

COLLECTOR'S CORNER

Hello again and welcome to trainspotting for the Oric. Here we are again looking at the minuscule differences between different releases of the same bit of software. Sometimes the program itself is identical in both releases - usually though it is the introduction of the Atmos that led to software houses repackaging their products.

This time we look at Salamander's Oric Trek. The game itself is one of the oldest computer games, being originally programmed on computers without HIREX graphics and before user defined character sets. I have a version that uses those funny shaped characters like the asterix to build a display.



For some this is a fascinating game. It is a combination of a trading game an adventure and it is set in the popular sci-fi world of future space technology.

It has a similar appeal to management games, like the numerous football management games that proliferate the various platforms. It has that interactive aspect that , even on old text based computers, could draw you in and make the experience seem somewhat real.

Drive your space ship off into space and orbit a planet ready to trade some hard earned crystals for a bit of chemical which was a vital component of your fuel source. An element needed to drive you further into space putting you at more risk of coming into contact with Klingons.

There is certainly an appeal here that the fancy graphics of modern technology just can't improve on. We've seen Hasbro, who bought rights to Atari software, repeatedly trying to improve on the classic old games of the 80s. And they are dreadful. The only appeal is the original basic appeal of shoot 'em ups - the sort of appeal of games that anyone could play without the need for great big instruction manuals. Breakout can be a pleasure to play - just once or twice now and again, on a computer like the Oric. On a PC with a 32Meg graphics card driving 3D graphics and a wonderfully smooth action backed by CD quality sound and the game just loses something. Perhaps it is the basic simplicity that allows such games to work. Bricks are great for building houses, but you don't paint them fancy colours and stick them on your mantelpiece do you ? Well I hope not - it's just not what they're for. And perhaps that is what's wrong with these PC games. They should be used for the new era of games - Half-Life, Unreal Tournament, Tomb Raider and so on they are classics on these modern machines.

Of course there is nothing wrong with using an emulator to relive the good old days of computer. That is like switching on the actual machine and playing an old game on an old machine. Although all that modern technology lurks beneath, say an Oric emulator, it still acts like an Oric. So you can take out your old Oric Trek tapes and enjoy them as they should be enjoyed.

Oh Hell the Oric Trek Tape !!! Oh well, it came like it is in the above picture; a cassette featuring a guy at the controls of some space ship that seems to be a bit out of control , (just like when I play the game), and he seems to be turning to run away as the ship hurtles towards an asteroid belt. I don't think he'll get very far.

That is the usual cover. The image on the right shows a tape I saw on Ebay. Someone outbid me so I can't tell you too much about it. It seems to be a later Atmos version and the little round sticker in the bottom right corner says 'Oric Atmos' so it is probably another update of the earlier Oric-1 version which dates back to computers of a bygone age.

