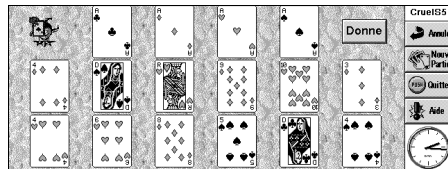## Cruel to be Kind

Damian Walker reviews Gilles Contastin's CruelS5 patience card game.

There is an interesting game of patience (or solitaire, to those west of the Atlantic) known as Cruel Patience. The aim is to build up sequences, ace to king, in their correct suits, rather like the more well-known Klondike game. There, however, the similarities end. The four aces are extracted from the pack before play begins and laid out as foundation cards, onto which the sequences are built. The tableau consists of twelve piles of cards face-up, in two rows of six, of which only the top cards are visible. Cards may be moved singly from one tableau pile to another only if they form a descending sequence of the same suit; for instance, a five of hearts can only be moved onto a six of hearts. Cards may also be moved onto the foundation piles, one at a time, to build the final sequences. If no moves are possible, the tableau may gathered up and re-dealt. The order of gathering up and dealing is significant, but I won't go into the details here. There is no stock pile from which cards are drawn as in Klondike as all cards are dealt at the start of the game.

Gilles Contastin has implemented this game for the Series 5 under the name CruelS5. The program is available only in French, but this didn't pose a problem to a non-French speaker like me, as the rules were easy to pick up. One can see from the picture cards that the Jack, Queen and King are marked V, D and R respectively. The only thing I needed to look up elsewhere was how the cards are gathered and re-dealt, though I managed to play the game before doing that without knowing this detail.

CruelS5 implements the rules precisely. There are very few options, with only difficulty level and sound available. Though the help doesn't give details about the differences in level (other than that one is easy and the other more difficult), it seems that in the easy level, the order of re-dealing is modified to make more moves available.

The graphics are just about as good as one can expect from a card game. The cards are large and clear, filling the Series 5 screen. There is a pretty background for those who like such things. Sound is supported, with a card flip noise and a congratulatory message when one wins the game, though the cards are dealt silently. The user interface is good enough that you can find your way around the game without speaking the language. The help file is obviously barely intelligible to those who don't understand French, but I don't hold that against the game.

Once familiar with the rules, the game is reasonably addictive, as is the case with many good patience games. While I wouldn't skip lunch or miss a good television programme to carry on playing this game, it's a good time filler and difficult to tear myself away from in the middle of a game. Every game is different, as the number of possible deals is astronomical, so it's always worth another game.

The program is compatible only with the Series 5, and those machines of the same screen size. While it plays in letterbox mode on the Series 7, the buttons on the toolbar are drawn too big, and the clock is superimposed in such a way as to make the bottom button inaccessible. For owners of the right machines I would recommend giving CruelS5 a try.

By	Gilles Contastin
URL	http://perso.wanadoo.fr/psions5-3495/
Licence	Freeware
Compatibility	S5 S5mx MC218 netPad
Rating	★★★☆

Welcome to this month's issue of *EPOC Entertainer*. There are two reviews for you, *Samurai: My Success Story* and *CruelS5*. We also put another EPOC32 game author's software *In the Spotlight*. And the programming tutorial *Taking Control* continues.

As always, feedback is welcomed, and can be sent to the usual address.

entertainer@snigfarp.karoo.co.uk

In the Spotlight

Damian Walker takes a look at the output of prolific French software author Gérard Millet.

In this issue I review the game CruelS5, by Gilles Contastin. He shares a web site with another French author, Gérard Millet, and their games are concentrated around similar genres—computer versions if interesting board games and puzzles. Some of these are conversions of games available on other platforms, but are none the less welcome because of this. Millet's conversions tend to be games not brought to the EPOC platform by anyone else.

Examples of the conversions include *Atome5*, a game which resembles Sokoban in appearance but is very different in gameplay.

Bataille Navale may well be original; I've not managed to find it elsewhere. It plays like a board game, with ships moving around like rooks in chess. But when they come to rest they fire broadside at each other.

I look forward to reviewing these games in a future issue. But there are others: *CMagic5*, a magic squares game, and Compte5, familiar to British television viewers as the numbers game from Countdown. There are also the puzzle games *Inversatile*, *Logi5*, *Pilade5*, *Quadomino5* and *Quadra5*. Another game that deserves a special mention is *Dames5*, which is the French version of draughts or checkers, played on a 10x10 board.

Few of these games have found their way to mainstream sites, so I recommend you take a look at Millet's web page.
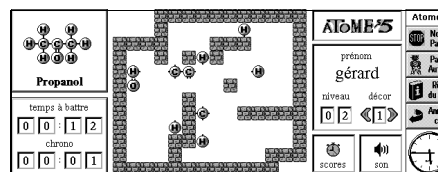
Author	Gérard Millet
URL	perso.wanadoo.fr/psions5-3495

You're Fired!
A review by Damian Walker of Cosmic Co's Samurai: My Success Story
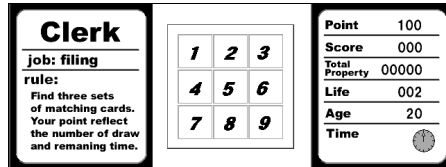
I was intrigued when I first encountered *Samurai: My Success Story*. It claims to be a simulation game in which a businessman climbs up the ladder of hierarchical Japanese company. With this description I wasn't quite sure what to expect.

When I installed the game and started playing, I found that it is really a compendium of simple games, which you have to play in turn to gain rank in a company. Starting as a clerk, success at the various games gives you promotion to section manager, director and finally, president.

The first round is a simple memory game, of which there is no shortage on EPOC32. Then comes a version of *Balloon* by the same author, where you have to jump up from the ground and headbutt various objects to score points. A fast reaction game follows, in which an object is indicated and you have to tap on it as it appears in various positions on a grid, before it disappears. Then there is another round of Balloon. Finally, there is a little single-hole golf game to crown your career.

By the time I finished the first round of the balloon game, I was beginning to regret my choice of a game to review. The idea of tying together a number of simple games in order to pursue a goal seemed a promising one, and when done well it can be very entertaining. But in this case, none of the individual games is much fun at all, and when strung together in series the tedium is multiplied.

The memory round has only nine tiles to uncover, so it would barely tax the memory of a goldfish. The jumping round is boring, and what makes it worse is that it appears twice in the game. Only the fast reaction round provided any entertainment for me. The golf game at the end is well presented, but it is extremely difficult to get the ball anywhere near the hole. The wind speed and direction vary wildly from one shot to the next, and some winds are so strong that it is impossible to keep the ball on course.

The graphics are simple but adequate. The executive theme is adhered to throughout the game, with everything from mobile phones and office chairs to golf clubs making an appearance. The game features sound too, with a "boingg" noise in the jumping game, and various other sounds which aren't too irritating. The user interface is very simplistic, with most rounds being operated by the stylus or a single key.

Samurai has little in the way of options. You can choose *easy* or *hard* as the skill level, but in some rounds—such as the memory game—this appears to make no difference to game play.

The game runs properly only on the Psion Series 5 and 5mx (and therefore also on the Ericsson MC218 and the Psion netPad). On the Series 7 it runs partially in letterbox mode, but some parts of the game drop to the bottom of the screen. Samurai runs in monochrome on all systems. As far as speed and reliability go, there were no problems, though with game play being so lamentable, this is really an irrelevance. The fact that the game takes up nearly a megabyte of disk space doesn't help matters.

Needless to say, I wouldn't recommend trying Samurai: My Success Story. While the author doubtless put a lot of work into the game, it simply isn't fun to play, which rather misses the point of what a game should be.

By	Cosmic Co. Ltd.
URL	psion.snigfarp.karoo.net
Licence	Freeware
Compatibility	S5 S5mx MC218 netPad
Rating	☆

Taking Control
Damian Walker continues the programming tutorial series, with improved key scanning.

By the end of last month's instalment we had a working program using GETEVENTA32 to scan for the keyboard. We don't yet scan for other events, such as closing from the system screen, and I intend to leave that exercise to you. There is abundant information about this sort of event checking in the manual, and in non-game orientated OPL tutorials. This month we'll improve the keyboard scanning to ignore EPOC32's key delay, and to check for two keys at once.

Last month I explained that each key press generates three events: key down, key code and key up. Currently we ignore the first and last of these, and look at the key code event only. The improved technique reverses this: we ignore the key code event, and instead scan for key down and key up events instead. To make this work, first remove the following lines from *MoveBall*:

```
movex%=0
movey%=0
```

Then replace the *IF/ELSEIF/ENDIF* construct we added last month with the following:

```
IF ev&(1)=1030 AND ev&(3)=16
  movey%=-4
ELSEIF ev&(1)=1030 AND
            ev&(3)=17
  movey%=4
ELSEIF ev&(1)=1031 AND
    (ev&(3)=16 OR ev&(3)=17)
  movey%=0
ENDIF
IF ev&(1)=1030 AND ev&(3)=15
  movex%=4
ELSEIF ev&(1)=1030 AND
            ev&(3)=14
  movex%=-4
ELSEIF ev&(1)=1031 AND
    (ev&(3)=14 OR ev&(3)=15)
  movex%=0
ENDIF
```

The first *IF* construct checks for up and down. An event code of 1030 in *ev&(1)* means a key has been pressed, and when this happens, *ev&(3)* contains the *scan code* of the key. Unfortunately the scan codes differ both from the codes returned by *KEY* and by key code events, so you have a new set of codes to learn: 14 to 17 for right, left, up and down respectively. The event code 1031 means that a key has been released, the scan code again being stored in *ev&(3)*. Note that only one press and one release event are generated for each key press, no matter how long you hold the key for.

So the check works like this: we check to see if *cursor up* has been pressed, and if it has, we set the Y direction to up. Alternatively, we set it to down if *cursor down* has been pressed. But if either key has been released, we set the Y direction to 0. The left/right combination works in the same way, and is checked separately so that we can have both vertical and horizontal (i.e. diagonal) movement at the same time. The routine could be further improved; it doesn't always respond helpfully when both up and down, or left and right, have been pressed at once, as a panicking game player might occasionally do.

As you're expecting by now, I'm about to set up next month's article by describing what's still wrong after this month's. You can't fail to have noticed that the key click sound still plays, assuming you have it enabled. This isn't appropriate to most games, so next month, as I round off the series, we'll look at keeping your Psion quiet.