

# PSYCHIC ATTACK

As the popularity of arcade style 'shoot-em-ups' has waned, so the distinction between the various types of computer game has become blurred. Best-selling home computer software now tends to combine elements of arcade, strategy and adventure games, and successful play requires much more than just fast reflexes.

Psytron is a complex and absorbing game featuring excellent fast-moving graphics, and will take the player a long time to master.

The player takes the role of the Psytron, a half-human, half-computer device that runs a space colony on the planet Betula 5. The colony is made up of various buildings, each of which has a specific function. Life-support systems are vital for the human colonists, and power plants are required to keep the computer operating. The most important installation is the main power plant, without which the entire colony would grind to a halt. By using either the keyboard or a joystick, the player is given a full 360° 'scan' of the installation, and each of the buildings is carefully drawn to give added realism to the view.

During early levels of play, Psytron behaves much like any other arcade game. The player has a number of weapons with which to fend off attacks by alien invaders, and it is not until the fourth level that the strategy elements of the game become apparent.

At the first level, the Psytron controls a 'droid', which is used to destroy the three-legged saboteurs that are 'teleported' into the base in an attempt to blow up the airlocks that connect the colony buildings. The second and third levels of play give the player the chance to shoot down the alien saucers — these may be picked off one by one or, if the 'Disruptor' is utilised, all aliens in view can be wiped out at once. However, the Disruptor is somewhat unstable, and there is a 10 per cent chance of it exploding when used.

Once level four has been reached, the player has the chance to make strategic decisions, based on the amount of damage suffered by the colony's installations. Throughout this level, the alien craft continue their attack, bombing strategically vital areas of the base and dropping saboteurs on kamikaze missions. However, at this level, 'Freezetime' is introduced. By simply pressing the Return key, the player may 'freeze' the action so that damage reports may be received and processed. Factors to be considered include the numbers of crew members who are dead or injured, the level of supplies remaining and the damage inflicted on the power plant. While in Freezetime, repairs may be carried out, and crew members can be allocated to areas in which they can be most effective. Careful juggling of resources is needed at this stage: the Psytron must take into account the fact that repair crews will consume more food and oxygen than non-working humans, and it may be necessary to abandon some of the buildings in order to conserve fuel, air and supplies.

The fifth level gives the player the chance to communicate with a supply ship, which may beam vital supplies down to the colony. Care must therefore be taken to ensure that the docking facilities have not been damaged in previous attacks.

At the sixth and final level, the strategic factors assume paramount importance. The only goal at this stage is to survive for an hour, keeping the base intact by using all the facilities that have been introduced in previous levels. The number of attacking ships increases, the action speeds up, and it soon becomes apparent that it is impossible to keep all the colony's installations intact in the face of the overwhelming firepower of the attacking aliens. Decisions must be made as to which buildings must be sacrificed — it is vital to protect the docking bay, in particular, as this will allow stocks to be replenished.

Computer games have come a long way since the days of Space Invaders, and Psytron provides a demanding and absorbing alternative to the arcade games that have until recently dominated the market.

**Psytron:** For 48K Spectrum, £9.95, for Commodore 64, £7.95 (cassette); £11.95 (disk)

**Publishers:** Beyond Software, Competition House, Farndon Road, Market Harborough, Leics LE16 9NR

**Authors:** Tayo Olowu and Paul Voysey

**Joysticks:** Optional

**Format:** Cassette (Spectrum), cassette or disk (Commodore 64)

## Droid's View

These scenes from Psytron show part of the action from level one of the game. As the droid chases the saboteur through the corridors, the view pans across the base. By means of the window in the bottom right-hand corner of the picture, the player is able to see through the eyes of the droid. When the saboteur appears in the window, the player can destroy it by pressing the fire button

