Gods

General informations

Genre	Arcade - Platformer (Scrolling)	**Year**	1991
Language	1991	**Publisher**	Renegade
Controls	Joystick	**Distributor**	
Players	1	**Developer**	Bitmap Brothers
Resolution		**License**	Commercial
Programmer(s)	Montgomery, Mike / Tall, Steve	**Country**	United Kingdom
Graphic Artist(s)	Coleman, Mark / Matthews, Eric Tall, Steve	**Software language**	English
Game Designer(s)	Matthews, Eric / Tall, Steve	**Documentation language**	
Musician(s)	Nation XII	**License**	Commercial
Sfx	Joseph, Richard	**Serial**	
Cover Artist(s)		**ST Type**	
MIDI		**Version**	
Protection		**Number of Disks**	

Disk

GODS
THE BITMAP BROTHERS
ST
DISC 2
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instructions

GODS
THE BITMAP BROTHERS

A city lost in Legend. An Unconquered warrior
seeking reward. A challenge laid down by the Gods.
Taking the role of Hercules, in the ultimate arcade-
adventure, you must scour the depths of an ancient
city in your search for the great prize of
immortality.

Featuring:
• 15 different weapon systems.
• 20 different potions and power-ups.
• A host of intelligent monsters.
Have you got what it takes to be a GOD?

Une cité perdue dans la legende. Un guerrier
chasseur de primes toujours en fuite.
GODS, un véritable challenge!!!
Identifiez vous à l'hercule des temps modernes
dans cet ultime jeu d'arcade et d'aventures;
parcourez les tréfonds d'une ancienne cité à la
recherche de l'immortalité.

Caractéristiques:
• 15 systèmes d'armement différents.
• 20 pouvoirs et potions magiques.
• Une armée de monstres intelligents.
Etes - vous capable de relever le défi??

Eine legendäre Stadt ... verloren in Raum und Zeit.
Ein unbesiegbarer Krieger auf der Suche nach
Abenteuern. Eine Herausforderung der Götter ...
Versetzen Sie sich in die Rolle des Herkules, der in
diesem neuartigen Action-Adventure die Mauern
einer längst vergessenen Stadt durchstreift, um
den Schatz zu finden, der Unsterblichkeit
verspricht.

Features:
• Viele knifflige Rätsel.
• 15 verschiedene Waffen.
• 20 verschiedene Zaubertränke und Power-Ups.
• Zahlreiche "intelligente" Monster und Gegner.
Hast Du das, was man als Gott braucht?

BITMAP
BROTHERS

GODS
THE BITMAP BROTHERS
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THE ONE   MARCH 1991

GODS
Renegade

ATARI ST
PRICE   £24.99
OUT   End March
GRAPHICS   89%
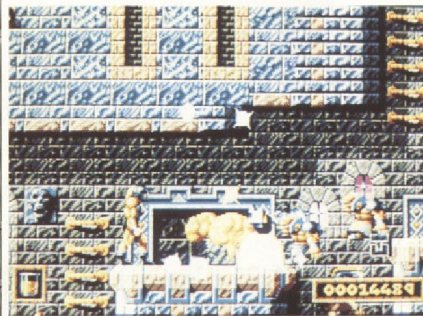SOUND   90%
PLAYABILITY   92%
VALUE   92%

OVERALL
93%

AMIGA
PRICE   £24.99
OUT   End March

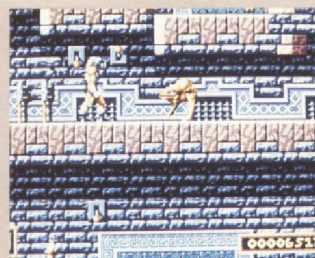**IBM PC AND COMPATIBLES**
PRICE   £29.99
OUT   May 1991

Laurence Scotford has a heavenly experience with the Bitmap Brothers' latest Olympic effort — a platform puzzler from the Pantheon.

F OR CONNOISSEURS OF PLATFORM GAMES only three essential buys have emerged over recent months. Rainbow Arts' *Turrican* and its sequel are both worth having for their sheer size and playability. Psygnosis' *Killing Game Show* is not only eminently playable, but original and well-designed – a rare combination these days – and is also worthy of a place in anyone's collection. That just leaves *Gods*, probably best described as 'the thinking man's platform game', to make up the trio.

Gods is something of a first on two counts. As regular readers will already know, it's the first product from new publisher Renegade and, as such, will be closely watched by other publishers, large and small. It is also another opportunity for The Bitmap Brothers to demonstrate their versatility. As *Cadaver* was for isometric action adventures, this is their first attempt at a platform game, and, again like Cadaver, they make it seem as if they've been creating platform games for years.

As might be imagined from the title, Gods has a mythological setting, loosely inspired by the Herculean legend (this is, admittedly, not the first time this particular source has been used in a platform game, but it hasn't been done like this before). There are four levels, each sub-divided into three worlds. In each world your hero has a quest, but your objectives only become clear to you as you

ALTHOUGH *GODS* HAS its fair share of stupid creatures that are quite happy to stroll right through a hail of fire, they're accompanied by more than a few intelligent brethren. These smart chappies will not only avoid your fire, they'll find the quickest and safest route to get to you!
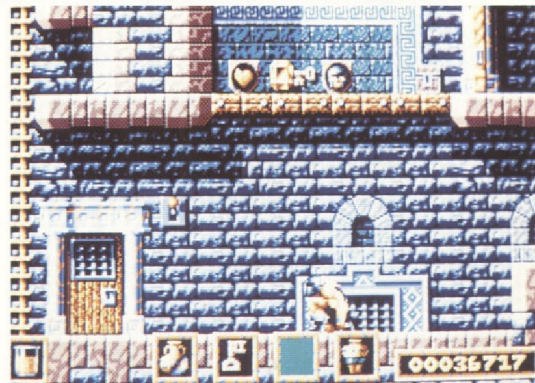
UP TO FOUR ITEMS can be carried at once. Adding items to the inventory is as easy as crouching over them and calling up the inventory window, shown here, then selecting an empty box. Dropping items is just as simple, although some automatically disappear after they have been used.

OF COURSE THERE'S the obligatory shop. You're guided there by the shopkeeper at the end of every level, so that he and his bird can take your hard-earned cash in return for anything from extra lives to shields giving temporary invulnerability. If you don't have enough cash to purchase a particular item, there's always the possibility that you'll wander across it during the coming level.

NOW HERE'S A PROBLEM. You've got to get past those spikes and you know that, in the correct combination, the three switches nearby will destroy them. But what's the right combination?
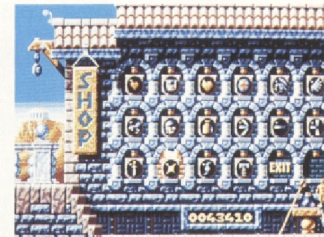
OOOPS! YOU'VE TRIPPED the wrong one and it's triggered off a fresh wave of walkers. Now you are going to have to deal with them before you can carry on.

MARCH 1991   THE ONE

Gods

continue playing. It's up to you to piece together your task from the hints given.

Points are scored for solving puzzles and killing aliens. And you'll definitely have to engage in both activities – aliens can sometimes be avoided, but when shot they leave treasure which can later be used to buy additional weapons and power-ups.

So far so good, you might think, but what puts Gods on a higher plane? At the heart of the program is a unique player monitoring system that keeps a constant track of just how well you're doing. If you're extra smart and extra quick, not only do you get bonuses, but life gets a tad tougher. If, on the other hand, you're tripping over your own feet and having to book holidays to finish levels then you'll be recognised as remedial and given the occasional helping hand, like the odd energy top-up or extra life.

In addition, however you're doing, there are lots of hidden bonuses and rooms to discover. There are a number of ways of getting to them – it may be a secret switch or it may just be a matter of timing. There are enough hidden extras to ensure that Gods will surprise you, even on the second or third time through.

GODS IS FULL OF SURPRISES. Here you've been calmly wandering along, minding your own business and admiring those stone gargoyles when, without warning, they become a little more lifelike. There's only one thing for it... down the hatch!
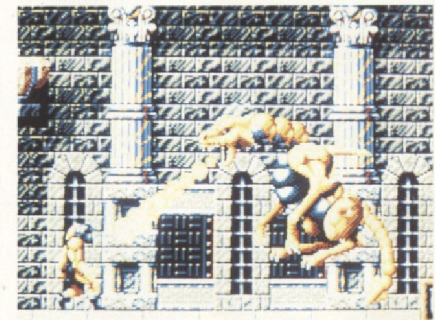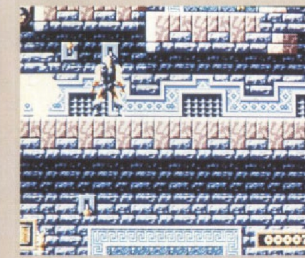
AS IF YOU HADN'T already been through enough, when you reach the end of a level there's a guardian to deal with – in this case of the large, clawed, fire breathing variety. This is one combat you can't avoid – it's just you against him until your energy or his reaches zero.

ALIENS OUT OF THE WAY, you can try again. Great, you've finally got the correct combination and the spikes have been destroyed, clearing your path. Problem solved. But wait...

WHAT HAPPENS IF you go back to the first switch and try it again? Voila... you get showered in gold. Which just goes to prove the Gods help those who help themselves!
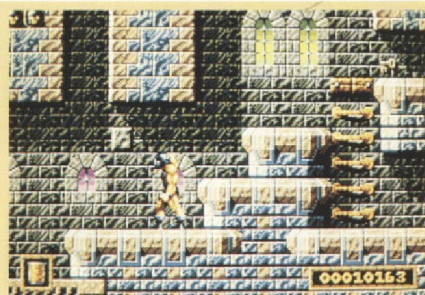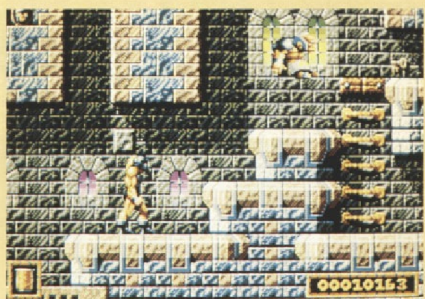
HERE'S ANOTHER PROBLEM. To progress much further you need that key up there, but the gap is to small for you to enter; so how do you get it?

ANSWER: hang around until a thief comes along. But how does that help you?

ANSWER: the thief steals the key and then heads on down to attack you. Just wait till he gets close then let fly a couple of shots to kill the little blighter and collect the dropped key. Problem solved!
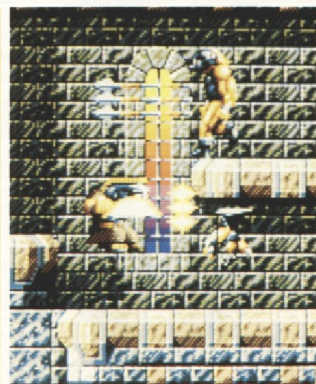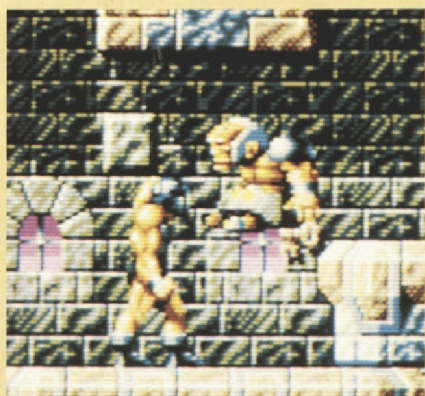
LOOKS FAMILIAR THAT PARROT. Yep! Get the right icon and you can have yourself your own bird-brained companion, quite happy to spit fireballs at enemies while you get on with something more useful... like running away. The familiar has his own hit-points, so he won't last forever: one collision too many and he becomes a dead parrot... a deceased parrot... a parrot that is no more... a parrot gone to meet his maker... a parr... (eerghk!!)

ST IF THERE IS ONE CRITICISM that can be levelled at Gods, it's that the graphics are a little too detailed. Occasionally objects can get lost against the intricate stonework backgrounds, but this is a cosmetic problem and, to be honest, it hardly makes a difference when the action heats up. It's perhaps a little unfair to start with that very minor grumble, because the detail does give all the graphics a very solid quality, which is reinforced by some superb animation. Being a Bitmap Brothers game it comes as no surprise that Gods is quite hot on the sound front too. The title track is Into The Wonderful, a jaunty little Nation 12 number, and somehow they've managed to make it sound good on an ST too. Spot effects, rather than just being exercises in strange sounds thrown in to fill up the silence, have been used thoughtfully and often supply clues to events off-screen. The control method has been well thought out; it's easy to do things like shoot from ladders, and picking up, dropping, and using objects couldn't be simpler. To begin with you might need five minutes or so to completely adjust to the best method of rapidly firing at aliens coming from both directions or jumping on and off ladders, but, that done, you're in for a treat. Gods is absorbing, fun, and should provide long-term entertainment for all platform addicts, even the experts.

A AMIGA OWNERS ARE going to see the benefit of some cosmetic changes. The sound will, naturally enough, be even more wholesome, and the graphics will be tweaked to make, for instance, the colour-graduated sky even prettier. Otherwise, what you see here is what you get.

PC EXACT DETAILS ON PC Gods are a little up in the air at the moment. It's the Bitmaps' policy to support all major sound cards, but as to video card support, you'll just have to wait and see.

REBELS WITH A CAUSE

There's a possible revolution in the air as yet another development team turns tail and set up on its own. Laurence Scotford pays a visit to new kid on the block, Renegade, to see what all the fuss is about.

AS REPORTED in the previous issue, The Bitmap Brothers have abandoned their connection with Mirrorsoft's ImageWorks label to set up Renegade, a new software publishing arm aiming to offer developers a 50/50 Deal. The company was established by Mike Montgomery, Steve Kelly, and Eric Matthews (The Bitmap Brothers), Martin Heath and Adele Nozedar of Rhythm King Records, and former Telecomsoft and Mirrorsoft employee Tom Watson.

The connection with Rhythm King records is important in that the company is known within the recording industry for offering a similar deal to its own artists. We asked three of the new company's directors to talk us through the philosophy behind the firm, and take a look at its first release, Gods.

"There are substantial differences between development teams. We believe in marketing teams, not our corporate body. This way consumers will have a better idea of what they are buying and the developers themselves will have more substantial careers."

"Developers are going to have to get a better deal from publishers if those publishers want to survive. This is not a cottage industry any more."
Mike Montgomery, Bitmap Brother

TOM WATSON

"I CHUCKLED enormously when I read the comment of an anonymous publisher in the last issue of The One: 'This isn't the record business, and these people are very naive to think they can just come in and change things around just like that'... there are numerous hidden costs incurred by the publisher... any given program is the product of far more people than just the programmer — so why should he get all the credit? It just reinforces what we are doing.

"The software industry thinks only it knows how to handle its product, but it is really a small and simple industry. Are these 'Hidden Costs' the company Mercedes and BMWs?

"We have a fair mix of skills at our disposal so I wouldn't be too quick to write our obituary."
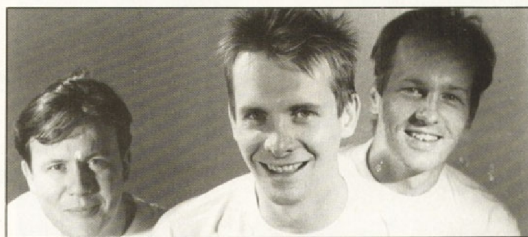Tom Watson, Renegade

The software industry is not unique. Management and marketing skills are transferable, so this parochial attitude is funny.

"The two key things that matter to us are the way we publish and promote software. To take the film industry as an example, 99 times out of 100 you are not swayed in the film you see by the name of the company that releases it, but by what you know of the people who have created the product. These people are more than capable of determining the right direction for their own careers.

"There are substantial differences between development teams. We believe in marketing teams, not our corporate body. This way consumers will have a better idea of what they are buying and the developers themselves will have more substantial careers."

"The comment I mentioned earlier was ignorant. Look at the credits on a record sleeve and you will see that there are far more people involved in the production of a record than a piece of software. The amount of work in producing a record compared to a software product increases by a factor of at least 10.

"Consumer recognition of development teams won't be as tightly defined as consumer recognition of record artists to the extent that people will consistently buy products from their favourite development teams, but the broad principles will still apply.

"Currently, developers negotiate a royalty rate and then an advance on that, and are then sent away to produce the game. We analyse the cost of producing the product, and take into account the possible overheads before the work starts. The direct costs are then deducted from the income from the product, and the profit shared. This gives the developer incentive to get their costs in order.

"We also take into account the amount of technical assistance that will be required from us. The one man developer is less and less of a reality in 16-bit software, so we want to put together a creative pool in which developers can flourish.

"As far as the piracy and pricing problem is concerned I don't know if there is a solution. Of course piracy does force prices up, but then you have to ask, 'If publishers did start selling more units, would they make their products cheaper?'

"People don't often consider the amount of work that is involved in producing 16-bit games. There is a great difference between developing 8-bit games and developing 16-bit games. More and more people are required now to produce a really good 16-bit game. Then customers want nice packaging and manuals, and of course a lot of profit disappears at the distributor-retailer end.

"We would like publishers to change the way they operate, to have a look at the way they spend money. They should spend more on promoting their products and less on promoting themselves. We are already doing this, and we have a fair mix of skills at our disposal, so I wouldn't be too quick to write our obituary.

"As far as console development is concerned it is easy for everyone to say they are seeking out console business. I think European developers are perfectly placed to harness their existing skills in developing for 16-bit consoles. American developers have a lot of expertise in producing DOS-based material but European developers have gained a lot of experience in the transition from 8-bit to 16-bit machines. But yes, we'd all like to be involved in consoles.

"CD-ROM is great, but I don't think a lot of people will be buying CD machines for the home. The more interesting area is the Sony/Matsushita work on CD-I, but at present it is impossible to say what will come out of that. There are still problems to be overcome.

"If CDTV can work, great. It will make people aware of what the future can bring. One way or another CD is going to happen. Geoff Heath, director of Mindscape, made a very important comment in Issue 24 of The One that CD involves spending mini

THREE of the directors of the controversial new entertainment software publisher Renegade. From left to right: Eric Matthews (Bitmap Brother), Martin Heath (Rhythm King), and Tom Watson.

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film budgets and is only feasible in conjunction with record and film companies. Hopefully we are already more in tune with the methods required — software, sound, and video professionals will be needed and we have access to all three.

"We have the music expertise in Rhythm King who also have links with TV and Video production companies. That is a key factor in where we are coming from and where we are going to."

MIKE MONTGOMERY

"THERE are already some publishers run by developers, but we are trying to do for the software industry what Rhythm King achieved for the record industry. At the moment we get the situation where big publishers collect awards for their products, but surely the award belongs to the developers — after all they put all the work in. We are out to promote the developer, not the publisher. People will be buying a Bitmap Brothers game which happens to be published by Renegade, rather than a Renegade game which happens to be developed by The Bitmap Brothers.

"Developers are going to have to get a better deal from publishers if those publishers want to survive. This is not a cottage industry any more. It's team efforts that result in good product, and with the advent of CD technology software development is going to become even more like film production with much bigger work forces.

"We will definitely see more originality in the future although products do have to be commercially viable. At the moment we almost have two markets: licensed products and original games. Neither of these markets is going to disappear, but hopefully the quality of licensed games will improve."

ADELE NOZEDAR

"PUBLISHERS who have criticised what we are doing are incredibly misinformed. It is not a good idea to compare computer games publishers and record publishers. A record can take up to two years to produce with many people involved. Even so it is the artist that gets the credit.

"Rhythm King started because we wanted to release records in our own way. There is no other record company that offers a 50/50 deal to recording artists. If the software industry was ideal then developers like The Bitmap Brothers wouldn't be forced into setting up on their own."

RIGHTEOUS REBELLION OR CALAMITOUS COUP?

THE EXISTENCE of Renegade has already given rise to plenty of very strong feeling within the entertainment software industry. While the principle of a 50/50 developer-publisher deal is anathema to most established companies, there are undoubtedly many in their employ who feel that the time is ripe for change and that it might as well come about through Renegade as anywhere else. But do developers really understand the business of publishing? And, conversely, do publishers really have any idea of the difficulties and requirements of developers?

If not, then Renegade could well be the best thing to happen to the industry since the firm establishment of the 16-bit market. Success for Renegade could have many key industry figures visibly quaking, while signalling for development teams the sort of prosperity they have not enjoyed since the mid-80s.

But what if The Bitmap Brothers and like-minded developers are trying to have their cake and eat it? The collapse of this new company, as well as evoking a chorus of 'I told you so' from the rest of the industry may also succeed in undermining the confidence of the 'underpaid, undervalued, and overworked' creative minds for whom Renegade has set itself up as a saviour.

Whatever the future for the company, the most important aspect is how it will affect the deal that consumers get in return for their patronage. Indications are that, apart from the possibility of recognising a few more of the names responsible for the games you play, you won't be seeing much of a change in the way the software industry views you, the way it takes your money, or, indeed, the product that it gives you in return.

Gods
00031660

Will Renegade be immortalised with its first release? Laurence Scotford finds out.

GODS draws inspiration from the legend of Hercules, a gentleman prominent in both Greek and Roman myth. In case you weren't paying attention in your History lessons, Hercules (or Heracles as the Greeks know him) was supposedly set 12 near-impossible labours by Eurystheus, King of Argos. And it is these on which Gods is based.

The finished product is going to be divided into four or five worlds, each with four or five levels. Although these levels must be played sequentially there is more than one way to complete a world, and you can be sure that no two games you play will ever be the same.

At the heart of the program are four specialised pieces of logic that control the use of objects, normal adversaries, intelligent adversaries, and problems. Together these modules allow an infinite combina-


00007155

OUR HERO is a versatile chap. He can handle a wide selection of deadly weaponry, from time bombs to fireballs. At a pinch he can even fire while clinging onto a ladder. If there are no ladders available, no problem — he can drop short distances, moving through the air as he does so.

tion of interlinked events. Rather than just creating a fixed environment which is the same each time you play, the systems used in Gods modify the game's performance depending on what the player does, or even how well he does.

Playing Gods is very much a journey of discovery. You have to experiment with actions to discover exactly the best way through each world. Even if you do manage to play right through you won't be left with a white elephant — play it again and the chances are you will discover more aspects to Gods then you encountered in your first run through it.

In fact, the beauty of Gods is that you can never really be sure that you have done everything that there is to do. Attempt to play it with a completely different strategy and who knows what might happen?
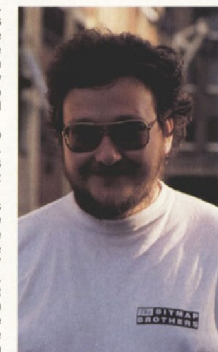
STEVE Tall, Bitmap Brother and programmer of Gods.

Left Page

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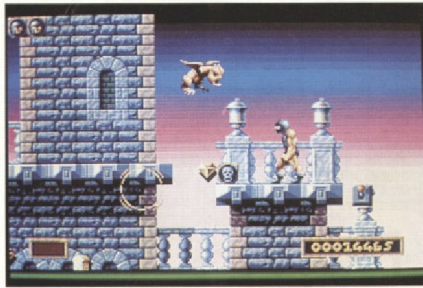
EVERY dead opponent has the potential to leave behind a bonus object, such as diamonds or money bags (used to buy useful extras in the still-to-be-implemented shops), or additional weapons and other equipment. A neat touch is the ability to intensify equipment by collecting more than one of each type. One of the more useful 'items' is the Familiar, a flying creature who attacks all other creatures that get in its way until its hit points expire.

GODS' WORLDS are riddled with switches and one or two mysterious objects. Discovering just what each switch or object does is part of the fun. Just to complicate matters, in many cases traps, bonuses, and extra sections are not simply activated by a single object or lever, but by a combination of two or more of them.

THE MEN WHO SHAPED GODS

THE TWO men responsible for Renegade's first release are programmer Steve Tall and graphic artist Mark Coleman. They began work on Gods last December and expect to have it finished early next year. Steve is a new face among The Bitmap Brothers. He had previously worked for Tynesoft as part of the team responsible for **Circus Games, Rodeo Games,** and **Beverley Hills Cop.** Steve's programming career began on the Dragon. "It's a much maligned machine," says Steve sounding generally sorry for that. When the leap between the Dragon and the likes of the Atari ST is mentioned, he retorts that "there are many similarities between the 6809 and the 68000. Switching from one to the other wasn't too difficult." It may well be that The Bitmap Brothers will go on to create other games using the Gods system. Its versatility and power make that a very feasible and very exciting option.

THE COLOURFUL skies featured in Gods are created by using palette switching. The Sky Editor allows the colours and frequency of switching to be adjusted with ease.
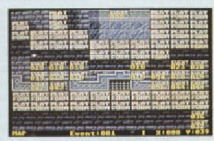
THINGS hot up when you encounter one of the occasional 'intelligent' adversaries. By using a second editor the designer can give each of these a primary and secondary objective, as well as setting up other variables which control their behaviour. An intelligent creature may be instructed to guard treasure unless certain conditions are fulfilled, in which case it attacks the player. If it does attack then twisting and turning down passages will do no good as the creature simply follows you. The only way to escape is to kill it or trick it into falling down a pit or meeting some similar fate. And since each creature monitors its surroundings at up to 17 times a second you have to be a bit swish to shake it off.

ONE OF the most impressive aspects of the system behind Gods is the Problem Editor. Puzzles are triggered by one, two or three conditions, and they can also be chained together. The conditions can be anything from carrying a particular item or being in a particular place to having scored a specific quantity of points. This flexibility allows the designer to set extra traps if a player is doing particularly well, or extra bonuses if he is doing badly. Thus the game adapts to your style of play.

ALIENS come in two types: Walkers, which stick to the walls and floors and so can be easily avoided and shot, and Fliers, which have the habit of swooping down on you unexpectedly. Fliers and Walkers both come thick and fast so there are rarely moments when you have time to sit and ponder the situation. At the end of each world you confront the traditional end-of-level Boss. These guys are still awaiting the attention of Mark Coleman.
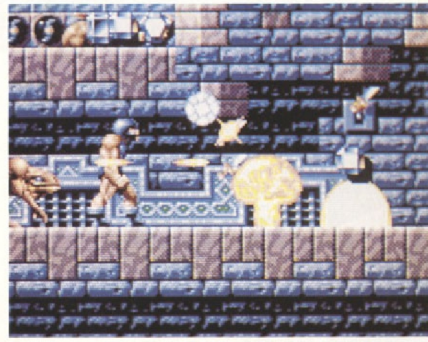

THE ALIEN Attack Wave Editor is used to determine the attack pattern and type of each 'normal' adversary you encounter. They are fairly stupid and follow a fixed path, which makes them easy to remove.
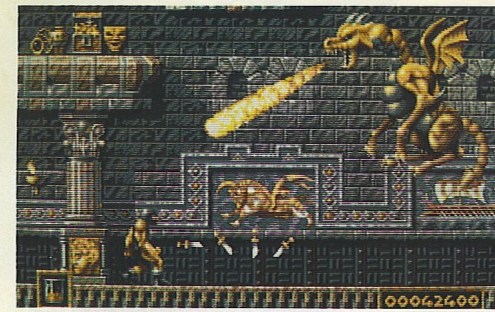
BACKGROUNDS are put together with the Map Editor. Pre-defined blocks are put into position and then designated as platforms or walls. This editor is also used to position 'Event Spots', locations that trigger events if the player enters them.

Right Page

00062400

Eric Matthews of the Bitmap Brothers, programmers of *Speedball 2*, the *FORMAT* Gold winning *Xenon 2* and now *Gods*

■ *Gods*, due for release soon, is a platform and puzzle game by the Bitmap Brothers, now working for Renegade software. This early version looked extremely promising with nifty gameplay elements including intelligent aliens. Another innovation: the game itself knows when you're not doing so well and adjusts the difficulty level accordingly

GODS
Renegade

Andy Hutchinson has an *exclusive* talk with the Bitmap Brothers about their new exploration into divinity

The Bitmap Brothers, those demon programmers, don't hang about for very long. No sooner has their ever so wicked *Speedball 2* hit the shops than they reveal their next title. The Bitmaps started working on *Gods* in December 1989 and it's now nearing completion.

Gods is an eight-way-scrolling platform and puzzle game, based on Greek mythology. The Brothers decided early on to bring a fresh approach to this most jaded of formats. Eric Matthews, one of the team, is keen to release a platform game: "We'd never done an eight-way scroller," he says. "We wanted to get away from mindless aliens flying on screen."

So why is *Gods* so different to other platform games? "We've combined strategy and wargaming elements in an arcade environment and created an identity for the aliens in the game," says Eric. The aliens, he explains, don't weigh in with the usual amoeba-like intelligence but are very cunning. They possess artificial intelligence and might, for example, dodge your bullets. The Bitmaps are also thinking of including a morale rating for their alien attack waves so if the lead alien gets shot, the others may either get angry or simply run away.

One of the cutest computer-controlled characters is the thief, who enjoys stealing treasure. He isn't bad news, though – in fact, you'd be strongly advised not to shoot him the first time he appears on-screen.

The gameplay area in *Gods* is massive: 48 x 50 screens for each of the four levels. To complete a level you need to get hold of some keys, hidden in rooms you can only reach by solving puzzles. Eric reveals that you don't need

to solve all the puzzles to complete a level – there's more than one way to get to the final door. However, if you do choose to do things the hard way, you're rewarded with loads of treasure. You can only carry up to three items at a time, though.

Shoot an alien and you're rewarded with a crystal. Collect all of them and you can spend loads of lolly in the shop, in the middle and at the end of every level. There are 15 different weapons to choose from, ranging from axes and knives to magical potions.

"We've combined strategy and wargaming elements in an arcade environment" – *Eric Matthews*

Reach the end of a level and you encounter a particularly vicious monster. This chap needs more than two direct hits to deal with, but if you've collected all the weapons en route you should eventually kill him.

Steve Tall, a big ST fan, programmed *Gods*. He told *FORMAT* he far preferred working on an ST because the processor is quicker than any of

Knuckle Draggers Anonymous ought to have a chat with these chaps

the competition. The awesome graphics in *Gods* are the work of Mark Coleman of *Xenon 2* fame. Sprites and backdrops really are first rate, and you can even see what influences him: if you've played *Dune*, you might recognise the floating fat man on Level Two. **stf**

SOUND SONIX

The sound in a Bitmap Brothers game is always excellent. *Gods* is no different. Since Renegade have amalgamated with Rhythm King records, there are going to be some big names producing the music for the game. Nation 12 – whose members are John Fox (ex Ultravox), Simon Rogers (of The Fall and Ez-ee Possee), DJ Streets Ahead, Shem (of Beats International) and Tim Simmons (of Bomb the Bass) – have written a song called *Into the Wonderful*. This not only features in the game but is planned for release on vinyl by Rhythm King records. Eric Matthews of the Bitmap Brothers also revealed that the *Speedball 2* music might be finding its way onto a 12 inch extended remix at some point.

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■ Sainsbury's it ain't. This shop stocks knives, axes, potions and such weird add-ons as familiars which watch your back

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■ Leaping into nowhere is never very advisable, but that stash of treasure is too good an opportunity to pass up