

Microdot

Can you save the world from radioactive doom?

By Jim Blackler

In the 22nd century, microchip technology has become so advanced that conventional methods of repair are obsolete. But when a vital military satellite passes through a freak radioactive storm and begins to malfunction, something must be done - quickly.

The "Microdot" is a tiny remote-controlled craft capable of entering the machine and absorbing the 99 radioactive particles which litter the complex labyrinth. Your job is to control this craft, but your mission isn't going to be easy; dangerous build-ups of static electricity hinder the task by causing Microdot to overload on contact.

When you've collected all of the particles, you'll have to re-activate the circuit and get Microdot out alive within a set time limit. Not an easy task, but you must succeed - the safety of your country depends on your skill and competence.

Loading it up

LOAD "MICRODOT";8,1 loads the game. C128s must be in C64 mode.

Use a Joystick in port two; Left and Right moves horizontally. Fire causes Microdot to jump. Holding up and pressing fire activates the jumpdrive (as will space).

Keys; SPACE: Activates jumpdrive. RUN/STOP: Pauses gameplay. After pausing; RUN/STOP restarts, CLR aborts to the title screen.

Game play

For extra height, use the space bar to activate the "Jump Drive". There is a limit of five jumps per game. Bonus triangles: Give one of six random bonuses.

Conveyor belts: Carry Microdot in their direction of flow.

Reset pointers: Contact with these blue squares marks the return point after each death.

Spark traps: A dangerous spark fluctuating between two points.

Rubber mats: Cause Microdot to bounce.

Microdot Construction Set

For players with creative tendencies, the game includes a construction set allowing the user easily to design a whole new set of levels with every facility of the original at their fingertips. To start, press 'E' on the 'demo' section.

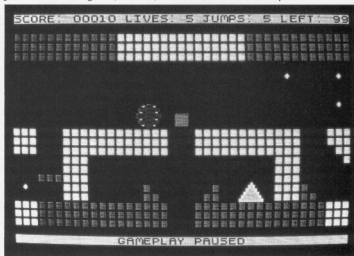
To keep the game fresh and interesting, it isn't possible to manipulate the default levels; the layout will initially be cleared for replacement. To demonstrate the program, a small mini-game is saved just after the main game (See later).

If a lettered key is pressed, this becomes the block selected; the cursor now lays this block when fire is pressed. Hold down INST-DEL to display all of the blocks available. The function keys alter which of the four different brick styles is drawn.

To make the cursor delete, press the @ (at) key - just right of 'p' on the keyboard; to set the start point, press the = (equals) key. Test your layout by pressing backarrow and starting the game.

Two blocks (F and X) consist of 3 x 3 blobs of electricity, and appear to be identical. They are not. Always use F, except when the blocks form a "pool" imbedded in the ground.

Each room has separate colours for



Editing the game layout

The landscape is made up of blocks of 3 x 3 characters; including the reset triangles, rubber mats, etc. Each level is a 13 by 7 matrix of 91 blocks; the main labyrinth is a 12 by 12 matrix of 144 levels.

The joystick directs the cursor through the levels. Leaving the matrix causes a return to the 'demo' section, as does the backarrow key (top left on

the keyboard). If a lettered key is pressed, this becomes the block selected; the cursor now lays this block when fire is pressed. Hold down INST-DEL to display all of the blocks available. The function keys alter which of the four different brick styles is drawn.

Remember; The sides of adjacent rooms must agree; a passage in one room cannot lead into the wall of another. With spark traps, use the 'N'



block to lay the beam between the pointers.

Editing the sprites

The moving blocks of electricity, radioactive particles, bonus triangles and the final electricity switch are all

sprites. A maximum of seven sprites is allowed for each room, each with its own reference number. To create a new sprite, press the lowest unallocated number (eg. Press 6 on a screen with 5 sprites, 1 on a screen with no sprites, etc.). To edit an existing sprite simply press its number.

Editor Control Summary

Joystick (directions)

Joystick (fire)

Lettered key (A to Z)

@ (at)

INST-DEL

Backarrow

Ctrl

Left shift

= (equals)

F1

F3

F5

F7

Return

Moves cursor

Lays block

Sets block for cursor to lay

Sets cursor to delete

Displays a plan of the blocks

Returns to 'demo' mode

Enters 'media-transfer' mode

Tests proposed animation

Sets Microdot's start

Sets style to blocks (one)

Sets style to waves

Sets style to spheres

Sets style to blocks (two)

Changes purpose of numbers *

* If 'S' then numbers edit relevant sprites.

If 'C' then:

1 Changes static colour

2 Changes rubber colour

3 Changes block (one) colour

4 Changes wave colour

5 Changes sphere colour

6 Changes block (two) colour

Sprite mode

Joystick (directions)

Fire, or Return

T

C

A

S

D

W

+ and - (plus and minus)

Left shift

Backarrow

Positions sprites

Fixes sprite

Adjusts type

Adjusts colour

Adjusts animation speed

Adjusts movement speed

Adjusts starting direction

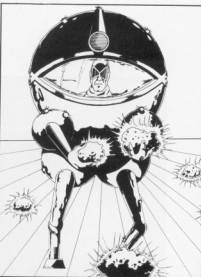
Wipes selected sprite

Adjusts sprite area

Tests proposed animation

Returns to 'demo' mode

Change where a sprite starts by moving the joystick - alter its colour by pressing 'C'. Press 'T' to move through the four sprite types. Sprites can be wiped with 'W', or fixed by pressing fire.



Moving sprites travel for a certain time, then reverse. This time is measured by the "RU" value (see base of screen), and is changed with the + and - keys. 'D' changes the direction in which it starts, 'S' changes its movement speed, and 'A' its animation speed. To see how a sprite will look in the game, hold down the left shift. Remember - Sprites must NEVER overlap.

Making your plan complete

To succeed, the player must collect all of the radioactive particles, find an "electricity switch", then leave by the gap automatically created for his escape. Use the sprite editor to lay the switch in any room you choose. The gap is always in the top left corner of the first room - marked by bricks when the layout is first wiped, and impossible to delete. It will be removed automatically, but make sure it's possible for the player to escape.

Press CTRL in the editor to save or load your designs. On Disk, one layout per side is allowed; use a formatted disk with at least 78 blocks spare. There is a small demonstration of rooms saved just after the game itself, to allow experiment with the designer. To load, select option "3" and wait.