



THE STORY BEHIND...

IN A REGULAR FEATURE CHRIS WILKINS TALKS TO THE OLIVER TWINS ABOUT ONE OF THEIR GAMES — THIS ISSUE, THE STORY BEHIND GHOSTBUSTERS 2.

■ Ghostbusters was a massive movie globally back in 1984 and inevitably there would be a sequel accompanied by new games. This is where the Twins come in and the Ghostbusters 2 title for the ZX Spectrum and Amstrad CPC.

CW: Most people associate you with Dizzy and the many Simulator games all published by Codemasters, but it turns out you also wrote the Amstrad and Spectrum versions of Ghostbusters 2. Tell me the story behind this.

Oliver Twins: In May 1988 we were approached by a local development team lead by Stefan Ufnowski — he asked us if we would convert the game his team were just completing on the Commodore 64 called Incredible Shrinking Sphere to the other 8-bits. We agreed and slotted this around other

GH**OST**BUSTERS II

games we were writing at the time — although we didn't put our names in the credits. A few months after completing this, he returned and asked us if we'd like to convert the Ghostbusters 2 game to the Spectrum & Amstrad as he'd secured a deal with Activision to develop all the home computer versions. We jumped at the chance as we were massive fans of Ghostbusters. Obviously it had inspired us to write Ghost Hunters a couple of years before.

The movie was set for

release in the summer, some six months later, with all the games due to release shortly afterwards and expected to be best sellers for autumn and Christmas 1989.

CW: Who did the game design?

OT: Stefan's company Foursfield did the design and this was lead by his wife Anna. The design was pretty good making games from three of

Below: Two very satisfied looking twins in a PR shot with the Spectrum (left) and Amstrad (right) versions.



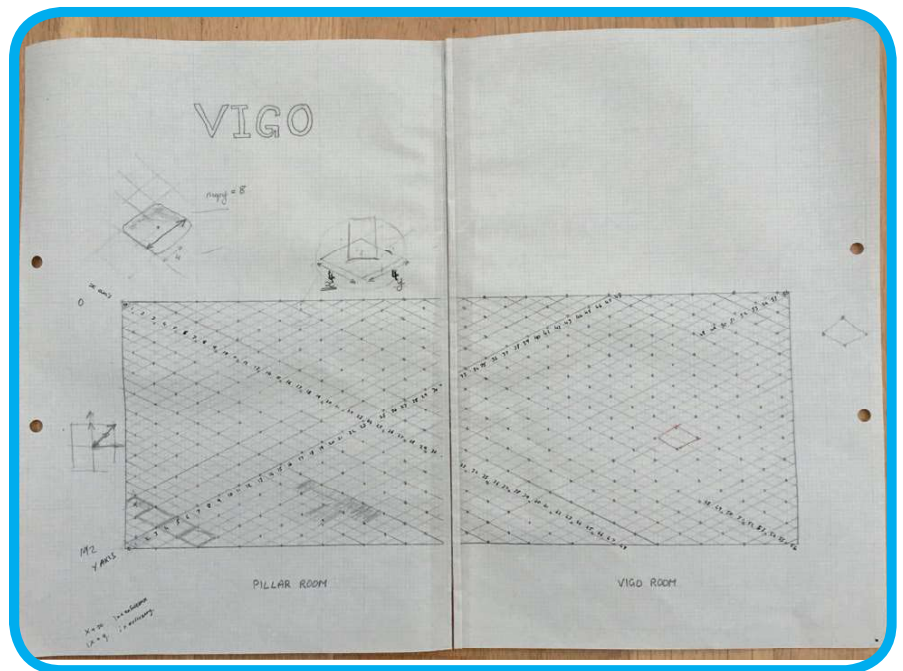
the main iconic action scenes of the film. Each presented great visuals and different gameplay inspired by classic games but with a Ghostbusters 2 spin.

CW: The game consisted of three games why?

OT: Yes, that certainly meant a lot of work, but there were several reasons. Firstly the variety meant great screenshots on the box. It picked up more from the film than if it had only focused on only one part of the plot, and to be fair there wasn't one obvious part that would have worked. Finally, and most importantly, as the game was going out at full price the idea was that it contained, not 1, not 2, but 3 games and that meant it represented better value for money for the players.

CW: Did you get to go to Hollywood and meet the stars?

Below: This CPC vent shaft scene was cut short in the film but is one of the three games.



OT: We wish! We were a long way away from all that, stuck in front of computers in a bedroom! It really wasn't glamorous, but neither were video games to Hollywood. Back in those days, a licencing guy from the 'Consumer Products' department at the film company would have been instructed to go and license Ghostbusters 2 and make as much money as possible. Armed with his sales pack he'd approach toy companies, book publishers, 'garment'

Above: Some design drawings of the game.

manufacturers and retailers. Fast food restaurants, plastic lunch box companies — and in that list would be games publishers. In this case Activision offered the most and in return got to use the pack of materials including the script, logo, poster art and some early photos from the sets. No-one from development got to see more than that, infact I dare say no-one at Activision saw any more than that. It's quite a challenge to design a game just from that. Especially as everyone that plays the final game will have just seen the finished movie and be able to compare them.

CW: So you didn't get to meet Dan Aykroyd, Bill Murray and Harold Ramis?

OT: They were massive Hollywood stars — we were programming geeks and we were under no illusion that we might! It was important though

to ensure that players could see their faces in the game, so even though screen resolution was poor, we still represented their faces since this was so important to the license.

CW: So what were those three games?

OT: For the first level, the film script described a scene where one of the Ghostbusters descended into a vent shaft to find lots of ectoplasm running through an abandoned tube station under New York. It described ghosts circling around him as he made the discovery. It seemed a pretty major scene and was going to look impressive. Sadly, when the movie was made this scene was cut very short and they removed any ghostly apparitions.

So our opening level has the player controlling a Ghostbuster descending the shaft on a rope whilst ghosts

Below: The Spectrum version of the third game is based in the museum — the final scene in the film.



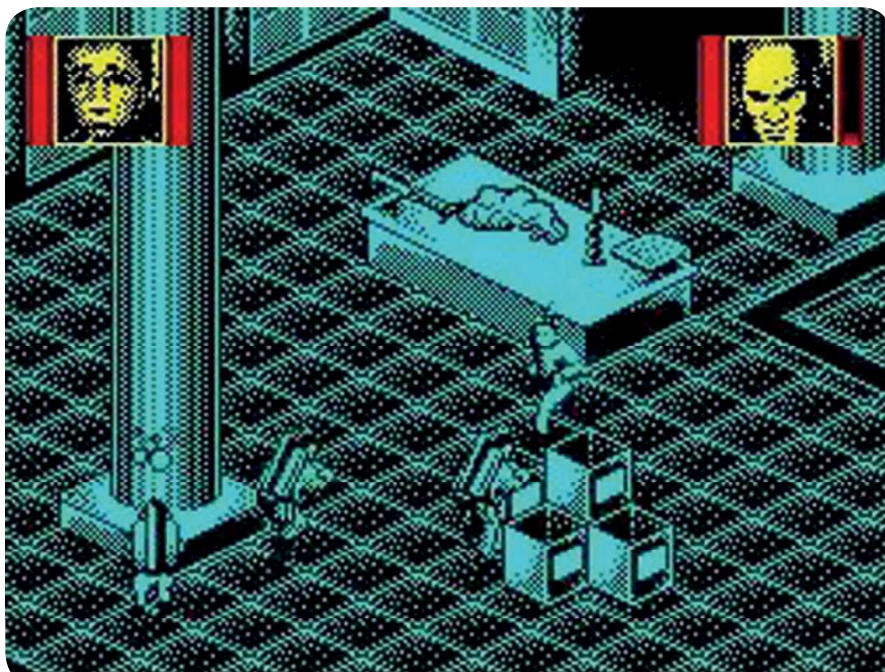
and goulsh hands are trying to grab him.

The next level was based on bringing the Statue of Liberty to life and walking her through New York streets. The gameplay itself was based on a classic, tried and tested, horizontal scrolling shooter — think R-Type. Waves of ghosts

Above: More PR shannanigans with Phillip and Andrew and some Ghostbusters 2 props.

approached from the right with the player having to shoot them to stop them crashing into the Statue of Liberty. The background showed a city street scrolling past and worked pretty well and made for great screenshots.

The third and final battle of the film took place in the museum as Janosz attempted to release the spirit of Vigo the Carpathian, a powerful seventeenth-century tyrant and magician trapped in a painting in the gallery. Vigo ordered Janosz to locate a child that he could possess, allowing him to return to life on the New Year. Being the film's final climax, it had to be the game's final level. Foursfield had chosen to design this as a series of 3D isometric rooms that players





Above: The action packed Amstrad CPC cassette cover.

Below Right: ZX Spectrum in action!

had to run around in order to defeat Janosz, Vigo and protect the baby! This was a good idea, but technically pretty tricky, especially on 8-bit computers!

CW: How long did it take?

OT: We started in Feb 1989 and mastered the Amstrad and Spectrum versions late September '89 in time for an October release.

CW: Wow — that took quite a long time for you guys. I thought you used to try and do a game a month.

OT: We knew it would never be a quick job. There were the three games to write and

others were involved which always slowed things down. We tended to produce games a lot quicker than anyone else we knew. So whilst we agreed to convert Ghostbusters 2 to

the Amstrad and Spectrum we also converted Richard Darling's Pro BMX 2 to Amstrad and Spectrum and produced Jet Ski Simulator, Operation Gunship & Fantasy World Dizzy all for Amstrad and Spectrum. So making Ghostbusters 2 was fitted in around all these other games.

CW: That was quite a productive year for you. How did Ghostbusters 2 do?

OT: We were fairly pleased with the results, as with all scrolling games on Amstrad and Spectrum, we could have really done with more speed. The games ran at about 15 frames a second which was a great shame, as they would have played much better if they were more fluid. Our versions of the game were pretty well received by magazines and the public with reviews around 80% and the power of the license meant it did become a #1 game over the Christmas period, along with Fantasy World Dizzy.

