

## In Emulation

**In this issue's instalment, Damian Walker looks at emulating arcade machines.**

From emulation of the pocketable games console I covered in the last issue, I now move to the opposite end of the size scale—emulation of full-sized arcade machines. This can be done on the Psion using the package *EMAME*, a port of the open-source *MAME* project popular on desktop machines.

The video games arcade has been around for as long as the home computer and home games console, and was very popular at a time when many of us couldn't afford either a computer or a console at home. Even when games consoles and computers became cheap enough for most home budgets, the quality of the graphics on home entertainment systems was not comparable to that which was experienced in the arcade.

While the full *MAME* package aims to emulate these machines as much as possible, the smaller *EMAME* package emulates only a small subset—those games running on Z80 processors. *EMAME* runs on the Psion Series 7 and Series 5mx. It also runs on the Revo but is hampered by the small screen. My attempts to run it on the Ericsson MC218 failed.

Installation of the emulator isn't as straightforward as for standard SIS files. *EMAME* comes as a ZIP, which must be extracted with its folder structure intact. Once this is done, you need to install the file `stdlib.sis` which is included. This failed on my MC218 as `stdlib.sis` is already included in ROM. This may be the origin of my problems on that machine.

Before running the emulator you need to find some ROM files, for the particular games you would like to run. Of all the emulators covered in this series *MAME* is

the most problematic in this respect. Very few of the games are available legally for free. There are some questionable sites that offer downloads, but it is only legal to download images from them if you own the real arcade machine. The "proper" way to obtain the ROMs is to buy the arcade machine, or perhaps just the ROM board, and extract the contents of the ROM into a ZIP file. This is a complex process, too much so for me to cover here. A simpler way is to buy the ROM board, stuff it in a cupboard somewhere and then download the appropriate ZIP from one of the questionable sites; it is unclear whether this is strictly legal or not, though, and so I don't recommend doing this without further investigation into its legality. There are a few legal games available, but I could get none of them to work with *EMAME*.

To run the emulator, you need to navigate to its folder and tap on the file `emame.exe`. This is more fiddly than running applications that support the Extras bar, but as *EMAME* is a straight port it doesn't properly support EPOC conventions. Once running I found the results disappointing. After all that trouble, *EMAME* ran neither of the free games it was supposed to support, giving me a blank screen after the initial copyright message. That was on the Series 7; on the MC218 *EMAME* crashed out on selecting the game and set my screen contrast to an unreadable level.

While the idea of running arcade games on your EPOC machine can be quite exciting, after trying it myself I don't think it's worth the trouble. It's difficult to legally get hold of the ROMs, and even if you're not as concerned as I am about staying on the right side of the law, the range of games supported is very small. Therefore I don't really recommend *EMAME* as a way of expanding the games library you can take on the move.

Issue 23: January 2010

# EPOC ENTERTAINER

Editor: Damian Walker *In this issue: Mr Matt Reviewed*

Welcome to a new issue of *EPOC Entertainer*. Contrary to popular belief the magazine is not dead. Indeed how could it stop, being part way through a series of articles?

Getting to grips with a new piece of publishing software caused delays to November's issue, and an increased workload (not to mention Christmas) pushed December's further back towards the new year. So in the end I decided to aim for a new year issue. I'm hoping now to get back on track with a regular monthly schedule.

As an aside, eagle-eyed viewers will have noticed that issue 22 was listed on the web site as "Issue 12". Nobody mentioned it to me, though!

So, on to a new month, a new year and a new issue. Despite the change in software I've tried to keep the look as close as possible to what went before. I've quite

liked the look of it, and nobody else has complained. However, there will be a few stylistic changes, partly because it's difficult to make things exactly the same in a new piece of software, and partly as I will be experimenting with the capabilities a new piece of software brings.

As for content... Things are largely unchanged. The *In Emulation* series continues unbroken, there's a little bit of delayed news about John Spillet's work in tracking down software authors and publishers, and there are two more reviews for you on the inside pages: one of the puzzle game *Mr Matt*, and one of the lesser known *Carpz* puzzle game.

As always, there's something for owners of all EPOC32 machines in this issue. If you have any comments, please send them to the usual address.

[entertainer@cyningstan.org.uk](mailto:entertainer@cyningstan.org.uk)

## More Software News

**Damian Walker brings an update on availability of an interesting piece of game software.**

As an update to last issue's efforts, John Spillet has obtained a copy of Purple Software's *BridgePro* card game. This was kindly supplied by the new copyright owners ZingMagic as unsupported software. They're happy for it to be distributed on the condition that people don't bother them with queries—you're welcome to play it, but you're on your own for support.

The game is currently obtained from John's web site <http://tobidog.com/> as well as from the EPOC32 Game Database. The Game Database currently has a skeleton entry for the game, but this will be fleshed out when I have time to try it out on various machines and to take screen shots. There will also be a review in *EPOC Entertainer* at some point in the future.

## The Ultimate 3-point Turn

Damian Walker reviews  
Adelino Oliveira's car-themed puzzle game.

The EPOC32 platform has a fair few interesting solitaire puzzles where the object is to swap the positions of two sets of pieces. I have already reviewed one, *Knights*, in an earlier issue of *EPOC Entertainer*, and I have written one myself—*Pebbles on the move. Carpz* by Adelino Oliveira is a slightly more sophisticated example of this type of puzzle, for the Series 5.

In *Carpz*, also known as *AOCARPZ*, the pieces are cars. They are initially set out on the sides of an H shaped section of road, the road being organised into squares. The bar of the H has an extra square to the side, to act as a passing point. The cars move along the road along adjacent squares, but may not jump over other cars, nor can they move diagonally. The object is to swap the positions so that the black cars occupy the positions that the white ones started on, and vice versa. Not only that, but the cars are numbered, and each car must end the game occupying the position of its equally numbered counterpart.

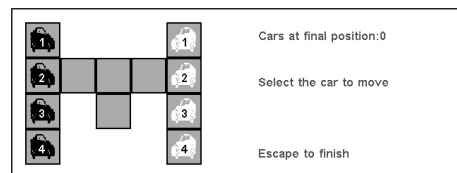
As in all his other programs, Adelino Oliveira's presentation in this puzzle is very simple. It is probably one of his most graphically effective games, but is not particularly strong when compared to other available games. The graphics are clear, but the cars appear to be stretched vertically. Sound is absent from the puzzle too.

The user interface is adequate but very rudimentary. The introductory screens respond only to keyboard control. In the main puzzle, the cars are moved by tapping the stylus on the car then on its destination, which is a fair-enough alternative to drag and drop. Only one other option presents itself, that of pressing Esc to quit the program. There is no drop-down menu, and no apparent way to undo a move or to restart the puzzle without exiting the program.

However, if one can see past the basic user interface there is quite an absorbing puzzle here.

The layout of this puzzle makes it distinctive, and not just a car themed version of other swap-the-pieces puzzles. The passing point is crucial to the solution of the puzzle, as one finds out when trying to swap one's first pair of cars. Later in the puzzle it also becomes apparent that the positions in which the 1-numbered cars start is also a crucial passing point, where one car can wait while others file in and out of the bottom sections of road. And due to the small amount of space to manoeuvre, there will be a lot of turning around and moving backwards and forwards to get the cars into their final positions. The program keeps a move count, and my first attempt took me 244 moves—albeit with much unnecessary backtracking.

*Carpz* is designed to run only on the Psion Series 5. There are no speed issues, so it will play perfectly on 100% compatibles like the Series 5mx and the Ericsson MC218. It will



work in letterbox mode on the larger screens of the Series 7 and the Geofox, but unfortunately parts of the display will be missing if you try to play on a Revo or an Osaris. That being said, the Osaris shows just enough of the screen to allow play, though the bottom-most car will be partly obscured.

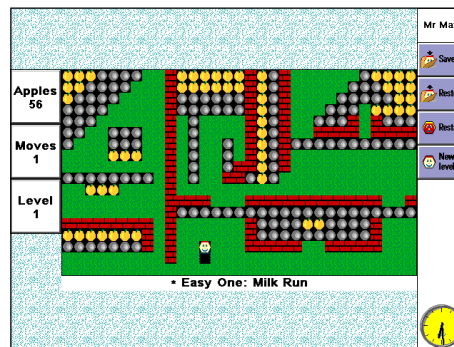
For Series 5-owning puzzle game fans I would recommend *Carpz* as a way to while away the occasionally ten minutes. It probably won't take you long to solve the puzzle, but it may take a little longer to find out how to do so in the lowest number of moves. If you beat my score, let me know!

Author	Adelino Oliveira
URL	<a href="http://psion.cyningstan.org.uk">psion.cyningstan.org.uk</a>
Licence	Freeware
Systems	Series 5/5mx
Rating	☆☆

## The Big Apple

Reuben Thomas' Mr Matt  
game is examined in this  
review by Damian Walker.

I was recently looking at the game of *Boulderdash*, which some people will remember as a popular computer game from a bygone age. There were many similar games inspired by *Boulderdash*, which you might remember: *Repton* was a very well known one on Acorn computers, and the first one I played was *Icicle Works* on the Commodore Plus/4, which had a Christmas theme. *Mr Do* in the arcade and *Dig Dug* on the PC had similarities, though those two games emphasised the fast-moving action element of the genre. *Repton*, *Icicle Works*, and on EPOC32,



Reuben Thomas' *Mr Matt*, emphasis the puzzle solving elements instead.

So what is a Boulderdash type game? When you try to describe it, it's a very strange affair. You occupy a 2-dimensional playing area which is much filled with earth. You can wander around the area, clearing earth as you go. Added to this are rocks. If you clear the earth beneath a rock, it falls towards the bottom of the screen. If you remain in its path, you'll be squashed and lose a life. This raises an interesting point: gravity affects the rocks but not you or the earth. You can also push boulders left and right if the way beyond them is clear of earth and other obstacles.

The game has walls, which block your way completely. And there are the treats, the object of the game being to collect all of these treats in

order to pass from one level to another. Some *Boulderdash* clones feature moving enemies, while others have variations on the treats. There are some variations in the physics between games of this genre: in some you can run away from a falling boulder, in others the boulder falls to quickly. In some, the treats are affected by gravity, while in others they are not.

In *Mr Matt*, there are no moving enemies, and the treats are apples. If you push a rock over a precipice, or clear the space from under it, it falls instantly to the bottom of the hole before you have chance to move. These attributes put it firmly at the puzzle end of the *Boulderdash* family of games. Indeed, one fiendish difficulty of this game is to avoid trapping yourself behind avalanches of boulders while you collect the apples.

The presentation of *Mr. Matt* is quite attractive. On the Series 7 the game is very colourful. Each game level fits entirely on the screen, so while you can see the whole level from the beginning, the sprites are quite small. This is not so much a problem on the Series 7 but may be an inconvenience on machines with smaller screens, which also obviously lack the advantage of colour to make things clear.

There is one element to *Mr. Matt* which I find very strange. Unlike many other puzzle games, one is not forced to start at the first level and progress through them in order. At any time, you can select a level way ahead, skipping levels which give you too much difficulty. I'm not sure that this is a good thing. The challenge in puzzle games usually revolves around finding the solution to one level before you're allowed to progress to the next.

Despite this I think that *Mr. Matt* is a very good freeware puzzle game for the EPOC32 platform. This is especially true since it runs well on all screen sizes, from the netBook down to the Osaris and Revo.

Author	Reuben Thomas
URL	<a href="http://www.freepoc.de">www.freepoc.de</a>
Licence	Freeware
Systems	All EPOC32 machines
Rating	☆☆☆☆