



TEST



DARK SIDE

Incentive, £9.95 cassette, £12.95 disk, joystick with keys

●FREESCAPE returns in the stunning sequel to *Driller*

For 200 years the Ketars caused no trouble for the people of Evath, and the problems faced in *Driller* have become all but a distant memory. But now the fiendish race is back, and determined to cause even more aggravation than before.

On the dark side of Evath's sec-

ond moon, Tricuspoid, the alien murderers have constructed a huge energy beam weapon *Zephyr One*, with which they intend to destroy Evath and every living creature upon it. Of course, this can't be allowed to happen, so the government of Evath have decided to send in their best agent to thwart the Ketars' evil plan.

That agent is none other than your good self, armed with quad lasers, a plasma band shield, a jet pack (to provide aerial views and explore elevated areas), and, most importantly since this moon has no atmosphere, a space suit. The mission objective is simple – destroy *Zephyr One* before it annihilates all in its path.

▼ The Psyche Sector contains a building bearing the word 'Dark' – is this a clue or just a plug?



This can only be achieved by destroying the ECDs (Energy Collection Devices) scattered around the moon's surface. The solar cell suspended at the top of each ECD captures the rays of Evath's sun, converts the light into electrical energy and channels it, via a matrix of power lines to *Zephyr One*. It is these solar cells that have to be disabled, but some of the ECDs are connected to other active units, and if these are shot they immediately regenerate. As the ECDs are crippled, the power being passed to *Zephyr One*



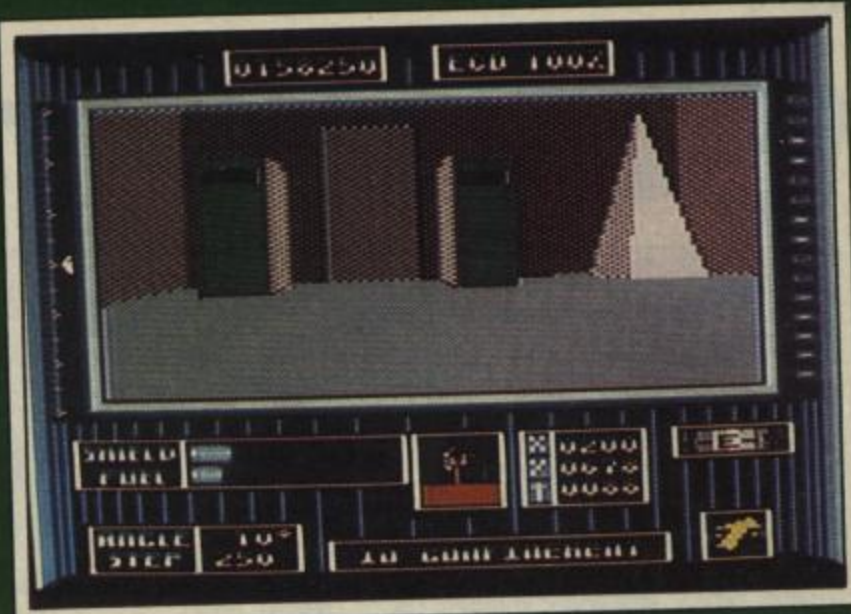
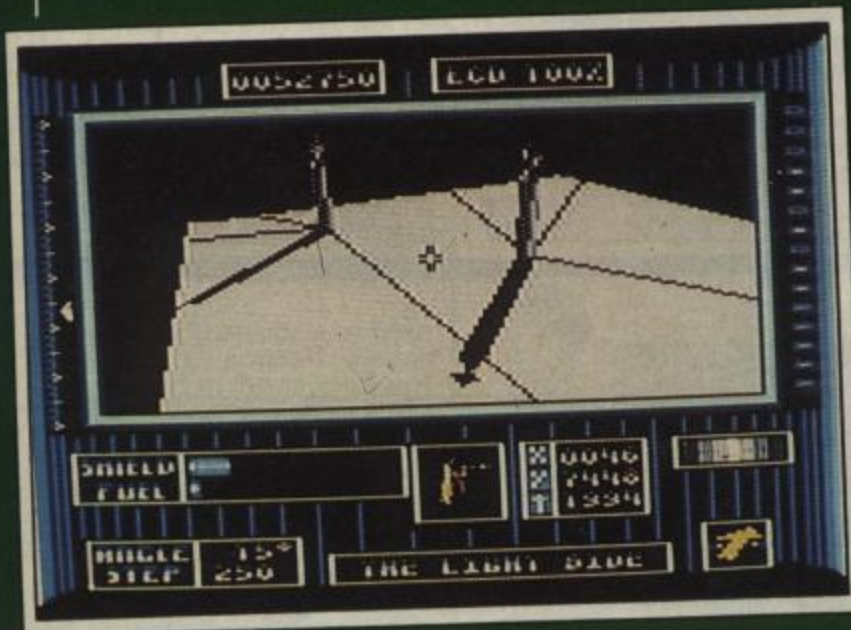
Incentive have done it again! First they unleash *Driller* onto an unsuspecting public, and now hot on its heels comes *Dark Side*. The same type of fiendish puzzles featured in *Driller* are present in this game – only they're more difficult, and I'm sure many sleepless nights will be spent trying to crack them. Graphically it's great, with the Freescape system again being put to very good use, creating some stunningly solid-looking scenery. Sound is also good, with an eerie in-game tune adding a menacing edge to the atmospheric graphics. Those of you familiar with the control method of *Driller* will have no problems here, but first time players may find them a little confusing at the outset, especially considering the slow pace of the game. Fortunately, the programmers have again included an indicator to reassure you that key-presses are being processed, even if the display hasn't changed yet. As always, a little patience soon pays off, and once you get into *Dark Side* it'll keep you glued for hours. It's not completely different to the original, but it's easily another winner!

As this is the second game using Incentive's Freescape 3D technique, I had hoped they'd manage to revamp the system to get some speed into it, but considering the number of pixels being shunted around the screen I suppose it was a pretty vain hope. This is a shame, because the speed of screen update and jump between frames is the only real distraction with Dark Side. Such slow movement creates problems reminiscent of those I had with The Sentinel, namely the difficulty in being able to turn around in time to destroy an enemy tank before it does the same to you. The U-turn key helps to speed movement up to a small extent but this remains a frustration. Compensating for such slothful movement means developing strategies to determine when and where to destroy tanks and ECDs, and this is where the game's real area of interest lies. Exploring Tricuspid, after practice, is a thoroughly absorbing experience, and discovering a new group of ECDs is always a delight (even if some of them regenerate two seconds after you've destroyed the tower-top!). Sound is more than competent, with a slow and moody piece of music which doesn't interfere with concentration, and in fact adds enormously to the atmosphere. If you have the patience, Dark Side is well worth a try, but don't expect a wild shoot 'em up. It's a tactical exploration game, and when treated as such it's got much rewarding gameplay to offer.

diminishes, thus allowing the player more time to complete the mission. The amount of power being channelled into the super

weapon's energy banks is shown as a percentage at the top right of the screen, and time remaining is shown as a binary display below it.

▼ A pair of Energy Collecting Devices stand mute witness to the imminent destruction of Evath



▲ There's plenty to search in this room in IO Confinement

I've no doubt that the rest of the ZZAP! team have made reference to Dark Side's slow screen update, but I beg to differ. I'll admit that initially it is rather frustrating to be slowed down by the capabilities of the machine rather than by not knowing what to do next, but the exploration bug quickly bites – and once it has, it just doesn't let go. The graphical rendition of the landscape will be familiar to players of the original game, but *Dark Side* has one or two wonders to marvel at – witness the Sphinx, pictured in this review, and believe! The Hagar soundtrack is excellent and creates a suitable air of suspense, though it still doesn't quite beat the theme that helped make Driller such a tense, atmospheric game. Don't buy it if fast shoot 'em ups are your only passion – *Dark Side* doesn't really cater for that breed of gamers. However, anyone who wants to use their brain a little and explore new worlds better get down to the software store and buy this, making sure they've got a few drums of midnight oil to burn.



▼ Your objective in *Dark Side*: the awesome Zephyr One weapon

There are many puzzles and pitfalls in the game to hinder the unwary player, so he needs all the time he can get to disable the Plexors (tank-like defense units that open fire on anything that comes within range), to puzzle over the method of activating the telepods which give access to restricted areas, and to replenish flagging shield power and fuel reserves. Rest assured that all of these puzzles, and more, can be solved, but have you enough time to try, or will Evath be reduced to a pile of radioactive rubble?

PRESENTATION 88%

Good packaging and on-screen presentation, and the brief instruction manual only hints at the nature of the mission.

GRAPHICS 89%

Good use of the Freescape technique creates some slow but still pretty stunning graphics.

SOUND 90%

Choice of atmospheric in-game tune or functional sound effects.

HOOKABILITY 81%

As with *Driller*, once you get over the slow pace of the game the devious puzzles draw you inexorably in.

LASTABILITY 96%

And they don't let go until you've completed it.

OVERALL 90%

A brilliant and more involved sequel which should appeal to most.

