

In Emulation

Damian Walker summarises emulation in the last instalment of this series.

I had hoped to round off the series with a review

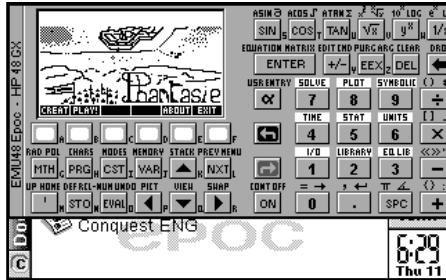
of Psi85, the emulator for the Texas Instruments TI-85 calculator.

Unfortunately the program isn't finished



enough to be useful to game players—it won't load the standard 85G format files that games are supplied in. So much for the TI-85! Instead I'll just look at a round-up of the emulators covered in this series.

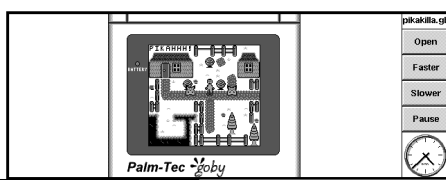
By far the most successful emulator is Z80, for the Sinclair ZX Spectrum. It seems to run most games flawlessly and at a good speed. Because many games use only two colours for the action, the monochrome screens of most EPOC



machines are rarely a drawback when playing Spectrum games. And the proportions of the Osaris screen fit the virtual Spectrum wonderfully. But on a Series 7 or netBook, with its large colour screen, Z80 comes into its own.

Of the other emulators, the Apple II and Commodore 64 emulators are probably the next

I'd recommend. And the PC emulator is good if you stick to text mode games. The HP48 emulator is pretty good too, but the Gameboy emulators are probably too slow unless you have a Series 7. I can't recommend EMAME or the TI-85 emulators at all.



I'll leave you with a selection of screen shots to ponder, from the best games that the emulators have to offer.

Images from top to bottom: HP48 game Phantasia on an Osaris, Oregon Trail in PsiApple, C64 game Navy Moves, Gameboy game Pikakilla, PC game Monkey Island looking pretty but being barely playable on a netBook, and Spectrum game Iron Lord on an Osaris.

Issue 25: Mar 2010

EPOC ENTERTAINER

Editor: Damian Walker

In this issue: V-Rally

Welcome to the March issue of EPOC Entertainer. This month sees the last in the series In Emulation, with a look back at the best emulated games that EPOC32 has to offer.

There are as usual two reviews for you this month, both for high quality pieces of software. Widget Software's Chomper is a Pac-man clone, while Tomtom's V-Rally is a playable demo of a racing game.

Regular visitors to Psion Games at Cynningstan (psion.cynningstan.org.uk if you need reminding) will have noticed that I have finally managed to obtain a working Geofox One, the most elusive EPOC32 machine. Before going bust Geofox managed to sell only 1,000 of these, out of a projected 10,000 in their first year. The manufacturing company continued to build a handful of machines after Geofox went



bust, but the machine is still very rare. Nevertheless, I have tried to support it as much as possible in my own programs and in the Game Database.

Having the Geofox means that not only can I start creating Geofox screen shots for the Game Database, but I can also give the machine more coverage in EPOC Entertainer. This month, V-Rally was evaluated on the Geofox. In a future issue I hope to do a one-off article to discuss issues about running games on the Geofox, a bit like the one I did for the Osaris back in issue 4. But before that I have to get used to the machine's quirks!

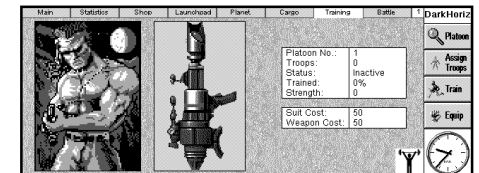
Enjoy the rest of the magazine. Any comments or questions about the contents, suggestions of future material, or offers of help, are equally welcome at the usual address.

entertainer@cynningstan.org.uk

Software News

Damian Walker gives an update on what's been happening in the world of EPOC game software recently.

As reported in the Digest last month, the author of Dark Horizon has been traced and is still accepting registrations for the game. James Greenwood can be contacted by email: jsg (at) jsgreenwood.com.



Chomping at the bit

A review by Damian Walker of Widget Software's Pac-man clone Chomper.

One of the most famous video games from the early years of the arcade is Pac-man. Appearing in the arcades in 1980, Pac-man has endured and maintained its popularity for thirty years, and has begotten a number of spin-offs. These include video game sequels, films, music and an inevitable number of copies or Pac-man-inspired games.

One of those games is Chomper, by Widget Software. Initially a commercial game, this was released free of charge by Widget software once the market for Psion games became unprofitable. Chomper is available on the Series 5 classic and the Revo.

The original Pac-man is well known, but I'll describe it now for completeness. The player controls a round yellow creature who gives the game its name, and can wander around a blue maze eating yellow dots as he goes. When a maze is cleared of dots, Pac-man progresses to the next maze. His task is hindered by a few monsters, or ghosts, who wander around the maze and cause him to lose one of his lives whenever they catch him.

Pac-man is given some help in the form of power pellets near the corners of the maze. When he eats one of these the tables are turned, and Pac-man can catch the ghosts and temporarily remove them from the maze. Other power-ups appear at the centre of the maze from time to time.

Chomper makes several changes to this formula. First, the tall maze of the arcade original is exchanged for a wider maze design more suitable to the Series 5 and Revo screens. The number of levels is reduced from 256 in Pac-man to 12 in Chomper. The four ghosts of Pac-man with their individual personalities are

replaced by three ghosts in the smaller maze of Chomper, with no apparent personality traits.

Despite these simplifications, Chomper is still an entertaining version of Pac-man. As a lover of the original, I never even noticed the personalities of the original ghosts; I was too busy running away to observe their movements in detail. I never managed to get through twelve levels, let alone 256, so the twelve levels of Chomper are more than enough for me, if not for skilled Pac-man players. The twelve levels are repeated at a higher level of difficulty if you clear them all.

Speed is an issue on modern computers. The Series 5 version of the game is suitable only for older, slower machines, as it plays too fast on the Series 5mx. The Revo version is optimised for the Revo and has a speed control, so you can play the Revo version on the 5mx and the Series 7/netBook if you don't mind the very small display. I would recommend looking at other Pac-man clones before resorting to this, though,

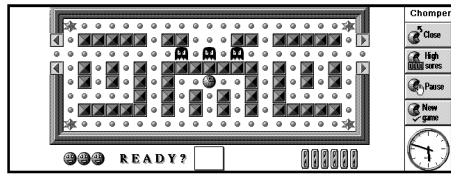
as EPOC32 isn't short of them.

Chomper's graphics are well-presented. They use a white background, which is clear on the monochrome displays of

the Series 5 and Revo, and is probably easier on the batteries than Pac-man's black background would have been. There is abundant sound and music, with various sounds being played when power pills are collected and tunes at important points in the game. But the "wacca-wacca" noise that the original played when collecting each pellet is sadly absent.

If you use a Series 5 Classic, a Geofox One or a Revo then I can recommend this game due to its playability and good presentation. But owners of the faster EPOC32 machines are advised to look elsewhere.

Author	Widget Software
URL	www.pscience5.net
Licence	Freeware
Systems	Series 5 "classic", Revo
Rating	☆☆☆



A Rallying Cry

Tomtom's V-Rally playable driving game demo is reviewed by Damian Walker.

Motor sport games aren't numerous on EPOC32. Mike D. Rally has been reviewed already, in issue 5 of *EPOC Entertainer*. Another such game is V-Rally, a now unsupported commercial offering from Tomtom. It is available as a playable demo, but after a brief search of the Internet I haven't been able to find out if it can still be bought or otherwise registered. Tomtom's site certainly doesn't have it any more.

The full version of V-Rally puts you in the driving seat of the car of your choice, and allows you to choose from any of 20 tracks. You can race in practice mode, arcade mode or championship mode.

Practice allows you to drive around a single track, arcade to compete against other cars, and championship mode to take part in an entire season, racing on all twenty tracks. The playable demo allows only practice mode. While you can still choose any of the four cars to drive, only a single track is available—the French Alps.

This still allows you to have a bit of fun with the game, though, especially if you're as bad at it as me and wouldn't stand a chance in a competitive race. But it does turn an impressive game into a lightweight time filler. It's great to occupy you for the odd ten minutes, but it won't keep you up late into the night.

What's most impressive about this game is the graphics. Tomtom really went to town on this, and treated the EPOC32 machines with the respect they deserve. Instead of the simplistic graphics we're used to in other games, V-Rally gives a the graphical experience you'd have expected of a desktop machine of equivalent power, albeit in monochrome.

Sound is pretty good too. Music accompanies the menus, and there's a lot of

speech in the game. On the track, you hear your car crash into objects at the edge of the road and into other cars (well, I do anyway). One thing that's missing is the engine noise, but here Tomtom were up against the limitations of the machine with its one-channel sound.

The user interface is not what we're used to on EPOC, lacking a toolbar and pull-down menus. Nevertheless, navigation around the program is reasonably straightforward and the interface resembles more what you'd see on a console or home computer. V-Rally is well behaved as far as system events are concerned, shutting down cleanly when you make a backup.

Compatibility is very good, with the screen scaling flawlessly to fit any EPOC32 device from the Osaris to the netBook. Speed is perfect. In theory the Geofox should be slowest, since the processor is the same speed as the Osaris and Series 5 "classic" but it has more pixels to shift on its bigger screen. The game runs at the right

speed on my Geofox though, as it does on the netBook at the other end of the scale.

There are no colour graphics on the Series 7 and netBook, which is a shame. Since the game doesn't seem to use a standard MBM file for its graphics, I'm not sure whether it would make a viable colouring project. Another compatibility issue inherent in the hardware is of course the lack of sound on the Osaris.

I live in hope that Tomtom might release the full version as freeware one day, or at least take registrations. But as a demo, V-Rally is still well worth a look if only to admire graphics we rarely see on EPOC32.



Author	Tomtom
URL	psion.cynningstan.org.uk
Licence	Commercial
Systems	All EPOC32 machines
Rating	☆☆☆☆