



# the storm

both fast and exceptionally smooth even on a low-powered machine.

"On the PC the game scrolls as well as it did on the Megadrive, if not better," reckons Speedlink's Roger Taylor, the man overseeing Desert Strike's coding (and not to be confused with Duran Duran's drummer). "Because the Megadrive had to occasionally download and decompact graphics from the cartridge the scrolling used to 'glitch' from time to time. You don't get that on the PC because you can store all the data in memory — the scroll stays dead smooth all the time."

"The key thing with a scrolling game is that you have a constant velocity," Roger adds. "In other words, if you have a 16MHz 386 and a 33MHz 486 both running Desert Strike side by side, then it'll take you the same time on both machines to fly from one side of a level map to the other — the difference is that on the slower machine the scroll will be 'coarser', because it hasn't got the power to update the screen so often."

Why does Alex think the scroll in so many other games is, to be blunt, crap? "I don't know," he replies. "I guess it's just because people have different ways of approaching it. I spent a lot of time working out the mathematics behind my routine and the results have fortunately come out really well."

Compared to the scrolling, the 3D effect — whereby the helicopter can fly 'behind' buildings and other landscape features — was relatively easy to achieve.

"It wasn't so hard to do," claims Alex. "You just prioritise the order in which things are printed, so that you draw objects at the 'back' of the screen first and



guides between what's pure game logic and what's hardware specific stuff," adds Alex.

A tough job was made harder by the fact that Alex had very little in the way of information from Electronic Arts about how the original Megadrive game was put together.

"We had no documentation at all," sighs Alex. "The only thing we had was the Megadrive code which had comments in it but that's about it. We had some graphics as well, but they'd been compacted in a really weird way and it took us about a month to work out how to get at them!"

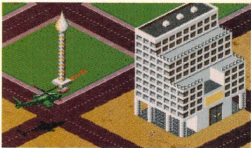
The game's now only a month or so away from completion and most of the coding is complete, with

ture of Megadrive and Amiga graphics just for development," says Roger.

It's all shaping up very nicely that's for sure, and Desert Strike looks set to be as successful on the PC as it was on the Megadrive. But don't take my word for it, because if you tune in to the next issue of PC GAMES you'll be able to find out how good the game is for yourself by playing our EXCLUSIVE demo.

"It was always my intention to make the game as smooth and as playable as it was on the Megadrive," says Alex. "I'm pretty pleased with the results."

And so he should be.



With the game only a month or two from completion, the team are delighted with what they've achieved. "Desert Strike PC is easily as playable as the Megadrive version," says Roger.

**"If you don't plan your attacks carefully there's no way you'll be able to finish the game."**



things at the 'front' of the screen last. There are things you can do to optimise the code, like not drawing things that are totally obscured by other objects, but that's the basic theory behind it."

Since the Megadrive and PC have almost completely different hardware set-ups, converting Desert Strike hasn't exactly been a straight-forward job.

"Things like the sprite movement, scrolling and so on are handled by Megadrive's custom graphics hardware so that has to be totally coded for the PC from scratch," explains Roger, "but things like the game logic are fairly transportable — although obviously you've got to convert the code [because the Megadrive and PC have different processors] and optimise it."

"The difficulty about it is that you have to distin-

only a few tweaks to be made here and there. The biggest headache that lies ahead is enhancing the Megadrive's 64-colour graphics to take full advantage of the PC's 256-colour palette. "We're still using a mix-

