

TIME was when getting air meant going for a quick stroll, and a real hip skateboard was a short plank with half a skate at each end. Sheesh, even the very term getting air is a little old hat – all the juves groove to atmospherics these days.

Trouble is, skateparks are either pocket handkerchief affairs with about 40,000 skaters per square metre, or huge, soulless places which cost a fortune to get into. So all the mad, bad and rad dudes have started building their own courses, wherever they can, and with whatever they can find.

Skate of the Art starts, against all possible odds and LRT's safety standards (whichever is the lesser), on the platform of Earl's Court tube station.

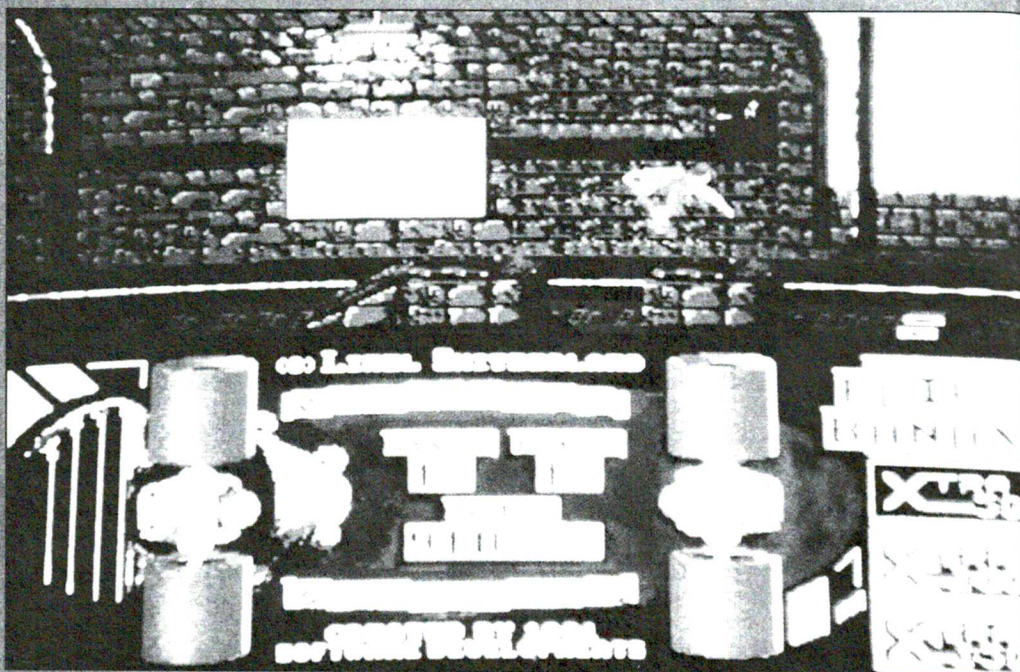
Various bits and bobs are arranged in a one-dimensional way along the platform, for the special delight of your little skater. Tasteful brick ramps must be climbed at just the right angle and then coasted down gracefully.

Manholes, and what look indistinguishable from piles of books and filing cabinets, must either be jumped or flipped, depending on their size.

There's no bonus for completing a course without error – they can only be done in one faultless run otherwise you lose a board and have to sit through the whole tedious business of the little skater setting his board down at the start.

Each of the courses is short. The real skill lies in timing the movements just right. The 20 courses track your progress through the skateways of the world, with various panoramic views and geographically relevant obstacles.

The preamble to the game is quite



*What a stupid place to leave a skateboard*

well done, with a series of simple but effective attract screens. The controls are explained in rather a neat way. You are presented with a picture of a joystick and your little skater in a small window. You move the joystick, the joystick on the screen moves, and the homunculus obliges with the relevant action. Simple, but neat. It kept me happy for half a minute or so.

Although the attract mode works, the in-game graphics are not great. In fact, not to put too fine a point on it, they're blocky and wouldn't be that remarkable on a C64. Most of the screen is taken up by a huge upturned skateboard whose wheels move in sync with yours. It really only acts as a scoreboard.

The top hundred or so pixels do the interesting bit. The smoothness of the scrolling would be remarkable on a lesser machine, but we are in the real world, so I'll try not to mention it. The tunes can be lived with, but the game effects are limited to a rather pathetic "Aah!" as your skater wipes out again.

By making the first course very difficult until you learn it, and then making it a mere formality when you know how, Linel has killed any urge to progress with the game. It's too simple, too hard and too dull to charge any more than £1.99 for, despite any effort that went into it.

Skate of the Art's only claim to fame is that it comes from Liechtenstein, the little principality

which is too small to hold Captain Bob and his bank account simultaneously. Unless you're on a "Buy Liechtensteinian" drive, the atmospherics are better elsewhere.

Stewart C. Russell

## Skate of the Art

**£19.95**

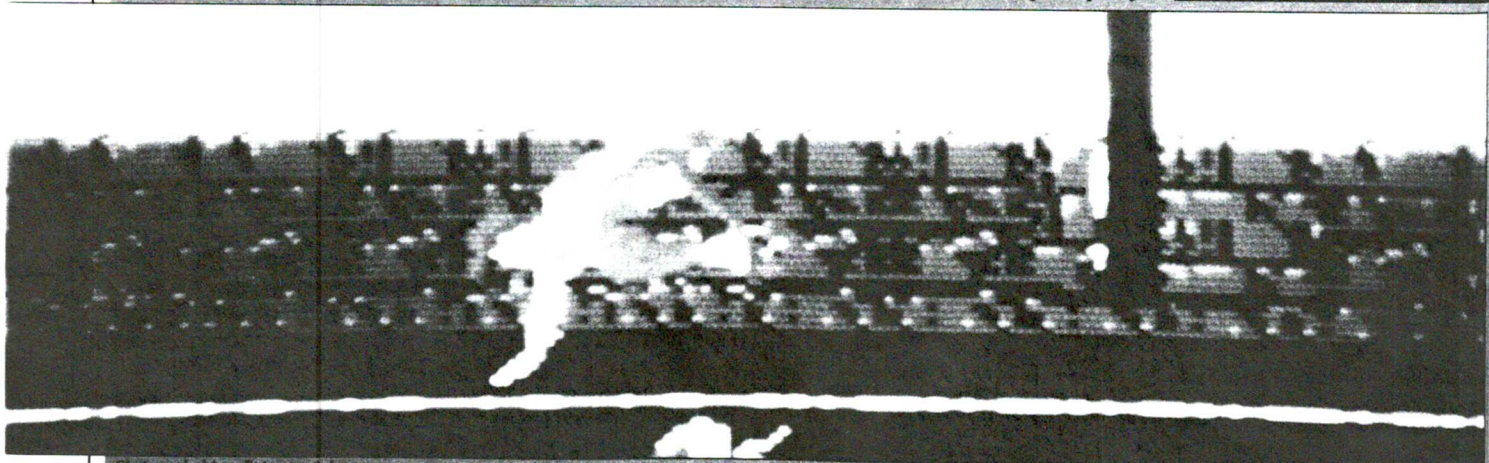
Line 1

## SOUND

## Gameday

Value

**Overall – 46%**



## Skate and chips, flying tonight