



Micro Machines



If you've ever tried racing a Formula One car at home, you may have noticed how the size of your bedroom can be a little restrictive to your driving activities. Well now there is a solution in the form of Micro Machines.

Micro Machines pits your racing abilities against those of three other drivers on a wide variety of courses and in an assortment of pocket-sized vehicles. The action is set on an overhead-view

multi-directionally scrolling track. The control system rotates the car either clockwise or anti-clockwise, depending on the direction pressed, much in the mould of that old classic Super Sprint.

Finish in first or second position and you qualify for the next race. Finish in third or fourth and you lose one of your three lives. Complete twenty-eight races and you are proclaimed Micro Machines supreme champion!

A BIT OF RUFFTRUX



Every time you come first three races in a row, you are given the opportunity to expand your stock of lives. You are placed in control of a Bigfoot clone called a Rufftrux. The object of this bonus level is to reach the end of a dirt track course before your time runs out. Should you succeed, you're given an extra life. However, the combination of sparse road markings, barely negotiable rivers and boulders strewn across the road make this a lot more difficult than it sounds.



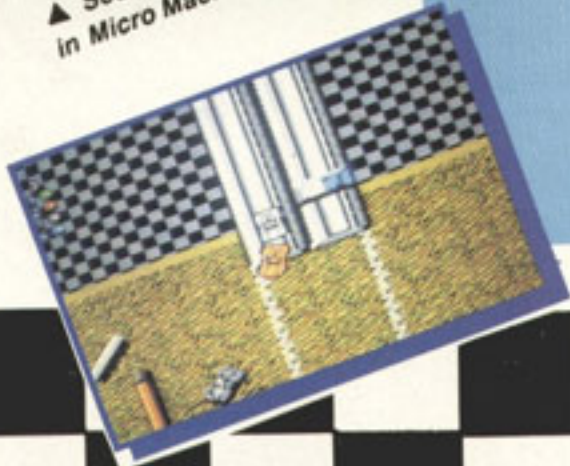
▲ Scoot across schoolbooks in Micro Machines.



SKID MARKS

Taking a Micro Machine for a spin isn't all plain sailing, even in the boat-bound stages! As in real life, the vehicle you are driving builds up momentum as it speeds onwards. This inertia makes cornering more than a matter of pressing the joypad. Your speed must be taken into account and braking measures taken to ensure a smooth turn. Failure to do this often results in your transport hurtling off course, usually to a nasty demise after plummeting groundwards from the table.

▲ Skiddy bends ahoy!





▲ Mind the oranges, Marlon.



▲ Beware the sprinkler.



▲ Sticky marmalade abounds.

**MICRO
MALARKEY**

The vehicles and courses in Micro Machines are a little bizarre to say the least. From racing sports cars across school desks covered in books, rulers and the like to GP cars burning across pool tables, replete with balls, cues and rests. Each environment offers individual hazards to watch out for, such as water sprinklers in the garden which tend to knock your mini-helicopter out of the sky and rubber ducks in the bathtub boat races. There are also various substances, tailored to each course, designed to slow your vehicle or cause it to skid out of control. These include marmalade on the breakfast table, ink slicks on the desk level and bunches of suds in the bath.

COMMENT



ROB

When I first had a bash on Micro Machines I was mightily confused about the steering. Although the action is viewed from above, the player steers through the eyes of the driver.

Once I had figured that out and got the hang of it, I realised just how good a game this is. Perhaps its greatest asset is its playability. Although some of the courses are fast, the scrolling is always smooth and the vehicles always respond realistically. There are some excellent and inventive graphics as well. I particularly liked the race around the breakfast table, where the cars have to dodge marmalade spills and such like. At times the collision detection is a bit suspect, but this doesn't really detract from the game's entertaining style. Micro Machines isn't a game that is easy to master either. Even when you've managed to beat all of the opponents, there's still the two player option, allowing you to challenge a friend of equal (or not) expertise. NES owners are advised to pick this one up, it is the most original game on to appear on this console for some time.




**CONTROL
 CAPERING**

The Micro Machines control method differs from most other racing games. Instead of your car having brakes, it is given a reverse gear. A light tap on the reverse button slows your car down a tad, whilst a prolonged press sends your vehicle shooting backwards at high speed, which is handy when you're trapped behind a large object. The reverse button also has a second use. Whilst driving tanks, providing the accelerator is also being pressed, the reverse control fires your cannon, capable of temporarily destroying your opponents, thus allowing you to take a comfortable lead.



▲ Vroom vroom scree.


**TWIN-TYPE
 HORSEPLAY**

In two-player mode the races are set over four laps as usual, but the rules for victory are very different. One player controls a blue vehicle, the other is red. An eight-point score bar is present in the top-left corner. The object of the game is to fill the bar with dots of your colour by being the first to reach the front edge of the screen. This is trickier than it sounds, and when you're leading the race it's almost impossible to see the course ahead of you!


BY: CODEMASTERS
PRICE: £34.99

RELEASE DATE: JULY

GAME DIFFICULTY: HARD

LIVES: 3

CONTINUES: NONE

SKILL LEVELS: 1

RESPONSIVENESS: MICRO-GROOVY

PRESENTATION 90%

More options than there are Micro Machines (well, not quite), and the game is beautifully presented throughout.

GRAPHICS 74%

Inconsistent sprites and backgrounds that range from okay to brill. The scrolling is great.

SOUND 82%

Brillo tunes which, sadly, do not play throughout. The effects are pretty average.

PLAYABILITY 95%

Fast and responsive, Micro Machines is most playable.

LASTABILITY 91%

The tournament and two-player mode will keep you going for yonks. You'll still play this even once it's completed.

OVERALL 93%

One of the best NES releases in months, and one no self-respecting games fan should miss.

COMMENT

As a license, Micro Machines is almost as bizarre as the soon-to-be-released *Monster in my Pocket*. As a game, Micro Machines works brilliantly. Although the graphics are somewhat inconsistent, with some of the sprites and backgrounds being really basic and others

having loads of detail, they don't really detract from your enjoyment of the game. The sound is okay, there aren't many effects, but the tunes are some of the best yet on the NES. What sets Micro Machines apart is the superb playability. The vehicles handle smoothly and realistically, sometimes with a frenzied turn of pace. The smooth scrolling moves things along perfectly, without hint of speed blur or jerkiness. The only fly in the ointment is the off-centre collision detection for the sticky, deceleration inducing hazards such as glue slicks or marmalade. Micro Machines is a very different race game that brims with playability. NES owners would be mad to miss this.

RAD