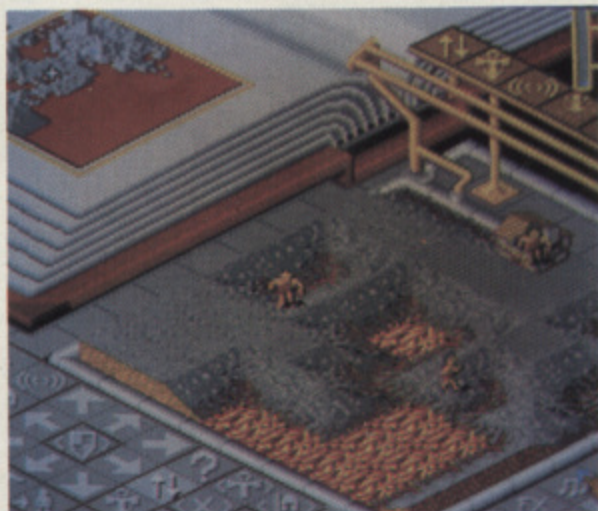


Populous

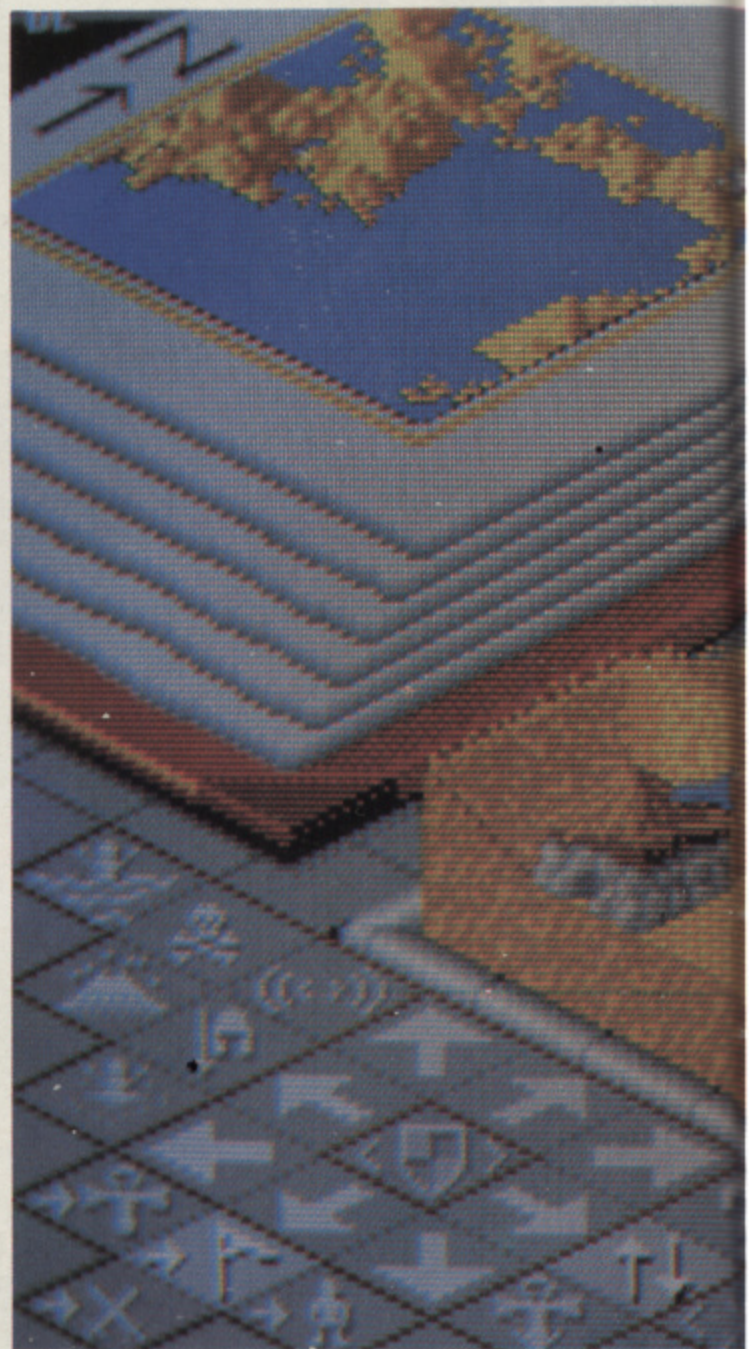
In the beginning there was Fusion. And it came to pass that Bullfrog Productions and Electronic Arts said 'Let there be Populous'. And there was Populous. And Gary Whitta saw that it was good.

Earthquakes, swamps, volcanoes, floods and even complete armageddon can be summoned... as long as the god is sufficiently powerful. Most of these options only slow the opposition's progress, but armageddon always results in a victory for the stronger god - so make sure of your status before you bring the world to an end.

The era of strategy gamers having to put up with game after game casting them as Roman generals, NATO commanders and nuclear submarine captains is over. Power-freaks no longer have to make do with controlling the movements of tank regiments or the actions of foot soldiers. With Populous you're nothing less than an omnipotent deity with an entire world ripe and ready for the taking.



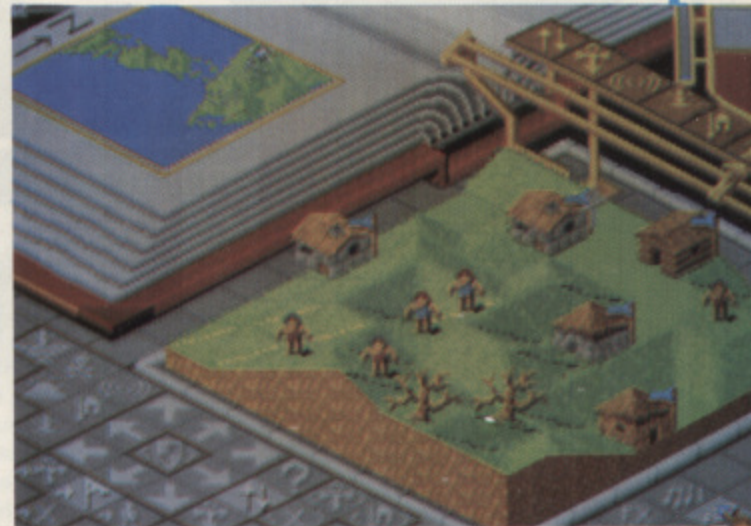
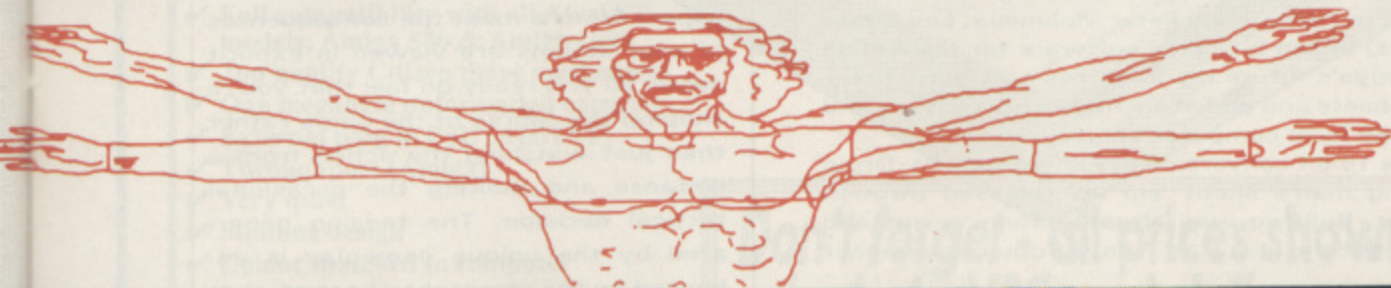
Commands are issued and actions are carried out via a bank of icons below the main game area. From here earth is quaked, volcanoes are created, floods are caused and armageddon is triggered. The relatively mundane tasks of altering the landscape and gathering information are also carried out from this point.



Your people's lifespan is not only affected by their individual power levels, but also by the type of terrain they inhabit. For example, the Ice World's hostile conditions will soon finish off anyone who stays out of doors for too long.

POULS

Your followers begin their life in 'Settle' mode. Having found a suitable spot of level ground (which you provide for them), a group of mortals will build themselves a home – the size and type of which depends on the amount of space available (the range of domiciles stretches from the roughest of tents to a walled castle). The population then expands to fill the building's capacity, with the excess spilling out to begin the process all over again.



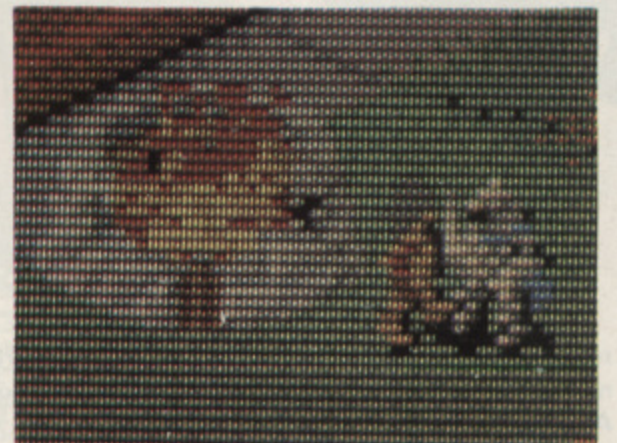
loser banished forever.

Despite the fact that you're all-seeing and all-knowing, you're still not in a position to directly control your mortal followers' movements and actions. What you can do is issue vague commands and affect the lie of the land to suit your people's actions.

Populous is all about power – learning the fastest way to generate it and the most effective way to use it. Although you start with only enough power to perform menial tasks such as raising and levelling land, if used wisely this allows your population to set up home and expand – thus increasing your power.

The main part of the game is taken up by Conquest, where you attempt to systematically subjugate the people of 500 ready-made worlds, gaining passwords to later planets as you go. And if 500 worlds sounds a little limited, Populous is also capable of generating a further 128,000 different landscapes at random!

Knights are a kind of mediaeval Terminator, which take a lot of power to create but are one of the most effective offensive forces. They travel about enemy territory, killing anybody they find and burning down any settlements that get in their way.



The population's movement can be influenced by changing the Papal Magnet's location. The magnet is a religious focal point in the form of a staff or skull which can be used to attract the population to any part of the map. Also, the first person to reach it becomes the 'leader'.





ITS NOT EASY BEING GREEN



Bullfrog Productions croaked into life way back in 1985, when Peter Molyneux, Les Edgar and Kevin Duncan (the team behind Populous) began business software for the Amiga under the name of Taurus. Realising that the Amiga's future lay in games software, Peter and the gang forgot about databases and spreadsheets and added six new programmers and graphic artists to their ranks by recruiting through local computer shops.

The company's first commercial product was the 16-bit conversion of Enlightenment: Druid II for Firebird. This was followed by a 'thinking man's shoot 'em up' released through Electronic Arts, Fusion. Even at this early stage, Bullfrog was already planning out and designing Populous: "I'm not really sure where we got the idea from," says Populous designer Peter Molyneux, "It just sort of appeared."

Although Populous is all about the immortal, Bullfrog was anxious to refrain from being too religious, and so named the two deities Good and Evil rather than God and the Devil. The last thing they wanted was a Salman Rushdie-type hit-squad after their blood!

Before programming began, a typical landscape was constructed from Lego to allow the team to accurately study the new world's dimensions and perspective. The game was then developed on the ST and later converted and adapted for the Amiga.

Inspiration for parts of the game came from the strangest sources - for example, the power indicator was modelled after a slider-type snooker scoreboard! The samples that form most of the atmospheric sound are also rather unlikely. After much experimentation with logs and petrol, Bullfrog found that the most realistic fire sound was achieved by rustling a crisp packet!

Now that Populous is complete, Bullfrog has just started working on two new products - the first is Colony, described by Peter Molyneux as 'arcade adventure taken a step further' and Warmonger, a vector-graphics based affair said to be similar in concept to Populous but with even more intricate and involved game design.

As mentioned in the review in issue five, a Populous expansion pack is already in the offing. This will accommodate four completely new terrains and a whole host of devious new strategies.

When they're not programming into the wee small hours, the Bullfrog boys get their kicks from Role Playing Games like Dungeon Master and the coin-op Assault 360. Peter's all-time favourite game is Andrew Braybrook's Commodore 64 classic Paradroid, which he considers to be one of the best designed games ever.

As far as film or coin-op conversions are concerned, Peter says he has far too many original game ideas to consider, despite the financial incentives of conversion work: "And besides, it's much more rewarding to produce an original game that you know is your own."

A

Bullfrog Productions has come up with a masterpiece. Most war-games don't succeed in generating a genuine feeling of 'being there', but Populous does - for the simple reason that all the action is viewed in extreme close-up. Instead of just watching character-block-shaped tank regiments disappear from a map, the consequences of your actions are viewed in explicit detail, so you really do feel that you're shaping the course of the game rather than just watching the action from a distance and making the occasional tactical decision. The tension generated by the unique gameplay is enhanced by the atmospheric sound, that for the first time is actually interactive rather than just an aesthetic frill. There is no music as such, just the sound of eerie low-pitched wailing and rushing wind accompanied by a dull heartbeat, speeding up and slowing down to indicate your power level. There's a huge array of options available, including a 'paint map' mode where any game scenario can be set up easily, much like setting up a chess problem. Although two players can't compete on a single screen, an unusual two player mode allows two machines to be connected via serial lead or modem. And with 128,000 landscapes to conquer, ranging from walkovers to the downright diabolical, interest isn't likely to wane for quite some time. It's what the seventh day was invented for.

PRICE:	£24.95
RELEASE DATE:	April
GRAPHICS	88%
SOUND	91%
PLAYABILITY	91%
VALUE	90%

OVERALL 95%

ST

Despite the fact that the majority of Populous' code was developed on the ST, this version is lagging ever-so-slightly behind. However, Electronic Arts is confident that it will make it onto the shelves within a week of the Amiga version at the same price.

PC

Bullfrog has only very recently embarked on this version, and as such no decisions have been made concerning EGA or CGA compatibility. It's due to be released in the latter half of the year at £24.95.



Meet the gang. From left to right: Glenn Corpes (Graphics), Shaun Cooper (Game testing), Peter Molyneux (Game design and programming), Kevin Duncan, Les Edgar (administration) and Andy Jones (graphics and game testing).

