

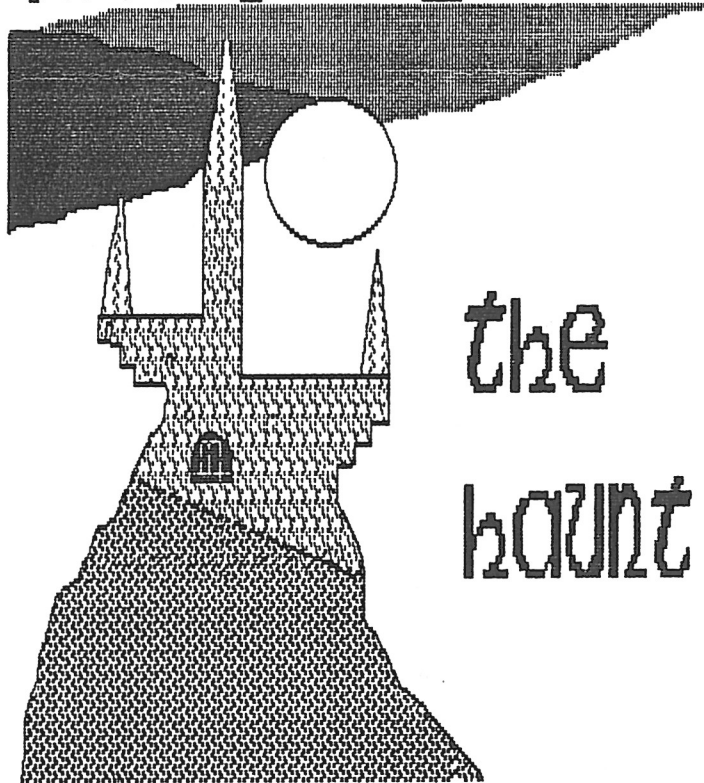
ORIC

USER
MONTHLY

Issue No. 21

May 1989

have you got.....



the
haunt

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O U M

Oric User Monthly

Issue 21 : May : 1989 : Edited by R.Cook

Issue 21: Another month, another issue. This months OUM is probably one of the best we've ever produced, there is plenty of interesting articles inside, but first - an amendment: last issue I printed the fact that HGC (Mailorder) was to be closing down, and you may have heard this too if you attended our stand at the Alternative Micro Show, however, HGC (run by Allan Whitaker) is not closing down and will continue to sell Oric software. So I apologise for distributing false news, and a big apology to Allan Whitaker for any inconvenience caused.

This months issue contains a full report of the Alternative Micro Show, our stand was run by Dave Dick, Jon Haworth, and Dave Utting was selling interfaces too, 'New Computer Express' April 15th issue had a little report but hardly described the event fully. The report is written by Dave Dick, and the style is just what you've come to expect from him, you've been warned.

There is also the facinating interview with the author of 'Don't Press the letter 'Q' ', which should appeal to everyone. And of course the usual tips & hints, news section, for sale/wanted, charts, reviews, RAMblings from Jon Haworth, etc. and yet again free offers. Remember, all contributions welcome (and vital), best wishes.

NEWS

OUM could well be going out in France soon, in a French translation. Ourselves and Vincent Talvas (of the CLUB DISCORIC) are working out the best way to translate and distribute OUM in France, which should allow British readers to contact other Oric owners abroad.

Modem users will soon be able to use a new Oric section called "ORIC-LIVE". The section will be set-up soon, Jeremy Chaplin decided to take control of the section when LIVE-LINE closed down, it is on Skyline Viewdata database. It should be worth looking at, should you have anything to submit for ORIC-LIVE then write to:

Mr J.Chaplin,
208 Dereham,
New Coftefey,
Norwich,
NR5, OSW.

'Phone: (0603)-742273
(24 hours)

Bleu Ciel Software (in France) have stopped selling Oric software, and the copyright of all their software has been returned to the authors. Some of the software in their catalogue will be distributed now by the CLUB DISCORIC (CDO). They sell 'Willy' for cass. 29f/disk 49f, and a compilation 'Risiko', 'Eye of Zoltec', 'Yahtzee' and others, there are four compilations, each containing a certain type of software, they cost less than £ 10 so itsquite cheap.

'League Soccer' is now available on cassette for just £ 3.99 inc. P&P.
'The Haunt' is still available for just £ 1.99 inc. P&P.

More news on page 9.

DAVE'S DATA

Game: Winter Games
Supplier: HGC
Price: £ 6.50 (cass) / £ 9.10 (disk)

This colourful winter sports package was imported from Germany, which is probably the reason for it being in the upper price bracket. I have seen the authors motorbike racing game and this is ten times better. There are 3 sports for you to tackle and you do this by way of 2 cursor keys and the space bar.

- (i) Biathlon:- you ski over a cross-country course against the clock. You stop to fire at 5 targets and continue on your way. You do 4 circuits of this and get a 1 minute penalty for each shot off target.
- (ii) Ski - jump:- down the runway you go and jump as far as you can. You control your landing, and if you are as skilful as me, you may not land in a heap. A nice touch is the inset picture which helps you to control your feet. You have 3 attempts, with your longest jump being recorded.
- (iii) Speed-skating:- you against the computer in a frantic 1000 metre dash, with your time displayed.

Overall, this is a well put-together game and is a good addition to the catalogue of anyone who likes the Triathlon/Zoo-Olympics type of game. This is a nice colourful package and is definately one to put in your collection. Graphics: 9 . Sound: 6 . Addictiveness: 7 . Overall: 8
Next month I'll do some mini-reviews of things which are easy to obtain and some which you may have trouble buying. I'll look at: Masterpaint, German Linkword, Psychiatric, One-Key BASIC and a couple more.

ALTERNATIVE MICRO SHOW REPORT by Dave Dick

STARDATE: 01:04:89
LOCATION: Alternative Micro Show, London.
MODE OF TRANSPORT: Ford Cortina Circa 1976

CAPTAINS LOG: As I park the old banger a red light comes on. Have I found Pamela Bordes ? Has the alternator gone ? Oh, forget it. Beam me into the show hall Scotty. Jon Haworth is already there. Our 12 ft stand is suddenly 6 ft, the organisers have cocked it up . By gentle persuasion (there are more on our stand) we get rid of the other peeps (Stavros term for people) and put our laser beams away. At one end of the stand is Dave Utting and a friend selling Cummana disk interfaces for £ 50. Then there are Jon and I with a couple of Atmos's, disk-drive, data recorder, monitors, OUM back-issues, software (including 'The Haunt' & 'League Soccer') and reams of bumpf.

Half an hour into the show and an Oric owner appears. Jon demonstrates his copy of CLUB DISC'ORIC while I desperately try to sell him some back issues of OUM. " Buy a quantity and I'll do you a deal", says I (with laser beam pointed at his head).

Turn the page for STARDATE:LUNCHTIME.

By lunchtime things are hotting-up, plenty of interest by now. Software and back-issues are selling, 3 new subscriptions are taken. Simon Houlton and his minder appear, he sells a couple of drives and promptly retires to the bar to celebrate.

A reporter from "New Computer Express" asks me what an Oric is. I give a 'History of the Oric' speech, I hope he had a C90 cassette in his cassette-player or he may have missed something. Pete Canning from Hitchin re-appears, "What about buying those back issues" says I, "I'll catch you later" says he. (Note: I'm still waiting Pete, if you don't order some I won't give you a free plug for your 'Atmostar' program - oops, too late).

I have a wander around the show-hall, Capri Marketing have sold alot of Oric software and a company from Wales are selling 'The Quill' for just £ 2 ! It's nearly time to pack-up now. A big thank-you to Jon Haworth, Dave Utting and Simon Houlton (and from myself too - ed), and a big thank-you to the COOK brothers for the fantastic job they did in getting all the back-issues and new software to me on time. But, most of all, thank-you to all those who visited us on the stand and bought something to keep OUM out of the red.

When I got back into my trusty Cortina, the red light came back on, the engine worked but nothing else. Do you know what it's like driving through London with no brake lights, no indicators and no radio (to discover how Liverpool FC did) ? - beam me up Scotty.

A big thank-you to 'Micro Mart' magazine whose idea of an April fool joke was to print my advertisement in their April 6th issue, nevertheless, I'm now getting 'phone-calls and at least OUM should get new subscribers.

MESSAGE ENDS.....MESSAGE ENDS.....MESSAGE ENDS.....MESSAGE ENDS..

Charts: compiled by readers

1. Zorgons Revenge	I.J.K.	1
2. The Boss	Peaksoft	2 *
3. Xenon 3	I.J.K.	3 *
4. The Ultra	P.S.S.	6 *
5. Maze Rally	F.G.C.	4 *
6. The Hellion	Orpheus	5
7. Defence Force	Tansoft	7
8. Don't Press the Letter 'Q'	I.J.K.	8
9. Karate	Gasoline	9 * (F)
10.Frelon	Loriciels	RE * (F)

Comment: Not much happening this month, but The Ultra rises fast. Games heading for the top 10 include Insect Insanity, Starter 3D & Classic racing. Please keep sending your lists of top 3 favourite games plus the name of the game you most dislike.

To win a free copy of 'The Haunt' including P&P, write in and tell me the names of three Oric games which contain peoples names, one winner. Entries and orders for next issue by no later than May 20th please.

A while ago I said that I was trying to obtain some Loriciels software from Elite Systems Ltd who had taken over them, well now I've discovered that Elite have lost Loriciels (who have got themselves back on their own) so it may take a little while longer. I'll keep you posted.

Last months competition for a free copy of 'The Haunt' was won by (if you win a competition you can enter others too) Mr Patrick Brown, Orpington!

RAMbling in the ROM - 2

I thought this time that we might consider a curious feature of the Basic 'GOTO' routine, which is identical in both ROM versions. It is at #C9B3-#C9DF in V1.0, and at #C9E5-#CA11 in V1.1. The principle of the routine was intended to be that if the number of the line to 'GOTO' was higher than the number of the programme line containing the instruction, then the search would start not at the beginning of the programme, but immediately following the current line. The obvious purpose of this was to speed up the operation of the 'GOTO' statement. Thus the line: 200 GOTO 250 was intended to start searching from a possible line 201 onwards. GOTO a lower line number must, of course, start searching at the first line of the programme.

Unfortunately those intrepid authors of the ROM, Peter Halford and Andy Brown, cocked it up! For the above to work properly, the routine has to compare the line number to GOTO with the current line number. Surprisingly, the only comparison made is between the high bytes of the hexadecimal pair of bytes holding the line numbers. So, if the high bytes are the same, back we go to the start of the programme!

To clarify, take our example: 200 GOTO 250
 The low byte/high byte hex representation stored in the Oric for 200 is C8/00, and for 250 is FA/00. Compare the high bytes - both are 00 - and even though 250 is greater than 200, back to the start of the programme we go to find line 250.

Now consider: 200 GOTO 260
 The hex representation of 260 is #0104, which reversed to low byte/high byte (as are all hex numbers stored in Oric memory) is 04/01. Now compare high bytes - 01 is greater than 00 - so the search starts after line 260!

While this would be no problem with such low line numbers, imagine it being commanded towards the end of a very long Basic programme. The result is a very substantial loss of programme speed while the programme searches for line 15250 from line 10!

How to avoid the problem? Not straightforward, but it can be done. Counting forwards, 1 is added to the high byte each time 256 decimal is added to the number. So make sure the line you GOTO is at least one more than the next highest multiple of 256 above the current line number. (2560 = #0A00)
 So 2560 GOTO 2590 would not work efficiently (2590 = #0A14)
 2560 GOTO 2816 would! (2816 = #0B00)

Tail-ender

PRINT 1 will give you , not surprisingly, "1" on screen.
 Try POKE #D7,1: PRINT 1
 Any offers for an explanation?

See you soon,

Jon Haworth

INTERVIEW

Andrew Moore wrote 'Don't Press the Letter "Q"' back in 1984, marketed by IJK Software. Andrew did alot for Oric owners and gave them much to cheer about with a few quality titles that still look good by todays standards, here we catch up with him in this OUM interview. You may be wondering how I got in touch with Andrew, the truth is that by completing his game you will see his address to write to, although he has since moved to Cambridge. I myself didn't complete the game to see his address, but instead managed to crack the amazing security-system and program scrambler to see the address, although on repeated attempts the system beat me. On with the interview.....

Question 1: DPTLQ is an extremely original arcade game, voted 'most original Oric game' by OUM readers. What inspired you to put the game together and where did you get the ideas for the games originality ?

Answer: At the start, back in June 1984, my motivation for creating a game like DPTLQ was that it would be nice to write a game and yet still not quite know what to expect when it was finally finished. Well, that's not quite true: my real motivation was of course to maybe make some money. But given that main motivation, the sub-motivation was to do something reasonably fun.

The basic idea was to take many generic features from a whole variety of arcade games of the time, and implement them, and then put themtogether in all sorts of different ways. As I had expected, this involved significantly less work than would be needed to knock-up several arcade games seperately. Looking at about fifteen different arcade games (two dimensional) on Boscombe Pier (the amusement arcade where I grew up) there were only about three different sorts of general user movement and perhaps half a dozen different alien/invader/nasty-thing movement routines. This pattern repeats with almost all the other game features. Of course there are lots of subtle differences, and the game features have to be combined with care, and this is where the algorithms used in DPTLQ come in.

Question 2: How long did the game take to write from the very start, and how did you go about putting it together ?

Answer: It was about four months worth of eight-hour days, written in Bournemouth during a university summer vacation. Those were very good times. The first six weeks were spent designing structures and representations and then algorithms, followed by about six weeks of coding and debugging. Finally, scattered through the next two or three weeks were all sorts of necessary final adjustments and improvements. Those were the all-to-familiar days in any programming project, of "Yes, that's right - it's just about finished now, I'm just removing one final buglette".

Question 3: You programmed & designed the game on your own, what were the main problems you faced in the programming and how did you go about overcoming them ?

Answer 3 on the next page:



The main problems were in some of the deeper algorithms. For example, during game generation it was necessary to combine many game features without allowing combinations to be (a) so stupid as to make the game unplayable (b) so sensible as to make all the games too similar. Other tricky areas were coping with Orics attribute-style graphics (surprise eh ? - Ed) in real time, doing efficient general collision detection and building random mazes (though in the final case, I think the problem was my stupidity: it isn't really a tough problem).

Question 4: How did you get interested in computers and how did you meet up with the Oric ?

I got interested as soon as I met a friend's Tangerine (not the fruit, this was an early 6502 micro, in the days when all computers were named after vegetation). I got myself a Tangerine and wrote a few games for that (things like "Ghost Gobbler" and "Defender"). Oric was the successor to Tangerine, and so it wasn't long after it appeared that I bought one.

Question 5: DPTLQ was marketed by IJK Software. What made you decide on them for the programs release, and did you send copies to other software houses ? What help did IJK give ?

I had originally been intending to sell the game to Tansoft, Orics own software house. I had already sold them another game for the Oric, "Defence Force" which I'd written the summer before. However, at the time, they were going bust, owing me an enormous (by my standards, anyway) amount of money. So I searched the computer press for another Oric software house and wrote to IJK, and one other company. IJK gave the best offer, and seemed to be reasonably professional, it was pretty well complete, and so they didn't really need to supply any help of a technical nature.

Question 6: Looking back at DPTLQ, most readers still find the game fascinating. Are you still happy with the end product ?

I was happy with the end product, but could certainly see numerous ways of improving it.

Question 7: What have you been up to in the world of computers since programming the game, and what's in store for micro users in the future ?

Until recently I'd done almost nothing with microprocessors (except for a small piece of work on the Z88, Sinclairs new laptop). However, last November a friend of mine suggested we work on a joint venture to create a massively improved, much more professional, implementation of Don't Press the Letter 'Q'. We hope to have just finished the prototype version and are delighted with the results. There are many, many styles of game, and the graphics are much nicer. The concept of the pathways has been replaced with a huge "Aleph Maze" - an infinitely large universe of games which gets mapped out for you as you complete the games and find the 'Q-cumbers' (got something about Q, haven't you Andrew ? - Ed). The prototype version runs on the Commodore Amiga, but it has been written to be very portable and we hope to be making our first transfers soon (though sadly, at 200K it will never return to the Oric). At the moment we are searching for software companies who would like to market it- a task which seems to have become a great deal tougher and more competitive in the last five years.



Question 8: On a final note. DEPTLO is a very enjoyable and amusing game which has many features never seen on any micro, but did it sell enough copies to make it worth all the effort and give you the acclaim you obviously deserved ?

It made me enough money to have been more profitable than if I'd been spending the summer working at a "real" job, though it didn't make as much as Defence Force had. IJK were paying me on a royalty basis. My last royalty cheque, covering SIX MONTHS of late 1986, was around £ 10.00 and since then they have apparently sold no more copies.

So, it was worth it simply financially, but also because it was rewarding to see the final result and to occasionally see friends becoming temporarily addicted to it. I haven't played it for a couple of years now, because my Oric was stolen some time ago (good news for Oric lovers, I guess - it is still considered worth stealing !). The furthest I ever got in it was Beacon twelve. I'd be interested in knowing if anyone had got further without cheating.

Many thanks to Andrew Moore for taking the time to help us in this interview.

I would like to thank all Oric owners who have sent in programs that they submitted for publication in OUM, I'm just letting them know that they are being dealt with, and that we'll print them in OUM as soon as possible, but, as you know, we have been very short of space in OUM. So please be patient and we'll get around to them.

For sale/wanted: **ADS**

This section is free for use by any OUM reader, if you have something to sell, swap, or buy, then write the advertisement (no more than 45 words) and send it to us.

.....

For sale, Oric 1 and Atmos software, prices inc. P&P.

- Multigames 1 : £ 1.00
- Invaders (PSS) : £ 1.50
- Light Cycle : £ 1.50
- Goldmine : £ 2.00
- Maze Rally : £ 2.50
- Gubbie : £ 2.50
- Scuba Dive : £ 2.50

Write to: Matthew Shakeshaft, 47 Newton Rd, Ashton-on-Ribble, Preston, Lancs, PR2, 1DY.

Matthew will also consider swaps.
.....

~~For sale:~~ Issues of Oric Owner (duplicate) no. 7,8,9 and 10, £ 1.00 each.
For loan, issues 1 to 4 of Oric Computing magazine.

Enquiries to: Mr R.Plant, 296 Undercliffe St, Bradford 3, West Yorks, BD3, 0PH.
.....

For sale: Commodore 64C, mouse, joystick, programme stopper, £ 250 pf software inc. strategy games, all for just £ 125.

Contact: Mr J.McKay, 21 Holme Drive, Sunbrooke, Lincoln. Tel: (0522)-754870
.....

If writing to advertise in this section, please tell me if you wish for your address to be printed, or if you want OUM to pass on enquiries, freely.

(News:cont)

Software news now. Remember The Quill selling for £ 17 ? Then £ 9.50 ? Then OUM was first to tell you it was just £ 3.99. Well now it is selling for the amazing price of just £ 2.50, and that includes postage & packaging. If you still haven't got this superb utility, write to:

R & A.J. Preston, Kings Hall Court, St. Brides Major, Mid. Glamorgan, CF32, OSE. Tel: (0656) 880965.

'Software Cellar' have now got a new price list out, containing about 20 extra titles, inc. View to a Kill - £ 3, and Tyrann - £ 3.00.

We are working on two new titles for release, and we hope to be able to start on arcade games soon, to satisfy most users. I know that there is a new karate-style game being programmed (not for OUM release) but I won't say any more on that just yet, preview soon.

 Issue 22 costs 55p with an A5 s.a.e. or 90p inc. P&P, 1st class postage. A years subscription inc. 1st class P&P costs just £ 10, 80p off normal cost. Back issues cost just 50p each, maximum order of three at a time. Cheques/postal orders (cash accepted) payable to: " O.U.M. (R.Cook) ".

James Groom from Halesowen, West Midlands.

HINTS+TIPS

In Superfruit (IJK), pressing the ESC key will reset the 'amount inserted', 'amount paid' and 'difference' counters to zero, useful if you are losing the game.

T.C.Brown from Essex.

To speed up data processing, type POKE#30E,64 although it will disable the keyboard, POKE#30E,192 to cancel it. Useful for speeding up programs sections where no keys need to be pressed.

Jonathan Haworth from Cambridge

'Infinite lives' pokes & dokes.

Hunchback : POKE#6FA4,39 : POKE#5B55,255

Styx : DOKE#5BDF,#EAEA

Lee Akrill from Hull

'Infinite lives' on Bozy Boa, change line 550 to:

550 IF PEEK(48058)=42 THEN POKE (48058),42: GOTO 1000

H.G.C. News

HGC is selling The Quill for just £ 3.50 inc. P&P. Allan Whitaker is putting together Atmos packs, which contain brand new Atmos computers, an Atmos costs just £ 45.00 inc. P&P, and offers are:

48K ATMOS, Advanced User Guide book, and Orion utility. Just £ 55.00.

48K ATMOS, Advanced User Guide book, and educational software. £ 55.00.

48K ATMOS, and many arcade games, including Snake Venom & Pasta Blasta, £ 55

Slalom-Race: High Quality ski-ing game, just £ 3.50 inc P&P.

Lots more next month, plus the reviews of new HGC software, just 55p. Oric User Monthly, 10 Thomson Ave, Kings Norton, Birmingham, B38, 8YD.

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 Cover & ads: Jon Haworth

Dave's Data: Dave Dick
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