

QL ADVENTURERS FORUM

ISSUE 5 PRICE 90p.

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the second printed edition of QL Adventurers Forum, which should be even more readable than the first. No runic fonts this time. In fact it has been done on my daisywheel printer as the dot matrix one isn't functional at the moment.

First some good news for us. The Pawn and D-Day have both resurfaced on the market, albeit in small quantities.

The Pawn is available, courtesy of EEC Ltd, at the very reasonable price of £9.95 (they also have Chess at the same price and 5 arcade games at £5.95 each.) The Pawn cannot run from disk but the extra memory problem can be solved by a boot 128K prog. I can recommend this one. I suspect this will sell quickly as nearly every one I know with the Pawn has, err, not very original copies. EEC Ltd are at 18-21 Misbourne House, Chiltern Hill, Chalfont St. Peter, Bucks SL9 9UE. (Tel 0753-888866).

For the latest news on D-Day see the article in the main body of the mag.

CGH Services have Alan Pemberton's "Starplod" ready for you to buy. This is an icon-driven adventure and I reckon it's great, although some people may find the icon system a little difficult to get into. However once mastered it's quite fun. Not only icons but pretty pictures of the locations. Perhaps one of our readers would like to write a review? Cost to you lot is a mere £6.00 (or £4.00 if you supply the media.) Comes with its own printed manual too.

More good news! Rich Mellor, who is becoming QLAF's Mr Fixit, and Tony Wells, have been working on the QL Adventure Designer. This should be fixed and turbo'd by the time you read this, although the post appears to have delayed matters considerably. This little package, is based on the progs in the Tony Bridge and Richard Williams book reviewed last issue. If you've got a scenario you'd like to put into game form then contact Rich and he, if he gets time, may be able to enter it in for you. QLAF will be happy to print any ads, comments, etc to do with this system. So if you write a scenario, send it in.

Tony Woolcock, author of The Blag, is considering another police type adventure. He said he was waiting to see the review that we give it. As you can see from this issue it is quite favourable, so we should be in luck. However it seems that Peter Chambers of GAP, who published the program, is having difficulties. At the time of writing his phone is disconnected and he hasn't answered several letters, including one I sent with an sae, or any from Tony which bodes ill for the progs he published, including the Blag. Fearing the worst, Tony has decided to publish The Blag II. See the advert in the ads supplement.

Talking of the ads, many thanks to DP for their splendid offer of cheapo cheapo ACT's for you all. £35.00 can't be bad.

I received rather a lot of technical / utility reviews for this issue and, as you can see, couldn't fit them in. In fact they would probably make up an issue of a mag all by themselves. So if you'd like to read these reviews: they cover Lightning & Speedscreen; Qjump & Hotkey II; IDIS and so forth, let me know. So I'm starting another QL mag - QL Technical Review. £1.00 for issue 1. If there's enough material there'll be a number two and, so on. Still space for more articles in issue 1.

Those of you hoping for an exciting wargame will have to wait a lot longer I'm afraid as that project has been shelved. I have, however, had another go at game design and this is now being coded by myself in SuperBasic, with Alan Pemberton doing the icons and graphics. Hopefully you won't be able to see the join when it is finished. Already 500 lines of code, it is vaguely like a cut-down Lords of Midnight, but different. If you can help with the graphics (like LOM), preferably in machine code, we'd love to hear from you.

I must admit that I have been too busy to do any adventuring myself for 3 months. I hope to have more time to adventure for QLAF6. Deadline for QLAF 6 is Jan 31st. All submissions gratefully received.

Richard Alexander

ON-LINE ADVENTURING WITH YOUR QL

It is undeniable that the number of adventure games available for the QL is small compared to home micros such as the Spectrum or CBM 64, or business machines such as the IBM PC and its 'contemptibles'. For such machines there must be hundreds of adventures, wargames and other simulations, whereas for the QL there are only a handful in circulation. Though new QL adventures are being launched all the time, some of the older ones become unavailable as the producers drop out of the QL market, for instance Fantasia Adventure or Executive Adventure which are probably only to be obtained as second-hand copies. There may be ways to boost the availability of QL owners access to adventures, one of which I shall discuss in some detail in this article.

SOLUTIONS TO ADVENTURE SHORTAGE

Two possible solutions to the adventure shortage occur to me at present, apart from the obvious that is - getting more QL programmers to release their games into general circulation.

Use of either Sandy's CP/Mulator or Digital Precision's SUCCESS CP/M emulation system should allow QL users to obtain and run adventures written for Z80 based CP/M machines on their 68008 based black beasties. Supposedly thousands of programs of all sorts have been written for CP/M machines, and the two QL CP/M emulators should run the majority of them, according to their suppliers claims. However, I am not at all certain how easy it is to obtain CP/M programs anymore. Even CP/M systems such as the Amstrad (spit! spit!) PCWs seem to have relatively few CP/M programs advertised for them, and these are on 3" discs anyway, which very few QLs are likely to have. There are a couple of Public Domain CP/M software libraries which I think can supply programs on 5 1/4" or 3 1/2" discs. A catalogue of such PD programs mentions the following adventures: Quasiland Adventure; Mystery; Collosal Cave Adventure; Original Adventure; Expanded Adventure; Wargaming; and several discs just called 'games'. Unless anyone can prove otherwise, it may not be worth spending £45 to £50 on a CP/M emulator just to obtain adventure games. If you have another use for CP/M then getting the games could be regarded as a bonus, but if all you end up with is a version of Collosal Cave then you might as well buy the Sinclair version sold with Mordon's Quest or join Quanta and get the free version from its software library.

I would be interested to hear whether anyone has found a useful source of CP/M adventure and simulation games and whether the games worked well with an emulator. (QLSUB say they have such a library but, as of copy date I haven't managed to get hold of a list of the adventures therein contained. Ed)

GETTING ON-LINE TO ADVENTURES

For about the same cost as a CP/M emulator you can buy a modem which would allow you to play a number of on-line adventures. The QL has two of the cheapest modems available for any computer. The Miracle Systems QL Modem costs £45 and is available from several advertisers in QL World. It is sufficient to achieve access to Viewdata systems such as Prestel and also 80 column bulletin boards. It is not British Telecom approved, but this did not stop BT's own Micronet service giving the modem the thumbs up for price and features. Tandata's modem outfit used to cost around £220 in total when launched about three years ago. The basic units which you would need are the QConnect and QMod modules, which can be bought for as little as £43 together. With the auto-dial module -QCall- the system costs around £75 - £80 complete with all cables and software. The Tandata modem takes its power from the QL power supply and this could cause problems if you have too many add-ons. I have a Tandata system plugged into a QL which has 512K extra RAM and a disc interface and this has worked well, but I did replace the Sinclair-supplied power supply with an Adman Services replacement QL power supply, which seems to keep everything cool! The QConnect software is not multi-tasking nor can it work with more than 128K RAM. The boot

program resets memory to 128K before QConnect will load. The program seems to work OK from disc if you don't have too big a phonebook loaded, otherwise there is too little free memory. If you don't like the software then TF Services sell a new QL Terminal program for about £30 which works with both the Miracle and Tandata modems. The supplied software doesn't seem too bad to me, bearing in mind the above mentioned limitations.

VIEWDATA SYSTEMS

For those readers who do not have modems at present, the easiest way to visualise a Viewdata system is to have a look at Oracle or Ceefax on television - a few pages are often displayed instead of the test card. The big difference between viewdata and a teletext-equipped t.v. is that you can send as well as receive information via your telephone line.

The best-known viewdata service is BT's Prestel. This has nationwide coverage, which means that once you subscribe you should have access to all its services by means of a local telephone call. This contrasts with the smaller independent bulletin boards, such as Sector Software's QL Online Magazine on Leyland (0772) 454328, which you may have to ring at quite a distance. However, Sector's board is free to access, whereas Prestel has a time charge on top of the phone bill and some pages have a charge from 1p to 99p. You have to weigh up the advantages of logging on to a free board at long distance compared to a paid for service with a local call. Prestel has an annual subscription of about £80, which includes access to Micronet.

PRESTEL MICROCOMPUTING - MICRONET

It is possible to get a free demonstration of Micronet by telephoning (with your modem) 01 623 8855, entering the following identification number: 4444 4444 44, and giving the password 4444. I believe that once you are online you will be able to look up your local number if you do not live near London.

A lot of Micronet is biased towards the big selling micros - Spectrums, BBCs, Amstrads, Commodores and Ataris. However, there is still much to interest QL enthusiasts, especially the QLeaps pages produced by the Super User Bureau. In addition, there is a lot of material on adventure games which would be of especial interest to readers of this magazine. The Micronet Adventure Spot is reached through Club Spot 810, menu 4 (QLeaps is through menu 3).

Most of Adventure Spot is devoted to the popular adventures on the main home micros, but some of the hints, for Mordon's Quest for instance, are still quite useful for QL games. A "Hints & Tips" section gives a number of clues to about 20 different games, but there is also an Adventure Helpline section. In this you can fill in a response frame which is added to a general display board for such requests for help, showing your Prestel mailbox number for any replies. If someone can help you with your problem they should then send a response to your mailbox. Whether this is useful or not will depend on how many QL games players access this part of Micronet and also whether your problems concern QL-only adventures.

TALK TO OTHER ADVENTURERS

On Micronet there are a number of "instant response" boards, which allow a sort of conversation between users. Many are devoted to specific computer interests. Some are on any general topic. There is even a lonely hearts column! But best of all is the Adventure Talkabout. This is divided into two areas, for ordinary single player adventures and for multi user games. You prepare a message on the subject of adventures (on line, or off line if your software permits this) and it is sent to the Adventure Talkabout, being added to all of Prestel's computers around the country in minutes (so the theory goes). This means that it is like getting a letter and being able to deliver a reply almost immediately, but anyone will be able to read the

WINTER TIPS

Edited by Dan Marchant

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| 11. Jinxter | 21. Hitch Hikers |
| 12. Lurking Horror | 22. LGOP |
| 13. The Pawn | 23. Worm in Paradise |
| 14. GOT | 24. Mordon's Quest |
| 15. Space Quest | 25. Borrowed Time |
| 31. Lords of Time | 41. Leisure Suit.. |
| 32. Lord of Rings | 42. Kayleth |
| 33. Starcross | 43. Hampstead |
| 34. Buggy | 44. Suds (part 1) |
| 35. Knight Orc | 45. Wishbringer |

How to Reveal - Key 5

contents. Talkabout can contain any sort of news or gossip about the adventures scene - its contents depend entirely upon the people who use it. For instance, you might have a problem with an adventure which you mention on Talkabout and then get the answer straight away (if you're lucky).

This raises some interesting possibilities. If QLAF readers wanted to discuss adventures with other, distant adventurers they could arrange to log onto Talkabout at a certain time to exchange ideas. I wonder how many QLAF readers have modems and subscribe to Micronet and would be interested in using Talkabout? I don't suppose that David Batty would mind too much either if QL adventures enthusiasts swapped clues by means of his Sector Software bulletin board. He wants news and views to be contributed to keep the board lively and well patronised.

MULTI-USER GAMES

There are a number of ordinary adventures available on-line on Micronet, offering cash prizes on completion but at a charge of a few pence per frame accessed. More of a challenge are the multi-user games, specifically "Shades". Micronet's publicity describes it thus:

"There is a land of magic and spells, a land of excitement and adventure, a land wherein alliances are forged and battles fought, a land governed by wizards...a land known as Shades."

To put it simply, you are one of the characters in the game, and the other personalities you meet on your travels are also Micronets users bashing away at their Spectrum or Amstrad keyboards. The games are said to be very addictive, to the extent that you could run up bills of hundreds of pounds playing them if you get carried away. Be certain to make sure that your children can't log on while you are out of the house. They do offer variety and new challenges to QL adventure games players, but at a cost.

HOW TO FIND SUITABLE BULLETIN BOARDS

Micronet can be reached via Telemap Group Limited, Durrant House, 8, Herbal Hill, London, EC1R 5EJ. For news of other bulletin boards which have adventure news or multi-user games, "Computer Shopper" and "Micro Mart" seem to offer the best general interest coverage as well as being quite cheap (78p and 50p respectively).

Michael L. Jackson

THE ADVENTURE (ABERSOFT)

(This is a reprint of the original piece that appeared in QLAF4 in the practically indecipherable font. But even if you have read it, read on, you will find something of great utility!!!)

In an QLAF1 we had a short piece on the Cave Adventure, in which Shane showed how far he had got. I have had another go at this adventure, aided by some clues given in a PC mag and have managed to get a bit further on.

In particular I have solved the problem (I hope) of the troll, and with it, that of the emerald. If you remember you can get to the emerald by saying plover in the Y2 room, but getting out again successfully is another matter. The solution to this problem involves two parts. Firstly go into the emerald room with your lamp, get the emerald, NE into the dark room to get the pyramid, return then drop the lamp, go west then when you can get no further drop the emerald and return to get the lamp and return to the Y2 room. If this is done correctly (and I'll leave it to you to work out the exact commands!) the the emerald will be accessible from another direction.

To get to the emerald you'll need to be carrying the golden eggs - so don't plugh them back to the building when you get them - the keys and some food. Once you've got the eggs go west from the oriental room then sw to the long winding corridor, thence to the chasm where you'll be faced with a troll. He'll demand a toll (don't they always!) and to pay him throw the eggs at troll. (Giving doesn't work here.) Once over the chasm you can either go NE to a spectacular view and pick up some spices or SE to the bear, (or indeed do both). The bear, to be useful, needs feeding. So having fed the bear unlock the chain and the bear will be yours. To return past the troll simply drop the bear and he'll chase away the troll.

Right that means that, according to most versions of the game, we have only to find and kill the dragon and get the rug to trigger the end game. Well, thanks to Agnes Waitt, who has completed this on a PC version, I can let you know how to get the rug. The answer lies in going SW from the Mountain King's Hall. Ah, you say, we tried that and it said it weren't possible. Not so, mes amis, try once more and you'll be able to get to the dragon, no problem. It appears that access to this passage is only available on alternate attempts, simply to frustrate the adventurer. The fight, alas, is an anti-climax. Anyway you can now get the rug and enter the next stage of the adventure. More in QLAF 6.

Richard.

LETTER: TONY 1

Dear Richard,

Recently, whilst browsing through a local bookshop, I came across a series of computer books, primarily for children published by Usborne. Amongst the piles of paperbacks telling you how to write space invaders on a ZX81, I found three slim volumes of interest to us. These were "Write your own adventure programs for your microcomputer", "The mystery of Silver Mountain, an adventure game", and "Island of Secrets, an adventure game". The first book tells you how to write adventure programs, similar to your basic program in Issue #2, and has a small listing for a 10k adventure, whilst the other two are each a combination of story book and a 20k listing.

The story line might not be to everyone's taste, but to a rank beginner to adventuring, like myself, they are an ideal introduction to the noble art. The small listing is set in a haunted house, the second is a fantasy with "Garggs" (which look like historic Monguls) instead of Orcs, and the third is like a Hammer sci-fi B movie without rocket ships.

The listings are a mass of GOTO's and GOSUB's to be compatible with as many micro's as possible, including the BBC Model A and the ZX81. This summer's project is to convert, and type in, the listings from all three books, complete with a Quill document, giving a scenario, for each adventure.

I have written to Usborne, asking their permission to circulate free copies of the QL conversion, so as to avoid copyright problems. As these books were written in 1982 and 1983, and do not even mention the QL, let alone Dragons, Orics or PC's, I am not expecting any problems.

If their reply is favorable, would you be prepared to offer your magazine as a clearing house? I will send you copies of all three, either for your own personal use or for distribution, whether you want me to provide the copying service or not. (Please note I can now copy cartridges, 3" discs, 3 1/2" discs, and 5 1/4" discs.) My ambition is to have them adopted as a suite of programs by the Quanta library. Fame !!!

I am working off the BBC basic version of the listings, as this seems most compatible with Superbasic. If this exercise works, I have access to several other rather good public domain BBC basic adventures which I will also convert. This should help broaden our horizons. I will report progress in further issues of Adventure Forum. In the meantime, if anyone can help me convert discs from BBC format to QL format, or import from a BBC micro to a QL, it will save me many weeks, if not months, of repetitive typing - I am the original one finger typist !!

Tony Wells.

UPDATE

Tony recently phoned to say that Usborne have given the go ahead to distribute these as Public Domain. So when Tony has finished the conversions, I'm happy to co-ordinate making them available.

Please note that we need as many adventures as we can get on the QL, so if you know of any source of P.D. progs that can be converted for the QL let us know. The more the merrier.

As for converting BBC disks, the current issue of QL World has an advert from PDQL for Multi-Discover, which transfers files from BBC and CPM to QL format as well as the usual IBM. A snip at £39.00.

Richard

TONY 2

Dear Richard,

The Commodore book 'Exploring Adventures' had several cover versions for different computers, and there was even a cassette available (seperately) to save you typing the listings in. I have the BBC programs for all three games, if anyone is interested. (Cassette or ADFS 3 1/2" and 5 1/4" disks.) I might even get round to converting the other two, after the Usborne programs I mentioned in my last letter.

TONY 2

QLAF #4 - Hooray !, I do not have to order some more printer ribbons after all, just a new pair of specs ! I tried to read #4 after the proverbial hard day at the office but had to give up with the atricle on 'Cave Adventure' on page 7. To be serious for a moment, from the various letters from inebriated students I may be the only reader who will never see the big 4 - 0 again. I truly tried, but the runic-like script finally beat me. I also found the surplus of upper case 'K's a bit annoying, but that's probably just me sliding into middle age. Please spare a thought for we lesser, and older, mortals.

Other points include many thanks for the maps for Zkul, I have given up more times than I care to remember on this one.

Lastly, I have been assured by QL S.U.B. that P.C.B.S. are still trading, and that they (S.U.B.) can supply 'Talisman' for £19.

I am the Tony Wells that Richard refers to at the very end of QLAF#4. (Fame!) I bought the book 'Sinclair QL Adventures' some years ago from W. H. Smiths. I have typed in all the listings, polished my halo, and even cured a few of the problems caused by the improvements in the JS Rom. (At least QLAG appears O.K. now, Rich Mellor and my self are ironing out the few left in QAD.)

Unfortunately, Michael Jackson has not quite understood the programs correctly. There are actually three, interlinked programs in the book. The first is QLAG - QL Adventure Generator - which provides a skeleton framework for a Dungeons and Dragons type game, complete with combat routines. As the authors say in the book, the format is sufficiently free to allow for any scenario, from caves to rocket ships. The game is laid out on a 12 by 24 grid, giving a total of 288 rooms. After descriptions, exits, objects, characters and monsters have been typed in, the game is saved as a data file. This data file is then loaded into Q1 ADventure (QAD), which is the second program. QAD actually plays the game, unlike QLAG which 'maps' it out. Rudimentary graphics

(line drawings) are provided for the default objects and monsters. If you wish to create new objects or monsters the third program, GRAPHIC, is used to turn your artistic abilities into the necessary DATA statements.

To play these games properly requires at least two people, one to create a game with QLAG (i.e. a 'Dungeon Master') and at least one Adventurer to play it with QAD. I must admit that, until recently, I was the only person I knew with a copy and so I never got round to fully de-bugging the programs. Unfortunately it degenerated into an academic exercise. However, if anyone wants to know more, please drop me a line or give me a ring.

For budding 'Dungeon Masters', Richard has agreed to allow QLAF to be used as a meeting place. If you have 'generated' an adventure and are looking for players, drop him a line and he will give some publicity, Perhaps, in time this could become a regular column, Mr. Editor, Sir!

Address is: 26 Oaksfield, Methley, Leeds LS26 9AE, West Yorkshire. Tel.0977-515820
Tony Wells.

An Editor replies:

1) QLAG/QAD :

I'm pleased that we shall shortly be able to have copies of these progs. I have written to Tony Bridge and am awaiting a reply as to whether we can P.D. them but have not received a reply. The letter stated that if no reply was forthcoming we would assume his consent.

Certainly if anyone does generate any "dungeons" I'd be very happy to help in any way I can to circulate them. If those people interested want a regular column, so much the better.

Regarding errors in the review, I should apologise but I only got a copy of the book myself after the review was sent in and didn't have time to check it.

2) QLAF4:

As for the "Cave Adventure" typeface, I have reprinted it in this issue. There should be no problems reading it this time.

Richard

***SPECIAL OFFER TO
Adventurers Forum readers**

******BLAG2!******

***ONLY £7 Inclusive of P&P**

Additional features in **BLAG2!** includes a large data base that will educate you in matters relating to Police trivia, as you play the game.

For those who have already purchased the Blag, A self addressed and stamped envelope plus the original cartridge will bring you the updated program, including a completed Blunders notebook, containing hints on solving the game.

All orders/enquiries to...
Blunders Adventure, 30, Lyndhurst Road, Ashurst,
Southampton. SO4 2DU. Tele. Ashurst 3418.

JEWEL ADVENTURE

JEWEL ADVENTURE by T. Bladon

This adventure is available free to QUANTA members from the library on DISK 9 or MICRODRIVE cartridge 22.

This adventure is very much in the same vogue as Tom's WORM adventure. It does however differ in some respects. There is not a graphics version of this adventure, but this fact does not detract from the game (although on one or two occasions, I have thought graphics would help to enhance the descriptions). Note that Tom has included sprites in this adventure, as in WORM, to represent the giraffe which is an integral part of the adventure.

In JEWEL your task is to find 13 jewels which have been spread about the country in various places, some of which may be quite straight-forward, and some which you would find it hard to believe. As in WORM, you have to find ways of making some of the characters in the adventure become your friends so that they will follow you around and hopefully fulfil some of the tasks for you, such as killing some of the more undesirable characters.

The problems range from the relatively simple one of a door which will only open to one word (the letters of the word are spread around written on various objects) to a vampire in a coffin who will kill you as soon as you open the coffin, unless you get to him first.

There is no real-time fight sequence in this adventure, but you have the added problem of needing a drink regularly as well as food. (This causes problems especially when you try exploring the desert, since you actually need to drink more often). There is not too much food around, so try to be conservative with it, since you will find the only food available quite early in the game.

I didn't enjoy this adventure as much as WORM, since there were a few stages where it seemed impossible to find anything more to do, but then that is part of the adventure. The puzzles are not really too complex as soon as you begin to follow Tom's line of thought and remember just

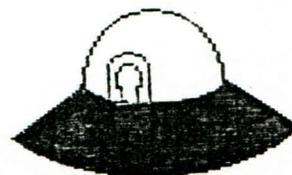


how explosive gas is. The main problem with the game is that it warns you if a goblin for instance, is to your south, but does not tell you that the goblin will kill you if try to go south (still I suppose that should be obvious by the fact that he is madly wielding an axe!!)

Overall, the game is quite good, but may not appeal to all adventurers since the food and drink problem tends to restrict your movement at an early stage and may frustrate you rather a lot when you know you have only a few moves left to get the last jewel and return it to its place of rest and the computer suddenly tells you 'You die of hunger.' The only way around this as far as I can see (unless you alter the program), is to explore the whole world, forgetting about the task of collecting the jewels, but making a map and then begin all over again, wasting as few moves as possible.

Rich Mellor

StarPod



Written by Alan Pemberton
£6.00 if we supply the media
£4.00 if you supply the media
postage & packing
comes with an 8 page manual.
Orders to CGH Services.

D-I-Y ADVENTURE

A REVIEW OF P. J. SMITH'S 'DIY ADVENTURE', BY M. L. JACKSON

DIY Adventure used to be available through Sinclair QL World's Microdrive Exchange until several months ago, when the range of programs was revised and extended. QL World charged only £1.00 for this 'adventure creator' if you supplied your own blank microdrive cartridge. For your quid you got a short instruction manual in the form of a Quill doc file which you could read on screen or print out for future reference; the main program 'DIY_skeleton', about 8K of SuperBASIC; and an example game created with the 'skeleton', 'DIY_adventure', around 12K in length.

THE BLACK CASTLE ADVENTURE

The alternative name given to the DIY adventure by its author, Philip John Bagnell Smith -also known as The Bagnell- is The Black Castle. The main intention of this game appears to be to demonstrate how to construct a game using the adventure skeleton, though the author suggests that it should provide a few hours entertainment, which it does. The objective for the player is to explore the fantasy world, collecting parts of a QL along the way. (This sounds a little like my front bedroom.) I found the game to be among the easiest of QL adventures, but it is probably worth playing to boost your morale.

The DIY Skeleton is designed to help those inexperienced at programming to produce their own SuperBASIC adventures. It provides a framework for constructing an adventure by giving a program listing with ten places to fill in with your own ideas. To create a personalised adventure you must add your own instructions, determine the number of rooms, monsters and witches and objects, provide the data for the rooms, monsters and objects, decide on the object usage combinations and the object usage consequences. This probably gives you an idea as to the type of adventure you could create with the skeleton, i.e., lots of roaming around picking up objects to destroy demons and monsters, etc.

PRINCIPLES OF GAME WRITING

Unfortunately it is by no means as easy to use as an adventure creator such as the Quill Adventure Writing System, which allows you to produce adventures without any knowledge whatsoever of SuperBASIC (apart from how to load it, that is). I would recommend, therefore, that the DIY skeleton be used in conjunction with a book on writing adventures, such as the ones reviewed in the earlier articles in this series. The manual with the skeleton is only three pages, and it is impossible to explain the theory of adventure game writing in such a short document. A good book on game writing should cover all the basics, and 'skeleton' should help with the problem of getting your own good game ideas into the form of a program.

Incidentally, Philip recommends loading the skeleton into an editor such as Quill to help with adding your own details. He does not explain how to do this and this caused me some problems when I was first starting with the QL. A Quanta library cartridge, LIBRARY 02, has a Quill utility to help with such editing of programs.

AVAILABILITY OF DIY ADVENTURE

I do not know whether QL World will ever supply this game and utility again. Should sufficient QLAF readers write in to ask they might consider it. I wonder if Philip reads this magazine? If Microdrive Exchange no longer has the distribution rights to DIY adventure, would Philip consider releasing it into the public domain? Even though more sophisticated utilities are available use of the utility might help extend users' knowledge of game writing and they might have some fun with the Black Castle adventure. Have any readers produced any games with this utility which they would release for general distribution?

Michael L. Jackson

ACT 1

REVIEW OF ADVENTURE CREATION TOOL v1.53 (Special Edition)

WRITTEN BY STEVE SUTTON

PUBLISHED BY DIGITAL PRECISION, 222 THE AVENUE, LONDON, E4 9SE (£49.95)

SPECIAL OFFER TO QLAF READERS : £34.95 !!!

The first thing that struck me about this package was the size. As usual with DP's manuals, this one is pretty thick. If that wasn't enough to put you off, a directory of the disk will. It contains some 79 files (although most of these are part of an example adventure supplied). In one way this is good for the user, since it makes you delve into the manual from the start, rather than trying to have a go on the program.

Before I look at the package itself, a large adventure (IMAGINE) is included on the disk, which was written with ACT by its author. It serves as a very good advertisement for the package itself; it's just a pity that DP are unwilling (or unable?) to sell IMAGINE separately since it is a great joy to play and makes full use of the QL's capabilities. I will not dwell on this since it has been reviewed already in QLAF.

However, it must be noted that the manual warns you that IMAGINE took many months to write and therefore to produce something of the same standard (or better), you must be prepared to spend quite some time on the program. I do think however, that the ACT package will speed up the actual writing of the program and is much easier to use for writing an adventure than any other method. ACT will produce a stand alone multi-tasking adventure run using the EXEC command and the completed adventure is therefore a lot quicker than many other programming languages. (Maybe not as quick as pure machine code, but have you ever tried writing an adventure in machine code?).

There is another similar adventure-writing program for the QL, 'The Quill' by Gilsoft, but ACT is different in many aspects and is by far the more flexible of the two. For instance, ACT allows graphics and sound to be incorporated into an adventure; although Gilsoft have brought out a graphics package for other versions of the Quill, they have stated that they will not do so for the QL version. As for sound, as far as I know, they have not produced a sound package for the Quill on any version. ACT is also radically different in that it allows you to actually 'program' your adventure as you would like it, rather than having the computer generate all of the action. It is by this method that it achieves its versatility and manages to get rid of that clinical feel which Quill'd adventures seem to produce.

THE MANUAL

Reading the manual shows the thought that has gone into the whole ACT package. The manual is easy to read with small bits of humour and leads you hand in hand through using the system. I was a little disappointed by the index however, since it only contains broad subject headings and does not actually help you find the bits of important information which are spread throughout the manual, such as the use of Location 5 in the example adventure, which is the dump for all of the used objects.

The manual also shows signs of the first part having been written before the graphics and sound capabilities were added. This means that certain files have the wrong names and if you follow the instructions in the manual verbatim, you will have problems unless you also look at the two addenda (which cover the graphics and sound).

You are invited to try out the power of the system quite early, by playing the small example adventure (only six locations). Note this is a development adventure intended to be added to by the user, and is different to IMAGINE. The manual leads you step by step to solve this rather simple adventure and then goes on to tempt you to add locations and objects to the adventure, so that you can see how easy it is to expand an adventure once the basic program is there.

There is also no need to worry if you do make a drastic mistake in your alterations to the adventure, since every time that you use the editing facilities in ACT, the

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automatically make a back-up copy of the file before you can alter it.

USING THE SYSTEM TO WRITE AN ADVENTURE

The manual warns you beforehand that you will need to plan out your adventure beforehand on sheets of paper before even attempting to get it into the computer. This is a good idea when writing any sort of adventure and is not just a feature of this system. (When will someone come out with a program to design an adventure map on the computer, with multiple layers and directions drawn in? Maybe you could use a 3D circuit board designer?).

You then have to think of the layout of your program, whether to use graphics and sound or not and which mode you would like the program to run. For those of you who would like to have MODE 8 graphics with MODE 4 text, the system comes complete with a machine code routine which can be used from within ACT to do just that. However, there are three warnings about this split-mode routine:

- 1) the finished program may not be compatible with some programs and memory expansions (although the example adventure shows how you can ask users if they wish to use split-mode, to avoid this problem)
- 2) If the adventure is to be run alongside QRAM, you will need to use the UNLOCK option on QRAM when running the program
- 3) The routine can slow response time down considerably (although it must be noted that this is a problem with all such split-mode routines, and not just the code used here).

In order to keep the separate editing programs quite small, and keep down complexity, there are separate files for descriptions of locations and objects and two more files for data associated with them, such as the directions from each location. This can lead to a problem however, since unless the programmer is careful, it is possible that the direction data will not correspond with the list of directions given in the location description. It would therefore be useful if the computer itself generated a list of the directions available when it describes the location. I guess that DP haven't adopted this approach for two reasons:

- 1) The description of available exits is more flexible since you enter them yourself; and
- 2) You could do this yourself from the program.

You do not have to be worried about the use of flags to control various aspects of the game however, since you can use a maximum of 127 parameters per object and location (although the first ten are given over to directions). You can have eight flags per parameter and a maximum 255 locations plus 256 objects. This gives a grand total of $8 \times (127 - 10) \times (255 + 256) = 478296$ flags, which should be enough to cope with even the largest adventure. Note that location 0 is not available for use by the programmer (it is used to store certain game information such as player's score, health and location) and therefore there is a maximum of 255 locations.

The program gives you very good control over objects in the game. The example program allows them to be contained in other objects, have set surface areas or volume and weight. You can also specify if they are edible, poisonous, liquid or solid; if they will burn and if so, how long they will burn for. However, it should be noted that this is just the use the example program puts some of the flags to, and you may decide to alter some of these uses.

So, how do you actually program the game, after you have set up your data on the objects and locations and entered the messages the computer will respond with.

ACT requires you to write the program in two files, the PLAYER program and the EVENT program. The PLAYER program controls what happens in response to the player's input,

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whereas the EVENT program controls what will happen in the game regardless of what the player decides to do. The EVENT program is called once every two seconds and so retains a real-time aspect to your adventures (although you need not retain this feature if you do not want to).

The programs themselves are written in ACTBasic, which is a new programming language, although in some respects it looks similar to BASIC and can be entered from BASIC. They cannot be run as they stand, but have to be assembled into a form that ACT can understand and then linked with the rest of the data files. It is a pity however that the beep which the assembler issues when it has completed a line, cannot be turned off, since this can become annoying; especially if you are programming into the small hours as I regularly do in order to avoid mains spikes.

The new language is not very difficult to learn, since it only has a few keywords. There are a maximum of 256 variables available in each program, although these can be a little confusing since they are represented by numbers rather than letters. It may be useful if the numbers (rather than the variables) had to be preceded by a hash, so that it is easy to distinguish between the two. Also, another part of the language which takes a little getting used to is the fact that it does not support a IF...THEN...ELSE...ENDIF structure. Do not worry though, it still contains an IF function which returns control to the next line if the condition is not complied with.

Like Superbasic, you can create your own procedures, which can thankfully be accessed from either program whilst only having to be defined in one of them. However, the task still seems a little daunting and therefore many of the more useful routines are included in the example adventure, nearly all of which will not require alterations to incorporate them into your own adventures. You will only need to add specialist calls to deal with certain player and program actions. To help you on your way, the manual includes some examples of how to add extra features to the demonstration game.

My first attempt at programming ACT was to add a command to switch off the graphics and therefore allow the program to run a little quicker when the player wanted. After I had sorted out the variables and numbers, I found it very easy to do, although it meant finding all of the lines containing graphics calls by inspection. Luckily I was able to use QLOAD/QREF (Liberation Software) to speed up loading and saving of the game, and also to find keywords in the program. The fact that the programs are not in Superbasic does not affect the operation of these two excellent programs, it is just a shame that the final programs had to be saved in the normal manner at the end for the ACT assembler to understand. (Any possibility of getting the assembler to assemble QSAVED files as well DP?).

To aid you in writing and testing your adventures, an excellent debugger is included in the package which can be incorporated into your adventure at the testing stage. However, it should be noted that you ought not to supply this version to anyone else, since the debugger provides an excellent opportunity to 'cheat'.

The debugger allows you to single step through both the player and event programs. You can also set break-points and alter object and location parameters to see the effect. The only problem with this is that you will need to know fully what each flag is used for, but as usual, if you have planned your adventure well, you will already know what they do. The manual gives an example of using this function to manipulate the program and therefore cheat: since one of the parameters on location 0 contains the player's present location, you can use the debugger to alter this and go to whichever location you want.

You may be worried that all of these facilities will lead to a large end program. However, this is no problem, since ACT contains a text compression routine which can reduce text by anything up to 50%. Also, once your program is fully debugged, you do not need to include the line numbers in the player and event programs, and you can also use a shortened version of the ACT run-time which does not include the debugger.

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Also you only need to incorporate the graphics or sound facilities which are actually used by your program (the graphics compression is excellent - see below).

The text compression means that it is impossible to cheat by looking at the listing of the adventure (I thought that was all part of the fun!) and therefore adds an extra degree of security to your program. Thankfully this does not affect the name of the drive name for the saved game position and therefore it is relatively easy to adapt the completed program for either disk or microdrive use; especially since even with the graphics and sound options included, the completed adventure will only be made up of two files.

Once the game is complete, it will run on any QL (provided there is sufficient memory and there are no problems with the split-mode routine - see above) without any extra toolkits or run-times being present. The only slight restriction is that a position must be saved on the same drive as the picture file, and the name of the saved game is set by the programmer and cannot therefore be player selected (this means that to save more than one position, you will need to use more than one disk or microdrive, although I don't have any ideas about changing a disk over in the middle of a game, since the program will be unable to load/save the game due to the picture file will still be open).

THE GRAPHICS PACKAGE

The first sign of a good adventure is the way it is displayed on screen. With ACT this can be enhanced in two ways:

1) You are able to use any fonts you may possess, to display the text in and, although there is no font editor in the package, this is no great problem since there are several on the market. The code needs to be altered slightly to make it compatible with ACT, but a program is included to do this, and once modified, only three instructions are needed in the event program to turn on the new font.

2) Quite complex graphics can be incorporated into an adventure created with the ACT system. For instance, all of the objects in the current location are displayed on screen, and by the use of two pictures for one object, the picture can reflect when a flame is burning, or a container is open. The graphics are not just restricted to locations either: you can have extra screens to be displayed when a certain event occurs. An example of this is the explosion screen in the demonstration adventure.

To enable you to build pictures, several utilities are included in the ACT package. There is a rather simplistic graphics designer in the package, which lacks facilities such as plotting points, leaving a trail behind the cursor or even wiping out a previously drawn line. However, even using this utility on its own can lead to good results with a little effort, as can be seen in IMAGINE. The program is different from other graphics designers on the market, since it stores a picture as a series of commands, rather than as a screen dump, which allows very good compression of the screen. It does however, include some very useful facilities (which are also available as keywords for inclusion in BASIC programs). There are two new FILL commands supported which are able to multi-task and also to fill a shape repeatedly (for a definite or indefinite period). They both also support both plain colours and stipples, which coupled with the repeat facility, allows 'flame' or 'running water' effects to be shown on screen. The one fill function works along similar lines to the BASIC FILL function, except in that it is able to fill re-entrant shapes, and will also cope with lines which cross each other. The other allows a shape to be filled after it has been drawn.

If you do find that the graphics program is too simplistic for your needs, you have no cause to despair. ACT is able to cope with pictures from any source, and includes a screen compression program for use with pictures created in this way. This screen compression utility differs from others on the market in several ways:

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- 1) It manages to achieve a compression of around 50-60% on screens I have drawn (compared to 30-40% compression produced by the best routine I have seen so far).
- 2) It allows you to define the area of the screen to be compressed, by moving a window around the display.
- 3) Since the program is multi-tasking and invoked by a 'hotkey', you are able to take a snapshot of any screen which can be produced on the QL, even if you are in the middle of a program.

As with the other graphics utilities, DP have included a facility to make use of this from BASIC. A new command is added to basic which allows you to show a compressed picture on screen.

Note however that if you use a compressed screen in an ACT program, it will not set the display windows to accommodate the screen. It must therefore be the same size as (or smaller than) the established picture window. It would thus be helpful if the compression program were to display the size of the window as you altered it, to select the area of the screen to be processed.

THE SOUND PACKAGE

A sound editor is included in the ACT system to enable you to incorporate sounds into your adventures. You must not expect to reproduce Beethoven though, since ACT still has to rely on the QL's BEEP command.

You are able to create up to 999 sounds (or pauses), which can be incorporated into a sequence to create the desired effect. You alter the parameters of the sounds by using the cursor keys, and once a sound has been entered, another parameter shows if you want the program to go on to produce another sound after the QL has beeped this one. You can then alter another sound; or listen to either the sound on its own, or the sequence containing that sound.

Once you have completed all of the sounds, the program will create a machine code routine to enable the sounds to be incorporated into your adventure. This is a painless operation (although it involves linking all of the files together yet again), and then all you have to do is to alter the player and event programs to call the sounds as and when desired (again, only three commands are needed to call a sound or sequence).

THE EDITING FACILITIES

You are able to access the editing facilities through 'CAPTAIN', ACT's front end program (or if you prefer, you can EXECute them individually from basic). This allows you to select what you want to edit and then call up the different utilities supplied with ACT (such as the editors, linker and assembler). Please note that if you have QRAM present, the computer may crash when it attempts to return to the front end. Hopefully DP will see fit to put this right.

It is unfortunate that the front end does not communicate with the different utilities to inform them what you intend to edit and thereby set up the default file name ready for loading. This does occur to a minor extent in the parameter editor, but here the default is set up as the location data file, even if you have told 'captain' that you intend to alter the object data file.

These are basically very good utilities which enable you to easily enter all of the text for the adventure. They will enable you to change the INK or PAPER in the middle of the text, so that you can highlight certain points if you so wish. There is no need to try to justify the text since this is done by the ACT main program automatically to suit the mode which the QL is in, when the text is output.

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There is a small problem when using the parameter editor since the last location/object number it displays is a new one and if you even just look at this, it will automatically increase the number of locations/objects by one. According to the manual there is no way to get rid of it (perhaps DP should include an option to quit the editor without updating the file). This can cause problems in the graphic version of an adventure unless you have drawn a picture (or a blank picture) for this new location or object. However, I have found a way of removing it without any problems, although do not use this if you have added another picture to cure the fault:

(In following, read objects for locations, if these are what you were editing).

- 1) a = length of file (use FLEN if you have TK2, else it is the number of locations * no. of parameters {displayed by the editing program})
- 2) v =RESPR(a):LBYTES flpl_locn_dta (or objt_dta),v
- 3) POKE v+2,no of locations-1
- 4) SBYTES flpl_locn_dta,v,a-no of parameters

* PLEASE DO NOT USE THIS METHOD TO REMOVE LOCATION DATA FROM ANYWHERE BUT THE LAST LISTED LOCATION, SINCE THIS WILL CAUSE HAVOC IN YOUR ADVENTURE *

Another minor quibble is that once you have finished editing a file, control returns to the front end without asking if you wish to edit another file, so you then have to go through the process of calling up the editing program again. However, I must say that I like the way that when you do return to the front end, it sets up the next option as the program necessary to incorporate the changes into the finished adventure (although the screen telling you this does not always appear for long enough, due to a tendency for there to be overrun on the keys).

I also feel that it would have been perhaps useful to give a word search option (as there is already on the WORD editor) in the text editors, so that if you rename an object, you can ensure that all references to it in the text have been altered. Also for the sake of being dogmatic, I would have liked the programs to have been a little more consistant in their prompts: sometimes the ENTER key is needed as well as Y(es) or N(o) and sometimes it isn't.

CONCLUSION

I feel that the whole of the package represents value for money if you are looking for a means of producing quality adventures without too much trouble. Although I have found a few minor quibbles in the system, it is basically very sound and quite easy to use. You can produce complex adventures without too much hardship, and are able to build up a library of routines to use in your adventures.

I was a little disappointed with the graphics utility, but considering the fact that there were only six sectors left on a double-sided 3.5" disk to allow expansion of the program, coupled with the obvious memory restrictions (not everyone has endless sources of cash for memory expansion) DP seem to have struck the right balance between the complexity of the program and the use of memory.

The rest of the package certainly left a large impression on me (must have been the weight!), and it is certainly good for the QL market to have such a product available for would-be adventure writers to use. I just hope that the product has not appeared too late in the QL's life, and that we will soon see the appearance of good, cheap adventures on the market produced using the system. Maybe now some of the Quill'd adventures can be updated to allow conversion to disk and inclusion of sound and graphics. The QL adventure market has been rather stagnant for too long and it's about time we showed the rest of the computing world that the QL has not fought its last battle against the dragons and evil wizards of the world (of the adventurer) just yet.

Rich Mellor

THE QUILL

Many moons ago, I picked up an early version of The Quill for the Spectrum. I was impressed with the ease at which adventures could be created, compared with writing them from scratch in Basic. Now I have got myself copy of The Quill, this time for the QL (from QLSUB if you are interested.) I hoped that I would find some enhancements to the program since the original Spectrum version.

As expected, the bulk of the program was just as I was used to, but skipping through the manual, I was pleased to find a number of additions to the possible "actions".....

1) AUTOG and AUTOD (i.e. autoget and autodrop)

These are a really good idea, as they save all the effort and memory space involved in creating separate entries in the Event Table for each object.

2) DROPALL

At first I was curious as to why a corresponding GETALL action was not included, but it is fairly sensible when you think about it, because there will be some objects (e.g. doors) that you won't want the player to run off with. And, although it isn't mentioned in the manual, there appears to be a fairly simple way to implement a GET ALL command anyway, which is probably worth mentioning here:

For each "getable" object x, insert an entry in the Event Table of the sort...

| | | |
|---------|-------|-----------|
| GET ALL | Conds | PRESENT x |
| | | NOTCARR x |
| | | NOTWORN x |
| | Acts | GET x |

NB: - No OK or DONE
Then finally,

| | | |
|---------|-------|----|
| GET ALL | Conds | |
| | Acts | OK |

3) RAMSAVE and RAMLOAD

Initially, I was very pleased to see RAMSAVE and RAMLOAD among the new actions, but it soon became obvious that

the way they are implemented, they are of very little use.

You see, if RAMLOAD is called before a position has been saved using RAMSAVE, the program goes into a loop. Therefore, a RAMSAVE must be done from the Status Table during the first turn, so that this situation does not arise. However, if you get killed in an adventure (i.e. the action END is used), the program re-initialises and will do another RAMSAVE at the first turn, before you get a chance to RAMLOAD any saved position.

The only way out of this Catch 22 situation is not to use END at all....
First of all, you should have a flag (e.g. flag 58) denoting whether RAMSAVE has been used. This can be done as follows:-

| | | | | |
|--------------|---|---|-------|---------|
| Status Table | N | N | Conds | ZERO 58 |
| | | | Acts | SET 58 |
| | | | | RAMSAVE |

Also, whenever the player is killed off, a flag, say flag 59, is set instead of using END.

Then the Status Table should check after each turn, whether flag 59 is set, and if so

- 1) CLEAR all flags EXCEPT flag 58 and flag 1
- 2) DROPALL
- 3) PLACE all objects back in their start positions
- 4) GOTO location 0
- 5) Print a MESSAGE such as "You have been re-incarnated!"
- 6) Wait for ANYKEY to be pressed
- 7) The DESCRIBE the current location (i.e. zero)

All this means that you will go back to the beginning of the adventure but will still be able to use RAMLOAD.

I hope Gilsoft will consider implementing a useful RAMSAVE routine in future releases.

I really only have two complaints about The Quill (well, version A07 to be precise), one of which I have just mentioned (and that can easily be avoided by not using RAMSAVE at all). The other one is much more annoying, and only

THE QUILL

evident once you have saved your adventure as an EXECutable program; namely that there is a little blue window with a white border at the bottom of the screen. Unfortunately, when you change the permanent colours in the main window, the colours of the bottom window stay the same, which can make the finished product look very untidy indeed.

This annoyed me enough to start me PEEKing at some finished adventures to try and find a way of changing the colours of the redundant bottom window....

Although I can only speak for the A07 release of The Quill, the program listed below will enable the user to change the colours of the bottom window according to his/her preferences. First of all, find out the length of the finished adventure (using the DIR option from The Quill for example) and make a note of it. Then type and RUN this program.....

```
10 CLS
20 INPUT "name of file ";file$
30 INPUT "Length of file ";l
40 a=RESPR(1)
50 LBYTES "mdvl_"&file$,a
60 INPUT "New Border Colour (0 - 7) ";b
70 INPUT "New Border Width (0 - ?) ";w
80 INPUT "New Paper Colour (0 - 7) ";p
90 INPUT "new Ink Colour (0 - 7) ";i
100 POKE a+4186,b
110 POKE a+4187,w
120 POKE a+4188,p
130 POKE a+4189,i
140 INPUT "New name for file ";name$
150 SEXEC "mdvl_"&name$,a,l,500
```

NOTES

- 1) Change refs to mdvl_ to flp_ etc as required.
- 2) This program is not error-trapped so use it sensibly.
- 3) I don't know how much data space The Quill adventures need to run. I used 500 bytes in the SEXEC command in line 150 and this seems to work OK. If you run short of memory, you could experiment with lower values.

I hope that these comments will help readers get even more out of this excellent utility.

Alan Pemberton

HELPLINE

IMAGINE:

Rich Mellor writes in asking for help on this. He's solved the problem of the Nibbler (and the clock face) but is now stuck thuswise:

- 1) Once one has disposed of the nagging wife, do I need to go into the larder? I use CRAWL but still bump my head and can't find anything.
- 2) I still need a key to open the transporter and a friend to work it.

Well I haven't got this far so let's be hearing from you on Imagine, and let's hope that DP see the sense of releasing it seperately.

UNDERGROUND ADVENTURE:

David Goodwin has written about this adventure from the Quanta library. Basically he is stuck, not being able to get past the chasm or the tree.

Well, I haven't completed this one by a long way, BUT, I have solved these two problems!

- 1) To cross the chasm, you wave the staff you picked up just east of the cavemouth.
- 2) To get past the tree, you chop it down with the axe, which you'll find in a chamber beyond the chasm. This'll get you to the rope and a bear.

Now for a couple of questions of my own on this one.

- 1) How do you get past the panther?
- 2) What do you use the rope for?

Richard Alexander

SUBSCRIPTIONS

IF YOU WANT FUTURE EDITIONS OF QLAF, THEN PLEASE SEND £4.00 FOR 4 ISSUES TO CGH SERVICES, CWM GWEN HALL, PENCADER, DYFED, CYMRU. SA39 9HA. ALL PAYMENTS IN STERLING PLEASE.

ADVENTURE CREATION TOOL

ACT - THE ADVENTURE CREATION TOOL SPECIAL EDITION COMPLETE WITH IMAGINE

This is what they said about it:

- * about APT (the forerunner of ACT) in QL World, Aug. 1987...
"lives up to the quality we have learned to expect from the QL"
"an excellent tool for crafting your own mega-adventures"
"the flexible architecture allows your designs to be as complicated or as simple as you wish"
- * about IMAGINE in QL Adventurers Forum, No. 4 and QL World, Feb. 1988...
"IMAGINE is brilliant"
"the Graphics are a delight"
"Packed with features, IMAGINE is lively and full of fun"

Q. What is ACT?

A. ACT is a complete SYSTEM designed to allow you to write professional quality adventure games for the QL. It allows interactive 'text only' or fully illustrated or even animated adventures to be developed.

Q. So it is only for those who want to play or design games?

A. Absolutely not! ACT can be used for interactive and/or real-time simulation, testing and modelling. Our definition of 'game' is VERY wide-ranging.

Q. How does ACT work?

A. You develop a game starting from a simple 'framework' provided. Several utility programs allow modifications and additions to be made to any feature in the game, or any number of new ideas to be incorporated.

Q. I'm not a programmer - am I going to be able to use ACT?

A. Yes, you can use ACT to make sophisticated games involving hundreds of locations and objects each of which can be illustrated (or not, it's up to you) without your ever writing a single line of program code.

Q. Does that mean that ACT is a 'fixed' system with a limited number of flags and 'things' that can happen?

A. Absolutely not! You don't have to be able to write programs to use ACT but if you are able to write simple additions to the 'system' then you can add absolutely ANY feature you want to your game. The manual provides lots of examples.

Q. Do I need memory expansion to use ACT?

A. Yes and no. We only supply ACT on disk (it could work from microdrive but it would require rather a lot of them) and the chances are that if you have disks then you will also have extra memory. However, the component parts of ACT will work on unexpanded machines as will the games you write using ACT, provided they don't grow too big of course. ACT can be used to write a game that uses virtually ALL the memory available on a fully expanded QL - but such a game would be huge! In general, games produced by ACT will be compact and capable of running even on unexpanded, microdrive-only QLs.

Q. What EXACTLY do I get with ACT?

A. The basic 'bits' that you get are: Fourteen multitasking utility programs ranging from a sophisticated graphics drawing program to utilities such as a program designed to examine or modify the vocabulary of words that your game will know. Several of these utilities can be used for other applications as well, for example there is a powerful screen compressor (more efficient than ANY other currently available). There are also lots of data files that you use when developing a game. These are all manipulated by the system utility programs and form the 'blueprint' that is used to construct an adventure game. Several powerful SuperBASIC additions allow many of the advanced drawing features included with ACT to be used independently from your own SuperBASIC programs. A complete demonstration adventure game is included - IMAGINE. IMAGINE is the most raved-about adventure for the QL, and it alone is worth the purchase price of IMAGINE. A mini-adventure is also provided - this is a suitable for use as a framework for building your adventures. Perhaps most important of all is a comprehensive manual that provides step-by-step instructions to all parts of ACT.

Q. What can I do with ACT that I can't do with other systems?

A. The simple answer to this is to say ANYTHING you CAN'T do with other systems! ACT is very flexible, virtually ANY feature you might want can be incorporated into an ACT adventure.

Q. What other advantages will I get by using ACT instead of SuperBASIC?

A. There are lots of advantages. The main ones are: 1) SPACE. ACT uses sophisticated text and screen compression techniques that will allow you to include much more in a given amount of memory. 2) CHEAT-PROOFING. There is no way anyone can read the text within a game produced by ACT except by playing the game properly. 3) SPEED. ACT uses a dedicated language that is VERY fast - the response to commands when playing an ACT game is, therefore, very quick. 4) FREEDOM. All the hard work of sorting out how to make your adventure operate is taken care of for you by ACT. You are free to do the creative work of actually constructing your game.

Q. This is clearly going to cost hundreds of pounds.

A. ACT SPECIAL EDITION including IMAGINE costs just £49.95: to members of the Adventurer's Forum the pair costs just £34.95 - a massive discount. ACT SPECIAL EDITION is available mail order from DIGITAL PRECISION, 222 THE AVENUE, CHINGFORD, LONDON E4 9SE, or by telephone (24 hour service) 01-527 5493.

ACT SPECIAL EDITION
COMPLETE WITH IMAGINE

LETTER: MALCOLM Pt. 1

Dear Richard,

Thanks for QLAF4, the printed work makes a lot easier reading than having to mess about with disk drives, printers and what have you.

I've got a THOR XVI, so reading the first three issues involved microdrives, two machines and the networking facility, but at least all the files are over and have been printed.

Which brings me onto my next point: us THOR users. How are we supposed to run protected software if keyed mdv_s are required? Thankfully, I've got a few items unpacked, so I can use them - but what about my Pawn? Have I wasted my money, or has someone out there cracked it? (I'm willing to swap my original mdv_ for an unprotected one!) The problem with Pawn, I'm told, is that the mdv_s are specially sector mapped - so a plain copy won't do at all.

Someone has managed to deprotect my Lands of Havoc for me and now I have it running 100% (i.e. no key) on my QL disk system, but I won't transfer it to the THOR XVI until the day I can get a joystick running for the THOR XVI.

Over the next few months I hope to dispose of my old QL's and to solely use my THOR. Since most of the serious software I use is able to run on disk this is no problem - but what about games?

I gather that CST are hoping to sell 60,000 THOR's, 90% of which are to non-QL owners, surely this is incentive enough for manufacturers to make software available on disk systems?

Anyway, my next task is to see if I can get ZKUL (despite my having completed it), West, D-Day and War in the East on the THOR. I reckon that lot ought to keep me quiet for a while.

Of course running some utilities on the THOR will mean a few changes to the code; Gilsoft's QUILL's boot file needs to be deleted and the code simply EXEC'd; the excellent The Double needs a window instruction on the first line as well as a Flp_use Mdv command.

Anyhow, a few comments on the games I know:

ZKUL

I hope that my maps prove useful. I'm sorry but I didn't realise that Richard would copy them directly into the magazine - if I did I would have re-drawn them. Despite what some manufacturers say, Zkul is an excellent adventure.

COLOSSAL CAVE

I've completed the IBM (original version) and I've got the maps. I've tried the QL version and it's basically identical. I've noticed two differences so far: the snake handling is different and there is no passage SW from the snake's chamber as in the IBM. But I reckon I could whizz around with my IBM maps in an evening or two. Shall I contribute a map, Richard?

PLAYTIME

Fantastic. Except I'm stumped. I've got a blob but I can't clean it at all. But my biggest problem is that I can't seem to communicate with anyone. In fact in any adventure, where one can "talk" to characters, I always get nowhere. Help!!! How do I get past the prisoner?

FANTASIA

Remember this ancient Superbasic adventure? Well, I still can't crack it. Has anyone actually made any sort of sense out of the layout of Fantasia, and actually done something of note? I think it's a wise idea not to wander in the desert!

BOWLED OVER

A cricket simulation. A ball by ball simulation that's dead boring. Don't bother with it.

THE DOUBLE

A simulation, but soccer this time. Now, I'm hooked totally on this game, a real two in the morning job! A few words on comments raised in the last issue about the game:

- 1) Yes, it is possible to get sacked, just wait until you can't afford to repay the loan - you get kicked out of the game!
- 2) The Save routine is OK on my THOR, but perhaps it's because I'm using a THOR and not a QL!
- 3) If the results of the other divisions bother you then just hit enter nine times

MALCOLM Pt.2

REPLY Pt.1

so that the display whips through it quicker. Again, perhaps the THOR runs faster than the QL, so it's no bother at all.

However there are a few negative points:
1) Error-trapping is non-existent and the input routines are messy. Perhaps I'll add my code to this.

2) Also I think that it's a waste of time asking the player if he wants to buy a player if he hasn't got enough money! Despite all this, it's a great game and I really recommend it. Darlington for the Cup!

LANDS OF HAVOC

Believe it or not, I've got maps for this game. Is anyone interested in them being printed in QLAF?

THE FUTURE

Because of the large numbers of THORs being shifted, surely now's the time for some bright spark to grab the licence to convert other games to the QL from the Atari ST and Commodore Amiga?

There must be a market for the remainder of the Pawn series and such epics as Elite. Can you imagine what the latter would be like on the QL/THOR? Fantastic! I reckon that for a small company there could be some money in converting such games to the QL/THOR and the more games, the more sales of the machine, which might lead to more games....

Finally could QLAF arrange for someone to distribute QLAF software on 3.5" disks, it would make my life (and others) a lot easier.

Plugh,

Malcolm Smith

APOLOGIES

To those of you whose letters and articles were chopped or couldn't be fitted into this issue. It's 4 pages longer than usual and I'm doing another mag: QL Technical Review to cater for all the utility reviews you've been kind enough to send in. Keep 'em coming.

Richard

Malcolm,

Thanks for your very interesting letter, which raises a vast number of points, which I'll attempt to deal with, under three headings: QLAF/CGH Services; QL Adventures; The THOR and its future.

QLAF/CGH SERVICES

1) I'm glad you approve of the printed version. Most people who've written have said the same.

2) 3.5" disks. All QLAF/CGH Services software is available on 3.5" disks. Previously this was courtesy of several readers of the mag who kindly copied them for me. I have now given in to the demand for 3.5" disks and should have a new Super Q-Board and twin NEC drive set up on my No2 QL by the time you read this.

3) I wish I could share your optimism for the QL market. What was waning this time last year, now seems to be in terminal decline. Until the Thor is seen to be available in big quantities and working then the prospect of us getting new games software of the standard enjoyed by ST and Amiga owners is remote. The QL market just isn't big enough. Further, both it and the Thor (if it ever gets off the ground) are seen as business machines for small businesses and societies. If a freelance programmer can produce something of excellent quality they can usually find a small market for it, but for the effort, the rewards are miniscule compared with the ST, PC and Amiga formats.

Having said all that CGH Services are very interested in getting as much software out for the QL as possible, either as commercial or public domain or shareware. If you know of any software that is no longer commercially available (or never been published) that we could make available, bung us a line today!

QL ADVENTURES

I must say I was impressed by the range of games you've amassed, Malcolm.

Points raised:

1) THOR disk versions of QL games.

As you are aware, when most of the QL software was developed, the THOR hadn't

REPLY Pt.2

been thought of. Subsequently few THORs have been sold compared with the number of QL's, and few QL software publishers, apart from the major ones can afford such machines. So QL software does tend to be produced on the assumption that it will be used on a 128K QL with mdvs not the THOR or even QL's with disk drives, although versions on 3.5" are becoming more common. So we await crackers to unlock these progs for THOR users. And, of course, as QL software publishers ourselves, it would be invidious of QLAF to publicise ways of pirating software to the detriment of the copyright holders.

a) THE PAWN. It can be copied using proprietary copying progs, but however I've done it, I always need to have 4 mdvs, not disks. If anyone can help Malcolm legitimately copy his Pawn to disk do write in.

b) ZKUL. Thanks for the maps, I think they are very serviceable as they are. I agree that it is a very good adventure.

c) COLOSSAL CAVE. See the comments in the Cave Adventure article, especially about that mysterious SW passage from the snake's room.

d) PLAYTIME. Having consulted Alan's complete solution to this one, I can tell you that the Prisoner should respond to "Tell Prisoner To Follow". I don't think the Blob needs to be cleaned, it is disgarded soon after picking it up. Apart from that, in this particular adventure there is no direct communication with other characters, you either give to or get from them. If anyone else likes to do a run through of Playtime do write in with it.

e) FANTASIA. Apologies Malcolm, I hadn't heard of this on the QL until I looked through some back issues of QL World. I then wrote to S&B to see if they were interested in it becoming PD or whatever, but have received no reply. Could you do a review of it. Legit 2nd hand copy would be appreciated by the editor!!!

f) THE DOUBLE. Thanks for correcting us on the points mentioned.

g) LANDS OF HAVOC. I'm very impressed by you having the maps for this game. As we are supplied with the maps for the first

nine screens and are told that there are hundreds more, how many pages do the maps take up? Once we've completed Zkul and Colossal Cave (also the Pawn?) maps we could do Lands of Havoc, unless people have other preferences. Alternatively CGH could publish them seperately.

h) D-DAY & WAR IN THE EAST. See the article in this issue for excellent news on D-Day. I'd very much like to see a review of War in the East, especially as the price: £40 is the same as a week's wages for me!

THE THOR

Malcolm, as you're probably well aware there has been much speculation surrounding the current status of The Thor and CST. As I don't have the facts to hand all I'll say is that this uncertainty has done nothing to improve the situation relating to Thor software. In view of this I don't really expect the THOR software compatibility, joysticks etc situation to resolve itself for a long time.

This would also tend to knock on the head any proposals to convert other software to the QL/THOR, there just isn't the market.

Having talked to Anita Sinclair of Magnetic Scrolls to see what their policy was in relation to the QL, I can only report that there is No Way they are going to release their newer games on the QL. The time taken to convert the games would not justify the returns and they don't want other people messing with their code or to release sub-standard software themselves.

Richard

BACK ISSUES

QLAF 1-3 ARE STILL AVAILABLE ON MDV OR DISK AT £1.00 EACH PLUS MEDIA AND POSTAGE. BOTH RICH MELLOR AND MICHAEL L. JACKSON CAN SUPPLY QLAF 1-3 ON 3.5" DISKS IN COMBINED AND READ ON SCREEN FORMS AT THE USUAL PRICE. ISSUE 4 (PRINTED) IS AVAILABLE FROM CGH SERVICES AT £1.00.



THE BLAG



BY TONY WOOLCOTT, PUBLISHED BY GAP SOFTWARE
£15 ON CARTRIDGE OR DISC (3 1/2"), FOR EXPANDED QLs
Review by Michael L. Jackson

Gap Software have been advertising this new adventure game / crime puzzle for around two or three months now, so some QLAF readers may already have purchased it. On the other hand, the recent postal dispute can't have helped the software houses that rely on postal sales, so I assume that the majority of readers are not familiar with the game. At this stage, therefore, a review is in order - some hints might follow when more copies are in circulation.

GET EXPANSION

First, a word of warning - don't buy this game if you have only got an unexpanded 128K QL. It will run only on QLs with some memory expansion, but some of Gap Software's advertisements have not made this clear. The Blag needs at least 130K working space, according to a toolkit, which compares with the 90 odd K you get free on a basic QL. So if you bought a copy when it was first advertised and it wouldn't work, send it back for a refund. However early RAM expansions are being sold off at rock bottom prices with Quest 64K boards have been going for as little as £5, which should give you enough spare memory to run The Blag.

I am not certain whether the author of The Blag would have been better modifying the program in some way to allow it to run on ordinary QLs so as not to cut out a potential category of purchaser. It is a large multi-tasking machine code (compiled?) program, which uses a 'huge' extensions toolkit of about 11K (compared to the Turbo run-time toolkit of about 5K). Are all the extensions used, or could some memory be saved? More on this later. Anyway, once the toolkit is loaded it will multi-task quite adequately, though it doesn't seem to include a screen refresh option so its display might get a bit cluttered, depending on what the other jobs running at the same time actually do.

It is available on disc or cartridge, but even if you buy the cartridge version it shouldn't be too difficult to convert it to disc operation. The program is not protected and is said by its publishers to work on the Thor and Thor XVI (if these are still available). I suppose The Blag should also run on Strong Computers' QL-compatible Atari STs. (I'd test this if they would lend me one!)

BANG TO RIGHTS AND SUCH SAYINGS

Some readers must have got so far without having a clue as to what The Blag is about, possibly depending on whether they are keen on cop shows such as The Sweeney. A 'blag' is not a distant relation of a 'hobbit', or similar mythical creature, but an armed robbery - especially a bank raid.

The Blag is set in a realistic setting - an ordinary town. No caves, towers, lakes or mountains here, just banks, police stations, antique shops and broken pavements. (It lacked realism in some respects - where were the shoe shops and building societies?) Normally the town would have been very quiet, but an armed robbery at the bank has livened things up. It is your task, as a police detective, to solve the crime by telephoning the Superintendent and giving the names of your three suspects and details of their whereabouts.

LOOKING THROUGH THE GREEN WINDOW

Essentially The Blag is similar in game play to most text adventures. You move from location to location, there are objects to collect and manipulate, other people to interact with, all achieved by typing English commands. The parser is closer to

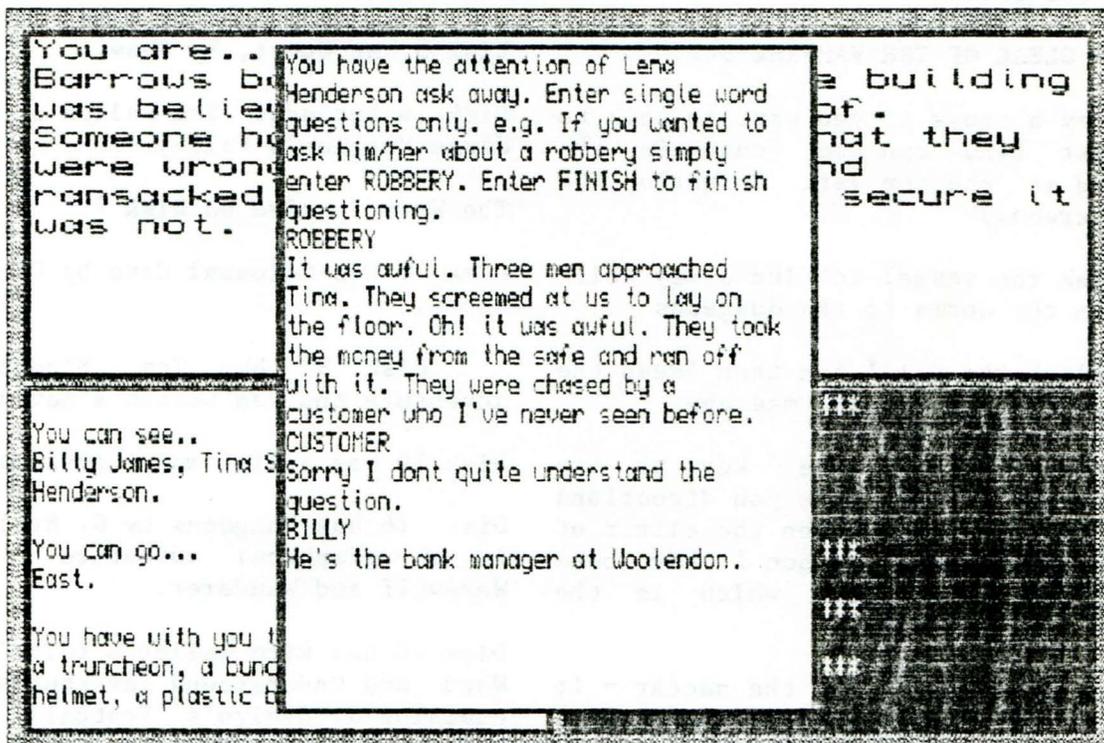
THE BLAG

Colossal Cave than The Pawn, in others words, usually two word input. But it is adequate. Some commands, such as INVENTORY, LOOK, or WHERE are redundant because of the use of multiple windows. The top half of the screen is the location window, which is constantly updated as you move around the town. Bottom left has an objects window, which shows what is present in a location and what you are carrying. To the bottom right is the window where the prompts appear and you type in your commands. From time to time you will type a command which produces a large pop up window in the middle of the screen, temporarily overlapping the others. This appears, for instance, when you read the telephone directory, use the police computer or question suspects. It is a nice feature, but it has a cost, being one of the reasons why the game won't run on 128K QLs. Pop up windows eat memory!

A clever use of the pop ups is Blunder's note book. This allows you to write notes as you visit the scene of the crime or question suspects or witnesses, just as a real detective would, and then to read them at other locations at your leisure. The notes are saved to cartridge or disc, so you can read them the next time you play the game. In The Blag keeping a decent set of notes is more important than mapping, as you will probably get used to the locations quite quickly.

One problem I found with the screen layout is that it is probably best suited to a proper 85 column monitor, preferably colour. I tested the game on a black and white TV and an 80 column monitor and found a lot of information was lost off the left of the screen. At one point there was a witness whose name appeared as 'bert'. By trial and error I had to work out that it was Albert, and not Robert or Cuthbert. This might put some people off, so couldn't the screen be redrawn slightly to avoid these problems? Still on the subject of screen displays, the larger QL character sizes look a little ugly. Use of custom typefaces in some of the windows would make the game more attractive.

There are quite a few other characters in this game so you won't get lonely. Have a chat with them. Questioning witnesses bring up the pop up window, but then they can be asked only about one thing at a time by simple one word input. Some know more than others, so why not ask them about each other.



THE BLAG

STAYING ALIVE

I didn't managed to get killed in this adventure, despite desparate robbers charging around with shotguns. However it is still advisable to save your position occasionally, because you can do things like destroying evidence by mishandling it. A ramsave would have been nice, but instead you can save one position per disc or cartridge. There aren't any mazes as such to save your position before entering, but unless you are good with animals it isn't worth going down to the woods today.

THE VERDICT

Overall, The Blag is an enjoyable game which I will continue playing as I haven't yet finished it. Some aspects aren't quite right. Mainly it is serious in style though there is some humour. Either it should be dead straight or introduce more humour. It is an unusual adventure as far as the QL is concerned and as such is prably worth playing for a change of scene. However some adventurers thrive on dwarves and goblins, so might miss them in The Blag. I suppose it would have been 'heightist' to have had a dwarf suspect in this game.

I feel it is a little overpriced at £15. Around £10 would have been more reasonable, but £15 seems to be the going rate at the moment for new QL games. I hope more software houses follow C.G.H Services example with 'Valagon' and go for mass sales by cheaper pricing. At £6 I would have recommended The Blag to anyone. At £15 you will need to be keen on the basic scenario.

Michael L. Jackson

DRAGONHOLD HINTS

- (1) Do not carry any arms to go through the doors between lands.
- (2) Do not carry any arms if you want to talk to the woman.
- (3) KEEP CLEAR OF THE VAMPIRE BAT.
- (4) Carry a cross if you want to talk to the priest (who can be found in the graveyard at the top left corner on the FOREST screen.)
- (5) Break the vessel to find a key which will open the doors to the dungeons
- (6) 'Polish the Ball' and then 'Read the Ball' to reveal a helpful message
- (7) The priest is the key to the adventure - He will give you directions to the treasure (maybe even the elixir of life) - I am unsure since I have been unable to find the place which is the start of the directions
- (8) 'Wave the Wand' over the nectar - It changes it into a refreshing elixir which will give you extra strength

R.A.MELLOR, ROSCOE & GLADSTONE HALL,
GREENBANK LANE, LIVERPOOL, L17 1AH

QUANTA LIBRARY

Here is a short note of currently available Quanta adventures.

Disk 2 has Hack, by Soken. £3.00 royalties are needed for this disk.

Disk 5 has Quest, by Shaw.

Disk 6 includes Tom Baldon's Worm, and James Methley's Valley.

The Worm is also on Disk 7.

Disk 8 has Colossal Cave by Crowther and Woods.

disk 9 has Tom Bladon's Jewel adventure and Van Loenen's Adventure.

Disk 10 has a Diplomacy Games Manager.

Disk 16 has Dungeons by G. Evelyn, which is a graphical adventure. Also has Werewolf and Wanderer.

Disk 20 has Rich Mellor's turbo'd Jewel, Worm and Underground adventures. It Also contains G. Evelyn's "Football" game.

Cart 21 is a demo version of Alex Waye's Ambition game.

D-DAY

Many of you may remember that in the early days of the QL, Games Workshop published a QL version of their wargame, D-Day. It didn't exactly get rave reviews and it was not hard to see why: it only ran on unexpanded machines, couldn't be run from disk, was prone to crashing and basically was No Fun. (Just like the real thing I suppose!)

Recently Strong Computer Systems of Carmarthen, started selling D-Day at £19.00. They explained that it was the original version but they had added another cart to help boot and clone the original. I sent off for it, but soon tired of it due to the above problems.

Sounds like job for our Mr Fixit, Rich Mellor, I thought, and was very pleasantly surprised to hear that he was, indeed, willing to take on the task of doing something about the prog. Back and forth mdvs went between us, no sooner did Rich sort something out than I spotted another problem, and then introduced a couple of my own!

Anyway, Rich has finally got D-Day to work how it should have worked in the first place. It sits neatly on disk, loads in no time and there's no hassles with extra memory. Further, most of the more obvious bugs have been fixed, and the whole lot has been Turbo'd and the screen compressed using the utility from DP's ACT. Rich has even turned the cursor on during the player's turn to aid aiming. You also don't need to have Strong's boot prog for it load and it can be cloned to whatever device you care to mention. I've taken the liberty to add a wee boot prog of my own, to make it even easier. All in all we have made D-Day into something worth playing. Mind you the computer "intelligence" has us flummoxed.

I have been in contact with Tom Kirby of Games Workshop and he has kindly let me have a licence to produce copies of D-Day provided that 1) the original authors receive a royalty and 2) Games Workshop also receive a payment for each copy sold. We decided that for me to buy the game outright would cost more in lawyers' fees than I'd make selling the game!

So CGH Services can now offer a relatively well-behaved version of D-Day for the trivial sum of £12.00. For this you will receive a copy of the manual (suitably enhanced) and two mdvs (or other media - please state preference.) We can also offer this as an upgrade to existing owners of D-Day, at the remarkably cheap price of £6.00. For this we replace the existing code with a debugged and turbo'd version. To ensure that people do not get pirated versions, we have to insist on receiving proof of ownership of original copies before doing the upgrade, i.e. the manual or one of the master mdvs. You will also need to supply blank media. Please note that this upgrade only works on expanded QL's.

If you have very recently bought a copy from Strong Computers check to see if Rich Mellor's name appears on the initial boot screen. If it does then you've got the upgrade. Please note that Strong Computers are leaving the QL software market. It seems likely that TK Software will be taking over much of the remaining stock. I have no idea what their prices will be.

Rich is also working on an improved (but not turbo'd) version that will fit 128K machines. Details when we get them!!!

One of the benefits of contacting the authors is that we may be able to get the computer player's units to behave more intelligently. No promises though!

QL Adventurers' Forum will also be happy to mediate between any D-Day players who, having tired of solo play against a pathetic opponent, wish to utilise the two-player option in the game to have postal challenge D-Day battles. Could be lots of fun.

John Shaw has promised a review of War in the East for the next issue of QLAF and this review will also deal with Squadrons and D-Day. One to look out for.

Talking of wargames, has anyone played any of the Complex Data Systems games yet? Maybe if the PC Emulators work properly we may be able to play PC wargames on the QL. There are some in the Public Domain that may be interesting.

Richard

PUBLIC DOMAIN & SHAREWARE NEWS

Alan Pemberton has converted a Spectrum adventure he wrote on the Quill for us, called, Ye Classical Adventure. Yes, the old chestnut, but done in a different style. It's a cracker !

Also on the PD front, Rich Mellor has corrected the bugs in "Treasure Hunt" and turbo'd it so that it runs faster and you can't read the basic listing. Not the world's greatest adventure but it might be fun for younger members of the family or for those wanting something not too difficult. Please note that we haven't had "official" clearance from anyone about this "PD" game, although Rich (a law student) assures me that Treasure Hunt is PD.

We also have Rich Mellor's Help_bas utility for documenting superbasic extensions.

Fraser Harkins has sent us Supremacy - a game based on Risk. This is a good implementation of the board game - which can be played with human and/or computer opponents. This is Public Domain. I wish there had been more guidance as to how to play the game. Children, who may enjoy Risk, could find this too slow for their liking. Otherwise lots of fun.

Fraser also sent us a copy of Cavern Frenzy, a Boulderdash clone - which is well evil to play. This is available as Shareware, i.e. you pay the copying agency, in this case CGH Services, the nominal quid (as well as sending the media, p&p) and once you have played the game and enjoyed it you then send the author a sum, equivalent to the amount you think it is worth. The program can be freely copied PROVIDED it is done as Shareware, together with a doc file explaining what Shareware is all about and which gives the address for payments.

I should have received 3 disks of PD software from QLSUB by the time you read this which I shall also be distributing. Send an sae if you want the latest list of PD / Shareware software we have available. As I understand it, QLSUB will be charging for the media, we only charge a copying fee, you provide the media and return postage. Swings and roundabouts, I expect. If anyone is feeling energetic

there are vast libraries of PD software for other machines which could be converted.

We can also make available the Werewolf and Wanderer adventure if anyone wants a copy. It's the same version that sits in the Quanta library (and which you can get for nowt IF you belong.) This has been converted by Michael L. Jackson. I must confess I found this a bit confusing to play - but maybe you'll be luckier.

Chris Skellern's Starburst is still available. This is really great fun to play and cannot be too highly recommended. 256 machine coded screens of maze / defender.

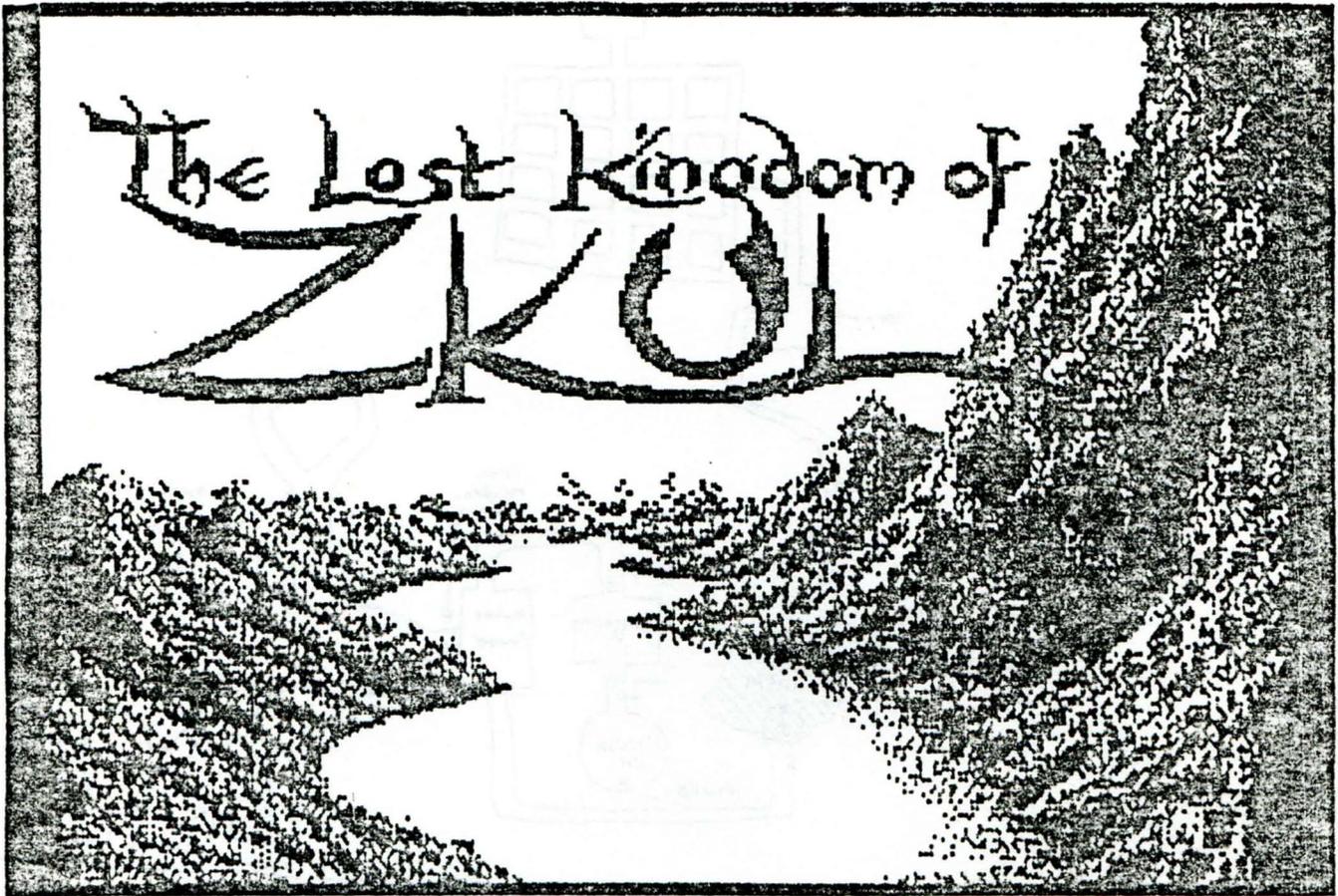
HOW TO GET YOUR HANDS ON THE GOODIES!

Simple. For each programme send £1.00 and a formatted mdv_, plus the return postage, and we'll copy the progs over for you. For disk owners the charge is £2.00, but you'll get several progs per disk. If you want Rich Mellor's Help_bas as well as any others we'll put it on the cart or disk for you, if there's space, free of charge. Cheques, payable to CGH Services, should be sent to the usual address. Note on disks. We can't guarantee that there are no file name clashes.

This is just the beginning of QL PD software. (Which is not to put down QUANTA, of which I have been a member ever since I got my QL, but their software is restricted to their members.) If you have a prog or two that may be of interest to other people, even Superbasic extns or perhaps a conversion job on a PD prog from another machine send them in. If you want the progs made Shareware (ie if you do all the hardwork on them) please include a _doc file to this effect giving your name and address.

Coming soon, thanks to QLSUB, various European progs. Anyone with access to non-UK PD software please get in touch!! Also there's a MS-DOS emulator for the QL due out soon. Although what speed it will run is anybody's guess. The Atari PC emulator only goes at a third PC speed, whereas the Atari QL emulator goes a lot quicker!

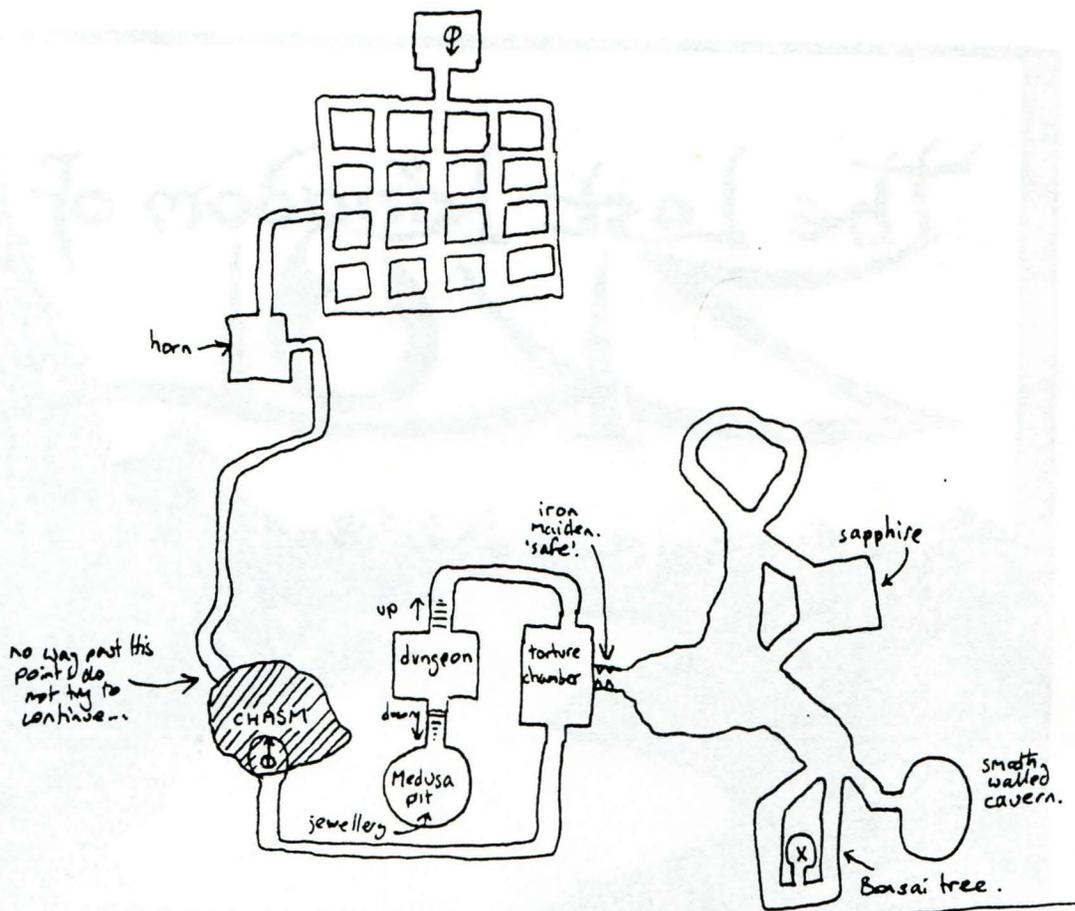
Richard.



THE MAPS

PART 2

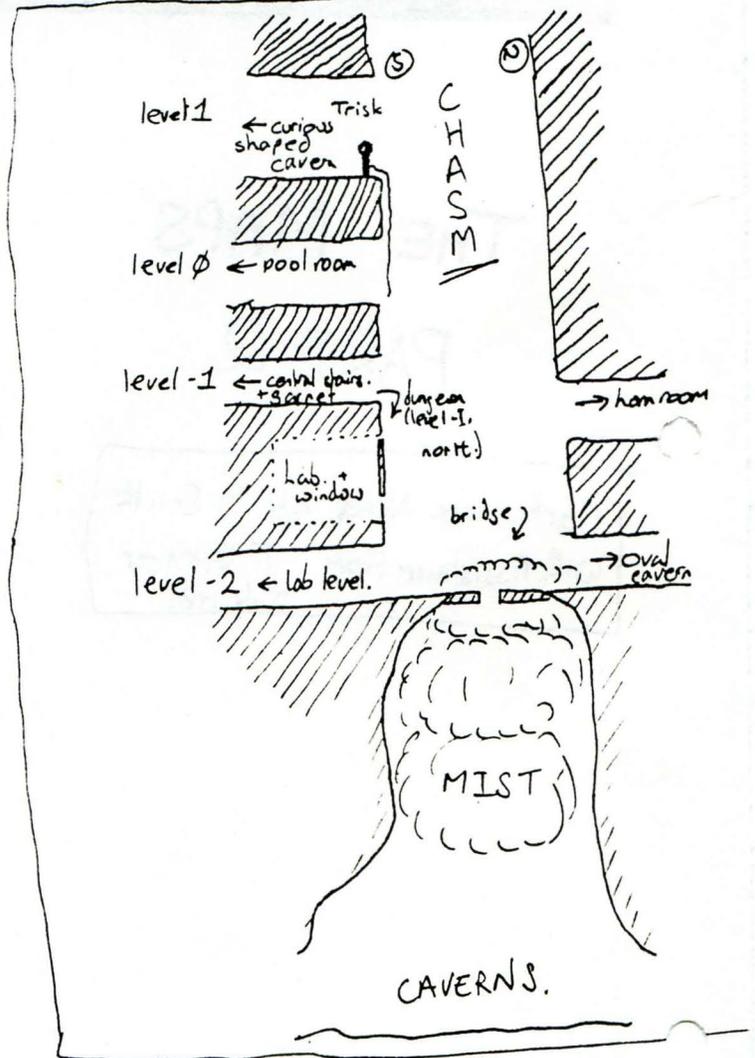
Cartographic Notes by M Smith
With Assistance From T Spencer.
July 1985.



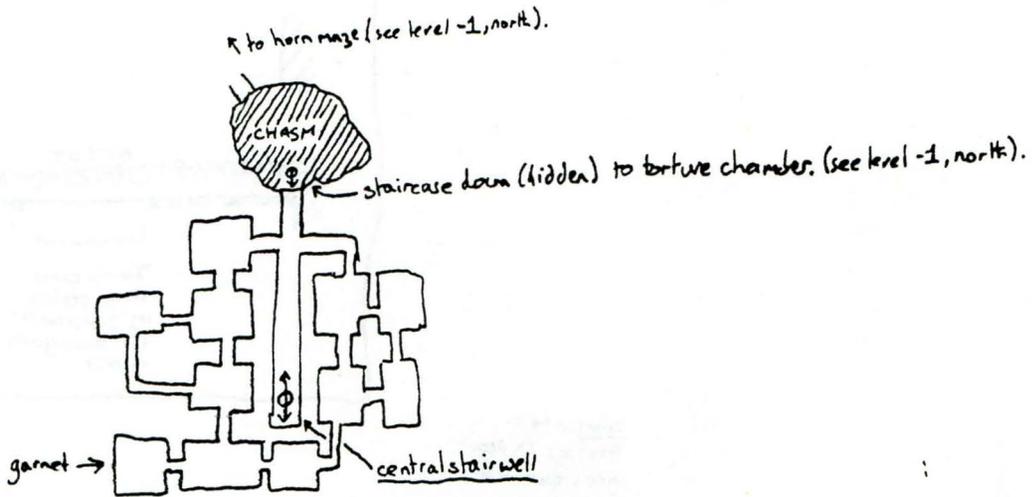
Medusa pit: require to possess a mirror, else there will be one more statue here - YOS!!
You have been damned!!

Bonsai tree: This needs to be treated with kid gloves. The first thing one does is to "POUR WATER" onto the Bonsai tree by "WATER TREE". Then the tree may be handled okay. If anything else is done then the tree becomes withered and worthless. Therefore the crystal bottle filled with fresh water from either the lake or the river is required.

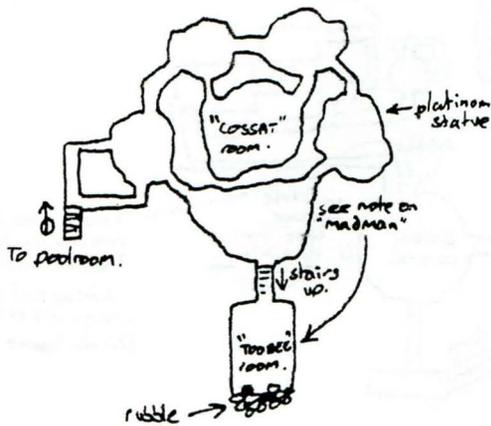
Horn: do not blow under any circumstances else the wizard will appear and take it from you. It is a treasure + not to be used as a tool.



LEVEL -1 (North)



Under the Pool Room:



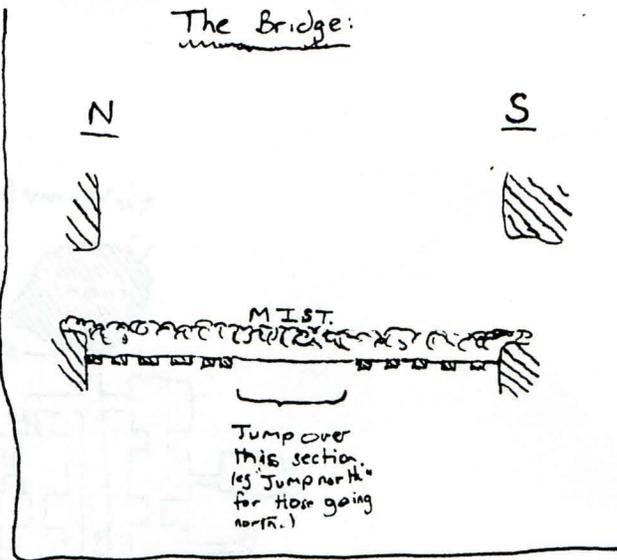
"COSSAT" room: actually this isn't the cossat room as such. The cossat lies in a "mirror" version of this room. If one says "COSSAT" anywhere in the complex (not near the underground sea) then the adventurer goes to where the cossat is. The first time this is in the 'mirror' to this room. To get back say "TASSOC" - you have a few seconds as the room gets smaller.... The cossat can then be used as a quick teleport device whenever you drop it!

"TOOBEE" room: A fixed teleport room. Saying "TOOBEE" anywhere within the complex (except near the lake) and in Eldomin's hut brings you back here. The room is really designed for those duds that run out of peraffin. If this happens a "TOOBEE" followed by the necessary orders can get one to the peraffin can before you fall down the pit.... Incidentally, the first time you encounter this room you will meet the....

MADMAN

runs around with a massive sword (part of the treasure). repeated "STRIKE MADMAN WITH AXE" kills him. The madman comes from the Colossal Cave complex.... The madman conveniently supplies you with the axe by throwing it at you. Keep the axe until both the thief + the madman are killed. The axe is also required to cut the drawbridge rope.

The Bridge:

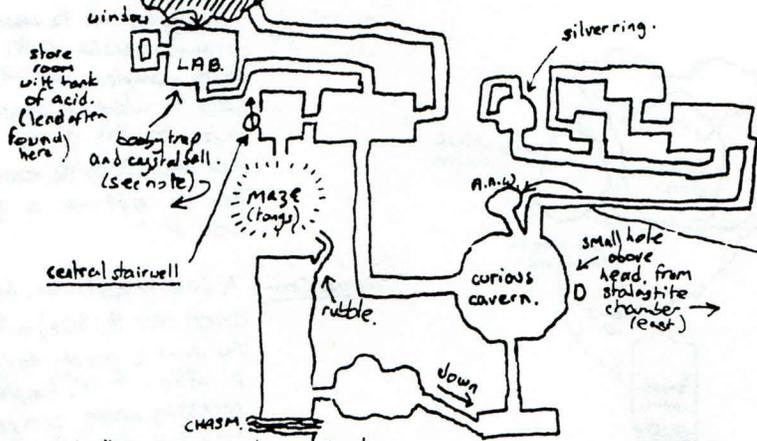


ruby in here. Passage (hidden) goes down from this room.

to ruby north maye

lock (paddle for boat).

rope bridge across chasm hidden in mist. (see top right)



central stairwell

small hole above head from stalagmite chamber (exit)

This is where the old man who steals your treasure hides.
"Strike the f with the axe" often enough will kill him.
Eat wholesome food first !!

"trader" chamber

cut rope with axe to lower drawbridge (also allows passage to the paraffin).

rubble room in level -1. Dig away with the shovel.

The baby-trap:
goes off when the explorer "gets all" from the laboratory.

The lead nugget:
If dipped into the acidic tank (you'll need the tongs) will transmute the lead into gold.

