

Joystix : A C64 PDF Zine



PEOPLE OF LIBERTY 2006

Greetings everyone and welcome to a new release from People of Liberty in 2006. This is Luke Lynde (IQ-Dna) here presenting to you, “Joystix” – this time it is not an article of retro game reviews in an issue of Scene World (from me) but a medium-sized PDF magazine!

I will be looking at the many “deserving” great Commodore 64 games that have made this such a wonderful computer that has withstood the tests of time. This PDF magazine will no doubt continue in the future, check out the appropriate part in this mag, if you want to supply some texts.

WHATS IN A GAME THEN?

The Commodore 64 computer has a lot of history to it. The records state there have been well over 15000 games released during the history of this great machine. A lot of these games have been totally bad, but there are also many that shine through – and have kept people addicted to keep using the C64 for some (joystick) entertainment, so while other Scene (so called “Legal”) activities get a touch boring, its nice to play a game now and again.

In each issue I intend to describe and review some shining titles, along with screenshots – to make it all the better. While it seems the Commodore 64 is under the constant threat of annihilation, this is never the case, as the die-hard and true lovers of C64, will never let this computer stop or die. This PDF magazine is my contribution to the C64 Scene, and also to other C64 enthusiasts who love this machine.

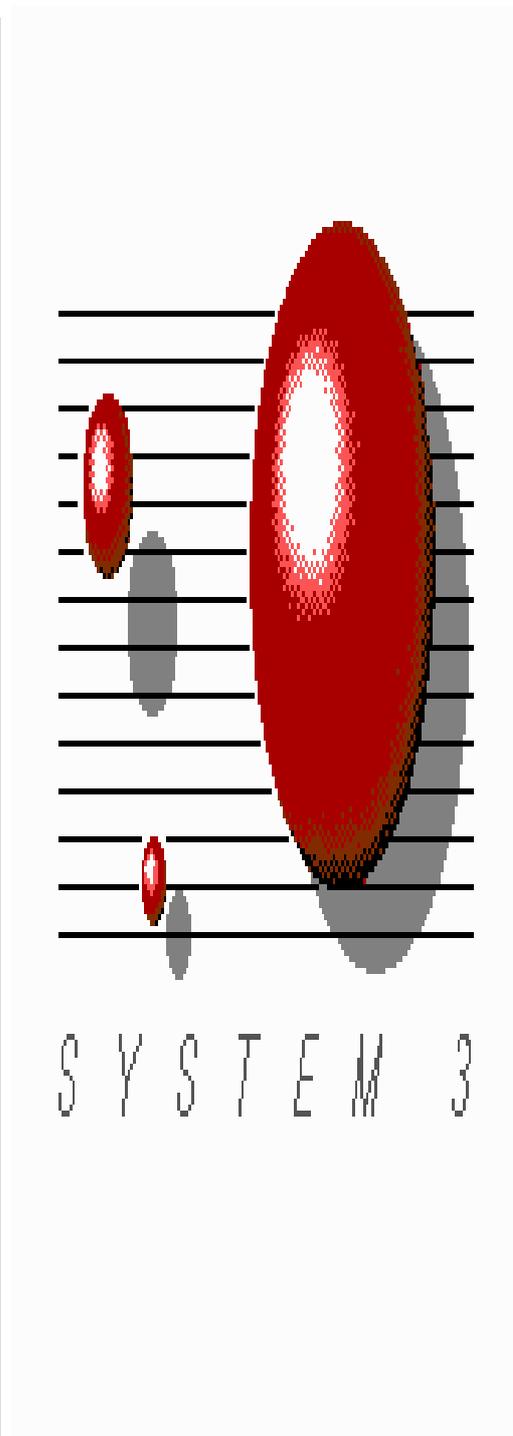
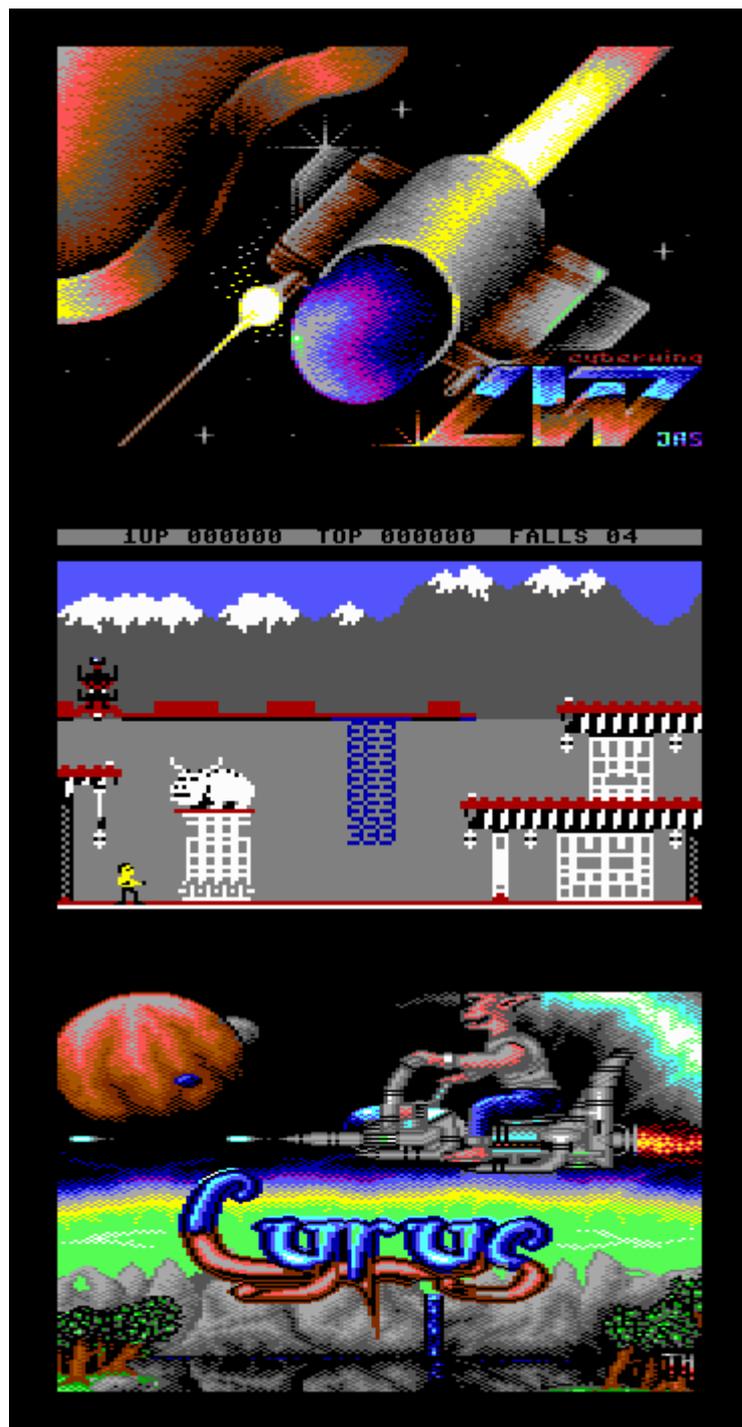
Is there a need for a magazine like this? Well, I wanted to do it, “regardless of what anyone may think” about it. I think there is always opportunity to promote the Commodore 64 in some way.



The classic shoot-em-up R TYPE -/or Katakis. Katakis 2 is currently being made for the Commodore 64!!

Anyway, whether you are from the scene, or are just a retro and/or C64 fan, I am sure you will like this magazine. It's not that I particular target the C64 scene with this release, I am also happy if other people interested in the C64 (hobbyists, etc) take a look at this magazine – and continue the “experience” of this humble 8bit machine, from its beginning back in the times of 1982...

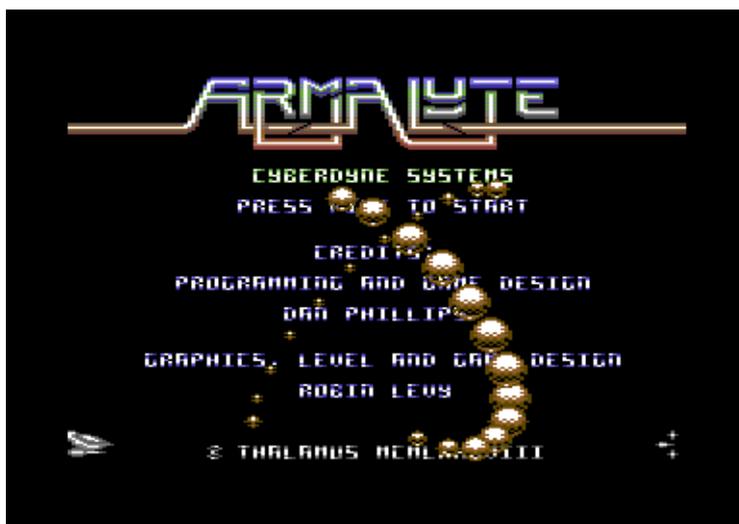
Who would have thought the Commodore 64 still continues on in this day and age, well it does!



The screenshots above highlight the graphical wonderland that is the Commodore Universe!

Armalyte - from the realm of DELTA

Just when you thought the concept of horizontally scrolling shoot em ups had past their used by date, Armalyte delivers what is singly the most spectacular shoot em up ever to hit the Commodore 64 screen. Everything about this game is a work of art – the graphics, the gameplay, the audial soundtracks, the overall smoothness of the game.



Here is the traditional Armalyte welcoming screen, so get ready for battle!

Its hard to fault this game, the only thing which would make it perfect is some nice tunes while

playing, though the sound effects are more than enough. You make your way through level after level of alien attack formations, you pass through brilliantly detailed alien plantations, and the pace is fast and hectic. Two players can join in on screen at the same time.



The beginning of Level 1, just have a look at the excellent graphical detail on offer.

The fluidity of alien movement and attack patterns to offset your space ship, are the nicest formula I have seen. This really is a beautiful game that totally encapsulates the atmosphere of an alien world... Without any cheat mode, it can get quite frustrating, it is by no means an easy game – but it is very rewarding...

Armalyte is the essential shoot em up!

Below is the fantastic graphical artwork depicting the reality of alienated Armalyte:



OVERALL 99%

Comments: From the time when it first come out, I was of the opinion that this game was something special, it blew the theory of how a "Commodore 64 game should look like" out of the water. Pictures of me (IQ-Dna/POL) below:



Citadel - Arcade & Strategy 2-in-1

From the brains of Martin Walker, who also did some musics for Armalyte (reviewed previously) presents to the public this frantic game. To try to explain it is kind of hard. Moving around is done carefully somewhat like playing on a chessboard. The blasting part will have its reminiscence in any shoot em up genre. The playing area is overhead view like Paradroid.



Are you ready to be immersed in some neurologically twisted gameplay? Be prepared for the experience!

Basically you have to attack all alien forms that are found on the many levels, while moving your robot (whatever it is) around. Things get a little

tricky, but lucky you can fire in 8 directions, which means diagonally included. Each level has a sublevel where you can go back and forth. Switches are located around the levels, which you need to activate, to get to the next stage – as some exits to the next stage are carefully hidden and require some minimal brain work.

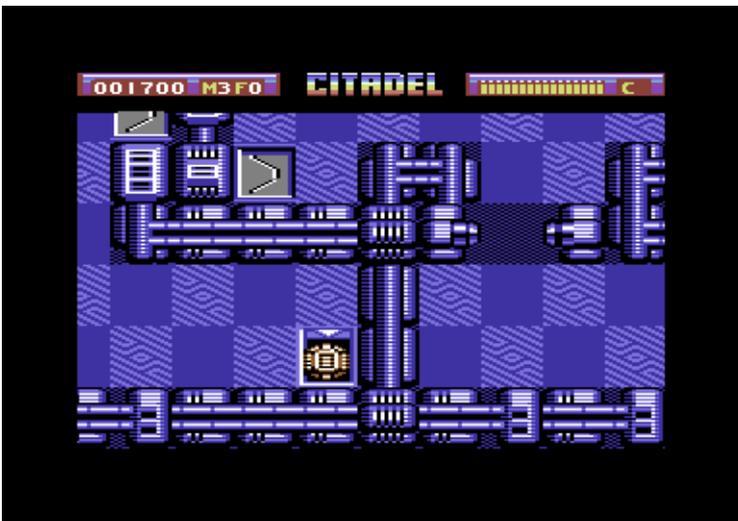


Notice your craft robot thingie in centre of the screen? You move it around and shoot stuff, duh!

It resembles Paradroid by Andrew Braybrook, but is completely different. The use of graphics are some of the best ever used in a Commodore 64 game, and the sound effects and music suit the genre and atmosphere superbly. It is a simple one-file game, but everything possible has been packed into it – and then some. Its quite easy to get stuck in the levels, coming in and out of

sublevels constantly, until you find the exit to the next stage. Barriers have to be turned off to pass through.

Perserverance helps, and is rewarded. With trainers on, this game CAN be completed in under 10 minutes – but you would play it longer than that just to admire the lovely graphics...



This is a sublevel of Level 1. (Level 1 where you begin was shown in the previous Screenshot).

OVERALL: 96%

This game oozes style, I mean you couldn't really get a better designed game – every aspect of the game is complimentary. A rare find indeed, something any C64er should never miss. It's pure Nirvanic bliss...

**There is no real
excuse, c'mon!**

The reality of the situation is that there were many many crap games released on the Commodore 64. This comes down to a number of factors and theories, of which I will briefly talk about some of the most popular.

First, software companies are only interested in making quick money, and are not interested in making a product of total satisfaction. Rather than be interested in creating game dynamics, they are more concerned with business interests and so forth.

Secondly, the programmers and team involved in any particular game are just not dedicated or experienced enough to make a good game that actually plays like a Commodore 64 game. What then is a "Commodore 64 game"? A game that uses the features of the machine to an extent,

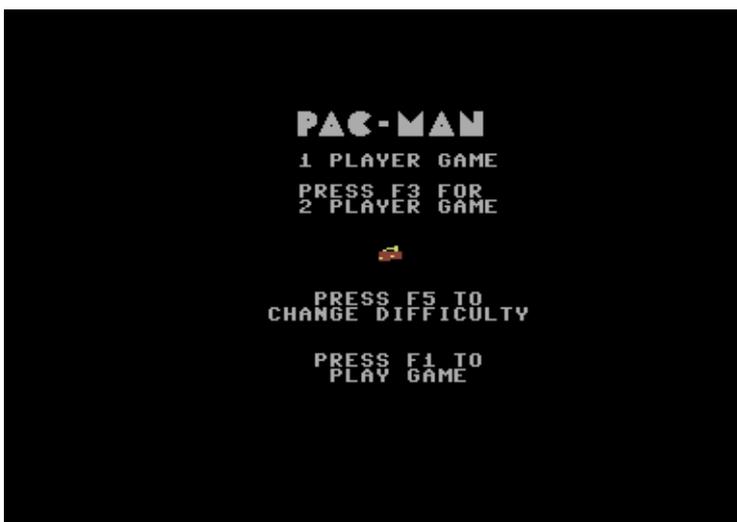
along with decent graphics, sounds, and gameplay. A really good game requires a proficient coder, graphician, and musician. If one of these are missing, it can mean the difference between a great game and another average C64 title. Who wants to play a horrible (unplayable/frustrating) game just because it has nice graphics or sound?

Thirdly, I need to speak about a culmination of the above two points I have made, as has been shown and proven true by past C64 gaming history. Great software companies with mediocre coders? Terrible games with great sound? Great games do stand out on their own however, somewhat - regardless of deficiencies if they are only miniscule.



Pacman - Enter the Maze of Madness

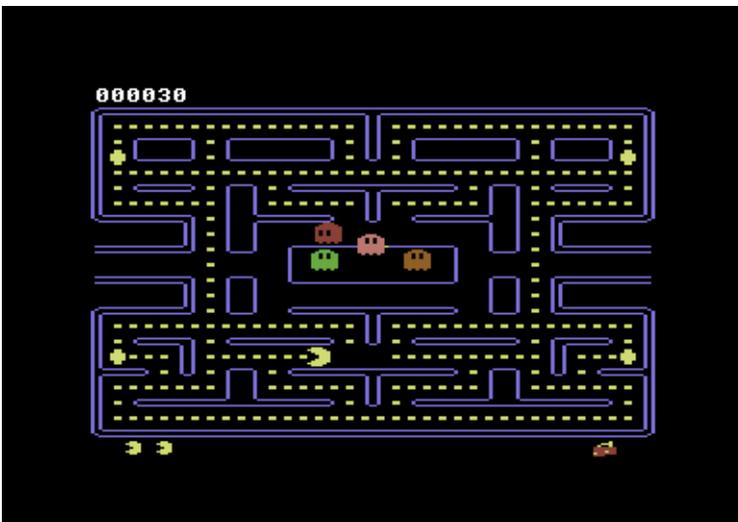
Pacman 1982 Atari Version. Yes, IMHO, this is the best version of Pacman on the C64 – if not the best version across a number of platforms. The idea for Pacman was originally from a Pizza with one slice missing, resembling the famous Pac Archetype. It was also going to be called Puckman, but was changed – because they thought young kids would change the P into an F on the arcade machines.



Nothing fancy, just some function key options shown here, and then the curtain rises for Pacman...

Pacman C64 has a level selector at the start, which is handy, because the first levels are quite

slow – but are good for beginners. The idea is to consume all the dots in the maze, avoid the ghosts, to advance each level. Power pills allow the tables to turn and you can capture the Ghosts. Different Ghosts hunt down Pacman differently, but I find their manouvres pretty much the same, with slight variations.



Wow! Like going back in a time machine, that wonderful Pacman screen...

The Maze is the same throughout the game, but graphically it is as good as you need it to be – and the sound effects are very reminiscent of the original. The great appeal to this version on C64 is the playability. It is never too difficult, and the levels of difficulty gradually increase as you pass level upon level. I find it perfect, meaning

you can spend up to 20 minutes on a game, and not really get bored of it.

Other versions of Pacman on C64 have serious faults, but I cannot find fault with this one at all. Maybe someone should update it, adding CreamD's Pacman sid tune – and some tiny graphical improvements of the maze, the pac character, the ghosts, the fruit, and an overhaul of the menu system. It would make a great game, even greater. Either way, this is a fantastic game if you are a fan of early 1980s arcade games, the games that started this whole “joystick craze thing” rolling.

OVERALL: 92%

What can I say? Surely everyone has played Pacman before, some get sick of it – and some get kind of obsessed by it. Nothing fancy like Doom or other 3D manifestations, but the simple joy of a simple game can give simple pleasures – quite simply because it is so simple, and that is the simplicity of it all. Simple!

Colossus Chess 4: Bigger Than BenHur

If you've read Retro Game Corner in Scene World, you would know I have reviewed these games before – but that was a while ago now, and anyway this is more of a PC production than a C64 Disk Mag :-) So, Colossus Chess 4 would have to have the best realism over most chess games on C64, provided you also have some instructions – to get the most out of this game.



Oh, what a nice title screen, and if you look closely in the bottom right corner, someone is about to tell you it's cracked!

Chess is quite a mundane game for some, Some view it as a sign of intelligence – or maybe

intriguing. Colossus Chess 4 is everything you can expect from a 8bit chess game, there is 2d and 3d views, time limiters, decent difficulty levels, and more. I enjoy many more chess games, but this title here is definitely the best for me. Don't expect it to play anything like the titles being released nowadays...



As you begin a game, here is the nicely detailed 2D chess board, easy on the eye, and all around professional too!

The screen arises and you just have to love the proper graphical definitions of the chess pieces to make it all that more authentic. There is definitely a feeling of a powerful computer thinking in the background, or maybe I am a bit hopeless at Chess. I tend always to grind the Computer down to a few pieces left, but alas I find myself Checkmated not long after, if not before.

1985 seemed to be year that Commodore 64 titles started to mature, and this is an example of where that year was going to end up. Try



3D in action, yes doesn't it all look much better some infinitely garbaged and molested DOOM clone?

Chessmaster 2000 and 2100 if you want, or even some older pre-1985 one filers – some which are also very good, but this is a seminal title for me – and brings back much nostalgia of when I was in Year 9 at High School in 1988, when I loaded this one up many a time. 18 years later, I still enjoy it – whoa, what dedication to such a brilliant computer, underestimated and astounding!

OVERALL: 91%

A decent Chess game, for the good old Commodore 64, standing the tests of time...

Emulation Blues

I know that in the past, especially in Scene World, I have sung the praises of Emulation. However, I would much RATHER prefer using the real machine, especially now. Maybe emulation is more a matter of convenience to people, than a necessity. WinVice is the most popular C64 emulator around at the moment, but has serious problems handling fluidity and smoothness of movement on screen. CCS64 is much better in this respect, but lacks some SID capabilities.

Which one to use? I say use both of them. The SID emulation in CCS64 has improved greatly over earlier versions, and overall presents a more authentic C64 environment than WinVice. WinVice however, can handle just about anything thrown at it, and appears to have more features – though I have not compared features in depth. CCS64 has a lot of features too, and a handy Commodore 64 Environment menu-system, which I think was a great idea to

implement.

I have been using WinVice for the longest, though now with the current release of CCS64 – I can see this emulator gradually becoming as good, if not better, than WinVice. Commodore 64 hardware can be picked up on the internet (eg. Ebay) very cheaply so what I would say is this: get some real C64 gear, and enjoy it in real time ;)

“Emulation: no real reasons for Celebration?!”



Screenshots of Trailblazer, and, Ba, Ba, Batman!

Hunter's Moon - Dark Side of Time

Martin Walker is such a great all round C64 programmer, that I just had to review his other smash hit of an excellent game! Situated in the darkest recesses of space, this is a multi-directional shoot em up – where the objective is simple, collect star cells amidst hostile cell frameworks that fire back at you, and even repair themselves when damaged.



Is this an awesome title picture of what?! Thalamus were always known for top quality games.

It's kind of strategic to get far in the game, for example in later levels, the star cells are hidden – so you have to rely on the small compass at the

bottom of the screen, to locate them. When you complete levels, you are treated to some psychedelic displays – unparalleled on the C64, except maybe in some nifty demo...

The graphics are what you would come to expect from someone like Martin Walker, superb use of colors and an encapsulating atmosphere. The sound effects are succinct, brilliant and well suited to the game, immensely! The scrolling movement of the ship as you move around the screen in whatever direction, is totally fluid. Running into some large cellular structure, and going bezerk on the fire button, so you can collect the required star cells to complete a stage – is exciting and very entertaining.



You can't see it here, but in the background are some psychedelic design movements! 1987? Your Kidding!

Still after all this time, this game does not look

outdated. Neither does Citadel, for that matter. Armalyte is also another prime example of a game that has not lost its charm or relevance in the artificial realms of science fiction meets computer gaming... I suppose the science fact part of Hunter's Moon is the use of cell structures as an enemy, and after all – I have some interest in cells, after all my handle is IQ-Dna!



The beginning of Stage 1 Level 1. You can see the cell structures surrounding your space craft.

The amount of stages and levels to this game is huge, considering it is a one filer – that is all the more amazing.

OVERALL: 94%

It will keep you glued to your screen... Enough levels in this game to keep you going for Ages!

The End!

Ok, we are extremely close to the End. JOYSTIX is about game reviews, new or old, so if you want to submit some text (whoever you are) then send your text files to me at: LyndeLuke@Hotmail.Com

It could also be a nostalgic view into old games you loved, and still play. Only C64 related, though. This PDF is only 24 pages, I need your help to make it a 50 page PDF mag. I do not have the time nor expertise, to churn out 50 page issues all the time... My C64 scene life during the 1980s and 1990s was as Swapper only, so I can not give you some great informed facts that you may desire about games (coding, etc.)

Anyway, I hope you enjoyed this trip down memory lane, until next time we meet...

**Farewell,
IQ-Dna/People of Liberty
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