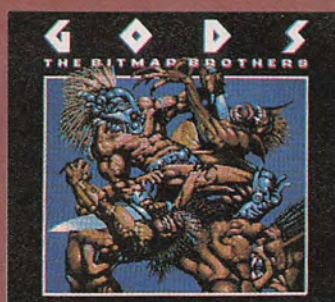


GODS

Have you got what it takes to be a God? Dan 'Bacchus' Slingsby finds out in the Bitmap Brothers' latest release.



Simon Bisley's striking artwork for *Gods*, pictured here as original painting (left) and digitised intro screen (above).



Look carefully at the warrior in this early screen shot. Originally, he didn't have a ponytail, but after Simon Bisley added one to his boxed artwork, Mark Coleman attached one to the game sprite.

The Renegade gamewave begins in earnest this month with the fledgling softcos' first release, *Gods*, winging its way into the softshops. Developed by top 16-bit development team, the Bitmap Brothers, *Gods* is an arcade adventure set in ancient Greece with numerous puzzles to solve, monsters to slay and treasure to collect.

Featuring a novel artificial intelligence which allows the

and respond to the decisions and actions of the player, the game is set over 4 action-packed levels. Each one throws up its own particular battery of bug-eyed nasties, flying griffins, satyrs, two-headed beasts and hideous monsters, all of whom are out to give you a bloody good thrashing.

The player has been given the task of battling his or her way through a city created by the gods

has since been taken over by the forces of darkness. Four all-powerful guardians patrol each level and have a horde of hell-like minions under their control. Only by completing each level, made up of three worlds

apiece, and defeating the end-of-level guardians in mortal combat can the player gain the ulti-

the gods.

Various weapons, potions and energy icons are scattered throughout each level, as are a number of devious puzzles, secret passages and rooms, switches, levers, and traps. The first two worlds of level one offer no real challenge, but are a useful training course and help the player get used to the simple joystick controls and combat conditions. By the third world, things start to hot up and the





The Minatour-style bull makes an appearance in the Cretan labyrinth



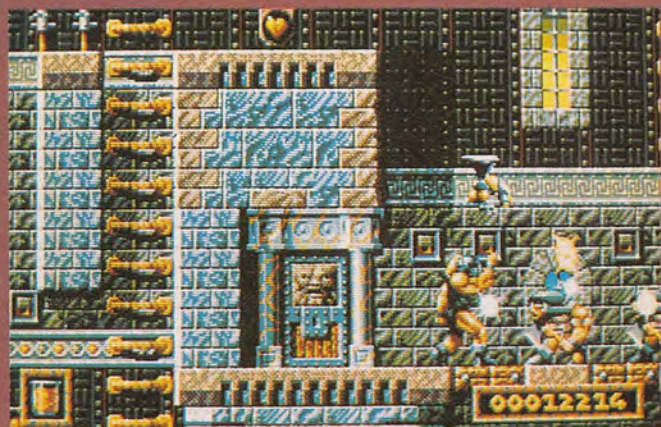
The warrior can only hold three objects at a time, so you've got to be careful what you choose to take with you.



A visit to the shop will prove helpful. A wide variety of potions, weapons and even extra lives can be bought if you've got the cash to splash. If you haven't got the necessary reedies the shelves will be bare.



Level three features gigantic killer bees. They're especially lethal and emerge from gigantic beehives which have to be destroyed to stop the swarm running riot and overcoming the warrior.



Some puzzles are fairly basic and only require the throwing of a switch or lever. Others are more complex and involve collecting objects, finding keys and using in-game teleports.

THE HARPIES Harpies were one of the most fearsome monsters that the ancient Greeks knew. Half-human and half-vulture, they circled the skies looking for victims to feed their unsatisfiable hunger. Harpies preferred dead flesh to eat but were more than capable of killing humans and animals with their razor sharp talons. They often protected sanctuaries or were extremely possessive of areas they had control of. Anyone who ventured into the domain of the harpies rarely came out alive. Skeletons and half-eaten bodies often acted as warning signs of land inhabited by harpies.

the game's artificial intelligence and become a lot harder to defeat. By the time the player has progressed onto level 4, the screen will be thick with all manner of wee beasties and the going will be decidedly tougher.

Each world has its own specific task which must be completed before the player can progress further. This may involve retrieving several objects and taking them to a certain place or manipulating a number of levers to release some kind of treasure. Apart from the first world, they're never going to be easy and are made much harder by the legions of vulture-like Harpies, gargoyles and serpents on the prowl. The monsters materialise out of thin air in response to various actions by the player and become increasingly intelligent as the game progresses. For example, in the early stages the monsters will follow a simple attack pattern, but later on they might run away, chase you or even avoid hostile fire. It's also possible to manipulate them into helping you. Some thief-like characters can be used to retrieve items which are hard to reach. Once retrieved, the player can blast them and walk away with the booty.

Weapons include daggers,

destroying platform-based uglies. Spears are by far the best weapons to collect as they can pass through aliens and platforms causing untold devastation. Daggers are the weakest and only inflict minimal damage. Other useful icons include shields for invincibility and starburst-like smart bombs which cause multiple explosions. Also scattered around are engraved stone tablets which, when collected, reveal hints and tips in the form of a scrolling message at the bottom of the screen. These may define the

MEDUSA The Medusa had a rather unusual hairstyle. She boasted a barnet of live snakes! The Medusa acquired this by declaring that she was more beautiful than the goddess Aphrodite. As a punishment, Aphrodite made sure that no-one would ever look at her with pleasure again. If anyone caught sight of the snake-headed creature, they would be so terrified they would turn to stone. The Medusa's home was decorated with her pitiful victims; their features distorted in terrible fear and pain.

quest for each world, give hints or solutions to a puzzle, or the location of an object.

As well as picking up weapons and potions left behind by blasting luckless aliens to a goopy pulp, a shopkeeper icon appears during, and at the end of, each level. Once collected, the shopkeeper appears and takes you to his shop where

GODS

> program adjusts to the player's ability and makes the game easier by taking out some of the attack waves and placing more energy-giving icons in the level. A similar system has been used in Storm's big new shoot 'em up, *SWIV*, in which attack craft move more slowly if the player has few lives left or if his/her hit rate is

GRIFFINS Griffins were extremely vicious and dangerous creatures of the sky. Similar to modern day eagles, they were masters at killing, often by swooping down and plucking their unsuspecting victims from the ground. Its chosen prey were carried off to lairs which were laden with rotting flesh. However, they were not only blood-thirsty but also renowned for their wisdom and cunning. As a result, images of griffins were often painted on buildings to strike fear into the hearts of the faint-hearted.

below a certain level. *Gods* is also speed dependent – the quicker things are done, the greater the rewards. By playing well, extra treasure chests can be collected and secret pas-

sages revealed. For example, in the first world of level one, a special jump potion only appears if a player has reached the top of the building within a certain time. This enables the player to jump up and access hidden ledges and platforms and collect armfuls of cash and power-ups.

Graphically, the game is highly impressive. Mark Coleman, who handled the graphics on *Speedball 2*, stepped in to help out on *Gods* and has surpassed his own already high standards. He's created a large repertoire of bizarre and ugly looking monsters which

add variety to each level. As the game progresses, the creatures get ever-more weird until the final level when what look like flying Sumo Wrestlers and Slinky-spring type beasts run about causing general mayhem. Such variety helps enrich the game and puts others of its type to shame. Obviously a lot of hard work has gone into their design. With over 60 frames of animation, the central character moves in a semi-realistic manner and is remarkably detailed, even down to his flowing blond locks of hair. My only criticism is the lack of animation used on the end-of-level-guardians. They look great, but have only limited movements which tends to negate their appeal. Although the first level Centurion is a massive 96x64 pixels high, it's not that difficult to defeat and was a mild disappointment.

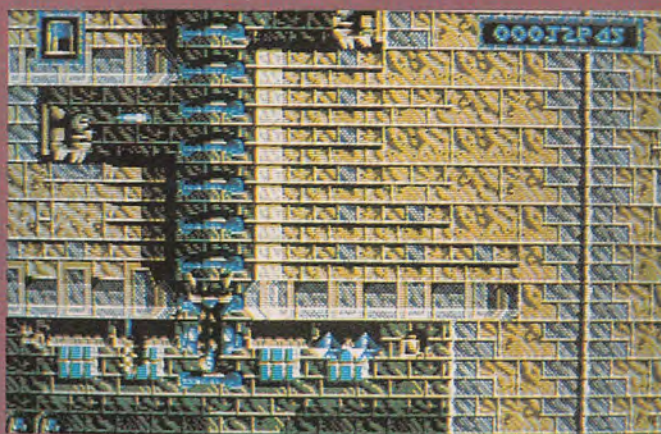
The sonics in *Gods* are excellent. There are a wide range of multi-layered sound effects and samples which complement the frantic on-screen action perfectly, as well as a trumpet fanfare after each level has been completed. There's also a 2 1/2 minute intro tune by Nation 12, reprogrammed for the Amiga by Richard Joseph. This will most likely be released as a single in the not-too-distant future.

The game itself plays like a dream. It's not just a shoot 'em up – there are lots of intriguing puzzles to solve, platforms to explore and objects to discover. Even if you complete the game, there will always be something

you've missed and no two games will ever be exactly the same. Over a year's work has gone into developing *Gods* and it shows. It's not an original game, but it's certainly the best of its type. It deserves to be an almighty smash hit.



Above: Stone gargoyles spit jets of fire as the warrior descends one of the many ladders. Below: The Familiar helps out as an attack wave closes in.



A Centurion and Dragon form the guardians of levels one and two. Hint: to distract the dragon bring him a golden jewel.



Sprite screens showing an assortment of weapons, potions and health icons as well as a variety of hideously mishapen demons. The Bitmaps used our own Steve Merrett as a model.



RENEGADE £24.95

Fast and frantic arcade action – sure to be a hit!

GRAPHICS	92%
SOUND	88%
LASTABILITY	92%
PLAYABILITY	94%

OVERALL 93%

AMIGA SPEC

MEMORY REQUIRED	512K
COLLISION DETECTION	7
LEVELS	4
DIFFICULTY LEVEL	8
NUMBER OF PLAYERS	1
GRAPHICS STYLE	SPRITE-BASED
SOUND	MULTI-LAYERED
	SAMPLES
DEVELOPMENT TIME	13 MONTHS
LARGEST SPRITE	96X64
PLAY AREA	68 SCREENS/LEVEL