Attempting to pass through a laser gate in Cyadonia

You'd have to be mad to buy full price packages when there's so much excellent PD, shareware and licenceware around.
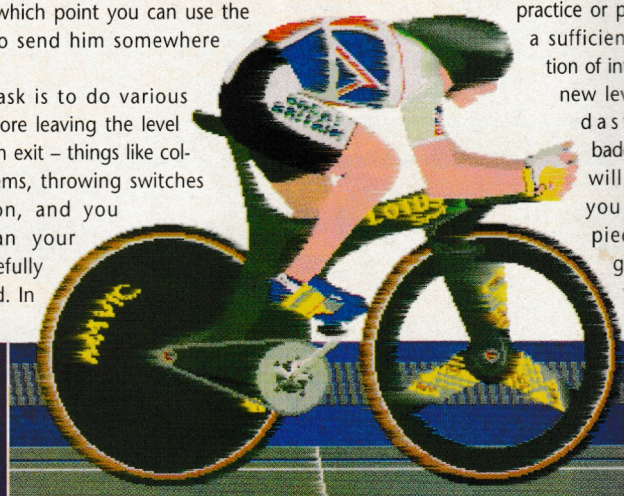Phil Morse looks at this month's bumper bundle

PUBLIC SECTOR

Peg a Picture

Deja Vu, L99

by Steve Bennett

This educational program is aimed at primary school children, and indeed the author actually bothered to take it to a local school and get the kids to check it out, allowing him to make changes and improvements to the code before putting it on general release.

After a complicated instruction screen which an adult would be best reading and explaining to a child, you can use either pegs or shapes to create pictures.

You choice of shapes is large, and it feels a little like playing Tetris, except you can use the mouse to put the shapes wherever you

want them to be! There are a wide range of colours to choose from, and you can make a colour flash by clicking underneath it – great for Belisha beacons. With full loading and saving options, this is an interesting and potentially useful education package.

Cyadonia

Deja Vu, L/67

by Jamie Newcombe

According to the instructions, you have to guide your CYAD (he's actually a yellow cross) around the many levels of the matrix – "a metallic structure of interconnected platforms and bridges hanging in the void of outer space".

This is typical PD, in that a simple idea has been taken and turned into a fully-featured game which is actually quite

good fun. You move your joystick to move the CYAD, but once he has started moving he'll continue to do so until he hits something, at which point you can use the joystick to send him somewhere else.

Your task is to do various things before leaving the level through an exit – things like collecting gems, throwing switches and so on, and you must plan your route carefully to succeed. In

its "thinking arcade game" feel, it's a little like Lemmings, and with a full tutorial section where you can choose which levels to practice or play, and a sufficient selection of interesting new levels and dastardly baddies, this will keep you occupied for a good while.

Dangerous DEMOS

Danger abounds this month! No boring vectors, no scrolling sleepiness, just the cream of the demo crop. First up is Olympic Cyclist Anim (17 Bit, 2155). From the title screen of this 1Mb-only animation I learned that the UK have previously held the Olympics in 1908 and 1948. Roll on Manchester 2000, eh?

Anyway, I was expecting dodgy digitised videotape, à la mayhem on Wheels 3. Instead I was pleasantly surprised to see a fully convincing animation of

the British bike which beat the world at the recent bash in Barcelona, as ridden by Chris Boardman, complete with stupid hat.

The animation is smooth, although as it only does one thing there ain't exactly hours of fun here. Still, well worth a peek.

Underground all-nighters here we come! The Yamma Yamma Hardcore Megamix (17 Bit, 2138) is a simple but effective aural assault. A mad – ie mind bending – strobe accompanies a competent demo containing all the right noises and breakbeats, from Kicks like a Mule's The Bouncer to *that* grungy noise.

Demos like this are good fun, of course, but not a patch on a half-decent DJ. Still, it's better than most. It's certainly better than the Sesame's Treet Remix (17 Bit, 2089) which is a version of the recent love-it-or-hate-it "rave" smash from the Smart Es.

This opens with a loading shot of a badly drawn man smoking something dubious which disappears to reveal... a blank screen as the demo is playing.

It's an average version, the sound quality is acceptable, but it hardly breaks any boundaries, and with the record absolutely guaranteed to end up at 99p in the bargain bins, vinyl's yer' best bet for this one.

Alternatively, don't bother and buy some proper dance music instead...

The Palace Linus animation is one of the funniest I have seen in a long while

It's that bike again!

The Disknet Silly Names demo (17 Bit, 2137 A/B) contains 12 music demos, from Through the Limits to an absolutely appalling supermarket version of Eric Clapton's Wonderful Tonight, decimated in a way which only our European friends seem capable of achieving.

Some good samples and sounds lend the demo a very high quality feel, but it's let down by the scrolling credits, which apart from containing some dodgy English (no problems) also contains a lot of swearing (no need for it, lads).

Original animation shocker! Yup, the Palace Linus animation (17 Bit, 2086) is a clever Take Hart-ish effort involving amusing music and a pencil which draws things, Rolo advert style, for the central character to interact with.

This coding is neat, and the idea more original than any demos I've seen for a long while, all making this one of the better animations of recent times. Worth a look. And that's it for this month. Remember - stay dangerous!