

= Atic Atac =

Atic Atac is an arcade @-@ adventure video game developed and published by Ultimate Play The Game , released for the ZX Spectrum and the BBC Micro in 1983 . The game takes place within a castle in which the player must seek out the " Golden Key of ACG " through unlocking doors and avoiding enemies . It was Ultimate 's second game to require 48K of RAM ; most of their previous games for the Spectrum ran on unexpanded 16K models .

The game was written by Tim Stamper and graphics were designed by Chris Stamper . Atic Atac received praise from critics upon release , mostly for its graphics and isometric gameplay . It was later included in Rare 's 2015 Xbox One retrospective compilation , Rare Replay . The game served as inspiration for the critically acclaimed adventure game show Knightmare .

= = Gameplay = =

The game is presented in a top @-@ down perspective and is set inside a labyrinth of a complex castle . The player has been trapped inside and needs to collect three pieces of the " Golden Key of ACG " in order to escape . They can choose from three different characters ; a Wizard , Knight or Serf . Each character has access to a secret passage unique to them , meaning that navigating the castle is different for each one .

There are a number of items scattered around the castle , of which the player may carry up to three at a time . Some of these are always in the same place at the start of the game , whereas others are distributed randomly . Items include differently @-@ coloured keys which will unlock their respective doors , the three pieces of the ACG key , and other items that affect certain enemies or are mere red herrings . Common enemies appear in each room upon entering and will attack the player on sight . Collision with these enemies destroys them but drains a portion of the player 's health . There are also stationary poisonous fungi which will drain health constantly if the player is in contact with them , and enemies that require special items in order to either distract , repel or kill them , otherwise they remain invulnerable to conventional attacks . Bosses guard pieces of the ACG key , and contact with them will rapidly drain away the player 's health .

The player has a number of lives upon starting the game , and should they die a gravestone will appear at their location and stay in place as long as the player has lives left . Health can be replenished by collecting food scattered throughout the castle , however it will constantly drop the more the player moves , thus the player may eventually die from starvation if they have not escaped the castle in time .

= = Development = =

Ashby Computers and Graphics was founded by brothers Tim and Chris Stamper , along with Tim 's wife , Carol , from their headquarters in Ashby @-@ de @-@ la @-@ Zouch in 1982 . Under the trading name of Ultimate Play The Game , they began producing multiple video games for the ZX Spectrum throughout the early 1980s . Prior to founding Ultimate , the Stamper brothers had backgrounds in designing arcade machines , but no marketing experience in the video game sector .

The operations of Ultimate were secretive and the Stamper brothers rarely gave interviews . Computer and Video Games noted that during development of Atic Atac , staff would work in " separate teams " to ensure quality control ; one team would work on graphics whilst the other would oversee gameplay or sound . The Stamper brothers worked seven days a week with little sleep in order to devote more time into developing video games , and would frequently re @-@ use the same mechanics of their earlier games into newer ZX Spectrum games .

= = Reception and legacy = =

The game received a positive critical reception upon release . Micro Adventurer mainly praised

Ultimate 's capabilities of developing high quality games , saying that Atic Atac was " bound to fix their name firmly into the minds of adventurers " , further recommending the game " without reservation " . Crash enjoyed the game 's colourful graphics , heralding the detail and objects of the game to be " marvellous " . However , they criticised the difficult joystick control and vague instructions , adding that the entire game is a " learning experience " . Computer and Video Games stated that the game was " the best yet from Ultimate " , and later in 1984 described it as " the favourite arcade adventure amongst computer gamers " . Personal Computer Games wrote that it was " another blockbuster game " , while Sinclair User praised both the depth of plot and the advanced graphics , citing them both as " superb " .

In 1991 , Atic Atac was ranked as the 79th best ZX Spectrum game of all time by Your Sinclair , and was voted the 8th best game of all time by the readers of Retro Gamer Magazine for an article that was scheduled to be in a special Your Sinclair Tribute issue . In 2007 , Eurogamer described it as a prime example of " what passion can do when properly digitised " . The game was Ultimate 's third consecutive number one in the UK Spectrum sales chart , following the first two Jetman games . In 2015 , the game was included in Rare Replay , a collection of 30 Rare @-@ designed games released for the Xbox One gaming console .

The game was a major inspiration for the critically acclaimed CITV game show Nightmare , with producer Tim Child realising that if a ZX Spectrum could run a compelling adventure game , then a television programme with pre @-@ rendered graphics could revolutionise the genre . Sabre Wulf , which was released for the ZX Spectrum by Ultimate Play The Game later in 1984 , was often criticised for having similar gameplay to Atic Atac , including its similar themes of a continuous maze . In a retrospective interview with Retro Gamer , Rare designer Greg Mayles asserted that their 2003 game Grabbed by the Ghoulies was not inspired by Atic Atac , despite their similar themes of a haunted mansion .