

It's a tragic tale but true. That lovable dolphin, Flipper, star of the much admired sixties TV series, has gone barking mad. During filming in the Pacific, for a Christmas special edition of the show, he begins to suffer horrendous Vietnam flashbacks. These traumatic hallucinations drive him to a decision - he must go back! In Twisted Flipper, the player guides the dynamic dolphin on a return mission deep into enemy territory. Only by saving the PoW's still held in a Saigon prison, shall Flipper be cured of the disease twisting his mind...

...On the other hand, that could all be complete rubbish, fabricated to carry out a cheap pun on the game's title. Twisted Flipper is in fact a pinball game! The flippers in this game have nothing to do with sea-faring mammals. Instead players fire up a silver ball and use a mixture of skill and intuition to amass as many points as possible.

Twisted Flipper manages to fit a vast pinball table into the cramped confines of the Megadrive. There are three sets of flippers to work with, but falling through the lowest set loses the ball. Mutant skulls and runaway brains do their best to make proceedings more hazardous, and diverting tasks present new ways to get at the points. All good pinball games have a two-player option, but Twisted Flipper actually takes it a step further and has a four-player option, something which is bound to lead to plenty of cursing, boasting and sulking. Just don't expect any dolphins, ok?!

## DEEPLY FLIPPY

As has already been mentioned, there are three sets of flippers to work with in this game. Here's a quick summary of what to expect from each area of the table:



▲ *Mind the Mutant Skulls, Marlon.*



▲ *All centipede scum must die!*



## MIDDLE FLIPPERS

In the table's middle section, skulls in green wigs, wearing sandals, waddle around the screen. Statue figureheads also appear, and when broken their brains escape and go walkabout. The pylons to the left and right of the flippers shoot lightning when the ball bounces against them enough times. It is the middle section that holds the key to gaining access to the upper flippers. The cards that appear displaying words like HEAD and BANGER (?) must all be knocked down. Only then does the block preventing the ball from getting to the upper flippers, de-activate. Hoorah!

## POINTY! POINTY!

In pinball points are the name of the game, and Twisted Flipper naturally includes some bonus features giving the player a chance to score extra points. The most common is the Jump Ramp, although there are other less accessible bonus screens. With the Jump Ramp, players have to carry out a sequence of tasks involving destroying blocks, lighting the diamond, and knocking down all of the letters in the words "Jump Ramp". Then the ramp appears and the next task is to launch the ball over it. If successful, the silver ball flies off the table and into space and finally settles on a bonus screen. Good eh?

# TWISTED FLIPPERS



## BASE FLIPPERS

These flippers are the last protection on the table. If the ball falls through these, it is lost forever - caution is therefore the watchword! Most of the action takes place in this area though, and it is here that you'll find the Jump Ramp bonus level. Look out for caterpillars which wiggle across the screen as well.

## UPPER FLIPPERS

This is a much smaller area of the table, and thus more frantic with the ball rebounding ferociously in the confined space. The head of a soft-rock fiend then starts to levitate above the flippers. His blonde permed hair and shades are no doubt designed to put players off, but those who are able to withstand the fashion travesty staring them in the face have to try and break down the gate he is protecting.

REVIEW



▲ Out of its skull!

▲ Never trust a hippie.

▲ The word "head".



COMMENT



ROB

For those of you contemplating buying a pinball sim, the thing you probably want to know is whether or not this is better than Dragon's Fury. In the playability department things are pretty even. The inertia of the ball is very realistic, and there are no quirks in the game logic that cause the ball to rebound at strange angles. The sound too, matches the classic rock opera of Dragon's Fury with wild guitar solo's a-plenty. But I'm afraid it's at this point that Dragon's Fury leaves its rival behind. Basically Twisted Flipper lacks the variety necessary to make a pinball sim interesting - there just isn't enough going on. While a few sprites move about the screen, most of the graphics are static and short on detail. Bonus screens, which work wonders in Dragon's Fury are few and far between in this game. While the Jump Ramp bonus level is an impressive idea it is generally the only extra level that turns up regularly. The four-player mode opens up the door for some multi-player fun, but the actual pinball action is just too dull to keep anyone interested for long. So in answer to the opening question, I'd say that although Twisted Flipper has some okay pinball action, it's beaten hands down by Dragon's Fury.

R.

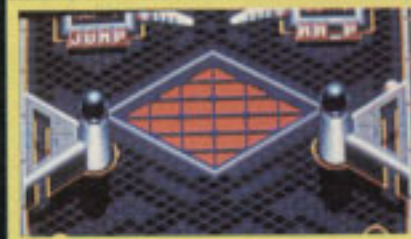


COMMENT



JULIAN

Being a keen pinball fan, I really wanted to enjoy this game. But try as I might, the more I played, the more I got bored. The problem is that the challenge level is too low - the collision detection on the flippers is too forgiving and it's all too easy to keep the ball in play. Consequently it doesn't take long to get to a level where games go on for ages at a time, and it all becomes a matter of routine. This is compounded by the fact that there's not enough happening on the table to keep your interest going between bonus screens - the amount of drop targets and trick shots is actually very limited. The graphics and sound are very slick, and the ball movement is fairly realistic (although I found its movement a bit too "heavy", as if the table was tilted forward too far), but my vote goes for Dragon's Fury - it has more variety and is more challenging.



▲ Target-related tomfoolery.



BY: EA

PRICE: £44.95

RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER

GAME DIFFICULTY: EASY

LIVES: 4

CONTINUES: NONE

SKILL LEVELS: 1

RESPONSIVENESS: GOOD



PRESENTATION 75%

Two, three, and even four-player action, but little else besides. Sad title screen as well.

GRAPHICS 72%

Some nicely drawn and animated sprites, but not enough of them.

SOUND 85%

Some air punching, soft rock riffs and decent bing-bong pinball sound effects.

PLAYABILITY 86%

The pinball "feel" is successfully reproduced, which means its easy to get into.

LASTABILITY 70%

The absence of enough bonus screens means monotony soon starts to set in.

OVERALL 74%

A realistic pinball sim that doesn't offer enough challenge or variety. Dragon's Fury is a better alternative.