

POPULAR

ISSUE 04
WINTER 2019

RETRO

Merry Breakfast

Cereal box toys and prizes

PLUS:
Masters of the Universe • Ocean games on the Oric



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POPULAR RETRO

ISSUE 04

WINTER 2019

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Editorial

Not only does this issue conclude 2019, but it also marks the 1st year anniversary of Popular Retro as a free magazine. We're hoping that those of you who have taken the trouble to seek out and download the magazine have enjoyed the issues produced.

Of course, this issue is going out just before Christmas, so hopefully everyone (including us here!) has got all of the last minute shopping done and dusted. Being the traditional time of giving and receiving presents, it would have been a neat idea to have included a free gift inside this issue, just like those you used to get inside breakfast cereal boxes. Sadly, virtual 3D printing isn't a thing (yet!), so we will have to make do with an article about them instead!

Happy Christmas, Happy New Year and all the very best for 2020!

RETRO NEWS

BREAKING NEWS: THEC64 IS HERE!



Backers of the full-size THEC64 have now started receiving their boxed THEC64 retro computers. If you are one of them, please don't forget to look online and download the full User Manual from retrogames.biz/thec64/support/manuals-thec64. The manual explains in detail the

whole range of features available on THEC64. THEC64 is also available at retail in various European countries, whilst stocks last.

To ensure that they don't feel left out, THEC64 Mini owners should soon be able to download a new firmware upgrade from

retrogames.biz/thec64-mini/support/upgrade. The new 1.3.1 upgrade features a number of tweaks and enhancements to the performance of THEC64 Mini, adds some new functionality and adds a new game to the carousel. Full details are available from the website.

Cereal Fillers

Discovering a set of cards amongst your Weetabix or tipping a plastic toy into your bowl of Ricles might not be the norm these days, but for those of a certain age, this was the kind of marketing that encouraged kids to visit the supermarket with their parents and then munch through their breakfast cereal at lightning speed.

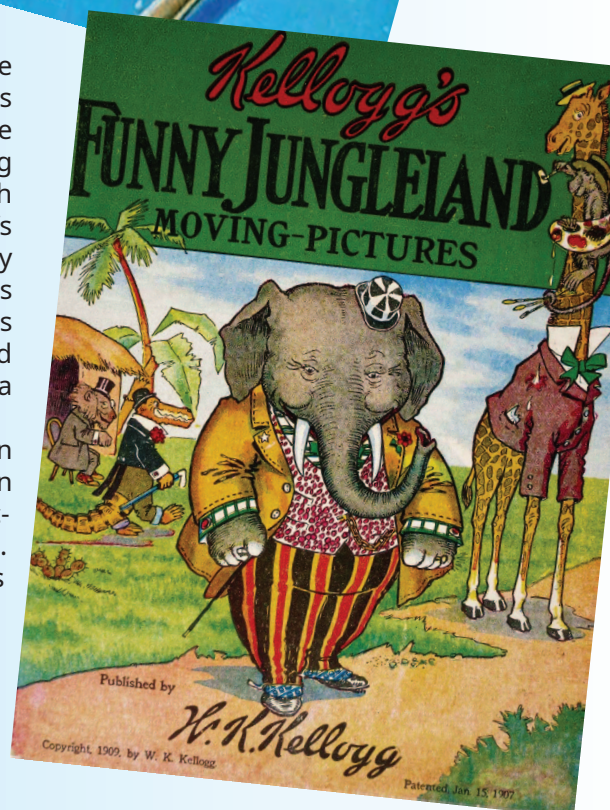
Believe it or not, breakfast cereals have featured offers, gifts or free prizes since the turn of the 20th Century, whether requested by post, redeemed at the store, or included on or inside the box. The gifts came in many forms, including simple board games, books, transfers, stickers, toys and much later on, even compact discs. These days, fast food giants like MacDonalds and Burger King offer promotional gifts with their children's meals, but it was the humble breakfast cereal that blazed this particular trail first.



Kellogg's

Kellogg's in the United States were the first cereal company to offer products associated with their cereals. Just three years after the company started selling Toasted Corn Flakes to the North American public in 1906, Kellogg's produced the first in a series of Funny Jungleland Moving Pictures books for young children. Buy two boxes of Corn Flakes, and you could send off for the book, paying 25 cents (a dime) for postage costs.

In 1909, sales of Toasted Corn Flakes ballooned to over a million boxes, suggesting that this particular marketing ploy was a success. By 1912, over 2.5 million books were dispatched to households across North America. Kellogg's subsequently produced various other Funny Jungleland books, and variations of the same offer continued until the late 1930s.

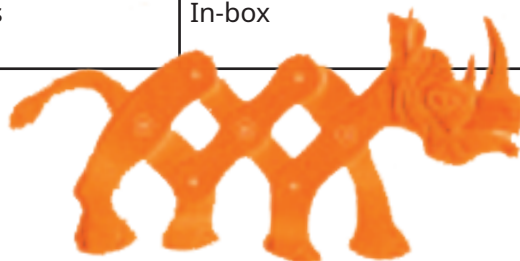




With probably well over a few hundred different breakfast cereal products to their name over the last one hundred or so years, Kellogg's have produced a huge amount of free gifts (or prizes as they are sometimes referred to in the U.S. and Canada). Below is just a taster of some of the promotional items linked with the Kellogg's Ricles cereal brand in the United Kingdom.



Cereal	Year	Promotion	Type	Details
Sugar Ricles	1957	Enid Blyton's Adventures of Little Noddy	Presented on the back of the box	Colour illustrated four-panel story
Ricles	1966	Noddy Goes Shopping vinyl record	Mail order offer with tokens from qualifying cereal boxes	Flexi record (33.3 RPM) with five songs on one track, composed and conducted by Ron Goodwin
	1968	The Magic Roundabout model	In-box plastic toy	Second series. Six to collect (in five different colours)
	1972	Stretch Pets	In-box plastic self-assembly toy that elongates when pulled	Eight to collect (in a number of different colours)
	1976	Mr Men stickers	In-box	Twelve stickers to collect. Two stickers in each box.



It's also worth pointing out that just a few years ago, Kellogg's announced that the Ricles brand was to be retired, as part of a push to reduce the sugar content in breakfast cereals in general. As Ricles were really nothing more than Rice Krispies but with a sugar coating, their announced withdrawal was hardly a surprise.

Weetabix

Weetabix was created by Australian Bennison Osborne and was originally called The Health Biscuit, before being renamed Weet-bix in 1926, with the original name relegated to appearing below the new.

This wholesome biscuit-shaped breakfast cereal was produced in Australia by Grain Products Ltd, a company set up specifically to make Weet-Bix. Grain products Ltd continued to make the product after the change to Weet-bix until they sold up to the Sanitarium Health and Wellbeing Company in the late 1920s. Sanitarium made rival health food and was an Australian company that just happened to have recently recruited an immigrant baker from the United States called Edward Halsey, headhunted from Kellogg's.

Unhappy with this development, Osborne moved on to South Africa and produced more Weet-bix whilst laying the foundations of a new company with private funding to sell a variation called Weetabix. The British and African Cereal Company began production of the new Weetabix from their UK base

in Kettering, Northamptonshire in 1932 and never looked back. A scant four years later, the company changed their name to the eponymous Weetabix Limited.

In the 1930's, Weetabix began advertising associated products to help sell cereal. At first, these were all mail order offers for Weetabix branded tins, breakfast sets and recipe books. Send in a number of coupons cut out from

the boxes to get one of the items for free, but some items required over a hundred. Considering the standard 12 biscuit boxes came with one coupon and the larger 24 biscuit boxes came with two, that's an awful lot of Weetabix! Obviously, these marketing tactics were aimed more at the adults than the children, as it's hard to imagine a young child wanting a Weetabix branded marmalade jar.

By the 1950s, gifts intended to appeal to children were included with the cereal in an effort to keep up with Kellogg's, who were ramping up their association with Enid Blyton and Noddy in particular throughout that



Cereal	Year	Promotion	Type	Details
Weetabix	1974	Robin Hood (Walt Disney)	In-box cards and back-of-box diorama	Three or Six push-out cardboard figures with folded stand
	1975	Doctor Who and Enemies	In-box cards and back-of-box diorama	Three or six push-out cardboard figures with folded stand
	1976	Doctor Who Action Game	In-box cards and back-of-box board game	Three or six cards with folded stand and four board games to collect
	1977	Huckleberry Hound's Funtastic Friends	In-box cards and back-of-box diorama	Three or six push-out cardboard figures with folded stand
	1978	Mickey Mouse Playmates	In-box cards and back-of-box diorama	Three or six push-out cardboard figures with folded stand
	1978	Superman	In-box cards and back-of-box diorama, with puzzle on inside of back of box	Timed to coincide with Superman – The Movie but associated with the comics, not the film
	1979	Star Trek – The Motion Picture	In-box cards and back-of-box diorama and spaceships to cut-out and build	Instructions also printed on the inside of the box
	1980	Flash Gordon	In-box cards, with colour-in picture on inside of back of box	You could send off for an album to keep the cards safe

decade. The unofficial breakfast cereal war was on.

Early Weetabix gifts included a series of collectible cards called Conquest of Space that included 'up-to-the-minute scientifically accurate information compiled by one of this country's leading experts'. An album to keep your cards in was also available for the princely sum of 1/3 in old British money. Cut-out cardboard figures depicting 'Children of Other Lands' were featured on boxes in 1959, featuring Mexico, Japan, Austria and many other countries.

The Weetabix Workshop was a series of motorcar models printed on the back of boxes. Cut them out and glue along the tabs to create your own cardboard models of Jeeps, London Buses, Fire Engines or Shell and BP Petrol Tankers. Later series included Railway

Locomotives, Freight Cars and Vintage cars including Rolls Royce, Lagondas and Mercedes-Benz.

Interspersed with the child-friendly gifts were offers for more Weetabix branded items for the home, including carving knives, saucepans, bathroom scales and Irish linen!

Stereo picture cards, viewed using a Weetabix stereoscope device (costing just 1/6) proved hugely popular in the 1960s. Inspired by similar stereoscope devices like ViewMaster, Weetabix included one free 3-D card in every packet, featuring photos of Animals (of the type found in a Zoo), British Birds, British Cars and Working Dogs to name just a few. The 3-D cards used the time-honoured principle of displaying two images side-by-side, but with the photos taken at slightly different

angles. The viewer then presented the relevant left or right image to each eye, and the brain sees depth in the image due to the subtle differences between the pictures.

For many kids, the free cards from around the mid-1970s onwards inside Weetabix boxes proved irresistible. They were all licenced from contemporary TV programmes or movies and typically came in sets of three, divided by a perforated line that allowed you to separate each card. Sometimes they were part of a game included on the back of the box, or were part of a diorama (also included on the box).

Of course, Weetabix as a brand is still going strong today, but gifts are much less common. Discount coupons, competitions and online offers are far more prevalent today.



–CHILDREN OF THE CORN FLAKES–

Editor's note: When reading this article prior to publication, I was taken back to my childhood. Many of the kids I went to junior school with had parents who worked at a local cereal factory. The gifts found in the boxes of cereal would often be handed out in the playground from one child to another, like illicit currency amongst friends! Favourites which spring to mind include; 'Tom and Jerry Shrinky Dinks', and the one most engraved into my memory, the highly coveted 'Star Wars' transfers! Oh the memories!

Nabisco

For many years, one of the Nabisco breakfast cereal brands most associated with gifts was Shreddies. As with their rivals, Nabisco included a similar range of mail order coupon offers and gifts found both on and in the cereal boxes. Also, just like their rivals, they ended up with a go-to licence which they returned to time and time again. Kellogg's started with Noddy, Weetabix had Hanna Barbera and Nabisco's Shreddies had Tom & Jerry.

This promotional game of cat and mouse hit a peak during the 1960s and 1970s, when every breakfast cereal box on supermarket shelves in the UK seemed to have something to entice the buyer. Shreddies had Tom & Jerry comics, Tom & Jerry joke books, lenticular badges, fun sheets, stickers and iron-on transfers, to name just a few.

Shreddies also had the occasional dalliance with Walt Disney. A prime example was the promotion they ran in 1971 with Disney for their latest animation movie, The Aristocats. A series of plastic toys featuring six of the characters from the movie were included inside boxes of Shreddies in a variety of different colours, including red and light blue. A separate promotion included Aristocat stickers which could be stuck to dioramas found on the back of the boxes.

Other Shreddies cereal gifts included a range of adventure books, covering the subject of Soldiers, Pirates, Famous Explorers and Heroes of the Wild West. Early '80s Pop Star badges (in reality, stickers) featuring artists including Wham, Michael Jackson, Nik Kershaw, Boy George, Howard Jones, Spandau Ballet, The Thompson Twins, John Taylor (from Duran Duran), Madness and Paul Young were another success.



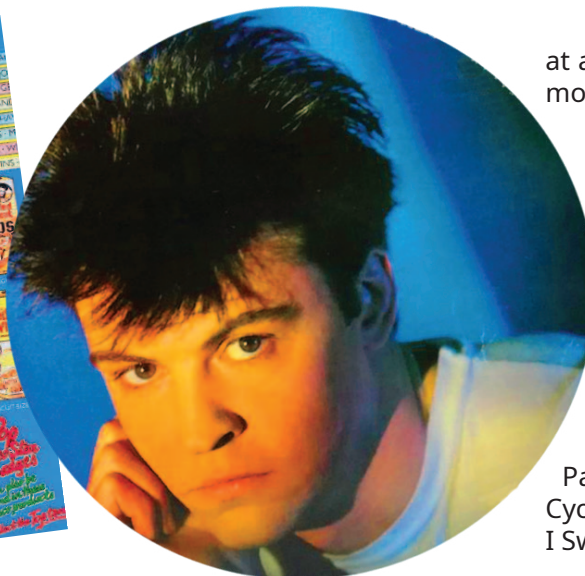
Shredded Wheat (in its various guides, shapes and sizes) is a popular breakfast cereal all around the world. The ownership of the cereal has changed hands a few times, but the brand has consistently had many gifts and promotions over the years. Until the mid-80s, Shredded Wheat was produced by Nabisco in the UK, before ending up years later with Nestlé.

One particular favourite found in Shredded Wheat boxes were lenticular cards. These cards would change images when tilted in different directions, thanks to the inclusion of a lenticular lens to accompany the images applied to each card.

In 1975, Shredded Wheat featured a series of cards featuring Dutch international football player Johan Cruyff, who had excited world football with his part in the Netherland

team's performances in the 1974 World Cup held in West Germany. Photographed in his Barcelona club team strip, the cards featured animated lenticular images of Cruyff on one side, with an explanation of the technique demonstrated in the images found on the reverse side. The four cards covered ball control, the volley, trapping and shooting. There was also an offer included to send off by mail order for a training wall chart.

Lenticular cards featured once again in 1980, when Shredded Wheat ran a series of five 'Aces in Action' Magic Picture cards that featured animated artwork showing Spitfires and Hurricanes in combat with a Dornier D017, a Stuka, an Me109, Me110 and a Heinkel He111. The gift also tied in with a concurrent promotion with Airfix, allowing you to buy two models



at a discounted price of £2.00 for both models.

Indeed, sport featured heavily with the Shredded Wheat brand, as the health benefits of the cereal were brought to the fore in many of their marketing campaigns. Footballers including Bob Wilson and Kevin Keegan, Cricketers including Ian Botham and various athletes were often used, and related gifts on or on the boxes were not far behind. Sport for All Sew on Patches included I play Cricket, I go Cycling, I Play Football, I'm a Gymnast, I Swim and I play Tennis.



Fun Stickers

Shredded Wheat introduced a set of ten fun stickers collect in 1977, featuring a mix of British TV celebrities including Morecambe and Wise (What do you think of it so far?), Tommy Cooper (Just like that), and Bruce Forsyth (Nice to see you), alongside US imports including the Fonz (Stay Cool) and the actor and singer (Superstar) David Soul. Bizarrely, the set also included a donkey (Smile) and an ape (Funky Gibbon).

The Demise of the Prize

Giving gifts of all kinds has never gone away completely, but in this day of tech-savvy kids and health and safety, the number of breakfast cereals that give away gifts in the box has dwindled as modern kids are less interested in promotional gimmicks. It still happens, but the kind of plastic toys

and other paraphernalia given away with cereals so prolifically in the latter half of the 20th Century has diminished as the MacDonalds and Burger Kings of the world have risen to prominence. Instead of eating partially or mostly healthy foods to gain your free collectibles, now you have to eat burgers and fries. Such is the price of progress.

(Just as this article was being finished, Burger King announced that for the good of the environment, they are halting all plastic toy promotions with their kids meals.)

Thanks

This article would have been much harder to research without the following wonderful web resources:

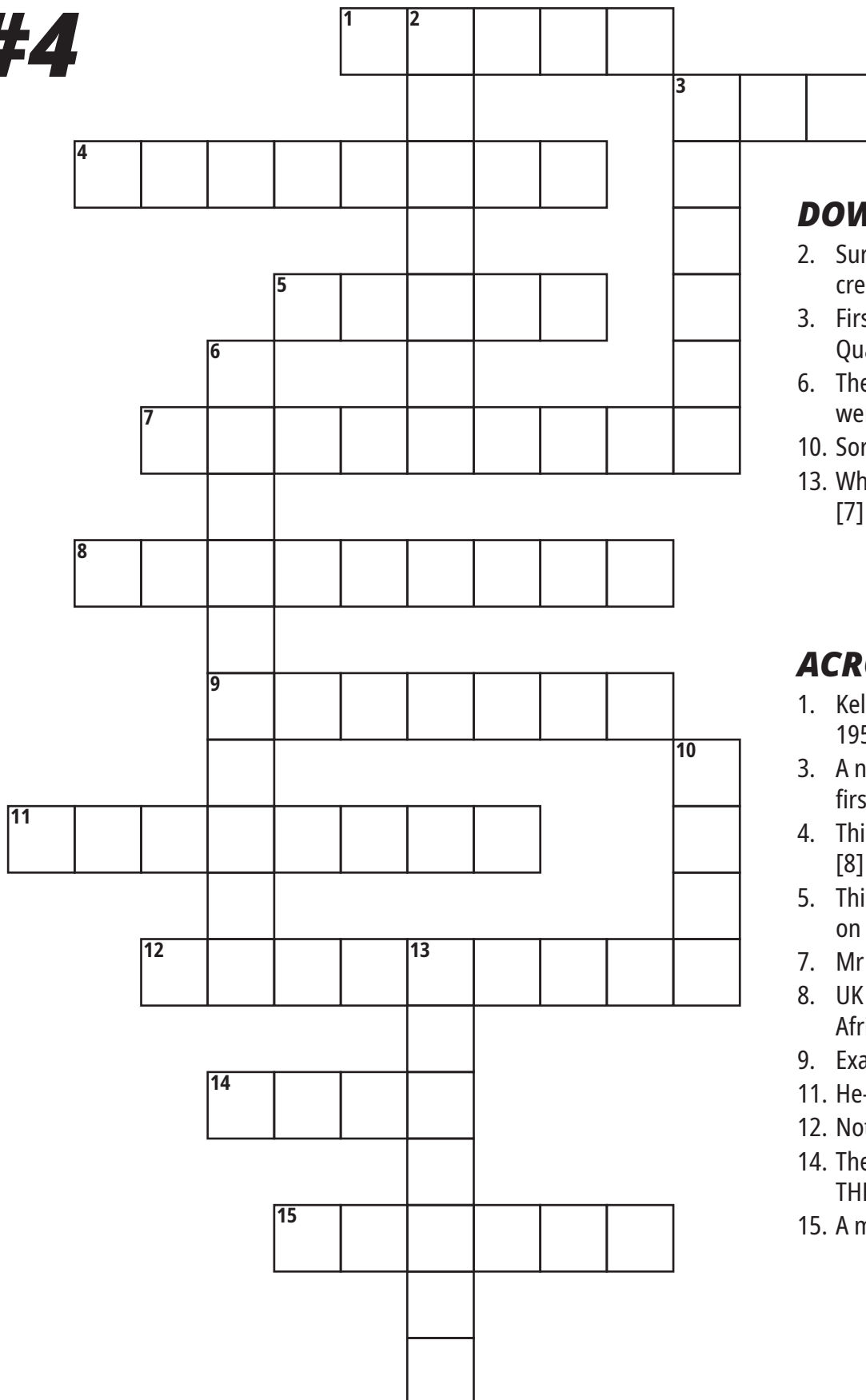
cerealoffers.com, with special thanks to Nick Symes for kind permission to use images from his site.

Other images provided via ebay.



CROSSWORD

#4



DOWN

2. Surname of the Health Biscuit's creator [7]
3. First name of the creator of Quasimodo [6]
6. These types of changing cards were frequently given away [10]
10. Sorceress or Goddess [5]
13. What you could do to these pets [7]

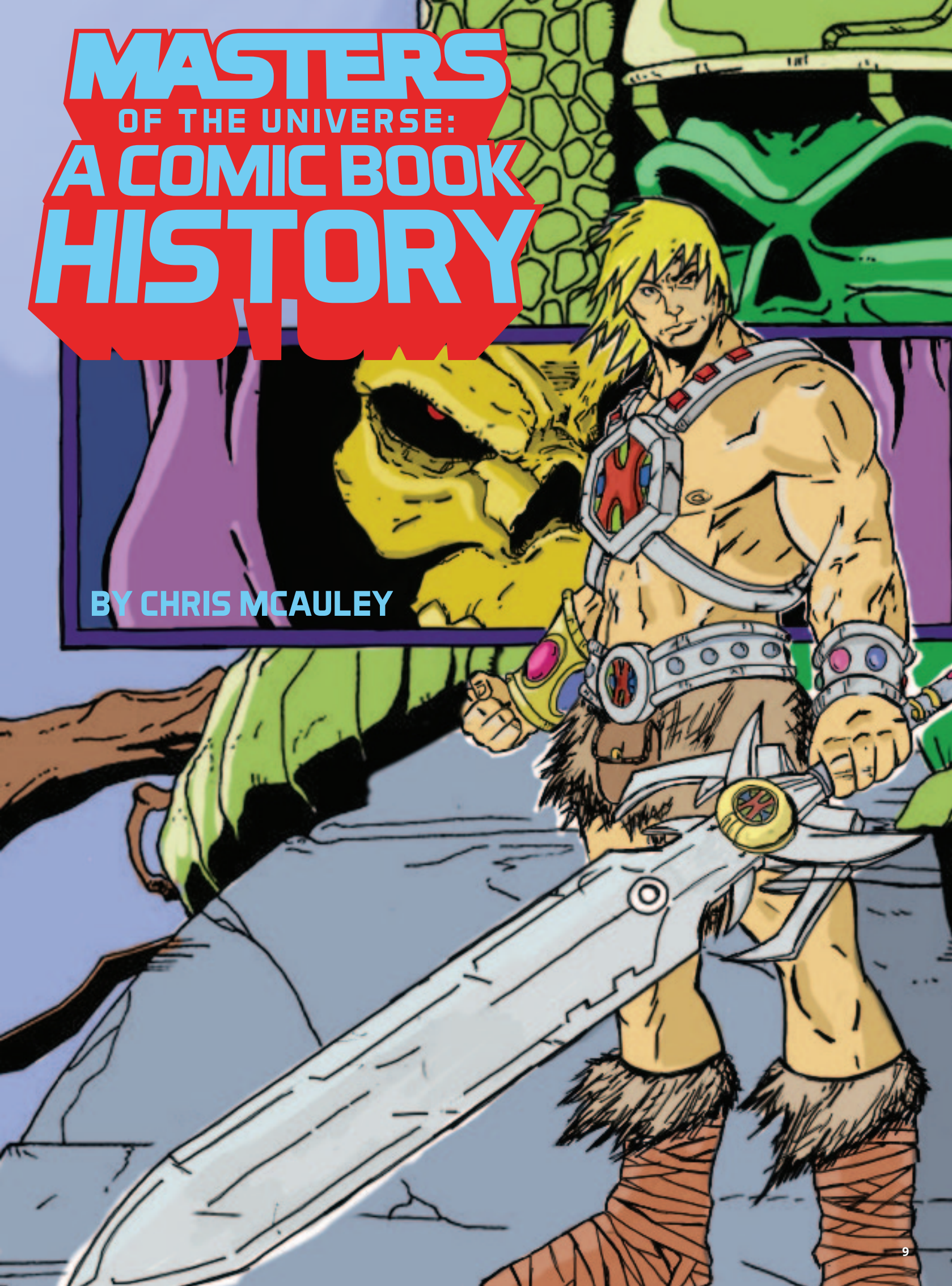
ACROSS

1. Kellogg's favourite character in 1950s Britain [5]
3. A new computer for THEC64, on first name terms [3]
4. This breakfast cereal added an 'a' [8]
5. This mouse featured a few times on and in cereal packets [5]
7. Mr Wimpy's day-job [9]
8. UK home for The British and African Cereal Company [9]
9. Example of A Sport for All [7]
11. He-Man's nemesis [8]
12. Not a colourful heady abode [9]
14. The number of USB ports on THEC64 [4]
15. A masterful toy manufacturer [6]

The answers to Crossword #4 will be published in the next issue.

MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE: A COMIC BOOK HISTORY

BY CHRIS MCAULEY



It's safe to say that the characters of He-Man, Skeletor and their legion of barely dressed companions are beloved generational touchstones for many of the people reading this article. At the height of *The Masters of the Universe's* popularity, there were countless toy-lines, cartoons, a live action film and a series of comic books.

Simply entitled *Masters of the Universe*, the comic book series was an attempt to cash in on the massive popularity of the Science Fiction and Fantasy aesthetics dominating pop culture in the late '70s and early '80s. This shift came from the success of the original *Star Wars* movie and the fantasy and science fiction films that followed it. To introduce this new comic brand, toy company Mattel hired two well-established creators from each genre. Don Glut and Alfred Alcala had made their mark on comics such as Marvel's *Savage Sword of Conan* and novels such as *Star Wars: Empire Strikes Back*. Together, these imaginative creators created a universe for the heroic He-Man and the evil Skeletor unlike any of the many interpretations that followed.

The comic book series began in 1982 with *He-Man and the Power Sword*, which was the first of four MoTU (Masters of the Universe) miniature storybooks packaged with the original line up of action figures. This interpretation of He-Man sees him as a brave warrior who leaves his jungle tribe to help defend Castle Greyskull when he saves a green-skinned lady in snake armour known as "The Goddess" from a wandering monster. The depiction of the planet Eternia is slightly different from what was established later; a once technologically advanced world which was destroyed by ancient weapons technology.

Following this imaginative beginning, *This Old House* introduces the Overlord of Evil, Skeletor. In this continuity Skeletor is not He-Man's mystically scarred uncle, but rather a creature from another dimension populated entirely of Skeletors. This interesting back story is not delved into (I would be curious as to what evolutionary factors created a race devoid of a face of skin) and all the reader is told is that Skeletor wants to bring his people for the conquest of Eternia.

Alcala's artwork is the main factor for the ongoing popularity of the early comics. His work embraces He-Man's weird and goofy world with a visual nuance not afforded the low budget animated effort. The narratives really pop thanks to



Mattel's high quality colour printing. Alcala uses watercolors to subtly ground his bizzare landscapes and fantastic figures.

Glut and Alcala would go on to introduce popular characters such as Mer-Man, Stratos, and Battle Cat in three other minicomics that Mattel and DC would produce. For the remainder of the minicomics produced by DC Comics, newcomer Mark Teixeira would take over art duties, and Gary Cohn would pen eight stories which introduced even more characters such as Ram Man, Trap Jaw, Tri-Klops and Man-E-Faces. This new team traded the picture book format for a more traditional comic book aesthetic. Teixeira would trade Alcala's moody and atmospheric Eternia for a kinetic, almost florescent world of villains almost universally wearing lime green and pink.



But even as *He-Man* constructed his dwelling, evil eyes were gazing upon *Tee-La*, the warrior-goddess, as she watered her unicorn charger.

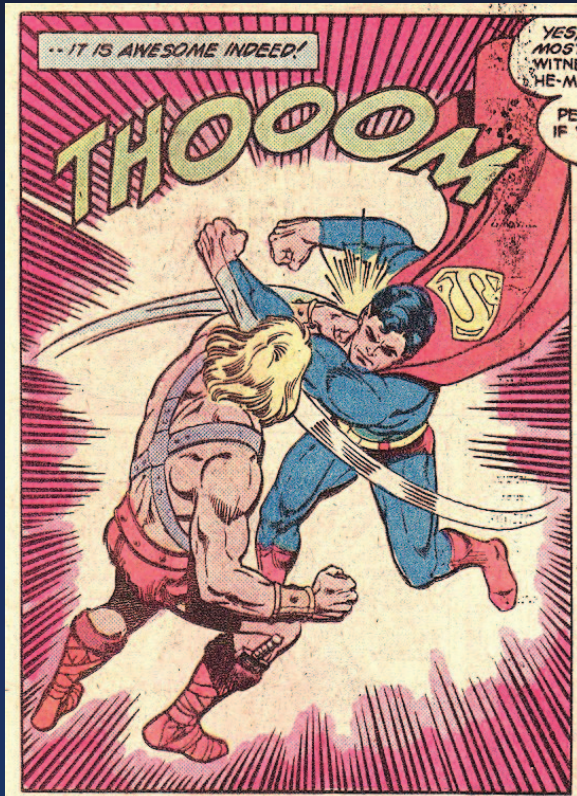
"There is none in all of Eternia as beautiful as she," grunted the ape-like *Beastman*. "I'm really starting to believe that she is a goddess!"

"Soon she will be more than that," whispered his master, *Skeletor*. "Soon she will be my bride!"

Important Issues

Tale of Teela

One of the critical issues that appeared was *The Tale of Teela* in 1983. This narrative attempted to clear up the continuity issues regarding the character. Originally, Teela was the proto-Sorceress who protected Castle Greyskull. Mattel had added to the confusion by producing two Teela toys. The first was the snake-like Goddess character while the second was the human with attachable snake armour. The comics attempted to resolve this by claiming Teela is the magically cloned daughter of The Goddess created by Skeletor to be his child bride.



He-man vs Superman

It wasn't long before He-man would face off against publisher DC Comics leading man. *From Eternia With Death* introduced this titanic battle in 1982. Superman actually visited Eternia twice; the first in DC Comics Presents #47 and the second in a special insert that was included in the back pages of every DC book published in September of 1982 to introduce their upcoming MoTU miniseries.

In the first issue, Superman is transported to Eternia by a cosmic storm. It is at this moment that Skeletor chooses to attack Castle Greyskull. Although Skeletor does not have any kryptonite he does pose a threat to the Man of Steel as he utilises his major weakness – magic. In order to defeat the evil overlord, Superman must team-up with He-Man and do battle. The whole narrative and conclusion is fairly weak but reading through it is fun, if you can suspend your disbelief.

The second encounter between these two cultural titans sees Superman return to Eternia through a underwater whirlpool. *Fate is a Killer* breaks a major taboo and sees He-man throw his sword right through Skeletor's chest. He-man actually kills Skeletor and absorbs his life force!



Skeletor Strikes Back!

Anyone who is familiar with the Batman Animated TV Series which debuted in the '90s will know Bruce Timm. He teams up with Tim Kilpin in the beautifully illustrated *Terror Claws Strike* in 1985. In this narrative, Skeletor is after one of the thousands of magical items located throughout Eternia. This time however, Skeletor isn't attempting to force his way into Castle Greyskull. He wants the gem to control the agriculture of the planet.

Timm creates a Skeletor who looks vicious, sporting a pair of Freddy Krueger/Lady Deathstrike slasher gloves. He also adds the now essential aesthetic to the MoTU's lore, when Prince Adam transforms there's now a powerful Krackle effect. He also crafts these dynamic figures in beautifully drawn action.

This story would be the final triumph for the minicomics as the newer series of action figures failed to meet the high sales expectations set by earlier success. The comic book adventure of He-Man did continue for another couple of years in the short-lived Marvel Star Comics children's line.



SPOT-THE-DIFFERENCE!



The differences will be revealed in the next issue.

ocean

on the

ORIC



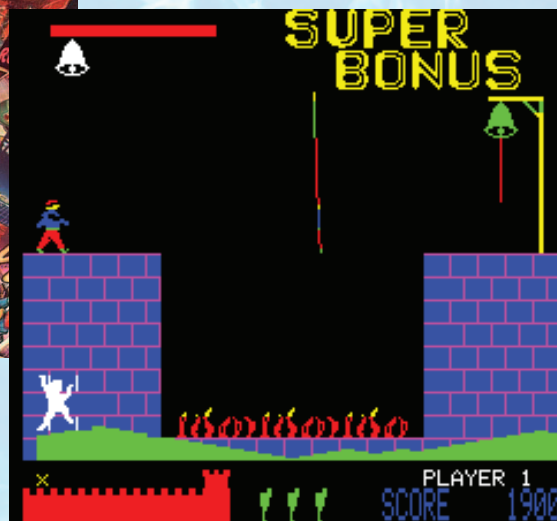
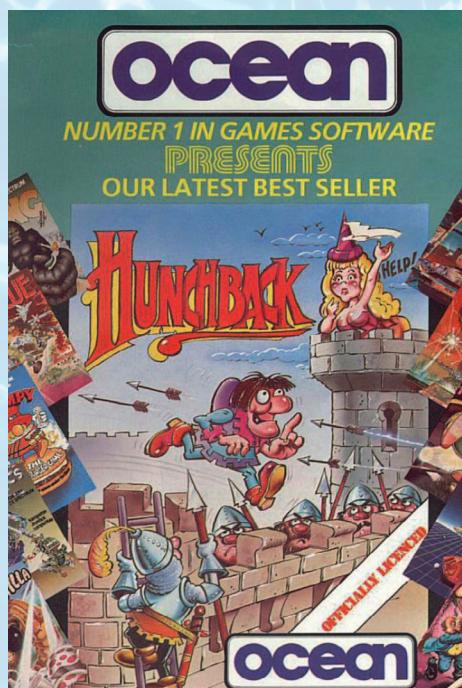
Oric 1 photo used with kind permission.
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<https://pc-museum.com>

by Kieren Hawken

Pretty much anyone with an interest in retro gaming will be more than familiar with Ocean Software. Founded in 1983 as Spectrum Games, the Manchester based software house went on to huge success before being snapped up by French company Infogrames (now renamed Atari Inc.) in 1998. Much of their success was down to licensing hot arcade and movie properties such as Robocop, Chase H.Q., Operation Wolf and The Addams Family but their beginnings were a bit more humble. In their early years they were mainly known for releasing rip-offs of other people's games, often of questionable quality, and it's this era we will go back to for a moment. While most are well aware of Ocean's many hits for the likes of the Commodore 64 and ZX Spectrum, they did produce some games for less popular machines too such as the Atari 8-bit and Oric 1. It's their small selection of titles for the latter computer that we will be looking at here, so let's throw that Oric into the Ocean!

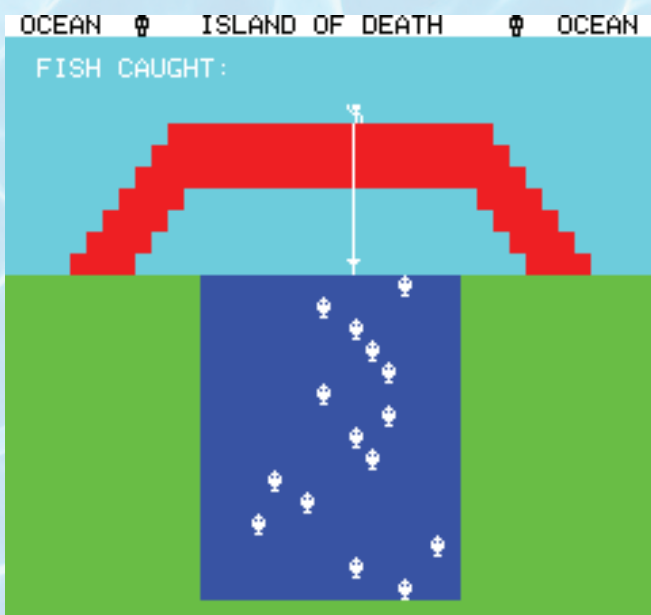
Hunchback (1983)

Hunchback was the first ever arcade conversion by Ocean and very much signalled a big change in both the company's direction and its ultimate success. Hunchback was licensed from the little known UK coin-op manufacturer Century Electronics with the original arcade game first appearing earlier that same year. It was converted to the many 8-bit computers soon after and spawned several sequels that took the gameplay in many different directions. The player controls Quasimodo, based on the character from the Victor Hugo novel *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, on a quest to save his beloved Esmerelda. It's a simple one-screen platformer where your goal is to cross each section of the castle wall and ring the bell at the end. In your way are various obstacles including sword-wielding knights, flaming fire pits and deadly flying arrows. It plays a little bit like the classic Pitfall in many ways, in that you have to swing from ropes as well as jump and dodge these hazards. The final screen sees you finally rescuing your sweetheart and if you get past this challenge the game repeats only much faster and thus harder. I've always felt that Hunchback has all the key ingredients of a good game but doesn't get the execution right. The jumping can be very frustrating indeed and you have to be absolutely pixel perfect to catch the ropes as they swing. Even if you do master these fiddly controls the game is very short so it doesn't leave a lot to come back to. I guess if you liked the original arcade game you'll enjoy this conversion, but many others won't.



The Island of Death (1983)

This game is totally unique in Ocean's library for a couple of reasons; firstly because it's exclusive to the Oric but also because it combines a text adventure with arcade-style mini-games. You actually start this game off by defining a number of characteristics, another very novel feature, such as how many lives you want, what speed you want to play at and how hard you want it to be. Then you go straight into the meat of the game – the text adventure. This is pretty standard stuff with words on the screen describing your surrounding and simple text-based commands being used to navigate the world around you. However at key moments in the story the action



switches to something, well, more action packed! These little diversions include such things as swimming through

shark infested waters, negotiating a maze as quickly as possible and climbing dangerous mountains to retrieve valuable bird's eggs. All of these little games are played using pre-defined keys and a simple set of instructions are displayed on the screen before you start so you aren't just going in blind. The quality of these does vary greatly too, while some of them are quite fun others are rock hard and more than a little unfair at times too. I have to take my hat off to the overall concept, not only was it very original for the time but it actually comes together pretty well for the most part too. Now if only the mini-games had been given a bit more attention to make them better in both the visual and playability stakes then we would be looking a real winner rather than a nice curiosity.



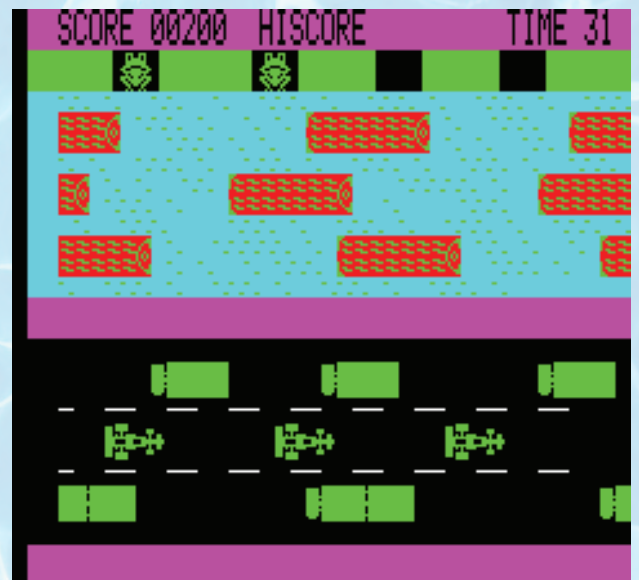


Mr. Wimpy (1984)

Following hot on the heels of *Hunchback*, *Mr. Wimpy* is one of the earliest examples of a licensed property by Ocean. In fact it's widely credited as being the very first tie-in of its type for a home computer, being somewhat of an advertising tool for the property it's based upon, an early form of game sponsorship if you will. Now these days Wimpy might be a bit of an also ran in the fast food stakes, a cheap and cheerful place that reminds you off the past but unlikely of consideration for the future. However back in the eighties Wimpy was huge, it was every bit as popular as McDonalds ever was and like the American company they also had their own mascot – the one and only Mr. Wimpy. The man himself was based upon the Beefeaters that proudly patrol the world famous Tower of London. Obviously this is a clever take on the "Beef" part with hamburgers being Wimpy's main staple but it also keeps to the company's image as a British brand over its big American rival. So what of the game itself? Well you probably won't be surprised to learn that it's basically a shameless rip off of the hugely popular Data East arcade game *BurgerTime*, albeit one that does add an element or two of its own. You see, before you can start the main game you have to collect all the ingredients needed and push them across the screen while avoiding enemies. Once you complete this rather pointless and annoying task it's into the game proper. *Mr. Wimpy* might be far from original but it's actually a pretty good game and arguably the best title in Ocean's small Oric line-up.

Road Frog (1983)

Let's be honest here, the name pretty much gives this one away! Yep, you guessed it *Road Frog* is nothing more than a shameless *Frogger* clone. Now there are plenty of these for the Oric so what makes this one stand out from the rest? Answer – it doesn't. In fact it's probably one of the worst examples of the classic Konami arcade game released for the system. So let's go through the litany of problems that make this game so bad. Firstly there are just three lanes of traffic with all the vehicles being the same width apart and all moving at the exact same speed, kind of defeating the point of having different types of transport. Then when we get to the river section things don't improve at all with just the three rows of floating logs, no lily pads, no alligators, no female frogs and no flies to eat for bonus points. This really is *Frogger* at it's very most basic – get the frog across the screen four times and then do more of the same just with faster moving objects. The graphics are pretty awful here too – the main sprite flickers constantly and lack of colours make it look unfinished. There are also some strange glitches present like parts of the screen disappearing altogether! It doesn't control that well either, feeling both sluggish and unresponsive. There are five difficulty levels, high scores and a hall of fame but nothing is going to save *Road Frog* at this point. When you play something as bad as this it's almost impossible to believe that Ocean would go on to such great things later on their life, this definitely wasn't their proudest moment!



Unreleased Games?

Aside from these four titles Ocean never released any more games for the Oric, preferring to concentrate on more popular formats. However there were a couple of games that appeared on various adverts and price lists that never made it out the door, so let's look at these too.

Monster Muncher – A blatant clone of the Namco arcade classic *Pac-Man* that got a less than favourable response when it was released for the rival ZX Spectrum. Let's face it, the Oric wasn't short of *Pac-Man* clones so I don't think this is a title that'll be missed by anybody!

Missile Attack – Another pretty blatant arcade clone, this time the game in

question is Atari's seminal save the world classic *Missile Command*. Much like *Monster Muncher*, this was another title that failed to set the Spectrum alight so again it's not much of a loss to the Oric library either.

A third game called *Hopper* is also mentioned on many earlier lists but name suggests that this was simply an early title for *Road Frog* and nothing more.

WORD SEARCH

P E O E L T S E N P B A Y B
T I S T N E S E R P R I S K
R N R R C T T U H N E R E C
O O I A R R I E S I A F G M
G E R A T O U R F B K I S O
U T T I F E L Y E O F X K R
E O G A C O S A F R A O E E
S A I N R E T E E F S B L C
F R O S T B I T E R T E L A
S C B O E N O T S Y E K O M
R C N L I F L A S H L C G B
C T O C S I B A N R A E G E
T A G C M S O Y O U N G S G
F R O B X R N O S I E O T U

ETERNIA
BREAKFAST
CEREAL
NABISCO
NESTLE
KELLOGGS
STRATOS
FROSTBITE
KEYSTONE
USB

TROGUE
CRUYFF
AIRFIX
PIRATES
YOUNG
MORECAMBE
FLASH
ROBIN
PRESENTS
ORIC

CHICKEN-HEADS-UP!

As it's Christmas, here's a more-than-double-helping of recent C64 and VIC 20 games that you can download and play for free.

TRogue 64 (C64)

Rogue is a game that has had countless variations produced down the years, and it remains a popular RPG genre.

TRogue 64 is a recent free homebrew release that can be downloaded from wbochar.com/troque64 as a virtual disk file (d64) for the C64. It runs very nicely on either THEC64 or THEC64 Mini on a PAL C64, with an appropriate CJM file to add joystick control.



X:64,pal,fullheight
J:1*:W,S,A,D,SP,SP,SP,F1,SP,F3,F5,R,SP,, ,





Pumpkid

(VIC 20)

To help celebrate THEC64 launch, how about a homebrew VIC 20 game to play on it?

Well, by visiting hewco64.itch.io/pumpkid and preferably making a donation, you can download *Pumpkid*, which is a Halloween-themed arcade game where you avoid ghosts, grab magic candy and try to defeat an evil witch to lift a curse.

The game needs 16k of additional expanded memory and works fine with a joystick. The quickest method for getting the game to run on THEC64 is to use filename flags: pumpkid_MVTPB1B2.prg



Keystone Capers

(C64)

Following the impressive *Chopper Command* conversion featured in issue 03 of Popular Retro, the same group of coders have converted another old Activision game. *Keystone Capers* was originally released on the Atari CVS 2600, Atari 5200, Atari 8-bit and the MSX, but never made it onto the C64.

csdb.dk/release/?id=182116

This game runs without needing any configuration on THEC64 or THEC64 Mini.





Frostbite

(C64)

Not content with doing *Chopper Command* and *Keystone Capers*, Antonio Savona, Steven Day, Saul Cross and Ste have produced another early '80s Activision titles that never appeared on the C64. Frostbite was originally an Atari 2600 console game, and is a cross between *Frogger* and *Q*bert*.

csdb.dk/release/?id=183742

As with their other releases, this game works right off the bat on THEC64 or THEC64 Mini without any configuration needed!



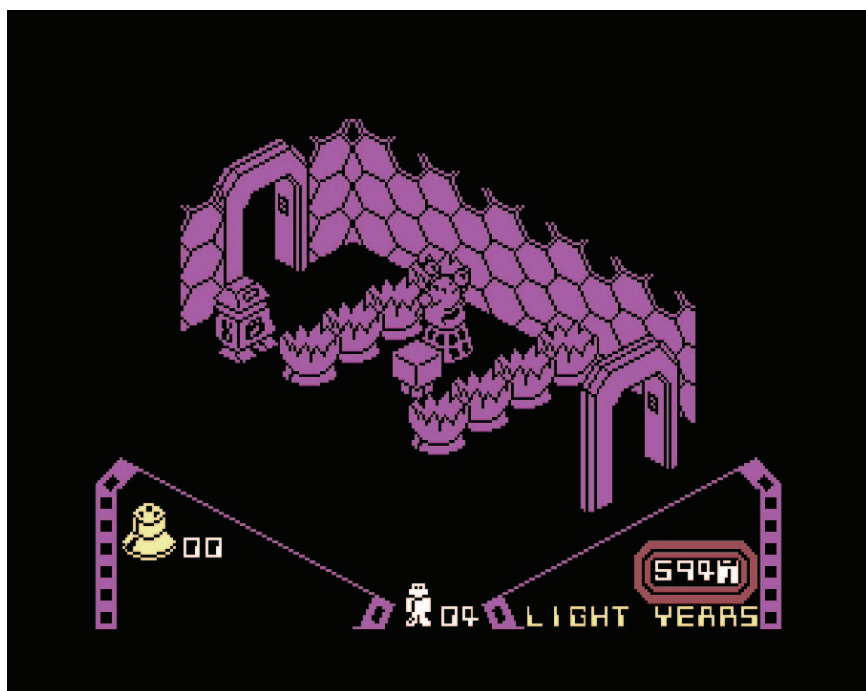
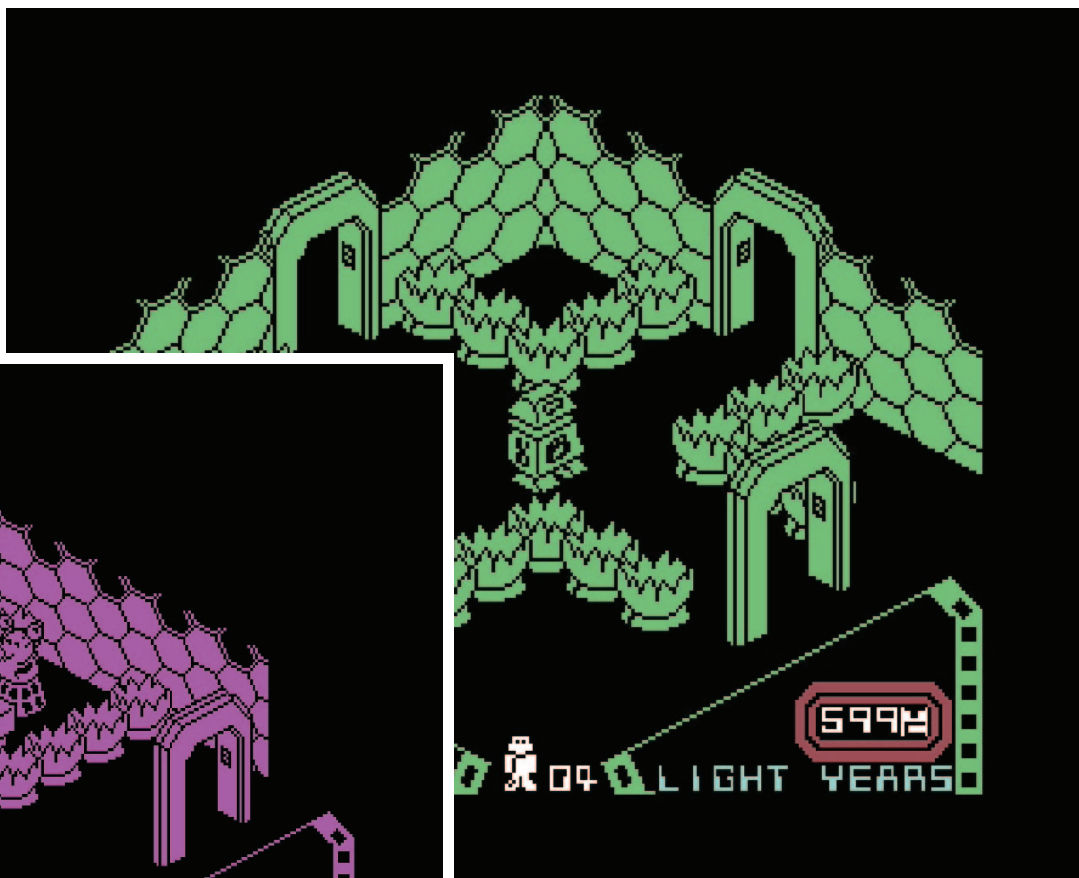
Alien 8

(C64)

A handful of Ultimate Play the Game titles were never ported over to the C64. *Gunfright* was unofficially converted from the Z80 original a while ago, and the same team of Emu and Mariusz, with music by Saul Cross and a loading screen by Ste have done it again with *Alien 8*.

csdb.dk/release/?id=183645

This game runs fine on THEC64 using the defaults, and runs equally well on a PAL or NTSC C64 computer. It comes with a plethora of options which the original Z80 versions never had, including multiple cheat settings.



If you have discovered a hidden C64 gem that can be purchased and/or legally downloaded, please get in touch and we will try and feature it in a future issue. If you have a suggested CJM configuration file, send that along as well!

THE C64

F.A.Q.

If you want to know how THEC64 differs from THEC64 Mini, then you're in the right place, and you're reading the right article!

What kind of TV or display monitor does THEC64 need?

THEC64 connects to any HD TV or monitor that uses HDMI. THEC64 can be configured to output the 720p HD display at 60 Hz (default) or at 50 Hz. This ensures that THEC64 should work on any HD display anywhere in the world.

In comparison, two separate versions of THEC64 Mini are available. The European model only runs at 50 Hz and the North American model only runs at 60 Hz.

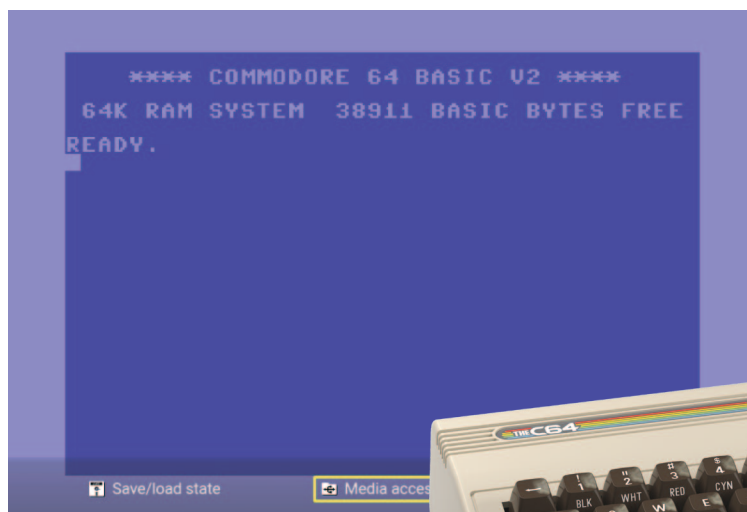
Does THEC64 come supplied with a power supply?

Yes, and the backer's units come with a multi-adapter power supply, meaning it can be used across the world without any issues.

What are the two different modes available on THEC64?

Carousel mode is very similar to THEC64 Mini, in that it contains a large number of pre-installed C64 games, and a few VIC 20 games as well.

VIC 20? Yes, THEC64 gives you the choice of a VIC 20 or a C64 computer, and THEC64 can boot directly into BASIC as either model, exactly like the original computers. This is called Classic mode.



How do I insert a disk, rather than auto-boot it on THEC64?

You can insert your virtual disk files from a USB stick when THEC64 is in Classic mode, using an option called Media access.

1. Press MENU ≡ then select Media access
2. Browse to a virtual disk file (d64, g64, d81 etc.) on your USB stick
3. Highlight the relevant file and press FIRE to insert it into the disk drive on Media access
4. The current media section in Media access shows the newly inserted disk with a ★
5. Press MENU ≡ to return to the computer (C64 or VIC 20)
6. Now load from, browse or save to the disk.



How do I swap or flip a disk during a program?

Follow the process for inserting a disk from a USB stick, as explained previously. When you return to the running program, just follow the C64 program's instructions on-screen to tell it that the disk has changed. Some programs can detect the disk change automatically.

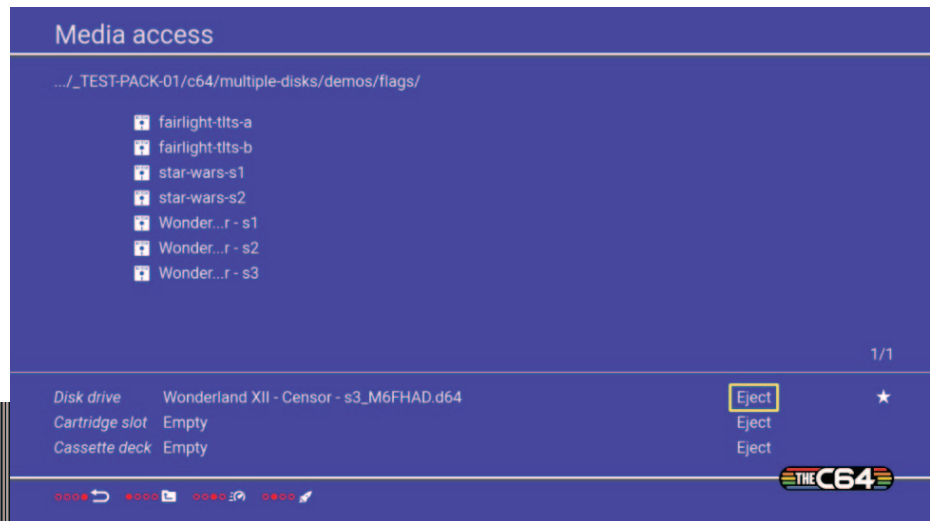
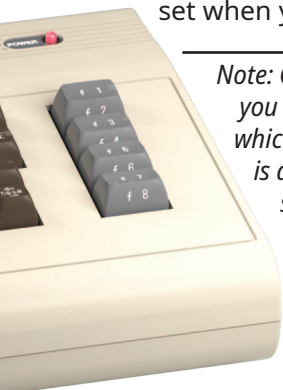


What are continuation disks?

When using multiple disk sets for a program, it's handy to let THEC64 know which is the first (boot) disk and also keep all saved states for that program in one place.

1. Add a `_CD` filename flag to all virtual disk files in the same disk set except for the first disk
2. When you eventually insert subsequent disks in the set on THEC64, save a state (when required) as usual
3. At a later date, when you come to run the same program again, insert the first disk and then load your saved state
4. THEC64 automatically inserts the correct virtual disk file for you as part of the process, even if you were using the second or third disk in the set when you last saved a state

Note: Continuation disks mean you don't have to remember which virtual disk file in the set is associated with your latest saved state. Insert disk 1, load a state and THEC64 ensures the correct disk is inserted for you when the program continues



Can I have different virtual file types inserted at the same time?

Yes. You can have a virtual disk in the Disk drive, a virtual cartridge in the Cartridge slot and a virtual tape in the Cassette deck all at the same time if need be.

Some programs might require a specific disk and cartridge to be present, and so THEC64 copes with this scenario. For example, insert the virtual disk first and then auto-load the virtual cartridge. The C64 computer reboots, loads the cartridge and then the cartridge program loads what it needs from the disk inserted into the disk drive.

How do I eject a disk/cartridge/tape/program?

1. Press MENU ≡ and select Media access
2. Move down to the current media section, then highlight the appropriate 'Eject' option and press FIRE
3. The relevant Disk drive, Cartridge slot or Tape deck is now empty

Note: After ejecting, the ★ in the current media section moves to the previously inserted file (regardless of whether it be a disk, tape or cartridge) and so any subsequently saved states associate with that file instead. If NO files remain inserted, then subsequently saved states will associate with the current computer's BASIC until a new virtual media file is inserted

Can I change THEC64 display options whilst running a program?

Yes, this is easily done in Classic mode.

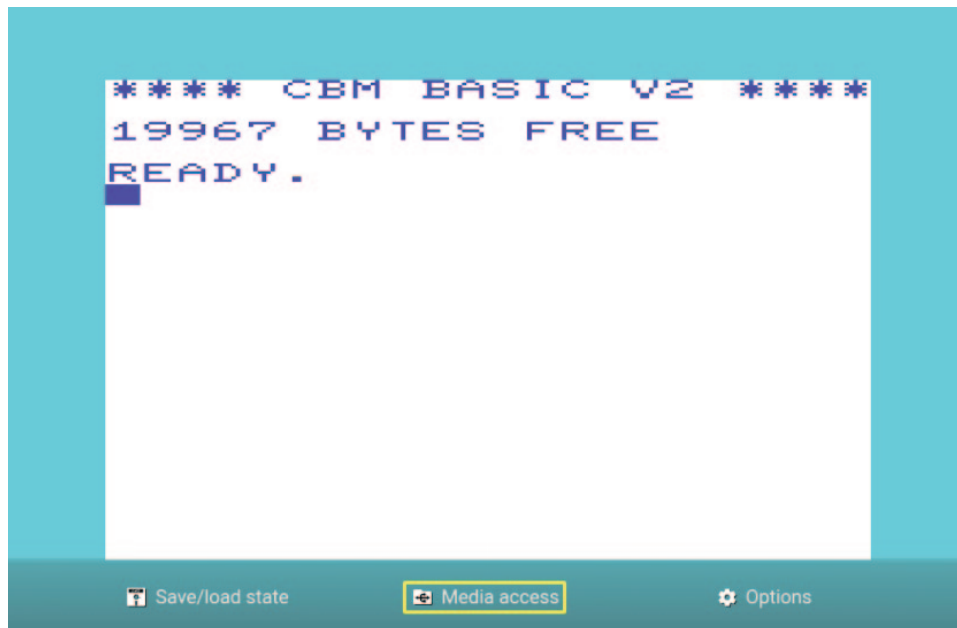
1. Press MENU ≡ and choose Options > Display options
2. Choose a different setting, e.g. European 4:3 CRT
3. Press MENU ≡ and then MENU ≡ once more to return to your running program
4. The display mode has changed

How can I load a multi-file VIC 20 cartridge?

Some VIC 20 cartridge programs are split into multiple files that need to be loaded one after each other.

1. Press MENU ≡ and then select Options > Device settings > Computer model >
2. Switch to a VIC 20 PAL or VIC 20 NTSC computer
3. Press MENU ≡ and select Media access
4. Browse to either appropriate .crt file on your USB stick and press B to auto-load
5. Press MENU ≡ to return to the VIC 20 computer (typically shows a blank, black screen at this point)
6. Repeat steps 3-5 for each subsequent cartridge file
7. The cartridge program finishes loading and runs

Note: VIC 20 cartridge files (single or multi-file) must have a .crt filename extension if they are to load correctly on THEC64



Can I auto-load on THEC64?

Of course! If you don't need to insert a disk but would prefer to auto-load it (or auto-load a tape, cartridge or program file), then it's simple to do:

1. Press MENU ≡ and select Media access
2. Browse to a virtual disk file on your USB stick
3. Highlight file and press B on keyboard or B button on the Joystick to auto-load
4. Auto-loading automatically inserts the virtual media file into the appropriate disk drive, cartridge slot or cassette deck as shown in Media access. Tapes, cartridges and stand-alone program files can only be auto-loaded on THEC64

Note: Stand-alone .prg files are treated like a cartridge and are automatically inserted into the cartridge slot on Media access when auto-loaded

How do I add expanded memory for a VIC 20 program that needs it?

Add filename flags or create a separate .cjm file to increase the available memory needed for some VIC 20 programs to run on THEC64.

Filename flags example:
vicgame_MVTPB0B1B2B3B5.prg

This is a VIC 20 program (MV) that runs on a PAL computer (TP). It needs 35k (using all available expanded memory banks 0,1,2,3 and 5).

The memory banks combine to give different amounts of expanded memory to the VIC 20 computer.

- B0** 3k of additional expanded memory
- B1** 8k of additional expanded memory
- B1B2** 16k of additional expanded memory
- B1B2B3** 24k of additional expanded memory
- B1B2B3B5** 32k of additional expanded memory
- B0B1B2B3B5** 35k total memory

CJM file example:
X:vic,pal,35k
J:1*:W,S,A,D,I,K,J,L,1,2,3,I,4,EN,

The above line in a .cjm file achieves the same configuration as the flags mentioned earlier. Other memory possibilities are 3k, 4k, 8k, 16k, 24k, 32k as well as the 35k shown above.

Note: If you create a .cjm file for either a C64 or a VIC 20 program, you must define your joystick requirements as well, otherwise controllers won't work at all for that program

Are there any more new settings on THEC64?

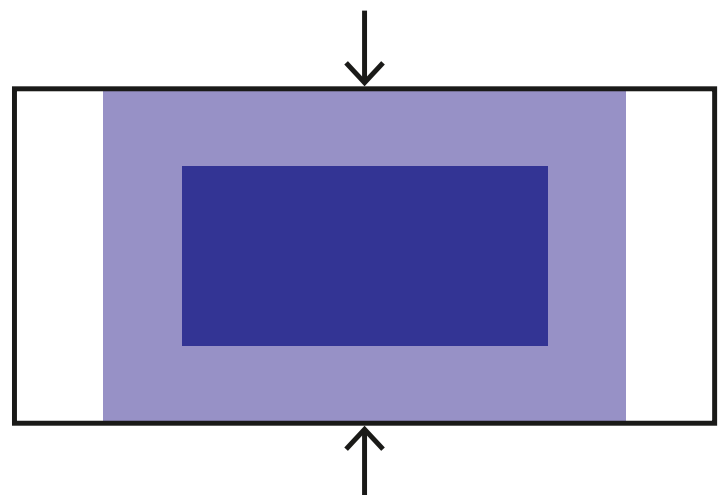
We're glad you asked. Yes, THEC64 introduces a number of additional settings to THEC64 range.

Audio Scale This adjusts the pitch of the generated SID audio to be much closer to the correct setting when a program runs at a different refresh rate than expected (e.g. a program running on a PAL C64 at 60Hz or a program running on an NTSC C64 at 50Hz). Audio scale on is the default setting for THEC64.

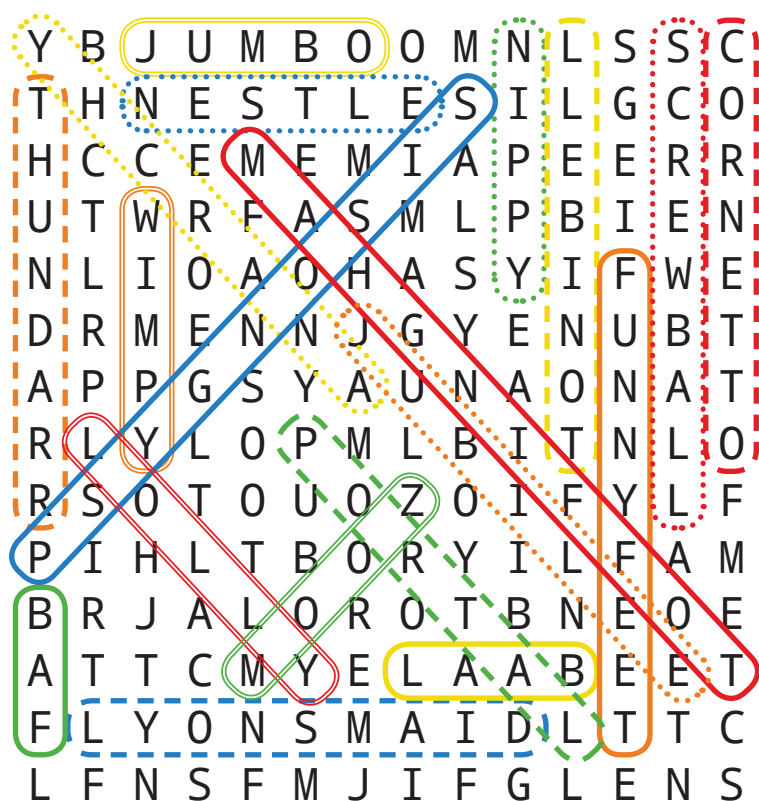
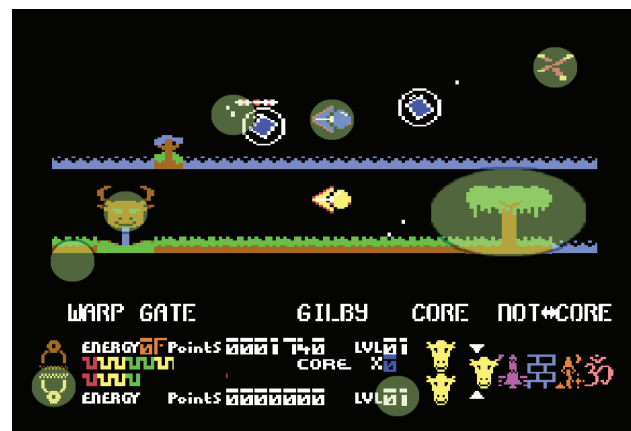
Use _NS (filename flag) or noaudioscale (as an additional X entity value within a .cjm file) to disable this setting when running a program

Full Height This squeezes the entire computer's video output, including top and bottom borders, into the 720p image output from THEC64, by sacrificing the usual pixel perfect rendered image.

Use _FH (filename flag) or fullheight (as an additional X entity value within a .cjm file)



#3



NESTLE

ZOOM



SOON...