



Above - Herc' kicks butt on Level Two. One of the most common beasts here are the plant pot snakes. As you approach they pop up and spit venom. Worse still, if you kill them masses of small snakes are set loose.



Right - Hercules has been tempted into a bonus treasure room, which is full of treasure but also dead hard nasties. This room is accessed via a teleport gem, so you have to beat the snake in the top right-hand corner to get the jewel which will whisk our Herc' back to safety.

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RENEGADE ■ £24.99 Joystick

Olympian practical jokes aren't funny, full stop. Juno's idea of a good laugh was to send you mad, while Eurystheus was fond of sending folk on unfinishable tasks. Hercules, the world's strongest man, is just one such victim of these Grecian Jeremy Beadles. To earn freedom from them both and achieve his rightful god status he must complete four challenges in four different zones of a magical city.



Hercules must fight through a temple, the streets, a labyrinth and eventually the underworld if he is to

emerge as immortal. A myriad of mythological monsters stand in his way, but, more importantly, so do a horde of traps and tasks. The monsters may be killed or avoided, as may the traps, but all the tasks must be fulfilled if he is to achieve eternal life. It's in the contract you see; small print.

Just win!

Hercules is an individual and is not forced to follow any particular route to the end of any level, or zone; getting there is good enough. Under your control, all he has to do is win through using any

magic, weapons or tricks that happen to come to mind. Unfortunately, the beasts who inhabit the worlds are also free to follow their own initiative. This is a combination that makes Gods a platform challenge, the like of which even the Zeus have never seen.

The boy can move as per normal, leaping, ducking and climbing between levels. For protection he hurls out showers of daggers and axes ahead of him, which kill (eventually) any foes foolish enough to cross his path. His initial single

'shot' can be souped-up, adding a two, or even three, way spray of flying blades, by collecting magic tokens. Extra shuriken and power bolts can be added to further beef-up the armoury. The spread is even controllable with the use of tokens, as the needs of the weaponry varies with each level.



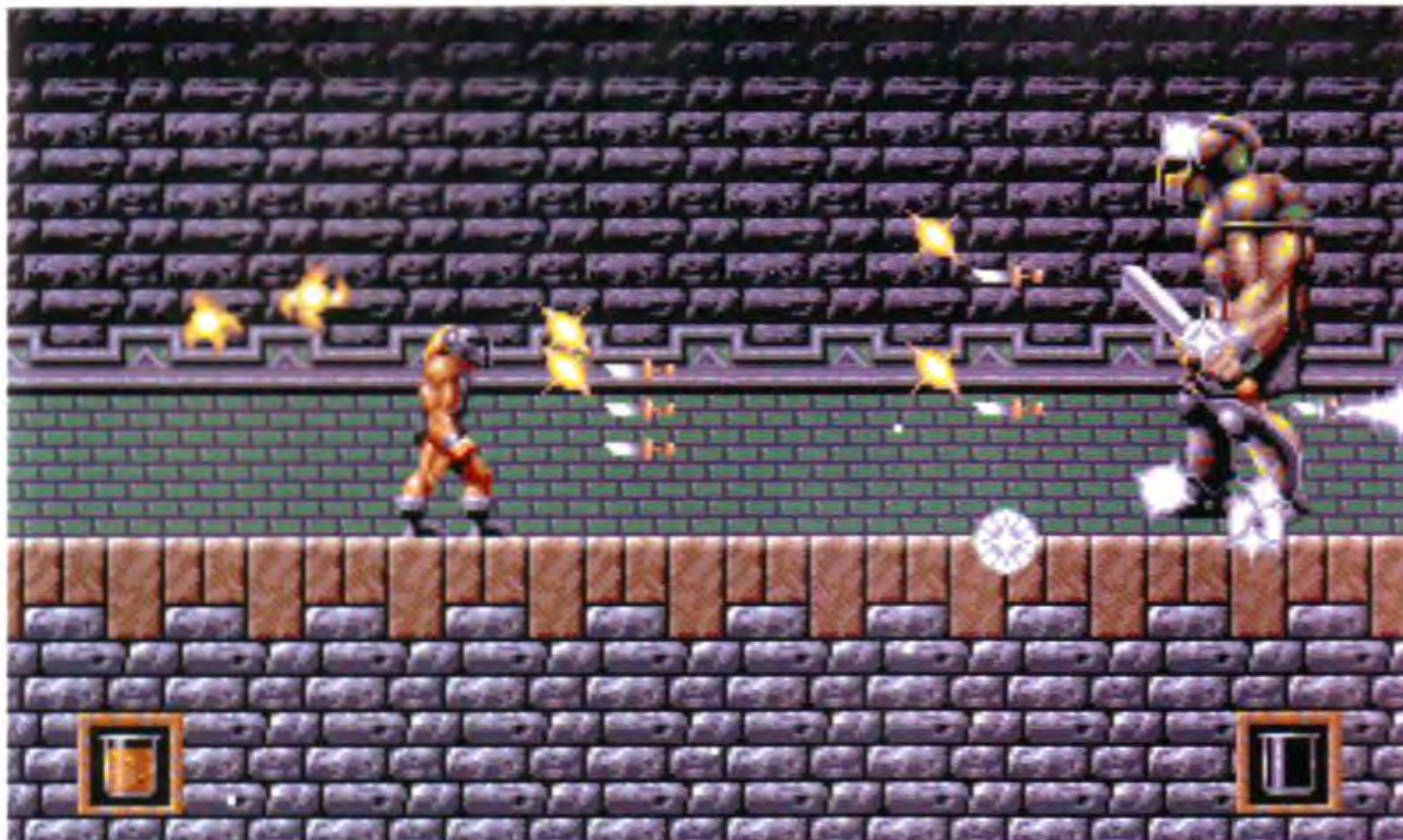
In solution

Trap-like puzzles litter the zones, increasing in complexity as the game develops. At first they are simple obstructions, which can be destroyed by a flick of the correct

Hercules busts into a room and finds another potted serpent and a teleport stone on a remote ledge. Killing the snake is easy but avoiding the small snakes in this little room could be extremely difficult.

Large gold keys are always 'world' keys but how on earth can you get it? It must have something to do with those yellow buttons. Time to go a wandering and see what items are peculiar to this level.





Above - kill the end-of-world bad guy and you win a visit to the shop. To summon the shop-keeper just walk over the 'circle' token and wait. As if by magic the he will appear and take you to his weapons emporium.

Left - when the going gets tough, the tough hide under the table. Luckily this end-of-world guardian is a wimp, all brain and no brawn. You must have the lightning bolt to fight him, but all you have to do is stay out of the way of his bullets. Which is surprisingly easy - for a change!

THE REAL TWELVE TASKS!

To qualify as an apprentice Immortal all you have to do is...

1. Kill the Nemean lion.
 2. Kill the Lernean Hydra.
 3. Catch and retain the Arcadian stag.
 4. Destroy the Erymanthian Boar.
 5. Cleanse the Augean stables.
 6. Destroy the cannibal birds of Lake Stymphalis.
 7. Capture the Cretan Bull.
 8. Catch the horses of the Thracian Diomedes.
 9. To possess the girdle of Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons.
 10. To capture the oxen of the monster Geryon.
 11. Obtain the apples of the Hesperides.
 12. Bring Cerberus from the infernal regions.
- ... and you thought getting a high score on a multi-level platform game was tough!



Experiment with the levers, in Gods and the most surprising things happen. Here a short-cut teleport gem and secret room are opened if you reset the switches to their original positions.

lever. Later however, Herc' is offered a vast array of switches and any one of them could remove the problem. Pressing the wrong one however, could well summon more heat than a growing God needs. The art is working out, and remembering, which levers do what. Solving a puzzle is rarely a case of just throwing one switch. Often the answer lies in a series of levers, working on a combination principal and finding the solution is not so much a case of trial and error, as die-all and error.

There are three main puzzle elements. First comes the switch

throwing nightmare, which is only ever solved with a quick bout of flicking. Secondly come the keys. To enter many of the more interesting rooms you'll need the correct keys. These appear after certain core monsters or traps have been destroyed, and they are never near the door they unlock.

Here you have to check the text bar to see the keys name, then find the matching lock. Stored in Herc's three pocket backpack, the keys are used automatically when he passes the relevant door. It may still need a switch thrown though before it opens, so you're

forced to continually check the inventory, to see if keys have vanished. The final and toughest puzzle element is in the quests Herc' is sent on. Each depends on you finding a number of objects (anything from gold to pieces of mosaic) and relocating them.

Good Gods?

The game mechanics maybe spiffy, but the 64 Drachma question has to be: is Gods any good? The answer is yes, unreservedly. Gods melds the standard platform run-and-shoot form with a strain of action puzzle game. What starts

out as a blast, soon becomes a guessing game of great proportions. What will that switch do if thrown? Is this strange skull the object of your quest? Where the hell is the key to the door?

The pace never flags, ensuring that you race through as much of the game as is humanly possible before stopping to think. If you hang around the nasties will start seeping out of the walls again! Assess, plan and act, is the motto of



Continued overleaf

Now those small gems are strange, could they activate that yellow lights found in the 'world' key room? This pattern of play that is common in Gods, of visiting and re-visiting rooms to test out mad theories.

Every time this room was entered with a different small gem, the key drops by a third. Now after fire, water and ice it is finally low enough to jump onto. Problem solved and another world bites the dust.





If you're pegging out you might as well go out in a blaze of glory. When Hercules loses all his life energy he explodes in a shower of Renegade skulls and stars. Avoiding death is of vital importance in *Gods* because bonus scores for each world are calculated against lives and energy.



By dropping a gold key this thief has been lured out and has brought that shield with him. Thieves can always be conned like this and then killed to capture both items. Crime: together we'll crack it!

the day. A factor which is only enhanced by the independence of the monsters, who continue to hunt even when Herc' stops.

familiar with. The graphics have texture and atmosphere, with each level subtly evolving from the last. In fact the only irritants are the

While a youth Hercules was accosted by Virtue and Pleasure and forced to choose between them. Pleasure promised all the world's carnal delights while all Virtue had to offer was immortality. Herc' chose the latter - for some obscure reason - and after a life of toil he was received amongst the gods.

Over the edge

Backing up the metallic sound effects is the great theme tune, which players of last month's Coverdisk demo will already be

sparsity of save game points and Herc's occasional insistence on standing over the edge of platforms. The wait is easily tolerated in such a quality game but the mid-

a i r stance does make trying to judge the jumps harder than it really needs to be. You are forced to edge out, risking a hefty fall, just so you get the best chance of leaping to the next platform. Such mechanisms have become traditionally accepted facets of platform games, but it is one convention the Bitmaps could well have flouted.

These minor gripes aside though, *Gods* looks as if it is set to join games legend. Viciously good gameplay and powerful effects have managed to make Renegade's first title an ideal debut. **Trenton Webb**



VERDICT

- ◆ Highly challenging platform romp with real class.
- ◆ The intelligent monsters and fiendish puzzles make life enjoyably awkward.
- ◆ Well paced, *Gods* gets easier for poor players, tougher for veterans.
- ◆ Sounds brilliant, with a strong Nation 12 theme and crisp metallic effects.
- ◆ The menagerie of foes is vast and the end-of-level guardians are something special.



BRAINS AND BRAWN!

Gods' aliens are smart: they are not just pretty faces, but have ample brain-power too. Each creature has a rating for manoeuvrability, speed, morale, aggression and intelligence. Using these factors the monsters will decide when it is best, and how best, to attack Hercules. If a cowardly, but fast, beast is at the end of a wave that Herc' easily kills, then it may choose to scuttle ahead and surprise him later rather than join in the futile frontal assault. The effect this has on the game is subtle, but discernible, as the game develops around each players own style.

ONE STOP SHOPPING.



At every two levels and after a whole section has been completed Herc' gets to pop into the local weapons shop. Fans of Bitmap games will be familiar with the format.

All the goodies are lined up in rows and wagging the stick rotates the highlight. Clicking on a highlighted item tells you what it is and what it does, clicking again buys the item. So you don't get confused over how much cash you have, the items out of your price range disappear. On offer in this store are: Chicken Legs (health, power 1), apples (health, power 2), Wide arc shot token, concentrated arc shot token, medium arc shot token, Bread (health, power 3), Alien freeze, Health token (third of total energy), Shuriken, Shield, Health potion (half of total energy), Starburst smart bomb, fireball, and magic hammers.