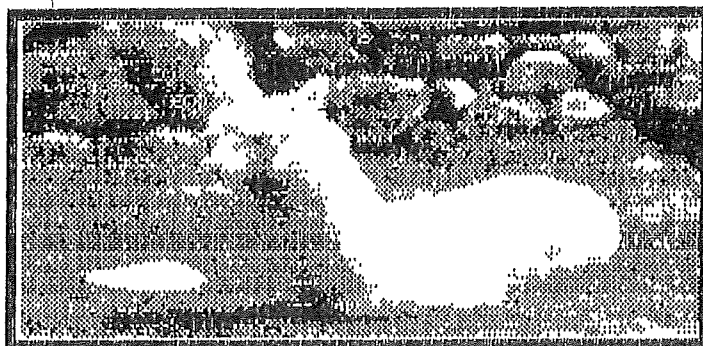


# The Nature of the Beast...



Return of the Mutant Camels - completed  
Atari 7800 - blasted  
Groovy new Atari ST stuff - tested  
Lights in the Dome - revisited  
New Amiga A500 - anticipated-

1: This is the New Stuff...

Greetings once again... NOTE is coming to you this time courtesy of the new Fleet Street publishing kit on the Atari ST... it'll be interesting to see how it compares to the Macintosh stuff I'm used to.

I've been a busy Yak indeed these last few months, finishing off Revenge II, doing a little work here and there on Colourspace II, and playing lots of great games, of course... Revenge II took just over five months to write, making it the longest games project I've yet done; but a month of that time was spent ski-ing in France where, although I have the equipment to work, I don't get anywhere near as much done as I might do at home. However, I hope you'll find Revenge II to have been worth the effort - the early responses by passing game testers have been favourable, and I think it's my best yet, but then I'm biased. A full description will follow...

## 2: THE RETURN OF THE MUTANT CAMELS

### 1: THE PRESIDENT OF EARTH SPEAKS....

'We, the people of Earth, are long unused to the rigours of conflict, having been many millennia a unified people, seeking only to roam amongst the stars, learning and sharing our knowledge with such sentient beings as we might encounter on our way. However, we have recently learned of the re-emergence of our ancient enemy, the empire of Zzyax, and of its plans to strike at our very homeworld and destroy our race forever. Thus we are forced to fall back upon this, our last defence - left us by our ancestors of 6000 years ago, against the day that the blight of Zzyax returned to darken the Galaxy. The doings of those ancestors, and their triumph over the mighty and tyrannical Zzyaxian Empire, have long since become the stuff of rumour and legend. Suffice to say that as far as we can tell, the myth can be traced back to actual historical events. These are that:

a) at some time before Mankind availed themselves of an interstellar drive and left the Earth, they were adept in genetic engineering, and utilised mutated forms of contemporary beasts as engines of warfare; and that certain of these enhanced forms were abducted and used in turn against the human forces by alien adversaries;

b) these beasts were persuaded to rebel against their captors and fight on the side of Earth in the epic conflict known as the Revenge of the Mutant Camels; they subsequently returned to Earth, persuaded by a number of cerebrally-enhanced goats (an Earthly species of astonishing beauty, sadly now extinct) and after their return we know not what was their fate, bar a few shards of data distorted wildly by the passage of the eons. We do believe that these beasts may have something to do with this ultimate defence left us against the Zzyaxians; and that they represent our last hope against defeat by the Zzyaxian evil. Thus, I have given the coded RF signal that will re-activate the ancient defence station on the Dark Side of the Moon. God~ help us in our time of need; and God help the Zzyaxians if the legends be true and we have let loose the Mutant Camels of old amongst them'.....

### 2: THE BEASTS AWAKEN....

Within the great cave was only silence, and darkness, and intense cold; the cold of absolute vacuum. For six millennia nothing had stirred within this giant chamber; but now there came an intrusion of light, of harsh cathode rays, as six hundred high-resolution colour CRTs came flickering to life before the eyes of six hundred shaggy, slumbering heads. There was a chattering of headphones as 1200 furry ears twitched tentatively to what was probably Mankind's last surviving Pink Floyd CD. Upon the screens symmetrical patterns flowed and swirled in time to the Floyd, massaging the long-dormant visual cortexes of the hibernating MetaBeasts. At last, one of the ancient ungulates' brains responded to the synergistic stimulus and coherent thoughts poured through the beast's neurons, of which the first thought was:--Man, I sure musta been blasted last night, I fell clean asleep watching Colourspace!...closely followed by the realisation that there had been, in fact, no party, only the Resolution, followed by the Refrigeration, and that this must be the Resurrec-

tion, and that the headache was not due to a hangover, but rather to something closer to an afterlife; and that there must therefore be Zzyaxians loose again upon the face of the Galaxy, and therefore a job of blasting to be done.~~

These memories were re-inforced by the sight of 599 other MetaBeasts awakening, looking around for some lager without lag-ends in, and finally making the mental transition from party to Nemesis, the Nemesis of the evil Zzyaxian empire.

And so, 600 monstrosly hairy, 90-foot high, neutronium-shielded, laser-spitting death-camels finished their Floyd, then shambled purposefully towards the waiting spaceships that were to carry them across the light-years to the planet Zzyax Prime, there to attempt the ultimate battle in the defence of Earth.... the RETURN OF THE MUTANT CAMELS.....

\* 'God' in this context is more accurately translated as 'synergistic consciousness formed as the sum of sentient Galactic consciousness' or suchlike, far too heavy for this translation. Just stick to God, you'll find it less of a brainstrain.

~~ Upon their return to Earth, the victorious Mutant Camels were entertained by a series of parties involving camels, humans, cerebrally-enhanced MetaGoats, and most of Thailand. After a year of this, the camels agreed to participate in a radical scheme, partly out of a desire to repay Earthkind for having rescued them from the Zzyaxians, and partly out of a notion that it just might prove to be a wonderful cure for their hangovers. They agreed to undergo the process of the Three R's- the Resolution (to serve Earthkind against the Zzyaxian oppressors); the Refrigeration (to be placed in suspended animation on the Dark Side of the Moon, against the day they might be needed to do battle for Earth once more); and the Resurrection- which would take place at the command of the people and beasts of Earth should the Galaxy once more fall under the shadow of Zzyax....

Thus the scene is set for the third game in the Mutant Camels series, the Return of the Mutant Camels. The game follows much the same format as its illustrious predecessor, Revenge of the Mutant Camels... but with many extensions and improvements to the graphics, of course! The basic battle method is the same: you, represented by a camel, fight against waves of aliens; you must survive the assault for a total of 7 km, the distance to go until victory being shown at the upper-right of the screen.

However, in RMC II, you have 100 waves to tackle, instead of the 42 of the original. The waves are accessed by means of a Wave Select Grid which looks, at first glance, very similar to that of Mama Llama; the way in which it operates is totally different, however. Each square represents a wave; you begin the game in the upper-left hand corner of the wave grid, with a marker positioned over Wave One. You can't move this marker at first for reasons that become apparent later. You press the FIRE button to enter the wave (which is deliberately easy, and from which you will surely emerge the victor). Upon return from battle, the square with the marker in will have changed: gone clear if you won the battle, or marked with a cross, if you lost. You now find that you can move the marker to certain adjacent squares - the squares you can access are determined by the rule that if a square abuts on the north, south, east or west to a square which has been already attempted, it becomes available. Sounds complicated but isn't.

The upshot is that you can create your own pathway through the waves, taking them in whatever order you fancy. This means that if you come across a particularly nasty wave, you can make your way around it by a different route on subsequent games.-

Thus, a degree of mapping is required if you're going to take advantage of the easy waves and avoid the difficult ones.

This talk of difficult waves brings us nicely to another of the major extensions to the Revenge scenario: the ability to buy shields and more powerful weapons in order to tackle the more evil waves. When you return from battle, your remaining energy is doubled, as in Revenge 1, and you also receive credits- how many credits depends upon how much energy you have left; the more energy, the more credits. With these credits you can buy kit from the Weapons Store before entering your next chosen wave. The handy kinds of kit available include:

***SHIELDS*** - two strengths of; Double Shield is advisable for certain of the heavier waves;

***YOYO BULLETS*** - bullets that return to the camel upon hitting an alien - you have a good chance of catching another target 'on the rebound';

***BIG BULLETS*** - just that - whopping great collision rectangle to these suckers, you can really sock it to the opposition;

***SMART BULLETS*** - three of these running wild on a screenful of aliens are a joy to behold - once fired, they chase all over the screen, seeking out and destroying the enemy;

***RESET MAX*** - if you come out of a wave with but a piffling trifle of energy left, this'll fill you up again;

***EXTRA BEASTIE*** - purchase another life - each new camel comes factory-fitted with gleaming new Shields Strength Two and Big Bullets, by way of a bonus.

The snag is that all these things cost you credits, and all the prices keep rising, too - must be the Tory government I suppose!

The only limitation to what you can buy is your credit limit (of course) and the fact that you may purchase only one type of bullet and shield, thus you can't have, say, Big Smart Bullets or Shield Strength 1+2. So, you see, you have to plan your route through the waves carefully, drawing on past experience. You can cash in on the easier waves - save up your creds and earn plenty more - then splash out on Shields and Big Bullets for those real toughies.

You get a separate score for each wave; this score is added to your total score only if you survive the wave. Scoring is deliberately generous - with 10 digits for score information, scores like telephone numbers are the order of the day, and we're talking International Dialling Codes and all here...

The graphics have been greatly improved, with a variety of weird backdrops which have been inspired to a certain extent by the excellent Sega game Fantasy Zone; weird pastel colours and bizarre shapes. The camel animation has been modified; it's now based on actual photos of a running camel, studied carefully and rendered into sprites, and is quite flash. The beast can fly, too; its tail rotates like a propellor and its hump wobbles alarmingly as it does so... Ultimately, we have what I consider to be my best blaster yet; an element of strategy and mapping, plenty of waves, plenty of colour, plenty of bullets... and a nice arrangement of a traditional Peruvian tune to cap off the title page. (Notice the way the camel flicks its tail in time to the music of the title screen. Well cool).....



Not anywhere near as difficult to get into as some of my stuff has been of late - but still plenty of difficulty in there for those who dare to look...My best score so far has been of the order of forty million (!) with 28% completed, but I was demonstrating at the time, and will doubtless do a lot better when I sit down for a proper game.

### 3: Other Stuff...

Not content with writing Return MC, I've been doing a little work on other bits and pieces, too. Void Runner has, as mentioned in the last issue, been transported across to the C64 and will be available on the Mastertronic mid-range budget label MAD across a number of formats, not just on the '64. The initial reviews of VR have been very favourable.

I've also been working at Colourspace II here and there, mainly stuff to get the program working with the ProDraw graphics tablet I got at the Atari show last November. This is a fine device indeed - it hooks up to the ST's RS232 port and makes the perfect controller for Colourspace, for a variety of reasons. First off, there are no moving parts - the stylus head doesn't even need to be touching the active area for co-ordinates to be returned. There's never any of the sticking and drifting that you tend to get when your mouse is getting a little bit mungy. Best of all, you can set the tablet into what's called Absolute mode - where the active area of the tablet maps directly onto the screen, meaning that you can lose the little white dot which you used to need to locate yourself - you can now locate yourself easily by knowing your position on the tablet.

I'll be working on Colourspace II full-time for quite a while now - six months at least - and it promises to be my greatest challenge yet. The ultimate aim is to completely overhaul Colourspace - remove the rather ropey user-interface and put in a proper icon-driven one; speed up all plotting ops; add new screen mappings and symmetry forms; create a 'macro language' for key events; link to MIDI for easy syncing with external synthesisers and other STs; and create a video-animation system for use on the larger STs to generate some great full-screen video FX.

Perhaps the most ambitious thing we've got planned is to link five STs through a video mixer we're having built, to generate a single display. This last I'll be doing in conjunction with Adrian Wagner, a musician one of whose albums you will have seen me Colourspace to at the November Atari show. Our aim is to create a 'video album' of Colourspace, with his music and my graphics. Watch this (Colour)space....

### 4: The Atari 7800, mine at last...

Those of you who've been getting NOTB for a long time will surely remember my first ravings about the Atari 7800 game system, designed in '84 and never released. Well, for a while it looked like it never would be - but then it turned up at the Atari show last November, with a UK launch seemingly imminent - but alas it was not to be - we get stuck with the graunchy 65XE which is just a sawn-off 8-bit and lacks the all-important MARIE chip of the 7800.-

However, the 7800 was launched in the USA, and those nice people at Atari arranged for me to buy a US model and four carts, *Pole Pos II*, *Galaga*, *Robotron*, and *Xevious*. Well, your man with the step-down transformer and the NTSC telly can report that the 7800 is great!

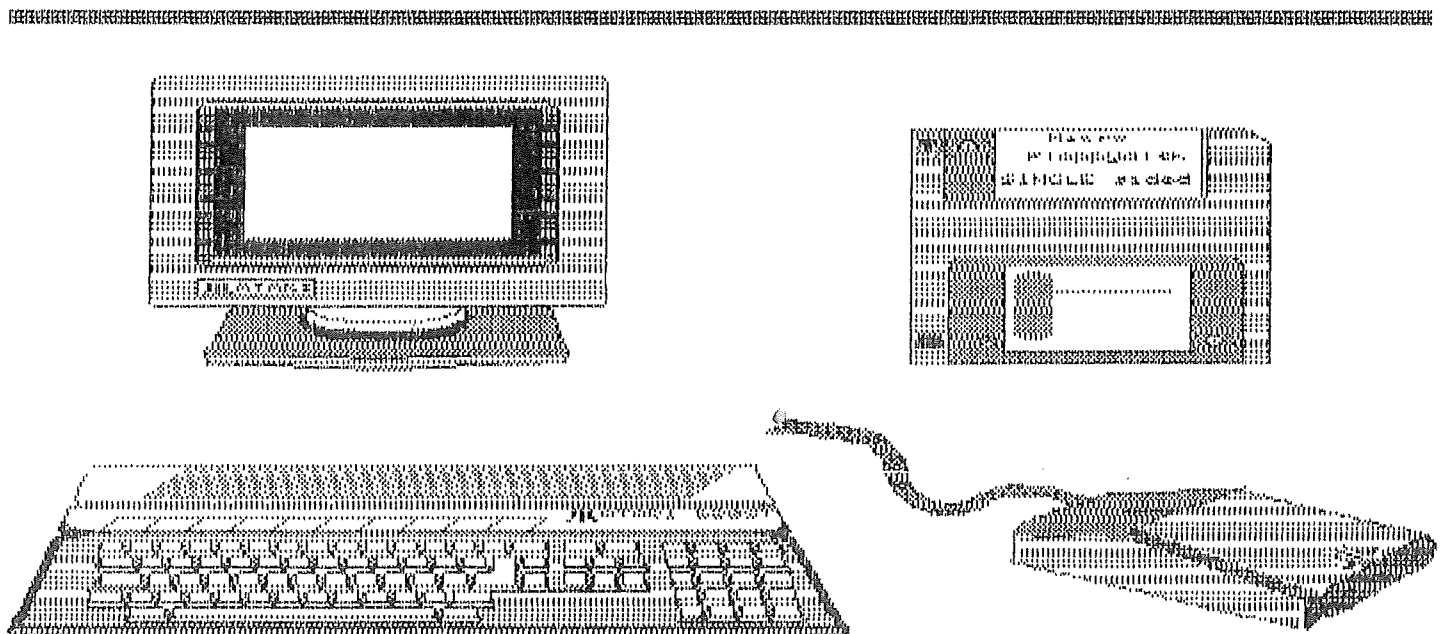
The sprite generator is indeed vastly improved - it looks like it's handling at least 128 fast-moving objects with ease. Couple this to good hardware smoothscroll, plenty of colour and a punchy sound generator and you've got a fine games system. Not quite as hi-res as the Sega, but considerably less sprite flicker, and some damn fine games.

Of the four games, *Pole Position II* is the least impressive - it's an OK game, just not as good as the rest. *Galaga*'s great, almost exactly as it was in the arcades, except that the fleet doesn't 'breathe' like on the original. *Robotron* lacks the fly-apart explosions of the original but retains ALL of the playability and really shows off that sprite generator - you never saw so many sprites on screen this side of *Space Harrier*! The best conversion has to be *Xevious* - which plays superbly, just like the Arcade game, down to the positioning of the 'secret bunkers' and bonus flags. If you fancy yourself a cool zapper try *Xevious* on Expert level - that'll make your glasses steam up for sure...

I really don't understand why Atari don't release this in the UK. In the USA it's cheap - around 70 dollars - and the carts are about 12 dollars, in line with home computer game prices. It's compatible with all the old 2600 stuff, too; so if you have a large library of 2600 stuff, you can just buy the new console without having to junk your old games.

This has to make sound sense - there are hundreds of thousands of old Atari VCSs out there. The system we're getting, the 65XE, has no 2600 compatibility. True enough, you can use 8-bit Atari software with it - but do you really want to have to load in slow, tape-based games when you could have instant cartridge software? And you don't get all those sprites, either.

I should be getting a lot more carts from a mate of mine who's off to the States shortly. I'll report on these next time. Hopefully I should be getting *Space Harrier* for the Sega, and with luck, *Out Run* and *Enduro Racer*, too....-



## 5: Lights in the Dome... again

Imagine that you're lying out on a hill on a warm, starlit night; someone nearby is playing some well groovy sounds and you're gazing aimlessly into the night sky. Suddenly, you notice a faint iridescence amongst the stars. This becomes brighter, until you realise that it's actually Colourspace. You start to groove and then, in response to the Floyd, the stars in the sky start to rotate -and as they do, Colourspace appears to turn the other way...

If all this sounds totally groovy but also totally impossible, think again, 'coz that's exactly what I've been doing with Space just recently. I've been invited to do some work at the Armagh Planetarium in Northern Ireland, which possesses, in addition to the usual star generator that you usually find in Planetaria, some really hot video projection kit that projects computer images straight up into the dome. They have five projectors which project upwards in a cross formation, and when you put Colourspace on, then add in the star generator, the effect is just totally amazing. Add some music, and you're well blown away.

I'm going to be doing almost a week of live performances there, accompanying a US musician who's coming over to play in the Dome. I'll be using Colourspace 1.3 running on a 1040 plus my trusty hard drive, and I'll be having a cool and very groovy time for sure. And the Guinness is delicious, too.

Provided it all goes well, I'll probably be working with the Armagh people quite a bit more in future, hopefully phasing in Colourspace II as it becomes available.

## 6: New Stuff

The Atari ST market is coming together really nicely now, with a fair bit of high-quality stuff becoming available. For any of you who are into the ST, here's a summary of some of the stuff that's come my way:

**TYPHOON**: German vertically-scrolling blaster by the folx who brought you Xtron (anyone heard my hacked Xtron- boots up with a sampled Dave Gilmour belting out the guitar solo from Comfortably Numb). Typhoon is in a similar vein, with a nice smooth-scrolling backdrop and some detailed meanies. Gameplay isn't too bad but could be better, but nonetheless it's a challenging blast.

**XEVIOUS**: the granddaddy of the verticalscroll zappers. Probably the best home computer version, graphics good on the ships, not so good on the ground (WHY did they miss out the Nazca Eagle on the ground just after the first rotating shields??). Playability is quite good, but it's not so close to the arcade game as the 7800 conversion (which DOES have the Nazca Eagle). Great if you like Xevious and haven't got the 7800 version.

**ARKANOID**: A perfect conversion. More than that you don't need to say. Brilliant-

**MACADAM BUMPER:** The best version of the Pinball Construction Set bar none, and it comes from France. Pinball playability is fine, graphics are very good, and the user-interface is very nicely done. My only, slight, quibble concerns the flippers; they seem to have only two positions, unflipped or fully-flipped, no intermediate positions, which gives you less ball control.

**TURBO G.T.:** Another French production; very playable version of Atari Super Sprint (you know, the one with the three steering wheels). Lacks the spanner options of the original, but is nonetheless good fun, especially with two players.

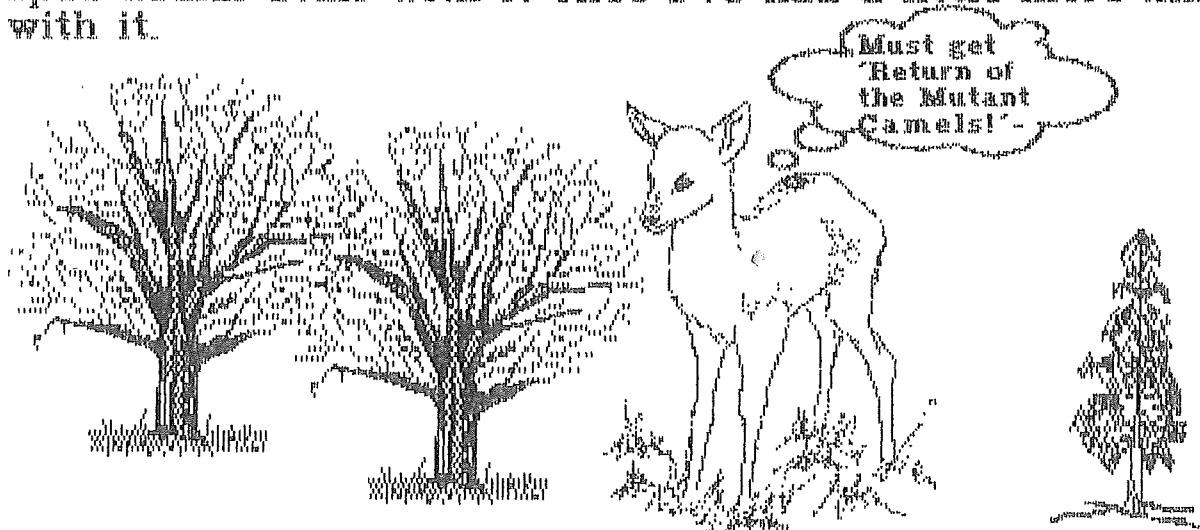
**GOLDRUNNER:** I haven't seen this finished yet, but the demo looks very fast and cool. It's URIDIUM laid on its side and scrolling vertically at HORRENDOUS speeds. Sampled speech too - 'Get Ready' and 'You're doing GREAT!' - I wonder if author Steve Bak is a Space Harrier fan by any chance? Whatever he is, he's certainly come a long way since Lands of Havoc....

I've also got some smart new utilities: I'm transferring my coding over to Devpac, which is a sight better than K-Seka. Seka is fine if you're learning or if you haven't got the hard disk yet, but Devpac's much nicer.

On the graphics side, I'm most impressed with Aegis Animator. This is a metamorphic animation package ('metamorphic' describes the in-betweening facility it has whereby you can define, say a square in one frame and a star in the next, then animate, and the square smoothly metamorphoses into the star). It can also handle bitmap stuff like in Film Director, but it's the metamorphic stuff I like the best. Polygons can be filled or outline, and you can shrink, rotate in 3 planes, move and distort them in a variety of ways. Using K-Switch, you can have both Colourspace and Ani installed in a 1-meg ST, and flick to a groovy animation sequence in mid-'Space.

I'd already seen Aegis Ani on the Amiga, and although it seems weird, I swear it's a bit faster on the ST...

My newest acquisition is Fleet Street Publisher, wot I'm using now. It's good for doing the newsletter and easy to learn - this is my first attempt you're reading now! Although this is in the usual NOTB style dictated by the original format, which was produced in Macwrite on the Macintosh, FSP will do all the proper stuff like put your text in columns like a newspaper, and allow you to merge pix in with the text. Look out for some more spectacular stuff with it once I've had a little more time to play with it.





## 7: End of File..

Well, that just about brings me to the end of the current output. I guess it'll be a while before I have 'Space II finished, so don't hold your breath - but I also plan to bang off a couple of budget blasters on the C64 if I get the time, just to keep my hand in as it were. Plus I have both Peter Gabriel and Genesis concerts to attend in the immediate future, which ought to be plenty good...

Longer-term plans are for a definite ST arcade game to be written, and for Colourspace to be ported across to the Amiga, too.

Since Commodore have finally seen the light and released an Amiga that is (a) quite cheap, and (b) actually looks like a home computer rather than an IBM PC, we can expect good Amiga software to go up in quantity and down in price. Amiga hardware is now being used in arcade machines, so we're getting to the stage where the home version of an arcade game will be exactly the same as the original...except that the original will probably be using about 2.5 Megabytes of main memory, of course. Nonetheless, the quality of arcade conversions on Amigas and STs will still be hugely superior to the current '64 standard. I'm afraid that the more you use a 16-bit system, the less satisfied you become with the old 8-bit stuff.. I mean I'm an old '64 stalwart, and I don't intend giving up on the beast just yet, but when you compare an ST game to its '64 equivalent, it really shows... and with the Amiga it's even worse.

As for '64 stuff, one of the nicest bits I've seen recently was DELTA, not for the game design (design? wot design? 'sgot bullets, ain't it? 'sgot a spaceship, ain't it? an' aliens? Wot you mean, 'originality'? Never 'eard of it) but the raster handling's rather nice, using sprites-for-everything, only uses the character screen for a starfield and bullets. Fine blasty stuff in the mode of Salamander, and a groovy, homage-to-Philip-Glass soundtrack to help along the action.

Mind you, I haven't been truly addicted to anything '64-wise for a while, not really since the likes of Sentinel or the incomparable Thrust (when's Thrust II out for the Commie, I want to know??). Of course I'm pretty addicted to Return of the Mutant Camels, but then I would be...

I was interested to read the other day that Commodore have finally released a 3.5in drive for the C64. I've been waiting for this to happen for quite a while now, and hopefully it'll signal the beginning of the end for the ungainly 5.25 inch disk. 3.5in floppies aren't floppy - which means you can leave them lying about like cassette tapes and they won't get bent or anything silly; the media is protected by a sliding cover so your cat won't be able to put his paw right in the middle of your source code when he's sitting on top of your disk drive - and besides, those little floppies are just so much cooler than your average knackered 5.25 inch clunker. Mark my words- those old floppy floppy disks will soon be as dead as the old 8-inch jobs (anyone remember them, on the old 380-Z crates at school? Disk drives the size of a small garage, motors whirring all the time whether or not you were accessing the drives, and sticking your disk in was like putting an LP, sleeve and all, into the drive slot).

Right, you've had quite enough of this for now. Remember, you've 28% and 40 million to beat. Get to it!!-

'Nature of the Beast' is published by Yak whenever he feels like it. If you would like to receive it, please write to LLAMASCFT, 49 Mount Pleasant, Todley, RG26 6BN, requesting to be added to the mailing list. Likewise if you don't wish to get it any more, tell us to stop sending it. This is the first issue to be entirely composed and edited on my trusty Atari ST. Clunkout was done on my Epoch FX80. Contact us on (07956) 4478 for more info on the availability of Return of the Mutant Camels, or watch the computer press.

# The Daily Llama

all the news that's fit to bleat

## Female Llama wins U.S. elections

Our Beast in Washington with the fluffy little tail reports

In a surprise election result that shocked the world, it was last night announced that the next President of the USA will be Shaggy Fluffytail Darling III, a female llama standing for election with the Groovy Beastie Party.

The GBP candidate swept to a surprise victory, completely blowing away Republican and Democratic candidates alike.

Interviewed shortly after the result was announced, Miss Shaggy Fluffytail Darling III made a few gentle bleating noises and the odd grunt.

Initial reaction to the result has been favourable. Llama-lovers all over the USA are, of course, delighted. Said one: "What a relief to have an intelligent creature in the White House at last! Now we can sleep soundly at night knowing that the President of the USA isn't going to press The Button and start global nuclear war - she can't reach The Button with her

little hooves".

The feminist camp is also reported to be pretty chuffed, although they admit that they didn't really expect the first female President to be a llama.

### GBP Policies

The radical policies proposed by the GBP include some swingeing attacks upon the speciesism that plagues the US today.

"Equal Rights for Beasties" proclaims the GBP slogan. Why should an entity suffer loss of privileges in society merely because he is a llama? And so, we can look forward to the following reforms:

1: No eating animals or we'll send in the carnivores.

2: No Keeping pets. An animal may agree to live with a human, but no ownership is implied, even if they're married (possible under GBP

policy).

3: Compulsory wearing of Peruvian jumpers is to be enforced, at least initially, to serve the dual purpose of boosting the Peruvian and Bolivian economies and promoting llama-awareness in general.

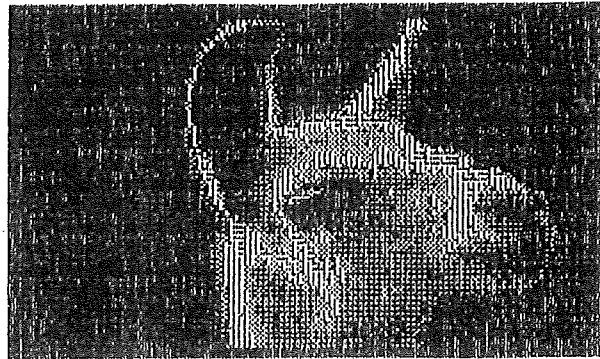
Detailed examination of GBP policies - turn to page 2

### News in Brief:-



Llama discovers ancient Inca city - full story inside.

Ungulates released from zoos: Said one released llama: 'Captivity? It makes me spit!' See page 94



SHAGGY FLUFFYTAIL DARLING III-  
'COMPULSORY PERUVIAN JUMPERS'