The Lemm's drop into deadly danger. Those three pillars would be no problem if you had three bashers. However, you only get two and have to make do with a miner to dig down diagonally. Hurry and get that bridge going though, here comes the crowd! If it ain't finished in time the lemm's will be! Oh no!
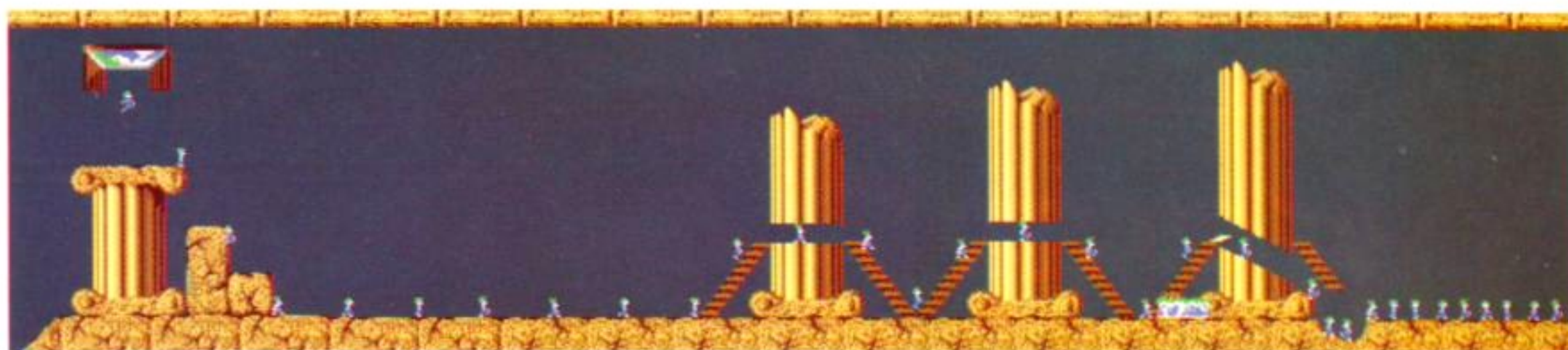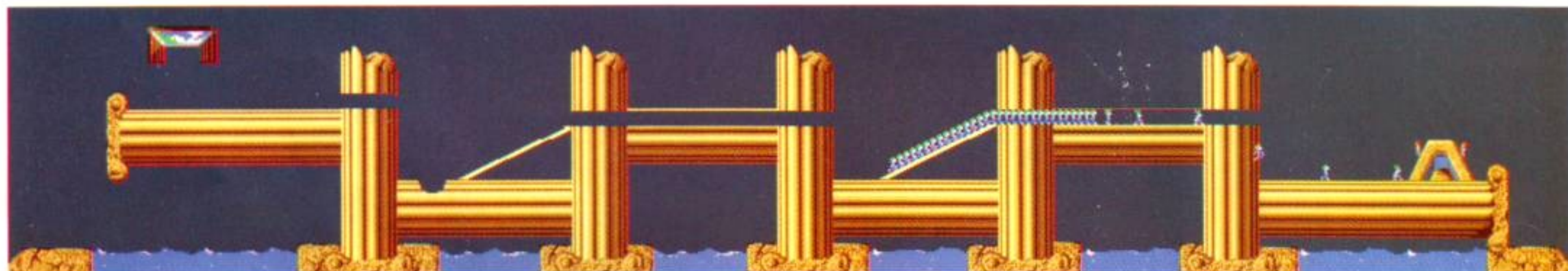
LEMMINGS

Psygnosis ■ £24.99 Mouse

Oh no! The lemmings are dropping into deadly danger! Only you can give the necessary instructions to save their little lives and guide them to the safety of a

This one's a poser. Do you go over under or through? Well bashing the pillars seems to work, but it is the bridges that will see the green folk to safety. An easy level this one. It's is matter of timing rather than mental dexterity. You also have to save 99% of the 100 starters. Best of luck!

cliff-free zone. Are you up to giving lemming aid?

Each level begins with a huge trap-door creaking open, then down tumble a herd of dungaree-clad, green-haired lemmings. Being folk of little brain, and left to their own devices the little lemm's do what they do best: die! Why? Because those cruel people at Psygnosis have crammed each level with dangers that are absolutely guaranteed to kill the terminally stupid, ie lemmings.

Doing the do

The lemm's can only be saved if you take control. By giving lemm's certain tasks to do it's, just about,

feasible to shepherd the bumbling bunch to safety. A menu bar below the game's screen offers a number of icon options. Through it, any lemming can be changed from a standard 'runner' into a 'do'er', by selecting a task icon, then clicking on a specific individual. Lemm's can dig, build, bash, climb and tunnel. They can even use parasol parachutes when presented with the kind of cliff-drop that has made them famous.

The road to sanctuary, though, is never smooth; pot-holed by one simple fact: there are never enough of the right commands! On

a level full of ravines it's a safe bet that there's one too few bridge-building commands to straddle the gap. So cunning plans are the order of the day to ensure enough — a percentage of lemmings must be saved on each level — lemm's reach safety.

Run away

In their way are chasms that must be spanned, hills that have to be tunnelled through and fatal falls that must be guarded by suicide-blockers. Once they are down they start running and will continue to charge in the same direction until they hit a solid

object — either a wall or a blocker — or if they run out of floor. Once past such a peak, the little lemm's can only survive a short fall. If the

distance is too great for them they sickeningly splat in a shower of lemming drops.

Embroiled in a frantic race against time, you have to juggle blockers, bashers and floaters as well as the main herd. Taxing and tense it makes for incredible gaming. Succeed and your grin will shame a Cheshire cat, fail and you have to try again.

Lemmings thrives on panic, lateral thinking and accurate mouse work. As commands are clicked directly on the lemm's, accuracy gets tough when the little beggars bunch up. And one mistaken mouse click can cost the whole herd their lives.

The frantic high-speed thinking is underpinned with the tension of timing. The best example of this is waiting for bridge-builders to span a gulf. Each command only lasts for ten small bricks, after these are laid the lemm' reverts back to normal and runs onwards. Fine if they've bridged the gap, fatal if

The blocker on the right of the hill is set to explode (one second left on the countdown). However the disastrous run is continuing as most of the lemmings are trapped with a downward digger. One miner has the right idea and he is on his own now. Time for mass suicide, hit the mushroom icon twice to quit this level.
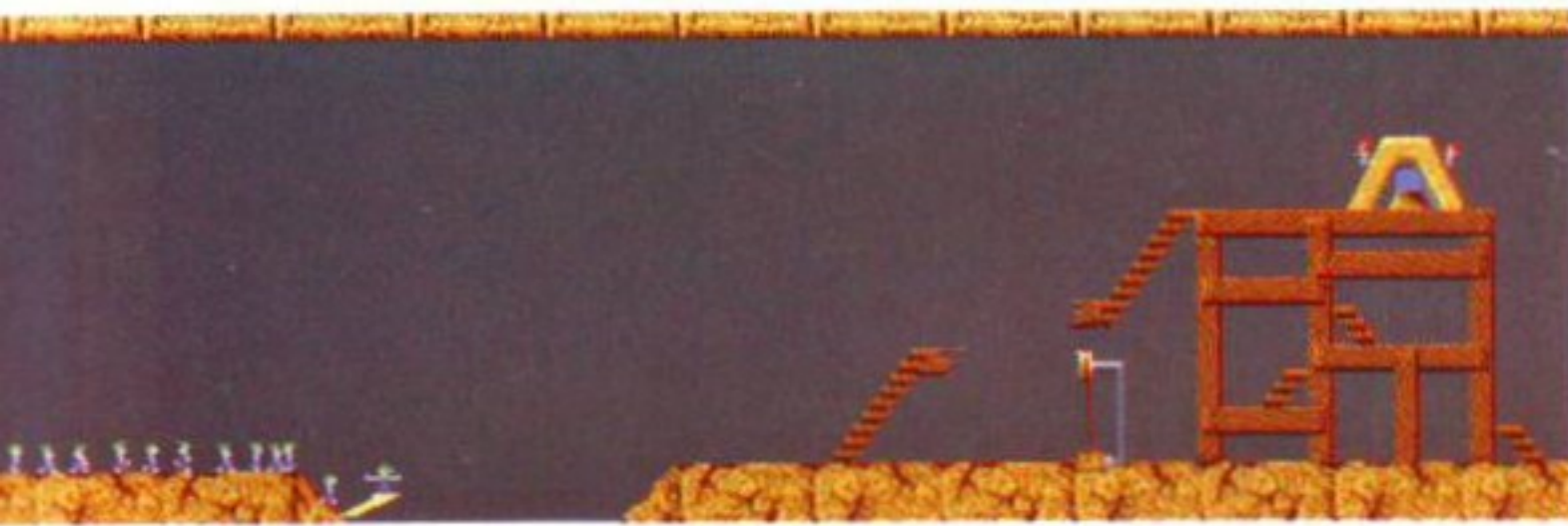
they haven't. To stop such suicidal tendencies and lengthen the bridge, you have to wait until the tenth brick is laid. Then, as the lemm' turns and looks bemused, you have to slap another bridge-builder command on them.

Cliff hanger

Why, however, should anyone want to spend time and mental anguish saving the lemm's? The answer partially lies in their excellent animation. Although only a few pixels high, the little folk have real character. They hold their heads in despair if instructed to self destruct and tap their toes as they get bored of blocking.
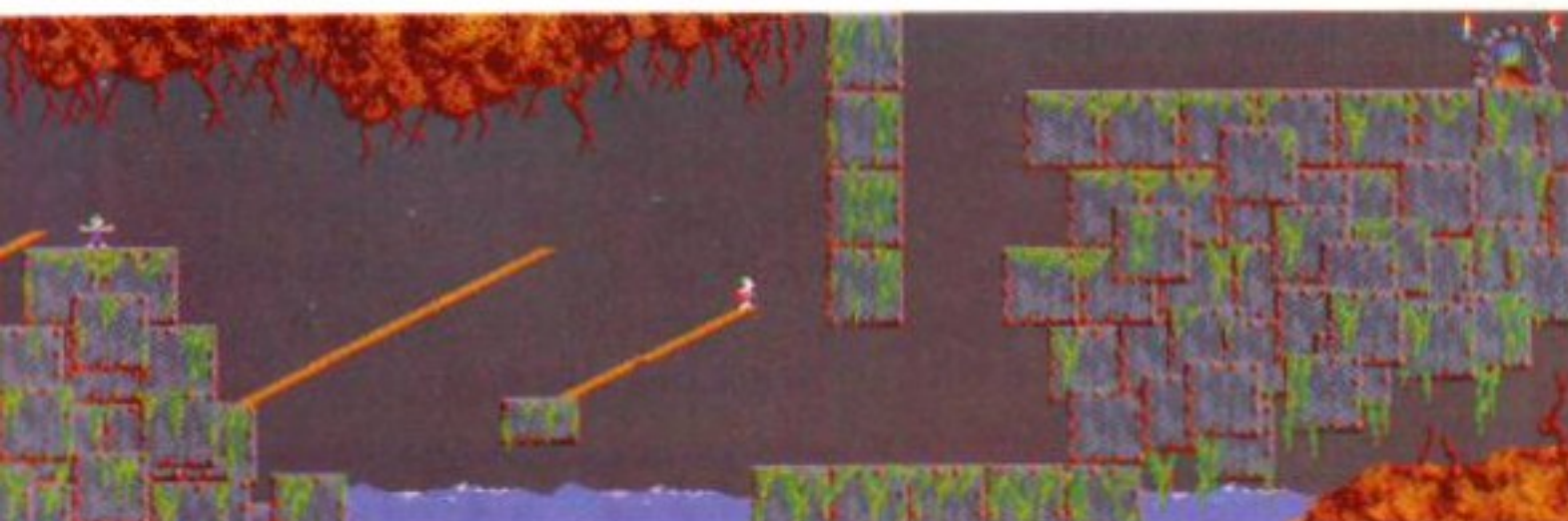
The lack of one main protagonist and, instead, focusing upon a collective group who are controlled via icons, puts this firmly in the 'god game' genre. Most important, though, is the blending of this 'god game' approach into the obvious puzzle formula. The resultant mix transcends the normal limits of shapes, pipes and balls that have held back the likes of *Klax* and *E-Motion*. The lemmings supply the intrigue, while the puzzling levels gives the grey matter a hard time.

Lemmings is a hoot to play and quickly becomes a dangerous obsession. Four different styles are available plus a two-player mode. All call for a clear head and a cool hand if you are to finish a level and gain the next password. There are over 160 levels, each of which has more than one solution.

You must decide the best way to solve a level, given the commands available, and any favoured personal approach. There is, as the old saying goes, more than one way to explode a lemming.

Trenton Webb

Menu masters — for the way lemm's live today!

On each puzzling level you will have a different number of 'icon' commands with which to guide the little people to safety. Just click on the icon you want to use next then click on the lemm' you want to command.

Climber — this can be used at any time and once a climber always a climber. Given this command a lemm' will scale any vertical surface like Spiderman — albeit a very small green-haired one.

Floater — normally great falls are fatal for lemm's, just like in real life. However, click this command on a lemm' at anytime and if they fall, they open a brolly and float gracefully to Earth.

Bomb — to remove a blocker or any lemm' who winds you up, click it on them. After a five-second count down they explode. Ha!

Blocker — an essential but fatal command in the hectic world of Lemminging. The lemm' will stand where clicked, spread his arms and stop his fellows from running in that direction. The only way to remove a blocker is to use the 'bomb' function.

Builder — these little guys will immediately start building a bridge that rises at an angle of 30 degrees from the floor. Each such command lasts for 10 bricks, after which the lemm' reverts to a normal 'runner'.

Basher — when a lemm' hits a solid object, at that precise instant, slap a basher command on them and they'll bash their way through it. That is unless it is made out of metal, then they get bruised claws, turn around and run off.

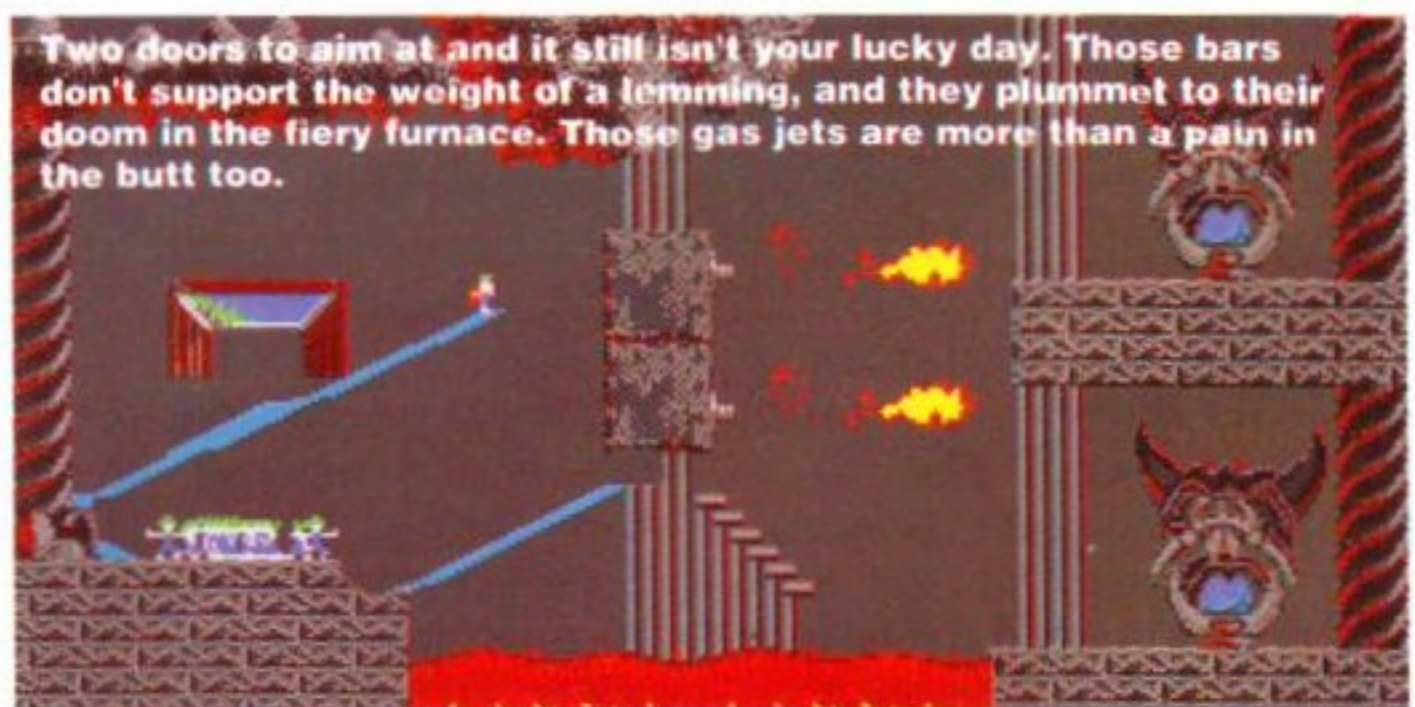**Digger** — useful begger, Johnny digger! Click this one on a lemm' and they immediately start to tunnel straight down. Again if they run out of floor or hit metal they stop.

Miner — starts any lemm' digging diagonally down until they hit metal or run out of floor. Pick 'em when you can't go over, or round an object and have to go under.

Armageddon — Click twice on the mushroom cloud and this quits the level, killing all the lemm's in one huge communal explosion.

Hmm! The trick here is to send a lone lemm' ahead of the pack laying bridges. It calls for spilt-second timing to re-activate the bridge command before he starts to sky-dive. Getting to the door (far right) will take some nifty bridge work, and we're not talking about dentistry!

We all go up together!

When you turn a lemming into a blocker they are doomed. Unlike other commands it can not be countermanded. The only way to shift them is to ask them very politely to self-destruct. Then the poor doomed chap, looks about in amazement as a five-second timer counts off above their head. When the clock hits zero they hold their heads in despair, and then oblige by blowing themselves to bits. Rather usefully they also take out part of the landscape.

A much more spectacular option is Lemming-Armageddon. Hitting the mushroom cloud twice sets off a mass destruction, and the lemm's on the level switch to self-destruct and explosions splatter the screen, effectively quitting the level so you can start

Two doors to aim at and it still isn't your lucky day. Those bars don't support the weight of a lemming, and they plummet to their doom in the fiery furnace. Those gas jets are more than a pain in the butt too.

VERDICT

92%

◆ Incredibly original concept that is well worked into a really great game.

◆ Graphic magic, despite the small sprites.

◆ Huge game with incredibly addictive gameplay.

◆ Amusing and simultaneously frustrating. Perfect.