

the overall familiarity, rather than breeding contempt, meant people knew what they were getting before waiting what seemed like hours loading the game up. So whether or not they were like a latter day Westlife – coming out regularly, being pretty much the same yet selling in bucketloads,

and with not many people actually admitting to loving them – seemed not to matter.

The character was born in 1987, the brainchild of Andrew and Philip Oliver. Two years earlier, the pair had graduated from Clarendon School in Trowbridge and were on course to go to university. Instead,

they decided to put together a business plan and take a year out.

Not the first

They had already worked on many computer games for the 8-bit market, spending hours programming on their Spectrum.

Their first published titles, Black Box and Gambit, were released on the BBC Model B, and by 1985 they had produced another 10 games for the format, plus titles for the Amstrad CPC. Taking a year out was, therefore, not such a huge gamble. And it certainly paid off. They convinced their

DIZZY III

This original, never-seen-before map was kindly provided by the Oliver twins



parents of the merit of pursuing their business plan and went on to become one of the most successful double acts of video gaming history.

But it was not until their chance meeting with Codemasters' Richard and David Darling that their fledgling

company began to really take off. In 1985, the Oliver twins went to the European Computer Trade Show where they bumped into the Darlings. Richard and David were hugely impressed by the Olivers' talents and asked them to produce Super Robin Hood for the CPC. From that point on, the

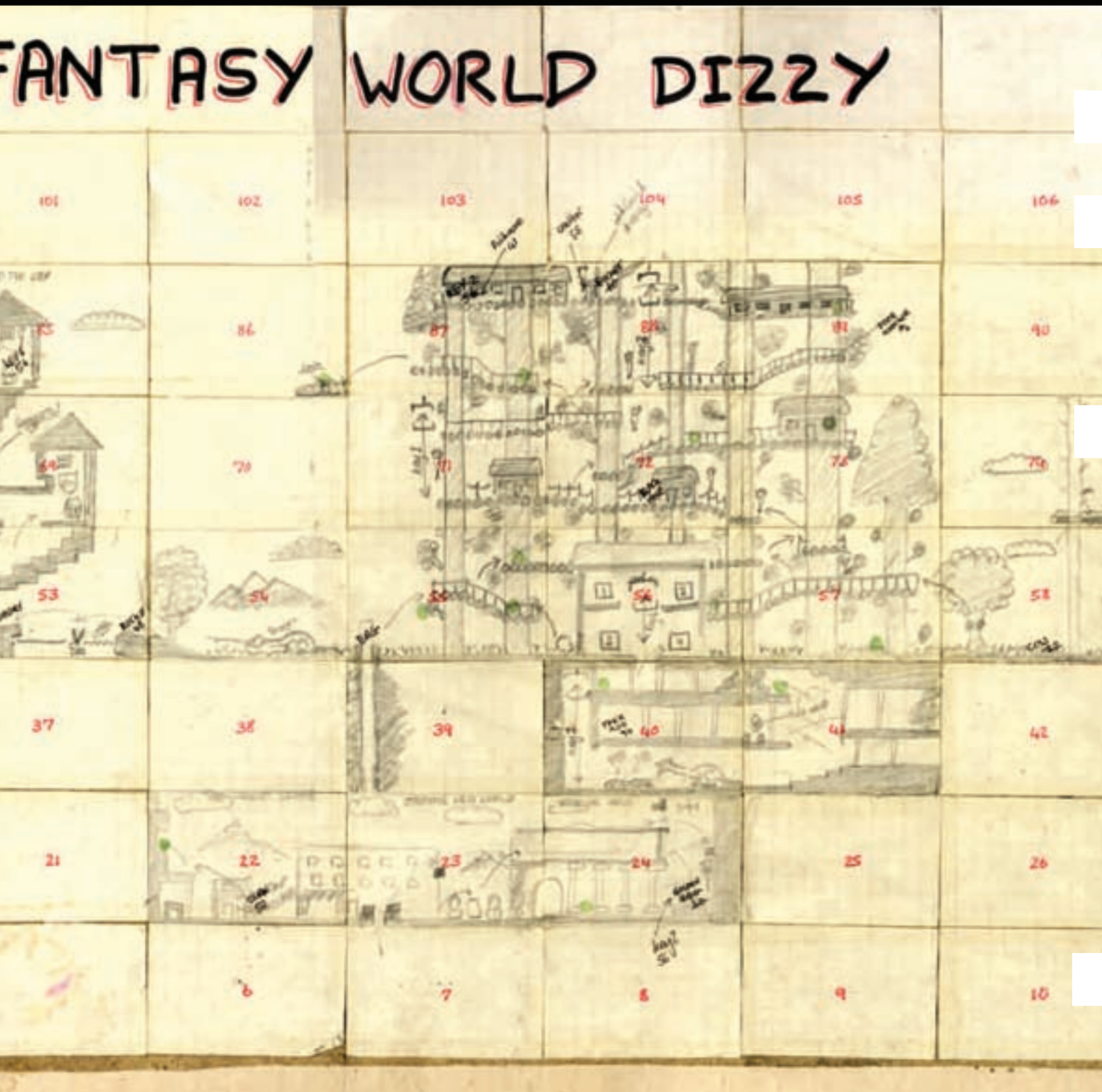
twins continued to write a host of games, most of which featured the word 'simulator' in the title.

Easy going

The Olivers found programming such games relatively easy since they were only asked to translate

a sport across onto the computer rather than come up with something original.

As Codemasters' most prolific programmers, however, the Olivers were able to break free from the restraints of sports simulation games and decided to go for something new and

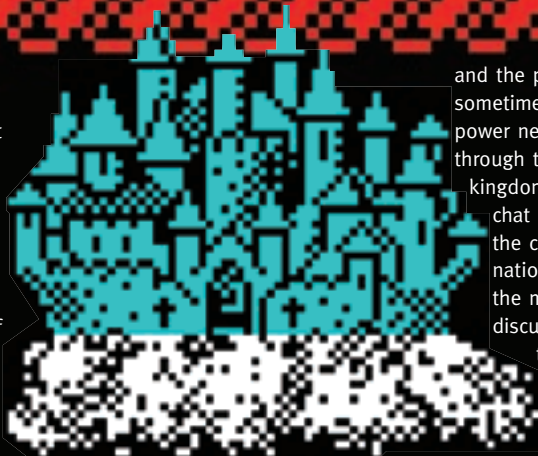


Rather than follow the process of their previous offerings where, for



example, Grand Prix's sequel became Grand Prix 2, the Olivers decided not to go for Dizzy 2 but to name the second title, Treasure Island Dizzy in a bid to give each game a distinct identity – much like the Indiana Jones and James Bond films. The game outsold the first offering without actually affecting sales of the first game. Both the Olivers and the Darlings were surprised. Andrew said: "We first came up with Dizzy because we wanted to produce an adventure game. Something with more depth to the experience than anything we'd played before and with a good story behind it. Yet we were gobsmacked by the popularity of the character. It was a game we really wanted to do, so in retrospect it's no surprise that other people took to it as well. But at the time we were amazed. We just had to produce a third when the second did so well."

Spin-off games were also created. The first, Fast Food, was a clone of Pac-Man and saw Dizzy running around a maze munching on burgers while avoiding capture. It was the first time the egg was placed out of his adventure settings and aimed to establish the character as focal point for video game players who did not necessarily enjoy adventuring. But the adventure



games remained the Olivers' favourite creations. Their third such game, Fantasy World Dizzy was the best yet – huge and absorbing, it introduced Dizzy's family and became a talking point in playgrounds up and down Britain. How did you stop the dinosaur from scrambling the egg? What did you have to do to get past the guard on the first screen?

Andrew said: "Fantasy World Dizzy was our favourite title of the series, there's no question about it, because so many things went right for that game. It was the third Dizzy title and we completed it in just one month. We knew what we wanted from the start, introducing all the new characters and the whole project gelled together nicely. Even down to the box art, which was great.

"This was also the last Dizzy game done by just the two of us before other people started getting involved so it's quite special because of that, and it also sold more than any other Dizzy game."

Each character had its own quirks and personality. Dylan was laid back and something of a hippy, Daisy was the typical old movie-style damsel in distress, Denzil was cool and into his music, and Grand Dizzy was old, wise and a bit of a moaner.

Perfect puzzles

The games were created to appeal across the market, from children to adults. The kids were taken in by the cute factor

and the parents by the sometimes frustrating brain power needed to progress through the magical kingdoms. The playground chat helped to cement the character in the nation's conscience – for the more children were discussing the problems they were trying to overcome, the more people were going out to see for

themselves what all the fuss was about.

But who devised these puzzles? Philip said: "We both had a hand in them. We'd have the same ideas all the time and it was always just a case of which one of us said it first. There weren't really any brotherly battles about the direction of the games. It might be because we're twins but we have always been very much in tune with one another in what we want to do with our games. This might have given us an edge over any of our competitors because we had double the creative input of anybody else."

For their final solo Dizzy game, they put in all of their efforts into creating a massive world for the egg to explore. Memory was tight with the games having to fit into just 48K of memory on some computers. The Olivers got out their pencils and began to sketch out a massive plan of what they wanted to see, then set about trying to translate as much of it on screen as possible. Philip said: "It wasn't really all that hard to create massive games with such small computer memory. We simply built the game until we couldn't



Dizzy makes the giant leap from



build anymore. A lot of the assets were already in place from earlier Dizzy games such as the code, audio and a lot of the graphics.

"Basically we came up with a massive plan which was all sketched out and started building levels. When we did run out of memory we just had to make the decision over which screens to sacrifice. Not that many had to go in the end though, except for a dock area which we planned for but never made it. This went into Fantastic Dizzy so it wasn't wasted."

Passing the baton

Big Red Software took over from the Olivers for number four in the series. They kicked off their rein with Magicland Dizzy, a great game that had improved graphics and sound, but the same, familiar

gameplay was all there. Zaks once again returned from the grave, Daisy was kidnapped and

there was a nice big castle to explore. Although losing a little of the Oliver magic, handing Dizzy over to Big Red didn't do him any harm at all and he went from strength-to-strength, moving onto other formats such as the NES and the Megadrive.

The next game, Spellbound Dizzy, was so large – 100 screens, in fact – that Codemasters set up four separate four-minute phone helplines. For the first time, Dizzy was able to swim underwater and ride around in mine carts. Some people didn't like the added elements but it was certainly an ambitious project – and Codemasters must have raked in the cash on the phonelines.

Despite the incredible money-making success of Dizzy, Codemasters did not put pressure on the makers. There was spin-off merchandise with everything from teddy bears to trading cards all

flogged to eager punters, but the creative programmers were left alone to devise new worlds and new ideas. Philip said: "We had a great relationship with Codemasters as they helped us start up in the games industry. It wasn't anything like producing a game a year – it was more like we knocked them out as quick as we could and they took them all off our hands. At one point we were creating 50% of Codemasters' games so it was a fruitful relationship for us all."

In 1992, Codemasters entered discussions with animation experts Hanna-Barbera with the view to producing a Dizzy television cartoon series. The US giant didn't believe the character was big enough world-wide, though, and the idea didn't progress, despite United Artists also showing an interest. That didn't stop Dizzy making the step onto the consoles. The first game to be created for NES and

Dizzy spin-offs

Fast Food (1989, Spectrum, C64, Amstrad CPC, Atari ST, Amiga)

This was the first spin-off for Dizzy and was apparently going to be called Happy Eater, after the roadside chain of restaurants. The eatery was to



sponsor the game but the deal fell through. Despite that, the fast food element remained in this Pac-Man style game. Dizzy went around munching burgers and shakes while avoiding the ghosts.

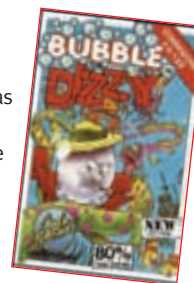


Bubble Dizzy (1991, Spectrum, C64, Amstrad CPC, Atari ST, Amiga, PC)

Dizzy got into another scrape, this time doing something as innocuous as taking a leisurely sea journey to visit girlfriend, Daisy. He inadvertently found himself on a pirate ship and was made to walk the plank. The aim of the



game was to get him back to the surface by standing on bubbles and leaping from ledge-to-ledge, picking up pearls along the way. It was a good-looking game and considerably more fun than the other Dizzy spin-offs.



Kwik Snax (1990, Spectrum, C64, Amstrad CPC, Atari ST, Amiga)

A fun arcade game which had colourful graphics and fast-paced action. The idea was to squash the Evil Wizard Zaks' henchmen with blocks, while collecting fruit. When that was complete, Zaks' spell over the Yolkfolk was broken. Dizzy looked frankly bizarre and appeared as if he had been thrown in at the last

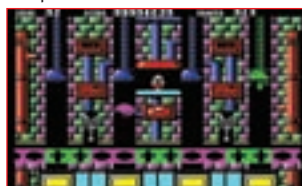


minute. In 1993, Codemasters updated Kwik Snax and released it on the NES and Game Gear as Go! Dizzy! Go! It could be played alone or with a friend – taking on the role of Denzil – which made it all the more fun because you could compete in battles for the most fruit.



Dizzy Panic (1991, Spectrum, C64, Amstrad CPC, Game Gear)

A very difficult, frustrating yet enjoyable game, this had the player using his or her hand-eye co-ordination skills to the max. A series of four tubes dropped different shapes towards the ground. A conveyor belt at the bottom of the screen had holes to correspond with the shapes and the player had to position the strip with the correct hole underneath the shape



which matched it. The tubes got lower each time and split-second reactions were needed as the action got faster. Once again, Dizzy just seemed to have been tagged into the game and served no real purpose.



Megadrive was The Fantastic Adventures of Dizzy, which won Best Graphic Adventure of the Year at a US video games awards show. Yet at the time, Codemasters wasn't even licensed to produce Nintendo games and had a very tough job getting the game into the shops and reviewed in magazines.

A fond farewell

A few more games followed on the consoles as Dizzy bid farewell to the 8-bit home computers, but then the phenomenon ended and production ceased. Dizzy, it seems, had had his day despite the support from fans. Andrew said: "Fan mail came by the truckload. Not literally, but there was a lot of it, and we still get emails about Dizzy today all these years later. We'd like to

think Dizzy was the Mario, Sonic or Lara Croft of its day. He was the first game character to actually have any personality and really started to show how loveable game characters could be. It's probably because he was the first character like this that he still has such a wide fan

base today, even though there haven't been any new games."

Philip and Andrew Oliver now run Blitz Games. They had broken away from Codemasters to form Interactive Studios and the development house produced a number of hits including Judge Dredd and Theme Park. Interactive's first original game was Firo and Kila

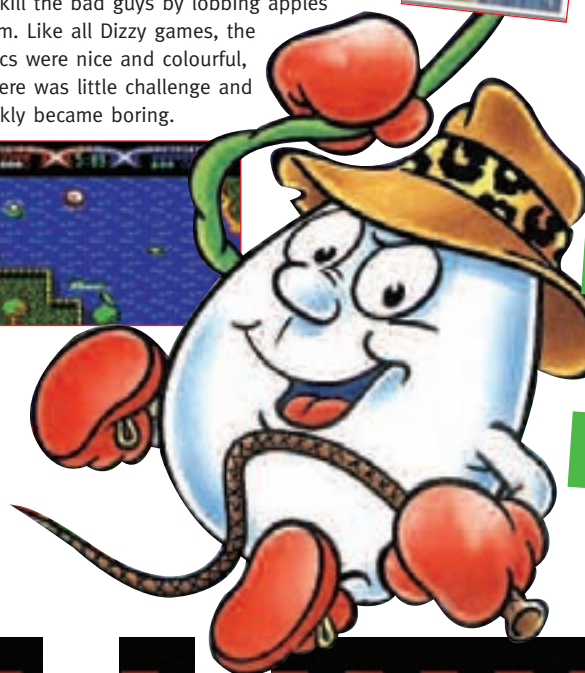
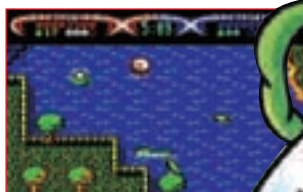
for PC and PlayStation, and it helped them break into the next-generation market. Interactive is now Blitz and has around 100 staff members knocking out games such as Action Man and Chicken Run. But the Oliver twins continue to recognise their roots. Their website contains a Dizzy section – as well as a dedicated site to a next-gen Dizzy (www.fantasticdizzy.co.uk), complete with a petition to push for the egg's return (over 1,500 names to date). The new Dizzy

looks spectacular but the Olivers say no decision has been made on whether to revive the series. Andrew said: "We've been asked so many times whether or not Dizzy ever will make a comeback and the answer is we just don't know."

"Never say never."

Dizzy Down the Rapids (1991, Spectrum, C64, Amstrad CPC, Atari ST, Amiga)

A Toobin' clone where the player took on the role of either Dizzy or Daisy and floated – slowly – downstream in a barrel, avoiding all manner of creatures and objects. The loved-up heroes could kill the bad guys by lobbing apples at them. Like all Dizzy games, the graphics were nice and colourful, but there was little challenge and it quickly became boring.



Magazine versions

Special versions of Dizzy games were covermounted on various magazines, including Crash, Your Sinclair and Amiga Power. To promote the release of Fantasy World Dizzy, special versions of Dizzy and Treasure Island Dizzy appeared on Crash issues 65 (June 1989) and 72 (January 1990) respectively. These were basically smaller versions of the original games containing adverts for other Codemasters titles. A variant of the first game also appeared on Your Sinclair issue 52 (April 1990).

However, Crash issue 84 (January 1991) included an ever better bonus. As the title suggests, Dizzy 3 and a Half was a new adventure that bridged the gap between Fantasy World Dizzy and Magicland Dizzy. The aim was to get Dizzy to Magicland using a teleporter. The game was only five screens big and very easy to complete, but it was a nice addition to the series nonetheless.

Other magazine giveaways included an Easter-themed version of Fast Food on both Amiga Action and ST Action. The game was titled Easter Eggstravaganza and you had to run around mazes collecting Easter eggs. Finally, a one-level preview of Fantastic Dizzy called Christmas Dizzy appeared on Amiga Power magazine.



Dizzy adventures

Dizzy (1987, Spectrum, C64, Amstrad CPC)

The original game was fresh and innovative, but when compared to Fantasy World Dizzy, Magic Land Dizzy or any of the later offerings, it appears quite dated. It was also quite a small game. Nevertheless, it was the one which started the ball rolling and introduced one of



history's best-loved computer game characters. The object of the game was to kill the Evil Wizard Zaks. Unfortunately for Dizzy, in later episodes of the game, the pointed-hat one came back to haunt him.



Treasure Island Dizzy (1988, Spectrum, C64, Amstrad CPC, Atari ST, Amiga, PC, NES)

By this stage, things were improving. Gamers had to get Dizzy off a desert island where he had become stranded. It had probably the best Dizzy plot but the graphics were still pretty much the same – the

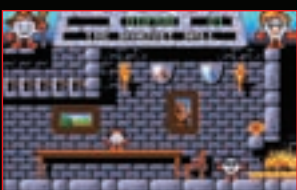


Spectrum offered little in the way of flair and Amstrad owners had to make do with a straight Spectrum port. Still, it was a fine little game that built on the original. Note that the NES version did not appear until 1991.



Fantasy World Dizzy (1989, Spectrum, C64, Amstrad CPC, Atari ST, Amiga, PC)

The best game of all the adventures, and the first of a new-generation of Dizzy titles (also the last from the Oliver Twins). Dizzy braved the wrath of the king's trolls as he set out to rescue Daisy. This time all his pals were with him – the infamous Yolkfolk – from Denzil and Dylan to



Dozy and Grand Dizzy, spread out over 50 rooms. The plot may have been familiar but the game was top notch with a perfect blend of action and puzzles. Brilliant!



Magicland Dizzy (1990, Spectrum, C64, Amstrad CPC, Atari ST, Amiga, PC)

Dizzy's Yolkfolk were in danger yet again as the Evil Wizard Zaks decided to transport them into fairytale worlds. Daisy was trapped by Zaks, Dora was turned into a frog and Dozy was put to sleep. The puzzles kept coming and coming in this offering as Dizzy attempted to find the enchanted sword Excalibar and brave the wizard's island to



save his pals – oh, and finish Zaks off once and for all. This was perhaps the most difficult game in the series, mainly due to a series of tricky jumping challenges. Anyone remember trying to cross the volcano?



Spellbound Dizzy (1991, Spectrum, C64, Amstrad CPC, Atari ST, Amiga, PC)

The largest Dizzy game to appear on the 8-bit machines, Spellbound had a staggering 100 screens. Dizzy managed to transport his egg-friends and Wizard Theo to the underworld after he read a spell from one of the wizard's



books. Dizzy had to collect five stars and a special object to get him and the Yolkfolk back home. It was an absorbing game but it lacked some of the charm seen in previous games. However, the sheer size of the game meant it could take



Dizzy: Prince of the Yolkfolk (1991, Spectrum, C64, Amstrad CPC, Atari ST, Amiga, PC)

This was by far the shortest Dizzy game – just 30 screens, seemingly aimed at younger gamers. It sometimes felt as though it had been knocked out in an afternoon, and could certainly be completed in one. Dizzy was put in prison by



Rockwart the troll who threatened to overrun the King's castle. Meanwhile, Daisy was put in a 100-year sleep. Originally the game was only available as part of the Dizzy's Excellent Adventures pack, a compilation also featuring Dizzy Panic, Dizzy Down the Rapids, Kwik Snax and Spellbound Dizzy.



The Fantastic Adventures of Dizzy (1991, NES, Megadrive, Master System, Game Gear, Atari ST, Amiga, PC)

The Fantastic Adventures of Dizzy was the first time the character had appeared on the consoles (it was called Fantastic Dizzy on some machines). After selling over 3 million copies on other formats, it was time he made the



leap and in 1991 Dizzy did just that. As with the other games, Daisy was kidnapped and Dizzy had to save her (he really must have been getting something good). This game took bits from all the other offerings and created something that was new to console players. The graphics were simply amazing.



Crystal Kingdom Dizzy (1992, Spectrum, C64, Amstrad CPC, Atari ST, Amiga, PC)

Unlike some of the previous games, this one was sometimes a little too easy. Many of the puzzles were along the lines of finding a screwdriver for Denzil when he said he has lost his tools – but mixed in were some truly obscure conundrums which, after a bout of trial and error, left you thinking 'What?'. In this instalment, the ancient treasures of Zeffer had gone missing and the player had to find it by exploring four worlds. It was the first game to step out of the budget bracket, and while the size of the game reflected the full-price tag, the time it took to complete did not.





>PIECES OF 8-BIT

The first in a regular series of retro collecting features covers the ever-popular 8-bit market. Whether you're looking to build a personal collection or want to make a tidy profit through trading, Richard Burton reveals everything you need to know...

Got an innermost urge to return to the 1980s and buy up all the things that symbolised your youth? Whether that's Star Wars figures, a Raleigh Chopper or every ZX Spectrum game ever released, you are certainly not alone my friends.

Retro game collecting is undeniably on the rise but why? Some may see it as an opportunity to have everything they were denied when they were kids. Others might think it's potentially a good investment for the future. The majority, we suspect, are in it for the good time factor. The feeling of playing a game you once loved after almost 20 years, whilst beaming from ear to ear and nodding knowingly at the screen, is priceless.

No matter how many times you play on your PlayStation 2 or Xbox, you can never relive the feeling of waiting for software to load. And when we say waiting, we mean waiting, sometimes afraid to move, sometimes staring madly at the tape recorder as if this will ensure a successful load, sometimes mentally shouting "work" over and over again in your head like some rabid Uri Geller with a broken watch – and for what? To be eventually rewarded with the intro music to Manic Miner. That's electronic paradise that is, and you can beat it.

Then there's gameplay. Granted, there are always gaming atrocities on all formats of computer and consoles, so we can't say everything about vintage gaming is great. However, what retro gamers seem to find is that the quality of gameplay often makes up for the lack of graphical excellence. Fun, simplistic, one-more-go addictive gameplay at its best – whatever you call it, retro systems have it in abundance and that's probably the biggest single reason why people are returning to older systems and finding qualities that are seemingly so often lacking in the latest games. Whether you were a computer or console owner, we're sure you'll have a favourite game that you look upon more fondly than anything released today.

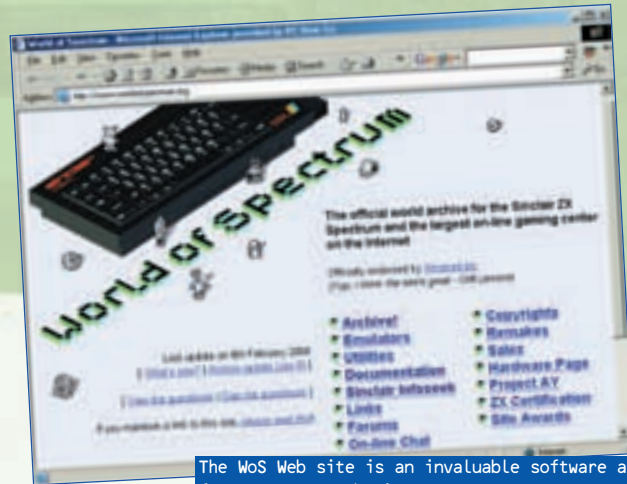
Hunt and gather

With a whole generation of late 20 to mid 30-somethings out there with a great deal more disposable income than they had when Space Dust and Big Trak were around, retro game collecting has taken off big time.

Take the Spectrum for instance. There are armies of collectors out there building substantial game collections. Their reasons and motivations may differ slightly but it all boils down to the need to get games – and lots of them. Many collectors are in it for the sole purpose of having as many original games as they can get their hands on. In the school yard, you had to live with tape-to-tape copies of Jet Set Willy with handwritten colour code sheets that took you six hours to copy. Today you can get a box full of original games for a couple of crisp 10 pound notes. Come on, who wouldn't want to have a spare room stuffed from wall to wall with classic games? Wonderful to look at, satisfying to ponder over.

For some, there is also the preservation element of the games to be considered. As the years go by, the magnetic tape in your cassettes will start to degrade. Eventually it will reach a point where it cannot be salvaged. Might that game be lost forever? Not if the preservers have anything to do with it. Web sites such as the impressive World Of Spectrum (www.worldofspectrum.org) are actively pursuing every single title released for that computer – a daunting task by anyone's standards. Not only that, the preserved version must also be a perfect copy of the original code, so there's no room for beautified, ripped or cracked versions by Eastern-Block hacker types here. Once preserved, the games are freely available for download to anyone who wants them, but only after the original copyright holder has given consent for its distribution. It's a retro gamer's dream, and certainly one of the best presented and most useful resources for the Spectrum anywhere on the Web.

For the Commodore 64 owners there is the superb Lemon 64 (www.lemon64.com), for Acorn fanatics the equally excellent Stairway To Hell (www.stairwaytohell.com) and for Amstrad owners there's CPC Zone (<http://cpczone.emuunlim.com>). All are run by dedicated enthusiasts and are certainly worth supporting.



The WoS Web site is an invaluable software archive for Spectrum enthusiasts

>Sourcing software

Generally, 90% of games for most 8-bit formats can be picked up for peanuts due to the large quantities released. By the same token, there are the games made by bedroom programmers, those individuals who've written a game, hand produced their own copies of it and even included the almost obligatory photocopied black and white inlay. There are not going to be many of those knocking about and the prices for the rare and obscure games are rising all the time.

So whether you're looking for a common classic or a rare obscurity, where is the best place to start? Car boot sales, house clearances, auction rooms and the like all used to be good places to find old computer systems and carrier bags full of games. At least, they certainly were until a few years ago. It seems the once fruitful car boot has become a barren and empty wasteland for the retro collector. There might be the occasional gem appearing from within a mound of second-hand pants and decapitated Barbie dolls, but certainly not the huge haul you were hoping for. People are realising that old computers and games are worth money and are selling them elsewhere. Please be up standing for the wonderful world of retro collecting Web sites.

Thankfully, the Internet has not only opened thousands of doors to new places of collecting, it has also brought collectors together from all over the world. Trading is as much a part of the scene as buying, if not more so. To find kindred spirits who are gagging for the complete range of Sinclair computers, or every single Oric Atmos game, or maybe even just a nice set of Ultimate games, is a very liberating experience. We are certainly not alone.

There are literally hundreds of Web sites catering for the retro collector with cash to spend. Some are your fellow collectors' homepages with a few duplicate games for sale, and then there's the larger Web sites with vast stocks of games for you to drool over. Here are a few of those larger sites that cover a wide range of old 8-bit formats: