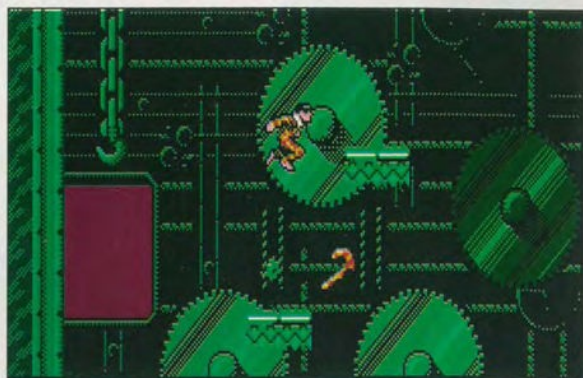


Harlequin

GREMLIN



Careful use of the cogs will let you move platforms around the screen.

Sheffield's finest exponent of top quality games – we are talking about Gremlin of course – have earned themselves a reputation over the past couple of years for their excellent racing games.

Every time they do something different it's greeted by gasps from the majority of people. You know the stuff: "Wow! A good game from Gremlin with no cars in it". When you think back to titles like Utopia and Suspicious Cargo you realise they've been doing it for ages, yet every new non-race game gets met with the same shock. Why?

Standing down off the old soapbox, this time around they've decided to hit the platform market and, no before you ask, there's not a car in sight. Harlequin features, as its main character, one of those ridiculous clowns with the black masks who used to give you the creeps when you were a kid. You'll be in complete control of all of Harlequin's actions as he goes about his task of saving his land from almost certain doom!

Chimerica was once a wondrous place, full of happiness and pleasant surprises but, while Harlequin has been away, the kingdom has suffered a broken heart and has been taken over by evil forces.

Now he's back and the only way to restore his homeland to its former self is to recover the four pieces of the broken heart and then things will

begin to get back to normal. From the second you start the game you'll continually run into nasties, all intent on draining your life force and making sure that the pieces of the heart are never recovered.

Wear your heart on your finger

To combat this you can fire love hearts from your fingertips that will destroy all things evil. Some will take a little more persistence to kill off than others, the badder they are, the more love it will take to remove them.



Armed with this and this alone, you must guide Harlequin through the 23 levels of platform mayhem. Thankfully your hero clown has a hefty jump on him and can spring about like a nervous gazelle, clearing great distances.

Unlike the Robocod style of platform game there are plenty of puzzles to solve before you can progress further. These include collecting objects and toggling switches that reveal exits for you to go to other levels.

Dotted around the platforms you will come across little presents. Opening these will

give you special bonuses including tokens. Among them are, a space hopper and an umbrella, some of which you'll need before you can get anywhere on certain levels.

For example, there's a level called Sewercide which consists mostly of water and you will need the fish icon that will allow you to transform into a... well fish, surprisingly. It's quite amusing at first watching a little fishy swim around in a clown suit with a mask on!

Clowning around

Coming into contact with any of the things out to get you will drain your energy bar, which can be located in the bottom left hand corner of the screen. When this finally gets to the bottom, that's it, game over, finished, kaputt. Thankfully though you do get three continues at the beginning of each game, and you will find yourself needing them, especially at first.



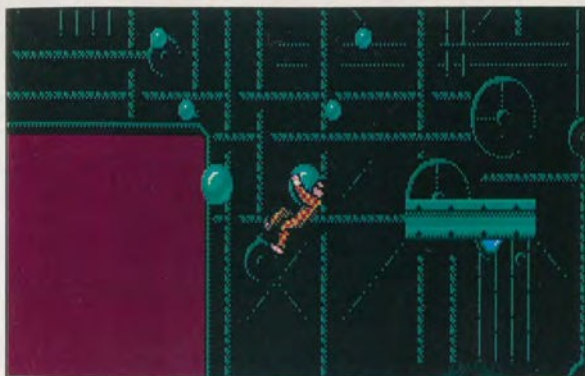
Opening the presses gives you bonus points and occasionally necessary tokens.



Swinging down this rope will let you collect all the bonuses that are nearby.



This is one of the many bonus levels in the game, these are accessed by jumping onto a kite.



These swinging balls have a use, they help you create a pathway across the screen, although it does appear a little precarious.



Simply by wandering around you can pick up loads of bonuses that will help you to continue onwards with your quest.

Gremlin have gone for the option without parallax scrolling which is a pretty wise decision.

This worked for Robocod and although the sprite movement may seem a little slow at first, once you get used to it you really do appreciate it as the action never slows down if there are a lot of things on screen at the same time.

The scrolling is really very smooth too and it all adds together to give a polished if not exactly visually stunning look to the aesthetic side of things.

Sound is, well, the kind of sound one has sadly come to expect from the ST as of late. You are presented with the odd spot effect and a few rather limp tunes. I don't think you'll have them blasting out of the telly for long, they don't really constitute music for pleasure.

As for the controls, they are pretty responsive and you won't find any trouble with them, although you may be a little put off by the initial sluggishness although you will soon get used to this and get on with it. You'll be leaping around from platform to platform like the frisky little Harlequin you are.

Paul



Jump onto the electricity cables to find hidden switches.



Finding the fish token will let you carry on through the water levels having transformed into a Harlequin fish.



The land of Chimerica isn't a nice place to be living at the moment. You must return home to save it from evil domination.

GAME: HARLEQUIN
PRICE: £25.99

Platform games are one of the few types of game that have always remained popular. This may be because there can be such a great variation within the classification. For example Parasol Stars and Harlequin are both platform games but you could quite happily have them both in your collection without worrying about them being too similar. Harlequin itself is a classy product, oozing playability and style. Nice graphics add to the atmosphere and no self-respecting platform addict should be missing out on this, what's bound to be Gremlin's latest best seller.

LEAGUE RATING

4 TITUS THE FOX

★ 5 HARLEQUIN ★

6 JAMES POND

PLATFORM

GAMEPLAY: ██████████

SOUND: ██████████

GRAPHICS: ██████████

RATING=85%



Now you've found this hidden switch, how on earth do you get to it? Use your initiative and you will prevail.