



Roland Takes a Running Jump

One of the staples of the computer gamer's diet is the platform-type game, which features a lot of leaping about and treasure collecting. Peter Green starts a series showing how to write your own.

One of the games that will go down in computing history as a landmark is *Missile Miner*, a game which originally appeared on the Spectrum and whose success brought forth an army of clones: *Jet Set Willy*, *Jet Set Willy II*, *Blagger*... Most of these games have been converted to run on the Amstrad computers, and you have all probably seen one

version or another.

The basic principle is that you have a number of screens built of various types of platform. The player uses a joystick or the keyboard to control a little figure who can run left and right, or jump into the air. Scattered about each screen are both pieces of treasure, which you have to collect, and

nastics of various types, often moving, which you have to avoid.

The object of this series is to give you an insight into the problems involved in writing such a game, and the techniques used to overcome the problems. As an example, month by month we'll build up the code for a demo program called the obvious reason's 'Roland Takes A Running Jump'. Our hero will be Amstrad's mascot, Roland, who will have to leap about the various floors of the Amstrad company offices collecting 3' floppy discs.

Spritley Moves

Obviously the most important, and therefore the first point to consider, is the graphical representation of each play level on the screen. A screen consists of two basic elements: the background of platforms and fixed hazards which never change, and the player, treasure, and moving hazards which do change.

The fixed background is no problem. It only has to be drawn once, at the start of a level, and can then be neglected provided we arrange for the moving elements not to corrupt it. It's the moving elements themselves which provide the first obstacle.

The type of gameplay we will incorporate is the same as *Manic Miner*: the player cannot fall through the platform he is standing on, but he can jump up 'through' a platform above him. Thus we need to draw the player's character over the background in such a way that, when he moves on, the block ground re-appears as it was before.

Some computers have sprites as part of their graphics capability. Normally, the pictures on the TV display are generated from the data stored in screen memory; on the Amstrad, screen memory is a 16K block. Put very simply, a sprite is a graphics shape which appears on the TV display without its data being stored in the screen memory. Its data is actually stored elsewhere in the computer, together with data telling the system where on the screen the sprite is supposed to appear. When this point is reached, the hardware generates the TV frame video signal from the sprite data instead of the screen data, so the sprite seems to appear in front of the screen background. Thus sprite graphics can very easily be put on screen, moved around, and taken off again without any effect on the background.

None of the Amstrad computers have this hardware sprite capability. To make something appear on the screen, its data must be written into screen RAM, even if that means overwriting background data. However, there are two methods we can use to produce a 'software sprite'. The first is really pretty obvious: when we want to draw a shape over a piece of background, first copy the section of the screen which is going to be altered into a safe section of memory. Later, we can erase the shape and restore the background exactly as it was by copying the data back again to its original position. This will give an effect that looks just like a hardware sprite, but we won't be using it for our program.

Over and Out

Instead, we'll be drawing our moving characters using XOR mode. Many of you will know what this means, but I'll briefly explain it for the benefit of readers who don't understand logical operators.

Normally, drawing a shape on-screen means taking numbers from one part of memory (a table of data for the graphic shapes), and copying it into another part of memory (the screen memory). It replaces whatever was there before. But the Z80 processor at the heart of the Amstrad also lets us combine numbers with the ones already existing in a memory byte, using various logical rules, or operators. The operator we're interested in is XOR. The table below shows what the result bit is for each possible combination of bit pairs in the two original numbers. In English, the XOR rule is 'the result bit is a one if both bits are the same, and a one if the two bits are different'. The first example shows how to XOR two numbers together, using the table or the above rule:

First bit:	0 0 1 1		
Second bit:	0 1 0 1		
Result bit:	0 1 1 0		
Example 1:	10010100	Example 2:	10100010
	XOR		XOR
	01100100		01110100
	given		given
	10100000		11010110

But now look at example 2. If we take the answer from example 1, and XOR it with one of our starting numbers, the result is the other number that we started with. This always works with XOR: test a few examples to see for yourself. If we take a number, and XOR it twice with another number, we always get the first number back unchanged.

The point of this mathematical diversion is that, if we draw a shape onto the screen using XOR mode, it appears; drawing it a second time in the same place makes it disappear, and we get our original background back as a bonus! The only disadvantage is that new colours may appear at the points where background and shape overlap, as new bit patterns are produced in the screen memory. However, we (and most commercial games of this type) will put up with this for the sake of convenience. Readers lucky enough to own a copy of the excellent game 'Savory' will be familiar with the weird colours that appear when characters cross over each other, and this is the reason.

Speed Limits

Now you might think we're laughing, as the Amstrad TAG option lets us print characters using graphics XOR mode. Our second problem rears its ugly head now: speed. For smooth, flicker-free animation, we've got to add and remove characters from the screen fast. Let's do some experiments. Program 1 is a BASIC listing that fills the Mode 1 screen with characters. Run it and time it and you find BASIC needs about 6.5 seconds to print a thousand characters: about 6.5 milliseconds per character.

But the screen is displayed at 50 frames a second, 50 milliseconds a frame. Chop off the time each frame when the hardware is testing the keyboard, updating the sound

chip and doing all the other housekeeping tasks, and you can see we only have time to remove and redraw one or two characters per frame before flicker starts to occur. And we haven't even considered things like checking for legal moves, measure, scores and time left! We need a speed improvement, or we'll have a very dull game.

Can machine code provide a solution? Surprisingly, the answer is no. Program 3 is a routine that fills a Mode 1 screen with characters (the variety, in vertical strips instead of horizontal rows), using the firmware routines that BASIC would normally use. The routine cycles through all 256 built-in characters, so first the program selects all characters to be taken from ROM, and enables the ROM so that we can read from it. Each character column in Mode 1 is two bytes of screen memory wide, so we move across the screen in two-byte increments (the double CALL to SCR NEXTBYTE) writing vertical strips of characters. For each character we must find the address of the eight bytes that make up its matrix, input the matrix into the corresponding set of pixel masks for a Mode 1 screen, then combine each mask with the stored ink we're using, and copy the result into the right place on the screen.

And the time saving? This routine takes about four seconds to fill the screen, a rate of two to three characters per frame scan. Still no good, and we simply can't go any faster using standard routines. Machine code may be fast, but the complicated organisation of the Amstrad screen means a great deal of work has to be done to print a character, which slows things down again. We have to come up with a new trick.

The Plotting Thickens

Well, the fundamental limit of speed is the time it takes just to write the correct data from one place in memory to another: we can't do that any faster. The real time-waster in Program 3 is the conversion of a character from its stored form into its screen form. Cut out that step and we'll be plotting shapes on screen as fast as we can.

So for smooth animation of a number of shapes, we store our graphics already encoded into their screen data format. An example is given in Program 3, which includes the encoded data for a checker board character. The program plots the character at a point on screen given by the given starting screen address (&FS00): the call to EM WAIT CHAR is a machine code 'Press any key to continue', after which the character is re-plotted in the same place and then disappears, as we showed above.

This is fast, but we can do slightly better. Program 3 uses the proper firmware calls to step right and down through the screen memory map, which is often a complicated process. This is due to the very complex addressing system used by the Amstrad hardware, which becomes even worse if scrolling has taken place. It means a great deal of checking has to be done to move around the screen map.

However, we can make a few short-cuts provided we don't scroll the screen after selecting the screen Mode. In this case, the screen addressing looks like Figure 1. It still looks complicated, but provided we don't try to move off the sides, top or bottom of the screen, we can use the following rules. To move right or left one byte, add or subtract one to the screen address. To move down one row, add 2048 (&8000) to the screen address. If the carry flag is clear after this, the answer is the new screen address (for example, the byte below

&1800 in Figure 1 is &1800 + &800 = &1E00).

If the carry is set, though, indicating an overflow past &FFFF (the top of memory), we have to add a further correction factor. This consists of &C000 (which takes us back to the start of the screen memory map), and &80 (which takes us to the next row in the same 32K block). For example, adding &800 to &FF01 gives &1001 and the carry flag set. Adding another &C000 gives &1C01 as the required address, which Figure 1 shows is the correct answer.

Screen memory map if no scrolling has occurred after Mode change

		80 (800) bytes				
FIRST EIGHT PIXEL LINES		C000	C001	.....	C04E	C04F
		C000	C001	.....	C04E	C04F
		C000	C001	.....	C04E	C04F
		C000	C001	.....	C04E	C04F
		C000	C001	.....	C04E	C04F
		C000	C001	.....	C04E	C04F
		C000	C001	.....	C04E	C04F
		C000	C001	.....	C04E	C04F
		C000	C001	.....	C04E	C04F
		C000	C001	.....	C04E	C04F
SECOND EIGHT PIXEL LINES		C050	C051	.....	C09E	C09F
		C050	C051	.....	C09E	C09F
	
	
	
	
	
	
	
	
LAST EIGHT PIXEL LINES		C700	C701	.....	C74E	C74F
		C700	C701	.....	C74E	C74F
		C700	C701	.....	C74E	C74F
		C700	C701	.....	C74E	C74F
		C700	C701	.....	C74E	C74F
		C700	C701	.....	C74E	C74F
		C700	C701	.....	C74E	C74F
		C700	C701	.....	C74E	C74F
		C700	C701	.....	C74E	C74F
		C700	C701	.....	C74E	C74F

ALL ADDRESSES IN HEX

Program 4 incorporates these improvements, and takes just under one second to print 1000 characters. As an added bonus, there's no reason why we can't encode our data so that shapes appear multi-coloured on the screen. To do that using the firmware routines would have required over printing several characters to produce the extra colours, whereas our system requires no extra time at all.

Typing in the Programs

Since most of the programs have been written in machine code it is usually necessary for you to have an assembler so that you can enter the programs (I use MASM), so that anyone who is new to machine code, and doesn't have an assembler, can enter the program a small Basic program which reads data in and prints the machine code in is provided.

Program 1

```
10 GOTO 1
20 FOR I=1 TO 40*25
30 PRINT "A";
40 NEXT I
50 GOTO 50
```

Program 2 - Machine code

```
ORG 0000
LD HL,100
CALL 0000 ;GET SET H TABLE
CALL 0000 ;CL L FOR TABLE

;Title
LD R,1
CALL 0000 ;GET SET MODE
LD HL,0000 ;START OF SCREEN
ROR A
JZ R,4

;Loop
ROR HL ;DECR LOOP# COUNTER
ROR HL ;DECR SCREEN ADDRESS
CALL 0000
POP HL ;RESTORE SCREEN ADDRESS
ROR A
CALL 0000 ;GET NEXT BYTE
CALL 0000 ;GET NEXT BYTE
POP A
ROR HL ;RESTORE LOOP# COUNTER
JNZ LOOP
RET ;END OF PROGRAM
;VERIFY
VERIFY ;VERIFY SCREEN ADDRESS AT TOP OF TITLE

;ROR A
LD R,25 ;SETTER HEIGHT IN ROW
LD R,1 ;GET LK 1
CALL 0000 ;GET ONE CHARACTER

LD CHARIN,A ;CHARACTER INB
POP A

;Loop
ROR HL
ROR A
ROR HL
CALL 0000 ;GET SET TABLE
LD HL,CHARIN
CALL 0000 ;GET OFFSET
POP HL ;GET SCREEN ADDRESS

LD HL,CHARIN
LD R,CHARIN
LD R,4 ;GET CHARACTER IN L
JZ R,4

;Loop
LD R,100 ;GET FIRST ROW
ROR C ;DECREMENT WITH INCREMENTED HL
LD HL,A ;GET TO SCREEN ADDRESS
ROR HL ;DECR SCREEN ADDRESS
CALL 0000 ;GET NEXT BYTE
ROR HL ;POINT TO NEXT PLOT MARK
LD R,100 ;GET FIRST ROW
ROR C ;DECREMENT WITH INCREMENTED HL
LD HL,A ;GET TO SCREEN ADDRESS
ROR HL ;RESTORE PREVIOUS SCREEN ADDRESS
```

```
CALL 0000 ;GET NEXT LINE
ROR HL ;DECR PLOT MARK
ROR LOOP#
POP A ;RESTORE PREVIOUS CHARACTER
ROR A ;GET NEXT CHARACTER
POP HL ;RESTORE LOOP COUNTER
RET
```

```
VERIFY SET H
VERIFY ROR HL
```

Program 2 - Basic poker

```
1 ; randomize the deck
10 FOR I=0000 TO 0000 STEP 5
20 FOR J=0 TO 4
30 READ deck
40 IF CHARIN(VAL(STR$(deck),1))=0 THEN
50 CHARIN(VAL(STR$(deck),1))=0
THEN CHARIN(STR$(deck))=deck;deck=
610 100
50 CHARIN=deck
60 NEXT J
70 READ CHARIN IF CHARIN=0 THEN
80 CHARIN=0
90 CALL 0000
95 END
100 PRINT"Invalid character in line "J+1:
110
110 PRINT"Checksum error in line "I+1:
120
130 DATA 11,00,01,02,03,04,05,06,07,08,09,10
140 DATA 09,10,01,02,03,04,05,06,07,08,09
150 DATA 08,09,00,01,02,03,04,05,06,07,08
160 DATA 07,08,09,10,01,02,03,04,05,06,07
170 DATA 06,07,08,09,10,01,02,03,04,05,06
180 DATA 05,06,07,08,09,10,01,02,03,04,05
190 DATA 04,05,06,07,08,09,10,01,02,03,04
200 DATA 03,04,05,06,07,08,09,10,01,02,03
210 DATA 02,03,04,05,06,07,08,09,10,01,02
220 DATA 01,02,03,04,05,06,07,08,09,10,01
```

Program 3 - Machine Code

```
ORG 0000
LD R,1
CALL 0000 ;GET SET MODE

LD HL,0000
LD HL,CHARIN
LD HL,0000
CALL plot

CALL 0000 ;GET NEXT CHAR

LD HL,0000
LD HL,CHARIN
LD HL,0000
CALL plot

RET

plot ROR HL ;DECR WIDTH AND ROW COUNTER
```


Roland Takes a Running Jump

This month Peter Green moves in a mysterious way, but Roland doesn't in our on-going arcade programming feature.



Last month we saw how to get chunks of graphic data onto the screen as quickly as possible by storing them in their encoded form (i.e. as the actual data bytes required in the screen RAM) by the 6845 video display chip, and then copying them as a rectangular block into the screen memory area. This is not only fast, but it means we can display multi-coloured characters just as quickly as monochrome ones, because the size of the screen data block is identical, however many colours it contains, and the encoding is done in advance, not as the screen is being updated.

We decided to use Mode 11 as a compromise between screen resolution and variety of fonts available. In this mode, a pixel needs two bits in the display memory for a choice of four colours. To display multi-coloured characters by printing them would need up to three operations in transparent text mode (overprinting three characters, one in each foreground ink), or two operations in TAG text as graphics control mode: printing one character to set one bit of each pixel as required, then overprinting in OR graphics mode with a second character to set the other bits. Neither system is very good for the sort of speeds we need.

On the move

Now that we can place our graphic blocks, or 'software sprites', on the screen, we have to think about animation. We need a systematic way of controlling the sprite movement.

Well, if we go back to O-Level Physics, we have all the tools we need. Let's consider just one sprite. It has a position, represented by two coordinates (in whatever system we choose): an x coordinate across the screen, and a y coordinate up the screen. We can store these as two variables, and, by altering the values of x and y , place the sprite anywhere on screen with an appropriate bit of routine that converts x and y to a screen address. This calls the routine we used up with last month.

Suppose we want our sprite to move steadily in some direction. This means that one (or both) of the variables x and y have to be altered steadily by a constant amount, each time causing the sprite at its old position and redrawing it at the position given by the new values of x and y . The amount of change in x and y each time round the 'display loop' can be considered to be the x and y velocities, and we can store these in two more variables, vx and vy . Smooth animation, from the program's point of view, now has the form: use the old position, add vx to x , and add vy to y , to obtain new coordinates, redraw the sprite in its new position and loop back. The only problem with this system is that, quite quickly, the sprite vanishes off the screen.

Bouncing checks

We have to include some kind of checking system, so that our sprites can be made to 'bounce' off obstacles or the edges of the screen. A further problem is that Roland's velocity depends partly on what you're doing with the joystick, and partly on his surroundings. In

short, we need to have a system of acceleration. Here acceleration is used in its strict scientific sense of 'a change in velocity', not its popular meaning of 'going faster'.

Acceleration is more complicated to deal with than velocity, but the limited nature of our sprite movements means it isn't too tricky to handle. We're basing our game on established favourites like Magic Bliner and Bigger, and in these the animated marbles move back and forth in straight lines. This is easy to handle - for each sprite we store the maximum and minimum x and y values for its path. Each time the sprite moves, its new position is checked against these limits. If the sprite has reached an x or y limit, the acceleration is applied by inverting its velocity in that particular plane: the effect on screen is that the sprite 'bounces', and starts moving in the opposite direction. These 'bouncing points' are decided by the programmer when designing a particular game level.

Roland's acceleration is more difficult. Under joystick control he can move left, right, jump up in the air or stand still. But his movement is restricted by his environment in several ways. Again taking our lead from commercial games, there are a number of 'building blocks' which can be considered. Let's look through them.

First there are solid walls and floors, which Roland cannot penetrate. If he falls from 'Thin' Floors, to distinguish them from the 'thick' floors which Roland cannot fall through, but is able to penetrate when jumping up. There there are the melting floors, which probably disappear if Roland stands on them. There are conveyor belts, moving either to the left or right. Usually the way these work is that, if you try to move Roland against the direction of travel, he just stands still. If you release the joystick or go in the same direction, he moves with the conveyor at its normal walking speed. All right, in real life his speed when walking would be added to the speed of the conveyor belt, but we are trying to keep things as easy for control as possible.

Finally, we need to keep track of 'deadly' objects, which cause instant death when touched, and treasure objects and the exit from the level, which do not affect Roland's freedom of movement but still have to be recognised. All of these various game elements need to be stored in a kind of map, so that the program knows where Roland is and how he should be moving.



The routine pushes then just erases the contents of the location into the A register and returns. We're going to need to alter the contents of the map as the game progresses, so I've included the analogous routine to store the A register at a given row/column, and called it *poke* for obvious reasons.

If Roland's in mid-air, the program jumps to deal with the 'fall'. Notice that we have to remove bits 3, 1, and 4 before deciding if a location is 'empty', because Roland is able to move onto treasure, death objects or the exit. As described above, fall simply leaves *rv* as it was, and increases *rvy* by 1.

Otherwise, the type of ground is saved on the stack and the joystick state fetched. The 'ground' is popped into the D register, DL pointed to the variable *rvy*, and B loaded with zero velocity. If the fire button hasn't been pressed, this is the correct value for *rvy*, as the program jumps to store Z. Otherwise *rvy* is made equal to a jump value of -2.

Next, the ground and joystick states (D and A) are combined by ORing them together. This is best explained by reference to Figure 2, which shows all the possible starting combinations and results for bits 2 and 3, which we then mask off with AND &C. If the ground

was not a conveyor belt, then A holds a number representing the x velocity: 0 for stationary, 4 for right, 4 for left. Furthermore, the F register parity bit will be even for zero velocity, and odd if as a velocity exists (there's only bit 3 or bit 2 can be set, never both). If the ground were a conveyor belt, the joystick neutral, the same state applies. But if the joystick direction opposed the conveyor belt, both bits 2 and 3 are set to 1. Two bits set to 1 means even parity, thus the parity test can be used to choose the correct x velocity, which is zero. Of course a zero in A also passes the 'parity even' test, but since the result is to zero A, the x velocity is set all through values.

The various tests following this piece of bit manipulation trickery simply put the right x velocity into D, and store it in *rv*. The program then jumps over the fall routine and into the new position part of the program, which I'll tackle next month.

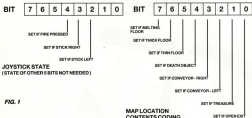


FIG. 1

MAP LOCATION CONTENTS CODING

IF BIT 7 IS ZERO, MAP LOCATION IS EMPTY SPACE.

IF BIT 7 IS SET, THEN ANOTHER CHECK IS OVERSEEN FOR

BITS 6, 5 AND BIT 4, AND BITS 3, 1 FORM A TWO-BIT COUNTER IMPLICATING HOW MUCH THE FLOOR HAS MELTED. THE LOCATION CONTENTS ARE INCREMENTED EACH TIME ROLAND STEPS ON THE LOCATION, AND AFTER FOUR COUNTS THEIR BITS CARRY ROUND TO ZERO SPACE; IE, THE FLOOR HAS COMPLETEDLY MELTED.

FIG. 2

INITIAL OF GROUND TYPE (G)	00	00	00	01	01	01	10	10	10
INITIAL OF JOYSTICK STATE (J)	00	01	10	00	01	10	00	01	10
A-OR'D	00	01	10	01	01	11	10	11	10
PARITY	EVEN	ODD	ODD	ODD	ODD	EVEN	ODD	EVEN	ODD
BYTE VALUE AFTER PARITY TEST & AND	00	01	10	01	01	00	10	00	10
VS (0 = STATIONARY) (-1 = LEFT) (1 = RIGHT)	0	-1	-1	-1	-1	0	1	0	1

ALL CONTENTS IN DIFFERENT TO ZERO BY AND 9C INSTRUCTION



Roland Takes a Running Jump

PART 3

This month it's one small leap for Roland, one giant program for mankind, as we hit you with all the remaining machine code in one go. Bytes by Keith Wilson and Marcus Sharp. Words by Peter Green.

The editor (all fall on bended knee) was on the phone. "This Roland series, can I have a program in the next part that actually does something?" The only permissible answer to questions like that is "Yes, sir," so we're abandoning the piecemeal, one-routine-at-a-time approach and presenting all of the remaining machine code in one go. The advantage

of this is that people who prefer fun to information can just type in the rest of the listing and start leaping. The rest of you will have rather a lot to plough through, but "Running Jump" is neatly written in well-defined blocks, like all good machine code programs, so it should be easy to follow what's happening. Everyone involved in the game is very pleased

with the final result, and we're sure you will be too. Why, even the editor is happy!

The Listings List

We have several chunks of program to consider this month. If you want to type-it-in-and-go, you will be interested in Listings 1,2 and 3. Listing 1 is the short BASIC program to load and run the machine code routines. Listing 2 is the BASIC hex loader for the machine code program, while Listing 3 is a room designer, for those among you who feel creative and want to produce your own customized version. It uses some of the routines from the main game (so that has to be loaded into the computer for the program to work), and allows you to paint in floors and walls of the various types whenever you wish, define the starting points for Roland and the two monsters, the monsters' paths, a title and the ink colours for the screen, and the level number. The resulting data file is called SCREENS.BIN and is used by the BOLAND program. The designer program is very easy to use, but actually producing a screen which is challenging, but not impossible, is something that will require a lot of practice. The nine screens provided here should give you some ideas.

Next month we will print Listings 4 and 5. Listing 4 is a set of nine brainlessly difficult screens which show what can be done with the designer. Listing 5 is the source code for the machine code program, for those readers who are interested in how it all works.

The Running, Jumping, Standing Still Show

To produce a working version of the game, first type in Listing 1 and save it to tape or disc under the filename "BOLAND". Then type in Listing 2 and run it: this generates the machine code program and saves it under the filename "GAME.BIN". For this month you will need to work with screens you have designed yourself. Type in listing 3. Save it on a separate tape then use it to create a file called "SCREENS.BIN". This must go on the tape after "BOLAND" and "GAME.BIN". Tape users must have the files on cassette in that order, but obviously this is irrelevant for disc users. If you now load and run "BOLAND", it will set HIMEM to reserve sufficient space for the machine code, and load the two binary files. Then you're asked which level you wish to start at: type in a number from 1 to 9. After setting up the required tone and volume on relays for the sound effects and setting a rapid ink flash speed for the death routine, the main machine code program is called. The game itself then follows the classic pattern. On each level you must collect five treasures (if floppy discs) and then make your way to the exit to the next level (the blocks with crosses). To make (programming) life simple the conveyor belts are not animated, but they do have arrows on them to indicate the direction of travel. Melting floors... well, they melt... and don't touch the deadly plants! Finally, the large animated monsters represent the twin halves of an editor's life: the telephone, and the man in the MD's chair. You've heard of the Stop-Puff Marshmallow Man from Ghostbusters? Here's the Sugar Monster...

Once you've died five times (and believe me you will), control returns to the BASIC program so you can play again. Pressing the small ENTER key will perform COPY 30,

running the program again from the same level. To start from another level, type COPY 30 and press the large ENTER key. To stop during the game, press ESC and you'll drop back into BASIC, but there's no pause facility (yet, aren't we!).

Designs On You

The screen designer can be used to make small changes to the existing screens, or start from scratch with your own ideas. Note that it also requires two of the routines from the main game, which it loads in line 30. Your various options are selected by single letter keypresses as shown in Table 1. LOAD loads in an old set of screens that you want to edit. When you've happy with the screen data, SAVE saves it under the filename SCREENS.BIN ready to use with the main game. You could keep a whole set of different screens



like on tape, changing to the required cassette after the main game has loaded. Both the current graphic to plot (see Table 2) and the current level to edit, are selected by pressing keys 0 to 8 (the program adds one to the current number to set the level range from 1 to 9 as required). First select and display the level you want to edit by pressing its number (minus 1), then 9. This displays the current design of that level. The cursor keys move the cursor around the playing area: pressing the COPY key places the currently-selected graphic at the cursor position. After the current graphic as required by pressing keys 0 to 8. To save time, it's possible to leave a TRAIL of the current graphic behind the cursor as you move it: this feature is toggled on and off by pressing T.

Each level can be displayed in its own set of colours, which are chosen by selecting the INKS option and then entering your chosen colours in response to the prompts. You have to enter two numbers, (separated by a comma) for each prompt, and you are strongly recommended to have both numbers the same (eg 16,16), which gives a non-flashing colour. Putting in two different numbers gives a flashing ink, and



Bearing in mind that the initial BASIC-coded program makes the flash speed extremely fast, this is only recommended to fans of aquatics. Nevertheless the option is provided in case someone can come up with a good use for it. Also, INK 1, which makes up most of the Roland character, is always white, so you should choose a dark ink colour for the background, INK 3, otherwise you won't be able to see himself you get in a complete mess and want to start again, the currently displayed screen can be wiped clear by pressing *.

Once the background is to your liking, you need to place the moving characters on it. Roland is simple enough, you simply move the cursor to the place where you want his head to be at the start of the level (remember that Roland is TWO characters high), then press @. The monsters are slightly more tricky. You are allowed per level, and the following procedure is done for each. Move the cursor to the position where you want the TOP LEFT corner of the monster graphic to start (remember that each monster is two characters high and two characters wide). Now press M.

Following the prompts, enter the monster number (1 or 2), the monster graphic number (1 for the Sugar Monster, 2 for the telephone), the amount of movement (ie the initial velocity) in the X and Y directions (this is -1 for left or up, +1 for right or down, 0 for no movement in that plane) and the distance in characters that the monster travels before reversing direction. You will need to be careful here to make sure you don't try and move the monster off the screen. In the game proper, setting the X velocity zero will make the monster move up and down only, setting Y zero will make it move left and right only, while if both velocities are non-zero the monster will move diagonally. Of course if both velocities are zero the monster will stay still, but that's not much fun, is it? Finally, choosing the NAME option lets you assign a silly name for the current level, up to 48 characters long.

TABLE 1

0-9	Select current number (the level) to edit or blank to display.
Cursor keys	Move cursor.
F	FRONT; displays the level corresponding to the current number and allows it to be edited.
COPY	Place current number graphic at cursor position.
T	TRAIL; leaves a trail of the current number graphic behind/cursor toggles on/off.
I	INKS; allows selection of colours for INKs 0, 1 and 3.
*	CLEAR; wipes currently displayed screen clear.
N	NAME; allows entry of the title string for current level.
@	Sets start position of Roland's head at cursor for current level.
M	MONSTER; allows monster data to be entered for current level.
L	LOAD; loads a SCREENS.BIN file into screen editor.
S	SAVE; saves current screen as file SCREENS.DIN.

TABLE 2

Current Number	Graphic
0	Exit
1	Treasure (left)
2	Conveyor left
3	Conveyor right
4	Deadly plant
5	Thin floor
6	Thick floor
7	Melting floor
8	Empty space

Roland Takes a Running Jump

PART 4

Last month we produced the core of a game which ran and a program which allowed you to design screens for the game. Now it is time to see what makes 'Roland Takes a Running Jump' tick. Bytes by Keith Wilson and Marcus Sharp. Words by Peter Green.

Roland takes a running jump was written to include a set of nine sheets which make up a data file like the one you will have from the room designer program listed last month. We had intended to list these rooms this month but the program turned out to be so long that it would have taken over the magazine. As a compromise we have listed the source code, explaining how the machine code works and left the rooms out. If you want the original rooms then we will send you a copy of the listing. Just drop an SAE in the post to us and we will let you have a copy of a program to create the rooms.

Decoding the code

Normal people can stop reading now, and start typing the rest of you masochists can carry on with the explanation of how the remaining machine code works. Listing 1 is the beast in question, and it is assembled at \$8000: the data for all the levels is loaded at \$4000. The total length of data for one floor is 830 bytes, consisting of the values for the three variable links (six bytes), the start coordinates for Roland, two sets of monster data as described above, and the 780 bytes which hold the block map of the level. We now have a 40 by 18 play area, not 40 by 38. We managed to squeeze a bit more into the screen, which makes the design possibilities more versatile.

The entry point for the code is at line 400. We don't strictly need the BINT directive here, as the routine isn't self-running but is always called from the Basic program. Maxima users will have to drop it anyway because it isn't a recognised directive. They'll also need the dots in front of the labels print and end as these are reserved words.

The first set-up routine simply initialises the start level (this value is POSKEY'd into place by the Basic program, allowing you to start at any point in the game), the number of lives (which can alter to suit), and the pointer to the data for the Roland sprite to be displayed (there are two, one facing left, the other right). The mode and border colour is set, INK 1 is set to white, the



text pen is set to INK 1 and the four headings for the game information printed; that is, the number of lives left, the number of objects collected, the current level and the amount of energy Roland has left.

Each of these text strings is printed using the subroutine print, which is entered with HL containing the screen coordinates at which printing is to start, IX pointing to the first letter of the text, and B containing the number of letters to print. The routine just sets the text cursor to the HL value and prints B letters; nice and simple. The JP in line 530 means that the RETURN in line 1280, at the end of the print routine, acts as a return for the setup routine. If KKKX is a subroutine, then JP KKKX has the same effect as CALL KKKX: BUT but saves a byte (unless you're doing naughty tricks with the stack that mess up the return addresses). Routine setup is only called once, at the start of the whole game.

At line 410 setup2 is called, and this is done at the start of each new level. It resets the counts for objects collected, and Roland's fall status (some exits are only accessible if you drop into them). The energy level is reset to its maximum of 254, and the energy count to 2: we'll see what happens to these values later. The numerical values are printed out by the subroutine info at line 810, which is also called at various times during the game to update these values as necessary (when an object is collected, for example). This routine takes the binary values of the variables (which are always in the range 0-9) and adds 48 to obtain the correct Ascii code for the digits 0-9. The firmware routine TXT WRCHAR is then used to print the numbers at screen positions set by TXT SET CURSOR.



Next, `setup2` calls a firmware routine `SCR FLOOD` BOX to draw the rectangular strip that displays how much energy is left (line 1090). Then the routine is called that draws the background for this level onto the top 19 rows of the screen. This routine is called `putbak` and it starts at line 8320, but its action needs a lengthy explanation so we'll return to it later. After drawing the background, the counts for the path lengths of each monster are initialised from the monster data at `m1` and `m2` (lines 130-148). Finally the text pen is set to `INK 1`, and the Roland and monster sprites are drawn on-screen by the `putrol` and `putmon` routines. This concludes the `setup2` routine.

Back to putbak

Now to cover the printing of the current background. First, `putbak` calculates where in the data table the 800 bytes for the current level can be found (lines 8390-8400). Then the values for the three variable `INKs` 0, 2 and 3 are obtained from the table and sent to the hardware using the firmware routine `SCR SET INK` (lines 8430-8570). This means each level can have its own colour scheme. Then the next 734 bytes of data are copied from the data table into the variable work area (lines 110-150). Next, the title for the screen is displayed, 40 characters (including leading and trailing spaces added by the screen designer program to centre it) which are printed underneath the playing area (lines 8580-8790).

Now the program has to place all the background graphics on the screen. It does this in a similar way to the sprite-drawing routine back in Part 1, by copying pre-encoded data directly into the screen RAM. Again, this allows multi-coloured characters to be displayed with the minimum of fuss. The screen data for the background blocks appears at lines 6050-6800 in the listing. The routine that puts a block on screen is called `putbak` (no kidding!) and starts at line 8300. It expects to find a block number in the `A` register, and the screen address of the top left-hand corner of the block in `DE`.

The action of `putbak` is as follows. After saving the `HL` and `BC` registers from `putbak`, the type of block is examined to calculate how far into the block data we have to index to find the right graphic. If the block is zero, representing empty space, we can skip the next bit of program because the index is zero (first entry in the block table). Otherwise, we check bit 7 and if it is not set, the floor isn't of the melting type. So we now go into a loop starting at `bk_lpt`, rotating the `A` register to the left and incrementing `B` (initially zero) until the carry is set. As you'll remember from Fig. 1 last month ordinary objects are represented by a single bit set in the block code. So once this loop terminates, `B` contains a number corresponding to the position of the block in the block table. For example, `B` is 2 for a thick floor, because a thick floor has the second bit from the left set.

Now `B` is put into the `A` register and multiplied by 69, because each graphic in the block table contains 16 bytes. At `bk_lpt` this index value is moved into `HC` as a 16-bit assigned number and added to the start of the block table in `HL`, to give the actual address for the graphic data. Finally the code at lines 8320-8380 transfer the graphic data into the screen, before restoring the saved registers and returning.



Suppose, however, that the block was a melting floor. Here we do something different, and slightly at variance with the information given in the December issue in Fig. 2. If bit 7 is set, it does mean that the floor is melting, but also that the whole block number is the complement (inverse) of an offset into the block graphic lookup table (that is, the offset which we had to calculate for all the other "normal" blocks above). Line 8398 receives this offset with a `CPL` command (this inverts all the bits in the `A` register), then jumps straight to the absolute address calculation at `bk_lpt`, line 8380.

The point of all this is that an "unmelted" melting floor is stored with a character value of 209, &DF, or %11101111, which inverts to %00010000, or 16. This is the correct offset into the block character table for the melting floor graphic, so the whole graphic block gets printed. However, for each time period that Roland stands on a melting floor, 4 is added to the block number in the float work area. So the block numbers for a melting floor cycle through 209, 243, 248, 249 and 255. The inverse of these gives 16, 12, 8, 4 and 0, so as the floor melts, the table offset decreases: thus the block gets drawn as partly the empty space (the character before it in the table), and partly the melting floor graphic. This gives the effect of the floor gradually sinking, and when it is finally gone (value 200), the offset is zero, the whole of the space graphic is printed, and the floor is now just an empty space. Next though this is, it does slightly complicate the 'see what's there' routines as both 0 and 200 represent empty air.

One last small point: Lines 8640-8670 aren't really necessary. They're there as a leftover from an early version of the screen designer program, which stored the block data as powers of two only. For the above system to work, a single melting floor block had to be converted from 128 to 209 in the float map. If you look at the final version of `Designer` (listed last month), line 370 does this conversion too.

The game of the name

And so to the main game loop for Roland (lines 420-610). First off, we count 14 TV frames to slow the game down to manageable speeds, then erase Roland (patrol does this job too because we're EXORing the screen; see Part 1 of the series). Next we look at a variable, *jumpout*. Roland's jump is split into two parts: the parabolic curve as he leaps into the air and falls back to the same level, and thereafter a vertical plunge (a velocity zero). This is not textbook physics but makes programming easier! The curved part is measured by *jumpout*: if Roland is moving up, there's no point in CALLing the joystick input and 'fallin to his death' routine (line 480 checks this). If Roland is moving downwards or on the level, this routine checks out what's underneath and the state of the joystick, adjusts Roland's velocities accordingly (as we discussed last time), and kills Roland if he's fallen too far onto a solid surface.

If Roland isn't dead, the rest of the loop is straightforward. In turn, the program: moves Roland's coordinates; checks if Roland has hit a disc, the exit, a plant or one of the monsters, and if so deals with it; puts Roland back on screen at his new position; for smoothness, waits for the next flyback; erases the monster; moves them on their predetermined paths; decreases the energy bar (killing Roland if time has run out); replaces the monsters in their new positions; checks if Roland has hit a monster (killing him if so); tests the ESC key and quits if it's pressed; and then loops back to the label 'game' to do it all again. Now we'll examine each of the routines mentioned above.

The fall guy

The cunning part of the *fallin* routine (lines 1880-2780) was discussed in December. The additional lines you see here deal with melting floors and falling. Melting floors are handled by lines 2090-2240. First, if the floor block character from *fdist* is all 1s, it's wholly melted, it counts as empty space and a jump is made to the falling routine at line 2020. Otherwise the value of the A register is altered (by 4) to represent the next stage of the melting process, this value replaced in the *fdist* table, and the *putblk* routine used to draw the new floor graphic on screen.

If Roland is standing on solid ground, lines 2290-2390 check if he got there by falling more than four character heights. If he did, the death routine is invoked because he's broken his neck! Otherwise the fall counter is reset to zero. Finally, if Roland is dropping in free fall, the routine at line 2620 is used. The fall velocity is set at 1 (this is not the system suggested in part 2, with an accelerating drop, but makes the programming much easier). If Roland is falling back from the peak of his jump towards the level he started from, the routine quits here (so Roland also travels left or right if he was moving that way when he jumped). Otherwise, Roland is on the straight, vertical section of his fall, so the velocity is zero in line 2720 and the fall count incremented.

Move it all about

The Roland sprite movement routines at 3070-3780 are quite straightforward. Checks are made to prevent Roland moving off the right or left edges of the screen (lines 3090-3350 and 3470-3480). Then, the routine labelled 'find' is called to check the contents of the two

locations Roland is attempting to move onto (so Roland is two characters high, remember); this is done at lines 3360-3450 and 3480-3580 for right and left movement respectively. Roland isn't allowed to move onto a solid block, or 'thick floor' as we've called it, which is indicated by bit 6 of the *fdist* entry being set to 1.

Finally, if the variable *jumpout* isn't zero, showing that Roland is jumping, its value is decremented.

Check it out

The check routines are equally straightforward. The find routine is used again to see what Roland is now actually touching (again, he covers two character positions). If bit 1 is set, a disc is being touched; lines 4420-4490 increase the object count and displays the change in the information box, makes a suitable sound, checks whether the disc was under Roland's head or feet, and removes it from the corresponding location on the screen. If a deadly plant is being touched, the death routine is invoked without further ado. Finally, if the exit is being touched, the object count is checked and, if all five discs have been collected, the level is incremented (swapping back to 1 if we're on Level 9 already). The victory sound is made, there's a long pause, and the program jumps back to *gm_1.pld* to set up things for the new level.



Mobile monsters

The monsters move in straight lines and are able to cross over any type of background character, so their movement routine at lines 3820-4080 is quite simple. Each monster has its x and y positions altered by the magnitude of its x and y velocities. The count (which is the length of the monster's path) is decremented and, if it has reached zero the monster is at the end of its path. The count is reset to its start value and the x and y velocities have their directions reversed (using NEG), which sends the monster back in the other direction.

Energy losses

Decreases another simple routine at lines 1790-1890, knocks a strip one pixel wide off the end of the energy bar every two passes round the overall game loop (round counts the number of passes). As the strip starts out 254 pixels long, each level must be completed within 208 game loops (about one and a half minutes). If the time runs out, Roland croaks.

Touch and go

Finally, lines 4680-4900 check whether Roland is overlapping either of the monsters. For each monster, the routine compares Roland's x coordinate with the monster's. If it isn't either the same, or one larger (remember Roland is only one character wide, the monsters are two characters), then Roland can't be overlapping and the routine exits. Otherwise, at line 4800 the y coordinates are retrieved and a similar comparison made. A match here means Roland and a monster have at least one character position in common, and a jump is made to the death routine.

FEATURES

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4048	LS 1.6	
4078	LS 1.6	
4088	LS 1.6 (1000)	gear options, automatic gearbox
4098	1000 cc	
4108	1000 cc (1000)	100 cc gearbox, 100 cc gearbox
4118	1000 cc (1000)	100 cc gearbox, 100 cc gearbox
4128	1000 cc	
4138	1000 cc	
4148	1000 cc (1000)	1000 cc gearbox, 1000 cc gearbox
4158	1000 cc (1000)	1000 cc gearbox, 1000 cc gearbox
4168	1000 cc	
4178	1000 cc (1000)	1000 cc gearbox, 1000 cc gearbox
4188	1000 cc	
4198	1000 cc (1000)	1000 cc gearbox, 1000 cc gearbox
4208	1000 cc	
4218	1000 cc (1000)	1000 cc gearbox, 1000 cc gearbox
4228	1000 cc	
4238	1000 cc (1000)	1000 cc gearbox, 1000 cc gearbox
4248	1000 cc	
4258	1000 cc (1000)	1000 cc gearbox, 1000 cc gearbox
4268	1000 cc	
4278	1000 cc (1000)	1000 cc gearbox, 1000 cc gearbox
4288	1000 cc	
4298	1000 cc (1000)	1000 cc gearbox, 1000 cc gearbox
4308	1000 cc	
4318	1000 cc (1000)	1000 cc gearbox, 1000 cc gearbox
4328	1000 cc	
4338	1000 cc (1000)	1000 cc gearbox, 1000 cc gearbox
4348	1000 cc	
4358	1000 cc (1000)	1000 cc gearbox, 1000 cc gearbox
4368	1000 cc	
4378	1000 cc (1000)	1000 cc gearbox, 1000 cc gearbox
4388	1000 cc	
4398	1000 cc (1000)	1000 cc gearbox, 1000 cc gearbox
4408	1000 cc	
4418	1000 cc (1000)	1000 cc gearbox, 1000 cc gearbox
4428	1000 cc	
4438	1000 cc (1000)	1000 cc gearbox, 1000 cc gearbox
4448	1000 cc	
4458	1000 cc (1000)	1000 cc gearbox, 1000 cc gearbox
4468	1000 cc	
4478	1000 cc (1000)	1000 cc gearbox, 1000 cc gearbox
4488	1000 cc	
4498	1000 cc (1000)	1000 cc gearbox, 1000 cc gearbox
4508	1000 cc	
4518	1000 cc (1000)	1000 cc gearbox, 1000 cc gearbox
4528	1000 cc	
4538	1000 cc (1000)	1000 cc gearbox, 1000 cc gearbox
4548	1000 cc	
4558	1000 cc (1000)	1000 cc gearbox, 1000 cc gearbox
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4588	1000 cc	
4598	1000 cc (1000)	1000 cc gearbox, 1000 cc gearbox
4608	1000 cc	
4618	1000 cc (1000)	1000 cc gearbox, 1000 cc gearbox
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4638	1000 cc (1000)	1000 cc gearbox, 1000 cc gearbox
4648	1000 cc	
4658	1000 cc (1000)	1000 cc gearbox, 1000 cc gearbox
4668	1000 cc	
4678	1000 cc (1000)	1000 cc gearbox, 1000 cc gearbox
4688	1000 cc	
4698	1000 cc (1000)	1000 cc gearbox, 1000 cc gearbox
4708	1000 cc	
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4758	1000 cc (1000)	1000 cc gearbox, 1000 cc gearbox
4768	1000 cc	
4778	1000 cc (1000)	1000 cc gearbox, 1000 cc gearbox
4788	1000 cc	
4798	1000 cc (1000)	1000 cc gearbox, 1000 cc gearbox
4808	1000 cc	
4818	1000 cc (1000)	1000 cc gearbox, 1000 cc gearbox
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4838	1000 cc (1000)	1000 cc gearbox, 1000 cc gearbox
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4858	1000 cc (1000)	1000 cc gearbox, 1000 cc gearbox
4868	1000 cc	
4878	1000 cc (1000)	1000 cc gearbox, 1000 cc gearbox
4888	1000 cc	
4898	1000 cc (1000)	1000 cc gearbox, 1000 cc gearbox
4908	1000 cc	
4918	1000 cc (1000)	1000 cc gearbox, 1000 cc gearbox
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