

# >One Vision

Protovision is known as one of the most active groups throughout the Commodore scene, constantly innovating to deliver some of the best new software since the C64's commercial death. And as Shaun Bebbington finds out, it's more than just a retro software publisher

**Retro Gamer:** Firstly, would you like to give a brief history of Protovision for the benefit of readers who might not know of you? How did you start and what do you currently do?

**Protovision:** The idea behind Protovision started in 1996 during a journey to a C64 party. We were sad that groups like X-Ample were leaving the scene since Game On and Magic Disk weren't being published any more. At that time, Protovision had just two members (Malte Mundt and Stefan Gutsch), who were mainly working on three games. After some time, Lars Hutzelmann joined the group, creating the music for the game Stroke World and the later cancelled T3 (more on T3 later). During the years, more and more capable and skilled members joined. Today we are developing games and distributing them, along with productions from other bright and active minds, and we even sell hardware, distribute magazines and other essential Commodore-related accessories. Not bad considering our humble beginnings.

**RG:** What was your first release for the C64?

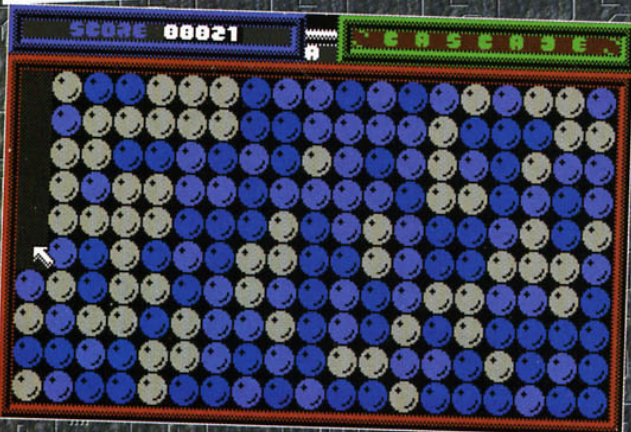
**PTV:** That would be our freeware title Stroke World, which has an impressive storyboard and animations, plus a brilliant soundtrack.

**RG:** What games have you released since then, and how have people reacted to them?

**PTV:** We have released 11 games so far. We tend not to receive much feedback on our freeware releases, but our commercial titles are well accepted and renowned for their high standards and quality. Some of our games even pop up in the C64 all-time hall of fame! The one that stands out is definitely Bomb Mania, especially when used with our four-player adaptor. It is probably the most popular game played at computer parties and retro-related shows all around the globe. Another popular game by Protovision is the neat two-player platform game Ice Guys.

**RG:** How many members do you have currently?

**PTV:** We have just welcomed a new Dutch member. Currently, Protovision comprises of 12 talented sceners from four different countries, each with a unique background and experience. You may learn more about the individual activities of our members on the Commodore Scene Database (<http://noname.c64.org/csdb>). On a wider scope, PTV is bigger than it seems because we also co-operate with a great number of enthusiasts outside of our camp. There is, for example, the Singular Crew with the stunning Grubz preview and the extremely professional Cinematic Intuitive Dynamix, the team behind one of the greatest RPGs to grace the C64 – Newcomer.

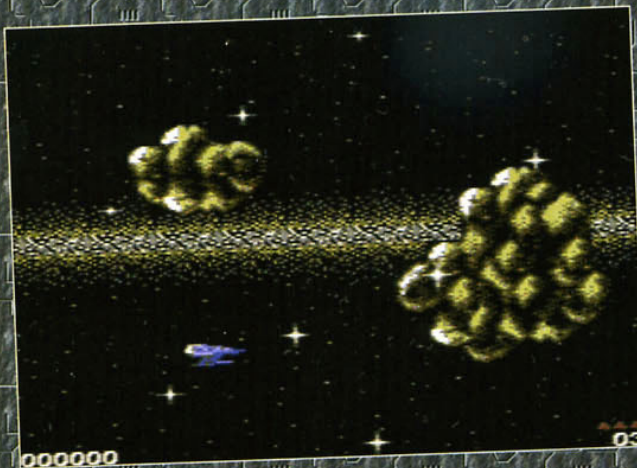


**RG:** Do you ever have any ex-C64 users coming back to the C64 because they have stumbled across your website? How do they react to your activities?

**PTV:** Indeed, we have! We are reaching more and more 'sleeping' users with our games, and they're dusting off their old machines and getting back into the C64 again. There is still a huge and highly active community of creative C64 people out there. Sometimes we are asked by people browsing the Internet: 'Do you really still sell these items or am I just dreaming?' And our message to the world is, 'Yes, we are 'still' selling C64-related items, and what's more, we are also actively developing new ones'. We add items to our product range every two or three months. Not always games, though, sometimes we add hardware as well.

**RG:** So what kind of hardware do you produce?

**PTV:** We mostly redistribute hardware, although we do have a helping hand in many of the items. There is lots of interesting new hardware for the C64 and I can name only a few highlights here. Our newest product is an expansion that enables the C64/128 user to use IDE hard drives, CD-ROMs and even Compact Flash RAM as storage devices. Moreover, you can hook up the C64 to a PC and use the devices that the PC has. There are also adaptors for plugging things like PC keyboards, PC mice (even optical mice and trackballs), modems and network devices – and of course without drivers or long-winded installation processes. It is possible to browse the Web with a C64, especially when it is equipped with the stunning SuperCPU accelerator card from CMDRKEY.



**RG:** What games are you currently working on?

**PTV:** Many. The Metal Dust shoot-em-up that we started way back in 1996 – before the hardware that it's currently running on even existed! – will soon see the light of day. The game will require a SuperCPU to work, and will bring a new standard in games of its type, partly due to the extra power that the SuperCPU allows, and also due to our overwhelming will to innovate and deliver the best standards in C64 gaming.

We also have some games in the pipeline supporting our own four-player adaptor, including Tanks 3000. In this game, you hunt down your opponents with your tank which has 'steer-able' missiles. Pac It is another game that we are busy finishing. It's a fun-to-play game in the Pac-man style, which will allow four players at a time in either team or battle mode. This game will contain more than 100 different levels and situations, featuring lots of animated sequences and an underlining story.

With Reel Fishing, we are developing (as the title suggests) a fishing simulation game for the C64, and we are keeping a keen eye on the detail here. Enforcer II is a sideways-scrolling shooter, and will interest people who have an unexpanded C64. We have the permission from Manfred Trenz to create this follow-up to his excellent (and last) game for the Commodore.

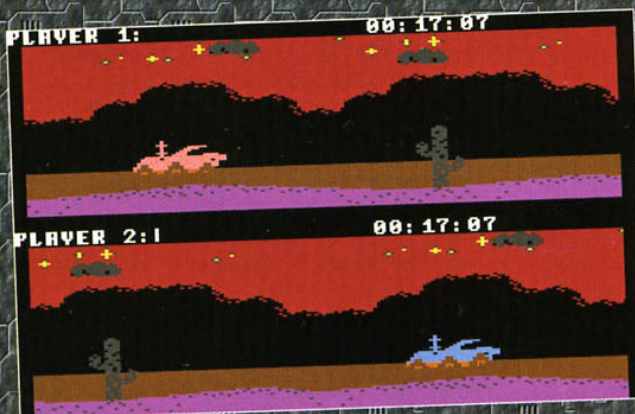
Other games that will appear under the Protovision flag are as follows: Advanced Space Battle (the name says it all); Grubz (based around the classic Amiga-game Worms); and Jim Slim (an original and stylish game). There is even more which we are keeping secret at the moment, so expect some surprises from us. We would like to give Retro Gamer the exclusive on Metal Dust in particular, so stay tuned. There is also a lot of demo or preview versions of the upcoming Protovision games on this month's cover CD.

**RG:** Is there anything else you have planned in terms of hardware, applications or entertainment software?

**PTV:** Yes, there is, but we're not telling! Keep an eye on our website ([www.protovision-online.de](http://www.protovision-online.de)), or the superb news portal at [www.c64.sk](http://www.c64.sk).



**RG:** Tell us more about the T3 project – what is it, what happened and what exactly went wrong?



**PTV:** This is a sensitive topic for some people in the scene, and here is why: the T3 project was an unofficial sequel to the awe-inspiring Turricon II, started by Chester Kollschen, Stefan Gutsch and Lars Hutzelmann.

Coding this game from scratch and not stealing a single routine or coding concept from the original games is no easy task, but these guys were more than up to the job, and they carefully captured the magic and playability of the first two titles. They also added new features such as a replacement to the lighting beam when fire was depressed for long enough.

Chester went on to code an ingenious routine to display large 'monster sprite' enemies without any flickering on a standard C64, which again proved that Protovision was more than capable of handling such a game. After seeing this superb piece of coding, 'AEG', a member of Smash Designs, contacted Chester about his programming wizardry, begging him for a full explanation of how the 'monster sprite' routine worked. Unfortunately, 'AEG' later claimed to have invented the routine himself.

But there was another disappointment concerning fellow C64 sceners, which led us to cancel the T3 project. During a C64 party, where an unofficial preview of the game was introduced to the visitors, the disk was stolen and soon spread worldwide. This back-stabbing killed all motivation to go on with the project. All that remains of T3 nowadays is available when you buy Hockey Mania, including the fully playable first level, featuring the biggest end-of-level monster ever seen on standard C64! A sequel to Turricon may some day appear, but it won't be from us.



**RG:** How do you see the future of both the Commodore 64 platform and Protovision?

**PTV:** Over the years we have seen many development stages of the C64 platform. There was a real breakdown when all the magazines disappeared from the shops during the Nineties, but we are now far beyond that point. Since then, the user-base has remained more or less stable.

As for us, we will focus more on producing games for the Commodore instead of broadening the product range with items such as music CDs and other related stuff. After all, we're not really commercial and we do what we do in our spare time. Protovision will not move on to other platforms, not even other 8-bit platforms.

**RG:** Is there anything that Retro Gamer readers can do to help Protovision?

**PTV:** There are some ways. You already help us by reading Retro Gamer – the rise of this magazine will help gain publicity for what we do and what we are about. So the first thing to do is spread the word – Protovision and the C64 are alive! There are still too many 'sleeping' users out there who would like to play a C64 game again but have no knowledge of our activities. Think of who you knew who possessed a C64/128 and tell them about Protovision and the wider scene. If you maintain a website, link to ours – this is greatly appreciated, and banners can be found in the About section at our website. If you maintain an Internet radio station we can supply you with cool advert jingles, and if you are involved in any publication, make the masses aware of Protovision in your own way.

In general, feedback is greatly appreciated. Either in the form of a nice email, or an order! Also, biscuits or birthday cakes will be gladly accepted!

**RG:** Final words?

**PTV:** Be active or support those that are. Be creative or pay attention to those who create.

## Win a four-player adaptor

This is your chance to enjoy four-player games on your Commodore 64. Simply answer the following question and you could win a four-player adaptor, a copy of Bomb Mania and a free bonus disk courtesy of Commodore Scene and Protovision, saving you £30 in the process (providing you win, of course). Have you been paying attention? Good, then here is the question.

What year was Bomb Mania released?

- A: 1996
- B: 1997
- C: 1998

You can either enter online ([www.retrogamer.net](http://www.retrogamer.net)) or by post. Send your entries to Protovision Competition, Retro Gamer, Live Publishing, Europa House, Adlington Park, Macclesfield, Cheshire, SK10 4NP, UK. All the usual competition rules apply, with one winner being drawn at random. All entries must be received by 30 September 2004.

## Five of the best

Protovision has released 11 games to date, all of them different. Here are five of our personal favourites

### Bomb Mania

Bomb Mania is one of Protovision's most successful games to date. It was released back in 1997 along with the four-player adaptor which adds an extra two joystick ports to your C64/128. The game is a Bomberman clone, played over eight different mazes. Each maze has its own attributes, such as the Night Shift level played at the dead of night during a thunder storm. Each lightening flash enables you to briefly see the maze, meaning you can be easily caught out. Bomb Mania is great fun, especially when competing against three of your mates.



### Ice Guys

Ice Guys is a one- or two-player platform game, set in an unusually cold and snowy winter across three European cities and the continent of Antarctica. The unusual weather conditions have encouraged mutant monsters to kidnap snowmen for their own evil purposes, and when two retired Antarctic researchers discover the sinister plot, they take it on themselves to rescue and free the captured snowmen!

This is where you (and a friend) step in, killing the evil mutants by capturing them in a snowball and rolling them off the screen. Bonuses and power-ups aid your progression, and there is also a shop to visit, and a nice horizontally scrolling mini-game. Ice Guys is inspired by the classic arcade game Snow Bros, featuring sampled speech during the title music, and is perhaps one of Protovision's most under-rated games.





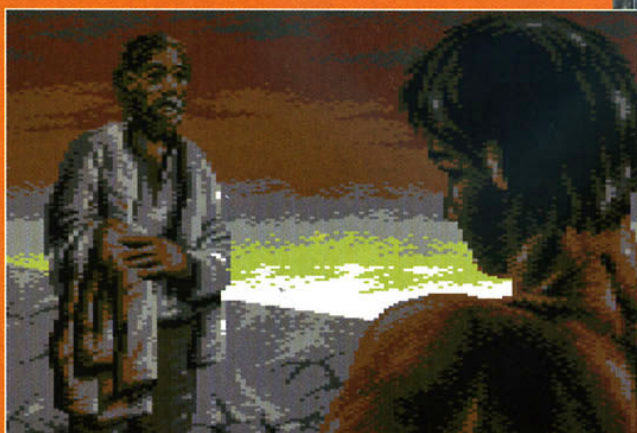
## Hockey Mania

This title is another game that utilises the four-player adaptor. It's an overhead sports simulator played in an ice rink. The object is to control the puck and fire shots at your opponent's goal, hoping to score a point and increase the lead. Each goalkeeper is controlled by the computer, and you'll start to learn some neat tricks after a few games, including ways of barging the keeper away from the goal to score. There is the option to upgrade your players' abilities between the breaks, providing you have collected enough items during play. Hockey Mania is for two or four players only, since you are not able to play a match against the computer. Still, it's great fun as a multiplayer game.

## It's Magic II

This slick platform game is a follow-up to the popular It's Magic (now available as freeware). Since his first adventure, Tom the magic cat has gained a lot of experience, having returned from the Dream Islands and celebrated as a hero.

At his home, all animals live together peacefully, but they are now in danger and what Tom doesn't know yet is that he himself is conjuring up this danger by mistake. The Dream Islands find themselves in chaos and the only one who can save them is Tom. The picturesque introduction sequence presents the story behind the game, and after flipping the disk, you are ready to play. It's Magic 2 tops its predecessor and is rightly considered a classic for fans of the traditional platform genre.



## Enhanced Newcomer

This is probably the biggest game in the history of the C64, produced by Cinematic Intuitive Dynamix Studios, with nearly a decade of production behind it.

Newcomer is inspired by the Interplay RPGs from the late eighties. You find yourself stranded on an island which, as you soon find out, is in fact a neglected prison for serious criminals. With a hazy memory, you must find your way around the island, meeting its people and working out what to do next. The gaming engine allows numerous actions and interactions, and is an absolute must for fans of the old D&D style games. There is also a handy save-game option, which should be utilised because this is a massive adventure. To give you an

idea of the sheer scale of this game, nothing like this could have been released back in the C64's heyday. It weighs in at nearly 2.5Mbs and is stored over seven double-sided disks!

Protovision offers this game as both a free download (for Vice and other good emulators), and on disk with a nicely printed manual. It has also been provided on this month's coverdisc, so what are you waiting for? The world of Newcomer awaits you.

