feel you still have the "retro love"?

I was more impressed by the community service aspect to *Commodore Free* and other resources that make the retro scene happen. I also wanted to help *CF* because you ran a feature on my novel (a couple of promises of reviews from bloggers never materialised). It's been nice to tidy some issues of *CF* up without my presence having been stated. I've tried to keep each contributor's voice intact. It was nice to write a couple of articles too.

Q. Would you ever consider moving back to work in the games industry in some form?

I'd probably do the equivalent of what I did before.

Q. Do you have fond memories of CRL, and do you feel that the company and its software isn't remembered or promoted by retro fans enough?

1987 was one of the best years of my life. Well, mostly! The experience as a whole was a mixed affair. Yet I've never since worked in an environment that was so much fun. The business writer, Charles Handy, wrote in *The Hungry Spirit* about the importance of organisations nurturing a strong sense of belonging. There was this sense of belonging at CRL. Some of this was down to being in an industry where the rules hadn't been established yet. And some of it was down to people like Clem and Mike steering a bunch of kids

so that they came up with something saleable in the process of mucking about with their mates. Or as Francis Jago put it in *Your Computer* in December 1986:

> 'What becomes very apparent from any visit to CRL is the feeling of a community, something many bigger software houses lack. CRL maintains that the feeling is because of the ability of [Clem] Chambers to make everyone feel as if the company is their responsibility.'

As for what retro fans should remember or promote – it's not for me to say.

Q. Do you wish you had written a factual book about CRL?

Maybe. Your first response to *The Hype Game* was that you were concerned about writing a feature about a piece of fiction. You'd suggested that gamers would relate more to something factual. With hindsight, I might have had a good chance at getting funding to research retro gaming in some way. I just couldn't see at the time how something factual about the culture of the 1980s games industry could have much mileage either inside or outside of academia. It's hard to tell what will be picked up on.

Publishing a novel turned out to be a bad idea. If you're going to publish something online, unless it's crime or another popular fiction genre, it's a good idea to write something that promotes what you do for a living offline. Most books are in the long tail economy so they don't make any money. And if you write for the love of it, there's little discussion or feedback to be had. And then you discover your book on pirate sites. I had more retro game books planned, but who's going to pay for something when it ends up free? 100K words is a lot of work to give away. In recent years I've still managed to do some research, interviewing, and writing, though it's things like funder's reports and best practice guidance for social services organisations. At least it's possible to see the difference this writ-

ing makes. And it pays for my time.

Q. What will most people remember you for? What was your best release?

I've always been a background person. And practically all cultural forms and producers are erased by time anyway. Ask anyone to list his or her favourite Restoration comedies.

On the other hand, I re-discovered a while ago that I had modelled for the death scenes in those Rod Pike adventures. Jon Law digitised me with a security camera and a C64 interface, and added some gory bits with his Koala pad, while Paul Stoddart wrote the code to integrate the images into Quill. So who knows? Maybe CRL's best known games have memorialised me as a series of corpses?!

Q. Finally, do you have a question you would like to ask me?

What do you think the retro computing scene in general, and on the C64 in particular, will be like in the future? Or is that a big enough question to devote to an entire issue?

COMMODORE FREE
Well, I think the future looks good. New and younger people are entering the retro scene, (and) I think the challenge of designing games that run on 8-bit systems is tempting many programmers. Of course none of us are getting younger, and (also) machines are becoming harder to repair, so emulation will form an important part of preserving history. Certainly I can see a lot more FPGA type machines appearing. Who knows? Someone may even be able to market one commercially as an upgraded 8-bit machine!

Commodore Free interview with

Paul Stoddart of CRL

Q. Please introduce yourself to our readers.

Hi, I'm Paul Stoddart, but when I worked for CRL I was also known as Andy Stoddart or Android Stoddart, LOL

Q. When did you start at CRL, and how old were you?

Oh, a long long time ago in the dark ages of 1984, so just over 30 years ago. I was only 19 at the time!

Q. So you were still holding down school during the day and working at nights and weekend?

Well, yes. At that time I was studying for a TEC Diploma in Computer Technology at a place call East Ham College of Technology. Today it's called the Newham College (I believe East Ham Campus). I was aceing the microprocessor module because it was 8085, which was the forerunner of the Z180, and I had already been playing with a ZX81 at home long before the course.

Q. You started programming on the Spectrum. What Commodore 64 games did you work on?

The first was *Rocky Horror Show*, both UK and US versions, plus the C128. I developed a very basic game with Clem called *Death or Glory*. But it was not so much the game; more, it was system. Jay Derrett re-used the code for Traxxion. The change was not scrolling but updating instead. Thus, if you changed a background module code in memory (each module 8x8 characters) it updated on the screen. I used the same trick for *Mandroid*, which was follow up to *Cyborg* by Ian Foster. Before-hand I was helping Ian with coding Cyborg. I also coded the graphic parts for the Dracula etc., which upset the BBFC. Trouble was – during this time I got tied with master games for tape as well and helping with other coding instead of developing titles.

Q. Were you involved in converting software to and from the Commodore 64?

Only with RHS, but that was coding from fresh, because Jeff Lee's approach

to background compression was just too time-consuming for the project. I developed an automatic screen compression from the ported backdrops. Good thing I did, because the USA was not happy with the Speccy look. So all the room backdrops had to be re-drawn. So re-compressed.

Q. You were a part of the Zen Room. Can you explain this room (and what exactly happened)?

Zen took its name from RHS. I suspect the success of the product help pay for the space. :)
It was the total development-side spun into a separate building because we had grown – basically the factory floor. It also gave the team a place to create and play, (to) chill out. Many of the team stayed or even crashed there when de-bugging a game project. H&S would have kittens today.

Q. What was the pressure like in those days to hit deadlines? Was hitting a deadline more important than getting a game created that CRL were more happy with?
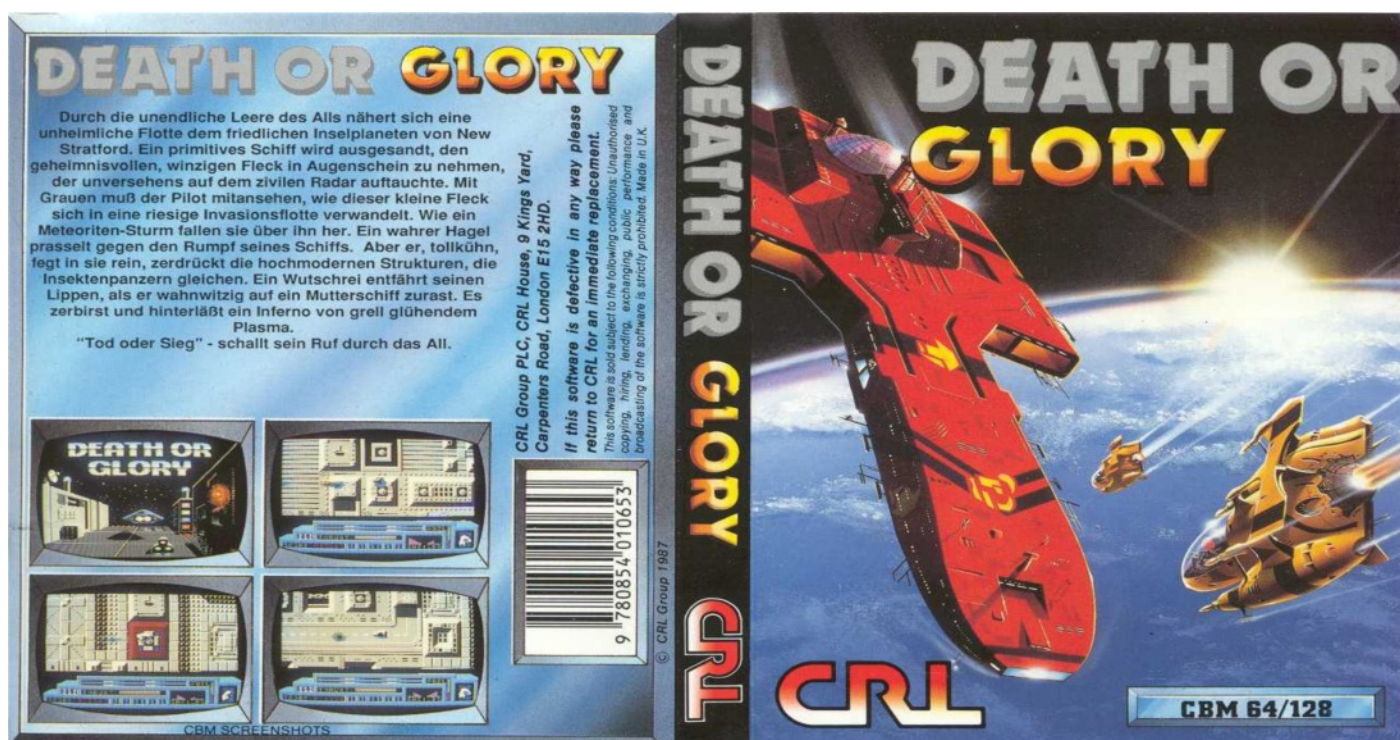
The pressure was quite high because the big store had catalogues. We had one project that was not in-house but freelance called the *Image System*. It was sort of a C64 Photoshop product. The programmer had got into a right mess, so the in-house had to sort it because WH Smith had a pre-order for a lot of the product from CRL. But getting it right counts. RHS was a very well-designed game. Cyborg was very complex as well. In that case Ian Foster was a perfectionist; he wanted the game to play exactly how he saw it.

Q. Was there more pressure working on big name or franchise games like *Blade Runner*?

Oh yes, the big retailers loved a big title. But that meant strict delivery times. RHS on the Speccy became very problematic for Jeff Lee. He was under a lot of pressure to get it done.

Q. So your work on Rocky Horror – what was this like?

Fairly straight-forward because Jeff Lee had laid down the blueprint. In fact, we worked in the same room during RHS. Actually, I brought Jeff Lee into the company. Helped him learn code before he joined. He was a long-standing friend well before my CRL days.

Q. **What games have you worked on, what are you most proud of, and of course – what games did you work on that make you cringe (and wished you have never had your name connected with)?**

If we talking C64, of course then for me, *Mandroid,* I'm quite proud of. *Death or Glory* showed off the system but was a bad game. RHS with the new graphics (again) I'm proud of.

Q. So, are you proud of your days at CRL, and given the chance – would you have taken the same path?

Proud is not the right word; it's (more) happy and filled with good memories of being pioneers and being creative with computers. Yes, at times I do miss it all.

Q. When did you leave CRL, and why?

CRL (basically) did not get paid by a key partner, and that caused a money crash within the company, so it failed. I believe it ended in court and Clem won. But CRL had already been destroyed. If that had not happened, CRL might be here today and I might still be coding (on say) XBox or Play Station, but who knows? :)

Q. What do you do now (apart from answering questions about CRL)?

Well, I stayed in the computer industry after CRL but moved into business computing, working on coding for printer emulator server. It was based on Z180 so the coding was familiar to me. I then progressed into 68000 coding and finally into C coding. Now I work in digital printing, producing bespoke small-order books. Usually reference books or teaching books.

Q. There is some confusion about the Paul and Andy names. Can you explain to our readers about this – and why the decision was taken so you had a virtual name change at CRL?

Well, when I joined CRL there was already a Paul in the company, so Clem was would ask for the other Paul, but get me instead. So I decided to use my middle name. Because I coded without break and one time stayed all day and night they also nicknamed me Android. There was a rumour I did not eat or drink either.

Q. When working on a game, what was the process? Were you given a brief or graphics other?

I only coded game play and effects. The graphics were drawn by a separate person. Sometimes I would code with dummy graphics or draft graphics. Jon Law, who stayed in the industry I believe, did a lot of graphics in the Zen Room for me and the other coders. He did *Mandroid* stuff, *Death or Glory,* and I think *Traxxion*.

Q. So, you would share code together – or did each coder have his own way of working?

Yes, as I mentioned earlier, Death or Glory bred Traxxion. Also, I helped

Ian with *Cyborg* and *Blade Runner* on C64.

Q. Do you think CRL were and still are innovative? Were some of the magazine comments hard to swallow at the time, and do you also feel they were justified?

I think some comments were justified; we did buy in and create a few poor games. I think Blade Runner was quite weak and had boring game play. But we did have a lot of very good product. Otherwise, we would have not grown in 1986.

Q. Do you have any other comments to make?

If one machine stood out in the 1980s as very *game* computer, it was the C64. Its graphics chipset, sound chip – was amazing. I really enjoyed programming at CRL, and *especially* on the C64 with its power. The only pain was the 6510 CPU.

As for CRL, it was my first real job, so it's very special in my heart and memories. To this day I owe a lot to Clem Chambers for giving that chance, and (for) those fun memories of creating games. It was a fun job. I was gutted when it was destroyed. It was great pushing the C64 to give even more than possibly the designers of the machine thought possible.

Hope this helps. And thanks:)
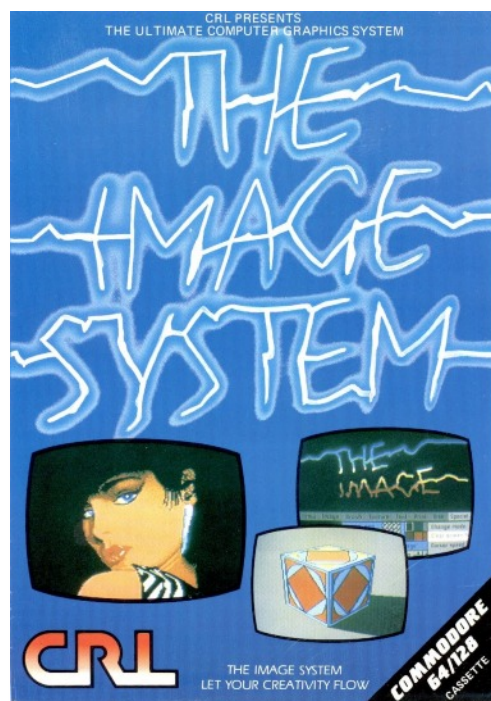
Commodore Free Interview with

Jay Derrett

Q. Hi can you please introduce yourself to our readers?

Hello! My name is Jay Derrett, and I started my life at CRL (aged 16) as a programmer writing games on the ZX Spectrum. I soon moved over to the C64. I wrote a handful of games on my own on both formats, but I also got involved in other technical aspects behind the scenes. I was given test machines to try out (Amstrad, Atari 520ST, Amiga, etc.). I also developed a MIDI interface between all platforms to transfer graphics, music, sound effects samples, etc. (MIDI was the only standard interface available to all computers; even RS232 varied too much between makes).

Back in those days each programmer originally created everything themselves – game design, graphics, sound, piracy protection, music, etc. Soon after starting, CRL took on graphics guys, and I ended up doing more of the music for other games (tutored by Rob Hartshorn of Clever Music – a company we originally outsourced music to) as I enjoyed it; and the boss seemed to like my tunes. Also, it let the other coders off the hook from having to do this. So, although I still wrote games, most of my life moved over to music and sound effects. This wasn't just writing the tunes, but also writing the code to drive the SID to get those Rob Hubbard squeaks, wails and farts. Later, I introduced samples to the code. In the later years, the programmers shared code snippets, so although I only wrote a few games on my own (all rubbish), I contributed code to a few of the other guys' games, as they did to mine.

I did try to copy the cool sound effects of Hubbard and Galway, but with my own code. I do regret never really getting slide notes to work, but apart from that, it sort of worked, and only took a few raster lines to run. That's how we measured how long a piece of code took to run – put the code on a raster interrupt, turn the border one colour, run the code, and turn the border back, and the thickness of the white border is your measurement. Simple but very effective

Q. So, what year did you start at CRL?

That was in July of 1984.

Q. I remember something about Clem sponsoring you and some school friends to build a robot. Is that true, and if so, what the story behind this was?

That's how we met!

We had a school electronics club project to build a robot to compete in the Micromouse competition – robot mice would race to the middle of a randomly laid out maze. A group of five of us built it on a shoestring from Tupperware boxes, old bits of electronics found in the physics lab bin, and a Z80 chip robbed from someone's old ZX-81 I think. I was the programmer of the on-board ROM on the robot. It was rubbish and failed spectacularly. We were on the tube train to Earls Court to enter the competition at a computer show, and we were still gluing it together on the train. Clem happened to be going to the same show and sat opposite us, and watched us 'work'. Impressed with our efforts, he introduced himself. After the show, he asked us to build him one with proper resources to enter the European competition in Madrid. We did and it won the novice round, more by default than superiority.

For some reason, Clem and I hit it off well. I wrote a couple of Spectrum games for him while still at school. He offered me a job (for when I left school) which I jumped at, and so it began.

Q. You worked on, amongst other games, *Rocky Horror Show* and *Tubular Bells*. What input did you have on these projects and how innovative do you think Tubular Bells was?

Tubular Bells was an interesting one. Clem had this idea of using home computers for more than games, and this was him putting his toe in the water of video effects, and also of using musical licensing rights (hence also

Rocky Horror Show, Jeff Wayne's War of the Worlds, etc.). Rob Hartshorn did the musical transcription of Tubular Bells and I did the coding. I was messing about with line-drawing algorithms on the C64 (I also did a game called Room 10 on the C64 using wire frame) so I thought I'd put all of these bits together. That was pretty much how we all worked – find a cool idea (code, music, design, hardware exploit, etc.) and bounce it around into something more commercial. It rarely worked out that well, but was a lot of fun.

Q. Clem hints that Tubular bells wasn't "strictly licensed". Did anyone contact CRL about the program and insist on royalties?

I have no idea about the commercials, I'm afraid. CRL was split into two buildings in the same industrial yard (which is now under the Olympic stadium). The Zen Room (from the Rocky Horror Show) was the name for the programmers' building, and CRL House was the sales and admin building. I can see now why the suits wanted to be as far away from the great unwashed as possible! So commercial and business talk never seeped into our world.

Q. Ahh, you mentioned the Zen room. Can you tell our readers about your memories of the room, and the idea behind the concept?

It was basically a separate silo of games designers, programmers, and graphics artists, and in the back was the stockroom. It was a floor of an old warehouse that had a few office walls put up in it. There were no rules, no real timekeeping, no project management, and no real reporting to the suits in CRL House. I don't know if it was intentional, but it was the closest thing possible to our natural habitat of a teenager's bedroom. We had our own music blasting, we slept there overnight on fold-out beds in our offices, we had a pub across the road we'd frequent, we lived on pizza and cigarettes and it also had showers – the whole place stank royally. Everyone got on really well there. I do think it was the best days of my working life.

Q. How long did you stay with CRL, and what prompted you to leave?

Just over four years. It was clear to all of us that the writing was on the wall for CRL (and most of the games industry in that guise), so I thought it time to grow up and get a proper job in business.

Q. Was there a game you had wished you had worked on at CRL, and why? What input would you like to have had?

Not really. There were many coders there I admired (particularly Richard Taylor and Pete Cooke) but I wouldn't know how I could have contributed positively to their work.

Q. If you were given the option back at CRL, what game would you have created, and why?

To be honest, I just wasn't creative. I could see a formula others were working to, so I tried to base ideas on those, but if I ever had a burning ambition to create something, Clem would have encouraged it, and it would have just happened.

Q. Who decided who worked on what game, or did everyone just chip in as and when was needed across games, or was it everyone on one game at a time? I know you mentioned it did start like this at CRL.

Originally, everyone had their own little project that they completely owned from start to finish, yes. Then Ian Elleray joined and he shook it up a bit, dividing design, coding, graphics and sound to best resources. Paul Stoddart, for example, was a very gifted coder of scrolling scenes, so we all lifted his code. I was considered useful at music and sound, so I did that mostly. Jon Law and others did graphics, etc. Ian was a great guy –a really positive, happy and dedicated man – but he was a threat to our precious teenage status quo, so we were unduly cynical of him, and that is the one regret I do have from CRL.

Q. So you still have fond memories of CRL? Do you all still keep in touch?

I have many fond memories of CRL, and yes, it's mostly of the fun we all had, and certainly of Clem's paternal care to his staff; he was always a very generous and forgiving boss, much to his own detriment. Mad as a box of frogs, but thoroughly charming. I see him every now and again when he's in the UK, mainly via a very good friend I retained from CRL – Ashley Hildebrandt who was an old school mate of Clem's but also the chief accountant of CRL. I see Ash several times a year, we holiday together and Clem and I are godparents to Ash's son. Obviously I'm still in touch with my brother Jared who worked at CRL on graphics, and others there on social media. CRL was a seamless extension

from school, so those guys are like old school mates.

Q. What (in your opinion) should CRL be remembered for, and what would you say were CRL`s top 5 games?

CRL should be remembered primarily for its part in an amazing short phase in the history of both entertainment and technology. We will never see such unstructured and wild creativity and inventiveness again. The nearest we've had since is crowd-sourced development for the Raspberry Pi or Arduino, but even then, the consumer take-up seems to have been mostly academic or scientific rather than over-excited kids trying to push them to do whacky stuff for the sheer fun of it.

Top 5 games, that's a tough one.

1. *Tau Ceti*. A proper, polished game with good game play and attention to detail.

2. *Test Match Cricket*. A very early CRL title for the Spectrum, that did what it said on the tin. Boring, but so addictive. So just like cricket.

3. *Juggernaut*. Another typical Pete Cooke game – simple, polished, addictive. It would be a very successful 59p app now.

4. *Terrahawks*. A 3d wireframe shooty thing by Richard Taylor. I nearly crashed his Fiat 126 once while attempting doughnuts in the CRL car park with him and three others squeezed into it. The <u>only</u> time I've ever seen him angry. But I digress.

5. *The Colour of Magic*. The only text adventure I've ever enjoyed. Fergus McNeill was basically Terry Pratchett (were Terry Pratchett to be a gangly Scottish hobo).

Q. CRL produced a few games for the Atari and Amiga computers. Do you feel the transition to 16-bit was just too much for CRL team, or was it more the amount of outlay and the bigger projects need to create 16-bit

games was just beyond CRL`s Budgets?

Neither really – it was just a function of timing. We'd all played around with 16-bit kit in the Zen Room as you say, but about that time of the late 80's CRL was falling apart at the seams. It cost nothing more to produce 16-bit code than 8-bit code. Sure, the graphics needed more work, but we had three (maybe four) graphics designers in-house by then. I know Jon Law (graphics) and Jules Bert (coding) had their own pet projects for 16-bit and, as CRL fractured, they took them up to Wigan with my brother and set up their own games house. That's really where the 16-bit product went, but even if it hadn't, CRL may have put out a few titles before the inevitable.

Q. Do you have any comments you would like to add?

Perhaps I owe Tony Crowther an apology for trying to get him drunk at a trade show just to wangle out of him how he did the multi-coloured sprite trick on the C64, but apart from that, I think it's all written above.

Q. What takes up your time (since you left CRL) and at the current time?

Boring corporate IT, I'm afraid. It's all I know, and it keeps my wife in the manner to which she has become accustomed. As such, computing is now just a pay check that has served me very well. I get my kicks form other things – flying gliders, playing music on more mainstream instruments, and the church.

Q. Thank you for your time.

You're very welcome.

Clement Chambers, centre, with Jeff, right, and Jerry Wayne, of ORP

Worlds war — at home

The War of the Worlds will soon be fought out on home computers in a 10-part game based on H. G. Wells' book and an album based on it.

CRL's managing director Clement Chambers has signed a deal with New York company ORP which has the game rights to the book and programmer Nigel Taylor, 15, has started work.

Spectrum and Oric versions are planned for March, followed by Commodore 64, BBC, Electron and Dragon.

CRL, 9 Kings Yd, Carpenters Rd, London E15 2HD

CRL International Soccer review

Well... bending the rules slightly, but this is an actual software release by CRL. Commodore actually issued this game on cartridge, and later the rights were acquired by CRL to release the game on disk and tape. CRL then re-badged the game with CRL advertising, a new piece of cover art, and released it on the public, and as far as I am aware, apart from the branding the game itself – is the same.

Clem commented to me that when they approached Commodore, they said they wanted to concentrate on the hardware rather than software and so gave CRL a green light to release the game on cassette and disk. The story then goes a little off-track, but let's just say CRL placed a new front-end and in-game graphics and released the game under the CRL brand.
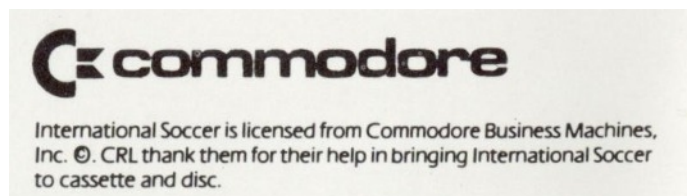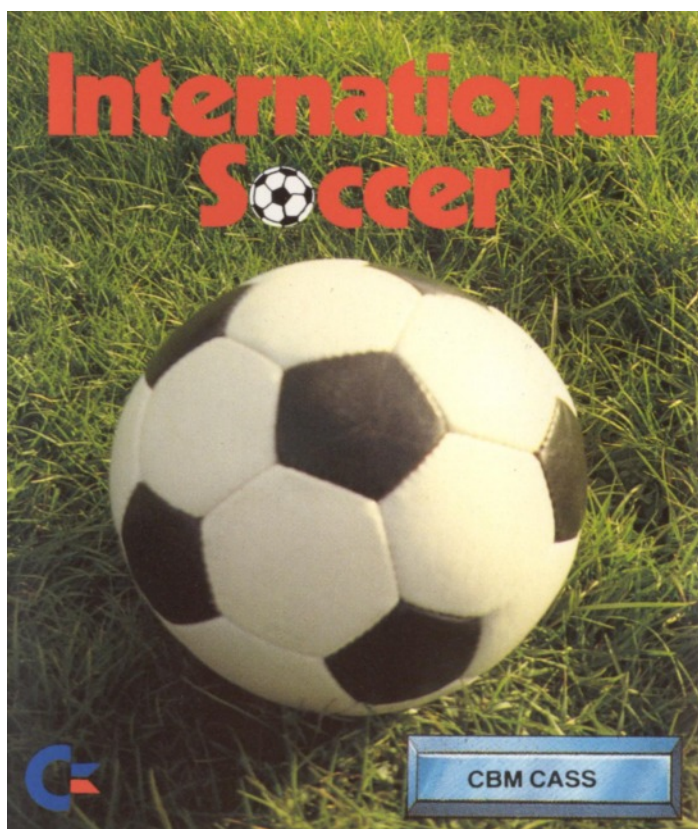
The game has won many fans for its game play, and although I can't say I am a football fan, I would happily sit and play International Soccer for ages with the computer (or even against friends).

International Soccer is a football game with no league or tournaments – just friendly matches. The game is played over 2 halves and features corners and throw-ins, but you are unable to foul another player. You have a team of 7 players and control the action with a joystick moving in 8 directions in a pseudo-3D type environment and pressing fire to play. You only see a small area of the play field and the screen scrolls around. As you move you get automatic control of the goal keeper as required.
http://www.c64-wiki.com/index.php/International_Soccer

I reviewed International Soccer in Issue 57. I still stand by the scores as basically it's the same game (but not on cartridge). My friend commented that, "it's a football game for people who don't like football," and I think that's a fair comment of the game really!

http://www.commodorefree.com/magazine/vol5/issue57.html

NOTE THE COMMODORE BRANDING

NOTE THE CRL BRANDING

International Soccer is licensed from Commodore Business Machines, Inc. ©. CRL thank them for their help in bringing International Soccer to cassette and disc.

Graphics	6/10	
Sounds	3/10	**Overall 8/10**
Gameplay	8/10	

SUN STAR Commodore Plus 4 Review

Because the Plus 4 version was the first version I played this game on, I will concentrate my review on that version, but other versions or conversions are the same really.

If you download the game from here there is also a full manual and inlay cassette scan, and as it's a great resource for Plus 4 owners, I found the game better on the Plus 4 than the c64 – not sure why – it just seemed more responsive.

http://plus4world.powweb.com/software/Sun_Star

Release date 1987

Aim of the Game
Collect as many energy crystals as you can. You can fire at one of the four disrupter pulses until its energy runs out; this will cause you to jump to another grid and leave an energy crystal. Collect this before it burns out your other crystals, then head for another disrupter until you collected all 10. You then enter a warp gate and have to fire into a hyper-warp to go to the next grid (avoid hitting the wall and obstacles).

Controls
Move the joystick and press Fire

http://plus4world.powweb.com/groups/CRL_Group_PLC

The splash screen looks cool; pressing RUN takes you into the game, I suppose it's a bit like *Tron*, but with more gameplay added (and) not as cool graphics as the TV version.

You move your ship around trying to shoot at things and collect bonus items along the way. Don't crash your ship into the sides, as you will lose energy and eventually die.

On the right of the screen is a top-down map of your location, a map of where everything is. Various items are colour-coded, and on the left is a more blown-up version of your current location. In the top-middle is like a driver's view of the landscape, bottom-centre are your stats, energy left crystals collected, etc.

Graphics and music are basic at the best of times in this game; it does have that one more go, and although it looks a little primitive, there is a lot going on. The game could be seen as ground-breaking but it's hardly earth-shattering in its design or implementation.

Graphics	4/10	
Sounds	3/10	Overall 5/10
Gameplay	5/10	
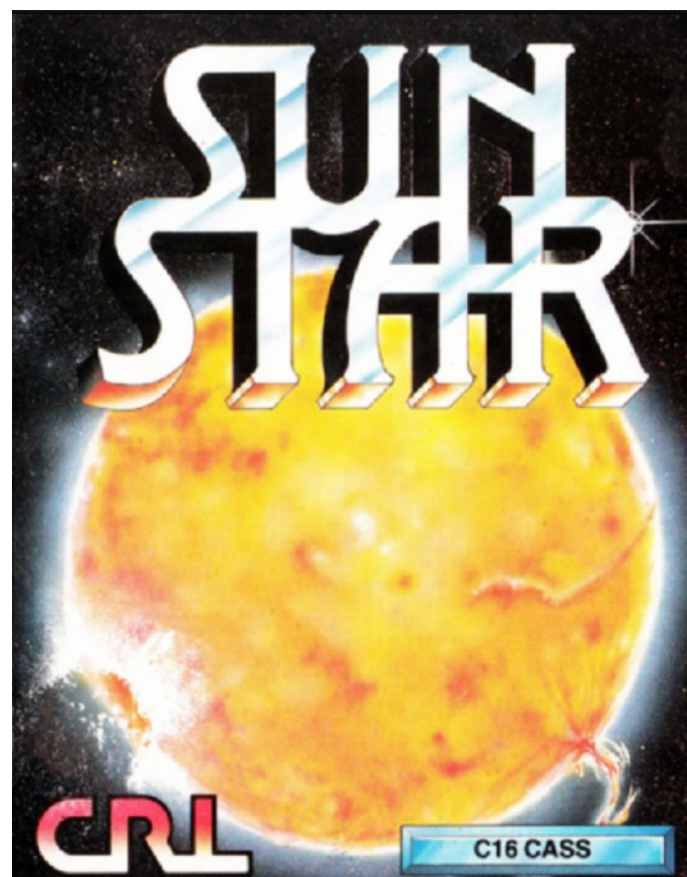
BERKS COMMODORE 16 review

http://plus4world.powweb.com/software/Berks

There is a collection of these games with Baby Berks, Berks, and Berks 3 (Baby Berks was re-released on the Alpha house CRL budget range). Anyway, they all are very similar so I just reviewed Berks, which looks a little like a stripped-down *Robotron: 2084* game.

Synopsis
Berks are everywhere, protected by their drones that you can't destroy (although you can stun them). Clear the area of Berks to move to the next level. Each level gets progressively harder; don't let your energy run out.
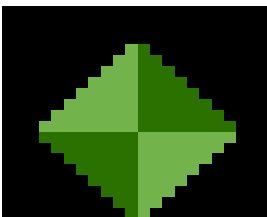
You will have seen similar games, and maybe it's not the best variation on the idea, but it's a nice game in its own right. You have X amount of Berks to kill (the amount is shown on the top right of the screen).
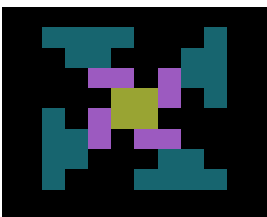

You start in the centre of the screen and fire in the direction you are moving.
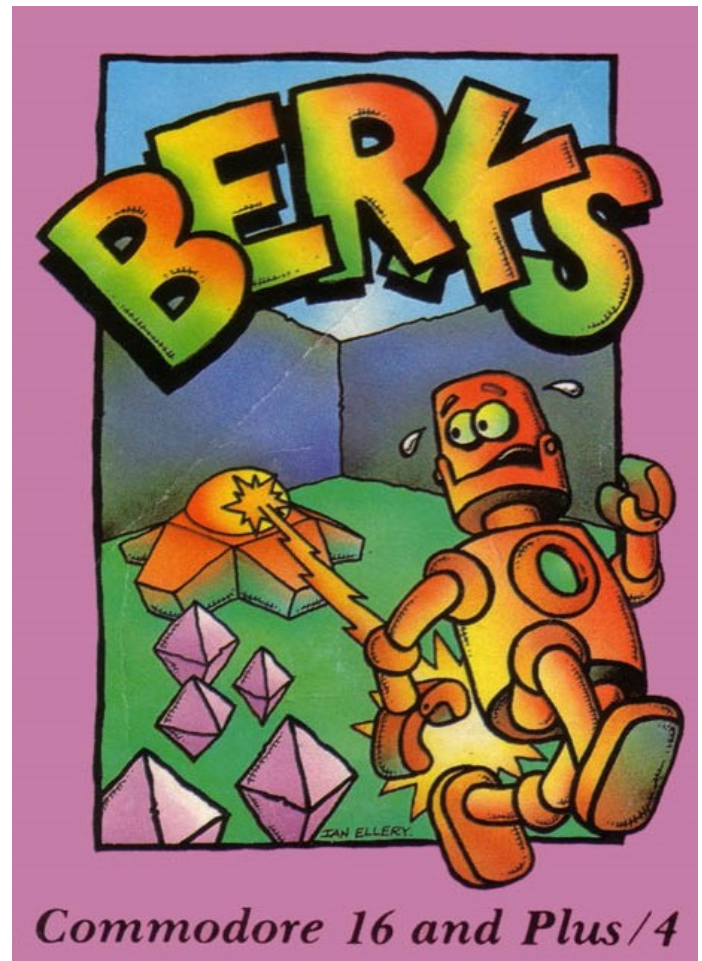You have to kill these
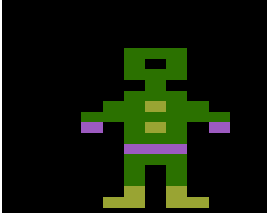
While avoiding these:

Bit-hit either and you will be zapped of energy.
Oh this is you!

But be warned: the game is very difficult, even on level 1. I think this is what kills the game; it's just too hard, the level curve is just too steep, and you find yourself giving up before getting to grips with the game

Commodore 16 and Plus/4

		Overall
Graphics	5/10	5/10
Sounds	4/10	Average, but does have a strange pull-back for the player
Gameplay	5/10	

LAND OF NEVERWHERE

Released in 1987 under the "Powerhouse Publishing Ltd" for the price of £1:99, the game managed only a very dismal 59% score in ZZap 64.

The tape cover says:
"The year is 2086 after the great battle of Thang, huge defensive silos have been placed around the seas of home base terror. Mankind's only hope was to send you - like a fool you volunteered but then what was left after what the sharks did in Canada"

This game sees our hero, with your mission to rescue 8 kids (one is in-tow) from the moon base terror. You must move from the moon base to your space ship. It says you will encounter images of disk jockeys and must not let these touch you or the kids!

The game itself looks quite nice, (with) lovely scrolling scenery and some great character animation, although at times touching on the psychedelic and full of screen candy effects. The music is (sadly) just about functional, and (also) sadly the game itself suffers from being just too "samey"; you just seem to be running about shooting, and things soon get a

little boring. Nothing here grabs you, and I'm not sure what it needs, but it desperately does need something added. Just needs something to spice it up a little. Yes, not all the games can be classed as mould-breaking or "classics", but as I stated earlier, they are CRL titles I remembered. It could be the graphics, sounds, or game play which triggered me to write about them.

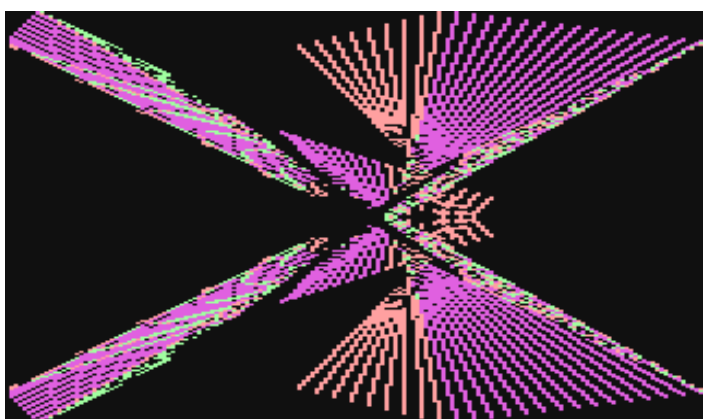| Graphics	7/10	
Sounds	6/10	Overall 6/10
Gameplay	5/10	

TUBULAR BELLS

This is, as the cassette says, "a combination of music and kinetic interactive chromo-visual designs." Set to the SID renditions of Mike Oldfield's album Tubular Bells, this visual and audio experience (as we can't really call it a game) is an interactive experience into light and sound. If you have ever played with Jeff Minter's Psychedelia, you get the idea of what is about to happen during the main part of this application.

Once loaded, pressing the space starts the erm... experience, with the first track on the Tubular Bells album blasting out of the SID chip, and a set of what looks like parallel lines flying around the screen at high speed. If you press the space bar again the music changes and is another part of the Tubular Bells rendition from the album. The lines bounce around the screen and back onto themselves. You can't control direction, but can alter symmetry of the lines and the length of the line's tail and colours. There is an option to toggle between Line and Laser mode; this is fast-moving dots that leave trails...

You have four types of symmetry at your command -- they range from none at all, to...horizontal mirror image... vertical mirror image... or a combination of both mirror images,

Summary
An interesting idea... a sort of interactive album, very advanced for its time, but for sheer colour-twiddling fun, Jeff Minter's Psychedelia wins it.

Graphics	5/10	Overall 6/10
Sounds	6.5/10	
Gameplay	5/10	It's a wonderful idea

Rocky Horror Show review

Possibly one of the most recognizable musicals/ films for people in their 40s, I know personally that I have watched it an unhealthy number of times, and when I purchased my first car and installed a cassette player, it was for some time the "tune of choice" for personal cruising. In fact, I played it so much the tape stretched and so was unusable – I later bought the CD of the said show. I have attended the live show twice and all I can say is, if you haven't been then it's "an experience."

The game was released for the Commodore 64 and later enhanced for the Commodore 128. It was later released on a budget label as well.

The rights to the film were purchased by CRL and its creator, Richard Briers, over-saw the production at CRL. Its not know how much input he had, but as it was his intellectual property, he guarded it quite loosely. With clever marketing Rocky Horror became an underground smash! To think it's still running somewhere now shows how successful the show actually was.
Not sure if the game would excite non-fans, but..........

The release on computer was a classic piece of licensing; it featured all sorts of strange items, drugs, trans-sexually horror sex (in fact I don't think there was anything it didn't feature).
Don't dream it. play it............

Enter at your own risk to the domain of Dr. Frank N. Furter Your beloved – Janet or Brad! has been kidnapped by the evil Dr. Frank who has activated the diabolical Medusa machine to turn her or indeed him into stone. Frank, however, has dismantled the De-Medusa (the only machine that will reverse the petrification process) and has scattered the parts around the castle. Frank knows that you will attempt to save your partner, and it amuses him to watch your efforts as you collect the pieces and attempt to activate them Time is of the essence as the castle is really a disguised space ship and is on final countdown!

It just lacked the magic of the film.

Graphics	6/10	
Sounds	6./10	Overall 6/10
Gameplay	6/10	

REVIEW Tau Ceti

This game is science fiction-based, and while originally released for the ZX Spectrum (as with most CRL titles), it was converted to several other platforms, and if you're a fan of the C64 version you really should check out the other versions! Designed and programmed by Pete Cooke, many considered the game ground-breaking because of its 3D graphics (not to mention the gameplay).

Plot

Humanity has spread and colonised nearby star systems, a plague in 2150 led to the colonies being abandoned and left to automated robotic maintenance systems. several of these colonies have been re-inhabited, the colony on the planet Tau Ceti III has been uncontactable since a meteor smashed into the planet. A mission to Tau Ceti III in 2164 landed but broadcast a mayday message followed by silence. Experts decided that the planet's robots were running amok as a result of the meteorite impact. The only chance, of successfully stopping the defence systems without destroying the cities already there is to send a single pilot in an armoured Gal-Corp skimmer to the planet's surface to shut-down the central reactor

This was indeed an ambitious piece of software for the time.

You move your skimmer (that can dock with some of these buildings) looking for parts to shut down the reactor. Cities can be travelled to by a "jump pad", making trips shorter. The game is displayed in a 3D view looking out as if you were sitting in the skimmer. The 3D landscape features simple shadows to show the day and night cycle of Tau Ceti III.

Cities with robot defences consist of laser towers, Hunter ships, and slowly-moving mines. Your skimmer is armed with lasers, missiles, and the customary shield. Once gone the skimmer will then take damage and onboard systems will start to fail. The buildings destroyed in the game are permanently destroyed, but mobile defences are renewed as the player leaves the city.

Your skimmer also has a scanner in order to detect buildings and of course, what skimmer could be seen without a compass to aid navigation. To cope with Tau Ceti III's frequent hours of darkness, the skimmer has a rather natty infra-red display system.

The game is mostly action-based but also futures text-input parts such as, for example, when the skimmer docks, or it lands on planet's surface. You just use simple words: the best of these is probably *"HELP"*, which tells you all the commands you can use!

Your mission, as stated, is to shut down the central reactor by locating the forty pieces of the reactor cooling rods and assemble them into twenty complete rods. These are inserted into the reactor and will shut it down.

It even managed a ZAP64 score of 93%

Comments

Sadly, it looks a little dated nowadays. The Amiga version is still silky-smooth, with things scrolling around like they are pulled about on roller skates. The c64 version is a little clunky and jittery, and although still a good game, time hasn't been good to the game – but it still manages a respectable score. If you like games like Elite you will love this. I remember reading that in the C64 version there was a bug making the game impossible to finish as some of the rods couldn't be collected! I think the Amstrad and Spectrum versions had better graphics but hey! I cant really say that in a C64 magazine, can I?
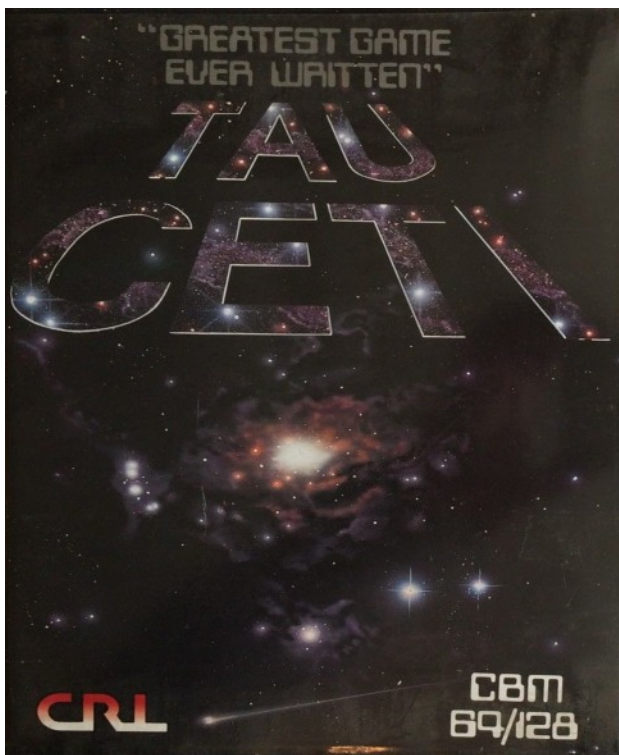
Graphics	7/10	
Sounds	5./10	**Overall 7/10**
Gameplay	7/10	

Inner Space review

Released back in 1989 by the CRL group under the title of "interactive" this game is set in deep space, and for some reason I have the disk, but no sleeve cover or instructions. Maybe I bought it at a swap meeting or something. Anyway, this is a multi-load, horizontal-scrolling, shoot'em-up featuring 9 waves of action with 130 different alien types. Although it can't in any way be classed as an original game, its origins seem to lie with Delta and Sanxion.

It does feature some really nice graphics, animation, and amazing parallax scrolling. These features lift the game from what the *Zap 64* review of the time rated the game (with an overall of 44% this is surely a mistake). You clear a wave to get an energy item; however, failing to clear a wave sees you lose the item. You can gain things like smart bomb, lose a life?, shields, speed-ups, etc.

The game seems to feature some demo-style effects, like when you loose all your lives, and wavey texts and bouncing sprites, however these look a little dated by today's standards.

You lose energy if you miss an alien, and at the end of each level the guard indicator informs you how many aliens will try to kill you. Toward the base of the screen there are 8 icons showing all the available weapons. If any weapon is flashing, it means you will soon collect it. To select the weapon you must press the space bar.

Finally, after nine levels you battle (what I think is) a giant squid. It takes some time to kill the beast, then the level (and game) ends, and you are shown a congratulations screen. The text on the screen explains how Harry has at last found peace away from his war-stricken world and now lives north of Reading. You're also given the option to restart the game. It's a bit of a rubbish finish really, and I scored the game down for *this*.

To control the ship you use a joystick in port 2. You can move the spaceship up, down, left, and right – and as suspected, pressing the fire button will shoot. Hitting the space bar lets you select the weapon.

Summary
Way better than the Zap score suggests. Some of the in-game graphics scrolling and effects are great, it doesn't look too dated, and has been coded to a high standard. It's enjoyable to play; however, the aliens' attack formations become predictable and the ending sort of kills how long you would stick with the game. I would prefer it just looping.
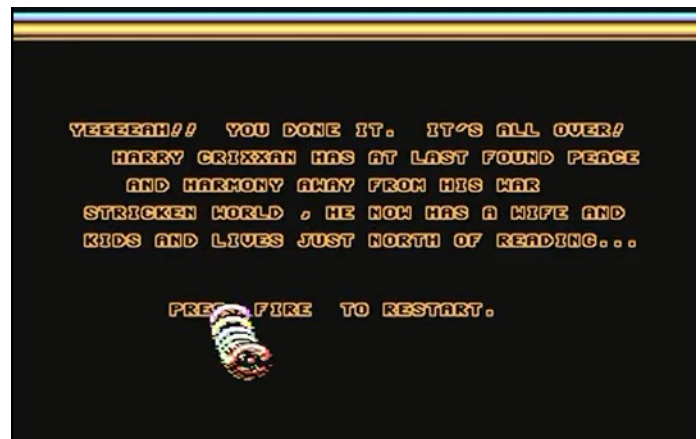
I guess that's that then! THE END !

Graphics	7/10 Nice Animation and scrolling	Overall
Sounds	6.5/10 Nice in game sounds	6.5/10
Gameplay	6/10 OK but repetitive	Not original and the ending kills the lastability

REVIEW OF CRL`S DRACULA

Dracula is a rather scary 95% text adventure released for the Commodore 64 by CRL in 1986. It was the very first of a series of themed horror adventures from CRL, including the likes of **Frankenstein** and **The Wolfman** (Dracula follows Bram Stoker's novel).   The text adventure has been interspersed with blood-curdling digitised images displayed when the player meets a gruesome end. The player is further treated to a SID chip rendition of Bach's *Toccata and Fugue* in D minor. At the time the game was sent to the British Board of Film Censors (BBFC) for review, and it was the first game in the UK to ever receive a 15 certificate. The censorship certificate on the sale of the game was supposed to be enforced by law. Not only that, but it was also very expensive for CRL to have the game rated this way.

The game is played from the viewpoint of the novel's heroes, Jonathan Harker and Doctor Edward Seward, and has a number of puzzles. You enter text via two-word noun/verb sentences. The game was written in three parts and split over two tapes, so it was best to go with the disk version where possible.

The game is quite unfair, and in some cases totally illogical, with lengthy room descriptions that deliberately misdirect the reader, and time-based sequences where you type WAIT repeatedly to achieve crucial aims in the game. You have no way of knowing this, and it's only now (with the aid of the Internet) I am able to get anywhere close to finishing the game.

Let's look at the first location. Your path is blocked by a drunk coachman, so you look in your inventory and it shows that you're carrying nothing. It took some time for me to find the solution to this problem, and the *totally illogical* solution is to type "PAY COACHMAN" even though you are not shown as carrying any money with you. You may now assume from this that you do carry money around; this holds true for a while. However, later in the same chapter of the game your money starts off in a coat that you're not wearing, so you have to figure this out and must have taken your coat from your chair and looked at its contents first.

Often in the game the room's description doesn't seem to mention any of the exits; your only way of finding these is by trying to move in every single direction (in turn) until one works.

Game text is written in a gothic red font. The text in the game is quite absorbing to read, and can really draw you into the game; the other text in the game is colour-coded for dialogue, etc.

You may like to look here :

Dracula chapter 1
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=joOJ-0e2cTA

Dracula chapter 2
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p69q6aQq4OM&list=UUGdQRtlqpUZByVjvvWXQzEQ

Dracula chapter 2 part 2
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zFV9JPGa79k&list=UUGdQRtlqpUZByVjvvWXQzEQ

Chapter 3
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AUCCfi_rrvY&list=UUGdQRtlqpUZByVjvvWXQzEQ

Chapter 3 part 2
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W6k1Xa6HpRo&list=UUGdQRtlqpUZByVjvvWXQzEQ
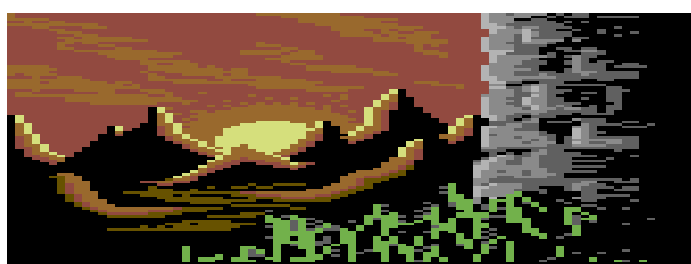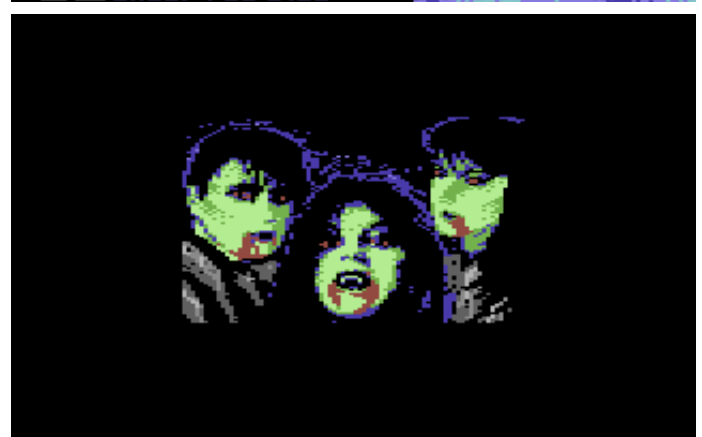
Graphics	**6.5/10** **Mainly for the nice stage digitized scenes and ketchup**	Overall 6.5/10
Sounds	5./10	
Gameplay	**6.5/10** **can be frustrating when you get sudden death**	

CRL unreleased Games
From Games That Wernt website …..

http://www.gamesthatwerent.com/gtw64/results/gy/0/gh/0/gc/CRL/gco/0/ga/0/gs/0/go/0/

The website *Games that Weren't* lists a number of CRL non-releases with exclusive comments from the staff about how complete (or otherwise) the games were. There is a playable demo called "Unnamed CRL game" – this was found via Darren Melbourne's disks – and written by Finlay Munroe.

Academy
1987 CRL
- **Coding:** John Twiddy
- **Graphics:** John Twiddy
- **Sound:** Unknown

Attack On Centralis
1987 CRL
- **Coding:** John Twiddy
- **Graphics:** John Twiddy
- **Sound:** Unknown

Black Shadow
1988 CRL
- **Coding:** Warren Mills
- **Graphics:** Paul Harris, Phil Harris
- **Sound:** N/A

Cops And Robbers
1986 CRL
- **Coding:** Jeff Lee
- **Graphics:** Unknown
- **Sound:** Jay Derrett (?)

Mad Max Game
198? CRL
- **Coding:** Andy Jervis
- **Graphics:** Andy Jervis
- **Sound:** Unknown

Prizone
1988 CRL
- **Coding:** Juha Kaki
- **Graphics:** Jukka Kaartinen
- **Sound:** Jukka Kaartinen, Juha Kaki

Sophistry
1988 CRL
- **Coding:** Unknown
- **Graphics:** Unknown
- **Sound:** Unknown

The Blues Brothers
1987 CRL
- **Coding:** Unknown
- **Graphics:** Unknown
- **Sound:** Unknown

The Last Stuntman

198? CRL
- **Coding:** Alan Botwright
- **Graphics:** Unknown
- **Sound:** Unknown

The Magic Roundabout
1984 CRL
- **Coding:** Peter Jobate
- **Graphics:** Jared Derrett
- **Sound:** Jay Derrett

The Rocky Horror Adventure Show
1986 CRL
- **Coding:** Fergus McNeil
- **Graphics:** Fergus McNeil
- **Sound:** Unknown
- **Other:** Richard O'Brien (Design)

Thunderbirds
1984 CRL
- **Coding:** Jay Derrett
- **Graphics:** Jared Derrett, Jay Derrett
- **Sound:** Jay Derrett

Unnamed CRL Game
198? CRL
- **Coding:** Finlay Munro
- **Graphics:** Finlay Munro
- **Sound:** Jay Derrett (?)

War Of The Worlds
1984 CRL
- **Coding:** Jeff Lee
- **Graphics:** Jeff Lee
- **Sound:** Unknown
- **Other:** Ian Ellery (Design)

Wizard
198? CRL
- **Coding:** Unknown
- **Graphics:** Unknown
- **Sound:** Unknown

Wolfman V2
1988 CRL
- **Coding:** Rod Pike
- **Graphics:** Unknown
- **Sound:** Unknown

Commodore Free Magazine

www.commodorefree.com

Editor
Nigel Parker

Spell Checking
Peter Badrick

Text , HTML & Ebook Conversion
Paul Davis

D64 Disk Image
Al Jackson

ISSUU formatting
Alessandro Di Nepi

PDF Design /Editor /webhost /text collector
Nigel Parker

Website
www.commodorefree.com

Email Address
commodorefree@commodorefree.com