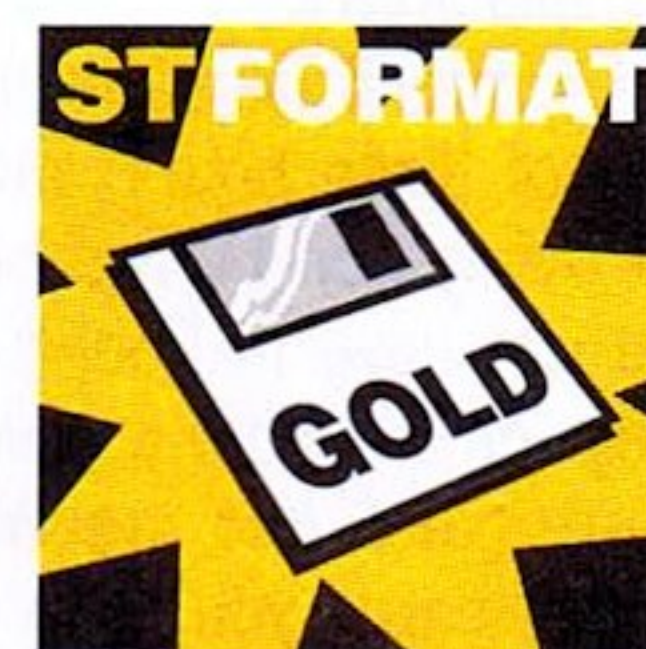


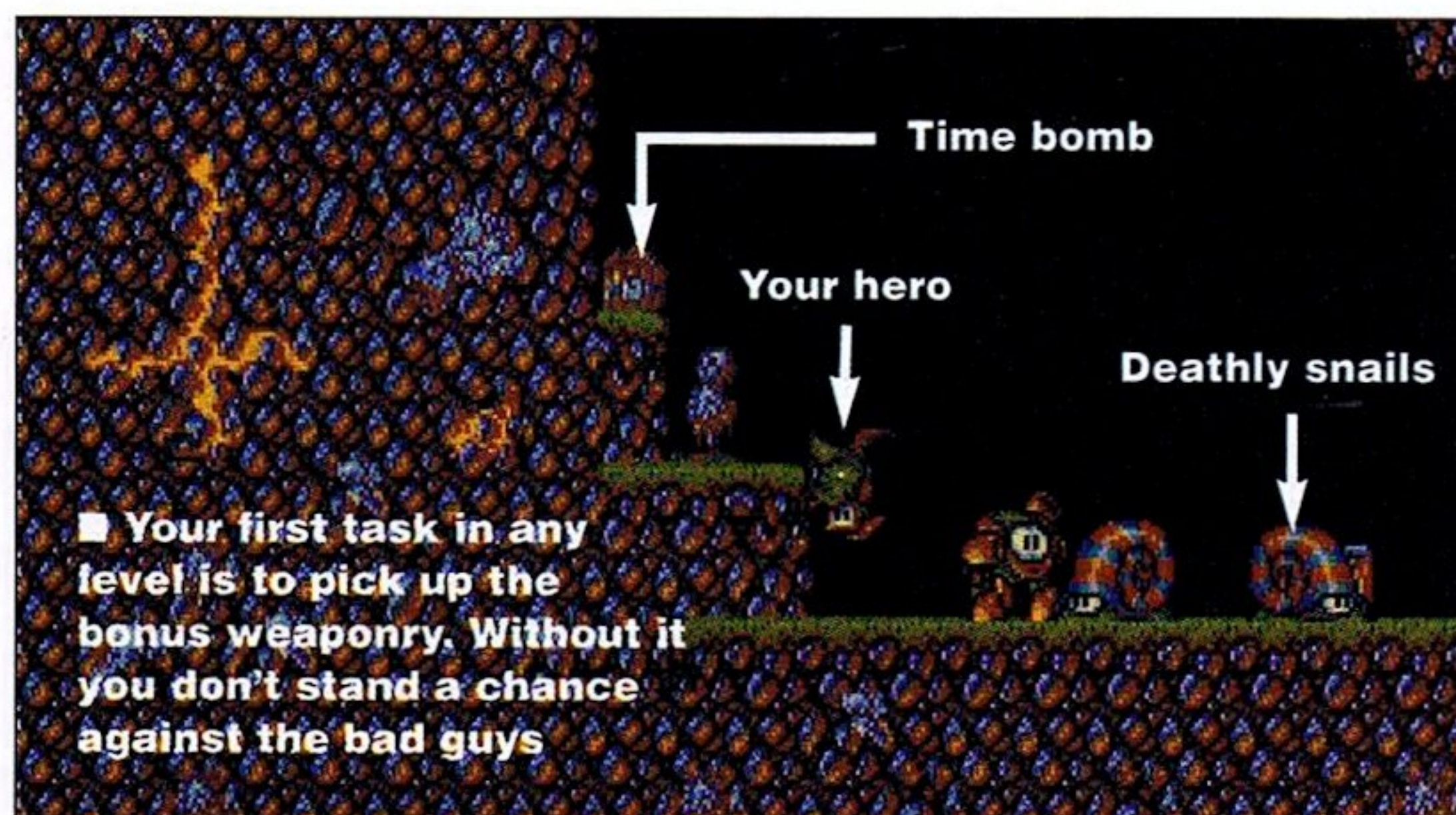
■ *Flood* is the Bullfrogs' contribution to the cutesy scene. Your task is to collect all the cans located on each level and find the exit to the next level. The game has an ingenious water theme to it. The longer you take, the higher the water rises. If you aren't quick enough you drown

# flood



**ELECTRONIC ARTS £19.99**

**After last year's extraordinary success with Populous, Bullfrog have opted to go cutesy. Powermonger may be their next big strategy game - catch our exclusive ST preview on page 80 - but before that comes Flood: Mark Higham wonders whether Bullfrog are out of their depth**



■ Your first task in any level is to pick up the bonus weaponry. Without it you don't stand a chance against the bad guys

**T**here are two kinds of ST games player: those who played *Populous* last year, and the unlucky ones. The fortunate will be avidly awaiting anything Bullfrog attempt, even if it's "only" a cutesy platform game; while those who found the very idea of *Populous* a big turn off are much more likely to be attracted to *Flood*. The former won't be disappointed, and the latter may well be persuaded to save up for *Powermonger*, the next project by the

guys from Guildford. One way or the other, the Bullfrogs are well on course for world domination.

To *Flood*, then. The objective: to collect all the trash cans in a level and find the exit to the next level. On many levels water quickly builds up and submerges the cans. To pick these up you need to dive into the water and walk over them. With only limited supplies of oxygen you can't stay underwater for long without drowning.

Collecting the trash cans can be a nightmare in itself. Levels consist of platforms and blocks which need to be scaled if you want to pick up some of the more obscure cans.

Yet *Flood* isn't just a straightforward joystick exercise. Each level pulsates with bad guys, from tumbling balls to ghosts — and



even demonic teddy bars! When the game begins you have grenades you can toss at the bad guys: lob one and leg it fast or you get caught in the blast.

Other weapons are scattered around the levels. One of the best is the flamethrower: hold down the fire-button and singe anything that comes towards you with a long laser of red and orange flame. There's a comic element to the game as well. If you shoot the flamethrower too often, it ends up being temporarily transformed into a chicken the next time you attempt to use it.

Various icons scattered around the levels liven up the action still further. Some give you bonus points, extra energy or different weapons, while others can be an ordeal. One acts as a switch, setting off a line of missiles which make part of the level inaccessible for the rest of the game. Another is a mine which throws you into the air. In one of the later levels there are several mines joined closely together and arranged in such a way as to blast you all the way up to the top of a deep well.

The water theme forms a cohesive thread throughout the game. Streams of water flow from taps, and if you get caught in the current you can be swept away. The water often builds up at the bottom of the levels, quickly climb-

## BULLFROG: PLATFORM SOULS?

This isn't the first *Flood*, because the Bullfrogs have been working on a platform game for nigh on two years. In one version the game was based around the idea that water would rise and mould itself into caverns, then flow over the edges – by no means as easy to program as it sounds. To get to this final version the game has been enhanced by a series of intensive rewrites until the Bullfrogs were eventually happy with it.

"It started off like a *Joust* thing where you were on this bird that flew up," explains Bullfrog head honcho Peter Molyneux, "and there were all these different ships you could fly around on. Then it changed into a spaceship game, where you had to solve all these puzzles. It had a main view and four mini-views with these cameras you could send out. And then it turned into *Flood!*"

In that time several different programmers were put to work on the game, with the final rewrite accomplished by Sean Cooper.

"When we design a game we don't do detailed specifications – in fact the spec for *Powermonger* was only two pages long!" admits Molyneux. "We wanted to do a platform game, and it's nice to appeal to people who wouldn't be interested in *Populous* – any suggestion of strategy or anything like that and they run a mile. But that all sounds very market-oriented, as if we planned to get a bigger share of the market. Nothing could be further from the truth!"

"What happens is, we get to a certain stage in a game, ask ourselves whether we still really like it and only then decide to continue or not. That's a very expensive and time-consuming way to do it, but at least we get something at the end of it that we enjoy playing. Tell you what, though: it won't be happening again!"

ing to submerge caverns, ladders and trash cans.

There's one more hazard: a blue ghost. It can't be killed by anything and occasionally you run into it during the action and lose your energy. If you take too long to complete a level, the ghost follows you closer and closer, eventually stealing all your energy. It's a bugger, it really is.

### EFFECTS

Only a portion of each level is shown on screen at any one time. As you leap into the air or move in any direction, the display scrolls smoothly to show more of the level. The game is littered with hosts of enemies waiting to be blasted, but it's actually the weaponry which looks the most appealing. Weapons such as the flamethrower are amazing and the grenades leave behind such effective explosions that they make your journey through the maze of platforms perilous.

There's an excellent sampled intro tune composed by Charles Callet, the Frenchman who did *North and South*. And this is complemented by superb burp-and-fart spot effects that ring out whenever you fire weapons or fall victim to the bad guys.

### VERDICT

In *Rainbow Islands*, the baddies – giant spiders and fluffy toys – added enormously to the game's cuteness. In *Flood*, however,



■ You're stuck in a bonus section of the level. How the hell do you get back?



■ There's the exit looming in front, but you can't get there without bumping into the snail

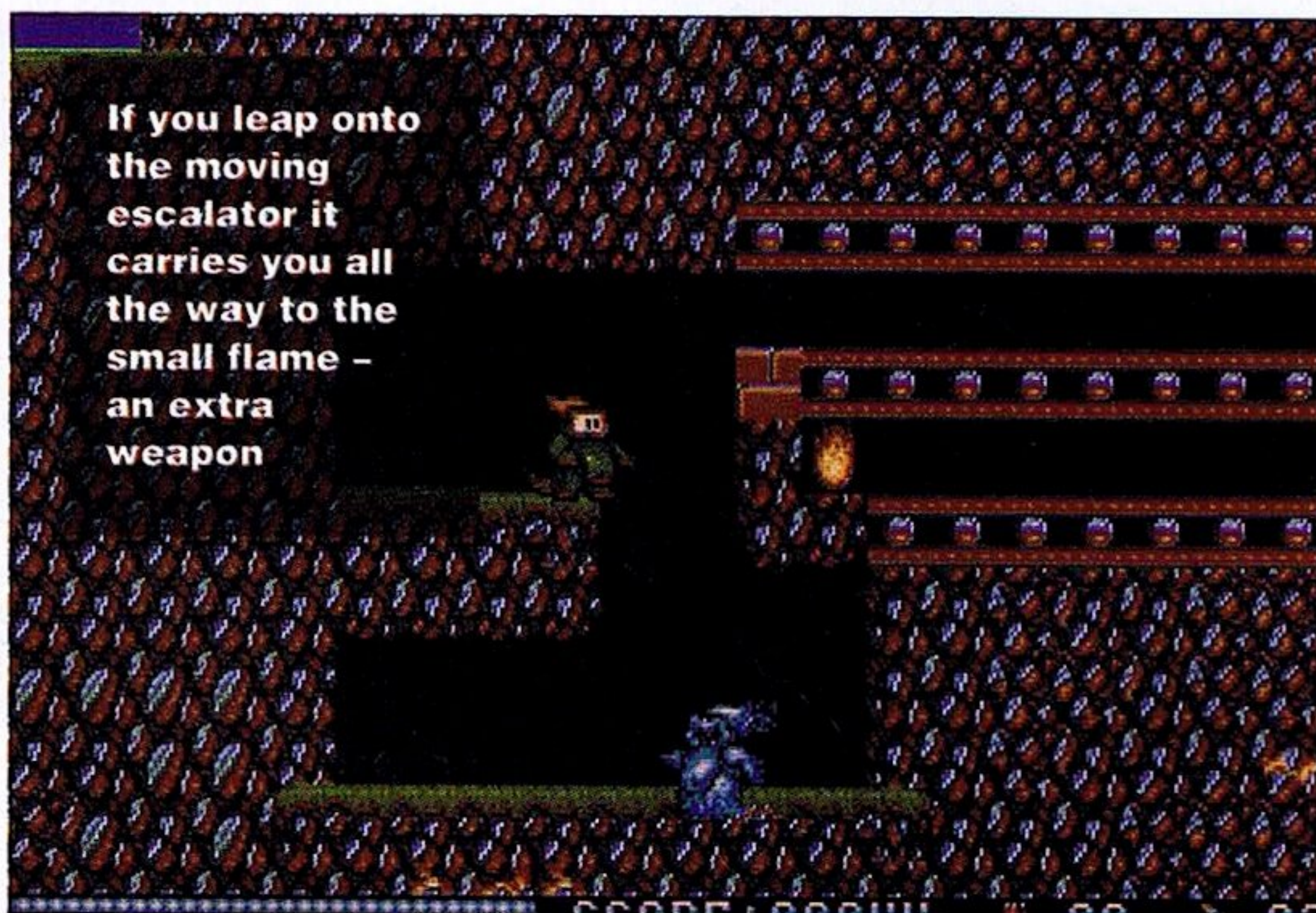
there's something horribly sinister, macabre, and violent about the murderous ghosts, missiles and bouncing balls.

On the other hand, *Flood* is a stiffer challenge, because to succeed you often need to work out the best way to scale walls or pick up elusive trash. As levels progress you find yourself hot on the tail of enemies who are busy strewing trash, but with the right weaponry at your disposal you can defeat anything.

Be prepared for a tidal wave of addiction. *Flood* is one of those "just-one-more-go" games. Start playing and you won't be able to stop. It's a frighteningly absorbing challenge, well worth all those hours you are going to spend playing it. It's just a question of whether you can finish it before *Powermonger* arrives.

MARK HIGHAM

GRAPHICS	7
SOUNDTRACK	6
INTELLIGENCE	4
INSTANT APPEAL	9
LONG TERM INTEREST	8
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>91%</b>



■ Level four is a tricky one. Climb the walls and leap onto the platforms



■ Pick up the flamethrower and blast the brains out of those Garfield characters



■ The water rises, but there are cans down there to collect. Dive for them!