

# ON THE REBOUND

## PINBALL CONSTRUCTION SET

Electronic Arts

In a way, this should really be a Version/Update review, because *Pinball Construction Set* made its first appearance on the Commodore 64 back in 1989 on the AmigaSoft label. But as that was over two years ago now, it seems only fair to give this new PC version the full treatment. Critical response to the original 8-bit kit was highly favourable. Now Electronic Arts are making it available to PC owners in the UK.

*Pinball Construction Set*, on PC, is just what it claims to be – a complete pinball design utility which requires no programming skills whatsoever. Once designed games can be saved to disk for later playing, and just to give you the flavour of things there are five example games included.

The main screen display is divided in two vertically. On the left, pinball table on the left, design icons on the right. Of these, 17 are pinball parts – flippers, bumpers etc. – in the form of polygons, which can be moved over onto the table by using the hand pointer. Included among these parts are such things as magnets to raise the ball's movement and lanes to make pathways for the ball. In addition, there are several command icons to use in designing the polygons used in the pinball game.

### SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

The first of these reshape icons, an arrow, creates control squares on the polygons and game takes effect when selected. If the pointer – now an arrow – is placed on one of these squares, the shape can be dragged into a new form. More control squares can be

added by the second icon – a hammer – or eliminated by the third icon – scissors. This last function is useful if you have put

One of the design screens, just to show how it's done, complete with logo



something into an undesirable new form – delete the square and the mistake disappears too. But to warrant the flexibility of this system (designing and the ease with which it can be done, means that the pinball novice (as we discovered at T&E GAMING SOCIETY) when one such had a

git can rapidly design tables of magnificent playability!

Next command icon is a paint brush with three colour choices below. In each choice of these three colours can be copied through on some machines – and doesn't include standard background black. All the control level the brush and paints can be used simply to change the colour of selected shapes. However when used in conjunction with a magnifying glass icon then pretty much anything on the board, plus

and the elasticity of sides and flippers. The real icon means the player can establish scores and even awards for targets, plus bonuses. The final icon is a file by which games can be saved, loaded, played and copied. (Copies can only be played with the PC5 box.)

Amateur PC players should note that the pinball option refers to analogue positions used with a joystick card.

### PC

Diskette: £14.95

*Pinball Construction Set* is without any doubt the last word in such utilities. Its icon system is essentially straightforward, though with such a wealth of options extremely complex results can be obtained in given sufficient patience. If you're a fan of pinball games (PC) is unmissable and could even be used to recreate favourite pinball tables such as *Big Hunter* and *Space Shuttle*. For non-fans the enormous range of options available might prove enticing for the curious but essentially it is just a pinball game, and whether you like such games or not should essentially govern your reaction to this admittedly superb utility.

OVERALL 84%

"Pinball Construction Set is without doubt the last word in such utilities."

### VERSION UPDATE

## A prime evil

PREDATOR  
Activision

Atari ST Diskette: £14.95

All the gore and ultra-violence of the latest Amiga *Silent Rage* comes to the ST from Activision. In *Predator* – the game of the film – you step into the shoes

of Schwarzenegger, leader of a crack team of commandos on a rescue mission in the Central American jungle. Things go wrong when the team is forced to retreat after the mission is aborted. Their real bloodbath begins as the team

encounters the Predator, a hunter from another world, increases in strength and agility. But full game details of this multi-level horizontally scrolling shoot-'em-up, see the other format review in T&E.

Slaughter in the jungle – together more detailed (therefore more processed) on the ST



### COMMENT

The scrolling isn't perfect but is kept to a minimum and doesn't detract from the gameplay. In some places, the colour scheme is not so subtle as the greys and greens found in the Commodore 64 game, and there is the odd graphical mistake – the ability to walk through bodies and tree trunks for example. Sound takes a back seat for much of the game, with grenade explosions, bullet effects and the roar of helicopter blades at the start. The theme tune in the introductory sequence is only well out of context with the game and its even more incoherent. On the whole *Predator* is an enjoyable shoot-'em-up with some neat effects but a disappointingly straightforward conversion from its 8-bit predecessors.

ATARI ST  
OVERALL 70%