



Many of the creatures on this world have strange desires - practical jokes played upon them by Mother Nature if you will. For instance, lemmings throw themselves off cliffs, elephants walk five thousand miles to a specific spot before dying, dogs aren't happy unless they're sniffing each others' bottoms and frogs like to climb towers in the middle of the sea! Yes, whilst frogs have a reputation as fun-loving pond-dwelling amphibians, they actually spend their lives compelled by their genetic coding to climb to the tops of ruined lighthouses and the like, avoiding the evil creatures that dwell within.

Castelian is the story of one such frog, named Binky. In order to fulfill his life and die happy, Binky must make it to the top of eight towers via a derelict outer staircase. Unfortunately many of the stairs have crumbled away, making the use of lifts and tunnels through the buildings essential for success. As Binky climbs, the view of the tower rotates, keeping him in sight at all times, and handily allowing him to see the way ahead too! Binky must reach the top of each tower before his biological clock runs out and he loses one of his three lives.

CASTEL



▲ Completing a level leads to this bonus screen.



▲ Lordy me, it's a winking frog.



▲ More bonus screen hilarity for our froggy chum.

A GOOD HARD FROG

Binky may have a bit of a soft name, but he is surprisingly hard. When hit by enemies, instead of dying or receiving hideous injuries, Binky merely drops a level or two down. Sadly, if there are no steps below our froggy chum, the fall could last until he lands on a lower platform, or until he hits the water and drowns. Funnily enough for an amphibian, the only thing other than running out of time which kills Binky is contact with water!



GRABBING YOUR JEWELS

Although Binky's quest may seem completely pointless, it is not without reward. Every time the lad completes a tower, he is warped to a bonus level. Here, he leaps, gambols and frolics as only a frog can, avoiding the occasional enemy, leaping the many pits and collecting the myriad floating jewels. Every jewel boosts Binky's score, which puts him on the road for an extra life when enough points have been scored. If Binky makes it to the end of these bonus levels he is awarded a time bonus, depending on how long the bonus level took to complete. However, this extra time is only added to your first attempt, so once you lose a life it's back to the old limit. Doh!

COMMENT



I didn't find this quite as irritating as Radion did, mainly because I've played this game several times before and know the screen layouts and danger situations. But what he says is true - there are some annoying flaws which if removed could have made a good game into a great one. Collision detection is poor, the controls are sluggish and some of the baddies aren't situated as well as they were

JULIAN

in the original versions, which means that you're often guaranteed certain death unless you know exactly what's coming up. Without these niggles this would have been an outstanding, utterly addictive puzzle game, just like the original version. As it is, though, it's an enjoyable, challenging, but flawed game which some might find too frustrating to be worth persevering with. Give it a go before you buy.



▲ Using lifts is an essential part of frog behaviour.

CLIMB-Y FISHER

Negotiating the sheer faces of each tower is trickier than you might think. There are many gaps in the stairways which can only be crossed in one of three ways. Firstly, small gaps of one step are easily jumped using your froggy hopping abilities. Sometimes there is a lift block which raises you to stairs way above your head, although you must beware of flying enemies when using these. Lastly, there are tunnels. These cut through from one part of the building to another. However, you don't know where they lead to until you go through. It may be an essential doorway which aids your quest for the summit or circumvents some particularly nasty nasties, or it could be a trap leading to nought but a long plummet to the sea.



▲ Stair-type excitement awaits.



▲ Don't fall off the bottom of the tower.



▲ Mind the oranges Marlon!



▲ It's that bonus screen again!



▲ An invincible star chases Binky.

SHOOTING YOUR LOAD

Binky isn't utterly defenceless. It's a little known fact that, whilst standing still, frogs are able to shoot small balls of slime from their feet. Binky can do this by pressing the jump button whilst stationary. Some enemies are stunned by this action, others are destroyed (some of these reincarnate themselves on the next highest platform) and others are unaffected. It's important to learn what effect your attacks have on each meanie, or you could meet a sticky end.



COMMENT

Castelian has been out for years on computer formats under the name of Nebulus, and as it was so popular I was really looking forward to a super-smooth console conversion. Unfortunately, whilst Castelian isn't a real dog, it doesn't live up to expectations. The real problems lie, as always, in irritating gameplay flaws. The old dodgy collision detection rears it's ugly head again, and in a game



RAD

where one hit can mean the difference between success and failure it's really inexcusable. Castelian also moves a bit slower than it should and it's hardly what you could call ultra-responsive. The main downer, however, is the presence of unavoidable death syndrome. This places you in positions from where there is no escape. This wouldn't be so bad if it just drained an energy bar, but being constantly prevented from reaching the top of a climb because of one invincible enemy who always gets in your way is so-o-o frustrating. Also, having to repeat the early levels every time you run out of credits is a proper pain, surely it couldn't have been too difficult to put in some sort of password system? If you're on the lookout for a new puzzle game with a bit more emphasis in arcade skills than most Castelian might be your game, but try it out before parting with any cash.



BY: SALES CURVE

PRICE: £35.99

RELEASE DATE: AUGUST

GAME DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM

LIVES: 3

CONTINUES: 2

SKILL LEVELS: 2

RESPONSIVENESS: SLOW



PRESENTATION 70%

There's options! There's a title screen! There's nothing else to speak of!

GRAPHICS 72%

Main sprite is ok, the backdrops are a bit samey but otherwise fine. The tower rotation is impressive, but the other sprites are crap.

SOUND 73%

Choice of fairly good tune or sad effects to accompany your travels.

PLAYABILITY 75%

An intriguing game style which is highly enjoyable, but features some frustrating flaws too.

LASTABILITY 62%

Eight towers aren't going to last forever, and there won't be much to draw you back once it's been completed.

OVERALL 73%

Another sorry tale of wasted potential. Not bad, but could have been polished up into something really special.