

GHOSTS IN THE MACHINE

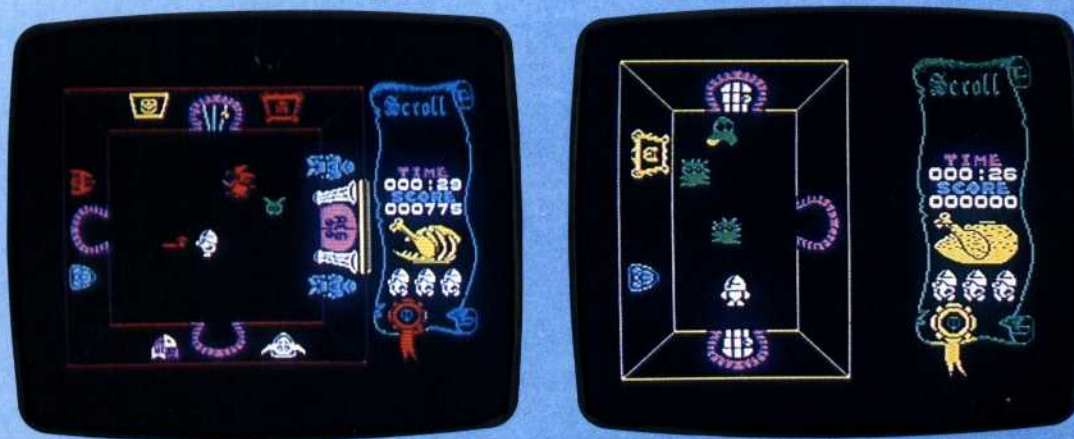
Ultimate, Play The Game is a company that has gained a well-deserved reputation for producing high-class computer games. Early releases from Ultimate set new standards in Spectrum animated graphics. Here we look at **Atic Atac**, a game that adds the strategy elements of adventure gaming to the fast action of the arcade.

weakens you badly. Fortunately your armament of axe, sword or spell will repel your attackers. Most of the monsters appear to move fairly randomly, but some have a deliberately antisocial policy of heading straight for you.

Movement is controlled by a Kempston or cursor joystick or the keyboard. Unfortunately, like a lot of games, Atic Atac uses the keys Q,W,E and R for movement, and as these are in a straight line on the keyboard the game is unnecessarily

Atic Antics

These screen photographs show two stages in Atic Atac — an adventure game that takes place at the frantic pace of an arcade game. A succession of monsters and other surprises appear as you hunt through corridors and secret passages in search of a golden key.



Atic Atac is one of the rare breed of games that manages to combine the excitement of arcade action with the complexity of the adventure game. In classic adventure style, the game is set in the many rooms of a haunted castle. You are trapped inside and can escape only by finding the golden key that unlocks the main doors. Your life is threatened by a collection of evil creatures — spiders, ghouls, monks, witches, devils and hungry monsters are all here, to say nothing of Dracula, Frankenstein's Monster, the Mummy and lashings of bats. It is rather like being in an over-populated Hammer Horror movie. Trapdoors and hidden passages abound, and there are various useful or valuable objects for you to collect.

So far it all sounds much like a typical adventure game, but it is illustrated by superb animated graphics, which is where the arcade aspect of Atic Atac comes in. For you are presented with a three-dimensional coloured plan view of each room or dungeon. You can see the various doors leading off north, south, east or west, and other trappings include suits of armour, bookshelves, grandfather clocks and pictures. In your chosen guise of Knight, Wizard or Serf (or, as the program would have it, 'surf') you move through each room, armed with the appropriate weapon for your character. The various monsters keep appearing, heralded by puffs of smoke, and their every touch

difficult to play. It would be far more sensible to use Q and A for up and down, and alternative keys on the bottom row for left and right.

The game could easily become a simple shoot-out if it wasn't for the fact that some of the objects, not to mention the golden key itself, are very useful. Some coloured doors will open only if you possess the matching coloured key, and certain objects ward off certain creatures. On a more basic level you need to find food, as the rapidly disintegrating chicken to the right of the screen vividly portrays. If you don't eat, it slowly changes from a wholesome fowl to a heap of bones, signifying your death by starvation.

Initially, Atic Atac may be considered as simply a very frustrating arcade game. Once you begin to master the techniques of fighting the various monsters, you begin to appreciate the adventure side of it as you search the castle for various artefacts and treasure. But be warned — this is a game that requires many hours of effort before the key is found and the doors are opened.

Atic Atac: for the 48K Spectrum, £5.50
Publishers: Ashby Computers and Graphics Ltd.,
 Ashby de la Zouch, Leicestershire LE6 5JU
Authors: Ultimate, Play The Game
Joysticks: Kempston and cursor joysticks
Format: Cassette