Para

A HIGH-TECH toilet," Andrew reminisces when you ask him where the name **Paradroid** came from. "That's what **Technobots** always reminds me of... We were messing around with some names and somehow we came up with **Technobots**. I even had it on the title screen for a while," he continues. "But then **Paradroid** came along and saved the day. It's a play on PARAnoid anDROID - everyone's out to get you." And the **90**? "It's coming along quite nicely. It should be out next year."

Andrew's clear about his direction: "The idea isn't simply to produce a 16-bit version of the original, but to convert the feel of the original and make it more appropriate for 16-bit. I want to appeal to anyone who enjoyed **Paradroid** the first time around but is now currently enjoying what 16-bit has to offer."

But for a more complete picture of **Paradroid 90**'s origins, we have to go back deep into Andrew's past. Before Gribbly Grobbly and Dragon 32s, to the days of working at Marconi on an IBM Mainframe CMS (Conversional Monitor System), for which, incredibly, Andrew wrote five original games - all in COBOL, and all presented in text, before producing a real-time version of **Space Invaders**.

Now here's something for the history books. Andrew Braybrook's first game ever was **Space Chase**, written in 1979. "There was a **Star Trek** game on the system, but I wanted to build a more interactive version. There was trading or anything like that - you just

Andrew Braybrook: bass player, Graftgold coder, Best Programmer Ever (see pages 160 and 161) and all-round nice guy. He's currently beavering away on his first `original' 16-bit game - a conversion of Paradroid for Hewson. But success hasn't gone to his head, and he consented to give Gary Penn the time of day.

droid '90
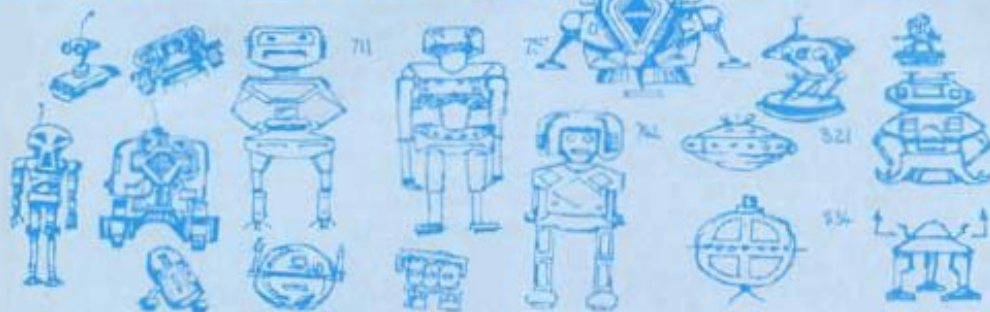
jumped around from galaxy to galaxy, shooting alien ships."

A year later came **Dalek Hunt**: "an early forerunner of **Paradroid**, I suppose," he confirms. Spread over two lift-connected maze-like levels, the objective was to destroy Davros (the Daleks' leader), avoiding or destroying the dozen or so Daleks dotted around ("I'm a bit of Doctor Who fan," he admits). The Daleks can't turn around, so you can sneak up behind them and shoot them. You eventually make it to the lift and the second level. But the moment you shoot Davros, all the lights go out (sound slightly familiar, **Paradroid** pickers?) and the Daleks become invisible, their position only discernable when they fire. With Davros out of the running, you make your way back to the lift to the top level again... only this time there are more Daleks and a deadly Black Dalek - get it and get out in as few moves as possible.

"With **Rubble** (1980) I tried to take the idea a bit further..." The Daleks were replaced by Mechanoids (which appeared in early Bill Hartnell Dr Who stories), and this time you input five moves in advance, which meant that: "You had to guess where the Mechanoids would move, but blocks appeared on the screen and changed the their direction. You could shoot the blocks, but you couldn't guarantee they would disappear, and you'd die if you moved onto them. The objective was to kill all the Mechanoids before you got blocked in."

1981 saw a slight digression with the appearance of **Navigate**, a simplistic blend of

trading and fighting action. It wasn't until a year later, when all the machines in Andrew's office were linked via a network system, that he created **Survive** (spot the ideas that made it to **Paradroid**).

The action took place in a 10-level dungeon, with lifts between levels. The tension was further increased by the presence of two computer-controlled assassins, which moved in a predictable enough pattern... until they saw you. The only time you could see an assassin - or the other players for that matter - was when they were in your line of sight. A message informed you of another player's presence on your level, but of course you couldn't tell if it was alone. Players could ram each other (at the expense of energy) or shoot, by firstly by drawing a string of plus signs on the map and then pressing RETURN to 'light the fuse'.

"I thought it would be nice to play a game with up to four people. A referee program was set up on a remote machine and it knew the position of all the players. Each player's moves were sent to the referee, then sent back to the other players."

The **Paradroid** most Commodore 64 owners have come to know and love came after the cute platform pranks of **Gribbly's Day Out** and two conversions of Steve Turner shoot 'em ups - one for the now defunct Dragon 32 and the other the 64.

Paradroid's scenario concerns a fleet of Battle Droid-bearing freighters on their way to the Final Frontier. Something mysterious hits the fleet and activates most of the droids, who
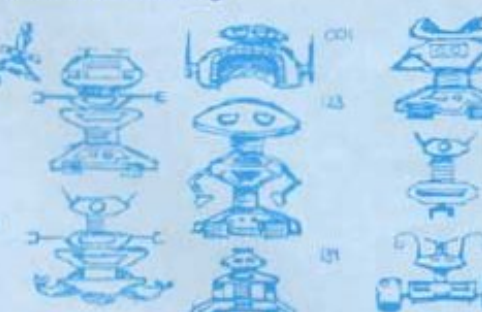
A selection of Graftgold graphic artist John Cumming's sketches for Paradroid 90 droids, including the original 8-bit boys plus some ideas for new creations.

consequently kill the human crew. With contact lost, the space freighter company beams across an Influence Device - a droid capable of interfacing and ultimately controlling hosts.

The ID is pretty weak really, mostly unprotected and armed only with a low-powered laser. Understandably, your priority is to take over a stronger droid.

Each freighter is split into decks, linked by lifts - although not all floors are directly accessible as some decks are split into more than one area. The idea is to make each freighter safe, by either disposing of everything on it or actually destroying the ship outright. You can then beam out to next.

Andrew's been working on **Paradroid 90** on and off for three months, and he's not

Gripping text-based action in one of three of Paradroid's forerunners: Dalek Hunt.

scheduled to finish until April '90. He's writing for the ST first using Dominic Robinson's OOPS development system. "I'm hoping to make some improvements on the Amiga, like scrolling in all directions [it scrolls vertically on the ST, with the possibility of a film-like fade from one 'strip' to another] and hardware sprites for the score and energy displays."

Taking control of a droid isn't simply a matter of bumping into it. Having collided with your target, you enter a sub-game. A representation of the droid's circuitry is displayed, and the idea is to gain control of more data lines than the computer-controlled droid.

Apart from the Battle Droids there are many other types on board, like Security and Maintenance, and each has identifiable characteristics, such as speed and level of aggression. Some patrol set routes, some stand guard, some are dormant and activated by high activity in their vicinity, while others are rogue. Some detect your presence by radar, some require visual contact, and others, like the Daleks in Dalek Hunt, can be approached and shot from behind. Andrew has a dozen or so designs planned, but even more are required. So, here's your opportunity to see your name in lights - design a functional droid, and send it to us. Who knows, it may get used and named after you if it is!

"The pirates are more humanoid than the other droids, so you won't be able to transfer to them." Pirates? "Yes, I thought it'd spice things up a bit. A pirate ship docks with the freighter you are on, and the pirates pour through the airlock. Some will probably be teleported in."

Coming up with new, innovative firepower is only half the battle. Implementing it is another matter entirely: "The problem with rotating robots is that you can fire in almost any direction, which means that the bullets have to be circular or you have to produce frames of animation for each direction. Mind you, you do get some interesting combinations with some droids only capable of firing in eight directions."

"I want to have 10 radically different weapons, each with different strengths and reload times. There's a toothpaste laser [similar to the effect seen in Defender] - in fact it could also bounce around off surfaces. Mmmmm... yes, and Dalek gas, a few more standard plasma bolts, and some proximity mines - you can leave a trail of them and after a short while they explode." Not forgetting every ardent Paradroid player's favourite, the disruptor, which may end up behaving like the smart bomb in Andrew's space exploration epic Morpheus. "Oh, I'm hoping to have some rapid-fire machine guns, too."

A simplistic cutaway side-view of the ship is shown whenever you access a lift to move between floors. Extra detail has yet to be added.

GRAPHICS

Translating the harsh, bas-relief environment of the 8-bit original to a more refined, metallic 16-bit surrounding wasn't as easy as Andrew anticipated: "The most difficult thing is developing a style - I like to have a style, not scrappy graphics bolted together. I want it to look as much like a real spaceship as possible. You can't have anything looking out of place. I want to incorporate more detail, which is easy enough in terms of quantity because whereas the Rainbow Islands' scenery was produced from 256 building blocks, Paradroid 90's is built from 1,024, providing plenty of possibilities... perhaps too many."

"I initially developed some graphics for a very early, four-colour multi-directional scrolling ST version, based on Heavy Metal Paradroid [an enhanced version of the original]. When I saw Xenon 2 though, it was obvious that my attempt wasn't good enough, so I changed style completely. I'm very impressed with Xenon 2's graphics - they're the best I've seen on 16-bit. It uses double-lighting - not a higlight and a lowlight, but two highlights: the main white light from the top left, with a red light from the bottom right. The colour palette seems really flexible - basically we realised that they used less colours, but more shades. John Cummings tried to build a similar palette, and we changed all of the graphics over a couple of days we remapped all the backgrounds and robots, and spread the colours to create a more solid effect. I was trying to redraw the walls as there were but with the new colours, but then I decided to incorporate the metal-cladding."

ART STUDIO.   VIEW FROM SPRITE 0

Andrew's first set of building blocks used to create each deck.

A more recent and more colourful collection of building blocks. Extra shades of colour are used to create more solid scenery. Note the extremely tasteful metal cladding.
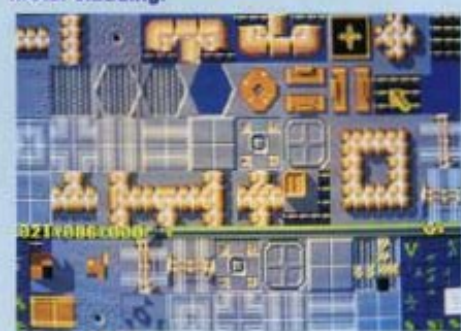
The panel flickers to life and the screen lights up when you log-on to one of the many consoles dotted around the decks. You can then view a plan of the deck you inhabit, a side view of the ship, or view data on robots with a lower secutiry code than that of the host you possess. Unlike the two-dimensional display of its 8-bit parent, Paradroid 90 features an impressive 3D display, complete with blueprint-style plan, side and front views.

Manbot Security
ID Class: 9
Weight: 546 Kgs
Height: 8'11"
Mobility: R
Weapon: MkII Laser Cannon
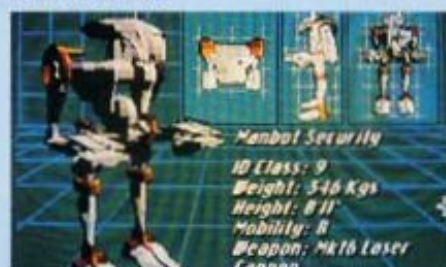
Two working weapons - the toothpaste laser (left) and puffs of corrosive 'Dalek gas' (left), which should in fact be grey in colour.

SOUND

"I leave the sound until the end - but it's not an afterthought. I think about how things will behave in general as the game's developed, and this encompasses the sound."

Jason Page has already written a title tune on the Amiga, complete with electric guitar sample and incorporating the original 'talking' using a sound not too disimilar to the martian voice in Aegis' Sonix. He develops on Soundtracker but actually uses Graftgold's own sound routine to play the tunes.

The atmosphere would be destroyed if a tune was played as you did, so rythmic, slightly unpredictable pulses suffice to unnerve in much the same way as the Space Invaders heartbeat. "It gives the game life. It makes you think that the whole ship is alive - that there are other things going on." It certainly does, especially when coupled with the swish of doors, and other suitable noises for the different droids - like high-speed whines for fast droids and slow throbs for the bigger boys.