

DUTCH COURAGE

PREDATOR

Action

It is a shame that everyone under 16 won't have seen the film of *Predator*, the blockbuster, all-action, box-office hit movie starring Arnold (The Terminator, Commando) Schwarzenegger—and of course, caring parents won't let you see it when it comes out on video either, unless you have turned 16 in the meantime. So for the underprivileged youngsters, the next best thing is to play the computer game, which Activision has kindly prepared for you. The storyboard was designed by System 3 (Bangkok Knights, The Last Ninja and R series) with coding, music and graphics by Source Software. For the 64 version, Hugh Riley provided the graphics.

You take the role of Major Alan "Dutch" Schaefer, the leader of a crack combat team sent in on a top secret mission to rescue white-collar ransoms of a helicopter crash deep behind enemy lines. The team finds the survivors murdered by guerrillas, and following a fire fight with the guerrillas of Free Base, the team is forced to retreat back into the jungle. Then, one by one, each member is killed by a new threat, an alien predator from another world. Extremely agile, the alien is seemingly invulnerable to the most powerful of firepower.

Predator is a powerful movie and it is difficult to see how any computer game could capture the suspense and excessive violence that has made the film such a success. Almost predictably, the basic idea behind the game is nothing new, which may disappoint some readers who have seen the film, but System 3 have managed remarkably well to capture the film's flavour, and for once this really will fit the bill.

The game begins with the team leaving their helicopter, running into the jungle with the Dutch providing the support in what quickly becomes a battle for survival. The game takes the player through the film's main scenes, from the jungle battle to the guerrilla base, on over there.

The colour/Amstrad graphics help off the game's lead but it will certainly not be as realistic as the

spanning streams and mud pools and on to the final encounter with the predator itself, all by way of scrolling landscapes. This is done, in all versions, by the use of multi-loads, so if you are not on disk, be prepared for a wait between sections.

At the outset, Dutch is armed with a machine-gun and three grenades, and as the jungle is overflowing with guerrillas, enemy soldiers, low flying vultures and the predator itself, there is no shortage of targets.

BODY SNATCHER

At each stage mutated bodies of Dutch's men are strewn around the jungle clearing. Searching their corpses reveals extra weapons and ammunition for use against the enemy. Dutch can be wounded by enemy bullets, machine-gun fire, or close wounds from passing vultures. As he is, however, made of sterner stuff than can take several wounds before losing a life.

Frequently the predator's gunship lands in an Dutch as he runs through the jungle, and a life is lost if it catches up with him. In the final two levels the predator itself joins in the action, using all of its skills to try and kill Dutch. The whole mission is played against the clock — a timer attached to a



Disappointingly, only a slightly ahead 'em-up, on the Spectrum the lack of colour is a disadvantage to Amstrad's more efforts.

SPECTRUM 48/128

Cassette: £9.99

It's such a pity that much of the film's atmosphere isn't given proper justice in the green and black scrolling levels of the Spectrum. The background scenes of jungle foliage look very impressive, but they tend to obscure soldiers, vultures and bullets moving around the screen, reducing playability. Amstrad himself is really estimated, vultures always purposefully and really looks as though he's firing a powerful gun, but the predatory alien looks decidedly average for such an awesome beast. Don't worry too much about the multi-loads as they are only about 30 seconds long.

OVERALL 70%

COMMODORE 64/128

Cassette: £9.99

Diskette: £14.99

Colour and animation really came into their own on the Commodore's version. Jungle details are superb and the Amstrad character works particularly well, right down to changing facial expressions. Colour is used well, and only in enemy movements, but practically too when you are targeted by the alien. Sound (it's still in the white with feathering bits in the background) and a suitable gurgling noise as the alien is hiding watches you. Best of the three versions, *Predator* is a predator for the home, and an interesting reworking of the scrolling shoot-'em-up.

OVERALL 84%

nuclear device powered explosion.

As is often the case with film titles, the computer version is better appreciated after seeing the film — the instructions do not go into much detail about the game's objectives, so if you haven't seen the film first, you may find some of it bewildering. Though we have seen games (some) like this, you don't lose in courtship terms before, from the opening sequence onwards — as Earth looms into view — the game is very professional looking, and, depending on which format you have, can be effectively atmospheric. It is only the limited graphics of each level that makes *Predator* something of a let down, although despite this, it remains to be a very enjoyable shoot-'em-up.

AMSTRAD CPC

Cassette: £9.99

Diskette: £14.99

Colour has been put to good use in *Predator*. The dark forests and greens work well to recreate the film's atmosphere effectively. The scrolling is a little rough around the edges and the background graphics, like the Spectrum version, tend to obscure enemy bullets and the alien gunship, but the game itself is polished in the way it is put together. Surprisingly, sound FX do not play a prominent part, they are restricted to gun fire, the approach of the alien's gunship and the infrequent use of vultures.

OVERALL 76%

"... from the opening sequence, the game is professional and atmospheric."

