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THE INCREDIBLE WIZARD

The Wizard of Wor comes to home videogaming in Astrocade's finest cartridge yet.

Object

The ancient world is plagued by demons. Some of them are only moderately annoying; some are utter miseries. Others are positively lethal.

As a "worrier," it's your task to penetrate the infamous Dungeons of Wor and rid the land of its many nefarious inhabitants. No problem, you think. After all, you've an army behind you.

As soon as you enter the catacombs, you begin to wonder why you ever volunteered for service. Your knees begin to knock, but you cherish the feeling for one reason: it means you're still alive.

Not only are the labyrinths dark and gloomy, eerie sounds creaking and howling from within, but they are so narrow that only one soldier can penetrate at a time. It is then that you learn why the king sent a full battery on this mission: your personnel perish with alarming frequency.

Your Concentrated Unified Field Disturbance Rifle is fully charged and you grip it tightly within your perspiring palms. Your radar screen is operative and you enter the dungeons yourself — the dungeons where death is less a question of "if" than a matter of when.

Your mission is to destroy as many monsters as possible, from Burwors to Garwors to Thorwors to the great Wizard himself, before your own demise.

Variations

There are three levels of play: Easy, Medium, and Hard. The monsters move with increasing rapidity as the difficulty increases. At the same time the successive mazes have fewer and fewer walls, permitting the creatures to come at you from more sides simultaneously. Fortunately, the demons can only attack vertically and horizontally, never diagonally. In the more open mazes, you will be distracted by the monsters' approach from all angles: try to pay their maneuvers no attention, for in the end the creatures can come at you only from top, bottom, left, or right.

Scoring

Burwors (blue):	Thorwors (red)
10 points	50 points
Garwors (yellow)	The Wizard
20 points	250 points
Worluk (blue with yellow wings)	
100 points	
Worriors (yellow or blue)	
100 points	

Whenever you destroy a Worluk, the point value of the next maze doubles. Sizzling the Wizard wins you a quadruple point value. When a Worluk and Wizard appear in the same maze, failing to destroy one does not affect your bonus for having eliminated the other.

Extra players are awarded every fourth maze.

Control

The Incredible Wizard is fought using Astrocade's three-function joystick, though only two of the implement's abilities are brought into play.

The joystick handle moves your warrior up, down, left, and right, while the trigger shoots your rifle. A quick jerk to one of those sides will cause your warrior to face the side without further movement in that direction. The knob atop the joystick is of no help.

Patterns

In time, you will come to recognize some of the mazes. However, individual patterns do not recur with any regularity. Nor is there any set place from which the monsters or the Wizard enter the catacombs. However, they always appear in the same order, the Burwors and Garwors first, and after a few moments the Thorwors and Worriors.

The moth-like Worluk flits your way only after all the Wizard's other familiars have been destroyed; the Wizard comes next, though not all the time and never after the first maze, but at any time thereafter.

There is one sure way to tell when the Wizard is about to appear: if your warrior can discharge more than two shots after the Worluk has been vanquished or escapes, then the Wizard is on his way. If that is the case, follow the strategies cited five paragraphs hence.

Your own warrior always begins by entering through a doorway in the bottom left of the screen, except in two-player games where the second participant gets the doorway on the lower right.

Strategies

Most of the time, you should blast a monster when you have the chance. There is little time to reflect on this: the beggars move swiftly! The sole, incontrovertible exception to shooting-on-sight is when you're gunning down a long corridor. At any time, before you can fire a second shot your first one has to have exploded. If you fire at a remote

target and there's a creature around the corner, your projectile might not reach — and, hence, you may not be able to "recharge" — before the nearer monster arrives and you're disintegrated.

As a rule, in any maze try to situate yourself in the corner of a lengthy tunnel. For the most part, the longest tunnels are horizontal. Not only will that give you time to turn and fire at whatever is ambling your way along the lengthy corridor, there will by virtue of its length be more passageways leading into that tunnel, ergo more monsters will use it.

Your only concern beside firing along the tunnel will be to pay attention to what may be scampering along the short side of the right angle. The creatures of *The Incredible Wizard* are quite clever: if they see you blasting away down the corridor, one or two of them will try to sneak around and come at you from the side.

After you have done away with the lesser creatures, the Worluk will arrive. While the other demons in this game change directions abruptly, none makes quite so fleet an about-face as the Worluk. With a supernatural disdain for the laws of physics, it *can* make immediate, full-speed changes in its course. That means if you've been tailing the Worluk and are close behind it, you run the very real risk of being run over. At the same time, while it may very well change direction and head your way, it may stop short of you and shift gears again. The monster is nothing if mercurial.

What is predictable is that the Worluk will almost always try to escape via the door nearest to the spot where it first appeared. Thus, after clearing the screen of all other menaces, position yourself with a clear shot at that door. Or, if you want to try and anticipate the Worluk, try to pick off the winged beast before then. Do this not by chasing it into the maze, but by nestling at the far end of a long corridor. Moving into the more convoluted areas of the labyrinth while that devil is buzzing about will more than likely bring about your ruination.

The Wizard moves in a manner almost identical to the Worluk, but he has the added threat of firing projectiles rapidly in all directions. He will show up more and more frequently the longer you survive.

Always prepare for the Wizard's arrival by sheltering yourself on as many sides as possible: this tartar really *is* a

one-man dervish, toting a pistol as he dashes around the maze, becoming visible for mere moments, eluding your radar, and changing course unpredictably. After having determined by the process mentioned above that the Wizard is on his way, your best bet is to sit in a corner and open fire along a free side, just in case he happens to materialize there.

Don't go wandering about: he'll come to you soon enough. Nor should you vacillate; choose a direction which offers the Wizard the fewest maze walls in his approach to you, and stay facing that direction. Be prepared, however, to shift and shoot the other way if he alters his approach. Further, the Wizard is an exception to the hold-your-fire rule mentioned earlier. If you don't plug him far down a corridor, his missiles are sure to nail you.

Accordingly, even if you don't get the Wizard, make certain he doesn't get you by *never* leaving yourself out in the open when he is afoot.

Another "never-do" applies to every creature in every maze. That is, never position yourself by the right or left wall near the spot where a passage leading from one side of the screen to the other opens now and then. If your back is to the wall when the door appears, and a creature happens through it on the other side, it will trample you under before you can flee.

One of the strategies you should always undertake is to shoot clusters of monsters. You often find two, sometimes three Burwors, Garwors, and/or Thorwors moving in tandem: at such times, you can obliterate them all with one shot. If you see a cluster developing, chase it if possible. If one is already developed, chances are you won't arrive in time to tag them all. The clusters are extremely shortlived.

In the more difficult levels, especially "hard," you'll be sitting still less than in the "easy" level. For one thing, the creatures move faster; for another, they fire weapons at you. Best to stay on the move, always firing ahead of yourself to clear a path, pausing to pivot and fire at any creatures which happen to come at you from another side.

The most difficult level of all is "The Pit," which has no walls. It is simply the bare playing field, the monsters, and you. Get yourself at once to any corner of the field and play from there, shooting vertically or horizontally as demons approach. Remember, though some of the monsters will approach from what seems to be a diagonal direction, they

must ultimately have at you from top, bottom, left, or right.

When it comes time to bag the Worluk, position yourself right before one of the two exits. It moves so swiftly that, unless you're a much-decorated Warrior, even a long corridor doesn't give you enough of a cushion to hit it. Unless your timing is perfect, a missile fired more than one-third of the screen away from the Worluk will arrive too late to hit it. And, as mentioned above, trying to *anticipate* the beast is difficult at best; in the "hard" level, the difficulty increases geometrically. Which is a long-winded way of saying that your best bet remains standing by one of the exits. It *must* go to one of them. You'll blast the bat-beast if it heads your way, and be in the ideal position to hit it — unless it uses the other side.

In any maze, if you want an invisible monster to show itself fire in a "false" direction from the way you want it to come. More often than not the creature will fall for the bait and attack rather than hide.

Using the radar to watch those creatures which can become invisible — all but the Burwors — is of value solely in the climactic moments of play. The maze is not indicated on the radar, only the creatures' movements within the rectangular screen.

During the thick of battle, when there are many monsters afoot, it's best to be ready to pivot and blast rather than try to anticipate. The invisible monsters materialize, literally, a second before they pounce on you. That's enough time to turn and fire.

Conversely, if your eyes are on the radar at the bottom of the screen, you may not have time to interpret its position from the sketchy information presented on the radar screen, then turn in the right direction. The radar is best for those times when there is only one Garwor or Thorwor afoot and you choose to stalk it.

Comment

The Incredible Wizard should sell a lot of Astrocade units. Not only is gameplay superb, and the graphics excellent — the Wizard's death throes are dazzling — but the sound effects are among the best of any home game. There is music which introduces each maze (if you don't appreciate the delay, cut the tune short by pressing the trigger), and the six-shooter sounds of the Wizard's weapon are worth the price of admission. ▲

Peripheral Vision The War Over Wor

There are going to be some hot times in the marketplace, and it appears that Astrocade may well be the one taking most of the heat.

The Incredible Wizard has been on the market for several months now. Sales-wise, it has done remarkably well considering the fact that Astrocade still has to overcome several hurdles to make itself felt in the marketplace.

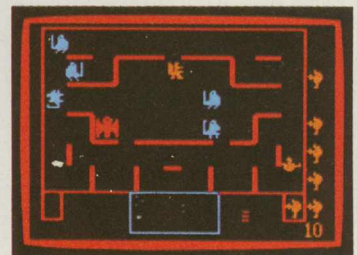
One problem is that anyone competing with Atari and Intellivision is facing a pair of juggernauts. Even monied companies like NAP, which manufactures Odyssey, have had to work hard to chip away at their lead. What with Coleco-Vision crowding the marketplace even further, Astrocade has its work cut out for it.

Another problem the company has had is a series of name changes-cum-identity crises over the past few months. They've gone from being Bally to Astrovision to Astrocade. None of which is to denigrate what is essentially a very sound game system.

Nor do Astrocade's difficulties end there. A new specter has arisen, one which attacks *The Incredible Wizard* specifically: the new CBS games unit is making ready to release the same game under its original arcade title, *The Wizard of Wor*. The CBS game will be Atari-compatible.

Just how Midway, which produced the arcade version, licensed the game to two companies is not clear at present, though we'll have the story for you next issue.

What's clear is that CBS, with an aggressive campaign, very slick packaging, and the benefit of being available in a format which can be used with the most popular home videogame unit of them all, might well be a greater foe than any fought by the Astrocade Wizard on the TV screen.



A screen from Astrocade's *The Incredible Wizard*.