BATALYX
Llamasoft/Ariolasoft, £9.95 cass, £12.95 disk, joystick only

SIZZLER

After four months of keyboard pounding, Jeff Minter is back in the limelight once more. As could well be expected the Zzyaxian are back as well and this time they're on the defensive. In a 'Star Wars' type story, the 'Pseudo Sci Fi Bit' as Minter calls it, you are in control of a daring task force attempting a raid on Zzyax Prime, the controlling planet of their galaxy wide empire. The plan calls for the reactivation of a set of mystical structures that date from a time before the tyranical Zzyaxians conquered the magically technological world for themselves. Upon reactivation, a specially trained task force wise in the ways of Prime's latent powers are to move in and use the near endless energy supply to drive Zzyaxians from their homeworld. With the hub of the wheel shattered, the spokes of the empire should soon splinter into meaningless oblivion. The Zzyax, not totally naive, have left automated defences to repel any such rebel attack.

You play a Psi Op, an entity of advanced psionic ability who can leap between the minds of the task forces each battling to reactivate a mystical site. There are five such sites and one relaxation area to calm your battered neurons. To be an effective psi op you must constantly leap between all five different battlefields, repelling and attacking the enemy. Though it may be tempting, it is wiser to leave those kinds of battle at which you are most proficient till last, because the skill of your opponents grows the more you progress through the game. If you attempt and complete any set task then your other goals become a lot more difficult. So clearly you must choose the order of reactivation carefully. And if the struggle becomes too much, there is still site number six specially created for pleasure and relaxation.

Batalyx is a collection of five games and one non-game, which is a simple form of Psychedelia. The six different sections are entered via keys 1 to 6 on the keyboard and each is instantly accessible at any time — the program makes a note of your position when you left. While you are in one of the sub-games, its icon is highlighted among the row of icons each depicting one of the six sections. To complete a section you have to light up one of a row of characters, five characters in the row, one for each game. The character appears in four different sections as you pass various step-

Attack of the Mutant Camels II.

BONUS LEVEL 00
CAMELS LEFT 08
'SCORE' 00002000

ping stones within the game. Different characters are are predictably Minteresque objects such as sheep and antelope. Before starting you select a skill level and depending on that level you are given an amount of time to complete Batalyx. The times range from one and a half hours down to five minutes, though it's a lot more likely your games will be of the one and a half hour type.

For those morons out there expecting us to slag off Batalyx . . . tough luck mateys — we don't bear grudges. Batalyx is definitely THE best Minter program to date, and is one of the best games I've seen this year. With its many aspects (shoot em up, psych, gravities, reaction and general way-outness) the five separate sub-games and pause mode all combine to make an excellent and incredibly absorbing game.

My personal favourites are Syncro II (I've had some practice since I got it from the net a while back) and Cippy on the Run — both tricky and concentration sapping games. The idea of Psychedelia in the pause mode is great — it might well persuade people to go out and buy the (much underrated) real thing. I don't mind saying 'nice one Minter . . . it's HYPER BRILL, okay twelve year-olds?'

Subgame 1: Hallucin-O- Bomblets

It has been admitted by the hairy one, that this is an 'Asteroids' derivative. Trapped in a wrap round blank screen, you control a small craft using globular little bomblets as the main source of propulsion and attack. To fire a stream of bomblets you merely point the joystick in the direction you wish the stream to travel. The trouble is that thanks to some fairly fundamental laws of physics, the little bomblet machine flies off in the opposite direction. The scene is set on the fringe of space, the upper atmosphere of Zzyax Prime, and the gas present has enough viscosity to slow you down rather than whizz about endlessly and helplessly as in 'Asteroids'.

The task is to destroy the defence satellites placed around Prime's orbit. There are 16 different types each with its own distinct movement pattern. For each satellite totalled, a small

Cippy on the Run with a few friends in tow on the first bonus screen.

square on a screen-long bar lights up. If you crash into a stray satellite then some squares are knocked off the bar, the actual quantity depends on how late you entered the game. When all the bar is lighted, half Hallucin-O-Bomblets icon is shown, and to complete the whole icon you must fill another bar.

Kill a sufficient number of satellites and a new type replaces the vanquished minions. Attacking nasties are such things as pint glasses, cippies, ex Prime Minister Aardvarks and similar others.

Subgame 2: Attack of the Mutant Camels II

Attack of the Mutant Camels is possibly one of Llamasoft's most famous creations. Recently it was converted to the Atari and a lot of the creative work infused into the Atari version has now been put back into the Commodore. For those very few of you unaware of AMC's game type, you control a small craft powered with a low energy laser. Attacking are mutant camels. These require zapping many times before they die. When it's nearing its end, the beast kneels down, and can then be vanquished by a couple more well placed laser blasts. The camels' weapons are Bonio's of Doom, a deadly device similar in shape to a famous biscuit for dogs. Complete one sheet by destroying all the camels you

can then warp to the next. Flying through the warp, you are pelted with a shower of Bonio's — best avoided as your shields are limited in number.

The Zzyaxians camels aren't real however, they're robots, the shape chosen because man is loath to shoot anything vaguely camel shaped. The pseudo camels' role is as one of Prime's built-in defences, there to ward off any potential attackers.

Subgame 3: The Activation of Iridis Base

Described by Jeff as 'probably the most abstract of the six games' this is essentially a simple (!) test of reactions. The base, disguised as a pyramid, looms in the background while in the foreground there is a group of nine squares representing the nine positions of the joystick — left, right, up, down, fire and diagonals. These squares light up to indicate the direction you are to move the joystick and this must be done immediately. Failure to do so will result in the loss of one of six phosphenes, sort of 'lives'. When all six are gone then that particular attempt at activation is aborted and the sequence has to be started once again.

On successfully activating the base you are treated to a colourful display similar to the effect featured on the album cover of Pink Floyds 'Dark Side of the Moon'.
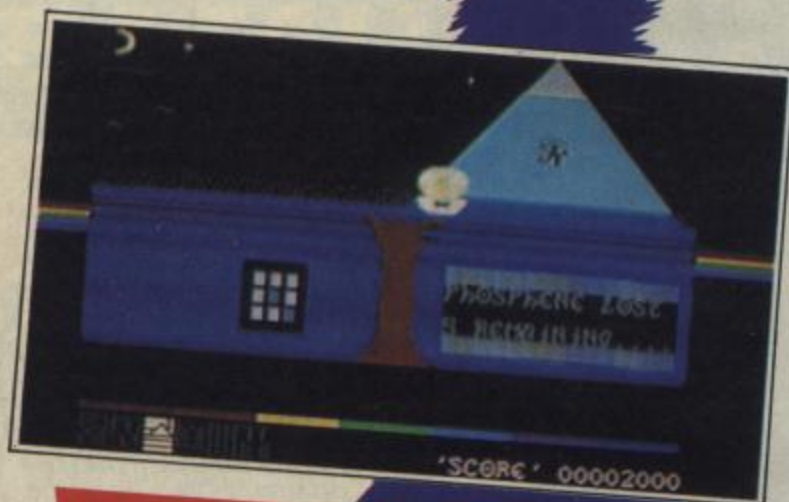
Subgame 4: Cippy on the Run

Set in the Metapsionic Power Wave Guide Channel (?), nicknamed the Grey Corridor, you must reactivate this structure by physically touching every segment of the structure and thinking really hard. The corridor is a simple version of Minter's *Sheep in Space* planet. There is ground on both top and bottom of the screen and each has its own gravity. The main sprite, a porky Ancipital, can run on either floor and you push the joystick towards the floor you wish to move to. Cippy remains centrally positioned while the corridor scrolls about him.

The Zzyaxians have left a supply of phosphene globes to interfere with your task. These appear in the distance and move closer, if you let them come into the foreground they go haywire and slam themselves into the corridor, mutating a segment. The effect the phosphene has depends on when you start playing, but earlier mutations cause the segments to repel you or throw you to the other side or even warp you to another section of the corridor. There are also a few holes in the corridor which, if you're clumsy enough to fall into one, blast you away and the sheet must be started again. On later screens things get nasty as segments are deactivated when you travel over them twice. To battle the phosphene interferers, a stream of

sprites are constantly ejected from Cippy's mouth.

Also supplied is a scanner showing most of the corridor. The mutated and activated segments plus any holes are clearly shown. To light up this games icon you need to complete four corridors. After every second level you are given the opportunity to pick up a substantial amount of extra points on a bonus screen. No phosphenes appear on this screen and Cippy's form is enhanced with a colourful trail of clones following his movements exactly. To collect a massive bonus you need to activate the corridor with no life loss. If time is getting close you can always skip this screen by hopping down the nearest hole.

"MINTER DOES IT AGAIN!"

Subgame 5: Syncro II

Compunet modem owners have probably seen this as a stand-alone program under Jeff's pages. This follow-up to Minter's other freebie hit, *Syncro*, is a game of logic rather than manic blasting. The structure needing reactivating is the Great Psionic Generator of Dhi Oh. To attain reactivation an alignment of globes is required. The globes are given a random angle and velocity and their paths are confined to the size of the screen so that they bounce off the edges. Filling the screen
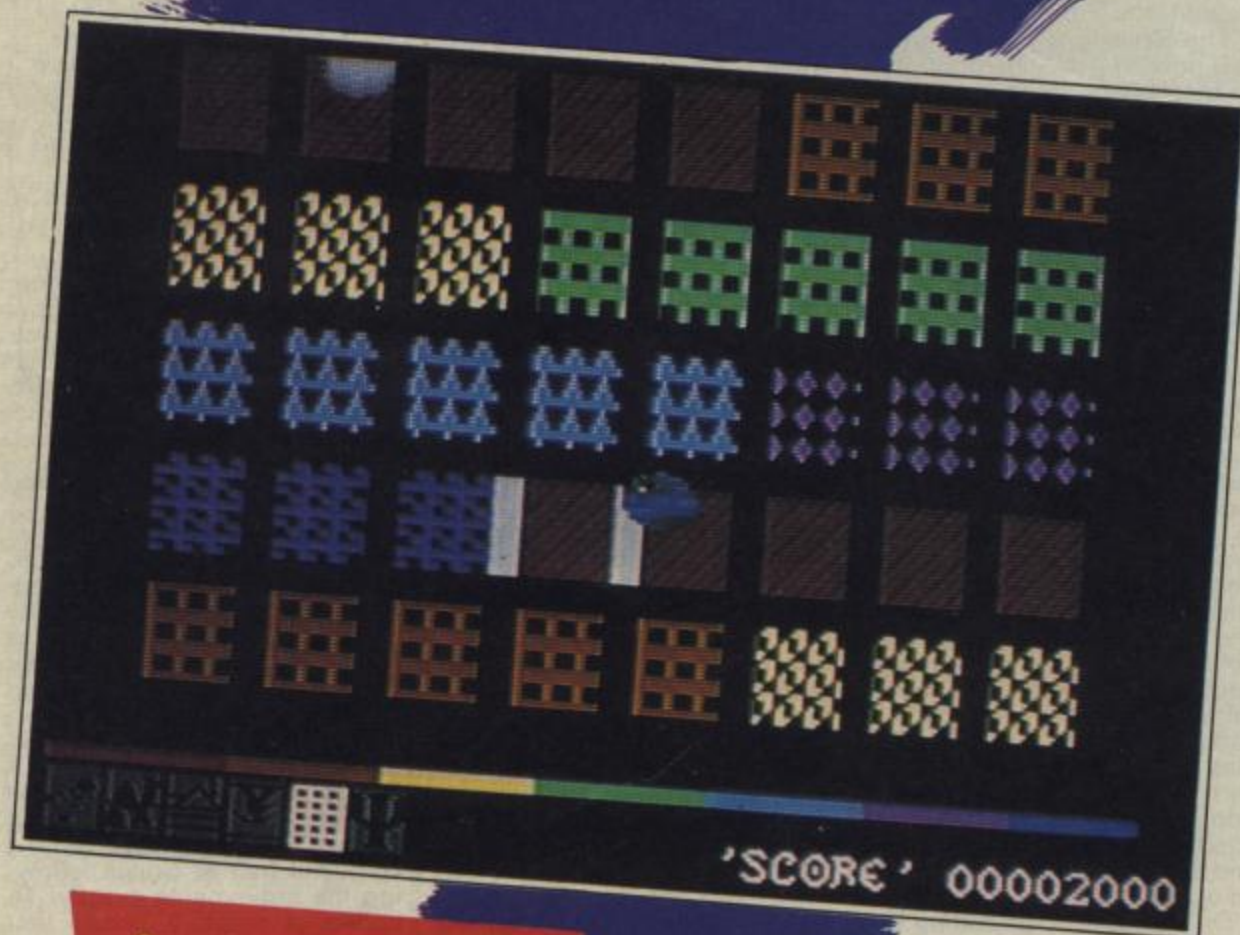

Activation of Iridis Base.

are sixteen different squares, each composed of a particular pattern. You control a cursor which may be positioned on any of the squares. Initially the squares are static but if you move onto one, press fire and move the joystick, the square's pattern scrolls in the direction you move the joystick. Also any like-patterned squares move in unison with the square being activated. If a sphere moves over the square it is slowed down or speeded up depending on the pattern's scrolling direction and speed of scroll. The object of the game is to stop the globes from moving by snaring them onto a square.

As the sheets progress, large areas of black squares appear making the going pretty rough since you can't see the speed or direction of the patterns' scrolling. Throughout the game dramatic sound effects are supplied by a neat little system of chord manipulation. As the squares are changed, the chords change with them. If you care to take the Great Psionic Generator of Dhi up to its highest level and you manage to align all the spheres, then a mega bonus is added. To light up Syncro II's icon you have to travel through eight screens.

Subgame 6: Psychedelia

In the instructions *Psychedelia* is likened to 'Swedish Massage for the Brain'. *Psychedelia* is a pattern creating device controlled via the joystick. The real function is as a pause mode though it should do something to calm your battleshot nerves.

> Mama Mia! What has Jeff Minter done? Simple. He's taken Revenge, *altered the music, graphics, level select and control method and then thrown the disk in the bin and written Batalyx instead. Batalyx is certainly Llamasoft's best creation to date and though being totally original to play, it incorporates all the elements that have made previous releases hits.*

> *The game is so easily underestimated and takes a quite a lot of play to realise its strategic qualities. Personally I really liked* Cippy on the Run, *it being my favourite of the bunch. Much welcomed also is the pause mode showing* Psychedelia's *previously unrealised calming qualities. Overall one of the star releases of the year, containing a perfect proportion of tactics and mindless blasting. I really hope further Llamasoft releases follow this trend.*

G.L

Syncro II.

'SCORE' 00002000

Presentation 96%
Extremely well thought out and executed program.

Graphics 93%
Excellent definition, animation, use of colour and superb scrolling techniques.

Sound 81%
Very good and unusual Minteresque sound effects.

Hookability 95%
Extremely easy to get into as you can start where you like.

Lastability 94%
Addictive, challenging and above all FUN!

Value For Money 95%
More expensive than previous Minter releases but just as worthy.

Overall 94%
Yet another Minter classic.