

TIME MACHINE

Activision/Vivid Image, C64 £9.99 cassette, £14.99 disk; Amiga £24.99



Time Machine Can't afford, or find a chrono-charged De Lorean? Never fear, Prof Potts has his own means of travelling through time, with a machine in the classic mould of HG Wells's device. The only problem is the Prof likes to work outside, and as he's about to zip off to one million years BC (and meet Raquel Welch!), terrorists strike!

The explosion destroys the time machine and its vital accelerator crystal, hurling the Prof a lot further back in time than he'd intended. He arrives in an era when humans have yet to evolve. The future as the Prof knows no longer exists. So he must alter history to recreate the 20th century, allowing him to prevent the terrorist attack and live happily ever after!

Prehistoric Times comprises five flickscreens, including a swamp, river and volcanic ground. You must find a way to cool the Earth down, killing off the dinosaurs, and allowing humanity to evolve. If you do this successfully another Time Zone is created, the Ice Age. Here you must find a way to heat the planet up. In all, there are five Time Zones with the Stone Age, Middle Ages and Modern Day. This makes a total of 25 screens, shown in a grid at the centre of the control panel. Once a Time Zone is created its five screens turn blue and you can travel there: you stay in exactly the same position as you were before, only the time changes. Often landscape features such as rocks and trees are still there, the river is in virtually all Zones. Potts also carries Travel Pods which can be dropped and teleported back to.

All this time-travelling is crucial because you could be in the Middle Ages when the Ice Ages stop heating up, threatening Man's evolution. So you must warp back and fix the problem before all the Zones collapse, sending you back to the start minus a life. You might also need some food which grows in Prehistoric times, or need to change an object which will have an effect on a later level. Your energy is shown by a gauge on the right of the control panel: energy is drained by walking underwater (!), being hit by objects such as falling icicles and being hit by creatures such as yetis! To defend yourself you're armed with a short-range zapper; initially it stuns a creature (useful if you want to pick it up), but prolonged fire might kill it.

Robin Hogg

Considering this is one load I'm very surprised by just how much is in Time Machine: the wide variety of atmospheric graphics, a technically superb Wally Beben tune, not forgetting the sheer complexity of the game and the great sense of freedom to do what you want makes for an impressive game alright. It's a nice idea that you just can't leave a time period and forget about it; you've got to keep jumping back to correct past events, then jumping forward to manipulate the results and back again to tackle a new problem – compelling stuff! The ideas behind Time Machine are very inventive, making for a very devious game: it's akin to the Back to the Future movie only much more fun as it's you that's manipulating the time lines. Just when you think you're getting somewhere something happens in the distant past to make you lose all the time periods you've reached. It may well sound frustrating but it's great fun to merely experiment with the time zones and there's a lovely sense of humour about it all. I've only one reservation and that's whether Time Machine is really a 8-bit game, since little has been done to expand the game for the Amiga though I must admit it's great to play and looks excellent.

Scorelord

It's been a long time since a game as imaginative as this. The game operates in such a smart way, e.g. planting a seed in Prehistoric Times then warping into the future and discovering a tree standing in its place. That's not to say this is another arcade game with frustratingly obscure puzzles. The solutions are far from obvious, but they all seem very logical and the novel time-travelling element makes it absolutely compulsive to play. Due to the

way everything interrelates, the game has to be a single load. Yet the Amiga's 25 screens pack in five distinctly different zones, all glowing with plenty of colour and imagination. The speech bubbles are fun, and the way the Ice Age chimps shiver, turn blue and then freeze is hilarious. The game has an excellent cartoon look which really adds to the entertainment value. But it's the C64 game which is incredible, cramming the same 25 screens into 64K. The quality of the Zones is so high you'd be convinced there had to be a multiload, but there isn't! This is a marvellous arcade adventure, great on the Amiga and incredible on the C64!

Phil King

Although Time Machine is another flickscreen arcade adventure, it is completely different from the blasting intensive Hammerfist. There's still plenty of baddies to zap but you have more time to think – essential with such an innovative game. The puzzles are so interesting and fun I just had to keep playing. Even when you work out what you need to do, getting it all in the right order and using the travel pods to best effect is very challenging. The graphics are, in my opinion, an advance over Hammerfist on both machines and the way you can interact with them is great. I especially like the window on the instrument panel which shows a picture of any usable objects you get close to. This saves you trying to pick up or use any useless bits of scenery, although pretty much everything in the game has a purpose. The way everything links together is a real pleasure to see and, more importantly, to play. Definitely the best 4-D game out!

AMIGA

PRESENTATION 79%

A little intro sets the scene well and the lack of multiload is both vital and welcome.

GRAPHICS 92%

Very 'vivid' colourful graphics establish a cartoon feel with many amusing touches such as freezing monkeys.

SOUND 85%

Good intro and in-game tunes, but the FX are superb with sampled pterodactyl shrieks, zapping noise and so on.

HOOKABILITY 91%

As with the C64 you can have lots of fun exploring and the first level puzzles are relatively simple to easy you into the game style.

LASTABILITY 88%

The same as the C64, which is a bit disappointing – maybe they could've put in a few more dinosaurs to go with the pterodactyl.

OVERALL 90%

A superbly done time-travelling arcade adventure.

C64

PRESENTATION 79%

Attractive loading screen and title music, with no multiload!

GRAPHICS 92%

Five zones and 25 screens consisting of top quality graphics.

SOUND 85%

Good Wally Beben intro music and in-game spot FX.

HOOKABILITY 91%

Despite the complex ideas, the urge to simply explore is high and with a little persistence Zone Two is soon created.

LASTABILITY 88%

Not only must you work out the intriguing puzzles, but maintain the Zones against marauding creatures.

OVERALL 90%

The best arcade adventure in a long while.