

When it's clear as MUD, in your neighbourhood. Who ya gonna call?

Written by dreamkatcha. Any related videos, as always, can be found on my YouTube channel.

None of this would have been possible without the fantastic resources generously provided by immensely talented emulator authors, and communities such as Hall of Light, Lemon Amiga, Lemon 64, World of Spectrum, Moby Games, World of Longplays and Recorded Amiga Games. Thank you for your tireless dedication to preserving the history of gaming.

Coder, designer and musical maestro, Antony 'Ratt' Crowther, is best known for his prolific Commodore 64 output, yet over the years has - despite some initial reluctance - learnt to adapt to developing for whatever the current platform happens to be. Not only did he support multiple systems, he spanned most genres, his diverse line-up extending to text adventures, shoot-'em-ups, platformers, RPGs and puzzle games.

"Zig Zag is without question, a technically brilliant game. The landscape scrolls smoothly and the way that walls flick into existence is incredible. Shoot 'em up fans may not be so keen, but it boasts an impressive list of options and there's enough depth to keep maze freaks and mappers happy for ages."

Zzap! awards Zig Zag a shiny 92% badge of honour, plus a venerable plug on the magazine's cover (December, 1987)



One of his many high profile roles saw him working as a programmer at Mindscape in Burgess Hill where he was tasked with creating the official Captain Planet and the Planeteers cartoon license tie-in game that would be bundled with the Commodore Amiga 500 'Cartoon Classics' system in 1991, and later sold as a standalone retail product.

Due to madness, insanity and an illogical lack of logical foresight Tony was asked to cobble together the finished article in a solitary month. Somehow - with help from graphician Jason Kingsley, and musician Ben Dalglish - he accomplished his goal, and he'll be joining us shortly to plug any trivia gaps left by my retrospective article on the subject.

While we wait for his stretched limo to pull up to the rolled out red carpet at the entrance to Amigos Studios, first a whirlwind tour of Tony's compelling career thus far.

"New concepts in arcade games are few and far between, so Imageworks is to be complimented for producing an original idea, and it's non-sexist and non-violent too. That is, apart from detonating bombs, but no-one gets hurt in the process. Great graphics, supersonics, addictive action and fabulous fun for all ages. Buy this, you won't be disappointed."

Bombuzal inspired an impassioned 90% review from Atari ST User magazine (January, 1989)



Tony first began dabbling with programming at the tender age of 16 when a friend of his father lent him a Pet 4032. Determined to ascertain how to make it bend to his will following an initially frustrating and confusing first three

months attempting to fathom its mysterious inner workings he wrote the computer interpretation of the Mastermind board game. Very pleased with the results he was too.

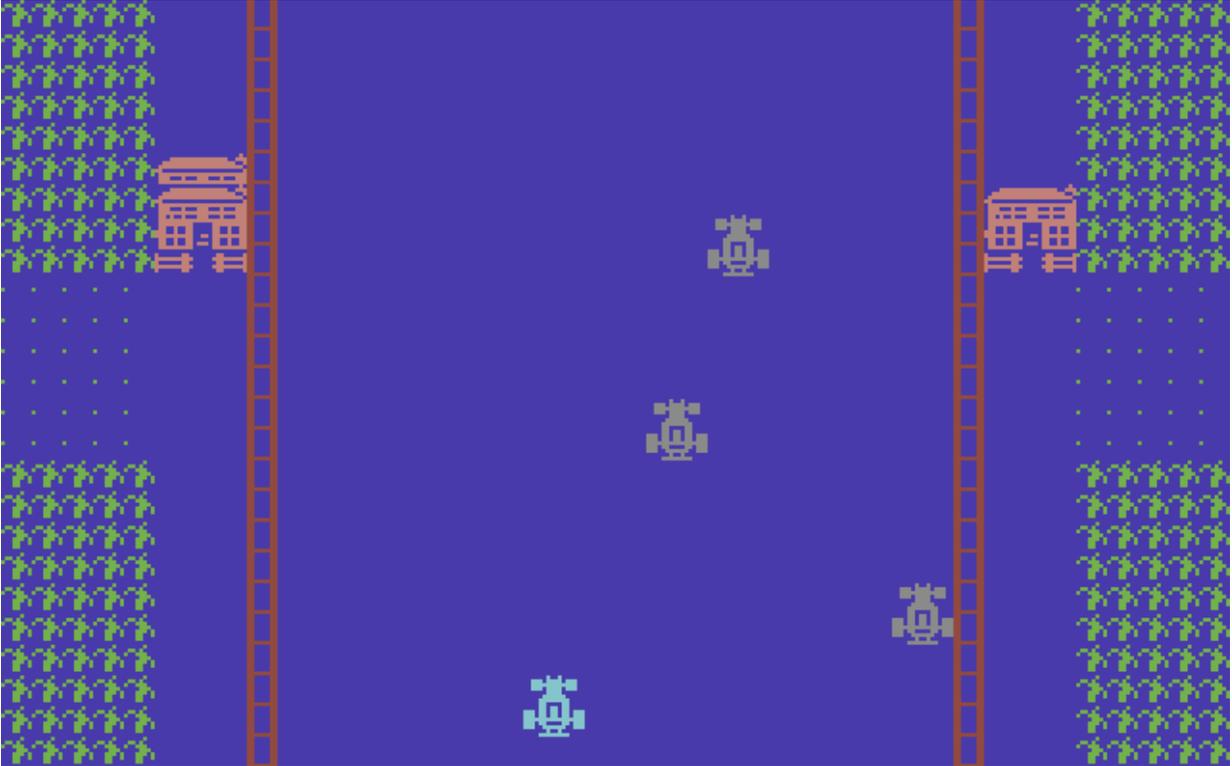
Unfortunately, despite sending it to 'Computer and Video Games' magazine as a type-in listing freebie it failed to grab their attention, and so wasn't published. Of course, it was time well spent regardless; Tony was teaching himself how to construct fruitful programming code, an invaluable skill that would hold him in good stead for a lifetime's career in the games industry.

Tony met fledgeling musician Ben DalGLISH whilst still at school resulting in the union of 'W.E.M.U.S.I.C.' aka 'We Make Use of Sounds In Computers'. Initially, they joined forces to compose accompanying in-game music using the Commodore 64's SID (Sound Interface Device) chip, though would continue to collaborate as times changed and technology evolved, Captain Planet being an especially pertinent example here.

While studying for his art, engineering, drawing and maths A-Levels in Bradfield, any downtime was spent in the school library. Tony had no inclination to become a librarian, he was writing educational software in Basic along with Ben, Nigel Merryman, and Martyn Peverley, to raise money for the school fund. Whilst the charity work clearly nourished his soul as well as IT and collaborative skills, Tony's true passion was games development.



Switching to the Commodore VIC-20, Tony began learning the art of machine code, and soon found himself engaging it to write a Galaxian clone and a car racing game known as Brands. These were demonstrated for Mike Mahoney at his newly formed Superior Systems computer store where Tony had a Saturday job selling hardware.



Mike was so impressed with his work he offered to pay Tony advance royalties in the form of a loaned Commodore 64. Two weeks later Tony devised Lunar Rescue for the BBC Micro and Acorn Electron, which in 1983 would become the first commercial piece of software he ever had published. Tony would go on to release five subsequent titles under the Alligata Software label, the developer/publishing outfit run by Mike, his brother Tim and father up until it was sold to Superior Software around 1987. For his trouble he was rewarded with a cheque for £500, got to keep the borrowed C64, and Tony's parents finally took 'get a proper job' off the record player!

Leaving Alligata Software in 1987, Tony joined Gremlin at the age of 18 investing Percy the Potty Pigeon as collateral, however, would only remain with the company for three or four months before co-founding his Wizard Development partnership with Roger Taylor.

Monty Mole

Micro: Commodore 64 | Price: £7.95 | Software house: Gremlin Graphics | Author: Tony Crowther | Type of game: platform

Gremlin Graphics has managed to produce yet another excellent game - this time in the form of Monty Mole.

With a long, cold winter and bone-chilling Christmas ahead, Monty makes a daring coal-snatching raid to his local South Yorkshire pit. He soon regrets it.

The mine is definitely unfriendly. Our hero is attacked by many types of monsters. These are only half the story! The mine is a massive underground obstacle course, featuring coal crushers, ladders, drainpipes, trolley, acid pools and arrows - the list is nearly endless.

Monty also has limited energy, which can be replaced by a box of worms.

After collecting the coal, Monty escapes - to emerge in Arthur Scargill's castle. Seizing his only chance of toppling him, Monty collects the secret ballot papers and vote-casting scroll. But Arthur's no fool. Monty is soon confronted by his personal bodyguard of pickets and deadly flying hairsprays.

The graphics in Monty Mole are not spectacular, but that's only to be expected from a game this complex.

The sound was repetitive, and a tune played throughout. But overall it's a compulsive game that will keep you going for many an hour.

Michael Boyce

Value **** | Graphics **** | Sound ** | Satisfaction *****

TV Gamer magazine, January 1985.

Pigeon Pie

"Another new company, Gremlin Graphics, has produced Potty Pigeon. Like Alligata's Loco it's fabby. Percy the pigeon flies through a smooth-scrolling landscape of motorways, computer shops and castles, picking up twigs to add to his nest. Cats, ferrets, kamikaze planes and twig-snatching sparrows serve to liven up the action, and Percy strikes back with revolting eggbombs. Nice zany music and nine levels of difficulty. Look out Jeff Minter, the pigeons are coming..."

Commodore Horizons magazine, October 1984.



Gremlin Graphics' origins are immortalised in the world's first computerised pigeon simulator!

In the postliminary years Tony worked as a programmer, technical consultant, tools programmer, senior engineer, and senior software engineer for Mirror Soft/Image Works (1987 - 1989), Mindscape (1989 - 1993), Gremlin Interactive (1994 - 2000), Infogrames (2000 - 2003), Genepool (2003), Electronic Arts (2004 - 2006), Criterion Games (2006 - 2007), Electronic Arts (2007 - 2011), and finally Sumo Digital (2011 - present).

"As I mentioned earlier, it's a scary experience. The sound effects have a lot to do with this - insane laughter, crying babies, hollering beasts and creaking floors add so much to the game you'll be jumping out of your skin, like I was, every time you hear something out of the ordinary. Realms of the Haunting is Gremlin's best game for years. It's an epic. It's a completely absorbing experience from start to finish, and it really, really deserves your attention."

PC Zone's glowing review of Realms of the Haunting, one they underscored with a 93% final verdict (August 13, 2001)



Ah, perfect timing - Tony's just pulling up to the front door now. I'll get him strapped into the retro gaming brain-picker and see if Jeeves can rustle up some Yorkshire Bitter and a Snack Pot.

Q. How much do you know about the deal Mindscape hatched with Commodore?

It's possible Mindscape had other plans before I was asked, that may have fallen through as the Amiga box bundle deal was already in place before I was even asked.

Q. Did Mindscape have any clue how long game development normally takes and what's involved? Were you tempted to tell them it can't be done in such a short space of time?

Mindscape asked if I could do the game for them in 30 days, and to be honest I was very happy with the result, but it was a little on the hard side. Because it was so hard people did not get to see all the vastly different levels and puzzles.

Q. The game was revised for the retail release. Do you remember what changed and why?

I can't remember what was different for the retail version except we added the Atari ST version.

I don't believe anything was cut from the original design. And we worked hard to ensure that was the case.

Q. Is there anything you would have done differently given a more rational time-frame in which to work?

I think the only problem I got wrong with the game was the levels were too large. Knowing this now I would have split each area into smaller levels. But when I completed each level there was an extra buzz.

Q. Did Mindscape have much input in what type of game they wanted you to produce, or were you left entirely to your own devices to design it as you saw fit?

I believe I was left to my own devices on what the game would be. We would have had some discussions about the levels. This was the first time I worked with another artist, and he did all the animations of the main characters.

I think I did the levels and the large images near the bottom (I think). I think that game on the Amiga was the first to use sprites in the borders.



Q. Were you already a fan of the cartoon, or did you have to research it beforehand?

I had seen some of the cartoons before I started the project so I knew a little of what we had to produce to fit

the license.

I remember planning the game play capabilities of the characters and the level designs.

Q. Was there ever any intention to produce a sequel?

The project was done as a one off, so no plans of a sequel.

Q. When you read the negative press the game received did it make you want to scream at the reviewers, "it was thrown together in a month, give me a break!"?

I didn't think all the reviews were bad, just the odd one wasn't brilliant, but I'm used to that. You can't please everyone.

It may just be me, but I'm still proud of that game. It contains bits of my favourite games from Mario to Boulder Dash. And the final level's music is fantastic.



I had just completed Captive when Captain Planet came up. I believe if you inserted a Captive disk it enabled the cheat mode. And I think after this we started work on Nightmare with Tim Child. I was very excited about working on Nightmare so moved on to it quite quickly.

Kookosity.blogspot.com

What's peculiar about Captain Planet is that love or loathe it, you could own it almost unwittingly and yet still form an impervious attachment to it. It may have been one of the very first Amiga games you ever played. You may have played it on Christmas day, sitting on your parent's living room floor gawping intently at the 'big' family telly, surrounded by discarded Rudolph and elf themed wrapping paper.

Indelible, treasured memories intermingled with a catchy, upbeat soundtrack and a positive, eco-friendly parable are enough to transform a platformer greeted with a lukewarm reception into a fondly remembered one. It's almost criminal to be mean about it, especially when we know the author poured his heart and soul into creating it.

Others don't need any artificial encouragement from rose-tinted retro goggles, they adored the game from the outset. Dan Waddington (of Lemon Amiga and Lemon 64 fame) is one of them. He's perhaps Captain Planet's greatest fan, at least where the Amiga game is concerned.

All that remains for me to say is thanks very much Tony for generously agreeing to give up your time to join us. I hope my memory extraction device wasn't too painful! ;)

