



The Oric Game



Blake's 7—The TV Series

Blake's 7 was a British science fiction television series produced by the BBC and created by Terry Nation, which aired back in 1978. Despite its low budget, the series became quite popular and stood up due to the dystopian nature, good characters, ambiguous morality, and a dark and pessimistic adult tone.

It is set in a distant future, where humanity has colonized other worlds throughout the Galaxy, but are forced to live in domed cities in Earth due to contamination. The dystopian society is governed by the **Terran Federation**, who controls the citizens through mass surveillance, brainwashing, and drugs.



 The series tells the story of a group of political dissidents commanded by **Roj Blake** (you!) who gain control of a technologically advanced alien spaceship. This group of rebels is little more than a bunch of criminals (except Roj Blake, who was accused with false charges), so conflicts between their interests and Blake's idealism are always arising, specially with **Kerr Avon**, a technological genius captured the only occasion in which he relied on other people.

Throughout the series, Blake's group is tirelessly pursued by **Supreme Commander Servalan**, one of the best villains ever, and **Space Commander Travis**, a dedicated and ruthless soldier. They will not spare any resource to capture Blake and his group, but Servalan is also a power greedy manipulative woman, who follows her own agenda, and wants the alien ship to be captured intact to serve her own interests.



The Game

In this game you play the role of Roj Blake, a content citizen living in one of the many domed cities in Planet Earth, under the Terran Federation Government. From the beginning you'll learn that something is not as it should be. You often have nightmares and start to worry about your family, who are supposed to live in an outer colony, while you work here for 10 years in exchange.

A friend of yours, Ravella, will introduce you to a much more cruel reality, which will make you reconsider who you are, your own past, and your future.

Explore, enjoy yourself, and live the story that unfolds as you advance. Patience, perseverance and imagination are the keys to solve some the puzzles and make Blake start a journey that will make him become a legend.

The legend of **Blake's 7**.



Before You Start

In order to play this game you'll need an Oric-1 or Atmos with a **Microdisc** floppy controller. Jasmin and other controllers are not yet supported. Both real floppy drives and emulators such as HxC will work, but beware 3" floppies cannot be used. The Telestrat is also supported. Please see the release notes for important information on compatibility and further instructions.

Boot your Oric with the game disk. The game will load and start automatically. You'll see an icon of a floppy disk flashing in colours on the bottom-right of the screen every time the disk is accessed. Some times it takes a few seconds to load all the data, so be patient. Whenever the game saves information to the disk, the flashing icon changes to a disk with an arrow.

Soon after booting the opening titles and introduction will start.

Playing Blake's 7

After the introduction you'll face yourself in your room inside the domed city. The largest area of your screen is the graphical representation of the environment, as if seen in a TV or movie. On the top there is a line where the sentences being said by the characters in the game will be displayed. On the bottom you'll see two different areas: the verbs (or actions) you can use at the left, and the inventory area at the right, where the names of the objects you collect will appear. It is in this part of the screen where your options for dialogs will appear whenever you talk to other characters. Just above this area, there is space for a line of text where the command you are composing will be displayed automatically.

There is little else to say, the interface is the usual one found in many graphic adventure games, and it is extremely easy to use. Just move the cursor and click to select a verb (command), then select an object from the graphic area or the inventory (object names appear automatically when you hover the cursor over them) and click. That is all. Your alter ego will go to the object, if necessary, and perform the action. If possible, that is.

The default action is "Walk To", which does not appear in the verb list. That is because it is what you will do most of the time. Clicking anywhere on the graphic area will take your ego there. He will find the way automatically.

Cutscenes

Cutscenes are (usually short) animated scenes, where you don't control the action. They serve as introduction to something new in the game, deepen in the motivation of the characters, or deliver events which are important in the story. Sometimes you can skip them by pressing ESC. If a Cutscene is not skipped this way, it is because what happens is important for the story. Watch them carefully, and enjoy them.

I have spent quite a lot of time designing and tweaking them, so they deserve some of your attention., don't they?

Dialogs

Along his way, Blake will encounter other characters, and sometimes he will have to interact with them. In these cases a dialog may be initiated, for instance using the verb "Talk To".

During these conversations, you will have to select what Blake says from among the possibilities shown below the graphic area. Just click on the sentence you want him to say.

Beware that some options may appear only after some events have occurred, or you have gathered new information.

What you choose to say will affect how other people respond. And, as conversation continues, you could be presented with new choices. Don't worry – you'll never be



punished for selecting the wrong dialog response. After all, you're playing the game to have fun (as was pointed out in the instructions of the wonderful game "The Secret of Monkey Island").

Keyboard Shortcuts

Yes. Using the keyboard to control the cursor can be a bit cumbersome, and the Oric was not blessed with a proper mouse (one dealing with acceleration, I mean). By pressing ESC at any time during gameplay (not in a cutscene), you can pop up the preferences menu. From there you can, among other things, redefine the keys used in the game to suit your needs. By default, the cursor arrows and space bar are used, but you might want to change them to something more comfortable.

Anyway, moving the cursor back and forth may become a tiring experience. For this reason, the game includes a system of shortcuts. Each verb has an associated number, from left to right and top to bottom:

- | | | |
|----------|------------|---------|
| 1- Give | 2- Pick up | 3- Use |
| 4- Open | 5- Look at | 6- Push |
| 7- Close | 8- Talk to | 9- Pull |

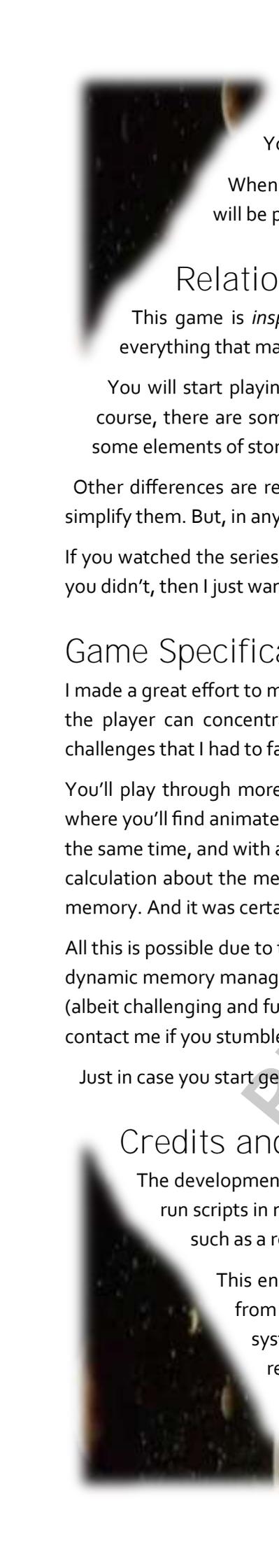
When hovering the cursor over an object, you can simply press the number associated to an action, and it will be performed immediately, without the need of selecting the verb first, then the object again.

You could even move the cursor with one hand and select actions with the other!

Where Is The Save Option?

Nowhere. You don't have to worry saving your game. It will save automatically for you after every relevant achievement. The game is designed so there is no way you can get to a state where you cannot continue playing and have to restart again from a previous point.

My philosophy here was similar to the point of view of Lucas Arts graphic adventures. You prefer to solve the problems by exploration and thinking, and you are here to have a pleasant, but challenging, experience solving mysteries and being involved in the story.



Dying because you choose the wrong door, or lack a given object, is far from an immersive and pleasant experience. So don't be afraid of trying something fun or risky. You won't die or reach a dead end because of it.

Whenever you start the game, it will search for the presence of a savepoint, and if it exists, you will be prompted to continue playing from there or to start a new game and lose your progress.

Relation with the TV Series

This game is *inspired* on the original TV Series, and I tried it to keep the tone, sense of humour, and everything that made the show enjoyable in the first place.

You will start playing the first Episode of the series ("The Way Back") and continue along the storyline. Of course, there are some divergences from the original, this is, after all, a game, not an interactive movie, and some elements of storytelling are different.

Other differences are related to a more adequate timing for a computer game, to group events together or to simplify them. But, in any case, I always wanted to preserve the original atmosphere.

If you watched the series, then I want you to feel that you are actually playing Blake's 7, despite the differences. If you didn't, then I just want you to enjoy the tone, the characters and the story.

Game Specifications

I made a great effort to made the game not to interfere with the playing experience, so (despite the lack of mouse) the player can concentrate on the story and puzzles. This may result in oversighting many of the technical challenges that I had to face in the development.

You'll play through more than 50 different locations, many of them larger than the visible part on your screen, where you'll find animated objects and big sized characters full of animations, where several things are occurring at the same time, and with a large amount of text just to bring the story and the characters to life. If you make a small calculation about the memory needs, you'll quickly realize it seems impossible to make all that fit into the Oric's memory. And it was certainly difficult!

All this is possible due to the usage of multitasking scripting and loading/discarding data from disk on demand with dynamic memory management. Creating such a game engine in assembly in such a limited machine is a hard task (albeit challenging and fun!), and it is possible that there are still some nasty bugs lurking around. Don't hesitate to contact me if you stumble upon one, and I'll try to fix it as soon as possible.

Just in case you start getting annoyed because of the delay experienced due to the disk accesses.

Credits and Acknowledgements

The development of this game took me more than 2 years, and involved the creation of an engine able to run scripts in multitasking, loading and discarding data from disk on demand, and several auxiliary tools such as a room editor or a script compiler. Not to mention the enormous amount of graphics.

This engine, called OASIS (Oric Advanced Script-Interpreting System), was designed and made from scratch. Of course, although it is very different, it is inspired in the ground-breaking system developed by Ron Gilbert and Gary Winnick for his marvellous game *Maniac Mansion* released back in 1987 for the Commodore 64 and Apple II (<http://wiki.scummvm.org/index.php/SCUMM>). This system changed the way a player interacted with adventure games, and influenced many later productions.

I cannot miss thanking everyone that helped me during this harsh process. Some

gave me tools, some helped me with ideas and feedback, some encouraged me and, of course, someone made incredible graphic designs for the characters.

Yes **jojoo73**. Without your talent and those beautiful character designs, the game would not have seen the light. At least not as great-looking as now!

The game disk is created using *FloppyBuilder*: a tool first created by **Jede**, updated to a new version by **Dbug** and tweaked by me to store all the data in a compressed format.

I had to create all the backgrounds for the game, but more often than not, I did not do it from scratch. It would be impossible to name here all the sources I used to get inspiration (or sometimes, directly, copy or even rip), mostly because in most cases I just can't remember.

Whenever I had to create a new design, I issued a search with Google Images, something such as "futuristic room" or "space ship cargo bay" or "graphic adventure cave interior". That is why some designs will remind you other games such as King Quest. In particular, I made the interior of the London with the same design of the ship in Oo-Topos.

Oh, by the way, the B7 logo at the beginning of this manual is the work of **simche**, downloaded from <https://fanart.tv/series/75565/blakes-7/>

I want to thank **Greymagick** for his support, encouragement, and patience. He not only tested many intermediate versions thoroughly, but also provided invaluable insights and advice. As usual.

I also want to thank all the people who collaborated with the testing process, **Dbug**, **Kikems**, **Silicebit**, **ron**, **Symoon**, **Jede**, and many others who got a copy of a working version and gave it a try to make some tests for me. And, of course, **Fabrice Frances**, to whom this game is dedicated, as he was the one who re-started my passion for programming this little machine. Also thanks to **htdreams** for suggesting the shortcut system. I am surely forgetting somebody, and I wouldn't like to, so thanks to you all.

Again, thanks to the Oric community for being there, gathered mainly around the **Defence-Force** forums, to the fantastic people of **RetroWiki**, and also to the people behind the best youtube retro channel in Spanish: **Amiga Wave**. All you guys are fantastic.

Finally, a word in memoriam of **Gareth Thomas**, who played Roj Blake and Adam Brake in "Children of the Stones" (another of my favourite series back in the 80s), and who passed away in 2016. Together with him, we already lost several people related to this series, namely **Terry Nation** (the creator), **David Jackson** (Olag Gan), and **Peter Tuddenham** (voice of Zen, Orac and Slave).

Rest In Peace.

Any thoughts, comments, questions, bugs or whatever, are more than welcome. Post them in the Oric Forums (forum.defence-force.org) or email me at enguita@gmail.com

Happy playing!

José María Enguita (Chema) - 2017

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PRELIMINARY

DEFENCE FORCE



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This game was made as a homage to the series, and it is completely non-profit.

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