

Public Domain is getting everywhere at the moment and there's good reason – where else are you going to get Amiga games for (near as dammit) free? Nowhere, that's where, but good games for free are better than bad, which is where Stuart Campbell comes in...



RATINGS: ★★★★★ Excellent ★★★★★ Nearly there ★★★★★ Very good ★★★★★ Has its moments ★★ Flawed ★ Dire

PHASE II (VIRUS FREE, EXCLUSIVWARE)



Scramble days are here again in Phase II

Virus Free's Exclusivware series (non-PD software at PD prices, with royalties paid to the programmers) has been steadily improving over the last couple of months, and this latest effort is easily the best so far. A simple Scramble-style horizontally-scrolling shoot-'em-up, Phase II is pretty and playable, if just a touch on the slow side. It starts off very easy indeed, but by the third level you're in big trouble if you haven't collected some serious power-ups. It's not the kind of game that's ever going to set the world alight, but it's enjoyable and addictive enough for a quick zap every now and again, and at three quid that's a fair enough deal in my book.

VERDICT: Not stunning, but a very neat little blast all the same. You could do much worse than give this a go. ***

SUPER TWINTRIS (PD SOFT, DISK NO.1816)



Twice the Tetris fun in Super Twintris

Tetris, Tetris, Tetris. Every day another PD clone of the legendary Russian block-stacker arrives on the scene, and every day we all sigh with disappointment as it fails to match up to the incredible Nintendo Game Boy version. This, though, is undoubtedly the best attempt so far. For one or two players simultaneously (like the arcade game), Super Twintris offers easy

and hard modes, a selection of crap tunes to listen to while playing, halfway-respectable controls for once, a great 'earthquake' effect when you get multiple lines (increasing in magnitude up to the point where you get four lines at once, whereupon the screen shudders around explosively and impressively), and gameplay which at last comes close to replicating the excitement and tension of the original. It's still flawed (you get rather too much scope for shifting the blocks around after they've landed), but it's the best way to play Tetris on the Amiga to date. Which is why we've put it in on the disk this month for you all to enjoy, in fact.

VERDICT: There's room for improvement yet in the Tetris field, but this is a very good effort and something of a must-get at PD prices. ****

JUMPER (START PD)



Jumper: Come on in, the water's lovely!

What? You want more Frogger? Oh, alright then. This version of the Sega's classic amphibious arcade machine comes on The Assassins disk IV, a compilation of six games which also includes the brilliant Go-Muku (reviewed in Issue Six) and the not-half-bad Jumpy (from Issue Five), plus a card game, a Mastermind game, and yet another version of the Tron lightcycles game. Jumper itself is a great copy of the coin-op containing most of the original features (increasing difficulty, diving turtles, riverbank predators), which starts off easy but quickly gets very tricky indeed. Imagine trying to cross the M25 five times at 8.45 in the morning with someone behind you with a stopwatch going "Hurry up, you've only got seven seconds left!" and you'll be close to understanding the pressures of this seemingly leisurely game. If you liked Bullfrogger at all, you'll love this, and with all those other great games on the disk for a couple of quid... (fill in the rest yourself).

VERDICT: A bargain and a half. In fact, more like two bargains. And then some. More essential PD. ****

RAPHAEL'S REVENGE (PD SOFT, DISK NO. 1818)



Raphael's Revenge: Oh dear, oh dear

Shoot-'Em-Up Construction Kit. Teenage Mutant bloody Ninja Turtles. Everything you need, really.

VERDICT: Duff, tedious, confusing and fairly pointless run-of-the-mill SEUCK clunker. You can do a lot better than this. **

SQUAMBLE (PD SOFT, DISK NO. 1749)

Oh, cruel disappointment! The ad for this called it 'Scramble' and used almost exactly the same wording as the one for

Asteroids, and although it doesn't actually claim anything of the sort, I hoped it was going to be another coin-op conversion of the same flawless quality. When it arrived and I loaded it up though, you can imagine (from looking at the screenshot) what a let-down it was. Primitive graphics and not exactly action-packed gameplay looked set to consign this one to the bin, but on playing it for a while it turned out to be actually quite good fun. It follows roughly the same layout as the arcade game (mountains, tunnels, UFOs and so on), and while calling it a conversion would be using the word in its very loosest sense, this is still a perfectly enjoyable little game.



It's been a good month for Scramble fans.

VERDICT: Fast and zappy (well, after the first couple of levels) and generally not bad at all. Don't expect too much and you might be pleasantly surprised. ***

BEST PD GAME EVER!

ASTEROIDS (PD SOFT, DISK NO.1735)

Scene: 1991, the offices of AMIGA POWER (Britain's brightest, bestest and biggest-selling Amiga games mag). All around are some of the most stunning examples of the game writer's art ever seen – Rainbow Islands, Speedball 2, Lemmings – an endless litany of technical magnificence, beautiful graphics, incredible sound and music. A hapless observer walks into the office one afternoon to find every Amiga in the place occupied by a black-and-white single-screen game with lines for graphics and sound consisting of pings, beeps, and the theme from Jaws. Jaded hacks are glued to their screens, fingers flitting feverishly across keyboards, the tension in the air broken only by the intermittent yells of frustration and clattering sounds as Amigas are repeatedly punched in fits of temper. New high scores are shouted to and fro and gloated over, and trivialities like working, eating and going home are completely forgotten. The cause of all this hormonal havoc? Asteroids.

Back in time to 1979 with Asteroids

For many arcade veterans the greatest coin-op game of all time (a position only seriously challenged by Williams' Defender), this oft-imitated classic has finally been done justice on a home computer with a perfect, flawless conversion by German coder Kris Schulte. Everything is right – the graphics, the sound, the positioning of the keys (keys!), even the little Atari logo at the bottom of the screen. The gameplay is as superlative as ever, and if you've never played this monster before, get ready for the most addictive experience you'll ever have without breaking the law. This is a game good enough to make you want to own an Amiga, and if you've got one already (which you probably do), you'll be thrilled to see we've included it on this month's coverdisk (or at least, you should be).

VERDICT: There aren't enough stars in the sky for this one. Play it, love it, and send the programmer a shareware donation immediately. He deserves it. *****

