

## An Impressive Collection

A review of Gilles Contastin's puzzle game *Collector* for the Psion Series 5.

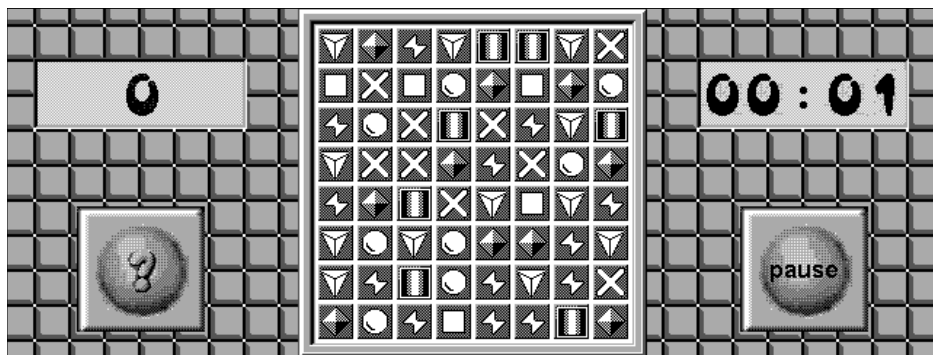
Today I thought I would give Gilles Contastin's *Collector* game a try. This is a game I first encountered on-line under the name *Bejewelled*, which was very addictive. So addictive, in fact, that a number of people were reportedly fired from my place of work for playing the game in work time.

It is a simple puzzle game played with patterned tiles on a grid. The grid is affected by

Contastin. The tiles are decorated with spheres, crosses and other shapes, looking very much like those in *Vexed*. The rest of the screen uses custom fonts and a 3D effect to make this one of the better looking games on the Psion Series 5.

Sound is conspicuous by its absence. *Collector* would have been livened up by sounds for swapping tiles, forming a row, and gaining a bonus. But in public situations most of us would turn such sounds off anyway, so their absence isn't such a great loss.

Game play, as I have mentioned already, is addictive. I do find that it can outstay its welcome, though, as it takes a long time to get to the stage where you can't move at all. Some variations of this game are played against a timer.



The beginning of a *Collector* game on a Psion Series 5.

gravity, as in *Vexed* (reviewed in a previous issue of *EPOC Entertainer*) or *Cascade*. At the start of the game the tiles are mixed up. You must create rows of three or more by picking two adjacent tiles to swap their positions, after which the row of three will disappear. The tiles above will fall, with new ones falling from the top of the grid to fill the gap. Only moves which form rows of three are valid, and the object of the game is to keep going as long as possible till there are no more valid moves.

*Collector* is a version of this game for the Psion Series 5. It will run in letterbox mode on machines with bigger screens. The visual presentation of this game, the first thing I noticed about it, is excellent, as are many of the games by Gilles

*Collector* does have a timer, but it doesn't seem to affect the game at all. It's not even recorded in the score table. But for some reason I felt compelled to continue playing anyway, and not just for the sake of the review. And because every game is random and different, I will probably find myself playing this game again and again.

Author	Collector
URL	<a href="http://psions5-3495.pagesperso-orange.fr/">http://psions5-3495.pagesperso-orange.fr/</a>
Licence	Freeware
Systems	Series 5, 5mx, MC218
Rating	☆☆☆

Hello and welcome to another issue of *EPOC Entertainer*. If you think you've missed one, you probably haven't. There was no issue in October due to your editor's ill health. November's issue has three reviews for you. There's also a round-up of software news.

Thanks to all those who returned the reader survey. A number of new ideas were sent in, in addition to the ones presented in the survey in issue 30. Although the prize draw has ended, survey forms and other feedback are still welcome. Enjoy!

[entertaineer@cynningstan.org.uk](mailto:entertaineer@cynningstan.org.uk)

## Prize Draw Result

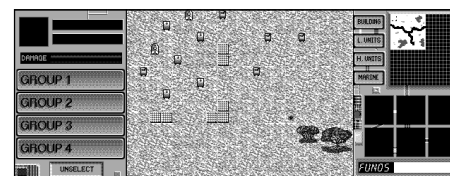
The winner of the reader survey prize draw is **Jan Palenicek**. Congratulations go to Jan, who should be receiving a copy of Atelier's *SimCity Classic* very soon.

## Software News

A round-up of news about what's going on in the world of classic Psion and EPOC32 gaming.

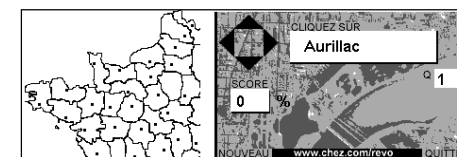
*Imperium* was reviewed in September in its unregistered state. Now, thanks to the efforts of John Spillett, and the generosity of Simon Jacobs of Xen Games, the game can now be registered. John tracked Simon down and Simon gave him a generic registration code—*Imperium403*—which will unlock the registered features of the program.

Simon also mentioned that, for those who now have an iPhone or an iPod Touch, an upgraded version of the game is available on the app store. It's called *Strategic Assault*. See [www.xengames.com](http://www.xengames.com) for more details, and also John's site [tobidog.com](http://tobidog.com) for other registration codes.

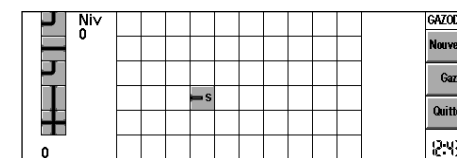


*Imperium* can now be played in full.

Eric Schrafstetter got in touch a little while ago to say that his games for the Revo are once again available from his web site, <http://eschraf.perso.sfr.fr/REVOLAND>. You can also see them at the Psion Games database. The games *Gazoduc* and *Lines* have been added, and files updated for *La France* and *Labyrinthes*.



Test your French geographical knowledge with Eric Schrafstetter's quiz game *La France*...



... or try something fast and furious, like *Gazoduc*.

## Snake in the Grass

This month we take a look at RMRSoft's snake game RMRSnake.

*RMRSnake* is the second snake game reviewed in *EPOC Entertainer*. Ferenc Sarlós' game *Worm* was reviewed back in issue 12. RMRSnake appears to be much the better game of the two.

The basic game of RMRSnake is like many other snake games. You begin the game at a modest length, travelling around an empty screen. As you eat food, which appears as numbers denoting each morsel's value, you grow, showing your progress but making it more difficult to manoeuvre. When you're big enough, you're allowed to leave the level and an exit appears. Subsequent levels start to include walls, and later on pairs of teleports start to cover the landscape. Crashing into the wall or the end of the screen kills you and ends your game.

There are a number of extra features to make the game more interesting. There are four game "modes" you can play. The normal mode is as I describe above. There's endurance, in which you have to complete smaller and smaller levels until you die or complete the smallest possible (four squares by four). Trials allow you to choose one level to complete in the quickest time possible. Finally, Custom lets you design your own levels with walls and teleports. The level designer also lets you place invisible walls. While these are really intended to fill hollow areas of wall (preventing food from appearing there), they could be used to create some really evil level designs.

Graphics in this game are clear and simple. The snake is built up of featureless black squares. A nice touch is that the square is slightly bigger where there has been food, creating a bulge when you eat. Food is shown as a number in a black square, and exits and

teleports are shown as E and T respectively. Walls are shown as a simply decorated black square. There are a few other decorative touches around the screen.

One thing I have against RMRSnake is the complete lack of sound. An action game like this would benefit from a few discreet sounds when you eat, die or complete a level. But the game is completely silent, with no evidence of a sound option anywhere.

Control is a bit fiddly. There is a noticeable delay when trying to turn the snake. You have to press the arrow key to turn one step *before* you actually want to. Before I got used to this I was crashing into the sides of the play area frequently—and that was on the easiest, slowest setting.

An interesting addition to the game is the concept of bonus points, carried over from one game to another. If you achieve a place high up on the high score table, you're given bonus points, which are accumulated. In subsequent

games you can spend these. Things you can spend on include automatic lengthening to bring you closer to the end of a level, a "second chance" which allows

you one hit on an obstacle without dying, and an automatic jump to the next level. The anticipation of playing with these things is an extra incentive to keep practising and getting better and better scores.

RMRSnake was released as shareware, but as it is now unsupported, a generic registration code is included in the archive available at Pscience5. The game is designed for the Series 5, but it works on machines with larger screens and faster processors.

Author	RMR Software
URL	<a href="http://www.pscience5.net">www.pscience5.net</a>
Licence	Freeware
Systems	Series 5 & 5mx
Rating	☆☆☆

## Invasion Force

A review of Invasion, Thomas Ashton's turn-based strategy game set in the far future.

Thomas Ashton wrote quite a bit of software for the Psion Series 3 and the Psion Series 5. He was active on the Psion scene till about 1999, since which time he moved on to pastures new. One of his most polished games was *Invasion*, released on EPOC16 and then on EPOC32.

*Invasion* is a turn-based war game set in the future. The help file has a background story which is well worth the minute or two it takes to read. In summary, forces of an oppressed Earth have set up a resistance to an invading Galactic Empire. You take the part of one side or other, and you can fight single pitched battles against the computer or a friend, or grapple with a computer opponent through a series of scenarios of increasing difficulty.

*Invasion* shares a lot of traits with real-time games *Imperium* and *No Mans Land*, reviewed in previous issues of *EPOC Entertainer*. You can construct buildings like factories and research centres. The factories can build tanks and other military vehicles. Like those other games, it has been compared to *Command & Conquer*.

There is a big difference, though. *Invasion* is a turn-based game. You build and move your forces, firing at the enemy when the opportunity presents itself. Then the computer does the same, while you watch. This is in contrast to the real-time games, which throw everything at you leaving no time to stop and think.

*Invasion* for EPOC32 works well with all systems except the Revo. There can be minor issues with an Osaris screen, but none that prevent the game being enjoyed. There is a colour patch by Fritz

Waechter for the Series 7 and netBook, and I reviewed *Invasion* on a Series 7 with this colour patch installed.

Graphics are workmanlike and clear on most monochrome displays. It's a nice touch to have the units of opposing forces look completely different, rather than just being the same units in a different colour. Sound is simple but effective, with effects played when units fire at each other or are destroyed. Game play is addictive. Though *Invasion* is turn-based, it's difficult to stop a game in the middle.

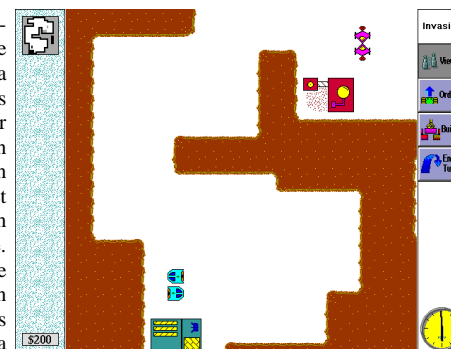
But the game is marred by a couple of bugs I have found. When saving a game *Invasion* crashed out with an application error. It had managed to save

the game, though. More seriously, once when I finished building a research centre, the game forgot to allow me to place it. I sat there for turn after turn, waiting to see if the computer would allow me to place the completed building, while the computer used its research centre to devise bigger and more powerful tanks to send against me. This made the battle somewhat one-sided. Nothing in the help file indicates what could be holding up handover of the building.

Were it not for the research centre bug I would have recommended the game to others to play. Indeed, there may be some incompatibility that allows the game to proceed as normal on some models but not on others - this might warrant a bit of research on other EPOC32 machines.

If the game appeals to you then give it a try, and do let me know if you manage to build a research centre! It would be nice to know I had overlooked something.

Author	Thomas Ashton
URL	<a href="http://psion.cuningstan.org.uk">psion.cuningstan.org.uk</a>
Licence	Shareware
Systems	All EPOC32 systems
Rating	☆☆



*Invasion* in colour on the Series 7 (above) and on the small Osaris screen (below).

