

Memoirs

Issue #1

by Roald Strauss

eBook version
of the Blu-ray project
www.8bitMemoirs.com

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Preface

What is 8-bit Memoirs?

8-bit Memoirs is a collection of stories about the computers and gaming consoles from the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. You are currently reading the very first issue of 8-bit Memoirs, written by Roald "Mr.Lou" Strauss and originally released in December 2017 as a Blu-ray project: A commercial disc (and freely downloadable ISO) with the same content as in this eBook version, but with additional 5 hours of audio content playing while reading, and 9 hours of supplemental video content. This eBook version was created in December 2018 due to requests for a version that could be read on cellphones and tablets.

I can't imagine I'm the only one with an urge to share my memories of this awesome era, so hopefully the future will bring additional issues written by other authors too.

Here in issue #1 I'll be writing about the computers and consoles I experienced in my life during the time period from the early 1980s to mid 1990s. Stories about how I experienced playing the games (which was sometimes a bit different from what the game-developers had in mind), and how I experienced creating my own amateurish BASIC programs.

It's important to note that the focus of 8-bit Memoirs is on the stories. It's the author sharing his childhood memories with you, from the perspective of the child he/she was at the time. Stories describing the experience. Typically with supplemental screenshots, illustrations and/or videos.

So don't expect review-like presentations of popular games or demos, especially not from a present-day viewpoint. That's not what 8-bit Memoirs is about.

You should expect most stories in a given issue to be about games that wasn't necessarily the most popular ones, and/or amateur homebrew stuff that you've never heard about before,

A short list of texts you **won't** find in 8-bit Memoirs includes game-reviews, walk-throughs, technical specifications of various machines and explanations of why the author thinks a certain machine is the best. All those topics are out of scope, and they're also covered on a lot of other channels already.

A concept idea

This first issue of 8-bit Memoirs is also an invitation and encouragement for **you** to start writing your **own** memoirs. My somewhat optimistic vision is to see it result in a series of collections of memoirs all from the same era, but written by different authors coming from different platforms. That way we'll get to read about how different people had different experiences with different (or the same) computers and gaming consoles from that same golden era.

I think that the various retro-computer communities around the world are only increasing in size. Spending time with these old computers is something more and more people seem to enjoy doing. And there are so many ways you can do this: Playing the old games, watching walk-through's on YouTube, meeting up with friends where everyone brings their own retro-computer, or finally code that game you've dreamed of coding since childhood. Reading old magazines from that time, building your own hardware to expand your favourite retro-computer. The list is long.

Reading (and authoring your own issue of) 8-bit Memoirs is merely yet another way of revisiting those good old days.

If you're curious about authoring your own issue of 8-bit Memoirs, please see [the guidelines](#).

Why 8-bit Memoirs?

I've wanted to share these memoirs of mine with the world for many years before finally pulling myself together and getting started.

The short answer to the "why" question would be, that I just felt I **had** to. These stories **had** to be published. Whether anyone would find them interesting or not wasn't important. They just **had** to be written and made accessible for whoever might find them interesting at some point in time. I just had a strong urge to make sure these memoirs of mine would be preserved, because I feel they deserve to be.

At the same time, 8-bit Memoirs seemed like an intriguing project that allowed me to mix several of my sparetime hobbies into one big creation.

Coding has been a hobby of mine ever since I began looking into BASIC on the Amstrad CPC back in early 1986.

I also enjoy nostalgia quite a lot, and writing these stories and creating these videos was a great way for myself to revisit the good old days in greater details.

Why "8-bit"?

There might be a few readers asking why I'm calling it "8-bit" when some of the computers I'm writing about (like the Amiga) actually had a 32-bit bus. Well, the short answer to that question is that the title doesn't relate to the bus-size of the CPU in a given device. The music I made on my Amiga was still done in 8 bits. As far as I'm concerned, all the computers I've included in 8-bit Memoirs belong in the 8-bit era. At least **my** 8-bit era.

*However, it's not a requirement that a given issue of 8-bit Memoirs **only** contains stories about 8-bit computers. As long as the majority of stories are about the 8-bit computers, then it's fine to also include stories about 16-bit and/or even 32-bit computers.*

Why Blu-ray (for the original project)?

The choice of platform for the full 8-bit Memoirs project has seemingly been a puzzle for a lot of people. But there are good reasons behind this choice, once you actually take time to consider them.

There were actually many platform options on the table at the beginning of the project, but as I ran through the project requirements (that were formed by the diskmag focus), other options were ruled out one by one.

- It should be possible to read it while being offline, to enhance the feeling of disconnecting.
- It shouldn't require maintenance of any kind. Once done, it should be as stable and long lasting as a paper book.
- It shouldn't cost me a monthly or yearly hosting fee.
- It should (of course) preferably be able to run on as many different devices as possible.
- It should be easy for people to make copies.
- Obviously, it should have capacity for all the supplemental video and audio I was planning on including.

A website requires constant maintenance, and would also cost me a monthly or yearly hosting fee. I've tried using web technology for similar projects like this before, putting it all on a CD. But because web technology constantly changes, none of those CD's will run properly in today's browsers. And that's how I know it would be a silly choice for 8-bit Memoirs. I want 8-bit Memoirs to live **a lot** longer.

It's not easy to make a copy of a website either. So when the website dies, it'll be gone for everyone.

An eBook format like e.g. ePub3 would become way too big, considering the 24 gb of supplemental video and audio. Same goes for a cellphone app.

...and so on and so forth.

Long story short: Blu-ray was literally the **only** format that gave me all the things I wanted.

Blu-ray is suitable for lots of video and audio. Doesn't require me to do any kind of maintenance once it's done, because the Blu-ray specs doesn't change. (Gotta love "dead" platforms). It will run in any Blu-ray player forever, without needing to change or adapt to new players. And that's a rather large group of target platforms: Standard Blu-ray players, including the new Ultra HD Blu-ray players. Modern gaming-consoles such as PlayStation 3, PlayStation 4 and Xbox One, and future models of both. A lot of TV boxes and media centers, such as Dune HD devices, Popcorn Hour devices and more. And let's not forget software media players which runs on both Windows, Mac and Linux.

Most people (at least most people in my target recipient group) have a Blu-ray player in **some** form. If not in the form of a traditional player, then most likely in the form of such a gaming-console. And if not, you can always download a software media-player for your computer, like VLC, Kodi or PowerDVD, and play the ISO from your harddisk or a USB stick.

And that kinda makes Blu-ray the unexpected "universal format" that all of us can view these days, despite using different computers and different gaming-consoles. I bet you didn't see that coming.

But there's more, in the form of later discovered bonuses: A Blu-ray player also seems to offer something that appears to be very rare on other platforms: **It automatically changes the refresh-rate of the display to match the framerate of the video.** All videos here in issue #1 consists of 50 frames per second, because that was the framerate the computers and TVs had back then here in Europe. Playing back these 50 fps videos on a PC monitor will typically give a jerky unpleasant result, because the average PC monitor has a refresh-rate of 60 hz, or some other frequency not dividable by 50. The same goes for a modern TV playing back a video from a USB stick.

I naturally want my videos to give an accurate representation of how the games and my own homebrew stuff actually looked like on the computers and consoles back then. Blu-ray makes sure this happens. Most other playback devices don't.

So there you have it. All the advantages of Blu-ray that other platforms just doesn't give you. And I have to say that I'm extremely pleased with the result myself. It turned out exactly as I'd hoped, and I love how it forces people to give it the same kind of attention they give a movie. That's exactly what I wanted. You're supposed to use 8-bit Memoirs to disconnect, to relax, to chill. It's not something you hurry through while running about in your daily hectic life. Instead, 8-bit Memoirs is what you spend your time on when you wish to have a cosy relaxing evening.

That being said, I didn't rule out future alternative versions, such as a cellphone app or eBook. It just wasn't a priority at that time, and if I did end up making any alternative versions some day in the future, it would be without the videos, and I also expected the audio playlist to be much shorter. Turned out the audio would be completely removed too.

Who is 8-bit Memoirs for?

It's quite possible that I'm aiming a bit too high here, because I'm actually trying to target 3 different groups of people at the same time.

First of all, I'd like 8-bit Memoirs to be recognised as something I'm giving back to the people who are directly or indirectly responsible for these memories existing in the first place. As a kind of thanks for giving me these great childhood memories.

I'm certain only few people can comprehend how much value these memories have had to me (although the size of 8-bit Memoirs should give you some idea).

Secondly, I'd like 8-bit Memoirs to be a kind of legacy of mine. I imagine my daughter might appreciate having these stories available many years from now. I imagine she might become interested in reading about dad's childhood some day, probably when she has children of her own.

There may also be other family members and friends who knew me back then, who'd like to spend a few days stepping back in time with me, to see if they recognise or remember anything from my stories. Or maybe they're just curious to see what my life was like back in those days.

And lastly, it is my hope that the retro-computer community will appreciate 8-bit Memoirs as much as I have appreciated all the various hardware and software projects everyone keeps making for our dear retro-computers, as well as various fanzines and all the long-play videos that are available online. Thus making 8-bit Memoirs my way of giving something back to the community.

Platforms

Since I grew up mainly with the Amstrad CPC464, I am of course mainly an Amstrad CPC guy, and most stories in 8-bit Memoirs issue #1 are therefore oriented around this particular computer. Issue #1 will thus logically be most interesting to other Amstrad CPC users.

But other machines **are** included too. I'd say issue #1 should be interesting for people who grew up with (or has an interest in) one or more of the following devices:

- Philips Videopac G7000
- Game & Watch games
- Amstrad CPC series
- Commodore Amiga series

Other platforms will hopefully be covered in future issues of 8-bit Memoirs written by other authors.

How to get 8-bit Memoirs

The website of 8-bit Memoirs is located at www.8bitMemoirs.com, so that is the first place to go for instructions on how to obtain a copy. Each issue of 8-bit Memoirs will be available in each their own way. There will always be a free version that can be downloaded in whatever fileformat the author wants. On top of that, the author can choose to also offer a physical commercial version.

I have chosen to offer (the original Blu-ray project) issue #1 in the following two versions:

Free software version: An ISO file that you can download for free and play on your computer with a software Blu-ray player (or burn to disc and play in your hardware player). As I later learned that software players like Kodi v18 can actually stream a Blu-ray folder structure, I of course also created an HTTP and WebDAV source for that.

Commercial version: A Blu-ray Disc with printed label in case with printed inlay, that you can buy and play in your hardware Blu-ray player.

Later on, I decided to create an eBook version as well, though without all the audio and video content.

Free software version

The free software version of issue #1 can be downloaded from www.8bitMemoirs.com - and the same applies for any future issues.

The free version is basically just an ISO image of the disc. Content-wise there's no difference between the freeware software version and the commercial physical disc version. So if you happen to know someone who bought the physical copy, feel free to simply make an ISO copy of that one.

The ISO can be viewed with any software media player that supports Blu-ray Disc Java (BD-J), such as VLC, Kodi or PowerDVD. But the recommended way of viewing it is on a real hardware Blu-ray player, so go ahead and burn the ISO onto a BD-R. Burners are cheap and Blu-ray Discs are long lasting. The disc also contains the cover artwork and label artwork.

Commercial version

If you're the kind of person who prefers the extra touch, or just wanna show your support and appreciation for the work, or maybe you just prefer having a physical disc but don't own a burner, then you can choose to buy a physical version in the form of a Blu-ray Disc. It comes in a case with a printed label and cover, and should fit in well with your Blu-ray movie collection, or your game collection.

Go to www.8bitMemoirs.com for more info on how to buy this disc. And thank you very much for your support! Much appreciated!

Future options

It's **possible** that 8-bit Memoirs issue #1 will be ported to other platforms (and languages) later, but it is in no way a high priority for me at the time of writing, and it of course also depends entirely on how much interest the English Blu-ray version will have.

Versions I've had in mind include a web-version, an eBook version (ePub3), and a Smart TV app version. But having ideas is one thing. Having the time (and interest) required to actually do them is something else entirely.

In any case, you can always get a list of available versions at www.8bitMemoirs.com, of course depending on when you read this. Obviously the website won't live forever - but the disc will. ;-)

8-bit Memoirs credits

A lot of people has helped out with the creation of the original Blu-ray project. Although this eBook version excludes a lot of content, I want to include these credits anyway.

Code / Content / Videos

The engine has been coded by myself; Roald Strauss. I also wrote all the content and created all the videos, though my better half Marlene Johansen assisted as the 2nd player in the 2-player games.

Music

The playlist in 8-bit Memoirs is divided into several sections, most of which consists of the computermusic I created on my Amstrad and Amiga. But the first section consists of music composed by various artists of IndieGameMusic.com, listed here in playback order:

- *"Ode To You" by Roald Strauss*
- *"Aftermath" by Mike Pettry*
- *"Distance Between Two Worlds" by Nico Maximilian*
- *"Overworld Theme" by Caleb Faith*
- *"Forgotten City" by Visceral Serenity*
- *"Ease" by Jordan Mills*
- *"Chamomile" by Alec Irwin*
- *"Traveler's Sky" by Taylor Darnell*
- *"Disconnected Feels" by Andrea Baroni*
- *"Cavern of Mystery" by Robert Dooley*
- *"Expanding Spaces" by Sebastian Breitenbach*
- *"Make Me Feel" (Deep Sea Version) by Shayan Mannan*
- *"Memoiry L8ne" by Randy Johnson*
- *"Slightly" by Martin Sharrard*

Illustrations

All illustrations in issue #1 has been created by Marlene Johansen aka BlueAngel.

Using old reference photos of people, locations and inventory from that time, she has created illustrations of moments in time that I remember but which was never photographed.

Themes

Various themes have been created by various artists:

- *"Brown" by Marlene Johansen*
- *"Purple" by Marlene Johansen*
- *"Amstrad CPC" by Marlene Johansen*
- *"Commodore 64" by Trond Øyvind Hermansen*
- *"Paperbook" by Roald Strauss*

Betatesters

- Adolfo Perez Alvarez
- Anders Bergmann
- Andy Livingston
- Bjarne Strauss
- Craig "JuneBug" Harrison
- Inge Strauss
- Kenneth "Nemiz" Strauss
- Michael Bang Nielsen
- Paul "Dizrythmia" Monopoli
- Thomas "Bomb Jack DK" Heine Bech
- Thomas Isaksen
- Trevor Johnson
- Trond Øyvind Hermansen
- Ulla Christina Andreasen

Support 8-bit Memoirs

It's been somewhat of a journey creating this project. It originally began in 2012 as a diskmag-like project for JavaME enabled cellphones (which basically mean any phone except iPhone). Along the way it was turned into a Blu-ray project, because I found it to be a more suitable platform for this kind of content, considering a lot of factors described in "[Why 8-bit Memoirs?](#)".

It took a tremendous amount of time to create 8-bit Memoirs. Studying BD-J, developing the engine, authoring the content, creating screenshots, recording videos, drawing illustrations, scanning thousands of old negatives in search for reference-photos for the illustrations, putting together the playlist. I also had to buy a lot of equipment, like a negative-scanner, several Blu-ray players for testing purposes, an XRGB-Mini Framemeister and Hauppauge PVR Rocket for recording videos from the real machines.

This first issue of 8-bit Memoirs ended up being **much** bigger, costing a **lot** more and taking a lot longer to create than I initially thought it would.

But now that it has been completed, all that has to happen in order for all the effort to have been worth it, is for you to enjoy and appreciate the end result.

Should you wish to show your appreciation, there are a few ways you can support the project:

Buy a copy

Go to www.8bitMemoirs.com and buy a copy of 8-bit Memoirs. This is the best kind of positive feedback you can give me.

It is also the absolute best way of experiencing 8-bit Memoirs issue #1. Read "[Why 8-bit Memoirs?](#)" for an explanation.

Donate money

If, for some reason, you don't wish to buy a copy of 8-bit Memoirs, but still wish to support the project, you can donate some Euros to paypal@dewfall.dk or paypal@lublu.dk to show your support. This will of course also be deeply appreciated.

Spread the word

Post about 8-bit Memoirs on whatever retro-computer related forum or chat or magazine you're reading. Make sure you include the link to www.8bitMemoirs.com

Create copies (of the Blu-ray version)

8-bit Memoirs is free, and everyone is allowed to create copies.

But although surprisingly many people own a Blu-ray **player** in some form, I'm fairly sure that only relatively few people own a Blu-ray **burner**. In other words, relatively few people actually has the means to create a disc for their hardware player. So if you own a Blu-ray burner, you can support 8-bit Memoirs by helping create copies for interested people around you (who for some reason doesn't want to buy an original copy).

Write a post on your favourite retro-computer forum and offer to burn and send discs to whoever is interested. You're even allowed to charge a small fee for your time/service in addition to the expenses on the media and shipping. (The combined cost will of course have to be cheaper than the expenses of ordering an original copy, in order for it to be interesting for anyone).

Send feedback

If you like 8-bit Memoirs, you can also write me an e-mail at mr_lou@dewfall.dk to let me know. Positive feedback is always supportive, and much appreciated.

Thank you very much for your support!

Thanks to

I would like to thank the following people, in no particular order, for being a great help in the creation of 8-bit Memoirs.

- **Luis Gonzalez, TRSI**, for lots of useful advice regarding BD-J coding in the early start of the project.
- **Jesper "Jetpack" Ulriksen**, for modding my Philips Videopac G7000 with an RGB output signal, to make high quality videorecording possible.
- **Karen Hylander**, for supplying me with thousands of old negatives I could scan in order to find pictures to use for illustration references. And for finding accurate dates for various events.
- **Johannes "Saga Musix" Schultz, sagamusix.de**, for fixing DBM playback in OpenMPT123 when I needed it. And for creating Amiga screenshots of Protracker and DigiBoosterPro.
- **Olav "8bitbubsy" Sørensen, 16-bits.org**, for fixing a minor bug in his Protracker 2.3D clone when I needed it.
- **Frank Svendsen, Photocare Frederikshavn, Denmark**, for sending me useful photos of Dam Foto from the 1980s, used for illustration references.
- **Johnny Olsen, CPCwiki.eu**, for finding a certain magazine containing an article about Sprite Designer by Jason Charlesworth.
- **Ian "Bryce" Mc Bride**, for modding my Philips Videopac G7400 with RGB-output.
- **Phantomz, CPCwiki.eu**, for finding specific versions of certain Amstrad CPC games for me.
- **Bill Foote & Joe Rice, HDCookBook project**, for creating the HDCookBook project many years ago, which I have used extensively to create 8-bit Memoirs and other Blu-ray projects. Great work!

Guidelines for authors

It is my hope that 8-bit Memoirs issue #1 will motivate other people to start writing their own memoirs, resulting in several future issues of 8-bit Memoirs written by different authors.

Writing an issue of 8-bit Memoirs naturally isn't for everyone. (But what is?)

First of all, you need to have somewhat of an unusual good memory. The stories here in issue #1 begin when I was only 5-6 years old, and yes, I do remember that far back. Not **everything** that happened of course, and not in great detail either, but I do remember the episodes I'm writing about.

You also have to have had a certain kind of love for these old machines back then. If these computers didn't give you a great time back then, you'll obviously have a hard time remembering them today as something extraordinary.

Next comes the skills required, which actually aren't that many when it comes down to it: You have to know how to write and how to do the necessary research. And most importantly; **being patient** while doing these things, and **allowing the project to take the time it needs to take**. Never ever rush it.

Those are actually the only skills you need. Because everything else **can** be done by other people: The coding of the engine (or compiling into an eBook), music composition, illustrations, photos, videos etc. No one says you have to do everything yourself. In fact, it would be silly to insist on doing everything yourself. So I strongly encourage you to seek assistance from your fellow retro-computer geeks.

I certainly didn't do everything myself for issue #1. I had lots of help from many other people.

Requirements

It would be best if all issues of 8-bit Memoirs had somewhat the same feel, and somewhat the same kind of content about the same topics. Having your own writing-style is of course fine, but the fundamental feel has to be somewhat the same.

And as far as I can see, there are 8 requirements you must meet in order to achieve this:

1. All stories must be true.
2. The stories must be about the computers and gaming consoles from the 1970s and/or 1980s and/or 1990s.
3. There should be only a single text author for each issue. (There are exceptions though).
4. You must write a minimum of 10 stories. 20 would be good. More would be better.
5. All stories must be written in the English language.
6. Everything should **preferably** be presented in a diskmag-like GUI, or some other retro-styled presentation.
7. The whole thing must be available for free in some form at some point, if not initially at the time of release, then at least one year after.
8. Your issue number will be assigned by me (to avoid two different issues using the same number).

Let me elaborate on those:

Must be true

8-bit Memoirs is not fiction. It is in fact more like a semi biography focusing on the experiences the author had with the computers and consoles from the 8-bit era. This doesn't mean that every little detail has to be 100% accurate. There's obviously a limit to the human memory. But all stories in any issue of 8-bit Memoirs must be about events that actually occurred.

1970s, 1980s and 1990s

Since the title is 8-bit Memoirs, it makes sense that the stories are actually about the computers and gaming consoles from the 8-bit era. There were of course also 16-bit and even 32-bit computers from that time, but I still think that most of the work we did on these computers was done in 8 bits. Like for example the music I composed with Protracker on the Amiga: It was still 8-bit music despite the Amiga actually having a 32-bit bus. So, as already mentioned, the title does not relate solely to the bit-size of the bus.

Even if you can't say that your creations were done in 8 bits, it's still fine to include stories about 16-bit and 32-bit computers, as long as the **majority** of the stories are about the 8-bit ones. If not, then it **is** outside the scope of 8-bit Memoirs, and would have to reside in another production called "16-bit Memoirs" for example.

Only one author

I feel that all the stories in a given issue should be authored by the same person, in order to achieve a certain consistency. So one author per issue. Having created issue #1 myself, I **am** aware of how much work that requires.

You don't have to be the coder of the engine though, nor the artist of the GUI or illustrations, nor the composer of the background music. While I have authored every single story here in issue #1, a lot of other people has helped me out with other things.

I think it would be ok to have multiple authors in some cases though, when a group of people who grew up together each have stories that are more or less linked together. Then it would be interesting having those stories gathered into one creation rather than multiple separated and shorter creations.

Minimum 10 stories

Don't be scared by the size of issue #1. Yes, it does have a total of about 60 stories, 50 videos, 100 screenshots and 15 illustrations. That's just because it ended up being a lot bigger than I initially aimed for. The same will **probably** happen to you, but you really don't **have** to include that much content. You don't even have to add videos or illustrations. In my opinion, I'd say about 10 written stories with a few screenshots should be sufficient for a decent issue of 8-bit Memoirs. But of course, the more the better.

If you feel that even 10 stories is a lot, just wait and see. Once you get started you'll be surprised how the memories start coming back to you. One story will remind you of another, and the next will suddenly need to be split into two separate stories. Suddenly the project will have doubled in size - twice, and you'll end up writing **at least** 3 times as much as you initially thought you would. That's what happened in my case.

(So if you want to do this, you should expect and accept that it might take a year or more just to author the stories - especially if you also have a family and a full-time job).

English language

It has to be an international creation, and all stories should thus be written in the English language.

You're free to write in another language too of course, but in order to use the title 8-bit Memoirs, there has to be an English version available.

You could choose to write in your native language, and ask someone else to translate it into English.

Diskmag-like GUI

One of my biggest wishes for the 8-bit Memoirs series is for each issue to give the same cosy atmosphere and feel that diskmag used to give us back in the good old days. Therefore my suggestion is that they should all be presented in a (preferably somewhat retro-styled) diskmag-like GUI. Or at least some other retro-styled presentation, to boost the retro-feeling. The cosy colour-themes and relaxing background music probably being the two most important key elements.

I imagine it's quite possible to create such a diskmag-like GUI with an eBook format like ePub3 nowadays. Or you could choose to use a diskmag-engine like "Panorama" that has also been used for the PC diskmag "Hugi".

An HTML5 web-app could also work. (Preferably one that can run offline after installation).

This diskmag-like GUI is **not a requirement** though. It's just a strong encouragement. If you'd really rather target another media, like e.g. an old fashioned printed book, then that's acceptable too.

Must be free in some form

Your issue of 8-bit Memoirs must become free for everyone to download or obtain in some form at some point within a year after the release of any commercial version.

*"Free" in this context means it shouldn't cost any money. It does **not** mean that other people are free to edit it and make their own versions. This is not Open Source.*

It is fine to **also** offer a version people can buy.

There can be various reasons why people would want to buy it rather than just settle for the free version. Maybe they'd like to support your work. Maybe they don't want to wait till the free version will be released. Or maybe they just don't have the means to use the free version.

For example: Since issue #1 is created as a Blu-ray Disc, I have made the ISO file downloadable for free. This ISO file can then be viewed with a software media player that supports Blu-ray Disc Java (BD-J), like VLC, Kodi or PowerDVD. Or you can burn the ISO to disc and watch in a hardware player. (Recommended).

But since far from everyone owns a Blu-ray burner and/or the means to print the cover and label, I've also provided a way to buy a physical disc version.

It is not a requirement to provide a commercial version. That's entirely your own decision. You just have to make a free version available, within a year after your commercial version.

You are free to use crowd-funding to get started if you want. If the general public knows that you have writing-skills, and/or is particular interested in reading **your** stories, then crowd-funding might work for you. (Especially if issue #1 becomes popular and successfully creates the interest I'm hoping it will).

It's fine to ask for donations too. As long as the end result is freely available for the readers in some form within a year after any commercial release.

It's also fine to use your issue of 8-bit Memoirs to promote yourself and/or friends. For example, in the original Blu-ray version I'm using background music composed by various artists of IndieGameMusic.com; a site that I created and therefore naturally wish to see gain popularity. Using music from artists of IndieGameMusic.com gives me an opportunity to promote my own site.

If you don't have a project of your own to promote, you could look for someone who'd sponsor you. I.e. pay you money in return for promoting them in your issue. That's allowed too. As long as the end result remains a free download for all.

The commercial version could be some sort of physical copy, like a Blu-ray Disc or a floppydisk or even a book. The physical copy will thus usually require certain hardware in order to be viewed.

The corresponding free version will typically be an image-file of some kind, like an ISO, DSK / D64 / ADF or PDF / ePub3 file. These files will require certain software in order to view them on your PC.

Request an issue number

To make sure two authors doesn't use the same issue number, I will keep track of issue numbers. So all authors must contact me to ask which issue number is the next in line. And in order to make sure all issues are released in sequential order, you can only receive an issue number once your issue is 99% complete.

And that's it

Those are, as far as I can see, the only requirements there are in order for your stories to qualify as an issue of 8-bit Memoirs, and thus end up in the list at www.8bitMemoirs.com

You are free to target any platform you want.

While I went with Blu-ray because of several reasons explained in "[Why 8-bit Memoirs?](#)", I imagine most other people might feel like targeting web instead - and you're free to do so. You might also feel like targeting one (or more) of the 8-bit platforms you're writing about. Or maybe go for an old-fashioned printed book? It's entirely your own decision what platform(s) you want to target. There are no requirements that it has to be available on a certain platform. It's up to the readers to obtain the platform you target, either by downloading a certain emulator or a certain software media player or a certain eBook reader.

And finally, I'd like to remind you that the focus of 8-bit Memoirs should be on the stories. So please avoid writing any kind of reviews based on your present day knowledge. Stick to the stories of how you experienced everything back in the day; the childhood magic it was to be introduced to these entertainment systems. Describing the impression these computers and consoles and their games gave you, from the childhood perspective.

Also avoid adding (too many) newer creations of yours. Stick to the old nostalgic stuff.

Tips'n'tricks

A great way to help yourself remember your stories, is to surround yourself with all kinds of things you remember from those days: Play the games again that you used to play on your 8-bit computer as a child (preferably on a real machine rather than an emulator). Put on the music you used to listen to back then, and watch movies you used to watch back then. Look at old photos and visit the places you used to hang out. Talk to people you used to know back then, see if they remember any episodes that you don't.

If you do these things I'm certain you'll be surprised how many memories suddenly pops up. It'll be the nostalgic trip you've been missing. ;-)

Advice

I would also like to give you the following advice, in order to create the best result:

1. Write your stories.
2. Wait a week.
3. While you read your stories, fix spelling errors and rephrase as you find suitable.
4. If you made more than 5 changes, then go to step 2 again. (This can go on for a **loong** time, and that's fine. Everyone will appreciate it in the final result).
5. Send to betatesters.
6. Take betatester feedback serious. Implement most of their suggestions and changes - also those you don't agree with. Your betatesters are the ones telling you what the average reader wants - so make sure you give it to them.
7. Possibly send to betatesters again, depending on how many changes they requested.

Good luck!

I'm looking forward to read your issue of 8-bit Memoirs some day in the future! :)

Introduction

Welcome to 8-bit Memoirs

Welcome to the very first issue of 8-bit Memoirs, written by Roald "Mr.Lou" Strauss and originally released in December 2017 as a Blu-ray project. You're currently reading an eBook version of 8-bit Memoirs, which contains the same text and same pictures, but excludes 5 hours of background music and 9 hours of supplemental video content.

You're about to go back in time with me, beginning all the way back in the early 1980s when I was just 5-6 years old, all the way up to the late 1990s.

I've been longing to share all of these nostalgic stories with the world for many years, and now, after 5 years of work, I can finally present you with 8-bit Memoirs issue #1.

As I'm writing this welcome text, I'm still having some difficulties comprehending that these events began a whole 36 years ago. Suddenly I'm 42 years old, which means that I'm actually quite a bit older now than my parents were when all of these events took place. This would make sense if it actually **felt** like 36 years had gone by, but it doesn't feel that way at all.

3 decades ago, 30 years seemed like a very long time. But now that those years have come and gone, I find myself thinking that 30 years isn't that long after all. That is, until I stumble across recent photos online of the people I used to know back then, and notice how much older they suddenly look. Then I realise that 30 years **is** in fact a rather long time. The years have just gone by surprisingly fast. **Too** fast.

This reminds me that none of us are here forever. We all have an expiration date on life. And I have to admit, the knowledge of this inevitable departure scares me a bit from time to time. I guess it scares all of us to some degree. And in my case, it also gives me a desire to leave something behind, like for example some stories from my life, to mark that I was here once upon a time.

There was no doubt at all which stories I wanted to share with you: The ones from my childhood, ranging from the early 1980s to the mid 1990s, because there's no doubt that those stories are the best ones I have. I suppose childhood is like that for most of us, for the simple reason that life at that age generally is a lot less complex than this grown-up life we end up with. In childhood we haven't yet discovered, that everyone else in the world is just as clueless about everything as we are ourselves.

Not that childhood doesn't give us struggles too. But at that age we're still somewhat shielded against the many horrible realities that exist in the world, and the daily stress-factors you're dealing with today generally doesn't start invading your life till your mid teens.

Apart from school homework, my concerns back then were mostly about figuring out which one of my hobbies I should spend my time on. And at age 10, I would discover the absolute biggest hobby of my life that would end up giving me lots of great memories, and even set the course of my career.

The age of home computing

We're going back to a time that was a lot simpler than this modern hectic age of technology we live in today. Actually, it was the time that kinda got it all started: The beginning of the age of home computing, where families began to seriously embrace the idea of having a personal computer in their homes. That's right. Can you even imagine this? People generally did not have a computer in their homes yet at this time. This was the very beginning.

The market got flooded with various different brands of computers, and the competition for the consumers had begun.

Any issue of 8-bit Memoirs you may find in the future will contain stories about how the author experienced these computers from this dawning age, and you will find that there were many different brands - all with different advantages and drawbacks - and all incompatible with each other.

No one got to experience **all** of the available options back then. Most of us only got to experience a few of the machines that were available. And for me, it was the Philips Videopac model G7000, a few Game & Watch games, the Amstrad CPC models 464 and 6128, and finally the Amiga models 500, 600 and 1200. So the stories here in 8-bit Memoirs issue #1 will be about those systems.

It is very difficult to express with words what kind of value these computers added to my life back in those days, but the size and dimension of 8-bit Memoirs should give you some idea. This work contains about 60 stories (the equivalent of about 250 pages of printed text), 100 screenshots, 15 illustrations and 50 videos. 5 years in the making and way too many expenses along the way.

It's difficult to explain exactly why I felt the need to share these memoirs. It just felt a whole lot of wrong to let them die with me some day (hopefully many decades from now). They **had** to be written. 8-bit Memoirs **had** to be created.

I've sometimes shared a few of these memories with family members and friends, and been met with a mix of astonishment and scepticism. People are mostly both amazed and sceptical about the number of details I remember from this era - because they don't remember much themselves, despite being just as big a part of the story as I was. Apparently most people just don't remember past events to the same extent that I do.

The explanation for this seemingly outstanding memory of mine is probably a combination of various circumstances. One simple and short explanation sounds like this:

Each story here in 8-bit Memoirs is a memory that has always meant a lot to me, which I've therefore often thought back on. In other words: Without realising it, I've actually been reminding myself of these past events on a somewhat regular basis ever since they took place, just by thinking back on them from time to time.

All the games I played back then. All of my own homebrew creations I did on the CPC and Amiga. I remember all of it. (Well, definitely most of it). The magic it was to play these games at that age, and the excitement it was to create my own BASIC programs and compose my own music. The thrill it was to experience everything as new and ground-breaking.

The good old days

While I might stand out a bit from other people when it comes down to how much I remember, I know I don't differ a whole lot when it comes down to how much I enjoy re-visiting the good old days. Lots of people try to re-live these good old days in various ways; by still playing the good old games, and mingling on various online retro-computer forums. Some of us even get together in groups for some relaxing retro-gaming events, bringing with us our own childhood retro-computer.

We do this in an attempt to rediscover or re-experience that special joyful atmosphere we remember from back then. Somehow it was kinda lost while we were busy growing up. And what better place to find it again than where it was first discovered?

*I imagine our generation is rather blessed in this regard: We have the opportunity to actually use our real childhood computers here 3 decades later. Somehow I seriously doubt future generations will be able to do this with **their** childhood electronics, considering how fast almost all modern devices seem to just stop working after purchase. Electronic devices built in the 1980s were solid stuff that seems to be able to last forever. Most modern devices in contrast seem to be purposely designed to only last a few years.*

So us who grew up in the 1980s are probably the last generation who'll have the luxury of still being able to use our childhood computer here 3 decades later - most probably even through-out our whole life.

8-bit Memoirs is merely another way of re-experiencing this great era - from the perspective of the author.

I'm thinking that my own generation will find it entertaining to read about someone else's experiences with the computers and gaming consoles from that time, while remembering and comparing the stories with their own memories. (Hopefully to such a degree that they'll feel inspired to start writing their own issue of 8-bit Memoirs too).

Future generations may simply find it interesting to read the stories about the computers and gaming consoles that existed long ago, because it was the beginning of the modern powerful PC's and gaming consoles that exists today.

So here are my memoirs.

What was life like back then in the 1980s?

Well, let me start a random place most people can relate to: James Bond; the character who's been played by many different actors up through time. From 1973 to 1985 he was played by Roger Moore, which means that most of the Bond movies we watched as kids in the 1980s was with this actor in the role. Roger Moore turned the James Bond character into a much more relaxed and humorous person than any other actor ever did, and that is just **one** example of the many things that would shape the 1980s into precisely the more relaxed and happy time it was.

The same applied to the Batman character. In the 1980s Batman hadn't yet turned into the dark and gloomy character he is today. The Batman we knew came from the 1960s, played by Adam West in a very kids-friendly style.

Our most successful pop artists at the time were Michael Jackson and Madonna, who both contributed a lot to the magic of the 1980s. Everything on TV and radio generally seemed to have a much higher quality back then.

I still remember the very first time I heard Michael Jackson's "Thriller" on the radio, because of the unique quality that was present in that track. Even on my tiny mono transistor radio (which still lives on today in my dad's garage, as a classic example of solid 1980s electronics), "Thriller" was an exceptional experience. (One that made me decide to always keep a recordable tape ready in my transistor radio from that day on).

For some reason, this was the time all the great movies (and their sequels) were trending. Movies like "Star Wars", "Indiana Jones", "Back to The Future", "Ghostbusters" and "Superman". And TV-series like "Automan", "Airwolf", "A-Team", "Knight Rider", "Thundercats" and "MacGyver". Quality was more the rule than the exception back in those days.

But the best thing about this time for us kids, was the introduction of home computers. And having one of these home computers back then, was slightly different than having a PC today. Things like cellphones and The Internet hadn't been invented yet. So we didn't sit in front of the screen to chat or send messages to each other. That wasn't possible yet. Instead, a lot of us were intrigued and curious about creating our own programs - because all the computers allowed us to do that rather easily. They all came with a programming language called BASIC, which was very easy to get started with - so a lot of us did.

This was the very beginning of the age of home computing. Everything was about to change, and the kids of my generation were the ones who got to experience it all - and tell the story about it decades later.

Happy reading.

About me

Before you begin reading this "About me" text, you should know that it's going to summarise a lot of the stories in 8-bit Memoirs. So it's possible you'll want to skip this text till later.

My name is Roald Strauss. I was born in 1975 in Frederikshavn, Denmark, where I spent the first 30 years of my life. I then moved to Hobro in 2005 where I'm currently residing with my better half Marlene and our daughter Milena.

My fascination with computers began with the Philips Videopac G7000 way back in the early 1980s followed by a few Game & Watch LCD games.

The computer that made the absolute biggest impact on me was the Amstrad CPC, despite using Amiga for many years after the CPC.

I like coding

My interest in coding began at age 10 when I got hooked on BASIC on my grandma's Amstrad CPC464. When I later got my own CPC464 I made a lot of various BASIC stuff in the many years that followed, and stuck with BASIC for a whole decade before learning Java as part of my Computer Scientist degree.

Along the way I also picked up other languages like HTML, Javascript and PHP. I've even tried some C for a few Amstrad CPC game projects.

My passion for coding and being creative on the computer has resulted in various sparetime projects up through the years. Amateur BASIC stuff on the Amstrad CPC, maildisks to penfriends on both the Amiga and PC (personal diskmag-like creations). Amateur retro game projects for JavaME, like UkkosJourney.com, and trying Android too for PirateDiamonds.com. Sites like IndieGameMusic.com where musicians like myself can offer their music to game-developers. And lastly small retro games for the Amstrad CPC like "Sort'em" and "Space Rivals", and Amstrad CPC music-compilations like "Nightshift" and "Tracks from the early 90ies".

8-bit Memoirs is my latest (and biggest) of these sparetime projects.

As you can see I'm mostly doing freeware niche projects. For some reason, mainstream commercial projects have never really caught my attention. I guess doing the same thing everyone else is doing just isn't that fulfilling to me.

I also tend to always pick the platform that offers the biggest challenge. If someone says to me: "You gotta use platform X because you can't do it with platform Y", then it's almost certain I'll try to do it with platform Y just to prove them wrong. (Especially if platform Y is Java-based).

The first two mobile games I coded thus ran fine on the Sony Ericsson model T610, simply because my fellow JavaME coders claimed it was practically impossible to target that particular phone.

I'm a geek musician

Ever since my aunt Bodil presented me with a musical instrument called a melodica in 1983, I've been interested in composing my own music. When my dad later bought a Family Organ for the whole family, it quickly ended up in my room, and I've since then had several different musical keyboards up through the years.

I also made music on my Amstrad CPC with BASIC, by typing in the frequency-numbers manually for each tone I wanted the CPC to play. That was a huge amount of work - but when you're passionate about coding **and** creating music, then that's what happens.

Later I moved onto Protracker on the Amiga. Then DigiBooster Pro (also on the Amiga). Very little Fasttracker II on the PC before moving on to Skale Tracker for some time. Today I primarily use Milkytracker and Renoise - when I have the time.

One of my geeky hobbies as a musician today is to create different file-formats of my tracks. Like a "full" version as WAV/FLAC, smaller file-size version as OGG/MP3, and then also a "tracker version" as IT/XM, and finally a GM MIDI version. I've also experimented with other more exotic file-formats, like XMF and SMAF/MMF.

I then put these different file-type versions on display at IndieGameMusic.com. That way game-developers on many different platforms can use my tracks in their games.

Most musicians today seem to focus only on the streamed formats, like mp3 and ogg. That's not enough for me. Again I tend to be drawn towards the more challenging options. I find it much more interesting to create the "exotic" formats, and the main reason I created IndieGameMusic.com was in fact because I couldn't find a place online to put such formats on display for game-developers.

It is my (naive) hope that more game-developers will begin using the tracker formats again instead of mp3 and ogg, because I find them much more suitable for games, considering the amount of control and options they offer. Like, making things happen in the game to the beat of the music. Or changing the tempo without affecting the pitch. Or jumping back and forth in patterns smoothly. And all at a smaller filesize too.

Philips Videopac stories

Uncle's Videopac G7000

My stories begin way back in the very early 1980s when I was only about 5-6 years old.

My dad's sister Sonja lived with her husband Peder and their 3 kids Gerner, Brian and Allan (who were all older than me) in a city called Skagen, about 40 km north of Frederikshavn (where we lived). My mum and dad would sometimes drive there, with my little brother Kenneth and I on the back seat. The drive there took about 45 minutes, but it felt like an hour and a half at that age. The question "Are we there yet?" was asked a lot from the backseat during those 45 minutes.

Back then I assumed the long drive was the reason why we didn't visit that often, but here 3 and a half decades later, I realise that most of us at this grown-up age are just way too busy to have the same kind of social life we had when we were kids. We blame the distance for not visiting each other, but that's rarely the real reason.

The thing I remember most about the long drive there, was the change in scenery that happened near the end of the trip. First, the landscape became much more open. No where else in the country would you find a road with so much open landscape to each side of the road. Then all the houses and street name signs began looking different.

If someone had told me we'd crossed the border to another country, then they'd definitely have me fooled. But no, same country, just 40 km north of where we lived.

The tourist industry refers to this part of the country as "The Land of Light", and it does indeed feel like a brighter place up there than in other parts of the country.

This radical change in scenery wasn't the only change I noticed when we drove to The Land of Light:

My aunt and uncle generally seemed to have a much more relaxed and joyful way of living their lives than what I was used to at home. They gave me the impression that they never worried about anything, simply because that would be a silly waste of time. And I found that very appealing.



Life also seemed to have a lot less restrictions in The Land of Light for some reason. Various things that my brother and I would **never** be allowed to do back home, seemed to be perfectly acceptable up here at aunt and uncle's.

An example: At some point in 1985, my cousin Allan decided to show us "Thundercats"; an animated series we would definitely not be allowed to watch back home. Ok, my aunt **did** make a comment about it not being suitable for us at our age, and because of this comment, my mum felt she had to keep an eye on us while we watched the first episode. But even though she agreed with my aunt, we were still allowed to watch it. And like all other kids in the world who got to watch "Thundercats" back then, we of course loved it.

I concluded that at least **part** of the good mood I always witnessed in this home, had to originate from this less restricted lifestyle they seemed to have.

Almost every time we came for a visit my aunt Sonja would make us waffles, as if it was the national dish of The Land of Light. I got a clear impression that they had waffles quite a lot, and **that** definitely had to be another source of the good mood this family was always in.

All these very positive factors made it feel like a small vacation every time we went for a visit there, which of course was super awesome. But the one thing absolutely without a doubt topping the list of "Awesome stuff at aunt and uncle's" was their Philips Videopac G7000.

First video gaming experience

The Philips Videopac G7000 was the first video gaming experience my brother and I had in our lives. And when my uncle Peder and youngest cousin Allan introduced it to us back then in the early 1980s, we were both absolutely captivated by it.



Realising it was possible to play video games at home in your living-room using a normal plain TV-set, was proof that great things existed in the world. And experiencing this at age 5-6 made the whole thing even more magical.

When visiting, my brother and I would sit on the floor in front of the TV which was placed in a large bookcase that almost covered the entire wall. That was the setup every time we played on the G7000 during our visits there.

Being able to experience this magic any time they wanted to, was clearly **another** reason for the good mood that seemed to thrive in this house. Waffles and G7000 gaming. Could life be any greater? Who wouldn't constantly be smiling if they could watch all the "Thundercats" they wanted, play all the G7000 they wanted, and then have waffles for dinner every day? **I** certainly would!



In all fairness the Videopac G7000 belonged to the whole family. But I'm calling it "Uncle's G7000" in these stories because it was usually him who hooked it up for us. Subsequently it was my cousin Allan who would typically demonstrate the games to us.

My two older cousins, Brian and Gerner, didn't seem to take an interest in the machine. At least none that I can recall.

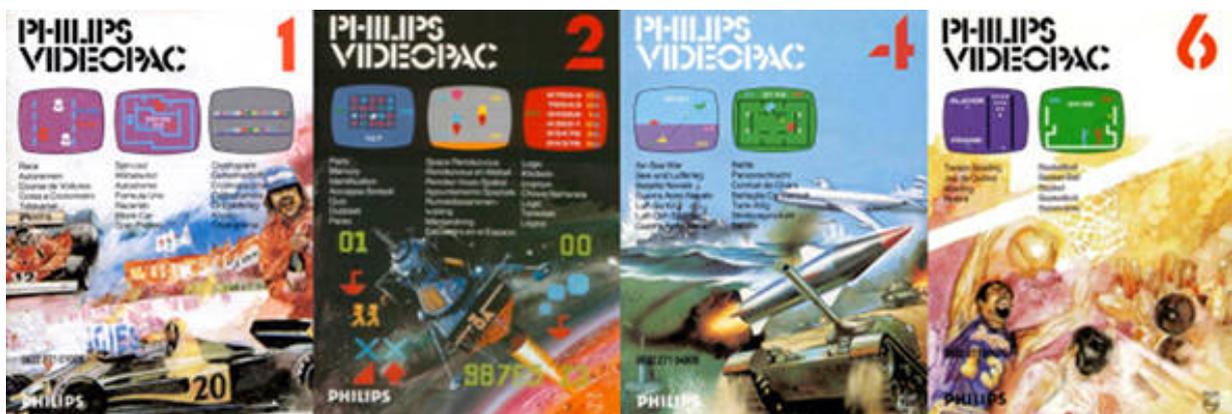
Uncle's G7000 games

Uncle and aunt had surprisingly many games for their G7000, and as I saw them one by one I remember thinking this family was extremely lucky to be living in this part of the world where wonderful things like the Videopac G7000 existed. I was sure the G7000 didn't exist anywhere back home, a whole 45 minutes away (which felt like an hour and a half). The Land of Light had a different landscape, different houses, different street name-signs, different food habits, different (happier) mood. And then they also had this lovely machine. As I'd never seen any of those things back home, I was sure G7000 machines only existed in The Land of Light.

15 games

Naturally not all of the games appealed to me, but most of them surely did, and today they all weigh quite a lot on the nostalgic scale.

I count 15 games on 12 cartridges for the G7000 that reminds me a lot of the times we were visiting uncle and aunt in the beginning of the 1980s.



They either didn't have **all** of these games during our first visits, or else they deliberately introduced the games to us (my brother and I) little by little. When I look at the list of games, then the first videopac cartridges in the series are part of the oldest memories I have. Videopac 1 and 2 for example; they represent the very beginning of the "G7000 gaming at uncle and aunt" era, while the later games represent the middle and end of the era. It could just be a coincidence of course, but it is a bit peculiar that the chronological order I remember the games in matches the videopac cartridge number order.

One possible explanation could be that the level of difficulty slowly increased for each game. And since my brother was only 3-5 years old at

the time, it makes sense that we were only introduced to the absolute easiest games at first.



Here are the stories of how I remember those 15 games.

["Race"](#) & ["Spin-out"](#)

["Space Rendezvous"](#)

["Air-Sea War"](#) & ["Battle"](#)

["Tenpin Bowling"](#) & ["Basketball"](#)

["Cosmic Conflict"](#)

["Take the money and run"](#)

["Gunfighter"](#)

["Labyrinth"](#)

["Jumping acrobats"](#)

["Satellite attack"](#)

["Munchkin "](#)

["Pickaxe Pete"](#)

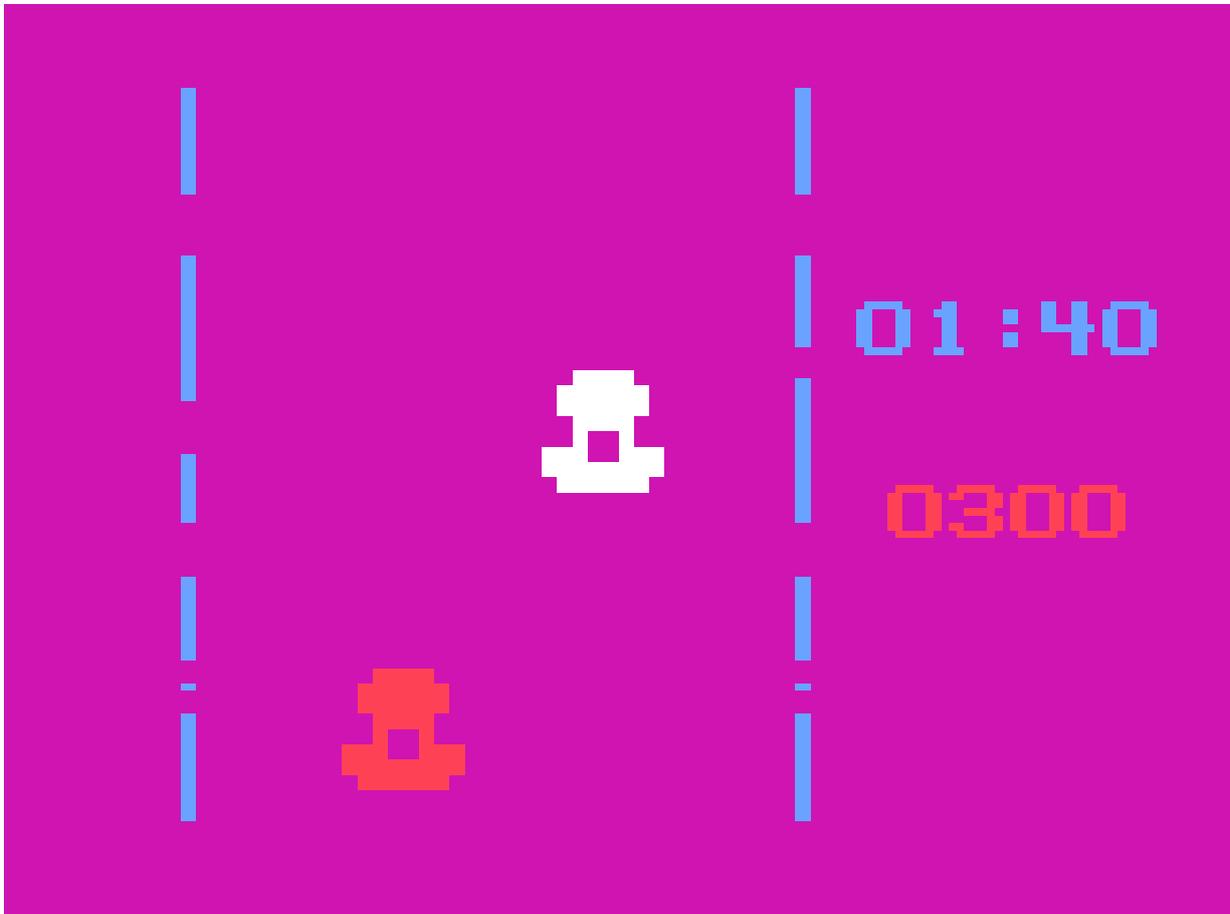
I'm sure that a lot of readers will notice (and possibly comment to themselves) how very simple the graphics look in these games. It's pretty clear to everyone that we've gone back in time here to the beginning of home videogames.

While you might find these graphics rather unappealing, I instead find them very charming. That's how it goes with most everything you grow up with. I rather like the graphics in these games.

But even though the graphics is a big part of the game-experience, it has never had anything to do with playability. Same goes for music and sound-effects. Two other factors determine playability: Framerate and level of difficulty. And G7000 games always seemed to get those two exactly right.

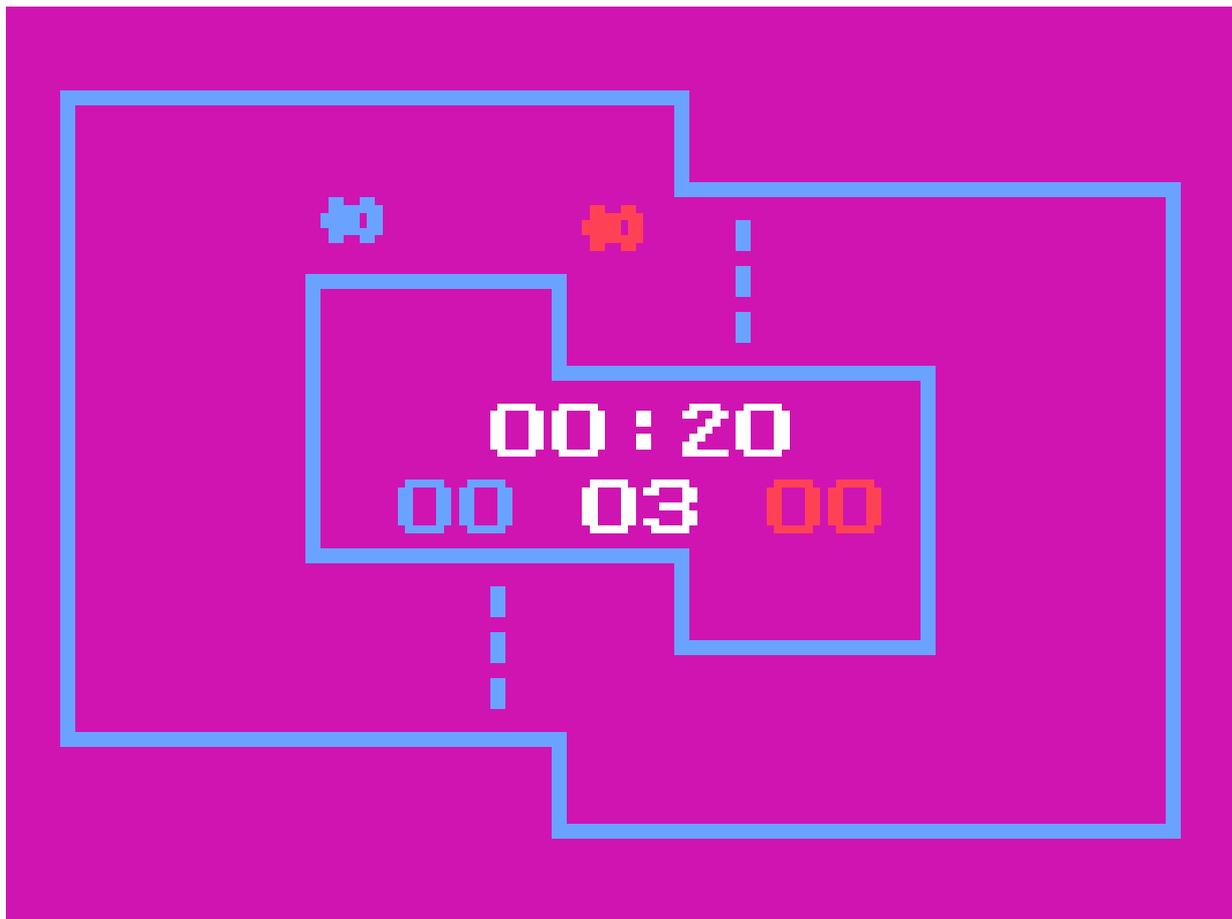
"Race" & "Spin-out"

The videopac 1 cartridge for the G7000 contained 3 games: "Race", "Spin-out" and "Cryptogram". That last one didn't interest us though, so we only played the first two.



"Race" was a simple single-player top-view racing game as simple as they get. But despite this simplicity, my brother and I still found it way too difficult. We crashed into every single car on the road. Then we claimed the game was impossible, only to witness our cousin Allan easily disproving that claim of ours, by showing off his superior driving skills. Not entirely fair though, considering the huge amount of practise he had.

"Spin-out" appealed to us a lot more, because it was a two-player game. Racing against each other was a lot more intriguing than racing against the computer, because it meant we could set the pace ourselves, naturally resulting in a tempo that was much more suitable for our (lack of) skills. We also felt it helped a lot to have an overview of the whole game arena on one screen.



That didn't mean we wouldn't still constantly crash into every single wall **and** each other. It just meant it was more fun than "Race", because it felt more down-tempo playing against each other than against the G7000.

While we were playing "Spin-out" in the living room, the grown-ups would sit in the kitchen and talk about grown-up stuff.

Then, after a while, one of them (typically my uncle) would come into the living room, walk up to the TV, turn down the volume of the TV, and walk back into the kitchen.

He did this because of the sound effect used in the game when crashing the car. It consisted of 2 square synth tones an octave apart, playing one at a time, repeating while the volume slowly faded.

For some reason, playing this particular sound-effect 3 million times within 5 minutes seemed to cause some kind of allergic reaction for people above the age of 30 or so.

Turns out I'm immune myself though. Because having turned 42 all of the sudden, I still have the exact opposite reaction to this particular sound-effect when I hear it today. To me it is one of the most pleasant sounds that reminds me of a great time in my life. :-)

The original Blu-ray version of 8-bit Memoirs contains video footage of this game. Visit www.8bitMemoirs.com to get it!

"Space Rendezvous"

Videopac 2 also contained 3 games, but only one of them caught our attention: "Space Rendezvous"



"Space Rendezvous" was a very simple 2-player game: Using only a single button to control the thrust of your rocket ship, first land your ship, then take off again to reach the moving purple target at the top of the screen. Whoever managed to do this first had won the round.

If you landed too hard though, your ship would crash, resulting in a "wait time" penalty (presumably due to repairs), after which you could continue the game.

Because of this very simple game-play, the game appealed to the both of us right away.

Unfortunately, we lost the interest again equally fast, because none of us could ever manage to land the ship without crashing. Instead, we'd both use up all of our fuel trying to land without crashing, leaving no where near enough fuel to reach the purple target afterwards.

In my humble opinion this was clearly a design flaw in the game. The designers should have reset the fuel after a crash. Maybe even after a successful landing too.

Anyway, our cousin Allan had a solution for us. He explained to us how we could just let both our ships crash first. Because that way we only had to worry about reaching the purple target - and since we hadn't used any of our fuel on a failed attempt at landing, we'd still have a full tank available to reach the target.

It took us a while to see the logic behind this plan of his. I couldn't quite understand how he could just "invent" his own rules in the game. It kinda felt like he invented his own game within the game.

But once we understood what he meant and saw that it did indeed work, then the game became fun again. What a clever guy.

Start the game. Let both ships fall to the ground to crash. Then, while waiting for the ships to be repaired, hold down the button in order to take off as soon as the ships reappear.

"Space Rendezvous" was (like "Spin-out") one of the very first games we played at uncle and aunt. So the memories I have of my brother and I playing this game are among the absolute oldest and most nostalgic memories I have.

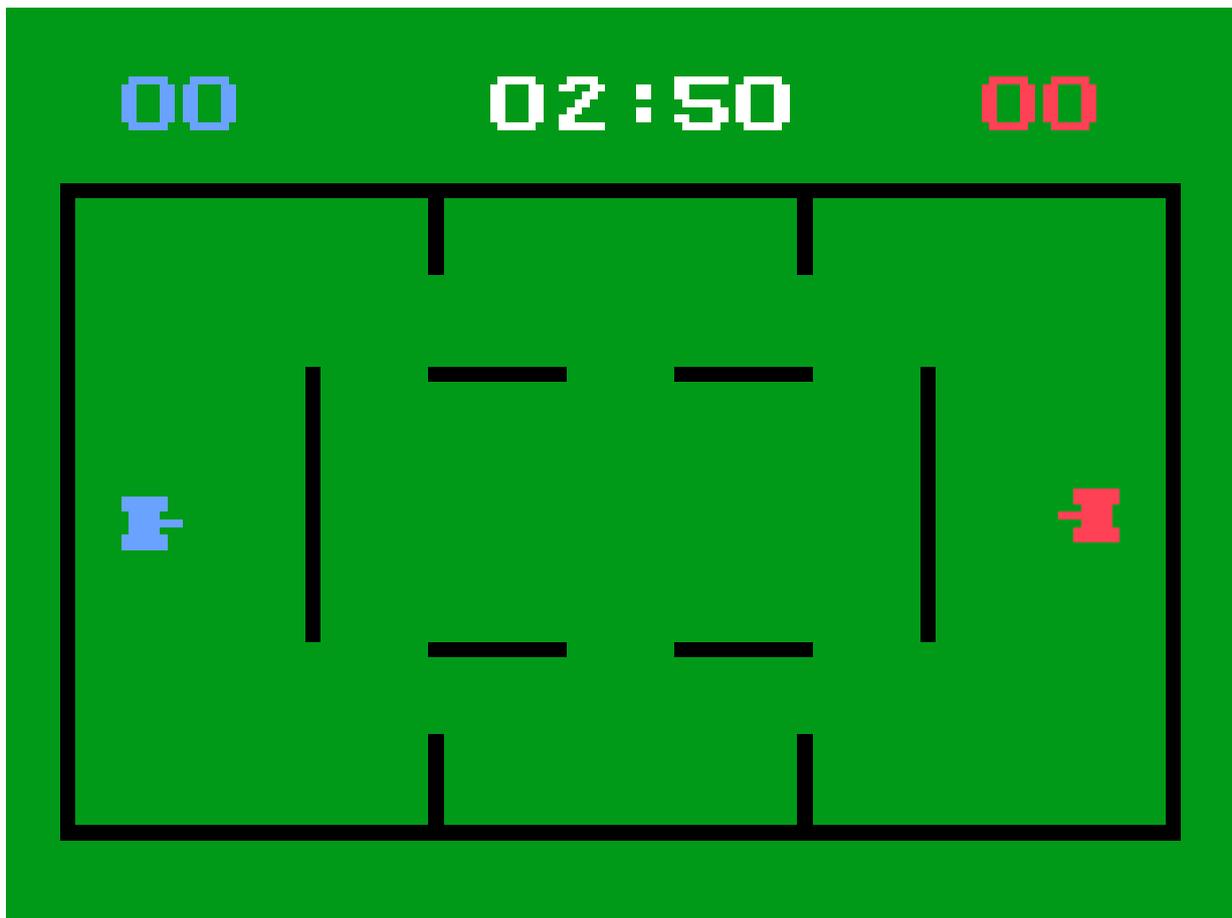
More than 30 years later (in 2015), my better half and I created a 4-player game for the Amstrad CPC titled "Space Rivals", strongly inspired by "Space Rendezvous".

The original Blu-ray version of 8-bit Memoirs contains video footage of this game. Visit www.8bitMemoirs.com to get it!

"Battle" & "Air-Sea War"

The next cartridge that was introduced to us was videopac 4, which contained two games in various versions: "Battle" and "Air-Sea War", and we soon got hooked on both of them.

They were 2-player games like "Spin-out" and "Space Rendezvous", which meant that the pace was set by the players themselves. 2-player games like this were always fun when both players had about the same (lack of) skills.



"Battle" was a top-view tank game. Each player controlled a tank, and the goal was then to hit the other player. The levels would have walls we could hide behind, and in some levels you could also control the direction of your bullet.

"Battle" had a somewhat strange combination of relaxation and excitement. It was relaxing because the tanks moved very slowly on the screen, but exciting when you finally reached your opponent and tried to hit him while avoiding **his** bullets. I found this combination great. For a young mind, it was all the variation a game needed to have, thus making it one of the absolute favourites for the both of us.

In "Air-Sea War" one player controlled an air-plane while the other controlled a submarine.

My brother and I both wanted to control the air-plane for some reason, so we'd usually start out arguing a bit about that before actually starting a game.



The pace in "Air-Sea War" was a bit higher than in "Battle". The air-plane would move across the screen from the right to the left, while the submarine would move from the right to left. Then you had to try to hit your opponent.

Considering that the air-plane and submarine both crossed the screen almost at the same time, it was either a very slow air-plane or a very fast submarine - or probably a mix of both. But such thoughts of course never crossed our minds back then.

My grandma also had a Philips Video G7000 machine, which I would discover a bit later, and this particular videopac 4 cartridge was also part of **her** collection. So I was playing this cartridge at her place too, which means that these two particular games are not exclusively associated with my uncle and aunt. And there's an interesting observation about this:

The way I remember the whole game-experience at aunt and uncle's is completely different from how it felt playing the exact same games at my grandma's place.

At aunt and uncle's I remember these two games being more fun and entertaining. I remember good weather, sunlight, positive mood (due to the family talking in the background) and relaxation.

At grandma's I remember the games being somewhat less interesting, the weather being somewhat grey and rainy, quiet surroundings with only me and my grandma there, and less relaxed.

This observation clearly shows that the game-experience very much depends on the surroundings and situation, and not only on the games themselves. Game-play, music/sfx and graphics are the 3 things we typically expect to sum up the game-experience. But to me there's definitely this important 4th factor too: The circumstances and surroundings.

And this is why (in my theory), that when you play your retro games today, you'll sometimes feel something is missing compared to how you remember the games back then. This is because you're missing a lot of the surroundings you used to have. Having the real machine helps a lot, but for the best experience you should play your retro games together with someone who appreciate the games and nostalgia as much as you do.

When we visited aunt and uncle, it was usually during the summer vacation, and there were usually a lot of people present: My parents and brother were there obviously, and my aunt and uncle and their 3 kids. That makes 9 people.

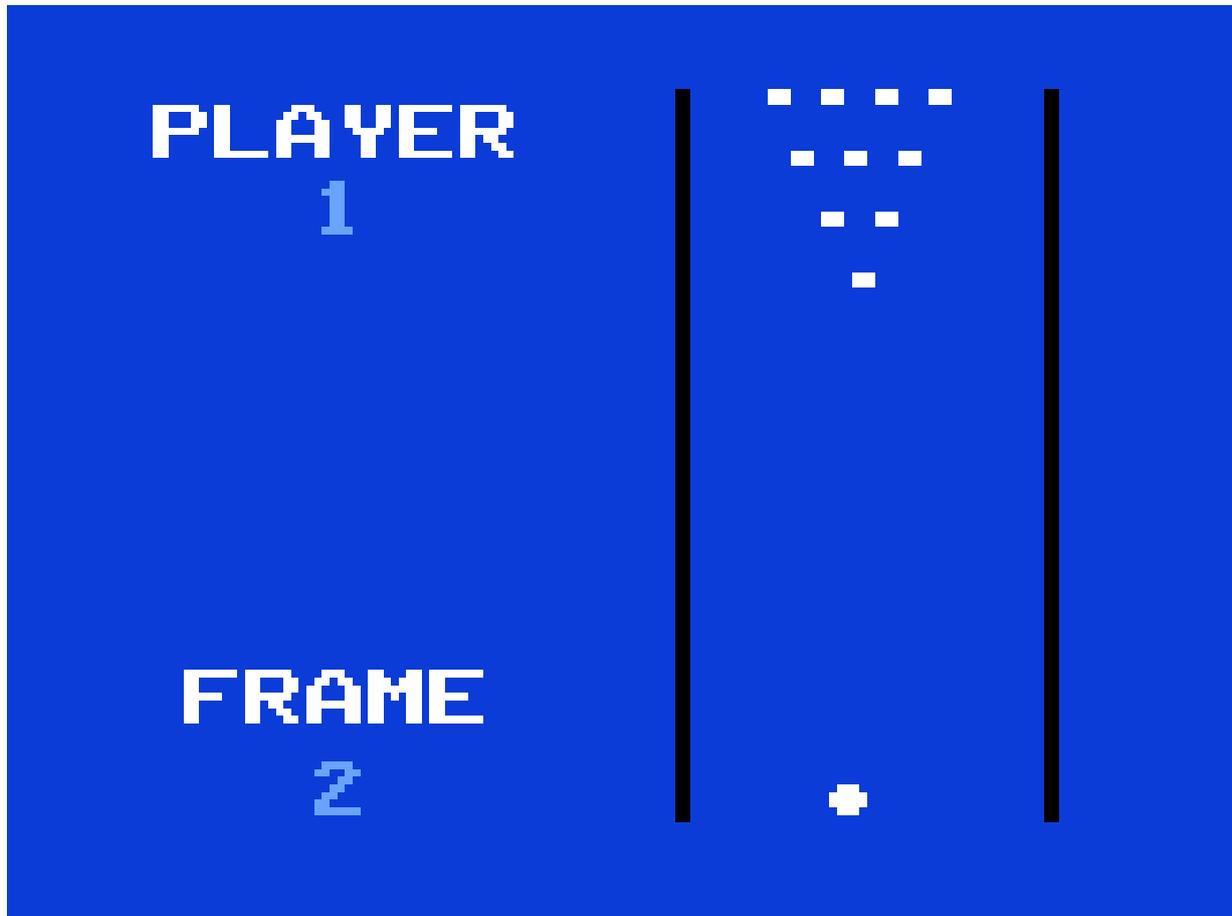
We would never play G7000 games at grandma's place when that many people were visiting. That was out of the question. Videogaming was reserved for boring rainy days, preferably when I was the only one visiting.

That's probably also why I ended up associating "Battle" with my aunt and uncle, while "Air-Sea War" makes me think of my grandma. Because "Air-Sea War" was the only game of the two that was possible to play without needing a 2nd player. So obviously "Air-Sea War" was played the most at grandma's place while "Battle" was played the most at uncle and aunt.

The original Blu-ray version of 8-bit Memoirs contains video footage of this game. Visit www.8bitMemoirs.com to get it!

"Tenpin Bowling" & "Basketball"

The videopac 6 cartridge also contained two games "Tenpin Bowling" and "Basketball".



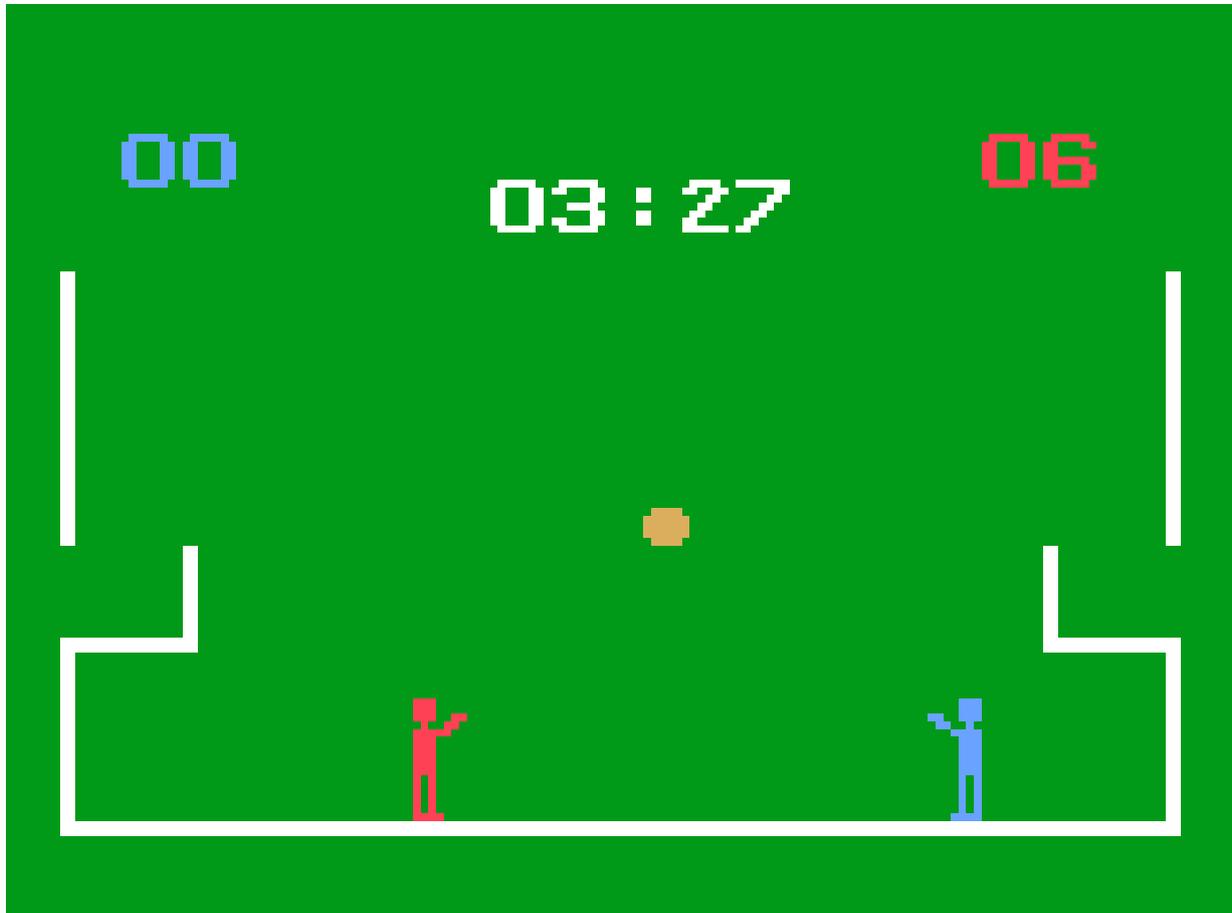
I remember my dad playing the bowling game against my uncle one time we went for a visit. It was the first and only time my dad tried the machine.

It was always pleasant to see the grown-ups play a game with or against each other, and watching them finding it fun. It was like it brought kids and grown-ups a bit closer together, because it was extremely rare that both kids and grown-ups enjoyed the same thing.

Grown-ups never played against (or with) one of us kids though. It had to be either kid vs kid or grown-up vs grown-up. Anything else would be too boring for everyone. But just the fact that both kids and grown-ups found the same thing interesting, that was a big thing for me.

The bowling game didn't appeal to my brother and I though, and since sports games in general never appealed to me (and still don't) we didn't even check out "Basketball" at first either.

My cousin Allan had to show it to us before we realised that it wasn't the complex game I thought it was.



I had imagined the game to have a **huge** playing field, consisting of at least 3 screens, maybe even 2x3 screens, and with lots of players that I needed to control simultaneously, while struggling to beat the computer - which no doubt was **a lot** better than me.

That was one of my flaws back then: I always imagined things to be **much** more complex and advanced than they really were.

"Basketball" wasn't complex at all. It turned out to be another one of those very simple 2-player games where the tempo was set by the players themselves, thus making it a very cosy game.

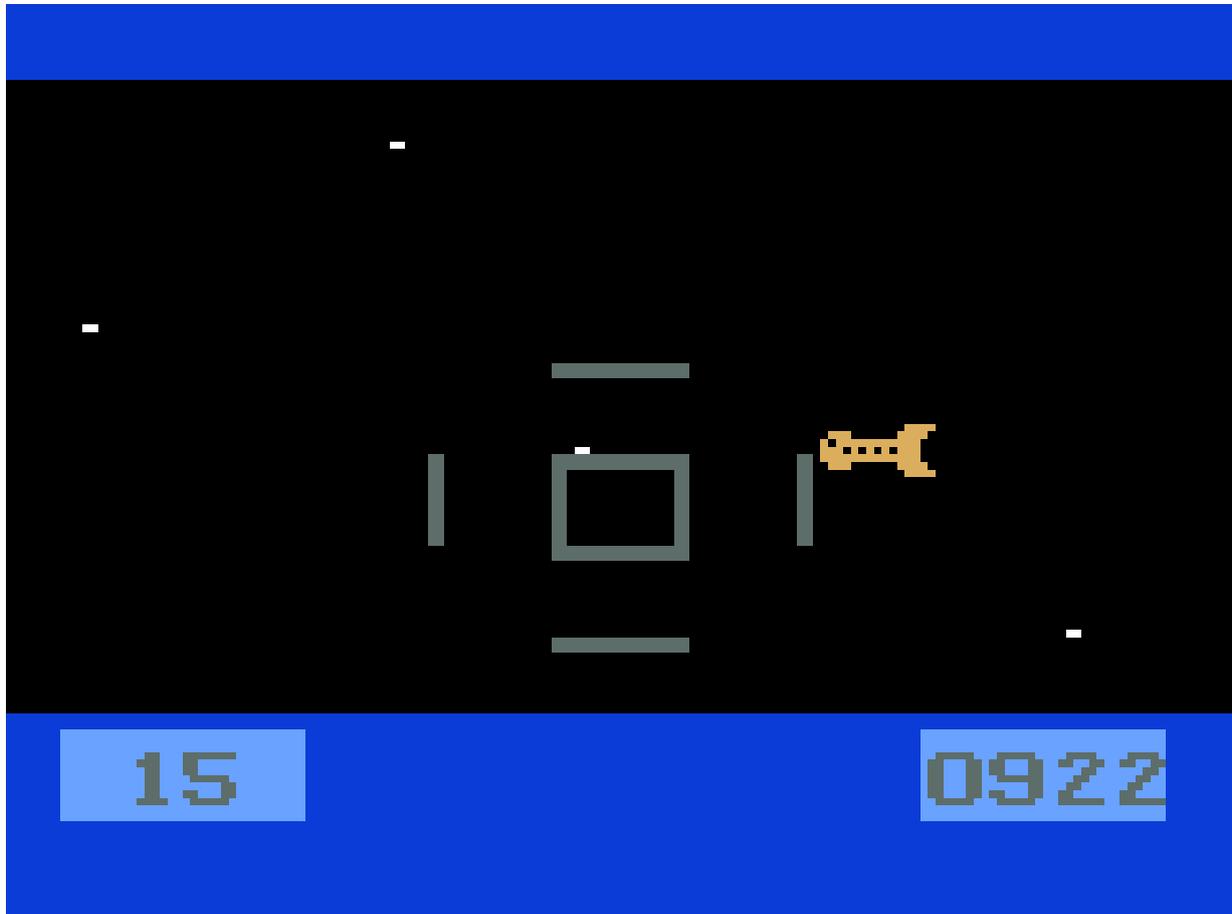
Then we got hooked on it pretty fast and had lots of fun with it - until (several visits later) we learned it was possible for one of the players to cheat! Player 1 could very easily steal the ball from the other player: When the two players approached each other, the one holding the ball would instinctively throw it. If player 2 did this, and player 1 held down the button at the same time, then he'd instantly steal the ball. It didn't work the other way around.

After acquiring this valuable knowledge, my brother and I obviously both wanted to be the player who could do that nifty little trick, ultimately ending in us not feeling like playing the game any more.

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"Cosmic Conflict"

"Cosmic Conflict" (videopac 11) was one of the few games that didn't appeal to me at all. Not because I found it boring, but because I actually found it too hectic.



The game had a very simple game-play: You're sitting in your spaceship in the vast outer space. Now shoot other spaceships you see.

So far so good.

But it just felt like a way too big and complicated game to me. Mainly because the gaming arena was nothing less than outer space... **Space!** Do you have any idea how big that is?!

I was very uncomfortable with the feeling of being placed out there in the big vast outer space, of which you had a very limited view from within your spacecraft, and from where unknown things could attack you at any moment. When I was looking at the black background I clearly saw a vast endless void from where unexpected scary things could emerge at any time. And what if something attacked me from behind?! I couldn't see what was behind me!

And whenever there was a red alert I could never hit the alien spaceship that was approaching me because I panicked. The text "RED ALERT" was blinking on the screen while an alert sound-effect was blasting out of the speakers. That was enough to make me panic. I felt there was **way** too much going on in this game for me to keep up.

For this reason I didn't play "Cosmic Conflict" a whole lot during our visits at uncle and aunt. It absolutely did not appeal to me. So you might be surprised to hear that it's actually one of the games that reminds me the most of our visits there. Isn't that interesting?

I'm no expert on the field, but I think it has to do with how and when the brain is programmed to remember things. We will always remember stressing episodes of our lives more than relaxing ones. It's one of our many survival mechanisms, designed to prevent us from putting ourselves in the same dangerous situation twice.

Playing "Cosmic Conflict" today is (of course) a completely different experience. It now feels like a very calm relaxing and peaceful game where almost nothing happens out there in space. And the relaxing chip sound effect of the laser from my spaceship throws me right back into the living room at uncle and aunt, to such a degree that I can almost smell the mixed scent of uncle's cigarettes and auntie's waffles.

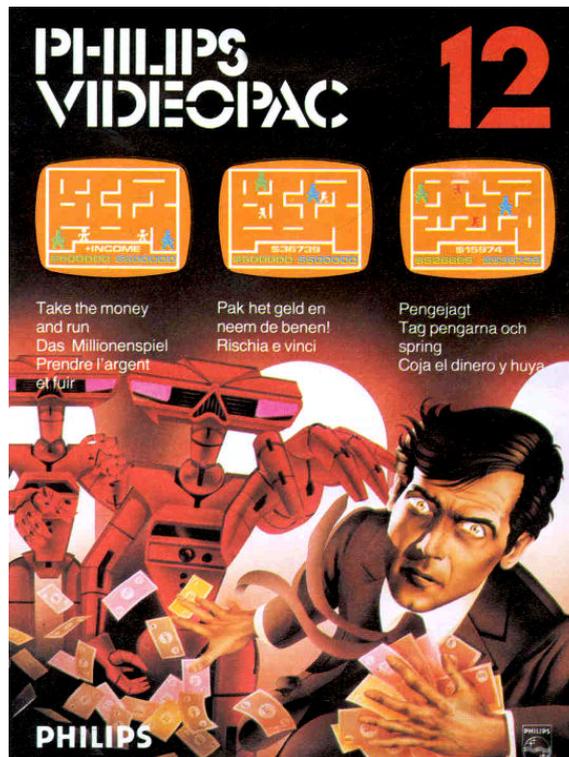
But today the game is simply too boring. When I play the game today, it's only for the nostalgia. While other games from that time are still fun to play there's just far too little going on in "Cosmic Conflict" for me to find it interesting.

The original Blu-ray version of 8-bit Memoirs contains video footage of this game. Visit www.8bitMemoirs.com to get it!

"Take the money and run"

Videopac 12 was another game that didn't interest my brother and I at first either, because the cover art on the box made us assume it was a game for grown-ups.

It had a drawing of a man in a suit and tie, holding a fist full of money while running - clearly being in a hurry to get somewhere for some reason. We figured he must have been a businessman of some kind.



There appeared to be two vicious and evil robots chasing the man, which was probably the reason he was running. And you might think seeing these robots on the cover would make the game look interesting to us, but no.

The whole "businessman in a suit who's obviously in a hurry to make money" overshadowed the robots and gave us the impression that this was clearly a game for grown-ups only.

All this stressing around in order to make money was one of the many weird things the grown-ups seemed to be deeply passionate about. Us kids would never fall for whatever scam it was that had all grown-ups fooled into thinking they needed to waste their lives like that. Us kids had much better things to do with our time.

So we didn't even try this game during our first visits at uncle and aunt.

My cousin Allan had accepted his role in all of this: It was clearly his job to demonstrate the games to us, in order to show us that they **were** in fact fun to play - even for kids. And although he didn't succeed in doing this every time, he did convince us this time.



Once he'd shown us how the game-play was, we did get a bit hooked on this game.

Quite simple game-play really: Run away from a man who's chasing you in a maze.

As far as I remember, "Take the money and run" was the only game for the G7000 (that my uncle and aunt had) which allowed two players to play **with** each other instead of **against** each other. And that was a rather new experience for us, because most other games (and other things in life) taught us that we were put here on earth to compete with each other.

So we found it rather refreshing to be on the same team for a change. And I suspect the grown-ups in the kitchen found it rather pleasant too, because it resulted in far less yelling coming from the living room.

I don't remember ever seeing the robots from the cover art in the game though.

There were two little men chasing us, looking nothing like the tall robots depicted on the box cover. Nothing vicious or evil about these tiny little men at all.

The main characters that we controlled were twice as tall as these tiny little men, so I never linked the two vicious evil robots on the box cover with those small characters.

At first I expected the robots to show up later in the game in some scary way, somewhat like the RED ALERT did in "Cosmic Conflict". So I wasn't completely comfortable playing the game at first, because I was expecting some kind of scary surprise to appear at any time. But the robots never appeared, so in time I placed it in the "Lessons learned in life" box labelled: "You cannot trust photos or illustrations on product containers or commercials".

A rather fun twist about the game-play though: While you were trying to escape in this labyrinth, some pathways required the player to bow his head (achieved by holding down the button on the controller) in order to fit there. At first this was just extremely annoying because we didn't **know** we had to bow our heads, and as a result we were of course unable to escape the tiny little men... I mean evil vicious robots.

But after learning how we could bow our heads and then escape, the game became much more fun to play.

We then ran to the kitchen to tell everyone in the house about this great discovery we'd just made, that probably no one else in the world knew about yet...

"Gunfighter"

Videopac 14 contained one of our favourite games: "Gunfighter".

Like with most G7000 games, it had a very simple game-play: Two players on the screen, both cowboy characters. Now shoot each other.

You could play against the G7000 or against a 2nd human player, and it had exactly the level of difficulty that suited kids our age. So this game became a favourite of ours fast.



Whatever kind of bullets these cowboys were shooting with, I'm sure various organisations around the world would be very interested in obtaining some. Because these bullets were effective! They would kill you just by touching your foot - or your hat!

Although our overall life-experience with bullets at this point were rather limited, this kind of bullet-effectiveness just seemed illogical, so at first we'd complain about it. But we quickly learned to accept and adapt to such 8-bit realities - and then we of course tried to hit each other in the foot or hat all the time.

When we ran out of bullets we just wandered around on the screen not knowing what to do. It took a few visits at uncle and aunt before learning that it was actually possible to get new bullets: By walking into the tree on the screen that had the same colour as your character.

Maybe not the most logical place to get bullets, but... 8-bit realities.

There was also a puzzling thing in the game that took me years to figure out: Why did these slim cowboys suddenly become extremely fat when they died? When they got shot, they'd spin around for a while, then drop to the ground where they now suddenly had a large round belly.



Well, as we'd seen countless of times already, not everything had to make sense in a computer game, so I didn't think a whole lot about it at the time, except that it was strange. We commented on it to the grown-ups, but they didn't have any useful input about the matter. It was clear that none of them had ever thought of it before.

I don't remember when or how, but at some point it finally hit me:

It wasn't his belly at all. It was his **hat!** His hat **on** his belly.

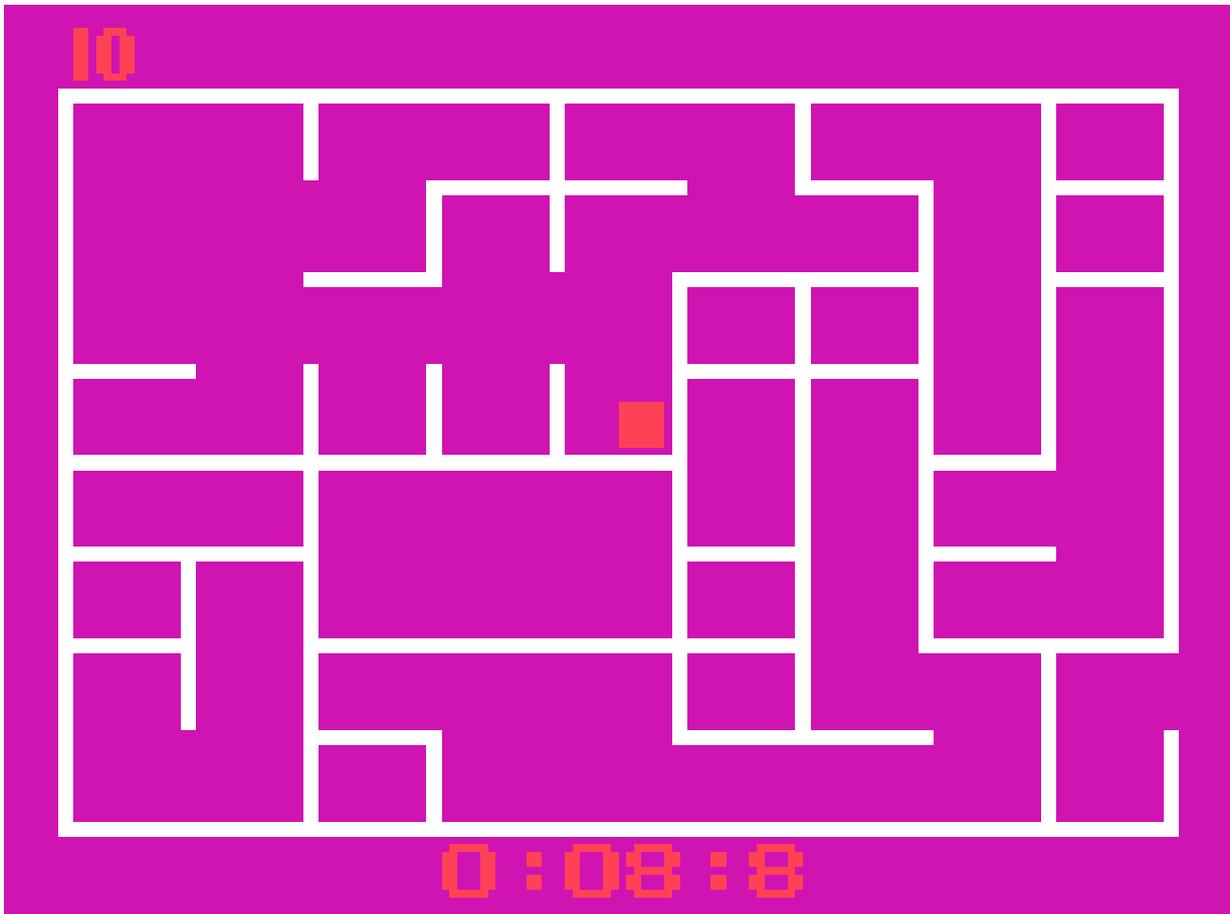
Somehow, after getting shot, he simply took off his hat, and held it to his belly, just before dropping to the ground...

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"Labyrinth"

"Labyrinth" (videopac 32) was probably the game with the most simple game-play of all the G7000 games we played. As the name suggests, you had to find your way out of a labyrinth.

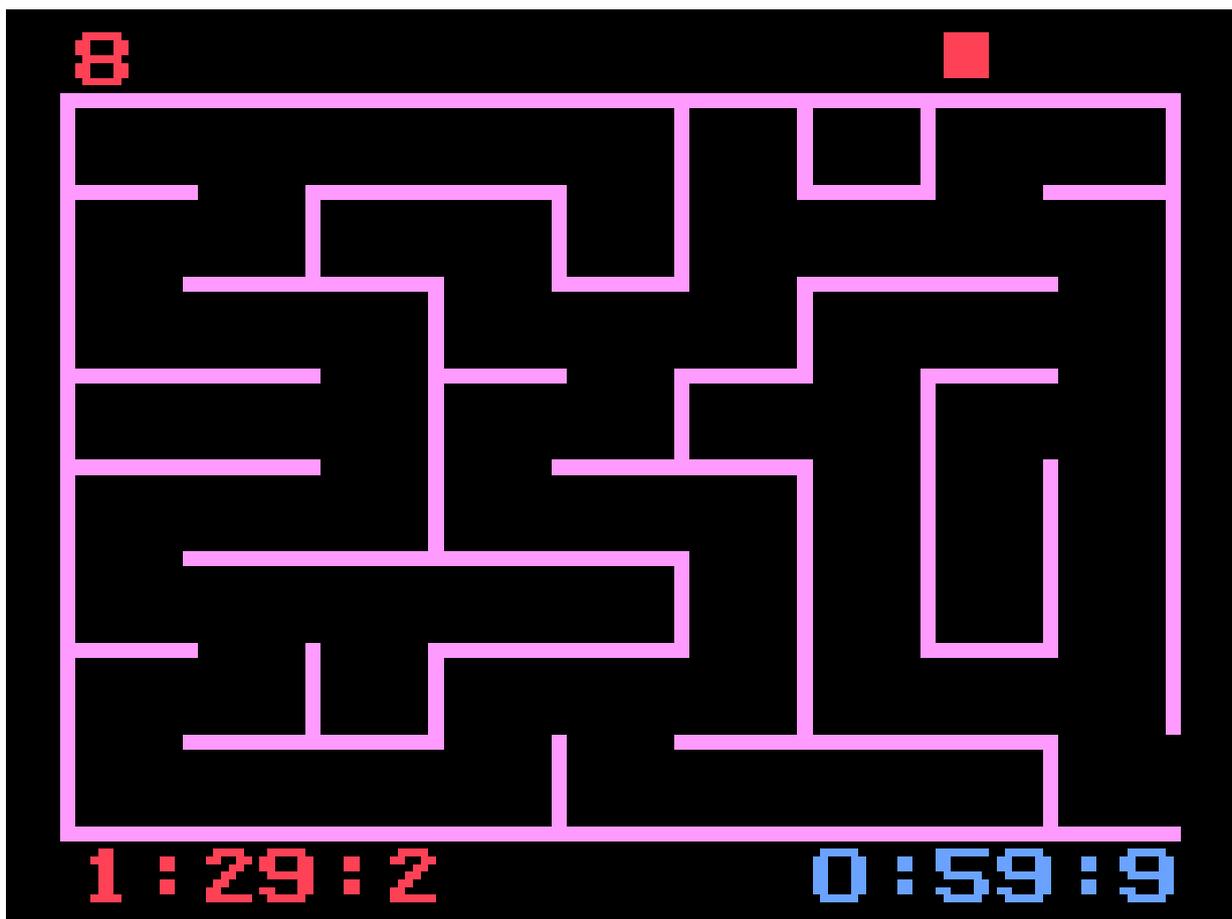
My brother and I would play at the same time, both trying to find our way out of the labyrinth before the other.



"Labyrinth" was one of the most calm games for the G7000 when you played the game in single player mode. But when you switched to 2-player mode, it turned into a rather hectic game. You wouldn't think so by looking at it, but the 2-player mode could actually be lots of fun. Both of us trying to reach the exit before the other, while walls were appearing and disappearing, and hitting a wall would bounce you back, the lead could change many times before one of us managed to reach the exit. This made the game unexpectedly exciting.

Like many other G7000 games, "Labyrinth" appealed to us partly because of the simplicity in the game-play and partly because of the two-player mode. And as usual there were multiple variations of the game you could choose from. In one variation the walls would constantly move to other locations, making it very difficult to find your way out. In another variation, an entity would be chasing you at the same time you were trying to find your way out.

Something else that made "Labyrinth" an interesting experience was that you could actually "escape" the game. When you reached the end of the labyrinth, instead of going straight out to freedom, you could go out just a little bit, and then proceed up or down outside the labyrinth. That way you could now move around outside the game arena, which I'm fairly sure wasn't a feature the game-developers had created intentionally.



It may not sound like a big deal to most people, but to us at that age it was very exciting to have found this way of escape. The only annoying thing about it was that we couldn't **see** the world outside the screen. We could **go** there, but had no clue what was there, because the picture didn't scroll to follow us. So we wondered what exiting things might be concealed there.

Our discovery of this "escape option" helped us understand a certain scene in the movie "Tron" many years later; When the players escaped the light-cycle arena we totally understood what was going on there, and it was awesome to finally be able to see the world that existed outside the game arena. :-)

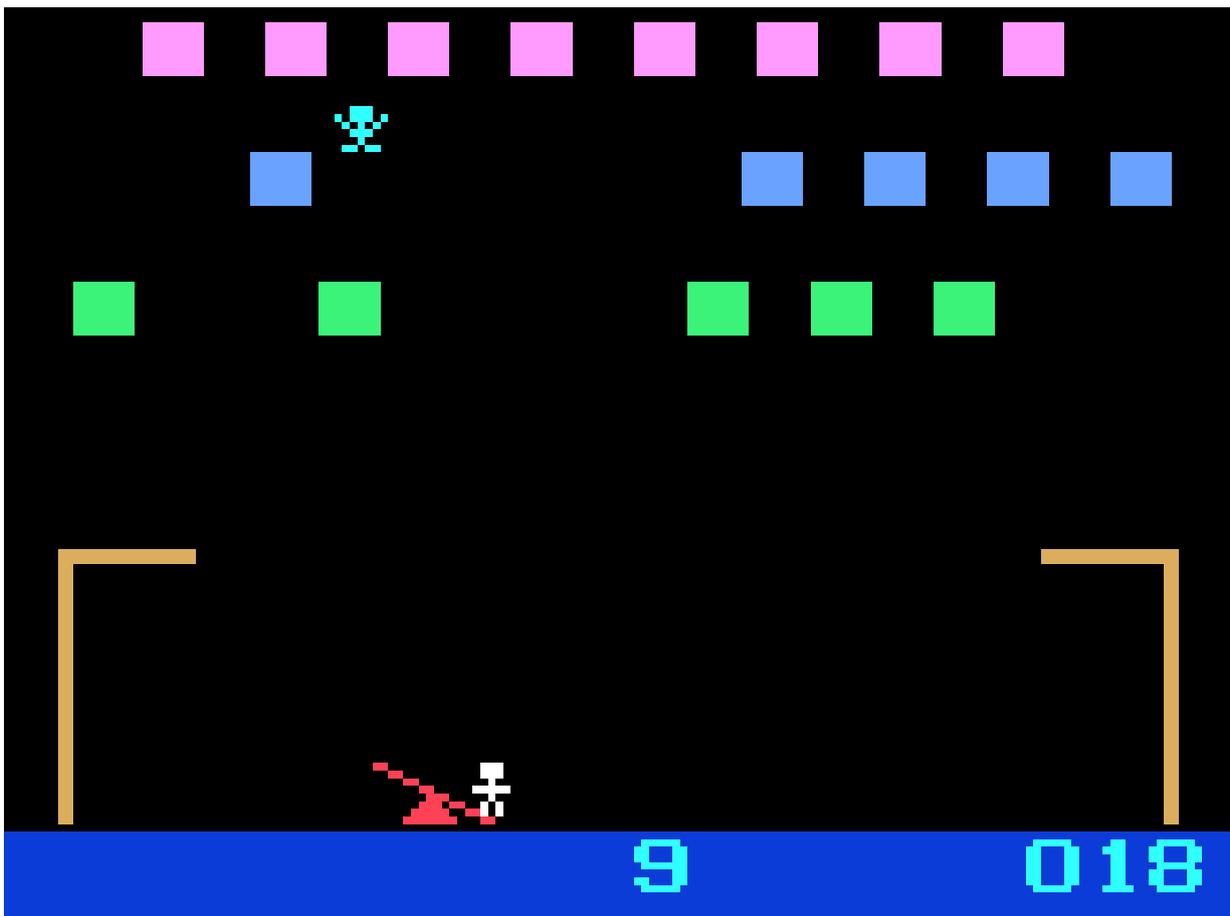
The original Blu-ray version of 8-bit Memoirs contains video footage of this game. Visit www.8bitMemoirs.com to get it!

"Jumping acrobats"

Videopac 33 contained the game "Jumping acrobats".

While this game does remind me of those good old days, I know that we never really played it a whole lot, because we found it too difficult. The game-play itself was brilliant though. Jumping on a trapeze to catch balloons in the air.

But when the acrobat was headed down towards the ground again, you had to catch him by sliding the trapeze towards the spot where you thought he would land. And we always failed miserably in doing that. Even catching the acrobat from his initial jump that was supposed to start the game, was too difficult for us.



In a silly attempt to put more effort into it, we started pretending that we were catching each other. E.g. when I was playing, we pretended that the guy in the air was my brother, and vice versa. The idea was to become better at catching each other, but it turned out to have the exact opposite effect.

Instead of getting better at catching the acrobat, we ended up moving the trapeze away intentionally to **not** catch the acrobat, just to mock each other.

And that was about the only amusement we got from this game.

The original Blu-ray version of 8-bit Memoirs contains video footage of this game. Visit www.8bitMemoirs.com to get it!

"Satellite attack"

And then we've finally reached one of my absolute favourite G7000 games from those days: "Satellite attack" on Videopac 34.

This game was completely impossible for us when we were first introduced to it. But during later visits it became my favourite game of them all. And today it's one of the games with the absolute strongest representation of our visits at uncle and aunt back then.



I never knew the game by its real name: "Satellite attack". I always referred to it as "the UFO game". Clearly anyone could see that it was a flying saucer moving around on the screen. So "UFO" seemed like a logical name for it.

When we came for a visit I'd always ask if I could play "the UFO game". And they would then claim that they didn't have any such game in their collection, which would annoy me a great deal because I knew with certainty that they **did** have this game in their collection.

It was just a classic grown-up response, dismissing what I said without bothering to look into it any further. So when they finally got the G7000 and the games out, I found Videopac 34 and showed them the box: "See, here it is! This is the game I was talking about!"

They then seemed to store this new information in their short-term memory - completely gone again the next time we came for a visit.

"Satellite attack" clearly belongs in the Asteroids category, but it's much more fun in my opinion. Directional controlling, enemies moving towards you, and a somewhat special firing system:

Your gun would turn 360 degrees clockwise around your ship when you moved around the screen. For example, if your gun was positioned at 180 degrees (straight down) while you moved to the right, then your gun would start rotating up to 270 degrees (straight left), then up to 360 (straight up) and then finally to 90 degrees.

This process took some time, resulting in a rather challenging game-play.

You also had a shield protecting your ship, so you could actually crash into an enemy ship without dying. This action would drain all the energy from your shield though, and it took a second or two for it to recharge.

Your shield would also drain like this when you fired your gun, again taking a second or two to recharge.

This mix of firing- and shield system made the game not too easy and not too difficult. In my opinion, it had a difficulty level right where it should be in order for the game to be interesting.

I remember getting rather excited about the game the further I got. Not because of the score, but because more and more was happening on the screen as more and more enemies appeared. Where other games with this much action previously would have made the game too difficult, "Satellite attack" was instead just lots of fun.

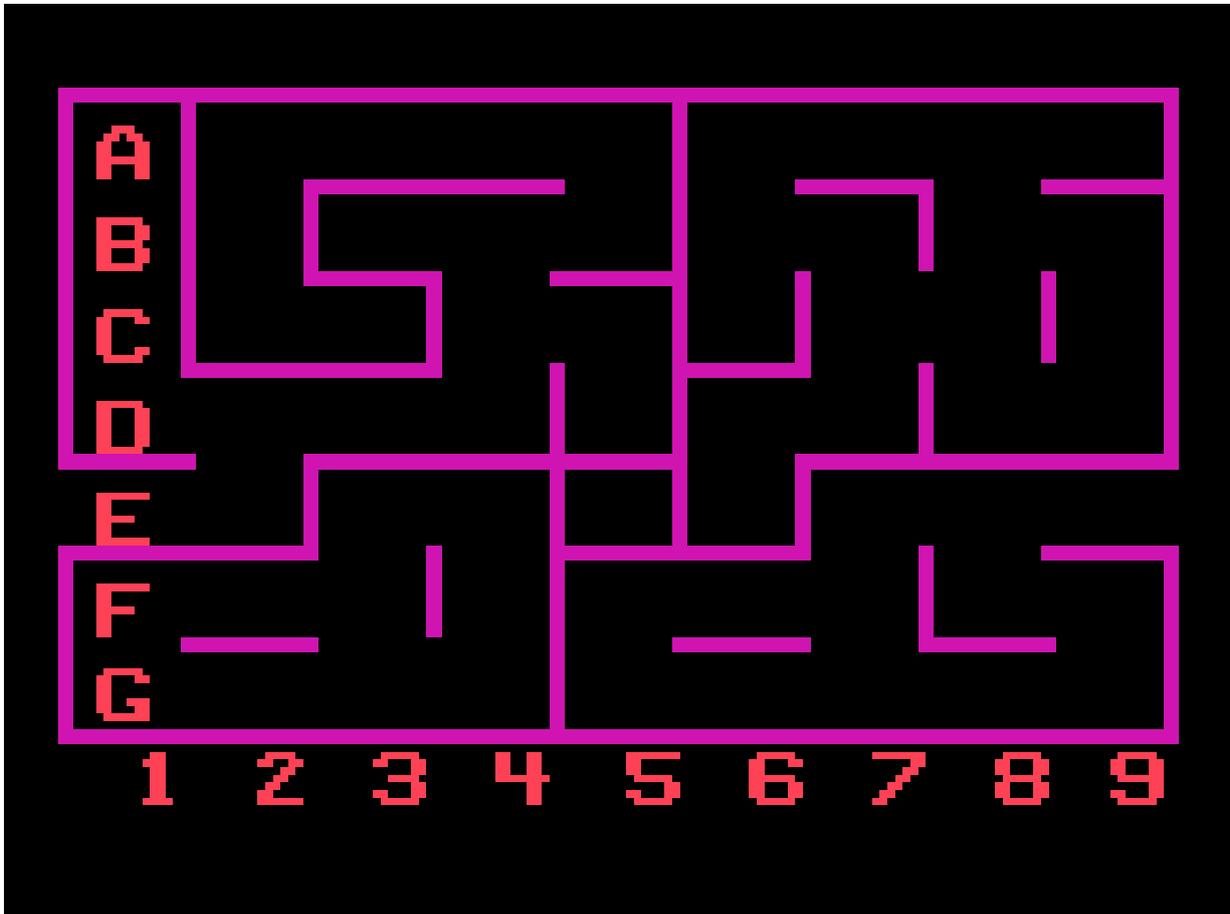
This was probably partly because I was now a bit older and therefore slightly more skilled, but I'm sure the game-play in this game must have had many other people hooked the same way. I think I even caught myself laughing at one point because things were going absolutely crazy. I had never seen this many entities moving on the screen at the same time before.

The best nostalgia you can have is with the games that you remember which are still fun to play today, and "Satellite attack" definitely belongs in that category.

"Munchkin"

Videopac 38 contained a Pac-man like game called "Munchkin". (In fact, so similar to Pac-man that they were forced to stop selling it).

But unlike Pac-man, you could design your own levels in "Munchkin", and that was something my brother and I ended up spending much more time on than playing the actual game.



Designing our own levels was **very** intriguing. At first, mostly because it made it possible to block out the ghosts so they couldn't get to us.

Of course, **playing** those particular "safe" levels was only fun the first 2-3 times or so. Then it became rather boring not having a challenge in the game at all.

Realising that it was necessary to have **some** challenge in the game, it didn't take long before we found ourselves trying to design ultra cool levels that the world had never seen before.



We would spend 15 minutes designing a level. Then 3 minutes playing that level.

Then 15 minutes designing another level, and 3 minutes playing that one.

I'm not sure were we found the patience for this, but it was definitely a solid first sign that we were both creative people.

There was only one flaw with this level-designing feature: You couldn't continue designing a level once you'd started the game. And **that** was very annoying.

Nevertheless, designing those levels ended up being one of the things we found most interesting when spending time with the G7000 during our visits.

The only problem was the classic one: My brother and I of course **both** wanted to design these levels, and since we knew it took 15 minutes to create a design, we'd always argue about whose turn it was to design the next one - because we both knew that the other person would have to sit patiently by and wait. 15 minutes was a **long** time to sit and observe all

the stupid design decisions your brother would make, making it a natural consequence to criticise as much as possible.

While my brother was designing a level I would complain that he had absolutely no flair for design whatsoever, and he'd complain back that I didn't understand his artistic mindset.

Not with those exact words of course, and probably not quite as calmly expressed either, but generally that's what we said.

Anyway, a little twist in "Munchkin" compared to Pac-man, was the center spot from where the ghosts spawned. In Pac-man this was always only open to the top. In "Munchkin" the exit point would rotate, resulting in 4 possible exits.

This part of the game-design was cleverly used to split up one of the levels into 4 sections, so that the only way to go from one section into another was to go through the center spot.



This particular 4-part level was definitely one of my favourites. It was interesting because it was different, and I also liked how it felt easier to hide from the ghosts in that level.

"Munchkin" is a good example of a G7000 game that was clearly inspired by another game, but where I find the G7000 version more fun than the original game.

The original Blu-ray version of 8-bit Memoirs contains video footage of this game. Visit www.8bitMemoirs.com to get it!

"Pickaxe Pete"

I remember "Pickaxe Pete" (videopac 43) being the most advanced game I ever tried for the G7000. It had more elements in the game-play than any other game I experienced during our visits.

Avoid boulders by jumping over them or ducking under them. Grab a pickaxe to destroy the boulders.

Climb up ladders to reach the floor above you. Grab the key to be able to access one of the 3 doors, which will lead you to the next level.

Very good combination of objectives there.



Considering all the things that were happening in the game at the same time, you might think it felt like a hectic game, but not really. It was definitely a difficult game for our age, but it didn't feel hectic.

The boulders **were** difficult to avoid once they were headed your way, but not **impossible** to avoid - and they weren't headed your way that often either.

The game-experience was intriguing, fun and calm at the same time.

In recent years I've learned that some people consider "Pickaxe Pete" to be a "Donkey Kong" variation. Some people even call it a clone.

I never noticed the similarities myself before hearing about this, because to me it feels like a completely different game.

Our main character in both games has to jump over boulders/barrels, and climb up ladders to reach upper floors. There's also the pickaxe/hammer that both Mario and Pete picks up to destroy barrels/boulders.

But I still think "Pickaxe Pete" is a completely different game. It just has a very different feel to it.

I would have a hard time making up my mind, if you asked me to choose between "Pickaxe Pete" and "Donkey Kong". They're both great games, but I think I would probably end up choosing "Pickaxe Pete", partly because of the nostalgia I've attached to it, but also because I think it's a bit more fun, and has more variation.

Anyway, I have to admit that my brother and I didn't really play "Pickaxe Pete" that much. It was a bit too difficult for us at the time. The memories I have of the game comes mostly from watching my cousin Allan play the game. I think it was his favourite game at the time.

When he was done playing, my brother and I would of course give it a go, but we never survived for long.

Unlike other games that were too difficult for us, "Pickaxe Pete" kept being interesting though. Probably partly because we noticed how much our cousin liked it, but most likely also because it just had the right combination of all the right elements. A great example of an arcade game put together exactly right.

The original Blu-ray version of 8-bit Memoirs contains video footage of this game. Visit www.8bitMemoirs.com to get it!

Grandma's G7000

I'm guessing it was late 1982 or early 1983 when I discovered that my grandma (on my mums side) also had a Philips Videopac G7000.

Having previously only seen the G7000 at my uncle and aunt in The Land of Light, my now 7-year old brain had gotten the idea that it was a machine you could only find in that part of the world.

So when I saw a G7000 placed under the TV in grandma's apartment (and she lived in the same city as me), I first thought maybe she'd borrowed it from my uncle and aunt.

"Absolutely not! This is my own console", she replied as if she almost got offended by me asking.

She didn't have nearly as many games for it as my uncle and aunt did though. I only remember 4 cartridges in her collection.

The first one was videopac 4 with "Battle" and "Air-Sea War", like uncle and aunt also had. Good games.

"Skiing" (videopac 25) was also there, which was a bit of a disappointment, because I thought it was a rather boring game. Uncle and aunt had it too, but I never played it when we were visiting them either. Its nostalgic weight is almost none, which is also why I haven't even mentioned it before now. So when I saw "Skiing" in grandma's collection too I kinda felt like it was a waste of good "cartridge space". That space in her collection should have been used for another game, I thought. Especially when it was such a small collection.

Grandma also had "Munchkin" (videopac 38). But this game had been linked so strongly to my uncle and aunt in my mind that I didn't want to play it (a whole lot) when visiting grandma. When visiting grandma I would much rather play (new) games that I could associate with her.

Luckily, she did have a game that would fill this role. A game that my uncle and aunt didn't have: "Space Monster" (videopac 22).

And sure enough; this game has indeed become the representation of my grandma in that particular time period.



"Space Monster" was a clone of "Space Invaders", but as usual with G7000 versions of various games, it had a few twists:

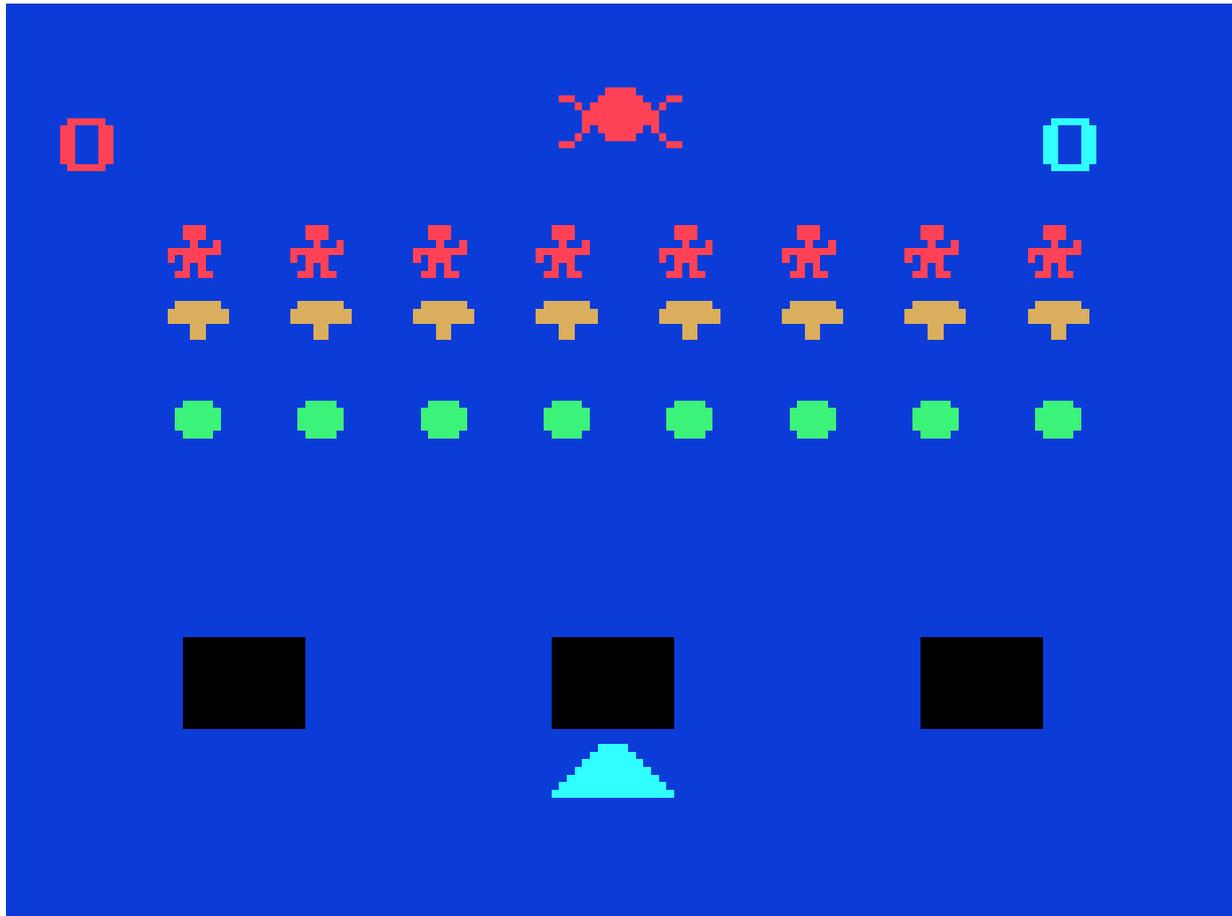
Your shields in "Space Monster" didn't break when they were hit by alien fire nor your own shots. And when your ship was hit, you didn't die either. Instead of dying, you just lost your ship and then controlled a little man without being able to shoot back at the aliens, leaving only one thing do to: Run for cover under a shield.

Pressing fire while standing under a shield would give you a new ship - and the shield would disappear.

As usual, these twists made the game more fun than the original "Space Invaders" in my opinion. As I've already mentioned, this was something I saw quite a lot with G7000 games. Small twists that made the G7000 version of the game more interesting than its original.

"Space Monster" apparently made an impression on other family members too. Although I don't remember ever seeing any of them playing the game, it was clear that they **had** been playing it in the past, and that it had made a rather big impression on them. Because it would come up in conversations every now and then, when everyone was gathered at someone's birthday party.

They referred to the game as "The Crab". That was the name they'd given the game, obviously because of the cover art on the box, which depicted the space monster as a crab-looking creature.



The original Blu-ray version of 8-bit Memoirs contains video footage of this game. Visit www.8bitMemoirs.com to get it!

Because of my own fascination with computers and video games, it was always extra cosy on the rare occasions when the grown-ups in the family expressed fascination for a certain video game that I liked too. This didn't happen often of course, but it did happen a few times. "The Crab" was the 1st game to make an impression like this on a few family members. "Munchkin" did too. And the 3rd game to make an impression on other family members was the Game & Watch LCD game "Mario's Cement Factory".

The sleep-over

My strongest memory of grandma's G7000 is the weekend I stayed overnight. Again, my guess is that this was either late 1982 or early 1983.

My mum and dad had some grown-up event to attend to, so my brother and I had to be elsewhere for the night.

My brother arranged to sleep over at a mate from school, and I was "placed" at my grandma's.

A lot of "Space Monster" was played that day. A **lot**.

I remember finding the game quite difficult at first. While it was awesome that I didn't instantly die every time I got hit, but instead could go fetch myself a new ship from one of my shields, it really didn't take long for me to use up all of the shields for this. And when I was out of shields, the big red space monster would decent from above and hunt me on the ground. It was slightly stressing being out of shields **and** ships while having this big red space monster hunting me, because I knew there was nothing left to do from that point but to die. There were no other options left when you're unable to defend yourself. But I just kept on running back and forth trying to avoid the inevitable anyway.

As my skills improved (that same day), I eventually managed to clear the whole screen of aliens - which would **also** make the big red space monster decent from above and hunt me on the ground - but **this** time I could defend myself. It was a big victory when I managed to slay the space monster and proceed to the next level. Getting better at the game sure made it even more fun.

Who needs sleep?

Yes, with a headline like that you probably imagine me sitting up all night playing G7000 games, right? Sorry, that's not what happened. I'm not even sure such a thing had been invented yet. But I came close inventing it that night.

I was (supposed to) sleep on a mattress that my grandma had placed next to her bed. And the last thing she told me before falling asleep herself, was this: "If I start snoring, just poke me"...

I soon discovered she really meant "when" rather than "if".

I didn't really feel comfortable poking her, but when the snoring became too annoying I decided to try anyway. The result: 2 minutes of silence before the snoring resumed.

After trying this poking strategy a few times, I concluded that it wasn't really worth getting up from bed for.

I really didn't get too much sleep that night, and while laying there I thought to myself that I might as well go back into the living-room and play some more G7000.

But I waited till very early in the morning, long before my grandma woke up. Very tired I got out of bed and into the living-room to play some more "Space Monster".

And then disaster struck...

Oh no!

Suddenly the picture on the TV slowly began getting distorted. The left and right borders of the picture began bending, as if something was squeezing the picture on each side.

At first I thought (and hoped) it was a temporary thing that only happened with the G7000 picture, so I tried turning the TV off and on again. But the picture remained distorted - even when viewing the TV channels. I had to face the fact that the TV didn't work properly any more.

This was terrible on so many levels! Because I was **sure** it was the Philips Videopac G7000 that had broken the TV somehow, and therefore that it - in some way - was **my** fault. I thought, maybe TV sets generally weren't built to handle a video signal of a gaming console for that long in a row? You probably weren't supposed to play video-games for as long as I had been doing? And if only I hadn't been playing "Space Monster" so much, then her TV would still work?

If this theory of mine was correct, then it could potentially have a huge impact on how much video gaming I would have in the future. Meaning, I'd probably seen the last of it now. Obviously, there was no way my dad would ever let me connect **any** video gaming console to any TV in the house, if there was the slightest chance it could break the TV at some point.

Even if my theory **wasn't** correct I feared that my dad might reach the same conclusion, and therefore of course ban all video gaming consoles forever. Actually, I was fairly certain that my dad would indeed reach that conclusion.

When my grandma woke up and came into the living-room, I told her the bad news; that her TV wasn't working properly any more.

She took a look at the picture on the TV, and said something along the lines of "Yes, indeed", while being rather calm and relaxed about it. I didn't understand how she could be so relaxed about it.

I then told her that I thought it might have been the G7000 that was the cause of it, because it happened while I was playing "Space Monster". She instantly rejected that idea and said it was an old TV that would have broken regardless. But I couldn't help thinking that she only said that in an attempt to make me feel better.



Several days went by before I'd collected enough courage to find out what my dad's viewpoint on this matter was. And to my big surprise he said the same thing as my grandma; that it wasn't because of the G7000 but rather because it was an old TV.

Big relief. My future could potentially become full of lots of video gaming after all. I mean, it probably wouldn't, but at least it wasn't ruled out now.

End of the era

Uncle's and aunt's Philips Videopac G7000 made our visits there extra special. Every time my parents told me that we were going for a visit at uncle and aunt, I'd always get very excited. I couldn't wait till we arrived so I could play some G7000 with my brother and/or my cousin Allan. Their G7000 was definitely the main thing representing our visits there. It gave the visits valuable content for us kids.

So when I stepped into their living-room and saw that the G7000 wasn't already hooked up, I always felt rather disappointed. They couldn't possibly have missed how thrilled I'd been by the G7000 during previous visits, so I didn't understand why they hadn't set it up for us now that they knew we were coming. I mean, did they really expect us kids to just sit in the couch looking out the window, while the grown-ups were sitting in the kitchen, talking about boring grown-up stuff?

Since the G7000 wasn't already hooked up I would then usually ask if I could play some G7000, and to my pleasant surprise my uncle would then find the machine for us. The day was saved.

I'm sure only very few people can imagine how much joy the G7000 added to our visits at uncle and aunt.

But as time went by, more and more visits contained absolutely no G7000 gaming whatsoever.

It started with this one time where uncle couldn't find the G7000. Didn't know where it was, he said, mumbling something about Allan having lent it out to one of his friends. I just couldn't make any sense of that. How could he not know where their G7000 was? I mean, I can understand people misplacing their car keys. But misplacing a G7000? No. So at first I thought it was a poor excuse to avoid setting up the G7000 - except of course that my uncle actually did try to find it. He looked in closets and drawers various places, but didn't find the G7000.

My dad then got annoyed with me and complained that I shouldn't just sit and play games anyway when we were visiting.

"We're not visiting to play video-games", he said, "We're visiting to visit".

This translated into "Look boy! We did not bring you along for you to have any **fun** here. Now go sit in the couch and look out the window while we grown-ups go sit in the kitchen and drink coffee all day while talking about grown-up stuff".

The last few visits of the era went by the same way: I would get excited that we were going to visit uncle and aunt, looking forward to hopefully play some G7000, only to be disappointed that I couldn't.

Before we left from home, my dad would say: "Now don't expect to be playing any video games when we get there". I'd reply "Ok..." because that was the only correct reply to give such a command. But for the whole drive there I still hoped that **maybe** today uncle would surprise me.

Sadly no. There was no G7000 anywhere when we arrived.

The G7000 era at uncle and aunt had ended long before I realised it.

Memories created

All the G7000 gaming at uncle and aunt has resulted in a lot of great memories from that time. Though my brother and I might not have been as social with the family as we could have been (which in my opinion has more to do with the grown-ups just sitting in the kitchen, than us kids playing video games in the living-room), all the great G7000 memories still reflects back on uncle and aunt and my cousin Allan. It is not the G7000 alone that makes the great memories. It is the "G7000 at uncle and aunt". In their home, with that certain atmosphere that only seemed to exist up there in The Land of Light. Had I been sitting alone in a house while playing these games, they wouldn't have had anywhere near the same value today. When I think back on this era, it is not the games alone that I remember. It is very much the surroundings and the people that were present. The people who were there... even if they were mostly just sitting in the kitchen.

There's no doubt I would have remembered the visits at uncle and aunt very differently, if we'd all just been sitting around a table talking. The G7000 added a lot of value to the visits, and it's probably the only reason I even remember the very first visits at all, considering my young age at the time.

That's why, when I've visited my better half's family in newer times, and seen how her nephews always run into their computers and PlayStations during family gatherings, I know they're creating great memories that will automatically be linked to everyone who is present - even though they aren't actually being a whole lot social with any of us. They'll still remember the cosy atmosphere that is usually present at family gatherings, and that's what counts.

It will be great some day decades from now when they start working on their own "64-bit Memoirs"... ;-)

Colour associations

A peculiar thing I've noticed about the G7000 games that I played at my uncle and aunt and grandma, is how much the colours that were used in those games weigh on the nostalgic scale. Certain colours used in the games have become strongly associated to the people, the places and that time.

"Race" and "Spin-out" had a purple background. "Munchkin" had purple walls.

"Battle" and "Basketball" had a green background. "Skiing" had a green border, and "Gunfighter" a dark yellow background.

So those colours (purple, green and dark yellow) instantly takes me back to my uncle and aunt. These particular colours have even become representatives of the "The Land of Light" where they lived.

The same way, two particular blue colours instantly takes me back to my grandma and the place where she lived in the early 1980s, because of "Air-Sea War" and "Space Monster".

LCD games stories

"Donkey Kong II"

I was probably 5 years old when I began sending my Christmas wishes to Santa Claus. Not like other kids did though; not in the form of a letter.

I found the whole Santa Claus topic slightly confusing. It was somewhat clear to me that the grown-ups didn't **really** believe he was real. Yet for some reason they kept trying to convince us kids that he was. And that was kinda weird.

Well, they didn't need to convince **me** of anything. I was **sure** Santa was real. It wouldn't make any sense if he wasn't. Let me explain why:

I was still just a kid, but I felt that I already had a lot of experience in the "completely not fair" category, mostly involving my dad scolding me for things I definitely did not deserve any scolding for. It had become clear to me that a lot of things in life just wasn't fair, and also that there was absolutely nothing I could do about it.

But logically there had to be justification in the world. Something to even out the balance. Because logically, there had to be a balance. Things can't exist without a balance.

Santa Claus was the logical abnormality. The entity that was brought into existence by the mere need for balance in the world. He **had** to be real. Because if he wasn't, then the world would truly be a dark place - and that just didn't make any sense to me.

Thus, I **knew** Santa was real. No need to convince **me** of anything. But it was obvious that the grown-ups needed some convincing.

So I took it upon myself to prove to the grown-ups that Santa Claus was indeed real. This was my mission now.

The mission

So there I was, trying to figure out how I could prove to the grown-ups that Santa Claus was real.

Sending him a letter wouldn't work, because I would have to rely on my parents to mail it for me. And then they would just open it to see what I'd wished for, and give me the presents themselves while pretending they were from Santa...

Why would they do this, you're asking? Why not just send the letter? Well obviously because **they** didn't believe in Santa.

I quickly got the thinking that most parents probably opened their kids' letters to Santa Claus to buy the presents themselves, and that Santa Claus was probably rather disappointed and annoyed by that. Maybe even frustrated. Because it was a kind of a deceit really. All those kids writing letters to Santa Claus, and then they were never sent to him!

It made perfect sense to me that the grown-ups didn't believe in Santa Claus. I'd never seen any grown-ups receive any presents from him, so why would they believe he was real?

...oh my God! **Their** parents had probably done the **same** thing with **their** letters back when **they** were kids! ...and **their** parents too! Who knew for how long this had been going on?! Maybe for hundreds of years?!

For hundreds of years, Santa Claus hadn't really received that many letters, because the grown-ups had never sent them!

This was a **horrible** discovery I'd just made!

Alright. It was clear now, that the first step in my mission was to find a way to send a message to Santa Claus without involving my parents. If only I could somehow make sure that Santa Claus received my wishes, then I was certain he'd give me at least **one** of the presents I'd wished for - and that would surely set my parents straight, teaching them that Santa Claus was most definitely real. And as a bonus, when they realised that Santa was real, it would also settle a small disagreement between my parents and I: The question of whether or not I had been a good boy.

This was a great plan!

Surprisingly, I found a solution to the communication problem rather fast. It came to me while I was contemplating about who Santa Claus was and what he was able to do.

For starters, this guy was riding a flying sleigh. He just knew whether people had been good or bad (which explained why only very few grown-ups ever received any presents from him), and then he gave away millions of presents for free in just a single night.

Someone having all these powers and abilities should logically also be able to just know what people wished for in their lives. In fact, it seemed entirely illogical to have to tell him "manually", with something as primitive as a handwritten letter.

And then it hit me. I realised a truth that no one else seemed to have figured out: **Santa Claus could read our minds!**

Just as he instantly knew whether you'd been good or bad, he would also logically just know what your Christmas wishes were - because he could read your mind! It all made perfect sense!

"Send a letter to Santa?". Absolutely not! **Think** him a message instead! Much faster, and much more private too! I bet this whole "write a letter to Santa" idea was just invented by the grown-ups in order to be able to find out what their kids wanted for Christmas.

So, I began sending my secret wishes to Santa by thought every year, and then waited in anticipation for Christmas.

But Santa Claus never gave me any of the things I wished for. And that was an indescribable disappointment every year.

While it **was** of course great to receive all the **other** presents from everyone else, I didn't show as much appreciation as I could or should have done - because my focus was on my mission. I was always hoping that the next present would be the one from Santa Claus. So when the last present had been opened each year, and Santa hadn't given me my secret wish, it was like being told that he apparently agreed with my parents about me not being a good boy, or at least didn't disagree enough to get me that present.

Indirectly being told that Santa apparently agreed with my parents about me not being a good boy, was of course a rather big disappointment every year. And this disappointment was of course noticed by my parents, who quickly concluded that I was being rudely displeased with the presents I **had** received. My parents would then scold me for being rude and tell me I wasn't a good boy again...

I did question my theory sometimes, about Santa being able to read minds. Maybe he never gave me any of the presents I wished for because he never received my wishes? **I** definitely thought I was a good boy. Especially when comparing myself with other kids I knew. Santa ignoring my wishes just didn't make any sense. And after turning all the logic in my head, I always ended up sticking to my theory that he could read minds. It **had** to be true. It made no sense to need to write a letter in order to tell Santa Claus what you wished for.

Christmas 1983

Aah yes, Christmas 1983. I was 8 years old now.

First, I have to apologise. Because I know you're expecting me to tell you how I magically did receive my secret wish from Santa Claus now. But I'm not going to do that, because that never happened.

I only told you the Santa story because it gives a good context to what happened next - and I also thought you might enjoy reading about how my early Christmases were like.

My parents didn't have it easy when it came to Christmas presents. Because when they asked me what I wished for, I never told them what my biggest wish was. My biggest wish was reserved for Santa Claus.

So my parents had to figure out for themselves what to get me. And that task obviously wasn't easy when they had nothing to go on. They often complained that I never had any "real" wishes - and they were right - but I couldn't reveal anything about the mission I'd been on these past few years.

In 1983 they really hit the nail spot on though: They decided to buy me Donkey Kong II; the Game & Watch LCD game from Nintendo.

I hadn't wished for this game, not from my parents, not from Santa. I don't think I even knew it existed.



I **had** seen the orange-cased prequel "Donkey Kong" in school though. One of my classmates often brought it with him. But I never saw the game up close, because him and I never really got along with each other.

The unwrapping

Unwrapping "Donkey Kong II" that Christmas in 1983 was a very special experience.

First, I thought it was probably one of the smaller less expensive presents, because of the small size of the box. Maybe a deck of playing cards of some kind? I think "Uno" was rather popular around this time, so maybe we'd now see a flood of various card games emerge?

Seeing the brown colours on the box gave me the impression that it was probably something old from the 1960s. Maybe something that had been previously used by someone else? Even when I noticed the illustrations of the LCD display printed on the box, I still didn't understand that it was in fact a modern digital LCD game.

Taking the game out of the box, my brain remained confused. The brown colours on the game itself (not just the box) still gave me the impression that it was an older product, meaning it couldn't possibly be a modern LCD game - but it appeared to be one anyway. It did not compute.

I imagine my parents must have been missing some kind of joyful outburst from me, because all they saw was me sitting there very quietly, studying the game and the package, trying to figure out what this was. I'm pretty sure I did this longer than most kids would do. At least it was long enough for my aunt Karen to ask: "Do you need any help with the batteries?"



So there I was, sitting on the floor playing "Donkey Kong II" on Christmas eve. It was precisely the kind of magic Christmas was supposed to be all about.

I was hooked on this game right away. Most games from Nintendo were addictive like that, so I kept on playing one game after the other.

My parents eventually had to instruct me to open the other presents too. No doubt this was the first Christmas where I had to be told to open my presents.

Best Christmas

"Donkey Kong II" made Christmas 1983 one of the absolute best Christmases of my life. It was also a kind of turning point. I'd now learned that my parents could and would give me great presents, despite not agreeing with me about the whole being a good boy or not issue. Meanwhile, Santa Claus seemed to completely ignore my secret wishes, and I was rather disappointed with him because of that. Apparently him and I **also** disagreed about the whole good boy or not issue. But the difference was, that despite both Santa and my parents agreeing with each other, my parents went ahead and got me great presents anyway, while Santa did not.

So after Christmas 1983 I began giving my parents my biggest wishes instead of giving them to Santa Claus - and Santa Claus in turn "received" the smaller wishes.

I **had** been wondering if maybe the reason I never received the Santa-wishes was because my wishes were too big and expensive. So wishing for smaller things was a logical next step in my mission anyway. And the mission would continue for a few years, although with a slightly lower priority.

Still in great shape

1984 contained **a lot** of "Donkey Kong II" gaming, effectively rendering my life much better than it used to be.

The game and especially the sounds in the game still throws me back to a great time in my childhood.

I still have the game today, and it's still in great shape. And every now and then, when I feel like having a nostalgic moment, I play a few games.

30 years later, in 2013, I bought another "Donkey Kong II" game as a present for my friend Karin. We then challenged each other by sending pictures of our scores to each other on the phone. A short but rather fun event that I recommend you try out some time.

In 2015 I decided to make it a Christmas tradition to play at least one game of "Donkey Kong II" every year in December. I'm thinking such a tradition will give each Christmas that extra touch of nostalgia that Christmas is supposed to be all about.

The original Blu-ray version of 8-bit Memoirs contains video footage of this game. Visit www.8bitMemoirs.com to get it!

"Mario's Cement Factory"



The tabletop version of "Mario's Cement Factory" entered our home some time around 1984/1985 I think.

As far as I remember, it was given to me as a present, but I don't remember who gave it to me, or whether it was for my birthday or Christmas. I **think** it was a birthday present in April 1984 though. My brother also had a tabletop game around the same time, so I guess he got his for his birthday too, which was a month and a half before mine.

I imagine the success of "Donkey Kong II" had made a big impression on my parents, so now they of course wanted to repeat the success.

A gathering point

And repeat the success they certainly did. "Mario's Cement Factory" was extremely intriguing. I'd never seen an LCD game like this before where all the "graphics" were now in colour, and short melodies played when a game started and ended.

I wouldn't say "Mario's Cement Factory" was **better** than "Donkey Kong II". It was merely different and new and thus very interesting.

But it was even more than that. It became one of those rare things that - from my perspective - brought the family closer together, because most family members seemed to be intrigued by it.

I had 5 aunts and an uncle on my mum's side, and I think all of them tried the game at least once, inevitably resulting in a few of them getting hooked on it.

My aunt Lise slowly began competing with my mum for the highest score. At first they played the game when I wasn't home, or when I was otherwise too occupied to notice they were using it. My mum assumed I would complain about them using my game without my permission. At least that was her explanation when I asked her later. But I suspect the real reason for the secrecy at first was because they didn't want the world to know that they'd become addicted to a children's game like this.

The secrecy took a lower priority after a while though, and my mum began asking if they could borrow my game when Lise came over for a quick visit after work - which suddenly became a rather frequent thing.

My mum would obviously practice a lot more than my aunt, since the game resided in our home, which is probably also why Lise never managed to beat my mum's highscore.

But she sure tried. I remember one time I came home from school, finding my aunt Lise sitting in the kitchen playing "Mario's Cement Factory" while still wearing her white nurse clothes from work. And she was very focused on the game because of all the alerts going off due to the full cement containers. Then I heard the sound-effect of "cement container over flooded" and my aunt - deeply engaged in the game - shouting "Nooo!", followed by the "game over" melody and my aunt going: "Oooohhhh!!"

My mum would then lean over to take a peak at her score, then smile and laugh a bit because she was still the highscore holder.



My mum and aunt Lise were definitely the two grown-ups in the family who had become the most addicted to "Mario's Cement Factory", but it did also make an impact on other family members. Many years later when the whole family was visiting e.g. to celebrate someone's birthday, "Mario's Cement Factory" was still brought to the dinner-table after desert.

20 years later

I don't remember exactly what happened with "Mario's Cement Factory". I only know that it suddenly wasn't in my possession anymore.

But I decided to buy another one around 2003 from eBay.

Unfortunately, the one I bought had a different start-up melody that the one my game used to have, and that was rather annoying. But it was fun to play the game again.

Then in 2017 I finally found and bought one with the "right" startup-melody, at a semi local retrogame shop named Nes Bozz. :-)

The original Blu-ray version of 8-bit Memoirs contains video footage of this game. Visit www.8bitMemoirs.com to get it!

Other LCD games

LCD games were a big hit with kids in the early and mid 1980s, and there were many to choose from.

I wonder if other people loved their LCD games as much as I loved mine. "Donkey Kong II" and "Mario's Cement Factory" definitely stands as two of my absolute best childhood memories.

I'm not sure my brother felt the same way about his space-shooter tabletop game as I did about my Mario game, but his love for "Super Mario Bros" on his NES resulted in him getting the LCD game "Super Mario Bros" years later, which he then played **a lot**.

I imagine my cousin Robin treasured his "Greenhouse" game as much as I did with my "Donkey Kong II" game.

Playing "Donkey Kong II" brings me back to the house we lived in, the surroundings and the atmosphere there.

Likewise, when I play "Greenhouse" it takes me back to cousin's house, the surroundings and atmosphere there.

My aunt Karen had "Thief" from Gakken. I was way too young first time I tried it, so I couldn't figure out how to play it. But that wasn't important. It was still very intriguing. Most grown-ups didn't understand that. It was never about being able to play the games successfully. It was more about just seeing the games, and try them out. It didn't matter that I couldn't figure them out yet. It was still interesting to study the logic behind them. And "Thief" therefor became a representation of aunt Karen's house in the very early 1980s.

I also remember my classmate Lasse had a tabletop version of "Pac-man" from Gakken called "Puck Monster". I remember him and I switched games for a period of time. He borrowed my "Mario's Cement Factory" and I borrowed his "Puck Monster" game.

Another classmate Allan had "Rich man", "Monkey" and "Trojan Horse" among others. I remember visiting him one day where we just sat in his couch playing these games. As I recall, he was quite fond of "Trojan Horse" while I found "Monkey" more interesting.

In later times I have managed to acquire all of the LCD games I remember from back then. I admit they aren't being used much, but it's nice to be able to revisit them whenever I want to. :-)

Amstrad CPC games

Grandma's CPC464

In October 1984 my grandma moved into an apartment located just next to the school where my brother and I went.

This meant it was very easy for us to go visit grandma after school now - if we felt like doing so.

Of course, when you're 7 and 9 years old, visiting grandma isn't exactly at the top of the priority list. At least it wasn't for us.

As far as I remember we actually never went for any after-school visits. If we did then it was a rare thing. Because I do remember my mum complaining about us never visiting grandma, with the argument that it was so easy for us to do so now that she lived just next to the school.

It wasn't that we didn't **like** visiting grandma. When our parents brought us along for a visit at grandma's place, we'd always watch some great videotapes that grandma had recorded on her Video 2000 machine from TV: Max Fleischer's Superman cartoons from the early 1940s. The Tarzan movie from 1932. Zorro from 1957. The Jungle Book from 1942. Batman the movie from 1966. And of course various Disney cartoons from the 1940s too. They were all awesome and we loved watching all of it. Those movies and cartoons will forever stand as representations of my grandma in the 1980s.

My parents didn't own a VCR, so we didn't have such high quality entertainment available at home. But despite grandma having all of this entertainment available, we still didn't go to visit her after school.

At some point in 1985 she then decided to buy an Amstrad CPC464 computer, and I suspect at least **part** of the reason for doing that was to have her grandchildren come visit her more often.

One day I came home from school my mum told me that grandma had gotten herself a new computer, and asked me if I could go visit her to "help her with her new computer"...

It was rather obvious that this was one of those classic grown-up schemes that they planned during their secret grown-up meetings. "Go help grandma with her new computer" was of course a coded message that translated directly into "Grandma has a **computer** now! Go visit already!".

I don't know how often the grown-ups cooked up plans like this, but it kinda felt like this one had been rushed a bit. I found it rather rookie of them to completely overlook the fact that I didn't actually **know** anything about the Amstrad CPC. Apart from having seen a CPC464 briefly one time while visiting my classmate Stig, I had absolutely no clue on how to operate one. All I could really tell my grandma was that she would need tapes for it.

Nevertheless, that's how my CPC days began: By visiting grandma with the official task of helping her with her new computer.



The helping classmate

When I arrived at my grandma's place, she'd placed the CPC on her coffee-table in front of a sofa chair. A rather inviting setup to most kids back then, but I didn't find it a whole lot interesting at that point, because I knew she didn't have any tapes for it.

In case you're puzzled about why I'm talking about tapes here, I should just mention that computers back then used cassette tapes to store their data on. They didn't have harddisks. Loading from tape took a long time (although sometimes faster than a Windows boot that we'd all "enjoy" later in life). It was all part of the experience.

I mentioned to my grandma that my classmate Stig had a CPC464 just like the one she'd acquired, and if she wanted me to, I could ask him to lend us a game or two when I saw him again next day in school.

She thought that was a great idea, and suggested that I called him right away.

...called him right away?

Grown-ups frequently puzzled me with statements like that. As if they either sincerely believed that kids lived by a different set of rules than grown-ups did, or else just chose to completely ignore the rules in certain situations when it was beneficial for themselves to do so.

You couldn't just call someone from class that you didn't hang out with, just because you suddenly needed a favour. I'm sure that if **I** needed a favour from my grandma, that she knew one of **her** co-workers could help me out with, then she wouldn't just call this person either.

I always thought it was strange when they said things like this, considering all the other rules and social codes they often tried to teach us kids. "When in this and that situation, you don't do this and that. Blah blah blah".

In any case, I didn't know what his phone number was. The only info I had about him was that he lived just down the block, on the same street as my grandma, only 2 minutes away...

Oh bollocks, I probably shouldn't have told her that...

"What's his last name?", my grandma asked with a certain determination in her voice while fetching the phonebook.

It was one of those situations where it didn't matter one bit what I said. Grown-ups back then had this "ignore mode" they seemed to switch on every time they found my opinion irrelevant. It was a setting they used quite often, as far as I remember.

She found his number quickly, dialled it and handed me the phone, leaving me with pretty much no choice than to engage myself in the conversation.

When my classmate Stig picked up the phone he was of course a bit puzzled that I called him, because we never really talked with each other in school for some reason. But after explaining the circumstances to him it was kinda like he recognised the kind of situation I'd been put in, as if he'd tried something similar himself too, and then he was happy to help. He said he'd copy a game for us right away, and that I could come pick it up in 15 minutes. Talk about service.

He then asked me what kind of games I liked, but since I had no clue, he said he'd just copy "a good one". I never heard what the other options were, but I thought "a good one" sounded like a pretty good choice.

Returning to my grandma from my classmate 20 minutes later, I had a tape in my hand with the word "Commando" written on it.



I had absolutely no idea what kind of game it was. I'd never heard the title "Commando" before. (And it would take many years before I'd even try the original arcade game too).

So when grandma asked me what game it was, I just replied what my classmate had said: "It's a good one".

Loading, I think

My grandma took a peek in the Amstrad CPC464 User Instructions to figure out how to start loading a game.

We were a team really, combining our skills on this mission of ours. She had the required language skills, and I apparently had the classmate who could supply us with a game.

It only took grandma a few seconds to figure out how to get things going. She hit a few keys on the CPC, and the magic words, that I would come to see countless of times from this day on, appeared on the screen for the very first time in my life.

Ready
RUN"
Press PLAY then any key: ■

As instructed, we pressed the play button, hit a key, and then the tape began spinning. I have to admit that I found it rather exciting at this point, now that it seemed we were actually getting somewhere. I had definitely not expected to get this far on day one.

Loading section 2

After a little while, the CPC sent out a message on the screen: "Loading COMMANDO block 1".

"Yes, it's loading now", grandma said, and wandered off into the kitchen.

Shortly after, the CPC sent out another message on the screen: "Read error b".

Since I didn't understand English, I had no idea what "Read error b" meant, and since my translator had gone to the kitchen to do some chores while the game was (supposed to be) loading, I had to somehow figure out for myself what this new output meant now.

I engaged my 10-year old brain in a thorough analysis of the message, strictly using a logical approach (since that's all I had). It actually only took me about 10 seconds to come up with the hypothesis that the CPC was probably **supposed** to write "Read error b" when a game was loading. I was pretty sure the first part "Read" meant something along the lines of "Acknowledge, I'm getting some kind of valid input here". So the last part of the message logically had to be telling what **kind** of valid input it was.

After thinking about it for another few seconds, I concluded that the "b" part then had to be a descriptor telling which **section** of the game it was currently loading.

And thus, "Read error b" became "Reading 2nd section of the game now".

The only thing that didn't quite add up in this theory of mine was the lack of a "Reading 1st section of the game now" message. There hadn't been a "Read error a" output on the screen.

I speculated that maybe that first "Loading" part was the part that made the "read" outputs possible. It made sense that the CPC had to be instructed first before being able to output anything. Therefore it would never output any "Reading 1st section of the game now" before this "outputter" had been loaded.

My hypothesis was (to my logic) confirmed shortly after, when the CPC continued with another "Read error b" on the next line. To me, it might as well have said: "Yes mate, I'm still loading the 2nd section of the game. You just hang in there buddy. Then an awesome game will appear on the screen aaany minute now".

If it really was an error message, surely it would only display it once, and then just stop trying? Why continue trying to load if a previous error made any additional loading pointless? That just wouldn't make any sense. So my hypothesis thus turned into a conclusion.

The (real) truth revealed

A few minutes later my grandma came back into the living room, saw the (at this point, rather long) list of mixed read errors displayed on the screen, and told me the sad news; that the outputs were error messages.

I couldn't believe what she said.

The idea of a machine being capable of informing us that it couldn't read what was on the tape just didn't make any sense to my 10-year old brain. Logically, if a computer was given false instructions, or incomplete instructions - instructions that it didn't understand one way or another - then logically it just wouldn't react to them. How could a computer tell us that what we were trying to feed it didn't make any sense to it?

To me, that was like speaking in a certain language to a person who didn't understand that language, and then hear him reply - **in that language** - that he doesn't understand the language.

"Excuse me, sir! You wouldn't happen to speak English, would you?"

"No I'm sorry sir, I'm afraid I don't speak any English."

"Oh, ok. Sorry for the interruption then."

"That's quite alright old chap."

"It's such a shame you don't speak any English."

"Indeed it is, sir. We could have had a nice little chat if I did."

That makes just about as much sense as a Monty Python sketch, doesn't it?

Actually, I tried that when we went camping in Germany that same year (I think it was), where some German kids came up to me in the playground, spoke a lot of German to me, and then looked weird at me for just standing there and not replying. So I quickly ran to my dad and asked him how to say: "I don't speak German" in German. Then ran back to the kids and said: "Ich spriche nicht Deutsch".

The German kids of course understood nothing of this since they so clearly heard me speak German now. So they just kept on telling me a bunch of things in German of which I understood absolutely nothing. So I ran back to my dad again and asked him how to say: "No I really don't understand German. I only learned how to say that I don't understand German in order to tell you that I don't understand German".

My dad didn't want to teach me how to say that for some reason...

Well ok, it's not quite the same scenario as with the CPC, but that's how I saw it back then.

I had a very strong belief that a computer would only react to instructions it actually understood. So my grandma and I had a little debate about whether she was right about the outputs being error messages.

The discussion ended with me reluctantly calling my classmate again, who unfortunately sided with my grandma.

Adjusting the head

I was rather annoyed when Stig told me that my grandma was right. I knew that my logic was correct, except of course that it apparently wasn't. And it was also annoying that the game didn't just work.

I hadn't really been **too** interested in this whole computer stuff, but now that Stig had supplied us with a game, I admit I'd become rather intrigued. So this whole "It's not working" thing was very annoying.

But all was not lost, Stig said. He told us about this little hole in the tape deck, where we could stick in a small screwdriver to adjust the head of the tape player while the tape was spinning. He sounded confident that the CPC would load the game if we adjusted the position of the head.

I personally had a lot of doubt about that, and I also thought the explanation sounded **way** too technical and difficult. And when **I** thought it sounded too technical and difficult, I was pretty sure grandma would find it even more so. I was also sure that she wouldn't have any small screwdrivers lying around in her apartment anyway. Such tools were a man's possession, not something the women in the family had lying around.

So I just told grandma that we had to give up...

"That's not what he said!", she replied with her usual sturdy tone. "What did he say?"

Grandparents back then didn't know when to quit, did they? My grandma definitely didn't.

After forwarding the guide from Stig to my grandma, she then wandered off into her hobby-room, and came back with a small screwdriver that apparently came as part of a tool-set for her sewing machine. And then she started fiddling with the tape deck. When the sewing machine screwdriver didn't fit (slightly too big), she wandered off again and came back with a smaller one - from an actual toolbox.

I have to say that considering **I** was supposed to be the one helping **her** out, I felt pretty much useless at this point.

Yay it works!

When my grandma got the game working it was a weird mix of surprise, annoyance and excitement. Surprised that she actually succeeded, because I was sure she wouldn't. Slightly annoyed that she succeeded because **I** had given up. And excited to now finally be able to play the game!

Grandma must have been somewhat proud of herself too. The whole mission had taken about an hour, from the moment I stepped into her apartment, to the moment when the game was done loading.

And now, after this successful mission, she was of course eager to see me play this game, and curious to see what "a good game" looked like.

But we would soon discover that the mission wasn't completely over yet.

GRANDMAH

JAPAN CAPSULE COMPUTERS (UK) © 1985

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CHRIS 006000

DAWN 005000

S TO START GAME PRESS J FOR JO

Let's play!

I hit the fire button on the joystick to start the game, and absolutely nothing happened.

Ok fine, then I hit space, and still nothing happened. As everything was still new to me, I didn't dare to press any other keys, you know, in case I'd accidentally hit the key that would make the computer explode or something.

"Graaaandmah, the game doesn't start. How do I start the game?"

Grandma took a quick look at the title-screen, then hit a key on the keyboard, and the game started. I grabbed the joystick, but couldn't control the character on the screen. Nothing reacted to the joystick.

The developers of the CPC version of "Commando" had decided that you had to press S in order to start the game. But you also had to press J first if you wished to use a joystick. That wasn't a logical procedure to start a game in my opinion. It felt more like some kind of secret code that you just had to know about. Like a protection of some kind, preventing younger kids from playing. Maybe because it wasn't suitable for younger kids? Why not just detect that I pressed the joystick button and then start the game with joystick control?

There were many things with all this computer stuff that didn't make much sense to me.

But ok. **Finally** a game started where I was able to control the main character in the game.



Alright! Let's play! Oh, I'm dead? Ok, try agai... ohkay, dead again. Ok, **now** I'm gonna show 'em... What?! Game over?!

Ok fine, that first go was just practice. **Now** I'll play for real. What?! Come on! Hey, that's not fair!

Biggest understatement of the year: I sucked at playing "Commando". I could never reach any further than a few steps from the starting point. It was just way too difficult for me.

And this, of course, resulted in me losing interest in the game after only a few minutes.

My grandma understood nothing of this, since I'd clearly stated with my very own words that the game was "a good one". Why on earth didn't I want to play "a good game" now? Here we had struggled for more than an hour to get the game working, and then I just didn't want to play?

Her conclusion was that I was just being difficult now, refusing to play the game because I'd given up on getting it working earlier.

That wasn't the real reason at all, but it was the one that was written down in the history books. (Never trust history books. They lie).

Amstrad CPC games

Ok, so Commando wasn't my cup of tea at age 10, but it did become interesting some years later. I remember playing it with my cousin Robin, and reaching level 3 - which was a rather big deal for us at the time.

I'd play a lot of other games at grandma's in the following months though, that I liked quite a lot, and which therefore have a strong nostalgia attached to them today.

More about those games in the next stories.

The original Blu-ray version of 8-bit Memoirs contains video footage of this game. Visit www.8bitMemoirs.com to get it!

"Grumpy - Super Sleuth"

Grandma bought new games for her CPC464 every now and then. Rarely for her own amusement though. I'm pretty sure the intention for the most part was to have new games for her grandchildren to try out next time they came for a visit - except for "Las Vegas Video Poker", which she clearly bought for herself.

Of course, as she had no knowledge of which games were cool and which ones weren't, her choices depended entirely on the advice of the salesman in the shop.



I remember one of the first new games she presented to us. It was called "Super Sleuth".

"Try this game here!", she said to me, with a facial expression clearly indicating that she knew what she was talking about here and was telling me the absolute truth: "They said in the store that it's a really great and big game!".

As it turned out, you apparently can't always trust salesmen.



Controlling a big fat guy named Grumpy inside a shopping mall didn't qualify as "big and great" in my opinion. It kinda felt like they'd gotten the words mixed around. "Big" clearly applied to Grumpy rather than the game itself.

I also wasn't that impressed by the graphics, which were supposed to be "really great".

It was plain'n'simple a boring and unappealing game for a 10-year old boy.

Buuut, if they said in the store that it was a big and great game, then maybe it was. Maybe I just had to play for a while before reaching this greatness...

And that was the primary reason I played this game: Because grandma had told me that the shop had told her that it was awesome.

I did lose interest in the game fairly quickly though, but my brother kept playing it every now and then, even 2 years later.

*In more recent times, I attempted again to find this rumoured greatness in the game, and did also finally find **some** of it: Walking around in this rather big shopping mall, and finally **succeeding** in finding the pieces you need to solve various puzzles - that of course makes the game a lot more fun than it ever was back in the day.*

But the annoying customers that constantly bumps into you just ruins the game-experience. That's a classic flaw with many of the games from that era.

The original Blu-ray version of 8-bit Memoirs contains video footage of this game. Visit www.8bitMemoirs.com to get it!

Most nostalgic games

All of the Amstrad CPC games I used to play back in the good old days of course have a very strong nostalgia attached to them today. It doesn't really matter whether I found the game great or not.

It's one of the main reasons I still enjoy playing these games today. Playing retro games that I remember is nostalgia when it's best, because a lot of the games often give me a two-in-one experience nowadays: Old mixed with new.

Developers back then created games **very** differently than developers do today, giving the games back then a difficulty-level usually ranging from "Extremely difficult!" to "Absolutely impossible!". Or at least it felt that way to me at age 10. It often required lots of skills and even more patience to stay alive in a game for more than just a few minutes, and kids in general just don't have that kind of patience.

Developers can't afford to design games that way today. Because then they simply won't be able to make any money. Consumers seem to have even less patience today than we had back then, so if they find a game just a little bit too difficult, they'll simply go browse the over-flooded market and find another game that's either very cheap or else completely free.

We didn't have that luxury back in the 1980s. Computer-games were expensive, and we didn't have nearly as many to choose from. Our only option was to keep playing the games we had. And this of course eventually resulted in improved skills, which allowed us to get a little bit further in the games, thus making them interesting again. Generally though, the difficulty in the games meant that most of us never got very far.

But that was many decades ago now. Our game-playing skills have improved over the years. And if you need more help, you can probably find cheat codes for the games online now too.

These circumstances have created a new situation today, causing this two-in-one experience: We now have a lot of games that we remember from back then, which brings us nostalgia - but at the same time also gives us something new: We're now able to reach new levels in the games, and see screens that we never saw before! Sometimes we even get to complete the games!

So it becomes "nostalgia that brings new experiences", and **that** is a **very** interesting mix to experience. If you haven't yet tried this yourself, you definitely should!

All the games you used to play as a kid can have this effect today. But there will of course always be certain games that stand out more than others. Games that has a much more powerful nostalgia attached to them than any other game you remember.

For me, those particular games are especially the ones I played on my grandma's CPC464 in 1985-1987. The very first 2 years of my CPC life, when I was only 10-12 years old.

Despite not really finding "Super Sleuth" any fun, it still ended up becoming one of the most nostalgic games that reminds me the most of grandma back then. Hearing the music from the title-screen, with "Super Sleuth" displayed in big colour-cycled letters, throws me right back into grandma's apartment in 1985.

And 18 other games would soon be added to the list of games that has that same effect today.

I can split these 18 games into two groups: The ones I played on grandma's CPC during the first 2 years of my CPC life, and the ones I played later on my own CPC.

Although I can't write a long and interesting story about each of these games, I think at least the ones in the first category deserves their own presentation in 8-bit Memoirs. So here they are:

Played on grandma's CPC:

["Zorro"](#) (1985)

["Wiggler"](#) (1985)

["Caves of Doom"](#) (1985)

["Street Machine"](#) (1986)

["Don't Panic"](#) (1985)

"[Winter Games](#)" (1986)

"[Spindizzy](#)" (1986)

"[Radzone](#)" (1986)

"[Daley Thomson's Super Test](#)" (1985)

Played on my own CPC:

"Kung-Fu Master" (1986)

"Gauntlet" (1985)

"Le 5eme Axe" (1985)

"Gunfright" (1985)

"Atlantis" (1985)

"Killer Gorilla" (1985)

"Nuclear Heist" (1986)

"Batman" (1986)

"Green Beret" (1986)

Read about those games in [here](#).

All these games are linked to grandma because she was the one who started the whole CPC era and acquired the first games. It is very difficult to describe the feeling these games give me when playing them today. They all represent a long lost happy time when all was mostly well and life was mostly problem free. The whole family got along with each other, and grandma was healthy and well.

All of that would sadly change in the following years: In 1986 a dispute between my grandma and two of her seven children would end up splitting the family in two. And in 1987 my grandma then had a stroke that put her in a wheelchair and gave her speech problems, which made it very difficult to communicate with her, obviously making it difficult for anyone to sort anything out. Not that anyone had any interest in sorting anything out though, as far as I could see.

The unavoidable teenage problems, that most of us has to deal with in life, then followed in the years after.

In other words, from 1986 and onward things very slowly began getting overshadowed by various annoying, sad and stressing factors, and in the 1990s it had built up to become quite noticeable. This is why everything I remember from before the 1990s shines a lot brighter than other memories of mine. There was a calmness back then. A "silence before the storm" I suppose.

When visiting grandma in 1985, this calmness was impossible not to notice. Her apartment was always full of a certain silence I don't remember experiencing anywhere else. Of course, I did usually come visit her straight from school (meaning several hours of noise), so that might have emphasised the quietness in her apartment.

I think most of the games in grandma's collection had a very relaxing and calm feel to them, and I wonder how much the silence that was present in her apartment influenced this. Maybe other people experienced the exact same games differently, because they played them in more noisy surroundings?

Even when I didn't know what to do in a game, I still often found them relaxing. There was never any rush, and never any constant re-spawning of bad guys, that I would experience in many other games later. There may have been a ticking timer somewhere, but I never noticed that. And the game may have been ridiculously difficult to complete, but it was still relaxing to play the few screens I could reach.

So these particular Amstrad CPC games represent the long lost sunny relaxing calm time I remember back then, before the storm clouds came sneaking in to split the family in two, put my grandma in a wheelchair and otherwise just made life difficult due to a number of other stress factors.

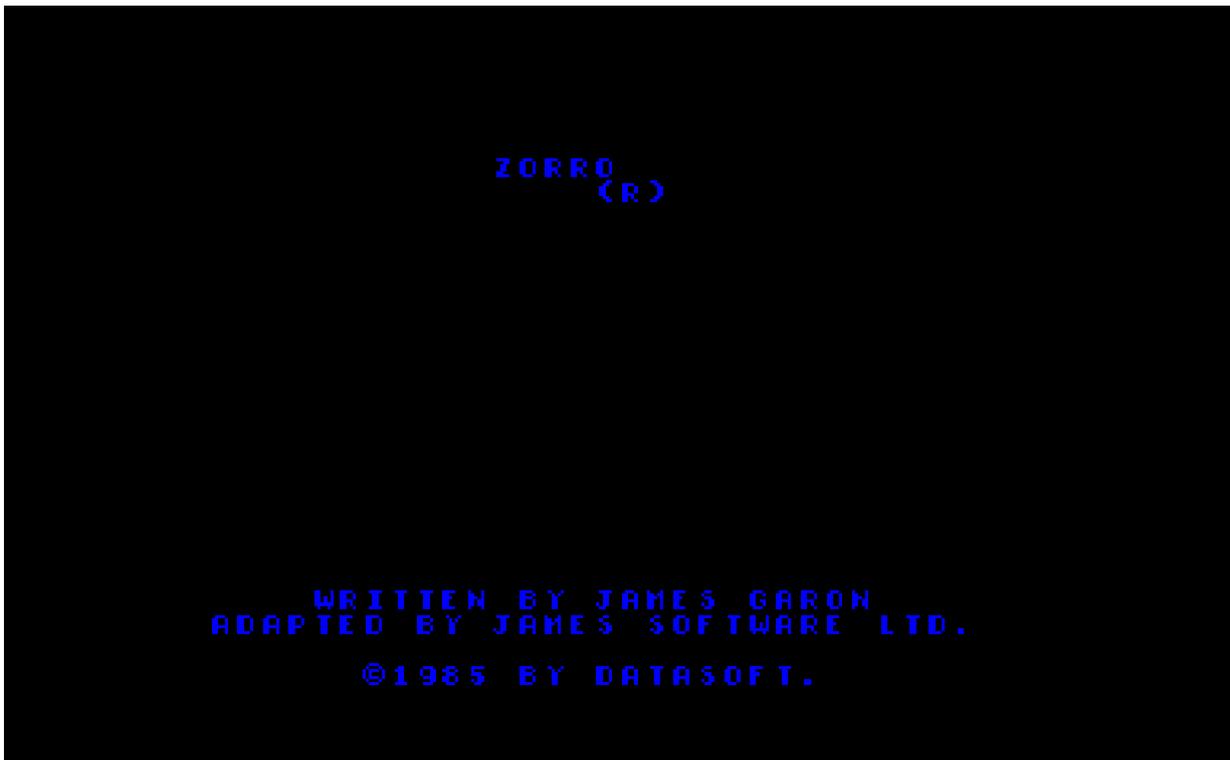
And that makes these games some of the absolute best nostalgia I have. Sweet memories of a bright time long ago.

If you'd rather skip the game-stories for now, and instead read about what happened next, you can go to "[First BASIC experience](#)". Otherwise press down to go to the next game story.

"Zorro"

One of the very first games I remember playing on my grandma's CPC464 was "Zorro". In fact, I think it was the 2nd game I ever played on her CPC. "Commando" being the first one, and "Super Sleuth" probably the 3rd one.

I'm pretty sure anyone seeing "Zorro" for the first time nowadays (even if he's a retrogame fanatic), will probably say that the game looks a bit poor.



It starts with a rather boring title screen and a very short tune that loops over and over, from title-screen to the last screen of the game - unless of course you turn the music off (which I didn't know you could do back in those days).

But that very boring title screen and short music-loop just brings back incredibly strong nostalgia for me. In fact, the music in "Zorro" is one of the strongest representatives of my grandma from that time.

My brother and I were already familiar with the Zorro character from Disney's 1957 B/W Zorro TV series, which had also been presented to us at grandma's place. She had recorded a few of those episodes from TV (among many other shows) on her Video 2000 VCR, and watching these videotapes had previously been the primary form of entertainment when visiting grandma.

Like most kids, we of course loved Zorro for being the hero he was; striking down bad guys and helping the good guys.

So when I was presented with the game "Zorro" for the Amstrad CPC, it was of course very interesting even before seeing what it looked like - but it also kinda felt like a huge responsibility: There was no way I could do what Zorro did, not even in a computer game. Being Zorro required skills that I definitely did not have. Self confidence was non-existent. So I wouldn't say that I was eager to **play** the game, but I was of course curious to **see** what it looked like.

Alright, let's play!

So upon starting the game, Zorro is standing on the ground. Above him is a girl holding a handkerchief.

The first few times I played the game I was clueless on what to do. I don't remember if there were any instructions available in my language, but even if there were I'm sure I wouldn't have read them anyway.

So I just stood there for a while, examining that first screen in the game, waiting to see what would happen.

Then, suddenly, one of the enemy soldiers appeared and kidnapped the girl! What a bastard!

At first, I thought maybe this was some kind of penalty for just standing there and not doing anything, like some kind of timer in the game or something.

Regardless, it looked a bit strange. The girl practically vanished from the balcony, and appeared on the ground below - a good distance away from the balcony.

How was the enemy soldier able to do this?

SCORE : 000000 LIVES : 4
BONUS : 2200 HI : 001000



SCORE : 000000 LIVES : 4
BONUS : 1700 HI : 001000



Hm, maybe he used one of the doors? When going through a door in a computer game in those days, it usually meant popping up at another door instantly. That much I did understand. But no, he couldn't have done that. The first door was too far away from where the girl was standing, and the other door was also too far away from where they both appeared on the ground below.

To this day it remains a mystery how the enemy soldier is able to do this trick. It's apparently just one of those 8-bit realities you have to accept.

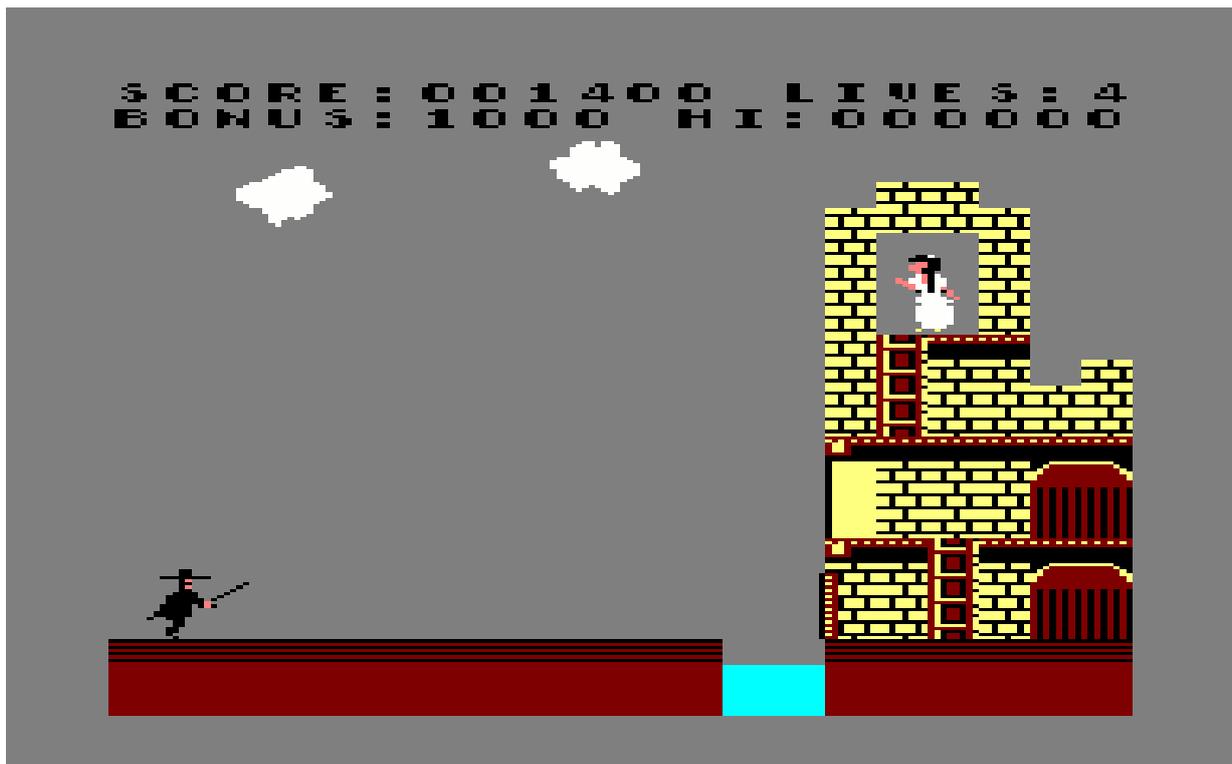
I realised that I was probably supposed to rescue the girl somehow. That did sound like something Zorro would do. So naturally I ran after them, into the next screen where, obviously, they were quite a bit ahead of me now, and quickly disappeared into the 3rd screen.



After pondering a bit about that, I started a new game again. This time I hurried up the shrub to get to the girl **before** she was kidnapped. But the girl still disappeared right before my very eyes, even though I was standing right there! Apparently this kidnapper soldier was some kind of magician. Not entirely fair in my opinion.

So in the next game, I tried running into the 2nd screen as fast as I could, in order to stop the enemy soldier when he came that way with the girl. But as I entered the 2nd screen, the soldier carrying the girl was already ahead of me **again!** And he hadn't even kidnapped her in the 1st screen yet!

Fine! Ok. Let's just follow the direction he is going in then.



If I kept following the soldier, I eventually ended up at a castle, where the girl was now held captured, confirming that I was indeed supposed to somehow free the girl from her imprisonment.

To the rescue!

"Zorro" had a lot of puzzles you needed to solve, and I couldn't figure out any of them. I only got as far as to figuring out I needed to grab a key, and then unlock a door in order to pick up a bottle in the room behind that door.

That's how far I got while playing the game at grandma's place. I tried various keys on the CPC keyboard, thinking I needed to drink the content of the bottle, but could never find any buttons on the keyboard that would let me do that.

I also found some things about the game not so Zorro-like. For example, Zorro jumping on a couch in order to reach a higher floor in the building, didn't quite seem like his style in my humble opinion. But ok.

Even though I didn't get very far in the game, I enjoyed running around in the screens. It was one of the most appealing characteristics about the game: It was very slow paced. You had plenty of time thinking about your next move. No annoying enemies that constantly re-spawned, and no timer that would kill you if you weren't fast enough.

This made the game very suitable for my age (10 years old), and it meant that I didn't give up after only a few minutes.

Looking back on which games I (still) enjoy the most, it is exactly primarily these relaxing exploration-like platform games (possibly with a little not-too-tricky puzzles), rather than fast paced shoot'em up games. (Though there are exceptions, like e.g. "Dead on Time" which is a big favourite of mine).

2 years later

Fast forward to late 1987 when my brother Kenneth and I now had a CPC464 each, it was Kenneth who showed me what I had to do with the bottle in the game: Give it to a man in the bar, so that he'd drink it and fall asleep - so you could jump on his belly to reach a higher floor in the building...

...what?! Ok, Zorro **definitely** wouldn't do that in the TV series. He wouldn't hurt an innocent man like that, by jumping on his belly. It was entirely illogical that you had to do this! Not Zorro's style at all.

Despite my fascination with these relaxing exploration games, I was never any good at actually solving the puzzles. They were always way too illogical for me to figure out.

And point'n'click adventure games I'd later try out on the Amiga were even worse!

Another 2 years later

Picking up the game once again, this time with my cousin Robin, we managed to reach the underground screens for the first time ever.

It was at this point I realised that "Zorro" was actually a rather big game. Or at least that's how it felt. Reaching this far in the game was one of those rare "Wow" moments. The short tune that was playing in a non-stop loop through-out the whole game, was playing in a slower tempo and lower tone in the underground screens. And believe it or not, this small variation in the music was all that was needed to tell us that things were getting serious now.

But we didn't get any further than that though. The underground screens were **way** too difficult for us.

20 years later

A whole 2 decades later again I finally managed to complete "Zorro", during one of my relaxing nostalgic de-stressing retro-gaming evenings.

It was a very special experience; nostalgia mixed with satisfaction of completing the game, after seeing screens I'd never seen before. If you haven't already had such an experience yourself, I highly recommend that you try it.

The original Blu-ray version of 8-bit Memoirs contains video footage of this game. Visit www.8bitMemoirs.com to get it!

"Wriggler"

"Wriggler" was also among the very first games I played on my grandma's Amstrad CPC464.

I saw it as a calm and relaxing game, just like "Zorro".



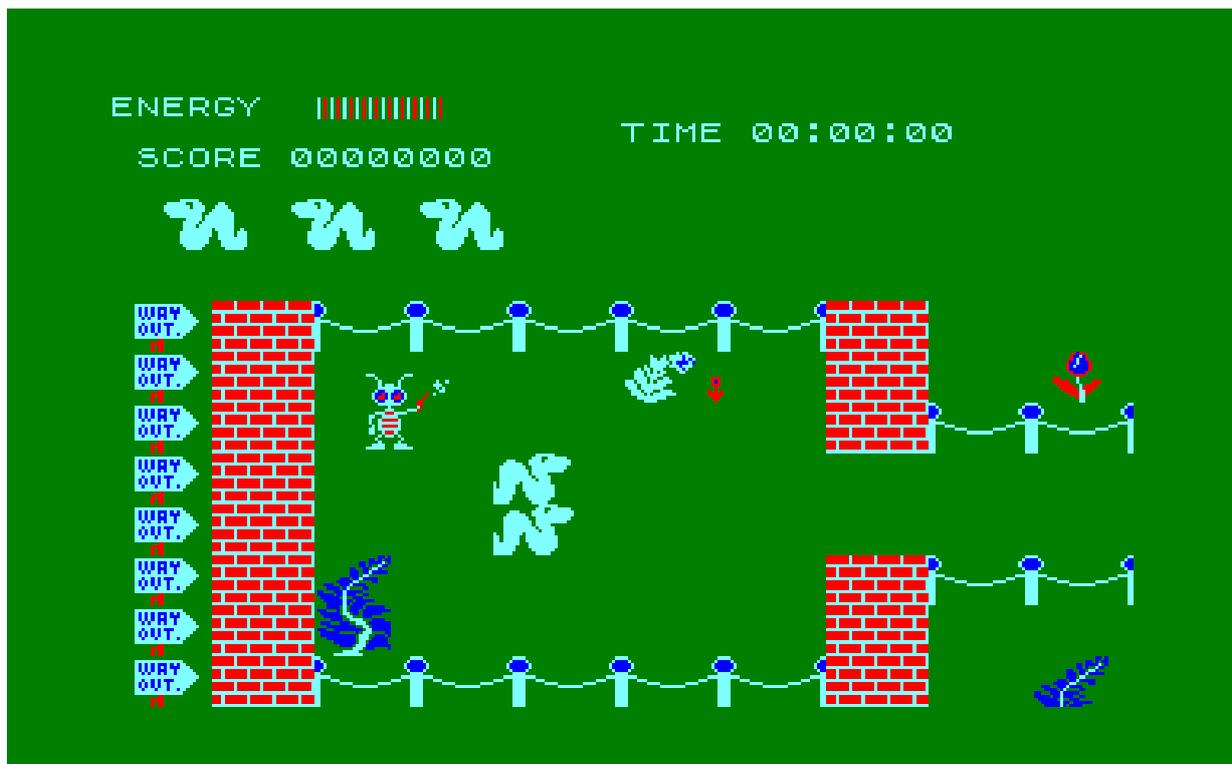
There were several things about "Wriggler" that intrigued me back then. First of all, I found the music in the title screen great. (Still do). And whenever I found the music in a game great, it would always boost the overall impression of the game.

Another very intriguing part about the game, was that it presented the small insect world with large graphics, as if you were watching everything through a magnifying glass. Big ants, bigger spiders, and pathways formed by big plants.

Imagine yourself being shrunk to that size, and then try to find your way around. You'd get lost very fast, if not instantaneously.

And the game-developer had done something rather brilliant in this regard: The way the screens were linked together meant that you couldn't easily draw a map of the game. For example, if there were two exits both to the right in a certain screen, you would expect both of them to lead to the same screen, right? But that wasn't the case with "Wiggler". These two exits would lead to two different screens. In my opinion, this very much enhanced the feeling of being very small in a big world.

Add the slow relaxing pace of the game, and you've got the key elements that made games appeal to me: Atmospheric music on top of an interesting world that I could explore in my own relaxing pace.



The object of the game was to win The Annual Maggot Marathon. Yes, you controlled a maggot, but I thought it looked like an earthworm, so that's what it was to me. It took 29 years before I finally read the instructions and thus learned that it was in fact a maggot I'd been controlling all of this time...

It was clear that I was participating in some kind of race, but I gave up that part of the game fairly quickly, as it became clear to me that my chances of ever winning was pretty much non-existent. Especially because my competitor could go through bad guys without losing any energy, and I surely couldn't.

So instead of trying to win the race, I just enjoyed exploring the world. And it was indeed a very big and interesting world to explore.

The game has 4 parts:

1. The Garden
2. The Scrubland
3. The Underground
4. The Mansion

I had no idea the game was this big though. I always only wandered around in "The Garden", wondering what way I should go. On a very few occasions I found my way out of "The Garden" and into the "The Scrubland", and remember being amazed how this completely new part of the game had managed to stay hidden from me for so long.

I was never able to explore for long though. I lost my three lives rather fast. Partly because I lacked the skills, but also because I had no idea I could replenish my energy by picking up various items along the way, such as ice cream and apples, or even a cup of tea. So my games were always shorter than they could have been.

"Wiggler" was a classic example of games that intrigued me the most, because of the relaxing exploration of an interesting world, without bad guys constantly re-spawning. But it did also have its share of unfair annoying traps. Like for example ending up in a screen that said "DIE" with big capital letters, where you could do nothing but actually lose all of your remaining lives and be game over.

Considering most reviews I've found in newer time all say that they never managed to reach The Mansion, I think it's fair to say that "Wiggler" is a rather big and challenging game.

Reaching "The Mansion"

While creating 8-bit Memoirs, I actually managed to reach The Mansion for the first time in my life in 2015. It was very interesting to get that far.

But I still didn't manage to complete the game. While creating the video of the game in 2016, I managed to reach "The Mansion" again, but still did not complete the game.

The original Blu-ray version of 8-bit Memoirs contains video footage of this game. Visit www.8bitMemoirs.com to get it!

"Caves of Doom"



Being one of the very first games I played on grandma's Amstrad CPC, "Caves of Doom" will always have a certain cosiness attached to it for me. I like the graphics and the overall calm atmosphere in the game.

But it was also one of those games I just found way too difficult. Not that I didn't reach quite a lot of screens (in my own humble opinion), but I lost my lives way too fast in the process.

My brother felt the same way about the game. It was ridiculously difficult. But he found his own work-around: He simply used the level-editor to create his own paths in all the screens.

Decades later it's been games like this, with this level of difficulty, that would often end up giving me that special two-in-one feeling: Nostalgia mixed with something new. Since my skills had improved over the decades, I would now typically be able to reach screens I'd never seen before.

This didn't happen with "Caves of Doom" though. Decades later I still can't reach much further than in the good old days.

Basically the problem is the general speed of the game. The main character moves way too fast, and the same goes for a lot of the enemy characters. Everything should have been about 10%-20% slower. That would have helped a lot I think.

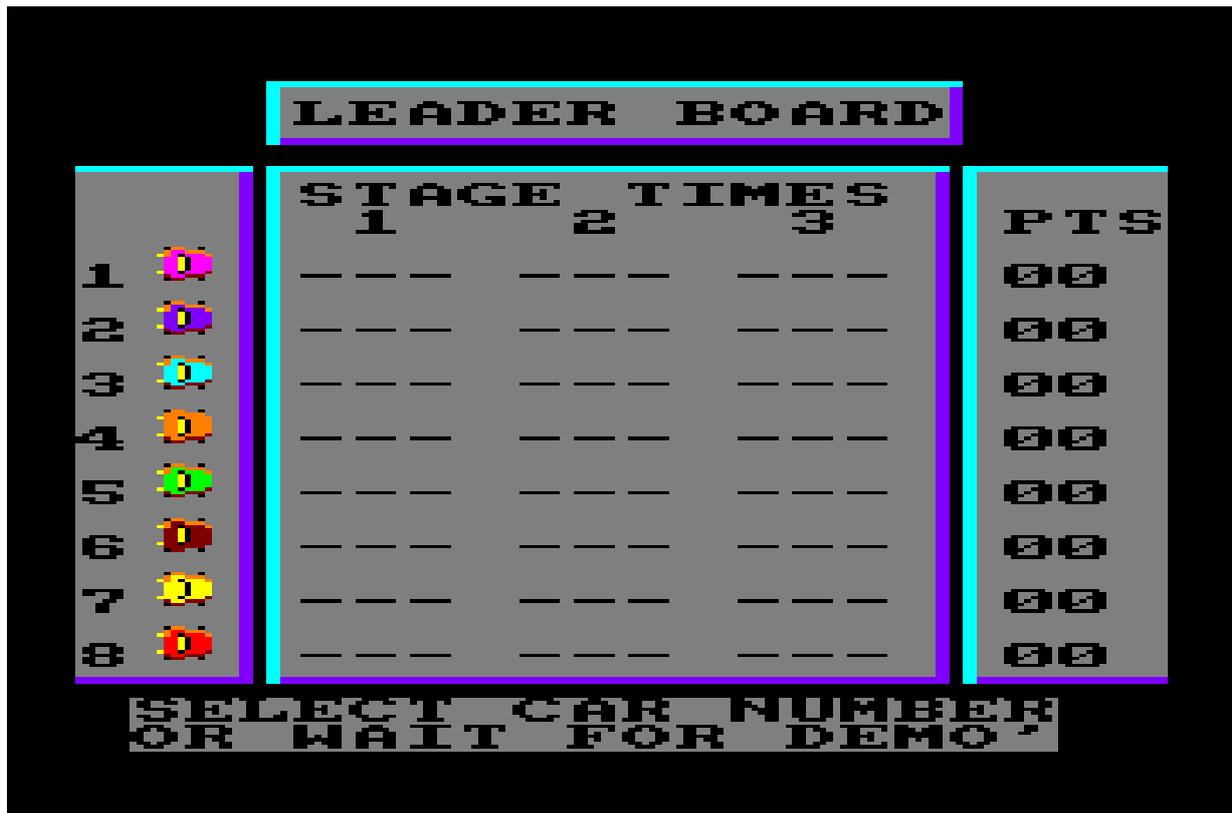


The game is definitely too difficult to complete without using cheatcodes of some kind. So in 2010 I had help from CPCwiki Forum user Grim acquiring some of those cheatcodes, which rendered most of the enemy characters and surroundings harmless. Under these conditions, I was finally able to complete the game.

Considering how difficult the game was **without** cheatcodes, I'm a bit surprised to discover that I actually remember many screens from the game. Combined with the fact that the game itself stands as one of the most memorable games from that time, it must mean that we played it a lot back in those days, despite the level of difficulty. Most probably because the collection of games we could choose from were somewhat limited.

That's how it often was back then of course, when the market wasn't flooded with games yet. We didn't have the luxury of simply moving on to the next game - because we didn't have many to choose from.

"Street Machine"



"Street Machine" was a car-racing game. At least according to the instructions (which I didn't read). To me, it didn't feel like a racing game at all, but rather some kind of reality simulation.

When I loaded "Street Machine", it wasn't because I felt like racing. I loaded it to take a cosy drive along the country side to get away from things for a while. And although I was only 11-13 years old at the time, I often felt like taking such a peaceful virtual trip.

As far as I could see, there wasn't really anything in the game indicating that I was participating in a race. Sure, there was a white dotted line painted on the road, which could represent a starting point of some kind, but it just felt like the actual race had already taken place a week ago, which was why the streets now seemed so empty. And if this really was a race, then where were the other cars I was supposed to race against? Surely all participants ought to start from the same position at the same time, if this was in fact a race? And where were all the cheering spectators?



There was no timer counting down and no rushing messages telling me to hurry up either. There wasn't even any information displayed on the screen regarding my position or my score. Nothing told me that I was competing with anyone here.

Sure, there were a few other cars on the road, but I assumed they were just people who lived in the city, probably out doing their shopping or on their way to visit family or friends.

So I didn't really even perceive "Street Machine" as a game at all. To me it was more like an experience you could take. A nice and quiet car-driving simulation.

But this very slow-paced calm feel about it was the very reason I **liked** it so much.

I enjoyed driving around for the mere pleasure of driving around and studying the landscape. I imagine you might find that silly; that I found pleasure in "exploring" a pixelated virtual landscape like that, but I did.

Along the way I'd even sometimes park my car and pretend I was having lunch at the diner next to the parking lot. Then I'd take off again after a while, to continue my sightseeing.

Sometimes I'd look for shortcuts along the road, meaning places where I could drive off-road in order to skip a portion of the route. And when I was successful in doing this; learning that it **was** possible to drive off-road, I then became curious exploring the driveways for the various houses and such, to see if there were any pathways hiding in there.

This was only interesting for a while though, because it always resulted in my car beginning to act strange, like making small explosion noises and blast smoke out of the exhaust pipe (I assumed). And when my car had been damaged to a degree where it needed maintenance, the "Maintenance Chart" popped up and interrupted my trip.

I never did find any hidden paths either.

It was very annoying when this "Maintenance Chart" popped up with its huge amount of data that I had absolutely no clue what I was supposed to do with. So for a long time, to me the "Maintenance Chart" screen was just a long-dragged "Game Over" screen. And it was always annoying needing to wait till this "Game Over" screen would go away so I could start a new game again. I often tried pressing The ESCape button and other keys on the CPC keyboard in order to kill the "Maintenance Chart" screen and return to the main welcome screen, but to no avail. There was no way around this annoying wait-time.

After a while I did figure out that the highlighted values that was shown on this screen (when the timer ran out), was probably the reason the game ended. I did realise that I probably had to change these numbers to correct values, but as I had absolutely no knowledge about the internals of a car, nor understood English for that matter, I figured it was pointless to even try. There was no way I would ever be able to guess the correct values for all of these mechanical parts on this huge list.

It took some time again before I noticed that the highlighted numbers were always of a rather high value compared to numbers that didn't get highlighted. And then I also noticed that the value would always only decrease when the row was selected by me. There was no way of increasing a value - I could only decrease it.

With this new discovery I figured out that it was actually just a matter of spotting and decreasing high values in the list. It didn't matter exactly what the number was representing. As long as all the high values were lowered, then I was allowed to continue my game. So suddenly my lack of knowledge on both car-mechanics and the English language didn't matter at all!

Being able to continue my journey after the "Maintenance Chart" was a new experience, because it let me reach places I had never seen before, and it was indeed a very nice relaxing sightseeing trip. :-)

The original Blu-ray version of 8-bit Memoirs contains video footage of this game. Visit www.8bitMemoirs.com to get it!

"Don't Panic"



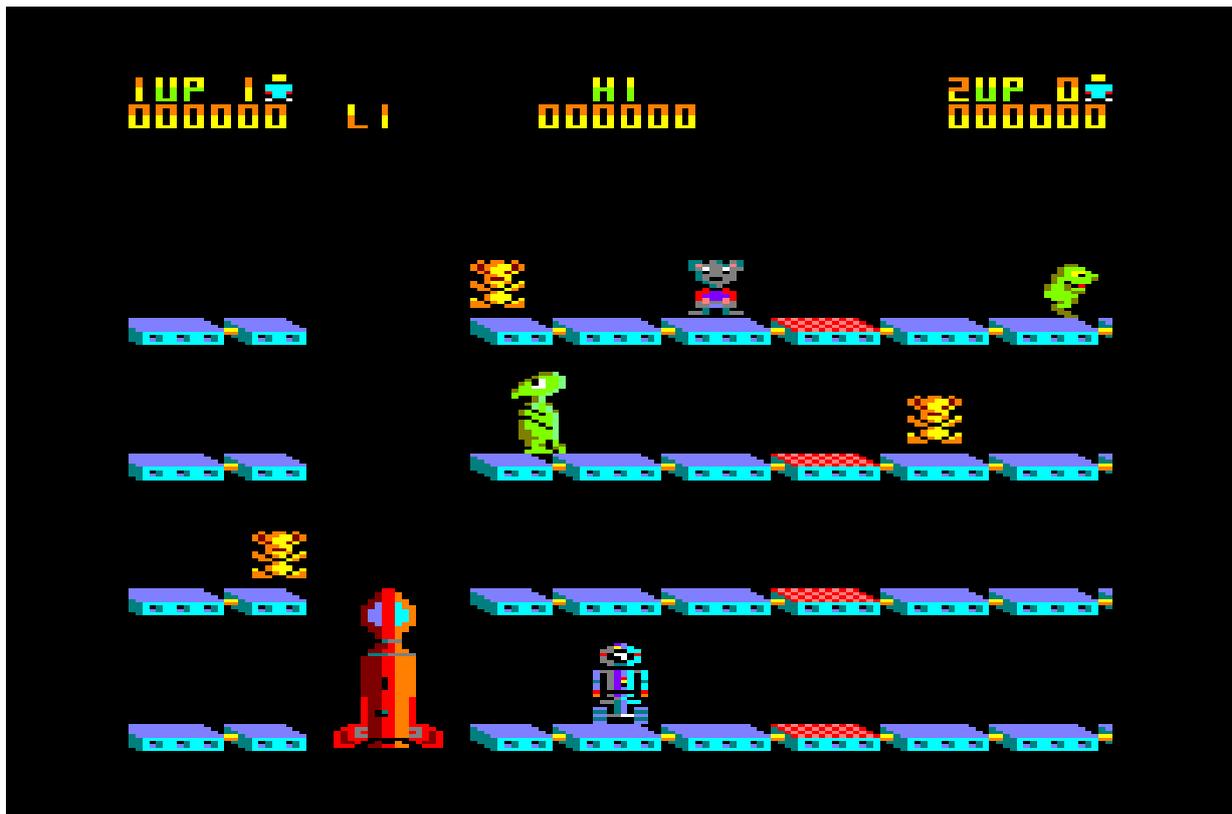
Among the games that represents grandma from that time, "Don't Panic" stands out a bit. I'd typically load it after having played "Street Machine", but then only try it out a single time, because it was **way** too difficult.

It **looked** interesting though: The nice graphics and level-design made it look like a potentially great arcade-game. But despite trying hard many times to actually **find** this hidden awesomeness, I just failed.

With "Caves of Doom", I at least got to reach a **few** screens. But with "Don't Panic" it was pretty much Game Over within the first minute, no matter what I did.

I controlled a robot that appeared to have just landed here in its red spaceship. I appeared to have a rather powerful weapon at my disposal: A rather thick laser-beam of some kind, though with a disappointingly limited range.

As soon as I saw the small cute teddy-bears on the platforms, I thought it was pretty obvious what I had to do here: Collect these cute little teddy-bears of course!



So when it turned out to actually be **fatal** to just **touch** one of these cute fuzzy little bears, it was somewhat confusing and puzzling. Ok, so the teddy-bears are apparently evil! Do not touch the teddy-bears! Noted.

Fine, **shoot** the teddy-bears with my seemingly powerful laser then. Result: The teddy-bears changed colour to white but appeared to remain alive. At least they couldn't hurt me any more now though. Hm, maybe that was the aim of the game? Neutralise all of the teddy-bears?

I didn't get a chance to ponder about it more than that though, because all of the sudden I was attacked by an ugly jumping green alien creature of some sort. I quickly fired my laser, but it didn't seem to have any effect at all on this creature! This weapon of mine was getting increasingly disappointing. Hm, maybe I'd get a more powerful laser later in the game?

Trying to turn all the teddy-bears white while escaping the green alien was simply too difficult for me, so I never played the game for long before loading the next game. But because I still did load it every now and then, the game was grouped with the other nostalgic games anyway, even though I always only played it for about 2 minutes before giving up.

Eventually I figured out what the real object of the game was: Push all the teddy-bears with your laser, to the edge of the platforms in order to put them into your spaceship. Do this while avoiding the green alien thingy. Ridiculously difficult at my age, and therefore still uninteresting.

If you're annoyed that I keep calling it "the green alien thingy" because you know the instructions says it's actually a mutated toad, then you're forgetting that I'm just describing the games as I experienced them back then.

I think it actually took almost 2 decades before the game finally became interesting to me. Because that's how long it took for the challenge in the game to match my skills. (I never said I was a skilled gamer).

Remembering the game from back then, without actually having played it a whole lot, "Don't Panic" became one of the games that brings a lot of that special two-in-one feeling: A game-experience that is nostalgic and new at the same time.

The game-play wasn't exactly intuitive when looking at the screen and seeing the laser-firing capabilities of the robot. But now that I finally knew what I had to do, it **was** indeed rather arcade-game-like as I had suspected from the beginning. And entertaining too! Because I finally figured out how to escape the green alien! Thus finally being able to clear the first screen after all those years.

If you're into retrogames, and like the arcade game category, then you have to give "Don't Panic" a try.

The original Blu-ray version of 8-bit Memoirs contains video footage of this game. Visit www.8bitMemoirs.com to get it!

"Winter games"

"Winter Games" belongs in the group of games that reminds me particular of the quietness that was present in grandma's apartment back in those days.

I don't remember exactly when I was playing this game at grandma's place, but I'm guessing it was during the winter period 1986/1987 after school hours.



When I saw "Winter Games", there were two things that immediately gave me the impression that this was a game for grown-ups: The awesome graphics and the huge size of the game itself.

I couldn't picture grandma playing "Zorro" or "Wiggler", because those games were clearly made for kids; with graphics for kids and a game-play for kids. But I was rather sure that she played "Winter Games" every now and then when she was alone, because that was clearly a game for grown-ups. And why else would she buy a game for grown-ups, if it wasn't to play it herself?

This perception of mine is probably part of the reason the game has such a strong link to my grandma today: Because I thought she played the game herself. Whenever the grown-ups showed any kind of interest in something **I** found interesting too, I would always find it even **more** interesting.

I'll never know if she actually ever did play the game herself though.

"Winter Games" actually consisted of a whole 7 games, divided into 4 individual parts on the tape.

The first part contained "Bobsleigh", "Hotdog" and "Speed Skating". The 2nd part contained "Ski Jump". The 3rd part had "Figure Skating" and "Free Skating", and the 4th and last part of the game was "Biathlon".

Part 1: "Bobsleigh", "Hotdog", "Speed Skating"

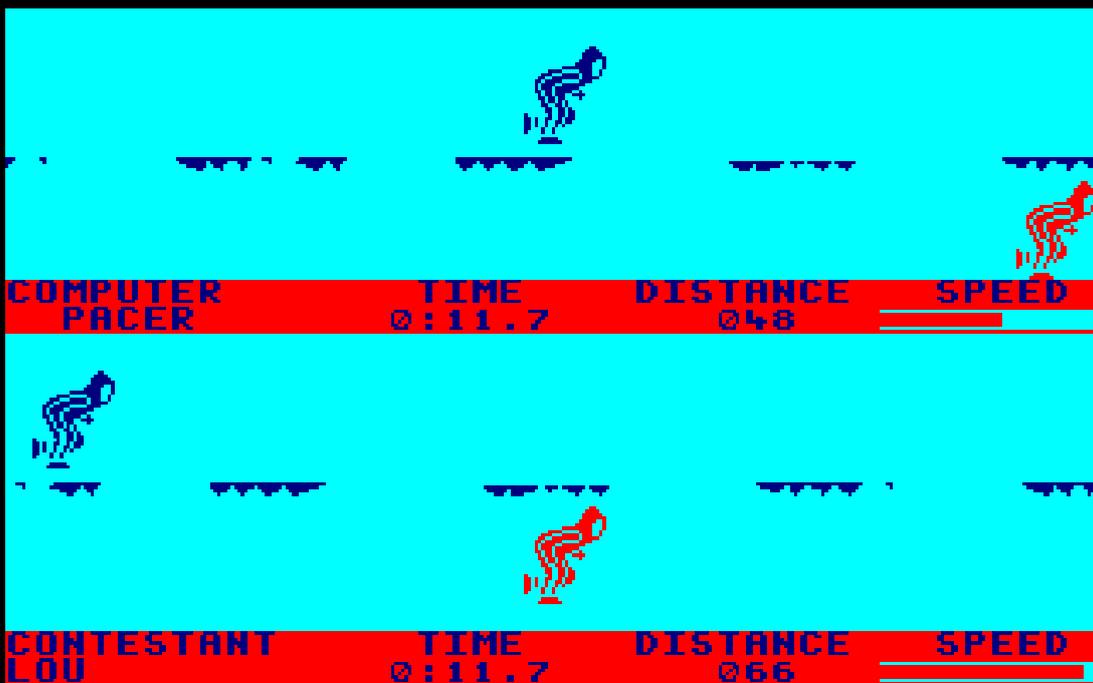


Playing the first part of "Winter Games" wasn't a whole lot of fun at first, because I basically just sucked at it. I crashed my bobsleigh constantly. Could never land on my feet in "Hotdog", and "Speed Skating" was just plain boring.



CONTESTANT LOU

ATTEMPT 1



COMPUTER PACER	TIME	DISTANCE	SPEED
	0:11.7	048	100

CONTESTANT LOU	TIME	DISTANCE	SPEED
	0:11.7	066	100

It wasn't until later, when my brother and I was borrowing my grandma's CPC, that we (in our own opinion) eventually got pretty good at "Bobsleigh". We still couldn't figure out "Hotdog" though, and "Speed Skating" was still plain boring.

Part 2: "Ski jump"

The 2nd part of "Winter Games" was the one that made the biggest impression on me, and thus the one that ended up being loaded the most.

Looking at part 2 today, I recognise the elements that always seemed to make a game interesting to me. It had an impressive piece of music, interesting graphics, and the sprites had a size that gave a good overview of the screen.



I would sometimes load part 2 just to look at the start-screen and listen to the music. Not because I found the music great as such. To be completely honest, I didn't actually like the music that much. But it gave an impression of something grand, especially when that awesome title-screen was displayed at the same time. I liked the impression of greatness that it gave.

"Ski jump" was also the part of "Winter Games" I enjoyed playing the most. Especially once I learned how to actually land on my feet.

Part 3: "Figure Skating", "Free Skating"

I always saw "Figure Skating" and "Free Skating" as the exact same thing, and never understood why the most boring part of the game had to be played twice.

I can't really say anything else about this part. It was the least interesting part of them all, and I only played it because my brother usually insisted on us loading all parts of the game in sequential order. Skipping a part wasn't an option.



Part 4: "Biathlon"

My 2nd favourite part of the game was the last part: "Biathlon".

"Biathlon" was a very different experience compared to other games. To be honest, I actually found it rather boring. But at the same time I also found it very relaxing, although at times also a bit frustrating. I could never figure out how to gain any speed at all, so I assumed that the slow pace was just how this part was supposed to be played.



I'm sure the awesome background graphics lifted up the whole game-experience for everyone who played "Winter Games", but they made a big impression on me for another reason too: I was sure that the small town in the background was a real place somewhere in the world that my grandma had visited more than once on vacation. I also thought that the reason for her playing "Winter Games" herself, was probably because it took place close to this town she had visited in real life. So it was obviously a place she was very fond of, and this made it more interesting playing this particular part of the game.

"Spindizzy"

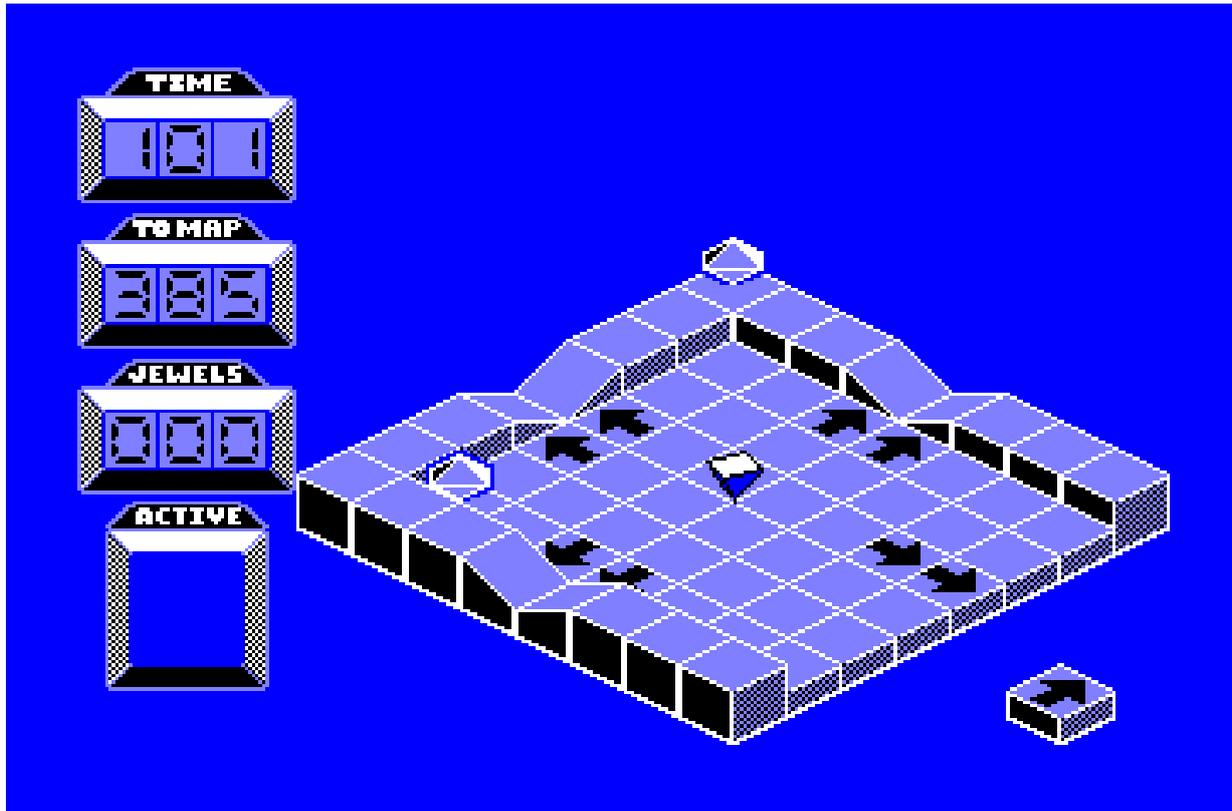


"Spindizzy" has a lot in common with "Winter Games" to me. They both belong in the group of games that reminds me particularly of the quietness in grandma's apartment back then in 1986/1987. I saw both games as being for grown-ups, and today they both stand as the most relaxing games I've ever played on the Amstrad CPC.

"Spindizzy" has an incredible relaxing atmosphere. The silence that is present in this vast isometric world is only interrupted by an occasional sound-effect, like e.g. when picking up a jewel, or when hitting the ground.

In more recent times I've learned that many people complained about the lack of music in the game. In my opinion, music would have ruined the whole experience. The silence with the few sound-effects was exactly right, giving it a very special atmospheric feel.

It's truly a game that stands out from any other game, in my opinion.



It is also one of those games that has given me a lot of that two-in-one experience later; nostalgia mixed with something new. Because back then my skills only allowed me to reach about 20% of the 385 screens that made up the isometric world. Even today there are still screens I haven't seen yet. I think I'm probably up to about 80% now, so I still have plenty of unexplored screens left to visit. :-)

The original Blu-ray version of 8-bit Memoirs contains video footage of this game. Visit www.8bitMemoirs.com to get it!

"Radzone"



I can list grandma's CPC games with the most nostalgic ones at the top, based on a mix of how early I was introduced to them, and how interesting I found them to be.

"Radzone" is placed at the very top of this list, followed by "Spindizzy", "Wriggler", "Zorro" and "Winter Games". Those 5 games have the strongest nostalgic weight because they were the very first games I saw on my grandma's CPC, and I ended up playing them a lot during the following years.

Then comes games that was introduced to me at the same time, but which I didn't play a whole lot later: "Batman", "Street Machine" and "Atlantis".

I think the reason "Radzone" is placed at the very top of the list, is because it ended up being the game I played the most of them all in the following years. It is the game that weighs the absolute most on the nostalgic scale of all the Amstrad CPC games I ever played.

The start-screen alone was very appealing. The title music told me I was about to go on a great adventure, and there was something rather magical about the visual part of the start-screen too: The overall ambient lighting, clear night sky with twinkling stars and the occasional shooting star flying by.

It was rather clear to me that this game was created by someone who was very passionate about making games and cared a lot about the atmospheric details. I recognised quality when I saw it.



The game itself also had many elements that appealed to me a lot: Relaxing exploration of a calm and quiet world with just the right amount of variation. There was no bound direction I had to take. I could take whatever path I felt like, thus adding more variation.

Something that often ruined exploration games was the requirement to constantly shoot bad guys. But there was luckily nothing like that in "Radzone". Everything had a comfortable relaxing pace. It was challenging without being too difficult.

The sprites had a suitable size; not too big and not too small, resulting in screens with just the right amount of overview.

The cosy atmosphere was enhanced by small discreet sound effects here and there, and they complimented the dimmed lighting really well.

All these appealing elements placed "Radzone" in the group of most interesting games I'd ever seen on the Amstrad CPC, and to this day it still resides in that category.

I have yet to complete the game though. I've made a few attempts, but never succeeded yet. I've always gotten stuck somewhere, or else missed a screen I couldn't find again.

Last time I made the attempt was back in 2008, December 25th. (I can't believe it's been that long already since my last attempt).

We were spending Christmas at my parents' place that year, and I'd brought my CPC464 with me along with some joystick extension cables.

Christmas and nostalgia kinda belongs together I think, so that morning I gave myself a cosy nostalgic Christmas session with "Radzone", long before anyone else in the house woke up. :-)

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"Daley Thomson's Super Test"



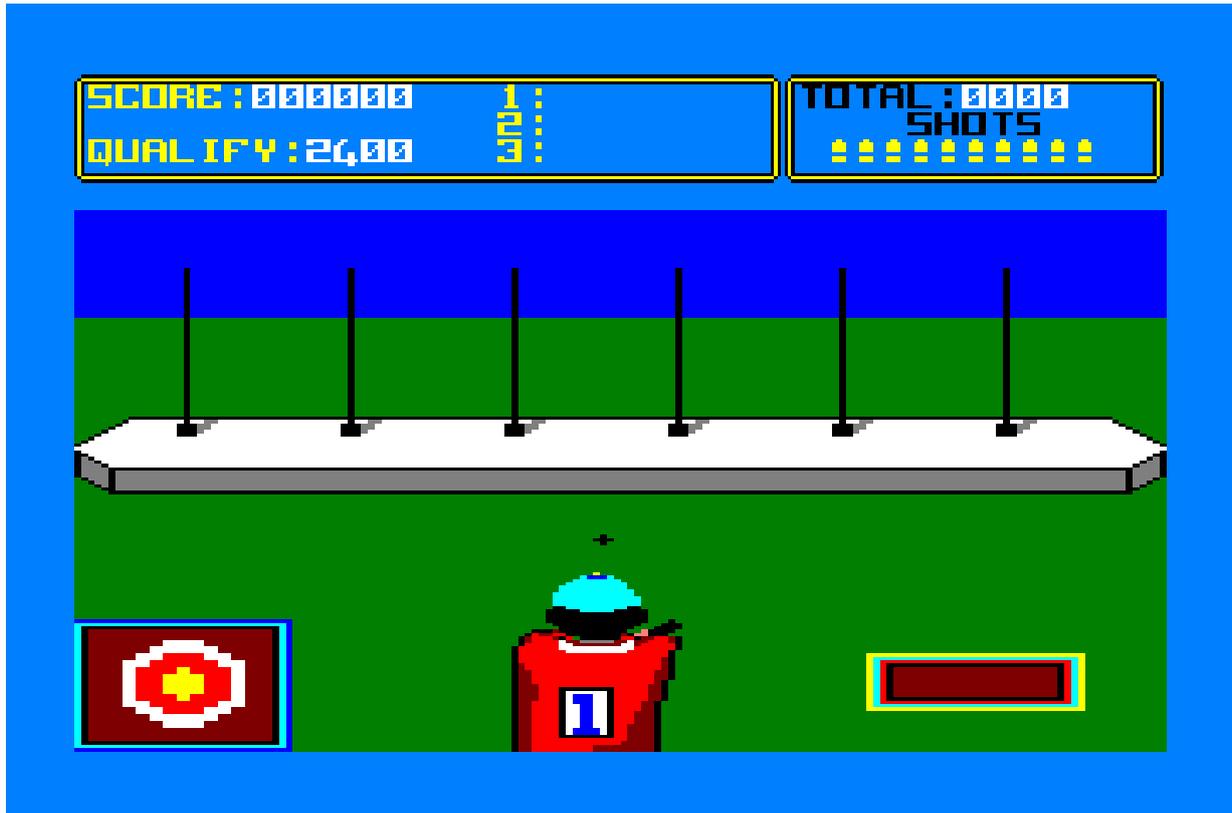
I think my brother and I were introduced to this game in January 1987. As far as I remember, this was the month grandma's CPC464 went for a visit at our house, and stayed in my room for a few months.

During the months we were borrowing grandma's CPC464, we were mostly playing new games, as in games we hadn't played on the CPC at grandma's place earlier.

I still link these games to the grandma CPC era though, because despite playing the games at our own house, it was still her games and it was also still her CPC.

"Daley Thomson's Super Test" is the game I remember the most from those months. My brother and I would sit on the floor in my room and play the levels of this game quite often.

We both remembered the arcade game "Track'n'Field" from a camping trip we'd been on, because we'd found it one of the most entertaining elements of that trip.



Every time we went camping, the first thing I checked was whether the place had any arcade machines. And this particular camping place introduced us to both "Track'n'Field" and "Burger Time". While my parents were a bit sad that it rained a lot that week, my brother and I just thought it was great, because it "allowed" us to go play these games in the small arcade (a small shed) instead of playing with other kids in the playground.

"Daley Thomson's Super Test" of course wasn't the same as "Track'n'Field", but it came close enough.



Instead of hitting two buttons to move the player, you had to yank the joystick left and right. This effectively made these games the ultimate joystick tester, and we would often hear "warnings" from the grown-ups that the joystick would break. Little did they know that Wico joysticks were real 1980s quality. I still have mine and it still works just as well as it did back in 1987.

"Daley Thomson's Super Test" consisted of 8 games:

"Pistol Shooting"

"Cycling"

"Spring board diving"

"Giant Slalom"

"Rowing"

"Penalties"

"Ski jump"

"Tug o'war"



I am a bit puzzled by how each of these 8 games reminds me of different people and places today. The first 2 games along with the last one represent me and my brother Kenneth playing the games mostly on grandma's CPC. But "Spring board diving" for some reason represents my classmate Lasse. And "Ski Jump" represents my cousin Robin. The only explanation I can find is that I must have been playing the games with them at their place at some point - and when we reached this particular part of the game, something happened that made an impression on me.



The original Blu-ray version of 8-bit Memoirs contains video footage of this game. Visit www.8bitMemoirs.com to get it!

Other games

I got my own CPC some time around June/July 1987.

At that time I had a tape for the CPC with 10 games. I'm not 100% sure where this tape came from. It was either my classmate Stig who had made a copy of one of his own tapes. Or else it came from my cousin's dad, who got it from someone at work.

Since we'd just moved to a new place, and I'd just gotten my own CPC, this tape kinda represents the transition between the "grandma's CPC chapter" and "my own CPC chapter" in the CPC era.

Some of the games on this tape are thus associated with my grandma, like "Atlantis", "Nuclear Heist" and "Batman", while others remind me of the new place we'd just moved to, like "Kung-Fu Master", "Le 5eme Axe", "Gunfright" and "Green Beret". And some of the games remind me equally much of both chapters, like "Gauntlet" and "Killer Gorilla".

And then there was "Skyfox" which is the only game on the tape that I never played because I couldn't figure it out, so I haven't even included that one on the list.

I haven't written any stories about these games, but the original Blu-ray version of 8-bit Memoirs does contain video footage of them (except for "Skyfox"), because I felt they had to be included for the sake of completeness.

Amstrad CPC stories

First BASIC experience

I had my first BASIC experience some day within the first quarter of 1986. My mum had brought me along for a visit at grandma's place.

It was in the very early CPC days, only a month or so after grandma had acquired her CPC464, and she only had about 3-4 games in her collection at this time.

The CPC was placed on her coffee table in the living room, where it was placed for the first few months she had it. It was moved to her hobby room later, some time around April.

I **think** my mum and grandma imagined that I could entertain myself with the CPC, while they could then have their grown-up conversation undisturbed at the dinner table.

But that wasn't exactly how things unfolded...

I was in no mood for any of the few games grandma had, so gaming was out of the question. So this was where my grandma then suggested that I instead took a look in the user instructions, to see what other things I could do with the CPC. That really didn't sound too exciting, but after some persuasion I picked up the CPC464 User Instructions and looked inside. From there it didn't take long before I found myself typing in one of the short BASIC examples from the user instructions.

Most people's first BASIC experience, looks somewhat like this:

```
10 PRINT "Hello world!"  
20 GOTO 10
```

But not mine. Mine looked like this:

```
10 INPUT "What is your age";age  
20 PRINT "You look younger than";age;"years old."
```

Found on page F2.6 in the user instructions.

I was rather curious to see the CPC carry out my commands, so the CPC's response to my RUN command was a bit disappointing:

```
"Syntax error in line 10".
```

The grown-up conversation between my mum and grandma was interrupted by my complaints about my program not working. My mum then told me it was because I'd made a typo in line 10.

And indeed she was right. I spotted the error when comparing my line on the screen with the one in the user instructions. So I added the missing character, typed RUN again and got a "Syntax error in line 20"...

```
10 input "What is your age"age
20 print "You look younger than";age;"years old."

run
What is your age
Syntax error in 10
10 INPUT "What is your age";age

run
What is your age? 10
Syntax error in 20
20 print "You look younger than";age;"years old."

run
What is your age? 10
You look younger than 10 years old.
Ready
■
```

When I finally got both lines correct, and the program ran fine, I had to interrupt my mum and grandma again, because I had no clue what the English words on the screen meant. My mum then told me it was asking me how old I was. So I typed "10" as my answer, and the CPC's answer was truly amazing. I knew that computers could do this sort of thing of course. I'd seen it in a movie or two at this point. But it was just a very different experience when it was **my** commands it carried out - and the fact that it was happening right here in front of my very own eyes - not just in a movie. It was incredibly intriguing to see the CPC remember my age and write it back to me. This machine was clever! It could remember what I'd told it! And now it knew my age!!

As I had no English skills whatsoever, I didn't know what the actual words in the reply meant. All I could see was that my age was included. So I asked my mum what it meant, but she just said it was something meant for grown-ups, and that answer obviously didn't help me much.

Ok. No matter. I was immediately captivated, and wanted to learn more.

I found another example in the user instructions and began typing. I don't remember which listing it was, but I suspect it was one I found on one of the next pages.

This one started with a CLS command in line 5, which meant that the whole screen was cleared at the beginning of the program. So when the CPC gave me a "Syntax error in line 10", it was on a blank screen. And this blank screen confused me. (Yes, it didn't take much). Since the listing wasn't visible on the screen anymore, I assumed I had to re-input the whole program all over - so I did.

When I still got a syntax error after having re-typed the whole thing, I got rather annoyed, and the prospect of having to re-type the whole program for the 2nd time spawned some rather loud complaints from me.

At this point, my grandma and mum was getting slightly tired of constantly being interrupted. So at first they tried threatening to turn off the computer if I had to be like that. But when that didn't work, my mum got up from her chair and came over to me.

"What's the problem?", she said, clearly indicating that she'd fix this quickly so she could return to her conversation with grandma.

"It doesn't work even though I typed it in correctly", I replied annoyingly.

"Try typing LIST", she then said.

"LIST?? What? Why?", I replied

"Then you can see what you've typed", she explained.

"...what? No way, you can't do that", I said.

"Just try it", she insisted.

So I reluctantly typed "list", and my little program did indeed magically appear on the screen.

What the...? I mean, **what** was going on here?! Mum knew about computers? She knew how to solve a random problem on a computer?

She then continued telling me about the EDIT command, usable when needing to make changes in a line.

This didn't add up. Mum walking around with such knowledge didn't make any sense. Especially considering that **she** had sent **me** to "help grandma with her new computer" very recently.

This was a puzzle I had to figure out later. Right now I had a much greater quest ahead of me; creating the best BASIC programs in the world. And now that I'd acquired this new valuable knowledge, I was even more eager to get started.

When I later asked my mum how she knew about these BASIC commands, she told me that she'd picked up a little bit at work because one of her co-workers developed GW-BASIC programs for the company she worked for.

It's difficult to describe just how eager these small BASIC type-ins had made me in just a single day. I definitely wanted to do more BASIC programming now. It was the discovery of a whole new and very exciting world for me. I could give instructions to this machine - tell it what to do - and then it did it! It became clear to me that this machine was most definitely going to become my new best friend.

And that was it. That was the very moment that my destiny was sealed. I was hooked on BASIC programming now. No other experience had ever been this exciting nor interesting.

I **had** to have more of this in life.

"Moon Quest" cartoon

Having experienced a few small type-ins from the Amstrad CPC464 User Instructions now, and gotten quite excited about BASIC coding, I decided to spend the next few weeks learning more commands, until I felt I was ready to create a little program of my very own.

I had an idea for a very simple technique I was eager to try out:

First, use LOCATE to instruct the CPC where on the screen to draw a symbol of some kind. Then use PRINT CHR\$(number) to draw that symbol. And finally use a FOR loop to wait a while before removing the symbol again, and placing it somewhere else.

I could picture in my head how the combination of these commands should logically result in some kind of animation on the screen - and that vision was extremely motivating in itself. It was probably the most intriguing idea I'd ever had in my life.

The big day

I arranged with my grandma to come visit her after school. I'm fairly sure the date was around 5th of May 1986, a couple of weeks after my 11th birthday.

Grandma's CPC had been moved to her hobby room now, where it was placed on a table with her sewing machine and other hobby articles. (It sometimes seemed like she had a million different hobbies).

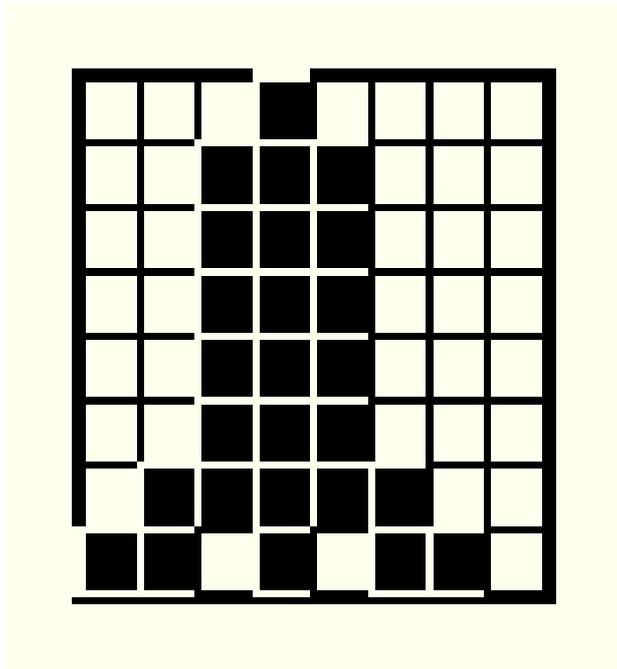
I explained my master-plan to her, about wanting to create some kind of animation on the CPC, and she of course thought it was the best idea she'd ever heard in her life.

I knew what technique to use. All I needed now was to come up with some kind of story. And a look in the appendix pages of the user instructions would help with the inspiration in that regard. All the characters that the CPC could display was listed on those pages in magnified versions.

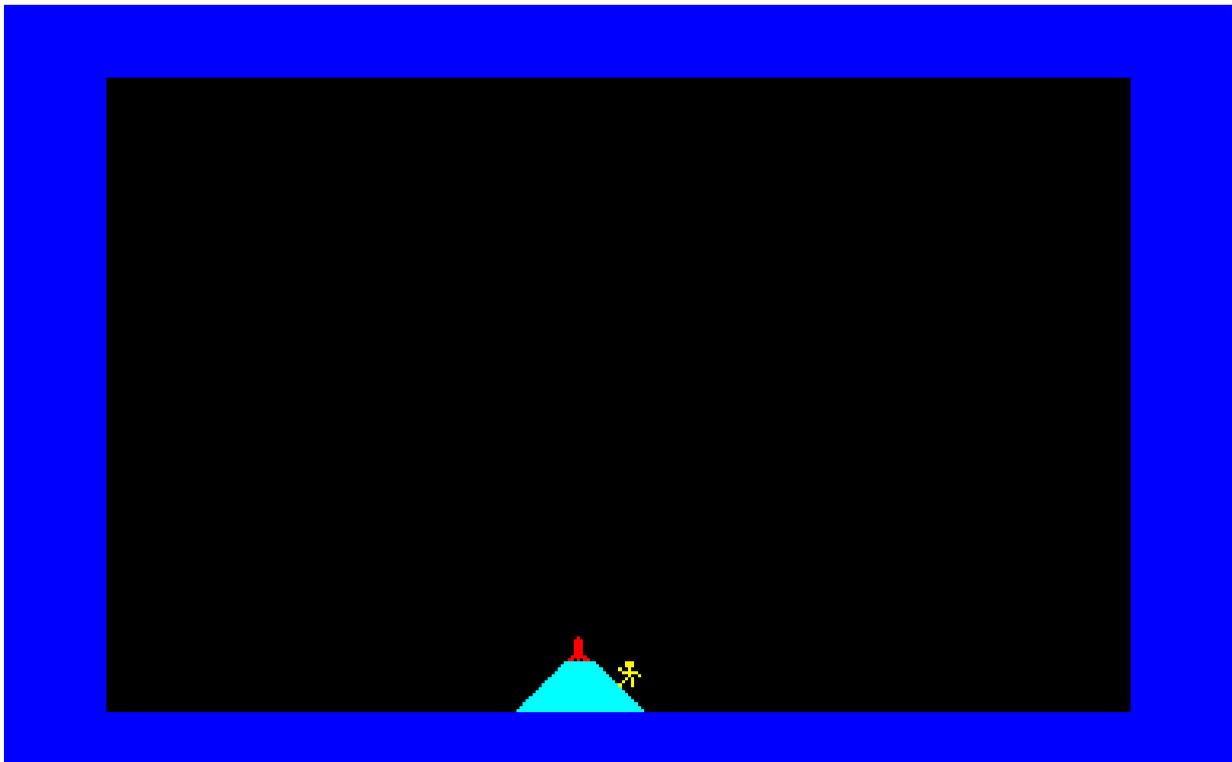
Character 239 in the list quickly helped me decide what I wanted to create: A small cartoon of a rocket that flew to the moon.

I'd been fascinated with rockets and space ever since I saw/read the Tintin episode where they flew to the moon in the red/white checkered rocket.

And then I got started.



First, I drew some ground and a little hill. Then a rocket on the top of the hill. Now: Animate a man approaching the rocket.



Using the LOCATE command, I placed my main character a few steps from the hill. Then made the CPC wait a while by calling a FOR loop that counted to 150. Then removed the man again by putting a space character at his location, and placed another man on the position left of his last position. Then waited a while again using another FOR loop...

Typing RUN would start the program, and in the beginning I would type RUN every time my main character had moved just a single position, just to admire the greatness of my work. But I'd soon make my character move a whole 4-5 positions before typing RUN again.

Seeing my work slowly come to life on the screen was a very rewarding feeling that I had never experienced before. I knew that creativity was great, but who knew that it could be **this** fulfilling?

In the BASIC programming language all lines had line-numbers, usually starting from line 10 and skipping 10 for each new line number. Reaching line number 500 in my very own program was a very big and noteworthy accomplishment. It meant I had written a whole 50 lines of my very own BASIC code. And that was quite an achievement for me.

```
250 PEN 3
260 LOCATE 19,22:PRINT CHR$(239)
270 LOCATE 19,23:PRINT " "
280 FOR n=1 TO 150:NEXT
290 LOCATE 19,21:PRINT CHR$(239)
300 LOCATE 19,22:PRINT " "
310 FOR n=1 TO 150:NEXT
320 LOCATE 19,20:PRINT CHR$(239)
330 LOCATE 19,21:PRINT " "
340 FOR n=1 TO 150:NEXT
350 LOCATE 19,19:PRINT CHR$(239)
360 LOCATE 19,20:PRINT " "
370 FOR n=1 TO 150:NEXT
380 LOCATE 19,18:PRINT CHR$(239)
390 LOCATE 19,19:PRINT " "
400 FOR n=1 TO 150:NEXT
410 LOCATE 19,17:█
```

3 lines for each frame. My idea seemed to work. It sure was a lot of typing, but each little frame in my animation gave me more enthusiasm.

My grandma was doing some cleaning up in the kitchen while I was typing all of these BASIC lines. When she was done, she came into the hobby room to rest for a while. (Her hobby room was also where her bed was placed).

"I'm just gonna lie here and rest my eyes for a bit, ok?", she said. "I'm not sleeping, I'm just resting my eyes..."

"Ok", I replied and continued typing in BASIC commands for a few minutes. And then grandma began snoring.

I could accept that this BASIC animation adventure wasn't quite as exciting for her as it was for me, but I'll admit I was slightly disappointed that she didn't at least find it interesting enough to stay awake.

I pondered for a while if it was rude of me to continue working on my project when my host had fallen asleep.

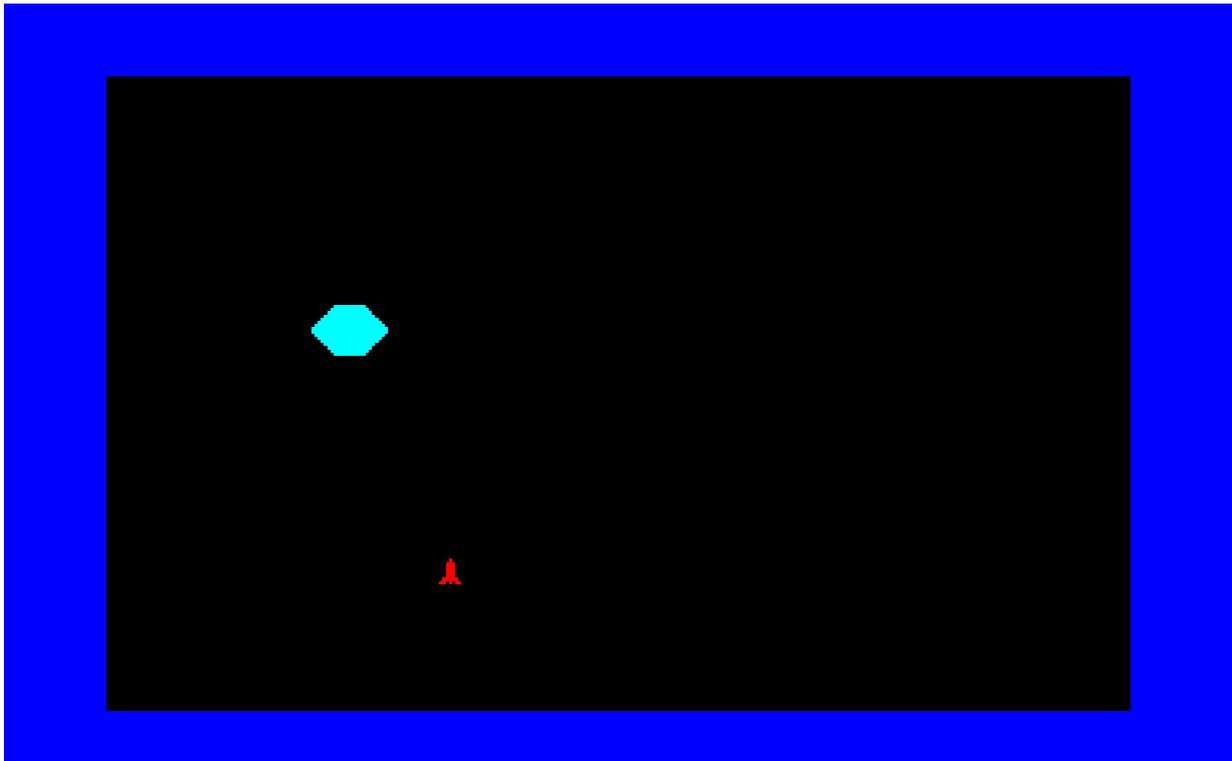
It took me a few minutes (might have been seconds) to determine that my project had to take priority. After all, this was clearly the dawn of a new era for me. And surely no social code should stand in the way of new dawning eras. Especially not one as great as this. So I continued typing.



I sat there for what felt like hours and typed and typed.

Moving the rocket from the bottom of the screen to the top of the screen was a process that took a long time. I was not a fast typist (yet).

*The CPC actually has a copy function that I **could** have used to copy lines - if I'd known this function existed. But I didn't know about that yet. So each and every line was typed in manually. No "cheating" involved.*



Finally the rocket reached the top of the screen. Now what?

Next screen of course - where the rocket again was at the bottom of the screen... So if I wanted it to reach the top of this 2nd screen once again, then I had to type in another 3 x 25 lines just like the ones I'd just written for the previous screen... I didn't feel much like doing that. So I decided that my destination; the moon, should be placed here in the 2nd screen.

As I moved the rocket closer to the moon, I also increased the size of the moon simply by PRINTing a bigger version. Early 3D animation in the works, yes sir.

One thing I particularly remember about that day was the silence surrounding us in the room. No background noise coming from grandma doing household chores. No background music coming from a radio, and no traffic from outside could be heard either. Everything was just quiet.

The only noise I heard was coming from the CPC keyboard when hitting a key - and the occasional snoring coming from grandma.

Under normal circumstances it would simply have been too boring for me to stick around. But the CPC kept my attention. So it was a somewhat unusual mix of surroundings to be in.

I don't remember if I was the one waking up grandma, or if she woke up by herself. In any case, she woke up when I had completed the project, and then I could present her with my creation. Her reaction made it very clear that this was undoubtedly the most amazing thing she'd ever seen in her whole life... on the CPC.

It was a rather short show though. What had felt like hours of typing had only resulted in a 2-screen animation lasting a few seconds...

Then it was time to save my work on tape, in order to preserve it for all eternity. But what should I call it?

The task of finding a name for this awesome creation took me by surprise. I recognised that finding the right name was important. So important in fact, that I couldn't leave it up to me alone.

"What should I call it?", I asked my grandma.

And she only thought for a few seconds before answering "Moon Quest".

The Danish name she suggested was "Månefart", which directly translated means "Moon travel" I think, or "Journey to the moon". I think "Moon Quest" is a suitable English title though.

I didn't particular like that suggestion though. I thought it sounded old. I didn't even know what it meant before she explained it. But I went with it anyway, because it was an animation I'd created for my grandma, so she should be allowed to give it the name she wanted.

I then decided that the animation should have a small loader. Nothing fancy, just a little BASIC program that displayed some information while the actual animation was loading.

The information said:

"This program is not a game. It is an animation made by Roald Strauss when he was 11 years old."

The purpose of this message was to avoid any misunderstandings with anyone. Although I was only 11 years old at this time, I had already noticed several times how easily people misunderstand each other, and how badly they behave when discovering that things aren't what they expected - even if it really is their expectations that are wrong, and not the actual reality about it.

I wanted to do my best not to mislead anyone into thinking they were loading an awesome game here. I knew perfectly well that my little animation would be worthless to anyone who expected to see an awesome game. And then they'd get angry for having wasted their precious time waiting for the whole 2 blocks of data to load.

Hopefully this loader-message would avoid any such confusion and disappointment for anyone for all times.

The part "when he was 11 years old" bugged me a bit though. My birthday had only been a couple of weeks ago. So if I had created this amazing animation just a few weeks earlier, then I would have been able to put "when he was 10 years old". And being able to create something this grand at age 10 would surely have been a bit more impressive than doing it at age 11.

But as I was always an honest guy I of course put "11 years old".

Then I at least get to impress the world decades later by showing how honest I was at age 11...

The original Blu-ray version of 8-bit Memoirs contains video footage of "Moon Quest". Visit www.8bitMemoirs.com to get it!

Borrowing grandma's CPC

Having successfully created my first BASIC program "Moon Quest" on my grandma's Amstrad CPC464 around May 5th 1986, I'd now become **very** interested in BASIC programming. I had a **strong** urge to create more of my own programs on the CPC - and it was instantly clear to me that after-school visits at grandma's here and there wouldn't be able to fulfil this need.

It wouldn't feel right either to suddenly begin visiting grandma that much just because I was interested in her CPC now - even if it might have been part of the reason why she acquired the CPC in the first place.

So at home I'd express my desire to do more CPC programming, and my mum would reply: "So go visit grandma", to which I'd reply back: "I can't go visit grandma just because I want to use her computer".

My mum would then say: "... sure you can", while understanding perfectly fine what I meant, but at the same time deciding that this was one of those situations where such rules did not apply. Grown-ups could make exceptions to the rules like that whenever they wanted to. Kids could not.

I **must** have visited grandma a **few** times during late 1986 and early 1987 though, but have to admit that I don't actually remember. I definitely didn't visit as much as I could have. In retrospect I probably should have. Because it **is** of course true that the rules are slightly different for kids in this regard. And it was something all parties wanted. I just had to ruin it with my premature political correctness.

The next thing I remember is that grandma's CPC464 was hooked up in my room at home!!! I'm guessing this was in January 1987 - meaning a whole 7 months after I created "Moon Quest". I don't remember the exact how and why, but my best guess is that grandma decided I should borrow the CPC, because I'd spoken a lot about wanting to do more BASIC programming.

And so, her CPC464 was now at my disposal every day when I came home from school. I was free to seriously start exploring BASIC.

Only for a limited time of course, because I was only borrowing the CPC. But still. It was in my room, and that meant I could now start making all sorts of different creative projects.

On top of the time-limitation, I also had to share the CPC with my brother. That was one of the conditions for borrowing it. He had to be allowed to play games on it too. And I know what you're thinking here: Two brothers both wanting to use the same toy. What could possibly go wrong, right?

The CPC was placed on the floor in my room. Not that I didn't have a desk for it. I just preferred sitting on the floor when playing the games, because that was what we'd been doing when playing the Philips Video G7000 games at uncle and aunt years earlier, and I would very much like to recreate the cosy atmosphere from those days.

The CPC game I remember us playing the most during this time was "Daley Thompson's Super Test".

It was obviously problematic when both my brother and I wanted to use the CPC at the same time. And that was a scenario we encountered many many times. While we were being held captive at school, I would make plans to create something great in BASIC as soon as I was released from school, and my brother would make plans to play a game. Then we'd both be set on carrying out these plans of ours during the whole day. So when we both came home from school, we would of course start a big argument about who was most entitled to use the CPC. We mostly seemed to agree that it was a question about who came home from school first. In a classic scenario, I would hurry as much as I could to get home as fast as possible, only to find out that my brother had already been home for hours with the CPC, because he had fewer classes than me that day. This was rather annoying, because as I was a few classes ahead of him, I often had longer days than him.

Luckily my mum would sometimes help me out in these cases: "Now let your brother use the computer. You've been using it for a while now. It's your brother's turn".

Of course, she said the same thing to me when the roles were switched around, which meant that my creativity was often interrupted.

I did also enjoy a short game every now and then, but as I found most of the games too difficult, I usually lost interest again rather fast.

Creating my own stuff in BASIC was much more interesting. And getting ideas for new projects was never a problem. Ideas popped into my head all the time. (Still do).

And so, with the limited knowledge I had, I began building my program-ideas with the few BASIC commands I knew at the time.

Whenever I ran into a problem I always managed to solve it somehow. Due to my skills and knowledge being rather limited, I rarely found the most **optimal** solution in the world. But I always found **some** kind of workaround.

My mum couldn't avoid noticing how eager I was to code BASIC on the CPC, so she asked one of her co-workers (who was coding GW-BASIC programs at work) to print out a program listing she could bring home with her and give to me for inspiration.

A nice thought but a terrible idea. GW-BASIC didn't use the same commands as the CPC, so it obviously didn't work on the CPC.

And I was also **much** more interested in creating my **own** programs, rather than typing in something that was made by someone else. I was somewhat annoyed with her for not understanding this, but had to give her points for trying.

Every day when I came home from school, I rushed up to my room to work on my programs. I had truly found **the** sparetime hobby of my life. Coming home from school was already the best time of the day, and now it was even better!

Likewise, bedtime was already the worst time of the day, because it meant that another school-day was waiting for me when I woke up again, and it was very frustrating knowing that I had to go waste most of the day there before I could come home and continue doing something useful with my time.

And now bedtime was even worse, because it now also meant that I had to stop working on my programs for the day.

Unless of course I brought the CPC with me to bed...

...wait a minute... That's a **great** idea!!!

Bring the CPC with me to bed? Of course! Why didn't I think of that any sooner?

That's right. I ended up placing the CPC in the foot-end of my bed. I slept in one of those sofa-beds at the time, placed in a corner of my room. Being a sofa-bed meant that it had an armrest, and the monitor fit nicely on there so that the back of the monitor leaned up against the wall.

With this geeky setup I could sit up at night and work on my BASIC projects for as long as I could stay awake. It was a great plan.



"Now don't turn on the computer when I leave the room", my mum would say after saying goodnight. "You have to get some sleep to be ready for school tomorrow".

"Alright mum"...

And as soon as she left my room, I of course switched on the CPC and continued working on my programs. It really gave the days a perfect ending. Of course, it also made the mornings worse, but it was totally worth it.

The school eventually introduced computer class, but as far as I could see, they weren't designed for us to actually learn anything. Instead, we had to use silly applications like Turtle to draw lines on the screen, and that just wasn't interesting to me at all because of all the lines I'd already been drawing on the CPC, using a much more direct approach.

Sometimes all we did for the entire class was to sit and type in the data of all the students at the school, into a database system invented by the teacher. Then a month later a group of men in suits would come to see the system demonstrated by the teacher. I think his dream was to sell this system and retire from teaching, but that didn't work out for him, because there was nothing revolutionary about this database system of his.

My address-book project

While I was borrowing grandma's CPC464, I began creating an electronic address-book with the names, addresses and phone-numbers of everyone in my class at school.

I already knew how to store values in variables, and had recently learned that one variable could actually contain multiple values. I had no clue this was called an array, and to be honest, I couldn't care less either. I was interested in functionality; to see what each command could do and then use that functionality for something useful and creative. Knowing the actual names of the various techniques didn't really affect my development one way or the other, so such knowledge didn't have any value to me.

Then I began writing my program, by typing in the names, phone-numbers and addresses of my classmates into DATA lines. Then reading the DATA lines into my array variables a\$, b\$, c\$ and d\$. All names were stored in the array a\$, all addresses in b\$ and so forth.

If you know a little bit about computer-programming, you're probably wondering why I didn't use variable names like name\$, address\$ and phone\$. Well, this was because someone (I think it was one of my dad's older brothers) had told me earlier about "the registers" of a computer. They were called A and B, and were used to store values in. Whoever told me this was of course talking about the very inner workings of the CPU, but I translated it to BASIC and thought I had to use the names A and B for variables. I was impressed by the CPC that way because I was sure this person had told me I could **only** use A and B, but on the CPC I seemed to be able to use C and D and many more too!

Right, let's RUN this nifty little program of mine...

A screenshot of a terminal window with a dark blue background and yellow text. The text reads: 'run' on the first line, 'Subscript out of range in 90' on the second line, and 'Ready' on the third line. A small yellow square cursor is positioned at the start of the fourth line.

```
run
Subscript out of range in 90
Ready
█
```

What? Subscript out of range? What did **this** mean now?

Every time the CPC gave me one of its many different error messages, I was always clueless about what it actually meant. I still didn't understand English, and grandma only had an English version of the User Instructions. So the only thing the various error messages told **me** was

that **something** was wrong with my commands. I had to figure out for myself what it was.

In this case, the problem was that I hadn't told the CPC how many indexes my array variables should have.

This should be done with a DIM a\$(number) command. But I had absolutely no idea about that, and I never suspected that to be cause of the error either. Because it **was** possible to store up to 9 values **without** dimensioning the arrays.

Since I had no one I could ask for assistance, I never figured out that the problem was the missing DIM statements. But I **did** figure out that I could only store 9 indexes in each array. A rather disappointing discovery, that this machine didn't have more capacity than that. I sure expected a lot more - and it didn't add up either, considering I'd just discovered that the CPC apparently had a lot more registers available than other computers. Hm, maybe this array limitation was a consequence of having more registers available? If so, it obviously hadn't been thought through by the designers...

In any case, since that's how it was, I simply chose to split up my program into 3 parts. One part to hold information on all the girls from class, and two other parts to hold information on all the boys. That way I never used more than 9 indexes of my array variables.

Version 2: Going pro

About 6-8 months later when I had my own CPC, I decided to have another go at an electronic address book. Having the Danish Amstrad CPC464 User Instructions available now meant it was a bit more interesting to browse through the keywords. I slowly began to learn the meaning of the various commands. But I have to admit that I often still didn't understand the description of the commands, so I mostly reverted to my old cleverly invented method for learning what the various commands did:

- 1) Type the command
- 2) See what happened

The DIM command didn't produce a whole lot of magic on the screen, but looking at the syntax in the example, while utilising my stunningly high IQ, it was easy to see that this command had something to do with array variables. And after a little test I understood how it worked.

This was awesome! Now I knew I could store **much** more than just 9 indexes in an array... The CPC was truly an amazing machine!

But **how** many indexes could I store, I wondered?...

Curious to find out how many indexes I could have in an array, I first tried dimensioning my variable to 50000 indexes. This gave me an "Overflow" error. Ok ok, not **that** many apparently.

So I tried with 30000 instead, and received a "Subscript out of range" error. Then I tried with 20000, which gave me a "Memory full" error...

These different error messages confused me quite a bit.

Finally trying with 10000 indexes seemed to work.

```
dim a$(50000)
Overflow
Ready
dim a$(30000)
Subscript out of range
Ready
dim a$(20000)
Memory full
Ready
dim a$(10000)
Ready
█
```

Despite 10000 indexes being a whole lot more than 9 indexes, I remember still being a bit disappointed that the CPC couldn't store more. Although I doubted **I** would ever actually need 10000 indexes, it just didn't seem like that much for a computer like this. I couldn't help comparing with K.I.T.T. from the Knight Rider TV series. Whatever Michael Knight asked K.I.T.T. it always had the answer handy. I couldn't see how the CPC would be able to do the same with only 10000 array indexes, and that was a bit of a letdown.

Anyway, with this new knowledge about arrays, I decided I would make a bigger and better program to keep record of **all** the people I knew. Not just my classmates this time, but also family and friends. This would

definitely not be a K.I.T.T.-sized database, so it should be doable with the CPC's memory capacity.

I decided that this should be a professional looking program, so it had to be designed like one - visually and operationally.

For example; the data should be stored in a separate file rather than being hardcoded, in order to not need to edit the program every time I wanted to add a new person or make changes to an existing one.

And it should also use the 80-character wide MODE 2 with a black background and white text.

And that was basically the design phase. Didn't take long back then.

I succeeded in creating the program, and in time it grew to contain more and more people I knew. Classmates, family and friends.

PC version

Around 1993/1994 I even made a GW-BASIC version on the PC, and added a few new fields in the process. I had no knowledge whatsoever about how I could transfer the data from the CPC to the PC. In fact I was pretty sure it wasn't even possible to do so. Connect a CPC to a PC? What a silly thought. Read a CPC disk on a PC or a PC disk on a CPC? Even more silly.

So I had to manually input each person again. I don't remember exactly how many people's data I'd collected at that time, but it sure felt like a lot.

I also attempted creating an Amiga port using AmigaBASIC, but didn't get that far before giving up. There were a number of factors that made AmigaBASIC unattractive, like its incompatibility with newer AmigaOS versions and the overall slow speed.

Returning the CPC

I think grandma's CPC464 was returned again around April 1987, which means it stayed with us for a whole 3-4 months. My dad thought we'd had it long enough now, and wanted to return it. Also, my parents had sold our house, and we were moving out in May. He thought it was best to return the CPC before moving to a new place. Almost a whole month before we were moving.

So now I was without a CPC again...

Getting my own CPC

The 9th of May 1987 we moved from our 2-storey house into a smaller apartment.

Before moving, we had been borrowing my grandma's CPC464 for 3-4 months, and it had been tremendously fulfilling to create my own various BASIC programs during those months. But the CPC had been returned to my grandma now, partly because we were moving, and partly because my dad felt we'd had it for a long time now, and it was time to return it. So now I was without a CPC again.

Not having a CPC at my disposal at this time was the absolute worst possible situation I could be in. I was hooked more than ever now! And then all of the sudden I was completely surrounded by no CPC at all!

It was crystal clear to me that I **had** to have a CPC in my life. My very soul told me so. There was absolutely no doubt that the CPC was a keystone in the life I had been put here on earth to live. If I didn't have a CPC, then I wouldn't be able to live the life I was destined for, which meant that my life would pretty much be without purpose then.

Being able to see this truth wasn't great at all. Because at age 12 I was old enough to know that the CPC was a very expensive "toy", originally priced around 850 Euro. Then on sale in 1985 for 730 Euro, and again in 1986 for about 600 Euro.

But even a price drop like that didn't make it affordable for my parents. I knew they didn't have a whole lot of money. That was the main reason we had to move into a smaller apartment in the first place. So I didn't exactly need any psychic powers or a crystal ball to predict what kind of reaction they'd give me if I asked them for a CPC.

Inflation calculation: 600 Euro in 1987 was the equivalent of about 1.020 Euro in year 2016.

Of course I **had** to ask anyway. I just didn't do it right away. I wanted to keep the hope for a while. So it took me a few days to build up the courage I needed in order to hear the "No!" that I knew they would give me.

And so they did.

All hope of ever getting a CPC was shattered.

I was miserable for weeks. My parents had never ever seen me this sad before.

I knew in my soul that I **had** to have this machine. I knew that it was (supposed to be) an extremely important part of my life. And knowing that I could never have one was just devastating. I couldn't picture what my life would be like without a CPC. What path would I take if not the one I was destined for?

I wasn't angry at my parents. Unlike many other cases where their decisions always seemed illogical and unfair to me, turning down my request for a CPC made perfect sense. I understood perfectly well that it was way too much money for them. That's how I knew that their "no" was a final answer. I knew this wasn't negotiable in any way. And that's why I'd never been this sad before: There was no hope that anything would change.

I **was** angry at the situation though. Angry at the cosmic powers of the universe for requiring the ridiculous amount of 600 Euro from my parents, in order to let me take the path I was born to take. I mean, what kind of sick joke was that?!

Changed their minds

My somewhat long duration of sadness must have really made an impression on my parents.

Because while I was away on a trip for a week, they somehow managed to find the money for a CPC, and decided to go ahead and buy me one. (I suspect there may have been yet another price-drop too).

The way they decided to tell me this wonderful news, was like this:

Coming home from my trip, my dad came to pick me up at the train station where he, after welcoming me home and asking if I'd had a nice trip, then said something along the lines of:

"So... if you'd still like to have one of those Amstrad computers we can swing by the store on the way home and pick one up".

Some kind of glitch happened in my brain at this point. It was having a **really** hard time processing those words. It was a huge change of topic. We might as well have been talking about trains, and then have one of us go: "I also like jam on my bread".

My long duration of sadness hadn't been some kind of protest to get things my way. No, I had truly been sad because I **knew** that I would never have a CPC in my life, and I'd somehow kinda adjusted to that empty reality now.

But now dad was saying I could get one anyway? **Confusion!**

A rather hectic conversation began between me and my brain:

Wait, what?? **What** did he just say???

He said you could have one of those computer thingies.

What? Don't toy with me dammit! Are you absolutely sure?

Yup, that's what he said.

....**really?**

Yup

But... **why?** What's changed?

Don't know dude.

But that doesn't make **any** sense! Wait... Is he talking about some other cheaper brand of computer that they found somewhere, and thought it would be better than nothing?

Nope, pretty sure he's talking about the CPC.

...but they **know** it means the world to me to get one of those. Why isn't mum here to see my reaction too then, if it's for real?

Don't know dude.

And getting an Amstrad CPC is a **big deal!** It's not something you just "swing by the store on the way home to pick up"! Surely I can't have heard him right?

I'm pretty sure you heard him right dude.

...but **everything** about this is **entirely illogical!!!** They gave me a very certain (and somewhat displeased) "no"! Why this sudden change of mind???

This makes no sense!!!

Don't know dude.

...you're not exactly any help here, are you?

...no.

I looked at my dad for several seconds while this conversation was going on inside my head, trying to figure out whether I'd really heard him right and understood him correctly, or if I'd just gone crazy. (Always consider the possibility that you might have gone crazy. It happens).

His facial expression didn't help much. It neither confirmed nor denied anything. It was just kinda expressing an impatience caused by the lack of response from my side. So there was nothing yet I could use to rule out the possibility that I had in fact gone crazy.

The absence of a joyful outburst from **my** side made him question if I was still even **interested** in getting a CPC.

I was of course definitely still interested in getting myself my own CPC, but I was also very doubtful whether this whole thing was for real. And **if** it was for real, how comfortable would I then be about my parents spending money they didn't really have?

At the store

Entering the local shop in town that sold the 8-bit home computers, everything was still rather unreal. I still suspected my parents might have found some other cheaper computer brand they wanted me to accept instead, but no. It really was going to be a CPC.

The shop was called "Dam Foto" in 1987, and they basically sold cameras and 8-bit computers. In 2017 the same shop is called "Photocare", and is owned by one of the guys who worked there in 1987.

The salesman who handled the computer section wasn't available when we visited, so we had to settle for the camera salesman, who of course didn't know a whole lot about the computers.

Luckily that didn't matter at all, because I already knew everything I needed to know: I wanted a CPC464.

But then the salesman presented me with the CPC6128; a superior model with a disk-drive and 128kb of memory. For comparison, the CPC464 only had a tape-deck and half the memory.

While my dad was talking with the salesman, telling him how much I'd been wanting the CPC, I was seated on a chair in front of the CPC6128, and started typing a few PEN, INK and BORDER commands, soon resulting in a small light show of colours blinking on the screen.

My dad then told me I could have whatever model I wanted. As if things weren't surreal enough already.

No doubt most 12-year old kids given such a choice, would of course have chosen the superior model without hesitation. But nothing in my life was ever simple.



There were 3 things that made me choose the CPC464 instead of the CPC6128:

- 1)** I kept having a feeling that my long duration of sadness had pushed my parents into spending money they didn't really have. The morally right thing to do would probably have been to decline my dad's offer about getting a CPC in the first place, but then I would be turning my back on the life I had been put here on earth to live. It was a hard decision, but yet a very clear one. Naturally I had to have a CPC, but I could at least make it the least expensive model then and also exclude any accessories, in order to make it the cheapest possible package.
- 2)** My grandma had the CPC464, so that was the model I was used to. Getting the CPC6128 would require me to learn new placements of the keys, and prevent me from running the stuff I'd made on her CPC464, since they'd been saved on tape - unless of course I also got a separate tape-deck for the CPC6128. But that would require even more money from my parents, and I didn't want that.
- 3)** I knew that my cousin Robin also had an Amstrad CPC now, but I didn't know which model he had. He would probably be sad if I got a model that was better than his, and I didn't want that.

I didn't tell my dad about these thoughts, except the one about my cousin, to which he replied that we could just call him to find out which model he had. The salesman even offered us to use the phone in the store.

But I didn't want to make that call as I knew it wouldn't really change my decision anyway. I had to have the least expensive model.

And that's how it was decided that it should be the CPC464.

*My cousin of course had the CPC6128. And considering how much we ended up CPC'ing together, you'd think it **would** have been better if I'd gotten the CPC6128. But I never regretted getting the CPC464.*

I also took notice when my cousin complained about disks being way too expensive, resulting in him actually ending up using tapes a lot more than disks anyway.

Coming home

Arriving at home with my new CPC464, a new era in my life had begun. It should have been a day of pure joy, but it wasn't. The joy that was supposed to have been present was suppressed by a lot of tension. A feeling of having scammed my way to some kind of reward that I didn't deserve, giving me a feeling of being in a huge debt to my parents now, and I had no idea how I could ever pay them back.

As everything had gone so fast I obviously didn't have a spot for it in my room yet. No table to put it on. So instead, it was placed on the floor.

Naturally I wanted to hook it up right away, but my dad said I should wait a while before turning it on, until it had gotten room temperature. So for a while I was just looking at it while thinking about all the cool stuff I would soon be creating with BASIC now.

After waiting a while the CPC was turned on, and I was eager to continue my BASIC exploration where I'd left off when my grandma's CPC had been returned. I had the tape with all my saved programs ready. It was the same Philips tape, with their "blue dots" logo on the front, that my grandma had given me back when I needed to save "Moon Quest" in May 1986. Soon I would find out if all of my saved programs could be read by my new CPC, or if I'd run into the same problems that my grandma and me experienced back when we tried getting "Commando" running on her CPC464.

But my dad wanted me to load the supplementary game that I'd chosen in the shop instead: "Star Firebirds", released the year before.

I didn't really feel like playing that game (or any game for that matter). It wasn't one I'd chosen because I thought it looked cool. In fact, I remember finding the orange spaceship on the cover rather lame. (My apologies to the artist). "Star Firebirds" was merely the one of the two choices I had that looked the **least** boring when comparing screenshots on the back of each cassette. (The other option I had was "Bombscare").

To be completely honest, I only picked "Star Firebirds" because it would be impolite to reject both games.

So I didn't really feel like playing the game. But I also felt that I had to give my dad **something** in return for all of this. So I loaded the game up anyway.

When the game was loaded, and I managed to start a game, it seemed to require a joystick to play it. But I didn't have a joystick. I'd chosen not to get one, in order to let my parents save **some** of their hard earned money.

It was at this point I realised that my dad wasn't **temporarily** insane. It began looking more like a permanent damage of some kind.

Because instead of getting angry at me for turning down a joystick in the shop, he merely asked if he should drive down to the shop again and get me one.

I declined his offer of course, because I really didn't want them to spend any more money on me, and I really wasn't that eager to play the game anyway.

"But you can't play the game without a joystick, right?", my dad asked. I don't think he understood how little the gaming-part meant to me. I just wanted to code some BASIC stuff.

"Umm... right... ", I replied.

"Ok, then I'll go and get a joystick now", he said, and left. Drove down to the shop (2 km from our place) and back again with a joystick.

*You actually **can** play "Star Firebirds" without a joystick though. The very first screen asks you to select joystick or keyboard controls. But I missed that because my English skills still weren't that great, and because my way of getting a game started therefore involved first pressing SPACE, then ENTER, and then a lot of other random keys until something happened. Apparently I hit the J key at some point, thus selecting joystick controls. So I assumed you needed a joystick.*

While my dad was out, I found the tape with my BASIC programs I'd previously created on grandma's CPC, and loaded them one by one, enjoying the reunion very much. And it was a big relief to see that they actually loaded fine on my new CPC, which instantly increased the value of my new CPC by a factor 10.

Coming back from the shop with a joystick, I'm guessing my dad must have been longing for some sign of appreciation. Some kind of "You're the best, dad!" outburst from my side perhaps. Or maybe just a smile would probably also have been good. But I didn't show much of that. He did probably notice that I was slightly happier when he returned, but that

wasn't because of the joystick. That was because I now knew that my BASIC programs worked on my new CPC.

I still felt guilty for having made my parents pay a lot of money that they logically didn't have, so I was mostly just quiet and somewhat careful-like, not knowing exactly what to expect next in this surreal situation.

I loaded "Star Firebirds" again in an awkward attempt at making my dad happy. And it became slightly more awkward when I noticed the keyboard/joystick question this time. I chose to not tell him that his 2nd trip to the shop and the extra expense had been unnecessary.



As I expected, I was far from impressed with "Star Firebirds" back then, but I played it for a while anyway because I felt my dad needed and deserved to see **some** kind of appreciation. I'm pretty sure that the general lack of any sign of appreciation from my side was a rather disappointing experience for him.

It didn't help much to see me play the game either, because it really didn't interest me, and overall I found it rather boring. So I just played for a while until he gave up catching any smile from me and left my room.

"Star Firebirds" was a CPC conversion of the arcade game "Space firebird" created by Nintendo in 1980. I didn't know this in 1987 of course. In fact, I only found out about this by coincidence 27 years later, when checking out various retro games for MAME. And quite interestingly, after playing the original title from 1980, the CPC version "Star Firebirds" has actually become more fun to play nowadays. Playing the original version from 1980 also taught me that the biggest sprite in the CPC version was in fact **not** a big face of an old indian man with a turban and a big bushy beard, as I had always thought it was. No, it was in fact a big space firebird.



Yes sir. You live and you learn.
(And if you're wondering why I didn't find it odd that a big indian face attacked me in a space shooter, then you really haven't played enough games from that era. You will see the strangest things in some of those classic games).

But gaming was never my passion.

What I really wanted to do was to code my own BASIC stuff. And as soon as the game was over, I found the tape with my BASIC programs again.

Best thing ever

When my mum came home from work later that day, I heard my parents talking in the kitchen. First a bunch of boring work-related topics, before she asked: "So how did it go? Did you get the computer?"

"Yes, it's in his room, but he doesn't seem too happy about it", he replied.

My dad had already found a table for the CPC at this point, and it was now hooked up in the corner of my room.

My mum peeked into my room and saw me deeply engaged in one of my BASIC projects while pretending I didn't notice her peeking, and she recognised that I was quite happy with my new CPC.

Although it wasn't easy to see, "quite happy" was an understatement. Buying me a CPC is without a doubt the best thing my parents has ever done for me in my whole life.

Just as I knew, it ended up playing a huge role in my life.

Having a CPC and my BASIC projects to come home to every day after school made life **much** more enjoyable - and I needed that.

It made life seem much brighter, because there was **always** something to look forward to now: Coding the next idea, solving the next bug, learning new commands and techniques. The CPC was exactly the companion I was missing in my life.

My parents would of course complain that I spent too much time in front of the screen - but not nearly as much as they could have done. I think the only reason they complained was because they felt they had to, because the "Parents Instructions Manual" said they should. But at the same time they also recognised that the CPC was one of the very few things I truly enjoyed in life, and they of course didn't want to take that away from me.

About a decade later when I was educating myself as a Computer Scientist and had to learn about the Active Server Pages technology from Microsoft, all of my BASIC experience from my CPC proved to be a great help. I actually even used my Amstrad CPC464 User Instructions to look up keywords used in ASP. And this came in very handy at my first job, when I needed to do some ASP development. I found this rather amusing, because a few of my classmates in primary school had told me that I'd never be able to work in this field without learning C. But there I was now, coding professional solutions with BASIC that I'd learned on my Amstrad CPC464 - even using my Amstrad CPC464 User Instructions to look up keywords.

Today I have a ton of great nostalgic memories about the CPC, because my parents bought me my CPC464 back in 1987. You can even say that 8-bit Memoirs is a direct result of getting my CPC464 back then.

So yes, the CPC really made a great and positive impact on my life. I can't imagine where I'd be today if my parents hadn't changed their minds and bought me a CPC back then in 1987.

"Moon Quest II"

It was now November 1987, and I'd had my new CPC for probably about a month or two.

Back in May 1986 I'd created this small "cartoon" for my grandma on her CPC464. It had been given the name "Moon Quest" by my grandma herself.

My cousin Robin (on my mums side) only saw "Moon Quest" recently and thought it was such an awesome creation that he very enthusiastically suggested that we teamed up on creating a sequel.

I thought that was pretty much the most awesome idea I'd heard all my life. It had "awesome" written all over it!

To learn that my cousin apparently was just as passionate about Amstrad CPC BASIC programming as myself - that was extremely awesome. Because it told me that the near future would contain lots of Amstrad CPC BASIC coding with him - and that was **definitely** awesome!

Creating a sequel to "Moon Quest" could only be categorised as awesome too. So there was absolutely no doubt that the near future was going to be absolutely **awesome!**

And indeed it was, because this was the beginning of almost half a decade of a great Amstrad CPC era with my cousin. Those years still stand as some of the absolute best times of my life.

Robin had the CPC6128 (that came with an internal disk-drive), and then he also had an external tape-player. I "only" had the CPC464 (that came with an internal tape-player), and I didn't have an external disk-drive for it (yet).

So, since we could both use cassette tapes, theoretically it wouldn't matter if we worked on the project at his place or my place. As long as we saved our work on tape, then we could both load it on each of our CPC's.

But I still hadn't forgotten the problems my grandma and I encountered back in 1985, when we were trying to load the game "Commando" on her CPC464. It was the very first time I tried loading anything on a CPC, and it proved to be quite a challenge. It had taught me that a program saved on one CPC didn't necessarily work on another CPC.

I pictured myself coming home from my cousin with the tape containing our awesome BASIC project, only to see the read error messages when

trying to load it on my own CPC. It was a scary scenario that I would very much like to avoid.

It was decided that we should work on the project at my cousin's place, and use the disk-drive in his CPC6128 to save our work. That way we'd spend less time on loading and saving.

In return, I knew there was a chance I might never be able to watch our creation at home on my own CPC, if it couldn't read the tape that was recorded on my cousin's tape-recorder. Time would tell.

So, for the next week or two we met at Robin's place almost daily. At age 12 that was a very long time to spend on such a project. Developing the first "Moon Quest" had only taken me a single afternoon.

Brainstorming

"So what should the story be about?", I asked.

"Well, he's just landed on the moon", Robin replied, "So how about it takes place there?"

"That's... brilliant!"

Everything was brilliant back then. The kind of joy we experienced with our creativity back then never came back again later in life. Not that it isn't still great being creative. (Otherwise I obviously wouldn't have spent 5 years creating 8-bit Memoirs). But being creative back then was just much more fun and intriguing and new. Of course, it helped a lot to actually have the necessary sparetime available for it. But just knowing that we were about to create a cartoon on the CPC together that took place on the moon, was ridiculously exciting for the both of us.

Without thinking more about the plot or story, we began typing in lines of BASIC.

"So how did you do it when you created the first story?", Robin asked.

I then explained how I used the LOCATE command to place a symbol from the ASCII table on the screen, then used a FOR loop to wait a while, before clearing the symbol again and placing a new one on another location.

"Wow... that's a lot of work", he replied.

After explaining my methods to my cousin, he insisted there had to be a better way of doing it. And sure enough, the next day or so he had found what he was looking for in one of his Amstrad CPC magazines. There was

a listing showing a much more efficient way of moving a symbol across the screen: By using the variable of a FOR loop with the LOCATE command.

Suddenly we could move a symbol across the **whole screen** using only **1 line** of BASIC commands instead of using 3 lines of commands to move the symbol a single position, as I had previously done.

We were learning a lot, and this was the very first time I experienced the reward of working together in a team: Sharing valuable knowledge with each other, and being equally ecstatic when seeing the results appear on the screen. This had to be what teamwork was all about.

This new discovery made everything even **more** intriguing, which was a bit difficult to comprehend, because it was already ridiculously intriguing as it was. With this awesome new knowledge we would now be able to produce much more in far less time!

It was instantly clear to the both of us that "Moon Quest II" would definitely be bigger, longer and better than its prequel. It would indeed become a most worthy sequel. No doubt about that.

Story writing

All we had to do now was to come up with a story. One that would be really interesting for the viewer while remaining doable for us with our limited set of skills. Meaning; the animations should be great - but not too complicated.

"He should walk over a hill!", Robin suggested rather enthusiastically.

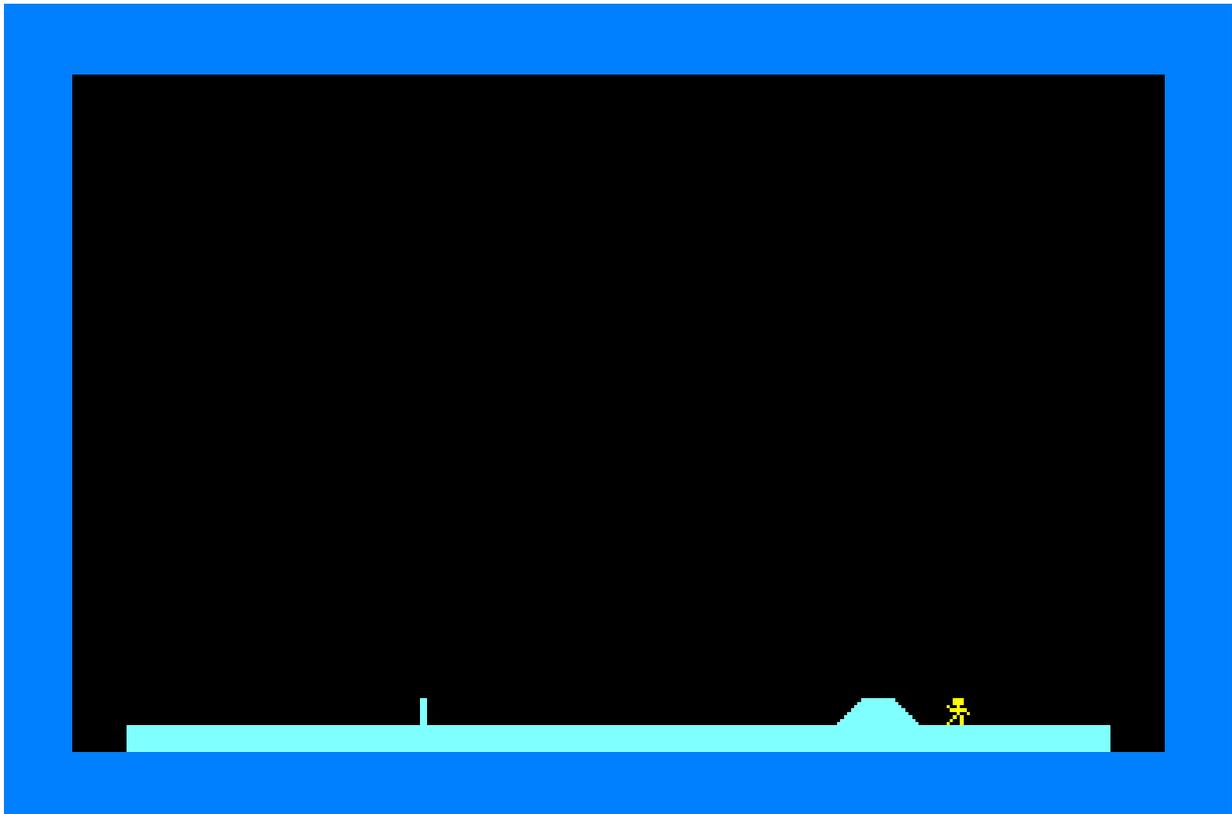
The very first suggestion on the table couldn't take advantage of the awesome new technique we'd just discovered. I was a bit annoyed by that, because I'd really gotten hooked on using that technique now. But Robin promised that we'd use it a lot after the "hill-climbing" part. After all, this animation was going to be several minutes long, so it would of course contain a lot of different screens, including one or more that would let us to use this new technique.

Robin then began typing in BASIC lines to make his vision of the hill-climbing scene come to life. He was very devoted, and was set on making it realistic: While our hero was walking **up** the hill Robin made longer pauses between the frames, to illustrate that it was harder to walk up the hill than walking on flat ground.

Likewise, when our hero was walking **down** the hill on the other side, he made the pauses between frames shorter.

Executing the BASIC lines and thus seeing his vision come to life was clearly one of the most satisfying experiences Robin had ever had in his life - just like it had been for me when doing the first "Moon Quest". There was no doubt that we had found a hobby that we both truly enjoyed here.

After completing the small "hill-climbing" scene we agreed there should be no more hill-climbing in the story, since it prevented us from using the new clever one-liner technique for moving our character around the screen.



"How about he knocks over a wall?", I asked.

The second suggestion on the table couldn't make use of the new technique either.

"Oh, yea! That'd be awesome! But.. how'd you code that??", he asked back, doubting that something like that was even possible for us to make.

Notice how none of us stopped to question why or how there'd be a wall on the moon. Don't you just miss childhood?

I explained my idea about first placing a vertical line on a location, then replace it with another line 45 degrees tilted, and then replace that one again with a horizontal line.

My cousin had doubts that my plan would result in anything looking realistic, because he imagined all of the lines being placed in the middle center of the 8x8 pixel character-space, which we agree would indeed only result in a rotating stick.

That's not what I wanted to do. I (obviously) imagined placing the vertical line to the right in the 8x8 pixel grid, and the horizontal line at the bottom.

It was one of the many things we both learned during this project: It takes great skills to explain anything to anyone using only words. The recipient rarely understands it exactly as you mean it. And after failing at explaining things to each other a couple of times, we learned that it was much faster to just go: "I have an idea!" - and then simply spend a couple of minutes typing in the BASIC lines needed to **show** the idea. That procedure took a lot less time overall and also resulted in more ideas coming to life.

When we saw the result with the wall being knocked over, it had both of us burst into laughing joy, astonished by the awesomeness that was now present in this grand creation of ours.

I can't describe with words how excited Robin was. He ran the program several times to see his hill-climbing part, followed by my wall-tipping part, and he just thought it was unbelievably awesome. I don't think I'm exaggerating when saying that the equivalent amount of joy today would require a winning lottery ticket.

"Ok, next screen. What should happen next?", I asked.

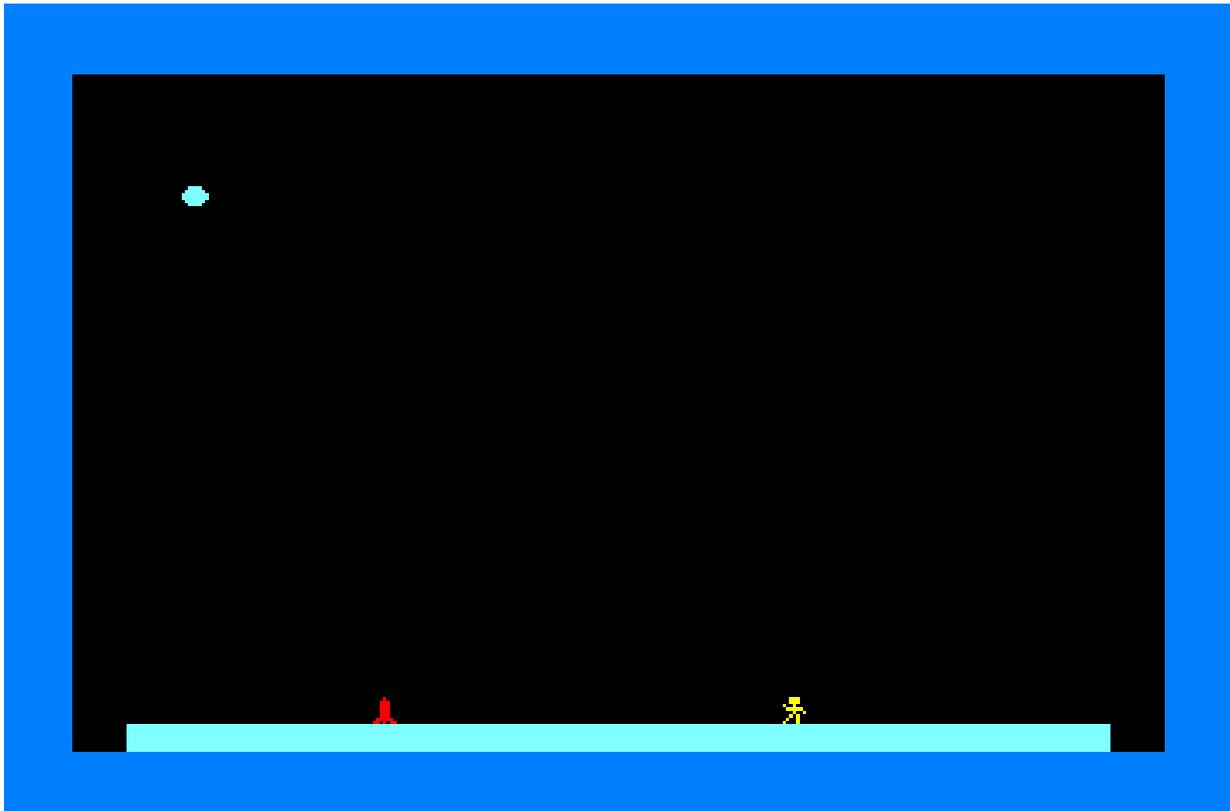
The challenge in this project was to come up with a story we could illustrate using the characters and symbols that the CPC offered.

We didn't know about the SYMBOL command yet (which allows the programmer to create his own symbols), so we had to pick between the predefined symbols that was available in the ASCII table, listed in the back of the user instructions. Luckily the CPC included a lot of interesting and useful symbols in its ASCII table, and they were a great source of inspiration.

"Hmm... how about he sees a rocket?", Robin suggested.

"A rocket? But... this is only the 2nd screen. Surely he shouldn't be returning home to earth already?", I complained.

"No no... he tries to take off, but then discovers that the rocket doesn't have any more fuel!", he explained.



I thought that idea sounded boring, but as we'd just learned, it was always best to just code the idea to see what it looked like rather than dismissing it based on the short verbal explanation. And sure enough, when I saw my cousin's idea on the screen with the added sound-effect that **clearly** sounded like "rocket trying to take off but can't", then I recognised that it was indeed a great idea.

This was combined story-creation and visualisation on a high level, as you can clearly see.

We made up the story as we went along, and then wrote the BASIC lines needed to transform the vision into animation on the screen. Creative freedom when it's best.

The 3rd screen

It really felt like we were on a roll. Plenty of ideas for the story, and great success in writing the BASIC lines to make the ideas come to life on the screen. We were progressing rather fast, and the two screens we'd made now were definitely much more interesting than the two screens in the first "Moon Quest". Just as you'd expect from a sequel. Everything was going according to plan.

But then the 3rd screen happened...

"Ok, what should happen on the 3rd screen?", one of us asked.

And then, there was silence...

After two great screens with awesome ideas, suddenly none of us could come up with an interesting scene for the 3rd screen. And I'm not talking about a few minutes. No, we spent much longer than a few minutes trying to come up with an idea, and we just couldn't.

I was particular puzzled by this because of how fast we'd both had ideas for the first two screens. And now none of us could come up with anything for the 3rd screen. We then began nagging at each other for not coming up with anything.

After a few minutes of nagging, we agreed to take a break. The day was almost over anyway. Then hopefully one of us would get an idea for the next day.

But no. Next day, neither my cousin nor myself had managed to come up with an idea for the 3rd screen. And now it had become rather frustrating to the both of us to be stuck here and not getting any further.

Then we began blaming each other, and discussing who's turn it was to come up with something.

"I came up with the last idea", Robin complained.

"But I don't have any ideas!", I replied, annoyed that everything apparently was my fault. Because he was right. It was my turn to come up with something.

Since it seemed that our imagination had suddenly left us, we finally reluctantly agreed that the 3rd screen had to be the last in the story.

I was very disappointed, having thought this project would become so much more than it now seemed it would be. I'm guessing Robin felt the same way. But when none of us could come up with any ideas, things couldn't really be any different.

The 3rd screen was going to be the last one, which meant it should contain the going-home rocket...

Because, as you well know, the world leaders has strategically placed several "going-home" rockets on the moon, just in case someone ever lands there and finds himself in need of a spare rocket to fly back home...

Wrapping it up

Our main character shouldn't just walk up to the rocket though. That would have been the most boring screen of the 3. No, we had to come up with something a bit more interesting.

Robin, who suggested the hill-climbing part in the first screen, then suggested that we made a huge mountain in the 3rd screen.

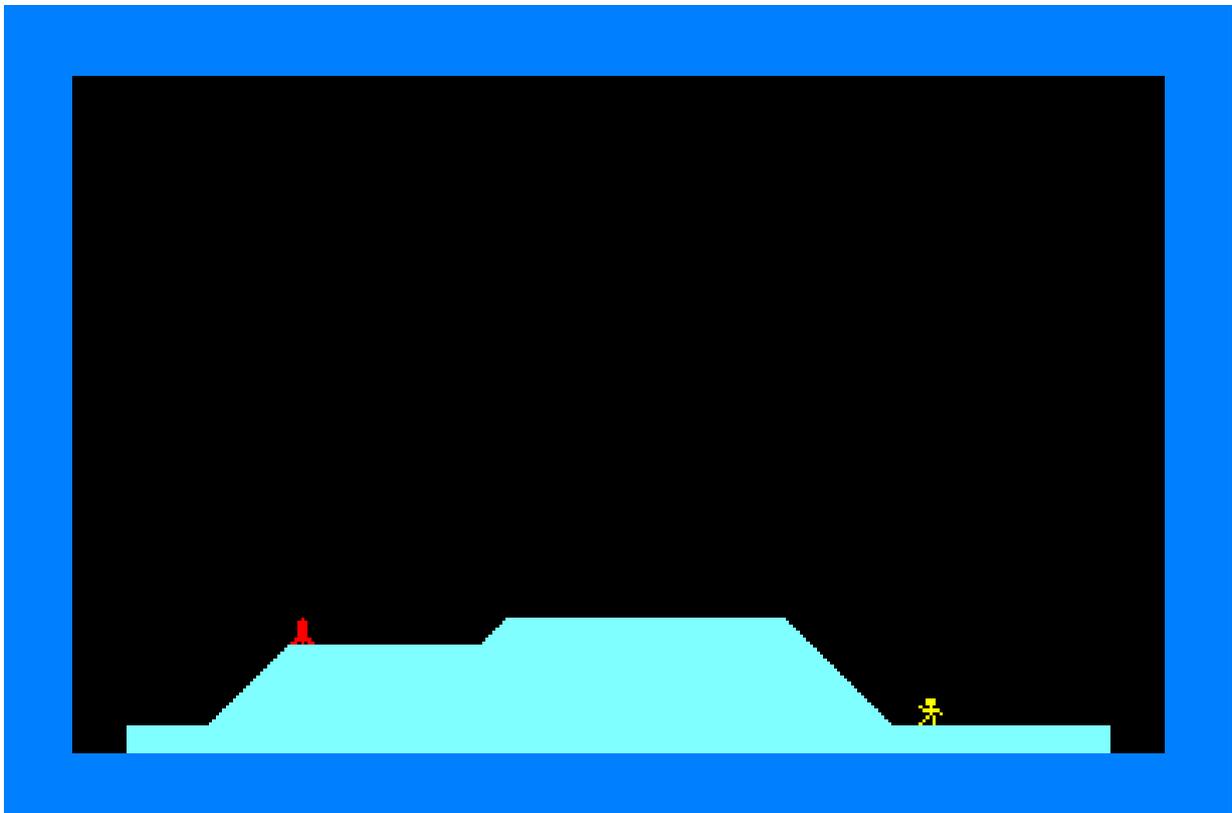
I was against that idea because I didn't believe there were any mountains on the moon.

"It's the moon!", he said, "Everything isn't flat on the moon!"

"Yes it is!", I replied, "There certainly aren't any mountains there!"

"How would you know? Have you ever been to the moon?", he asked.

"Yes I have!"



Strong disagreements about the whole flat/non-flat terrain question, but since I recognised that we **had** to move on, my cousin got it his way.

We drew a big mountain on the 3rd screen and placed the rocket on the mountain.

Having already done the hill-climbing thing in the 1st screen, it would seem repetitive to do a mountain-climbing part here in the 3rd screen now. We'd also gotten a bit tired of the project now, so none of us felt like doing all the typing it would require to make our character climb the mountain. The question was therefore: What to do now with this huge mountain?

"He could blast his way to the rocket", Robin suggested, "We should have some kind of big explosion".

"Yea, could be great with a big explosion. But we don't have the skills to do that", I replied.

He knew I was right. It was clear to both of us that we didn't have the skills to create an awesome animation of an explosion that threw rocks up in the air in all directions. But Robin's need for this explosion scene was too big for him to let it go. He thought long and hard about how to come up with an acceptable alternative within the constraints of our skills, and then he began experimenting with different commands.

"If only there was a way to clear the screen a bit slower than a CLS does", he said.

And then I remembered that there **was** in fact a way to do that.

"You can do that!", I said, "By setting a PAPER first before you call CLS".

So setting a red colour for PAPER and clearing the screen, followed by a yellow colour for PAPER and clearing the screen again, and then repeat a few times - that ended up being the acceptable alternative for an awesome explosion animation.

"Alright!", my cousin said, "So he throws a hand grenade, and the whole mountain explodes!"

"Er... what about the rocket then?", I asked.

"....good point...", he hesitated, "Um... the rocket just stands on the ground afterwards!"

"...the whole mountain explodes, and the rocket just stands unharmed on the ground?", I asked.

"...yea!", he replied.

After experiencing the advantages of working in a team, it was becoming clear that teamwork also had its disadvantages: Disagreement.

We shared a big interest in Amstrad CPC BASIC programming, and our different visions and ideas did also result in a much more interesting story, but we also spent a big part of the time arguing about different viewpoints.

We finally agreed to do it the way my cousin wanted, since the top priority right now was to end the story and be done with it.

And thus, the 3rd screen ended up containing a big mountain that got demolished by a special kind of hand grenade that only destroyed moon-rock and which therefore didn't harm the rocket, which resulted in the rocket standing on the ground unharmed after the explosion.

Our main character then walked up to the rocket, and the story was over.

THE END

Presenting "Moon Quest II"

Now that we had completed the sequel to "Moon Quest" we naturally wanted to show it to our grandma. The whole project was intended to be a surprise present to her.

But she didn't have her CPC464 any more. It had ended up in my brother's room shortly after my parents gave me my CPC. I imagine my parents must have bought it from her.

So visiting grandma to show her our creation wasn't an option, since she no longer had a CPC. Instead, we had to wait till **she** came for a visit at either my parents or Robin's parents.

It ended up being a visit at my parents, and I think the occasion was my mums 34-year old birthday, December 12th 1987.

We copied our creation "Moon Quest II" to tape and made sure it would load on my CPC464.

Then we were ready for the big show.

And it really did feel like a big show for several reasons. One reason of course being that we'd spent many days working on "Moon Quest II", followed by several days waiting for an opportunity to show it to an audience.

Another reason was that my grandma had ended up in a wheelchair recently because of a stroke that had left her paralysed in the right side of her body. Therefore she didn't come into my room that often, since it required a bit more effort with the wheelchair.

So when my mum helped grandma into my room in her wheelchair, it was clear that this was indeed a special and rare event.



Grandma was placed in front of the CPC. "Moon Quest II" had already been loaded half an hour ago, so all that was left to do now, was to type RUN and press ENTER.

My cousin and I were excited, watching the screen, then watching grandma and my mum, then looking at each other, then watching the screen again, then grandma. No one spoke a word.

My aunt Karen, who was also there for my mums birthday, recognised that this was a big moment in time that deserved to be documented in a diskmag-like eBook project called 8-bit Memoirs 30 years later, so she took a picture of us, which was then turned into the illustration you see here.

While my grandma and mum watched the screen there wasn't much of a reaction from either of them, so my cousin and I weren't sure exactly what they were thinking about this masterpiece that we'd just shown them.

It turned out they needed a little explanation about what was going on. Grown-ups apparently aren't that sharp. Surely anyone else could clearly see what was going on in the story. It was certainly clear to Robin and I.

We started the program again, and this time explained what was going on while watching.

Oh yes, **now** they could see that this was truly the work of two geniuses. What a great story indeed.

Curtains

The show was over. Grandma left my room to rejoin the other grown-ups in the living-room. Weeks of work and preparation had resulted in a 10-minute long show... and it had gone by way too fast.

We had expected a **bit** more positive feedback, so we were a **little** bit disappointed. I wasn't entirely sure either, if grandma even recognised that she was watching a sequel to the 1986 masterpiece she had named herself. But Robin and I had learned a few things:

The two people in the audience had both complained there wasn't enough time to read the subtitles. So for future productions it would probably be best if the viewer had to press a key every time a subtitle was displayed, before the story continued.

My cousin also thought it would be a good idea to place the subtitles at the **bottom** of the screen instead of the top of the screen, simply because that's where people expected to find subtitles. I didn't feel like placing the subtitles at the bottom of the screen - but it didn't matter either, because:

The disagreements we'd had when creating the story for "Moon Quest II" had made us agree that we needed a break from team-projects. So our next CPC projects would be solo-projects anyway. Or at least, that was the plan...

The original Blu-ray version of 8-bit Memoirs contains video footage of "Moon Quest II". Visit www.8bitMemoirs.com to get it!

The Young Fighters

Creating "Moon Quest II" with my cousin Robin had been a very mixed experience for the both of us. It started out really great but ended in a lot of frustration.

When the project was over we decided to take a break from teamwork and instead go solo for a while. But it was a very short break. In fact, it only lasted as long as we waited for a chance to present "Moon Quest II" to our grandma.

After having shown the whole thing to our grandma and my mum on the 12th of December 1987, Robin came up with an idea: Seeing as our only problem regarding teamwork seemed to be about story-creation, he suggested that we could just team up on other CPC BASIC projects that didn't require us to come up with a storyline. And that did sound like a good idea to me.

So there we were again now, sitting in front of cousin's CPC6128 in his room, all set on creating a new CPC program. I think this was probably during the Christmas holidays 1987.

The first thing we decided on was the title, before even knowing what the content should be. Robin came up with the suggestion "Young Fighter".

There was no deeper meaning with that title. He merely thought it sounded cool. I think he came up with it by combining some titles from his dad's VHS movie collection.

I agreed that it was a cool title, and thus it was decided that our program should be called "Young Fighter".

A few minutes later we had an epiphany: Since we were now creating a program called "Young Fighter", it was obvious and logical that **we** were in fact The Young Fighters!

This was no doubt the most awesome label in the history of awesome labels - and now **we** had claimed it!

We both felt the power of this cool label right away. It seriously boosted our motivation to make this project.

With a title like "Young Fighter", you probably imagine the project to be a story about a young kid who is fighting injustice in the world.

But since I already told you that we agreed on avoiding any kind of story-creation, you know that it can't have been about that.

So then what? The title surely indicates that we were fighting **something**, right? Yes, and I do remember us having a little discussion about that.

"So what are we fighting?", I asked him, pretty much prepared to fight any kind of injustice he could throw on the table.

"Nothing", he replied, "It's just a title".

Although we both did have each our own things to struggle with in daily life, none of those topics were ever on the table during our Amstrad CPC sessions. This was our time off, where we got to be creative learning and having fun. You know, the exact opposite of what school was like. And us kids didn't waste our time off by discussing all the tedious realities in our lives that we couldn't change anyway. That's what grown-ups did, because grown-ups apparently never had anything better to do with their time. But us kids would rather spend our time on something that actually made sense.

We didn't even discuss the big family dispute that had begun just prior to our CPC era. It had split the family in two, with Robin's parents on one side and mine on the other. Had it not been for our mutual interest in the Amstrad CPC, Robin and I probably wouldn't even have spent time together at this point because our parents didn't spend time together. So that would indeed have been a worthy cause for The Young Fighters to fight, but it wasn't. I suppose we naively thought the grown-ups would eventually solve it themselves. I often overestimated the overall intelligence of grown-ups like that.

Anyway, I ended up just being fine with the content of our program not really relating to the title that much.

And then we could begin.

Our CPC BASIC programming skills included 3 categories at this point:

- 1) Creating and moving symbols around the screen,
- 2) Creating small pieces of music, and
- 3) Drawing lines

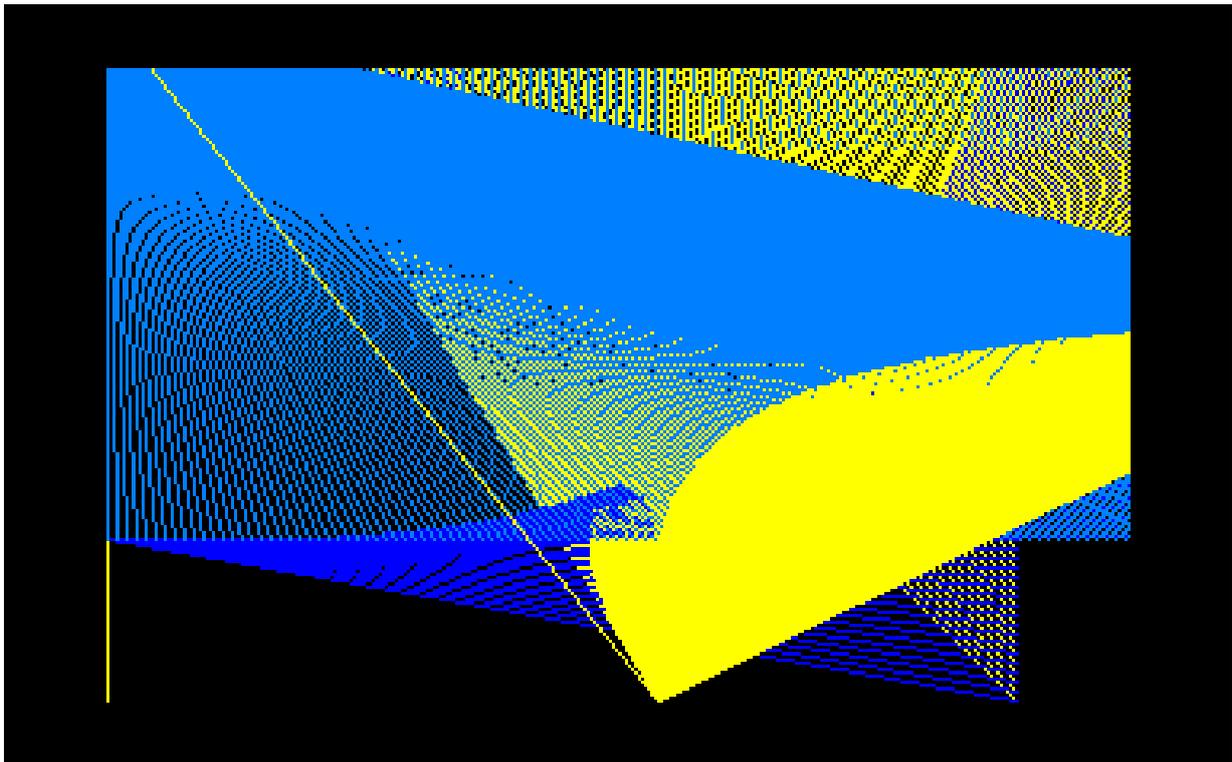
Robin and I were both interested in music, but Robin thought the SOUND command on the CPC was confusing. In return, I thought the FOR loops with DRAW commands (that used SIN and COS and TAN functions) were confusing.

And so it was decided that the audio on the CPC should be my area of expertise, while my cousin became the "computer math art" expert.

The symbol animation was something that we could both figure out how to do.

I'd already come up with a tune at home not long ago while playing my little electrical organ. We decided to name this tune of mine "Young Fighters", and make it the theme for our program.

We then took turns typing in a few lines of BASIC. First, I typed in a few SOUND commands to make the CPC play the theme music. Then we both typed in a few lines of symbol animation of some kind. And then my cousin typed in a few lines containing a FOR loop or two, with a few DRAW commands, resulting in some awesome art appearing on the screen.



Our "Young Fighter" program thus ended up being a collection of small BASIC experiments that we'd just typed in after each other, effectively making it a very primitive and amateurish kind of BASIC demo.

There was nothing in life that gave us more pleasure than to be creative on the CPC, and being able to share this hobby with each other only made it even better.

We had lots of fun making these BASIC projects together, and we were always proud of our creations when they were done. The goal was never to create programs that would amaze and impress the world, but rather just to have fun by being creative - and that we surely had.

"Young Fighter II"

There'd been no annoying disagreements nor frustrating discussions while creating our "Young Fighter" program. So we soon got together again to make "Young Fighter II". Content-wise very similar to its prequel. The only difference was that this sequel included a menu, so that the viewer could choose what he'd like to see instead of just having it all shown to him in one go.

The original Blu-ray version of 8-bit Memoirs contains video footage of these creations. Visit www.8bitMemoirs.com to get it!

More "Moon Quest"

As already mentioned, creating "Moon Quest II" with my cousin had been lots of fun at first, and then very frustrating in the end - for the both of us. Our "Young Fighter" programs had been a better experience though. But we both felt like doing a few solo projects now.

I created "Moon Quest III", in which our main character now went on a trip to Mars. It contained a loader picture and a whole 10 screens of animation. I had learned how to use the SYMBOL command at this point, so I was able to include custom graphics for the first time, which was a pretty big deal to me.

My cousin subsequently made "Moon Quest IV", which took place on the moon.

Although we did show these creations to our grandma, we were probably creating them mostly for each other at this point. I don't think grandma was the main recipient anymore.

Creating these projects separately eliminated any kind of complaints from the other - at least until showing the end result to each other. I couldn't help complain about "Moon Quest IV" taking place on the moon, because I felt the moon had already been covered in "Moon Quest II". And since "Moon Quest III" took place on Mars, it would make more sense if "Moon Quest IV" took place on some planet even farther away.

Years later (1992 I think) I began working on "Moon Quest V", which was definitely the biggest one in the series, containing lots of new knowledge I'd learned through-up the years. I suspect I began working on it in an attempt to fill a void that had appeared after our CPC era was over. Sadly, I never completed "Moon Quest V", and the only one who got to see it a single time in its unfinished state was my brother Kenneth, and I doubt he even remembers that.

"Moon Quest IV" and "Moon Quest V" has sadly been lost over the years. Only the first 3 has been preserved.

Team names and aliases

Back to the Christmas holidays in 1987 again.

Robin often got new games for his CPC. Pirated games. I don't remember where he got them from, but I remember being a bit jealous that everyone except me seemed to know people they could get games from. Although I did have two classmates who also had a CPC464, I couldn't go ask them for games as I didn't really hang out with any of them in school. I might occasionally have asked them anyway, but it definitely wasn't a frequent thing.

Being only 12-13 years old at this time, none of us thought about the fact that pirated games were in fact illegal. Even in rare cases when the games contained a message clearly stating that it was illegal to copy the game, we always dismissed those messages as something that didn't apply to us. Just like the warning in the beginning of a rented VHS movie, such messages were targeted grown-ups, not us kids.

When we got older and understood that those messages **were** in fact targeted us too, we then dismissed them again thinking they didn't apply any **longer** because the games were too old for anyone to care now.

These pirated games often came with a so-called crack intro or cracktro for short, where the crackers had made their own introduction of the game. And while the games themselves **were** interesting, Robin and I usually found these crack intros much **more** interesting. So interesting in fact, that we'd often load them without loading the actual game. Robin even made a disk containing only the crack intros without the actual games, in order to be able to watch all the intros after each other without needing to switch disks.

We saw crack intros as a kind of recognition and applause for the games.

If a game came with a crack intro, it meant that the cracker community considered this game to be really great - and **that** was about the best kind of positive feedback any game-developer could ever receive. I imagined game-developers being very proud to have their games presented in such a cool way by the crackers - the elite coders of the world. I saw it as a kind of "We approve of this game" label from the crackers, and that was about the highest honour a game-developer could get. There was no doubt that if **I** ever managed to create a game, I'd sure be proud if the crackers would make a crack intro for it.

As soon as Robin and I saw these crack intros, we knew right away that we'd also like very much to create such cool little game-introductions. And so it was, that our quest to become crackers began during the Christmas holidays in 1987, while we created our "Young Fighter" programs.

Birth of "Crack-Master"

The first step in becoming crackers was to come up with a cool team name - and aliases for each of us too.

Robin didn't feel "Young Fighters" was a fitting name for a cracker-team. He wanted the word "crackers" to be part of it somehow. So he came up with "Crack-Master" to replace "Young Fighters".

Obviously we weren't exactly **masters** in cracking at this point. Having neither any skills nor experience kinda made that just a tiny tad impossible. But we had plans to learn. Or at least an interest to learn.

So we were **going** to become masters in cracking in the near future - according to the plan...

In our "Young Fighter" programs, we'd been using our real names. But now we had learned that everyone else who was being creative on the computer seemed to be using cool nicknames instead of their real names. So naturally we wanted to have cool nicknames too.

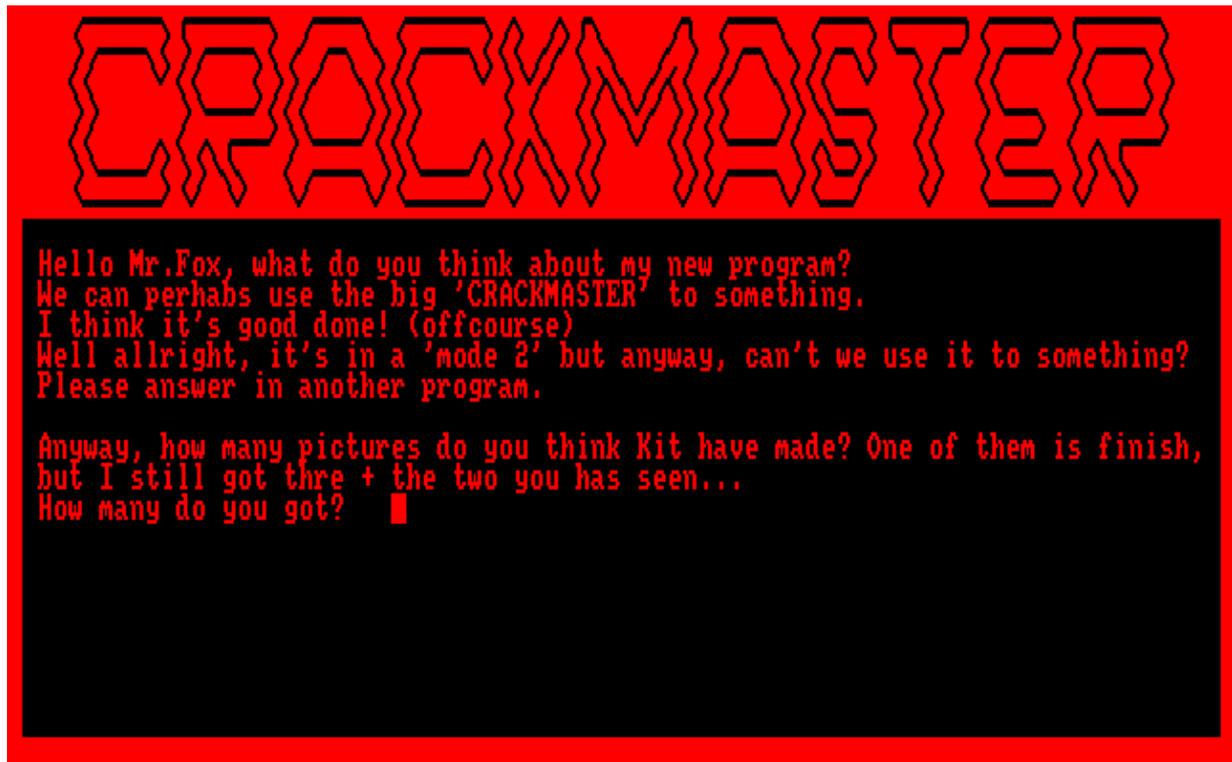
Robin was quick to come up with a nickname for himself: "Mr.Fox". He had a little crush on Samantha Fox back in those days, clearly demonstrated by the big poster he had hanging on his wall showing Samantha Fox wearing... well, not so much. So "Mr.Fox" it was for him.

I needed a bit more time to come up with a nick, which ended up being "Kit".

Using the new nick names and team name, we began creating small BASIC programs for each other, to share our ideas for logos or small programming routines we came up with. We'd usually also include a small message to each other in the form of a type-writer effect or a scrolltext, effectively turning these small creations into small digital letters.

Knowing neither how to crack anything nor how to write Assembler code, there was obviously bound to be just a tiny little bit of difference between the great vision of the awesome crack intros we imagined we'd create, and the BASIC loaders we actually ended up making instead: Very small

loaders without music, showing a BASIC scroll-text and maybe a little sprite animation.



I seriously doubt anyone will qualify that as cracking.

The only thing we did that ever came remotely close to cracking, was to load a few games into a hex-editor to change the entries in the highscore list to our own names. I remember we did this with the game "Ikari Warriors". And Robin continued "hacking" other games the same way on his own for a while.

Fun fact: 15 years later, working my first job as a system developer, a co-worker asked me to change a name in an old Windows application that the company didn't have the source code for anymore. I remembered the hex-editor trick from my CPC days, and got the job done in just a few minutes.

I don't remember how many of these BASIC loaders cousin and I made, but I've managed to find a few of them while running through all of our old tapes and disks.

"Crack-Master" lived for about a year and a half, from December 1987 to around May 1989 I think. After that we both kinda stopped doing anything using the "Crack-Master" label. It was clear that we weren't really getting anywhere in this cracking endeavour, and I was spending most of my time doing music with BASIC instead now. As a result, we had a break from teamwork for about half a year.



Birth of "M.T.C."

In the beginning of 1990 Robin wanted us to team up again.

Part of the reason everything stalled in my opinion, was because of the team name "Crack-Master". I had been complaining about that name on/off ever since Robin came up with it, because I felt it was just a tiny little bit misleading. The "Master" part didn't **quite** match our (lack off) skills. Robin had been stubbornly holding on to the name, but now here in January / February 1990 he finally caved in and agreed to come up with another team name.

Since he **really** wanted the word "crackers" to be part of the name, he then suggested "Danish Amstrad Crackers". I liked that one a lot, because it was precise and didn't paint a picture of us being better than we were.

Sadly, we only got to use this new label for about a month or two, before discovering that someone else were already using it. That was particular annoying for me because I had already used the "D.A.C" abbreviation in my "Rick Hunter" game. And now we needed to come up with another name yet again.

My cousin was still a bit annoyed (or maybe a lot) that I wasn't satisfied with "Crack-Master", so he said: "Then **you** come up with a better name!"

I then came up with "Magic Team Crackers".... And as you can clearly hear, "Magic Team Crackers" sounds **much** more cool than "Crack-Master", and not lame at all, right?... Right?... Hello?



Ok then... anyway, meanwhile I had also run into some problems regarding my own nick "Kit":

When playing arcade games at the local grill, and entering KIT in the highscore-list, the other kids who were watching would go: "Wow, that's a cool nick! I want to call myself that too!".

I remember being slightly surprised that no one seemed to have any respect for the fact that it was **my** nick! **I** came up with that nick you prick! Go find your own nick!

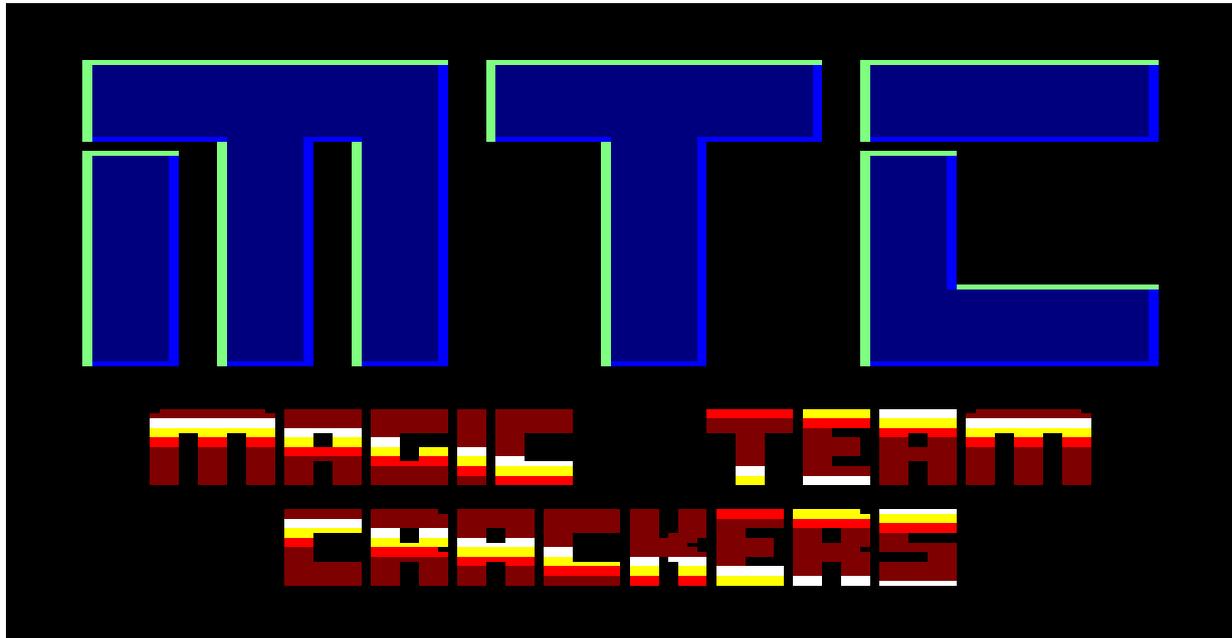
I was not happy at all with the idea of having to share my cool nick with someone else. So I decided I had to come up with another nick for myself. One that I could keep for myself this time. Meaning, it had to be a nick that no one else would be interested in, while at the same time not sounding **completely** lame.

After some thinking, I came up with "Mr.Lou". It didn't feel like a particular cool nick to me. In fact, I didn't even feel it expressed who I was, nor what I stood for. To be honest, I actually felt the name sounded a bit shady, and kinda made me think of Chicago and gangsters. Not really something I could relate to. (My apologies to all Chicago gangsters I might be offending with such a statement). But because I felt certain that no one else would be interested in using this nick, I decided to go with it anyway.

And here is the first sign in my life that I've always had rather big ambitions: I simply decided that I'd just change how "Mr.Lou" sounded like to people. By creating great projects my whole life, and mark them all "By Mr.Lou", I would eventually give the name "Mr.Lou" a whole new

and much more positive sound. Sure, it would probably take all of my life, but that was ok. I had patience like that.

Going from "Kit" to "Mr.Lou" was apparently too much of a confusion for my parents. At my confirmation that same year, one of the presents they gave me was marked "To Mr.Kit".



So, we'd reached April 1990 now, and we were now Mr.Fox and Mr.Lou from Magic Team Crackers, and those were the names we'd stick with till the end of our Amstrad CPC era. And for me, "Mr.Lou" would last a lot longer than that. Will be 3 decades soon.

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Sprite programs

In the beginning of our Amstrad CPC era, Robin and I only made small BASIC programs done in MODE 1 (the 40x25 character (320x200 pixels) screen with 4 simultaneous colours from the 27-colour palette). Any kind of graphics we had in these programs were created using character symbols from the ASCII table.

Later on we began using an image editor called "Screen Designer" to create pictures in MODE 0 (the 20x25 character (160x200 pixels) screen with 16 simultaneous colours). And then we'd often add either a BASIC scroll-text, or else use the Demomaker tool from New Way Cracking to add a much better scroller and music too.

"Sprite Designer"

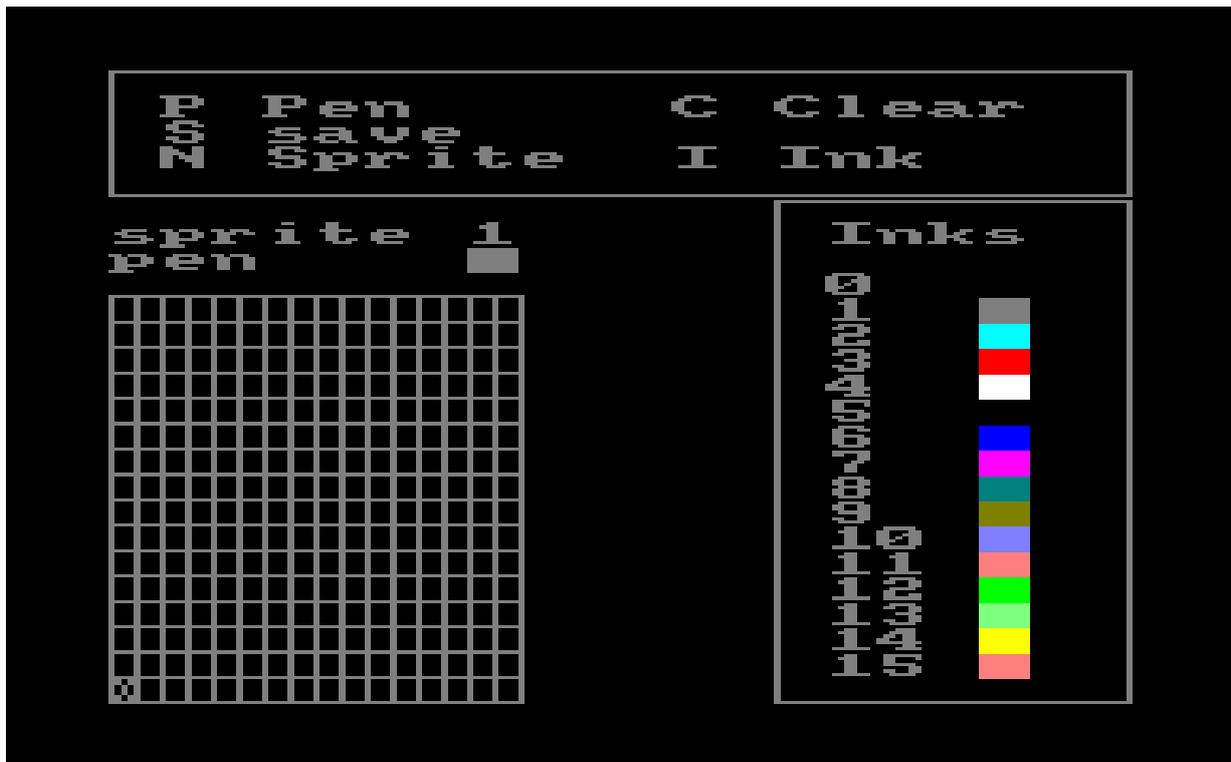
Both Robin and I had assumed it wasn't possible to use sprites in a BASIC program. Sprite functionality was reserved for the elite who could write machine code - or so we thought.

At some point in 1988 we got our hands on a program called "Sprite Designer" created by Jason Charlesworth. I don't remember where we got it from, but I'm fairly sure we didn't type it in ourselves.

It wasn't a new program. While creating 8-bit Memoirs, I found out that "Sprite Designer" was listed in the magazine "Your Computer" in issue 1 January 1985 on page 145, so it was at least 3 years old already when we began using it.

With "Sprite Designer" you could create 15 MODE 0 sprites in 16x16 pixels, and save them for use in BASIC. In order to use them, new BASIC commands were created, and that was **very** interesting to the both of us. The CPC kept on impressing us like that through-up the years. Being able to simply add new BASIC commands when you needed them, was a clear sign that this computer was designed by some clever people.

This meant that basically anything you could think of could be done with BASIC - if you had the skills to create such new BASIC commands. Robin and I sadly did not possess such skills, but we were excited about it being possible nevertheless.



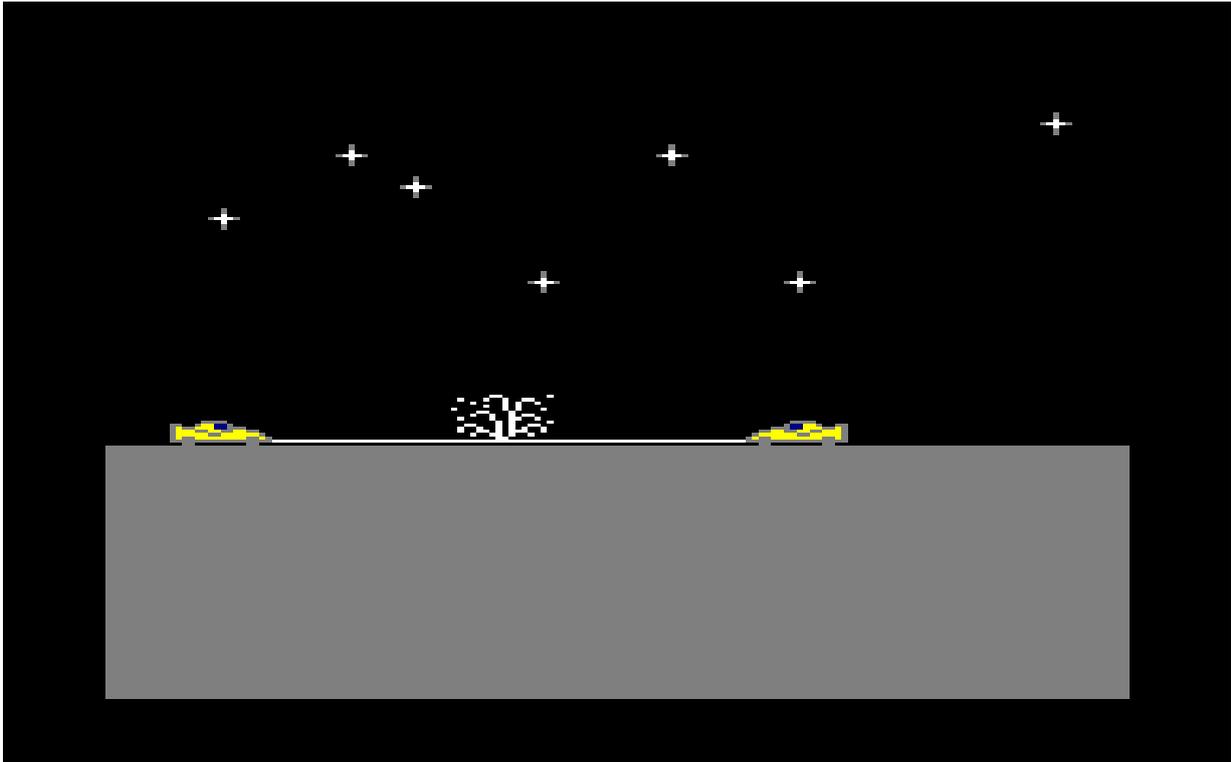
One of the very first experiments I did with sprites was a very short 2-screen animation I named "Crash Car". Basically just two cars firing lasers at each other.

I don't remember exactly when I made this, but I'm fairly sure it was before September 1988.

Everything on the screen was drawn with sprites: The cars, the stars, the lasers, even the flat grey ground was made up by a bunch of 16x16 pixel sprites.

It doesn't look like much today, but I remember being very ecstatic when seeing my creation on the screen back then. This was my very first "real" animation, with "real" graphics and "real" movement. Not that chunky movement we got with LOCATE commands, which moved the symbols 8 pixels at a time. No, this was "smooth" animation, moving 1 pixel each frame.... kinda.

And the 2-frame animation I made of the lasers hitting each other looked surprisingly realistic to me. I was very proud to have made such a great first experiment with sprites.



My cousin and I then began using sprites for various projects, but soon discovered the shortcomings of "Sprite Designer":

The maximum number of sprites was only 15, and it wasn't possible to keep background graphics on the screen when drawing sprites. Instead, the 16x16 pixels would erase whatever graphics was on the screen.

I didn't mind the background graphics issue that much, but the limited number of sprites bothered me.

"Bah, we can't even create a whole alphabet", I complained.

"True, but maybe we could just use words that only requires 15 letters from the alphabet?", Robin then suggested.

In retrospect, that was a brilliant idea, but I didn't like it at all at the time, because I didn't feel comfortable needing to form each and every phrase based on only 15 available letters. So Robin went ahead and did it without me for one of his "cracktros". It was definitely a proof of concept, and I had to admit he did it very well.

We both had that certain optimism when it came to our own ideas. Once an idea popped into our heads, we'd stop at nothing to bring the vision to life.

"Sprites"

Robin's dad frequently brought home Amstrad CPC magazines. The Danish "Amstradbladet" at first, and later on the German "CPC Schneider International". One of the most interesting things in these magazines were the listings with cheat pokes for various games. My cousin typed in a lot of those, and on rare occasions we also attempted one of the bigger type-ins together.

It was mostly Robin who read these magazines. I obviously couldn't, since they resided in his home, but I have to admit I didn't really have the interest either. I was always more interested in creating my own stuff rather than typing in something someone else had made. But Robin enjoyed type-ins quite a lot, and was therefore often the first one of us to learn new things about the CPC.

When he stumbled across another sprite program in "Amstradbladet" issues 3/4 and 5 from 1986, he got rather excited. Because this one seemed to offer the things we'd been missing with "Sprite Designer": Having more sprites available and keep background graphics when drawing sprites. So he knew I'd be interested in typing in this one. The program was called "Sprites", and it was a sprite designer developed by the magazine's own coder.

"Look what I found!", he exclaimed in his usual enthusiastic way, "It's another sprite designer! We gotta type this one in! Then we can have 100 sprites!!!"

Looking at the listing I saw that it was only 73 lines of BASIC for the designer part and additional 13 DATA lines along with a few lines to POKE the DATA values into memory.

I remember being very sceptical about whether these few lines of BASIC would really give us a sprite designer that would let us create 100 sprites with transparent backgrounds. It seemed to be yet another one of those "too good to be true" things, but we agreed that we absolutely had to give it a go regardless.

And then we got started on part 1; the main program. 73 lines of BASIC. Didn't take that long.

Part 2 next; the RSX commands: 680 hexidecimals to be typed in...



"Right...", Robin said while his brain came up with some kind of brilliant plan on how to proceed from here.

"How about you read the values out loud and then I type them in?", he then suggested.

"Brilliant plan!", I replied.

I then began reading out loud: "C3, 53, 9C".

And Robin then typed: "D3, 63, 9B", which weren't **exactly** what I'd said now was it?... (ok ok, I'm exaggerating a little bit).

As I'm sure a lot of people had discovered long before us, the letters B, C, D and E sound a lot like each other, and the consequence of that is **a lot** of type errors in a scenario like this one. The author of "Sprites" hadn't included a checksum calculation to warn about such errors, so the binary file we created naturally just crashed the CPC.

The bugfix phase went kinda the same way as the initial input phase. I would again read out loud from the magazine, and my cousin would check on the screen that the values were correct. It didn't take long before we found the first error, which we then fixed and naively thought that was it - until we saw the next crash.

We then found the next error, fixed it and saw the 3rd crash.

"OMG you have bad hearing!", I complained.

"I do not! It's you who aren't pronouncing the values clearly enough!", he replied.

"... **what?** My pronunciation is just fine!", I said.

"Fine! Then let's switch places. I read out loud and you check if it's correct!", cousin replied.

"Fine!"

Switching around of course didn't change a whole lot, but we eventually did manage to find and fix all the errors.



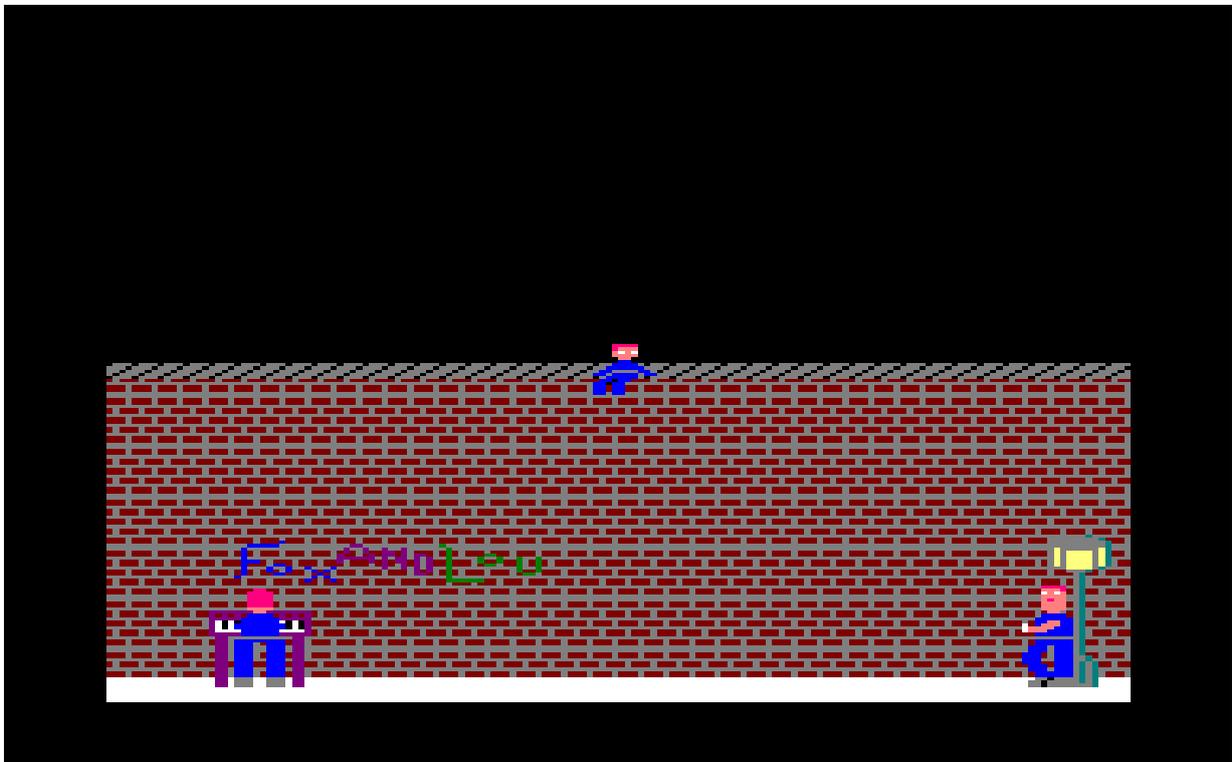
Sure enough, this sprite designer did indeed allow us to create a lot more than just 15 sprites - and it also kept background graphics on the screen when drawing sprites. We weren't **completely** satisfied with the designer though, so we added 22 lines of our own code in order to get an actual-size preview of the sprite in the upper right corner, and also an indicator on which colour was currently selected. We were slightly disappointed that these things hadn't been included by the original author, but luckily we had the ability to add such things ourselves now.

Using this new sprite designer, we then created a little demo similar to my "Crash Car" animation, where everything on the screen again was drawn with sprites.

We drew a brick wall with graffiti "Fox and Lou" painted on it. Then placed 3 people there. One sitting playing a keyboard, one standing smoking a cigarette and one sitting on the wall.

The guy smoking the cigarette would take a puff while looking at the keyboard-player, then turn his head to look towards the viewer.

And to top it off, we then added a short tune that played in a non-stop loop (that would drive anyone crazy after about 30 seconds).



The result on the screen made it very clear that none of us had any future as a graphics artist. The keyboard player looked like he'd been cut in half, and the guy sitting on top of the brick wall looked like he'd been squashed by some bricks.

How very annoying to discover that being creative on the CPC required skills in so many different categories.

Our lack of graphics skills was no doubt one of the reasons we never looked any further into sprites than we did. Another reason was the annoying flickering that occurred in the animation when using the routines of this new sprite designer.

But the biggest reason we didn't look any further into sprites was the poor performance. We couldn't figure out why the performance was so poor. Our (lack of) coding skills was an obvious suspect of course, but this was very simple stuff, so we both felt the performance **should** have been better. In any case, it was disappointing.

The original Blu-ray version of 8-bit Memoirs contains video footage of these sprite demos. Visit www.8bitMemoirs.com to get it!

Music with BASIC

My interest in music composition began way back in 1983 a random day when my aunt Bodil presented me with a mint green melodica instrument. It worked kinda like a flute; you had to blow air into it while holding your fingers on the keys in order to produce a sound. I was very intrigued by this instrument right away.

My aunt then tried to teach me some tunes, but it was clear from the beginning that I was more interested in composing my own tunes.

My dad noticed my interest in music, and decided to buy an electrical organ for the family. At least that's what it said on the front: "Family Organ". And for the first two months or so, it was placed in the living-room for everyone to enjoy. After those two months it had become clear that it was mostly me who played it, and my parents may have gotten slightly tired of listening to my constant homemade compositions. So the organ ended up in my room instead.

Enter Amstrad CPC

When making various BASIC programs with my cousin Robin on our Amstrad CPC computers, I had discovered that I could make small melodies by typing in a bunch of SOUND commands after each other.

At some point in late 1988 I got the idea of using DATA lines to store the notes, then READ the notes and then play them by re-using the same SOUND commands in a loop. I already had experience using DATA lines for other things in previous programs I'd made, so logically this should be straight forward.

The very first experiment was simple: READ 3 notes of a chord from a DATA line, and then use SOUND commands to play these notes in a certain order - not necessarily the order they were written in.

And this little experiment was a big success.

Usually when I was trying out new things like this, I'd typically run into a lot of error messages that I had no idea what meant. But not this time. Everything went completely problem-free this time. I wrote the program, and the melody played just as I expected it would.

I think this might have been the first time in my life I had this experience: The feeling of having things under control, knowing what commands to write in order to achieve a certain result - and then actually achieving that result in the first go.

All of my previous experience with BASIC had paid off and given me this advantage now, and it felt rather good.

Adding a bass and a melody to the tune was no problem either, and before I knew it I had coded my first BASIC tune on the CPC using DATA lines. Experiencing this successful experiment here at age 13, I remember asking myself why I hadn't dived deeper into music on the CPC before now.

```
10 FOR n=1 TO 44
20 READ a,b,c,d,e,f,g
30 SOUND a,b,c,d,e,f,g
40 NEXT n
50 RESTORE
60 DATA 0,179,142,106,0,0,0
70 DATA 0,213,159,106,0,0,0
80 DATA 0,179,142,106,0,0,0
90 DATA 0,213,159,106,0,0,0
100 DATA 4,6,6,1,1,1,1
110 DATA 4,6,6,1,1,1,1
120 DATA 4,6,6,1,1,1,1
130 DATA 4,6,6,1,1,1,1
140 DATA 4,6,6,1,1,1,1
150 DATA 4,6,6,1,1,1,1
160 DATA 4,6,6,1,1,1,1
170 DATA 4,6,6,1,1,1,1
180 DATA 4,6,6,1,1,1,1
190 DATA 4,6,6,1,1,1,1
200 DATA 4,6,6,1,1,1,1
210 DATA 6,3,8,2,1,3,1,5,9,1,0,6,1,0,6,1,0,6,0
```

To find the frequencies for the tones I needed, I would press a key on my organ while executing a SOUND command on the CPC, until I thought the two tones matched. I **could** have just looked up all the frequencies in the back of the Amstrad CPC464 User Instructions, but I didn't bother much with the User Instructions at all. I knew I lacked the language skills to understand what it said anyway, so it had become a kind of a tradition to figure out everything by myself. Finding the frequency numbers by listening to the tones of course resulted in some tones being a bit off though.

Creating music on my CPC464 in BASIC was very intriguing, and for the most of 1989, music composition was my new main interest on the CPC. It didn't take long for me to create 10 tracks this way. I named them "Musik1" up to "Musik10".

I remember learning about the ENV and ENT commands, and getting rather excited when reading that I could produce different instruments using these commands. Like e.g. a bell or a piano. Wow! I can make a piano sound?! Very enthusiastically, I typed in the parameters that were supposed to produce a piano sound, and subsequently made a great effort in trying to identify anything sounding remotely close to a piano in the square synth tone that came out of the CPC speaker.

Listening to my BASIC compositions was great, but Robin wanted more than that. He wanted to be able to use the music in our BASIC projects, and I agreed that would be cool. But we had no clue how to do that; make the music play while other things were happening on the screen too. We couldn't even get a simple BASIC scroller to run simultaneously with music playback.

As usual it was my cousin who found the solution: He discovered that the music in the CPC game "L'Aigle D'Or" was also coded in BASIC using DATA lines - but not the same way as I had been doing it - and we found that very interesting. Apparently their approach allowed for other things to happen on the screen too while the music was playing. And after some looking into the source we understood how to do it the same way too.

Then I began creating my tracks using this new approach. I even created a few BASIC "demos" myself that played music while showing some moving graphics on the screen. These tracks were named "Music1" up to "Music11".

All in all I thus created more than 20 tracks in BASIC using DATA lines and typing in note by note. This was from late 1988 to mid 1991 I think.

I am fairly sure most people hearing these old tracks today will find most of them absolutely terrible. Maybe even horrible. But to me each track tells a story of a long lost time in my life where things were grand and great. They bring very powerful nostalgic feelings; sadness and bitter-sweetness. I doubt nostalgia can get any more powerful than this. Listening to old music does that of course, but I think the effect is a lot stronger when the music was created by yourself.

The original Blu-ray version of 8-bit Memoirs contains a playlist with this music. Visit www.8bitMemoirs.com to get it!

New Way Cracking

In 1990 my cousin Robin and I got in contact with a guy who called himself New Way Cracking. This is the story of how that happened, and the events that followed.

Robin the cracker

A while back, Robin and I had managed to alter the highscores in the game "Ikari Warriors" using a hex-editor. We had both thought that was lots of fun, but Robin was clearly more intrigued by it than me. While I was much more interested in my BASIC music at the time, Robin kept loading various games and utilities into the hex-editor to see if he could find anything interesting to change.

Among the many files he examined in the hex-editor was a demomaker tool written by New Way Cracking, and hidden in the bytes of that program Robin discovered the name and home address of N.W.C.

This address wasn't visible anywhere else in Demomaker from any of the menu options. Robin had looked everywhere, but could only find it by using the hex-editor.

You were supposed to enter some secret code in Demomaker to make it reveal the address, but we didn't know that. I also have to admit, that to this day I still don't know what that secret code is.

Cousin was hyped when he told me about his findings.

"Dude! Look what I found! We gotta send a demo to this guy! He lives right here in Denmark too!", he said.

I thought it was very cool and almost movie-like that Robin had managed to find a secret hidden address like that, but I didn't like his idea about sending this guy a demo at all. I was sure that a pro like N.W.C, who seemed to only be doing awesome machine-code stuff, wouldn't want to waste his time on amateurs like us, who could only make crappy BASIC stuff.

But Robin insisted that we should send N.W.C something.

"The guy has written his address in his Demomaker! He is practically **asking** us to contact him!", Robin argued.

And I counter-argued: "Such hidden messages aren't meant for amateurs like us to find! They're targeted the elite! You cheated by using the hex-editor!"

I don't think anyone had any doubts that the computer-scene was divided into two groups: "The cool elite" and "The amateur noobs". I was also pretty sure that the people in that 1st group wasn't a whole lot interested in being penpals with anyone from that 2nd group. That was just common logic. They probably wouldn't say that to your face of course - but I imagined that when the elite at some point got fed up by us noobs, then it was of course bound to have some kind of consequence, and I did not want to be part of the cause of such a consequence, regardless of the shape and size of it.

In later years when I was reading scrolltexts in various intros and demos, I would sometimes come across texts like "Cool coders contact us. BUT NO LAMERS!". And that was a prime example of the kind of consequence I had worried about back then.

I continued my argumentation: "We make crappy BASIC stuff! That's the magnitude of our poor skills! What category do you think that puts us in?"

The discussion was long, and in the end we still didn't agree. It was the classic optimistic attitude from my cousin, and the somewhat pessimistic attitude from me.

And he couldn't be stopped. Robin was going to create and send something to N.W.C whether I wanted to be a part of it or not.

So in the end he began making a little BASIC demo to N.W.C without me. I would have nothing to do with it.

Or at least that's what I said at first. Once he began working on the demo, I of course couldn't stay away.

So I began helping out with the demo, but I still didn't want my nick included as one of the senders. The screen thus ended up saying "By Mr.Fox" rather than "By Mr.Fox and Mr.Lou". My nick was instead put in a speech bubble of a green bat that said "With help from Mr.Lou". Thus clearly indicating that this demo was created by Mr.Fox and sent by Mr.Fox. That other Mr.Lou dude had only **assisted** a bit and was in no way responsible for any lameness that might be present in this creation.

It was a very short demo that probably doesn't even deserve to be put in that category. It had no music and no special effects. It was merely a screen with a BASIC scroller containing a very short message, asking N.W.C to call Robin on the phone. A more accurate description of it would probably be "A small digital letter".



Contact

N.W.C called Robin back the day after he received the disk in the mail, and cousin was overly excited when he told me the news. We were clearly rising in the "cracker community", now that we'd made contact with another (real) cracker.

Not that **any** of us actually ever cracked anything though. My cousin and I surely didn't crack anything, and as far as I know N.W.C didn't really crack anything either. At least I never saw anything cracked by N.W.C.

We weren't even **interested** in cracking any more. I'm not sure we ever really were.

All the crack intros had just confused us into **thinking** we were interested in cracking, but it turned out it wasn't the cracking part that interested us at all. It was the demo-making part of it. The "being creative on the computer" part.

I'm guessing it was probably the same story with N.W.C and many other people from that time.

Mail exchange begins

N.W.C sent back a copy of his latest demo "Not dead", and we were absolutely stunned when watching it on Robin's CPC6128.

"Whoah!!! Look at the smooth movement of that logo!", my cousin exclaimed, "Look at it!! It moves less than a pixel each frame!! How does he do that?!".

Good question indeed. It seemed that the elite was always able to do things that were actually impossible to do from a technical point of view.

We were used to seeing chunky animations in our BASIC programs - even when using sprites, so when looking at the smooth movement of the N.W.C logo in his "Not Dead" demo, we were convinced it actually moved less than a pixel per frame somehow.

The snailmail exchange continued. We sent back a disk with some of the music I'd made in BASIC. Originally we **had** planned to include one of these tracks in the demo we sent to him, and as far as I remember we did also manage to embed one. But as it slowed down the BASIC scroller way too much, we had decided to remove the music again.

But at least N.W.C got to hear the tracks now then.

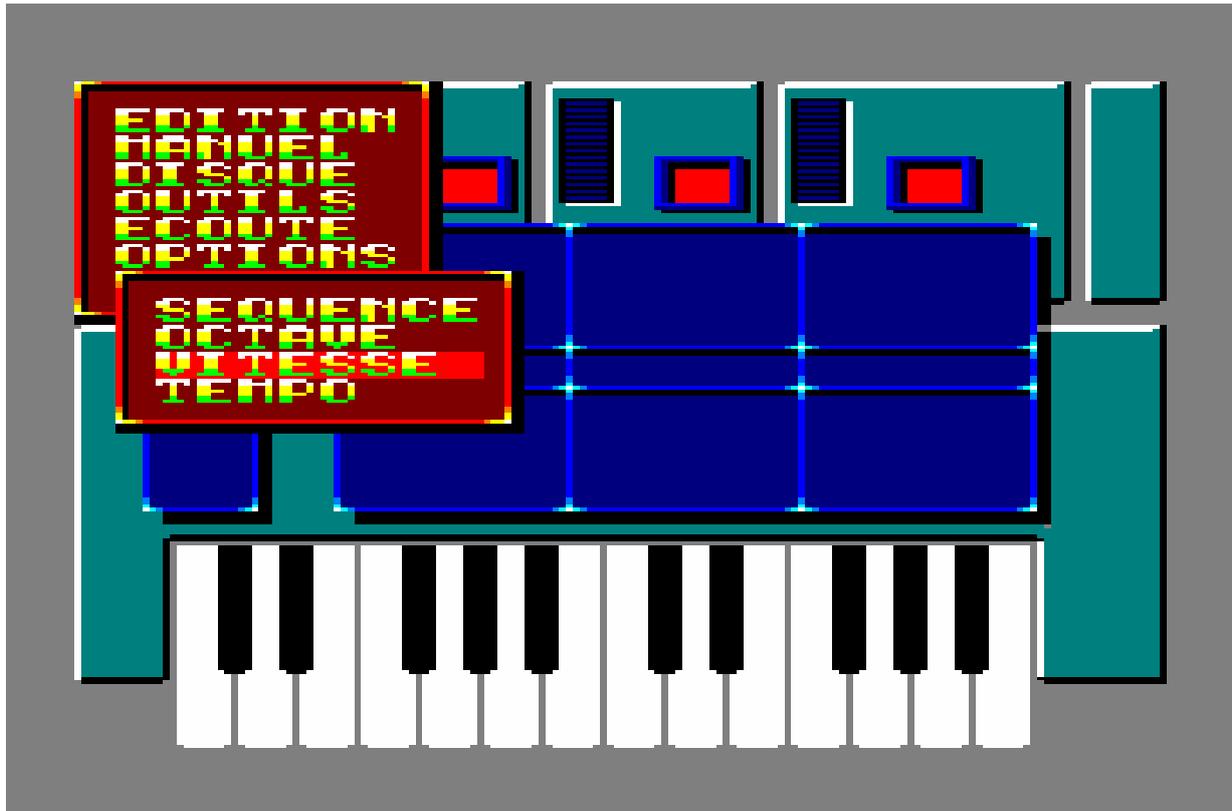
Music tracker

N.W.C was rather impressed by my BASIC-coded music. He said it was some of the best CPC music he'd heard, and he thought it was very impressive that it was made in BASIC.

That kind of positive feedback from a pro was definitely a good motivational booster.

He also told us that he couldn't use BASIC music in his demos, since his demos were obviously always coded in Assembler. So he sent back a music program called "Equinoxe", and asked if I'd be interested in tracking some music with this. Because then he would use my music for one of his demos later, he said.

Equinoxe was a French tracker, and I didn't understand a word of French. This was **very** annoying. Previously, my lack of English skills had been a big problem, but I finally understood (enough) English to get around now - and then fate just went: "Hah! You thought that was it? No dude, here's **French** you sucker! HAH HAH HAH!"



Because of this language barrier, Equinoxe didn't interest me at all at first. I was also discouraged by the limitations such a tracker had. I felt I had much more freedom to do whatever I wanted with BASIC. So whatever I could theoretically create with Equinoxe would never impress N.W.C the same way that my BASIC tunes had done. Especially if he expected something even better.

But every now and then I would load Equinoxe anyway to see if I could figure out what each menu item meant. It took time of course, but eventually I actually managed to figure out which functionality was hidden behind all of the options. And within the next year or two, I created more than 30 tracks with Equinoxe.

I sometimes recorded my Equinoxe tracks onto tape, in order to bring them with me to school on my walkman. Then my classmate Jens would listen in and say: "That's not real computer music. I'll bring some real computer music tomorrow, then you'll see". He then went home, turned on his Amiga, and recorded the title music from the game "Wolf Child". This was the first glimpse of what kind of music I would be creating in later years, but I didn't know that yet of course.

My cousin often asked me when we should send my Equinoxe tracks to N.W.C, but I always held back because I didn't feel any of the tracks were good enough.

Eventually Robin got tired of waiting and sent my tracks to N.W.C anyway - without my permission. Then waited some time before telling me about it...

I really wasn't happy to learn that my tracks were now "out there" without my consent. It was actually rather embarrassing. Some of the titles were kinda lame, and I felt that a lot of the tracks didn't represent my skills at all. I would really have preferred to at least sort through the tracks before they had been sent.

The solo years

Shortly after Robin had sent my tracks to N.W.C. everyone around me started to lose interest in the Amstrad CPC, and before I knew it I was pretty much alone with my Amstrad CPC enthusiasm.

Robin switched to PC some time late 1992. My brother had already switched to the Amiga, and would later get himself a Nintendo Entertainment System too. (Or maybe it was the other way around, I don't remember).

I held onto the CPC much longer than most, but eventually also ended up selling my CPC464 in 1997.

I regretted the sale rather fast though, and quickly bought myself another CPC464 again, identical to the one I'd gotten from my parents in 1987 (with danish keys). But selling my CPC was an expensive mistake: I'd lost my disks now, including the ones with all my BASIC music and Equinoxe music...

Having completely forgotten that my cousin had sent my Equinoxe tracks to N.W.C back in 1992, I often thought about writing a "Missing disk" post on some Amstrad CPC forum, in the thought that **maybe** my disks were still alive out there somewhere. Maybe the guy who bought my CPC had taken good care of it along with all the disks.

But I always gave up hope in advance, since I estimated that the chances were way too slim. **If** the disks even still existed, chances of my post being read by the guy who had them was virtually none.

In February 2005 I made the attempt anyway though.

N.W.C stumbled across my post in December the same year, and replied that he did remember getting some tunes that were tracked by me, and that he would look for them when he got the chance. It would take some time though, because all of his CPC stuff was packed away.

At this time I did remember that we had sent my BASIC tunes to N.W.C, but I still didn't remember that my cousin had sent my Equinoxe tracks to him without my permission back then. So when N.W.C replied my post, I wasn't excited or thrilled at all, because I expected he would only find my BASIC music, and I had already re-acquired those from my cousin's discs at this point.

In 2006 N.W.C then sent me a copy of my Equinoxe tracks. Talk about an awesome surprise and a nostalgic trip! I hadn't heard any of these tracks for a whole decade, so it was a strong dose of nostalgia when listening to them all again. Lots of memories came back.

I then sent my cousin a small thought of thanks for sending N.W.C my tracks without my permission back then. If he hadn't completely ignored my wishes, my tracks would surely have been lost forever today...

"Unique Demo"

N.W.C ended up using one of my Equinoxe tracks in his demo "Unique Demo" in 1997. But it would take 10 years before I found out about that myself. All by coincidence too; when a user on an Amstrad CPC forum congratulated me for the music in that particular demo.

Obviously I had to find this demo and check it out - 10 years after its release...

But I'm still not particular proud of any of my Equinoxe creations. Even today I still feel that I did better stuff with BASIC. My only comfort is that I've heard other people say that Equinoxe wasn't exactly an easy tracker to use. That helps my self-esteem a little bit.

You might be wondering why I've only included 9 of my Equinoxe tracks in 8-bit Memoirs when I actually created 34 of them back in the day. This is mostly because a lot of the tracks were copyrighted tracks created by someone else and only arranged by me in Equinoxe. I had to cut all these tracks out of 8-bit Memoirs to make sure I wouldn't run into any copyright issues later. On top of those tracks, there were of course also a few I just didn't find good enough to include. And after these exclusions there were only 9 tracks left.

Amateur game projects

Although my CPC sessions with my cousin were great and stands today as the absolute best CPC memories I have, I must admit that I eventually enjoyed doing CPC projects on my own even more.

There was a tremendous creative freedom in being able to decide everything myself, and thus doing whatever I wanted to - however I wanted to.

Like many other kids back then, I fantasised about creating my own games. So among my many CPC creations there were quite a few ~~games~~ game-attempts.

The very first time I took a peak at game-development, was way back in 1988 I think. I stumbled over the JOY command in the Amstrad CPC464 User Instructions, which was used to receive input from the joystick. So I naturally had to experiment a bit with that.

I drew a green platform on the screen and then made it possible to move a symbol left and right on the screen using the joystick.

Surprised by how easy that was, I then proceeded to implement a jump feature, and soon realised exactly how poor my programming skills really were.



I eventually did manage to create a working (but quite unimpressive) jump-like function for this little experiment, but it was nothing at all like the one I had visualised in my head. This small 1-screener was of course also very boring, but it served as a motivational booster that would soon have me engage myself in various amateurish game-projects.

It was never my intention to release any of my "games" to the public. My primary target group consisted of my cousin and my brother, and the main goal of the projects was just to enjoy being creative.

Here are some of the game-projects I did from 1988 to 1994:

["Speedman"](#) (1988/1989)

["Rick Hunter"](#) (March 1990)

["Speedman II"](#) (1990)

["Space Help"](#) (1990)

["Casino"](#) (1993)

["Ursula's Quest"](#) (1994)

There was also a time my cousin and I attempted to port an arcade game to the CPC:

[The "Repulse" port](#) (1990 I think)

And finally, I thought I'd also better include a brief story about the Amstrad CPC game-projects that my brother created. Otherwise I'll feel something is missing some day when I re-visit 8-bit Memoirs myself many years from now.

[Games by Mr.Ice](#)

"Speedman"

A successful experiment with the JOY command had motivated me to attempt creating a game of my own in BASIC on my CPC464. It had to be a game without a jump function though, because my initial experiment had revealed that I simply lacked the skills to create one of those.

The year was 1988, meaning I was 12-13 years old at the time.

I named the game "Speedman", and it had a title-screen with music and all. In my own humble opinion, a decent welcoming presentation of the game.



Needless to say, it was of course a very amateurish game, no doubt extremely boring to most people. I wouldn't say that I found it incredibly exciting myself either, but it sure does have a special value today, because it represents that time so long ago.

The game was divided into 2 parts, each having 2 levels.

Part 1, level 1

In the 1st level you had to ride a motorcycle while destroying rocks on the road with your shield. That may **sound** interesting, but... The only thing that moved on the screen were the 2 approaching rocks. And "ride a motorcycle" was a little bit of an exaggeration since it pretty much drove on its own. In fact, all you really had to do in level 1 was to press the joystick button when a rock was right in front of your motorcycle. This would activate your shield which would then destroy the rock.



As I had no grasp of speed and distance at the time, I'd made it the goal to ride a distance of a whole whooping 500 meters! There was an indicator at the top of the screen displaying how many meters you had driven, revealing that the speed of this motorcycle was approximately 5 meters per second. In other words, you were riding this motorcycle with a steady top speed of 18 km/h....

I'm going to take a wild guess here that most people will expect just a tiny little bit more speed in a game titled "Speedman", but that's just a crazy wild guess of course.

*I did have a feeling that I messed up here, which is also why I asked my dad for help.
"Daaad, how far is 500 meters? Is it far?", I asked like a kid would ask a grown-up.
He gave me one of his typical replies that were never helpful in whatever quest I was on: "That depends whether you're on foot or by car".
"No, I mean how long does it take to drive 500 meters?", I tried again.
"That depends who's driving"....*

Part 1, level 2

Anyway, after the 2 minute long motorcycle ride, you entered level 2 where you had to walk through a few screens. As I had no clue on how to code a proper jump function, the player simply couldn't jump. It wasn't entirely logical what you had to do either. For example, in one screen there was a red arrow pointing to the right, which of course made you assume that you had to go to the right, right? Wrong! Instead, you had to place yourself under the red arrow and press fire. The arrow would then rotate 90 degrees clockwise (thus pointing down), and a hole in the ground would appear right under your feet, resulting in you falling into a screen below you... And then you could continue.

Had you instead chosen to go to the right, as indicated by the arrow, then the "game" would have been over.

Classic case of "don't know how to create a challenge in the game - so let's turn it into an impossible guessing game!".

My brother would also use this approach later in one of his game-projects.



Part 1 ended at a dock where you jumped into a speedboat and sailed off. You were then presented with a password that you needed to type into Part 2 before being allowed to continue playing.

Part 2

I created Part 2 late 1988 / early 1989 I think, so I was 13 years old now.



In level 1 of part 2 you were sailing the speedboat from part 1, and had to navigate around in a maze to collect 9 dollar-symbols, before the timer ran out. Collecting all 9 dollar-symbols made the exit appear.

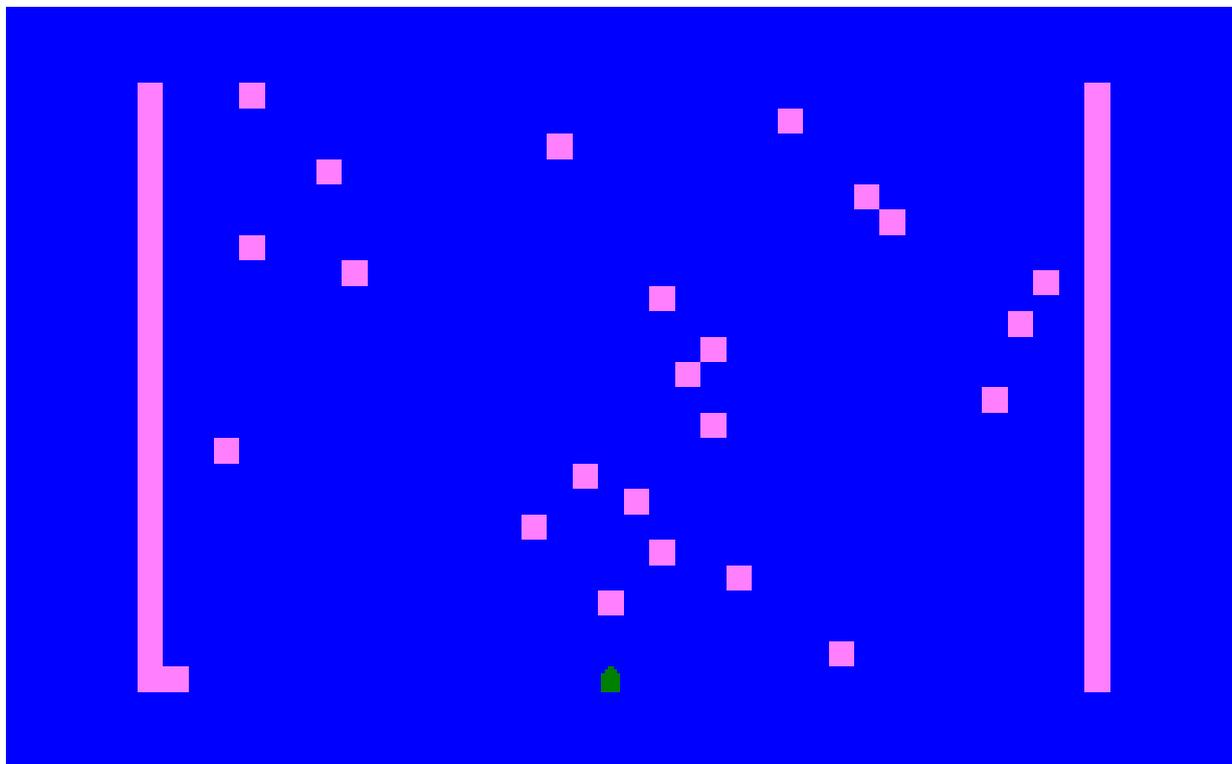
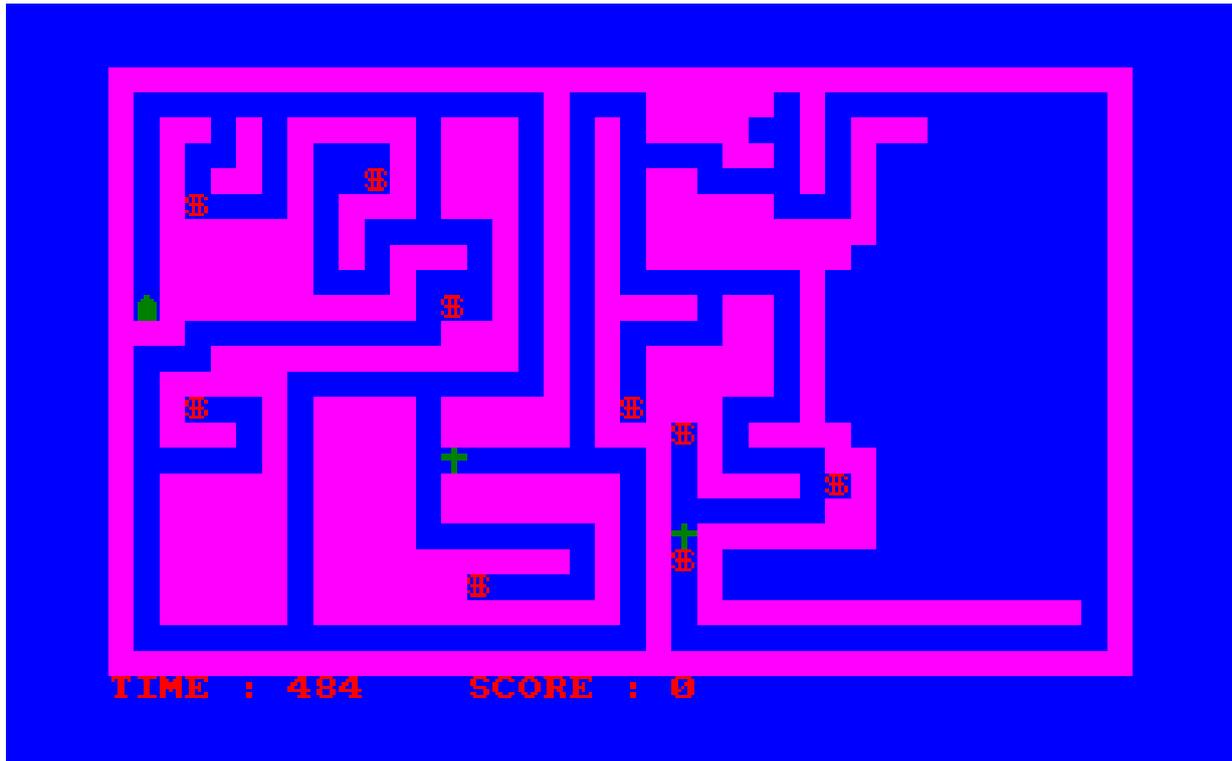
An Amstrad CPC BASIC game doesn't get much more classic than this.

Reaching the exit resulted in the remaining time being added to the score 1 by 1 while a short sound was played for each point. I knew that my cousin Robin really liked when points were summed up in this way, which of course is why I did it that way.

Not much else to say about level 1 really.

In the 2nd level of part 2 you had to sail slalom to avoid hitting anything.

I rather liked part 2 of Speedman. It was the first game I'd made that actually felt somewhat game-like to me. I had managed to create a game that didn't require me to implement a jump function, and which didn't require the player to make impossible guesses in order to complete it. It felt good.



The observant reader/viewer will wonder why "Speedman" was made by "Mr.Lou from M.T.C" when my nick in 1988 was "Kit". This is of course merely because I updated the game with my new nick later.

"Rick Hunter"

The 4th of September 1988 we moved out of our apartment and into a house again.

My brother was without a doubt the one who was most excited about this. Because the neighbourhood we moved into was part of some shared antenna agreement, which meant that we suddenly had access to a lot of foreign TV channels. The two most interesting channels were "Sky Channel" and "Super Channel", because they aired a lot of cartoons for kids.

While everyone else was helping out with the moving, my brother placed himself in a cardboard box in front of the TV and watched cartoons all day on the new foreign TV-channels. He was immediately hooked on shows like "Brave Starr", "M.A.S.K", "G.I. Joe", "Transformers" and "Robotech". It was a whole new world to suddenly have access to.

While I also enjoyed **some** of these animated shows, I think I only watched about a fifth or even just a tenth of what my brother watched. I remember watching "Brave Starr" a few times for example, and who didn't love "Inspector Gadget"? But "M.A.S.K", "G.I. Joe", "Transformers" and "Robotech" didn't interest me at all for some reason - except for the title music which I found rather cool in most of them.

My brother didn't watch all of the shows at the same time of course. I think they aired at different times during the following year and a half. So for a few months he'd be hooked on "G.I. Joe". The next few months it would be "Transformers". Then "M.A.S.K", and finally "Robotech". Doubtfully in that exact order though.

Anyway, the main character in "Robotech" was called "Rick Hunter", and it didn't take long before this character was the new favourite hero of my brother.

And that's when I got the idea of making a game for my brother where he could control his hero; Rick Hunter.

Enter sprites

Having previously created my small "Crash Car" sprite animation, and now also my "Speedman" game, I felt confident I could create a sprite-based game at this point. So the game "Rick Hunter" was going to be my first game using sprites, and it was going to be a present to my brother at his 12-year old birthday in March 1990.



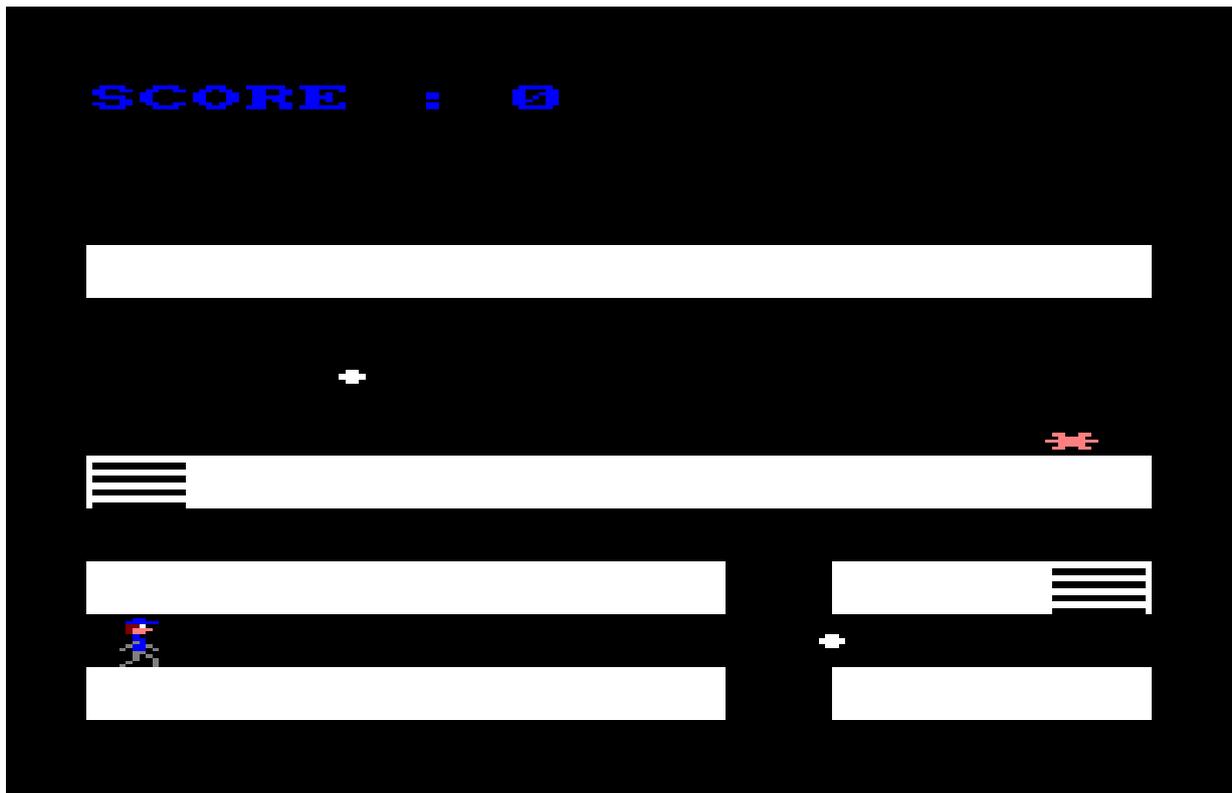
Creating the sprites was no problem at all. This was mostly because of my very low requirements for graphics though. As with "Crash Car", the platforms for the hero to walk on were simply a flat one-coloured white tile. And the enemies were merely oval shaped undefined white thingies.

Building the 1st screen was no problem either. I managed to create a somewhat decent game-loop. My "Rick Hunter" character could walk left and right, crawl up and down ladders, and I even managed to code something that looked like a jump routine.

Seeing the 1st screen come to life was very cool and motivating. But **wow** it was slow...

Despite having witnessed this poor performance issue with sprite-based projects before, I assumed it had been a direct result of my poor coding skills. But now that my coding skills had improved, I had expected (or hoped for) a significant **boost** in speed when using sprites instead of ASCII characters. Other sprite-based games sure seemed to be much faster than my SYMBOL-based stuff. But **my** sprite stuff just seemed to run even **slower** than my ASCII stuff, and that was **very** disappointing and annoying.

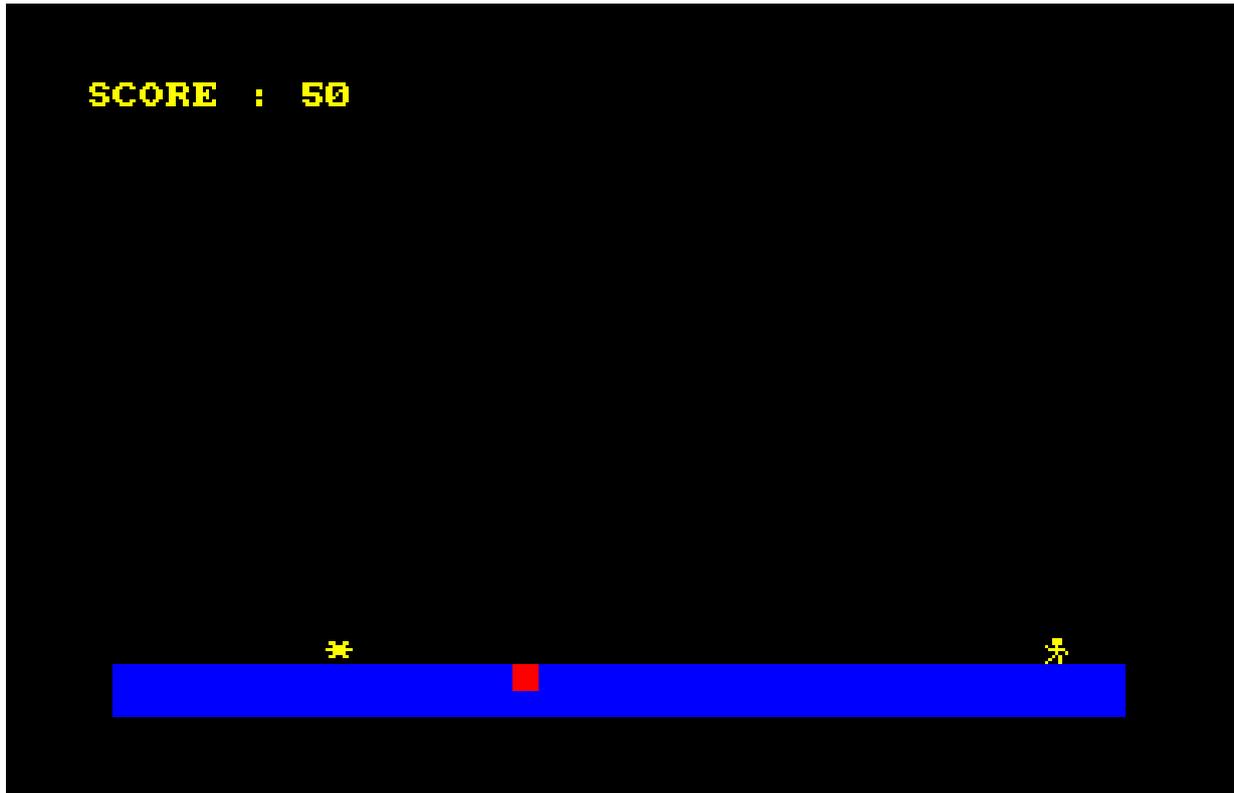
Because of this disappointment, my development of the game kinda stalled.



I would load it, and then not really work on it. I loaded it quite often, and then didn't work on it. And suddenly I was running out of time...

My projects usually didn't come with a deadline, but in this case it had to be "ready for release" in time for my brother's birthday. So in the end, in order to complete the project in time, I had to code the remaining screens using symbols instead of sprites. 3 rather boring screens that clearly testified how uninterested I was in completing this project.

The poor performance of using sprites was a big disappointment, and even though I did technically complete the project, this first sprite-based game-creation-attempt has to be marked as a complete failure.



The original Blu-ray version of 8-bit Memoirs contains video footage of this game. Visit www.8bitMemoirs.com to get it!

"Speedman II"

After the disaster with "Rick Hunter", I decided to avoid using sprites for my next game-project, and instead stick with symbols as I had previously done with "Speedman".

I was rather proud of the "Speedman" character I had created, and of course also of the game itself (especially part 2). My very own hero character that I had invented all by myself.

At school during recess I would go up to the blackboard and write the title "Speedman" with huge letters similar to the style shown in the title-screen of part 1. Then I'd sit back on my chair, admiring my artwork now displayed on the blackboard, while no one else in class had a **clue** what it was referring to.

Since I wanted to create another game, and I had to use symbols like in "Speedman", it made sense to make this game a sequel to "Speedman" - because it made sense for the two games to have the same style.

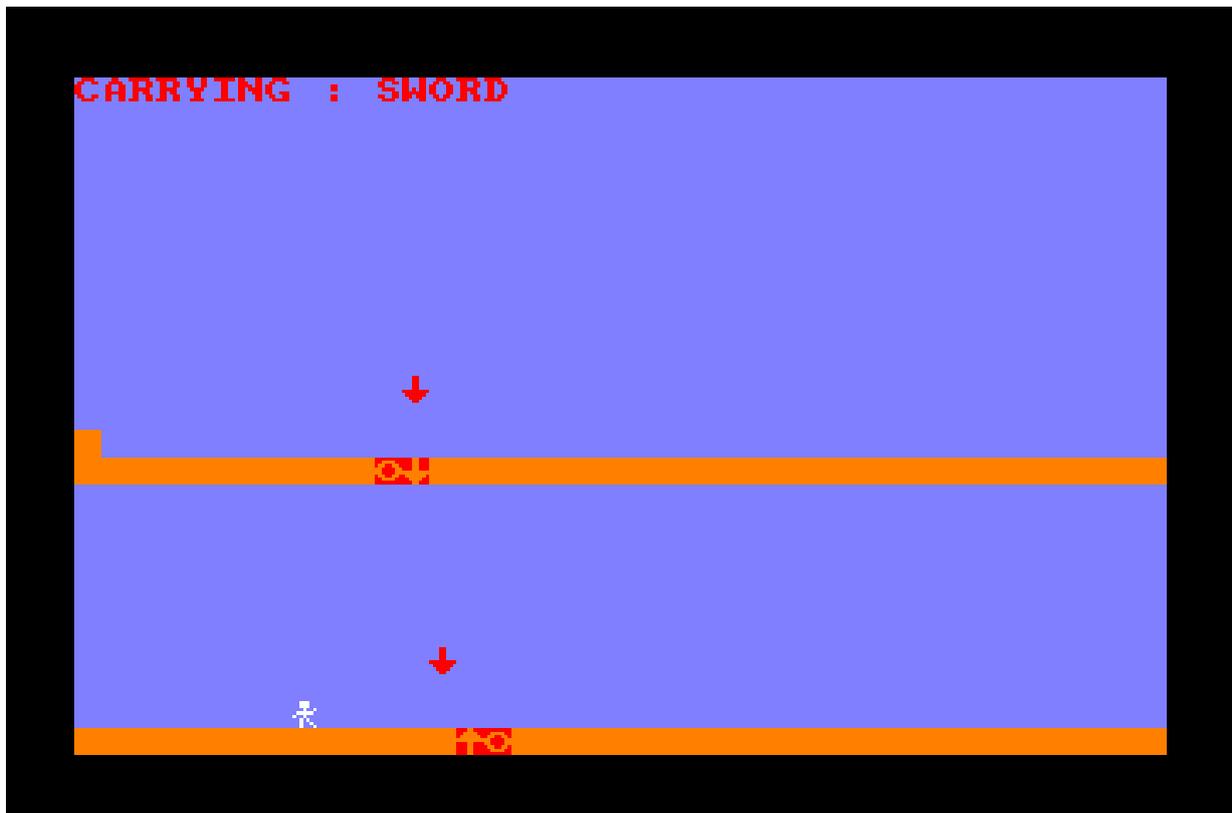


"Speedman II" became a platform game containing a whole 14 screens plus the final boss screen, and items you could pick up along the way: A sword, a whip and some boots.

The sword allowed you to eliminate the bad guy or obstacle in front of you. The whip did the same, but had twice the range as the sword and also a bit more power, enabling you to destroy enemies you couldn't destroy with the sword. The boots allowed you to jump.

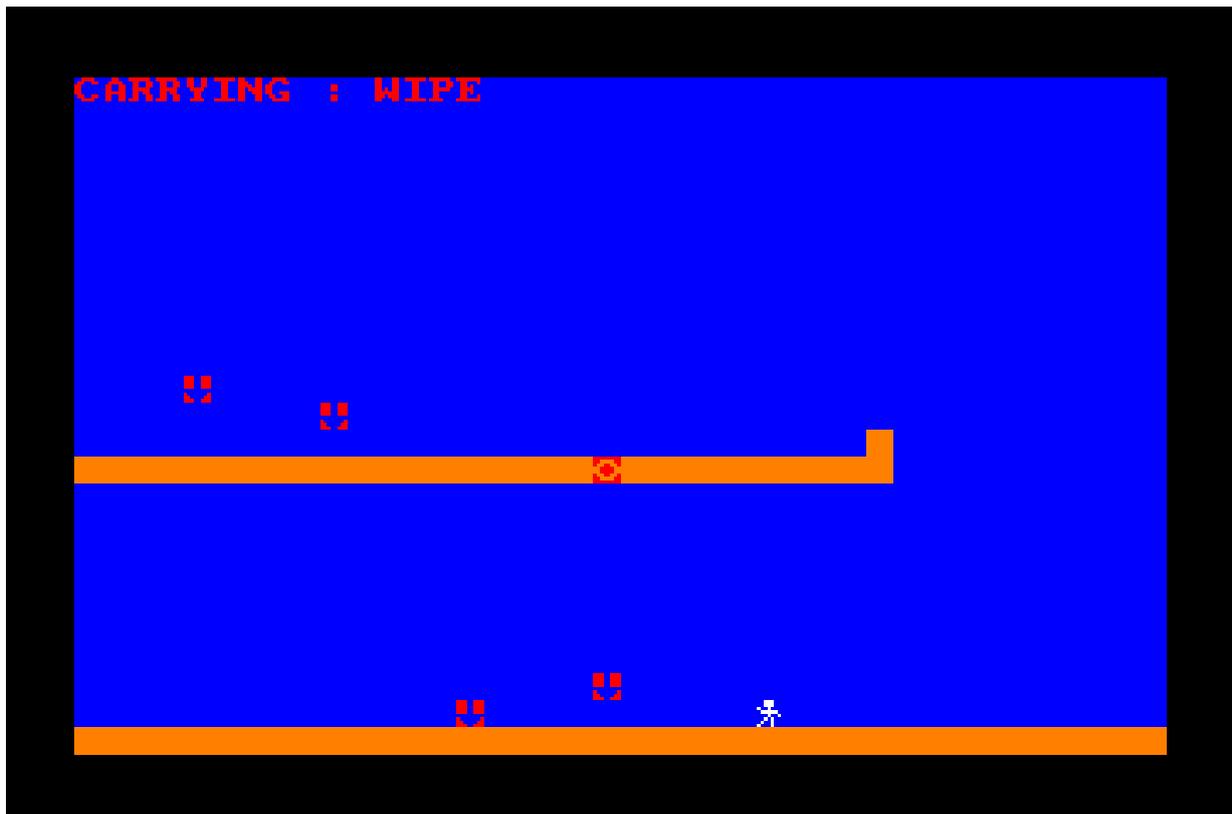
Now go forth and rescue the girl from the evil Dr. Deeps, and collect a case full of jewels as a reward.

Although my language skills had improved a bit in regards of reading and understanding English, my spelling skills still weren't that great, so in the game it was called "a wipe" and "juwels"...



"Speedman II" is probably the biggest game I ever made on the Amstrad CPC. At least when looking at file-size and memory usage. I remember actually running out of memory near the end of it, and actually being unable to save my work unless I called a CLEAR command first - which took a few seconds to execute. In other words, I had apparently reached the maximum amount of memory a BASIC program was allowed to use.

I also had to call CLEAR in the game-code before the player entered the boss level. Otherwise there'd be an "Out of memory" error stopping the game. The 592 lines of BASIC code took up 18 blocks on the tape, corresponding to 36kb.



The file-size of the game wasn't exactly a consequence of a lot of content though. It mostly had something to do with the fact that every single screen had its own game-loop. In other words; the code for checking joystick input was actually present a whole 15 times. And I knew perfectly well that it wasn't the most optimal way of doing it, but I also knew that if I had to do everything the most optimal way, then I wouldn't be able to create anything.

These projects were never about creating flawless optimal code. They were always only about being creative and have fun with it. And that I definitely had.

I also included a jump function in "Speedman II". Not a very good one, but it was there. The very non-impressive part about it was that while the character was jumping, everything else on the screen was standing still. That was the compromise I had to make, in order to include jump functionality with the coding skills I had at the time.



Presenting

For all the game-projects I did back then, there were rarely any actual play-testing phase. As far as I remember, I never had anyone give feedback during development.

As long as the game wasn't done yet, the only person who'd play/test it was myself. Well, maybe my brother occasionally had a go too, but otherwise no one.

So when it was time to present my game-projects to friends and family, it was always very interesting to watch them play. See how much they concentrated and study what actions they decided to take in each screen. It was especially interesting to see how people had different ways of playing my games despite of how simple they were. Like for example how some players would put an effort into eliminating each and every single enemy on their path, while other players would just walk past and ignore the enemies that didn't present any danger.

The original Blu-ray version of 8-bit Memoirs contains video footage of this game. Visit www.8bitMemoirs.com to get it!

"Space Help"

I've never been good at giving up, especially not something that intrigues me. I usually keep at it until I succeed. It has proven to be a great advantage in **some** cases, mostly work-related. But it's not **always** a good thing to be persistent like that.

The failed "Rick Hunter" project told me I better avoid using sprites, so I had created "Speedman II" using symbols.

But I still had a strong interest in creating a game with sprites. One with a decent framerate too. The lousy 5 fps in "Rick Hunter" was far from acceptable.

The successful "Speedman II" project had given me back the motivation I needed to have another go at creating a sprite-based game-project. So in late 1990 I started up another such game-project, and called it "Space Help".

It was to be a sideways space shooter, as simple as they get:

On your way to reach Mars, you run into various obstacles and bad guys to shoot.

I theorised that the disappointingly low framerate in "Rick Hunter" might have had something to do with my coding skills still being rather poor. Like e.g. the clumsy algorithm behind the jump functionality; using way too many IF questions.

So for "Space Help" I tried a new approach, resulting in the code looking a bit better than any previous game-code I'd done before:

Despite there being 3 different aliens appearing after each other, I was now (finally) using the same game-loop-code for all of them.

I think this was the first time I felt my code was somewhat decent. (At least compared to previous projects). Especially when noticing that "Space Help" consisted of only 118 lines of BASIC code, compared to "Speedman II" that took up a whole 592 lines.

And, the best part: A spaceshooter didn't require a jump function! So I had a good feeling about this project.

Silly me... being optimistic like that.

Everything ended up running just as slow as in "Rick Hunter", and it was still equally disappointing.



In all of my previous game-projects, the biggest challenge had always been the implementation of a jump routine. Now with "Space Help", the annoying jump routine had seemingly just been replaced by the annoying "fire laser" routine.

A fitting name for my first "fire laser" attempt would be "snail laser", since it moved with roughly the same speed as the stars in the background. When I did manage to get a decent speed of the laser, I then struggled a lot with the collision detection of the enemy spaceships.

Adding the laser sprite also slowed down the whole game even more!

After lots of struggling I ended up doing something similar to what I did with the jump function in "Speedman II": I just halted everything else in the game while drawing a line of laser sprites. That was (as usual) **no where** near my original vision, but it prevented the overall framerate to drop even more and also made the collision detection easier (translation: doable with my skills).

"Space Help" confirmed once again that I just didn't know how to create a proper sprite-game in BASIC. I wasn't sure what the problem was. Either I lacked the required coding skills, or else this particular sprite engine was just too slow? Or maybe BASIC was just too slow?

Many possible reasons, but I kept suspecting that the real reason was my lack of coding skills. After all, other games (like e.g. "Radzone") clearly demonstrated that doing sprite-games with a decent framerate - even with BASIC - **was** possible.

I definitely couldn't figure out how to create one though. Yet again I'd managed to produce a rather poor and slow sprite game. And even though I usually never gave up on my projects, this time the disappointment was demotivating to such a degree that I gave up doing any kind of game-project for the next 3 years - and it would take 25 years before attempting another sprite-based game in BASIC on the CPC.

In 2015 I had another go at doing a sprite-based game using BASIC on the CPC. Even after all those years I still couldn't accept that I hadn't been able to do it back then.

This time I asked the skilled CPC coder, Kevin Thacker aka arnoldemu, to make the sprite routines for me, to be sure that these routines definitely couldn't be any faster.

*But I didn't get far with the project before noticing that speed was **still** an issue. Then I complained to Kevin and asked how on earth other people managed to code fast sprite games using BASIC.*

He then took a look at the source code for "Radzone" and subsequently shed some light on the mystery:

It turned out that a lot more than just the sprite routines were done with machine code in "Radzone". A lot of the game-logic was apparently also coded in Assembler.

This was both good news and annoying news. Good news because it had to mean that I apparently didn't suck as much as I'd thought I did for all those years. And rather annoying too, because it meant that the demotivation that had put a stop to my creativity back then, kinda had been unjustified.

The original Blu-ray version of 8-bit Memoirs contains video footage of this game. Visit www.8bitMemoirs.com to get it!

"Casino"

3 years went by, and all of the sudden it was 1993.

My last attempt at creating a sprite-based game; "Space Help" in 1990, had been yet another disappointment. So I wasn't a whole lot active on the CPC for the next 3 years. At least not when it came to game-projects. I'd completely lost the interest. Instead I'd been spending my time making music with "Equinoxe"; a french Amstrad CPC tracker.

In 1993 I returned to game-development though. Here's why:

I was never much of a card-player. I simply found card games too boring. Playing cards was something that grown-ups did, and although I actually turned 18 this year I still didn't identify myself as a grown-up.

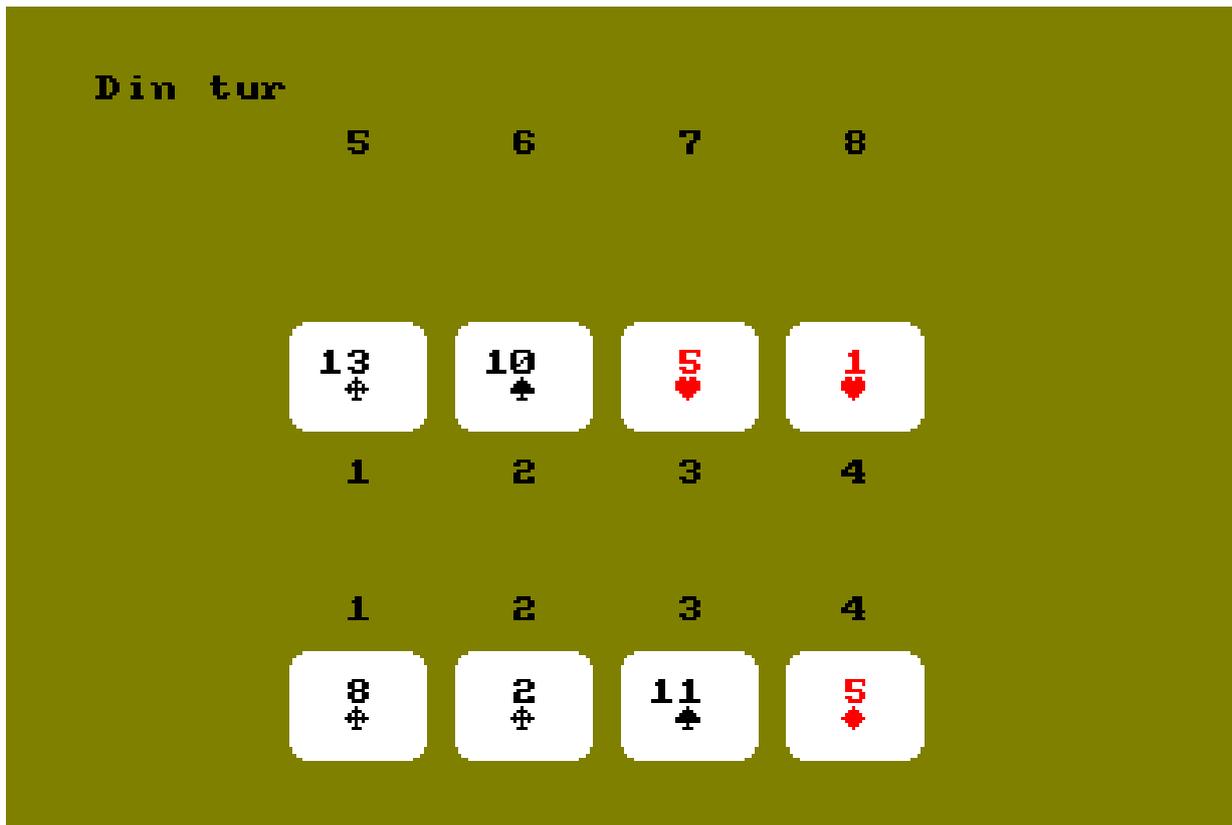
But one of my closest friends, Karin, liked to play cards quite a lot. One of her favourite games at the time was called "Casino", and when she managed to persuade me to play a game with her, I have to admit that I got rather hooked on it. So much in fact, that I began teaching other friends of mine how to play it too.

But there wasn't always someone around to play with when I felt like having a game. And that's of course how I got the idea of simply creating someone to play with: On my Amstrad CPC464.

The main reason I'd left game-development alone for the past 3 years, was the poor excuse of a framerate that I had been able to produce with my previous game-projects.

But "Casino" was a card game, which was somewhat different. There was no need for a high framerate in a card game. No need for a jump function or a "fire laser" function either. It wasn't even necessary to use sprites. All the typical obstacles seemed to be absent from a project like this, and the idea of playing "Casino" against my CPC was very intriguing, so I got started.

As far as I remember, I managed to create "Casino" surprisingly fast. It was just a matter of implementing a few very basic mathematical functions, along with some user-input functionality. 121 lines of BASIC, and that was it.



Now I could play "Casino" with my CPC, and that was both fun and exciting, although admittedly only for a little while though. Because when you play against a computer instead of a human, you're obviously missing a lot of human factors. The laughs and "Doh"s that two human players would usually express towards each other was of course completely absent from the game. And the absence of those elements would quickly render the whole experience rather boring on the CPC.

So I have to admit that I didn't really play the game on the CPC that much. It lost its appeal relatively fast. But it was nice being creative on the CPC again.

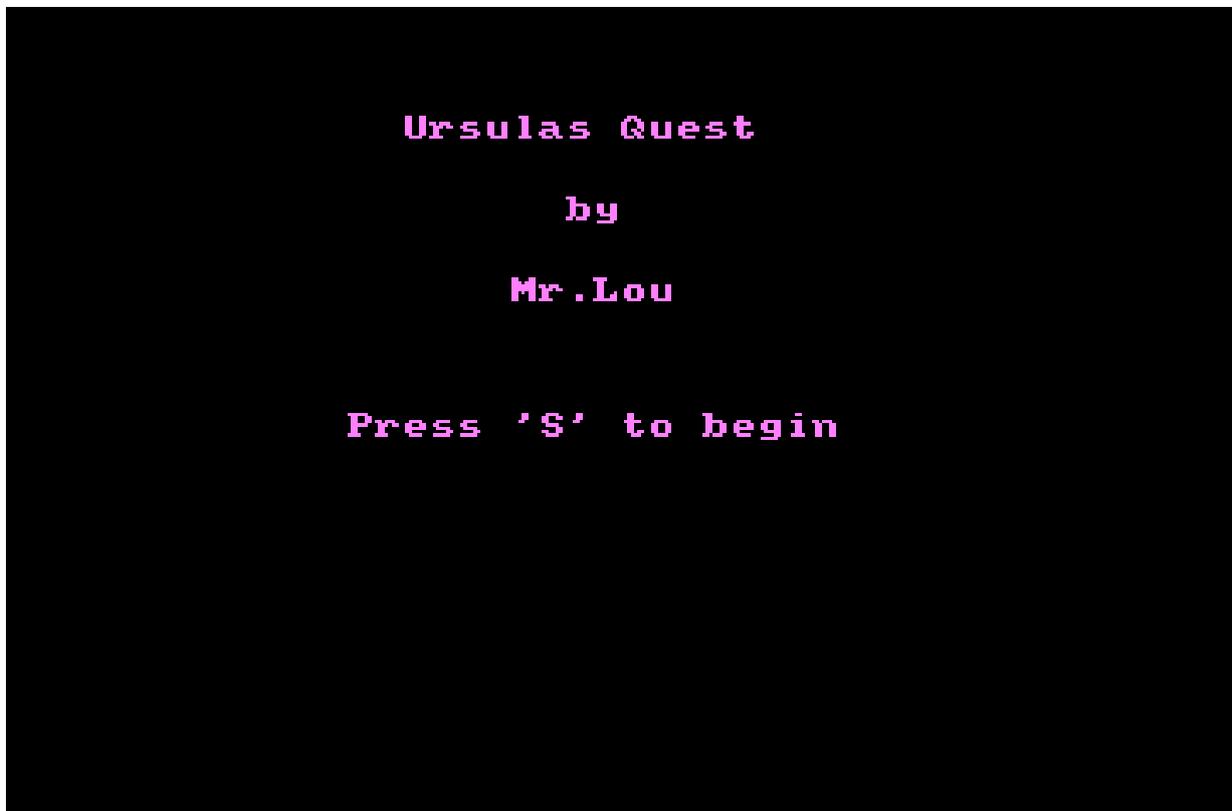
The original Blu-ray version of 8-bit Memoirs contains video footage of this game. Visit www.8bitMemoirs.com to get it!

"Ursula's Quest"

The last game I made on the Amstrad CPC back in those days was "Ursula's Quest", and the year was 1994.

This last game kinda marked my acceptance of only being able to create BASIC games using SYMBOLs and LOCATE commands rather than using sprites. I wanted to make this final game where I used all the things I'd learned up until this point. Things like using the same game-loop code for all screens and levels. And using simple collision detection instead of the complicated IF questions I had previously used, which hogged up all of the CPU power.

Not a whole lot else to tell about this game really. As my skills were somewhat decent at this time, I can't tell any interesting story about the development, because it went rather smoothly, without any funny quirks or obstacles.



It starts and ends with the S key

Looking back at the very first Amstrad CPC game I tried; "Commando", I see the irony in me being confused back then by needing to press 'S' to start the game - and then looking at the start screen of "Ursula's Quest".

Yup. "Press S to start" it says.

I do remember why I chose to do this though: If the player lost his last life in the middle of a jump, it meant he'd be holding down the fire button. And entering the title screen while holding the fire button would start a new game immediately.

To prevent this I had to assign the "Start game" action to another key.

I wonder if that's why the developers of "Commando" chose to do it like that too...

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The "Repulse" port

Doing CPC stuff with my cousin Robin was definitely one of the more intriguing passions I had in life. We both always looked forward to our next CPC session. It was no doubt a great time in both of our lives.

It didn't take long before single afternoons after school wasn't enough. So we instead began arranging weekend sleep-overs at each other. That way we could turn the whole weekend into one big CPC session.

CPC weekends

Each of these weekends all had the same agenda: First do lots of CPC stuff; some coding followed by some gaming-breaks. Maybe watch a movie. Then go to sleep. Wake up in the middle of the night, meet up in the kitchen and have a night snack. And finally wake up next morning and do more CPC stuff.

We had a few of such weekends at my place, but the majority of these weekends were held at my cousin's place. Partly because he was the one with the CPC6128, and partly because his dad wouldn't let him bring his CPC with him anywhere:

"Computers aren't meant to be moved around!", he said, "They will break!"

So whenever we held such CPC weekends at my place, we only had my CPC464 available.

Luckily my parents weren't so strict about me moving my CPC464 around, so I was allowed to bring it to my cousin's place. My dad would drive me there, and help carry my CPC inside.

And then followed a whole weekend of exciting CPC geekiness, with each our own CPC.

I didn't mind that most of our CPC sessions took place at my cousin's place. In fact, I kinda preferred it, partly because of the less strict rules that seemed to apply there. At my place my parents would be all like "Don't do this or that!". But at my cousin's place his parents would instead go "You may mess up everything as much as you want - as long as you clean everything up again to the point where it's impossible to see there ever was a mess". While this of course basically had the same effect as "Don't make a mess!", it was just much more appealing and fun to be given a choice - to actually be "allowed" to make a mess - as long as we cleaned up everything again. Of course, since none of us felt like cleaning

up, we never did make the kind of mess they suggested - despite getting some rather interesting ideas from the examples they gave us.

Robin's parents also had a great collection of movies, and we would sometimes watch one during our CPC weekends.

I enjoyed watching movies a lot. To me, watching movies with mum and dad and my brother was what family evenings was supposed to be all about. Having everyone gathered in the couch, snacks on the table and "Superman" or "Star Wars" airing on the TV. Those are the absolute best and most cosy family evenings I remember.

But movie evenings at home were very rare. My parents just didn't have the interest. This became rather clear one day I was visiting Robin and saw his "Star Wars" toys. I picked up this huge white monster-looking thingy...

"What's this?", I asked.

"That's from Star Wars", Robin replied.

And I absolutely did not remember any such creature from "Star Wars" at all - because I'd only seen the first movie; "Episode IV", and I had no clue there were two other movies as well. In fact, I didn't believe him when he said there were a total of 3 Star Wars movies, because it was too weird that I hadn't heard about them. The short discussion ended with Robin putting on "Episode V" to prove me wrong.

I was surprised and amazed. "Star Wars" wasn't just **one** movie?? There were **3** movies in total??? How could I not know about this?? Clearly a serious flaw in my upbringing.

And I'd soon discover that "Star Wars" wasn't the only case like this. It also applied to "Superman".

So it was at cousin's place I discovered some of my favourite things in life. Great movies. Amstrad CPC BASIC coding. We also played a lot of music together, since we both played the keyboard. In other words, I had a lot of positive experiences in that house.

The ambitious project

I still remember one of the best CPC weekends we had: The time we naively attempted to create an Amstrad CPC version of the space-shooter arcade game "Repulse".

For the past many months I had been playing a lot of "Bubble Bobble" at the local grill, and it had been great. I loved that game. I'm fairly convinced that everyone who ever experienced it also loved it.

Yes, a lot of these grill food places had arcade gaming machines back then. You'd typically order some food, and then play a game while waiting for your order to become ready. Or else you'd visit the grill just to play the arcade games, which is what I typically did. Some of these grills had quite a lot of arcade games.

To play these arcade games you had to insert the equivalent of about 25 Eurocent, and I would often take my bicycle down to the grill as soon as I had managed to scrape together the equivalent of a single Euro, just to be able to play 4 games of "Bubble Bobble". That's how eager I (and many other kids) was to play this game.

But then one day I arrived at the grill, "Bubble Bobble" was gone. It had been replaced with another game called "Repulse".

At first this annoyed me a lot, because I was all set on playing "Bubble Bobble". No other game could ever go better hand in hand with the pleasant aroma of french fries, hotdogs and burgers than "Bubble Bobble". This was common knowledge - **everyone** knew this! So why had they replaced it with another game now? It looked like the classic problem I kept seeing everywhere else in the world too: Bad management. The people in charge always seemed to lack the necessary skills, knowledge and experience about whatever area they were in charge of, and the result was a lot of bad decisions. Removing "Bubble Bobble" was a good example of such a bad decision.

But I obviously had to check out this new game, just to see **how** bad a decision it was.

It didn't take too long before I was hooked on "Repulse" though. Obviously it would never be able to replace "Bubble Bobble" - no game can ever do that. But if the owners of the grill absolutely felt they had to have a new game, then "Repulse" wasn't the **worst** choice they could have made, in my humble opinion.

So I continued visiting the local grill to play "Repulse" now.

Of course I'd still visit other grills in town that still had "Bubble Bobble". You don't just stop playing "Bubble Bobble" like that.



Attempting a CPC port

So this particular weekend at Robin's place, I suggested that we tried making an Amstrad CPC port of "Repulse".

Since I had been playing (and thus studied) the game for quite some time, I felt confident that we could pull it off.

This was obviously before learning that doing a sprite-based game with a decent framerate in BASIC was in fact impossible, unless most of the game-logic was done in Assembler too.

I was especially looking forward to creating the audio part, because I was sure the CPC could create a sound 100% identical to the arcade version - and it would be nothing less than awesome if the CPC could mimic the arcade audio perfectly.

Although Robin didn't know the game, he thought it sounded like a cool project.

So based on my description of the sprites, he began creating the enemy spaceships in our sprite designer "Sprites", while I began coding the basic game-loop.

I had an awesome vision of how it was all going to look like when it was done.



Sure, the CPC didn't have the resolution nor colours used in the original arcade game, but I was sure it could produce an acceptable result nevertheless.

Note: The CPC screenshot was made while creating 8-bit Memoirs - not back then.

The enemy spaceships in "Repulse" moved not only in x and y space, but also in z space, illustrated by using different sizes of the enemy spaceships on the screen. It worked great in the arcade version.

Creating some similar sprites ourselves on the CPC didn't go that well. As we had already discovered earlier, it was (still) a bad cocktail to require quality when lacking the necessary skills. So after the usual frustration we ended up settling for "temporary sprites" so we could move on to next step: Getting the engine up running.

Getting the engine running didn't go that well either though, despite it **seeming** simple enough:

First, receive joystick input and move the player-ship around. So far so good.

Now add the enemy spaceships...

The reality about my poor coding skills had hit me in the face many times at this point, but every time I started a new project I always expected things to go better than last time for some reason. I guess that made me a kind of naive optimist?

I literally spent the rest of the day trying to figure out how to make these enemy spaceships appear on the screen while being able to control my own spaceship at the same time. I was extremely persistent, but got absolutely no where.

Apart from a few gaming breaks, all day went by trying to get these sprites to move on the screen.

We stayed up for as long as we could stay awake - and then a bit longer. It was very difficult for me to go to bed without resolving just a **little** bit of the problem, but in the end I had to, because I wasn't getting anywhere - and we were tired.

Lying in bed I couldn't fall asleep because I couldn't stop thinking about my code. I just couldn't leave it alone. I kept trying to come up with the missing puzzle in my head.

"...I got it!", I almost shouted when I got an idea, jumped out of bed and turned on cousin's CPC again.

Robin waited half asleep until I came back 10 minutes later.

"Did you fix it?", he mumbled.

"....no", I replied with a somewhat annoying tone.

He didn't tell me at the time, but Robin rather enjoyed that enthusiasm of mine. He thought it was awesome that I was hooked on the project so much that I jumped out of bed in the middle of the night just to try out something I just thought of.

Next morning when we woke up, I rushed into the CPC's again, continuing my attempt at making everything work, and still failing miserably.

The project was just way too complicated for the both of us.

So we never did manage to create a CPC version of "Repulse", and the weekend felt somewhat like a waste at the time. But nowadays I think that particular weekend was one of the best CPC sessions we had. The effort and enthusiasm we both had put into it was the essence and most important part of our CPC weekends. As long as these things were present, it was ok if we didn't reach our goal.

Of course, we wouldn't have been able to reach our goal no matter what. We were attempting to create a sprite-based game in BASIC with about 7-10 sprites moving at the same time on the screen with a smooth framerate. We didn't know this at the time of course, but such a result was simply impossible to achieve with BASIC on the CPC.

Games by Mr.Ice

When my parents gave me my CPC464 back in 1987, my grandma's CPC464 was handed on to my younger brother Kenneth. So we had a CPC464 each. But our usage of the CPC was very different.

My brother and I have always been two very different people. Whenever there was a certain thing **I** liked, you could be certain that he instead preferred the exact opposite. And vice versa.

On the rare occasions where we did in fact like the same thing, some minor difference would set us apart anyway.

The result of this situation was that we never really did anything together. Constantly having opposite interests naturally prevents that.

When I was very much into being creative, and didn't really appreciate gaming that much, Kenneth was instead very much interested in gaming, and didn't appreciate being creative that much.

I would sometimes try to make him interested in being creative, and he would try to make me interested in gaming. But it was always almost impossible for us to change each other's interests. So our attempts usually failed.

At the time I suspected his lack of interest in BASIC coding was because he thought it was too difficult. So then I'd wait a few days or weeks, before trying to persuade him again, this time emphasising how easy it really was, while also offering to do the music for his game-projects - if he got started.

Eventually I managed to find the trigger that got him interested in having a go. He started coding a game in the same style as my "Speedman" games, and all of the sudden he was hooked on being creative just like me. He picked the nick "Mr.Ice" for himself, and named his first game "Gunman".

As promised I did the music for it, and before we knew it he had completed his first game-project.

After "Gunman" he also started up several other creative game-projects, sometimes together with a friend, but he only managed to complete a few of them.

I can't write a whole lot of stories about these projects of his, as I wasn't the one doing them. But the original Blu-ray version of 8-bit Memoirs does contain a video of his projects for the sake of completeness. Otherwise I'm sure I'll feel something is missing from 8-bit Memoirs when I revisit it myself some day in the distant future.

Even to this day my brother and I keep having different interests. I like Java, he likes C#. I like Linux, he likes Windows. He plays a lot of modern PC games, I only play retro-games. He **does** play **some** retro-games too though - but prefers playing them on emulators while I prefer playing them on the real machines.

He prefers streaming movies, I prefer having the physical media. He prefers taking photos with a 360 camera, while I instead prefer video-recording with a normal view. I could go on for a long time.

Our Amstrad CPC BASIC coding was the last thing we truly had in common with each other.

CPC gaming with cousin

Although most of our time was spent creating our own amateurish homebrew stuff, my cousin and I did also play a few games on the CPC. The list of games that reminds me of his place back in those days counts about 40 titles.

I can't write a story for each of these games though, and if I had included a video for each of them, the project would have become way too big. So instead, I've chosen to just write this one single story, about a few of "Cousin's CPC games".

The main reason these games are linked to my cousin, is mostly because he was the one who introduced them to me. And in most cases he was also rather enthusiastic about them. And the reason the list contains a whole 40 titles, is because he was the only one of us who had the luxury of being able to present new games. I never had any new games to show him back.

The weight of the music

Most of us knows how an old song on the radio or in a movie can bring back memories of people we used to know in the distant past. The reason that certain music causes these flashbacks is of course because we used to listen to that music a lot while having this person in our lives.

Any kind of music can do this - including the chippy music in old retro computer games.

When my cousin Robin introduced me to "Jet Set Willy", the first thing I noticed was the title-music. It appealed to me **a lot** - and definitely contributed to the value of the actual game. I'm fairly sure I wouldn't have found "Jet Set Willy" nearly as interesting, if some other melody had been used. There was something "deep" about this tune, which affected the atmosphere of the whole game.

But it took a year or two before I learned that this piece of music was actually Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata". This discovery was made one day Robin began playing the tune on their piano in the living-room, and I went: "Hey! You can play Jet Set Willy!". He then explained that it was actually a classical piece of music.

This was a big surprise to me, because I hadn't expected myself to like classical music, much less relate to it. At least not at such a young age. I thought classical music was somehow reserved for old people, like e.g. my grandma. Even my parents hadn't yet reached the age I thought you had to have in order to appreciate classical music.

Another game cousin introduced to me was "Space Harrier", which was one of his favourites. He especially liked the animation of the hero character when he was running on the ground.

I didn't find the game that interesting myself, as usual because I honestly couldn't figure it out. But we both liked the music a lot. Great tunes, both in-game and at the highscore screen.

And guess what! The music that was playing at the highscore screen, was actually another classical piece of music: "Bach a la Jazz". I didn't know that either, and this time it would take decades before I found out.

"Roland in Time" was another one. As with "Space Harrier", the strange thing about the nostalgic weight of "Roland in Time" is that I never really actually played it. It didn't appeal to me at all, because I found it **way** too difficult. But it found its way onto the nostalgia list anyway because it was Robin who showed it to me, and because **he** seemed to like it quite a bit. At the same time, the in-game music also made an impact, because it was a melody that was sometimes used at family parties, when someone had written a song for everyone to sing: "The Happy Wanderer". Once again I didn't recognise the melody right away, but made the connection many years later.

When I was introduced to "Roland goes Digging" I was a bit ecstatic, because I had been missing a game like this on the CPC, ever since seeing "Space Panic" on the arcade machines.

The music in "Roland goes Digging" was "Dig-a-dig-dig" and "Heigh Ho" from the Walt Disney feature film "Snow White and the seven dwarfs" from 1938. So it sounded very familiar when I heard it - but again it took years before it dawned upon me where it came from.

It is interesting to see how the music in these games appear to be the factor that has made the biggest impact on me. Whenever I hear "Moonlight Sonata", "Bach a la Jazz", "The Happy Wanderer", "Dig-a-dig-dig" or "Heigh Ho" today, I am of course thrown back to this golden childhood age, where all was comfy and cosy. And because the tracks are fairly well-known and used elsewhere, I can't avoid being reminded of the good old days every now and then.

Of course, I do also actively seek these nostalgic flashbacks, for example by visiting remix.kwed.org and find new remix versions of the tracks. (Highly recommended, if you haven't already tried it).

Exclusively associated games

"Space Harrier" and "Roland in Time" are exclusively associated with my cousin, because he was the one who introduced them to me, and because I never really played the games elsewhere. Other CPC games on that list include:

"3D-Fight", "Arabian Nights", "Astro Attack", "Blagger", "Break out", "Caterpillar", "Electro Freddy", "Galaxia", "Ghouls", "Kong Strikes Back", "Laserwarp", "Pak Caverns", "Punchy", "Rally II", "Roland Ahoy", "Roland in Space", "Saboteur", "Space Mania", "Spannerman", "Westbank" and "Who Dares Wins II".

We did also play other games, like "1942", "Ghost'n'Goblins", "Ghostbusters", "Harrier Attack", "Hunchback", "Ikari Warriors" and "Kane". But because I also played those games in other relations, only the first list is exclusively associated with my cousin and their house.

So it's very easy for me to take a nostalgic trip back to that cosy atmosphere: All I have to do is load up one of those many games on my CPC. It will of course never be the same as actually being there back in the day, but it sure is nice to be able to remember the era this way.

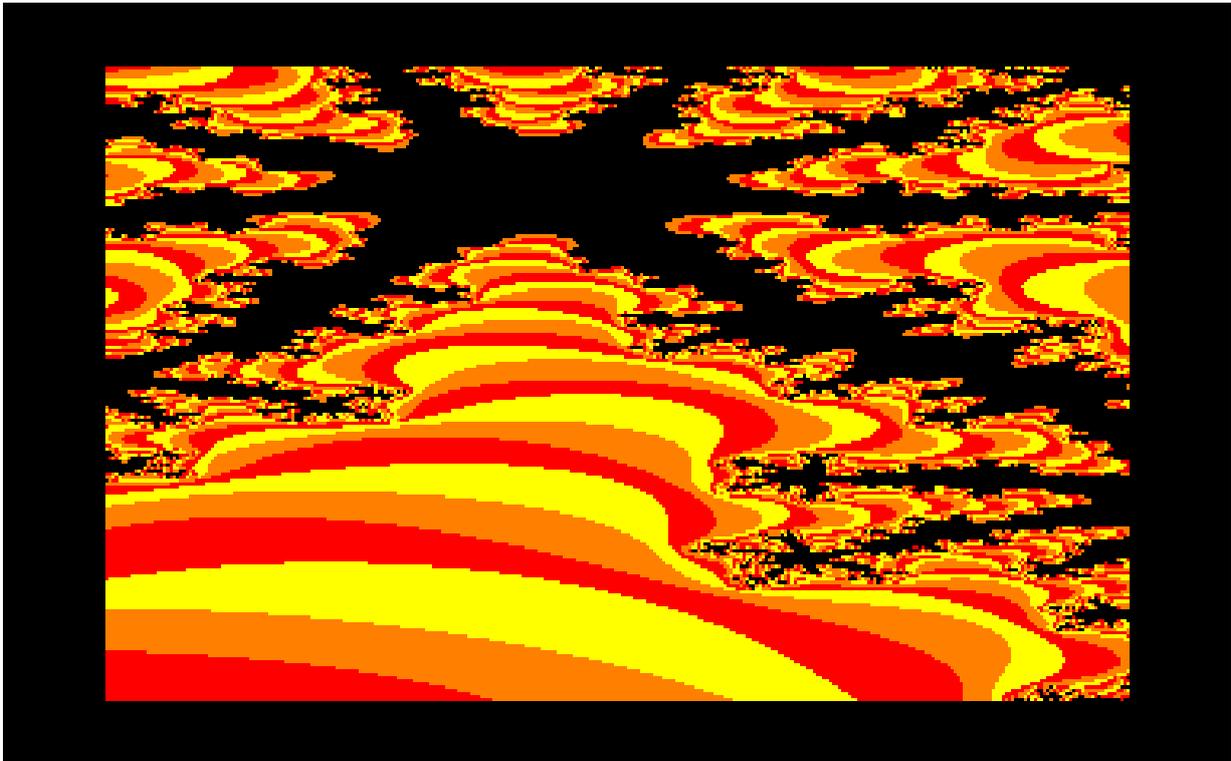
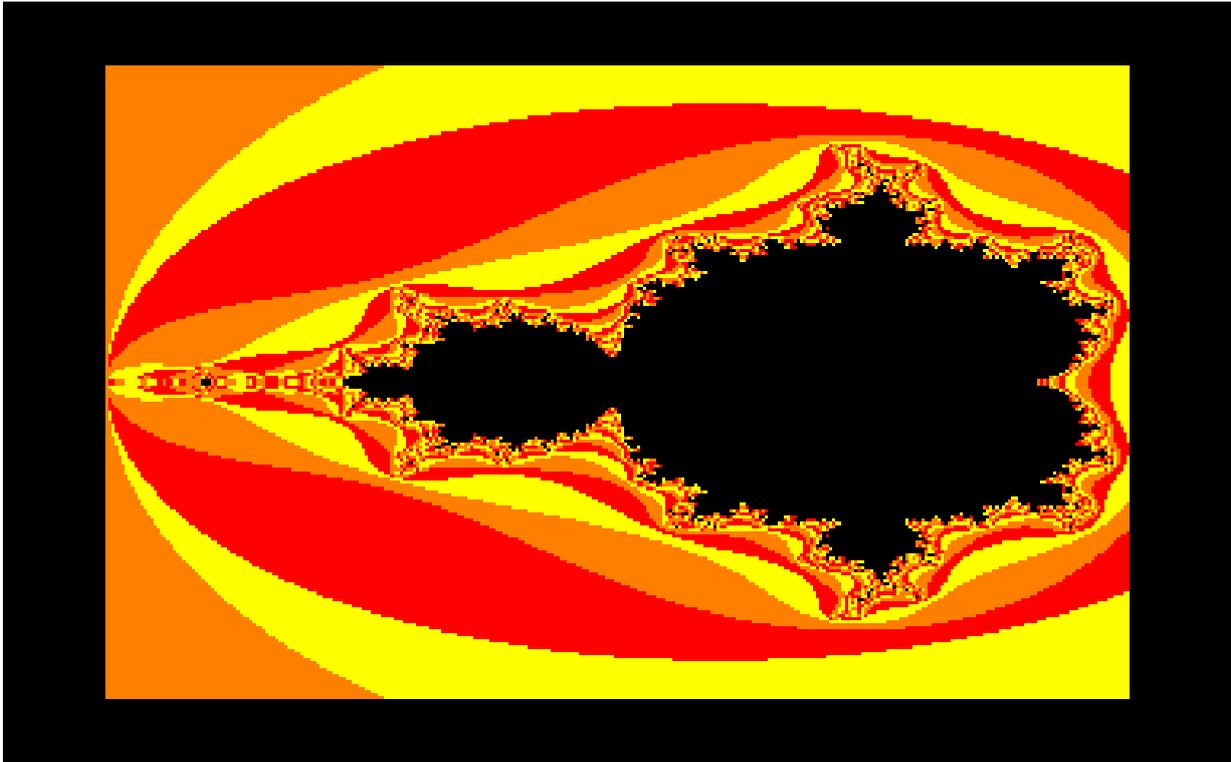
End of the era



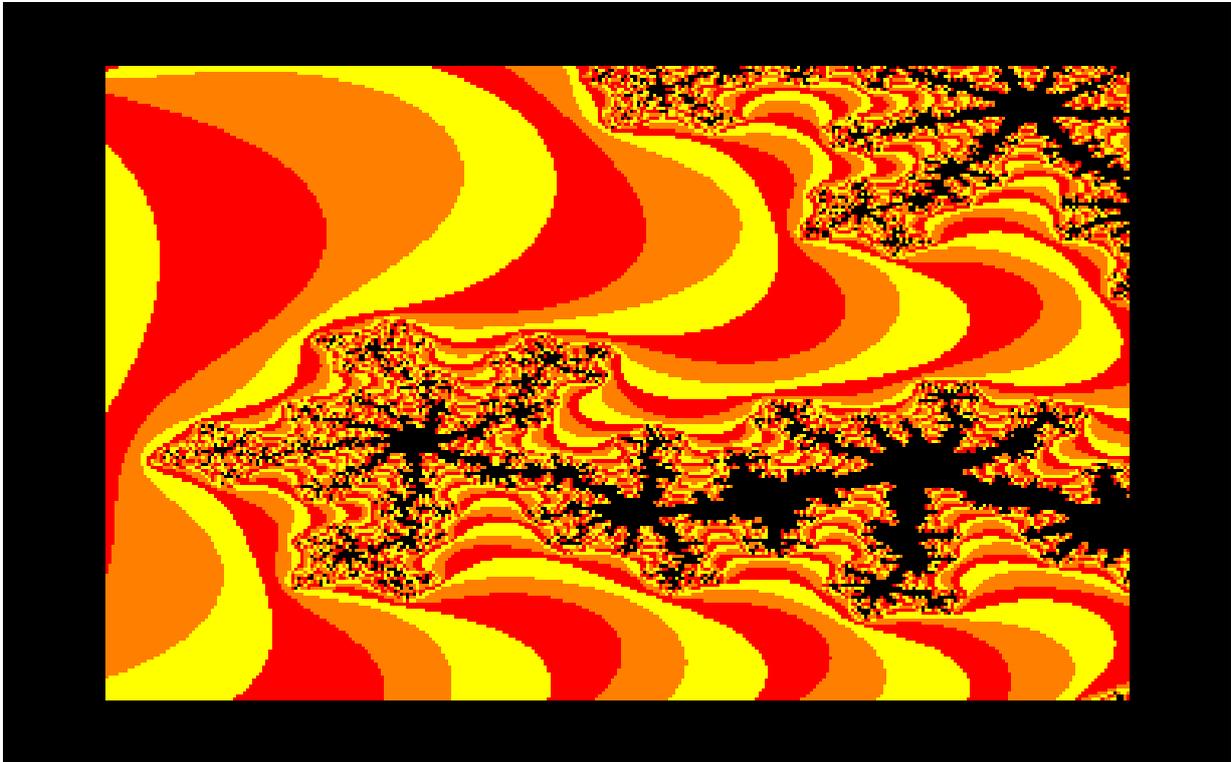
Robin never dived into game-development on the CPC, like my brother and I did. I don't remember whether it was because of a general lack of interest, or if he just found it too difficult. Maybe a bit of both.

Apart from my own game projects, I also created many other programs on the CPC, like e.g. my own amateurish BASIC version of "A real writer", after seeing the demo-making tool with the same name on the C64.

I also remember translating and typing in a Mandelbrott listing from Pascal. Then waiting 4 days for the CPC to complete the rendering, only to realise I was a fool to not have added a saving routine for the picture once it was done. Then waiting another 4 days for it to render again - and again after changing some values to zoom in - and once again.



I also enjoyed making pictures in "Screen Designer", using the only technique I had the skills for: Laying a piece of transparent plastic on top of a picture in a magazine or on a T-shirt, to draw the lines onto the transparent plastic. Then put the transparent plastic onto the CPC monitor and simply follow the lines once again with "Screen Designer". Not exactly oozing of skills, but creative nonetheless.



Writing all the stories here in 8-bit Memoirs has given me an interesting overview of my CPC era on a year by year basis:

- 1986: The introduction at grandma's place
- 1987: Borrowing grandma's CPC & getting my own
- 1988: Lots of awesome CPC projects with my cousin
- 1989: Captivated by BASIC music creation
- 1990: The year of game-projects
- 1991: Music creation with "Equinoxe"
- 1992: The general fade of CPC interest

Each year was great in its own way. But if I had to pick a favourite year, it would have to be 1988, followed closely by 1989.



The era began fading in 1992, and most people I knew left the CPC completely that year. But not me. Despite now being alone with my interest in the CPC, and even after getting myself an Amiga in 1994, I kept doing various geeky projects on my CPC.

For example, in 1993 and 1994 I made birthday greeting "demos" for my friend Karin, using N.W.C's Demomaker and my own version of "A real writer".

In 1995 I made a geeky doorbell system that connected my doorbell to the joystick input of the CPC, in order to see if anyone had been by when I was out. (A few selected people could press the doorbell a certain number of times to let me know it was them who'd been by).

I suppose you can say that the CPC era finally ended for me in 1997 when I made the big mistake of selling my CPC464, that my parents had given me in 1987. Having no one to share the interest with anymore finally got to me.

But a new CPC era would begin shortly after when my regret of selling my CPC simply resulted in me buying another one.

The 2nd CPC era

The "childhood CPC era" was over in 1992 (or sooner) for most people I knew, but I held on to the CPC all the way up to 1997 before finally making the big mistake of selling my CPC464. That means that the era kinda lasted a whole decade for me, which was twice as long as it was for most other people.

Not having a CPC in my life anymore quickly made me realise how much I **needed** to have one though. I think only a few months went by before I simply bought another CPC464 identical to the one my parents had given me in 1987.

Needless to say, I was of course still very much alone with my interest in the CPC. But this would luckily slowly change in the following years.

Me buying this other CPC464 has to be marked as the early beginning of my 2nd CPC era; the "grown-up CPC era".

From there on I just continued creating various geeky CPC projects. Like for example a small alarm-system I made using magnetic switches on the front door, connected to the joystick port on the CPC.

And experimenting with the expansion port, making a BASIC program that could turn on/off a lamp in my home.

I used the CPC for all kinds of different projects - because I knew how to use BASIC.

The Amiga had been a disappointment in this regard. Doing the same kind of projects on this machine seemed to require 10 times as much effort. For example, the Amiga didn't have enough amps to switch on a relay by itself, so an additional circuit with its own power-supply was necessary in order to turn on/off a lamp in the home with the Amiga.

On the CPC, BASIC was ready as soon as the machine was turned on. On the Amiga I had to first load a BASIC interpreter - which wasn't included with the computer. Call me picky, but that was actually a big part of the reason why I didn't have the same interest in development on the Amiga, as I had on the CPC.

So I only used my Amiga for music-creation in Protracker, while the CPC was still used for other creative projects.

This 2nd CPC era would slowly become more and more active. The retro-computer community had been born, and it seemed to grow in size every year.

Today it almost feels like these old machines are more popular than they were 30 years ago, and I just find that absolutely awesome.

New hardware keeps coming out for the CPC. I now have CPC's with various expansions built into them, like flashcard solutions to replace the floppy disk, and of course a multicartridge solution for the CPC plus/GX4000.

New games keep coming out too. Many of them demonstrating impressive capabilities of the CPC no one thought was possible.

It's just a really great time to be a retro-computer enthusiast.

I also finally have the skills now, that I wished I had as a kid. I can finally code sprite-based games for my Amstrad CPC with a proper framerate. I think that's a classic childhood dream that comes true for many of us after all these years, which is also why more and more amateur games are created for the CPC (and other retro-computers) nowadays.

The new problem though, is that work and family doesn't leave us much (if any) spare time for such nostalgic projects - unless of course you've managed to find a partner that has the same geeky interest. ;-)





Despite having very limited time, my better half and I (LuBlu Entertainment) have actually managed to create a whole 4 CPC productions here in the 2nd CPC era: In 2009 we did an Amstrad CPC version of our very first JavaME mobile game "Sort'em" from 2006. In 2012 we had help from other coders and artists creating two music disks; "Nightshift" and "Tracks from the early 90ies". And in 2015 we made yet another game for the CPC: A 4-player game called "Space Rivals", strongly inspired by the Philips Videopac G7000 game "Space Rendezvous".

We've also been meeting up with friends a few times a year, where everyone brings their own retro-computer from their childhood, and then we just have a cosy day playing the good old games. And these games still have a lot of entertainment to offer, because most of us only scratched the surface of them back then.

All in all it's like we've had this "dark age" from 1992 to 2005, and things began returning to normal again after that period - or even better than normal. The CPC (and other retro-computers) seems to be stronger than ever before.

I am enjoying this 2nd CPC era quite a lot. The Internet has made it easy to be in contact with other CPC geeks. It's been a very interesting era so far, and I don't see it ending any time soon. It seems to keep expanding,

offering one new impressive game or demo after the other, followed by the next impressive piece of hardware after the other. New Amstrad CPC magazines has also emerged.

I lack the imagination to foresee what will come next, so I think I'll just lean back and enjoy the ride. :-)



A single C64 story

Experiencing the C64

I began hearing rumours about the Commodore 64 somewhat early in my Amstrad CPC life, before even getting my own CPC464.

Apparently this C64 computer was **the** computer to own. At least everyone seemed to think so. And I have to admit that these rumours made me slightly annoyed that my grandma (and thus also me) apparently had become interested in the "wrong" computer.

Not that these rumours would make me lose interest in the CPC. It would take a **lot** more to do that at this point. But it was still rather annoying being told that I was using the wrong computer.

When my dad brought me to visit the local computer shop in 1987 to buy me my own CPC, there was also a C64 on the table I could have tried if I wanted to. But at that point I really only had eyes for the CPC, and I wasn't even curious about the C64.

Therefore it took quite some time before I actually got to experience the C64. It would happen a random day in 1988/1989.

Meeting Mr.Spy

I met Mr.Spy in 1987 shortly after we'd moved into an apartment in the same hallway where he lived.

"Mr.Spy" wasn't his real name of course. It was the nick he would choose for himself later. His real name was Dann.

I don't remember exactly why he picked "Mr.Spy" as his nickname, but I think it was simply because he liked the game "Spy vs. Spy".

Dann rang our doorbell a day or two after we'd moved in. A complete stranger standing in the hall asking me if I wanted to go hang out. Those were his words: "You wanna go hang out?"

But his facial expression and body language told a different story, along the lines of "Whatever dude, I don't actually care". I was a bit confused by that for a few seconds, until I noticed some puzzling noises coming from one floor up in the hallway. Someone was listening in on our conversation, to make sure that Dann did what he'd been "asked" to do: Go ask the new kid to hang out.

I recognised the kind of situation he'd been put in here. It was very similar to the time my grandma had phoned my classmate without giving me any choice in the matter. So already within the first few seconds of meeting Dann, it was clear that we had at least this one thing in common: The grown-ups controlled our lives.

Just as my classmate Stig had bailed me out back then by offering his assistance without hesitation, I obviously also had to do something for Dann here. So I just grabbed my jacket and said: "Let's go".

Dann enjoyed playing computer games as much as the next guy, but neither him nor anyone in his family owned a computer (yet). We must have played a **few** games on my Amstrad CPC, but I must admit that I don't actually have any memories of him and I sitting in front of my Amstrad CPC464.

What I do remember though, is our visits at his older sister Carina. She lived in the same neighbourhood, in an apartment identical to the one Dann lived in - just in a different building. Her boyfriend had bought himself a C64 with a disk-drive and lots of disks, which Dann and I of course found very interesting.

So we would go visit his sister's place to play games on her boyfriend's C64 when they were both at work. I don't remember **exactly** when this was, but it must have been in late 1988 or early 1989. As far as I remember, this was the first time I got to sit down in front of a C64 myself.

First C64 encounter

My first thought when sitting down in front of the C64 was something along the lines of: "Wow... it sure takes up a lot of space".

The setup consisted of a monitor, a disk-drive, a few boxes with floppy disks, a few joysticks and of course the computer itself - and it took up all the space on the round table it was placed on. It was especially the disk-drive and the 5.25" floppy disks that took up a lot of space on the table.

I had of course seen the start screen before here and there, and I kinda liked how it resembled the Amstrad CPC start screen; with a text-area in the middle, and a border around it. So my very first intuitive action was to type "BORDER 0" in order to turn the border black, and thus demonstrate my superior knowledge about computers.

```
***** COMMODORE 64 BASIC V2 *****
64K RAM SYSTEM  38911 BASIC BYTES FREE
READY.
BORDER 0
?SYNTAX  ERROR
READY.
```

?SYNTAX ERROR
READY

...what? No BORDER command? Hm, wonder what the command is called then.

It took me years before learning that most BASIC instructions on the C64 were actually done with POKE commands. To turn the border black on the C64 you had to type POKE 53280,0

Ok, let's see some amazing stuff on this computer that everyone has been praising for so long. The first disk was inserted and Dann began typing on the keyboard:

```
LOAD"$",8
READY
LIST
```



...er, **what** was that?

On the CPC you just had to type CAT to view the content on the disk. The C64 apparently required some kind of secret code to let you see what was on the disk. Load dollar? Come on. And "LIST"? That command wasn't created to view disk contents, but rather to list the lines of a BASIC program.

*For the first few weeks I was actually certain that there had to be an easier way of listing the content of a disk on the C64. I'm pretty sure I told Dann that I would find out, but of course I never did - because there **was** no other way.*

When the content of the disk was displayed on the screen, Dann then began hitting the arrow-keys to move the cursor up to the line of the program he wanted to load, and began typing "LOAD" in front of the name of the program.

"Er, that probably won't work", I said, knowing that you definitely couldn't do it like that on the CPC.

"Yes it will", he replied, already getting a bit annoyed with me for thinking I knew everything. "That's how you do it". And he was indeed right.

This was very interesting. I remember intuitively trying that very same approach on grandma's CPC back in my early CPC days; spotting an error in my BASIC program, and then simply placing my cursor where the error was to correct it. But pressing ENTER hereafter just gave me a syntax error - because you couldn't make changes to a program-listing on the CPC that way. When I found out that I instead had to use the EDIT command to make edits to a line, I felt stupid for having tried that other approach.

But now I was witnessing that my approach on the CPC was actually exactly how you had to do it on the C64: Move the cursor up to the line you want to edit, and make the edits. No need for an EDIT command.

And as with anything else, there were advantages and disadvantages with these different approaches.

Some cracktro popped up on the screen, with a huge logo swinging sideways back and forth while an awesome piece of music was playing. At this point I got the impression that the C64 had a much bigger palette than the Amstrad CPC. All graphics on the CPC always consisted of bright and "strong" colours. But here on the C64 everything was toned down a bit, which I assumed was done to give things a more "natural" and/or "less childish" look. This made me assume that the C64 had a lot more colours to choose from than the CPC: Obviously it must have had all the same bright colours that the CPC had. Anything else wouldn't make any sense, considering all the praise I'd heard about this computer. So it **must** have had all of the strong CPC colours, plus these additional toned down variants, thus having a far superior palette compared to the CPC.

I was slightly envious at Dann for having a disk-drive available for the C64. I didn't have a disk-drive for my CPC (yet), but I'd seen the difference in loading time on my cousin's CPC6128. A disk-drive definitely loaded the games a lot faster than a tape-player.

I wasn't completely sure what was going on here on the C64 though. Compared to the CPC, the C64 didn't seem to be particular fast at loading anything from disk.

But then it hit me: Since the C64 - according to rumours - was a superior computer compared to the CPC, the games for the C64 was probably also bigger and better and therefor contained a lot more data than the CPC version of the same game, naturally resulting in a longer loading time.

So for the first few games, the long loading time made me a bit excited to see what would pop up on the screen, because I expected to see a much cooler version of the game, compared to the CPC version.

When the game appeared on the screen, I discovered that it was somewhat of a challenge to identify the part of the game that justified all of this loading time. It definitely wasn't the graphics, as they appeared to be of the same detail and quality as on the CPC. Or actually maybe a bit worse as they seemed to consist of slightly less colours. But that **could** just be a fashion trend of course... Fashion trends never made much sense to me.

It was instantly clear that the machine itself was a lot **faster** than the CPC though, because the games appeared to have a much higher framerate than on the CPC. All the sprites always moved incredibly smooth on the C64, and that definitely justified **some** of the praise I'd been hearing. I'd have loved to see this kind of smoothness in my CPC games. Chunky movement could ruin any game, in my opinion.

The music here on the C64 was definitely awesome too. I recognised 3 different instruments coming from the C64: A flute, a synthesizer, and a CPC. I thought it was pretty cool that the C64 could actually sound like a CPC - **and** have two additional instruments available too. There was no doubt that the C64 was superior here. And since I was a musician myself, I found this part very impressive.

But it still didn't explain the long loading time. Or at least, I would be a bit disappointed if these additional instruments caused such a long loading time. Not sure it would be worth it then.

Thinking about all the positive rumours I'd heard about the C64, I have to say I wasn't really impressed after checking out a few games together with Dann, but I still assumed it was because we didn't have any of the **greatest** games at hand. Somewhere out there in the world, there had to exist some truly amazing stuff for this computer. Because the rumours had definitely indicated that this machine was much greater than what I was seeing here.

Regardless, doing something with computers with Dann was rather cosy and relaxing. The only other person I shared this interest with, was my cousin Robin on the Amstrad CPC. Nothing could ever beat my CPC sessions with Robin, but I definitely wouldn't mind having more C64 sessions with Dann either.

So I suggested Dann that we tried doing something creative on the C64. It could be awesome if M.T.C. could be active on two platforms.

Dann didn't seem particularly interested in my suggestion at first, mainly because he had absolutely no programming skills whatsoever, but he wasn't entirely uninterested either. And when we found a disk with "A Real Writer", things became a bit more interesting. With this nifty little demo-maker program, we could create our own small demos without needing any coding skills. So we of course got started on a small demo right away.

My cousin's reaction to my idea about M.T.C. also existing on the C64 was not as expected. I thought he'd find it cool, but it turned out he didn't like the C64 at all for some reason. Though I was personally very fond of my CPC, I hadn't developed any hatred towards other platforms (yet). So I didn't understand Robin's reaction at all. Especially not when he decided to complain about it in one of his CPC demos a whole year later in 1990. It would take a while before I too began hating other platforms like he did with the C64 - but I never hated the C64. I instead hated the Amiga at first, and then the PC - but for entirely different (and justified) reasons: It was these platforms that "stole" my fellow CPC mates away from the CPC. The C64 didn't steal any of my CPC mates. It co-existed with the CPC.

Since neither Dann nor I had any coding skills on the C64, I have to admit that our demo adventure never even got started. Instead, we found another very manly and interesting creativity: Cross stitch embroidery...

Now now, gimme a chance to explain here.

While looking through various magazines of our parent's, we stumbled across recipes for cross stitch embroidery patterns - and immediately recognised that such patterns were an ideal way for two guys with no art skills to create some graphics on our 8-bit computers.

The colours for the patterns rarely matched the palette on our computers, so we had to remap most of them. But after that it was simply a matter of inputting the pattern on the computer.

For the Amstrad CPC I enjoyed doing this using DATA lines and simply inputting the colour value pixel by pixel, line by line. Dann instead preferred loading an image editor program on the C64 and draw the pattern by hand. The result was the same of course.

Since the group of people who were interested in cross stitch embroidery **mostly** consisted of elderly women, the patterns in these magazines didn't exactly contain any motives that appealed to Dann and I, so we had to settle for what we could get.



I typed in quite a few of these smaller patterns. Dann instead decided to work on **one** big pattern: The head of a horse. Probably because it was the least feminine motive he could find.

We didn't get to be a whole lot more active than that on the C64 though. As far as I remember, his sister's boyfriend either sold the C64 or else just packed it away.

Dann's mum later acquired a Commodore 16 though, which was then set up on the floor in their living-room under the TV. Dann and I then spent an entire afternoon one day typing in some SOUND commands, resulting in a tune we named "Ghost", solely inspired by the triangle waveform the C16 (and C64) could produce.

I didn't understand why the C16 had SOUND commands available when the C64 did not. Wasn't the C64 supposed to be a superior machine compared to the C16? Why strip away useful commands like this? I sure enjoyed having them available on the CPC.

The C16 also brought back another useful command: The DRAW command, which the CPC also had. Learning about this, Dann and I came up with a clever way of creating cool line art on both platforms: First, use a pencil to draw on a piece of graph paper. That way it was easy to count the length of lines, in order to easier transform our illustrations to the screen.

Dann would get his own C64 later, and we would then sometimes switch computers for a week or two. He'd borrow my CPC464 and I would borrow his C64.

It was during one of these weeks that I heard an awesome track in a cracktro on the C64. I liked it so much that I ended up creating my own Amstrad CPC version of it in BASIC - weeks after the C64 had been returned - meaning I created it from memory (which is why it doesn't sound 100% like the C64 version).

I don't remember which game the cracktro was for, but I'm fairly sure I didn't even play it. I've managed to find the same cracktro all these decades later though: It was from Papillons, and the tune was called Coco Intro.

Visiting my classmate

One of my classmates, that I hung out with on a regular basis, also had a C64. His name was Thyge, and when visiting him, we'd typically play games like "The Willow Pattern", "Tiger Mission", "IK plus" and "Bruce Lee".

This was the first time I experienced tape-loading on the C64, again learning about the differences between the CPC and the C64: The CPC required you to listen for the right tones when locating the beginning of the data on the tape. The C64 instead required you to look for the right colour-stripe pattern on the screen for the same thing.

Being a musician, I had no problem needing to listen for the right tones. Thyge didn't understand how I could do that. In return, I couldn't see how anyone could make any sense of all that colour-flickering on the screen with the C64.

Once again, the music on the C64 impressed me to such an extent that I had to go home and create my own short Amstrad CPC BASIC version of it. This time it was the music from level 1 in "Tiger Mission". (Not included in 8-bit Memoirs).

30 years later I discovered that "The Willow Pattern" also exists for the CPC, which of course meant that the next couple of weeks were spent re-visiting that game.

When my cousin Anita found herself a boyfriend who also had a C64, he introduced me to the C64 version of the game "Lightforce", which I have to admit kinda rendered my CPC version of the same game somewhat boring, mainly because of the music. And when he loaded the game "Warhawk" I was absolutely astonished by the title music.

Those were the C64 encounters I had back in those days. But I would have a lot more C64 experiences later in life. Because when I found my soulmate in life, it turned out that she grew up with the C64. So we're a rather geeky couple who still today enjoys revisiting the good old games on the good old platforms. :-)

Amiga stories

Hello Protracker!

It was now December 1992, and my precious Amstrad CPC464 had been with me for 5 years. I was still rather passionate about Amstrad CPC BASIC coding, but I no longer had anyone to share the enthusiasm with. Everyone but me seemed to have lost all interest in the machines from the mid 1980s, and had thus moved on to other platforms.

My cousin Robin had moved on to PC, because his father had bought one. This obviously resulted in the end of our CPC adventures.

My brother Kenneth had moved on to the Amiga 500, and would get himself a Nintendo Entertainment System soon too, so I couldn't share my CPC interest with him anymore either.

Other people who had helped me with various CPC stuff up through the years had also moved on to other platforms, and none of them saw any value in the CPC anymore. One of these former fellow CPC enthusiasts even **gave** me his CPC464 for free. That's how little the CPC suddenly meant to him.

So everyone but me had left the CPC, but despite of being the only one left, I still didn't see any reason to leave the CPC. I had absolutely no interest in any of those newer computers. Mostly because I wanted to continue coding BASIC stuff, and I couldn't quite see how any of those newer platforms would let me do that. As far as I could see, all they offered was gaming, and I was never a whole lot interested in gaming.

The Amiga did have "Amiga Basic" available, but it looked very unappealing. And the PC just seemed way too big and bulky and noisy, so I had no interest in that one either.

A devious plan

But one of my former CPC mates, who had now turned to the dark side (meaning Amiga), had slowly begun scheming a devious plan with one of his other Amiga mates. His name was Anders, and he went by the nick "Mr.Tec" at the time. His Amiga mate was Michael, who (rather suitably) went by the nick "Venom".

Their plan began when Anders had been playing some of my CPC music for Michael. (Anders still had his CPC6128 at the time). Michael had then commented: "This sounds great! This guy could potentially make some great music on the Amiga".

These two Amiga users had then gotten the idea that the 3 of us could form a great team on the Amiga. Anders was interested in graphics and liked spending time with Deluxe Paint on his Amiga 500. Michael had been doing Assembler coding with ASM-One for a few months on his Amiga 500 Plus. All they needed in order to complete the team was a musician, and they both agreed I could fill that role nicely.

Their only problem was my complete lack of interest in the Amiga. So the first step in their devious plan was to change my view on the Amiga. And the way they decided to try doing this, was simply by demonstrating Protracker v2.3 to me, and then ask how I felt about trying out composing a track for a demo of theirs.

Protracker was a very popular music program for the Amiga. It offered 4 channels, which basically meant that you could play 4 instruments at the same time. A lot of game-music from that time was created with this tracker.

Borrowing my brother's Amiga

And their plan worked. Not to a degree that made me rush out and buy myself an Amiga, but enough to make me ask my brother if I could borrow **his** Amiga for a few days - and that was a big step for me; asking if I could borrow his Amiga. But hey, I was doing my mates a favour here.

My brother Kenneth had only had his Amiga 500 for about a year or so, but that was apparently long enough for him to have gotten slightly tired of it already. At least he didn't play games on it every day anymore, and that was probably the main reason I was allowed to borrow it now.

So there I was in my room with both my CPC and my brother's Amiga on the same desk and a rather awkward setup:

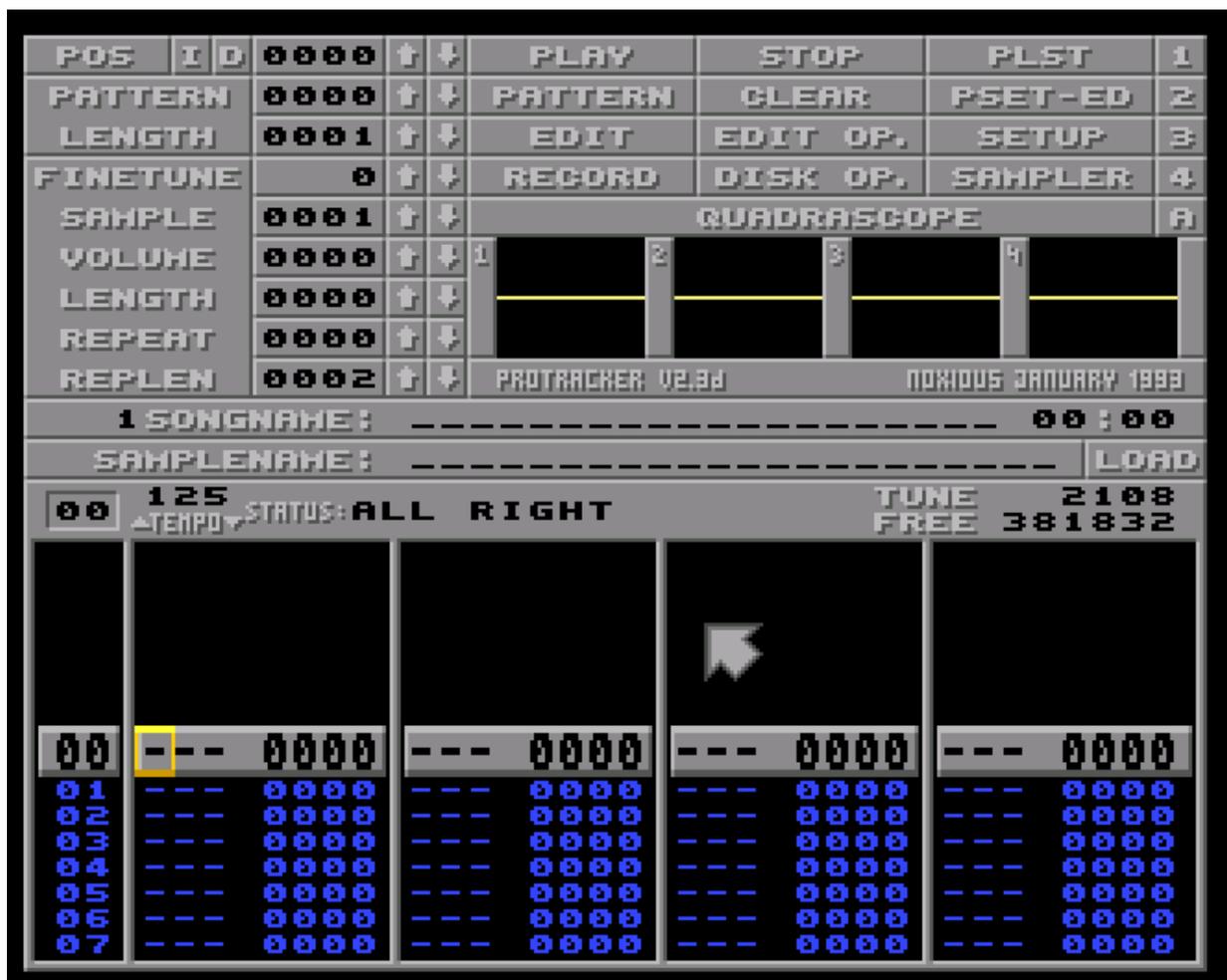
The Amiga monitor (meaning my TV) was placed in the top space of a closet, giving me a viewing angle of about 45 degrees up. Not the most comfortable setup in the world, but I didn't have a whole lot of other options in my rather small room.

I had no desire to get myself an Amiga of my own. As far as I was concerned, I was only looking into Protracker in order to see if I could help out Anders and Michael with some music for their demo. I was a nice guy like that. ;-) When/if I succeeded in doing that, it was back to the CPC. At least that was the plan.

Exploring Protracker

Going from 3 channels of square-synth and noise in "Equinoxe" on the CPC to 4 channels of streamed instrument data in "Protracker 2.3" on the Amiga, was a lot more interesting than I had expected.

My biggest problem on the CPC had always been the lack of a proper bassdrum, and now I could have all the bassdrums I wanted! Another thing I'd missed on the CPC was a sawtooth synth, which of course was also easily achieved with Protracker.



The CPC **could** of course create the sound of a bassdrum and a sawtooth-like sound. I just had neither the tools nor the knowledge on how to do that back then.

The very first track I created using Protracker on my brother's Amiga was titled "Er...yes". And the next one was given an equally silly name. These uninspiring titles spawned from an obvious dissatisfaction of my own skills.

The 3rd track I created turned out alright though.

Before continuing you should probably know that a piece of music created with Protracker was called "a module", which was typically abbreviated to "a mod". So The Scene refers to tracker music as "modules" or "mods".

As far as I was concerned, I was still a CPC user who was just doing a couple of Amiga users a favour. They needed some music for their demos, and didn't know any other local musicians they could ask.

But their plan worked. Composing music with Protracker became more and more interesting to me. It wasn't a **better** kind of creativity than coding BASIC on my CPC. It was just a different one, equally fulfilling.

So while I didn't know it yet, this was in fact the beginning of my Amiga era.

Team names and aliases

This new Amiga team, that I was now suddenly a member of, turned out to be a bunch of loonies. Literally. I mean their team-name was actually "Loonies", formed around October 1992 by Michael (Venom) and a few of his fellow coder friends - and I'd soon discover how fitting that name was for this group.

In addition to Venom, Loonies had 2 other coders: Pry Freak and Leatherface. And then they had a single musician called Byte Glutton, but no graphics artists yet.

I had no idea who any of these people were. All I knew was that they all lived out of town, some of them up to 2 hours away.

Despite the lack of a graphics artist, Loonies had already managed to create some amateurish intros. Nothing impressive. Just simple stuff like a logo displayed on the screen with a scroll-text at the bottom while a Protracker module was playing.

The artwork in these small creations was done by a guy from another team; Vorpall of Concise, whom I never knew either.

Reduced to a musician

Michael created these small intros which he then sent by snail-mail to his mate Jacob (Pry Freak), who would then send another one back. It was very similar to what my cousin and I had been doing on the CPC earlier using N.W.C's Demomaker and our amateurish BASIC coding skills. I thought it was great being a part of something like that again.

But I have to admit that the atmosphere and feel about the whole thing here on the Amiga was nothing like it had been on the CPC.

Part of the reason for this was that I wasn't the one doing the coding anymore. Here on the Amiga it kinda felt like I'd been "reduced" to "just" being the musician. Not that exploring Protracker wasn't great. It just wasn't quite enough for me. Being "just" the musician meant that I wasn't part of the development, meaning I usually only got to see the creations when they were done, and I had no saying in **how** they should be done. Also, as I didn't actually know the recipients of these small electronic greetings, I obviously didn't participate in authoring the text-content either.

These circumstances meant that I didn't **really** feel the team spirit here on the Amiga like I'd done with my cousin on the CPC. It felt more like I was just kinda tagging along, and making my music available for whatever productions Michael decided to create.

Of course, this was still better than not being part of a team at all, but I can't deny that something was definitely missing.

"My" first intro

With the addition of Anders and me, Loonies now consisted of two headquarters: "Loonies HQ-North" consisting of Venom (Michael), Mr.Tec (Anders) and Mr.Lou (myself) - and "Loonies HQ-South" consisting of Pry Freak (Jacob), Byte Glutton (Leon) and Leatherface (Esben). I imagine Michael and Jacob were a bit exited about this.



Michael changed his nick to "Shatterstar" for some reason, and the "intro/demo mail-exchange" between him and Jacob continued.

The 1st of January 1993 Michael sent another intro to Jacob, but this time he used one of **my** mods for the first time. It was the 3rd track I had composed out of 5 tracks in total at the time.

The positive feedback from Jacob was unexpected and surprising. He said he enjoyed this track of mine so much that he listened to it for a whole hour straight while doing his homework.

That was probably the most positive feedback I had ever received in my life for any of my music. That someone found it so good that he listened to the same track for a whole hour straight!

The 2nd best feedback I ever got for my music, was when N.W.C. said that my BASIC music was among the best he'd ever heard on the CPC - and that it was especially impressive that it was done in BASIC.

Birth of X-Force

Loonies then seemed to slowly die for some reason. Most members were attending highschool at this point, and that of course took up most of everyone's time.

I think it was me who then suggested that the 3 of us (in "HQ-North") came up with a new team-name for ourselves, and began making our own stuff. I think this might have been an attempt from my side to become more part of the team. Making it "ours".

I don't remember who came up with the new name, but we all agreed fairly quickly that "X-Force" would do nicely.

For this new team, Michael also suggested that Anders changed his nick to Bigfoot, because in his opinion he had big feet...

The 15th of March 1993 another one of my mods was then used in an Amiga X-Force intro. Nothing fancy. Just some text and a small "DEMOS" vector rotating on the screen.

***FORCE**

TIME, YOU SAID???...
YEAR... THE OLD MAN SAID WITH
SATISFACTION IN HIS GREEN EYES
- GRAB YOUR F***** PEN OR PENCIL
AND WRITE DOWN THE FOLLOWING AD-
DRESS IF YA WANNA SWAP DEMOS/IN-
TROS/DENTROS AND STUFF LIKE THAT
-BUT REMEMBER! THE OLD MAN WHIS-
PER



Birth of FATman Productions

Despite the 3 of us having formed our own team now, Michael was still the one calling the shots, and now he had become interested in "Master Fatman" for some reason; a somewhat eccentric artist and singer who claimed (among other things) to be the reincarnation of Bobby Ewing from the TV soap series "Dallas". Master Fatman had written a small book with all sorts of made up stuff and pictures of him shaking hands with various famous people, like for example Elvis. It was this silly kind of humour that wasn't quite compatible with my own rather dry humour, but which definitely fit the former team-name "Loonies". And when Michael presented us with this small book, while referring to it as "our Bible", I was reminded again that this wasn't really **my** team. I was just kinda tagging along.

On the CPC, my cousin and I had always discussed almost every single little detail together, before making any decisions. But here on the Amiga, I was mostly left out of the decision making part. Even after we came up with the new team-name "X-Force" for ourselves together.



In April 1993 Michael had created another intro. I still wasn't completely satisfied with my mods. Especially the one used in this April intro made me bow my head in shame. I did also complain to Michael about him using that particular track, and I think he also promised to replace it when I came up with something better. And then we both of course forgot all about it.

Michael changed his nick once again, this time to Daddy Cool.

So we were now: Daddy Cool, Bigfoot and Mr.Lou from X-Force, FATman Productions. And those were the nicks and team-names we'd finally stick with for the rest of the era.

I should note, that none of us were overweight in any way. In fact, Michael and Anders were both swimmers, and looked accordingly. I suspect that "The Master" himself would probably have disqualified all of us if he knew how skinny we all really were,

X-Force productions

Loyal to my new team I began using the labels "X-Force" and "FATman Productions" in every little production of mine - despite finding that latter one rather silly. I added the labels to my Amiga Protracker mods of course, but also Amstrad CPC stuff, like personal electronic letters that I still occasionally made for the only person I knew who still had a CPC: Karin.

And she only had a CPC because I gave her one.

In December 1993 I also started a CPC project intended to be sent to N.W.C. labelled with "X-Force" too. My cousin Robin, whom I didn't see much of anymore, came by while I was creating this project, and contributed with a small greeting too.

The project was never completed though, and was therefore never sent either. It was difficult keeping the CPC spirit up when having no one to share the passion with.

So at this point my CPC was packed away (for a while) - and in 1994 I then finally decided to get myself an Amiga of my own...

In November 1994 X-Force created another Amiga demo named "Cosmic Love", referred to as a "Cosmictro".

This was our biggest creation ever. It was also our last, but we of course didn't know this at the time.

What we did know though, was that our skills were rather unimpressive. And Michael decided to have some fun with this, by stating that the demo was released in 1987 rather than 1994...



The original Blu-ray version of 8-bit Memoirs contains video footage of these demos. Visit www.8bitMemoirs.com to get it!

Getting my own Amiga

In 1994, I had become very hooked on creating mods in Protracker, But now a new problem emerged: My brother wanted to sell his Amiga, which I had been borrowing to create my music.

This obviously forced me into getting an Amiga of my own.

I suppose the obvious solution would have been for me to buy my brother's A500, but that idea never crossed our minds for some reason. I'm guessing my brother was more interested in getting as much money as possible for his Amiga, and that of course conflicted with my desire to pay as little as possible.

Fortunately, my mate Kent had also already moved on from the Amiga to the first Sony PlayStation console, so he was willing to sell me his Amiga 600 rather cheap. As far as I remember he only asked for 200 Euro.



Getting my own Amiga resulted in a serious boost in my mod production. I began creating "Mr.Lou's Musicdisk collection" disks, both for the Amiga and the PC. Protracker v3.15 had been out for a while, but it took some time before I got my hands on it. And I was happily composing mods almost on a daily basis now.

Michael sent my mods to Jacob as part of their maildisk exchanges, and Jacob then uploaded my mods to Aminet. Yes, the Internet had arrived now, but far from everyone was connected to it. Jacob was the only one of us who was online at this time.

Tracking music had completely replaced my passion for Amstrad CPC BASIC programming now. I would come home from school, turn on my Amiga 600, load Protracker, and then I'd sit and track music for the rest of the day.

Composing music was a great way of escaping the increasing number of stress factors that kept invading my life at this time. It resulted in some rather melancholic, sad and sometimes even frustrating tracks, which bares witness today of a tough time in my life. But having this outlet; being able to throw it all into the music, was an incredibly effective liberator.

I could easily spend several days in a row composing music in Protracker. When it was time to go to bed, I'd throw myself on the couch and fall asleep with my headphones on while the track was playing in a loop. Then I'd wake up 40 minutes (meaning 10-20 loops) later, turn off the Amiga and go to bed.

A lot of my tracks were created like that.

The next version of Protracker I got my hands on was v3.61, which means that I'd unknowingly skipped several versions since v3.15. Protracker v3.61 had an integrated option to mix channels into 1 sample, resulting in a mod that sounded like a lot more than just 4 channels. (An option that previously existed in the form of an external command). This feature resulted in yet another boost in my mod production.

From 1993 to 1997 I created a total of about 100 Amiga Protracker Modules! I only counted them for the first time when creating 8-bit Memoirs, and that number kinda baffles me a bit. I never thought that I created that many. Most probably because I only ever released 21 of them.

Hereafter I created 24 DigiBoosterPro modules (and 1 Fasttracker II module). All of those were released.

The original Blu-ray version of 8-bit Memoirs contains a playlist with these tracks. Visit www.8bitMemoirs.com to get it!

Maildisks

Composing music in Protracker on my Amiga 600 was awesometastic. And it had also been nice to see some of my music used in actual productions.

But I still felt something was missing. I wanted to do more with the Amiga than just track music. Ideally I wanted to code BASIC on it like I'd done on my Amstrad CPC464, but I couldn't see how that was possible. I didn't find Amiga Basic interesting at all, despite truly giving it a try several times.

Assembler was not an acceptable alternative, and I had no interest in learning C either, despite classmates in primary school had previously told me that I'd never amount to anything if I didn't.

What I **should** have discovered back then, was something like AMOS BASIC. Had I known about the existence of AMOS, I'm fairly sure I'd have coded a lot for the Amiga. But that was the drawback of not having any Internet available yet, and not being subscribed to any Amiga magazines. There was no access to quick information yet. You had to settle for what people around you knew.

I did also eventually end up looking into the "compiler version" of Amiga Basic called Cursor. But looking through my Amiga Basic Cursor disk from back then, I see nothing worth mentioning here in 8-bit Memoirs.

Another option

Then one day in June 1994 when I was visiting Michael, he showed me one of the disks he had received from his fellow coder Jacob. Although the intro/demo production in the team had stalled, Michael and Jacob were still sending disks to each other with digital letters. These disks booted up in AmigaDOS, presented a menu in the form of a plain text file, and then allowed the recipient to select various texts and/or pictures by pressing the F-keys. A Protracker module was playing in the background - even when the disk was loading - and as far as I remember there was also a starfield displayed in the background on this particular disk.

As soon as I learned that this nifty little thing was **not** done with any kind of advanced coding, but rather with a few simple AmigaDOS commands, I became very interested in learning how to create such a disk myself. While it wasn't the BASIC coding I had been longing for, it was at least finally another way of being creative on the Amiga - one that I should be able to figure out too!

The process of creating these disks **was** somewhat of a mission though:

First, you had to format a disk and make it bootable. Easily done with trusty old Directory Opus 4.

Then load your Workbench disk and open the System Configuration utility to change colours as you like. Also edit your mouse pointer graphics if you want. Then save the configuration.

Now copy this configuration file from the Workbench disk to your own disk.

Next, copy the various commands and tools you want to use, into the "C" folder on the disk. A command to show a text-file, one to clear the screen, another to display a picture, and one to play a Protracker module.

Also copy the keymap file in order to get the character-set you want. Don't forget all the libraries required. And finally, create a startup-sequence in the "S" folder...

To me, this process was far from as simple as coding something in BASIC on the CPC. So I got stuck a lot in the beginning, and I'm fairly sure Michael got slightly tired of me constantly phoning him for help. He took it well though, and was (almost) always available for assistance.

At the same time I also began looking into Red Sector's Demomaker, finding it extremely confusing at first (compared to N.W.C.'s Demomaker on the CPC), but eventually I got the hang of that one too. So I was all set on creating my own maildisks now.

The recipient

I had a penfriend down south in the country at the time, whom I knew also had an Amiga, so she became the ~~victim~~ recipient of my maildisks.

In July 1994 she received the first 2 Amiga disks from me.

The first disk contained a 19 minute long "demo" I'd made with Red Sector's Demomaker. The other disk contained a plain letter displayed with the utility PPMore.

From July to September 1994 I sent a whole 5 maildisks to this penfriend of mine. I also started on a 6th one in March 1995, but that one was never completed and therefore never sent.

Creating these maildisks was great, and it came with an advantage that other creative productions didn't have. When developers felt like being creative on the computer back in those days, they'd usually code some intro or demo - and then not have a clue about what to write in the scroll-text.

I did not have that problem with maildisks. There was always something to write about in a personal letter, regardless of how such a letter was presented; as a scroll-text or plain ASCII text in AmigaDOS. So I saw these demos and maildisks as a great and useful way of being creative.

But sadly, I'd soon run into another familiar problem: My penfriend left the Amiga and bought herself a PC instead...

This was becoming a recurring problem: The people I enjoyed sharing my creations with apparently never stayed with the platform for long.

First everyone left the CPC. And now they were leaving the Amiga too. You could say of course, that this was only a problem because **I** wasn't the type of person who switched platforms that often. I definitely had no interest in switching to the PC. Especially now that I'd finally accepted that the CPC era was over, and had gotten comfortable with the Amiga.

My penfriend leaving the Amiga was no doubt the primary reason that my maildisk production ended.

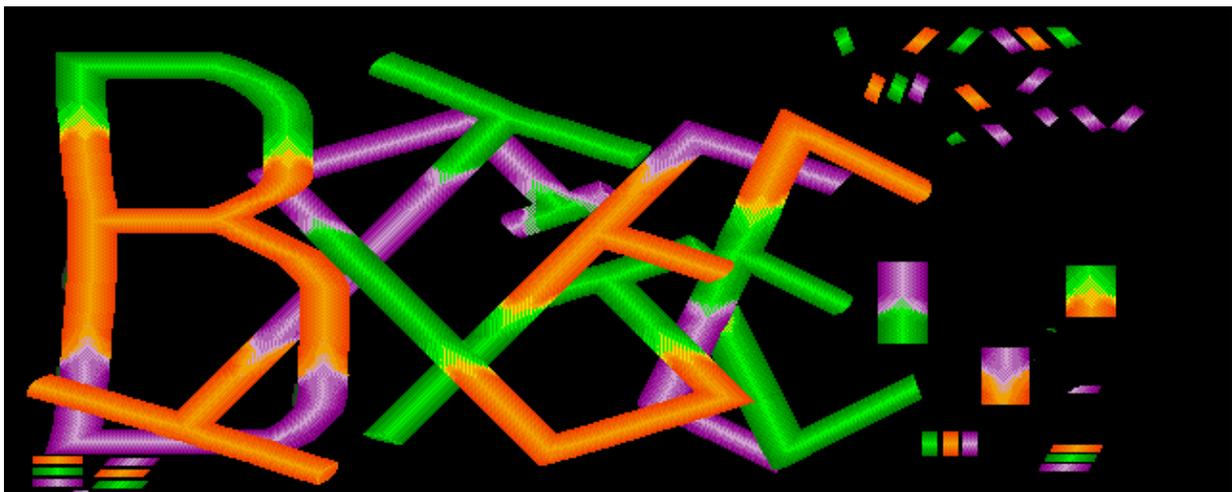
Since I didn't have any other Amiga friends I could target, it was now back to my other Amiga creativity again: Music composition with Protracker, and that was pretty much the single activity filling up the rest of my Amiga era.

I would later create a few maildiscs for other penfriends though. All done with HTML and Javascript, burned to a CD and running on a PC in a browser. Of course, none of those maildiscs will run that well (if at all) in any modern browser today (which is partly why I didn't want to create 8-bit Memoirs with web technology ;-)).

Moving on to Amiga 1200

While I was enjoying my maildisk production and music composition, Anders and Michael wasn't being nearly as productive. Anders did create some art every now and then, but Michael seemed to have completely stopped coding.

All of us attended highschool now, and that did steal a lot of our time. But while Anders and Michael also had a few other sparetime interests, the only sparetime interest **I** had was my creativity on the Amiga. And that obviously resulted in a lot more productivity from my side than from theirs. I often got the impression that I was the only one in the team who was still being productive.



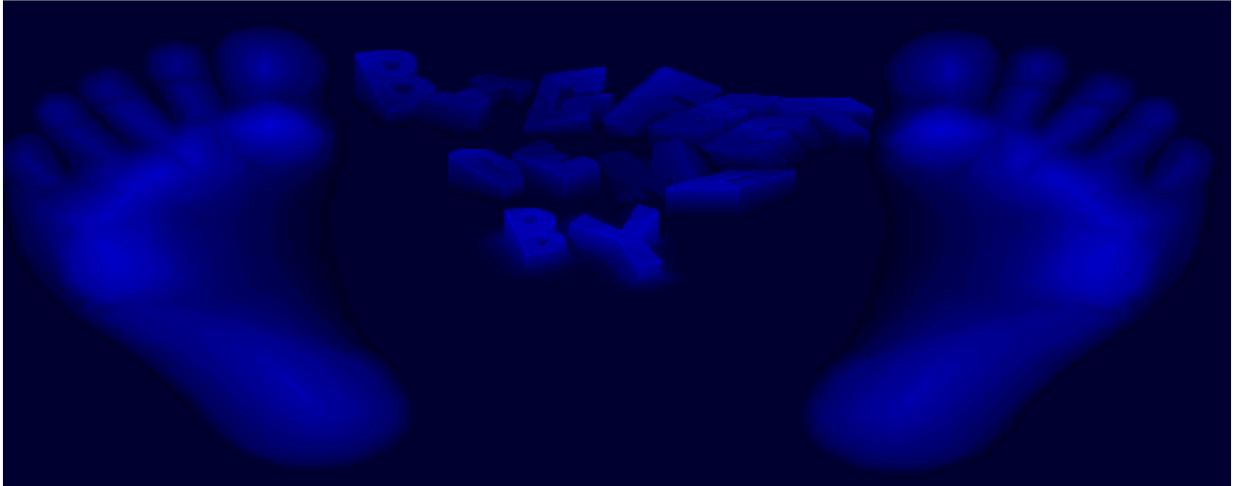
Michael had previously said that the reason everything had stalled was because the Amiga 500 and 600 just weren't interesting anymore. He said that we all needed to get the Amiga 1200 model before doing any more demos.

Well alright then.

Anders had thus replaced his Amiga 500 with an Amiga 1200 a while back. Being the graphics artist in the team, he was probably also the one of us with the biggest curiosity about the 1200 model, because of the 24-bit colour palette it offered.

To celebrate his new investment, we held a geeky day of productivity at his parents' house. Michael brought his Amiga 500 Plus and I brought my Amiga 600. Then the whole weekend was spent with each of us doing our own creative stuff on our Amigas. Anders created some art in Deluxe Paint IV. I created some music in Protracker. And Michael coded some stuff in ASM-One. These creative days were always cosy, but they were

also rather rare, because it was always difficult finding a whole weekend where all of us had nothing else booked in the calendar.



In late 1994 we decided to make amends for our lack of geeky meetings though, and joined 2700 other geeks from all over the world at The Party IV in Herning, Denmark. It ran for 4 days from the 27th to the 30th of December.

Being at The Party was a mixed experience for me.

Watching the demo-competition run on the big screen together with a bunch of other geeks sure had a lot of atmosphere. Especially when the crowd applauded a certain section of a demo. I still remember Andromeda's winner demo "Nexus 7" running on the big screen, and the applause from the audience during the 3D vector animation when the lamp jumped from one platform to another.

I also found it really cosy to chill out with Buzz Diskmag #5, which was released during those days too, and which actually was the first diskmag I ever experienced.

But 2700 geeks gathered at one place with their computers created a lot of noise. And I have to admit that spending 4 days in that noise wasn't my cup of tea.

In 1995 I was then the next one to get myself an Amiga 1200. It didn't really change anything for me music-wise at first. I still just used Protracker to compose my tracks, **but** I eventually got a harddisk installed, which meant easier storage and faster load times. It was really nice having fast access to all of my mods without needing to switch disks all the time now.

My music production was going really well. So I decided to create a simple website for myself titled "Mr.Lou's Modpage" from where people could download all of my Protracker mods.

Mr Lou's Modpage

My music

My released music
Full length pieces free to download

Title	Length	Released	Packed size	Style	Format	Download
Stay With Me	4:57, 5:20	970408	452 KB	Relaxing Jungle	MOD 4 tracks	lha
True Love	3:51	970313	607 KB	Piano Ballad	MOD 4 tracks	lha
Secession	6:37	970108	461 KB	80 Techno	MOD 4 tracks	lha
Step into my Dream	8:31	960902	533 KB	Relaxe	MOD 4 tracks	lha
Lonely Sunrise	7:00	960602	184 KB	Relaxe	MOD 4 tracks	lha
The 4th Dimension Train	4:48	960517	830 KB	Dance song	MOD 4 tracks	lha
Together under God	8:35	960315	167 KB	Love tune	MOD 4 tracks	lha
October Memories	5:10	951127	95 KB	Relaxe	MOD 4 tracks	lha
Midnight	9:26	951117	293 KB	Strange, relaxe	MOD 4 tracks	lha
War	9:25	951117	208 KB	Relaxe	MOD 4 tracks	lha
Cornflakes	3:30	950322	92 KB	Pop dance	MOD 4 tracks	lha
Mister Lou	5:23	950214	153 KB	Strange	MOD 4 tracks	lha
Sword of the Spirit	12:30	950110	87 KB	Relaxe	MOD 4 tracks	lha



Want an e-mail everytime a new mod is uploaded?
Click here and signup for my mailinglist.

The betrayal

Anders and I were patiently waiting for Michael to get himself an Amiga 1200 too, so we could get started doing some demos again. Obviously it wasn't enough for the graphics artist and musician to have an Amiga 1200. The coder of the team very much needed to have one too.

But instead of following his own plan, Michael then went ahead and bought himself a PC.....

Let me just give you a few moments to let that sink in...



"...what?? ...wait... No... **what** did you say?!?", I exclaimed when Anders told me the news.

I couldn't hide how big of a betrayal I felt this was from his side. It was Daddy **Uncool** himself who came up with the plan that we should all move on to the Amiga 1200. Anders and I had then bought one, and then Michael just skips out as if that was a perfectly acceptable action to take.

"But I need a PC for my studies and I can't afford to buy both a PC and an Amiga", he tried to excuse himself.

I was getting really tired of people switching platform around me. This was the 3rd time the PC came along and destroyed the creative spirit for me. First time was when my cousin moved on to the PC from the Amstrad CPC. 2nd time was when my penfriend left the Amiga, also in favour of the PC. And now Michael also left the Amiga for the PC. What an **evil** machine this was, ruthlessly destroying teams like that.

PC's were way too big and bulky and noisy for my liking. I just couldn't see what was so great about them. And now I began hating them even more for continuously destroying my creative relations.

And the excuse of "needing a PC for studies" didn't qualify as an acceptable excuse in my book. I saw no problems at all using my Amiga for **my** studies. While it was true that the PC couldn't read Amiga floppy disks (lame), the Amiga could easily read PC floppy disks, again demonstrating which machine was clearly the superior one. So doing homework on my Amiga, and subsequently bringing it with me to school to print it out on a PC, presented absolutely no problem for me.

Well ok, to be completely honest, there was a small "problem" with the difference in the ASCII tables of the two platforms. Special characters in the danish language were placed at different locations, which meant that I had to fix all missing danish characters at school before printing. But this was easily solved with a search'n'replace macro in Word Perfect 5.1 - so still no excuse.

When Windows 3.11 was introduced at school and Microsoft Word came along to replace Word Perfect 5.1, I was even **less** impressed by the PC platform. Word was slow and buggy. Windows was slow and unimpressive.

The Amiga was a lot faster starting up, and it could toggle between open applications in a microsecond. Windows took a long time to boot, and switching from one application to another could sometimes take several seconds.

The big mystery to me was why people insisted on ignoring these facts. Even when I demonstrated the difference, showing how slow the PC was and how fast the Amiga was, right before their very eyes, it still didn't wake anyone up. As if they thought it was a magic trick of some kind, and thus not real.

But to me, there was no doubt I had ended up with the right platform for me. The platform for the artist.

Conservative me

Just like when I had my CPC, I stayed with my Amiga **far** longer than anyone else I knew. Anders eventually moved on to the PC too, but I instead upgraded my Amiga 1200 with a 68030 card, more RAM, and got on the Internet with it too.

Getting online with my Amiga was a game changer. Because it meant that, instead of once again being alone with my platform, I could now be in contact with other Amiga enthusiasts on various chat channels. And this was absolutely awesome!

So instead of being abandoned once again, I was now finding myself having many long cosy chats with fellow Amiga users. We also played a lot of Netris; a networked Tetris clone for Amiga that let 2-4 players compete against each other. Very addictive and lots of fun.

*I must say hi to a few oldtimers here: Hyper, Creative, Warhawk, Chill, AMiVAG, Demoulous, Kaedric, Damnation, Mr.Mango, Deranged and Nalle!
Good times! Hope you're all doing great out there in this crazy world!*

I continued expanding my Amiga 1200, putting it in a tower and adding more hardware: A 68040 PowerPC card, a CyberGraphX card and a CD-burner. Who needs a PC? Not me.

Music-wise the PC owners now had Fasttracker II or Screamtracker available, offering a lot more channels than I had available with Protracker. This was slightly annoying for a while, not because I longed for more channels, but because PC users mocked my Amiga for only giving me 4 channels.

The Amiga would of course also soon have a few trackers that offered a lot more channels (even more than the PC trackers): "OctaMED Sound Studio" and "DigiBooster Pro", to name two. I liked that latter one because it used the same codes for effects that Protracker did, which meant it was easy for me to make the switch from Protracker to DigiBooster Pro. It was an awesome Amiga tracker with lots of channels and with lots of features the PC trackers didn't have. It had its own format, but could also export to XM (the fileformat of Fasttracker II modules).



I decided to buy DigiBooster Pro v2.18 in 1998, and upgraded to v2.21 later. I then created 24 tracks with this tracker over the next two years.

The Amiga and PC obviously had different applications, but there really wasn't anything that PC owners could do on their PC, that I couldn't also do on my Amiga.

The original Blu-ray version of 8-bit Memoirs contains a playlist with this music. Visit www.8bitMemoirs.com to get it!

End of the era

When Michael decided to buy a PC instead of an Amiga 1200 back in 1995, he effectively also killed the team. Anders also moved on to the PC platform later, leaving me as the only Amiga user left of the 3 of us. So X-Force had been dead for a few years now.

And I saw absolutely no reason to "move on" to the PC platform. I instead saw lots of reasons to stay with the Amiga - so I did.

The assassination of creativity

In year 2000 I would finally suffer the same fate as many other people had before me though: Education required me to have a PC. The Amiga could no longer keep up with the special applications that my studies required me to have, most of which in my opinion were rather silly and unnecessary, since you could reach the same results with other applications.

I kept my Amiga of course, but the creative days were over for the next 5 years.

Attending school was extremely time-demanding, leaving no time for any kind of creativity anymore. Every day I had to first take a bicycle-ride down to the train station. From there I took a 70-minute train ride followed by a 20-minute bus ride - and don't forget to include the waiting time between stations.

When the day was over, it was the same trip back again. And when I was finally at home again there was a lot of reading I had to do for the next day.

I often planned on spending those daily 3 hours of travel time for studies, in order to free up just a little bit of sparetime to create some music when I got home, but I always ended up falling asleep on the train instead.

I did load Fasttracker II on my new PC sometimes, but it turned out to be pretty much useless due to my soundcard apparently being incompatible with FT2, which only confirmed what I already knew about the PC: Rubbish. Instead of a nice clean sound I got a lot of noise in the background that I just couldn't ignore. And there was no money left to buy another soundcard.

So these circumstances were the main reason my tracking days came to a halt, resulting in "Mr.Lou's Modpage" having no new tracks added after year 2000. The result was the end of my Amiga era **and** an involuntary 5-year long break from tracking music.

A single PC story

BASIC on the PC

After accepting that my CPC BASIC days were over, I had moved onto the Amiga platform, where I spent a lot of time scouting for some way to continue being able to create BASIC programs. But I never really found a way.

I did not own a PC yet. I just had my Amstrad CPC464 and my Amiga 1200. But I was attending the so-called Higher Technical Examination (HTX) at the time, which meant that I had to use a PC (running DOS) a lot. In this relation I couldn't avoid running into both GW-BASIC and QBasic, which I naturally had to explore a bit.

GW-BASIC

I remembered GW-BASIC was the language my mums co-worker had used back in 1986 when I began looking into BASIC on my grandma's Amstrad CPC, which made it a bit more interesting that it would probably have been otherwise.

The exploration of GW-BASIC soon resulted in me staying at the school long after everyone else had gone home for the day, deeply engaged in my amateurish GW-BASIC projects. I had finally found a way to code BASIC again. Sadly not on the Amiga, but still... It was nice to be able to be creative with BASIC again.

But the magic was gone.

It was impossible not to notice the difference between Amstrad CPC BASIC coding with my cousin, and PC GW-BASIC coding here on the PC, alone in an empty classroom, after school hours, only accompanied by the noise of 20 idling PC's. It might have helped if there'd been someone I could share my BASIC-coding-enthusiasm with. But there was no one.

The only one who took a slight interest in my GW-BASIC coding, was one of my teachers; Carl, who occasionally came by the computer-room. All schools has this one teacher who's overly eager to spread some enthusiasm and encouragement among the students. At my school, that guy was Carl. And his encouragement was nice of course, but it obviously wasn't quite the same kind of enthusiasm I'd experienced before.

GW-BASIC was both interesting and annoying at the same time. While it had all the same commands I knew from the CPC, many of them had different names in GW-BASIC, and the parameters sometimes had to be written in a different order too. The LOCATE command on the CPC for

example, took parameters x,y. But with GW-BASIC it was LOCATE y,x, and that was extremely annoying.

Nevertheless, despite of the annoying factors and the relative lack of atmosphere, I definitely came to embrace GW-BASIC and enjoyed coding my small programs very much.

QBasic

Just as I'd gotten used to GW-BASIC, one of my classmates came along and told me I had to use QBasic instead.

"GW-BASIC is old and outdated", he said.

At this point I recognised the pattern well:

First, someone will ask me to look into something. I refuse. Then, I look into it anyway - and get hooked on it. Then, I'm told it's old and outdated and I need to look into something new. Repeat.

Being told to move away from GW-BASIC into QBasic was therefore no surprise. And as usual, I refused at first, but looked into it later anyway, and actually even began creating a little game with QBasic. It was never completed though.

GW-BASIC and QBasic was **exactly** the kind of thing I had been missing - had it only been on the Amiga: A way to be able to continue my BASIC coding.

So despite the slightly depressive circumstances (and the fact that it was on a PC rather than Amiga), it kept being interesting to me - all the way up to the arrival of Windows. Once again the pattern repeated itself. Windows came along and killed everything DOS-related, which meant that I once again had to drop my interest.

But this time I didn't follow the usual pattern. Well at first I did: As tradition dictated, I kept hanging onto GW-BASIC and QBasic longer than everyone else. But when it was time to embrace (or at least accept) the new tech and thus find an alternative to GW-BASIC and QBasic, I'd lost the spirit. This constant evolution of technology was bothering me too much. I guess I'm just too conservative to keep up with the constant changes.

Meanwhile, I'd begun hanging out with Mr.Mix a bit, whose real name was Tim. And while the rest of the world was embracing modern 486 PC's with 66 Mhz CPU's and Windows 95, Mr.Mix and I would spend our weekends creating silly GW-BASIC stuff on an old 12 Mhz 286 with a

black'n'white monitor. Somewhat the same kind of programs I'd previously been doing with my cousin Robin on the Amstrad CPC, but perhaps on a slightly less serious and also less cosy level, yet still plenty of fun.

There was only a single audio channel available - but that didn't stop us from creating music.

The whole "PC BASIC period" doesn't weigh a whole lot on the nostalgic scale. Apart from my GW-BASIC coding with Mr.Mix, there was no special cosy atmosphere present as there'd been with the CPC.

Closing chapter

Then vs now

As I'm writing this closing chapter, it's the year 2017, which means it was

- 35 years ago the Philips Videopac G7000 entered my life and gave me some of the absolute best entertainment of my childhood. Proof that awesome things existed in the world.

- 31 years ago I was introduced to the Amstrad CPC464, which gave me some of the absolutely best creative years of my youth, in the form of countless of BASIC creations and music compositions.

- 25 years ago the Amiga allowed me to expand on the music compositions, giving me a much needed outlet during the following stressful decade.

- 17 years ago it all ended with "the dead zone". Education and work had finally managed to completely kill my creativity.

Time flies.

The G7000 and CPC will forever stand as the best eras of my life, because they represent a time where all was well and fine. As I was always working on some CPC project, I began most mornings with an excitement to continue my work. In other words, waking up was mostly a daily positive experience. My life had meaningful valuable content, which naturally contributed a lot to my basic well-being.

The Amiga period **should** have been equally great, but sadly the whole era was "polluted" by more and more stress factors that kept invading my life at that time, and this has of course made it impossible to remember the Amiga era in the same positive light as the G7000 and CPC era. It **was** of course definitely awesome to compose music with Protracker, but when listening to my Amiga music today, many of the tracks kinda has this hidden channel that only I can hear, which tells me the story of whatever I was struggling with at that particular time. This means that whenever I listen to certain old Amiga tracks of mine today, while the music itself and the attached nostalgia **is** great, I'm also reminded of all the shit I had to deal with at the time, obviously making it a rather mixed experience. Luckily this doesn't apply to all my Amiga tracks though.

All of my CPC music of course also has such a "hidden channel", but it tells stories that are somewhat more positive.

"Now"

So how does the present look like? Well, the G7000 and especially the CPC continues to bring me joy even to this day. All of the games I used to play in the good old days has become representatives of times, places and people I knew back then. And I enjoy revisiting those times, places and people every now and then.

I don't really have any of the people from back then in my life anymore. Some of them sadly aren't living anymore, and others just ended up living busy lives in other parts of the country. But even if I still had contact with them, they have of course also changed a lot over the years. And I've also learned, that only very few people seem to have the same interest in the nostalgia that I have. So it will really always only be in our memories we can revisit the good old days.

"Now" began 6 years after "then" ended; in 2006, when I formed "LuBlu Entertainment" with my better half. We've since then done creative projects on newer platforms, like cellphone games, various websites and Blu-ray projects (videoalbums and games) - but we've actually also created a few projects for the CPC; games, art and music.

There's something rather fulfilling about doing CPC projects, compared to other platforms.

On top of the nostalgic factor, CPC projects will always be appreciated by other CPC users a lot more than users on more modern platforms will appreciate projects for their platforms. Try making an Android game nowadays for example. Or a game for Steam. It will almost certainly drown in the over flooded market - even if you give it away for free.

Not so with the CPC. On the CPC, your game will always have an audience - even one who is willing to pay for it (depending on size and quality of course). And if you put in just a little bit of effort, there's a big chance your game get free advertisement in magazines such as RetroGamer.

So if you're a CPC enthusiast **and** a game-developer, it actually makes very little sense to even look into other platforms... These days, it kinda seems like there's a bigger chance your game will be appreciated if you target a niche platform rather than a mainstream platform.

The CPC (and a lot of other retro-computers) seems to be more alive today than ever before. For the past 10-15 years, more and more people has returned to the CPC. Primarily people who used to own a CPC in his/her childhood, but also people who's never had any previous experience with it! And because the Internet makes it easy for all of us to be in contact with each other, it kinda feels like the CPC is more popular now than it ever was. Never before have I had so many people to share my CPC interest with, and that of course also helps boost and keep the interest.

I never got used to Windows. Having all of the experience I had with the Amiga, I never learned to accept the consistently silly behaviour I kept seeing with Windows. So it wasn't till I began looking into Linux in 2006 that I finally felt at home using a PC. Linux reminded me so much of the Amiga that it kinda felt like finally being back home in the good old days again.

While a lot of the applications available on Windows weren't available for Linux, I managed to find acceptable alternatives in most cases - just like I'd always done with the Amiga. And rather unexpectedly, all of the other applications that I had previously used on Windows became available for Linux a year or two later.

Over time I've had a look at many different trackers, both on Windows and Linux. OpenMPT, MadTracker, Skale Tracker, Milkytracker, Renoise etc.

I would really have preferred using Skale Tracker (which is also available for Linux), had it only been possible to use the small effect-column for other things than volume. Because then Skale Tracker would have been the ideal tracker for my workflow: One of my geeky interests is/was to create my tracks in many different fileformats: Streamed formats (WAV, FLAC, OGG, MP3), different tracker formats (IT, XM, S3M, MOD), and even MIDI too, with and without an embedded soundfont. I've even looked into some of the more exotic formats like SMAF and XMF. The whole idea with all of these fileformats was to offer my music to game-developers on many different platforms via IndieGameMusic.com

Skale Tracker makes this process easier than Renoise does, but sadly limits creativity due to the missing possibility of using the small effect-column for other things than volume.

I even contacted the authors to ask if it was possible to fix this, but sadly no.

I don't know of any format that's better suited for games than the old tracker formats. They offer so many options that are ideal for games, that it continues to puzzle me why the streamed formats have taken over in such a degree that they have.

Trackers have evolved tremendously since Protracker. One of the modern day trackers is Renoise, which I bought and created a few tracks with. But my desire to create game-music in a tracker format that is widely supported by various player libraries keep bouncing me back to Milkytracker instead.

I've noticed this about myself, both when it comes to tracking music and coding: I prefer working with limited platforms that presents a bigger challenge. I guess that's part of the reason I still enjoy doing CPC projects.

The many CPC projects I used to have in my life back then has been mostly replaced with job and family though. While I do usually also have some sparetime project going on at the same time, I rarely wake up in the mornings with the same eagerness to continue my project, like I did back in the day with all my CPC projects. Such enthusiasm will slowly die just by knowing there isn't any time for such projects anymore. I have to go spend my time and skills working on other people's projects instead.

I wouldn't say I've had bad luck with jobs. Since graduating I've actually only had 2 jobs. Disregarding my crash at my first job, I've actually been somewhat lucky to find myself jobs that has allowed me to work on many different projects that I've had a lot of interest in. Not many people are lucky like that, so I have to appreciate that.

Still though, they're not **my** projects. They are the company's projects. And this means I often have to accept someone else's silly decisions despite having enough experience to foresee the trouble it will result in - and trying to warn about it. But no one listens, and when we then run into the problems I predicted, **I** am the one who has to fix them. :-|

So it's not exactly a huge mystery why it gives me a much bigger feeling of fulfilment to work on my own projects rather than someone else's. I think most of us can relate to that.

Next generation

In an attempt to give our daughter some great childhood memories similar to our own, my better half and I bought her the V.Smile gaming-console for kids from VTech. This console has been surprisingly entertaining for all of us. So much in fact, that after buying all of the locally available games, we began buying the English games on eBay. The following years when her birthday was coming up, and asked what she wanted for her birthday, she always replied "V.Smile games".

I have to say that I don't understand any of the criticism this console has received. The games has been (mostly) great and cosy, definitely suitable for kids.

We also bought her an Android tablet; the Galaxy S3 for kids from Samsung. A lot of different children's games has been installed on this tablet up through the years. (And let me just applaud Samsung here for creating a long lasting tablet. Finally some new tech that actually last - despite being used by a child. Well done Samsung!)

When I found a "130 in one" handheld game from Lexibook extremely cheap on a flea market, I of course also had to check that out - and she found that one very interesting too.

So I think it's safe to say that my daughter has had a lot of gaming experiences in her childhood already, and it's clearly been interesting to her.

Time will tell if she'll remember it in the same positive way that we have with our childhood.

The making of 8-bit Memoirs

A couple of weeks after releasing 8-bit Memoirs, I wrote a long post on the CPCwiki.eu forum, sharing the experiences I had while creating the project. I thought the eBook version of 8-bit Memoirs Issue #1 should contain this text too, so here it is (in a slightly modified version).

It starts with an idea

"8-bit Memoirs" officially began back in 2012. But my yearning to see (someone else create) a project like this began many years before that.

I would mention diskmag on the CPCwiki.eu forum a lot, in an attempt to make someone **else** interested in creating one, but without much luck. Although there were a few people who agreed that it would be awesome to have a new diskmag about CPC stuff, the majority didn't really seem that interested. So my attempts to lure someone into creating such a diskmag failed. (That was fail number one. See if you can count the number of fails from here).

But my desire to see such a diskmag come to life was too big for me to let it go, so in 2010 I began creating a diskmag engine of my own - for JavaME enabled cellphones. I posted photos of phones running the diskmag, and I also created a download for everyone to check out. The PC version (emulator) even came with magnify options to increase readability. But still there just wasn't a whole lot of interest, despite the fact that it ran on both phones and Windows / Linux / Mac (via emulation).

The biggest counter-argument was the same old "we have websites now so we don't need diskmags!", which to me is kinda like saying "We have movies now so we don't need books!"

A diskmag is something **very** different from a website in my opinion. It's a creation that contains lots of cosy articles or stories that you read while you listen to atmospheric relaxing music. It's never ever black text on a white background, but always a bright text on a darker background (although it **could** contain a "black on white" theme in an attempt to please more people). Navigating between pages is usually done with a single click, and everything must (be able to) run offline, to enhance the feeling of disconnecting for a while.

And while all of this is technically possible to do with HTML5, it's just not what developers do. (Prove me wrong).

I think most of us can agree that diskmags and websites are two very different things.

Doing it myself

Two years later I began again creating a whole new engine from scratch. The previous engine had been too complicated for people to figure out. Partly because of the navigation system, and partly because you had to download a specific version depending on the screen resolution of your phone, and partly because the author of the emulator (whom I of course contacted about the project) informed me that I wasn't actually allowed to embed his emulator like I had done, which forced me to try to instead instruct everyone on how to manually download the emulator... and I assumed these circumstances were definitely part of the reason there hadn't been a whole lot of interest. Things simply became way too complicated.

So this new engine, while still targeting cellphones, had to have a better navigation system, and also be able to run on any screen size. So there had to be options available to select different font sizes.

At this point I'd also given up waiting for someone else to create the content. So I decided I would create some myself now, and it was going to be a small collection of stories about my own CPC memories from my childhood. Memories that I've always felt should be preserved somehow anyway.

I gave this project the name "8-bit Stories", and then I began writing my stories.

It always gets bigger

As the project progressed, it kept growing in size. New ideas meant more content (and more work). Some stories reminded me of another. And other stories ended up being too big, and needed to be split into two.

I'm not even going to try to explain how much time I spent proof-reading the stories, again and again and again.

How about adding videos too?

That's an awesome idea! I could ask some of the guys on the forum who does YouTube videos if I could use some of their videos. That way they'd get advertisement for their YouTube channel, and the project would become a real community project. No doubt they'd be interested in that. It was going to be **awesome!**

But when asking around I never heard back from anyone...

Oh well, I suppose they were all busy, and I guess it probably was a bit much to ask... despite most of the videos already existing on their YouTube channels.

To be fair though, I later found out that the nick tagging system on the forum was broke at the time. So no one ever got a notification when I tagged them...

So instead I ended up

- buying some rather expensive equipment to record the videos myself
- getting my G7000 modded to output an RGB signal
- spending a ton of time creating all the videos myself

I absolutely **insisted** that this project was going to become a reality - even if I had to do everything myself, and no matter how much money it would cost me. We were going to have this diskmag-like creation no matter what.

Platform change

Adding videos to the project meant that cellphones weren't the optimal target platform anymore, so I had to find another platform that was more suitable for lots of video and music. And that ended up being Blu-ray, since this platform was literally made for content like this - and as a bonus, this format can be viewed almost everywhere: On real hardware players from disc and on software players from harddisk or USB stick, playing the ISO file or folder - **exactly** like any retro computer game can run on the real machine from a floppy disk and on emulators from harddisk, playing the ADF, D64 or DSK file. So there was no need for me to code different versions now. Awesome!

How about making the videos look like it looked on a real Amstrad CPC monitor?

Fantastic idea! Then followed a lot of experiments with CRT filters.

I can't say that everything was going according to plan, because there really **was** no plan. I didn't need one either, because there was no deadline. The content for this project could never get too old, so I was in no rush at all. And that's why it was no problem at all just letting the ideas pop up as I went along. Just like any cosy project is supposed to be.

How about adding different themes?

Of course! There should definitely be an Amstrad CPC theme, or maybe two! Possibly also a C64 theme and Amiga theme! Great idea!

So I contacted a few CPC graphics artists on the forum, having no doubt at all that at least a **few** of them would be interested in participating. Maybe even be proud to contribute with something, considering how monolithic this project was going to be. And it wasn't that much work either. It was just a piece of top graphics and bottom graphics.

But yet again I never heard back from anyone, except one who said he sadly didn't have the time.

Ok then....

It never goes as you expect

Meanwhile, I discovered that someone had now bought the domain 8bitstories.com, and used it to post "stories" about.... well I never really got that part. It looked suspiciously like sabotage.

But whoever was behind it actually did me a favour, because it made me realise that the title "8-bit Stories" was in fact wrong for the project. Because the word "stories" doesn't indicate that we're talking about **true** stories. In fact, the word gives more of an impression that we're talking about fiction. So I needed a better word to describe my content as it was: True stories from my life. And that word was of course going to be "Memoirs".

So the new title became "8-bit Memoirs", which also sounds a lot better I think. And to prevent further sabotage I of course bought the domain right away.

(That other 8bitstories.com site suspiciously closed shortly after).

How about adding illustrations?

Yet another nice idea there!

Requirements? Well I need to find an illustrator of course. And then I suppose I need to get my hands on a lot of photos that I can give to this illustrator for references.

So my aunt Karen supplied me with thousands of old negatives of which I scanned probably about a thousand, looking for photos I could use for references. I had to buy a negative scanner for this.

But unfortunately there were hardly any of the photos I could use. Apparently no one in the family had ever taken photos of the rooms or items that I needed. Only one single picture was ever taken with me sitting in front of my CPC...

Over the next year and a half I talked with **6** different illustrators who were all interested in creating the illustrations. Some wanted payment, others offered for free. But none of them ever delivered anything. Most of those 18 months was literally spent just waiting to hear from these illustrators.

My girlfriend finally took pity on me, and decided to help me out with the illustrations, despite not really having the time for it. She sacrificed/postponed one of her own projects to help me out. So I had to reduce the number of illustrations a bit. But at least the project had illustrations now. (Each illustration took between 10 and 20 hours to create, which means each illustration took several weeks to create. This was partly because there was very little sparetime available between job and family, and partly because we spent a great deal of time and effort making each illustration as faithful as possible to the actual moment in time they represent).

Since I never heard back from any CPC graphics artists, it was also my better half who ended up creating most of the themes. So I also had to reduce the amount of themes I would have liked to include.

Ok fine, so apparently this project wasn't going to become the community project that I had thought it would be. And I have to admit, that was rather disappointing. Not completely impossible to understand though. I know most people have very little time, and I can't brag about lining up myself to help anyone else with their projects. So I understand perfectly fine that we all (have to) prioritise. But it was still somewhat discouraging to indirectly being told that no one else had any interest in this project.

Hopefully future issues of 8-bit Memoirs will see more collaboration between community members. It would be nice if issue #1 at least had that effect.

Despite all the obstacles.

I still felt pretty good about the project. It was progressing slowly but nicely. And I had found a suitable platform that people could view on both their Windows or Mac or Linux PC. And it could also run on their PlayStation 3, PlayStation 4 and Xbox One gaming console. And I would later discover a long list of hardware media players that would also play it from harddisk or USB. And of course let's not forget all the standard Blu-ray players, including the new Ultra HD ones.

I thus believed I had solved the problem that people complained about when I posted about my first engine: Different people had rather different preferences regarding the platform they preferred viewing such a project on. With Blu-ray I was well covered. One single file would run on any media player that supported BD-J - and VLC and Kodi (was going to) have that covered for a bunch of different platforms in the near future. So it felt good.

Another Blu-ray project I had previously made; a game I had ported from MIDP to BD-J as a proof-of-concept project, had given me feedback like "I'm not wasting a disc burning only 83 mb", so I was glad that the 9 hours of video content plus 5 hours of music in 8-bit Memoirs filled out most of the 25 gb available on the disc. Then I definitely wouldn't hear any such complaints here.

(Nothing was added just to fill out all of the space. It was all planned content, and all relevant to the stories. In fact, I actually had to cut down a few videos to make it all fit).

(As you can see I was on the classic (impossible) mission to try to please everyone).

More obstacles!

But then I discovered a bug on certain hardware players that resulted in a short black screen between tracks in the background music playlist. In order to fix this I had to change the way the background music playlist was put together. So I did. That was a lot of work, but it seemed to fix the issue.

Unfortunately this fix then in turn seemed to create a new problem for VLC users, due to a different bug in libbluray.

During development of the project I tried many times offering my assistance to the VLC and libbluray developers with BD-J implementation, in different ways, in an attempt to have VLC ready in time for the release of 8-bit Memoirs. But they were always rather unresponsive to my input. So in the end I realised there was nothing I could do. I had to just release the project, and then hopefully VLC would get fixed later.

It was fixed in VLC v3.0.1, but by then a lot of people had already had the bad experience, which of course sadly damaged the reputation of the project.

Kodi v18 still wasn't out yet, but when releasing v1.1 of 8-bit Memoirs in June 2018, the nightly builds of Kodi v18 still suffered from the same bug. I had posted about it on IRC, on their bug tracker and on their forum. Nothing more I could do. (Will be interesting to see if it'll be fixed before the actual release of v18).

Burning the discs!

Alright! One week before release, I was ready to start creating disc copies. But now all of the sudden my Blu-ray burner didn't work anymore! **What?!?** I had to spend several days figuring out the reason for this, and at this point I was beginning to go crazy. I was stressing out because I had to create a decent amount of copies before the release date, and I couldn't believe how new obstacles could keep on popping up like this, seemingly for every single little step I tried to take. The problem in this case: A buggy new Linux kernel. Solution: Boot on older kernel.

I had been planning on printing the case covers at work, because we had a good laser printer there - except of course that it had been replaced the day before now. (The timing was always "perfect" in regards to screwing up my plans). This new printer was supposed to be far superior than the old one - but of course it wasn't. It looked absolutely terrible. But knowing my luck, I had anticipated this in advance, so I simply drove to work during the weekend, hooked up the old printer that still hadn't been picked up, and printed all the case covers. "Fuck off you evil powers who think you can prevent my project from becoming a reality!"

The disc-prints was done at home on our own printer, which of course couldn't produce the right colours. A lot of tweaking (and a lot of discs) were necessary to get that right.

Meanwhile the ISO file was sent to SceneSat a few days before release. They'd promised to create a torrent for me that I could add on 8bitMemoirs.com. But just as they were about to start doing that, they had a **major** crash. (Can you believe it?) As a result, it took about 3 weeks after release before the torrent file was up! This could easily have been a disaster! But luckily, the HTTP download seemed to work fine for most people. I had thought it would time out for most (because that's what most people had told me), but no. It worked surprisingly well, giving a download time of only 3-4 hours.

Alright. I then prepared a text for the release post on the forum, and uploaded a video to YouTube. But shortly after posting the video, someone reported it as being in violation with the YouTube community guidelines, which of course it wasn't. Again smelling suspiciously like sabotage.

There was no doubt that YouTube would lift the block once they had time to look at the video, but I of course couldn't wait for that now that the project had been released. So now I had to upload the video to Vimeo too, to be able to have something to show, and then go back to all the forums I had posted on to provide a new link.

But **finally** the project was released, December 1st 2017.

After 5 long years, it was done. I had initially thought it would take about 2 years, but the constant flow of obstacles meant it ended up taking 2,5 times longer.

Version 1.1

During the next 3 months, I received various suggestions for improvements and extra functionality from many people. Things like adding a progress bar when watching a video. Being able to jump back to the previous text. Using the d-pad for video navigation. Adding fast forward option. And underlining menu-items.

Although those were indeed great ideas, I wasn't planning on including any of them. To me, the project had been completed now. If these ideas should have been included, they should have been presented during the betatest phase.

But then I stumbled across a bug myself that was overlooked by all the betatesters; freezing the GUI after watching a video under certain conditions. And because I couldn't quite accept that bug existing in the project, I began looking into a v1.1 anyway. I also decided to send out a replacement disc to everyone who had bought the Collectors Edition of version 1.0.

Observations

Despite finding it necessary to create a version 1.1 several months after the official release, I still consider the project a success, just for having managed to complete it and release it despite of the constant flow of obstacles that kept being thrown in my face.

The amount of interest in the physical copy matched what I expected. The number of downloads however, far exceeded my expectations. For a while I was worried that I might get an extra bill from my webhotel provider, but they were luckily rather friendly about it.

Did you lose count of the number of problems as fast as I did? Hardly anything in the project went as I thought it would! Almost every little part of the project was originally intended to be different in some way. And that is something worth thinking about. I know this is something that bothers anyone working on projects like this; when things don't go according to plan or expectations.

So what I've learned here is this: The plan is not important. The project doesn't have to be 100% like you planned it. As long as you managed to complete it - then it's a success. I am very happy with the result. :-)

Pleasing everyone!

After releasing v1.0 of 8-bit Memoirs, I received some **very** positive feedback. You can't get much better comments than "This is something seriously awesome!", and "Equal to any commercial product I have bought!". Such awesome feedback is of course extremely nice to receive.

But as I'm sure a lot of people have experienced long before me; making **everyone** happy is simply impossible. No matter how hard you try to please everyone, there will always be someone who complains.

There were primarily two complaints:

1. The size of the download was too big: 23 gb
2. The project couldn't be viewed on cellphones and tablets.

A few readers reported back to me that the ISO file took about 3-4 hours to download. So apparently that's too long to wait for some people in order to get my 5 years of work for free...

Regarding the cellphone and tablet exclusion: That was kind of an intentional choice when I picked Blu-ray as the platform. I wanted 8-bit Memoirs to receive the same kind of attention that you give a movie. It's something you should set aside time for, and get comfortable before starting. As opposed to a YouTube clip or website that you just catch a part of on the go, while rushing through the stressful day.

Not that I would **mind** if 8-bit Memoirs could be viewed on a cellphone or a tablet. It just wasn't a high priority to pick a platform that made it possible. Therefor I hadn't even looked into whether or not a Blu-ray project could be viewed on a phone or tablet.

But of course, now here in 2018 I ended up creating an eBook version also, so I expect everyone to be happy now. 😊