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COMMODORE

ZAP!
64

COSMOS DESIGNS

We take a look at all their games!

SOUL FORCE

STEVE SHIELDS' ZZAP BACK
ADVENTURE TRAIL WITH COLIN BELL
10 REVIEWS PLUS PREVIEWS

AND
ME!!



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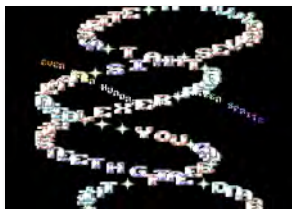


The games of...



With the release of *Outrage*, the final chapter of the Cosmos Designs story has been written. PROFESSOR BRIAN STRAIN looks back at the games of the Austrian coding team and finds a few hidden gems.

Before Cosmos Designs there was Cosmos, a cracking group that featured Hannes Sommer (MC Sprite). Hannes and Arnold Blüml (Army) then started up Cosmos Designs in May of 1989. While the group concentrated on demos with the help of coder Bernd Buchegger (Panther), Hannes had already started to code some small games. Cosmos Designs quickly earned a good reputation,



The impressive 118-sprite multiplexer from the *Cosmail* demo.

best shown by their co-operation with Blackmail



As the worm races between levels in *Super Nibbly*, a fish is visible bottom right.

on the Cosmail demo. This featured FLI graphics and an amazing 118-sprite multiplexer, a record at the time. The later *MC Gottifant* demo, featuring a pink elephant running along, gave the team the idea for a game.

By 1991 the group started to concentrate solely on games, selling them to Markt & Technik (for 64'er disk magazine) and CP Verlag (Game On and Magic Disk 64). Hannes' brother Karl (MC Lord) joined the group, writing music for their games. There are some subtle Christian references

in several titles, from the "fish" symbol on *Super Nibbly*'s map screen to the lyrics of *Heavenbound*'s title screen.

A few Cosmos Designs titles were imported to the UK by Electric Dreams Entertainment Software, under license from CP Verlag, and then sold in the USA by Creative Micro Designs. These titles are now collectable in their simple printed paper sleeves, as very few copies were sold. Let's look back



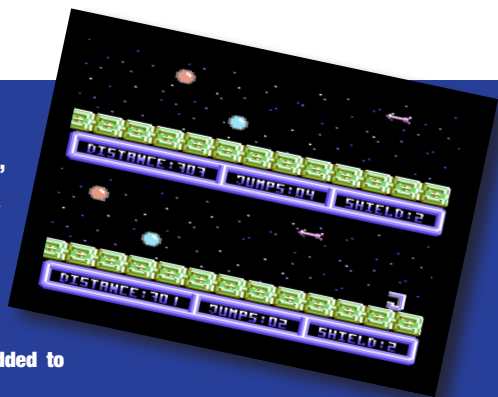
The title screen of *Heavenbound* with its Christian lyrics.

at the highlights of the Cosmos Design era.

1989

Spaceball & Spaceball 2

Seemingly inspired by Elite's Hoppin' Mad/Cataball, the original *Spaceball* took up just 11 blocks and had the player control a row of four bouncing balls. The sequel added a computer opponent or a second player in a race, with a limited number of shields and jumps over a specified distance (collecting S or J added to their number).



D.I.S.C.

(Damned into Spacecraft)

The first official Cosmos Designs game, a vertically-scrolling shoot 'em up with tiles that are shot to turn them into power-ups (activated by pressing Fire). Tough but well presented.

1991

Dark Cosmos

A single-screen shoot 'em up with one or two-player modes, the creature at the top of the screen launches enemies downwards; once they are all shot the "roof" lowers and more enemies descend.



1991

Square Out

With Drax/Vibrants (Thomas Mogensen) providing music, the player guides a ball around a series of tiles until it has coloured the entire "track". The ball must not fall off the edge, and power-ups appear at random.

1991





1991

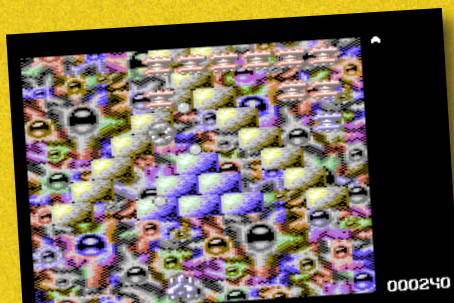
Plural

This shoot 'em up scrolled horizontally, with more than a nod to *Armalyte*. With one or two players, shooting weapon pods allowed them to pick up the coloured power-ups. After each level and game over, a stats screen shows how each player died and a ranking based on number of enemies shot.



Moons

The vertically scrolling technique had been used in an earlier demo, allowing backgrounds to use 16 colours (and the title screen to show the last level played behind the credits). The weedy starting strength of the player's ship and the overwhelming number of enemies make this a tough game.



1992

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TEST

OUTRAGE

Cosmos Designs / Protovision & Psytroik, 2021

What do you call a game thirty years in the making? *Outrage!* Although programming commenced in 1990, circumstances and a

that we have *Outrage* in our hands today!

Our hero awakes to confusion and pain, fire and smoke. After a desperate struggle, the



declining market at the time of its completion meant that although it was a highly regarded (and award-winning) game, it was never picked up for publication. Fortunately, today's resurgent C64 market has plenty of room for quality games and so it is

base had been destroyed and all his friends and family were lost. How could this have happened? What could have caused such destruction? He recalled... a dragon? No, that

couldn't be it, surely..

Making his way to the armoury, the pain and grief were replaced by rage and

anger. This outrage could not go unchallenged... or unpunished! Revenge burned in his heart as he grabbed the weapons and ammunition he would need for his mission. Ammo was in short supply so he took what he could, knowing there were shops out there where he could boost his supplies. He knew these would be necessary, for although his stock weapon held unlimited ammunition, the more powerful guns needed for larger enemies could only hold limited quantities of ammo.

There are five areas for our hero to battle through, each of which is overwhelmed by strange creatures that must be destroyed or avoided. At the end of each area is a fearsome giant creature which must be defeated to progress to the next area. Contact with any creature or projectile reduces energy and, tough though our hero may be, he is also as mortal as the rest of us and if he takes enough hits, he will die. Unlike the rest of us however, our hero has a number of lives and can even purchase more if necessary... which it almost certainly will be. Will our hero have a happy ending if he clears all five areas? You'll have to play it and find out...





I wouldn't exactly call this an outrage... more like 'a bit of a cheek'. Outrage is VERY reminiscent of Hawkeye in many ways, although it

does have a few tricks of its own. Levels are much longer, and I like that you have choices as to how you tackle them, as each level has a high and low ground. Having a shop rather than weapons pickups adds another element of strategy to your play that Hawkeye doesn't have, so although it's clearly influenced by Thalamus' Gold Medal winner, it has enough of its own to be worthwhile. It's not all good... level layouts can be unclear, leading to many frustrating deaths. Otherwise, Outrage is a good game, worthy of its release after all this time.



From the moment you read the atmospheric backstory, to the ASCII art

file directory, to the incredible animated and PETSCII loading screens - with one of the best chiptunes I've heard come out of my SID chip in a long while - it's clear Psytronic and co meant this to be something special. And, they've mostly succeeded. After 37 screens of info another demo-like intro awaits. Enough already, I wanna play! At first the game feels like a let down - a bog standard shmup. Until you notice the special

touches. It's an eclectic mix of Hawkeye, Mario, Zelda, even Thing On A Spring. Gameplay is satisfying and you'll immediately know what you're doing. Smart bombs are a nice addition; things getting too hectic on screen? Just hit space and BOOM! There's not much to criticize. The stalactites that fall on you without warning get a bit frustrating, as does falling through platforms that don't have clear gaps in them. But on presentation and music alone it feels like a smash - and that's before the unique blend of gameplay gets you smashing baddies. Outrage-ous fun!



Sometimes you just need a bit of enjoyable mindless run and gun fun. The others have noted the similarities to Hawkeye, so I don't need to go there, but I

prefer the exploration and chasing about the levels that Thalamus' game provided compared to the standard scroll to the right action here, although the smart bombs and shop are certainly a boon. Some of the platforms are unclear and you can fall to your death without realising, but the game is challenging enough, and it's nice to see a title finished off and released even after 30 years in hiatus.



PRESENTATION 85%

Excellent manual and box, good instructions/backstory on the disk and a (non-saveable) high score table - but it lacks in-game options.

GRAPHICS 81%

Good bosses and pre-game graphics, but some sprites appear washed out or indistinct at times

SOUND 83%

Good upbeat music and great loader tune, but the FX are pretty generic.

HOOKABILITY 79%

A straightforward, familiar concept that's easy to play.

LASTABILITY 75%

Only five levels of blasting action, but they're long and quite tough.

OVERALL 79%

A solid action-platformer which is a must-have for Hawkeye fans.

A C64 GAME 30 YEARS IN THE MAKING!

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OutRage



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64K

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