

Lode Runner

1983 Broderbund

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LODE RUNNER

Ariolasoft/Broderbund, £9.95 cass, £12.95 disk, joystick or keys



Classic panic game with forgettable graphics, unbelievable addiction

150 different screens and you can create your own

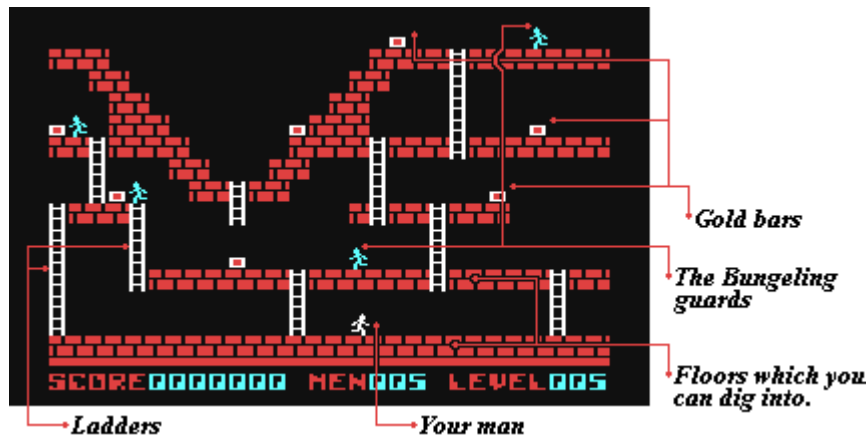
Deep in the Bungeling Empire lies a fortune in gold, stolen by power hungry leaders and guarded by enemy soldiers. Luckily, a highly trained Galactic commando such as yourself, is on hand to recover every single ingot from the massive and perplexing underground caverns.

There are 150 screens of Panic style action in this game, the difference being there's a lot more panic. Each screen consists of a number of gold chests scattered about, which you must collect to move onto the next level, but they are protected in devious ways. Some are embedded in seemingly impenetrable brick, others by apparently uncrossable gaps.

Usually there are ladders of various length joining any platform formations. Horizontal bars of differing length are also usually present, and you can swing your way along these, hand over hand.

On some screens there are hidden trap doors to fall through. They look exactly the same as normal, diggable brick, but have the annoying property of being where you least expect or want them. Thankfully, they appear at the same place on the same screens, so if your memory's good

Getting the chests is not so easy, though. A group of guards patrol the screen, all after your blood, and are far more intelligent than your average alien. These guards occasionally pick up a chest for themselves and must be tricked to falling into pits, which you dig with your laser drill pistol. Any gold carried by them will then be released for you to pick up.



Up and down for a lode of loot

You, and the guards for that matter, can fall any distance without dying. This proves useful should you become surrounded, as you can dig a hole and fall through it to the next level of platforms. But beware, some bricks are undiggable.

All of the screens have been designed with the utmost cunning and prove difficult and enjoyable to play. The facility exists to make your own equally baffling screens of action, should the present set become at all tiresome (see panel).

There are also a wide range of gameplay options. Keyboard or joystick control is accessible at any time throughout the game. If all is lost and your man is trapped without any means of death or escape, then there is an option to abort that particular life.

It's possible to alter the overall game speed, pause, and restart the game. You can toggle the direction that you dig (either in front or behind you), or terminate the current game should you get too annoyed with your performance.

There are also two cheat options with which you can add additional lives or advance levels. However, should you resort to using either, you won't be registered on the high score table.



Our own specially-edited screen. And it is MEAN to play!

With all these overwhelmingly good points, it seems difficult to fault Lode Runner in any way. Nevertheless, the sound and graphics must be criticised for their crudeness and simplicity, and the loading of levels for its laborious technique.

The sound consists of little other than a few quirky tunes on completing levels, and some bleeps and beeps thrown in for good measure during the game.

The sprites used are nothing more than stick men, about a character square high. But they are in fact well animated. Bricks, blocks, ladders, and bars, are all as simple as the sprites. Even the colour scheme is plain, consisting of a mere four colours.

The 150 levels are stored in blocks of roughly 16 screens and need to be loaded from side two of the tape (The main program is on side one and must be loaded first). This proves to be an annoying way of doing things, especially if you get to a high level, die, and want to play again -- you have to rewind the tape back to the beginning and reload the first levels.

Still, the game doesn't lose out because of these niggles -- it's got playability, hookability, and most of all, lastability.

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DIY screen designing

The game generator facility allows you to design and play your own screens of deviousness. You could shock your friends with your talent to design. The edit mode allows you to:

- 1) Edit a screen. Choose which of the 150 screens you wish to amend. Screens can then be drawn by moving a cursor using a tight cross formation of keys (which I found a little awkward to use). When you want to place a block, space, man etc., you just press the relevant key. When you are finished designing your screen, it can be saved to tape for use at a later tape.
- 2) Play. You can play-test any, or all of the 150 screens - including the ones you haven't edited. Incidentally, this means you can see the later screens as soon as you like.
- 3) Initialize. Will clear out the currently stored block of levels, ready for you to define your own from scratch.
- 4) Clear. Erases a screen from tape.
- 5) Move. Allows you effectively to renumber the screens, so that they appear in a different order.
- 6) Score. This clears out all the high scores currently held in memory.



Not one of the most recent games, but certainly one of the best. There are loads of screens, masses of action, and lots of variation to keep you going. The slightly off-putting graphics turn out to allow you a relatively massive playing area with consequently more to do than usual. This will be a classic for a long time to come.



Fast arcade action that'll make the platform wallahs' eyes drop out. A massive 150 screens (more if you design them) which will keep the midnight oil burning in many a dedicated arcade players home. Graphically miniscule and aurally crude, the game's sheer addiction kept my eyes propped open until the owls went to bed.



Despite the below average graphics, sound, and annoying level loading method, Lode Runner comes up with its head held high. An incredibly playable and addictive 150 screens of platform derivation, combined with a superb choice of options, means you'll be playing for a long time to come. Despite the relatively few different elements on each screen, there's enormous variation between the different screens. Some are amazing, and amazingly difficult.

Presentation 82%

Graphics 39%

Sound 34%

Hookability 89%

Lastability 94%

Value For Money 88%

Originality 39%

Excellent screen design facility. On cassette, game loads in sections.

Tiny but well-animated stick man graphics.

End of screen tune plus one or two effects.

Extremely playable and addictive from the word go.

150 screens plus an infinite number for you to create.

Endless hours of designing and playing.

Strong Space Panic roots but you can design your own screens.

Note: Includes the ZZAP!64 specially designed level, re-created for the needs of this review. To play the Zzap! level: Load the game as usual, insert the disk labelled 'ZZAP!64' and start a new game. Level 1 will now be replaced by the Zzap! custom level.