

"JUST WHEN YOU
THOUGHT THE
REVIEWS WERE
OVER..."



Decent arcade adventures on the 64 are few and far between at the moment — *Cauldron* attempts to expand this category. It is essentially an arcade game (combining platform and shoot-em-up elements) with adventure overtones. Six strange ingredients must be retrieved from the very bowels of the planet to form a spell. This spell must be used to dispose of the evil Pumpking.

You start in the witch's house surrounded by six parchments, one for each ingredient to be found. This is where the final spell is to be made, so everything must be brought back here — 'juice of toad, eye of newt, wing of bat and Hemlock root, mouldy piece of splintered bone. . . . ' — doesn't sound too appetizing.

Out of the attractive cottage hobbles the witch, and then into a forest, depicted in detailed 2D. In order to collect the ingredients she must find four coloured keys scattered around the planet to open the doors to the underworld (see panel).

Collecting these keys is difficult. Your hag can walk a fair distance around the world, but mountain ranges, sea and a graveyard are impassable unless flown over. To take off on her broomstick, she must find a clearing. A quick push up on the joystick, and she takes off

slowly.

Flight control is very reminiscent of that arcade classic, *Defender*, with a large amount of inertia to take into account when you change directions — this takes some getting used to.

On your travels you pass

At last a great arcade-adventure so we 64 owners can boast our own against the Speccy crowd. Large and enjoyable playing area with some original touches to keep zappers happy as well as adventurers. Plenty of original creatures which are graphically excellent. I initially had problems with the witch's control, but perseverance has its reward. Don't play it after midnight!



CAULDRON

Palace Software, £7.99 cass, joystick only

- Large arcade-adventure with pretty graphics
- Scrolling planet plus 64 underground locations

trees, bats, ghosts and very aggressive plants spitting death. Shark fins and seagulls roam the seas and volcanoes spout fireballs. Some of the nasties you can destroy by firing magic, but this only works when you're flying.

The four keys are placed randomly around the world, making the game slightly different every time you play. Once you've collected one, or all, of the keys, it's down into the darker depths of the globe to get the components for your spell.

The five doors lead to four separate caverns of platform action (one cavern has two doors). In each of the caverns you must negotiate various platforms and avoid the nasties floating around. These include

some superbly defined skulls, pumpkins, rib cages, bats and fireballs all following predictable, but awkward, patterns.

Some of the ingredients can only be taken when carrying certain containers, and because you can only carry two ingredients at a time, you need to make several return journeys to the cottage. Once all the ingredients are collected and mixed, it's off to the Pumpking's lair (one of the caverns) to put the spell to good use.

You have eight hags, or lives,

Structure of the planet

At last, arcade adventures are making an important and long overdue appearance on a worthy machine (who needs a Spectrum now?).

Cauldron has an interesting structure with the action dividing into two types: flying above the smooth-scrolling surface of a large planet, and leaping around the platforms (rock ledges) under the surface.

The planet surface consists of forests, plants, volcanoes and areas of sea. If you keep flying you eventually return to your starting place - the planet is round! - and Palace say the total length of the planet surface is some 120 screen widths.

Below ground there are 64 screens divided into four separate platform-filled caverns in which pits of red hot lava bubbles convincingly, and stalactites hang menacingly. There's certainly plenty to explore.



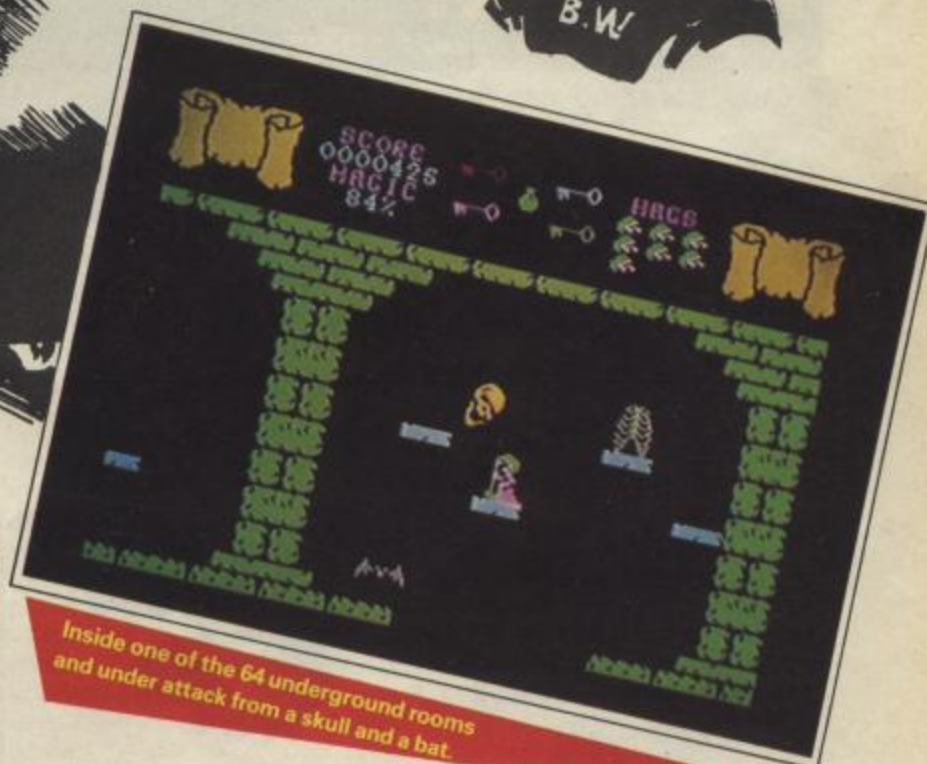
detailed and very effective, as are the sprites. The moon hangs realistically in the night sky, and makes an impressive scene when the witch flies in front of it. Animation is terrific and colours are superbly used, giving some excellent 3D effects all round.

The sound isn't that impressive - the opening music being fairly simple, albeit atmospheric, but some sound effects are put to good use.

The instructions given are simple but adequate and are printed in rhyme on a 'parchment' in the inlay.

GP

This marvellous cross between Defender and a platform game should be a winner for Palace. It combines excellent playability, both above and below ground, with plenty of difficulty. The scrolling landscape is wonderful, as are the monsters, but watch out for those keys in the trees - particularly the green one, it's almost invisible. Below ground the action doesn't let up and either section would qualify as a decent game in its own right. Together they're great.



Inside one of the 64 underground rooms and under attack from a skull and a bat.

a nasty occurs.

Taking off, landing and picking up keys, accounts for a high percentage of deaths. Energy can be replenished though, by sources of power which you must hover or stand in.

The graphics in *Cauldron*, although very Spectrumsque, are great. Backgrounds are

to attempt to achieve this feat, and initially these are easily lost. You start with 99 units of energy for each witch and a life is lost when energy reaches zero. This is continually depleting, and is made worse when contact with

Cauldron certainly has a large playing area and will take some time to complete. Obtaining the ingredients and utilising them correctly is fairly difficult. Mapping isn't really worth doing above ground, but below it comes in useful as you need to know what's coming when you enter another screen. Definitely an enjoyable challenge to novice and proficient arcade adventurer alike.



PRESENTATION	ORIGINALITY
65% <i>Nothing notable except some intriguing poems</i>	74% <i>Not many arcade-adventures like this on the 64</i>
GRAPHICS	HOOKABILITY
82% <i>Small but colourful, detailed and well animated</i>	83% <i>The urge to explore is very strong</i>
SOUND	LASTABILITY
73%	87% <i>Stacks of locations, tough long-term challenge</i>
VALUE FOR MONEY	
87% <i>An excellent combination of zapping, leaping and exploring</i>	