Games I was bad at on my Amstrad CPC

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My first gaming machine was an Amstrad CPC 6218.

During this period, Amstrad computers were popular in France, so pirated games were easy to obtain at school.

At the time games came with paper manuals, meaning that pirated ones didn't come with one.

Me and my gaming school friends were less that 10 years old, many games were difficult to play and to decipher, and there was no internet to provide you with walkthroughs or guides.

Trying systematically different strategies, or drawing maps was not something we understood.

Gaming magazines published some cheat codes, that required an external physical device to use.

We didn't traded magazines, but ex-changed cheat codes for the games we had.

It means there was three games cate-gories:

1. The minority of games we could figure by ourselves and that were easy enough to enjoy long play sessions.

2. The games that had cheat codes that removed all difficulties. We played them again and again from the start

to the end, swapping keyboards and joysticks at each level.

3. The other games. We also played them again and again, but often the play sessions were very short as we lost again and again at the same point were the lack of skill or knowledge hit us.

The third category is an odd kind, but we were young and the games were fascinating, so being stuck was not frustrating for us, in the same way than doing the same bike ride again and again was still fun.

Asphalt

One of the first games published by a French company then called UBI Soft.

You played as a truck trying to survive against other vehicles that tried to destroy you.

There was no power-up. Between each level parts of the truck got repaired a little, so your goal was to get as little damage as possible to survive a bit longer.

It means that the winning strategy was to remember the level structure to anticipate were the enemies will come from, and to execute the right movements with the right timing. Two things we couldn't master.

The truck was slow to move, the levels were long, and the number of different enemies were low, which made the game mesmerizing.

You can play it here.

Batman

35 years ago we had action 3D games, but they were isometric.
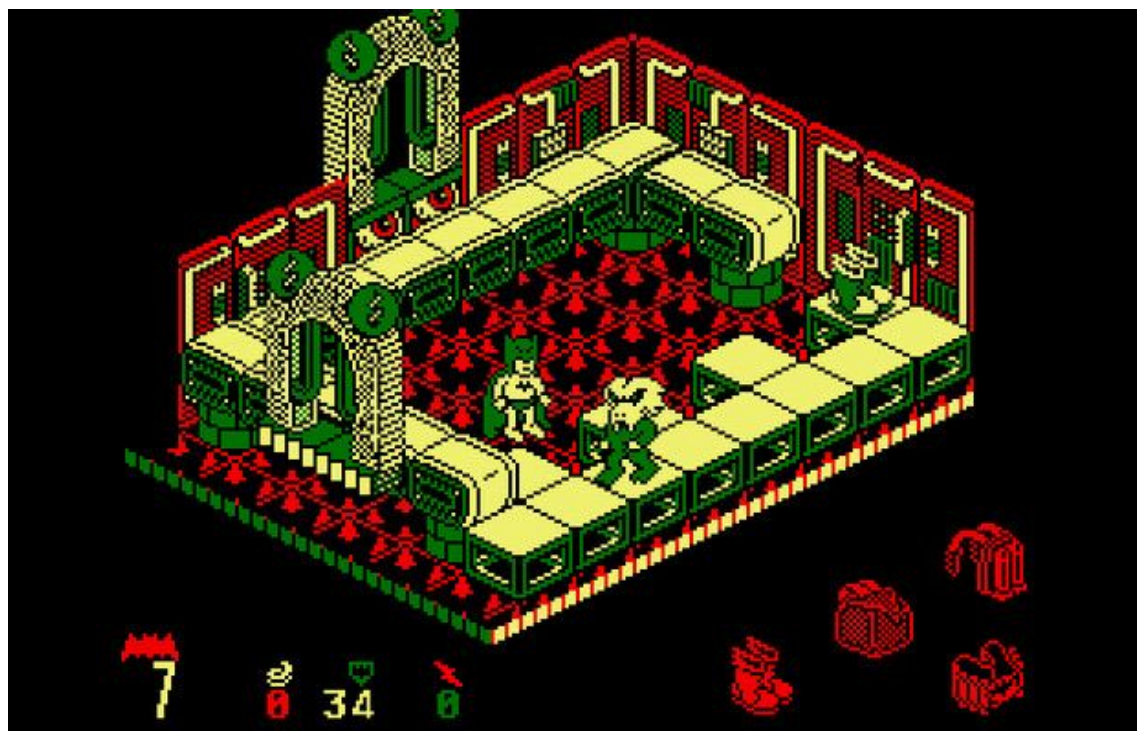
Those kind of games were pretty popular and were a mix of platform and puzzle games, with sometimes a dash of early metroidvania.

The isometric play required a specific skill to map the up / down / right / left keys to the diagonal movements on the screen.

My experience was that I could do it in the first sections were you have to do one thing at the time. But when things became more difficult, like when you had to do several timed jumps in a row, I suddenly lost this ability and couldn't figure in which direction I was supposed to move the joystick, and died horribly.

You can play it here.

Captain Blood

A very unusual game at the time, and probably still now.

This science-fiction game was about chatting with different kind of aliens to obtain information, mostly the space coordinates of other aliens so you could visit them to chat with them and extract other information.

The chat interface was based on a set of emoji you could use to compose sentences, each emoji representing a concept (me, you, war, planet, coordinates, etc.). Then the alien answered you another set of emojis.

Being able to chat with different kind on aliens looked impressive, but of course underneath it used a limited set of rules.

Progressing in the game required to discover the more or less exact sentences

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you had to use on each alien so it would give you the information you need.

The manual gave you crucial information on the relationship between the alien species, but we didn't had it.

The first alien was easy to brute-force, so we were blocked on the second group of aliens, unable to find what to ask, trying different sentences or repeating the same again and again with the hope it would eventually work, until the game run out of time.

You can play it here.

The Great Escape

Yes: they made a video game adaptation of the great escape movie.

Think of it like a very early version of The Escapists: you need to find the right objets to escape from the camp while following a daily routine expected from you.

Another isometric 3D game, this one with a realistic place to explore, which was a real novelty at the time.

Without the manual that explained the gameplay, we toured the place like tourists, fetching the few objects we could access without being caught and admiring the visuals. We never discovered the tunnels network and I only learnt about them a few years ago while watching a video of the game.

You can play it here.

The Sacred Armour of Antiriad

In this game, you start as a kind of prehistoric person that can jump and throws rocks.

Once you find an artifact that looks like a boot, you are supposed to activate a flying armor.

Then with the armor you should be able to find other power-ups to expand your abilities which unlock further locations, again a kind of early metroidvania.

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Except I only remember running around, collecting the boot and seeing the armor, which probably means I didn't figure how to use the armor to fly even if it was obvious you should be able to use it for something.

You can play it here.