Twenty years ago, a meteorite fell to Earth near Cemetery Lane. This was no ordinary meteorite, however, and the occupants of 2406 Cemetery Lane, who stumbled across the wreckage, were changed into mad, cackling, blue psychopaths!

Worst of all, the meteor-driven loonies have kidnapped Dave’s girlfriend Sandy and plan to use her in their dastardly scientific experiments! It’s your job to control Dave and two of his pals as they break into the mansion and attempt to save Sandy without being caught by the evil inhabitants.

Maniac Mansion is an adventure which shows the characters’ escapades side-on. Actions are selected with a cursor, using menus situated on the bottom half of the screen. All you do is select a word or words from the menu, such as pick up, go to or whatever, and point it at a part of the main picture screen. The relevant character will then try to do what he or she has been told. The action is mostly puzzle based, requiring the correct use of an item or action to pass certain stages.

Look at that security door! It’s locked and you’ve got to find the key!

THE DUDES YOU CAN FRINK!

There are six characters to choose from in Maniac Mansion. Dave tags along no matter what, but you choose two of his pals to venture forth with. There’s Razor, lead with the band Razor and the Scumettes; Jeff, a surfer-type; Bernard, a physics buff and all-round bore; Michael, ace photographer for the school paper; Syd, an aspiring musician; and Wendy, a budding novelist.
Maniac Mansion works along almost identical lines to Shadowgate, but the difference between the two is massive. Where Shadowgate was frustrating, obscure, Maniac Mansion is easy-to-operate, lively, addictive and thoroughly entertaining. Presentation is superb (some of the cut-screens are really funny), and the puzzles are all very nicely thought out - there are no death-without-warning situations, so you're encouraged to experiment and explore. The graphics aren't outstanding, and the sound isn't anything to write home about, but Maniac Mansion's excellent, thoroughly rewarding and genuinely funny gameplay more than makes up for its deficiencies, and the end result is a highly original and very addictive adventure that no Nintendo owner should be without.

The family in Maniac Mansion take energy conservation to new heights - they've constructed a huge nuclear reactor on the ground floor! This powers the kettle, the TV and all their horrific experiments. Finding your way to the reactor room is a simple matter of pushing one of the gargoyles on the stair bannister, but once in there, be careful! One wrong move and you start a meltdown which destroys the mansion and everything within a five mile radius.

Maniac Mansion would be simple if it were set in a small semi-detached (like where Rich lives), but it isn't. Indeed, it's set in a massive place, similar in appearance to the Addams family residence. It's quite similar in content too, with pets such as a huge green tentacle! Keep a look out for the members of the family who hide out in the deepest corners of some rooms, ready to pounce on unsuspecting intruders.

Watch out for the plant of doom! It's alive, kicking and not very friendly at all!

The kid checks out certain parts of human anatomy on the medical chart.
What a spectacular library! Here, our hero’s found an entrance to the ubiquitous secret passage!

Outside Maniac Mansion. Your first job is to get in!

Maniac Mansion has its own arcade!

The staircase of doom!

Rad

After last month’s dose of role-playing “laughs” in the form of Shining in the Darkness, it’s refreshing to see a decent adventure on a console. Maniac Mansion has been around for years, but it’s still as playable today as it ever was. Graphically, very little has changed from the C64 version, and only minor improvements have been made in the sound department, but all the old puzzles, characters and jokes are there, including some great intermission screens featuring the evil antics of the Mansion’s owners! If you’re just a jaded blast-o-rama head, you probably won’t reckon much to Maniac Mansion, but if you’re looking for an adventure or just a game with a bit more depth, I’d recommend Maniac Mansion.

Presentation 78%

Game save options and superb in-game presentation.

Graphics 72%

Decent enough animation and backgrounds, but the sprites are block city.

Sound 70%

Middling effects and a variety of ear-bashing tunes.

Playability 88%

Cursor movement can be slow at times, but that doesn’t really affect the overall gameplay.

Lastability 90%

A big game with a lot of tricky puzzles that should keep most gamers going for some time.

Overall 89%

A playable and long-lasting adventure which should appeal to anyone after something a bit different.