

= Soft & Cuddly =

Soft & Cuddly is a horror arcade adventure game released for the ZX Spectrum home computer , developed by John George Jones and published by The Power House . It was released in September 1987 in the United Kingdom and in early 1988 in Spain . The player assumes the role of a man armed with a laser gun and a jet pack , whose mother , the Android Queen , has been dismembered . The player 's task is to locate the scattered body parts of the Android Queen and sew her back together .

Jones had previously developed a gruesome game called Go to Hell . In an interview Jones stated that he developed the game for his own amusement ; he enjoyed the reactions people gave to the game . The original , pre @-@ release , version of the game featured more grisly images . Reviewers praised the game 's graphics but had mixed feeling about the scenes actually depicted by the graphics . Some reviewers criticized the game 's gameplay as repetitive but praised as being fun and akin to a horror movie by others .

= = Gameplay = =

Soft & Cuddly is a surreal arcade adventure game set in a fantasy horror world of 256 rooms . The player controls the son of the Android Queen . The Queen has imprisoned her husband , the player character 's father , in a refrigerator . The Queen has been dismembered in an accident , leaving her husband in danger of being attacked by evil spirits .

The object of the game is to collect the eight pieces of the Android Queen 's body then stitch her back together again . The player must first find and approach the refrigerator in order to be told where the first body part can be found . Once this has been returned to the player 's trapped father , the next body part location will be revealed . Once all eight body parts have been collected and returned to the refrigerator , the player must find a needle and thread in order to restore the Android Queen . The location of the refrigerator is randomized at the beginning of each new game .

The game world consists of a number of rooms and passages with background scenery including a machine which stretches four conjoined babies and men being torn apart on racks . The game 's rooms are filled with enemies and traps such as spiked ceilings , falling anvils and airborne spinning blades . The player character is armed with a laser gun and a jet pack which is used to fly around the game world . The laser can overheat and become inoperable for a time if not used sparingly . Scenery and surfaces can be degraded then destroyed by repeated laser fire , allowing access to adjacent rooms which would otherwise be unreachable or require a detour . The player starts each game with three lives ; the game 's display features a heart strength indicator which is reduced each time the player is injured . If the player loses all their heart strength , their heart stops , resulting in a lost life . Players can render themselves invisible and invincible for a limited period three times on a single life . When the player character is invisible , he can fire the laser in order to determine his current location .

= = Development and release = =

Soft & Cuddly was developed for The Power house by John George Jones . Jones had previously developed Go to Hell for Triple Six . Go to Hell was published in 1985 and featured " ... revolting , crude and downright vile images . " When interviewed by Sinclair User , in the October 1987 issue , the programmer was asked " Whatever possessed you to write a game like Soft and Cuddly ... " . To this Jones responded , " I didn 't write the game because I 'm a horrible person , I wrote it to amuse myself . " Jones also stated " I love the reaction people give , I can 't stand ' nice ' inoffensive things ... " . The original version of the game was more gruesome ; the babies were being torn apart rather than stretched and " ... the sheep was bouncing up and down on a corpse . " When asked how long he would retain interest in computers , Jones stated that he had already lost interest . Soft & Cuddly was released by The Power house during September 1987 in the United Kingdom . The game was later released in Spain during the first quarter of 1988 . The game featured in a competition printed

in the November 1987 issue of Sinclair User . The first prize was a day in the company of The Power House 's staff including a trip to the London Dungeon . Other prize winners received a copy of Soft & Cuddly or a poster of the game 's inlay artwork .

= = Reception = =

Soft & Cuddly received average review scores from critics . The game 's graphics were praised ; Sinclair User reviewer Jim Douglas stated " Graphically , it is certainly unusual , and occasionally brilliant . " Crash magazine 's three reviewers also praised the graphics but raised some issues . Nick Roberts described them as smooth and slick , but stated that they were " a mite sketchy " . Roberts also stated " colour is used very well . " Paul Sumner stated " There are some cleverly @-@ animated and attractively @-@ coloured graphics " . Robin Candy said they are the game 's greatest asset .

Reviewers held differing opinions on the game 's setting and themes . Sumner stated the game is " dragged down by distasteful graphics and a horribly grim inlay . " Roberts described the game as " sick " , adding " I only recommend Soft & Cuddly to those of you who cut your toenails with a carving knife ! " Douglas was critical of the game 's themes ; he described playing Soft & Cuddly as " watching very large and unpleasant graphics jiggling up and down like a box of offal " . Tony Lee of Your Sinclair was more positive , stating , " This is a very sick game indeed , but fortunately I have a very sick sense of humour . "

The overall game received a more positive reception from Lee and MicroHobby magazine 's reviewer as opposed to the reviewers from Crash and Sinclair User . MicroHobby 's reviewer called Soft & Cuddly a typical arcade adventure with a performance worthy of a horror movie . Douglas stated , " The actual playing of the game is , unfortunately , a rather tiresome business . " He criticized the game for consisting of character movement coupled with occasional item gathering . Douglas described the game 's enemies as being " bog standard cannon fodder aliens " , saying " they drift around being annoying and sapping your energy . " Candy stated that " It 's very easy to get into , but boring . " He added that exploration is the best part of the game but becomes repetitive . Sumner stated " all there is to Soft & Cuddly is graphics . The gameplay is repetitive . " Lee said that the game is fun ; " I love this one . "