MEGA-GAMES -- THE FREE FORMAT GAME CONCEPT

Conceived by:-
   D.H.Lawson
   E.Evans
   D.I.Weatherburn
   J.Gibson
   M.Glover

General Concept:-

The idea is for the player to enter a bounded world where everything is possible and you can achieve different aims according to the sort of game which you enjoy playing. There will be no concessions to an ordinary computer game.

All areas are indicated in a symbolically obvious manner with cartoon quality graphics for all usable objects and for the background.

The screen layout will be simple in structure but every object,door or window will either have a use or lead to somewhere, or at least provide some information. Rewards will take several forms, allowing the player to judge how well he is doing in different ways e.g. building a pile of gold, collecting monsters heads to put in a trophy room, gaining more notches on his sword e.t.c

Points supporting free format games:-

1) The great depth of play, achieved by having many inter-related objects and events in the game. This would mean that the player would have a large number of places to explore and things to use. The player would still be discovering things about the game months after first seeing it. This type of game would also generate a large amount of public interest and involvement in the press with hints and tips on the adventure pages.

2) The game would have a subtle hidden difficulty factor with a beginner not having the experience to gain access to the locations with the more vicious opponents and valuable rewards, whereas an experienced player will know the quickest and safest routes to take.

Each player will be able to play in his own style, beginners can play in all the areas which are immediately and easily accessible to learn how to interact with the game, arcade players can travel around trying to defeat as many opponents as possible whilst still surviving, adventurers can go in search of anything which they think is useful and try to complete certain tasks.

Hopefully this will make the game all things to all people.

Due to the cartoon like world which will be developed for the character, the player will be able to relate to the character in a very easy manner. In most current games the player finds himself in a situation where he says "I wonder what is behind that door ?" and all too often is not allowed to find out. In this free format game there will be only a very few 'secured' items and locations to give the more experienced adventurer something to think about.

Things to be avoided:-
1) No status line --- this means
        a) no score as such
        b) no lives
        c) no timer
2) No limits on what tasks the character is capable of performing.
3) None of the standard arcade traits.
        a) sequential levels
        b) finite game play time

The Window Environment.
========================

     The visual representation of the game is made up of several levels of
windows, these are:-

(1) Main Window/Outer most level of the shell
     This takes the form of the usual full screen view of the game,
showing the scene with the character within it from whichever view is required.
This will include your character, any enemies or any other players in the game
and finally the objects in that scene which the player can manipulate.

(2) Enquiry Window/Medium shell of the game
     This is a view into or out of or examination of an object on
the screen and may be displayed or cleared away by 'implied instruction'(see
later sheet for explanation).An example of this is if the player wished to view
the contents of a chest or box of some variety, he would approach it and implie
with the joystick that he wished to view its contents, the game would then
expand a window on the screen illustrating the contents of the box. This would
retract by pulling the joystick in the opposite direction.

(3)Help Windows/general information appears at any time
     These take the form of cartoon style speech balloons and think
bubbles depending upon the situation or need at the time of play. Both styles
would be used for two purposes to inform the player of what is going on in the
game which cannot be displayed visualy or with sound effects.(e.g the character
geting tired the further he runs)

     Think Bubbles: When he is alone or wants to project something to the
player which is a thought (e.g "I'm feeling tired already")

     Speech Balloons: When relating to someone or something or making a noise
(e.g "AAAAARRGH!!)

     The idea behind these features is that the t.v. is your window onto a
world and the character is your means of interaction with the other characters
in the world. Therefore the window is your sense of vision, the speech bubbles
are your means of affecting the actions of others.
     The speech windows will also be used for selecting more complex
options, the character will think or 'say' all the options which are available
to you in the game at the time and the player can select which he wants when it
appears.

Implied Instruction
====================
     This allows the player to tell his character to perform certain tasks
without the need for any complex control techniques, the player does not have
to type in the command or position the character carefully on the screen. The
instruction is implied by placing his character near to the object he wishs to
manipulate and implies with the joystick that he wishs to move it. The program
 then decides which object he wishs to handle and automatically places him in
the correct place to make the move and takes him through the animation phases
 to make the move. An example of this is going through a door, the player
simply places his character near the door, then he pushs the joystick up to
select the door, the program will then automatically take him through the
detailed phases of opening the door. If at any time he changes his mind he can
simply pull back the joystick and the program will reverse the process.

Character Personalities

Each character which is involved in the game and the player can meet, has a personality which it follows when deciding how to act upon your actions and also that of other characters. Each can be given a very subtle and individual personality which the player will learn to recognise and use to his advantage. Characters include such personalities as enemies who are after you, henchmen who will do what you ask them to do and characters who just occupy the area of the game and act upon the other characters as well as your own. (The final type of character is the most complex, an example would be a sheriff of some sort who is after both you and a bounty hunter, who in turn is after you)

All these charcters will have a main task which they will follow at all times, which can include such things as constantly moving objects from one place to another, but if you come across him en route you can take him on.

BANDERSNATCH - THE SCENARIO

The location for the game will be a distant space colony on the outer edge of a large galaxy. The idea is that this is a new moon-like world which has been colonized mainly because of its rich content of a new crystal. This crystal (unnamed yet) produces immense amounts of heat and light when exposed to the air and is used to power the new generation of starships which have been developed so it is incredibly valuable. Small sparkling grains of it can be found lying on the ground all over the planet and these are used to provide heating and light for the domes (n.b. only the tiny surface crystals can be used in this way as the big,pure mined crystals are infinitely more dangerous)

However the planet is not heavily populated since it is a totally airless world with only one small spaceport, and life is only possible in one of the eight Citydomes scattered over the light side of the moon. There is the constant risk of any dome being obliterated should the mined crystal be accidently exposed to the air in the dome. Consequently the small population who do inhabit the place are very hardy and greedy, not to mention vicious. The small local police force is more like a set of vigilantes than any other in the galaxy and will shoot first and ask questions later if they see anybody they don't like. The whole place is a nest of thieves, miners, gamblers and renegades with a sort of 'Blade Runner' type atmosphere.

You enter the scene as a well-known criminal on the run from the main Galactic Police. The reason you chose to come to this place is that it is the outermost colony world and the least likely to be searched.

The style of dress of the character will be something like a shabby version of the 'Blakes Seven' futuristic suits. Other characters will come in as many different shapes, sizes and styles as possible. It will even be possible to introduce alien lifeforms (Mineworms e.t.c.) to add some flexibility.

Playing the game will be as described in the concept above, with no single task to make up the game. Some of the prospective ways to play the game could include amassing money by gambling/stealing, trying to destroy the domes by exposing the crystals to the air (sadists only), or simply trying to survive and avoid capture by the Galactic Police who will undoubtedly turn up some time during the game if we have anything to do with it.

PSYCLAPSE - THE SCENARIO

The storyline of Psyclapse revolves around a mighty overlord who after years of traveling through time and space has seen and done all there is to see and do and has now settled down in a solitory castle which occupies a section of space at all moments of time from the ice age to present day and beyond.

It is in this castle that he occupies himself by taking prisoner warriors from various time eras, holding them captive and setting them against each other in an arena of combat. They have a complete selection of weapons at hand but are of course only skilled in the use of the weapons from there era. It is up to each surviving warrior to attempt to learn to use as many weapons as possible, to enable him to stand any chance against any future adverseries. If a caveman faces a cowboy he would not stand much chance aginst him armed only with club and faced with a six-shooter,but if he in turn has learned how to use a machine gun then he may be in for a chance.

The fortress that he lives is has one unusual feature which is due to the location along a time line, each room in the castle can take the form of any period of time. This means that you can leave a room which was in the early neolithic period with cave walls,cave writing and return to it later to find that it is now in the cowboy period with log cabin walls. Another mysterious event connected with this is that at any time a time slip can occur which means that the room transforms all around you, these can be evoked by the overlord or by coincidence at random. This can have various effects dependant upon what you are doning at the time it is obviously not very usefull if your for suddenly changes into a more advanced enemy and you have to fight him with an inferior weapon.

You have become one of the unfortunate characters in this tale picked out from your era and brought to the overlords castle to be pitted against other warriors. When the game begins you find yourself in a long corridor with no idea of the reason for your sudden transference to this strange place you can only explore and attempt to figure out why you have been brought to this place.

Many tasks will be placed in your charcters path, some of these can be completly ignored, others will lead on to greater things. The main task facing the character is to find his out why he is in this place and possibly attempt to leave it. Others will include straight forward survival to go on to explore more and more of the place of his capture, by battling against the onslaught of other warriors that he meets on route and find sufficient food and water to keep going. He is also able to acquire gold and other such treasures to collect some sort of personal wealth.

The characters on route will also have several tasks which they are attempting to perform, the overlord is attempting to force you into your cell to hold you captive for use in his arena, various warriors are sent after you by him attempting to get you but some ofthem may also want to escape and will not harm you under certain circumstances. The other foes which you will have to face are the overlords henchman, they go around rounding up the warriors within the fortress and forcing them into there cells.

Most of the players time will be spent attempting to search the whole fortress this is made more complex with the advent of time slips which make it more difficult to map your location.

"I CAN SMELL SOME THING STRANGE IN HERE!"

SPEECH BALLOONS FOR COMMUNICATION

SPEECH BALLOONS WILL BE USED TO EXPLAIN AND ILLUSTRATE PROBLEMS WHICH WOULD NOT USUALLY BE ILLUSTRATED. EXAMPLES OF THIS ARE:- THE SENSES, (e.g SMELL, HEARING, VISION), THINGS WHICH MAY HAPPEN (e.g. GETTING TIRED OR HUNGREY), ETC.

"SHALL I RUN AWAY, I DO'NT THINK I STAND A CHANCE"

THEY WILL ALSO, BE USED FOR EASY DECISION MAKING, WHEN A CHOICE HAS TO BE MADE EACH OPTION WILL APPEAR IN TIME. TO MAKE YOUR CHOICE YOU SIMPLY PRESS PRESS THE JOYSTICK BUTTON.

EXAMPLES OF THIS ARE ABOVE AND ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES.

IN THESE WE SEE OUR HERO FACING AN ENEMY OF SOME SORT.

①
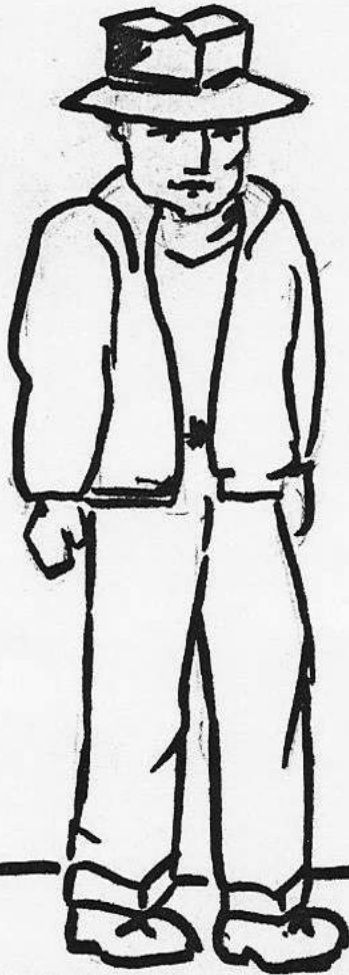
"IMPLIED INSTRUCTION"

EXAMPLE ①

IF YOU WISHED TO TAKE YOUR CHARACTER THROUGH THE DOOR, IT IS A SIMPLE MATTER OF POSITIONING HIM AT THE DOOR, AND THEN PUSHING THE JOYSTICK UP TO IMPLIE THAT HE WISHES TO OPEN AND GO THROUGH.
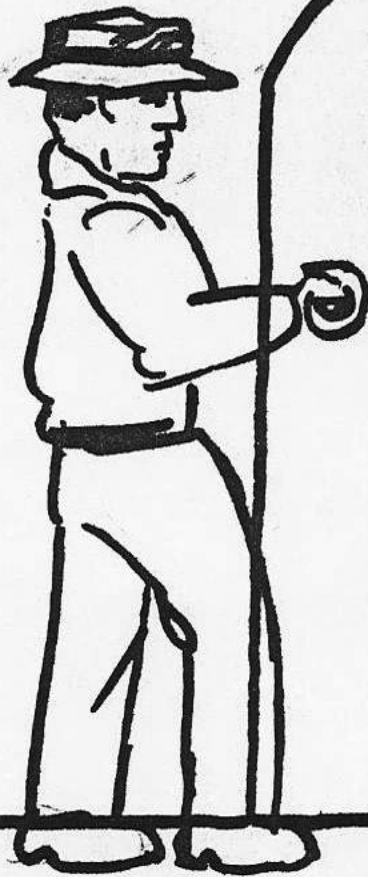
HERE WE SEE THE FIRST PHASE OF THE
AUTOMATIC ANIMATION SEQUENCE.
IF AT ANY TIME THE CHARACTER HAS
TO BE MOVED AWAY FROM THE DOOR, THE
PLAYER ONLY HAS TO "UNIMPLIE" THE
INSTRUCTION BY PULLING THE JOYSTICK
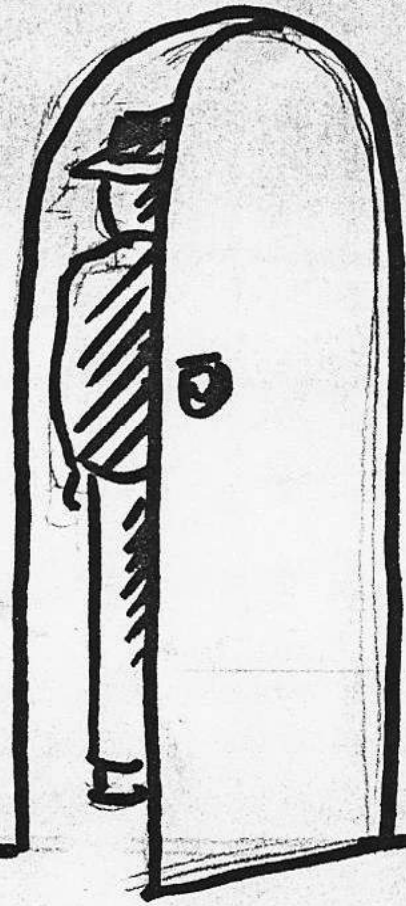DOWN THIS WILL REVERSE THE
SEQUENCE AND TAKE HIM BACK TO PHASE ①

③
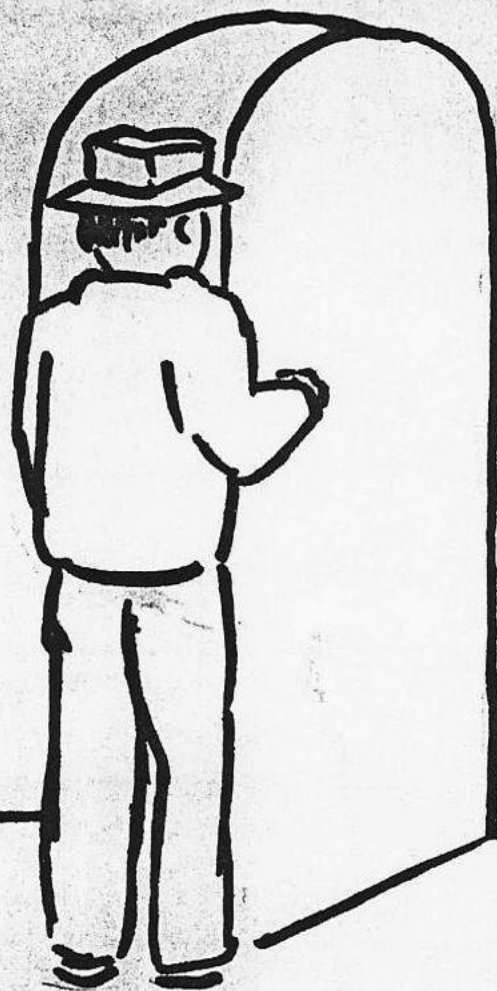
THIS TECHNIQUE HAS THE ADVANTAGE
THAT THE CHARACTER DOES NOT HAVE
TO BE POSITIONED AS CAREFULLY
AS IN USUAL GAMES. ALSO THE
ANIMATED PHASES OF GOING THROUGH
THE DOOR ARE AUTOMATIC, AND THUS
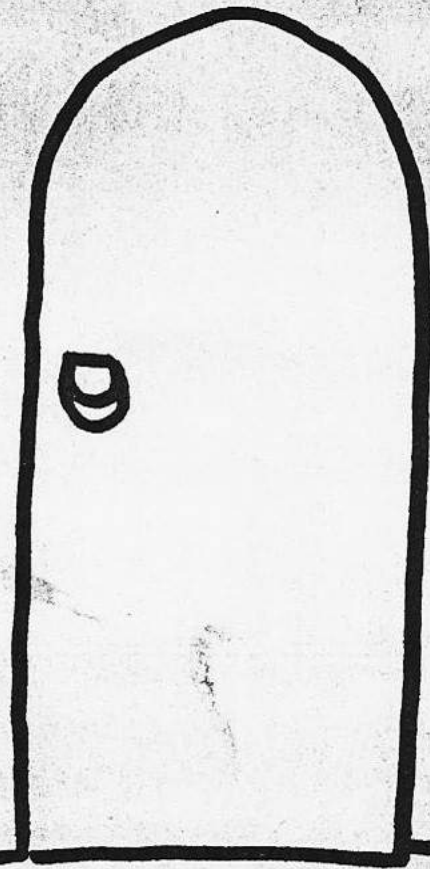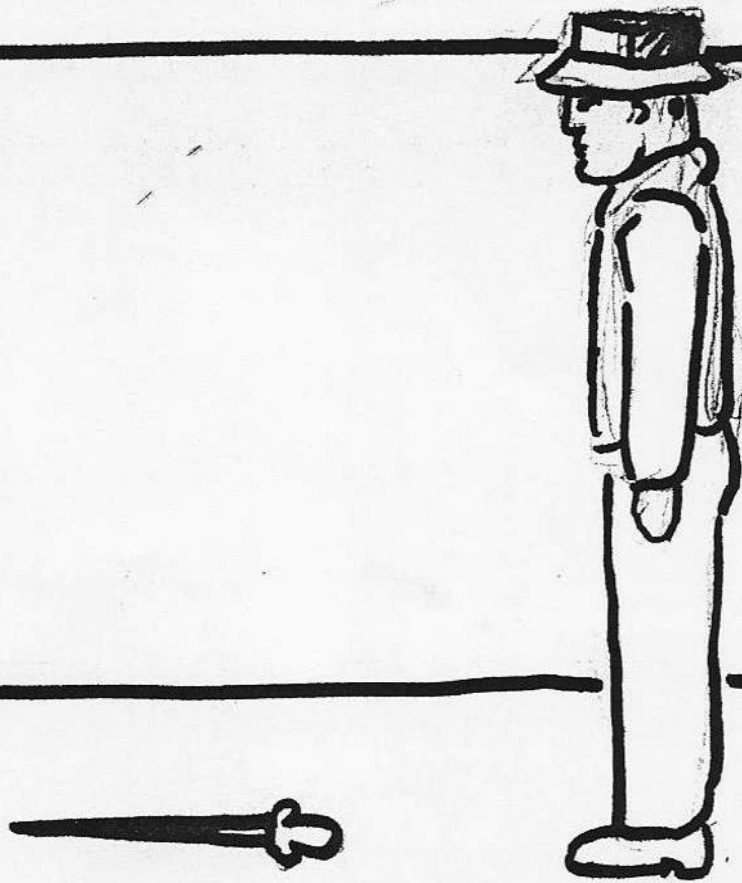ARE CONTROLLED AS EASILY AS
SIMPLY MOVING LEFT & RIGHT.

(4)

THE CHARACTER HAS NOW GONE THROUGH
THE DOOR AND THE SCENE WILL SWITCH
TO THE VIEW ON THE OTHER SIDE
OF THE DOOR.

⑦

UPON SWITCHING TO THE NEXT SCENE THE CHARACTER WILL NOW BE BACK INTO NORMAL CONTROL MODE, WITH THE ANIMATION OF THE DOORS CLOSING BEHIND HIM.

IMPLIED INSTRUCTION

EXAMPLE ②

AS WITH EXAMPLE ① YOU SEE
THAT THE CHARACTER HAS TO PICK
UP THE SWORD. BY PULLING THE JOYSTICK
TO THE LEFT HE MAY WALK STRAIGHT
PAST. BY PULLING DOWN AT A POINT
BY THE SWORD YOUR CHARACTER WILL
STOOP AND PICK IT UP. TO DROP IT YOU
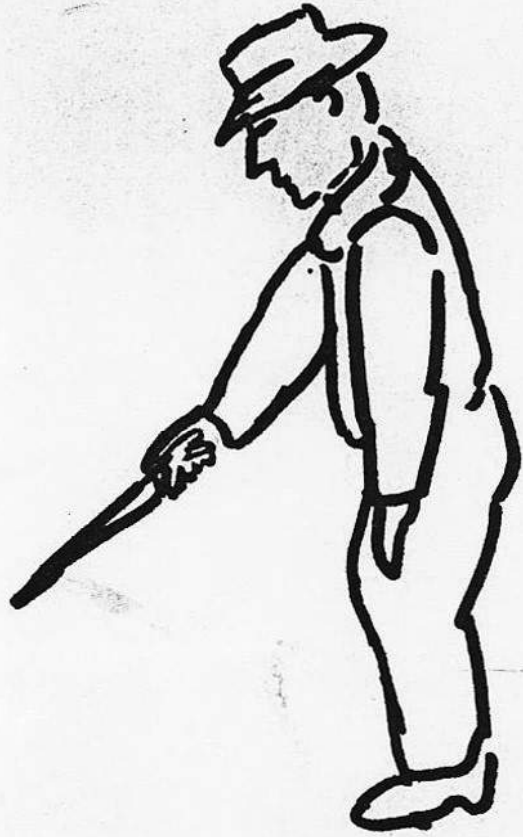SIMPLY STOOP WHILE HOLDING THE SWORD.

④

⑥